

# GENIZAH FRAGMENTS

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

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This special edition of *Genizah Fragments* is dedicated to its founder, Professor Stefan C. Reif, on the occasion of his official retirement as Director of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit.

Fifty issues of the newsletter have provided dynamic testament to the unique contribution Stefan Reif's working life has made to Genizah studies. The foundation

of the Genizah Research Unit, the establishment and publication of a "Genizah Series", and his outstanding fundraising efforts, are just some of the major achievements the newsletter has recorded over the years.

In addition to this, many people around the world have had their working lives enriched by cooperation or consultation with Stefan, not to mention the positive benefits brought to those of us who have actually worked for him.

Thus, it is fitting that these friends and colleagues have decided to create a special issue of the newsletter to pay tribute to the unique experience of knowing and working with Stefan Reif. It is no

less a tribute to his wife, Shulie, for without the constant support that she has given to Stefan, and without her unique skills in editing, organising and research, the story of the Unit would not be the same.

In preparing this special edition, we asked for contributions in the form of quotes, anecdotes and any other sort of testimonial, and we particularly encouraged warmth and humour. To our great surprise, we managed to tap into a hidden reserve of talent in and around the academic world for imaginative prose, poetry and comedy (although we will all stick to our day jobs!).

Indeed, being academics, we could not let the occasion pass

without slightly redressing the balance and considering other "truths". It should be noted, therefore, that while Stefan's achievements are remarkable, there are some things that he did not manage to realise. Thus, this issue will also present front-page reports of "the ones that got away!"

We wish Stefan and Shulie Reif a happy and well-deserved retirement to their new home in Israel. And we look forward to still seeing them at regular intervals and benefiting from Professor Reif's continued assistance with the Library and the Unit.

REBECCA JEFFERSON  
Research Associate,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit

## Gates boost

The Bill & Melissa Gates Foundation has indicated that funding could be made available to build a permanent T-S Genizah Research Centre.

The Centre would boast state-of-the-art research facilities, including an exhibition room, conference suite, and coffee-machine.

Mr Gates, who recently discovered that his great-grandmother Mary was half-Jewish, admitted that he had always been a fan of *Genizah Fragments*: "I was impressed with how the Unit was only one step behind Microsoft and I felt a great affinity with Ellis Weinberger. Now I know why."

Speaking at a conference in Jerusalem, Gates promised that he would find a way to ensure "the future of the software of the past."

After a series of high level talks, the Librarian has proposed that the Centre be housed deep in an underground extension to the recent extension to the Library's new extension.



Gates asks the Librarian for a Genizah Centre

## Shopping list uncovered

The Jews of the Genizah world often mixed Hebrew words with their native tongue to create dialects like Judaeo-Arabic, Ladino and Yiddish. Recently, however, a new dialect has come to light among the fragments of the Cairo Genizah.

The document in question consists of a list of strange words in Hebrew script. At first the words seemed incomprehensible but, with painstaking analysis, Unit researchers, Dr Avihai Shvitiel and Dr Friedrich Niessen, were able to distinguish the letters *pe*, *lamed*, *tet* (platt) followed by *pe*, *kaf*, *tet* (paket).



T-S Box.D.4.U(s)

After a consultation with an expert in Nordic languages, they were able to conclude that this writing was a unique example of Judaeo-Swedish and probably one of the earliest known references to a method of transporting furniture.

The remaining words were quickly deciphered to reveal a list of other household goods. Only one word at the top of the page with the letters *alef*, *yod*, *qof*, *alef*, *he* (Ekyah/Aykiah?) remains a mystery.

## Unit in cure for common cold

During his last visit to the Unit, Dr Efraim Lev, together with Leigh Chipman, came across some previously unseen medical fragments containing treatments for colds. One of the treatments, they noticed, was quite unusual and not found in any of the known Greek or medieval sources. Its ingredients include equal amounts of turmeric, mustard seed, elderberry, Egyptian turnip, crushed marble, and calf bladder.

Upon hearing of this discovery, Dr Rebecca Jefferson, a great sufferer of colds, volunteered to prepare and self-administer the treatment. Dr Jefferson took four doses daily for three days and was able to declare at the end of the treatment that she was completely cured. So far there have been no side effects other than some slight skin discoloration and nausea.

Scientists working in Cambridge are testing the "Genizah Cold Cure" and have reported "some degree of success" with rats.

T-S UO 44534.35b contained a text that appears to refute Maimonides' belief in the therapeutic nature of philosophy. Much of the writing is obscured by stains and rubbing, but it goes on to discuss the value of earthly goods, the benefits of money and the happiness accrued by accumulating possessions.

In view of the strange content, Outhwaite examined the manuscript closely to discover that it had an explanatory, if barely legible, heading. A digital image of the manuscript quickly solved the mystery. To his astonishment, the fragment was entitled "A letter from Maimonides' wife to him." Outhwaite's full description of Mrs Maimonides' letter will be published in volume sixty of *Women Philosophers* due to appear this summer.



The President offers his opinion of the T-S Unit during a recent visit to the Library

## Mrs Maimonides

Dr Ben Outhwaite of the Genizah Research Unit has just announced the surprising discovery he made while sifting through the UO (Unit Only) series of the Collection for things to report in *Genizah Fragments*. Outhwaite noticed that fragment

### NEXT ISSUE

Nasa Project  
Map of Lost Ark  
Unit at Oscars

INSIDE: SPECIAL TRIBUTES TO PROFESSOR STEFAN C. REIF

## For old times sake ...

To commemorate the retirement of Professor Stefan (in Hebrew, "Shelomo") Reif, I was asked to write a few lines about him. I accepted the task willingly, thinking that it would be easy, after all Stefan and I are old friends and have known each other since 1973, the year Stefan and Shulie moved to Cambridge together with their small children.

I was wrong. It was certainly not an easy undertaking. The main problem was where to start. Should I begin with his childhood? Well, I admit that I do not know much about it, except for some details that normally appear in, say, a passport application, and one or two amusing anecdotes about his family and teachers at university. I soon realized that my knowledge of this period could be summed up in a few short paragraphs. Either because Stefan did not tell me (blackmail, etc.) or because there was not much to tell, apart from the fact that he was a very conscientious student who spent most of his time "in the tent of the Torah."

What about his work at Cambridge and his contribution to scholarship at large? Well, what can I add that isn't already well-known?

Thus, I came to the conclusion that since the Genizah Research Unit is Stefan's "baby", I should say something about the "pre-conception period." By describing what the Genizah was like before Stefan's arrival, I will let the reader draw his own conclusions about Stefan's great achievements.

Having heard so much about the

Cairo Genizah before my arrival in Cambridge in 1972, I was keen to see it with my own eyes, especially since I had met Stefan's predecessor, Dr. Henry Knopf, only a few days before, when I went to inspect his university accommodation which we were planning to acquire after his departure for Israel.

