



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 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.

From prayer books and Torah scrolls that are hundreds of years old to school records and community letters from the 20th century, the remarkable survival of this written record of Iraqi Jewish life provides an unexpected opportunity to better understand this community.



Exhibition Details

Content:

23 original documents and books from the Iraqi Jewish Archives; hands-on materials, and audiovisual presentation on preservation of the material.

Curator:

Gabriel Goldstein, Independent Curator and Specialist in Jewish Culture, History, and Art

Supplemental Materials:

Exhibition website with online accessible database of Iraqi Jewish Archives holdings; educational and promotional resources; speaker's list

Rental Fee:

Free for 10-week display

Security Requirements:

High security and environmental controls

Shipping:

Shipping costs are covered by NARA

Size:

2,000 square feet

Number of Crates:

11 crates, 9 exhibit cases, and 3 pallets

Insurance:

Insured by the National Archives

Tour Dates:

"Discovery and Recovery" will tour through September 2018. Dates are subject to change.

Project Status:

Fully Booked

More About this Exhibition

The exhibition, in both English and Arabic, tells the story of the documents and how they have been preserved and made accessible worldwide:

Discovery: Tells how the documents were discovered and the efforts made to rescue them and begin the process of identification and preservation. A short film includes images from the discovery, rescues and preservation efforts. Trunks used to ship the documents to the United States are exhibited.

Text and Heritage: Provides context for the documents and outlines the significance of text in Jewish life and tradition and the important role of this region in Jewish belief, scholarship, and history. Documents include a Torah scroll fragment, a Babylonian Talmud, and a Rabbinic Bible dated 1568.

Iraqi Jewish Life: Constancy and Change: Illustrates the long history of Jews in Iraq and the importance of their religious, communal, and domestic culture. A Haggadah, prayer book, and an illustrated Hebrew calendar are included in this section of the exhibit.

Personal and Communal Life: A selection of correspondence and publications to illustrate the range and complexity of Iraqi Jewish life in the 19th and 20th century. Original documents as well as facsimiles in flipbooks show the range of community life from school primers to international business correspondence.

After the Millennia: Discusses the last years of Jewish communal life and events that led to the departure of most of the Jewish population from Iraq. Included is a 1951 law freezing assets of Iraqi Jews.

Preserving the Past: Shows the treatment, preservation, and digitization of these documents books and how they are being made available worldwide.

National Archives Traveling Exhibits Service

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