

The Genizah: The Spiritual and Ethical Necessity for the Repatriation of Sacred Texts

To: Cambridge University Library

From: The Descendants of the Cairo Jewish Community

Executive Summary

In 1896, the discovery of nearly 140,000 ancient manuscripts in the genizah, a repository for worn-out or damaged sacred Jewish texts, of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo changed the history of Jewish historical and theological study.¹ Among these discoveries was the original Hebrew text of the apocryphal book of Ben Sira, a worn 10th-century manuscript waiting for ritual burial by the Jewish community of Egypt in accordance with Jewish law.² Spurred by dreams of academic prestige in Western universities, researchers such as Dr. Solomon Schechter treated this repository as an archive of records to be extracted and transferred to institutions like Cambridge University for their eternal preservation.³ This extraction was a Western paradigm which misunderstood the purpose of the genizah.⁴ The genizah is a waiting room for the ritual burial of decrepit texts.⁵ Because the Cairo Genizah had both secular historical documents and holy artifacts, its modern restitution requires a bifurcated approach.⁶ The secular genizah documents should continue to be digitally joined, reunited, and centralized for global academic study. However, sacred materials, such as the book of Ben Sira that contain the name of God in

¹ Rebecca J. W. Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt : The History and Provenance of a Jewish Archive* (I.B. Tauris, 2022), <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1970023587243041445>.

² Solomon Schechter and Charles Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (Cambridge, Univ. Press, 1899).

³ Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt*.

⁴ Solomon Schechter and Elkan Adler, "GENIZAH (Lit. 'Hiding' or 'Hiding-Place')," in *1906 Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (Funk & Wagnalls, 1906).

⁵ Schechter and Adler, "GENIZAH (Lit. 'Hiding' or 'Hiding-Place')."

⁶ Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt*.s

any form, must be physically repatriated to Israel, there they may undergo proper ritual burial to complete their life cycle.⁷ This physical restitution of sacred materials is based on Jewish halakhic or religious law mandating the purposeful disposal of spiritually pertinent texts, worldwide ethical precedents, and the past actions of the Egyptian government's historical oppression of Egypt's Jewish community, whose descendants now live in Israel, are thus the modern-day inheritors and caretakers of their heritage.⁸

Section 1: The Halakhah Standard

To understand why the Cairo Genizah must be approached through the bifurcated lens of physical repatriation and reunification, we must first establish the religious law governing these artifacts.⁹ Western academia views the genizah as an archive, but Jewish law or *halakha* demands the categorization and disposition of its contents based on their spiritual significance.¹⁰ The writings of the Shulchan Arukh, the most universally consulted written manual of halakha, and the Mishnah Torah, the Rambam's compendium and analysis of Jewish oral law, provide the basis for delineation.¹¹

When categorizing the genizah materials, the Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim (154:3), makes clear the boundary between the sacred and mundane, ruling that “articles of holiness (*tashmishei kedusha*)... possess holiness and require genizah [burial].”¹² Within the Cairo

⁷ Lior Wolf et al., “Identifying Join Candidates in the Cairo Genizah,” *International Journal of Computer Vision* 94, no. 1 (2011): 118–35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11263-010-0389-8>.

⁸ Joseph Karo, *Shulchan Aruch* (Joseph Karo, 1565).

⁹ Joseph Karo, “Orach Chayim (154:3),” in *Shulchan Aruch* (Joseph Karo, 1565).

¹⁰ Karo, “Orach Chayim (154:3).”

¹¹ ben Maimon Moshe, “Yesodei Hatora (6:1-2),” in *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*, 14 vols. (Egypt, 1170); Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*.

¹² Karo, “Orach Chayim (154:3).”

