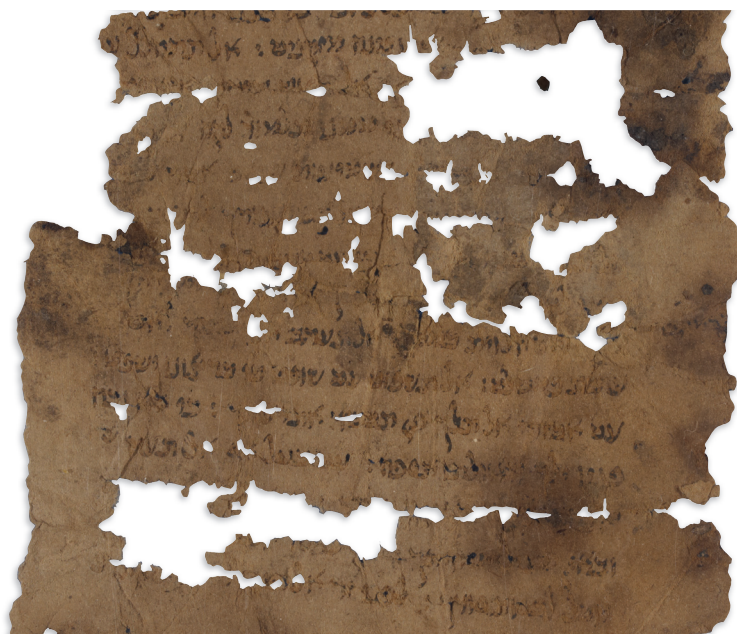


GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

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

No. 61 April 2011

More Ben Sira uncovered



From the verso of the new leaf of Ecclesiasticus, T-S AS 118.78.

The original Hebrew text of the apocryphal book of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) lies at the heart of the story of the discovery of the Cairo Genizah and the subsequent dispersal of its contents to the libraries of Europe and the United States. In 1896 the twin sisters Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson returned from a trip to Cairo with a number of leaves from the Genizah that they had succeeded in

purchasing. When they showed these leaves to Solomon Schechter at Cambridge University, he quickly recognised among them the remains of the Hebrew Ben Sira. Schechter's discovery touched off a bitter rivalry between himself and Adolf Neubauer of Oxford University, the object of which was the identification of further fragments of this book. It was in the course of this rivalry that Schechter travelled to Cairo

and secured permission to transfer the bulk of the contents of the Genizah to Cambridge University Library.

Within several years of Schechter's discovery, scholars had recovered over half of the original Hebrew of Ben Sira among the Genizah materials. The search for additional fragments continued over the course of the twentieth century, with impressive results. To date, fragments stemming from six different manuscripts of Ben Sira have been identified in the Genizah. These manuscripts are conventionally labelled A–F. The Genizah finds, moreover, have been supplemented by manuscripts of even greater antiquity, which have been discovered at Qumran and Masada.

With the great progress made in the systematic investigation of the Genizah materials in the latter part of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, the prospects of finding further Ben Sira fragments in the various collections have dwindled significantly. It is against the background of this fact that we must judge the

excitement of the discovery of a new fragment in the Additional Series of the Taylor-Schechter Collection, T-S AS 118.78. The new fragment belongs to MS D, which had been represented up till now by a single leaf from the collection of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris, ID 1. It contains the text of Ben Sira 7:18–8:18, which deals with the themes of morality, wisdom and virtue. Indeed, Ben Sira 8:8 is particularly apt: 'Despise not the discourse of the wise, but acquaint thyself with their proverbs'. We are now better acquainted with the writings of Ben Sira thanks to the preliminary identification by Sarah Cohen at the Ezra Fleischer Institute for the Research of Hebrew Poetry in the Genizah, who examined the manuscript in the course of the systematic cataloguing of the poetic fragments contained in the T-S Additional Series. This identification was subsequently confirmed by Shulamit Elizur, the Institute's director.

**Shulamit Elizur and
Michael Rand**

Three Genizah Peaces

Can Genizah texts illuminate Jewish theological history? In the realm of Jewish liturgy they certainly at times reveal some interesting data.

The final benediction in the daily *'amidah* is known to the early rabbis as both **ברכת כוהנים** ('blessing of the priests') and **שִׁים שְׁלוֹם** ('grant peace'; evidently because it contains the priestly blessing (Num. 6:24–26) as well as a request for peace (*shalom*). These two elements, originating in the Hebrew Bible and in rabbinic liturgical formulation, were fused at an early date.

