

Dā'ūd²³ I shall send you various letters specifying all you need to know. *And peace!*

61 A NOTE FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE

Short letters dealing with local business and having the form of notes (see no. 35, n. 2, above) are typical for the Geniza correspondence of the thirteenth century.

The recipient of this letter was a banker, who, together with another investor, had a partnership with the writer, which was most successful. For a profit of 60 dinars for each of them, as mentioned here, was unusually high under any circumstances. Like all citizens of the Egyptian capital, the writer hated to travel in the countryside, but his telegraph-style note is cheerful and bears the imprint of a personality.

University Library, Cambridge, Taylor-Schechter
Collection, TS 13 J 13, f. 18.

Your slave and servant
Ibrahīm b. Abu 'l-Surūr, . . .

In (Your name).

I yearn for my lord and master, the illustrious elder Abū Naṣr—may God prolong his life and crush his enemy. Another matter: my lord, I parted from you, without having been satiated with the pleasure of your company, which I regret very much. Another matter: Your letter arrived. I kissed it before reading it and took notice of its content. The spices¹ and the silk arrived, may I never be deprived of you and never have to miss you. But the spices, may God punish him who packed them. No profit will come from them. By my head, I shall not see a dinar from them. Had I been in the store, as I intended, I would have found that they are not of full weight. The rose marmalade is thin and does not bring relief to a person in

²³ Identical with David, sec. B, above. See n. 15, above.

¹ That is, all an *'attār*, or perfumer, used to sell. Later, *hawā'ij* simply meant "spices." The partnership no doubt concerned only the silk, while the "spices" had been ordered by the writer on his own account. Otherwise, he would not have used such strong words against the sender.

illness.² The tragacanth gum is not worth a penny. A God-fearing man does not do such a thing.

My lord, I sent you beekeepers, scrapers of honey,³ with Ibn Hāja ("Son of Something"),⁴ also a basket with half a *wayba* of sifted caraway seed, a quarter for you, and another for the elder Ma'ānī.⁵ This is for your kindnesses; no payment is required. Each of us has made a profit of 60 dinars. I gave him (the basket) and was extremely happy for having been able to do this. I am coming to town. Only the debts owed me keep me in the country. The end will be good for you; trust in God and extricate yourself. The seeking of sustenance spurns a man as does the seeking of glory. So make an effort and extricate yourself. (Greetings to the sons of his maternal uncle and three other persons.) Kind regards. The answer to this letter should be sent to Alexandria. Would I try to describe to you how much I am eager to get out of the countryside, a letter would not suffice for this. And peace.

(P.S. on the first page:) And send me the alcali quickly. Put it in a jug and secure its⁶

(Address:)

To Fustat, to be delivered to the elder Abū Naṣr, (*may his e(nd be) g(ood)*, son of Abu 'l-Karam, (*may he r(est in) E(den)*).⁷

² Rose marmalade was widely used for the alleviation of illness.

³ The honey scrapers (see *Med. Soc.*, I, 125, 429, n. 71) were fellahs, who would not have made the journey to the city alone.

⁴ A nickname, derived from the phrase *lī hāja ilayk*, "I want something from you," too often used by an ancestor or ancestress. There is also a nickname *Ibn al-Hāja* "Son of the Female Pilgrim" (with article and double *j*).

⁵ Abbreviated from Abu 'l-Ma'ānī ("Eloquent"), a common name in that late period. A man bearing this name contributed to the same appeal as the recipient (see n. 7, below, and *Zion* 7 (1942), 143, col. 11b, l. 10).

⁶ Text: *shs-hā*, "its opening"?

⁷ Contributed to the public appeal discussed in *Med. Soc.*, II, 488-490 (see Bodl. MS Heb. c28 [Cat. 2876], f. 47, ed. E. Strauss-Ashtor, *Zion* 7, p. 142, col. 1a, l. 19). There he is described as *ṣayrafī*, banker.