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RARE BOOKS

The Story of the Sarajevo Haggada*

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Abstract: The story of the rescue of Sarajevo's Haggada codex during the Second World War was put together first by checking archives and other reliable sources, and thereafter contrasting the findings with the legend itself. It appears that a fictional story has filled a gap in the historical record of the postwar years; the legend has protected persons involved in the salvation of the Haggada.

**The manuscript was referred to Judaica Librarianship by Hazel K. Bell, editor of two journals published in England: The Indexer and Learned Publishing. Owing to the war in Bosnia, it was difficult to communicate with the author, but the Bosnian mission to the U.N. assisted us.*

While some portions of this article may be viewed as reflecting the political perspective of supporters of the Bosnian government's cause, the referees felt that the paper is significant for its treatment of legend and because of the author's discovery of new information regarding the rescue of the Haggada during World War II.

The Haggada Codex

Since 1894, the rare manuscript codex known as Sarajevo's Haggada has resided in the Library of the State Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (founded in 1888).¹ This Jewish manuscript, which is a masterpiece of Spanish illumination art from the 14th century (according to Narkiss (1991) it is from Aragon, ca. 1350–60), was brought to Bosnia in the 16th century. There exist several published artistic and historical studies on this richly illuminated codex; they are reviewed here within the context of a description of the period of the Second World War in the Museum and an analysis of some details regarding the rescue of the Haggada codex.

Parallels in the Events of 1941 and 1992

During the evacuation of the State Museum Library in the early Spring and Summer of 1992, when the city of Sarajevo had

become the target of artillery attacks from the occupied hills that surround it, the Haggada codex was on my mind all the time. "Is it safe?" was the question that presented itself daily, and I was afraid to learn the answer. Later, the empty rooms of the completely evacuated Library began to echo my question, asking about the destiny of burned libraries: the Documentation Center of the Museum of the 14th Olympiad (held in Sarajevo, April 21, 1984); the library, archive, and manuscript collection of the Oriental Institute (May 17);² and the National and University Library (August 25).³

By that time there was no safe passage leading to anyone's home: every building, cultural monument, museum, library, church or mosque was only a two-dimensional target on a map intended to be destroyed. Like all the citizens enclosed in the besieged Sarajevo, I had to risk going out from the shelter in suppressed freedom for a simple walk from home to the Museum. The strangulation of Sarajevo would later become a world phenomenon, a myth, a reference point of international diplomats in endless and unproductive efforts on behalf of its relief, a city with no way in or out. The city has lost almost everything: infrastructure and buildings, 10,000 of its civilians. . . .

Notes

1. "Zemaljski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine," the name of the Museum, is a translation into the Bosnian language of the German term "Landesmuseum." This term was used to denote a general museum with various kinds of collections (archaeology, ethnology, natural sciences) (e.g., a national museum) for a particular region (e.g., a district museum). Several terms (national, regional, district, state, and even land museum) are often used as English equivalents of the name of the Museum. We find the term "State Museum" most appropriate.

2. The loss of the Oriental Institute cannot be measured or ever repaired. In less than two hours, 5,000 unique manuscripts—Turkish, Persian, and Arabic; over a hundred plat books from Ottoman times (books that used to show that Slavs professing Islam have lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many centuries); other records

The jewel of the State Museum—Sarajevo's Haggada codex—was evacuated from the museum building to one of the safe deposit boxes of the Central Bank. More and more parallels have occurred as time passes—in particular, a tragic similarity in the historical experience between the Bosnian Muslim population in 1992 and the Jewish population in 1941. By the 2nd of Av 5753 by the Jewish calendar, 500 years after the great exile of Sephardic Jews from Spain, hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Muslims were expelled from their homes as a consequence of "ethnic cleansing" from the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina under Bosnian Serb occupation and control. Brutal aggression was clearly visible: massacres, refugees, concentration camps, burned towns and villages, and scorched earth. Should we conclude that nothing can be learned from the world's historical experience, and that such a question common to all of us sharing the Bosnian experience is a question of a difference between us and them, between Good and Evil?

At the "Sefarad '92" Convention, held on September 11, 1992, in Sarajevo's Holiday Inn Hotel, we were talking about the half-millennium tradition of our peaceful neighborhoods in Sarajevo, called "Jerušalajim

of the Ottoman rule numbering some 200,000 pages; 300 microfilm reels of Bosnian writings from other manuscript libraries, the 10,000 volumes of the institute's research library; and 300 sets of periodicals . . . all lost in flame.

3. Twenty-five mortar shells struck the building, launched from four positions in the surrounding hills. In support of the attack, forty shells were dropped on adjacent streets, preventing the fire brigade from coming into action. The attack lasted less than half an hour. The fire lasted into the next day. Approximately 1,200,000 books and 600 sets of periodicals were destroyed, as well as administrative documents and the card catalog, computer equipment, microfilm and photograph laboratories, the rare book and other special collections, and the university library which was housed in the same building.

Ketana" (Little Jerusalem) (Nezirovic, 1991), watching the mighty artillery demolishing the front lines of Sarajevo—the old Jewish cemetery, just opposite the Hotel. We talked about Sarajevo's "Korižo" (Great Garden) dating from 1581; it was never a Jewish ghetto, just a city zone in the middle of the Old Town (Levi, 1911, p. 186).

The Haggada Mystery

There were a dozen stories describing the rescue event itself that claimed to be based on confirmed facts. Even this article is just another version of the Haggada rescue story that follows the actual event.

