

Geniza

*An New Opera - 'Hidden Fragments', set in the
Cairo Geniza and Cambridge University
music and libretto by
Arnold Saltzman*



Geniza

*An New Opera - 'Hidden Fragments', set in the
Cairo Geniza and Cambridge University
music and libretto by
Arnold Saltzman*



*Geníza: Hidden Fragments, set in the
Cairo Ben Ezra Synagogue and Cambridge University
music and libretto by
Arnold Saltzman*

A chamber opera for piano, 8 professional singers, requiring a conductor, pianist, director, some stage lighting, costumes if possible, and stage management.

Orchestration available for Fl, Bb Clar., Horn in F, Trumpet in C, Trombone, Accordion, Piano, Violin and Double Bass.

*Geniza: Hidden Fragments, set in the
Cairo Ben Ezra Synagogue and Cambridge University
music and libretto by Arnold Saltzman*

A chamber opera for piano, 8 professional singers, and requires a conductor, pianist, director, some stage lighting, costumes if possible, and stage management.

Orchestration is available for Fl, Bb Clar., Horn in F, Trumpet in C, Trombone, Accordion, Piano, Violin and Double Bass.

Introduction

The music for this opera is tonal and in some sections dissonant, a mixture of opera and light opera, comedy and drama, with the story told through aria and ensemble set pieces, as in classical opera. The opera is a work of 90-100 minutes in duration without intermission.

I have used texts by nineteenth century authors in the public domain, mainly Solomon and Mathilde Schechter, Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson, as well as writing my own poetic text. I set myself the task of writing a libretto first, while researching the history, and the result is a retelling of the discovery by Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson, as well as the important role played by Solomon Schechter and Mathilde Roth Schechter in acquiring the hundreds of thousands of fragments of the Geniza for Cambridge. This was accomplished in a scholarly race for the fragments, and Schechter wished to be credited as first in this matter.

The second act and third act are historic fiction very loosely based on names, occupations, biblical irony, and characters who step into and out of, 12th century old Cairo.

If you are not familiar with the actual discovery of these important fragments, I recommend reading 'Sacred Treasure: The Cairo Geniza' by Mark Glickman, 'Sacred Trash' by Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, and Bentwich's biography of Solomon Schechter the basis for the other two books. Also, Margaret Gibson and Agnes Lewis both wrote novels and travel books about their adventures, with some of their texts set to music in my opera.

Why should you and the public care about this? The story and music draw us into the beginnings of an historic find of documents illuminating Jewish history and Egyptian history, and the relatively open society which had existed in Egypt. It is also a story of traveling in the footsteps of those who wish to be close to biblical tradition. In addition,

this is part of my work in expanding our music and theater repertoire as an important cultural foundation of our heritage, and to a better understanding the history of the Jewish People in an age of misunderstanding and anti-Semitism.

My interest in this subject began as a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America where I learned about the Geniza fragments in the Seminary Rare Library Collection from Rabbi Morton Leifman, Professor Albert Weissner and Professor Johanna Spector. I was shown some tables in the rare book room with many sorted and unsorted fragments. This collection survived for centuries and then survived a fire at JTS and the damage caused by water in putting out the fire.

Of great interest to scholars is the discovery and mystery of the Medieval Music from the beginning of music notation, and how a difficult to understand few selections of music became an important find in the collection, being the oldest Jewish Music in medieval notation ever found. The research of several scholars across the globe and many years of research, came to the conclusion that it was the work of Obadiah, the proselyte, who is also addressed in an important letter by Maimonides.

Today scholars have access to libraries with Geniza Collections, which have been digitized so that handwriting can be matched, texts can be reconstructed, and an entire history of 1000 years can be examined through letters, responsa, documents, fragments or as complete pages.

While it is a fact that if these had not been rescued, purchased and brought to research library collections, the fragments would have ended as sacred dust. Many of the fragments did turn to dust. Sixty years ago there were 60,000 Jews in Egypt, while today there are around 100 Jews in Egypt. I would imagine that Egyptian scholars will be interested in the medieval life of the Jewish community at a time when Jews, Coptic Christians, and Muslims, lived side by side in a far more open society than existed in Europe. Yet, these fragments, I have no doubt, would not have survived had they not been purchased from the Ben Ezra Synagogue.

Originally I wanted to use the actual melodies of Obadiah but refrained from doing so. Instead I studied two Gregorian Chants which make use of familiar biblical texts: 'In Exitu Israel' - When Israel came out of Egypt. This was based on the idea that there is a 'sacred bridge' between the Gregorian Chant and ancient Hebraic Chant, the principle being where the text parallels in Hebrew and Latin, so must the melody. Also, I wanted the irony of this text posing the question: Why did Jews settle in Egypt when our sacred texts daily speak about the Exodus?

A second chant 'Alleluia Justus in Palma' - The Righteous Shall Flourish Like a Palm Tree...Alleluia. These were used as thematic basis without necessarily using the full chants, and I am pleased with the musical result and hope that you will be pleased.

The Geniza has intrigued scholars for several generations and will continue to do so. Like the Torah, Prophets and Writings, it will be examined, commented on, discovering an amazing archeological and scholarly treasure, among the most important ever found for Jewish history. In the writing of my work, I contacted the descendants of Solomon and Mathilde Schechter so they would be aware of my work and that when the time came, they might join us for the premiere of this new chamber opera.

There are many who helped me during this time, whether being supported by them, friends or family. Carol Nissenson and I have been married over forty-two years and she more than anyone else encouraged me to write, write, and write on a daily basis. She listened to my progress, doubts, complaints, and shared my joy in the process of writing, even when she was focused on her own creative process. She served as a role model. I am very grateful for all Carol did to assist me in completing this Opera, and for so much more.

My initial queries about production, and workshop/reading have been met with great enthusiasm. I look forward to adding to this preface as rehearsals begin. A special thank you to Jeffrey Silberschlag, conductor of the Chesapeake Orchestra, and Deborah Greitzer, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Orchestra, who have been invaluable friends during the discussions of producing this opera as well as previous productions of my compositions 'A Choral Symphony: Halevi' and 'Solomon and the Dove'.

I wish to dedicate this work to my family, Carol Nissenson, Josh Saltzman & Hagar Sand and their daughters Keren and Eden, and to Michael & Kaitlin Saltzman, and their daughters Sophie and Emma (we have four marvelous granddaughters)!; My sister and brother-in-law Dolores & Chris Tomaino, and to the many friends and supporters of my work. My parents, Anne and Max Saltzman made it a priority for me to have an education which connects me to our history and tradition, and Carol's parents, Marc and Norma Nissenson, who were so caring in their love of family, and helping all of us to succeed.

I would also like to thank the Libraries and Scholars of the Geniza Collections, and praise them for their work, for the scholars of the past, The Schechters and Giblews, and for the new generation of scholars who will bring us new discoveries.

