A PETITION (*BAQQĀŠĀ*) ADDRESSED TO RABBI SHALOM SHABAZI: A YEMENITE JEWISH SAINT*

by

REUBEN AHRONI

The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210

This article will focus on the discussion of a Yemenite manuscript which bears the title *Baqqāša*, “a petition”. The first three lines of the manuscript set forth its purpose, “to be recited by the grave of the Saint, our lord and venerable teacher, the delight of our heart, the apple of our eyes, our crown of glory, the erudite, the divine tanna, our master Rabbi Shalom Shabazi, may his merit protect us, amen” (II. 1–3).

This as yet unpublished manuscript is in the possession of my good friend Nissim b. Gamlieli of Ramleh, Israel. It is in the form of a booklet and is comprised of ten leaves, written recto and verso in pure Hebrew, and executed in square characters devoid of vocalization. Seven leaves of the manuscript contain the *Baqqāša*, while three leaves consist of other prayers unrelated to Shabazi. The abbreviation of phrases and expressions by means of their representation with mere initials (rawer a'bir) is prevalent throughout the manuscript. Thus, for example, יי זָרָךְ פֶלֶמֶךְ הָאָלֹהִים (l. 177) stands for the phrase יי זָרָךְ פֶלֶמֶךְ הָאָלֹהִים והחַיִים. Generally speaking the script of the manuscript is bold and clear. Some portions however, are dilapidated, having been washed out by water. The damage was probably incurred by downpours of rain during the long pilgrimage to Shabazi’s shrine, which was usually undertaken by foot or on donkeys. Fortunately, the blurred portions are not totally indecipherable.

According to Gamlieli, the manuscript was brought in 19492 to Israel from the Yemenite town of Damat by Moshe Yosef Ibn Hasan Mathna.

* I would like to thank the Graduate School of the Ohio State University, the College of Humanities, and the Melton Center for Jewish Studies for supporting my research on Yemenite literature. I am deeply grateful to Nissim B. Gamlieli who graciously allowed me to make a photo-copy of the manuscript (the text of which is appended) and to publish it.

1. An authority quoted in the Mishna. Here it means a highly esteemed scholar.

2. The year in which Operation Magic Carpet (known also as “On Eagles’ Wings”) began. In this operation Yemenite Jewry was transported almost in its entirety to Israel (see Barer, 1952).
It is an anthology of prayers to be recited by the shrine of Shabazi, possibly composed by various authors. Indeed the pervasive repetitiousness of phrases, and at times of whole sections, taken from the treasury of Jewish sacred lore (Bible, Prayers, Midrash, Qabbalah, etc.), lends support to this view. The fact that a similar manuscript, with marked internal divergences in both structure and content, is available (in the possession of Yosef Tobi of Jerusalem, who kindly provided me with a copy of it) seems to indicate that this manuscript contains not the original compositions, but rather variants of them. It should be noted, however, that as far as I could ascertain, these two are the only variants of the Baqqāšā extant. Both of them seem to have been written at the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Gamlieli’s copy, the text of which is appended to this article, has the name Shalom ben-Abraham inscribed on it without any reference to his role. It ends with the following note:

Let it be known to you, O Children of Israel, that whoever recites this petition, let him follow it with a Haškābā,3 for the repose of our venerable lord Shalom Shabazi, followed by a Haškābā for my venerated father Abraham the son of Jacob, who volunteered (נתרב) this. (ll. 298–300)

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the nature of this volunteered “contribution”. Is the reference to authorship, copying the text or something else altogether? Tobi’s variant of the Baqqāšā does not provide us with any additional clues, thus leaving our question open.

