



The Genizah philanthropists Albert and Nancy Friedberg visited Cambridge University Library recently, pictured here with Ben Outhwaite and Esther-Miriam Wagner. Mr Friedberg and his wife were welcomed by Anne Jarvis, University Librarian, and spent a number of hours examining a range of manuscripts from the several Genizah collections at Cambridge as well as treasures from among the Library's other Hebrew manuscripts. The current healthy state of Genizah Studies, and in particular the remarkable growth of its online presence, owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the Friedberg Genizah Project.

Digital Library developments

Readers will be pleased to learn that the number of Genizah fragments being delivered via Cambridge University Library's digital library service continues to grow, with a further 8,000 fragments added over the past month. With initial funding from the Polonsky Foundation, the Cambridge Digital Library (<http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/>) is intended to provide a sophisticated online platform to enable researchers and the wider public to discover, access and work with its important digitised collections. As the number of digital library collections grow, Genizah scholars will be able discover related content from other medieval collections held by the Library. They will also be able to navigate more easily across the Genizah Collection with enhanced indexing being generated through a grant from the Mellon Foundation.

Fragments are being added to the digital library in batches, once the cataloguing information (metadata) has been checked and enriched by members of the Research Unit. The metadata and images are imported into the digital library, with the metadata being indexed using tools developed by the California Digital Library (<http://xtf.cdlib.org/>) and the images being processed using the Seadragon DeepZoom tool (<http://archive.msdn.microsoft.com/SeadragonAjax>) to produce a series of image tiles for the zooming interface. The digital library is built in a modular way, with different tools linked together to process and present the content. This will enable the system to grow as new tools become available. Most of the tools are also 'open source', which means the computer code can be used and updated by anyone

– further ensuring the flexibility and sustainability of the system.

The Cambridge Digital Library has only been online for 18 months and much more development work and content is being planned for the next few years – including, eventually, the full set of manuscripts held by the Library: the Taylor-Schechter

Collection, all of which has now been digitised thanks to the generosity of the Friedberg Family of Toronto, the long lost Jacques Mosseri fragments and, should all go well with the appeal, the Lewis-Gibson manuscripts too.

Grant Young
Cambridge Digital Library

The Genizah Research Unit is grateful for the continued generous support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, and the Friedberg Genizah Project. We are also extremely grateful for the help of our supporters: the N & J Greenwood Charitable Trust (£2,500); Peter Cole & Adina Hoffman (\$1,000); the Manifold Trust (£300); David Sofer (£300); a group via Ruth Crossick (£300); James R Cook (\$250); Benjamin Friedman (\$250); Warren Stern (\$250); Evelyn Berezin (\$100) and for other smaller or anonymous donations.

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.

GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

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

No. 65 April 2013

Cambridge and Oxford join forces to buy the Lewis-Gibson Collection

In the words of Mrs Gibson, Solomon Schechter showed 'much tact and zeal' in clearing out the Cairo Genizah. Yet the two sisters, Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson, showed equal tact and considerable tenacity in quietly amassing their own collection of fragments, one of the earliest to be assembled. Mostly purchased from Cairo booksellers over several visits in the 1890s, the manuscripts of the Lewis-Gibson Collection were donated by the sisters to Westminster College in Cambridge, to whom they were great benefactors, and they have remained in the College's care ever since.

Since the 1990s, however, the governors of Westminster College – a member of Cambridge Theological Federation, but not the University – had been concerned about the conservation and storage of these precious manuscripts and were keen that they should become more widely available to the ever growing field of Genizah scholarship. A decision was therefore taken to sell the

Collection, offering it in the first instance to Cambridge University Library.

Cambridge alone could not afford the purchase price, but, following a conversation between Anne Jarvis, Cambridge University Librarian, and Sarah Thomas, her counterpart at the Bodleian, a partnership was proposed, whereby Cambridge and Oxford will jointly purchase the Collection, share ownership of it, and together endeavour to conserve and digitise the manuscripts as soon as possible.

