

✓ - breadth is used, which causes the horizontal and vertical

Letter of Joseph b. Abraham to Ben Yijū, mainly about a young merchant
of doubtful reliability

Aden - India, approx. 1136 - 1139.

University Library Cambridge 10 J 12, fol. 5.

16, 5 cm. breadth. Of the height, 22, 5 cm. are preserved on the right margin, 12 on the left.

Same paper, breadth and script as in No. 51. Beginning and end, including the address, lost. The sender's name, indicated as such, is mentioned in l. 19. At first sight, the handwriting looks different from that in other letters written by Joseph b. Abraham. This impression is caused by the different pens used. The other letters are written with a broad pen, which emphasizes the contrast between thick and thin strokes and enables the writer also to give to his letters "crowns", see the Introduction to No. 51. Here, a pen of middle strokes to be of the same thickness. However, an analysis of the form of the individual letters, as well as of the general character of the writing, shows that we have here the same hand as in Nos. 49, 51, 54, 55, 93, 210 and 227. The writer tried another style, adapting himself to the different pen. However, at the end of the letter - approximately last third of the backside, he relapses into his usual style.

The letter preceded No. 51 approximately by one year, or. Introduction ib.

The main section preserved, which deals with the measures to be taken against the young Abu 'l-Faraj b. Moses - or, as he is called officially:

^{your} shade upon ~~thy~~ right hand. The Lord shall preserve ^{you} ~~thee~~ (4)
 from all evil; he shall preserve ^{your} ~~thy~~ soul. He shall preserve
^{your} ~~thy~~ going out (5) and ^{your} ~~thy~~ coming in from this time forth and
 to eternity. The sun shall not (6) smite ^{you} ~~thee~~ by day nor the
 moon by night. Great peace have they that love thy law (7) and
they will not stumble.

B To the honor of my lord, the light of my eyes and the ornament
(8) of my neck, m(y) m(aster) and t(eacher) Abraham the son of his
h(onor), g(reatness and) h(oliness) R(abbi) Perahyā Ben Yijū, m(ay
he rest in) E(den).

C (9) My master, there arrived that small ^{shipment} ~~sending~~ of pepper, namely
 one bahār and a quarter (10) less 4 ratl of big measure. I went to
 take (11) delivery and received the whole due. Likewise, Sheikh
^{Kh} ~~Halaf~~ received (12) his ^{shipment} ~~sending~~. You mentioned that this (13)
bahār and a quarter less 4 ratl of pepper was (sent against) the
 balance in my favor of the account (14) concerning the cardamon ^m
 and the "eggs" etc., may God take upon himself to reward (15) you
 well and may I never miss your favors.

D (16) You asked about your brother Mevassēr. He has not come (17)
 all this time, nor have I seen a letter to you (18) from Egypt.
 Had I found a letter for you, (19) I certainly would have forwarded
 it to you.

E Concerning the news from (20) Egypt, you (certainly) have heard them
 from the merchants who arrived (21) at your place, if God will.

^{gh}
 b. Mūsā, verso, l. 2 al-Baḡdādī is of special interest. Baḡdādī worked for Joseph on the basis of a commenda, according to which Joseph, as the investor, received two thirds of the profits, and Baḡdādī ^{gh} one third, see margin, l.1. The young man, who had obviously misused Joseph's confidence, tried to escape from India to Ceylon and from there to another country. Joseph gave power of attorney against him, obviously before a Muslim court - as, in reference to the warrant of proxy, he calls him by the Arabic form of his name, see above. However, Joseph was extremely careful not to expose the young man, unless it was established with absolute certainty that he "deviated from the way of rightness". Even more so, he was prepared to assist him with any amount of money to enable him to return to Aden. This shows that the reputation, even of a young man, was guarded with greatest care. On the other hand, Joseph seems not to have given up the hope to retrieve his money, perhaps by setting the young Baḡdādī ^{gh} to work.

C o n t e n t s

B e g i n n i n g l o s t .

- ^{shipment}
 A. Announcement of a ~~sending~~ of copper and bronze vessels and order of new ones, described in short. (11.2-8)
- B. Details about five presents sent. (11.8-14)
- C. Recommendation for an Egyptian merchant, who was a newcomer to India, (11. 14-16)
- D. Expression of regret for having been unable to send raisins. (11. 16-18)
- ^{shipment}
 E. Details concerning a ~~sending~~ of arsenic, (11. 18-19)

- F. Main part of the preserved section of the letter ^a request to deal with the affairs of the young Ba^{gh}dādī. (l. 18 - verso, l. 21)
- G. About a ^{shipment} sending of sugar. Fragment. (ll. 22-24)
- End lost.

