

GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

The Newsletter of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, Cambridge University Library

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More fragments of early Torah scroll come to light

In 1959 the paleographer Solomon Asher Birnbaum published a fragment of a Torah scroll which he dated to the eighth century (S. A. Birnbaum, 'A Study of an Eighth Century Synagogue Scroll', Vetus Testamentum 9 [1959], pp. 122–29). In 2015 Edna Engel and Mordechai Mishor published this fragment, along with an additional piece that they attributed to the same Torah scroll (E. Engel and M. Mishor, 'An Ancient Scroll of the Book of Exodus: The Reunion of Two Separate Fragments', Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology 7 [2015], pp. 24–69). The first fragment is MS. London, Jews' College 31, and the second is MS. Durham, Duke University, Ashkar 2. The two fragments contain a text from the book of Exodus.

Although the two fragments are not consecutive, the authors argue that they belong to the same biblical book. They base this claim on a textual and paleographic examination. Mishor notes that a single column of text from this Torah scroll is missing between MS. London and MS. Ashkar.

Engel and Mishor list the unique features of the scroll, which they



date, by paleographic means and on the basis of carbon-14 dating, to the seventh or eighth centuries CE. In the course of a survey and classification of Torah scroll fragments in the Cairo Genizah, I identified two

Above: T-S AS 37.1, part of the book of Genesis. One of thirteen newly-identified fragments from the same early Torah scroll.

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fragments which directly join the Ashkar and London fragments and completely fill the gap between these two. In addition to these, I identified in the Genizah collections eleven additional fragments that, by paleographical criteria, belong to this Torah scroll (I am grateful to Edna Engel for her opinion on this question). Quite surprisingly, one of these fragments came to light in the Ashkar Collection itself, but its illegible condition prevented its identification. The discovery of these fragments shows us that the two previously discovered fragments, too, originated in the Cairo Genizah.

The Torah scroll remnants do not form a completely continuous text. Nonetheless, many fragments survived in two concentrations, one is Gen. 44–Exod. 3; and the second, Exod. 8–17. The scroll is written on leather Gevil (גוויל – a form of skin made from the whole hide). Each column of the scroll contains 42 lines, and according to the extant fragments, we can reconstruct that the scroll comprised about 310 columns.

These remnants comprise close to ten percent of a whole Torah scroll. This, then, is the



Above: Renée Levine Melammed with the staff of the Genizah Research Unit. On 17th October 2018, Renée, Professor of Jewish History at the Schechter Institute, Israel, gave the fourth Annual Genizah Lecture in Cambridge. Her lecture, “The World of Women in the Cairo Genizah: 1978–2018”, explored the Genizah sources relating to the lives of women, and reviewed the changing winds of scholarship in recent decades. It was very well attended.

oldest Torah scroll in the world of which such considerable portions are preserved. Very few Hebrew manuscripts from this period have survived. Consequently, this discovery of a manuscript from the seventh or eighth centuries, which is also the earliest biblical manuscript after the Dead Sea Scrolls, makes a major contribution to the study of

Hebrew manuscripts as a whole, and especially to the research of the copying of Torah scrolls.

The following is a list of the fragments and their contents: 1. Cambridge, T-S AS 36.30 — Gen. 10:28–13:9; 2. Cambridge, T-S AS 36.31 + Cambridge, T-S AS 37.26 — Gen. 44:23–46:20; 3. Cambridge, T-S AS 37.1 +

Cambridge, T-S AS 37.22 — Gen. 47:17–50:23; 4. Cambridge, T-S AS 36.36 — Exod. 2:14–3:21; 5. London, Jews’ College 31 — Exod. 9:18–13:2; 6. Cambridge, T-S AS 36.19 + Cambridge, T-S AS 37.8 + Durham, Duke University, Ashkar Collection 2 — Exod. 13:2–16:1; 7. Cambridge, T-S NS 282.88 — Exod. 17:5–18:14; 8. Cambridge, T-S AS 36.10 — Num. 10:16–35; 9. Durham, Duke University, Ashkar Collection 21 — Deut. 2:9–3:12; 10. Cambridge, T-S AS 37.10 + ENA 4117.13 — Deut. 32:50–end of the Pentateuch.

Mordechai Veintrob
Hebrew University
(My thanks to the Ludwig Jesselson Chair in Codicology and Palaeography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for their support in my research.)

Jews, Money, Myth

A new exhibition in London’s Jewish Museum looks at the subject of money, exploring its role in Jewish life, and how it has affected the relations between Jews and non-Jews, examining the origins of some of the most deeply engrained anti-Semitic stereotypes. The exhibition features a manuscript from the Cambridge Genizah Collection, a begging letter written for a poor blind man, who needs funds for the boat ride down the Nile to bring his wife and children to join him (T-S 8J16.29).

