

21-30 Four Letters from Spain [Hebrew]
Holographs of the Illustrious Poet
Judah Ha-Levi

JUDAEO-ARABIC LETTERS FROM SPAIN
(Early Eleventh Century)

[Six letters written in Spain and one sent by a Spanish merchant from Fez, Morocco, to his father in Almeria are rendered here in translation (No. 5, summary only). The letters from Spain have been edited by me before with a Hebrew translation; but much has been learned since about their text and content. The letter from Fez is edited here for the first time. A letter from Granada, written in May 1130, is transliterated here in Arabic characters in order to enable the reader unfamiliar with Hebrew characters to get an impression of the style of private correspondence in Spain at the beginning of the eleventh century.

We describe these letters as Judaeo-Arabic, because they are written in Hebrew characters. But besides a few Hebrew words and phrases occasionally inserted in some (but not all) of them, there is hardly anything specifically Jewish in their Arabic language. The style of the litterateurs (not of the merchant) is close to the classical language and differs very much from that of letters written in the Muslim East, which reflects the spoken language to a far higher degree.

This material was found in the Cairo Geniza, a treasure trove of manuscripts mainly from the tenth through the thirteenth centuries, about which the article "Geniza" in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition, might be compared. More detailed information about the documents of the Cairo Geniza, their general

character and significance for Islamic social and economic history, is to be found in the Introduction to Vol. I of my book A MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY, University of California Press, 1967.

The documents of the Cairo Geniza are preserved at present in many libraries, but mostly in the University Library, Cambridge, England, which comprises the famous Taylor-Schechter Collection (TS) and also some smaller collections (referred to as ULC). Our Nos. 3 and 4 are found at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, Elkan N. Adler Collection (ENA).

With the exception of the letter from Fez, [the material presented here is connected with Ḥalfōn b. (= ben) Nethanel, a learned India trader from Fustat, Egypt. Altogether I have collected twenty-nine such letters and two legal documents referring to Ḥalfōn's stay in Spain and Morocco. This material will be edited in full in my book Documents on the India Trade from the Cairo Geniza, referred to ⁱⁿ short as India Book.] Another letter by a Spanish merchant, sent in December, 1141, from Fez to Almeria, will be published separately. Attention is drawn to E. Ashtor, "Documentos españoles de la Genizah," Sefarad 24 (1964), pp. 1-40.

As stated before, all these letters are written in Arabic language, but Hebrew characters. The phrases in Hebrew language found in the letter from Granada transliterated here into Arabic characters have been translated into Arabic, but are put in parentheses. In the translations the Hebrew phrases have been set apart from the main Arabic text by being printed in italics.

Words and phrases abbreviated in the originals are rendered in the translation in full, but the complemented parts are put in parentheses.]

LETTERS I-3.

A COLLECTION FOR THE RANSOM OF A CAPTIVE WOMAN IN THE CITIES OF SPAIN

The approximate time of the three letters dealing with this matter can be determined through the persons and circumstances involved. The letters are addressed to the prominent and learned India trader Halfon ben Nethanel of Fustat, whose visits to Spain are attested by dated documents referring to 1129-1130 and 1138-1139 respectively, and who frequented that country, as is evident from his correspondence. The writer was the Hebrew poet, physician, and public leader Judah ha-Levi, who died in the summer of 1141. The spiritual head of the Jews of Spain, Joseph ibn Migash (or, more exactly, Megas, meaning "great, tall" in Greek), who is referred to in the second letter, died in the same year. Since Judah ha-Levi writes from Toledo, "the wicked woman," in whose prison the captive languished, can be hardly any one else but Doña Urraca, who ruled over that city from 1109 through 1126. Urraca, described as ruling "cruelly and femininely," waged war against her husband Alfonso I of Aragon, her son Alfonso VII of Castile, and her sister Teresa, the ruler of Portugal. Thus we are not astonished that she showed no mercy for the captive girl. Urraca died on March 8, 1126, and since one of the letters refers

to the Jewish autumn holidays, the latest possible date for these letters is late summer, 1125.¹

The standard ransom for a person of any religion or sex all over the Mediterranean was 33-1/3 dinars. Ha-Levi speaks of 32 dinars, presumably because he himself, before starting the pious work of collecting the ransom, had contributed 1-1/3 dinars.

