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Fragment of the Month: October 2010

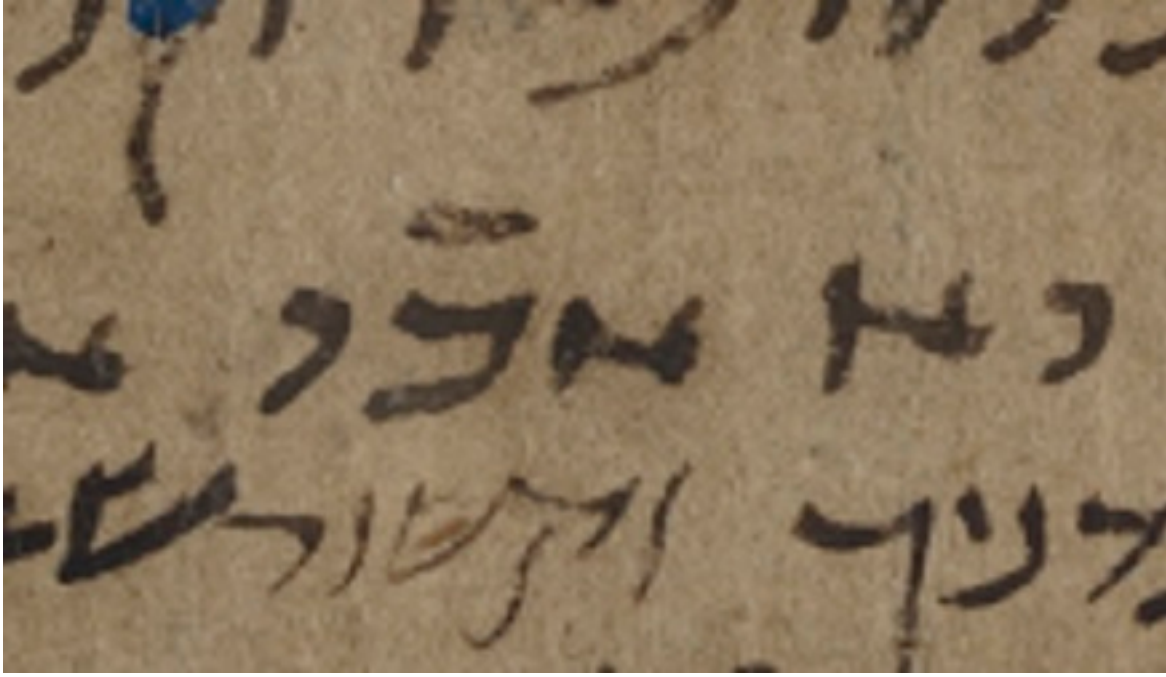
A new letter to Maimonides, T-S Misc.28.98

Amir Ashur

Finding a Maimonides-related document has always been the gem of Genizah research, so you can only imagine how excited I was when I encountered such a document, while preparing a description of the T-S Misc. folders, during my work in the Genizah Research Unit.

Although this is not a fragment written by Maimonides himself, it is clearly addressed to him — this we learn from the poetic opening lines that address 'Moses, the Great Rabbi' and other blessings regularly found in letters and other documents addressed to him.

The writer's poor handwriting and the sometimes unclear language he tends to use make it difficult to understand the content of this letter in full. From what I can reconstruct, the letter seems to be written by a community leader reporting on his activities to the Rambam. What seems to be remarkable is the fact that after the writer addresses Maimonides in the most polite and respectful way (as common in such documents) he then refers to him as *יא אחי*, that is, 'my brother' — a direct, informal form of address, that is commonly used between close friends and equals.



The author addresses Maimonides in a friendly manner

On the recto a few words are written between the lines both in Hebrew and Arabic letters, and so perhaps this letter was only a draft.

I am unable to identify, at this stage, who the sender of this letter is. I hope to publish this interesting and rather perplexing piece soon. In the meantime I present here a dozen lines.

