

TE'UDA

I

CAIRO GENIZA STUDIES

TEL-AVIV UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES
THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES
'MORESHET' PROJECT FOR THE STUDY OF EASTERN JEWRY

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TE'UDA

THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES RESEARCH SERIES

I

CAIRO GENIZA STUDIES

Edited by

MORDECHAI A. FRIEDMAN



TEL-AVIV UNIVERSITY

'MORESHET' PROJECT FOR THE STUDY OF EASTERN JEWRY
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THE LIFE OF OUR FOREFATHERS AS REFLECTED IN THE DOCUMENTS OF THE CAIRO GENIZA

S.D. Goitein

Three features distinguished the Cairo Geniza from other Genizas: its size, its contents, and the age of the fragments found there, from the tenth through nineteenth centuries. This extensive period is largely due to the fact that the Geniza chamber was in constant use since the beginning of the eleventh century. As to its contents, the Geniza is unique in that it preserved not only writings of a 'religious' nature but also purely 'secular' papers such as legal documents, accounts, business and family letters. Perhaps the preservation of such writings was a peculiar Palestinian custom and was thus retained in the Palestinian synagogue of Fustat. Alternatively, this may have been a universal Jewish practice in antiquity which was discontinued in later times. If so, there may have been other Genizas that might yet be discovered in excavations in such localities as Sijilmasa, in North Africa, Wargela, in the Sahara or in the Yemen. But the most likely place for such a discovery is Egypt itself. An addition to the catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, notes that several sacksfull of fragments came from excavations in the vicinity of the synagogue. This undoubtedly refers to the al-Basāṭīn cemetery where the fragments in the Mosseri collection originated. The author recently received a photograph of a complete Geniza family letter that had been purchased in the Cairo bazaar during the summer of 1972.

To return to the first point, the size of the Geniza chamber: it contained hundreds of thousands of fragments. The Geniza was constructed when the Palestinian synagogue was rebuilt, in the second decade of the eleventh century, following the destruction that resulted from the decrees of the mad caliph, al-Hākīm. The decision to erect the large Geniza room may have followed an unfortunate event at the end of the year 1011, immortalized in the 'Egyptian Scroll'. On the last day of that year the funeral procession of the congregation's cantor was attacked by the Muslim masses, and the lives of leaders of the community were saved only by the intervention of the caliph.

The former custom was probably to remove Geniza materials for burial in such funeral processions. It is suggested that the community decided to include a large Geniza chamber in the reconstructed synagogue to preserve their sacred writings from future attacks.

Concerning the intellectual and literary activity of our forefathers during the classical Geniza period (tenth-thirteenth centuries), this was a time of crystallization and formulation. In education, great emphasis was placed on Bible study, understanding its meaning, learning its correct pronunciation, and committing it to memory. Talmudic studies concentrated on areas of practical law: Sabbath and the festivals, *kashrut*, marriage and divorce, inheritance, and monetary matters.

The most remarkable literary phenomenon of this period is the abundance of *piyyuṭim*, and religious poetry in general, which have been discovered in the Geniza. The basic concept which underlies *piyyuṭ* is that one is required to innovate in prayer, that it not become rote. A cantor was expected not only to sing known *piyyuṭim* but to make original compositions and spontaneous additions to the *piyyuṭ*. The people's attraction to the often obscure *piyyuṭim* is to be explained not only by the popular tunes to which they were sung and the intellectual challenge to comprehend their meaning but by the spiritual experience conveyed by the rhythm of the poem. As to philosophy, the works of Saadiah Gaon were of uncontested popularity for a most extended period.

The documentary Geniza materials describe every day life. By 'family' one understood primarily the extended family of blood relations. The mother and sister played a special role. The relationship of a sister's son was also particularly close. Marriage with the sister's daughter, opposed by the Karaites, was uncommon among the Rabbanites as well. Marriages between first cousins, on the other hand, were rather frequent and were seen as a way to strengthen the family ties. The wife usually went to live with her husband's family. Needless to say, this was frequently the cause of tension.

Another source of tension was the age difference between husband and wife; girls married at about the age of 15 or 16. The dowry brought by the bride contributed to the family's financial stability, but the use of these valuables was often the subject of family disputes. Frequent extended business trips disrupted many marriages. A large proportion of women remarried after being divorced or widowed. The Geniza reveals relationships

of love between husband and wife, both in first and second marriages.

There was a great deal of movement of the Jewish population from city to city. But the expanse of territory from Palestine and to the East and West, from Iran to North Africa, had continuous Jewish settlements since antiquity. Jewish life in these countries during the High Middle Ages reflected a much higher degree of normalcy and stability than in Christian Europe. This is reflected, for example, in the broad economic foundations of the Geniza Jewish communities.

We find a broad spectrum of interesting data on the organization of the community and its institutions, which illuminate not only the Geniza period but the Talmudic period as well.

Finally, attention is called to the Geniza documents as invaluable source materials for the study of midrashic Hebrew.

