

III, C. *Letters Sent to Ben Yijū by Khalaf b. Isaac*III, 10 *Letter from Khalaf b. Isaac to Abraham Ben Yijū, Dahbattan, India*

Aden {after 1138}

TS 24.64

Translated in Goitein, *Letters*, 185–92. The following is based both on that publication and Goitein's fuller original edition.

The writer of this letter, Khalaf b. Isaac b. Bundār, was a cousin of Maḡmūn b. Ḥasan who closely cooperated with him. His correspondence, much of which has been preserved, is a valuable source for the India trade around the middle of the twelfth century {in the 1120–30's}. It shows that a very lively traffic connected India with the West; because of the tremendous risks the quantities sent in each ship for each individual merchant were comparatively limited in size; losses were borne with remarkable equanimity; and a spirit of friendly cooperation prevailed between Jew, Muslim, and Hindu (also Christian, of course, although rarely mentioned), and between the free merchants and the bond-servants who served as their agents. Three of these slaves appear in this letter as business agents. One had an Arab name, one a Persian, and one a Hindu.

The following documents concerning Khalaf have been found: five letters to Ben Yijū, III, 10–16, one of them in three copies (III, 12–14); 5 documents (II, 51; IV, 1, 11–13)—an account and four letters—addressed to Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel;<sup>1</sup> two letters (II, 46<sup>2</sup>; VI, 37) to Abu 'Imrān b. Nufay'; one letter (II, 48), to a Cairene merchant, most probably the above mentioned Ḥalfon, and one order of drugs, written in Arabic letters, with a marginal note in Hebrew characters (II, 50). In addition, two letters of thanks addressed to him by the Palestinian Yeshiva in Cairo have come to light (II, 53, 54).<sup>3</sup>

Of the documents emanating from Khalaf's office, the same handwriting appears on the following thirteen: III, 10, 14, 16; the postscripts and marginal notes to III, 11 (the body of which is written in a different

<sup>1</sup> {See the introduction to II, 51, where I suggested that that letter was sent to someone else.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 444–45, concerning the addressee of this document.

<sup>3</sup> On Khalaf, see further chap. 2, sec. G.

hand); II, 48, 50–51; III, 15; IV, 1, 11–13; VI, 37. Two other documents, III, 11, 12 (with the exception of the postscripts and the marginal notes; see above), are written in another, especially large and elaborate script. No. II, 46 is again in another handwriting, much smaller than the two just mentioned, but still done very carefully.

Thus, it is highly probable that the 13 pieces, on which the same hand appears, were written by Khalaf himself, especially since the various additions to III, 11 would hardly have been made by any clerk, and certainly not by a clerk different from the one who had written the letter itself. Joseph b. Abraham also wrote most of his letters in his own hand; see the introduction to III, 1. It may be, of course, that the recipient mainly preserved the originals written by the boss for reference, while he disposed of most of the copies made by the clerks.<sup>4</sup>

Khalaf's handwriting excels in regularity and clearness and approaches the type of writing used in highly official legal documents, such as marriage contracts. However, there is nothing strange in this fact. It was the pride of the medieval Jewish gentleman to be regarded, not only as learned, but also 'to wear the crown of calligraphy.'<sup>5</sup> The recipient of our letter, Ben Yijū, could pride himself on the same achievement. However, the documents collected in this book prove that a really beautiful hand is an art attained only by a select few.

After he had filled the front page with seventy-four lines—which are slightly broader at the bottom than at the top—and concluded his letter, Khalaf wrote a first postscript in eleven short lines, on the narrow margin, beginning at the bottom and ending at the head of the page. On the verso he appended a second addition of seven lines, while the address, as usual, is written upside down at the other end of the verso. The letter is carefully folded in such a way that the address fits exactly into the second fold.

The addresses have been preserved in only seven of Khalaf's letters (III, 10, 12, 16; IV, 11–13; VI, 37). All are in Hebrew characters; in two cases, however, III, 12, 16, the address is also written in Arabic letters. This suggests that normally letters were carried by Jewish merchants; and only when none was found, the letter was sent with a Muslim, and the address was added in Arabic characters.

<sup>4</sup> This is unlikely, however, in light of Ben Yijū's habit of saving even copies on which there was no blank space.

<sup>5</sup> See page 306. {Cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:228 ff.; Friedman, *JMP*, 1:11.}

Although it is extremely difficult to compare the intrinsically cursive Arabic script to the very monumental Hebrew, I have the feeling that Khalaf himself wrote the Arabic addresses on III, 12 and 16 (the latter should be reexamined), for they betray the same strong and grand style of writing which characterizes Khalaf's Hebrew script.

Khalaf writes from Aden (cf. lines 33–34). From line 50 it is clear that Ben Yijū resided on the Malabar Coast, not in Fandarayna (a line 24 {and accompanying note}), and most probably in Dahbattan (see line 17).

