

May all (8) *Israel* be blessed with the sudden appearance of *salvation!*²⁹ We were not worthy of this, (9) but the *Holy One—may He be blessed!*—did what He is worthy of, *for the sake of* (10) *His great name*, and brought relief to the Jews in (11) the entire country of Yemen. Relief was brought first, slightly before us, (12) to the people of the mountains. Finally the Sultan came to us, (13) and the relief became complete, *by the help of God* {read: *the Creator*} and through your (14) success.³⁰ *Let them praise the Lord for His steadfast love.*³¹

(15) Kindest regards to his excellency my lord (= to you) and to all under his care (16) the kindest regards, *and to all connected with him and* (17) *subordinated to him a million greetings of peace.*

(18) Written *Tammuz 17*³² *1513 E.D.*³³ (19) *Salvation is near!*³⁴ (21) Two copies were made and sent by way of the *Ḥijāz*.³⁵

²⁹ Baneth mistakenly read *fī hānē yishmā'el* (a combination of Arabic, Aramaic and misspelled Hebrew!), instead of *fayahni yisrā'el*. 'The sudden appearance,' *badh* (Baneth took *bdh* as equivalent to *bi-hadbihi*). Goitein's erroneous translation followed accordingly. For the prayer, "May He let Salvation sprout as quickly as the blinking of any eye" in context of the Geniza documents, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:395.

³⁰ Again a reference showing that the recipient had a significant role in the turn of the fate of the Jews in Yemen (see lines. 25 ff.). He, together with Maimonides and the Jewish judge of Cairo, had intervened with the Muslim authorities in that city. The allusion to his munificence means that the arguments based on Islamic law had to be fortified by 'presents' to the proper persons. {'Through success' translates *bi-sa'āda*. In this period *sa'āda* could mean the happiness associated with the closeness to God (see Daiber, "Sa'āda"), accordingly perhaps translate approximately: thanks to your closeness to God. On the 'munificence,' see 516, n. 22.}

³¹ Ps. 107:8, recited when saved from a danger.

³² A day on which fasting is obligatory. I have found many letters written on that fast in July: perhaps the merchants were too exhausted to do much business and passed the time in letter writing. {Abraham Ben Yijū listed the 17th of Tammuz and similar days as fasts in the calendars he wrote in India and Yemen for 1146–50, on II, 16v and in III, 26. Some Babylonian Geonim did not recognize the 17th of Tammuz as an obligatory fast day; see *Otzar ha-Geonim (Rosh ha-Shana)*, 5:32, no. 34. As Prof. Shulamit Elizur has informed me, there is evidence in the Geniza that this and similar fast days were observed according to the rites of Eretz Israel. See, for example, Fleischer, "Additional Remnants," 17, 33.}

³³ July 9, 1202.

³⁴ {Cf. margin, line 8 and 484, n. 30.}

³⁵ Over land, and not, as usual, by sea, probably because all the ships of the season had already sailed. This note makes sense only if we assume that what we have is the original draft, which was destined to be retained in Maḍmūn's office. The manuscript gives the definite impression that this is indeed the case. It is written with utmost carelessness and the main letter lacks any conclusion. This draft found its way to Fustat as scrap paper: on the reverse side the Jewish calendar for the years 1207–12 is jotted down. Someone who used that calendar took the paper with him to Egypt. After it had lost its practical value, he threw it away into the Geniza. {For sending multiple copies of letters or accounts, see page 9, n. 23. The note could have been intended to indicate that this was one of the two copies. 'Two copies,' Arabic *nuskhatayn*, accordingly, is to be understood as duplicate originals of the letter. This is expressed explicitly, for example, in II, 71v, lines 55–56. The remark concerning sending the letters overland contrasts with the writer's comment in II, 67a, that his letters had been sent in the *Kārim*; see pages 519–20.}

{II, 67a *Letter from Shemaryā b. David to a Prominent Egyptian Jew*

Aden, Late twelfth century

ULC Or. 1081 J 6

While this fragment from the top of a letter preserves no details as to its main contents, I have added it to Goitein's 'India Book' corpus, since the sender's identity, the presumed identity of the recipient, the style and format as well as the information concerning sending letters in the *Kārim*, all illuminate data preserved in other documents in this chapter.

The sender, Shemaryā b. David, is undoubtedly the same Maḍmūn/Shemaryāhū b. David, the Nagid of Yemenite Jewry, in whose name II, 67 was sent in 1202.¹ The handwriting of his signature, affixed at the top of II, 67a (see below), appears to be identical to the handwriting of the text of II, 67; and both were almost certainly written by the same person. The text of II, 67a, on the other hand, seems to have been written by a professional scribe. This letter contains the same Hebrew invocation, *be-shēm rahmān*, 'In the Name of the *Merciful*,' as II, 67, and the salutation used in addressing the recipient is almost identical.

The polite and artificial phrases used in the salutation, *al-ḥaḍra... al-shaykhiyya... al-muwwafaqa al-sa'ida*, 'his excellency... *shaykh*... the successful, the auspicious,' clearly mark the recipient as an important personage. In the introduction to II, 67, we suggested that the phrases that appear in the salutation there, *al-ḥaḍra... al-shaykhiyya... al-muwwafaqa al-sa'ida al-amīna*, 'his excellency... *shaykh*... the successful, the auspicious, the trusted,' refer to an notable who bore the titles the *shaykh... al-Muwwafaq al-Sa'id al-Amin*, and that this was likely to have been Maimonides' associate, the famous Jewish physician Hibat Allah Ibn Jumay', known as the *shaykh al-Muwaffaq*. Our letter was probably sent to the same individual before he was granted the additional title *al-Amin*, found in II, 67, and accordingly I suggest dating II, 67a to the late 12th century.