GENIZA: Hidden Fragments

An opera with libretto and music by Arnold Saltzman

Cast of Characters

Obadiah, a teenage acolyte
Tenor

Abraham Ibn Ibrahim, the young groom,

Solomon Schechter (Zalman Shneur)
Baritone

Ab Ibn Sullam, father of the bride

Mathilde Roth Schechter
Soprano

Miriam, mother of the bride

Giblews

Agnes Smith Lewis
Soprano

Leah (1)

&

Margaret Dunlop Gibson (twins)
Mezzo- Soprano

Rachel (2)

Prof. Adolf Neubauer of Oxford U.
Tenor

Obadiah, the proselyte

Arthur Cowley, assistant to Neubauer
Tenor

Ganuz, lover of Yair, fabric salesman

Grace Blyth school teacher, assistant-
to the Giblews, tea server...
Silent in Act 1,
Mezzo Soprano Act 2 & Act 3

Yair, Wedding Dress Maker

Stage set in a 12th century Monastery in Oppido, Lucano, Italy
center up-stage for chorus, downstage for the young Johannes/Obadiah

Prologue, the back area in a Christian Chapel, chant, dimly lit, oversized candles,
monks garb.

Place: Oppido-Lucano

Obadiah, a 12th century acolyte, teenager, dedicated to becoming a Monk, while his twin brother, **Rogier**, born first by 20 min. is dedicated for Chivalry
During the time when **The Bishop of Bari** and his followers protest the slaughter of Jews by Crusaders.

The Bishop and his followers flee to Constantinople.

NOTE: **Obadiah in Oppido, Lucano** is an acolyte - He has a dream that someone is standing at his right and commanding him to make a choice.

Obadiah -in his dream - he will follow the **Bishop of Bari** and become a Jew as a protest to the slaughter of Jews in Europe by Crusaders.

(The twin brothers, like Jacob and Esau, part, and go their own way.

NOTE:

Johannes/Obadiah learned the notation of neumes at the Monastery
(Musical palimpsests is the form of the opera)

NOTE: The Monastery Chorus at Oppido, Lucano, Italy in the prologue is a two part chorus, and can be sung by the cast facing away from the audience, or wearing monks hoods to hide their faces.

GENIZA: Hidden Fragments

An Opera by Arnold Saltzman

Prologue & Act 1

1. Prologue - Oppido, Lucano, Italy
2. Act 1 Scene 1 - Cambridge University, Christ's College - Mathilde/Solomon
3. Act 1 Scene 1b- Mathilde recit./aria/Solomon
4. Act 1 Scene 1c - Solomon Schechter - Aria
5. Act 1 Scene 1d- Agnes & Margaret - duet: Discovery of the Fragments
6. Act 1 Scene 1e - Mathilde, Agnes, Margaret and Solomon

7. Act 1 Scene 2 - At Castlebrae, home of Agnes and Margaret with Agnes, Margaret, Mathilde and Solomon (Grace Blythe, silent role in Act 1)
8. Act 1 Scene 2 - At Castlebrae. Agnes Louis, aria St. John Climacus
9. Act 1 Scene 2 - At Castlebrae: Mathilde Schechter, aria

10. Act 1 Scene 2 - Solomon's aria
11. Act 1 Scene 2 - Duetto - Agnes and Margaret
12. Act 1 Scene 2 - conclusion - Arioso, and response Solomon and Margaret

13. Act 1 Scene 3 - *Stage Right at Cambridge* - Solomon and Mathilde send a letter

14. Act 1 Scene 3b - *Stage Left at Oxford*, At the Bodleian Library, a few hours later. Adolph Neubauer and Arthur Cowley

15. Act 1 Scene 3c - *Stage Right At Cambridge Stage Left at Oxford*
Solomon at Cambridge, speaking with Mathilde

- Adolf Neubauer at Oxford, receives a postcard from Solomon two hours after it is sent. Speaking to himself and his assistant Arthur Cowley

- Stage Right - Solomon and Mathilde*
Solomon reflects on a document/fragment/ the Ben Shirah written in Hebrew, discovery

16. Act 1 Scene 3d - conclusion of Act 1 - Recitative and Aria -
Schechter receives a card from Neubauer saying he has also found Ben Sira pages, which infuriates Solomon.

Act II

17. Act 2 Overture - Cairo at the end of the 19th century: Overture and Ballet (Ballet - optional)
18. Act 2 Scene 1 - Center stage - a table in the Suk with three chairs for Agnes, Margaret and Solomon
19. Act 2 Scene 1b - Trio conclusion
20. Act 2 Scene 1c - Duet Letter Scene- Mathilde and Solomon - Stage Left - Solomon in Cairo,
Stage Right - Mathilde in Cambridge
21. Act 2 Scene 1d - Aria - Solomon (From the words of Solomon Schechter over 100 year ago)
Cairo at the end of the 19th century
22. Act 2 Scene 2 - The Ben Ezra Synagogue, 12th century, as characters enter the stage from a door frame or window. Duet - Yair, the wedding dressmaker and dresser, and Ganuz, an itinerant fabric salmon from Jerusalem; Aria - Ganuz, Center stage wedding dress studio
23. Act 2 Scene 2b - Aria - Yair; Arioso - Ganuz
24. Act 2 Scene 2c - duet - conclusion

Act III & Epilogue

25. Act 3 Scene 1a - Yair, the wedding dress aria
26. Act 3 Scene 1b - Ganuz, aria (Ganuz and Yair in the wedding dress studio)
- 26b. Act3 Scene1c - duet ,Yair and Ganuz, aria
27. Act 3 Scene 2a - The arrival of the Bride and her family: Miriam, Leah, Rachel, Ab-Ibn-Sullam (In Yair's studio)
- 27a. Act 3 Scene 2b - The twins, Leah & Rachel duet
28. Act 3 Scene 2c - Trio, Miriam, Yair & Ganuz (Mother of the Bride; The truth about Ganuz)
29. Act 3 Scene 2d - Aria, Ganuz
30. Act 3 Scene 2e - Aria, Yair

31. Act 3 Scene 3 - Octet - The Wedding: Obadiah, Abraham Ibn Ibrahim (Groom), ensemble exits near the end of the Octet, and they can sing partly offstage. They re-enter the Geniza. Lights out

Spotlight on Solomon

32. Epilogue - Solomon seated in his iconic pose in his research room at Cambridge reflects that it will take many generations to discover the treasures of hidden fragments found in the Geniza.

Characters and their scenes for Geniza: Hidden Fragments

#1 **Young Obadiah** - Prologue. (tenor or Boy Soprano)

#31 Act 3, Scen 3 (tenor)

#1 & #31 **Chorus** - Prologue, Act 3 Scene 3

Mathilde Roth Schechter - soprano

#2 Act 1S1 aria/duet

#3 A1S1b recit/aria

#6 A1S1e - Quartet

#7 A1S2 - Quartet

#9 A1S2 - aria

#13 A1S3 - Duet

#15 A1S3c - Duet

#20 A2S1c - duet

Mathilde becomes Miriam, mother of the bride and enters with the other characters.