Genizah, this delineates the line between secular historical documents and sacred texts, and even among the latter, distinct categories of holiness that dictate different treatment.¹³

Among the subcategories of both the sacred and the secular, it is necessary to establish an understanding of the contents of the genizah. In the Cairo Genizah cache of documents, there are approximately 400,000 individual fragments, spread across 60 institutions.¹⁴ It is estimated that 90% of the fragments come from long-form literary texts, including liturgy, the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic literature, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, astrology, Jewish law, lexicography, poetry, and theology.¹⁵ The remaining ten percent are secular documents: letters, legal deeds, lists, accounts, state documents, and other everyday writings and ephemera.¹⁶ Among long-form literary texts, under Jewish Law only the Hebrew Bible, the Liturgy, Rabbinic literature, and halakhic codes are considered sacred.¹⁷

The smallest category consists of purely secular materials. It contains everyday records, from deeds of sale to letters from as far away as Kyiv, even marriage documents, and tax lists.¹⁸ Scholars attribute secular documents to account for approximately 10% of total genizah fragments.¹⁹ An example of such documents is Cambridge artifact Add.2586, a 1233 CE deed of sale for an apartment in Fustat.²⁰ This document exists only as an administrative record and has

¹³ Karo, “Orach Chayim (154:3).”

¹⁴ Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt*.

¹⁵ Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt*.

¹⁶ Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt*.

¹⁷ Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt*.

¹⁸ Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, *Karaite Marriage Contracts from the Cairo Geniza: Legal Traditions and Community Life in Mediaeval Egypt and Palestine* (BRILL, 2021).

¹⁹ Richard Gottheil and William H. Worrell, *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection* (University of Michigan Press, 1927), <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12945702>.

²⁰ b. ‘Amram Abū l-Faḳr, “Legal document (Add.2586),” Deed of sale, Cambridge University Library, 1233, Cambridge University Library.

no religious sanctity, thus requiring no religious burial nor repatriation.²¹ For this type of artifact, digital reunification is an acceptable conclusion to its existence.²² Additionally, it is of research significance to Western scholars as a repository of records of the daily lives of ordinary people across the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa.²³

However, the standard changes apply to the second category of texts: sacred texts that contain any form of the name of God. In *Yesodei Hatora* (6:1-2), the Rambam states that destroying or erasing any of the seven holy names of God is a biblical violation.²⁴ Artifacts in this category, such as Cambridge Or.1102, a 10th-century fragment of *Ecclesiasticus* (Ben Sira), bear the divine name and thus require the highest degree of holiness.²⁵ According to halakha, when such texts become worn and unusable, they must not be discarded, nor stored indefinitely as historical curios.²⁶ Their physical degradation requires religious burial to protect the divine name from disgrace.²⁷

The third category contains religious documents that do not explicitly mention the name of God, such as *Fragmented Talmudic Commentary* (Cambridge artifact T-S NS 342.164).²⁸ Although it could be argued that such scraps constitute historical literature without a divine name, rabbinic law also applies to them.²⁹ It includes protection for both the intellectual and spiritual medium of these teachings.³⁰ As the Rambam clarifies (*Yesodei HaTorah* 6:8), “all holy works

²¹ Abū l-Faḡr, “Legal document (Add.2586).”

²² Wolf et al., “Identifying Join Candidates in the Cairo Genizah.”

²³ Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt*.

²⁴ Moshe, “*Yesodei Hatora* (6:1-2).”

²⁵ “*Apocrypha* (Or.1102),” 1 leaf, Cambridge University Library, 10th century, Cambridge University Library.

²⁶ Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*; ben Maimon Moshe, *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*, 14 vols. (Egypt, 1170).

²⁷ Moshe, *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*; Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*.

²⁸ “*Genizah Fragment* (T-S NS 342.164),” Talmudic Fragment, Cambridge University Library, n.d., Cambridge University Library.

²⁹ ben Maimon Moshe, “*Yesodei Hatora* (6:8),” in *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*, 14 vols. (Egypt, 1170).

³⁰ Moshe, “*Yesodei Hatora* (6:8).”

and their interpretations and commentaries are prohibited to burn or destroy actively...holy works that have become worn out should be buried.”³¹ Therefore, the halakhic code does not differentiate between the physical presence of God’s name and the religious weight of Torah commentary; both elements render the physical paper sacred, thereby requiring it to be buried in the earth.³²

