28. RYLANDS GENIZAH COLLECTION
A 803 (1825)

Esther-Miriam Wagner and Mohamed Ahmed

Transcription

1. בין'ה

2. ביום א ה' סיוון יז ליתר

3. והא של פ' יבון נון יאיר אבר

4. והשת ימז נא שלמים ועליכם יברוךfbeו אתמול וברך עליכם

5. עלהל גווריה הביא פ' בשנות אל פספ פי ישית' 베א יתוע עלינה

6. קאנויל לכא

7. פי פ' לוא ויב נערכות באן סביר תי חתנון柠檬ו ליכים וחברים באית

8. אלפוחנה בונה 살

9. עללוס קלנולו של סטרים יושפ ולאڻהזואים סאל עליכם כיון גרף זה

10. וקלנה לה לא תמتعا אלו

11. נאיך ייני פ' כירה וברנאווכם סאל ועליכם גדולהו ולה המ השכון אל חמק

12. לעלנה קונ פ' שערון

13. ואתה תבנה כל ונ реакци וברנאווכם ספלו ועליכם גדולו ולה המ השכון אל חמק

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https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0208.34
Arabic Transcription

1. bağ'ah
2. بَوِيمَ ٢٠ لَيْلَّا، عَشَرَتِينَ ٨٠ لَيْلٍّ إِلَيَّ
3. آل السِّبْنَة، يَجَعَلُ يَعْبُرُنَا، يَا أَيُّ يَبْرِهِمُ النَّبِيُّ
4. ﴿هَكَذَا، مَنْ بَعْدَ مَرْيَمَ عَلِيْكُم مُّعْرِفَكُمْ بِأَيْنَ أَحْتَمَلُ جَهَّ لَضْفَنَهُ السِّيِّمُ.﴾
5. عَلَهُ الرَّحْمَةَ بِنِعْمَةِ بُنِّيَتِهِ الْمُفَارِقَةِ فِي بَعْضِ ١٠ شَهَّٰٰذٌ إِبِّيَنَ صَعُوْبَاتِ عَلَيْهِ
6. قَامَ لِأَلِينَ
7. كَانَ رَاجِئُ تَطْرُسَا كَرِيْشَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حَكَوَّا الْنَّاسُ وَلَا كَانَ مَعْهُ مَلِكَ بِحَيَّةٍ إِلاَّ شَيْٰٰٓٓ
8. يَصُرِّبُكُمْ رَبُّكَ
9. فِي كَيْفِ وَفَالْدَوْدُ وَعَدَ عِنْفَكُمْ بِأَيْنَ سَابِقَ تَّا كَتَبَهُ لِيكُمْ وَخَيْرَتُكُمْ إِبَّٰنَ الخَواجَةِ
10. يُوجِّهِنَا سَلَّ
11. عَلِيْكُمْ وَقُولُنَّهُمْ لَسَافِرٍ يَشُوفُ وَوَالْدَوْدُ وَهَذَا سَلَّ عِنْفَكُمْ إِبَّٰنَ كَانَ جَيَّتَ وَلَهُ
12. فِي شَارِيفِ
13. كَانَ جَيْحِي فِي خَيْرِهِ وَخَيْرَتُكُمْ نُحَذْرُ جَمِعُهُ لَهُ مَا تَجهِبُوُّهُ الْحَقَّ عَلَيْهِ يَكُونُ
14. عِيمَمِيكُمْ ﴿بَلَّأَ، جَوَابٌ إِلَى مَكْتُوبٍ تُكوُّنَ أوِيُّوُتُو، ثَبْثًا كَمَا قُولُوُّكَ لِلْ
15. وَوَكِيلٍ
16. وَلَيْلٍ مَبَاشِرٍ وَلَمْ عَنْدَيْهِ مَنْ نَطُولُ عَلِيْكُمْ إِلَّا بَالْ خَيْرِ وَشَلاَةٍ وَحَقٍّ
17. تَوْسِعَ سَبَأَة
18. ﴿سُبْحَانَ، صُحُبٍ، شَهِيَّةٍ، وَلَّا خِلْفَٰٓٓ.

