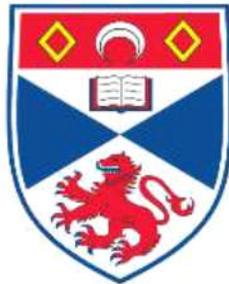


**JEWS IN YEMEN IN 17<sup>TH</sup>-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ACCORDING TO  
HEBREW SOURCES WITH COMPARISON WITH ARABIC YAMANI  
SOURCES**

**Nour El Hoda Hasan Abd El Aal**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St. Andrews**



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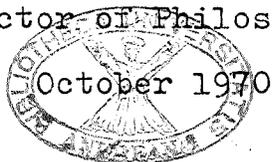
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I

JEWS IN YEMEN IN 17th-19th CENTURY  
ACCORDING TO HEBREW SOURCES  
WITH COMPARISON WITH ARABIC YAMANI SOURCES

A Thesis by  
Nour El Hoda Hasan Abd El Aal

Presented to  
The University of St Andrews  
in application for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy



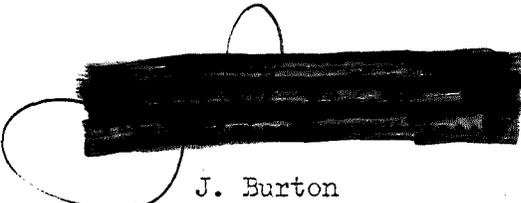
## DECLARATION

I HEREBY DECLARE that the accompanying thesis is my own composition, that it is based upon research carried out by me, and that no part of it has previously been presented in application for a Higher Degree.



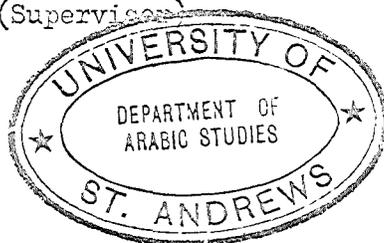
## C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I CERTIFY that Mrs. Nour Mawi has completed nine terms of research work in the United College, University of St. Andrews, that she has fulfilled the conditions of Resolution No. 1 (1967) of the University Court and that she is qualified to submit the accompanying thesis in application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



J. Burton

(Supervisor)



(Maiden name: Nour El Hoda Hassan Mohamed <sup>c</sup>Abd el-<sup>c</sup>Aal)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure for me to thank my research supervisor, Dr. John Burton, the Head of the Arabic Department, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude for supervising the research in this thesis. He not only suggested the problem in the first instance, but provided both impetus and direction to ensuing investigation, as well as offering helpful and constructive comments on the organisation of this thesis. His constant advice and patience are unlimited. Without his kind help this would never have been done.

I am deeply indebted to Professor A.M. Honeyman, formerly Head of the Department of Hebrew and Oriental Languages, under whose supervision I carried out my research for two years. He gave me much valuable advice which helped to define the topic.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Mahmud al-Ghul, formerly Head of the Department of Arabic Studies, who encouraged me to carry on doing the same subject.

I would like to thank Dr. Gertner, School of Oriental and African Studies, for his kindness and effort in obtaining relevant Hebrew works from libraries and collections abroad.

I would like to reserve especial thanks to the Rev. Fr. I. Gillan, Ph.D. for all his kind help in connection with the English language.

My thanks are due to the librarians of St. Andrews University Library who were tireless in their efforts to obtain on my behalf

some of the sources employed in this research.

It remains for me to express my thanks to the Azhar University in Cairo for awarding me the scholarship to enable me to undertake this course of research study.

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TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

a or ʾ	=	ا	d	=	د
b	=	ب	t	=	ط
ṭ	=	ت	z	=	ظ
th	=	ث	c	=	ع
j	=	ج	gh	=	غ
h	=	ح	f	=	ف
kh	=	خ	q	=	ق
d	=	د	k	=	ك
dh	=	ذ	l	=	ل
r	=	ر	m	=	م
z	=	ز	n	=	ن
s	=	س	h	=	ط
sh	=	ش	w	=	و
ṣ	=	ص	y	=	ي
damma + waw	=	ū	fatha	=	a
fatha + ya	=	ai	kasra	=	i
fatha + waw	=	au	damma	=	u
			fatha + alif	=	ā
			kasra + ya	=	ī

т	а
-	а
..	е
·	е
·	и
·	о
·	у
·	е
·	а
·	е
·	о

A	а
B, v	б
G	г
D	д
K, kh	к
H	х
v	в
z	з
H	г
T	т
J	ж
I	и
M	м
N	н
S	с
Z	з
Ph, f, P	ф
·	·
K	к
R	р
Sh	ш
S	с
T, Hk	т

## Introduction

This period of the history of the Jews in the Yemen was selected for study on account of the richness of the material which is available.

The sources used in this research for the study of the political, economic and social situation of the Jews in the Yemen may be divided into the following groups:

1. The MSS.

A - Hebrew MSS.

B - Arabic MSS.

2. The printed sources

A - Hebrew printed sources

B - Arabic printed sources

C - European printed sources

3. Travellers

A - Contemporary travellers

B - Modern travellers

In addition to the Hebrew and Arabic sources we have a series of eye-witness reports from travellers who visited the Yemen during the last three centuries, and whose observations have had remarkable and enduring results. The information obtained from these sources is plentiful and of great interest and importance for the history of the Yemen in general and supplies us with

personal observations on the people, both Arabs and Jews. Such journeys increased the volume of knowledge and broadened its horizons owing to the opportunities taken for study and investigation.

Although these sources have been mentioned in both the footnotes and the bibliography, it would be worth mentioning them here to estimate their relative informative value.

One of the most essential Hebrew sources on which we have relied most in this dissertation is Korot Ha-Zman, written by Ḥabshūsh. All we can learn about Ḥabshūsh must be gleaned from his own writings. He was primarily a coppersmith by profession and it was only in his later years that he took up writing. In the Spring of 1893, Ḥabshūsh was occupied in writing his Hebrew account of the history of the Jews in the Yemen. The Autumn of the same year he spent writing his account about his journey with Halévy.<sup>1</sup> His decision to write his own works was perhaps partly due to the influence of the European travellers who spread culture among the Jews in the Yemen in the nineteenth century. But his method of writing and his bitter complaints against the treatment of Halévy<sup>2</sup>

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1. The story of the reasons underline the composition of this book can be seen in Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.6.

2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.76<sup>b</sup>

might suggest that he did not fall completely under the influence of the European travellers. His method of collecting the information for the European travellers is a real testimony to his cleverness. His reading the Qur'ān on Saturday<sup>1</sup> and his collections of the Sabaen inscriptions reveal his interest in many aspects of culture. But at the same time we can also say that Ḥabshūsh was looking forward to revealing, through the European travellers' works, the condition and the atmosphere in which the Jews of the Yemen were living. This might explain the risk he ran for the sake of collecting information for the European travellers. It also explains that he might have been to a degree consciously under the influence of the European travellers without however relaxing his own method of investigation.

Ḥabshūsh dealt in his work with various topics of the history of different periods. For the part concerning history he depends on three sources: the old oral traditions among the Yemenite Jews; odd memoirs and notes; written Arabic chronicles.

The historical material of Ḥabshūsh is sometimes lacking in accuracy. He very often fails to establish the exactness of names, dates and events, particularly for the periods before his own time. In this present research

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1. Zadoc, Moche, Jehude Teman, p.117

one will occasionally find the discussion of these names of dates and events compared with these given in the other sources. The work of Ḥabshūsh dealt also with exiles, wars, famines, Messiahs, the description of the Jews daily life, customs, economic and religious matters. The Ḥabshūsh material on these aspects is good and of use for studying the situation of the Jews in the Yemen. The absence of this material might have been a great loss for the study of the Jews in the Yemen in the light of its being valuable information given by a contemporary Yemenī, himself Jewish.

Ḥabshūsh's work has been published by Goitein and Joseph Kafih. Goitein published the Arabic part of the work written in Hebrew characters in his book called Habshush Travels in Yemen. Goitein has also published the same work, in Hebrew translation in his book Joseph Halévy's Journey in Yemen.

Joseph Kafih published the rest of the work in Sefunot, vol. 2, giving it the title Korot Israel Bē-Teman. But in this present research study we have relied on the MS under the title Korot Ha-Zman, No. 8<sup>o</sup>599 of Jerusalem library, for certain parts using Goitein's publication of the Hebrew text under the title Ḥizyon Teman or Ru'yā al-Yaman, which is indicated in the footnotes of the thesis wherever relevant.

We have another Hebrew MS which is of great

value. This MS was written by Sa'īd Sa'dī.<sup>1</sup> It is unique as far as its materials are concerned. It deals with the years of the famine which happened in the Yemen between 1717 and 1725. The events of these years are chronicled by the author, describing the suffering of the Jews in Ṣan'ā' from the severe famine and indicating the economic situation of the people, particularly of the Jews of Ṣan'ā' as a result of the famine with, however, no sign of the Jews being persecuted by the Arabs. This book is of considerable value for the social and religious situation of the years in the Yemen of this famine since the author was contemporary with the period and an eye-witness of the events. Further, he wrote his reports at the time.

The author's bitter feelings at the natural calamities which befell the Jews, drove him to write a dialogue between Man and Time, complaining and blaming

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1. He is either Jehuda al-Ṣa'dī or his son Yaḥyā, as, is indicated on the front page of this work. Most writers know him and refer to him as Jehuda. See al-Nadaf, Seridê Teman, p.8; Korah, op, cit., pp.15-16. But the publisher of his work decided to identify him by name as Sa'īd al-Sa'dī relying presumably on Goitein's suggestion that his name is Sa'īd if the Hebrew alphabet is reversed, for he mentioned his name, Ḥazmak Ha-Katan in the introduction. See Goitein, Megnaze Beth Ha-sefarim, Kiryath Sefer, vol. 14, p.253.

Time for its cruel deeds against the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

As for the Arabic sources, there are Arabic MSS of works written by al-Shaukānī (died 1834). His writing on the social problems which arose during his lifetime in the period we are studying, is copious in the sense that it represents the argument which was going on between the Muslim scholars. The value of his writings does not come only from his being a Muslim scholar paying much attention to the social problems of his time, but also from his being a Judge of Ṣan'ā'; and the one who occupies this important position is officially the representative of the state and its attitude and usually acts as a religious adviser of the 'Imām. It is possible, therefore, to consider the valuable articles of al-Shaukānī, the one called Hal al-'Ishkāl fi 'Ijbār al-Yahūd 'alā-'Iltiqāt al-Azbāl, and the other Tafwīq al-Nibāl 'alā-'Irsāl al-Maqāl, which were directly devoted to discussing the problem of compelling the Jews to collect the sweepings, as semi-official documents giving the state the religious justification to compel the Yemenite Jews to do this sort of work.

This does not by any means indicate that al-

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1. This work is entitled Dofe Ha-Zman and has been published by Joseph Kafih in Sefunot, vol. 1. In this study I have relied on the MS itself, No. 8<sup>o</sup>599 of Jerusalem Library.

Shaukānī had abandoned his objective methods of investigation under the pressure of the state which he had to support the attitude. But in his article Tafwīq al-Nibāl, which was devoted to his reply to al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh's article, 'Irsāl al-Maqāl 'alā-'Izālat Ḥal al-'Ishkā, one can see that al-Shaukānī insisted on the evidence given by him in his article, Ḥal al-'Ishkā, which had been answered by al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh. All that means that al-Shaukānī did not fall under the pressure of the state, but had his own opinion with which he was personally satisfied.

It seems that al-Shaukānī was conscious of the social problems which faced the community of the Jews in the Yemen. He shared in the discussion of these problems which was going on, giving, as a Muslim scholar, his own understanding of the nature of these problems. Although we cannot unfortunately refer to his valuable article called Risālah fī Ḥukm Ṣibyān al-Dhimmiyyīn 'Idhā Māt 'Abawāhum, it seems from the title that he took part in the discussion of this social problem facing the Jewish community in the Yemen.

All these articles are as yet unpublished. One hopes to see them edited, as an important scientific aid to further investigation.

There is another article by al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Īsā. It is contained in a MS, Dār al-Kutub wa al-

Wathā'iq al-Miṣriyyah, in Cairo, No. (2216). Al-Qādī 'Abd-Allāh seems to have been a well educated Yemenī Muslim. His father, as it appears from al-Shaukānī's article, Tafwīq al-Nibāl, was also a well known Muslim scholar. It seems that al-Qādī 'Abd-Allāh had a great influence which might explain his daring to oppose the attitude of the state in his article.

As for printed Hebrew books, we have quite a number of valuable books and periodicals which furnish us with useful information not less important than that provided by the original Hebrew MSS. Very important and not less valuable are the fragments of Hebrew material which deal with certain individual events. Some of these are of great assistance in the sense that they supply the deficiency which occurs in Ḥabshūsh's records and in the other Hebrew sources.

In fact most of the Hebrew printed books supply us with a survey of the history of the Jews from their early settlement up to their final emigration and settlement in Israel in 1950. A good example is the work done recently by Zadoc, Jehudé Teman.

The Arabic books of biographies were of great help, in discerning and identifying the 'Imāms as well as the dates at which some of the events happened, points on which some of the Hebrew sources lack accuracy and full information.

One of the Arabic ~~sources~~ <sup>studies</sup> especially worth mentioning is the book of al-'Aṭṭār, namely Al-Takhuluf al-'Iqtisādī wa al-'Ijtimā'ī fī al-Yaman ~~which is not of less importance than the others~~. This book was published first in French. The book is of great value particularly for the modern history of the Yemen and the economic and social conditions.

Its importance lies in the character of the author talking about himself, he has indicated that he was one of those officials responsible for the reserved properties of the deposed Royal family. The author gives good information about many of the peculiar incidents during the eccentric rule of the 'Imām of which he was an eye-witness.

## PART I

The Political Situation  
of the Jews in the Yemen

It may help in order to understand the exact situation of the Jews in the Yemen, if I open this Chapter with a few elementary remarks and a few details of the administrative organization of the country, indicating the 'Imām's lineage and manner of rule.

1. The Government and Organization of the State:

The régime in the Yemen is an absolute monarchy called al-'Imāmah. The 'Imāmat of the Yemen is a closed mysterious country. Its ruler is a sacred personage, holder of a centuries-old office, combining in himself both spiritual and temporal sovereignty. The 'Imām enjoys unlimited absolute power as he is considered to be the high origin of the laws and the interpreter of the Qur'ān. He rules directly without any ideological opposition.<sup>1</sup>

Since the foundation of the Zaidī authority in the Yemen in the ninth century A.D., a vigorous absolute régime was practised until their state passed away.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See Neibuhr, Neibuhr's Travels Through Arabia and other Countries in the East, 1792, vol. 2, p.83; Al-'Aṭṭār, Al-Takhalluf al-iqtisādī wa'l-ijtimā'ī fī al-Yaman, pp. 76,77, November 1949.
  2. Ingrams, Harold, The Yemen : Imams, rulers and revolution, 1963, pp.43-44.

The Zaidī Charter<sup>1</sup> states that the 'Imām should be elected from the Zaidī Sādah, who in practice came from the noble Caste on the following conditions:

1. To be from the Zaidi lineage.
2. There should not occur any suspicion about his lineage.
3. To be pure in body and soul.
4. To know the basic elements of 'Islām.
5. To be talented in ruling.
6. To be pious, generous and magnanimous.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Imām is elected by a limited group composed only of the Zaidī Sādah. The throne of the Yemen is hereditary. The eldest legitimate son of an 'Imām is his rightful successor. But the frequency of revolutions shows that this order of succession is often violated.<sup>3</sup> The 'Imām chooses hostages from the noble families and the warrior tribes, for the security of his authority, so that he could use the former to subdue the riots caused by the latter.<sup>4</sup>

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1. In Arabic mīthāq.

2. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., p.77; Strothman, R., Al-Zaidīya, The Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. IV, 1924.

3. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., p.77; Neibuhr, Travels Through Arabia ..., vol. 2, pp.82-83; Hugh Scot, In the High Yemen, 1942, p.225.

4. These hostages were kept in Ṣan'ā', the capital, under very strict observation. When their tribes or families

The 'Imām was directly responsible for the treasury of the state, so that it was accounted with his personal possessions and he had a free hand in the treasury. As the Yemen as a whole was in the 'Imām's possession, the ministers' and the Court's authority was limited.<sup>1</sup>

The general division of the Yemen into the lowlands and the highlands obtains throughout the 'Imām's dominions. Upon this grand division depends the subdivision of the Kingdom into small governments or counties.

There are, however, in the territory of the 'Imām, many Shaikhs dispersed in the mountains, who do not acknowledge his authority and are but slightly dependent upon him.<sup>2</sup> The independent states of the Yemen, besides the dominions of the 'Imām, according to Neibuhr,<sup>3</sup> were thirteen independent districts.

#### The Judges:

Although the 'Imām is an absolute monarch, he is checked in the exercise of his authority by the supreme tribunal of Ṣan'ā'. This tribunal consists of certain

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started to rebel, the hostages were to be imprisoned and sometimes they were put to death when negotiations with their tribes proved impossible. See Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.77-78.

1. Ibid., p.78.
2. Neibuhr, Travels Through Arabia ..., vol. 2, p.70.
3. Ibid., pp.46-47.

numbers of judges, qāqīs (pl. quḍāh). The judge possesses the sole power of life and death. He is sole judge in civil and ecclesiastical affairs.

In every province there is a judge, dependent on the chief judge of Ṣan'ā'.<sup>1</sup>

### The Governors:

Every province and district in the Yemen has its governor. He is called Wālī or Dola. He commands the forces stationed in his province, regulates the police, and collects the taxes.<sup>2</sup> If one of these governors or ministers in the Yemen is found guilty of important misdemeanours or convicted of malversations in office, he is punished by imprisonment, or by confiscation of his property. And sometimes the one who has been thus disgraced, is raised from prison to an even greater position than before. This custom marked the character of despotism.<sup>3</sup>

Every little town has a sub-governor. And the chief of a large village is a Shaikh.

The governor is attended by the comptroller

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1. Neibuhr, Travels Through Arabia ..., vol. 2, p.86; Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.89-90.
  2. Neibuhr, Travels Through Arabia ..., vol. 2, p.85; Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.88-89.
  3. See below, p.84 ; Neibuhr, Travels Through Arabia ..., vol. 2, p.86.

whose function is to spy upon the conduct of the governor and inform the 'Imām of what is going on.

The Military Force:

The 'Imām keeps up a body of regular troops which consists of infantry and cavalry. The infantry are raised chiefly in Ḥāshid and Bākīl. Most of those who serve in the cavalry have, alongside the army service, civil employments.<sup>1</sup>

The above survey is considered the main administrative organization of the state at that time.

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1. Neibuhr, Travels Through Arabia ..., vol. 2, p.86.

The 'Imām al-Qāsim (1560-1620) and the Jews  
in the beginning of the seventeenth century

The beginning of the seventeenth century was a period of revolution against the Ottoman régime in the Yemen. The first Ottoman capture of the Yemen (about 1546-1629) came to an end in consequence of the 'Imām al-Qāsim's revolution. The 'Imām al-Qāsim had grown up in an atmosphere of increasing hatred of the Turks. At an early age, he inspired efficient mobilization of effective resistance against the Turks. After many years of life under mobilisation, al-Qāsim, who was known by the name al-Mansūr bi-Allāh,<sup>1</sup> had many supporters and proclaimed himself 'Imām in 1016 A.H. (1607 A.D.). (He is the ancestor of the succession of the Zaidī 'Imāms who ruled from Ṣan'ā' during the period of our study). 'Imām al-Qāsim continued the war with the Turks until he died in 1620 and he was honoured with the epithet Great and was called the 'Imām al-Qāsim al-Kabīr (Qāsim the Great). The 'Imām al-Qāsim's son, namely, Muhammad al-Mu'ayyad bi-Allāh (1582-1644)<sup>2</sup> succeeded to his father's throne and proceeded

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1. Al-Wāsi'ī, Tā'rikh al-Yaman al-Musammā Furjat al-Humūm wa al-ḥuzn fī Ḥawādith al-Yaman, 1927, p.52; Al-Ziriklī, al-A'lam, vol. 6, pp.17-18.

2. Al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli' Bi Maḥāsin Min Ba'd al-Qarn al-Sābi', 1929, p.238, vol. 2; Al-Muḥibī, Khulāṣat al-Athar, vol. 4, 1284 A.H., p.122; al-Ziriklī, op. cit.

to free his country from the Ottoman occupation.

Naturally, as a result of the war which took place at that period, many of the inhabitants fell victims on both sides, Arab and Jewish, alike.

The Hebrew sources known to us which deal with that period are four:

- 1) An Arabic chronicle in Hebrew characters; the author is anonymous but he was contemporary with the events which took place during that period.
- 2) A report included in the book Ḥimdat Yamim<sup>1</sup> written by Shalom b. Jusiph b. Abīgad b. Ḥilphon who was contemporary to the events. (One of Sālīm Shibzī's family).
- 3) Part of Ḥabshūsh's Korot Ha-zman.
- 4) Two pieces of lamentation written by Rabbi Sa'īd Darīn who was known by the name of Dīnār. He was also contemporary with the events.<sup>2</sup>

These sources were concerned generally with the historical events as a whole in the last two years of the Turkish régime (1627-1629). They described the position of

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vol. 7, p.229.

1. Ḥimdat Jamim, written by Sālīm Shibzī, see about him below, p.44.
2. These works are published in Sion, vol. 20, 1941, pp.33-46, with Hebrew translation of the Arabic parts by Jehudah Razabi in his article Mered al-Qāsim.

the inhabitants of the Yemen especially in Ṣan'ā', with more stress upon the situation of the Jews at that time.

Shalom b. Jusiph b. Abīgād, in his report, throws light upon the Jews' situation during the 'Imām al-Qāsim's reign in the Yemen.

The Jews in the Yemen were persecuted at that time by the Ottoman but not by the Zaidī rulers. On the contrary, we find that the Arab rulers stood on the Jews' side at that time against the Turks as we shall see.

According to the reports of Shalom b. Jusiph, this author was, as we already mentioned, contemporary with these events. We are informed that in the year 1619, the Turkish Governor Faḡlī Pāshā issued a severe decree against the Jews that their houses should be plundered and ruined. And their leaders were scourged until their clothes were defiled with blood and they were imprisoned and chained for twelve months. Shalom attributes the reason of the announcement of that decree against the Jews, to their refusal to accept conversion to 'Islām or as he exactly said to convert to the religion of the disgraced swine, according to Razabi's explanation, a clear reference to the Turks and thus a distinction between the Muslims of the Yemen (the majority of whom were Zaidī) and the Turks (who are Sunnis).<sup>1</sup> Some of the Jews could not bear the cruelty

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1. Jehuda Razabi, Mered al-Qāsim, Sion, vol. 20, p.37-38; Korah, Sa'arat Teman, p.6.

of the punishment and converted to 'Islām. But that did not last long, because after the Zaidī 'Imāms' victory over the Turks, the latter were driven out of the country, the former gave their order to set the Jews free and those who were converted relapsed and came back to their religion.<sup>1</sup>

Moshe Zadoc's comment on that event is that<sup>2</sup> the 'Imām who drove out the Turks and released the Jews was the 'Imām al-Ḥasan b. 'Imām al-Qāsim and that in the year 1627, the 'Imām al-Qāsim and his brothers continued their resistance against the Turks. Here we find some corruption in the part which concerns the 'Imām al-Qāsim. We already mentioned that the 'Imām al-Qāsim died in 1620 and his son Muḥammad al-Mu'ayyad bi-Allāh ascended to his father's throne and stayed 'Imām until his death in 1644. This 'Imām could be the one who released the Jews, for, as Shalom reports, the Turks' punishment against the Jews was for twelve months. And as the punishment took place in 1619 and al-Mu'ayyad succeeded to his father's throne in 1620, therefore, he might be the one who released the Jews. But it is more probable that it was the 'Imām al-Ḥasan (1588-1639) who released the Jews, for as a matter of fact, the 'Imām al-Ḥasan it was who drove out the Turks with the co-operation of his two brothers, Muḥammad and

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1. Jehuda Razabi, Mered al-Qāsim, Sion, vol. 20, p.38, note 35.

2. Zadoc, Moshe, Jehudē Teman, 1967, p.62.

'Ismā'īl,<sup>1</sup> and subdued the district of Zubaid and stayed Amīr of that district. In that case he could be the 'Imām who annulled the decree against the Jews by the Turks after the latter's expulsion.

It is to be understood that this decree was applied against the Jews of South Yemen, al-Ṣa'īd where the author of that report, Shōlom b. Jusiph, was among those who were imprisoned. This period of the Yemenite Jews' history is known by the name Golat Shar'ab (the exile of Shar'ab).<sup>2</sup>

The anonymous author of the Arabic chronicle does not report any particular incident to show any ill-treatment directed against the Jews. He describes the rising of Ḥasan, Ḥusain and Aḥmad, the sons of the 'Imām al-Qāsim al-Kabīr, against the Turks. He reports the rising of the prices at that time as a result of the losses of the war and indicates the steps taken in that serious battle by mentioning the days sometimes and the months. That confirms the fact that he lived at the same time as the events which he reports took place.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See al-Ziriklī, op. cit., vol. 2, p.228.

2. Zadoc, Moshe, op. cit., p.61; Although Zadoc relies in that event on the aforementioned source, he mentions that the decree took place in 1618 instead of 1619.

3. Jehuda Razabi, Mered al-Qāsim, Sion, vol. 20, p.34-35; Korah, op. cit., p.6.

The Political Situation of the Jews in the Yemen  
and the False Messiah

The political troubles which took place from time to time between the Jews on one side and some of the 'Imāms in the Yemen on the other, had no direct connection with the fact that the Jews in the Yemen were of a different religion, living in a Muslim country under a Muslim government. But it is obvious that some of the Jewish religious beliefs developed a political object which could be dangerous for the entity of the country. We notice that clearly in the following points:

The Messiah:<sup>1</sup>

The idea of the Messiah runs through the Old Testament. It is the natural outcome of the prophetic hope for the future. The first prophet to give a detailed picture of the future ideal King was Isaiah (ix. 1-6, xi. 1-10, xxxii. 1-5). The ideal King to whom Isaiah looks forward will be a scion of the stock of Jesse, on whom will rest the spirit of God as a spirit of wisdom, valour and religion, and who will rule in the fear of God.<sup>2</sup>

The hope in the return of David is expressed in many parts of the Old Testament. The Messiah to whom

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1. The Hebrew word is "Ha-Mashiah"; Aramaic "Meshiḥa" - "anointed one".
  2. The Jewish Encyclopaedia, p.506.

Jeremaia looks forward will be "a righteous sprout of David" (xxiii. 5, 6; xxxii. 15, 16). The idea that David will be the King of the future runs in many parts in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup>

The picture of the future is that the last judgment will lead to a spiritual regeneration and bring about a state of moral and religious perfection. The Messiah will first crush the unjust rulers and rid Jerusalem of, and destroy, the impious heathen. Then he will gather the scattered ones of their tribes, and found his own Kingdom of peace and justice.

#### The False Messiah:

Several times a Messiah appeared in the Yemen. This is largely explained by the superstition of the Jews as well as of the Arabs.

The idea of the Messiah among the Jews in the Yemen had been largely changed from a religious legend which was repeated in every generation into a political matter which had serious effects for the political situation in the Yemen in general and on the Jews in particular. Every Messiah who appeared in the Yemen was branded with a political tendency which usually led the two sides, i.e. the 'Imām and his troops and the Messiah and his adherents

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1. Ezekiel, xxxiv. 23 et seq., xxxvii. 24 et seq.: Hos. iii. 5.

to engage in serious battle, which very often ended by a proclamation of severe decrees against the Jews.

A. The false Messiah during the reign of 'Āmir b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb<sup>1</sup> (866-923 A.H.)

Although the story of the war between the 'Imām 'Āmir b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb and the Jews of the Yemen took place in a period a century and a half prior to the period of our study, it may have for us a particular import in the sense that it throws light on similar events in the time we are studying.

According to Ḥabshūsh, a remarkable false Messiah<sup>2</sup> appeared in Baiḥān in 1495. He succeeded in getting nearly all the Jews between Ṣan'ā' and Baiḥān, and a large number of Arabs to follow him. With his numerous troops he won many successes in battle against the 'Imām's troops, but after several battles he was eventually defeated and killed.

The report agrees, with some differences, with the Arabic Chronicle.<sup>3</sup> It is mentioned in Rūḥ al-Rūḥ that this event took place in 905 A.H. (1499 A.D.), that is,

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1. See about him, al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli'..., vol. 1, p.308; al-Ziriklī, op. cit., vol. 3, p.22.

2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-zman, Jerusalem Copy, Chap. 8, pp.52<sup>a</sup>-52<sup>b</sup>.

3. 'Isā b. luṭf-Allāh b. al-Muṭahhar, Rūḥ al-Rūḥ, B.M., MS., or. 4583, p.5<sup>b</sup>-6<sup>a</sup>.

four years after the date which was given by Ḥabshūsh.<sup>1</sup>

The Arabic historian tells us that the immediate reason which caused 'Imām 'Āmir b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb to attack the Jews of Baiḥān was the murder of the son of Wālī al-Jauf when it was discovered that he was murdered by Banū 'Abd who followed that Messiah and formed a great troop against the 'Imām and his army.

That Jew was very bold and disobeyed the government's law by riding horses and bearing his ornamented dagger; moreover he did not take any care not to insult the Muslims and he declared Muhammadanism false. All the converted Jews turned back to him and the Muslims who were frightened of 'Imām 'Āmir b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb also followed him. But at last he was killed by the 'Imām himself who went to Baiḥān allegedly to hunt, but aiming to put an end to that man and his troops.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Goitein, S. D. in his article: Megnaze Beth Ha-sefarim, Kiryath Sepher, vol. 14, p.266, note 32, said that in Shukeen's copy it is 1895 and that it is only a slight mistake between the letter "Tav" which makes the number and the "Ḥet" in the Hebrew, Goitein said too that there is no mention of that event in the book Bughyat al-Mustafid fī Akhbār Madīnat Zubaid, where the events end in 901 A.H.: that confirms the accuracy of the Arabic source Rūh al-Rūh date.
  2. Ibn al-Muṭṭahhar, 'Īsā b. luṭf-Allāh, op. cit., p.5<sup>b</sup>-6<sup>a</sup>.

It is obvious that the idea of the false Messiah was not restricted merely to the Jews as a serious political matter but also attracted groups of the Muslims themselves,<sup>1</sup> therefore, it is very clear that the situation under the appearance of a false Messiah did not lead only to political division but also to religious repercussions upon a fanatical country like the Yemen.

B. The false Messiah during the reign of al-Mutawakkil 'al-Allāh 'Ismā'īl in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The Jews of the Yemen, hearing the rumours of the appearance of Shabethai Zevi of Constantinople, in the second half of the seventeenth century,<sup>2</sup> started to behave actively, showing their joy. Although Shabethai Zevi was not one of the Yemenite Jews, Ḥabshūsh said that the rumours spread all over the Yemen that the Jews had tried to crown a King for themselves, rejecting the actual Arab 'Imām. The result of these rumours was that the 'Imām<sup>3</sup> wanted them to be punished by collecting all of their leaders, Jews from everywhere in the country and talking to them, saying that they had no loyalty to the country in

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1. Ibn al-Muṭṭahhar, 'Īsā b. luṭf-Allāh, op. cit., p.6<sup>a</sup>.

2. vide infra, p.32

3. Ḥabshūsh called that 'Imām, al Mahdī 'Ismā'īl. The discussion of his name may be seen in the Chapter of Galut Kamrān, the exile to Kamrān.

which they live as they earlier did not have any loyalty towards their prophet Moses. The 'Imām accused them of insulting the Muslim religion and declaring false the Muslim prophet Muḥammad. They were accused of having for themselves a different 'Imām to dominate the country by force and to ruin it as they had done in their previous time. That speech directed at the Jews by the 'Imām confirms that the appearance of the false Messiah always gave rise to sedition, and threatened the political state of the country with division under separate authorities, one the legal 'Imām and the other the false Messiah. The result was that the 'Imām was obliged to deal with them with some cruelty to avoid revolution and riot which might have led to the destruction of the state of the Yemen.<sup>1</sup>

C. The false Messiah of the end of the nineteenth century.

The Yemen is a land full of religious tension. The crowd there expect the return of the hidden 'Imām as the world-redeeming Mahdī, and in the same spirit, the Yemenite Jew as a result of his feeling of political persecution, believes that the Messiah could appear any day. This expectation paved the way for deceivers and pretenders to give themselves out as Messiahs from time to time.