The requirement to bury holy texts is not only legal; it also extends to a psychological understanding of what makes a given text sacred.³³ In Jewish tradition, holy texts are not dead paper; they possess an innate animating spiritual presence.³⁴ According to the Mishnah (Yadayim 3:5), touching a sacred scroll causes a person’s hands to become ritually impure.³⁵ Rabbis created this rule to prevent people from mistreating holy books as ordinary or mundane.³⁶ By declaring that the scroll alters the ritual state of anyone who touches it, sages force scholars to handle such texts with care and respect. This declaration lifts the manuscripts from objects of study to objects of reverence.³⁷ Such a concept is supported by Shalom Sabar’s 2009 research, which explains that in Jewish culture, the Torah scroll and its appurtenances “emerged as the most sacred tangible objects,” often lifted to a place where they are viewed as possessing spiritual powers.³⁸ When Western institutions treat such artifacts as data to be studied or filed away, they undermine the

³¹ Moshe, “Yesodei Hatora (6:8).”

³² Moshe, “Yesodei Hatora (6:8).”

³³ Shalom Sabar, *Shalom Sabar, “Torah and Magic: The Torah Scroll and Its Appurtenances as Magical Objects in Traditional Jewish Culture,” European Journal of Jewish Studies, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2009): 135-170, n.d.,* <https://doi.org/10.1163/102599909X12471170467448>.

³⁴ Sabar, *Shalom Sabar, “Torah and Magic.*

³⁵ ben Maimon Moshe, “Yadayim (3:5),” in *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*, 14 vols. (Egypt, 1170).

³⁶ Moshe, “Yadayim (3:5).”

³⁷ Sabar, *Shalom Sabar, “Torah and Magic.*

³⁸ Sabar, *Shalom Sabar, “Torah and Magic.*

theological nature of the artifacts' existence. They are spiritually filled objects, with a natural lifecycle, that must eventually conclude with burial much in the same way as that of humans.³⁹

The strongest rebuttal to the demand for physical repatriation of such sacred texts comes from within Rabbinic law and Western archives. Rabbinic law posits that the commandment to continuously “study the Torah is equal to them all” [all the other commandments combined], a view that seems to align with the Western academic tradition of eternal preservation.⁴⁰ Critics of repatriation argue that burying the book of Ben Sira, or other sacred fragments, would permanently cause the loss of valuable information for scholars to study historical and religious content. However, Rabbinic law also calls for the ritual burial of sacred texts at the end of their lives; with the advent of modern digitization, the two prerogatives are not mutually exclusive.⁴¹ It is entirely possible to study the religious intellectual content of the religious text while still respecting that its physical lifecycle has come to a close.⁴² Digitizing the text fulfills the Rabbinic mandate for study, while physical burial fulfills the mandate for care.⁴³ However, Western academic tradition prioritizes eternal preservation of historical documents so researchers can study them indefinitely.⁴⁴

³⁹ Sabar, *Shalom Sabar*, “Torah and Magic.

⁴⁰ Yehudah HaNasi, “Mishnah Peah (1:1),” in *Seder Zeraim* (200 AD).

⁴¹ Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*; Wolf et al., “Identifying Join Candidates in the Cairo Genizah.”

⁴² Wolf et al., “Identifying Join Candidates in the Cairo Genizah.”

⁴³ Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*; HaNasi, “Mishnah Peah (1:1).”

⁴⁴ Lotte Arndt and Noémie Étienne, “Transforming Conservation: Challenging Hegemonic Models, Broadening the Realm of the Concerned, Changing Practices,” *Museums & Social Issues* 17, nos. 1–2 (2023): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15596893.2024.2379654>.

Section 2: Ethical Justifications

While halakha declares the religious necessity for the repatriation of the genizah's sacred materials, the external justification comes from modern ethical ideology surrounding cultural heritage. The restitution of the book of Ben Sira and other spiritually animated fragments must honor the wishes and laws of the living descendant community rather than defer to the convenience of Western institutions. To prove that ritual disposal is a valid alternative to eternal preservation, we examine three points: the flaw in the Western paradigm of eternal preservation, the legal-ethical standards established by NAGPRA, and the anthropological precedent of ritual deactivation in African objects such as the *minkisi*.

