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Quick links | Search

// | Collections / All collections & departments / Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit / Fragment of the month / FOTM 2022

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Home | Using the Library | Research | Teaching and Learning | What's On | Search and Find | Collections | About | Giving | Contact

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Collections

All collections & departments

Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit

Fragment of the month

FOTM 2022
1. Fragment of the Month: November 2021
2. Fragment of the Month: October 2021
3. Fragment of the Month: September 2021
4. Fragment of the Month: August 2021
5. Fragment of the Month: July 2021
6. Fragment of the Month: June 2021
7. Fragment of the Month: May 2021
8. Fragment of the Month: April 2021
9. Fragment of the Month: March 2021
10. Fragment of the Month: February 2021
11. Fragment of the Month: January 2022

FOTM 2021

FOTM 2020

FOTM 2019

FOTM 2018

FOTM 2017

Fragment of the Month: December 2016

Fragment of the Month: November 2016

Fragment of the Month: October 2016

Fragment of the Month: September 2016

Fragment of the Month: August 2016

Fragment of the Month: July 2016

Fragment of the Month: June 2016

Fragment of the Month: May 2016

Fragment of the Month: April 2016

Fragment of the Month: January 2016

Fragment of the Month: September 2015

Fragment of the Month: August 2015

Fragment of the Month: June 2015

Fragment of the Month: May 2015

Fragment of the Month: April 2015

Addendum to November 2011 - Fragment of the Month

FRAGMENT OF THE MONTH ARCHIVE

Fragment of the Month: January 2022

Jake E. Schaeffer

A Tale of a Torn Title Page: T-S 65.191.76

The Taylor-Schechter Collection, boundless and overwhelming as it is, contains comparatively few items related to the history of the Russian Empire, although the latter was crucial in shaping the history of the Jewish nation in modern times.

A small scrap numbered T-S 65.191.76 is a torn title page of a book. Its reference is expectedly verbose, self-advertising and highlighting the unusual benefits of its edition. In contrast, the Russian censorship stamp only mentions the place of the number of the printing house and the year. The presence of Russian is important: it allowed the identification of the book by those who knew its reference, e.g., officials who could confiscate the book if it was found in a private library. Hebrew was not a language of the Russian Empire, and it was one of those knowing what they are looking for. It is a book of polemics against Christianity ("Permitted by the censorship"), part of the place name on some would mean that the authority granting approval was located in the same place as the printing press. Tagmulim, well-wishers/benefactors, are a typical feature of Hebrew book production, and they are mentioned in the colophon of many books printed in the Russian Empire. In contrast, the title of the Russian 1836 edition of Tsefina of Israel is rare, and unsurprisingly not mentioned in the colophon.

Isaac Goldman

Isaac Goldman (the Prince [1813?]-1898)[1] — not to be confused with his namesake the Lithuanian Jewish poet Isaac Goldman, two generations his junior — was a prominent figure in the Russian Empire. Although he was not a rabbinical figure, he was a leader of his community, and he was often the Tsar's representative. Goldman was the Kalonymus family patriarch of Berezhany, towards the end of Goldman's lifetime his population increased from about six thousand to twenty-five thousand souls, and the town became a major shtetl. During WWII, it was depopulated and shortly again, this time permanently, torn from the Jews.

The biographers assume that Goldman acquired his initial education at home. Already as a child, he must have been proficient in German, Hebrew, and Russian, and he was able to read Latin and Greek. Later, he was able to read Arabic, Syriac, and Persian. He was also able to translate in the service of and protection for his fellow Jews on behalf of the Tsar. The Jews from his hometown were known to be well-educated in the same area at the suggestion of J.B. Levinsohn, there appeared a decree requiring a total revision of all Jewish books in circulation. Goldman was commissioned to review the Talmud, and he was able to convince the Tsar that the Talmud was not a hostile book. Goldman was also well versed in Tsar and governor. Many philanthropic deeds and financial attentions to detail were necessary for such a career. Equally important was understanding the topics and purpose of censorship.

Censorship controlling bodies, such as the Schedule "Concerning Jewish Affairs" of the Public Education (Yiddish: Yidishe Sakhes Tsugehoyrik Tsu Ofnemen Ha'Ko'ach Ha'Ko'ach Ha'Ko'ach