

III, 26 *Calendar for 1461 E.D. (1149/50 C.E.)*

Yemen, 1149/50

TS 12.320

A calendar written by Ben Yijū for the year September 1149–September 1150, which seems to indicate that, as before in India and later in Egypt, he planned to organize in Yemen a private service led by him. Additional calendars written by Ben Yijū are found in II, 16*v* and III, 51.

{This calendar is written on the blank space between the end of the text and the address on III, 1*v*. It appears to be a simple, straightforward calendar, listing the days on which months begin and on which occur festivals and fast days. He wrote similar calendars for the preceding three years, 1458–60 E.D. on II, 16*v*. The very beginning of a calendar for 1461 is preserved there as well and was probably a rough copy. I see no indication in the calendars for these four years that Ben Yijū intended them for anything but his personal use. Contrariwise, in III, 51, he listed monthly contributions to a synagogue. I am also unaware of evidence for a private prayer service he led in India. On his heading a congregation in Yemen, see the introduction to III, 31; for Egypt, the introduction to III, 41 and III, 51.}

III, 27 *Sundry Accounts Written by Abraham Ben Yijū*

{Yemen, apparently 1140–44, 1149–1152}

TS 12.235

Written on verso of III, 9. See the description of the manuscript there. The accounts were written in three different places on the blank space between the end of the letter in III, 9 and its address:

- A) Twelve lines, about 11 cm long, on the left side of the paper, beneath the address and in the same direction. Large bold letters; the beginning of the lines are almost completely illegible, owing to damage by water or holes in the paper. Between lines 10 and 11, another line, written in smaller letters, is inserted.
- B) At an angle of ninety degrees to the first 4–6 lines in A, thirteen lines of 2–4 cm are written in small letters on the right side of the page. They are effaced to such a degree that even an ultraviolet photograph could bring out only single, incoherent words. {The third line before the end includes “Sheikh Sa’id al-‘Aṭṭār” (Perfumer/Druggist).}
- C) Beneath B, there are other accounts written in the same direction as A, of which, owing to their bad state of preservation, even the number of lines could not be made out. The ends of three lines of C are visible beneath A.

Whether these accounts were written in India or in Yemen will be ascertained after one or more of the smaller coins mentioned here is identified. As pointed out in note 2, the Indian coins usually listed by Ben Yijū do not occur here. I am inclined to assume that these accounts were written in Yemen.

Despite its poor state of preservation, the document is not without interest. We learn about the daily life of the Maghrebis in Yemen (or India), as well as about smaller coins used there at that time. {In the notes evidence is adduced to the likelihood that the account was written in Yemen. The dates are those of Ben Yijū’s likely stays in Yemen; see the introduction to III, 21 (page 648).}

## Translation

[A]

(1) [[Seven<sup>1</sup> dirhems<sup>2</sup> due from Sheikh Abū Sa'd,<sup>3</sup> the rest of the dinar.<sup>4</sup>  
 (2) [...] two Maṣṣūrī dirhems and two others, one Ḥusaynī, (3) and  
 the second Aḥmadī. Total: three dirhems<sup>5</sup> and two *fulūs*. He paid me  
 one (4) Ḥusaynī dirhem in five *fulūs*. Total: four dirhems less one *fals*.  
 (5) [...] dirhems and one *fals*. His credit: one dirhem for *dādhā* (lichen).<sup>6</sup>  
 (6) [...] two [dir]hems and one *fals*. He owes the owner of the wax<sup>7</sup> (7)  
 [...] Total: three dirhems and six *fulūs*. (8) [...] and four *fulūs*. Balance:  
 two dirhems and two *fulūs*.]] (9) [...] dirhems. He received five dirhems  
 and the worth of (10) [...] one *fals* [...] a quarter *raṭl* of cumin,<sup>8</sup> price  
 six *fulūs*; // [...] His debit: one Aḥmadī dirhem; balance in his favor: one

<sup>1</sup> Lines 1-8 are deleted by two intersecting strokes—a sign that these accounts had been settled.

