

[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.)

Translation

[A] (1) two days [before] the ships sailed [...] (2) foreigner by him and b[y... , some of it] (3) for (or belonging to) the ruler of Dahlak and some of it for Sheikh [...] (4) Bilāl Ibn Jarīr against the man w[ho sold (?)] (5) the *drky*.⁵ He bought it from him for [him]self. (6) And no one can ask for anything claimed by (7) the lord⁶ Bilāl. Were the *maṭiyya* boats⁷ of I[[bn] (8) al-Sudā[n]ī⁸ to bring some of it,⁹ I would send it to him (i.e., to you). (9) You should not believe that I have neglected your need (10) and that which would produce something beneficial to you.

[B] By God, (11) this year there was in the city a great fall¹⁰ (in the market). (12) The Egyptian *mithqāls* reached [...]

⁵ For this commodity, see 331, n. 11. The *drky*, spoken of here, was probably shipped by the ruler of Dahlak, mentioned in line 3.

⁶ {Arabic *mālik*, a common term of respect in the Yemenite letters. See 362, n. 13.

⁷ Arabic *maṭāyā*. For this type of vessel, see 476, n. 18.

⁸ The reading and restoration of Ibn al-Sudānī (the Sudanese) are uncertain.

⁹ Arabic *bi-shay minhu*, presumably referring to the *drky*.

¹⁰ Arabic *labṭa* means a kick by an animal or a gallop (*ṭalabbata*, according to Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:513, means to limp). I assume this was part of the merchants' jargon ('market crash, runaway market?'), but I have not found it elsewhere in the India Book papers.}

II, 28–29 *Letter from Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan to Abraham Ben Yijū: Safe Conduct and Assistance for Brother*

{Aden, ca. 1145}

II, 28. ULC Or. 1080 J 263

II, 29. TS NS J 285

Goitein described II, 28:

Letter of Maḍmūn assuring Ben Yijū that he had obtained safe conduct for him from 'The Auspicious King'¹ (a title bestowed on Bilāl b. Jarīr by the Fatimid caliph), when Ben Yijū would come to Aden.

and II, 29:

A short note: Actions on behalf of Ben Yijū's brother Mevassēr had been delayed because of a prolonged interruption of communications with Egypt in the wake of epidemics raging there.²

{When arranging the India Book items according to the 'New List,' Goitein indicated the affinity of nos. II, 28 (245 in the 'Old List') and II, 29 (297) by placing them one after the other. A closer examination shows that they are two contiguous pieces of the same letter. No. II, 28, contains the first 22 lines of the letter. The first line of II, 29 is line 23 of the original. The top of the letter ʾ in the last word of that line, *yʾil*, is preserved in II, 28, its lower portion in II, 29. Furthermore, in the blank space at the bottom of II, 29 recto and the verso of II, 28–29, Ben Yijū copied a liturgical poem for the evening service of (Yom) Kippur, and here too there is a direct continuation between the writing on II, 29 and II, 28 (in this order).³ No. II, 29, has suffered more damage than II, 28; this makes the match between the two somewhat difficult to identify. Several lines, the extent of which cannot be ascertained, are missing at the end of II, 29, so there is no direct continuation between the text there and the margin (where as usual the writing begins at the bottom of the letter and precedes to the top). The body of the margin has also suffered damage, and some words are missing between the writing there in II, 29, and the continuation in II, 28. As a result of these lacunae, much of the details concerning

¹ {Read, 'the auspicious lord'; see below, the note to II, 28, line 19.

² Other than this description, the draft transcriptions and a few notes in his papers and publications, nothing else remains in Goitein's writings on these items.

³ On the liturgical poetry, which Ben Yijū copied on the reverse sides of his documents, see pages 67–68.