In any event, it is reasonable to conclude that the addressee resided in Egypt. The only information from the body of the letter preserved in this fragment is that the writer had already sent to the addressee other letters 'in the *Kārim*.' The *Kārim* was a convoy of ships in which merchants traveled and transported goods to and from India.² Since presumably all letters sent to India arrived in the *Kārim*, it stands to reason that this notation indicates that those letters were sent not there but to the west, to Egypt.

¹ {On the identicalness of Maḍmūn and Shemaryā/Shemaryāhū, see the introduction to II, 74.

² See 483, n. 28.

The comment on sending letters in the Kārim contrasts with the remark at the end of II, 67, that two copies of that letter had been sent overland, 'by way of the Hijāz.' The Kārim is called 'blessed' as a pious wish that it arrive safely and be crowned with financial success.³

Our letter provides an excellent example of an unusual style that appears in a number of petition-like missives from this period. After the invocation *In the name of the Merciful*, the scribe wrote *yakhuṣṣ al-ḥaḍra*, literally 'greet the excellency,' without any apparent subject. The same appears in II, 67 (there with the perfect aspect of the verb, *khaṣṣa*). Evidently only after the scribe had completed the letter did the sender sign his name 'the servant Shemaryā b. David' in the upper left-hand corner. This is the usual position for the sender's name in a petition. But here, unlike the usual petition, the name, written in this case in two lines, above and below the invocation, functions as the subject of the following predicate.

Sometimes the sender's name was written in the margin, rather than the upper left-hand corner. Such is the case in II, 67, where 'the servant Maḍmūn b. David' similarly functions as the subject of the predicate in the salutation at the beginning of the text. Writing the subject of the salutation in the margin appears also in roughly contemporary Arabic letters to important personages. So in a letter from the Red Sea port of Quṣayr, where after the *basmala* (comparable to *be-shēm raḥmān* here) the text begins 'kisses the ground,' etc., with the subject, *al-mamlūk*, 'the servant,' in the margin.⁴ Similarly in another petition, after the *basmala*, the letter begins *yakhdūm*, 'serves,' etc., and the subject *al-mamlūk al-asghar*, 'the smallest of servants,' is written in the margin.⁵

The handwriting of the signature 'the servant Shemaryā b. David' at the top of II, 67a is hardly similar to the handwriting in the words 'the servant Maḍmūn b. David' in the margin of II, 67, even though, as already noted, they evidently refer to the same individual. It is not impossible that one person wrote both in different styles, but this is unlikely. As we have seen, II, 67, was sent in two copies. I speculate that Shemaryā/Maḍmūn b. David penned II, 67. Maḍmūn b. Jacob, the bystander who added a postscript there, might have been the copyist,⁶ who penned the second text of the letter and also signed Maḍmūn b. David's name to II, 67.

³ See 377-78, for similar uses of *al-mubārak*, 'the blessed.'

⁴ See Guo, *Commerce*, 294.

⁵ See Diem, *Geschäftsbriefe*, 52.

⁶ See above, 517, n. 28, referring to TS 12.825, where a copyist uses a similar phrase when adding a greeting to Maimonides.

Be that as it may, it is clear that the name of the petitioner was added at the top of a letter or in its margin and served as the subject of the salutation, not only when the letter or name was written by a copyist but also when both were written by the sender. An example of such a text is found in II, 74, where in the upper left-hand corner, opposite the invocation, the petitioner wrote his name 'the servant Joseph . . .,' and this serves as the subject of the predicate in the text below, 'kisses the earth before the lofty seat.' The very same procedure and formula appear in several Arabic petitions from the 13th century.⁷ The poet laureate Judah al-Ḥarīzī also began an epistle with this style.⁸

Translation

[A. Salutation]

(13) *In the name of the Merciful*.⁹ The servant Shemaryā b. David—*may the spirit of the Lord give him rest!*¹⁰—(4) greets his high and lofty excellency, the most illustrious (5) *shaykh*, his lordship, the munificent, gracious, (6) 'the Successful,' 'the Auspicious'—may God make his honored position permanent, (7) renew his good fortune and crush his enemies!—greet him¹¹ (8) with profuse wishes for his well-being—and may He make it possible to meet him speedily, (9) God willing!

[B. On letters sent in the Kārim]

I inform you (10)—may God make your felicity permanent!—that my letters to you (11) have already been sent in the blessed Kārim. (12) Accordingly, the servant can dispense with (13) repeating their content in this letter. And I [. . .].¹²

⁷ See Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 372, 375 (TS Arabic 40, f. 16; TS K 16, f. 61); Guo, *Commerce*, 296, 298, 301, 302. In the text there on page 187, *yuhyi*, is probably an error in deciphering *yakhuṣṣ*.

⁸ PER H 86. See Yahalom & Blau, *Wanderings of Alharizi*, 274-75, where it was not interpreted correctly.

⁹ Hebrew *be-shēm raḥmān*. This invocation is found in numerous Yemenite sources. See Friedman, *Yemenite Messiah*, 174, n. 152.

¹⁰ Isa. 63:14.

¹¹ Because of the succession of clauses that alternate between the greetings of the writer and pious wishes that God bless the addressee, the writer repeats here the verb *khaṣṣa*. The same was done in II, 65, line 6 and II, 67, line 6.

¹² The continuation is torn away.