It is surprising that the collection of a ransom for one single captive should have necessitated an action comprising several of the major Jewish communities in Christian and Muslim Spain. Compared with Egypt, where large sums were frequently raised for similar purposes, Spanish Jewry seemingly appears here as either poorer or less liberal. But perhaps no such conclusions should be drawn from these letters. Rampant piracy and continuous warfare accounted for the constant need of providing funds for ransoms, especially in the port cities. This probably explains why Almeria and Denia, which harbored important Jewish communities during this period, are not included in ha-Levi's list. Almeria, as we know from several Geniza documents, was indeed busy with other captives.²

I. REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF THE COLLECTION.

TS 8 J 18, f. 5.³

My lord and master, may God make your honored position permanent.

I received this letter from our master and teacher Judah

b. Ghīyāth,⁴ lord of mine and admirer of yours, may God elevate you both, and decided to rush it to you so that you may enjoy it - may God let me enjoy your company.

In my previous letter I thanked you for your efforts in the matter of the captive woman.⁵ Kindly alert her father to come to us, for her affair is nearing a satisfactory solution: We here in the town pay 10 mithqāls; the Turks, the Ghuzz⁶ have sent 4 or so; and then the mithqāl donated by you. From Malaga we expect 6, and when he (her father) will bring 10 from Lucena⁷, the matter will be settled and we may get his daughter out before the holidays. For that wicked woman has changed her mind and does not permit us any longer to take the girl out of the prison on Sabbaths and holidays.⁸ If he (her father) prefers to send us what has been collected thus far and to go to Granada in order to secure what might still be missing from the 32, let him do so. But I believe the best thing is to obtain her release as quickly as possible. God may guide us to whatever may be the best. The final term agreed with the wicked woman is the end of Tishyā⁹ and she does not grant us even one hour more.

Kindly let me know how you are in body and soul, may God shelter them in his grace.¹⁰ And Peace!

(Yours. Address:)

To the illustrious scholar, the noble leader, our master and teacher Ḥalfon ha-Levi, may the All(merciful) preserve him, son of his honor, our master and teacher Nethanel ha-Levi,

m(ay he rest in) E(den).

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2. BID FOR SPEEDING UP THE COLLECTION AND OTHER REQUESTS.

TS 10 J 15, f. 1.

My lord and master, (may God) unite (us) soon under
desirable circumstances.

You have strained my yearnings. Please (mend) soon what
you have impaired.

May I ask you a favor? Kindly approach your uncle¹¹ and
your paternal aunt and also the "Head of the Police," Abū Ibrāhīm
Ibn Barōn,¹² who values you very much and who is my support - may
God make his honored position permanent - that they should talk
to Ibn al-Jayyān¹³ with regard to the balance of the pledge made
for the imprisoned woman.¹⁴ For we are in trouble with regard to
the small balance remaining as we had been with regard to the
large sum.

The bearer of this letter of mine - may God restore his
health - asks you to kindly recommend him to someone who could be
of help to him. For he was a man of means and has become the
opposite; on top of this, he has lost his health and eyesight and
is far away from his family and native country. And God may let
you be the originator¹⁵ of every charity and good work.

And Peace upon my lord and God's mercy.

(Verso. Address: same as in preceding letter.)

(Postscript, written upside down)

Convey my highest regards to the Illustrious Master (*Rāv*),
the Light of Israel,¹⁶ may the Allmerciful preserve him, and substi-
tute for me in asking him to reply to the people of Toledo.
 They rely on me in this matter, and I cannot say that my requests
 find no friendly response with the Master, may his Rock protect him.

And peace upon my lord.

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3. NOTE ON A BAD DINAR AND OTHER MATTERS.

ENA, Laminated No. 40.

As the facsimile shows, this short note is partly effaced and
 damaged by holes in many places. But it is not without interest.

My lord and master and one to whom I am much indebted. . .

