

GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

The Newsletter of Cambridge University's Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge University Library

Research before sensation

Scholarship is no less prone to fashion and topicality than other areas of human endeavour. This applies even to what appears to be such an esoteric field as manuscript research.

In Solomon Schechter's day, a century ago, the discovery of the Cairo Genizah was the flavour of the period for many of those interested in studying ancient Hebrew documents.

Between the two World Wars, the literary remains of the Canaanite civilisation of biblical times, as preserved at Ugarit, attracted major attention.

No one can deny that 40 years ago a good deal of the excitement associated with the examination of primary Hebrew sources was generated by the analysis of the Qumran Scrolls that had come to light in the caves near the north-western shores of the Dead Sea.

Letters of Bar Kokhba, clay tablets from Ebla, freshly uncovered *genizot* in Europe, archives made available for the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution – as each new topic comes to the fore, so scholars undertake the necessary pilgrimages, both physical and intellectual, with the aim of making obeisance at the current Meccas of research.

Because this year is the 500th anniversary of 1492, special attention is being given to the outstanding Spanish-Jewish symbiosis that preceded the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and to the establishment of the American colonies that produced the modern nation with the most significant version of its modern cultural equivalent.

As the libraries of Russia open their doors to Western academics, so scores of

scholars examine their treasures in the light of discoveries made elsewhere and pronounce on how they do or do not relate and compare.

All this is welcome and can only encourage the study of Hebrew and Jewish manuscripts, including the Genizah research to which this Unit is committed.

What must be borne in mind, however, is that as fashion and topicality change, important collections may still await their full treatment.

When the initial excitement has worn off, much solid work remains to be done, and the world of scholarship must do everything in its power to ensure that such work is not neglected in favour of the latest academic sensation.

STEFAN C. REIF
Director, Taylor-Schechter
Genizah Research Unit

Unit advises Washington on manuscripts

The Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, is currently planning to rehouse its Genizah fragments.

Having read in various issues of *Genizah Fragments* descriptions of the conservation, housing and photography of the Cambridge Genizah fragments, the Gallery's paper conservator, Martha Smith, has been in touch with the director of the T-S Unit, enquiring about the Unit's degree of satisfaction with its methods.

The Gallery was advised that the system of conservation had generally proved successful, although the size of the binders for the New Series could perhaps have been a little smaller and thus less inconvenient for handling by readers.

A catalogue of the fragments in the Freer Gallery of Art was compiled by Richard Gottheil and William Worrell and published in New York, 1927.

Spain's 1492 legacy in Cairo Genizah

Professor S. D. Goitein once remarked that the richness of Judaeo-Spanish items in the Genizah reflects the dominance of Sephardi Jews in the Cairo community after 1492. What he did not reveal is the contents of these papers.

Like any other historian, the historian of hispanic Jewry must be prepared for surprises. He must be able to specialise in, or at least deal competently with, an astonishing variety of subjects.

It is true that every reader of G. S. R. Kitson-Clark's *Guide for Research Students Working on Historical Subjects* knows that he must be ready to address a variety of topics. Yet the historian who is to reconstruct Hispano-Jewish society and culture before and after the various expulsions by using the Cambridge Genizah Collections is likely to be taken aback by the evidence.

First, the language itself is an important cultural monument. Indeed, the raw material (that is, speakers and texts) for studying modern Judaeo-Spanish is not

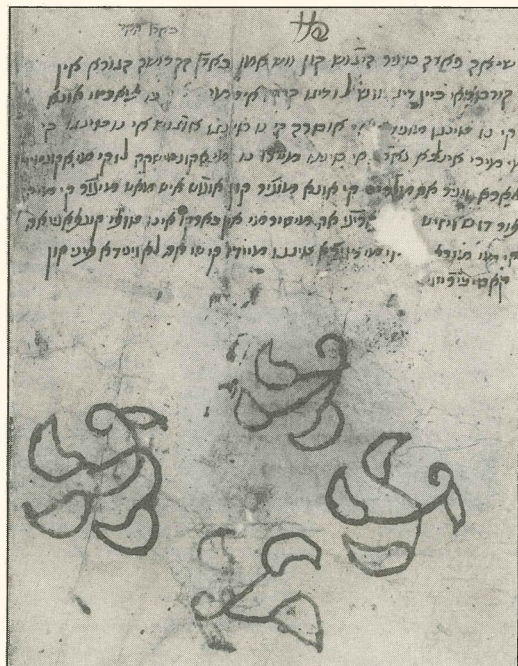
lacking in contemporary Israel and the USA.

