

filled (46) with sugar, for it had a little empty space; therefore, I filled it (47) with sugar. I, your servant, sent you also with the above (48) mentioned (Abū 'Alī) half a pound of vitriol, half a pound of chewing gum, (49) ten sheets of white²⁴ paper and a pound of costus. (50) I could not get hold of arsenic in (51) the market; otherwise, I would have sent it to you, my lord {alt. tr.: but it will reach you (later), my lord}.²⁵

[I. Greetings and date]

Please, my master, (52) receive for your esteemed self the best greetings from me. (53) And to my lords, your children—may God let you enjoy their being alive {alt. tr.: give you pleasure with them throughout your life}!—²⁶ (54) and to Sheikh Bama²⁷ the best greetings. (55) And your servants,²⁸ my children, send you (56) and your children the best greetings.²⁹ *And Peace.*

(57) *Written in the month of Elul of the year (58) 1458 E.D.*³⁰

[J. Address]

[Verso] (1) (To) His excellency, the most illustrious Sheikh (2) Abū Ishāq Abraham b. (3) Peraḥyā, known as Ibn Yijū.

(1) (From) His servant and the property of his hands,³¹ (2) Khalaf b. Isaac—(3) *may God's spirit give him peace!*³²

²⁴ Arabic *bayād*, which occurs only here. As we have often had opportunity to state that the Yemenite letter writers sometimes use brown and sometimes white (now grayish) paper, it stands to reason that with *bayād*, a particularly white paper is meant. {Also in II, 24, line 9. According to IV, 69v, line 10, sheets of white paper, *waraqa baydā*, were used to prepare a letter from Alexandria in 1141, in order to highlight the writing.

²⁵ Arabic *fa-kāna yaṣīlu*... Cf. III, 8, lines 9–10. Also in the letter written before this one, Khalaf commented that arsenic was not available; see III, 12, line 41.} All the presents and household goods mentioned here have occurred in the other letters. Cf. especially III, 16, lines 16–19, where also the same quantities were sent.

²⁶ {Arabic *amta'abu allāh bibim*. For this phrase see Hava, *Dictionary*, 706; Diem, *Arabische Briefe*, 15.

²⁷ Ben Yijū's servant, mentioned repeatedly.}

²⁸ Arabic *mamlūkak*, in the singular, perhaps because Khalaf had first in mind to send greetings in the name of one son only. {Perhaps read *mmlykk*, a defective spelling of *mamālīkāk*, 'your servants.'}

²⁹ The greetings as in the previous letters. A novelty is introduced by the regards sent by Khalaf's children. The same is found in II, 51, margin {cf. II, 46, lines 67–68}.

³⁰ July 30–August 27, 1147. On writing the date, see III, 16, introduction.

³¹ {Arabic *ydh* looks more like *wdh* (*milk wuddīhi*): '(the possession of) his love' (expressions of love are common here; see, e.g., 621, n. 42); but the reading *ydh* is clear in III, 32, line 10 and address and IV, 12, address, which is also written by Khalaf.

³² Isa. 63:14.}

III, 16 *Letter from Khalaf b. Isaac to Abraham Ben Yijū, Mangalore*

Aden, July 19–August 17, 1148

JNUL 4° 577.3/6

Ed. Ashtor, "Documents," 148–51. Described by Yellin, "JNUL Geniza," 295. No reference is made here to some mistakes, misconceptions, and an omission made in the first edition of this document. Had its learned editor had at his disposal the material collected in this book, he would have made all the necessary corrections himself.

The double lines created during the manufacture of the paper are clearly visible; they parallel the length of the sheet. Written in Khalaf's own hand; see the introduction to III, 10. The verso is blank, except for the address, which is written in the same direction as the letter itself and not upside down, as usual. The reason for the normal procedure was to differentiate the address from the text, which, as a rule, continued on verso. Here, where the verso bore no writing except the address, it was more convenient to write the latter in the same direction as the main text, so that the reader had only to turn the page without needing to turn it also upside down. {The address in Hebrew characters was normally on verso in the same direction as the text of recto, whether the letter had a continuation on verso (almost always written in the opposite direction) or not as, e.g., here and III, 7. The address in Arabic script, added when the letter was to be delivered by a non-Jew, was written in the opposite direction, as usual. Perhaps the direction of the address was connected to the practice of folding and sealing the letter before delivery.}