The time of our letter can be fixed according to the following considerations: The blessing after the name of the sender's father shows that he was dead at that time. Khalaf's father died in February 1139 {Feb. 14–March 13, 1138} (see II, 51 {line 6}). In two other letters, which certainly were written a year later (1140), he thanks a Cairene merchant, most probably Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Nethanel, and Ben Yijū for their expressions of sympathy (II, 48, line 41;<sup>6</sup> III, 11, line 1). In III, 11, there seem to be several references to our letter; cf. *ib.*, lines 13, 21, 32. If our interpretation is correct, our letter must have been sent after 1139 {1138}.

#### Translation

##### [A. Introduction, the beginning in rhyme]

(1) *In Your name, O Merciful.*

(2) The letter of your excellency the illustrious Sheikh, has arrived— [may God prolong your life/] (3) and make permanent your honored position, and rank/highness and loftiness/excellence, and ascendancy!/] (4) May He never deprive your dwelling-place and court of any good!/[May He bestow] (5) upon you that which is most suitable of all He usually confers {alt. tr.: [May He protect] for your sake... of all He has conferred upon you}!/[May He subdue those that are envious of

<sup>6</sup> This letter was written in 1140.

<sup>7</sup> Arabic *ṣāliḥ mā awlāhu*. {For this phrase, see page 330, n. 2. Goitein evidently understood the pronominal suffix in *awlāhu* as referring to the preceding *mā*. However, in the parallel phrase in IV, 17, line 16, *ṣāliḥ mā 'aṭāhum*, the recipient is evidently intended.}

you and crush your enemies/(6) and may all your affairs be completed successfully {lit., '... be joined by blessings'}!<sup>8</sup>

I was glad when I looked at your letter even before (7) I had taken notice of its content.<sup>9</sup> Then I read it full of happiness and, while studying it, became joyous and cheerful. (8) For, it was reassuring for me to learn from it about your well-being and your satisfactory state. Then I praised (9) God for this very much and asked Him to give you more of all the best (10) in His mercy.

Whatever longing (for me) you expressed, my lord, I, (11) your servant, feel twice as strongly (for you) and more than what you have described in writing. (12) May God decree {read: facilitate}<sup>10</sup> our coming together in the near future in complete happiness (13) through His mercy, God willing!

##### [B. Shipments from India]

I took notice, (14) my master, of your detailed statement concerning sending 'refurbished' iron<sup>11</sup> in the boat of the (15) *nākhudā* Ibn Abu 'l-Katā'ib.<sup>12</sup> It (the shipment) has arrived, and I received from him (16) two *bahārs* and one third, as you noted, my lord.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Arabic *itaṣṣalat bi-'lkhayrat asbābuhu*. For *asbāb*, 'affairs,' cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:623b, and III, 12, line 5, where the same phrase is used.

<sup>9</sup> {For such expressions of joy on the receipt of a letter, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 5:229.

<sup>10</sup> I read *sabhal*, commonly used in this context, instead of Goitein's reading *sajjal*.)

<sup>11</sup> Because of the perennial wars between Christians and Muslims, the Jews did not trade in iron in the Mediterranean. In the India trade, however, iron was a staple commodity rarely absent from any larger shipment leaving India. Four types are mentioned; 'refurbished' translates *muhdath*, lit., 'renewed.' {For six types of iron, see 315, n. 17 and for 'refurbished' 316, n. 21a.

<sup>12</sup> For this shipowner, Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. Abu 'l-Katā'ib, see page 142.

<sup>13</sup> As already noted (376, n. 39), the *bahār* contained 300 pounds. But the *bahārs* of different products sometimes differed in weight. See Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 8–10 {and below, 616, n. 13}. According to II, 16, lines 16 ff., 31–32, the same type of iron was transported in the same ship from India to Aden; there, Khalaf received two and one fourth *bahārs*, here two and one third. Despite the similarities, it is not certain that II, 16 and III, 10 refer to the same shipment, for II, 16 is an exact statement of the transactions made by Maḍmūn for Ben Yijū. Here, lines 18–20, Khalaf reports that he had received from Maḍmūn a certain quantity of cardamom on Ben Yijū's account. However, nothing of the kind is mentioned in Maḍmūn's letter. The detail discussed confirms a fact, reflected in other documents published here: There was a certain routine in the Indian trade. Similar quantities of the same commodity were ordered by the same merchant in different years and were carried by the same ship from India to Aden; cf., e.g., 611, n. 28.

