

אגרת בכתב יד קדשו של רבי יהודה הלוי

טוליטולה תתצ"ח • גניזת קהיר T-S 8J18.5

A Letter in the Hand of R' Yehuda HaLevi

An autograph from the Cairo Geniza – T-S 8J18.5

Toledo • August 1138

An exact copy of Cambridge University Library T-S 8J18.5

What you are holding is an exact copy of one of the very few documents to survive in the hand of R' Yehuda HaLevi (c. 1075–1141) – the greatest of the medieval Sephardic Hebrew poets and the author of the Kuzari.

The letter was written from Toledo in August 1138 to his close friend Halfon ben Netanel in Fustat. Its subject is a matter of pidyon shevuyim: the ransom of a captive Jewish woman in al-Andalus, for whom $3\frac{2}{3}$ dinars were needed. HaLevi writes that he himself has contributed $\frac{2}{3}$ of a dinar toward the sum, and pleads with Halfon to help raise the rest.

The letter survived for more than seven hundred years sealed inside the Cairo Geniza, the storeroom of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat that preserved nearly a millennium of Jewish life in a single dusty room. It was recovered in 1898 by Solomon Schechter and Charles Taylor and brought to Cambridge, where it became part of the great Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection (T-S 8J18.5). HaLevi's authorship of the hand was confirmed by S.D. Goitein in his classic 1956 study *Otografim shel Yehuda HaLevi* (Tarbiz 25).

One leaf, 17.1 × 17.8 cm, with holes and rubbing – the everyday correspondence of a working poet, written about a real woman in real trouble, in his own hand.



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The original letter is held at **Cambridge University Library** as part of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection (T-S 8J18.5).

Image courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

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Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document or letter, written on aged, yellowed paper. The text is oriented horizontally across the page.

T-S 8518.5

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