

II, 41 *Dirge on Maḍmūn's Death*

{Yemen, 1151}

Mosseri VIII, 119.2 (P 474)

{In this *muwashshah*-type poem, with the acrostic ABRHM (Abraham), Ben Yijū eulogizes Maḍmūn, who died in 1151. Maḍmūn is spoken of as having been awarded seven titles by the Exilarch. These were probably bestowed on the occasion of gifts sent by Maḍmūn. They include *allūf* (Distinguished Member of the Academy), Nagid (son of Nagid), *yedīd ha-yeshīvā* (Friend of the Academy), *segullat (ha-yeshīvā)*, Chosen of the Academy), *seḡan ha-hamullā* (Chief of the Multitude, a poetic equivalent of *rosh ha-qehillōt*, Head of the Congregations). Ben Yejū's emphasis that the entire congregation called Maḍmūn 'Nagid son of Nagid' probably indicates that this appointment was met by opposition (see II, 38–39). Maḍmūn was also called *meyudda* (friend), but this may be a poetic addition to *allūf*, following Ps. 55:14. In II, 35, lines 17–18, he is called Prince of Princes and Head of the Congregations and in II, 36, lines 13–14, Prince of the Congregations. And in II, 38, lines 14–16, 'the Mordecai of our time, the eminent pillar, the Nagid of the land of Yemen, the leader of the congregations, the Pride of the Communities.' Since Ben Yijū labeled the poem 'A Similar Dirge,' he must have written at least another such eulogy to Maḍmūn.}]¹

¹ {Based in part on Goitein's remarks in the Hebrew edition of the poem. Since II, 36, lines 10–11, speaks of Maḍmūn as having been appointed by exilarchs and heads of academies, Ben Yijū's identifying the awardee of the seven titles as 'the Exilarch' may be an oversimplification.}

II, F. *Joseph b. Abraham b. Bundār, Maḍmūn's Cousin**II, 42 *Letter from Joseph b. Abraham to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel*

Aden, ca. 1134

TS NS J 402

No. 42 is written to India and concerns textiles, musk and pepper imported from there to Aden and cinnabar, which was shipped in the opposite direction. The letter is fragmentary. The upper portion, which on verso contained the address with the names of the writer and recipient, is missing. Six merchants are mentioned by name.¹

{The following comments summarize some of the stages of research of this fragment. Goitein, who noted that he checked the document on December 10, 1978, had identified the writer as Joseph b. Abraham solely on the basis of his handwriting. He did not identify the recipient, however.

Of the six merchants mentioned in the letter, the first three—Abū Sa'īd b. Maḥfūz,² Khalaf b. Isaac³ and Barakāt al-Ḥalabī⁴—also figure in II, 49. In II, 42, Joseph commented that Abū Sa'īd had arrived from India and had delivered to Khalaf goods, apparently pepper, on behalf of the letter's recipient. Joseph had sold the pepper that he had received for 38 dinars per *bahār* ('the best thing!,' *aṣlah shuway*) but did not know for what price Khalaf had sold his consignment of pepper. Barakāt al-Ḥalabī too had arrived from India and delivered textiles to Khalaf. A detailed letter from Khalaf to the addressee would follow.

The same goods mentioned here, pepper, wrappers and other textiles and musk, also appear in II, 49. Joseph notes (in II, 42) with regret the addressee's delay in India; similar disappointment with his failure to return that year to Aden is expressed in II, 49. Khalaf wrote the now fragmentary

* Besides nos. II, 42–45a, see also Joseph b. Abraham b. Bundār's letters to Abraham Ben Yijū (chap. 3, sec. B = III, 1–9), Ḥalfon b. Nethanel (IV, 15–16), Abū Zikrī Kohēn (V, 9–12 [also TS 8 J 20, f. 19, no. 243a in the 'Old' India Book list], Abū 'Imrān b. Nufay' (VI, 36); and his letter containing a report on Isaac al-Nafūsi's losses (VI, 28).

¹ {The above, brief comments are based on Goitein's notes. Other than a draft of the transcription of the Judeo-Arabic text, no translation or other notes are preserved in his papers.

² = Ḥalfōn ha-Levi b. Shemaryā Ibn Jamāhir; see 331, n. 13.

³ Joseph's cousin, whose papers are dealt with in chap. 2, sec. G and chap. 3, sec. C.

⁴ This is Barakāt b. Mūsa al-Ḥalabī, mentioned in VI, 26–28.