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## ḤEFEŞ B. YAŞLIAḤ'S LOST BOOK OF PRECEPTS

WHILE engaged in preparing a descriptive catalogue of the Genizah fragments which are now at the Dropsie College, I came across a codex of  $36\frac{1}{2}$  paper leaves written in Arabic. This fragment forms part of a collection which came from the Cairo Genizah. It was acquired in 1891 by Dr. Cyrus Adler who recently presented it to the Dropsie College.

There are in this fragment six fascicles which are unequal in the number of their leaves, and are fastened together by a string.

Fascicle 1 has four leaves;

Fascicle 2 has six leaves;

Fascicle 3 has three leaves;

Fascicle 4 has eight leaves;

Fascicle 5 has twelve leaves;

Fascicle 6 has three and a half leaves.

The measurements of the leaves is  $7\frac{1}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$  ins. (= 17.6 x 13.5 cm.).

Fascicle 1 hangs rather loosely, and even a superficial glance will detect that some fascicles are missing between fascicle 1 and fascicle 2. Moreover fascicle 1, although written probably by the same hand as the others, differs from the rest in two respects:

1) The paper is of a lighter hue; 2) the number of lines on a page of fascicle 1 ranges between 18 and 19, whereas the pages of the other fascicles have 23, 24 and 25 lines.

After a careful perusal of this MS., I found that fascicle 1 is part of a book of Responsa on widely different subjects, while the others form part of the Book of Precepts of Ḥefeş b. YaşliaḤ. As is well known, that Gaon, or רַאם אֶלְכָל, as he is styled in our codex, composed a Book of Precepts which was quoted with great respect by the best mediæval Jewish authorities. No trace, how-

ever, of this book has been found in modern times (comp. L. Ginzberg, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s. v.; S. A. Poznański, *אוצר ישראל*, s. v.; A. Marx, *JQR.*, New Series, I, 439).

From the fragment in question we may safely infer that the Book was divided into parts (פצל), sections (קסם), and precepts (שריעה.) Our MS. begins with the middle of precept 8, section 3, part 3.

Section 3 of part 3 contained 9 precepts, and ends on fol. 6*b*, l. 22.

Section 4 of Part 3 contains 11 precepts which end on fol. 12*b*, l. 3.

Part 4 contains 3 sections, all of which together have 36 precepts. This part begins on fol. 12*b*, l. 4, and ends on fol. 29*a*, l. 16. It bears the superscription אלפצל אלד מן אלשראיע תאליף ראם אלכל חפין בן יצליח.

Part 5 contains 9 precepts, and bears a similar superscription. It begins on fol. 29*a*, l. 17. We only reach as far as precept 3 which is rather a long one. It begins on fol. 31*a*, l. 15, and continues till the end of 36*a*, when the MS. breaks off. Fol. 36*b* is blank.

On the whole the MS. is well preserved, and the writing is the ordinary square with a tendency to cursiveness. By all likelihood the MS. dates from the eleventh century.

At some future date I hope to prepare an edition of this fragment, and supply it with a translation, introduction, and notes. But for the present I thought it worth while to announce to scholars interested in this subject the existence of this Book of Precepts, as it may lead others to discover more leaves of this important work.

Whether the Responsa belong to Hefes b. Yaşliḥ or not I am for the moment not prepared to decide. No authorities whatsoever are mentioned.