TALMUD FRAGMENTS IN THE CAIRO GENIZA

Y. Sussmann

Thousands of fragments, large and small, of the Mishnah and Talmud were found in the treasure of Hebrew manuscripts which was discovered some hundred years ago in the Cairo Geniza. While the Geniza fragments of rabbinic literature in general were dealt with and researched, these fragments, which contained no spectacular discovery, were, by and large, ignored by scholars. These texts, which include ancient fragments about one thousand years old and which at times preserve original variants that did not reach us through the European channels (Spain, Ashkenaz, etc.), have not yet been dealt with systematically.

The systematic treatment of these fragments has been undertaken by the Mishnah Project, sponsored by the National Israeli Academy of Science. In this framework (photographs of) all the fragments that are scattered throughout the world have been collected, identified and listed with precision. In the past years, much use has been made of these fragments, and their readings have been quoted frequently. But this has been done without

any attempt to evaluate and ascertain the nature of the individual fragments. Frequently the variants of 'Geniza' texts are used as unquestionably authoritative sources, even though this is not always the case. Only after all the fragments have been listed, indentified, and joined together, will it be possible to ascertain the value and authority of the various copies from which they were derived.

The author presented examples of the significance of this work and gave notice concerning the preparation of a complete catalogue which is to be published (of materials from the Geniza and from other sources), of all the manuscripts of the Mishnah, Tosefta, Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud, and Alfasi. The catalogue of the Palestinian Talmud has already been completed. All fragments have been indentified and fragments of individual manuscripts have been matched. (This was not done by L. Ginzberg in his edition, and this misled many scholars.) Thus an attempt has been made to reconstruct the original copies from which the Geniza fragments came. Presently, these fragments (some 30% more than the previous edition) are being prepared for publication.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GENIZA FRAGMENTS FOR THE STUDY OF THE TALMUD AND MIDRASH

Z.M. Rabinowitz

In his visits to the libraries of Cambridge, Oxford, and London, the author found several old Geniza fragments of halakhic and aggadic midrashim, of the Palestinian Talmud and other works. From these it has been possible to study the ancient forms of Talmudic texts. These fragments are written according to the ancient Palestinian orthography, known from old manuscripts that are considered reliable texts of Mishnaic Hebrew and Galilean Aramaic, such as the Vatican MS of Genesis Rabbah or the Rome MS of the Sifra, etc. Most of the fragments are from the eleventh century or earlier. Recently a legal inscription has been discovered at Beth Shean, from the end of the Amoraic

period in Palestine (approximately the fifth century) whose orthography is the same as that of those 'reliable' manuscripts of rabbinic literature and the Geniza fragments.

Indications of the antiquity of these Geniza fragments include (1) Parchment: most fragments written on parchment are old, (2) Palimpsests: some texts are written over Greek writings from the Byzantine period, (3) Shapes of the letters, such as *zayin* and *nun* with triangular tops, etc., (4) Characteristically Palestinian spellings, e.g., the *mem-nun* exchange, the names of Amoraim (יִוֶסִי for יוֹסִי), etc., (5) Palestinian vowel signs and punctuation, (6) Ancient terms from the Palestinian Talmud and midrashim, and (7) Galilean Aramaic, the language of the midrashim and Palestinian Talmud.

These fragments enable us to restore the correct text in many places where the printed editions and late manuscripts have been corrupted. These texts became corrupted as the result of scribal errors, marginal notes which have been introduced into the text, omissions due to homoioteleuton, and the deletion of unfamiliar Greek and Aramaic words. The article contains examples of superior textual variants found in the Geniza fragments.

STUDIES IN A GENIZA BOOK LIST

M.B. Lerner

MS. TS LOAN 149, which contains a unique inventory of books, was published by J. Mann in 1931 (*Texts and Studies*, I, pp. 651-654).

Most of the books in this inventory are listed according to their opening passages, and, in spite of the fact that the scribe does not seem to have been very erudite, much valuable information concerning lost literary treasures may be derived from these listings. It is very likely that the library of an enlightened scholar, who appears to have displayed an unusual interest in midrashic literature, served as the basis for this collection.

The midrashic items mentioned in TS LOAN 149 comprise most of the major halakhic and aggadic midrashim. It is apparent that, at the time of the

compilation of this inventory, the traditional collections of Midrash Rabbah and Midrash Tanḥuma to the Pentateuch were not yet consolidated. On the other hand, the Gaonic tradition of 'Four Explanatory Midrashim' to the Pentateuch (Genesis Rabbah and the halakhic midrashim of the Tannaim) is undoubtedly represented.

It is postulated that this book list, which does not contain even a single selection from post-Gaonic Rabbinic literature, was composed no later than the beginning of the twelfth century.

