

NN Add JTS ENA 2805 f.19

Letter to Nahray from, probably, Nissim b. Ishaq, brother of Barhun b. Ishaq.

This long, but unfortunately damaged, letter contains the key to one of the crucial events in Nahray's career - the death of his early mentor and patron (and older relative) (Abu Ishaq Barhun b. Ishaq). This affected not only Nahray's career, but also that of several of his colleagues who were in one manner or another connected to Barhun. The latter seems to have financed in various ways the early careers of several Maghrebis active in Egypt. Also, the shipwreck in which Barhun perished may have also caused the death of several other important Mediterranean merchants, not to speak of much loss of property which resulted in complicated settling of accounts for years to come.

The top left part of the letter is torn away, and other portions of it are damaged. Among the missing sections is that containing the name of the sender. On verso, line 10, the writer refers to "my brother, may he rest in Eden;" he refers to "the deceased" (al-marhum) verso, l. 22. The contents of the letter and the handwriting have much in common with N170 and N182 - both emanating from Nissim b. Ishaq. There can be little doubt that this letter is from him and that it was written shortly after the death of Barhun and contains constant and repeated urgings that Nahray draw up accounts, collect all the information about the late Barhun's debits and credits, etc. As evidenced by N170 (written ca. 1055 or 1056), this process dragged on for three or more years.

That Barhun b. Ishaq died in a shipwreck is fairly evident from this letter. Whether this was a natural disaster or caused by an act of piracy or a raid is not clear. With Barhun on the ill-fated ship was "your maternal