

Detailed Letter of Ḥalaf b. Isaac, Aden, to Ben Yijū, Dahbattān,Malabar Coast, India

Most probably 1139

University Library Cambridge T.-S. 24.64

Breadth 14cm. Of the height, 55 cm. have been preserved on the right margin and 51.5 cm. on the left. On the part torn away, there were only a few phrases, which can easily be restored. Likewise, the words, lost by holes on the left edge, can be filled in with certainty.

Of Ḥalaf b. Isaac, the sender of this letter, the following documents have been found so far:

5 letters, Nos. 56-208 (60x), to Ben Yijū, one of which in two copies (No. 58 and 59a-b);

5 documents, Nos. 81, 90, 91, 235 (91x), 92 - an account and four letters - addressed to Halfon b. Netan'ēl;

2 letters, Nos. 148-149, to Abū ^cImrān b. Nufai^c;

1 letter, No. 207 (149x), to a Cair^eine merchant, most probably the above mentioned Halfon;

1 order of drugs, written in Arabic letters, with a marginal note in Hebrew characters, No. 15¹.

In addition, 2 letters of thanks, addressed to him by the Academy of Jewish Learning in Cairo, have come to light, Nos. 150 and 209 (150x).

Of the documents emanating from Ḥalaf's office, on the following 13 there appears the same handwriting:

Nos. 56, 57, 59a-b. The postscripta and marginal notes to No. 60, which is written in a different hand, see below, 208 (60x), 81, 90, 91, 235 (91x), 92, 148, 207 (149x), 151.

Two other Nos., 58 and 60 (with the exception of the postscripta and the marginal notes, see above) are written in another, especially big and elaborate script.

No. 149 is again in another handwriting, much smaller than the two just mentioned, but still done very carefully.

Thus, it is highly probable that the 13 pieces, on which there appears the same hand, were written by Ḥalaf himself, in particular, as the various additions to No. 60 would hardly be made by any clerk, and certainly not by a clerk different from the one who had written the letter itself. Cf. the similar case of Joseph b. Abraham, who wrote most of his letters, which have come down to us, with his own hand, see the introduction to No. 51. It may be, of course, that the receiver preserved, for reference, mainly the originals written by the boss, while he disposed of most of the copies made by the clerks.

Ḥalaf's handwriting excels in regularity and clearness and approaches the type of writing used in highly official legal documents, such as marriage contracts. However, there is nothing strange in this fact. It was the pride of the mediaeval Jewish gentleman to be regarded, not only as learned, but also "to wear the crown of

scribedom," see above No. 48, l.6. The receiver of our letter, Ben Yijū, could pride himself on the same achievement. However, the documents collected in this book prove that a really beautiful hand is an art attained only by a select few.

After having filled the front page with seventy-four lines - which at the bottom are slightly broader than on the top - and concluded his letter, Ḥalaf wrote a first postscriptum on the very narrow margin - in eleven short lines, beginning at the bottom and ending at the head of the page. On the backside, there follows a second addition of seven lines, while the address, as usual, is written upside down at the other end of the verso. The letter is carefully folded in such a way that the address fits in exactly into the second fold.

Only in seven letters of Ḥalaf, the addresses have been preserved, Nos. 56, 57, 58, 90, 91, 92, 148. All are in Hebrew characters; in two cases, however, Nos. 57 and 58, the address is given, in addition, also in Arabic letters. This seems to indicate that normally the letters were carried by Jewish merchants, and only in case no such persons were found, the address was added also in Arabic letters for being transmitted by a Muslim.

Although it is extremely difficult to compare the intrinsically cursive Arabic script to the very monumental Hebrew, I have the feeling that Ḥalaf himself wrote the Arabic addresses on Nos. 57 (to be examined again) and 58, for they betray the same strong and grand style of writing which characterizes Ḥalaf's Hebrew script.

Halaf writes from Aden, cf. ll. 33-34. Ben Yijū lives on the Malabar coast, l. 50, certainly not in Fandarīnā, see the Commentary on l. 24, but most probably in Dahbattān, see l. 17.