Mechanical recitation of panegyric, liturgy and petitions by the graves of saints, whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish, is not an unusual phenomenon. This practice, intended to orchestrate the cult, is an integral part of the various ritualized acts which pilgrimage involves. The author of our manuscript, however (but not that of Tobi’s), states in his introductory note to his Baqqāšā (ll. 4–10) his own motivation for providing a written copy of these prayers. Prayer at the grave of Shabazi the saint, he notes, is highly efficacious in effecting cures for all sorts of maladies and in alleviating suffering. Unfortunately, he adds, many pilgrims come to the shrine, but “find themselves speechless, unable to utter a word, and their eyes do not produce tears.” Petitions, he points out, are more effective when they are offered fervently and in plaintive voice, “with eyes brimming with tears” (ll. 22–23), for God “may be conciliated by tears” (l. 232).4 It is for this reason, says our author, that he set himself

3. Prayer for the repose of the dead, requiem.
4. Based on the talmudic statement: “Although the heavenly gates of prayers were shut, the gates of tears were not shut” (Berk 32b). “Prayer,” says the Zohar (the book of Qabbalah, Jewish mysticism), “when offered with intensity, is as flame to coal in uniting the higher and lower worlds” (Wayyaqhel, 213b).
to compose this petition, in order to serve all those who come to prostrate themselves before the grave of Shabazi (ll. 9–10). The introductory section of our manuscript (absent in that of Tobi) also volunteers a note of warning to all pilgrims who frequent the shrine of Shabazi: the unclean should not approach the shrine, lest he desecrate it. Those who had experienced nocturnal pollution, or whose bodies and clothes were soaked with sweat from the long and arduous journey, should first purify themselves by immersion in water (ll. 10–11). Moreover, the author goes out of his way to warn against failure or slackness in payment of vows or pledges to the shrine. To underscore the extreme gravity of the matter, he quotes in full several scriptural verses (Deut 23:22–24; Num 30:3; Jonah 2:9), all of which caution against slackness in performing whatever proceeds out of one’s lips. The author adds a mystical note to his warning, saying:

He who vows and revokes his vow impairs the sphere of Binah, and he who takes an oath and rescinds it renders the six edges defective, and his children will die while they are still young and during his own lifetime. Moreover, whoever delays paying his vows, his heavenly record of deeds will be noted and consequently trembling will seize him without knowing why... (ll. 13–21)

Why is the author so obsessed with ritual and financial matters associated with Shabazi’s shrine? Does he belong to the family or council which served as the guardians or caretakers of the shrine? Such guardians, to judge from what we know of the management and practices of shrines, in general, are entitled to certain rights and privileges. Part of the revenues from the flow of donations, pledges, offerings, vows, etc., is reserved for the maintenance of the shrine. The rest is shared by its caretakers, who rely on these revenues for their own sustenance. It would not then be farfetched to assume that the author may have been associated in some administrative capacity with Shabazi’s shrine.

The author encourages his audience to visit the shrine of Shabazi and to ask for the intercession of this “holy Saint”. The destruction of the Temple and the Exile of Israel from their land, complains the author, deprived the Jewish people of their glory. As a result of that, he bemoans, “We no longer have a prophet, a seer or a priest to atone for our sins,

5. Cp. the rabbinic sayings: “one should enter upon prayer in the spirit of deepest humility and holy reverence” (Berk 5a); “The worshipper should be dressed in clean garments” (Yer. Meg. 1, 71a).

6. One of the ten divine potencies known in the Qabbalah as Sefirot. It should be noted that our Baqqāṣā is interspersed with mystical allusions.

7. For the gravity of vows and their role in shrines of saints, see Ben-Ami (1984, pp. 51–52).
nor a healer to cure our maladies and alleviate our sufferings” (ll. 175-177; see also ll. 96-100). Under such circumstances, the author stresses, recourse to Shabazi, the holy saint, is of paramount importance. He would serve as an advocate for those who seek him, one who will interpose for them before God as a “lofty and firm wall” (l. 30). Though the prayer is addressed to Shabazi, the Baqqāšā makes it abundantly clear that it is to God that the ultimate appeal is directed.