Dr Knopf was a nice, friendly sort of person, albeit shy and with little self-confidence, something that stood in complete contrast to his physique. He warmly invited me to visit him at work where he could show me the Genizah. As agreed between us, I went the following day to the University Library, knocked on his door and entered a small office resembling the typical academic "retreat": books, files and documents were scattered all around on shelves, the desk and the floor. Dr. Knopf apologized for the "tohu-bohu" and invited me to sit down after removing a pile of papers from the only spare chair in the room. After a few comments about the weather we got straight to the point. Dr Knopf assumed that I already knew the Genizah story (which I did not) and therefore suggested we go immediately to the stacks to see it. What I witnessed there were scores of fragments "bound" between sheets of glass, fragments inside small folders tied in red ribbons and fragments inside large black boxes. All in all, several thousand fragments had been sorted, partly identified and partly catalogued by scholars such as Goi-

tein, Scheiber, Allony and Spiegel, who used to visit Cambridge once a year, in search of material for their own publications. Dr. Knopf's responsibility was limited to welcoming them and answering occasional queries from other interested parties. Since what had already been worked on was enough to occupy the handful of Genizah scholars, no one paid much attention to the several tea chests full of tiny fragments which were standing in the corner and which were considered, even by scholars, as "useless rubbish."

I was utterly shocked by what I saw. I thought: Surely the Genizah deserves better! But as long as the pilgrimages to Cambridge continued and scholars kept publishing Genizah material, the physical condition of the collection was ignored. In retrospect, we now know that if preservation had been given the right priority the fragments would not have suffered so much from the careless hands of those who repeatedly examined them.

So far as the contents were concerned, the Genizah was enlightening, but its physical condition was depressing. Those who visit the Genizah today are impressed by the condition of the Collection, forgetting or simply not knowing what it was like until 1973.

Stefan was undoubtedly the man the Genizah was yearning for all those years. Since his arrival and to this day he has put order in the house of the Genizah and has been behind any

achievement attained.

Paraphrasing on the famous dictum "From Moses (Rabenu) to Moses (Maimonides) no other Moses has emerged," one may say about the excellent condition of the Genizah and the work and achievements of the Genizah Research Unit at Cambridge: "From Shelomo (Schechter) to Shelomo (Reif) no other Shelomo has emerged." Stefan will be sorely missed by the Genizah and all those involved with it.

AVIHAI SHIVTIEL  
Senior Research Associate,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit

### Fostering careers

Stefan is responsible for the careers of many of the researchers who worked in the Genizah Unit. Whether he wants to or not he can take credit for their later successes, as many of us developed and flourished under his guidance. My six years as a researcher in the Unit gave me valuable opportunities to hone curatorial skills in specialist areas of research. I look back at this period as an excellent apprenticeship, preparing me for my current role.

COLIN F. BAKER  
Head of Near & Middle  
Eastern Collections,  
The British Library



### Willpower

Every so often, Fred gives the Unit a special treat at our Friday morning coffee break: he brings a selection of pastries from one of the North London Jewish bakeries. Guiltily, I usually eat about three, because they taste of home. My guilt is somewhat assuaged, however, by Stefan's reaction to the pastries. He has to be careful about wheat and sugar, and always conducts an internal debate out loud: Should I? I really shouldn't ... they look so delicious ... before finally giving in and eating. To his credit, he only eats half a fruit pastry, never a chocolate one. But if even Stefan of the iron will gives in to temptation, lesser mortals such as myself can surely be forgiven!

LEIGH CHIPMAN  
Research Assistant,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit

### Sui generis

When, back in the early 1990s, I secured a post at the UL, a colleague in my former workplace nodded knowingly when discussing the special collections of the Library. "Of course," he said, "that's where that chap looks after all the scrappy stuff!" I was intrigued then, and I remain intrigued today. "Scrappy stuff" does not come much better than the Genizah Collection, but, being scrappy, it always needs looking after, working on, defending against the cynics and the doubters, promoting in the right circles. Stefan has done all that, and so much more. He has contributed a great deal to the work of Library, University and St John's College, publishing key scholarly texts, while all the time proving a constant friend and colleague. The chap who looks after all the scrappy stuff will, I think, prove a very hard act to follow.

MARK NICHOLLS  
Librarian, Tutor, St John's College,  
University of Cambridge

### Appraisal

It's not difficult to put into words an appraisal of Stefan Reif. So many aptly spring to mind, all of them indicative of why the success of his

work here has been so great. He is industrious, dedicated, and tenacious (as anyone who has ever had the temerity to invite him onto a squash court, or slaved with him on a cricket field, would soon find out). By these virtues he has, throughout his time here, richly earned the respect of his colleagues and the scholarly world in general by his enthusiasm, leadership, and by simply "getting on with it." Others will tell of the quality of the work he has put in here, particularly that done within the Genizah Research Unit, and this will always be a testament to his inspiration and drive. As one who has simply known him and worked in his shadow for a number of years, I can only confirm how much we value his wisdom, and have constantly benefited from his advice and friendship. This is a small tribute to add to those many others that will undoubtedly be raised.

GODFREY WALLER  
Superintendent, Manuscripts Reading  
Room, Cambridge University Library



### Secret recipe for a good boss *rife* with quality ingredients!

Ingredients:  
Good humour  
Patience & tolerance  
Flexibility  
Efficiency  
Intelligence  
Understanding  
Good communication

- Method:
1. Take good humour and mix well with patience and tolerance.
  2. Add intelligence and understanding and blend well with good communication.
  3. Leave to stand with strong background support for several years.
  4. Prepare flexibility and efficiency and fold into mixture.
  5. Pour into mould and warm through gently until set in ways.
  6. Then enjoy fruits of labour.

Ps: Do not upset this mixture as it is very sticky to clear up!



SARAH SYKES  
Secretary,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit

## Vorlage and a packet of crisps!

The Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, founded by Stefan Reif at Cambridge University Library, has played a major role over the last few decades in advancing the study of the Cairo Genizah. It has done this in a variety of ways. The conservation of the collection now permits it to be consulted without the danger of damage. The numerous catalogues produced by the Unit, which now cover a substantial proportion of the collection, allow scholars to locate manuscript fragments that are relevant for their research. Stefan and his staff, who are intimately acquainted with the collection, have offered expert help and guidance to other scholars which has greatly facilitated their research. Stefan himself is a leading scholar in Genizah studies and has advanced the field by his numerous important publications.

For me personally Stefan and his Genizah Unit have been of immeasurable importance. I joined the Unit in 1983 when I was in the final stages of my Ph.D. My funding was coming to an end and I was worrying about my future. I was considering various options, including retraining as a school teacher, setting up a translation agency, or even running a country pub. I was most fortunate that Stefan took me on as a Research Assistant in the Genizah Unit. This gave me a job that kept me in the university world. Also, by the privilege of working with Stefan and being in direct daily contact with the Genizah manuscripts, the experience nurtured in me a fascination with medieval manuscripts.

I shall always be grateful to Stefan for the wonderful start he gave me. His presence in Cambridge has not only revolutionized the Genizah manuscript collection but has also touched the lives of many people. I would like to convey to him my warmest wishes for his retirement.

