

*youth, and may you be granted to see their joy and wedding. Amen, may it be ordained thus.*

When I parted from your excellency, I intended to sail to the island of Cyprus, but a strong storm diverted the boat to Tarsus.<sup>6</sup> I was very much afraid that the king would take hold of me and detain me. Therefore the boys<sup>7</sup> who traveled with me went up to Fahd b. Karīm ("Cheetah panther, son of Noble-minded"), and informed him of my arrival. Fahd came on board and said to me: "Disembark, do not be afraid, the king has granted you safety." He carried with him letters of safe-conduct from the king assuring me that I was permitted to return to my place, and I found with him safeguards the like of which no one has received before. The ministers<sup>8</sup> were very happy with me and thought that I would remain. They made me all kinds of offers ensured by guarantees. I said to them: "Until the first of the next month." I offered<sup>9</sup> a sum of money to the Christians in the town; Fahdān<sup>10</sup> is an in-law of theirs. But the illness of which you know remained with me and I could not stay any longer [for I needed] treatment. [Four lines torn away.]

I found my paternal uncle present in Alexandria and he brought me to the physician who let me take medicine three times. I found<sup>11</sup> healing through it, God lit up my eyes in his bounty and goodness. I am very much indebted to the illustrious elder, the physician Abu 'l-Karam Ibn al-Wāsiṭi,<sup>12</sup> the son of your paternal uncle, may God let many people be like the two of you.<sup>13</sup> [Most of three marginal and four main lines lost.] . . . and the elder Abu 'l-Manṣūr ("Victorious"), . . . and the physician 'Abd al-Kāfi ("Servant of the All-

<sup>6</sup> Spelled *Tarṣūs* for the usual *Tarsūs*, i.e., with interchange of the emphatics.

<sup>7</sup> The writer's sons.

<sup>8</sup> Ar. *al-dīwān*.

<sup>9</sup> Ar. *ar-raḍt* (fourth for first form, as often). The offer was probably for the purchase of goods.

<sup>10</sup> Meaning Fahd. This is an attempt at classical Arabic for *Fahdun*.

<sup>11</sup> Ar. *'ṣbh*, with two dots on the *h*, again a wrong attempt "to go classical."

<sup>12</sup> From the town of Wāsiṭ in southern Iraq. A common family name among the Jews in Egypt through three centuries. Physicians bearing the names Abu 'l-Karam and Ibn al-Wāsiṭi are mentioned in Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Biographies of the Physicians* (Cairo, 1882), I, 255-256, II, 141-142, but cannot have been identical with this one, who was Jewish.

<sup>13</sup> From here one gets the impression that the recipient, too, was a physician.

sufficient"), . . . the physician 'Abd al-Raḥmān ("Servant of the All-merciful"),<sup>14</sup> *may our God remember them by bestowing on them blessings, life, bounty, and peace, and may thus be his will.*

The bearer of this letter,<sup>15</sup> the illustrious elder R. Isaac, the son of R. Abraham, is one of the illustrious men of Sicily (or Palermo); many here in Alexandria know him as a prominent and fine person and a scion of great families. His arrival in Alexandria coincided with the presence of a large company from France. Our community has made a large collection for them and has also taken care of their maintenance and expenses during their stay here, so that there is no possibility to provide for this or any other man at present. Your bounty is now besought that you may act for this man in accordance with your [noble] habits and your munificence, so that he will part from [you] full of thanks, as all people who pass your house.

To all of you<sup>16</sup> kindest regards, greetings, and respects. *And peace.*

I need not impress on you the urgency of action for that man, so that he should be treated well and kindly, for he is suffering utmost deprivation. Any good done for him—he is worth. *And peace.*<sup>17</sup>

## 77 A BILL OF LADING

This bill was given to the traveler who accompanied the shipment and took care of it. Another copy would be sent to the recipient in another boat.

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter  
Collection, TS NS J 300.

<sup>14</sup> These Muslim physicians obviously had been invited to a consultation by their Jewish colleague who treated the writer. Cf. *Med. Soc.*, II, 254.

<sup>15</sup> Lit., "service," *ḳhidma*.

<sup>16</sup> Such an informal conclusion was possible only between relatives or very close friends.

<sup>17</sup> It was customary to recapitulate the main purpose of a letter in a P.S. and to conclude it with a second "*and peace.*"

O God, in your mercy grant safety for Joseph, son of Khalfa,<sup>1</sup> (*whose*) *s(oul may) r(est in peace)*, to a bundle containing:

32 Tripolitanian cloaks

2 red cloaks

2 hides serving as covers

40 Sicilian cloths wrapped in a washed mantle

4 boxes of saffron

5 Sicilian cloths, a turban made of cotton. All are wrapped in underpants.<sup>2</sup> May God decree safety for it. Amen. O Lord of the Worlds! *And Peace.*<sup>3</sup>

#### 78 PROVISIONS FOR A JOURNEY

A stranger writes to a travel companion, who was accompanied by his wife or a servant. Script of early thirteenth century.

Mosseri Collection (Private) L 101.1.

*In (Your) n(ame), o Mer(ciful).*

It so happens that your servant must go on travel today. I am sending to you some chickens and quails as provisions on my way, for I have no one who could prepare them. Please excuse this impertinence and treat me in this matter in accordance with your kind character and noble disposition, for [as the proverb has it] "strangers are kinsmen to one another."

*May the welfare of your excellency increase steadily and forever. Selah.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Known from other Geniza papers with the family name *al-Qarawī*, from Qayrawān, Tunisia. He lived in the second half of the eleventh century. See ch. iv, introduction, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Men did not wear trousers but their underpants were very wide. When no longer in use, they served as wrapping material.

<sup>3</sup> This greeting is addressed to both the bearer and the recipient of the bill.

<sup>1</sup> This enigmatic word, which concludes many Psalms (e.g., Psalms 3, 9, 24) appears often at the end of letters or their introductions.

#### 79 THE ABANDONED CONCUBINE

*In the Sudanese port 'Aydhāb*

Probably December 19, 1144

Muslim law entitled a master to use his slave as a concubine. The Church and the Synagogue emphatically denied this license. They permitted sexual relations solely in marriage, and marriage was possible only between free persons. Therefore, a master who fell in love with a pretty slave, had first to free her. But this was not an easy matter, since Christians by statute and Jews by custom were monogamous. Still a considerable number of such cases is attested to by the Geniza papers.

It is natural that social concepts and practices of a majority should influence minorities living within it. Cases of a bachelor living with a slave girl or of a husband absconding with one are reported in the Geniza, although such cases were far rarer in the East than in thirteenth century Spain. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 134-135.

As to travel, I have found only one case of a man suspected of visiting prostitutes (in Aden, South Arabia) and one, the document translated here, of a traveler accused of having kept a slave as a concubine. An attentive reading of the text shows that the core of the accusation was not the fact of the concubinage, but the mean way in which the girl had been treated. After having borne a son to her master, she was abandoned by him in Berbera, Somaliland, at that time a wild part of Africa. The girl most probably was Indian and a complete stranger in those parts. The matter was aggravated by its religious aspect. The proper thing would have been for her master to free and then marry her. Later, since he was certainly married, he should have divorced her, before or at coming home, and given her means enough for being a good match for a Jewish man of a lower social class. The Geniza contains several marriage contracts of freedwomen marrying men other than their former masters, and bringing in a substantial dowry. See *Med. Soc.*, 1, 145.

By one of those ridiculous coincidences in which the Geniza is so rich, a marriage contract between a freedwoman and a freedman has been found in which it is stipulated that the bride receive as domicile a house connected with the house of Abū Sa'īd Ibn Jamāhir,