The *nākhudā* (17) Joseph<sup>14</sup> arrived from Dahbattan<sup>15</sup> on the Malabar Coast in the ship of Ibn al-Muqaddam,<sup>16</sup> and I received from him (18) two basins, two ewers and two basins for candlesticks.<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, I took delivery from my lord, (19) the most illustrious Sheikh Maḍmūn, of 30 pounds of cardamom from your excellency's bag (20) and paid for it the customs duties, as you had written.<sup>18</sup>

Please send the remaining lids,<sup>19</sup> (21) my lord.

However, of the betel nuts (22) mentioned by you, my lord, I, your servant, have not received anything, for you wrote that you had sent them with (23) Jawhar, the slave-agent<sup>20</sup> of Ḍāfir,<sup>21</sup> but he has not arrived this year.

<sup>14</sup> Certainly Joseph b. Abraham b. Bundār, another cousin of Khalaf active in the India trade. As III, 1 shows, Joseph was especially interested in Indian bronze vessels. {For Joseph b. Abraham, see chap. 2, sec. F; chap. 3, sec. B. He is not called *nākhudā* elsewhere, nor is there any other data that suggests that he was a shipowner. It is likely that some other individual is referred to here as the *nākhudā* Joseph/Yūsuf. This is further suggested by that fact that in contrast to other distinguished merchants mentioned in the letter, this Joseph is not designated Sheikh. When Khalaf b. Isaac referred to 'Sheikh Joseph' in III, 12, lines 37–38, he certainly intended Joseph b. Abraham. See also page 151.}

<sup>15</sup> A port on the Malabar Coast (still existing, under the name Valarapattanam), repeatedly mentioned, because Abraham Ben Yijū had his brass factory there. See Nainar, *Arab Geographers*, 29. {Also see III, 18, sec. B, line 9.}

<sup>16</sup> See III, 9, line 13. In II, 16, line 48, a ship of his father is mentioned. This, by the way, also suggests that II, 16 preceded our letter, although this argument is not decisive, since in the case of Rāmishṭ, a man, his sons and his brothers-in-law {or, his son and son-in-law}, each had separate ships operating at one and the same time; see II, 24, line 31. {As already noted, from II, 29, margin and verso, line 5, it appears that al-Muqaddam and Ibn al-Muqaddam were one and the same.}

<sup>17</sup> These basins, called here *ṭast sham*—but today in Yemen *maghnas*—serve as lamp stand, flower vase (when turned upside down), and drinking vessel. {On the basins that went along with the lamps, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 4:135, 388, n. 205.}

<sup>18</sup> This comparatively small quantity (one tenth of a *bahār*) obviously was sent by Ben Yijū to Khalaf for the payment of minor orders. Customs were due, as the cardamom was not carried in an open basket; see III, 3, line 13, and 569, n. 2. {Obviously, Maḍmūn b. Ḥasan, the representative of the merchants, was intended here and in the continuation.}

<sup>19</sup> Certainly bronze lids, as in III, 11, line 13. Lids were traded separately from the vessels for which they were destined. This proves how much standardized the copper industry was; see below line 46. In I, 1, line 15 and I, 14, line 1, where silver vessels are referred to, a water jug and its lid are mentioned together.

<sup>20</sup> Arabic *ghulām*, which simply means 'young man'; cf. Hebrew *na'ar*, which also denotes both a young man and a servant. {It can also mean 'freedman,' 'apprentice,' 'employee,' 'son.' See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 6:40 (Index); Diem, *Dictionary*, 158. Jawhar was a common name for a slave; see page 151.} Jawhar seems to have been commuting between India and Aden regularly, just as we find Bama, Ben Yijū's slave and agent, staying for a summer in Aden; see II, 23, lines 41–45. The importance for the Indian trade of these slaves, who served as business representatives of their masters, is brought home by our letter, where three of them are mentioned by name; cf. lines 65, 74. {Cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:131 ff.}

<sup>21</sup> Two India traders bearing this extremely rare name appear in our papers: one, the

## [C. Shipwreck]

As to your shipment, (24) my master, forwarded from Fandarayna<sup>22</sup> in the ship of Fatan Swami<sup>23</sup> through Sheikh (25) Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. Ja'far.<sup>24</sup>

The smaller ship<sup>25</sup> arrived and I took delivery (26) from it {alt. tr.: from him} of 1% *bahār* of pepper, as had been stated in your memorandum<sup>26</sup> (27) to my master, the most illustrious Sheikh Maḍmūn, as well as of a *bahār* of *amlas* ('smooth') iron.<sup>27</sup>

(28) The larger ship, however, arrived near Berbera,<sup>28</sup> when its captain ran into trouble with it, until (29) it was thrust against Bāb al-Mandab,<sup>29</sup> where it foundered {alt. tr.: it crashed at . . . and broke up there}. (30) The pepper was a total loss. God salvaged<sup>30</sup> none of it. (31) As to the iron, mariners were brought from Aden, with whom it was stipulated (32) that they would dive for it and salvage it. They salvaged (33) about one half of the iron, and, while I am writing this letter, (34) they are bringing it out of the Furḍa to {alt. tr.: releasing all of it from the . . . and bringing it to} the storehouse<sup>31</sup> of the most illustrious Sheikh, (35) my master

son of Farāj (III, 4, margin, line 2, and verso, lines 6–9), the other, the son of Burayk, the Alexandrian (II, 34, side e, lines 1 ff.).

