

II, 49 to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel (see *ibid.* for this identification), India. Khalaf remarked there that Abū Saʿīd had arrived from India and made a delivery to him. Part of the pepper he had received he sold for 37 dinars per *bahār*, part for 36. (Abū) Barakāt al-Ḥalabī also delivered textiles to Khalaf. These and other data lead to the almost certain conclusion that like II, 49, also II, 42, was sent to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel. A fragment of Khalaf's letter (which would follow), which Joseph mentioned here (II, 42) in the margin, in all likelihood is II, 49. Ḥalfon was in the practice of shipping consignments from India with different merchants to Aden, to be delivered to a number of his associates there, including Joseph, Khalaf and Maḍmūn. As I shall attempt to demonstrate elsewhere, Ḥalfon's instructions concerning the disposition of goods mentioned in II, 42 and II, 49, are apparently to be found in VI, 27, whose most distinguished, anonymous recipient, was identified by Goitein as Maḍmūn. A similar letter was probably sent to Joseph at the same time, to which he replies in II, 42 and to which he alludes several times. No. IV, 1, also concerns some of these same transactions; see further II, 49.

After I had translated and annotated II, 42 and after I had subsequently concluded that it had been sent to Ḥalfon, as explained above, I then reviewed again various fragments written by Joseph and identified the upper portion of this letter in IV, 15. It contains on verso the names of the addressee Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel and the sender, Joseph b. Abraham. The match is indisputable. The translation of the almost complete text from the two combined fragments, IV, 15 and II, 42, will appear with the former piece in chap. 4.

I tentatively suggest that IV, 15–II, 42 was written in 1134, although any date is approximate and speculative. In November 29–December 8, 1133, Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel and Barakāt al-Ḥalabī were together in one place, and in my opinion VI, 26, which attests this, was written in (Broach) India. Ḥalfon evidently ignored Abū Zikrī Kohen's advice from January–February 1134 (V, 2), not to (stay in Aden or) return to India. I have already suggested that in 1135, Ḥalfon was probably in Yemen, finally on his way back from India to Egypt (see the introduction to II, 33–34). If so, IV, 15–II, 42, in which delivery of goods that he sent from India with Barakāt al-Ḥalabī is acknowledged in Aden, was likely to have been written in 1134.

II, 43 *Memorandum from Joseph b. Abraham to Abū Naṣr al-Ḥalabī*

Aden, ca. 1130–50

TS 12.355

{This is a memorandum written by Joseph b. Abraham of Aden and handed to a merchant, Abū Naṣr b. Mūsā (?) al-Ḥalabī (from Aleppo, Syria), who was traveling to Egypt, undoubtedly to Fustat, and was requested to fulfill the writer's instructions for sale of pepper (imported from India), purchases and other errands. The memorandum is essentially equivalent to a business letter, except that it lacks the introductory and closing blessing and personal remarks, etc., all of which were unnecessary, since it was personally delivered by the writer to the recipient. As in II, 33–34, 50 and IV, 3, the memorandum is called 'blessed,' a pious wish for success in the ventures detailed therein; see the introduction to II, 33–34. As in that memorandum, also here (lines 16–21) the writer's associate is requested to deliver a gift to religious dignitaries in Fustat. A more elaborate memorandum written by Joseph b. Abraham is found in II, 44, which also contains more generous gifts to the religious dignitaries of Egypt and to the holy sanctuary of Dammūh. See Goitein's discussion there on the commodities sold and ordered.

The manuscript is almost complete, but the paper has suffered much damage, and the reading is often uncertain. This is unfortunate, since, as with other papers, this document contains some information not identified elsewhere, such as descriptions of certain garments to be purchased.¹

Translation

[A. Heading]

(1) *In Your name, O Merciful.* (2) A Blessed Memorandum carried by Sheikh Abū Naṣr b. Mūsā (?) al-Ḥalabī.² (3) May God decree his (= your) safe arrival! For his servant Joseph b. Abraham.

¹ {All that remains in Goitein's papers for this document is his draft copy of the Judeo-Arabic text and the description 'Orders Entrusted to a Merchant Leaving Aden for Egypt.'

