

freight: 6 dinars; I paid here 3 dinars, and the remaining 3 dinars will be paid in Almeria after safe arrival. Please take notice of this. Best regards to you and your partner Abu 'l-Wahsh ("Father of the wild animal").⁴

God alone is sufficient for me.

(Address, on the otherwise blank verso:)

(To) my master and lord Abu 'l-Afrāh, 'Arūs b. Joseph, . . .

(From) his grateful Hilāl b. Joseph, . . .

(As usual, the blank space is filled with lists in 'Arūs' hand, but this time obviously referring to a collection for a public appeal.)

50 SPANISH SHIP SEIZED BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT

Ca. 1100

Here again two letters refer to the same shipment, but there is no need to translate both, for they were sent more or less simultaneously because of the urgency of the matter. Some details contained in the letter not translated here (Bodl. MS Heb. c 50, f. 19, referred to below with "Bodl.") are used in the comments.

The Egyptian government ordered the Spanish ship to be emptied in order to use it for naval operations in case of necessity, most likely in the war with the Crusaders, who had just arrived on the scene. As was assumed above (no. 48, n. 3), that ship probably was larger and stronger than the other Muslim boats anchoring at that time in Alexandria.

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter
Collection, TS 13 J 27, f. 9.

(Upside down:) Written in the night after the holiday.¹
(Six short lines of the usual opening phrases.)

⁴ Identical, of course, with "Lion" of no. 48.

¹ Meaning Pentecost (Shavuoth), in May when the ships set sail.

I have just received your note in which you inform me that you have bought a bahār of lac and packed purple. But I must tell you that I cannot take anything from you with me. For when I took leave from you, I was planning to travel to Spain, but when I arrived here, I found that the Andalusian ship was completely emptied on written order from the Sultan.² Therefore I boarded a ship going to al-Mahdiyya. If you intend to send your goods to al-Mahdiyya, please send me a message and instruct me before we sail, since I do not think it would be proper on my part to carry your things with me unless you tell me so expressly in your letter. And be not late in writing, for the al-Mahdiyya boats are ready to sail; they have no further business here.³ Otherwise, your goods might get stuck in Alexandria. Do not send your letter with anyone who you are not sure will deliver it. The best thing is you send it with a mukārī (donkey driver) to the store of Hilāl b. Binyām.⁴

(Short greetings and a note on the recipient's cousin, not completely legible in both letters.)

(Address in Ar. characters:)

This letter should be brought to the Colonnade⁵ to the store of 'Arūs.⁶ Deliver and be rewarded.

(In Heb. characters, upside down:)

To the illustrious elder 'Arūs, son of R. Joseph, . . .
From his "son" Zikrī, son of R. Hananel.

51 THE FRUSTRATED JOURNEY OF A BUSINESS FRIEND

The letter is written in the beautiful and regular hand of a trained scribe. Unlike other letters, where the address is put on the

² Bodl.: *al-marḳab al-andalusī qad ta'attal bi-ḳitāb min 'ind al-sultān wa-furriḡh jamī' mā fihā.*

³ Bodl.: *al-marāḳīb al-mahdawīyya qad rājū*, an expression I have not seen before specifically in this sense.

⁴ A drugstore. See no. 48, n. 14, above.

⁵ Ar. *al-ṣaffayn*. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 194.

⁶ Clearly a landmark known to the muleteers.

top of the verso, here it is arranged as a broad band almost in the middle of the completely blank reverse side, creating an aesthetic effect similar to certain artistic Iranian dishes from the same period.¹ Such care for the outward appearance of the letter shows the esteem in which 'Arūs was held by the writer. He was called Ḥalfōn ha-Kohen b. Judah, and describes himself as the recipient's friend (*muḥibb*). I have not yet traced him elsewhere.

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter
Collection, TS 10 J 13, f. 4.

(Six lines of the usual introductory phrases.)

I was leaving you with the understanding that I would travel overseas. But on the way² I had an accident, all my things were drenched, and the sugar was spoiled in its entirety; by these lines, not more than about twenty pounds were saved.³ I was overcome by a great depression and refrained from going abroad.⁴ I dispatched my things, but the boats are still in the harbor. May God—be he praised and exalted—grant them a smooth passage.

Now to the story of Abū 'Imrān Mūsā ("Moses, Father of Amram"). He arrived, and people tried to arrange a settlement between us. He swore solemn oaths that he did not owe me more than those 100 dinars.⁵ I thought, even if I forced him to give an oath in court,⁶ he would not concede more than this. Therefore I made a settlement with him and took from him those 100 dinars and issued him a release. Please take notice of this. May God never deprive me of you and your kindnesses and keep you for me and for all

¹ A similar, and even more artistic, arrangement in TS Box K 6, f. 189, a letter from Jerusalem addressed to Abū Naṣr Faḍl al-Tustarī. See no. 30, B, above.

² From Cairo to Alexandria.

³ One traveled on the Nile, and goods often fell into the water. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 297ff.

⁴ The wording seems to mean that it was not the material loss, but the depression that induced the writer to give up his travel plans. He perhaps took the accident on the Nile as a bad omen.

⁵ He had already conceded on a previous occasion that he owed this debt.

⁶ Giving an oath in court was a very serious matter and regarded as damaging to one's reputation. Respectable merchants avoided it, if possible (see *Med. Soc.*, 11, 240). Conceding part of a debt entailed an oath expressly provided for in the Torah.

other people who need help.⁷ May he give you *male children studying the Torah and fulfilling commandments in Israel. May your well-being increase and never decrease. Amen, in eternity, Selah.*

Kindest regards to you and the elder Abu 'l-Wahsh⁸ and to all under your care. *And peace be upon Israel.*⁹

52 A STRAY LETTER

Business During an Epidemic

Ca. 1080-1100

The letters of traders translated thus far make the impression that they are all preserved in groups. This impression should not be generalized. The mass of unconnected material is very considerable. But the translation of an unrelated letter often requires much guesswork and lengthy comments, which are better left for a full-fledged edition of the original. The letter presented below, which is roughly contemporary with, or slightly preceding those addressed to 'Arūs (nos. 48-51), is such a case. The persons mentioned in it might or might not be identical with others found in approximately contemporary letters or documents, but the weighing of the pros and cons would be time-consuming without being rewarding. Despite this drawback the letter translated here is by no means without interest.

Abu 'l-Faraj Nissīm ("Miraculous Delivery"), the recipient of this letter, was an India trader, against whom, while in India selling precious Western textiles and mercury, a power of attorney was issued in Fustat.¹ The date of that document is not preserved, but the names of the signatories, known from other sources, put it around 1090. The sender of the letter shared with him the family

⁷ Clearly 'Arūs had been influential in inducing the debtor to concede that he owed 100 dinars.

⁸ See no. 49, n. 4, above.

⁹ This quotation from Psalm 128:6, often found in the mosaic pavements of ancient synagogues, was not used as conclusion of a letter, but refers here to the peaceful settlement of the lawsuit.

¹ TS 12.19, *India Book* 163.