But while such material for contemporary Judaeo-Spanish that has served most linguists in their analysis is hardly recon-dite, the evidence for the earlier vernacular is rare indeed and is frequently absent from scholarly bibliography. That is why the Genizah material is so precious.

The discoveries of sixteenth-century vernacular texts in Judaeo-Spanish (rather than the more easily available and printed calque) serve to fill the gaps in linguists' knowledge of the vernacular language of the exiles from Spain. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that so much attention should be paid to this material.

If, for areas such as legal and political history, the historian of hispanic Jewry must look elsewhere, this is not the case with the history of more popular culture. The renewed impetus to this type of history, in the wake of the publications of such

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Part of a Judaeo-Spanish letter (T-S Ar. 29.105) from a blind man in Cairo to his wife in the Holy Land, one of several letters mentioned by Dr Eleazar Gutwirth in his accompanying article



Delegates to the fifth international conference of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies, held at Princeton University

Scholars confer

Some 40 scholars, members of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies, met last August for the Society's fifth international biennial conference. The third conference was held at London and Cambridge Universities in the summer of 1987.

The recent one was co-hosted by the Jewish Theological Seminary and Princeton University, who sponsored it together with the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. It opened at the Seminary on 25 August and continued at Princeton for the following three days.

The theme was "Aspects of Mediterranean Culture in the Middle Ages." Sessions were devoted to language, Jews and Muslims in Mediterranean society and culture, law, literature, Bible translations and exegesis, Karaites and Karaism, philosophy, copyists and readers in Judaeo-Arabic culture, and history.

Professor Mark Cohen, of Princeton, gave an informal guided tour of the S. D. Goitein Laboratory for Genizah Research at Princeton, which duplicates the original archive housed at the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.

Many of the papers touched upon the Genizah. Professor Hag-gai Ben-Shammai, of the Hebrew University, reported on Hebrew manuscripts written in Arabic script in the Firkovich Genizah Collection in St. Petersburg, which he had examined during a recent trip to the Soviet Union.

An unpublished letter of friendship to Maimonides from the Genizah was the subject of the paper of Professor Joel Kraemer, of Tel Aviv University.

Meira Polliack, who is preparing her doctoral thesis at Cambridge, reported some of her

findings in a presentation on mediaeval Karaite translations of the Bible into Arabic.

Professor Moshe Sokolow, of Yeshiva University, summarized the contents of a volume of Genizah book-lists he has edited for the Ben-Zvi Institute.

Dr Shulamit Sela, of Tel Aviv University, presented a new hypothesis about the early origins of the office of "Head of the Jews," based on the chance discovery in the Genizah of a copy of a Fatimid decree.

Dr Yosef Rivlin, of Bar-Ilan University, described aspects of Jewish life in Lucena, Spain, revealed in a collection of Genizah documents.

Dr Menahem Ben-Sasson, of the Hebrew University, introduced the subject matter of the newly-published book he has edited, *The Jews of Sicily 825-1068*, the first volume of the Ben-Zvi Institute's *Oriens Judaicus* series.

Professor Avrom Udovitch, chairman of the hosting Near Eastern Studies department at Princeton, shed "new light on mediaeval Egyptian rural life from the Genizah" in his offering to the conference.

The T-S Genizah Unit's Professor Ephraim Wiesenbergs also attended and delivered a paper on "Maimonides on the Relation between the Determination of the New Moon and the New Year, by Sight and by Calculation."

The Society plans to publish a volume of conference proceedings. Enquiries about membership should be addressed to Mark Cohen, c/o Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08544, USA.

MARK R. COHEN
Professor of Near Eastern Studies,
Princeton University

Genesis discovery

Remnants of Hebrew books written between 135 CE, the date of the Bar-Kokba revolt, and the Middle Ages are few, and most of them are very small fragments. They were found with documents, letters and amulets written on papyrus and are today housed mostly in the Bodleian Library and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich.

Michele Dukan and I have been fortunate enough to find important remnants of two scrolls in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection at Cambridge University Library:

1. From the Byzantine period (300-700), two fragments of a Genesis scroll which we tend to assign to the fifth or sixth century.

