

# Holy Land

# VII

## Postal History 126-127



### Austrian Post Office in Jerusalem

Cover from Jerusalem to Vienna 1865, franked with nine copies of the 5 soldi of the 1864 Austrian issue. The rate of 45 soldi breaks down to: 8 to Jaffa, 2 for transit in Jaffa, 20 for the remaining sea voyage to Trieste and the final 15 for the transport from the port to the Austrian capital. A real gem of Holy Land and Middle East postal history. (page 908)

Spring 2014

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# HOLY LAND POSTAL HISTORY



התאחדות בולאי ישראל  
**Israel Philatelic Federation**  
Member - Federation International Philatelic

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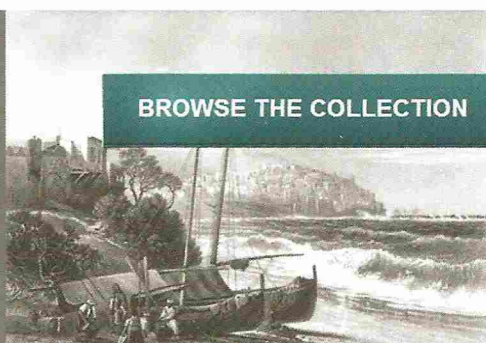
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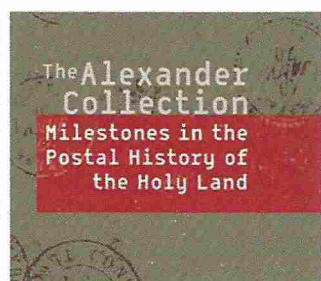
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## Postcards from Herzl

Herzl's love for his children is demonstrated in three postcards written by Herzl to his daughter Paulina. The postcards were found in London in the 1970's in the inheritance of Joseph Weiman. Following prolonged negotiations, that lasted 10 years, the collector Zvi Alexander managed to purchase the three postcards and added them to his extensive collection.

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# Editorial

This issue is an *anniversary* issue. It is the tenth issue that the Editor edits. It is a pleasant occasion for him, because when he received the editorship in 2008, he was not entirely confident about the result as he has never done so before. Judging from the reactions of readers, the Bulletins are well received.

Of course, the Editor could not do it by himself. Much is due to the contributors of articles and other supporters. Itamar Karpovsky, Mihael Foch, Les Glassman, Izik Barak, Yakov Tzhaor, zvika Aloni, Mike Bass and others. If I missed to name someone I apologize. To all of you writers I thank you, as well as, to Tibi Yaniv, The Manager of the Israeli Philatelic Federation for the financial and the logistic support and to Les Glassman for proof reading.

It is also the anniversary occasion of our Bulletin. With this issue, number 126-127 a new volume is started volume VII. We hope that the Bulletins in the new Volume would be of interest as these in the previous ones.

In this Bulletin we open a new section, "Items of interest" in which outstanding postal history items of the Holy Land will be shown. We encourage collectors to send us such items from their collections, for the knowledge and enjoyment of our readers.

The subject of the Narin Brothers "Overland Desert mail" has been well studied and documented. Nevertheless, new findings have been discovered and these are presented in an article in this issue. The article is a reprint from the "LP" the journal of the Royal Philatelic Society London. It is the first time in ten issues that a reprint is included in our Bulletin. Well, we prefer originals, but when important philatelic information is published in another publication and when we believe that it is also worthwhile for our readers we publish it. At least it is from a respected source.

In 1799 Napoleon left Egypt in his Campaign to conquer the Holy

Land (Syria). He and two of his Generals wrote letters from Gaza, Jaffa, Acre and Jerusalem. These are discussed and shown.

Sometimes an article appears in an important philatelic publication, written by a well known philatelist, which is based on incorrect facts or wrong interpretations. Following philatelic publications repeat and cite this incorrect information. Collectors buy these items and when new information which disproves the previous ones comes to light, there is disappointment and perhaps financial loss. One such case are four 1458/59 Venetian letters, which supposedly originated from Ashkelon/Ascelona in Syria/Palestine, when in fact these were sent from Barcelona, Spain. The subject is covered in a detailed article, which also contains a suggestion on how to avoid such pitfalls.

Philatelic subjects about the 1948 War of Independence seem inexhaustible. This time it is an article about the military mail sent to and from besieged Jerusalem. It is an important example of the ingenuity and stubbornness of the "Yisuv" to keep the communications with besieged cities and locations open.

The "Jerusalem Coffee House" in London serving as a post office in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, is not directly part of Holy Land Postal History. However, It is an interesting chapter in the development of the postal system, and as "Jerusalem" is part of the address of the letters, we thought of the connection to The Holy Land and liked to share this with our readers. Please read the article with such an approach.

***Yehuda Kleiner, FRPSL  
Editor***

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr. Kleiner:

I received the journal Holy Land Postal History and noticed your article on consular mail in the most recent issue. Could you provide more information about Figure 9, which shows the backside of a cover sent to Andover, Massachusetts from the American Consulate in 1895?

I am interested to know to whom the envelope was addressed to. If this cover is not in your collection, perhaps you can direct me to the current owner of the cover. Since you acknowledged (House of Zion) Ed Rosen as the origin of your photographs, I wrote to him but he replied that he had sold this cover several years ago.

**Edwin H. Kolodny, M.D. SIP LM#595**

Dear Mr. Kolodny,

Thank you for your email and for your interest in our Bulletin.

I do not collect "Consular Mail". When I saw the illustrations in Ed. Rosen's catalogue I thought that the subject is suitable for an article. I did some reading and wrote the article. so I cannot help you.

**Yehuda Kleiner, Editor.**

Dear Yehuda:

I corresponded with Ed Rosen to get further information on the cover you illustrated (Fig. 9). He indicated that the illustration you published was from one of his past auction catalogs and that he did not have an illustration of the front of the cover. He added that "The correspondence is the same, selah Merrill, U.S. consul general, family from mass". The front and back of my cover is shown in the attachment to this email (shown below). It was mailed from Jerusalem on December 30, 1895, traveled through Alexandria and arrived in Boston on January 24, 1886. The receiving date in Andover, MA was also in January. It would be interesting to know if the same consul (Selah Merrill?) served the span of

a decade 1885-1895 in Jerusalem, more about him, whether both letters were in the same handwriting, whether both letters were addressed to the same relative in Andover, MA, and who Edward Taylor, Esq was. Thank you for your interest and help. I am agreeable to your publishing my cover (front and back) and asking readers of Postal History of the Holy Land to help.

Edwin H. Kolodny





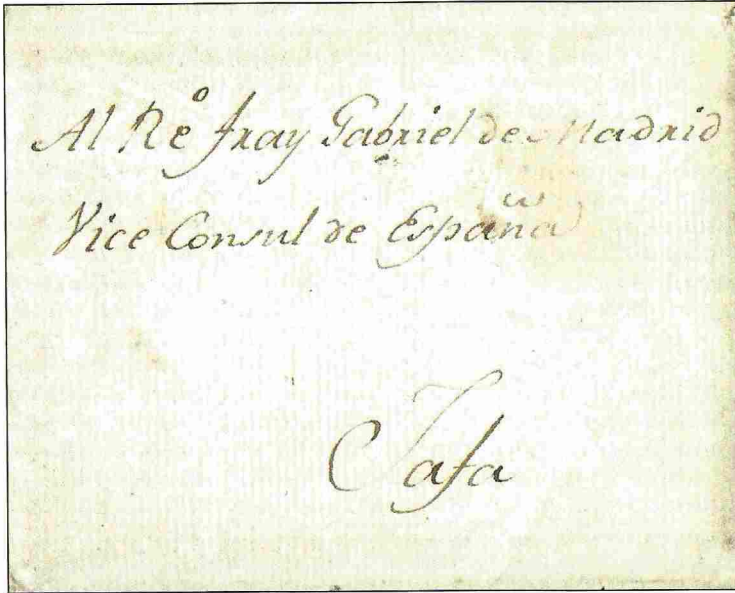
Meanwhile the Editor found another cover from this correspondence which is shown below.



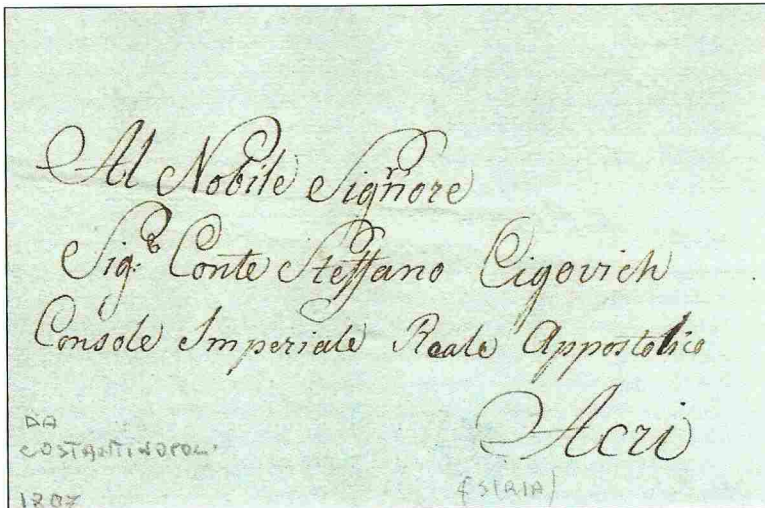
This cover is dated April 1, 1885, sent from the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem to Andover Mass. U.S.A, via Boston. Foreign Department paid delivery fee, postmark GERUSALEM 1.4.85, 10 Soldi foreign postage fee. The Editor will try to find the owner of this cover and connect him with Dr. Kolodny. In any case it would be appreciated if anyone of our readers could also be helpful in this matter.

\*\*\*\*\*

While on the subject of “Consular Mail” and as a supplement to the article in the previous issue we like to present two early letters to Consuls in the Holy Land.



1789, consular letter from the Spanish Embassy in Constantinople to Gabriel de Madrid the Spanish Vice Consul in Jaffa.



1807, Apostolic letter from Constantinople to the Apostolic (Papal) Consul in Acri (Akko)

# 1948 War of Independence – Flown Army Mail to Besieged Jerusalem

Itamar karpovsky, Tel Aviv, Israel

During the early phase of the 1948 Palestine war (from November 29, 1947 to May 15, 1948), local Arab forces took control of the hills overlooking the road to Jerusalem (Highway 1), between Sha'ar HaGai (Bab el-Wad) and Al Qastal. Vehicles attempting to use the road, Jerusalem's only link to the coast, took heavy fire, in effect besieging the city's Jewish population. Convoys carrying food, weapons, and medical supplies sent by the Yishuv sustained heavy losses, and often did not get through to the city. Thus the Jewish area of Jerusalem was effectively under siege as of April 20<sup>th</sup>. 1948

To overcome this problem the Israeli forces built “**The Israeli Burma Road**”, which was a makeshift bypass road between the general vicinity of kibbutz Hulda and Jerusalem, (Fig 1). The name was inspired by the Burma Road, which the British built and used to get supplies into China during W.W.2.



*Fig. 1: An army ambulance climbing the hilly bumpy “Israeli Burma Road”*



During the siege which lasted for almost three months till 11<sup>th</sup>. June 1948, when the young Israeli Army drove the Arabs away and reopened the road to Jerusalem, the only possible contact between the city and the rest of the country was by air, using a small, one engine army aircraft, which flew from north Tel Aviv, "Sde Dov" airport to the temporary "Matom" airport in Jerusalem.



*Fig. 2: A 109 German Messerschmitt aircraft "left over from W.W.2 hastily bought by Israel during the War of Independence. Messerschmitt, Spitfire, and Czech made planes were the backbone of the young Israeli Air force. Such planes were also used to form the contact with besieged Jerusalem.*

The planes were used to carry mainly ammunition, weapon spare parts, medicines and other urgent necessities. This did not leave much room for mail, apart from important V.I.P mail and a few letters to soldiers serving in Jerusalem. Consequently, incoming mail to Jerusalem during the siege is scarce.

On the return flight besides transporting wounded soldiers, official and army correspondence, which was approved by the Army authorities, such mail is rare, only a few have been recorded. Letters from soldiers are the most scarce, since the majority of them were inhabitants of the City and there was no need to send their letters by plane, when these were addressed to family inside the City. Only a few soldiers letters needed to be sent from the Besieged City as outgoing mail and thus is also very rare.

