

Now I intend to set out²⁴ for India. May God, may He be praised, make the outcome good again!

[E. Painful separation from wife and closing greetings]

Everything that I have heard about what you (pl.) are undergoing and your circumstances (3) increased my distress over you.²⁵ [Verso] (1) Do not cut me off from news about you. I am traveling in faraway places.²⁶ I hope that we shall be able to be (2) in one town until God decrees the appointed time (death) for me or for you. By God, by God, do (3) no cut off (sg. f.)²⁷ your letters from me. We will not be reunited unless God wills. Accept for yourself (sg. f.) (4) profuse wishes for your complete well-being. And profuse wishes for Sheikh Abu 'l-Maḥāsin's complete well-being.²⁸ And Peace. (5) And Abū 'Umar²⁹ sends everyone profuse wishes for complete well-being.

[F. Address]

(1) (To) His excellency, my dear son, master (2) Abu 'l-Maḥāsin b. Abū 'Alī. May his grace be permanent!}³⁰

²⁴ Arabic *a-dukhūl* (= *al-dukhūl*). In contrast to *khurūj*, which means the opposite (see 372, n. 4), *dakhal*, *dukhūl*, literally, enter, means travel abroad (to India), i.e., enter the sea. See Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 145; II, 66v, line 21. The writer's experiences merit comparison with those described in a contemporary letter by David Maimonides (VI, 4); see above, page 157.

²⁵ After having complained about his suffering various trials and tribulations on the road, the husband remembers towards the end of the letter to commiserate with his wife and family over their dire circumstances in his absence, of which he had heard. On the complaints of the distant husband's wife and his responses in Geniza letters, see Kraemer, "Women Speak," 193–95.

²⁶ Arabic *fa-qad ba'uda al-mazār*, lit., 'the visiting place has already become distant.' A similar phrase is used for one traveling in distant places in IV, 13, line 17: *ṭūl asfāriḥ wa-bu'd mazāriḥ*, 'the length of his travels and distance of his visiting places'; IV, 18, line 16: *mā huwa 'alayhi al-mazār min al-bu'd*, 'the distance of his visiting places.'

²⁷ Obviously the writer intends his wife, and not the rest of the family, in the previous remarks as well, but he only begins to address her with the feminine singular here.

²⁸ As stated explicitly in the address, Abu 'l-Maḥāsin was the writer's son, who was home with his mother.

²⁹ Abū 'Umar was the writer's older son, who accompanied him.

³⁰ On the absence of the sender's name, see the introduction to the document.}

II, 65 *Letter to a Merchant Away in the Far East, whose Interests were Protected by the 'Nagid David'*

Aden, ca. 1180

TS Misc. 28, f. 187

This letter from Aden (sent to India) reflects the situation in the town at the time of 'our Nagid' David,' probably the son or other relative and successor of Ḥalfon b. Maḍmūn. The letter is written by a merchant to an India trader out in the Far East, probably India [see below], who had taken loans from merchants in Aden, including one Ibn/Abū (al-)Daghīsh.² The latter took the law into his own hands and seized goods from the warehouse of the absentee debtor. The addressee's business partner or representative, Makārim b. al-Ṭayyib, came to an agreement with Ibn/Abū (al-)Daghīsh, in which the latter promised to pay 150 dinars for a release from any claim resulting from the unlawful seizure; but he subsequently used his connections with some VIPs in Aden to avoid payment. Word of the dispute spread among other creditors, one of whom, who was in Egypt, obtained a ruling from the Qadi Ibn al-Jazūlī,³ which allowed him to take part of the seized goods in payment of his loan. The writer had informed the Nagid David of the events, but because of the absence from Aden of important traders, the Nagid instructed the writer not to take any action until Makārim arrived from Egypt or until the addressee himself returned in the following year from India. The writer emphasizes the wisdom of this advice, rather than acting in a highhanded fashion, as the addressee had wanted.

The Nagid David is probably the father of the Nagid Maḍmūn/Shemaryā b. David, whom we meet in the following documents.⁴

{The fragmentary address on verso, written only in Arabic characters (the letter itself is in Judeo-Arabic) clearly contained only the name of the addressee and not that of the sender.⁵ The letter was sent to Lawāmānda

¹ {See the note to the translation of line 35 below on whether he was 'Nagid.'

² Not a proper name but a pejorative by-name. Daghīsh is registered as a (by-) name in Ibn al-Zubayr, *Asmā'*, 1587, and means 'Scoundrel, Aggressor.' The diminutive Dughaysh also appears there, and that vocalization could be intended here as well.

³ The name comes from a Berber tribe in southern Morocco. See Colin, "Jazūla."

⁴ See Goitein, *Yemenites*, 81–8 {and above, Introduction IIB} on the Nagids. {The preceding remarks are based on various comments in Goitein's papers to II, 65. He did not translate the document.

⁵ On this practice, see pages 498–99.

