Accessing the Iraqi Jewish Archive

Dina Herbert, Librarian
National Archives and Records Administration

Association of Jewish Libraries 49th Annual Conference
Las Vegas, NV
June 23, 2014
Recovery of Books and Documents from Saddam Hussein’s Intelligence Headquarters, Baghdad, Iraq, 2003

Waterline

Images courtesy of Harold Rhode
Examination in Freezer trunk, Baghdad, Iraq, 2003

Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler
NARA Conservation Chief
Phase I:
Getting Materials Dry and Stable; NARA Takes Custody

Vacuum Freeze-Drying, 2003
Babylonian Jewish History

6th Century BCE: Jews exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar

219 to 1050 CE: Babylonia as the center of Judaism

1258-1918: Mongol period - Ottoman rule

1900: 50,000-80,000 Jews in Baghdad (25-40% city population)

1918-1932: British Mandate, Jews played a key role in civic life

1932: Iraq independence, situation begins to deteriorate

1941-1951: Jews arrested, property confiscated, fired from jobs, bombings.
    121,600 Jewish emigrated from Iraq, 5-6,000 Jews remained in Baghdad; extensive assets left in Iraq

1952-ca.1973: Most Jews left via airlifts or were smuggled out

2014: Approximately 4 Jews in Baghdad; fewer than 30 Jews in Iraq
# What We Have Vs. What We Do Not Have

**HAVE**

- Documents from Communal Organizations
- Administrative Materials from Jewish Schools
  - Students’ permanent records
  - Copies of blank exams
  - Administrative notes
- Bibles, Talmuds, Hebrew Primers

**DO NOT HAVE**

- School Materials Sent home
  - Report cards
  - Copies of taken exams
- Diaries, Personal Letters
Images courtesy of Maurice Shohet
Phase II: Assessment, 2006-2007
Funded by National Endowment for the Humanities to the Center for Jewish Heritage

Daniel Dancis, Conservator Technician

Susan Duhl, Conservator

Rehoused in Permalife Wrappers

Preliminary Photography Database Created
Phase III
Funded by Department of State in 2011; completion in 2014

- Complete cataloging and the database.
- Provide conservation treatment.
- Image all documents and selected books.
- Create an exhibit in English and Arabic to be displayed in the United States and Iraq.
- Create a web site to host the collection online.
- Provide fellowships for Iraqi conservation professionals.
- Box, crate, and transport the materials.
Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Project Team, 2014
Cataloging & Arabic Translators

Ryann Craig

Huda Dayton

Jeff Abadie
Cataloging Books

• The collection has about 2,700 books, ranging from the 16th – 20th centuries.
• Books are considered printed, published materials.
• Some books are complete; others are sections with as few as 1-2 pages.
• Most books were used by the Jewish community and printed in Hebrew; just over 400 IJA books were printed in Baghdad.
This is part five of a five volume commentary on the Babylonian Talmud by the Baghdadi rabbi known as the Ben Ish Hai.

**Bibliographic Information**

- **Author Personal:** Joseph Hayyim ben Elijah al-Hakam
- **Publisher:** Bi-Defus ha-Rid Framkin
- **Date of Publication:** 1903 or 1904
- **Date of Publication Hebrew:** 5664
- **Place of Publication:** Jerusalem
- **Record Type:** Books
- **OCLC Number:** 19166874
- **Language:** Hebrew
- **Annotations:** Yes

**Format**

**Preservation**

**Metadata**

- Covers and title pages imaged in 2006-2007
- Annotations imaged in 2012-2014
- For digitized version, see IJA#2010
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<table>
<thead>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Mold Remediation: Not Done
- Flattening: None
- Disbound / Disassembled: No
- Mended: No
- Rehoused: Custom Box

- Covers and title pages imaged in 2006-2007
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No comments have been made for this entry.
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Download as a PDF

For optimized zooming and panning please use the Flash Viewer

Download File Size: 113 MB
Requires Adobe Reader
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VIEW THE COMPLETE DOCUMENT