In Figure 3, an incoming letter from a soldier who served at "Army Post 150" Tel Aviv area, to Jerusalem dated, 31.5.1948 is shown. The letter was

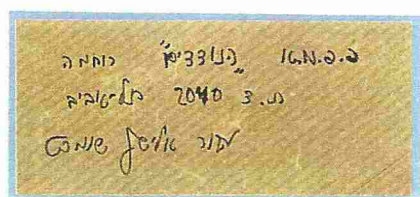
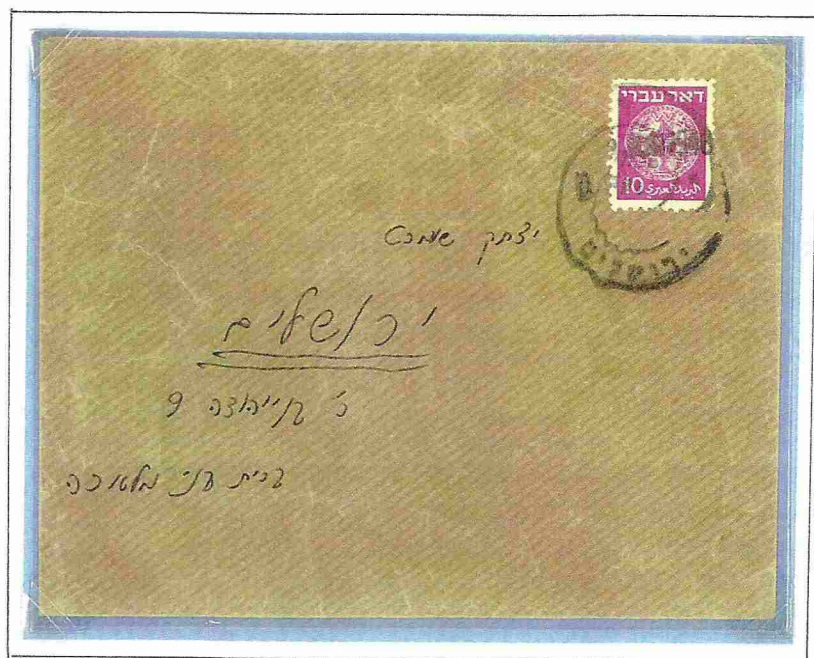




behind Egyptian lines. The letter is addressed to his family in besieged Jerusalem. So in effect it is a letter that was sent from one besieged location to another besieged location. The letter was flown by the army plane from Nir-Am to Tel Aviv and then flown again to Besieged Jerusalem.



*Fig. 4: Stampless courier O.A.S letter originating from Kibutz "Nir Am" in the besieged Negev, behind Egyptian's army lines, transit Tel Aviv, "A.P. Base-A, 16<sup>th</sup>. June, postmark, to besieged Jerusalem, by Army plane. Cancelled upon arrival on the reverse of the letter "A.P.O-5", Army post office-5, provisional postmark for Jerusalem, dated 18<sup>th</sup>. June 1948. This letter is the only one of two letters known so far as being sent from the besieged Negev to besieged Jerusalem. The second one is shown in Figure 5.*



*Fig. 5: Courier civilian letter sent from besieged Kibbutz Ruhama, behind Egyptian Army lines to Tel Aviv where it was franked by a 10Mil Doar Ivri stamp paying the domestic letter rate. Flown to Besieged Jerusalem, cancelled upon arrival at the sorting office with distorted "Rosette" postmark dated 18<sup>th</sup>. June 1948.*



## To British Consulate in Jerusalem and back

Collection Mihael Foch, Slovenia

The British consulate in Jerusalem was opened (established) in 1838. The first consul was William Tanner Young, with mandate until 1846. His successor was James Finn (1846-1863). Consulates cared for contacts with its citizens in the Holy Land and they organized the mail (post), until official post links were established.

The mail from England arrived to Jerusalem over Alexandria, Jaffa or Beiruth. In those days the population in Jerusalem was not large and as we can say now "anybody knows everybody". There were also cases when someone was searched after, but without success. That confirms the following interesting letter.





The letter was sent from Beanminster on 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1850. Postage costs 1 shilling and 3 pence. Validated with the stamp PAID VA 9 SP 9 1850. It was addressed to Peter Cox (in protection of the English consul) and it was written by his father.

The English Consulate in Jerusalem sent it back to England, with an interesting stamp used on it.

---

SENT BACK TO ENGLAND  
WITHOUT A REASON  
FOR NON DELIVERY

---

It is not entirely clear, how the letter traveled back to England. Probably with the French ship from Beiruth (postage 28 decimes) over Malta, where the letter was disinfected by cutting and smoking. Also is not known, who paid for the postage and if the letter arrived back in Beanminster and when.

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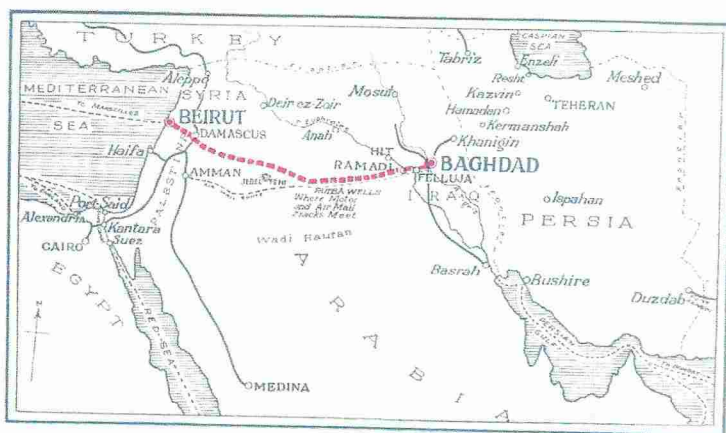
# Overland Mail Baghdad – Haifa\*

## The Publicity Envelopes of the Nairn Transport Company

Rainer Fuchs, AIJP

Much has been written about the Overland Mail Baghdad-Haifa in both philatelic books and many contemporary publications. Nevertheless, this private postal transport company is unknown to many philatelists despite the famous publication *The Overland Mail via the Syro-Iraqi Great Desert* by Norman J. Collins with Zvi Alexander and Norman Gladstone (BABIP Monograph, 1990). Since that book was published, much new information has arisen. However, since this area is not widely popular among collectors, a revision and re-publication of the book is unlikely at present. To make the new findings public, they will be published in a series of articles.

This article focuses on the so-called Nairn Publicity Envelopes. For additional postal historical information on agreements with postal administrations, surcharges, route instruction handstamps / labels / envelopes and late fee markings, please refer to the literature list at the end of this article. Additional information on the different names and legal forms of the companies is mentioned.



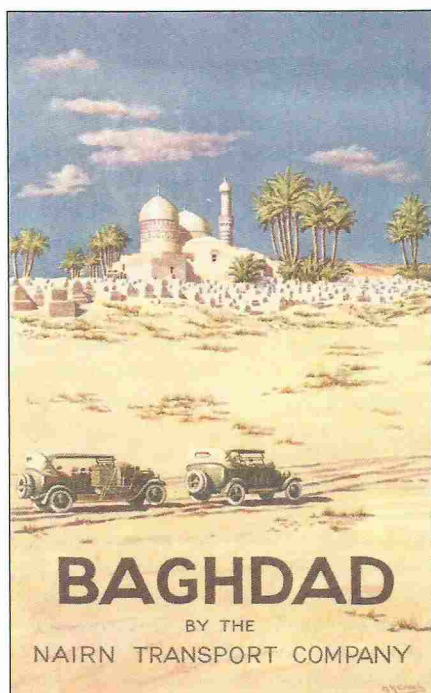
Map (extract) from  
an old advertising  
pamphlet of the  
Nairn Transport  
Company showing  
the transport route.

\* This article is reprinted by permission from the Journal of the Royal Philatelic Society London

## ***Short Historical Introduction***

The Nairn Transport Company was formed, as the name indicates, by Norman Nairn and driver / mechanic Gerald Nairn, young New Zealander brothers who served at the Royal British Army in the Middle East during World War I. After the war, the two brothers remained in the Middle East and noted the possibilities a transport company through the Syro-Iraq desert could offer.

After intensive planning, and with the support of the trader family Nasser, a transport company was opened on October 18, 1923 in Haifa and Beirut.



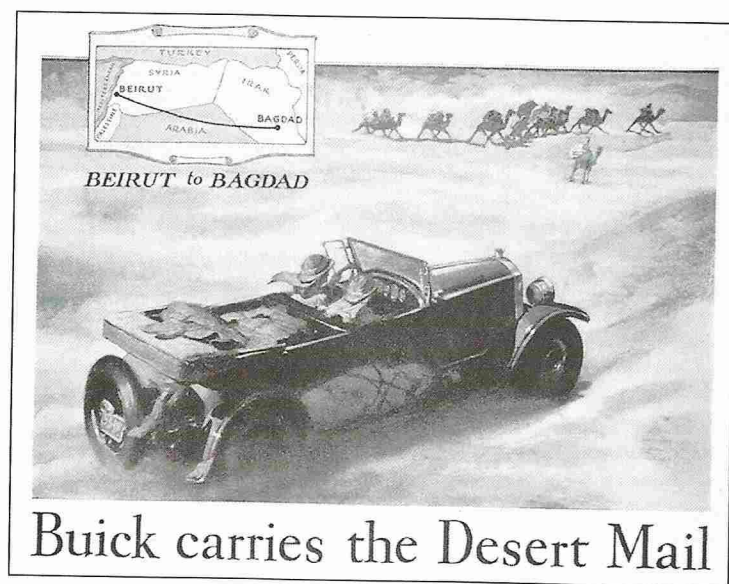
Since the route through the desert was found feasible and reliable, the Iraqi Government contracted Nairn for the transportation of mail from Baghdad to Damascus / Haifa and vice versa. To cover the costs for this service, the Nairn Transport Company received the rights for the postal surcharges, which were usually paid in advance by the sender.

Nairn Transport Company only transported the mail across the desert; it did not deliver the mail to the receiver. Nairn received the mail

accumulated by the Iraqi, Syrian or Palestinian Exchange Post offices and forwarded it. By using this route, the transport time for mail to/from Europe was reduced to approximately 10 days compared to the 30 days required on the usual route by ship from Port Said, through the Suez Canal, around the Arab Peninsula to the Iraq port city of Basra and by rail to Baghdad.

To make the public aware of the services of the Nairn Transport Company, several advertising and travel pamphlets such as the one shown above were issued. This pamphlet is an early type showing a typical desert panorama with palm trees and a mosque as well as two cars, most likely a Cadillac (left) and a Buick (right). The first commercial cruises through the desert were performed from 1923 onwards with such cars.

Since the desert cruises were successful, the car manufacturers earned a good and welcome reputation. The American manufacturer Buick published the following advertisement in 1927 in the *Saturday Evening Post*, USA (advertising text truncated).



In addition to the advertising and travel pamphlets, a number of publicity envelopes were issued which is the focus of this article. The contemporary philatelic literature reports a total of six different publicity envelopes (and three different cachets which are within the scope of this article). Further research in major collections, auctions and dealer offerings



has been carried out and I now can report a total of eight publicity envelopes in up to four different dimensions, plus several minor variances in size and in one case with a different shape of back flap. From most of these publicity envelopes very few examples are known to exist and from some of them only one is known to exist. Norman J. Collins (FRPSL) mentioned in his monograph *“What is surprising is the fact that so few of these envelopes seem to have survived and they seem to be in the Post Office Mauritius class of rarity...”*, however, without having their monetary value.

The reason for the relative low value in relation to the few known pieces may be that these envelopes do not have postage stamp indicia; therefore they are not classified as postal stationery. They were publicity (advertising) envelopes which had to be franked with postage stamps to be valid for being mailed through the post. Types (Fuchs) 2-7 of the publicity envelopes bear the identical logo; only the inscription / company name is different. The name of the company changed several times over the years, reflecting different ownerships and legal forms that were represented by the logos, and which are important for their classification.

## ***Listing of the different types of the Nairn Publicity Envelopes***

For many years, the listing of the advertising envelopes as found in the Collins monograph was the status quo for them. Norman had listed all advertising envelopes known to him at the time of publishing the monograph. In addition, he mentioned the quantity of known copies of the respective envelopes and the earliest and latest dates of use. The numbers mentioned in the monograph are outdated today and therefore not repeated here.