2. From the first Arabic period (700-950), 19 fragments (some quite large) of a *Sefer Torah* which we date in the eighth or ninth century.

The Genesis scroll is written on fine parchment, on the flesh-side, in a beautiful hand and is about 58.5 cm high. The margins are large (the upper one 6.5 cm) and the columns are 43.2-43.5 cm high.

We have the upper fragment of two columns (T-S NS 4.3: Genesis 4:14-6:7) and of five more (T-S NS 3.21: Genesis 13:10-17:27).

The first two columns are the sixth and seventh of the scroll; the others are the seventeenth to the twenty-first. The columns are 7.9-9.2 cm wide, with 2-2.3 cm between them. Each line has 17-

23 letters and there are 54-55 written lines. If Genesis alone was copied on this scroll, it had 68-70 columns and the whole length was 8-9 metres. If it was a *Sefer Torah*, it was 38-40 metres long.

The Hebrew is almost completely identical to the Massoretic Text, except in 17:1, where the scroll has *shanhah* for *shanim* at the end of the verse.

There are also two corrections. The first is in 14:9, where the *waw* missing from the beginning of the name Aryokh has been placed above the line by the scribe. This is a method of correction used, for example, in a fragment of a Genesis scroll from the Dead Sea collection.

In the second correction, in 16:13, the scribe wrote the Hebrew for "and he called" instead of "and she called" and corrected this by writing a *taw* over the *yod*. Since *yod* is a narrow letter, the resulting *taw* differs from others in the scroll.

We have also found in this scroll what appears to be the first instance of the "crowns" (*tagin*) mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (*Menahot*, f.29b).

The ornament on top of the left down-stroke in the letters *sh'tnz* *gs* is different from the ornaments on other letters. It is made with a to-and-fro stroke and creates an angle open to the right.

COLETTE SIRAT
Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, Paris, and Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem

[TO BE CONCLUDED]

If you would like to receive *Genizah Fragments* regularly, to enquire about the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection, or to know how you may assist with its preservation and study, please write to: Dr S. C. Reif, Director of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR, England. The Library may also be reached by fax (0223) 333160.

Readers not already supporting the Unit are asked to help ensure the continuity of this publication by making a small, regular gift. The sum of £3 (UK) or \$8 abroad per annum is suggested and payment may be made to the Unit's Cambridge office or to the American Friends.

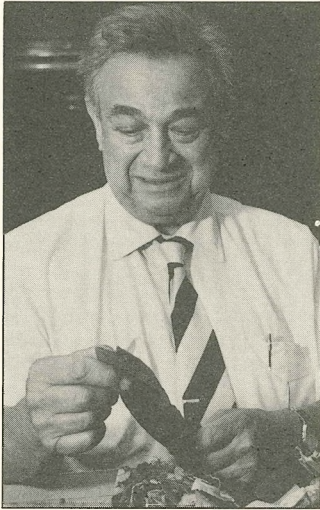
All contributions to the Unit, whether for the research programme or for its other activities, are made to the "University of Cambridge," which enjoys charitable status for tax and similar purposes.

In the USA, all contributions may be directed to the president of the American Friends of Cambridge University (USA/Canada), Mr Stephen C. Price, at P.O. Box 7070, Arlington, Virginia 22207, USA.

Transfers of such funds are regularly made from the USA to Cambridge.

The AFCU is recognized by the IRS as a charitable organization and contributions are legally deductible for United States income tax purposes. They are similarly deductible in Canada even if made directly to Cambridge.

**How you can
help the T-S
Genizah Unit**



Professor Goshen-Gottstein at the Genizah Research Unit

Last visit

In the summer of 1990, Professor Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, the distinguished semitist and biblical philologist, wrote to the Unit offering a charming reminiscence and a note of appreciation:

"You have put Genizah studies back on the map, and the days when I dirtied my hands excavating the crates with Miss Skilliter's permission seem light-years away."

"Had I myself not moved so far away from the area, I would almost feel like coming back one day and leafing through the newly-ordered material. Of course, there is little chance of repeating my discoveries, most of which were never published."

"In any case, let me offer you hearty congratulations on what you have accomplished."

