

Short letter of Perahya b. Joseph Yijū to his father in Mazara

Most probably June 1154

University Library Cambridge 8 J 36, fol. 3

16 cm broad and 12 high, i.e. the breadth of the lines is more extended than their height - an unusual distribution of the space available.

Light-brown, woolly, thick paper. Many words and letters lost, owing to holes and in particular, through damage by water. On the backside, the address only.

The letter most probably was written in 1154, as it contains a reference to the proposed travel to Egypt of the Yijū family. Perahya is on a journey along the coast, certainly in Sicily or southern Italy, because he speaks here of his brother being sent back to Mazara via Palermo, while he himself had not yet set out on his passage to Egypt. This letter, as the preceding, shows that there remained still assets to be realized for Joseph Yijū, most probably from the time he was a merchant.

C o n t e n t s

- A Reference to a letter from Egypt expressing doubts as to "the" travel to that country (ll. 1-4)
- B Urgent request to send a power of attorney with Moses, who had gone back to Mazara for this purpose and report about a failure of obtaining a loan (ll. 4-9)
- C Detailed greetings (ll. 9-13)
- D Forwarding of the letter mentioned above, section A (ll. 13-4)

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

A (1) I am sending you these two lines in wellbeing and health. ((We arrived)) on Sunday night (2) of the week Wayiqqaḅ Qōraḅ and stayed overnight on board. On ((Monday?.....)), I disembarked for sundry business and was met (3) by a man from Egypt, called Ben J.fy, who gave me a letter ..... from Sheikh Abi 'l-Fahr<sup>kh</sup> (4) Ben al-Amṣāṭī, addressed to you, in which he expresses doubt about "the" coming there.

B My brother Moses had travelled to the Town (Palermo) (5) heading for your place, so that you could write him a power of attorney. Please take utmost care in the legal confirmation of that attorney (6) and send it as quickly as it is convenient.

I tried to get a loan from Sheikh (7) Abi 'l-Rabī<sup>o</sup> of twenty rubā'ī, in order to send them to you. However, I did not find gold at his disposal, as he had invested it in business.

(8) Again, if the power of attorney is not legally confirmed, you will get nothing, except in case you come in person. For, he says expressly in ((his letter?)) ".... (9) and send a document, in which your sister ((approves of)) the matter."

C Do not be remiss in praying for me. Best (10) greetings to you, to my mother, and my brothers Moses and Samuel. Please greet, (11) my lord, the rabbi and Mr. Jacob, his brother, and to rabbi Zecharia, the best greetings and to Mr. Solomon, greetings; (12) and to everybody who asks about me, and to my master, R. Ḥayyīm, the father of the rabbi, the best regards and ask him not to forget me (13) in his prayer. And your Peace shall grow more and more, Amen Selah. And Peace.

D ..... The letter attached to this letter is the one sent

by Sheikh Abi ḥl-Faḥr.<sup>kh</sup>

Address, right side:

To my dear parent (2) hi(s honor) my father and master Joseph Melammed b. Perahya (3) m(ay he rest in) E(den), Yijū, God may be his protector and keeper.

Left side:

(1) His son, who is longing for him, Perahya. (2) Salvation may be speedy.

C o m m e n t a r y

1 these two lines - See No. 69, l. 5.

2 the week Wayiqqaḥ Qōraḥ - The weeks are called according to the words beginning the Scripture reading of the following Sabbath. The section referred to (Numeḥ, chapters 16-18) is normally read in the month of June.

3 Abi ḥl-Faḥr<sup>kh</sup> - Perahya writes Abī in all cases, which he believed to be grammatically more correct than Abū, used for all cases in spoken language.

Abu ḥl-Faḥr<sup>kh</sup> Ben al-Amḥāṭī<sup>sh</sup> (the son of "the comb-maker or -merchant") was the friend and helper of the Yijū family in Cairo, which is evident from many of these letters, cf. No. 76 verso, l. 34; No. 77 margin, ll. 6-7; No. 79, ll. 7-8; No. 80, address.

4 "the" coming - Obviously, a reference to the desire of old Joseph to follow his son Perahya on his way to Egypt, cf. Nos. 76 and 79.

B 5-9 As the clearly discernible words "your sister," l. 9, indicate, R's aunt Beraha<sup>k</sup> was also involved in the transaction. One does not see, however, why the personal appearance of his father would remove that legal difficulty. Anyhow,

owing to the bad state of the ms., the full import of the passage cannot be made out.

9 The prayer of parents or other relatives and, in general, of pious old people was regarded as a most efficient protection on a dangerous journey, cf. below, l. 13 and e.g. 153, l. 11; ib., margin, ll. 6-7; No. 173, margin, l. 13; ib., verso, ll. 4 and 8.

11 the rabbi - Ar. Mu<sup>c</sup>allim, see No. 74, ll. 16-8.