Thanks to a very generous lead gift of £500,000 by Dr Leonard Polonsky, through his Polonsky Foundation, the consortium requires a further £700,000 to secure the purchase and ensure that the sisters' collection remains accessible to future generations of Genizah scholars. On the 6th of February the two Librarians, along with staff from both institutions, officially launched the appeal for the purchase at a well-attended press event at the British Academy in London. Press coverage has been very



Conservators James Bloxam and Lucy Cheng preparing items for display at the launch of the appeal at the British Academy, London.

promising, with a feature on the Collection on BBC Radio's Today programme, in the Guardian, New York Times, the New Yorker Online and elsewhere. Continuing to maintain a high profile is critical, as we only have until August 2013 to raise the remaining funds and complete the purchase.

Once purchased, the Collection will remain in Cambridge for a period of two years where it

will undergo conservation and digitisation. Cambridge and Oxford have both committed to digitising the manuscripts in a timely manner, and making those images publicly accessible.

Finally, we should address the issue of the name of the Collection. Genizah scholars have long known it as the Westminster Collection, but, in a decision itself showing great tact and considerable zeal, the two University Librarians have decided to celebrate the achievements of the two pioneering sisters by renaming it the Lewis-Gibson Collection in their honour.

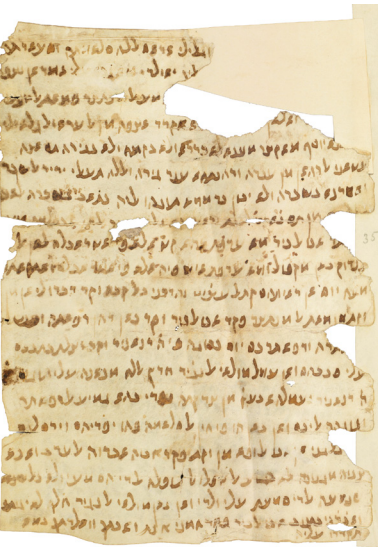
Delving into the Lewis-Gibson Discoveries

The Lewis-Gibson Collection, like all Genizah collections, possesses its fair share of rare and unique items, and, indeed, probably has an overabundance, given its status as one of the first Genizah collections to be assembled from the famous storeroom. Some of these treasures are easy to spot, and their significance requires little explanation. Lewis-Gibson Talmud 2.57, for instance, is an almost complete leaf of Maimonides’ *Commentary on the Mishna*, written in the distinctive cursive hand that Maimonides himself employed for the fairer copies of his literary works. It joins dozens of other similar autograph pieces in the wider Genizah, but is a particularly large and fine example. Lewis-Gibson Glass 1A was of great interest to the Smith sisters themselves, who published it, since it is a palimpsest, with an under-text in Christian Palestinian Aramaic that dates probably to around 600 CE. Other treasures, however, require teasing out, as they might appear inconsequential at first glance. Lewis-Gibson Misc. 35, for instance, is a Judaeo-Arabic letter on vellum and, as such, joins hundreds of other similar items to be found in the T-S Collection.

Lewis-Gibson Talmud 2.57, an autograph leaf of the Rambam’s *Commentary on the Mishna*, tractate *Shabbat*. Courtesy of the Governors of Westminster College, Cambridge.



Reading it, however, reveals that the writer is a woman – rare in itself, but women letter-writers are not unknown in the Genizah world – but, more importantly, she proceeds to give an eyewitness account of events following the Crusader invasion of the Holy Land (1099–1100 CE). She has fled to Tripoli in the Lebanon, which had escaped the Crusader conquest, and from this place of comparative safety she writes ‘I was with him on the day I saw them killed in terrible fashion ... I am an ill woman on the brink of insanity, added to the hunger of my family and of the little girl who are all with me, and the horrid news I heard about my son’. Such is her current plight, she is even driven to suggest that it would be better to be a captive, since those in captivity ‘find someone who gives them food and drink’, whereas as refugees, she and her children are in danger of starving. Flick through fifty more pages of the handsome, but somewhat timeworn, leather-bound Westminster College volume, and you come across Lewis-



Lewis-Gibson Miscellaneuous 35, a female refugee writes of her plight in Crusader-era Tripoli. Courtesy of the Governors of Westminster College, Cambridge.