In Section Three of the article, bibliographical and topical comments are provided for various entries, almost all of them dealing with Talmudic-midrashic literature. These comments, which are designed to bring J. Mann's notes up to date, also provide new insight into several of the entries. These include: Siphre Zutta (No. 13); BT Pesahim (25); BT Ḥullin (74); Leviticus Rabbah (29); Tanḥuma Genesis (32); Pirqe de'R. Eliezer (65); 'the treatise on astronomy' (34) et al. Two entries provide important evidence concerning the inclusion of excerpts and portions from the Mishnah in the Palestinian (26) and Babylonian (74) Talmuds.

Section Four is devoted to an identification of the hitherto unknown work *Pirqe Tish'a Be'Av* (No. 39). Complete manuscripts of this work, bearing the title *Midrash Eikha*, are found in the possession of Yemenites who emigrated to Israel. These assisted the author in identifying a Geniza fragment (TS C 1, fol. 52) as stemming from this work. *Pirqe Tish'a Be'Av*, which contains selections from midrashic and aggadic literature dealing with the destruction of the Temple and the tragedies that befell the Jewish people, is obviously not a Yemenite Midrash and should be dated back to the Gaonic era.

The two appendices to the article include: a) The reedited texts of those entries from the book list quoted in the article. b) An index of all works mentioned in the book list, arranged according to subject matter.

PALESTINIAN MARRIAGE CONTRACTS FROM THE GAONIC PERIOD

Mordechai A. Friedman

Since the Middle Ages, the marriage contracts of all known Jewish communities have followed the basic model of the Babylonian Geonim. Students of the marriage contracts assumed that there had been a unilateral, vertical continuity of the *ketubba* formulary since early Talmudic times. The recent discoveries of fragments of Palestinian-style marriage contracts have revealed traditions of formulating the *ketubba* distinct from that of the Babylonian Geonim. The materials come from two separate finds: three very fragmentary Aramaic *ketubbot* from the Judean Desert, from the years preceding the Bar Kokhba period, and tens of pieces of Palestinian *ketubbot* from the Cairo Geniza.

The present paper highlights some significant features of these Geniza texts (a full study of which will appear in the author's book *Jewish Marriage in Palestine – A Geniza Study*). Seventy-eight fragments of sixty-five Palestinian-style *ketubbot* have been indentified. They exhibit a fairly high degree of local variation. Eight texts preserve Talmudic 'court stipulations' (most of which are known from M. Ket. 4:7 ff.). All of these contain interesting variations from the texts preserved in the Talmud, some of which can be traced to the Judean Desert fragments. They also contain the double divorce stipulation cited, in part, in the Palestinian Talmud and some less-known undertakings, as one which deals with the wife's burial and another which concerns the care of a wife who has gone mad.

The basic formulation was unique. Most texts opened abruptly as a homology, with the words of the groom, as if he himself had written the *ketubba*. Most contain elements of mutuality that present the text as a contract between partners.

The Babylonian Geonim waged a power struggle with the Academy of Eretz Israel over the loyalty of the Diaspora communities. In doing so they attacked Palestinian traditions, including the formulation of the marriage contract. The extent of their influence is attested by the fact that all of the marriage contracts from the Palestinian synagogue of Fustat, where the

Geniza was found, were written according to the Babylonian custom. Babylonian influence grew in Palestine as well, and the *ketubbot* are the only large body of documents loyal to the old Palestinian traditions which have been preserved in the Geniza.

These contracts were written in various communities in Eretz Israel, Syria and Lebanon and Egypt. All of the dated texts come from the tenth and eleventh centuries. The total absence of Palestinian-style *ketubbot* after the end of the eleventh century undoubtedly reflects the destruction wrought on the Jewish population of Eretz Israel by the crusaders.

While Palestinian-style *ketubbot* from Eretz Israel were no longer found, we can identify the influence of the Palestinian traditions in the marriage contracts of various Jewish communities. This is particularly clear with marriage contracts of the medieval Italian rite, where the text was written in Hebrew but was based on a rendition of an original Palestinian-style Aramaic formulary. This text is known from a formulary found in old Maḥzorim and identified there as a 'Ketubba Yerushalmit' and from citations in the writings of Isaiah the Elder of Trani.

Specific elements which can be identified as based on Palestinian influence have been identified in medieval Yemenite *ketubbot* and in some North African texts. Some primarily Palestinian formulae were used in the marriage contracts of the Greek Jewish communities of Corfu and Yanina until modern times. The formulary for the marriage contracts adopted by the Karaites appears to a large extent to be a free Hebrew rendition of the customary Aramaic *ketubba* of the Rabbanites of Eretz Israel.

