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JUDEO-PERSIAN COMMUNITIES IX.
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JUDEO-PERSIAN COMMUNITIES OF IRAN

ix. Judeo-Persian Literature

Introduction. Several hundred years before the emergence of a Persian Jewish literature, and prior even to the emergence of classical Persian literature, Persian documents and stone inscriptions were being written in Hebrew script. These are of historical importance for the light they shed on the development of the Persian language and in particular the language spoken by the Jews (see JUDEO-PERSIAN LANGUAGE).

European scholars were the first to embark on research on Judeo-Persian epigraphy. In 1829 Konrad Dietrich Hassler (pp. 469-80) published an article which can be regarded as the first landmark in Judeo-Persian studies; and in 1838, Solomon Munk (p. 135) wrote a brief study of portions of a manuscript found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Paul de Lagarde produced a comprehensive description of the characteristic elements of Judeo-Persian and made the case for its importance in his *Persische Studien* (1884). Theodor Nöldeke, Karl Salemann, and Paul Horn agreed with de Lagarde on the importance, primarily linguistic, of these texts; and further contributions were

also made by Hermann Zotenberg, Alexander Kohut, Ignazio Guidi, Hermann Ethé, and Walter B. Henning.

Wilhelm Bacher (1850-1913) was another significant and extremely prolific contributor to the advancement of Judeo-Persian scholarship; and he was able to benefit from hundreds of Judeo-Persian manuscripts that had been purchased by Elkan Nathan Adler (1861–1946) in Iran and Central Asia at the end of the 19th century and brought to London. They are at present housed in the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. Walter Joseph Fischel's pioneering work on Persian Jewish history should also be noted, although he did not deal specifically with the field of Judeo-Persian manuscripts.

The contribution to Judeo-Persian studies made by the early printers and editors of Judeo-Persian manuscript should also be acknowledged. The Jews of Central Asia were pioneers in printing Judeo-Persian books, most of which were printed in Jerusalem. Avraham Yaʿari mentions Binyamin Ben Rabbi Pinchas ha-Qatan and Rabbi Binyamin Yochanan Ha-Cohen as being among the first to print *tafsirs* (Judeo-Persian translations with or without commentaries) for the Book of Psalms and the Book of Proverbs (Yaʿari, p. 382). Shimʿon Ḥākhām (b. Bukhara, 1843; d. Jerusalem, 1910) was the most prominent early figure in the field of printing and editing Judeo-Persian manuscripts.

Early writings in Judeo-Persian. Most of the inscriptions and documents written in Judeo-Persian at the beginning of the Islamic period were discovered in the 19th century. They are important for the study of the development of early New Persian, and their existence proves that Jews lived and were active in all areas within and beyond the borders of historical Persia, and that they used Judeo-Persian as their medium of linguistic communication. A list of the texts is given below in their chronological order. The two oldest texts are the earliest specimens preserved, not only in Judeo-Persian, but also in New Persian generally; their language is free of Arabic influence and replete with archaic terms.

1. Three stone inscriptions found in 1952 by Roman Ghirshman and Richard N. Frye in Tang-e Azāo, a gorge in the mountains of Western Afghanistan, about 200 km east of Herat in Ḡur Province. All three are in Judeo-Persian, and bear the names of the engravers, who thus recorded their visit to the site; the father of one of them is a Persian named Samiel Ramash (Pers. *rāmeš* "joy"). Walter

B. Henning (1957), based on an abbreviated date that appears on the tablets, determined the year of the inscriptions to be 1064 Seleucid (752-53 CE).

2. Part of a letter in 37 lines from a Jewish merchant, found in 1896 by an archeological team led by Sir Aurel Stein in the ruins of a Buddhist monastery at Dandān Öilïq in Khotan, Chinese Turkistan (Xinjiang Province). It deals with matters of commerce and was apparently written in the eighth century. It was published by David Margoliouth (1903), discussed by Carl Salemann (1904), Walter Henning (1957), Bo Utas (1969), and Shaul Shaked (1971).

3. A copper tablet found in the 19th century at Quilon, Travancore, on the coast of Malabar, southern India. The tablet bears a brief text with the testimony and signature of four witnesses. Its contents relate to a gift of money given to a Christian church in Quilon. The item is believed to date from the 9th century.

4. An early document of the Karaites (scriptural literalists who rejected rabbinical interpretation) from the Cairo Geniza, dated 17 Av 1262 Sel./22 July 951. The document deals with judicial deliberations in a Karaite court.

5. A court document (probably Karaite) of 1332 Sel. (1020-21) from Ḵorramšahr, Khuzestan.

6. An early Judeo-Persian fragment found in Zefra in Isfahan Province in 1973 by Amnon Netzer. The translation may help to clarify the linguistic features of the language linking Middle Persian with New Persian (Netzer, 2002).

7. Hundreds of items on pages dealing with various subjects, found at the Cairo Geniza, are preserved in libraries including those at Cambridge, Oxford, John Rylands Library Manchester, the British Library, London, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. They may be classified as: (a) personal letters; (b) court decrees; (c) tafsirs (commentaries) on the books of Genesis, Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Daniel, and Nehemiah; (d) lengthy discussions of Karaite religious law (halakhah), including a section of a Karaite book of religious commandments; (e) works on medical subjects; (f) Judeo-Persian works on Hebrew grammar; (g) Judeo-Persian poems.

8. Numerous cemetery headstones found by French and Italian archeological teams in an area about 2 km south of the village of Jām in Ḡur Province with inscriptions in Judeo-Persian, Hebrew, and Aramaic. The first headstone was

discovered in 1946, and the rest over the years up to the 1960s. The headstone dates range from 1012 to 1218 CE. Jām is thought to be the site of the medieval Firuzkuh, the capital of the major branch of the Ghurids. The presence of a cemetery in Firuzkuh indicates the existence of a Jewish community in this remote region. The fact that the latest of the headstones is dated 1218 makes it likely that the Firuzkuh Jewish community was eradicated with the invasion of the region by the Mongols. The headstones are still being studied, both for the linguistic information they may provide on the Judeo-Persian language and for information on the status and origins of the deceased.

The tafsir literature. The literal meaning of tafsir is "interpretation" (including translation) or "commentary" on sacred writings, primarily the Hebrew Bible (Pentateuch, Prophets, Writings) and the Talmud, which has been a venerable tradition among Persian Jewry. In its broader sense the term is used for interpretation or commentary on secular writings as well.

The beginnings of tafsir production are obscure, but it may be supposed, based on the existing tafsirs, that the earliest ones were devoted to the Bible. They constitute a very large proportion of the entire canon of sacred, rabbinical, and religious writing, but most of their authors remain unknown. General rules and guidelines probably existed for tafsir production, such as those mentioned in the introduction to Bābāʾi ben Nuriʾel Eṣfahāni's tafsir on the Book of Psalms (see below). The body of Judeo-Persian tafsirs may be divided into the following categories:

1. Literal translation of Hebrew or Aramaic originals into Persian. This kind of translation retains the syntax of the original, thereby deviating from that of the Persian language. There is a certain degree of similarity between this type of translation process and the way in which Muslim sacred writings in Arabic were rendered into Persian. There were also attempts to translate *piyyuṭim (religious songs, liturgical hymns) in a literal manner, but in most cases rhyming words were used that did not correspond exactly to those of the original. Literal translations were made primarily of the Bible and the Apocrypha, as well as of midrashim (exegetical texts), prayers, and benedictions.*

2. Literal translations accompanied by brief explanations and synonyms of difficult words in the Hebrew or Aramaic original. This type of translation became prevalent over the last few centuries, due to an overall decline in the levels of comprehension of sacred writings within the Jewish community. In many cases, it was impossible to distinguish between the translation and the

original, with the result that later transcribers retained the explanatory terms (the synonyms) rather than the translated ones. Thus, we have been left with many manuscripts whose precision as translations is questionable, but which are of interest to linguistic researchers.

3. Translations that are paraphrases accompanied by commentaries and *drashot* (homiletic expositions). This type of translation is common for both prose and poetry. The commentaries and drashot vary in length according to the original sentence. At times, the original sentence is translated with no need to add an accompanying interpretation or *drashah. Translations of this kind may also include sections translated in the manner described in item 2, above. There were Jewish poets, such as Moshe ben Esḥāq and Simān-Ṭov Melammed, who first composed Hebrew piyyutim and then translated or reformulated them as Judeo-Persian poems. The poet Šāhin (see below; Netzer, 1996, pp. 54-58) referred to his own poetical tafsir of the Pentateuch and of the Book of Esther as šarḥ (interpretation, commentary).*

4. Translations called “tafsir,” even though their linguistic (occasionally even thematic) resemblance to the original is so minimal that they can hardly be considered proper tafsirs. This type of tafsir usually refers to various piyyutim, which were originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. Sometimes, despite the lack of similarity between the original and the tafsir, one may discern an effort to maintain a thematic bond between them.

5. Not translations, but tafsirs in the sense of commentaries on words, ideas, and biblical verses, or on events, in sacred writings and in rabbinical literature. Also belonging to this category are drashot, in most cases the author’s original compositions, which were intended to be delivered before an audience. These drashot generally make use of tales, anecdotes, and explanations of ideas based primarily on biblical verses. Woven into these sermons are proverbs, stories, and quotations from non-Jewish Persian poetry.

TAFSIRS OF THE BIBLE

The following list of important tafsirs is given in the order of the books of the Bible.

Pentateuch. 1. The first tafsir of the Pentateuch to become known to the West (in the 16th century) was that of Yaʿqov ben Yosef Ṭāvus, a scholarly Persian Jew who taught at the Jewish Academy in Istanbul. The tafsir appeared in Istanbul in

1546 in the polyglot Pentateuch printed by Elʿazar ben Gershon Soncino, along with the Hebrew original of the Pentateuch, the Targum (Aramaic translation) of Onkelos, and Rabbi Saʿadia Gaʾon's Judeo-Arabic tafsir. Ṭāvus's tafsir was transcribed from Hebrew characters into Persian script by Thomas Hyde (1636-1703), and in this form it accompanied the Bible printed by Bryan Walton in London in 1657. The Hyde printing of the tafsir of the Pentateuch aroused interest in Judeo-Persian language and literature. For many years Western scholars regarded Ṭāvus's work as the first tafsir ever produced on the Pentateuch, but later it became evident that the work was actually a link in the long chain of Persian Jewry's tradition of Bible study, about whose beginnings we have no information (Fischel, 1952).

