

Musallam⁶ has for me arrives. Do not neglect (24) the wheat, for it is one of the most essential things.⁷ And write to [Margin] (1) Musallam (2) to deposit for you in (3) Akhmīm two *irdabbs* of wheat or (4) three, to serve you as provisions for the journey, (5) God willing.⁸

(Akhmīm was on the Nile in Upper Egypt, and Maḥrūz would pass there on his way East. The two or three *irdabbs* of wheat would probably suffice for several months, while he traveled to India.)⁹

D. Matters concerning two claims. One involved 11½ dinars, which Makhlūf Ibn 'Ayn Shirra¹⁰ admitted owing Maḥrūz's grandfather Isaac (margin, line 5-top of page, line 4). Abū Zikrī also urged the mother of Abū Iṣḥāq, son of the *Reliable* Claimant, not to take any action against Abū Naṣr (also mentioned in line 6 as being in Alexandria).¹¹

E. Greetings and a special, urgent request, of an undisclosed nature,¹² of 'our lord,' Head of Egyptian Jewry (top of page, line 5-verso, line 3).}

⁶ He is also mentioned below, margin, line 1. Undoubtedly this is Musallam al-Ka'kī; see II, 24, line 27 and 348, n. 74.

⁷ This sentence is quoted and discussed by Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:235, 435, n. 68.

⁸ The consumption of wheat, its measures and prices are discussed in detail by Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:235-44 (for the *irdabb* see above, 465, n. 15). Twelve *irdabbs* of wheat were yearly provisions for an average middle-class family. Maḥrūz writes Abū Zikrī about wheat in V, 20, line 7.

⁹ The Jewish merchants staying in certain areas of India imported wheat for their own consumption, since it was not considered a necessity of life for the natives there. See page 602, n. 45.

¹⁰ On Makhlūf b. Musā, called Ibn 'Ayn Sarra (here spelled *Shirra*, 'mischief'), see 338-39 and n. 4.

¹¹ For Abū Iṣḥāq Abraham, see II, 32, line 13. Abū Naṣr is probably the prominent Alexandrian India trader Abū Naṣr b. Elisha; see II, 59. Makhlūf complains about Abū Naṣr b. Elisha's dishonesty in business in VI, 23 (see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:247, 575, n. 143).

¹² Arabic *al-hāja alladhī kātabak fī amrihā*, can be translated, 'the need about which he wrote you for instructions' (or: 'concerning which he wrote you'). This could be connected to a passage in a letter by Abū Zikrī to someone else (V, 6, margin, lines 7-9): "If you travel up (to Fustat) perhaps you can take from the *Rayyis* the responsum concerning the house."}

II, 59 *Letter from Maḥrūz to Abū Zikrī Kohen with Urgent Warning*

Fustat {March 3, 1135}

ENA 4194, f. 3

Ed. Gil, *Ishmael*, 4:602-5, no. 801.¹

An urgent warning sent by Maḥrūz, Fustat, to Abū Zikrī, Alexandria, advising him to take all his merchandise out of a warehouse there. A business partner of Abū Zikrī in Fustat was dying, and because of the lawlessness prevailing at that time in Egypt, Abū Zikrī's goods would be confiscated together with those of the dead man (before 1129, it seems).

{The dying man, Abū Sa'īd, was related to Abū Zikrī's partner the well-known Alexandrian India trader Abū Naṣr b. Elisha.² Evidently, Abū Sa'īd did not have any heirs of the first degree, and the officials of the *diwān al-mawārith* (line 5: *aṣḥāb mawārith!*),³ the Office of Estates, which took advantage of such situations, were about to confiscate all of his belongings held by Abū Naṣr.⁴ Not taking any chances, the officials would sequester Abū Naṣr's assets and, moreover, those of Abū Zikrī, since the partners' holdings were stored together. The Head of the Yeshiva, certainly Maṣliḥ ha-Kohen, who in fact was apparently Abū Zikrī's cousin, personally conveyed the warning to Maḥrūz and instructed him to send immediately an urgent message to his brother-in-law Abū Zikrī. For this purpose Maḥrūz

¹ {Gil did not identify the parties and mistakenly described the document as written in Alexandria, ca. 1062; cf. id., "Institutions," 156.

