

Preface



The suggestion to write this book came to me from Leon Nemoy, whose *Karaite Anthology* (New Haven, 1952) has been a major scholarly achievement and a source of inspiration ever since it was published. Judeo-Persian (JP) studies, although better explored at this point than Karaism was when Dr. Nemoy published his book, are largely ignored by scholars of both Jewish and Iranian studies, and they are virtually unknown to the public. Significant publications touching on various aspects of Jewish life in Iran as reflected in JP texts have appeared sporadically in Hebrew and in a number of European languages since the nineteenth century, but knowledge of their contents remains the specialized domain of a small group of scholars. Yet there exists a large corpus of untapped JP manuscripts that, like the Judeo-Arabic texts of the Cairo Genizah, have the potential to shed considerable light on the ancient and vibrant Jewish communities of Iran—albeit mostly in their late medieval, early modern phase—since most of the surviving manuscripts date from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries.

Judeo-Persian texts have the potential to enrich the fields of both Jewish and Iranian studies. They reward scholars of Jewish studies with variegated information about yet another Jewish diaspora community in a Mus-

lim milieu. This milieu, by virtue of its being Shi'i from the beginning of the sixteenth century, adds a different dimension to our knowledge of Jewish survival in Muslim lands under conditions that were often less congenial than those prevailing in the Sunni world. Scholars of Persian linguistics, history, and literature can also find a great deal of useful information in JP texts. Because of the antiquity of the Iranian-Jewish community, JP texts are crucial to the understanding of the development of New Persian and its various dialects. Those JP texts which preserve historical (mostly Jewish, largely communal) accounts are also a valuable source of historical information, presenting a minority view of events that are barely alluded to or completely ignored by royal chronicles, the most important sources of Iranian history. In addition, by preserving many Persian classical texts (mostly poetry) in the Hebrew script, JP manuscripts constitute a potential source for refining critical editions of these texts. Finally, the original literary contributions of Jewish-Iranian authors expand the canons of both Jewish and Persian literatures. The strong reliance on and interaction with Persian literature of JP literature turns it into yet another branch of the prodigious, luxuriant Persianate literature, which flourished far beyond the borders of present-day Iran.

Stimulated by Dr. Nemoy's challenge, I undertook the task of compiling the present anthology of JP literature. It consists of annotated English translations of selections from some of the most important JP texts, preceded by brief introductions.

From the beginning I was aware of the numerous difficulties surrounding such a project. Two practical obstacles were the location of JP manuscripts and the lack of critically edited texts from which to make reliable translations.

There are several substantial collections of JP manuscripts worldwide, specifically, the collections of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS), New York; the Klau Library, Hebrew Union College (HUC), Cincinnati; the Ben Zvi Institute (BZI) and the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL), both in Jerusalem; the Library of the Oriental Institute (Institut Vostokvednya; IV) and the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library (SS), both in Saint Petersburg; the British Library (BL), London. The majority of these manuscripts are not catalogued. Three notable exceptions are Amnon Netzer's catalogue of the JP manuscripts of the Ben-Zvi Institute, Ezra Spicandler's short descriptive list of the JP manuscripts of the Klau Li-

brary (see the bibliography), and Efraim Wust's catalogue in progress of the manuscripts housed at the Jewish National and University Library. I wish to thank all these libraries and their librarians, especially Robert Attal and Yosef Goel (BZI), Meir Rabinowitz (JTS), Efraim Wust (JNUL), and Nadezhda Ivanovna Nosova (IV), for their help and courtesy in providing me with access to the JP manuscripts in their collections. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Oleg F. Akimushkin (IV), Saint Petersburg, for facilitating my trip to Russia and my visits to the libraries of Saint Petersburg. Special thanks are also due to Robert D. McChesney for drawing my attention to ms. 610 of Fond Vostochnykh Rukopise, Akademiia Nauk, Dushanbe, Tadjhikistan.

There are a significant number of privately owned JP manuscripts in Iran, Israel, the United States, and elsewhere that could not be considered for this book. I had access only to the collection of Efraim Dardashti (Merion, Pa.), which I gratefully acknowledge.

The bulk of JP manuscripts are literary in nature, reflecting the attraction for Iranian Jews of belles lettres, especially Persian poetry, rather than subjects of a halakic (legal), historical, mystical, or philosophical nature. (A separate study would be needed to establish to what extent these aspects of Iranian Jewry's legacy are represented by Hebrew texts produced in Iran.) Reflecting this inclination, the present anthology includes more poetry than prose. Naturally, the choice of texts and of the passages translated from longer works reflect my own taste. In general, I chose to translate texts that indicate the deep acculturation of Iranian Jews, as well as texts whose literary merit remained perceivable even after translation into English. I should point out, however, that these selections, while striving to be representative of JP literature as a whole, are not comprehensive.

Few JP texts have been translated into Western languages, and fewer still have been translated on the basis of critically edited texts. In compiling this anthology, the large number of manuscripts of many of the same texts precluded an exhaustive investigation of all available versions. In order to prepare sound translations for this volume, I edited, collated, or conflated several JP manuscripts for each selection, generally using at least two, and often more, texts. It is my hope that this anthology will spur the study of JP literature, especially the preparation of critical editions.

In Queen Esther's Garden has an important and inspiring precursor, Amnon Netzer's Persian anthology of JP literature, *Muntakhab-i 'ash'ār-i fārisī*

az āwār-i yabudīyān-i Irān (An anthology of Persian poetry of the Jews of Iran; Tehran, 1973). The aim of Netzer's volume was to introduce JP literature to Iranian audiences through the transcription of selected JP texts into the Persian alphabet. Although the present work attempts to do the same for an English-speaking audience, my selections, (partial) editions, and annotations differ from Netzer's more general approach.

I wish to thank the foundations that have partially funded my travels to see the various collections of JP manuscripts: the American Philosophical Society, the Littauer Foundation, and the International Research and Exchanges Board. A two-year translation grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (1992–94) allowed me to concentrate on this project, and a Skirball Fellowship (1993) from the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Yarnton Manor, Yarnton, Oxford, provided beautiful and peaceful surroundings for the most intensive stage of translation.

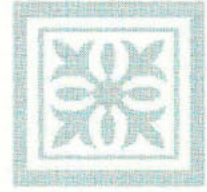
I would like to thank the following authors for contributing to this volume, either by providing reworked translations of earlier texts or by allowing me to do so. At the same time, I gratefully acknowledge the publications in which these texts first appeared and thank their editors for permission to reprint: Jes P. Asmussen, "Judeo-Persica II: The Jewish-Persian Law Report from Ahwāz," *Acta Orientalia* 29 (1965): 49–60; D. N. MacKenzie, "An Early Jewish-Persian Argument," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31 (1968): 249–269; Vera B. Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism: A Study of Bābāī Ibn Lutf's Chronicle [1617–1662]* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1986); Moreen, *Iranian Jewry During the Afghan Invasion: The Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān of Bābāī b. Farbād [1721–1731]* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990); Amnon Netzer, *Sifrut farsi-yehudit. 2. Tafsiṣ-i miḏrash 'aliyat Moshe le-marom* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1990); Bo Utas, "The Jewish-Persian Fragment from Dandān-Uiliq," *Orientalia Suecana* 17 (1969): 123–136; David Yeroushalmi, *The Judeo-Persian Poet 'Emrānī and His Book of Treasure* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

In addition to the contributions of the individuals named above, many colleagues and friends have helped with the realization of this book. I would especially like to thank Tova Beeri, William Brinner, Efraim Dardashti, Abraham David, William C. Jordan, Daniel J. Lasker, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (z'l), Bernard Lewis, Robert D. McChesney, Igor Naftul'eff, Ezra Spicehandler, Norman Stillman, Sarah Stroumsa, Ray Scheindlin, Wheeler M. Thackston, and Isadore Twersky (z's'l). I am also indebted to the unfailing

help and courtesy of Gilad Gevaryahu. I would like to thank the librarians of the Annenberg Research Institute (now the Center of Judaic Studies of the University of Pennsylvania), especially Penina Bar-Kana, James Weinberger (Princeton University), and Heather Whipple (Swarthmore College), for facilitating access to many of the works cited. I thank Sid Z. Leiman, Ivan G. Marcus, and the editors of the Yale Judaica Series, and especially Susan Laity of Yale University Press, for their help in preparing this book for publication. Above all, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Dick Davis for his perceptive observations and corrections of my translations and to Grace Goldin (z'l), for her patient and generous aid in casting many texts into verse (she is in no way responsible for my failings); to my sorrow she is no longer with us to see their publication. I would also like to thank Judah Goldin (z'l) for helpful suggestions on questions of midrash. Last, yet always first, I thank my husband, Robert, and our sons, Gabriel and Raphael, for their love and patience during the long period of this book's gestation.

I am not indulging in Persian hyperbole when I say that hardly a sentence in this book was written without a keen sense of the loss caused by the untimely death of my beloved teacher and guide in Persian studies Martin B. Dickson, who encouraged this project. With trepidation, remembering his high critical standards, and the wish that I could have had the pleasure of continuing to discuss the book with him, I dedicate this work to his blessed memory.

A Note on the Text and the Transliterations



All Hebrew words and foreign words at first usage are italicized in every selection. All biblical quotations are from *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985).

Names of well-known Iranian towns, regions, and well-known terms, such as “Sunni,” “Shi’i,” “Sufi,” “mullah,” “sultan,” “hajj,” etc., retain the spelling in common usage. All qur’anic quotations are from *The Glorious Qur’an*, trans. Mohammad M. Pickthall (New York: Mostazafan Foundation, 1984).

The texts in this book—particularly the epics—were often divided into chapters with descriptive titles. Those titles tend to be long, and for the reader’s convenience, I have sometimes added short titles of my own. All the original titles are present; however, chapter titles in roman are mine.

The Hebrew and Persian transliterations have been made according to the following tables:

Table of Transliteration

Hebrew

Persian

Vowels		Consonants		Vowels		Consonants	
a	-	ʾ	א	a	ا	ʾ	ء
a	ַ	b	ב	a	اِ	b	ب
e	ֶ	g	ג	u	و	p	پ
i	ִ	d	ד	i	ي	t	ت
o	וּ	h	ה	a	أ	s	ث
u	וּ	w	ו	o	و	j	ج
u	ׁ	z	ז	e	هـ	ch	چ
e	ֵ	ḥ	ח	a,e	هـ	ḥ	ح
		ṭ	ט	aw, ow	او	kh	خ
		y	י	ay, ey	اي	d	د
		k	כ			z	ذ
		l	ל			z	ز
		m	מ			r	ر
		n	נ			zh	ژ
		s	ס			s	س
		ʿ	ע			sh	ش
		p	פ			ṣ	ص
		f	פ			ẓ	ض
		ṣ	צ			ṭ	ط
		q	ק			ẓ	ظ
		r	ר			ʿ	ع
		sh	שׁ			gh	غ
		s	שׂ			f	ف
		t	ת			q	ق

Table of Transliteration (*continued*)

Hebrew

Persian

Vowels

Consonants

Vowels

Consonants

k ک

g گ

l ل

m م

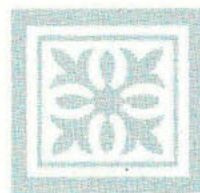
n ن

u/v و

h ه

y ی

Abbreviations



<i>AO</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia</i>
BL	The British Library, London
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BZI	The Library of the Ben Zvi Institute, Jerusalem
D	Collection of Efraim Dardashti, Merion, Pa.
<i>EI</i> (2)	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> (new ed.), 1960–
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>
FVR	Fond Vostochnykh Rukopise, Dushanbe (Tadzhikistan)
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUC	The Klau Library of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IOS</i>	<i>Israel Oriental Studies</i>
IV	Institut Vostokvedenya, Saint Petersburg

<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JE</i>	<i>The Jewish Encyclopedia</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNUL</i>	The Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem
<i>JQR</i>	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Jewish Social Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
<i>SBB</i>	<i>Studies in Bibliography and Booklore</i>
<i>SS</i>	The Saltykov-Shchedrin Library, Saint Petersburg
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZHB</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

Introduction



Judeo-Persian literature is one of the most neglected areas of both Jewish and Iranian studies. Although JP texts, that is, New Persian writings in the Hebrew alphabet, date as far back as the second half of the eighth century CE,¹ and although they constitute the first recorded texts in New Persian,² they are still largely unexplored. There are two reasons for this neglect. First, most JP texts are available only in manuscript form, and these manuscripts are located in largely uncatalogued library collections.³ Second, the study of JP manuscripts requires a thorough knowledge of several languages (Persian, Hebrew, and Arabic) as well as of Judaism and Islam, their respective religious and secular literatures.

Since the late nineteenth century, strides have been made in the study of JP texts.⁴ Nevertheless, much remains to be done, especially in the realm of editing the texts, the first and most important step toward a comprehensive study. Until more scholarly editions have been prepared, our studies must necessarily be preliminary in nature.

Judeo-Persian texts include a large variety of genres: Bible translations, religious and secular poetry, chronicles, rabbinical works, grammatical treatises, translations of medieval Hebrew poetry, transcriptions of classical

Persian poetry, original epics. Many of these enrich both Jewish and Persian literatures. This wealth, as far as Persian literature is concerned, is best exemplified by the last two categories, that is, classical Persian poetry and original JP epics. Judeo-Persian texts could also further refine our knowledge of received texts and editions of classical Persian poetry as well as expand the parameters of Persian, especially poetic, literature.

In many ways JP literature is comparable to other bodies of Persian literature that flourished in the Persianate⁵ world and outside the boundaries of Iran proper (for example, at the Ottoman and the Mughal courts) in that it adopts and adapts Persian *topoi* and rhetorical modes of expression to traditional Jewish themes. It is the aim of this anthology to acquaint English-speaking readers with some of the most important JP texts, which are part of the literary heritage of Iranian Jews as well as of Muslims.

Most JP texts were, indeed, produced within the current boundaries of Iran proper, especially in its central province, Fars. To the extent that we are able to determine their provenance, the bulk of JP manuscripts appear to come from the major ancient centers of Jewish population—Isfahan, Kashan, Hamadan, Kirman, Yazd. However, the number of Jewish communities in the Persianate world between the eighth and the nineteenth centuries, the time frame of this anthology, far exceeded the number of communities from which identifiable JP texts have survived. Many of these other communities were smaller; although we lack demographic information, we can postulate that they may not have had significant numbers of learned men. Jewish communities were scattered all over the map of the Persianate world, from the southernmost tip of the Persian Gulf as far north as the shores of the Caspian Sea, as far northwest as present-day Azerbaijan, and as far east as not only Bukhārā (the second-most important source of JP manuscripts after Fars) but well beyond, into the Caucasus Mountains, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and even China.⁶ In fact, our earliest sources in JP are epigraphic, originating from locations along the Silk Road and thus suggesting that, as elsewhere in the diaspora, commerce played an important role in the spread of Persian-speaking Jewish communities.⁷

It has often been stated, yet it bears repeating, that the Jews of Iran constitute one of the oldest—if not the oldest—continuous Jewish diasporas in the world, as well as one of the most homogenous. However, their history is not fully documented, and there are many gaps in our knowledge. Here I shall attempt to sketch the broad outlines of this history, concentrat-

ing on the Islamic phase, the period which fostered the development of JP literature.

The origins of the Iranian-Jewish diaspora may well go back to 722 BCE, when the Assyrians deported a substantial number of Jews—the so-called Ten Tribes—belonging to the northern kingdom of Israel, and resettled them throughout their vast empire. According to Jewish tradition, these Jews eventually intermingled with local populations (2 Kings 17:27ff.) and adopted their forms of worship, so that, as far as historical evidence is concerned and despite numerous legendary claims to the contrary, they became lost to Jewish history.

It is more plausible to trace the origins of the Jewish diaspora in the Persianate world to 586 BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and sent many Judeans into exile in Babylonia.⁸ Because the Babylonian Empire at its height included parts of western Iran, the early history of Iranian Jewry is linked with that of the Jewish communities of Babylonia.

It was an Iranian ruler who offered all the exiles in Babylonia, including the Jews, the opportunity to return to their homeland. In 538 Cyrus the Great, remembered for this in Jewish sources as “the Lord’s anointed” (Isa. 45:1–4; 44; 25–28), issued his famous edict permitting the return that previous rulers had forbidden. As the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah testify, only a fraction of the exiles acted on this good news by returning to the Land of Israel. Although Cyrus gave the order to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:2–3), the actual rebuilding of the sanctuary occurred later, during the reign of Darius I.⁹

Jewish life in Babylonia flourished for a considerable length of time. This is not the place to review the well-known and extraordinary religious and literary accomplishments of Babylonian Jews, which culminated in the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud. Suffice it to say that Iranian Jews also contributed to those efforts.¹⁰ Those achievements were made possible by the generally cordial relations between the Jews and their largely Zoroastrian neighbors.¹¹ We begin to hear about outright persecutions of Jews toward the end of the fourth century CE; they continued, intermittently, until the Muslim conquest of Iran.¹² Most of the time the persecutions resulted from political friction, such as when Jews sided with unsuccessful political factions.¹³ Even though Zoroastrians generally did not favor proselytizing and did not use it as an excuse to oppress others, there were several instances of persecution which were motivated by excessive Zoroastrian

religious zeal. One of the most devastating waves of anti-Jewish persecutions occurred toward the end of the third century CE and was led by Kartir, an eccentric Zoroastrian priest, who considered such actions part of a Zoroastrian's religious obligation.¹⁴ More systematic religious persecutions took place in the fifth century, during the reigns of Yazdagerd II and his son Peroz.¹⁵ Thus animosity against Jews and Judaism in pre-Islamic Iran is associated primarily with Sasanian, especially late Sasanian rule. Zoroastrian religious objections against the Jewish faith can be found in surviving polemical texts, which, although they come from the ninth and tenth centuries, may reflect earlier attitudes.¹⁶

The Muslim conquest of the heartland of the Sasanian Empire was not sudden, swift, or easy. It was actually a protracted undertaking that lasted from 637 to 644 CE, with distant regions added more securely into the Muslim empire as late as the eighth century.¹⁷ The conversion of the local population to Islam was also gradual,¹⁸ and we have no way of knowing how many Iranian Jews were involved at this early stage. There is little doubt, however, that the lot of the Jews improved as a result of the conquest, especially when contrasted with the hardships they had endured under late Sasanian rule. During the first three centuries of Islam, from the eighth to the tenth centuries, the great Babylonian academies of Sura and Pumbedita continued to prosper in tandem with the flourishing Islamic empire.¹⁹ Jewish communities, like other non-Muslim groups, remained autonomous within the Muslim empire and were able to maintain to some degree (albeit with decreasing authority and jurisdiction) a form of centralized secular and religious leadership through the institutions of the exilarchate and gaonate, respectively, the former until the tenth century, the latter until the eleventh.²⁰

In the eighth century, a time of great political ferment in the Islamic Empire, eastern Iran gave birth to several Jewish heterodox movements that appear to have been linked to similar trends in the Muslim environment.²¹ They were led by individuals with pseudo-Messianic claims, such as Ḥīwī of Balkh and Abū 'Isā of Isfahan. The latter's movement, the 'Isāwiyya, became a significant schismatic movement, together with Karaism. The 'Isāwiyya did not leave a lasting imprint on Judaism, and it is remembered chiefly from the accounts of Muslim heresiographers.²² But Karaism, several of whose chief spokesmen came from Iran, is still with us today. It received most of its early support from the Jews of Iran and "Babylonia" (Iraq), where some of the notable scholars of the movement were born.²³ It

has been suggested, recently and intriguingly, that both movements “were formed in the same crucible that bore Shi‘ism.”²⁴ There has come to light a significant trove of Karaite texts in JP among the documents of the Cairo Genizah: deeds, personal letters, fragments of Hebrew grammar, and biblical commentaries (especially on the Book of Daniel).²⁵ It would appear that the Karaite community of Iran used JP extensively and that some of these texts fill a perceived gap in the body of JP literature between the ninth and fourteenth centuries. As Karaism itself began to decline in Iran after the ninth century, JP texts with Karaite content fell into desuetude.²⁶

There is very little solid historical information about the Jews dwelling on the Iranian plateau and northeastward until the arrival of the Mongols in the thirteenth century. The earliest JP writings attest to the fact that Iranian Jews had the freedom to travel throughout the Islamicate world and to engage in commerce.²⁷ Most of the evidence for this comes from the Cairo Genizah, which appears to suggest a continuous move westward of those who had the means to do so. Iranian Jews came to the Mediterranean areas as colonizers, emigrants, and refugees from the turbulent political upheavals of ‘Umayyad, and later ‘Abbasid, policies.²⁸ Prominent in the Genizah documents are records of the commercial activities of the Karaite Tustarī family in the eleventh century, who, as their surname indicates, hailed from Tustar, a region in southwestern Iran famous as a center of the textile industry.²⁹ Trade in silk produced in Ṭabaristān, on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, also involved Jewish merchants who had ties with the region.³⁰ According to Donald D. Leslie, the penetration of Judaism as far as China was achieved primarily through the commercial activities of Jews from the Muslim world, many of whom came from Iranian provinces.³¹

The success of such far-flung mercantile activities rested, ultimately, on the fact that the Jews of the Islamicate world did not labor under legal restrictions as onerous as those that oppressed their fellow Jews in Christendom.³² In Muslim law Jews, along with Christians and Zoroastrians, were classified as *ahl aḏh-ḏhimma* (people of protection), or *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the Book [Scripture]). Laws discriminating against non-Muslims did exist; they are enshrined in the so-called Pact of ‘Umar. Attributed to the second caliph ‘Umar (r. 634–644), the pact, many of whose discriminatory laws derive from earlier Byzantine law, probably originates from the tenth or eleventh century.³³ Although Jews were subjected to the *jizya* (Arabic for “poll-tax”) in return for *ḏhimma* (Arabic for “protection”) and had to defer

to the dominant faith in many other ways, their religious and mercantile activities were not severely restricted. Perhaps the greatest limitation they suffered was the prohibition to hold high office, but, as is well known, on rare occasions even this was disregarded in various parts of the Islamic Empire.³⁴ Except for a brief period under the Mongols (1248–1291), Jews in Iran proper did not occupy important positions at court. The astonishing career of Saʿd ad-Dawla, the Jewish grand vizier of the Mongol Il-khānid ruler Arghūn (d. 1291), is all the more striking because we know so little about the Jewish community from which he emerged. He rose to his high rank primarily because Arghūn had not yet converted to Islam and therefore had not yet learned to discriminate according to its teachings; in Mongol eyes all men belonged “to one and the same stock.”³⁵ The fact that both ruler and grand vizier were eventually murdered and that the Jews of Baghdad were subsequently attacked indicates that his was an exceptional case in Persian, indeed in Islamic, history. Soon afterward, the Mongol ruler Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) embraced Islam, and Jews could no longer aspire to such high office. Ghazan’s grand vizier was a Jewish apostate, the famous historian, physician, and statesman Rashīd ud-Dīn Faḡlullāh (d. 1318), who also met a violent death, partly because of his never-forgotten Jewish origins.³⁶

It would appear that after the Il-khānid (1256–1336) and Tīmūrid (1370–1405) dynasties, until the beginning of the twentieth century, Iranian Jewry was almost always close to the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, only a step above the much-maligned Zoroastrians and, in the nineteenth century, the Bahaʿis. As far as we can tell, Iranian Jews were primarily artisans, craftsmen, small-scale merchants, wine makers and wine sellers, brokers of medicinal drugs, and the like. Commerce was largely in Muslim hands, while “banking” (primarily money changing) was the occupation of a small number of Indians.³⁷ By the beginning of the seventeenth century most external trade, including the lucrative silk trade—which was a royal monopoly—passed into the hands of Armenian Christians,³⁸ and in some towns, such as Kashan, Jews were relegated to dyeing and weaving carpets using silk threads. This long period in the history of Iranian Jews remains obscure to a large extent because Iranian chronicles, the most important source of historical information, concern themselves with little besides the intrigues, feasts, and fights of royal courts. It is primarily through a

few JP texts and the accounts of a number of European travelers and missionaries that we can fill in at least some of the lacunae.

Whereas under the reign of the Il-khānid rulers a Jew still felt free to write panegyrics in praise of a ruling monarch (perhaps even expected to be rewarded),³⁹ life must have become increasingly difficult for the entire settled population of Iran under the Tīmūrīds and later under the rival Turkoman rule of the Qarā-qoyūnlū (Turkish for “those of the Black Sheep”; 1378–1468), and the Āq-qoyūnlū (Turkish for “those of the White Sheep”; 1435–1502), names derived from the groups’ tribal insignia.⁴⁰

A measure of political stability was introduced with the advent of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1731), even as this dynasty brought about a major religious upheaval. Its first monarch, Shah Ismā‘īl I (r. 1501–1524), began the aggressive conversion to the Shi‘i form of Islam of Iran’s predominantly Sunni population. By the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I (1588–1629) there were few pockets of Sunnis left in the realm. Preoccupied with Sunnis, with various heretical Muslim groups, and with the prevalent mystical (Sufi) allegiance of their elite corps, early Safavid rulers seem to have paid much less attention to *dhimmī* minorities, such as the (Armenian) Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. But once the “Shi‘itization” of the kingdom was virtually complete, several shahs, beginning with ‘Abbās I, turned their attention to these groups. The Jews of Iran found themselves more isolated than in previous centuries—even from the rest of the Jews living in Muslim lands, not to mention from Jews living beyond those borders. Outbursts of anti-Jewish persecution occurred already during the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I, known as “the Great,” because of his numerous accomplishments in practically every facet of Iranian life.⁴¹ They culminated in the reign of Shah ‘Abbās II (1642–1666), when large segments of Iranian Jews, forced to convert to Islam between 1656 and 1661, continued to practice their Jewish faith secretly. Bābāī b. Luṭf, the first Iranian Jewish chronicler to come to our attention, described the events that affected Iranian Jewry in the first half of the seventeenth century in *Kitāb-i Anusī* (The book of a forced convert). His descriptions contribute a new chapter to the history of *anusut* (Hebrew for “forced conversion”) especially familiar to us from the experiences of the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁴²

Though relatively short-lived, these persecutions and the failure of the

Sabbatean movement, which had affected many Jewish communities in Iran, had a general detrimental effect on the lives of Iranian Jews.⁴³ Thus, when the Safavid dynasty began to unravel soon thereafter, and the kingdom fell temporarily to the Afghans (1726–1736), “spontaneous” conversions to Islam occurred that were prompted by an overwhelming sense of fear and insecurity. Bābāi b. Farhād, Bābāi b. Luṭf’s grandson, recorded these events in his chronicle *Kitāb-i Sar guzasht-i Kāshān dar bāb-i ‘ibrī va goyūmī-yi sānī* (The book of events in Kashan concerning the Jews: Their second conversion), written sometime between 1730 and 1736.⁴⁴ The reasons for the persecutions vary, as can be seen from the texts translated below. However, it should be mentioned that even at their worst they seldom reached the level of persecutions that Jews experienced under Christendom.⁴⁵

With the growing power of Shi‘i clerics during the Zand (1750–1796) and especially the Qājār (1779–1924) dynasties, the position of minorities deteriorated still further.⁴⁶ Already during the late Safavid period prominent theologians like Muḥammad Bāqir b. Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlīsī (d. 1699) were closely involved with wielding political power and felt free to promulgate, and probably to implement—at least in localities close to Isfahan, the capital—a host of anti-Jewish laws, many of which were merely restatements of the Pact of ‘Umar. However, some of these laws, especially those based on the Twelver Shi‘i concept of *najasa* (Arabic for “ritual impurity”), went further by declaring contact with all non-Shi‘is polluting.⁴⁷ It was undoubtedly this worsening social and political climate that led, at the end of the eighteenth century, to the continuous harassment of Jews in Azerbaijan and a devastating riot against them in Tabriz.⁴⁸

The flow of information about Iranian Jewry increases as we get closer to the nineteenth century and contacts with Europe as well as visits by messengers from the Land of Israel intensify. Thus we know more about the last major outbreak of persecutions against the Jews of Iran, which occurred in Mashhad in 1839. Nādir Shah (r. 1736–1747), who favored rapprochement with Sunni Islam, had forcibly settled a number of Jewish families from Qazvin in Mashhad, an intensely Shi‘i city containing the tomb of the eighth Shi‘i imam. He may well have done so in order to dilute the Shi‘i character of Mashhad and thereby to plant a source of tension in the midst of the Shi‘i populace.⁴⁹ On the pretext that the Jews had insulted Husayn, the third imam of the Shi‘i tradition, the Muslim inhabitants of Mashhad attacked the Jews and killed about thirty individuals. In order to save itself,

the Jewish community of Mashhad converted en masse. This tragedy, which came to be referred to among the Jews of Mashhad as *Allabādā* (God's justice or God's gift),⁵⁰ left a lasting mark on the community. For almost a hundred years the Jews of Mashhad who could not flee (and many did flee to Afghanistan) lived as *anusim* (Hebrew, "forced converts"), publicly Muslims and privately Jews.⁵¹ By the end of the nineteenth century the Jews of Tehran were also harassed and forced to wear demeaning marks of identification.⁵²

It is in the nineteenth century, owing to persecutions at home and a growing Zionist awakening, that many Jews from the Persianate world, especially from Bukhārā, emigrated to Jerusalem and began to establish a thriving community that clung to its JP heritage. The Jews of Bukhārā, whose history and cultural accomplishments are so closely linked with those of their fellows in Iran, deserve special mention. Their closeness diminished but was not entirely severed when Iran became a Shi'i kingdom while Bukhārā remained under Sunni rule. A positive result of this separation may have been that Bukhārā's Jews were spared the waves of persecutions mentioned above. Yet the Jews of Bukhārā suffered their share of sporadic persecution. One such instance is described in *Khodāīdād*, an eighteenth-century poem based apparently on a historical occurrence.⁵³ As forced conversions increased in number in the nineteenth century so did the number of *anusim*.⁵⁴

Modernization, along with a strong attempt—enforced from above—to secularize, came to Iran with the advent of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925). This change brought to Iranian Jews and other minorities a fuller integration into the fabric of Iranian life. The development, together with the European influence that penetrated via the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (which began to be established in Iran at the beginning of the twentieth century),⁵⁵ put a virtual stop to the creation, dissemination, and study of JP texts by Iranian Jews in Iran, although they continued for a while longer among the Bukhārāns living in Israel.

Judeo-Persian texts are written in the Persian language but the Hebrew alphabet.⁵⁶ Interest in these texts first emerged in the West among linguists who noticed that the earliest written traces of New Persian (that is, the written language in use since about the ninth century) actually appeared in the Hebrew script.⁵⁷ They also noticed that these inscriptions and texts

preserved certain archaic linguistic features that were closer to Middle Persian (Pahlavī) than to later New Persian (Fārsī) in texts written in the Arabic script.⁵⁸

Judeo-Persian has some interesting peculiarities that are difficult to understand without the appropriate linguistic background; I shall therefore limit myself to a few generalizations.⁵⁹ The idiom of JP texts tends to be colloquial, reflecting spoken Persian through such features as looser grammatical structure, the dropping of endings (especially in verb forms), the transformation of certain vowel sounds, such as “a” and “u,” and the dropping of consonants, which last two practices tend to throw off the scansion in numerous poems. In addition, many texts, especially those written after the seventeenth century and those with a religious content, contain a substantial number of both Hebrew words and hybrid Persian-Hebrew (and vice-versa) words that are linked through the construct case. However, on the whole, JP texts testify to the fact that there never existed a single, unified, Persian dialect that belonged exclusively to Iranian Jews. In fact, a considerable number of Iranian-Jewish dialects existed because of the vastness of the Persianate world, but with the exception of the JP texts from Bukhārā, these did not leave appreciable traces on the corpus of literary JP writings that emerged between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁰ Since JP texts tend to reflect the spoken language, their writers were not bound by “the orthographic and stylistic canons” of classical Persian literature. Through the use of the Hebrew alphabet, these texts also reflect “a totally independent orthographic tradition.”⁶¹ A curious, perhaps unique, hybrid language that was not unlike Yiddish did exist in all Iranian-Jewish communities; it was called *Loterā’ī*. This word appears to be descriptive, indicating that the language was *lo-Torab[i]* (Heb. + Pers. suffix *i* of abstraction), that is, “non-Torahic,” because although it contained many Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) grammatical elements—such as the majority of verbs, nouns, and some prepositions—its morphological features (verbal endings, prefixes, suffix pronouns, and most particles) as well as its syntax were Iranian. *Loterā’ī* attests to the “antiquity of the Jewish settlements of Persia”; its use was intended to ensure private communication that would have been unintelligible to Muslims.⁶²

Once the Arabic alphabet became widely accepted in Iran, we must ask the question, *Why* did Iranian Jews retain the Hebrew alphabet? The texts translated in this anthology suggest that the best Iranian-Jewish writers

were familiar with the great Persian classics,⁶⁵ and in all likelihood with the Arabic-Persian script as well, at least to some degree. Although it may be valid to a certain extent to assume that Iranian Jews deliberately put a “self-imposed graphic barrier”⁶⁴ between themselves and their Muslim neighbors in order to ward off the Muslims’ religious influence, it appears more likely that Iranian Jews simply retained their ancestral alphabet. For, like the Jews of medieval Europe, Iranian Jews were more literate than their non-Jewish neighbors because of their attachment to and ritual need of reading the Torah. This gap may have been even wider in Iran, where before the advent of Islam, the majority of the non-Jewish population was illiterate. As in most of the ancient world, literacy in pre-Islamic Iran was confined chiefly to the upper classes, to priests, scribes, some nobles, and merchants.⁶⁵ Pahlavi, the system of writing in use just before Arabic was adopted, was difficult to learn and cumbersome to use as it employed Aramaic heterograms and masks for the spoken Persian language. Knowledge and use of it was the monopoly of priests and scribes, who had an interest in limiting literacy as much as possible. This monopoly accounts for the relative speed with which the Arabic script, easier both to learn and to write, was adopted in the Persianate world.

Iranian Jews, whose literacy probably predates their sojourn in Iran, may simply have opted to retain their ancestral script, which they found adequate for the Persian (as well as the Arabic) language, rather than to switch to the Arabic alphabet. As noted above, under the Arabs, Persian (essentially the dialect of the central Iranian region of Fars) spread as far as Central Asia and the river Indus, becoming the *lingua franca* of a vast realm. Other minorities, notably the Christians of Chinese Turkestan, also experimented with writing Persian in a different script, in their case, Syriac.⁶⁶ Thus, as with other Jewish languages, in the case of JP it may be more appropriate to speak, at least initially, of a *retention* of the Hebrew script rather than a deliberate rejection of the Arabic alphabet. It cannot be denied, however, that this choice ended by becoming an effective but far from impermeable, orthographic barrier, as our texts show, resulting in the isolation of JP literature from the larger corpus of Persianate literature to which it rightly belongs.

Judeo-Persian literature is the product of the confluence of two mighty literary and religious streams, the Jewish biblical and postbiblical heritage

and the Persian (Muslim) literary legacy.⁶⁷ The uniqueness of JP literature derives from the fact that it is a lovely amalgam in which the two streams, though recognizable, are strongly intertwined and interdependent.

The origins of JP literature may be attributed to the desire of Iranian Jews, as of the Jews in many other parts of the diaspora, to explicate, expound upon, and disseminate knowledge of the Torah. As was the purpose behind the creation of all Jewish languages, by translating biblical texts into the spoken Persian vernacular, Iranian-Jewish scholars, most of whose identities remain unknown, fostered both the study of Hebrew and at least some degree of literacy in the vernacular. Although very few grammatical texts⁶⁸ or dictionaries,⁶⁹ have survived, we must presuppose their existence at least to a certain extent.

Among the earliest JP texts that have come to light are fragments of commentaries on the Books of Ezekiel and Daniel.⁷⁰ An incomplete manuscript of the Pentateuch, copied in 1319 and probably composed earlier, shows the translator-commentator's thorough familiarity not only with the Hebrew text but with the Targums, Mishnah, and Talmud, as well.⁷¹ Partial or complete JP renditions, some with commentaries, of a host of other biblical books have also survived to our day.⁷² The Torah-centeredness of Iranian Jews, perhaps both cause and effect of Karaite leanings, is attested to by the small number of surviving halakic (legal) texts found among JP manuscripts, all of which tend to deal with practical matters, such as the laws regarding ritual slaughter and burial.⁷³

The "bible" of Persian literature is the *Shah-nāmah*, "The Book of Kings," a massive epic completed around 1000 CE. Its author, Firdowsī (d. 1010), drew upon a substantial corpus of earlier layers of mythical, historical, and pseudo-historical materials; the *Shah-nāmah* is a "mytho-poeticization of the Iranian past and identity."⁷⁴ All later Persian poets are indebted to Firdowsī, whose work they mined for their themes, whose epic style they both imitated and consciously deviated from in the form of the romantic epic. They, as well as writers of shorter lyrics and mystical poems, alluded to the *Shah-nāmah* repeatedly, confident that its popularity would ensure that audiences would comprehend their allusions.

If we set aside the JP translations of biblical books mentioned above, and the earliest texts, which we may call literate but not really literature (see chap. 1), we come upon the figure of Shāhīn, the "father" of JP literature (see chap. 2). Like Firdowsī before him, Shāhīn probably had precursors,

but their work has not survived. So we are presented with the apparent paradox that the first full-fledged poet of the JP literary tradition is also the best representative of that tradition. All later JP poets, like Firdowsī's successors, were deeply influenced by Shāhīn, and many generations of Iranian Jews lovingly preserved his memory and literary legacy.

Shāhīn shares with Firdowsī the transcendent goal of commemorating and glorifying his nation's origins, history, and ideals. For him as a Jew, the Torah, and especially the Pentateuch, was the source of his material, and he set himself the task of recasting large parts of it into a Persian epic mold. Shāhīn thereby made many of the Pentateuch's extraordinary narratives more accessible—and even more memorable—not only for his Iranian coreligionists but quite possibly for his Muslim neighbors as well.⁷⁵ Perhaps his wish was to demonstrate to everyone that the Jewish national heritage was no less glorious than that of ancient Iran.

Shāhīn did not versify the Pentateuch in its entirety and quite naturally (from a literary point of view) omitted its sizeable legal portions. Like the *Shah-nāmāh*, whose most interesting narratives revolve around the exploits of heroes, especially Rustam, the central figure of Shāhīn's biblical epic cycle is Moses.⁷⁶ Similarly, because cycles of events in the *Shah-nāmāh* are demarcated by various reigns, in Shāhīn's rendition of the Book of Esther (*Ardashīr-nāmāh*), the action revolves around the royal house of Ardashīr (Ahasueros). The story of the Book of Esther is but one cycle within the broader saga of this reign. The "Esther cycle" actually culminates in Shāhīn's *Ezra-nāmāh*, the short epic based on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah recounting the rebuilding of the Temple and the deaths of Mordekai, Esther, and Cyrus.

Shāhīn's narratives fall within the tradition of the "rewritten Bible,"⁷⁷ but they are more than that: they demonstrate a deliberate effort to cast the biblical narratives into the Persian epic mold;⁷⁸ whether, or to what extent, he was successful is subject to interpretation.

The influence of Firdowsī's tragic epic, the *Shah-nāmāh*, pervades Shāhīn's poetry. Undoubtedly he was also influenced by Niẓāmī's (d. 1209) romances and, to some extent, by the mystical epics of such Sufi poets as 'Aṭṭār (d. 1220) and Rūmī (d. 1273); the nature and extent of these influences remain to be investigated. Shāhīn used a certain amount of Muslim mystical (Sufi) language and imagery (not as much as his later imitators), and *Ardashīr-nāmāh* in particular has many features characteristic of

Nizāmī's romantic epics.⁷⁹ We have yet to find any evidence that the greatest Judeo-Persian poet knew or was aware of the lyrical poetry composed by Hāfiz (d. 1389), the greatest lyrical poet of Iran, who was Shāhīn's approximate contemporary and fellow Shirazian. However, unlike that of Hāfiz, Shāhīn's language, as befits a conscious imitator of Firdowsī, resembles the "pure," sparsely adorned "Khurasani" poetic language, which flourished between the tenth and twelfth centuries, rather than the more ornate poetic language, known as the "Iraqi" style, of his time.⁸⁰

At least four specific features contribute to the Iranian sensibility of Shāhīn's epics: descriptive passages of the natural and manmade environment; amplification of details beyond the biblical narrative; endowing biblical protagonists with characteristics typical of heroes and heroines in Persian epics; and inserting direct (or indirect) didactic comments on the fates of the heroes through their dialogues and speeches.⁸¹ Shāhīn's syncretic style derives from a reliance on exegetical and legendary sources, both Jewish midrashim and Muslim *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (Arabic for "stories of prophets"), which amplify his narratives so that they appeal to both audiences. His knowledge of qur'ānic stories and their Sufi dimensions, such as the narrative of Adam's "fall,"⁸² demonstrates the subtlety with which Shāhīn perused materials from both traditions. Unlike later Iranian Jewish poets, Shāhīn used few, if any, Hebrew words in his narratives, perhaps as part of his Firdowsian approach; Firdowsī had consciously shunned the use of Arabic words, which were increasingly popular in his environment.

If I have devoted a disproportionate amount of space both to introduce Shāhīn and to represent his poetry in this anthology, it is because he looms disproportionately on the horizon of JP literature. Later poets were not able to attain his rank, although many tried. His most successful imitator was probably 'Imrānī (1454–1536), a versatile and interesting poet in his own right. In obvious imitation of Shāhīn, 'Imrānī embarked on setting into Persian verse some of the biblical books that follow the Pentateuch, namely, Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel (incomplete in surviving manuscripts), and the Book of Ruth, the aggregate of which he called *Fatḥ-nāmab* (The book of conquest; see chap. 2, below). 'Imrānī adhered closely to the biblical narratives and appealed much less frequently to Jewish, not to mention Muslim, legendary sources. His narrative style is more heavy-handed than Shāhīn's because it is more formulaic and, at times, more artificially fanciful. The Sufi element is more pronounced in 'Imrānī's oeuvre as a whole. In

addition to his biblical epics, ‘Imrānī composed versified renditions of midrashic and apocryphal tales, such as *Ḥanukkah-nāmab* (The book of Hanukkah; chap. 3), and set to verse both the mishnaic tractate Abot (*Ganj-nāmab* (The book of treasure; chap. 5), and Maimonides’ “Thirteen Principles of Faith.” A number of shorter, lyrical poems have also survived from his pen.⁸³

Others have tried their hand at versifying post-pentateuchal biblical books. From among these, I include here an excerpt from Aḥaron b. Mashiah’s *Shoftim-nāmab* (The book of judges; chap. 2) composed in 1692, and Khwājah Bukhārā’s *Dāniyāl-nāmab* (The book of Daniel; chap. 2), whose work is also considered below in the context of the literary achievements of Bukhārān Jewry.

Like classical Persian epics in both the heroic and romantic forms, JP epics contain a strong didactic element that is often colored by Sufi expressions and sentiments, even though, as in the case of ‘Imrānī’s *Ganj-nāmab*, their chief source of inspiration is undeniably Jewish. One of the few JP works that can be strictly designated as a didactic work appears to be Yehudah b. David’s *Makbzan al-panḍ* (The treasury of advice; chap. 4) written in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. It is modeled on an ancient Persian literary genre, although the Book of Proverbs may have influenced it equally.

Iranian Jewish poets were attracted to midrashic topics but, judging from the surviving manuscripts, not quite as much as to the biblical books themselves. Two examples of midrashic exposition are included in this anthology. The first is based on the Hebrew version, *‘Aliyat Moshe le-marom* (The ascension of Moses; chap. 5), which appears to have been popular among Iranian Jews, perhaps because it undermined Muslim claims of Muḥammad’s ascension as the pinnacle of spiritual experience. The second, Amīnā’s rendition of midrashic interpretations of Isaac’s sacrifice, which is a central theme of the Day of Atonement, is included here in chapter 7, devoted to the religious expression of Jewish Iranian poets.

Although Iranian Jews appear to have referred to Shāhīn’s biblical epics as *tafṣūr* (Arabic for “commentary,” “elucidation”), they are not biblical commentaries in the true sense of the word, which connotes the elucidation of difficult words and concepts, the making of connections between related ideas, and the like. It would appear that Iranian Jews did not write many biblical commentaries or, more likely, that very few have survived. Of course, the various works bearing the word *tafṣūr* in the title (a word that for

Iranian Jews, as for Jews living in Muslim countries in general, meant *both* translation and commentary) often contain features ascribed to the commentary form. Still, the number of JP texts that can be recognized primarily as commentaries rather than paraphrase translations are relatively few. I include two samples, one from the pen of Yehudah b. Binyamin, who does not seem to have been particularly learned, and another from Shim'on Hakam (see chap. 6), the eminent Jewish scholar who hailed from Bukhārā.

Iranian Jews were deeply involved with the annual cycle of Jewish festivals and wrote many prose *derashot* (Hebrew for “sermons”) as well as poems elucidating and praising the *derashot*'s meaning; most of these appear to have been written after the seventeenth century (see chap. 7). Despite their intensely Jewish content, they were written in JP, not in Hebrew, and were clearly aimed at lay audiences whose knowledge of Hebrew was limited. A large number of sermons await careful evaluation.⁸⁴ They should provide valuable insights into Iranian Jewry's level of Jewish knowledge in premodern times.

Understandably, Purim, the Jewish festival that originated in Iran, has always held and continues to hold a special place in the hearts of Iranian Jews.⁸⁵ Two excerpts are included here, the first from Amīnā's versified retelling of the Book of Esther, the second a popular account of specific sentiments and customs that Iranian Jews associated with the festival (see chap. 7).

Iranian Jews bore witness to the historical developments in their midst, although, judging by surviving records, not as much as one would like. Their reticence accords with the trend observed among Jews in the diaspora in general. They tended to view history as a series of repeated divine patterns that went back to ancient (biblical) paradigms. These patterns were little affected by human acts and volition, and hence not particularly worth recording.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, two major waves of anti-Jewish persecutions in Iran, those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, found eloquent commemorators in the chronicles of Bābāi b. Luṭf and his grandson Bābāi b. Farhād (see chap. 8). Whatever their shortcomings, the chronicles of Bābāi b. Luṭf and Bābāi b. Farhād provide valuable insights into the lives of ordinary Iranian Jews, a subject hardly ever touched upon by Muslim Iranian sources.

The hardships of *anusim* are also movingly described by Ḥezekiah, an otherwise unknown Iranian Jewish poet, while an outburst of persecu-

tion in Bukhārā was recorded in the short narrative poem *Khodāidād* (see chap. 8).

Perhaps even more scarce than historical texts are JP writings whose subject is philosophy and mysticism. The two philosophical texts included here, separated by some five centuries, share a polemical interest in their staunch advocacy, in the face of the constant glorification of Muḥammad, of the superiority of Moses and the laws revealed to him. Both writers appear to have been impressively learned. Yehudah b. El'azar, the seventeenth-century author of *Ḥobot Yehudab* (The duties of Judah), the most important philosophical text to emerge from Iranian Jewry, was well-acquainted with the works of earlier Jewish and Muslim philosophers and owes much to the thought of Maimonides (see chap. 9). The extent of *Ḥobot Yehudab's* originality needs careful evaluation.

Iranian Jews became acquainted with Kabbalah at least by the end of the thirteenth century. We know of the contributions, in Hebrew, of one particular individual, Joseph of Hamadan, who wrote a treatise on *ta'me ha-misvot*, the (mystical) reasons for the commandments and on the ten *sefirot* (emanations).⁸⁷ Kabbalistic allusions can be found in numerous Hebrew poems written in Iran, and many JP manuscripts contain popular formulas characteristic of practical kabbalistic practices. However, full-fledged theosophical kabbalistic texts are not well represented in JP manuscripts.⁸⁸ On the other hand, as I note throughout the anthology, the influence of Islamic mysticism (Sufism) appears to have been pervasive, raising questions about the nature and extent of Jewish involvement with this movement beyond the mere use of literary clichés.

Ḥayāt al-rūḥ (The life of the soul), by Siman Ṭov Melammed (d. 1823 or 1828), appears to be the most comprehensive mystico-philosophical work in JP. It is syncretic in the sense that it tends to express Jewish concepts garbed in Sufi terminology. But aside from its poetry, both in Hebrew and in Persian, *Ḥayāt al-rūḥ* is not particularly original. Like *Ḥobot Yehudab*, it relies heavily on the thought of Maimonides and of the Iberian Jewish neoplatonic mystic Baḥya b. Paquda (eleventh century). Melammed obviously believed that many Jewish and Muslim mystico-philosophical concepts were fundamentally identical, or at least overlapped considerably, and he therefore found nothing objectionable in using Sufi vocabulary and even writing a paean to Sufis. That his attitude was, nevertheless, not widely shared is demonstrated by an anonymous poem against Sufis (see chap. 10).

Fervent messianic hopes, which can be found in the mystico-philosophical texts mentioned above, also prevail in the religious poetry of Iranian Jewish poets (see chap. 11). Panegyrics honoring Moses, a subject often alluded to but seldom the theme of full encomiums in medieval Hebrew poetry, are fairly numerous in JP texts in a manner reminiscent of the numerous poems written throughout the Muslim world known as *nu'ūt* (Arabic for “attributes”) that describe and praise Muḥammad’s praiseworthy qualities.⁸⁹ Because Iranian Jewish poets appear to have written very few panegyrics dedicated to rulers or wealthy patrons, they honored their prophets instead, especially Moses but also Ezra and Ezekiel, whose not-too-distant tombs were destinations of pilgrimage.

Intense and moving *munājāt* (Pers./Arabic for “personal prayers”), such as those written by Binyamin b. Misha’el (known by the nom de plume “Amīnā,” “the trusted,” “the faithful”) and Bābāī, probably owe as much to the Sufi predilection for the genre as to the Book of Psalms.⁹⁰ Themes connected with biblical history, such as are found in Amīnā’s “A *Ghazal* on the Twelve Tribes,” or devoted to philosophical concepts like God’s attributes or those found in Shihāb Yazdī’s “Almighty God Displaying Might” were also fitting subjects for shorter JP poems.

Classical Persian poetry, like the Arabic poetry it emulates, includes a large body of panegyrics to rulers and wealthy patrons. We find few such examples in JP manuscripts, eloquent evidence of the fact that Iranian-Jewish poets seldom, if ever, benefited from such patronage, even if they aspired to it.

The lyrical poetry of classical Persian literature is one of the great literary treasures of world literature. Iranian-Jewish poets were familiar with the genre in its various forms, the *ghazal* (a monorhymed poem 7–12 distichs long), the *rubāʿī* (quatrain), and the *qitʿa* (a fragment [of a *ghazal*]). Many Iranian-Jewish poets have tried their hand at these genres with varying degrees of success (see chap. 12). Because these forms are light, graceful, full of puns and alliteration, their efforts are even more difficult to convey in translation than the *masnavī* (discussed below). The themes of Persian lyrical poetry include unrequited love, the cruelty of the beloved, the beauty of the beloved, the (mystical) intoxication of wine, the deceptiveness of this transient world, and so on.⁹¹ Lyrical Persian poetry developed a vocabulary all its own, even as it adopted and amplified the body of the rhetorical figures

of speech of Arabic poetry. Many Persian poetic conceits became standardized. The prowess of a lyrical Persian poet was measured not so much by the originality of his themes as by his creative manipulation of standard ideas and images. Beginning with the twelfth century, this stylized form of Persian poetry became permeated with Sufi symbolism and thus acquired an additional layer of semantic richness.⁹²

The JP lyrical poems included in this anthology are largely from the pen of Amīnā. He seems to have been a versatile poet, preferring the shorter lyrical forms of Persian poetry. Some of his *ghazals* are clearly based on standard themes. Other, somewhat longer poems like “The Story of Amīnā and His Wife,” and “On Becoming Cold-Hearted Toward Women” have an autobiographical flavor that makes them somewhat original in content.

The body of both religious and secular JP poems is large enough and of sufficient literary merit to warrant further study. Albeit in the vernacular, in its use of Persian topoi and rhetoric, JP poetry compares favorably with the Hebrew poetry produced during the Spanish Golden Age, which also relied on Arabic poetical rhetoric.

The Jewish authors of Bukhārā probably deserve their own separate anthology.⁹³ They were active between the twelfth and the eighteenth centuries and often wrote JP manuscripts that included vowels indicating their dialectical peculiarities. In all other respects, these writers were influenced by Persian classical poetry. In this anthology I include a sample of their epic writing in the form of Khwājah Bukhārāʾī’s *Dāniyāl-nāmah* (The book of Daniel; chap. 2) composed in 1606. Khwājah Bukhārāʾī undoubtedly knew the works of Shāhīn, and probably those of ʿImrānī as well. His narrative is richly adorned with midrashic elements.

Shimʿon Ḥakam was the greatest Jewish man of letters to hail from Bukhārā. He emigrated to Jerusalem in 1890 and established a JP publishing house through which he saved many texts for posterity by editing and disseminating them.⁹⁴ I include an excerpt from his pentateuchal commentary, which reveals his thorough acquaintance with traditional rabbinic sources (see chap. 6).

Khodāidād, bearing the name of its protagonist (see chap. 8), is a historical poem based on an incident of anti-Jewish persecution in the eighteenth century. It was probably written by Ibn Abūʾl Khayr and provides a somber glimpse of Jewish life in Bukhārā. Yet this was far from a relentlessly

oppressive environment, and Bukhārān Jews were close to their Muslim neighbors, shared their cultural tastes, and were recognized as excelling in certain arts, like music.⁹⁵

Another poet from the eighteenth century, Yūsuf Yahūdī, the author of several JP works and of a lovely quintet in honor of Moses (see chap. 11), testifies to the religious fervor that flourished among Bukhārā's Jews, a feeling that led them to be among the first emigrants from the Persianate world to return to the Land Israel.

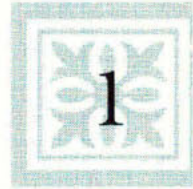
The Jews of Iran preserved their Jewish heritage in JP texts, in their own local customs and modes of prayer,⁹⁶ in artistic expression,⁹⁷ and in numerous Hebrew works, whose study falls beyond the ken of this anthology. There are other aspects of Iranian-Jewish literary culture that are not represented in this anthology because its exclusive concern is to give an overview of original JP belles lettres. If poetry is disproportionately represented here it is because poetry was, beyond any doubt, the favorite and most highly regarded mode of expression of Iranian Jews, as of Iranian Muslims. Judeo-Persian manuscript collections also include a considerable number of medical texts, based on the Islamic medical knowledge of the Middle Ages, as well as folktales, spells, and folk remedies, with which I am not sufficiently acquainted to discuss. Similarly, the large body of JP transcriptions of Persian and Hebrew classical poems needs a different mode of study than the one adopted in this anthology. Of course, without these additional dimensions, it is not yet possible to make a comprehensive assessment of premodern Iranian-Jewish cultural life as a whole. What I can state with confidence about the JP texts included here is that they constitute yet another chapter of Jewish diaspora literature similar in many ways to, yet distinct from, the literatures produced in the Hellenistic world, medieval Spain, and Renaissance Italy. Like these illustrious exemplars, JP literature attests to the phenomenon of deep Jewish acculturation without assimilation, a hallmark of most premodern Jewish diaspora communities. Thus JP literature enriches our knowledge of Jewish literatures in general while contributing to the vast and varied literature of the Persianate world.

In the translations that follow I strove to achieve a measure of literacy but not at the expense of the literal meaning of the texts. The *masnavī*, a narrative poem in rhymed couplets that was the preferred long poetic form of

classical Persian literature for all types of contents—stories, didactic verse, heroic and romantic epics, even history and medicine—was also the vehicle of the JP epics translated here. For various technical reasons, rhymed couplets are difficult to reproduce in English. For most of the translations below I chose free verse as the most likely form to engage English-speaking readers. All translators, and especially those who translate from Persian into English, will undoubtedly sympathize with the various hurdles encountered in this process, while other readers, it is hoped, will be indulgent when wading into a tradition with which they are unfamiliar but many of whose literary conventions will become apparent to them through these texts. The task of translating was made all the more difficult by the tentative nature of the conflated editions on which they are based. Because I hope that this anthology will appeal to both Jewish and Iranian scholars and to general readers, I provide notes which may occasionally appear redundant to one or the other of these groups.

It is my hope that this offering of texts will stimulate further research in the field of JP studies and that future scholars will endeavor to correct my mistakes.

Earliest Judeo-Persian Texts



In his comprehensive *History of Iranian Literature*, Jan Rypka states, “It is a curious coincidence that the earliest records in the [New] Persian language are at the same time the earliest records of Judeo-Persian literature” (p. 737). In an earlier passage he notes that although these records cannot be classified as belles lettres, they are important “in virtue of their being the oldest first-hand documents committed to writing in the Persian language” (pp. 148–149). As such, they preserve many archaic features, both linguistic and lexicographic. Among the most important of these early Persian (“prose”) records are:¹ a. the inscriptions found at Tang-i Azaq (Afghanistan), initially thought to come from the mid-eighth century but more likely of considerably later provenance;² b. the letter of a Jewish merchant found in Dandān-Uiliq, northeast of Khotan (East Turkestan), dating from the second half of the eighth century;³ c. the signature of witnesses on the Quilon copper plate in a church in Malabar, South India, ninth century;⁴ d. a legal document from Hormshīr (Ahwāz) in Khūzistān,⁵ and e. an undated commentary on Ezekiel.⁶ Only the translations of texts b (“A Letter from a Merchant”) and d (“A Legal Document”) are presented here because they provide a coherent departure point for what will later develop into JP—and Persian—prose.

The JP fragment from Dandān-Uiliq (b) concerns, as its translator Bo Utas notes, “the trading of sheep and possibly also cloth[ing] and slaves.”⁷ Aurel Stein discovered the document on one of his expeditions, among the ruins of Dandān Uiliq (“the Ivory house”), a small community in which a minor imperial Chinese garrison was stationed. Dandān Uiliq, known to the Chinese of the T’ang period as Li-hsieh, was not on the Silk Road itself but somewhat to the north of it. Taking into account some of the observations made by later scholars,⁸ Professor Utas kindly provided for this anthology both a word-for-word translation, to which I made slight changes, of the intelligible parts of the letter and a reconstruction of the entire letter. For the sake of coherence I include only the latter.