The modern museum exists primarily on the basis of eternal preservation. As mentioned in a recent study by Lotte Arndt and Noémie Étienne, "Western conservation has long been presented as a project of duration and permanence."⁴⁵ The goal of such conservation is to ensure that objects are fully protected from environmental degradation.⁴⁶

This conservation practice is a flawed response to such sacred objects and artifacts. Applying such a mindset to the Cairo genizah creates an ethical conundrum. A genizah is, by definition, the way sacred perishable books perish respectfully.⁴⁷ By removing said artifacts from their decay before they can be buried, early scholars like Dr. Solomon Schechter interrupted their natural life cycle.⁴⁸ Today, decolonial perspectives contest these Western preservation practices. Keeping a sacred book or text locked in a climate-controlled vault ignores the cultural history and

⁴⁵ Arndt and Étienne, "Transforming Conservation."

⁴⁶ Arndt and Étienne, "Transforming Conservation."

⁴⁷ Karo, *Shulchan Aruch*.

⁴⁸ Schechter and Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*.

know-how that had governed the care of such artifacts for years. True preservation of heritage means preserving the practices of that heritage, not sealing it away and subjecting it to an unnatural, prolonged lifespan.

The argument that sacred materials should be returned to descendant groups for burial is not new. It exists as law in the form of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which creates the legal ethical precedent for returning holy artifacts and human remains to indigenous tribes in the United States.⁴⁹

Under NAGPRA, institutions are required to return ownership and physical possession of sacred artifacts to tribes, with the understanding that many of the tribes rebury these items in the earth.⁵⁰ The United States federal government and international museums have accepted the practice that the descendant community's religious rights to perform ritual disposal supersede an institution's need to display an artifact for public education.⁵¹ This framework must be applied to the Cairo genizah.⁵² Just as it is unethical to deny an indigenous tribe the right to bury their sacred heritage, it is unjust to deny the Jewish community the right to practice Kevurah (ritual burial) for texts carrying the holy name.

Besides legal systems, anthropological precedents also show that artifacts have a definite lifecycle that ends in deactivation. An example of such an artifact is an *nkisi*, a spiritually

⁴⁹ United States: Congress: House of Representatives: Office of the Law Revision Counsel, "NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION. CHAPTER 32," in *INDIANS. Title 25*, 2024th ed. (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2024), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/USCODE-2024-title25/USCODE-2024-title25-chap32>.

⁵⁰ United States: Congress: House of Representatives: Office of the Law Revision Counsel, "NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION. CHAPTER 32."

⁵¹ United States: Congress: House of Representatives: Office of the Law Revision Counsel, "NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION. CHAPTER 32."

⁵² United States: Congress: House of Representatives: Office of the Law Revision Counsel, "NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION. CHAPTER 32."

animated artifact from the Kongo people of Central Africa.⁵³ The objects were created to contain spiritual entities for the purpose of healing and protection. When an nkisi fulfilled its purpose, its creators deactivated it.⁵⁴

When Western museums get *minkisi* and put them on display, they misunderstand the purpose of the object. They are displaying a dead object, ignoring the cultural logic that allows such materials to be returned to the earth.⁵⁵ The book of Ben Sira and the sacred genizah fragments exist within a similar cultural mindset.⁵⁶ Without the ending of the ritual of burial, the object is stuck. Recognizing the life cycle of artifacts is not a step towards the destruction of history but towards the ethical conclusion of an object's life cycle.

Section 3: Historical Realities

Physical restitution needs to respect the living community's religious laws and its descendants, rather than merely defaulting to modern geographic borders. In deciding where the Book of Ben Sira and sacred fragments of the genizah should be sent for burial, the general assumption is to make this decision by geographic borders, thus the country of Egypt. However, historical and contemporary actions make it clear that the physical texts should be repatriated to a cemetery in Israel managed by the modern-day descendants of the Egyptian Jewish community.⁵⁷ Handing such sacred texts over to the Egyptian government would be an ethical failure, as it fails

⁵³ Mary McCurnin, *From the Old to the New World: The Transformation of Kongo Minkisi in African American Art*, n.d.

⁵⁴ McCurnin, *From the Old to the New World: The Transformation of Kongo Minkisi in African American Art*.

⁵⁵ McCurnin, *From the Old to the New World: The Transformation of Kongo Minkisi in African American Art*.

⁵⁶ McCurnin, *From the Old to the New World: The Transformation of Kongo Minkisi in African American Art*.

