

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.}]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> {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.<sup>1</sup>

{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,<sup>2</sup> Khalaf b. Isaac<sup>3</sup> and Barakāt al-Ḥalabī<sup>4</sup>—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).

<sup>1</sup> {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.

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

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

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

II, 49 to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel (see *ibid.* for this identification), India. Khalaf remarked there that Abū Sa'īd had arrived from India and made a delivery to him. Part of the pepper he had received he sold for 37 dinars per *bahār*, part for 36. (Abū) Barakāt al-Ḥalabī also delivered textiles to Khalaf. These and other data lead to the almost certain conclusion that like II, 49, also II, 42, was sent to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel. A fragment of Khalaf's letter (which would follow), which Joseph mentioned here (II, 42) in the margin, in all likelihood is II, 49. Ḥalfon was in the practice of shipping consignments from India with different merchants to Aden, to be delivered to a number of his associates there, including Joseph, Khalaf and Maḍmūn. As I shall attempt to demonstrate elsewhere, Ḥalfon's instructions concerning the disposition of goods mentioned in II, 42 and II, 49, are apparently to be found in VI, 27, whose most distinguished, anonymous recipient, was identified by Goitein as Maḍmūn. A similar letter was probably sent to Joseph at the same time, to which he replies in II, 42 and to which he alludes several times. No. IV, 1, also concerns some of these same transactions; see further II, 49.

After I had translated and annotated II, 42 and after I had subsequently concluded that it had been sent to Ḥalfon, as explained above, I then reviewed again various fragments written by Joseph and identified the upper portion of this letter in IV, 15. It contains on verso the names of the addressee Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel and the sender, Joseph b. Abraham. The match is indisputable. The translation of the almost complete text from the two combined fragments, IV, 15 and II, 42, will appear with the former piece in chap. 4.

I tentatively suggest that IV, 15-II, 42 was written in 1134, although any date is approximate and speculative. In November 29-December 8, 1133, Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel and Barakāt al-Ḥalabī were together in one place, and in my opinion VI, 26, which attests this, was written in (Broach) India. Ḥalfon evidently ignored Abū Zikrī Kohen's advice from January-February 1134 (V, 2), not to (stay in Aden or) return to India. I have already suggested that in 1135, Ḥalfon was probably in Yemen, finally on his way back from India to Egypt (see the introduction to II, 33-34). If so, IV, 15-II, 42, in which delivery of goods that he sent from India with Barakāt al-Ḥalabī is acknowledged in Aden, was likely to have been written in 1134.}

II, 43 *Memorandum from Joseph b. Abraham to Abū Naṣr al-Ḥalabī*

Aden, ca. 1130-50

TS 12.355

{This is a memorandum written by Joseph b. Abraham of Aden and handed to a merchant, Abū Naṣr b. Mūsā (?) al-Ḥalabī (from Aleppo, Syria), who was traveling to Egypt, undoubtedly to Fustat, and was requested to fulfill the writer's instructions for sale of pepper (imported from India), purchases and other errands. The memorandum is essentially equivalent to a business letter, except that it lacks the introductory and closing blessing and personal remarks, etc., all of which were unnecessary, since it was personally delivered by the writer to the recipient. As in II, 33-34, 50 and IV, 3, the memorandum is called 'blessed,' a pious wish for success in the ventures detailed therein; see the introduction to II, 33-34. As in that memorandum, also here (lines 16-21) the writer's associate is requested to deliver a gift to religious dignitaries in Fustat. A more elaborate memorandum written by Joseph b. Abraham is found in II, 44, which also contains more generous gifts to the religious dignitaries of Egypt and to the holy sanctuary of Dammūh. See Goitein's discussion there on the commodities sold and ordered.

The manuscript is almost complete, but the paper has suffered much damage, and the reading is often uncertain. This is unfortunate, since, as with other papers, this document contains some information not identified elsewhere, such as descriptions of certain garments to be purchased.<sup>1</sup>

Translation

[A. Heading]

(1) *In Your name, O Merciful.* (2) A Blessed Memorandum carried by Sheikh Abū Naṣr b. Mūsā (?) al-Ḥalab[i].<sup>2</sup> (3) May God decree his (= your) safe arrival! For his servant Joseph b. Abraham.

<sup>1</sup> {All that remains in Goitein's papers for this document is his draft copy of the Judeo-Arabic text and the description 'Orders Entrusted to a Merchant Leaving Aden for Egypt.'

<sup>2</sup> Abū Naṣr is a very common name in the India Book. What follows his proper name is extremely difficult to decipher. In his draft copy, Goitein copied: 'b. Sitt al-Minna.' I do not remember having encountered this name ('Mistress of Graciousness') elsewhere in