For optimized zooming and panning please use the Flash Viewer

DOWNLOAD AS A PDF
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Bibliographic Information
Format
Preservation
Metadata

Last Updated: November 19, 2013
Keywords: Commentary on Talmud; Printed Text; Annotation

Public Comments
No comments have been made for this entry

- Covers and title pages imaged in 2006-2007
  Annotations imaged in 2012-2014
- Completely imaged in 2012-2014
Almost 900 unique keyword terms
  - As broad as “Prayer book” and as narrow as “Rosh Hashana Maḥzor”
  - Tried to be as wide-ranging in thinking as possible for all types of searches

Similar to National Archives’ Citizen Archivist Initiative
  - Allows users to “tag” photographs and transcribe documents.
Citizen Archivist Example
No caption. Workers picking shrimp.

Tags Contributed by the Public:
- barefoot child worker
- boys working
- child labor
- families at work
- picking shrimp
- poverty
- young boys

Tags Contributed by the Public:
show more details...

Log in to add a tag

Tagging Policy | FAQ
Cataloging Archival Documents

• The collection has tens of thousands of pages of archival material, from the 20th century.
• Archival entries are considered unpublished materials.
• Some archival documents can have as many as 800 or more leaves; others are 1-2 pages.
• Most are from the Jewish communal organizations: Schools, Chief Rabbi’s Office, Lay Council, etc.
Class Rosters and Grades, Frank Iny and Shamash Secondary Schools

These are class rosters and exam scores from the Frank Iny and Shamash Secondary schools. This includes rosters with scores for various classes/subjects from the Shamash Secondary School, 1968-1970; Frank Iny, intermediate grades, 1968-1970; Frank Iny, primary grades, 1968-1970. They are arranged in folders by teacher, followed by grade ledgers.

Bibliographic Information

| Inclusive Start Date: 1968 |
| Inclusive End Date: 1970 |
| Archival Materials Type: Paper |
| Archival Materials Format: Multiple Papers |
| Language: Arabic/English |

Preservation

Metadata

Public Comments

November 9, 2013 at 4:06 PM by Ronnie Dallas

It is unbelievable after 40+ years, I have found my name and a record of my exams results in Mathematics in the fourth secondary academic year. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to share it with my children.

Post a Reply

November 24, 2013 at 4:21 AM by Eli Mor

Fourth grade

Comment related to Page 6

Comment related to Page 81

Download as a PDF

For optimized zooming and panning please use the Flash Viewer

Download File Size: 112 MB
Requires Adobe Reader
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Bibliographic Information
Preservation
Metadata

Last Updated: March 7, 2014
Keywords:
File Folder; Annotation; School Material; Frank Iny School; Baghdadi Jewish Community; Chart; Typed; Shamash Secondary School; Form; Exam Records; Education; Transcript; Students; Middle School; English Literature; Chemistry; Mathematics; Science; Literature; French; Geography; Handwritten; Teachers; Fragment; President of the Jewish Community; High School; History; Ledger

Public Comments

November 9, 2013 at 4:06 PM by Ronnie Dallal

Comment related to Page 6

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The following guidelines relating to cataloging were written specifically for the Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Project.

3.1 Cataloging Procedures
3.2 Cataloging Quality Control
3.3 Criteria for When to Digitize
Tools for Removing Mold

HEPA filter vacuum with Y-hose attachment

Small attachments used on low suction

Fume Hood set up for safe handling

Larger attachments for minimally moldy materials
Set up includes an overhead camera with lights, a computer, and a heavy-duty copy stand.

Many objects were filmed under glass; the shutter is triggered by a foot pedal allowing technicians to use both hands.
Discovery and Recovery: Preserving Iraqi Jewish Heritage

- Discovery
- Text and Heritage
- Iraqi Jewish Life: Constancy and Change
- Personal and Communal Life
- After Millenia
- A Reduced Community
- Preserving the Past
- Preservation: the Survival of Iraqi Jewish Heritage
Highlighting NARA’s work on the preservation and digitization

Exhibit at National Archives & Records Administration
November 2013 – January 2014
Before and After Treatment
Before and After Treatment

מסכת יומא מן תלמוד בבל
Masekhet Yoma min Talmud Bavli
Vienna, 5553 (1792 or 1793)
IJA Digitization: Performing Quality Control
Preserving the Iraqi Jewish Archive

Standing evidence of the once-vibrant Jewish life in Iraq came to light in May 2003—over 2,700 books and tens of thousands of documents were discovered in the flooded basement of the Iraqi intelligence headquarters by a US Army team.