The unique manuscript is of considerable interest because it provides valuable insights into the social, religious and cultural practices of the Jews of Yemen and their venerative attitude toward Shabazi, the only communal saint which this Jewish community had ever canonized and sanctified. We learn from the petition that many Yemenite Jews had frequented the shrine, often after having traversed wide stretches of arid land or rugged mountainous regions in their quest of a miraculous cure for their diseases and afflictions. The picture which emerges from the plaintive tones of the Baqqāšā is that of a persecuted Jewish community, subject to humiliation and derision, pillage, violent deaths by plagues, pestilence, famine, and other calamities (ll. 38-40 et passim). The Baqqāšā repeatedly implores the saint to plead his people’s case before the Lord, to pray for the redemption of the Shekhinah and the hastening of the coming of the Messiah, “speedily in our own lifetime.” Moreover, Shabazi is called upon to intercede before God so that He may

prolong our days and years with joy and happiness, peace and tranquility, that we may serve Him all our days. Let Him give us a full span of life with ripe old age, with sons and grandsons, holy and wise offspring, sages great in Torah and piety, devoid of moral flaws, sin and blemish, that they may live a long life, engaged in the study of the Torah . . . observing its commandments. (ll. 44-50)

8. The Jews of Yemen were widely dispersed throughout the country. About 80 percent of them lived in villages or small towns. Yemen is characterized by a remarkable diversity of geographical features, varying from low strips of lands to highland ranges surmounted by several major peaks and eminences.

9. Despite the innumerable wadis which crisscross the mountainous region of Yemen, there are no perennial rivers. Thus the country is totally dependent upon rainfall. Any marked scarcity of rain in the agricultural regions entails a general famine. Indeed, famine has scourged Yemen repeatedly throughout history. References to this devastating calamity are numerous in Muslim Yemenite chronicles (see for example Wāsīṭ, 1928, p. 30 et passim). Another scourge which frequently hits the land of Yemen is that of the locust, which eats up all fruit and vegetation. Because of the extreme scarcity of food which results from the various natural scourges, coupled with the constant afflictions caused by anarchy, frequent internecine wars, tribal disputes, etc., the locust constituted in Yemen a source of food: “al-jāwe," says a telling Yemenite proverb, “ya’kul makhāwe" (the hungry eat [even] the legs of the locust).
The petition asks the saint to remind God of His covenant with Israel and demand the fulfillment of His promises to the Fathers and to the Prophets. Ample scriptural quotations are given to this effect. Furthermore, the petitioner asks for vengeance to be executed upon his oppressors. Let God, he prays, act for the sake of His great and holy Name and reveal His marvels and mighty deeds (ll. 131–133).

At times, the note of supplication turns into a forceful demand. The supplicant feels that he is entitled to the saint’s gracious and favorable attention. His pilgrimage, he points out, entailed an enormous sacrifice on his part. “Behold,” he reminds the saint, “I have come from far away to prostrate myself before you” (l. 94). He repeatedly stresses that his visit to the shrine not only sapped his energies, but also caused him to forsake his house, to harden his heart “like stones” toward his parents, wife and children, to wander through highways full of terrors, and to suffer the abuse of the “gentiles” . . . (ll. 102–104; 171–174). All this he has done so that he may pay homage to his most venerated saint.

II

Sainthood, namely the attribution of sanctity to individuals and their subsequent veneration, whether in their lifetime or after their death, is a universal phenomenon amply attested to in antiquity. It may have its roots in the yearning of man to link himself with the divine spheres or to attain their protection and favor through non-human intermediaries such as daimons or guardian angels (Brown, 1981, pp. 33–61). The veneration of saints is widely prevalent in contemporary cultures and religions. It constitutes an integral part of Christianity and holds a prominent place in Islam. The tombs of the Christian saints became centers of the ecclesiastical life of their region. Some are viewed as patron-spirits of their locality, while others transcend their regional confines to embrace the universal community of believers. Islam, likewise, has its own walis whose tombs dot the various Muslim countries. Their shrines, which are generally located in conspicuous places, are readily recognizable by their qubba shape (domed roof). The cult of the saints is most prevalent throughout the Maghreb. Indeed, the presence of marabouts “is the most striking feature of Moroccan Islam” (Eickelman, 1976, pp. 6–7; see also id. 1977). In both Christianity (particularly the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches) and Islam, the masses attribute an

10. Wali is the common Arabic name for saint, from the Arabic root wali, to be near. In ordinary use the word means protector, benefactor, companion, friend. See the article “Wali” in Encyclopedia of Islam (Old Edition), 4:1109, and Goldziher (1971, pp. 277–341).

