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- Home
- Using the Library
- Research
- Teaching & Learning
- What's On
- Search & find
- Collections
- About
- Giving
- Contact

Fragment of the Month: March 2014

A newly discovered medical recipe written by Maimonides: Mosseri I.115.1

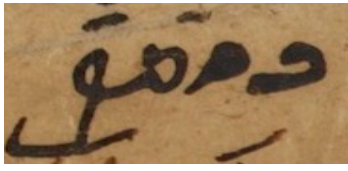
By Amir Ashur, [The Center for the Study of Conversion and inter-Religious encounters](#), Ben Gurion University

While examining the legal opinion on the verso of this manuscript, I glanced at the recto, which contains a medical recipe. At first it looked no different from other medical recipes.^[1] But upon closer inspection I realised that it might be an autograph of Maimonides!

A note of caution is in order, for some aspects of the script are not characteristic of Maimonides' autographs. In particular, here the Arabic letter ق is represented by the Hebrew qof with two diacritical dots above it:



This is rare in Judaeo-Arabic,^[2] and I have not seen it in any of Maimonides' known autographs, but it is found seven times in this recipe. Maimonides did make a practice of writing ת, with two dots, in order to identify it as ט rather than טו, which was written with three diacritical marks, a fairly well-documented practice in Judaeo-Arabic. In our recipe there is only one example of ת (in a word which also includes ק viz. פִּתְּחָק):

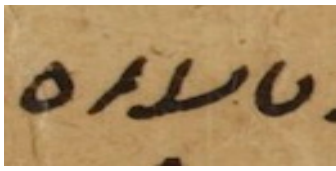


Less significant but also worthy of mention is the phraseology of the Hebrew blessing at the end of the recipe וְשִׁלּוּם הַדְּרָתָה יִרְבֶּה 'May the wellbeing of his Excellency increase'. In many of his letters Maimonides writes וְשִׁלּוּמָה יִרְבֶּה 'May his wellbeing increase,' with the word הַדְּרָתָה 'his Excellency' implied.

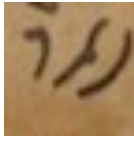
These discrepancies notwithstanding, a careful comparison of the handwriting of this recipe to Maimonides' known autographs clarifies, in my opinion,^[3] that this manuscript is written in his hand. Note, for example, the word טַעַם found in T-S Ar.44.7, part of Maimonides' *Treatise on Sexual Intercourse*:



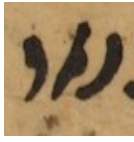
It is identical to the same word found in our medical recipe:



Another example from T-S Misc.34.24, which belongs with the same autograph treatise, is the word נָאֵר 'fire':



Which can be compared to the same word in our fragment:



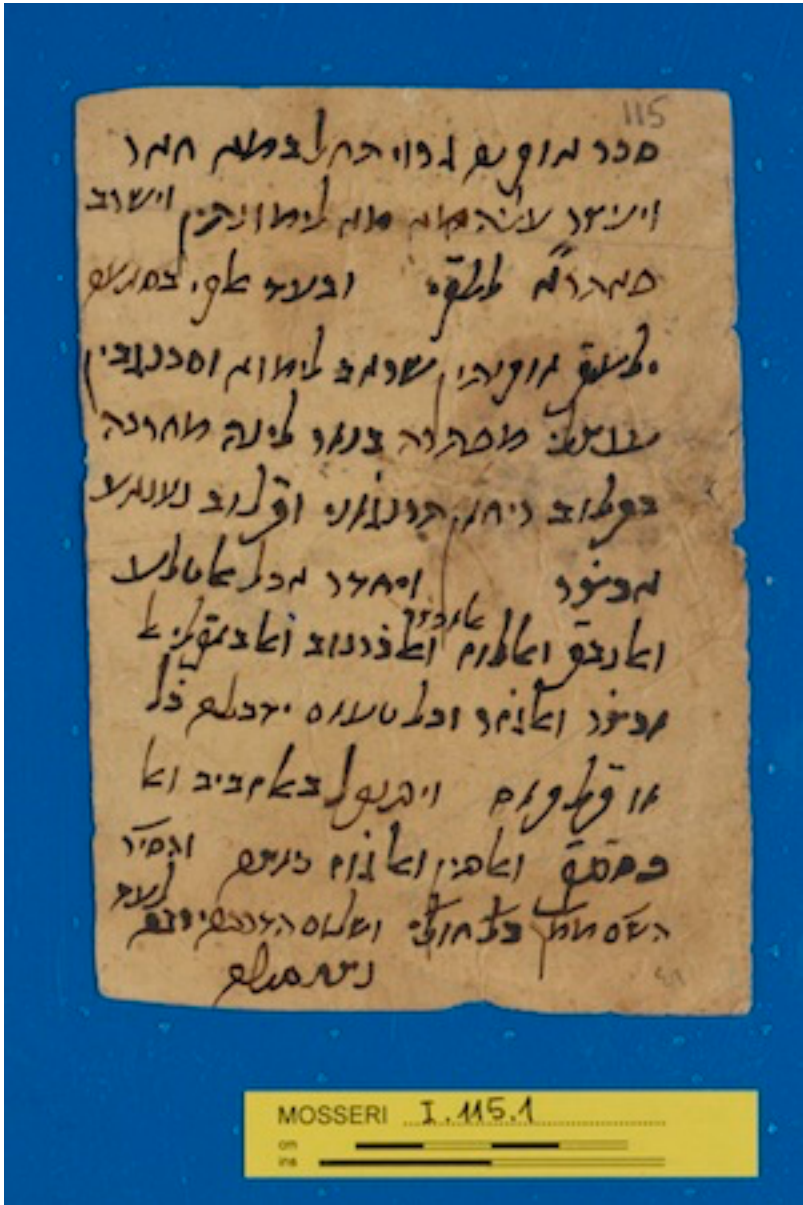
Only a handful of medical recipes written by Maimonides have been found so far, making this fragment an important addition to this small but expanding corpus.^[4]

