

Short Letter from Joseph b. Abraham, Aden, to Ben Yijū, India

Approximately 1147 or 1148

University Library Cambridge 13 J 7, fol. 27.

28 x 12 cm

Concerning paper and scribe see Introduction to No. 51. The handwriting, the long final strikes turn to the right of this clerk is characteristically different from that of No. 219 (55x) in so far as here while in No. 219 they go to the left. With the exception of the address, the <sup>verso</sup> ~~backside~~ is blank.

*small type*

The date of the letter can be fixed with considerable certainty owing to the reference to the addressee's <sup>e</sup>brother, see comments on 11. 15-18.

## C o n t e n t s

- A Preamble in the form of six verses from the Bible. (11. 2-7)
- B Address. (11. 7-8)
- C Acknowledgement of the arrival of a small <sup>shipment</sup> ~~sending~~ of pepper - the balance of last year's transactions. (11. 9-15)
- D Details concerning the addressee's brother. (11. 16-19)
- E Remark about news from Egypt. (11. 19-20)
- F Greetings. (11. 21-23)

## T r a n s l a t i o n

(1) In Y(our name), O Me(rciful).(2) For the Lord <sup>will</sup> ~~shall~~ be thy <sup>your</sup> ~~thy~~ confidence, and <sup>He will</sup> ~~shall~~ keep thy <sup>your</sup> ~~thy~~ footfrom being caught. The Lord (3) is thy <sup>your</sup> ~~thy~~ keeper; the Lord is thy <sup>your</sup> ~~thy~~

<sup>your</sup> shade upon ~~thy~~ right hand. The Lord shall preserve <sup>you</sup> ~~thee~~ (4)  
 from all evil; he shall preserve <sup>your</sup> ~~thy~~ soul. He shall preserve  
<sup>your</sup> ~~thy~~ going out (5) and <sup>your</sup> ~~thy~~ coming in from this time forth and  
 to eternity. The sun shall not (6) smite <sup>you</sup> ~~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 <sup>shipment</sup> ~~sending~~ of pepper, namely  
 one bahār and a quarter (10) less 4 raṭl of big measure. I went to  
 take (11) delivery and received the whole due. Likewise, Sheikh  
<sup>Kh</sup> Ḥalaf received (12) his <sup>shipment</sup> ~~sending~~. You mentioned that this (13)  
bahār and a quarter less 4 raṭl of pepper was (sent against) the  
 balance in my favor of the account (14) concerning the cardamon<sup>m</sup>  
 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.

F I send your hight "presence" the best (22) and most copious greetings, and to all those committed to your care (23) the choicest and most copious greetings. And much peace and speedy salvation.

Verse. Address - Right side

To the h(onor), g(reatness and) h(oliness) of my m(aster) and t(eacher) Abraham, son of his h.g. and h.r. Perahya Ben Yijū, m(ay) his) r(est be full of) h(onor).

Left side

He that experiences your favors daily, Joseph b. Abraham, m(ay he rest in) E(den).

#### C o m m e n t a r y

A It was not uncommon, especially in Yemen, to open a letter with a quotation from the Bible, cf. Nos. 23, 30 and 70. However, the heaping up of so many verses here and in No. 208 (60x) certainly had a special reason: the addressee most probably had expressed his intention to travel from India to Aden - which, as we shall see, he actually carried out two years after No. 208 and our letter (see below 1.16) were written. The verses at the beginning of these two letters express the wish for a safe journey. Most of the verses quoted here are indeed from Psalm 121, which is a part of the Jewish prayer for <sup>safe</sup> a ~~good~~ journey.