

INTRA- AND INTERCOMMUNAL APPELLATIONS IN JUDEO-YEMENI

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In Judeo-Yemeni, or the Arabic dialect of the Jews of the Yemen, both urban and rural, a specific lexicon developed over the ages including epithets, additional, or synonymous popular names – word coinages not current with the Muslim majority. These were appellations of an augmentative nature, typical of entries in a dictionary. They symbolised the spiritual life of Jews in the Diaspora, the Holy Scriptures, the religious ceremonies, Jewish manners and customs, their yearning for redemption, and their nostalgia for Zion.

The tension between the devotion of the Yemeni Jews to their Law and their faith in being ‘the chosen people’ on one hand, and their inferior status as *dimmiis*, as protected subjects of the harsh Zaidite Islamic rule on the other hand pushing them to the edge of society, urged them to turn inward, though being essential for the general society because of their diligence in craftsmanship and skills. Moreover, their social situation communally and individually intensified their psychic tensions. Their sense of discrimination depressed them as a minority. Permanent tension between them and the Muslim majority deriving from conflicting beliefs claimed at least a verbal vent to their suppressed feelings expressed by appellations towards and against Muslims, including disgraceful ones by which they wished to prove their own pride. Cants were widespread among believers in both creeds. Reciprocal appellations will further be defined as intercommunal.

Intracommunal Jewish appellations in the Yemen are of religious and secular types coined by eloquent poets in their *diwāns*, their collections of poems. Religious appellations refer to Holy Scriptures and places, to the Sabbath and holidays, while secular appellations become established in daily usage. Tendentious intercommunal appellations include reciprocal disgraceful ones aiming at defiling believers in the other creed. Furthermore, there are objective intercommunal appellations and an objective range of cants. The usage of tendentious cants is implicit. Yemeni Jews resort to literal manoeuvres in cants to hide their intentions. They abide by metaphor, by insertion of Hebrew words in an Arabic context, by transposition of sounds and letters, or partial transposition by change of word structure or sporadic consonants, or by usage of euphemisms.

The scientific apparatus of this paper is authentic and fully attested. Due to abundance of citations and limitation of space we have chosen not to fully cite our bibliographical references. Instead, the reader is suggested to consult our *Dictionary*

of *Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic* through its page numbers, bracketed after each and every citation attested below.

1 Religious and secular appellations

Yemeni Jews did not discredit the usage of Arabic appellations commonly used in Islam. By regarding them as metonymical transfers, they validated their application as parallel sacred concepts in Judaism.

1.1 Religious appellations

1.1.1 Divine and Messianic appellations

Following are some exemplary divine appellations: *rabb as-simū*^c ‘God, the Hearer (of Israel)’ vs. *as-samī*^c, one of the Beautiful Names of Allah in Islam (233a); *‘ālim al-‘alām* ‘the Most Sage’ vs. *al-‘ālim*, or *al-‘allām* in Islam (338b); *hūrī l-ḡinān* ‘the Fair of the gardens’; *šarad hūrī l-ḡuzlān* ‘the fair Gazelle has gone astray’, fig(uratively) the Divine Presence has departed (with the destruction of the Temple) (112b).

Messianic appellations: *al-mahdī* ‘the Messiah’ vs. ‘the rightly guided’ in Islam (506a); *imām al-hudā* ‘the king of the straightforward religion’ (12b); *am īr al-hūr* ‘the prince of those who have eyes with a marked contrast of white and black’ (the Jews) (13b); *al-fatā* ‘the Man’ (366a); *al-mansūr* ‘the aided (by God)’, ‘the triumphant’ (487b); *al-‘aytamūs* ‘the Bird that has a majestic splendour’ (349b); *šāhib al-kāyneh al-kadrā* ‘the man of the green Tent’, cf. *al-kadr* ‘Elijah’ in Muslim literature (142a).

1.1.2 Nicknames and given names

The Jews are nicknamed, as previously stated, *al-hūr* ‘the fair ones’, *al-ḡamā‘a* ‘the community’ (73a), *āl ya‘qūb* (537a), or *šī‘at ya‘qūb* ‘the descendants of Jacob’ (274a), *silsilat ya‘qūb* ‘the offspring of Jacob’ (229a), *yūsif* ‘Joseph’ (Ps 80:2), *al-ḡazāl*, calque of Hebrew (further: Heb.) *haš-šavi*¹ ‘the gazelle’ (II Sam 1:19), or as metaphor of ‘the Torah’ (355b); *mā bayna nūn wa-kāf* ‘[God has chosen the people of Israel] from amongst *n* (50 in numerology) + *k* (20) = seventy, i.e., many [nations] (501b), cf. the reference to *k* and *n* in Islam: The Imam facing the worshippers in a Friday sermon turns to them in supplication, saying: *yā man amrubu bayna l-kāfi wan-nūn...* ‘You [Allah], Whose order is [summed up in two letters] *k* and *n*! attested in *fa-idā qadā amran fa-innamā yaqūlu labu kun [kn] fa-yakūn* ‘and when He decreeth a thing, He only saith unto it, Be, and it is’ (Sale’s translation of the Qur’an 40:68).

