

Letter from Moses Yijū, in Tyre, to his brother Ferahya, in Cairo

14 April 1155

University Library Cambridge 13 J 20, fol. 7

The letter certainly was written by Moses himself, as it was continued on the margin by another hand, that of a friend, adding greetings in person. When letters are copied by a scribe, he normally mentions all the persons who convey greetings, cf., e.g. No. 133 or No. 193. Moses' writing is not as elegant as that of his elder brother, who was<sup>s</sup> an accomplished scribe, but still is very regular and could be used in copying books. His Hebrew is also very remarkable.

As date, Wednesday, the 24th day of the °Ömer, i.e. the seven weeks' period starting on the second day of the Passover, is given. During the years 1152-7, *only in 1155 did the 24th of °Ömer fall on a Wednesday, which, then, was in the* hands of the Crusaders. *Corresponded with 14th April. The letter obviously was written in Tyre, which then*

Concerning the background of this letter, see the Introduction to Nos. 76 and 79. As many persons are greeted in Cairo, it seems that Moses had been there and was captured on his way from Egypt to Sicily.

## C o n t e n t s

- A. Long preamble in Hebrew, expressing the hope to attend P.'s wedding (ll. 1-23)
- B. *Reference to* ~~Intimation~~ of the writer's forthcoming trip to Egypt and other matters (ll. 23-margin 1)
- C. Greetings to persons in Egypt (margin, ll. 2-20)
- D. Greetings and congratulations from one David b. Isaac (ll. 21-28)

The letter is addressed to the Bazaar of the druggists, Murabba<sup>o</sup>at al-<sup>o</sup>Aṭṭārīn,  
 cf. E. Worman, Jewish Quarterly Review 18 (Philadelphia ), p. , to  
 the shop (read dukkan for Worman's ) of Abi 'l-Faḥr, (Ibn al-  
 Amsāṭī<sup>v</sup>) the friend of the Yijū family, cf. No. 75, l. 3.

Translation of Section B

(23) This is to inform you, my brother, that (24) I intend, if God will, to come.  
 I have taken out a passport other than that of Binyam, (25) for he also goes up  
 to Cairo.

I received seventeen dinar. I should like to mention (26) also that I wrote  
 in Tyre many letters and sent them (home) (27) with Abraham ibn al-Qarīṣ and to  
 you as well. Furthermore, I sent (home) with Abraham (28) of al-Mahdiyya your  
 letter and letters from me, and told him how I was rescued.

Thank God (29) I am well and healthy - may I never miss God's favor (30)  
 under your auspices. However, on the day I disembarked, I was so ill (31) that  
 I did not expect to stay alive, and I wrote those letters (32) only out of duress.  
But He acted for the sake of His name and on the fifth day

Margin

recovered.

C o m m e n t a r y

24 passport - Ar. barā, written here first bry and then br't in the form con-  
 nected with a following word. Moses had intended, first, to use the passport of

one Binyam (which stands for Binyām,\* an abridged form of the name Benjamin); however, as the latter himself wanted to go to Egypt, Moses had to get a new one. A passport was necessary, as the travellers had to pass from Christian to Muslim territory. As a matter of fact, a barā or barā'a was needed for a non-Muslim even while travelling between Muslim countries, as he had always to prove that he had paid his polltax, see S. D. Goitein, *Studia Islamica* 3 (Paris 1955), p. 86.

25 goes up - One goes up a river; therefore, travelling from the coast to Cairo is expressed in this way, cf. also No. 74, l. 20.

27 Abraham of al-Mahdiyya - See No. 68 verso, l. 1. R wrote home to Sicily via Tyre, but most probably sent letters also through other ports.

30 under your auspices - Ar. bisa'ādatak, cf. Dozy, *Supplément I*, 654. The writer omitted an Ālef.

31 Most probably letters of despair and asking for help.

32 God's name is "The Allmerciful." In order to do honor to His name, He saves man from his misery.

C No greetings are extended to Abraham Yijū, certainly, because the writer knew that he was away, at that time, most probably in Tunisia.

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\*Already found in a Greek inscription in Attica (BENIAMES) in the second or third century of the Christian era, see M. Schwabe, *Tarbiz* 21 (Jerusalem 1950), 113.