During a visit to England with his wife Esther nine months ago, Professor Goshen-Gottstein was able to visit Cambridge University Library again and to entertain those in the Unit with stories of work on the Genizah Collection in the 1950s.

Sadly, the learned professor died in Jerusalem in September, 1991, but researchers in the Unit feel privileged to have welcomed him here during what turned out to be his last visit abroad.

Indian trade

Readers will recall that in a recent issue of *Genizah Fragments* (No. 21, pages 3-4), Professor Mordechai Friedman described the Genizah documents relating to the Indian trade.

Those particularly interested in the twelfth-century letter from David Maimonides to his brother, the famous Moses Maimonides, should note that the classmark is Or. 1081 J1, and not Or. 1080 J1, as inadvertently printed.

Wellcome grant of £18,800

A grant of £18,819 has been made to the University of Cambridge by the Wellcome Trust to enable the T-S Unit to complete its catalogue of the medical texts in the Genizah Collection.

Dr Haskell Isaacs has been preparing descriptions of about 2,000 fragments on a part-time basis since 1985 and has now been joined in the project by Dr Colin Baker, whose doctoral research at Cambridge dealt with Arabic medical texts.

The intention is to complete the necessary research within a few months and to use computer technology for the preparation of camera-ready copy for submission to Cambridge University Press in 1993, for publication in the University Library's *Genizah Series*.

Other major awards recently received have included £1,500 from Mr Samuel Sebba, £1,400 from the Jewish Memorial Council, and £1,250 from the British Academy to sponsor the visiting professor-

ship of Dr Victor Lebedev from St. Petersburg.

Mr Cyril Stein and Mr Michael Phillips have each contributed £1,000, and Mr I. Raine is welcomed as a new supporter of the Unit in the amount of £1,000.

Renewals of earlier support have kindly been made by Mrs Vivien Duffield (£500), Goldberg Charitable Trust (£500), Heron International plc (£500), Dr Ralph Kohn (£500), Mr Henry Kormind (£585), Mr Arnold Lee (£500), Mr A. S. Oppenheimer (£500), and Sir Leslie Porter (£500).

Lord Sieff of Brimpton has again associated himself with the Unit's efforts by helpfully arranging for a £500 contribution from the Simon Marks Charitable Trust.

The Unit greatly regrets the death of its long-time supporter, Mr Stanley Burton, who contributed £400 last year, and welcomes an anonymous donation of £200 in his memory.

Among other friends to be

thanked for maintaining their support are Mr Philip Maurice (£350), Mr Harry Landy (£300), Mrs Helena Sebba (£250), Mr William Margulies (£250), and Mr Fred Worms (£250).

The Unit is also grateful to Mr S. W. Laufer (£180), Mr Clifford Barclay (£100), Mr David Isaacs (£100), Mr and Mrs Anthony Rau (£100), Mrs Judith Samuel (£100), and Mrs Hazel Alexander (£100, from a sale of her sculpture of Maimonides).

A number of contributions have been forwarded by the American Friends of Cambridge University and particular thanks are due to them and to Ms Kathryn L. Johnson (\$500), Mrs Clara B. Laks (\$275), Mr and Mrs Raphael Levy (\$150), and Mrs Diane Claerhout (\$125).

All such assistance and many other smaller or anonymous donations are deeply appreciated and are ensuring the continuation of the Unit's projects in the fields of description and research.

Egyptian help to the Holy Land

During the Mamlūk period (1250-1516), the land of Israel was politically and economically attached to the Egyptian centre and was ruled from Cairo by emirs and governors with varying degrees of authority.

From the second half of the fifteenth century, Jewish sources paint an interesting picture of relations between the Jews of the two countries. Among such sources are memoirs of migrants and pilgrims from Europe to the land of Israel via Egypt, passages from responsa literature, and letters and documents found in the Cairo Genizah.

As part of the *Oriens Judaicus* project of the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem, I have recently researched twelve such manuscripts from the Genizah Collections at Cambridge University Library that touch on the history of Jerusalem, Hebron and Safed in the early sixteenth century.

The evidence goes further than demonstrating the massive and apparently continuous support that the Jews of Egypt provided for their brethren in the Holy Land. It also emerges that, although the links between the Jews of Safed and Damascus became reinforced with the rise of Ottoman rule in the land of Israel from 1516, the connection between the Jews of that city and Egypt did not cease, but was ref-

lected in commercial ties and in requests for financial aid.