1. See chapters: The exile to Kamrān, and The exile to Mūza', pp. 32 - 40, 41 - 54

Another false Messiah according to Ḥabshūsh was that of the year 1893.<sup>1</sup> He resided in Ahallal-Ayl which was in Bilād Anas. He deceived all the Jews by his magic as he sent for the Jews who lived in this neighbourhood to come with anything they could offer, either a sheep, a lamb, or money and see his face to procure forgiveness and to enjoy with him the pleasure of the consecrated portion. That Messiah robbed the people by claiming that the Jewish women and girls imitated the Gentiles in wearing all sorts of ornaments which is against the Jewish law, therefore, they should make atonement for these sins and bring to him all their jewels either gold, silver or copper or whatever it was.

We find that that Jew who gave himself out as a Messiah, deceived and cheated the Jews and endangered their position.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Bension, Ariel, in Menorah Journal, vol. XVII, 1929, in his article Letters from abroad. The Jews of Yemen and Aden, p.165, mentions that the Messiah who was called Juseph 'Abd-Allāh appeared in the seventeenth century. But all the evidence indicates that he appeared in the nineteenth century. See Korah, op. cit., pp.53-55.
  2. He introduced the call of the ass as the clarion call of his followers, it happened when all of them gathered to hand over the jewels, he stood to pray with them. At a feeling of mad commotion he brayed like a donkey ('Ā' 'Ā' 'Ā' !!) and his followers repeated it after him. See Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-zman, p.53<sup>a</sup>.

D. The famous Messiah of the nineteenth century.

Yet another Messiah appeared in the nineteenth century. His name was Shukrī Kuḥail.<sup>1</sup> Mori Shukrī Kuḥail was according to ibn Saphir<sup>2</sup> one of the learned men. He gave himself out as a Messiah in 1861<sup>3</sup> but he started about eight years earlier to show the power of his prophecy in the shape of dreams in which he was ordered to divorce his wife and to live like a true ascetic in remote places.<sup>4</sup> Shukrī Kuḥail was accepted with great enthusiasm by all the Jews of the Yemen who made him the Hero of the century, but in the end he was assassinated by an Arab who brought his head to the 'Imām of that time who had offered a reward to whoever should kill him. But the Jews, because of their enthusiasm towards him, hinted that he would be resurrected again, and three years after his death, in 1867, there happened what they hoped. One of his disciples declared himself as the Messiah Shukrī Kuḥail risen from the dead

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1. The Arabic of Jehuda; his letter which he sent to Moses Ḥanoch hallevy asking him for money to build the Temple at Jerusalem is published and translated into English by S. D. Sassoon, An Autograph letter of a Pseudo-Messiah; with facs. in Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. XIX 1907, pp.165-167; his full name in Hebrew was Jehuda b. Shlomo, see Saphir, vol. 2, 1874, Ibn Saphir, p.159<sup>b</sup>-
  2. Saphir, op. cit., vol. 1, pp.74-75.
  3. Ibid., p.151<sup>b</sup>.
  4. Ibid., vol. 2, pp.149-151; Goitein, Land of Sheba, 1947, p.111ff.

and asked for the wife of the previous Shukrī Kuḥail and she confirmed that he was her real husband. He was accepted with great joy by Jews and Arab alike.<sup>1</sup>

In 1868, he declared war against the 'Imām and rumours spread that he came with great numbers of men, both Jews and Gentiles, to lay siege to Ṣan'ā' and conquer it. As a result of that, the 'Imām poured his anger upon all the Jews and gave orders that the Jews should be punished for their disloyalty towards his authority and for their opposition to their government and following the false Messiah with whom the authorities were at war.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Sassoon, An Autograph Letter of a Pseudo-Messiah, p.163.

2. Saphir, op. cit., vol. 2, pp.151-153. He was not only famous in the Yemen but also in Egypt, 'Irāq and Turkey.

### Conclusion

The dispute happened frequently in the land of the Yemen between the crowned 'Imām and the false Messiah either the Muslim one whom they called Mahdī or al-Mahdī al Muntazar or the Jewish one.

In either case, it led to a political dispute, for any of those pretenders could be considered as a rival to the reigning 'Imām who fought each of them, Jews and Arabs alike, to the death.

We produce here a few examples of the Muslim Mahdīs who always gave themselves out as foretellers and succeeded in having the support of a vast number of disciples by whom they could form an army in opposition to the reigning 'Imām and conquer the towns and besiege the fortresses.

One appeared in 986 A.H. (1578 A.D.) in Bilād Anas who claimed that he was Manṣūr Ḥimyar<sup>1</sup> who, as

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1. Manṣūr was a title to an expected Messiah, nearly all the religious sects believe in him, the Muslim said, he is the Mahdī and Jews said he is the Messiah and in every other faith they believe he is belonging to them, See Nashwān b. Sa'īd al-Ḥimyarī, Muntakhabāt min Akhbār al-Yaman min Kitāb Shamsu'l 'ulūm wa-Dawā' Kalām al 'Arab min al-Kulūm, copied and corrected by 'Azīm al-Dīn Aḥmad, p.103.

mentioned in the legends, would appear at the end of the world and work miracles and conquer the lands.<sup>1</sup> When the Ottoman Wālī Murād Pāshā, who was ruling at that time, heard about him, he sent a big army to capture him, dead or alive.<sup>2</sup>

Another incident contemporary to the period we are dealing with, is the story of al-Maḥṭūrī who reached his peak in conjuring and juggling and said that shooting had no effect on him or on his adherents. He appeared in the reign of 'Imam al-Mahdi Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib in 1111 A.H. (1699 A.D.) with whom severe battles took place and the former gained several victories over the latter. In the end, the 'Imām's troops succeeded in defeating him and his head was brought before the 'Imām.<sup>3</sup>

A similar story happened at the beginning of the reign of 'Imām al-Mahdī al-'Abbās b. al-Ḥusain who fought Abū 'Allāmah in 1164 A.H. (whose power was exactly like al-Maḥṭūrī and shooting did not effect him either) to defend his throne which was threatened by that man and his disciples.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Margolisuth, Mahdī, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 8, Edinburgh, 1915; see also Al-Turmudhī, vol. 2, p.36; Al-Ṭabarī, vol. 3, p.159.
  2. Ibn Al-Muṭahhar, 'Isā b. luṭf-Allāh, op. cit., fol. 98.
  3. al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli' ..., vol. 2, pp.99-100.
  4. Ibid., vol. 2, pp.100-101.

The conclusion which can be drawn here, is that the political persecutions which the Jews in the Yemen faced from the Muslim dominating authorities as a result of their belief in the false Messiah, was not because of their being a community of a different religion, keeping its own religious beliefs and insisting on believing in the appearance of their own Messiah as a world-redeemer, but the resistance and the struggle which took place against both the Jewish Messiahs and their followers and the Arab Mahdīs or al-Masīh al-Kadhāb. Resistance was necessary from the 'Imām's point of view to secure the state from any possible kind of threat to destroy the 'Imām's authority in the country.

The exile to Kamrān

The frequent appearance of the false Messiah and the transformation of this religious belief from being a promise in the Jews' sacred books<sup>1</sup> to a justification for refusing obedience to the ruling authorities, produces a serious result which no doubt affected their political situation. The 'Imāms' displeasure did not stop at only taking an active policy against them, as we have seen from the examples of the previous chapter, but it also, as we will see, gave them a foretaste of the exile they were to undergo during the second half of the seventeenth century, during which period they suffered exile in different places. One of these incidents was the exile to Kamrān.

According to Hubshūsh's records in the year 1668, the news of the appearance of Shabethai Zevi<sup>2</sup> of Constantinople spread all over the Yemen. The Yemenite Jews as a result of their grief and poverty among their Arab neighbours were eager always to hear about the appearance of a Messiah, for they believed, both the older

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1. vide supra, p.20

2. Founder of the Shabbethaian sect. In 1666 he adopted 'Islām to save his life after being famous as a Messiah. In 1668 he gave out anew that he had been filled with the Holy spirit and had received a revelation. Jewish Encyclopaedia, pp.218-225.

and younger generation, in their redemption on the appearance of a Messiah and in the promises which they heard from their prophets and their Ḥākhāms (Ḥākhāmīm).<sup>1</sup>

Ḥabshūsh connected this event with the reign of 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Ismā'īl who was aware of the news of Shabethai Zevi and the rumours which tell that the Jews wanted to crown a King for themselves, rejecting the legal 'Imām.

According to Ḥabshūsh's illustration, al-Mahdī 'Ismā'īl became very angry with the Jews. He sent his messengers and his soldiers armed and riding on horses to all the villages where the Jews lived. They arrested them and took them in chains before the 'Imām in the city of al-Saudā' after their houses had been ruined and their properties plundered on the 'Imām's orders. The 'Imām insulted them and said that their aim of being gathered round their false Messiah that they were always awaiting and hoping for amounted to the hope that the country should be defeated and surprised by the appearance of their Messiah Himār 'Azīz.<sup>2</sup>

Ḥabshūsh added that the 'Imām threatened them

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-zman, p.43<sup>b</sup>

2. See above, Chap. 1, The Messiah; this is the title which the Arab in the Yemen gave to the false Messiah and they also call him al Masīḥ al Dajjāl. See Joseph Kafih, Sefunot, vol. 2, p.253, note 50.

with the option to choose between conversion to 'Islām or death, but the reply was the refusal of conversion at all costs.

The Nasis (the chiefs of the Jews) to whom the 'Imām was talking said that death was for saints and that they could not bear false witness since their Torah advised them that their prophet was one of them, one of their relatives, one of their brothers; and Islām was of no interest to them under those conditions and they would still stay very strict to their faith for ever and ever.<sup>1</sup>

The consequences of their challenge to the 'Imam was that the 'Imām punished them by proclaiming his orders that they should be hung up naked in the burning sun for three days hoping that they might change their mind and be converted to Islām. Thereafter, the 'Imām gave his orders that they should be imprisoned in chains underground.

In the month of Azar of the year 1669 he declared his ultimatum against the Jews and commanded that their chiefs should be brought from everywhere in the Yemen to be exiled to the land of Kamrān<sup>2</sup> where the water was very bad and the land was barren. The rest of them were to

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-zman, Chap. 1, p.43<sup>b</sup>.

2. Goitein, S. D., Megnaze Beth Ha-Sefarim, Kiryath Sepher, vol. 14, p.264, considers that the exile to Kamrān in 1669 was a prelude to the exile to Mūza' which took place later in 1679.

be imprisoned on the tops of the mountains and high places for a year. The Shaikhs of the towns intervened on behalf of the Jews. The 'Imām accepted their intercession and gave his order to release the Jews who returned home, feeble, starved and ill. During the exile a tremendous number of them died from the cruelty of the bad weather in this part of the Yemen.<sup>1</sup>

This part of Ḥabshūsh's report of this event is entirely corrupted, neither dates nor names being accurate.

In contrast to this account, from the Arabic sources which are in our hands, we found that no 'Imām existed among the Zaidīs under the name al-Mahdī 'Ismā'īl.<sup>2</sup> We find that the 'Imām who reigned in the Yemen round that period was 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh 'Ismā'īl who was born in 1019 A.H. and died in 1087 A.H. (1676 A.D.). He

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1. Ḥabshūsh mixed up this event with another which is known as The exile to Mūza', as he followed his record saying "and after the 'Imām released their exile from Mūza'". We find it is quite clear that this is only a corruption from Ḥabshūsh, for the exile to Mūza' to be discussed later in the next chapter, was about ten years afterwards.
  2. Jehuda Razabi, in his article Te'udot l-Toldot Jehude Teman (sources for the history of the Jews in Yemen), Sefunot, Jerusalem, 1958, vol. 2, note 20, p.291, said that 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Ismā'īl should have ascended the throne straightaway next year in 1668 after al-Mutawakkil's death.

ascended the throne after the death of his brother, 'Imām al Mu'ayad bi-Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim in 1054. It is said that during his reign, the country yielded to him and the people enjoyed security, prosperity and peace.<sup>1</sup>

In order to clarify the truth beyond Ḥabshūsh's story of the exile to Kamrān, we find another Hebrew source whose author was contemporary with the period in which this incident took place.<sup>2</sup>

That reference, in fact, does not solve the problem, for neither the name of the 'Imām who exiled the Jews to Kamrān is mentioned nor the place of the exile, nor any kind of particular punishment inflicted upon the Jews before the year of the exile which is 1669, as Ḥabshūsh mentioned. That other contemporary reference concentrated only on a famine which happened in 1669, and in Tamuz a month other than that mentioned by Ḥabshūsh - Azar. The poet describes the Jews' unpleasant situation as a result of the famine which inflicted all its cruelty upon them, so that they were feeble and lying in the markets and the streets. He complained against the cruel Zaidī 'Imāms, with no sign of the reason for the complaint. All the thread which we can catch from that reference is that, with

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1. al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al Ṭāli' ..., vol. 1, p.148.

2. That Hebrew source is the poem which is published by Jehuda Razabi in Sefunot, vol. 2, p.292-293, Jerusalem, 1958; about the author of the piece, see *ibid.*, p.291.

no details, he cast a sort of light on our subject by mentioning that vexations and hard decrees were directed against the Jews in that year.

Apart from the above-mentioned two sources, there is another Hebrew<sup>1</sup> source which we may consider of good value, which might help us to clarify the mystery behind the truth of the period 1666-1668 as far as the name of the 'Imām then in power is concerned and the kind of persecution carried out against the Jews at the above-mentioned period.

The reports in Megilat Teman say that in the year 1635 the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh 'Ismā'īl ascended the throne. The source describes him as a kind, pious 'Imām who reigned 36 years in the town al-Saudā'.

During the reign of that 'Imām, in 1666, letters bearing good tidings were received from Egypt,<sup>2</sup> telling of the redemption of the Jews. Thereafter, letters arrived from Mosqat to confirm the tidings of redemption. Rumours<sup>3</sup> spread fast and the Gentiles were astonished at the Jews'

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1. Sassoon, Megilat Teman, Hazophe, vol. VII.

2. The news of Shabethai Zevi arrived in the Yemen through letters received from Egypt. See Moshe Zadoc, op. cit., p.50.

3. It is clear that these were the rumours of the appearance of the false Messiah Shabbethai Zevi, which are mentioned by Ḥabshūsh.

behaviour. The rumours were so predominant that the Jews' redemption would be on the passover of 1667 and then came the passover with no change in the Jews' situation. They became a mockery among the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious from the above-mentioned report that the two sources, i.e. Ḥabshūsh's reports and Megilat Teman's reports deal with one period.

The identity of the 'Imām in that last source is very clear and correct as it agrees with the Arabic history presented by the Arabic references mentioned above, so far as affects the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh 'Ismā'īl's date of reign.

The other important point is: what kind of persecution befell the Jews at that time according to Megilat Teman's report? It is said that the governor of Ṣan'ā' at that time captured one of the Jews' leaders who was in Ṣan'ā', namely Moshe and the former reported to the 'Imām about the latter (apparently because of the aforementioned rumours). The 'Imām gave the governor permission to kill the Jewish leader. Meanwhile, the 'Imām sent a quick messenger to stop the decree. But the Jew was told (in a dream presumably) that his reward would be Paradise being killed for the faith. Therefore, the Jew's hope was to be killed.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Sassoon, Megilat Teman, pp.10, 11.

2. Ibid., Ha-zophe, p.11.

The incident did not finish there but discussion took place among the ministers of the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh 'Ismā'īl's government and the Commanders of the army, to take a decision on destroying, killing and exterminating the Jews. But because the 'Imām was kind and pious he searched for a solution as an alternative to that hard decree, and it was the prohibition in 1667 of wearing turbans and obligation to go with uncovered heads (which was considered a disgrace and shame).<sup>1</sup>

According to Korah the name of the 'Imam, which is the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh 'Ismā'īl, is given correctly and the year agrees to that given by Ḥabshūsh and Megilat Teman, namely 1077 A.H. (1666 A.D.) in which the Jews revolted and announced the appearance of their Messiah. The people wore their finery and went to the fortress of Ṣan'ā' which was called al-Qaṣr (the palace) and demanded of the soldiers and the ministers to get out of the Qaṣr since their Kingdom had already been realised.<sup>2</sup> The result was the decree of the prohibition of wearing turbans.<sup>3</sup>

After the information given in the above-mentioned Hebrew sources, a conclusion could be drawn that

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1. vide infra, p.214-216.

2. Korah, op. cit., p.8.

3. Ibid., p.8.

it is hard to accept Ḥabshūsh's statement regarding the exile to Kamrān. There is no evidence of that sort of punishment befalling the Jews during the reign of the aforementioned 'Imām. And it is obvious that his report suffered corruption and that he confused that event with the exile to Mūza'.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See below, The exile to Mūza', p.41.

The exile to Mūza'

The Yemen at the time of the exile to Mūza' was under the reign of 'Imām 'Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-'Imām al-Mahdī li-Dīn 'Allāh. He ascended the throne in 1676, and it is said that the country in all aspects was well organized as a result of his decisive character.

Ten years after the beginning of his reign, we find that the Jews in the Yemen suffered from the most remarkable persecution they had faced. The exile to Mūza' led to a considerable political result. Not only did the Yemenite Jewish sources consider that event, but it was also the first important event which drew directly the attention of one of the Yemeni Arab authors.<sup>1</sup>

The Hebrew sources have suffered some corruption, as they lack accuracy in dating the exile, each of them giving a different date. But at any rate, they all embrace the same period.

In Megilat Teman,<sup>2</sup> the author said "in 1675 as

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1. al-Shaukani, al-Badr al-Ṭalī' bi maḥāsin man ba'd al-garn al-Sābi', 1926, Cairo.
  2. Megilat Teman, published by S. D. Sassoon in Ha-zophe, vol. VII, and the Hebrew source is of two copies, the first of 7 pages and the title is missing, the second copy of 1 page only by the copyist Jehuda b.-Joseph b. Moshe b. Shlomo b. David b. Sa'ādia b. yaḥyā who was famous by the name Kirawānī.

'Imām 'Ismā'īl died; there was famine and many died. There came 'Imām 'Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Imām al-Qāsim, whose grandfather al-Qāsim drove out the Turks from Yemen.' The author confirms in his text that al-Mahdī was a successful ruler. And he continued to mention that in 1676 the 'Imām gave his orders that the synagogues of the Jews should be ruined at once. In the following year, 1676, there was a famine, and in the year 1677-1678 the 'Imām fulfilled the most hateful punishment against the Jews which was the exile to Mūza' where the hot weather was unbearable.<sup>1</sup>

The record of these events in that text agrees to some extent with the Arabic records.<sup>2</sup> In the biography of 'Imām 'Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-'Imām al-Qāsim, al-Shaukānī confirms the deed which was perpetrated by that 'Imām towards the Jews during this period. He said that one of the 'Imām's best actions was that he drove the Jews of Ṣan'ā' out of their homes, so that they were obliged to sell their houses. Moreover, he ordered that the synagogue which belonged to them in Ṣan'ā' should be closed. Another important thing was not mentioned in the Hebrew text mentioned above, but was mentioned in some other Hebrew parts which we are going to deal with later, namely, that the wine which was in that synagogue was

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1. Sassoon, Megilat Teman, Ha-zophe, p.12.

2. al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al Ṭāli'..., vol. 1, p.45, note 1.

thrown out and the books also were cleared out of it. The 'Imām gave his orders that the synagogues were to be destroyed and in 1091 A.H. a new Mosque was to be built instead. The Mosque was known as Masjid al-Jalā'.<sup>1</sup>

A poem in Arabic was written praising 'Imām Aḥmad for punishing the Jews by dismissing them from Ṣan'ā' and for destroying their synagogue by building instead the Mosque of al-Jalā' in 1091 A.H.

<p>احمد سبط القائم القاسم          لها دوى قبل أوقاسمى          يهود صنعاء أخبت العالم          لساجد الله أوقائهم          وانفق التاريخ فى غانم<sup>2</sup>          ١٠٩١</p>	<p>امامنا المهدي شمس الهدى          له كرامات سمت لم تكن          لو لم يكن فيها سوى نفيه          وجعله بيعتهم مسجدا          قد فاز بالامر به غانما</p>
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About the details of that event, we find that the two sides, the Arabic records and the Hebrew records entirely agree about who was the 'Imām who exiled the Jews; that point is very important and there is no argument needed about the claim that it was 'Imām al-Mahdī li Dīn-Allāh who exiled the Jews and ruined their synagogue in Ṣan'ā'. But still there is no agreement between the Arabic source and the Hebrew source mentioned, as to the date and

1. Al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Tāli' ..., vol. 1, p.45.

2. Ibid., p.46, note 1; said by the judge Muḥammad b. 'Ibrāhīm al-Saḥūlī.

the place of exile. The Arabic source did not mention the place of exile but the Hebrew mentioned it as Mūza' where the weather is unbearable and the land is barren.

The date of the exile:

The first point was the date. On this we notice some differences between the two sources. The Hebrew text recorded the date of the exile as 1677-78 and the destruction of the synagogue was a year before in 1676. It is clear that al-Shaukānī in that aspect did not mention either the date of exile or the date of the destruction; he only gave the date in which the Mosque was built - 1091 A.H. (1679-1680). With reference to Sālim Shibzī's<sup>1</sup> poem we find that the date of exile given approximates to that which was given by al-Shaukānī for the construction of the Mosque in place of the synagogue for, if the construction of the former took place in 1091, then the destruction of the latter should have been completed shortly before that date. Shibzī said in his poem that the exile took place in 1090 as it was illustrated in his poem:

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1. One of the very famous poets in the second half of the seventeenth century who was among the Jews who were exiled to Mūza' and was very popular among the Jews so that they believed that he should have been the true Messiah and a real saint. His tomb was regularly visited after his death. See below, p.171.

ג'ם גאנא סנת תס ע'זכ'ור / ו'ארק אלטת צפ' אלק'ד' אפר  
 קאל ס'רו אלא כ'ות א'לוקר / כ'ות דרע'אז קר'ו אלסאוק'י' 2

We understand that the year 90 (תסע"ך) is 1090 A.H., which is just one year before the construction of the Mosque. Sālīm Shibzī was very accurate and gave the month and the day exactly in one of his other poems, saying that the decree was announced on the second of the Muslim month Rajab.<sup>3</sup>

Another contemporary author,<sup>4</sup> adduced the facts which he had seen himself as well as Shibzī', recording what happened to the Jews in the year 1679 and 1680. To begin with, the 'Imām ordered the destruction of all the synagogues all over the Yemen, and as many of the precious Hebrew books were stolen by the Gentiles, they were obliged

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1. 'Imām al-Mahdī l-Dīn-Allāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Imām al-Qāsim, as Shibzī called him in his verse "Ab Sham'on yaqūl yā-Mursilī", Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūza' (the exile to Mūza'), Sefunot, vol. 5, p.354.
  2. Ibid., p.355.
  3. Jehuda Razabi in his article Galut Mūza' fixed that it was Aylul 1678, Sefunot, vol. 5, p.353, note 1, although Shibzī himself as described above, mentioned that the year was 90 (1090 A.H., 1679 A.D.) and I think it is a mistake, for it should have been Aylul (August-September) 1679 and not 1678.
  4. Phenḥas b. Gad-Hakohen who wrote his records about that event in the same days in which the punishment took place and finished his book in 1680.

to pray individually in secret in their houses, for there were no longer synagogues belonging to them. Thereafter, the 'Imām's wrath did not end there, but he commanded that all the Jews should be exiled to the desert of Mūza' and their houses ruined. Some were forced to sell what was left of the houses for sums of no value. The house whose value was a thousand gold coins was sold for only one hundred, and that whose value was one hundred was sold for only ten. If we consider Ḥabshūsh's text concerning that event we find that he was not accurate and we meet with deficiency and even corruption. Ḥabshūsh while reporting the exile to Kamrān which took place in 1669 as he claimed, turned to the Mūza' exile with no connection and no links. He said: The survivors of the Jews came back home after the King's<sup>1</sup> orders to set them free from Mūza'. They were ill from the change of weather and water. They did not allow them to go back to their former houses<sup>2</sup> in the town,

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1. Joseph Kafih, publisher of Ḥabshūsh's Text, Korot Ha-zman, Sefunot, vol. 2, p.255, note 79, confused 'Imām Aḥmad al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh and 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Imām al-Qāsim, and thought that the latter was the 'Imām who persecuted the Jews at that time.
  2. The Jews' quarter before the exile of Mūza' was called al-Sā'ilah, inside the Capital Ṣan'ā'. See Sālim Shibzi's song "Waṣalnā Hātif al-Alḥān", Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūza', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.354.

for they had already seized and plundered their houses and fields. They allowed them a small tract of land, two thousand Amah far from the country Ṣan'ā' called Qā' al-Sam' on which they could build mean dwellings.

As we see, we could not rely on Ḥabshūsh's text in this event, for it lacks accuracy.

The place of the exile:

There arose another point which is not less important than the other - the place of exile. It suits well that the exile was to Mūza' as this event is well known by the name, the exile to Mūza', Galut Muza'.

According to Sālim Shibzī in his poem 'Ab Sham'on<sup>1</sup> Yaqūl Yā murgilī, we notice that the exile was to Qubat al-Baqar and Qubat Dar'ān. And in another part of the poem he mentioned the place Mūza':

ז'ט וז אל שור אשאר פ' אלסכו / וסל מוצע אההך זא' כוך

In another poem Ibn al-Aṣḃāt of Yuseph al Mu'allim, no other places were mentioned except Mūza':

אפתלג כאשר' ע' ע' תדע' / קאל אלמאם אס'ר זנת מודע

and in another poem of Yuseph al Mu'allim, under the title

1. Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūza', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.355.

2. Ibid., vol. 5, p.355.

3. Ibid., p.358.

Ibn al-Asbāṭ Anā 'Ubdi' he mentions the land of Tihāmah:<sup>1</sup>

ז"ל שחל אנקרא קאלו תהאמה / ואלזפונא נס"ר וקולנא כראפה  
 א"ל הד' אל שתאצר עלנא זלזמה / וס"ז מודע נחל ולו ה' כ"רצ"ב  
 ועד זנבא נס"ר ז"ר צ' אל תהא'ם / לא ביות ללסכוך ולא שי קוא'ם  
 מצא מעבאנא וס"ז ג"ר אלדעבא'ם / כ"ה תכוך זלזלה ודרס זלכתנא'

The places Tihāmah and Mūza' are repeated once more in a different poem:

3 זלזמ'ם זלזמ'ם זלזמ'ם / זלזמ'ם זלזמ'ם זלזמ'ם / זלזמ'ם זלזמ'ם זלזמ'ם

and again we find Qubat Dar'ān in a poem whose author is anonymous

4 קאלו פנסכ/ כות דר'באן / קד'הו מ'צרח פ' זלזמ'א'ך.

And again the places, Tihāmah and Mūza' appear as the places of the exile in the poem Subḥan man hu Munshi' al-Amṭār.

The reason for the exile to Mūza':

The persecution of the Jews at the time of the 'Imām Aḥmad's régime is a puzzling question.

1. Mūzā' is in Tihāmah.
2. Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūzā', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.365.
3. A poem of ben Dawūd and the title Ibn Sālim Yaqūl Anā 'Ubdi'.
4. This poem Anbahtanī yā Ṭāyir al-Bān is copied from the Diwān of Rabbi Yaḥyā al-'Irāqī, Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūzā', Sefunot, p.376.

It is necessary to pose the question, as to the reason for the persecution. There must have been a serious reason which made the 'Imām Aḥmad take that attitude towards the Jews in the Yemen. Most of the sources record that the 'Imām asked them to abandon their religion and convert to Islām. Most of the sources, if not all, said that the persecution came for their refusal of the 'Imām's demand to convert to Islām. Sālim Shibzī in his poems gives the reason quite clearly, i.e. that the 'Imām wished them to abandon their religion and to convert to Islām; in his poem 'ubdi' bi-Rab al-'arsh he says:

1. קד עבדלו בדרך וקסלך נסלמס " נודל לתואתך לז עזל נא נאנתס

In a different poem he is deeply sad that the Arabs mock his religion.<sup>2</sup>

Again in the poem Ibn Sālim Yaqūl are shown all the efforts made by all the Shaikhs of the tribes to persuade them to convert to Islām:

2. זלזקה לכה נגחנא תסעסאם/ זלזקנא זל קד הם לנא פ' תקסס  
3. זסלמז ז' קוד זליח ד' זלזסלסאם.

1. Sassoon, Megilat Teman, Ha-zophe, vol. 7, p.3. That poem of Sālim is translated into Hebrew by Jehuda Razabi; Galut Mūza', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.379-380.

2. Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūza', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.341, note 15.

3. Ibid., vol. 5, p.372.

In one of the contemporary poems as well, entitled Subhān man Hu munshia, it is said that the reason was the observance of Shabath:

נחפץ' אללעצט וואלסבת ונפך' שלוק/ עם כפור חטאות  
 1 לאלעצטם קד קאל נ'ע' אלד' / ננס חג עצרות

If we consider that their refusal to convert to Islām was the main reason which caused the 'Imām to exile them to Mūza', then, was that only because the aforementioned 'Imām wanted to unify the faith in the land of the Yemen and to make it into one faith only, according to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's advice that there should not be two religions there at the same time?<sup>2</sup>

It seems that at this period, a storm of dissatisfaction was directed against the Jews in the Yemen, and it is likely that the authority concentrated far too much, in fact, on getting Islām to be the only religion in the Yemen, although it did not turn as they wished, but it

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1. Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūza', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.381.
  2. Ibid., vol. 5, p.341, believes that the main idea of the punishment was not only that they had to be exiled, but to be ruined, demolished, for the view of the Khalīf 'Omar b. al Khaṭṭāb that there must not be two religions in al Ḥijāz, always appealed to the 'Imāms of Yemen. The Ḥadīth is in al-Muwaṭṭa', vol. 2, pp. 892-893; Ibn Hishām 'Abd al-Mālik, Sīrat ibn Hishām, vol. 3, p.197.

was fulfilled in the shape of exile, first to Kamrān, then to Mūza', and finally forgiveness so that they returned within the country.

The Arabic sources reveal such attitudes through their records. One of the famous judges during the reign of that 'Imām, al-Mahdī li-Dīn-Allāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, wrote a treatise about that purpose which was under discussion at that time.<sup>1</sup> The Jews should be dismissed from the Peninsula, he referred to the idea of dismissing the Jews from al Ḥigaz (أخرجوا اليهود من الحجاز).<sup>2</sup>

At any rate, it is obvious that negotiations to discuss that purpose (أخرجوا اليهود من جزيرة العرب)<sup>3</sup> were held. It had its supporters as well as its opponents as we have seen from the treatise of the above-mentioned judge called al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. 'Īsā Allā'ī who was known as al-Maghribī.

In spite of that, the question stands with no complete answer. Was there a serious reason which caused the 'Imām and the members of the Government to force the Jews to choose between conversion to Islām and exile? Only some of the Hebrew sources answer that question and

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1. al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Tāli' ..., vol. 1, p.230.

2. Ibid., p.230, 231.

3. See Al-Muttaqī, Kanz al-'ummāl, vol. 4, p.323; Abū Dā'ūd, Sunan Abī Dā'ūd, vol. 2, p.147.

reveal indirectly the main reason for that sort of persecution.

If we treat what Habshūsh recorded about the exile to Kamrān and to Mūza' as a combined subject, and consider that the exile to Kamrān was a prelude to the exile to Mūza' as we already mentioned before, we arrive at the conclusion that the reason was merely political and its roots go back to the appearance of the rumours of the false Messiah, followed by the 'Imām's punishment of the Jews in his attempt either to convert them to Islām or to ruin them. This is known from the passage in which the 'Imām said "it is better for you to agree to our advice and believe in our prophet, so that we may be one nation and you may get the right to live (in the country) with pleasure and in peace, and you may acquire possessions in Paradise".<sup>1</sup>

As they refused to convert, the 'Imām followed his Government's advice to punish them and the result was their exile to Mūza'.

More than one Hebrew source furnishes us with an entirely different reason which drove the 'Imām mad and made him pour his anger upon the Jews by asking them to choose between conversion and death. That reason is contained in a very strange popular story which has nothing

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1. Habshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, Chapter 1, p.44<sup>a</sup>.

to do with politics, although its result was political.

That story offers a different cause which made the 'Imām wreak vengeance on them for his only daughter who was put in trouble by one of the Jews and became pregnant. The 'Imām made his effort to rescue his daughter's reputation and get rid of the scandal, but it was too late, for the pregnancy was far into the seventh month. As the 'Imām failed to rescue her honour, he killed her. Her story happened at that time and was repeated among the common people in the Yemen who made of it a song:

קד קלת לך י'א מי'טונה / ל'א ת'ב ש'ק' ה'ד'א ל'א ע'ב'ר'  
 ו'ז'נ'ת ב'ח'ב'ה ע'ג'נ'ו'נ'ה / פ' כ'ו'נ'ך מ'א א'ח'ד י'ד'ר'  
 פ'א'ל'ע א'מ'ל'ק'ה ה' מ'ל'ו'נ'ה / ע'ך א'ל'ש'פ'א'ע'ב'ה ס'א'ר'  
 א'ל'ל'ק'ה י'א א'ל'ל'ק'ה י'א ע'ב'א'ל'ע'י א'ל'א'ס'ר'א'ר' / ע'כ'פ'ל ל'ח'ס'ן א'ל'א'ש'ו'א'ר'

Thereafter, as a result of his bitter grief, he wrought vengeance on the Jews by forcing them to choose between conversion to Islām or death and the result was their exile to Mūza'.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Hebrew sources differ among themselves about the main reason which made the 'Imām ask them to

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1. Two Hebrew sources refer to that story, the first is a report by Sālīm ben Jehūda Maṣṣūra who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century and picked this story orally from his brother, Cabant Maṣṣūra. See Jehūda Razabi, Galut Mūzā', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.351; about the story see *ibid.*, p.391-393. The second Hebrew source is the legend by al-'Arosī; about him see *ibid.*, p.351.

abandon their religion and all agree about the reason of the exile, that is their refusal to convert to Islām.