The paper concludes with four examples of phenomena in these fragments which are of interest for linguistic studies, particularly for Galilean Aramaic. These are: (1) ליה 'to her', the fem. third pers. sing. pron. suffix יה attached to prepositions and singular nouns. Examples of this suffix are identified in Palestinian Midrashic, Talmudic and Targumic literature. (2) The rel. pron. פרנה מה דעבד מרי מבשר, e.g., מה די 'the marriage contract made by master Mevasser'. Examples of this are cited from the Targums (esp. MS. Neofiti 1), from a synagogue inscription and from the midrash. (3) שילום means 'completion', 'remainder' or 'balance'. (4) The correct pronunciation of משלם, as in the expression בותן לו שכרו משלם, has been debated for centuries. The form מן שלם, in one of the texts, shows that it is *mishshalem*.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE GENIZA TO THE STUDY OF MEDIEVAL HEBREW RELIGIOUS POETRY

Ezra Fleischer

The author begins with a brief review of the state of the study of medieval Hebrew religious poetry prior to the discovery of the Geniza. He notes that much paitanic materials had been included in medieval codices. These were sufficient to make numerous well-founded bio-bibliographical conclusions; but they were inadequate to construct a reasonable, sound theory of the subject. This inadequacy has two explanations. Firstly, the materials reached the Maḥzorim only after they had undergone repeated revisions which had obscured their nature as compositions and the forms of the different types of *piyyuṭim* and had mixed dissimilar types as well as early and late materials. Secondly, the materials are found in the Maḥzorim in a completely fixed state, similar to the texts of the prayers themselves; and it was impossible to form an estimate of the true, original function of the *piyyuṭ* as a substitute — albeit facultative, but always complete — to the fixed texts of the prayers.

The fact that the Geniza has enabled us to view the nature of paitanism correctly and precisely and to understand its development in depth, according to its stages, periods, and schools, is not dependent on any specific discovery from the Geniza. It results from the very quantity of the find, the fantastic plethora of fragments of *piyyuṭim* found in the Geniza. This abundance, which M. Zulay had already noted with astonishment, compelled scholars to ask the fundamental questions of this field of research, to search for the original function of the paitanic composition and, accordingly, to understand its essential boundaries, its essential nature of composition and its essential link, through all the stages of its development, to the obligatory public prayers. This primary understanding has directed attention to structural distinctions between the various types of *piyyuṭim*. On the basis of the frequency and constancy of the different forms, the Geniza materials have given scholars a key to define chronological and geographical characteristics, that are both fundamental and reliable, of the different types of *piyyuṭim*. The organizing and categorizing of the materials in this fashion have assisted the research to

pass from the stage of listing, publishing, and search, to the stage of an overall theoretical view of the field. This new perception has already resulted in the formulation of the cardinal questions of the field and the first attempted answers. In the author's opinion, research must focus on these major problems so that their final solutions can be found.

THE PIYYUTIM OF ISAAC IBN GIAT

Menachem Schmelzer

Isaac ibn Giat's poetic work was not discovered in the Cairo Geniza. His *piyyutim* have been known for a long time from conventional sources. Still, the numerous Geniza fragments containing pieces of Ibn Giat's poetry offer a wealth of material for a critical edition of his collected poems, as well as for a new appraisal of his work.

Many of his poems, which hitherto have been known only as preserved in later manuscripts and printed editions of various *Mahzorim*, are now coming to light in much earlier Geniza manuscripts. These new findings offer very valuable textual readings. The new material frequently helps us to determine the true authorship of dubious pieces.

There are also many *piyyutim* found in the Geniza which were completely unknown until now, and which contribute quantitatively to Ibn Giat's oeuvre. However, it is even more significant to note that these new materials provide testimony to the poet's creativity in certain paitanic genres for which no evidence is yielded by conventional sources. Particular attention is drawn to Ibn Giat's *yotzrot* compositions which came to light in the Geniza, and which reveal a novel aspect of Ibn Giat's poetic activity.

Accordingly, a systematic and exhaustive utilization of Cairo Geniza materials is a necessary prerequisite for a critical edition of Ibn Giat's complete poetic work and for its proper evaluation.

SECULAR HEBREW POETRY IN THE GENIZA MANUSCRIPTS

J. Schirmann

It is well known that the Cairo Geniza has preserved an abundance of liturgy and *piyyuṭim*. The secular poetry from this source fills hundreds and perhaps even thousands of leaves but is clearly not comparable to the tremendous number of religious poems from the Geniza. Nevertheless, for the student of literature the Geniza secular poetry is as significant as the religious poetry.

The *piyyuṭim* from the Geniza had been copied for recitation during prayer and were thus intended for a large audience. The secular poems were essentially intended for the much smaller group of lovers of literature. The Geniza texts have contributed much to the study of poetry from the Golden Age of Spain. For an extended period students of excellent, old works had been forced to rely on late copies. Frequently these suffered from deficiencies and corruptions. They had been brought to Turkey and, to a lesser degree, to Italy and North Africa, by Spanish exiles and their descendants. The Yemenite Jews played a large role in preserving and transmitting the treasures of their Sefardic brethren, apparently as of the mid thirteenth century.

During the Middle Ages, strong ties were created between the Jews of the lands that surrounded the Mediterranean. Due to the ties between Andalusian and Egyptian Jewry, manuscripts of religious and secular poems that had been written in Spain during the lifetime of the poets who composed them found their way to the Geniza. The origin of manuscripts of this type is attested by (1) their paleography, (2) their use of the term מ' (= מרנא, our master) before the names of the poets — a term known from old Spanish texts such as tomb inscriptions from the eleventh century — and the blessings used for a living person after the poets' names (אדאם אללה עזה or צ"ש).

