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THE EGYPTIAN NAGID.

THE remarkable fragment relating to the dignity of Nagid in Egypt, which was edited by Mr. E. N. Adler in the *JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, IX, 717 sq., is not the original, but must have been a portion of a book which contained a collection of this and similar letters and reports. This I noticed when I was kindly allowed to inspect the fragment. Only two leaves of the whole have been preserved, and several other leaves, two at the very least, must have been lost between them. The leaf, commencing on page 718, l. 3, must, perhaps, be considered as the first. Anyhow, we have here a report in which an Egyptian Nagid notifies his appointment and solemn instalment to the congregations under his charge.

Before determining the historical importance of this find, it will be necessary to correct the printed text and its translation after the MS. The beginning of the piece *כִּיד אֱלֹהֵי הַטּוֹבָה* is correct. The new Nagid presents himself as an old acquaintance who had already, during the office of his predecessor, shown himself as the proper representative and successor of the Nagid by his Synagogal addresses at certain festivals and by his decisions on points of the ritual. *וְעַל נָגִיד : מִלְפָּנֵי אִשָּׁר* means : and to my Nagid, before whom, in whose presence=*לְפָנָיו*. Mr. Adler read *מִלְפָּנֵי*, my teacher, but thus the construction of the whole sentence is destroyed. L. 2 we read *בְּפָרְקִי*. On l. 5 the allegation from Is. xl. 4 is indicated as a Biblical verse by the point placed over the word. We know now, moreover, from the text published in the *JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, IX, 687, that the Gaonim used also in private letters to denote quotations from Scripture, which ought really to have been written on lines, by points placed over the Biblical words. Our copy of the report of the Nagid is no exception to this rule. L. 6 ought to read *נִרְעוּ מֵרַת צִדְקִי* "know ye, in what measure I was favoured." *נִכּוּתִי=צִדְקִי*. That which is said here about the favour of the Caliph becomes unintelligible by the words *אֲחֵרֵי* in l. 7, and *בְּעַמִּי* in l. 8. The Caliph cannot consider the Nagid as his successor, or as the ruler of his people among the Arabs. The MS. shows *אֲחֵרֵינוּ* and *בִּשְׁמִי*. The Caliph says thus even during the lifetime of the previous

Nagid: "This one shall rule after him, and he appoints the successor as Nagid in his, the Nagid's, name." In l. 9, before חסדאי about two words are missing. In l. 10 read עד ביאת הממשלה הראשונה instead of עד כי תאתה, and since the verse Micah iv. 8 is differently applied here, the points over the words are wanting. In l. 11, instead of the meaningless לעשות לו שם, the sense requires לעשות לי שם, and in l. 12 correctly וקראני instead of קראני, which is without connexion. L. 18 and l. 19 have the usual points over the words, being respectively citations from Ps. xl. 3 and Ps. xxxvii. 37. The last line, in which להקת היושר must be read, concludes with words from Ps. lxxii. 8, which also has points. On p. 718, l. 3, read סוסיה instead of סוסים. L. 7, instead of תחת מלכותו correct בכל מלכותו. In l. 9, only the three words from Is. lxvi. 23 מדי חדש בחדשו, inserted with the citation from 2 Kings xxv. 30, are provided with points. L. 10 is marked by the points as a Biblical verse (Zech. xi. 11), equally l. 12 as a citation from liii. 12. In l. 15 ותאמצני כח must, according to the MS., be read, instead of ותאמצני כדי. L. 18 read שאילמלי. IX. 19 בן יחיר is without doubt against the MS., which is illegible in this place, but shows no traces of יחיר. L. 22, being a quotation from Is. xxviii. 29, is pointed.

That the new Nagid was the son of his predecessor, as Mr. Adler's translation has it, is not mentioned in the text with a word. The silence on this point rather shows the opposite, that these two men were in no way related. The circumstance that the Nagid is represented here, like the Gaonim, as preacher and teacher of his congregation, is important. He is installed with great honours, which form a spectacle that attracts many spectators. His dignity is a political one, being conferred by the Caliph, from whom the dignitary draws also a salary.

The information afforded by the fragment, according to which, at the time of this Nagid at least, the consent of the Babylonian Exilarch, and—which is more remarkable still—that of the Gaon of Palestine was required, is very instructive. Indeed, Palestine's vote appears at that time to have had so much weight in the religious questions of the Egyptian Jews, that the appointment of the Egyptian Nagid depended more on the consent of the Nagid of Jerusalem than on the Egyptian Caliph, who was invested with the political authority.

The expression, "Crown of the princes," which the Exilarch bestowed upon the representative of the Nagid during the lifetime of the latter, makes him as it were the *Dauphin* of the dignity of Nagid, with which the title of "Prince of princes" was connected. It is a hitherto unknown feature in the history of Jewish titles,

many of which sink into empty exaggerations, being formerly the standing attributes of certain dignities and offices. The Nagid appears here clearly also as the authority that mediated between the government and the Jewish community. On p. 718, l. 16, Mr. Adler's reading לפני, which is already confuted by the following plural, must be rejected also on this ground. Since two words are missing, the reading is perhaps לפני העם. The Nagid had to represent the Jews before the Caliph in all their desires and affairs.

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