

in the letter translated below, which is reproduced here in its entirety with the exception of the usual introductory and concluding phrases. The yarn probably was of cotton grown in Palestine.

Mosseri Collection L 39b, as from line 5.

In my previous letter I have informed you about the arrival of the yarn. I was not remiss with regard to it, but, immediately after its arrival, I delivered it to a trustworthy Jewish craftsman. Earlier, I showed it to various craftsmen, who told me that it would make a thousand robes of the bazaar type and slightly more of the home-made kind. Among the rolls of yarn, there were four spoiled ones which were coarse and deformed. I also gave him (to the weaver) two robes of the bazaar type, in accordance with your instructions.<sup>1</sup>

After each roll<sup>2</sup> is finished, the craftsman is to receive 3 quarter dinars. The embroidering will require 1/6 dinar and 1/2 qirāt, and the bleaching and pounding, 5 qirāts, the total (for a roll) being 1 1/8 Nizāriyya dinars. The material is with the craftsman up to the present time. He will present it this week. I shall inform you how much of the yarn went into the weaving and how much remained.

The bleaching will not be completed until after Passover. For it is now winter, and God does not make bleaching possible in winter time, when it would not be as brilliant as during the summer. Had you sent the yarn a month before the (autumn) holidays, the whole work would have been easily completed in a short time.

## 21 PALESTINE'S IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

### Middle of Eleventh Century

As in the previous letter we read here about yarn sent from Jerusalem, but this time processed in the city itself. In addition, mention is made of two other main products of the country in

<sup>1</sup> The clothes were given either as a model or as a present.

<sup>2</sup> Text: *maslak*, found in this sense also in other Geniza texts, e.g., TS 13 J 22, f. 30, l. 20-22; 10 J 7, f. 1, l. 21.

those days: oil and apples (see *Med. Soc.*, I, 121). Money in the form of donations and the main fabrics of the period: silk (see no. 19, above), flax, and Ṭabaristan brocade, reexported to Egypt (see below) were the main imports. A Christian moneylender is mentioned. In other Geniza letters from Jerusalem the Jews borrow from Muslims.

The sender, being in the Holy City and occupying himself with the pious work of support for its main religious institution, here uses the Hebrew form of his name. Details about him are given in the next selection. The clerk who copied the letter had a clear handwriting, but made many mistakes. The introductory phrases are omitted in our translation.

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter Collection,  
TS Misc. Box 28, f. 199.

I am writing to you . . . from Jerusalem on the 5th of Adar II (mostly February) . . . You instructed me to pay 1 dinar to our lord, the Head (of the yeshiva), one-half to our lord, the president of the court, and one-quarter to the Third.<sup>1</sup> I have done as you advised me, paying a total of 1 3/4 dinars. I also took a receipt for 15 dinars of full value from the Fourth, and also one for a dinar from the cantor Mūsā (Moses).<sup>2</sup> The receipts are enclosed, please pass them on to the donors.

I have already informed you that I bought you olive oil in two containers and sent them with Ibn al-Tuffāḥī<sup>3</sup> to Jaffa. I also bought the yarn and had it processed according to your instructions.

I have also written to you that, at the time of my travel from Ramle to Jerusalem, only four bags of the flax held in partnership<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The yeshiva, or Jewish high council, of Jerusalem, was composed of seven members, the Gaon, or president, the chief judge of the high court, and five others, styled the Third, the Fourth, etc. Here the Fourth acted as cashier for the yeshiva. The reference is probably to Abraham, the son of the Gaon Solomon b. Judah (d. 1051), who was "Fourth" and in charge of the financial affairs of the yeshiva.

<sup>2</sup> The donor certainly had asked that prayers for the soul of a deceased relative should be said in Jerusalem. This explains why a cantor received the same special gift as did the head of the yeshiva.

<sup>3</sup> Wholesale trader in apples. From Jaffa the oil would be transported to Egypt by boat.

