

GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

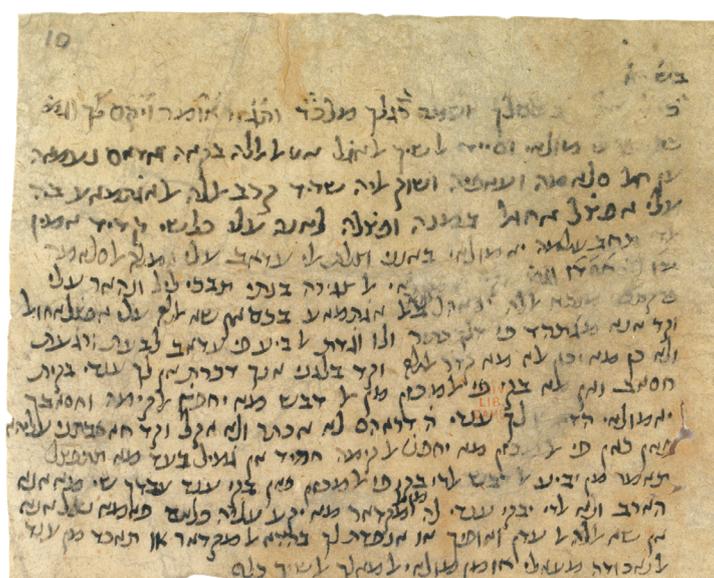
The Newsletter of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, Cambridge University Library

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The India Book comes of age

We reported in *Genizah Fragments* 55 on the appearance of the first volume of Goitein's much anticipated *India Book*, a detailed examination of the medieval Jewish trade with India, of which the documents of the Genizah are the primary witness. The completion and publication of the work was bequeathed to his former student Prof. Mordechai Friedman, whose dedication to this prodigious task has been shown in the publication of three further volumes with yet more to follow.

Readers of *Genizah Fragments* need no introduction to the revolutionary research of the late S. D. Goitein (1900–1985). His metamorphosis from an Islamist to becoming the leading light of Genizah scholarship had its inception some sixty years ago, when he examined Judaeo-Arabic fragments in the Taylor-Schechter Collection. It was inextricably bound to a major undertaking, which he conceived but never completed: the *India Book*. This was the informal name he gave to a study that was to include the editions of over 400 Genizah letters, written mainly during the twelfth century by participants in the India trade.



The story of Goitein's involvement in this project and his subsequent sea-change from India to the Mediterranean, crowned by his magisterial *A Mediterranean Society*, was encapsulated in the twenty-first issue of this newsletter (April 1991). There I also announced that I had undertaken to prepare the study for publication and that it would be available 'in the near future'.

Goitein worked on the *India Book* intermittently for about thirty-five years. On March 10, 1979, during one of these periods of intensive activity, he wrote me: 'My whole day is spent on the *India Book*. The task is

enormous; I hadn't imagined how much so'. It is obvious that when, in 1991, I announced the imminent publication of the opus, I too failed to appreciate the enormity of the task.

I am pleased to report recent developments. Close to 200 of the texts are translated, annotated and described with introduction, in Goitein and Friedman, *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza ('India Book')*, Leiden and Boston (Brill and Ben Zvi Institute) 2008.

T-S 8J21.10 A letter by the Jewish merchant Ibn Yijū written in Aydhab, the Sudanese port central to the India trade. He describes his daughter's grief at having left India, and particularly at leaving the family to whose son she had been betrothed: 'she cries day and night over your separation from her'. Following this personal account there is information about repaying a debt.

Complete editions of the Judaeo-Arabic texts, with Hebrew translations, notes and introductions have been published jointly by the Ben Zvi Institute and the Rabbi David Moshe and Amalia Rosen Foundation in three volumes (*India Book* 1–3):

1. Goitein and Friedman, *Joseph Lebdi Prominent India Trader: Cairo Geniza Documents* (Jerusalem 2009). A native of Tripoli (Libya), Lebdi was the first important India trader whose papers were preserved in the Genizah. His trips to the East resulted in multiple law suits, including one involving the business-lady

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Wuḥsha. Her brother was one of Lebdi's two partners murdered in the Sudanese port of Aydhab on their way home.

2. Id., *Maḏmūn Nagid of Yemen and the India Trade: Cairo Geniza Documents* (2010). The Yemenites played a pivotal role in the India trade. Maḏmūn b. Ḥasan, a ship owner, was recognised as Nagid (Prince) of Yemenite Jewry. He formed alliances with local and distant potentates in business

and military ventures and for protecting the land and sea routes to and from Yemen and on to India.