T r a n s l a t i o n

(1) Free of liability, and if you (about 20-25 letters torn off)

A (2) Furthermore, I sent in a mazza, in which there are 14 raṭl and a half copper a broken(.....) (3) and a broken stool etc. Please kindly make me of it (4) a wash-basin and a ewer, which should be small and simple, their weight being altogether six raṭl (5) or five and a half, a little more or less, and a small stand for a small (6) candle; its weight should be altogether from two to two and a half raṭl; it should be simple (7) and of good workmanship of the type you like. The rest of the copper should be sold and added to the account (in my favor).

B I sent to your ^{honor} ~~high presence~~ what has no importance and of which it is not (9) worthwhile to take notice, namely a ^{large brazilwood box with containing} ~~big baqqamiya~~ of white sugar, an Alexandrian maḡṭa°, half a raṭl (10) Iṣbahānī antimony, half a raṭl °ilk gum, four sets of Egyptian paper of small (11) size. Please ^{ac} ~~accept~~ this in return for some of your services. The paper, the antimony, and the °ilk are in (12) the mazza with the copper. The maḡṭa° alone in a ^{piece} of cloth. All this, together with the package of silk and the package (13) of arsenic, is forwarded in the ship of ^{Fadyār with} ~~FDYAR~~ through the above mentioned Sheikh Abū °Alī ibn Tayyib al-Miṣrī.

C (14) And, my master, I should like you to help him in all he sells (15)

and buys, for he is a foreigner, who does not know that country. All you do with him, (16) reverts to me - may I never miss your favors.

D. And, by God, my master, I tried to get (17) some raisins, in order to send you. However, nothing at all of it was to be had in Aden this year. Please excuse your servant for this.

E. On the package of arsenic there is written Abraham Yijū, (19) sending of Joseph b. Abraham. It is wrapped in hides.

F. You, my master, mentioned with regard to that young man Abu 'l-Faraj b. Moses (20) al-Ba^{gh}dādī that he was travelling to Ceylon. I got his letter, in which he complained about the ship's owner (21) Ibn Abu 'l-Katā'ib, that he demanded from him payment for the hire of a compartment, although he did not carry for him anything (22) in his ship, and he mentioned further, that he may travel to Ceylon or stay on.

Margin

(1) (Unknown number of letters lost), while I should get two thirds. Now, my master, if he has travelled to Ceylon, nothing can be done. However, if he returned from there or if he did not make the journey, (2) (... Unknown number of letters lost). The news that he was travelling to Ceylon depressed me. Afterwards I took courage and saw that Sheikh Dāfir b. FR' was travelling to your place.

Verso

Fedyār

(1) this year in the ship of (((NBEDWY))) EDYAR. I sent with him a warrant of proxy, (2) confirmed by witnesses and proof "a warrant against Abu 'l-Faraj

ibn Mūsā (3) al-Baḡdādī^{gh}"; I did so as a matter of precaution.

Now, ^mMay I ask you a favor - may God make your honored position (4) permanent -; If this young man is still with you, or has come back from Ceylon and is going to (5) Aden, nobody should know that I made out that warrant against him. Likewise, please tell Sheikh (6) ^ZḤāfir that in this case he should not undertake anything ⁱⁿ ~~th~~ the matter. However, if (7) - God forbid - he deviated from the right way and has turned bankrupt or intends to travel (8) to a place other than Aden, please inform Sheikh ^ZḤāfir to produce the warrant against him in order to demand from him (9) what is due from him. Sheikh ^ZḤāfir is a very busy man and perhaps will not attend to this matter and not (10) "break" him. I can rely only on you and your favor for reprimanding him and for dealing (11) with this secretly, not openly. However, if he deviates from the right way, there remains nothing (12) but to do it openly. Please do me this favor and act for me in this matter as is right.

Furthermore, my master, (13) I wrote to this young man three letters, each sent ^{on} ~~by~~ another ship and each accompanied by another copy, (14) asking those carrying them to hand them over only to you, and (15) I told him there what you will read. Please, open every letter addressed to him (16) and read it and give it to him, without his knowing (that you read it).

I wrote to him in that letter (17) that I sent to you currency, with the purpose that if he wanted from you e.g. ten dīnār^s (18) or ten mitqāl^s from my property, you will give it to him, if he was proceeding ^e [^] to (19) Aden without making troubles. However, if he deviates from the way, do not pay him anything. (20) Thus, please inquire into that matter, and if he is

proceeding to Aden and asks (21) for 10 mitqāl, and even more, pay them to him from my property.

large Brazilwood box

G I (22) sent you a big baqqamiya with sugar through ~~miss~~ ((...about 12 letters looking)) (23) Abū °Ali, the aforementioned ((...)) (24) the sugar ((.....

C o m m e n t a r y

1 In the lost line, Joseph had asked Ben Yijū to send him something without any responsibility on his side. See No.56, 11.53-54. In the preceding, lost, section, ab Joseph gave notice of his sendings of silk, 1.12, and arsenic, 1.18.

2 mazza - about this receptacle see above No.51 verso, 1.11.