Professor Asmussen, who has worked on the letter from Ahwāz (d), also gave this anthology a full translation of the letter, refining the first English translation made by D. S. Margoliouth, whose notes remain valuable.⁹ The document is the legal resolution of property taken unlawfully. The protagonists are vivid, but nothing more is known about them.

A Letter from a Merchant Translated by Bo Utas

[1] (*In the name of*) the Lord God, who shall be [our] helper.¹ Soon the day (*on which we have decided* [2] *will come*;) I wrote more [than] twenty letters, but *y(ou have not replied*. [3] *Please, observe* with what my post (?) arrives and in [whose] hand (?) ([4] *it is found!* *And*) order [someone] to give [out] his three shares! My portion (*should be added to my account* [5] *and*) by this you should buy, until I have set out [and] gone down. (*If you arrange* [6] *all this in*) a good way, the Lord God (*will bestow*) on you good reward for it. (*As for* [7] *the cattle market*,) it was delayed until the ninth of the month, and until the tenth of (*the month I could not* [8] *find out what*) sheep there were. And they buy weaker, and the Lord God shoul(*d assist us!* *Regarding* [9] *the clothes*), he should ensure that not any of them is worn (?) because they (*were displeased in the last place* [10] *and*) the clothing that had been sold, that they thr(*ew*) in our face, (*so that in the end* [11] *very little*) was sold. There was (?) nobody; a hundred people of the town (*came together, however*. [12] *I am in doubt about those*) thirty jugs (?) which we should buy, and there is no nard (?) available. (*It seems that something of yours* [13] *belongs to me*) like something of mine to you. And I have a man, one (*who knows*) the work, (*who has done the accounts*, [14] *so that I shall*) know my profit and loss and nine *shabili (?) (*were counted*

to my credit. [15] Try to find something like sheep to buy on my behalf, so that (this will even up my account! [16] In your last letter) you said thus: Rabbi, thirty (pieces of those goods [17] were late) to come and are heavily attended by loss. (Will you, please, [18] give) him (the order to buy) on my behalf seventeen bales (of cloth and send them [19] together with the animals) that you yourself bought and yourself sold and yourself dro(ve to such and such place. [20] In this affair;) if profit should be my share, I (ask you [21] to take care of it,) but do not take any trouble regarding a good count! (About so and so, [22]) you sent (a message), and he was not here, and the profit of the sheep [was] thus (not) correctly (counted. [23] I hope that that agent) of yours arrives, as God wishes, and [that] you personally (will go) to *Sababad,(?) (and that [24] regarding that matter) you will say thus to *Sababad(?): (Bring) me a harp (and I have a girl! [25] If) you bring the harp, I shall teach the girl, and [look] how fast (she will learn! [26] What) I (wanted to) find, I did not find, but from *Nurbak (I got) one h(arp, [27] and that one) I shall give [to him], so that he shall teach *Bagidi(?). The black eunuch (will take care of the rest. [28] Be sure) that I received your letter; but you said one thing better than that: (if that is arranged, [29] then) I shall work hard, so that the work which you ordered will be done. (As for your fears [30] regarding) my mind, do not suffer any anxiety that (you will) hurt my mind. (As for the other matter, [31] know that) I asked thus on behalf of *Angusht(?) *Robahah(?) [and] said (that you must [32] certainly go) to Parvan(?) and yourself make a request from that party regarding (what they owe you. [33] Furthermore,) in your letter you sent [the message] that to one hundred and fifty (units there is consent [34] and that the buyer) of that trifle of sheep (accepts) that (price) of y(ours. [35] As long as) you have not come out (from the to)wn, from the side of (so and so anything may be expected, [36] so equip yourself) suitably as regards saddle and stirrups and straps! (Thus I wish you [37] the very best) of everything [that comes] from the Highest!

Az-[38] -kbar(?)

A Legal Document Translated by Jes P. Asmussen

"It was thus before us *witnesses*, whose signatures are written below this record: In Hormshīr [Ahwāz] town, which [is] among those of Khūzistān, which stands on the river Ulay, in the month of Shebaṭ, year 1332 according to the [Seleucid] era of documents [1021 CE], there were present before us

Ḥannah, daughter of Israel, son of Jacob, *may he rest in Paradise*, and she cited Daniel, son of Reuben, [son] of ‘Azariah, known as “Baby.” And this Ḥannah bat Israel said thus: “This Daniel ben Reuben, my son-in-law, has gone without my order and without my desire and taken out of the purse of my brothers, who are in Egypt, six pairs of pearls and sold them for twenty-five dinars. And this purse was the property of my brothers Sahl and Joseph and Sa‘īd, sons of Israel, son of Jacob, *may he rest in Paradise*.” And the elders said to him: “You did wrong; you did this, that you laid hands on property other than your own, and you are in a state of lawlessness through this that you have done.” And he answered: “I did it of necessity, [obliged] by my heart, for I was in great difficulty.” And the elders said to him: “It is incumbent upon you, Daniel ben Reuben, to make recompense for it and to ask *forgiveness* from the owners of the property.” And this Daniel ben Reuben said: “The thing which [belongs] to me is available to these [men], Sahl and Joseph, and Sa‘īd, sons of Israel, son of Jacob, *may he rest in Paradise*, and I am content before you elders that you write it and rectify [the matter] against me, in that it became right, since I was agreeable. It is [so] that, in recompense for these pearls which I took, under their hands [as] recompense [there are] these dinars. I sold them and took twenty five genuine sultani dinars.” And he was agreeable, and we took *the property acquired* from the hands of this Daniel, son of Reuben, [son] of ‘Azariah, known as “Baby,” in [the form of] clothing. It is proper to take *property [so] acquired*—by the laws of Sinai and the words at Horeb—with his approval and at his request. And this Daniel, son of Reuben, [son] of ‘Azariah, abandoned all claim [on it] *to the end of all actions of protest*. And he wrote [this] and gave it into the hand of Ḥannah, daughter of Israel, son of Jacob, *may he rest in Paradise*, that it may be for her a discharge and a proof.

‘Azariah ben Abraham ben ‘Ammar

Sa‘dan ben Daniel ben Sa‘dan.

Mowlānā Shāhīn-i Shīrāzī

The Jewish-Persian poet known as “Mowlānā Shāhīn-i Shīrāzī” (Our Master, the Royal Falcon of Shiraz) is both the earliest known and the most accomplished JP poet. His biography remains shrouded in obscurity. Beyond the fact that he flourished during the reign of the Il-khanid Sultan Abū Saʿīd (1316–1335), information revealed by the poet himself,¹ we know very little about Shāhīn. He appears to have been a near contemporary of Ḥāfīz (d. 1389), the greatest lyrical poet of Iran, who also lived in Shiraz.

Uncertainty about Shāhīn extends not only to his birth and death dates and his occupation but even to such fundamental information as his name and place of origin. It is not at all clear whether “Shāhīn” is the poet’s first name or his *takballuq* (nom de plume).² Bābāī b. Luṭf claims that Shāhīn is buried in Shiraz,³ but some scholars believe that he may have hailed from Kashan.⁴

Shāhīn’s surviving oeuvre consists of two major epic cycles: 1) a versification of selected narrative parts of the Pentateuch, *Beresbit-nāmah* (The book of Genesis; henceforth BN), *The Tale of Job*, and *Mūsā-nāmah* (The book of Moses; henceforth MN); and 2) the Book of Esther, *Ardashūr-nāmah*

(The book of Ardashīr; henceforth AN), and *Ezra-nāmāh* (The book of Ezra; henceforth EN).⁵ Of the two, the pentateuchal epics are the longest and constitute Shāhīn's magnum opus. Their first and only editor, the Bukhārān scholar Shim' on Ḥakam,⁶ named this biblical cycle *Sefer sharḥ-i Shāhīn 'al ba-Torah* (The book of Shāhīn's commentaries on the Torah) when he printed them in Jerusalem between 1902 and 1905.⁷ We do not know what Shāhīn himself called this work. Ḥakam's title is probably a reflection of the popularity of BN and MN among Iranian Jews.

The versification of MN preceded that of BN. It was composed in 1327⁸ and it consists chiefly of the major nonlegal narratives from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The poem is approximately 10,000 distichs long and its meter is *bazaj mussadas makbzūf*, one of the simplest meters of Persian prosody and commonly associated with romances.⁹ If MN was probably Shāhīn's first major work, BN appears to have been his last. Composed in 1358¹⁰ in the same meter as MN, BN is somewhat shorter, consisting of some 8,700 distichs. The two parts, MN and BN, are sometimes copied in separate manuscripts. Rather than follow the chronological order of Shāhīn's compositions, in this anthology translations from Shāhīn's biblical epics begin with two selections from BN following the natural order of the Pentateuch. The first selection is on 'Aza'zel's (Satan) "fall" from divine grace and the second centers on Jacob's grief at Joseph's disappearance. Both highlight popular themes that also reverberate deeply in Islamic literature. The tale of Jacob's grief is part of the Joseph (Yūsuf) and Zulaykhā narrative, a favorite theme of Iranian epics,¹¹ and it is often found copied separately from the rest of BN. In both selections Shāhīn's interweaving of Jewish and Muslim legendary strands is particularly felicitous.

The selections from MN highlight Shāhīn's desire to turn Moses into an epic hero, modeling him on the great heroes of Iranian epics, especially Firdowsī's heroes in the *Shāh-nāmāh*. In the process, Shāhīn glorifies Moses almost more than Jewish sources do, and thus contributes to a prevalent theme in JP literature,¹² the veneration of Moses, that was probably affected by a similar trend to venerate and praise Muḥammad in Muslim life and literature.¹³

Shāhīn gives short shrift to the legal and ritualistic contents of the four biblical books covered in this epic and centers his narrative around the "exploits" of Moses. In the selections that follow, Moses is depicted as a tender shepherd (which qualifies him for his mission as leader of the Children

of Israel), a reluctant leader, a profound mystic and lover of God, a fair and implacable chieftain confronting Korah, and, especially toward the end of his life, a teacher anxious to instill God's message into the Israelites for all time.

At the end of BN, after a chapter on the descendants of Esau, Shāhīn appends a short (170 verses) versification of the Book of Job, motivated by the fact that Jewish and Muslim legendary sources place this tale similarly, after the death of Jacob's descendants, because they believe Job to have been either Esau's grandson or his great-grandson.¹⁴ Shāhīn abbreviates the content of the Book of Job drastically, omitting two of its most important features, Job's dialogues with his friends and God's lengthy reply. He chooses to develop instead the insidious assaults on Job's faith by his wife, a subject referred to only briefly in the book itself.

Between his pentateuchal epics, in 1333,¹⁵ Shāhīn wrote another complex epic consisting of a versification of the Book of Esther (AN) and a very free treatment of the prophetic Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (EN). *Ardashīr-nāmab* is 9,000 distichs long, and it is composed in a more complex variant of the *hazaj* meter.¹⁶ The content of AN is not confined to the Book of Esther. It is distinguished by at least three major creative features. First, in addition to the biblical tale, Shāhīn also narrates the fantastic exploits of Shīrū, the son of Ardashīr (Ahasueros) and Queen Vashti[!]. Second, the narrative of AN is tied explicitly to Iran's national epic, the *Shāb-nāmab* of Firdowsī, by fictitiously identifying Shah Ardashīr with Ardashīr, son of Isfandiyār, one of the Iranian shahs mentioned in the *Shāb-nāmab*.¹⁷ Finally, Shāhīn claims that Cyrus, the great Persian restorer of Jewish national sovereignty, was the offspring of Esther and Ardashīr's union.¹⁸ He thus clearly reveals his chief literary model, the *Shāb-nāmab*; he also intertwines the fates and histories of Iran and Israel, attesting to his love of both.

The translated selections from AN that follow describe scenes not found in the Book of Esther. They display Shāhīn's creative imagination at its best, such as in Ardashīr's difficult search for a lover to replace Queen Vashti, his courtship of Esther, Mordekai's role in the match, the royal wedding night, and the auspicious birth and childhood of Cyrus. Each of these themes is paralleled in both the *Shāb-nāmab* and in the classical Persian romances of Nizāmī (d. 1209), whose influence is especially strong in AN.

Usually appended to AN and best considered a part of it—a sort of epilogue—is *Ezra-nāmab* (EN), a short versification (about 500 distichs)

superficially connected with the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.¹⁹ The translated selections highlight Ezra's efforts to bring about the rebuilding of the Temple. In the process, Shāhīn polemicizes against the Muslim attitude toward the role of Ezra in the preservation of the correct copy of the Torah.²⁰ The relation of this epic to AN is made clear by the narrative describing the deaths of Mordekai and Esther, once their divine "mission" has been completed. Following the earlier description of Cyrus' birth and youth, we here have the moving account of his death, typical of a description of the death of a hero in JP (and Persian) epics. The deaths of these three protagonists close the second cycle of Shāhīn's biblical epics and reveal the poet's view that these heroes strove to fulfill through their lives God's higher purposes.

Shāhīn's epics have not yet been studied to the extent that they deserve. The most comprehensive study remains Wilhelm Bacher's *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter Schabin und Imrani*, a work frequently cited in this anthology. In addition to establishing basic information about the contents of the epics, Bacher also drew attention to Shāhīn's rhetoric, the manuscripts known to him, and the sources of literary influence, both Jewish and Muslim, on the poet (pp. 71–117). All these areas can and need to be studied more thoroughly. Here I confine myself to some general observations.

Shāhīn's poetic diction, his use of the Persian language and grammar, and the rhetorical forms he employs are typically those of classical Persian poetry. Among his most pronounced grammatical peculiarities is the frequent use of the colloquial forms *-imān* and *-idān* for the first person plural. But Shāhīn's language does not reflect a dialect. Manuscripts of his epics, and even more those of his successors, reflect many more colloquial features connected with the popular, spoken language of Iran, whereas classical Persian literature consciously avoids doing so. Shāhīn's use of Hebrew words and Hebrew rhymes is much less frequent than his successors'. Like many other Jewish writers from the Muslim world, Shāhīn refers to well-known biblical characters by their Muslim names: Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Mūsā (Moses), Qārūn (Korah).²¹ When he refers to less well-known people, he uses the Hebrew forms. Shāhīn must have been among the first JP writers to use the construct *-i (izāfa)* form to link Hebrew and Persian words. The fact that many verses in Shāhīn's epics do not quite scan properly is more likely due to the corrupt state of the manuscripts than to the poet's inability to write in the correct meter; hence the urgent need to establish critical texts in order to determine correct meanings.

As far as poetical rhetoric is concerned, Shāhīn's epics reflect his thorough knowledge of classical Persian forms and conceits. Like his Persian models, he uses rhetorical artifices, such as *tanāsub* (Ar./Pers. for "harmony of concepts"), *taẓādḏ* (contrast), *ḥuṣn-i ta'tīl* (the beautiful explanation of a cause), *ishtiqāq* (paranomasia), and many others, to achieve the aesthetic peculiar to Persian poetry.²²

Shāhīn's epics show that he was an erudite poet, acquainted with many Jewish and Muslim religious sources. Among the former, Bacher notes the Babylonian Talmud, the Targums, and many midrashic works, such as Bereshit Rabbah, Shemot Rabbah, Va'yikra Rabbah, Midrash Tanḥumah, Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, and quite possibly Saadia Gaon's Arabic translation of the Pentateuch.²³ Preeminent among his Muslim sources are the collections of popular tales known in the Muslim world as *qisṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (Arabic for "stories about prophets"), especially the Persian collection of Ibn Khalaf al-Nīsābūrī compiled sometime before 1100. He also displays some knowledge of the legends related by al-Ṭabarī (d. 920) in his famous *Tā'rikh al-rusūl wa'l mulūk* (The history of prophets and kings). Shāhīn appears to have had some acquaintance with the Qur'ān, which may not have been direct and could have been obtained from *qisṣaṣ* collections and from al-Ṭabarī. Many of these stories circulated in oral form, and there is no need to assume that Shāhīn's information came from books; quite the contrary, since books were scarce in his time. Above all, Shāhīn was undoubtedly well-acquainted with the great classical Persian epics—again, perhaps orally—composed between the turn of the millennium and his time. It is from them that he may have absorbed not only the nuts and bolts of his poetic craft but also much of the legendary Muslim lore that is found in his epics.

We do not know whether Shāhīn himself considered his biblical epics, especially those based on the Pentateuch, to be *tafsīrs*. This Arabic word has multiple, often overlapping meanings—"explanation," "commentary," and frequently, especially in the Judeo-Muslim context, "translation."²⁴ It would appear that for Iranian Jews, Shāhīn was more than just an imitator of classical Persian poetry. They apparently considered him a biblical commentator. The number of the surviving manuscripts attests to the popularity of Shāhīn's epics, but it does not reveal the extent to which Iranian Jews considered him a reliable transmitter of Jewish tradition. As the translations that follow indicate, Shāhīn did not hesitate to interweave in his narratives

many details that originate from Muslim legendary sources. Unfortunately, we cannot determine to what extent his Jewish audiences were aware of this fact nor how it may have affected their view of Shāhīn's status as biblical commentator.²⁵ To us Shāhīn's work appears to be mostly literary because it lacks the traditional features we associate with the word "commentary," such as verse-by-verse clarifications, philological explanations, elucidations of difficult passages, that are associated with a more scholarly approach, such as is found in Rashi (Rabbi Solomon b. Isaac; d. 1105), in the Ashkenazic world. Unlike Rashi, whose commentaries expound on almost every verse of the Pentateuch, Shāhīn was eclectic in his choice of biblical episodes. He had no qualms about skipping over substantial parts of the Pentateuch, for example the legal parts, which held little dramatic interest from a poetic point of view.²⁶ As far as Iranian Jewry's regard for Shāhīn's status as a poet is concerned, we are not in doubt, for his work has been lovingly preserved and, as this anthology attests, frequently (if not always successfully) imitated. Shāhīn's great skill rested in fusing classical Persian prosody and poetical rhetoric to Jewish themes, culled, primarily, from traditional Jewish sources "leavened" with just those Muslim tales that would have been familiar to both Jewish and Muslim audiences.

Although he wrote excellent classical Persian verse, Shāhīn is not mentioned by any literary historian of Iran, medieval or modern, because his poetry was apparently not known beyond the confines of the Jewish communities. If his poetry was originally set down in the Hebrew script, this may explain its inability to penetrate the Iranian literary environment.²⁷ I hope that the translations that follow will reveal fully the close kinship Shāhīn's works bear with classical Persian poetry.

Bereshit-nāmāh (The Book of Genesis)

The Fall of 'Aza'zel

The Description of 'Aza'zel's Greatness

'Aza'zel¹ ranked among the celestial elite
 Most learned, a teacher of the angels;²
 Everything they knew came from him;
 He lit the very lamp of grace.
 No angel was greater than he
 Who seemed kneaded out of Mercy itself,

Always obedient, forever bent
 On increasing his service.
 225 The heavens were his place of worship;
 Perpetual service was his only task.
 Faithfully he served for countless years,
 Hoarding a boundless capital of obedience.³
 He was unaware of the Most Merciful's decree
 Although he knew that among palace intimates
 Damnation could strike one suddenly.⁴
 He was exceedingly exalted
 Among the intimates of the Royal Falcon.⁵
 230 But as for bowing before Adam, he refused,
 Denying him any authority.
 Still, accompanied by other angels
 He set out joyfully flying to earth
 Like the wind, alighting before Adam's form⁶
 Suddenly, full of pride but curious
 To know who the accursed one might be,
 What he was like who was subject to no commands.⁷
 Arriving, he stood at a distance;
 Through his neglect he became himself unjust.
 235 Angels kept flying in in troops
 Surrounding Adam row upon row. Then
 At the Pure Almighty's command,
 They bowed down, rubbing
 Their faces in the dust;⁸ cheerfully,
 One by one, they bowed before Adam
 At God's command. 'Aza'zel alone hung back
 Unmoving in his place and did not bow.

His Excellency Addresses 'Aza'zel

His Excellency then called out, "'Aza'zel,
 Why are you standing bewildered, indolent?
 240 Come, bow down, for such is my command,
 Or else misfortunes await you in ambush."
 Hearing God's command, 'Aza'zel replied:
 "O Creator of the elephant and of the gnat,

Who is like me, possessor of such a capital,
Carrying out orders for years, obedient?⁹
Why should I bow before a lump of clay?
O Pure Almighty, should this be lawful for me?
He is made of earth, I of pure light;
I should not have to bow down before earth!"

245 The Almighty replied: "O foolish ignoramus,
Such is My command; don't disobey it!
I did not ask you to explain its roots and origins;¹⁰
Whatever I command you must obey.
What is your business with either earth or fire?
The latter burns, the former is foundation.
Do not imagine that fire is superior to earth:
Without a doubt Adam's clay is pure light.
Though Adam's light is not everlasting,
In him the earth becomes transmuted.¹¹

250 Fire has no relation to the earth;
It is poison; earth is the antidote.
O unlucky one, fire is not superior to earth;
Ignorance prevents you from perceiving this.
With might I created four jewels:
Nothing is better in the world than these:
First wind, then fire and water,
Fourth is the pure earth, that limpid jewel.¹²
These four are the world's fortune;
The magnificence of each is well known."

.....
281 Then Iblīs said again: "O Pure Almighty,
Flaming fire is not inferior to earth!
What is a lump of earth in the world
That it should be superior to fire's essence?
I do not wish to bow down to it;
Why should I humble myself on its account?
Better than Adam am I in every respect;
Why should I grovel before him?

285 I will bow before none other than You;

I do not even contemplate such thoughts!¹³
 O Exalted One, beyond imagination, I will not
 Bow before Adam even on Resurrection Day!
 I will not yield this sign of servitude,
 For Adam is not worthy of prostration.
 You alone are the object of praise and bowing,
 Not I, not Michael, and not Gabriel."
 The moment he digressed from God's command,
 That unlucky one became an infidel;
 290 Iblīs' glory departed because of His curses
 For no one should dispute with God.
 With all his former acts of obedience,
 Hidden and open, great and small,
 The Incomparable Almighty struck his face:
 "Take your obedience, O vile accursed one!
 Since your back is loaded with obedience,
 You escape My wrath and get off lightly.
 I curse you till the Day of Resurrection:
 You will be a source of calamities, a mine of evil;
 295 You will stray throughout eternity
 Full of anger, toil, suffering, and pain.
 I will call you Shayṭān the Damned;
 I will turn all your prayers into insults."
 Beholding all his work destroyed,
 Shayṭān replied: "O Praise of Praises,
 Chasing me away from Your presence,
 This is the greatest calamity of all!
 It comes to me by way of Adam. I am
 Trapped forever in the bonds of grief."
 300 He pleaded once more: "O You
 Who are One, Generous, Pure, and Judge,
 Oppression and injustice are not among
 Your attributes; You are the source and quarry
 Of justice and mercy.¹⁴ I deserve no evil;
 For a mortal's sake do you humiliate me thus?
 O You who are superior to imagination,
 Is this how you wish to repay my countless years

Of service, to pay off your debt to me?"¹⁵

Then the Almighty said: "Vile cheat,

What recompense do you desire for that work?

305 Tell me, and I shall grant it to you;

Injustice is not one of My attributes."

Shayṭān replied, "O Generous One,

Since this befell me on Adam's account,

Hand him and his descendants over to me

That I may debase them through sin.

With trouble I will tempt them day and night;

So that they will remain forever far from mercy;

Befriending sin through me they will become

The very warp and woof of vice.

310 I will carry them with me to Hell;

They shall be my army and my troops.

I will never let them rest in peace;

I will turn all their gains into losses,

Ambushing them from right to left;

They will be in perpetual want."

The Debate Between Almighty God and Shayṭān

Again, the Judge responded to Iblīs:

"O you repulsive, sinister, unlucky infidel,

I will grant your wish concerning them;

Distress no further your sinister mind.

315 But O unclean one, over saints and prophets

You shall not prevail; they will break you!¹⁶

I watch over their every state,¹⁷ for they are

The quarry of every treasure and good fortune.

Upon them I bestow abundant favors

Because they labor for My sake."

Iblīs replied: "Day and night I will

Demean devotion in their sight;¹⁸

They will grow weary of service and devotion,

Deliver themselves from Paradise to Hell.

320 No longer will they rejoice in Your bounties;

I will convince them that sin is good;¹⁹

Each one of them separately will I trick."
 The Almighty rejoined: "O tyrant,
 If you demean devotion in their sight,
 I will not abandon them in that hardship;
 I will deliver them from it with ease.
 I will make them repent; I'll soothe
 And blandish them till they return."
 325 But Shayṭān persevered, saying: "O God,
 Through their sins I will make them tongue-tied;
 One by one, I will keep them from repenting;
 I will keep such thoughts out of their hearts."
 The Almighty replied: "O sinister one,
 You do not know the extent of Our mercy,
 That I am the pardoner of servants,
 The guide of all the weak and helpless.
 Do not imagine in your sinister heart
 That you can hold Us back from mercy."
 330 "I did not know," Shayṭān replied, "that You
 Have such an immense amount of grace for them . . .
 My tricks then cannot work;
 Your favor renders me impotent.
 I have no remedy for this;
 You've trapped me in great pain.
 Strange! I know they will be my enemies,
 Adversaries of my soul, my foes,
 Vindictive against me for Your sake
 They will seek only to harm me.
 335 Thus will they be: they will not turn away
 From striking an alliance with me,
 Yet they will emerge victorious.
 I am surprised that You will show them mercy;
 I would show them nothing but sorrow and trouble."
 The Almighty then said: "Since those dear to Me
 Love Me, that which is difficult becomes easy.²⁰
 I will overlook their sins one by one;
 I will rain Mercy upon all their heads.

- Through My Grace I will bring them to Paradise
And I will keep them there for all eternity.”
- 340 By the will of the Almighty, who is
Without friend or companion,
The Lord of Above and Below,
The Lord of the Green Firmament,
The Generous Master of Generosity,
The Lord of Truth, the Kind
Merciful One, the Absolute Sultan,
When He finished cursing Shayṭān
He cast a glance at Adam’s frame;
Caressing him with His bounty’s light²¹
And out of His mercy, He created
A shadow over that earthly creature.
When He endowed him with a living soul
The earthly Adam suddenly leapt up.
- 345 He bowed before the Universal Monarch
Rubbing his face into the dark earth,
Saying: “Praise be to God! O Lord,
I testify to Your oneness for You are
Lord of the created and uncreated,²²
Lord of heaven and earth;
You have been and will exist forever;
The sun and the moon are lit by Your light.
Suddenly You brought me forth from earth;
You breathed a pure soul into my body’s frame.
- 350 It is most fitting that You are the supreme God
For You are omniscient, intelligent, and my guide.
I fully acknowledge Your might;
You are the creator of day and night.”
By God’s decree, of a sudden Adam grasped
Every form of knowledge and all mysteries.²³
All knowledge He made evident to him;
Thus Adam, through grace and knowledge,
Came to apprehend the whole world.
He came to know God’s most exalted names;²⁴

God preferred him above all other creatures.
 355 He nourished Adam with generous favors
 For He created him for the sake of good deeds.
 God said to Adam: "O pure servant, you
 Have I chosen from among the celestial innocents;
 I created the entire world for you;²⁵
 I drew your stature like that of a cypress.
 Wild and tame animals, birds and fish,
 Cattle and lambs—whatever you would want—
 Dry and moist fruits of the world
 I created for you; eat in good health!
 360 From your progeny I will bring forth
 A multitude of peoples; with them
 I will fill the entire world
 That they may rejoice and delight in it.
 All comforts have I created for their sake;
 Wet and dry are meant to please their souls.
 No prayer of your progeny will be in vain
 Even if it must traverse the Earth's circumference."
 O Shāhīn, whomsoever the Almighty Himself
 Favors even a little, such a one
 Becomes the favorite of both worlds;
 O Lord, have mercy on my state.²⁶

Jacob and the Wolf

Jacob Becomes Aware of Joseph's Disappearance

They carried out the fell deed suddenly,¹
 Flung Joseph, Jacob's son, into the well.
 Quickly they slew a kid²
 And kneaded its blood into Joseph's coat.
 Then they came before exalted Jacob
 Bareheaded, with torn coats, weeping.
 Each one grieved separately,
 Each one shed copious tears.
 5 Jacob, that clever man, leapt to his feet
 Bewildered, before his tent,
 As he beheld his sons upon the way³

- Come nearer, nearer, sighing and lamenting.
 From far away he saw at once
 That they were barefoot, weeping and forlorn.
 The sound of their laments rose up to heaven.
 Anguish pierced Jacob's heart as he thought,
 "Some accident, some great calamity,
 10 Has befallen Joseph!"
 As they came nearer they cried very loud,
 Justly lamenting their own evil deed.
 Jacob addressed them thus: "My dear ones, oh
 Why do you strew dust upon your heads?
 Your torn coats and your cries, what do they mean?
 Tell me, whom do you mourn in such a manner?
 Where's the light of my eyes? He is not with you.
 Is he in heaven, for here is not his place?"⁴
 They answered: "[We mourn] for that shah of beauties:⁵
 The lamp of the assembly, radiant sun,
 15 Celebrated Joseph, crown of our heads,
 Younger but better than ourselves,⁶ who
 Was suddenly slain by a wild beast's⁷ claws;
 Abruptly has his day turned into night.
 He was among us, that heart-dazzling one;
 He was in charge of all our flock today.
 To him we entrusted it but for a while
 And went joyfully into the desert.⁸
 A wolf ambushed him from a hidden place
 Like a lion, rushed upon him suddenly,
 20 And carried off that rose-cheeked beloved,
 Monarch supreme over idols of Rūm and Chīn.⁹
 He pulled him down, trampled, tore him apart,
 Killed and devoured him in his affliction."
 When Jacob heard this news, his heart
 At once became inhabited by grief and sighs.
 Roaring, he collapsed; he fell
 Unconscious, unable to move, astounded.
 For a while he was completely out of this world,
 Turned for him upside down.¹⁰

Jacob Laments His Separation from Joseph

- 25 After a time his consciousness returned;
 Passionate love for Joseph seared his heart,
 And he cried out, weeping in his grief:¹¹
 "What shall I do, what's left for me to do?
 What have you done with my sun of beauties?
 My Canaan's moon, what has become of him?
 Where did you take that beautiful face?
 Where did you carry off that heavenly moon?
 Where did you take that sunny face?
 Where did you carry off that curly head?
 30 Where did you take that mine of modesty?
 Where did you carry off that treasury of gifts?
 Where did you take that weeping lion?
 Where did you carry off that Yemenite pearl?
 Where did you take that soft-spoken youth?
 Where did you carry off that graceful cypress?
 Where did you take that fierce lion?
 Where did you carry off that sugar of the lips?
 Tell me what happened to Joseph, tell me the truth;
 Do not distort, my dear ones, do not embellish.
- 35 You mean to keep me in the dark¹² about him,
 Intoxicate me with the cup of ignorance."¹³
 Then Levi said to Israel, "O father,
 What can be done against God's own decree?
 The Almighty inscribed this on his brow;
 Fate¹⁴ itself stood in wait to ambush him.
 He was trapped by the wolf's claws;
 That jewelled treasure passed away.
 We saw footprints of the wolf in the desert
 And long ran after him,
 40 Troubled all the way and full of grief,
 But spied no trace of that moon-visaged one.
 Then at the foot of the rocky mountain,
 We saw his cast-off tunic soaked in blood."
 Before Jacob he placed it and he said:
 "This is the sole token of that beloved friend."

Jacob recognized the shirt on sight
And seizing it at once he addressed it thus:
"O shirt, where did your friend go?¹⁵ Where is your master,
Who gave you little trouble, where did he go?
45 Where did your chosen intimate friend go?
Where did that moon-browed beauty disappear?
Certain it is you did not leave me singly;
Why are you single now, not paired with him?
Why are you far from your beloved friend,
And distant from the one who shared your griefs?
Why are you far from that bedroom candle,
And distant from the garden's box tree?
Why are you far from that radiant moon,
50 And distant from that brilliant sun?
Why are you far from that moon incarnate,
And distant from that honored chief?
Why are you far from my hair's musky noose,
And distant from my tall cypress?
Why are you far from that summit of the age,
And distant from that peerless moon?
Why are you far from that shepherd moon,
And distant from that sunny countenance?
Why are you far from my dear friend,
And distant from my beautiful standard?¹⁶
55 Why are you far from my protector,
And distant from my sun and moon?
Why are you far from my peerless pearl,
Distant from that kind boon companion?
What did you do to Joseph? What happened to him?
In whose claws did he fall down helpless?
What wild beast dared to fight him?
How did the wolf shed Joseph's blood?
Tell me the truth, what happened to Joseph?
How did the wolf eat him? He is not a deer!
60 Who dipped you in this blood?
Tell the truth, the truth; drenched with blood,
Joseph's shirt is no longer beautiful.

- Why did you turn blood red?
 You used to be [snow] white; this red,
 You make me despair of my child.
 You went off looking handsome;
 Why did you come back ugly?
 You have soaked yourself in blood.
 Of Joseph you deprived me suddenly;
 Alas, a hundred times alas for that moon face!
 Now you're my only memorial of him,
 Truth's intimate companion in sorrow.
- 65 Is it right that you should kindle a fire
 And in this grief consume my heart and soul?
 Is it right that you appear here without Joseph
 And show me instead his blood?
 Blood is no substitute for Joseph;
 One never sells one's child for blood.¹⁷
 Whoever heard such mysteries?
 Blood cannot cut me off from my sun!¹⁸
 If I had seen this in a dream,
 I would have died at once.
- 70 Confused, I know not what to do;
 Grief came upon my soul so suddenly.
 Joseph went out to play all unaware,
 Left me behind in eternal sorrow.
 The souls of the weak cannot be revived;
 May no one ever suffer as I do now!
 But how can I live without my life? O Lord,
 Take my life from me now.¹⁹
 Abruptly night and day have become one
 For me, dawn turned into darkest night."
- 75 Uttering this, he lost his strength and sense
 And fell, once more, unconscious to the ground
 Like one utterly weak or suddenly dead.
 Then once more he began to cry and groan.
 His neighbors²⁰ came, and they encircled him
 While he went on lamenting:

“Explain,

- Dear friends, acquainted with every mystery;
 Why did I not perish before him?
 Why am I not carried off today?
 80 He quit this life so young,
 His spring turning to autumn suddenly.
 Did I not fear the Most Generous Almighty,
 The Lord of the Assembly and Resurrection,
 Lord of both wound and salve,
 I would kindle a strong fire right now,
 Leap into it, and burn from head to toe.
 Better a hundred elders like unto me should die
 Than that one youth should lack a strand of hair!
 Now the youth perishes, and the elder survives;
 Who can explain this mystery?
 85 Would that You, O Lord, had taken me in my wretchedness
 Before Joseph, beneath the ground!
 I'll guard his shirt as long as I'm alive;
 I'll never wash out the blood
 But I will keep it, seeking my child from it.
 I'll rub it on my blind eyes day and night;²¹
 I'll carry it, blood and all, into the grave,
 I'll bring it with me on the Day of Judgment
 To the Judge's palace, soiled with blood;
 90 May He grant me justice from that wolf,
 And mark him quickly, even in my day.
 O God, is it right that a vile small wolf
 Should shed my child's blood upon this countryside?
 Exact justice for me from him, Lord;
 May he dwell in misfortune day and night!”

Jacob's Debate with His Sons

- All ten of exalted Jacob's sons
 Stood bareheaded and disheveled before their father,
 Reuben, and Naphthali, and Asher,
 95 Zebulun, Gad, and leonine Levi,
 Judah, and bold Issachar,

Also Simeon, the brave and valiant hero.
 In private they confessed: "We are the wolf;
 We have all sinned; the fault is ours."²²
 With pained hearts they lamented
 That ugly, villainous deed.
 Their father, seeing the grief and agitation
 Rising from the depth of their souls, and their burning hearts,
 Addressed them thus: "What is the use of lamenting
 Now; what should have never been has come to pass.
 100 It would be better that you act like men,
 Sustain each other in this suffering.
 You were and ever shall remain far from him;
 The wolf vanquished him suddenly.
 On Judgment Day, God will inquire after him
 And will require something for his blood."²³
 You will be brought before that council;
 The Almighty will not neglect injustice.
 105 Each of you is in possession of such strength
 That you can break the necks of lions, yet
 A wolf outfoxed you, like a Turk or Tāzī.²⁴
 What a treasure you have cast into the winds!
 Through carelessness you've pulled up root and branch.²⁵
 Spread out his shirt for me; show it again.
 Contemplate how he was killed in grief;
 Were his arms and back broken?"²⁶
 Then Levi opened up the tunic,
 Before Jacob displayed it once again.
 110 No part of it was torn,
 Neither the collar nor its back;
 No trace of the wolf's claws could be seen,
 Nor of their deceit.²⁷ Jacob said to himself:
 "There is a hidden mystery in this;
 None but the Glorious One divines its meaning.
 My sons were simply sporting with him,
 But me they cast into a burning furnace.
 The story of Joseph and the wolf is a lie,
 Exceedingly brazen, a patent lie.

- 115 No wolf knows anything of Joseph;
 The story of my darling sons is just not true.
 Can a wolf burst into the midst of a flock,
 Leave lambs behind and steal my Joseph?!
 They're tearing me apart with their lie's claws,
 Untouched the truth of Joseph and the wolf.
 My shepherd, truly a bloodthirsty wolf,
 Guards my sheep on the plain day and night.
 Never have I had troubles from wild beasts;
 No wolf has ever eaten from my flock.
- 120 How did the wolf tear him apart
 And leave the entire flock behind?!²⁸
 Then to his sons he said aloud:
 "Inform me of this mystery,
 I want to examine it thoroughly;
 Speak nothing but the truth:
 How did this unjust disaster befall Joseph;
 How was he caught in its clutches?"
 They once again replied: "O clever one,
 May Resurrection's King be ever your help.
- 125 We went to play for a while,
 We were simply fooling around;
 We raced among the flowers and the green,
 Picked roses, sweet basil, and hyacinths.²⁹
 He did not come with us to play;
 We pressed him, but he would not come.³⁰
 So we left him with the flock for a short while;
 We thought he would be safe.
 We stripped off our clothes
 And left them with that handsome one.
- 130 We neglected him for a while,
 And thus he came to grief.
 The wolf ambushed him from a hidden place
 And like a lion pounced upon the flock.
 The wolf ambushed him unexpectedly,
 Carried him off by heaven's own decree.³¹
 He took him away and ate him suddenly;

- Killed and devoured him quickly.
 When we returned from our games after a while,
 We ran looking in haste toward the flock.
 135 Seeing no trace of Joseph, we cried
 And felt we were losing our minds.
 We knew at once a wolf had carried him off;³²
 Hard-hearted, had killed and eaten him.
 We ran looking for that wolf in every direction
 But found no trace of Joseph or the wolf.
 At last, and to our sorrow, we found this tunic
 At the mountain's base, smeared with blood.
 We have no other information;
 All of us grieve and cry for him."

*Jacob's Argument with His Sons Regarding the Fact That the Wolf Did
 Not Eat Joseph*

- 140 Clever Jacob responded to them thus:
 "All that you're saying is a complete lie:
 If by heaven's decree Joseph fell captive
 Into the clutches of a bloodthirsty wolf,
 Where are the marks of the wolf's claws,
 The paw prints, and the traces of his bites?
 And if the wolf ate him without his tunic,
 Why is it thus drenched in blood?
 And if the mad wolf ate him with his tunic on,
 Where are the tears of his fangs on it?
 145 All that you utter is a lie, deceitful;
 Deceit shackles your feet, each one of you.
 If I could see that wolf in person,
 He'd tell me about Joseph face to face.
 Certain it is that a wolf did not eat him,
 Nor treated him unjustly.
 You're not telling the truth about him;
 The lie within this tale is evident.
 The truth is that a wolf did not devour him;
 My child did not perish by the wolf's claw."
 150 But his child's condition was not clear to him;

For God's gift of prophecy had left him then.³³
 He thought, "They've killed him
 And smeared his shirt in blood;
 If they did kill him, the Almighty will
 Cause them in time to perish in affliction.
 Then their long abode will be under the ground,
 And their place under the dirt forever."
 Once more he addressed the shirt and cried,
 "Where did your royal master go?
 Where is your friend, your heart's beloved?
 155 Where is your elegant radiant embracer?
 Where your rose-cheeked heartbreaker?"
 He spoke thus and tore his hair,
 Replaced his clothes with a coarse mantle;³⁴
 His sons wept, seeing him wrapped in the mantle,
 And strewed dust upon their own heads.

Jacob's Sons Capture the Helpless Wolf and Bring Him to Their Father

Again his sons addressed the prophet, saying:
 "O dear, exalted father, we will run quickly
 Out to the desert and try to find the wolf."³⁵
 160 In agitation, they left Jacob's side
 Barefooted and bareheaded, crying loudly.
 Roaming the desert for a while,
 They came upon a small and solitary wolf.
 Cutting off his flight on every side,
 They quickly captured that innocent beast.
 Like thieves, they collared him,
 And with a staff broke his back and flanks,
 Bloodied his muzzle and paws; those "brave" ones³⁶
 165 Rendered him utterly helpless. They dragged him along;
 They brought him back to Jacob, saying,
 "May you come to a good end!
 We bring the shameless wolf who devoured
 Joseph, the offspring of Jamshīd;³⁷
 Ask him: Why did you commit this unjust act;
 Did you rejoice in killing my son?

Why did you go after him, O wicked one?
 What grudge did you bear against that moon-cheeked son?"
 When Jacob, crazed with grief, beheld that wolf,
 Covered with blood from head to toe,
 170 Caned almost to death, blood flowing
 From his throat and back, he said:
 "This wretched wolf is innocent,
 Although he is a vile and predatory beast."³⁸
 Then he prayed silently to God
 To grant his hope, a wish:
 "Release the wolf's tongue from its bonds
 That he may tell about these awful wounds."
 Quick as a flash the Almighty God accepted
 The prayer of Canaan's sage; the wolf
 175 Began at once to converse with Jacob;³⁹
 His tongue took to it rather nicely.

Jacob's Debate with the Wolf and His Querying of Him

Jacob addressed the wolf: "O tyrant,
 Why did you set my soul on fire?
 O wolf, have you no shame before God?
 Why did you kill Joseph so wretchedly?
 Why did you eat that soul of the universe,
 Why did you devour that princely youth?
 Why did you act so unjustly toward him?
 Why did you deprive me of his company?
 180 Tell me, O villain, what harm did Joseph
 Do to you that you attacked him?
 Why did you uproot my cypress tree,
 Impale my heart upon a roasting spit?
 You've robbed the boy of life and father;
 Has this ever been done to the shah of beauties?
 Did Time⁴⁰ drive your heart to such vengeance,
 Or insane rage possess your head?
 My heart's lamp you have extinguished,
 Making the world appear perverse before my eyes;
 185 You dared deprive the world of such a prince,

Who was the glory of the human race!
Why did you cast the die crookedly,
And burden me with pain and sorrow?
Were there too few flocks on the plain and mountains
That you had to aim at those sunny cheeks,
And eat Joseph instead of a lamb?
Did you think you were eating bread and herbs?
Was there nothing better to eat than my Joseph,
Not enough fat and lovely lambs around?
190 You've set fire to a world of good fortune;
The world is on fire by reason of this plunder.
How did you tear him apart with your claws?
Did you not see the beauty of his face?
Bitterly you robbed him of his sweet soul,
And me you flung into a burning fire.
Where did you eat him, tell me;
It may be I can find a strand of hair,
That would become my sweet companion and my friend;
My heart and soul I'd bind with that one strand.
195 One of his strands of hair is worth two hundred lives;
The eight heavens are of less value than such a hair!⁴¹
That strand would keep me company in the grave,
Even on Resurrection Day; to me it would impart
Forever the scent of my beloved Joseph.
Though you had died ravenous,
You should not have harmed him.
No mercy came to that moon face,
None to his lovely black eyes.
No mercy came to that meadow cypress;
None to that moon of Khotan.⁴²
200 No mercy came to that tranquil soul;
None to that soul of the universe.
No mercy came to that sugar bundle;
None to that jewelled necklace.
No mercy came to that treasury of gifts;
None to that brilliant light.
No mercy came to that fierce lion;

None to that living soul.
 No mercy came to that sunny child;
 None to that happy boy."⁴³
 205 Thus did he keen and rain forth tears
 On his cheeks like a spring shower.
 The pain that racked Jacob's grieving breast
 Filled the heart also of the wretched wolf;
 For the old man he cried profusely,
 As if he had been struck by an arrow.

The Wolf's Debate with Jacob, by God's Command

The wolf then, by God's decree
 Launched into conversation with Jacob.
 He said, "O prophet, for the Almighty's sake,
 Beware, bear not a bad opinion of me.
 210 How could I shed a prophet's blood;
 How can I contend with God's own prophet?
 How can a beast devour a prophet,
 A great man, a prince, acquainted with the Lord?
 The prophet's blood is forbidden to us;⁴⁴
 I do not even know who Joseph is.
 How does a beast rate against a prophet,
 To dare attack him, O wise sage?
 Beware, bear not a bad opinion of me;
 215 Seek Joseph in other quarters; of these charges
 I am innocent; God knows my inmost thoughts.
 Had I seen Joseph, I would have laid my head
 Down at his feet; tender respect and honor,
 Caresses, hundreds, would I have shown him.
 In all this time no wolf has dared
 To hover round your sheep;
 Should one so do, he'd merely frighten them;
 You know their habits all too well.
 220 And if all of a sudden a wolf should see
 One of your stray sheep upon the road,
 He'd drive and chase it away,
 Sending it back to your flock

Without even smelling it for fear of you,
Even were he to expire from desire;
How then would he dare hunt down your Joseph?
Which wolf would dare to play that game?
Around your flocks, the wolves are shepherds,
Endlessly watching over them. No,
I know nothing of Joseph; and God knows
My inmost and my open thoughts.
Since one can't hover round your flock,
It would not be easy to devour Joseph.
Seek your Joseph in another place;
He was not harmed by us."
The innocent wolf's tale made Jacob suffer;
He asked him once again: "O beast,
Of Joseph's blood I know you're innocent
And now I do apologize to you.
230 But tell me, what did happen to him;
Who dared inflict on him such unjust cruelty?
Who blackened our day so suddenly?
They've killed him swiftly, in affliction;
No friend came to his rescue."
The wolf replied: "O honest lord,
Who but the Mover of the celestial spheres
Sees the invisible? But know, exalted prince,
One should not draw the veil aside like a spy.
235 I did not eat him; so much is certain;
The Lord of the Throne knows the rest."
Jacob then knew the beast spoke truly,
Pursued nothing but truth. The sons' falsehood
Needed some looking into;
Not one of their words was truth;
Out of their lies they wove
A deep, dense night. One cannot hide
The sun with dirt; water cannot be hidden
240 Under fire, the moon by a fish,⁴⁵
Nor can blackness be washed out of the night.
Jacob said in his heart: "If things stand thus,

My sons have been deceitful, that's for certain;
 I must suffer the pain with red eyes, yellow cheeks.
 I will not find out the truth about him from them;
 God knows they brought this evil upon me.
 Their own misfortune they have bought with gold;
 They have disgraced themselves in haste.
 245 This they made plain by bringing here the wolf,
 And now, alas, they are entirely disgraced.
 The thoughts and acts of each are in God's hands;
 Hidden secrets are manifest to Him.⁴⁶
 They have diminished their own stature,
 And are bound intimately with their deed.
 In the end, He will return those gone astray,
 Whoever bears guilt in this matter.
 This tale will come to light;
 I'm confident of God's decree."
 250 The moment he heard about his child,
 Prophecy left that sage at once.⁴⁷
 As long as he knew not what became of him,
 He endured the calamity and injustice.
 But pay close attention to the games
 The Judge plays with His prophets.

Jacob's Second Debate with the Wolf

Again Jacob addressed the wolf: "O beast,
 Why are you now so drenched in blood?
 Where have you been; what did you graze upon?
 What prey did you tear apart today?
 255 Was it beast or human being? On whose life
 Did you wreak your oppression, your injustice?"
 The wolf replied, "O lion of God,⁴⁸
 I am bewildered, wounded, and fatigued,
 And I have wandered far away from home;
 I am a stranger here, helpless and weak.
 My habitation used to be in Syria;⁴⁹
 My permanent abode was in its mountains.
 There in the mountains, plains, and forests,

Ferociousness prevailed.
 260 In my lowliness I had only one child;
 The dust of his paw prints was my diadem.
 He wandered off from me suddenly;
 He tore apart my sore, afflicted heart.
 Ten days it is that I've been cut off from him;
 Not one of these days has been good.
 By evening I was headed toward the desert,
 From Syria into Canaan, weeping,
 Bewildered, and distressed.⁶⁰ I questioned
 Every beast, good or bad, on every bypath
 265 About my child and suddenly arrived here
 In this valley and saw what I ought not to have seen.
 I chanced upon these ten youths,
 Nimble and strong, rough champions.
 They cut my way off right and left; it seemed
 The Day of Resurrection had arrived for me.
 They trapped and collared me firmly
 And with a stick broke both my arms and legs.
 I fell into these straits, O wise sage,
 Suddenly, through the grief I bore my child."
 270 He said this, and from his eyes shed
 Copious tears like pomegranate seeds.
 His bewildered heart was so much on fire
 It could have kindled a fire on its own.
 Jacob said: "He's looking for his child,
 Just like me; two streams of tears of blood
 Flow from his eyes; without doubt,
 He is afflicted, just like me. He is mourning
 His child; he is stunned and afflicted."
 Aloud, he said: "Come, let us cry together,
 We have both lost our beloved children."
 275 Then he commanded that they remove his collar
 And give him food to eat aplenty.
 The wolf heaped blessings on Canaan's sage,
 Turned, and took off for the desert.

Jacob Argues with His Sons and Laments

- Jacob turned to his sons and said,
 "O twisted children, you are all sinners,
 One and all, and you know it;
 Your destiny is from the Almighty.
 He made you guilty and sinful;
 He made you acquainted with villainy.
- 280 The Almighty knows the secret you are hiding
 For in the invisible He knows all secrets.
 O God, may you experience my misfortune!⁵¹
 God grant me patience to suffer this pain;
 He must make me patient.⁵²
 The day will come when I shall see my child's face,
 I will happily sit in my Joseph's presence.
 Should my time be up before then, I accept the order,
 And I will die in separation's pain.
- 285 What can one do against the Lord's decree?
 I would simply go helpless into the ground."⁵³
 This he said and began crying again.
 The hearts of all present were aflame.
 Children, women, men came and surrounded
 Canaan's sage, lamenting in his pain.
 They mourned his grief and in their turn
 They grieved: sad, weary, and afflicted.
 When Jacob lost Joseph so suddenly,
 He gave up all his wordly tasks.
- 290 He sat in a dark house all day long,
 Dressed in sackcloth, his only occupation
 Wailing and sighing, lamenting,
 Like a prisoner inside a well.⁵⁴
 The sighs he uttered could smash
 Iron hearts forged upon anvils.
 When pain for Joseph made him sigh,
 The cheeks of young and old turned pale.
 He could if he so wished set fire to the world,
 And then what straw he'd scatter to the winds!
- 295 Mourning, he dwelt within his house,

Grief's bread and water were his only food.
 He rested on no couch other than on his knees;
 He did not sleep by night nor rest by day.
 His strength was lost in sleeplessness;
 Much did he weep and greatly longed for death.
 Blindly he cried, full of affliction,
 Within his house, grieved, facing the wall,
 Day and night bearing his sorrow
 Which did not diminish over time.

- 300 His tongue uttered no word other than "Joseph,"
 For Joseph was his strength of body and soul.
 He lived with the memory of the boy's appearance;
 Other than mourning, he had no occupation.
 He allowed no one in his presence
 Save those who like himself sighed and lamented.
 And if his tongue did not call Joseph's name,
 His mouth would fall silent at once.
 Day and night Jacob lived with his sorrow;
 None could converse with him.

- 305 O Shāhīn,
 The sorrow of the ages prepares
 The arrival of happiness' new shoot.
 Dark night ends in a bright morning;
 Day always follows a dark night.

Mūsā-nāmāh (The Book of Moses)

Moses and the Burning Bush

God Manifests Himself to Kalīm Allah for the First Time

One night,¹ when Moses once again
 Happened to roam the desert,
 Walking round and round his sheep,
 Night's face was veiled in darkness,
 A sense of dread stirred discord in the heart.
 Black *ḍivs*² were lurking everywhere; it seemed
 That turning Time itself was plotting ambush.
 The world plunged into crow-black mourning,

- And morning's neck was broken.
- 5 Fish and fowl were both asleep on this
Malevolent night full of foreboding.
The world was crying but the heavens smiled,
Displaying starry teeth upon the firmament.
Below, the prophet hovered in the desert
Around his flock of sheep.³
- Suddenly,
- A lamb jumped out before him, running madly
Away from the flock into the desert,
Dashing into the darkness of the night
Like an arrow shot from a bow.
- 10 The prophet, seeing this, ran quickly
After that beloved son.⁴ And when between them
But a short distance remained, renowned Kalīm,
The sun of all creation, saw of a sudden
Flames enveloping a tree, resembling a pavilion,
Leaping from there to diverse other trees.
From far away, God's interlocutor
Was unable to see that the fire was,
In truth, nothing but light:⁵
- 15 It kindled not a branch. Boldly
Kalīm Allah walked in its direction,
Not knowing that the fire was but light,
The site of God's manifestation.
Courageously and quickly he moved forward
After the lamb⁶ in hot pursuit.
And then he heard a voice:
- "O Moses, Moses,
Remove your sandals quickly as you move;
This is a chosen spot; do not come⁷
So flustered, beside yourself!⁸
- 20 Know that the flames you saw from far away
Are nothing but pure light."⁹
- As God's voice
Was absorbed by his soul's ears, Moses replied:

"Here I am,"¹⁰ then lost all consciousness of self.¹¹

When by the command of Time's Creator

'Imrān's¹² son removed his sandals,

He was addressed again:

"Moses, know well

That I am the lord of your fathers

And forefathers. Toward Egypt make haste¹³

For there the Israelites are in torment.

I harkened to their cries and lamentations;¹⁴

The time has come to rescue them. Long ago,

I entered into covenant with the forefathers

Of this friendless folk, with Abraham,

Wise Isaac, and prudent Jacob, pledging that Canaan

I would return to them and would defeat

All their enemies — Canaan, that land

Flowing with milk and honey,¹⁵

By God's divine decree. Its excellence

Of vegetation can be matched

Only by the Garden of the Ṭūbā tree;¹⁶

30 Its air and water cannot be compared

With those of any other land;

Its breeze revives the dead; its gentle air

Relieves all grief. In all the world

No other place like this, a shady, pleasant place.

I send you quickly now

Off to Egypt like a flying arrow.

Carry my message to Pharaoh;

Give it to that unlucky, accursed infidel:¹⁷

35 "Let Jacob's offspring leave your realm

Such is God's perfect command!"

That luminary of earth's pedestal, Kalīm Allah,

On hearing the command of the Pure Judge,

Replied: "O Knower of all mysteries,

Ancient, Potent, Omniscient, Veiler,

Do not, O Generous One, entrust me with this;

This mission, no, I am not the right man,

I cannot carry it out;
 A man more eloquent than I is needed,
 One who can speak strong language
 40 Before the oppressive pagan.¹⁸
 Might and miracles are needed;
 What am I saying? You know it all.
 What might and miracle can I display,
 And how dislodge the state crown from his brow?"
 Having confided thus in God he banished
 Speech into the birdcage for a while.¹⁹
 Then the command came:

"Throw down your staff!"

45 He did so. Suddenly a snake appeared
 Through God's power, showering sparks of fire
 From its eyes. Beholding this,
 The prophet lost his breath,
 His soul leapt to his mouth.

The call came once again:

"Grasp it by the tail; why are you so afraid?
 Don't run away from the staff!"²⁰
 Made bold by God's command the prophet wheeled
 Like a male lion upon that fierce creature,
 Grasped its tail; and instantly it turned
 Into a staff again; such was God's pleasure.

50 Came another command:

"Now place your hand

Into your bosom," and so Moses did.
 The call pursued: "Now take it out."
 Obeying, the brave prophet saw
 His hand had turned all white; despair
 Seized on him at the sight.

Again a call:

"O bright-faced man, once more
 Place your hand in your bosom!"
 The prophet once again obeyed
 Intoxicated by these mysteries.

55 And when the command came, "Now take it out,"

He did and saw his hand quite healed.

Then God addressed him further:

“Glorious chief, the Hand of Might

Will keep you company. My Majesty will be

Your companion. When with the staff

You strike water and fish,

Myriads will die. Your staff

Will fill the waters of the Nile with blood,

Red blood will be its color.”

60 But Moses spoke and said:

“O Mighty, Living Omnipotent,

Send someone in my place;

Conceal my person from this evil man’s eyes;

My speech is not up to the task

As You, knower of secrets, know too well.

How can I be a messenger to Pharaoh,

And carry your message to that villain?”

But he was told, “I rule over your tongue;

65 I nourish you, body and soul. Why do you fear?

I Myself am your friend; grieve not,

Even if Fate should oppose you.²¹

You must set out quickly;

You do the going, I will display the might.

Your brother will come to meet you on the way;

He will carry out your wishes. At every turn

I’ll be along with you and be your guide

On and off the path.”

(Listen

And learn from me the mystery

Of Him who bade Moses remove his sandals.

70 The unperceptive disciple²² does not know it;

This language is not known to every bird.

He meant: “You will no longer be around women,

To win the [polo] ball on the field.”²³

When once again Moses glanced at the trees,

He saw the light no more and set out on the road.