I asked God for guidance¹⁷ and, relying on the nobility of
 your character, I am returning you the dinar,¹⁸ for it is not good.

You will receive also 500 sheets of paper which were in my
 possession, and in the possession of the son of m(aster) Obadiah,
 who is ill at present, and which belong to the son of Obadiah.

Take notice of this.¹⁹

There is nothing new with me except that I shall be on my way
 to you next week, if God, the exalted, so decrees. And complete
 peace upon my lord and great master and God's mercy!

And excuse, please.²⁰

(On the margin:)

The vizier Abū Muḥammad b. Abū Rajs' conveys to you his
 finest, best scented and most fragrant greetings. And so does

the vizier Abū Ishaq b. Wāzi^c.²¹ And peace!

(Overleaf. Address as above with a slight alteration.)

4, "GOING EAST"

ANOTHER AUTOGRAPH OF THE SPANISH-JEWISH POET JUDAH HA-LEVI

ENA, Laminated No. 46.²²

Travel to the Muslim East was such a common thing among the savants of the Muslim West that books were compiled, dealing exclusively with the biographies of such travelers. Judah ha-Levi had a special reason for going East: he yearned to spend the end of his days in the Holy Land:

"My heart is in the East, but, alas, I am in the farthest West."

He expressed this wish in many of his poems, but it was no simple thing for him to leave his family and friends, or to give up his honored position as a court physician and public leader. Our letter is significant not only for its expression of the desire "to go East," but also for a number of other details as well. We learn from it how the poet's theological magnus opus came into being. It was called "the Khazari book," because it takes the form of a dialogue between the king of the Khazars, who subsequently embraced the Jewish religion, a philosopher, and representatives of various religions. As we see here, it grew out of a correspondence with a Karaite heretic, who lived in Christian

Spain. In the finished form of the book, the dispute with the Karaites comprises only a limited space. Thus we may conclude that considerable time passed between the writing of this letter and the completion of the book, which was followed by the poet's holy pilgrimage, during which he died in 1141.

The letter is hastily written in an extremely difficult, but very characteristic, Spanish hand. The crowd on Friday morning, which the writer mentions as the reason for his hurried style, most probably consisted of patients who came to see the court physician on the day of Muslim worship when he was free from "the service of the kings" (about which he complains in one of his poems). The left ends of the first six lines are torn away. The translation owes much to the critical remarks of D. H. Baneth in Tarbiz 26 (1957), pp. 297-303.

ENA, Lamenated, no. 4A.

My lord and master, and God's greatest gift to me - may God make permanent your honored position and unite us in the most pleasant circumstances, in his grace. Your dear, cordial letters have arrived. They did not²³ diminish my longing for you, but excited and increased it... We can do nothing but trust in God's bounty, to unite us and fulfill our hopes - if God so decrees. Nor are my secret hopes different from those which I expressed openly in your high presence. I have no other wish than to go East as soon as I can, if I am so enabled by (divine) decision.

My work is as you know. Your dear letter was handed over to me on Friday morning when I was surrounded by a large crowd, as

usual, the like of which you have witnessed; but I am answering on the spot. I have already answered two previous letters of yours, acceding in them to your wishes.

As for the Khazari book, it was the usual kindness of the illustrious philosopher and accomplished scholar Joseph b. Barzel to praise me for a trivial thing.²⁴ I personally would have refrained from submitting it to you. The reason for writing it was a challenge by one of our heretics, living in the land of the Romans, who questioned me concerning certain problems, in reply to which I sent him that book. Later on, I repudiated it. You will see it when we meet.

I am seeking an opportunity to finish what you have asked me to compose,²⁵ if I can find time for it.

Please excuse the form of the letter; I am writing it surrounded by people, as I understand that the one who undertook to transmit my answer is in a hurry.

Desire carries me on its wings to you and I say:

"Love, and not my feet, is the guarantee (of my coming)."²⁶

And peace to my lord and master, commensurate with the greatness of my longing and yearning, and the mercy of God.

(Address:)

To the illustrious scholar and noble leader, our master and teacher Halfon ha-Levi, may the Allmerciful keep him, son of the honored master and teacher Nethanel, may he rest in E(den).