Due to the additionally known types, it is necessary to completely revise the classification introduced by Collins and extend it to add the additional known types and subtypes. All the types cited below are identified with new numbering (Fuchs) A timeline is provided for the different company names and are matched to the types of advertising envelopes.

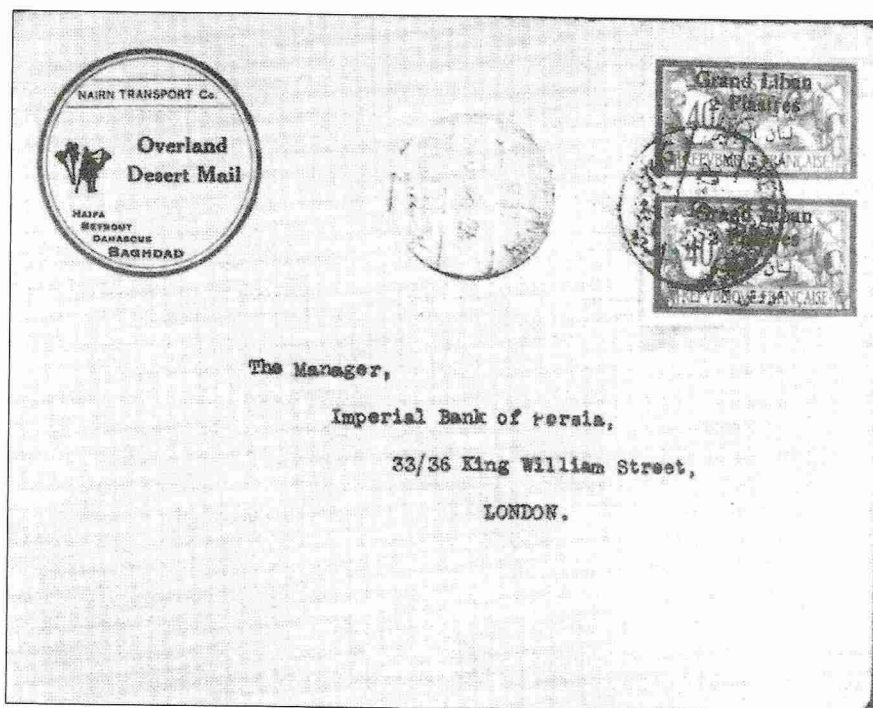
A table showing all types and sizes known to date is provided at the end of this article.

## ***The Companies and Envelopes: Nairn Transport Company (18 October 1923 – 19 September 1926)***

The Nairn Transport Company was officially opened on 18 October 1923 and operated under this name until 19 September 1926. From this period four different types of advertising envelopes are known, some of them in different sizes. The relatively high number of different advertising envelopes reflects the newly opened company's initial efforts to make the company known to the public.

### **Type 1**

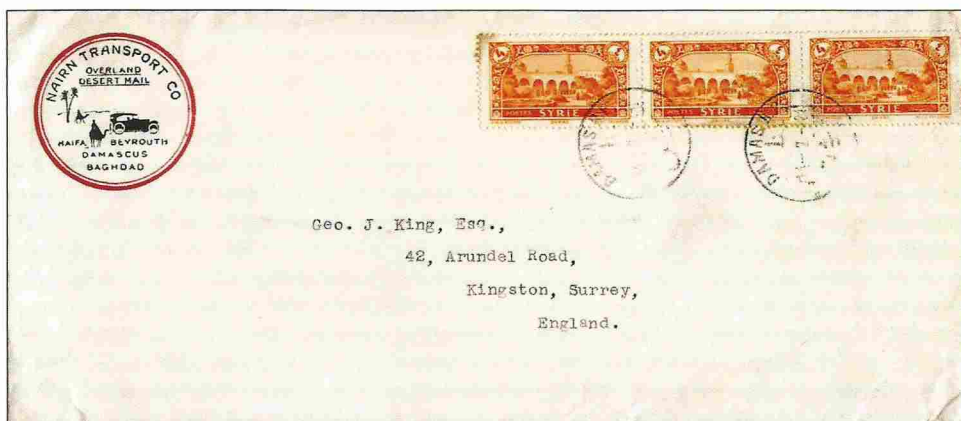
This advertising envelope is, along with Type 8, the only type not bearing the normal Nairn logo (palm trees, camels and vehicle). The poor resolution image in this logo appears to be palm trees and a Bedouin on a camel (or in Arabic cloth?). The four cities of Haifa, Beyrout, Damascus and Baghdad are mentioned, indicating that Nairn offices were located in these cities.



*Type 1: Advertising envelope to UK, franked with stamps of the French-Levant, today's Lebanon, dated 20 September 1924. This is the only reported example of this envelope (Ex Collection Art Groten, current owner unknown).*

## Type 2

Type 2 advertising envelopes are known used from 10 April 1924 until end of April 1936. A total of three subtypes have been identified. Reminders of the old envelope stock are also used after Sep 1926 when the name was changed to Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd...

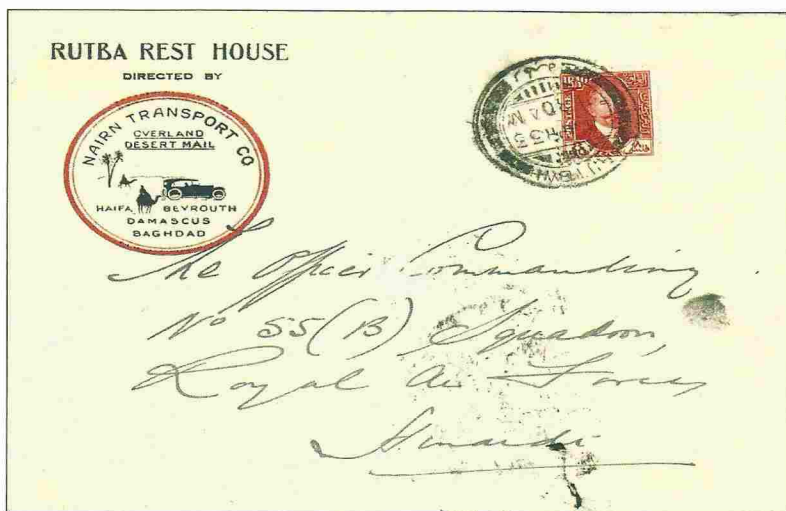


*Type 2b: Damas (cus) to England, dated 14 February 1934, franked with Syrian stamps (Collection Zoonefeld).*



*Type 2c: Another mystery. The logo is type 2, however, the envelope appears to be Manila paper, similar to that used for Type 7 advertising envelopes. Size approx. 158 x 129 mm (calculated graphically out of the image). (Ex Collection Art Groten, current owner unknown).*

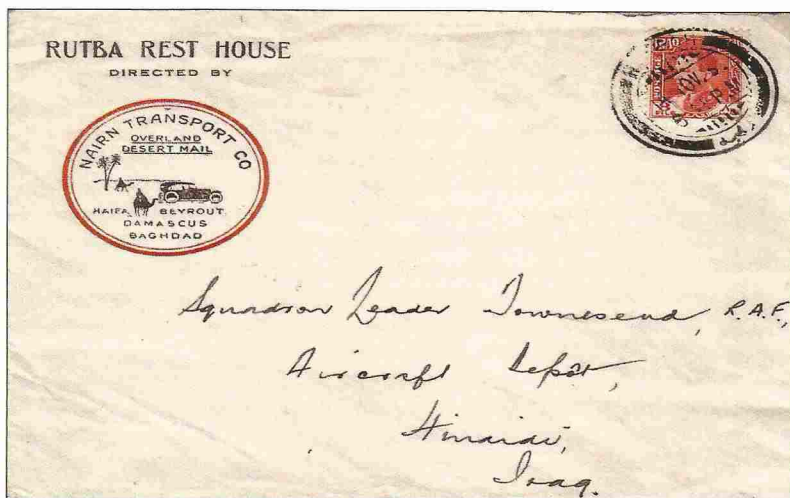
### Type 3- With "RUTBA REST HOUSE" imprint



Type 3: Rutbah to Hinaidi, medium size type of this advertising envelope, dated April 1933. Two examples of this type are known.

### Type 4

Similar to Type 3, however without "H" in BEYROUTH. This is the only type of advertising envelope spelling BEYROUT without the "H" at the end.



Type 4: Local cover from Rutbah (Iraq) to Hinaidi (Iraq), medium size type of this advertising envelope, dated 14 November, year unreadable. Two examples of this type are known. Collection of the late Zvi Alexander which has been bequeath to the Israel Postal Museum.



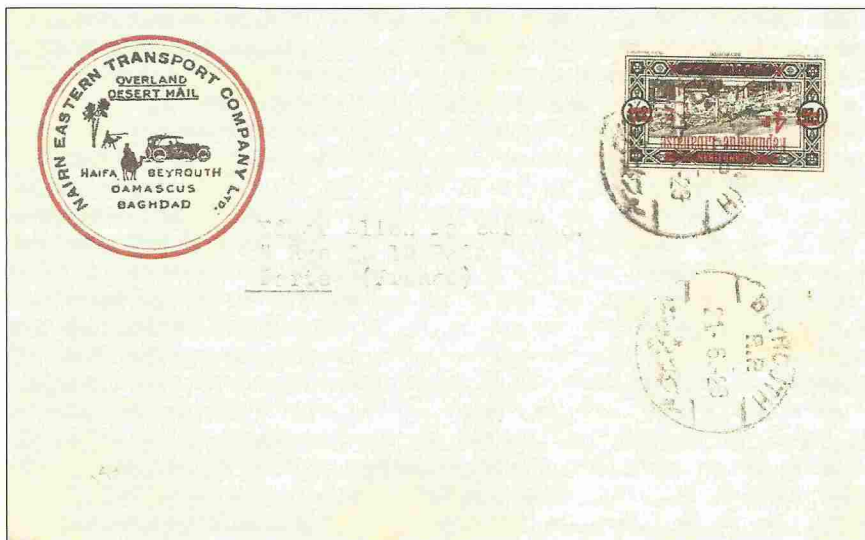
Types 3 and 4 are only known from 1933 and 1934 when the company name was “Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd”.

## ***Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd (20 September 1926 – 1936)***

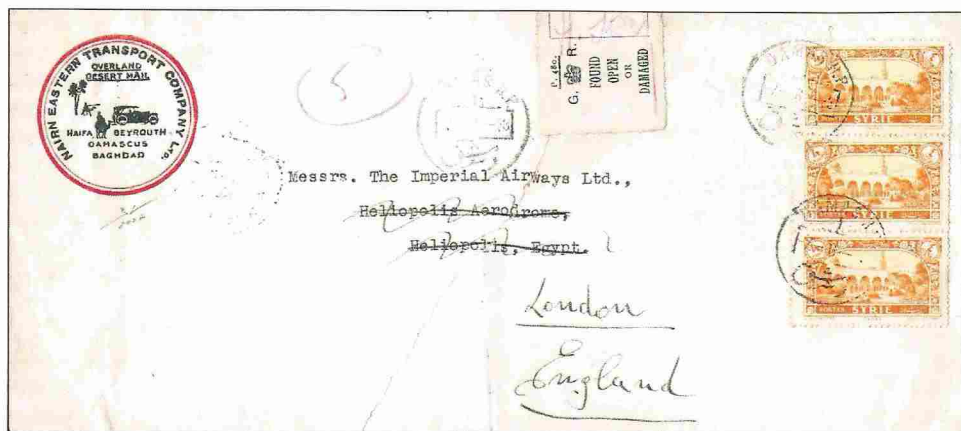
In 1926, the Nairn brothers took over another transport company, the Eastern Transport Company. They merged the two companies and reorganized them. However, for financial and political reasons which are beyond the scope of this article, the Nairn Brothers sold this new company to a group of English and French investors. Norman Nairn, however, arranged to remain in a supervising role and he became the Managing Director of the “Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd”. That company was registered on 20 September 1926 with its head office in Damascus and a sub-office in Beirut. The renaming of the company was reflected in the advertising envelopes of which two different envelopes, one in two different formats, are known.

### **Type 5**

Name change to Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd.



*Type 5a: Beirut to Paris, France, dated 21 June 1929, franked with a Lebanese stamp.*



Type 5b: Damas(cus) to Egypt und forwarded to England, dated 7 June 1933, franked with Syrian stamps.