The Jews in 1700

About ten years after the exile to Mūza', the Jews in the Yemen faced a different kind of persecution which was not from the ruling authority as we have seen in the previous section, but from a rebellion which rose against the actual authority and formed a danger to the governor as well as the Jews and Arabs alike. At that time the régime was transferred to 'Imām Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-'Imām al-Qāsim who was known by the title al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib (born 1047 A.H., died 1130, enthroned 1097 A.H.).<sup>1</sup> He ascended the throne after the death of Muḥammad b. 'Ismā'īl in 1097.\* The political situation in the Yemen at that time was full of disturbances; many rebels were against him. In his time battles and disputes took place between him and his nephew al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusain.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Hebrew sources, we find that

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1. vide infra, p.61 ; he first gave himself the title of al-Mahdī, then he changed the title into al-Nāṣir, later, after he changed it into al-Hādī then into al-Mahdī until his deposition, see Al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusain, Tuḥfaṭ al zaman fī-Akhbār Mulūk al-Yaman, p.247<sup>b</sup>; Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Zubārah, Ithāf al-Muhtadīn bi-Dhikr al-'A'imma al-Mujaddidīn ..., p.87.

2. vide infra, p.64.

\* Vide infra, p.72

the Jews faced persecution at the early stage of the 'Imām Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's reign and accurately in 1700. Ḥabshūsh records that in the year 1700 a new King ('Imām) appeared in the south west highlands of the Yemen. He was not descended from a Royal family. His knowledge about the Qur'ān was recent and little. He warned the Jews everywhere to choose between faith or death. A great number, all the inhabitants of Tihāma followed him. He attacked al-Ṣalbah and its districts and subdued it. He killed as well the so called Banians (Indian merchants). After that he moved to the Highlands of Ḥajjah. Ḥabshūsh reported that he destroyed and plundered the town and the Jews of Ḥajjah. In order to rescue themselves from that hated rebel, they fled to other parts in the Yemen.

Here, again, we find that Ḥabshūsh's records lack accuracy. In that case he did not mention the names of either the ruling 'Imām or the rebel whom Ḥabshūsh described as King. Ḥabshūsh went on describing how that new King conquered the villages and the cities until he reached Tilah and there he was defeated by the actual 'Imām of the Yemen, 'Imām al-Nāṣir.

We notice that no more details mentioned who this Nāṣir was. In order to discuss the character of the then ruling 'Imām<sup>1</sup> we understand that so far as the year

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1. Joseph Kafih identified him as Muḥammad b. 'Ishāq b. Aḥmad b. al-'Imām al-Ḥasan b. al-Qāsim. See Korot

1700 is concerned, the Yemen was under the reign of the 'Imām Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Qāsim who was known by the name al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib and that the name al-Nāṣir was one of his first titles which he gave himself.<sup>1</sup>

What sort of persecution did the Jews face during that period? It is obvious from Ḥabshūsh's reports that the persecution was not from the side of the throned 'Imām, but it was from that of the rebel pretender.

It is difficult to discern who was that new claimant King, who as Ḥabshūsh said, persecuted the Jews by giving orders that the Jewish proprietors who were in the aforementioned town should be robbed and the Jews, in order to rescue themselves, were forced to convert and some of them fled and others were killed for keeping their religion. None of the Jews remained in the aforementioned countries. As soon as that claimant King was defeated by al-Nāṣir as Ḥabshūsh claimed, those who converted returned to their faith and those who had abandoned their villages to save themselves from the cruelty of the claimant 'Imām, came back to their previous dwellings and many of them were

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Israel b e-Teman, Sefunot, vol. 2, p.266, note 146, but that 'Imām whom Kafih thought he was the ruling 'Imām at that time claimed himself 'Imām after the death of al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsim and gave himself the title of al-Nāṣir, vide infra, p.66, note 1.

1. vide supra, p.55, note 1.

killed for keeping their faith.<sup>1</sup>

According to another Hebrew source which tells the same sort of persecution that the Jews suffered from, but with differences, the main and essential difference is that not exactly the new King who appeared in the South West of the Yemen who persecuted the Jews and forced them to convert to Islām, but that he was the reason for the Jews' persecution. The records here in that MS continue confirming that at that time there was actually a rebel, (who claimed himself as an 'Imām at the east of the Yemen and not at the west of the Yemen as Ḥabshūsh and Sassoon's MS records)<sup>2</sup> rebelled against the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib so that the latter, in order to settle peace, asked his nephew Aḥmad b. 'Ishāq to go to settle the troubles in the area mentioned. Sayyid Aḥmad, known by the

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.63<sup>b</sup>; Ḥabshūsh's report agrees with another Hebrew source which describes this event, that work is one among many other works by different authors, all in one MS called Kamāl al-Ṣinā'ah, The Perfection in the Art by 'Alī b. al-'Abbās al-Majūsī, that MS is found in Sassoon, Ohel David, the Hebrew and Samaritan MSS, vol. 2, p.1040, Cod. 985. And the events page number in the MS is p.293. This account about that event is by Joseph b. Sa'īd al-Lāwī. It is most probably that Ḥabshūsh copied from it, not exactly literally, but perhaps he made his account according to what he read in that source.

2. vide; the previous note.

name Ḥajar, as he was called by the Arabs and the Jews as well, was very fanatical against any other religion.<sup>1</sup> He was Wālī Ṣan'ā'<sup>2</sup> at that time. He gained the agreement of all the members of the government about what he intended to do against the Jews except the agreement of his uncle al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib who opposed all his ideas and moreover, he warned him against causing any harm to the Jews and secretly told the chief Rabbi of the Jews about his nephew's plot.<sup>3</sup>

In order to discern the character of that new King as he was called by Ḥabshūsh, who appeared in the year 1700, we learn from the Arabic sources about that enormous event which happened during the reign of the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib in 1111 A.H. (1700 A.D.). It is the event of the Dajjāl al-Maḥṭūrī or al-Maḥḍūrī<sup>4</sup> who was a professional juggler and conjurer. He carried on plundering and shed blood and shooting had no effect on him.<sup>5</sup> That event, as al-Shaukānī reports, shook the state of the Yemen

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1. Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūza', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.387.

2. The actual 'Imām's settlement at that time was at Redā'.

3. The story is published in Arabic with Hebrew characters in Sefunot, vol. 5, pp.387-389 with Hebrew translation by Jehuda Razabi.

4. Al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli'..., vol. 2, p.99; Al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusain, op. cit., p.247<sup>a</sup>; Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Zubārah, Iṭḥāf al-Muhtadīn..., p.87.

5. Ibid., p.99.

so that the Şultān in Turkey wrote the Governor of Egypt asking about that rebel who rose in the Yemen. The 'Imām al-Mahdī Şāhib al-Mawāhib's army at that time was exhausted in several severe battles with him.<sup>1</sup> It is stated that his victims from Jews and Banians and Muslims from the twelfth of Rajab until Shawwāl of the above-mentioned year, 1111 A.H., reached twenty thousand people.<sup>2</sup> As he was captured at last, he was questioned about his killing the 'Ulamā' and his cruel deed against Ahl al-Dhimma by killing, torture, ravishing and all the disgraceful behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭalī'..., vol. 2, p.99; Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Zubārah, Ithāf al-Muhtadīn..., p.87.
  2. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Zubārah, Ithāf al-Muhtadīn..., p.87; Al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.222.
  3. Muḥsin b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Qāsim, Riyād al-'Asjad wa al-Zahr al-Yāni' al-Munaddad, p.48<sup>a</sup>.

### The Jews in Prosperity

The change of the political situation in the Yemen towards the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, affected in many ways the political situation of the Jews in the Yemen. The Jews in the Yemen at that time reached the epoch of their political glory. One of them occupied the situation of political adviser of the 'Imām. Although the story of Ḥabshūsh lacks accuracy as to the exact names of the 'Imāms, it still has a great deal of information about the highest political situation of the Jews in the above-mentioned period. According to Ḥabshūsh the 'Imām Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib, who reigned from 1097-1128 A.H.,<sup>1</sup> had sympathy for them and accepted one of the Jewish family, of Ahrān Hakohen al-'Irāqī to serve in his palace and their child Sālim grew up alongside the 'Imām's son.<sup>2</sup>

Mori Sālim al-'Irāqī gained remarkable respect from the 'Imām's son who according to Ḥabshūsh's description won his father's throne. The story of how he

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1. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Zubārah, Ithāf al-Muhtadīn ..., p.87; al-Ziriklī, op. cit., vol. 6, p.239.
  2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.65 ; Brauer, Ethnologie der Jemenitischen Juden, p.41, note 2, repeats according to Semach, that Ahrān 'Irāqī was physician at the 'Imām's Court in Reda'.

won the throne is very interesting; moreover, it shows the political role of Sālīm al-'Irāqī. The information of Ḥabshūsh on this aspect is considerable, describing in greater detail, the political trick of Sālīm al-'Irāqī who guided the 'Imām's son step by step to ascend his father's throne. He said that as the 'Imām's son grew, his ambition for the throne grew with him after the throne had been under the King of Gharās, and the 'Imām's son relied entirely upon his Jewish friend's astrology.<sup>1</sup> By his intelligence he got the answer that most of the people and the Shaikhs of the country did not like the King of al-Gharās and most of them praised his friend the 'Imām Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's son for his kindness and uprightness and above all the people of the Qur'ān (the religious people). Thereafter, he was sure that he could easily ascend the throne without fear and all would accept his rule willingly. Sālīm's trick of making him enter Ṣan'ā' and be accepted by the congregation was a great success, by which the 'Imām's son had won the throne.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ḥabshūsh now and again in his records tries to produce a joke about the Arabs, trying to show the Jews' talent and how they could play with the simplicity of the Arab and stupefy them; Ḥabshūsh added that Sālīm al-'Irāqī knew himself that he did not know astrology and he had no knowledge of such a matter and did not esteem it.
  2. The steps of Salim's trick in detail is in Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.66<sup>a</sup>-66<sup>b</sup>.

Sālim al-'Irāqī said to the 'Imām's son: "long life to your Majesty, here our God anointed you to rule and this is the sign: tomorrow go and pray the dawn prayer, in front of the gate of Uzal (Ṣan'ā'), outside the wall, ... On the same day enter the country officially and pray the evening prayer in Masjid al Murādiyyah (the Mosque of al-Marādiyyah), which is in Uzal Palace (the Palace of Ṣan'ā'), and at night messengers will come to announce that you have been anointed King." The 'Imām's son exulted and rejoiced because of his Jewish friend's prophecy. Sālim al-'Irāqī told him: "to confirm the truth of my saying, we can go together, and if any of my words would not come true, you may kill me for it is Sālim's mouth that speaks".

As the 'Imām's son heard the saying of his Jewish friend, he quickly ordered his servants to gird the mule and went all day long and night. As the dawn rose, they reached the gate of Ṣan'ā' and prayed in Masjid Wahb, for all went well with them. The light of the day appeared, and the people were going every one on his way. Here, they saw the son of the generous King, the King of al-Mawāhib. They were astonished and whispering one to another about the arrival of the 'Imām's son. He entered their big College or house of study<sup>1</sup> (which means Masjid as

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1. The Hebrew word is מדרש, see Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.66<sup>b</sup>.

it is a place for studying religion), the people of the country surrounded him in astonishment. At noon, he prayed in the Masjid surrounded by a large congregation.

When the representative of King al-Gharās realised that his supporters had gone away because of the King of al-Mawāhib's son, he fled to the palace.<sup>1</sup>

Ḥabshūsh's story of the proclamation of the 'Imām Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's son has no corroborating evidence in the Arabic sources which make no mention of the fact that any of 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's sons tried to ascend the throne after their father's death. It is very clear that 'Imām al-Qāsim who gave himself the name al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusain b. Aḥmad who was in Zamar during his uncle al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's reign ascended the throne in 1128 A.H. (1716 A.D.)<sup>2</sup>- 1139 (1726). According to Ḥabshūsh, the 'Imām's son must then have won the throne from 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh who succeeded his uncle after the riots had been perpetrated by 'Imām al-Manṣūr and his supporters. He was proclaimed 'Imām for a short time by the help of al-Mutawakkil, to pave the way for himself to ascend the

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.66<sup>a</sup>.

2. al-Ziriklī, op. cit., vol. 6, p.8; al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli'..., vol. 2, pp.42-44; al 'Arshī, op. cit., p.69 confirms the date of his ascendance in 1130 instead of 1128.

throne.<sup>1</sup>

As for the Arabic sources, we find some of them refer to the troubles (riots) which happened during 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh's reign. The most remarkable event occurring during his reign was initiated by his cousins (sons, not of his uncle 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib, but of his uncle 'Ishāq) and war took place between the two sides. The reference confirms what Ḥabshūsh claims, that the people were not quite satisfied with his reign and there was an argument about capturing him in Ṣan'ā' and they all voted unanimously that the scholar (al-'Allāmah) 'Iz al-'Islām Muḥammad b. 'Abd-Allāh b. al-Ḥusain should give himself out as 'Imām, hoping to gain the tribes' vote. The matter was involved between two, the above-mentioned person and 'Iz al-'Islām Muḥammad b. 'Ishāq b. al-Mahdī. That was on the 9th of Ṣafar in year 1136 A.H. (1723 A.D.) 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh was at that time at al-Rauḍah. Bakīl and Ḥāshid's tribal vote was for the latter not the former, and there was no other way but to accept that Sayyid Muḥammad b. 'Abd-Allāh should withdraw and leave the chair to his rival Muḥammad b. 'Ishāq.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See al-Wāsi'ī, Tārīkh al-Yaman..., pp.222-223; al-Ziriklī, op. cit., p.8, vol. 6; Al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusain, op. cit., pp.247-8. Ibn al-Ḥasan, Muḥsin, op. cit., pp.9-29.

2. Al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusain, op. cit., pp.248<sup>a</sup>-249<sup>a</sup>.

After all, 'Imām al-Mutawakkil succeeded in defeating them and silencing them by capture and imprisonment.

In order to discern how far Ḥabshūsh's records of the event of Sālim al-'Irāqī and the 'Imām Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's son were true, we find some similarity between the Hebrew and the Arabic chronicle, not in all the details but in some subsidiary points. In a way, they agree with each other that 'Imām al-Mutawakkil's reign was not a time of prosperity and peace, but of rebellion against him, and his uncle's sons, particularly Muḥammad b. 'Ishāq,<sup>1</sup> when he was proclaimed 'Imām for a few days as we mentioned. Obviously the difference between the two sources, the Hebrew and the Arabic is noticeable, that none of the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's sons was proclaimed 'Imām either during their father's successor's reign or the latter's successor's reign. He was called 'Imām al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh al-Ḥusain b. al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsim (1139-1161 A.H. : 1726-1748 A.D.) but only Muḥammad b. 'Ishāq made a fresh attempt at the 'Imāmat at that time and proclaimed himself 'Imām under the name of al-Nāṣir. Later he was defeated by 'Imām al-Manṣur.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See about him, al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭālī'..., vol. 2, pp.127-128, he tried for the 'Imāmat again after al-Mutawakkil's death and proclaimed himself 'Imām and gave himself the name of al-Nāṣir.

2. al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭālī'... vol. 2, p.222.

It is worth mentioning that the Jews in the Yemen during the reign of the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib, according to their own reports confirm that they lived in respect. There was no hint of persecution and they gained ground at the 'Imām's Court and gained the love of the 'Imām's son.

So far as we are concerned, it is quite agreed that there was a friendship between the Jews and the 'Imām's son alongside whom Sālīm al-'Irāqī grew up. It is not only Ḥabshūsh's records which mentioned that, but it is obvious from another Hebrew chronicle<sup>1</sup> which was written during the same period in which the events happened. It is the most important chronicle about the Jews in the Yemen at the beginning of the 18th century (1717-1726) by Sa'īd Sa'dī whose chronicle describes the war which took place between the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib and the 'Imām al-Manṣūr, who was proclaimed 'Imām by the support of the rebel clans. "In the year 1717", Sa'īd Sa'dī said, "which is the twenty-eighth year of the reign of the King al-Mahdī, there came a very weak King from the north called al-Manṣūr and he rose against the great King al-Mahdī. He wished to gain victory over him but failed. He was supported by armed men from the north. They put him on the throne for a few hours until they captured the western

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1. Sa'īd Sa'dī, Dofe Ha-Zman.

lands. Al-Mahdī distributed money to them, for that was their main aim. The weak King as a result of his weakness could not go with them to battle".<sup>1</sup>

From that passage, we notice how the Jews in their writing looked upon 'Imām 'al-Mahdī with great love and considerable respect by calling him "the great King al-Mahdī".

According to the Hebrew sources too, we find that there is no sign of persecution against them apart from some slight harm caused as a result of the barbarity of the rebels which affected the Jews as well as the Arab natives. Sa'īd Sa'dī continues in his chronicle describing the destruction which was caused as a result of the war saying, "Mahdī's men came out and a war took place between the two sides, starting at noon until the sun set, in which about fifty people were killed from both sides. After the fight the rebels could not find a place to stay, and rested in the desert of 'Uzal (Ṣan'ā'). Therefore, they returned to stay in the houses of the Jews. On their arrival at the Jewish quarter, they were met with the shouts and cries of the people of the devastated country. They broke the doors of the houses and entered them. The Jews ran out from everywhere and stayed in one house. The rebels continued spoiling, plundering and wrecking. The Jews gathered in

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1. Sa'īd Sa'dī, Dofe Ha-Zman, Jerusalem, MS. No. 80<sup>o</sup>599, p.4<sup>b</sup>.

the morning and went to the King's son, shouting and saying "Why do you do that to your people?" and the King's son, therefore, sent delegations to expel the rebels from the Jews' houses!"<sup>1</sup>

Again there appears, as we saw, the character of the son of 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib and it is quite obvious that he was a great friend of the Jews as they had the full freedom to go and shout at him, protesting against the Arab rebel clans who took advantage of them by plundering and wrecking their houses. It is natural that the effect of the war concerned almost all the people of Ṣan'ā', the Jews as well as the Arabs, but as we notice, it is obvious that the Hebrew sources are usually concerned about the Jews only.

So far as the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's son who was a friend of the Jews is concerned, we find it difficult to identify his character, for Sa'īd Sa'dī as well as Ḥabshūsh, left us in a vague position by not mentioning his name. According to an Arabic reference, it is said that during the war, al-Mahdī depended somehow upon the help of his son al-Muṭahhar.<sup>2</sup> It is likely that this is the son who was meant by Sa'īd Sa'dī to whom the Jews complained about the destructive attitude of the rebel

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1. Sa'īd Sa'dī, Dofe Ha-Zman, p.5<sup>a</sup>.

2. Sharaf al-Dīn, Kitāb Bulūgh al-'Umniyah fī-al-Sīrah al-Mutawakkiliah, p.8<sup>b</sup>.

clans. It is confirmed in that same Arabic reference that the rebels ravaged and ravished a great deal.<sup>1</sup> But the Arabic records do not give evidence that that happened only to the Jews in particular or to the Arabs in particular, but as it is understood, to the inhabitants of that area at that time.

The Jews at that time were not in a position of fear or under pressure of persecution. On the contrary, they were in a position which would not let them hesitate to complain. They raised their voices before the Muslim Arab leaders, complaining against any cruel behaviour, harm or losses afflicting them.

The beginning of the 18th century as we have already stated, was a period of prosperity for the Jews in the political situation in the Yemen. Their representative in the Court of the 'Imām, Sālīm al-'Irāqī, succeeded in bringing the Jews near to the 'Imām, gaining a political ground in the Yemen.<sup>2</sup> Sālīm al-'Irāqī acquired popularity among the Jews also. He was a respected character as well as a Nasi (leader) of the Jews and their representative in the 'Imām's Court.

One important point needs to be discussed. It is the birth of Sālīm al-'Irāqī. According to Ḥabshūsh, as we

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1. Sharaf al-Din, Kitāb Bulūgh al-'Umniyah fī-al-Sīrah al-Mutawakkiliah, p.16<sup>a</sup>.

2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.64<sup>b</sup>; Korah, op. cit., p.16.

already mentioned, Sālīm al-'Irāqī was born in the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's Court and grew up alongside the 'Imām's son.<sup>1</sup>

The Hebrew sources give evidence that he was born earlier than the period reported by Ḥabshūsh. In Megilat Teman, it is reported that after the 'Imām Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan (1620-1681) released them from the exile of Mūza', the Jews chose Morī Yaḥyā Hallevy and Morī Sālīm Hakohan to be the leaders of the community at that time.<sup>2</sup>

Another Hebrew source confirms that report, though it is based on the traditional sayings which say that Sālīm al-'Irāqī was born twenty years before the exile to Mūza' and died in 1780 which means that he died 120 years of age. His descendants, on the other hand, say that he was born after the return from the exile.<sup>3</sup> If we consider the information of Megilat Teman and Koraḥ that he lived 120 years, it would be more likely that he grew up in the 'Imām Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan's Court and not in the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's Court as Ḥabshūsh claimed, and that it was not Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib's son whom Sālīm al-'Irāqī had grown up alongside and helped to ascend the throne but the 'Imām Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan's son, and more correctly the

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1. vide supra, p.61.

2. Sassoon, D. S. Megilat Teman, Ha-Zophe, vol. VII, p.12.

3. Koraḥ, op. cit., p.19, note 16.

latter's grandson, namely Muḥammad b. 'Ishāq who revolted during the reign of the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh as we already mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

Although we understand that the Jews gained the friendship of the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib, who was the 'Imām Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan's son, the aforementioned 'Imām, and that Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib did not succeed to his father's throne straightaway because the 'Imāmat went to Muḥammad b. 'Ismā'īl who was known by the name al-Mu'ayyad bi-Allāh (1634-1686).<sup>2</sup> We eliminate the possibility that both Sālim al-'Irāqī and Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib grew up alongside each other because the latter was mature after his father's death and was not a little boy whose ambition for the throne grew when he became grown up, as Ḥabshūsh claims. He was already far older than Sālim al-'Irāqī, who was only about 27 years old when Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib ascended the throne, if we consider the saying that he was born 20 years before the exile to Mūza' while Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib was about 50 years old (ascended the throne in 1686; born 1637).

At whose Court did Sālim represent the Jews? That is the question here. So far as we can see, it is likely that it was towards the end of 'Imām Ṣāhib al-

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1. See above, p.65.

2. Al-Ziriklī, op. cit., p.262, vol. 6; al-Muḥibbī, op. cit., vol. 3, p.296; al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.68.

Mawāhib's period. An evidence of help, already mentioned, is that the Jews shouted at the 'Imām's son, protesting against the damage done by the rebels in the war. It is possible that Sālīm was their representative to the 'Imām's son at that time, for the following passage declares the decline of Sālīm in the Court.

Habshūsh's records give the idea that as Sālīm reached his peak, the table turned round and there came another 'Imām who imprisoned Sālīm, "after that, there came, a King from the family of al-Ḥusain (Bait al-Ḥusain) who was a descendant from the family al-Ḥasan. He arrested Sālīm Hakohen (al-'Irāqī) for about 12 months and bound him and brought him before the lion, but the lion was rubbing himself against him like a cat and there was no sign of harm or injury done to Sālīm al-'Irāqī, so that the King and the ministers were astonished by that miracle. Then he was released from jail and all the people were very happy. All the women of the country, Gentiles and Israelites from the gate of the fortress to the west gate of the Jews' quarter were climbing over the windows and the roofs of the houses and shouting very loudly with joy la-la-la for that was their custom.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, pp.67<sup>b</sup>-68<sup>a</sup>. Ḥabshūsh's way of telling the story of Sālīm's capturing is similar to the old stories, in describing how he was brought by the lion and the lion approached him with no harm. Daniel VI, 16-23.

Ḥabshūsh added that while Sālīm al-'Irāqī was imprisoned the 'Imām gave orders that all the Jewish houses should not be higher than the height of the 'Imām's sword which was eleven cubits. Moreover, he ordered the destruction of all the Jewish synagogues except the smallest among them which was called al-Masūrī.<sup>1</sup>

Ḥabshūsh very often did not give the date of that event nor the proper name of the 'Imām who persecuted the Jews at that time except that slight light was thrown on the 'Imām's character, namely that he was from Bait al-Ḥasan min-zar' al-Ḥusain (p.67<sup>b</sup>).

Koraḥ was more accurate giving the date in which the decree was announced and the name of the 'Imām who ordered that decree against the Jews, but without mentioning Sālīm's imprisonment. Koraḥ reported that in 1762 the 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abbās b. al-Manṣūr Ḥusain punished the Jews by destroying their synagogues of the district of Bi'r al-'Adhb and that the Jewish population were scattered to pray in the houses.<sup>2</sup>

Niebuhr's report confirms the name of the 'Imām and the date of the incident given by Koraḥ. His testimony confirms Ḥabshūsh's story so far as Sālīm's imprisonment is concerned. He said, "one of the most eminent merchants

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.68<sup>a</sup>.

2. Koraḥ, op. cit., pp.18-19.

among them named Oroeki ... two years before our arrival here, ... had fallen into disgrace, and was not only imprisoned but obliged to pay a fine of 50,000 Crowns. Fifteen days before we arrived at Sanaa, the 'Imām had let him at liberty ... The disgrace of Oroeki had drawn a degree of persecution upon the rest of the Jews. At that period, the government ordered fourteen synagogues, which the Jews had at Sanaa, to be demolished. In their village are as handsome houses as the best in Sanaa. Of those houses likewise all above the height of fourteen fathoms were demolished and the Jews were forbidden to raise any of their buildings above this height in future".<sup>1</sup>

According to what we learn of that event in the Arabic sources, it shows that Sālīm was imprisoned during the reign of 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsīm b. al-Ḥusain (1128-1139 A.H.), though not by his own will as an enemy of the Jews who harboured hate against them, but because of the atmosphere caused by some of the religious people such as al-Badr al-'Amīr (al-Badr Aḥmad b. 'Ismā'īl al-'Amīr), who was very strict in his faith and exaggerated in applying the faith in the Yemen.

The following story which was recited by the Arabic source was a desired opportunity for al-Badr. It happened that a drunk man tried to assault a boy in one of

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1. Niebuhr, Travels through Arabia, vol. 1, pp.408-409.

the Mosques, but the latter appealed for help, and was delivered. They reported that matter to 'Imām al-Mutawakkil who became very offended and asked for Sālīm al-'Irāqī the leader of the Jews<sup>1</sup> to be questioned. How is it that the authority forbade the Jews to sell wine to the Muslim, yet he, i.e. Sālīm al-'Irāqī gave them the permission to sell it? "The Sayyid Muḥammad al-'Amīr and the Sayyid al-Ḥasan b. 'Ishāq", Sālīm replied, "gave us their fatwa that selling wine is legal". As al-Badr al-'Amīr heard of Sālīm's fabricated lie against him he went to the 'Imām and asked him to bring Sālīm al-'Irāqī before him to reveal his lie and to make him realise how far the Jews' activity had gone by increasing the number of their synagogues and crowding out the Muslims in the streets which is inconsistent with their being humbled.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the

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1. Joseph Kafih refers, that Sālīm al-'Irāqī was at the time of 'Imām al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusain (al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusain) acting as the leader of the Jews of Ṣan'ā', he said in Sefunot, vol. 1, p.214, note 199 about the Jewish woman who committed adultery with the Jews and Gentiles as well, at the time when Sa'īd al-Sa'dī was writing his book Dofe Ha-Zman, whose events took place during the reign of al-'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusain, "the leader of the Community at that time was Rabbi Sālīm Ahrān al-'Irāqī who was in charge of the mint and very close to the King and he was the direct representative of the Community before the tyrant authority".

2. Qur'an, IX, 29.

'Imām ordered Sālīm al-'Irāqī before him and asked him about the number of the synagogues. Meanwhile al-Badr al-'Amīr asked him: "You said that I gave you fatwah which permit selling wine; did you meet me, or did I write you a fatwah with my handwriting?" Sālīm al-'Irāqī hesitated in replying and said: "Our Rabbis told us". Therefore, the 'Imām realised his fabricated lie and ordered him to be imprisoned, and al-Badr al-'Amīr said: "and to be chained too".<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, al-Badr al-'Amīr tried to persuade the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil to follow the Hadīth: "Dismiss the Jews from the peninsula",<sup>2</sup> or at least to destroy their synagogues. Thereafter, the 'Imām ordered the destruction of their synagogues. The 'Imām's own desire was not to cause any harm to the Jews or to Sālīm al-'Irāqī, for as soon as al Sayyid al-Badr al-'Amīr left, he gave orders to stop the destruction of the synagogues, and that Sālīm should not be put in chains.<sup>3</sup>

At that time, and as a result of that event, the 'Ulamā' in the Yemen were involved, discussing the continuous living of the Jews in the Yemen, giving many casuistic (fatawī) arguments which refer to their right to live in the Yemen and the balance swayed against al-Badr

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1. Muḥammad Zubārah, Nashr al-'urf, vol. 2, p.513.

2. vide supra, p.51.

3. Muḥammad Zubārah, Nashr al-'urf, vol. 2, p.513.

al-'Amīr's party.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Arabic source, we find it obvious that 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsim b. al-Husain's attitude towards the Jews at his time did not carry any kind of deliberate persecution. On the contrary, they lived in a very prosperous political situation under their leader Sālim al-'Irāqī in spite of the opposition from some of the strictly religious men of the state. That situation continued up to the second half of the 18th century, i.e. under another two 'Imāms after 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh's régime. The other two 'Imāms were, 'Imām al-Mansūr ibn al-'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh and 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abbās who ascended the throne after him.<sup>2</sup>

We find it very difficult to discern under what 'Imām the Jews suffered that sort of mortification. The Hebrew source confirmed by Niebuhr's testimony emphasized

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1. Muḥammad Zubārah, Nashr al-'urf, vol. 2, p.514ff.
  2. Niebuhr emphasized that Sālim al-'Irāqī gained a tremendous position in the first half of the 18th century. He said: "One of the most eminent merchants among them, named Oroeki, gained the favour of two successive 'Imāms and was for thirteen years, in the reign of El Mansar, and for fifteen years under the present 'Imām, Comptroller of the Customs and of the royal buildings and gardens; one of the most honourable offices at the Court of Sana". See Niebuhr, Travels through Arabia..., vol. 1, p.408.

that it was the 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abbās who persecuted the Jews and ordered the destruction of their synagogues. And the Arabic source gives the name of the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil. It is not reasonable to disregard the Hebrew source as confirmed by Niebuhr's testimony. At the same time we could not refuse the Arabic source which is accompanied by a detailed account of the incident. It is likely that this story happened twice. First in the time of the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusain when the decree of the destruction of the synagogues, according to the Arabic source, was annulled shortly after it was put into practice. And second, during the reign of the 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abbās according to the Hebrew sources.

The Jews' Political Advantage at the Beginning of  
the Nineteenth Century

The Hebrew sources in our hands do not mention any events concerning the political situation of the Jews in the second half of the eighteenth century. This can be ascribed to the circumstance that no remarkable persecution approached them during that period and that events so far as the Jews are concerned, presented nothing new. But again at the beginning of the nineteenth century, their political situation reached its peak. They suffered no considerable persecution; on the contrary, they gained the love and friendship of the 'Imām who reigned at that time, 'Imām al-Mahdī 'abd-Allāh.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they agreed upon a military co-operation with the 'Imām in his war against the clans of Ḥāshid and Bakīl as we will see.

The Hebrew source describes how the first contact between the Jews and the Bakīl clans goes back to the famine which happened in the year 1808, when the forces of this clan came to have their dues which they had been in the habit of receiving since the time of 'Imām al-Qāsim. They encamped near by 'Uzel (Ṣan'ā') and held up any passer-by. They were plundering and robbing all the way, which

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1. He was born 1208 and died 1267, see al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.61.

doubled the severity of the famine, as the prices had gone tremendously high. At the end of the year, in the month of Aylul 1809, the famine waned gradually. That was not the end of the clans' skirmishes.

In the year 1817 the clan forces came to the 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abd-'Allāh to receive their dues. The 'Imām was kindled to anger for they already had taken 120,000 Shâkel of money every year. In the country a Herald proclaimed the arrest of any they found of the Bakīl soldiers and the order to bring them alive to be put in jail.

