

Index 348 X Letter 217 H
Aug, 1198

Mosseri L 12

Mosseri L-12

Text in Troubles in
32-34. Forced ~~Conversion~~ ~~from~~ Aden, South-Arabia.
33. Forced Conversion of ~~all~~ the local Jews, but
business as usual.

Index
Cyril

Only the lower part of this interesting letter,
still containing $31+28=59$ lines, has been found thus

far. The events ~~are~~ described in ~~the~~ ^{its} first ^{section} part were preceded

by a long period of crisis. Muslim religious propaganda

had become extremely aggressive, while the Jews feverishly ex-

pected the immediate coming of the Messiah, and a

[simple minded pious man] declared himself messiah and found
followers. [had indeed] made his appearance among

followers. In this period ^{Moses} Maimonides ^{wrote} ~~his~~ ^{epistle} ~~to~~ ^{epistles} ~~the~~ ^{to} ~~Yemen~~

his famous "Yemenite ^{epistle} ~~Letter~~", or rather ~~Letter~~ ^{epistles} ~~+~~
in order to strengthen the faith of his brethren, but also to unmask the
futility of their expectations.

Things came to a head when the eccentric nephew

of the great Saladin, al-Malik al-Mu'izz Isma'il,

ruled Yemen (1197-1201). He had the audacity

to style himself "caliph", although a caliph

sat at that time on the throne of the Abbasids in

Baghdad. His unorthodox ways are ^{evident} also in

the forced mass conversions described in our letter,

for Islam regards such conversions as illegal and

invalid. †

Mosseri L-12 13

A. Forceful Conversion of the Local Jews

[... to] Aden. Immediately after his arrival

[he was brought before the Caliph?], who said to him:

"Become a Muslim, or you will cause ^{the} death ~~to~~ [your]

brethren." [...] He cried bitterly, but there was no

other way for ^{him} [...] except by embracing Islam.

Before his arrival in Aden, all those who were

with him on the mountains had ^{apostatized} ~~converted~~ ^{accepted Islam}.

the "Efficient" the physician (known as) and

apostatized.

converted

everyone on the mountains ^{only} the Jews of

Aden remained. But the elder Madniun ^{converted} ~~converted~~
accepted Islam

on Wednesday, the first of Dhul Q'ada ⁶ On Friday,

the third ^{day} later, the bell (of the market crier) was
rung: "Community of Jews, all of you, anyone ^{will} ~~who~~

be late in appearing in the audience hall after
noon ~~noon~~, will be killed." None of the Jews remained,

all went up to the audience hall. Moreover, he
(the Caliph) ordered that anyone returning to the

Jewish faith would be killed. Thus all ^{apostatized} ~~converted~~,
Some of the very religious, ^{also} ~~defected~~ from Islam,

and were beheaded.

B. The Foreign ^{Jews} ~~Northerners~~.

As to us, do not ask me what we felt, with-

nessing horrors the like of which we ^{had} ~~never~~ ^{seen} ~~seen~~

But with us God wrought a miracle and saved us,
not through our might and ~~own~~ power, but through
 his grace and favor. For when we went up with them to
 the ^{audience hall,} the foreigners assembled separately, and the Caliph
 was consulted about them. God put into his mouth
 these ^{words} ~~denunciation~~: "No foreigner should be molested." He
 ordered that everyone should pay a third of the poll
 tax. ^{and} He disbursed this and he dismissed us
 graciously, thanks God. This is the upshot of what

happened. But, by the great God, I am really
 not able to ^{convey to you} ~~describe adequately~~ even part of
 what happened, for witnessing ^{an event is one thing} ~~a thing to write~~
~~different from~~ ^{and} hearing about it - quite another.

C. New Impositions on Visitors to Aden.

The merchants were outraged by the new impositions promulgated. Finally, however, God, the exalted, helped (The caliph) He had ordered that 15 dinars out of 100 should be taken from every one both at arrival and departure, but God helped, and he ordered that this Kārim should remain unchanged with no raise of the tariff. But everyone coming later would have to pay 15 out of 100 dinars from all goods, and also from gold and silver, from ^{Wheat} and from flour ¹⁰ in short, and from everything. Such will be the ^{earnings} ~~expenditure~~ of anyone coming here next year.

D. Prices in Aden.

The Prices:

Pepper, a sack - sold for 52, later went down to 45.

Cinnamon, a sack - 45.

Brazilwood obtained different prices:

good Amiri, a sack - 18;

Middle quality - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$;

(to f)

End pieces, a sack - 16;

& The long variety, a sack - 18.

Indian Indigo, a piece - 70 dinars.