Tales and stories are always based on both reality and imagination. An attempt to distinguish the verified details from the work of imagination is, strictly speaking, a task for the historian. All the facts should be scrutinized, including the work of the historian himself.

There are two legends about the Haggada codex told by Ladislav Sik (1931) in an article in the newspaper "Jewish Voice." The first legend is of a young Jew from Bosnia, a student in Padua (Italy), who had fallen in love with a beautiful girl and received the Haggada codex as his wedding present. The second legend regards a Jewish merchant from Sarajevo who had saved his Italian companion from a bad business deal in Florence (Italy) and received the Haggada as a reward.

As a student of library and information sciences working on my semester thesis in the National and University Library in Sarajevo, I accidentally came across these legends. It reminded me of a story that I had heard from my father when I was a child. Every Sunday my father used to take me on a walk to the Museum, where we visited its exhibitions. I call these visits "expeditions," an exciting experience of exploring and revealing the secrets of the Museum, and the mystery of the Haggada rescue during World War II was the greatest of them all.

Essentially the same story as my father had told me was related by my colleague Vlado Palavestra 25 years later when I was chief librarian of the State Museum Library.

The Haggada Story

The story of the rescue of the Haggada was analyzed in detail in Palavestra's paper presented at the Sefarad '92 Convention.

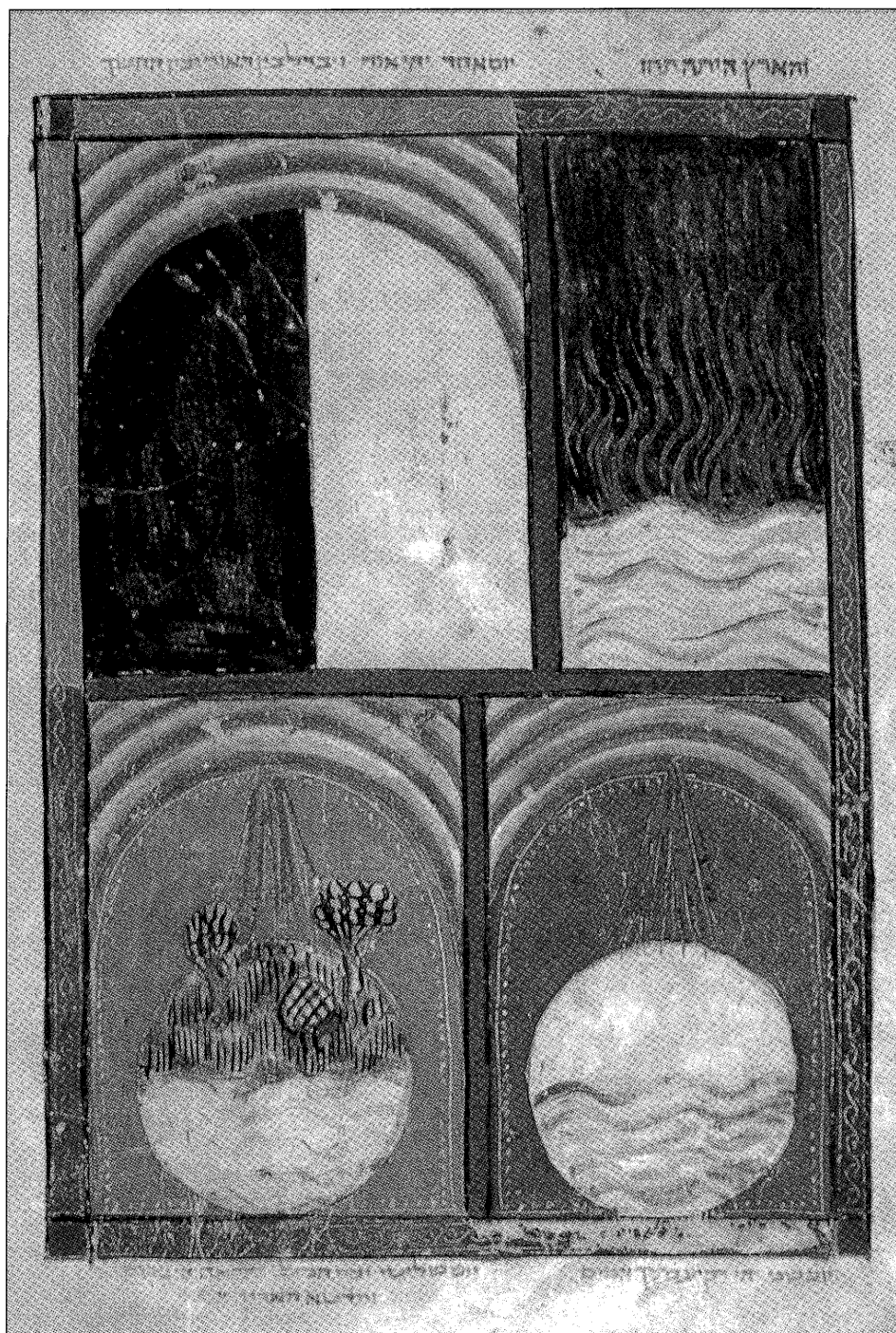


Figure 1. Page from the Sarajevo Haggada illustrating the story of the first three days of creation from the book of Genesis.