Normally, letters were not dated, as the carrier who had received them from the sender handed them over in person to the addressee. The special reason for dating this letter was perhaps that the usual yearly business letter had already been sent out to Ben Yijū by Khalaf, while our short note was sent in response to Ben Yijū's query about his brother, which was accompanied by presents, reciprocated here immediately. As usual, only the month, but not the day, is noted, for normally it took an unforeseeable number of days before the ship in which the letter was to be carried could set sail. {Khalaf dated other letters that he wrote, e.g., III, 15, IV, 12, IV, 14. This book includes additional dated letters, many of which include the day in the month.}

Translation

[A. Acknowledgement of letter]

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

(2) The letter of his excellence, the most illustrious Sheikh, my master and lord,¹ has arrived. (3) May God preserve your prosperous state and make eternal your happiness! May He enhance (4) your comfort,² raise your reputation,³ elevate your status in both worlds,⁴ (5) and crush your enemies and those envious of you! You mentioned, my master, (6) your longing and concern—may God concern Himself (7) in doing you good! May He avert from you sorrow and unite us (8) in complete happiness and in the best circumstances for which one can hope, with His favor (9) and might, God willing!

[B. Details about addressee's brother]

This is to inform you⁵—may God preserve (10) your honored position!—that I enquired with regard to your brother Mevassēr⁶ and was informed that he was (11) well and in good health. Furthermore, I enquired whether he was traveling (12) to Eretz Israel,⁷ but the people whom I had asked said they did not know, but that he was well. (13) Had he come to Aden, I, your servant, certainly would have taken care of {alt. tr.: performed every courtesy for} him, even (14) without your instructions, my lord, to this effect {alt. tr.: concerning him}—God

¹ Arabic *mālikī*, lit., 'he who owns me.' {For this common expression, see page 362, n. 13.}

² Arabic *baṣṭatahu*, a rare usage which refers to both prosperity and contentment. {Cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 31.}

³ Arabic *wa-a'lā kalimatāhu*. *Kalima* can be translated 'authority,' 'powerful position,' etc. Cf. II, 68, line 6, *wa-naṣāḏh kalimatika*, 'the execution of your authority.'

⁴ This world and the world to come.

⁵ Arabic *wamu'iman*, an interesting, completely unconnected {with the preceding} form. {For vestiges of the *tanwin an*, see the discussion and references in the introduction to III, 47.}

⁶ See III, 7, line 16 (and 583, n. 8).

⁷ Arabic *al-shām*; see 285, n. 7. Mevassēr, who had come from Tunisia and Sicily to Egypt, obviously had informed his brother that before joining him in India, he would like to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The fact that Jerusalem was, at that time, in the hands of the Crusaders by no means acted as a deterrent. {Cf. Goitein, *Palestinian Jewry*, 283–305.}

beware (that I should not take care of him). {Alt. tr.: I, your servant, feel regret on his account.}⁸

[C. Acknowledgement of receipt of betel nuts and bronze vessels]

(15) There arrived what you kindly sent, my lord, namely the betel nuts, the two locks⁹ (16) and the two wooden *qaṣ'a*-bowls.¹⁰ And I have taken delivery of all this.

[D. Presents and greetings]

I, your servant, sent (17) what has no importance or value, for (18) the children,¹¹ namely two bottles of sugar, a bottle of almonds and two bottles of (19) raisins, altogether five bottles,¹² all of them in the ship of Sheikh Maḏmūn, (20) which is going to Mangalore,¹³ through the agency of the purser {alt. tr.: *nākhudā*}.¹⁴ Please, my lord, take them from him. (21) Receive, my lord, for your esteemed self¹⁵ the best (22)

⁸ Arabic *'azīz 'alā 'abdihi bihi*. Cf. TS 24.72v, ed. Goitein, *Palestinian Jewry*, 272, lines 1, 10, 16. {The expression is unusual. *'Azīz 'alā* usually means 'dear to PN' (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:124a). Accordingly, Ashtor, "Documents," 150, translated here: 'because he is dear to his servant' and commented (149, n. 3) that *bibi* is superfluous. Another meaning, found three times in the document cited in this note, is 'PN regrets,' i.e., the equivalent of *'azza 'alā*. Goitein paraphrased this somewhat freely as 'God forbid,' etc. The translation, printed above in brackets, is an attempt at a more literal translation. The intention is: I regret not having been able to take care of Mevassēr (as in the preceding phrase *bibi* apparently refers to him). Cf. IV, 10v, line 26, *fā-'azīz 'alayya bi-hājat sayyidi*, which seems to mean: 'I am (would be) upset not to be able to take care of my lord's needs.'

⁹ Arabic *quṣṭayn*. See 313, n. 7.

