CASE No. 164

ANTIQUITIES INVESTIGATION UNIT

A HANUKKAH ESCAPE ROOM FOR TEENS

The Hasmonean Jug Mystery



A 2,000-year-old oil jug vanished from the museum – just before the Hanukkah exhibition opened.

4 suspects. 7 exhibits. 40 minutes.

Ages 12+ | **Classroom or family** | **Teams of 4–10**

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Facilitator's Guide

For the parent, teacher or youth leader – not for players

About the game

A tabletop escape room for ages 12+, about 40 minutes – perfect for a lesson, a youth group or a family evening. Players are a team of investigators who solve 7 exhibits to find out **who took the jug, where it is and why** – and the **4-digit code** to the safe.

Set-up – 10 minutes

1. **Team size: 4–10 players.** A class of 14 = 2 teams; a class of 40 = 4 teams of 10. Print one case file per team: the suspect files, the 7 exhibits and the case report (9 pages). Black & white works fine.
2. Put each case file in a folder or large envelope. Print the agent badges, door sign and certificate once for the whole group.
3. You keep the hint cards. Teams can "buy" a hint for a one-minute penalty.
4. "The safe": a box with a small treat (chocolate coins, doughnuts). In class, the first team to hand in a correct report wins.

How to play

Read the briefing aloud (3 min) and start a 40-minute timer. Teams work best in pairs – each pair takes an exhibit, then everyone meets to put the picture together.

Answers

#	Exhibit	Type	Digit	What it proves
1	The coded note	Atbash cipher	5	The guard is innocent
2	The entry log	Logic & timeline	2	Only Naama and Maya were inside
3	The curator's email	Hidden message (first letters)	7	–
4	The museum map	Grid coordinates	3	The thief started in the Display Room
5	The shoe print	Comparing evidence	–	Only Maya and Yoav wear that sole
6	The lost phone	Phone keypad code	–	Motive: to check if any oil was left
7	The camera stills	Ordering by time	–	The jug is in the storeroom

FULL SOLUTION

The thief: Maya Barak • Code: 5 - 2 - 7 - 3

For teachers & youth leaders: the game practises close reading, logical deduction, working with tables and maps, and teamwork – and introduces the Atbash cipher, which already appears in the Book of Jeremiah. Finish by reading the "Case Closed" letter and talking it over: how did you reach the answer? Who did what in your team?

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Mission Briefing

Read aloud before starting the timer

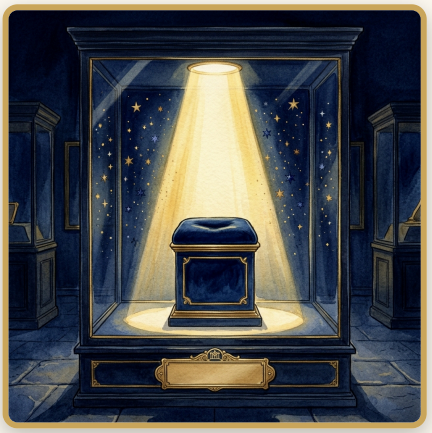
To: The investigation team
From: Commander, Antiquities Investigation Unit
Re: **The missing Hasmonean jug**

TOP SECRET

Two months ago, at a dig near Modi'in – home town of the Hasmonean family, the Maccabees – archaeologists found a **small sealed oil jug** more than 2,000 years old. An incredibly rare find: perhaps a jug just like the one in the Hanukkah story.

Tonight the jug was meant to be the star of the museum's Hanukkah exhibition. But at **21:52** the security cameras went dark for exactly 8 minutes. When they came back on – **the glass display case was empty.**

The doors were locked from the outside, so the jug never left the building. Someone on the staff took it – and hid it in a safe that only they know the code to.



Crime-scene photo, 22:00

EVIDENCE

You have 4 suspects and 7 exhibits. Your mission:

1. **Find out who took the jug – and why**
2. **Find where it is hidden**
3. **Crack the 4-digit code**

A tip from the Commander: no single exhibit solves the case. Connect the details – and split up the work.