From him who is always ready to serve you and who longs for you.²⁷

38.

Egypt

About a Present, Sent from Old Cairo to Lucena, Spain

T.-S. 8 J 18, f. 2

(This note is addressed to Almeria, the most important Mediterranean port of Spain at this time (around 1130). Its writer, Balfon b. Nathaniel - a great Cairone merchant, whom we find one year in India and the next in Spain - was expected to come to Almeria; therefore, a Cairone friend had sent him a present for his brother in Lucena (near Cordova) with the request to forward it. However, Balfon had changed his route and had either gone to another Spanish port, such as Malaga, or to North Africa. Therefore, he sent the present with the captain of a ship which went to Almeria, asking him to deliver it to one of three persons specified. He himself notified them by letters such as the one translated here. By chance, two of these letters have been preserved - most probably owing to the following circumstances: After having written them, Balfon found someone who was prepared to do the errand. Therefore, he did not dispatch these letters at all, but took them along all the way back from Spain or North Africa to Egypt. Thus, these little vignettes of life around the Mediterranean have been spared for us.)

My lord and master, my highest support and eternal treasure,^{a)} after having written my previous letter, an opportunity for a good deed has arisen, and I want to carry it out with your help. A consignment has arrived from Old Cairo, from the illustrious judge R. Elaser b. al-Qazabi,^{b)} to be sent to his brother in Lucena. I entrusted it to the captain, Said-han¹ b. Yaquin, the captain of the Sultan's ship, who shares the command of the ship with Ibn 'Abd al-Kafi, and advised him to deliver it in Almeria either to R. Isaac b. Baruch - because he is so well-known in the town^{c)} - or to your

excellency, or to R. Abraham b. Meninie,⁴⁾ the excellent scholar - may his Rock (God) preserve him. Whoever of you will be in town shall undertake this good work and will be thanked (by man) and rewarded (by God).

The consignment has to be taken from the aforementioned captain, to be looked after until its delivery into the hands of the addressee in Lucena; the latter will confirm its arrival in a note which he will send from Lucena and which you will kindly forward to Old Cairo.

May the welfare of my lord, the pupil of my eye, wax eternally.

This note was written on the coast (in the port); please excuse (its incomplete form).

(Postscript, written on the reverse side)

The consignment consists of a Bagdadian,⁵⁾ half silk-half linen,²⁾ and a small bag, containing cloves, weighing, together with the packing, 430 dirhan of Egyptian pound, i.e. weight, i.e. standard,²⁾ please take delivery from that captain. He also carries two notes,³⁾ one in Hebrew and one in Arabic, concerning it, please take everything and kindly forward it as a trust confided to you.⁶⁾

May the welfare of your honor wax eternally.

Address:

To my master and lord and helper, the h(onored), g(reat) and h(oly) M(aster) and T(eacher) Joseph, the great and unique scholar, the most illustrious physician, known as "Ibn al-Khaṭīb the Physician" in the bazaar of Almeria.^{h)}

From Halfon ha-Levi, who is grateful for his favors and spreads his fame.

Notes

- a) These polite phrases are used exclusively in letters sent to or from Spain.
- b) A member of the rabbinical court in Cairo, who also came originally from the Muslim West, as his name indicates.
- c) A number of letters, sent by this important merchant, have been preserved in the Geniza. Our writer apologizes for mentioning this merchant first.
- d) A Romanesque name (cf. Spanish maning), a queen's page.
- e) This does not necessarily mean that the material concerned was made in Bagdad; it could designate its Bagdadian style (cf. p.).
- f) The writer had difficulties in finding the right word (sanj). As the Egyptian pound, whose weight at that time corresponded roughly to the present American (p.), contained 140 dirhams, this bag held about three pounds of cloves, a very valuable present, as in Cairo, at that time, a pound cost 5,5 gold dinars (cf. S. D. Goitein, Geniza Documents on Trade and Travel to India, No. 219, verso 1a 8). At least two other instances of cloves being sent as a present to a scholar are to be found in the Geniza.
- g) I.e. without remuneration.
- h) "The son of the treasurer" - a family, various sons of which are known from literature or from the Geniza.