## Type 6 : RUTBA REST HOUSE imprint

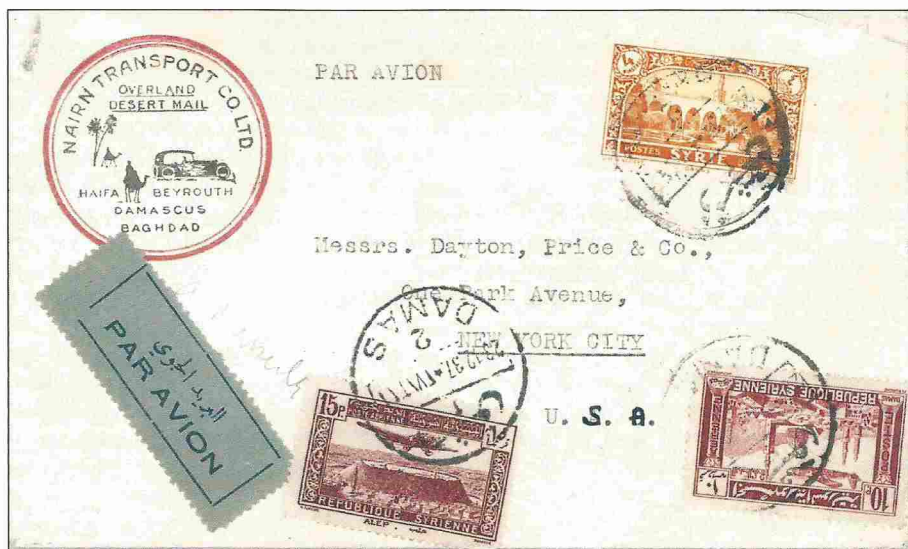


Type 6: Advertising envelope to the Philippines via Port Said, franked with a Syrian stamp. On reverse, transit postmark Port Said Traffic (1 March 1931) and Singapore (20 March 1931). This is the only known example of this type.

## ***Nairn Transport Company LTD (1936 – approx. 1956)***

In 1936 the “Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd” was renamed to Nairn Transport Company Ltd. Norman Nairn had the idea to replace the old buses with new white Pullman buses, but the Supervisory Board of the Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd objected that idea. Therefore, Norman Nairn, with the help of British investors, bought additional shares of the Nairn Eastern Transport Company Ltd to bring the company under his control, which resulted in the change of name. Again, the renaming of the company was reflected in the advertising envelopes. There are two different types (Type 6 and 7), with Type 7 known in four different main formats whereas Type 7a is known with some small differences in size and two different type of back flap.

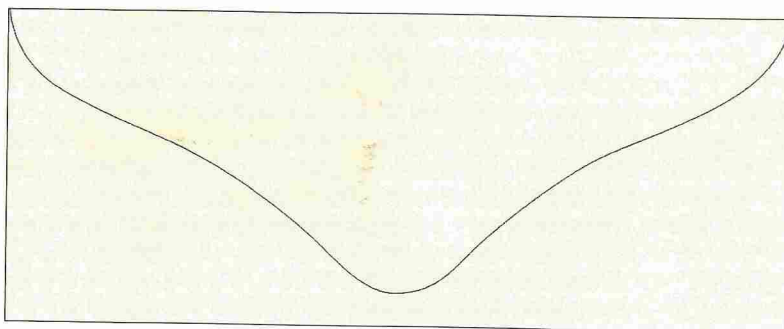
### **Type 7**



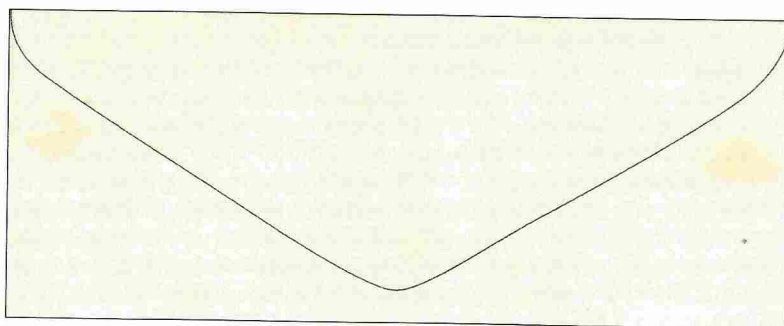
*Type 7a: Damas(cus) to New York, 23 December 1937, franked with Syrian stamps.*

Very recently, while scanning and measuring the few copies of type 7a in my collection, I noted that there are 2 different types of back flap, angled and rounded, as listed in the table at the end of the article.

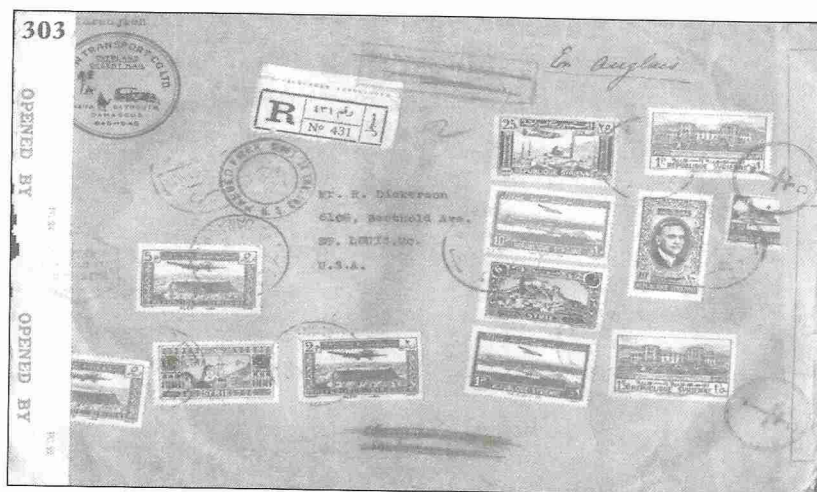
## Type 7a: The 2 different types of back flap



*Type 7a with Round Angled Back flap*



*Type 7a with Squared Angle Back flap*



*Type 7c: Large advertising envelope (Size approx. 254 x 178 mm), addressed to St. Louis, USA, franked with Syrian stamps, 20 March 1942, censored in Syria and Palestine, franked with Syrian stamps. This is the only known example of this type. Ex Collection Groten, current owner unknown.*



## Type 8

This advertising envelope is, besides Type 1, the only type which does not bear the usual Nairn logo. The inscription on the hand reads "Faith / Service / Ideal" and the inscription below the hand reads "Any Inefficient / Service, Staff / or Equipment Write / N. Nairn, Beyrouth".



*Type 8: 10 November 1936 from Damas (cus) to Souk El Gharb, Lebanon. This is the only known example of this type. Ex Collection Groten, current owner unknown.*

In 1956, after many years of successful business, the political situation became increasingly difficult. Gerald Nairn had already retired from the business some years before and had dispersed the shares and assets he had in the company. After careful consideration, Norman Nairn sold his shares to his employees, some of whom had worked more than 33 years for Nairn. The story of Norman Nairn and his transportation companies came to an end. However, the name Nairn is still a synonym for Overland Buses in the region.

## ***Current status of the philatelic research***

While studying auction catalogues and collections, it was noted that some of the publicity envelopes exist in different sizes. In addition I noted on Type (Fuchs 7a / Collins NPE-3) different shapes of back flaps as shown

in the article. This has not been noted or published previously. If similar differences can be found on other types as well cannot be confirmed, nor ruled out. The small quantity of known items does not permit this as of today. All known publicity envelopes and sizes are shown in the table below.

Type (Fuchs)	Type (Collins)	Shape of Back flap	Size in mm (if known)
1	NL		Most likely 154 x 122 mm
2a	NPE-1		159 x 96 mm
2b	---		240 x 107 mm
2c	---		Approx. 158 x 129 mm, graphically calculated based on the image
3	NPE-5		154 x 122 / 125 mm. (Envelope is not in exact rectangular shape)
4	NPE-6		Most likely 154 x 122 mm
5a	NPE-2		159 x 96 mm
5b	---		240 x 107 mm
6	NL		154 x 122 mm
7a	NPE-3	Angular, usage date 29 July 1937	151 x 93 mm
		Angular, usage date 26 February 1938	158,5 x 95,5 mm
		Round, usage date 28 April 1940	158 x 95 mm
		Round, usage date 28 February 1940	158,5 x 96,5 mm
		Angular, usage date 23 December 1937	159 x 95 mm
7b	---		240 x 107 mm
7c	---		Approx. 254 x 178 mm
7d	---		Approx. 280 x 222 mm
8	NPE-4		Most likely 154 x 122 mm

### Legend

NL = This main type is not known by Collins

--- = This format / size is not known by Collins

As now demonstrated for the first time, there are different variants of each envelope type. This has prompted a complete revision of the numbering system used by Collins. While this may lead to some discussion, the number of collectors for these items is quite small and changes in numbering due to new research is nothing extraordinary in other areas. There may be other distinguishing features of the paper, e.g., colour, shape of the flap, etc., but the small number of known items and available material does not make deeper research practical.

In Types (Fuchs) 3, 4 and 6, the distance between “Rutba REST HOUSE / directed by” to the round logo differs. This is attributed to two-step printing at different times. The use of these types after the company changed its name is simply the consumption of remaining stock.

Norman J. Collins reported in his monograph the number of items known by him as they had been reported by follow collectors. The numbers of known pieces noted there are now obsolete, so they are not repeated here. However, the old figures are still used by dealers and auction houses to suggest greater rarity than exists. Still, it must be said very clearly that these publicity envelopes are quite rare; however, the often demanded prices of €500-1000 (£400-800, US-\$600-1200) for the more common types are exaggerated. From some of the types, only one or two items are known. For some of the more common types, eight to ten examples are reported. Even today, new and previously unknown types and items are being discovered. Other types and subtypes have yet to be recognized. To discover and publicise them is the author’s goal.

### **Call for help:**

Some collectors / dealers have such envelopes, or perhaps only images, in their collections, archives or stock. The author would appreciate contact, exchange of experiences, and new usage data on these promotional envelopes, and also other historically interesting information. Additional information and images on such items and other aspects of the Overland Mail Baghdad–Haifa are published on the internet page of the author at <http://fuchs-online.com/overlandmail>

**Note:**

All shown items are, unless indicated otherwise, from the collection of the author.

**Literature References:**

- Norman J. Collins with Zvi Alexander and Norman Gladstone. The Overland Mail via the Syro-Iraqi Great Desert, BABIP Monograph, 1990.
- Arthur H. Groten, "The Nairn Way – The Baghdad–Haifa Overland Mail Desert Mail Route" *American Philatelist*, March 1995
- J. S. Tullet, *Nairn Bus to Baghdad: The story of Gerald Nairn*, New Zealand, ASIN: B0006CHQ54.
- Max Reisch, *Karawanenstraßen Asiens*, ISBN-10: 3853391265, ISBN-13: 978-3853391266.
- Norman A. Cohen, "The Overland Mail" in "The Arab World Philatelist No. 3 (Winter 1979)", published by Howard Courtney.
- Nutmeg Auction catalogue of Dr. Arthur Groten's "Via Palestine", public Sale No. 15, 13. April 1999.
- Rainer Fuchs, *Some Overland Mail Rarities*, *London Philatelist*, issue November 2010, Pages 341-343.
- Rainer Fuchs, "Die Overland Mail Bagdad–Haifa, Michel Rundschau 12-2008 (Pages 56, 58, 60 & 62), issue 1-2009 (Pages 60, 62 & 64) as well as issue 9-2010 (Pages 62 & 64).
- Rainer Fuchs, *Overland Mail Bagdad–Haifa, Die Werbe-Briefumschläge der Nairn Transport Company*, Philatelie, the monthly publication of the German Philatelic Society BDPH, Issue 413 (November 2011), pages 24-40 and Issue 414 (December 2011), pages 48-54.
- Numerous Articles in different bulletins of philatelic associations.



# Jerusalem Coffee House in London

Mihael I. Foch, FRPSL, Slovenia

Postal history research is a rather complex job. Sometimes you come into a blind ally but with a side opening towards a completely new theme. It has often happened during my Jerusalem collection study. I've found some letters sent to Jerusalem Coffee House in London, which immediately rose my brows- Jerusalem Coffee House in London? Partly the question about the Coffee House was answered in Holy Land Postal History Bulletin 121-122(2012) written by Martin Perlmutter from London who also found a letter from 1794 sent to the Jerusalem Coffee House.