Good luck,

Commander R. Hashmonai

⏱ 00:40:00

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Suspect Files

All four suspects were connected to the exhibition. One of them is lying.

Suspect No. 1 — CASE 164



164-01

Naama Levi

Lead archaeologist

Discovered the jug at the dig. Stayed late working in the lab.

SHOES THAT EVENING
Hiking shoes

STATEMENT
"I was in the lab all evening. I didn't hear a thing."

Suspect No. 2 — CASE 164



164-02

Yoav Cohen

Night guard

Has worked at the museum for 12 years. In charge of the cameras and doors.

SHOES THAT EVENING
Work boots

STATEMENT
"I went out to patrol the car park, like every night."

Suspect No. 3 — CASE 164



164-03

Maya Barak

Student intern

Archaeology student. Helped set up the exhibition.

SHOES THAT EVENING
Sneakers

STATEMENT
"I only came in to fix the exhibition signs."

Suspect No. 4 — CASE 164



164-04

Avi Sagi

Museum curator

Runs the exhibition. He sent the email to the staff.

SHOES THAT EVENING
Leather shoes

STATEMENT
"I went home early. I was exhausted."

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EXHIBIT 1

The Coded Note

Found in the security-room bin

A torn note was found in the security-room bin. The words don't look like any language... It's the **Atbash cipher** – one of the oldest ciphers in the world, first used for Hebrew in the Bible: the first letter of the alphabet swaps with the last, the second with the second-to-last, and so on.

CIPHER KEY – EACH LETTER SWAPS WITH THE ONE BELOW / ABOVE IT

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Z	Y	X	W	V	U	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N

THE NOTE • WRITE THE DECODED LETTER UNDER EACH ONE

G S V U R I H G W R T R G

R H U R E V

G S V T F Z I W R H

R M M L X V M G

FOR THE CASE REPORT

The digit you found

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EXHIBIT 2

The Entry Log

Who was inside when the cameras went dark?

This is the museum's key-card log. Every staff member swipes a card coming in and going out. The doors were locked – nobody could get in or out without a card.

TIME	NAME	ACTION
19:00	**Yoav Cohen**	Shift starts – in
20:58	**Naama Levi**	In
21:05	**Avi Sagi**	In
21:30	**Avi Sagi**	Out
21:40	**Maya Barak**	In
21:45	**Yoav Cohen**	Out – car-park patrol
21:52	⚠ **System**	**Cameras off**
22:00	✓ **System**	**Cameras back on**
22:05	**Naama Levi**	Out
22:10	**Yoav Cohen**	Back from patrol
22:15	**Maya Barak**	Out

How many people were inside while the cameras were off?

Who were they? _____

FOR THE CASE REPORT

Number of people inside = the digit

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EXHIBIT 3

The Curator's Email

Sent to all staff on the morning of the opening

This email went to the whole staff on the morning of the opening. At first glance – a perfectly normal email. But someone circled it in pencil and wrote in the margin: *"Look at it from the side..."*

From: Avi Sagi, Museum Curator
To: Exhibition team
Subject: The big night! 🕎

Hi everyone,

It's the big night – our Hanukkah exhibition opens this evening!

The Hasmonean jug will finally be shown to the public.

Items from the storeroom arrive tomorrow morning – please make space.

Security reminder: only authorised staff in the Display Room before opening.

Security cameras will get a short routine check at around ten o'clock.

Each of you, please lock every door when you leave the building.

Very important: no coffee cups next to the exhibits (yes, I mean you...).

Every one of you has worked so hard – it will be a wonderful night!

No questions? Then see you all tonight.

Avi

What is the hidden message? _____

FOR THE CASE REPORT
The number in the hidden message

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EXHIBIT 4

The Museum Map

The route of the unknown phone

The thief's phone connected to the museum Wi-Fi. That's how five places were logged while the cameras were off. Find each place on the map and write down the letter in it.