11. See also Crapanzano (1973); Dermenghem (1954); Doutté (1900); Gelner (1969).
almost divine nature to their saints. They address them in the same manner as they would address God and perform ceremonial processions around their tombs. Some even offer them sacrifices.

It should be noted that this cultic attitude toward the saints had been sharply condemned by Christians, notably by the Anglican Church. Muslim theologians also censured it and branded it as a contaminating legacy of pagan worship and a reflection, both in its essence and manifestations, of the worship of idols and local deities (Brown, 1981, pp. 6–7). Not only is there no warrant for such cult in Scripture, the Qurʾān or the *sunna*, so it is claimed, but it is also contrary to their very spirit. Muslim theologians went so far as to declare this practice to be tantamount to *şirk* (attribution of associates to God) and *bidʿa* (innovation, heresy). This, they contended, violates the principle of *tawhīd* (unity of Allah), verging on polytheism. Thus, for example, the end of the eighteenth century witnessed the Wahhābī crusade which destroyed tombs and shrines of *wālis*, including the most venerable shrines of Muhammad, the earliest *khalīfas* and the great martyrs of the Shiʿites. However, popular sentiments proved to be too strong to suppress, and, to judge from the current proliferation of tomb-shrines, the cult of the saints is as strong among the masses as ever.

The concept of sainthood is not alien to Judaism, although it is far from being as deeply rooted as in either Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Christianity or Islam. Jewish tradition holds in high esteem those individuals who, by their supremely virtuous mode of life and their exceptional adherence to the Torah and its commandments, serve as ideal exemplars of faith. Such singularly righteous people, whose actions and intentions are “for the sake of Heaven” (Berk 60a), are believed to possess the ability to exert influence upon the “Higher Spheres”. The *ḥāsid, qādōš* or *ṣaddiq* (the Hebrew terms for “saint”) are, according to the rabbis, even greater than the ministering angels (San. 93a) and they have, through prayers and intercession with God, the ability to control the forces of nature and to annul disastrous divine decrees (Sab. 63a). Indeed, this concept of the *ṣaddiq* and his crucial role in preserving and sustaining the world with his piety is among those essential concepts which form the backbone of Jewish life and thought (see Schechter, 1938, pp. 148–181).

12. For example, article 22 of the 39 articles drawn up in 1562 by the Anglican Church censures the invocation of the saints and characterizes it as one of those practices “vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God” (see Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 2:51).
14. See Mach (1957); Horodezky (1928); Schechter (1938, pp. 148–181); Dubnov (1966).
Generally speaking, although Judaism allowed the emulation and even veneration of its qedōšīm (holy persons) while alive, it refrained from granting ecclesiastical sanction to them after their death, let alone canonizing them by juridical process. It rather adhered to the rabbinic dictate, "The righteous need no monuments, their teachings are their memorial" (Seqālim 2,5). The very popular talmudic and midrashic sayings relating to the constant existence of thirty-six righteous persons upon whose merits the world exists and "upon whom the Shekhina (Divine Presence) rests" (San.97b, Suk.45b) are too well known to need elaboration. However, it should be stressed that the rabbis insist that these mysterious saints, whose piety extends beyond the requirements of the law, live in utter obscurity, unnoticed by their fellow men, and are themselves generally unaware of their own status. This emphasis on the anonymity of the saints is highly significant, since it reflects the predominantly negative attitude of the rabbis toward the cult associated with the tombs and shrines of saints.

Exceptions to this attitude are, however, not lacking. The most notable, indeed the most unusual one, is the Jewish community of Morocco, which has produced, according to Ben-Ami (1984, p. 11), more than 610 Jewish saints, including 25 female saints. This is, however, not surprising in view of the fact that this community lived for many centuries in a country marked by an unparalleled proliferation of maraboutic shrines.