3. Id., *Abraham ben Yijū India Trader and Manufacturer: Cairo Geniza Documents* (2010). Ben Yijū lived on the Malabar Coast, where he apparently married a former slave girl. Upon resettlement in Egypt, his daughter married his nephew, who became a well-known judge, associated with Moses Maimonides.

India Book 4 has engendered three volumes, now undergoing final editing and hopefully to be published soon:

Friedman, *Ḥalfon ha-Levi the Great Traveling Trader, Introduction*. On his frequent travels from Egypt to India and to Spain, Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nathanael acquired wealth in the import-export business and befriended grandes in the Jewish communities, including Judah ha-Levi, whose autographs are preserved in Ḥalfon's archive.

Goitein and Friedman, *Ḥalfon ha-Levi the Great Traveling Trader: Cairo Geniza Documents*. Editions of 91 documents from his personal archive.

Friedman, *A Judeo-Arabic Dictionary derived from Ḥalfon ha-Levi's Geniza Archive*.

Prof. Mordechai A. Friedman
Tel Aviv University

The Constantinople Polyglot of 1546

The installation of a Hebrew press at Constantinople in 1503 by David b. Nahmias ushered in a period of prosperity for Jewish printing in the Ottoman Empire. Gershom Soncino, head of the Soncino family and universally acknowledged towering figure of five centuries of Hebrew printing, followed in 1530 and established his Jewish publishing house in Constantinople. Political persecution and commercial competition drove Gershom Soncino to wander constantly, setting up printing shops in Soncino, Casamaggiore, Brescia, Barco, Fano, Pesaro, Ortona, Rimini, and Cesena in Italy; then in Salonica and Constantinople, where he died in 1534. After his death, he was succeeded by his son Eliezer Soncino.

The crowning achievements of Eliezer's twenty-three years of printing were the two Polyglot Pentateuchs of 1546 and 1547. The first contained the Hebrew text of the Torah, accompanied by Targum Onkelos, Saadiah's *tafsir*, a Judaeo-Persian translation by Jacob b. Josef Tāwūs and Rashi's commentary. The second exhibits an identical mise-en-page, yet printed in a different letter size and including Judaeo-Spanish and Judaeo-Greek translations.

Eliezer's printing of Saadiah's translation was the first time that the work had appeared in print, and, furthermore, represents the very first extant printed Judaeo-Arabic text. Despite the unique importance of Eliezer's undertaking, few details are known concerning its production, the number of copies or its dissemination. It is fairly

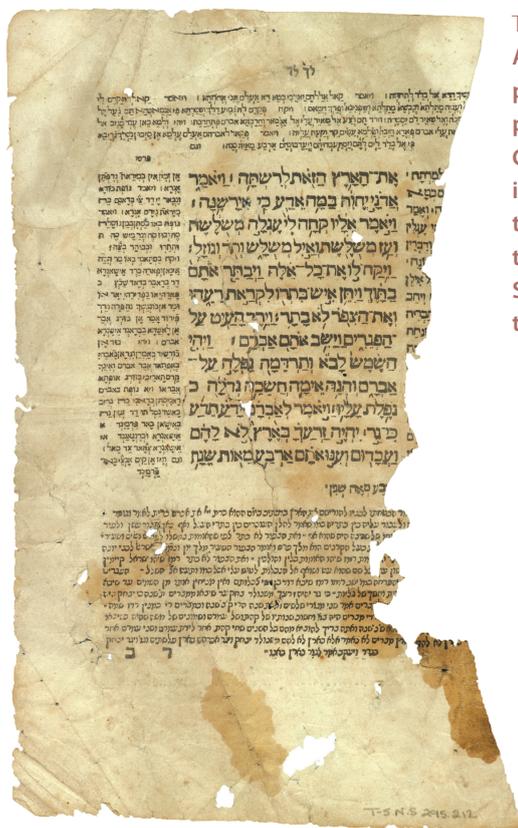
certain, however, that the Constantinople Polyglot was a book in great demand.

The provenance of the manuscript(s) used to produce the Polyglots is also unknown. Whereas the text of the Judaeo-Spanish, Judaeo-Greek and Judaeo-Persian versions could have been obtained by Eliezer

Soncino via local communities, procuring Saadiah's translation in Constantinople might have been more difficult. The Judaeo-Arabic version is placed on the upper margins, right above the Hebrew text, and opens with the formula **תרגום ערבי לרב סעדיא (!) גאון ז"ל**. Even a short examination reveals the rather late and phonetic character of the text, especially in regard to orthography, which indicates that the source manuscript(s) must have been fairly contemporaneous to the printing project. The sporadic vocalisation, with Tiberian vowel signs, was apparently added in the process of editing by an unknown collaborator and exhibits a distinctive North-African character.

