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Introduction and 3 letters for "messengers to themselves" (שלוחים לעצמם)

The Jerusalem community was never well-off. It has gone through worse and less bad times, but the majority of its Jewish residents, most of them new immigrants, have always lived very modestly. In the last quarter of the 16th century, the economic situation in the Ottoman Empire worsened. The community's debts to the authorities and private creditors multiplied, and the legal struggle for possession of the synagogue, known as 'the Ramban synagogue', in which a great deal of money was invested, ended in failure and its final closure at the end of the century.¹ The number of Jews in Jerusalem by that time was reduced to about a thousand souls. According to the poet Rabbi Israel Najara, about a quarter of them, 230 souls, were poor.²

At the beginning of the 17th century there was a certain recovery which was partly due to the decline and abandonment of Safed. New immigrants arrived in the city, including well-known rabbis who preferred Jerusalem to the sinking Safed. The community expanded, and in the twenties of the 17th century numbered about 2500 souls.

But the hopes for prosperity and blossoming were dashed within a few years. The reign of a cruel governor, Muhammad ibn Farokh (1621, 1624-5), was disastrous for the city's residents in general and the Jews in particular. Faced with unprecedented extortion, corporal punishment and threats of deportation, the Jerusalem community became a broken and debt-ridden community. The number of the Jewish citizens was reduced to about 1000 souls.³

The financial crisis and its ramifications continued to oppress the community for decades, yet Jerusalem never ceased to be a focus for Aliya. The place of the deceased and deserting fugitives was filled by new immigrants. But the heavy debts continued to oppress everyone, old citizens and new-comers alike. The majority of the public was poor and a large part was supported by donations from the diaspora or funds which did not always arrive on time and in the desired

¹ This is a traumatic event for the Jerusalem community. For summaries and additional references see A. Cohen, *The Jewish Community of Jerusalem in the 16th Century*, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 85-93 (Hebrew); A. Cohen and E. Simon-Pikali, *Jews in the Moslem Religious Court (16th Century)*, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 70-88 (Hebrew); idem, *Jews in the Moslem Religious court (17th Century)*, vol. I, Jerusalem 2010, pp. 142-144 (Hebrew); M. Rozen, *The Jewish Community of Jerusalem in the 17th Century*, Tel Aviv 1984, pp. 32-33 (Hebrew).

² ישראל נג'ארה, מימי ישראל, ויניציאה שס"ה, קסב ע"ב. Ottoman pole 1553/5 - 325 households.

³ Rozen, *The Jewish Community*, pp. 3-20. On Ibn Farokh period and its consequences see pp. 36-50; *The Ruins of Jerusalem* (first published in 1631), edited and annotated by M. Rozen, Tel Aviv 1981 (Hebrew). Ottoman pole 1625/6 - 200 households.

amount. Yeshiva students received a meager stipend for their living, but the poor who were not Torah scholars – not תלמידי חכמים - and did not belong to any group, had no regular sources of income. The immigrants who came to Eretz Israel, a major part of them in old age, encountered, therefore, a bleak reality.

One of the solutions of the Jews in Jerusalem (and other Jewish centers in Eretz Israel) was to send emissaries to the *Gola*, to every Jewish center in the world. Those emissaries were known by the acronym “*shadar*” (in plural: *shadarim*), which means messengers of the rabbis – שלוחי דרבנן (rabbinic emissaries)

The emissaries were sent to Jewish communities in the Diaspora to solicit funds for institutions, congregations, Torah centers and schools (*yeshivot*). They left Eretz Israel equipped with letters of appointment, which described the sorry plight of the city or institution on whose behalf they were acting - the burden of debts and the bullying of the local governors. Sometimes they provided ideological reasons for why the Jews of the diaspora should support their brothers in the Holy Land.⁴

The letters of mission (כתבי שליחות) presented the emissaries to the leaders and rabbis of the Jewish centers they reached, and begged them to welcome them with open arms, host them and donate kindly to the institutions they represented. Many of the emissaries were scholars who not only brought with them news from the Holy Land but also preached in public and arbitrated in disputes on Jewish law. After a trip lasting sometimes several years, they returned to their home city with the funds they had managed to raise from the various Jewish communities. Avraham Yaari wrote a comprehensive book about the institution of the emissaries, the nature of the messengers, the importance of their mission, the directions of the mission, the methods of collecting funds, and more.⁵ Matthias Lehmann’s book, *Emissaries from the Holy Land*, gives a historical overview of the institution of *shadarim* and links its beginning with the Ottoman occupation of Eretz Israel (1517). He actually describes the phenomenon as “**very much a**

⁴ Emissaries came up with innovative arguments about why the poor Jews in Palestine were, in fact, *more* worthy of charity than the “poor of your city”—whom Maimonides designated as taking “precedence over the poor of another city” (Matthias B. Lehmann, *Emissaries from the Holy Land: The Sephardic Diaspora and the Practice of Pan-Judaism in the Eighteenth Century*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2014, p. 160). See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Matnot Aniyyim*, 3.

