

II, 25–26 *Letter from Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan to Abraham Ben Yijū:*
Two Fragments

Aden, ca. 1134

II, 25. ENA 3616, f. 19

II, 26. ULC Or. 1081 J 3

The two fragments are written by Maḍmūn's clerk, repeatedly met before. Even though II, 26 suffered more water damage than II, 25, it is clear that the same paper is used in both fragments. The sheet is about 9 cm. wide, almost white, quite thin, with the fibers still clearly visible.

On the margin of the recto of both fragments a single line is added, the beginning of which in II, 25 is the direct continuation of the last line on II, 26. Much has been lost between the two fragments.

No. II, 25 is the beginning of the letter. Similar to II, 13, it contains within the body of the letter the full names of both the recipient and the sender, in addition to the 'address,' which has been preserved on the reverse of the page, opposite the beginning of the letter. {This also contains the names of the sender and recipient but not their localities. The recipient's address was unnecessary, since the letter was to be delivered by the bearer, who was acquainted with him.} The letter was sent from Aden, Maḍmūn's permanent residence, to India, as seen from his acknowledgment of the receipt of pepper shipments, one of which was transported by 'Alī b. Maṣṣūr al-Fawfalī (see page 143) and the other by Budah (see 350, lines 15–16). That II, 26 was sent to Ben Yijū, is proved by the blessings invoked upon his son Surūr and his slave Bama, verso, lines 8–9.

As its contents show, this letter was sent a year before II, 21–24. The settlement with Makhlūf, '{son of} the man with the gladdening eye' (II, 25, lines 12–13, II, 26, margin), the dispatch of 100 Egyptian *mithqāls* (II, 25, margin = II, 21, lines 4–5), the total of 881 or 880½ dinars owed by Ben Yijū 'for last year' (1134; II, 21, line 7 = II, 26v, line 1), and, above all, the many errands imposed on Saydān (Sīdān) b. Abu 'l-Faḥ (II, 26, lines 14–15, verso, lines 2–3) are reported here as actions just taken. In II, 21–24, it is reported that Saydān had perished with all he carried for Maḍmūn and Ben Yijū, and the sums mentioned are debts to be paid by the unhappy customer, who never received the goods ordered.

Although II, 21–24 is thus later than II, 25–26, it has been discussed first, for without the fuller story preserved in the former letter, the mutilated fragments II, 25–26, would have remained only partially

intelligible. On the other hand, II, 25–26 has contributed to a better understanding of II, 21–24, and contains some new and interesting information.

Translation

[A. Salutations; receipt of the addressee's letter]

[II, 25] (1) *Peace without limit¹ and blessings without (2) number; to my esteemed lord, our master and teacher Abraham (3) the son of his honor, great and holy master and lord Yijū—may he rest in Eden! From your friend Maḍmūn (4), b. Ḥasan—may he rest in Eden!* Your letter arrived, my lord; (5) I read and understood it, and was happy to learn that you were well (6) and your affairs successful, and thanked God² for this (7) very much.

[B. Receipt of shipments; Makhlūf's suit; Ben Yijū's credits]

Your servant took notice of what (8) you mentioned regarding the shipment of pepper (9) with the most illustrious *nākhudā*, my lord 'Alī (10) b. Maṣṣūr al-Fawfalī—may God preserve his honored position!—(11) and of the one in Budah's ship. [E]verything has arrived. (12) {add:

¹ Based on Isa. 9:6; the following phrase is added as a parallel. Not common in the opening of letters.

² {Writers of Judeo-Arabic usually wrote God's name in Arabic, Allāh, with the regular Hebrew characters, 'llh. In several manuscripts, however, we find that they used special symbols, similar to or identical with those used in writing God's name in Hebrew, with or without various abbreviations of 'llh. (Scheindlin, "Merchants," 327, who states that Allāh is always spelled in full in Judeo-Arabic is to be corrected.) A few examples of this are found already in papyri (thanks to Prof. Moshe Gil for calling this to my attention); see Blau, *Studies*, 464–65 (in a study written together with S. Hopkins). For such abbreviations and symbols in Geniza documents, see Goitein, "Additional Material," 26 (cited by Blau); Friedman, *Yemenite Messiah*, 144, n. 249, where I called attention to the similarity of one such symbol to those used in writing God's name in Hebrew. This practice was followed to avoid desecration of the divine name. Known authorities in Jewish law did not require such precautions when writing God's name in any language other than Hebrew. (Late authorities call attention to Maimonides, "Yesode ha-Torah" 6:5, as proof that such writings did not require preserving through *genizā*. Thanks to the Cairo Geniza and other manuscript collections, we can now examine many of Maimonides' writings in which he wrote Allāh with no symbols or abbreviations.) Here the writer writes 'l followed by a symbol, which resembles the Hebrew letter *tet*. The same appears in several other manuscripts in this book. In some, the symbol follows the letters 'll. In others, the symbol appears alone and sometimes takes other shapes. Students of these manuscripts have not always recognized the symbols. The writer of IV, 53c, spells 'llh.}

[I in]form} my lord that [Makhlūf], {add: son of the man} with the gladdening eye³ (13) [... has arrived in Aden...] to sue you (14) [asking for] a (Muslim) document⁴ [...] [II, 26 (remnants of a line before the first)] [Total to your credit: eight] h[undred] (1) [and eighty] dinars and a half.