In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century there were many Coffee Houses in London, several of these in Lombard Street. Best known is perhaps Jamaica Coffee House. Jerusalem Coffee House was one of the oldest, located close to Cowper's Court near Cornhill, founded probably at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

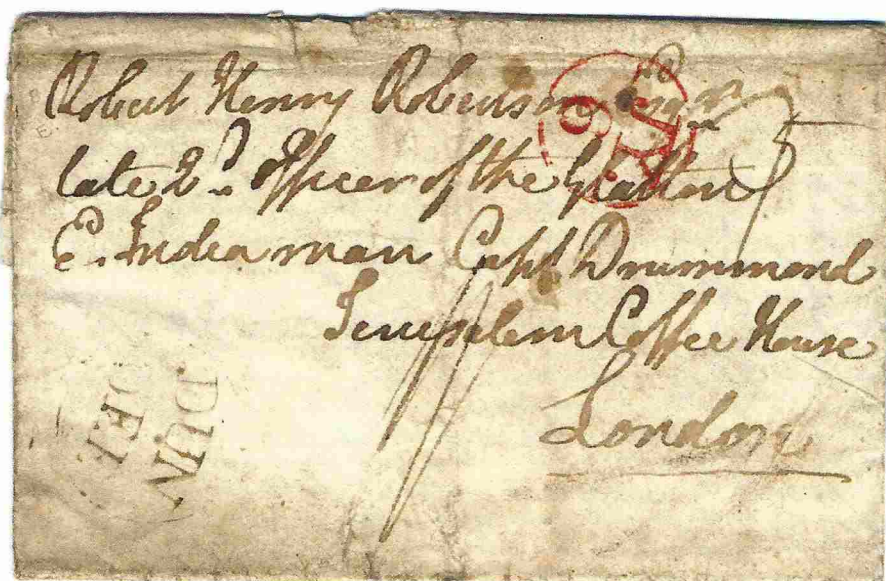


Fig.1: July 6<sup>th</sup> 1700 (?)/ Letter sent by Robert Stuart from Dundee to Jerusalem Coffee House for second officer of the ship Glatton, under command of captain Drummond, East India comp. Red "Bishop" stamp JY/6 and circular stamp Dundee. Postage 5p in manuscript.

These Coffee Houses were meeting points of merchants and captains of ships trading and travelling to the West and East Indies, China, Africa, Americas ,Australia, etc. There in the Coffee Houses they planned trading voyages and took bookings for cargo and passengers. Coffee Houses were equipped with voyage schedules of ships and sailing maps. They were serving also as post offices where letters could be dispatched and received by ship crews , officers and traders. In this way the Coffee Houses were ancestors of the British Royal Mail Service and Post Offices generally.

The reason for naming a Coffee House Jerusalem has not been explained yet. Was it founded and named by a descendant of Templar knights, or a Holy Land pilgrim or man (or more of them) with just interest in trading in Mediterranean and Near East? Or may be a Jewish orthodox immigrant? That is yet to be discovered.

### Reference:

R. M. Willcocks: England's postal History

Holy Land Postal History 121-122 letter to editor



Fig. 2: August 20<sup>th</sup> 1841/ Letter sent from Arbroath to Jerusalem Coffee House for Mc Donald, captain of Lord Auckland, with a cabin passage booking for an elderly lady. Postage 1 penny red stamp, cancelled by black Maltese cross.

# Letters from Napoleon's Egyptian/ Palestine 1799 campaign

Yehuda Kleiner, Raanana, Israel

## Introduction

The French Campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798–1801) was Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in the Orient, ostensibly to protect French trade interests, undermine Britain's access to India, and to establish scientific enterprise in the region.

Despite many decisive victories and an initially successful expedition into Syria, Napoleon and his *Armée d'Orient* were eventually forced to withdraw, after sowing political disharmony in France, causing conflict in Europe, and suffering the defeat of the supporting French fleet at the Battle of the Nile.

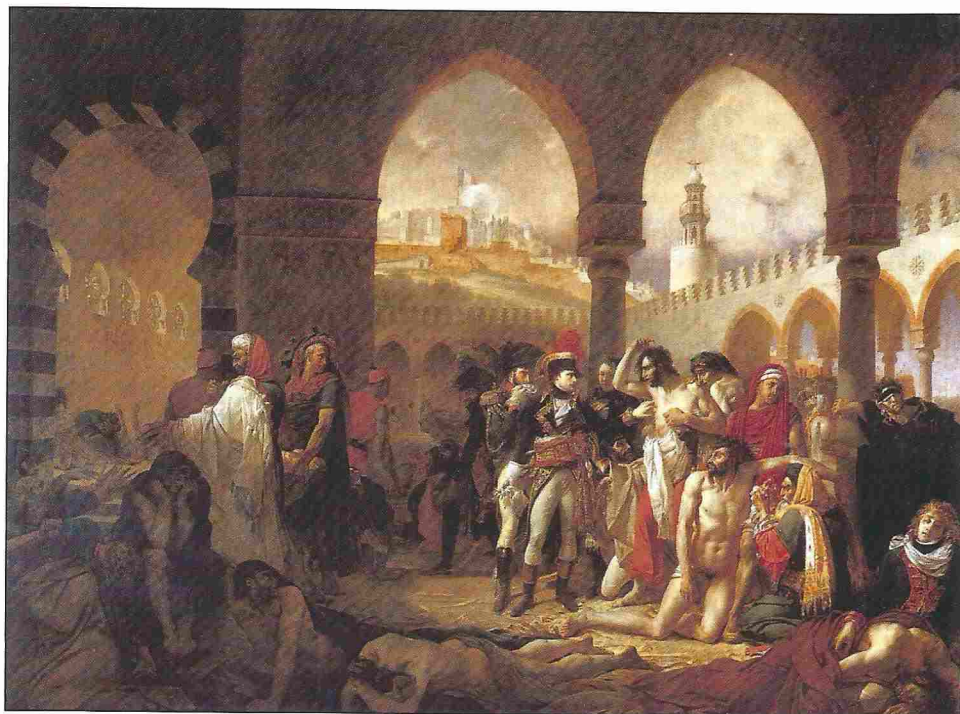
It was during this expedition that he invaded the Holy Land from the south-west; the aim of the campaign in the Holy Land was three fold:

1. To prevent the Ottoman army, which started to build up in Syria, from marching to Egypt through Palestine.
2. To block the British Navy from using Syrian and Palestine ports.
3. To annex Palestine to the French held colonial territory in Egypt.

In February 1799, the French marched across the Sinai Desert with some fourteen thousand soldiers. They arrived on February 21<sup>st</sup>. at the fortress of El Arish and easily captured the neighboring town. They continued northwards to Gaza which they occupied on February 27<sup>th</sup>. From there they marched to Jaffa which was conquered on March 7<sup>th</sup>. The next stop was at Acre where Napoleon and his Army arrived on March 17<sup>th</sup>. There they were stopped at the foot of Acre battlements by the defenders in the city who were led by Jazzar Pasha and backed by a British Naval Force. Despite Napoleons two month-long siege of Acre, he did not succeed in seizing the city and thus on May 22, 1799 decided to a retreat from Acre and from the Holy Land altogether. During his campaign Napoleon's army was struck down by a plague (Fig. 1). When he



retreated he left behind hundreds of wounded and dying men. Napoleon returned to France, where he was hailed as a conquering hero. His defeat in Acre had but little influence on his future glorious career.



*Fig.1: Napoleon visiting his soldiers who have been infected by the plague and interned in the Armenian monastery in Jaffa.*

## ***The Military Post System***

Inside the borders of the Empire, military correspondence was assured through the garrison offices of the towns; but for the army in the field, a specialized service was organized to transit letters and dispatches.

This Military Postal Service was entirely staffed by civilians, including the most senior personnel, but under the command of the of the military administration authorities. The service comprised two divisions: one for correspondence and funds and one for materials, coaches and limbers. In each army there was a grand bureau and under it sub bureaus at divisional and at army corps level.



Normal correspondence was transported by ordinary professional couriers, by coach or on horseback often escorted by guards.

In the Egyptian campaign the top commanding centers of the army were in Cairo and to a lesser extent in Damietta. Most correspondence from and to Gaza, Jaffa, and Acre was carried over land to Cairo and Damietta as the sea in the vicinity of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, was controlled by the British and Ottoman's navies.

## ***The Letters***

The number of letters from Napoleon's army originating from the Holy Land is not known to the author. Nevertheless he has found five which were shown in various publications (outlined in the list of sources). These are as follows:

Two letters by Napoleon One from Jaffa and one from Jerusalem, (Figs: 2 and 3).

Two letters by General Alexander Berthier. One from Gaza and one from Acre. (Figs: 4 and 5).

One letter by General Maxemillian Caprelli from Jaffa. (Fig. 6).

A distinction should be made between letters and dispatches. Letters were usually in the form, that we philatelists call "covers" Figure 6 is an example. Dispatches were written on preprinted forms, bearing the name and the rank, of the writer, the name of the Armée, as well as two words from the French Revolutionary slogan "Liberte and Egalite" (Freedom and Equality). They were folded closed and given to the courier to carry to destination.

The French Republican/Revolutionary Calendar was used. This Calendar was created and implemented during the Revolution, and used by the French government for about 12 years from late 1793 to 1805. The revolutionary system was designed in part to remove all religious and royalist influences from the calendar, and was part of a larger attempt at decimalization in France. Details of the Calendar are given in Appendix 1.

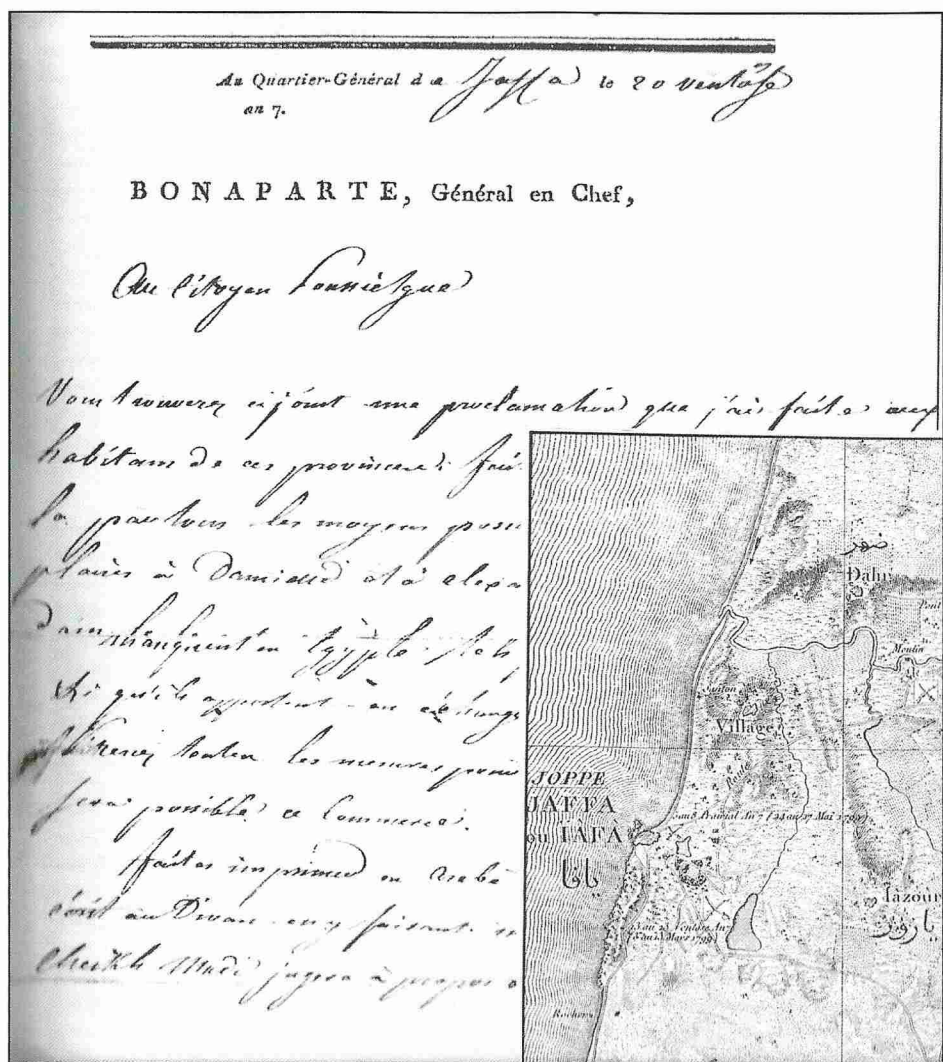


Fig.2: Letter/ dispatch written by Napoleon from Jaffa to Headquarters in Cairo. Dated 20 Ventose (February) Year 7 of the Republic (1799). The letter is pictured in the book *Jaffa Mirrored in History* (Hebrew) and shows part of the map made by Zakotin the mapping officer of Napoleon during the Egyptian Campaign. Note Jaffa manuscript in the top line.