<sup>22</sup> {For Fandarayna, see 332, n. 16.} As it appears clearly from the context, Ben Yijū was not in that town, but had advised his correspondent 'Alī [= Abu 'l-Ḥasan] b. Ja'far to buy and to dispatch from there the goods mentioned. See line 25.

<sup>23</sup> Indian *paṭṭana-swāmi*, 'lord of the mart,' chief of merchant guild in a port or market town (communicated by Professor A. L. Basham). {Also see page 146.}

<sup>24</sup> Certainly identical with Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ja'far, lines 64 and 65, whom we find in India. He did not transport the items listed in person, but sent them through his agent, line 65. While the name Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī was common among Jews, I have never come across a Jew named Ja'far. Therefore, this Abu 'l-Ḥasan certainly was a Muslim. Thus, we see a Jew sending merchandise to another through a Muslim merchant, traveling on a Hindu ship. The same appears in sec. G and II, 20. Whether the Ja'far, whose ship foundered according to II, 32, line 7, was the father of our 'Alī cannot be ascertained.

<sup>25</sup> In the Indian Ocean, ships used to be escorted by a smaller ship of a different type; cf. 341, n. 26.

<sup>26</sup> {Arabic *nuskha*. See 362, n. 11.}

<sup>27</sup> Cf. III, 11, lines 37–40.

<sup>28</sup> A town in the Somali Republic, Africa. The town itself seems to be known only from literary sources over a hundred years later than the references in the Geniza. See Lewis, "Berberā," 1172. See [II, 71 margin, line 3] VII, 23, line 7.

<sup>29</sup> Up to the present day the name of the straits between the southern tip of Arabia and Africa. But in ancient times it was also the name of a place on that tip {see Rentz, "Bāb al-Mandab"}, and this is what is intended here and apparently in V, 8, line 16. The sea of Berbera was famous for its treacherous, 'mad' waters. See the verses quoted by Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 2:438–39; cf. Maqbul Ahmad, "Mas'ūdī's Geography," 284.

<sup>30</sup> {Arabic *jama'*. The same expression for God returning lost belongings to their owner is used in II, 61, line 36.

<sup>31</sup> Arabic *dār*. Margariti, "Aden," 156, 321, suggests that this may have been Maḍmūn's home rather than a storehouse.}

Maḍmūn b. al-Ḥasan. All the expenses (36) incurred for the diving and for transport<sup>32</sup> will be deducted from whatever will be {alt. tr.: was deducted from whatever was} realized for it (that iron), and the rest will be divided proportionally, (37) each taking his proper share.

I regret very much your losses. But the (38) *Holy one, blessed be He* will compensate you and me presently {alt. tr.: may...compensate...speedily}.<sup>33</sup>

[D. Household goods ordered]

As to the (household) goods ordered (39) by you, my master: You asked me to buy a frying pan of stone<sup>34</sup> in a {lit., 'and its'} case.<sup>35</sup> Later on<sup>36</sup> (40) its case broke {alt. tr.:...pan of stone, and I wrapped it and after

<sup>32</sup> Arabic *kirā*, the wages paid to the camel drivers, who transported the salvaged iron from Bāb al-Mandab to the customs house of Aden, an extra expenditure made necessary owing to the foundering of the ship.

<sup>33</sup> Those merchants bore their losses with great restraint, both because they were used to them and because of their strong belief that God ordained everything, and "everything that God does is for the good."