[C. Ben Yijū's debits]

You owe: the price of the nougat,⁵ (2) [a product of] the highlands,⁶ three dinars less one-fourth; on account of {lit., 'and for'} (3) the *nākhudā* Abū Sa'īd,⁷ the price of wheat (sent) from Mangalore,⁸ (4) three dinars; the price of durra (millet), 1/6 dinars; the price of (5) two Egyptian *fūtas*, four dinars; the price of a *sharābiyya*,⁹ (6) 2 1/2 dinars; the cost of a *maqta*,¹⁰ 2 1/2 dinars; (7) the cost of Lakhabi¹¹ glass, three-quarters of a dinar; the price of (8) a *dast*¹² of Egyptian tumblers, six *qirāts*; the price of (9) four

³ In the singular. In II, 21, line 1, and VI, 1, line 7, the dual: *'aymayn*.

⁴ See II, 24, lines 16–17. Arabic *hujja*, if mentioned together with legal actions made both before Muslim and Jewish authorities, refers to the former. {But since the text is fragmentary here, it cannot be ascertained that a Muslim document is intended. Cf., e.g., II, 20, line 38, where Maḍmūn acknowledges receipt of a *hujja* written by Ben Yijū.}

⁵ Arabic *jawziyya*, a confection made from nuts, abbreviated from *halāwa jawziyya* (see Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:234).

⁶ That is, the highlands of Yemen. Arabic *al-jabal*; cf. II, 14, line 26.

⁷ Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz; see II, 20, lines 15, 23, 30, 39, and *passim*.

⁸ Wheat was not grown in Mangalore but was brought there from Aden (see III, 10, line 46), and sent from there to Abu Sa'īd, who probably stayed at that time in the place of residence of Ben Yijū.

⁹ For *sharābiyya*, see Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, 55 (made in Fasā, south-east of Shirāz) and 78 (in Tabaristan, northern Iran). However, here and in {II, 49, line 0 (!); IV, 1, line 11, a piece of clothing manufactured in Egypt is intended. Serjeant's explanation, 'a garment made of a special type of linen,' seems to derive the word from *sharḥ*. But *sharāb* means wine, drinking bout. Possibly, this was a material of vivid colors, as worn at revelry. {Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 54, mentions, without reference, *sharāb* linen. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:147–48, discusses another type of *sharābiyya*, a table vessel; cf. Diem, *Dictionary*, 113.}

¹⁰ See 325, n. 26.

¹¹ Lakhaba was a place 'two farsakh (parasangs), less one-quarter (about 10 km.) from Aden,' from which bricks and glass were brought to Aden; see Löfgren, *Aden*, 22, line 2. {Cf. Margariti, "Aden," 88 ff.}

¹² A *dast* was a certain quantity that made up a set of a particular item; cf. 304, n. 9.

bottles, firmly set in baskets {alt. tr.: in baskets, of *muhkam* glass},¹³ carried by Ibn Qaṭṭūs,¹⁴ (10) one *niṣāfi*.¹⁵

You also owe (for what) is in the ship of Rāmishṭ, (11) transported by 'Umar al-Bundār:¹⁶ a bag of red copper,¹⁷ (12) the number: fifteen pieces, the weight: a *bahār* (13) and a half; the price, including the export tax from the Furḍa of Aden: (14) 90 dinars.

You also owe (for what) is transported by Saydān b. (15) Abu 'l-Faṭḥ: two stones of silver, the weight: six hundred (16) and five dirhems; the price, 124¹⁸ dinars [II, 25 (Margin)] and one-third, and a purse in which there are 100 Egyptian *mithqāls*;¹⁹ the price: [... You owe a total of 581] [II, 26] (Margin) dinars and a half, plus settlement payment to Sheikh Makhlūf, 300 dinars. The total of what [II, 26] (Verso) (1) you owe: 881 dinars.

(2) The gold and the silver and the clothes (were sent to you) with Saydān (3) b. Abu 'l-Faṭḥ and the glass with Ibn Qaṭṭūs.

¹³ {See 345, n. 52.}

¹⁴ This Latin form (*catūs*) of the word cat seems to have been rather common among Jews. TS 13J1, f. 15, line 4, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, 62 {Gil, *Palestine*, 3:534–35, no. 608}. Ḥusayn b. Hillel, known as Qaṭṭūs, appears in court in Bāniyās, Palestine, in 1059 {1056}. In TS AS 145, f. 9 an Ibn Qaṭṭūs and his brother contribute to a public appeal. An Abū Sa'īd Ibn Qaṭṭūs, who refused to comply with a summons to court, Bodl. MS. Heb. e. 94, fol. 28; might have been identical with our Ibn Qaṭṭūs, for that document is in the hand of Abū Zikrī Kohēn, on whom see chap. 5. In the Geniza documents the word is spelled with a *shadda* (*tt*), as in Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:366 a–b. {An Ibn Qaṭṭūs is mentioned in JRL Gaster Add. 23-6, a fragmentary letter apparently dealing with the India trade.}

¹⁵ For this coin see 333, line 34.