² Abū Naṣr is a very common name in the India Book. What follows his proper name is extremely difficult to decipher. In his draft copy, Goitein copied: 'b. Sitt al-Minna.' I do not remember having encountered this name ('Mistress of Graciousness') elsewhere in

[B. Instructions for sale of pepper and purchase of clothing and a basin]

(4) I sent with you (my lord) a bag of pepper, weighing one *bab[ār]* and forty pounds. (5) [... God] the Exalted [...] (6) Kindly sell this for whatever God, the Exalted, apportions,³ and buy [for me (your servant)] (7) an exquisite Anatolian (?)⁴ *thawb* (robe), fifty cubits long;⁵ a *ma'tiqa* (?)⁶ [...] (8) ...exquisite, with a fine silken or golden decoration⁷ and [...] (9) cubits (?), golden; a 'fulled' *Sūsī*⁸ robe, forty cubits (10) long; two exquisite checkered,⁹ 'fulled' *Sūsī fūtas*; two kerchiefs, (11) raw (not 'fulled'), exquisite. The two sides of each kerchief should be decorated with [...] marks.¹⁰ (12) By my instructions,¹¹ my lord, buy for me (your servant) only exquisite clothing, (13) the most exquisite you can buy!¹² Also purchase a washing basin¹³ (14) [...]. It should be an attractive basin, the diameter one and a half handbreadths¹⁴ or a little more. (15) [On] its upper [...], engraving¹⁵ or writing. It should be without an ewer. (16) [But] if it is easy for you to acquire an attractive ewer, buy it for me.¹⁶

the Geniza, and it is unusual that a matronymic is used rather than a patronymic, though there is some precedent for this. An examination of an ultraviolet photograph and of the original manuscript shows the uncertainty of this reading, and instead of it, one could read 'b. Mūsā (?) al-Ḥalab[i].' An Abū Naṣr al-Ḥalabī sends regards in VI, 40v, line 5, a letter written from Dahlak. Barakāt b. Mūsā al-Ḥalabī was a well-known India trader and, as we have seen, was mentioned in II, 42.

³ For this formula, see the discussion in pages 63–65.

⁴ Arabic *anaṭālī*. The reading, though not the vocalization, is almost certain.

⁵ As with most fabrics today, the width was standard (Goitein's note from II, 44v, line 22).

⁶ The letters *m'tqh* are clear, but the vocalization is uncertain, as is the garment, which the word denotes.

⁷ Arabic *'alam*. See page 427, n. 72.

⁸ Made in Sūsa, Tunisia, mentioned frequently (see 169, n. 8).

⁹ Arabic *muqaffaṣ*; see Hava, *Dictionary*, 620.

¹⁰ Arabic *a'lām*. See above for *'alam*.

¹¹ Arabic *wa'l-waṣiyya*, an exhortation.

¹² On Joseph b. Abraham's insistence on buying for him only the best, see the introduction to II, 44.

¹³ The reading of the original, *ṭast gh[ā]sil*, is uncertain. A washing basin is usually called *maghsal*; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:139.

¹⁴ Arabic *fusha* (perhaps: **fashuhu*) *shibr wa-nisf*. Joseph b. Abraham also orders from India a vessel whose mouth was one and a half handbreadths in III, 2, line 13.

¹⁵ Arabic *naqsh*. See Shy, "Terms," 218.

¹⁶ Or: for it (*lahu*). For the basin and its ewer, *ṭast wa-ibriq*, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:139; Baer, "Ma'din," 989.

[C. Gifts for Egyptian religious dignitaries]

Also please (17) deliver in my (his servant's) name to my lord Sheikh //Rabbi// Isaac and Rabbi Ḥalfon sons of (?) (18) the scholar (?), the cantors of the synagogue,¹⁷ five Egyptian *mithqāls*.¹⁸ (19) Greet them in my name and apologize for me (your servant) to them concerning the (small) (20) gifts of honor.¹⁹ I had wanted to write to them a letter in the days of (21) Sukkot²⁰ [...] to them.

[D. Final orders]

Buy for me (his servant) (22) with the balance whatever your su[cce]ssful opinion²¹ decides [...] (23) Maghrebi [kohl] and raw (?)²² kohl²³ ... the eye [...] (24) gold and silver embroidery²⁴ and whatever merchandise you decide to purchase, which is easy to acquire. If you (my lord) (25) are able to arrive here this year, fine. If not, please [send these purchases] [Margin] with one of our coreligionists who are traveling [here...] My lord [...] through Sheikh Abū Sa'id b. Banāyā²⁵ merchandise [Verso] (1) [...] a pair

¹⁷ Hebrew *shelūḥē ṣibbūr shellakkeneset*. Perhaps to be identified with the brothers, both cantors, Isaac and Ḥalfon, sons of Ghālīb the cantor mentioned in TS 8.111 (see Friedman, "Marital Age," 172; this Ḥalfon the cantor might be Abū Sa'id the cantor mentioned in II, 47, line 8), even though I am not aware that Ghālīb bore the title *ḥavēr*, 'Fellow (of the Yeshiva)'. A gift of three dinars to 'the Fellow' is given in II, 44, line 29. (The reading in the original of the words expressing 'sons of the Fellow' is somewhat doubtful, however. Were we to assume that brothers are not involved here, we could identify Ḥalfon as Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh the court scribe in Fustat, 1100–38. Many letters mention gifts sent to him: II, 33b, lines 8–9, 34c, lines 1–2, where he is called cantor; II, 44, line 28; II, 47, line 7. Letters of thanks from him are found in II, 11a and II, 53. An Isaac the cantor was Isaac ha-Levi *ha-hazzān* b. Abraham: DK 165.)