⁵ A. Yaari, *Emissaries from the Land of Israel*, Jerusalem 1977 (Hebrew). Yaari estimated that the *shadars* trips usually last three to four years and that ten percent of them died during their mission.

product of the early modern period”.⁶ But Lehmann refers mainly to the 18th and 19th centuries.

A wide range of sources exists on the itinerary and activities of the emissaries. Among these sources are the letters of appointment and recommendation the emissaries were provided with before their departure.

Hundreds of such letters were sent from Jerusalem to the diaspora and, in particular, the flow increased during - and following - the disastrous reign of Ibn Farukh in the 1620s.

Most of the mission letters published in the past by Abraham Yaari and other scholars were general letters, which refer to the plight of the many - and not the plight of the individual. But alongside the letters describing the troubles of the community or its institutions as a whole, letters were also written describing the desperate situation of private individuals, who had to go on the road themselves in order to collect alms for their personal purposes. These individuals, who also carried with them letters signed by the community's leaders, were called "messengers to themselves" (שלוחים לעצמם).

In Yaari's monumental book, containing about 900 pages, only two pages were dedicated to the phenomenon of messengers to themselves!

This is the subject I would like to focus on: letters written by the community of Jerusalem for private individuals and for private purposes.

The three letters I chose as examples are found in a handwritten collection prepared by a Jerusalem community scribe in the first half of the 17th century.⁷ This is a sample collection (אגרון), in which the author copied letters that had already been sent, so that he can use their formulas in the future. In this case the scribe copied about two hundred letters of mission for emissaries, among them about twenty letters for individuals, and except for a few cases made sure to omit identifying details.

⁶ Lehmann, Emissaries, p. 15.

⁷ Jerusalem, National Library, MS. 8*61 כ"י אגרות שד"רים מירושלים (Letters of Emissaries).

The manuscript was previously described and mentioned in the research. See its description in Rozen, Rozen, *The Jewish Community of Jerusalem*, pp. 299-315. Treasures of information about Jewish personalities and communities in Syria, Eretz Israel and Egypt still remain in this manuscript. Among it 93 private letters written and copied by Rabbi Yosef Mataron (a student of Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh of Safed), from the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th, which were not thoroughly searched until now.

Minna Rozen published 83 letters of mission out of this manuscript, but most of the letters she published and referred to speak of the troubles of the public.

The three letters I present here were not included in Rozen's book, and to the best of my knowledge were not published anywhere else.

In contrast to the general letters whose wording often repeats itself, this is not the case in the private letters of mission, where no one case is similar to another. Each person and his own trouble. What made these people go out and collect alms?

There were several reasons why people wandered the roads to collect money for their own benefit:

A few letters were written for people described as destitute poor, who had no income and had to borrow money and go into debt to feed their families.

Several letters were intended to come to the aid of people who were robbed or taken captive on their way to the Land of Israel, as a result of the maritime piracy that prevailed in the Mediterranean basin during this period.

A group of letters in the manuscript received the title "A Daughter's Trouble" (צרת הבת). It turns out that the birth of a daughter was not considered a blessing to her parents, and from her childhood they began to worry about preparing a dowry for her so that she would be married when the time came. An unmarried daughter became a burden on her family. Fathers of daughters whose condition would not allow them to provide a proper dowry for their daughters had to wander on the roads to raise funds for this purpose.

Another issue that preoccupied Jerusalem's leaders was the situation of abandoned women, whose husbands left the city and left them without sources of income to become a burden on the public.

Why did the leaders bother to write letters of recommendation to private individuals while they are so preoccupied with vexing general problems? There is no doubt that behind the heartbreaking descriptions of people who lost their property, or captured by pirates, of poor fathers and abandoned women, there is also the fear of the leaders that these will fall a burden on the public.