3 stool - Ar. kursī; on this the copper tray, which serves as table, is placed. *Cf.* Lane, Manners and Customs of the modern Egyptians, Everyman's Library, pp.146/7, illustration No.45 (in ch. III). In modern times, as depicted by Lane, the Kursī is made of wood and inlaid with mother-of-pearl etc. Here it is made of tinned copper. About the sending of broken vessels as material for new ones see above No. 51.

simple - Ar. sādij, Persian sāde. ~~without~~ without decorations, as those of spirals ordered in No.51, verso 1. It is noteworthy that Joseph relies on the good taste of B.Y.

9 baqqamiya - Obviously a box made of baqqam *Box* Brazilwood. See above No.26 *and No.55, l. 16.*
verso, 1.29, where also a big is used as a receptacle for sugar.

maqta^c - The same Alexandrian material is sent by Joseph to B.Y. in No.55,

11 14/5. While in No. 54, 1.24, he represents a maqta^c to B.Y.'s boy, for this

very common merchandise see vol. I, Index.

107/11 For these commodities see No.51, verso, 11. 11/2

13 FDY'R - See below verso, 1.1. With the same ship and the same man (Abū °Alī ibn Tayyib) goods are sent by Halaf b. Isaac in No.56, verso 1.2 and 6. A ship of his is further mentioned in No. 58, 1.37. A letter to him is referred to in No. 60, 1.19. As FDY'R is three times preceded by the article (No. 56 verso, 1.2 and 6, and No. 60, 1.19), thus the word obviously is the designation for a profession or an office, but not a proper name. In No. 60, 1.19 FDY'R is connected with the trade in cardamom.

Abū °Alī - Cf. No. 51, 1.11.

14/6 A similar request below No. 83, top, 1.6.

18 kāfiya - For this expression see No. 36 margin, 1.7. Arsenic, used for medical and criminal (poisoning) purposes, is being imported to India from the West up till the present day, see Sir. G. Watt, The Commercial Products of India, 1908, 92/3. In No.59 1.6 and No.208 (60x), 1.50, it is said that no arsenic was to be had in Aden at that time.

21 Ibn Abu 'l-Katā'ib - A ship's owner often mentioned in our papers; see No.26, 1.17.

Compartment - Ar. bilīj, cf. No. 20, B, 1.3; No.129 (29x), 1.4; No.131 1.12, See Dozy Supplement 108b. The word is derived from the Malayan and designed a place in a ship separated from others by mats and serving for the storage of goods. The goods were normally covered with hides and each merchant slept on the cover of his own bilīj. Sometimes,

several travellers shared one such "compartment" cf. No. 131, l. 12.

Margin.

1 two thirds - Certainly a reference to the fact that the writer had given the young man capital or merchandise for doing business, as in such a contract the capitalist got two thirds of the profit and the other partner one third, cf. No. 159, l. 6. Joseph writes here correctly tultain as the unconnected form and not as the learned scribes of No. 22, l. 10; No. 84, l. 13. 20. 22; No. 159, l. 6: tultay.

2 Dāfir - ~~His slave agent is mentioned in~~ ^{See} No. 56, l. 23. The remnants of the last letter of his father's name may be read as t; thus his name was perhaps Furāt.

Verso

RD
1 (((NB/FWY))) - Most probably this was another ship, which sailed from Aden to India at that time. About BDY'R see above, l. 13.

7 bankrupt - mufliṭ. This word seems to be merchants' jargon and a combination of mufliṣ, bankrupt, and mufliṭ, escaping, with the t pronounced as ṭ, perhaps under the influence of Hebrew. Even the Jewish grammarian Ibn Janāḥ, ed. Neubauer 1875, p. 573, l. 33, writes the word with ṭ; cf. Dozy Supplément II 279a. Perhaps also taballaṭa "s'enfuir", Dozy, ib. I 11 18 (according to an ancient source; al-Balāḍori) is to be compared, as well as A. Mez, Die Renaissance des Islam, 450, note 8 muballit, "pleite", (German "Boersen-jargon") according to Tāj al-^cArūs s.v. blt. (Tāj al-^cArūs V 111, l. 11 from bottom, actually gives ablata in the sense of aflasa, becoming bankrupt.)

yahudduhu.

10 "break" him - Perhaps this too belongs to the merchants' jargon.

Otherwise, it is feasible to surmise that the writer omitted one d and intended to write ^yYuhaddiduhu, "to threaten him".

13 This procedure of sending three copies of one letter in three different ships obviously was nothing exceptional, as fragments of three such copies of the same letter sent to India even have been preserved in the Geniza, cf. Nos. 58/9. With each letter, Joseph sent here another copy for Ben Yipū's own use; the latter needed it for reference, as he was asked to hand over money to young Baḡdādī, see 11.16-21.

17/8 currency - Ar. sabīb, cf. No. 51 verso, l. 4. Adenese Malikī dīnārs and Egyptian mitqāls are intended.

22 baqqamiya - See above, 1.9. Here, additional explanations about that sending were given.