

III, 53 *Fragmentary Letter from Peraḥyā Yijū to Abu 'l-Fakhr Ibn al-Amshāṭī*

{Al-Maḥalla, ca. 1161–72}

TS 8 J 20, f. 25

Fragment of another letter to Abu 'l-Fakhr, important for verification of various data.

{The fragment contains only the first few lines of the letter. The addressee, Abu 'l-Fakhr Saadya b. Abraham Ibn al-Amshāṭī, here bears the honorary Hebrew title *pe'er ha-sōḥarim*, Pride of the Traders, presumably bestowed on him for his munificence to the Yeshiva.¹ Peraḥyā extends to him wishes that he celebrate the coming Passover together with his son and brother's son (the boy was presumably orphaned from his father),² and so for many years to come. Presumably, Abu 'l-Fakhr's other children, whom Peraḥyā had blessed with life in III, 52, line 3 and margin top, did not survive. Alternatively, III, 53, was written before the birth of the other children. The son and nephew are designated *pirhē ha-ḥasīdīm*, 'budding pietists,' which confirms the association of the family with the circle of pietists. The letter is addressed to Abu 'l-Fakhr's shop in the Square of the Perfumers of Fustat. A similar letter from Peraḥyā (so it seems) to the same Abu 'l-Fakhr Saadya Pride of the Traders, is found in ENA NS 1, f. 8 (L44), and wishes are extended there that the recipient celebrate in years to come Passover and the Feast of Weeks with his son and brother's sons. On the presumed place and time for writing this letter, see the introduction to III, 52.}

¹ {This title was also granted to a well-known India trader, Abu 'l-Barakāt b. Hārith. See Friedman, *Polygyny*, 88; Gil and Fleischer, *Yehuda ha-Levi*, 621, 637, and sources and studies referred to there.

² See page 98.}

III, 54 *Marriage Agreement between the Ben Yijū Cousins Peraḥyā and Sitt al-Dār*

Fustat, August 1156

RNL Yevr.-Arab. I (Firkovitch II) 1700, f. 28

The folio is numbered '27' in pen (and is accordingly cited by Goitein as Firkovitch II 1700, f. 27) and '28,' which is the correct number, in pencil. Partial translation in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:203–4.

Entry in the record book of the rabbinical court of Fustat from August 1156: Marriage of Peraḥyā b. Joseph Yijū to Sitt al-Dār ('Mistress of the House'), daughter of his paternal uncle,¹ Abraham (the name was added).

His marriage gift: 20 dinars, to be given to the bride immediately and 50 to be paid in the case the marriage is terminated. This was fair for a schoolmaster (cf. III, 50).² Of the girl's trousseau list only that of the jewelry amounting to the very considerable sum of 150 dinars (exactly 149)³ has been preserved completely. Unlike other trousseau lists, the value of each piece is indicated not in whole dinars, namely round sums agreed upon by the two parties, but mostly with an exact price, such as 8¹/₂ dinars for a silver-encased mirror.⁴ Clearly Abraham Ben Yijū himself had drawn up the list in preparation for the marriage contract, and the court wished to honor the dead man's disposition.

{The record book was written by the judge Mevōrākh b. Nathan; see its description in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:343. For the date, see the note to line 2. As noted in III, 50, Abraham Ben Yijū was disappointed with Peraḥyā and tried to postpone or discourage the marriage. Our document shows that the wedding took place only after Abraham's death.}

¹ {Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:29, cites this as an example for marrying the daughter of a paternal uncle. On 55–56, the story of the marriage is told as an example of predetermining the mate for an endogamous marriage.

² I assume that III, 50, line 11 is intended. It refers to Peraḥyā's position in Sicily but does not explicitly state that he had worked as a schoolteacher. See, however, III, 43, margin; in III, 57, line 18, Joseph Yijū in Sicily wrote that this oldest son, that is Peraḥyā, assisted him as a schoolteacher.

³ See the note to line 19.

⁴ That figure is for the value of several items of jewelry, the last being the mirror; see lines 15–17. The reader will find in the list a number of items assigned an exact value in fractions of a dinar.