

GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

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

Nearing a milestone in Genizah research

It was in the winter of 1896-97 that Cambridge University's talmudic specialist, Solomon Schechter, made his famous trip to Cairo. By the spring of 1897, thousands of fragments of mediaeval Jewish literature had been transported to Cambridge; and in October, 1898, they were formally presented to the University by Schechter and Charles Taylor, Master of St John's College.

With the centenary of this momentous event in Jewish scholarly history occurring in the academical year 1996-97, and culminating in the next World Congress of Jewish Studies scheduled for the summer of 1997 in Jerusalem, a number of scholars and institutions have been engaged in discus-

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

sions on how best to mark the event, not only for the specialists but also for the wider public.

During the most recent World Congress, in Jerusalem last year, a meeting was held to decide how to initiate the celebrations and how to ensure that the subject of the Genizah would receive the wide scholarly and popular attention it deserved.

Attending that meeting were Professor Joshua Blau, of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies; Professor Haggai Ben-Shammai, of the World Union of Jewish Studies; Professor Menahem Ben-Sasson, of the Ben-Zvi Institute; Prof-

essor Mordechai Friedman, of Tel Aviv University; Professor Mark Cohen, of Princeton University; Professor Edward Greenstein, of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; Dr Abraham David, of the Jewish National and University Library; and myself.

It was agreed that the next World Congress should devote part of its programme to Genizah research; that special courses on the subject be taught in 1996-97; that suitable symposia be arranged at major centres of Genizah research; and that an exhibition be mounted and arrangements made for it to

travel to various libraries and museums, with its final stop possibly at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

A major co-operative effort, rather than individual activities, is the ideal way to plan the project, with a steering committee, representing the interested parties, making all the necessary arrangements – perhaps via the World Union of Jewish Studies.

Whatever happens, unnecessary duplication and scheduling conflicts should be avoided, and the topic accorded major publicity. We owe that much to our distinguished predecessors, from Solomon Schechter onwards.

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

Bible: fact or fiction?

North-West London's Spectrum Radio interviewed Dr Stefan Reif on the controversy created by Thomas Thompson's book, *The Early History of the Israelite People*, and Thompson's claim that much of the Hebrew Bible is fiction.

Having first explained the work of the Genizah Research Unit, Dr Reif pointed out that historical approaches to religious documents were valuable in helping to explain the origins of Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions.

They were, however, often speculative and should not be presented as a superior scientific analysis as opposed to an outmoded religious commitment. The various aspects of human endeavour were complementary and not mutually exclusive.

To those for whom the Hebrew Bible is the directly mediated word of God, said Dr Reif, there is no challenge from history. To those whose self-awareness is strengthened by history, there is enough archaeological evidence to reconstruct a convincing Israelite background to the Hebrew Bible.



Veteran Cambridge Genizah researcher Dr Haskell Isaacs with a cake specially made to resemble a copy of *Genizah Fragments* on the occasion of his eightieth birthday

Beneath Byzantium

Byzantine studies have much to gain from an examination of Genizah material. Jews living in mediaeval Byzantine areas wrote not only in Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, but also in Judaeo-Greek – Greek in Hebrew characters – as well as in Greek itself.

During the Byzantine Symposium held at Cambridge in 1990, the University Lecturer in Rabbinics, Dr Nicholas de Lange, working with Genizah Research Unit staff, prepared an exhibition of items of Byzantine interest for display in the University Library (see *Genizah Fragments* 20, 1990).

Such was the interest aroused that he thought it worthwhile to publish brief descriptions of all the exhibited items, plus a few more. These have now appeared in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 16 (1992), pages 34-47.

The first fragments discussed belong to the biblical and liturgical fields and include palimpsests dating from the sixth century.

The second area covers the everyday life of the Jews in Byzantium as illustrated in documents and letters; and the third concentrates on the correspondence of Tobias Ben Moses, a leading figure of

Karaism in the eleventh century.