The Jews obeyed that summons and seized whom they found of Bakīl.<sup>1</sup>

Every Jew went out with a truncheon or with his jobbing tool, chasing the Bakīl. Upon the walls and the gates of Şan'ā' they fled away and they even went to hide from the Jews in the latrines. Those who had been seized were put in jail and their commander al-Naqīb 'Alī b. 'Abd-'Allāh was among the soldiers killed and his head was cut off.

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1. The hostility which the Jews carried against Bakīl's clan might go back to the year 1808 when the famine took place and the Jews were plundered by them. Another important thing in the link between the Jews and the 'Imām was that the latter had great leaning towards the Jews who supplied him with wine, the 'Imām's favourite pastime.

The Bakīl went back ashamed of their defeat and succeeded in gaining the sympathy of most of the clans who declared their desire to take part in the coming battle between the Bakīl on one side and the 'Imām and his loyal Jews on the other. The number of Bakīl, a combination from different clans, reached about 130,000. Their essential aim that time was to wreak vengeance on the Jews who had chased them everywhere in Ṣan'ā' and to gain victory over that 'Imām whose ancestor al-Qāsim they had helped, both to ascend the throne and to cast out the Turks.<sup>1</sup> Now the 'Imām wanted to decrease their dues and treat them as beggars.

They planned to attack first of all the Jewish quarter on the night of the passover when they were in their festive finery. They planned that because they would not face any resistance from the Jews who were not armed or furnished with weapons.<sup>2</sup> Among the Yemenite Jews this event goes by the name of Galut Arḥab.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that the Jews of the Yemen during

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1. See Niebuhr, Travels through Arabia..., p.71.

2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.48<sup>a</sup>.

3. See Brauer, E., Ethnologie der Jemenitischen Juden, p.41, it is clearly noticeable that this name might point to the fact that this invasion came not only from Bakīl's soldiers but from the combined army of Bakīl, Ḥāshid, Arḥab and Nihm.

'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abd-Allāh's reign gained a great power of balance under the 'Imām's régime. They formed an influential power in the political situation at that time.

Regarding the Arabic sources, there are evidences that the Jews gained the 'Imām's friendship. There are no direct reports of historical events concerning the Jews at that period, but the biographied written about the 'Imām of the Yemen at that time give evidence that the Jews had an influence on the 'Imām's character. He was described in most sources for his weak character and his tendency to wine,<sup>1</sup> it is said: *أنه مال الى الخمر وشرب الخمر*<sup>2</sup>

We go back to the previous point which is the war between the 'Imām and the Jews on one side and the Bakīl tribes on the other. The invaders fulfilled their plan and bribed the watchman at the gate of the Jewish quarter who wanted revenge against the 'Imām whose representative al-'Affārī, a year before this incident, had deceived them and did not give them their rights in full. As he was responsible for their maintenance, al-'Affārī

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1. We can imagine the Jews' friendship to the 'Imām since wine is forbidden in 'Islām particularly in a strict country like the Yemen.
  2. About that 'Imam, see al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭālī'..., vol. 1, edition 1, pp.376-377; al-Wāsi'i, op. cit., p.226; al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.71.

had done that on purpose in revenge against the 'Imām for his evil deed towards him six years previously.<sup>1</sup>

Ṣan'ā' in those restless times was ever under the threat of hostile invasions, which were a danger to the Jews as well as the rest of the inhabitants. The Jewish quarter and also the Bi'r al-'Azab were plundered and ruined, and the Jews with their families fled during the night to Ṣan'a'.<sup>2</sup> The invaders stayed there for about 22 days. Thereafter, the 'Imām gave them their dues,

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1. About al-'Affārī's story see Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.49<sup>a,b</sup>. The story is summarised in that al-'Affārī took advantage of the 'Imām's trust in him and wanted to make a fortune in a quick way by using the Jew who was in charge of the Royal mint to decrease the weight of the silver coin, and later after his deceitful method of robbery was discovered and he was imprisoned for six months and continued his work after a year, but he devised revenge against the 'Imām by not giving the watchmen their proper right and provoking them to revolt. This story might give light to one of the reasons which made the Jews take advantage under 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abd-'Allāh's reign since the Jews occupied in his Court one of the most vital and important jobs, that is the charge of the Royal mint.
  2. The Jews faced that persecution from the Bedouin tribes as a result of their loyalty to the 'Imām as we mentioned. Most probably, they hoped that their cooperation with the 'Imām might give them the opportunity to the right to bear arms.

although they had already received about 180,000 of gold  
Shâkil and the 'Imām set their prisoners free.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.49<sup>b</sup>-50<sup>a</sup>.

The Jews in the 'Imām's Court

A few years after the war of Bakīl in which the Jews were involved and played an essential part in the political history of the Yemen, it happened that Rabbi Baruch b. Samuel came to the Yemen. In 1833 he travelled from Ṣafad to Ṣan'ā'. He had been sent out by the Community in Jāffā to seek for the ten tribes and ask from them help for the Jews suffering persecution. He was a physician.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Baruch'arrived in the Yemen at a time when the Jews had reached their peak of influential power over 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abd-'Allāh: the former served at the Court as the 'Imām's private doctor and succeeded in gaining the 'Imām's approval, and the latter enjoyed his services as a doctor and conferred on him the right to bear arms and use a horse. Moreover, Baruch took the opportunity of the 'Imam's illness and lack of decision as Muḥammad 'Alī occupied Mocha.<sup>2</sup> He must have proposed to the 'Imām as Brauer said,<sup>3</sup> that he hand over to him 20,000 Yemenite

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie der Jemenitischen Juden, pp.42-43.
  2. About this time Muḥammad 'Alī of Egypt attacked Mocha, which was occupied by the Amir of 'Asīr; Brauer, Ethnologie..., p.43.
  3. Ibid., p.43.

soldiers with whom to drive the foreigners out of Mocha. In return he asked to be made governor of Mocha, where at that time 400 Jewish families dwelt, including also rich merchants in the city where trade still flourished.

As Baruch's influence reached that level, the Arabs in the Court tried to demolish his reputation with the 'Imām. After being calumniated, Baruch was shot by the 'Imām, who afterwards repented of his murder and favoured the Jews, often visiting the Jewish quarter of Ṣan'ā' and collecting Jewish books. The 'Imām was finally suspected of having been converted to Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., pp.43-44; Bieber, Hugo, Yemen, The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia, p.591; Shlomo, Barer, The Magic Carpet, p.120.

The Jews under al-Mahdī 'Abd-'Allāh's Son

The Jews' situation did not change under al-Mahdī's son who succeeded the throne in 1251 A.H.<sup>1</sup> and was called 'Alī al-Nāṣir b. al-Mahdī.<sup>2</sup> According to al-'Arshī, he was a weak 'Imām like his father and lacked decision, so that the nation was not well organized, and he was an example of stupidity and foolishness. This description of that 'Imām was approved by Joseph Wolff who visited the Yemen at that time and met that 'Imām who received him very kindly and presented him with different presents. As Wolff describes him: "He appears to be a man of no energy or talent".<sup>3</sup> If we accept what had been said about him by the

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1. The Arabic references differ from one another about 'Imām al-Mahdī 'Abd-'Allāh's death. Most of them agree about the date of birth in 1208 A.H. See al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭālī'..., vol. 1, p.376; al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.226, but al-Wāsi'ī attributed his death to the year 1267 which is a big gap between 1251 and 1267.
  2. Al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.71; Wolff, Joseph, Journal of the Rev. J. W., London 1839, p.390.
  3. Wolff, Joseph, op. cit., p.391; Brauer, Erich, Ethnologie..., p.44, thought that that 'Imām whom Wolff met during his visit to the Yemen was 'Imām 'Abd-'Allāh al-Mahdī himself, but in fact, that 'Imām was his son who succeeded his father and stayed for a short period and was dismissed as we will see.

two sources mentioned, we should imagine that his attitude towards the Jews was similar to that of his late father's, especially when it is approved by Wolff who met him personally and said that he was drunk from morning to night, and that the Jews of Ṣan'ā' furnished him with brandy and wine. This is evidence that he followed his father's behaviour.

That 'Imām being weak and lacking in decision did not remain long in power, but was dismissed in 1252 A.H. and the throne was occupied by 'Imām al-Nāṣir li-Dīn 'Allāh 'Abd-'Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Mahdī b. al-'Abbās.<sup>1</sup>

The situation of the Jews under that 'Imām is unknown, for neither the Hebrew sources nor the Arabic, mentioned any kind of persecution directed at the Jews at that time.<sup>2</sup> Although, it is likely that this is the 'Imām

1. Al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.71; al-Ziriklī, op. cit., vol. 4, p.208.

2. Biéber, Hugo, Yemen, The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia, p.591; it is claimed that "After the death of Abdullah el-Mahdi, his son and successor, Abdullah el-Nasir, persecuted the Jews, accusing them of having misled his father". It is clear that he was not exactly al-Mahdī's successor as we mentioned above, but he was his son's successor. In contrast to the Arabic sources, we understand that he was more decisive than the two previous 'Imams:

”قام بأمر الإمامة الناصر لدين الله عبد الله بن الحسن بن محمد بن عباس الحسين وهو لادم

الذي اعلی به لدين واطهر نفس بجة سيد طرسليين” Al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.71.

who was said to be the son of the 'Imām who had persecuted the Jews for the suspicion that his father was converted to Judaism.

## PART II

The Economic Situation of the Jews in the Yemen

In order to study the economic situation of the Jews in the Yemen it is necessary to pay comprehensive attention to the economic situation of the Yemen in general.

Difficulties surround the investigation of this subject in the light of the rarity of the sources concerning this aspect. The lack of serious<sup>1</sup> study has its negative effects consequently on the study of the economic situation of the Jews in the Yemen. But the completing of the study of economic activities is necessary in the interest of our subject.

Agriculture:

A little light thrown on the agricultural condition of the Yemen is not out of place. The Arabic historians call the Yemen, the happy Yemen (al Yaman al-Sa'id) or the green Yemen (al-Yaman al-Khadra') which means that it had reached a considerable degree of agricultural

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1. Most of the economic study about the Yemen could be derived from the writings of the travellers. But to rely on their information is not adequate, because it is merely an outside reflection. vide: the work of al-'Attār, op. cit., from p.159 to p.254.

economic development.<sup>1</sup> From the abundance of its grain, coffee, wines and fruits and the products which establish the essential wealth of an agricultural country, it has well merited the title of Happy Arabia.<sup>2</sup> The Yemen is mainly a very rich agricultural land, with its many irrigation systems, which compensate the lack of rivers. The irrigation system has played an essential role in the agriculture in the Yemen as it was used from time immemorial by farmers; the construction of the ancient dams, especially Ma'rib dam, is very good evidence of the antiquity of the system. But the artificial irrigation was a remarkably primitive system and the mechanical system did not arrive in the Yemen until 1959.<sup>3</sup>

The tools used in agricultural Yemen are primitive and undeveloped, they do not go beyond preliminary hand tools; sometimes cattle are used for

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1. Ibn Khaldūn wrote a very interesting chapter about the Yemen, see Kitāb al-'Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtada' wa al-Mubtadā' wa al-Khabar, vol. 4, part 2, pp.452-480; see also Al-Ḥakamī who wrote Kitāb Tā'rīkh al-Yaman in which he quoted extensively Ibn Khaldūn and al-Jindī. See Kitāb Tā'rīkh al-Yaman, ed. Key.
  2. See Playfair, History of Arabia Felix or Yemen, Bombay, 1859, p.2; Hamilton, Alexander, Account of the East Indies, Edinburgh, 1727, vol. 1, p.44.
  3. For more details about the irrigation system, see al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.169-171

pulling. The essential tools are the plough, the axe, etc.<sup>1</sup> It is not strange then to notice the poverty in agriculture products,<sup>2</sup> although the country has been famous all down the ages for the richness and fertility of its soil.

The Yemenī coffee plant is the most famous kind of coffee<sup>3</sup> seeds in the international market. It was discovered as early as the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century and its product furnished the European market, but in spite of that it did not cover the deficiency in the economics of the Yemen.<sup>4</sup> The Yemen lost its considerable economic situation in the seventeenth century, when the Portuguese doubled the Cape of Good Hope and were the means of diverting the Indian trade to that

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1. Scott, Hugh, In the High Yemen, pp.49-51, paid much attention and great interest in the agricultural occupation and its different methods of threshing and winnowing.
  2. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., p.178.
  3. Laroque paid much attention to the different kinds of coffee seeds used in Arabia felix, telling that the talent and genius of the Dutch for trade, carried coffee from Arabia to Batavia which they sowed, but it is likely they had no great success for they were still trading with the Arabs for it; and the English also planted some coffee at Madras Patan but with no success. Laroque, Voyage dans l'Arabie Heureuse, English translation, pp.229-30.
  4. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.31-32.

route, while its harbours were demoted from being international markets to mere anchorages.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the economic situation in the Yemen is self-sufficient.<sup>2</sup> From the previous description, agriculture composed the foundation stone of the economic situation in the Yemen and it is the essential source in the national income. It is worth mentioning that agriculture is not the only economic source in the Yemen. Cattle-breeding and the products of fish are also calculated as essential supplies in the economics of the Yemen. In addition to that there are various things like arts and crafts and some kinds of industry which will be dealt with in some detail later.

#### The ownership of land:

The land in the Yemen is divided into allotments as follows:

- 1) Private ownership
- 2) The State landed proprietors (the 'Imam's landed properties in particular and the landed Waqf)
- 3) The collective lands.

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1. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., p.31; Playfair, op. cit., p.3.

2. The meaning of sufficiency here is that the economic products of a country are only sufficient for its own use, i.e. self-sufficiency. This situation is included in the frame of an economic stage which is still pre-capitalism, where the products are for the direct self-consumption and there is no question of marketing them as means for gain and prosperity; al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.188-189.

## 1. Private ownership:

Private land-ownership is mainly in the hands of secular nobles, the Sādah and the great merchants, those whom we call the big landed proprietors who work it through hired labour or even a kind of forced labour by the Ra'iyah. They possess the majority of this land although they do not work it directly by themselves because they, above all, despise in particular the work on the land and the manual work in general, therefore they divide their land into small allotments feued to the farm labourers (Mushārah).

Among the propertied class included in the first division - private ownership - are the small landed proprietors who work their land by themselves.

## 2. The 'Imām's land and the Waqf:

Beside the 'Imām's landed properties as one of the noble class, the country's farming land is subjected to his sovereignty as he is the highsovereign and he is even the Country.

Besides this landed property, there are the Waqf, which are entrusted to the 'Imām's representatives. In a very strict religious country like the Yemen, revenue from Waqf land is bequeathed inalienably by the rich families. The product of this sort of land enters the 'Imām's treasury.

### 3. The Collective land:

The family land-ownership is more genuine here. The family ownership is based on the idea of no division and makes for the united supervision on the whole farm land which belongs to a family and with the products divided among the branches of the family.<sup>1</sup>

The share of the Yemenite Jews in farming as a principal economic activity is very slight. As we already mentioned, farming land in the Yemen is chiefly in the possession of the secular nobility.

Already Niebuhr noticed during his journey that there was a sharp distinction regarding that type of work. He stated that he did not see a field occupied by a Jew, "for this nation lives in Yemen almost exclusively on trade and handcraft".<sup>2</sup> Another testimony comes from Leland Buxton, who said that they were forbidden by the Arabs to engage in agriculture, and they have not acquired the habit

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1. See al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.123-125.

2. Niebuhr, Carsten, Beschreibung von Arabien, p.159; cf. Neumann, The Jews in Spain, pp.184-185, in mediaeval Spain relationship between the rival trade guilds of Jews and Christians led to laws passed against Jewish economical activity, not particularly in agriculture but to reduce the Jewish merchant and workman to economic subserviance.

since the Turkish rule.<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact it is not absolutely true that they do not possess farming land; they were only forbidden to work it by themselves, but were expected to farm it out to Arabs who divided the produce.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there are Jews who possess farming land and work it themselves.<sup>3</sup> Many rich Jewish families possessed farm lands and used Arabs and Jews to work them.<sup>4</sup>

The investigations which were held among the al-Gade's Jews refer to the fact that they acquired farm land. "The affluent Gadasi" said Goitein, "invested his money in farm land, despite the fact that his people had proverbs such as "a steady customer is better than a field with a running spring in it".<sup>5</sup> And the only land

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1. Buxton, Leland, Journey to San'a, Blackwood's Magazine, vol. 179, 1906, p.607; Patai, Raphael, Israel between East and West, p.182.
  2. Jawneili, Mazave Ha-Yehudim Be-Teman, Adama, vol. 1, 1920/21, p.404; Ibn Saphir, op. cit., vol. 1, p.53<sup>a</sup>; Jawneili, Be-Teman, Hapo'al Haza'ir, vol. 5, p.13.
  3. Jawneili, Mazave Ha-Yehudim Be-Teman, Adama, vol. 1, p.404; Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.232.
  4. Brauer, Ethnologie..., p.233.
  5. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.13; In general, the Jew of Şan'ā' who has pretensions to scholarship and practices as high quality fine silver-smith or weavers, despises the ignorant country man

restriction against Jews in al-Gade as legal foreigners (Dhimis) was cultivation of virgin soil.<sup>1</sup>

The possession of land was prohibited in some particular provinces, such as in Wādī Najrān where the cultivated lands were very fertile. Not only was the prohibition in that Wādī applied against the Jews, but also against anyone who was considered foreign to that province including even the Shārifs of the foreign tribes of al-Jauf who visited the Wādī every year during the date harvest.<sup>2</sup> They could have certain places for dwelling and they left it after the date harvest.<sup>3</sup> We notice here that not only was the possession of farm land prohibited, but also all kind of land, except that the tribesmen could own land for any purpose they pleased.

For the question of prohibition of farm land in particular against the Jews, Brauer explains that the prohibition in the Yemen is based on Zaidī traditions. From a Dhimi, a non-Moslem, the only tribute acceptable is the Poll-tax - Jizyah - there can be no question of paying the ushr tax. No Jew, even if he does possess land, can

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with his coarse employment in farming. See Brauer, Ethnologie..., p.232.

1. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.13, note 30.
2. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, [Hebrew Text], p.87.
3. Ibid., p. 87.

work it on his own because he pays no tax (tithe), therefore, he can not cultivate it for his own account.<sup>1</sup>

Sémach Yamtob visited the Yemen in 1910. He states in his book Une Mission de l'Alliance au Yemen, page 85, that the prohibition of agriculture was not everywhere consistently obeyed; he states that he found only twenty families in the country whose wage-earners worked in agriculture<sup>2</sup> while he states that the total Jewish population in the Yemen at that time, according to him, was 35,000.<sup>3</sup> While showing the share of the Jews in farming, we noticed that alongside the prohibition of possessing farm land, they themselves despised such work and preferred craftsmanship. What was the impetus to that? This might be referred to many reasons, briefly described as follows:

Cultivating needs an enormous muscular effort as a result of the using of the primitive methods, such as the axe, the plough and the Shādūf (a roḥ-and-bucket wheel).

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie..., p.232; there are some of them like those of al-Gade's village who did not even pay the maximum Poll-tax, see Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.15; also the Jews of Shīra' gained the tribe's sympathy, and the latter freed them from paying Poll-tax and they paid it to the Ottoman government instead. See Ḥabshush, Korot Ha-Zman, p.102<sup>a</sup>.
  2. Brauer, Ethnologie..., p.232, note 5; Patai, Raphael, op. cit., pp.199-200.
  3. Brauer, Ethnologie..., p.232.

An idea can be drawn of the great energy needed and the lack of gain.

Ploughing one Akr by this undeveloped method used in the Yemen needs 20 days to accomplish, and if a plough is pulled by two horses, ploughing might be completed in one day, but if the developed method is used, like using a tractor of big power, the time needed for ploughing would be reduced to only one hour.<sup>1</sup> And in spite of the exertion spent for agriculture in the Yemen, the product is not even adequate for the farmer so that he very often is obliged to deal with the usurers as a result of the heavy taxes and the lack of development in their agricultural method.<sup>2</sup>

Another point which might be the reason which made the Jews abandon working with agriculture, is the Zaidī traditions of landed property. In addition to Brauer's explanation already mentioned above, al-'Aṭṭār mentioned that the landed property is a possession exclusive to the 'Imām or Khalīfa or 'Amīr who does not recognise the possession of any other, but in the right of a free hand in using it, at the same time it recognises the possibility of owning the land property.<sup>3</sup>

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1. al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.206-207.

2. Ibid., p.126.

3. Ibid., p.126.

It is rather important to pay attention to the chronicle<sup>1</sup> of al-'Arūsī which is devoted mainly to agriculture products reporting the fall of the rain and the market prices of the grain chronologically, month by month and sometimes even day by day. For example, he reports that in the year 1856 the vineyards had been attacked by a severe disease which smote all the grapes and made them uneatable. And in the year 1864, in the month of Azar, the market price had gone tremendously high, so that the measure of wheat was qadah minus quarter for a riyal, maize, two qadah for a riyal and the rain was too heavy during the whole month. And at the end of the month the land was attacked by the locust. In the month of Nisan, it rained heavily as well and the market price was so and so ... and the rain stopped on the 13th of Azar and rain fell again in Sion, etc...

An accurate report like that must carry an essential interest to the Jews in agricultural Yemen. One might infer that they in fact owned landed properties and the change of the weather meant a great deal to them as far

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1. The Chronicle deals with the years 1808 to 1905. The chronicle is called Mazukot Teman. The title is given by Joseph Kafih published in the MS. in Sefunot, vol. 5, p.399. See about it, Sassoon, Ohel David, the Hebrew and Samaritan MSS in Sassoon Library, p.970. The Chronicle is in Arabic and transliterated into Hebrew by the publisher.

as their cultivating land products are concerned. The author stressed mainly the changes of prices. Bearing in mind the slight share of the Jews in working their landed properties themselves. That would not concern them as owners of cultivating land, therefore, it is more probable that they traded in grain and the market price was of exceptional interest to them.

Another idea might be reasonable for the explanation of the Jews' concern with the grain prices. The Jews were mostly artisans and traders who had to supplement their livelihood by buying what they needed of these grains which form the essential part of the everyday food. The deficiency and expense of the land produce which had been affected by the rain and the drought, would affect accordingly their economical position.

#### Handcrafts and trade:

The limits of Jewish economic activity in farming did not expand to the extent of Jewish participation in the other branches of the economy, like trade and handcrafts.

Harris describes them saying: "There seems to be no more oppression of the Jews in the Yemen than there is of the Arabs. They are free to carry on whatever trade they will ... though naturally the Jews as to nature born, cry out a great deal more than the natives ... Many hire

shops and bazaars and are daily engaged in the town in attending to them, or in carrying on their respective trades".<sup>1</sup>

That the Jews, however, were city dwellers, in the main, is easily understood. Fully significant was the variety of professions and crafts which characterised the Jews of the Yemen.

The Jews were mainly craftsmen and traders. In many trades they enjoyed a complete monopoly within their country, especially as silversmiths.<sup>2</sup> A confirmation of that is the story which is presented by Ḥabshūsh about a negro concubine of one of the 'Imāms - 'Imam al-Mahdi of Ḍawarān. It happened that this 'Imām received two golden rings set with precious stones as a gift from India. The 'Imām honoured his aforementioned concubine whom he loved more than his wives and his other concubines, with one of the two rings. Unfortunately the ring was too small and nipped the middle finger and caused a swelling because of the blood being congested. When the 'Imām heard of that he was puzzled about what to do, there was nobody in the palace who had even a slight idea of crafts and skill as a silversmith or goldsmith. The 'Imām hurried to the

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1. Harris, W. B., A journey through Yemen, Edinburgh and London, 1893, pp.312-313.

2. Goitein, The land of Sheba, New York, 1947, p.10.

window to call his servants and slaves to hurry and bring the carpenter to solve the problem. While he is still half bending from the window in the dark, he saw a poor Arab carpenter with his tools on his back. The servants called him and brought him before the 'Imām who ordered him to save the woman's finger by taking off the ring. The poor carpenter brought a small threshing tool out of his tools and cut the ring. And the 'Imām rewarded him generously for that.<sup>1</sup>

They gained a high reputation in handicrafts. Rihānī praised their talent and their remarkable skill as artisans when he said "The brass work of San'a' is not so good as that of Damascus; but it shows the skill of an industrial people ... They have a talent for decoration, an eye for line, and a rather skilful hand. What they make is well designed, but crudely executed. If they had modern tools and better material, however, as well as the means which the mechanical sciences afford, they would doubtless develop a distinct style in the industrial art."<sup>2</sup>

The Jews had the dignity which comes from skilled craftsmanship. Among them some practised no less than fifty different manual trades; the skill was passed on

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.66<sup>b</sup>.

2. Rihani, Ameen, San'a - City of Fanaticism, Travel, vol. 55, p.50, New York, August, 1930.

from father to son. In the poorer regions a man was often master of several crafts.<sup>1</sup> The author Ḥabshūsh, whose work we depended upon most in this research, is a good example of that. His main livelihood was as a coppersmith and yet he learned enough to decipher old Sabaeen inscriptions for Halévy. Besides, he was an author who supplied those keen on study with a very important and interesting book.

Even in the religious field, we find that the Rabbis did not only restrict themselves to service to the community as Rabbis but work and study went together. Besides studying religion they practised some manual trade for a living. Saphir gave us a very good example of a Rabbi of one of the Yemeni villages. In the little town of Jirwāḥ, he met the Rabbi of the Jews there. Saphir says: "This little town has a great Rabbi (in those centuries they called the Rabbi Morī). He was the teacher, the judge, the preacher, the butcher, and he mended things, he is also beadle and minister ... Morī Jusiph b. Sa'dī (Sa'ādiā) is full of learning, piety and worldly wisdom. He has a wonderful knowledge of the Bible and its commentaries. He is wonderful in the Talmud and the writing of Maimonides ... he is wonderful at writing Cabbalistic works, takes an interest in astrology, makes

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1. Shlomo, Barer, The Magic Carpet, p.138.

up charms and amulets and writes out medical prescriptions, for which the Gentiles come to him seeking his advice and medical prescriptions and amulets and charms ... By profession he is a blacksmith, making arms, spades, ploughs, hammers, axes, shovels and all the implements needed by the villagers... His workshop is in a vault on the slope of the town hill".<sup>1</sup>

Another example was told to Goitein about the schoolmaster who teaches children five days and on Thursday afternoons gives the boys a trim. Friday they have free and then he works as a barber and the people of the community come to him and have their hair cut.<sup>2</sup>

In the trades, most of them concentrated in those fields which do not require physical exertion, but can be carried out in relative comfort, indoors, and which stressed not muscular effort, but the highly developed skill and the accumulated knowledge of the rich lore of the arts and crafts.<sup>3</sup>

As traders, as a whole, most of the Jewish traders were small retailers or hawkers. Only from the middle of the nineteenth century were the Jews to any great

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1. Ibn Saphir, op. cit., p.51<sup>a</sup>.

2. Goitein, The land of Sheba, p.18; that type of work, the barber, was too much despised in the Yemen and the rest of the Arab country, especially in former times.

3. Patai, Raphael, op. cit., p.200.

extent admitted to trading, because of the decline in handcrafts. Alongside "petty commerce" part of the "big business" is in the hands of the Jews.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this, the Jews are concerned as traders with the import and export business of Hudayyidah and Aden; their caravans bring to the coast, wares for sale abroad, and carry back into the land imported goods. The Yemenite Jew, formerly when the Yemen was an important trading link with India, etc., played an important role in trading. Formerly, many Jews were engaged in trading in ivory and feathers. The figure of the Jews meeting the stranger from the ship, and in the street, with ostrich feathers, was a common sight.<sup>2</sup>

As already mentioned, the Jews were engaged in so many kinds of handwork: in metal work, as silversmith, coppersmith and armourer, or in wood work, leather work, as weaver, tailor and many other types.

One of the various kinds of work not engaged in by the Jews was building. Jawnieli states that there were no building labourers among the Jews in the Yemen. And it was even rare among the Arabs too, for there was no need for housing, since many are the ruined and empty houses as a result of the cruel famines and wars which

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie..., p.260.

2. Ibid., pp.260-263.

ruined generations, still waiting for anyone who wishes to dwell.<sup>1</sup>

Coining:

The role of the Jews as coiners was one of very vital importance in the economic activities in the Yemenite Jews' economy. Ḥabshūsh states that since Sālīm al-'Irāqī and onwards, the Jews were in charge of the Royal mint. This function enriches the Jews with an enormous wealth relative to the economic standard of the Yemen. Most of the families found their livelihood as some acquired fields, fruit gardens and vineyards as a sign of wealth.<sup>2</sup> Some of them went too far, in order to speed and expand their economy; they issued bad coins. Ḥabshūsh reports that event during the reign of Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, who according to Ḥabshūsh was acknowledged 'Imam in Ṣan'ā' in 1261 (1845) after the abdication of 'Imām 'Alī b. al-Mahdī 1251 (1835/6).<sup>3</sup> The Jew who was in charge of the Royal

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1. Jawnieli, Mazav Ha-Jehudim Be-Teman, Adama, vol. 1, p.404; Raphael Patai, op. cit., p.199, mentions among the Yemenite Jews, some who were engaged in building labour according to the investigation carried out among the Yemenite immigrants.
  2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.67<sup>a</sup>.
  3. There is no mention in the Arabic sources that Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā gained the 'Imāmat' after 'Alī b. al-Mahdī who ascended the throne after his father al-Mahdī 'Abd

mint at that time was called Yūsif al-Shaikh Levi.<sup>1</sup> The employee who was responsible as cashier at that time, in order to escape from the accusation of the deceitful misuse of the money which was discovered by the 'Imām, falsely accused the silversmiths who were Jews, of having supplied silver with too much alloy. Accordingly, the Jewish silversmiths were punished by paying such a heavy fine that caused many of them to sell their houses in order to cover the fine or to suffer unlimited terms of imprisonment.<sup>2</sup>

This shameful incident was a black spot which could tarnish the honesty of the Yemenite Jews according to some authors.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless it is quite clear that the Jews became wealthy and possessed jewels and were well to do through their occupation of the mint at that time when the treasury of the state was in danger, and the rebellions

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Allāh in 1251, see the political part, p.88 ; the country was in trouble when the Governor of the other provinces revolted and seized the treasury and he was dismissed in 1252 and 'Abd Allāh al-Nāṣir succeeded, see al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.71.

1. About that family, see Saphir, op. cit., pp.146-147.
2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.89<sup>b</sup>; Goitein, Habshush's travels in Yemen, p.41.
3. Burchendt, Herman, Die Juden in Yemen, p.338.

against the aforementioned 'Imām ('Alī al-Mahdī) were troublesome and had their economic effect upon the population. Not only during that time, but generally speaking, at any period when all the population, Arabs and Jews alike, suffered from economic deficiency, the Jews in charge of the mint lived in luxury in comparison with the others.<sup>1</sup>

Manufacturing of gunpowder:

Although the Jews were forbidden to bear arms,<sup>2</sup> they occupied the function of its manufacturing. When Ḥabshūsh went to Ghaimān, seeking the Sabaeen inscription to copy for Halévy, he was accompanied by the wife of one of the Jews of that district to go and collect the earth as she used always to do for the manufacturing of the gunpowder and it was one of the famous employments occupied by the Jews in Ghaimān.<sup>3</sup> Apparently, the Jews of al-Gade's

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1. Jawnieli, Adama, vol. 1, p.400.

2. Cf. the Gābilīs (Qābīlīs) law for that case in Ḥaḍramaut. The forbidding of bearing arms was applied to some classes there. The Gābilīs were armed with rifles and in many areas prevented the Masākīn (the poor of small, scattered and dispersed descent group) from possessing them. See Burja, A. S., Social stratification of an Arab village in Ḥaḍramaut, Ph.D. Thesis, S.O.A.S., 1965, p.24.

3. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.73<sup>a</sup>; Saphir, op. cit., p. 53<sup>a</sup>.

village,<sup>1</sup> were expert in a great variety of industries. Among these industries, they were expert as gunsmiths.<sup>2</sup>

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1. About that village, see below, p. 116.

2. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p. 13.

## The Zeqinims

### The Zeqinim of Tehilim:

The economical situation of a certain group of the Yemenite Jews was very distressing as Habshūsh describes it. Those people reckoned in that group are called the Zeqinim (the elders). They depend upon income from the Zeqinim's funds, for they are not capable of any kind of work, as their strength became feeble and their eyes have grown dim. They gather every morning in the synagogue, having their Bible in their hands. Some of them are resting against the wall because of their weakness or because of a fever from starving. The distribution from the Zeqinim's fund which supports them was not by any means adequate, so those who had some strength to go round the houses of the rich, earned a little more from the alms given to them by the latter, and as for those who were unable to go round the houses of the rich, their relatives and friends bring them the crust of the bread and they dip it in the coffee or in some hot water to be able to eat it. Their actual function is reading the Tehilim (Psalms) and playing a musical instrument. There was an extraordinary attitude on the part of their overseer who used to punish whoever did not raise his voice loud enough in singing - the Psalms - by hitting him inhumanely on his

head, hoping that he might not endure it and leave the group so that he would be able to acquire the latter's portion from the Zeqinim's funds.