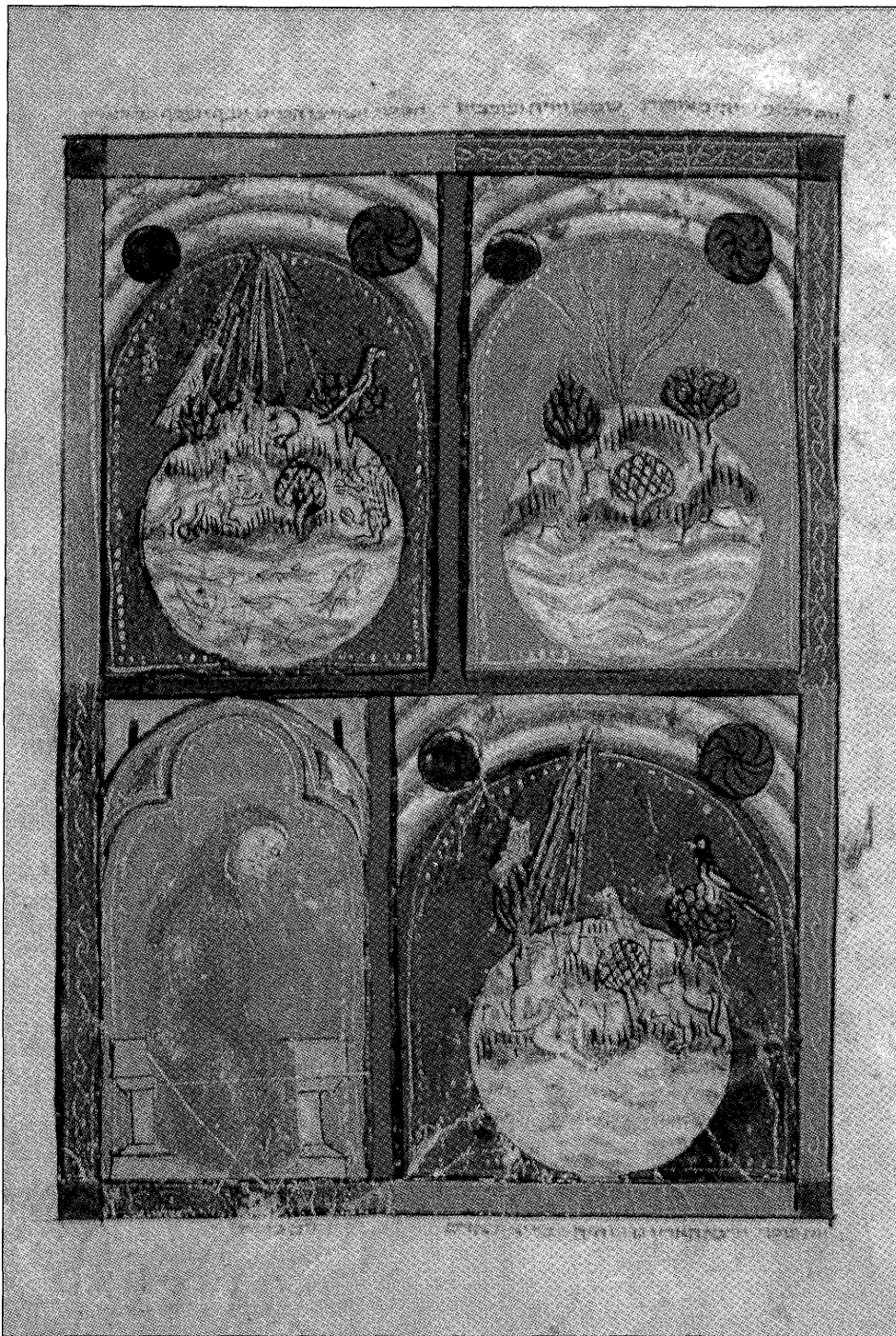


Figure 2. Page from the Sarajevo Haggada illustrating the final three days of creation, and the Sabbath.

As a young scientist in the Ethnological Department, he had started to collect the legends of the Haggada codex from older colleagues who had witnessed the Second World War years in the Museum.

Before the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the Spring of 1941, the Jewish community in Sarajevo numbered 10,550, and 14,000 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The new pro-fascist regime of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna drzava Hrvatska) that was brought into power by the German occupation started the radical extermination of Jews in Nazi fashion, first through antisemitic propaganda in local regime newspapers, then with mistreatment of Jews and robberies of their property, followed by vandalism of Jewish temples and graveyards, and forced labor.

The Old Jewish Temple in Sarajevo was completely demolished a few days after the Nazi troops entered the city on April 15, 1941. German soldiers and local gangs destroyed this monumental building, the sacred objects in it, and a large library collection, including the archive of the Sarajevo Jewish community. In Autumn of the same year, several university professors from Leipzig (Germany), accompanied by Gestapo officers, visited Sarajevo and took away the famous "Pinnaces"—the Annals of the Sarajevo Jewish Community (Pinto, 1987, p. 56).

The director of the State Museum at that time was an archaeologist, Dr. Jozo Petrovic (1892–1967), who came from Belgrade (Beograd, Serbia), where he had been curator of Prince Paul's Museum. Dr. Petrovic was a Croat from Travnik (Bosnia) and was adored by the Sarajevo intellectual community; he was cheerful and very personable. The State Museum was open to the public daily until its evacuation in November 1943. Limited scientific research was being performed; the Museum Library was functioning regularly; and even the acquisition of museum material was proceeding normally. Members of the local military and political establishment often visited the State Museum and its exhibitions.