2. The Vatican Library has an undated manuscript (Vat. Pers. MS 61) of a tafsir of the Bible purchased by the Italian traveler Giambattista Vecchietti in the town of Lār (southern Fārs Province) in May 1606. Limited linguistic research dates it to no later than the 14th century. Ignazio Guidi (1885) described the manuscript with some linguistic comments; Max Seligsohn (1903) compared parts of this manuscript with the Pentateuch tafsir in the British Library (see below), and with the Ṭāvus tafsir. Of various editions of the Vatican Pentateuch tafsir, that of Eltorre Rossi (1948) is the most recent; the entire text has been published in transliteration (Paper, 1965; idem, 1965-66).

3. In 1898 the British Museum acquired a manuscript (Or. 5446) from a Tehran resident visiting London. Its colophon states that the tafsir was transcribed by Yosef bar Mosheh on 14 Adar II 1630 Sel./6 March 1319. Seligsohn determined the correct page order, and the manuscript was published by Herbert Paper (1972a).

4. The MS Adler B.63 in The Jewish Theological Seminary of America [JTS] in New York was acquired in Bukhara at the end of the 19th century by Elkan N. Adler. The text is broadly identical to that of the Vatican manuscript. This tafsir is not a literal translation of the Pentateuch; but rather a collection of drashot, commentaries, and midrashim. Paper (1972b) has compared part of this manuscript (Deuteronomy 5:6-18) with other texts.

5. A manuscript was purchased in September 1973 for the Ben-Zvi Institute [BZI] (BZI 4559/1; for all BZI manuscripts, see Netzer, 1985) from a Jewish antiques dealer in Tehran. It contains tafsirs on sections of the Pentateuch accompanied by drashot and midrashim (see under Torah in the general index in Netzer, 1985), including a Pentateuch tafsir that was transcribed in 1788.

Despite the manuscript's relatively recent transcription, its language and syntax suggest that it was transcribed from an older text.

Prophets. 1. The Judeo-Persian commentary on the Book of Samuel, called 'Amuqot Shamu'el (BL classification number G. 77 = Or. 10482[2]), is an old manuscript. Its linguistic attributes have been studied by Wilhelm Bacher (1897b).

2. A tafsir of the Book of Isaiah in the Bibliothèque Nationale [BN], Paris, was published by Paul de Lagarde (1884), along with the text of the Book of Jeremiah and the beginning of the Book of Ezekiel (also from BN manuscripts). He also studied the marginal additions and noted certain linguistic phenomena in the text. Studies by Theodore Nöldeke (*Literarisches Centralblatt, 1884, pp. 888 ff.) and Paul Horn (1893) complemented de Lagarde's work. Paper (1975a) and Asmussen (1974) published transcriptions and research done on the de Lagarde text and on the printed text of Shimʿon Ḥākhām's translation of Isaiah (worthy of note is the Book of Isaiah and its tafsir in BZI 4559/2).*

3. The Judeo-Persian commentary on Ezekiel is one of the oldest manuscripts housed in the St. Petersburg library. Carl Salemann (1900) described the text and published the fifth chapter with linguistic annotations, and, more recently, Thamar E. Gindin (2000) has studied it further. The text is considered a significant source material for Iranian philology, in part due to its archaic vocabulary.

4. Part of the Hosea tafsir in the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN 101) was studied by Asmussen (1975). There is also another Hosea tafsir kept in Ben Zvi Institute (BZI 4559/5), which has not yet been studied.

For the studies of Judeo-Persian manuscripts on other Prophets, see Asmussen, Carlsen, Mainz, and Paper listed in the bibliography. There are also tafsirs of the books of Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micha, Naḥum, and Zephania (BZI 4559/6-11) that deserve scholarly research; the one on the Book of Jonah (BZI 4529/4) is very likely older than the rest.

Writings. 1. Tafsirs of the Book of Psalms were widely read by the Jews of Persia. The above-mentioned Giambattista Vecchietti purchased several such tafsirs in Shiraz and Lār in 1601. One of these was read aloud to a Persian Christian named Šams-al-Din Ḵonji, who transcribed it in Persian on 12 May 1601 at

Hormoz (Blochet, I, pp. 1-2).

One of the most important tafsirs of the Book of Psalms was written in 1740 by Bābāʾi ben Nuriʾel, a rabbi in Isfahan, at the behest of Nāder Shah Afšār (r. 1736-47). Bābāʾi was aided in his translation by Mirzā Mahdi ʿAqili, an erudite Muslim scholar, who is mentioned in the introduction. Part of this tafsir has been studied by I. Grill (1887) and Asmussen (1966). Ezra Zion Melammed (1968) published a critical edition based on five manuscripts: (a) a 122-page manuscript belonging to his father, originally transcribed in 1797 in Qomša near Isfahan, is apparently the oldest of them; (b) MS BZI 905; (c) BZI 938; (d) BZI 927; (e) BZI 995.

Two Psalms tafsirs were published in the late 19th century: (a) the Book of Psalms translated by Binyamin Cohen of Bukhara, was published in Vienna in 1883 with Hebrew text and Persian translation on facing pages; (b) Mirzā Nur-Allāh ben Ḥakim Mosheh, a baptized Jew who engaged in missionary activity within the Persian Jewish community, transliterated into Hebrew characters the Persian translation of Psalms by Robert Bruce (see EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN PERSIA). Mirzā Nur-Allāh's edition was published in London in 1895 by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

2. A tafsir of Proverbs edited by Herbert Paper (1982) was based on the MS Adler B.46 (Adler, 1921, no. 433) and on a private manuscript that belonged to the late Walter J. Fischel. In 1885, a Jew from Bukhara named Benyamin ben R. Yoḥanan ha-Kohen translated and annotated the Book of Proverbs, using the translation he had received from his rabbis (Yaʿari, p. 392).

3. Paper has published a critical edition of a tafsir of Job from an incomplete manuscript (missing 1:1-17, 1:21-2:7) in M. Benayahu's private collection. It lacks a colophon, but, in Paper's opinion (1976a, p. 314), it had been transcribed "in the 15th century or earlier." A certain Bābā Jān ben Pinḥas of Samarqand translated the Book of Job into Persian and published it in 1895 (5665) in Jerusalem. The BZI library only holds a tafsir of Job in New Judeo-Aramaic (BZI 924), which was transcribed in 1955.

4. A tafsir of the Song of Songs was well known and widely read within the Persian Jewish community. Asmussen and Paper published a critical edition from MS BN 116. The text's date of transcription has yet to be precisely determined, but linguistic and paleographic evidence point to a date no later than the 14th century. Ernest Mainz has published the Song of Songs tafsir in

Latin transliteration, based on BN 116 and 117 (Mainz, 1976; Shaked, 1979).

In 1906, Rafāʾel ben Pinḥas, head of the Jewish community in Ḳoqand, published a Persian translation of the Song of Songs made by Shimʿon Ḥākhām (d. 1910). Ezra Z. Melammed edited versions of the Aramaic translation of Song of Songs and its tafsir "in the language of the Persian Jews, based on a manuscript found in the estate of R. Shlomo ben David Katz" (Melammed, 1971, p. 1; on BZI manuscripts that include the Song of Songs tafsir, see BZI 932).

5. A tafsir of the Book of Ruth in Paris (MSS BN 90 and 116) was published in Latin transcript by Ernest Mainz (1976). The tafsir in MS 90 had been transcribed in Lār in 1601 (see BZI 935/7 for Ben-Zvi Institute manuscripts relating to the tafsir of the Book of Ruth).

6. A tafsir of Lamentations found in BN 101 and 118 was published by Mainz (1973).

7. A tafsir of Ecclesiastes in MS Adler B.46 (Adler, 1921, no. 433) was edited by Paper (1973); another, in BN 116 and 117, was published by Mainz (1974). Rafāʾel Khodādov recently published a new edition of Shimʿon Ḥākhām's work, Šāhin's commentary (šarḥ) on the Book of Esther. The edition includes an Ecclesiastes tafsir transcribed in 1893. The BZI library holds two manuscripts of the Ecclesiastes tafsir by the translator Yehudah ben Binyamin of Kāšān (BZI 1045/4, 4547/3).

8. The tafsir of the Book of Esther was edited by Mainz based on BN 127 and 116. In MS 127 there is a yearly calendar, the beginning of which is missing; at the end, the author states that the calendar starts from the year 1591 Sel./1280. Like the Books of Psalms and Proverbs, for the Jews of Persia the Book of Esther held a place of particular importance because of its unique connection to the history of Persian Jewry.

9. A tafsir of the Book of Daniel was edited by Mainz in 1982, based on BN 128 and 129. MS 128 includes a work called *Qeṣṣa-ye Dāniāl, which scholars assume to be a tafsir of a lost translation or midrash on the Book of Daniel. This midrashic tafsir is particularly important on account of its messianic content and archaic language. Some scholars believe that it was written or transcribed around the 13th century. Two fragments of commentary on the Book of Daniel from the Geniza were published by Shaul Shaked (1982a, pp. 309-22).*

Tafsirs of the Talmud. So far only small sections of either the Babylonian or the Jerusalem Talmud are known to exist in Judeo-Persian. The reasons for the lack of a full tafsir of Talmud seems to be: (1) The Talmud was the exclusive domain of the community's learned elite, and therefore it was felt that there was no need for a translation for public consumption. In dictionaries compiled by Persian Jews, we find interpretations and explanations of difficult words in the Talmud, which indicate that the study of the Talmud was common among the community's educated class. (2) Due to the deteriorating cultural-religious state of the community in recent centuries, there has been a decline in the number of students with Talmudic expertise. The focus has moved to the Zohar (a mystical commentary on the Torah) and kabalistic studies because of their mystical orientations palatable to Jews living in Persia (see below).

The tractate *Pirqei avot (Ethics of the fathers), due to its moral content and homiletic character, suited the worldview of Persian Jews; and it was translated into the language of the tafsir by various authors. One of the translators was Rabbi Yaʿqov Paltiel of Rašt, where he lived and was active in the mid-19th century. He called the tafsir 'Ohel Yaʻqov (BZI 929/4). He also left an additional tafsir, on the Pataḥ elyahu (Prayer for the dead), accompanied by drašot (BZI 1083/3).*

We know more about another translator, Rabbi Simān-Ṭov Melammed, who, in addition to poems and piyyutim, has left us a tafsir on *Pirqei avot (BZI 925). Also deserving of mention is the tafsir of Shimʿon Ḥākhām, which was published in 1907. According to him, the tafsir of Pirqei avot "would be studied in the cities of Bukhara and its districts on the Sabbaths between Passover and Shmini Atzeret [the last day of Rosh-Hashanah]" (Yaʿari, 1942, p. 46.59). Before Shimʿon Ḥākhām tafsir was printed, Nethanel and Binyamin Shauloff in Jerusalem published another commentary on Pirqei avot in 1902, containing the original and the accompanying tafsir verse by verse. Wilhelm Bacher (1902) described this tafsir in depth, and Paper (1976b) published the first chapter of the texts of Shauloff and Ḥākhām.*

Other tafsirs of *Pirqei avot* are accompanied by midrashim and stories; some of the tales are taken from classical Persian literature (see, for example, BZI 1008). In 1536, the poet ʿEmrāni (1454-1536) composed a paraphrase translation of *Pirqei avot* in Judeo-Persian poetry titled *Ganj-nāma* (Netzer, 1996-99, I, p. 66; see below). There are over thirty manuscripts of *Pirqei avot* in the BZI library, mostly tafsirs, including some accompanied by midrashim, commentaries, and stories (Netzer, 1985, index; Yeroushalmi, 1999).