‘Jews, Money, Myth’ runs from 19 March to 7 July 2019 at the Jewish Museum
<https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/jews-money-myth/>

“Aside from Jerusalem, Cambridge to me is the closest place to heaven”

An obituary for Professor Joel L. Kraemer

Prof. Joel Kraemer was intimately familiar with the Genizah Collection of Cambridge University Library. He received his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Yale, and taught at the faculties of JTS in New York, Yale, Tel Aviv University, and the University of Chicago. Kraemer was distinguished in many fields of scholarship, from Talmud to Islamic philosophy. His celebrated publications in Islamic and Jewish Studies include *The Renaissance of Islam* and *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds*. A Festschrift in his honour, *Adaptations and Innovations: Studies on the Interaction between Jewish and Islamic Thought and Literature from the Early Middle Ages to the Late Twentieth Century*, appeared in 2007.

Kraemer spent extended periods in Cambridge and became a world-renowned scholar in Genizah research. Many of his publications were based on documents from the Genizah, in particular the Cambridge University Library Collection. Among the more significant papers are ‘Six Unpublished Maimonides Letters from the Cairo Genizah’, *Maimonidean Studies* 2 (1992:

61–94) and ‘Women Speak for Themselves’, in S. C. Reif (ed.), *The Cambridge Genizah Collections: Their Contents and Significance* (2002: 178–216). Some of his works remain to be published, including *More Precious than Rubies: Women's Letters from the Cairo Geniza*, which is being completed by Prof. Renée Levine Melammed, and *Maimonides' Epistles and Personal Correspondence* (in English translation), which I have been editing.

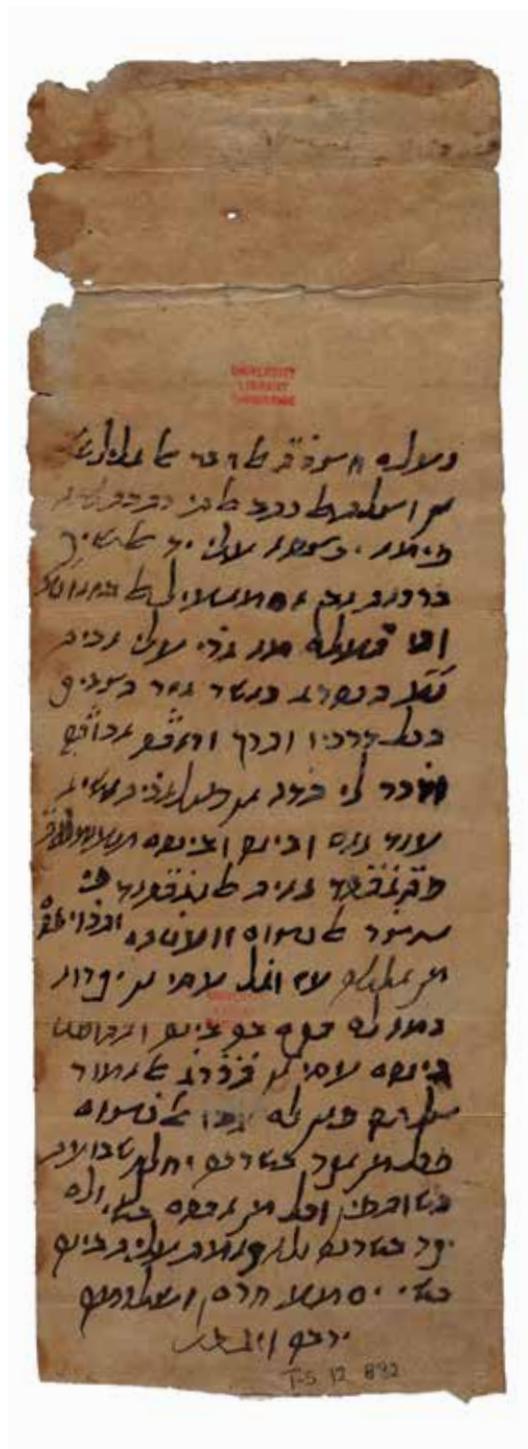
When I was a Research Associate in the Genizah Research Unit, Kraemer shared with me his musings on CUL and wrote: ‘Aside from Jerusalem, Cambridge to me is the closest place to heaven. I mean the library and the collection in the first place, but also the natural beauty of the place and its tranquillity.’

He is survived by his wife, Aviva, three daughters from his marriage to the late Roberta Knee – Judith Maisel, Susan Barak, and Sarah Kretsch – and nine grandchildren.

Zvi Stampfer
Orot Israel College

T-S 12.832, which Kraemer identified in 1991 as a letter written by Moses Maimonides, in which the Rambam is writing to a local judge to retrieve the assets left by a murdered merchant.

‘Do your utmost to summon the litigants and to caution and intimidate them in the name of God, may He be honoured and extolled, so that they confess in the absence of clear evidence. And mediate among them; perhaps you can settle the issues by compromise...’