Another function was held by these Zeqinim. This was to wail in mourning for the dead people, either men or women for seven days and gain a sum of money as the wailing wage and a big meal (Si'udat Habraah)<sup>1</sup> was offered to them every day after they finished the lamentation prescribed by the heirs of the dead.<sup>2</sup> But unluckily, they were deprived of that meal which was sometimes similar to a magnificent banquet, because of their dishonesty in choosing the required lamentation for that purpose.

The Zeqinim of Rashi:

Another kind of Zeqinim who live on a meal held not by the heirs of a dead person, but by someone who had in his house any sort of trouble, either illness, grief, etc... and promised a meal as a vow the Zeqinim would be invited to it. They are not the Zeqinim, the reader of

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1. It is called by the Yemenite Jews ('Ashā), see Joseph Kafih, Korot Israel B-Teman, Sefunot, vol. 2, p.282, note 224.
  2. In Muslim funerals such a custom as reading the Qur'ān is practised and sometimes they kill an animal at the grave and distribute the flesh and bread. They keep open house at meals for three days, see Tritton, A. S., Muslim funeral customs, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, vol. 9, p.660.

the Tehilim, but they read all the week from the book of Rashi and depended mainly for their livelihood on the cash box (funds) of the late Yemenite Poet Sālim Shibzī<sup>1</sup> which was collected from vows promised from everywhere in the Yemen. The Zeqinim of the Tehilim got nothing of it and they were not invited to that meal unless the owner of the vow could not find ten of the other Zeqinim. He is in that case obliged to invite from the latter.

### The fishing industry:

The Jews almost to a man in the Yemen occupied a distinctive task according to the facilities in each area where they lived. For instance the Jews of Nihm were distinctive in fishing and fish trading besides various other tasks. Many of them were carpenters, joiners, weavers, blacksmiths, silversmiths. Some of them were dealers and some travelled to the places where coffee seeds are planted to work and get a living, and a very few obtained cultivated land. They have a valley in which no other kind of plants grow except the Ḥuṣ trees which is a kind of palm tree. They cut and split it and take it to Ṣan'ā' on camels and make it into brooms. Their women make Aghdia, Mināsif and Ribā'āt which are kinds of vessels used in the Yemen from 'Azāf (a kind of grass without leaves

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1. About him, see political part.

which is called in the Yemen, Ḥandīd). In the winter they go fishing from the river al-Khārid and trade with their catch in Ṣan'ā'.<sup>1</sup>

In comparison with the work done by the Jews of Shirā', we understand that the latter's standard of life is not pleasant. They have no other function but burning or grinding the stones and selling afterwards. That was the function of men, women and children besides their engagement to the tribes for piercing leather.<sup>2</sup>

#### Pottery:

One of the popular tasks engaged in by the Jews in the Yemen was pottery. Burchardt in his tour of the Yemen noticed that the Jewish inhabitants of the village al-Jirāḥ were exclusively occupied with the manufacture of pottery-ware in demand far and wide on account of its superior quality.<sup>3</sup>

Not only were men engaged in the manufacture of pottery in the Yemen, but also women share with men. In pottery the woman does the work, while the man chiefly concerns himself with its retail distribution, and bends his back to the heavy burden of pottery-ware in the

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.101<sup>b</sup>.

2. Ibid., p.101<sup>a</sup>.

3. Burchardt, op. cit., p.341.

different markets.<sup>1</sup> It is said that the manufacturing of pottery-ware which is one of the chief industries of the Jews of the Yemen has rendered them famous throughout the east.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, trading in pottery in the sense of export might have claimed an important place among the Yemenite Jews' business in import and export.

Weaving, tailoring and embroidering:

Weaving was a vital source of income for the Jews in the Yemen. We find that in a village in the Yemen called al-Gade<sup>3</sup> almost all its inhabitants - Jews - were engaged in weaving. Local thread was used in earlier times which might have been manufactured by Jews as well in the same village as Goitein says that "there is still a house in al-Gades which was formerly a spinning establishment, and much "bad and expensive" thread was brought from the Gabilis."<sup>4</sup> Aden was of vital importance for all the thread used in weaving came from there.<sup>5</sup>

This village dependent mainly on the weaving

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1. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.163.

2. Anonymous, Yemen, The Jewish Encyclopaedia, p.593.

3. It was inhabited exclusively by Jews. It is part of the district of Ibb; Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.8.

4. Ibid., p.12.

5. Ibid., p.11.

occupation, lived its golden age when the Yemen was in chaotic conditions round the middle of the nineteenth century. During this period, two or three storey houses were erected, many new friends were acquired. They manufactured all the main parts of the traditional male attire, they also made sleeping bags which were used in the Yemen to protect against cold and vermin.<sup>1</sup>

Goitein gives the idea that the Yemenite weavers did not reach the stage merely of manufacturing material, he says: "To assess correctly the Yemenite weaver's place in the country's economy, one must remember that he did not produce material for the tailor, but rather finished clothing for the customer."<sup>2</sup> But we understand from Jawnieli that, in fact, manufacturing the thread was done in the country either by Jews or Arabs. "There by primitive hand looms from these threads is woven the linen which is used everywhere in the country for garments to cover the naked bodies of the inhabitants".<sup>3</sup> Weaving was not a task for men only, but women worked also at weaving and the binding of the brooms.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.12.

2. Ibid., p.12.

3. Jawnieli, Mazav Hayyihudim B-Teman, Adama, vol. 1, p. 400.

Tailoring:

Tailoring for women was the most widespread handcraft among the Yemenite women, where most of the working consists of the stitching together of garments and women's stockings. They work at clothing for the Jewesses, but above all for the Arab women also.<sup>1</sup> The money that women earn from tailoring and other kinds of work, they use altogether for their own personal needs, for acquiring clothes and above all, for ornaments. For they lay great store by ornaments, which signify their personal properties built-up and constituted, and remaining to them even after divorce.<sup>2</sup> Tailoring in the Yemen, mostly, concerns the women's garments and their trousers, but tailoring for men is not very necessary for the men's garments are very simple and do not need any kind of skill.<sup>3</sup>

Among the Jews in the Yemen there are many who are engaged in the function of sewing garments made of sheep and goats' skins.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Brauer, Die Frau..., p.168.

2. Ibid., p.168.

3. Saphir, op. cit., p.53<sup>a</sup>.

4. Ibid., p.53<sup>a</sup>.

Embroidery:

Manufacturing embroideries reached its highest degree among the Jews in the Yemen. The Jews of al-Gade were expert in manufacturing embroideries which brings in much more than weaving and tailoring.<sup>1</sup> All over the Yemen, even the little girls take part in that work. At the age of 4 or 5 years they begin to embroider for the Arab girls.<sup>2</sup>

Wine:

The Jews in the Yemen succeeded in making wealth not only through legal and recognised works but also through illegal means.

These previous kinds of employment taken up by the Jews, amply prove that no restrictions were placed on Jewish arts and crafts and commerce and trading.

It is apparent then that there was hardly a form of economic activity in which the Jews did not participate apart from being forbidden to pioneer cultivation of land. Their right to engage freely in work, trade and commerce was well protected except in trading with wine. Though the Jews were strictly forbidden to trade in wine particularly with the Muslim since the Yemen is a very strict religious

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1. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.13.

2. Brauer, Die Frau..., p.168.

country, they were illegally trading it with the Muslim and non-Muslim and became wealthy through this trade in the process of time. Even at the time of poverty as a result of famine, where the people in general were suffering from a hard and miserable life, they gained a lot and lived in extravagance. We mentioned before how the author of Dofe Ha-Zman describes the scandal of selling wine and trading with the Gentiles who sold all they possessed even their arms to buy wine and how the Jews gained much through that trade and became corrupted.<sup>1</sup> Selling wine by the Jews led to many of them being imprisoned. We already mentioned in the political part the reason for Sālim al-'Irāqī's imprisonment, which was chiefly the selling of wine by the Jews to the Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Making wine and trading with it was applied not only in the capital Ṣan'ā' but everywhere, where Jews could be found. In the port towns like Mocha, the Jews found ready opportunity for trading with wine. They sold wine to the sailors and mariners of the ships which anchored in the

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1. Sa'īd al-Sa'dī, Dofe Ha-Zman, p.19<sup>b</sup>.

2. The punishment was not placed only upon the seller of the wine but also on the Muslim who buys wine and is found drunk of any sort of alcoholic drink. See Joseph Kafih, Dofe Ha-Zman, Sefunot, vol. 1, pp.212-213, note 186; the wine sellers are called in the Yemen Mu'arrīqīn. Ibid., note 186.

harbour of Mocha and in secret sold it to the Muslims.<sup>1</sup>  
Smuggling of wine by night to the Muslims was, however, a very frequent matter.<sup>2</sup>

The Jews are the only people in the Yemen to introduce wine and brandy, since the Arabs are forbidden to enjoy and manufacture spirituous beverages. Already, under the 'Imām's government, licensed premises began to open for the sale of the forbidden drinks. But the Turks drank often at the houses of the Jews. In Ṣan'ā', many houses in special quarters of the Jewish city were turned into licensed premises, which were openly known as brothels. The girls had money and pretty dresses. "From time to time one of them, in her full splendour, appeared among the Jews. And many of her companions envied her and were on the alert for the passing moment, in order to follow her". Some of these girls possessed, indeed, political influence, which they applied in favour of the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

With the disappearance of the Turkish domination

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1. Mordekhi Abir, Kihilut Hezi Ha-'Ii Ha-'aravī B-Yeme Ha-timorah, Sefunot, vol. 10, p.637.
  2. Scott, Hugh, op. cit., p.136; the Jews produced the red wine and the white wine as well in their own quarter. Ibid., p.136.
  3. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.162.

there circumstances vanished also.<sup>1</sup>

The Yemenite Jews carried out, as we already mentioned, various sorts of economic activity and worked freely with pride of liberty, as Raphael Patai describes,<sup>2</sup> and the power of resoluteness which beats in the hearts of them has changed after their emigration to Israel as they faced alleged discrimination against them in work. The Yemenite Jews in Israel stated that "The Yemenite worker was discriminated against and remains discriminated against to this day. In most of the general labour exchanges in the country, and especially in the moshavot (private villages), the Yemenite is automatically registered as a candidate for work with the hoe. All work yielding a better income, in industry and even in road building, which is relatively easier, is given to others".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Brauer, Die Frau..., p.162.

2. Patai, Raphael, op. cit., pp.197-198.

3. Ibid., p.205, quoted from The Yemenite Jews in the State of Israel, a pamphlet published by them in April 1950.

### The Markets

In the Yemen, three kinds of Market (Sūq) must be distinguished:

- 1) The Regular Market, in the centre of the town, with its shops and stalls open every day.
- 2) The Weekly Market, held at this spot, attracting a particularly large gathering from the neighbourhood.
- 3) The Occasional Market, every week, once only and not confined to a fixed day.<sup>1</sup>

For the Jews, the Weekly Market is specially important. The Jew is above all a hand-craftsman, but he exposes only part of his work at his home town. He carries out the work on his goods for sale, as we mentioned, in relative comfort or indoors. But he must visit the Market to dispose of what he has made. The Jew, therefore, spends much of his time travelling. He must generally go by foot. There are no roads for vehicles, and his being forbidden to ride upon a beast,<sup>2</sup> hinders the Jew from using an animal as a mount, but he uses an ass to carry his wares. A humble artisan, who cannot afford an ass, carries his wares on his own back. With this burden he visits the Market three

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.255.

2. See the Social part, p.208-209.

times a week or more often.<sup>1</sup>

The occasional Markets for the most part are not confined to the town, but lie on the plain, at spots between the mountains, built to afford shelter, with no doors and not besieged or blockaded. The Markets are called after the days of the week, for instance, if the Market is held on Wednesday they call it Sūq al-Rubū'.<sup>2</sup>

The Regular Market is found in the Arab quarter of the town. Even the Jews, who (as unbelievers) may not dwell there, have their shops there, and for the most part also their workplaces. The Jews betake themselves to work in the early morning in their shops and return to the Jewish quarter in the evening, for they are obliged to leave the city before nightfall. And several Jews would pool together to pay an Arab to watch over their shops for them. But the valuable goods they take home with them every night. They lock up their shops with big keys which they hang over their shoulders as a "status" symbol.<sup>3</sup>

A special Sūq of the Jews is for dealing among themselves. The Sūq al-Yahūd in the Jewish Quarter of Şan'ā' is chiefly intended for the use of the Jews. And only men may visit the Market, for just as among the

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie. . . ., p.256.

2. Ibid., p.256; Saphir, op. cit., pp.48<sup>b</sup>, 49<sup>a</sup>.

3. Brauer, Ethnologie . . . ., p.258.

Muslims of Arabia, it is forbidden to a Jewess to show herself in the Market, she is likewise forbidden entry into the Sūq al-Yahūd.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.260.

## PART III

The Social Situation of the Jews  
in the Yemen

To study the social structure in the Yemen one faces many difficulties in many aspects, because it inherited many types of its ancient civilization which was constituted upon social and religious sects, and at the same time included the fallāhīn.<sup>1</sup> When Islām penetrated into the Yemen, its ideology aimed to abolish the distinctions in the distinctive stratification in a country like the Yemen which had its own systems, based on religious sects. And again the reflection of these religious sects continued after Islām.

As against most of the Arab countries with their social system based on other social stratification (Egypt, Syria, Algeria etc.) or on national minorities ('Irāq) we find that the Yemen's social system is based on both, i.e. these two social phenomena: 1) the Caste and 2) the religious sects. Nevertheless, in the Yemen the Caste is not completely shut up in one religious sect, but it is open to the other religious sects to penetrate into it. For example, not all the Zaidīs are Sādah but many of the

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1. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., p.114.

Shāfi'īs are also included in this stratum.

The Yemen is not a feudal country in the terms of European feudalism. In the Yemen there are no serfs belonging to the cultivated land on which they serve and there are no feudal lords who possess vast provinces and enjoy political and special economic rights. In the Yemen we find Sayyid is not particularly distinct from those who are under his orders. Moreover, the Sayyid is absolutely subjugated under the 'Imām's sovereignty. But we may consider the Yemen a feudal country if we mean by that term the system which is severe in taking the proceeds of the fallāhīn who serve on the land.<sup>1</sup>

The previous explanations, consequently, lead us to distinguish between six strata.

The following six strata are arranged according to their importance:

- 1) 'Al-Sādah (sing. Sayyid).
- 2) Shuyūkh al-qabā'il (sing. Shaikh).
- 3) The merchants and the craftsmen.
- 4) 'al-fallāhīn (sing. fallāḥ).
- 5) 'al-'Abīd (sing. 'Abd, slave).
- 6) 'al-'Akhdām (sing. Khādim).

1. al-Sādah:

They constitute the noble class in the Yemen.

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1. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.115, 116.

They are the landed proprietors. The nobles, Sādah, are of the Zaidī sect; there are Sādah among the Shāfi'īs, but the Shāfi'ī Sādah have no influence on the 'Imām like those of the Zaidī Sādah. The Sādah of the two sects pay too much consideration to genealogy and learn by heart their lineage and every family strives eagerly to keep its genealogical tree.<sup>1</sup>

2. Shuyūkh al-Qabā'il:

The second caste after the Sādah is Shuyūkh al-Qabā'il. In the Yemen are many great tribes. The most important of them are Ḥāshid and Bakīl. The tribes in the Yemen composed small independent states, more or less, and the only link connecting them to the 'Imām's authority was the privileges which they used to obtain from the 'Imām. The tribes had a very decisive role in the stability of the 'Imām's authority and very often were troublesome in declaring wars against the 'Imām, plundering and destroying as we already explained in the political part.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.116-117.

2. See above, p.81 ; the ossification of the role of this stratum may be attributed originally to ecological reasons. The Yemen depends mainly on the rain, the reason which weakens the situation of the central authority, because it could not restrain the fall of rain or distribute it. Therefore, nature becomes the lord of the farmer and not the 'Imām, consequently the

### 3. The Craftsmen and the Merchants:

This caste is open to everybody who shows skill in crafts and arts or has a small capital. There are families who engage in crafts and trade by inheritance, son from father, and they, in fact, form the rich class in the town. Belonging to that class also is the class of the labourers and the employees and also the fugahā' (sing. faqih, the teacher of the school children), etc.<sup>1</sup>

### 4. al-Fallāhīn:

The majority of the population in the Yemen are of that class which includes all who serve on the land. This class which is the main source of the country's economic strength is the poorest class among all and lives in very different circumstances. It acquires its livelihood with difficulty and is despised among all the other previous classes mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

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farmer becomes the lord of himself because the rain gives him the opportunity of independence and this is opposed to the Societies which rely on the irrigation, where the central authority becomes sharp and severe. The authority in the latter case dominates the river, which means in another way, to dominate the people and subdue them under severe laws.

1. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., p.118.

2. See above, p.97.

5. al-'Abīd (the slave):

The slavery trade existed in the Yemen. And the slaves were private property, i.e. they were connected entirely with their proprietors who treated them humanely and they sometimes enjoyed a remarkable freedom for which the fallāhīn envied them.

6. al-'Akhdam:

They formed the lowest class in the social caste system. They were lower than the slaves. They were Mullatoes of Ethiopian lineage. They were committed to all the hard and despised work. They were the drudges and the repudiated.<sup>1</sup>

The religious sects:

The religious structure is very important and a decisive element if not the dominating power upon the daily life of the people in the Yemen. In the Yemen, where the authority is of a spiritual nature, inspired by the faith, it is not strange to find all the social activities derived directly or indirectly from the faith. The 'Imām, inspired by the faith, is an absolute monarch over his subjects. And under the influence of the faith, the people pay the taxes or the tithes. And under the influence of the faith, the people accomplish their duties, towards their country.

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1. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., pp.115-119;

It is quite clear that any disloyalty to the 'Imām is considered as a religious crime.<sup>1</sup> There are three general and universal religious sects in the Yemen:

- 1) The Zaidiyyah (the Zaidism, the descendants from Zaid, a great-grandson of 'Alī 'Amīr al-Mu'minīn, entered the Yemen at the end of the ninth Christian century A.D.)<sup>2</sup>
- 2) The Shāfi'iyyah (they are Sunnīs).
- 3) The 'Ismā'īliyyah (group of the Zaidī; entered the Yemen 901 A.D.)

Among these different sects lived the Jewish Community which is the subject of our research. For the better understanding of the Jew's social situation, the above brief survey was presented.

It is worth mentioning that the Jewish Community was not the only one of different religion in the Yemen. There were also the Baniāns (Indian merchants) who settled in the commercial cities. They suffer more mortification than the Jews. Among the Arabs in the Yemen, the contempt is regulated as we have seen from the above-mentioned social stratification. It falls heaviest upon the

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1. Al-'Aṭṭār, op. cit., p.119.

2. See Scott, Hugh, In the High Yemen, pp.223-225.

Baniāns.<sup>1</sup>

The Christians were not numerous in the Yemen and received the least contempt among the different religions in the Yemen.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Niebuhr, Travels Through Arabia..., vol. 2, pp.191-192.

2. Ibid., p.192.

The Jewish Quarter and the Houses  
of the Jews

The Jews in Ṣan'ā' as well as in the other parts of the Yemen, lived in a separate quarter. The Jewish quarter<sup>1</sup> had changed from one place to another during the last three centuries. The Jewish quarter was called by the Arabs qā' al-Yahūd. In the Jewish quarter one finds no Muslim houses, but merely Jews, for they do not allow, as al-'Arshī said, non-Jewish (the Gentiles) to live among them in the Jewish quarter.<sup>2</sup>

Niebuhr describes how they enjoy a great deal of freedom and they are fond of living together.<sup>3</sup>

"The Jewish quarter is separated from the capital Ṣan'ā'", said Bury, "by Bir al-Azab. It has only one gate and that is well guarded by military and police who question wayfarers. It is known as Bab-al-Kaa or Bab-al-Yahudi."<sup>4</sup> The travellers who visited the Yemen during

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1. Korah, op. cit., pp.175-177 indicates the names of the dwelling area, the streets and synagogues of the Jews in Ṣan'ā' according to Goitein's request.
  2. Al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.138; Al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.
  3. Niebuhr, Travels Through Arabia ..., vol. 2, p.191.
  4. Bury, Arabia infelix or the Turks in Yemen, p.74.

those centuries found the Jewish quarter very distinctive from the Arab houses in its neatness and cleanliness.

Haig describes the Jewish quarter and reports that "their houses are models of neatness and cleanliness".<sup>1</sup> H. F. Jacob admires the cleanliness and neatness of their houses.<sup>2</sup>

The Jewish quarter in the Yemen had different names according to each district they lived in. It was called al "Sā'ilah" before their exile to Mūza,<sup>3</sup> and it was inside the city Ṣan'ā'. After the exile and when the Jews were set free, they were not permitted to go back to their own previous houses, but they were allowed to start again in another district which was called Qā' al-Sam'.<sup>4</sup> That was its name before it came to belong to the Jews and then it was known as Qā' al-Yahūd.<sup>5</sup>

Ḥabshūsh says: "The survivors of the Jews came back after the King's order to set them free from Mūza'.

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1. Haig, F. T. A Journey through Yemen, proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, vol. IX, 1887, p.485.
  2. Jacob, H. F., The Jews in the Yemen, Jewish Chronicle supplement, p.iii.
  3. Mentioned in one of Sālim Shibzī's poems, see Jehuda Razabi, Galut Mūza', Sefunot, vol. 5, p.354, note 11.
  4. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.45<sup>a</sup>.
  5. Kafih, Korot Israel Bi Teman, Sefunot, vol. 2, p.255, note 82.

They did not allow them to go back to their own former houses in the town, for they had already seized and plundered their houses and fields. They allowed them a small space of land, two thousand Amah far from the city (Ṣan'ā') called Qā' al-Sam' on which they could build mean dwellings".<sup>1</sup>

The houses of the Jews are distinguished from those of the Arabs in that they are not permitted to be higher than the Muslim<sup>2</sup> houses. Ḥabshūsh reports the event which happened to Sālim al-'Irāqī who was imprisoned by the 'Imām who gave his orders that the Jews' houses should not be higher than that of the 'Imām's sword which was eleven cubits.<sup>3</sup>

This limit in the height of the Yemenite Jewish houses might not have continued long. The traveller, Haig, who visited the Yemen describes how the houses are from three to four storeys in height, built of stone in most

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.45<sup>a</sup>.

2. Indicating that the Muslims are higher (more dignified) than the others. Qur'ān, 47, v.35; Goitein, in his introduction to Rathjens book, Jewish domestic architecture in San'a Yemen, attributes to the Qur'ān injunction, the reason for the Jews being ill-treated in the case of the height, giving evidence from the Qur'ān, IX, 29, which relegated non-Muslims to a state of humiliation.

3. vide supra, p.74.

cases, quite destitute of any architectural beauty, but with a good deal of ornamentation.<sup>1</sup>

But Bury's report differs from Haig's; he denies entirely the information as to the stone houses, indicating that the Jews houses are low and seldom more than two storeys, and built of sun-baked brick, dressed with mud, adding "you never see a stone house in the quarter".<sup>2</sup>

Brauer gives more information, in that case by mentioning that the town houses of the Jews have only two or three storeys, yet in many regions (for example in North Yemen) really important families have houses of five storeys, with 20 or more rooms.<sup>3</sup>

Other differences are to be noticed in the ornamentation of the houses. Generally, the outside walls of Jewish houses are almost completely without ornamentation. Thus, especially at Ṣan'ā', they can usually be distinguished at first glance from the Arab houses, whose outside walls on all sides are beautifully ornamented with projecting bricks, arranged in various friezes and patterns, with stucca decorations and

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1. Haig, F. T., A Journey through Yemen, p.484.

2. Bury, Arabia infelix or the Turks in Yemen, p.74; Harris, A Journey through Yemen, p.313, describes it almost the same, like Bury.

3. Brauer, Forschungen unter den Jemenitischen Juden, p.230.

ornamental designs in white gypsum.<sup>1</sup> In the case of a synagogue, it might be painted completely in white.<sup>2</sup> The Jews almost restricted the finer ornamentation of their houses to their interiors, not from being prevented to ornament the outsides of their houses, but evidently in order to prevent a feeling of envy on the part of their neighbours, the Arabs.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Rathjens, op. cit., p.16.

2. Ibid., p.16.

3. Ibid., p.17. Rathjens is an important reference, deals in details with the materials used in building the Jewish houses.

## Social Relations between Jews and Arabs

There are two types of relationship:

- 1) Personal (family life, customs in the neighbourhood etc.)
- 2) Impersonal (social laws concerning forced decrees).

### The Personal relationship.

#### 1. The "Comrade protector" (al-Jār):

The Jews in the Yemen had the institution known as protected Comrades, for the security of their life and their possessions. The Jews in every village, living among the Arabs, have a Jār to whom they appeal for judgment and in the problematic circumstances which occur between them and the Arabs their neighbours. The Jār acted as a bridge between the Jews and the authority. He was responsible for collecting the Poll-tax from the Jews in order to give it to the high authority. Ḥabshūsh represented a few examples where the Jews were discriminated against and persecuted under the Gabīlī (qabīlī, the tribesman) their Jār or Hāmī. An example from al-Madīd was 80 protégé-Jews under Ibn Mi'sār. The Jews had already paid the poll-tax to the Ottoman Government at that time (the period of Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn) which was two Qurūsh Ḍalaṭ (two riyals) annually on every Jew. When he ordered them to

pay the poll-tax which they had already paid to the Ottoman Government, they rejected the idea. That led him to ask them to go together to Muḥammad b. Ḥamid al-Dīn (1839-1904) the 'Imām then in power who would have no doubt forced them to repay it again to Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Dīn and not to the Ottoman Government. In that case they would not seek the protection of another Jār whom they call jār al-ghīwa<sup>1</sup> (to ask for the help of another protector).<sup>2</sup>

Ḥabshūsh adds that the Jews under ibn Mi'sār's protection decided to sacrifice an ox at the front door of ibn Mi'sār's house, hoping that that might soften his heart instead of his being so cruel to them. In addition, they sought ibn Luḥūm's mediation (the Shaikh of Milḥ) to solve their problem with ibn Mi'sār. So did ibn Luḥūm and ibn Mi'sār's reply was, "How could I exempt them from paying the jizyah<sup>3</sup> since they are wealthier than our tribesmen".<sup>4</sup>

Ibn Mi'sār was an exception. His attitude was not general among the Gabīlī', the Jār. This example

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.97.

2. See the glossary made by Goitein in, Habshush, Travels in Yemen, p.83.

3. It is said that the jizyah is due only from the adult men and is not due from women, see Shacht, Joseph, Kitāb al-jihād wa Kitāb al-jizyah wa 'Akhbār al-Muhāribīn, 1933, pp.204, 211.

4. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.97<sup>b</sup>-98<sup>a</sup>.

represented by Ḥabshūsh as well, which is in fact a continuation of the above-mentioned story, shows that not all of them acted like ibn Mi'sār. But there were those who tolerably calculated the power scale and did not neglect the Jews who could be considered an important element which they need as well as their allies against the Ottoman.

Ḥabshūsh tells that when Ibn Mi'sār refused Ibn Luḥum's mediation the Jews sought the mediation of Shaikh 'Alī who was Ibn Mi'sār's cousin. The latter promised his mediation with Ibn Mi'sār and tried to convince Ibn Mi'sār of his point of view saying, "They are our neighbours, and we need them in everything, and why should we wrong them these days when both we and they are under the Ottoman rule, and if they ran away from us we will be despised among the tribes".<sup>1</sup> Ibn Mi'sār's cousin persuaded him and made known the reason for the Jews' importance as far as the Ottoman their enemy was concerned.

Ibn Mi'sār's cousin, in order to clarify the problem of the Jews being wealthier than the Arab tribesmen, explained to him indicating the honour which they gain among the other Arab tribesmen their neighbour, "and that would be on our behalf and for our tribes' reputation", said Ibn Mi'sār's cousin representing the example of one

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.98<sup>a</sup>.

of the Jārs, who was ordering his protégé Jews to be dressed in Shabath's clothes and paint their eyes with antimony and massage their faces with Samn<sup>1</sup> and to be very pleasant looking at any time they appeal to him for justice or any problematic cases. Because if they would appear in a miserable condition, he would be disgraced and if they were in a better condition he would be respected among the tribes for having the Jews well looked after.<sup>2</sup>

The Jews in many places, living their daily life among the Arabs enjoyed peace and the love of the latter. Ḥabshūsh describing the situation of the Jews who lived in this part of the Yemen from time immemorial. Their houses are the properties of the tribesmen. But they, however, pay no rent and generally speaking, the tribesmen were very friendly and helpful to their Jewish protégés.

In Nihm, the Jews enjoyed an extreme sympathy from the tribesmen, so that the latter paid the poll-tax which was due from their protégé Jews to the Ottoman Government. They lived among the Arabs their neighbours in peace and gained their generosity since the standard of life of the Jews was just adequate, neither too much nor too little, and they got their up-keep easily by accepting the offers from the tribes.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Explanation of that, vide, p.190-192.

2. Ḥabshush, Korot Ha-Zman, p.98<sup>a</sup>-99<sup>b</sup>.

3. Ibid., p.101<sup>a</sup>, 102<sup>a</sup>.

Back to Ibn Mi'sār the Comrade protector, in a story which might indicate how effective the institution known as protected Comrades would be. The story was of a Jew from al-Madīd who came from Ṣan'ā' with his donkey loaded with goods. He was overtaken and robbed near his village. He hurried to al-Madīd shouting in report to his Comrade protector that he had been robbed by a person al-Jarādī by name. Ibn Mi'sār promised the robbed Jew to return all his things. On the very same day Ibn Mi'sār collected five hundred armed peasants and made an assault on the Jarādīs fortress. Two of ibn Mi'sār's people fell dead in that fight. The Jew got all his goods back.<sup>1</sup> The matter was not so simple. It did not finish there, but was more complicated. Jarādī escaped and put himself under the protection of the tribe of Jabr. Soon the Jabr tribe began hostilities against ibn Mi'sār (it is the code of the tribes to protect anyone who asks protection against another tribe, as will be explained later below).<sup>2</sup> Ibn Mi'sār went into the tribe's territory and slaughtered several oxen on the grave of Jabr, the ancestor and patron of that tribe. Ibn Mi'sār explained the situation to the tribe, describing how that Jarādī wronged his protégé Jew

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.99<sup>b</sup>; Goitein, The land of Sheba, p.35.

2. See below, p.145.

because of whom two of his people fell dead. As the true situation was revealed to the Jabr tribe, they forced the man to whom they had given protection to return home where he and his father were killed by the people of ibn Mi'sār in retribution for his crime.<sup>1</sup> Many similar stories were reported at length by Ḥabshūsh in his book, Korot Ha-Zman.

Ḥabshūsh also describes the customs and tribal code of honour among the Arabs, the Jews' protectors. He describes the custom among the Gabīlīs that the latter, show their power to the neighbouring Jews or to those of the Arabs who have no power in the village. The Jews and those also who have no power, if they are condemned for murder or any similar crime or apprehended for debt, or if they had wronged another, have to sacrifice an animal, either a cow or a sheep in the front of the village or the market belonging to the tribe whose protection they wish to ask against their adversary and the tribe would judge among them according to the tribe's tāghūt (the tribal code of honour). The Tāghūt, Ḥabshūsh explained, "is the statute of the tribes and not the law of the prophet".<sup>2</sup> It is a great honour to the tribe which is chosen for protection and it is a popular custom that it

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.100<sup>a</sup>.

2. Ibid., p.85<sup>b</sup>; cf Qur'ān, IV, 51, 60.

would agree to protect those who asked for protection no matter what that would lead to.

Another important point is connected with the protection by the tribes of the accused person. The tribal code of honour does not condemn the Jews, the slaves, the women, the children or the Garārī<sup>1</sup> if they kill or murder. No punishment would be laid upon them except from their relatives, because they are inviolable according to the tribal code of al-Jauf.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, it is considered disgrace and shame for the Gabīlī to kill one of these people.<sup>3</sup>

We mentioned above the custom of slaughtering an animal, cow or sheep and so on, in front of the door of the Gabīlī whose protection is needed and have already

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1. Garārī, though he is Muslim is socially lower than the Jews, and is considered as a slave. The Jews call them Ḥam (Genesis chap. 9, vv. 18 and 25). Their Arabic name is explained as derived from ngarwī (pedlar), see Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.38; it seems that those of the caste of al-'Akhdām, see above, p.130
  2. Ḥabshūsh by attributing that to the tribal code of al-Jauf does not make it clear whether that was applied among all the tribes of al-Jauf. Nevertheless, it is reasonable that it was applied all over the country, since the Jews are protected comrades and they were not allowed to bear arms.
  3. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.67. [Hebrew text]

shown a few examples of Jabr tribes and other examples. It is a very common and extraordinary custom that when the person asks protection, he is then on the safe side. This following story presented by al-'Arshī took place in 1330 A.H. (1911/12). A man killed another and escaped to the house of him whom he wanted as protector, the house of the Shaikh of the village who was also its judge. That Shaikh was the father of the murdered person, although the murderer did not know this. At that moment the brother of the murdered man followed the murderer when he went into his father's house and asked his father for the trial. All that and the murderer did not realise that the person from whom he sought protection was the murdered man's father. The decision was that the murderer should only pay the blood money in agreement and when the murderer asked the permission to go to his family to collect the blood money, the judge then revealed the truth of the matter to the murderer. He refused to take from him the blood money which he had already claimed against him by saying that "since the murdered man is my son and you stood in mortal need of my protection, I exempt you from the blood money"<sup>1</sup>.