² Here in line 4. His father's name, Elisha, is only partially preserved and was not deciphered by Gil. Abū Naṣr b. Elisha is mentioned in III, 15, line 32, III, 29, lines 8-9, V, 8, lines 7-8, VI, 23, lines 13 ff., VI, 43v, line 12 (there his son, called Abu 'l-Majd b. Abū Naṣr b. Lishā'; see Zeldes and Frenkel, "The Sicilian Trade," 127, n. 12, where 'Elisha' is to be corrected). He was a prominent man, for the famous Spanish Hebrew poet Judah ha-Levi, when staying in Alexandria in the fall of 1140, dedicated to him a poem, in which he consoled him upon the death of a slave girl and apologized for being unable, owing to a sore eye, to visit him and express his sympathy in person (Brody, *Diwān*, 40-41; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:143; Gil and Fleischer, *Yehuda ha-Levi*, 210, n. 143—where the reference to Goitein, "Letter to Judah ha-Levi," 344 is misprinted—and on condolences for the death of a slave girl, Friedman, *Polygyny*, 352). There were a number of India traders named Abū Naṣr. In some cases where Abū Naṣr is named without his father's name, Abū Naṣr b. Elisha is probably intended. See, e.g., II, 56, line 29, the note to II, 58, sec. D (486, n. 11), III, 47, line 14 and verso, line 3.

³ For the *th* > *f* shift (cf., e.g., *thūm* > *fūm*), see Blau, *Grammar*, 285.

⁴ On the activities of the Office of Estates and its effect on the Jewish community, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:395 ff., 613; 3:277 ff.; Rabie, *The Financial System*, 127-32; Friedman, "Responsa of Abraham Maimuni," 272, and the literature cited in these studies.}

hired a private courier (*najjāb*) to Alexandria by camel. In his letter, Maḥrūz tells Abū Zikrī to disregard costs and extricate his wares without delay. The warning is repeated in a postscript written after Musallam (see the previous document) informed the writer that the courier would not set out that night.

The Head of the Yeshiva's warning is not related to Abū Zikrī's urgent request to him in II, 58, since that letter was written several years after II, 59. No. II, 59 is dated Sunday, 15 Jumādā. Since Maḥrūz urges Abū Zikrī to return to Fustat to be with his family before the approaching holiday, the date can be fixed with a fair degree of certainty as March 2, 1135, when 15 Jumādā I came four weeks before Passover. (I do not know why Goitein assumed the letter had been written before 1129.) As already noted, Maḥrūz was not accustomed to writing, and others penned for him most of his letters, which have been preserved, except for this one and V, 20. Because of the urgency of this letter, he evidently wrote it himself. His untrained hand, poor style and substandard language, replete with vulgar forms and other orthographic irregularities, prove the wisdom of his normal practice.}

II, 60 *Bill of Sale for Purchase of House by Maḥrūz*

Fustat, 1131/2

TS NS 184, fs. 52, 55 and 56

Maḥrūz acquires (part of) a house in Fustat.

{Maḥrūz purchased the property from Abu 'l-Faraj Yeshū'ā ha-Levi b. Abraham, who was acting on behalf of his mother Lūlu'a. This is the second half of a draft of the bill of sale, written in the court notebook in the hand of the court scribe, Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh. The previous page, containing the first half of the deed, has not been identified yet. The three fragments are contiguous. Jacob, Maḥrūz's late father, is referred to as the distinguished *sar*, notable, probably indicating some governmental connection which he had, and *ḥāsīd*, pietist. The previous documents have depicted Maḥrūz's business activities in Fustat, where for a certain period his family lived together with that of his brother-in-law Abū Zikrī Kohen. Maḥrūz presumably purchased the house as a domicile rather than for investment purposes only.}