Halakhah. Normative Persian Jewish life, as reflected in the manuscripts, was based on the observance of the *halakhot* (religious laws and commandments) by most Jewish communities. At the present stage of research it is difficult to give an overall picture of the halakhic changes and developments that occurred within the Jewish communities in the various geographic regions or historical periods in Persia. As far as is known, very few or significant rabbinical court decisions were preserved in Persia, resulting in a lack of halakhic Responsa literature that could shed light on life of the community.

The fact that the Persian Jewish community produced no well-known halakhic authorities presents additional problems for scholars, although it is possible that there were some learned rabbis who dealt with complex halakhic issues. The halakhic works in Hebrew or in Judeo-Persian that the community possesses are generally devoted to ongoing, immediate concerns of Jewish life, such as those of kosher animal slaughter, halakhot related to prayer, blessings, circumcisions, marital relations, holidays and festivals. Controversial halakhic issues reflecting the dynamics of halakhic development over time did not, as far as we know, find a place in Judeo-Persian manuscripts.

The available manuscripts indicate that Persian Jews relied heavily on Moses Maimonides' (Ebn Maymun) *Mishneh Torah* and Rabbi Yosef Caro's *Shulḥan ʻarukh*, although these books have not yet been found in their entirety in Judeo-Persian translation. As it is known, the codices of Maimonides and Caro were not accepted unquestioningly by all Jewish communities. The current state of research does not enable us to answer the question of where the Persian Jewish communities stood on the controversies surrounding them, or whether there were attempts within these communities to produce a separate halakhic codification.

Avraham Aminof and Shimʿon Ḥākhām made an important contribution to the field of halakhic compilation with their four-part Judeo-Persian *Liquṭei dinim* (The book of laws).

Midrashim. 1. Persian Jews were very interested in aggadic and halakhic midrashim, which found their place not only in biblical tafsirs, prayers, *drashot*, and prose stories, but also in verse, as in the poetry of Šāhin, ʿEmrāni, Binyamin ben Mishaʾel (Aminā), and others. In addition to the midrashim listed in the Otzars index (Netzer, 1985), there are those in other collections, such as *Midrash Seder Yetzirat ha-Valad*, *Midrash Sheqalim*, and *Midrash Megillah* in the Gester collection in the British Library, London (Or. 9953 = G.

1084); and, in the Klau Library of Hebrew Union College [HU], Cincinnati, *Midrash Esther* (2140[3], 2197[7]), *Midrash Bereshit* and *Shmot* (2197), *Midrash Devarim ʿatiqim* (2123), *Midrash le-Shir ha-shirim* (2139, 2197[5]), and *Midrash Ruth* (2159[3], 2197[7]).

2. At the end of 19th century, Elkan N. Adler purchased Judeo-Persian manuscripts in Tehran (marked T) and Bukhara (marked B). These manuscripts, now housed in the library of The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York (see Adler, 1898 and 1921), include a number of midrashim. *Midrash leqaḥ Ṭov* by Rabbi Ṭuviah ben Elʿazar is an anthology of midrashim on the books of Genesis and Exodus, with a glossary (MS B.5). The continuation of this midrash (on Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) is in MS T.76. This midrash, which was originally on the Pentateuch and the five Scrolls (the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), was compiled during the 12th century, and it is thought to have included a polemic against the Karaite sect. *Midrash leqaḥ Ṭov* was published several times; it is called both *Psiqta* and *Psiqta Zuta*. There are also midrashim on the tractates *Taʿanit*, *Megillah*, and *Ḥagigah* (all in MS B.9); *Midrash masekhet Derekh eretz Zuta* (B.46g), parts of which are in the *Maḥzor Vitri*; *Midrash Maʿaseh Rabbenu* and *Midrash ha-Neʿlam* with a tafsir (B.10a, g); compilations based on *Midrash Rabba* (B.32b); *Sefer ha-Yashar* (B.37), which was transcribed, apparently from a Venice imprint in 1773 in the city of Herat; and *Midrash Bereshit* (T.45).

3. An important midrash called *Pitron Torah* is a collection of midrashim and interpretations of the Bible, found in MS HU no. 4-4767. This manuscript was published in a critical edition by Efraim E. Urbach (1978). It was transcribed by Yosef ben Shmuel ben David ben Mosheh in the month of Ṭevet 1640 Sel. (1328) in the city of Sambādagān. *Pitron Torah* covered the entire Pentateuch, but in the manuscript only the portion relating to the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy has survived.

4. One of the most interesting Judeo-Persian midrashic works is the *Maṭʿamei Binyamin* by Binyamin ben Eliyahu, a scholar and poet who lived in Kāšān. MS HU 5225 is an autograph manuscript, written in 1823 (5573); BZI 915 was transcribed by Nehoray ben Khodādād in 1825 (on the BZI manuscripts of *Maṭʿamei Binyamin*, see BZI 915, 1069, 4507, 4521). Identical with this text in content, apart from minor editorial changes, is *Zikhron Raḥamim* by Raḥamim Melammed ha-Cohen (a native of Shiraz; d. Jerusalem, 1932), which was printed in Jerusalem in 1930; the author's son, Ezra Z. Melammed, published a critical edition (Melammed, 1959). Several Judeo-Persian midrashim differ

from those found in other sources, for example: *Midrash ʿaliyat Mosheh la-marom* in Judeo-Persian contains material additional to, and differing from, that of the same midrash found in a Yemenite manuscript. One may find similarities between this midrash and the Middle Persian text *Ardā Wirāz-nāmag* (see ARDĀ WĪRĀZ) on certain matters concerning the description of hell and paradise (Netzer, 1978 and 1990).

Kabbala and mysticism. The number of kabbalistic works in the BZI collection is small, despite the fact that Persian Jews were much preoccupied by kabbalistic issues, a consequence of their tendency toward metaphysical observation and of the influence of Sufi literature. Except for collections based on the *Zohar*, kabbalistic literature interwoven with midrashim such as *Midrash Talpiyot* (BZI 1090/1), and the short work *Avqat Roqaḥ* (BZI 935/2) attributed to Rabbi Makhir, we cannot at present point to any obviously kabbalistic works. The influence of the kabbalistic streams can be felt in midrashim that were studied by Persian Jews, such as *Midrash ʿaliyat Mosheh la-marom*, although it is not considered to be a clearly kabbalistic midrash.

We do not know whether kabbalistic circles arose within the Persian Jewish community, nor are we aware of any influence upon it of the European Hassidic streams. It is too early to say whether the messianic and eschatological issues that preoccupied Persian Jewry are indicative of significant kabbalistic activity within the communities of the region. Shabbetai Zvi (1626-76), proclaimed messiah in 1665, had apparently a fair number of followers in Persia, as well as in Turkey and elsewhere; the merchant/traveler Jean Chardin tells of a wave of messianic fervor on the part of Persian believers (VI, p. 135).

The kabbalistic tendency of Persian Jewry can also be detected in poems and piyyutim. Songs of praise to non-Persian Jewish sages such as Shimʿon bar Yohay (mid-2nd cent.), as well as poems and piyyutim by well-known kabbalistic figures, may be found in several collections of poems. A well-known piyyut with kabbalistic content is *Avarekh u-Ahallel* by Elishaʿ ben Shemuʾel of Persia. His poem gives us a glimpse of the poet's complex kabbalistic world, based on mystical-speculative foundations with a system of heaven and angels (Netzer, 1985, index).

The motif of aspiration to unmediated oneness with God and the effacement of the Self, which runs through Persian Sufi poetry, finds expression in Persian Jewish poetry as well, although, from a general Jewish standpoint, few

kabbalistics actually shared it. Examples of this aspiration are found in ʿEmrāni's *Sāqi-nāma*, Yosef Yehudi's lyrical poetry, and Simān-Ṭov Melammed's poems and piyyutim. These Jewish poets found in Sufi poetry an acceptable system of mystical symbolism that they could adopt as their own. They struggled to comprehend the secrets of the Divine and of Creation under the influence of a Sufi approach, but with the Bible as their foundation. At times this biblical foundation is so weak and indistinct, and the Sufi motifs so dominant, that it seems as though one is dealing with non-Jewish Sufi poets. Mystical elements such as the search for ecstatic experience and oneness with God, not via the intellect but through introspection and ecstasy, are consistently expressed in the terminology and symbolism of both Jewish and non-Jewish Persian Sufi poetry.

Despite this, it is not known whether the Persian kabbalistic circles possessed creative forces that aspired to a deep understanding of the Bible or to the generation of new trends in communal religious attitudes. Nor is there a clear indication of the existence of Persian Jewish kabbalistics of similar caliber to those figures who arose in other Islamic countries, such as Shalom Sharabi (Yemen and Jerusalem, d. 1777), Avraham Azulai (Morocco, d. 1741), Avraham Ṭubiana (Algeria, d. 1793), Shalom Buzgalo (Morocco, d. 1780), Sassoon ben Mordechai (Baghdad, d. 1830).

Philosophy, theology and apologetics. 1. No purely philosophical works or writings that may be defined as completely theological or apologetic have thus far been found in Judeo-Persian literature, except for some argumentative fragments of the Karaites. The most important work to have embraced to some extent all three of these fields is Yehudah ben Elʿazar's *Ḥovot Yehudah* (Netzer, 1995). We have no information on the author, but he most probably lived in Kāšān. *Ḥovot Yehudah* was completed in 1686, during one of the most troubled periods in Persian Jewish history due to the restrictions imposed by the Safavid state and to unrest connected with the activity of Shabbetai Zvi's followers across Persia. It is written in fluent Judeo-Persian comparable to that of the finest specimens of classical Persian literature of the period. Its content leaves no doubt about the author's broad and deep erudition. The author provides some information about another work on the same subjects composed earlier by a Persian Jew named David Bar Maʾmin of Isfahan (see BZI 4577, fol. 5a). We have no other information on Bar Mamin's work, which apparently was lost.