Many of the Andalusian secular poems were written in the strophic style called *muwashshah*. Many of these never entered their authors' diwans and were lost hundreds of years ago; tens were rediscovered among the Geniza treasures. All the Arabic *muwashshahs* were essentially songs intended to be sung by singers. Sometimes the copyists indicated a poem's 'tune' by noting

the first words of another poem which followed the same melody. The newly discovered secular nuwashshahs include works by the greatest poets of the Spanish school, but most come from anonymous poets. Thanks to the Geniza, we now have secular muwashshahs written by poets not only from Spain but also from Egypt and other Eastern countries.

The texts of the closing lines (*kharjas*) of the Geniza nuwashshahs are particularly significant. These are sometimes written in vulgar, spoken (Spanish) Arabic and sometimes in a Romanic (Spanish) dialect with Arabic words added. These are important for the research of old Spanish language and literature. The Geniza variants facilitate the decipherment of many of these difficult texts.

Hundreds of pages from the diwans of the leading poets of the Spanish school, including poems unknown from other sources, have been preserved in the Geniza. More surprising is the discovery of the works of forgotten or little-known poets, especially their secular poetry. Such is the case with Ibn Abitur, Ibn Khalfon, Ben Mar Saul. We now are familiar with secular poems written by contemporaries of Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah ha-Levi, such as Joseph Ibn Sahl, Judah Ibn Giat, Joseph Ibn Barzel, Joseph Ibn Shami, Joseph Ibn Saddiq, etc. Many copies of Al-Harizi's poems were preserved in the Geniza, especially from his *Tahkemoni*. Several of his previously unknown poems and *maqamas* have also been discovered, some in Hebrew, but most in Arabic.

The Geniza has preserved few works of poets who lived in Christian countries: Byzantium, Italy, North Africa, North France, Germany and even Christian Spain and Southern France. On the other hand, we learn a great deal about the development of secular Hebrew poetry in the Near East and North Africa. For example, I cite the remnants of several collections of rhymed proverbs. One of these contains lines that are based on a quote from the Hebrew version of Ben Sira. The author of this work, who had a rich and picturesque style, revealed his name through an acrostic: Sa'ïd b. Babshad ha-Kohen; he probably lived in the tenth century at the latest. Another collection of parables, apparently from the twelfth or thirteenth century, is based entirely on verses taken from the Hebrew Ben Sira.

Mention should also be made of 'Allun b. Abraham (app. Syria, 10th cent.) and Mevorakh ha-Bavli (Palestine, late 11th cent.). As in Muslim Spain,

'court poets'. who wrote rhymed praises for the philanthropists who supported them, were found in the East, e.g., Eleazar ha-Kohen (Eg. early 13th cent.), Eleazar ha-Bavli (Baghdad, 1st half of the 13th cent.), Joseph ha-Yerushalmi (Eg. 2nd half of 13th cent., almost all of his diwan was preserved in the Geniza).

Many fragments of maqama collections, written in the East, some of which are of definite literary value, are preserved.

The last part of the survey deals with the techniques of copying and disseminating secular Hebrew poems.

PALESTINE DURING THE FIRST PERIOD OF MUSLIM OCCUPATION (634—1099) IN LIGHT OF THE CAIRO GENIZA DOCUMENTS

Moshe Gil

The Muslim conquest of Palestine was essentially an invasion of the Bedouins. These nomad tribes coming from the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula would have brought about a total destruction of the civilized lands, were it not for the statesmanship of the second caliph, 'Umar, who imposed restraint upon the invaders. After some time, a way of peaceful coexistence was found between the local population, which consisted of Jews and Christians, and the Bedouin tribes.

These tribes formed the Muslim army of occupation. Together with officials and clergymen, they comprised the Muslim population of the country. But for many generations, most probably throughout this period, the majority of the country's inhabitants remained non-Muslims.

During the four and a half centuries until the crusaders' conquest, Palestine became an almost permanent battle field of the various warring factions within the Muslim world. This holds true for the early period, of the Umayyads, and even more for the Abbasid period. The most intensive fighting occurred during a period of some 60 years, from the first conquest of Palestine by the Fatimids (969) until the final defeat of the anti-Fatimid forces (1029).

The situation during this period has been illuminated by the Geniza documents. Palestine was at the very center of Jewish life for a great part of the Diaspora. The Palestinian Yeshiva, which continued its uninterrupted existence from antiquity throughout this period, had jurisdiction not only over the greater part of Egyptian and Syrian Jewry but also over more remote communities, mostly in the Byzantine empire.