The community institutions in Jerusalem, which were designed to support the poor, the elderly, the sick and the lonely - were themselves poor and dependent on occasional donations. The Jerusalem community was mostly poor, the many financial demands of the Muslim governors

did not allow it to stand on its own feet. Most of the donations that came from outside the country did not go to individuals but were intended to pay the community's debts to Gentile creditors. That's why the leaders tried in every way to reduce the number of the poor and free themselves from personal obligation, and they had a clear interest that those individuals would succeed in their mission. Therefore, it should not be surprising that those in need were equipped with heartbreaking letters of recommendation, and in fact they were encouraged to go on the road and try to raise funds on their own.

In conclusion: the collection of letters from Jerusalem shows an extensive network of connections that existed between the Land of Israel and communities and individuals in the Diaspora not only in public affairs and financial contributions to the general, but also in various private matters. Quite a number of messengers to themselves left Jerusalem with letters of recommendation and support, signed by public figures and rabbis.

Here are three examples of such letters, sent by the community for private individuals.⁸

I.

Source 1: Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, Ktiv Project, Ms. Heb. 8°61, system no. 990000434660205171, Correspondence from Jerusalem in the 17th Century, letter no. 178, fol. 209-210 (digitized fol. 109-110).

The preamble to this letter is particularly long and consists of fragments of biblical verses. It is an example of the style of addressing distinguished people. It is intended for certain benefactors - possibly from a family of Cohens - and praises them with an abundance of eloquent phrases. It continues with a general description of the dire situation in Jerusalem, and then describes the hardships of immigrants seeking to live in the Land of Israel.

Only then the fate of the poor bearer of the letter is described. It is about a man named David, who lost all his possessions on the way and after arriving in Jerusalem.

⁸ In the original Hebrew there are entire sections that are written in rhyme, the majority is based on biblical verses, but it was impossible to translate them accurately, and I tried to translate as close as possible to the original. All punctuation, spaces and division were done by me.

מליצה [=המלצה] לאיש עני

חמדת עדת אבירים המה הגבורים אשר מעולם, אנשי השם, צדק לבשו וילבשם, כשם הגדולים המגדילים צדקות ועוז ומעוז ישועות בקנה א' [חד] עולות, רודפי צדק מחזיקי כל בדק, עם ה' נביאים ששים ושמחים לעשות רצון קוניהם, יום מריקים שקיהם, לא ייעפו לא ייגעו, דמים בדמים נגעו, השרידים אשר ה' קורא ומורה לצדקה להשביע נפש שוקקה, לא נפלאה מהם ולא רחוקה, רחמנים בני רחמנים גומלי חסדים בני גומלי חסדים, הנה הנם מקהלות תהלות ישראל די בכל עיר ועיר מדינה ומדינה, מקום אשר דבר המלך מלכו של עולם ודתו [=במשמעות חוקיו] מגיע, ועל ראשיהם מלמעלה עטרת תפארת לעמוסי בטן, ה"ה [הלא הם] החכמי' [ם] השלמים הרבנים המצויינים על גרם המעלות להעלות נר מצוה ותורה, ואחריהם כל ישרי לב נדיבי עמים עם אלד' אברהם, ראשיהם זקניהם ומנהיגיהם וכל העוסקים עם הצבור בשלום יחדו, ה' עליהם יחיו ארך ימים עולם ועד ויתענגו על רוב שלום אנס"ו [אמן נצח סלה ועד].

מאחר עלות כל תפלה כל תחנה לפני שוכן מעונה בעד שלותכם וטובתכם אותותינו אלה בלכתם ילכו הלוך ובכה על כל התלאה אשר מצא ורבעה בעיר האלד'ים מחמת מלך ושרים זרים אוכלים אותנו בכל פה, אין רגע בלי נגע ותקצר נפשו בעמל ישראל, בני מלכים הבאים מקצוי ארץ באנת נפשם לשכון כבוד בארצנו, היא היתה אם כל חי, לשמור את דרך עץ החיים. ויהי הם מריקים שקיהם עד הגיעם למחוז חפצם והנה תנור עשן ולפיד אש בוער בקרבם על כי יצאו נקיים מנכסיהם ואין לאל ידם להביא טרף לביתם והמה בוכים ותוהים על אשר כבר עשוהו, כאשר קרה לעני הלזה, כואב ורזה, כה"ר דוד וכ', מוביל כתבא דנא. שליו היה בביתו ורענן בהיכלו ונפשו אותה לחזות בנעם ה' ולבקר בהיכלו, ובתוך ימים מועטים נשאר קרח מכל אשר לו, כי רחיים על צוארו, ונוסף יגון על יגונותיו צרת הבנות בנותיו, תחת שלש רגזה הארץ [מחוק בקו במקור] נפשו, כי בגרו הגיעו לפרקן וביתו ריקן אין לחם ואין שמלה ובקול יללה בוכה למספחותיו כי רבות אנחותיו. אשר ע"כ [על כן] עגמה נפשנו לאביון כי כפי הנשמע היה מן הנותנים ולא מן המקבלים, ועתה ה[ת]הפך עליו בלהות הזמן בלתי נאמן והוכרח לצאת ממחיצתו לדפוק על דלתי שערי בריחי ברוכי ה' יטילו מלאם לכיסו לחבוש נגעי מכותיו ואת בקיעי בית דוד כי רבו.