Ḥovot Yehudah contains four discourses, divided overall into eighteen parts

and fifty-two chapters, along with preface and conclusion. Each discourse contains a detailed discussion of a particular subject related to one of the principles of Jewish faith proposed by the author. In the first discourse the author discusses cosmology and the existence of a Supreme Being. In the second he addresses various kinds of prophecy. In the third he discusses the Torah of Moses and the Jewish faith. The fourth discourse is a continuation of the third but includes a discussion of such issues as the resurrection of the dead, reward and punishment, redemption and the coming of Messiah, paradise and hell. In this work the author relies primarily on the writings of Maimonides. He also quotes Rabbi Yosef Albo's *Sefer ha-ʿiqarim* and the works of other great Jewish scholars. The author demonstrates profound familiarity with the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, Ḡazāli, and Averroes.

2. BL Or. 8659 has a theological-apologetic section of *Sefer ha-mitzvot*. This section consists primarily of a midrashic and halakhic discussion of various aspects of the commandment of circumcision. The piece, despite being short (only ten leaves), is significant as a sample of Karaite apologetic literature written in Judeo-Persian (MacKenzie, 1968). As Shaked points out: "If this is in fact part of a Karaite work, then it represents a new discovery, since it would then be the first existing evidence of a Karaite written literature in the Judeo-Persian language" (Shaked, 1972, p. 50).

Judeo-Persian prayer books. 1. *Siddurim* (prayer books) found in Persian Jewish manuscripts were transcribed, so far as is known, from the 16th century on. These *siddurim*, even the later ones, reveal interesting features of Persian Jewish prayer customs. Based on the manuscripts, scholars such as Adler (1898), Rabbi Simḥa Assaf (Assaf and Yoel, 1941, p. 30), and Shlomo Ṭal (1981) concluded that the Jewish Persian *siddur* is based on that of Rabbi Saʿadia Gaʾon, head (*gaʾon*) of the religious school at Sura, Babylon (d. 942). Adler bases his conclusion primarily on MS T.79, which had been transcribed in Persia in 1565 (Adler, 1921, pp. 600 f.); Rabbi Assaf seems to concur (Assaf and Yoel, 1941, p. 30).

2. A more comprehensive study was carried out by Ṭal based on MS Adler B.6 (alternative classification: ENA 23), which he compared with Adler T.79 and Sassoon collection 1045, 1143, 1144 (Sassoon, II, pp. 897, 959, 963). BZI 945 and 4527/1 contain Saʿadia Gaʾon's *Tefilat ha-Shaḥarit*, but it is not clear whether Ṭal had made use of them. Another relevant manuscript is the *Seder Tefilot* (BL, Or. 10576).

3. Rabbi ʿAmram Gaʾon's (d. 875) work on liturgical practice was particularly influential in those lands, including Persia, that were under the spiritual leadership of the great Babylonian religious schools (*yeshivot*). It should be mentioned that his prayer book, the *Seder ha-Rav ʻAmram Gaʾon*, influenced the *siddurim* of the Jews of Spain, France, and Germany, and served as the basis for the *Siddur Rashi* (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzḥaqi, d. 1105) and the *Maḥzor Vitri*, 11th-century works produced in France.

Many years before Adler visited the communities of Persian Jews; they had already ceased to use their unique *siddur* (see above, no. 1) and had begun using those published by the printing presses of Leghorn (Livorno), Warsaw, and Vienna. Interesting in this context is a statement of a Bukharan Jew, quoted by Adler: "They say that a hundred and fifty years ago a learned man came to them, Rabbi Avraham Mamon, whose descendents are now among the most prominent Jews of Central Asia. He came from Morocco to faraway Bukhara and persuaded the Jews there that, [since] like him they were also descendents of the Spanish and Portuguese exiles, they should therefore adapt themselves to the prayer customs [of the latter]" (Adler, 1921, p. 602). It appears that the version of prayer used by Persian Jews changed due to the influence of emissaries from the West and from North Africa. At present two important questions remain unanswered: (a) when did the Persian Jews begin using Rabbi Saʿadia Gaʾon's *siddur*, and (b) when did they cease to use it? One thing is clear: the prayer version in MS Adler B.6 (= ENA 23), primarily in the margins of the transcriber's manuscript, already reveals deviations from the Rabbi Saʿadia Gaʾon version.

4. Scholars believe that the Jews of Persia were under the authority and influence of the Babylonian sages during the period of the Gaonim (post-Talmudic period, 7th to 11th century), and that teachers and rabbinical judges were sent to them from Babylon. However, Persian Jewry was not only subject to influence, but also exerted influence in the liturgical field. Emissaries were sent from Persia to the Chinese Jewish community. This fact is known to us from, among other things, portions of the prayer liturgy found in Kaifeng in eastern China. These texts contain Persian names of emissaries and Judeo-Persian instructions to worshippers (see Neubauer; Leslie; Ben-Zvi, 1966b, chap. 14).

5. In addition to the prayer service, Persian Jews sang sacred songs as well as the secular works of poets from Spain, Italy, and the Land of Israel, such as Shlomo ben Gabirol (d. 1057), Yehudah ha-Levi (d. 1141), Yisrael Nagara (d.

1625), and others. Sacred poems composed by Persian Jewish poets, such as ʿEmrāni, Shamuʾel Pir-Aḥmad, Elishaʿ ben Shamuʾel, Binyamin ben Mishaʾel (Aminā), Simān-Ṭov Melammed, and others, also found a place in the liturgy.

POETRY

Jewish Persian poetry is varied in content and broad in scope. Its linguistic features deserve a brief analysis: (a) Nearly all of the longer poems are composed in the *hazaj* meter (see ʿARŪŻ), which is commonly used in classical Persian poetry as well. (b) With regard to verse form, the majority of poems are in rhymed couplets (*maṯnawi*), although classical Persian poetry in general is characterized by a multiplicity of forms. (c) In versified tafsirs of Hebrew piyyutim, the poets do not always adhere to the meter throughout the entire poem, a deviation from the strict rules of Persian prosody. (d) In early manuscripts, such as BZI 4529 and 4598, the versified tafsirs of Hebrew piyyutim are literal translations that follow the Hebrew word order. (e) Words, particularly those in Hebrew, are used in stanzas and in rhyme schemes according to their spoken form. For example, Hebrew *avot* "fathers," pronounced *āvut* by Persian Jews, rhymes with the name Dāwut (Dāwud, i.e., David). Shlomo (pronounced *šelemu*) rhymes with Persian *gu* "saying, say!" "Solaymun" (Solaymān, i.e., Solomon) rhymes with "Yehošuʿa ben Nun," and *bičun* "ineffable" with *sobḥun* (*sobḥān* "praise"). (f) Long vowels appear at times as short ones in Judeo-Persian poetry, in order to avoid metrical deviations, a phenomenon existing in Persian popular poetry as well. (g) In words that end with two consonants, the second one occasionally has to be suppressed in order to ensure adherence to the meter. This phenomenon is related to the spoken form of the word, and is common practice in classical Persian prosody (Netzer, 1973, p. 69, example no. 15).

The following is a concise presentation of the most important and prominent of the Jewish poets and their major works. A brief overview is included of the non-Jewish poets whose works are found, not only in collections of secular poetry, but also in collections with sacred poems and prayers.

Šāhin. Arguably the most important of the Jewish Persian poets, Šāhin is also, to the best of our knowledge, the earliest. He is dated to the 14th century, but we have no information about his life, and even his real name is unknown; it may be assumed that "Šāhin" (lit. hawk) is his pen name. Bacher, in his important study on Šāhin (1908b), stated that the poet lived and was active in Shiraz, but this is a point on which scholars are divided. Šāhin's language and

style seem to be close to the one called Ḵorāsāni style (*sabk-e Ḵorāsāni*; Netzer, 1999c).

The title commonly used for all parts of Šāhin's translations of the Bible is *Šarḥ-e Šāhin ʿal ha-Torah* (Šāhin's commentary on the Torah). *Ardašir-nāma* is referred to as Šāhin's commentary on the Scroll of Esther, and *ʿEzrā-nāma* is called Šāhin's commentary on Ezra. No other work by Šāhin has been found; the attribution of the poem "Šāh Kešvar va Bahrām" to him by Asmussen is not substantiated (Asmussen, 1970, pp. 5-45; Netzer, 1974a, pp. 259-60; idem, 1996-99, I, pp. 90-92). All of Šāhin's works were published in Jerusalem by Shimʿon Ḥākhām, but the printed edition of *Šarḥ-e Šāhin ʿal megillat Esther* is incomplete (Ḥākhām, 1905; idem, 1910).

1. *Musā-nāma* (The story of Moses). Šāhin was the first and only poet to have given poetic expression to the Pentateuch in Persian. He first translated the four last books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) in 1327. Since the events of these books are connected with the figure of Moses, this translation was called *Musā-nāma*. Comprising about 10,000 verses, the work is not a literal translation of the biblical source; rather it incorporates legends (*aggadot*) from Jewish midrashim and from non-Jewish traditions. As is common in long poetic works, *Musā-nāma* begins with verses in praise of God, Moses, and the prophets. A special section is devoted to glorification of the ruler at the time, Sultan Abu Saʿid (r. 1317-35; Netzer, 1996-99, I, p. 55).

2. *Ardašir-nāma* and *ʿEzrā-nāma*. About six years after he completed the *Musā-nāma*, Šāhin produced his second work in verse, in which he describes the events of the books of Esther and Ezra. Bacher and other scholars speak of two separate works: *Ardašir-nāma* on the Book of Esther and *ʿEzrā-nāma* on the Book of Ezra, but it seems that the poet intended to produce one poetical text with two historically and dramatically interrelated sections. This suggestion is supported by four points: (a) The two texts appear as a single poetic unit in most manuscripts. (b) *Ardašir-nāma* opens with a conventional proem, including verses exalting the Creator and Moses and a section in praise of the Il-khanid ruler Abu Saʿid, whereas *ʿEzrā-nāma* has no such introduction and enters immediately into a description of the events of the Book of Ezra as though they were directly connected with those of the Book of Esther. (c) The hero of the Book of Ezra is "Cyrus ben Esther and Ardašir," which establishes a natural dramatic and historical connection with the Book of Esther. (d) *Ardašir-nāma* does not end with a concluding section, while *ʿEzrā-nāma* does,

and, besides, mentions mid-Šawwāl 733 (early July 1333) as the date of completion (Netzer, 1996-99, I, p. 56).

