

# Jewish Archives and Archival Documents Israel and the Diaspora

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# Jewish Archives

- Middle Ages (XIII century)
- Holocaust period ( mid- XX century)
- Official Archives
- Documents about Jews until the Emancipation period
- Documents related to Jewish voluntary institutions

# Jewish Archives

- *Pinkas*, record book
- Minutes of deliberations
- Regulations
- Deaths
- Special events and so forth

# Jewish Archives

- *Pinkasim*
- Mantua, Italy
- Tikocyn and Zabłudow, Poland
- Frankfurt am Main, Germany
- Record book of special societies
- *Hebrah Kadishah* (burial society)

# Jewish Archives

- 1905 *Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden*
- General Archives of German Jewry
- 1925 YIWO *Yiddisher Wissenschaftlicher*
- *Institut*
- Jewish Scientific Institute
- 1919 *Zionist Central Archives*

# Jewish Archives

- Rise of Nazism in Germany
- Establishment of the State of Israel
- How was the fate of Jewish archives similar or different from that of other archives during the period of Nazi occupation and under wartime conditions?
- What was unique in the case of Jewish archives, as compared to other archives, when the issue became restoration and restitution of archives to their legal owners?

# Archives in Wartime

- Charles Kecskemeti, “Displaced European Archives: Is It Time for a Post-war Settlement?”, *American Archivist*, 55, 1992, 132- 138
- Napoleon Bonaparte
- Vienna
- Simancas
- Vatican

# Archives World War II

- A. In Germany itself, from the rise of the Nazis to power until the downfall of the Third Reich,
- The tendency was to take over archives, especially Jewish ones
- B. From the beginning of the war, the Germans expropriated archives, including Jewish ones, in occupied countries



# Archives World War II

- C. After the war's end in areas under Soviet occupation, German archives and others under German possession were transferred to the Soviet Union and its satellites.
- D. German archives from the American and British zones of occupation were brought to the U.S. and Britain for research and photocopying and then returned to Germany.
- E. In the 1980s and 90s, negotiations were conducted with the former Soviet Union and Russia for the restitution of archives to their legal owners.

# General Archives of German Jewry

- Remained in place
- *The Reich Office for Research of Family Origin*
- 1944/45 Personal status of Jews, original record books were destroyed
- State archives in Potsdam
- 1950 Return to East Berlin, local Jewish community

# Central Zionist Archives

- 1933 transferred from Berlin to Jerusalem
- Locus of deposit for archival material of the organized Jewish community in the Land of Israel
- 1938/39 Messages to Zionist organizations requesting that they transfer inactive documents to Jerusalem

# YIVO

- 1940 Transfer of part of the YIVO Archives to New York
- Other part confiscated by the Germans
- After WW II, Americans transferred to the USA official German archives, these included the remnants of the YIVO Archives
- All YIVO Archives remained in the USA

# Jewish Archives after WW II

- Jewish archives in Europe were “orphaned”
- 1948 Establishment of the State of Israel became the major locus for archives of destroyed Jewish communities
- Who should legally inherit “orphaned” archives – Israel or the countries in which they were created?
- What was the approach adopted in Israel and the approach of official and Jewish bodies in the countries of provenance of the archives?

# Jewish Archives after WW II

- Israeli opinion
- Archives of Zionist organizations should be transfer to the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem
- Jewish archives that survived the destruction of European Jewry should also be brought to Israel

# Jewish Archives after WW II

- Official and renewed Jewish communities in Europe
- Official opinion in Europe was that the archives were part of the cultural assets of a certain country
- The renewed Jewish communities saw themselves as the continuation of the former ones

# Jewish Archives after WW II

- Denise Ryan, “The Holdings of the Former Jewish Communities in Germany in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem – Review of the Various Communal Archives”, *Arkhiyyon*, 12, 2003, 58-78 (Hebrew)



# Jewish Archives after WW II

- Dr. Alex Bein
- 1933 Archivist in State Archives, Potsdam
- 1955 Director of the Central Zionist Archives
- 1956 First State Archivist of Israel
- 1951 and 1956 Missions to Europe with the objective of restoring these archives to the Jewish people in their national home

# Jewish Archives after WW II

- West and East Germany
- Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People did not have legal basis to demand transfer of these collections
- Local organizations with recognized standing to handle the claims in West Germany

# General Archives of German Jewry

- Personal relations and cooperation between the heads of the Jewish communities in East and West Berlin
- Dr Bein, several reasons:
- Emotional influence of the Holocaust
- The objection that murderers should also inherit from their victims?
- The obligation to preserve the past, especially when the present was so unclear (“Iron Curtain” policy)

# Hamburg Community Archives

- 1951/59 Negotiations with the local authorities
- 1959 Agreement. 1,500 original files were transferred from Hamburg to Jerusalem.
- Each party kept those files it considered most important and would receive photocopies of those held by the other party

# “Special Archives” - Moscow

- Archives confiscated by the Germans in countries they occupied which fell into Soviet hands after the defeat of the Third Reich
- 1946 Archives deposited in a “special archives”
- 1990 News of this institution and its unique fonds was made public

# Jewish Fonds in the “Special Archives”

- Major fonds
- Germany, Austria, France
- Small fonds
- Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, former Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, former Czechoslovakia

# Nazi Regime Policy on Jewish Archives

- “Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question”, Frankfurt am Main
- Archival collections of international Jewish organizations
- Alliance Israelite Universelle
- Jewish political parties
- Bnei Brith , etc

# Jewish Archives Restitution

- Patricia Kennedy Grimsted published on the return of materials from the “special archives”
- Jewish documents were returned with non-Jewish material (Dutch Jewish communities)
- 1994 CITRA Conference of ICA in Salonika. Attention to the archives of the Jewish community
- 2010 A list was drawn up of all confiscated Jewish materials remaining in Russia



# Changes in Israeli Policy

- Several reasons for the change of policy
- The time that has elapsed from the end of WW II
- The changed relations between Israel and European States
- Israel's changing approach towards Jewish communities in the Diaspora
- Technological developments

# Changes in Israeli Policy – Jewish Archives Outside Europe

- Archives of non – Zionist bodies, the same policy as Zionist archives
- Israel is the natural locus for research on Jews and Judaism
- The lack in many cases of the professional and financial means to properly maintain archives abroad
- 1970s and 80s surveys of archival material conducted to South America

# Conclusions

- Jewish archives in periods of crisis and distress underwent the same hardships as did other archives
- In two aspects the case of the Jewish archives is unique:
  - A. There are no heirs, due the extermination of entire Jewish communities, and the ensuing debate as to who should inherit them. Israeli opinion changed from absolute demand that these archives be brought to Israel to non-intervention in efforts to return the archives to their original countries

# Conclusions

- B. In the all-Jewish sphere there was a change from a state of mind that all Diaspora materials should be brought together in Israeli archives to an attitude that accepted non-concentration of materials and greater mutuality between Israel and the Diaspora
- **Just as the history of the Jewish people is unique, so is the history of its archival collections**

Thank you for your attention !