He grabbed the sprightly lamb and quickly

- Traversed the plain. Bringing it to the flock
 He kept kissing its eyes and cheeks; then
 75 A portion of the night, until the smile of dawn,
 The prophet spent communing with the Lord.²⁴
 That night He spoke with him tumultuously,
 One to one, till dawn. Intoxicated,²⁵
 By the night he had spent, the prophet headed
 Toward the sage Jethro; lambs skipped before him;
 That free cypress brought to the meeting place
 The flock at the appointed time.
- 80 Kalīm the glory of the human race,
 Came before the sage and told him
 About his journey and shared with him
 Those mysteries.²⁶ When he heard everything,
 The thought of separation sparked turmoil
 In famous Jethro's heart. But instantly
 That prudent sage readied provisions
 Of every type on hand. He gave
 Fleet handsome beasts of burden
 While grief tugged at his heart.
- 85 Beholding him intent on leaving, swiftly
 Jethro adorned the prophet's mount.
 Moses bade him farewell and he, in turn,
 Assured him of the trust of times gone by.
 Although he had had from the beginning countless sheep,
 For each a thousand more had come to him
 Through Kalīm's good fortune. The Perfect Lord
 Gave him so many sheep that only He,
 Their true provider, could count them now.

Moses' Vision of God

Kalīm Allah Beholds God's Countenance

Thus did Kalīm lament,¹ and said: "O Immortal
 One, I have a wish: for Your mercy's sake
 Reveal Your face to me from behind the veil;
 Show me just once a vision of Yourself,
 For I so long to see You. The pain of this

Great longing grieves my heart." Thus
 For this vision's sake the prophet kept lamenting
 Before God, rubbing his head and his white beard
 5 Into the dust.² A voice called out: "O Kalīm,
 Whoever sees Us must perish that same moment;
 He endures not in the world but must, that very hour,
 Relinquish his sweet soul; the mortal eye cannot
 Endure so much light; only from far away
 Can it behold My face and My eternity.
 But do you now send Joshua, son of Nun, away,
 Happy and cheerful toward the army;³
 Once there, tell him to seek out all the people
 10 And warn them that tomorrow at dawn no one
 Except Aaron⁴ should dare to leave his home.
 Let them guard their flocks also within folds,
 And let none of the people venture forth
 From their own dwellings.⁵ Such, O Kalīm,
 Is My command and My decree. And as for you,
 Tomorrow night you should go cheerfully
 Toward that high mountain made of emerald,⁶
 An open site; you'll see a designated mound;
 Go, sit there free of worry.
 15 O Kalīm, be alert and self-possessed; know
 That tomorrow I shall pass quickly by that place,
 But you⁷ will not see anything except My back
 Even if you were made of iron, steel, or stone.
 In order that you may endure in the world,
 I make you full aware on all accounts."
 Hearing this the prophet kissed the ground
 And with happy rosy cheeks that man
 Of pure descent quickly departed to where
 Joshua, the son of Nun, was waiting.
 20 He told him God's entire message
 And sent him off toward the army.
 Joining his friends, that brave man
 Revealed at once the burden of his heart.
 He warned each one in turn to beware,

For such was God's command: "Tomorrow,
 No living being leave his dwelling,
 Nor wander suddenly upon the plain; no humans
 And no animals should be around Mount Sinai.
 25 Beware, and heed the Judge's own command;
 If you would remain safe and tranquil,
 And not dispatch your souls from your bodies,
 Do not in any way rebel against it."
 As for his part the prophet,
 That wise old sage, headed out in the deep
 Of night toward the emerald mountain,
 To where the Judge, the Ancient One
 Of night and days, had foreordained. Upon the way,
 Intense desire for union with the Friend
 Burned within him.⁸ Then, of a sudden,
 He saw the world flooded in light:
 30 Fire fell upon mountain and stone;
 Heavy mountains were toppled.⁹
 Heaven and earth, mountain and desert,
 All trembled by the Judge's command;
 The entire world was filled with endless light,
 Which every moment increased. Then suddenly,
 Kalīm glanced up from the path, beheld
 The Majesty and took leave of his senses.¹⁰
 That pure man turned entirely into spirit;
 Being beside himself, he rent the garment
 35 Of his soul. A cry arose from the lover
 Now that he suddenly beheld his Beloved enter.¹¹
 He passed in front of him: the prophet looked
 And saw Him, and in beholding
 His dread, he passed out at once.
 The prophet fell moaning upon his face,
 Rubbing his own beauty into the dust.
 He said: "O Hidden and Manifest Creator,
 Ancient, Almighty, Omnipotent, Glorious One,
 Forgive the errors of this sinful world;
 Absolve all who are seeking Your pardon.

- 40 Forgive my people all at once; cancel
 And cleanse them of their sins, their crimes."
 As he cried thus to God, to the exalted,
 The Creator's message came in glory; a voice
 Declared: "O Moses, rejoice, and raise your head;
 Rise, do not tear your face, nor cry!
 I do forgive them all wholly; all those
 Who are worthy, I fully pardon;
 Know this, drive this care out of your heart,
- 45 Your mind. For with their ancestors I made
 A covenant, gave them My word, upon My soul,
 That I will entrust Canaan to them and rain
 The fear of them upon their enemies.
 I will drive out the Amorites and Jebusites;
 Leave no Perizite in place; the Hivites¹²
 And the Girgishites¹³ of the realm, enemies all,
 Will topple, and fulfilling the vow
- 50 Of My generous soul, I will give them a place
 As lovely and as fresh as Eden's Garden.
 But O Kalīm, as regards yourself,
 Grasp well the inward meaning of this mystery,
 For since eternity I have decreed it so:
 You will yourself not set foot in Canaan;
 From this, O son of 'Imrān, you are withheld."
 On hearing this the color left Kalīm's cheeks,
 Tears abundant like the Oxus flooded his bosom.
 Yet even as they flowed, Kalīm Allah
- 55 Thought in his heart: "Though I am not to see it,
 This is no cause for grief; these my two eyes
 Ought not to grieve, for when my people behold
 That land and settle in it happily,
 As You, O Knower of secrets, know full well,
 It will be as if I saw it two hundred times!"
 And when the prophet told himself this secret,
 Good cheer returned to him once more,
 A small, unfolding rosebud.¹⁴

The Killing of the Blasphemer

The Sons of Jacob Kill the Blaspheing Man

- One day,¹ by fate's decree, two riders
 In the glorious royal encampment
 Fell into discord with one another;²
 The hand of one turned out to be the stronger
 And this he proved upon the other well.
 He struck him down with a high blow
 And gave no thought to helping him.
- 5 Upon receiving such a heavy blow,
 This one then cursed his mother and his sister.
 Then, full of enmity, he turned to God
 And blasphemed with his tongue.
 His mother was one of the tribe of Dan,
 But his father was an Egyptian;
 He had a father who was an infidel;
 The jackal was now turned into a tiger.
 His father's name was Hūrī of Sām;³
- 10 Shelomit was his mother's name.
 When that accursed man vilified the Judge,
 On hearing the curse, the army came running
 From all directions toward that infidel.
 They pressed around him firmly
 And threw a rope over his neck and thighs.
 Humiliating him thus, they dragged him
 Before Moses; then those chieftains
 Told Moses and Aaron what the vile man had said.
- 15 Informed of the man's blasphemy
 Moses, that soaring royal falcon,
 Angrily admonished the company thus:
 "Do not associate with him;
 Confine him to the prison until
 I learn what the Almighty commands;
 His way will come to pass."
 According to the prophet's word
 They threw him into prison, bound tightly,

- Like an anvil. As if for a thief
They cleared a space for him in jail
And bound his feet in iron chains.
- 20 Kalīm Allah, having thus jailed him,
Received at once God's message: "O Moses,
Release now from your prison
That blasphemer, that cursed bad-tempered man;
Give orders to the army to bring him out,
Dragging him on the plain, and then
Let everybody stone him to death.
Let him embrace the consequence of his act
That others may take warning and shall know,
All who blaspheme shall in this manner die."
- 25 When Kalīm Allah heard from the Almighty
This mystery, he bowed and kissed the ground;
Apprised of God's command the prophet
Spoke at once to the assembled company:
"Depart from here quick as fire,
Relay this message to that infidel in jail;
Remove him from it, for such is the command
Of the Incomparable: let the army
Fetch him by dragging him out.
Let him be stoned to death so that
- 30 The world will heed this lesson
And hold its tongue in check."
When the army heard that mystery,
They hastened gleefully to the sinner's side.
They dragged him terrified out of jail,
Out of his mind, an iron collar
Fastened around his neck. The Sons of Jacob
Surrounded him and said, "O perverse sinner,
Did you not know not to contend with God?
You'll never rise from this calamity.
- 35 In this world such are your desserts;
Hell has been joined to your soul."
Thus spoke they to him and hauled him out
In humiliation, dragging that vile man.

And having brought him out, the army
 Dug a circle on the surface of the plain
 And then those famous men, all of one mind,
 Seized him and stood him up within the circle.
 They buried him up to his waist in dirt,
 While from the ditch he roared like a lion.
 40 And then from every side and direction
 Those famous men rained stones on him.
 At the first blow his fortune came to an end;
 Quickly his trunk fell over, quickly.
 One whose race lacks stock and lineage
 How can he rejoice at belonging to the human race?
 This man was of ill-fated, topsy-turvy descent,
 Egyptian, not of Jacob's progeny,
 He made his stock and lineage
 Known to all, high and low, so that
 All were aware, and through his curse
 Were not themselves destroyed.
 Black never turns to white though you
 Wash it in a hundred waters;
 Of certainty a crow does not become
 A parrot; nor will bad stock turn good;
 A bead of clay does not a jewel make,
 Gilt cannot become a pure turquoise.

Qārūn's Rebellion

Qārūn's Argument with Kalīm Allāh

They hastened and went quickly to the prophet;¹
 Raising a mighty clamor they addressed him thus:
 "Why should you count for more than we,
 Have precedence in every matter over us?²
 We're greater than you in wealth and treasure;³
 There's nothing in which you're better than us;
 You're indigent, a dervish,⁴ whereas we possess
 Money and treasures beyond count. Tell us,
 5 In what do you surpass us? Think and then
 Tell us, just who do you think you are?

- We're equal in nobility, we and you,
 As we are one and all of Hebrew stock.
 Won't you then tell us, O Kalīm,
 Wherein lies your greatness?
 How long will you look so severe?
 How long will you keep on saying
 The Almighty has commanded thus,
 Causing such anguish to this multitude?⁵
 Calamity has come to us from you each moment;⁶
 You showed no mercy to our white beards.
- 10 From the time you carried us away from Pharaoh
 On this "pilgrimage," we have not seen in the world
 Anything good, nothing but trouble hourly.
 You've turned our daylight into darkness;
 You aimed to kill us with your wisdom,⁷
 This was your intention from the start,
 To annihilate the Hebrew folk. As for us,
 Our rank and station surpass yours
 As does our combined nobility.
- 15 And you, what have you done for us?
 Have you not thought of what you've done?
 You gave the priesthood to Hārūn⁸ instead of Qārūn
 And thereby plunged us into mourning:
 Who more than Qārūn was worthy of the priesthood
 In the world, O son of 'Imrān?⁹
 As for the Levites, they possess such "courage"
 That out of fear of you they breathe as one.
 You've seized the entire world in your own hands;
 You have disgraced whatever it brought forth.
- 20 Through treachery you have thrust yourself forward;
 You've rent the very innards of the world.
 A beggar claims now his share in meddling!
 Your ignorance is written on your heart:
 You're a mere dervish; off with you to a retreat!
 We don't need a beggar for our leader. We take
 Precedence over you, whatever you say;
 Our combined nobility surpasses yours."

When God's lion heard this from oppressive Qārūn
 And his tribe, he was dumbfounded. The prophet
 25 Addressed himself to Qārūn thus:

"Talk alone

Leds to no real results.

My rank and station come from God. Pay heed,
 Oblivious man, to my mystery.

Why do you strive with me in vain? I fear
 Through this you'll shed your blood.

Since you've let loose your tongue in foolish talk
 And set your foot shamelessly on this path,
 At dawn tomorrow, come before me and display
 Your own rank and station.¹⁰

30 Each one of you bring along his censer,
 And we will show you up in your own business.
 Let each of you put incense in his censer and,
 O mad, oppressive tyrants, undertake to sprinkle.

If you would wear the priests' garments
 Then relinquish all your worldly goods.

Hārūn will also take hold of his censer;

You, he, and Qārūn will be left alone.

Then go to the opening of the Tent of Meeting;¹¹

I will not heed your cries and lamentations.

35 There will it be manifest who is truly noble,
 And who strikes whom by right."

Hearing these words from him who was Time's glory,
 They walked toward their tents well satisfied.

Kalīm Allah went into his own tent, where he sat

Angry and brooding over Qārūn's tyranny.

He dispatched someone to fetch Datan and Abiram;

That noble cypress ordered both be found.

When those two elders learned where matters stood

They went like night that covers

The Almighty's sun.¹²

40 Said the prophet to them:

"Tomorrow at dawn, do not follow, do not be misled
 By Qārūn. Take not your own censers,

For you will burn, in truth, or die.
 Qārūn's star is now obscured in darkness,
 His horoscope's account is in a ruined state.
 Tomorrow he will die among his chieftains;
 Violence will overcome his soul.
 What lot these are, the progeny of Jacob,
 Stricken from moment to moment upside down!
 45 Who else has such a people in the world?
 Their iniquity has worn me down.
 I've traveled the twisted path in the valley
 And now arrive near the goal,
 That place wherein, by divine decree,
 The milk and honey flow. Of those
 Whom I brought out of Egypt,
 From before Pharaoh, from the blame
 They heaped on me, none has survived;
 50 The rest who have remained will stumble,
 Every one of them, for lack of righteousness.¹³
 The elders¹⁴ who heard this from the prophet
 Said nothing, good or bad; fell silent,
 And left the prophet's presence;
 Quick as the night they hastened to their homes.
 All that the prophet told them
 Flickered round them, as in a dome.
 But they did not believe the words
 Of God's lion, did not befriend good fortune.
 55 They did not heed one little word of it,
 And they forgot the prophet's speech.
 They did not turn away from their pledge to Qārūn
 Nor did they withhold their hearts from him¹⁶
 One grain of barley's worth, so when
 Misfortune rose all round them,
 It scattered all their learning.
 Fate veiled their learning,
 And strove to bring about their death.
 When night passed into morrow
 Tumult and clamor arose among those chiefs.

- 60 Qārūn, that tyrant, rose up and came forth
 Once more among his friends. All went
 Toward the Tent of Meeting,¹⁶ with music
 And with their censers, cheerfully.
 They filled their censers with a special incense
 And gathered round Qārūn. In that hour
 Qārūn built a well-proportioned altar,
 Exceeding the required measurements.¹⁷
 Upon it he prepared to offer
 Several sacrifices. Just as the animals
- 65 Were placed on the altar, Kalīm Allah
 And Hārūn arrived. Hārūn held in his hands,
 Greatly delighted, a censer full of aloes;
 The chosen chieftain, Hārūn,
 Entered at once with Moses,
 Into the sanctuary;¹⁸ they stood
 In worship with open hearts and souls.

Moses Petitions God to Split Open the Ground

- A divine message came: "O Moses and Hārūn,
 Depart at once from out of the midst of these
- 70 That I may rain fire over their heads;
 I shall cast dire affliction on them all.
 I will leave not one of them alive and well,
 For they are all oppressors steeped in error."¹⁹
 When Kalīm Allah heard this he was full of fear;
 The awesome dread sent shivers down his spine.
 He sat down on the ground and rubbed his face in dust;²⁰
 From heart and soul he cried out to God:
 "O You Who uphold the nine²¹ vaulted firmaments,
 Patient and generous, incomparable,
- 75 You know full well it is Qārūn who has sinned.
 Do not, O Gracious One, oppress the rest.
 You are that One and Only Peerless God
 Who does not link the crime of one to another."²²
 Thus for a time he lamented before God
 And launched a boat on that vast ocean.²³

- A voice came once again: "O 'Imrān's son,
 Drive out the people from before the Dwelling;²⁴
 Separate them from Qārūn's folk
 So that they will not be buried with them."²⁵
- 80 On hearing this Kalīm Allah hastened
 And ran toward his gathered friends;
 He bade them flee,²⁶
 Then took his stand within the Dwelling.
 But none of Qārūn's folk heard this,
 None feared the Almighty's wrath.
 Suddenly Qārūn uttered a savage roar:
 "Who are Moses and Hārūn in the world?
 Two begging dervishes needing between them
 But one loaf of bread, who speak
 Contrary to God's command."²⁷
- 85 Now will it be shown who is God's chosen;
 Now will we soon weep over them."

Kalīm Allah

 Then turned in wrath upon Qārūn,
 Walked swiftly, furiously up to him,
 And as he did so he prayed: "O Pure
 Almighty God, Lord of the Firmaments,
 Open this very moment the earth's mouth,
 Let it drag down this misguided man, first
 His home and all his property,
 His goods and chattels, treasure,
- 90 Money, whatever he owns, from end to end,
 Worth but a grain of barley.
 Let it all be destroyed before his eyes;
 And may his wishes turn to poison."²⁸
 Preserve neither his cash or goods nor his treasures;
 Let not one barley grain survive,
 That none may say that Moses coveted
 His gold especially or set his eyes
 On Qārūn's money and because of that
 Suddenly destroyed Qārūn."²⁹
- 95 When thus Kalīm, the moon-faced, sun of the East,

Entreated the Judge, a voice proclaimed:
 "O Kalīm, treasury
 Of mysteries, seek another wish from Us.
 For this I did not plan at My creation
 And in My council took no account thereof.
 You who approach the sun in countenance,
 Know that I made the earth without a mouth."³⁰

The prophet cried out once again and spoke:
 "O Creator, Displayer of Omnipotence,
 100 I ask that through Your might You may
 At once endow the earth with a mouth, wide open,
 And that it swallow this malicious,
 Seditious, rich, and utterly corrupt man
 At once, and let the army heed this warning,
 Assenting on the spot with all their hearts."

The Earth Swallows Qārūn, His Wealth, and His Companions

As Kalīm Allah thus entreated God
 And sought this habitation for Qārūn,
 The World Founder, Judge of the Universe,
 Monarch of Being at once granted his wish.
 105 The goods, chattels, and beasts,
 All that was Qārūn's on the desert plain,
 All that surrounded Qārūn there
 Filling the desert and the plain,
 All that he owned of scattered herds
 Hidden on mountains and on plains,
 Through a miracle of the Lord of miracles
 Came walking toward him; of Qārūn's wealth
 Nothing, not a grain of barley, remained behind.³¹
 110 It was all there, surrounding Qārūn,
 The earth not visible beneath this wealth.
 Those who beheld it were confounded;
 How would they ever sort it out again?³²
 God only knows the meaning of all this;
 Whom can you turn to when the stars portend ill?
 That's what they were saying to one another;

- Taking refuge in friendship out of dread.
 The earth then suddenly split apart
 And swallowed all the longed-for treasure.³³
- 115 When Qārūn saw this, dread filled him with fear;
 Deeply distraught, he trembled like a willow.
 That was his state when, in a moment,
 The earth swallowed him also, by God's decree.³⁴
 Along with him it swallowed Datan and Abiram³⁵
 Like trapped game. Then of the others who died
 Among all those who had followed vengeful Qārūn,
 Seven hundred were swallowed all at once.
 Thus did the earth seize them, spreading
 General dread by the Creator's decree, while nearby
- 120 Stood a close-knit group joining Kalīm,
 Full of suffering and care.³⁶
 When the two hundred and fifty bewildered chieftains,
 With censers full of incense in their hands,
 Saw Qārūn thus destroyed,
 Beheld him perish suddenly,
 They were much distraught for Qārūn's sake
 And were in awe of what they had seen.
 A fire came suddenly from above,
 From the seventh heaven,³⁷ that high sphere.
- 125 Yet awhile it burned on the sphere itself
 Then struck Hārūn's censer and lept forth.
 A flame rose from it suddenly, like an arrow
 Set loose by the archer's thumb-stall.
 It moved and struck fire above them
 And set the army blazing all at once.³⁸
 Not one of Qārūn's faithful was left alive
 Full of awe for Moses and Hārūn;
 Smoke rose from them to the emerald sphere;
 They turned to ashes, one and all.
- 130 That night fourteen thousand Israelite³⁹ heroes,
 Male lions one and all, allied themselves
 With Qārūn's group seven hundred strong;
 With all their hearts and souls they turned to Qārūn

Full of aversion for their oath to the prophet.
 Once joined in a pact they broke away
 From their allegiance of old to Moses,
 Plotting, they said: "In the morning
 We'll attack, exalt heroism and death;
 135 We'll wash off all the water of shame,
 And seek revenge for Qārūn's blood.
 Why should we be oppressed on his account?"
 Thus did they speak of Qārūn's fate.
 When they had thus decided to rebel
 Against Moses, the lion of God,
 The sole Creator struck them down in anger.
 That very night they all died on the spot
 Relinquishing this way their souls to God.
 140 Next day, when news spread of the fate
 Of these denying, treacherous Israelites,
 News that a group from their own midst
 Had acted this way,⁴⁰ such fear and dread
 Entered into the hearts of the Israelites that
 The memory of joy fled from them at once.
 They ceased their talking and, like the sea,
 Each churned within from grief.
 The prophet's wish having been granted
 Qārūn's fortune came to an end.
 145 Kalīm then stood and worshiped God;
 He loosened his tongue in grateful praise
 Launching a boat on the sea of grace;⁴¹
 His sailor soul skippered it for a while.
 Through grace the wind pulled him upward,
 And in a moment he cut a path through that sea.
 When Kalīm came out from that mighty sea
 He walked gracefully, free from grief.⁴²

God's Great Name

Kalīm Allah Writes the Great Name of God for the People

By the command of Him Who is Most Generous,¹
 At once Kalīm Allah set down that hymn of praise;

He lined up all Jacob's sons before him
To teach them from the beginning to the end
The praises of the Generous Lord. The prophet
Addressed King² Joshua: "Now all our goals
5 Have been attained; reflect and fear no man.
Be strong; your friend is now the Knower
Of [all] mysteries. When in the company of friends
You head to Canaan, that land the Judge
Himself, Lord of the Universe, has pledged,
He will protect you and destroy your enemies."
When Moses completed writing it he arranged
The Torah into sections, and then the prophet,
The chosen messenger and royal falcon of creation,
Addressed the Levites thus: "O you
10 Possessors of the Great Name, guardians
Of the glorious Torah, as you now receive
God's praise, accept it among God's commandments.
The Torah's fruits are beautiful,
And all its parts refresh the soul;
As long as it remains a sign for you,
It will bear witness to the state within your midst,
Providing you with many rites and reasons,
15 Though you are stiff-necked, inclined to treachery
And pretense. I comprehend your deeds;
I know and am aware of all your thoughts, that you
Will fall suddenly into crooked ways,
Yourselves will open wide the door to calamities.
Because I am aware of all your secrets,
Your plots, tricks, arts, and artifices,
And because you are today in this covenant,
Do not tomorrow cease to heed me.
For if you oppose the Lord's command,
You will fall into decrease and disarray.
20 If you busy yourselves with evil deeds,
God will reject you. And now, O wise
And learned elders, gather all the people
For whom these precepts are intended, that I

- Myself may clarify these mysteries to them.
 I will reveal to them God's mystery,
 Make manifest to them His message.³
 I will invoke as witness to you concerning them
 The earth and firmament, heaven itself:⁴
- 25 So that you not bring evil upon yourselves
 Nor suddenly don the garments of idolatry.
 I know for certain that when I am no more
 And remain no longer in your midst,
 You will become wicked, stray far from the road,
 Grow famous for your evil deeds. The mysteries
 I've heard from God I will once more confirm
 Their first fruits to you.
 I know that you do not remember,
 And transgress all those commandments.⁵
- 30 But if you walk in crooked ways, calamities
 Will buffet you from every side;
 However you twist, fore and aft, your sweet water
 Will turn to poison. I will relate to you
 The evil your bad deeds will engender;
 Let not your hearts pursue Ahriman's⁶ vision!"
 On hearing all those mysteries from the lord
 Of generosity,⁷ all those wise men went
- 35 And brought the judges and elders before
 That handsome man. Then once again,
 Kalīm Allah began praising the Lord.

Kalīm Allah Explains the Great Name to the People

- Thus did the prophet speak: "O pure celestials,
 And you, illustrious earthly men,
 Open wide your ears to knowledge,
 Climb high upon the roof of justice:
 Turn not away from His Law,⁸
 So that you find life through justice.
- 40 Hear from me all these mysteries,
 Follow the precepts of the Law.
 Like rain I will shower my words; my precepts

- Will fall like drops of dew or like the shower
That falls on verdure,⁹ restoring its life and beauty,
Like a nourishing rain which revives
The wilted green. When I utter
The Name of the Incomparable Creator,
I will make you hear and remember His Name.
- 45 The earth, mountain, and sea will tremble,
Awestruck and full of dread.
Acknowledge His might, for He is
Omnipotent, Bestower, and Veiler.
His will and deed are revealed every moment;
He is the God of old, the long-suffering one.
He has shown us the way of truth,¹⁰ the laws,
The wisdom, and the treasures of the path.¹¹
He is gentle and just and knows no crookedness,
He is unique, and He remains with none.
- 50 Do you pursue justice as well that you
Die not heedless, like your ancestors.¹²
They did not follow justice and of the precepts
They did not heed one in a hundred.
Although I counseled them all the time,
It was to no effect, they paid no attention;
Of God's precepts they were heedless.
They were exceedingly stiff-necked;
They turned my heart into a storehouse of grief.
- 55 When they would hear of the Avenger's wrath
They would rebel at once;
This people was devoid of wisdom, learning,
Knowledge, and gratitude for blessings.
In forty years those champions¹⁵ died on the road,
Everywhere, complaining and ill-tempered.
They did not act justly toward one another;
Their actions were all twisted. They tried
Their Lord; calamity's road they opened for themselves.
- 60 Beware, and be not like those errant folk.
Acknowledge the pure and peerless Lord;
Guard night and day against His wrath.

Acknowledge His might; ascribe to Him no partners;¹⁴

Do not deny Him in your hearts and minds.

He is merciful and compassionate, sustainer,

Munificent pardoner of sins. The world

He did create, a good and lovely place,

Laid out well and perfectly arranged.

65 You He created for obedience,

Whence you should build your capital;¹⁵

Were you to travel day and night,

Still your provision is eternal.

The generous Almighty has thus adorned you

And turned you into a mighty and prolific

People; you should be satisfied.

To you I have shown the edifice of faith;

All is for you, O faithful folk.

70 The customs of the law, the road to salvation

I have shown you so that you can attain salvation,

And when you appear before God

On Resurrection Day, they will be your stock,

Earning the profit. Your time passes in years;

What will happen through aeons of Time?

Question the learned and wise men so that

Happiness will befriend you.

75 They will reveal the secrets of the world,

Show you the bright path.¹⁶ And when those

Honorable sages turn you to

The manifest God, discern the One

From all realities, do not abide

In the sleep of neglect and tyranny.

For He is One, without like, unique,

Munificent, alive, with no abode.¹⁷

Ease leads to nothing but corpulence;¹⁸

Turn from it and find a better state

80 Lest it should prompt you to forget your God

And come to disregard His precepts.

Stray not from the road, nor let

The darkness of idolatry confound you.

If you sacrifice to idols,
To Lāt,¹⁹ to demons,²⁰ you will be accursed,
You will become strangers to God, a byword
Among the nations. But now once more you have
85 The chance to stand up tall and straight;
You are more learned on the path of truth
Than were your forefathers.
None of them were learned; they were contentious
About everything, completely ignorant,
Lacking discernment in matters of faith.
Neither king nor lowly doorman has ever heard
From them the likes of the commandments,
The Lord's precepts and His blessings.
Because they did not heed God's will and covenant
Did not believe His deeds and might,
90 The Avenger's vengeance broke over their heads;
They have rebelled and therefore have perished.
You should head like lions to that region,
That homeland, that so famous place, and beware,
O great men, do not grow suddenly arrogant in it.
When you behold the royal crown and throne,
Choose not the futile road, for if you do so,
Like the pagans, plagues will come,
You will die suddenly; you will be driven out
95 From that land, from one end of it to the other,
Your enemies will drag you out in affliction;
Captive you will fall into idolaters' claws,
And you will go astray consumed by grief.
Your homeland He will hand over to the enemy;
One by one He will destroy you.
When you've been rendered helpless through
Your schemes, you will be completely scattered
Over the world. Your enemies will encompass you
On every border, they will oppress you utterly
And continually; men and women alike will tremble
100 In fear and dread of the leonine enemy.
Youths, children, old men, even the newborn,

Will follow idols whoever they may be.
 Affliction will prevail in that whirlpool
 Impelled by calamity, toil, and grief.
 God told me too, revealed this mystery
 To me repeatedly, that the rash enemies will be
 Victorious, impudent, and rude, claiming:
 105 "It is we who have caused all this evil;
 Pleasant and lovely are our ways and customs;
 We are exceedingly mighty
 We ourselves ruined the sons of Jacob."²¹
 They will think those bad things
 Came from them and not from Me;
 The hands of enemies will press them hard.
 But I will destroy them in a moment;
 I will diminish their excesses all at once.
 All of your evil deeds, O faithful people,
 Are clear, each and every one,
 110 Before the Judge. All that is hidden
 Is manifest before Him; He is eternal,
 Almighty, sustainer of all.
 So you ought not to persevere in wickedness;
 Don, all of you, the garments of obedience.
 Take wisdom and learning as your models
 That you not die of grief and heedlessness.
 Take to your hearts the words of God so that
 Good fortune will appear to you and be
 Your main provision on Resurrection Day;
 Your deeds will stand upright,
 115 Your good and bad will stand before the Judge,
 And what a Judge—He judges the sun of the East!
 He is as bright as the light of the flashing sun,
 Omniscient, Creator, and Sustainer.
 He placed the sea²² into His treasury,
 Like a helpless ant buried under the ground.
 Seek refuge in none but the World Protector,
 For He is the creator of all that is created

And He is glorious. He alone grants and
Withdraws life. He wounds and sends the salve.
120 He has no blemish; no one should suppose so.²⁵
He is generous, omnipotent, assisting,
Perennial guide of young and old.”
Thus did the prophet sing God’s praises,
Such were the pearls he scattered
Among his friends. And when that chief
Imparted the praise to all his friends,
He addressed them once again:
“O faithful friends, these are God’s words;
125 Heed all these precepts; transgress not
Even a jot or tittle of it; bequeath them
Also to your children; the promise²⁴ must be
Constantly fulfilled. Show them the customs
And the laws, reveal their mysteries to them
So that they will preserve these stipulations
Until the Day of Resurrection. Do not
Despise the Law, do not rebel
Against God’s command, for from it you
130 Derive eternal life, both strength and station,
The wishes of your hearts, the length
Of all your days—so long as you,
Like the queen in chess, do not deviate from it.
So long as you cultivate this way,
Faithful to custom, all will be well with you,
You will live untried, without hatred,
In that land the Judge grants to you,
A gift full of healing, which He bestows on you
In good faith. You will dwell in it for many years,
You will drive out of it all your enemies.
135 Your wishes will be fulfilled there
As they had been at the Reed Sea.”
When the prophet revealed to them
Those hidden mysteries, he lit the lamps
Of their eyes through his teachings.

And when the sons of Jacob heard this from him,
One and all they chose the way of this path.²⁵

The Tale of Job

Beginning the Tale of Job

A wise sage once related¹ that
Eight children were born to brave Nahor.²
‘Uz was his oldest and firstborn,³
Greatest among his brethren;
The other name he bore was Job.
He was much loved by God,
An honored, God-fearing man,
His wool and warp.

- 5 The Almighty bestowed on him great wealth,
Livestock, estates, and money without count.
When that mishap occurred to Dinah
Through low-born Shekem,⁴ they killed him;⁵
Of all his folk no child was spared.
Then some years after that, Jacob
Married his daughter to Job.⁶
And in due time that moon-cheeked one
Presented Job with many children.
- 10 Daily his wealth increased, while he
Held God dear in every way and was
Perpetually bound to praise Him,
Never diverging from this path.
Satan was jealous of him⁷ for he
Deemed obedience⁸ to God his chief occupation.
The Almighty said to him: “O malicious one,
You’ve set yourself on fire through ignorance,
And cast your acts of worship to the wind.⁹
Why do you pursue patient Job?
- 15 You can’t deflect him from the path
Nor trap him in the claws of sin.
I gave him guidance worthy of him;
Beware, you will not turn him off the path.

- He's my most devoted servant, a veritable
Storehouse of worship, gratitude, and prayer."
Satan replied to the Incomparable:
"O You who provide sustenance to
Sultan and dervish alike, you gave
To Job all that he needs and crowned him
With the turban of good fortune;
20 Why should he not excel in worshiping You?
He's merely peddling flattery and fraud
To Your Excellency. You'll know
His real devotion if You take back
His wealth and riches. Then You'll not see
From him half an hour's worth of worship
Daily, or even in a year. It was all due
To wealth; he loves the material gifts of Time."
Then the Creator said to Iblīs: "O you
Most wretched creature in the universe,
25 Whether he owns property or not, it is
His worship that strews dust into your eyes!"
Satan replied: "If You will make him poor,
And withdraw all You have given him,
He'll cease remembering to praise You;
He'll cast Your worship to the winds.
Entrust him to my claws and let me
Suddenly fling him into the enemy's mouth.¹⁰
30 He'll stop his praise and glorifying,
And will soon wash his face in sin's waters."

Then God,
The Almighty ruler of the universe,
The peerless deity, answered accursed Satan:
"I'll hand Job over to you now;
I'll place him in your clutches. Destroy,
At one fell swoop all of his wealth;
Leave not a trace of all his blessings."¹¹
At once Satan girded himself for the task,
Plotting against the faithful Job.

- 35 First he turned his aim against the livestock
 By casting pestilence into their midst
 Until they all perished; from his
 Accursed snare none did escape.
 The shepherds went to Job and told him
 About the massacre this way: "Your flocks
 Have perished all at once
 Through the Avenger's vengeance."¹²
 But Job replied: "It is no cause for grief;
 What comes from the Almighty is not unjust.
 God gave it and it is His once more;¹³
 This does not trouble me." And then
- 40 He bowed and kissed the ground
 Offering thanks to God once more,
 Increasing his devotion yet again.
 Satan was overwhelmed by pain,
 As if an arrow had pierced his heart.
 In other ways he carried out his design,
 Attacking Job with all the means he had;
 Within a few days Job was poor,
 But still his heart grieved not. His worship
 Did not decrease by so much as a hairsbreadth,
 And day and night he prayed to God.
- 45 His deeds astonished Satan;
 He turned his face aside for shame,
 And stood in wonder.

God's Discourse with Satan Concerning Job

- The Almighty said to Satan: "O ill-starred
 Villain, Job's worship has not diminished.
 He is as he was before, with all his heart
 He offers Us each moment hundreds of blessings."
 Satan replied again: "O You who provide daily
 For mankind, birds, and beasts,
 Job's happiness comes from his children;
 On their account his heart is bent on worship;
- 50 For their sake does he worship;

It is for them that he exerts himself.
 If You take back his offspring,
 Leaving not one behind, he will no longer
 Exert himself in worship, he'll drink no more
 From the goblet of yearning¹⁴ for You."
 The Almighty replied: "O black day, you are
 Impure, malevolent tyrant of creatures,
 I will destroy them on your account,
 Inebriate them from the cup of death.
 55 Yet Job will not remain without thanks
 To me and will continue strewing the dust
 Of *tawhīd*¹⁵ in your eyes."

Job had from Dinah

Three daughters and seven sons, each¹⁶
 With a friendly face, clever and bright.
 By God's command they all died within an hour
 Entrusting their souls to Him.
 On seeing this, Job cried and lamented, saying:
 "What shall I do? What course shall I pursue?"
 Again he increased his thanks and devotion;
 Not one moment did he do without them.
 60 Then God addressed Satan once more:
 "You devious, accursed traitor,
 My benefactor's thanks have not decreased;
 He is worthy of Our mercy."

Satan's Debate with God Regarding Job's Health

Satan replied: "He is in good health,
 That's why he perseveres with praise and thanks.
 Once he fell ill his tongue
 Would cease to utter further praise."
 The Veiler¹⁷ replied to Satan yet again:
 "O you source of calamities,
 Misfortune, and affliction, I grant you
 65 Power over his body;¹⁸ I open wide
 The door of misery before him.
 Go, try him

- With illness and turn his body into
 A storehouse of pain and tribulation,
 But injure not, malicious, ignorant dog,
 His life."¹⁹ That very moment vicious Satan,
 By God's command came before Job and
 Of a sudden rubbed his hands on him.
 Job cried out from underneath his hands,
 70 Barbs then assailed his body; the rose
 Of his pleasant life turned to thorns.
 Fever racked his entire body
 Making him cry aloud,
 Blood flowed from his scratching nails,
 From every part of his whole being.
 His body was an open wound from head to toe
 And full of sores. Then worms
 Began to crawl over him;²⁰ blood and pus
 Flowed from his every vein.
- 75 That pain and torment went on day and night
 And yet time in, time out, he remembered God.
 And when a worm would fall off its place,
 He'd pick it up and put it back,²¹ saying:
 "God has made me your daily sustenance;
 One should never let go of one's sustenance."²²
 Thus he endured the worms and the pain humbly,
 Warm-hearted and in cold blood.

Dinah's Dispute with Job

- His wife kept saying to him all the time,²³
 "My dear, it isn't appropriate
 To offer thanks and praise; how
 80 Can you be thankful now for wealth when
 Not a barley grain of it do you own?
 You have nor gold, nor children, nor your health;
 Illness has turned your full moon into a crescent.
 Seek all you may, your body does not hold
 Good health the size of a fingertip.
 Your body is a sieve full of holes,

Front and back; weak and exhausted by the worms
 Your world has now become as small as an ant's eye.
 85 For which of its boons can you be thankful?
 The words of a strange, undignified old man!
 Wherever your thanks to God happen to fall,
 On that same spot they cannot endure.
 You have no business thanking God;
 In vain do you live on. Do you think
 You can deceive God if you patiently endure
 The grief and pain He has dealt you?
 90 Many, and more devoted than you,
 Has He killed. Desist now
 From worship a few days;
 Devise a remedy for your own pain,
 Mind your own business for a while.
 Praising God is of no use to you;
 A sick man may be free from all such duties.
 Do you not know that God pardons
 The sick and afflicted from fast and prayer?"²⁴

Job Answers Dinah, His Wife

Job answered his wife thus: "My dear,
 Why are you so arrogant and thoughtless?
 I was God's friend while in good health
 For many long years. What if today
 95 I have become poor and my heart is racked
 By pain and suffering?
 I despair not but that the Almighty will
 Once more bestow His Grace on us.
 He will once more raise my head up to the spheres,
 He will set me free from grief and pain and sorrow.
 Through His Grace I will regain my health
 And find respite from illness and weakness.
 He will rekindle the lamp of my good fortune,
 Consume together all my griefs and cares.
 100 I shall find a light out of this darkness;
 I shall find release from grief and injury.

I despair not of the Almighty's mercy,
 For suddenly He will light the sun for me,
 Turn my dark night into a bright day,
 And all my days to a New Year's festival.
 For the Almighty fetters no one without
 Opening for him a hundred better paths.
 Whatever He does is just, and I
 Have greatly benefited from it.
 105 His acts are joined to Wisdom;
 He the merciful, generous, and forgiving."²⁵

Dinah's Second Dispute with Job

Dinah replied, "Gratitude has brought you
 Nothing but sickness and bad luck.
 Do you wish to regain good health
 From this illness, weakness, and grief?
 You're old and have one foot in the grave;
 This time I know you'll die for sure.
 In your old age are you wishing to regain
 The strength and benefits of youth?
 110 You once owned heaps of gold and silver,
 Handsome servants, and swift horses,
 And you gave thanks for them; foolishness
 Makes you ignorant of what you're saying.
 If you wish something from the world,
 Stop singing God's praises. You'll see
 Your goods and wealth back in dreams.
 Don't be in such a hurry with your thanks;
 Do you think you'll see anything again
 Of all your fortune? Dream on!
 115 Youth is gone, you are old and sick;
 Your time has come, and you will die.
 Desist from idle thoughts; you're sick,
 How can your strength return?
 Calamity and grief have turned you upside down;
 How can you after this dream on
 Of wealth and goods? Because you're patient

In grief and affliction, do you think
You can deceive God?"²⁶

Job Answers Dinah a Second Time

Then Job answered his wife:

"O harridan, leave me to my pain and grief!

120 What do you know of my body's pain?

It's best for me to endure it.

You know I'm captive to this misery;

My captor is the Incomparable Himself.

That hour when I relinquish my breath

The time of death will have arrived.

My heart seeks nought but God's pleasure;

My tongue utters only His praise.

I hope that through His grace my pain

125 Will find a remedy. Beware, speak not

With me of things that you should not.

Stop trying to free me from gratitude.

I do not wish to utter one hairsbreadth less;

I praise the Almighty with all my heart and soul."

Thus Job endured all his misfortunes

And bravely bore the sorrow of his heart;

Never did he cry aloud from that pain,

And bore his pain with both strength and ease.

130 They called him Patient Job;²⁷

Through patience he became world famous;

By God Himself he was called The Patient.

They say that for seven long years²⁸

That brave man endured the agony of worms,

But in Scripture²⁹ it is said

He suffered only one year of grief,

Affliction, pallor, and broken health.

Humbly he put up with the worms

And tended each one with great care.

135 He nourished them like a nursemaid, sitting

Sometimes in the sun and sometimes in shade.³⁰

He had no other friends but the worms,

No other companions with whom to share his grief.³¹
 The heavenly elite were deeply grieved
 By his continuous pain and fever.
 They cried to Almighty God for his sake
 And then the Almighty went into action.

Ardashīr-nāmah (The Book of Ardashīr)

The Courtship and Marriage of Esther and Ardashīr

Shah Bahman Summons the Maidens

One day,¹ the prince and monarch of Iran,
 Kayānid² heir, refuge of lions,
 The most noble Ardashīr Bahman,³
 Sultan of ‘Iraq, Rūm,⁴ and Arman,⁵
 Reposed among his fortunate lords
 And sat like a lion upon his throne,
 All smiles from good fortune and joy,
 Flashing his teeth into his cup of wine.
 5 Full of good cheer he quaffed date wine;
 The rebec’s sounds brightened his mood.
 But when the wine rose to his head,
 He removed the veil of modesty;
 Patience, rest, and repose left him;
 He squirmed; the air around him heated up;
 When wine and warm air cheered one another,
 Well gone in lust and ardor’s fire,
 The shah began to long for the confined idols,⁶
 But he resumed decorum for reputation’s sake,
 10 He calmed himself, continued drinking,
 And sat feasting until supper time.⁷
 As soon as it arrived, he summoned Hegai⁸
 And said to him: “Run, bring to my harem
 In all haste one of those seven⁹ graceful idols;
 Let me investigate her good and bad,
 From her attain my heart’s desire.”
 When Hegai heard the shah’s command,
 He took a sweet-lipped, moon-cheeked girl,

15 Adorned her like Venus and brought her to the harem,
 To the sun.¹⁰ The dazzling charmer spent the night
 There with the shah until daylight came round;
 Time's lips broke into a smile; the bright sun
 Laughed, its teeth displaying,¹¹ the shah was drunk
 By his companion's side, roused by the scent
 Of the grape's juice.

Lords usually entrust one special servant
 To set the bait for them into the snare, thus

20 The shah ordered Hegai to bring to his harem
 Nightly a different ravishing, slender beauty,
 Of the six remaining graceful moon-faced idols,
 Each one of them bright-faced, with curly tresses.
 In a week, one by one, Hegai brought them all
 To the shah's palace, as he had wished,
 For seven nights entrusting to him
 Sedition-stirring beauties with sweet lips.
 But however much each night the shah clasped
 The idols, Jupiter could not take wing.¹²

25 For among all these he did not find
 His love, his houri, his heart's companion.
 His horoscope confounded him; each morning
 The shah drove away another from his presence;
 And though compelled to drive each one away,
 He brought in yet another to his chamber.
 Although he greatly honored them,
 With feasting, pleasure, and indulgence,
 Each time the shah reached out
 To a lovely idol with moon cheeks,

30 Cruel fate would thwart his heart's desire.
 Like a green shoot, grief sprouted in his heart.

The Shah Calls Hegai and Asks Him About Esther

There is nothing better than a loving friend;
 How can one live without a bosom friend?
 Life in the loved one's company
 Is better than eternal life.

With such a friend, a companion, life is good;
 Without, time is not worth a barley grain.
 When Hegai saw the shah so inflamed,
 With such deep sorrow in his heart,
 35 He understood how the shah felt, that he
 Was looking for his friend, his true beloved.
 He sought the hour to approach him and
 Came one night unawares into the harem;
 Like a lion, he made haste to serve the shah,
 And thus disclosed¹³ to him the secret of Esther:¹⁴
 "There is a tender idol, exalted in beauty
 And learning; the likes of her has never been seen
 In the world, no, not even among the houris
 Of Paradise. Should you but see her cheeks
 40 One night, and only in a dream,
 You would never again look at moonlight.
 Compared to her full moon, the moon
 Is but a crescent; next to her stature
 The cypress appears bent.¹⁵
 Rest tranquil, only take her into your arms,
 And see what a fountain you will drink from!
 In her embrace a thousand Vashtis become
 As boats gliding on water.
 In learning, beauty, and grace,
 In wisdom, goodness, and eloquence,
 45 She is peerless in this world; so,
 Don't throw a pitcher on a hard stone.¹⁶
 You do possess such a delicate houri,
 You have the lovely one within your reach;
 Say then, what worries you?
 Why do you distress yourself so much?
 I've been her teacher these ten long months,¹⁷
 I've seen all her good deeds;
 Nothing bad will ever come from her,
 Nothing but learning and good deeds;
 50 Not even as much as a cup of water did she
 Ever request from me;¹⁸ she's never troubled

Anyone; now that I've shared with you the secret
 I've been guarding,¹⁹ don't just sit there
 Helpless. Get busy! Be at ease about her,
 Lift up your head to the fourth heaven;²⁰
 Marry that lovely idol and imbibe
 Comfort without grief, until
 You repossess your peace of mind
 And happily sit again in your wonted station."
 55 Hearing this from the devoted servant,
 So truthful and sincere, Bahman replied:
 "You're right in everything you say;
 You seek nothing but our peace of mind.
 Rightly you speak; tomorrow
 I will lay the foundation of my happiness.
 I will take the graceful Esther into my arms,
 And stop my delusions. I'll send her
 Many assloads of gifts and jewelry,
 Musk, and I myself will provide her dowry;
 60 I'll drink the sweet draft of union with her."
 Light from this talk rose to the spheres
 And hurled uproar upon the world's inhabitants.
 The mirror of grace made its appearance;
 A flame flashed from the crystal goblet.
 At sunset the shah sat upon his throne
 Glorious; Venus and Mercury fled out of shame.
 The world turned amber yellow; dust rose
 From the world's rubbish heap.

Shah Bahman Sends Wedding Gifts to Esther

65 He Who knows the mystery of this tale,
 He ordained guidance through Wisdom.
 Since Bahman was intent on union with Esther
 He made arrangements to attain his joy.²¹
 He ordered the old treasurer to open,
 Without regret, the doors of the royal treasury
 That he might attain his goal,
 And relish union in the rose garden

Thus he commanded Fīrūz²² right away:
 "Today, out of my treasury and stable take
 70 A hundred rare, beautiful gifts of fabric,
 A hundred bolts of satin, silk, and brocade,
 A hundred *manns*²³ of gold²⁴ as red as fire,
 A hundred elegant, lovely Turkish slave girls,
 A hundred elegant Turkish and Chinese slave boys,
 A hundred swift mules with decorated saddles,
 A hundred hidden royal jewels, a hundred
 Rose-cheeked, well-proportioned eunuchs,
 A hundred great horses, swift as the wind,
 Royally harnessed, saddled, caparisoned,
 75 A hundred strings of embellished camels,
 Covered with ornaments, furnishings, and carpets,
 Wearing anklets of gold and carrying
 Loads of gold, sugar candy, and sweets;
 Ten beautifully decorated litters
 From the sweet-lipped ones of Qandahar.²⁵
 Prepare all this as quickly as a lion;
 Pay heed, delay not in this matter."
 Fīrūz, the faithful vizier, saw to it
 That all was properly carried out.
 80 Then he came to the shah, blessed him,
 And said: "I have prepared everything
 And hasten into the shah's presence;
 Tell me what plans are you issuing from
 Your throne, your signet ring, your sovereignty?"
 On hearing this from Fīrūz, Bahman said:
 "Wisdom and knowledge are learned from you.
 Since you have prepared the gifts according
 To the manner and custom of Kay Qobād,²⁶
 85 Take them and drive them swiftly on;
 Go with them all to Esther, accompanied by
 Banners, royal parasols, golden kettledrums,
 Tambourines, trumpets, and brass flutes."
 Fīrūz took leave of the shah
 And set out with a retinue of warriors,

- Heading toward that offspring of the moon.
 The sound of trumpets and kettledrums rose upward,
 The surface of the earth grew dark as night
 From the dust of hooves and mounts;
 90 The heroes all held mace and sword in hand
 And rode their horses like wild lions;
 Cheerful, and in high spirits.
 They set out toward Esther; you'd say
 The firmament itself might tumble from
 The kettledrums' roar, the wailing of the flutes.
 When these and all the trumpets blared,
 They stirred up the inhabitants of Shush,²⁷
 Who ran to see the grand procession,
 95 Lining up row upon row; the white chain
 Passed with kettledrums, waving proud banners.
 Boldly then Hegai²⁸ entered the palace²⁹
 And straight away went to the moon-faced sapling;
 The presents, all the gifts brought, were given
 To Mordekai on the dazzling beauty's behalf;
 When Fīrūz had handed over the bridal gifts item by item,
 He returned to Ardashīr, the exalted Khosrow.³⁰
 100 He drank with the king as his friend,
 A boon companion of the prince.

Mordekai Advises Esther

- When wealth and fortune act virtuously,
 Wealth sews a cloak out of good fortune
 For one who is auspicious, and for a while
 He holds on to it; but when the time comes,
 He must return it. When Mordekai saw all
 The shah's gifts, their vast quantity
 Meant nothing in his eyes.
 105 "How far did Qārūn³¹ go with his wealth?
 How did he topple from greatness?
 To me God's mercy surpasses gold and silver,
 It is greater by far than treasures,
 Signet rings, and thrones.

- He who gave life to a weakling like me,
 And gave me reason, eloquence, and wisdom,
 He provides my daily sustenance,
 And never diminishes our portion.
 What have we to do with gold and silver?
 This is now a great burden on my soul."
 110 Thus musing he debated with himself a while
 About those gifts and presents, then
 He summoned Esther, the concealed;³² he sat down
 And seated her before him, saying:
 "O lovely idol, how sweet you are,³³
 How seemly is your manner and deportment;
 The World Keeper endowed you even as He
 Endowed the nine revolving spheres.
 Listen, and pay attention: I will offer
 A few words of advice; pray, attend to them,
 115 And if you heed them, surely you will remain
 Immortal in both worlds.
 God's light is manifest in your face;
 Your sunny nature is visible from afar.
 This, then, O child, is my advice to you,
 A sweet, good, pleasant counsel;³⁴
 When you become intimate with the shah,
 Take care not to forget it!
 Guard carefully the spirit of wisdom
 And the fear of God daily in your heart.
 120 Beware, engage not in evil deeds;
 Veil yourself from sin and crime;
 Do not foolishly trouble anyone;³⁵
 Each day the world elevates a person,
 Entrusting to him a new station, but
 How can one's heart grow attached to it?³⁶
 None can reside secure in glory.
 Behold the treasure that the oyster shell conceals
 From the rain drops falling from the clouds;
 125 When it plucks its chosen drop out of the air,
 In the end, the melting drop becomes a pearl;

Then when the diver leaps into the sea,
 Bringing out of its depths an oyster shell,
 Much like a lion contending for his prey,
 He scatters it upon the ground like sand.
 The pearl is then pierced through its navel;
 No shell remains on it; though it has nourished
 Every pearl, it must relinquish each of them,
 Teach them the joy of flight. Only for two
 130 Or three days the shell enjoyed the pearl;
 Another came and took it away from him.³⁷
 Since in the end the pearl could not rest
 In the shell's mouth, in the depths of the sea,
 Helpless, it donned the garment of patience,³⁸
 Enduring the while Time's violent sting.
 Since throne and station abide with no one,
 What can a person lacking experience understand?
 Therefore do not consider the throne's station today;
 135 Think of tomorrow. Soothe those who are fallen,
 Do what should be done. Do not seek to oppress
 The wretched; have little or nothing
 To do with anyone; if you do nothing bad,
 You will have nothing to fear from evil;
 Be passive;³⁹ don't struggle with yourself.
 I have one more piece of advice for you,
 Which I've kept well hidden in my heart:
 Beware, reveal to none your origins and faith!⁴⁰
 140 Conceal your lineage. Comprehend this matter well,
 Take it to heart, heed all my counsel:
 The royal ruby lies in the stone's heart.
 Be ever prudent in dealings with the shah,
 Be gentle and obliging: his affairs
 Are set apart from those of beggars, princes,
 And gatekeepers."

Having thus counseled Esther

145 Fully, Mordekai kissed the moon-face
 On both her eyes, her face, her pure countenance.
 When morning came he made arrangements,

Busied himself on the veiled one's behalf,
 Though while in repose a moment,
 Poisonous thoughts filled his heart.
 Early in the morning Hegai arrived
 Swiftly, sent by the king.
 He adorned graceful Esther according to Kayānid custom,
 As the shah wished, and thus displayed
 150 That hidden treasure while hiding her in jewels.
 As morning donned its garment,
 Fortune placed a crown upon her head.

How Shah Bahman Married Esther

When the shah assumed his throne
 The sun rose from the well's depths;
 Trumpets resounded, left and right,
 The clamor of fierce thunder from the clouds.
 Shush was in uproar, its people
 Full of gossip and chatter.
 155 Fīrūz, the son of Bīshūtan,⁴¹ and the warriors,
 Mīlād,⁴² and the heroes of Iran's kingdom,
 Left the shah's presence bearing gifts,
 Scattering coins. Arrived at Esther's palace,
 The princes formed two facing lines.
 Esther, behind a veil, like Venus
 Presented the visage of the bright moon.
 Upon her face she wore a beautiful veil;
 Down to her feet tumbled her lasso tresses.
 160 Softly, with graceful delicacy, she walked
 With measured pace, like a beautiful partridge.
 When the nobles saw that concealed face approach,
 At once they brought forward a litter;
 The lady within sat accoutered in fortune
 And happiness while moon-faced slaves,
 Girls and boys, waited upon that heavenly image.
 Accompanied by minstrels and mirth,
 They neared the shah's gate,
 165 Where ladies attendant on the shah,

Together with the wise *mobeḏ* Hegai,⁴⁵ came out
 To fetch that moon, that jewel of the crown,
 Ornament, and magnificence; sprinkling musk,
 Rose water, gold, and adornments, chattering,
 Carrying jewel caskets, scattering,
 Gold coins, jewels, over the shah's lady,
 Asking her countless questions.
 The lady emerged from the litter
 Like the moon from behind dark clouds;
 Accompanied by beauties with pomegranate breasts
 She entered the royal bedchamber.

- 170 Once more the houris scattered coins on her
 To express their veneration and devotion;
 She was worthy of a hundred thousand times more!
 Her good fortune and happiness were young.
 Then the *mobeḏ* gladly contracted the marriage
 With the hero Bahman, the just shah.
 Afterward the monarch sat upon his throne and drank,
 Agitated, as he recalled that moon.
- 175 All evening long he did not put the goblet down,
 Offering wine to nobles and commoners alike;
 Then when the wine had settled in him,
 Helpless, for he was drunk, he rose.

How Shah Bahman Went to Esther's Harem

- Like a partridge strutting toward a peahen,⁴⁴
 The shah entered the harem and came to his wife.
 Impatient to be united with her, this fortunate prince
 Came toward that moon upon the throne.
 Ladies-in-waiting all departed quickly
 From the moon's presence, all except her nurse.
- 180 Smiling and full of cheer, the shah
 Drew back the veil from the moon's face.
 When he glimpsed her cheek like the night,
 He lost his reason, fell down senseless
 Into the well, a foreign traveler exhausted
 By the road. The lady, seeing him all undone,

Placed his head upon her knee. Awakening,
Bahman perceived his head was on the beauty's thigh.
185 She rose then and sat down by his side;
He reached for the beloved's curls.
Then that dark night beheld the sun,
The beauty of Venus in evening's court.
He was astonished by her radiance
And called down blessings on her lovely face.
Through the entire night until daybreak;
He exulted on sleep's couch, with heart on fire.
Through marriage, love, and kinship, he attained
His heart's desire from that beloved idol.
190 When the sun's countenance broke into a smile
Upon seeing the world, flashing its teethlike rays,
The earth became a glorious garden,
Smiling and radiant, pure and bright.
The shah rose happy from Esther's embrace,
Not the least sated by his beloved's face;
Love for her had so distracted him,
He plucked the rose and never felt the thorns,
Thinking of her only as the moon,
Loving her cheeks more than his own soul.
195 A heavy, jewel-encrusted crown the shah
Placed on the moon's head, bestowing on her
Vashti's station and all her former titles.
He sought every moment to please her;
He made her empress of the world.
Since the beginning of his auspicious rule
Seven years had passed. Having married the moon,
In union with her the shah was satisfied.
200 If Vashti ever entered into his thoughts,
Esther would overtop her like a crown.
In sunlight who needs the moon? If crowned,
Who needs a hat? So night and day the shah
Burned with impatience to see that lovely image.
Six days he remained within the palace
With the rose-cheeked, dazzling beauty,

- And on the seventh dawn, when he arose,
 He pulled himself together and sat upon the throne.
 205 Gold coins and pearls were showered on him;
 The palace was filled with game.⁴⁵
 The victorious shah then threw a feast;
 From the first day he laid the foundations
 Of the edifice.⁴⁶ He invited all famous men,
 Heroes and warriors, and all excellent horsemen;
 Wine sparkled in their goblets like
 The rubies and the jewels of Badakhshan.⁴⁷
 Date wine intoxicated all the guests,
 They grew frenzied, conceited, laughing;
 Wine went round the shah and the heroes
 210 Twice, three times, scouring grief
 From proud hearts, increasing mirth,
 Good cheer, and pleasure. The sages say,
 Drinking pure wine to the sound of *rūd*⁴⁸ and song
 Is better than another life.
 What a pity youth is cast to the winds!
 The sound of the *rūd* players rose
 In the presence of the shah and the nobles;
 215 The lute and the drum, the oud and the flute
 Wailed while Bahman quaffed the pure wine.
 With *šāz*⁴⁹ in hand, having so happily plucked the rose,
 He burst into song, a drunken nightingale;
 All melancholy sounds were lifted away
 From the exalted name of Ardashīr; each moment
 The drum, the flute, the lute, and the dulcimer
 Struck a different mode. When the shah saw
 Good cheer drown out sorrowful tunes,
 With the *sāz*, and happiness, he then commanded
 220 The treasurer to bring forth at once
 Assloads of treasures and coins,
 And was promptly obeyed; the pen cannot record
 So many belts, headpieces, and tunics.
 Then the shah gave to each according to his merit
 Gold, treasures, garments, and much money.