Thanks to the Geniza materials, we have come to know in considerable detail the personalities who headed this institution: Solomon b. Judah, Daniel b. Azarya, and others. We also have information on their relations with Egyptian Jewry, mainly of course with Fustat, but also with many other communities. These materials shed light on the relations with the Babylonian center, the Karaites in Palestine and their relations with the Rabbanites, Jewish life in Jerusalem and in many other localities in Palestine, economic life in Palestine, problems of taxation, matters of pilgrimage and immigration, and so on.

A period of many centuries in the life of this country and of its Jews would have remained completely unknown were it not for these Cairo Geniza documents.

THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH IBN 'AWKAL: A SUMMARY OF THE STATE OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

Norman A. Stillman

In a number of publications that have already appeared in English and French, I have described the various business and communal activities of Joseph b. 'Awkal and his family. Ibn 'Awkal was a great merchant prince and leader of the Jewish community in Egypt at the end of the tenth century and throughout the first third of the eleventh century. Some sixty documents from the family archive in Arabic, Hebrew and in one case Persian have been preserved in the Geniza. These documents span four generations, although most are from Joseph b. 'Awkal's lifetime.

This paper aims at presenting a concise summary of the present state of our

knowledge concerning the Ibn 'Awkal family and their activities. It includes new information that has come to light only recently. This paper also attempts an assessment of the Ibn 'Awkal documents' significance for Jewish and for Mediterranean socioeconomic history at the height of the Fatimid period.

DAVID B. DANIEL B. AZARYA IN EGYPT: A NEW INTERPRETATION

Mark R. Cohen

Megillat Evyatar, the well-known commemorative 'scroll' written by the Palestinian Gaon Evyatar ha-Kohen b. Elijah, describes how the Nasi David b. Daniel overthrew first the Egyptian Nagid Mevorakh b. Saadiah around 1082, then Evyatar himself, and ruled Egyptian and Palestinian Jewry until his downfall in Iyyar (April/May), 1094. Though recognizing the one-sidedness of Evyatar's account, most modern scholars have accepted his viewpoint that David was an illegitimate usurper and tyrannical overlord who unlawfully arrogated to himself the title of Exilarch (*rosh ha-gola*). Based on his extensive research into the origins of the Egyptian office of Head of the Jews (*ra'is al-yahūd*), known more generally as the office of the Nagid, the author believes that this interpretation needs to be revised.

Evyatar's point of view is, understandably, thoroughly selective and biased. Structure and thematic unity prove that the Megilla was a piece of political propaganda for the exclusive right of Evyatar's priestly Gaonic family to rule over the Jews and against the challengers from the Babylonian Exilarchal house of Daniel b. Azarya and his son David. Consequently, one must avoid taking Evyatar's negative portrayal of his rival, David b. Daniel, at face value.

Routine Geniza documents pertaining to David's reign — some fifty have been indentified by the author thus far — reveal that David's conduct of Jewish affairs was far from resented in Egypt. The very same key notables in Fustat and Cairo who had previously supported the Yeshiva and the family of Evyatar rallied willingly around the Nasi after 1082 and enlisted in his administration. These men included Abraham b. Isaac the Scholar, Eli ha-Kohen b. Yahya, Nahray b. Nissim, "the Rav" Judah ha-Kohen b. Joseph, and Evyatar's own first cousin, Solomon ha-Kohen b. Joseph Av. These

Rabbanite supporters of David's rule were joined by influential Karaite courtiers, led by David's father-in-law, known from the Nasi's marriage contract which Schechter published.

Dated and datable legal documents and letters from the Geniza prove, moreover, that David b. Daniel did not assert his claim to the dignity of Exilarch until late in his administration. He is consistently called 'Nasi,' only, until August, 1089, while the first dated document to entitle him *rosh ha-gola* is from 1092. Even Megillat Evyatar reserves mention of the Exilarchal title until the recitation of events occurring in the fall of 1093. The author suggests that Fatimid military and political developments following the reconquest of Tyre (with Sidon, Jubayl, and Acre) in 1089 stimulated David b. Daniel to expand his political objectives. His assumption of the title of Exilarch between the end of 1089 and 1092 had something to do with his initially unsuccessful attempt in 1089 to subjugate the Jewish community of Tyre and his consequent desire to strengthen his claim to hegemony over all of Fatimid Jewry.

Finally, the Geniza documents show that David b. Daniel's regime was far more significant for Jewish political history than Evyatar wished openly to admit. Not the Exilarchal title, but the expansion of the political prerogatives of the office of Head of the Jews during David's administration defined his achievement. The latter third of the eleventh century saw the creation of a political power vacuum in Fatimid Jewry as a result of the decline of the Jerusalem Yeshiva and its exile from Jerusalem to Tyre. During this period, the institution of the Headship of the Jews began evolving in Egypt to replace the foundering Palestinian Gaonate as the recognized central authority over Fatimid Jewry. The first cautious steps in this direction were taken under the aegis of the brothers Judah and Mevorakh b. Saadiah, both of whom derived their religious authority from the Palestinian Gaon. David b. Daniel, who ousted Mevorkah b. Saadiah and replaced him as Head of the Jews ca. 1082, was untrammelled by loyalty to the priestly Gaonic family. Hence, he appropriated Gaonic judicial and administrative prerogatives which the sons of Saadiah had refrained from assuming. After 1094, with the precedents set by David b. Daniel behind him, the restored Mevorakh b. Saadiah was able to advance the evolution of the Headship of the Jews to its logical conclusion as replacement for the Palestinian Gaonate.

