

(II, 6). This is the end of the story of the camphor. What happened to Abu 'l-Faraj Nissīm himself we do not yet know.

Ḥasan b. Bundār retained the proceeds of the camphor certainly because Nissīm carried with him to India merchandise belonging to other merchants (II, 8), possibly belonging also to Ḥasan himself. That he kept the family in the dark for several years might be explained by the assumption that he expected to hear from or about Nissīm at any time. However, since, after such a long absence, Nissīm's wife had to be regarded as 'a woman the whereabouts of whose husband are unknown,'⁸ Ḥasan's silence was religiously blameworthy. A veiled reproach on this score was certainly contained in the letters to him by his Egyptian peers and prompted him to act.

⁸ This long phrase translates one Hebrew word, *'agūnā*, used by Amram in connection with Ḥasan b. Bundār's answer to the Head of the Jews Mevōrākh (II, 6, lines 19–20).

II, 2 *Letter from Amram b. Joseph to Nahray b. Nissīm: Request to Intervene with Ḥasan b. Bundār*

{Alexandria, 1094–96/7}

TS 13 J 23, f. 10

This is the opening letter of the correspondence; Amram b. Joseph recapitulates what had been done thus far and asks Nahray b. Nissīm to intervene with Ḥasan b. Bundār through the merchants returning to Aden.

Lines 1–13. Excuses for the writer's long silence: he always inquired after Nahray's well-being, but refrained from writing so as not to obligate a response.¹

Lines 13–29. A letter of Abu 'l-Faraj Nissīm, containing the story of his horrible experiences, had been forwarded by Nahray ten months earlier. It caused the family great distress, which was exacerbated by the illness of both the writer's sister (Nissīm's wife) and his own wife, an orphan whom he had recently married after the death of his former wife, and who had borne him a sickly boy. Economic difficulties did the rest. "Man's road is not his [to choose]."²

Line 30–verso, line 13. In that letter Nissīm had mentioned that he had shipped to Abū 'Alī³ Ḥasan b. Bundār 1½ *manns* camphor with the request to sell them in Aden and to send the proceeds to Nissīm's family; the camphor had arrived in Aden, but Nissīm did not know whether Ḥasan had forwarded anything.

That letter had been written exactly two years before.

Recently a number of acquaintances, all mentioned by name, had arrived from Aden, some with letters and receipts⁴ from Adenese

¹ {This excuse for not writing more often is often found in letters. Cf. below, page 308.}

² Jer. 10:23. Continuous pain in the joints of the hands and the feet (II, 2, lines 18–19) rendered Nissīm's wife incapable of work (II, 6, line 20), and her treatment was expensive (II, 2, line 19). These and similar details in this and other letters of Amram to Nahray show that, despite Amram's minor status, the relations were intimate. These details are also intended to emphasize the impropriety of Ḥasan b. Bundār's behavior.

³ Persons were addressed with their honorific by-name. Amram rarely forgets to add Ḥasan's *kunya*, although he only mentions him. Also, in II, 6, lines 12–14, he enumerates nine titles of Mevōrākh b. Saadya, while speaking of him.

⁴ 'Receipt' translates *barā'a*, literally, an acquittal given to a person in court testifying that he had delivered a shipment entrusted to him. Without a *barā'a* proving that Ḥasan had received the camphor he could not be sued.

merchants. One receipt seemed to be connected with Nissīm's shipment, and Nahray is asked to inquire into this and similar matters.⁵

Verso, lines 14–24. Having learned that the merchants who had arrived from Aden were returning there, Amram wrote to them letters and now asks Nahray to meet 'all of them' and to give them his letters. They should explain to Ḥasan b. Bundār that his "taking temporary possession of the camphor's proceeds as security against possible claims"⁶ was a great sin.