Two further groups of fragments centre on Byzantine Jews in Egypt and on Byzantium in Jewish life, while the remaining two blocks of material contain the correspondence of the tenth-century Spanish-Jewish diplomat, Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, and of Nehorai Ben Nissim, an eleventh-century businessman in Cairo.

A total of 41 fragments are described, all but one (from Westminster College, Cambridge) at Cambridge University Library.

ON OTHER PAGES

Missing pieces from a Sassoon jigsaw 2

New interpretation of circumcision 3

British Academy's £8,500 contribution 3

Fresh insights into Schechter's life 4

How you can help: page 2

Missing pieces from a Sassoon jigsaw

An eighth-century Jewish legal code associated with the name of Yehudai Gaon, *Halakhot Pesuqot* (= HP), is the subject of a detailed study by Dr Neil Danzig. The original text was published in 1951 by the late Rabbi Solomon David Sassoon, of Letchworth in England, from an incomplete unicum manuscript found in his father's library.

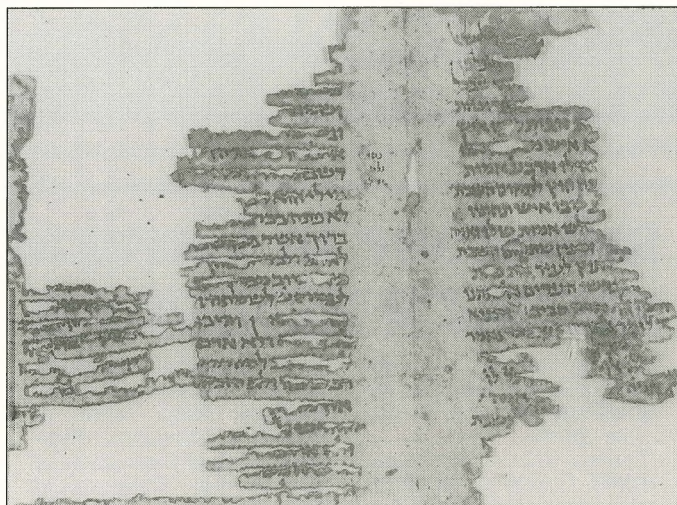
Danzig's book, written in Hebrew and recently published by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, is entitled *Maro Le-Sefer Halakhot Pesuqot* (Introduction to HP) and relies heavily on his research into Cairo Genizah materials, including those in the Taylor-Schechter Collection at Cambridge.

Of more than 300 Genizah fragments quoted or cited, half are in Cambridge University Library; 50 are identified as belonging to HP. The chapters missing in Sassoon's text are published for the first time, collated from various Genizah fragments.

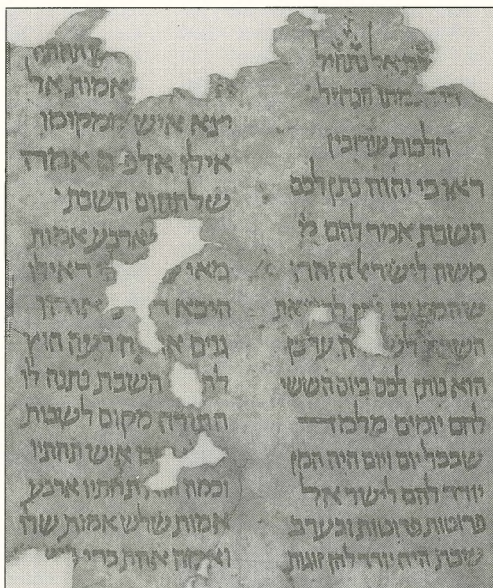
The nature of this elusive work has intrigued scholars since the last century. Prior to the appearance of Sassoon's edition, Simcha Assaf published a Cambridge Genizah fragment (T-S K6.188) in his *Responsa Geonica* (Jerusalem, 1942), consisting of the first page of a text in which an owner's signature identifies the leaf as belonging to the *Halakhot* (without further specification) of Yehudai Gaon, who was head of the academy at Sura in Babylonia.