#27 A3S2a - ensemble

#28 A3S2c - Trio

#31 A3S3 - Octet + chorus

Solomon Schechter, Baritone

#2A1S1 duet

#3 A1S1b - duet

#4 A1S1c - aria

#6 A1S1e - Quartet

#7 A1S2 - Quartet

#10 A1S2 - aria

#12 A1S2 - arioso/duet

#13 A1S3 - duet

#15 A1S3c - duet,

#16 A1S3d - recitative and aria

#18 A2S1 - trio

#19 A2S1b - trio conclusion

#20 A2S1c - duet

#21 A2S1d - aria

If Solomon changes roles and becomes the father of the bride, Ab-ibn-Sullam

#27 /A3S2a Quartet

#31 A3S3 - Octet

#32 Epilogue - aria

Agnes Smith Lewis - Soprano, twin sister of Margaret Gibson (also Leah in A2&3))

#5 A1S1d - duet
#6 A1S1e - quartet
#7 A1S2 - quartet
#8 A1S2 - aria
#11 A1S2 - duet

#18 A2S1 - trio
#19 A2S1 - trio conclusion

Agnes changes roles to Leah, bride to be.
#27 A3S2a - Quartet
#27a A3S2b - duet with Rachel (Margaret)
#31 A3S3 - Octet + brief choral section

Margaret Dunlop Gibson - Mezzo Soprano, twin of Agnes (also Rachel in A2&3)

#5 A1S1d - duet
#6 A1S1e - quartet
#7 A1S2 - Quartet, Aria
#10" A1S2 - Margaret's aria (opt)
#11 Act 1 Scene 2 - Duetto - Agnes and Margaret
#12 Act 1 Scene 2 - Conclusion - Arioso, and response Solomon and Margaret

#18 A2S1 - trio
#19 A2S1 - trio conclusion

Margaret changes roles to Rachel, sister of the bride
#27 A3S2a - Quartet
#27a A3S2b - duet with Rachel (Margaret)
#31 A3S3 - Octet + brief choral section

Grace Blyth - Mezzo Soprano, Silent role in Act 1 (tea server, tutor, assistant) Act 2 & Act 3
Yair, the wedding dress maker and dresser.

#7 A1S2 answers door?, escorts guests at Castlebrae, the residence of mAgnes and Margaret
#11A1S2 presenting some of the document on a table

#22 A2S2a Entrance with all characters. **Yair, duet** with Ganuz
#23 A2S2b - Aria
#24 A2S2c - duet

#25 A3S1a - Aria
#26b A3S1c (opt.) duet
#27 A3S2a - present in the dress making studio, but listening as she works.
#28 A3S2d - Trio, **Yair**, Miriam and Ganuz
#30 A3S2e - Aria

#31 A3S3 - Octet + chorus

Prof. Adolf Neubauer (in his 60s) - Tenor also plays **Obadiah minimally at the end of Act 3**

#14a A1S3b - duet with Arthur Cowley

#15 A1S3 aria (yes, I changed the order)

#31 A3S3 - Octet, the 'mature' Obadiah, the proselyte

Arthur Cowley, tenor - assistant to Prof. Neubauer at Oxford, a generation younger than the Professor.

In Act 2 and Act 3 plays **Ganuz**, an itinerant supplier of fabric and accessories for bridal studios, and the love interest of Yair.

#14a A1S3b - duet with Arthur Cowley

#15 A1S3 - present as Prof. Neubauer shares his thoughts with him.

#22 A2S2a - duet with Yair & Aria

#23 A2S2b - duet

#24 A2S2c - duet

#25 A3S1 - present for Yair's aria

#26 A3S1b - Aria

#26b A3S1c - duet (optional), Ganuz aria

#28 A3S2c - trio

#29 A3S2d - Aria

#31 A3S3 - Octet

Young Obadiah - Prologue. (**tenor**) & Abraham ibn-Ibrahim, the young groom (his height mentioned in the lyrics is that he is tall)

#1 Prologue - Obadiah

#31 A3S3 - Octet

Geniza: Hidden Fragments

An Opera by Arnold Saltzman

Libretto

1. PROLOGUE

O: (Deus Autem Noster - Our God Who is in Heaven... When Israel Exited Egypt...)

Johannes/Obadiah: Greetings! I am unable to sleep. My dreams keep me awake, they are disturbing.

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day...”(Joel 3:4)

Like Jacob and Esau,
Rogier, my twin brother and I are set on divergent paths.
He has been chosen for Chivalry by birth, though his being older is a matter of a few moments.

I have been sent to this monastery to prepare for the Priesthood while
Rogier will become a Baron with guards and servants, and I will become a monk.

Chorus of Monks: We are not clear about the meaning and future.

Johannes/Obadiah: Outside, Crusaders are attacking everywhere, destroying, in the name of our Church.

Chorus of Monks: Are we helpless, unable to do anything about it. How can this be Just?

Johannes/Obadiah: The Bishop of Bari has protested, and fled for his life.

Aria:

In a dream I saw a light, and a window above me,
and a ladder to climb up,
and when I reached the top the window was gone.

Chorus of Monks: What does this mean?

Johannes/Obadiah: How can I find that window? And make my way out of this place which has gone mad?

“Behold, a saintly man was standing to my right,
He called to me!

Johannes!"

Follow me, he commands!

This dream haunts me - I am revolted by the action of the crusaders.

I'll cast my lot with the Bishop, regardless of the consequence.

Like Jacob, I too must leave to find the place where I can rest and pray,
dreaming of a ladder,
with angels bringing God's word to earth
and angels going toward heaven?

In a dream I saw a light,
and a window above me,
and a ladder to climb up,
and when I reached the top the window was gone!

Chorus of Monks: What does this mean?

How can I find that window?

Chorus of Monks: : Deus Autem Noster

GENIZA: Hidden Fragments

2.

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Cambridge University, Christ's College

Solomon Schechter sitting in a room studying a text with Mathilde Schechter urging him to consider more than texts. Enter Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson with exciting news about the cache of manuscripts they've brought back from their trip to Jerusalem and Egypt, but there are a couple they could not identify. They invite the Schechters for tea.

Mathilde Schechter: Papers, and vellum, and parchment, and vellum, and fragments, and more endless fragments!

I wish that we were back at the reading room in the British Museum and Library where we met, with its manuscripts and fine books, and fine art.

Papers, and vellum, and parchment, and vellum, and fragments, and more endless fragments!

Solomon Schechter: This room though rather bare, is a gift to us where we can organize our work, our future papers and research, We can neither prove nor disprove but we can expect excellence in the quality of research and scholarship from the papers submitted to us.

3.

Mathilde: How will we ever get this place in order... You're moving around more than you usually do... [Schechter is humming a niggun]

While you dedicate yourself to tradition and scholarship,
I will need to place my energy elsewhere.

Aria

We need to build our little community to pray and to explore, repairing the world,

Women [conflicting needs in marriage and life]
must not be swallowed up entirely
In the work of their husbands and family.
Women need to retain a full sense of themselves,
Apart from our maternal role.

We have the power to sooth and comfort.
Our deeds and rituals
Are our song of our communion with God.
tenderly kissed into the life by the spirit.

Does all light come from above?
Not all light comes from outside.
Inside of us
we feel it
What is the source? What is source?

We're set in motion and cannot stop
there is nothing to stop us (or our motion)

Like a law of nature
we continue-

Who will be our young women of the future?

Does all light come from above?
Not all light comes from outside.
Inside of us
we feel it
What is the source? What is source?

We're set in motion and cannot stop

4.

A1S1c

Aria

Solomon Schechter: The River Cam's undercurrent
transform's its bed
its depth and shadows.

To learn about a river
one must immerse oneself in its very element
against whose touch
The bridge was meant to protect him.

One cannot do this alone. One needs a band of disciples
To carry the message like the river's current, to the world.

The River Nile's undercurrent
spreads out over the land
providing a richness to the soil
yet hiding the changing time of year
The changing mystery of what it has witnessed.

The River Cam's undercurrent
transform's its bed
its depth and shadows.