III

Yemenite Jewry, probably the oldest Jewish community, lived for centuries in relative isolation, both physically and spiritually, in a predominantly Zaydī (an offshoot of the Shi‘ite sect) Islamic state, one permeated with Muslim saints. Despite this fact, this community did not capitulate to Muslim influence in this area. The Jews of Yemen refrained from sanctifying their personages, so that shrines of Jewish saints in Yemen are almost nonexistent. One exception, however, is that of Rabbi Shalom Shabazi, the subject of our Baqqāšā's veneration.

15. Cp. the strikingly similar Muslim belief in the existence of 4000 or, according to another version, 356 saints hidden in the world, whose sanctity is not always apparent and who are themselves unconscious of their state ("Wali," Encyclopedia of Islam, 4: 1109).

16. It should be noted that Yemenite Jewry no longer exists as a separate and independent community. Its wholesale departure to Israel, which assumed the dimensions of mass exodus in the 1950's, brought an end to its pulsating life. The shrine of Rabbi Shalom Shabazi is, however, still in Ta‘izz. For insights into various aspects of this community, see Ahroni (forthcoming); Goitein (1983); Gamliel (1976 and 1978); Nini (1982).

17. A few Yemenite Jews used to pay visit to the grave of Rabbi Pinehas, for the purpose of prayer.
Yemenite Jewry had adorned Shabazi with a garland of the highest reverence and virtually canonized him. The tomb-shrine of “Weli Shabazi,” as he was referred to by the British explorer Hugh Scott (1942), is situated east of the city of Ta‘izz, the major city of the southern part of Yemen. Scott describes this grave as “a whitewashed oblong with a little arch on top at one end . . . surrounded by a rough stone wall with a small low one-roomed stone building opening into the enclosure” (p. 92). From the accounts of other travelers, notably Jacob Saphir, and also from indigenous Yemenite records, we learn that this tomb is popularly known as “al-ziyāra (place of pilgrimage) of Abbo Sālim al-Shabazi” (p. 92). Adjacent to the grave is a cave with a spring of water, known as al-minşāra. After praying at Shabazi’s tomb, we are told, pilgrims, particularly the sick and the afflicted, would proceed to the spring anticipating a responsive sign from the saint. Whatever came forth from the gushing spring, a leaf, grass, insect, and the like, would be taken, preserved in a leather case and worn as an amulet. Such amulets were believed to be potent charms highly effective in warding off evil, in healing the sick, and in eliminating personal, marital and other difficulties (Saphir, 1866, p. 82; Ḥoze, 1973, p. 42). The unworthy, however, the accounts relate, could not be helped by the saint; he would find the spring dry, and the entrance of the cave guarded by a serpent (Ḥoze, p. 42).

The life of Shabazi, the Yemenite Jewish Saint, as it emerges from the web of legend spun around him (see Ḥoze, 1973 and 1982; Noy, 1967), accords in many respects with the general model of the Muslim waḷī or marabout. Despite the differences, at times marked, in details from one individual to another, saints are essentially stock characters. Their miraculous feats, when stripped to their bare essence, are found to cluster around a limited number of familiar hagiographic motifs.

Generally speaking, saints are believed to be recipients of divine blessings (barakāt). They are credited with a miraculous power and therapeutic gifts (karamāt) which enable them to heal all sorts of human ailments and afflictions: cure disease, remove sterility, bestow earthly benefits upon people, eliminate blights, plagues and disasters from a community or region and confound enemies. They have control over the jinn (spirits) and ʿafārīt (demons), and they, therefore, possess the ability to cure the devil-struck and the mentally possessed. They have the power to bestow the faculty of speech upon animals and stones, and wild animals are subject to their will. They are able to defy and control the laws of nature. They are not hindered by spatial distances since the earth folds up for them, enabling them almost instantaneously to visit remote
places.\textsuperscript{18} They stop the course of the sun and are invulnerable against attack on either body or soul (see Goldziher, 1971). Indeed, these and other miraculous exploits constitute in the eyes of the masses the proof of saintliness. However, once an individual's saintliness is established, hagiographic legends tend to attach to him as if by magnetic attraction, woven and embroidered by the unbridled exaggeration of the local or regional popular mind. The greater the miraculous feats attributed to a saint, the larger is the circle of his believers, and the greater is the awe, reverence and esteem which he commands.