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1. Al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.89: this Arab social usage is called in the Yemen al-'azl, when someone seeks the protection of a tribe and takes an animal to slaughter in front of the protector's door before he can refuse protection, see Walter Cline, al-'Azl, Shame Compulsion in the Yemen, Man, 1929, vol. 29, p.170.

It is worth mentioning how much the blood money was estimated in the Yemen in general and for the Jews in particular. Ḥabshūsh mentions that the blood money in the Yemen is 770 Riyal for the Arabs, and for the Jews living under the protection of a tribe four times as much, i.e. 3080 Riyal. If anybody dared by causing harm or even pulling a single hair from a Jew's ringlet, his punishment is very hard.<sup>1</sup> Ḥabshūsh gives many explanations of the discrimination in the value of estimating the blood money: that this might go back to the olden ages when the Jews dominated the Yemen and if someone killed a Jew the blood money had to be four times as much; or anyone who offended any of them had to be punished severely and this might become common practice ever since. Or most probably, these were conditions of agreement between the Jews and the Gabīlī, his protector comrade.<sup>2</sup> Ḥabshūsh's explanations might be regarded as improbable. It is more likely that the Jews and those who are in their rank did not bear arms to defend themselves in case of attack and they were protected according to the law,<sup>3</sup> so punishment of those who

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1. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, Hebrew text, p.34.

2. Ibid., p.34.

3. For this benefit they were used to play an important role secretly for the tribesmen. Jacob, Harold F., in his book, Kings of Arabia, p.90, indicates that they "Both sexes are employed as secret messengers. They

abuse them should be severe, and their compensation was double even quadruple as in the case of the blood money.

The Arab of the Yemen with reference to the social condition of the Jew his neighbour, does not intensely hate the Jew. The Arabs as far as the Jew's religion is concerned, respected that to a remarkable extent. They observed the holy days of the Jews with respect, but sometimes they went too far in applying their concern. There is a Yemeni proverb: "If you are a Jew, be a Jew, and do not make a game of the Torah".<sup>1</sup> Ḥabshūsh's example of the Jews in charge at the Gabīlīs' house is that they have Shabath free, whereas the Gabīlī does not allow himself to sit and talk with the Jew under his service on that day, respecting the sacredness of Shabath as the Jew according to Jewish law must observe Shabath and keep himself indoors.<sup>2</sup>

Another example indicates the Gabīlīs' reverence for the Shabath. When, on a day of famine a large swarm of locusts visited the neighbourhood of Ṣan'ā', one of the Jews of Ṣan'ā' who used to disobey the rules, in order to restore to a certain extent their exhausted food supplies,

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can pass through the midst of tribes at warfare and will not be molested".

1. Goitein, The land of Sheba, p.38.
2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.93<sup>a</sup>-93<sup>b</sup>.

marched out with the villagers to collect locusts as they were accustomed to do when the locusts appeared in the sky. Some of the people go after it for long distances, sometimes as far as half a day's walk or even a whole day on foot. The Jew in question accompanied them and it was Shabath's eve. Although his friends advised him not to go, he ignored their advice. As soon as he was recognised by the Gabillīs, they condemned him of violating the sacred Shabath and he was beaten and brought before the judge who confiscated his property and expelled from him from the country.<sup>1</sup>

Many travellers speak about the behaviour and attitude of the Arabs of the Yemen to the different subjects living in their country. Niebuhr indicates the relation between Arabs and non-Arabs by saying that "the Mussulmans in general do not persecute men of other religions, when they have nothing to fear from them, unless in the case of an intercourse of gallantry with a Mahometan woman." Niebuhr adds, "I never saw that the Arabs have any hatred for those of a different religion. They, however, regard them with much the same contempt with which Christians look upon the Jews in Europe."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Habshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.93<sup>b</sup>.

2. Niebuhr, Travels through Arabia, vol. 2, p.189, 190, 192.

The sort of contempt shown in the daily relationship, presumably is obvious from the popular story of the Ashkinazī Ḥakhām who visited the Yemen during the period of Sālīm al-'Irāqī.<sup>1</sup> Ḥabshūsh tells the story at length, describing the desire of the Ashkinazi Jew to visit the country of Ṣan'ā', and the efforts which has been made by Sālīm and the heads of the community to prevent him from making that visit in order to avoid his being insulted by the Arabs, for it was common for the latter to ill-treat the Jew by using insulting words. But all their efforts went in vain when the Ashkinazi showed his anxious desire on one Friday morning to see the solemn procession of the 'Imām and his entourage to the Mosque. As Sālīm al-'Irāqī perceived his anxious desire to see the procession, warned him since he has no objection to the list of insults which might befall him, to keep silent when he hears any of them so that he would be on the safe side. They mock the Jew

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1. The name of that Ashkinazī is not given by Ḥabshūsh, and he is not mentioned anywhere else, Goitein in, Joseph Halevy's Journey in Yemen (translated from Arabic into Hebrew), p.27, note of doubts that there was Ḥakhām Ashkinazī visited the Yemen at Sālīm al-'Irāqī's period, unless he might be the one from France who visited the Yemen in 1730 according to Morī Abrahām Ya'arī in his book, Shalihim Mē Erez Israel lē-Teman, (Messengers from the land of Israel to Yemen), from Sinai Magazine, vol.22, p.17.

saying, for example, Yahūdī hū (this is a Jew) qudsī hū (Jew from Jerusalem)<sup>1</sup>, donkey b. donkey, dog b. dog and they might well throw stones at him or a carcass of a dead cat as it happened with the aforementioned Ashkinazi who lost his patience at that moment after being silent to all the oral insults and picked up the carcass quickly and threw it back to the young boy who dared to do that to the Ashkinazi. For that he was brought before the judge on an accusation of being insulting to the Muslims and the prophet.<sup>2</sup> When the opportunity of defence appeared the Ashkinazi explained that he went through the written conditions imposed on him by the Nasī-Sālim al-'Irāqī, but could not find among them any reference to dead cats. The 'Imām acquitted him and gave his orders to the Arabs to behave more politely towards foreigners.<sup>3</sup> And ever since

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1. Goitein, Joseph Halevy's Journey in Yemen, p.23, note 31.
  2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.77<sup>b</sup>-78<sup>b</sup>.
  3. With comparison to other travellers, we find that some of them carry signs of admiration for the Arabs of the Yemen. Walker, Bernard C., Medical work at Sanaa Yemen, Moslem World, vol. 31, no. 1, p.6 (1941) indicates that he has never heard a European called wicked names in the street except by the small children which is still different from being shouted after in China; Harris, op. cit., p.267 admires their hospitality and describing their gentleness and emphasises how much he likes them.

the Ashkinazi's words, there is no cat in it, ma fīh dimm, have become proverbial in Ṣan'ā'.<sup>1</sup>

2. The character and the behaviour of the Jews in the Yemen:

The Jews differ in their character from one place to another, for example, Ḥabshūsh describes the Jews of Nihm as different from those of Arḥab, for the tribes of Nihm are different from those of Arḥab. The Jews of Nihm acquired more courage than the Jews of Aḥrab. That is obvious in the height of their houses (higher than the others) and their loud voices. The Muslims of that part of the Yemen were worried that opportunity might open before the Jews to dominate the Arabs.<sup>2</sup> Also in a different case, we find the Jews of al-Ghīl are very distinguished for their generosity and hospitality to their guests. An example given by Ḥabshūsh, describes their arrival (i.e. he and Hallevy) at al-Ghīl). As they met their host Morī Yahyā Sa'dī, the latter started to collect alms for them. Among the Jews of this province, there was a very poor man who was host to Ḥabshūsh himself. That man who possessed nothing, insisted on taking part by giving some alms. He gave his wife's two rings which were

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1. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, pp.22-23, and the word dimm is Cat in the Yemen.

2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.85<sup>a</sup>.

her only silver ornaments.<sup>1</sup> That was their local code of honour: to welcome and help their guests with all they needed and it was the duty of every one, high or humble, to be generous to any visitor whether he was poor or rich. If the Morī who is in charge of collecting the alms refused to accept the gift offered by one of the poor, it would have been an offence and the latter would have appealed to his tribal overlord, his protector, who would have punished the former by compelling him to compensate for violating the local code of honour.<sup>2</sup>

It is quite interesting to deal with the Jews in the Yemen in a certain period, indicated by Sa'īd al-Sa'dī in his book Dofe Ha-Zman.<sup>3</sup> This work is a valuable source for the social and religious conditions of his period. He dealt with the seven years of famine (1717-1724) describing throughout the whole work their sins and their frivolous behaviour and the way of living in these years.

He told that the famine went so far that from grief and weakness, people neglected their prayers, and neglected their merciful duty towards the depressed and the unhappy victims of the famine, and they dealt with

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.97<sup>a</sup>.

2. Ibid., p.969.

3. Published by Josiph Kafiḡ, Sefunot, vol. 1; see Sassoon, Ohel David ..., p.969.

them according to the saying, "Give intoxicating drink to the ruined and wine to the depressed". The author described at length their attitude towards the victims of the famine and how far the famine would make them neglect their own religion. He said that everybody was anxious, busy searching for his food, and that they reached an extreme degree of apathy as a great number of the people died either in their houses, in the streets or in the markets with nobody to pay attention and come to bury the dead, - but they remained for a day or even more. And if there was one prepared to do it, he did not carry the dead man to the grave in his best clothes as was the custom, but in rags. Only two or three people went with him to the graveyard and there was no ritual funeral procession, no wailing, no Kadish was said, and even the grave digger lightened his work by simply laying the dead man on the earth instead of digging a proper grave.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between Jew and Jew reached that degree of inhumanity. Sa'īd al-Sa'dī was bitterly sorry for their bad manners and behaviour to each other. Everyone behaved badly and everybody was murmuring against his friend for not concealing his shameful attitude. He attributes all that befell them in the famine, to their bad

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1. The Jews in the Yemen made the grave from north to south and its width from east to west, they dig two metres deep, see Kafih, Sefunot, vol. 1, p.197, note 80.

behaviour, and their endless sins and quotes verses from the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> It was not only the crowd of the people to blame but also their Rabbis who lacked knowledge at that time. Sa'īd al-Sa'dī describes them like harts, the head of one towards the tail of the other, and the rest of the people busy with nothing, but repeating what they had seen in a dinner party or in a drinking session, leaving serious matters for trivial things; drinking, merry making and singing of poems round the room. If a sensible man went into one of the places where these rash and reckless men were gathering, having drink and making merry, they objected immediately to his entrance and resented his staying with them, saying, "We want to indulge our joy and entertain ourselves until the morning".

He rebukes his contemporaries for smoking tobacco. He said that they attend wedding parties for the sake of smoking the Tūtun<sup>2</sup> all the night claiming that they are entertaining the bridegroom, and they do not care if they burn the couches in the groom's house through their

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1. Jeremiah, 10, v. 21.

2. Tūtun is the Tabgh (tobacco, and it has different kinds, Hamawī, Himyarī and Khabtī, see al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.421; al-Muhibī indicates that Tūtun is originally a Turkish word and its first appearance in Arabia was in 1012 A.H. See al-Muhibī, op. cit., vol. 2, p.80.

continuous smoking of Tūtun. Generally speaking, smoking tobacco is widespread among the Arabs in the Yemen and the Jews alike. Men, women, poor or rich, old or young were madly smoking it.<sup>1</sup>

If a man of sense or learning happened to join the wedding, they just left. They could not bear a logical or intellectual behaviour. Each one said to the other, "We did not come here to discuss serious matters or to deal with religious subjects in a meeting with ascetics and penitents". Therefore, they ordered the landlord, generally the groom's father who held the wedding in his house, impolitely to open the upper floor room, so that they would be able to drink and make merry. If the house was not big enough for them, they suggested going to the house of one of them. By that time, they get entirely drunk and go to their friend's house and if they found his wife and children sleeping, and if the wife shouted at them for their noise, they insulted her, using rude words; and that was their attitude year after year.

Sa'dī attributes the scarcity of rain-fall to their behaviour and their sins too. He said that the

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1. Kafiḥ, Halekoth Teman, p.222; Sālīm Shibzī wrote a poem on that condition, the Qāt and the coffee: al-Qāt wa-al-Qahwah Yisalūnī, published in Kafiḥ's book, Halikoth Teman, p.224-225; Sassoon, Le-Korot Ha-yyehudim be Teman, p.20.

Rabbis of the Talmud said that rain is not to be shut up unless because of a shameful attitude or because of a harlot which shut up all kindness and all goodness, and they were passing through all that. The Yemenite Jews at that time went astray and fell into the depth of graceless behaviour; the author speaks of adultery<sup>1</sup> and mentions the story of an adultress who confesses that she is a notorious whore who commits adultery with the Jews and Gentiles alike, bachelors and married.<sup>2</sup>

The Yemenite Jews had reached the peak of their carelessness at that time. Sa'īd al-Sad'ī describes the scandal of selling wine dear and trading with it to the Gentiles who sold all they had, even their arms to buy wine. The Jews changed life into a long festival, enjoying too much food, and too much wine and became corrupted, making merry,<sup>3</sup> while the rest of the people, Jews and

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1. Generally speaking, the crime of adultery can be committed only by and with a married woman, for the unlawful intercourse of a married man with an unmarried woman is not technically adultery in the Jewish law, the detection of actual intercourse was necessary to establish the crime (Leviticus, XVIII, 20), under the Biblical law the adulterer suffered death, together with the adulteress. The Jewish Encyclopaedia

2. Sa'īd al-Sad'ī, op. cit., pp.20<sup>a</sup>, 20<sup>b</sup>.

3. Ibid., p.22<sup>a</sup>; wine is forbidden to the Muslim in the Yemen. If they found Muslims possessing wine, or

Arabs alike, were dying of starvation. When every member in the family, mother and children, spent all day long, searching in the rubbish for some fruit skin or dry bones, searching for the crust of bread and find it not; eating the worms from the dung hills and dying in the streets in numbers beyond counting.<sup>1</sup>

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drunk, they imprison him as well as the wine seller, see Kafih, Dofe Ha-Zman, Sefunot, vol. 1, pp.212-213, note 186.

1. Sa'id al-Sad'i, op. cit., p.11<sup>b</sup>

Magic and Superstition among the  
Yemenite Jews

Arabs and Jews alike believe in many kinds of superstitions: they believe a great deal in supernatural influences. Ḥabshūsh who knows the mentality of the people in the Yemen, describes with understanding how (when he went to copy the inscriptions which were in Ghaymān for Halevy) he could make them believe his claim to search for the secret of the treasure. Ḥabshūsh declared that he was a man in possession of magic arts, and he was afraid of the guardians of the treasures, for their seven rulers are allies. He pretended to examine the soil, for the villagers expected him to find Dhurār. Dhurār, a fine substance, small in size but of fine quality, has many characteristic virtues; it may convert, by admixture, every metal into gold. Generally speaking, the people of the Yemen claim that many kinds of fuṣūṣ (half precious stones) are very useful for various medicinal purposes. Ḥabshūsh classifies the use of those Afṣāṣ. Some of them are said to stop bleeding as soon as it is put on the wounded part.<sup>1</sup> Some are used for keeping the sperms a long time if one wanted

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1. Al-Tīfāshī, Kitāb al-Aḥjār wa Khawāṣuhā, p.14<sup>a</sup>, mentions that al-'Aqīq comes from the Yemen and have different colours, one of them is used to stop bleeding. MS in the British Museum, No. or.1198.

sexual intercourse for the whole night. Some of them dry up water and some draw water from underground to the surface of the earth and make it a river. Some are especially for curing illness of the eyes,<sup>1</sup> and some cure the ulcerated body. Some of them cause wealth and others serve to beautify and for endless other uses; Ḥabshūsh adds that the public thought that they had more uses than that, e.g. they were used for magic and for al-'Azāyim wa al-Raqawāt. The most famous use of one of the fuṣūṣ<sup>2</sup> in the whole of the Yemen is that kind which is used by the Sarhī to treat the poisonous snake's bite. When anybody is bitten by a snake they take him to Bait al-Sarhī who puts the faṣ on the snake's bite to draw the blood and then he takes it away by tweezers and bathes the wound in cow's milk several times.<sup>3</sup>

The belief in superstition penetrated very deeply among the Yemenite Jews, so that they would not realise what harm could be caused from following the medical instruction given to them by the person claiming magic. If, for example, a child is afraid and cries out, they go with

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1. Azhār al-Afkār fi Khawāṣ al-Aḥjār, MS in the British Museum, No. or.4690, p.2, mentions a similar medical use of one of the stones called al-Jauhar which is al-Dur.

2. See Scott, Hugh, In the High Yemen, p.175.

3. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.82<sup>b</sup>.

him to a man who understands this technique; the latter takes an iron nail which has been made to glow in the fire, and unexpectedly brands a mark on the child's belly. A leaf soaked in Samm is laid on the wound. Brauer mentions that every Yemenite whom he saw, showed him one or more of these egg-shaped scars, which are about four centimetres in size.<sup>1</sup>

For the child who is ill, embers are taken from the fireplaces of three houses lying at three different places round him, and are laid in the middle of the room. Then all the children in the house make water on a handful of salt and the head of the sick child is rubbed with it. The children urinate then in a shovel, in which salt is placed. And against wounds, the dung of a dog is burnt and mixed with the ashes of the Dau plant, with sesame and urine of a first-born child. With this medicine the wound is annointed.<sup>2</sup> When anyone is ill, they take salt and scatter it round the sickroom, at the same time they say spells.<sup>3</sup>

The belief in magic is widespread among the Yemenite Jews as well as the Arabs. The practice of magic

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1. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.171;

2. See Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.388.

3. Ibid., p.388.

occupies, in consequence, with them a great deal of space. The use of amulets, witchcraft, and exorcising are all widespread,<sup>1</sup> although their beliefs differ from one district to another. For instance, Ḥabshūsh says that the belief in that art is less widespread in Eastern Yemen than in the districts near the coasts, but they still, anyway, believe in this superstition. The reason for that, Ḥabshūsh suggests, may be because there are so many claiming learning for themselves in the Eastern districts, because the more there are who claim learning, the more there is belief in this art especially in the neighbourhood of Zubaid and al-Ḥudaidah.<sup>1</sup>

Ḥabshūsh had an experience when he was visiting the Jews of Najrān. When he was in the hospitable house of Morī Ma'īdh, he noticed that his hosts were suffering from a great sorrow. Ḥabshūsh tried to draw aside the curtains of their sorrow. The story<sup>2</sup> behind their grief is concentrated on the family's daughter who was put into trouble and became pregnant while she was not married and following the customs of the Jews of Najrān, she had to be put to death to wash out the scandal as had happened to

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1. Brauer, Die Frau ..., pp.170, 171; Brauer, Forschungen unter den Yemenitischen Juden, ZfE, p.231.
  2. Goitein, S. D., Habshush Travels in Yemen (the Hebrew text), Hizyon Teman, p.69-70.

quite a few of her relatives before her.<sup>1</sup> The pretence to know magic made Ḥabshūsh know the secret of the family's sorrow although the secret was a painful scandal to the family who endeavoured to keep it to themselves.

In the Yemen, belief in magic flourishes undiminished, and myths and miracle tales, whose truth no one doubts, occur just as much among the Jews, it is to be noted, as among the Arabs.

The mystical doctrine of the Jews, commonly called the Kabbala,<sup>2</sup> has found fruitful soil in the Yemen. Among the Yemenite Jews the practical Kabbala also (Kabbala Ma'asit) gained great importance. Among the Yemenite Jews it forms an essential element in their interest in the

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1. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen (the Hebrew text) Ḥizyon Teman, pp.69-70; it is quite obvious that the Jews being among the Arabs are no doubt strongly influenced by Arabs as far as customs are concerned. It is quite common among the inhabitants of the Arab countries especially those of the villages, that the unmarried girl who sins by sexual intercourse is scandalous and such a behaviour is unforgivable and very often ends with the death of the girl. See above, p.53. (The Exile to Mūzā')
  2. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., pp.349, 351, says that it has not yet been explained just when the Kabbala penetrated the Yemen, but from the quotations of the Kabbala in old Yemenite collections it may be inferred that this took place not later than the second half of the 14th century.

Kabbala.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Saphīr seems to have himself succumbed to it when he was visiting the Yemen.<sup>2</sup> After hearing all the abnormal power of the miracle worker (by the power of the Divine name) and how it forms the essential element in revealing the obscure power either for rain or wind, etc., collected many books of that sort, like the Kabbalistic books and Lot's books. "It gave joy to my heart and mind", Saphīr said, "to reflect that I was Kohelet, the King, the Ruler of the upper and lower regions of the world and in my hands weapons of every kind. All the angels on high are gathered round my miracles, and all the winds tied up with me. Call them by names, and they answer. I make decision and nothing may be changed. From stones they bring me gold, and draw fire from water. I see, and nobody sees me, I ride upon a light cloud ... Today I am in Yemen and tomorrow in Jerusalem. The past is revealed to me, and the future is not hidden from me, either".<sup>3</sup>

The people in the Yemen, just as much among the the Jews, it is to be noted, as among the Arabs, explain all natural phenomena through their belief in magic. Where the catastrophe appears, there appear soothsayers and astrologers. Since the Yemen is a land of famine, owing to

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1. Saphīr, op. cit., p.59<sup>b</sup>.

2. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.356.

3. Saphīr, op. cit., p.59<sup>b</sup>.

the occasional failure of rain or drought and the economic crisis reaching its crucial point, the foretellers found fruitful soil to expand their influence among the people. Sa'īd al-Sa'dī describes the economic situation of the people and the Jews in particular in the Yemen in 1724 when the people realised the falsehood of the astrologers who claimed prophecy and told them that in the month of Ḥishwan God would be merciful to them and there would be relief for their misery and the prices would be reduced, but Ḥishwan came and everything remained as it was, and at that the falsehood of the soothsayers became known all over the country when some of them said, it is not in the month of Ḥishwan but in the month of Azar. Others said that they would have a release of their grief at the beginning of Azar and some said on the 15th of the month, some said on the 21st of the month and some said on the 25th, "and the matter is very simple" said Sa'dī, "who could foretell the future? Of course, nobody". The falsehood of those foretellers did not gain ground at that time because of the repetition of the catastrophes and there was no proof of their prophecy, merely evidence of quackery. Their main aim was to strengthen their position in the country as astrologers, but all their prophecies were untrue and their soothsayings were nothing but lies and fiction.<sup>1</sup> Not only

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1. Sa'īd al-Sa'dī, op. cit., p.9<sup>a</sup>

the common people of the Jews believed in their jugglery and soothsaying but also the scholars.<sup>1</sup>

Miracle tales:

It is told of Morī Sālim Shibzī that every Friday he jumped, by magic, from his home at Ta'iz to the centre of the Kabbalistic organization. In addition, he could render himself invisible. Many are the examples of that kind of miracle story like one of the former times who knew how to turn earth into gold, etc., etc.<sup>2</sup> Such a practice is told of by al-Shaukānī who was an eye-witness himself to a similar operation by one of the Arabs who was called al Sayyid al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad al-Maghibī al-Tūnisī, as when he was in need of money (Drāhim) brought bayāḍ (most probably the material used in whitening walls) and cut it into small pieces, the size of the coins used at that time and put it in a vessel full of water and with many spells he turns it into money (Drāhim).<sup>3</sup>

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1. Sa'īd al-Sa'dī, op. cit., p.9<sup>a</sup>. It is interesting to find that the Jews have a reputation among the Arabs in the Yemen for being great rainmakers, and are required, often even forcibly, to undertake rainmaking ceremonies. See Brauer, Ethnologie ... , p.367.

2. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., pp.357-358.

3. al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli'..., vol. 1, p.314.

The practical Kabbala in case of illness:

One of the most practical Kabbala of the Yemenites is the healing of diseases, that is to say, the driving out of them by means of magic. For the Yemenite Jews were strongly influenced by magic. One could work magic, without contradicting the teaching. Morī, for example, so much at home with the Kabbala, is a medicine man. His power is a result of his study of the Kabbala, which enables him to apply it.<sup>1</sup> Among the greatest of the Kabbalists among the Yemenite Jews and the greatest of the Yemenites generally, is to be reckoned Morī Sālīm Shibzī, the poet.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the struggle, Rabbi Yaḥyā Gāfiḥ (died 1935, chosen Ḥakhām Bāshī in 1899)<sup>3</sup> had to persuade the people of Ṣan'ā' to give up the Kabbala, faith in its practice has not waned.<sup>4</sup>

Prescription does not come from certain magical books, the books for the most part do not consist of monographs, but are collections of separate items, brought together long ago by whoever possessed them at the time. Brauer emphasises that the direction given in these books

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., pp.358-360.

2. Ibid., p.351.

3. See about him, Korah, op. cit., pp.60-61.

4. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.360; many efforts were made by their Rabbis who wrote books in order to shake the faith of the people in witch healing. See Shlomo Barer, op. cit., p.104.

so far as he could verify, are nevertheless not of Yemenite origin, but stem largely from Kabbalistic sources, from the Sepher Raziel, the Sepher Brit Menucha, and other works of this kind.<sup>1</sup>

Amulets:

Amulets are extraordinarily widespread in the Yemen, as a magical device, whether in a written form, or in that of a magical object. In general, objects are used more in popular magic, especially among women. It is otherwise with the written amulet, which is devised by scholars familiar with the practical Kabbala, and written out for definite purposes, against illness. The formula is found in the aforementioned magical books. In putting together a written amulet, it is a question of writing the name of God and of Demons accurately; since a fault in the writing can be responsible for bringing about what is contrary to one's intention.<sup>2</sup> Amulets are extraordinarily popular, especially in the case of children, objects of most richly varied character serve as amulets. An amulet, worn round the neck, was found to consist of two blue glass beads, the bone of a small bird, a silver effigy of a hand, and a small silver plaque (lauh).<sup>3</sup> Thus any object capable

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.361.

2. Ibid., pp.362-363.

3. Ibid., p.387.

of bearing any kind of inscription appears suitable for healing purposes. An important role befalls also the tāsah as a medical inscription amulet in treatment of the difficult labour of a woman. The tāsah is a metal bowl, on the interior and an exterior of which are engraved ornaments and, even among Jews, verses of the Qur'ān. Such bowls, are of great value and the Mahjerah (an experienced woman called to help the mother in labour in difficult cases) places the vessel on the body of the mother in labour, whereupon the delivery follows easily.<sup>1</sup>

#### Spirits and Demons:

Arabs and Jews alike, believe in jinn and Demons<sup>2</sup> or what could be called spirits. The belief in their supernatural power to protect or to harm the inhabitants is widespread. They know all about these spirits; their names<sup>3</sup> and what may be expected of them. They give considerable attention to what should be done to

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1. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.163.

2. Ḥabshūsh with his thick hair covering his body, frightened many people when they saw him in one of the ancient ruins, copying Sabaeen inscriptions for Halevy, thinking that he was a demon, Korot Ha-Zman, p.95<sup>b</sup>.

3. Tritton in his article Spirits and Demons in Arabia shows how these ideas were carried over into 'Islām, and their names, and that they were organized in tribes under chiefs, J.R.A.S., 1934, pp.715-724.

satisfy them. Sometimes they slaughtered animals, like a sheep for instance or a black hen for curing illness,<sup>1</sup> or to disturb the spirits of some places by slaughtering a sheep or so.<sup>2</sup>

They believe in possession of the jinn in one's body. For example, an epileptic who was ill for six months in the year and well for six was possessed by the daughter of the lord of the jinn.<sup>3</sup> Ḥabshūsh presents the story of Ḥārūn al-Sa'dī (mentioned above, p.151) one of his guides, with Halévy who became epileptic and possessed by evil spirits. And how he became, after being a poor man, a great 'Alīm according to the people's belief. The jinn seems to have revealed to him the secret of the great hidden treasure in the district of al-Saudā', and the past is revealed to him and the future is not hidden from him.<sup>4</sup>

Though Ḥabshūsh himself claimed the practice of magic in more than one place he pointed out in his book, he rejected it with emphasis and shows his sorrow for the people whose ignorance reached an extraordinary degree in the belief of superstition and magic.

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1. Shlomo Barer, op. cit., p.104;

2. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.18.

3. Tritton, Spirits and Demons in Arabia, J.R.A.S., p.722.

4. Goitein, Ḥabshush Travels in Yemen, (Hebrew text), pp.109-110.

The practice of representing the spirits to inform them of the obscurity of living in its various types was widespread among the Arabs as well as Jews in the Yemen. For example, the medicine man shuts himself up at night in his house and ties himself securely to his bed, so that the spirits cannot do him harm. Then he begins to burn different sorts of incense, and with many spells tries to get the spirits to reveal to him the nature of the disease and its cure.<sup>1</sup> Al-Shaukānī once was too puzzled at the supernatural power of one of the 'ulamā' who used the jinn to help him in practising magic. He saw that 'Alīm, when he put the ring of one of the people gathered round him, in a vessel full of water and cast many spells, thereafter a horrifying voice was heard and the ring rose and settled in the lap of its owner.<sup>2</sup>

Many stories of that kind were widespread among the Arabs. There was one who claimed that the jinn serves and helps him and gives him plaques of gold and silver. And his fame covered most of the country and he possessed many lands and his adherents were many.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.362.

2. al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli' ..., vol. 1, p.314.

3. al-'Arshī, op. cit., p.74.

The belief in Holy places and Holy men after their death:

We have already seen that the practice of magic occupies in consequence with the Yemenite Jews a great deal of space. The reputation of some of the great Kabbalist practitioners is so great that they are considered powerful even after death. The belief in Holy men and the Holy places reached such an importance among the Yemenite Jews. The Cult of the Walī (plu. 'Awliyā') is very considerable among the Jews in the Yemen. Great respect and admiration was shown to the most famous Kabbalistic Morī Sālim Shibzī whose grave in Ta'iz was the most famous centre of this sort.<sup>1</sup>

The pilgrimages to Ta'iz to the grave of Morī Sālim Shibzī constitute the climax of the life of the Yemenite Jews. The grave is visited more particularly with devotion by barren women. Those who, after visiting the grave have a child, if it is a boy, call him Shim'on after Morī Sālim's son, if a girl, call her Sham'āh, after his famous daughter. When the barren woman goes to Ta'iz, the place of pilgrimage, she stands at the spring near the grave of Morī Sālim Shibzī and gives voice to their complaints:

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.380; Brauer, Forschungen unter den Jemenitischen Juden, p.231; Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.171.

"Ya 'ain 'inīnī waddī lī nīnī"  
 (Oh spring, help me and give me a child)<sup>1</sup>

Brauer attributes the development of the veneration of the Walī with pilgrimage among the Yemenite Jews to the influence of the Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

Visiting the Holy places and Holy graves was connected in one way or another with vows. So far as they hoped for a cure from any sort of illness or release from any kind of trouble through visiting the Holy people etc., they promised vows in return for the accomplishment of their purpose. For instance, if a man was attacked by a disease or a woman faced difficulties in labour or if any sort of trouble befell them, they vow to slaughter a sheep or two or a cow, as each could afford. Once the trouble was over, the person who vowed had to fulfil his vow and the relatives and friends were invited on that day to dine at his house and eat from the victim of that vow.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Brauer, Ethnologie ..., p.383; Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.171.
  2. Brauer, Forschungen unter den Jemenitischen Juden, p.231; cf Serjeant, R. B., Sex, Birth, Circumcision: some notes from South-West Arabia, Tübingen 1962, p.196, deals with some customs and beliefs in superstition, practised in Ḥaḍramaut which was part of the Yemen.
  3. Jawnieli, Be-Teman, Ha-po'el Ha-za'ir, vol. 5, p.15; Kafih, Halikoth Teman, p.156.

Marriage Customs followed among the Jews in  
the Yemen

Marriage among the Jews in the Yemen is one of the great events which interest the Jews. It is accomplished through long and very fascinating stages.