The remarkable survival of this written record of Iraqi Jewish life provides an unexpected opportunity to better understand this 2,500-year-old Jewish community. For centuries, it had flourished in what had generally been a tolerant, multicultural society. But circumstances changed dramatically for Jews in the mid-twentieth century, when most Iraqi Jews fled and were stripped of their citizenship and assets.

To provide accessibility throughout the world to the damaged materials found in 2003, the US National Archives and Records Administration and its partners have preserved, cataloged, and digitized the books and documents.
Searching

www.ija.archives.gov/search
Search Results

Refine Your Results

All Record Types
- Books: 19
- Archival Materials: 20
- Monographs: 28
- Other: 12

All Languages
- English: 2
- Hebrew: 1
- Other: 2

All Dates
- 500-599: 1
- 600-699: 1
- 700-799: 1
- 800-899: 1
- 900-999: 1
- 1000-1099: 1
- 1100-1199: 1
- 1200-1299: 1
- 1300-1399: 1
- 1400-1499: 1
- 1500-1599: 1
- 1600-1699: 1
- 1700-1799: 1
- 1800-1899: 1
- 1900-1999: 1
- 2000-2009: 1

All Subject Terms
- Black Hebrew Community: 1
- Babylonian Talmud: 1
- Jewish Law: 1
- Jesus: 1
- Jerusalem: 1
- Midrash: 1
- Talmud: 6
- Jewish Bible: 1

Search results

[Book - Talmud]
This is a collection of the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, and Arakhin. Sanhedrin discussed legal...

[Book - Talmud Bavli]
This is a collection of the Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma, which deals with a...
The search found 220 results in 0.156 seconds.

Search results

[Book - Talmud]
This is two tractates of the Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin discusses legal i...
Record Type: Books · Language: Aramaic/Hebrew · Comments:

[Talmud Bavli]
This is a tractate of the Babylonian Talmud, Soṭsuspected of adultery...
Record Type: Books · Language: Aramaic/Hebrew · Comments:

[Book Section - Jerusalem Talmud]
This is part of the Jerusalem Talmud.
Record Type: Books · Language: Aramaic/Hebrew · Comments:

[Book Section - Talmud]
This is a tractate of the Talmud, Nedarim, which
religious vows. There is ...
Record Type: Books · Language: Aramaic/Hebrew · Comments:

[Book Section - Talmud]
This is a tractate of the Talmud, Nedarim, which

Only show results with downloadable versions
The Preservation Project

For guidance and assistance in preserving the treasure trove of books and documents from the mid-sixteenth to late twentieth century, the Coalition Provisional Authority called on the US National Archives and Records Administration. With the agreement of Iraqi officials, the National Archives undertook the effort to preserve these waterlogged, damaged, and moldy materials; to catalog and digitize them; and to develop an exhibit from the books and documents.

The work occurred in three phases:

- Initial recovery, freezing and shipping, and vacuum freeze-drying;
- Identification, assessment, photographing title pages and covers, creation of a database, preliminary cataloging, and consultation with subject matter experts;
- Completion of cataloging, stabilization of materials, digitization, boxing, creation of the exhibition in English and Arabic, collaboration with Iraqi conservators, and return of the materials to Iraq.
Discovery and Recovery: Preserving Iraqi Jewish Heritage

Jews have lived in Iraq for thousands of years, but when coalition forces entered Baghdad in May 2003 only very few remained. A U.S. Army team searching for weapons of mass destruction in the flooded basement of the Mukhabarat, the headquarters of Saddam Hussein’s Intelligence services, discovered over 2,700 Jewish books and tens of thousands of documents. The remarkable survival of this written record of Iraqi Jewish life provides an unexpected opportunity to better understand this community. The National Archives is preserving these books and documents and making them accessible worldwide.

