

[Signatures]

(27) Judah ha-Kohen b. Joseph ha-Kohen—*may his end be good!—offspring of Yehōsēf Kohen Sedeq—the memory of the righteous is blessed!*³⁰

(28) Zechariah b. Sar Shālōm—*may he rest in Eden!*³¹

(29) ///Halfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh—*may he rest in Eden!!!*

³⁰ This is Abū Zikrī Kohen, to whom chap. 5 is devoted.

³¹ An India trader; see V, 4, margin, line 2, where he travels home in the Kārim flotilla, and VI, 39, lines 19–20, where he is on his way from 'Aydhāb to Fustat; see also the fragmentary VI, 22, line 2. He drowned on a voyage between Aden and India, III, 15, lines 22–25. His father Sar Shālōm Ibn al-Shāmī writes from Aden to Fustat, II, 1, lines 6–7 [see 285, n. 7 on Shāmī], margin, line 6. The full name of this signatory: Zechariah (Arabic [Abū] Zikrī [Yahyā]) b. Sar Shālōm Ibn al-Shāmī. {Abū Zikrī b. al-Shāmī is identified in III, 28a, lines 14, 18, as a *nākhudā*, traveling from Aden to India. For the Kārim flotilla, see 483, n. 28.}

I, 34a *Betrothal between Sitt al-Ahl d. Joseph Lebdi and Her Cousin*

Fustat, November 1118

TS NS 184, fs. 58, 62, 50, 71, 70, 74, 72, 98 (in this order)¹

A lengthy court record in Halfon ha-Levi b. Manasseh's hand, of which thus far eight fragments have been identified.

Joseph Lebdi had taken his sister and her son, Abraham b. Isaac, into his house, where the latter, while visiting his mother, had frequent opportunity to see his cousin Sitt al-Ahl ('Mistress of the family'). After both Joseph and his sister had died, such visits were no longer good etiquette, but Abraham wished "to remain connected with the house of his uncle."² He and two friends, with a notable as spokesman, came to see Joseph's widow and proposed to her daughter Sitt al-Ahl. The widow {Jamī' '[Mistress of] All,' line 11} was reluctant and wished to wait until her son (Abu 'l-Barakāt) would return from a protracted voyage. But the notable was insistent. After having gone so far as to propose, he could not leave without having achieved something; a betrothal should be arranged, while the wedding would take place after Barakāt's return. At this impasse, the mother {agreed, and it was then} suggested that they take up the matter with the girl herself. After {presumably} having heard many laudatory words, Sitt al-Ahl agreed. Abraham, in the presence of his friends and Sitt al-Ahl's mother {and another (young) brother of Sitt al-Ahl (line 22)}, produced two rings of gold and one of silver, as well as five dinars. She accepted the gift and declared: 'I betroth myself to him.'³ Fourteen months then passed before our document was written. Abraham's friends testify in court that Sitt al-Ahl had accepted his gifts

¹ {See on this document Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:31 (no. 11), 73–74, 434, n. 80, 442, no. 20; 4:268, 449, n. 35. I have repositioned some of the fragments, and contrary to what is written there, the document, except for a few words and the signatures, is complete. Subsequently, a few minor adjustments have been made in the following description. Shvitiel and Niessen, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 182, lists TS NS 184, f. 78, as an additional fragment of this contract. That item, however, is a fragment of another document, written by the same scribe, Halfon ha-Levi b. Menasseh, and has no connection to this one.

² While Abraham is quoted as having wanted 'to be with them' (line 10), he first said (lines 9–10): 'I desire to be joined with (*ittiṣāl bi-*, often used for marriage) the daughter of my maternal uncle.'

³ According to Jewish (unlike Islamic) law a girl who comes of age may marry 'whom she likes.' In reality, of course, matters were different. {The bride's recital of this formula, *qad qaddastuhu nafsi*, is quite exceptional and merits further attention.}

and betrothed herself to him, which meant (as is expressly said) that she was legally married to him.⁴

I leave it to the imagination of the reader to fancy what was behind that court record. Sitt al-Ahl probably knew that Barakāt was not eager to have Abraham as his brother-in-law. She might have had another opinion about the man. The end of the story is revealed in the next document.