⁵⁷ Kate Fitz-Gibbon, "Egypt's Antiquities Authority Seizes Geniza from Jewish Cemetery - Cultural Property News," *Cultural Property News - Cultural Property News*, March 31, 2022, <https://culturalpropertynews.org/egypts-antiquities-authority-seizes-geniza-from-jewish-cemetery/>.

to examine Egypt's history of expulsion and its modern penchant for the desecration of Jewish heritage and the flaws in geographic repatriation.⁵⁸

The rightful inheritors of this cultural heritage are the descendants of the community which tended to it and preserved it for centuries.⁵⁹ Today, this community no longer exists in Egypt.⁶⁰ During the middle of the 20th century, the Egyptian government engaged in systematic persecution and expulsion of its Jewish citizens, stripping tens of thousands of people of their homes, livelihoods, and culture.⁶¹ Following this mass exodus, the majority of Egyptian Jewish descendants emigrated to Israel, where they now reside.⁶² Returning sacred texts to Egyptian authorities would mean handing Jewish heritage to the very people who attempted to eradicate the community that created it.⁶³ As Sarr and Savoy note in a report on restitution, they declare that true repatriation requires the “transfer of ownership, where what's really at stake is the symbolic impact and who gets to oversee the care of the objects.”⁶⁴ The right to oversee that care belongs to the modern descendants in Israel, not to the state which expelled them.

Further, the modern Egyptian state has proven by recent action that it will not likely handle sacred Jewish artifacts appropriately.⁶⁵ If the sacred texts were returned to Egypt, there is evidence they would once more be mistreated rather than allowed halakhic burial. According to a

⁵⁸ Fitz-Gibbon, “Egypt’s Antiquities Authority Seizes Geniza from Jewish Cemetery - Cultural Property News.”

⁵⁹ Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*, 1st ed., vol. 11 (University of California Press, 1998), <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.8441772>.

⁶⁰ Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, vol. 11.

⁶¹ Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, vol. 11.

⁶² Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, vol. 11.

⁶³ Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*, vol. 11.

⁶⁴ Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*, N°2018-26 (2018).

⁶⁵ Yehuda Dov, *Egyptian Antiquities Authorities Confiscates New Genizah Found In Cairo Jewish Cemetery* | VINnews, March 24, 2022, <https://vinnews.com/2022/03/24/egyptian-antiquities-authorities-confiscates-new-genizah-found-in-cairo-jewish-cemetery/>.

recent article in the cultural property news in 2022, a new genizah was discovered during excavations of a Cairo Jewish cemetery.⁶⁶ The Egyptian Antiquities Authority seized the materials.⁶⁷ Officials broke into the cemetery and spent 48 hours indiscriminately dumping the sacred materials into plastic bags. They continued to do this despite the protests of the small local Jewish community, who pleaded that a rabbi be present to oversee the handling of the texts.⁶⁸ The Times of Israel corroborated this story, quoting a spokesperson for the community who stated that their complaints were ignored and the confiscated materials were taken to a storeroom to “rot away.”⁶⁹ Their actions showcase a disregard for halakhic law and demonstrate that Egypt is hostile towards the proper treatment of Jewish sacred artifacts.

Opponents of repatriation of the genizah to Israel use conventional cultural materials frameworks. Such legal systems argue that artifacts belong to their country of geographic origin and should become the property of the modern entity in which they were found. Through this lens, the genizah fragments found in Cairo belong to Cairo and, by extension, to Egypt. However, restitution needs to be seen through the additional lens of ethics. Geographic understanding, on its own, ignores the historical context of a nation's recent behavior. Returning sacred texts to a body that actively demonstrates improper treatment of existing artifacts violates the spirit of repatriation. True restitution necessitates the object being returned to the care of the communities who lay rightful claim to it.

⁶⁶ Fitz-Gibbon, “Egypt’s Antiquities Authority Seizes Geniza from Jewish Cemetery - Cultural Property News.”

⁶⁷ Fitz-Gibbon, “Egypt’s Antiquities Authority Seizes Geniza from Jewish Cemetery - Cultural Property News.”