GEOFFREY KHAN  
*Professor of Semitic Philology,  
University of Cambridge*

## Ancient code broken



Valued informants showed me this image from the Cambridge University Library Oriental Collections and, influenced by the Da Vinci Code, von Daniken, Carlos Castaneda and bLo bSang Ram pa, they have insisted this

manuscript predicts the arrival in Cambridge of a great manuscript scholar in the mid-20th century. I leave it to you to judge if the figure on the left is indeed Stefan Reif? Be that as it may I have to say Stefan represents a tradition of scholarship highly valued in Cambridge and though less in fashion than it once was we can hope that it will survive through future generations. His decisions and judgments on all matters have always been those of a scholar. He knows how to inspire serious work. All who value this in the University will wish him well. Oh, and the figure on the right is said to be Stefan's successor, can you put a name to that face?

CRAIG JAMIESON  
*Head of Indian Department,  
Cambridge University Library*

## Rare Hebrew haiku found in Library tea room

רוכל הגניזה  
ספרו דרשו - והשועל  
איך מחליף הארי

BEN OUTHWAITE  
*Research Associate,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit*

## Act of good faith

Although I have known Stefan Reif for a relatively short time, I can name him among the people who have played an edifying role in my personal and professional development. My first experience of Professor Reif was one of trust. When I applied to work in the Genizah Unit, I had never even held a medieval Jewish manuscript in my hands before. Inwardly I felt quite intimidated, but after several months of work I began to gain some confidence and to think: I can do it! Yet it seems that Professor Reif had known that from the start! After one brief meeting he estimated my potential better than I could, and gave me his full trust. Such insight, I believe takes wisdom, high professionalism, a deep knowledge of people, and also faith. Since those first steps in the Genizah Unit a year and a half ago, I have had the opportunity to appreciate Professor Reif's other good qualities: his caring attitude, his warm attention and the understanding he shows people; his availability and the immediate response he gives to any of your requests, even in the midst of a tempest.

MILA GINSBURSKAYA  
*Research Assistant,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit*

## Musings I



There was a young scholar called Reif,  
With an equally industrious wife.  
They took on the Genizah,  
And made it look easa;  
"Well done" saith the Lord, "By My Life!"

ROBERT GORDON  
*Regius Professor of Hebrew,  
University of Cambridge*

## A lasting legacy

The scholastic world and the Jewish community both in the UK and abroad will feel a sense of loss with Stefan Reif's retirement. Erudite, articulate, highly personable, user-friendly, he is a good example of how scholars can best communicate with the uninformed and popular world. He managed in his several lectures, which I attended, to communicate a passion and enthusiasm for the Genizah in a way that was totally infectious, and yet the subject matter itself did not have wide appeal until he raised its profile and fed a thirst for knowledge which hitherto had not been apparent.

We do not boast of many Jewish scholars in his field who can present their subject in such a fluid and exciting manner. Yet this is what he did and it was therefore little wonder that I was eager to convince him to write the book "A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo", and happy to fund it.

The launch of that book received overwhelming endorsement from the Jewish community, being written in a popular form with a light touch of scholarly input, so as to ensure that the readership actually appreciated the reading experience.

I have to say that Stefan had to be bullied consistently into meeting deadlines and timetables because of his other priorities, but I felt that his work should have the widest possible dissemination so that the Jewish people could be proud of their heritage and be proud of the findings which have been made public through the book and his work. I feel the book fulfilled all our expectations.

We all wish him luck with his decision to retire, which we hope will be in good health. He leaves behind a legacy of esteem and affection from his colleagues and an unreserved admiration for the work which he has achieved.

JOE DWEK CBE

## Major impact

I do not know what to say about Stefan's retirement, because this word does not go well with Stefan. To imagine the Cambridge Genizah collection without him sounds almost inconceivable. I was there before Stefan's tenure. I was quite young then, and I don't know how many people still remember how it was to work on the collections in those days. I will not go into details, but the condition of the fragments was really desperate. I cannot say that I did not benefit from my work in those far days. But when I came back, after a pause of years, I was stunned by the new conditions. What a difference! It was incredible. I cannot recall a similar case of one man leaving such an imprint on a project of such magnitude. Not to mention the *Genizah Fragments*, which brings the importance of the Collection to the awareness of many scholars.

I can only hope that Stefan will somehow continue to contribute to the progress of Genizah studies.

A final word on the unique input of Shulie, at Stefan's side, to the Genizah: it added a special dimension to their achievements, and also added so much to the special atmosphere of working with the Genizah Unit.

A huge THANK YOU, and heartiest congratulations for the future.

HAGGAI BEN-SHAMMAI  
*Professor of Arabic Language & Literature,  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## Rare breed



- Genus:** GENIZAH SWIFT  
var. *stefanus reifi*  
**Colour:** some grey plumage  
**Feeding:** non-wheat grains; herbal tea leaves  
**Habitat:** buildings with tall towers; acquires nest from paper fragments  
**Song:** chant-like; heard in early mornings, Friday evenings, and on other special occasions (birdwatchers in central Cambridge have reported hearing its call all day on Yom Kippur)  
**Mating:** has two nests but only one female – the *shulia reifi* (also rare) (female helps male with paper fragments; maintains nest to very high standard)  
**Migration:** flies regularly across Britain, N. America and Middle East  
**Character:** gregarious; high flier; sleeps on the wing  
**Behaviour:** meticulously guards paper fragments; enables other birds to build their nests; cares for flock

EFRAIM LEV  
*Senior Lecturer,  
University of Haifa*

## Letter of tribute

Dear Stefan,

Memories of working with Genizah manuscripts here not long before you came seem at first to sum up all that needs saying. The excitement of being brought a box of crumpled and tattered unidentified fistfuls in the Anderson Room, and perhaps getting some assistance by means of an ultra-violet lamp (although on a good day the sun would perform the same function), and the kindness and help of Dr Teicher and the Library staff, soon to include Dr Knopf – these good things had to be balanced against the frustrating and even ominous sense of a vast unexplored and constantly deteriorating mass of material, towards the ordering of which the efforts which could be provided for were clearly insufficient.

Now these damaged and perforce neglected leaves are properly cared for and studied by a highly-qualified scholarly group of curator-researchers, and the reader characteristically finds a flat rather than crumpled document, presented in such a way as to maximize access and minimize further damage; and we are furnished with a magnificent series of bibliographical

aids. All this represents an inestimable benefit for scholars throughout the world, and an achievement evoking the utmost admiration; and you are the one sine quo non, without whom it could not have happened. You have channelled into service a sort of river of Pishon, the refreshing water of scholarly wisdom mingling always with the gold of the needed funding. The brown and crumpled leaves have correspondingly found a new lease of life, and (the earlier ones perhaps rustling gently to form the Greek phrase *stephanos Stephanoi*) they have woven themselves into a garland for Stefan.