Comments

1. Said-han, clearly written as one word, both here and in T.-S. 10 J 15, f. 3, which is the letter sent to Isaac b. Baruch simultaneously with that to Ibn Khāsin.
2. Ar. nigfiyya, common in the Geniza. Dozy, Supplement II, 680b points it as nagfiyya, but for which it is not evident.
Reason:
3. Text: ruq'atān tafsikir, literally: two slips containing a memorandum.

VI
in
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From Spain to
Tunis

32. A SPANISH MERCHANT WRITES FROM FEZ, MOROCCO,

TO HIS FATHER IN ALMERIA, SPAIN.

This rare specimen of a business letter going from Morocco to Spain provides interesting information on several points. Cheating at customs houses seems to have been uncommon in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, probably because the rates, as the Geniza shows, were reasonable. Customs were paid not only at frontiers, but at the gates of any larger city, and no discrimination was made between local people and foreigners. When, however, such discriminations were introduced, as was done in Sicily at the end of the Muslim rule, then we often read in the Geniza papers about attempts of foreigners to pass off their baggage as belonging to local people. Here, we learn the same about Fez.

The letter also gives a good idea of the writer's business. He dealt with precious textiles, probably manufactured in Cairo, if not in Baghdad; with Spanish exports, such as copper; with products of the eastern Mediterranean, such as indigo and scammony; and with the staples of the Orient, such as lac. Naturally, he exported Moroccan local products, of which antimony is listed. Many interesting side lights fall also on his techniques and his mental frame.

The letter is written on good, whitish paper, with a thin pen as was common in Spain. But the Hebrew script is entirely different from the fleeting cursive cherished by the more literate men of that country and is similar to the types used in the Muslim East. In his

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TS 12.435

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The letter is written on good, whitish paper, with a thin pen as was common in Spain. But the Hebrew script is entirely different from the fleeting cursive cherished by the more illiterate men of that country and is similar to the types used in the Muslim East. ~~In his Arabic usage shows, however, the writer was not an Easterner; he writes hw, meaning "good," and ml, meaning "rich" - usages not found in the contemporary Geniza letters from the eastern Mediterranean. He might be identical with the writer~~
^{if he had adapted himself to his environment}

The first five lines are badly damaged, but most of the missing words can be complemented.

How did this letter find its way into the Cairo Geniza? It is reasonable to assume that the recipient, like countless others, fled to escape from the Almohad persecutions and found his refuge in Egypt.

TS 12.435.

In your (name), oh All (merciful).

To ~~the~~ my master and lord, my succor and supp[ort],

may God prolong your life and make permanent your high rank] and

[letter of no. 50, but that one is written with a thick pen, which makes it difficult to compare the two.]

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lofty position. May he crush those who envy you and not withhold from you [success]. May he substitute me [as ransom for all evil that might befall you and may he] never leave me [alone being without you. May he let you succeed in obeying him and eliciting his favor. May he unite us in happiness, soothe my solitude by your appearance and relieve my grief through your presence.

Lo, he listens to our prayers and answers quickly.

I arrived in Fez on Friday, Marheshvan² 2. At our arrival we were met by the informers and they found out exactly the number of the loads (belonging to us). They went to the superintendent of the customs and told him. On Sunday morning he sent for me and for Ibrāhīm and said to him: "Are you prepared to give an oath that all that arrived with you is entirely your property and that this man has no share in it?" Then he said to me: "Are you prepared to swear that nothing at all was brought by you to this place?" There was much talk, but he clearly knew that five camel loads had arrived with me. After great troubles it was agreed that the governor² would take 10 mithqāls, the superintendent of the customs - 3, the informers - 2, and the employees - 1/2. I was sick for three days out of anger and sorrow. Had I possessed here usually have the same courage as I ~~had~~ in Almeria, I would have escaped with less than this. But I consoled myself with the solace of one who has no choice. I also said to myself, perhaps God may grant us some compensation for the loss. On the day of my arrival it was 3 and 2; today it is 2 and 4. 3

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By God, if you can avoid it, do not go abroad. If God wills, I shall set out for Marrakesh with the very first company ~~46~~ ⁴⁷ traveling there, and, if necessary, inform you about the situation, whereupon you may make your decision. I have no other aim, by God, than saving you the trudging along the streets and traveling overland. ~~48~~ ⁴⁹ May God turn everything to a good end!