The age of marriage:

The girls marry very often very young, mostly even before child bearing age.<sup>1</sup> The average age of marriage between girls and boys in the Yemen is at the age from ten to twelve years for girls, and boys from thirteen to fifteen. Girls sometimes marry even before the onset of menstruation.<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew sources furnish us with interesting detailed information about marriage among the Yemenite Jews. Ḥabshūsh gives us an example of the early marriage of the girl, during his visit with Halévy to the Oasis of Khabb. One day while eight persons came to the house of Sa'īd Hiwas (their guide at that time) to entertain them and welcome them on their arrival. One of

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1. An eye-witness of the average age of marriage in the Yemen is given in Menarah Journal: "We were invited to the wedding of Habiba, the twelve-year old daughter of the shoemaker, to the son of the blacksmith, a tall, thin boy of fourteen." Bension, Ariel, op. cit., p.163.
  2. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.153.

them claimed, on the alleged basis of a former engagement, the hand of a girl to fill the situation of his late wife, the mother of his children.<sup>1</sup> We notice here the big difference which could occur between a girl of five years old and a man, previously married and having had children.

Brauer attributes the reason of this widespread range of difference in age partly to the fact that marriage is a kind of business transaction,<sup>2</sup> requiring money, that is, a shop of fixed value to be given to the father of the girl by her husband.<sup>3</sup>

One other reason, was in case of an orphan's children, in order to avoid them being converted by force to 'Islām as we shall mention in a later chapter.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.75. [Hebrew text]
  2. It is known that the money (dowry) paid to the bride's father, is not only applied to the Jews, but also to the Arabs on the first hand. Niebuhr tried to explain the exaggerated stories told by many travellers about the situation of the women in Arabia and the opinion that women are slaves in Arabia as having arisen from the mistaken notion that the fathers there sell their daughters to the highest bidders. He denied the allegations concerning the fathers by exposing the error and described how the father who has a handsome daughter is pleased to match her with a rich man. See Niebuhr, Travels through Arabia, pp.214-215.
  3. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.153.
  4. vide infra, pp.211-213.

They made them marry on this account at a very tender age,<sup>1</sup> for as soon as they get married, they are considered adolescents. Brauer gives the information that the Yemenites claim directly that these early marriages serve to guard against transgression by which they mean, sexual intercourse outside marriage.<sup>2</sup> We already mentioned that the marriage age of the bridegroom is between the age of thirteen and fifteen, up to nineteen and under some circumstances like old age of his father or because the father is ill and wishes to see his son married before he dies.<sup>3</sup> And the average age for the bride is between the age of eleven and thirteen, and if it happened that the girl stayed to the age of eighteen (which was not common) without marriage, she did not expect to marry a young man, but she might get married to a widower or to a divorced man, or be a rival wife to one who has no children. The man who has no children, generally, would rather prefer to marry a widow or a divorced woman who previously had children than to marry a girl whose ability to bear children is not definite.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Anonymous, Jews in Yemen, Darkenu, vol. 1, 1948, p.16.

2. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.154.

3. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, pp.107-108.

4. Ibid., p.107.

How they choose each other:

Those chiefly involved, namely the groom and the bride, are not consulted when it comes to negotiating the marriage. To agree or to reject lies altogether in the hands of the parents. The children, moreover, are mostly too young by far, rightly to grasp what is undertaken on their behalf. This applies not only to the girl but also to the boy. As the boy reaches the marriage age his mother asks him whether he has somebody in mind to be betrothed to. The mother is the bridge which puts her son in touch with what is going on in that matter, for the relation between the son and his father is not so frank since the son is considered to be more shy of his father than of his mother. And in that special case, he might be shy of both of them, so the parents ask one of his close friends to ask him indirectly whether he has someone in mind to be his wife, and if not, they reveal their desire to get him married to the girl whom they have already chosen.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to know the reaction of the girl or the boy as they hear the news of their betrothal.

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1. Kafiḥ, Halikoth Teman, p.108, Kafiḥ gives a very interesting detail about how they make the groom see his bride secretly before their marriage, p.108.

Brauer gives an example, relying on Sémach,<sup>1</sup> who tells of what he observed of a nine-year old Yemenitess, Nādrah by name, who had overheard from her parents' conversation that after the passover she is to be betrothed. "Her mother pays her touching attention, calling her darling, love, the one who sets free her heart, restores her soul ... in the little girl's imagination there is a real question whether she is expected to be sad or to be happy ..."<sup>2</sup>

Endogamy is very common in the Yemen; they have a general tendency to marry close relatives. There were also cases of two brothers marrying two sisters or a sister and brother marrying a similar pair.<sup>3</sup>

On the occasion of the contracting of the marriage, great stress is laid on good family connection.

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1. Unfortunately, I found many difficulties in the way of obtaining that book, so I trust Brauer having quotations from Sémach's book Une Mission de l'Alliance au Yemen, Paris (O.J.), 1910, Zit. SM.
  2. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.154, relied on Sémach, Une Mission de l'Alliance au Yemen, p.89.
  3. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.20; Goitein explains that the term they use in the case of exchange is called Munāzala, *ibid.*, p.20, note 47; This term is equivalent to what is used in Egypt, Badal, which could be found mostly among the inhabitants of the villages.

Families are to be found, which regard themselves as of noble descent, and refuse offers of marriage from less distinguished families,<sup>1</sup> even where the latter happen to be at a considerable material advantage.<sup>2</sup> This was applied as well on Sālīm al-'Irāqī when he wished to betroth a bride for his son: "When Usta sought an alliance for his son with some of the important Jewish families of Yemen, the latter refused, declaring that they would marry with none who could not, like themselves, trace direct descent from the court of King Solomon. Thereupon 'Uṣṭā ordered the abolition of all class distinctions among Jews".<sup>3</sup>

The conditions of marriage are fixed on the occasion of the betrothal. And it seems that the traditions followed differ from one part to another among the Jews in the Yemen. Ḥabshūsh informs us that the Jews of the

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1. Bury, (Abdullah Mansur), Land of UZ, p.278, explains such a case in a Yemenī expression "the boy if he is in an alien country or his tribe engaged in a lengthy war, he must marry into his own class, and generally into his own tribe, for endogamy is practised. No one of tribal origin may marry into non-combatant stock. There is an ancient saw "Kal bui Nuah "al Hegri luh Hegrah, al 'Askari luh Askariyah w'al-abd luh gāriah".
  2. Brauer, Die Frau ... p.153.
  3. Bension, Ariel, op. cit., pp.160-161.

wilderness (Yahūd al-Bawādī) have a different tradition from the town Jews, that is to say, when the Jews of the villages go to ask for the girl's hand, they take with them a sheep for the supper on the evening of the proposal. After supper, they start to talk about marriage affairs and everyone deals according to his village's traditions, concerning the dowry and the clothes which ought to be offered by the bridegroom. Ḥabshūsh describes here mainly the customs of the Jews of al-Bawādī who stipulate for the clothes offered by the groom: 3 pieces including a libās (woman's trousers, richly adorned with embroidery), 'Antarī (the upper garment of a woman), Magramah (Shawl), Ṣunah (head-band worn by older women)<sup>1</sup> for the bride's mother. That is not everything, but they stipulate how many men would accompany the bridegroom to attend the wedding ceremony. For example, if ten would attend with the bridegroom, there would be twenty attending with the bride.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the purchase-price (the dowry) it

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1. See Goitein's glossary in Ḥabshush Travels in Yemen, pp.91, 93.

2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.99<sup>a</sup>.

differs from that of the Arabs. It is higher among the Jews (the purchase price among the Arabs is notably less). According to Sémach's information, the Jewish sums are from 50 to 100 francs, and in Şan'ā' the price amounts to roughly 40-50 Riyal or Maria-Theresa, but among the Arabs, it amounts in Şan'ā' to 8-10 Riyal.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Arabic source, the dowry is usually divided into two parts, part of it (which is often half the sum) is paid to the wife's parents in advance and the rest is to be kept for later on<sup>2</sup> (usually it is paid to the wife in the event of a divorce).

The traditions among the Arabs oblige the husband to supply the wife with what she needs for her own properties and what is needed for the wedding party. That is known in the Yemen by Haq al-Nār which is nearly equal to the value of the dowry and the dowry is determined at from 3 to 10 pounds according to each family's ancestral claims and nobility. The husband again, had also to pay to the bride, his wife, what they call Haq al-Iftiḍāq on the morrow of the wedding which is again according to the financial situation of the husband and it is determined between 3 Riyals and 10, which is known in the Yemen as

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1. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.154, quotes from Sémach, op. cit., p.92.

2. Al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.304.

Ḥaq al-Ṣabāh. The payment obligation on the husband does not expire with the wedding day only, but also extends to the third day of the wedding, on which he has to pay to his mother-in-law what is known as Ḥaq al-Thūlūth and this is not fixed, but determined between 3 and 10 Riyal, either to be paid cash or he could buy her a suitable silk garment which befits a wedding celebration. In the Yemen, the wife does not share in organizing her new house, but all the furniture is to be bought by her husband and the dowry is just for her jewels and ornaments.<sup>1</sup>

The Wedding celebrations:

Between betrothal and marriage, a year elapses, very often indeed, a longer delay, either because the dowry has not yet been collected or because as we mentioned before, the girl is still young.

As far as Jewish law is concerned, Brauer states

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1. Al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.304; Ameen Rihani describes in his book Around the Coasts of Arabia, pp.207-208, some of these traditions which exhaust the finances of the husband. As when the procession of the new couple leaves the bride's father's house for their new house, the bride asks for the chair (on which she is going to be carried) and sits down to make demands and conditions. "I will not move from here unless you give me" say, 10 Riyal; the husband pays her, and she repeats that every few steps to the end of the procession which would end at the husband's house door.

that the whole juridical side of the affair is regulated according to Jewish law.<sup>1</sup> But as far as the wedding celebration is concerned, it surrenders, more or less, to the common background of the environment.

A few months before the wedding, they fix the day of the wedding ceremony. They choose either Thursday or Friday, but usually it is on Thursday in modern days since no marriage ceremony is to be held on the first four days of the week.<sup>2</sup>

Two months before the wedding, they keep themselves busy, preparing the needs of the great occasion. For example they buy fūl (beans) and the nuts and make the 'Araq<sup>3</sup> and get the 'Asaf (the precious gifts) ready and make Mā' al-Ward<sup>4</sup>, and get the bride and the bridegroom ready. The wine is usually made in the grape season. Since this occasion is one of the great occasions which happen in the Yemen, they give it extreme attention. A proverb is recited among the people in the Yemen: Mā' Mā'

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1. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.154, gives the information that the ritual follows that of the Sephardic Jews.
  2. Kafih, Halekoth, Teman, p.111.
  3. 'Araq : Aarrack distilled from grapes or dates, see Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.90.
  4. Mā' al-Ward is made of the rose essence added to the water for the smell and the flavour.

al-'Ādamī 'illā 'irsah wa 'illā mūtah<sup>1</sup> (nothing concerns one except wedding or death). These arrangements naturally happen at the first wedding of both the bride and the bridegroom. In the cases of second marriage, all these ceremonies are done in brief.<sup>2</sup>

The wedding feast itself lasts fourteen days. It begins a week before the wedding and ends with a meal lasting seven days. The start of the ceremony as we already mentioned is usually on Thursday. The first step takes place on the morning of that day by the visit of the bridegroom accompanied by his comrades to the bath,<sup>3</sup> wearing rather distinctive clothes which are usually in between the week-day clothes and Shabath's clothes, mostly madanī as they call it, which is material of two colours - white and black only. When they finish with the bath, as they come back from the bath they prepare for them the breakfast.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, the bridegroom goes along with his comrades to invite the Moris, Rabbis, and the relatives to come on Shabath or Sabt al Bid' as they call it.<sup>5</sup> They go then to the Qāt market and buy a bundle of Qāt.

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1. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.111.

2. Ibid., p.112.

3. Most probably in a public bath.

4. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.112, describes in length the contents of the breakfast.

5. Ibid., pp.111-112; the term Sabt al-Bid' here, is the beginning - Shabath.

Sometimes, the Rabbis come to dress the bridegroom. In that case, it shows what a big man and remarkable fellow he is in the neighbourhood. That usually stimulates the people's attention, as they ask one another "Minū labbas al-Ḥatan?" (who dressed the groom?).

Apart from the customs prescribed by the ritual, the Jews allow themselves to be powerfully influenced by their environment. This is quite obvious after we follow al-Wāsi'ī's description of the customs followed among the Arabs in the Yemen.

Among the Arabs in the Yemen, the wedding ceremony starts three days before the wedding. The first day is called Yaum al-Ḥammām (the bath day). On that day the bride's family invite the groom's female relatives to accompany them to the bath and stay with them on that day to eat and drink.<sup>1</sup>

The second day is called Yaum al-Naqsh.<sup>2</sup> Both

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1. al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.305.

2. For weddings the bride paints her hands and feet with black painting which is called Khutaṭ and remains permanent for a few days (on the non-wedding days, hardly any women paint their cheeks) and under the chin they make a small line and two dots of the paint. See al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., p.304; Bension, Ariel, op. cit., p. 164, describes the material which is used for painting the bride's face with before a Jewish wedding as a mixture of Henna and black. This is of course what is used among the people in the Yemen, Jews and Arabs alike.

sides, the bride's female relatives and the bridegroom's female relatives, join in that celebration (by painting the bride and get themselves painted as well), singing and dancing, and a professional singer (al-Munshidah) calls on that occasion to sing Madh Nabawī then sings on behalf of the bride and her family, e.g. praising her beauty and so on, and others on behalf of the bridegroom and his family.

The third day is Yaum al-Ḥilfah or Yaum al-Dukhlah (the wedding day). In the two houses, i.e. the bride's house and the groom's house are held big feasts at which the relatives and the friends of both sides are invited. And it is necessary that the bridegroom should attend himself or one of his relatives or friends to have supper only in the bride's house and then go back to his house to entertain his guests. Now the wife is with her husband in his house from the night of Yaum al-Ḥilfah. The next day is called Yaum al-Ṣabāh, they dine on that day in the husband's house and double the number which attend at the bride's house on the previous day should attend on that day at the husband's house. On the third day, the husband goes in the morning to see his mother-in-law (she is called 'Ammah' in the Yemen and the father is called 'Amm'). On the seventh day of the Ḥilfah, the husband invites the wife's family drinking and eating from morning till night. On the twentieth, there occurs

something in contrast to what happens on the seventh day. All the husband's relatives, twice as many as those who go to the husband's house on the seventh day, go to the wife's parent's house eating and drinking from morning till night, and it is worth mentioning that the bride does not leave her husband's house before twenty days after the Hilfah (the wedding day).<sup>1</sup>

The above survey of an Arab wedding could be of some interest to show how the Jews allow themselves to be influenced by their environment.

The Jews' celebration of a wedding seems to go on a little longer than that of the Arabs. As we already mentioned above, it starts one week before the wedding day. In every day of the wedding celebration, exchange meals on the two sides of the marriage count as an important tradition among the Jews as well as the Arabs in the Yemen. Smoking the tūtūn or the qāt is very common among them and as it became dangerous habit among the Jews, their Rabbis were worried a great deal about it.<sup>2</sup> The groom and his friends, after inviting the relatives and the intimates to the wedding on the bath day, go to the market to buy Mirbaṭ qāt (a bundle or packet of qāt).<sup>3</sup>

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1. Al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., pp.305-307.

2. See above, p.154.

3. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.112.

It is to be smoked every day after every dinner party held for the wedding celebration. They scour the Narjīlah (hooka)<sup>1</sup> and cut the bundle of gāt. They sit round, cross-legged and start to chew and smoke the gāt. Next day to the bath day, a hard work is for the groom and his friends to be pointed and to be in charge of al-Shir'ah which is to adorn the room where dinner parties have to be held.<sup>2</sup> On Shabath (Sabt al-Bid') the guests come to join in the celebration. It is interesting as much as peculiar that the guests honoured to attend these ceremonies bring their own food with them and eat and drink and sing.<sup>3</sup> The custom of invitation is to go round to their relatives and friends keeping some determined sentences like "qālat Ni'mah fisa' 'indahum bi tahīn" (Ni'mah said come quickly to them with wheat flour) or "ju wa iddu Ma'ākumm malīh al-Dunyā" (come and bring with you the best of the world). But in case of a rich family they do not ask for anything to be brought with the guest, but is only a mere invitation like qālat Ḥamāmah fisa' 'indahum (Ḥamāmah said hurry, come to them).<sup>4</sup> It is a custom among them to ostracise one who

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1. It is called too, Madā'ah, by the Yemenites, see Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, [the text], p.116.
  2. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.113.
  3. Ibid., pp.114, 125; Bension, Ariel, op. cit., p.164.
  4. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.

conducts himself improperly if he is not otherwise amenable to correction. They do not, for instance in case of a wedding, attend his wedding celebration though they are invited. This is obvious from the story told to Goitein, of Ibn Odded who invited all his relatives and friends to his wedding. But because of his bad behaviour and bad reputation, nobody attended his wedding.<sup>1</sup> So far as the wedding guest is concerned, it is the custom among the Yemenite Jews that the man who was last married and invited to the wedding, takes the seat of honour next to the bridegroom.<sup>2</sup> From the beginning of Shabath, they pass through continuous ceremonies and celebrations attended by the Rabbi whose blessings follow one after another. Every single preparation for the wedding, even the bride and the bridegroom's clothes pass through all these ceremonial celebrations.<sup>3</sup>

The second day of the wedding week, which is Sunday, is Yaum al-Tatrufah,<sup>4</sup> which is equivalent to Yaum al Naqsh according to the Arabic source al-Wāsi'ī mentioned above.<sup>5</sup> That day is carried on with as much

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1. Goitein, The Land of Sheba, p.22.

2. Ibid., p.22.

3. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, pp.117-123.

4. Ibid., p.125; Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.155.

5. See above, p.184.

celebration as it is among the Arabs. According to al-Wāsi'ī, the celebration before the wedding day are two days. But in comparison, in the Jews' customs, it extends for one week before the wedding day.

Yaum al-Taṭrufah extends for two days, the first day is for painting the bridegroom and the second day is for painting the bride. The following day is Yaum al-Taḥdhīfah which is fixed for removing the unwanted hair from the bride's body and combing her hair in the presence of the guests.<sup>1</sup> An old woman afterwards breaks an egg and smears its contents over the bride's face and then she sticks some wadding over all that. Thereafter, she takes three lighted tapers and blows them at the bride's face. A shout of joy is heard from the assembled female guests, then the wadding neatly falls away from the bride's face which is a sign of good omen for her future.<sup>2</sup> Kabbala is practised in public in the wedding ceremonies. The bride's face after being washed from that mess, Kabbalistic figures are painted on her forehead and cheeks and especially on her eyelids.<sup>3</sup> All that is carried out to the sound of music and dances and songs. Then comes Yaum al-

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1. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, pp.132-134; Saphir, op. cit., p.81<sup>b</sup>.

2. Bension, Ariel, op. cit., p.164.

3. Ibid., p.164; for the belief in the practical Kabbala see above, p.166.

Qidush (the wedding day).<sup>1</sup> For a whole week, after the wedding ceremony, a meal for the guests is made ready every day. The groom may not work for a month, and his wife for three long months, but it is very often reduced to one month. She is forbidden during that time to leave the house, she may not even once look out through the window.<sup>2</sup>

The influence of the environment upon the Jews is obvious, but with a little more exaggeration by lengthening the period from twenty days among the Arabs to thirty days among the Jews.

Marriage parties and some customs following them:

Great care should be taken towards the guests. Things go further in complication than seems reasonable in celebrations. Ḥabshūsh supplies us with a few examples which indicates the delicacy of the host's position towards his guests. For example, the guests as we already mentioned are to be saluted by offering the contents of the wedding feasts as Ḥabshūsh describes, of either 'Aṣīd and Samn (melted butter) or bread and Samn. In case any one is left out of this ceremony, it would be considered

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1. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, pp.134-149, describes in length the celebration in very interesting detail; Saphir, op. cit., pp.81<sup>b</sup>-87<sup>a</sup>.
  2. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.157.

as an accusation or offence which would lead them to go to the Shaikh (the Jār)<sup>1</sup> to judge between them and compel the one who was mistaken to compensate the other with an ox or sheep to be killed. That was applied to all variety of food. "It was the custom", Ḥabshūsh says, "if any mistake would happen about the Samn or antimony or naub<sup>2</sup> (portion of meat allotted to the guest) or even about the coffee if it was less Qishr<sup>3</sup> (shell of the coffee seeds, from which the drink is made in the Yemen).<sup>4</sup>

It is the custom among the Jews to entertain their wedding guests by offering the coffee as well. The Jewish tradition of hospitality involves massage with oil<sup>5</sup> in their everyday life and when receiving guests for special occasions or ordinary ones, they entertain them by massaging their legs and face with Samn and give them the antimony vessel for painting the eyes.<sup>6</sup> The anointing with Samn is very common among them as a comforter for their tired feet after a long day's work, wandering on

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1. Mentioned above, see above, p.138.

2. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, pp.92, 95.

3. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.

4. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, pp.92, 95.

5. Psalm 23, v.5.

6. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, [the text], p.47; Saphir, op. cit., pp.49<sup>b</sup>-50<sup>a</sup>.

foot. And it is common too that they anoint the whole body with Samn.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, the use of Samn for anointing is applied in various aspects. It is not out of place to mention its various uses. The investigation held by Brauer about the Jewess of South Arabia (Yemen) is very interesting. He supplies us with different uses of the Samn. In a case of difficult labour of a mother, the Mahjirah<sup>2</sup> massages the mother's body with Samn. And after the birth the mother and the child have Samn rubbed into their bodies from end to end.<sup>3</sup>

Another use of Samn is when a girl has her first course, she runs to her mother, and tells what has overcome her. The latter takes melted butter, Samn, and anoints her with it. From now on, every time the same thing happens.<sup>4</sup>

We go back to the wedding ceremonies. The controversies are not limited to the distribution of naub or Samn or coffee, but it extends for more than that. It is a custom among the relatives of the bride on their arrival that everyone sits in a certain place all the time and if anyone of them trespasses on the other's place,

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1. Saphir, op. cit., p.59<sup>a</sup>.

2. See above, p.168.

3. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.163; Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.158.

4. Brauer, Die Frau. ..., p.166.

this would be considered an offence and needs judgment.<sup>1</sup> They celebrate the occasion by singing in turn, one after another and nobody has the right to interrupt the singer by calling to mind or correcting the tune and if it happened, it is considered an offence and needs propitiation which is an ox or sheep.<sup>2</sup>

Saphir notices that some of their songs sung at wedding celebrations are of Sālim Shibzī's poems, and the most famous of them is the poem Ab Sham'un.<sup>3</sup>

Dancing is one of the entertaining methods practised in wedding celebrations, but with great reserve. Not everybody dances at weddings, because it is considered as an undignified movement. Dancing is considered undignified, and scarcely found and if found, it is only among women with each other and the woman is shy to dance

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.100<sup>b</sup>.

2. Ibid., p.100<sup>b</sup>.

3. Saphir, op. cit., p.82<sup>b</sup>; Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.138. It is rather peculiar to find that some songs among the women (those who are already married), express disgust of her husband, as Goitein says, pride in her brother, strong longing for her mother and reproach her family for having given her away to strange people. Goitein suggests that these might be of Muslim origin. But unfortunately I could not get hold of any evidence to confirm that. See Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.21.

even in front of her husband.<sup>1</sup> They have a proverb concerning that matter which says: Man Raqaş Nagaş (whoever dances, belittles himself). But the attitude to dancing is different among the Jews of the villages. They like dancing very much and respect the dancing and the dancers a great deal and it is not uncommon to find aged women accepting an invitation to dance at a wedding celebration.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of entertainment, the custom among the Jews as well as among the Arabs is for everyone of the friends invited to the wedding to contribute a sum of money to the bridegroom as each can afford, and that was expected of everyone attending the celebration, including the tribesmen if invited and vice versa.<sup>3</sup>

Still an important point in the marriage affairs, without which a marriage may not be complete, is the preparation of the list of the bride's possessions which has to be reckoned before the bride leaves her

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1. Al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., pp.309-310; Ameen Rihani, observation in Tihāmah about dancing among the Arabs, indicates that "Dancing is one of their dominant passions". It is called playing and the women of the town dance separate from the men, but among the bedu there is no separation, both may play or dance together. See Ameen Rihani, Round the Coasts of Arabia, p.206.
  2. Kafih, Halekoth Teman, p.118 and note 13, p.118.
  3. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.101<sup>a</sup>.

father's house. Ḥabshūsh describes how five persons should be appointed to estimate the value of the possessions among whom two must be belonging to the bridegroom and two belonging to the bride. They estimate the value of every single thing from the necklace of beads to the silver ornamentation which is either pure silver or alloyed. They price everything almost double its worth. Afterwards they count the total amount, minus one Riyal and a half and they call it ghulfat al-Ḥariw<sup>1</sup> (for the clothes of the bridegroom). The Riyal and a half is laid down traditionally all over the Yemen. Thereafter, they write a list of all the bride's possessions to be the responsibility of the husband.<sup>2</sup> This tradition is still commonly

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1. The bride is called Ḥariwāh and the wedding feast is harāwāh; see Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.84.
  2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.101<sup>a</sup>. This is, however, applied according to the Jewish law. According to the Jewish law the husband has no right over the wife's property. The property of the wife fell into two main categories. One was named Nichsei Melug. It consists of those assets which she brought from her parents, of her own belongings. The husband had no ownership in the substance itself of this property. The second kind was named Nichsei zon Barzel (Iron property), that kind of property if the wife wished, went over to the ownership of the husband with conditions that he undertake the responsibility for risk at the same price and value as when the wife brought it in when she married. But

practised among the Muslims, though many of the people nowadays do not pay much attention to it. It was meant for the security of the wife in case of divorce, to be paid to her alongside the sum retained from her dowry.

Few evidences prove that the Jewesses allow themselves to marry among the Arabs and the question is whether they were forced before their marriage to the Arabs to convert to 'Islām or not. Niebuhr indicates that the Muslim could marry the Jewish woman or the Christian and does not oblige her to apostatize from her religion.<sup>1</sup> Another evidence from Jacob H. F. . . said: "This is not strictly true, Jewish maidens are forcibly converted to 'Islām prior to their marriage with Arab husbands."<sup>2</sup>

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the main thing is there is no duty on the wife to give this property to the husband nor was he forced to take on himself this type of responsibility. See Rabbi K. Kahana, The Theory of Marriage in Jewish Law, pp.17,18.

1. Niebuhr, op. cit., p.192.
2. Jacob, H. F., Jews in Yemen, The Jewish Chronicle supplement, p.111.

Polygamy among the Jews in the Yemen

The Yemenite Jews live in polygamy. Two or three wives is no rare thing. The practice of such a custom differs from one place to another, e.g. very often less in the towns than in the villages where it is practised on a large scale. Habshūsh gives an example of the Jews of al-Jauf saying that the Jewish men of al-Jauf marry eight to ten women during their lives, and some of them have three or four rival wives.<sup>1</sup>

Goitein emphasises that it differs from one place to another by mentioning that the number of men married to more than one woman in al-Gade's village was limited. And the principal reason for polygamy in al-Gades was the institution of the levirate which Yemenites regarded as of great sanctity.<sup>2</sup>

There are many reasons for polygamy. An essential feature of founding a family is, however, in addition, the wish for children, and above all for sons who are needed for the economic structure.<sup>3</sup> It is not only

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1. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.68. [Hebrew text]

2. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.21.

3. Sometimes the entire economic structure in the village (where the man work peasant for instance) demands the founding of a family. With the division of labour, they

among the Arabs in the Yemen or in any other country, but also is found everywhere among the Jews, the wish for a Kaddish, i.e. the son, who after the death of the father can say on behalf of the latter, the Kaddish or prayer for souls.<sup>1</sup>

Sémach considers lack of male descendants as the main reason for polygamy: "several men in the Yemen have two wives, but it is almost always because the first has had no children or only daughters".<sup>2</sup>

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think of having several wives to help and accordingly a number of children would be born to achieve the object. Brauer in his article, Die Frau bei den Süd-arabischen Juden, p.159, does not entirely agree with the reason. He said only to some limited extent do economic reasons allow themselves to be considered in this condition for the Yemen. For scavengers, farm labourers and cattlemen, polygamy is the regular form of "ménage". Here, women supply the labour force, and the more wives a man has, so much more can he expand his economy. But in the towns, many wives are a social hindrance rather than a help. Brauer, evidently accepts that the Jews of the Yemen are almost altogether excluded from agriculture, therefore it follows here too that polygamy is not conditioned by economic considerations. For even in the country, there are trades like pottery which is almost altogether in the hands of the Jews.

1. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.158.
2. Ibid., p.158, Brauer quotes from Sémach, op. cit., p.88; Goitein in Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village,

This was not strictly peculiar. Jawnieli who visited the Yemen in 1910, observed that polygamy among the Jews in the Yemen could happen very often for no reason except for the husband's desire in getting married to another woman. Jawnieli mentioned that throughout the length and breadth of the Yemen, the man, if he wishes, married two wives, and even three and this happens even if he has sons and daughters by his first wife, and in this matter there are no restrictions.<sup>1</sup>

In that case, if polygamy among the Jews could happen for no obvious reason, but only for the desire of the husband in having more than one wife, it could be explained that the Jews were strongly influenced by their environment. We have some examples which show the uncounted wives belonging to one husband. But that very often happens in the Court only. It is said that the 'Imām al-Mahdī Ṣāhib al-Mawāhib (mentioned above) had seldom less than three hundred wives married to him,<sup>2</sup> and the numbers

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p.21, note 51, mentions that only one case was found among the investigation carried out about the Jews of al-Gade's village, where a second wife was taken because the first was ailouit or ilyouit (a sterile woman).

1. Jawnieli, Yehude Teman, Ha-po'el Ha-za'ir, vol. IV, 1910/1912, p.21.
2. Hamilton, Alexander, A new account of the East Indies, vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1727, p.34.

of women he keeps in his Court are reckoned to be six or seven hundred.<sup>1</sup>

Brauer gives a different reason for polygamy among the Jews in the Yemen. He says that polygamy is an exceptional phenomenon among the Yemenite Jews and above all it has nothing to do with the lack of male descendants according to Sémach's suggestion. The main justification for polygamy among the Yemenite Jews lies not in the social, but in the sexual context. The man who has only one wife is compelled to abstinence over long periods, namely during menstruation, confinement, and part of pregnancy and suckling. And since there is no opportunity for prostitution<sup>2</sup> or other kind of extra marital sexual intercourse, therefore the Yemenite takes to himself a second wife, and if possible, a third also, for the Yemenite Jew is by no means capable of continence.<sup>3</sup>

The Jews of the Yemen seem to fulfil the demands of the Jewish laws of purity very strictly indeed. The Jewish laws of purity, according to Yemenite usage - full

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1. La Roque, op. cit., p.20

2. Prostitution began in the Yemen as a result of the Turkish military occupation. The Yemenite Arabs did not consider the Turks to be Muslims, since they drank wine and arak regularly and were continually defying the law. See Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.162.

3. Ibid., p.159.

fourteen days of separation between husband and wife every month for menstruation - were strictly observed. And the visit to the bath at the end of the period was a semi-public ceremony, where a bunch of flowers is fastened behind the woman's left ear.<sup>1</sup> And for confinement, according to Jewish law the woman is untouchable for 40 days<sup>2</sup> after the birth of a boy, and 80 days<sup>3</sup> after that of a girl. The Yemenite Jews shorten it to 30 and 40 days respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Levirate:

One important point is considered as a reason for polygamy among the Jews in the Yemen. It is the

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1. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.22; Ibn al-Mujawir, Ta'rīkh al-Mustabsir, vol. 1, p.36, describes the separation period of the woman during menstruation, according to the Jewish law; she eats and drinks in a separate place and nobody comes near her. Giving an example of a purifying ceremony among the Jews in Baghdad, where there is a well called Tomy, they take the woman to that well and dip her gradually in until the well's water covers her, they allow her to come out as she is considered well purified and afterwards all the Jewesses come to meet her.
  2. Leviticus, XII. 2, 4.
  3. Ibid., 5.
  4. Brauer, Die Frau ..., p.164.

levirate marriage. Goitein supplies us with important and interesting details about the levirate marriage practised among the Jews in the Yemen. He reports that levirate marriage occurs in many parts of the world. But there is never any question of compulsion based on custom, and a bride-dowry is reckoned for the brother's widow, as for other women. It is precisely characteristic of the Jewish levirate marriage law based on the Bible,<sup>1</sup> that the undertaking can be annulled only by a painful juridical procedure, and that according to strict law, no fresh marriage-bond is necessary. It means that the former marriage, properly speaking, remains valid, and need only be renewed by the brother of the dead man, and that, consequently - and this is the important feature for the Jews in the Yemen - a fresh bride-price need not be paid.<sup>2</sup>

Goitein presented eight very interesting stories, showing how the levirate marriage is thoroughly traditional among the Yemenite Jews. That altogether in the Biblical sense, its actual performance is considered among them to be strictly binding in law, but this is not so in the case of dispensation from it, through the procedure of the so-

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1. Deuteronomy, chap. 25, v. 5.