¹⁸ Full weight dinars.

¹⁹ Arabic *makārim*. For the singular *makrūma*, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:608, n. 32. Alternatively, translate: acts of deference.

²⁰ The (intermediary) days of the Feast of Tabernacles. For writing letters at the time of the holidays, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:17. A request that the recipient of a letter apologize to the cantors for the letters sent them is found in II, 47v, line 4.

²¹ Arabic *ra'yuhu al-[muwaffā]q*. Your opinion, whose correctness is a gift from God. The same expression appears in IV, 79, line 5. But perhaps read and restore *al-[yaqī]n*, 'correct,' 'certain.' For other *ra'y* expressions, see 592, n. 36; 695, n. 8.

²² Arabic *musabbag*, perhaps 'unfinished.' The translation is uncertain and was suggested by Amir Ashur.

²³ For kohl (*kuhl*) in the Geniza papers, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 6:61 (index).

²⁴ Arabic *qashab*. See page 169, n. 7.

²⁵ For the Banāyā family see 372, n. 6, where the son of Nissim b. Banāyā is mentioned.

of mats of attractive workmanship, as much as possible [...] which (2) [...] for the house... (3) nine cubits, in breadth nine cu[bits...] (4) one of them nine cubits, in breadth four and a half cubits [...] (5) [If] you (my lord) will have had something made already, fine. And if not, my lord, have both made for me short, the pair.²⁶

And tell Sheikh Abū [...] not (?) (7) to have something else made. This is through your kindness—may I [never] lack for it! Please add, (8) my lord and master,²⁷ an exquisite [...] together with the aforementioned (9) that is debited to me, your servant. *And Peace.*}

²⁶ Arabic *al-qaṣīrayn al-zawj*. If Abū Naṣr were unable to purchase mats to fit the size of the rooms in the house, he should get two small ones that would go in any room.

²⁷ Arabic *mālik*; cf. 362, n. 13.}

II, 44 *Memorandum from Joseph b. Abraham to Ishāq Nafūsī*

Aden, 1130's

Westminster Misc. 9

Ed. Goitein, *Yemenites*, 106–19, on which the following is based.

The preceding documents have acquainted us with the grandees of Yemen in the commercial and public contexts. The next section—an order sent to the Egyptian capital for a variety of miscellaneous items—brings us right into their homes, showing us the everyday life of a wealthy Adenese family in the twelfth century. The significance of this list becomes clear if one remembers that only some of the household goods used by such families were manufactured in Egypt. Delicate tableware of thin porcelain was imported from China (and sent from Aden as a gift to Maṣlāḥ Gaon, the Head of Egyptian Jewry);¹ India supplied the copperware (most utensils used at the time, whether in the kitchen, the dining-room or the bathroom, were made of copper). Textiles produced from cotton, such as bedding and bed-covers, were also imported from India as well as costly fabrics, such as *lālas* (red silk; this was also presented to Egyptian notables as a token of respect).² To the extent that furniture was used in those times, it was another import from India (this is still the case today) because good wood, not common in Egypt, was abundant in India. Both India and North Africa 'exported' maid-servants for Egyptian matrons. In addition, hides, leather goods, ivory, ivory goods and gold were brought from East Africa. However, since the travelers who left us their documents in the Geniza were not involved in trade with Africa, we hear little of those matters. Yemen itself also supplied a variety of commodities; besides comestibles, such as flour, fowl and livestock and also exported textiles, in particular, *būrdas*, that is, striped coats, which were used as outer clothing and nightgowns.

An important feature of the orders in this document is that the writer repeats, again and again, that he is interested exclusively in choice, exquisite (*rafi'*) wares; indeed, a letter written by the same individual, preserved in the Geniza, confirms receipt of some of the clothing and expresses appreciation of its quality. While the acquaintance, who dealt with the purchases had apologized for the high prices, the person who

¹ See above, II, 34.

² {See 307, n. 10.}