<sup>34</sup> Arabic *tājīn* {also in III, 24, lines 17, 36}, the Greek *teganon* (τήγανον) (which came to the Arabs through the Aramaic; cf. Fraenkel, *Fremdwörter*, 69). In III, 11, lines 21 and 23, the Arabic word {*miqlā*,} *miqlāt* (pronounced today in central Yemen *maglā'*) is used instead. {Cf. Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:391, n. 33.} A *maglā'* made of *ḥarad* stone is believed by the Yemenites to give the food an especially tasty flavor; cf. Goitein, *Jemenica*, 169, No. 1319 and 49, No. 273. The famous Yemenite Sabbath dish *kubānāh* is kept warm in a pot made of this *ḥarad*. In former times, Yemenite immigrants to Eretz Israel used to bring those stone pots with them, which shows how much they valued them. In modern times, *maglā'* denotes in the language of the Yemenite Jews not a frying pan—which is called *sullā'*—but a large dish, in which warm food, destined for the whole family, is served {see Piamenta, *Dictionary*, II, 412}. However, as *tājīn* and *miqlāt* are used here in one and the same sense, the common Arabic use of these words was presumably intended. As we learn from III, 11, lines 21–23, Khalaf forgot to send the iron pan and sent instead two pans of stone. {In Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:143, frying pans made 'of iron or of "stone"' are described. R. Ettinghausen, in his notes to the text, which he sent to Goitein on April 2, 1959, remarks that cooking vessels carved from a gray stone were in use in the 10–12th centuries (and still today) in Khurasan. Waines, "Maṭbakh," 809a: "Pans (sing. *miklā* or *miqlāt*) generally used for frying fish and the like were made of iron. A stone-made *miklā* was used for other purposes, although the distinction between it and the former is unclear." Stone (*ḥajar*) kitchenware appears here, lines 39, 41; III, 11, line 23; III, 24, lines 17–18. Such vessels from Yemen are discussed by Muchawsky-Schnapper, "Stone."}

<sup>35</sup> Arabic {*wa-}gḥḥ*, which could correspond to Arabic *ghalḥa* or *jalḥa*; the former is preferable, although it seems not to be attested by the dictionaries {see, however, n. 37}. In the same sense, III, 11, line 24: *ghilāf* {see note there}.

<sup>36</sup> Arabic *ba'd* for *ba'dan*, as in modern Yemenite speech; cf. Goitein-Habshush, *Travels in Yemen*, Text, 77, line 18. {See next note.

I wrapped it, it broke},<sup>37</sup> whereupon I bought you an iron frying pan for a *niṣāfi*,<sup>38</sup> (41) which is, after all, better than a stone pan {lit., 'more recommended than the stone one'}. I bought you (also) for a *niṣāfi*, (42) glassware:<sup>39</sup> tumblers, bowls {alt. tr.: jugs/cups}<sup>40</sup> and cups {alt. tr.: jars},<sup>41</sup> namely sixty-eight (43) tumblers, ten bowls and five cups {alt. tr.: jars}; with the basket, which cost a *qirāt*, it made exactly (44) one *niṣāfi*; furthermore, five green<sup>42</sup> bottles with {lit., 'in'} their baskets<sup>43</sup> for eleven *qirāt*, the (45) total being a dinar and eleven *qirāt*s. As to the small pots, I (46) could not get any single items, only in *dasts*.<sup>44</sup> The wheat has been

<sup>37</sup> The words in the original following *tājīn ḥajar*, 'a frying pan of stone,' can be vocalized *wa-ghallaḥḥ wa-ba'd* (see Blau, *Grammar*, 217) *ghallaḥḥ inkasara*. This has the advantage of avoiding the unattested *ghalḥa* and the lack of concord between it and the following verb. Furthermore, the breakage of the case does not explain the need to buy an iron pan, since the text as read by Goitein does not state that the stone pan broke.)

<sup>38</sup> Half a Maliki dinar; see II, 20 (page 333), line 34.

<sup>39</sup> Glass vessels were ordered very frequently by Ben Yijū; cf. II, 20, line 47 ff.; II, 23, lines 45 ff.; II, 26, line 7; III, 11, lines 25–30, 50. As the low prices indicate, local glass, such as that manufactured in Lakhaba near Aden (cf. II, 26, line 7), is intended here. The Adenese themselves ordered Beirut glass or glass made by the Dār al-Jawhar from Cairo; see II, 44, lines 18–19, verso, lines 28–29.

<sup>40</sup> {For 'bowls,' here and in the next line, the original has *kisān*. I have not found this word elsewhere. From his working papers it is clear that Goitein understood it as a plural form of *ka's*, which in III, 11, lines 25, 50, he similarly translated 'bowl' (perhaps to differentiate between this item and the previous one here). I suggest that *kisān* may be an irregular spelling or dialectical form for *kizān*, plural of *kūz*, jug or drinking cup, for which see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:143, 148, and above, 422, n. 32 (there: 'copper vessels for wine'). Both in II, 44, lines 18–19, and here the item in question appears together with *aqdāh* and *artāl*. (For the *z>s* shift, see Blau, *Grammar*, 37. Blau lists, with due reservation, only one example, Bodl. MS. Heb. b. 3 [Cat. 2806], fol. 9v, line 6, *wsnḥ*, taken by the editor, Baneth, "Documents," 85, n. 56, as possibly equivalent to *waznuhā*. In context, however, this is highly unlikely, and *wa-su<k>nuhā* should be preferred. Ashtor, *Mamluks*, 3:59, 147 already noted the correction; thanks are due to Amir Ashur for calling this to my attention. As such, I am aware of no other documentation for the proposed shift.) According to Sadan, "Mashrūbāt," 721b, Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:146, "translates *kizān* as 'bowls,' a sense which the word possesses in certain dialects." As far as the reference to Goitein is concerned, a mishap seems to have occurred here. On page 146, he quotes a passage with 'bowls, platters and cups.' As indicated in the accompanying note, page 393, n. 51, this is a translation from the text in this book II, 32, lines 49–50, which in the original reads *zabādi wa-ṣuḥūn wa-kizān*, i.e., *zabādi* = 'bowls'; *kizān* = 'cups.'