Isaac, the Patriarch, is nicknamed *ad-dabiḥ* ‘the Slaughtered’, which is the epithet of Ishmael amongst Muslims (166a). Jacob, the Patriarch, is nicknamed *ar-rāḡiḥ* ‘the Righteous, the Godfearing, the Just, the Upright’ (175b). Joseph is nicknamed *mawlā*

¹ The Hebrew transliteration expresses Judeo-Yemeni pronunciation.

r-ruyyān (!) (Classical Arabic: *ru'yā*) 'the Dreamer' (Gen 37:19) (533a). Moses is nicknamed *ibn 'imrān* (40b), or *walad 'imrān* 'the son of Amram' (532a), as well as *ar-rasūl* 'the Messenger' (181b), or *an-nabiyy al-mursal* 'the delegated prophet' (477a), which appellations are of Muhammad in Islam. Moreover, according to Muslim commentators, Yāsīn is one of the nicknames of Muhammad and Moses, rather of all ten prophets revered in Islam (535a). Jewish commentators break *yāsīn* into *yā* as vocative, and *sīn* as the initial of *sīnā* '[Mt.] Sinai', or of (Heb.) *sənēh* 'fire-bush' (Exod 3:2), of *sayyid*, or of *insān* 'man' (535a). *yāsīn* is also the nickname of the recitation of (Heb.) *šmā'*... proclaiming the belief in the Unity of God attested in Deut 6:49, ibid.11:13-21, and Num 15:37-41 vs. *yāsīn* the name of sura 36 of the Qur'an (534f.).

While contrasting Judaism with Islam, it is appropriate to mention at this point that a statement intended a) to call someone's attention to an issue, or b) when introducing an important conversation, or c) when dissuading someone from committing an offence, or d) when warning someone of an obstacle or pointing to his error, the person is reminded of Moses, who brought down the Torah to the people of Israel, by saying *udkur Mēsa* 'remember Moses!' i.e., consider, regard, reconsider the matter!' or think it over! cf. *udkur Muḥammad* 'remember Muhammad!' or *salli 'alā n-nabiyy* 'pray for the prophet!' responded to by *šallā-llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam* 'God bless and grant him salvation!'. Jews respond, saying *'olōw haš-šolōm* 'on him (Moses) be peace!' (168a).

Aharon (Aaron), his brother, is nicknamed *al-imām* 'the Priest'. *min nasl al-imām* 'one of the descendants of the priest' is one whose surname is (Heb.) Cohen 'Priest'.

Whereas *al-imām* in Islam is 'the prayer leader' who ascends the pulpit in the mosque and holds his sermon facing the worshippers, the *imām*, or 'Priest in the Temple, or the Cohen in the synagogue' faces the worshippers from the Holy Ark, and blesses them in the course of morning prayers (12b).

aš-šuyūk 'the Elders' is the nickname for the (Heb.) Sanhedrin, an assembly of 71 ordained scholars, which functioned in the days of the [Second] Temple in Jerusalem as Supreme Court and Legislature (273a).

Maimonides is nicknamed by the Jews *an-nasr al-kabīr*, calque of (Heb.) *han-nāšar haḡ-godōl* 'the great Eagle' (483b), *al-ḥokōm al-kabīr* 'the great Rabbi' (80b), and in short, *sayyidnā*, calque of (Heb.) *rabbēnū* 'our lord, our master' (237b). *as-sumū'i ibn 'aḡlān* is the nickname of Rabbi Shim'on Bar-Yōhai, who carried on discourses with rabbis named in the Zohar, a commentary on the Pentateuch (233a).

The poet laureate of Yemeni Jewry since the 17c. CE was Rabbi Shalom (Shalem) Shabazi. His agnomens are *abū yūdō/yahūdō*, *abū/ab šim'on*, *abbō šolēm*, or *abū šolēm* (244), *walad yūsif* (538a), *ibn yūsif* (40a), *ibn mašta/mušattā* - his birth-place in southern Yemen, or *al-mušattā'iyi*. *al-mašta'iyya*, or *bint al-mu'allim* 'the daughter of the Rabbi', Shabazi, was the nickname of his daughter *šam'a*, a renowned righteous woman whose tomb was frequently visited (246a and 339a).

1.2 Secular appellations

Habbāni Jews in eastern Yemen use *burēh* as a pet-name for Abraham vs. Muslim *brayhīm* (29b). *hurēn* and *hurānī* are affective forms for A(h)aron in Jewish circles in al-Gades, Lower Yemen (507a). A Jew addresses an unacquainted adult co-religionist with the vocative ‘*ammī* ‘uncle!’), and a young man with *ibn ‘ammī* ‘cousin!’ (340a). Urban Jews denigrate rural Jews by nicknaming them *yhūd al-bawādī* ‘country Jews’ (23b), otherwise *yihawd bilād* (37b).