2. Goitein, Zur Heutigen Praxis der leviratsehe ..., vol. 13, p.160.

called Halisah<sup>1</sup> (drawing of the shoe of the husband's brother by the childless widow).<sup>2</sup>

Goitein indicates that the levirate marriage is retained whole and entire among the Yemenites. The environment has somehow an influence in this direction. In two of the eight stories which he brought, the law of the land (Yemen) among Muslims, opposes strong limits against the application of the Jewish levirate marriage, since upon appeal to the Qādī, the property of the deceased can always be divided, and in that case, on occasion of the levirate, there is no point in marrying the impoverished widow.<sup>3</sup>

The first story among the eight presented by Goitein, shows the opposition of the Muslim law practised in the Yemen against the application of the Jewish levirate marriage. It is the story of Sālim Sh- the youngest of five brothers. The four elder ones have already inherited their portions of the family patrimony and live in their

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1. Goitein, Zur Heutigen Praxis der leviratsehe ..., vol. 13, p.159.
  2. Deuteronomy, chap. 25, v.9. Niebuhr presents evidence to show that this biblical custom is kept up by the Yemenite Jews. They bind a shoe to the calf of the leg and the wife of the deceased brother unfastens this with the right hand, throws it before him on the ground, and spits thrice on the ground in his presence, instead of doing so in his face. Niebuhr, Beschreibung von Arabien, p.45.
  3. Goitein, Zur Heutigen Praxis der Leviratsehe ..., p.165.

own houses. Sālīm, however, still stays with his wife Rūmiyah in his father's house. The father emigrated to Palestine, Sālīm accompanies him as far as al-Ḥudaidah, the port, and dies as a result of an experience on his return journey. Jehudo, the eldest brother, who is himself married and even whose children, or some of them, are married, is immediately obliged to undertake a levirate marriage. In order not to disturb peace in his house, quite apart from any consideration of his slender means, he is inclined to avoid acting for the time being.

Negotiations drag on for a year and a half. It is suggested that he proceed with the marriage, and after some months, eventually pronounces a divorce, for a levirate marriage is a law of the Torah. If the Hillūs is not well-founded in law, it is to be feared that one of the two parties obliged by the law to the practice of levirate marriage, but not practising may die, or otherwise suffer loss. In the end Jehudo agrees, Rūmiyah obtains her marriage certificate and besides this, all moveable property once her husband's, since it is commonly accepted that she will probably be divorced after a short time. It is stressed that Rūmiyah lived all the time in her deceased husband's (strictly her father-in-law's) house, and did not return to her father's house. Immediately after the levirate marriage Rūmiyah was pregnant and on that account, naturally not divorced. She bore a son, called Sālīm after

his father,<sup>1</sup> and accordingly Sālīm b. Jehudo.

The circumstances are interesting, under which, upon the death of another of the aforementioned five brothers, the levirate marriage cannot take place. The widow - likewise called Rūmiyah, of the learned and very rich Meir betook herself to Jehudo and each one of the surviving brothers on condition that the property of the deceased which she possessed, should not be divided with whoever should be her new husband. The brothers, however, proposed division of the inheritance according to the law of the land and thus it came about that the brothers kept for themselves practically everything, while there remained over to the widow, only the half of a quarter. Had she agreed to divide the inheritance, she might perhaps have been able to obtain a levirate marriage. This, however, she refused to do. She might have been able to force the brothers to the Hillūs, but she got fed up with the whole business and emigrated to Palestine, where, of course unmarried, she gained her bread by the work of her hands.<sup>2</sup>

The second story is number six among Goitein's stories. At the death of Meir Sh., from Amram, three unmarried brothers were at hand. His property fell by

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1. Deuteronomy, chap. 25, v. 6.

2. This story as number one, was told to Goitein, Zur Heutigen Praxis der Leviratsehe ... pp.161-162.

inheritance, according to the law of the land, largely to his father who was still alive. The widow wished to marry the youngest brother. The chief Rabbi in Şan'ā' declared however that she had by no means free choice in the matter, but that she belonged, for the moment anyhow, rather to the oldest brother. The latter was summoned to Şan'ā', but declared himself unable to maintain a wife - the property of the deceased man, as we have already remarked, was no longer available for the most part, being in the hands of his father. As for the second brother, he did not appear at all at the hearing of the case before the Beth-Din (the judge's court). And so, only the youngest brother, scarcely 18 years old, was left, and he, at the wish of the widow, agreed to carry out the marriage.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious from the previous passage that the influence of the environment did not only affect the Civil customs, but also the religious practice. As for the Jewish law, the Yabam<sup>2</sup> who performed his duty by marrying the widow of a brother who died without children became the sole heir to his brother's estate. But he did not receive his brother's share in their father's estate unless the father died before the brother (Yeb. 40<sup>a</sup>).<sup>3</sup>

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1. Goitein, Zur Heutigen Praxis der Levirate, pp.163-164.

2. The husband's brother, the brother-in-law.

3. The Jewish Encyclopaedia, vol. VI, p.584.

It is worth asking how more than one wife could live with only one husband. In fact, they live together in the same house, and it is extraordinary to know that there is no jealousy among them. The first wife is always assured of a privileged position in the household, especially if she has brought a son into the world, and if she has not, then she is apparently resigned to giving her husband another chance. And in any case, if she is clever she would say, let the second wife now make the coffee for the man.<sup>1</sup> Another example was known from the lips of a rival wife: "We two women were like two doves; the man was one week with her and one week with me. I did embroidery, she the housework. I produced the children and she reared them". And after their husband died, both women remained on the best of terms.<sup>2</sup> In some other cases the rival wives do not dwell together in one house, sometimes a well-to-do man would cast his eye upon a beautiful woman because of no other reason than that she pleased him. In this case the price was particularly high, a separate house, as a separate cow and even a maid had to be provided for that second wife.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Shlomo Barer, op. cit., p.102; he obtained this information when he was questioning some of the emigrants to Palestine, and their customs and traditions were going on the same for generations.

2. Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite ..., p.21, note 51.

3. Ibid., p.22, note 51.

The Impersonal Relationship between  
the Jews and the Arabs

Social statutes against the Jews:

The Jews in the Yemen faced different kinds of social decrees. One of these is to forbid them from some sorts of things practised in the daily activities, to show their humbleness. We already discussed in the first part of the thesis, the exile to Kamrān and the other to Mūza'. And we discussed the reasons which surrounded the problem, which took place in the second half of the seventeenth century. It had to be for the Jews to suffer, not only from a temporary punishment which was the exile to Kamrān and Mūza',<sup>1</sup> but also as a social humiliation, that they should be humbled and subdued. The Court of the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh warned him to beware of the developing position of the Jews and to humble them in order to subdue them under his rule. According to Ḥabshūsh's records, we find that a hard decree, hateful to the Jews followed the storm which occurred as a result of rumours of the appearance of the false Messiah of Constantinople, Shabethai Zevi. The Court of the 'Imām magnified and exaggerated to the 'Imām, how the Jews' position would create a shameful position to the Muslim as when he rides

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1. See above, pp.32-40, 41-51.

and the Muslim walks, he appears higher than the Muslim, which does not agree with the Qur'ān, as it is said that the Muslim should be higher than any other believer. And an order<sup>1</sup> was announced at that time that it was forbidden for the Jew to ride the donkey either his own or anyone else's.<sup>2</sup> And no Muslim should allow a Jew to walk on his right, but on his left.<sup>3</sup> And it is forbidden for a Jew to raise his voice against a Muslim; he must talk to him respectfully.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.45<sup>b</sup>-46<sup>a</sup>.
  2. Kafih, Korot Israel Be-Teman, Sefunot, p.256, note 90, confirms that that decree was practised until the modern days (the 20th century) with exception that the ill and aged people might ride the donkey on condition that the two legs must be at one side.
  3. S. Landshut, Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East, p.73; Kafih, Korot Israel Be-Teman, Sefunot, p.256, note 91, mentions that the Muslim in the Yemen does not let the Jew walk on his right, and if it happens, the former orders the latter Yassir yā Nijis (walk at the left unclean): a similar decree was announced in Egypt against the non-Muslim during the Mamluks period in 1300, see 'Alī Ibrāhīm, Ta'rīkh al-Mamālīk al-Bahariyyah, p.124.
  4. Neuman, The Jews in Spain, p.187, such presumption and insolence was practised after a fashion in the middle ages in Spain, as Christians were forbidden to eat with a Jew or accept their invitation or live in the same house.

The statute also provided, however, that if these severe punishments could not be carried out, other penalties should be improvised. As he may be beaten or may be punished as needed to keep him humble.

The Forced Conversion of Jewish Orphans  
to 'Islām

The Jews in the Yemen felt a special animosity towards the state of the Yemen, because of the law requiring the forced conversion to 'Islām. It had been reported that in the Yemen, the Jewish orphans were forcibly converted to 'Islām. Ḥabshūsh gave us a few examples stating how that most hateful social decree affected the Jews. He mentions their (i.e. his and Halévy) encounter with a Jew from al-Jirāf whose age was over a hundred years, who originally had fled from Ṣan'ā' during the reign of the 'Imām al-Manṣūr 'Alī (1776-1809)<sup>1</sup> who had forced the Jewish orphans to convert to 'Islām. How the idea of the conversion to 'Islām came to the above-mentioned 'Imām, Ḥabshūsh describes in his characteristic detail,<sup>2</sup> giving the reason that he was a very reckless 'Imām who lived in luxury and built the very remarkable luxurious buildings which cost the state a tremendous amount of money and that accordingly all the prices went tremendously high. He lodged his big family in those houses and ordered that all the Jewish orphans should be

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1. See al-Wāsi'ī, op. cit., pp.59-60; al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭālī ..., vol. 1, pp.459-466.

2. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, [the text], p.104-105.

forcibly converted to 'Islām. This he did in order to serve his children in those fabulously built palaces.<sup>1</sup>

Goitein has a different explanation of the reason which made the 'Imām order such a decree. The idea was explained to Goitein by one of the Yemenite Jews that the Muslims think that 'Islām is the natural religion and the other religions are merely a custom what a father is allowed to hand down to his child, but which is annulled by the death of the father.<sup>2</sup> But Goitein's own point of view attributes the application of this law in the Yemen to the Ottoman method of pressing Ra'iyah children into different kinds of Government service (Janissaries).<sup>3</sup>

In order to avoid this fate the Yemenite Jews make their orphans to marry at a very tender age, or more commonly they smuggle them out of the capital, Ṣan'ā', to the remote villages.<sup>4</sup>

So far as we can say, such cases concerning the conversion of the infant Jewish orphans to 'Islām by force must have happened in the Yemen; and it seems that the applying of that law raised a dispute in the Yemen and

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1. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, the text, p.105.

2. Goitein, The Land of Sheba, p.17.

3. Goitein, Habshush Travels in Yemen, p.62ff, note 11; Goitein, Magnes anniversary volume, p.91, note 11.

4. Anonymous, Jews in Yemen, Darkenu, vol. 1, p.16; Goitein, Portrait of a Yemenite Weaver's Village, p.17.

attracted the attention of the Jews as well as the Arabs and that serious discussions were held for there is an Arabic reference concerned with that problem and its title confirms what Ḥabshūsh claims.<sup>1</sup>

It is not clear whether that law was practised only during the period of the aforementioned 'Imām or continued any longer after him. Ḥabshūsh himself confined the usage of that law to the period of that 'Imām. But according to Korah, it seems that that decree is older than the period of the aforementioned 'Imām. Korah gave us a date prior to that period. And in fact he did not give a certain period in which such a decree was pronounced, but mentioned that the practice of it was annulled at the first Turkish capture of the Yemen (1546-1628) and reappeared again after they left and again was annulled at the second period of the Turkish rule in the Yemen (1872). Evidently, Korah indicates that Mori Sālim Shibzī devoted one of his poems to that decree called "Masynā fī riḍā al-Rahmān".<sup>2</sup> That clarifies that that law must have been practised in the 17th century for Sālim Shibzī as we already mentioned above was among the Jews who were exiled to Mūza'.

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1. Al-Shaukānī, Risālah fī Ḥukm Şibyān al-Dhimmiyyīn 'Idhā Māt 'Abawāhum, unfortunately I found it difficult to check this reference.

2. Korah, op. cit., p.157.

The Prohibition of the Turbans

The Jews in the Yemen, according to Hebrew sources,<sup>1</sup> suffered mortification during the reign of the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh 'Ismā'īl (born 1019 died 1087 A.H. - 1610-1676). Although such persecution had a political reason,<sup>2</sup> its results were social discrimination which prevented them from wearing turbans - as it is reported by the aforementioned Hebrew sources. As far as the date is concerned, on which the decree prohibiting the Jews from wearing turbans was made, the Hebrew sources differ among themselves. Ḥabshūsh reports that in the year 1673 the 'Ismā'īlīs gave an order that the Jews could not wear turbans and that their heads had to be uncovered because they had finer turbans than those of the 'Ismā'īlīs themselves.<sup>3</sup>

As for the other Hebrew source, Megilat Teman, a different date is given, which is 1667,<sup>4</sup> when the 'Imām al-Mutawakkil 'alā-Allāh sought an alternative solution to that of the ministers in his government and the chiefs of

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1. Korah, op. cit., pp.7-9; Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p. 32 ; Sassoon, Megilat Teman, pp.10-11.

2. vide supra, p.46<sup>a</sup>.

3. Habshush, Korot Ha-Zman, p.46<sup>a</sup>.

4. Sassoon, Megilat Teman, p.11.

his army, who advised him to destroy and exterminate the Jews. This was a result of the rumours which spread about the news of their redemption, based on the appearance of the false Messiah Shabbetai Zevi.<sup>1</sup>

Korah tells that the decree to start with was to remove the turbans, followed then by the orders that they should grow side locks of hair<sup>2</sup> to be for them a distinction or permanent mark, clear and obvious to everybody. This, the Jews considered a disgrace and shame and felt them as if they were two snakes on their beards.<sup>3</sup> These marks were called by the Arabs in the Yemen, zanānīr (sing. zinār), and were called by the Jews, Simanim (sing. Siman).<sup>4</sup> The removing of the turbans was mentioned by Sālim Shibzī in one of his poems:

"פּוֹתֵל עַל דַּת' וַיִּזְזוּ לְתוֹרַת' וְהָסִיךְ עַצְמוֹתַי"<sup>5</sup>

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1. vide supra, p.32.

2. Weissenberg, S., Die Jemenitischen Juden, ZfE, vol. 41, p.311, 1909; Lev. XIX.27; the cutting of the side-locks hair was considered a heathen custom; therefore this law, as interpreted by some authorities, forbids the removal of the side locks with razor or clipping them with scissors (see Rabad to sifra, Kedoshim, vi [ed. Weiss, 90 C]. See The Jewish Encyclopaedia). The side-locks are extensively worn by Jews of Eastern Europe and also of the Orient, see The Jewish Encyclopaedia, article Péot.

3. Korah, op. cit., p.8 \*

4. Ibid., p.8.

5. Ibid., p.7.

He mocks my faith and despises my Torah, and has removed my turban.

In another poem Sālim recites:

"וְצַרָה פִּי שֶׁלִּיטֵן הַיָּמִים בְּלִי שָׂרָה וְצַרָה"<sup>1</sup>

In the Yemen I began wandering about without refuge and (without) turban.

After supplications and entreaties to allow them to return to wearing their turbans,<sup>2</sup> they bribed one of their friends in the Court with money, and were allowed to cover their heads with a piece of cloth which they folded afterwards and sewed together to look like a turban.<sup>3</sup>

That decree was carried out until it was annulled during the reign of Ṣultān 'Azīz in 1872.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Korah, op. cit., p.7.

2. Ibid., p.8.

3. Ḥabshūsh, Koret Hazman, p.

4. Ibid., p.46<sup>a</sup>-46<sup>b</sup>.

The Compulsion in Collecting the Sweepings

One of the most remarkable events which happened to the Jews towards the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century was that hard decree which was carried out after several protests raised by the Jews themselves. The decree forced the Jews to clean the latrines and the streets, a job which had been done before by the Muslim Arabs only.

Ḥabshūsh placed this event in the year 1846<sup>1</sup> and gave the reason for all these changes. The story behind it is that two of the Gentiles had a dispute, one of them of the Sādah and the other an Arab merchant. The former was one of the family of the 'Imām who was governing at the time. His job was bath attendant, or as we might call it, a scraper. His disputant said to him: "Do not show off, for you are cleaning the latrines of the Jews, lay aside your pride and go to clean the dirt and the filth from the lavatories.

That dispute drove them to attend before the Qāḍī whose name was Yaḥyā al-Saḥūlī.<sup>2</sup> He told in his turn

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1. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.46<sup>b</sup>.

2. He is Yaḥyā b. Ṣāliḥ b. Yaḥyā al-Shajarī al-Saḥūlī, born 1134 A.H. and died 1209 A.H. (1794), vide: Al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli', vol. 2, p.333; Al-Ziriklī, op. cit., pp.186-187.

the 'Imām<sup>1</sup> who was ruling at that time and advised him to settle that problem and gave him the hint that "it is undignified to us to permit the Muslims to clean the lavatories of the Jews" and advised the 'Imām to leave this type of work to the Jews. So it was, and a decree was pronounced which forced the Jews to do that sort of work. The Jews considered that kind of work a shame and disgrace. The rest of the Jews who were not engaged in that work contributed some money every month to those who were engaged in it, and on Shabaths and on the feasts, the latter received from almost every house a piece of bread for their nourishment. In addition, they received their wages from the bath-attendants for collecting the sweepings.

We were lucky to get hold of one of the most important Arabic MSS which mainly deals with that concern. Three treatises were devoted to the matter. The first was written by Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Shaukānī (1760-1834)<sup>2</sup> under

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1. Joseph Kafih in Korot Israel Be-Teman, Sefunot, p.274, note 178, named that 'Imām Al-Mutawakkil Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Manṣūr. Kafih thought of that 'Imām because he was indeed the 'Imām who reigned at that time according to the date which was given by Ḥabshūsh. That 'Imām died in 1849, vide: al-Ziriklī, vol. 8. pp.12-13.
  2. Al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli', vol. 1, p.459; al-Ziriklī, op. cit., vol. 7, p.190.

the title Ḥal al-'Ishkāl fī 'Ijbār al-Yahūd 'alā 'Iltiqāt al-Azbāl.<sup>1</sup> From that MS appears the fact that there was a debate about that problem. Some were supporting that idea and some were opposing it.

An important thing should be discussed first, that is the period in which that problem happened and implemented that sort of decree. According to al-Shaukānī, who did not give the exact date of that event, we understood from the MS date of completion that the problem appeared towards the end of the 18th century.<sup>2</sup> Ḥabshūsh mentioned that this decree was pronounced in the year 1846 when Yaḥyā al-Saḥūlī was acting as judge in the 'Imām's Court. This confirms the fact that it did not happen in 1846, but round the end of the 18th century, because Yaḥyā al-Saḥūlī (died 1794) did really live in the 18th and not in the 19th century and he was a friend of al-Shaukānī who died in the year 1834, i.e. 12 years before the date which is given by Ḥabshūsh.

Since we accept al-Shaukānī's MS as far as the date of the event is concerned, we find that the 'Imām in power at that time was the 'Imām al-Manṣūr Bi-Allāh Rabb al-'Ālamīn 'Alī b. al-'Imām al-Mahdī<sup>3</sup> who appointed Yaḥyā

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1. MS 2216, in Dār al-Kutub wa al-Wathā'iq al-Qaumiyah bi al-Qāhirah.

2. The author, i.e. al-Shaukānī mentions at the end of his MS, p.48<sup>b</sup>, the date of the completion, 1205 (1790 A.D.)

3. Al-Shaukānī, al-Badr al-Ṭāli' ..., vol. 1, pp.459-466.

b. Ṣāliḥ al-Saḥūlī as one of his judges.

The problem of the compulsion of the Jews to collect the sweepings arose during the aforementioned 'Imām's period. The real proof of its gravity is the debate between al-Shaukānī on one hand and al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Īsā b. Muḥammad, one of the 'ulamā', on the other hand.

The saying of al-Shaukānī in his MS, Ḥal al-'Ishkāḷ ... was devoted to establishing the opinion of the Islamic religion in this problem. He did not find before him any evidence of discussion by anyone of the 'ulamā' concerning this problem.<sup>1</sup> He emphasised again that the raising of this problem and its wide discussion took place not before the period of 'Imām al-Manṣūr Bi Allāh Rabb al-'Ālamīn 'Alī b. al-'Imām al-Mahdī.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Imām seeking a solution to this problem, asked al-Shaukānī to derive the evidence which could support him to compel the Jews to collect the sweepings.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Shaukānī, bearing in mind, no doubt, the demand of the 'Imām, wrote his above-mentioned MS in which he tried to give an interpretation of some verses from the Qur'ān and some of the Muḥammadan tradition. Although al-

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1. Al-Shaukānī, Ḥal al-'Ishkāḷ ..., p.45<sup>a</sup>.

2. 'Imām al-Manṣūr 'Alī is the one who pronounced the decree of the forced conversion to 'Islām, vide supra, p.211.

3. Al-Shaukānī, Ḥal al-'Ishkāḷ ..., p.45<sup>a</sup>.

Shaukānī derived from either the Qur'ān or the traditions about fifteen verses and Ḥadīth to support the official attitude of the state of that time, it is hard to find any of these which have a direct relevance to the problem.

One of the main verses, for example, on which al-Shaukānī laid most stress, is:

«<sup>1</sup> حتى يعطوا الجزية عن يد وهم صاغرون»

The explanation of this verse in al-Shaukānī's opinion is that, for the Jews to pay the taxes (Jizyah) is not enough, but they (i.e. the taxes) have to be paid accompanied by the compulsory works which make them humble such as collecting the sweepings.<sup>2</sup> Al-Shaukānī, considering the explanation of this verse in the aspect of its word al-Ṣaghār, declares his sorrow about the time which had already passed without obliging the Jews to collect the Muslims' sweepings, saying that the Muslim generations which had already passed, had wrapped themselves up in the humiliation when they did the opposite by collecting the Jews' sweepings.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Shaukānī was not content with the above verse, but carried on giving more explanations of the Qur'ān verses and Muḥammadan Ḥadīth. All the details mentioned

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1. Qur'ān, IX, 29.

2. Al-Shaukānī, Ḥal al-'Ishkāḷ ..., p.45<sup>a</sup>.

3. Ibid., p.45<sup>b</sup>.

by al-Shaukānī deserve to be quoted. Let us draw attention at least to yet another Ḥadīth, in which he says:

”اذا لقيتم اليهود والنصارى في الطريق فلا  
تبدؤوهم بالسلم واضطروهم الى اضيقه“<sup>1</sup>

The explanation of this Ḥadīth<sup>2</sup> as it is given by al-Shaukānī, is that the prophet ordered the Muslims not to let the Christian or Jew walk on the middle of the streets because this might show their dignity. The order of the prophet as it appears, according to al-Shaukānī, is that the Muslims have to oblige both Jew and Christian to walk on the narrow strips of the streets which shows that they are not equal to the Muslims. The tenor of this Ḥadīth forbids the Muslims to allow Jews to be equal to themselves even in this slight matter of daily activities. Al-Shaukānī said that if this slight matter is forbidden according to Muḥammadan tradition, therefore, it is more proper to oblige them to take over this type of humiliating work instead of it being carried out by the Muslim.

Al-Shaukānī proceeds, giving more interesting evidences. One of these is the prophet's Ḥadīth in which he says, as it is given by al-Shaukānī:

”نزلوا الناس منازلهم“

1. al-Muttaqī, Kanz al-'Ummāl, vol. 9, pp.70-71, Hyderabad, 1962.

2. Al-Shaukānī, Hal al-'Ishkāl ..., p.47<sup>a</sup>.

The commentary of this Ḥadīth<sup>1</sup> according to the commentators of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and unanimous opinion of the Muslim Savants is that the Muslim position is higher than that of the non-Muslim. According to that commentary, the Muslim should have the privilege of superiority, so that they can be distinguished from the others. Al-Shaukānī drove the conclusion of that Ḥadīth that the Muslims should enjoy the right of forcing the Jews to take over that humiliating job.<sup>2</sup>

This opinion of al-Shaukānī was opposed by one of the 'Ulamā' called 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Īsā. His MS called 'Irsāl al-Maqāl 'Alā 'Izālat Ḥal al-'Ishkā<sup>3</sup> was devoted to opposing al-Shaukānī, discussing and commenting on the same verses and Ḥadīth which were given by al-Shaukānī.

One could find in the introduction of al-Sayyid 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Īsā's MS.<sup>4</sup> that he is going to discuss al-Shaukānī's treatise. His methods of supplication to God to pave his way and to enable him to understand the Qur'ān and its meaning and to enable him to be faithful to the text and to give him the patience to discover the similarity. All these might give the hint that al-Shaukānī

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1. Al-Shaukānī, Ḥal al-'Ishkā ..., p.47<sup>a</sup>.

2. Ibid., p.47<sup>a</sup>.

3. Included in the same microfilm of Dār al-Kutub.

4. 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Īsā, 'Irsāl al-Maqāl ..., p.50<sup>a</sup>.

was neither faithful to the Qur'ān text nor able to understand the similarity between the verses, nor was he able to discover the exact meanings.

'Abd-Allāh b. 'Īsā proceeds to discuss al-Shaukānī's first evidence. He explained the Ṣaghār here relying on a grammatical point in the language to confirm that the continuation of the action does not exist in the sentence and there is no evidence which makes the Ṣaghār continuous. But as the ancestors understood and acted, it is that they, i.e. the Jews are humbled only at the moment of paying the taxes. Quoting al-Zamakhsharī's comment,<sup>1</sup> al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh gives the limit of the humiliation which should be suffered by Jews. Only when they come to pay the jizyah, it should be paid accompanied by humbleness such as to come by themselves, walking, not riding, and when they hand it over, they have to be standing while the tax-collector is sitting and the tax-collector might seize the Jew by the collar, ordering him to pay the taxes.<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion which al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh drew from the commentary as it is given by al-Zamakhsharī is that the Jews should be forced by humiliation only in the moment of their paying taxes, and not by any means at any

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1. Al-Zamakhsharī, Al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī wujūh al-Ta'wīl, vol. 2, p.35, Cairo, 1948.

2. 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Īsā, 'Irsāl al-Maqāl ..., p.50<sup>b</sup>.

other time such as a continuous humiliation by forcing them to collect the rubbish. Emphasising his opinion, he said that neither the prophet Muḥammad nor his companions nor his successors compelled the Jews or gave them an order to do such work.

Al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh discussed most of the evidences given by al-Shaukānī. When al-Shaukānī, for instance, shows his sorrow about the time which had already passed without obliging the Jews to collect the Muslims' sweepings, saying that the Muslim generation which had passed, had wrapped themselves up in the humiliation when they did the opposite by collecting the Jews' sweepings, al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh argues against al-Shaukānī quoting a Ḥadīth of the prophet, in which he says:<sup>1</sup>

2 "ان الأمة لا تجتمع على ضلالة"

This Ḥadīth means, al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh said, that the Muslim nation was unanimously deviating from the right course by their acceptance of collecting the sweepings. But this in the last analysis obviously is against the Ḥadīth of the prophet.

Al-Shaukānī did not concede in his discussion with al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh, but he started to defy him, using his grammatical knowledge and his well established

1. 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Isā, 'Irsāl al-Maqāl ..., p.52<sup>a</sup>.

2. Mentioned in Ibn Māja, Fitan, 8, See Wensink.

background of Islamic study, by writing another article called Tafwīq al-Nibāl 'ilā 'Irsāl al-Maqāl. In this article, al-Shaukānī adopted the same attitude as in his first mentioned article. He did not adduce any new evidence. But he worked on his previous evidences giving them new proofs and at the same time making some statements. One of these statements is that "as far as the debates are concerned it is not enough to quote the sayings of the servants, but you have to be correct, and if you are claiming that some of your account is correct you have to prove it".<sup>1</sup>

This statement indicates that al-Qādī 'Abd-Allāh might give some quotations incorrectly or perhaps failed sometimes to prove his evidences.

Another statement was given by al-Shaukānī, that is: the understanding of the commentary of the Qur'ān by the companions of the Prophet and their successors did not prevent the other Islamic scholars so much as twenty or thirty for one verse.<sup>2</sup> Considering these different opinions of commentary on one verse, al-Shaukānī did not abstain from giving his own understanding of the debated points.

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1. Al-Shaukānī, Tafwīq al-Nibāl 'ilā 'Irsāl al-Maqāl, Dār al-Kutub's MS no. 2216, p.60<sup>a</sup>.

2. Al-Shaukānī, Tafwīq al-Nibāl 'ilā 'Irsāl al-Maqāl, pp.61<sup>a</sup>-61<sup>b</sup>.

Discussing the meaning of al-Ṣaghār<sup>1</sup> in the verse of the Qur'ān, al-Shaukānī raised this question: is it grammatically understood from the word Ṣaghār that it is restricted only for the moment of their (i.e. the Jews) paying taxes or could it be at any time? His finding is that it does not mean grammatically that the Ṣaghār is restricted only to the moment of paying the taxes, but it is likely to include anything except those of sleeping, eating and resting.<sup>2</sup> According to this understanding the Jews have to be compelled to do the humiliating jobs, particularly the collecting of the sweepings, because this work is forbidden to be done by the Muslims.

Trying to put al-Qādī 'Abd-Allāh in a critical situation, al-Shaukānī raised another question: is it legitimate or not to command the Jews not to ride the horse, not to let their houses be higher than those of the Muslims, and so forth?<sup>3</sup>

If all these forbidden acts are not against the Islamic law, al-Shaukānī said, then all the claims of al-Qādī 'Abd-Allāh in his article, that al-Ṣaghār only accompanies the moment of paying the taxes, is incorrect.

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1. Al-Baiḍāwī, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, p.252, comments on the word Sāghirūn in the Qur'ān verse, by only the meaning Adhillā' (humbled).

2. Al-Shaukānī, Tafwīq al-Nibāl ..., p.60<sup>b</sup>.

3. vide supra, p.208, 209.

Because all these forbidden acts have a sense of continuity.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Shaukānī laid stress on this point saying that the reason why the Muslim legislator did not give them the right to all these acts mentioned above, was because he knew that it might give them dignity and honour which might enable them to have the upper hand on the Muslims. According to that understanding, exempting them from a humiliating job, such as collecting the sweepings, will give them definite dignity, honour and the upper hand on the Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

But if you reply, says al-Shaukānī still discussing his question, all these acts are against the Islamic law, we should argue by saying that according to Abu 'Ubaidah in his book called al-Amwāl, 'Umar ben al-Khaṭṭāb allowed these orders.<sup>3</sup>

Adopting this attitude, al-Shaukānī insists that there is no disagreement or contradiction with the Islamic law in compelling the Jews to collect the sweepings.

From all these discussions of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth about this matter, it is clear that there are two

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1. Al-Shaukānī, Tafwīq al-Nibāl ..., p.62<sup>a</sup>.

2. Ibid., p.62<sup>b</sup>.

3. Abu 'Ubaid, al-Amwāl, p.52-54.

contradictory opinions. One of these is that al-Shaukānī who was the representative of the official opinion of the state at that time and was claiming to be a Qāḍī of Ṣan'ā'<sup>1</sup> after the death of al-Qāḍī al-Saḥūlī.

The other opinion as it seems, was not the official opinion of the state and the representative of this opinion was al-Qāḍī 'Abd-Allāh who took the position of the defence against the official attitude of the state. All this shows that if the Jews of the Yemen had suffered from the humiliation in the name of the Islamic religion as it is understood by the official judges of the state, it shows, too, that in the name of the Islamic religion they found some of the 'Ulamā' defending them in their problem.

This problem, as it appears from these articles was of importance for both sides, the minority of the Jews and the majority of the Muslims at the same time.

This decree against the Jews in the Yemen was practised until the régime of the Sulṭān 'Azīz in 1872.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The duty of the Qāḍī of Ṣan'ā' is to give the religious opinion about such a problem arising similar to that of the debated subject.
  2. Ḥabshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.47<sup>a</sup>; Moshe Zadoc, op. cit., p.82, gives the date of cancellation in 1860 by Aḥmad Mukhtār too, saying: that it had not been practised for a short time only and was renewed when the Arab ruler ruled again. He added that this decree was

It had been cancelled with all its orders by Ahmad Mukhtār Pāshā, but the parsimonious people, who worked in that contemptable job did not accept the cancellation of the decree, therefore, that work was available only for them, and the rest of the community were freed from doing it.<sup>1</sup>

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practised until 1949; Anonymous, Jews in Yemen, Darkenu, vol. 1, 1948 (June), p.16, confirms Zadoc's statement that the Jews were forced to be engaged in that kind of work until recently (round the date of his writing his article).

1. Habshūsh, Korot Ha-Zman, p.47<sup>a</sup>.

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