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Fragment of the Month: March 2014

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

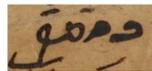
By Amir Ashur, [The Center for the Study of Conversion and inter-Religious encounters](#), Ben Gurion University

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 **ق**, with two dots, in order to identify it as **ق** rather than **ك**, which was written with three diacritical marks, a fairly well-documented practice in Judaeo-Arabic. In our recipe there is only one example of **ق** (in a word which also includes **ق** viz. **قوتق**):

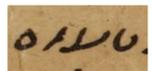


Less significant but also worthy of mention is the phraseology of the Hebrew blessing at the end of the recipe **ישלום הדרתה יריבה** 'May the wellbeing of his Excellency increase'. In many of his letters Maimonides writes **ישלומה יריבה** 'May his wellbeing increase,' with the word **הדרתה** 'his Excellency' 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 **טעם** 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 **נאר** 'fire':



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



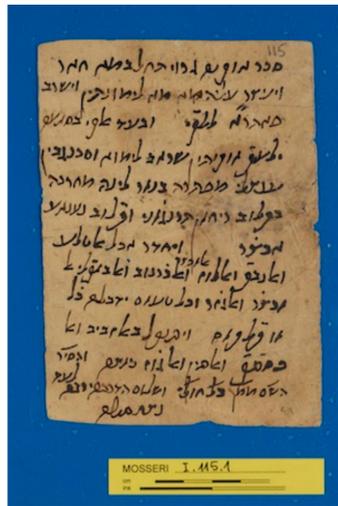
Only a handful of medical recipes written by Maimonides have been found so far, making this fragment an important addition to this small but expanding corpus.^[4]

Mosseri I.115.1:

- 1 סכר אוקיה גרוי תחל במא חאר
- 2 ויעצר עליהמא מא לימנתין וישרב
- 3 פאתרא ללקי ובעד אלקי בסאעה
- 4 ילעק אוקיתין שראב לימוא וסכנגבין
- 5 ענצלי מפתרה בנאר לינה מחרכה
- 6 בקליב ריחאן תרנאני אקליב ענאע
- 7 אכצר ויחדר אכל אלטלע
- 8 ואלנבק ואללחז אלאכצר ואלכרוב ואלבאקלי אל
- 9 אכצר ואלגזר וכל טעם ידכלה כל
- 10 אוקלקאס ויתנקל באלזביב ואל
- 11 פסתק ואלתין ואלגוז כאצה וחסיר
- 12 השם ממך כל חולי ושלום הדרתה יריבה לעד
- 13 נצח סלה

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 Nešah. 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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