2 Appellations of Holy Scriptures

The Torah is pronounced (*sifr*) *at-tawriy(y)a*, or *at-tawriy(y)āt*, *tawra* in al-Gades, and *tawrī* in Hujariyya, both in Lower Yemen vs. *at-tawrāh* in Cl. Arabic (54b). *al-‘ilm* is the appellation of the Torah and the Talmud (338a), cf. the appellation of the Qur’ān (as-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 117). *al-qur’ān* is the appellation of the Torah and the Ten Commandments. In Lower Yemen (‘Ammār) the Torah is pronounced *al-qurāh* (391a), cf. *al-qur’ān* ‘the Qur’ān’ in Islam.

Other appellations of the Torah: *an-nidām* ‘the Rosary’ (490a), *al-firdaws* ‘Paradise’ (370a) and *dār al-ihsān* ‘the world of beauty’ (160a). *at-tāg* ‘the Crown’ is the traditional Judeo-Yemeni Pentateuch (54b). Rhyming constraints may impair syntactic structure, such as *āyāt marsūm* (!) ‘written [Jewish] Law’ (17a), for *ā. marsūma*, and *kutūt ma’sūr* (!) ‘the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue’ (328a) for *k. ma’sūra. furū’ aš-šarī’a* are the Torah laws, or Halachah vs. ‘*ilm al-furū’* lit(erally) ‘the doctrine of the branches’, i.e., applied *fiqh*, applied ‘ethics’ elaborating canonical law in Islam (371b).

The Mishna is translated as *matānī*, in the pl(ural) vs. *matnāh*, singular:sg. in Cl. Arabic (58b), cf. *al-matānī* ‘the Repetition’, an appellation of the Qur’ān in Islam (as-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 117). The Halachah, or Jewish law is *sunna* vs. the Sunna, or the Law established by the Qur’ān and the usage sanctioned by Muslim tradition (233b). A command of Jewish law is *maktūm*, pl. *makātīm* (120b), and a precept of Jewish law is *fard*, pl. *furūd* vs. ‘religious duty’ in Islamic law (371). The Jerusalem (Palestinian) Talmud compiled about 375 CE is nicknamed *al-ḡamor aš-šāmī* (243a), where the Aramaic Gemara, lit. ‘Completion’, the second and supplementary part of the Talmud (providing a commentary on the first part, i.e., the Mishnah) is insinuated. The Zohar, an essential in Cabbalistic literature is nicknamed either *al-azhar*, imitating the sound of (Heb.) *zōhar* ‘Shining’ (207a), or *kitāb al-lumā’*, its calque in Arabic (453b). Cabbalistic literature, dealing with Jewish mysticism is nicknamed either *kutub as-samā’āt* after the name of the author of the Zohar, Rabbi Shim’on Bar-Yohai, *as-sumu’ī ibn ‘aḡlān* (233a), or *kutub at-taqlīdāt* (410b).

As for the works of Maimonides, the book (Heb.) *mišnah tōroh*, otherwise (Heb.) *hay yad ha-hazzogoh*, including all Jewish oral laws, in 14 volumes is nicknamed *matnā l-‘ilm* (58b). *mōrah nāvūkīm* is the Hebrew title for his work *dalālat al-hā’ir in*

'Guide of the Perplexed', written in Judeo-Arabic and, as usual, in Hebrew characters. It is called, in short, *ad-dalāla*, whereas *dalāyil* in the pl. refers to 'Scriptures' in general (155a) by dint of metonymy. Finally, his *sēfar ham-mūsawōt* 'the Book of Precepts' is nicknamed *mawsara*, relating to (Heb.) *mūsor* 'ethics, morals' (474).

Some Yemeni Jews pray according to the *baladī* 'local', i.e., Yemeni version, while others pray according to the *šāmī* 'Jerusalem (Palestinian)' version. The Yemeni version prayer-book is nicknamed *tiklāl*, pl. *t(a)kālīl*, 'inclusive, comprehensive', including also Jewish laws, marriage bonds and divorce certificate versions, ritual songs, and songs of praise (434a). An introductory chapter of a Jewish prayer is termed *fātiha*, pl. *fawātih* vs. the *fātiha*, or introductory sura of the Qur'ān (365a). *tašlīh*, calque of (Heb.) *tiqqūn* is 'a Jewish night-liturgic or prayer, Sabbath songs and readings etc., believed to purify the soul and cancel a bad decree' (286a)., *tafsīr at-tafsīr* 'Commentary of commentaries' is a Jewish Yemeni enlarged and more common commentary of Sa'adia Gaon's *tafsīr* 'commentary' – Arabic translation of the Bible (374).