Jerusalem: R. Samuel ha-Kohen, a member of one of the academies in Jerusalem, asked a number of communal leaders in Egypt for permission to use a synagogal sermon to explain his financial difficulties (T-S 13J24.29).

Later in the sixteenth century, an anonymous philanthropist in Egypt received a letter from R. David Badussi, who used to teach children in Jerusalem. R. David details his economic plight and asks for help (T-S 13J9.16a).

During the same period, R. Jacob Zalmai and his brother R. Yeshu'ah in Egypt were contacted by their Jerusalem sister Gamilah, the widow of the Moroccan kabbalist, R. Judah Halewyah, who had lived in Safed and Jerusalem.

She asked them to intercede on her behalf with a philanthropist who is unnamed but is probably to be identified as R. Solomon Alashkar, a known supporter of charities in the contemporary land of Israel. She explains that she is still waiting for him to fulfil a promise to send her money (Or. 1080 J161).

Hebron: Two fund-raising letters, signed by the heads of the Hebron community at some point in either the sixteenth or seventeenth century, were delivered by emissaries to dignitaries in Egypt

(T-S 8J11.20 and T-S 18J3.23).

Safed: The first six lines have been preserved of a letter sent from Egypt to the members of the "holy academy" in Safed about the death of their emissary, R. Samuel Bahalul.

Other Genizah evidence places such a personality in the first decade of the sixteenth century and we may therefore conclude that the Safed community was at that time suffering the kind of economic difficulties that necessitated appeals to the Diaspora for financial assistance (T-S AS 218.153).

At the end of the century, R. Abraham Sagis of Safed sent a letter to an anonymous person with good connections in Egypt who had studied in Safed with the prominent sage, R. Moses di Trani.

The writer complains bitterly about the addressee's failure to pay a debt owed to him and his unwillingness to support the descendants of his late master. He also describes the poverty being experienced in Safed at that time (T-S 10J17.33).

I have published full details of these fragments, and of others from Oxford and New York, in *Cathedra* 59 (1991), pages 19-55.

ABRAHAM DAVID
Jewish National and
University Library, Jerusalem



Mrs Elena Romero (left), of the Arias Montana Institute in Madrid, and Mrs Beatriz Martin Arias, of the Spanish Ministry of Culture, arranging manuscripts from the Taylor-Schechter Collection at Cambridge for their exhibition in Toledo marking the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain

Praise for T-S Unit

The University Library's annual report, published in the *Cambridge University Reporter* of 31 January, 1992, includes the following remarks about the Oriental Division:

"One of the purposes of the creation of the Division was to co-ordinate the diverse and isolated achievements of the various departments into a coherent whole ... and to extend and exploit the man-

agement structures which had been so successful in the Genizah Research Unit.

"This has undoubtedly been achieved and the Library can with confidence point to a Division which has few equals outside.

"At the same time, the achievements of the Genizah Research Unit have in no sense been diminished. On the contrary ..."

Mediaeval experience

The next conference of the British Association for Jewish Studies will take place at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 27-29 July, 1992. The main theme will be "The Mediaeval Jewish Experience" and the following list of lecturers and titles has been tentatively arranged:

A. Broadie, "The Nature of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy."

A. David, "Late Genizah Material as a Source for the History of Eretz Yisrael."

W. Horbury, "Judah Briel and Seventeenth-Century Jewish Anti-Christian Polemic."

E. Horowitz, "The Meaning of the Jewish Beard in the Middle Ages."

I. Jacobs, "Is Peshat a Mediaeval Concept?"

L. Jacobs, "Havvayot de-Abbaye ve-Rava: The History of a Talmudic Text."

G. Khan, "The Pronunciation of Hebrew in the Middle Ages."

S. C. Reif, "The Nature of Mediaeval Jewish Liturgy."

M. Rubin, "The Birth of the Host Desecration Accusation against Jews in Late Mediaeval Europe."

N. Solomon, "Nathan ibn al-Fayyumi and Jewish-Christian Relations."

S. Stern, "Mediaeval Rabbinic Attitudes to Christian Dogmas."

H. Trautner-Kromann, "Jewish Criticism of Christianity in Mediaeval Spain and France."

M. Weitzman, "Hasdai Crescas and his Refutation of Christian Theology."

There will also be short research reports on Genizah projects at Cambridge, an exhibition, a reception and the annual general meeting of the Association.