The date is in TS NS 184, fs. 98, 72 (line 31 of the court record), which states that the betrothal had taken place in the beginning of Kislev (mid. Nov.) 1118. The document was drawn up Sunday, January 12, 1120.

{The testimony to Sitt al-Ahl's betrothal was probably heard in court after it became known that she did not want to consummate the marriage with her cousin. The court record confirms that her betrothal was legally binding and she had the status of a married woman, that is, she could not be released from the betrothal without a bill of divorce.}

⁴ A girl betrothed could get free only by a formal bill of divorce, which was not always easy to get; see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:69, 73-74, and *passim*.

I, 34b *Another Betrothal, This Time between Sitt al-Ahl and an India Trader*

Fustat, June 10, 1124

TS NS J 460 {+ TS NS J 112 + TS NS 211, f. 8 + TS NS 323, f. 11 + TS 8.138 + TS AS 152, f. 19}

See Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 4:449-50, n. 35, according to which Goitein identified the first fragment on July 2, 1981. For TS 8.138, see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3: 382, no. 25.

Four and a half years passed. Sitt al-Ahl, daughter of Joseph Lebdi, was 'divorced,' i.e., freed from her betrothal to her cousin, Abraham b. Isaac, and betrothed to Abu 'l-Surūr Peraḥyā ha-Levi.¹ She received part of her father's large house,² and her brother promised to give her a house in the al-Fiḍḍī ('Mr. Silverman') Lane in the Castle of the Candles.³

{After I added TS NS 211, f. 8 and (upon the suggestion of Amir Ashur) four additional fragments, the entire original document has been restored. The full name of Sitt al-Ahl's new groom was Abu 'l-Surūr Peraḥyā ha-Levi b. Benjamin. In I, 36 (where his father's name is given as Binyām),⁴ he is mentioned as part owner of the Lebdi house and identified as a perfumer ('*attār*'). Perfumers often were involved in the India trade, and from II, 11a, we learn that he was traveling from Aden to Fustat, probably in connection with that commerce. We thus have an example of the daughter of an India trader marrying another India trader.

Sometime between May 26 and June 4, 1124, the dowry of the couple was publicly displayed and assessed. It was so lavish that Abu 'l-Surūr feared that the bride's family might rescind part of it. He asked the witnesses to stay and insisted that Sitt al-Ahl's young brother, Zayn, declare

¹ The name Peraḥyā is not found in the Bible and is rare in post-biblical, pre-Islamic Hebrew literature, one example being Joshua b. Peraḥyā in M. Avot 1:6. It is fairly common in Geniza times, because the Arabic-speaking Jews identified Hebrew Peraḥ ('flower') with Arabic Farah ('joy'), and Peraḥyā was understood to mean 'Joy in God.' Accordingly, the by-name used with Peraḥyā was Abu 'l-Surūr, Joyful. {The *kunya* Abu 'l-Surūr is also used with the Arabic name Farah, e.g., Abu 'l-Surūr Farah. b. Yeshū'ā ha-Kohen, II, 33-34, side e, lines 14-15. Also see Goitein, *Letters*, 317, n. 1; Friedman, "Ransom-Divorce," 307, n. 69.

² The house formerly belonged to the Ibn Zaffān family, concerning which see Goitein, *Med. Soc.*, 3:460, n. 74. It is mentioned as the place where the dowry was assessed, but it is not stated explicitly that this house was a gift to the bride.

³ The Castle of the Candles, *qaṣr al-sham'*, is the ancient center of Fustat, for which see, e.g., Gil, *Foundations*, 579 (index); Lambert, *Fortifications*, 274 (index).}

⁴ This abridged form of the name Benjamin, Binyām—BENIAMES is already found in a Greek inscription from Attica in the second or third century C.E.; see Schwabe, "Schools," 113. It is common in the Geniza.