The vehement polemic against David b. Daniel in *Megillat Evyatar* stands as testimony to the fact that the Palestinian Gaon, himself, recognized the nature of David's political achievement.

(The author is currently completing a book-length study of the origins of the office of Head of the Jews in Egypt.)

THE GENIZA *KETUBBOT* AS A SOURCE FOR MEDIEVAL FEMALE ATTIRE

Yedida K. Stillman

The importance of the Cairo Geniza documents for socio-economic history, religious history, and for literature and linguistics has been well known for decades. Only recently has the Geniza been recognized as an important source for the study of medieval material culture and Islamic art history. My own research has dealt with Middle Eastern costume history. The approximately 750 trousseau lists from the Geniza, together with commercial and other records, have provided a unique source for the study of female attire during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods (969—1250) and, to a lesser extent, for the Mamluk period (1250—1517).

This paper surveys some of the new and more significant data on costume and textiles that the Geniza has provided and offers some insights into the Islamic vestimentary system. It also attempts to show how the Geniza records dealing with clothing can be coordinated with representations in Islamic art and with descriptions in Arabic and European literature.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GENIZA DOCUMENTS OF THE SIXTEENTH-EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

M. Benayahu

What is unique about the Geniza is that it provides us with abundance where we had little and with little where we had much. Everything after the thirteenth century had been considered non-existent among the Geniza materials. This is not the case. Some aspects of the late materials are identical with those of early ones, some differ. They are similar as concerns letters, notebooks and, to a degree, in their form; they differ with reference to literary compositions. Our period does not provide even one composition which contains a significant discovery or novelty. The Geniza also offers little of homiletic or kabbalistic works. Why is it that prayers and *piyyutim*, of a man's basic needs, which are so richly found in the earlier periods in the Geniza, are represented by almost nothing of value in the later periods? One might suggest that the invention of the printing press was the main cause of this change between the early and later times. But the Geniza fragments of printed books come from the beginning of printing, and even these are few in number. Perhaps after the popularization of printing the number of scribes and copyists diminished. Printed books were clearly in more demand than manuscripts. Perhaps there was also a decrease in the people's 'Geniza consciousness'.

The Geniza materials from the later period are particularly valuable for their historical data, especially for the history of the Jews of Egypt and Palestine. There is important information on the period between the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal and the end of the Mamluk rule in Turkey. Many chapters in history would remain almost completely unknown were it not for the Geniza materials. A significant source is the court notebooks. These are rich in information on matters of trade, on the contacts between Egyptian Jews and other Jewish communities, on books and the techniques of copying them, etc. A unique category consists of private letters, including letters by women to their husbands who were away on business in distant lands. The documents contain information concerning known scholars,

on the study of Torah and the Yeshivot. Many letters are written in Ladino or Arabic, and these are of linguistic interest.

The value of the Geniza for the study of the period being discussed will not be recognized or understood until these fragments are collected and published. This is presently a need of the hour.

ASHKENAZIC MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE GENIZA

A. M. Habermann

Scholars did not imagine that besides fragments written in Hebrew, Arabic, and the other languages of Eastern Jewry, the Geniza also contained fragments from writings of Ashkenazic Jewry.

Letters in Judeo-German from the mid sixteenth century have been found among the Geniza materials. Also large sections of Old German poetry which belong to the genre of the Hildegard legends, from 1382, have been found. There are also a number of poems written in Judeo-German with alphabetical or nominal acrostics. These are the oldest known Judeo-German manuscripts.

We do not know how these manuscripts reached the Geniza. As a hypothesis it is suggested that an Ashkenazic traveler took along reading materials on a trip to the East; and these leaves somehow remained in Cairo.

CONTEMPORARY LIFE PATTERNS IN THE JEWISH EAST WHICH ILLUMINATE GENIZA MATERIALS

M. Michaeli

The Jews of Baghdad in modern times had their own neighborhoods as did the Jews of medieval Fustat. The institutions of the community such as the social services, foundations, etc., were similar in Baghdad and in Egypt.

As with Egyptian Jews, the Baghdadi Jew had two names, a Hebrew one and an Arabic one. Women were called by by-names (Mother of Joseph);

women's names were usually Arabic (e.g., Badr, 'Moon'), later, European names appeared.

Baghdadi Jews engaged in all the occupations which the Egyptian Jews had in the Middle Ages. The silversmith's work was a Jewish monopoly among Egyptian and Baghdadi Jewry. In Baghdad, unlike Egypt, Muslims formed partnerships with Jews in the dyeing industry.