3 Appellations of Holy places

The Garden of Eden is nicknamed '*adnān*, sounding like (Heb.) *gan 'ēdan* vs. the name of a legendary ancestor of the North Arabs (319a). The Temple in Jerusalem is nicknamed *al-quḍs*, *bayt al-quḍs*, or *al-maqdis*. Hence *al-maqdis at-tānī* is 'the Second Temple' (530 BCE-70 CE) (389a); *bayt al-maqdis* is a lit. translation of (Heb.) *bayt hammigdoš* 'the Temple' (45).

Other epithets of the Temple are:

madrasat sām 'the Temple of S(h)em', cf. *al-madrassa*, name of a mosque in Saṅ'ā' (148b), and referring to its brightness, it is nicknamed *rawšan* 'verandah' (192b), and *bayt as-samāwa* lit. 'the house under the open sky', fig. 'divine house', which appellation refers also to Jerusalem (45b), known in Jewish Yemeni circles as (Heb.) *yerušolāyim*, or as (undefined) *quḍs* (389a). The Holy of Holies in the Temple is nicknamed *al-ḡawwāniyya* 'the Innermost' (76b), which epithet refers, incidentally, to the innermost place in the Cave of (Heb.) Machpelah, or *al-ḥaram al-ibrāhīmī* in Hebron by local Muslims. On the other hand, *al-barr(ayn)* 'the Field', (Heb.) *ḥas-šodah* (Gen 24:63) is the epithet for the site of the Temple in Jerusalem, and in a wider sense Judea and Galilee too (24a). The Lord is addressed with the words *mihṛāb sakīntak* lit. 'the Place of worship where Your divine Presence dwells'. (Heb.) *šakīnoh* is Cl. Arabic *sakīna* 1. 'dwelling' < *skn*. 2. 'divine Presence', i.e., Your Temple (in Jerusalem) (88b) vs. *mihṛāb* 1. 'niche which shows the direction of the *qiblah*'. 2. 'a place of worship, also of the Children of Israel' (Lane 1863-93:541c). *qiblī* is 'north' for all Yemenis. Therefore, *al-qibla* is the northward direction to which Yemeni Jews turn when praying to Jerusalem through the Holy Ark in their synagogues (385b), cf. *al-qibla* in Islam – the Ka'ba, northward to Mecca, and *ūlā l-qiblatayn* 'the first of

the two qiblas' – Jerusalem. *bilād al-quds(iyyāh)* is the Holy Land (37a). In the *Dīwān* of Rabbi Shalom Shabazi, Samarqand is figuratively the vision of the Jewish people: '*īdnā li-maqdisnā samarqand ardnā ṣayyōn qaryatnā maqām al-awwal ī* 'turn our back to our Holy Temple, [to] the vision of our land, [to] Zion (Jerusalem) our City, the residence of our ancestors!'. Samarqand, used metaphorically in this context, was ruined by Genkiz Khan in 1229 CE, like Jerusalem. It was Tamerlane's capital in the 14th century CE (232a), ruined later in history to be rebuilt again.

aš-šām 'the north' has different notions communally speaking. Yemeni Jews refer by it to Jerusalem, and in a narrower sense to the Temple in it, whereas Muslims refer by it to Syria, and in a narrower sense to Damascus (242b). By extension, *dār as-salām* is Jerusalem vs. Bagdad in Islam, or, again in Islam – lit. 'the peaceful zone' an appellation for Islamic countries vs. *dār al-ḥarb* lit. 'the war zone, enemy territory', an appellation for non-Muslim, Christian countries. However, Yemeni Jews include Palestine, queerly, under *diyār al-ḥarb* (160a), or *ad-diyār ad-dākila* lit. 'the interior countries', i.e., overseas, countries abroad (146a).

4 Holiday appellations

Yemeni Jews nickname a weekday *yawm al-bayn*, pl. *ayyāmāt al-bayn* 'intervening days (between two Sabbaths)' (538b), or *bayn al-ahlāl* lit. '[included] in (!) the weekdays', *ahlāl* being the Yemeni pl. of (Heb.) *ḥol* 'workday, excluding the Sabbath' (103a), or *wa'd* 'weekday', pl. *ō'ād*, or *wi'ūd*, generally meaning 'week' (527a). A holiday is *īd*, pl. *a'yād*, and *taw'īd*, pl. *tawā'īd* (ibid.), or *yawm ṣāliḥ*, calque of (Heb.) *yōm tōv* lit. 'good day' (Esther 9:22) (538b). A holiday eve is *'arb al-īd* < (Heb.) *'ērav...* (320b).

