

[E. News from Egypt]

You, my lord, (certainly) have (20) heard the news from Egypt from the merchants who arrived, (21) God willing, at your place.¹⁰

[F. Greetings]

I send your eminent excellency the best (22) profuse greetings, and to all those in your protective care (23) the choicest, profuse greetings. *And much peace. Salvation is near!*¹¹

[G. Address]

[Verso] (1) *To his honor, great and holy master and lord Abraham, son of* (2) *his honor, great and holy master and lord Rabbi Parahyā Ben Yijū—may his rest be honored!*¹²

(1) (From) *He that experiences your favors daily,*¹³ (2) *Joseph b. Abraham—may he rest in Eden!*

¹⁰ Ben Yijū had asked about news from Egypt. The Near Eastern merchants frequented many ports on the Indian West Coast, and apparently they did not arrive at Ben Yijū's place every year. Joseph knew that some were due to arrive there the year he wrote this letter. Here we see additional evidence that ships sailing from Aden had their fixed ports of destination in India.

¹¹ See 484, n. 30.

¹² This blessing for the dead, *חַדָּא מְאוּחָדוּ כְבוֹד* (see Isa. 11:10), is not common in our papers; cf. II, 11a, line 18 {מְאוּחָדוּ כְבוֹד חַדָּא חַסָּא הַכְבוֹד} and see Zunz, *Geschichte*, 345. {It appears on some twelfth century tombstones from Aden. See Goitein, "Tombstones from Aden," 84.}

¹³ Literally, 'every morning.' This strange phrase is based on Ps. 27:4 {cf. commentaries}.

III, 8 *Letter from Joseph b. Abraham to Abraham Ben Yijū*

{Mangalore, India, ca. 1140–44}

TS NS 324, f. 114

A brief letter written by Joseph b. Abraham, about the same time as III, 7, and sent by him, not from Aden, as with his other letters, but from somewhere in India, to Abraham Ben Yijū, Mangalore. We are able to ascertain that Joseph was in India from, *inter alia*, the goods which he sent to Ben Yijū and ordered from him, their small quantity and the fact that they were carried not by Sheikh PN but by a soldier (*muqātil*), who in order to transport them hired a *fāl* (*fʿl*), apparently a compartment in a ship.¹ Ben Yijū is asked whether he intends to travel to Aden this year, and Joseph presumably wanted to travel there with him. Ben Yijū did indeed make the trip, and verso of the manuscript contains a list of goods, which he shipped with him on his way out of India; see below, III, 24. It is unusual, however, that Joseph asks Ben Yijū, who too was in India, to send him *burr*, wheat.²

{The letter is complete and contains an address. It did not indicate Ben Yijū's whereabouts, presumably because the letter was to be delivered by the bearer. I read the document somewhat differently from how Goitein seems to have read it according to the sparse notes he left. Due to the vagaries of the Arabic syntax and the writer's style (he alternates between the third person and the first, in referring to himself, and between the third and second, in referring to Ben Yijū), it is not clear whom the writer mentions as being in Mangalore. I believe it was Joseph. The goods he sends Ben Yijū include salted fish and pickled foods, items otherwise shipped from India to Aden. The commodities that Joseph ordered from Ben Yijū include wheat, which as noted by Goitein was normally sent from Aden to India.³ Joseph also ordered the spice (and medicinal substance) cumin. While in modern times cumin is grown extensively in India, it is not indigenous there and is assumed to have come from Egypt or the countries of the Mediterranean.⁴ As attested by the India Book documents (III, 27, sec. a, line 10; III, 43v, line 12) and other Geniza papers, cumin indeed was

¹ {According to II, 55, lines 10–11, soldiers, who protected a ship, traveled in a smaller boat that escorted it. A *fāl* is mentioned in connection with shipping something valuable from Aden to India in IV, 14, line 15.

² These comments are based largely on notes written by Goitein on May 29, 1979.

³ See II, 26, line 3; III, 10, line 46.

⁴ See Watt, *Commercial Products*, 442–43.}

found in Sicily, Egypt and Yemen. Joseph asks Ben Yijū (lines 27–28) *in kāna tamma laka safr ilā 'adan am lā*, the most simple translation of which would be 'did you succeed in traveling to Aden or not.' All of this leads us to the conclusion that the letter was sent to Ben Yijū somewhere in inland Yemen, where we find him, for example, in III, 32 and 38. The fact that he later wrote on the paper's reverse, blank side a list of items he carried with him on his way out of India to Yemen (III, 24) does not prove otherwise. As we have already seen, he saved and carried with him wherever he went every piece of paper he had and often wrote on a letter's blank space something else in a different place. Note, for example, that Joseph b. Abraham sent III, 2 from Aden to Ben Yijū, who was in India, but the latter later wrote in Yemen the text of his own letter to some other merchant in India (III, 28a). From all of this it follows that there is no evident reason to fix the time of this letter on the basis II, 7. On the contrary, it probably was written during Ben Yijū's stay in Yemen, ca. 1140–45; for these dates see the introduction to III, 21.}

III, 9 *Letter from Joseph b. Abraham to Abraham Ben Yijū*

Aden, ca. 1150 {ca. 1148–49}

TS 12.235

Same paper and hand as III, 1. Very much damaged by holes. About two thirds of the text is effaced by water. On the verso, Ben Yijū wrote accounts [= III, 27].

The letter was written in Aden, as proven by references to persons and places (lines 20–21; 13 and 15 respectively) and is addressed to Zabīd (verso, line 2).¹ About this town on the coastal plain of southwest Yemen, see II, 20, lines 45–47. From Zabīd, or rather its seaport Ghulayfiqa (see III, 25, lines 1–4), one traveled directly to India, without stopping at Aden, though it was along the route (see II, 20, line 47). This explains the reference to pepper (margin, line 3) in a letter sent to a town lying to the northwest of Aden. The elaborate description of a consignment of almonds (line 25 and margin, lines 15–17) appears puzzling. Zabīd, of course, is nearer to the almond growing district of Yemen than Aden.² However, in those years Zabīd was mostly in the hands of the Abyssinian Banu 'l-Najjāh, who were at war with the various other rulers of Yemen.³ Thus it was easier to supply that town with luxury fruits growing around San'ā from Aden, and, as we learn from our letter (margin, lines 16–17), even there only limited quantities were available.

A comparison of the passage in the margin, lines 11–18, with recto, lines 22–23, shows that the letter was sent after the sailing season, overland from Aden to Zabīd.⁴ Also in Mediterranean countries, letters dealing with people and merchandise traveling by sea were commonly sent by messengers overland; cf. IV, 76, lines 3–6. Perhaps our letter was damaged by water when Ben Yijū sailed from Yemen to Egypt {or, as I have suggested, when sent to him to India}.

The approximate date of the letter can again be fixed by a reference to Ben Yijū's brother Mevassēr. In lines 8–9 of the margin, Joseph announces that a letter had arrived from Mevassēr and would be forwarded together with our document. In 1148, Mevassēr still lingered

¹ {See the comments added at the end of the introduction, where an alternate interpretation is suggested.}

² See Grohmann, *Südarabien*, 1:229.

³ See Smith, "Şulayhids"; Strothmann, "Zabīd" and id., "Karam."

⁴ {Those passages, in my opinion, do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the letter was sent by land. See page 591, n. 28.