That contrast between past and present in the Cambridge Genizah seems at first to say all that needs to be said; but in fact it leaves out much else that is gratefully remembered. For me, any list would include first of all a mention of your wife and home, and the fact that a tribute to you is a tribute to her; and then I'd think of the completion of the Loewe and Leveen catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts outside the Taylor-Schechter collection, the constant welcome to visiting scholars and the stimulating lectures and symposia, and the deeply impressive example of your own scholarly work, carried on amid all this with

unflagging zest and discipline.  
Wishing you a very happy day,  
Yours gratefully,

WILLIAM HORBURY  
*Professor of Jewish and Early Christian  
Studies, University of Cambridge*

## Friedman: No Comment on Schechter Loan Rumour

According to an unconfirmed off-the-record interview, M. A. Friedman is reported to have described his discovery in 1971 of a hand-written letter by the University Librarian to Solomon Schechter, among un-numbered fragments in a New Series box. The letter supposedly confirmed that all Genizah fragments not catalogued by E. Worman were Schechter's private property but would remain on loan at CUL for a minimum of fifteen years and until demanded by him or his successors at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. According to the report, when Friedman visited Cambridge in 1974 he showed the letter to the newly appointed Genizah librarian Stefan Reif. Because of its obvious importance for

Genizah history, Reif immediately took the letter to the laboratory for preservation. When later that week Friedman requested to examine the manuscript, he was informed that an unfortunate work accident had occurred in the new Unit and the letter had been damaged beyond recognition. While this newsletter was being prepared, Friedman was asked to confirm the report. He adamantly refused to comment but professed his sincere friendship and deep admiration for Professor Reif and gratitude for his invaluable contribution to Genizah research.

MORDECHAI A. FRIEDMAN  
*Joseph and Ceil Mazer Chair in Jewish  
Culture in Muslim Lands and Cairo  
Geniza Studies, Tel Aviv University*

## Poetry in motion

There was a great scholar called Reif  
Who had the support of his wife.  
He uncovered the layers  
Of old Jewish prayers  
And brought them from darkness to life.

ANNA SAPIR ABULAFIA  
*Lecturer, Faculty of History,  
University of Cambridge*

## OED (unofficial edition 2006)

### Dictionary

Stefan Reif ['stefan, 'stēvən, rɪ:f 'rāf rēf rīf] (abbr.: Prof.)

noun

- a person in charge of a special manuscript unit: *If only a Stefan Reif would take over my research facility, it would run like clockwork.*
- a type of librarian
- a highly respected academic
- a type of person who cannot sit still

### DERIVATIVES

**reify** ['rēə,fi | , rɪə 'faɪ | , rɪ:ɪfai | , reɪ-] cf. deify

verb (-fies, -fied) [trans.] formal

make (something abstract) more concrete or real

ORIGIN early Seventies: from chiefly Sc. *to guide*

### Thesaurus

#### Reifle

Verb (esp. in context of management meetings)

1. **fidjet** = *move restlessly*, fiddle (*informal*), bustle, twitch, fret, squirm, chafe, jiggle, jitter (*informal*), be like a cat on hot bricks (*informal*), worry

#### Reifian

adjective

1. **industrious** = *hard-working*, diligent, active, busy, steady, productive, energetic, conscientious, tireless, zealous, laborious, assiduous
2. **dedicated** = *committed*, devoted, sworn, enthusiastic, single-minded, zealous, purposeful, given over to, wholehearted
3. **ebullient** = *exuberant*, excited, enthusiastic, buoyant, exhilarated, elated, irrepressible, vivacious, effervescent, effusive

PETER FOX (*Cambridge University Librarian*) & ANNE MURRAY  
(*Deputy Librarian*), *Cambridge University Library*

בבוא מלפת שבא לפני שלמה  
נערים בלבוש אשה, נערות  
והוא הבין להבחיןם בכדור  
וקא סניור שמו גם הוא שלמה  
בבית-אל והביאו אל מנוחה  
והניח לדור-דורים, ברכה  
קטעים לרבות, מאמרים  
שלמה זה, אשר פתר לחידה,  
שלישי בא שלמה דב, וגלה  
ימי חיי הגונים בדורם  
והנה אחרון חביב, שלמה,  
אשר חלם לקבץ הנפוצים  
גאוני דור, מאירי עין שתומים,  
הלא הגשים חלומותיו, ואשריו  
כחיד"א הוא במסעיו, ויחידות  
לבו, רעים, לברך שם כבודו,  
בקול תודה נעטר לו, עטרה

לנסות אם בחידות הרעמו  
בבגדי איש להלביש צותמו,  
כחטפו או כהשליכו לרומו.  
אלי קהיר לאור גנוז, מקומו  
אשר עש כמעט הפל שקמו  
בקמבריג' כל-אשר אסף בחרמו  
לבן-סירא לעומת תרגומו.  
שמו זכור לטובה בו ביומו.  
אשר הסתיר זמן המחרומו,  
גניזתם כמשיח לתמו.  
והוא פהו לאל עליון, חלומו  
לאיש ואיש פרי עטו ברשמו,  
וכתביהם שתולים הם בכרמו,  
אשר הרזה שדה חמד בגשמו,  
ורו לפני פשוטים שם סתומו.  
כנהר הגני גוטה שלומו,  
וכתר עז: ואלה לשלמה.

אני רפאל הלוי Loewe חיברתי י"ז שבט, מות ירע"ם לפ"ק, 15-02-2006

## Natural Miracles

As angels are not of necessity heavenly creatures with wings, but may be human messengers sent from Heaven (Gen.18:2), so miracles are not necessarily ruptures of nature, but may be natural events so extraordinary that we justly regard them as miraculous.

This kind of natural miracle occurs with the destiny of some manuscripts. When S. D. Goitein gave a lecture on the India Trade at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1954, Saul Lieberman, the great Talmudist, commented that it would be a fine thing if the Genizah could furnish us with a letter from David to his brother Moses ben Maimon. Goitein answered that he could write a narrative about David, but would not dare to fabricate a letter. Back in Cambridge, Goitein asked to see Genizah papers acquired before 1897. He began to examine the papers and the first item he plucked out was the letter David sent to Moses before his fateful trip to India. The name 'Aydhah first caught his attention. It is a precious letter, describing the terrifying ordeals David had endured on his way and informing Moses that the market in 'Aydhah was stagnant and that he had decided to go on to India. David told Moses not to worry about his impending voyage. "He who saved me from the desert and its terrors will save me from the sea." He implored his brother to calm the heart of David's wife and her sister, not to alarm them or make them despair. And he told Moses not to pray, for "if a man cries out [to God] over what is past, his prayer is in vain" (Mishnah Berakhot, ix, 3). From David's requests we learn important things about his brother.

The letter's survival is nothing short of miraculous. Consider that the letter had to travel from 'Aydhah 300 miles over the frightful Eastern Desert, and then down the Nile, with customs checks on the way, altogether about 640 miles, to Fustat. The letter was presumably put into an archive and eventually deposited with the papers that became the Genizah.

After the events that brought David's letter to Fustat and then to Cambridge, it might have been discarded had Goitein not rescued it. It was as though an invisible hand preserved the letter and guided Goitein to it.