5. Enter - Agnes and Margaret, stopping by Schechter's research room.

A1S1d

Duet

Agnes Smith Lewis: Maggie and I resolved to carry out
our long cherished plan
of visiting the scene of one of the most exciting miracles...
The passage of the Israelites
through the desert of Arabia, and
The spot where a still more impressive event occurred:

Margaret Dunlop Gibson: The secluded mountain top
where the Deity first revealed Himself
to mankind...
The people who witnessed were
consecrated to be
Exponents of God's will to their fellow men.

Agnes: Our Cambridge friend,
Professor James Rendel Harris, who visited the Convent of
St. Catherine in 1889,
made the discovery of
The Apology of Aristides.
Professor James Rendel Harris not only insisted on teaching us photography,
but lent us his own camera...

Margaret: And accepted with Christian resignation
All the little injuries we did to it.

Extended Duet:

We crossed the Gulf of Suez
In a sailing boat, and landed on the shores of Asia.
The Sheikh...appeared at half-past one with three dromedaries
and said to them...
"...The ladies command you!"

We travelled...for many days,
until we reached Ain Mousa,
The spot where Miriam began her song of triumph.

Agnes: The Pillar of Cloud led them...
Though it must have been difficult
to trust in our Divine leader in the Exodus
When the course of the world
'seemed' to be
Going against us.

“He is a just God and
A God whom we must trust.”

We rested on cushions and

Margaret: And drank Turkish coffee.

6.

Quartet

A1S1 conclusion

Agnes, Margaret, Solomon and Mathilde

Agnes and Margaret: Will you join us for tea later this morning at Castlebrae?
We've come to invite you for Tea.

Mathilde: Yes, Yes. We would love to visit with you
And will you share with us
Some of your recent findings in Egypt?

Agnes and Margaret: That is exactly what we intend to do, and perhaps you can assist
us.

Solomon Schechter: I understand that you have some manuscripts
You've purchased and some which you cannot identify.
Please, remember my preference for weak tea.
Dark tea, is not
A taste that I have been able to acquire.

Agnes and Margaret: That is exactly what we intend to do!

7.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

At Castlebrae with Agnes, Margaret (in their residence), with Mathilde and Solomon
*Solomon is amazed, and says 'can I borrow these two documents to check references'?
"I think the first is from the lesser known Jerusalem Talmud, but the second I believe is a
lost treasure - Ben Sira in the original Hebrew". He runs back to the room given by
Christ's College at Cambridge. He writes a letter to the Giblews writing to not let anyone
else know - and this is indeed an exciting find they have made, and that he has
identified.*

[two tables - one for the tea and cakes, the other for the documents and fragments]

[stage left, and center stage for tea]

(Grace Blythe enters. *The Giblews lifelong companion, Grace Blythe, serves Tea and
cakes.*)

Mathilde: This is a custom which I am very fond of.

Solomon: The tea is perfect. I can barely taste it.

Thank you!

Pass the sugar?

Will someone please pass the sugar?

Mathilde and the Giblews in conversation while Solomon wanders over to the table with the documents.

Margaret: Being outsiders at Cambridge has brought us together both in our religions
and as women.

Recitative

Margaret: Our mother died when we were infants and
our father brought us up without any
social graces...

We were raised with legal minds and as scholars.

We know eleven languages,
many of them no longer spoken,
but very good

For examining old and exotic manuscripts.

While we have been blessed with love,
and loving spouses,
they each died after three years of marriage,
leaving us both widowed.
To comfort ourselves in our grief,
we travelled
until we began to forget
our past sadness.

8.

A1S2

Aria

Agnes Smith Lewis: We travelled eleven days by camel to St. Catherine's in the Sinai, there we were able to see and photograph, a 6th century palimpsest, written in Syriac by St. John Climacus.

He lived forty years in a cave...

above the Chapel where

he composed 'The Ladder of Divine Ascent'

in which he declared that

spiritual life is like Jacob's ladder.

With thirty rungs, each step a spiritual virtue.

The first rung - a renunciation of all earthly ties,

while the next fourteen relate to human vices such as:

talkativeness

anger

despondency

dishonestySyriac

And the final fifteen rungs are virtues:

meekness

simplicity

prayer

body and holy stillness

with the crowning virtue to love.

9.

A1S2

Aria

Mathilde: In our tradition

There are eight levels of charity

in the spiritual ladder of Maimonides,

each rung greater than the next.

Tzedakah, the Hebrew words for Justice,

gives the donor and the recipient unmeasured benefits.

The Hebrew for 'Natan' - gave,

is spelled the same backwards

and forwards - giving and receiving.

There is always need,

and the corner of the field, having what you need

is Justice - hand to heart.

The recipient receives assistance,

while the donor receives merit.

Giving with reluctance
is still giving
it is the bottom rung,

Not giving enough,
but with a smile.
Giving when asked, is next.
While giving before being asked.
Is the fourth (step).

When the donor does not know
but the recipient knows.
This avoids shame for them.

When one knows to whom one gives
but the recipient does not [know].

The seventh rung is anonymous giving
for the sake of heaven.

The last step of the ladder, is the greatest level of charity,
is finding work for them
in order for them to become independent.

10.

A1S2

Aria (introspective, to the audience, wandering...)

Solomon Schechter: Time is sacred, it moves our lives,
it cannot be captured, it rules over us,
when, If we can make
our time a way to find the answers.

Time can look backward and in a moment
It can be all time in motion.

Time is sacred, it moves our lives,
It cannot be captured,
It rules over us.
When, if, we can make our time to find
answers, a way to ask questions.

Time can look backward and in a moment
It can be all time in motion.
The Talmud begins with: When do we pray?

Recitative

Solomon: A professor at Oxford is interested
and racing to discover the hidden secrets of old Egypt.

While I wish to prove the depth of our tradition
and have already disproved the Higher Criticism (Margoliouth)
We must examine these documents and make arrangement to acquire them.
We must make arrangements to travel to Fustat in Cairo, the source...
We do not know what treasures of wisdom and scholarship await us.

10b.

Aria

A2S2

Margaret

We started on a Monday morning at half-past seven on foot,
Saleem accompanying us to show us the path.

I made him thoroughly understand that
we had come to this country to see the way
by which Neby Mousa, the prophet led the Israelites;
Just as God leads us along the hard path of our earthly life.

The path led all day between limestone hills.
We lunched under two palm trees and photographed them.
A stranger came and ate with the other men,
helping themselves freely from their pots...

The rocks here are very beautiful, showing
alternate layers of yellow and red sandstone.
The cliffs became fantastic; they were composed of black rock
with red sandstone, surmounted by pink granite peaks.

The sand was of a pink color with ink granite boulders strewn about.
We climbed amongst magnificent cliffs pausing (now and then)
to get a draught of delicious water 'till we reached
the foot of the highest precipice...

at length we reached the foot of the great inaccessible rock
Jebel Mousa, which crowns the summit, a rock
which no human foot has ever rested on, and
peering over a wind swept ledge had a magnificent view of the
extensive plain of Er-Rahah beneath us.

11.

Duetto

A1S2

Agnes and Margaret (to the Schechters): We've collected perhaps as many as 2000 documents and fragments from our recent journey to Jerusalem and Egypt. There are a couple which we have not been able to identify- while for most of these fragments we have the skill to understand and identify...

12.

A1S2

**Arioso, and response Solomon and Margaret
Solomon Schechter:**

(Almost not listening and in his own world)

May I borrow these?