Clover - not to be had, the mediocre - 45,

the [...] - 44, ten (mann, or double-pound),

Celandine ¹⁰ - not to be had.

New camptor - 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ a mann.

The odoriferous woods are of middle quality and

expensive.

The price of the copper was $\sqrt{2}$:

Copper in fragments, first 72, later 85;
in bars 70, later it attained 90.

Tin - 70.

Coral - 11.

Antimony (Koll) of Shalwadh $\sqrt{14}$, a sack - 17
of Madzid $\sqrt{15}$, a sack - 25.

The "gray" perfume $\sqrt{16}$, a sack - ...

Cinnabar ^{V¹⁷} - ^{ten} ~~to~~ (mann) 18.

Mercury - ten (") 17.

Please take notice of this, my lord.

E. Conclusion

I asked God for guidance and ^{am} ~~shall~~ ^{ing} ~~traveling~~

home in the boat of Ibn Salmān, the same in

when I ^{made} ~~took~~ the passage out. ^{V¹⁸} May God

bestow safety upon ~~know~~ it. My brother Abū

Nasr ^{V¹⁹} will be traveling with me. I am kissing

your hands and feet. ²⁰

(A P.S. ^{of four short lines} referring to several of the goods mentioned before, is too much effaced for an attempt of translation).

✓ Scientific edition by Abraham S. Halkin, with an English translation by Boaz Cohen, New York, 1952. Halkin, following others, thought that the ~~Epistle~~ ^{he calls it} "Epistle to Yemen" (as ~~it is called by him~~) was written in 1172.

✓ India Book ⁵⁰ 348
 ✓ The part dealing with the forcible mass conversions ~~with omissions and mutilations~~ was ~~published~~ edited by Bernard Chapiro, "Lettre de Maimonide aux Juifs du Yemen," Cahiers Juifs, vol. 2, 3rd year (1935), p. 58.

✓ The Heb. term used here, found in the Geniza rec general I, is pāsha' (not rāsha', as in Chapiro's text, see n. 2), lit., "to renounce one's allegiance, see Med. Soc. II, p. 300.

✓ Maimūn b. David, the head of the Jewish community, ~~our next selection~~ ^{our next selection} ~~who wrote~~ ^{see} ibid.

✓ Corresponding to Aug. 25, 1198, see Westonfeld-Mahler-Spuler, p. 13.

✓ Ar. manzar, in Yemen a room on the upper floor, open to the fresh air ~~as far as there was any in Aden at that time~~.

✓ This shows that, at that time, the Jewish India traders must have been ^{still} of considerable importance for the economy of Aden.

// over //

¹⁸ The poll tax of the non-Muslims ^{was} to be paid at their permanent residence. Thus, this imposition was illegal, but the travelers were content to buy their religious freedom with this price.

✓ This use of the term *Kārim* (see *El², vol. IV, p. 1*) in the meaning of the totality of India's travelers operating during one year is very remarkable.

¹⁰ ✓ Meaning that even from the provisions of the travelers 15% had to be turned over to the ruler of Aden.

✓ Or "swallowwort" (which is an English rendering of the Greek word), a plant of the poppy family, serving as a tonic, see Maimonides - Meyerhof, p. 120, no. 241.

✓ ¹² Up till ^{here} ~~now the~~ ~~spices~~ ~~and~~ ~~golds~~ imported from India or other eastern countries had been ~~enumerated~~ listed, which would be carried to *Ca. so* ^{and} other places east. Here ^{begins the list of} ~~golds~~ from Spain and other western countries,

which had been brought by these merchants.

✓¹³ See C 4, n. 7, above.

✓¹⁴ In Spain. Yāqūt 3, p. 316, says that kohl was produced there from lead.

✓¹⁵ Reading doubtful.

✓¹⁶ ~~See al-tib al-shayba~~ al-tib al-shayba. Maimonides. Meyerhof p. 10, no. 11, and Dozy, Supplément I, p. 808a, probably refer to another product. I have not seen this expression elsewhere.

✓¹⁷ Since Roman times a precious export of Spain.

✓¹⁸ In the language of the India traders dakhal, to enter, namely the Indian waters, designates (from the Indian ocean) the way out, and kharaḡ, to come out, means going home.

✓¹⁹ No identification possible. My India card index, still incomplete, notes twenty five persons of this name.

✓²⁰ One kisses the hands of a ^{senior} relative and the feet

of a judge. The ~~or~~ might have been a relation
 of the judge Isaac b. Sarōn, ^{who was} the Jewish chief judge
 and ^a close associate of Maimonides,
 of Cairo, ^{but} ~~he was~~ also ~~or~~ ^{was} very active in the
 economic field. See next relation.