<sup>41</sup> For 'jars,' *artāl*, see 423, n. 34.

<sup>42</sup> Arabic *ksy*, which most probably is to be understood as *khudr*, plural of *akhḍar*; cf. II, 44v, lines 28–29, where red and white glass is mentioned. It could hardly be *khusr*, 'slender,' as this form is not attested in literary or Yemenite Arabic.

<sup>43</sup> Arabic *shutūt*, a Yemenite word; see II, 23, line 44.

<sup>44</sup> This, too, shows how much the industry was standardized in those days. See above line 20. A *dast* was a certain quantity that made up a set of a particular item; cf. 304, n. 9.

made ready for dispatch (47) to {lit., 'has been packed for'} you by my lord, the most illustrious Sheikh Maḍmūn.<sup>45</sup>

[E. Silk sent instead of gold]

I, your servant, sent to [you] on my (48) account five *manns* of good silk,<sup>46</sup> for I saw that my master, the most illustrious Sheikh (49) Maḍmūn, had sent some to Ibn 'Adlān<sup>47</sup> and to others and it was reported in his (Ibn 'Adlān's) name (50) that it is selling well in Malabar. Therefore, I thought it was preferable<sup>48</sup> to send, instead of gold, (51) merchandise, which might bring some profit. Thus, kindly sell it for me, your servant, (52) for whatever price God, the Exalted, apportions as livelihood, and buy for me, your servant, whatever (53) God, the Exalted, apportions<sup>49</sup> and send it to me in any ship, without any liability, my lord, (54) for any perils on land or sea. If the commodities purchased include (55) betel nut or cardamom, kindly purchase for whatever price is available; but you, my master, (56) need no instructions, for you are competent {alt. tr.: the epitome of competence}.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, I, your servant, cause you trouble

<sup>45</sup> Wheat was indigenous in India, especially in its northwestern and central parts. According to Watt, *Commercial Products*, 1092: "With the vast majority of the people of India, wheat is not, however, a necessity of life; it is indeed rarely if ever eaten by them. Wheat becomes an important article of food in the Panjāb only." It is evident from III, 18B, lines 4 and 10, that Ben Yijū's staple food in India was rice. He needed wheat, perhaps, not so much as food, as for religious purposes, for according to the Jewish ritual, the full grace cannot be recited except after the eating of bread made of one of the main five grains grown in Palestine (wheat, barley, etc.). A scholar like Ben Yijū certainly would have hated the idea never to pronounce the full grace. Therefore, he—and certainly also the other Jewish merchants out in India—needed to have wheat bread, at least for the Sabbath meals. In fact, a similar problem existed in southern Yemen, where the staple food was at that time—and still is—durra ('Indian millet,' *Andropogon Sorghum Brot.*). The Yemenite Jews approached the head of the Egyptian Jewish community, Abraham Maimuni (in office 1204–37) on this matter. In a long letter he explained to them what they could do; cf. Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, 126–28 (no. 84) and 197 (no. 109). In II, 26, line 3, Maḍmūn charges Ben Yijū three dinars for wheat sent to him. Wheat was brought to Aden from Egypt via 'Aydhāb; cf. VI, 36, line 19, verso, line 17. In letters from Aden to India, the Yemenite word *burr* is used for wheat [as here; II, 51, line 9, in a letter from Aden to Egypt; III, 8, line 12, from India to Yemen]; in orders from 'Aydhāb, the Egyptian *qamh*. {See, e.g., II, 58, line 24, where wheat is called 'an essential.'}

<sup>46</sup> Approximately 10 pounds. Silk was traded in standard quantities of 10 pounds, costing 20 Egyptian dinars. On shipping silk to India, see III, 1, line 7 and 555, n. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Not known from other documents.

<sup>48</sup> Arabic *akhyar*; cf. III, 9, margin, line 5.

<sup>49</sup> {For the 'whatever...apportions' formula, also in lines 60, 69, see the discussion in pages 63–65.}

<sup>50</sup> Such an apology is made, after the writer has given his instructions. See below, line 71. {Arabic *mawḍi' al-kifāya*, lit., 'the place of competence.' I have not seen *mawḍi'*

(57) every year; but you, my master, do [excuse] your servant,<sup>51</sup> (58) as it has always been your habit, in the past and recently.