Ardašir-nāma tells two separate stories. One is related to Esther and King Ardašir (Aḥašveroš), and the other is a love story centered on Širuya (*Ardašir*'s son by his wife Vašti) and a Chinese princess named Mahzād. In about 6,000 verses Šāhin presents spectacular scenes of love and revenge, nature and hunting, sport and battle, scenes reminiscent of the symbolic world of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*. *ʿEzrā-nāma* is much shorter, about 500 verses, and is of interest for its description of the life and death of "Cyrus ben Esther," as well as its fascinating accounts of meetings between him and such major Jewish figures as Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Mattitiah, and Mordechai, ending with the death of Mordechai and of Esther in Hamadān (see 3. *Berešit-nāma*. Completed in 1359, the *Berešit-nāma* is Šāhin's final opus, a paraphrase translation of the Book of Genesis, which completes his translation of the entire Pentateuch. The work, composed in about 9,000 verses, may be divided into four distinct sections: (a) from the creation of the world to the binding of Isaac; (b) the binding of Isaac (Gen. 22); (c) the verse epic connected to the Book of Job; (d) the story of Joseph and his brothers and the love of Zolayḵā (Potiphar's wife) for Joseph (the section also known as *Yusof o Zolayḵā*; Netzer, 1996-99, I, pp. 56-58; Figure 1).

Šāhin does not rely on biblical sources alone. Many episodes are taken from midrashim or even from the Muslim tradition (Netzer, 1990; for a concise illustration of the poet's treatment of the story of Abraham in *Šarḥ-e Šāhin ʿal ha-Torah*, see BZI 978, fols. 23-73; Netzer, 1985, pp. 29-30). The story of Abraham is told in over 2,200 verses and is based on (a) Genesis 11-25, (b) *Qeṣaṣ al-anbiāʾ* (Muslim collections of stories about the prophets; see Nagel), and (c) the following midrashim: *Bereshit Rabba*, *Sefer ha-yashar*, *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliʿezer*, *Seder ʿOlam Rabba*, *Seder ʿOlam Zuta*, *Midrash ha-gadol*, *Midrash Tanḥuma*, and others.

ʿEmrāni. ʿEmrāni (b. Isfahan 1454; d. Kāšān, 1530s), the second prominent poet of Judeo-Persian, who tried to complete his predecessor's literary enterprise. ʿEmrāni was born in Isfahan, and, at a certain point, he moved to Kāšān, where, to the best of our knowledge, he died after 1536. Until recently, scholars of Judeo-Persian knew of only two of his works, namely *Fatḥ-nāma* and *Ganj-nāma,* but in fact he produced about a dozen works of poetry and prose:

1. *Fatḥ-nāma*. As far as is known, *Fatḥ-nāma* is ʿEmrāni's first and longest work (about 10,000 verses). It describes the events related in the books of Joshua, Ruth, and Samuel I-II. The poet's introduction states that he began to compose the work at age twenty, in 1785 (Sel./1474). ʿEmrāni's intention was to give poetic expression to the books of the Prophets and the Writings, and thereby to complete Šāhin's literary project. However, it appears that he was unable to finish this work. All manuscripts of the *Fatḥ-nāma* examined by the present author lack a concluding section. Most of the manuscripts end with the story of the conquest of Jerusalem by King David and the sending of gifts by King Hiram of Tyre (Samuel 2:6). Like Šāhin's *Musā-nāma*, *Fatḥ-nāma* is composed in the *hazaj* meter. It includes a greater number of Hebrew words than does any of Šāhin's works. Compared with the latter, the *Fatḥ-nāma* is more faithful to the biblical text. It also incorporates material from the sages and the midrashim (BZI 981, 982, 964; HU 1275, 1484; JTS 1366, 1430; Netzer, 1996-99, I, pp. 58-62).

2. *Wājebāt wa arkān-e sizdahgāna-ye imān-e Esrāʾil* (The thirteen commandments and pillars of the Jewish faith) was composed in 1508 and contains about 780 verses. It follows Maimonides' "Thirteen Principles of Faith" (MSS HU1183, HU2496, JTS324).

3. *Ḥanukā-nāma* (The story of Hanukkah), composed in 1524, is an epic poem of about 2,000 verses describing the heroic battle of the Maccabee army against the Selucid invaders. The poem has also been referred to as *Ẓafar-nāma*. A similar poem with an identical title was composed by Elishaʿ ben Shamuʾel (Rāḡeb) in the 17th century (HU 1183, fols 22b-51b; JTS 1411, fols 4a-74b).

4. *Enteḵāb-e naḵlestān* (The choice of the palm grove). This is an undated poem in about 600 verses, in which the poet complains about the people of Isfahan and his determination to leave for Kāšān. It also appears under the title *Enteḵāb-e golestān* (The choice of the rose garden). The poem seeks to enlighten members and leaders of the community by offering moral, religious, and practical counsels (HU 1183, fol. 222a; also HU 2498).

5. *Sāqi-nāma* (Ode to the cupbearer). This is a mystical, lyrical poem of approximately 190 verses relating the author's mystical aspiration to achieve oneness with the Creator. The poem incorporates excerpts from the works of such Persian poets as ʿOmar Ḵayyām, Saʿdi, and Ḥāfeẓ (text in Netzer, 1973; BZI 934; HU 1182, 4484).

6. *Qeṣṣa-ye haft barādarān* (The story of the seven brothers). This poem is also known as *Moṣibat-nāma* (The tale of afflictions), "Miriām bat Nāḥum and her Seven Sons," and "Ḥanna and her Seven Sons." It is a midrashic lamentation incorporating sections in prose. Until recently the work was attributed to Yosef ben Esḥāq ben Musā, but the textual evidence indicates that its author was actually ʿEmrāni. The name Yosef Kāteb (Yosef the scribe) in the work refers to a poet who in 1688 added his own verses to ʿEmrāni's poem (Netzer, 1973, pp. 49-50; idem, 1996-99, I, pp. 64-65; BZI 922, 970, 4563; HU 1928).

7. *Monājāt-nāma* (The book of supplications). This undated work is a short poem containing blessings and praise of God; it is found in various verse anthologies.

8. *ʿAsara harugei ha-malkhut* (The ten who died for the kingdom). Based on a Hebrew midrash of the same name, this is an undated work in both poem and prose, which is also known as *Moṣibat-nāma* (see no. 6, above; BZI 938, 563; JTS 88).

9. *Zambilduz* (The basket-weaver). This short didactic poem was discovered by the present author in Shiraz (BZI 1094), and references to the story were later found in BZI 1008, fol. 121b. It is a love story between a princess (sister of King Anuširvān) and a poor basket-weaver. To some extent it reminds one of the disappointed love between Joseph and Potiphar's wife (*Yusof o Zolayḵā*). ʿEmrāni is mentioned as the author but since it differs in style and diction from the well-known works of ʿEmrāni, this attribution must be regarded as tentative.

10. *Ganj-nāma* (The book of treasures). Completed in 1536, this is a fine versified paraphrase of the Mishnaic tractate *Pirqei avot* (Ethics of the fathers) in approximately 4,900 verses. It appears to have been the poet's last major work, displaying his intellectual maturity and refined sentiments. Writing in old age, ʿEmrāni, in the last verses, mentions the death of his friends, calling them by name and lamenting their loss. In a separate section he extends counsel to his son Jalāl-al-Din Sar Šālom (Netzer, 1973, pp. 179-207; idem, 1996-99, I, p. 66; Yeroushalmi, 1995; MSS: BZI 912, 913, 1027, 4554; HU 1001, 2230, 3065, 4429; JTS 1429, 8615, 8616).

11. Short poems. (a) Five lyrical verses under ʿEmrāni's name in a BZI manuscript (Netzer, 1985, p. 189, item D16); (2) a poem on the ascetic life, with a recurring refrain, in a BZI manuscript (Netzer, 1985, p. 198, item T9); (3) *Dar*

setāyeš-e taḥammol (On praise of forbearance), a didactic poem of sixteen verses also found in other works such as *Fatḥ-nāma* and *Enteḵāb-e naḵlestān* (BL, Or. 13704; HU 1183, fols. 222a-b, HU 2496, fols. 119b-120a).

12. Prose works. As far as we know, ʿEmrāni produced only two prose works. One is a midrash on the binding of Isaac (BZI 1011/2), and the other a tafsir on *Pirqei avot* (Netzer, 1974, p. 264). The latter seems to have served as the basis for the *Ganj-nāma* (above, no. 10).

Ḵᵛāja Boḵārāʾi. Boḵārāʾi's only known work, composed in 1606, is a religious verse epic in 2,175 couplets titled *Dāniāl-nāma*. It is based on the Book of Daniel, the Apocrypha, and the midrashim and contains Rabbi Saʿadia Gaʾon's calculations (based on verses in Daniel) regarding the End of Days and the coming of the Messiah. In 1704 Binyamin ben Mishāʾel (Aminā) edited the text and inserted several of his own verses in it. The work is written in an epic style reminiscent of Šāhin's *Musā-nāma* and ʿEmrāni's *Fatḥ-nāma*. In the opening section Boḵārāʾi lauds Šāhin (lit. hawk) and refers to himself as a "frail sparrow" (*gonješk-e żaʿif*). However, at the end of the work the poet expresses pride in the fact that he was able to present his people with a creation which "is on a level with Ferdowsi['s *Šāh-nāma*]." *Dāniāl-nāma* includes vivid descriptions of the battlefields in which the armies of "Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede" fight against their enemy, Belshazzar of Babylon (Netzer, 1971; idem, 1972).

Only one complete manuscript of *Dāniāl-nāma* is known (BL Or. 4743; HU no. 2680 is a 237-verse portion of the beginning). It was transcribed by Mosheh Yisrael Gadaloff in 1913 in the Central Asian city of Oš in Farḡāna (for Oš, see Barthold, p. 156); written in Hebrew square characters, it is vocalized to reflect local pronunciation. Four sections are devoted to the praise of God and the prophets, supplications to God on behalf of the Jewish people, praise of Moses, and the author's reason for composing the poem (Netzer, 1996-99, I, pp. 67-68).

Aharon ben Mashiaḥ. Because of persecution, this poet fled from his native city of Isfahan and settled in Yazd. His relatively short poetic work, *Šofṭim-nāma* (The book of judges), a paraphrase of Judges 1-18, was composed in 1692. It is in the same meter and style as ʿEmrāni's *Fatḥ-nāma* and is well known for having been included in most *Fatḥ-nāma* manuscripts. The poet also pays tribute to ʿEmrāni by figuratively referring to him as "my rabbi and also my teacher." The author hints at bloody events in Isfahan, and mentions the killing of an important person named Matitiya, "who was killed like Zechariah

[the prophet]" (in 2 Chron. 24:21) and the murder of four of the city's rabbis. It is very likely that the Matitiya in question was Matitiya ben Binyamin Zeev Bloch, emissary of Shabbetai Zvi, about whose death Yehudā ben Elʿazar writes in *Ḥovot Yehudah* (Netzer, 1995, p. 496).