What kind of peace was being sought by the rabbinic worshipper? There are three textual prototypes for this benediction in the post-talmudic and Genizah periods. A close examination of these identifies the theological preferences of those finalising the wording.

Most common among Genizah fragments is the longest formulation, favoured by Babylonian authorities, and recorded by Maimonides. It requests, for 'us and Israel your people' (**עָלֵינוּ וְעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ**), not only *shalom* but also 'good, blessing, favour, benevolence and compassion', and craves divine blessing 'from the light of God's countenance' (**מֵאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ**)

for the whole Jewish people, 'all of us together' (**כֻּלָּנוּ כְּאֶחָד**). Such blessing, declares this formulation, has already ensured for Israel throughout history the gifts of Torah, life, love, benevolence, justice, compassion, blessing and *shalom*.

The body of the benediction ends with an appeal for God to agree to bless his people Israel at all times and the eulogy (**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'**) praises God as the one who blesses his people Israel. Since *shalom* is included in both lists of benefits, the implication is that the word is being understood in its basic biblical sense of total well-being, including of course the absence of conflict.

The message conveyed by the phrase 'all of us together' is that we have moved from an elitist arrangement, that sets the priests atop the hierarchy, to a more democratic set-up, where God (who has this power, as indicated in the priestly blessing) is asked to offer his blessing to everyone, and no mention is made of mediators.

The second textual format was not the only one used by the Jews in their pre-Crusader homeland but certainly appears regularly in Genizah remnants of their rite. It asks God to grant 'your *shalom*' (**שִׁים שְׁלוֹמְךָ**) to Israel, and some versions include,

variously, its people, its land, its city and its sanctuary. The central portion, as in the first prototype, requests a blessing 'for us', and the benediction immediately concludes with a eulogy of God as 'creator of *shalom*' (**עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם**). Although a democratic tendency is again revealed in some texts by the use of the phrase 'all of us together', there appears to be another religious message here.

Shalom is not in a list of benefits and is described simply as belonging to God and as his creation. The plea is therefore for a gift of whatever the priests were requesting in their blessing, and it is broadly defined as of divine origin and possession. *Shalom* here is related to the *shalom* that occurs in rabbinic passages concerned with the special relationships between God and Israel, between God and the heavenly retinue, and between God and the cosmos. It is then less a practical state of affairs and more a spiritual notion, with an affinity to concepts of divine emanation in neoplatonic religious thought.

The third formulation probably originated in the land of Israel but has, in spite of some earlier mentions, especially in Genizah texts, survived only in the Ashkenazi rite. It is used on occasions when the priestly

blessing itself is not recited, such as during the afternoon and evening services.

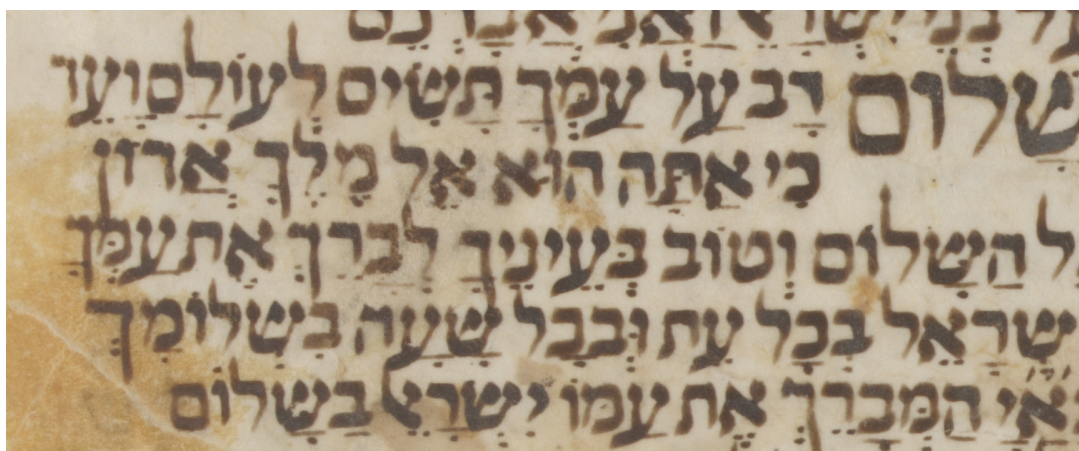
It begins with a request to God for 'ample *shalom*' (**שְׁלוֹם רַב**) to be eternally granted to Israel 'your people' because God is the 'royal master of all *shalom*' (**מֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹן לְכָל הַשְׁלוֹם**) and concludes with an appeal for God to agree to bless his people Israel at all times with his *shalom*. Although the eulogy, as in the first formulation, praises God as the one who blesses his people Israel, its original format probably referred to God as source, master or creator of peace.

