

A Farm Manager Advises the Absentee Landlord to Replenish
His Stock of Bees

T.-S. 13 J 26, f. 19

(As can be concluded from the epithets used in this letter, it was addressed to Mevörakh, Nagid, or head of the Jews in the Fatimid empire, around 1079-1110 (see p.). The high price of the beehives and the fact that a special letter to the tax-farmer of the district concerned was necessary for their acquisition, as well as some minor details, are of interest. The postscript explains why we have comparatively little material about farming in the Geniza: these affairs were normally attended to in person and not by correspondence.)

In Y(our name,) O Me(rciful).

The reason for the writing of these lines - may God prolong the life of your Excellency, our lord, the Prince of the Princes, the Nagid, the strength of the House of Israel, may his glory be enhanced and his honor wax - is to inform you that the bees will perish if they are not reinforced by some additional stock. It was agreed between your servant and you that you would send money for the purchase of fifty beehives, costing twenty ^{ṣaḡm} dinars. However, nothing has arrived and only the remainder of this month of Teveth (December/January) - may God let you experience its blessings - remains for purchasing bees. I will await an answer to these lines with your instructions and orders. If you decide to purchase the bees, please send the money immediately, and together with it a letter to the elder Abū Ghālib, the tax-farmer of Jazīrat Qansaniyya.^{a)} For the bees will have to be purchased there, and a kind letter from you will help your servant to carry out your instructions.

If, however, you have abandoned your plan to buy bees, please send a messenger together with a letter to whomever you see fit to assist me in the selling of the small stock of bees, which still remain; for if it will not be sold immediately, it will perish. Whatever you see fit to order will be carried out. May the well-being of your Excellency and that of your two sons, the noble princes, wax forever. Amen. Selah.

Your servant kisses your kind hand. He is full of longing to see you. May t(he) H(oly one) b(e) b(lessed) accept from him his prayers for you and for your sons, may their well-being be plenty.

Instead of writing, your servant intended to come up^{b)} to your Excellency, but was advised by the Judge^{c)} not to do so.

Name of the sender, written on the otherwise blank reverse side of the letter:

Your servant Abu 'l-Faraj, son of Hillel, m(ay he rest in) E(den).

cf ENA 2743, no. 3
top 1-4
Identical with Faraj b. Hillel

Notes

- a) A district in Lower Egypt, between Alexandria and Cairo.
- b) From Lower Egypt, one's travel led on the Nile upstream to Cairo.
- c) Presumably the local judge of the place, from which the letter was sent. Most likely, he also copied out this most beautifully written letter; for otherwise, one or more honorific epithets would have been attached to the word "Judge."

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