The time of our letter can be fixed according to the following considerations: The eulogy after the name of the sender's father shows that he was dead at that time. Halaf's father died in February 1139, see No. 235 (91x), Introduction. In two other letters, which certainly were written a year later (1140), he thanks Ben Yijū and a Cairīne merchant, most probably Halfon b. Netan'el, for their expressions of sympathy, No. 60, l. 1; No. 207 (149x), l. 41. In No. 60, there seem to be several references to our letter, cf. ib., ll. 13, 21, 32. If our interpretation is correct, our letter must have been sent in 1139.

after

About the personality and business of Halaf b. Isaac, see the Introduction to No. 148. His letters are indeed an important source for our knowledge of the Indian trade during the first half of the twelfth century.

C o n t e n t s

- A. Elaborate acknowledgement of letter. (ll. 1-13)
- B (a)-(e). Details about the arrival of consignments of iron, brass vessels and cardamom, and of ^{shipments} ~~sendings~~ of brass covers and of betelnut, still due. (ll. 13, 16, 18, 20, 21)
- C. Announcement that of a consignment from Fandarīnā, only pepper,

Typist: pl. disregard the numbers of lines 56/5 p.6

carried in the small ship of Fatan Sāmī, arrived, while his big ship foundered off Bāb al-Mandeb with the result that all pepper was lost, while of the iron about one-half was savaged by divers.

(ll. 21-38)

D. Details about household goods ordered by Yijū. (ll. 39-47)

E. Intimation that the writer had sent (instead of gold) silk for which he asked the addressee to buy Indian products. (ll. 47-58)

F. Request to deal with a sum of money due to the writer from a Muslim merchant in India. (ll. 58-72)

G. Greetings and details about presents sent. (ll. 72-margin)

H. Postscriptum: Details about the consignments forwarded to the addressee. (verso, ll. 1-7)

A. Introduction, the beginning in rhyme.
Translation

TS 24.64, India Book 56.

(1) In (Y)our name, O Me(ro)iful,

your honor

(2) The letter of the "presence" of the most illustrious ^{elder,} Sheikh

has arrived, [may God prolong your life] (3) and make permanent your

honored position, rank, ^{and} highness, ^{and} loftiness, // excellence, and as-

cendancy. // (4) May ^{he} He never deprive your dwelling-place and court

of any good. // (May He bestow) (5) upon you that which is most suit-

able of all He uses to confer. // May He subdue those that are envious

of you and crush your enemies, // (6) and may all your affairs ~~like~~

be completed

~~this letter) arrive at their destination~~ successfully.

I was glad ^{when I} to look ^{ed} at your letter even before ^{had} I ^{an} took notice of its content. Then I read it full of happiness and, while studying it, became joyous and cheerful. (8) For, it was reassuring for me to learn from it about your wellbeing and your satisfactory state. Then I praised (9) God for this very much and asked Him to give you more of all the best (10) in His mercy.

You mentioned, my master, that you were longing for me. Believe me that (11) I feel twice as strongly and more than what you have described; (12) may God decree to bring us together in the near future in complete happiness (13) through His mercy, if God will.

B. Shipments from India.

I took notice, (14) my master, of your announcement of the sending of "refurbished" iron in the ^{boat} ~~ship~~ of the (15) ^{kh (shipowner)} Nāḥodā/Ibn Abi (1) al-Katā'ib. The ^{shipment} ~~sending~~ has arrived and I received ^{from him} ~~out of it~~ (16) two bahār^s and one-third, as you noted. ²

~~There~~ ^{kh} arrived The Nāḥodā (17) Joseph ³ from Dahbattān ⁴ in the ship of Ibn al-Muqaddam and I received from him (18) two basins, and two ewers and two basins for candlesticks. ⁵

Likewise, I took delivery from my master, (19) the ~~most~~ ^{elder} illustrious ~~Sheikh~~ Maḥmūd of 30 ^{raṭl} cardamom from your bag (20) and paid for it the customs duties, as you had written.

