

# Manuscript Discovered in Cairo 50 Years Ago Found to Have Been Written by Maimonides

Discovery of a hitherto unpublished manuscript by Maimonides, twelfth century Jewish philosopher and codifier of ancient Jewish law, was hailed yesterday as a major event in Jewish learning.

Through the researches of Prof. Saul Lieberman of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, four long fragments from the original Hebrew text written in the holograph of Maimonides formed the basis for publication yesterday of an eighty-page original and commentary issued in a Hebrew folio edition.

Professor Lieberman identified the fragments last January after obtaining photostatic copies of the originals now stored in the Cambridge University Library in England. Evidence that these were in Maimonides' own handwriting was confirmed by Morris Lutzki, research assistant at the seminary library and an expert in the philosopher's holograph.

The manuscript was found fifty years ago in the Cairo Genizah (a synagogue storage place) by the late Dr. Solomon Schechter, who afterward became the seminary's second president. It aroused little curiosity and was considered to be the work of a contemporary writer.

Written in ink on long sheets of regular paper, it was fairly well preserved, owing to the dry climate of Egypt. Mr. Lieberman reported he spent four months reconstructing missing passages and preparing the book for publication.

At a luncheon in his honor yesterday in the newly dedicated "day synagogue" of the seminary, he praised the Maimonides text as a masterpiece and said it shed light on both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. Dr. Louis Finkelstein, president of the seminary, said it represented a great advance in Jewish scholarship.

Maimonides, who was born in Cordova, Spain, in 1135 and died

in 1204, was said to have written the text some time before his thirty-third year.

Maimonides, probably best known for his philosophical work, "Guide to the Perplexed," spent most of his life in Cairo, where he also was personal physician to the Egyptian monarch, Sultan Alfdal.

Prof. Lieberman reported that the new work includes the opening pages and refers to religious rites and ceremonies, the duties of a husband toward his wife, including provisions for adequate compensation for her and the children if there is a divorce, or when he dies.

It provides, for example, that if the wife had presented him with a dowry, he must double that in the event of divorce or death. At no time was the husband permitted to sell her inheritance.

Maimonides codified the law, using as a basis the first five books of the Old Testament, the Palestinian Talmud of the fourth century and the Babylonian Talmud of the sixth century. Maimonides' volumes expounded the entire oral law of the Jewish people.

His influence was so important as to lead to a well known Jewish proverb: "From Moses to Moses there was no Moses." Maimonides' full name was Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon. In his time he was considered somewhat radical, not so much on the basis of his Talmudic work as for his philosophical concepts, according to Professor Lieberman.

The professor said it was possible that civil law in the new Jewish Palestine would be based largely on the Talmud. He pointed out, however, that under rabbinic law the law of the country is binding and that whoever breaks the law of a country breaks the law of the Torah.

Presiding at yesterday's luncheon was Dr. Finkelstein. Dr. Alexander Marks, librarian, and Dr. Ginzberg were speakers.