

Please (24) do not ask me, my lord, what I experienced from Mūsā b. (25) Mevōrākh¹³ and his malicious joy at my misfortune¹⁴ over the loss (26) of my shop. Yes, my shop was taken away from me by force {alt. tr.: I was robbed only of my shop}.¹⁵

[D. Advice to the addressee about his journey from the High Yemen to the Coast]

[Margin] (1) Receive for your honored self the best (2) greetings, and do not defer your travel¹⁶—may God assist you!—(3) indeed,¹⁷ to our place. And please, do not travel (4) except in the company of people on whom you can rely.¹⁸ (5) *May peace for you overtake* (6) *peace!*¹⁹ (7) This letter²⁰ was written in a hurry.²¹

¹³ Both this man's name and that of his father are common in their Hebrew and Arabic forms, and it is interesting that the two were mixed here.

¹⁴ On gloating over a rival's misfortunes in the Geniza papers, see the note to II, 20v, line 6 (335, n. 42).

¹⁵ Arabic *wa-mā suriqtu illā min saqifati*, another sarcastic statement.

¹⁶ Lit., coming down.

¹⁷ {Arabic *wa-a-mā*. Goitein, who had not deciphered the preceding phrase, translated: 'or.'}

¹⁸ Arabic *tkn* ['alayhim], from *wkn*. In the High Yemen, the relevant form would be pronounced *tūkan* or *tkan*; cf. Goitein, *Jemenica*, XXI, para. 17a. {Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 53, has only *wikin bi*-.}

¹⁹ Cf. III, 31, lines 27–28 and 701, n. 10 and III, 37v, line 15.

²⁰ Arabic *rq* (vocalization is uncertain). See notes to II, 34, side f, line 2 and III, 30, line 12 (385, n. 46; 695, n. 7).

²¹ A frequent form of apology for the poor handwriting, etc.}

III, 33 *Letter from Yeshū'ā ha-Kohen b. Jacob to Abraham Ben Yijū re House Rented for Him*

Dhū Jibla, Yemen, 1150–51

TS 10 J 14, f. 2

For the background of this letter and its relationships to III, 31 and 38, see the introduction to III, 31.

Contents

- A. Preamble, consisting mostly of rhymed Hebrew prose (lines 1–15).
- B–C. See translation, below.
- D. Address (verso).

Translation of B–C

[B. Communication that everything was all right with Ben Yijū's house in the sender's town]

(15) I,¹ the servant of (16) your excellency, inform you—may God make your prosperity permanent!—(17) that when you departed from me {alt tr.: I departed from you},² I went to the house; (18) and the hand mill³ and the durra crusher⁴ were in the house. I locked⁵ (19) the house and departed and entrusted⁶ Sheikh Ḥusayn with the care (20) of the

¹ {This section begins with the words, *ghayra anna*, 'furthermore.' I have not seen this usage in dictionaries; cf. Blau, *Grammar*, 203, *ghayra dhālika anna*.

² Arabic *maḍā minhu*, lit., 'when he departed from him.' The third person is used for both writer and addressee.}

³ Arabic *maṭṭan*. A sketch of a Yemenite hand mill can be seen in Rathjens, *Sūdara-bien-Reise*, 3:120. {For the *maṭṭan*, also see Margariti, "Aden," 161.}

⁴ Arabic *marhā*, a common word in Southern Yemen denoting a smaller hand mill for the crushing of peeled durra. The peeled durra grains, after having been soaked in water overnight, are crushed in the *marhā*, until they become a liquid used for the preparation of *lhūh*, a flexible flat cake forming one of the main dishes of the population; cf. details in Goitein, *Jemenica*, 136, no. 1004 {cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 190}. While the hand mill normally is built on a fixed platform, the *marhā* is mobile.

⁵ Arabic *rbt*, normally meaning to tie, to bind. As the door is fastened with a leather string, one says in Yemen, *urbuṭ al-bāb*, 'tie up the door.' Perhaps, the writer intended to say *al-bāb* and wrote erroneously *al-bayt*. {On locks in Yemen, see page 313, n. 7.}

⁶ Arabic *zakkan* (a *shadda* is written on the top of the word). This is Yemenite speech. *Ant muzakkan bifūlān*, 'you are responsible for so and so (e.g., that he should not escape)',

house, which he was prepared to do (lit., 'the man said only "good,"').⁷ (21) Qays,⁸ however, was angry⁹ and said: "He¹⁰ lost the house's (22) furnishings¹¹ and rent." In fact, I, your excellency's servant, inform you (23) that Sheikh Ḥusayn received payment of (24) the entire rent and that you have not suffered any loss (25) from the house. Therefore, when he¹² reaches Aden and talks (26) to you, my lord, about this matter, do not accept (27) his words (as true) {alt. tr.: do not take notice of his words}¹³ nor be distressed or (28) worried by them.