I should also like to inform you that I spread out the nisfiya⁴⁸ clothes, and the very first one that fell into my hands was spoiled by water in all its folds. I went out of my mind, but God, the exalted, had willed that only this one was spoiled. This happened because we had much rain on the way, but God, the exalted, granted rescue. Until late today I sold ten pairs of them for a total of 80 dinars, inclusive of the ten bad ones ~~49~~ ⁵⁰ and the one spoiled by water.

I bought first-class, excellent antimony (kohl), about twenty qintārs, the qintār (hundred pounds) for 1 dinar. If you think that I should buy more, send me a note and let me know. ~~50~~ ⁵¹

For the lacquer I was offered 24. I am holding on to it, perhaps I shall get 25. ~~51~~ ⁵²

The good elastic (?) ~~52~~ ⁵³ copper is worth here 9 dinars a qintār. Scammony ~~53~~ ⁵⁴ is worth 3 dinars a pound. Inquire, and if it reaches that price in Almeria, sell it. Otherwise send me one half (of what we have) and leave there the other half.

All our lacquer and nisfiyas are in the house ~~54~~ ⁵⁵ ¹² of Ibrāhīm, for I did not want to leave anything at all with me in the house.

I may be able to sell all the nisfiyas in Fez.

Please take notice that Indigo is very much in demand here in Fez.

I should also like to inform you that everyone, Muslims and Jews, tell me that Ibn Talw⁵⁵¹³ will pay me all he owes us, as soon as I arrive,⁵⁶¹⁴ for he is very rich today.

Hatred (of Jews)⁵⁷¹⁵ is rampant in this country to a degree that, in comparison with it, Almeria is a place of salvation.⁵⁸¹⁶

(Address, right side:)

To my lord, succor and support, my father,

Japheth ha-Levi b. Cullah (may the) rest in) E(den).

Forward and you will be rewarded!⁵⁹¹⁸

(Left side:)

His son [60]¹⁹

May he become his ransom.

NOTES

D. Antonio Ballesteros y Beretta, Historia d'Espana, Barcelona, 1920, II, pp. 254-258. J. Schirmann, Tarbiz 25 (1956), p. 412, thought that "the wicked woman" might perhaps refer to an oppressive government. But D. H. Baneth, Tarbiz 26 (1957), p. 301, points out that the Heb. term misba'at, found here in the midst of an Ar. text, is used in the Bible referring to the wicked queen

NOTES

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³⁹ The writer's mother, but where applicable, it was good form to describe a person as a relative of the receiver of the letter rather than of its writer.

⁴⁰ These are allusions to the family names or designations of common friends of Joseph and Halfon: Ibn al-Fakhkhar (India Book, pp. 276, 277), Joseph b. Barzel, who is called hakim, or philosopher, above, p. 14; Fashshat (this reading should be substituted for fashshat in the edited text) was the name of an important family in Fustat and, later on, in Tudela, Spain, see I. F. Baer, A History of the Jews in Christian Spain, Tel-Aviv, 1959, p. 131 (Heb.).

Who is meant by "cantors," I do not yet know.

⁴¹ See n. 30, above.

⁴² This Hebrew title is taken from the Book of Numbers 3:32. Like their Arab neighbors, the Jews were very much intrigued by high-sounding genealogies, a fact which did not escape the attention of the Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldun. See his Muqaddima, Book II, chad. XIII.

↓ Late September - early October.
A Jewish month corresponding mostly to October.

✓ ² Ar. qa'id, corresponding to amīr in the East. Large cities, such as Alexandria or Fez, were administered by a military governor.

✓ ³ Obviously an example for profit already made. I understand the numbers thus: on the day of the writer's arrival a certain standard commodity was worth 3 dinars and 2 qīrāts; at the time of the writing, it was already (3 dinars and) 2-4 qīrāts.

