

4. Request of a Silkweaver

to be permitted to pay his debt to his employer in installments, in order to be able to quit the latter's workshop, where he was persecuted by a fellow-worker, a renegade.

(Around 1150 A.D.)

TS NS/J 277

(Written on left upper corner:) From his servant Abu 'l- Alā' b. Abu 'l-
Faql al- Anīnī

Happy are they that are upright, who walk in the law of the Lord.

Happy is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His command-
ments.

To His Excellency our Lord, the light of our eyes, the delight of our
hearts and the crown of our head, the Prince of Princes and Nagid of all
the Negidim, may his name last forever and may God preserve his two sons,
the noble princes, and fulfil through them the scripture: "Instead of your
fathers shall be your sons, you shall make them princes throughout the land."

This is to inform His Excellency, our lord - may God establish his
glory forever - that I am a man unable to press his case, whose life is in
danger. I work in a silkweaver's workshop together with a number of Muslim
laborers, one of whom is a Jewish apostate. This man persecutes me and
seeks to destroy me, for he wants to oust me from the workshop. Time and
again he has said to me, "you swear falsely by the King all day long," and
he has already made a false deposition to this effect.

Your servant is unable to quit the workshop, for I owe a debt to my
employer. Therefore I ask God, the Exalted, and your Excellency, to save

my soul from death, by issuing an order to the judges to allow me to pay the debt in installments, before I am imprisoned. May your Excellency make this effort in order to save me, as is your custom with any son of Israel.

May your well being be increased.

(The employer certainly was a Jew himself; otherwise, the Jewish judges would have had no jurisdiction over him. He employed Muslims, a Jew and a renegade, certainly in order to have easier control over his employees, and precisely for this reason the renegade wanted to oust the only Jew. The contract between the employer and the laborer indebted to him certainly stipulated that the latter had to pay the whole sum, in case he left the job. This was a means to ensure that the employee would not leave in time of a boom, see the preceding document.

The Nagid, or head of the Jews of the Fatimid empire, was a secular authority and, as a rule, did not give judgments himself. He issued however instructions to the judges, indicating in which spirit a case should be decided, cf. Mediterranean Society V ().)

NOTES

- a) Psalm 119:1 and 112:1. The quotations emphasize that the receiver of the letter was a just and Godfearing person. The preamble is entirely in Hebrew.
- b) This title is mostly connected with the Nagid Samuel b. Hananiah, who was in office 1142-1159, cf. MJ II, p. 286. The identity is corroborated by the fact that of the more prominent Nagids only he is known to have had two sons, who often were referred to in letters addressed to him.
- c) Psalm 45:17. This wish was not fulfilled. As far as is known, none of his sons succeeded Samuel b. Hananiah in his office of Nagid.

COMMENTS

- 1) Anīnī (pronounced Anēnī) stands for Anānī, a family name derived from the Palestinian village Kefar Anān, see J. Braslavsky, Our Country, 1954, p. 78. The name occurs e.g. in TS Box K 15, f. 15 and 97.
- 2) Text: qaṣīr al-ḥujja.

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laborers, one of whom is a Jewish renegade. This man persecutes me and
seeks to destroy me, for he wants to oust me from the workshop. All the
time he says to me, you swear ^{also oaths} (all day long by the King and say lies, and he
has already deposited a false witness to this effect.

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soul from death, by issuing an order to the judges to allow me to pay the
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May your wellbeing be increased.

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Account of Physic
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