[C. Conclusion and greetings]

If you, my lord, have any {alt. tr.: Whatever, you, my lord}¹⁴ (29) need or require any service, honor your servant (30) with it. To you, my lord (31) and master, and to my lord Peraḥyā¹⁵—*may his Rock preserve him!*—the best greetings. *And peace.*

[Margin] Kindly do not cease writing to me, the servant of your excellency. May I never be deprived of you!

zakkin bilada 'ind *fulān*, 'entrust the clothes to so and so.' In documents, they write: *zkn udrikt* (*zukkint wa-udrikt*), 'I have taken upon myself full responsibility' (Goitein, "Documents from San'a," 200 [Goitein, *Yemenites*, 159], line 15 of the document published there, dated 1678). Cf. also Goitein-Ḥabshush, *Travels in Yemen*, 45, 46, 112, 123. [Cf. Piamenta, *Dictionary*, 202–3, where this meaning should be added for the second form.]

⁷ A common way of expressing consent in Yemenite speech.

⁸ It is doubtful whether this person was Jewish. I have never heard the name Qays used by Yemenite Jews, nor is it common today in Yemen among Muslims. It was mentioned to me as a family name among Muslims.

⁹ Arabic *ḥad*, most probably pronounced *ḥirid*, as today.

¹⁰ {Ben Yijū.}

¹¹ Arabic *āla*. This is in Yemen the legal term for everything movable in a house. If a newly-wed woman quarrels with her mother-in-law and the judge decides that the husband has to leave his father's house and provide his wife with a house of his own, the formula used is: *an tuḥaddir bayt wa-āla*, 'you have to provide a house with its furnishings.'

¹² Obviously, Qays.

¹³ {Arabic *fa-lā ya'khudh bi-kalāmih*.

¹⁴ For *ma'a mā* here, see 484, n. 29.

¹⁵ Ben Yijū's son Abū Surūr.}

III, 34–35 *Fragments of Three Responsa Written by Abraham Ben Yijū*

Probably Yemen, ca. 1151

III, 34. TS 10 J 9, f. 24

III, 35. TS 10 J 32, f. 6

For the description of III, 34, see III, 3, the verso and margin on recto of which were used by Ben Yijū for writing these opinions. {No. III, 35 is a direct continuation. Goitein noted the connection in his letter to me of Jan. 29, 1979.}

The many additions written between the lines (e.g., lines 1, 5, 7, 8, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, etc.), deletions and corrections (e.g., lines 5, 16, 21, 23) prove that these were legal opinions given by Ben Yijū himself, not responsa by others copied by him. This is further to be recognized by the very state of the manuscript. The beginning of the first responsum and the end of the second had been written on other sheets; of the third, only a passage from its midsection was written in the free space on the recto of the letter (III, 3). Thus, there can be no doubt that we have here actual drafts of opinions.

The names mentioned, such as Salīm (line 17) and Sa'īd (lines 4 and 14) and above all the personal name Fayyūmī¹ (line 24 and 32), point to Yemen as the country, in which these opinions were given. In Cairo or Tunisia, then great centers of Jewish learning, Ben Yijū would neither have been approached nor would have considered himself entitled to act as a legal expert. Of course, the responsa could have been written in India. This would require assuming that a rather sizable community of Yemenite Jews was settled then in that country and had been there for a considerable time (in case I, three generations are mentioned as well as the gift of a house). However, since the currency referred to is the dinar, and not Indian money, it is almost certain that we are here in Yemen. As we know from Maimonides' famous *Epistle to Yemen*, the Jews were then—as up to the exodus of 1949/50—dispersed in tiny communities all over the country.² These country Jews represent a curious mixture of learning and ignorance. Thus, in case II here, reference is made to a legal document, properly drawn up, but witnessed by a father and his son, which, according to a most elementary rule of Jewish

¹ [See the note to II, 24v, line 2 (349, n. 78).]

² Cf. Friedman, *Yemenite Messiah*, 85, n. 3.}