After the war, during coffee-breaks, the rescue of the Haggada codex was the key subject of conversation among the Museum's personnel. The Haggada story, according to Palavestra, is as follows:

The visit to the State Museum of high-ranking German and Croat officers, with

General Fortner at their lead, was announced in 1942. Dr. Petrovic was designated to guide the officers through the Museum exhibitions. The visit lasted about one hour, and before his departure General Fortner addressed Dr. Petrovic as follows: "Und jetzt, bitte, übergeben Sie mir die Haggadah!" (And now, please, give me the Haggada!)

Dr. Petrovic had, according to this account, expected such a demand of the General and, pretending to be surprised, he answered: "General, Sir, it is not possible! Just two hours before your visit one of your lieutenants was in my office demanding the Haggada codex, and I gave it to him!"

General Fortner became upset and started to shout, "Who is that lieutenant? Give me his name! His unit! With whose authorization did he do this?" Dr. Petrovic was confused and stated that he thought that the lieutenant was sent with Fortner's authorization. Petrovic did not identify the officer, nor did the officer introduce himself. General Fortner continued to protest and make remarks to his officers regarding the discipline of German soldiers and Director Petrovic's carelessness; then he quickly left the State Museum. An additional investigation was not undertaken.

While this was happening, the Haggada codex was in Dr. Petrovic's office in his briefcase. After everything calmed down, Dr. Petrovic told this story to his colleagues, emphasizing the urgent need to evacuate the Haggada from the Museum. It was agreed that the librarian, Dervis M. Korkut, should take the Haggada codex, and with the help of a reliable Islamic priest, hide it under the threshold of an isolated mountain village house near Sarajevo; it was kept there until the war was over.

Palavestra remarked that the account should and should not be treated as true. I have discovered two facts that may be considered true which were in a way a consequence of the Haggada story.

The first fact concerns the general who is mentioned in the preceding story. He was Johann Hans Fortner, born in Zweibrücken (Germany) in 1884, died in Belgrade in 1947; he was an active German officer from 1903. During the Second World War he was commander of the 718th division (from May 3, 1941), and later (from February 18, 1942) the commander of both German and Croat troops in Eastern Bosnia, including five battalions of the Croat "Black

Legion." Fortner left Bosnia on March 14, 1943, and retired in 1944. In February 1947 he was summoned before the Yugoslav War Crimes Court, condemned to death, and executed in Belgrade. During the court proceedings he tried to argue that his authority had been limited, and he emphasized the help he had given to people in Bosnia. The court rejected these claims. Fortner appealed that Dr. Petrovic should appear in front of the court as a witness to testify to his activities (Popovic, 1986).

The second fact is that after the war, Dr. Petrovic spent several years in prison on charges of "cultural collaboration" with the Germans. Later he returned to the State Museum where he worked as curator of the numismatics collection until his retirement.

Palavestra concludes: every account of an historical event for which one cannot obtain authentic documentation "floats between reality and imagination, and in the minds of the people who share such a legend it becomes part of their historical conscience." But as the time of the original event passes, persons who communicate a particular subject or story frequently consciously or unconsciously add and modify the original core of the tale with their personal views (Palavestra, 1991).

The Haggada rescue story could, therefore, be placed in the category of verbal communication of a narrow circle of people that share a common past, and in their repeated remembrances of the event, the story becomes rich with new forms and meanings. Such a tale has not yet become a fully formed historical story (legend) as it is known in the theory and history of literature, with the strong likelihood that in the future such a tale may become a standardized verbal communication pattern of past events.

Verbal communication tends to ignore the substance of the original event, i.e., how it really happened and why it happened. The main interest in the event is due to the fact that it is unusual and interesting, and, of course, that the tale has its audience. Reality and imagination are the compound parts of the tale itself.

Sources of the Haggada Story

There were at least two printed editions of Sarajevo's Haggada codex: the first was

published in 1962 in an edition of 25,000 copies, with an introductory study in the Bosnian, English, German, French, and Hebrew languages. Cecil Roth, who wrote the introduction, briefly repeated the story:

The reputation of the Haggada was worldwide, and one of the first actions of Nazis when they occupied Sarajevo in April 1941 was to send an officer to the State Museum to seize the manuscript. Thanks to the splendid improvisation of the Museum director this was not possible, and during the War the Haggada codex was in a safe place in a mountain village near Sarajevo. (Roth, 1962, p. 15)

Several years later, a pirated edition of the facsimile of the Haggada became available in several European cities; it was presumably identical to the original, and was published in an edition of more than 10,000 copies.

The second edition of the Sarajevo Haggada was issued in 1984 with an introductory study by Eugen Verber in the Bosnian, Spanish, French, and German languages, and published in 10,000 copies. Verber, writing of the Haggada during wartime, tells a story almost identical to Roth's:

There were different stories of Sarajevo's Haggada, but most of them are unreliable. . . . In 1941, shortly after the occupation, one German Nazi officer came to the State Museum demanding from the museum's director extraction of the Haggada codex from the rich museum collections. By various excuses the director delayed extraction and in the meantime managed to smuggle the manuscript from the museum buildings to a mountain village near Sarajevo. After the liberation of the city this treasure of the State Museum was returned to a museum safe box. (Verber, 1984, p. 7)

These almost equivalent statements of Cecil Roth and Eugen Verber do not cite any reliable sources, such as an archival document or an official report. Moreover, the context of the story's appearance in introductions was informal. The story of the Haggada's rescue without new details can be found in publications by Avram Pinto (1982, 1987); it is also in Muhamed Karamehmedovic's (1966) article.