Sassoon and other scholars of his day assumed that this leaf came from a work alternatively known as HP. This theory was contested and it was claimed that Sassoon's text was not the original code written under Yehudai's auspices, but an abridgement of another geonic code, *Halakhot Gedolot*.

Despite efforts to locate in the



T-S NS 291.77 and T-S K6.188: two parts of the literary jigsaw pieced together by Dr Neil Danzig, the first (above) badly damaged and the second well preserved



Genizah other pages belonging to Assaf's manuscript, no fragments have been found to verify it as indeed being the opening page of HP. It is likely that only the first page became detached from the manuscript and was deposited in the Genizah.

Danzig has, however, discovered a bifolium from the beginning of another manuscript (T-S NS 291.77) that helps to solve the puzzle. Although severely damaged and difficult to read, the first leaf contains the same text as that found in Assaf's fragment, and the

attached leaf covers a portion of the following chapter.

Another bifolium from this fascicle (T-S F8.97), as well as other leaves from ensuing fascicles (among them T-S F2(1).34), do indeed parallel sections of Sassoon's text. The text of Sassoon's manuscript is thus unquestionably the same work attributed to Yehudai by the owner of that Genizah manuscript.

Another puzzle relating to Sassoon's text has been solved using Cambridge Genizah material. Sassoon's manuscript includes the laws of *terefot* according to the customs of the Land of Israel. This lent support to those who questioned the authenticity of Sassoon's text, since it is unlikely that the customs of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel would have been accepted by Yehudai, who fought fiercely to uphold Babylonian traditions.

Another Cambridge fragment (Or.1080 4.18) resolves this issue: while it covers the end of the previous chapter and the beginning of the next, it does not include this section. It appears, then, that it was not part of the original work and may have been added by the scribe of Sassoon's manuscript.

Danzig's book includes analyses of allied codes of the geonic period, especially *Halakhot Gedolot*, written by Simeon Qayyara; *Halakhot Qesuvot* erroneously attributed to Yehudai; and the anonymous *Halakhot Qetanot*. The traditions of *Halakhot Pesuqot* and of Yehudai are also studied, and the pivotal role played by Yehudai in transmitting these laws is clearly established.

Danzig has also recently completed a five-year project to catalogue the Elkan Nathan Adler collection of Genizah fragments at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, on its New York campus.

The project, funded in part by the United States Government through its National Endowment for the Humanities, included Dr Stefan Reif as a member of its advisory board and consulted several researchers at various academic centres who had worked in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Unit.

The database listing of all the fragments in that collection that the project has recently completed will be accessible through the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), and a catalogue of the rabbinic material is being prepared for publication.

How you can help the T-S Genizah Unit

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 Stefan Reif, Director of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, at Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR, England (fax number 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 American Friends of Cambridge University, c/o its President, Mr Stephen C. Price, at 466 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, 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.



Libraries focus on technology

Researchers in the Genizah Unit played an important part in hosting the annual meeting of the National Council on Orientalist Library Resources, held at Cambridge University Library in December under the chairmanship of Mr John McIlwaine, of University College London.

Lecturers and discussions focused on the use of state-of-the-art computer technology by orientalist librarians. Work recently done on Cambridge University Library's Hebrew and Genizah material was among the examples demonstrated.

Particular attention was paid to

the catalogue of almost 1,000 complete Hebrew codices now being prepared at Cambridge University Library; and Hebrew and Arabic specialist, Mrs Jill Butterworth, spoke about the Library's use of the Israeli libraries network (ALEPH), with Hebrew, Arabic and Cyrillic, as well as Roman script, on screen.

Pictured above at the meeting are (left to right) Mr Craig Jamieson, one of the main speakers; Dr Fred Ratcliffe, the Cambridge University Librarian, who welcomed the delegates; Dr Stefan Reif, director of the T-S Genizah Research Unit; and Mr McIlwaine.

New interpretation of circumcision

With Heinz Fahr, I have published an edition of T-S B13.12, entitled *Jordandurchzug und Beschneidung als Zurechtweisung in einem Targum zu Josua 5*, which appears as No. 3 in the *Orientalia Biblica et Christiana* series published by J. J. Augustin (Glückstadt, 1991).

