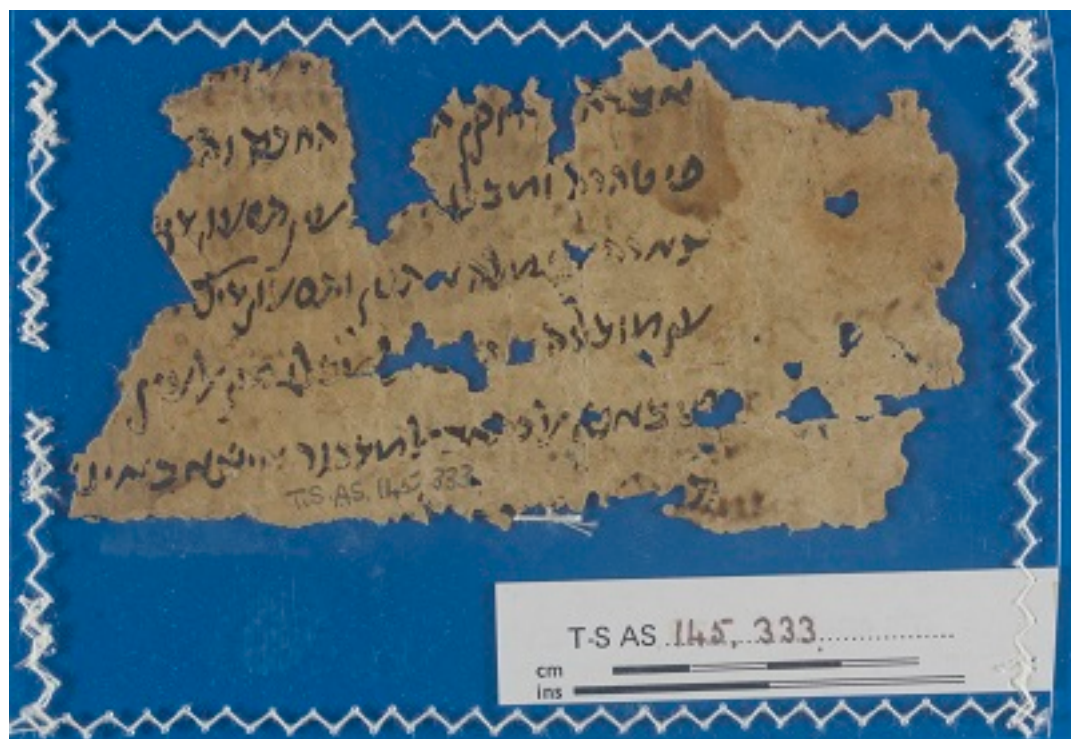


# Cambridge University Library

Fragment of the Month: September 2008

## T-S AS 145.333: Keeping it in the family: the handwriting of Hillel and Ḥalfon

Esther-Miriam Wagner



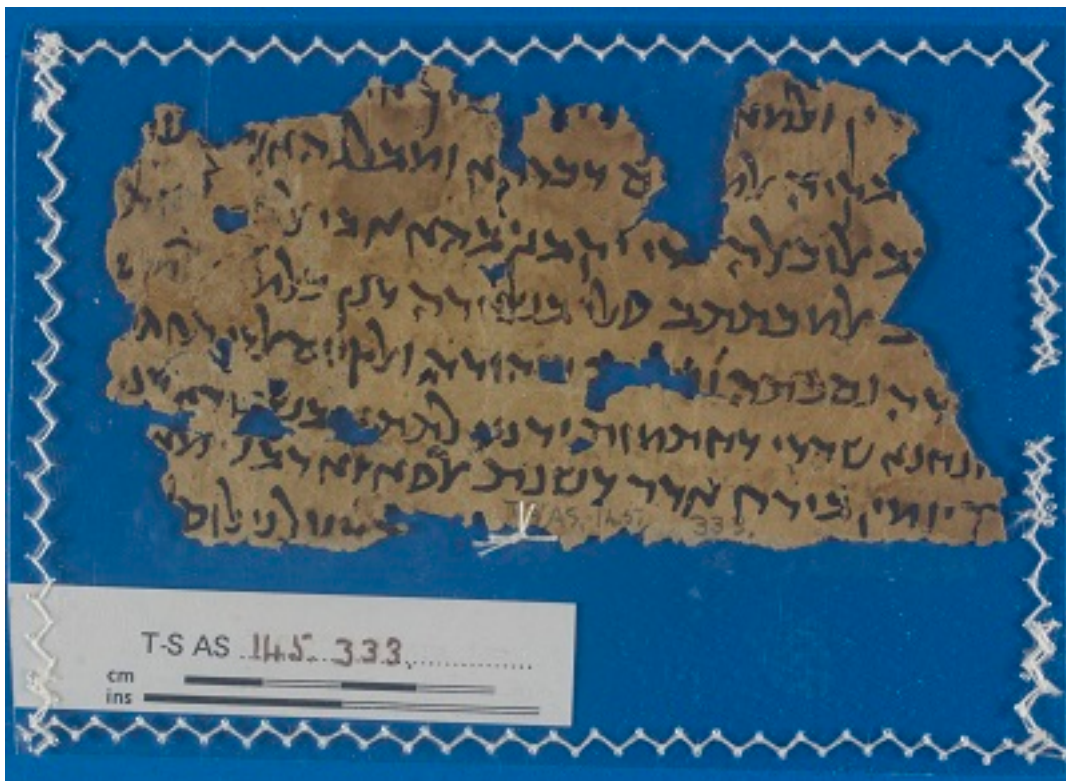
T-S AS 145.333 recto

In August, a two-day seminar on codicology and paleography took place in Cambridge University Library under the guidance of Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, Professor of Medieval Hebrew Palaeography at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris. Researchers from the Unit as well as post-graduate students attended the seminar, and in the days and weeks following it, many discussions have revolved around palaeography and the hands of particular scribes.

There are two hands that we encounter very frequently as part of our daily work since they belong to two of the most prolific scribes of the Genizah. These scribes are Hillel b. 'Eli (documents dated 1066-1107) and his son-in-law Ḥalfon b. Manasseh (documents dated 1100-1138), who has been mentioned on this site before (see FOTM July 2007 and April 2008). Their hands are similar in many regards, although Ḥalfon's ductus is more rounded than Hillel's. Their handwriting's close resemblance has led to misidentifications, even by Goitein, who on one occasion writes "The Hebrew scribe was not Hillel b. Eli (as assumed

by me, [...]), but his son-in-law Ḥalfon b. Manasseh, who had certainly learned the scriptorial art from his father-in-law, so that it is sometimes difficult to discern between them” (see Goitein (1967-1993) V, 625, fn 28).

Fortunately, there are fragments like T-S AS 145.333, in which their hands can be readily compared. Recto has a legal document in the hand of Ḥalfon b. Manasseh, while another on verso was written by Hillel b. Eli. Hillel's document on verso preserves part of a date, of which we can still read 14[00] of the Seleucid era, 1089 CE therefore being the earliest possible date. It is probable that Hillel wrote the first document (and therefore verso should really be identified as the recto), to which Ḥalfon then added a postscript or a second document.



T-S AS 145.333 verso

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### Bibliography

Goitein, S.D.: *A Mediterranean society; the Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza*, Berkeley 1967-1993.

Weiss, Gershon: *Legal Documents Written by the Court Clerk Halfon ben Menasse (Dated 1100-1138): A Study in the Diplomatics of the Cairo Genizah*, PhD dissertation University of Pennsylvania 1970.

*Readers are invited to send comments to [genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk](mailto:genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk). The Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit is not under any obligation to acknowledge or to publish comments.*

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