

# GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

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

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## Digitisation project: 65,000 and counting



Six months have now passed and the mammoth task of digitising the Taylor-Schechter Collection is well underway. Thanks to the strenuous efforts of the photographic team, 65,000 images are already safely stored away on the Library's DSpace digital repository. This significant landmark is the work of five dedicated staff who spend their days in a set of former darkrooms located in the heart of Cambridge University Library's Imaging Services Department.

Little more than the click of shutters and the rustle of melinex — the archival polyester

which protects most of the T-S manuscripts — emanates from the digitising suite, as more than 500 superbly high-quality digital images are shot every day. More than 310,000 images will be produced by project's end, and the experienced team — four photographers and project manager Maciej Pawlikowski — are well on schedule to achieve this within three years.

Thanks to a grant of more than £1 million from the Friedberg family of Toronto, the Library has been able to invest in a range of specialised equipment to ensure that the highest quality digital

**T-S AS 32.1 is part of a medieval Torah scroll and contains several chapters of the book of Numbers. This piece measures 120 cm by 65 cm and was too large to be photographed as a single image, so it was shot as 12 separate images that were then digitally stitched together.**

photographs are captured in the most efficient way. A number of 39 and 60 megapixel single-shot digital cameras are used to photograph the great majority of Genizah manuscripts — mainly those of A4 size and smaller — while larger cameras and an enormous purpose-built archival scanner (capable of copying fragments up to A1 in size) are called upon for those of greater size.

Genizah manuscripts range in size from scraps smaller than a postage stamp to sheets of vellum the size of a rug. Fractured sections of Torah scrolls or the impressive *ketubbot* of Fustat's leading dignitaries tend to be at the larger end of the scale, and these pose significant problems for the photographers. In some cases individual manuscripts have been too large to photograph even on the A1 scanner and instead have had to be shot as a mosaic of many images which are then meticulously — and seamlessly — stitched together on the computer. This is something of an art, and the photographic team will be acquiring considerable practice at it over the next two and a half years.

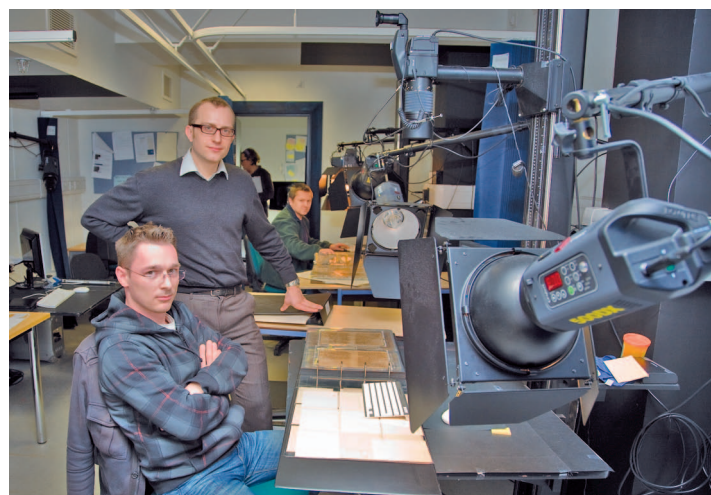
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The smallest pieces of the Genizah Collection are the so-called “minute fragments”, which often retain only a word or even a few letters of legible text. The Friedberg-sponsored project aims to record every fragment from the T-S Collection, however, no matter how small or insignificant it may appear, with the hope of eventually piecing these scattered fragments together digitally and recovering the original texts. To this end much patient work with tweezers has been carried out, placing and orienting hundreds of the tiny scraps for the camera, before

painstakingly turning them over to capture the reverse.

With six months of the project completed, and some significant hurdles overcome, the digitisation team have shown great diligence and professionalism. The remaining thirty months of the project will present challenges — not least the awkward “bound volumes” of the Old Series, whose irregular sizes and bindings will necessitate frequent changes of focus and position — but we are sure that the project staff will continue to show their expertise and complete this essential project.