As to the covers, ⁶ (21) which remained with you, my master, kindly

send them.

However, of the betel-nuts (22) mentioned by you, my lord, I

have not received ~~anything~~, for you wrote that you sent them with

(23) Jayhar, the slave-agent of Dāfir, ^{but he} who has not arrived this year.

As to your ^{shipment C. Shipwreck.} ~~sending~~, (24) my master, forwarded from Fandarīn ^{ay 7} in

the ship of Fatan ^{was} through the Sheikh (25) Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. Ja'far:

His smaller ship arrived and I took delivery (26) from it of one

and a quarter and an eighth bahār of pepper, as it was stated in your ~~memo~~

~~bill~~ (27) to my master, the most illustrious ^{elder} Sheikh Maḍmūn, as well

as of a bahār ^{anlas} of ("smooth") iron.

However, (28) ⁹ The bigger ship, arrived near Berbera, when its captain got into trouble with it, until (29) it was thrust against Bāb al-Mandeb, ¹⁰ where it foundered. (30) The pepper got lost completely, God did not save of it a thing. (31) As to the iron, mariners were brought from Aden, with whom it was stipulated (32) that they should dive for it and salvage it. ~~Indeed,~~ ¹¹ they salvaged (33) about one-half of the iron, and, while I am writing this letter, (34) they are bringing it out of the Furḍa (the customs house of Aden) to the storehouse of the most illustrious ^{elder} Sheikh, (35) my master Maḍmūn b. al-Ḥasan. All the expenses (36) incurred for the diving and for transport will be deducted from whatever will be realized for that iron and the rest will be divided proportionally, (37) each taking

Swami

his proper share.

I regret very much your losses. But the (38) H(oly one) ^(8e) ~~may~~

He ~~will~~ b(lessed) will compensate you and me presently.

D. Household goods ordered.

As to the household goods ordered (39) by you, my master:

You asked me to buy a frying pan of stone in a case. ¹¹ Later on
(40) its case broke, whereupon I bought you an iron pan for a niṣāfi, ¹²
(41) which is, after all, better than a stone pan. I bought you, also,
for a niṣāfi (42) glassware: goblets, bowls and cups, namely sixty-
eight (43) goblets, ten bowls and five cups; with the basket, which
cost a qirāt, it made exactly (44) one niṣāfi; furthermore, five
green bottles with their baskets for eleven qirāt, the (45) total
being a dīnār and eleven qirāt. ¹³ As to the small pots, I (46) could
not get any separate, only in sets. The wheat has been made ready
for dispatch to you by (47) my master, the ~~most~~ illustrious ~~Sheikh~~ ^{elder}
Maḍmūn. ¹⁴

E. Silk sent instead of gold.

I sent to you on my account (48) five mann ^{15 of} good silk, for I saw
that my master, the ~~most~~ illustrious ~~Sheikh~~ ^{elder} (49) Maḍmūn, had sent
some to Ben ⁵ Adlān and to others and it was reported in his (Ben
⁵ Adlān's) name (50) that it is ⁵ selling well in Malabar. Therefore,
I thought it was preferable to send, instead of gold, (51) merchandise,
which might bring some profit. Thus, kindly sell it for me (52) for

whatever price God ^{the} ~~may He be exalted~~ ^{apportions} & assigns and grants, and buy
 me whatever (53) God ^{the} ~~may He be exalted~~ & assigns and send it to me
 in any ship, without any responsibility (54) for any risk on land or
 sea. If there was opportunity to buy (55) betel-nut or cardamom, kindly
 do so, but you, my master, (56) need no instructions, for you are com-
 petent. Indeed, I cause you trouble (57) every year; ^{but} however, you, my
 master, ^{do} excuse me, (58) as it has always been your habit, ~~in the~~ past