¹⁰ {For these bowls, see 326, n. 33, where too they are sent together with locks.}

¹¹ Besides a son, Ben Yijū had a daughter; see III, 41. {As noted there, he also had another son. See below, n. 16.}

¹² The same items were sent a year earlier; see III, 15, lines 44–45.}

¹³ Cf. II, 20, line 23 {and introduction} where details about these Indian headquarters of Ben Yijū are given.

¹⁴ Arabic *nākhudā* {translated here by Ashtor, "Documents," 150, 'captain'; for the translation 'purser,' see III, 10v, line 2. Clearly, Maḏmūn himself did not travel on this ship. Otherwise, Khalaf would have expressed himself quite differently. {See the discussion in page 126.}

¹⁵ Arabic *'azīz nafsihi*. The same unusual expression in III, 1v, line 21; III, 10, line 72, etc. {This is a common expression in our papers; cf. *'izzatu al-nafsi*, 'noble fierté,' Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:123b.}

greetings and give in my name to my lord, your boy,¹⁶ the best greetings, (23) and likewise to the brother Bama¹⁷ the best greetings in my name.

[E. Regret that the addressee had not yet left India]

Every year (24) you write that you are leaving for Aden, but nothing happens.¹⁸ May God, the Exalted, (25) ordain a happy conclusion! If you have any order (26) or require any service, please honor me with it.

[F. Date]

*Written in the month of Av of the year (27) 1459 E.D.*¹⁹

[G. P.S. about a present consisting of paper]

I sent you also two *dasts*²⁰ of (28) Egyptian paper.²¹ Please take notice of this. *And Peace.*

[H. Address]

[Verso] (1) (To) His excellency, the most illustrious Sheikh, my master, (2) Abū Ishāq Abraham, *son of (3) his honor, great and holy master Perahyā b. Yijū from al-Mahdiyya,*²²—(4) *may he rest in Eden the Garden!*²³

¹⁶ In II, 12, line 47, 'my lords, your two sons.' The other son presumably died between the writing of these two letters. See III, 41, line 14.

¹⁷ Ben Yijū's slave-agent; see III, 10, line 74.

¹⁸ Ben Yijū traveled from India to Aden in the following year (1149); see III, 29.

¹⁹ July 19–August 17, 1148 C.E. As usual, the date is written in Hebrew.

²⁰ A *dast* was a certain quantity that made up a set of a particular item; cf. 304, n. 9.

²¹ See III, 1*v*, line 12; III, 4, line 10.

²² Arabic *al-Mahdawī*, which is, of course, not to be regarded as a fixed family name, for normally, Ben Yijū is not designated as originating from al-Mahdiyya, then the capital of Tunisia. {Cf. II, 37, verse 48, where he calls himself *ba-ma'arawi*, the Maghrebi.}

²³ This strange expression {*nū'ah 'eden gan*} is also found in the letters of other Yemenites (see the addresses of II, 25; III, 32; III, 38 [as well as additional texts]), and can be heard from Yemenites up to the present day. However, it was not confined to Yemen [for its use in the responsa literature by Yemenites only, see Sharvit, "Blessings," 85]; it occurs, e.g., in the signature of the famous rabbi Baruch b. Isaac of Aleppo (lived around 1050–1125) on a responsum published by Assaf "R. Baruch," 107. Zunz, *Geschichte*, 341–48, seems not to have noted this expression. It has its origin in the ancient conception that Eden was different from, and higher than, Paradise; see the Talmudic

(1) (From) His servant, who is grateful (2) for his favors, Khalaf b. (3) Isaac—*may the spirit of the Lord give him rest!*²⁴
 {In the address written in Arabic script both parties are referred to as 'the Israelite' and Khalaf signs 'his servant, who longs for him.}'²⁵

sources {Berakhot 34b; Sanhedrin 99a} quoted by Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:30, n. 84. {The wording is based on Ezekiel 28:13 ("in Eden the garden of God") and need not bear any relationship with the distinction between Eden and Paradise. Maimonides' contemporary, the Egyptian judge Isaac b. Sāsōn, often signed with the letters *n'g'* (= *nū'ah 'eden gan elōhim*), 'may he rest in Eden garden of God,' after his father's name; see Maimonides, *Responsa*, 1:174, 2:629, 681, 686, 687, 3:141, nos. 103, 351, 403, 408, 409; TS G 1, f. 19. See also above II, 55*v*, address, and 479, n. 33.

²⁴ Isa. 63:14.

²⁵ Arabic *al-mushtāq ilayhi*, these two words deciphered by Prof. Moshe Gil.}