A few years ago a project was initiated at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem (JNL) to search among the holdings of the JNL for Hebrew manuscript fragments which had been removed from book-bindings. This project is still in the initial stages. I am collaborating with Dr. Ezra Chwat, one of the staff members of the manuscript department, who is in the process of analyzing manuscript fragments from the medieval and modern periods. To date, approximately 120 medieval European fragments were identified, most of which appear to have been removed from book bindings. They were stored in boxes for many years, held but neglected as useless material.

Four years ago we started to investigate the contents of this ‘rubbish’. From the fragments that have been analyzed thus far, we have uncovered material belonging to every genre of Jewish literature from the High and Late Middle Ages. Our findings follow the patterns reported in similar inventories from Europe: most of our fragments represent liturgy, poetry, biblical texts, rabbinic literature (Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash) and halakhic texts. Kabbalistic and philosophical texts are very rare in Jerusalem; to the best of my knowledge, this reflects the results of the census of the European ‘Genizah’ inventories as well. This is noteworthy given that the percentage of Kabbalistic works among extant Hebrew manuscripts is generally quite high. Remarkably there are a lot of fragments from the modern period, which were removed from Oriental and Yemenite bindings. Those are not the purpose of our research project.

Two private collectors have contributed significantly to the fragments held in the JNL Manuscript Collection. Mr. Ezra Gorodesky is a long time collector of purportedly ‘useless’ and torn bindings, who has been donating these items to the National Library for many years. Over twenty years ago, the JNL published a catalogue that featured a selection of the fragments from Mr. Gorodesky’s collection.1 A smaller number of medieval

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1 It is a bilingual catalogue: Revealed Treasures From The Ezra P. Gorodesky Collection in the J.N.U.L. (Jerusalem: The Jewish National and University Library, 1989). In Hebrew: אוצרות שפונים מאוסף פ. עזרא גורודצקי בבית הספרים והאוניברסיטאי תשמ”ט (Hereafter: Gorodesky Collection).
fragments came from the collection of the late Dr. Israel Mehlmann. Many of his treasures—printed editions and manuscripts—have been housed at this library for more than thirty years.²

The project of restoring and scanning the fragments in the JNL’s Manuscript Collection is still in its infancy. Unfortunately our budget inhibits the pace of our progress. As we move forward, there is a good chance of finding many more fragments that remain in bindings at the JNL, particularly in Latin incunabula.

I would like to highlight the fragments from five noteworthy medieval and Early modern period compositions, genres and correspondence discovered by our project:

A. **Kiryat Sefer by R. Isaac ben Jacob de Lattes (Provence, 1372)**

Twenty-seven binding fragments come from a 15th century manuscript of *Kiryat Sefer*, composed by R. Isaac ben Jacob de Lattes in Provence in 1372.³ This work describes the history of halakhic transmission from the Tannaitic period through the author’s own generation as well as other topics. The sixteen chapters (*she’arim*) in this volume are divided into two sections: *Sha’arei Zion* (Chapters 1–15) and *Toledot Yitzhak* (Chapter 16).⁴ The fragments in the JNL collection include: responsa by Maimonides that draw on rulings from his *Mishneh Torah* as well as an interpretation of a section from R. Abraham Ibn Ezra’s commentaries on the Pentateuch (Chapters 14–15). Some of the paragraphs included in these fragments are absent from the Oxford manuscript.⁵ Only the first chapter of *Sha’arei Zion*—comprised of a halakhic genealogy from Adam to R. Isaac’s lifetime—has been printed.⁶ This chapter highlights prominent halakhic figures from 12th- and 13th-century Provence.

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² Mehlman’s collection of printed editions has been catalogued and published: Isaac Yudlov, ספר גנזי ישראל The Israel Mehlman Collection in the Jewish National and University Library (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984); Shunit Degan, From Dr. Mehlman treasuries at the National and University Library (Jerusalem: The Jewish National and University Library, 2002) (in Hebrew).


⁴ This work is known from two manuscripts: Oxford—Bodleian Mich. 602, Neubauer 1298, copied in the 15th century; and Moscow—Günzburg 1336, which was probably copied a bit earlier.

⁵ See above, n. 4.

⁶ Three printed editions of *Sha’arei Zion* are extant: In Ozar Tob, edited by Abraham Berliner and David Hoffmann, (Berlin: Julius Benzian, 1878): 54–77; Edition of Solomon