- Then he addressed those inclined to pride:
 225 "Desist from tyranny; strive to be fair and just;
 Do not put on the garments of injustice.
 Refrain from cruelty and oppression; beware
 Indulgence in fancies. Let Iran and its frontiers
 Be tranquil, known for their lion champions;
 It is my command that anyone beware
 Who takes unjustly even a barley grain's worth
 From another; render injustice weak in cities,
 On the roads and the byways.
- 230 I swear by the pure Almighty, Lord
 Of heaven and earth's expanse, whoever
 Pursues injustice toward a living being,
 Will not be able to conceal his misdeed;
 If he tries, upon my soul, he will not live an instant.
 I'll bruit his name about in every region;
 Before the princes he'll become a warning
 Both to the common men and the elite;
 His morning will completely turn to night."
- 235 The clever shah held forth on justice
 The while the heroes all bowed down
 And kissed the ground before him to approve
 His words. Then they replied: "We all
 Seek but to carry out the shah's will,
 Pledging our armies and our allegiance;
 If any should act unjustly, let none
 Survive in the world." Thus they conversed
 Till dinnertime with cups of wine and date wine
- 240 In their hands. The sun revolved within the dome,
 Turned amber in the desert, and departed,
 Along with the stars, hiding from man's sight.
 Then all the nobles turned into night worshippers;
 Intoxicated by pure wine, each one
 Took leave of Bahman and went to his own palace.
 When the shah saw that night was all around
 He entered the harem and went to Esther.
- 245 Affectionate and tender, he loved her

By day and night; although he had a multitude
 Of lovely, moonlike beauties, he was sated
 With all of them and chose to unite only with Esther. . . .

The Birth of Cyrus

Esther Gives Birth to Cyrus

The Wise, Incomparable Creator, Lord
 Of the Heavens, of commoners and the nobility,
 250 He who creates offspring from royal seed,
 Who creates roses and greenery,
 None knows His hidden mystery,
 And none remains forever happy or afflicted;
 Sultans and beggars alike are His prisoners
 None steps away from His door.
 He aids His slaves' affairs, He strives against none
 Unjustly.

When Esther became the consort of the king
 Of kings, she found dignity and an exalted station.
 That houri delighted the shah's heart;
 255 He saw nothing but light from her two cheeks.
 He spent his time with her in joy and pleasure;
 He enjoyed her company and making passionate love.
 Through the will of the Greatest Father, Esther
 Became pregnant,⁵⁰ and when her time of birth came,
 God opened up for her the gates of purity,
 [And she gave birth] to a beautiful, sun-cheeked boy,
 [Worthy] of the crown and throne of Jamshīd.⁵¹
 The shah rejoiced at the child's birth;
 He uprooted oppression from the world.
 260 He rolled back the tax on caravans,
 Distributed much gold and money to the poor.
 Because of his generosity and gifts
 No indigent remained in Shush.
 The shah empowered the dervish, who
 In place of grief,⁵² now gambled with gold.

Esther rejoiced at her newborn,
 And she offered thanks to God; she chose two

Lovely, loving nursemaids for the child,
 265 To nurture and educate him,
 Help him to grow into a tall cypress.
 On the midwives she bestowed gold, silver,
 And colorful garments.

When Cyrus turned

Four years old, his face was like the spring
 And like a tulip; that exalted princely jewel
 Indeed grew tall, a cypress. Without him,
 At dawn and sunset, the shah found no repose.

Shah Babman Gathers the Astrologers to Instruct Cyrus

270 One day clever Bishutan said to brave Ardashīr:
 "The time has come for the prince's eyes to be opened
 To knowledge, to know good and bad, more and less;
 His days should not be wasted." When the shah heard
 His grand vizier's advice, he deemed it just;
 He summoned many wise men appropriate for the task.
 He gave each one of the learned men gold, gifts,
 275 And his child, that they should each and every one
 Teach him what every prince, what every brave hero
 And famous man should know, brighten his face
 With bravery and knowledge. When he was
 Fourteen years old, fortune spread its wings
 Over his head: in all the cities of Iran,
 At the courts of intrepid heroes, no one
 280 Waged war like him; steel was like copper in his hand.
 Lions avoided confronting him;
 His arrows could pierce rocks.
 Were he to attack an elephant,
 It would be rendered abject in his grasp.
 If he would topple a tower from a mountaintop,
 Mount Alburz⁵³ itself would be crushed.
 If he unsheathed his sword, no one
 Could stand against him in battle.
 If he ungloved his champion's claw,
 Men were carried away by fright.

He became great and famous; in horsemanship
 He was like Rustam, the son of Zāl.⁵⁴

Ezra-nāmāh (The Book of Ezra)

Cyrus Grants Permission to Return and Rebuild the Temple

- A man engaged in ugly acts¹
 What are the acts that follow him?
 God sets misfortune over his head,
 Lets him endure injustice, violence,
 And oppression; humbles him with affliction,
 Abases him, drags him in blood.
 A wise man long ago declared
 That none can fathom the Deity's acts.
 5 When the Temple, that Special Quarry,²
 Was destroyed, the edifice lived on
 In heroes' hearts. Kalīm's³ people were
 Laid low, afflicted in the end
 Through their own deeds, for which
 That Special House, site of divine rendezvous,
 In ruins lay for seventy long years.⁴
 Time came, and at long last
 That Site of Mercy was set free
 Of troubles and calamities.
 Two prophets of God lived in those days,
 As bright as the sun and the moon:
 10 Ezra was one, the other Haggai,⁵
 Who was the elder⁶ of the two.
 (No prince but Mattatiah⁷ survived
 Of the tribe and progeny of Judah.)
 The prophet Ezra in appearance was
 Exceptionally endowed and was most generous.
 Often he proffered his advice to Kalīm's people
 And greatly did he help them, warning:
 "Heed God's own counsel; take to heart
 My command. Strive to obey
 15 His judgment lest you find yourselves

Drowning in raging, boiling poison.
 Know that God is All Forgiving and All Pure;
 Banish all evil from your hearts,
 And turn yourselves into proud cypresses,
 Become, each one of you, a hidden treasure.
 Then you will attain your heart's desire;
 Shining like Venus, the sun, and the moon,
 You will radiate light."

Since Ezra often did advise them thus
 They set themselves to work.

- 20 They turned away from ugly deeds,
 Became steadfast in faith.
 On seeing them, Ezra's grieved heart
 Regained its peace. He took his place joyfully
 In the people's assembly and hoisted
 The banners of guidance. He said,
 Turning to Haggai and to the leaders,
 "Bad times have passed and are now gone;
 Merciful times have arrived; those evil, ugly,
 Difficult, and troublesome days are truly gone.

- 25 Be my supporters and my friends;
 Be faithful to your own covenant so that
 Like heroes we may present ourselves bravely
 Before Iran's sovereign. We will reveal to him
 Our wretchedness, unveil our secrets,
 Until he understands our state
 And sets us free from our torment.
 He will restore to Canaan the Quarry,
 That Special Site of divine rendezvous."⁸

- 30 The leaders listened to the prophet's words;
 They took to heart his good advice.
 That day passed and on the next
 Ezra,⁹ the great prophet, accompanied
 By Haggai, Zekariah,¹⁰ and Mattathiah, the great king,
 Went before exalted Cyrus, the phoenix¹¹
 In the company of three royal falcons.
 (There were still other learned, pious,

- God-fearing men with Ezra.)
- 35 When God's lion¹² came from the road
Unto the palace gates,
Within the righteous portals there stood
Many a cypress-statured courtier, but
When the gatekeeper¹³ saw Ezra and his men,
At once he inquired of their needs. Then,
Full of agitation, he went before the shah
And said: "O brave young hero,
There are two or three persons at the gate,
Brave and exalted heroes, requesting
- 40 An audience with you. Light radiates
From their faces; none matches the glow
Of beauty on their countenance."
Upon hearing this, Cyrus gave the command:
"Bring them to me at once!"
The gatekeeper ran to admit them; he opened
The gates to the three or four of them.
The shah rejoiced on seeing Ezra
In the company of Haggai and the freeborn chieftains.
But looking at their faces, his heart
Contracted with dread and distress.
- 45 Then Mordekai¹⁴ addressed the shah:
"O brave, handsome, and exalted shah,
Know that these chieftains are esteemed;
They are good people, full of discernment:
Prophets, kings, and famous men,
They reign over the people of Kalīm."
He introduced each one by name;
Informed the shah of each one's worth.
Cyrus seated them all with flattery
And cleared the court of all but his intimates.
- 50 Then he addressed Mattatiah,¹⁵
That jewel of the House of Judah:
"Tell us, what do you wish from us
Out of the royal jewels and the treasury?
I will fulfill your wishes;

- I know full well what your business is."
 On hearing this Mattatiah, that prince of
 Judah's House, answered the shah:
 "O may your wisdom last forever!
 Through you the world is joyful and in bloom;
 55 There has never been a greater shah than you;
 In you the state has found its crown and throne!
 May neither throne nor crown
 Ever be deprived of you;
 May your fortune endure forever!
 You have succeeded in your father's place;
 May you live as long as clouds cross the skies!
 Know, O shah, that Canaan's kingdom,
 Has been our hearth and home
 Since the time of Kalīm, son of 'Imrān.¹⁶
 A divine gift, by the grace of God.
- 60 For as long as we were fair and just
 In worshiping our God, we prospered:
 We possessed treasury, crown, and throne,
 As well as victory, might, and fortune;
 But when we lost our way, became idolaters,
 We sowed the seeds of tyranny and evil;
 We were thrown out of our abode in pain;
 We became a byword for every evil.
- 65 A base and evil man arose; he toppled
 Our sovereignty. Seventy years have passed
 Since the kingdom's destruction through injustice.
 I wish that through your generosity, O exalted one,
 We might reinhabit this land. You will thus
 Preserve your good name in the world;
 You will be remembered in all the prayers
 Of Jacob's progeny." Then Cyrus said
 To him and to all the chieftains,
 Among them to Haggai: "You wish
 That I should fulfill your desire; I too
 Have a desire that I wish you to fulfill:
- 70 That from my own hands, willing or not,

You should accept a cup of wine.¹⁷
 Then I'll fulfill your wish and turn your land
 Into the garden of the Tūbā tree.¹⁸
 I will restore it everywhere: its land,
 Its dwellings, and the rendezvous site."¹⁹
 On hearing this, Mattatiah said: "O you,
 Whose generosity is like the waters of the sea,
 Today I cannot do so. Neither choose nor strive
 75 To break me. I will now go to my friends,
 The leaders and our famous men, to see
 What the divine Law rules²⁰ in such a case.
 I shall return tomorrow morning and reveal
 All hidden secrets." Having said this,
 He and the heroes cheerfully departed
 From the shah's presence. Mattatiah then met
 With Zekariah, Haggai, and valiant Ezra,
 80 Seeking a ruling on that matter
 From the gathering of wise chieftains.
 Ezra addressed him thus: "O servant
 Of the Living, Unknowable One, the King
 Who ever commands the forbidden
 And the permitted²¹ to Moses' people,
 What the exalted shah demands you must perform;
 You must drink the cup of refreshing wine;
 Accept and drink a cup, lest you
 Forfeit your life at the hands of evil men²²
 85 And so that the Special House, O wise man,
 Should be rebuilt once more."²³
 When the sun, out of the lapis lazuli firmament
 Showed forth its yellow cheeks, it plunged
 Into modesty's ocean, like lightning
 Drowning in the boundless sea;
 The world lamented, mourned over the sun's loss,
 Dressed itself in black from head to toe,
 Wailing and sighing, full of pain,
 Regret and sorrow, at this malevolent design.
 90 When clear morning beheld the world this way

It struck modesty prostrate and rent patience;
 It dressed itself in silver, abandoning all
 Distinctions of good and bad, of this and that.²⁴
 Mattatiah arose from a sound sleep
 And went before the shah with Zekariah,
 Haggai, and two or three others,
 Freeborn men, well-known leaders.
 When Cyrus saw him, with flattery
 He made room for him on his throne,
 95 Seated him according to rule and custom,
 As if he were the Khosrow²⁵ of Rūm, Hind, or Chīn.²⁶
 Then Cyrus handed him a goblet of pure wine,
 Saying "Drink up!"—and found his wish fulfilled.
 Mattatiah took from him and drank the cup of wine;
 Finding no remedy for it, he sought none.
 At once Cyrus gave the command
 To rebuild the kingdom of Canaan;
 And to rebuild that Special House,
 They would donate measures of gold and silver.²⁷
 100 Kalīm's people rejoiced at this; they have
 Survived the times of tribulation.
 Bad deeds engender only bad; spinning,
 The world returns to its beginnings.²⁸

*How Ezra, Peace Be upon Him, Wrote the Ineffable Name and Went to the
City of Moses' People*

Now Ezra the prophet saw that Canaan once more
 Would flourish by God's firm command,
 And Jacob's descendants would return
 Full of joy, laughter, and good cheer.
 But ever since evil Bukhtanşar had burned it,²⁹
 There was no longer Torah in the land.
 105 Ezra, however, had memorized it all;
 Thus skilled through miracle and might.
 He wrote it all down as it was at first;
 Not a jot or tittle of it was changed; then
 He gave this precious gift and offering

- To Jacob's progeny. But Kalīm's people said:
"O moon-faced prophet, you made the Torah
Manifest to us through God's will and grace;
Might not an error, more or less,
110 Have crept in unawares? Seventy years have,
After all, passed by since that unjust king
Burned the Word. Since then the world
Has been bereft of Torah; none has recited it.
Yet all of it, the entire Torah, the words
Of the Living Judge, survived preserved
In your heart. But it may be
That you remember a little more or less,
115 O excellent man. Like a star or quicksand
You must journey to Reḳab's land,³⁰
To the progeny of God's lion,³¹
The descendants of Moses, son of 'Amram.
They have preserved the correct Torah
And they will show it to you. Search closely
That it match your own copy, and then
Return it to us so that once more
We may become intimate with it."
120 When Ezra heard this from them,
He was distraught and grieved. But then
That great leader thought of a recourse:
He sat down and wrote out the Great Name.³²
At once he flew off like the wind,
Toward the quicksands and the promised place.
When those chosen people beheld him,
They ran to surround him. Right away Ezra
Recited the Torah aloud to their wise leaders;
125 Verse by verse, he recited it all, leaving
Kalīm's progeny smiling: not even a dot's worth
Of difference existed between Kalīm's
And Ezra's versions. The leaders spoke to him;
That illustrious gathering addressed him thus:
"It is as if you were an angel,³³

- Kneaded out of purity and light;
 How else by heart could you have written down
 The entire Torah, omitting nothing from its proper place?⁵⁴
 130 In truth, this can't be done by flesh and blood,
 O mighty cypress, moon-faced one." Ezra,
 With cheerful heart, snapped up the words
 And took off like the wind, flew off to Canaan
 As swift as the phoenix, back to the people of 'Imrān;⁵⁵
 Kalīm's folk, like tall cypresses, met him gladly.
 He came cheerfully to them but they all feared him;
 135 They turned to invocation⁵⁶ and prayer,
 Thankful to have survived destruction.
 The celestial spheres heeded their wishes,
 One firmament after another, all eight.⁵⁷
 Their revolutions brought nothing but gifts;
 Even Time⁵⁸ seemed to grant them eternity.
 As long as you possess knowledge of God,
 And engage in worship and praise, your work
 Will be successful; you'll be endowed with soul
 140 From head to toe. In upright deeds,
 Nothing excels walking the path prepared.
 But is there an antidote without a sting?
 Beware, don't ever be led by the nose!⁵⁹

Esther and Mordekai Have a Dream and Go to the City of Hamadan

- When Canaan became reinhabited,
 Adorned by God's will, once there,
 Kalīm's tribe, the people of God,
 Consulted with one another often.
 Their work proceeded in order;
 145 Fortune obeyed them all. Because their hearts
 Were true to one another, happiness
 Adorned God's chosen people.
 Wherever they'd been scattered from their land
 They now returned to their own place,⁴⁰
 To grow intimate once more
 With prayer and invocation.

It happened that one day, in a dream,
 Mordekai⁴¹ saw heaven and earth shaking.⁴²
 An angel from the emerald spheres appeared
 Before him, saying: "Know, O wise man,
 150 The time has come for you⁴³ to return;
 Time to return capital as well as profit.⁴⁴
 Your resting place will be on Mount Alvand,⁴⁵
 In Hamadan, O virtuous man. When morning comes,
 Both you and Esther will joyfully depart
 For Hamadan, as it has been arranged;
 At nightfall you will go to Paradise."
 Upon awaking, Mordekai's anguished grief
 And sorrow increased. By God's decree, that night
 155 Esther, the concealed,⁴⁶ had the same dream;
 She did not hide it from the sage
 But shared with him the contents of her dream.
 Her ladyship prepared herself along with him;
 She launched her boat onto the self-same sea.
 Their thoughts sailed toward the moon's casket;
 Both of them glowed like fire and water.
 The lady gave up her rank and position;
 The exalted sage gave up both throne and signet ring;⁴⁷
 160 Swift as the autumn wind that sun and moon
 Came to the appointed place, joyful and glad.
 When they arrived in Hamadan they did not meet
 With any companions or friends. The sun
 Had already crossed the heavenly sea
 And sank downward from the azure dome;
 The world was enveloped in deep darkness,
 In crow- and snakelike blackness. Off the path,
 The two headed straight to a synagogue,⁴⁸
 As eagerly as a seed seeking its soil.
 165 On seeing Mordekai, so learned and illustrious,
 The *parnas*⁴⁹ asked: "Where are you from?
 You seem an old acquaintance."
 Mordekai answered: "May your spirit remain
 Forever joined to wisdom!"

I am a stranger, passing through,
 Come to these parts by chance;
 I am far from my city and my realm,
 170 Here with my daughter, strangers in distress.
 Tonight we'd like to spend in the synagogue;
 Tomorrow, at dawn, we will be on our way."
 The parnas showed him much kindness
 And made room for them in the synagogue.
 When the night's first watch had passed,
 He went to sleep in peace. Then Mordekai,
 Awake, perceiving no one nearby,
 Except the loving Almighty One,
 Crying, addressed himself to Esther:
 "Of us, of you and me, the world has had
 175 Its surfeit. Take care, for I'm departing;
 You stay, I'm passing on.
 The time for decamping⁵⁰ is here; doubtless
 The time for sleep and slumber has arrived.
 This illusory world is no one's home,⁵¹
 And none can know the secrets of Heaven.
 Time's sweet is all poison and alloyed joy,
 Devoid of righteousness, faith, and religion.
 Power and wealth are of no account with it;
 It weighs neither spells nor stratagems.
 180 Time nourishes itself with affliction,
 Raises its head when the body is distressed;
 What is a shah or dervish in its sight?
 Forever it remains a stranger to its kin.
 My days have passed and so have all my nights.
 Mourn and lament over my soul.
 Of all my family and kin now
 There remains but you; I am weak,
 Without brother or sister. Alas!
 The hour of death is here. Much have I
 185 Struggled in Time with its revolving spheres
 And quaffs of poison; but now,
 Neither poison nor injustice remains,

Nor their antidote; neither bodily strength
Nor intelligence endures. Now I depart
Toward oblivion; helpless, my soul
Hangs on my lips. The illusory world
Hands me the cup with which I pass on
To face the divine Cupbearer."⁵²
Having said this, his soul quickly took off.
He sighed, and bid it a last farewell,
190 Sprinkling his sweet soul upon the Friend;⁵³
And in this way the age's perfection departed.
Greatly did Esther lament him, shedding tears
Like the clouds in Adar.⁵⁴ Her own soul
She relinquished amid tears;
The silvery cypress fell beside him.
Esther and Mordekai perished;
The world was left without sun and moon.
As long as the firmament arches over the exalted vault,
It is a tent, a palace, the wide horizons;
195 Except for oppression, mourning, and grief
Nothing else comes from it. Its temptations
Set souls on fire; it crushes bones
Into fine dust and collyrium. Alas!
Man has not turned out well; his watery flesh
Brings forth fire. Water is never extinguished in fire:⁵⁵
Man cannot restore what is destroyed.
This uncaring inn of a world
Separates many a father and son;
200 None dwells in it happily;
Grief is every soul's portion.
Each moment it shows forth a new trick,
Its unlucky omens. Wise men have no need
For Time's⁵⁶ vicissitudes; they recognize
Its false, deceptive blandishments.
Whoever is attached to Time
Becomes its laughingstock.
Where are Adam, Seth, Noah, and Job?
Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

- 205 Where are 'Iraj, Kay Qobād, and Nozar
 Or Jamshid, Gīv, Qobād, and Qayṣar,
 Where are Zāl's Rustam and Nīram and Sām?
 Where Bizhan, Farīdūn, Ṭūs, and Bahrām?⁵⁷
 Each was a leader in his time;
 A royal falcon each, a peerless hero.
 On desire's wind they entered the earth;
 Now all are sleeping in the dust.
 Death turns everyone's morning into night;
- 210 It spares no one. But for their names
 Nothing survives of these warriors;
 Their realms and kingdoms have been laid waste.
 Helpless flesh is made of water and dust;
 The fire of grief ever sears the heart.
 The bloom of each rose and tulip
 That cheerfully opens is in the end
 Washed in the heart's blood.
 Each cypress that grows in the meadows
 Is felled in the end; Mordekai prevailed
 Over this implacable power
 Through prayer and invocation.
- 215 They built an edifice over their heads
 Where people came in earnest pilgrimage.⁵⁸
The Death of Cyrus, the Son of Ardashūr
 Each rose, unwelcome for its prickly thorns,
 Loses its blossom, scattered in the end.
 It lives one day, two, three, at the most;
 But in the end, death settles its affairs.
 Such also is the way of flesh; Time ever
 Takes vengeance on it. That year,
 Cyrus sat full of happiness
 Upon the exalted throne of fortune;
- 220 He sat upon the highest of all thrones,
 Never deprived of a sense of justice.
 He guarded his patrimony while God Himself
 Kept guard over him. The shah's glory

- Was exalted; his prayers were fulfilled
Through the Almighty's mercy.⁵⁹
When his cypress stature became bent,
He grew weary of his own company.
Anguish assailed the depths of his heart;
He melted away in grief's crucible.
- 225 One day he cried out in pain a few times;
Calamity kneaded him back and forth;
When its work reached his soul, he gave it up
And toppled like a tall cypress.
At once his soul fled from his body
Abandoning all good and bad, all this and that.
His affairs fell from his throne
Onto the burial plank;
He died, leaving behind his royal affairs;
They cleansed him and clothed him in silk and brocade.
- 230 They sprinkled musk on his head for a crown
And camphor on his ivory bosom.⁶⁰
They passed his accoutrements from hand to hand,
And then they opened the crypt for him.
He died, as all those born are bound to die;
None can endure in this world.
We're made of earth; to it we shall return
Even were we to fathom the greatest mystery.
Beware of Time, for it must feed on man,
Just as it feeds on snakes and scorpions.
- 235 When will it be sated with blood? Cry out
Against the oppression of the revolving spheres!
Adam and Eve ate easily of the grain,⁶¹
Relinquishing their souls.
We cannot escape either and must die;
We cannot save ourselves.
Should you endure even a hundred years and twenty,⁶²
Except for death and dying,
There is no other end. Even if you endure
A thousand years, still, in the end,
- 240 You will befriend the dust.

Neither king nor gatekeeper
Escapes death; neither fairy nor demon,
Neither bird nor beast.

The road to nonexistence is hard;
All are compelled to travel it.
Happy is he who has provisions;
He finds a sheltering corner everywhere;
He rests tranquil from the journey's travails,
Reigning over his own riches. Without food
And provisions, what is his worth in the eyes
Of the noble toll gatherers?⁶⁵

245 The world is an illusion from end to end,
Impossible for the intellect to grasp.⁶⁴
Its wealth consists only of snakes and scorpions;
It is a sea full of men's blood. Abstain
From the scorpion's bite and sting;
Withdraw from its common chatter.
All clever men flee from what is bad;
They quarrel with their own destiny.
Shun not the rose because it has thorns;
It still has companions and friends.

250 All kingdoms possess tulip gardens;
The tulip's color comes from imperial blood.
Consider a heavy jug, O noble man;
Look at the jug, at its hand, tongue, eye, and nose.
Do not look down upon this jug,
For it is worth no less than you and I.
Alas! Like this old pitcher we shall also break.

255 Man is the reason for the pitcher's breaking,
It is he who opens the door of this base abode.
If the soul's pitcher is struck by death's stone
Shouldn't the pitcher be upset? It cannot stand
The stone; it breaks and spills the water.⁶⁵
O noble man, you will be full of dust,
Whether you are like *Hātīm*⁶⁶ or like *Zaḥḥāk*.⁶⁷
This world of ill-repute made *Hātīm* of *Ṭāyy*'s work
Virtuous, full of generosity and kindness,

- 260 While sinister, accursed, treacherous Zaḥḥāk
 Was counted among the rebellious evildoers;
 He was the friend of Ahriman,⁶⁸
 Never pursuing equity and justice.
 Fortune favored him for a short time,
 But in the end it shed his blood.
 The world is not partial to either good or bad;
 It plays tricks equally on both.
 Go, watch out for tricks and gifts;
 Do not injure yourself through carelessness.
- 265 Ever since God created the world
 For our sake he set things up
 Through the eternal covenant.
 We became prisoners of annihilating Time,
 Heedless of His eternal excellence.⁶⁹
 Being is the realm of annihilating Time;
 Better transcend the worship of self!⁷⁰
 Shāhīn, worship God and prosper; behold
 With both your eyes the Artist and the art.⁷¹
 If you know yourself all your life long,⁷²
 You will be saved; go, you are still alive!

‘Imrānī

Like Shāhīn, the second-most-famous poet of JP literature is known to posterity only by his nom de plume, “‘Imrānī.”⁷¹ He was born in 1454 in Isfahan, where he lived until his mid- or late twenties, when against his will, and for reasons that remain unclear, he was compelled to move to Kashan, a flourishing town. He died in Kashan at an advanced age, sometime after 1536, outliving many of his relatives, friends, and contemporaries. According to David Yeroushalmi, “a profound sense of exile and alienation prevails in the majority of ‘Imrānī’s works and this sentiment may, in part, explain the poet’s essentially disillusioned and pessimistic view of man and society. To his larger awareness of the Jewish exile ‘Imrānī adds his personal feeling of forced and unjust banishment.”⁷²

The span of ‘Imrānī’s life covers two turbulent periods in Iranian his-

tory: the end of the Timurid era (1453–1501) and the advent of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722).³ As in most periods of political upheaval in Islamic history, this time was full of religious and economic uncertainty, which affected most Iranians; however, ‘Imrānī’s works do not convey specific information about the living conditions and hardships endured by the Jewish communities of Iran. Although ‘Imrānī witnessed a momentous change in the religion of the kingdom (from the Sunni to the Shi‘i form of Islam), which was accompanied by an especially intense period of forced conversion during the reign of Ismā‘īl I (1501–1524), the first Safavid shah, the repercussions of this event are not reflected directly in his verses. His apparent lack of interest in contemporary history may be a result of the fact that, as far as we know, the change in Iran’s religious outlook affected non-Muslim minorities only about a hundred years later.⁴

‘Imrānī’s surviving work bears testimony to his literary versatility. Among his compositions we count epics on biblical, historical, and legendary themes; works in prose and poetry based on Jewish historical and mid-rashic sources; and several strictly didactic pieces.⁵

‘Imrānī’s longest, and probably his most important, work is *Fatḥ-nāmāh* (henceforth FN; The book of conquest), based on the Books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, and part of II Samuel, in which he versifies major biblical events from the time of Samson until Solomon’s ascension to the throne. *Fatḥ-nāmāh* is modeled on Shāhīn’s versification of the Pentateuch. ‘Imrānī’s epic was apparently undertaken at the bidding and encouragement of a patron holding an official (communal?) rank bearing the inflated honorific title Amīn al-Dawlah (trustee of the state).⁶ The poet began working on FN in 1474, but he appears to have been interrupted shortly afterward, when his patron died. The encouragement of a new patron, a certain Rabbi Yehudah, was not sufficient to keep him on course. ‘Imrānī’s life seems to have been in upheaval during the writing of this epic, as he became embroiled in a conflict with the Jewish community of Isfahan and chose to go into “exile” to nearby Kashan. He seems to have harbored such bitterness, hostility, and sorrow over this experience that its imprint is visible not only in FN but in most of his later works as well. Although his working conditions in Kashan were far from ideal, the new environment was more congenial to ‘Imrānī’s creativity, as his prolific writings from that period suggest.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, FN and *Ganj-nāmah* (henceforth GN; The book of treasure; see below, chap. 5) were the only poetic works clearly attributed to ‘Imrānī.⁷ Yet recent research has shown him to be more prolific and versatile than Shāhīn, his erstwhile model.⁸ These two works epitomize, rather, ‘Imrānī’s successful melding of Jewish and Muslim themes.

Faḥ-nāmah is a *masnavī* of approximately 10,000 couplets composed in the popular Persian meter *ḥazaj musaddas mahzūf*. Like Shāhīn, ‘Imrānī follows closely the prosodic, rhetorical, and stylistic requirements of classical Persian verse, although at times he is less skillful than his predecessor.⁹ Apparently ‘Imrānī’s original plan also called for the versification of the biblical books of the Prophets and Writings but no trace of these efforts, if ever undertaken, has come to light. ‘Imrānī is faithful to the biblical outline of the tales he narrates in FN, but in their development he appears to be more restrained in the use of details culled from midrashic and Muslim legendary sources than Shāhīn. Similarly, like Shāhīn’s biblical epics, FN is heavily indebted to Persian epic poetry, especially to Firdowsī’s *Shah-nāmah*, in language, imagery, descriptions of feasts and battles, and characterization of heroes. There are many specific references in FN to the heroes of the *Shah-nāmah*, as well as to Iranian and Islamic concepts, which are placed anachronistically into the biblical settings of ‘Imrānī’s tales.

All of ‘Imrānī’s work illustrates his penchant for didacticism—a principal characteristic of classical (especially Sufi) Persian poetry in general. Nowhere is this more apparent than in GN, probably ‘Imrānī’s last work, completed in 1536. It is a versification of the first four chapters of the mishnaic tractate Abot ([The wisdom of the] fathers), which was popular everywhere in the Jewish world. Since it does not discuss halakic (legal) matters but deals with general and fundamental ethical precepts, it is accessible to all, not only to learned men. “Consisting of sayings and epigrammatic teachings of the [rabbinic] authorities of the Jewish tradition, Abot has been defined as ‘the nearest approach made by rabbinic Judaism to a philosophical formulation of its ideas.’”¹⁰ A large number of JP manuscripts on Abot, especially in prose, attest to the popularity of the tractate in the Iranian world. The fact that its exhortations resemble the wisdom poetry of Iran, known as *panā-nāmah* (book[s] of counsel), probably enhanced the popularity of Abot. *Ganj-nāmah* is also suffused with a mystical Sufi outlook and

is indebted to such writers and works as ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1220), Sa‘dī’s (d. 1292) *Pand-nāmah*,¹¹ and especially the various didactic works of Sa‘dī, such as *Bustān* (The garden) and *Gulistān* (The rose garden). Its poetic imagery also calls to mind the imagery of Ḥāfiz (d. 1389), the greatest lyrical poet of Iran.¹²

In addition to these two major works, several other compositions by ‘Imrānī have survived. Among these is a short epic (almost 2,000 couplets) called *Ḥanukkab-nāmah* (The book of Hanukkah), also known as *Zafar-nāmah* (The book of victory; see below, chap. 3). It is based on the Book of Maccabees and describes the struggle of the Maccabees against the Greeks.

‘Imrānī wrote at least three compositions based on midrashic narratives. The first, *Asara haruge ha-malkut* (The ten martyrs of the kingdom), written in prose interspersed with poetry, describes the well-known story of the martyrdom of the ten Jewish sages at the order of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (117–138 CE). The second, known both as *Qiṣṣe-ye haft barādarān* (The story of the seven brothers) and as *Musibat-nāmah* (The book of calamity), again intersperses prose and poetry. It is the tale of the martyrdom of Ḥannah’s seven sons, who were killed for refusing to become idolaters during the Hasmonean revolt (168–162 BCE). ‘Imrānī’s third midrashic work, *Aqedat Yīḥāq*, although based on the biblical account of the sacrifice of Isaac, concentrates primarily on Abraham; it is composed entirely in prose.

Among ‘Imrānī’s didactic works are *Vājibāt va arkān-i sīzdahgāni-yi imān-i Isra‘el* (The thirteen precepts and pillars of the faith of Israel), a masnavī based on Maimonides’ “The Thirteen Principles (of Faith),” and *Intihāb-i nakblastān* (The best of the palm grove), a masnavī that consists of “religious, moral, and practical advice to members and leaders of the Jewish community.”¹³

Among ‘Imrānī’s poetic compositions that do not have a perceptible Jewish dimension, the lovely *Sāqī-nāmah* (The book of the cupbearer) and a short poem known as *Dar setāyesh-i tabammul* (In praise of forbearance) have survived. *Sāqī-nāmah* appears to have been modeled on a similar work by Ḥāfiz (d. 1389). *Dar setāyesh-i tabammul* consists only of sixteen couplets extolling the virtues of patience.¹⁴

The large number of ‘Imrānī’s surviving compositions, the wide range of his themes, and his poetic skills merit closer study. They assure their author of a place at the top of the list of outstanding Iranian Jewish poets.

Fath-nāmab (The Book of Conquest)

Joshua's Conquest of Jericho

God's Angel Appears to Joshua in Jericho by God's Command

- When,¹ through God's guiding grace,
 The prophet Joshua and the Hebrews
 Encamped before the town of Jericho,
 Besieging it from every side,
 They worshiped God, full of devotion,
 All night long, from dusk to dawn.
 Not for a moment did the prophet grow
 Neglectful, idle in God's service;
- 5 Only of His traditions did he speak
 And throughout the night slept not a wink.
 One night as that exalted cypress
 Began to pray in prayer's tent,
 Lamenting until dawn as was his wont,
 He beheld at dawn a pure being,
 Rooted in place like a steel mountain,
 His stature shaming the tall box tree.
 Light from his face filled the retreat;
 His beauty, a model for the Universal Intellect.²
- 10 A drawn bejewelled sword was in his hand,
 It scattered sparks instead of luster.
 When Joshua beheld that vision,
 He was afraid and asked him:
 "O excellent, exalted man,
 Did you come here to shed my blood?
 Why do you grasp this sword?
 With it you grasp our very peace.
 Tell me, are you, exalted one,
 One of us or a stranger?"
- 15 The angel answered thus:
 "O wise man,
 Fear me not, and rejoice, for I am
 A friend of yours; no enemy am I

- I chose you from among the creatures of the world
 To be prophet, shah, and leader; know
 55 That I bestow on you Moses' rank and station.
 I made you cross the Jordan joyfully
 And freed your heart from grief; behold,
 I now bestow upon you the realm of Jericho;
 Its walls and towers I will level with My might.
 You'll conquer that province from end to end,
 Its sultan, heroes, army. Tell Jacob's Sons
 That tomorrow, at the break of dawn,
 60 They should put on the accoutrements of war
 And shout resolute war cries.
 Let whosoever is a hero, skillful and brave,
 Possessing sword and dagger, issue forth
 To wage war resolutely, color the earth
 With infidel blood. Tell them, O glory of creation,
 To take this besieged town quickly;
 Those brave warriors should march all
 Around the towers for six days,
 65 Once every day. Choose seven leaders
 From among the *priests*⁸ who are skilled
 At blowing the *ram's horn*.⁹
 Let them pursue these infidels and blow
 The Almighty's *horn* for their own sakes;
 Let them this way walk around the town
 Six days. To El'azar give the Torah quickly,
 So he, that glory of creation, may obey and walk
 70 Along with Phinehas¹⁰ and the other priests
 Behind this tribe and host.¹¹
 Tell them to remain silent for six days,
 Reciting litanies and chanting prayers;
 But on the seventh, at daybreak,
 When day's armies triumph over night's,
 Tell these people to come out once more
 And go around the city a seventh time;
 Then let the priests blow their *rams' horns*
 75 Together; as they do, tell all the people

To roar like lions; let them cry out
 To God with all their hearts and souls;
 Let them, full of devotion, rub their faces
 In the dust; let them, O exalted conqueror,
 Clamor and pray and magnify Me.¹²
 Then I will command the earth to split;
 At once the towers will fall into it;¹³
 The walls, the towers, all will topple
 By the Almighty's decree. Such might
 80 The Sons of Jacob will not behold again
 Until the Day of Resurrection.
 This will be a memorial
 They will recall through Time.
 When all the walls and towers fall,
 A path will appear on every side.
 Tell them to enter and refrain not
 From capturing infidels. Let none survive;
 Let them place bridles on every head:
 85 Infants, children, youths, old men.
 Let them kill all with dagger and arrow;
 Let them wipe out the fields and homes of the infidels."
 Hearing this happy news, the prophet Joshua,
 Who received this token,
 Sought out among the great priests
 Blowers of the noble *ram's horn*, seven
 Renowned, and told them of God's mystery:
 90 "O skillful, glorious men,
 You must now walk behind this brave people,
 And when I tell you, blow together
 The *ram's horn* of the Judge."
 When God's elite received this order,
 They rejoiced at His command. At once
 They took up their *horns* ready to obey
 95 God's word. Then Joshua, that wise sage,
 Summoned the Sons of Jacob and told them
 The command; they too rejoiced.
 That day, until nightfall, the army kept busy

Fashioning swords, maces, and daggers.
 Next morning, by God's command
 Those faithful folk took up their weapons
 And marched once round the city with Joshua
 100 And with God's priests, as He commanded.
 Warriors and braves marched in the vanguard,
 Chief priests followed behind heroes,
 Holding in their hands *rams' horns* divine,
 Each one beside himself, absorbed in union,¹⁴
 Uttering His praise and exaltation,¹⁵
 The leaders¹⁶ all in a state of ecstasy.¹⁷
 105 Joshua followed those illustrious men
 Gladly with the Ark; behind him walked
 The Hebrews, rich and the poor alike.
 That day they went round the city once,
 As God commanded. Joshua said to the people:
 "This, O chieftains, is God's command:
 That you make no sound
 110 Until the day I tell you to clamor
 Before the Almighty with all your hearts,
 So that you may attain the goals
 And wishes of your hearts."
 On hearing this, the Sons of Jacob held
 Their tongues at once. Thus did they walk
 Till nightfall; it was as if
 The world received benevolence from the night.
 At eventide they all returned and
 All night long communed with God.
 115 When from the East the sun rose brightly,
 The world bestowed a mandate on the sun.
 Once more those brave people
 Went all together round the town;
 For six days, every day, that victorious folk
 Went round the town; behind them came
 The priests blowing their *horns* together.
 When the eastern sun brightened the world
 With its beauty, on the seventh day,

- 120 By God's command, at dawn they came forth
 Once again together, the army
 With Joshua, the priests, and the Torah,
 Guardians of the Ark of Witness.¹⁸
 Around the city they marched seven times,
 As God commanded. The seventh time,
 The priests quickly blew their *horns*
 Six times, and at the seventh,
- 125 By God's command, Joshua said:
 "Now, you famed people, cry out all of you,
 With all your hearts and souls,
 And rub your faces in the dust in worship;
 Pray, O chieftains, magnify¹⁹ God,
 With the youths, children, infants, and old men,
 That God may give you this beautiful realm;
 And know clearly that this entire town
 Is forbidden to you; whatever money, goods,
 Property, silver, gold, and all such
- 130 Found in it are consecrated to the Lord.
 Whoever takes a grain's worth will be banned;
 By my sword will he die. I warn you of this mystery
 Lest you dare take a grain of barley's worth.
 Beware, beware, abstain from it
 Lest you be trapped by the ban.
 Do not, through greed, lift up your hands
 And bring calamity upon this host.
- 135 If you entrap the people in the ban²⁰
 God's wrath will flare against them:
 Jericho's entire wealth
 Is proscribed for the Judge's sanctuary.²¹
 Whoever dares to misappropriate,
 I'll shed his blood without hesitation.
 As for all those who are alive,
 Wild beasts, birds, and humans,
 Male, female, shed the blood of each;
 Carry this out, O glorious, faithful men!
- 140 Let none survive; rid the world

Of these villains, allow no mercy
 To enter into your hearts;
 Spare none of these strayed men,
 Except Rahab and all her household,
 For she has shown us benevolence and favor:²²
 She saved the messengers from death
 And sent them safely back to us.
 Therefore a messenger should be sent to her
 To help her come forth from the midst
 145 Of these strayed folk. Whoever
 Is in the house of that fair face,
 Her relatives and friends,
 Guard them, O chieftains, for such
 Is the command of the Almighty.
 Harm none of them, neither youths,
 Old men, nor children."

When the Sons of Jacob

Heard this from God's sage,
 They rejoiced greatly.
 With pure sincerity that princely folk
 Cried out before the Judge's court;
 150 With prayers, the clamor of supplication,
 They recalled the Sovereign of this world.
 Those faithful men cried out at once
 Together before the Judge's court.
 Their laments reached to the Pleiades;
 It seemed as if the earth itself rose upward.
 In that same hour, by the command of the
 Immortal beyond compare, the Lord of the earth
 And heavenly vaults, the Eternal,²⁵
 The One True God, the Sultan Absolute,
 155 A sudden gust of wind arose,
 And for a while darkness covered the world.
 Then the earth split and swallowed
 All the towers; by God's might and decree,
 The towers disappeared both one and all.
 When the towers and the fort toppled,

- The infidels' hearts leapt in surprise;
That might terrified them; the color
Of their faces turned to straw;
160 Out of dread they expired on the spot
And from there hastened toward the Lord's palace.
For their part, the Sons of Jacob,
When they beheld the impact of that deed,
Loosened their tongues in prayer once again;
Their bowed heads touched their feet.
Then they drew out their swords
And ran at once toward the town.
In place of walls and towers,
Columns of lions circled it now.
- 165 They blocked all Jericho's exits
And went on killing those vile folk.
Joshua, that honored chieftain, found
Caleb²⁴ and Phinehas and said to them:
"O warriors brave, remember the oath
Which you have sworn to Rahab;²⁵
You swore in God's name to extricate
Her and her family from battle.
- 170 Honor your promise; don't sin against her!
Free her from war's tumult
Lest you break our oath and thus break
Our hearts. Whoever is in her house,
Strangers²⁶ or relatives, guard all of them
With their property lest they be harmed,
As you have promised; such was the oath you swore
In the name of God.
- 175 In addition to what is hers, relinquish everything
To her lest anyone misappropriate
A barley grain's worth and thereby bring upon us
Trouble and grief. If suddenly you break
Your oath, God's wrath will flare against us."
When the glorious leader of the age said this,
At his command, the two set out at once
And quickly came to that distraught moon.

- 180 On seeing the sign of the scarlet thread
 They ran joyfully into the house.²⁷
 (That sun-cheeked beauty had placed
 A red sign on her roof, and from the day
 The brave heroes had left her
 That red sign was there for their return.)
 When that moon was informed of the arrival
- 185 Of the faithful heroes, that houri-face
 And all her kindred came forth in welcome.
 They fell down before the heroes' feet,
 And kissed the ground before them, saying:
 "O glorious heroes, may you always be princes
 In the world, through your good fortune
 We're set free, severed at last from these
 Accursed infidels." The heroes answered Rahab:
 "O you the light of whose face
- 190 Puts the moon to sleep,²⁸ now is not the time
 To tarry; come, let us get out of town,
 For it will be destroyed entirely,
 Such, lovely lady, is the Judge's order.
 Go quickly with all your kindred
 And join cheerfully our host, with whom
 You can dwell happily, free from grief,
 At rest from grief's sharp sword,
 Lest you be torn apart suddenly in the midst
- 195 Of this clamoring calamity; come,
 O lovely one, to our host and worry not."
 On hearing such words, that ravishing houri
 Set out quickly, cheerful and smiling,
 With her relations and the famed heroes
 And all her property and chattels, cows, sheep,
 Horses, and mules, also the property
 Of all her relatives; she brought them all
 Without reproof into the army's camp.
- 200 For their part, the army of God's lion,
 With spears and swords and daggers drawn,
 Encircled the infidels, whose blood

Flowed like a river; men, women,
Youths, children, old men, grand viziers,
Kings, princes, and viceroys,
Wild beasts, birds, cows, and sheep,
They killed them all, by God's command;
They left no soul alive; all fell
205 By the sword's blow, all except Rahab
And those who were with her;
The rest were killed at God's behest.
Whomever the Sons of Jacob saw in that sea,
They cut off his head at once.
Women and babes were not spared;
All fell by the sword's blow.
Whoever had a soul, he was soon parted
From it. Old men and youths, males, females,
Children and nursing babes,
Camels and donkeys, all were dispatched;
210 They finished off the infidels
And seized the town with all its homes.
They plundered the infidels' wealth
And brought it before the commander.
When Joshua saw all those riches,
He rejoiced and laughed happily;
Then he said to the braves: "O famous men,
God's command is that you destroy
This town entirely, turn it into a thicket,
215 A dwelling place for lions. I curse
Until the Day of Resurrection
Whoever would inhabit it again."²⁹
On hearing this from God's prophet,
They made ready huge maces
And toppled the entire town, uprooting
The fort, its soil, mountains, homes,
And then let loose upon them water and fire
And cast everything to the wind.
They leveled the town with the plain;
They left no footprint's trace.

- 220 Then they returned to camp accompanied
 By victory and conquest, and there
 Those brave lions rested.
 Joshua took money and treasure
 And carried them into the sanctuary
 Of the Almighty.³⁰ He dedicated all
 To the Almighty of the Universe;
 What God commanded, Joshua carried out.
 He then ordered Rahab to be brought before him
 With her tribe, family, and kindred.
- 225 Kindly he questioned each and every one
 And shared his mirth with them.
 He opened his hands in largesse
 To give each one a fitting crown and belt.
 He related to them God's command,
 Making each one aware of his spiritual neglect;
 They then became servants of God,
 Abandoning the path of unbelief;
 God's oneness they acknowledged,³¹
 Sobering up from their drunkenness.³²
- 230 They accepted Kalīm Allah's³³ customs
 And freed themselves of unbelief.
 Joshua, the wise prophet, gave them a station
 In the midst of Jacob's Sons, according
 To birth and kindred, and right then,
 In the midst of the tribe and companions,
 Joshua gave Rahab to Caleb.³⁴ With her
 Caleb had several children, each one famous,
 Wise, and a hero; a large progeny
 Came from them, all famous, mighty, faithful,
 Many revered wise men of high rank,
 Strong among the people, learned leaders,
- 235 *Righteous, pious prophets*, many attaining
 To kingship in the world.³⁵ They gave the world
 The enjoyment of justice and placed
 The crown of lordship on their heads.
 See, O wise man, how Rahab prospered

In the world through goodness;
 It was through goodness she attained this,
 Through goodness she ascended.
 240 He who expresses goodness finds a place
 Wherever he may be; he who accustoms
 Himself to goodness crowns himself
 Among the people; in every assembly he joins,
 He'll be deemed righteous; wheresoever he goes
 He'll find his worth; Time itself will follow
 His commands; his statutes will be accepted everywhere.³⁶
 The world stands through the righteousness
 Of good men; the firmament keeps in place
 245 For the love of good men, so strive,
 Day and night to do good while you are
 Under the gilded azure cloak.
 He whose calling is goodness,
 What does he fear from Fate?
 How well did that wise man say this,
 No one has ever said it better:
 "He who assents to goodness in his heart
 Conquers the world; it does not conquer him."
 They asked that dear sage: "What is better,
 A good name or happiness?" The prudent sage
 250 Gave a reply more precious than a hundred treasures:
 "Certain it is that he who lacks a good name,
 Cannot, in truth, have happiness."³⁷
 Happy is the man who has a good name;
 Through it he attains his wish always!
 He passes through the world joyfully
 And has nothing to do with what is bad;
 He is always free from grief and sorrow,
 A leader among the progeny of man.
 255 Through goodness man attains to eminence;
 Human calamity comes from a bad nature.
 When Rahab, that pretty chin, performed
 Her good deed that night toward those heroes,
 Helped them elude the officers of the shah,

She tore the ropes of unbelief.
 Since happiness was her companion that night,
 Today good fortune is her servant.
 Freed from the blows of the vengeful sword
 She turned with her loved ones from grief
 260 To happiness. Through her good fortune
 They escaped; they all escaped only through
 Her grace. If not for her, they would have
 All been killed by those brave heroes' swords.
 Instead, that moon and all her people
 Dwelt happily among the Sons of Jacob.
 So save yourselves through goodness
 And you will bring others to good fortune.
 O Lord, for the sake of our good names,
 For the sake of all the imams and innocents,³⁸
 265 Keep 'Imrānī upon the good road,
 Far from the bad, and always close to You.

The Book of Ruth

The Birth of Jesse, David's Father

When¹ at the Bestower's behest Naomi came
 Into the desert of Moab, the world was still
 Weakened by drought; seeds and grains were dear
 Everywhere; wheat and barley that the farmer
 Sowed into the earth had not yet sprouted;
 A carpet of new greens spread over
 The cultivated fields storing within
 The promise of bounty at harvest time.
 5 By God's will, when Nisan's grace arrived,
 Land and fields turned into rose gardens.
 And as they praised that blessed bounty,
 Women and men cried out in happiness.
 When moon-cheeked Ruth became aware
 Of farmers storing the barley stacks,
 That fairy-face said to Naomi, "I want to roam
 About this field; if barley can be found,

- I will obtain it, but if it is not permitted
We will be helpless. Whether barley be found
10 In desert or meadow, I'll bait it, hunt it down.
I will return at nightfall
To share your sighs and grief."
Naomi answered, "O dazzler of hearts,
Go, and may the Lord grant success and happiness."
On her approval Ruth walked toward the field;
Swift as the wind the maid left Naomi;
Alone she set out toward the desert
Arriving where the farmers gathered.
15 No water had she, nor bread, nor other source
Of nourishment; she gleaned some barley on the way.
That moon-face thus traversed field after field,
In perfect solitude, just like the sun.
She chanced upon a cultivated field,
A veritable meadow in the desert,
Everywhere full of busy squires,
Happy and smiling over the barley harvest.
The moon-cheeked Ruth asked one of these:
"To whom does this huge field belong?"
20 Replied a farmer: "O fairy-face,
This goodly plain belongs to Boaz.
He is a fine youth and renowned,
Owns houses aplenty, property, and storerooms.
He is of Elimelek's kin, and now he rules
In Bethlehem. His wealth and property
Are endless, he is most courteous to all,
Great, a prince of Judah's folk;
Sunlike, God's love radiates from his face,
25 His counsel is auspicious, like a king's;
In fortune he resembles the sun of the age.
His lips do not touch bread or drink until
He welcomes some poor men into his house.
He looks upon the people's needs with favor;
Noble, he gives each commoner his due.
He cheers the sight of the aggrieved; hope

He restores to orphans and widows;
None come before him whom he does not ease.”

- 30 Thus they conversed as Boaz himself
Arrived and saw Ruth’s beauty from afar.²
Several chieftains rode along with him
Each one holding a *sāz*,³ for he was never
Without joy and the *sāz*; the lute and harp
Were heard wherever he went. Beholding Boaz,
The farmers one and all rushed out to meet him
To pay respects. They bowed their heads at his feet,
Invoked God’s blessings on him.
- 35 Then from the road Boaz questioned a youth:
“When did that moon appear from its zodiac tower?
Who is this sun-faced woman with a visage
Brighter than gold, and what is it she needs?
Why is she here? Why is she wretched and heartbroken?
What does she want? What is her name?
I will fulfill her wishes on the spot.”
The youth replied: “O Exalted one, this sun-
Cheeked beauty is Naomi’s daughter-in-law,
- 40 Who from the desert came with her from Moab;
And she has no one, neither mother nor father.
They two live together; she has no friend,
No intimate, no husband. Fortune its faith
Kept not with her; it turns out beggars everywhere.
She travels far without provisions,
Plucking their gleanings wheresoever she goes;
At nightfall she returns, like fire,
And shares everything with that burned one.⁴
- 45 That moon, her waist is cinched like heaven’s wheel
In service to Naomi, in city, in plain.
Naomi has no one, no other friend but Ruth,
With whom to share her sorrow.”
When Boaz heard the young man’s words,
His heart froze out of grief for Naomi.
Lamenting the injustice of heaven he cried;

His happy heart filled with sorrow.
Then he called to Ruth, made room for her
By his side, seated her and said,
50 "O houri, the likes of you cannot be seen
Among the veiled; hear me, O radiant moon:
Remain with us here in the desert; beware,
Beware, do not go anywhere else; glean here
Among the storerooms, linger near my farmers,
No longer solitary like the world's sun."
Thus he commanded the farmers:
55 "See she is kept in good spirits; do not offend her,
For she is poor; a poor person is not happy.
From now on give to that moon from my storerooms
That which she ought to have; withhold not from her
Your water, bread, whatever else you have.
She is a stranger and fallen on hard days; none
Should harm the stranger."⁵ And when Ruth heard this
From Boaz and saw such favor, kindness,
60 And compassion, she fell down upon the dust
Bowing at once before his feet. Lifting
Her head she said: "Exalted one, may you live
As long as the moon and the stars; may the sun
Never shine without your beauty, and may
Your enemies descend into the grave alive.
God grant, so long as heaven and earth endure,
So long as day and night, month, year, the world
Itself endure, that you be always victorious
Fulfilling in this world your friends' best wishes.
65 Because you've made this slave girl glad,
May God fulfill your wishes and desires.
You've acted like a kinsman toward me, a stranger;
You have in your station done many deeds of kindness.
In turn may the World Preserver grant your wishes
And like the sun greatly exalt your name."
Boaz replied: "O heart-ravishing beauty,
Companion of the moon, none is like you

Among those veiled in the world; in Paradise itself
 70 No houri is like you. Men and women
 Have spoken much of you, O moon-cheeked one,
 Tales they have told of you; true faith, kind manners,
 Right custom, these have you, O lovely one,
 Shown toward Naomi; you shine on life's royal highway
 Like the bright moon, meriting praises by the thousand."
 So the time passed and dazzling Ruth was busy
 Day and night, in town and in the fields. Each day
 75 Till nightfall spent she in the fields,
 And when night came she returned to Naomi,
 And with her all night long, till dawn,
 Time in, time out, she wailed and sighed.
 Daily she brought Naomi food and was
 Her ever-compassionate nurse. When Boaz came
 Into the field to oversee his lands and property,
 He would glimpse Ruth near his farmers, her waist
 Cinched up to work hard like a man. She was
 So nimble in her fieldwork she appeared
 To win the wager against heaven itself.
 80 Alone she piled the harvested grain and sought
 The company of none throughout the bright day.
 Her beauty she concealed even from herself;
 She spoke to no one an entire month.
 When Boaz saw her beauty and her renown,
 Like a perfect moon in all she did, he gave
 His heart to that graceful cypress, for
 In truth, to such a one the heart entrusts the soul.
 He fell in love with Ruth; fire fell
 Into the house of patience. Passionately
 85 Did he love Ruth, so that, save for her face,
 No other moon he saw.⁶ The harvest
 Of the wheat and barley came to an end;
 Farmers moved out from their tents to their homes.
 Fairy-faced Ruth, like fairy kind,
 Departed, and a longing for her tore

At Boaz's heart. Daily his passion for her
Swelled, for such is the nature of love.
When he went helpless from not seeing her,
He called together a few famous chieftains,
90 Sat among them and bade them all sit down,
And spoke of many things. After a time he said:
"Know, O faithful, exalted, and wise elders,
That I would marry Ruth, to be her husband,
She my wife. Since Elimelek, Mahlon, and Kilion
Were my kinsmen but now are gone, by God's will,
Leaving behind some property and homes,
For these, by God's will, I sought out
95 A guardian closer than I am in kinship.
He did not want them, and after some talk,
He offered me his guardianship entire.⁷
Now their inheritance is mine: those closest
In kinship can by right inherit."
The sages replied: "In truth,
You are the rightful guardian by God's will,
You have the right to act as you have said;
100 Do as you wish." At that moment they
Summoned Naomi, told her of the matter.
With what they said her heart was pleased.
Promptly they found a judge in the assembly.
Thus they arranged the marriage⁸ of Khosrow
And Shīrīn⁹ and freed them from bitterness
And separation; those two lovers found comfort
In one another.