Pinto and Karamehmedovic, like Roth and Verber, dated the rescue of the Haggada codex to the first days of the German occupation of Sarajevo in April 1941.

New Details of the Story

During my research on the subject, I found the above quotations intriguing. I tried to find a document that might confirm the core of the Haggada's rescue story, or at least explain the context of the story prior to and after the event itself.

Some new details on the war years in the State Museum were brought to light by Almaz Dautbegovic (director of the Museum, 1980–1992) in the introduction to the 100th Anniversary Yearbook of the State Museum (1988):

... it is most important to draw attention to activities of museum personnel, particularly of director Petrovic, who have done tremendous work in the rescue and evacuation of Museum collections. Several attempts were made by occupation forces to transport the Museum collections, first to Zagreb (Croatia) and afterwards to Berlin (Germany). The most valuable Museum objects were packed and transported to a State bank safe box in 1943, while the other Museum collections were hidden in specially built shelters in the basement of the State Museum. (Dautbegovic, 1988, p. 21)

New information on the evacuation of the Museum during 1943 was introduced from an archival document found by Dautbegovic. It was entitled "Report on Museum objects evacuated in 1943," written by director Vejsil Curcic, and dated 1945. This report describes in detail the entire operation of collection evacuation.

The investigations of Mrs. Ljubinka Petric were also based on archival and other sources. The following statement was published in an article in the 100th Anniversary Yearbook (1988) and previously in a book (Petric, 1985):

The Museum library was rescued mostly as a result of the activities of Dervis M. Korkut who hid and camouflaged the most valuable books among other books in the basement of the Museum Library, so that the use of the card catalog of the Library to get access to any of the books was impossible. (Petric, 1985, p. 56)

A footnote to this quotation emphasizing the role of Dervis M. Korkut in the Haggada rescue was taken from two postwar sources: a document from the State Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina (DABH MO, 1945/46), and a newspaper article (Jelovac, 1945).

According to Mrs. Petric, both sources confirm the following:

Commission inspection (April 11, 1945) shows that call slips for the Haggada codex and the King Tvрко Chart were with curator Korkut, who had evacuated them to a safe place outside the Museum building. Korkut also kept the keys to the Museum Library and the Balkan Institute, as well as the keys of the basement, to which were evacuated the library's inventory books, rare books, and the incunabula collection, along with the most valuable collections from the Balkan Institute, including the archives of the Museum.

The call slips mentioned here may be important in reconstructing the sequence of events of the rescue. Unfortunately, the sentence construction is ambiguous: the meaning of the words "were with curator Korkut" is unclear. Were these call slips signed by curator Korkut (i.e., he was the last person in possession of the Haggada codex), or did Korkut rescue the Haggada codex and keep the call slips (signed by other persons) as a testimony to the library transactions of this most important book?

Additional details on Korkut's role in the Haggada rescue cannot be found even in Alija Bejtic's biography of Dervis M. Korkut, where it is simply mentioned that "together with Dr. Petrovic, people say, Korkut had evacuated . . . the Haggada codex . . . and rescued the codex from Nazis who were after it" (Bejtic, 1974, p. 36).

A New Fact Revealed

I could not find a single sheet of call slips in the Balkan Institute archives, in the State archives, or in the documentation of the Museum Library. The only reliable information on the call slips for the Haggada was found in the margins of the library's inventory book.

Inventory no. (rev.) 9034 (i.e., 9313); Call number C 4436; Sarajevo's Haggada—medieval Spanish-Jewish manuscript 22:16 cm, 34 free illuminations [i.e., the illuminations are not interpolated in the text], 104 pages with miniatures on pp. 1–48, pages 49–104 without miniatures, pp. 105–107 blank. Parchment, modern binding.

The left margin was filled with handwritten notes: The first marginal note, "Received the Haggada codex and deposited the

codex in the Museum safe box, Vladislav Skaric," is not dated; it was written between 1926 and 1936 when Skaric was director of the Museum. The next marginal note is dated January 5, 1937; on that date the new Museum director, Mihovil Mandic, received the codex from Skaric. Then there is a gap—there were no additional notes on the Haggada until October 29, 1943, when director Vejsil Curcic received the codex from curator Korkut. The last note in the inventory book is dated August 1, 1945, when Dimitri Sergejevskii received the codex from Curcic. This is the only primary information on the movement of the Haggada. Other archival documents do not refer to the codex at all.

Two interesting and confusing facts came to light following the transfer of the Haggada. In 1941 there was no handing over of the Haggada by director Mihovil Mandic to Dr. Jozo Petrovic, nor was there such a transfer in 1943 between Dr. Petrovic and the new director Curcic. Obviously, some crucial elements are missing from the record.

Chronology of the War Period in the State Museum

On April 30, 1941, shortly after the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mihovil Mandic became Director with Special Competencies (DABH ZMS, 2/41, 112/41). A few months later, on June 24, 1941, he retired (DABH ZMS 438/41), and Dr. Jozo Petrovic assumed the position of director on August 18, 1941 (DABH ZMS, 406/41). On the same day Petrovic and Mandic (both archaeologists) initiated a review of the prehistoric department of the Museum, as well as other museum collections and museum equipment (DABH ZMS, 430/41). When they finished this review on September 4, 1941, Mandic was discharged (DABH ZMS, 438/41). In the cited document of August 18, the Haggada codex was not mentioned among any of the official State Museum documents. In essence this means that by that date the codex was not in the Museum's safe.

