

qəssət Ḥannah (The story of Hannah) Judeo-Arabic

The text is chanted on *tishʿa b'Āb* (Ninth of Ab) in the Baghdad Judeo-Arabic tradition. An annual fast, it is considered to be the saddest day in the Jewish calendar.

Informant: Ḥakhām Sassōn Hougi

Recorded by: Sara Manasseh

Date: Jerusalem, 10 February 1992.

Ḥakhām Sassōn Hougi was born in Baghdad, the son of Ḥakhām Aboudi Hougi, the Ab Bēth Dīn of Baghdad. The family emigrated to Israel in the early 1950s.

qəssət Ḥannah is traditionally chanted on *tishʿa b'Āb*, in Iraq, in Judeo-Arabic, and tells the painful story of the martyrdom of Hannah and her Seven Sons. It is chanted from a booklet, printed in Judeo-Arabic, in Hebrew characters.

Ḥakhām Sassōn Hougi and his wife, Violette, were life-long friends of my parents, Albert and Rachel Manasseh, who lived in Bombay, India until the 1960s. In the 1950s, my father had arranged for Ḥakhām Sassōn Hougi to officiate at the Magen David Synagogue (Byculla, Bombay). Ḥakhām Sassōn served the Iraqi Jewish community of Bombay, for a short while, as *hazzān* (leader of the prayers), *mōhél* (person trained to perform Jewish male circumcision) and *shōḥēṭ* (person certified by a Jewish court of law to slaughter animals for food), before returning to Israel to his family.

The recording is an authentic example of Baghdadi Judeo-Arabic. Ḥakhām Sassōn Hougi and his wife, Violette lived in Israel, but spoke Hebrew maintaining the Iraqi Hebrew pronunciation which they had learned and used for prayer in Baghdad.

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Sara Manasseh, 31 July 2024, London