Here God, who controls peace, is asked to grant it in abundance to his people Israel. The final appeal — possibly an addendum — does not depart from this theme but stresses that *shalom* comes directly from God and prays for a constant supply to Israel. Taking into account all these factors, it seems clear that the sense of *shalom* in this third formulation is virtually identical to the one earlier identified in the second textual version.

(Brief extract from a full treatment to be published in the forthcoming *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Year Book 2010*, ed. P. C. Beentjes)

Stefan C. Reif

The prayer *Sim Shalom* from T-S NS 123.105.



Have you seen our
Fragment of the Month
feature on the website?

[www.lib.cam.ac.uk/
Taylor-Schechter/fofm](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter/fofm)

OBITUARY

Genizah researchers in the Unit have been deeply saddened by the recent deaths of three friends who had taken a close personal interest in Genizah research and had, for over thirty years, provided generous support for work on the fragments at Cambridge University Library.

Cyril Stein was a highly successful businessman who transformed the small betting firm of Ladbrokes into a major international company with wide interests in the world of hotels and catering. Even at the busiest period of his commercial career, Cyril, with his wife Betty always by his side and fully supportive, found time actively to promote and support Hebrew and Zionist education, a love of Israel and its

development over the centuries, and historical Jewish scholarship. He and Betty played a major role in attracting support for the Genizah Research Unit in its earliest years, visited Cambridge to see the Genizah Collection, and, continuing into their years of retirement, always took a keen interest in its progress and achievements.

Renée Lauffer belonged to a philanthropic family that agreed to give their daughters a high level of education long before it became customary to do so. Renée was trained as a teacher and was involved in special education for many years. She and her late husband, David, were not only interested in higher education but especially fascinated by the study of history.

They participated in an early fund-raising dinner held at Cambridge University Library, and last summer Renée and her sister Dr Vivienne Cohen paid a visit to the Unit to acquaint themselves with its most recent research discoveries and to meet members of its staff. Renée reported afterwards how greatly she had enjoyed the experience.

Raymond Burton's father, Montague Burton, was the founder of the chain of retail tailoring stores and Raymond himself came into the family business and established many new areas of commercial activity, including a move to provide fashionable clothes for women as well as men. He followed the family tradition of involvement in the support of learning in its numerous manifestations.

Raymond was patron of education and the arts and took a warm, personal interest in the projects he supported. He visited Cambridge University Library to view an exhibition of Genizah fragments and personally corresponded with the Unit over a number of years.

All three benefactors understood the educational importance of manuscript research and historical investigation and also gave generously of their time and their resources to support scholarly initiatives. They did so with enthusiasm and with kindness and some of the staff in the Unit who had known them for many years came to regard them as personal friends as well as active supporters. They will be greatly missed.

Head lines

Despite our best efforts, and Stefan Reif's over many years, there are still a great many people who've never heard of the Cairo Genizah. Hopefully, the next year will change all that as two major new books on the Collection are released. Mark Glickman's 'Sacred Treasure', has been out for a couple of months and boasts some excellent reviews, not least from Sarah Sykes in this newsletter and, I note, from his own younger brother on Amazon.com. Mark and his son Jacob travelled the world in the course of researching the book, ending up in the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, and blogged entertainingly about it online as 'Expedition Genizah: the climb through time'.

The next book, which is due out very soon, comes from the combined pens of husband and wife authors Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, 'Sacred Trash: the lost and found world of the Cairo Geniza'. Peter is not only a

celebrated poet, but also author of 'The Dream of the Poem' (2007), a wonderful book of translations of Spanish Hebrew poetry. He was the Genizah Research Unit's first (and, to date, only) resident poet — a fruitful post, out of which came his poem 'Things on which I've stumbled' (2008). Adina has written an acclaimed biography of the Palestinian poet Taha Muhammad Ali (2000) as well as a beautifully lyrical description of her Jerusalem neighbourhood, 'House of Windows' (2009). The combination of two such gifted writers suggests that the book will be very special indeed.