Following are appellations of Jewish holidays:

'*īd al-kāmis* 'New Year's day' referring to the agricultural marking star *kāmis* lit. 'fifth', relating to the month of *aylūl* 'September' when the dhurah in the fields becomes full-grained and brilliant (137), and the first croppings are harvested (348b). '*īd al-arsa* 'feast of the booth[s]' is the feast of Tabernacles, (Heb.) Sukkoth. '*īd as-serāg* 'feast of the lamp, of lights' is (Heb.) Hanukkah. Purim is either called by its Hebrew name (Esther 9:26), or translated into Arabic as a calque, *sihām*, sg. (Heb.) *pūr/sahm*, lit. 'arrow', 'lot' (236b). '*īd al-qarāqir* 'feast of the cups' is so called because Jews drink excessively on this occasion, falling at the end of the rainy season in the Yemen. '*īd al-qarāqir* was coined for the Qabilīs (tribesmen), referring to the Hebrew citation *wā-qarqar kol bōney šēt* 'and destroy all the Children of Sheth' (Num 24:17), as Purim is a token of submission of the enemies to the Jews (394b). '*īd al-faṭīr* is the feast of the unleavened bread, i.e., Passover, otherwise nicknamed '*īd al-māyda* 'feast of the table (of the night of Passover)' (475a), or '*īd al-miyyā* 'the one hundredth day' since the last season of sowing wheat and barley (348b). Incidentally, the evening (not the eve!) of the first day of Passover, when after prayers in the

synagogue the Jewish community visits the residences of the chief rabbis in groups, in order to congratulate them and receive their blessing, that evening is called *laylat as-salām* 'the evening of congratulations' (457a).

Quite as the month of Sha'ban precedes Ramadan, the fasting month, and is pregnant with it, so is the Hebrew month of Iyyar pregnant with Sivan, the month of the reception of the Torah including the feast of (Heb.) *šovū'ot* 'Pentecost'. It follows that the Judeo-Yemeni religious poetry nicknames the revelation on Mt. Sinai (Heb.) *matton tōroh* 'giving of the Law', as good tidings hidden in the month of Iyyar and as a secret – *sirr šā'bānī* 'the hidden secret of Sha'bān' (257a). Pentecost is called *aš(s)ara*, or 'īd al-*aš(s)ara*, (Heb.) *ʿaššārat* '(Talmudical) Pentecost' (329b), cf. *al-ʿansāra*, or 'īd al-*ʿansāra* in Arabic '(Christian) Pentecost < Greek *pentecosté* 'fiftieth (day)'. It is also nicknamed 'īd al-*kamsīn*, because the sowing of dhurah takes place within fifty days starting with the first day of Passover, and ending precisely on Pentecost (348b), which is also nicknamed 'īd al-*kudayrah*, or *al-kudayrā*' (131a), 'feast of the greenery, verdure'.

In southern Yemen, Pentecost is nicknamed 'īd al-*uṣr* 'feast of doughnuts (327b), termed *zalābiyāh* by Jewish women of Ṣanʿā' (203b). In Aden, Pentecost is nicknamed 'īd an-*nārgīl* 'the feast of coconuts' on which occasion the Jews prepare and eat coconut jam (476b). In Ṣanʿā', *laylat al-grāyāh* 'the night throughout which reading takes place' is the first night of Pentecost, when sacred texts are read in groups in the synagogue (391a). Another appellation of this night is *laylat al-qadr* 'the night when the Gates of heaven are open' (as on every mid Jewish month, according to the Cabbalah), and the Jews stay awake throughout, praying and awaiting the Hour decreed by God to arrive. Thereupon, they express their wishes, which God fulfills, including the distribution of living provisions (457a), cf. the attestation that 'some say that the appellation of *laylat al-qadr* in sura 97 of the Qur'ān is the night wherein the means of subsistence are apportioned' (Lane, 1863-93:2494c). According to this sura, the Qur'ān was revealed in *laylat al-qadr* celebrated through the night between 26 and 27 of Ramadan. In Christianity on the other hand, *laylat al-qadr*, otherwise called *laylat al-ḡitās* 'the eve of baptism' is the night preceding January 6, the day on which the baptism of Christ is celebrated (457a).

In concluding, we refer to the following appellations: *yawm al-mahḍar*, or *yawm al-manṣīb*, calques of (Heb.) *yōm ham-mā'mod*, refer to the Day of the Event, to the revelation of the Torah on Mt. Sinai (97b and 487a). *yawm al-wa'd*, or simply *al-maw'ida*, is the Appointed Day, the end of days, the Day of Redemption, and the Days of the Messiah's advent (527a); *yawm al-qabūl* is the Day of Redemption, otherwise called *yawm al-muṣtarī* lit. 'the Day of the Buyer' – the Redeemer of the people of Israel, i.e., the Day of Redemption by the Messiah (539a). Finally, *yawm al-hisāb wa-d-daftar* lit. 'the Day of Reckoning and of [checking one's] "register" [by God] i.e., the Day of Judgement, doomsday (538b).