Mordechai ben Rabbi David. It is not clear why Aharon ben Mashiaḥ did not complete his versification of the Book of Judges. In any case, the task of completing it was taken up (probably just a few years later) by Mordechai ben David (Mordeḵāy ben Dāvid), who entitled his poem *Maʿaseh pilegesh ʿal ha-Givʿā* (The story of the concubine on the hill). This piece is sometimes referred to as the Supplement (*Tatemma*) of *Šofṭim-nāma.* It too uses the language, style, and meter of ʿEmrāni's *Fatḥ-nāma* and is usually included with it in manuscripts. The poem is undated, but appears to have been composed during a stormy period of persecutions and conversion decrees. The poet states that he had spent eight months in the king's prison (*zendān-e šāhi*), and had been forced to sell his property and turn the money over as ransom, escaping with his life. It is unclear from where and to where he was obliged to flee (Netzer, 1996-99, I, p. 83).

Elishaʿ ben Shamuʾel (17th century). This poet, who used the pen name Rāḡeb, lived in Samarkand and wrote two major works (see also Netzer, 1988).

1. *Šāhzāda va Ṣufi.* Composed in 1684, this work is based on the Avraham b. Ḥisdai's (of Barcelona, 13th century) translation into Hebrew of an Arabic version of a well-known literary tale, called in Hebrew "The King and the Nazirite." The poet's introduction confirms that he had translated the story into Persian from Hebrew (ʿAmrāni language). The ultimate source of the story is an Indian tale about the life of Gautama Buddha. It found its way, through Iranian mediation, into Georgian, Greek, and other European languages. In Middle Persian it was called *Balauhar and Budāsaf*, but the second name thereafter became corrupted. In its Greek version it turned into a Christian tale called *Barlaam and Josaphat* or, in its first Latin translation in 1048, *Barlaam and Joasaph* (see BARLAAM AND IOSAPH). The Arabic version, titled *Bilawhar wa Yudāsaf*, had been originally rendered from a Manichean text in Middle Persian.

Comparison of the versions in the various languages reveals differences in ideological stances as well as literary motifs. The Greek-European version is replete with Christian concepts expressed by the Christian monk who comes to teach the prince about the virtues of the ascetic life. In the end the prince

becomes a devout Christian.

Avraham b. Ḥisdai introduced many changes into his version, such as in the king's attitude toward his son, the ideologies inherent in the Nazirite's counsel, and in the fate of the prince, who is left to live a life of loneliness and sorrow. The final sections are infused with philosophical and theological ideas, and incorporate ethical discussions, stories, and anecdotes that are not found in the Greek-European version, and which also differ from the Judeo-Persian version.

Like "The King and the Nazirite" of Ebn Ḥisdai, *Šāhzāda va Ṣufi* is written in both verse and rhyming prose. The Judeo-Persian work is composed of thirty-eight sections, of which thirty-four present the story, while the other four are the introduction, devoted to praising God and Moses, and conclusion. Section 33 presents the Sufi's final teachings to the prince, dealing with the final destiny of the soul enclosed in the body-prison, from which it is to be freed to return to its heavenly source. Section 34 is an ethical sermon to the people of Israel, which generally resembles those in Yehudah Lāri's *Maḵzan al-pand* (Netzer, 1973, pp. 369-76). Of special interest is section 13, in which the Sufi presents to the prince lessons from the life of the king of Khorasan (Netzer, 1973, pp. 335-38), and the words of wisdom spoken at the end of section 15 by the famed Persian Sufi, Šams-e Tabrizi (ibid, p. 344).

The language and style of the prose and verse imitate Saʿdi's *Golestān*. The poet demonstrates great ability in constructing the story and in presenting his ideas in a richly imaginative classical Persian. *Šāhzāda va Ṣufi* is preserved in a large number of manuscripts, indicating its popularity and status as one of Persian Jewry's cultural and literary treasures.

2. *Ḥanukā-nāma*. A short poetic work composed, as mentioned in the poet's introduction, on the thematic framework of ʿEmrāni's *Ḥanukā-nāma*. Here, as in his other works, Rāḡeb displays a skillful command of the Persian language. The poem is undated, and it is difficult to determine, based on internal evidence, which of the author's two works was composed first. In the opening of *Ḥanukā-nāma*, the poet writes of himself as one known within the community as a poet, and this may well indicate that other poetic work had preceded this one.

Yosef ben Esḥāq ben Musā. Little information is available about this poet. Bacher (1899) has suggested the possibility of his identification with a

Bukharan poet, Yosef Yahudi. Yosef Ben Esḥāq is credited with a work called *Antioḵus-nāma* (publ. Jerusalem, 1903). He also wrote several verse tafsirs of piyyutim found in manuscripts at the BZI (see Netzer, 1985, index, s.v. Yosef ben Esḥāq ben Musā, Yosef Šāʿer, Yosef Yahudi; idem, 1996-99, I, pp. 72-75).

Binyamin ben Mishaʾel, better known by his pen name Aminā. Based on the information in his poem, *Tafsir-e Azhārōt-nāma* (BZI, mx. 1085), he was born in Kāšān in 1083/1672 (Netzer, 2003, p. 69). Some biographical information about him is found in his *Sargoḏašt-e Aminā bā hamsar-aš*, which relates his marital problems with his wife after twenty years of marriage (Klau MS 217(7)b; see Spicehandler, 1968). Due to this marital strife Aminā left Kāšān to take up residence near Mount Alvand, perhaps in the city of Hamadān. In the same poem, he addresses his seven children by name, complaining about his wife.

Aminā composed about forty poems, in which the subjects range from the sacred to the secular and to personal and familial issues. They are scattered in anthologies of poetry in many manuscripts in various libraries. Aminā's works are notably brief, except for three, each one over 200 couplets (Netzer, 2003, p. 74). One of these long poems is *ʿAqedat Yiẓḥāq* (The Sacrifice of Isaac; ca. 250 couplets), based on the midrash of Yehudah ben Shamuʾel ben Abbās (fl. 12th cent.). His second long work is a commentary on the Book of Esther (ca. 216 couplets), based on the book itself and on midrashim. The third is the *Tafsir-e Azhārōt-nāma* (324 couplets), composed in 1732. Several of his poems, such as *Monājāt* (Supplications, 6 couplets in Hebrew and Persian), *Davāzdah ševaṭim* (Twelve tribes, 24 couplets), and *Tafsir-e Azhārōt-nāma*, appear to have achieved the status of sacred writing and were chanted in synagogue services (Netzer, 2003, pp. 75-80).

Aminā also composed a long Hebrew poem with twenty-three strophes containing twenty-nine columns arranged in alphabetical, acrostic alliteration. Each strophe is made of four lines (see, Netzer, 1979a; idem, 2003, p. 79).

Simān-Ṭov Melammed. He was born in Yazd, lived for a time in Herat, and afterwards settled in Mashad (specific dates are unavailable). It is possible that he reached Mashad prior to 1793, since it is said that he met there the learned Rabbi Yosef Maman (a native of Tituan, Morocco), who, on his way from Safed in Palestine to Bukhara, stopped in Mashad that year. Two different death dates given are 1823 or 1828, but the internal evidence indicates that he died in Mashad, most probably in 1800 (Netzer, 1999a). We have information on

relations between the Yazd and Mashad communities based, among other things, on their correspondences. For example, there are the letters of Rabbi Or Shraga of Yazd from 1782 and 1783 to Mashad, regarding emissaries who came to his city from Palestine (Ben-Zvi, 1966a, p. 297).

Simān-Ṭov composed mystical poems, in several of which he mentions his pen name Ṭubiā. His major work is *Ḥayāt al-ruḥ* based on Baḥya b. Pakuda's *Ḥovot ha-levavot* (Duties of the heart) and on Maimonides *Dalālat al-ḥāʾerin* (Guide for the perplexed), which he mentions in his preface. Another important poetic work is *Azharot* ("warnings," which are hymns read in Mussaf, the "additional" prayer service, on the feast of Šavuʿot), composed in Hebrew and Persian (BZI 1087). The meter of the tafsir on the positive commandments in *Azharot* differs from that of the tafsir on the negative commandments. *Azharot* was published by Matitiah ben Mordechai ben Avraham Garji (Jerusalem, 1896). The printed work also includes several of Simān-Ṭov's poems, such as his piyyut for a circumcision (Netzer, 1979), and a piyyut on the Thirteen Principles of Faith formulated by Maimonides. Simān-Ṭov also translated *Pirqei avot* into Persian (BZI 925; Netzer, 1996-99, I, pp. 76-77).

Yaʿqov ben Yeḥazqel. This poet, a native of Kermān, died in 1961 at age seventy-five, according to the owner of the unique, incomplete manuscript of his work, the *Šamuʾil-nāma* (in the private collection of Avišay ben Yaʿqov, Jerusalem). This poetic work, to the best of our knowledge, has never been referred to in any catalogues or Judeo-Persian research works. It is a paraphrased versification of parts of the Book of Samuel in about 1,000 couplets. It is composed in the *motaqāreb* (see ʿARŪŻ) meter, which was rarely used in Judeo-Persian poetry; as noted above, *hazaj* meter was predominant.

Other poets. Many Persian Jews have applied themselves to the composition of poetry and piyyutim in Persian and in Hebrew. Information on most of these poets is scarce; generally lacking are biographical details apart from their names and, infrequently, the names of their fathers. There are poems and piyyutim written in Persian, and also in Hebrew, whose authors have remained nameless, but they are undoubtedly Persian Jews. Apart from those discussed above, about sixty poets have been described, or mentioned with excerpts from their poems, by Amnon Netzer (Netzer, 1982).

None of the poets listed above (including the most prominent among them, Šāhin and ʿEmrāni) and their works have yet been subjected to any thorough study and research. Additionally, there are many anonymous poems and

piyyutim in the Judeo-Persian manuscripts. Textual analysis of the poems and piyyutim, identification of their authors, and investigation of their intellectual world are yet to be carried out. Just as the Jews of Persia expressed their uniqueness and their religious and cultural experience through the medium of poetry, this poetry in its turn helped to preserve the community physically and spiritually in the face of adverse circumstances, and deserves further study.