The question arises at this point: Was the Haggada codex already in the possession of curator Dervis M. Korkut (somewhere safe in the mountain village) or deliberately not mentioned in any of the documents?

The relation of Dr. Petrovic to the Jewish community in Sarajevo can be inferred from the following confidential letter which he addressed to an official of the Independent

State of Croatia, Jozo Dumandzic, (minister in charge of Bosnia) in October 1941 (DABH ZMS, 537/41).

In Sarajevo, as you know, there is no office of the Croatian Society of Restorers, so that I am in charge of all activities of restoration and conservation of historical monuments, as follows: the Old and New Serbian Orthodox Church as a monument of Russian-Orthodox propaganda, the Old and New Jewish Temples including their libraries. . . . The Old Jewish Temple has been already devastated; even the copper roof was taken for military needs. The monumental building of the New Jewish Temple is now deserted. I kindly ask your permission to place this building under the control of the State Museum so that we can establish a Judaica museum. The collection is so famous that several scientists from Berlin have already taken some of the precious pieces. It would be of tremendous importance and to our benefit if we—the Croats—were to give these treasures to Germans. . . . I also kindly ask your permission to take the libraries of Campus Michael and the private libraries of Menahem A. Romano and Jave Baruh, former members of the Turkish parliament. It is most important to obtain the library of Dr. Moric Levi, who researched the Spanish Jews' Sephardic history and Spanish-Jewish romances in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and who had contact with the State Museum authorities as a possible publisher of his scholarly works. . . . The late Moric Levi left a large number of original documents on the Turkish and Arab languages, which may be valuable for future economic and cultural relations of the Independent State of Croatia and Spain. The librarian of the State Museum, Korkut, has good relations with the Jewish Community in Sarajevo, and some years before I personally investigated the old Jewish Synagogue in Stobi (Macedonia). The proposals I have presented here could easily become operational with your permission.

There are several interesting details in this letter. Dervis M. Korkut was an intimate friend of director Petrovic. His connection with the Jewish Community in Sarajevo was close and longlasting. Korkut translated from Turkish a famous "Kafileme defter" (List of Jewish families in Sarajevo who witnessed or guaranteed legal transactions) dating from 1848; it is one of the most important documents of the strong Jewish tradition in Sarajevo, and he published it in the "Jewish Voice" (1928). At the

beginning of 1941 in his office in the Museum library he also wrote a memorandum to the Government on the problems of the ethnic cleansing of the Gypsies and Jews of Sarajevo, entitled "Antisemitism is foreign to the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (1941).

I have also found an interesting document dating from 1946 (DABH ZMS, 580/46) which may shed light on Korkut's activities in 1941. During the opening of the previously sealed offices of the Balkan Institute and the State Museum Library in the presence of Dervis M. Korkut (who kept the keys to these offices and to the Museum basement), the Museum Commission proved that the contents of a box labeled "Archiv der Familie Kapetanovic—Turkisch Urkunden" included several manuscripts that Vito Kajon had left to Korkut on October 17, 1941. Korkut had deliberately introduced an error into the record to protect the Jewish manuscripts (Bakaršić, 1994a).

Dr. Petrovic supported Korkut. There is a document dated December 1942 (DABH ZMS, 1644/42) that indicates the nature of their professional relationship:

. . . During my inspection of the Library of which you are in charge I have found that a large number of books were not recorded in the inventory book and card catalog. Books and periodicals come to the Library daily, so it is my decision, for the benefit of our Museum and your personal interest, that you should temporarily hand over the management of the library to Josip Korosec so that you can complete your scholarly research.

This situation lasted until the new director, Vejsil Curcic, became the person in charge of the Museum on October 25, 1943 (DABH ZMS, 1109/43; 413/43). Dr. Jozo Petrovic was removed from his position shortly after the capitulation of Italy during strong political turbulence, and the crisis in the military and intellectual establishment of the Independent State of Croatia in Zagreb concerning the influence of Italian politics on the Croatian fascist regime. Petrovic had some influence on political changes; and that was, in a way, related to the Haggada codex.

Two archival documents and one personal statement give us more detail on Petrovic's relations with the Italian sovereign Victor Emmanuel III. On December 20, 1942, in a letter addressed to the Ministry of Education in Zagreb (Croatia), Petrovic wrote about the lead seal of Bulgarian King Grgur from his collection, which he pre-

sented as a gift to "His Majesty the King who is like a father to me and whose concern for my private numismatics collection is enormous" (DABH ZMS, 1833/42).

On Christmas Eve Petrovic wrote a report on some initiatives for establishing an "Institut Croaticum" in Rome (Italy), suggesting the following:

" . . . it will be of great importance that we present a series of Bosnian coins to the Institute. With such an exhibition we will be able to draw the attention of the Italian sovereign King Victor Emmanuel III, and that will be of benefit to our enterprise on its opening." (DABH ZMS, 1719/42)

A year prior to his death in an interview given to Muhamed Karamehmedovic (1970), Petrovic made a similar statement, emphasizing that the State Museum was under the protectorate of the Italian King even shortly after he had become a director of the Museum, i.e., that the collections—including the Haggada codex, the jewel of the Library—were safe and protected from the highest possible rank.

This statement must be taken with a grain of salt. It was politically and administratively impossible that the Italian King had the patronage of the State Museum, simply because of the fact that the city of Sarajevo was included in the German occupation zone, and the Ministry of Education of the Independent State of Croatia was ruling the State Museum, precisely, the Croatian State Museum in Sarajevo, as it was named under that regime.