and ~~recently~~ present. F. Request to intervene with a Muslim ^{notable,}

Moreover ^{likewise}, my master, (59) last year, I sent to the captain Mas^oud,
 the Abyssinian, (60) ³⁰ thirty Egyptian mitqāls, to buy whatever God, ~~may~~
~~He be~~ ^{the} exalted, & would ^{apportion} assign. However, when (61) he arrived at your
 place, there befell him the wellknown misfortune. He announced me that
 he (62) had bought me two bahāra ^{of} pepper, which he carried with him, and
 that there remained for me ^{17 1/4} seventeen (63) mitqāls ~~and a~~ quarter, which
 were deposited with my master, the ~~most~~ illustrious Sheikh (64) Abu
 'Alī b. Ja^ofar. Therefore, I, the captain (65) Mas^oud, and
 Bakhtyār, the slave-agent of 'Alī b. Ja^ofar went to the ~~most~~ illus-
 trious Sheikh (66) 'Alī b. Muḥammad Nīlī ^("the indigo merchant") and he (Mas^oud) reported to
 him the matter, whereupon I received (67) a notification from Nīlī
 to 'Alī b. Ja^ofar about it. (68) When you meet ^{him} him, kindly greet ^{from} from
 me and ask him (69) to buy me for this what God, ^{the} ~~may He be~~ exalted, &
^{apportions} assigns and to send it in (70) any ship without any responsibility for

(typist correct)

any risk on sea (71) or land, in this world ^{or in the world} (to come) ¹⁶ I do not need giving you instructions, how to approach him; (72) "a hint is sufficient for a wise man."

May my lord receive for his honored self (73) the best greetings and convey the best and most plentiful greetings in my name to my master, the noble scion, ¹⁷ and all (74) whom your care embraces, and Bama. ¹⁸ And Peace.

Margin:G. Presents sent.

(1) I sent (2) what has no importance or (3) value, namely a bottle of sugar (4) and a good Abyssinian hide. ¹⁹ (5) On the ^{hide} ~~hide~~, there is written (6) "Yljū" from outside and from inside on various places. (7) Favor me by accepting this and excuse (8) me, as has been your habit, ^{present} (9) in the past and recently, (10) and best greetings to you (11) and sincerest regards and salutation. (12) And Peace.

Verso:

(1) ~~Also~~ ^{also} I notify you, my master, that the basket with the glassware and the five bottles (2) are with the ^{kh 20} Nāḥodā ^{kh} Ahmad, the ^{kh they of} Nāḥodā of the Fadiyār ^{ship}; on all of them (3) there is written Yijū in Hebrew script. The hide (4) and the bottle of sugar are with ^{elder} the ~~Sheikh~~ Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Maḥallī, and (5) the silk is the ^{with elder} ~~Sheikh~~ Abū 'Alī b. Ṭayyib. Please, my master, take delivery (6) of all this,

6 affairs - Ar. asbābahā, cf. Dozy, Supplement I, 623b, and below

No. 58, l. 5.

14 "refurbished" iron - Cf. No. 24 verso, l. 6; No. 26, ll. 17-8 ff.

No. 60, l. 36.

About the four types of iron, occurring in our documents see Vol. I, Index.

15 Ibn Abi (i) 'l-Katā'ib - Normally, the name is written Ibn Abū, and not in the form ^{qu}required by the classical grammar, Ibn Abī, cf. No. 26, l. 17 and verso, l. 21; No. 29, l. 7; No. 53, l. 21; No. 60, l. 11; No. 208 (60x), l. 18, which is in Ḥalaf's own hand. About the man, see ~~here the Introduction, p. 56/5.~~ No. 26, l. 17.

According to No. 26, l. 16 and ll. 31-2, the same type of iron was transported in the same ship from India to Aden; there, Ḥalaf received of it two and one-fourth bahār, while here he got two and one-third. Despite these great similarities, it is not sure that No. 26 and No. 56 refer to the same sending, for No. 26 is an exact statement of the transactions made by Maḍmūn for Ben Yijū. Here, ll. 18-20, Ḥalaf reports that he had received from Maḍmūn a certain quantity of cardamom on Ben Yijū's account. However, nothing of the kind is mentioned in Maḍmūn's letter.