✓ ⁴ The long way between Fez and Marrakesh led mostly through

Inhabited country, not through deserts. Therefore, one traveled not in a big caravan, but in smaller groups, called shaba, large enough for protection, but of limited size making for mobility, see S. D. Goitein, Mediterranean Society, I, p. 277.

✓ 4 Although one had to cross the sea to get to Morocco from Almeria, it was not the sea voyage, but the uncomfortable locomotion by land which was disliked most.

✓ 5 A precious piece of clothing, ordered in Cairo by a merchant from Aden (India Book, p. 50), or sent as a present from Fustat to Lucena, Spain (Ibid., p. 102). See Dozy, Supplément aux Recueils arabes II, p. 680b, and R. B. Serjeant, "Islamic Textiles," Arabia, 15-16 (1951), p. 66.

✓ 6 Ar. wakhsh, a Maghribi word. The receiver of the letter knew of course that the clothes sent were of differing quality.

✓ 7 Morocco was a country of export for kohl. In Egypt the price of this commodity was five times as high, see Westminster College, Cambridge, England, Fragmenta Cair. Misc. 50 (dated 1098) and TS 12.434 (approximately the same time).

✓ 8 Lacquer was an Oriental commodity very much in demand in the Mediterranean countries and referred to in scores of Geniza letters and accounts. Its price per qintar varied from 15 dinars (TS 13 J 29, f. 10, l. 16 from al-Mahkliyya, Tunisia, 11th century) to 50 (TS 13 J 19, f. 29, ^dverse, l. 6, from the same place, early 11th century).

✓ 9 Copper was one of the great exports from Spain to the East,

and many types are mentioned in the Geniza, e.g., "burnt copper" from Almeria, sold in Tlemcen (India Book, p. 104, l. 9), "ham-
mered copper," madrūb, "cast copper" (sabīka in the Mediterranean
area, sabb on the India route), "yellow broken," "old hammered"
copper, all apparent in India Book. But "elastic (literally
palpitating) copper," rajīf or rījjīf, has been found only here.
Prices varied from 5 to 25 dinars, certainly depending on quality,
place, time, and circumstances.

11. Scammony, called in Arabic (and in the Geniza letters)
by its Greek name sagamūniya or, more frequently, as here,
māhmūda, "the praiseworthy (medicament)," is a plant growing in
the countries of the north-eastern Mediterranean, whose resin was
(and is) used as a strong purgative. It was exported as far as
Morocco in the West and India in the East. The price given here is
paralleled by other data in the Geniza papers.

12. Ar. bayt, which, in the East, then meant "room." But here,
I believe, the meaning "house" is more appropriate. Since these
Spanish merchants constantly traveled to Morocco they possessed a
house there. Many other such instances are alluded to in the
Geniza papers, see A Mediterranean Society, I, p. 61.

13. Could be pronounced also Tīw. This old Semitic word has
many meanings in Arabic, designating in general a young mammal.

14. In Marrakesh, it seems. One sees again that collecting one's
assets was as time consuming as selling one's merchandise.

15. The problem of medieval "antisemitism" is treated in
A Mediterranean Society II, chap. vii, section A, subsection 1.
pp. 278-284.

✓¹⁶ This remark is sarcastic, meaning that Almeria itself had a bad reputation in this respect. A letter from that town (India Book, ^{No.} 129, l. 24 and top, l. 4) says: "The 'hatred' has eased a little."

✓¹⁸ Namely, by God, who will grant you a safe journey as reward for your kindness. Ar. balligh tusdā, for which in Tunisia and the East they wrote tuṣṭar.

✓¹⁹ The end of the line is torn away. But I believe nothing was written here, see n. 27 above. Not mentioning one's own name was an expression of particular affection and intimacy.

✓¹⁷ It is likely that this man was a son of Ulla ha-Levi al-Dimashqī, the recipient of nos. 43-46. That a Damascene merchant settled in Fustat should send one of his sons to Almeria, Spain, to take care of his business there, was natural in the ^{early} twelfth century when the direct route Spain-Egypt had become much frequented.