Some time passed, and by
The Almighty's will, the moon-faced,
Lovely-breasted beauty carried within her
A young cypress shoot from the garden of souls.
105 At the appointed time, she gave birth to a child
Of great beauty, who brought much joy to Boaz's heart;¹⁰
He straightaway named the child Obed.¹¹
Naomi's joy was overwhelming;

She felt rejuvenated in old age;
 That veiled one offered many thanks to God
 And nursed the child contentedly.
 Day and night she nurtured him, like a nanny,¹²
 Sometimes in sunshine and sometimes in shade,
 110 Knowing no exaltation save in his beauty.
 Though he sat on her lap, he dwelt in her heart.
 She nurtured him as if he were her own;
 Out of her heart and soul he plucked all the pain.
 It seemed to her and also to others
 As if the departed had returned.
 Yet more time passed;
 Wise Obed grew to a young man
 Whose beauty watered the soul's garden,
 The violet bestowing radiance upon the hyacinth.
 115 If you beheld his cypress stature, you
 Would forget your own measure at once.
 If a nightingale saw the rose of his face,
 He would delight no longer in the rose.
 Unique in learning, chivalry, and lore;
 In goodness he was heaven's mate.
 His beauty filled the sight with light
 That even from far off taunted the moon.
 When once he came to the harem to find a wife,
 He saw a cypress vision, straight from the garden,
 120 A fragment of the moon framed by chains of curls,
 Sun-cheeked, angelic in appearance.
 The heart of Obed rejoiced in that beloved;
 Not for one moment was it free of her.
 And so it came about that in nine months,
 God granted him a longed-for child.
 Obed greatly rejoiced and gave him a name
 Full of happiness, Jesse. From Jesse's stock
 Came several offspring, prosperous in the world.
 125 One was the prophet David, one of God's elect;
 To this day it is recalled
 That the contract between moon-cheeked Ruth

And Naomi was the Almighty's will.

So you, 'Imrānī, ponder the fate of dazzling Ruth,
 How through her goodness she prospered in the world.
 Since she set foot on purity's path,
 Through goodness fortune itself became her guide.
 The world keeps measure of both good and bad;
 But Ruth was free of all that's good and bad.

130 Whatever music you play on your sāz
 Time will play back the same to you.
 Don't call out any tunes in this assembly, lest
 You be chased away in public from the feast.
 The arrow finds its way into the heart
 Only if sometimes it strays from its course.¹³

Aḥaron b. Mashiah

Shoftim-nāmah (henceforth SN; The book of judges) appears to be the sole surviving poetic composition of Aḥaron b. Mashiah, who lived in the seventeenth century and hailed from Isfahan.¹ At some indefinite point in his life he moved to Yazd, perhaps as a result of the wave of persecutions that swept through Isfahan in the mid-seventeenth century.

Shoftim-nāmah, composed in 1692, sets to verse the Book of Judges up to chapter eighteen. It is a relatively short composition written in the same *bazaj musaddas mahzūf* meter as 'Imrānī's *Fath-nāmah*. Aḥaron b. Mashiah claims not only that he was inspired by 'Imrānī's works but that the older poet had been his teacher and spiritual guide. Since 'Imrānī died sometime after 1536, this claim can hardly be true, except in terms of literary influence. Aḥaron b. Mashiah's composition is usually included in manuscripts of FN, probably because of the correct perception that Aḥaron b. Mashiah consciously strove to continue 'Imrānī's work.

Amnon Netzer draws attention to the fact that Aḥaron b. Mashiah may be alluding to events in his own times when he mentions that a man called Mattatiah was murdered in Isfahan along with four other individuals. It is likely that this Mattatiah was Matthathias Bloch, the messenger of Sabbatai Ṣevi (the false messiah) to Mosul and Iran, who remained active after Ṣevi's apostasy and was apparently murdered near Isfahan sometime after 1668.²

Shoftim-nāmah (The Book of Judges)

Jephthah Sacrifices His Daughter

Jephthah's Daughter Meets Jephthah with Tambourines and Flutes

- When Jephthah set out for the road¹
 He did so full of happiness and joy.
 He had a daughter,² a solitary cypress,
 Her visage fairyborn; two curls
 Upon her temples rested, two weeping violets;
 Her cheeks were like two jasmines;
 She was a graceful cypress.
 Her eyes were subtle, her forehead
 As bright as the moon; moonlike in form,
 5 She was wholly delightful, with a slender waist,
 High-spirited, prancing a partridge's gait,
 Both eloquent and elegant in speech.
 On hearing that her father had set out,
 That moonlike sun, cheerful and happy,
 Decided to go meet him.
 She took along a flask of wine,
 Came out with *sāz*,³ flute, and tambourine.
 As fate would have it, Jephthah's daughter
 Was an only child; as she came from the house,
 10 She plucked the *sāz*, showed off her joy,
 When suddenly her father came in sight.
 Jephthah, that wise and peerless hero, approached
 Happy and joyful, full of contentment.
 As he drew near his house in Mišpeh
 And was about to step into his home,
 By the Incomparable's will, he saw his daughter
 Who had come out to meet him. When thus he
 Suddenly beheld that moon of Khotan,⁴ he cried:
 15 "O my heart-ravishing daughter,
 You grieve me, distress me utterly."
 Having said this, he sighed, cried out,
 And tore at once the garments on his body;
 Again he addressed his daughter thus:

“O comfort of my heart, frivolously
Did I open my mouth when I declared
If I should return to Mišpeh safely,
After killing my enemies,
20 I would sacrifice to the Almighty Judge
Whatever first came from my house,
And now I see you here before me!”⁵
That moon replied at once: “O father,
Why do you grieve? Did not Abraham also
Take Isaac, the light of his two eyes,
By the command of the World Keeper,
To sacrifice him on His threshold?
Remove this grief and sorrow from your heart;
Whatever you have promised, you must do.
25 You were victorious over lawless infidels;
You ought now to rejoice and be happy.
I do, however, have one thing to ask:
I would like to lament over my fate,
I seek your permission and consent
To offer up the gift of my innocence.⁶
I know for certain I shall be killed suddenly;
Grant me a respite of two months.
I will go to the mountains with my friends
To grieve and lament over my fate,
30 Bewail my virginity with them.”⁷
When Jephthah, the chieftain, heard this request
He gave permission to that eastern moon
To go with a group of friends to weep
And lament together.

Thus did they spend two months,
Crying and burning up with grief; when the time
Was up she came accompanied by friends;
That radiant moon hastened to her father.
35 And once again when he beheld his daughter,
Jephthah rent his garments and said:
“I have only this child; the thought

- Of hurting her distresses me profoundly!"
 He wept copiously until he took her
 Helplessly away. He readied for her
 A tomb and he conveyed the moon-face there;
 40 He gave her an eternal resting place
 Sealed over with bricks and clay.⁸
 Then among Jacob's seed arose this rite:
 To send their daughters there
 Four times a year to grieve over her fate;
 Such was the way and custom of those times.
 But it has been said that in the end wise Jephthah
 Did wrong concealing his daughter thus.
 45 Phinehas, the leader, was not with him
 To suggest a remedy for his daughter,
 To counsel him according to religion,
 So that he would sacrifice a cow or lamb instead,
 Or give it to the priest to burn it
 In her place.⁹ For this they both lost
 Body and soul. Though Phinehas and Jephthah
 Both magnified God, they were afflicted in the end.
 O friends,
 50 In every matter of which you despair,
 You must act wisely lest your work
 Become too difficult; then you will
 Pick with ease the fruit you merit.
 O, Aḥaron, act wisely always, lest
 You become confused or disgraced.

Khawājah Bukhārā'ī

Khawājah Bukhārā'ī's *Dāniyāl-nāmah* (henceforth DN; The Book of Daniel) is a *masnavī* of approximately 2,200 couplets.¹ It versifies the Book of Daniel and adds to it some details not found in the biblical account. The poem is divided into eighty-eight chapters, and its meter, although often defective in various manuscripts, is the ubiquitous *bazaj musaddas mahzūf* we encountered in Shāhīn and 'Imrānī's epics. Khawājah Bukhārā'ī, "the Bukhārān

Master," dates his composition to 1918 of the Seleucid era, that is, 1606 CE.² Although we do not know his full name, his *nisba* (Arabic for "lineage," "connection"), "Bukhārā'ī," indicating his place of origin, as well as the pronunciation of certain words in DN that are characteristic of the Tajik dialect, confirm that he hailed from Bukhārā, one of the fabled cities of Central Asia.³ That Jewish poets thrived in Bukhārā is attested to not only by the surviving works of accomplished poets like Khwājah Bukhārā'ī and Yūsuf b. Yishāq b. Mūsā (see below, chap. 11) but also by the inclusion of poets of Jewish origin in at least one official literary *tazkirah* (biographical memoir) written by a Muslim.⁴

Based on DN, Khwājah Bukhārā'ī should be regarded as a learned man, acquainted not only with the works of other Iranian Jewish poets like Shāhīn but also with the great epics of Iranian literature, especially Firdowsī's *Shah-nāmah*. In addition to being knowledgeable in the Torah and its principal commentaries, Khwājah Bukhārā'ī was familiar with midrashic and apocryphal tales, which he weaves into his epic. His creativeness manifests itself also in some of the original contributions he makes to the biblical narrative, such as the dialogue between Daniel and the lions (vv. 100–110).

No other works of Khwājah Bukhārā'ī seem to have survived, although it is apparent from DN that he was an accomplished poet. Nor do we have any other biographical information about him than what can be gleaned from this work. The verses of DN are imbued with a pessimistic, anti-worldly attitude that characterizes much of classical Persian, especially Sufi poetry. Like Shāhīn and especially 'Imrānī before him, Khwājah Bukhārā'ī does not appear to consider the fatalistic, largely Sufi, outlook of classical Persian literature alien to the spirit of Judaism, perhaps because such sentiments had been expressed already in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Yet despite superimposing a Persian mood and mold upon a biblical theme, Khwājah Bukhārā'ī's fidelity to the details of the Book of Daniel reveals him as a poet deeply attached to his faith.

Like Shāhīn and 'Imrānī, Khwājah Bukhārā'ī employs the epic and mystical conventions of classical Persian poetry to convey moralistic teachings to be shared with the Iranian Muslim population at large. However, a Jewish feature unique to DN is its frequent expressions of messianic hopes. In line with these, Khwājah Bukhārā'ī blends and shapes the facts of

Persian history to suit his messianic theology. Amnon Netzer notes that “none of the Jewish writers of Persia ever inquired into or questioned the accuracy of dates, names, events, and the succession of Persian kings presented in their works. In *Dāniyāl-nāmah*, Cyrus (550–530 B.C.) is king of Persia and he is a contemporary of Darius (522–486 B.C.) who is king of ‘Irāq.’ They combine their armies and fight Belshazzar, king of Babylon. After defeating Belshazzar, Darius, at the age of sixty-two, sits on the throne of ‘Baghdad.’”⁵

In the narrative that follows, “Daniel in the Lions’ Den,” Khwājah Bukhārā’ī correctly identifies and embellishes the religious moral of the story, namely, that through Daniel’s ordeal others, especially Darius, are shown convincing proof that the God of Daniel is omnipotent and worthy of being worshiped (6:28).⁶

Khwājah Bukhārā’ī’s literary talents are especially vivid in battle scenes and descriptions of sunrises and sunsets, which, like similar passages in the works of Shāhīn and ‘Imrānī, echo the language and imagery of the *Shah-nāmah*. The feasts (*bazm*) that follow battles (*razm*) and the lamentations over the deaths of kings and heroes are equally inspired by Firdowsī’s great epic. *Dāniyāl-nāmah* displays many of the rhetorical and stylistic features that were appreciated in Khwājah Bukhārā’ī’s day and that characterized all Iranian epics, features that educated Iranians can still understand and admire.

Dāniyāl-nāmah (The Book of Daniel)

Daniel in the Lions’ Den

*How the Sages Exaggerated to the Shah, and How Daniel Was Brought
and Thrown into the Lions’ Pit*

In that time,¹ a tribe of lost idolaters
Came before the king of kings;
They said to him: “O guardian of the World,
Your law and order are diminished
If over Daniel you do not reign.
When will you fully rule your kingdom?
O Khosrow,² if you deliberately change
The Law of ‘Irāq and of Fars³

⁵ The state’s dun-colored steed will weaken;

The kingdom's reins slip from the hand.
This counsel is a thousand times more strong
Than the rampart Alexander built."⁴
Thus did those men exaggerate in concert;
On their account the shah now felt constrained.
He saw no benefit in treachery and craft
And said: "Bring Daniel here at once!"
His Excellency's servants quickly then
Brought Daniel to the opening of the pit.

10 The shah's heart was on fire, a censer
Full of grief toward that aged prince.
However, he did recover sufficiently
To walk gracefully to the pit himself;
Coming forth quickly from his palace
He headed toward the lions' pit.
Once there, none dared to utter a word.
That very moment bold men flung
The aged prince into the lions' pit.

15 But by the Omnipotent's command, the lions
Huddled together, head to head,
At the wise man's feet, he who brought joy
To prisoners' hearts everywhere.
Though landing quickly on the pit's bottom,
His body was neither injured nor damaged;
Safe and unharmed, by the Almighty's command,
That man of good deeds descended into the pit.
The lions bowed their heads before his feet
And opened not their muzzles to cause injury.

20 As long as he dwelled at the bottom,
The pit was fully illumined by his light.
Many a wise and understanding man has said
That the Creator of the world, while creating,
Informed the lions thus, out of His grace:⁵
"One day, in days to come, and of a sudden
One of my elite will be flung by his enemies
Into your paws. Harm not nor injure him;

Guard him like the pupil of the eye.”

- 25 O Khwājah, if you are virtuous and perfect,
 You are among the slaves of the Almighty’s army.
 Should you then fall into lions’ paws, into the pit,
 May God of His grace preserve you.

How the Shah Cried out to Daniel from the Opening of the Pit, and How He Comforted Daniel

- When that sage landed in the abyss of the pit,
 The shah cried out to him from the top:
 “O you who know the mysteries of the Living,
 Immortal One, the God before Whom you have always
 Bowed, let Him deliver you from this pit
 To please your friends and spite your ill-wishers.
 30 May you remain untroubled by these fierce lions;
 May you dwell safely in the abyss of this pit!
 As God’s grace is eternally your friend,
 What grief can come to you from the oppression
 Of cruel enemies?”⁶
- The shah then ordered that without delay
 A slab of stone be brought before him
 That he might place it on the opening of the pit
 So none should strive against his purpose.⁷
 The people rushed to find a stone measuring
 Many parasangs, huge on each side.
 35 They searched for it high and low, but
 In the end, most stones fell short.
 Then God called out to Gabriel:⁸
 “Carry a stone from Zion to Baghdad;⁹
 Though his ill-wishers cover the opening
 Of Daniel’s pit, their designs
 Will not prevail.”
- When the command reached faithful Gabriel,
 God’s own instruction and address,
 He pointed with his wing to a stone¹⁰
 Incomparably heavier than all others.
 40 He lifted it that moment into the air;

In an instant he flew like the wind
 From Zion to Baghdad.
 By the Omnipotent's command, of a sudden
 The stone fell down near that pit.
 On seeing it, the shah's officers resorted
 To tricks, cunning, even sorcery,
 And dropped that heavy stone as if compelled,
 Upon the opening of the pit.
 Then Iran's Shahānshah sealed off the area
 45 With his ring and princely stamp lest, unawares,
 Cruel enemies should throw the stone in
 And kill Daniel, and so that the old sage
 Would not suffer more from their torment
 Nor be afflicted by the wishes of their souls.

How Darius Returned to His Palace and Went to Sleep Grieving

When the world wearies of day's golden egg,
 Shabrang,¹¹ the dark bay steed, appears
 From under the crow's wings. Did not Jacob,
 That sage of Canaan, consort with sorrow
 On account of Joseph?
 As soon as they flung Daniel into the pit,
 The shah set out toward his palace,
 50 Depressed and weary on Daniel's account,
 He rent the pocket of his heart,
 The very shirt of his own soul.
 So torn apart was the king's heart
 That his wound's pain kept increasing
 As he walked on. Upon reaching the palace
 His ruddy face had turned yellow like straw.
 Grieving for Daniel, he was unable
 To sit still upon his throne;
 Anguish assailed him so for the old man's sake
 It brought the shah out of his own home.¹²
 55 He remained sleepless, although in search
 Of sleep he rested his head on the pillow.
 Thoughts of the sage chased sleep away;

Restless, he tossed from night to dawn.
 Not even briefly did sleep visit his eyes;
 It fled completely from over his head.

*How Darius Went to the Opening of the Pit in the Morning, and How He
 Called out to Daniel, Who Answered Him*

When dawn heralded the loyal morning,
 The zephyr wiped the rust off night's mirror.
 When morning's light turned bright
 Time itself rejoiced at the occasion.

60 The moon-cheeked shah arose then,
 Also radiant, like the sun,¹³ and headed
 Toward the pit, followed by courtiers.
 Full of pain, with royal gait he approached
 And saw his seal unbroken all around the pit.

At once he ordered his officers:

"Lift that stone off the pit."

They obeyed and opened up the pit;
 With effort they pushed the stone aside.

65 From high above over the people, the shah
 Glanced into the abyss of the pit and said:
 "O slave of the Most Generous Creator,
 Answer me, for I almost died of grief.
 If you are alive, God's and your slave
 Am I and all the world's kings.¹⁴
 I did not sleep a wink on your account,
 Drowning in fire and water, grieving for your safety.
 My heart and soul bleed for your sake,
 For I know not what happened to you.

70 God, before Whom you daily bowed,
 Whose attributes you extolled day by day,
 Did He ease this hardship for you or not?
 Did he save you from the lions' claws or not?"
 Then out of the darkness the sage replied:
 "O shah, may you endure forever!
 May your enemies grieve, your friends rejoice,
 And majesty befriend you in the world.

- May the heavenly spheres watch over you
 75 Always. God, whose creation I am,
 Sent an angel to me.¹⁶ He closed the mouths
 Of the ferocious lions;¹⁶ by God's decree,
 I did not suffer the loss of one hair,
 Nor any damage or injury from those lions.
 My actions always have been pure before God
 And thus the wishes of my enemies have come to naught.
 Ever prepared in loyalty toward Him I always
 Refrained from actions that would displease Him.¹⁷
 80 I never followed my own desires;
 Thus all that is difficult turned easy for me.
 And now, O shah, at your palace as well,
 I am found guiltless and without sin."¹⁸

How the Shah Rejoiced and Threw a Rope into the Pit for Daniel

- Full of happiness, that benevolent shah
 Nearly jumped out of his clothes.
 His heart was free from the bonds of grief;
 Cheer turned his countenance into a nosegay.
 85 He ordered his messengers at once: "Hurry,
 Bring a rope to him quickly!"
 On hearing the royal command,
 They ran like wild gazelles
 And brought a well-twisted rope,
 Whose every loop contained a knot;
 Its many twists and folds
 Resembled lovelocks of the fair;
 Its many folded, curly, closed chains,
 Were like Majnūn,¹⁹ a weeping willow,
 90 Or a hyacinth. With his own hands,
 The happy shah passed on the golden rope
 To silver arms, saying to them:
 "O tender youths, each one of you is dear to me.
 Look up to elders with affection
 For your own youth will fade away.
 As you rescue Daniel and bring him up

Carefully out of this dangerous pit,
 Even if you were peerless in affection,
 An accident could happen; so help him!"
 95 At once those moon-faced, sweet helpers,
 Hastened to throw the rope into the pit.

*How the Lions Became Aware of Daniel's Departure from the Pit and Came
 to Him in Mute Language*

When by the shah's command the silver arms
 Threw that golden rope into the pit
 The lions knew for certain then
 That the afflicted sage would leave the pit.
 His going affected them deeply;
 The thought of separation made them sad.
 Within the abyss of the pit the lions
 Began to speak by God's command
 100 (Know that they spoke in mute language),
 Saying: "You cheered our hearts and souls;
 Why did you dwell here to begin with,
 If now you must leave our abode?
 When one warmly befriends the evening guest,
 Next day's separation does not come easy;
 Why do you flee from us now?
 We showed you nothing but our goodness."
 Wise Daniel replied: "May God's will²⁰
 105 Be pleased with you! How long will you grieve
 Over our separation? Let not your eyes
 Shed any more tears for me; having fulfilled
 The Incomparable's command, you clearly passed
 His test. O lions, your goodness will endure
 In the world until the Day of Resurrection."
 This good deed needs no further explanation
 For this tale has become fabled everywhere.
 The lions were satisfied with his answer;
 They were set free from the bonds of grief.
 110 Then the sage bid them farewell, while they
 Continued to profess their loyalty.

How They Brought Daniel out of the Pit, and How Spectators Gathered Around

- When Daniel freed himself from the lions,
 He set his mind on coming out of there.
 The wise sage leapt forth with skill,
 The golden rope tied round his arm and waist.
 With hundreds of graceful signs the exalted sage
 Beckoned that they should pull him up.
 The youths, admiring his polished airs,
 Pulled him up with hundreds of cheers.
- 115 Fulfilling his friends' wishes at last,
 The sage with moonlike face rose from the pit.
 His countenance illumined the world;
 He shone over creation like the sun.
 The slender body of that good-natured sage, indeed,
 Was not damaged, diminished, by so much as a hair.
 The pure being of that exalted sage
 Was free of any harm or discord.
 The lions did not wound his heart
 Because of his belief in his Creator.
- 120 So many people came to the pit's opening
 That travelers were delayed everywhere.
 And when they beheld the mystery-knowing sage
 They ran toward him from every corner.
 His former enemies were all remorseful,
 For now they remembered Resurrection Day.
 Their hearts were so agitated that you'd think
 Their souls were ready to depart their bodies.
 They lost their tongue, their speech;
 Their rosy faces all turned pale.
- 125 Rending the collar of violent desire,
 They severed greed from their souls.

How the Shah Became Angry with the Enemies of Daniel, and How He Threw Them into the Lions' Pit

Beholding that miracle, the shah's devotion
 To the sage increased a hundredfold.
 He turned into a firm believer and felt

- Compelled to gird his loins in Daniel's service.
 Love for Daniel increased greatly in his heart;
 Endlessly he offered thanks to God.
 But when he saw Daniel's enemies
 He turned suddenly into a roaring lion.
- 130 The shah's face was kindled by aversion,
 As if forbearance's sapling burned within him.
 When thus he adorned himself in anger's garment,
 A great cry rose freely, even from slaves.
 That moment the people's cries and their laments
 Reminded one of Resurrection and Judgment Day.²¹
 That same hour the shah ordered his officers:
 "Go quickly to those who slandered Daniel;
 Seize them and throw them into the pit;
 Thus should one deal with ill-wishers.
- 135 Spare not their wives or children;
 Withhold your pity from them;
 Throw them into the pit upside down;
 Let those evil ones be food for the lions;
 Let their souls' phoenixes²² move from the world
 Of being to the nether world with hundreds of groans;
 Let them be torn apart by lions' fangs
 That they may know the fate of the afflicted!"
 Warriors leapt from their stations;
- 140 They tied the enemies' abject hands;
 You'd say they took their very lives away.
 Greatly they humbled all those people,
 Driving them one by one toward the pit.
 They threw those evil ones into the pit,
 Delivering the world of them at last.
 Their wives and children were thrown in as well;
 All fell into the pit that they had dug.
- 145 Ferocious male lions leapt from their place
 And sharpened their teeth and fangs on them.²³
 When the brave one threw them in but halfway,
 The lions' rule began at once:

They trampled them on the pit's bottom,
 Their paws left imprints with their blood.²⁴
 Their claws tore out the hearts of their souls,
 Sending them to roam the desert of nonexistence.

*How Darius Sent a Letter to His Realm Regarding the Security of Daniel's
 People and in Praise of God the Exalted*

When the shah's fury had subsided,
 He summoned all his scribes at once:
 150 "Compose a fluent decree on my behalf
 And this shall be your subject,
 For every nation in each and every region,
 Wherever Law holds sway,
 I rule today, Shahānshah of Iran;
 I am the realm's protector,
 The leader of its heroes.
 I am the heir of Jamshīd's²⁵ kingdom.
 Write the decree in my name, first of all,
 With the following content: 'No one must dare,
 In city or in countryside, to entertain bad thoughts
 155 Against or answer harshly the people
 Of Prince Daniel. None should molest them,
 Their labor or its fruit.
 Nothing but goodness should the people show them;
 For what is better in the world than being good-natured?
 None should divulge their secrets;
 Let not a talebearer against them remain
 In the world. Their God is the Almighty Creator;
 His grace is ever joined to them.
 160 Their God is the creator of sun and moon;
 And He protects His people always.
 His miracles are witnessed through eternity;
 No one has seen a miracle that was not His.
 He delivered Daniel quickly from the lions' claws
 And from the dark pit.'²⁶
 Having instructed the scribes this way,
 They erased from their hearts all thoughts

Of periphrasis. That very moment, reeds ready,
They took down the letter with their own hands.
165 In it they first praised the Creator,
Piercing many a pearl of his attributes;
They wrote down what was in the shah's heart.
His wish fulfilled, the shah was now content,
He dispatched the letters at once
To the four corners of his realm.

Notes



Introduction

1. Utas, "Jewish-Persian Fragment"; Lazard, "Remarques," pp. 205–209; 'A. A. Şadiqī, *The Origins of the Persian Language* [Pers.] (Tehran, 1357 solar), pp. 77–81; and Shaked, "Judaeo-Persian Notes."
2. See Lazard, *Langue*, p. 31; Rypka, *History*, pp. 148–149.
3. The extant catalogues of JP mss. are Spicehandler, "Descriptive List," Rosenwasser, "Judaeo-Persian Manuscripts," pp. 38–44 (Rosenwasser's list has now been updated in Moreen, "Supplementary List"), and Netzer, *Oqar*. E. Wust is currently preparing a catalogue of the JP manuscripts held in the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, and I am cataloguing the JP manuscripts of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. The core of this collection, to which other manuscripts have been added over the years, consists of the manuscripts purchased by E. N. Adler; see Adler, *Catalogue*.
4. The most recent albeit incomplete bibliography can be found in Netzer, *Oqar*, pp. 59–69.
5. The word "Persianate" is coined after the definition of "Islamicate," a term proposed by the historian Marshall G. S. Hodgson in his *Venture of Islam*, 1:56–60. "Persianate" encompasses geographic areas to which Persian culture and civilization have spread, beyond the boundaries of present-day Iran (see Barthold, *Historical Geography of Iran*).

Throughout this book the words "Iran" and "Iranian" are used to refer to the land and inhabitants. "Persian" (*fārsī*, derived from the name of the central province, Fars, whose language became largely synonymous with classical Persian) is used to refer to the language, literature, and arts of Iran. Similarly, I use the term "Iranian

- Jews" for the Jewish inhabitants of Iran and confine the use of the term "Judeo-Persian" to the language and literature of Iranian Jews.
6. Fischel, "Region of the Persian Gulf"; idem., "Azarbaijan"; idem., "Jews of Afghanistan"; idem., "Rediscovery"; Brauer, "Jews in Afghanistan"; Netzer, "Yehudim be-meḥozot ha deromit"; Altshuler, *Yehude mizrah*; Yehoshua-Raz, *Mi-ndaḥe Yisrael*; Zand, "Hityashavut ha yehudim be-asiyah"; Leslie, "Judaeo-Persian Colophons."
 7. Rapp, *Jüdisch-persisch-hebräischen Inschriften*; idem., "Date of the Judaeo-Persian Inscriptions," pp. 51–58. See the more recent photographic reproductions of many of these tombstones, dating from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the thirteenth centuries, in Yehoshua-Raz, *Mi-ndaḥe Israel*, figs. 53–67.
 8. The Jewish community of Isfahan dates its origins specifically to this event. See Fischel, "Yahudiyya," pp. 523–526; idem., "Isfahan," pp. 111–128.
 9. For a summary and analysis of the ancient phase of Jewish-Iranian history, see Tadmor, "Period of the First Temple."
 10. Neusner, *History*.
 11. Brody, "Judaism in the Sasanian Empire," pp. 52–62.
 12. An overview of this period can be found in Neusner, *Israel and Iran in Talmudic Times*, a more concise presentation of the text that was published in the work cited above, n. 10.
 13. Brody, "Judaism in the Sasanian Empire," p. 59.
 14. Frye, *Heritage*, pp. 247–249.
 15. Brody, "Judaism in the Sasanian Empire," pp. 60–61.
 16. Shaked, "Zoroastrian Polemics Against Jews."
 17. Frye, *Golden Age*, chap. 4. and Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, chap. 1.
 18. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*; Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, chap. 3.
 19. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:201–204.
 20. On the exilarchate, see Gil, "Exilarchate." The gaonate continued, with increasingly weakened authority, until the end of the thirteenth century (*EJ*, s.v. "Gaon").
 21. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, chaps. 1 and 2.
 22. *Ibid.*, pp. 21–23, 71–89; see also Index, under "Isāwiyya."
 23. See Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*.
 24. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, p. 68; see also his persuasive reconstruction of the "proto-Shi'i milieu," pp. 82–84; Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, p. xii.
 25. For an example of this last, see the second part of Shaked's article "Two Judaeo-Iranian Contributions," pp. 304–322; idem., "Some New Early Judaeo-Persian Texts," a lecture delivered in Jerusalem at "Irano-Judaica: Fourth International Conference," July 1998.
 26. Shaked, "Persian and the Origins of the Karaite Movement," pp. 7–9.
 27. See below, chap. 1. On the Muslim attitude toward mercantilism and the role of the Jews within it, see Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 88–103.
 28. See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 4:2, 192.
 29. Fischel, *Jews*, pp. 68–89; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 3:37, 156, 289.
 30. See Goitein, *Letters*, pp. 76–78; idem., *Mediterranean Society*, 1:50, 106, 103, 164–165.
 31. Commenting on finding some JP writings among the Chinese Jews of K'aifeng as

- late as the eighteenth century, Leslie notes, "Persian-speaking Muslims, Arabs and others, were going to China during the T'ang, both by sea and overland. During the Sung, trade was less, but certainly some foreigners were arriving by sea. At this time, Persian was a *lingua franca* of the foreigners in Central Asia, and in China. Persian was one of the languages taught at the Interpreters' College in Peking under the Mongols. It is not very surprising that we find various evidence of Persian spoken and written (in Hebrew script) by the K'aifeng Jews" (*Survival*, p. 118).
32. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, chap. 3.
 33. On the legal position of the Jews in the Muslim world in general and on the Pact of 'Umar in particular, see Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, chap. 4.
 34. See the remarkable careers of Shemu'el ha-Naggid (Samuel Ibn Nagrella; 993–1056) in Eliahu Ashtor, *The History of the Jews in Muslim Spain* (Philadelphia, 1979), 2:41ff., and Sa'd ad-Dawla, in Fischel, *Jews*, pp. 90–117.
 35. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicum Syriacum*, p. 490, f. 575, quoted in Fischel, *Jews*, p. 91n.1.
 36. Fischel, *Jews*, pp. 118–125.
 37. See Savory, *Iran*, pp. 175 and 187.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
 39. See chap. 12, below, for Shāhīn's panegyric dedicated to Sultan Abū Sa'īd (r. 1316–1336) and Amīnā's panegyric in honor of the Afghan ruler Ashraf (d. 1730).
 40. See Bausani, *Persians*, p. 130.
 41. See Savory, *Iran*, esp. chap. 4.
 42. See below, chap. 8.
 43. See Benayahu, "Piyyutim," pp. 7–38; Scholem, *Sabbatai Ševi*, pp. 637, 640, 752–753.
 44. See below, chap. 8.
 45. See the discussion of this issue in Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, chap. 10.
 46. See Arjomand, *Shadow*, pts. II and III.
 47. See Moreen, "*Risāla*."
 48. See Netzer, ed., *Yebude Iran*, p. 8.
 49. The Jews of Mashhad recall their move to Mashhad in 1740 as Nādir Shah's recruitment of faithful guardians at the fortress of Qal'at (about fifty miles north of Mashhad), where he had housed treasures he brought back from his campaigns in India (see Netzer, "Qorot anuse Mashhad," and Patai, *Jadīd al-Islām*, p. 26). On Nādir Shah's general attitude toward the Jews, see Bābā b. Farhād's accounts in *Kitāb-i sar-guzašt* (below, chap. 12).
 50. The name, perhaps derived from the cries of Muslim attackers, certainly represents the Muslim perspective of the event. It was probably adopted by the Jews ironically, in order to conceal their true feelings about what happened.
 51. See the detailed account in Yehoshua-Raz, *Mi-ndabē Israēl*, pt. II, chap. 3. On some of the customs of these *anuvim*, see Tobi, "Ha-yahadut ha-iranit," pp. 235–237; Netzer, "Qorot yehude Mashhad," and Patai, *On Jewish Folklore*, pp. 195–275; *idem.*, *Jadīd al-Islām*, chap. 4.
 52. Netzer, *Yebude Iran*, p. 8; *idem.*, "Ha-qehillah ha-yehudit," pp. 257–258.
 53. See below, chap. 12.
 54. On the Jews of Bukhārā, see Zand, *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book, 1975–76*, pp. 183–192; *idem.*, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v., "Bukhārā"; Loewenthal, "Judeo-

- Muslim Marranos," pp. 1–11; idem., "Juifs de Boukhara," pp. 104–108; Ben-Zvi, *Exiled*, pp. 54–82.
55. Rodrigue, *Images*, see Index under "Iran."
56. See Gilbert Lazard's summaries in *EJ*, s.v., "Judeo-Persian," and *EI* (2), s.v., "Judaeo-Persian: ii. Language."
57. See De Lagarde, "Persische Studien"; Lazard, *Langue*, pp. 31, 128–134.
58. See Geiger, "Bemerkungen," 1:408–412; Noeldeke, "Judaeo-Persica," pp. 548–553; Salemann, "Zum mittelpersischen Passiv," pp. 269–276.
59. For more detailed presentations, see Lazard, "Judaeo-Persian"; Paper, "Note on Judeo-Persian Copulas"; idem., "Judeo-Persian Deverbatives"; idem., "The Use of (*ba*)*mē*"; Asmussen, "Jüdisch-persisch *guyan* [gwy'n], Zelt"; Netzer, *Muntakhab*, pp. 64–70; Dick Davis, "Shāhīn, the Father of Judeo-Persian Poetry in the Persian Epic Tradition" (unpublished paper). I thank Professor Davis for sending me a copy of this article.
60. On the dialects of Iranian Jews, see Abrahamian, *Dialectologie iranienne*; Lazard, "Dialectologie du Judéo-Persan"; idem., "Dialecte des Juifs de Kerman"; idem., "Lumières nouvelles"; MacKenzie, "Jewish-Persian from Isfahan"; Sahim, "Dialect of the Jews of Hamadan"; idem., "Gūyishhā-yi yahudiyān-i Irān"; Yarshater, "Jewish Communities of Persia"; idem., "Dialect of Borujerd Jews."
61. Paper, "Judeo-Persian," p. 107.
62. Yarsahter, "Hybrid Language," p. 5.
63. Much of this familiarity, however, especially with Persian poetry, need not have been acquired through the reading of texts because memorizing and reciting poetry have always been important elements of Persian culture.
64. Fischel, "Literary Heritage," p. 5.
65. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, pp. 100, 103.
66. Frye, *Golden Age*, pp. 173, 264n.49.
67. Several general surveys provide an outline of this literary tradition. See Bacher, "Judaeo-Persian Literature"; Fischel, "Israel in Iran"; idem., "Judeo-Persian Literature"; Rypka, *History*, pp. 737–740; Netzer, *Muntakhab*, pp. 17–71; idem., *Oḡar*, pp. 11–49. I shall concentrate on the contents of this anthology.
68. See, for example, Bābāi b. Nuriel's eighteenth-century introduction to his translation and commentary of the Book of Psalms in Grill, *Der achtundsechzigste Psalm*, pp. 223–227; Asmussen, "Judaeo-Persica IV"; Netzer, *Oḡar*, p. 17.
69. For example, Salomon b. Samuel's *Sefer ha-Melīq*, finished in 1339 (Fischel, "Israel in Iran," p. 1160), and the fifteenth-century Hebrew-Persian dictionary, *Agron* (Bacher, "Ein hebräisch-persisches Wörterbuch").
70. Fischel, "Judeo-Persian Literature"; on Daniel, see above, n. 25.
71. See the edition by Paper, *Targum ha-Torah*; idem., "Vatican Judeo-Persian Pentateuch: Genesis"; idem., "Vatican Judeo-Persian Pentateuch: Exodus and Leviticus"; idem., "Vatican Judeo-Persian Pentateuch: Deuteronomy"; idem., "Judeo-Persian Translations"; Asmussen, "Judaeo-Persica III"; Schwab, "Une version persane de la bible"; Guidi, "Di una versione persiana del Pentateuco."

The best-known JP translation of the Pentateuch is that of Jacob b. Joseph Tāvūs (sixteenth century), whose work was included in the polyglot Bible printed

- in Constantinople in 1546 by Eleazar b. Gershon Soncino alongside the Hebrew text, the Aramaic Targum, and Saadiah Gaon's Arabic version. (See Kohut, *Kritische Beleuchtung*; Fischel, "Bible in Persian Translation.")
72. Bacher, "Ein persische Kommentar"; Asmussen, "Judaeo-Persica IV"; Asmussen and Paper, *Song of Songs*; Asmussen, "Eine jüdisch-persische Version"; Jakob, "Jezsásjás könyvének"; Mainz, "Esther en judéo-persan"; idem., "Ruth et le Cantique des Cantiques"; idem., "Livre des Proverbes"; idem., "Livre de Daniel"; Paper, "Proverbs"; idem., "Judeo-Persian Book of Job."
73. See Netzer, *Muntakhab*, pp. 30–31; idem., *Oqar*, pp. 2–23.
74. Davis, *Epic and Sedition*, p. xxii. This study is a wonderfully perceptive analysis of some of the major themes of the *Shah-nāmah*.
75. Shāhīn's work has survived in several manuscripts and came to be known among Iranian Jews as a *tafsīr* (Arabic for "commentary," "translation") of the Pentateuch; see below, chap. 2.
76. Moreen, "Moses, God's Shepherd"; idem., "Moses in Muhammad's Light."
77. Dan, *Ha-sippur ba-ivri*, pp. 20–23 and 133–136.
78. For a recent concise definition of what constitutes an epic, see the new edition of *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan (Princeton, 1993), p. 361.
79. On the differences between the tragic and romantic forms of the Persian epic, see Amin Banani, "Ferdowsī and the Art of Tragic Epic," and J. C. Burgel, "The Romance," in *Persian Literature*, pp. 109–119 and 161–178, respectively.
80. See Davis, "Shāhīn," p. 3.
81. For a fuller analysis, see Moreen, "'Iranization' of Biblical Heroes."
82. See Moreen, "Legend of Adam"; idem., "Dialogue between God and Satan"; idem., *'Ishmā'īliyāt*.
83. On 'Imrānī's life and work, see Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet 'Emrānī*, pp. 22–41.
84. The JNUL collection of JP manuscripts is especially rich in *derashot*.
85. See, for example, Goodman, *Purim Anthology*, pp. 87–92.
86. See Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*.
87. See Moshe Idel, *Kabalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), Index under "Joseph of Hamadan" and his notes ad loc. Professor Idel informs me that more kabbalistic works of Iranian provenance exist in Hebrew.
88. See Netzer, *Oqar*, pp. 23–25.
89. See Asani and Abdel-Malek, *Celebrating Muḥammad*; Schimmel, *And Mubammad Is His Messenger*; see Index under *na't*.
90. An early and unsurpassed example of these are the *munājāt* of the Sufi poet Khwājah 'Abdullah Anṣārī (d. 1089); see *Ibn 'Atā'illab*, pp. 162–224.
91. There is no gender differentiation in Persian in the various pronouns, singular or plural, which leads to gender ambivalence in lyrical poems.
92. For a summary of the history and nature of Persian lyrical poetry, see Heshmat Moayyad, "Lyric Poetry," in *Persian Literature*, pp. 120–146.
93. See the numerous works listed and described in Yaari, "Sifre yehude Bukhārā."
94. See Fischel, "Israel in Iran," pp. 1180–1182. Hakam's unannotated editions are not critical (enough) by modern standards.

95. See Levin's *Hundred Thousand Fools of God*.
96. See Ṭāl, *Nusah ha-tefillah*.
97. See, for example, Gutmann, "Judeo-Persian Miniatures"; Moreen, *Miniature Paintings*; Rosen-Ayalon, "Judeo-Persian Amulet"; Sabar, "Decorated Marriage Contract"; Yaniv, "Mu'ammā-yi guldastehā-yi towrāt."

Chapter 1 Earliest Judeo-Persian Texts

1. See Lazard, *Langue*, pp. 31–36. In addition to these, there are many fragments from the eleventh century and later that are preserved in the Genizah Collection at Cambridge University (see Netzer, *Oqar*, pp. 12–13).
2. Henning dated these as early as 752–53 ("The Inscriptions of Tang-i Azao"), but Rapp's redating to 1300 appears to be more persuasive ("Date of the Judaeo-Persian Inscriptions"; idem., *Jüdisch-persisch-bebräusichen Inchriften*).
3. See below, n. 7.
4. See Minorsky, "Some Early Documents in Persian (I)," *JRAS* (1942): 183; W. B. Henning, "Mitteliranisch," in B. Spuler, ed., *Handbuch der orientalistik I, Abt., Bd., Iranistik*, I (Leiden, 1958), p. 51.
5. See Asmussen, "Judaeo-Persica II: The Jewish-Persian Law Report," which provides a full transliteration of the text.
6. Salemann, "Zum mittelpersischen Passiv," pp. 269ff.
7. Utas, "Jewish-Persian Fragment," which includes a facsimile reproduction, transcription, and annotation of the text, and a detailed bibliography. The quotation is on p. 125. The description that follows is based on this study.
8. See Shaul Shaked, "Judaeo-Persian Notes," *JOS* 1 (1971): 182n.25; 'A. A. Sādiqī, *Taqvūn-i zabān-i fārisī* (Tehran, 1357 solar), pp. 77–81; Lazard, "Remarques sur le fragment."
9. "A Jewish-Persian Law Report."

A Letter from a Merchant

1. In this selection, italicized words are Professor Utas' reconstructions, bracketed material represents reasonable transitions and conjunctions, words in parentheses are wholly conjectural, asterisks are reconstructions of proper names, and bracketed numbers refer to line numbers of the document.

Chapter 2 Biblical Epics

Introduction to Shāhīn

1. See below, chap. 12.
2. Because "Shāhīn" is a common Persian name, Bacher inclines to the former (*Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 7–8), whereas modern scholars incline to the latter view (Netzer, *Oqar*, p. 27).
3. *Kitāb-i anuṣī* ("The book of a forced convert"; see chap. 8). We still do not have a scholarly edition of this chronicle, but see the introductory chapters.
4. See *Sefer sharb-i Shāhīn*, ed. Hakam, Hebrew Introduction to *Beresbūt-nāmāh*.
5. This last work has practically no connection with the biblical book.
6. See the Introduction and chap. 6.

7. This edition is inadequate by modern standards. A new edition based on all available mss. is imperative for the study of Shāhīn's epics.
8. See Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, p. 8; Blieske, *Šābīn-e Šīrāzī*, p. 5; Netzer, *Oḡar*, p. 28. Netzer, *Muntakbab*, p. 37, gives the erroneous date of 1317. A short and comprehensive chronology of Shāhīn (and 'Imrānī's) works is presented in Netzer, "Judeo-Persian Footnote."
9. See Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade*, p. 32.
10. See Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 9 and 35ff.; Blieske, *Šābīn-e Šīrāzī*, p. 8; Netzer, *Muntakbab*, p. 39; idem., *Oḡar*, p. 29.
11. The most famous of these in Persian literature is 'Abdū'r-Raḥmān Jāmī's (d. 1492) *Yūsuf and Zulaykḥā*. For an exploration of this theme in various literatures, see John D. Yohannan, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in World Literature* (New York, 1968).
Bacher names Firdowsī's *Yūsuf and Zulaykḥā* as one of Shāhīn's influential Muslim sources (*Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 117–124). However, recent scholarship has determined that Firdowsī did not write the work in question. The poem was written by a poet from Khurasan known as Amānī around 1083 (Rypka, *History*, pp. 157–158).
12. See below, chap. 9.
13. See the Introduction and Moreen, "Moses in Muḥammad's Light."
14. Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 28 and 37.
15. See *ibid.*, pp. 9 and 43–66; Blieske, *Šābīn-e Šīrāzī*, pp. 5–6; Netzer, *Muntakbab*, pp. 38–39; idem., *Oḡar*, pp. 28–29. See also Asmussen, "Judaeo-Persica I: Šāhīn-e Šīrāzī."
16. *Hazaj-i musaddas-i akhrab-i maqbūz-i maḥzūf*; Blieske, *Šābīn-e Šīrāzī*, p. 5.
17. See below, *Ardashīr-nāmab*, n. 3.
18. See below, *Ardashīr-nāmab*, n. 50. For Shāhīn's conceptualization of AN, see Moreen, "'Iranization' of Biblical Heroes."
19. See Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 9, 66–71; Blieske, *Šābīn-e Šīrāzī*, pp. 7–8; Netzer, *Muntakbab*, pp. 38–39; idem., *Oḡar*, pp. 28–29.
20. See *Ezra-nāmab*, vv. 105ff.
21. I have not retained the Arabic forms in the translations in order to emphasize the fact that these narratives are about well-known biblical figures.
22. See Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, pp. 37–52. The classic work on Persian rhetoric is Joseph Garcin de Tassy, *Rhétorique et prosodie des langues de l'orient musulman* (Paris, 1873; repr. 1970).
23. See Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 16nn.2,3,16, and pp. 157–165.
24. See Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 117 and 121.
25. See Moreen, "Moses, God's Shepherd," pp. 122ff.
26. See Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, p. 41.
27. Bacher posits the intriguing possibility that Shāhīn wrote his epics originally in the Persian script but cannot adduce serious proof for his statement (*Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, p. 74). Most of the available manuscripts contain numerous errors of scansion, implying perhaps different manuscript traditions or even, if Bacher is correct, the possibility that errors crept in through the process of transcription from the Persian into the Hebrew alphabet. Scholarly editions of Shāhīn's epics would help resolve these questions.

Beresbit-nāmab

The Fall of ‘Aza’zel

1. This translation is based on [*Beresbit-nāmab*], ed. Ḥakam, pp. 5a–7b, BZI 978, fols. 4v–7r, IV C 43 (unfoliated), and SS Ebp. i. c. 150 (unfoliated). In this episode Shāhīn alternates between the names “‘Aza’zel,” “Shayṭān,” and “Iblīs,” which I retain in the translation to convey Shāhīn’s usage. The name “‘Aza’zel” is based on the controversial meaning of Lev. 16:8–10, but Shāhīn uses it primarily in its Muslim connotations. Although this name is not in the Qur’ān, Muslim tradition associates ‘Aza’zel with the fallen angels of the Apocrypha, ‘Uzza and ‘Aza’el, known as Hārūt and Mārūt in Islamic lore (*EI* [2], 1:811, s.v., “‘Aza’zil”). Some *ḥadīth* (traditions relating to the deeds and utterances of Muḥammad) sources connect ‘Aza’zel with the qur’anic Iblīs (Gk. *diabolos*), or Shayṭān (Satan), as does Shāhīn in this episode. For Iblīs, see *EI* (2), s.v., “Iblīs.” For a fuller discussion of this entire episode, see Moreen, “Dialogue Between God and Satan”; idem., “Legend of Adam.”
2. On the Sufi claim that Satan was the teacher of the angels, see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 193.
3. Shāhīn derides Satan’s useless “capital of obedience” in accordance with the Muslim, especially Sufi, view that tends to blame Satan for his excessive and prideful obedience. See Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption*, Index, under “Obedience.”
4. Here God’s celestial court resembles the unpredictable court of an oriental monarch.
5. *Ḥaẓrat-i shāh-bāzī*, lit., “His Excellence the Royal Falcon,” is a fairly common Sufi epithet for God.
6. This scene takes place in front of Adam’s body, before God endows it with a living soul.
7. Shāhīn appears to have in mind the Jewish idea of commandments, which differs from the Muslim concept in general and from the Sufi concept in particular (*EI* [2], s.v. “amr,” and Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, Index under “amr”). In the rabbinic view and according to such medieval philosophers as Maimonides, the divine commandments, derived and amplified from the Pentateuch through the Oral Law, are regarded as vehicles to shape and elevate human nature rather than as burdens imposed upon it. See Solomon Schechter, “The Joy of the Law,” in *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology: Major Concepts of the Talmud* (New York, 1961; repr. of 1909); Urbach, *Sages*, chap. 12; Maimonides, *Guide*, III:27, 31, 35; idem., “Eight Chapters,” in I. Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader* (New York, 1972), pp. 372–374.
8. The deep bow is, once again, reminiscent of a gesture of obeisance at the courts of oriental monarchs.
9. See above, n. 3. This and the previous hemistich are not in BZI 978. The Sufi view of Satan’s reprehensible act, namely his “reminding” God of his own merits, dovetails here neatly with the Jewish view that also frowns upon the performance of the commandments for the sake of reward. See the references in n. 7.
10. Pers., *aḍ-ḥ va-ḥalat*; *aḍ-ḥ va-farḥ* (Ḥakam ed.), Arabic for “root,” “origin,” “source” and “branch,” “derivative,” are technical terms in Islamic jurisprudence. Ḥakam’s choice has the advantage of suggesting that God cuts Satan off sharply by expressing His lack of interest in Satan’s legal exposition.
11. See Moreen, “Dialogue Between God and Satan,” p. 137. There is a complex Sufi idea embedded in this verse that in Islamic mystical theology is connected with the

- concept of Muhammad's light (*nūr al-Muḥammad*): "Adam, as Muḥammad's primogenitor, was the first to have the substantial blaze [of light] on his forehead. . . . Early Muslim sources are already familiar with the view that Adam and Eve were clad in 'clothes of light' in paradise" (Uri Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light: Aspects of *Nūr Muḥammad*," *IOS* 5 [1975]: 96). Although the Sufi veneer of the entire episode suggests that it may form Shāhīn's primary frame of reference, he may easily have received the idea of the special divine light associated with Adam's countenance from Jewish sources (Ginzberg, *Legenda*, 5:78, 112–113), which may actually have influenced the Islamic concept in the first place (Moreen, "Moses in Muḥammad's Light," pp. 191–193).
12. These are the four basic elements of Aristotelian physics, which God proceeds to extol (Nasr, *Introduction*, pp. 61–62).
 13. Despite the problem of Satan's attitude toward God in this episode, his staunch devotion earned him the admiration of many Sufis, who saw in his refusal to compromise his love for God a sign of his genuine, uncompromising monotheism (Awn, *Satan's Tragedy*, pp. 169–172, and Index under "Monotheist").
 14. This hemistich is missing in the Ḥakam edition.
 15. Revealing his deviant nature, Satan resorts to "blackmailing" God, demanding recompense for his "debt" of serving God. In a Sufi vein, again, God appears to grant Satan's wish so as not to appear unjust, but He does so for His own reasons, namely, to provide man with spiritual tests. Satan's reproach echoes here a rabbinic expression uttered in an altogether different context, "zu Torah ve zu sekara" (so this is the reward for [the devotion to] the Torah!) (*Babylonian Talmud*, Menaḥot 29; see also the "Ten Martyrs," of n. 20, below). The translation is Judah Goldin's in his "The Death of Moses: An Exercise in Midrashic Transposition," in John Marks and Robert Good, eds., *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East* (Guilford, Conn., 1987), reprinted now in Goldin's *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 175–186.
 16. The idea of Satan hindering yet not having ultimate power over saints and pious men, present in Jewish sources (Ginzberg, *Legenda*, 2:3), is further developed in Islamic legendary lore. As I have shown elsewhere ("Dialogue Between God and Satan," pp. 135ff.), Shāhīn is particularly indebted to the eleventh-century Persian *qisṣa* collection of Abū Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Maṣṣūr b. Khalaf al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstān-bā-yi payghambarān* (Tehran, 1961). In his tales, al-Nīsābūrī develops fully the idea of God's ultimate protection of the pious (pp. 10–15). In the Islamic mystical tradition, Satan's stumbling blocks are, of course, the prophets (and, for the Shi'is, the imams), their descendants, and, especially, the Sufi masters (Awn, *Satan's Tragedy*, pp. 109–121; Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 119–147).
 17. Pers., *ḥāl*, a Sufi technical term that denotes a transitory state of mystical illumination (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 99ff.).
 18. The idea of Satan enticing pious men away from higher spiritual goals and even appearing in the guise of a pious shaykh is well known in Sufi literature (Awn, *Satan's Tragedy*, pp. 79–90). Man's "evil inclination" is often personified as Satan in rabbinic literature (Urbach, *Sages*, pp. 472–483).
 19. The Ḥakam edition contrasts *ziyān* (loss) and *sūḍ* (profit), in place of *gunāb* (sin) and *kbūb* (good). In Sufi literature the concepts of profit and loss are earthly meta-

phors for spiritual states (Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, Index, under “Profit” and “Loss”).

20. Here, again, although similar rabbinic ideas—love to the point of martyrdom—are not difficult to find (e.g., the famous tale of the “Ten Martyrs,” the martyrdom of Jewish sages at the hands of the Romans to atone for their ancestors’ sin of kidnapping and selling Joseph, immortalized in the “Musaf Service for Yom Kippur” [*High Holiday Prayer Book*, trans. Philip Birnbaum (New York, 1987, pp. 838–844)]), Shāhīn’s statement strikes me as primarily Sufi in character. Jewish and Muslim spiritual teachings agree that God tries most those whom He loves best, and His elect, in turn, rejoice in the suffering—even to the point of martyrdom—that represents the summit of this love. (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 135–137).
21. See above, n. 11.
22. See Moreen, “Legend of Adam,” pp. 166–167nn.23–28. See also Rūmī’s verses in the *Masnāvī*: “The father of mankind, who is the lord of *He taught the names* [Surah 2:31], has hundreds of thousands of sciences in every vein. / His spirit was taught the name of every single thing, exactly as that thing is until its end” (Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, p. 62).
23. See Moreen, “Legend of Adam,” pp. 167–168nn.29–31.
24. See *ibid.*
25. Cf. Gen. 1:28–30. The idea that God created everything for man’s sake, although not clearly expressed in the Qur’ān, is also found in the *ḥadīth qudsī* (a divine message not recorded in the Qur’ān), “I have created everything for you” (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 189).
26. See above, n. 17, although this word can also mean simply “(present) condition, state” in a nonreligious sense.

Jacob and the Wolf

1. This translation is based on BZI 978, fols. 126r–132v, and JTS 8623, fols. 77r–85r. See also BZI 1093 and BZI 4569.
2. Midrashic sources point out that the blood of a kid was used “because its blood looks like human blood” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:25, 5:331n.62). Of course, “there is a touch of subtle irony here since years before, a kid and the garment of his brother had played key roles in Jacob’s deception of his father, as told in [Gen.] 27:9, 15, 16. Now his own sons deceive him through the instrumentality of a kid and their brother’s garment” (*The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, trans. Nahum M. Sarna [Philadelphia, 1989], p. 262).
Shāhīn’s Persian word for “kid,” *buzghāle*, can be found in al-Nīsābūrī (*Dāstānā*, p. 88). Interestingly, although al-Nīsābūrī is likely the source of many of Shāhīn’s Muslim interpolations (see the bibliography, Moreen, “Moses, God’s Shepherd”; *idem.*, “Legend of Adam”; *idem.*, “Dialogue Between God and Satan”), he does not include the scene of Jacob’s confrontation with the wolf.
3. According to the *qūṣṣ* version of al-Tha’labī (d. 1036), Jacob had a disturbing premonition and was anxiously awaiting his sons in the middle of the road (*Arā’iṣ*, p. 114).
4. This verse could mean “His place is not here” (i.e., he is not here with you) or, in a more hyperbolic fashion, it could show Jacob expressing his extreme love by suggesting that Joseph is a heavenly being who does not belong on earth.

5. Pers., *shāb-i khūbān*, a poetic cliché suggesting supreme physical beauty.
6. The brothers' hypocrisy is especially glaring here because the main reason for their resentment of Joseph, both in the Torah (Gen. 37) and in the Qur'ān (Surah 12:4ff.), is the latter's dreams, which imply dominion over his parents and brethren. Shāhīn inverts the brothers' feelings as these are spelled out in al-Nīsābūrī, "Is it right that we should be inferior to you and you superior to us?" (*Dāstānbā*, p. 87).
7. Cf. Gen. 37:33, where the beast is not identified. Ginzberg (*Legends*, 2:28) identifies it as a wolf, based on *Sefer ha-yašar*; Wa-Yeshev, 85a–85b. The absence of the scene between Jacob and the wolf in midrashic sources leads one to suspect that it entered *Sefer ha-yašar*; a thirteenth-century ethical work, via Muslim sources. Ginzberg suggests this to be the case based on the fact that "in genuinely Jewish legends animals do not talk" (!) (*Legends*, 5:332n.66). In the Qur'ān (Surah 12:13) and in *qīṣaṣ* compilations, as well as in al-Ṭabarī (*The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. William M. Brinner [Albany, 1987], 2:151), the beast is identified as *ḍbi'b*, which means both "jackal" and "wolf." English translators of the Qur'ān prefer "wolf" (see Pickthall, Arberry, and Ali, *ad loc.*). Al-Nīsābūrī uses the unambiguous Persian word *gurg* (wolf) (*Dāstānbā*, p. 86). However, in Knappert's translation of a Swahili account of the Joseph legends, the animal is identified as a jackal (*Islamic Legends*, pp. 89–90).
8. In midrashim the brothers claim, "He came to us not at all. Since we left thee, we have not set eyes on him" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:26), but in the Qur'ān we find, "O our father! We went racing with one another, and left Joseph by our things, and the wolf devoured him" (Sura 2:17; all the *qīṣaṣ* compilations echo the Qur'anic verse).
9. A common cliché in classical Persian poetry, referring to the famed beauties of "Chīn[a]" (usually intending Central Asia) and "Rūm," Anatolia, the Byzantine Empire.
10. See al-Tha'labī, *Arā'is*, p. 115, al-Kisā'ī, *Tales*, p. 170.
11. Jacob's heartfelt lament is fairly long in Ginzberg (*Legends*, 2:26–27), but the *qīṣaṣ* refer to it only briefly (see n. 10 above, and al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānbā*, p. 89). None of these compare with Shāhīn's dirge. Although filled with Persian poetic clichés, the combined effect is moving, even if it reinforces Robert Alter's characterization of Jacob's grief as "histrionic": "Jacob speaks as a prima donna of paternal grief" (*Genesis*, trans. and comment. Robert Alter [New York, 1996], pp. 214, 250).
It is interesting to note that Jacob's lament has become a prototype for dirges sung at Jewish funerals in Bukhārā, where a dirge called *Yūsuf-i jān-i pīdar* (Joseph, [your] father's soul) is still remembered (Elena Reikher, "The Folk Songs of Bukhārān Jews," a paper delivered at "Irano-Judaica: Fourth International Conference," Jerusalem, 1998).
12. Pers., *zandān* (jail) hinting at Joseph's future imprisonment through Jacob's now-turbulent prophetic powers.
13. Pers., *jām-i jabl*, an alliterated expression I was unable to convey in my translation. Persian readers would at once juxtapose it with *jām-i jam* (*shīd*), the cup of the prehistoric Iranian king Jamshīd (later also of Solomon and Alexander), through which Joseph divined the future. It was immortalized in Ḥāfiz's poetry; see A. J. Arberry, *Ḥāfiz: Fifty Poems* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 129.
14. Pers./Ar., *qazā* (fate, destiny), a favorite villain of Persian poetry, probably derived from the pre-Islamic Arab concept *ḍabr* (W. Montgomery Watt, *El* [2], s.v., "ḍabr").