⁵ These were the travelers mentioned:

- (a) Yaḥyā ('May he live!') Ibn Khalīla, from the ramified Tunisian Khalīla ('female friend') family, members of which were found in Egypt as from the beginning of the eleventh century (e.g., Moses b. Abraham Ibn Khalīla [in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:463, n. 144; Ben Kalīla] in Fustat 1017, TS 16.124). The most prominent representative of this clan was Mūsa (Moses) b. Abu 'l-Ḥayy, see II, 5, n. 1, below.
- (b) Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (or: Joseph) b. Abū Kathīr ('with numerous descendents') Ephraim (same meaning according to Genesis 41:52) Ibn Yahboy (margin, and verso, line 8, see II, 5, n. 3). Whether this family with a Persian name emigrated from Iran to Egypt directly, or, as happened with others, via Tunisia, is not yet known.
- (c) Of Joseph b. Isaac it had been rumored that he brought letters and receipts from Aden, but as Amram was told after the autumn holidays by another traveler—
- (d) Joseph b. [al-Fitūrī] (not yet identified)—nothing for him was among them. Nahray had already informed his cousin Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Allāl (b. Nahray; see Bodl. MS. Heb. c. 28 [Cat. 2876] fol. 34, line 23) about this before the holidays, but 'Allāl did not want to spoil Amram's holidays. {According to the Princeton University Geniza cite, Ibn al-Fitūrī appears in two other documents both of which have some connection with Alexandria: ENA 2805, f. 18A_v, line 2 (according to Gil, *Ishmael*, 4:176, this is ENA 2805, f. 18B); ENA NS 16, f. 19, line 7, Amram known as Ibn al-Fitūrī.}
- (e) Of Ibn Elḥanan (verso, line 12, later called Abū 'Imrān, that is, Moses b. Elḥanan, lines 34–35) it had been reported that he was on his way home, carrying important messages from Yemen, but, at the writing of the letter, he had not yet arrived. Since the name Elḥanan is as rare in the Geniza as in the Bible, it is highly likely that this man's father was identical with Elḥanan b. Isma'īl al-Andalusī, one of three Spanish brothers (TS 20.76, Goitein, *Letters*, 114–16) who was prominent in Egypt both as a merchant and as a communal figure (see Goitein, "Daniel b. Azarya," 63, n. 57). Our Ibn Elḥanan was head of a congregation in (New) Cairo; *anā rayyis kanīsati be-minnuy* (the last word is Hebrew), "I am the head of my synagogue by official appointment," TS 10 J 13, f. 11, lines 3 and 18, a letter, in which Abraham b. Nathan (Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:512, sec. 14) asks Nahray b. Nissīm to secure the excommunication of this man and his own appointment by the government. See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:614, n. 8. (The reference there is not to a *shohet* or ritual slaughterer, but to the communal leader, who is responsible for the proper conduct of the employees of the congregation). Abraham b. Nathan accuses Ibn Elḥanan of having squandered 4,000 dinars on a life of depravity, *shurūr*.

⁶ Arabic *'aql*, sequestration, is used twice (verso, lines 21, 23). {For use of this term, see below, 761, n. 18.}

Verso, lines 24–31. On his way to the East, Nissīm had met in Dahlak Sheikh Abu 'l-Ḥasan Salāma al-Ma'arrī, the brother of Sheikh Abu 'l-Ghanā'im.⁷ In the aforementioned letter (lines 13, 29 ff.) Nissīm had written that he had met that man again and asked him to carry with him the proceeds from the camphor from Aden, if they had not been sent before. Nahray is requested to find out whether this man had arrived in Fustat and whether he had brought any helpful message.

Verso, lines 31–38. In the concluding part, Nahray is reminded to enquire about another traveler⁸ who was reported to have some news on the matter.

One or two lines are missing at the end. {See the introduction to II, 3, for the dating.}

⁷ Ma'arra is a city in Northern Syria. Salāma ('Well-being')'s brother Abu 'l-Ghanā'im ('Spoils') must have been well known in Egypt. He lived in Damascus, but (Chinese) rhubarb belonging to him and forming the subject of a lawsuit in Fustat probably was brought there by or for him from Aden. Abu 'l-Barakāt b. Khulayf ('Dear Little Substitute') or Caleb (Num. 13:30 ff.) al-Ḥalabī (from Aleppo), while traveling to Fustat, was asked by Abu 'l-Ghanā'im to fetch the proceeds (TS 8 J 26, f. 6). {On *rāwand* (rhubarb), including *rāwand shāmī*, see 380, n. 9.}

⁸ Ibn Elḥanan; see n. 5(e), above.