The detail discussed confirms a fact, reflected in other documents

published here: there was a certain routine in the Indian trade; similar quantities of the same commodity were ordered by the same merchant in different years and were carried by the same ship from India to Aden, cf. e.g. No. 60, l. 32.

17 Joseph - The completely informal way in which the ship's owner is mentioned here, suggests that the reference is to a person particularly near to both the writer and the addressee, most probably the Adenese merchant Joseph b. Abraham, whom we find mentioned so often together with our Ḥalaf in Ben Yijū's correspondence.

Dahbattan - ^{דַּהַבְּטַן} written without an Ālef (long ā) before n. A wellknown port on the Malabar coast, referred to by the Arab geographers and travellers, Dimāšqī and Idrīsī, as Dahfattān and identified by S. Muh. Husain Nainar, The Knowledge of India possessed by Arab Geographers, p. 29, as Dharmapattanam, today Valarapattanam, a station on the South Indian railway near Cannanore.

The Paris ms. of Dimāšqī's Cosmography, quoted by Nainar, p. 32, renders the name of this port as ^{دهيان}, which is, of course, nothing but an error made by an ignorant scribe for ^{دهبتان}, i.e. our Dahbattān.

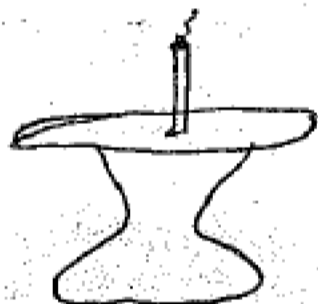
the ship of Ibn al-Muqaddam - See above No. 54, l. 13. In No. 26, l. 48, a ship of his father is mentioned. This, by the way, also suggests that No. 26 preceded our letter, although this argument is not decisive, as we have in the case of Ḥāmišt, a man, his sons and his

sons-in-law, each of whom had separate ships operating at one and the same time, see No. 199 (29x), l. 3.

18 basins for candlesticks - Ar. ṭestay Ṣam^o. I suppose this is the same object which is called by the Yemenites today ra's al-maḡras. The maḡras is a lampstand which serves three different purposes; when the ra's, "the head," a shallow basin, which is identified here with the ṭestay Ṣam^o mentioned in our document, is put on it, it serves as a candlestick. When the ra's is removed, its narrow, upper opening is used as a cup. When turned upside down, the bowl formed by the base provides a widely open vase for flowers.

The maḡras used as

lampstand (with the ra's)



drinking cup



flower vase



19 thirty raṭl cardamom - This comparatively small quantity (one-tenth of a bahār) obviously was sent by Ben Yijū to Ḥalaf for the payment of minor orders. Customs were due, as the cardamom was not carried in an open basket, see No. 55, l. 13, and ib. the Commentary on l. 2.

20 covers - Certainly bronze covers, as in No. 60, l. 13. It is interesting that covers were traded separately from the vessels for which they were destined. This proves how much standardized the copper in-

dust^r was, see below l. 46. In No. 1, l. 15 and No. 14, l. 1, where silver vessels are referred to, bowl and cover are mentioned together.

23 Jauhar, the slave-agent - Ar. gūlām, which simply means "young man," cf. Hebr. naṣar, which also designs both a young man and a servant. Jauhar seems to have been commuting between India and Aden regularly, just as we find Bama, Ben Yijū's slave and agent, staying for a summer in Aden, see No. 29, ll. 41-45.

The importance, for the Indian trade, of these slaves who served as business representative^s of their masters is brought home by our letter, where three of them are mentioned by name, cf. l. 65 and 74. See Vol. I, Index s.v., Slave-agent.

ز. Ḍāfir - Two India traders bearing this extremely rare name appear in our papers: one, the son of Furāt(?), No. 53 margin, l. 2, and verso, ll. 6-9; the other, the son of Buraik, the Alexandrian, No. 34E, l. 1 ff.