¹⁶ A Muslim. A mosque in Aden bore the name of Ibn Bundār; see Löfgren, *op. cit.*, 257, line 3. I do not think that the writer, whose grandfather was called 'Bundār,' would mention a member of his family in this way. Moreover, 'Umar is not a Jewish name, but in Hebrew spelling the word could be read also as 'Amr. {See Goitein, "Three Trousseaux," 96, n. 47: "typical Arabic names such as 'Omar or 'Amr... were common among Syro-Palestinian Jews." A search of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, produces six different Bundārs, one Maḍmūn's grandfather and the other five Muslims, one of them Abū 'Amr/ 'Umar Bundār al-Isbahānī an Arab philologist; see on him Fleisch, "Ibn Lizza." Al-Faṭḥ b. 'Alī al-Bundārī was a thirteenth century historian; cf. Houtsma, "al-Bundārī."

¹⁷ Arabic *ṣufī* (also verso, line 1). For the meaning of this term, see page 555, n. 11.

¹⁸ Written (in Hebrew letters serving as numerals) קדכ q = 100/ d = 4/k = 20. See 339, n. 8.}

¹⁹ Written here *mithqāla(n)*. The clerk knew that classical Arabic grammar requires sometimes the addition of *a(n)* after a number, but wrote it here in the wrong place. {For vestiges of the *tanwīn an*, see the discussion and references in 751–52.}

[D. Personal note; greetings and gifts]

(4) By God, this year I have had (5) such burdens²⁰ that I cannot recount (them). (6) I am writing this letter of mine in a state (7) that only God, the Exalted, knows.

Please accept, my lord, (8) wishes for the most consummate well-being for yourself; your son Surūr (9) and Bama are especially greeted.

(10) (Your servant) has sent a gift to your son—(11) six *rubā'yyas* of su[gar] and raisins, and a flask (lit., 'piece' {alt. tr.: unit}) (12) of rose water.²¹

[E. Address]

[In Arabic letters, on II, 25v] (1) To his excellency, the most illustrious elder, my lord Ibrāhīm (2) b. Īshū, the Maghrebi, the Israelite.

(1) (From) His servant (2) Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan b. Bundār.

[In Hebrew letters, on II, 25v] (1) *To my esteemed lord, light of my eyes, (2) our master and teacher Abraham, the son of his honor, great and holy (3) Yijū—may he rest in Eden!*

(1) (From) *Your friend Maḍmūn, (2) the son of Ḥasan—may he rest in Eden!*

²⁰ The *ashghāl* alluded to here are, of course, not identical with the losses described in II, 20, margin and verso, which refer to the year 1133. Maḍmūn means he was occupied with many affairs, commercial and public. [Cf. II, 20, line 43, and 333, n. 28. *Ashghāl* can be translated 'preoccupations.'

²¹ Cf. II, 20v, lines 8–9.]

II, 27 *Letter from Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan to Abraham Ben Yijū: First Pick of Merchandise for Bilāl b. Jarūr*

{Aden, between 1136–38 and 1139 or 1145–49}

ENA NS 48, f. 2¹

A note written by Maḍmūn, penned by one of his clerks, in which he describes the highhanded tactics of Bilāl b. Jarūr,² the governor of Aden and Maḍmūn's occasional business partner, who took first pick of merchandise in the city.

{The fragment comes from the bottom of a (copy of a) letter and contains two sections, both truncated, with only the end of the first and the beginning of the second preserved. The larger section [A] describes Bilāl's habit of demanding the first pick of goods in the port and specifically of *drky*, a commodity exported from Aden to India, which was sometimes not available (see 347, line 25; 366). Elsewhere, another Adenese merchant accuses the partners Bilāl and Maḍmūn of the same high-handed behavior (611, lines 27 ff.). As the Geniza demonstrates, governments of different countries demanded this prerogative.³ Maimonides points to a parallel practice within the Jewish community.⁴ Maḍmūn apologizes for not being able to send any *drky* to Ben Yijū. The second section [B] speaks of the general poor market conditions that year. Abraham Ben Yijū used the blank paper on verso to write business accounts for dealings in India (III, 28). It follows from these considerations that he was in India, when the letter on recto, translated below, was sent to him. Bilāl was appointed governor sometime between 1136–38. Ben Yijū visited Yemen ca. 1140 and was back in India from ca. 1145–49 (see page 648), and this letter is to be dated accordingly.

¹ {The manuscript was formerly listed 'JTS Geniza Misc. 2,' which number alone appears in Goitein's writings. I would like to thank Prof. M. Schmelzer for his help in identifying the current shelf marks of this and other items in ENA NS 48.

² On him, see the introductions to II, 28–29, II, 32, etc.

³ See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:268.

⁴ According to Maimonides (in his Commentary to Avot 4:6; see Shailat, *Avot*, 154), merchants customarily allowed an important trader to have his merchandise sold first and have the first pick of commodities offered on the market taken for him.)