Jews engaged in international trade, import and export. They were also wholesalers and storekeepers and dealt in all the goods mentioned in the Geniza documents. Most bankers began as moneychangers or businessmen. Trade was the most important contact between Jews and Muslims.

In Iraq, a Jew was called *Musawiy* (from Moses), *Dhimmi* (protected), *Ibn al-Sabt* (Sabbatarian), *Ibn Sara* (Descendant of Sarah). Anti-Semitism is reflected in such sayings as 'May I die a Jew if I lie', or, when speaking to a respected Jew, 'Too bad you're a Jew'. Anti-Semitism and persecution were mainly passing and local phenomena, as with the persecution of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Hākīm.

LINGUISTIC MINUTIAE IN THE GENIZA FRAGMENTS

I. Yeivin

the author describes two small Bible fragments from the Cambridge Geniza collection and the details of the punctuation of two words found in them. (1) In TS NS 190, fol. 88, the aleph in אָנֹו (Jer. 42: 6) is vocalized with a Babylonian *qamaṣ*. Here the 'Easterners-Westerners' apparatus notes that 'according to the Easterners the word is written and read אָנֹו'. Consequently, we learn that the Biblical אָנֹו was vocalized with a *qamaṣ* as in Mishnaic Hebrew, and not אָנֹו like (אָנֹו). (2) A fragment of Psalms, TS NS 161, 49, 211, points the *lamed* in סִלְעִי (Ps. 18:3) with a *ḥataf-ḥiriq*. A *ḥataf-ḥiriq* appears only in the Aleppo Codex, in only five places; but Ps. ch. 18 is not preserved in this manuscript. This Geniza manuscript, which is the only one known to use the *ḥataf-ḥiriq* other than the Aleppo Codex, thus attests a sixth instance of this vowel sign in the Bible.

ON GENERAL AND SPECIFIC FEATURES IN JUDEO-ARABIC

Joshua Blau

Judeo-Arabic texts exhibit special literary traditions. This paper deals mainly with the tradition of translating Biblical *na* by 'now'. This translation continues an early tradition, well established in rabbinic literature (and elsewhere). It is well attested, e.g., in the writings of David ben Abraham Alfasi (who even interprets Exodus 12:9: **אל תאכלו ממנו נא** 'do not eat any of it raw', as 'do not eat any of it now'), Ibn Janaḥ and Salmon ben Yeruḥam; and vestiges of it can be found in Saadiah Gaon's translations. Abraham Ibn Ezra even established an etymological connection (by metathesis) between *na* and Arabic *al-an* 'now'. This tradition is not limited to 'classical' Judeo-Arabic (which appears until the end of the 15th century and uses classical Arabic as one of its components), but is well attested in later 'vulgar' Judeo-Arabic as well (written in a much more vulgar language and addressed to the lower strata of the Jewish population).

THE PALEOGRAPHY OF THE GENIZA LITERARY FRAGMENTS

Malachi Beit-Arié

Determining the date and provenance of Geniza literary fragments is one of the major problems facing students of the Geniza. The scarcity of extant early dated Oriental codices and of dated literary fragments found in the Geniza and the lack of dated codices and fragments before 894/5 hinder the establishment of a typology of the Geniza bookcraft and scripts. The fragmentary state of the books found in the Geniza limits the application of the codicological typology already uncovered by the Hebrew Paleography Project. It is therefore inevitable that the paleography of the Geniza should be based mainly on a typology of scripts. Due to the scarcity of dated literary

manuscripts we are forced to deviate from one of the methodological rules of paleography by also utilizing the documentary Geniza, rich in documents whose date and place of origin are known.

The Geniza provides Hebrew paleography with valuable information in having preserved datable manuscripts written in areas other than Egypt or the Middle East, such as Spain, the Maghreb and Byzantium, or written by copyists who emigrated from there, from a much earlier period than that of the dated codices extant from those areas.

The diachronic classification of the scripts is rather problematic due to strong conservatism, though one distinguishes a shift in the shapes of letters of the non-square scripts in the middle of the eleventh century. Synchronic typology seems to be more feasible. The distinction between Oriental scripts and non-Oriental ones (such as the Andalusian-Maghrebi or the Byzantine types) is already clear. Even within the Orient, a differentiation between the Eastern branch and the Western one seems discernible.

Geniza students would benefit if they would adopt a codicological approach when dealing with fragmentary texts. The knowledge of the technical, graphic and scribal practices employed by Hebrew copyists is essential to anyone who tries to reconstruct the extent of a text and its order, or tries to combine scattered fragments of the same codex.

GENIZA COLLECTIONS AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

S. C. Reif

Following his introductory remarks on the advisability of encouraging a high degree of cooperation between the various institutions sponsoring Geniza projects, Dr. Reif subsumed his remarks under four main headings:

- 1) The special problems encountered in dealing with Geniza material;
- 2) The history, structure and content of the Cambridge Geniza Collections;
- 3) The progress made in research and conservation between 1973 and 1976 and plans for the future;

תקצירים באנגלית