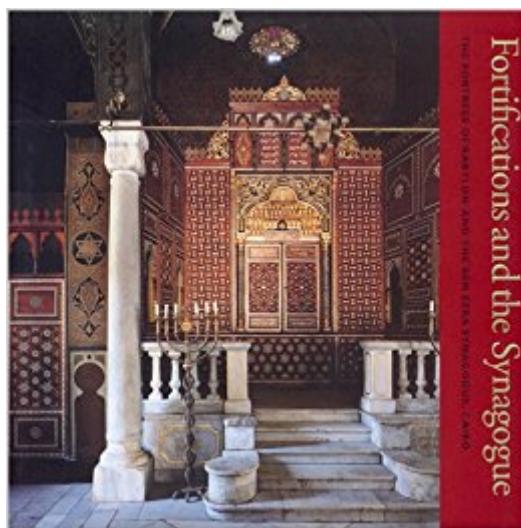


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Fortifications And The Synagogue: The Fortress Of Babylon And The Ben Ezra Synagogue, Cairo



Synopsis

The Ben Ezra Synagogue, in Cairo, is best known as the synagogue in which the 'Cairo Geniza' was found – an astonishingly rich store of ancient books, manuscripts, correspondences, and records dating back to the tenth century. Copiously illustrated with plans, engravings, and photographs, *Fortifications and the Synagogue* describes the recent restoration of this ancient synagogue, as well as the historical and archaeological research essential to its preservation and to an understanding of the religious communities that founded modern Cairo. The work is unprecedented in its comprehensive examination of the subject, presenting the first measured survey and photographic study of the fortress and synagogue, the first thorough study of the Geniza manuscripts, and a complete history of the synagogue from the Geniza period to the present.

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Customer Reviews

The Ben Ezra Synagogue, built within the walls of the Roman fortress of Babylon, is probably best known for its geniza, a room where discarded Hebrew documents were stored. The discovery of these texts at the end of the 19th century revealed a wealth of information about Jewish Mediterranean society in the 11th and 12th centuries, much of which has been made available in a number of scholarly works. Here, a series of carefully researched and well-written essays by leading scholars examine not only the geniza but also the original archaeology, the subsequent restoration of the synagogue, and the relation between the synagogue and the surrounding community. That last section, for example, covers the relationship in five essays from earliest times to the present.

The drawings and photographs found throughout the text are beautifully reproduced and bear directly on the text. All essays are supported by endnotes (though footnotes would have been more convenient). This is a volume for every serious art and history library. *?Martin Chasin, Adult Inst., Bridgeport, Ct.* Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Cairo's Ben Ezra Synagogue, for a millennium the site of Jewish worship, dates back to around 950, the probable date of its probable original foundations, though the present structure was rebuilt in 1892. The synagogue is best known for its Geniza, an archive that contained 200,000 fragments of vellum, parchment, and paper documents that form an important source for the medieval history of the Mediterranean. They constitute a collection of discarded religious and secular texts, including manuscript fragments of the Bible, the Talmud, and miscellaneous correspondence. The Fortress of Babylon (site of the synagogue), known today as Old Cairo, is still defined by its Roman walls and towers, though it is now partly buried or demolished. This opulent book, with 45 color and 160 black-and-white photographs and countless architectural drawings, is the story of the restoration of the synagogue from January 1988, to Aug_. 1991. The text, edited by Lambert, is written by a team of renowned archaeologists, architects, and historians and is unprecedented in its study of the subject. *George Cohen* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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