<sup>4</sup> Ar. *al-bāba*, "of that sort," as opposed to *al-ḥaṣṣa*.

had remained unsold, and of the flax belonging to you personally—five bags. I have asked M. Abu 'l-Faraj, son of Salmān's<sup>5</sup> sister, to take care of this in my place if he happens to find a customer for this. He asked me to request you to kindly go to 'Abdallāh al-Malaṭī<sup>6</sup> and ask him whether two bags with Ṭabarī cloth<sup>7</sup> which he had sent him have arrived safely. Take a letter from him and enclose it with your answer to me . . .

Give my regards to M. Abū Maṣūr b. Shu'ayb<sup>8</sup> . . . and inform him that Ibn Zurjiz (George) says: "He is making fun of me. He has not paid me a thing." Yes, this is what he said: "Ibn Shu'ayb has not paid me a thing." Please let me know which loan you have accepted from him.

Give my regards to Abū Sa'ūd<sup>9</sup> b. Levi . . . and tell him that I am grateful to him.

*May your well-being wax forever.*

(Address:)

To my master and lord, Abū Jacob (!) Joseph, son of Nahum, (*may his*) *s(oul)* *r(est in peace)*.

From Jacob, son of Samuel al-Andalusī, (*may his*) *s(oul)* *r(est in peace)*.

To Miṣr, if God wills.

<sup>5</sup> A representative of merchants in Ramle; so called because he had apprenticed with his uncle Salmān.

<sup>6</sup> Misspelled 'L'imṭy. From Malatia in Asia Minor.

<sup>7</sup> Presumably genuine Ṭabari(stān) fabric, imported from Iran and re-exported to Egypt.

<sup>8</sup> Mentioned twice in TS 8 J 38, f. 7, l. 1, and *verso*, l. 7, ed. E. Ashtor, *Braslavi Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 482. The letter is in the hand of Israel b. Nathan, the same man who wrote the letter from Jerusalem to our Jacob b. Samuel. See next selection, n. 3.

<sup>9</sup> A rare name in those days with both Muslims and Jews.

## 22 A FAMILY PARTNERSHIP AT WORK

*A Letter from Palermo, Sicily*

Middle of Eleventh Century

Two Spanish merchants, brothers-in-law, had moved eastward during the early years of the turbulent eleventh century, one settling in the Muslim Middle West (Sicily-Tunisia) and one in Egypt. In a very detailed letter<sup>1</sup> Isma'īl, the father of the writer of our letter, Ya'qūb b. Isma'īl (Jacob b. Samuel), addresses his sister's son, Yūsha' (Joshua) b. Nathan, but refers all the time to the transactions of the "old man," his brother-in-law, who at that moment must have been traveling. Among many other things he mentions that he had a fine son who was entirely to the taste of the addressee and his father, and if the latter agreed, he would send the boy to serve as an apprentice in their firm. Whether this referred to the writer of our letter or to one of his two brothers (see below) cannot be made out.

By the time of our letter, in which Ya'qūb addresses his cousin Yūsha', both old men were dead. Here, Ya'qūb suggests that his own son and that of the addressee should start a partnership and thus continue the tradition of their grandfathers.

Besides the letter translated below we have five other complete and some fragmentary letters by Ya'qūb. One, TS 16.7, was written five days after this one and is almost identical with it. Two others were addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm (dated documents as from 1045), namely, one from Tyre, Lebanon, with an enclosure to our Yūsha', and one from Sicily, referring to the death of Maṣliāh, the Jewish judge of Palermo (see below).<sup>2</sup> In his letter from Tyre Ya'qūb refers to his sojourn in Egypt, and we also have a lovely little letter to him from a relative reporting that Ya'qūb's family in Jerusalem, consisting of his mother, his "baby" (*iṣṭla*), that is, young wife, and babies, were all well and happy. Thus it appears that the

<sup>1</sup> TS 20.127. In *Med. Soc.*, 1, 376, sec. 28, this letter is (tentatively) misdated. It was probably written around 1030 and in Sicily. For the business cooperation expressed in it see *Med. Soc.*, 1, 178, n. 41.

<sup>2</sup> TS 8 J 41, f. 2, *Nahray* 191; Bodl. MS Heb. c28 (Cat. 2876), f. 61, *Nahray* 190.