The lack of reliable facts and information about the Haggada codex and its war years, as well as the narrow circle of persons involved with it (Drs. Petrovic, Korkut, Curcic), creates confusion on the subject; the "facts" remain highly controversial. Let us therefore continue to follow the path of available archival documents.

The situation changed with a new director, Vejsil Curcic, at the end of 1943, and the following year witnessed the evacuation of the Museum collections. As a result of an executive order issued on November 19, 1943, by the Director, the Haggada codex, numismatic collections, and the most valuable Museum items were evacuated to the State Bank safe box on December 9. The Museum Commission included Dimitri Sergejevskii, Dr. Mihovil Mandic, and Vejsil Curcic. Previously, on October 29, Curcic had received—after a long silence in the library's inventory book—the Haggada codex from Korkut.

But the evacuation of the State Museum Library and the Balkan Institute was not performed according to schedule. It cannot be determined what were the specific reasons that slowed the process; the only thing known for certain is that there was more than one delay. Dervis M. Korkut was supposed to hand over the library, but he deliberately delayed this task, using various excuses (DABH ZMS, 312/44; 374/44). Finally on November 11, 1943, the Library and Institute were closed and sealed without his presence, according to a confidential report by director Curcic to the Ministry of Education in Zagreb (DABH ZMS, 19/44). This document is of great importance and states the following:

... I have ordered an urgent and wholesale evacuation of libraries to a basement. It was high time to replace curator Korkut from his duties as librarian. For his 11 years of work in the Library he did nothing for the Museum at all. He will not hand over the Library because of some ridiculous reasons, but the main thing was hidden behind his words: he is hoping that this War will soon be over and that he and his Belgrade friends, including Dr. Petrovic, will run the Museum as they had done before I became Director.

Vejsil Curcic was in fact angry with Dr. Petrovic's article on the Museum (and the events surrounding the Museum), published in the first issue of the cultural magazine "Croatian Ideas." From the report it is obvious that Curcic had a poor opinion of Korkut, too. Korkut was constantly refusing to evacuate the Library and hand over the keys to the Library, which Curcic demanded repeatedly (DABH ZMS, 1177/44) but would not get until the war was over. Also on the basis of this document, the statement in Bejtic's (1974) biography of Dervis Korkut regarding his absence from Sarajevo between October 6, 1944 and April 6, 1945 can be rejected.

Curcic refers to the mysterious "Belgrade friends"; this may be an allusion to Dervis M. Korkut's political activity within Mustafa Mulalic's circle (the supporters of the Yugoslav government in exile), or to Korkut's protection of Bosnian Jews, together with a group of intellectuals from Belgrade (Hurem, 1965; 1968). In any case, the Haggada rescue was an episode in the daily routine of life, war, and politics in the State Museum.

The main fact still missing is firm proof of the exact location of the Haggada codex. All the documents cited in this article have shown that Dervis M. Korkut, not Dr. Jozo

Petrovic, was a key figure in the rescue of the Haggada codex. The Haggada was either under a threshold of a lonely mountain village house, or hidden in the labyrinth of the Museum Library's basement. According to the principles of the construction of legends and my personal experience of the State Museum Library's evacuation in the Spring of 1992, this second scenario may also be possible.

Another interesting fact may, perhaps, change the perspective of both the historian and the storyteller. By the end of 1943, the Haggada codex was deposited in the State Bank's safe box. The director of the Bank was Aleksandar Poljanic, a passionate collector of antiquities, rare books, and coins. Only minimal information about his collections and activities relating to the salvation of Jewish property during the War are known (DABH ZMS, 714/45; 1455/46; Petric, 1985; Hadziosmanovic, 1980). Another gap thus exists, and the gates of another story may be wide open.

Dimitri Sergejsvskii was the first director of the State Museum after World War II. On August 1, 1945, the Haggada codex was returned from the State Bank to the Museum's safe box. Some of Poljanic's numismatic items and part of the rare book collection were given as gifts to the State Museum by the Government authorities in 1963.

Materials Hidden

I now return to the point in the introduction in which the position of a historian or storyteller is related to his own perspective and experience, a fact that cannot easily be ignored. The following contradictions can be noted:

1. Someone wanted the Haggada codex—and yet the State Museum was planning to open an additional Judaica collection;
2. Someone secretly hid the Haggada outdoors—and yet someone gave his private collection to the Museum Library;
3. The Museum had to be evacuated—and yet a librarian was not in favor of this.

The story of the Haggada's rescue is obviously aimed to somehow protect the Museum personnel and to mold public opinion regarding the great things done in wartime with the rescue of Museum items and col-

lections. Crucial documents mentioning the Haggada codex are dated several years after the war was over, while the main actors in its rescue (Dr. Jozo Petrovic and curator Dervis M. Korkut) were accused of being collaborators with the Germans. Drs. Petrovic and Poljanic spent some years in prison; Korkut did not. Files of their trials are still inaccessible.

The postwar years of silence were filled with the Haggada rescue story. And as an imaginative pattern could not be limited until a reliable document appeared to oppose it, a new episode was about to appear, based on some as yet unconfirmed rumors pointing to the Masonic activity of Petrovic, Korkut, and Poljanic in the rescue of not only the Haggada codex, but of a large number of Jewish treasures and properties. In this story Poljanic was the mastermind of a secret action, and the Haggada mystery a cover-up.

