

During Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) a *qintir* (?)<sup>19</sup> arrived from the Land of the Zanj, which had in it new slaves.<sup>20</sup> I tried to purchase a servant<sup>21</sup> for you, my lord, but was not successful...}]

<sup>19</sup> [Obviously *qintir/qantir* is some kind of vessel, but I have not found the word in any dictionary. *Qanṭara* is a bridge. The reading *qntyr* is certain, despite a correction in the letter *ṭ* (possibly from *b*, which calls to mind *qunbār*, a large merchant vessel, for which see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:306). Note that *qaṭira* is a small vessel found in the Red Sea; see Kindermann, *Schiff*, 82–83 (Prof. Werner Diem kindly called this to my attention).

<sup>20</sup> Arabic *raqiq*. Hava, *Dictionary*, 264: 'slave newly caught.' According to Wehr, *Dictionary*, 352, the word is both singular and collective. Ibn al-Mujawir (*Al-Mustabṣir*, 141) noted the customs, two dinars, paid in Aden for *raqiq*.

<sup>21</sup> Arabic *wasif* means a slave engaged for household work. See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:131–32, where he comments on the infrequent mention in the Geniza papers of male menials.}

II, 49 Letter from Khalaf b. Isaac to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel

Aden {ca. 1134}

TS AS 148, f. 9

Fragment of a large letter sent to India, mostly about textiles and pepper, and reporting that because of peace in Egypt many merchants arrived from there.

{This is a tattered and effaced fragment of a letter written in Khalaf's typical handwriting. The beginning of the letter and its left side are missing. Because of the document's poor state of preservation, not one sentence is intact. There are fragmentary data on such subjects as the sale of merchandise imported from India, including some prices; the sinking of a ship at the entrance to the city; the failure of Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan to ship anything (to Egypt, so it seems) that year; the arrival of Jewish merchants (from Egypt), with family names pointing to Syria, Palestine and the Maghreb, bearing good news about relations with the government;<sup>1</sup> the arrival of two ships from India, one small and one large; the writer's request that the recipient leave India and return to Aden (Margin: "Buy whatever God grants you success in and set out this year. Do not delay again; livelihood is apportioned [by God]");<sup>2</sup> the writer's illness and other business and sundry affairs. From the fragmentary greetings extended to friends and associates in Broach, it is reasonable to conclude that the addressee was then residing in that northwestern Indian port city.

Goitein identified the recipient as Abraham b. Yijū, though he may have later changed his mind on the identification.<sup>3</sup> In any event, we can now establish with certainty that the addressee was someone else, namely, Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel. Incontrovertible evidence of this can be adduced from IV, 1, written in Khalaf's typical hand and entitled: "Account of my lord, Sheikh Abū Sa'īd Ḥalfon b. Nethanel." As several lines in II, 49 verify, IV, 1, is unmistakably the account, a copy of which accompanied that letter, referred to in it repeatedly. The match is unequivocal and makes it possible to restore in part many of the truncated passages in the letter.

<sup>1</sup> {See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:50, 519, n. 26, where he cites this passage.

<sup>2</sup> Margin, line 3, *fa'-l-rizq maqsūm*. See Bosworth and McAuliffe, "Rizq." See the brief discussion below.

<sup>3</sup> Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:50, 519, n. 26. Goitein's working papers for this book point to his uncertainty concerning the identification, which does not appear in the Summary for the New List of texts. I do not know whether his final conclusion (or indecision) is to be found in these papers or in the fifth volume of *Med. Soc.*, which was published posthumously.

The account lists and the letter describes Ḥalfon's credits for sale of goods he had shipped from India to Aden and his debits for expenses incurred and purchases made for him there. Accompanying accounts are mentioned in many letters in this book (e.g., II, 28, lines 14–15 and II, 31, line 14), but I do not recall encountering any other examples, where such a pair has been identified.

After having matched II, 49 with IV, 1, I found additional documents associated with Ḥalfon's same consignments. No. IV, 15–II, 42 (see there) is a letter concerning these affairs by Khalaf's cousin Joseph b. Abraham. Joseph wrote there that Khalaf's letter would follow with details of his actions with Ḥalfon's sales and purchases. A fragment of that letter is in II, 49, and IV, 1 is the accompanying account. Furthermore, as already noted above (see II, 42), Ḥalfon's letter (or rather a partial draft of it) to Maḍmūn concerning these same matters is found in VI, 27. In it he mentions goods to be delivered to Khalaf and a letter and power of attorney to him. To these, again, II, 49 and IV, 1 are Khalaf's response. I am hopeful that additional papers related to these matters will yet emerge and will further complement the information made available by these five items. See II, 42 and the introduction to chap. 4, for the date of this letter.

Khalaf's aforementioned remark that man's earnings are predetermined warrants a further comment. This notion appears to counter the underpinnings of such a highly mercantile society, in which men left their homes and abandoned their families in the Maghreb and Egypt and set out on long, perilous journeys to the Far East, in order to accumulate wealth. Beliefs that God (or fate) determined a man's livelihood are common in Judaism and Islam. In a letter Ḥalfon received from his brother Ezekiel the latter wrote: "No one can exceed his fixed livelihood" (IV, 58, top, lines 18–19).<sup>4</sup> Various undertakings by the Geniza people were repeatedly accompanied by their expressions of reliance on God.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the call by Khalaf, a learned man and veteran international merchant, to Ḥalfon, an even more illustrious scholar and seasoned trader, to cease and desist from certain commercial activity because of determinism is, I believe, rather extraordinary. In his

<sup>4</sup> Arabic *wa-laysa yaqdur aḥad yata'adda rizqahu*; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:331. This is translated in Gil and Fleischer, *Yehuda ha-Levi*, 407: "One can not forgo his profit."

<sup>5</sup> See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:323 ff. Khalaf too often refers to sale or purchase of merchandise for a price, *bi-mā qasam allāh*, 'whatever God apportions.' See the discussion of this phrase above, pages 63–65. Cf. also DK 1, line 8, *al-rizq fa-laysa hūwa shay bil-hirz*, 'livelihood is not something acquired by endeavor' (ed. Goitein, "Kaufmann Collection," 194–95; cf. id., *Med. Soc.*, 1:201 [there: "success in business does not depend only on the effort made"], 450, n. 49).

letter to Maḍmūn, Ḥalfon, for his part, attributed his delay in India, occasioned by bad market conditions there, to divine decree (VI, 26, lines 7 ff.): "For a number of reasons, it happened that I was detained this year and was unable to leave [. . .]. Since the Creator has so decreed, *this too is for good*." Joseph, in his letter (IV, 15–II, 42, lines. 21–23) comments on Ḥalfon's delay in a similar vein: "Your being detained distressed me, your servant. But you, my lord, were unable to do anything about it. May God give you success with the most choice of things and make the outcome good for you!" Their approach is more typical.}