The manuscript T-S B13.12 has been widely known – since Kahle mentioned it in *The Cairo Geniza* in 1947 – as testimony to an unpublished targum to the prophets in a dialect of spoken Palestinian Aramaic. Its importance, however, goes well beyond the scope of the dialectical debate that was once the preoccupation of the Kahle school.

The five leaves contain the festival *hafarah* reading for Passover in its liturgical frame, with alphabetic introduction, blessings, short résumé of the context in Joshua 3:4 and the usual targum to Joshua 5:2–15, as well as an “epilogue” of Joshua 6:1f.

Besides this arrangement, the manuscript is of special interest for the contents of the Aramaic rendering of the Hebrew text of Joshua 5:2–15, which is partly attested by two other manuscripts outside the Cambridge Genizah Collection but is not in accordance with the standard targum.

The interpretation of circumcision especially deserves attention. In the biblical text, circumcision is an important act that marks the separation between the 40 years' time span in the wilderness – in which circumcision was not practised on the children born on the

way – and the new age that begins with the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land.

T-S B13.12 (=CG) does not mention circumcision at all, just as Josephus omits it in his reference to the Passover of Gilgal in *Antiquities* V:20f.

Instead of the rite of circumcision, CG interprets the biblical text as referring to an admonition delivered by representatives of God – namely, wise men. Their teaching is connected with the eschatological expectations of the righteous who are to enter the Promised Land and their final separation from those who do not abandon their wicked ways.

Circumcision is thus interpreted in terms of such biblical texts as Deuteronomy 30:1f and Jeremiah 4:4f, which deal with the circumcision of the heart and the repentance that the angel Uriel demands in the CG version of verse 15.

Since Joshua 5 is one of the cornerstones of the rabbinic debate about the rites to be performed by proselytes, the question arises: What is the Jewish milieu of this divergent text?

Some hints point in the direction of the Second Temple period and its literature. The Book of Jubilees (ch. 50) has a similar expectation of an eschatological Passover and a crossing into the land.

In the Damascus Document 20:14, the 40 years until “the end of all the men of war” should be seen as a reference more to Joshua 5:6 than to Deuteronomy 2:14 because of the number cited. (Similar hope is expressed in 4QpPs 37 2:5 and in 1QM 2:7f.)

The role of those who enter the community to circumcise their hearts (see 1QS 5:5f) and who admonish each other according to Leviticus 19:18 is similar to that of those who deliver the admonition in CG and is reminiscent of the Essene scenario of crossing into the covenant (Deuteronomy 29:30).

Joining the symbolic military order is depicted in terms that relate to the crossing of the Jordan and the Jericho campaign in Joshua 3–6.

For the interpretation of CG, this background seems at the moment the most plausible context among ancient Judaism. Our book seeks to demonstrate that the targumist is the author of a new text which sees itself not only as a translation, but also as intent on making a relevant contribution to the issue of eschatology.

UWE GLESSMER
Old Testament Seminar,
University of Hamburg

Academy gives further award

Outstanding contributions made to Genizah Unit funding in recent months have included £8,506 from the British Academy; £5,432 from St John's College Cambridge; £3,000 from an international foundation that wishes to remain anonymous; and \$3,000 from the Georges Lurcy Charitable and Educational Trust (through the American Friends of Cambridge University).

Other major supporters have been Mr Samuel Sebba (£1,500); the Corob Charitable Trust (£1,257); Dr Ralph Kohn (£1,000); Mr Cyril Stein (£1,000); and the Kessler Foundation, whose award of £1,000 was its first to the Unit, and whose income is derived from the *Jewish Chronicle*.

Cambridge Genizah research also benefited from the continued assistance provided by the Goldberg Charitable Trust (£750); the Jewish Memorial Council (£700); Mrs Marjorie Glick (£533); Sir Trevor Chinn, of Lex Services

plc (£500); and Mr Michael Phillips (£500).

