

E. CONCLUSION

As to R. Ḥalfōn, I talked to R. Mardūk and to R. Yeshū'ā, the member of the academy,¹⁸ about this. We shall take up that matter with him and hope he will return what is due to you.

Whatever additional news arrive—I hope they will be good—I shall let you know. The boat of Mufaḍḍal (“Preferred”) has arrived in al-Mahdiyya;¹⁹ thus, all boats have arrived there safely, thank God.²⁰ *And peace.*

F. P.S.

Best regards to you and to R. Abraham,²¹ R. Abū Naṣr, my masters your brothers-in-law, may God keep them, to all under your care and those who inquire about me. *And peace in plenty.*

R. Abū 'Alī Ḥasan, the physician from Barqa, sends you kindest regards. He intended to travel to your place, for he is on his way to Jerusalem, may God rebuild it, and he insists on continuing the journey. When you write to me, mention him with greetings. He is a friend of yours and speaks of you all the time.²²

(Address:)

(To) my master and elder R. Nahray, son of R. Nissīm, (*may his m(emory) be (blessed).*)

May God prolong his life and always give him honor and strength.

¹⁸ Mardūk b. Mūsā (Mordechai b. Moses) was an intimate friend of Nahray's living in Alexandria (see no. 5, n. 15, above). Yeshū'ā (b. Joseph), the member of the academy, was Jewish judge and communal leader in the city. He was a Kohen, to mention which was absolutely *de rigueur*, but these words were scribbled in a narrow margin and the writer was stingy with his space.

¹⁹ Mufaḍḍal of Haifa, Israel, was the proprietor of both a ship and a barge which commuted between Tyre, Lebanon, Alexandria, and al-Mahdiyya. The name was common among Jews and Muslims.

²⁰ This refers, of course, to the spring convoys. The fall convoys would sail in August and early September.

²¹ R. Abraham, the Son of the Scholar. Many persons in Nahray's correspondence are called Abū Naṣr.

²² The physician from Barqa, Libya, intended to travel to Cairo and from there to Jerusalem overland. Because of the anarchy prevailing in Egypt he would now wait in Alexandria for a boat going to Ascalon or Jaffa, Israel.

(From) his grateful Yeshū'ā, son of Isma'īl, (*may he r(est in) E(den).*)

Peace in plenty!

35 THE COMMUNAL LEADER

Ca. 1085

This short note shows us Nahray at the head of the two Rabbanite congregations of Fustat during a difficult period. The court physician and official head (*Rayyis*) of the Jewish community was temporarily in disgrace, and his adversary David, son of the late Daniel b. Azarya, who derived his origin from the kingly house of David and had been head of the Jerusalem Yeshiva, had usurped authority over the Jews of the Fatimid empire. David claimed to have obtained a ruling from the government that the name of the Rayyis should be omitted from the public prayer and excommunicated any synagogue dignitary who did not comply. This is the background of our note, which was written by the highest religious authority of the Jewish community of Ēgypt, who calls himself here by name, but is referred to in the Geniza throughout merely by his title “the Master” (*Rāv*).¹

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter
Collection, TS 12.657.

Judah ha-Kohen b. Joseph ha-Kohen²

¹ About the meaning of this title in those days see *Med. Soc.*, II, 211-212, 325-326.

² In short notes it was customary for the sender to write his name in the upper lefthand corner of the sheet. The identification of the sender is based on TS 20.83, dated March 12, 1066, and (partly) written and signed by Judah b. Joseph, the Kohen, who is referred to as “the Rāv” in the validation of the court. TS 8 J 7, f. 15 is also (partly) written and signed by him. His motto, tiny letters arranged in zigzag above and beneath his signature in both documents: “May something good be found in us” *ymš' bnw dbr twb*. A native of Palestine, as is suggested by his handwriting and by his origin from a priestly family of Jerusalem Gaons, he studied with R. Nissīm in Qayrawān (see no. 33, above), returned to his native country, where he must

In (Your) name, oh merci(ful).

His excellency, our lord, the illustrious *prince, the prince of all Israel*,³ *may they in heaven guard, bless, and further him*, had ordered *the cantor Hillel*, . . .⁴ to convey to *our master*, the *Senior of the Yeshiva*,⁵ this information:

The prince had been informed that Joseph b. Elazar al-Ḥarīrī ("Silk-worker or merchant"), stationed in Tinnīs and known as "member" (of the yeshiva),⁶ insisted on praying publicly and offering supplication for one, to mention whom as Rayyis the Sul[tan, may] God [give him glorious] victories, has prohibited, whereupon the prince had excommunicated him.

A request, however, was submitted to his excellency to examine this case again *for heaven's sake*, and he agreed to defer the matter until a letter sent to the aforementioned Joseph would have been received by him and his answer be known.⁷

Therefore, *our master, Senior of the Yeshiva*, . . . please order *the precentors leading the two congregations in prayer* to refrain from pronouncing the ban on that man, until his excellency will have made his decision. *And Peace.*

have incurred serious troubles (TS K 25, f. 244), and finally settled in Egypt. He is referred to as R. Judah, the Rāv, in ENA 2805, f. 9, l. 25, and TS Box 25, f. 106, l. 13. Further information in Mann, *Jews in Egypt*, II, 101, n. 2.

³ David b. Daniel; see the introduction.

⁴ Hillel b. Eli. See *Med. Soc.*, II, index, s.v.

⁵ The honorary title conferred on Nahray by the yeshiva for his scholarship and communal activities. In his later years he was often addressed solely by this title.

⁶ He was the spiritual leader of the Jewish community in that Egyptian seaport and signed as "member" (TS 20.103). But David did not recognize him as such.

⁷ Most likely, the request was made by the writer of our note.

CHAPTER V

The India Traders

AS FAR AS the information provided by the Geniza letters is concerned, the India trade was an extension and a branch of the commerce uniting the countries of the Mediterranean. The traders who left us their writings were, of course, all Arabic-speaking Jews, although Hindus are mentioned as close and reliable "brothers" and Abyssinians and other Christians as business friends. The leading Jewish family of Aden probably came from Iran, but its members had completely assimilated to the Arabic-speaking environment, or had used that language in writing when still in their Persian homeland, as had the writers of no. 2, above.

Over one-half of the commodities traded on the Mediterranean market, especially spices, perfumes, pharmaceuticals, dyeing stuffs, and certain textiles, were imported from India and the Far East, and this chapter (also no. 10, above) tells us how this was done. The West on its side sent copper, lead, and tin, as well as chemicals and a great variety of finished goods, but, in the main, the balance of trade was, as in Roman times, unfavorable: Western gold and silver were constantly flowing to the East (e.g., no. 37, sec. C; no. 38, sec. F). Silk is also mentioned repeatedly as an export to India, but only as a replacement for gold (no. 38, sec. E; no. 39, sec. E), as was often also done in the West (no. 71, n. 11), where a pound of silk had a standard price of 2 dinars.

In India, the Mediterranean man was a foreigner. The natural products of the country and its whole way of life were different. The little presents sent to India with practically every letter going there (e.g., no. 38, sec. F; no. 39, sec. F; no. 40, sec. B) provided him with the household goods to which he was accustomed (including writing paper, not to be had there) and items of food cherished or religiously required by him. Thus, the full grace, consisting of four