The next letter from Napoleon, apparently from Jerusalem is a controversial issue. During Napoleon's campaign in Palestine, the government newspaper *Moniteur* published the information that Napoleon had issued a manifesto in Palestine which promised the Jews their return to their country. Many European newspapers reproduced

this information, although today it is questioned whether Napoleon really issued such a declaration. The format of this document is identical to the ones in other dispatches. The top and a part of it is illustrated below in Figure 3, while the full text of it is given in appendix 2. It may never have existed and this might be the reason why in spite of many efforts by the author no illustration of the letter could be found, although the translated text of the letter is on the Internet, and stated to be a translation of the original (see below).

*Fig. 3: Letter to the Jewish Nation from the French Commander-in-Chief Buonaparte (translated from the Original, 1799)*

---

General Headquarters, Jerusalem 1<sup>st</sup> Floreal,  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1799, in the year of 7 of the French Republic

**BUONAPARTE, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMIES  
OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC IN AFRICA AND ASIA, TO THE  
RIGHTFUL HEIRS OF PALESTINE.**

Israelites, unique nation, whom, in thousands of years, lust of conquest and tyranny have been able to be deprived of their ancestral lands, but not of name and national existence!

...And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isaiah 35,10)

...The young army with which Providence has sent me hither, let by justice and accompanied by victory, has made Jerusalem my headquarters and will, within a few days, transfer them to Damascus, a proximity which is no longer terrifying to David's city.

*...Arise then Rightful heirs of Palestine!*

---

The next two letters are from General Berthier. Marshal Berthier was Napoleon's Chief of Staff from the start of his first Italian campaign in 1796 until his first abdication in 1814. The operational efficiency of the Grande Armée owed much to his considerable administrative and organizational skills. The General-in-Chief Berthier gave his orders with the precision of a consummate warrior, and at Marengo maintained the reputation that he so rightly acquired in Italy and in Egypt under the orders of Bonaparte.

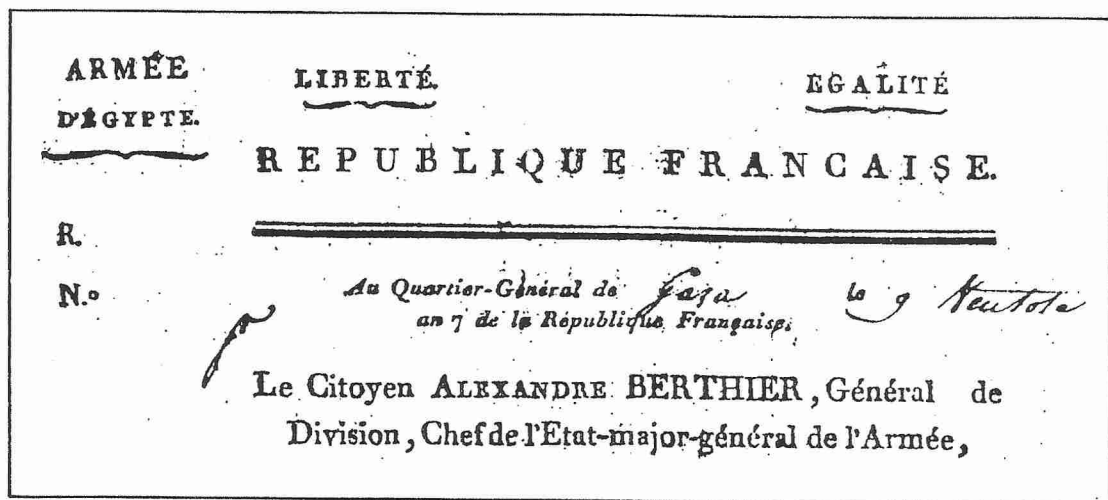


Fig. 4: Letter/dispatch from General Alexander Berthier from Gaza to Headquarters in Cairo, dated 9 Ventose 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic, = 27 February 1799, the date in which his Army occupied Gaza. Note manuscript "gaza".

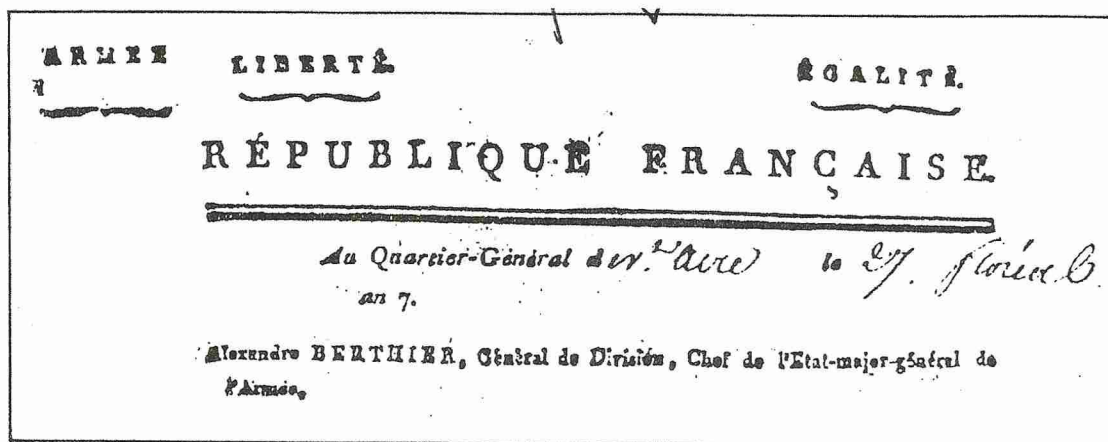


Fig. 5: Letter/dispatch from General Alexander Berthier from Acre to Headquarters in Cairo, dated 27 Floreal 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic = 16 May 1799, 4 days before the withdrawal from Acre. Note manuscript "Acre"

Finally, the letter from General Capparelli, who was an important member of the entourage around Napoleon and came with him to Egypt. He was elected a member of the Institute d'Égypte's political economy section in the class of moral and political sciences, and formed



part of the commission for drafting the Institute's regulations. He also accompanied Napoleon on the surveys to trace the route of what later becomes the Suez Canal. During the Assault on Acre, he had to have his right arm amputated when his elbow was smashed by a bullet during a new assault on Acre on April 24. He was just starting to learn to write with his left hand when a gangrene struck, causing a fever which killed him. Napoleon wrote of him in the order of the day: *"Our universal regrets accompany General Caffarelli to the grave; the army is losing one of its bravest leaders. Egypt one of its legislators, France one of its best citizens, and science, an illustrious scholar."*

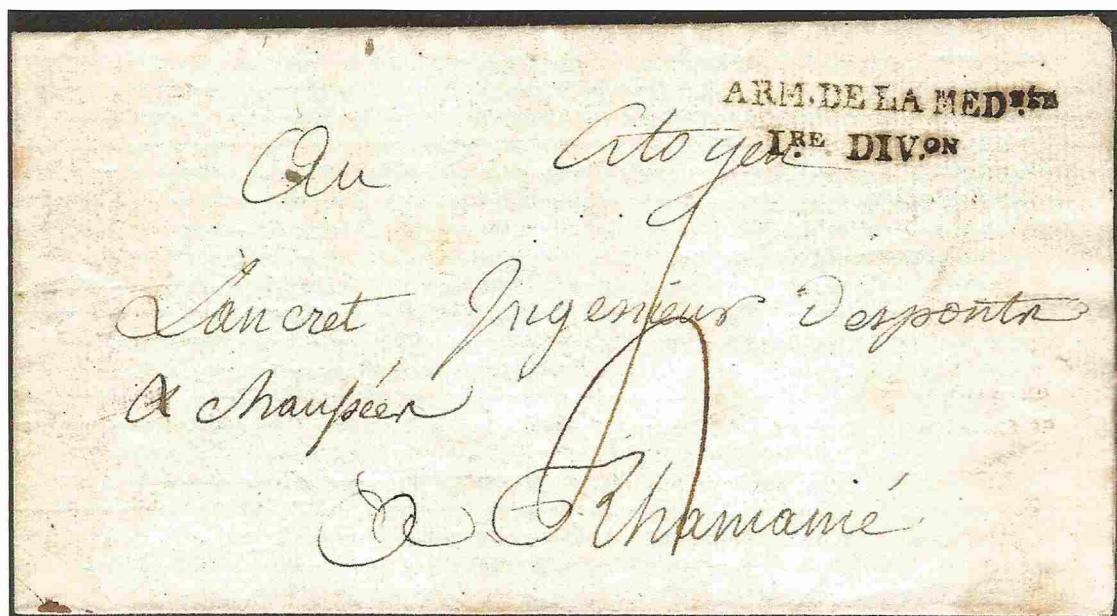


Fig. 6: Folded letter sent from Camp Du Jaffa, dated 19 Vendose 7 (9.3.1799), to Rhamanie, Egypt, showing at top right "ARM. DE LA MEDnee 1 er DIV. on" cachet. The letter was written three days after Jaffa had fallen to the French, who had subsequently massacred 4,200 prisoners. The letter was written by General Maximilien De Caffarelli, chief engineer of the Army of the Orient, who was mortally wounded in the siege of Acre on 27.4.1799. (Zvi Alexander collection)

## APPENDIX 1: THE REVOLUTIONARY FRENCH CALENDAR

- Autumn:
  - Vendémiaire in French (from Latin *vindemia*, “grape harvest”), starting 22, 23 or 24 September
  - Brumaire (from French *brume*, “fog”), starting 22, 23 or 24 October
  - Frimaire (From French *frimas*, “frost”), starting 21, 22 or 23 November
- Winter:
  - Nivôse (from Latin *nivosus*, “snowy”), starting 21, 22 or 23 December
  - Pluviôse (from Latin *pluvius*, “rainy”), starting 20, 21 or 22 January
  - Ventôse (from Latin *ventosus*, “windy”), starting 19, 20 or 21 February
- Spring:
  - Germinal (from Latin *germen*, “germination”), starting 20 or 21 March
  - Floréal (from Latin *flos*, “flower”), starting 20 or 21 April
  - Prairial (from French *prairie*, “pasture”), starting 20 or 21 May
- Summer:
  - Messidor (from Latin *messis*, “harvest”), starting 19 or 20 June
  - Thermidor (or Fervidor) (from Greek *thermon*, “summer heat”), starting 19 or 20 July
  - Fructidor (from Latin *fructus*, “fruit”), starting 18 or 19 August

## **APPENDIX 2: NAPOLEON LETTER TO THE JEWISH NATION**

### **Letter to the Jewish Nation from the French Commander-in-Chief Buonaparte (translated from the Original, 1799)**

General Headquarters, Jerusalem 1<sup>st</sup> Floreal,  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1799, in the year of 7 of the French Republic

#### **BUONAPARTE, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMIES OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC IN AFRICA AND ASIA, TO THE RIGHTFUL HEIRS OF PALESTINE.**

Israelites, unique nation, whom, in thousands of years, lust of conquest and tyranny have been able to be deprived of their ancestral lands, but not of name and national existence!

Attentive and impartial observers of the destinies of nations, even though not endowed with the gifts of seers like Isaiah and Joel, have long since also felt what these, with beautiful and uplifting faith, have foretold when they saw the approaching destruction of their kingdom and fatherland: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isaiah 35, 10)

Arise then, with gladness, ye exiled! A war unexampled In the annals of history, waged in self-defense by a nation whose hereditary lands were regarded by its enemies as plunder to be divided, arbitrarily and at their convenience, by a stroke of the pen of Cabinets, avenges its own shame and the shame of the remotest nations, long forgotten under the yoke of slavery, and also, the almost two-thousand-year-old ignominy put upon you; and, while time and circumstances would seem to be least favorable to a restatement of your claims or even to their expression, and indeed to be compelling their complete abandonment, it offers to you at this very time, and contrary to all expectations, Israel's patrimony!