Helpful renewals of their support have been made by Ruth and Conrad Morris (£350); Harry and Gertie Landy (£300); Mr A. S. Oppenheimer (£300); Fred and Della Worms (£300); Philip and Hilary Maurice (£250); Mr T. H. Reitman (£250); Mrs Helena Sebba (£250); with new support from Harvey and Adrienne Beckman (£200).

The Genizah Unit is grateful for gifts of £100 received from Michael and Esmé Daniels, Anthony and Diana Rau, Mr E. M. Rosenbluth, Mrs Judith Samuel, and David and Helen Solomons.

Anonymous and smaller donations totalling £2,208 are also much appreciated.

The Trustees of the John S. Cohen Foundation have awarded £12,000 to the University of Cambridge in support of two of the Research Unit's current projects. The sum of £7,867 has been earmarked for the description of the Judaeo-Arabic fragments and £4,133 for work on mediaeval Hebrew poetry in the Taylor-Schechter Collection. The grant will be made in October, 1994.

Fresh insights into Schechter's life

How does a robust, noisy, unkempt East European rabbi with a Lubavitch background get on with a mild, unassuming, public-school educated and well-turned-out Cambridge classicist? Pretty well, particularly if the Cambridge man has almost limitless goodwill and tolerance!

This is the impression concerning the relationship between Solomon Schechter, Genizah scholar and Reader in Talmudic in the University of Cambridge, and Francis Jenkinson, Cambridge University Librarian, given by Stefan Reif in "Jenkinson and Schechter at Cambridge: an expanded and updated assessment" (*Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, Vol. 32, 1992), a published version of his presidential lecture to the Jewish Historical Society of England in October, 1991.

Reif has much to back up his assessment. With the use of archive material from Cambridge University Library and the Jewish Theological Seminary, including the memoirs of Mathilde Schechter, the correspondence of Solomon Schechter

and the diaries of Francis Jenkinson, the working relationship of Schechter and Jenkinson between 1890 and 1902 (hardly mentioned in their respective biographies) is presented in a new perspective.

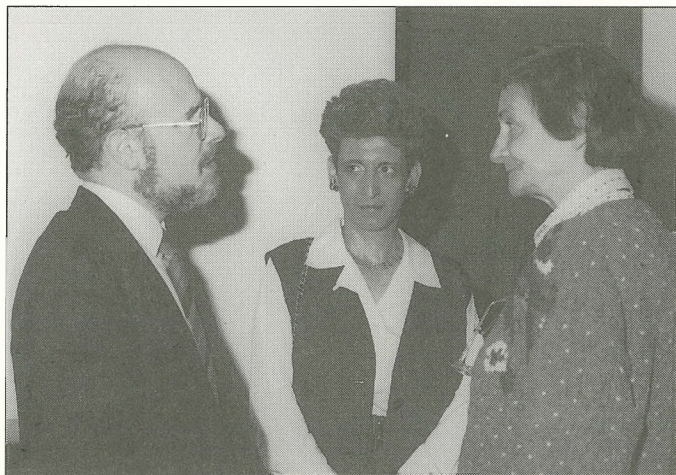
Given their different backgrounds and distinctive temperaments, as summarised at the beginning of his article, Reif gives the impression that Schechter and Jenkinson complemented each other – Jenkinson bringing the methodology, orderliness and guidance of a University Librarian to Schechter's passion for learning.

Spending a number of hours each day at the University Library, Schechter came into daily contact with Jenkinson, and the article illustrates how instrumental and accommodating he was in facilitating Schechter's research.

He arranged his colleague's visit to Cairo and trips abroad to consult Hebrew manuscripts; he advised on matters of conservation and binding; and he provided a room in the Library for Schechter to sort out the fragments and carry out his research.

Jenkinson once opened the Library on a Sunday to assist Schechter in an urgent matter regarding the numbering of Hebrew manuscripts; and on many occasions he remained with Schechter until late in the evening before closing the Library for the night – at that time the Librarian's duty.