24 Fandarīnā - About this Indian town see above No. 28, l. 25. As it appears clearly from the context, Ben Yijū was not in that town, but had advised his correspondend ^cAlī b. Ja^cfar to buy and to dispatch from there the goods mentioned. See l. 25.

^{wa?}
Fatan Sōmī -

25 His smaller ship - In the Indian ocean, ships used to be accompanied by a smaller ship of a different type, cf. No. 58, l. 11; No.

133, l. 10.

Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. Ja^cfar - Certainly identical with Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ja^cfar, ll. 64 and 65, whom we find in India. He did not transport the items listed in person, but sent them through his agent, l. 65.

While the name Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī was common among Jews, I have never come across a Jew named Ja^cfar. Therefore, our Abu 'l-Ḥasan here certainly was a Muslim. Thus, we see a Jew sending merchandise to another through a Muslim merchant, travelling on a Hindu ship.

Whether the ship's owner Ja^cfar, whose ship foundered according to No. 32, l. 7, was the father of our 'Alī, cannot be made out.

27 "smooth" iron - Cf. No. 60, ll. 37-40.

28 Berbera - The word seems to design here and in No. 170, l. 7 a town, namely the same town on the Somali coast of East Africa, which is at present the capital of British Somaliland. Thus, our text seems to be the oldest source for the existence of that town, see

No. 36 margih, l. 3, and Encyclopedia of Islam s.v.

²
4, p. 1172

got into trouble - Ar. dāyaqa bihi rubbānuhu.

29 Bāb al-Mandeb - The 24 km wide isthmus between the south-western tip of the Arab peninsula and the East coast of Africa. The word designed in ancient times also a town, and it may well be that here and in No. 131, l. 16, the writer had indeed in mind a place on the

Arabian coast of that isthmus, cf. Enc. of Islam s.v.

The sea of Berbera was famous for its treacherous, "mad" waters,
 of. the verses quoted by ^{Mas'ūdī, Murūj, Paris 1861-77, vol. II, 438-9;} ~~Yaqut, Geogr. Dict.~~
 see Magbul Ahmad, Islamic Culture 37 (1953), p. 284.

36 transport - Ar. kirā, the wages paid to the cameldrivers, who transported the salvaged iron from Bāb al-Mandeb to the customs house of Aden, an extra expenditure made necessary owing to the foundering of the ships.

38 Those merchants bore their losses with great self-control, both because they were used to them and because of their strong belief that everything was ordained by God, and "everything that God does is to the good."

39 frying pan of stone - Ar. tājīn, the Greek teganon (τήγανον), which has come to the Arabs through the Aramaic, cf. Siegmund Fraenkel, Die Aram. Fremdwörter im Ar., Leiden 1886, p. 69. In No. 60, ll. 21 and 23, instead, the good Arabic word miqlāt (pronounced today in central Yemen maglā') is used.

A maglā' made of ḥarāḍ stone is believed by the Yemenites to give the food an especially tasty flavor, cf. S. D. ~~Goitein~~ Goitein, Jemenica, Leipzig 1934, p. 169, No. 1319 and p. 49, No. 273. The famous Yemenite Sabbathdish kubānḥ is kept warm in a pot made of this ḥarāḍ. In former times, the immigrants from Yemen used to bring those stonepots

with them to Palestine, which shows how much they appreciated them.

It should be noted that in modern times, maglā' denotes in the language of the Yemenite Jew^s not a frying pan - which is called gullā' - but a large dish, in which warm food, destined for the whole family, is served. However, as tājīn and miqlāt are used here in one and the same sense, the common Arabic use of these words was assumed to apply here.

As we learn from No. 60, ll. 21-3, Ḥalaf after all forgot to send the iron pan and sent instead two made of stone...

case - $\gamma\lambda\beta\lambda$, which could correspond to an Ar. ḡalfa or jalfa; the former is preferable, although it seems not to be attested by the dictionaries. In the same sense below, No. 69, l. 24 ḡilāf.