Gibson Misc. 117, the writer of which was clearly living in a more carefree time. It’s a leaf from a c. 16th-century magical almanac, and includes a practical spell for, shall we say, awakening a woman’s interest in you: ‘Take your trousers off and put them over your head, so that you are naked. Say: “So-and-so son of So-and-so is doing this for So-and-so daughter of So-and-so, in order that she will dream that I sleep with her and she sleeps with me.”’ Such is the range of material encompassed by the Lewis-Gibson Collection, a Genizah in microcosm.

Melonie Schmierer-Lee
Genizah Research Unit

How you can help the Lewis-Gibson appeal

If you would like to donate towards the joint purchase of the Lewis-Gibson Collection, this can be done through the development offices of either the University of Cambridge or of Oxford. To securely donate online through Cambridge’s link for this appeal, please go to the following address: <http://bit.ly/XMCjH7> or, for further information, get in touch with the Genizah Unit either by email (genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk) or by phone (01223 333129).

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.

Why is this haggada different from all other haggadot?

At some point in the eleventh century, a competent scribe in Eretz Israel with a delightful Hebrew hand decided to commit to writing the text of the Passover Haggada known to him from his youth. He probably then escaped the clutches of the Crusaders and settled in Egypt, taking his work with him. Like many of his fellow Jews from the Holy Land, he was anxious to ensure that his family traditions were not superseded by those of the local Egyptians.

One of the folios of his Haggada (T-S H2.152) came to Cambridge University Library with Solomon Schechter’s ‘hoard’ in 1897. It is a rich source of customs that were practised in the Holy Land but not in Babylonia. For that reason, I have often lectured and written on it, drawing attention to its five and not four Hebrew questions in the *ma nishtana*, to its instructions in Judaeo-Arabic about how to conduct the *seder* ritual, and to its Aramaic version of the Exodus story.

A few weeks ago I was preparing an edition of the text for a volume to be published in the University Library’s new Genizah Series. I had long suspected that this folded piece of vellum was one of at least three or four such bifolia in what was originally a handsome codex. I was aware that Yaacov and Roni Choueka of the Friedberg Genizah Project in Jerusalem were perfecting computer techniques for linking Genizah fragments scattered around the world in many different centres of learning. It therefore seemed sensible to inquire of Roni whether he could find any match for my Cambridge fragment.

Within a short time, a remarkable reply was received. FGP’s computers had identified at least one other bifolium that belonged



T-S H2.152, showing part of the ‘Four Questions’ from the Passover Haggada, written on parchment with Judaeo-Arabic reading instructions.

to the same original manuscript. It was brought to London from Cairo by Elkan Nathan Adler before Schechter’s pilgrimage to Egypt and was now in the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, bearing

the classmark ENA 2018.3. It covers a later part of the Haggada known as the *ge’ula* (redemption) benediction and includes part of a poetic addition that was known to Saadya Gaon as an optional extra and which in his text commences with the words **אתה גאלת את אבותינו**.

Our scholarly colleagues in the Seminary were kind enough to co-operate with us and to supply

images of the relevant fragment so that some notes on its text can be included in my edition. The New York fragment is one of the few that testify to this extra piece of Haggada text. Perhaps the remaining missing bifolia will now be located in other collections. An intriguing and exciting prospect.

Stefan C. Reif
St John’s College

New volume on medical prescriptions published

The fourth volume in our burgeoning *Cambridge Genizah Studies* series at Brill has recently been published. The work, *Medical prescriptions in the Cambridge Genizah Collections: practical medicine and pharmacology in Medieval Egypt*, is by two experts in the field of Genizah medicine, Professor Efraim Lev of Haifa University and former Research Associate in the Unit, Dr Leigh Chipman. The volume follows in the footsteps of Lev’s previous work in this field and takes an in-depth look at the practice of medicine in the Genizah world, as opposed

to medicinal theory, something that we are uniquely able to glimpse thanks to the Genizah’s predilection for accumulating the ephemera of everyday medieval life. Through an

examination of thirty selected prescriptions, often hurriedly scrawled in barely-legible Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic, Lev and Chipman are able to delve into the world of the medical practitioner, analyse the doctors’ approach to treating a wide variety of illnesses, and discover the panoply of medicinal substances that they could call upon to create their cures. Published in Brill’s larger format, with full-page images and the complete text and translation of thirty medieval prescriptions, this is an attractive and fascinating volume.