5 Intercommunal appellations

5.1 Jewish appellations for Muslims

Yemeni Jews nickname the Arabic language *loṣōn haḡrī* ‘the language of Hagar’, mother of Ishmael (Gen 16) (504a). Muslims are nicknamed *ahl al-‘amāyim* ‘the turban wearers’, or *ahl aṣ-ṣiyām* ‘the fasting in Ramadan’ (15b). An urban Muslim of San‘ā’ is a *muslim* vs. ‘*arabī* ‘a tribal and rural Muslim’ (321a), whereas a *musulmānī* is a Jewish orphan bound to be kidnapped for forced conversion to Islam according to Yemeni Zaidite law (230a). In Shar‘ab, southern Yemen, the Muslim or Gentile is nicknamed *radīm* pl. *rudmān*, ‘guarantor (on behalf of the Jews)’ (179b), and *ḡafsarī*, or *ḡanīb*, ‘Gentile’ (69b and 75a). A Yemeni Jew addresses a Yemeni Muslim with the vocative (*yā sīdī* ‘Sir!’ (237b). When in an official document a Jew states that the signing of it took place in the presence of one or more Muslim witnesses, his or their epithet(s) following his or their full name(s) is ‘*azzahu*, or ‘*azzahum allāh* ‘God keep him or them honoured, esteemed!’ (324b).

5.2 Muslim appellations for Jews

Urban Muslims nickname Jews *ahl as-sabt* ‘keepers of the Sabbath’, or *ahl aṣ-ṣalāh* ‘the Jewish congregation’ (15b), and in Muslim official documents – *mūsawiyyūn* ‘people related to Moses’ (474a). The Qabīlīs (tribesmen) nickname them *banī l-asbāt* [*l-aṣbāt*] ‘the descendants of the tribes (of Israel)’ (39b and 40a), or *banī ḥimyar*, sg. *ibn al-ḥimyarī* ‘the descendants of (the kings of) Ḥimyar’ (39b), or *yihūd kaybar* ‘the Jews of Khaybar’ (140b) relating to the Jewish tribe defeated by Muhammad in an Arabian oasis. By appearance, a Jew is nicknamed *abū zinnār* ‘wearing side-locks (curls)’ distinguishing him from a Muslim (1b). Jews and Christians are nicknamed *ahl al-kitāb* ‘the people of the Book, the Bible’, and locally – *ahl al-kutba* attested in Damār (15b).

6 Disgraceful appellations

6.1 Towards Jews in the Yemen

A derogatory nickname given to Yemeni Jews is *banī mīta* ‘sons of a carrion’ (40a). A Yemeni proverb relating to hypocrisy and insincerity attests the attitude to Jews: *fi l-waṣṣ yā sīdī w-fi l-ḡafē yā yihūdī* ‘in your presence [he says] “Sir!” and in your absence – “Jew!” (538a). When a Jew is mentioned by a party in a dialogue between Muslims, he may be detested as someone to be guarded against. This is expressed by the formula *ṣānak allah* ‘God guard you!’ by the interlocutor. If the word *yihūdī* ‘Jew’ is mentioned, one adds the formula *allah yi‘izzak* ‘may God keep you honoured, esteemed!’, which formula is invoked also when mentioning something distasteful (324b). *yahūdī*, it should be noted, is not a denotation, but a cacophonous connotation. Still worse, the form *ḡahūdī* is a denigration of *yahūdī* (76a). To the

Yemeni the term *yahawdī* is a simple epithet of abuse bandied about among Muslims without a thought as to its meaning. Thus *kalb wa- yahawdī* means 'fighting like cat and dog' (538a). A walking or riding Muslim of al-Ḥawtah would tell a walking Jew facing him *šmul yā kalb* 'pass to my left, you dog!' (267a). To state an incident, a 17th century Muslim farmer hailed the Judeo-Yemeni poet laureate Rabbi Shalom Shabazi, saying: *as-silāl 'alayk ayyhū l-kaybarī* 'hot ashes on you, O man [of the Jewish tribe] of Khaybar!' denying him the greeting hailing Muslims only – *'alalyka s-salām* 'peace on you!' (227b). In Muslim dialogues, the word *'ibriyy* 'Hebrew' stands for the common word *yahawdī* 'Jew' (315a).

In official documents signed by the Imam Yahyā, the king would address a Jewish *'āqil* elected by the notables of the community to represent Jewish interests in the Royal Court, and raise poll-tax for the Treasury (335a), as *al-kawāḡa* So-and-So, a title and form of address for non-Muslims since Turkish rule (139a), not *as-sayyid* So-and-So reserved for Muslims (237a).

sifrat at-tawrāt 'sheep's hide of the Torah' is a cacophony of *sifr* 'Book' by a certain Muslim denigrating the Torah (224a). When a Muslim is asked about something of which he knows nothing, he says *ḥaqq sa'īd al-yahūdī* 'it belongs to Sa'īd, the Jew', i.e., I don't know (222b), Sa'īd being a common name for a Jew.

In Gurāz, northern Yemen, whoever wishes to disparage Jewish belief, resorts to the saying *al-qāt yislim 'aleh sab'in yihūdī* 'the *qāt* (Catha edulis) is so good that seventy, i.e., many Jews would turn to Islam for it' (230a).