⁶⁸ Fitz-Gibbon, “Egypt’s Antiquities Authority Seizes Geniza from Jewish Cemetery - Cultural Property News.”

⁶⁹ Dov, *Egyptian Antiquities Authorities Confiscates New Genizah Found In Cairo Jewish Cemetery* | VINnews.

Section 4: A Plan for Restitution

The Cairo Genizah is ultimately a waiting room. Acknowledging this requires a departure from Western ideas surrounding eternal preservation and a commitment to bifurcated restitution of these materials. While historical records may remain digitally unified and physically held by institutions, sacred texts bearing the divine name, as in the case of Ben Sira, must be digitized and physically repatriated to Israel for proper halakhic burial. The recognition of historical, ethical, and religious mandates is only the first step on the road to restitution. The international community of institutions now needs to create a framework for the practical transfer of these materials. Based on current restitution frameworks, this process shall be guided by ownership, legalities, and scholarly cooperation.

1. Identifying the rightful caretakers: transfer of ownership.

The question of restitution is not where an object goes but who should hold authority over its fate.⁷⁰ Historical precedent, especially the 20th-century expulsion of the Jewish community, necessitates that the modern Egyptian state has forfeited its claim to these artifacts. Restitution should be made to the descendant community now residing in Israel. As scholars Sarr and Savoy write regarding global restitution, true repatriation necessitates a “Transfer of ownership, where what's really at stake is the symbolic impact and who gets to oversee the care of the objects as the primary entities responsible for the items of cultural heritage.”⁷¹ It must be up to the descendant community to oversee the final burial of their cultural heritage.

⁷⁰ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷¹ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

2. Legalities: bilateral agreements and ad hoc procedures

Western institutions such as Cambridge University are obliged by heritage and deaccession laws which prohibit the disposal of their collections.⁷² Overcoming such legalities is required for a coordinated effort for the return of these genizah fragments.⁷³ This effort should be aided through the “creation of an ad hoc procedure proposing the basis for a calm process.”⁷⁴ This can be achieved through the bilateral agreements between the holding institutions and Israel acting juridically to represent the interests of the descendant community.⁷⁵ By instituting a law of exception for spiritually animated texts, Western museums can bypass standard public cultural heritage laws to fulfill this.⁷⁶

3. Scholarly cooperation and the continuation of digitization

Western academia's greatest fear surrounding the burial of the genizah's fragments is the permanent loss of the knowledge.⁷⁷ However, restitution and academia are not mutually exclusive.⁷⁸ Bilateral agreements must outline the activities of scholarly cooperation, allowing a transition period before the artifacts undergo their final burial.⁷⁹ It is during this phase that a joint commission of Western academia and rabbinic authorities can work together to fully digitize the sacred fragments. This technological intervention fulfills both the halakhic command to study the

⁷² Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷³ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷⁴ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷⁵ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷⁶ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷⁷ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷⁸ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

⁷⁹ Sarr and Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

Torah and the academic desire to preserve it. Once the text is digitally preserved, the physical paper can be returned to the earth.

Bibliography

Abū l-Fakr, b. 'Amram. "Legal document (Add.2586)." Deed of sale. Cambridge University Library, 1233. Cambridge University Library.

"Apocrypha (Or.1102)." 1 leaf. Cambridge University Library, 10th century. Cambridge University Library.

Arndt, Lotte, and Noémie Étienne. "Transforming Conservation: Challenging Hegemonic Models, Broadening the Realm of the Concerned, Changing Practices." *Museums & Social Issues* 17, nos. 1–2 (2023): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15596893.2024.2379654>.

Beinin, Joel. *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*. 1st ed. Vol. 11. University of California Press, 1998. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.8441772>.

Cowley, A. "Samaritana." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 16, no. 3 (1904): 474–84. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1450507>.

Dov, Yehuda. *Egyptian Antiquities Authorities Confiscates New Geniza Found In Cairo Jewish Cemetery* | VINnews. March 24, 2022. <https://vinnews.com/2022/03/24/egyptian-antiquities-authorities-confiscates-new-geniza-h-found-in-cairo-jewish-cemetery/>.

Executive Committee of the Editorial Board., J. F. McLaughlin, and Judah David Eisenstein. "NAMES OF GOD." In *1906 Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9. Funk & Wagnalls, 1906.