Maimonides' own hand-written archetype copy of his *Commentary on the Mishnah* also survived due to a sequence of events that were providential. When Maimonides' fifth generation descendant, David II ben Joshua (1335–1415), migrated from Cairo to Aleppo (1375), he brought with him family heirlooms, including this copy of the commentary. It is possible that David II brought with him the manuscript of the *Mishneh Torah* that Moses Maimonides certified as having been collated with his fair copy (Bodl. Ms. Huntington 80). It is also possible that he brought to Aleppo the Ben Asher

Codex, which came to be known as the Aleppo Codex and the Crown. Moses ben Maimon had used it as his exemplar when he wrote his own copy of the Bible.

The manuscript of the Mishnah commentary remained with the family in Aleppo until the end of the 15th century, when it passed into private hands. If the first miracle was the preservation of Maimonides' handwritten manuscript, the second was its discovery by English scholars in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century.

This is a marvelous story of how dedicated scholars saved manuscript treasures from oblivion. Edward Pococke Sr (1604–91), an English Orientalist educated at Oxford, became chaplain to the merchants of the Levant Company at Aleppo in Syria, where he continued to study Arabic and collected manuscript treasures, among them two orders in one volume of the autograph archetype of Maimonides' Mishnah commentary.

Pococke urged his protégé, the Arabic scholar Robert Huntington, to apply for the chaplaincy at Aleppo in 1670. Huntington stayed in Aleppo for eleven years, searching for manuscripts. Among the precious manuscripts he acquired were two Maimonides autographs—a volume of the archetype copy of the Mishnah commentary and part of the *Mishneh Torah*, with Maimonides' authorization of the text.

By another providential occurrence, two more volumes of the Mishnah commentary were discovered in Damascus during World War I by Jacob Moses Toledano and his brother Barukh. These volumes were purchased by the scholarly bibliophile David S. Sassoon and came to his library at his home in Letchworth, England, some fifty miles from their companions at the Bodleian.

The fair copy of the *Commentary on the Mishnah* was subjected over time to Maimonides' revisions—additions, deletions, and reformulations. In many cases Maimonides crossed out something in the text so that we see what he deleted; in others, he completely expunged the original text. It is amazing to see how his mind worked as he sought perfection.

In addition, there are emendations by his son Abraham, carrying out his father's intentions and oral instructions, so that even after his death his commentary was being improved according to his wishes. There are, as well, comments by his descendants, all the way down to David II. Many of the comments corrected the commentary in the light of the later *Mishneh Torah*, thereby fulfilling Maimonides' own plan.

We have taken it to be as natural as the spreading branches of the willow trees over the river that when we come to Cambridge we shall find Stefan and Shulie at the Genizah Research Unit, all smiles, extending their welcome and hospitality and

offering help and advice. It is hard to imagine the Unit bereft of their caring presence. As with so many things we cherish dearly, we assumed they would be there forever, without considering how fortunate it was for them to be there at all. Destiny brought a thirty-one year old Scotsman, young but ripe and right for the post, with his lovely wife, to a formidable task that he mastered in grand style for thirty-one years.

Stefan brought system and order to the Genizah collection, raised the necessary funds and turned it into an academic resource for the world of scholarship. He attracted preeminent scholars to work in the Genizah Research Unit and presided over the publication of many valuable books.

It is reassuring to know that Stefan will remain as a consultant to the Library and to the Unit, and that he will continue his research and writing, which he managed to do somehow despite the burdens of administration and fund raising.

Service to the community is a wonderful mitzvah, but it demands a great sacrifice—*כרמי שלי לא נטרתי*. When Maimonides was appointed Ra'is al-Yahud, a student wrote a congratulatory letter, expressing concern that his communal obligations would deflect him from research and writing. Indeed, I think it may have been the main reason why Maimonides did not occupy the office for very long (1171–73). A scholar has an obligation to write and share his knowledge with the world.

We wish Stefan and Shulie many years of joy, creativity and fulfillment.

JOEL KRAEMER

*John Henry Barrows Professor of Jewish Studies, University of Chicago*

## Genizah figment



*Taylor-Schechter Extraordinary Box 27½, c.1006 CE*

And lo! A great sleep fell upon me and I saw those things that shall come to pass in those days, ten times ten times ten years from the time of writing these words, and I saw a flat field and it was surrounded by flat fields as far as the eye could see and in that field stood the great Tower [*migdal*] of Babelotekha and it was a great and mighty tower that reached into the skies and frankly speaking a very ugly tower and lo! there were young men and women coming to and fro carrying books, and I said unto them, "Speak! Verily verily I say unto you, what books are those and what are their secrets?" and one held up a book and on it was written in words taken from the language of the Romans "Elementary structures of alterity in post-structuralist discourse", and I was seized with fear and confusion and understood nothing, and another held up a book of many colours and on it was written in the language of the Anglosaxim "Jewish Archive from Old Cairo by Professor Stefan Reif", and I was at peace and was mightily comforted...

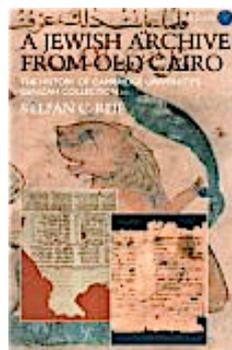
DAVID ABULAFIA

*Professor of Mediterranean History, University of Cambridge*

## A haiku from Professor Reif's diary for 2006

End of March: retire.  
Short lived are the joys of Spring –  
April: fool! raise funds.

## Musings 2



There was a young scholar called Stefan,  
With learning and Hebrew ambition:  
He forged lots of fragments,  
Wrote "Index" and "Contents",  
And now it's a "Special Collection".

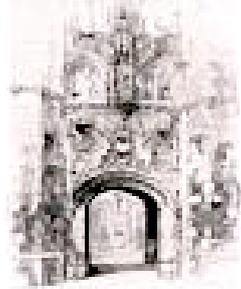
ROBERT GORDON

*Regius Professor of Hebrew, University of Cambridge*

ALISON PEARN

*Managing Editor, Darwin Correspondence Project, Cambridge University Library*

## Of special merit



When in 1976 Stefan Reif was appointed an Under-Librarian at the UL with responsibility for the Genizah, not being a graduate of Cambridge, he was granted membership of St John's College. He was not, then, a Johnian by birth, but by adoption and grace. The privilege was entirely appropriate since an erstwhile Master of the College was John Taylor, the editor of a well-known edition of *Pirque Aboth* and whose name, following his support of Solomon Schechter, was given to the Genizah collection. It is difficult to secure teaching Fellowships at the older Colleges if you are not in one of the major disciplines such as, for

example, Natural Sciences, Engineering or History. The situation eventually resolved itself when in 1998 Stefan Reif was deservedly appointed to an ad hominem Chair. It is possible to elect Professors to a different category in the Fellowship and one that is not connected to teaching duties and quotas. As a colleague in Hebrew studies and at the time President of the College, it was my privilege to take a part in his election to a professorial Fellowship. This duly happened in November 1998 and, since, Stefan has proved to be a diligent and dedicated member of the society. The kitchens have been able to accommodate his

Jewish dietary requirements and, with the integrity which is characteristic of the man, he has respected the Christian foundation of the College. It is good to recall that his College has been involved in the teaching of Hebrew since its very foundation in 1511, and that it stands opposite what was once the church All Saints in Jewry, the old Jewish quarter of the city. Stefan Reif is a loyal and appreciative Johnian. Baruch Ha-shem!