This one I believe is from the Jerusalem Talmud, lessor known and much more unusual than the Babylonian Talmud.

The other document may be important, too.

Maggie:

Yes, take them and let us know what you are able to discover.

13.

A1S3

Solomon and Mathilde write a note.

NOTE:

[Split Stage]Stage Right - Schechter at Cambridge, speaking /singing to Mathilde-

Stage Left - Neubauer at Oxford, Receives a postcard from Schechter two hours after it is sent.

(to his assistant and himself)

Mathilde S.

Write to our friends - Agnes and Margaret.

Let them know that they have discovered part of the original Hebrew texts of Ben Sirach. found in the Apocrypha, which means 'hidden', until now,

and that it is part of the ancient Hebrew texts, though it was not included in the Tanakh.

(Duet)

Solomon S.:

What shall we write?

(Mathilde and Solomon)

Dear Mrs. Louis and Mrs. Gibson

We are most excited about the fragment

We have taken with us in order to identify.

We have reasons to congratulate ourselves.

14aBodleian

A1S3b

(Bodleian Library, a few hours later)

(Stage Left)

Prof. Adolf Neubauer (in his 60s)

Prof. Neubauer

Rabbi Schechter has sent a post card saying that he has in his hands what he believes to be The original Hebrew version of Ben Sira.

The document is the property of Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson.

Arthur Cowley (his assistant, librarian and Semitic Scholar)-

We must be sitting on similar documents
which remain unexamined in all this trash.

Prof. Neubauer

We must hurry to see if we have other fragments of Ben Sira which have been in our possession, much longer, but now are being prepared to be destroyed.

Arthur Cowley And Prof. Schechter?

Prof. Neubauer Lets wait

as I will travel to Egypt

In a few months and find even more significant documents.

I can respond to him in a couple of weeks.

Arthur Cowley I've seen some pages and fragments,

but had no idea they could be of importance,

as they do not meet the Oxford standard

For rare manuscripts' condition of the documents.

Prof. Neubauer I'll write to Schechter and say coincidentally

I've discovered pages of Ben Sira in the Bodleian.

15

A1S3

Cambridge - Stage Right at Cambridge

Solomon Schechter and Mathilde Roth Schechter

My letter to Agnes and Margaret, Don't say a word.

We must congratulate ourselves.

This will make history!

(Stage Left) - Neubauer at Oxford, receives a postcard from Schechter two hours after it is sent.

(speaking to his assistant and himself)

Aria

Adolf Neubauer:

Ignore the post card!

We've already sold the fragments which were deemed worthless,

Unworthy of the Bodleian Library.

Nevertheless, Schechter has found something significant

Brought back by Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson.

Perhaps there are other documents

Among those we have here.
At least they are still here to examine
Prior to their being destroyed.

Solomon Schechter does not know my secret,
Archibald Sayce has written to me
in order to arrange a trip to Fostat, Old Cairo.

There is a Geniza there like no other,
filled with fragments, manuscripts books
torn to pieces in order to sell them piece by piece.

15.

A1S3c

Cambridge (Stage Right)

Solomon Schechter: (reflecting on a document and fragment)

How did it come about
that my theory that you, Ben Shirah,
wrote your book in Hebrew? and now
it is confirmed by this document?
Your words of wisdom
Are remarkable, unsurpassed.

Aria

“All wisdom comes from the Lord
And is with him forever.
Who can number the sands of the sea,
And drops of rain, and the days of eternity?
Who can find the heights of Heaven,
And breadth of the earth, and the deep, and wisdom?”

I came out like a brook from a river,
Like a water-channel into a garden.
I said, I will water my orchard
And drench my garden:
And lo, my brook became a river,
And my river became a sea.
I will make instruction shine like the dawn...
And leave it to all future generations.”

Kol Chochmoh mei Adonai, v'imo L'olomim
Chol yamei v'nitfey motor
vee-mot olom mi yimneh.
Ru-ach shomayim v'rochav oretz
V'omek t'hom mi yachakor
Kol chochmo mei A-do-noi.

16.
(At Cambridge) (Stage Right)
A1S3d conclusion of Act 1.
Solomon Schechter
reading Neubauer's version of events

A bogus account, a lie
A betrayal of trust !
I let Adolf Neubauer know
about the Ben Shirah
and now he claims
To have discovered it at the same time!

I never should have sent word
Of my discovery.

Aria

How can a colleague
Behave in such a manner?
A trusted colleague
making a false claim
and attempting to deprive me
Of this amazing moment?

The postcard which I sent to him
sent him digging through his documents
which he was ready to dispose of
Thinking that they were worthless.

Now, following my discovery,
He has searched for Ben Shirah
And has discovered manuscripts.
Our friendship is over forever!

I must get to Cairo as soon as possible
in order to acquire the Geniza collection
before Neubauer takes
The collection of books as he now claims to
have discovered at the same time!
I must get to Cairo as soon as I can!

END OF ACT I

17.

ACT II Scene 1

(Cairo close to the end of 19th century)

Solomon, Giblews

Overture - Ballet

(Act II Scene 1 The Vibrant life of Cairo with Chorus and dance (Music)

Setting in the Bazaar or Souk - metal plates, antiquities, maps, jewelry, potions, fabric, Fez hats, footwear, books, manuscripts, wedding dresses, fortune tellers, beggars, dancers, instruments, juggler, pipes to smoke, snakes in straw baskets.

Pipes, Turkish Coffee, commotion, chess, card games. Quiet when the call to prayer is heard (Instrumental?)

18.

A2S1

Solomon, Agnes and Margaret

Seated in a Cafe in Cairo, center stage

Solomon: Cairo is a great cosmopolitan city,
More open than London.

Agnes: Full of life at all hours.
Respect for one another, obedient women
But too much separation.

Maggie: Women seem content,
Respect for one another

Agnes: And when do women have the opportunity
To run a business, ride a camel or acquire an education?

Solomon: Cambridge does not admit women,
Why would we expect Egypt
To be more progressive?

Maggie: Our day here will come As surely as it will in England.

Solomon: In Europe, the Orthodox communities
have begun schools for girls where they learn Talmud,
The Prophets and Codes of Jewish Law.
It is a beginning.

Aria - Agnes:

Women - Why are we treated as property,
Abused, controlled?
Women can be great scholars,
Can make great contributions to the world.

19.

A2S1b

Solomon, Agnes and Margaret (same location)

Maggie: People in Cairo roam the alleys like madmen,
Women sell oranges and gypsies can be found to tell your fortune.
Shops line the Bazaar with brass trays and antiquities
while people speak loudly in conversation,
In an animated manner.

Agnes: You can hear singing everywhere. It is joyous!
A blind man plays the tambourine and Qanun.
Everyone seems to be hiding
Behind their veils and wraps.
Its quite beautiful.

People are happy here, full of merriment.
And the Fez maker, has a beautiful red scarf for sale,
With little tassels.

Solomon: May this day never end in all its joy and exultation!

Agnes and Margaret: By the candle light we see
the copper plates, and hear the tambourines,
and conical drums, finger cymbals resounding,
As we drink wine.

Agnes: Give us the evening air with parties
and singing where we can enjoy
candied nuts, dried fruits and sweets.

Solomon: Sitting on divans and cushions
with beautiful carpets
A festival of color.

