

for Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh, II, 33–34, and the gift for the Yeshiva, for which thanks are sent in II, 54. The honorary titles, which Ḥalfon adds to the names of Khalaf and his father, Isaac b. Bundār, were noted by him in II, 11b. The letter is written in Hebrew, mainly in rhymed prose, and in Arabic, and it can be compared to Ḥalfon's even more elaborate letter of thanks to Khalaf's uncle, Abraham b. Bundār, II, 11a. As noted by Goitein this exuberant letter of thanks proves Ḥalfon to be a master of Hebrew epistolography.⁵

⁵ Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:626, n. 39.

II, 54 *Letters from the Yeshiva in Egypt to Khalaf b. Isaac and Joseph b. Abraham, Aden*

{Cairo, ca. 1132}

ENA 3363, fs. 1–2

Partial publication in Mann, *Jews*, 2:337.

Drafts of letters of thanks, mostly in rhymed prose, to Khalaf {addressed with the Hebrew form of his name: Ḥalfon} (almost complete) and his cousin Joseph (beginning only), from the Academy in Cairo. Mann (*Jews*, 2:337) published part of the letter to Ḥalfon b. Isaac {and part of the letter to Joseph b. Abraham, though Mann did not mention his name}. The letter is written in Hebrew in very florid style. It contains only two words in Arabic *al-mann al-'ūd*. Mann translated this: 'the usual donation,' but the words mean: a *mann*, that is two *raṭls* (pounds), of aromatic wood. As we have seen, this was a common form of a gift, because the *'ūd* was a readily marketable commodity, and as such was equivalent to cash. The letter expresses thanks not only for the contribution but also for Ḥalfon b. Isaac's loyalty to the Academy: "your love of the Yeshiva and fondness for our office," an attitude with which we are familiar from other sources.¹

{The document is a large bifolium, on which were written a draft of letters of thanks to Khalaf b. Isaac and to Joseph b. Abraham, Aden, for their gifts to the Palestinian Academy, then located in Cairo, Egypt. The letters are issued from the 'Gate of the Academy,' namely in the name of its Head, the Gaon. The style is somewhat reminiscent of the Scribe of the Academy's letter to Joseph in II, 45. But the hands are distinct.

Aromatic wood (*'ūd*) was used for fumigation after meals. This was a costly commodity imported from the Far East, and the wealthy Jewish traders of Yemen often sent some as a gift to the community leaders of Egyptian Jewry.² In II, 33, side b, lines 16–17, we read that Maḏmūn b. Japheth sent a *mann* of aromatic wood with the illustrious India trader and community leader Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, as a gift for the Head

¹ {Based on Goitein, *Yemenites*, 27.

² Fumigation: see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:137–38. According to Ibn Mujāwir, in the Abbasid period a *mann* of *'ūd* sold in Aden for six dinars, but the customs and various port costs for importing it came to fifteen dinars! See Smith, *Studies*, chap. 11, 209. For the medicinal faculties of aromatic wood (*'ūd*), see Lev and Amar, *Medicinal Substances*, 170; Lev, *Medicinal Substances*, 208.

of the Academy in Cairo Maṣliḥ ha-Kohen (1127–39). Khalaf instructed Ḥalfon in II, 47 (ca. 1131), to deliver two *manns* of aromatic wood, one to Ḥalfon's brother Eli, the President of the Court in Cairo, the other to 'our lord,' undoubtedly Maṣliḥ. The aromatic wood for which our letter lavishes praise and thanks to Khalaf was sent by Ḥalfon as well, and it may refer to the same gift mentioned in II, 47.

Khalaf is addressed with the honorary titles bestowed on him by the Academy, Splendor of the Scholars (*hadar ha-talmidim*) and Favorite of the Academy (*reṣūy ha-yeshivā*),³ rather than his title used by Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh in the preceding letter, Delight of the Congregations. Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel's titles are Magnificence of the Levites (*hōd ha-lewiyim*) and Beloved of the Academy (*abūv ha-yeshivā*). The writer notes that Ḥalfon praised Khalaf for his loyalty to the Academy and his acceptance of the authority of its Head.

While, as noted above, only the beginning of the letter to Joseph is preserved in this document, it appears to be written in a more restrained and less lavish tone of praise. This may reflect the size of his gift or the role that Joseph played in Yemenite Jewry's aborted revolt against Maṣliḥ's authority ca. 1131.⁴

³ Though the Hebrew title (for this and other *rāṣūys*, see Mann, *Jews*, 1:279) is an appropriate embellishment of *rāṣūy* in Deut. 33:24 and Esther 10:3, it probably is a calque of the Arabic *raḍī*, as in *raḍī al-dīn* (Favorite or Well-pleasing of the Faith).

⁴ For which, see Goitein, *Yemenites*, 58 ff. and the Introduction to chap. 4.

II, H. *Maḥrūz b. Jacob, Son of Maḍmūn's Paternal Aunt**

II, 55 *Letter from Maḥrūz to Abū Zikrī Kohen, Broach*

Mangalore, India, ca. 1145 {ca. 1145–48}

Bodl. MS. Heb. b. 11 (Cat. 2874, no. 21), fol. 22

Ed. Goitein, *Yemenites*, 100–5. The following translation with accompanying introductory remarks and notes is based on Goitein, *Letters*, 62–65. A photograph of recto, a description and partial translation appear in Goitein, "India-Merchants," 37, where the shelf mark is not noted.

A representative of the merchants in the capital of Egypt, stuck in Broach, north of Bombay, after having been captured by pirates, is invited by his brother-in-law in Mangalore, southern India, to join him in his own ship on the way back to Aden.

The writer of this letter, Maḥrūz b. Jacob, was a *nākhudā*, or shipowner, who commuted in his own boat between Aden and India. Occasionally we find him in the capital of Egypt, where his sister was married to the recipient of this letter, Judah b. Joseph ha-Kohen, representative of the merchants there. Judah's own sister was married to Maḍmūn, representative of the merchants in Aden (see page 371). Thus we see that these India traders bolstered their economic positions by carefully arranged family bonds.

Judah b. Joseph ha-Kohen was the grandson of his namesake, the Rāv, or Master [Rabbi], who was so prominent in the Jewish community of Egypt during the second half of the eleventh century. In more elaborate addresses he, like his grandfather, is called 'Scion of the Gaons,' and, like the latter, he himself signs documents with the title 'Scion of Yehōseph (same as Joseph), the righteous priest,' referring to the first member of the family, who, after emigrating from Baghdad to Jerusalem, became president of the High Court there at the end of the tenth century.¹ Such transitions from religious and legal to commercial leadership and vice versa were natural to the bourgeois society of the

* {For Maḥrūz, see Introduction IIB1. The chronological order of the following documents is reversed, approximately: II, 60, II, 59, II, 58, II, 56–57, II, 55.

¹ See Goitein, "*Ha-Rav*"; id., "Additions." Gil, *Palestine*, 1:223 challenged Goitein's conclusion that Abū Zikrī Judah b. Joseph ha-Kohen was the grandson of the Rāv, but he seems to have been unfamiliar with the latter's study: "Additions."