At least thirty pages of this important polyglot have been identified in the Collection, which has preserved not only manuscripts but also many early printed works, of which T-S NS 295.212 is a fine example, showing the Hebrew text surrounded by, clockwise from top, the Arabic translation, the Aramaic of Onqelos, Rashi and the Judaeo-Persian version.

Ronny Vollandt
Research Assistant



T-S NS 295.212
A leaf of the polyglot Bible printed in Constantinople in 1546, showing the Judaeo-Arabic translation of Saadiah across the top.

Gabriele Ferrario joins the Unit



My first contact with Genizah material took place in 2006 during the course of my PhD studies at the University of Venice 'Ca' Foscari': Professor Marina Rustow, who was a visitor there at the time, gave a series of lectures on the Genizah and helped us decipher some Judaeo-Arabic documents. I found these few documents extremely challenging and interesting, but, in the meantime, I had to concentrate on finishing my dissertation on the medieval Arabic alchemical treatise known as *Liber de aluminibus et salibus* (The Book on Alums and Salts) and its Hebrew translation.

Following fellowships at the Warburg Institute in London and the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia, I came to work as a Research Associate in the Genizah Research Unit, where I am now describing and identifying fragments on the most diverse subjects: calendars and calendrical treatises, lists of books, books of exercises for children, vocabularies, poetry, dirges and so on: the miscellanea of the Old Series.

I have not set aside my interest in alchemy; I am planning to work extensively on the alchemical material of the Genizah, and I shall be reworking my PhD thesis into a book. Furthermore, I would like to be able to proceed with my research on the medieval alchemical poem *Dīwān Šudūr al-Dahab* by Ibn Arfa' Ra's. I am sure that the Genizah Research Unit and the University Library will provide an exceptional environment for my scholarly and personal growth.

Amir Ashur begins work

I was first introduced to Genizah material during my BA studies in Jewish Philosophy and Talmud in Tel Aviv University, and since then, almost 15 years, I have devoted most of my time to this subject. From the beginning of my MA studies I was lucky to take part in various research projects relating to Genizah research, under the leadership of my mentor, Prof. M.A. Friedman, among them the celebrated 'India Book' and the preparation of a catalogue of Responsa from the Cairo Genizah sponsored by the Friedberg Genizah Project. I mostly focus on the 'documentary Genizah' – letters, legal deeds and other documents that represent the daily life of the Genizah world, and especially those relating to family life, since my



postgraduate work, my MA and PhD dissertations, examined the traditions of engagement and betrothal deeds preserved in the medieval Genizah.

Although the Byzantine difficulties of the UK visa system did their best to prevent me taking up a post here, I am now settled with my family in Cambridge, and I want to thank Dr Outhwaite and the team for accepting me here in the Unit – the 'Shrine' of the Genizah collections.

HEAD LINES

We are now halfway through our AHRC-funded project of completing the description of the T-S Old Series, and we could fill the newsletter twice over with the discoveries that have been made: unique Judaeo-Arabic versions of philosophical and medical treatises, previously unknown correspondence with Moses Maimonides and many more. We shall be featuring as many as we can on our website's *Fragment of the Month* section (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter/fotm/>).

Users of the website will notice that the GOLD online database is looking increasingly dodderly. Once at the forefront of technology, its limited functionality is now obvious, and it is difficult to update and maintain. Earlier this year, however, the University Library received a donation of £1.5 million from Dr Leonard Polonsky towards the cost of establishing a digital library for the twenty-first century, the centrepiece of which will be the infrastructure required to display, catalogue and search the Library's digital collections, concentrating on the twin pillars of faith and science. The Genizah manuscripts of the T-S and Mosseri Collections, along with all their cataloguing data, will be among the first to be made available through the new system, which should be going online next year.

Thanks to the phenomenal work of Professor Yaacov Choueka and his colleagues in Jerusalem, more than 100,000 images of T-S manuscripts shot by the Library's Imaging Services Department have now joined those of other Genizah collections on the website of the Friedberg Genizah Project (www.genizah.org), where they can be searched and examined using a number of advanced tools. This represents one third of the entire T-S Collection, and the remarkable speed with which they have been made available online is of great credit to the *Genazim* team.