Solomon: We're here to look at fragments covered in dust,
As if these could be brought to life-
As if these could be made readable again
As if these could sing the music of the past-

Agnes: We see the copper plates and pots and
we hear the tambourines and conical drums
finger cymbals resound as we drink
glasses of wine at night.
Give us the evening air with singing everywhere.

20.

A2S1c

[Down Stage Right with spotlight]

Mathilde, at Cambridge, reflects on missing Solomon and writes him a letter. The Music is a composition to most of her letter.

Mathilde:

It is not quite ten years since our Wanderers' gatherings.

Young and keen

in our cozy study

We read and talked

Discussed every problem

[Under the sun].

There were never more jolly,

Sparkling, deeply earnest and

Spirited talks.

We were all so absorbed in living,

We failed to write anything down.

One was radical, another stormy

(you my love),

Another mysterious,

While one was neutral.

One decided who was right

In a kind way,

While another

Cleared the room

With laughter.

The spiritual life here,

In Cambridge,

Is diminished while

You are in Egypt.

No book or manuscript

Can replace you, since

Cambridge welcomed us.

Solomon Schechter

*Reading Mathilde's letter (while in Fostat)
and writing to her.*

Could you manage to have yourself and the children photographed and surprise me with it?

I sympathize with baby Amy. I also

Feel homesick...

...Never again on

A journey without you.

I cannot stand it

Any longer.

Mathilde: We await your return
And learning how you are feeling
And how you are bridging worlds.

Solomon and Mathilde: You my love!

21

A2S1d

Aria

Solomon Schechter: How the past suddenly rushes in
Upon you with all its joys and woes!

And there is in a spark of human soul
come to life again.

After its disappearance for centuries,

Crying for sympathy and mercy...

You dare not neglect the appeal

and slay this soul again...

22.

A2, S2a

Duet

The noise of cracking old velum is heard, dust rises, and ghosts come down the ladder (or through a door):

Yair, the wedding dress maker, chasing

Ganuz, her lover,

Leah 1, Rachel 2 - twins one of whom is about to be married, (chasing each other their parents, chasing them?)

Obadiah

Abraham ibn Ibrahim, the young groom

Ab ibn Sullam, father of bride

Miriam, mother of the bride

Brief - Interlude - Characters emerge from the Geniza

Yair, the wedding dress maker and Ganuz, an itinerant salesman of fabric, trimmings, wedding shoes, slippers, decorative jewelry, veils, henna and henna brushes...

Ganuz: May I come in?

Jair: Yes, please.

Ganuz: I have traveled from Jerusalem with items for your brides.

I have beautiful linen, and shear silk, red satin for a shawl or groom's sash, and turquoise ribbons for highlighting hair.

Yair: And Beads? For decorating the bride - from head to toe?
and Henna brushes?

Ganuz: The finest Camel hair brushes!

Yair: And what do you have for sandals and shoes?

Ganuz: I have light blue dyed leather half-shoes.
Will you try them on?

(She sits and he fits her shoes, gently touching her calf as he puts her shoe on)

(Yair gets up suddenly and turns away, afraid he might see her blushing)

Ganuz: *(takes some fabric and wraps it around her waist. He pulls her close - their eyes meet, and she kisses him)*

Yair: Why have you been away so long?

Aria

Ganuz: There are so many obstacles - Saracens and Crusaders are everywhere.
Crusaders kill their own Christians, not realizing that everyone here dresses alike.

I waited weeks for a ship to sail from Jaffa to Alexandria the only way to see you was overland to Fostat, the only way to reach you.

We waited days In Alexandria until we were allowed to disembark. I was overwhelmed by merchants wishing to buy my fabrics.

I was invited to dine with a wealthy communal leader who tried to match me with his daughter.

I left trying not to offend him, and hired a guide and camels to make my way here, to you.

23

A2S2b

Yair & Ganuz

Yair: I'm busy now with little time for you, especially when you disappear for months, then show up unannounced.

Aria

I waited forever for you to return to me, for you to return to me.
Not knowing if you were returning, I had to stop thinking of you.
And your soft hands, and your sweet words,
And our time together...
I waited for you to return to me.

Only my work, only my craft
Kept me from going mad.

Now, I wait for no one!
For no man!
I live, and my work is my love.
You could have been my love,
And now, I doubt it!
And now, I have my doubts.

they touch hands

Ganuz: How I missed you

...And the scent of citron permeating this room.

Can we forget the world for this moment?
Life goes on all around us, not caring that we see each other,
that we feel each others desire !
How I missed you...

24.

A2S2c

Yair & Ganuz

Duet

Yair and Ganuz: Life goes on around us, and we must see each other,
We must be careful loving, loving
and caring
The stars tell our future.

Yair: Don't come any closer!

Ganuz: Am I in danger? We are both in danger!

Yair and Ganuz: Can't we forget the world for this moment?
How I missed you!

25.

Act 3 Scene 1

The Wedding Dress Aria

Yair speaking to Ganuz

Yair: Ganuz, you're just in time as I am in need of fabrics for a bride.
Gold and Red,
white for the veil,
the best material,
the most vibrant and shimmering.

When a bride comes to her wedding day - she must be
one of a kind, unique,
perfect in her attire and jewels,
her hair, her makeup.

Her dress must be her personality
yet it should be light and airy,
fun and traditional.

Fitted and well constructed,
the most beautiful dress
of their entire life.

A wedding dress fitted for love,
a perfect gown, for imperfect love.

Is this the one or
is this the one?

So much to decide. The right dress?
The right groom?
Shall I keep looking?

Is the dress me?
My personality?
Will it be dramatic?
How will I be my very best?
The version of myself
I want everyone to know?

How can I, a dressmaker,
Convince them how a bride
on her wedding day
would look like?

Ganuz, Does the inner self take precedence
over the outer self?
Or - does the outer garment
reflect the inner beauty?
Her dreams? The dress
of her dreams,
fitted and made perfect.

A wedding dress fitted for love,
a perfect gown, for imperfect love.

The dress should be peaceful
like the Sabbath,
while light dances
on it's fabric.

A bride to be
is like a hunter
searching for her catch -
not the groom!
The dress to make her
stand out in Eternity.

How will she be her very best?
The version of herself she wants everyone to know?
Does her inner self take precedence over her outyerself?
Does the outer garment reflect her inner beauty? Her dreams?
The dress of her dreams, made perfect!

A wedding dress fitted for love,
a perfect gown, for imperfect love.

26.
A3S1b
Ganuz
Aria

Ganuz: Bedecked with fabric and jewels, decorated with silks and satins,
her hands decorated with henna designs -

A bride is hidden with her veil.
transparent, yet her face is seen
through layers of cloth.
The bride's eyes reveal her beauty,

Her happiness in these moments
and her terror.

She is the very garden of Eden, a paradise
never wishing to change,
but also struggling with what is beyond
the wall, the next steps.
She is seeking the life beyond
her idyllic life.

26b
A3S1c
Yair & Ganuz

duet

Yair and Ganuz: She is taking a chance,
and behold, she discovers,
and behold, he discovers,
a partner, also hidden

Yair: Now they have a life together.

Ganuz: Revealing some of their hidden self...

Yair and Ganuz: Yet always, yet, always.

Yair: Keeping a sheer fabric
from which the hidden self is never fully known.

Ganuz: No one will hear us.
I hate when you walk away!
Why can't you face me
without trying to leave?

