

book²² in favor of the aforementioned, and have it certified after (12) deducting the expenses for customs and commissions. And buy me goods for the 100 (13) dinars²³ and send them with whomever you choose, however you deem fit,²⁴ (14) [[for I]], and make an effort that the goods for 100 dinars be (15) either pepper or lac, whatever you regard (as more profitable), and inform about this— (16) I mean, at the time you send them—some of our coreligionists²⁵ and not (17) less than two.²⁶ *And Peace.*

²² {On use of a merchant's account book (*daftar*) as legal evidence (also I, 14, line 5), see the discussion in Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 1:209; Gil, "Merchants," 284 ff. The practice is discussed extensively in Jewish legal literature from the Gaonic period and is already mentioned in M. Shevu'ot 7:1. For additional examples, see I, 39, II, 20, lines 41–42, II, 35, line 24.}

²³ Short for 100 + 11½ + 3 dinars; see fol. 67r, lines 18–20, above.

²⁴ By land or by sea. See I, 14, n. 3.

²⁵ {Arabic *aṣḥābunā*. The word *aṣḥāb* (singular: *ṣāhib*) has a number of meanings, including 'friends.' The Jews who wrote Judeo-Arabic called fellow Jews: *aṣḥābunā*, lit., 'our friends.' Examples in the documents of this book and elsewhere abound. In most cases, it can be stated unequivocally that coreligionists and not other 'friends' were intended. See, e.g., II, 32, lines 42–44, where the writer requests that gold and silver be sent with merchants who are *aṣḥābunā* or with others (Gentiles), known to be reliable; II, 48v, lines 33–35, a wish that God will resurrect a group of *aṣḥābunā* who drowned "together with the pious of Israel." Amir Ashur calls my attention to Bodl. MS. Heb. c. 13 (Cat. 2807, no. 17), fol. 21v, which describes the enacting of a betrothal in the presence of three scholars "and a group of *aṣḥābunā*." I have not found this definition in the dictionaries. However, followers of a certain school (*madhhab*) in Islam are called in Arabic *aṣḥāb* of that school (e.g., Lane, *Dictionary*, 1653, *aṣḥāb al-Shāfi'i*). Accordingly, we conclude that followers of the same school were designated *aṣḥābunā*. Prof. Paul Fenton calls my attention to the fact that Moses Ibn Ezra refers to Rabbanite Jews as *aṣḥābunā* and to Karaite Jews as *khawārij* (Khārijites, members of the sect of dissenters). Similarly, in RNL Firkovich Jud.-Ar. II A 1119 (ed. Fleischer, "Al-Ḥarīzī Supplements," 218), Judah al-Ḥarīzī refers to the Rabbanites as *aṣḥābunā*, in contrast with the Karaites. Rabbanite Jews did, however, refer to Karaites sometimes as *aṣḥābunā*, e.g., TS 13 J 27, f. 5 + TS 13 J 13, f. 13, line 26, ed. Gil, *Palestine*, 2:573. In II, 71v, line 5, the Hebrew equivalent *havērenū* was used; see below, 536, n. 34.}

²⁶ Because of the general insecurity it was customary to provide acquaintances traveling to the destination of one's shipments with details about them in order to inform the addressees. In many Geniza letters travelers render such services. Coreligionists were preferred, since they would anyhow meet the prospective recipients in the common house of worship. {Many of the Jewish traders, whose papers found their way to the Geniza, trusted Gentiles less than Jews; see II, 46, line 3. Suspicion was obviously mutual.}

{I, 13a *Letter from Joseph Lebdi to Ḥasan b. Bundār*

Fustat.1098

JRL B 6028

This small fragment, not part of the original India Book collection, contains on recto part of the beginning of a letter, evidently written by Joseph Lebdi to Ḥasan b. Bundār (the two are named on verso) and concerning the court case between Lebdi and Jekuthiel (named on recto). Ḥasan is requested to confirm Joseph Lebdi's claims concerning various commodities, which are mentioned repeatedly in the documents concerning the suit between him and Jekuthiel. The letter is penned for Lebdi by the court scribe Hillel b. Eli, who seems to have written a summary of the contents on verso. Accordingly, the fragment appears to come from a copy or a draft of the original that was kept in the dossier in Fustat. If I have deciphered correctly the text of line 3, *aṣḥābūnī*, 'they sent with me,' this confirms that Lebdi carried goods with him sent by at least one other merchant besides Jekuthiel.¹

¹ {On Joseph b. Solomon al-Qudsi, for example, see I, 10–11.}