

1099) Egypt found itself in a dire situation, which the always-unruly Beja tribes might have used for making the desert roads between 'Aydhāb and Qūš even less safe than usual.¹¹ During the period of anarchy only a few goods were dispatched from Aden and other places to Egypt. As soon as the situation improved, the imports more than tripled. It is interesting that the shipments of Joseph Lebdi and his partners amounted approximately to one percent of the total arrivals (130 + out of 13,000 bales).¹² Lebdi was not only one of the first to arrive in 'Aydhāb, but left his partners there while traveling to Fustat; see I, 27.¹³

¹¹ See Holt, "Beja."

¹² Or 4.33 percent of the 3,000 bales that comprised the cargo of the first flotilla.

¹³ The writer of the letter knew only of Lebdi, who probably was the leading spirit in the partnership of three involved in this business venture. {According to I, 28a, line 3, I, 28b, line 12, Lebdi seems to have invested twenty-nine thirtieths of the capital}. The murder of Lebdi's partners and traveling companions had either not yet occurred, or the bad news had not yet reached Cairo.

I, 26 *Session of the Rabbinical Court of Fustat: al-Wuḥsha vs. Joseph Lebdi*

Fustat, June 30, 1104

TS 8J 5, f. 5

The manuscript is much effaced. But the handwriting of the scribe (Ḥalfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh) is so excellent and his style so well known that the text is completely legible. On the other hand, the record refers to a previous session, which undoubtedly was preceded by several others. The content of the document can be fully understood only in the context of I, 25 and 27-28.

The colorful story of 'al-Wuḥsha, the Broker' is known from a number of Geniza documents.¹ Here, her attorney sued Lebdi for her share of 300 dinars ('more or less') already realized from the investment by her dead brother Abu Naṣr in a partnership with him worth 800 dinars and for the goods not yet sold. Lebdi argued that the 300 dinars had nothing to do with that partnership. He was, however, prepared to include them, if al-Wuḥsha, on her side, would do the same with "the 22 bales of lac,"² claimed by her representative to represent a separate venture, unconnected with that partnership.³

Besides Isaac b. Samuel, one of the two chief judges in Fustat, and the clerk, the document is signed by Eli ha-Levi b. Nethanel (the brother of Ḥalfon, chap. 4), who was judge in Cairo, wherefore next to no documents signed by him have been preserved in the Geniza (which, we remember, was situated in Fustat).⁴

¹ See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:346-52.

² See I, 27-28.

³ {On I, 26, see further Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:348, where it is explained that al-Wuḥsha was represented by an agent in this suit, not because she was a woman, but because the checking and sale of such large quantities of wares required handling by an expert.}

⁴ For a document signed by him in January 1133 in Cairo see Goitein, "Court Records," 268-71. At the time of the writing of our document his father was still alive. {See concerning him, Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 2:513, no. 16; Gil & Fleischer, *Yehuda ha-Levi* (index).}