<sup>2</sup> Four types of dirhems are mentioned here: (1) Not specified. This was perhaps the Indian standard coin; cf. I, 2, line 5; I, 6, lines 8-9 (where about fifteen Nahrwāra dirhems correspond to one Egyptian dinar); I, 33, lines 1-5. See also III, 18, sec. B, lines 3-5. (2-4) Local dirhems, called Maṣṣūrī, Ḥusaynī, and Aḥmadī, respectively, which were of a lower value than the standard dirhem; see lines 2-3. The dirhem seems to be divided into eight copper coins called *fals* {pl. *fulūs*} (see Udovitch, "Fals"); for in lines 3-4, 3 dirhems, 2 *fulūs* + 5 *fulūs* = 4 dirhems, less 1 *fals*. Likewise, in lines 9-10 mention is made of 1 + 6 *fulūs* assets, with one *fals* remaining as a liability, totaling one Aḥmadī dirhem. When it is said in lines 11-12 that to cover a debt totaling seven *fulūs* the writer gave one dirhem, this implies that the dirhem contained approximately that number of copper coins. Ben Yijū did not live in the same locality when writing this account as he did when writing III, 18, since the local coins here seem to be different. {For Aḥmadī coins, see Lowick, "Ṣan'ā," 3. On Maṣṣūrī dirhems, see id., "Dirham." The Imām al-Maṣṣūr is believed to have issued the Maṣṣūrī dirhem in 601 A.H. (1204/5 C.E.), and the earliest preserved Maṣṣūrī dirhem is from that year! Our document attests an earlier Yemenite (?) Maṣṣūrī dirhem. The two aforementioned articles are reprinted in Lowick, *Coinage*, to which my attention was called by D. Wasserstein.}

<sup>3</sup> This name was rather common among Jews. A Sheikh Abū Sa'd was one of Ben Yijū's acquaintances in India (II, 55v, line 9), another (?) contributed oil to his synagogue (III, 51, lines 1, 5 and 7). {The popularity of the name is presumably because of its meaning, 'Fortunate.' In II, 55v, line 9, to be more precise, Abū Sa'd was an acquaintance of Maḥrūz b. Jacob, for whom Ben Yijū wrote that letter. Debts owed the *nakhudā* Sa'd are mentioned by Ben Yijū in III, 18, sec. C, lines 1 and 3a; a Yemenite acquaintance of his, named Abū Sa'd b. Nethanel, is mentioned in III, 31, lines 7-8.}

<sup>4</sup> Ben Yijū had given Abū Sa'd a dinar; the latter had paid back probably eight dirhems and still owed seven.

<sup>5</sup> The local dirhems were of a lower exchange rate than the standard dirhem.

<sup>6</sup> See 639, n. 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Asl*. See III, 18, sec. C, line 5; III, 19, line 10. {Also see the introduction to III, 19.}

<sup>8</sup> The cumin also points to the Yemenite provenance of this document; see 585.

*fals*.// (11) [...] His credit: one *fals* for radish;<sup>9</sup> another *fals* for radish; another for the tailor.<sup>10</sup> (12) His credit: three *fulūs* for soap. Total: seven *fulūs*. I {add: personally}<sup>11</sup> paid him one dirhem.

[C]

(1) The price of [...] and Sheikh 'Alī (or Eli) al-Baṣṣāṭ<sup>12</sup> is holding one dirhem as an advance for the *niṣāfi*.<sup>13</sup> (2) [...] five and a half dirhems. The Kōhēn<sup>14</sup> owes me: one dinar and his son Joseph is holding (3) [...] two dinars [...] (4) {add: Sheikh Sulaymān's<sup>15</sup> debit—one and a half dinars}, three dirhems and one *raṭl* of sugar candy.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For the medicinal faculties of radish (Arabic *fujl*), see Lev & Amar, *Medicinal Substances*, 194.}

<sup>10</sup> Probably a factotum who did various errands for Ben Yijū.

<sup>11</sup> {Arabic *min yadī*, lit., 'from my hand.'}

<sup>12</sup> The reading is clear; ṣ stands for s (regressive phonetic assimilation). The word may mean a carpet maker (from *bisāṭ*, carpet)—a form which, however, is not to be found in the dictionaries—or perhaps peddler, like *bisāṭī*, (cf. Steingass-Johnson, *Dictionary*, 185, Wahrmond, *Dictionary*, 215). {Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 31, defines *bisāṭ*, 'trousers decorated with silver threads.' The alternate transliterations, 'Alī or Eli, are because it is not clear whether the Arabic or Hebrew name is intended.}

<sup>13</sup> Half a Malikī dinar and the currency of Dhū Jibla, then the capital of Yemen (see II, 20, line 34).

<sup>14</sup> The Kōhēn is also mentioned in sec. B.

<sup>15</sup> {A number of Sulaymāns appear in Ben Yijū's papers: III, 18, sec. B, line 7; III, 29, line 12; III, 41, lines 26-35.}

<sup>16</sup> This (Arabic *fānīd*) type was common in India, while sugar proper was imported. {Cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 364.}