You are like the evening breeze
on the hills of Jerusalem
A place which heats up to

an unbearable day, yet
comforts with the evening winds.

You are the valley where people were left to die,
yet above them, Mount Moriah,
offering hope!

Without understanding your moods,
I find you punishing and irresistible.

Your beauty is dangerous and envelops me.
Your harshness makes me feel unwelcome.
Shall I go? Shall I stay?

No one else can see the night you bring.
The shimmering stars, aglow
in the night sky.

Are we so far apart as earth and moon?
Can you not accept that you are mine?
And locked in each other's orbit?

27.

A3S2a

Miriam, Leah, Rachel, Ab-Ibn-Sullam
Quartet

Scene 2 - Yair finds out in a letter, that Ganuz is married.

The brides family enters for a wedding dress fitting, with the young bride, Leah, confiding in her twin, Rachel, that she wishes she were not marrying. The twin offers to take her place.

A groom arrives. He is handsome and fit. The original bride, Leah, says she's changed her mind, but her sister, Rachel, having seen the groom, now refuses to relent.

Leah is distraught, and the wedding dress maker offers her some comfort in that they both have lost, and offers her a job a henna decorator. She accepts.

Eight Characters who enter from the Geniza:

The Sullam family

Ab ibn Sullam, father of he bride (Solomon)

Miriam, the mother of the bride (Mathilde)

Leah(1) and Rachel (2) who are twins (Agnes and Maggie)

Ganuz, Yair's lover (Arthur Cawley)

Yair, the wedding dressmaker (Grace Blyth)

Obadiah, the proselyte (Adolf Neubauer)

Abraham ibn Ibrahim, the groom (the young Obadiah)

Yair paces as she reads a letter.

Ab-ibn-Sullam: Good Day, may you be blessed
I am Ab-ibn-Sullam, here with my family, may God protect them.

My daughter is betrothed to Abraham-ibn-Ibrahim of Alexandria

Miriam: May they prosper together with the Almighty's blessing.
My husband may he be blessed, and I, Miriam, have brought our daughter, Leah, the bride,
and her twin sister, Rachel, here to be fitted and attired for the wedding of Leah
to Abraham-ibn-Ibrahim. May God make him prosper and be blessed with children.

Ab-ibn-Sullam: If I may address you, Yair, in the presence of my wife and daughters. Please
give Leah, our first born girl, all that she desires to be a beautiful bride.
The best of everything she desires, spare nothing,
For we cherish her,
and now
it will be our greatest joy to see her wed
under a chuppah.

I will leave you now, as it is a great blessing,
but also one which I find very difficult, to see my
lovely daughter, Leah, go to the home of the groom.

Miriam: (speaking to Leah)
I am happy for you my daughter, and could not be happier!
You are a blessed child and deserve your own home and family.
These are the great joys of life! (exit)

(Rachel and Leah)

Leah: Dear sister, Rachel, I am to be fitted for my wedding, which should be the happiest time
in my life. Instead, I am feeling ill.

A strange shadow
has overtaken me, dark thoughts.

Rachel: What is it dear sister, Leah?
With all my heart I wish you happiness,
and I wish you God's blessing.
You will soon feel better.

Leah: How is that possible?
I've never met the groom.
My opinion doesn't matter?

Rachel: Our opinion doesn't matter.

Leah: I have no potion to calm me,
except for your love,
and loving you, dear sister.

I have no potion to calm me,
For I have never met the groom.

27a

A3S2b

Leah and Rachel

Duet

Rachel: Let me speak with Yair.
She helps brides.
She will help you.

This is our fate to marry,
and to have a holy household
with children, the very miracle of life.

Leah: I will kill myself with this dagger,
I'll not submit to a man I do not know.
Step back! For the blood which springs
from my body will spray you,
and turn the whiteness of this linen to red.

No one is listening to me,
not even you beloved sister.
I cannot go on as a shadow,
as an echo of a man -
I've never met.
Good-bye beloved sister, forgive me!

Rachel: Wait! Wait!
It is a grave sin to take one's own life.
There may be another solution to your marrying.

I will take your place!
Do not take your life, you must not!
No one will know that now I am you and you are me.

Leah: And what of the Ketubah? It will have my name,
and yet you will be in my place?

Rachel: All the better as it will make it invalid
and the contract will be void!
An annulment will take place.

Leah: Our father will be furious.
It will be worth it to see it!
He will never forgive us, perhaps even mourn?

Rachel: Do not fear! Be not afraid!
He will not be paying close attention.
While he cares for us, as

a good father, and we
care for him,

I cannot allow you to kill yourself
or marry against your will!
My plan will work.
The groom, the Hattan,
will never know.
He's never met you.
Your twin sister cares for you
and will sacrifice to save you.

Leah: This is a way out.
How can I allow you
to take my place, my sister whom
I love with all my heart?

I will do as you say, sister,
May God be blessed , and God protect us!

28.

Act3S2c

Yair, Ab Ibn Sullam, Miriam

ENTER - Yair, the wedding dressmaker.

Yair: Welcome Miriam and welcome to your family!
May God be blessed.

Miriam: We are here for the bride to be dressed
as never before and never again.

Yair: This is what I do best...

[Miriam escorts Rachel who has stepped forward while Miriam is lost in thought, barely looking at her daughter.]

Miriam: All of Fostat knows of your great skill
as dressmaker and dresser of brides.

Forgive me, for I am lost in thought,
I never expected this day
to come so soon.

It reminds me of my own
wedding day, and being dressed
for the day
I met Ab-ibn-Sullam.
May he be blessed! May he be blessed!

[Yair begins to show fabric to Rachel]
[Enter Ganuz]

Ganuz: *(walks into room)*
You must see me now!

Yair: (Quietly) - Get out! Can't you see that I'm working!

Ganuz: I will not leave!

Yair: Then step outside where we can speak!

Ganuz: *[to stage left side]*

Yair: How dare you show your face !
For months
I've not heard a word -
about your well-being !

Ganuz: I thought of you, but
could not write to you
out of guilt.

Yair: Yes! Your Guilt!
Worrying for your safety,
and my love for you,
I sent a man to follow you
to see if you were well?
So I would know more about you.

You have a wife and children in Jerusalem.
You are worthless to me.
You lied!
Why did you lie?

29.

Act3S2d

Ganuz

Aria

Ganuz: Your face, your image, has never
left my mind.

As the moon constantly waxes and wanes
yet my love for you never diminishes,
it only grows.

As the moon casts its shadows
across the land,
the mystery of a dreamlike
world at night...

We await the moment, its whiteness to illuminate the clouds,
the sky,
I have waited
with love
to see you again.

You illuminated my life,
I lived in shadows.
The reflection of your light
outlining the clouds
My hidden self was revealed
And my love for you returns.

Like so many others,
I was betrothed when
I was very young
so I have hidden away my life, my desires,
until I met you.

30.

Act3S2e

Yair

Yair: I want to believe you,
I despise you and your lies.
You have lied to me,
You gave me hope only to destroy it.

I will not allow you
to destroy me,
your children, and the woman
who is your wife in Jerusalem.

Get out! You who have forgotten
your maker, your creator.
While you have broken my heart,
you will not break me.

For the moon has a power
of moving the tides.
I will summon nature itself
to drown my sorrow,
my love for you.