Later on - Ar. ba^cd for ba^cdan, as in modern Yemenite speech, cf. S. D. Goitein-Habshush, *Travels in Yemen*, Jerusalem 1941, Text, p. 77, l. 18.

40 niḡaffī - a half of a local dīnār, see No. 28, l. 34.

42-44 Glass vessels were ordered very frequently by Ben Yijū, cf. No. 28, l. 47 ff; No. 29, l. 45 ff; No. 60, 25-30.50 No. 61 (30x), l. 7. As the low prices indicate, local glass, as it was manufactured in Laḡaba near Aden, is intended here, cf. No. 61 (30x), l. 7. The Adenese themselves ordered Beirut glass or glass made by the Dār al-Jauhar from Cairo, see No. 50, l. 18-9 and ib. verso, ll. 28-9.

44 green bottles - $\gamma\delta\zeta$, ^{ksz} which most probably is to be understood as hūḍr, plural of ahḍar; cf. No. 50 verso, ll. 28-9, where red and white glass is mentioned. It could hardly be hūgr, slender, as this form is not attested in literary Ar. or in that of Yemen.

in their baskets - Ar. Yutūt, a Yemenite word, see No. 29, l. 44.

46 only in sets - Ar. dusūt. This, too, shows how much the industry was standardized in those days. See above l. 20.

Wheat was indigenous in India, especially in its north-western and central parts. However, "with the vast majority of the people of India, wheat is not a necessity of life; it is indeed rarely, if ever, eaten by them. Wheat becomes an important article of food in Panjab only" (Sir George Watt, *The Commercial Products of India*, p. 1092). It is evident from No. 64B, ll. 4 and 10, that Ben Yijū's staple food in India was rice. He needed wheat, perhaps not so much as food, as for religious purposes, for according to the Jewish ritual, the full grace cannot be recited except after the eating of bread made of one of the main five cereals growing in Palestine (wheat, barley, etc.). Now, a scholar as Ben Yijū certainly would have hated the idea, never to pronounce the full grace. Therefore, he, and certainly also the other Jewish merchants out in India, needed to have wheat-bread, at least for the Sabbath meals. In fact, a similar problem existed in southern Yemen, where the staple food was, at that time - and still is - dhura

("Indian millet", *Andropogon Sorghum Brot.*). The Yemenite Jews approached, indeed, the head of the Jewish community, Abraham, the son of Maimonides (in office 1204-1237) in this matter, who in a long letter explained to them what they could do, cf. A. H. Freimann-S. D. Goitein, *Abraham Maimuni Responsa*, Jerusalem 1937, pp. 126-8 and 197.

In No. 61 (30x), l. 6, Maḡmūn charges Ben Yijū for wheat sent to him three dīnār.

Wheat was brought to Aden from Egypt via ^oAidāb, cf. No. 227, l. 19, verso, l. 17. While writing from Aden to India, the Yemenite word burr is used for wheat, while ordering it from ^oAidāb, the Egyptian qamḥ.

48-51 About the sending of silk to India, see No. 51, l. 7.

49 Ben ^oAdlān - Obviously not known from other documents.

50 Malabar - Ar. Malībār. About the various forms of this name, see No. 1 verso, l. 6.

preferable - Ar. aḥyar, cf. No. 54 margin, l. 5.

56 you need no instructions - Such an apology is made, after...the writer has given his instructions. See below, l. 71.

61 misfortune - Obviously the man was captured by pirates and all the goods carried by him were taken away from him. We find him here, l. 65, alive and already back in Aden.

64 °Alī b. Ja^ofar - See above, l. 25.

65 Baḥtyār is a very common Persian name, cf. No. 28, l. 25; No. 29, l. 48. According to Jāḥiẓ, Faḥr al-Sūdān (Praise of the Negroes), ed. van Vloten, Tria Opuscula, Leiden 1903, p. 84, one should not confide one's business to a Persian slave (a Ḥorāsānī).