- Pers./Ar., *zamān*, (time), and Pers./Ar., *qaḏā* (fate), are inimical to monotheist Muslims who are careful to avoid the pitfalls of theodicy.
15. According to al-Thaʿlabī, Jacob smelled the tunic and rubbed it over his eyes and heart (*ʿArāʾiʿ*, p. 115); in the Swahili account “he rubbed the *kanzu* [long cotton garment] with its stains across his heart” (Knappert, *Islamic Legends*, p. 88), and in al-Nīsābūrī, he placed it on his face and cried until he went blind (*Dāstānḥā*, p. 89). Despite the clichés that follow in Shāhīn’s version, Jacob’s direct address to the garment is most dramatic.
 16. Pers., *zībā tamīzam*, suggesting that Joseph was the standard of beauty by which all others were judged.
 17. Another poetic instance of Jacob’s prophetic insight.
 18. The English pun “sun/son” is not found in the Persian *khurshīdam* (my sun)/*farzandam* (my son).
 19. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:26.
 20. Literally, “the men and women of the town.”
 21. See above, n. 15.
 22. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:27. In the Muslim sources the brothers show no remorse.
 23. Cf. Gen. 4:10.
 24. Pers., *tāzī* (Arab); imputing wiliness to Turks and Arabs is a cliché in Persian poetry.
 25. Unlike in Gen. 37:12, where it is Jacob who sends Joseph to his brothers, in the Qurʾān (Surah 12:13) and in the *qiṣaṣ* Jacob is reluctant to allow Joseph to accompany his brothers to the pastures. He expresses his fear in premonitory fashion (“I fear lest the wolf devour him while you are heedless of him”), appearing to “plant” the idea of the wolf into the minds of his less imaginative sons; in Genesis it is the other way around (“We can say, A savage beast devoured him” [37:20]). Similarly, in the Genesis account and in midrashim, Jacob does not express his suspicion of his sons’ foul play. However, in the Qurʾān, he voices his misgivings as soon as the tunic is shown to him (“Nay, but your minds have beguiled you into something” [Surah 12:18]).
 26. It seems more appropriate to read this verse as a question, rather than a statement.
 27. See al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾiʿ*, p. 115.
 28. These commonsense ponderings belong to Shāhīn, who does not wish his readers to assume even for a moment that the patriarch and prophet Jacob could really be deceived by his sons.
 29. This is the description of a typical Persian meadow, also appropriate for vicinity of Shekem, which “is blessed with an adequate water supply and fertile soil” (*Genesis*, trans. Sarna, p. 258).
 30. Joseph’s unwillingness to join his brothers’ games suggests that there was something unseemly about their behavior, just as their hatred of him may have been due not only to his dreams but to Joseph’s report to their father about their conduct (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:5, 5:326n.8).
 31. See above, n. 14.
 32. We are not told how the brothers came to this instant conclusion even before they “found” the tunic.
 33. See the comments of Rashi and Ibn Ezra at Gen. 37:32.
 34. Cf. Gen. 37:31. Jacob’s response in the Qurʾān is less extreme: “(My course is)

- comely patience. And Allah it is Whose help is to be sought in that (predicament) which ye describe" (Surah 12:18).
35. According to Ginzberg, Jacob ordered his sons to go into the fields to look for Joseph's body, and to "keep a lookout . . . for beasts of prey, and catch the first you meet" (*Legends*, 2:28). In Shāhīn's account the sons fulfill only the second half of the request. In the *qiṣaṣ*, Jacob orders his sons to find the wolf (al-Kisā'ī, *Tales*, p. 171, al-Tha'labī, *'Arā'ūs*, p. 115).
 36. Pers., *delīrān*, intended, I believe, ironically.
 37. See above, n. 13. The epithet is a supreme compliment, often bestowed on heroes in Persian epics. King Jamshīd (Yīmā) is celebrated in Persian mythology as the ruler who organized mankind into various social classes, established the crafts, and reigned over a fully civilized world (Hinnells, *Persian Mythology*, pp. 113–114).
 38. In al-Tha'labī, Jacob orders the removal of the ropes with which the wolf is tied (*'Arā'ūs*, pp. 115–116).
 39. "But God caused the wolf to speak" (al-Kisā'ī, *Tales*, p. 171).
 40. See above, n. 14.
 41. A reference to the seven (planetary) heavens and the abode of fixed stars. Muslim astronomy, following ancient Babylonian, Persian, and Jewish concepts, envisions the universe as consisting of nine spheres, the seven spheres of the planets that are visible to the eye, the fixed stars, and the empyrean or encompassing sphere (Nasr, *Introduction*, pts. I and II).
 42. A place in Turkestan reputed for its beautiful men and women.
 43. Contrast this soliloquy with al-Tha'labī's terse, "O wolf, you ate my son, the delight of my eye, the beloved fruit of my heart, and caused me to inherit prolonged sorrow and great pain" (*'Arā'ūs*, p. 119).
 44. See *ibid.*; al-Kisā'ī, *Tales*, p. 171.
 45. I was unable to convey in English the pun in this hemistich based on the Persian homonyms *māb/mābī* (moon/fish).
 46. Cf. Ar., *'alim al-ghayb wa-l shabāda*, "Knower of the invisible and the visible" (Surah 6:73).
 47. See above, n. 33.
 48. A common Persian epithet for epic heroes, and, in Islam, especially connected with 'Alī.
 49. Pers./Ar., *fal-J Shām*; al-Kisā'ī (*Tales*, p. 171) and al-Tha'labī (*'Arā'ūs*, p. 119), claim that the wolf came from Egypt.
 50. Al-Kisā'ī (*Tales*, p. 171) also has the wolf looking for his cub, but al-Tha'labī (*'Arā'ūs*, p. 119) has him going to visit relatives in Canaan!
 51. I am uncertain about the meaning of this hemistich.
 52. The wording here is almost verbatim that of Surah 12:18 (see above, n. 34).
 53. Cf. Gen. 37:35, "No, I will go down mourning to my son in Sheol."
 54. Jacob's grief echoes Joseph's agony in the well.

Mūsā-nāmab

Moses and the Burning Bush

1. This excerpt is based on Exod. 3 and 4; Surah 20:9–47. This translation is based on *Mūsā-nāmab* (Shemot), ed. Ḥakam, pp. 53a–54b and BZI 978, fols. 206v–208r.

- As noted before, throughout his epics Shāhīn uses the Arabic names of biblical characters, i.e., “Mūsā” for Moses, “Ayyūb” for Job, etc. Occasionally he refers to characters by their qur’anic epithets, i.e., “Khalīl” (God’s friend; Surah 4:125) for Abraham, and, as in the present title, “Kalīm Allah” (God’s interlocutor; Surah 4:164) for Moses. In most of the translations I employ the biblical nomenclature except when I wish to emphasize either the appropriateness of the qur’anic epithet or, as in the tale of Korah’s (Qārūn’s) rebellion (see below), the correspondence between the biblical and qur’anic tales and Shāhīn’s indebtedness to the latter.
2. A word derived from the Sanscrit *deva* (bright heavenly one) and referring to the nature of Vedic gods. In Zoroastrianism, *devas* became *daevas* (demons), allied with Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman, the evil deity in mortal struggle with the benevolent god Ohrmazd, or Ahura Mazda. The Indo-European words *deus* (Latin for “god”) and *theos* (Greek for “god”) also derive from this root (Hinnels, *Persian Mythology*, pp. 42ff.).
 3. This foreboding description of night owes a great deal to Firdowsī’s description at the opening of the Bīzhan and Manīzhe narrative (*Shāh-nāmāh* [Bombay, 1849, 1–2:399]). I thank Dick Davis for drawing my attention to the similarity. However, it may be that at its basis lies the claim of several *qīṣaṣ* compilers that Moses found himself in the desert on a dark, cold, and wintry night, filled with rain and lightning (al-Kisā’ī, *Tales*, p. 224, al-Ṭabarī; *History*, 3:48; al-Tha’labī, *Arā’is*, p. 178; al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānāh*, p. 159). Unlike them, Shāhīn does not connect the incident that follows with Moses’ return from Midian to Egypt in the company of his family (Surah 28:29), after having fulfilled his father-in-law’s terms of service (28:28). In al-Kisā’ī’s *Tales*, Moses reassures Jethro (called Shu’ayb in Muslim tradition) that he is no longer needed as a shepherd because, “I have made a pact with the wolves and lions that they cause no harm; and I have made this ram with the horns the shepherd” (p. 223)!
 4. Moses’ solicitude for his flock convinces God that he is to be trusted with leading the Israelites, God’s human flock (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:300–302, 5:414n.109; Moreen, “Moses, God’s Shepherd”). The specific incident between Moses and the kid comes from *Midrash Rabbah*, Shemot, where it is not a direct precursor of the theophany.
 5. See al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 3:48; al-Tha’labī, *Arā’is*, p. 178; al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānāh*, p. 159.
 6. “Toward the light,” *Mūsā-nāmāh*, ed. Ḥakam. Following the Qur’ān (Surah 28:29), all the *qīṣaṣ* collections maintain that Moses drew near in order to obtain fire with which to kindle his family’s fire at the encampment.
 7. Cf. BZI 978: “Why are you . . .”
 8. Pers., *sar mast o bī-kbwīsh* (intoxicated and beside oneself), is a common phrase in Sufi poetry describing the state of the disciple who achieves union with the Divine Beloved, i.e.: “The dervishes are kings, all of them selfless in intoxication. / Though made of dust, they are shahs and sultans” (from Rūmī’s *Diwan*, cited in Chittick’s *Sufi Path of Love*, p. 190).
 9. “*Ān nūraat ke dīdī nār nūt*” (“what you saw is light [*nūr*] not fire [*nār*]” [al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānāh*, p. 159]).
 10. Ar., *labayka* (Here am I [God]), part of the *talbīyah*, is the constant recitation of Muslims performing the ḥajj to Mecca, said to have been uttered by the first pilgrim, Abraham. It corresponds to the Hebrew *hinneni*.

11. See above, n. 5. Shāhīn describes Moses' first encounter with God in mystical Sufi terminology.
12. The name of Moses' father, 'Amram, in Muslim lore.
13. Cf. BZI 978: "Hasten toward Egypt like an arrow."
14. Instead of the next fourteen hemistichs, BZI 978 has only three: "Carry my message to the accursed Pharaoh, say: / 'O unlucky, accursed infidel, / Let Jacob's offspring leave your realm, / For God's perfect command has come.' / That luminary of earth's pedestal, Kalīm Allah." BZI 978 omits the entire description of the Land of Israel. I am somewhat inclined to believe that Shim'on Ḥakam, a former Bukhārān and an enthusiastic emigrant to Jerusalem (see below, chap. 6), composed these verses himself. In order to be certain of this, all manuscripts of Shāhīn's *Sharḥ* ought to be consulted. I chose to include the verses because in my view they enhance the narrative.
15. Cf. Deut. 31:20.
16. "Those who believe and do right: Joy is for them, and bliss (*ṭūbā*) (their) journey's end" (Surah 13:29), usually interpreted by Muslim commentators as referring to a unique tree in Paradise.
17. Ar./Pers., *kāfir* (he who conceals [refuses to see the truth] by covering), and, by extension, an "infidel," a pejorative reference to non-Muslims in general and animists in particular. This term appears frequently in classical Persian, especially Sufi, poetry.
18. Pers., *gebr*, a derogatory term for a Zoroastrian ("fire worshiper") and another pejorative designation for non-Muslims.
19. *Mūsā-nāmāh*, ed. Ḥakam: "And scattered sugar from his ruby lips."
20. Cf. "Did you not say it was your [staff]? Why do you flee from something that is your own? People don't fear or flee from their own objects!" (al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstān-bā*, p. 161).
21. See above, "Jacob and the Wolf," n. 14; here, this is a strange "dualistic" allusion coming from God.
22. Ar./Pers., *murīd*, a Sufi disciple.
23. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:316; al-Tha'labī repeats the Jewish midrashic claim and says that for (unspecified) allegorists (*abl al-ishārat*) the shoes that Moses is commanded to remove allude to women, that is, to carnal passions (*al-na'ī 'ibārat 'an al-mar'āt*; *Arā'is*, p. 179).
24. Lit., "the prophet stood before the Lord," in prayer. See God's lengthy instructions in al-Tha'labī, *Arā'is*, p. 180.
25. See above, n. 11.
26. For a discussion of Shāhīn's intimation that the relationship between Moses and Jethro resembles that between a Sufi master and disciple, see Moreen, "Moses, God's Shepherd," pp. 120–121.
Moses' Vision of God
 1. This excerpt is a conflation of Exod. 33:18–21, 34:10–11, and 19:10–12. See also Surah 7:143, Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:137; *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer*, pp. 364–365; al-Tha'labī, *Arā'is*, pp. 200–203. My translation is based on *Mūsā-nāmāh*, ed. Ḥakam, pp. 156b–157b, and BZI 978, fols. 263r–264r.
 2. These first four hemistichs are not in BZI 978.

3. Joshua's mission is not mentioned in any Jewish or Muslim sources.
4. The exception of Aaron is missing from all the sources I consulted.
5. This hemistich is missing in BZI 978.
6. "High mountain made of emerald": hence the emerald tablets hewn from it (al-Kisāʿī, *Tales*, p. 235).
7. This hemistich changes suddenly to the second person plural in BZI 978.
8. This is a typical Sufi statement. Shāhīn's description of Moses' theophanic experience relies considerably on the brief qur'anic account (see n. 1) and on Sufi inspiration.
9. Cf. "And when his Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down" (Surah 7:143); see also al-Thaʿlabī, *Arāʾiṣ*, p. 201.
10. According to Sufi interpretations, Muḥammad achieved an even higher state of communion with the divine during his *miʿrāj* (ascension). He is supposed to have attained this state while fully conscious, as opposed to Moses, who, although he spoke with God "face to face" (Exod. 33:11), swooned during his encounter ("And Moses fell down senseless," Surah 7:143); see Moreen, "Moses in Muḥammad's Light," pp. 198–199. On the other hand, losing consciousness ("passing away from one's [sense of] self"), as Shāhīn describes it here, is part of the Sufi's experience of *fanāʾ* (annihilation) (Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, Index), under "Annihilation (*fanāʾ*)," the quintessential (Sufi) mystical experience.
11. This hemistich is missing in BZI 978.
12. Cf. Exod. 33:2ff.
13. Cf. Gen. 10:16ff.
14. This chapter has five more verses in BZI 978 consisting of Shāhīn's personal prayer.

The Killing of the Blasphemer

 1. See Lev. 24:10–14. The translation is based on *Mūsā-nāmah*, ed. Ḥakam, pp. 11b–12b, and BZI 978, fols. 271r–272r.
 2. In midrashic sources the reason for the enmity is not merely a quarrel between two men. The blasphemer is not only of "unclean" Egyptian stock, he is also the illegitimate son of the Jewish woman raped by the Egyptian whom Moses killed (Exod. 2:11). For further midrashic elaborations, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:239–240, and 6:84n.451.
 3. The only Jewish source giving the father's name that I am aware of is the fourteenth-century Persian midrash *Sefer pitron ha-torah*, where he is called "Hapishtokh" (p. 95).

Qārūn's Rebellion

 1. Cf. Num. 16; Surah 28:76–82. This translation is based on *Mūsā-nāmah*, ed. Ḥakam, pp. 43b–47a, and on mss. JNUL 180/54, fols. 135v–138v; HUC 2102, fols. 118r–121v. "Qārūn" is the qur'anic version of Korah's name.
 2. Cf. Num. 16:3. Some midrashic sources have Korah and his followers say: "Upon Sinai all Israel heard the words of God, 'I am the Lord.' Wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" (see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:291–292; 6:101n.568 and the sources cited there).
 3. Korah's fabulous wealth is acknowledged in rabbinic legends (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:286), but it is greatly amplified in all the Muslim sources owing to the different emphasis of the qur'anic account.

4. As the following lines make clear, Korah's party objects as much to Moses' lack of wealth as to his general asceticism; both aspects of behavior are covered by the derogatory (here) term "dervish." The word actually occurs in al-Nīsābūrī's account of this incident (*Dāstānḥā*, p. 225), indicating again Shāhīn's reliance on this source.
5. The point seems to be that the commandments that God imposed on the people through Moses appeared excessively burdensome to Korah and his group (see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:288–292; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, pp. 106–107; al-Tha'labī, *Arā'is*, p. 215).
6. Cf. Num. 16:13; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:291.
7. Ar./Pers., *ḥikmat*, lit. also means "science," "knowledge," "philosophy," "mystery." See the references cited in n. 6.
8. Hārūn is the qur'anic name of Aaron, Moses' brother.
9. This reading is based on JNUL 180/54. The other two manuscripts have *pūr-i afsūn* (HUC 2102: "master of spells") and *por zi afsūn* (*Mūsā-nāmah*, ed. Ḥakam: "full of spells").
10. Cf. Num. 16:5, 16–18; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:292–293.
11. A hybrid word composed of Heb. *Miqdash* + Pers. *-i ma'ad* (lit., "sanctuary of meeting"), rather than the biblical *ohel mo'ed* (Tent of Meeting) of Num. 16:18.
12. In the biblical and rabbinic accounts Datan and Abiram refuse to come to Moses and send him an angry message instead (Num. 16:12–14; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:294). Shāhīn heightens the drama by having the two men appear and refuse Moses to his face, despite his attempt to save their lives.
13. Through Moses' soliloquy, not based on any of the sources I consulted, Shāhīn re-creates imaginatively the prophet's feelings during the incident.
14. Datan and Abiram.
15. Cf. Num. 16:27.
16. See above, n. 11.
17. This act, as well as the sacrifice that follows, further compound Korah's transgression, for he had not been divinely commanded to build an altar, let alone one exceeding the measurements given to Moses (Exod. 27:1–8), nor was he divinely authorized to offer sacrifices. His doing so here, before the outcome of the trial that Moses proposed, betrays his foolhardy confidence.
18. Heb., *miqdash*; no doubt the Tent of Meeting is intended here.
19. Cf. Num. 16:20.
20. Cf. Num. 16:22, where the plural verb indicates that both Moses and Aaron "fell on their faces" in supplication.
21. The nine vaulted firmaments comprise the seven planetary spheres plus the fixed stars and the empyrean or encompassing sphere. See above, "Jacob and the Wolf," n. 41.
22. *Ki jorm-i biḥ kas bā kas nagīrī*, lit., "You will not take one man with the sin of another," echoing Num. 16:22, "When one man sins, will You be wrathful with the whole community?" On the complex issue of theodicy alluded to in this verse, cf. Gen. 18:23ff., Exod. 20:5, 34:7, Deut. 5:9, the *Babylonian Talmud*, Berakot 7a.
23. See below, n. 41.
24. Heb., *miḥkan*; again, the reference is to the Tent of Meeting.
25. Cf. Num. 16:23.
26. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:297.

27. This verse appears to refer to the amplification of the Jewish Law through the oral tradition handed down by Moses. Objections to the growth of Jewish law beyond its biblical framework were favorite polemical topics of anti-Talmudic Jews and non-Jews beginning with the dissent of the Jewish Sadducees in the Second Temple period, continuing with the arguments of the Karaites (after the eighth century), as well as Christians and Muslims. See Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*.
28. Cf. Num. 16:28–30.
29. See al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾiṣ*, p. 217, and al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānā*, p. 228. The latter was probably Shāhīn’s source for this statement.
30. God’s reply is not in any of the Jewish or Muslim sources I consulted. It seems to be Shāhīn’s imaginative interpretation of Moses’ request in Num. 16:30: “But if the Lord brings about something unheard of, so that the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them.”
31. See Surah 28:81. Rabbinic sources emphasize the destruction of Korah’s wealth along with those of his followers: “Not these wicked people alone were swallowed by the earth, but their possessions also. Even their linen that was at the launderer’s or a pin belonging to them rolled toward the mouth of the earth and vanished therein. Nowhere upon the earth remained a trace of them or of their possessions, and even their names disappeared from the documents upon which they were written” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:298).
32. I am uncertain about the meaning of this hemistich.
33. The Qurʾān (Surah 28:79) and several *qīṣaṣ* sources (al-Ṭabarī, *History*, pp. 103–104; al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾiṣ*, pp. 214–215; al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānā*, p. 227) point out that many Israelites were envious of Korah’s wealth.
34. Midrashic sources make Korah’s death more painful: “Consumed at the incense offering, he then rolled in the shape of a ball of fire to the opening in the earth, and vanished” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:299).
35. Cf. Num. 16:31.
36. I am uncertain about the meaning of this hemistich.
37. That is, from near the divine throne, the abode of Abraham in Muḥammad’s ascension (*miʿrāj*) (see *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, ed. A. Rippin and J. Knapert [Chicago, 1990], pp. 69–70); see also Nasr, *Introduction*, esp. pp. 132–165.
38. Cf. Num. 18:35; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:299.
39. *Yaʿqūbiān*, lit., “Jacobites,” i.e., descendants of Jacob, used in many JP texts as a synonym for the biblical Israelites. In all likelihood the verses that follow attempt to explain the number of those who died afterward in a plague (14,700 according to Num. 17:14, “aside from those who died on account of Korah”).
40. These last two hemistichs are unclear in the manuscripts I have consulted.
41. The Ar./Pers. word *himmat*, which I here translate as “grace,” has many meanings—“desire,” “intention,” “mind,” “thought,” “strength.” In Sufi parlance it usually denotes strong spiritual power, which is what is intended here (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 79).
42. The image is startling and beautiful: just as he once physically parted the Reed Sea, Moses now has such spiritual strength that he cuts a path through the “sea” of praise and prayer straight to God.

God's Great Name

1. Shāhīn's text is loosely based on Moses' Second Song, "Ha'azinu" (Deut. 32:1–47; see also Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:454–455 and 6:153–154nn.912–919). My translation is based on *Mūwā-nāmāh*, ed. Ḥakam, pp. 138a–141b and BZI 978, fols. 351v–354v. The titles of the two chapters that follow are in reverse order in BZI 978. I translate *tasbīḥ* (Ar./Pers. for "glori[ifies]") in Shāhīn's title as "writes."
2. Cf. Deut. 32:44. Pers., *shah*, obviously a hyperbolic foreshadowing of Joshua's future role, which is not, however, one of king in Jewish sources.
3. BZI 978 adds another distich here: "Words which are signposts of [theological] discourse [*kalām*], / Which the cycles of the world [eternally] serve." (Or "For the cycles of the world serve Him.")
4. Cf. Deut. 32:1.
5. Ar./Pers., *shart* (condition, obligation, stipulation).
6. This reference to Ahrīman (see above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 2) would seem jarringly out of place in Moses' speech were it not for the fact that in Persian poetic language it is simply another name for Satan.
7. This epithet is usually associated with God (see v. 3 above); here it appears to be referring primarily to Moses, perhaps in his capacity as God's interlocutor.
8. Ar./Pers., *sharī'a*, the Muslim term for divine law.
9. Cf. Deut. 32:2.
10. Pers., *rāb-i ḥaqīqat*, a common Sufi expression.
11. Ar./Pers., *ṭarīqa* (way, path), a technical term for the Sufi way of life.
12. Moses is addressing the second generation, those born in the desert, who are untainted by the sins of their fathers.
13. Pers., *yalān*, still gives credit to the strength of the generation that came out of Egypt.
14. Ar./Pers., *shirk* (polytheism, idolatry), that is, associating something with God; in the language of Islam, this is the most serious transgression for monotheists (Surah 4:116) and actually covers a multitude of sins beginning with the polytheistic worship characteristic of animism and ending with atheism.
15. See above, "The Fall of 'Aza'zel," n. 3.
16. This recommendation to rely on present and future sages may perhaps be a touch of anti-Karaite polemics.
17. Pers., *lā makānab*, a Sufi epithet for God.
18. Cf. Deut. 32:15.
19. Lāt is one of the pre-Islamic goddesses of Arabia mentioned in the Qur'ān (Surah 53:19); this is another incongruous reference from the Jewish point of view but not from the perspective of Persian poetical conceits.
20. Cf. Deut. 32:17.
21. Cf. Deut. 32:26–27.
22. The Reed Sea.
23. This distich is missing in BZI 978.
24. Ar./Pers., *wa'ada*, that is, the commandments, the terms of the covenant between God and Israel.
25. See above, n. 11.

The Tale of Job

1. This translation is based on “The Tale of Job,” ed. Ḥakam, pp. 92a–94b, and BZI 978, fols. 105v–108v. For a comprehensive treatment of the subject in Jewish and Islamic sources, see *EJ*, vol. 10, s.v. “Job,” and *EI* (2), s.v. “‘Ayyūb.” For more detailed midrashic views, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:226–242 and 5:381–390. The Qur’ān’s principal references to Job are in Surahs 21:83–84 and 38:40–43. For post-qur’anic sources, see al-Kisā’ī, *Tales*, pp. 192–204; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:140–143; al-Tha’labī, *Arā’iṣ*, pp. 153–163, and al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānā*, pp. 254–263. For the location of Job’s tale in Shāhīn’s epics, see above, “Introduction to Shāhīn.”
2. Some midrashic sources consider non-Israelite prophets, such as Shem, Balaam, Job, and his four friends (Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad, and Elihu), to be descendants of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, from his marriage to Milkah (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:356, and 6:125n.727).
3. On the confusion regarding the identity of ‘Uz in Jewish sources, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:384n.14.
4. A discreet reference to Hamor’s rape of Dinah (Gen. 34:1–3).
5. Jacob’s sons killed Hamor of Shekem (Gen. 34:25–26).
6. In midrashic sources God punishes Jacob for not allowing Dinah to become Esau’s wife by commanding him to marry her to Job, “one that is neither circumcised nor a proselyte” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:396 and 5:288nn.121,122). They also claim that Dinah was Job’s second wife (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:396, 2:241, 5:386n.27, and 5:388n.35). In most Muslim sources Job’s wife is called “Raḥmah,” (Mercy); see al-Kisā’ī, *Tales*, p. 195, al-Ṭabarī, *History*, p. 140, al-Tha’labī, *Arā’iṣ*, p. 156). Al-Nīsābūrī claims that Job had four wives; three were divorced from him during the period of his trials and only the fourth, “Zayna, and some say [her name was] Raḥmah, one of the daughters of ‘Iṣ [Esau] b. Iṣḥāq [remained with him]” (*Dāstānā*, p. 257).
7. Al-Nīsābūrī takes offense at the view that God gave Satan dominion over righteous Job. Instead, he claims that Job’s trials were actually initiated by a conversation between God and the angels. The latter claimed that Job’s faithful service was due to the fact that God had bestowed much wealth and many favors on him. God insisted that Job would remain faithful even without these and proceeded to test him. (In effect, al-Nīsābūrī places Satan’s general argument against Job in the mouths of the angels.) Citing other unnamed sources, al-Nīsābūrī claims that Job *chose* to be tested by calamity to prove his faith and don the “reward of the patient” (*ṣawāb-i ṣabīrān*) (*Dāstānā*, pp. 254–255). See below, n. 22, a Sufi interpretation.
8. Pers., *ṭā’at* (obeying, submitting, worshiping). For Satan’s sense of pride in his chief occupations, see above, “The Fall of ‘Aza’zel,” n. 3. In this translation I tend to translate the word mostly as “worship,” except in this verse, where I wanted to point to the cross-reference above.
9. Cf. “The Fall of ‘Aza’zel,” vv. 292ff.
10. *Mūwā-nāmāh*, ed. Ḥakam: “I’ll turn treacle into opium in his mouth.”
11. Shāhīn omits God’s caveat, “See, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on him” (Job 1:12; 2:6). God’s ultimate solicitude for Job is echoed also in Muslim legendary sources: “God gave Iblīs mastery over Job’s possessions, though not over his body or mind” (al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:141); “You may proceed to rule

- over his entire body, but not over his tongue, his heart, and his mind” (al-Tha‘labī, *‘Arā’is*, p. 156).
12. Pers., *qabr-i gabbār*; *al-Qabbār* (the Subduer, the Vengeful), is one of the Muslim names of God (Surah 12:39, etc.).
 13. Cf. Job 1:21.
 14. Ar./Pers., *shawq*, another Sufi technical term denoting one of the stages of loving God (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 132).
 15. Ar./Pers., *tawhīd* (to make one, to declare or acknowledge oneness), a complex technical Muslim term denoting one of the most important doctrines of Islam, corresponding to the Jewish concept of divine oneness. For an excellent discussion of *tawhīd*, see Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *Vision of Islam* (New York, 1994), chap. 3 and the Index under the term.
 16. The number of Job’s sons and daughters differs in the Jewish and Muslim legendary sources.
 17. Ar./Pers., *al-sattār*; is another Muslim (non-qur’anic) epithet for God.
 18. Cf. above, “The Fall of ‘Aza’zel,” vv. 315ff.; Job 2:7.
 19. Cf. Job 2:6.
 20. This detail is apparently first mentioned in the *Testament of Job*, a Greek pseudepigraphic work, written possibly earlier than 100 CE (*EJ*, s.v. “Job, Testament of”).
 21. Cf. *EJ*, *ibid.*; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:235 and 5:386n.26.
 22. “Eat my flesh until God releases me from suffering” (al-Kisā’ī, *Tales*, p. 195). Al-Nisābūrī relates an even more curious detail: “Others say that [the reason Job finally cried out to God] was that one day two worms fell off him and he put them back, saying, ‘Eat your daily portions and do not quarrel with one another!’ When they began to eat, he felt a pain such as he never felt before. He cried out, ‘Adversity afflicts me!’ [Surah 21:83]. Gabriel, peace be upon him, said, ‘O Job, are you [finally] crying out?’ He replied, ‘O Gabriel, all these years I have not suffered pain and anguish such as I suffer from the stings of these two little worms.’ Gabriel said: ‘That is because this [test] was your choice [see above, n. 7]. Don’t you know that slaves [Pers. *bandab*, in the sense of Ar. *‘abd* and Heb. *‘eved* (slave, servant, true [Muslim/Sufi] devotee)] have no business with choice?’” (*Dāstān-bā*, pp. 261–262).
 23. Like the Qur’ān and al-Nisābūrī, Shāhīn omits Job’s dialogues with his friends and thus keeps the narrative on a mystical-devotional rather than a philosophical plane.
 24. Dinah’s two disputes with Job are eloquent variations on the solitary verse she utters in the Book of Job, “You still keep your integrity! BlaspHEME God and die!” (2:9). Midrashic sources are uncomfortable with Dinah’s forthrightness and have her advise Job to pray for death, afraid that he might not be able to endure his suffering (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:235 and 5:386n.27). All the Muslim sources I consulted omit this negative aspect of her character, emphasizing Raḥmah’s (Dinah) fidelity to Job and the sacrifices she made in order to help him.
 25. Again, Shāhīn embellishes Job’s solitary reply to his wife: “You talk as any shameless woman might talk! Should we accept only good from God and not accept evil?” (Job 2:10).
 26. Far from comforting Job, Dinah undoubtedly adds to his misery with her “reasoning.” In Muslim/Sufi terms she represents all that is unspiritual, *ḍunyavī* (worldly), and *‘aqlī* (logical), unable to transcend earthly concerns.

27. The following five verses are missing in the Ḥakam edition.
28. The time span differs: “eighteen years[!]” (al-Kisāʿī, *Tales*, p. 199); “seven years and some months” (al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 2:142); “seven years . . . three years” (al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis*, p. 163); “seven years and seven months . . . seventeen years” (al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstān-bā*, p. 257).
29. Ar./Pers., *kitāb* (the Book).
30. None of the sources mentions this; Shāhīn’s imagination is in high gear.
31. As mentioned before, the Muslim sources emphasize the devotion of Job’s wife throughout his ordeal.

Ardashūr-nāmab

1. This translation is based on BZI 980 (its folios are not numbered), JTS Acc. 40919, in which the folios are not properly arranged (the following folios include portions of the narrative; they are listed in the order of the narrative: 9v, 127r, 129r, 129v, 96v, 130r, 130v, 68r), and IV A 129 (unfoliated). For midrashic sources, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:365–390, 6:451–461, and the medieval sources listed and discussed in Walfish, *Esther*, p. 245n.63.
2. The Kayānids are a legendary ancient eastern Iranian dynasty and a probable source of the Iranian epic tradition (Frye, *Heritage*, pp. 58 and 225).
3. The Persian word *bahman* has a multitude of meanings, among them “the supreme intelligence,” the pre-Islamic name of the eleventh month of the solar year, and a demon or genius among Zoroastrians (Haim, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 1:296; Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 212). More pertinent here is that “Bahman” is another name of Ardashīr (Ahasueros), the son of Isfandiyār, in Firdowsī’s *Shah-nāmab*. It provides the linchpin connecting Shāhīn’s epic with Iran’s great national epic (Blieske, *Shāhīn-e Štrāzāw*, p. 6). To understand where Bahman/Ardashīr fits in the *Shah-nāmab*, see the brief summaries in *Epic of the Kings*, trans. Reuben Levy (Chicago, 1967), pp. 218–222. The *Shah-nāmab* connection is, of course, much later chronologically speaking than the traditional scholarly dating that places the story of Esther in the reign of Xerxes I (486–465 BCE; Frye, *Heritage*, p. 29; cf. Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, p. 44).
4. “Rūm” refers, at various times in Islamic history, to Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire. The latter, as a designation of the Anatolian Peninsula, is the meaning most often intended by the medieval poets of Iran.
5. “Arman” refers to the mountainous regions of Azarbaijan, including Armenia.
6. The women in the harem. Calling beautiful females (pl.) *botān* (idols) is a Persian poetical convention with some interesting implications in Sufi poetry.
7. Ahasueros is not known for restraint in midrashic sources, which prefer to emphasize that he was a somewhat foolish monarch (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:379–381).
8. In v. 165 we are told that Hegai is a *mōbed*, a Zoroastrian priest. Clearly he is not aware of Esther’s non-Zoroastrian origins or he would have been less enthusiastic about Ahasueros’ marrying her. Midrashic sources identify him only as “chief of the eunuchs of the harem” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:386).
9. These were selected by Hegai earlier as possible candidates to replace Queen Vash-ti. The number seven symbolizes the planets of medieval cosmology and probably also alludes to the seven beauties courted by Shah Bahrām in Nizāmī’s (d. 1209) fa-

- mous allegorical romance *Haft Paykar* (The seven portraits); see Julie Scott Meisami, *Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 51ff.
10. As we shall see, there are several astrological metaphors in this narrative, but they differ from those found in Jewish sources. For example, in Bahya b. Asher's thirteenth-century biblical commentary *Kaḏ ha-qemah*, on the section *Purim* (his commentary on the Book of Esther), Ahasueros and Haman are associated with Saturn and Mars, "the forces of evil," respectively, while Mordekai and Esther are associated with Venus and Jupiter, "the forces of good" (Walfish, *Esther*, p. 58).
 11. That is, its rays.
 12. A poetic reference to Ardashīr's temporary impotence, not mentioned in the midrashic sources.
 13. Hegai is volunteering the information without being asked.
 14. Pers., *rāz-i Ester*; alluding probably both to her beauty and to her long concealment at the hands of Mordekai (see below, n. 32).
 15. Lit., "it is like the letter *ḏāl*," which, in the Arabic/Persian alphabet is a line bent toward the left.
 16. That is, stop bringing together incompatible elements, such as "pitcher and stone" (*saṅg o sabū*).
 17. That is, Esther was already present among the maidens of the harem.
 18. This refers to Esther's modest manners, but it may also hint at her refusal to partake from the food of the court, which is mentioned in midrashic sources (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:386).
 19. Hegai has presumably been guarding the secret for just such an occasion.
 20. The fourth heaven corresponds to the sun, the appropriate royal symbol (Nasr, *Introduction*, p. 204), especially vis-à-vis Ardashīr's pending union with Esther, whom Shāhīn equates with the moon.
 21. Needless to say, the courtship of Esther is not detailed in Jewish sources, which view her marriage as a "necessary evil," divinely preordained to save the Jews. Shāhīn's view, perhaps relying on local traditions, sees the union as being *much* more: a happy, fruitful marriage! Unlike the other virgins in the harem, Esther is properly wooed and wed to a monarch, and she gives birth not only to a Jewish savior but to the heir to the Persian throne as well (see above, n. 8, and below, n. 50).
 22. Fīrūz is the son of Bishutan, Ardashīr's grand vizier; he is obviously also one of the shah's confidants and high-ranking officials.
 23. A mann is a varying weight for measuring dry goods, roughly equivalent to two-thirds pounds avoirdupois, or about three kilograms (Haim, *Persian-English*, 2:988).
 24. The Persian word *zar* is used for both gold and money.
 25. Qandahar is a famous city in Afghanistan.
 26. Kay Qobād was one of the kings of the Kayānid dynasty (see above, n. 2), famous, among other things, for embracing Mazdakism (*Epic of the Kings*, pp. 317–321; Frye, *Heritage*, p. 250).
 27. Shush was ancient Susa, the main capital of the Achaemenids after Darius (Frye, *Heritage*, pp. 124–128).
 28. Fīrūz was entrusted with organizing the procession of gift bearers, while Hegai was entrusted with the delicate negotiations requesting Esther's hand in marriage.

29. The implication is that Esther lived in royal quarters even before she married Ardashīr, as befitting her descent from the tribe of Benjamin, from which Saul, the first king of Israel, also descended (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:146).
30. A royal title originating from, and thus inviting flattering comparison with, the Sasanian king Khosrow Anūshīrvān (Chosroes I), whose reign (531–579) is particularly idealized in Persian poetry and Iranian history (Frye, *Heritage*, pp. 256–264).
31. See above, “Qārūn’s Rebellion,” n. 3.
32. Pers., *Ester satīrab*, an obvious homonymous pun (*tajnīb*) with practically identical meanings in both Persian (*satīrab*) and Hebrew (*seter*), “concealed,” “secret,” “hidden.” In midrashic sources Esther earns the epithet “she who conceals” through her double concealment, first from the eyes of the king’s spies searching for beautiful maidens, and second, by guarding the secret of her Jewish descent from everyone at court (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:380, 384). Abraham Saba, a fifteenth-century kabbalistic commentator from Spain, noted in his mystical commentary of the Book of Esther that *El mistater* [Is. 45:15] is among God’s names, and that He hid (*histir*) His face from Israel in Esther’s time; he identifies Esther with the *Shekinah*, the divine immanence (Walfish, *Esther*, pp. 39–40, and 265n.16).
33. According to some midrashim, Mordekai married Esther, his orphaned niece, when she came of age (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:387). Shāhīn ignores this information since it would ruin his tale (see below, n. 50).
34. There is in Persian literature, a definite didactic genre of advice to princes, known as a “mirror for princes.” Here we have a small “mirror for princesses.”
35. The meaning of the next hemistich is unclear.
36. Deep mistrust of the world is common in Sufism, as indeed in all pietist thought. Cf. Mordekai’s soliloquy, below.
37. This extended simile is like a parable describing Mordekai’s protective role (oyster shell) toward Esther (pearl), as well as his inevitable loss of her at the hands of a suitor; in this case, the plundering diver (Ahasueros). The oyster shell and pearl are frequently used in Persian (Sufi) poetry as symbols of the original, “organic” love between the lover and the Divine Beloved. For a few examples in Rūmī’s poetry, see Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 213, 264, and 303.
38. The proper behavior for Esther—and for Sufi novices.
39. Lit., “act as though you were dead,” another advisable characteristic of Sufi novices, especially with regard to complete obedience to the Sufi master (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 103).
40. For the reason behind Mordekai’s apprehension, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:388–389, and Walfish, *Esther*, p. 280n.19. It is interesting to note, as Hava Lazarus-Yafeh has done, that Esther is urged to dissimulate concerning her religious beliefs and conceal her true identity, concepts known much later among Iranian Twelver Shi’is as *taqiyya* and *kitman* (“Ester ha-malkah,” pp. 121–122).
41. Ardashīr’s grand vizier.
42. Another of Ardashīr’s courtiers.
43. See above, n. 8.
44. Shāhīn’s imagination soars even higher in the verses that follow from here on. He ignores the midrashic notion that Esther never consummated her marriage with Ahasueros (how could she, if she was already married; see above, n. 33). Thus,

- according to some Jewish sources, the unfortunate king made love merely to “a female spirit in the guise of Esther” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:387–388, and 6:460n.80).
45. Also tokens of gifts?
 46. The shah’s new marriage appears to be the occasion also for a renewal of his political authority.
 47. Badakhshan is a place between India and Khorasan (northeastern Iran) that is noted for its rubies (Haim, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 1:232).
 48. A *rūd* is a stringed instrument.
 49. A *sāz* (Ar./Pers.) is another musical instrument.
 50. As mentioned above, in Shāhīn’s epic the purpose of the union of Esther and Ardashīr is not only the immediate deliverance of Iranian Jews but the restoration of Jewish national sovereignty through Cyrus [Pers., Kūresh], the son of Esther and Ahasueros. Some midrashic sources claim that Esther and Ahasueros were the parents of Darius (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:366 and 6:452–453n.5). On the confusion in Shāhīn’s epic between the roles of Darius and Cyrus regarding the rebuilding of the Temple, see below, *Ezra-nāmāb*, nn.4–5. It seems highly plausible that there existed a local Jewish-Persian tradition claiming that Cyrus was the son of Esther, for this is explicitly stated in the fourteenth-century midrashic work originating from Iran, *Sefer pitron Torah*, p. 33.

- Midrashic sources also claim, in a rather contradictory fashion, either that (a) Esther took contraceptive measures to ensure that she would not get pregnant, or that (b) she miscarried on hearing of Mordekai’s arrival at the palace “clothed in sackcloth and ashes” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:419, and 6:469n.127).
51. See above, “Jacob and the Wolf,” n. 37.
 52. Full of (thoughtless) enthusiasm, Ardashīr managed to corrupt even ascetics by chasing away their thoughts of penitence with gold.
 53. A famous mountain in northwestern Iran, near Hamadan.
 54. The greatest hero of the *Shah-nāmāb*.

Ezra-nāmāb

1. This translation is based on Wilhelm Bacher’s edition (itself based on ms. 392 [old numbering] of the Adler collection, JTS), published in his “Le Livre d’Ezra,” pp. 249–280; BZ1 980 (unfoliated); JTS Acc. 40919, fols. 1–4, 160–164; and IV A 129. See also Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 66–71. For relevant midrashic sources, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:354–361 and 6:441–449.
2. Pers., *ma’dan-i kbāy*, in this text a frequent epithet for the First Temple, it is probably related to the Hebrew (mishnaic) honorifics of Jerusalem, the site of the Chosen House (*bayt ha-baḥīrab*) (*Babylonian Talmud*, Zera’im, Ma’aser Sheni, 5:12).
3. See above, “Moses and the Burning Bush,” n. 1.
4. Cf. Jer. 25:11. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian armies of Nebuchadnezzar in the summer of 586 BCE; the building of the Second Temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius’ reign (516/15 BCE). See Tadmor, “Period of the First Temple,” pp. 157 and 172. Some Muslim authors were also familiar with the seventy-year count, which is cited by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tā’rīkh*, 2:690.
5. In Jewish tradition, “Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi [who is identified with Ezra] were the last representatives of prophecy” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:354–355,

- 6:441–442nn.33,36), but they were not necessarily, as in Shāhīn’s account, contemporaries. Haggai’s activities are associated with Darius I (522–486 BCE) and those of Ezra are generally, but not unanimously, connected with Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464–424 BCE). See Tadmor, “Period of the First Temple,” pp. 173–174, and Frye, *Heritage*, pp. 147–154. Shāhīn’s poetic license is understandable in light of the fact that both prophets were associated with the rebuilding of the Temple.
6. Pers., *rasūl-i akbar*, which can also mean “the greater/est prophet.”
 7. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:286 and 291 (where Mattatiah is identified with King Zedekiah; idem., 6:382n.1). Mattatiah’s role in Shāhīn’s account appears to be a conflation of the roles of Zerubbabel, son of Shealti’el, son of Jehoiachim, the last captive king of the Davidic line (Ezra 3:2), and, possibly, Sheshbazzar, “the prince of Judah” (Ezra 1:8). See Ackroyd, *Israel*, p. 204, and Bacher’s hypothesis, “Livre d’Ezra,” p. 250.
 8. Ezra’s initiative to go before the monarch resembles here Nehemiah’s actions (Neh. 2:2ff.). Shāhīn chose to center his narrative around Ezra, diminishing—or rather neglecting completely—the role of other characters known to have aided in the process of restoration.
 9. Here Shāhīn calls Ezra “Uzayr,” the prophet’s name in Muslim tradition, for no discernible metric reason, perhaps simply to establish the identity of the two. He appends the epithet *rasūl-i akbar* (see above, n. 6), heedless of its earlier association with Haggai.
 10. Presumably the prophet of the Book of Zekariah. For his role in the rebuilding of the Temple, see Ackroyd, *Israel*, pp. 218–233.
 11. The bird known as *humā(y)* in Iranian mythological tradition is usually identified with the mythical phoenix, or the real lammergeyer. Its propitious appearance portends kingship to those who sight it (Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, Index under “Huma”). In the present context it alludes to Ezra’s exalted stature over his companions and, indirectly, to the imminent restoration of the Jewish monarchy.
 12. Another epithet for Ezra. In Persian literature it is usually associated with ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661), Muḥammad’s cousin and son-in-law. Most of the time Shāhīn calls Moses a lion (see Moreen, “Moses, God’s Shepherd,” p. 117). Here he may be using the epithet consciously, likening Ezra in his capacity of second lawgiver to Moses, as midrashic sources do also (see below, n. 33).
 13. Pers., *darbān*. It would appear that the protocol at the Achaemenid, Parthian, and even Sasanian courts required that an usher, who was informed of the purpose of the visit, screen visitors before announcing them to the king (see Shaked, “Two Judaeo-Iranian Contributions,” pp. 293ff., where, however, the word *darbān* is not mentioned).
 14. Although this Mordekai ought to be identified with the Mordekai in Ezra 2:2, here he is the Mordekai of the Book of Esther, as later parts of the narrative reveal.
 15. As Bacher notes, Cyrus addresses himself to Mattatiah, his royal counterpart, rather than to Ezra, the leader of the delegation (“Livre d’Ezra,” p. 265n.1).
 16. See above, “Moses and the Burning Bush,” n. 12.
 17. The prohibition on drinking wine touched by a gentile and on eating any kind of cooked food prepared by gentile hands may well be biblical (cf. Joseph’s refraining from eating with the Egyptians in Gen. 43:32). It is clearly expressed in the *Babylo-*

nian Talmud ('Avodah Zarah, 29b, 34b, 38a). However, it is more likely that the biblical precedent for Shāhīn's account of Mattatiah's test of faith comes, as Bacher notes ("Livre d'Ezra," p. 266 n.1), from Daniel 1:8, where Daniel refuses to eat and drink with the idolatrous Nebuchadnezzar. Bacher suspects that Shāhīn may have been influenced by III Esdras, chap. 3, where the power of wine is extolled at the court of Darius (see *Apocrypha*, pp. 9–11), but the echo of Daniel appears more convincing to me. Such texts of faith are attested in Muslim lands, particularly in Iran, and Bacher cites two examples, one from the Mongol period (late thirteenth century), and the other from the JP chronicle *Kitāb-i Anuṣṭ* (see below, chap. 8) from the seventeenth century. He draws attention to the quasi-legendary information related by Israel Levi ("Le tombeau de Mardochee et d'Esther," *REJ* 36 [1898]: 252) that Arghūn, the Il-khanid monarch (r. 1284–1291), offered a bowl of wine to Sa'd ad-Dawla, his Jewish grand vizier (p. 68n.5; see above, Introduction). For a thorough discussion of this prohibition and other aspects relevant to contact between Jews and idolatrous and nonidolatrous nations, see Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (New York, 1975; repr. 1962), chap. 3.

18. See above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 16.
19. That is, the Temple.
20. Shāhīn uses the Arabic word *fatwa*, a Muslim legal term, which denotes the published opinion on a religious matter issued by a recognized Muslim authority. The use of this and other Muslim legal terms by Jews living in Muslim lands is well attested in the Genizah documents; see Goitein in P. Sanders *Mediterranean Society: Cumulative Indices* 6, under *fatwa*, and n. 21, below.
21. Shāhīn's legal terminology in this verse is mixed. He juxtaposes (Ar.) *ḥaram* (prohibited) of the Muslim *shari'a* (religious law), with (Heb.) *mutar* (permitted), of Jewish *ḥalakah* (religious law), most likely for the sake of the (still imperfect) rhyme. He thereby demonstrates a tendency apparent already in Saadia Gaon's (d. 942) Arabic translation of the Pentateuch of equating Jewish and Muslim legal terms.
22. Mattatiah's refusal of a royal request could lead to his death.
23. Ezra urges Mattatiah to break customary law (see above, n. 17) in order to achieve the higher goal, returning to the Land of Israel and rebuilding the Temple.
24. Night as malevolent darkness and day as triumphant light are juxtaposed here in traditional Iranian (Zoroastrian) dualistic fashion. Such extended similes are common in Persian poetry, especially, as here, in connection with the passage of (personified) Time, never a positive phenomenon.
25. See above, *Ardashīr-nāmah*, n. 30.
26. For "Rūm," see *Ardashīr-nāmah*, n. 4, above; "Chīn" is China, "Hind" is India.
27. This verse does not seem to refer to Cyrus' returning the vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar looted from the Temple (Ezra 1:7–11), nor to the free donations of the Jews (Ezra 1:4) or of the local gentile population (Ezra 1:6). Instead, the verse implies that the gold and silver were donated directly from the royal treasury.
28. The suggestion, or "moral," encapsulated in this verse is that the Jews' fortune improved as a result of their improved ways (Bacher, "Livre d'Ezra," p. 268n.1).
29. Bukhtanšar is the Persian name of Nebuchadnezzar. This clear reference to Ezra's

mission to restore the Torah because it was burned is found in the Second Book of Esdras (14:20): “For your Law is burnt, and so no one knows what has been done by you or what is going to be done. But if I have found favor before you, impart to me the holy Spirit, and I will write all that has happened in the world since the beginning, which were written in your Law, so that men can find the path” (*Apocrypha*, pp. 95–96). Bacher also draws attention (“Livre d’Ezra,” p. 268n.3) to a possible echo here of the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes IV in 167 BCE recorded in I Maccabees (1:56–57): “And wherever they found the books of the Law, they tore them and burned them, and if anyone was found to possess a book of the agreement or respected the Law, the king’s decree condemned him to death” (*Apocrypha*, p. 378).

30. There are several legendary strands interwoven in verses 115–117. Ezra’s fellow Jews urge him to travel to the realm of the “sons of Moses,” a group of Levites who were supposed to have survived the destruction wrought by Nebuchadnezzar and who had preserved perfect copies of the Torah. These had been transported miraculously to a distant land cut off by a tumultuous river called “Sambation” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:316–418) and lived in the land of Rekab with the descendants of Jethro, who were not Jewish (*idem.*, 3:76–77). The Rekabites had been rewarded for their ancestor’s generosity to Moses with a paradisaical dwelling in the “Land of the Blessed,” whose access was blocked by an impassable river (*idem.*, 6:409n.57). Bacher adds that the famous medieval traveler Petaḥiah of Regensburg claimed that the Rekabites dwelt beyond the “Mountain of Darkness,” which, in Bacher’s opinion, refers to the region of the Caucasus (“Livre d’Ezra,” p. 269n.4; E. N. Adler, *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: Nineteen First Hand Accounts* [New York, 1930, repr. 1987], p. 83). Bacher amplifies this information by drawing attention to the Muslim legend recorded by the geographer al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283/4), according to whom Muḥammad, carried by his magic steed Burāq, also visited the descendants of Moses; al-Qazwīnī refers to the river Sambation as *wāḍi al-ramal* (the river of sand) (*Atḥarū’l bilād*, 2:186), a description that is reflected indirectly in Shāhīn (see v. 115) (Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, p. 69n.2).

According to other Jewish sources, one perfect copy of the Torah, buried under the Temple, was never destroyed and was carried by the prophet Ezekiel into the Babylonian exile from which Ezra returned it to Jerusalem (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:220n.24).

31. This time the epithet refers to Moses; see above, n. 12.
32. The reference to writing out the Tetragrammaton, God’s Ineffable Name, appears to be to the making of a sort of amulet, although, according to several Jewish sources, Ezra did pronounce the Tetragrammaton, “as it is written” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:445n.49). As a high priest after his return to the Land of Israel, he was certainly entitled to do so (*idem.*, 6:441n.35). The invocation of God by the Ineffable Name for theurgic purposes was a common feature of Jewish life in many places during the Middle Ages (see Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* [New York, 1977 repr.], p. 83). Its sophisticated use, especially among Kabbalists, is described by Moshe Idel in his *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), chap. 8, and *idem.*, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany, 1988), Index, under “Name of God.”

33. Shāhīn is alluding here to one of the most important Muslim polemical arguments against Judaism, namely, that the Jews worshiped Ezra (Surah 9:30); see Mahmoud Ayoub, "Uzayr in the Qur'ān and Muslim Tradition," in *Studies in Islamic Judaic Traditions*, ed. William M. Brinner and S. D. Ricks (Atlanta, Ga., 1986), pp. 9ff. Jewish tradition, although it regards Ezra very highly ("If Moses had not anticipated him, Ezra would have received the Torah" [*Tosefta*, Sanh., 4:7]), stops well short of such veneration (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:432n.5, and 446n.50). Nevertheless, perhaps under the influence of some Muslim sources, Shāhīn endows Ezra with superhuman qualities, such as flying by means of writing down God's Ineffable Name and possessing a phenomenal memory. His abilities clearly awe the Jews in Shāhīn's narrative, but they do not "worship" him. Shāhīn uses Ezra's superhuman efforts to transmit the correct form of the Torah as a reply to Muslim charges that Ezra had corrupted the text (see the following note). For a thorough analysis of Ezra's role in Muslim-Jewish polemics, see Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Ezra-Uzayr: Metamorphosis of a Polemical Motif" (Heb.), *Tarbiya* 55 (1986): 359–379, and a different version of the same topic in her *Intertwined Worlds*, chap. 5.
34. Shāhīn refutes another of the most important Muslim polemical arguments against Judaism, namely that Ezra transmitted an incorrect version of the original Torah. Al-Ṭabarī had already presented this argument (*Ta'rikh [Annales]*, 2:692), which was quickly adopted by many later Muslim qur'anic commentators and storytellers (*quṣṣā'id*). Its lasting formulation is found in the works of the famous Spanish scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) and of the Jewish apostate Samaū'āl al-Maghribī (d. ca. 1175). They maintain that the various invasions of the Land of Israel resulted not only in the physical destruction of the realm but also in the ruination of the Jews' archives, including their copies of the Torah. In his famous work *On Religions and Sects [Al-faṣl fi'l milal wa'l abwā' wa'l niḥāl]* (Cairo 1928; Beirut 1975), Ibn Ḥazm argues that knowledge of the Torah, which was confined to a few priests (2:149), was lost completely during the oppressive reigns of various kings of Judah and Israel and during the Babylonian exile (1:147–148). According to Ibn Ḥazm, it was Ezra the priest who "concocted the Hebrew scriptures from remnants of the revelation as it was remembered by other priests and from his own additions" (Moshe Perlmann, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Polemics: Muslim-Jewish Polemics"; *Al-faṣl*, 1:148). In *Silencing the Jews [Iḥbām al-yabūd]*, Samaū'āl al-Maghribī claims that Ezra's motive for introducing reprehensible tales (from the Muslim point of view, i.e., Lot's incestuous relationship with his daughters, King David's relationship with Bathsheba) into the Torah was to discredit the Davidic dynasty and prevent it from returning to power after the restoration of the Temple (New York, 1964, Ar. text, pp. 62–63, Engl. trans., p. 60. See also Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, p. 45).
35. Shāhīn uses the terms "Imrān's people" and "Kalīm's people" interchangeably.
36. Ar./Pers., *ḍbikr*; another technical Sufi term; see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, Index under *ḍbikr*.
37. Cf. above, "Jacob and the Wolf," n. 41.
38. Ar./Pers., *ḍabr* (time, destiny, adverse fortune, material world), plays the same role in Shāhīn's poetry, and in JP literature in general, as in classical Persian poetry. Derived from a pre-Islamic cosmological and poetic concept, this term alludes to those implacable, adverse aspects of human existence that strict monotheists,

- shrinking from the issue of theodicy, are averse to attribute to God and would rather attribute to the workings of “Time” (see *El* (2), s.v. *ḍabr*; and above, “Jacob and the Wolf,” n. 14).
39. Lit., “Beware, don’t fall into the rabbit’s sleep.” The last four distichs mark the transition to the somber narrative of Esther and Mordekai’s deaths.
 40. Contrary to Shāhīn’s poetic claim, only a small portion of the Jewish population exiled to Babylonia returned to the Land of Israel (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:355).
 41. See above, n. 14.
 42. Shāhīn’s indirect source for Mordekai’s dream is probably the Septuagint version of the Book of Esther, in which Mordekai’s dream is described: “Behold! A din and uproar, thunder and earthquake, and confusion abroad on the earth” (*The Septuagint Bible: The Oldest Text of the Old Testament*, trans. Charles Thompson [Indian Hills, 1960], p. 809); see also C. A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions* (New York, 1977), pp. 153–252, and Elias Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible: Jonah, Daniel, Koheleth, Esther* (New York, 1967), pp. 171–240.
 43. The angel, whose identity is not specified here, addresses Mordekai but uses the second person plural, thus including Esther in his admonition.
 44. The Persian words *sarmāyab* (capital) and *sūd* (profit) have many Sufi connotations relating primarily to spiritual “earnings” (cf. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 114 and 229). Here Shāhīn’s angel suggests, rather delicately, that Esther and Mordekai’s roles in the divine scheme to restore Jewish national sovereignty have come to an end. As noted earlier, Shāhīn leaves no doubt in *Ardashīr-nāmāh* that these roles consisted in bringing about the union of Esther and Ardashīr as the parents of Cyrus, the future liberator of the Jews.
 45. Mount Alvand is in a mountain range near Hamadan. Presumably Esther and Mordekai set out from Susa (Heb., *Shushan*), the main winter residence of the Achaemenid rulers of Iran, toward the south, traveling to Hamadan (ancient Ekbatana), the main summer residence of the Achaemenids (Frye, *Heritage*, pp. 124ff.). Jewish tradition maintains that the mausoleum at the center of Hamadan contains the tombs of Esther and Mordekai, but archaeological evidence suggests that the present construction dates no earlier than the end of the thirteenth century (E. Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran* [London, 1935], pp. 104ff.). The site and the tomb have played an important role in the spiritual history of Iranian Jews, particularly the Jews of that region. For a full description of the tomb, the customs, and miracles associated with it as late as the nineteenth century, see R. Menaḥem Halevi, *Maṣevot Mordekai v’-Ester* (Jerusalem, 1932), and Ze’ev Vilnay, *Maṣevot qodeṣh be-ereṣ Israel* (Jerusalem, 1950), pp. 228–230. Vilnay also mentions a tradition that Queen Esther is buried in Israel, in Kefar Bir’am in the Galil region, near Safed. Curiously, he quotes a certain R. Menaḥem Ḥevroni, who traveled in this region around 1215, to the effect that Queen Esther commanded Cyrus, *her son*, to build this tomb for her (p. 229).
 46. Here the homonymous pun *Esther satīrab* projects not only back to the time when Esther hid her Jewish identity at the court of Ardashīr (see above, *Ardashīr-nāmāh*, n. 32), but also forward, into the present moment of the tale, when Esther and Mordekai arrive in Hamadan incognito.