Left to right **Blazej Mikula**, project manager **Maciej Pawlikowski** and **Mark Scudder**, three fifths of the UL's crack Genizah imaging team (**Unit secretary Sarah Sykes** in background)

## The critical importance of Targum fragments

At the Targum Institute in the Protestant Theological University of the Netherlands (Kampen) a project entitled *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World: An Encounter* is currently under way. The team are collating the known extant Ashkenazi, Italian, and Sephardic witnesses of Targum Jonathan to Samuel, and analysing their textual, paleographic, and codicological features. Our aim is to identify possible Christian influences on the text and to assess the value of each textual witness for text-critical purposes. When complete this work will provide some of the foundations for the new critical editions planned by the International Targum Text Edition Project ([www.targum.info](http://www.targum.info)) to replace Alexander Sperber's problematic editions.

The Taylor-Schechter Collection will play an important role in the realisation of this project.

In preparing his critical edition of Targum Jonathan to the Former Prophets (1959), Sperber made use of fragments from the Taylor-Schechter Collection (a task not to be underestimated in the days before Michael Klein's catalogue). Regrettably he did not deal with fragments individually, but rather grouped them under a single siglum (“Fr”); consequently we are now at a loss to know precisely which fragments he used. At 2 Samuel 22, David's song of thanksgiving, Sperber records

142 variants under the siglum “Fr”, many of which exhibit intriguing variations (the main text of 22:47 reads, for example, “the redemption that was performed for your Messiah and to the remnant of your people who were left over”, in place of “for your people”). But of these 142 variants, only 24 can be found in the 21 Genizah fragments identified by Klein. Unfortunately these 24 variants do not include any of the really intriguing variants listed by Sperber, instead they concern mostly minor textual features.

What then of the remaining 118 variants? A brief review of the content of these variants suggests that we are not dealing with the main textual tradition of Targum Jonathan. A significant number of the variants exhibit a clear theological intent (for example **אלהא הייא רבא גיברא דחילא** in place of the tetragrammaton in 22:48), or the harmonisation and/or clarification of the text. At many points the language is more or less identical to that known from a Tosefta Targum found

in *mahzorim* following the Italian rite, though it has not yet been possible to identify its source in the Genizah Collection, so a puzzle remains.

Based on variants that occur in only one of the T-S fragments it is possible to conjecture that Sperber consulted at least four fragments: T-S B6.10; T-S B11.120; T-S NS 197.76; and T-S B6.8. We can also assume that Sperber did not consult T-S AS 70.238 + 70.240, since he does not record certain key readings (**ממריה** for **ממריה** at 22:9, for example). The remaining T-S fragments not consulted by Sperber yield a few variants, all of which can justifiably be omitted from a critical apparatus.

This brief insight into a tiny number of the Genizah targum fragments confirms the outstanding need to evaluate their text-critical value, but it also provides a sobering reminder of the magnitude of the task that lies ahead.

**Hector Patmore**  
*Protestant Theological University of the Netherlands*







T-S 12.122, the so-called “Kiev letter”, is believed to be first-hand evidence of the presence of Khazarian Jews in Kiev in the tenth century. This important document can be seen, until 24 May, in the Louvre, as part of their major exhibition “Holy Russia: Russian Art from the Beginnings to Peter the Great”.



## Mrs Shulie Reif z"l

Just as we were putting the finishing touches to this edition of *Genizah Fragments*, we learned with great sadness of the death of Shulie Reif, wife of Professor Stefan Reif, who, for many years, worked closely with him in the Unit, editing volumes of the *Genizah Series*. As many will know, Shulie had been ill with cancer for some time, but had resolutely fought a remarkable battle against the disease. She died on 19 February 2010 at home in Bet Shemesh with her family around her.

## HEAD LINES

It has always been a great source of satisfaction in the Unit when alumni of its projects have gone on to eminent careers in universities and academic libraries around the world. It is with a mixture of pride and sadness therefore that we have recently said goodbye to Dr Rebecca Jefferson, long-serving bibliographer, researcher and, latterly, editor of the *Genizah Fragments* newsletter. She has been appointed as the new Judaica librarian of the Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica at the University of Florida, a role for which her many years of maintaining the bibliography and administering the Taylor-Schechter Collection have given her an excellent preparation. She and her family have just relocated to Gainesville, Florida, and we wish them all the best.

In place of Rebecca, we are pleased to welcome Dr Julia Krivoruchko to carry on the important work of keeping the bibliography up to date. She is a highly qualified researcher, one of the world's leading experts on Judaeo-Greek, and already has considerable experience with *Genizah* manuscripts, having recently completed a major project on the Byzantine Bible with Professor Nicholas de Lange of the Divinity Faculty. She also brings with her an impressive array of technical skills.