Schooling and Identity

On 11–13 February 2019 the Unit hosted a workshop on ‘Parenting, Schooling and Identity Formation and Reformation: From the Middle Ages to the Modern Period’, organised by Zvi Stampfer, Amir Ashur and Nadia Vidro in collaboration with Orot Israel

College, Campus Rehovot. The workshop brought together thirty scholars from Israel and Europe working on modern education and Genizah studies. They explored the historical links that lie between the formation of minority religious identities in

medieval and modern societies and the ways in which modern theoretical approaches can inform the work of medieval social historians.

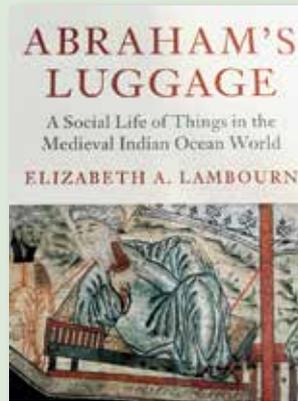
Talks and discussions addressed the effect of pedagogy on students’ emerging identity

in faith-based schools, the influence of teachers’ perception of God on students’ religious identity, Maimonides’ curriculum for post-elementary education, as well as the links between sexuality, religiosity and communal identity, and other matters.

What's in your suitcase?

What do rice, locks, rat traps, a coconut scraper, several ladles and four bed legs have in common? The foundations of a Two Ronnies' sketch? Maybe, but they are all items that Abraham ben Yijū, the twelfth-century Jewish trader, packed for a journey back across the sea from his adopted home of Mangalore. Abraham, who was the subject of Amitav Ghosh's celebrated *In an Antique Land*, made two lengthy sojourns on the Malabar Coast, before sailing back across the Indian Ocean to Yemen for the last time in 1149. These items appear, alongside containers and baskets containing all sorts of foodstuffs and commodities in a single document, T-S NS 324.114, a list that Abraham wrote specifying exactly what would be carried on the lengthy and

potentially hazardous voyage across the Indian Ocean. Elizabeth Lambourn's *Abraham's Luggage: a social life of things in the Medieval Indian Ocean world* mines this text, and its wider context, as a study in material culture. The book is actually quite remarkable in the detail it manages to extract from a single Genizah document, one that actually came to Elizabeth's attention when she reviewed Mordechai Friedman and S. D. Goitein's *India Traders* for the journal *South Asian Studies*. She recognised the Jewish trader's list as utterly unique, 'the only known document of its type to have survived from the premodern Indian Ocean'. *Abraham's Luggage* therefore epitomises the second fundamental stage of Genizah Studies, where the material



takes on a life in the wider world of scholarship, informing areas of inquiry that might hitherto never have encountered the unique sources of the Cairo Genizah.

Elizabeth Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage: a social life of things in the Medieval Indian Ocean world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

Ben Sira after 120 years

An important new collection of papers on Ben Sira has just appeared, *Discovering, Deciphering and Dissenting: Ben Sira Manuscripts after 120 years*. Edited by James Aitken, Renate Egger-Wenzel and founding director of the Genizah Unit, Stefan Reif, it brings together a

scintillating bunch of the world's best Ben Sira scholars to examine the text and its manuscripts from all angles, including papers on the early publications of the text (Reif), the codicology of the manuscripts (Olszowy-Schlanger), the Persian glosses (Wright), its reception (Aitken), its poetry

(Reymond, Corley) and Ben Sira's language in relation to Biblical Hebrew (Joosten, Dihi).

Aitken, Egger-Wenzel and Reif (eds), *Discovering, Deciphering and Dissenting: Ben Sira Manuscripts after 120 years* (De Gruyter, 2018)

A new Masora offering

Yosef Ofer, one of the world's leading scholars of the Biblical Masora (and not just Tiberian Masora, as he's also written definitively on the Babylonian Masora) has a new book out, *The Masora on Scripture and its Methods*. It covers the Masora

in all its aspects, including orthography, ketiv and qere, and manuscripts such as the Aleppo Codex, and its comprehensiveness should ensure it takes its place alongside Yeivin's *The Tiberian Masorah* as a standard work on the subject. It's a real treat

for Masoretic scholars and those with any interest in how the text of the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted down the centuries.

Y. Ofer, *The Masora on Scripture and its Methods* (De Gruyter, 2019)

HOW YOU CAN HELP To receive *Genizah Fragments*, to inquire about the Collection, or to learn how to assist with its preservation and study, please write to Dr Ben Outhwaite, Head of the Genizah Research Unit, at Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DR, England.

The Library can be reached by fax (01223) 333160 or by telephone (01223) 333000. Inquiries by email should be addressed to the Unit at: genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk

Contributions to the Unit are made to the "University of Cambridge," which enjoys charitable status for tax and similar purposes.

In the USA the Collection is supported through "Cambridge in America". For further information please contact them on 212-984-0960 or see their website: www.cantab.org

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