The young army with which Providence has sent me hither, let by justice and accompanied by victory, has made Jerusalem my head-quarters and will, within a few days, transfer them to Damascus, a proximity which is no longer terrifying to David's city.

Rightful heirs of Palestine!

The great nation which does not trade in men and countries as did those which sold your ancestors unto all people (Joel, 4, 6) herewith calls on you not indeed to conquer your patrimony; nay, only to take over that which has been conquered and, with that nation's warranty and support, to remain master of it to maintain it against all comers.

Arise! Show that the former overwhelming might of your oppressors has but repressed the courage of the descendants of those heroes who alliance of brothers would have done honour even to Sparta and Rome (Maccabees 12, 15) but that the two thousand years of treatment as slaves have not succeeded in stifling it.

Hasten!, Now is the moment, which may not return for thousands of years, to claim the restoration of civic rights among the population of the universe which had been shamefully withheld from you for thousands of years, your political existence as a nation among the nations, and the unlimited natural right to worship Jehovah in accordance with your faith, publicly and most probably forever (Joel 4, 20).

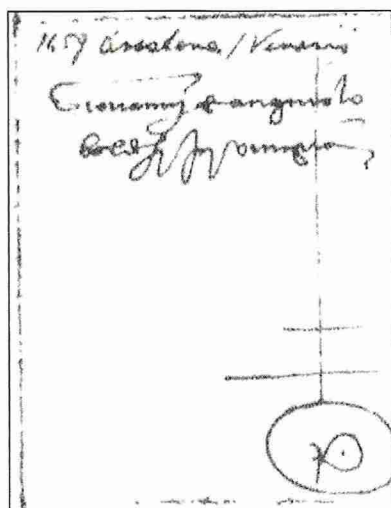
# Are 15<sup>th</sup> Century Venetian letters really from Ashkelon?

Yehuda Kleiner, Raanana, Israel

## Introduction

In BAPIP\* Journal number 18, of October 1956, the article "Mediaeval Post in and from the Holy Land" by E. Tulkovsky was published. The Article contained several illustrations of early prephilatelic letters to and from the Holy Land. One of these, is described as a Venetian merchant letter sent on the 28<sup>th</sup>. of August 1459, to Venice from Ashkelon, (Fig. 1).

A further instance where such a letter is shown is on the cover page of the monograph "Forerunners to the Forerunners" by Joseph Aron published in 1988. The letter is dated 1458, sent from Ascelona to Venice. (Fig. 2). In the same publication, on page 38, the Bapip journal letter is shown again. It is shown again in "The Holy Land 3000 years of Prephilatelic Postal History" book (2004), also by Joseph Aron, pages 63-64. During a discussion with the Author Mr. Aron advised me that he had

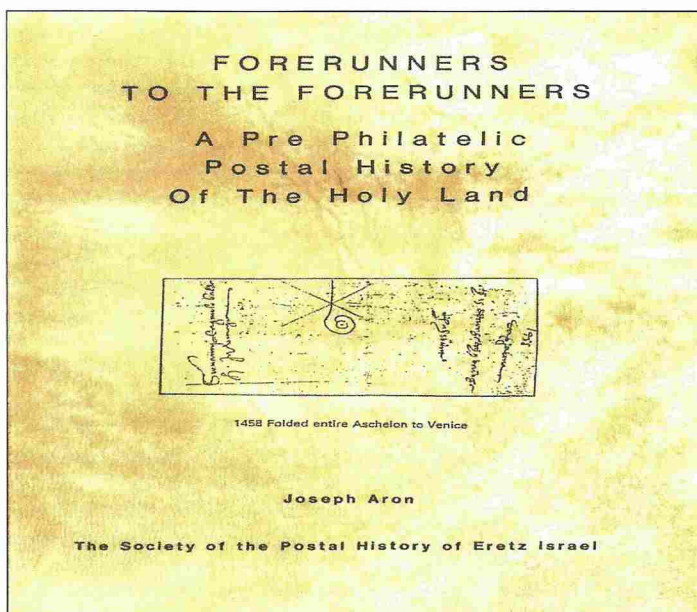


*Fig.1: Upper section of the letter dated 28 August 1459, illustrated in Bapip # 18. A full (better) picture of the letter is given in figure 5.*

\* British Association of Palestine Israel Philatelists.



some doubts that the letter originated from Ashkelon, but that this was the only available information at the time and therefore, he stated in the book that Byers and Tulkovsky are the sources.



*Fig. 2: The cover page of the monograph with an illustration of a 1458 letter from Ascelona to Venice.*

An additional reference to a letter, from Ashkelon to Venice, is contained in the Alexander collection shown on page 12 of the book "The Alexander Collection-Milestones in the Postal History of the Holy Land", (Fig. 3).

Two more examples are in the collection of an American collector. One letter dated 15 August 1459, from Ascelona to Venice (Fig. 4). The second letter is the one shown on the cover of the monograph "Forerunners to the Forerunners", (Fig. 2).

The Author being an enthusiastic collector of Venetian old letters recently bought the Bapip journal letter (Fig. 5). It may appear that by this a circle was closed, but it did not, as the author has reservations about Ashkelon been the place of origin. These reservations which are outlined, later gave rise to the article.

It should be noted that although eight examples of letters are referred to, actually there are only four different ones.

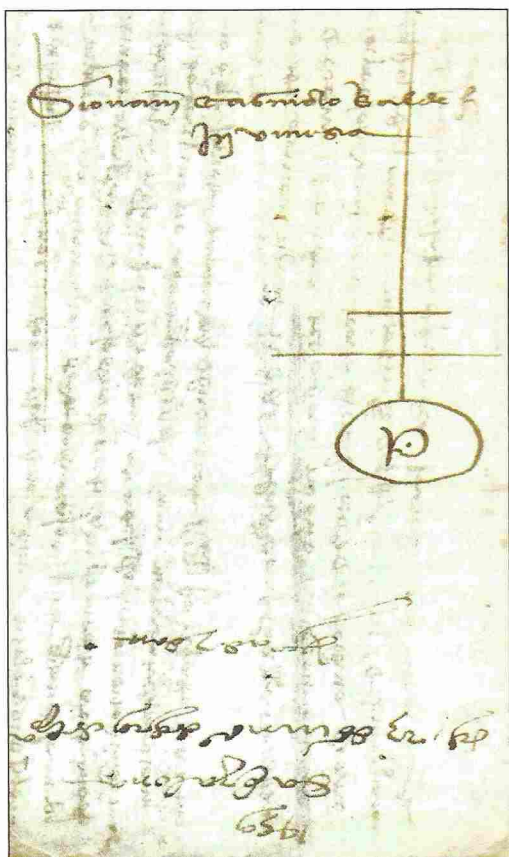


Fig. 3: Folded letter from Ascelona to Venice dated 31.3.1459 and forwarded by the Venetian post. The symbol on the letter is interpreted in the description of the letter in the book, as an indication that it accompanied a shipment of goods, which were marked by the same symbol. (Zvi Alexander collection)

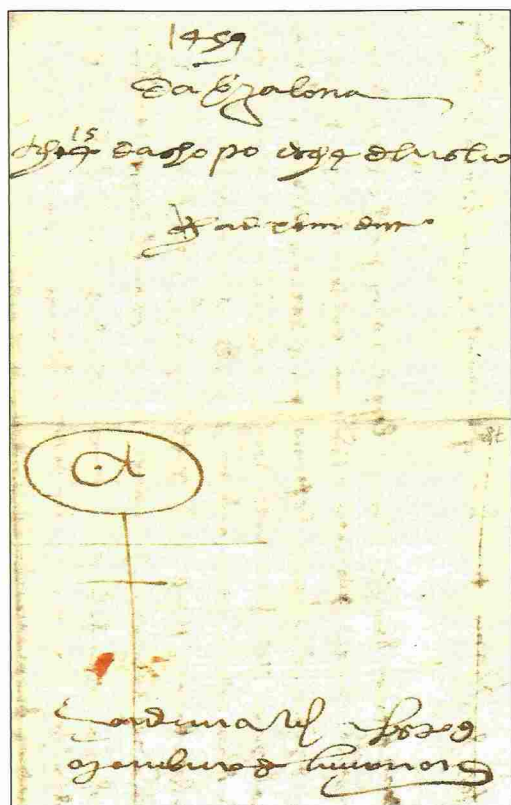


Fig. 4: Folded letter from Ascelona to Venice dated 15 August 1459, in the collection of an American collector

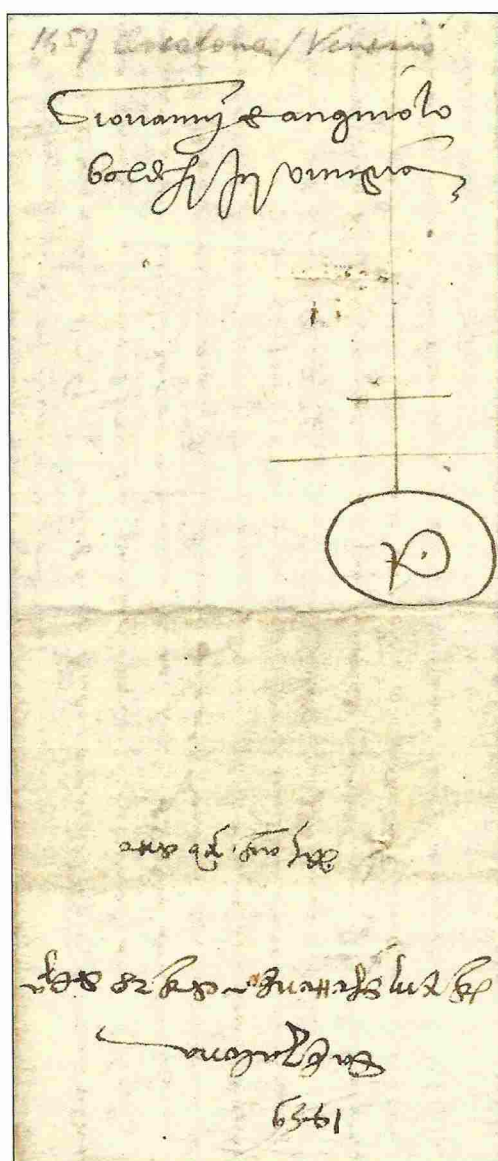


Fig. 5: The "Bapip" letter recently bought by the Author, from Ascelona to Venice, dated 28 August 1459, which gave rise to this article.

## Short History of the City of Ashkelon

The ancient seaport of Ashkelon dates back to the Neolithic Age. In the course of its history, it has been ruled by many nations such as: the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Israelites, the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Arabs and the Crusaders, until it was destroyed by the Mamluks in 1270.

An Arab village **al-Majdal** or **al-Majdal Asqalan**, was established nearby to the ancient site in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, under Ottoman rule. In 1918, the village became part of the British Occupied Enemy Territory Administration and in 1920 became part of Mandatory Palestine. In the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, al-Majdal Ascalun was the forward position of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force based in Gaza.

The village was occupied by Israeli forces on 5 November 1948. Jews moved into the area later that year. The Israeli town was initially called Migdal Gaza, Migdal Gad and Migdal Ashkelon. In 1953, the nearby neighborhood of Afridar was incorporated and renamed “Ashkelon”. By 1961, Ashkelon was ranked 18<sup>th</sup> among Israeli urban centers with a population of 24,000. In 2010, the population of Ashkelon was about 112,900.

Since the town and the port were in ruins, from 1270 to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century (when an Arab village was established on a site nearby the ancient one), *it is most probable that no Venetian activity which warranted letter communications existed there in 1458-1459, the dates of the letters.*

## ***Requisites for Venetian trade in Mameluk ruled countries***

For hundred of years, Venetians and Mameluks were engaged in an economic partnership based on a fundamental interdependence of two systems that were both linked to many other commercial networks. During the fifteenth century Venetian merchants and entrepreneurs became the main middlemen between the territories subject to Mamluk sultans and to western Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Several requisites are needed in order to uphold this commercial interdependence, these are as follows:

1. Trade concessions.
2. Regular ship line services and Port infrastructure, including warehouse and storage facilities.
3. Venetian trader's community.
4. A representative Venetian body to face Mameluk Sultans and officialdom.
5. Accessibility to internal markets



## 1. Trade Concessions

By the Fourteenth Century Venice was the dominant trading power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Venice secured already trading concessions from the Byzantine Empire. Trading concessions usually entail the permission to trade, to use harbor facilities, access to internal markets, to establish official representations, such as Consulates and exemptions from some taxes, etc.

