

II, 9 Letter from Khīyār b. Jacob to Nethanel b. Japheth re Abu 'l-Faraj Nissīm

{Alexandria, late eleventh century}

Mosseri II, 160 (L 161)

In a postscript to a letter addressed to his business friend Nethanel b. Japheth,¹ called here by his Arabic name Abu 'l-Mufaḍḍal [Hiba]t Allah b. Ḥusayn, Khīyār b. Jacob² writes:

My lord, kindly let me know what you have heard from Faraj ('Relief') about Sheikh Abu 'l-Faraj Nissīm; he (Faraj) is coming back after having been with him {alt. tr.:... from Faraj, //(that is) about Sheikh Abu 'l-Faraj Nissīm// he is coming back from him}³ (Nissīm) and others in India. Perhaps from him or others arriving [you might hear].⁴ Inform me about this in your letter.⁵ *And peace.*

Khīyār's quest clearly was general, and not confined to Amram b. Joseph and his camphor. No. II, 8 has shown that besides him there were others troubled by Abu 'l-Faraj Nissīm's disappearance in India.

¹ See about him 297, n. 1.

² Khīyār was Nethanel's regular correspondent in Alexandria; see II, 6.

³ Faraj was probably a freedman, cf. Goitein, *Letters*, 82–84. For a man born free with this name I have only one example: Saadya b. Isaac, known as Faraj b. Abu 'Amr, a poor man, who wished to marry an equally poor orphan, for which he needed help—hardly an India traveler. {For the alternative translation, note that the honorific Abu 'l-X is often shortened to X, e.g., Abu 'l-Surūr is called Surūr in II, 14, line 36; II, 24, line 11; II26v, line 8; III, 41, lines 23, 32.}

⁴ Here the manuscript is torn and about three words are missing. I guess: *la'alla minhu [aw min wāṣīlīn] ghayrīh.*

⁵ Unlike Amram (see II, 6, n. 8, above), Khīyār expected to receive letters from Nethanel regularly (possibly with the weekly Cairo-Alexandria mail service; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:287).

II, 10 Memorandum to Traveler Carrying Indian Goods to Isaac b. Bundār

India, ca. 1110

TS 8.27

A piece of cloth,¹ truncated on top, bottom, and the left side. The ends of the lines are lost (approximately three words in each line), but the upper section, as the first partially visible line shows, contained only the salutation with the usual good wishes, and the last line, of which only the tops of a few letters are recognizable, introduces a topic different from the list of goods, which forms the object of this memorandum.² The script is exceptionally handsome and regular. Verso contains the address, first Arabic in Hebrew letters (only one line preserved), then in Arabic letters. Here, of course, the *beginnings* of the lines are lost.

I prefer to comment on this interesting piece after its translation.

Translation

(1) [...] {add: after your departure.}³ May God bring us together soon in well-being and health! [...] (2) Take notice—may God keep you alive!—that I sent with you nine items, namely [lac, ...] (3) textiles,⁴ *fūtas*, and a bale of spikenard.⁵ Of the lac, one and a half bales are for 'Alī [and the ...] (4) for Fahd.⁶ Of the textiles, one bale for Yaḥyā, and one for Ibrahīm and Ishāq⁷ [... In the bale of] (5) *fūtas* are nine *thawbs* (robes) for Fahd and 'Alī. One fourth of this is for Fahd. Of the textiles [... so-and-so

¹ {Paper was scarce in India, and sometimes cloth was used there for writing material. See above, page 61.

² Since nothing is legible from this line, I am not sure on what basis Goitein decided that it dealt with another topic.

³ Arabic *ba'da khurūjika* (not copied by Goitein). For *khurūj* (*kharaj*) for leaving India and setting out for the homeward journey to the West, see page 372, n. 4.

⁴ Arabic *bazz*.

⁵ Arabic *sunbul*.

⁶ The name Fahd (cheetah, 'hunting leopard') was not unknown among Jews. The fledgling cantor in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:220, n. 3 (1040), was called thus (see Goitein, *Education*, 140–42), and so was a *wakāl tujār* in 1103 (id., *Med. Soc.*, 1:446, n. 14) and an emigrant from the Delta town Ṣahrajt to Byzantium in 1137 (id., Goitein, "Letter from Seleucia," 301). Several other examples could be provided. Our Fahd here (see also lines 5 and 7) is probably identical with the one found in India in VII, 56v, lines 2–4, who is described there in less than laudatory terms.

⁷ Abraham and Isaac, the brothers of Ḥasan b. Bundār; see line 7 and the address on verso.