Fitz-Gibbon, Kate. "Egypt's Antiquities Authority Seizes Geniza from Jewish Cemetery - Cultural Property News." *Cultural Property News - Cultural Property News*, March 31, 2022. <https://culturalpropertynews.org/egypts-antiquities-authority-seizes-geniza-from-jewish-cemetery/>.

“Genizah Fragment (T-S NS 342.164).” Talmudic Fragment. Cambridge University Library, n.d. Cambridge University Library.

Goitein, S. D. “The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80, no. 2 (1960): 91–100.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/595583>.

Gottheil, Richard, and William H. Worrell. *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection*. University of Michigan Press, 1927.
<https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12945702>.

HaNasi, Yehudah. “Mishnah Peah (1:1).” In *Seder Zeraim*. 200 AD.

Horowitz, Yehoshua, Menahem Ben-Sasson, Geoffrey Khan, Stefan C. Reif, and Stuart E. Rosenberg. “Genizah, Cairo.” In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. Gale eBooks.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587507178/GVRL?sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=1c9439bc>.

Ibrahim, Samy. “Egypt’s Synagogues: Past & Present.” *ARCE*, n.d. Accessed June 25, 2026.
<https://arce.org/project/egypts-synagogues-past-present/>.

Jefferson, Rebecca J. W. *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt : The History and Provenance of a Jewish Archive*. I.B. Tauris, 2022.
<https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1970023587243041445>.

Karo, Joseph. “Orach Chayim (154:3).” In *Shulchan Aruch*. Joseph Karo, 1565.

Karo, Joseph. *Shulchan Aruch*. Joseph Karo, 1565.

Klein, David I. “Historic Synagogue Creates Tension between Egypt’s Government and Few Remaining Jews.” *The Times of Israel*, December 22, 2023.
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/historic-synagogue-creates-tension-between-egypts-government-and-few-remaining-jews/>.

- McCurnin, Mary. *From the Old to the New World: The Transformation of Kongo Minkisi in African American Art*. n.d.
- Moshe, ben Maimon. *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*. 14 vols. Egypt, 1170.
- Moshe, ben Maimon. “Yadayim (3:5).” In *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*, 14 vols. Egypt, 1170.
- Moshe, ben Maimon. “Yesodei Hatora (6:1-2).” In *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*, 14 vols. Egypt, 1170.
- Moshe, ben Maimon. “Yesodei Hatora (6:8).” In *Sefer Yad Ha-Hazaka*, 14 vols. Egypt, 1170.
- Olszowy-Schlanger, Judith. *Karaite Marriage Contracts from the Cairo Geniza: Legal Traditions and Community Life in Mediaeval Egypt and Palestine*. BRILL, 2021.
- Sabar, Shalom. *Shalom Sabar, “Torah and Magic: The Torah Scroll and Its Appurtenances as Magical Objects in Traditional Jewish Culture,” European Journal of Jewish Studies, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2009): 135-170*. n.d.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/102599909X12471170467448>.
- Sarr, Felwine, and Bénédicte Savoy. *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*. N°2018-26. 2018.
- Schechter, S. “Geniza Specimens.” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 14, no. 1 (1901): 37–63. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1450527>.
- Schechter, Solomon. *Studies in Judaism: Second Series*. Vol. 2. Jewish Publication Society of America, 1908.
- Schechter, Solomon, and Elkan Adler. “GENIZAH (Lit. ‘Hiding’ or ‘Hiding-Place’).” In *1906 Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5. Funk & Wagnalls, 1906.
- Schechter, Solomon, and Charles Taylor. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Cambridge, Univ. Press, 1899.
- United States: Congress: House of Representatives: Office of the Law Revision Counsel. “NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION. CHAPTER

32.” In *INDIANS. Title 25*, 2024th ed. U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2024.

<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/USCODE-2024-title25/USCODE-2024-title25-cha-p32>.

Wolf, Lior, Rotem Littman, Naama Mayer, et al. “Identifying Join Candidates in the Cairo Genizah.” *International Journal of Computer Vision* 94, no. 1 (2011): 118–35.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11263-010-0389-8>.