66 Nīlī - the indigo-merchant, here, perhaps, family name.

The situation is this: The Abyssinian captain, after his return from his unsuccessful voyage to India, testified in Aden before the slave-agent of °Alī b. Ja^ofar, that he had left with him seventeen and one-fourth Egyptian gold mitqāl belonging to our Ḥalaf. All the three concerned went subsequently to a Muslim merchant en route to India, asking him to urge °Alī to send for the money deposited merchandise, the reason being obviously that the Abyssinian captain did not intend to return to India in the near future. Here Ḥalaf requests Ben Yijū to see to it that his Muslim friend fulfilled his obligations.

71 in the world to come - for according to a popular belief, a Jew (or Christian), oppressed by a Muslim, will ride on him on the day of Resurrection.

72 a hint is sufficient for a wise man - literally: "give to a wise man (only) the beginning of a thing." The same Hebrew phrase is used by

Ḥalaf in No. 60, l. 46-7.

73 the noble scion - Ben Yijū's son, Peraḥya Abu 'l-Surūr, cf. No. 24, l. 36.

74 Bama - Ben Yijū's slave agent, cf. No. 24, l. 36. He is regarded as a member of the family and called in No. 57, l. 23, "The Brother." Similarly, Maimonides, in one of his letters says: "All the members of my family, free men or slaves." ^{the note to} See also, No. 208 (60x), l. 32.

Margin:

4 an Abyssinian hide - Before the main meal is served, which is brought in ready made on portable tables or on a tray, the Yemenites eat Ja^olāh, all kinds of fruits, raw vegetables, and nuts, which are heaped up on a hide, on which one puts also the peels, pips, and stones. During the interval between the Ja^olāh and the meal, the hide, with all it contains, is removed. It stands to reason that the hides sent as presents served the same purpose. A hide bought for Ben Yijū by Maḍmūn cost two (Malikī) dinars, No. 26 verso, l. 5. ~~It may, perhaps, have served as a cover for precious sendings.~~

7 excuse me - polite phrase implying that a far more valuable present should have been sent.

Verso:

2 Nāḥodā - literally, "the lord of the ship;" normally, designs the ship's owner, who served, also, as its bursar. As the ship concerned here belonged to the Fadiyār, (about this name, see above No. 53, l. 13), this N. obviously functioned as bursar.

2-6 As all the three merchants, to whom Halaf confided his consignments,

travelled on the same ship, the distribution was made not as a matter of safety, but out of consideration for the carriers, who certainly took with them the comparatively small sendings without remuneration. The first of the three was a Muslim, the two others certainly Jews; details about Abū 'Alī b. Ṭayyib, see above No. 51, l. 11. Maḥallī, i.e. from the provincial town al-Maḥalla in lower Egypt. Of course, this could have been a family name of a man whose father or grandfather had settled in Cairo.

7 A conclusion like this is not common and expresses real, personal feelings.

Address, right side: *and calls himself a scribe, lavlar (from Latin libellarius) in the poem No. 41,*

2 the scribe - The addressee certainly excelled in the art of writing; l. 12.

it seems, however, that the title refers to his father; Ben Yijū's nephews, Perahya, cf. Nos. 74, 75, and 80, and Moses, cf. No. 77, also were calligraphists; it is a wellknown fact that the art of writing was handed down in the same family for many generations, as is proved by the colophons of Hebrew manuscripts and by the living tradition in both Morocco and Yemen, see S. D. Goitein, *The Communal Life of the Jews in Yemen*, M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume, New York 1953 (Hebrew Section), pp. 54-5 and especially p. 55, note 34.

Address, left side:

3 The eulogy (לַת (תִּיהָ (כֹּהֵן), seems not to be included in L. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur*, Berlin 1845, pp. 304-370, where

the Hebrew formulas used for the remembrance of the dead are listed.

It is, however, in use with the Yemenite Jews up to the present day.

Pronounce: liḥōyōh.