Events of the Spring of 1992

Nobody ordered the evacuation of the Library in Spring 1992. The existing evacuation plan could not be put into practice for various reasons. One of the most important was that the logistics of this mission were to be carried out in close cooperation with the special military unit of JNA (Yugoslav Peoples Army), which turned out to be the main factor in the aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The second problem was: where to evacuate 250,000 books in a town under siege? The notion of evacuation "on free territory," on the basis of a useless evacuation plan, was fictional at the time. All of the Museum staff members did only what they are supposed to do: to take personal responsibility deriving from the term *curator*, i.e., to take all possible steps to protect the Museum collections. The daily routine of evacuation included the ritual of kissing the doors of the Library with a simple prayer: "Please God! Don't let my Library burn down!"

After two years of dangerous living in Sarajevo and my obsession with the Haggada, my nightmares resumed, as I asked myself, "Is it safe?"; I still cannot suppress the question. The State Museum, the Library, and the Haggada codex must be saved for the sake of memory, which cannot be easily destroyed. And the answer—It must be safe—was not at first a wish, but in a way a hopeless order issued by one of its curators.

"Where danger is,
There salvation also grows."

Verses from Friedrich Hölderlin's poem "Pathmos" were my comfort in the night, and my mystical horizon of hope that the Library will survive (Bakaršić, 1994b).

Post Scriptum

From my perspective, there was nothing much to tell regarding the Haggada's evacuation in the Spring of 1992. But I was wrong. At the time this article was nearing completion, the story of the rescue of the Haggada in 1992 appeared in a local newspaper (Kalender, 1994). Two shocking details presented there urgently demand comment.

The first is:

During the two years of aggression, 'drunken primitive constructors of the older and finer history and culture' (meaning Serb aggressors) completely destroyed the treasures of the State Museum, one of the world's most valuable museum collections.

This simply is not true. The Museum collections were hopefully evacuated on time. The building of the State Museum, the roof, and the botanical garden are seriously damaged, however.

The second statement of Kalender requiring comment is:

Afraid of the thieves (whose knowledge of the museums is limited, with a presumption that gold and treasures can be found there), Enver Imamovic, together with some policemen from the Ministry of the Interior on the day when the JNA finally left the barracks in the center of the town, made a heroic action to rescue golden objects and other treasures from the Museum. It was at that moment that he noticed the attempts to rob the Museum. In the bushes, about ten meters from one of the side entrances of the Museum, he finds the Haggada—the sacred book of the Jews, one of the most valuable codexes on earth.

In this part of Imamovic's testimony we have the motif, the action taken, and the story. According to the principles of the construction of legends discussed above, this story has also filled the gap. This time it was the gap between the Spring of 1992 and the Spring of 1994, when all things in

Sarajevo pathetically looked like the aggression was over, but in fact almost nothing had changed yet.

At the time a draft of this article was being reviewed by my colleagues in London, New Castle, New York, Montreal, and Toronto, I had an opportunity to read another testimony on the Haggada's 1992 rescue in the Judaica librarians' electronic newsletter *ha-Safran*. [This was supplied by Zachary Baker, who reviewed the draft manuscript.—Ed.] The posting was dedicated to "a brilliant Ph.D. student at the University of Sarajevo who was killed as she tried to save manuscripts from the National Museum as it was being shelled." Yes, Miss Aida Buturovic, librarian of the National and University Library was killed on her way back from the library. The item from *ha-Safran* also includes the extracts from Dr. Marian Wenzel's article from "The Art Newspaper" (London) no. 32 (1993) with another set of Imamovic's testimonies.

A few of the cited Imamovic statements are intriguing.

"I can be thanked for everything that we have succeeded in saving, not only in the archaeological, but also in the other departments of the Museum, because I rescued them under the heaviest fire." This is an excerpt from an obviously partisan story of "heroic action" by the man who is the current Director of the State Museum.

Details of the rescue are also presented:

That day, June 6th, was the most hellish ever in Sarajevo. . . . We entered the Museum unnoticed. For six hours we hunted for the Haggadah in all the places we thought it might be. We forced every museum safe and found it in none. Finally, we came to the basement. It was completely dark. We had a little torch, which lasted only two hours. We had to grope in the dark, and that way we found it. . . . The basement was under water, which was rising fast because projectiles had punctured the central heating pipes. The height of the floor where the book lay was just a little higher than the height the water had then reached. Had we found the Haggadah only a few hours later than we did, water would already have reached it, and it would have been destroyed.

Here we have not only the story and the action, but also a mystical force—tension in the darkness—and finally, the climax and a happy ending.

As a witness to the events surrounding the evacuation of the State Museum, I find it difficult to comment upon these statements. But what I must point out are principles relating to the responsibility of making public statements regarding these conflicting pieces of information. Although they come from the same source or storyteller, they point to two different locations of the Haggada codex.

My evocation of the Haggada and the story of its rescue in the Second World War is dedicated to the memory of the people involved publicly and anonymously in those actions; the goal of this article was partial historical reconstruction of the past events obscured by the horizon of stories that has filled the time gap (Bakaršić, 1994a).

As a librarian I have a responsibility to the users of the library of which I am in charge, and I hope that the readers of this article will approve of the way I have handled this delicate matter.

In Sarajevo on the 1,014th day of its siege
15 January, 1995
14 Ševat 5755
14 Ša'ban 1415 [anno hegirae]

Epilogue

The Bosnian authorities brought the Haggada out of the vault during Passover 1995 to demonstrate that it was intact—Ed. [information supplied by Zachary Baker].

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