Non-Jewish poets in the Judeo-Persian literary tradition. Major Persian poets were loved by the Jews, and very few poetry collections failed to incorporate samples of their works. According to Joseph Wolff, while he was in Mashad in 1831, he met Jews and "Jewish Sooffees" who possessed poems, transcribed in Judeo-Persian, of Ḥāfeẓ and *divān*s of other Persian poets (Wolff, 1835, p. 158). Non-Jewish Persian poetry is found in collections that also included sacred piyyutim and, at times, even liturgical works. The large number of poems, quatrains, and Persian *divān*s found in the Judeo-Persian manuscripts indicates that non-Jewish Persian poetry was an inseparable part of a Persian Jew's cultural heritage. In Persian Jewish manuscripts we find not only works of great Persian poets such as Ferdowsi, ʿAṭṭār, Neẓāmi, Ḵayyām, Ḥāfeẓ, Jāmi, Ṣāʾeb, and Maktabi, but also a great many poems composed by less celebrated authors, including some about whom we have no information. Some of these unknown poets may have been Jews, or of Jewish origin, but their works need to undergo thorough study and research before such a suggestion can be substantiated.

Jewish poets took as their model the style, symbolic concepts, literary terminology, and prosody used by Persian poets. Some Jewish poets incorporated verses by non-Jewish Persian poets into their own works (e.g., ʿEmrāni in his *Sāqi-nāma*, in Netzer, 1996-99, I, p. 103, vv. 8-10; see Netzer, 1973, pp. 43-44, 251-60; idem, 1996-99, I, pp. 63-64, 99-106). In some cases, Jewish poets took the opening verse (*maṭla*ʿ) from a well-known poem by a non-Jewish poet, and then continued on, developing their own poems along the same structural and thematic lines. There are some rare cases in which the poem of a non-Jewish Persian poet served as the tafsir of a Hebrew piyyut, such as the verse of David Bar Aharon ben Ḥasin's piyyut, *Oḥil yom yom ešta'eh*, for which a poem of Ḥāfeẓ served as tafsir (BZI 4516/1; Netzer, 1985, p. 189, item D28). Persian Jews also entertained themselves with folk literature of non-Jewish poets transcribed in Judeo-Persian, such as *Bahrām o Golandām*, *Dāstān-e Ḥaydar Beg va Ṣamanbar*, *Sarv o Gol*, and *Flaknāz* (Netzer, 1996-99, I, pp. 90-96).

HISTORICAL WORKS

During the Middle Ages historical writing as a genre was highly developed in Persia and in other Islamic countries. However, to judge by what has survived in the manuscripts, it must be said that the Persian Jews did not particularly excel in this area, and thus many periods in the life of the community have remained obscure. The colophons likewise play a minimal role in the recording of events or in the provision of biographical information. In this area the Jews of Persia cannot be compared with the Armenians, whose colophons are rich in information of historical interest (Sanjian, 1969).

The Safavid period (1501-1736) was a decisive one in the national and religious life of the Persian people. After fierce internal battles and bloody wars against their neighbors invading tribes and neighboring peoples, primarily the Ottoman Empire, the first Safavid rulers succeeded in creating a state that would unify its population along religio-nationalistic lines. A direct outcome of this, the increase in the power of the Shiʿite clergy in the royal court, also entailed an adverse effect upon the Persian Jewish community (Levy, 1960, pp. 174 ff.; Netzer, 1980; Moreen, 1987).

Bābāʾi ben Loṭf. Bābāʾi ben Loṭf (d. after 1662) of Kāšān is the first known Persian Jewish historian. He described the sufferings of the Jews in all parts of the country during the period 1613-62. His chronicle, *Ketāb-e anusi* (The book of a forced convert), composed of approximately 5,300 verses, describes in heart-wrenching poetry the persecutions, restrictive decrees, mass expulsions, murders, and property confiscations to which the Jewish community members and leaders were subjected. His account is substantiated by similar descriptions in those of European travelers, and by the chronicle of the Armenian Bishop Arakel of Tabriz, who also recorded the sufferings of the Armenians and Jews in Persia.

Bābāʾi ben Loṭf devoted a major portion of his work to the events of 1656-62, some of the hardest years endured by the Jewish community under Shah ʿAbbās II (r. 1642-67). He lists nineteen other cities and localities where Jews lived: Abarqu, Ašraf, Bandar, Damāvand, Faraḥābād, Gilyārd, Golpāyagān, Hamadān, Isfahan, Kāšān, Kermānšāh, Ḵᵛānsār, Lār, Naṭanz, Nehāvand, Qazvin, Qom, Shiraz, and Yazd. The Armenian chronicler Arakel of Tabriz mentions additional localities and provinces: Ardabil, Astarābād, Fumanāt, Khorasan, Šuštar, and Tabriz.

There can be no doubt that Jewish communities existed in other locations around Persia, some of which appear in the accounts of European travelers. The persecutions also caused families to leave their native cities and settle elsewhere. Some Jews even considered going to Jerusalem. The author himself decided to leave Kāšān and start a new life in Baghdad. There were also expulsions of Jews to remote areas. The authorities decided to expel the Jews of Yazd to Kabul in Afghanistan. This expulsion did not take place due to the opposition of the Muslims of Yazd, who regarded the Jews as a useful socioeconomic element. These expulsions and migrations altered the demographic map of Persian Jewry.

The importance of *Ketāb-e anusi* as a primary source lies in the fact that, in addition to the story that it tells of persecutions and forced conversion decrees, it describes the organizational, social, and economic state of the Persian Jewish communities. We learn from this document that the Jews worked in a variety of different fields: medicine, pharmacy, herbalism, music, tailoring, and metalwork; some were fine craftsman in the production of silk cloth and silk belts; some were millers, antique dealers, and jewelry merchants. Jewish women held positions as counselors and teachers of the ladies of the royal court, and occasionally practiced fortunetelling (Netzer, 1980).

Bābāʾi ben Loṭf makes favorable mention of four personages: Shah Ṣafi I (r. 1629-42); the theologian and poet Mollā Moḥsen Fayż Kāšāni (d. 1680); Mirzā Ašraf, governor of Kāšān; and the Sufi, theologian and poet Shaikh Bahāʾ-al-Din ʿĀmeli (d. 1621). The worst persecutions were endured by the Jews of the capital city of Isfahan. According to Bābāʾi ben Loṭf, most of those who underwent forced conversions, after having been humiliated and devastated emotionally, socially, and financially, were eventually permitted to return to Judaism. The persecutions recounted in *Ketāb-e anusi* were neither the first nor the last to be suffered by the Persian Jewish community. About seventy years after the work was completed, another Jew of Kāšān, Bābāʾi ben Farhād, the grandson or great-grandson of Bābāʾi ben Loṭf, composed a versified history of the Jews of Kāšān in about 1,300 verses, titled *Ketāb-e sargoḏašt-e Kāšān*, in which he described the further oppression experienced by the Jewish community there (Moreen, 1987).

Bābāʾi ben Farhād and Mashiaḥ ben Rafāʾel. After more than two hundred years of rule, the Safavid dynasty began to disintegrate. The dynasty's internal weakness invited external pressures, and it seemed as though Persia was

about to lose its national autonomy to an Afghan invasion from the east. Under the command of their chieftains, Maḥmud and, later, Ašraf, the Afghans swept across wide expanses of Persia, capturing the capital city of Isfahan in a bloody battle and massacring many of its inhabitants (1722). In other battles waged against provincial or city governors, the Sunnite Afghans succeeded in gaining control of much of Shiʿite Persia, and they ruled over it for about eight years (1722-30). These upheavals disrupted the existence of the Persian Jewish community.

In various cities, particularly Kāšān, pogroms broke out in which Jews were greatly harmed, and pressure increased on them to convert. The Jews of Kāšān, as well as those of Isfahan, were forced to embrace Islam, and were also obliged to pay large sums to the local governors. As he passed through Kāšān in pursuit of the Afghan enemy, Nāderqoli Khan (later Nāder Shah Afšār) also extracted large sums of money from the Jews of that city. The persecutions and the pressures with which the Jews had to contend are the main subjects of Bābāʾi ben Farhād's work *Ketāb-e sargoḏašt-e Kāšān dar bāb-e ʿebri wa guyimi ṯāni* (Events concerning the Jews of Kāšān and their second conversion to Islam). The poet composed his chronicle in 1729-30, and in it he showered praise on the invading Afghan ruler Ašraf for his attitude toward the Jews and for refraining to harm them, in contrast to the Shiʿite Persians.

For seven months the Jews of Kāšān were forcefully treated as converts; afterwards, in return for a large communal ransom, they were permitted to return to Judaism. Bābāʾi ben Farhād criticizes the spiritual leaders of Kāšān, particularly the head of the Jewish community, for having displayed weakness and, together with several prominent community members, for having seen fit to convert to Islam. Another Kashani Jew, Mashiaḥ ben Rafāʾel, added about 200 verses to *Ketāb-e sargoḏašt*. The addition is mainly a repetition of events already written by Bābāʾi about Kāšān. Mashiaḥ ben Rafāʾel also contributes words of praise for Avraham, the head of the city's Jewish community, for his steadfastness and courage, and his success in having the decree canceled.

MEDICINE AND SCIENCE

Jewish physicians held a special status in Persia, and the Muslim population displayed appreciation both of their work and of their personal qualities. In many cases they were the ones who rescued their persecuted brethren (Neumark, pp. 79-79). The profession was usually passed down within the family. Several Jewish physicians earned great renown, such as the viziers to

the Il-Khans, Saʿd-al-Dawla (d. 1291; see ARGŪN KHAN) and Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh (d. 1318; see ABAQA; ḠĀZĀN KHAN), remembered more as a historian, who early on converted to Islam. We have no information regarding the course of study or credentialization of Jewish physicians, but it may be assumed that their studies were no different from those generally accepted at the time in Persia.

Medical treatises that were transcribed into Judeo-Persian include the following: (1) *al-Kāfi* by Jebrāʾil b. ʿObayd-Allāh (d. 1006), written in Ray; (2) *Ḏaḵira-ye ḵʷārazmšāhi* by Sayyed Zayn-al-Din Esmāʿil Jorjāni, based on Avicenna's al-*Qānun fi'l-ṭebb*, written in 1110 and dedicated to Qoṭb-al-Din Moḥammad Ḵʷārazmšāh (r. 1097-1127); (3) *al-Aʿrāż al-ṭebbiya*, also by Jorjāni, for the Ḵʷārazmšāh Atsïz (r. 1127-56), which was used extensively by Persian Jewish physicians; (4) *Kefāyat-e manṣuri* by Ebn Elyās, dedicated to Sultan Mojāhed-al-Din Zayn-al-ʿĀbedin, possibly the Muzaffarid ruler (r. 1384-87) of Fārs. (5) *Resāla-ye ātašak* by ʿEmād-al-Din Maḥmud b. Masʿud Širāzi (2nd half of the 16th cent.), on the curing of sexually transmitted diseases; (6) *Ṭebb-e Šefāʾi* by Moẓaffar b. Moḥammad b. Ḥosayn Šefāʾi, an alphabetically arranged work that was widely used by Jewish physicians, particularly in Kurdistan. It was translated into Latin by the Carmelite priest Matheus and printed by Father Angelus in Persia in 1681; (7) *Zād-al-mosāferin* by Moḥammad-Mahdi b. ʿAli-Naqi (fl. 1728).