These concessions during Mamaluk rule were granted on a national level by the Sultan but also on a local level. For instance in 1207, the city's sizable Venetian community in Latakia received a trading concession from the Muslim governor<sup>2</sup>. Finally, all this was affected in 1454 in the capitulations agreement which established the privileges of Venetian communities and consuls in the Mameluk Empire. The doge's subjects, as well as those who put themselves under the protection of their flag, were allowed to trade in all the places of the sultan's country. Ottoman subjects in Venetian lands had the same rights.

Customs were dealt with at the port of entry if by sea and at the border if by land. The country was divided to customs zones<sup>3</sup>. The foremost port in the Damascus zone for Palestine/Syria was Acre. In the South Khan Unis was the foremost custom station on the land route from Egypt and the locations alongside the Red Sea.

*As far as the Author could establish, the city of Ashkelon is not mentioned in relation to concessions or inclusion in custom zones.*

## 2. Regular ship line services and Port infrastructure including warehouse and storage facilities.

The shipping system of the Venetian Republic was based on regularly operating shipping lines.

The Eastern Mediterranean ports were served by four lines; the Constantinople line and the Beirut, Alexandria and Cyprus lines. Acre the only viable port on the Palestine shore was part of the Beirut line. The ships usually set sail twice annually in March and September. This entailed a considerable commercial activity. In Acre, for instance, 16 Venetian ships anchored in it's port, during the spring of 1471 and the autumn of 1472<sup>4a</sup>.

*Since the shipping activity in the port of Acre was well established there was no need for another such activity at a port in relative proximity, like one in Ashkelon.*

### **3. Venetian trader's community.**

There were several reasons for the need of having a Venetian traders community in the trading centers in the Mameluk countries. For one thing this was the demand of the Mameluk trading authorities since they expected reciprocity of trade. The Venetian merchants were required (and they willingly did so), to purchase and export goods from these countries. For it to be meaningful at least several Venetian traders had to reside in the trading centers in order to create volume and variety of trade to justify the concessions.

A trader's community was also needed when a representation to local and government authorities was necessary. Life of the Venetians in Mameluk countries was not always easy. They encountered exploitations' and harassments<sup>3</sup> and to resolve these an appeal to the authorities was required by the leaders of the community in order to be effective. Was there a Venetian community in Ashkelon?

If we take Acre for instance, we know from travelers accounts that a community of Venetians existed there. Bertrandon De La Brocquiere, who passed through Acre In 1432, mentions. Meeting some Venetians there. He also gives a short description of Acre<sup>5</sup> while Ashkelon he mentions in passing, by name only. Roberto Da Sanseverino came to Acre in 1458 tells that he was received by a group of Venetian merchants<sup>4b</sup>. Further more until these days a section of the town of Acre is named the Venetian Quarter.

*The Author has reviewed several travelers' accounts, articles and history books, in none of these was a reference to Venetians in Ashkelon.*

### **4. A representative body facing the Mameluk Sultans and officialdom.**

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>. Century, when the Ottoman ruler Selim I conquered Egypt, the Venetian consular network spread from London to Bruges, from Messina to Naples, and from Alexandria to Damascus. Venice had appointed consuls since the Middle Ages. Their task was to

protect the Venetian community abroad, to be a judge for it, to control commercial exchanges, to collect taxes and duties, to get in touch with local officials and to inform Venetian home authorities about trade and international politics. Just one year after the fall of Constantinople, in 1454, the newly settled agreement (Capitulations) between Venice and the sultan established consular privileges for a Venetian official, who was the doge's first permanent envoy in the Ottoman Empire<sup>6</sup>. Obviously, such an official envoy would be nominated in a place in which there was a minimal number of Venetians who needed to be represented. In a few places in which there were relatively small Venetian communities a Vice Consul would be nominated or elected. This was the case in Acre. Ashtor, who traced the evidence for a Venetian consulate in this town, has written that it had existed at least until 1460<sup>4c</sup>.

*No consul or Vice Consul could possibly operate in Ashkelon as it was not a port of call for the Venetian shipping lines, nor did any sizeable Venetian community resided there like it did in Acre.*

## **5. Accessibility to markets**

Ashkelon, not being a port for incoming goods and lacking ware houses could not serve as a distribution center. It was also deficient as being the "hinterland", a supply market for the goods that interested the Venetians, particularly cotton. A prerequisite for growing cotton is water. Ashkelon being in the south of the country usually is drier than the northern parts. In contrast the following citation about Acre, clearly indicates it: "Acre is a place for buying", declares a merchants guide (Venetian) of the early sixteen century. And indeed the main purpose of the stay of Venetian merchants there was the acquisition and exportation of cotton.....*"Acre actually served as an agricultural area of production, covering not only its own hinterland, but also a number of villages in the lower Galilee and the plain of Esdraelon"*<sup>4d</sup>

To complement the background information given above, the letters themselves should provide an answer. For this purpose the Author approached two expert opinions Professor Emeritus Benyamin Arbel, of The Early Modern History Department of the Hebrew University of Tel Aviv and Miss. Loretta Piccinini from Regio Emilia in Italy who specializes in Paleography. Prof. B. Arbel has written books and many articles about

Venice and its traders in the Levant and Cyprus. Some of his work is based on 15/16<sup>th</sup>. Century letters from Acre and to and from Cyprus. (Details Internet site: <http://humanities.tau.ac.il/segel/arbel>).

Loretta Piccinini holds a degree in Medieval History (Humanities and Art. Dept.), as well as a Diploma in Paleography, Diplomatics and Archivists and a post Graduate Diploma in Archeology. She carries out research, has written several books and articles and lectures. She is an expert paleographer of medieval manuscripts and mercantesca written letters.

Both can read the Venetian dialect and consequently advised that the letters *are not from Ashkelon*. Miss. Piccinini advised that *the “Ascelona” is in fact Barcelona*. The relevant section of her email is given below:

---

Dear Mr. Kleiner,  
As I promised to you, here I am.

The letter was written on 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1459 from Barcellona (Spain), just leaving with a postal letters' packet on **28<sup>th</sup> of August**, arriving to Venice on **13<sup>th</sup> of September** and registered on **15<sup>th</sup> of September**:

In front of the text you can read the only date:

*“+ Al nome de dio xxv de aghosto 1459”*

Not in the text (written in a very bad mercantesca writing), but in the registration's note (just opposite to the address), an employee of Bardesi brothers , office in Venice had written:

*“1459 da B(ar)zelona /  
Adj xiiij de setembre de adj 28 del prima /  
Registrata adi xv deto.”*

I am very sure about Barcellona, because of the tipic sign abbreviation of “b” for -ber or -bar.

Best regards,  
Loretta Piccinini

---



## Conclusion

On the basis of the above it can be concluded that the letters are not from Ashkelon. Was there any Venetian activity in Ashkelon? Probably not. If otherwise, where is the correspondence to prove it? It could change if new archives are discovered like it happened with the Datini Archive in Prato, Italy, and the Corsini Brothers Archives in Florence and London. Or new information would be forthcoming from reports, documents, letters, etc., from the State Archive of Venice. The lesson to draw from the article is that we have to be very careful when we rely on articles by collectors and on descriptions in auction catalogues, particularly, when it comes to old letters written a language/dialect that we do not know. Auctioneers may have done so in good faith, but collectors/buyers got hurt financially. An example is shown in Figure 6, on the next page. The picture was scanned from an auction catalog. *At the left upper corner of the letter "Acric" (Acre) is written as the place of origin, yet the description names Ashkelon as the place of origin.*

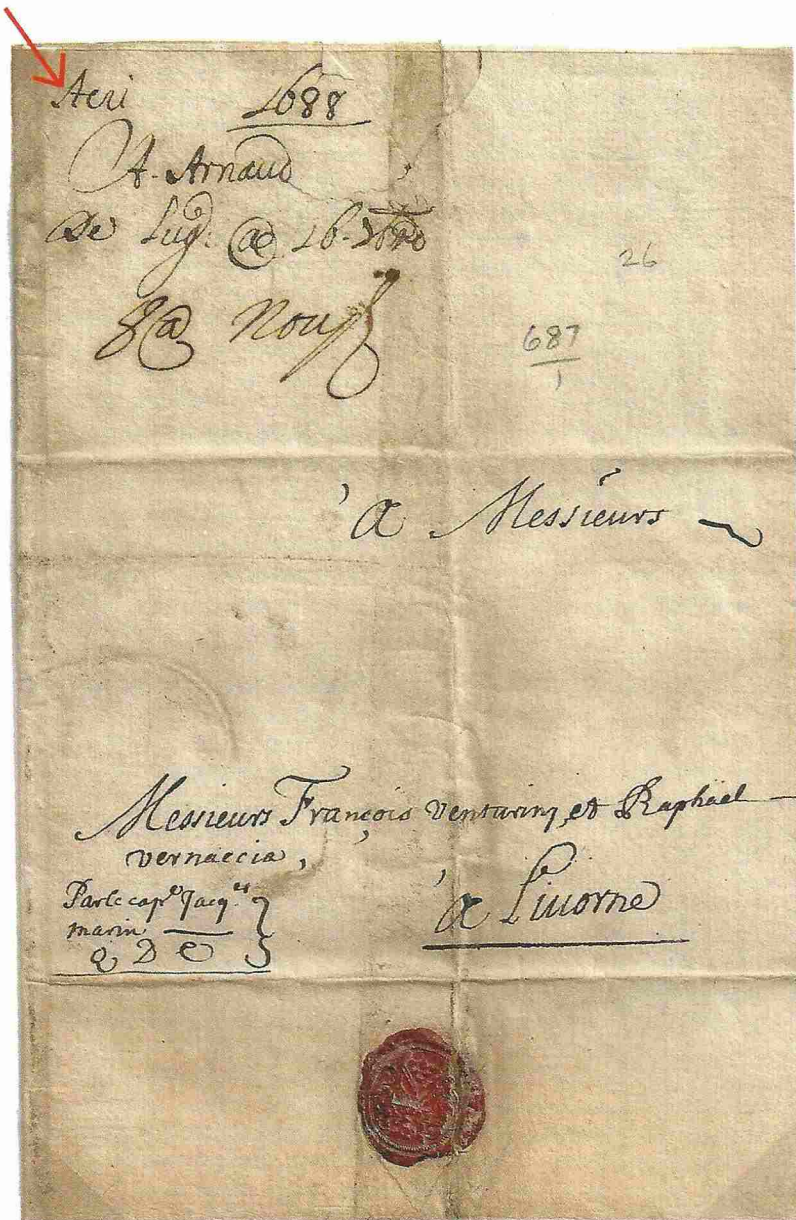
It is imperative that old letters from any country would be acquired only with a certificate of authenticity from recognized trustworthy experts. For the Author and perhaps for other collectors of the postal history of Venice this has opened a new collecting venue, namely the one based on the old letters to and from Spain particularly from Barcelona to Venice and vice versa.



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Aschelon to Livorno, Italy  
Sent: July 1688 (sender's date in manuscript)

Writer shipping cotton worth 34 piasters via Captain Marin to Alexandria

Fig. 6: 1688, letter from Acre to Livorno described as originating from Ashkelon.

## References:

1. B. Arbel, The last decades of Venice's trade with the Mameluks: Importations into Egypt and Syria.
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a. p.252; b. p.238; c. p.242; d. p.245.
5. Early Travels in Palestine. p.292.
6. Venetian Consuls in Egypt and Syria in the Ottoman Age. p.1.



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## Items of Interest

This new section is intended to induce the participation of our readers in the Bulletin. We are certain that each of you have a special item in which merits exposure to all of us because of it's philatelic significance, or and it's beauty.

This time Itamar Karpovsky sent us this fantastic letter which we decided to show as the cover picture of the Bulletin. We hope that other readers will comply to our request and sent us gems from their collections.



*Cover from Jerusalem to Vienna 1865, franked with nine copies of the 5 soldi of the 1864 Austrian issue. The rate of 45 soldi breaks down to: 8 to Jaffa, 2 for transit in Jaffa, 20 for the remaining sea voyage to Trieste and the final 15 for the transport from the port to the Austrian capital. A real gem of Holy Land and Middle East postal history. Itamar Karpovsky collection.*



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