With space running out, I'd like to say a word in thanks to Samuel Blapp, a student from Basel, who spent three months, unpaid, working in the Unit on the description of the Mosseri Collection. Our recent progress on the Mosseri manuscripts has been excellent, and has benefitted greatly from the generous assistance of volunteers.

The Genizah Research Unit is extremely grateful for the major support received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, and the Friedberg Genizah Project. We are also grateful to the continued help of our many friends:

Scott Shay (\$1800); Vivienne Cohen, the Charitable Trust of 1965 (£500); Goldberg Family Trust (£500); Betty & Cyril Stein Charitable Trust (£500); Jason Kravitt (\$500); N&J Greenwood Charitable Trust (£250); the estate of the late Miriam Shenkin (£250); Roy Hayim (£150); George Remington (£150); David Sellman (£150); Naomi Alexander (£100); Ralph Cantor (£100); Benjamin Cohnney (£100); Ruth & Charles Corman Charitable Trust (£100); Embassy of Israel (£100); Harbour Charitable Trust (£100); Alan Kaye (£100); Jack Lunzer (£100); Rofeh Trust (£100); James Rudolph (\$150); and other smaller or anonymous donations.

In memory of Shulie Reif z"l, 1945–2010

Shulie Reif began work for the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Unit in 1976, and for almost a quarter of a century toiled alongside her husband Stefan. Hired as an editorial assistant, she in fact performed many roles from bibliographer to translator, and was the epitome of the 'fitting helper for him' (Genesis 2:18). She loved the challenge of organising the Collection and laid the foundations for what would become an essential tool of research, an inventory of all 190,000 Genizah fragments in Cambridge. In her role as an editor Shulie prepared the Unit's volumes for publication by Cambridge University Press, compiled an extensive catalogue of the non-Genizah Hebrew manuscripts at the Library, and prepared for publication a volume of essays on the Cambridge Genizah Collections.



Shulamit Devorah was educated at the South Hampstead School for Girls, winning a free place to the senior school and obtaining outstanding results in her school examinations and piano-playing. Before commencing her

In 1997 Shulie played a central role in organising a major Genizah exhibition at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem that was seen by over 70,000 visitors. Setting impeccable standards in her work, as editor, bibliographer, translator and essential organiser, she contributed greatly toward Genizah scholarship.

Born on 11th November 1945 in central London to a family of Hassidic Galician background,

teacher's degree studies at the University of London, she spent a long summer in Israel at ulpan in 1964 and fell in love with the Jewish state. As Stefan reminisced at her funeral, she was at the age of 19 a very attractive, very bright young woman with many suitors but with a totally independent mind, a supreme sense of fairness and a powerful conviction about right and wrong.

While an undergraduate, Shulie met Stefan Reif, a doctoral student at Jews' College in London. They fell in love over morning coffee in February 1966 and were married on 19 September 1967 at Hampstead Garden Suburb Synagogue in London. Shulie was a devoted wife and mother to her children, Tanya and Aryeh, and whatever she achieved professionally, her most loved role was that of wife, mother and family builder.

After a four and a half year battle with lung cancer, Shulie Reif passed away on 19th February 2010, surrounded by her family. She is survived by her beloved husband Stefan, two children and seven grandchildren.

At a conference held in Cambridge in 2007, leading Genizah scholars from around the world gathered to mark the retirement of Professor Stefan Reif. The academic fruits of that conference – twenty papers on subjects ranging from Maimonides' interpretation of the power of attorney to the production of paper used in manuscripts – have been collected and will be published in October as 'From a Sacred Source': Genizah

Studies in Honour of Professor Stefan C. Reif, which also contains an appreciation of Reif's work and his complete (to date...) bibliography. Brill are publishing the book as the first volume in a new series, *Cambridge Genizah Studies*. The title *Sacred Source* is taken from a poem by Abraham ibn Ezra, as translated by Peter Cole in his *The Dream of the Poem*, and seems an apt description for the value of the Genizah archive.



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

"Cambridge in America" is recognized by the IRS as a charitable organization, and contributions for the benefit of the Genizah Research Unit are legally deductible for USA income tax purposes. Contributions are similarly deductible in Canada even if made directly to the Development Office at the University of Cambridge.

The Lauffer Family Charitable Trust has generously contributed towards the cost of producing this newsletter in memory of the late David Lauffer, an enthusiastic student of history and supporter of the Genizah Research Unit.