לכן אתאנו לחלות פני מעכ"ת [מעלת כבוד תורתכם] חזקו ידיים רפות וברכים כושלות אמצו כי עת לעשות לה' [...] כ"ש [כל שכן] לאיש עני כזה אשר מסוה הבושה מרחפת על פניו ואין מלה בלשונו לשאול ולדרוש כי לא נסה באלה. ע"כ אמרנו פתח פיך לאלם ובאנו בשתי שורות אלו להליץ עליו לפני מעכ"ת ככל צדקותיכם [...] ומעתה אליכם הכהנים המצוה הזאת לסמכו ולשמחו שבע שמחות בכסף מלא [...] למען ישוב בהר ה' יראה להשגיח על בני ביתו כי כלם עיניהם תלויות אחר השגחתו ית' [יתברך] ובשכר הנה אלדינו זה עומד אחר כתלנו משגיח להניח ברכה באסמיכם, ישלח עזרכם מקדש ומציון יסעד אתכם, ועיניכם תראינה ירושלם נוה שאנן וארמון על משפטו כנפשכם, וכ'.

A Reference for a Poor Man

[To] the cherished group of nobles, heroes of old, men of renown who clothe themselves with righteousness, whose name is great, who seamlessly combine giving large amounts of charity with providing strength, a fortress of salvation.]You[pursue righteousness, supporting every good cause – people of God, prophets who rejoice at doing what the Creator desires, emptying out your sacks daily, neither tiring nor becoming weary. One act of giving follows another towards the survivors about whom the Lord calls, instructing you to be charitable, to satisfy the longing soul. It is not too difficult for you, and it is not beyond your reach - merciful people from a long line of merciful people, kind people from a long line of kind people. Behold, you are of the groups praising God in every city and country, in the places where the edicts of the king – the King of the world – and his laws reach. On your heads is a crown of glory, for those whom God has carried since birth. Behold, you are the perfect sages, the distinguished rabbis – the very best at lighting the lamp of mitzva and Torah – followed by all the upright in heart, the generous ones of the people, the nation of the God of Abraham, their leaders, elders, and guides, and all

those who work together peacefully for the public good. May God grant you long lives forever, and may you enjoy an abundance of peace. Amen, eternally, selah, forever.

After directing prayers and supplication to the One who dwells on high asking that you live well and peacefully, we are writing to you on behalf of those who are weeping as they walk due to all the hardships that we have been through which were rampant in the city of God on account of a foreign king and his officers who eat us alive. Not a minute goes by without a blow, and we can bear Israel's misery no longer. [And the] honorable people who come from the ends of the earth because they desire to live well in our Land - which is the mother of all life and protects the path to the tree of life - their sacks were emptied before they reached their desired haven. A smoking oven and a flaming torch burned in their midst, for they were stripped of all their goods, unable to bring home food, and they are crying and bewildered about what has happened.

Such is the case with this poor man, suffering and gaunt, the esteemed Rabbi David, who bears this letter. He was living serenely in his home and flourishing in his palace, and all his soul desired was to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to visit His Temple, and in the course of mere days he was stripped of everything he had, [leaving] a millstone around his neck. And his anguish is even greater on account of his daughters: for three things ~~the earth~~ his soul trembles, for they have matured and reached marriageable age, yet his home has nothing. There is no food and there is no clothing, and he weeps and wails for his family [למספחותיו], sighing endlessly.

Therefore, we are full of sorrow for this poor man, because as we have heard he was among the givers and not the takers, but now everything has reversed, due to the unbelievable terrors of the time, and he has been forced to leave his home, and to knock on the doors and gates of those who have been blessed by God. May they transfer some of their bounty to his pocket, to bandage his wounds and repair the breaches of the house of David, which are many.