ANDREW MACINTOSH  
Fellow and Dean Emeritus of St John's  
College, University of Cambridge

## Gut-tural instincts

All good Jews eat CHaroseT at their seder,  
They know eCHad and sing of CHad Gadya.  
CHaredim send their kinder to a CHeder,  
At CHanukah perform CHiddur Mitzvah.

At Shavuot they contemplate the Shnei LuCHot,  
Rosh HaShanah brings devash but no CHalav.  
CHasidim wave the lulav in their succot,  
Remember CHurban on the Ninth of Av.

On Yom Kippur they pound their hearts and say Al CHet,  
At TashliCH they throw bread into a stream;  
They daven MinCHah daily – better yet,  
All through the year they do Bikkur CHolim.

The CH-sound has a simple regel aCHat,  
But with reference to our dear Professor Reif,  
Though usually a guttural, as in Bach, at  
This point it's exceptional (like his wife).

We all know that he's a MaCHer, what's more he's a  
CHaCHam. Don't lift your eyes up in despair,  
But for the man who put the ease into Genizah,  
It's "CH" as in Medieval Hebrew CHair.

DIANA LIPTON

Associate Lecturer, Faculty of Divinity,  
University of Cambridge



## Extraordinary items in the Cambridge Genizah Collections, Genizah Series 62

T-S\* AS\*\* 21.1

\*The abbreviation T-S, formerly interpreted as referring to Taylor-Schechter, is actually an acronym of the names Tanya and Shulie, thus honouring the influence of two women on the research of the Genizah documents.  
\*\* The abbreviation AS, formerly interpreted as referring to the "Additional Series", has to be read as an acronym of the names Aryeh and Stefan, both somehow connected with each other.

Description of the fragment: size 19.73 cm x 20.06 cm; 33 lines recto and verso; paper, excellent condition (it is to be hoped that it will be preserved for a long period), written in an almost illegible hand (some secretaries will be able to identify occasionally difficult readings); languages: Hebrew

(with Scottish accent), some Yiddish phrases.

Contents: Letter of a scholar from Angliaterra to his dear wife referring to Sabbath laws, introduced by a quotation from rabbinic liturgy, signed (signature hardly legible, probably שלמה (recto)); legal document concerning the purchase of a house in Erets Israel with names of witnesses, dated 2315 Sel. (verso).

The fragment belongs with T-S AS 11.11 to form a complete page (בכנגד).

FRIEDRICH NIESSEN  
Research Associate,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit

## Pithy sayings

I was going up in the lift with Stefan and discussing a class in medieval French manuscripts given by a distinguished literary critic, which I had just invigilated. Stefan confirmed my opinion of certain aspects of post-modernism: "The trouble is that nowadays, anybody can say just about anything about anything ..." A slight anecdote when repeated, but wise in its original context.

JAYNE RINGROSE  
Deputy Keeper of Manuscripts,  
Cambridge University Library

## Musings 3



There spoke a successor of Schechter,  
Who rejoiced in the title "Director":  
"Think outside the boxes,  
They're not Peter Fox's;  
Let's make it a proper Genizah/r."

ROBERT GORDON  
Regius Professor of Hebrew,  
University of Cambridge

## A ruddy good boss!

I can seriously say that it was fun to have Stefan as a boss! He was always a source of genuine advice and support and I will miss his elevating spirit and his enthusiasm, which enlightened my struggle in the jungle of work. Stefan is not a "time waster", that was my first impression of him and his sanguine personality communicated this attribute very philosophically.

YASMIN FAGHIHI  
Head of Near Eastern Collections,  
Cambridge University Library

## Testimonial

Please find below a direct quote (with some deletions) from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) assessment.

*"The well-proven record of Professor Reif and the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit guarantees a result of the highest possible quality, which will constitute the solid foundation of research upon the Taylor-Schechter Genizah collection for the foreseeable future ... Professor Reif is the foremost Genizah scholar in the world, with an unmatched record for successfully completing projects. All of his team have proven themselves to have all the necessary skills to do the job to the highest possible standards."*

In my opinion this sums up the GREAT work of Professor Reif and the hand-picked staff working under his guidance. I would like to add that the honesty and integrity of Professor Reif are some of his outstanding qualities.

REUVEN RUBELOW  
Friedberg Genizah Project

## Inspiration

"A library is only as good as the collections it holds and those who care for them." The Genizah is a world-class collection of manuscripts. Every fragment is a priceless piece. The monumental efforts of Charles Taylor and Solomon Schechter to secure this outstanding collection for the University Library over a hundred years ago was a great coup. Not quite so long

ago, the University Library achieved another great coup when Stefan assumed responsibility for the Genizah. His extraordinary energy and drive single-handedly transformed mounds of dusty fragments in crates into a world-class collection deserving the international attention that it has received from dignitaries, scholars and public alike. As Research Associate (1995–1997, 1998–2002) I had the privilege of working at the Genizah with Stefan. I learnt so much from both. Both were an inspiration. May the Genizah continue to serve. But may Stefan, together with Shulie, enjoy his retirement that is deserved one-hundredfold.

ERICA C. D. HUNTER  
Affiliated Lecturer in Hebrew and Aramaic,  
Faculty of Oriental Studies,  
University of Cambridge

## Sterling qualities

I cannot recall first meeting Stefan but it must have been during the late 1970s when I started working in the Oriental Faculty. Over the time that I have known him there are three of his many good attributes that stand out. First, enthusiasm – his energy and drive for making things move, change and go forward. Second, as a mentor – his support and encouragement for my own work and ideas. Third, his humanity – his open office door made possible the discussion of human problems and situations which were always met with understanding and sympathy. I have benefited greatly from all of these qualities over the years – I feel sure many others must have too.

CATHERINE ANSORGE  
Near Eastern Collections,  
Cambridge University Library

## In his spare time ...

There once was a man of great insight  
Who built a Unit with all his might.  
Stefan still had time to show his care  
As a CJCR examiner  
And now both our futures are bright.

EDWARD KESSLER  
Executive Director,  
Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations,  
University of Cambridge

## A strong measure of devotion

Stefan and I have collaborated in many matters connected with Jewish life in Cambridge for over thirty years, and it has been a most rewarding experience.

But for now I will recall just two highlights. For most of this period, Stefan has led a class in Talmud every week that he is in Cambridge. A Talmud class is not like most University lectures or supervisions, where the teacher expounds and the students (if you are lucky) listen, but it is a true exercise in group dynamics. The whole essence of Talmud study is that those learning must argue in order to eventually reach understanding, and, ideally, agreement. There are various styles of Talmud learning and, as might be expected, Stefan is no traditionalist: instead he focuses on more academic ways of learning; historicity, transmission problems and so on, as well as understanding the text and commentaries. Week after week this has been a cornerstone of our Jewish life in Cambridge. Those who attend now and who have attended over the years are very grateful for the time and effort expended, and for the many Tractates we have learnt together.