47. Although Mordekai's rank is not specified here, his possessing a signet ring implies that he was appointed grand vizier after Haman's execution (cf. Est. 8:2).
48. Bacher cites the *Jerusalem Talmud* (Megillah, 74b) and the *Babylonian Talmud* (Pesahim, 101a) in support of the idea that synagogues often served as inns in the talmudic period ("Livre d'Ezra," p. 273n.1).
49. The Hebrew word *parnas* has multiple meanings, all of which relate to the head functionary of a synagogue or a Jewish community.
50. The Ar./Pers. word *rahīl* (journey) is a poetical and technical term originating in the great *qaṣīdas* (odes) of the pre-Islamic poets of Arabia. It denotes the second section of a *qaṣīda*, the part in which the poet breaks up camp and sets out on a journey, mounted on a favorite camel, and seeks either to be reunited with his beloved or to encounter some formidable adventure (see Michael A. Sells, *Desert Tracings* [Middletown, Conn., 1989]). As the verses that follow show, Mordekai's choice of the word is appropriate, for he is about to set out on the final journey toward the Divine Beloved.
51. See above, n. 38. Mordekai's fatalistic soliloquy reflects many similar passages in classical Persian, especially Sufi, poetry. The Book of Ecclesiastes is one of the earliest sources for this pessimistic outlook.
52. The image of the "cupbearer" is a common cliché of classical Persian, especially Sufi, poetry, where it can denote both the earthly beloved, reflecting the Divine, or the Divine Beloved Himself.
53. "Friend" is another Sufi epithet for God.
54. The Hebrew month Adar usually falls in the rainy season of spring. It is also the month (February or March) in which Purim, the Feast of Esther, is celebrated.
55. Fire and water as independent symbols, and particularly their incompatible relationship, lend themselves to many mystical (Sufi) interpretations, such as the senses for the former and the guidance of the Sufi shaykh for the latter (Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 143 and 240).
56. Pers., *zamāneh*, a synonym of *ḍabr* (see above, n. 38).
57. Famous kings and heroes in Firdowsī's *Shah-nāmah*. Instead of "Farīdūn," the text actually has *gāv*, which, as Dick Davis suggested in a private communication, may allude to Farīdūn's famous nurturing cow rather than being a repetition or misspelling of the name Gīv (l. 205).
58. See above, n. 45.
59. See Netzer, "Some Notes," pp. 35–52.
60. I thank Dick Davis for correcting the translation of hemistichs 228–230 from the version that appeared in my article "The 'Iranization' of Biblical Heroes," p. 334.
61. According to Muslim tradition, which Shāhīn follows here, Adam's Fall came about through eating a grain of wheat from a wheat tree (Moreen, "Legend of Adam," pp. 159 and 163).
62. Cf. Gen. 6:3; and also Moses' lifespan (Deut. 34:7).
63. The "provisions" referred to in the last two distichs are our good deeds, which are faithfully recorded during our lifetime and carefully scrutinized by specific angels (the "toll gatherers" of v. 244), in both Jewish and Muslim traditions, before we are granted judgment and a resting place in the hereafter.

64. Another Sufi cliché.
65. The extended simile of the jug stands here, as in many other instances in Persian Sufi poetry, for our perishable form, yet this humble object can symbolize even God. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who is fond of this image, says: "Thou art the wine and I am the jug, / Thou art the water and I am the streambed. / I am drunk in the lane, of my Saki, oh my Water-giver!" and "Sometimes 'jug,' sometimes 'cup,' sometimes 'unlawful,' sometimes 'forbidden' — all art Thou, / for Thou are sometimes the guided and sometimes the Guide." (Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 315 and 308).
66. Ḥātim of Ṭayy, the paragon of traditional Bedouin hospitality and generosity, is celebrated in pre-Islamic and Islamic literatures. See R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, Mass., 1907; repr. 1969), pp. 85–87.
67. Žahhāk, an Iranian mythological figure, is the most evil character in Firdowsī's *Shah-nāmāh*. His monstrous deeds made him the paragon of evil in Persian literature. See Levy, *Epic*, pp. 11–25, and Hinnells, *Persian Mythology*, pp. 14–17.
68. See above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 2.
69. Shāhīn's dualistic "theology" is most Iranian.
70. The Sufi concept embedded in the proverb "selfhood is blasphemy even if it be holy" lurks behind this verse. See Javad Nurbaksh, "The Nimatullāhī," in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S. H. Nasr (New York, 1991), p. 159.
71. A Sufi cliché that stands for God and Creation, respectively.
72. The delphic maxim "Know thyself" is a cornerstone of Sufism, as of most forms of Western mysticism.

Introduction to 'Imrānī

1. This introduction is based primarily on David Yeroushalmi's doctoral dissertation, "The Judeo-Persian Poet 'Emrānī and His *Ganj-nāme* (The Book of Treasure)" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1986), now published under the same title (Leiden, 1995). All references are to the published book; see pp. 3–41. On 'Imrānī and his works, see also Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 166–206; Netzer, *Muntakhab*, pp. 40–45, 179–260; idem., "Judeo-Persian Footnote"; idem., *Oḡar*, pp. 31–33.
2. Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, p. 16.
3. See the Introduction.
4. See below, chap. 8.
5. Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, pp. 33–34.
6. Ibid., pp. 24–25.
7. See Bacher, *Zwei jüdisch-persische Dichter*, pp. 166–169.
8. For a complete list of 'Imrānī's works, see Netzer, "Judeo-Persian Footnote"; Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, pp. 32–41.
9. Corrupt manuscript copies and more frequent use of Hebrew words which throw off the meter also contribute to this impression (Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, pp. 69–77).
10. Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, p. 46, quoting Louis Finkelstein, *Mabo' le-massektot Awot we-Awot de-Rabbi Natan* (New York, 1950), p. 5.
11. The authorship remains unclear (see Rypka, *History*, p. 130).
12. See Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, pp. 57ff.; and below, chap. 5.

13. Yeroushalmi, *Jewiṣḥ-Persian Poet*, p. 39.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

Faṭḥ-nāmāb

1. Cf. Josh. 5, 6. This translation is based on mss. BL Or. 13704, fols. 30v–37v, D fols. 32r–37v, and BZI 4602, fols. 21r–28v. For midrashic sources, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:7–8. Most Muslim legendary accounts do not deal with this episode at length; the most detailed account is in al-Ṭabarī (*History*, 3:89–98).
2. In Sufi terminology, Ar./Pers., *aql-i kull* (Universal Intellect) refers to the first Intellect of the Neoplatonic system, often identified with the Archangel Gabriel, the source of revelation in Islam; the *nous* of Plotinus (Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, p. 35).
3. Pers., *zamāneḥ*; see above, *Ezra-nāmāb*, nn. 56 and 38.
4. In this and the verses that follow ʿImrānī employs the Arabic/Persian word *kbāḥ* (special, choice, select, excellent, holy), in the full range of its meanings.
5. Cf. Exod. 3:5.
6. Moses' name is not mentioned explicitly in this verse, but the epithet *rasūl-i ḥaqq* (God's messenger), clearly refers to him.
7. I was unable to find any legendary sources, Jewish or Muslim, for verses 49–52.
8. The Hebrew word *koben* is joined here to the Persian plural ending *ān*.
9. Heb., *shofar*.
10. The son of the priest Eleazar (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:5; 6:171n.10).
11. The priests and the Ark were actually stationed in the middle, between the vanguard and the rearguard of the army (Josh. 6:8, 9, 13).
12. Ar./Pers., *takbīr*; the Muslim formula *Allāhu akbar* (God is great), which punctuates the canonical prayer and is used constantly in daily life as a pious exclamation.
13. "The great miracle which happened at Jericho was not that the walls fell, but that they disappeared in the bowels of the earth" (*Babylonian Talmud*, Berakot 54a–54b; Targum Joshua 6.20; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:175n.22).
14. Lit., *vahdat* (union, oneness), a Sufi term denoting a mystical state of oneness with God. I was unable to find Jewish sources that referred to the priests' mystical experience before the walls of Jericho. For a late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century JP miniature depicting the priests before the walls of Jericho, see Moreen, *Miniature Paintings*, p. 49 (BL OR. 13704, fol. 31v).
15. Ar./Pers., *tablīl* (praising God), the first part of the Muslim profession of faith (*shabāda*), *lā ilāha illā-llāh* (there is no god but God). The Islamic term and concept echo the Heb. *hallel* (praise), associated especially with Psalms 113–118 and recited on the New Moon and the festivals.
16. Ar./Pers., *imām[ān]* (leader, model, exemplar), a term laden with meaning for Muslims that ranges from ordinary prayer leader to divinely inspired guide, this latter especially among Shi'is.
17. Ar./Pers., *wajḍ* (ecstasy of love), produced by the Divine Presence. This technical Sufi term is derived from the Ar. verb *wajada* (to find), that is, "to find God and become quiet and peaceful in finding Him" (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 178).
18. Pers., *ṣandūq-i shabādat*.
19. See above, n. 12.
20. This refers to the biblical concept of *herem* (ban, devoted thing), which means

- something that is set apart as belonging strictly to God and is forbidden for profane use. War booty in Israel's early wars was devoted entirely to God, and in victory nothing was spared; the idolatrous enemy had to be destroyed utterly (*The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, s.v. "ban"). Here and in the verses that follow, 'Imrānī is playing on the Hebrew term and its Arabic cognate *ḥaram* (forbidden [for sacred reasons]); cf. *EJ* (2), s.v. *ḥaram*.
21. This is, of course, anachronistic, as there was no set *miqdash*, cultic site, in Joshua's day (*EJ*, s.v. "Mikdash"). Joshua did not earn unanimous praise for devoting Jericho to the Lord: some Jewish sources thought that he led the Israelites thereby into temptation (cf. Josh. 7; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:175n.23).
 22. Cf. Josh. 2.
 23. A qur'anic epithet for God, Ar., *lā-yazāl* ([He Who] ceases not; see Surah 9:110; 13:31; 22:55).
 24. Caleb, the son of Yefuneh, was one of the spies (Num. 13:4–16) whom Moses sent to scout the Land of Israel and who, unlike the majority of the spies, encouraged Moses to proceed with the conquest (Num. 13:30). For this he was rewarded by being allowed to enter the land (Num. 14:24). Some midrashic sources claim that Phinehas accompanied Caleb on this mission (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:342, 6:118n.681). Josh. 2:1 does not name the spies. In a midrashic source (*Numbers Rabbah*, 16.1), Caleb is sent to spy out the land again, this time by Joshua, together with Phinehas.
 25. Cf. Josh. 2:14.
 26. Josh. 6:23 mentions only Rahab and her extended kindred. On whether Rahab was justified in her request, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:174n.23.
 27. This and the next two hemistichs are not found in ms. D.
 28. Perhaps 'Imrānī bestows this, and other standard Persian epithets, on Rahab tongue in cheek, given that she was a "harlot" (Josh. 2:1). However, he may have been in earnest since Rahab's good deed erased her past and allowed her to join the Israelite tribes.
 29. The reason for consecrating everything found in Jericho was, according to some midrashic sources, that it was conquered on the Sabbath: "Joshua reasoned that as the Sabbath is holy, so also that which is conquered on the Sabbath should be holy" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:8; but see the controversy over whether Jericho was conquered on the Sabbath at 6:174n.22).
 30. See above, n. 21.
 31. According to some midrashic sources, Rahab became a righteous proselyte, the ancestor of prophets and priests (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:5; 6:171n.12).
 32. 'Imrānī plays here with a common topos of Sufi literature. (Spiritual) drunkenness, usually denoting the mystical state of union with the divine, is used to imply the opposite, the state of spiritual deprivation.
 33. See above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 1.
 34. According to midrashic sources, Joshua himself married Rahab (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:5); Caleb had been married to Miriam, Moses' sister (2:253; 6:185n.25), who died at Kadesh and was buried there (Num. 20:1).
 35. See above, n. 31.
 36. This and the previous distich are not in BL Or. 13704.
 37. 'Imrānī is fond of quoting the poet Sa'dī, but I was unable to find these quotations

- in either Sa‘dī’s *Bustān* or *Gulīstān*. Perhaps the reference is to Solomon, traditional author of Ecclesiastes, as these verses are an elaboration of Eccles. 7.1.
38. Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭīma, and the twelve imams revered by Twelver Shi‘is comprise the Holy Family, or the Fourteen Infallible Ones in Shi‘i parlance. Needless to say, this invocation is rather strange here. If indeed this verse exists in *all* extant manuscripts, it may suggest ‘Imrānī’s hope that his poetry would spread beyond the Jewish community.

The Book of Ruth

1. This translation is based on mss. BL Or. 13704, fols. 97r–100r; BZI 4602, fols. 111r–115r, and BZI 964, fols. 183r–184r. For midrashic sources, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:30–32, 85, 88; 6:187ff. For a lovely poetic rendition of the Book of Ruth based on the biblical and midrashic accounts, see Grace Goldin, *Come Under the Wings: A Midrash on Ruth* (Philadelphia, 1980 repr.).
2. On Ruth’s extraordinary beauty, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:192n.57.
3. A *sāz* (Ar./Pers.) is a musical instrument.
4. That is, Ruth shares everything with Naomi, who has been “burned” by the calamities she has endured and who is still in mourning for the deaths of her husband and sons.
5. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:191–192n.55.
6. Boaz’s falling in love with Ruth is not mentioned in midrashic sources, but it is a necessary conceit in the Persian romances that served as ‘Imrānī’s models (see below, n. 9).
7. This is a reference to Tob, Boaz’s older brother, who is not actually named in Ruth 4:1. Tob apparently relinquished his right to marry Ruth under the misapprehension that the prohibition against Jews marrying Moabites included females, not just males, as was the case (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:193nn.61,64).
8. ‘Imrānī omits the entire episode in which Naomi and Ruth “plot” and carry out their plan to have Boaz marry Ruth (Ruth 3). Nor does he mention that according to some midrashic sources, Boaz had been married but that his dead wife had been buried on the day of Naomi and Ruth’s arrival (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:32 and 6:190n.48).
9. Famous lovers in Nizāmī’s (d. 1209) Persian romance *Khosrow and Shīrīn*, who, like Ruth and Boaz, were of different origins.
10. At the time of their marriage Boaz was apparently an octogenarian and Ruth was in her forties. Since she was past the age of childbearing, the birth of Obed was a miracle vouchsafed to Ruth. Boaz is supposed to have died in the bridal chamber (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:194nn.68,69).
11. Heb., for “servant [of God].” According to tradition, Obed was a very pious man (Ginzberg, *Legends*, p. 194n.68).
12. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:194n.69.
13. The musical references in the last three verses form an elegant *tanāsub* (Ar./Pers., harmony of similar things), one of the many rhetorical artifices of Persian poetry (see Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, pp. 38–40). This particular example looks forward to David’s musical skills and back to the fact that his birth could only have come about through an apparently straight arrow (Boaz) “straying” from its path.

Introduction to Aḥaron b. Mashiah

1. This introduction is based on Netzer, *Oḡar*, pp. 33–34; idem., *Yehude Iran*, p. 43; idem., *Ḥobot Yehudah*, p. xi.
2. Netzer, *Oḡar*, p. 34n.57; idem., *Ḥobot Yehudah*, p. xi, Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, p. 753n.177.

Sboftim-nāmab

1. Cf. Judg. 11:34–40. This translation is based on mss. BZI 964, fols. 153r–154v and BZI 4571, fols. 102v–105r. For midrashic references, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:43–47. For a perceptive discussion of the quasi-tragic dimensions of Jephthah's vow, see J. Cheryl Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge, 1992), chap. 3.
2. In the biblical narrative the daughter's name is not preserved, which is one of the reasons Exum labels the narrative "androcentric" (*Tragedy*, p. 68). Rabbinic tradition not only emphasizes her selflessness but preserves her name as Sheilah (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:44–45).
3. A *sāz* (Ar./Pers.) is a musical instrument.
4. A reference to Central Asia, believed to be the home of beautiful Turks in classical Persian poetry.
5. According to Exum, Jephthah's *hamartia* (Greek for "incautious vow") does not render him a tragic hero, primarily because the biblical narrative does not describe an "inner struggle . . . wrestling against his fate" on his part (*Tragedy*, p. 57). Aḥaron b. Mashiah's account attempts to describe such a struggle.
6. Literally, Pers., *kabutar* (dove).
7. According to Exum, Jephthah's daughter also "lacks the development that makes for a genuinely tragic personality. She accepts her fate so willingly and obediently that it is shocking. . . . In the space of a few brief verses, she moves from mirth and celebration of her father's victory to lamentation, and just as quickly she passes into death and celebration in communal memory" (*Tragedy*, p. 58).
8. According to some medieval commentators (i.e., Kimḥi [d. 1235] at Judg. 11:39), Jephthah did not sacrifice his daughter but let her live out her life in seclusion, devoted entirely to God. Early rabbinic sources, however, make no such claim and condemn Jephthah's act (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:203n.109). The concept of immurement is not in the Jewish sources I consulted and may well be the poet's original contribution.
9. In some rabbinic sources, the rivalry between Jephthah and Phinehas, the high priest, prevented the former from consulting the latter about the possible annulment of his vow, and this brought about Sheilah's death. Both men were eventually punished for their excessive pride: Jephthah was dismembered in death, and the holy spirit abandoned Phinehas (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:46). Rabbinic sources also blame Phinehas for "not having prevented the war between Jephthah and the Ephraimites. He ought to have remonstrated with those proud men who did not intercede in behalf of Jephthah's daughter, though they were ready to go to war over an alleged insult" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:203n.109).

Introduction to Khwājah Bokhārā'ī

1. This introduction is based on Amnon Netzer's doctoral dissertation, "Study of Kh(w)ājah Bokhārā'ī," pp. 1–91, also summarized in idem., "Dāniyāl-Nāme,"

pp. 145–164. My translation is based on Netzer's edition of the text as printed in his *Muntakbab*, pp. 45–46, 261–297, with occasional references to the fuller edition in his dissertation.

2. See Netzer, "Dāniyāl-Nāme," pp. 146–148.
3. See Netzer, "Dāniyāl-nāma and Its Linguistic Features." On the Jews of Bukhārā, see the Introduction. On more literature from Bukhārā, see below.
4. See the entries on Fattaḥ-i Jahūd and Ṭibb-i Ḥāziq, pennames of two Jewish poets living in Bukhārā, mentioned in Muḥammad Badi' b. Mowlānā Muḥammad Sharīf Samarqandī's (Maliḥā) *Muzakkir al-aṣḥāb* (The reminder of companions), compiled toward the end of the seventeenth century (ms. 610, Fond Vostochnykh Rukopisei, Akademiia Nauk, Dushanbe, Tadzhikistan, pp. 197–198). I am grateful to Robert D. McChesney for bringing this information to my attention.
5. Netzer, "Dāniyāl-Nāme," p. 155. For chronological inaccuracies within the Book of Daniel, see Bickerman, *Four Strange Books*, p. 93.
6. See Bickerman, *Four Strange Books*, pp. 82–86.

Dāniyāl-nāmab

1. Cf. Dan. 6. This translation is based on Netzer, "Study of Kh(w)ājah Bokhārā'i," pp. 197–209 and his *Muntakbab*, pp. 284–293. For midrashic interpretations, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:348–349; 6:435; Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions* (New York, 1977), pp. 117–149; Bickerman, *Four Strange Books*, pp. 53–138.
2. See above, *Arḍasbūr-nāmab*, n. 30.
3. Cf. "A law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be abrogated" (Dan. 6:13).
4. According to legend, Alexander the Great built a strong wall or rampart of iron and brass in order to stop the incursion of the barbarian "Yājūj" and "Mājūj" on an oppressed people (*EI* (2), s.v. "al-Iskandar").
5. Cf. "All other creatures were instructed to change their nature, if Israel should ever need their help in the course of history. The sea was ordered to divide before Moses, and the heavens to give ear to the words of the leader; the sun and the moon were bidden to stand still before Joshua, the ravens to feed Elijah, the fire to spare the three youths in the furnace, the lion to do no harm to Daniel, the fish to spew forth Jonah, and the heavens to open before Ezekiel" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:50–51; see also *Beresbit Rabbab*, 5.5, and other sources cited in *ibid.*, 5:68n.9. On the primordial nature of miracles already "stamped" upon "the existing nature" of certain things, see Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines (Chicago, 1974), 2.29, pp. 345–346).
6. Cf. "Darius sets his heart to deliver Daniel (6:15). The king, as Theodotion says, became not Daniel's judge but his advocate" (Bickerman, *Four Strange Books*, p. 85).
7. According to some midrashic sources, a large rock rolled of its own volition from the Land of Israel to protect Daniel against his enemies (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:348). Alternatively, an angel assumed the form of a rock to close the pit (6:435n.12).
8. The angel's name is not specified in the rabbinic sources I consulted. Gabriel, one of the four archangels, is an important divine messenger in both Judaism and Islam.
9. See Rashi's biblical commentary at Dan. 6:18.
10. Gabriel's wings are highly symbolic in Sufi lore. When Muḥammad ascended to

- heaven (*mi'raj*) and passed beyond the Lote Tree of the Far Boundry (Surah 53:14) into God's presence, Gabriel could not follow him, for, as the great Sufi poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī had him say, "If I fly beyond this limit, my wings will burn" (Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, p. 222).
11. Lit., "dark, night-colored," "dark-bay horse." In the *Shab-nāmab*, Shabrang is the name of Siyāvush's horse; Siyāvush is one of the heroes of the epic. See *The Legend of Siyāvush*, trans. Dick Davis (London, 1992).
 12. The meaning of this and the distichs that follow to the end of this chapter is not entirely clear, which is probably why Netzer omitted them from his *Muntakbab*, although they can be found in his edition of the text ("Study of Kh[w]āje Bokhārā'i," p. 201).
 13. Royal radiance seems unconnected to sleeplessness . . .
 14. This is the principal message of Daniel's ordeal in the Book of Daniel; see Bickerman, *Four Strange Books*, pp. 86 and 95.
 15. While he was in the pit, Daniel was being fed by the prophet Habakkuk, who was compelled to bring food from Judea (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:348; 6:432n.6; Moore, *Daniel*, pp. 140–141).
 16. Cf. "The ferocious beasts welcomed the pious Daniel like dogs fawning upon their master on his return home, licking his hands and wagging their tails" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:348).
 17. On the virtues of Daniel, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:326–327, 337–338, 347–348; 6:413–414nn.76–77.
 18. I omit the last hemistich, containing the poet's moralizing, which is rather flat after Daniel's speech.
 19. Majnūn, Ar./Pers., "[the] demented," the name of the celebrated Bedouin who was the hero of numerous romances written in the Islamic world. Majnūn's love chained him to Layla, who in Sufi poetry represents the Divine Beloved. See Niẓāmī, *The Story of Layla and Majnun*, trans. R. Gelpke, with E. Mattin and G. Hill (Boulder, Colo., 1978).
 20. Pers., *farmān* (command), intended, no doubt, for the Ar. 'amr. The relation between God's 'amr (command) and His 'urāda (will) is complex in Islamic philosophy and mysticism (*EI* (2), s.v. 'amr; and Awn, *Satan's Tragedy*, pp. 99–108). Here I translate *farmān* as "will" because that is a more idiomatic English expression, though I am aware that in the Islamic context the two terms are not interchangeable.
 21. This verse is missing in Netzer's *Muntakbab*.
 22. See above, *Ezra-nāmab*, n. 11.
 23. Cf. "The hundred and twenty enemies of Daniel, together with their wives and children numbering two hundred and forty-four persons, were torn to shreds by fourteen hundred and sixty-four lions" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:349; for the fantastic numbers, see 6:436n.16).
 24. There may be a negative pun in this hemistich that I was unable to capture in my translation: *bi-khunsbān panjabārā āl kardand* (lit., "they made red footprints with their blood") plays on the meaning of *panja-yi āl*, or *panj tan*, that is the "five [holy] ones," namely Muḥammad, Fāṭima, 'Alī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, the "holy family" of Shī'i Islam: a thinly veiled polemic against, or perhaps merely descriptive of, this martyr-oriented form of Islam?

25. See above, “Jacob and the Wolf,” n. 37.
26. Cf. “The king published the wonders done by God in all parts of his land, and called upon the people to betake themselves to Jerusalem and help in the erection of the Temple” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:349).

Chapter 3 An Apocryphal Epic: *Ḥanukkab-nāmab*

1. This introduction is based on Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, p. 36; Netzer, *Muntakbab*, p. 43; idem., “Judeo-Persian Footnote,” p. 263; idem., *Oqar*, pp. 31 and 36.
2. At least two Muslim chronicles from the first half of the fifteenth century bear this title (Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, p. 36n.27).
3. ‘Imrānī’s account is based primarily on the apocryphal *Scroll of Antiochus*, composed originally in Aramaic between the second and fifth century CE, and translated into many languages. I relied on Gaster’s translation, *Megillat Antiochus*, pp. 165–183; also *EJ*, s.v. “Scroll of Antiochus.” The tale is more remotely based on 1 Macc. 9:13–73 (*Apocrypha*, pp. 408–413). This translation is based primarily on JTS 1411, fols. 65r–73v. JNUL 1183, fols. 22b–51b, and BZI 1075 fols. 1a–61a were also consulted.
4. Khaṭā is northern China; Chīn is China in general; Barbar is Barbary, the north African coast as far as the Straits of Gibraltar. The point of the verse is that this army was assembled from the farthest corners of east and west.
5. Mangalūs is a place in India famous for its white elephants.
6. Cf. *Megillat Antiochus*, vv. 46–47.
7. This form of the name Bagrīs is from *Megillat Antiochus*; it is “Bacchides” in 1 Macc.
8. Nimrod was a legendary powerful pagan king, remembered in both Jewish and Islamic lore, who persecuted Abraham (see Vera Basch, “Abraham in the Fire,” B.A. thesis, Princeton University, 1972).
9. A rather curious spelling for the name Antiochus.
10. Lāt is a female goddess worshiped in pre-Islamic Arabia (Surah 53:19).
11. Cf. *Megillat Antiochus*, v. 50; also, “Then they gathered together and went to Mizpeh, opposite Jerusalem, for Israel formerly had a praying-place in Mizpeh” (1 Macc. 3:46; *EJ*, s.v. “Mizpeh”).
12. Ar./Pers., *rukūʿ va-sujūd*, technical terms of Muslim worship.
13. Heb., *šom haḥ[š]kab*, a period of continuous fasting lasting at least two days, interrupted by one meal (E. Ben-Yehudah, *Millon ha-lashon ha-ivrit* [Jerusalem, 1914], 2:1158).
14. Lit., “we turned them into *uncircumcised*.”
15. Mattatiah is emulating Jacob’s blessing of his twelve sons (Gen. 49) and draws appropriate parallels between namesakes.
16. Cf. Gen. 34:25, 26.
17. Abner is the name of one of King David’s captains (1 Sam. 14:50).
18. This verse can refer to Jonathan or, more likely, to Saul’s military exploits in 1 Sam.
19. Phinehas, son of the high priest El’azar; Num. 25:10–13; see above *Sboftim-nāmab*, n. 9.
20. This detail, in an altered form, may originate in the image of the “heavenly rider” in 2 Macc. 3:25–27.

21. Heb., *masbhit* (cf. 1 Chron. 21:12).
22. Heb., *esh ve-gafrit* (cf. Ezek. 38:22).
23. In *Megillat Antiochus* (v. 63), El'azar's death is more ignominious: he dies mired in elephant dung.
24. Judah and El'azar.
25. The beginning of the traditional prayer recited when lighting Hanukkah candles.
26. The three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
27. Hebrew for "law court."
28. Cf. *Megillat Antiochus*, vv. 70–75. Hanukkah begins traditionally, on the 25th of Kislev of the Jewish calendar.
29. This couplet is actually written in the third-person singular.

Chapter 4 Didactic Poetry: *Makbzan al-pand*

1. See above, "Introduction to 'Imrānī."
2. This introduction is based on Netzer, *Muntakbab*, pp. 52–53, 369; idem., *Oṣar*, pp. 35 and 183; and Bacher, "Aus einem jüdisch-persischen Lehrgedicht," pp. 223–228.
3. Netzer, *Muntakbab*, p. 52n.55.
4. This translation is based primarily on BL Or. 4731, JNUL 8° 4332, and Netzer, *Muntakbab*, pp. 369–376.
5. The literal meaning of this line is puzzling since it would endorse bad manners in both Iranian and Jewish cultures.
6. Pers., *farzand*, denotes a male or female child, but one is much more likely to have educated one's son in the Islamicate world in general.
7. Ar./Pers., *'adab*, a complex word in these languages denoting politeness, urbanity, propriety of conduct, learning (*EI* (2), s.v. "*'adab*").
8. One's coreligionists are not exempt from character flaws.
9. Cf. Ps. 111:10.
10. Cf. v. 102 above.

Chapter 5 Mishnah and Midrash

Ganj-nāmab

1. In Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*.
2. See the Introduction.
3. Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, p. 44.
4. This text is taken from Yeroushalmi, *Judeo-Persian Poet*, JP text, pp. 411–416; English trans., pp. 269–276. Rabbi Yose was the third of Rabbi Yoḥannan b. Zakkai's prominent disciples, mentioned in Abot 2:8. He was active ca. 80–110 CE. This section comments on Abot 2:12: "Rabbi Yose says: 'Let the property of thy fellow be as dear to you as your own; make yourself fit for the study of Torah, for it will not be yours by inheritance, and let all your actions be for the sake of Heaven.'"
5. Ar., *al-wabbāb* (the Giver, the Bestower, the Munificent), another epithet for God in the Qur'ān (Surah 3:6, 38:8 and 38–34).
6. This couplet is almost a direct quotation from Sa'di's *Gulistān* (The rose garden); see *Gulistān*, ed. N. Iranparast (Tehran, 1976), p. 42, chap. 1, no. 18.

7. Ar./Pers., *kalām*, has at least two meanings. In the Qurʾān (Surah 2:75, 9:6, 48:15) it is used in the sense of the “word of God” in instances where He speaks to Muḥammad. The second usage, [*‘ilm al*]-*kalām* ([the science of] discourse), is a technical term that designates the scholastic branch of Islamic theology, which flourished between the ninth and twelfth centuries. See Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 182–186.
8. Ar./Pers., *‘ilm o ‘amal* (knowledge and works). Throughout GN, ‘Imrānī uses these terms as equivalents of Word/Scripture and *miqvat* (commandments), hence the capitalization of “Word.”
9. That is, through Word and deed.
10. Ar./Pers., *nafs* ([the lower, carnal] soul, the flesh); see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, Index under “nafs.”
11. This is not a literal rendition, but rather ‘Imrānī’s interpretation of, possibly, Prov. 10:21. Similar expressions are found in Prov. 5:23, 15:10, and 19:17.
12. Ar./Pers. *ḥaqq* (truth, justice) is of one of the divine attributes mentioned in the Qurʾān. In Sufi terminology *al-Ḥaqq* (the Real, the Truth) is one of God’s most common epithets (see al-Ḥujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. R. A. Nicholson [London, 1935], p. 384, and al-Sarraj, *Kitāb al-lum‘a fi’l taṣawwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson [London, 1914], pp. 28–35).
13. Ar./Pers., *muqallīd*, a technical term in Islamic theology in general and in Shi‘ism in particular that designates the follower of high-ranking jurists (*muṭtabi‘*) in matters of religious law (*shar‘a*) (M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam* [New Haven, 1985], p. 175).
14. Ar./Pers., *ghusl*, the Muslim term for ritual ablutions before prayer.
15. Muslim legendary lore identifies Khizr with the prophet Elijah. He is said to have set out in search of the Fountain of Life; after finding it, he guided others to find the source of eternal life. See the definitive study by Wheeler M. Thackston, “The Khidr Legend in the Islamic Tradition,” B.A. thesis, Princeton University, 1967.
16. Lit., “he will bring the father to God.”
17. Num. 11:28; see *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, trans. J. Goldin (New Haven, 1983 repr.), p. 87.
18. The reference is to Sa‘dī, whom ‘Imrānī paraphrases in the next couplet (“They will ask you, ‘what is your accomplishment?’ And they will not say, ‘who is your father?’” [*Gulīstān*, p. 212]).
19. Ar./Pers., *yaqīn*, a Sufi technical term denoting the “elimination of doubt by virtue of gnostic knowledge and illumination” (R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* [London, 1963 repr.], pp. 50–51).
20. The rose and the nightingale are the most famous cliché characters of Persian Sufi poetry; they symbolize the lover (nightingale) and the beloved (rose), earthly or heavenly.
21. By referring to *amānat* (trust), this verse echoes the opening verses of the section.

A Miḍrash on the Ascension of Moses

1. This summary, as well as the translation and notes that follow, are based on Amnon Netzer’s “Midrash on the Ascension,” pp. 105–114 and 134–140.
2. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:304–316.

3. “. . . So is my beloved among the youths” (Song of Sol. 2:3), referring here to Moses.
4. See David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Responses to Ezekiel’s Vision* (Tübingen, 1988), pp. 289–313.
5. *Visions of Heaven and Hell*, Eileen Gardiner, ed. (New York, 1989).
6. Cf. Muḥammad’s ascension (*miʿrāj*), in Geo Widengren, *Muḥammad, the Apostle of God and His Ascension* (Uppsala-Wiesbaden, 1955).
7. They actually tour only seven spheres. For the number of the heavenly spheres, see above, “Jacob and the Wolf,” n. 41.
8. The various redactions give different spellings of the name of the Angel of Hell; cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:310, “Nasargiel.”
9. In the Hebrew version of this midrash published in A. J. Wertheimer, *Batte Miḏ-rashot* (Jerusalem, 1980 repr.), 1:281–285, the description of Hell and its classification into seven distinct sections and types of punishment differs from the JP version.
10. Isa. 59:7.
11. Isa. 1:4.
12. Lit., “in the sky.”
13. Job 3:21.
14. The various manuscripts are ambiguous about this name; see Wertheimer, *Batte Miḏrashot*, 1:282. According to the sources cited by M. Gaster, “Hell has seven names: Sheol, Abaddon, Beer Shaon, Beer Shahat, Hatzar Maveth, Beer Tahtiyah, and Tit Hayaven” (“Hebrew Visions,” p. 602). Or based on Abraham Azulay’s *Baraita de-Masseket Gebhinom*, “Beneath the earth is Tehom, under Tehom is Bohu, under Bohu is Mayim, under Mayim is Arka, and there is Sheol, Abaddon, Beer Shahat Tit Hayaven, Shaare Maveth, Shaare Salmavet, and Gehinom” (*ibid.*, p. 607).
15. Prov. 30:15. Cf. *Babylonian Talmud*, ‘Avodah Zarah, 17a: “What is meant by ‘Give, give,?’ Said Mar ‘Uqba: ‘It is the voice of the two daughters who cry from Gehenna calling to his world: Bring, bring! And who are they? Minut (heresy, apostasy) and the government.’”
16. According to Wertheimer, the name of the place is *ṭit ba-yaven* (miry clay; cf. Ps. 40:3; *Batte Miḏrashot* 1:282). About Dumah as an important section of Hell, see the midrash on Paradise and Hell in *Bet ba-Miḏrash* (Jerusalem, 1938), 5:44–45.
17. Ruḥi’el is not mentioned in Wertheimer’s *Batte Miḏrashot*. In Jewish legendary lore Ruḥi’el is the angel governing the wind (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:140).
18. That is, like Aristotle and his followers, they denied creatio ex nihilo.
19. Ps. 3:8.
20. Cf. *Babylonian Talmud*, Berakot, 54b.
21. Perhaps what is meant here is lending money to fellow Jews; lending on interest to strangers (non-Jews) is biblically sanctioned (Deut. 32:21). If the latter is the case, this JP text, emerging from a Muslim milieu, may be reflecting Islam’s ban—at least in theory—on lending money on interest (Surah 2:275).
22. That is, they cheated with weights.
23. Isa. 66:24.
24. See above, n. 14.

25. A doxological expression, part of the *kaḏdish*, one of the central prayers of the Jewish liturgy.
26. Cf. *Mishnah*, Pirke Abot, 4:22.
27. Jer. 17:10.
28. Jer. 32:19.
29. In general, the description of Paradise, with some omissions found in the text, corresponds to the Hebrew versions in Wertheimer, *Batte Miḏrasbot*, 1:283–285.
30. Ps. 144:15.
31. It is interesting to note that in two JP manuscripts (“C” and “G” in Netzer’s edition), Moses asks, “Why are my name and the name of my wife not among them?” The theme of this paragraph about the righteous women is not found in Wertheimer, *Batte Miḏrasbot* (cf. *Mishnah*, Shabbat, 2.6).
32. According to the *Zohar* (Num. 154b), Shamshi’el served as one of the two aides of the archangel Uri’el.
33. Seventy thrones in Wertheimer, *Batte Miḏrasbot*, 1:284.
34. According to Gaster, “It is the throne of Abraham the Patriarch” (“Hebrew Visions,” p. 586).
35. A verse from the standard Jewish prayerbooks (I. Davidson, *Oṣar ha-ṣbirab ve ba-piyyut* [New York, 1970], p. 4101).
36. Ps. 106:1.
37. JP mss. A, B, F, H: “to those who repented.”
38. *Bet ha-Miḏrasb*, 5:47–48; 2:52–53, and 3:131–140.
39. Jer. 32:19.
40. Ps. 31:20.
41. Jer. 32:19.

Chapter 6 Biblical Commentaries

1. See ms. IV D 35; its linguistic peculiarities are described by G. Lazard in *EJ*, s.v. “Judeo-Persian,” p. 431.
2. See the Introduction.
3. On the category of *tafsīr* in JP literature, see Netzer, *Oṣar*, pp. 13–14.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–20.
5. See below, chap. 8.
6. See *The Mūsā-nāma of R. Shimʿon Ḥakham*, ed. Herbert H. Paper (Cincinnati, 1986), p. xi.
7. See above, “Introduction to Shāhīn,” n. 7.

Commentary on Ecclesiastes 4

1. This translation is based on JTS 1403, fols. 53r–54r, 62v–65r; BZI 1045/4 fols. 105r–107v and BZI 4547, fols. 1v–2v, 88r–90r.
2. Ar./Pers., *tafsīr*.
3. We have no way of knowing what commentary Yehudah b. Binyamin is referring to.
4. Obviously, some Iranian Jews found the original Hebrew text of Ecclesiastes difficult to understand.
5. A rather unusual, if noble, motive for the author’s undertaking.
6. That is, without gainful employment.

7. The repetition of this phrase, if not a scribal error, is indicative of the author's real intentions. For David Kimḥi, see above, *Sboftim-nāmah*, n. 8.
8. A euphemism for wishing the opposite.
9. Binyamin appears to be creating his own interpretation of this verse in which power is explicitly attributed to oppressors.
10. "He has to eat his own flesh," because either, as Rashi (*ad loc.*) explains, he will eventually behold the reward of the righteous on the Day of Judgment or, as Ibn Ezra claims, he has consumed all his wealth through idleness.
11. Cf. Ibn Ezra, *ad loc.*, *lehem* (bread).
12. The Hebrew original says simply, "the case of a man who is alone, without companion"; Binyamin is following Rashi's explanation here.
13. See Rashi, *ad loc.*: "He acquires no student [to teach him the Torah] who would be like a son to him, nor does he have a friend [*ḥaver*; someone with whom he could study the Torah] who could be like a brother."
14. Rashi, *ad loc.*
15. Rashi, *ad loc.*, continues to refer to two companions who study texts together and help each other, or elucidate for one another when necessary, the teachings of their rabbi.
16. Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra, *ad loc.*, take this half of the verse to refer to the act of procreation.
17. If I understand the Persian correctly, this differs from the Hebrew text: "If one attacks, two can stand up to him."
18. Rashi, *ad loc.*, adds to the literal meaning again by referring to the strength of the wisdom acquired by three generations of one family (grandfather, father, and son) who have devoted their lives to the threefold learning of Torah, Mishnah, and *derek eret* (ethical conduct).
19. Instead of the Hebrew: "a poor but wise youth," which Rashi, *ad loc.*, says refers to *yeqer ba-tov* (the inclination toward good).
20. Rashi and Ibn Ezra, *ad loc.*, relate this verse to the previous one, a connection not found in the JP text.
21. Rashi, *ad loc.*, connects the phrase with the generation of the Flood and with Noah. However, Binyamin refers to Noah as "the second son," which is not correct; Noah was the first son of Lemek (Gen. 5:28–30). Perhaps he means that Noah was a "second Adam" because he (re)populated the earth. Ibn Ezra takes the expression to refer back to the two previous verses, to the wise young man who comes to supplant the foolish old king.
22. Rashi, *ad loc.*, gives the same explanation.
23. See Rashi, *ad loc.*

Commentary on Exodus 3–4

1. This translation is based on the text reproduced in Paper's *Mūsā-nāma*, pp. 100–107.
2. Referring to the pre-Islamic *now rīz* celebrated on March 21, the vernal equinox.
3. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:300–305, 316–326; 5:414–416.
4. According to rabbinic tradition, Moses led his flocks deliberately away from inhabited places so that they might not steal, even inadvertently, from other people's

- property (*Midrash Tanhumab*, 12; *Midrash Rabbab*, Shemot 3; *Yalqut Shim'on*, Shemot 3).
5. See Ex. 3:1, Mount Horeb; *tur* (Hebrew for "row," "column"), together with the Aramaic synonym *tura*, can also mean "mountain." Muslims refer to Mount Sinai as "Ṭūr" (Surah 52). Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:415n.113.
 6. Cf. *Yalqut Shim'on*, 4.172; *Seder 'Olam Rabbab*, 5.2.
 7. This is the staff which later becomes the instrument of Moses' miracles (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:291–293).
 8. It is Moses' solicitude for Jethro's flock that earned him the epithet *ro'eb ne'man* (faithful shepherd) and provided proof that he would be equally solicitous with the Children of Israel (*Midrash Rabbab*, Shemot 2; cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:301; 5:414n.109; see also Moreen, "Moses, God's Shepherd"). See also above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 4.
 9. Pers., *jāngālī* (untilled, jungly).
 10. Cf. *Yalqut Shim'on*, Shemot 3.
 11. "The first thing Moses noticed was the wonderful burning bush, the upper part of which was a blazing flame, neither consuming the bush nor preventing it from bearing blossoms as it burnt, for the celestial fire has three peculiar qualities: it produces blossoms, it does not consume the object around which it plays, and it is black of color" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:303).
 12. An indirect reference to the Persian expression *āyina-yi Iskandarī* (Alexander's mirror), which, together with *jām-i jam*, (Jam[shīd]'s goblet), is a magical object reputed to be able to reveal events all over the world. Both are popular concepts in classical Persian poetry (Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, p. 109). See above, "Jacob and the Wolf," n. 13.
 13. The *Shekinah* is the immanent aspect of God in rabbinic literature and it is usually referred to as feminine. The Hebrew *kaviyakol* is a pious expression intended to allay any intimation of anthropomorphism.
 14. Some midrashic sources claim that it was the archangel Gabriel; either angel "served the purpose to indicate the presence of the Shekinah, for it was God Himself, and not the angels, who spoke to Moses" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:415–416n.115).
 15. See above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 12.
 16. *Midrash Rabbab*, Shemot 3; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:305. Ḥakam translates the famous Hebrew expression *binneni* (here I am) with the famous Arabic expression *labayka*, with the same meaning (see above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 10).
 17. Rabbinic sources do not describe how Moses hid his face; the image here is reminiscent of the gestures of hiding and the coquettish modesty often found in Persian miniature paintings.
 18. Pers., *shahr* (city, town).
 19. Ar./Pers., *muḥaqqīl* ([tax] collector), for Heb. *noqes* (oppressor, taskmaster).
 20. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:317.
 21. Ar./Pers., *rasūl* (messenger) as opposed to *nabī* (prophet). The former term is associated in Islam primarily with Moses, Muḥammad, and Jesus, who were given divine Scriptures, not just divine admonitions for mankind. On the distinction between the two functions, see Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* (Minneapolis, 1980), pp. 81–82.

22. Pers., *khodā o nidā*, a rhyming expression.
23. That is, a stranger in Midian. For the chain of arguments between God and Moses that, according to midrashic sources, lasted seven days, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:316ff., and *Midrash Rabbah*, *ad loc.*
24. Heb., *ehyeh asher ehye*, which may also mean “I am who I am,” or, “I will be what I will be” (Exod. 3:14; *Tanakh*, p. 88n.a; *Midrash Rabbah*, *ad loc.*; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:421n.128).
25. See Rashi and Ramban, *ad loc.*
26. See *ibid.*; Aram., *dayab le-ḡara be-sbaʿtab* (sufficient unto the hour is the evil thereof); *Midrash Rabbah*, *ad loc.*; *Yalqut Shimʿoni*, Shemot, 3.1; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:420–421n.127).
27. Cf. *Midrash Rabbah*, *ad loc.*; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:319.
28. Heb., *adonai* (lord); cf. *EJ*, s.v. “God, names of.”
29. Heb., *yesbivab*; see Rashi at Exod. 3:16.
30. Exod. 3:16; *Midrash Tanḥumab*, Shemot 17.
31. See Rashi, *ad loc.*
32. Exod. 3:21; the image of people carrying things off in their up-turned hems appears to be Ḥakam’s.
33. Cf. *Midrash Rabbah*, 3.11.
34. See *Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin, 91a.
35. Ar./Pers., *ḥalāl* (lawful, legitimate, sanctioned by religion), a technical term in Muslim jurisprudence.
36. *The Babylonian Talmud*, Nedarim, 65a, and *Midrash Tanḥumab*, Shemot 17, specifically state that Moses will never return to Egypt.
37. Heb., *hattarab* (loosening, permission, solution), including the annulment of oaths.
38. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:318.
39. Pers., *az man dast bar dār* (take Your hands off me; leave me alone) — not a very polite reply!
40. Cf. *Yalqut Shimʿoni*, 3.170.
41. Pers., lit., *bī mazib mī sbavam* (I will become vapid, tasteless [to them]).
42. See above, n. 16.
43. Al-Nīsābūrī has an interesting comment on this specific exchange: “Question: God, the Exalted, knew what Moses had in his hand. Why did he ask? Answer: So that Moses would grow froward in his speech and would not be afraid” (*Dāstānbā*, p. 161).
44. I was unable to find the detail of the talking snake in any of the sources, Jewish or Muslim, that I consulted. We are reminded of the talking snake in Gen. 3:4.
45. See *Midrash Rabbah*, *ad loc.*, and al-Nīsābūrī, *Dāstānbā*, pp. 161–162.
46. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:322.
47. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:325.
48. That is, Aaron. See Rashi, Ramban, and especially Ibn Ezra, *ad loc.*
49. See the sources cited in n. 48.
50. See Rashi and Ramban, *ad loc.*
51. Lit., *imāmat-i kebunab*, an interesting Persian-Hebrew hybrid expression.
52. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:326, 5:422n.139.
53. Ḥakam uses dual verb forms, thus including Aaron in the command.
54. See the sources cited above in n. 23.

Chapter 7 Religious Festivals in Sermon, Commentary, and Poetry

1. See Netzer, *Ozar*; Index, under “derashot.”
2. See the wonderful study, based exclusively on European sources, by Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*.
3. A movement in Jewish mysticism based on the teachings of R. Issac Luria (d. 1572) of Safed and his followers.
4. See Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, pp. 63–79.
5. A non-*halakic* (nonlegal) mode of biblical interpretation.
6. See the sources cited in the notes to the translation.
7. This biographical information is based on Netzer, *Muntakbab*, pp. 50–51, 351; idem., *Ozar*; pp. 36–37; idem., “Taḥanunim le-rabbi Binyamin b. Misha’el,” pp. 48–54; idem., *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Amīnā”; idem., “Rabbi Binyamin ben Misha’el and His Works,” a lecture delivered at “Irano-Judaica: Fourth International Conference,” Jerusalem, July 1998.

A Deraḥab on the Haṣṭarab for the Ninth of Ab

1. This translation is based on JNUL 28° 5108, which lacks folio numbers.
2. The next word is illegible.
3. Illegible.
4. Pers. *rīzīdeh* can mean both “withered” and “scattered.”
5. See, for example, the interpretations of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and R. Joseph Karo in *Mikra’ot Gedolot: Yirmiahu* (Lublin; repr. New York, n.d.), 6:78–79.
6. On the prophet Elijah’s inclination to reveal secrets to mortals, see *Babylonian Talmud*, Baba Meṣia 59b. Khīzr, his Muslim “incarnation,” plays a similar role; see Surah 18:61–83, where he is not mentioned by name.
7. Heb., *miṣkkan* and *obel*.
8. The verb is illegible in the ms., hence I cannot determine the exact source of the quotation.
9. I have not been able to find a textual antecedent to the author’s connection between the verse in Jeremiah and Moses’ petition on Aaron’s behalf. The association appears to be the author’s, based, in all probability, on well-known midrashic suggestions. It is not found in one of the major Persian midrashic collections written in 1328 (*Sefer Pitron ba-Torah*, pp. 23–24, 179–80, 300). However, according to several midrashim, Moses’ intercession on behalf of Aaron after the latter helped build the Golden Calf accounts for the fact that God averted his wrath from two of Aaron’s four sons (cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:306, 6:105n.599, and the sources cited there).
10. I am uncertain of the meaning of the next hybrid phrase, *kavod-i jahīm̄bā* (Heb. [the honor] + Pers. [of hellfire]) in the present context.
11. Heb., *kašer*.
12. *Babylonian Talmud*, Yoma 33a.
13. Heb., *kelippot* (shards, shells), a term associated especially with Lurianic Kabbalah (cf. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, especially pp. 138–139).
14. Aram., *uitra aḥara* (the domain of dark emanations and dark powers), another kabbalistic term associated especially with Lurianic Kabbalah (cf. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 123–128).

15. On the different functions of the two Messiahs, see Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel from Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (New York, 1955).
16. A lovely Hebrew pun: *qol ba-tor* (the song/voice of the turtledove), and *qol ba-Torah* (the song/voice of the Torah). The author appears not to subscribe to certain Kabbalistic notions according to which the Torah will change in Messianic times (see Gershom G. Scholem, "The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism," in his *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* [New York, 1965]).

Commentary on the Book of Esther

1. This translation is based on JNUL 1388, fols. 323r–330r; JNUL 8° 4332, fols. 99v–104r; BL Or. 4731, fols. 36r–41v and JTS 8616, fols. 145r–153v.
2. Susa.
3. This well-aimed insult seems to have its origins, though not in Amīnā's formulation, in a midrash: "I am Vashti, the daughter of Belshazzar, who was a son of Nebuchadnezzar, the Nebuchadnezzar who scoffed at kings and unto whom princes were a derision, and even thou wouldst not have been deemed worthy to run before my father's chariot as a courier" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:375). According to *Targum Sheni*, Vashti was the daughter of Evil Merodach and grand-daughter of Nebuchadnezzar ("The Second Targum [*Targum Sheni*] to Esther," ed. P. S. Cassel and A. Bernstein, in *The Targum*, p. 295).
4. Vashti is deriding Ahasueros' "lowly origins," as compared with hers! However, according to rabbinic sources, Ahasueros was also the scion of kings, "the son of Cyrus the Persian, who was the son of Darius the Mede" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:451n.4).
5. Midrashic sources identify Memukan with the prophet Daniel and refer to a longstanding antipathy between him and Vashti. Memukan offered his opinion first because "it is customary as well among Persians as among Jews, in passing death sentence, to begin taking the vote with the youngest of the judges on the bench, to prevent the juniors and the less prominent from being overawed by the opinion of the more influential" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:377–378, 6:456nn.41–46).
6. An erotic as well as a martial image, which, however, does not mean that the shah carried out the execution himself.
7. On Ahasueros' name Bahman, see above, *Ardashīr-nāmab*, n. 3.
8. On the relationship between Esther and Mordekai, see above, *Ardashīr-nāmab*, n. 33.
9. "And it was on the third day, after Esther had three successive fasts" ("Second Targum," p. 322).
10. The 15th of Nisan (cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:472–473n.145).
11. One can't help but hear an echo of the state of mind of Kashan's Jews in Amīnā's time (see below, chap. 8).
12. Lit., "Who is he?"
13. This legend from the *Babylonian Talmud*, Megillah 16a (see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:442; 6:478n.181), is the subject of one of the loveliest miniatures found in a JP manuscript (see Moreen, *Miniature Paintings*, p. 34; the miniature is reproduced on the cover).
14. Originally a friend of Haman's, he now tries to switch over to the winning side (cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:443; 6:478n.182).

15. That is, for Mordekai.
16. Cf. "Second Targum," p. 337.
17. Ibid.
18. A poetic exaggeration.
19. See above, *Arđasbūr-nāmah*, n. 2; a famous king in the *Shab-nāmah*.
20. Āṣaf is the name of King Solomon's grand vizier in Islamic literature and lore (see Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* [Chicago, 1993], Index under "Asaph b. Berachiah").
21. Ar./Pers., "the guided one," a Messiah-like figure in Islam, who is expected to arrive before the Day of Judgment. The concept is more developed among Shi'i than among Sunni Muslims (*EI* [2], s.v. "al-Mahdī"). Amīnā, like other Jews in the Muslim world going back to Saadiah Gaon, appears to have had no qualms about attaching a Muslim term to a Jewish concept.

Purim-nāmah

1. This translation is based on BZI 1071, fols. 73r–76v; HUC 2167, no. 41 and HUC 2151, no. 13. The first part of this poem in praise of Purim (more likely a song) seems to be a paean on the theme of the well-known saying "When [the month of] Adar arrives, joys increase" (*Babylonian Talmud*, Ta'nit 29). For an edition and translation of a poem on Purim in the JP dialect of Isfahan, see D. N. MacKenzie, "Jewish-Persian from Isfahan," *JRAS* 1968: 68–75.
2. A choice scent in Persian poetry.
3. A harbor in the south of Iran, on the coast of Balūchistān, in one of the bays to the west of the Indus estuary (Barthold, *Historical Geography*, p. 76).
4. A town near Isfahan.
5. That is, Haman. Hanging Haman in effigy used to be customary in many communities. For this and other colorful Purim customs, see Brauer, *Jews of Kurđīstan*, pp. 344–362.
6. Haman's wife; see Esther 5:10.
7. The name of one of Haman's sons (Esther 9:7).
8. The (minor) festival of Purim is celebrated in high spirits everywhere. According to a talmudic saying (Megillah 7b), a man is obligated to drink enough wine on Purim to become incapable of differentiating between cursing Haman and blessing Mordekai.
9. Offerings to the dead? See the custom among the Jews of Kurđistan of "distributing cakes among acquaintances and schoolchildren for 'the souls of the dead'" (Brauer, *Jews of Kurđīstan*, p. 345).
10. A paste dressed with gravy and milk.
11. Pilaw, a kind of rice dish.
12. Probably alluding to the custom of *mishlō'ah manot* (sending portions; Esther 9:22) to friends on Purim and bestowing gifts upon the poor. At least two portions of edibles should be sent to a friend and money should be distributed to at least two paupers.
13. Probably referring to the lax behavior acceptable by *ḥalakah* (Jewish law) only on Purim.