Reif notes how discreet Jenkinson must have been when it came to giving other scholars access to Genizah material on which Schechter was working; and the diplomatic skills required by Jenkinson to ensure that due credit was given to Schechter on the title page of Burkitt's edition of *Fragments of the Book of Kings*



Dr Stefan Reif greeting Mrs Hana Raviv (right), wife of the Israeli Ambassador, Mrs Amira Meir, wife of the Minister Plenipotentiary, and other visitors from the Israeli Embassy. A party of 35 visited the Genizah Unit in January

according to the *Translation of Aquila* (Cambridge, 1898).

On a number of occasions, Jenkinson defended Schechter – when, for example, he criticised George Margoliouth, of the British Museum, for having rushed to publish two leaves of Ben Sira rather than handing them over to the University Library for Schechter to incorporate in his own work.

Jenkinson also came to Schechter's defence in helping to draft a letter refuting an anonymous attack, suggesting that real credit for the discovery of the Cairo Genizah should go to Elkan Nathan Adler.

There were times, however, when a clash of cultures between the two men was manifest. On one occasion, Schechter burst into a Library meeting in order to consult Jenkinson on the publication of the Ben Sira edition, provoking Jenkinson to reply in an angry letter expatiating on Library regulations and politeness!

Reif's understanding of Schechter's life and character provides interesting insights into this complex personality. We

learn, for example, about the relationship between Schechter's Orthodox Jewish upbringing and his scientific approach to the study of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*), and about Schechter's inability to find appreciation for Jewish culture in the Anglo-Jewish community, one of the factors which led to his leaving for America to re-establish the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Equally interesting is the fact that he never felt fully at home in the Cambridge academic community, where he was made a member of Christ's College but not a fellow; where, although promoted to Reader in the University, he was not offered a professorship.

Schechter was not above criticising his colleagues and contemporaries, and his opinion of other scholars and academics makes for amusing reading. His general opinion of Marcus and Morris Jastrow and of Israel Abrahams, for example, was pretty low; and when it came to Genizah research, the abilities of Israel Abrahams and Herbert Loewe did not impress him. He also had his doubts about Hartwig Hirschfeld, though these were later allayed by Jenkinson.

Schechter's attitude is aptly summed up in one of his letters, where he complained that some scholars knew less about the contents of the Genizah than did the bookbinder in the Library!

COLIN F. BAKER

Research Associate
T-S Genizah Research Unit

Presidents one and all

Presidential activity highlighted a meeting in London to mark the 100th anniversary – to the day – of the first lecture delivered to the Jewish Historical Society of England (on 11 November, 1893) by its founding president, Lucien Wolf.

Wolf was the famous publicist and historian who, with Solomon Schechter, was a member of The Wanderers, a Jewish intellectual group in late nineteenth-century London.

The proceedings were chaired by last year's president, Professor Aubrey Newman, and greetings were conveyed by the president of the British Academy, Sir Keith Thomas, and by a council member representing the president of the Royal Historical Society, Professor Olive Anderson.

The anniversary lecture, on Lucien Wolf, was delivered by Judge Israel Finestein, currently president of the Jewish Historical Society; and the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Stefan Reif, president of the Society in 1991–92.

Unravelling the law

No serious student of mediaeval Arabic and Islamic sources can afford to ignore the latest publication in Cambridge University Library's *Genizah Series* (No. 10) – *Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents in the Cambridge Genizah Collections*, by Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge University Press).

Most of these documents were produced in Fustāṭ (old Cairo) in the Fatimid period (10th–12th centuries C.E.), and were written by Muslim notaries or officials, although a large number concern Jews.

The documents, few of which have been studied before, constitute a unique source for the social and political history of mediaeval Egypt, particularly touching on Muslim–Jewish relations. They also offer a penetrating insight into the practice of law in mediaeval Islam and the administrative structure of government offices.

These fully transcribed, translated and annotated documents comprise important primary source material for a number of disciplines, including Middle Eastern history, Jewish history, Arabic philology, and Islamic law.

IN NEXT ISSUE

Taylor-Schechter in 1930
Dating the manuscripts
found in Cairo
More Genizah magical
fragments revealed