In the field of theoretical and applied sciences, a number of works used in the calculation of the Hebrew calendar have been identified. The most important of them was the Judeo-Persian work *Maḥzor dulābi*, based on R. Yoshiahu ben Mevura-al-ʿAquli's *Maḥzor remez* (see BL Or. 2451 and MS Adler B.1). The Jews of Persia seem to have displayed great interest in astronomy. Two astronomical texts that were transcribed into Judeo-Persian (BL Add. 7701) in 1666 are *Resāla dar hayʾa* by ʿAli Qušji and *Moḵtaṣar dar maʿrefat-e taqwim* by Ḵʷāja Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi. The Vatican Library MS 387-10 contains a Hebrew treatise on astronomy called *Zeh sefer toldot ha-shamayim uha-aretz* (History of the heavens and the earth) by Yosef ha-Parsi "Joseph the Persian." Belonging to the popular science of the period are many works on fortune telling, astrology, folk remedies, and amulets; these are found in almost all of the Judeo-Persian manuscript collections (Shaked, 1983; Rosen-Ayalon, 1990; Shani). Worthy of mention (in addition to those listed in the general index in Netzer, 1985) is the astrological work *Mishpaṭei ha-mazalot* by Avraham b. Ezra (1089-1164) in MS Adler B.22. This work apparently was studied by the

Jews of Persia and Bukhara.

POPULAR LITERATURE

Many Judeo-Persian tales exist in written form, both in prose and in poetry, and in all kinds of literature, in biblical and Talmudic commentaries, in midrashim, and in secular works. This type of literature is of great importance in understanding religious, cultural, and social mores, as well as the emotional world of an ethnic or religious group. Some of the stories, including ones that were incorporated into such sacred works as the Ethics of the fathers (*Pirqei avot*, see above), were taken from Persian sources. The number of these stories is large, and it is desirable that they be classified according to a special index or code, so that the cultural and historical trends that they reflect may be studied. A fairly complete sampling of stories and anecdotes from the tafsir of the *Pirqei avot* is given in the description of BZI 1008 (Netzer, 1985, pp. 110-12). This sampling generally reflects the midrashic literature, but no other kind of literature, such as that represented by *Šāhzāda va Ṣufi*, whose original sources are not Jewish.

DICTIONARIES

The study of Hebrew and Aramaic and the need to understand sacred books impelled the Jews of Persia to compile dictionaries, which have subsequently become important sources for Semitic and Persian language scholars:

1. No longer extant: Yosef Bar Mosheh, transcriber of a tafsir of the Bible (of 1319; BL Or. 5446) states that Rabbi Abu Saʿid compiled a dictionary explicating difficult words in the Bible.

2. *ʿAmuqot Shamuʾel* (BL Or. 10482[2]) is not an alphabetical dictionary, but it contains definitions of difficult words in the Book of Samuel, arranged in the order of the biblical verses. Since it is a very old work it is of great lexical value.

3. *Sefer ha melitza* by Shlomo ben Shamuʾel was transcribed in the city of Urganj (Gorganj) in 1339 (Bacher, 1900). It contains about 18,000 Hebrew and Aramaic terms (including words borrowed from Greek and Persian) that appear in the Bible, the Talmud, and midrashim. The words were translated into and explicated in Persian. Certain Persian words reflect the local pronunciation of the region of Chorasmia, hence the importance of the work for Persian linguistic studies (see CHORASMIA iii). The compiler was aided in

his work by the dictionaries and commentaries of Rabbi Saʿadia Gaʾon, Hai Gaʾon, Rashi, and Maimonides. The existence of this dictionary testifies to the fact that the Jewish community of Gorganj could justifiably boast of Torah scholars deeply versed in sacred literature.

Many words in the dictionary have yet to be identified. Moreover, the manuscripts are not free of errors, which are repeated in different manuscript versions. The compiler's method is based on the translation of the word from its source into Persian, accompanied by its Targum interpretation (Aramaic) and followed by quotations from the Bible, the Talmud, and midrashim. The compiler also presents words derived from the same root, with translation and explication.

The following manuscripts of *Sefer ha melitza* are known: (a) Incomplete MS 75, Firkowicz collection, St. Petersburg library. This manuscript was transcribed by Eliša' and it states that Shlomo ben Shamuʾel finished the dictionary in Tammuz, 1651 Sel./June 1339 in Gorganj. The date of transcription is unknown. Neubauer and Steinschneider wrote about this manuscript in 1866 and 1875. The manuscript has 87 leaves, but many are missing from beginning, middle, and end. The work is entitled *Agron*, as is Rabbi Saʿadia's dictionary. (b) Complete MS 710, Sassoon collection (Ohel David, I, p. 500), entitled both *Agron* and *Sefer melitza* (without the article *ha*), transcribed by Shamuʾel ben Yiẓḥāq ben Nisan ben Avraham ben Yosef in Marv, in Nisan 1704 Sel./April 1473; 441 pages (not folios). (c) Incomplete MS B.44(a), Adler collection, 355 folios. (d) Incomplete MS B.44(b), Adler collection, 24 folios. (e) Incomplete MS B.44(c), Adler collection, transcribed by ʿUziel Mosheh ben David for Yaʿqov ben Yehudah in Kislev, 1802 Sel./November 1491. It includes "dalet-nun-bet" to "tav-tav"; leaves are missing between "dalet" and "yod." Adler purchased these manuscripts in 1896/1897 in Bukhara and Samarkand. The above group, except for (b), were studied by Bacher. (f) BZI 4562 (purchased in Shiraz in 1973), 113 folios ("aleph-bet-kaf" to "tav-tav"). It was transcribed in 1805 Sel./1494 in Kāšān by Yaʿqov ben ʿOvadia ben Yosef ben Ezrā Kāvus, for R. Shamuʾel ha-Levi. On fols. 68b, 69a, 89b, 90a, 96a is written: "Explicated by Yiẓḥāq ben M. Baḵši Šoḥet Zarqān," and next to the word Zarqān (the township near Shiraz) is the doublet "Zargān."

4. *Agron* is a dictionary compiled by Mosheh ben Aharon ben Šerit in Širvān in 1459 (BL Or. 10482[1], incomplete: part of "yod" to "tav"). The work defines difficult Hebrew and Aramaic words in the Bible, arranged at times by root, but mainly by nouns (discussed in Bacher, 1896-97; Horn, 1897; Nöldeke).

For a description of the dictionaries in the BZI collection, see the general index in Netzer, 1985. Of particular importance is MS 4556/1, which was purchased in Yazd in 1973.

The following dictionaries are in the Adler collection (Jewish Theological Seminary, New York City): (1) *Perush ha-milot* appended to a *siddur*, containing explications of difficult biblical words beginning with “Parshat Noah” (Gen. 6:9-11:32); apparently it was composed in 1183 (MS B.1). (2) *Sefer biur milot ha-Torah*, compiled or transcribed in 1708 (MS B.43). (3) *Milon la-milim qashot sheba-Torah* from “Parshat va-Era” (Exod. 6:2-9:35) to “Parshat Ha’azinu” (Deut. 32; MS B49). (4) *Milon la-milim qashot ba-Torah* relates to the books Kings, Ezekiel, Esther, Song of Songs, and Joel (MS B.50).

The following are in the British Library: (1) *Mikhlal la-milim qashot sheba-Tana*, incomplete, 54 leaves; transcribed in 1804/5 (Or. 2454). (2) *Mikhlal la-milim qashot ba-mishnah* in 188 folios, compiled by Ābābā ben Nuriʾel in 1736/7 (Or. 9804). (3) *Perush ha-milim ha-qashot ba-mishneh Torah*, compiled in 1550; together with the text of Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*, 270 folios (see Or. 10043; cf. BZI 4556). (4) *Agron* (see above). (5) An incomplete dictionary, possibly from the 17th or 18th century, containing definitions of difficult words from the end of Genesis to the beginning of Chronicles. It has 95 folios (Or. 10556). (6) *Milon la-milim qashot ba-Tana*, possibly from the 16th or 17th century, 138 folios; many leaves from the books of the Prophets are missing (Or. 10577).

The following are in the Klau Library of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati (Spicehandler, 1968): (1) *Mikhlal Yofi [la-Tanakh]*, from “Parshat Noah” to the Writings, transcribed by Issakhar ben Ḵᵛāja Dāwud; 266 pages (MS 2040). (2) *Mikhlal* [*la-Tanakh*], from “Parshat Toldot” (Gen. 25:19-28:9), was transcribed, apparently in Hamadān, by Avraham ben Esḥāq; 218 pages (MS 2115b). (3) *Mikhlal Yofi la-mishnah*, compiled in 1736 by Shlomo Ābābā Nuriʾel, transcribed in 1830 by Yosef ben Ābābā; 302 pages (MS 2120). (4) *Mikhlal la-Tana*, from the end of “Parshat va-Yeḥi” (Gen. 47:28-50:26) to “Parshat Tetzaveh” (Exod. 27:20-30:10), was transcribed in 1815 by Mordechai ben Binyamin, probably in Hamadān; 172 pages (MS 2121). (5) *Mikhlal Yofi la-mishnah*, compiled in 1799(?) by Ābābā Nuriʾel and transcribed by Esḥāq ben Yaʿqov for Mordechai ben Binyamin, possibly in Yazd; 266 pages (MS 2122). (6) *Mikhlal Yofi la-mishnah* is different from MSS 2120 and 2122 and may have been transcribed or compiled in Shiraz; 300 pages (MS 2124). (7) Incomplete *Mikhlal* of explications of difficult words in the Pentateuch and the Hafṭarot

(readings from the Prophets), from “Parshat va-Yetze” (Gen. 28:10-32:3) to “Parshat Nitzavim” (Deut. 29:9-30:20), probably transcribed or compiled in Hamadān; 94 pages (MS 2130). (8) *Mikhlal* [*la-Tana*] begins with “Parshat Noah” and continues to the end of the Hebrew Bible; 498 pages (MS 2194).

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