14. An expression of messianic hopes.
15. Heb., “good deeds,” a possible reference to procreation.
16. It is likely that Purim merriment often overlapped with the Iranian celebration of *Now Rūz* (New Year), which falls on March 21; Purim also falls, most of the time, in March.

On the Sacrifice of Isaac

1. This translation is based on Netzer’s *Muntakhab*, pp. 351–364; JNUL Heb. 28° 3199, fols. 86v–90r and JTS 1403, fols. 62v–65r. There are substantial differences between these manuscripts. According to Netzer, Amīnā relies on a midrash by Yehuda b. Shemu’el b. ‘Abbās, a twelfth-century poet and preacher from North Africa (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Amīnā”). I was unable to confirm this claim. In the article mentioning this poet and his works, Ḥayyim Schirmann makes no reference to such a midrashic composition (“Ha-meshorerim bene doram shel Moshe b. Ezra ve-Yehudah ha-Levi,” *Yedi’ot ha-makon le-ḥeker ha-shirah ba-‘ivrit be-Yirusalayim* 6 [1945]: 297–313). For rabbinic views of this episode, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:274–286, 5:249–255, and Spiegel, *Last Trial*. For Islamic aspects, see Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ismael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, N.Y., 1990), pp. 116ff.
The Arabic/Persian *Khalīl Allāh* (the friend of God) is a traditional Muslim epithet for Abraham (Surah 4:125).
2. The thought is based on *Jerusalem Talmud*, Ta’anit 2.4, 65d (quoted in Spiegel, *Last Trail*, p. 90), but Amīnā’s wording differs significantly.
3. “A ram . . . which God had created in the twilight of Sabbath eve in the week of creation, and prepared since then as a burnt offering instead of Isaac” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:282). According to al-Tha’labī, the bellwether came from the Garden of Eden (*Arā’is*, p. 94).
4. See above, “A Derashah on the Haftarah,” n. 6; “the skin served Eliha for his girdle” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:283).
5. Kings and princes in the Islamic world often rewarded poets who sang their praises with robes of honor.
6. A *sāz* (Ar./Pers.) is a musical instrument.
7. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:283.
8. “And of his two horns, the one was blown at the end of the revelation on Mount Sinai, and the other will be used to proclaim the end of Exile” (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:283, 5:252n.246).
9. That is, may this place be the reward of the righteous.
10. Sufi terms are used in this verse.
11. An abbreviated form of “Ibrāhīm,” the Ar./Pers. name of Abraham.
12. I was unable to find any legendary sources, Jewish or Muslim, describing such a fabulous earthly paradise.
13. Verses 70–107 are not included in Netzer’s text.
14. JTS 1403 ends here.
15. That is, 1710.
16. See above, “Commentary on Exodus 3–4,” n. 13.

Chapter 8 Historical Texts

Kitāb-i Anusī

1. This introduction is based on my *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism*.
2. Since KA is not a chronological account, it is not, strictly speaking, a chronicle.
3. See Felix Tauer, "History and Biography," in Rypka, *History*, pp. 438ff.
4. See Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 157–164.
5. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 27–34.
6. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 56–107.
7. The translation that follows is adapted with some changes from Appendix C of Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 181–207.
8. See above, "Commentary on the Book of Esther," n. 20. Here the name Āṣaf refers to Shah 'Abbās II's grand vizier; see Moreen, "Downfall of Muḥammad ['Alī] Beg," pp. 81–99.
9. Muḥammad Beg is referring to the Shi'ī concept of *najasa* (ritual uncleanness), attributed by Shi'is to all non-Shi'is (*EI* [2], s.v. "nadjasa").
10. The poll tax demanded by Muslims of non-Muslims living in their midst; *EI* (2), s.v. "djizya"; Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 68–72.
11. For the origins of the Jewish suburb of Isfahan known as Dār al-yahūd or Yahūdīya, see Fischel, "Yahudiyya," pp. 523–526.
12. This statement refers to the periodic prohibition in various Muslim lands against erecting new buildings or repairing old ones, including houses of worship. These prohibitions are based on the so-called Pact of 'Umar, (see the Introduction), which spells out the conditions imposed on non-Muslim monotheists living in the Islamic world (cf. Lewis, *Jews*, pp. 24ff., and Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 54–68).
13. I was unable to identify this location.
14. The grand vizier is obviously punning on Faraḥābād (Abode of joy), the name of a town on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea with a flourishing Jewish community (Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, Index, under "Faraḥābād").
15. The famous seventeenth-century French traveler Jean Chardin describes the site, southeast of Isfahan, as follows: "Au delà, est la plaine de . . . Hézar dereh. . . Elle est aride et sèche; et cela vient, dit la légende, de ce que c'étoit un repaire de dragons, de serpens et de toute sorte de bêtes venimeuses, qui s'étoient amassées là en si grand nombre qu'on n'osoit en approcher ni demeurer au voisinage" (*Voyages* [Paris, 1811], 8:99). The area is still, apparently, a Muslim cemetery (Spicehandler, "Persecution of the Jews," 334n.9).
16. A village outside Isfahan which came to be incorporated into it (E. E. Beudouin, *Isfahan sous les grands chahs, XVIIe siècle* [Paris, 1933]).
17. References to Zoroastrianism, the pre-Islamic religion of Iran, are generally negative in classical Persian literature. From KA we note that their status was even lower than that of the Jews and that the latter shared the Muslims' antipathy toward the Zoroastrians (Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, Index, under "Zoroastrian").
18. Muḥammad Beg is appealing to the Zoroastrians' own well-known adherence to laws of purity. On this complex subject, see Choksy, *Purity and Pollution*.

19. The reference is most likely to Shah ‘Abbās I, rather than to Shah Ṣaḡī I, Shah ‘Abbās II’s immediate predecessor.
20. See the Introduction. Zoroastrian animosity toward Jews climaxed in the third century, under the Sassanids (see chaps. 1 and 2 in Neusner, *Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism in Talmudic Babylonia* [Boston, 1986], an abbreviation of his *History of the Jews*, vols. 2–5). This animosity appears to have continued through the centuries. It is best encapsulated in the ninth-century polemical text *Sbkand-gumanig Vizar* (The doubt-destroying exposition); see *ibid.*, pp. 175–195, and especially J.-P. de Menasce, *Une apologétique mazdéene du IXe siècle: Skand Gumanik Vikar, la solution décisive des doutes* (Fribourg, 1945).
21. A legendary hero of Firdowsī’s *Shah-nāmah* and Niẓāmī’s romance *Khosrow and Shīrīn*. Shah Khosrow assigned Farhād the impossible task of carving a tunnel through a mountain on the false promise that he would thereby win the hand of Shīrīn, whom the shah also loved.
22. Cf. Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 185–186n.12. Seraḡ bat Asher was the daughter of Hadorah, Asher’s second wife, by her first husband. She was therefore an adopted grand-daughter of the patriarch Jacob. She is reputed to have lived several centuries and was granted entrance into Paradise while still living as a result of Jacob’s blessing (Ginzberg, *Legends*, Index, under “Seraḡ bat Asher”). On the complex history of this tomb, see Ernest E. Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran* (London, 1935), pp. 106–107, and Yiṣḡaq ben Ṣevi, *Mehqarim u-mekorot* (Jerusalem, 1965–1966), pp. 289–291.
23. A veil worn by Muslim women in Iran covering the entire body and most of the face. It was apparently imposed by custom on non-Muslims as well.
24. Ar./Pers., “master,” the title of a Muslim learned in Islamic law and, among Iranian Jews, often the equivalent of “rabbi.”
25. The statement alludes to the meaning of the Arabic/Persian word *muḡlim* (one who submits [to the will of God]).
26. This expression is usually associated with ‘Alī and his descendants, the imams, among Twelver Shi‘is. As in n.24, above, a purely Muslim expression is transposed into a Jewish context, referring here, most likely, to Abraham and his descendants.
27. This is probably another reference to Abraham, who separated himself from his father in order to follow God, rather than to the *hijra* (the migration) of Muḡammad (Seligsohn, “Quatre poésies Judéo-Persanes,” p. 257n.1).
28. Many JP texts borrow this concept, usually connected with Muḡammad, to refer to Moses (Moreen, “Moses in Muḡammad’s Light”). The connection with Abraham is unusual.
29. Like many Persian poets, Ibn Luṭṭf resorts to cliché epithets even when they seem inappropriate.
30. A way of referring to a person’s sudden realization of the “true” religion (here Twelver Shi‘ism). Resorting to a night vision was often used by would-be converts of many faiths to explain a sudden, often pragmatic, change of faith.
31. This is ironic in hindsight since Ibn Luṭṭf later relates Shah ‘Abbās II’s displeasure with Muḡammad Beg and the latter’s downfall (Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 146–148; *idem.*, “Downfall of Muḡammad [‘Alī] Beg”).

32. On the value of this monetary unit, see Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 20–21n.8 and the sources cited there.
33. This refers to a *vaqf* (religious foundation), endowed here in the name of Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭimah, and the twelve imams.
34. I was unable to determine the value of this currency, but it was no doubt less than what the men received.
35. This was Ibn Luṭf's own predicament (Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 28–29).
36. Muḥammad Beg's policy of forced conversion is contrary to the Qur'ān's attitude toward the People of the Book, summed up in the famous statement *lā ikrāha fi'l dīn* (there is no compulsion in religion [Surah 2:256]); see Lewis, *Jews*, pp. 13–14; Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 112ff. The shah's objection is perfunctory, as it is unlikely that he would have been unaware of the methods Muḥammad Beg used to achieve his goal.
37. A long sustained sound made on the shofar.
38. See Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 94–107, 208–216.
39. Pers. *zar* means both "gold" and "money." In view of the reference to gilt idols, the first meaning is more appropriate here.
40. *Kadkhudās* were communal leaders whose precise functions appear to have differed at various times and in various places (Moreen, *Iranian Jewry*, pp. 120–123).
41. A reference to the twelve imams of Shi'ism.
42. Without other evidence, it is difficult to assess the kadkhudās' description of Jewish economic activities in Yazd. The Jews' sizable bribe suggests that they were well off; the kadkhudās' list of their activities shows a considerable range of business.
43. See n. 17 above. The Avesta, the Zoroastrian scripture, gained only grudging Muslim acceptance (Lewis, *Jews*, pp. 17–18; Cohen *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 53–54).
44. Duldul was the name of 'Alī's mule. The shah is, therefore, flatteringly identified with 'Alī, the first imam of Twelver Shi'ism.
45. See above, "Jacob and the Wolf," n. 37.
46. Zū'lfiqar was 'Alī's famous double-pronged sword, always victorious in battle.
47. See above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 12.

Kitāb-i Sar-guzasht-i Kāshān

1. This introduction is based on my *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan Invasion*.
2. Cf. Moreen, *Afghan Invasion*, pp. 6–7.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
4. See *Kitāb-i Anušt*, immediately above.
5. See Moreen, *Afghan Invasion*, pp. 7–13.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–37.
7. Maḥmūd never conquered all of Iran; before his accession he had subdued only Kirman and Yazd. Moreover, after the fall of Isfahan, he had serious difficulties trying to conquer the rest of Iran's major towns (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 130–131, 195ff.).
8. Bābā b. Farhād displays clear sympathies toward the Sunni Afghans throughout KS. Iranian Jews may well have perceived the Afghans as "saviors" from the increasingly intolerant Shi'i regime of the late Safavids (Moreen, *Afghan Invasion*, pp. 26–29). A JP panegyric in praise of Ashraf has also survived; see below, chap. 12, "O Just Shah Ashraf."

9. The favorite slave of Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 999–1030). The sultan's love for Āyāz is a common topos in Persian Sufi poetry, in which Āyāz usually symbolizes the Divine Beloved (see E. Bosworth, *The Medieval History of Iran* [London, 1977], pp. 90–92).
10. Behind the nickname there is a real individual known from Iranian sources as Sultan Amānullah, one of Maḥmūd's closest Afghan generals and rivals (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 138, 140, 143, 172–174, 193–197, 204–205, 207, 210).
11. Iranian sources disagree regarding the manner of Maḥmūd's death. Although it is unlikely that Ashraf himself committed the deed, he probably ordered it (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 209–211, especially n. 4).
12. Sultan Amānullah's desire for the crown of Iran was already evident during the reign of Maḥmūd, as early as 1723, and Ashraf naturally feared that it might surface again (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 204–205).
13. That is, they came forward to lay claim to their share of the inheritance. Sultan Amānullah's wealth was supposed to have been considerable (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 276–277).
14. A probable reference to Ashraf's conflict with the Ottoman general Aḥmad Pasha, who was then occupying Hamadan. Ashraf had to repel the Ottomans, and to some extent the Russians, in addition to the forces of Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khan. The encounter with Aḥmad Pasha took place in the fall of 1726 (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 288–291).
15. This vague statement is difficult to pinpoint in Iranian sources, for, as indicated in n. 14, Ashraf fought constantly to conquer Iran and to repulse other foreign conquerors as well as Iranian claimants to the throne.
16. Heb. *goyim* (gentile) is probably used here to refer to Shi'ī Muslims, the primary target of the Afghans.
17. Most of the Safavid princes had already been massacred by Maḥmūd in 1725 (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 207–208), but it was Ashraf who put to death Shah Sultan Ḥusayn, the last Safavid Shah (ibid., p. 289).
18. That is, to *maydān-i shah* (The royal square), Isfahan's principal site for parades and executions.
19. He was one of Ashraf's *pīrs*, or “[Sufi] religious masters.” Mullah Za'farān's death at the hands of Ṭahmāsp Qulī Khan is noted in Muḥammad Mar'ashī's *Majma' al-tawārikh* (Tehran, 1949), p. 80. See also Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 336–337.
20. Heb., *pasul* (disqualified, ritually unfit [for sacrifice]). I believe that this is an attempt to translate and transpose into a Jewish context the Arabic term *nājis* (dirty, unclean), with which Shi'is brand non-Shi'is.
 On the other hand, Maimonides already used the term *al-pasul* (rhyming with *rasūl*, Arabic for “prophet”) to refer to Muḥammad, which may indicate that *pasul* is an older term used by Jews to refer to Muslims. I thank Professor E. Spicandler for drawing my attention to the reference in Maimonides' *Iggeret Teman*, ed. A. S. Halkin (New York, 1952), p. 39, l. 19, in his review of my *Afghan Invasion* (JAOS 112 [1992]: 312).
21. Kashan is one of the main roads to the Caspian region, but according to Iranian sources, Ashraf never went that far and reached only as far as Simnan in 1729 (Lockhart, *Fall*, p. 30). It is therefore difficult to determine on which of his several campaigns Ashraf passed through Kashan. But Ibn Farhād's vivid description of

- his visit leaves no doubt about its occurrence and shows clearly the restlessness of Ashraf, who was besieged on many fronts.
22. This may refer to Ashraf's rendezvous with the Safavid Prince Ṭahmāsp, somewhere between Tehran and Qum (Lockhart, *Fall*, p. 277). I have been unable to determine the location of Mahsam.
 23. See Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 330–331.
 24. This is the first mention in KS of Prince Ṭahmāsp's general, the future Nādir Shah.
 25. See above, *Ezra-nāmab*, n. 57.
 26. No doubt this refers to the famine that broke out in Isfahan during its siege by the Afghans (Lockhart, *Fall*, chap. 13).
 27. The Jewish date 5490 equals 1730 CE, but Ashraf came to power on April 23, 1725, and was killed sometime at the beginning of 1730 (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 210–211, 336–338).
 28. *Qizilbāsh* (Turkish for "redhead") designates the original tribal supporters of the Safavids (see Kathryn Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbāsh Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies* 27 [1994]: 135–161). Here it probably refers to Prince Ṭahmāsp and his forces, although it may also include other Safavid claimants to the throne, such as Mīrzā Sayyid Aḥmad and the three men who claimed to be Ismā'īl Mīrzā, a younger brother of Prince Ṭahmāsp's (J. R. Perry, "The Last Safavids," *Iran* 9 [1971]: 58–59). The "lions" are probably the Ottomans.
 29. It appears from what follows that Ashraf's passage through Kashan, as well as his hurried departure to Isfahan, took place toward the end of his reign, when he was already in flight from Ṭahmāsp Khan (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 332–333).
 30. Ṭahmāsp Khan's rapacious policies continued even after he became Nādir Shah and were among the causes leading to his downfall (Lockhart, *Nādir Shah*, pp. 253, 270).
 31. Pers. *divār* means both "region" and "house."
 32. See above *Kitāb-i Anuṣī*, n. 40. Ṭahmāsp Khan was probably trying to raise funds from the entire population of Kashan, not just from the Jews.
 33. An important *mujtabiḍ* (Shi'ī theologian and legislator), probably the famous Āqā Mīr Abū'l Qāsim mentioned in 'Abd al-Raḥīm Żarrābī's *Tārīkh-i Kashan* (Tehran, 1956), pp. 208–209. I cannot be certain because Żarrābī does not indicate his dates, and there were several other prominent individuals, mostly descendants of this *mujtabiḍ*, who also bore the name Abū'l Qāsim. He may also be Mīrzā 'Abdū'l Qāsim Kāshānī, or Mīrzā Abū'l Qāsim Kāshānī, who occupied the position of *qadr* (supreme head of religious institutions under the Safavids), or *shaykh al-lolām* (supreme judge in religious matters), of Iran under Nādir Shah (Lockhart, *Fall*, pp. 102 and 105).
 34. The accuracy of this figure cannot be checked.
 35. It is not clear who is intended here by "enemies" and "friends." Usually Ibn Farhād intends the Shi'is by the former and the Jews by the latter, but that doesn't work very well here; nor do other combinations. More likely, it is one of Ibn Farhād's rather lame expressions.
 36. Heb. for "prince," "chief"; the title of the leader of a Jewish community.
 37. Probably members of Ṭahmāsp Khan's retinue.
 38. I thank E. Spicehandler for his correction of my translation here; see n. 20.
 39. Probably several thousand *tūmāns*, as the comment on the Hindus below implies.

40. Apparently Ashraf had distributed monetary gifts to the people of Kashan, including the Jews, in order to buy their allegiance. Although Iranian sources do not mention this incident, it is in keeping with the needs and the characters described in this episode.
41. The implication here may be that despair led the men to contemplate suicide.
42. Ibn Farhād's dating appears to be erroneous again. In 1729 (5490), the 8th of Ḥeshwan fell on Monday, October 31, and in 1730 (5491) it fell on Thursday, October 19. Although the second date makes his error somewhat smaller, the pillage must have occurred in 1729 because Prince Ṭahmāsp became shah officially in the winter of 1729. I am indebted to Sidney Becker for these calculations.
43. This statement is probably only partially correct. Although impoverished by Ṭahmāsp Khan's plunder, the Jews of Kashan must have had sufficient funds left, or have been able to raise them, to pay the large sum necessary to regain their religious freedom.
44. No reason for this conversion is mentioned, but the incident is indicative of the Jewish community's sense of insecurity and its divisiveness regarding the available means for survival.
45. Ibn Farhād appears to be supplying a motive for Binyamin's later behavior.
46. It is not clear whether each family head was asked to pay this sum or whether it was a collective amount; the former appears more likely.
47. *Sa'ids* are Muslims who claim descent from Muḥammad and who are held in great esteem by ordinary Muslims. Here they are just another group demanding a "cut" from the Jews.
48. Pers., *qāhib-i muqāddam*, an epithet usually connected with the Hidden [Twelfth] Imam. Here it is intended as a flattering title for the absent Prince Ṭahmāsp, Ṭahmāsp Khan's nominal master, or, more likely, for Ṭahmāsp Khan himself.
49. The Muslim profession of faith.
50. This nonsensical phrase is intended to flatter the Muslims present by intimating, inaccurately, that Moses had acknowledged, or as some Muslims believe, had predicted, the prophethood of Muḥammad.
51. This implies that the money plundered from the Jews by Ṭahmāsp Khan was taken in the name of the prince, who later became, very briefly, Shah Ṭahmāsp II.
52. I was unable to find a Muslim source for this legend. In Jewish midrashim Aaron's blossoming rod and Moses' staff are identical (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6:106n.600). Ṭahmāsp Khan may be improvising his flattery based on the poetic associations of Muḥammad with that flower (cf. A. Schimmel, *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam* [New York, 1982], pp. 76, 207, 183–184, 278n.37). In any case, these "verbatim" dialogues cannot be considered entirely historical.
53. In keeping with the definition of the state of *abl adb-ḍbimma* (see the Introduction), Ṭahmāsp Khan advises the Jews to resign themselves to their allotted (by the Qur'ān) state of humiliation and pay up.
54. He seems to be the individual mentioned in n. 45 above.
55. This was a rash, inconsiderate promise, since it was made without consulting the community.
56. See above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 12.
57. See above, *Kitāb-i Anuwā*, n. 10.

58. This refers to a gesture signifying the successful[!] accomplishment of their mission.
 59. That is, the individuals named above, who were at the banquet.

Khodāidād

1. Salemann, "Chudāidāt," pp. i–viii, 1–56.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. iv–v. Based on his study of two additional mss. that were unavailable to Salemann, Bacher agrees only with the likelihood that the author's first name was Ibrāhīm ("Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 205).
3. Salemann, "Chudāidāt," p. iv.
4. Bacher, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Judæo-Persian Literature"; Fischel, "Israel in Iran," p. 1176.
5. Cf. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*; see Index under "seliḥot."
6. This translation is based on Salemann's edition, "Chudāidāt," pp. 1–4, 14–22; IV A 105 (unfoliated), and Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," pp. 197–212. Salemann's edition bears the title "In Memory of Khoidāt, *gadol ba-dor* (Hebrew for "the great [one] of the generation"). The abbreviation of the hero's name from Khodāidād to Khoidāt occurs frequently, for metric reasons, especially in Salemann's edition (Bacher, *ibid.*, p. 200).
7. Pers., *sa'ūd-zāḍab* (from [a] *sa'ūd* family); see above, *Kitāb-i Sar-guzašt*, n. 47. Since Khodāidād was clearly not a Muslim, the author may simply wish to endow his family with nobility, which in a Jewish context would imply that he was a *kohen*, a descendant of the priestly tribe of Aaron. But the author did not use the Hebrew word, although he does not hesitate to do so elsewhere throughout the poem. His intention here is unclear.
8. This statement contradicts v. 3.
9. Pers. *maḥmil* can also mean "silk," "satin."
10. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 200.
11. Pers. *qūsb-begī*, the title of a head of local government in Bukhārā (see M. Mo'in, *A Persian Dictionary* [Tehran, 1984 repr.], 2:2746, and Michael Zand, *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book*, 1975–1976, s.v. "Bukhara," p. 185; *idem.*, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 3:1988, s.v. "Bukharan Jews," p. 535).
12. If not punished in this world, the perjurers will be punished in the hereafter.
13. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 205.
14. Cf. below, "The Anguish of the Community of Forced Converts," n. 2.
15. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 207.
16. Pers. *pāḍobāb*, more likely the governor, possibly Amīr Ma'ṣūm.
17. Pers. *zambar*; also a "handbarrow," or a "leather bag for drawing water."
18. A suggestion of rebirth in the new faith.
19. Pers. *'amal-dār* can also mean "one in command," "official," "functionary."
20. The meaning of this distich, whose first hemistich is defective in Salemann's edition, is not clear to me.
21. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 208.
22. The royal "we" (Bacher, *ibid.*, p. 208).
23. Pers., *molāim shū*, *molāim* (be gentle, mild, calm).
24. Pers., *kbān o mān* (family and property).
25. I do not understand the second hemistich.

26. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 208.
27. The meaning of the hemistich is unclear. It appears to refer to a previous decree by a ruler who may have staunchly enforced the prohibition on reneging Islam.
28. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 208, has *šbanān* (dignitaries), instead of Salemann's *šbahān* (kings).
29. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 208.
30. Ibid.
31. In this and the following verse Bacher replaces Salemann's admittedly cumbersome *mō'atal* (kept waiting, detained, delayed), with *maḥtalī*, the meaning of which eludes both him and me (ibid., p. 202).
32. The meaning of the hemistich is not clear.
33. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 208.
34. Ibid., p. 208, whereas Bacher's ms. A1 and Salemann have *qiyāmat* (Resurrection), instead of *ḏiyānat* (religion, conscience, integrity).
35. Ibid., p. 208; Khodāidād is chosen in the sense of being singled out for the honor of converting to Islam.
36. Ibid., p. 209, has *maṣnad* (throne, reclining place) instead of Salemann's *maskan* (dwelling, habitation).
37. The word used for "Law" in the section title is the Persian *dat* (Pahlavi, *data*), derived from Armenian, Hebrew, and Akkadian in the Achaemenid period (Frye, *Heritage*, p. 130). It does not occur again in this text.
38. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 209.
39. See above, "Commentary on Exodus 3–4," n. 5.
40. See above, "Moses and the Burning Bush," n. 12.
41. This is a loose paraphrase of many biblical injunctions.
42. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 209.
43. Ibid., p. 209.
44. Ibid., p. 209.
45. I am not certain of the meaning of this hemistich.
46. The second hemistich is in the third person singular.
47. Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 209.
48. An intimation of the presence of an angel or, more likely, the Prophet Elijah.
49. Heb., "righteous man"; Bacher, "Das jüdisch-bucharische Gedicht," p. 209.
50. Ibid., p. 202.

The Anguish of the Community of Forced Converts

1. This translation is based primarily on ms. BZI 1071 fols. 3r–7r, with additional consultation of BZI 954, fols. 13r–15r and HUC 2167, no. 43.
2. The refrain that runs through the poem, *in ḏin-i parišānī* is somewhat difficult to translate because the word *parišānī* has several meanings, including "dispersed," "scattered," "confounded," "distracted," "vexed." The poet deviates occasionally from this refrain, mostly by substituting the Ar./Pers. word *šbar*^s (religious law), for *ḏin* (faith, religion); I do not take this change into account in the translation in order to preserve its dirgelike quality.
3. The concept of seventy, seventy-one, or seventy-two nations/languages, to which some seventy sects can be traced, is of ancient origin and is found in many early

- Jewish and non-Jewish sources (e.g., Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:173, 5:194–195n.72, 6:375n.104). Many early Muslim *ḥadīths* (anecdotes from and about Muḥammad) also mention it (see A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* [Leiden, 1936–1971], p. 135, under “firqatun/firāq”).
4. Ar./Pers., *madḥḥab* (creed, denomination). This is a technical term referring to the principal schools of law in Islam.
 5. Pers., now *ḍān[im]*, the Persian expression for the more common Ar. *jadīd al-islām* (new Muslim), by which Jewish converts, especially the anusim of Mashhad, were known (Netzer, “Qorot anuse Mashhad,” and Patai, *On Jewish Folklore*, p. 200). This may suggest that the poem originates from Mashhad.
 6. Of Yom Kippur.
 7. The new converts were probably told not to mix Jewish and Muslim practices.
 8. Ar./Pers., *mursūbū*, *ustād*, words that typically designate Sufi masters.
 9. Pers., Zoroastrians.
 10. Cf. the element of “voluntariness” in the conversions recorded in KS and Mashhad (Introduction).
 11. This verse may allude either to the long fast of Ramadan or to the penitential fasts of the community in general.
 12. We have no clue as to who is intended here.
 13. Perhaps this is a reference to Nādir Shah moving Jews from Qazvin, Gilan, and other parts of Iran, to Mashhad. See Netzer, “Qorot anuse Mashhad,” and Patai, *Jadīd al-Islām*, pp. 25–28.
 14. Pers., *ākhūnd* (preacher, teacher), of low theological rank.
 15. Not to mention the fact that Islam prohibits the drinking of most alcoholic beverages.

Chapter 9 Polemics and Philosophy

On Moses' Prophecy

1. The first person to bring this text to scholarly notice was Asmussen in the appendix to his article “Judaeo-Persica II,” pp. 59–60. Asmussen also gave an extract of it in his *Jewish Persian Texts*, p. 16. The text was analyzed, transliterated, and translated into English by MacKenzie, “Early Jewish-Persian Argument,” pp. 249–268. It was emended in the same publication by Lazard (pp. 268–269) and by Shaked, “Judaeo-Persian Notes,” pp. 178–182. Lazard also discussed it briefly in his “Dialectologie du judéo-persan,” 77–98, especially pp. 88ff.
2. Capitals indicate folios, numbers indicate lines of text, words in parentheses are editorial additions. For examples of Jewish responses to Muslim anti-Jewish polemics, see *Ezra-nāmāh*. For Zoroastrian anti-Jewish polemics, see above, *Kūtāb-i Anusī*, nn. 17–18.
3. Old Iranian, *wāk-* (word, speech). The ritual associated with this term has a wide range of complex usages among Zoroastrians. The most common is that of “a particular essential formula which precedes, accompanies, or follows an action, . . . hedg[ing] the act around with the power of holy utterance”; it is necessary for “most recurring actions, whether of daily life or daily worship” (Mary Boyce and Firoze Kotwal, “Zoroastrian *bāj* and *drōn*,” *BSOAS* 34 [1971]: 56–73, 298–313; I am grateful to D. N. MacKenzie for guiding me to this article).

4. Lev. 3:17.
5. That is, by Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians, and Muslims.
6. The “one belief” refers to the truth of Moses’ prophethood.
7. Ex. 6:12.
8. Jer. 9:25; Ez. 44:9.
9. Jer. 6:10.
10. I found no biblical expression *‘arel lashon*, which appears to be synonymous with *‘arel sefataim*.
11. The commentator’s argument is borrowed most likely from the midrash, specifically from *Beresbit Rabbab*, 46.4, later repeated also in *Yalqut Shim‘oni* at Gen. 10:17, where this argument, preceded by a discussion of the expression mentioned in notes 7, 8, and 9, is attributed to Rabbi Akiba.
12. The connection to Joshua 5:3 as well as the linguistic explanation are based on *Vayiqra‘ Rabbab*, 25.7, and on *Midrash Tanhuma*, “Va-yer’a,” 43.22–27. See also the sources cited by Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:233n.123.
13. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:7, 6:172n.16, and the sources cited there.

Hobot Yebudab

1. Originally, my study of this work was based on two mss.: JNUL 8° 5231 and HUC 2007. While I was working on this anthology Amnon Netzer published an annotated edition of the JP text, including a Hebrew translation, introductions in both Hebrew and English, and helpful indexes. My introduction is based on and all references in the translation that follows are to Netzer’s *Hobot Yebudab*, pp. i–lxxx, 222–225 (JP text), 455–458 (Heb. trans.). I thank Professor Netzer for sending me a copy of his book.
2. There are very few JP texts with a philosophical content in the various collections of JP manuscripts, and they do not, with the exception of Siman Tov Melammed’s poetic and primarily mystical *Hayāt al-rūḥ* (see below, chap. 9), match the depth and scope of *Hobot Yebudab* (Netzer, *Hobot Yebudab*, pp. ii–v).
3. Three other works may also be attributed to him (Netzer, *Hobot Yebudab*, pp. xiii ff).
4. *Ibid.*, p. v.
5. *Ibid.*, p. xxi.
6. *Ibid.*, p. xxv.
7. Cf. *Beresbit Rabbab*, 79.5.
8. *Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 44.61.
9. *Babylonian Talmud*, Qiddushin, 35.72–36.71.
10. Rabbi Yehudah’s comparison is probably intended to highlight the Torah’s superiority to other codes of religious law.
11. Ar./Pers., *sharī‘a*.
12. That is, the fate of the Israelites was not determined by astrological forces.
13. The text actually has “second” here and the author refers to himself in this sentence in the third person singular.
14. *Shemot Rabbab*, 29.4.
15. Heb., *qabbalah*, used here in the original meaning of the word.
16. *Babylonian Talmud*, Hullin, 60.72.

Chapter 10 Mysticism

1. Heb., “warning,” “a category of liturgical poem for the Feast of Weeks (Shabu‘ot) in which are enumerated the 613 Commandments” (*EJ*, s.v. “azharot”).
2. Published as *Sefer Ḥayāt al-rūb*, “*Ruah ḥayim*” by Natan’el and Binyamin Shauloff (Jerusalem, 1898). I was unable to consult this (uncritical?) edition.
3. See the Introduction; *EJ*, s.v. “Meshed”; Yehoshua-Raz, *Mi-nehabe Israel*, Pt. 3, chap. 11.
4. Ar./Pers., “learned divines,” “theologians,” since Islam has no clergy.
5. *EJ*, s.v. “Melamed, Siman Ṭov.”
6. See, for example, Melammed’s treatment of the subject of asceticism (JNUL 8° 5760, fols. 82r–95v), which is a close translation/paraphrase of Bahya b. Paquda’s treatment of the same subject (cf. *The Book of Direction*, chap. 9, or the earlier, less precise translation of Moses Hyamson, *Duties of the Heart* [Jerusalem, 1970], 2:288–337).
7. Ar./Pers., “way,” “path,” refers to an organized Sufi way of life. On Abraham Maimonides, see now the authoritative summary in Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:474–496 and the relevant notes.
8. Jewish involvement with Sufism appears especially striking in what we know about the life of Sarmad (d. 1661), a fairly learned Jew from Kashan, who became famous for his Sufi-Hindu asceticism, mystical quatrains, and friendship with Dārā Shikōh (d. 1659), the tragic heir-apparent at the Mughal court in India (Lakhpat Rai, *Sarmad: His Life and Rubais* [Gorakhpur, 1978], chap. 2).
9. This introduction is based on *EJ*, s.v. “Siman Ṭov Melamed”; Netzer, *Muntakhab*, pp. 51–52, 365–368; idem., *Oḡar*, p. 38.

In Praise of Sufis

1. This translation from ḤR is based on JNUL, Heb. 8° 5760, fols. 82r–82v. It is a strophic poem (*tarjī‘ band*) characteristic of more popular forms of Persian poetry.
Pers., *kbwāb-i ghaflat* (the sleep of neglect), is a Sufi expression describing those who neglect spiritual quests. The ethos and vocabulary of the poem are Sufi.
2. “The straight path,” is a Qur’anic expression; see Surah 9:56, 15:41, etc.
3. That is, separation from the Divine Beloved.
4. Dwelling too insistently on any of God’s attributes can become a stumbling block for the mystic striving for union with the Divine.
5. As devoted lovers of God, the Sufis do not tie their worship to concepts of reward and punishment either in the present or in the hereafter.

Against Sufis

1. This translation is based on HUC 2167, no. 29; BZI 1070, fols. 56a–56b, and BZI 1089, fols. 26b–27a. These manuscripts are difficult to decipher and there are serious discrepancies between the various texts.

Netzer refers to this strophic poem as *shirat ba-anusim* (a poem of forced converts; *Oḡar*, p. 180, no. 32). Although this description is not incorrect, it is incomplete. In my view the poem satirizes the “attraction” of converting to Islam through Sufi initiation, a process with which the poet was obviously familiar but which he was able to resist (see the last stanza); he urges other Jews to do the same.

‘Imrān is the name of Moses’ father in Muslim lore.

2. This refrain, which occurs at the end of each strophe, means literally, “[May I be] sacrificed for/instead of Mīm Shīn Ha’,” the consonants in MoSheH, Moses’ Hebrew name. It obviously expresses the poet’s passionate devotion to Judaism. Similar poems praising Muḥammad, using the consonants of his name, can be found in popular Islamic poetry (Moreen, “Moses in Muḥammad’s Light”).
3. A famous ascetic who lost his sanity in the quest for the Beloved, Majnūn is immortalized in Islamic literature as the paragon of the Sufis’ quest.
4. Pers., *yār* (friend), a common Sufi designation for fellow Sufis.
5. An allusion to the biblical, chosen status of the Jews.
6. More customs associated with Sufi initiation, especially the donning of a special mantle (Ar./Pers. *kbirqab*; the term used here is the more colloquial Persian word *qabā* [tunic]).
7. An ecstatic Sufi utterance derived from the Arabic *būwa* (He), referring to God.
8. I was unable to decipher this verse.

Chapter 11 Religious Poems

1. For a list of the poets’ names, see Netzer, *Muntakbab*, pp. 53–56; idem., *Yebude Iran*, pp. 54–57.
2. See Netzer, *Muntakbab*, p. 367.
3. See *ibid.*, pp. 49–50, 345.
4. See Moreen, “Moses in Muḥammad’s Light.”
5. The title of this poem in some manuscripts adds to the Arabic/Persian word *munājāt* (supplications) the Hebrew word *baqashab*, suggesting that the poem was consciously modeled on a specific genre of Hebrew religious verse whose content is supplication and pleading for forgiveness.
6. The poet’s real name was Binyamin b. Misha’el.

Almighty Lord Displaying Might

1. This poem has survived in numerous manuscripts, which contain quite a few variants. My translation is based on BZI 1071, fols. 69v–70v, BZI 1070, fols. 56r–56v, BZI 1089, fols. 9r–9v, and Netzer, *Muntakbab*, pp. 377–378. See also Asmussen, “Šihāb,” pp. 415–418. The rhyme scheme is aaab, cccb, etc., which I could seldom capture. Nevertheless, I use as much rhyme as possible to try to convey the poem’s powerful, entrancing rhythm.
2. Pers., *farangī* (a Christian, a European).
3. That is, a spear or spearhead.
4. Ar./Pers. *dhikr*, cognate of Heb. *zeker*; is also a technical Sufi term meaning “recollection,” in the sense of “repetition of divine names or religious formulae” (Schimmel, *Mytical Dimensions*, see Index under “dhikr”).

In Praise of Moses

1. This translation is based on JNUL Heb. 8° 5646, fols. 17r–17v, and BZI 1023, fols. 2v–3v. There are considerable variations between these texts. The poem is highly polemical, comparing Moses and Muḥammad, advocating the superiority of Moses even as it endows him with some of the attributes associated with Muḥammad.
2. Although this verse may hint at Moses’ nature, “half terrestrial half celestial,” which

is how some Jewish sources attempt to explain the meaning of “the designation of Moses as *ish ha-elohim*” (a man of God; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:481, 6:166–167nn.965,966), I believe that Amīnā polemicizes here (as have several other Iranian–Jewish poets), arguing that Moses, like Muḥammad, was created out of primordial divine light and thus precedes all creation (see Moreen, “Moses in Muḥammad’s Light,” and the sources cited there).

3. Ar., *Kalīm Allāb*, see above, “Moses and the Burning Bush,” n. 1.
4. These two Sufi technical terms refer to the final stages of gnosis in which the mystic acquires *‘ilm al-yaqīn* (knowledge of certitude). True *‘ilm al-yaqīn* leads to *‘ayn al-yaqīn* (vision of certitude or essence of certainty), the station of the gnostics, and it culminates in *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (real certitude or reality of certainty), the station of God’s true “friends” (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 141–142). The verse implies that Moses has experienced these highest levels of mystical encounter.
5. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:481.
6. That is, Muḥammad.
7. Cf. Exod. 34:29–35; Moreen, “Moses in Muḥammad’s Light,” p. 192.
8. The polemical intent is clearly spelled out.
9. That is, *Mosheh*, the Hebrew spelling of Moses’ name. Amīnā appears to suggest that Moses’ superiority is apparent from the fact that his name consists of three consonants. He distorts the name Muḥammad, referring to him only as *MH*, when in fact, Muḥammad’s name consists of five consonants!
10. Exod. 33:11. This verse is another polemical thrust at Muḥammad, whose revelation was mediated through the angel Gabriel (Moreen, “Moses in Muḥammad’s Light,” pp. 197–198).
11. See above, “Commentary on Exodus 3–4,” n. 5.
12. Referring to Shabu‘ot, the festival commemorating the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, celebrated in the month of Sivan.
13. The poem appears to be incomplete in both manuscripts.

A Mukhammas in Honor of Moses

1. This translation is based on BZI 4153, fols. 30v–33r, and Bacher’s edition in “Der Dichter Jūsuf Jehūdi,” pp. 389–427. A *mukhammas* is a poem in five-lined strophes. As I try to show in my translation—at the expense of the poem’s literary quality—each strophe ends with the phrase “You made,” which is present in all five verses in the first strophe.
2. See above, “Jacob and the Wolf,” n. 41.
3. Ar./Pers. *azal*, a concept which in Sufi poetry refers to the Day of *Alast* (Surah 7:171: “Am I not [*alastu*] your Lord”), on which souls of all future beings assented to God’s lordship; a shorthand reference to the Muslim concept of primordial covenant.
4. In Muslim legendary lore Eve tempted Adam with ears of grain; see al-Kisā‘ī, *Tales*, pp. 40–41.
5. In the literal sense of the word, “one who submits [his will] to God.”
6. This is not a full biblical history; the poet skips over generations at will.
7. See above, “Moses and the Burning Bush,” n. 1.
8. A reference to the famous legend regarding Abraham’s defiance of Nimrod (destroy-

- ing his idols) and his miraculous deliverance from a fiery furnace into which Nimrod cast him (see above, *Ḥanukkah-nāmāh*, n.8; Ginzberg, *Legends*, Index, under “Fire, Abraham’s rescue from, the details concerning”; al-Kisāʿī, *Tales*, pp. 146–150).
9. Interestingly, the poet speaks of the sacrifice as a *fait accompli* (see Spiegel, *Last Trial*).
 10. That is, separation from Joseph. See above, “Jacob and the Wolf.”
 11. This direct quote is more intrusive in English than in Persian.
 12. Exod. 1:15–16; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2:250–258, which mentions no numbers.
 13. That is, Moses.
 14. An allusion to Muḥammad’s mediated revelation by the angel Gabriel, an important Jewish polemical thrust against Islam (Moreen, “Moses in Muḥammad’s Light,” pp. 191, 196).
 15. I could not find a midrashic source for this claim.
 16. Contradicting the concept expressed directly above.
 17. That is, when Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai.
 18. Midrashic texts preserve the tradition that God created and destroyed many worlds before the present one (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:4) and that a “new world” is His gift to Israel (idem., *Legends*, 3:47, 65, 6:18n.108), but they do not, as far as I know, connect this to Moses’ birth or mission.
 19. Exod. 33:23.
 20. Cf. Surah 53:9ff., the verses that, according to Muslim tradition, allude to Muḥammad’s highest mystical experience, his ascension (*miʿrāj*). See also *Al-Qurʾān: A Contemporary Translation*, trans. Ahmed ‘Alī (Princeton, 1990), p. 457n.2.
 21. Ar./Pers. *nūr-i tajjālī* (the light of [His] manifestation, an effulgence), a Sufi expression referring to mystical illumination which partakes of God’s original manifestation.
 22. See above, “A Derashah on the Haftarah,” n. 6.
 23. Ar./Pers. *imām* is used here in the meaning of “model,” “exemplar,” “leader,” rather than in its more complex Shiʿi connotations.
 24. The twelve tribes of Israel or perhaps the twelve paths that Moses hewed out of the Reed Sea for the twelve tribes to cross (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:21–22). For a lovely depiction of the latter, see Moreen, *Miniature Paintings*, p. 44, no. 5.
 25. Ar./Pers. *qābīb-qirān*, an epithet given to a fortunate ruler born at the conjunction of the two “happy” stars, Jupiter and Venus. “Officially, only Tamerlane and Shah Jahān were given this high-sounding title, but it was easy for poets to mention it in flattering verses in other contexts” (Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, p. 212), especially for founders of faiths, like Muḥammad and Jesus; this is probably why Yūsuf Yahūdī attaches it to Moses.
 26. Numb. 21:33–35.
 27. Ginzberg, *Legends*, Index, under “Aaron, the virtues of.”
 28. See above, “On Moses’ Prophethood,” and Moreen, “Moses in Muḥammad’s Light,” p. 199.

In Praise of Ezekiel

1. This translation is based on a conflation of BZI 4542, fols. 86v–95v, JNUL Heb. 8° 5437, fols. 53v–55r, BZI 1071, fols. 16v–19r, and HUC 2167, no. 42. The poem

describes the strongly messianic prayer of a man who has attained the object of his pilgrimage, the tomb of Ezekiel. The tomb is reportedly in Ḥilla, a small town in Iraq between Najaf and Karbala, two major Shi'ī sites of pilgrimage. Muslims identify the Qur'ānic prophet Dhū'l-Qiḥl (Sura 21:85; 38:48) with Ezekiel; thus both Jews and Muslims venerate the site. Muslims seized control of the tomb and its surroundings from the Jews in the fourteenth century (*EJ*, s.v. "Ezekiel's Tomb"; Zvi Yehudah, "Mabaqam shel yehude Bavel 'al shelitah be-qever Yeḥezqel ha-navi be-Kiḥl be-elef ha-sheni le-sefirah," in *Mehqarim be-toledot yehude 'Iraq u be-tarbutam* 6 [1991]: 31–75). For a purported debate between Shi'īs and Jews at this site, see Moreen, "A Shi'ī—Jewish Munāzara [Debate] in the Eighteenth Century," *JAOS*, 119, 4 (1999).

2. That is, the dust of Ezekiel's grave; this is a common conceit in classical Persian poetry.
3. Cf. Ginzberg, *Legendo*, 6:438n.25.
4. According to Jewish tradition, Elijah is the forerunner of the Messiah (Ginzberg, *Legendo*, Index, under "Elijah, the Prophet, messianic activity of").
5. When the Temple stood, Jews came on pilgrimages to it with special offerings on the three major agricultural festivals of the year, Succoth, Passover, and Shabu'ot.
6. See above, *Faḥ-nāmab*, n. 15.
7. "A priestly device for obtaining oracles" (*EJ*, s.v. "urim and thummin").
8. That is, Jacob.
9. Heb., 'am segulab (Deut. 7:6; 14:2).

In Praise of the Qualities of Ezekiel

1. This translation is based on a conflation of JNUL Heb. 28° 1388, fols. 149r–149v; JTS 1411 (unfoliated); JTS ENA 566, fols. 4r–5r; BZI 951, fols. 23v–25v; BZI 1047, fols. 1a–2a and BZI 1071, fols. 7v–9r. There are significant variations between these texts. The poem may have served as a general invocation among Iranian Jews, perhaps on the way—or wishing but unable—to visit Ezekiel's tomb. The poet, who may well be the same as the "Muḥlis-i Khwānsārī" of the previous poem, seems to be hoping for special help from the prophet whose namesake he is.
2. Pers., *nīm bi'mil* (half slaughtered), a complex Sufi topos alluding to the mystic's ecstatic throes, which resemble the death throes of a bird that has been ritually slaughtered, that is, upon which the "bismillah" has been uttered (see 'Aṭṭār, *Mantiq al-ṭayr*, v. 231).
3. Ar./Pers., *manzil* (stages of a journey).
4. This confession of sins in Hebrew forms the poem's refrain but is not present in all the manuscripts.
5. A common pun on *gul* (rose) and *gil* (clay).
6. Heb., "the House of God," that is, the Temple; an allusion to the advent of the Messiah.
7. A Hebrew name for Satan or for the Angel of Death.

In Praise and Commendation of Ezra

1. This translation is based on BZI 4542, fols. 96r–99v.
2. The twelfth-century Jewish travelers Benjamin of Tudela and Petaḥia of Ratisbon refer to Ezra's purported tomb in Babylon (Iraq), specifically in Basra, located on the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab, the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers on the Persian Gulf

- (*Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, ed. E. N. Adler, 1930; repr. New York, 1987, pp. 77–79, 84). However, according to Josephus, Ezra was buried in Jerusalem (*Antiquities*, 2:9, cited in Adler, *ibid.*, p. 373n.27). Clearly, among Iranian Jews the first tradition prevailed, and they were accustomed to go on pilgrimages to Ezra's tomb on the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab; hence the references in the poem to the "seashore."
3. Ar., *jābil* (ignorant, uneducated, illiterate). This unknown poet also appears to be responding to Muslim polemics alleging that Ezra simply wrote his own version of the Torah (see above, *Ezra-nāmāh*, n. 34). The customary word for illiteracy in the Muslim milieu is the Arabic *'ummī*, and it is associated with Muḥammad. Far from being uncomplimentary, its connection with the prophet of Islam is a code word meant to enhance the miracle of the Qur'ān, which, according to Muslim tradition, could not have been created by a human being, let alone an illiterate one (Schimmel, *And Muḥammad Is His Messenger*, pp. 71–74).
 4. One of Moses' names (*Babylonian Talmud*, Megillah 13a; Sotah 12b, 13a; Sanh. 101b).
 5. A reference to difficult, though unspecified, contemporary conditions.
 6. Pers. *parishān* also means "scattered" or "dispersed," which would be appropriate here were not the two adjectives adjacent *zar o parishān*, suggesting synonyms that reinforce each other.

O Elijah, Take My Hand

1. This translation is based on BZI 1015, fols. 107v–109v; BZI 4549, fols. 56r–58v; HUC 2151, no. 15 and Netzer, *Muntakhab*, pp. 300–302. See also Asmussen, "Bābā ben Luṭf," pp. 131–135.
2. I have tried to capture the poem's repetitious rhythmic structure (aaab, cccb, etc.), somewhat at the expense of a literal translation.
3. A mythical female bird in Persian lore, who plays a prominent role in Firdowsī's *Shab-nāmāh*. In Sufi poetry she becomes the symbol of ultimate spiritual reality (Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, pp. 188–189). The topos is most famously developed in 'Aṭṭār's *Mantiq al-ṭayr* [The conference of the birds].
4. Ar./Pers., *ma'rifa* (gnosis), an important Sufi term and concept.
5. Ar., *rabb al-'ālamīn* (Surah 1:2).
6. The letters spell "Allah."
7. In Jewish tradition Elijah is the forerunner of the Messiah.
8. "Nāwīyā," in Netzer, *Muntakhab*, p. 300, perhaps a distortion of Ar./Pers., *nabī*/Heb., *navī*, for the sake of the rhyme. BZI 1015 has the equally obscure "Shatīya."
9. See above, "A Derashah on the Haftarah," n. 6.
10. That is, the four Aristotelian elements, fire, wind, water, and earth.
11. This verse refers to Elijah's ability to traverse the world with four strides; hence the idea that he is never too distant to help (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:203).
12. A plea for the manifestation of the Messiah. For *Mabūdī*, see above, "Commentary on the Book of Esther," n. 21.
13. See above, "Commentary on Exodus 3–4," n. 5.
14. Lit., "we are buried alive." Ur was Abraham's pagan birthplace in Mesopotamia.
15. Lit., "Your Essence."

16. 1 Kings 18:20ff.

17. Lit., “the world clamors for you”; “El” is one of the Hebrew names of God.

A Prayer (Amīnā)

1. This translation is based on JNUL Heb. 8° 4332, fol. 1r; BZI fols. 25v–26r and BL Or. 13914, pp. 1–3.
2. Ar./Pers., *lā-makān*, “without place,” a Sufi epithet for God.
3. See above, “Moses and the Burning Bush,” n. 1.
4. See above, “Moses’ Vision of God,” n. 10.
5. The poet’s heartfelt prayer was obviously prompted by a specific problem, but in the manner of classical Persian poets, he does not provide specific information.

A Prayer (Bābāī)

1. This translation is based on BZI 951, fols. 26v–28v; BZI 1015, fols. 104r–105r; BZI 4549, fols. 51r–54r and JTS 1411, fols. 27r–28r. The poet may be Bābāī b. Luṭf, but we cannot be certain; Bābāī appears to have been a common name for Iranian Jews.
2. A reference to Tobit of the apocryphal *Book of Tobit*.
3. Since no monarch is specified, this may be a general reference to the oppression of rulers in general and of the Romans in particular.
4. See above, *Kitāb-i Anusī*, n. 22.
5. The tenor of the poem suggests that the poet is bemoaning the (forced) conversion of his community. Perhaps this is evidence for identifying the poet as Bābāī b. Luṭf.
6. Numb. 14:20.
7. Ar./Pers., *intizār* (expecting, awaiting), a term that Twelver Shi‘is associate with the condition of awaiting the return of the Twelfth Imam (Mahdī). Here, obviously, the term refers to the (Jewish) Messiah.

A Ghazal on the Twelve Tribes

1. This translation is based on BZI 1070, fols. 51r–52v; BZI 4542, fols. 100r–103r; BZI 1073, fols. 9r–9v and JTS 1411, fols. 25v–26v.
2. Ar./Pers., *bāṭin* (interior, esoteric), a Muslim hermeneutical term, frequently used by Sufis and others, which refers to the inward, esoteric meaning of a text. Here the poet uses the term to refer to the traditional symbolic characteristics of each of the twelve tribes.
3. Ar., *lā yazāl* ([He Who] ceases not), a Qur’ānic phrase, an indirect epithet for God (Surahs 9:110; 13:31; 22:55).
4. See above, “Commentary on Exodus 3–4,” n. 13.
5. Using his *takballuṣ* “Aminā,” or “the Faithful,” the poet puns on the name Benjamin, the name of the progenitor of the twelfth tribe and also the poet’s real name, Binyamin b. Misha‘el.

In Honor of the Lord Messiah

1. This short lyrical poem (*ghazal*) is from Siman Ṭov Melammed’s *Ḥayāt al-rūḥ* (chap. 10). The translation is based on JNUL Heb. 8°, 5760, fols. 142v–143r, and it is somewhat less literal than others in this anthology. In this *ghazal* traditional Persian love themes are enriched by echoes of the Song of Songs.
2. The rhyme words of this *ghazal* are *nāz konam*; *nāz* is a difficult word to render ade-

- quately and consistently into English. Its semantic field includes “amorous playfulness,” “glorification,” “soothing or endearing expressions used by lovers,” “fondling” (Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 1371), as well as “coquetry,” “mincing air (or manners),” “endearment,” and “teasing” (Haim, *New Persian-English Dictionary*, 2:1054).
3. That is, news of the Messiah’s arrival.
 4. Like a cock, the Messiah himself will proclaim his arrival from the root of the Temple (*Sefer ha-aggadah*, p. 311).
 5. A poetic way of referring to the darkness of *galut* (exile) and to the perception of the Messiah’s imminent arrival; the night before the dawn.
 6. For details of the messianic banquet, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:30, 5:43–44n.127, 47–48n.139.

Chapter 12 Panegyrics, Lyrical Poems, Quatrains

In Praise of Bahādur Abū Sa‘īd

1. This translation is based on Shim‘on Ḥakam’s edition of Shāhīn’s MN, pp. 2v–3r.
2. See above, *Ezra-nāmab*, n. 57.
3. See above, “Jacob and the Wolf,” n. 37.
4. Khosrow Anūshīrvān; see above, *Arđasbīr-nāmab*, n. 30.
5. A pun on the ruler’s name: Ar./Pers. *sa‘īd* (fortunate, happy), and *sa‘ādat* (fortune, happiness).

O Just Shab Asbraf

1. This translation is based on BZI 1044, fol. 13v.
2. The Gulf of ‘Oman.
3. Illegible; possibly Zandarūd, a river that runs through Isfahan.

My Lovely Delightful Girl

1. The form, with its frequent refrains, suggests that this may have been a popular song. The translation is based on BZI 1071, fols. 67v–69r and BZI 4579, fols. 83v–85r.
2. See above, *Dāniyāl-nāmab*, n. 19.

I Wish to Walk in the Rose Garden

1. This translation is based on BZI 1070, fols. 3v–4r; BZI 4542, fols. 49r–49v; BZI 1073, fols. 60r–60v and BZI 4549, fols. 77v–78v.
2. Lit., “I will be the friend and the friend will be me.”
3. That is, the sky, which resembles a goblet turned upside down.
4. There is a lovely pun here on the Ar./Pers. root ³*amn* (safety, security, protection) from which “Amīnā” comes, yielding the reading “You will not quaff without safety,” that is, “you will be safe drinking [only] with me.”

She Is the Rose Garden’s Cypress

1. This translation is based on BZI 1044, fol. 11r.
2. A niche in the wall of a mosque indicating the *qibla*, the direction of Mecca.
3. The name of a refreshing body of water in the Muslim conception of Paradise.

Last Night Her Magic Wink

1. This translation is based on JNUL 28° 4435, fols. 27v–28r.

The Story of Amīnā and His Wife

1. This translation is based on HUC 2171, no. 7b.
2. A province in eastern Turkestan famous in Persian poetry for its beautiful men and women.
3. The first half of this hemistich is illegible.
4. Part of the second hemistich is illegible.
5. The text is illegible at the end and the poem appears to be incomplete in this manuscript.

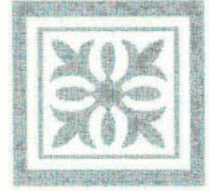
On Becoming Cold-bearted Toward Women

1. This popular poem by Amīnā can be found in many manuscripts. The translation is based on JNUL Heb. 28° 4435, fols. 27v–28r; BZI 4579, fols. 90v–91v and BZI 1071, fols. 65r–66r. I took some liberties with the translation in order to suggest the poem's powerful rhythm.

Anonymous Quatrains

1. These translations are based on JNUL Heb. 38° 5585, fols. 16v, 17v, 22v, 23r.
2. Pers., *bot-kbānab* (house of idolatry), that is, any place of worship containing paintings and sculptures forbidden to Muslim pious sensibilities. In Sufi poetry it can refer to a Buddhist shrine or to a Christian church.
3. See above, "She Is the Rose Garden's Cypress," n. 2.

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Manuscripts

BL: Or. 4731; Or. 13704; Or. 13914

D: *Fatḥ-nāmah*

FVR: 610

IV: A 105, A 129, A 192, C 43

JNUL: 180/54, 1183, 1388, 8° 4332, 8° 5646, 8° 5760, 28° 4435, 28° 5108, 38° 5585

HUC: 2102, 2151, 2167, 2171

BZI: 978, 951, 964, 980, 1015, 1023, 1044, 1045, 1070, 1071, 1073, 1075, 1089, 4153,
4542, 4547, 4549, 4571, 4579, 4602, 4731

JTS: 1403, 1411, 8616, 8623, Acc. 40919

SS: Ebp. i. c. 150

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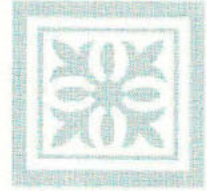
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