6.2 Disgraceful appellations towards Muslims in the Yemen

The degradation and suppression which the Jews suffered in Yemeni society under the authorities of the Zaidite Yemenis and the Sunni Turks, as well as under hostile inhabitants, made life for the Jews intolerable. They had no choice but to condemn their oppressors secretly and hesitatingly, to express their distress and cry for help in prayers and supplications, and in poetic themes of yearning to Zion and Messianic redemption. The sounds of Arabic names of persons they disgraced and hated inspired them with forming disgraceful appellations in Hebrew words, or in words of similar Hebrew roots from a traditional Hebrew stock, or in pseudo-Hebrew words inlaid in their Yemeni speech.

Following are exemplary appellations:

Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, is nicknamed *al-armanī* (!), cf. (Heb.) *rammāy* 'the deceiver, scoundrel' probably related to *al-armanī* the Syrian, an epithet of the uncle and father-in-law of Jacob the Patriarch (Gen 28:5), and of Jacob proper, matriarchally related (Deut 26:5), thus translated into Arabic by Sa'adia: 'the Aramean' (7a). A *šarīf* nicknamed (Heb.) *šorūf* 'burnt', is of the *sayyid* class (253a), a descendant of Muhammad by his daughter Fatimah, wife of Ali of the tribe of *banū hāšim*, honoured by all, except by the Qabilīs who hate him for his haughtiness (237a). The *imām* 'Yemeni king' nicknamed (Heb.) *mūm* defect, fault as a cacophony (474b) is

affiliated to the Zaidite sect nicknamed (Heb.) *zēdīm* 'wicked, insolent', or (Heb.) '*amolēg* 'Amalekites', i.e., wicked, cruel (210a). This sect ruled the Yemen over a thousand years, while the Ottoman Turks who ruled it twice in the meantime, and treated the Jews harshly were nicknamed *āsmōnī* hinting to the (Heb.) *āsmoh* 'guilt, sin' to mean '*uṭmānī* 'Ottoman' (9a). Gentile nations are generally nicknamed *āš-šimāl* 'the left side', based on the Aramaic phrase *šitārā di-šamālā* insinuating that they are of 'Evil Inclination' (267a). *al-ʿawwāleq*, a tribe which levied local taxes from the Jews of Ḥabbān, in addition to the poll-tax levied from them by the Central government were called '*amolēq* 'Amalekites', i.e., wicked, cruel (338a). *al-akdām* who were on the lowest scale of trades, yet ranked above the Jews (122a) were nicknamed by the Jews of al-Gades in southern Yemen *kano*, derived from 'Canaan', the slave people cursed in Gen 9:25 (437b).

A small village *al-balqā* [*al-balaqā*] bordering on the southern edge with the Jewish quarter of Ṣanʿā' named *qāʿ al-yahūd* in *bīr al-ʿazab*, a neighbourhood in the western precincts of Ṣanʿā' (18b), included an anti-Jewish population which compelled the Chief Rabbi of the community to construct a gate named *bāb al-balqā* [*b. al-balaqā*] in 1932 to the south of the Jewish quarter for the sake of security. The hostile population was nicknamed (Heb.) *bolog* for *balqā*' insinuating the Moabite king Balaq who hired Balaam (Num 22 ff.), (39a and 43a).

Ṣanʿāni Muslims and Jews deride speakers of the dialect of *al-yaman al-asfal* 'Lower Yemen'. *luḡluḡī*, pl. *laḡāliḡa* is the nickname of a Lower Yemeni such as a citizen of Ibb (450b). So is *ḡulḡulī*, pl. *ḡalāḡila*, a Jew of Sharʿab derided by a Jew of Ṣanʿā' for pronouncing his (Heb.) shibboleth [ḡ] instead of /q/ (358b). We may recall that the Jews of *al-yaman al-asfal* denigrated by the urban Jews were nicknamed *yhūd al-bawādī*, or *yihawd bilād* 'country Jews' (23b and 37b).

7 Yemeni cant

Yemeni cant called *luḡa ištīlāhiyya* 'secret language' (450b), or 'conventional language' is conducted by vague codes. It is a language of Jewish labourers skilled in building, silver-smiths, and utensil repairers – a Yemeni language including some traditional Hebrew words. It is generally defined as *luḡat al-ašādiyya* (sg. *ušta*) 'secret, or private language of master-craftsmen' (9b), as *luḡat al-ammārīn* 'secret, or private language of builders' (341a), or as *luḡat al-marwāḡisa* (sg. *murwāḡis*) 'secret, or private language of stone-cutters, stone-dressers' (529b). The Qabilīs would address a recognized Jew or refer to him as *ušta*. An anonymous Jew would be called *ušta sālim* 'Mr. Sālim', Jews being members of the community of master craftsmen and silver-smiths (9a).