Since 1975, Stefan and I, with occasional help from others, have led the synagogue services for Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). For those more familiar with Church or Chapel services, I should add that the total length of the prayer services on Rosh Hashanah is some 8–10 hours, and on Yom Kippur about 10 hours, so the task of leading the community in prayers, which are said just once or twice a year, is onerous and exacting. The words must be said correctly (not always an easy task); the tunes must be sung just right and the atmosphere, which is so important to the religious experience of the congregation, must be carefully maintained.

Over all these years Stefan has carried this out to perfection, and I wish to express my continuing gratitude once again. As a measure of his devotion I recall the Jewish New Year of 2001. The festival fell in September as usual, a mere two weeks after the events of 9/11. Stefan and Shulie were in the USA, and flights from the USA to England were in a state of chaos. They must have been sorely tempted to stay in America, and would have had every justification in doing so. Instead they managed to fly back to England, taking 24 hours in the process.

Stefan (and Shulie!) enjoy your retirement.

BARRY LANDY  
*Life fellow, Fitzwilliam College,  
University of Cambridge*

## Courting friendship!

Research is being conducted into the benefits of a continuing encounter on

the squash court between Stefan Reif and Julius Lipner which began over 20 years ago. These two friends and squash-combatants have been meeting on the squash court regularly for all these years. During the warming-up period, they put the world to rights by discussing various topics of the day: family, politics, University. Then the game begins, during which no quarter is sought or given. The matches usually hang on a knife-edge, and the overall score for these 20 plus years is probably exactly even.

Over the years the two players have cemented their friendship with family visits and College meals and other meetings, so that there is almost a squash-playing “covenant” now in force between them. Ah, the bonding and purifying attributes of this great game! Reif reports that all his tensions and woes simply vanish away as a result of these encounters. Lipner heartily agrees.

JULIUS LIPNER  
*Professor of Hinduism and Comparative  
Religion, University of Cambridge*

## Thanks

אולי רק ציפורי-מסע וידעות  
כשהן תלויות בין ארץ ושמים  
את זה הכאב של שתי המולדות  
לאה גולדברג

Thank you Stefan, for helping me to “hang between heaven and earth” for so many years. Risa

RISA DOMB  
*Lecturer in Modern Hebrew Literature,  
Faculty of Oriental Studies,  
University of Cambridge*

## Collaboration

I go back to the very beginning with Stefan. My first research visit to T-S was in the summer of 1974 (Stefan and Shulie actually watched my now 29-year old daughter take her first steps). Over the years and subsequent trips to Cambridge I watched him build the Unit, even as I, from the mid 1980s, was building my own Genizah project at Princeton—the database of historical documents known as the Princeton Geniza Project (we spell it without the “h”). Stefan and I collaborated on a joint pilot project, transcriptions and T-S digital images, before the advent of the Friedberg Genizah Project. His contribution to the Unit, his generous spirit, and his good counsel make him one of the truly enlightened figures of Jewish studies in our own time.

MARK R. COHEN  
*Professor of Near Eastern Studies,  
Princeton University*

## Code-x



While working on the reconstruction of medieval *diwans* in Cambridge University Library, I came across a poorly preserved colophon in a hitherto unseen anthology by the lesser-known redactor Eli ben Eli nin Eli ha-Hazan (MS 04.2006). The following is a rough transcription:

Folio 5, recto  
[13] ... And I wrote it so that it would be  
[14] a lasting memory ...  
[15] For there will come  
[16] a man from [hungaria?] ... the name  
[17] Shelomo [Zalman?] to restore [it]  
[18] and it shall reside [among] many  
[19] on the banks of the river [Kem?]  
[20] ... Shelomo [Goitam?] ... decipher it  
[21] ... until [a man] shall come forth  
[22] from the No[rth] ... [Skotti?] ...  
[23] [his] name Shelomo [Kalman?] ...  
[24] and shall cause [it] to be widely known  
[25] and disseminated. For he will open  
[26] <many> men's hearts to the great  
[27] learning to be found there.  
[28] He will be a light in his days.  
[29] ... in the year 2284  
[30] of the Seleucid era ...  
[31] ... Shelomo [HZQ] ...

JOSEPH YAHALOM  
*Professor of Hebrew Literature,  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## Procedure

Procedure for meetings with Professor Reif (Rough draft 3 of 16/02/ 2006)

- You must arrive ON TIME
- Make sure Professor Reif is not on the phone (*or otherwise engaged*) before entering the room
- You must arrive in a positive and empathetic frame of mind.
- ~~Do not take anything personally.~~
- You must arrive prepared with answers to questions that you want to ask and with answers to questions you didn't know existed.
- You must be ready to accept suggestions and new responsibilities.
- You will leave the meeting eager to learn something new, ready to carry out any task, and willing to overcome any problem.

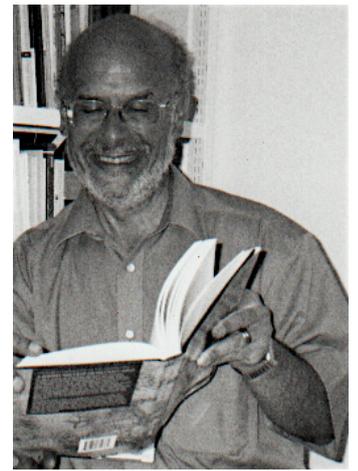
ELLIS WEINBERGER  
*Research Associate,  
T-S Genizah Research Unit*

## Ethos

The work of Stefan Reif in Cambridge has been characterised especially by his recognition – and indeed his embodiment – of the role of the scholar

in a great academic and research library. For him, such a library is not just a repository of texts, but a transmitter of them, and an institution which takes the initiative in recording and studying them. Those of us engaged in parallel endeavours had reason to be grateful for this ethos which he fostered, and the unobtrusive support which he gave us. This was particularly true for those, like myself, who worked within his broader department of “Oriental and other languages”. As a scholar-librarian, he will be hard to replace.

GEOFFREY ROPER  
*Formerly Head of the Islamic Bibliography  
Unit, Cambridge University Library*



## Going from strength to strength

I was fortunate to be taken on as a Research Assistant in the Genizah Research Unit in 1979 and worked there for 3 years before going on to other things. Many years later (in 2004), I joined Cambridge University's Development Office where, together with my colleague Aniela Shuckburgh, I have had the pleasure of working with Stefan again. What is amazing is that his energy, drive, and sense of purpose have not diminished over time and he has brought the Genizah on from strength to strength.

Aniela and I greatly enjoyed “going on tour” last year to New York and Chicago with two major exhibitions of Genizah fragments. Stefan is a tireless advocate of Jewish scholarship and enthralled audiences in the USA bringing the Genizah period to life through his erudition and humour.