WI-FI LOG • UNKNOWN PHONE

21:53	E2	
21:54	F4	
21:56	D5	
21:57	G4	
21:59	B5	

Letter = column (top)
Number = row (side)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	N	L (LAB)	H	F	N	U	K (DISPLAY ROOM)	T
2	I	N	U	A	T	A	P	E
3	E	L	F	I	W	U	B	D
4	U (STOREROOM)	B	O	K	G	H	E (HANUKKAH HALL)	R
5	E	E	A	R	D	E	F	B
6	I	L (OFFICES)	H	W	A	W	U (LOBBY)	F
7	O	B	K	N	E	D	C	O
8	A	R	N	H	A	C	E	C

The word: _____ Which room did the thief start in?

_____

FOR THE CASE REPORT

The word is a number – write it as a digit

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The Shoe Print

EXHIBIT 5

Evidence from the crime scene

Next to the empty display case, a partial shoe print was found on the marble floor. The size can't be read – but the **pattern of the sole** is clear.



CRIME-SCENE EVIDENCE

Shoe print by the display case

DO NOT TOUCH

SHOES PHOTOGRAPHED FROM EACH SUSPECT THAT EVENING



Naama Levi

Hiking shoes • 6

☐ match ☐ no



Yoav Cohen

Work boots • 10

☐ match ☐ no



Maya Barak

Sneakers • 5

☐ match ☐ no



Avi Sagi

Leather shoes • 9

☐ match ☐ no

Whose could the print be? _____

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EXHIBIT 6

The Lost Phone

Found in the lobby – a secret code between two friends

A phone was left in the lobby, with a chat open. The sender used the friends' secret code: each pair of digits = a **key on the phone keypad** + the **letter's position** on it. So **4 2** = key 4, 2nd letter = **H**. A / separates words.



MESSAGE 1 DECODED

MESSAGE 2 DECODED

THE PHONE KEYPAD

1	2 ABC	3 DEF
4 GHI	5 JKL	6 MNO
7 PQRS	8 TUV	9 WXYZ
*	0 ␣	#

Why did the thief take the jug? _____

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EXHIBIT 7

The Camera Stills

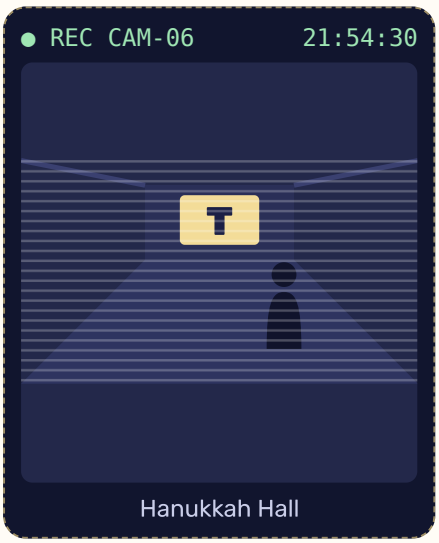
The last moments before the screen went dark

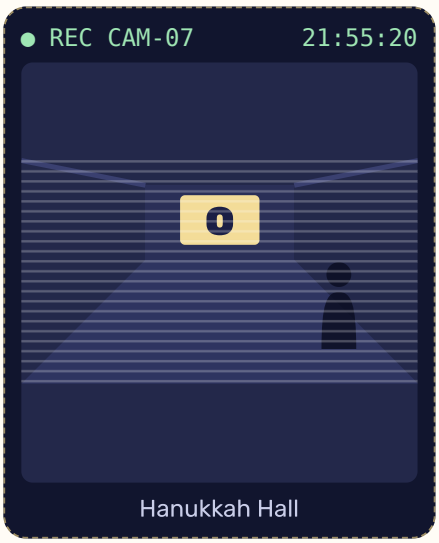
The main cameras went off at 21:52 – but a small backup camera in the corridor kept shooting and saved 5 stills. They got shuffled! Cut them out, put them in order from earliest to latest, and read the letters on the signs.











Note!

The figure in the stills is the thief – on the way to the hiding place. The signs mark the museum's rooms.

THE LETTERS IN TIME ORDER

1	2	3	4	5

Where is the jug hidden? _____

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Final Case Report

Fill it in as a team and hand it to the facilitator. Only a complete, correct report closes the case!