This online version of the Arabic/English exhibit Discovery and Recovery: Preserving Iraqi Jewish Heritage replicates all the text and images of the original 2013/2014 National Archives exhibition shown at:

Lawrence F. O’Brien Gallery, National Archives, Washington, DC
November 8, 2013 - January 5, 2014

Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, NY
February 4, 2014 - May 18, 2014

Video Clip: Recovering and Preserving Iraqi Jewish Books and Documents
Prayer Book

In many Jewish communities, a variety of symbolic foods, such as pomegranates and dates, are eaten in a home ceremony to celebrate Rosh ha-Shanah, the Jewish New Year. Each food is accompanied by a prayer that this food will serve as a good omen for the year. This prayer book features the liturgy for Rosh ha-Shanah services as well as the text for this home ritual.

Hanukkah Book

The eight-day holiday of Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the second century BCE. Festive Hanukkah celebrations in Iraq were marked by the eating of a delicacy—fried sweet fritters known as zendoula. Local foods and the cuisine and traditions of Iraqi Jews.

Sefer Zikeran Tov: Seder Tefilah le-Rosh ha-Shana (Book of Good Remembrance: Order of Prayer for Rosh ha-Shanah)

Sefer Sipur Nes Hanukkah (The Book of the Story of the Miracle of Hanukkah) Baghdad, 1925

Haggadah

A Haggadah is a compilation of ancient discussions relating to the biblical account of the liberation of the ancient Israelites from slavery and their exodus from Egypt. One of very few Hebrew manuscripts recovered from the Mukhabarat headquarters, this Haggadah was hand-lettered and decorated by an Iraqi youth.
Connect With Us

For more information about the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration visit www.archives.gov

View Videos and Articles

Hear the personal story of life in Baghdad at the middle of last century

- The dramatic story of how these materials were found, rescued and preserved is one worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster. This short film captures these heroic efforts. View the Video
- Peek "behind the scenes" of the state-of-the-art Conservation Lab. View the Video
- See how these materials are being scanned and digitized. View the Video
- See the history of the Initial work on the project. View the Video
- Article about the Iraqi Jewish Archive project and exhibit. View the Article

Press


PUBLIC EVENTS

November 21, 2013
Film Screening

December 3, 2013
Ort Bashkin: New Babylonians

December 5, 2013
Panel Discussion: Discovery and Recovery: Eyewitness Accounts
Tuesday, December 5th at 7PM William G. McGowan Theater, Archives I. View broadcast of this event

December 17, 2013
Panel Discussion: The IJA Project Team
Join the team working on the Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Project for a discussion about their daily work to preserve and make available the documents from this collection. View broadcast of this event

Press Releases

Broadcasts of events held at National Archives

Exhibit schedule

Connect With Us email form
Alfa Beta, Baghdad 5709 (1948 or 1949)
Alfa Beta, Baghdad 5709
(1948 or 1949)
Ben Ish Ḥai Manuscripts
Ben Ish Ḥai Manuscripts
Plans for another classroom and additional storage to the Frank Iy School, Baghdad
Circular for Teachers of English in Secondary Schools (Government & Private)

The Cambridge Lower Certificate in English

1. It is now recognized in Iraq that the Cambridge Lower Certificate is a valuable qualification for students of English to have. The Certificate is taken into account by the Ministry of Education in recommending students to Universities in England, (letter No 49/99 dated 1/8.56) and by the English Departments of the Higher Institutions in Baghdad in selecting candidates for entry.

2. A good student is stimulated to further study if he is working for an external examination like the Cambridge Lower Certificate. Only the best students of English should be allowed to enter for the examination; but all the best students should be encouraged to do so.

3. Preparation. Students are prepared for the LANGUAGE paper in the examination by their work in the secondary school on comprehension, precision and composition, and by all the language study which they do in connection with the literature books.