We are joined by our colleagues in the Development Office in wishing Stefan and Shulie well in their “retirement”. We will miss his presence at the UL but welcome his continuing role as an advocate of both the Genizah and the University Library.

DEBBIE PATTERSON-JONES  
& ANIELA SHUCKBURGH  
*Development office,  
University of Cambridge*

# University website reports unique find

Specialists working in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit have announced a unique find in the Collection. It appears to be a lost letter from a polyglot community in the hitherto unknown city-state of Bloomsbury. "This discovery ranks with the find of the famous 'Kiev Letter,'" announced the Unit's Director Professor Stefan Reif. "The settlement of Bloomsbury was unknown before our researchers translated this document. It clearly was a community where many languages were spoken. The letter itself is written in Aramaic

and appears to be a greeting of the communal leadership to a major scholar of the realm, Stefan the *Nasi*. The signatures of the community elders are in Hebrew, Ethiopian and other tongues, such as Old Slavic: this was clearly a very diverse community." Although bearing evidence of fire and rough handling, the letter is in remarkably fine condition, given its age and provenance.

Research on the document continues, announced a spokeswoman for the Genizah Research Unit, Dr Rebecca Jefferson. "In particular we are keen to identify the 'Queen Elizabeth' referred to in the document, as female rulers were a rarity in this region. We are also looking through other Genizah materials to find the writings of Stefan

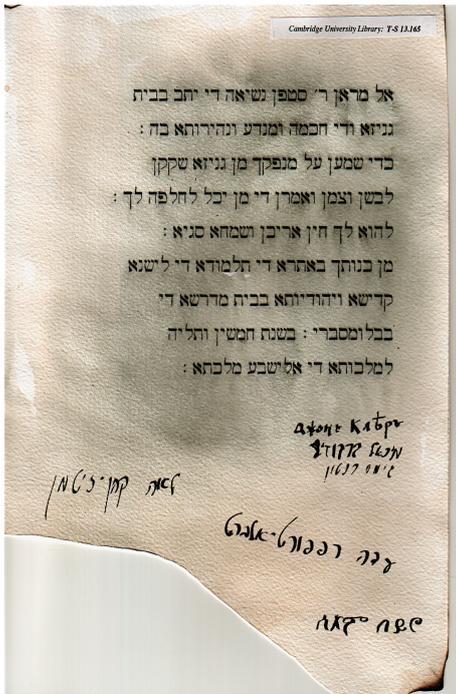
the *Nasi* himself. He was clearly a person of great importance in the region."



A library employee shows the section of the Genizah Unit storage room where the "Bloomsbury Letter" was discovered

This report is reproduced from Cambridge University's website where it

first featured. See <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/news/index.cgi>



To our lord, R. Stefan the *Nasi*, who sat in the house of the *Geniza*, and in whom is wisdom and knowledge and enlightenment.

When we heard of your retirement (lit. going forth) from the *Geniza*, we put on sackcloth and fasted, and we said, "Who is able to replace you?"

May you have long life and much joy.

From your colleagues in the Dept (lit. the place of the study) of Hebrew (lit. the sacred tongue) and Jewish Studies (lit. Jewish things, an invented abstract noun) at UCL (in the house of study that is in Bloomsbury).

In the 5322 year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

This is an English translation of "The Bloomsbury Letter" (CUL: T-S 13.165)

## Fragment from a Judaeo-Arabic letter of farewell from the Genizah

CUL, TT-FN Collection T42 and 24T in a Glass.

To the illustrious Sheikh and able hazzan (1), our friend and master, the celebrated teacher Sulayman Qalman (2) al-Reifi (3) at the House of Learning of Qanta(r) Burj (4), whose sun never set in the service of his people, with all his might, from dawn to eve – except for T (...break in the text). May his Rock succour him in his goings out. (...)(5)

Thy humble servant kisseth the ground and proffereth sincerest greetings on the felicitous occasion of thy retirement as it is said "thou shalt retire and sweet shall be thy well deserved slumber" (cf. Prov. 3, 24).

Thine assistant and researcher (...add: of thy welfare) in days of old, Yusuf Paul Ibn Ton al-Franji (6)

(1) Since it is unclear whether this word has here the archaic meaning of "keeper of liturgical texts" or "synagogue precentor", we have left it untranslated. (2) Unusual name in Genizah documents. Perhaps from qalam, the "pen". The addressee is no doubt a man of the pen. For chronological reasons he cannot, however, be identified with the writer Kalman Schulman (1819-99) whose works were translated into Judaeo-Arabic. (3) I.e. from the rif, or "provinces". Our addressee did obviously not originate from the capital. Perhaps he came from the North, as suggested by the dialectal variant reif. (4) I.e. the qantar the bridge, burj tower. Qalman is known to have studied at the College of the Jews, a mere 3 parasangs distant from Tower Bridge and the old Jewish quarter. (5) Reading uncertain (6) I.e. the Frenchman.

PAUL FENTON  
Professeur de Langue et Civilisation hébraïques  
Université Paris Sorbonne

## From St John's



Dear Stefan

I take this opportunity on behalf of St John's College to wish you every success and happiness in the work you will undertake after your formal retirement from your Professorship in the University. You have achieved much already and I am sure you will continue in your work to bring great credit on the University and on St John's.

Yours ever  
Richard

RICHARD N. PERHAM  
Master of St John's College,  
University of Cambridge

## Not over yet!

A recurring pleasure on receiving the Library's Annual Report is to turn to the section headed "Library staff – professional activities" to see just how busy Stefan has been over the past twelve months. He is the only colleague to render his account in numerical form. Most of us are happy enough if we can grind out an article or two in the course of a year, but Stefan is on a different plane: "27 papers at various conferences and seminars", "24 public lectures and conference papers", "37 lectures and conference papers"... He will be missed in the Library, but perhaps "retirement" will give him the opportunity to press on for his half-century.

JOHN WELLS  
Under-Librarian, Department of  
Manuscripts & University Archives,  
Cambridge University Library

## MESSAGE BOARD

"[Please convey] my best wishes to Stefan and Shulie for their future happiness and success in Israel and my thanks for the close and fruitful partnership we enjoyed on *Genizah Fragments* over the past twenty-five years." *Meir Persoff*

"[Please send Stefan] my best wishes and thanks." *Graham Davies*

"Wishing Stefan and Shulie all the best in their well-earned retirement." *Douglas de Lacey*

"Best wishes on your retirement." *Eleazar Gutwirth*

"[Stefan] will be very sorely missed." *John Moffett*

"Warmest regards to Stefan and Shulie [on the occasion of their retirement]." *Meira Polliack*

To Stefan and Shulie: "The staff of the Conservation Department would like to thank you both for your generous support and kindness over so many years, and wish you every happiness on your retirement." *Alan Farrant*

## Final musings ...



There was a young fellow of John's,  
With a talent for gathering funds;  
He raised lots of capital,  
But isn't it typical?  
The Genizah's no more in his hands!

ROBERT GORDON  
Regius Professor of Hebrew,  
University of Cambridge