

III, 37 *Letter Appealing for Assistance Against Abraham Ben Yijū*

Yemen

TS 13 J 24, f. 2

Request, addressed apparently to Maḍmūn b. Japheth, by a person in inland Yemen, to help him against Ben Yijū, involving a shipment of five *bahārs* (of what is not said). The addressee is asked by the writer to take care of his affairs until he himself would arrive in Aden.

{The complaints about Ben Yijū are reminiscent of those sent to Maḍmūn and other traders by Makhlūf b. Mūsā (see pages 65–66), but the handwriting does not resemble his.

Translation

(1) [...] with him [...] (2) *al-Sadīd*¹—may [God] pro[lon]g [his life!—...] (3) the most illustrious *nākhudā*² was kind enough (to assist) in what (4) you had already begun. Praise and thanks (5) are only to you. My lord, you (6) have already concerned yourself with the matter. Please complete it, for (7) kindness is yours³ in the past and recently. I request (8) of you, my lord, that you consider me one of (9) your devotees⁴ and servants. God already (10) knows and attests my love for my master.

(11) Sheikh Abraham b. Yijū (12) has made little of a (the) load of five *bahārs*. (13) All the time I see him, he repeats to (14) me, your servant, his talk. I have become exasperated by him. (15) He says to me all the time: "Come back." Then he makes himself scarce (16) and disappears, in a short day a hundred (17) times. I request that you act in the name of your esprit

¹ {For this honorific, see 274, n. 1.

² According to a note by Goitein, this is probably a reference to Maḥrūz b. Jacob. This suggestion was made at an early stage of Goitein's research before the large number of *nākhudās* mentioned in these letters came to light; see pages 142–46, 148–52. Note that also Maḍmūn was a *nākhudā*.

³ Arabic *al-faḍl laka*. For this expression, see 426, n. 67.

⁴ Arabic *aḥbāb*. Chamberlain, "Ayyūbid," 238: "Perhaps the most important of the ties that bound rulers to their supporters were love and service. Love (*ḥubb*, *maḥabbā*) referred to the intimate ties of the family and the sentimental attachments of masters and disciples; it also was a means by which the powerful recruited political supporters. . . ." (Thanks to Prof. Joel Kraemer for this reference.) Cf., e.g., IV, 34, margin, fourth addition, lines 1–2: "Our lord has acquired as his servants a multitude of devotees (*aḥbāb*) and has taken possession of souls and hearts."

de corps (18) with me, in keeping with your customary acts of kindness and noble (19) character with me and with others, concerning (20) something that one has taken from another. I have already (21) spoken with the *nākhudā* (22) about this, and he said to me: "I shall look after you."⁵ (23) I request of your exalted excellency (24) to take care of this, until you take [Margin] (1) [...] *mīthqāls* in the city (of Aden), whatever there is that remains. I shall complete my business with it, with your assistance. Then I shall come to Aden and proclaim⁶ the graces of the Lord—may He be praised!—(2) [and your grace]. I entreat God *blessed be He* and you. Stand by me and strengthen your surroundings,⁷ my lord and master. May your patronage protect me and your assistance embrace me! I ask of *the Holy One* [Verso] (1) *blessed be He* to increase all good things in (2) this world in your hands, make you successful, enable you to attain (3) your goals and make you, as (4) *the Holy One blessed be He* has already made you, (5) a permanent support. May He protect you from all (6) danger! Be kind enough, my lord (7) and master, to be present where your servant (8) is absent.⁸ May God make permanent your prosperity! (9) Expedite for your servant whatever (10) will be, in a (any) number of ways.⁹ Whatever there is (11) is from my load. I hope to receive whatever (12) is recovered soon, so that I can derive benefit (13) from it. *Peace on your pure* (14) *spirit and your virtuous soul*. (15) *May peace overtake peace!*¹⁰

⁵ Arabic *anā nanzur laka*. A somewhat imprecise translation of part of III, 37 is given by Ghosh, *Antique*, 178, e.g., for the last phrase: "I should turn to you." For the *nql* form for 1st pers. sg. imperf., see 743, n. 5.

⁶ Arabic *wa-anuthithu*. Hava, *Dictionary*, 749, translates *nathitha*: 'to divulge (news).'

⁷ Arabic *wa-tushiddu wasaṭaka*. (I do not find the fourth form of *shdd* in dictionaries with this meaning; but the reading is certain, and *t* is vocalized with a *ḍamma*.) Cf. III, 38, top margin, line 4, which I vocalize *wa-yumahḥil labu qurbabu*.

⁸ That is to act on my behalf in my absence.

⁹ I take this to mean: Use whatever methods necessary to collect quickly for me any money you can.

¹⁰ Goitein commented: May God, designated as 'Peace,' grant peace! See 701, n. 10.