TEAM NAME _____ **TIME** _____

1 • WHO TOOK THE JUG? TICK ONE



Naama Levi
☐ suspect



Yoav Cohen
☐ suspect



Maya Barak
☐ suspect



Avi Sagi
☐ suspect

2 • THE SAFE CODE – IN EXHIBIT ORDER



Exhibit 1	Exhibit 2	Exhibit 3	Exhibit 4

3 • WHERE IS THE JUG?

_____

4 • WHY DID THEY TAKE IT?

_____

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Hint Cards

For the facilitator only

Cut out and fold. The facilitator keeps the cards – a hint is given only when a team is really stuck.

Hint for exhibit 1

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

Each letter on the top row swaps with the one below it (and back). The note starts with "THE…"

Hint for exhibit 2

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

Find the time the cameras went off. Who came in before 21:52 and had not left by 22:00?

Hint for exhibit 3

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

Don't read the email across – read the first letter of each line, top to bottom.

Hint for exhibit 4

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

The letter is the column (top), the number is the row (side). The first point: E2.

Hint for exhibit 5

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

Ignore the size – look only at the sole pattern. How many shoes match?

Hint for exhibit 6

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

4 2 = key 4, 2nd letter = H. Message 1 starts with "BIG…", message 2 with "CHECKING…"

Hint for exhibit 7

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

The earliest is 21:53. The first letter is S – and the word is a room in the museum.

Hint: who is the thief?

fold here • costs a 1-minute penalty

Who appears both in the list of people inside (exhibit 2) and in the list of matching shoes (exhibit 5)?

E SCENE • DO NOT CROSS • CRIME SCENE • DO N

DOOR SIGN • HANG IT BEFORE YOU START

Antiquities Investigation Unit

Active investigation: **Case 164**



Authorised investigators only

E SCENE • DO NOT CROSS • CRIME SCENE • DO N

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Investigator Badges

Cut out – every investigator picks a team role. Hang on a lanyard or clip to a shirt 🔍

ANTIQUITIES INVESTIGATION UNIT
Investigator Badge

Photo / drawing

NAME

TEAM ROLE

BADGE No.

Roles: code-breaker • detective • time-keeper • report-writer

ANTIQUITIES INVESTIGATION UNIT
Investigator Badge

Photo / drawing

NAME

TEAM ROLE

BADGE No.

Roles: code-breaker • detective • time-keeper • report-writer

ANTIQUITIES INVESTIGATION UNIT
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Investigator Badge

Photo / drawing

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TEAM ROLE

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Roles: code-breaker • detective • time-keeper • report-writer

CASE 164 • CLOSED

Certificate of Outstanding Investigation

Awarded to the team

for cracking the Atbash cipher, following the evidence, uncovering the truth – **and returning the Hasmonean jug.**



R. Hashmonai
Unit Commander

CASE CLOSED ✦ 164 ✦

Time: _____
Date

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Case Closed

Read only after every team has handed in its report

To: The investigation team • From: The Commander

CASE CLOSED

Well done, investigators! You've solved the case.

What really happened? Yoav the guard was out in the car park – the coded note ("the guard is innocent") proved it. Avi the curator left the building at 21:30. While the cameras were off, only **Naama and Maya** were inside. And the shoe print? A zig-zag sole – just like **Maya's** sneakers.

Maya knew from Avi's email that the cameras would be switched off for a check at around ten. The backup camera and her phone traced her route: from the Display Room, through the Hanukkah Hall – to the **storeroom**, where she hid the jug in the safe.

But why? The phone left in the lobby gave it away. When questioned, Maya admitted: "I just wanted to check, quietly, for one moment, if there was any oil left in the jug – just like in the Hanukkah story. I knew that if I asked, they'd say no."

The jug went safely back into its case, the exhibition opened on time – and lab tests really did find traces of 2,000-year-old olive oil inside. 🕎

TO TALK ABOUT AT THE END

Which exhibit was the hardest? How did you split the work? And what do you think of Maya – scientific curiosity, or plain theft?