Therefore, we have come to beseech your honors to strengthen the feeble hands and steady the buckling knees, for it is a time for you to act for God, [. . .] especially for this poor man, who has a mask of embarrassment hovering over his face, and he lacks the words to beg, as he has no experience with this. Therefore we said: Let us speak up for those who are mute, and we have come in these two lines to vouch for him before your honors with all your charity [...]. Now it is your mitzva, you priests [Cohens?], to support him and bring him joy, to fill him with maximum happiness with valuable money. [. . .] So that he can return, appearing on the mountain of God, to take care of the members of his household, all of whom are directing their eyes toward His providence (may He be blessed). As a reward for this, behold, our God stands watching behind our wall to bring blessing to your storehouses. May He send you help from the holy place and grant you support from Zion. May your eyes see Jerusalem [restored as] a peaceful abode, and the palace standing in its proper place.

II.

Source 2: Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, Ktiv Project, Ms. Heb. 8°61, system no. 990000434660205171, Correspondence from Jerusalem in the 17th Century, letter no.72, fol. 114 (digitized fol. 60).

This is a plea written on behalf of a mother to the head of a certain family, whose generosity and support for the poor of Jerusalem was apparently known. It was published by me, without references, in the "Culture and Literature" supplement of the *Haaretz* newspaper on October 23rd, 2009.

לחלות פני איש על שבוי שנשבה ולא נודע מקומו

נחל נובע יודע דעת עליון מקור החכמה [--- ---] איש אלדים קדוש יאמר לו העומד לנס עמ[ים] אליו יבאו מאפסי ארץ להגיד להם את חקי האלדים ואת תורותיו, כי מימיו מן המקדש הם יוצאים, מי התורה והמצוה, והמצוה להשקות העם [--- ---] ה"ה [הלא הוא] החכם השלם בכל שלמות כה"ר [כבוד הרב] גר"ו [נטריה רחמנא ופרקיה] יהי שמו לעולם גם עד זקנה ושיבה בשובה ונחת ישב עולם לפני אלדים כסאו לעד יכון כירח יכון עולם הוא ובניו בקרב ישראלמעתה ועד עולם חיים עד עולם אנס"ו [אמן נצח סלה ועד].

הן זאת לשמיע [להשמיע] במרום קדשם כי באה לפנינו הזקנה פ' [לונית] אם פ' [לונני] ודמעתה על לחיה כמים נגרים במורד, בוכה ומבכה אחרים עמה על תשוקת ראות פני בנה פ', כי זה כמה שנים שהלך לו למקום פ' ושוב לא נודע לה מקומו איה, אם מ"ת אם ח"י, ונפשה מרה לה כי אין מגיד לה אנה פניו מועדות. וכעת הגד הוגד לה מפי פ' שהוא עצור וכלוא בשבי ביד איש יהודי על סך מה, ונתחייב לשרתו בחנם עד שיפרע לו הסך הנז' [כר]. לכן בבועו במטו מנייכו אפרכי מלכי ונסיכי להוציא ממסגר אסיר, שיעמדו לימין משה, שיצילו אותו, ואל יתנו דומי עד שישלחו ל[ב] חור הנז' לפדותו משם ולהעלות חש בז לנחם לב אמו הזקנה, כי שחה לעפר נפשה וכל ימיה במכאובים על פרידתו, כי נפשה קשורה בנפשו, וצדקה תחשב להם, כי מחיים את נפשה בתוככי ירושלים.

A plea in the matter of a captive who is imprisoned we know not where.

[To the one who is] a flowing spring, who knows the will of the Highest, a fountain of wisdom, [- - - - -] a man of God who is called holy, who is an exemplar for the nations. People come to him from the ends of the earth so that he can inform them about the laws of God and His teachings, because his waters flow from the Temple, the waters of Torah and mitzva, which it is a mitzva to provide to the nation [- - - - -]. I speak of the wise man, entirely perfect, the esteemed rabbi, may God save and keep him, may his name live forever, [and may he live] to a ripe old age. May he forever dwell in stillness and quiet before God. May his throne be established forever as the moon is established forever, he and his sons in the midst of the people of Israel, now and forever, with eternal life. Amen, eternally, selah, and forever .