[F. Request to intervene with a Muslim notable]

Moreover, {add: I inform you} my master, (59) last year, I sent to the captain Mas'ūd, the Abyssinian, (60) 30 Egyptian *mithqāls*, with which to buy whatever God, the Exalted, would apportion. When, however, (61) he arrived at your place, the well-known misfortune {lit., 'that misfortune'} befell him. He {lit., 'the man'} informed me that he (62) had bought me two *bahārs* of pepper, which he carried with him, and that there remained for me 17¼ (63) *mithqāls*, which were deposited with my master, the most illustrious Sheikh (64) Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ja'far.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, I, the captain (65) Mas'ūd, and Bakhtiyār,<sup>53</sup> the slave-agent of 'Alī b. Ja'far, went to the most illustrious Sheikh (66) 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Nīlī,<sup>54</sup> and he (Mas'ūd) reported to him the matter, whereupon I received (67) a notification from al-Nīlī {alt. tr.: took a note/letter, which al-Nīlī wrote} to 'Alī b. Ja'far about it. (68) When you meet him, kindly greet him in my name and ask him (69) to buy for me with this whatever God, the Exalted, apportions<sup>55</sup> and to send it in (70) any ship without

used this way in the dictionaries, and the exact translation is uncertain. For such an apology, see further, 592, n. 36.

<sup>51</sup> Arabic *ya'khuḍh 'alā 'abdih bil-...* The last word was restored by Goitein *bil-'udhr*, and the phrase translated, without brackets 'do excuse me.' From the dictionary definitions of *akḥadha 'alā bi-*, I would expect something like *ya'khuḍh 'alā 'abdih bil-[faḍl]*, 'force [kindness] upon his servant,' or the like. But I am uncertain that is idiomatic.

<sup>52</sup> See above, line 25.

<sup>53</sup> A very common Persian name; cf. II, 20, line 25, 28; II, 23, line 43 {contrary to Margariti, "Aden," 244, it is unlikely in my opinion that the same Bakhtiyār was intended}. According to Jāhīz, *Fakhr al-Sūdān*, 84, one should not confide one's business to a Persian slave (a Khorāsānī).

<sup>54</sup> Al-Nīlī means 'the indigo merchant,' here, perhaps, a family name. {'Alī al-Nīlī was the name of the wealthy clerk-agent of the shipowner Rāmīsh (see pages 145–46). Stern, "Rāmīsh," 10, n. 5, explains that al-Nīl is a place in Iraq. The same man could be intended here; see the following note.}

<sup>55</sup> The Abyssinian captain, after his return from his unsuccessful voyage to India, testified in Aden that he had left with 'Alī b. Ja'far 17¼ Egyptian gold *mithqāls* belonging to Khalaf. The captain, Khalaf and 'Alī b. Ja'far's slave-agent went subsequently to a Muslim merchant en route to India and asked him to urge 'Alī b. Ja'far to send merchandise for the money deposited, the reason being obviously that the Abyssinian captain did not intend to return to India in the near future. Here Khalaf requests Ben Yijū to see to it that his Muslim business associate {'Alī b. Ja'far} fulfilled his obligations. {It is not clear that al-Nīlī was en route to India. Had that been the case, it would hardly have been necessary to take from him a letter that he wrote to 'Alī b. Ja'far. Al-Nīlī may have been a highly respected merchant (see the previous note), who also had dealings with 'Alī b. Ja'far and was expected to be able to influence him. By what appears to be coincidence, our papers

any liability for any risk on sea (71) or land, in this world or in the world to come.<sup>56</sup> I do not need giving you instructions, how to approach {lit., 'to speak to'} (72) him; "a hint is sufficient for a wise man."<sup>57</sup>

May my lord receive for his esteemed self (73) the best greetings and convey the best and most profuse greetings in my name to my master, the noble scion,<sup>58</sup> and all (74) whom your care embraces and Bama!<sup>59</sup> *And Peace.*

## [G. Presents sent]

[Margin] (1) I, your servant, sent (2) what has no importance or (3) value, namely a bottle of sugar (4) and a good Abyssinian hide.<sup>60</sup> (5) On the hide, is written (6) 'Yiju' from outside (7) and from inside on various places. (8) Favor me by accepting and excuse (9) me,<sup>61</sup> as had been your habit, (10) in the past and recently. (11) And best greetings to you (12) and sincerest salutation and personal regards.<sup>62</sup> (12) *And Peace.*

[Verso] (1) I also notify you, my lord, that the basket with the glassware and the five bottles (2) are with the *nākhudā* Aḥmad {read:

mention another merchant, whose name combines those of some of the figures described here, viz. Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. Mas'ūd al-Nīlī (VII, 5, lines 11–12, VII, 36v, line 8).}

<sup>56</sup> This religious formula is not specifically Islamic. It is found in Hebrew and Aramaic Geniza documents. {Cf., e.g., II, 45a, lines 18, 33, 34.}

<sup>57</sup> Lit., 'give to a wise man {Prov. 9:9} (only) the beginning of a thing.' Khalaf uses the same Hebrew phrase in III, 11, lines 46–47.