Soon, too, we shall be fortunate in being able to draw upon the expertise of two new members of staff, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of our project to delve into the Old Series of the T-S Collection. Dr Gabriele Ferrario will be joining us from Italy. An Arabist who specialises in the medieval alchemical tradition, he will be working principally upon manuscripts written in — sometimes quite impenetrable — Arabic script. From Israel, we shall be welcoming Dr Amir Ashur, a veritable veteran of *Genizah* research who has worked for many years with Professor Mordechai Akiva Friedman of Tel Aviv University on a number of projects including the celebrated *India Book*.

With these new appointments, and with the experience and knowledge of our current researchers to draw upon, we can look with optimism on the future of *Genizah* research at Cambridge. Though the recent economic crisis is easing (albeit slowly), academic research and higher education generally in this country face a lean few years, so we have been fortunate in having been able to make these new appointments now and ensure that our current projects meet their goals.

The *Genizah Research Unit* is grateful for the major funding received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, and the Friedberg *Genizah Project*. We are also extremely grateful for the continued support of our many friends, particularly through these tough economic times: the Cohen Charitable Trust (£5000); the Manifold Trust (£300); Jason Kravitt (\$500); Norman Shelton (£100); Michael Rose (£250); Southgate and District Synagogue (£120); the P. & H. Maurice Charitable Trust (£100); the Harry and Gertrude Landy Charitable Trust (£100); the Sterling Charitable Trust (£100); Alan Kaye (£100), and other anonymous and smaller donations.

# Endangered Archive

It is sometimes forgotten that a small but important Genizah manuscript collection (the sister collection to the T-S) can be found at Westminster College in Cambridge. Its 2565 manuscript leaves contain the same type of texts found in other Genizah collections, but with a high proportion of biblical and rabbinic material. Medieval liturgical material comprises a quarter of the Westminster Collection, and the remaining quarter are miscellaneous pieces, fragments housed in glass, or fragments in Arabic, all of which date from the Middle Ages.

The Westminster College Genizah Collection was amassed by Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson: the famous twin sisters who were respected scholars of Syriac and Arabic and discoverers and collectors of important Near Eastern manuscripts.

On one of their trips to Egypt and Palestine in the spring of 1896, the sisters acquired two bundles of Hebrew manuscripts which they showed to their friend, Solo-

mon Schechter. Among them, Schechter found a page from the lost book of Ben Sira in Hebrew. This exciting discovery led Schechter to seek out its source which turned out to be the massive hoard of manuscripts now known as the Cairo Genizah.

Agnes and Margaret visited Schechter while he was in Cairo retrieving the Cairo Genizah manuscripts. Agnes later described how she and her sister helped Schechter to buy back manuscripts that had been "lifted" from his pile and sold in the nearby antique shops. The sisters selected and kept for themselves many biblical manuscripts that were of interest to them.

These hand-selected purchases together with the bundles that they had bought the previous year were cleaned, numbered, and bound into books by the sisters themselves. The manuscripts were later bequeathed to the theological college that they had founded in Cambridge: Westminster.

Today, the Collection continues to be an important source for Genizah research. Yet the archive is deteriorating as the combination of nineteenth-century conservation techniques, a century of visiting scholars and the damp English climate take their toll. Many pages are coming loose from their bindings and some fragments crumble and break upon touch. A number even feel damp and have patches of mould.

The Genizah conservator at Cambridge University Library, Lucy Cheng, has been looking into ways of providing temporary preservation solutions that would both prevent further deterioration and allow the manuscripts to be photographed, thus ensuring a permanent digital record of the Collection. It is hoped that funding can be found for these interim measures, but ultimately the Collection is in need of the kind of treatment that the Mosseri Collection is currently undergoing.

**Rebecca Jefferson**

*University of Florida*

The Unit was greatly saddened to hear of the death of Mrs Miriam (Mamie) Shenkin, of Giffnock, Glasgow, who had a keen interest in Genizah research and was one of our most steadfast supporters. Her son, Alan Shenkin, reported that she passed away in October at the age of 92.

**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.**

## 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](mailto: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](http://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.