(?), probably to be identified with an island off the west coast of Burma (see the note to the translation below), which, as far as I know, is mentioned in the Geniza papers only here. The letter can be divided into four sections. Selected translations are supplied below.

[A] Opening salutations and blessings, much in rhymed Arabic (lines 1–10).

[B] The Ibn/Abū (al-) Dagħish affair (lines 10–48).

(35) Our [Nagī]d⁶ David—*may his Rock protect him!*—... (37) advised me (your servant) to let the matter (38) stand and leave it, until Sheikh Makārim (39) b. al-Ṭayyib [arrives], on condition that [the merchandise] be neither sold nor (40) purchased,⁷ until a court ruling is made in connection with it and Sheikh (41) Makārim b. al-Ṭayyib arrives or perhaps your excellency returns (42) next year and takes action which will (43) bring about commendable results. This is to inform you, that (44) were I to stubbornly pursue the suit, it would lead to *bloodshed*. (45) God protect me!

[C] News from Yemen, Egypt and the Magħreb and closing remarks (line 48-verso, line 8).

(49) News of the land: It is calm.⁸ (50) Resources are plentiful, and the pitchers⁹ are overflowing with water. (51) The Sultan—may God make his rule eternal!—is just, and all of (52) the inhabitants are safe and secure. News of (53) Egypt is good, and prices are up. For the (54) Magħreb, the same... [Margīn] (4) Pepper is for [thirty]-seven [dinars a *bahār*,¹⁰...] (5)

⁶ The word is only partially preserved, and Goitein copied [negī]dēnū. The corner of the *d* is also torn away, and though what remains resembles 7 slightly more than 7, no clear distinction can be made between the two letters. I am unaware of any other sources in which this David is designated Nagid, though the poem in praise of Maḍmūn b. David, presumably his son, in II, 69, vs. 10, speaks of his 'fathers (or: forefathers) the Nagids.' On the other hand, this Maḍmūn, called Shemaryā in Hebrew, is referred to in TS Arabic 48, f. 294, as 'Our Nagid Shemaryā son of the deceased, our grandee (*gevirēnū*) David.' Subsequently, there is a distinct possibility that here too, we should read נגיד [negīd], 'our grandee.' If so, the title Nagid was never conferred on David.

⁷ A figure of speech, meaning that no business transactions should be carried out with the merchandise.

⁸ Similar good news, about the state of affairs in Egypt (see below, line 52), is found, for example, in I, 25v, lines 5 ff.

⁹ For this translation of *maṭārāt*, see Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:600; according to Hava, *Dictionary*, 444, *maṭāra* is 'large-mouthed (well).'

¹⁰ The prices here are in Egyptian dinars. {The restoration 'thirty' is based on II, 20, line 20 (about 1133), according to which the best price for a *bahār* of pepper was 37 dinars; according to IV, 15–II, 42, line 27, 38 dinars. But in 1199, the price was up to 45 dinars: II, 66v, line 6. Might Maliki dinars have been intended?

sixty, lac sixty, Faṣṣ[ūrī] camphor¹¹ (6) eighty a *mann*, Chinese camphor per *mann* (7) [...]teen, nutmeg¹² seventy per ten, (8) c[leansed] cloves fifty-five per ten (*manns*), (9) [...] a dinar per *mann*. Rhubarb¹³ is not selling in (10) the country [...] (11) galangal¹⁴ is not to be seen. [Verso] (1) Aromatic wood ('ūd) is selling, especially of average quality.

[D] Address in Arabic characters:¹⁵

(1) (To) The most illustrious [...] Sheikh (2) Abū Ya'qūb¹⁶ b. Hibat Allah (?).

[Written perpendicularly] (1) To be delivered to Lawāmanda (?),¹⁷ (2) God willing.}

¹¹ Faṣṣūr is a place in Sumatra, Indonesia, famous for its camphor. See Goitein, *Letters*, 228; Tibbetts, *Arabic Texts*, 140–41. Faṣṣūrī camphor is also mentioned in VII, 36v, line 16 (incorrectly transcribed in the edition in Gil, *Ishmael*, 4:589 as Maṣṣūrī).

¹² Arabic *jawza*. See II, 34, side d, line 2.

¹³ Arabic *rāwand*. See II, 33, side b, line 4.

¹⁴ Arabic *khulanjān*, the aromatic medicinal rhizome of certain East Asian plants. See Maimonides, *Lexicography*, ed. Muntner, no. 398, 109; Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 158; Lev & Amar, *Medicinal Substances*, 94.

¹⁵ Only partially transcribed by Goitein.

¹⁶ The name is very difficult to decipher. It looks somewhat like 'Sa'd'. Hiba b. Abū Sa'd drowned ca. 1154 in the Indian Ocean a few days out of Yemen (II, 71, line 25). These names are common.

¹⁷ Goitein did not transcribe this part of the address. After the first letters, 'Lawā', the reading is not certain. Lawāmanda is probably to be identified with Iron Island or King Island, off the west coast of Burma; see Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation*, 480–81, 566.}