Of course, we in the Unit are doing our best to spread the message of the importance of Genizah research, both in the public sphere and more broadly in academic circles, beyond the usual disciplines of 'Genizah Studies' or 'Jewish Studies'. We are co-hosting two conferences this year: one, convened by Esther-

Miriam Wagner, on historical sociolinguistics, examines the effect that scribes and copyists have upon the languages they transmit, 'Scribes as agents of language change', and the second being the fifteenth meeting of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies, on the theme of cultural exchange across linguistic boundaries. Next year we plan to make a big push to get the Genizah better known among medievalists generally, through the documentary content of the Cairo Genizah. To this end, we successfully applied for a grant from the Isaac Newton Trust, which will enable Genizah Research Associate Gabriele Ferrario to work on identifying and translating key historical documents from the Jacques Mosseri Genizah Collection, now undergoing conservation and digitisation at Cambridge University Library. We very much hope to build on this project, to make other historical sources

more accessible across the whole T-S Collection.

The Genizah Research Unit is grateful for the major support received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, the Friedberg Genizah Project and the Isaac Newton Trust. We also greatly welcome the help of our supporters:

Vivienne Cohen (£2000); Rabbi Mark Glickman (\$1000); Stephen Massil, Bow Park Investment Company (£500); Manifold Trust (£300); Norman Shelson (£200); Maidenhead Synagogue (£160); the Rofeh Trust (£100); a gift in honour of Rabbi Glickman's recently published book, from his children, nieces and nephews: Jacob Glickman, Shoshana Glickman, Taylor Banks, Kyleigh Banks, Jessica Glickman, Adam Glickman, Eliana Glickman and Sophie Glickman (\$120); John S. Schechter (\$100); Andrew Simmons (\$100).

The Amazing Discoveries of Mark Glickman



Described on its back cover as 'Indiana Jones meets the Da Vinci Code in an old Egyptian synagogue', Seattle Rabbi Mark Glickman's new book on the Cairo Genizah is a compelling and entertaining account of the Genizah's discovery, which brings the story right up to the present day. Genizah Unit secretary Sarah Sykes volunteered to review the book, since she felt it was high time she knew more about what we do here.

As secretary of the Genizah Research Unit since 2001, I recognise much of what goes on here but know little! Of course I know the story of who brought the Collection to the University, who supported it and how big it is; I've gathered this information along the way. When the office received a copy of Rabbi Mark Glickman's book 'A Sacred Treasure', I was interested to look at it in the way that all publications on the Genizah are of interest, but didn't expect to read it, as I presumed it would be another dry academic tome.

However, on opening the book, with its attractive cover and tongue in cheek blurb on the back, I was immediately engaged by Glickman's easy style. There was no stuffy academic discussion, but someone enthusiastically sharing a story and telling it well. I decided to read the whole book.

'Sacred Treasure' covers the discovery of the Genizah, the rescue of the manuscripts, their restoration and research. We also learn about the characters behind the story and a little of their lives. Although it is a work of history, Glickman has brought the story to life by telling it in the present tense, and, with some artistic licence, painting a vivid picture of the struggles experienced in bringing the Collection back to Cambridge, securing its place here and making it accessible to scholars for research.

Glickman brings the story up to date and explains the current projects taking place in the Unit and beyond, and how they have evolved. He mentions many of the scholars who have had a hand in describing, cataloguing and preserving the Collection and it is interesting to learn about what went on behind the scenes over the years.

We hosted Mark Glickman, and his son Jacob, for some days in the Unit as he went about his research for the book. But beyond Cambridge, he gained access to and interviewed many of today's key figures involved in Genizah research, around the world – some of whom can be very difficult people to get hold of!

I would recommend this book as an entertaining and highly informative read for anyone interested in an accessible book on the history of the Genizah. I would also add that it is a book that can be enjoyed whether you know about the Genizah or not – and not just because I get a mention in the acknowledgements!

Sacred Treasure: the Cairo Genizah is published by Jewish Lights Publishing.

Sarah Sykes

The Lauffer Family Charitable Trust has generously contributed towards the cost of producing this newsletter in memory of the late David and Renee Lauffer, enthusiastic students of history and supporters 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

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 recognised 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.