1 ממלוך הדרת יקרת צפירת תפארת הוד ועטרת

2 וצניף כותרת מרנו ורבנו משה הרב ה[גדול]

3 הפטיש החזק ה[...]^ו שמים יאריך אלהינו

4 ימיו בטוב ושנותיו בנעימים בזכות איש

5 בא בימים ונעקד כשה [תמי]ם ומכהן [ב]אורים

6 ותומים וכן יהי רצון מלפני צור עולמים:

7 שיהיה לו מעוז ומחסה בזכות אהרן ומשה:

8 ועוד יהיה לו מגן ועזרה בזכות דניאל ועזרא:

9 וגיר דלך יא מולאי אלדי תריד עלמה אן

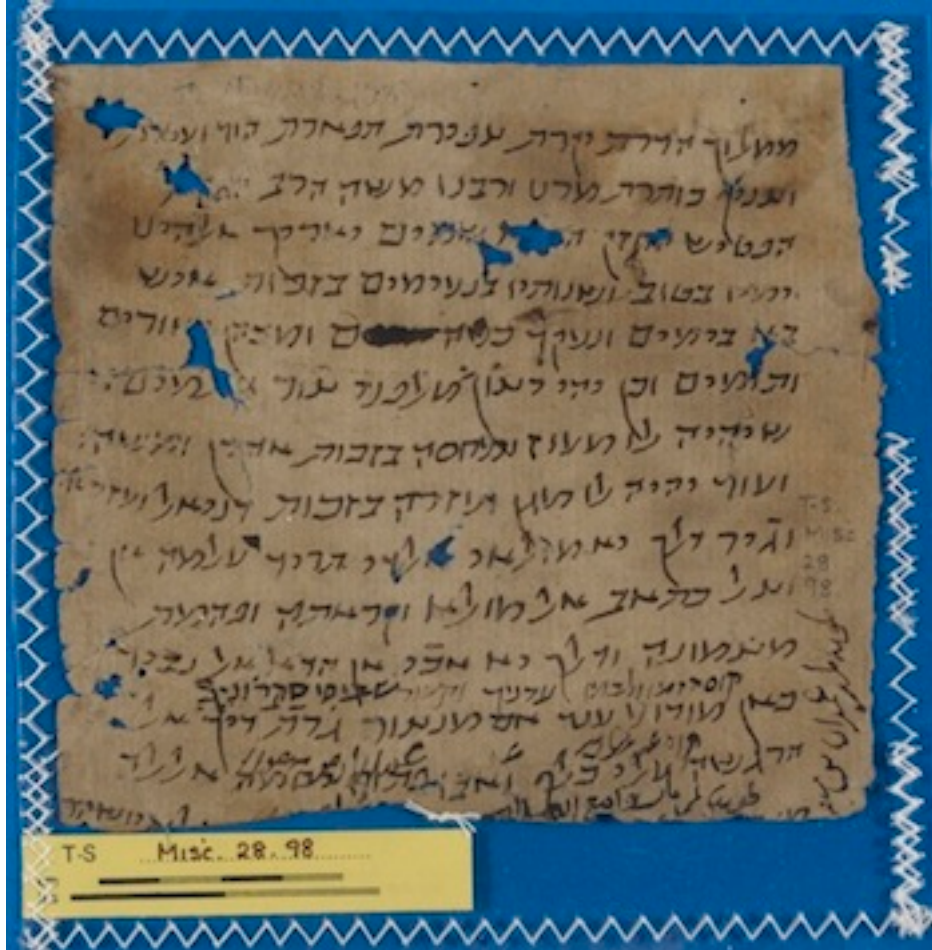
10 וצל כתאב אלמולא וקראתה ופהמת

11 מצ'מונה ודלך יא אכי אן הדא אלנביד

12 כאן מודוע ענד אם מנצור ...

Translation

1 The slave of the excellent, honourable, precious, diadem of
glory,
2 the crowning turban, our master and our teacher Moses the
Great Rav,
3 the strong hammer, the [...] heaven, may our God prolong
4 his days in prosperity and his years in delight for the sake of
the merits of he who was
5 advanced in age (=Abraham, the patriarch), of he who is
bound like a lamb without blemish (=Isaac) and of he who
ministered with the Urim and the Tumim (=Aaron).
6 May it be the will of the Rock of Ages
7 that He be a refuge and a shelter to him, for the sake of the
merits of Aaron and Moses.
8 And may He be a protection and an aid to him for the sake of
the merits of Daniel and Ezra.
9 Furthermore, my master, this is to inform you that
10 the letter of my master (=your letter) has arrived. I have
read it and understood
11 its contents, which is, my brother, that this wine was
deposited with Umm Manşūr ...



T-S Misc.28.98v, click on the image to see larger version

This project is sponsored by a generous grant from the AHRC to catalogue the Old Series of the Collection. I want to thank Prof. M. A. Friedman for his comments.

If you enjoyed this Fragment of the Month, you can find others here.

Contact us: genizah@lib.cam.ac.uk

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