Mosseri I.115.1:

- 1 סֵכֶר אֻקִּיָּה גְרוֹי תַחֲלִי בְמֵא חֹאֵר
- 2 וְיַעֲזֵר עֲלֵיהֶמָּא מֵא לִימֻנְתִּין וְיִשְׁרֵב
- 3 פִּאֲתָרָא לִלְקִי וְנַעֲד אֵלְקִי בִסְאֵעָה
- 4 יִלְעָק אֻקִּיתִין שְׂרָאֵב לִימֻא וְסִכְנֻגְבִּין
- 5 עֲנַזְלִי מִפְתֵּרָה בְנֹאֵר לִינָה מַחֲרֵכָה
- 6 בְּקֻלִּב רִיחָאֵן תְּרֻנְגָּאֵי וְקֻלִּב נַעֲנָע
- 7 אֲכָצֵר וְיַחְדֵּר אֲכִל אֵלְטֵלַע
- 8 וְאֵלְנֵבֶק וְאֵלְלֻז אֵלְאֲנָצֵר וְאֵלְכְּרֻב וְאֵלְבֶּאֱקִלִי אֵל
- 9 אֲכָצֵר וְאֵלְגֹזֵר וְכֵל טַעַם יִדְכֵּלָה כֹּל
- 10 אֻקִּלְקָאֵס וְיִתְנַקֵּל בִּאֵלְזִיבִיב וְאֵל
- 11 פִּסְתָּק וְאֵלְתִּין וְאֵלְגֹז כִּאֲצָה וְהִסִּיר
- 12 הַשֵּׁם מִמֶּךְ כֹּל חוּלִי וְשִׁלּוּם הַדְּרָתָה יִרְבֶּה לַעַד
- 13 נַצַּח סֵלָה

Translation:

- 1 One ounce of sticky sugar melted in hot water.
- 2 He should squeeze juice from two lemons onto it and drink
- 3 it lukewarm in order to vomit. One hour after vomiting,
- 4 he should sip two ounces of a lemon and squill-like oxymel drink,
- 5 heated to lukewarm on a low flame, mixed
- 6 with melissa-type and green mint leaves.
- 7 And he should be careful not to eat unripe dates,
- 8 Christ's Thorn jujube, green almonds, carob, green broad beans,
- 9 carrots and any food that contains vinegar
- 10 or taro. And for dessert he should eat only raisins,
- 11 pistachios, figs and nuts.
- 12 The Lord will ward off from you all sickness.^[5] May the wellbeing of his Excellency increase forever!
- 13 Neṣaḥ. Sela.



Mosseri I.115.1: An autograph medical recipe by Maimonides

Notes:

[1] Dozens of such recipes were published recently by Efraim Lev and Leigh Chipman, *Medical Prescriptions in the Cambridge Genizah Collections*, 'Cambridge Genizah Studies Series' 4 (Leiden, 2013).

[2] See Friedman, M.A., *Maimonides, The Yemenite Messiah and Apostasy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 2002), p. 200.

[3] Prof. M.A. Friedman has also examined it, and concurs.

[4] A fragment of such a recipe was published by Esther-Miriam Wagner: <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/taylor-schechter-genizah-research-unit/fragment-month/fragment-month-20-6>. Another recipe, T-S Ar.30.286, was published by S. Stern in *Maimonidis Commentarius in Mischnam*, S. D. Sassoon [ed.] (Hafniae 1961), pp. 27-28, and plate XIV-XV.

[5] Deuteronomy 7:15. New JPS translation.

I wish to thank Prof. M. A. Friedman for his comments

If you enjoyed this Fragment of the Month, you can find others [here](#).

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