The contents of Ms. Heb 24° 6395 in our sources, a ledger of an Adeni Jewish merchant, written in Judeo-Yemeni in the years 1945-48 CE (xix) were amazing by their data encoded in a secret bookkeeping technique, transacting with his brother

who had emigrated to Tel-Aviv. In order to keep his ledger in secrecy, to be encoded by his brother, he used an idiosyncratic business argot of the following complex: (a) two intertwined lexicons, Arabic and Hebrew; (b) two scripts, Arabic and Hebrew; (c) acronyms of words and dates; (d) four mixed calendars: Hebrew, Hegira, Common Era (A.D.), and Macedonian relating to Alexander the Great, an era otherwise called the Era of Contracts, (Heb.) *šatōrōt*, beginning in 311 BCE.; (e) symbols of arithmetical digits and fractions in Hebrew characters, Arabic or Indian ciphers, and local symbols of fractions (ix and x). Dates were also marked by the name of the specific portion of the Torah read in the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding the day of this or that transaction.

Under the category of Jewish cants we find verbal tricks in Judeo-Arabic speech by which Jews slipped away from Muslims, cheated and thwarted them hiding their intentions. They would resort to metaphor, to inlaid ordinary Hebrew words, to fully or partly distorted words in a different structure, to substitutes of Hebrew consonants inlaid in an Arabic text, moreover to euphemisms, and to Hebrew synonyms of words similar in sound to their Arabic counterparts for fear of revealing their cunning intentions.

Following are some exemplary instances:

a) Metaphor: When a quarrel ends in blows between a Muslim and a Jew, the friends of the latter who are witnessing encourage him, saying *idkil wast at-tōw* 'find shelter in the (Heb.) *t!*' – acronym of the (Heb.) *tamīm* 'perfect' adduced in Deut 18:13 "Thou shalt be *perfect* with the Lord thy God", i.e., fear not your enemy! (145b).

b) Inlaying of a Hebrew word: In the previous context of urging a fellow Jew in a row, one may also say: *awwet yā 'ibrī u-šwōh* 'beat your adversary, you Jew, and cry loud!'. The Hebrew verb *'iwwet* means 'to distort', i.e., to beat (344b). When the Muslim overpowers the Jew, the latter is encouraged by the cry *wal-barīhāh* 'run away!'. (Heb.) *barīhāh* 'running away' (25b). A cry urging a fellow Jew to find shelter from an enemy, or urging to completely deny an affair in a controversial issue with a non-Jew, or to keep a secret as if one's fellow Jew has not seen anything is *al-harīm* '[flee] to the mountains!' a corruption of (Heb.) *al-hahorīm* 'upon the mountains' (Ezech 18:6) (508a).

c) Distorting of a Hebrew word: When warning a Jew to escape from an approaching enemy or authority intending to put him in jail, or when quarrelling with a non-Jew, one cries *dahhī* 'run for your life!'. The intransitive Hebrew verb *dohoh* means 'to slip, escape, go away' (145a), cf. Sa'adia's Arabic translation: VII *indahā* 'to be driven' in Deut 30:4 and Ps 36:62, and of *mundahī* 'driven' (Deut 30:4). When hushing a Jew, one says: *inšam* (imperative only) 'hush!' being either a corruption of (Heb.) *ēn šom* 'there isn't' (486b), or of Arabic *insam* 'recover your breath!' (484a), cf. (Heb.) *našom. hanū'* 'mediation charges received in intercommunal transactions' is a corruption of (Heb.) *hano'oh* 'pleasure, enjoyment', used metaphorically (513a).

d) Euphemism: *bint (hagg) al-godaš* lit. 'girl of holiness', i.e., prostitute, public girl, (Heb.) *qadešoh* (40a). (Heb.) *hokom* 'wise, sage' stands for *h.k.m.*, acronym of the Arabic phrase *himār kabīr mulaġġam* 'big, bridled donkey' (102b). By crying out *yā hamīm ubūk* 'O "intimate one" of your father!' one hides the intended curse *yā-harīm* = *ya(a)h(arīm ubūk* 'damn your father!' (91a).

e) Usage of a synonym of a Hebrew word which might reveal one's intention: Since *qirš*, pl. *qurūš*, 'Maria Theresa thaler', or 'riyāl' (392b) sounds like (Heb.) *qaraš* 'plank, board', Jews would resort to its synonym (Heb.) *daf* as a cant for *qirš* (152a), which like its Aramaic counterpart *dappa* has an alloeme - 'page' of a book etc.

To sum up, the intricate life of Yemeni Jews as keepers of the glowing ember of Judaism in a remote and hostile diaspora, a life that was reflected by their devotion to religious values and by preserving themselves from the Zaidite rule, placed them in a situation wherein they were compelled to use appellations expressive of their innermost feelings and their everyday life within their community on one hand, and on the other, to secretly express the texture of their psycho-social relations with, and their definition of, the Muslim majority, which on its part vented its supremacy and arrogance in various appellations disgracing the Jewish community.

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