Better alone than a life
which is a lie.
I know that I could weaken
in this moment,

And why should my love,
any love, diminish me,
and those I do not know - your children, your wife?

Leave me now, though it breaks my heart,
my heart will heal.
You may go back to your shadows, Ganuz,
Our love is now in the Geniza. [can be sung or spoken].

[The Young Groom arrives, Abraham ibn Ibrahim]

Yair: This is the groom? A tall boy?

Abraham ibn-Ibrahim: Yes! I am to be married to Leah, daughter of Ab-ibn-Sullam and Miriam.

[Rachel steps forward]

Rachel: Yes, I am Leah!

[Miriam looking confused]

Miriam: Can I believe my eyes?
The bride is the image of Leah,
but the voice is the voice of Rachel!

Ab-ibn-Sullam: My daughter is so beautiful
though I no longer see so well,
I give you my blessing, dear Leah!

Ganuz: (to Yair) Your face an image have never left my mind!

[Leah, as an aside]

Leah: Oh, what have I done?
The boy is beautiful
I will forever regret this moment.
Oh, horror! What now?
What shall I do?

Yair: [to Rachel (Leah)]

You seem so sad
when you should rejoice
in your sister's happiness/

You will miss her, I know.
I will need a helper.
Can you be my assistant?

I will train you
so you always
will be reminded of the happiness
of matrimony,

and forever
making more beautiful
brides for their wedding day?

[Enter Obadiah, the proselyte]

Obadiah: Blessed are they
who come in the name of the Lord. [Huppah]

Leah (actually Rachel): I rejoice
in the Eternal One,
My whole being exalts in God.
For I am clothed
in garments of triumph.

Rachel (actually Leah):

The groom is so fair,
so young.
What have I done?
The boy is beautiful!

I will forever regret this moment.
Oh, horror!
What should I do?

[The father and mother of the bride]

Ab-ibn-Sullam and Miriam:

Our daughter is so beautiful! Though I no longer see so well!
I give you my blessing!

Miriam: Something is not quite right?
Have they played a terrible
trick on us?

Ganuz: Yair, Yair,
Please forgive me!
I cannot live without you!

Yair: Good-bye! Ganuz!
Return to your family
in Jerusalem!

Obadiah: May your joys be many,
May you rejoice in each other!
The Groom rejoices
with the bride!
The Bride rejoices with the groom!

[Aside and whispering]

Rachel to Leah: I've changed my mind!
Is it too late to declare that I am Leah and my sister is Rachel!
Oh, horror!

Leah to Rachel: It is too late,
beloved sister!

Obadiah: The song of the Turtle Dove
is heard in the Land:
The green figs form the fig tree
Its vines in blossom
give off fragrance

Arise my love, my fair one,
and come away with me!

Epilogue

[The characters using the door and the ladder, enter the Geniza]
lights off for a moment

[Back in Cambridge - Schachter, sitting on stage right, at a table, surrounded by boxes of fragments. Solomon picks up a collection of aged and stuck together parchments]

Solomon Schechter: Time is sacred it moves our lives,
It cannot be captured, it rules over us,
when, if we can make our time to
find a way to find the answers.

Time can look backward
and in a moment
it can be all time in motion.

What have we here?
A Ketubah for Leah bat Ab-ibn-Sullam v'Avraham-ibn-Ibrahim -
and
On the back another document
of divorce - Rachel pretended to be her
twin sister Leah.
How strange and wonderful!
We do not know what treasures
of wisdom and scholarship await us.

It will take time!

FINE

Note to: A3S2c

Yair finds out in a letter, that Ganuz will not return and she is distraught. The bride's family enters for a wedding dress fitting, with the young bride confiding in her twin that she wishes she were not marrying. Her twin offers to take her place. The groom arrives and he is handsome, fit and very young Leah she's changed her mind, but the sister, Rachel, now refuses to relent. Distraught, the wedding dressmaker offers the Leah some comfort in that they both have lost, and offers her a job as a henna decorator.

Ganuz suddenly returns during the scene, but Yair is furious and refuses to accept him, since he has lied already, and she would be breaking his family.

Note to: A3S3

The young groom is dressed in colors and the bride, like an Egyptian/Yemenite Bride, is festively attired.

Obadiah enters with a Huppah which is opened and hand held, and offers a prayer - while the scrim and lighting have the henna decorations in motion, and another scrim has the Music notation of Obadiah, while another scrim demonstrates how fragments come together to reveal 1000 year old documents.

Note to Epilogue: Solomon Schechter, back at Cambridge, examines a text fragment, a Ketubah and Get (Divorce document, stuck together on the back of the Ketubah) and realizes it will take generations of scholars to understand the vastness of the Geniza fragments.

Geniza: Hidden Fragments of the Cairo, Ben Ezra Synagogue

A New Chamber Opera with Libretto and Music by Arnold Saltzman

Arnold Saltzman (b. 1948): Composer of Opera, Symphonies and Ballet based on Jewish and American themes. His 4th Symphony, 'A Choral Symphony: Halevi' premiered at the 2018 Alba Music Festival with Dr. Jeffrey Silberschlag conducting, and its North American Premiere on February, 24, 2019 in Washington, DC with American University Orchestra and Chorus, with Matthew Brown conducting. In addition he was invited by the Alba Music Festival to present a work of chamber music for 2020 and videotaped for Youtube: Cheapeake Orchestra Labor Day Concert - 'Solomon and the Dove' by Arnold Saltzman. With over 300 grants for composition, awards and commissions including the Eugene M. Lang Foundation Award for Composition, the Cafritz Award for Composition, The Eric Fox and Amber Scholtz award for Composition, The Morningside Foundation, and the Charles E. Smith Family Foundation, his original music has been heard in concerts, television broadcasts, video and CDs around the globe. His *Rescue In Denmark Symphony* was the subject of a TV2-Denmark news story viewed by over one million people, and received high praise from The Washington Post and the Northwest Current. His opera *Touro* is cited in the online Encyclopedia Britannica, Opera News, Opera America, and he is featured in an article on 'The New Tonalists,' for his *An American Symphony*.

He has collaborated on music programs and projects with: Carol Nissenson, Raymond P. Scheindlin, Janice Meyerson, Matthew Brown, Daniel Abraham, Michael Wu, Jeffrey Silberschlag, Giuseppe Nova, The Alba Music Festival, J. Reilly Lewis, The Trinity Chamber Orchestra, Richard Fazio, Robert Convery, Joel Lazar, J. Thomas Mitts, Geoffrey Simon, Russell Woollen, Michael Parrish, Bruce Steeg, Eileen Cornett, Charles Davidson, Noel Zahler, Yankel Ginzburg, Naomi Shemer, Issachar Miron, Sherrill Milnes, Daniel Schorr, Dan Raviv, Sari Horwitz, The National Symphony, The Kennedy Center, The Cathedral Choral Society and the Maryland Chorus, St. Mary's College of Southern Maryland, University of Maryland Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, George Washington University Lisner Auditorium and American University Chorus and Orchestra, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, The Lillian and Albert Small Jewish Museum in Washington, DC, The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Catholic University Rome School of Music, The American Guild of Organists, United Synagogue of America & the Cantors Assembly, The Adas Israel Youth Choir, JPDS and the Strathmore Children's Chorus. He has been featured on network Broadcasts on ABC-TV, NBC, TV-2 of Denmark, and PBS Worldwide.