In the LITERATURE part of the examination, ("Prescribed Books"), students who are going to take the Cambridge examination will have to study two books from the list, privately outside school.

The list of prescribed Books for 1958 is as follows. The first four books on the list will also be prescribed in 1959:

1. DICKENS, Nicholas Nickleby (Longmans, Bridge Series)
2. CHARLOTTE BRONTE, Shirley (Oxford Univ. Press, English-Readers' Library)
3. REGINALD BEMUEY, The Lady with a Lamp (Longmans, Essential English Library)
4. NINA LANGLEY, Dr Albert Schweitzer, O.M. (Harrap)
5. SHETLEY BARRISH, Young Nurse Carter (Chatto & Windus)
6. SIR ARTHUR QUILLER COUPE, Harry Ravel (Dent, Kings' Treasures)
7. A.N. GIBB, Farmer's Diary (Faber)

4. Dates of the examination 17th June and 9th December, 1958. The oral examination will be taken on another day, near to the date of the written papers.

5. Entry. Entry Forms should be obtained by post from the nearest British Council Centre (see list below), during January. Candidates will then be told the last date for sending in the completed forms, and the amount of the fee to be sent with the forms (about one Dinar). The fee cannot be returned; but a candidate, who for a good reason (e.g. moving to another part of Iraq) does not sit for the examination on the date for which he entered, may, if he gives at least three weeks' notice that he will not be sitting, be given a voucher towards the cost of sitting at a later date.
School Photographs
Letters to the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad

Mr. & Mrs. Albert Lewis
and
Mr. & Mrs. I. Isaacs
request the pleasure of
the company of
Rabbi Sassoon Khadouri
on the occasion of the marriage of
Ruth,
with
Dr. Hesekel Isaacs,
at Lauderdale Synagogue,
Maida Vale, W. 9,
on Thursday, September 11th, 1947,
at 12 noon,
and afterwards at The Cafe Royal,
Regent Street, W. 1.

367 Edgeware Road,
London, W. 2.

R.S.V.P.

Chief Rabbi Sassoon Khadouri
President of the Jewish Community
Baghdad

Dear Friend:

I have the pleasure of
extending you an invitation to be present at
the Baghdad College exercises of graduation
and distribution of prizes to be held at the
King Faisal II Gardens on Tuesday, June 24,
at seven o’clock in the evening.

Respectfully,

Joseph Cornell, S.J.
Principal
Dear Rabbi Ashkenazi:

I have been given your address by the American Consul at Baghdad in the hope that you will be able to help me.

I am very anxious to exchange friendly letters with a young Sephardic Jew living in Iraq.

I am an American Jew of Anglo-Portuguese ancestry, and am descended from the family of Dorothea: Abraham Lefkowitz. My age is 26 years, and I am, by profession, an actor on the New York stage and in the cinema.

All phases of Jewish life and culture interest me deeply, as well as the broader scope of world affairs.

I am truly hopeful that you will give this letter to a young man of the Baghdad Jewish community who would like to have a friend in America.

Please accept my warmest greetings. Dear Rabbi Ashkenazi, and my wishes for the New Year just begun.

Faithfully,

Booth Colman
Nahid Fahil Mahdai
and
Zinah Adnan Majeed Al-Benezzi

Paper Conservators at National Library
and Archive in Baghdad, Iraq
Acknowledgements

• US Department of State
• Embassy of Iraq
• US National Archives and Records Administration
  NARA leadership and staff
  The Iraqi Jewish Archive Project Team
  Patrick Brown, Huda Dayton, Noah Durham, Daniel Feeley, Anna Friedman, Seth Gottlieb, Doris Hamburg, Christine Huhn, Katherine Kelly, Sue Murphy, Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, Jennifer Seitz, Randy Sullivan, Meris Westberg, and Norris White
• World Organization of Jews from Iraq
• National Endowment of Humanities
• Center for Jewish History
• American Jewish Committee
• B’nai Brith
• Library of Congress
• United States Holocaust Memorial Museum