<sup>58</sup> Ben Yijū's son, Perahyā Abu 'l-Surūr; cf. II, 14, line 36.

<sup>59</sup> Ben Yijū's slave agent; cf. II, 14, line 36. He is regarded as a member of the family and called in III, 16, line 23, 'The Brother.' Similarly, Maimonides, in one of his letters says: "All the members of my family, free men or slaves." See also 487, n. 2. Bama, as I learn from Professor A. L. Basham, is vernacular for Brahma. {The above reference is to Maimonides, *Epistles* (Baneth), 71. In sending regards to the addressee, Maimonides mentions *wa-kull man fi dāri ahrār wa-jiwār*, lit., 'and everyone in my home, free men and female slaves.' Cf. Friedman, "Menstrual Impurity," 12, n. 44. On greetings to Bama, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:435, n. 82; *Letters*, 13. Ghosh (*Antique*, 246–54), concludes that the slave's name is to be vocalized Bomma, ultimately derived from Brahma.}

<sup>60</sup> Before the main meal, which is brought in ready-made on portable tables or on a tray, is served, the Yemenites eat *ja'lāh*, all kinds of fruits, raw vegetables, and nuts, which are heaped up on a hide, on which one puts also the peels, seeds and pits. During the interval between the *ja'lāh* and the meal, the hide, with all it contains, is removed. It stands to reason that the hides sent as presents served the same purpose. A hide bought for Ben Yijū by Maḍmūn cost two (Malikī) dinars (II, 16v, line 5). See Goitein, *Med. Soc.* 1:111 {and 4:129}.

<sup>61</sup> A polite phrase implying that a far more valuable present should have been sent.

<sup>62</sup> {Arabic *ilmām*. See 492, n. 15.}

Muḥammad}, the *nākhudā* of the ship of the Fidyār,<sup>63</sup> on all of them (3) is written 'Yiju' in Hebrew letters. The hide (4) and the bottle of sugar are with Sheikh Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Maḥallī,<sup>64</sup> and (5) the silk is with the elder Abū 'Alī b. Ṭayyib.<sup>65</sup> Please, my lord, take delivery (6) of all this, which is in the Fidyār's ship—may God ordain its safety!

(7) May God, the Exalted, unite you with us *in His mercy and compassion!*<sup>66</sup> *And Peace.*

## [H. Address]

(1) (To) His excellency, the most illustrious Sheikh, my master Abū Ishāq (2) Abraham, *son of his honor, great and holy master Perahyā, the scribe,*<sup>67</sup> (3) b. Yijū—may God preserve his prosperous state!

(1) (From) His servant, who is longing (2) for him, Khalaf b. (3) Isaac—*may he be remembered for resurrection!*<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *Nākhudā* means literally 'master of the ship' (in Persian) and usually designates its owner. But here it designates the man in command of the finances and other matters related to the passengers, i.e., the purser. The proprietor of this frequently mentioned boat was a Hindu, and the name, like Fatan Swamī (recto, line 24), was in reality a title. {See page 147. The *nākhudā* Aḥmad b. Bakhtiyār is mentioned in II, 20, lines 25, 28; but our text seems to read Muḥammad.}

<sup>64</sup> From the provincial town al-Maḥalla in Lower Egypt. Of course, this could have been a family name of a man whose father or grandfather had settled in Cairo.

<sup>65</sup> As each of the three merchants, to whom Khalaf confided his consignments, traveled on the same ship, the distribution was made not as a matter of safety, but out of consideration for the carriers, who certainly took with them the comparatively small shipments without remuneration. The first was a Muslim, the two others certainly Jews; for details about Abū 'Alī b. Ṭayyib, see 555, n. 12.

<sup>66</sup> A conclusion like this is not common and expresses real, personal feelings.

<sup>67</sup> See 592, n. 37.

<sup>68</sup> This blessing, *zikh[ro] li-te[hayyā]*, seems not to be included in Zunz, *Geschichte*, 304–70, where the Hebrew formulas used for the remembrance of the dead are listed. It is, however, in use with the Yemenite Jews up to the present day, and the second word is pronounced *lihhōyōh*. {For the blessing's use (also see 394, n. 33) in relationship to the belief in resurrection, see Friedman, *Yemenite Messiah*, 137. Klein-Franke, "Tombstones," 174, mistranslates "his memory will stay alive." Also note IV, 68v, address: 'may he be remembered for a blessing and resurrection' (Alexandria, 1140).}