AN UNKNOWN AUTOGRAPHIC GENIZAH FRAGMENT OF MAIMONIDES’ CODE (MISHNEH TORAH) IN THE JOHN RYLANDS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF MANCHESTER

ABRAHAM DAVID
JEWISH NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, HEBREW UNIVERSITY, JERUSALEM

Over seventy fragmentary manuscripts in Hebrew or Arabic (in Hebrew character) emanating from the pen of Maimonides have been identified among the material of the Cairo Genizah. The most extensive item is an almost complete copy of the final version of his commentary to the Mishnah. ¹ The remaining items are mostly small fragments, reflecting both final version and various drafts. Among the items that have been described in the scholarly literature, ² we may note the following: several fragments of Dalālāt al-Ḥāʾirin; ³ responsa; ⁴ letters, instructions and deeds with Maimonides’ signature; ⁵ Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi; ⁶ medical writings; ⁷ fragments of drafts of his commen-

¹ The first section, Seder Zeraʿim, is in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. MS 393 (Huntington 117). The second and the third sections, Seder Moed, and Seder Nashim formerly belonged to the Sassoon Collection, MSS 72–3, but are now in the Jewish National and University Library at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. MS 4° 5703. The fourth and the fifth sections, Seder Nezikin and Seder Kodshim, are in the Bodleian Library. MS 404 (Pocc. 295). A facsimile edition of all the five sections was issued by S. Sassoon, and was edited by R. Adelmann Maimonides Commentarius in Mischnam, 3 vols., Copenhagen, 1956–66.


⁴ Lists of the responsa from his hand have been published by J. Blau in his Teshuvaṭ ha-Rambam, iii (Jerusalem, 1961) 10–11 and iv (Jerusalem, 1986), 5. See also the article by Hopkins, above n. 2.

⁵ See the Hopkins article, above n. 2.

⁶ Two fragments were published by S. Lieberman, Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi la-Rambam [Maimonides’ interpretation of the Jewish law in the Jerusalem Talmud], New York, 1947. Another fragment was published by Hopkins; see above n. 2.

⁷ Three fragments have been published by Stern (see above n. 1). More fragments will be published by P. Fenton. See Hopkins, ‘New Autograph’, 276. I have identified another autograph fragment of Maimonides’ medical work in the Gaster Genizah Collection in the John Rylands University Library (B 6210). On this collection see also below.
tary on the Mishnah; and several draft fragments of Sefer Mishpatim, the 13th part of his legal code, Mishneh Torah.

Another fragment which is housed in the Gaster Genizah Collection in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester is A 281. It has been identified and described by M. Beit-Arié, although the text itself has not been published. It consists of two incomplete sheets. The first one contains Sefer Mishpatim, Hilkhot Malweh Weloweh: 24:8 - 24:9 (fo. 1r); 25:1 (fo. 1v). The second includes Sefer Mishpatim, Hilkhot Toen Weniyan: 1:5 - 1:6 (fo. 2r); 1:9 (fo. 2v). M. Beit-Arié has determined that this fragment belongs to the same quire as other previously identified fragments.

In the summer of 1989 I spent three weeks at the John Rylands Library as part of a co-operative project undertaken by the Library and the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem. In Manchester I was dealing with the classifying of about 10,000 Genizah fragments found in the Library’s Gaster Collection. While classifying the material, I discovered another fragmentary sheet from the same draft in Maimonides’ handwriting. This one is numbered B 5756, and it is a direct continuation of the fragment discovered and described by M. Beit-Arié. It also contains several paragraphs from the same section in Hilkhot Malweh Weloweh: 24:9, 24:2; 16:7 (fo. 1r); 25:2-3 (fo. 1v). This fragment, like others, reflects an earlier version of this code: it contains additions or corrections in the margin and between the lines or afterwards in smaller letters. In comparing this draft to the printed version of the code, we can note some changes in the text and in the organization of material. In the final version some paragraphs were placed in different chapters.


9 See below, n. 10.


[_RECTO]

PRINTED EDITION ( MALWEH WELowe )

24:9

הוֹ נֵכַל, וּכְרַעֲגַי יָרֵאִי בְּגִלְגַל שִׁמְעַוֲרַי

בלע יָאֵת חַשְׁוַנְיָא אָצַי מַתּ הַשֵּׁר מַבֵּית

עַל יָאֵת מַטְנַי הַוָּא יָאֵי כֶּלֶל לָחֳזֵית

24:2

הלחו נֵטְקַת בֶּנֶקֶר וּשְׁכָרִים מֵסַק וַסְּמַכֶּר הַלַּחֵק

נְגוּתָה שָכַר, גָּאוֹתָה נִטְקַת שָכַר הַנַּשְׁמַת

נְגוּתָה שָכַר שֵׁרָה הַיָּרֵאִים וְאֵשֶׁר יִרְאִים

16:7

רָאוֹבֶן שֶׁרֵאָיָתָה שָכַר הַשֵּׁר שֵׁרָה לְבֵבֶל, עַל שְׁמוֹנָה עַשֵּׁי

שְׁלֵיָהוֹנָה לְבַכּוֹתֶהָ מַגִּירַת הַשֵּׁר שֶׁדְּרוּג

כֶּל עָלֶה גֵּרֶפֶת הָרִי, הֵזַרְבָּה גֵּרֶפֶת הַמַּטְעָא הָאָרְי

יִדְעָה גֵּרֶפֶת הַמַּטְעָא הָאָרְי, לַעְשֶׂה עַלְעֶה

לָכֵי לְשָׁמַע רַעֲיַךְ

יְנַבְּרָא רַעֲיַךְ הָוָּא לַעְשֶׂה עַלְעֶה פְּלֵס לָנָא, לָכֵי לְשָׁמַע

מכֶרָה וַאֲלַה נְהָגְתָה לַעְשֶׂה עַלְעֶה פְּלֵס לָנָא

הָנֵפֶשֶׂה[...]

סָכַר וַאֲלַ חָשְׂרַה וַאֲלַ נְשָׁעְתָה

[VERSO]

25:2-3

כָּנָרָיו, כָּנָרָיו בָּעָד יָאֵת אוֹתָה עֲרַב

נְשָׁעְתָהּ אֲלָפָי שְׁלֵמָי קֶדֶם

מִדְרָג, חָגְג שָׁחֵי בַּדְּרֵי רַעֲגַי לֶבַנָּה שָׁבַחְוֹן

וִמְרָיק הָנְשֶׁרְמָו הָאָרֶב לַכְּפָר הַהוּא

וֹיֶךְ לְהָנָא שְׁמָעְתָהּ לְבִּין בָּרִי בֵּרַחְיָה

הָיִיתָ שִׁבְעָה אַצֵּלִית הָמָלָכָה אֲלָי

תְּבִירוּ עַד יָרְבָם אֲלֵיָנָה עֲדָרָב