New volumes

Cambridge University Press has just announced the publication of *Genizah Research after Ninety Years. The Case of Judaeo-Arabic*, edited by J. Blau and S. C. Reif, and appearing as No. 47 in the University's Oriental Publications series. The volume contains 21 essays.

Publication of M. L. Klein's *Targumic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* in the University Library's Genizah Series, published by CUP, is on schedule for publication in June.

Spain's 1492 legacy in Cairo Genizah

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scholars as Burke and Gurjewitch, has meant that a number of topics of Judaeo-Spanish Genizah research have recently come to the fore.

The Genizah has allowed me to document such subjects as popular medicine; examples would include the Judaeo-Spanish prescriptions against lice or haemorrhoids (see my notes in *Anuario de Filologia* 9, 1983). Yet it appears that one cannot characterize the medical culture of the whole community by these fragments.

Indeed, I was able to describe in that article a fragment that I had discovered of an unknown *aljamiado* version of a work by the highly technical mediaeval medical authority, Arnau de Villanova, as well as a copy of the printed translation by Laguna of Dioscorides.

A similar mixture of the popular and the learned occurs in other fields. One find enabled me to document for the sixteenth century a Judaeo-Spanish song of mourning (*Miri madre*) known only from truncated oral versions recorded among Sephardi women in North Africa in the late 1940s.

Another turned out to be one of

the earliest-dated known Jewish texts of the vast corpus of Judaeo-Spanish popular songs (*Jerusalem Studies in Folklore* 5-6, 1984).

It would at the same time be too hasty to conclude that this suffices to gauge the character of the Old Cairo Sephardi reading public. I found an unknown and unsuspected fragment of an *aljamiado* edition of a work typical of Renaissance culture with its classical allusions and Italianate form: Torres Naharro's *Comedia Aquilana*.

The presence of an equally unknown *aljamiado* edition of the *Tragedia Josephina*, published in Spain in the 1550s and interpreted as anti-Jewish by some modern literary critics, enabled me to reach conclusions about the continued relations with Spain and its culture of the Sephardim in post-Expulsion Cairo (*REF* 145, 1986). These works hardly support the view of a homogeneous "popular" Sephardi culture.

A combination of responsa and Genizah fragments was necessary for preparing a note on the blind in Hispano-Jewish society. Here the material used covered a wide range of subjects.

They included such responsa as

Ashbili's reply to a question (which seems to have originated in Saragossa) as to whether a blind man is allowed to serve as precentor; a letter from a blind husband in Cairo to his wife in the Holy Land; and a fifteenth-century letter in Latin characters by a blind Jew, normally resident in Jerusalem, who had to travel to Gaza where another Jew was his business agent.

Genizah material at the forefront of scholarly research is that containing translations into Spanish. No longer an exclusive or exotic area, it is now a subject central to mediaevalists, as may be gauged by recent publications by the Royal Academy in Madrid and the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

The exhibition of "Scholarship on Fifteenth-Century Hispanic Topics," at the Caroline Skeel Library, Queen Mary-Westfield, University of London (24 June - 5 July, 1991), displayed two studies on mediaeval translations dependent on the T-S Genizah Collection (E. Gutwirth in *Revista Catalana de Teologia* 13, 1988, and in *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 49, 1989).

One deals with a Catalan

glossary to Exodus in Hebrew characters, and the other with a mediaeval Castilian translation of the mishnaic tractate *'Avot* in Latin characters.

But the more conventional topics so dear to our nineteenth-century precursors are still of interest. Polemics are well represented, and a forthcoming article will deal with a Genizah fragment of the *'Even Boḥan*, which may complement my work on Judaeo-Christian polemics of the late mediaeval period.

An unknown version of the *Zikhron Divrey Romi* from the Genizah will lead to a new critical edition with English translation and complement my earlier work on Hispano-Jewish historiography.

The diversity of the Hispano-Jewish materials, whether in Castilian, Catalan, Hebrew, *aljami* or Judaeo-Spanish, is, of course, only apparently surprising. After all, is the Genizah not a reflection of the richness of Jewish culture itself? This Goitein knew full well.

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