This is to call your eminence's attention to the plight of the elderly woman so-and-so, mother of so-and-so. She came before us, her cheeks wet with tears, like water cascading down a slope. She cries and causes others to cry with her, due to her desire to see her son so-and-so. A number of years ago, he set out somewhere, and she did not know where he was and whether he was alive or dead. Her soul was embittered as no one could even tell her where he was headed. Recently, she was told by someone that her son has been detained and imprisoned by a Jew to whom he owed a certain amount and had to serve him for free until he repays the debt. Therefore, we implore you, dignitaries, kings, and princes, to rescue a prisoner from confinement, to stand at the right hand of Moshe and save him. Do not rest until you have sent this young man [money] to redeem him from there and raise him up post haste. This will comfort his elderly mother whose soul lies prostrate in the dust and is in constant pain due to their separation, for her soul is bound

up with his soul. This will be credited to you as righteousness, for you will revive her soul in the midst of Jerusalem.

III.

Source 3: Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, Ktiv Project, Ms. Heb. 8°61, system no. 990000434660205171, Correspondence from Jerusalem in the 17th Century, letter no. 165, fol. 196 (digitized fol. 103).

A letter for a poor person emphasizing that the community cannot afford the expenses of helping all the poor people.

אליכם ק"ק יצ"ו שלום. ראה ראינו את עוני האיש הזה ההולך לקראתכם ואת רעבון ביתו וקוצר ידו, וכי אפס כחו כפיריו רשו ורעבו וילדיו אל אל ישועו, יתעו לבלי אוכל ושמלה ואין כסות בקרה, ונוסף עליו כי רבו הנוגשים והנושים, אצים רצים לוחצים אותו, מחפשים אחריו בחורים ובסדקים מדי יום ביומו לתת בכבל רגלו ולהעציבו כשימון. והיה כי צעק אלינו ושמענו ועשינו אליו כפי כחינו וכיד ה' הטובה עלינו, אך כי לא נוכל למלאת את כל חפצו ולהפיק את שאלתו די מחסורו אשר יחסר לו, כי קצר המצע מהשתרע ואין הקומץ משביע את הארי ואין הבור מתמלא מחולייתו. ובראותו דביש ליה בהאי מתא [=וכשראה שאין לו מזל בעיר הזאת] ולא יכול לו, נתן אל לבו לשנות את מקומו ללכת אנה ואנה, נע ונד בארץ, אולי ירצה ה' לו. על כן אמרנו: נגלה אזנכם בהדא נשתונא דאנן שלחין קדמכון [באגרת זו שאנו שולחים לכם] והיה בבואו אצל מחנה קדושתכם ופקדתם אותו מן הטוב אשר ייטיב ה' אליכם והטבתם עמו ותפיקו חפצו להריק עליו ברכה עד בלי די ופתוח תפתחו לו את ידכם הרחבה והענק תעניקוהו די כחכם וזרועכם הנטויה לקבץ נדחים, ועניים מרודים תביא בית, כי אחינו בשרנו הוא [וממ]נו אל תתעלמו. ואתם תשבו בטח תתענגו על רוב שלום בצדקה תכוננו ומן השמים תבורכו.

To you, the holy community, may God watch over you, shalom. We have seen the poverty of this man who will be visiting you, the hunger in his home, and his helplessness, and that his strength has given out. His young lions lack and go hungry, his children cry out to God, wandering without food or clothing, and without protection against the cold. Additionally, there are many creditors hounding him for money, chasing after him and pressuring him, searching for him on a daily basis in every nook and cranny, looking to shackle him and cause him grief as in the wilderness. When he called out to us, we paid heed and helped to the best of our ability, in accordance with God's hand that has been good to us. But we are unable to take care of all his needs and meet his requests for whatever he lacks, as the blanket is stretched too thin, and a single handful of food does not satisfy a lion, and a pit will not be filled up by rainwater alone. When he saw that he had no luck in this city and was unable to manage, he decided to change locations, going here and there, a restless wanderer on earth, in hopes of finding favor with God. Therefore, we said: Let us send a letter telling you about him, so that when he arrives in your holy camp, you will bestow upon him some of the goodness God has granted you. Treat him well, give him what he needs, and pour overflowing blessings upon him. Open up your hands

wide for him and give him generously to the best of your ability. Stretch out your arm to gather in wanderers, and to bring the downtrodden poor into your home. For he is our brother, our own flesh and blood, and you must not turn away from him. [If you help him] you will live securely, enjoying an abundance of peace. Through charity you will be established, and by heaven you will be blessed.