Translation

(1) With the help of God. (2) On the 28th of Sivan of the Year 5585 of Creation (= 1825 CE). (3) (To) our beloved, the master Jacob Yabets—may God protect and preserve him—enlightened by God. (4) After inquiring about his health, and after (extending) many greetings to you, we let you know that yesterday, Mr

1 In order to reflect the Hebrew spelling באים, we decided to use the sign here.
Joseph Ayllon came to our area, and he informed us (5) about the punishment of your brother, dead because of (our) sins. God—may his name be blessed—knows that (this) was difficult to bear for us, because (6) he was a pious and saintly man, as all people depicted him. Yet, there is nothing we can do. May God—his name be blessed—give you patience. It is for you (7) and his children to fill his place. Then we also inform you that previously we wrote to you and informed you that Mr Bogush asked (8) about you and we told him that you are travelling to see your children. Yesterday he asked about you, whether you came (back) or not. We said to him: Next (9) Friday he will come in good health. We tell you just as anyone other than us would tell you on our behalf. Do not blame it on us. You should know (10) this. With the help of God, (there will be an) answer to (this) letter. You should come to our area in accordance with what you told the agent (11) and the supervisor. I have nothing to add except the best of greetings. The young man (12) Nissim Sabbāḥ, (13) a good Sefardi.

**Commentary**

The code-switching between Hebrew and Arabic in this letter differs markedly from what can be observed in medieval letters. In fact, code-switching involving temporal adverbs, such as 'etmol

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2 For the Ladino spelling of the name, see https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%9E%D7%94 %D7%90%D7%90 %D7%99%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9F.

3 A common Egyptian condolence, see Badawi and Hinds (1986, 68).

4 Literally ‘This should be to your honourable knowledge’.
'yesterday', is not normally found in medieval Judaeo-Arabic letters, but is a much more common occurrence in Yiddish and Ladino letters. Medieval mercantile letters in particular avoid code-switching, whereas early modern traders frequently switch into Hebrew. Similarly, words such as nifṭar ‘deceased’ are not normally used in Classical Judaeo-Arabic code-switches, whereas they are commonly used loanwords in Yiddish. It could be argued that the change in style as well as frequency of mercantile code-switching observed between medieval Judaeo-Arabic and Early Modern Judaeo Arabic, in particular in the letter at hand, was influenced by language patterns from Yiddish and Ladino through traders from Europe and Asia Minor.

Line 1
בע''ה = בּעֶרֶת הָשֶׁם 'With the help of God'.

Line 2
לח = לַחֹדֶשׁ 'in the month'.

Line 3
אה = אַהוּבָנָה 'our beloved'.

_lineno = נַחֲרָה רַחְמֶנָה פֶּרֶקה = נָר''י 'may God protect and preserve him'.

Line 4
אחדש''יו = אַחֲרֵי דְרִישָׁת שֶׁלומָה 'After inquiring about your (lit. his) health'.

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6 See Wagner and Connolly (2017).
רונ. Classical Judaeo-Arabic גא, Classical Arabic جاء ‘he came’.

Line 5
‘difficult to bear’. The vocalisation here may reflect what Rosenbaum (2002, 37) describes as preference for u over Standard dialect i in Modern Jewish Egyptian Arabic, which would indicate the speaker’s Jewish heritage and minority status for any listener.

Line 6
The pointing of this letter and the other letters below is somewhat random. Some of those going back to Classical Arabic ג have dots beneath, as here; others do not, for example ירי ‘he will come’ in line 9. Yet, also Classical Arabic ג may receive the dot, as in ‘other than us’, also in line 9. The same irregularity can be found in various letters, e.g., the pointing of כ to distinguish between [k] and [b], on the one hand, and [k] and [ḵ], on the other.

חסידא קדישא. The use of this Aramaic form again is somewhat unusual for Judaeo-Arabic letters. Yet it is commonly used in Yiddish, as mentioned by Khan (2006, 358).

Line 7
‘تاريخه = תאריך; its (the letter’s) time, i.e., today’.

Line 8
The dialectal term walla + lā ‘or not’.

The double spelling of  here, as well as the double spelling of י in ‘he will come’ in line 9, are not consistent throughout the letter and may show a preference of double spelling if ي is followed by short [u] if and ي is followed by [i].