

~~From Spain to Tunisia~~  
Letter of a Trader No. 75

22. A Journey from Palermo to Messina

(1154)

ENA 151 (2557)

The letter was sent from Messina,<sup>1</sup> the well-known seaport in northeastern Sicily, to Mazara, a town in southwestern Sicily, which served as the terminus of the traffic between Tunisia and the island. It was written by Perahya Yijū, a nephew of a great India trader, who had come back to Cairo from the East, after an absence of many years, with great riches, accompanied by his only daughter, whom he planned to marry to the writer of our letter. In response to his uncle's invitation, Perahya left Mazara for Egypt, turning first north to Palermo, the capital or, as it was called in Arabic, "The City" (al-Madīna), and from there he embarked on the second lap of his itinerary: the journey described in this letter.

With a craving for adventure - attested in the Geniza for other young men also - Perahya's younger brother Moses insisted on accompanying him to the foreign country. After some mishaps - Moses was caught by pirates - the two finally arrived and were later followed by the rest of the family. Many letters concerning this family have been preserved in the Geniza, which is to be explained by the fact that the youngest brother, referred to in this letter, became a judge of the rabbinical court in Old Cairo, a position also attained by Perahya at the end of his life.