Such miraculous feats are also reflected in the legends that are associated with Shabazi. As expected, many of these stories are tinged with a typically Jewish flavor.\textsuperscript{19} Thus, we are told that Shabazi made use of his ability for miraculous and instantaneous transfer from one place to another for the purpose of observing the Sabbath in the Land of Israel, and alternatively in Jerusalem, Sefad, Tiberia and Hebron. He would leave Yemen every Friday afternoon and return every Saturday evening. It is for this reason that Jews refrained from visiting his grave on the day of the Sabbath; they thought it was futile to address an empty tomb.

Legend has surrounded his death with a halo. This saint, we are told, died on Friday afternoon, just before the eve of the holy Sabbath. The students and the congregation, who wished to refrain from desecrating the Sabbath, wanted to bury him on Saturday evening, after the conclusion of the Sabbath. One of his students, however, who wished to avoid delaying the burial, urged the community to bury him immediately. The legend goes on to say that while they were engaged in the discussion, the sun suddenly blazed and the congregation hastened to bury the saint. It is for his sake, they thought, that the sun stood still, in order not to allow the disgraceful exposure of his body until Saturday evening. The legend also says that Shabazi had anticipated the exact time of his death, and that just prior to it he had dug his own grave, prepared his shroud and bathed himself (See Ḥozc, 1973, pp. 11–12; Noy, 1977).

Like most hagiographic legends, those associated with Shabazi probably are mainly the figments of the popular imagination. They are, however, very valuable for the study of the little known seventeenth century Yemenite Jewish community. Hagiographic legends, it should be noted, although they revolve around stereotyped themes, are in their

\textsuperscript{18} This phenomenon is known as ǧayr al-‘ard in Arabic literature and referred to as qefšat derejk in Jewish tradition (See Hullin 91b, San. 95a).

\textsuperscript{19} Cp. those related to Rabbi Ba’al Shem Tov (Besht), the founder of the Hasidic movement (1700–1760).
details rooted in historical reality. They are highly reflective of the social, political and economic background of a particular region, and are in essence a product of the historical matrix. The legends that are told about Shabazi provide us deep insights into many features of Jewish existence in Yemen, particularly their social and religious interaction with the reigning Muslims in whose midst they lived. A typical example of such insightful legends is that relating to Shabazi's daughter, Šaṁah (“candle”), which recurs in diverse versions. According to one version, Šaṁah was a virtuous girl and extremely beautiful. When the son of the king saw her, he wished to marry her. Shabazi explained that such an intermarriage between a Jew and a Muslim is impossible, since Jews differ from Muslims in many respects, particularly regarding circumcision, observance of the Sabbath and dietary laws. The king, however, insisted upon such a marriage. In view of the king's threat to use force if necessary, Shabazi decided to bring death upon his daughter. On the day appointed for the wedding, he dressed his daughter in white, as befits a bride, and led her in procession to meet the bridegroom, singing wedding songs (zaффāt) along the way. However, when she reached the bridegroom, she fell down and died, to the dismay of the king and his son (Hoze, 1973, pp. 5–6).

We have stated earlier that Yemenite Jewry refrained from canonizing its personages. Why then did it make an exception with respect to Shabazi? What were its motivating forces? Who was Shabazi in real life? Unfortunately, Shabazi's life, like that of most saints, is shrouded in a thick veil of mystery. Legend is inextricably mixed with fact in all that is told of him. From one account which he himself wrote (1977, p. 135), we learn that he was born in 1619, a year which he associated with a bizarre celestial phenomenon. In that year, he says, two stars rose from the East with "tails like a stick." These two stars were understood by Jewish scholars to be "the stars of the Messiah," proclaiming the imminent advent of salvation. The question as to whether Shabazi saw himself in the role of one of the messiahs cannot be conclusively determined. But the fact that he refers again to the event of the appearance of these two "messianic" comets indicates that he was obsessed with this phenomenon, which stirred in him and in Yemenite Jewry great messianic expectations.

Shabazi, it should be noted, was above all a poet and a writer. He left us a literary legacy which consists of a large corpus of his poems and

20. Jewish tradition relates to the appearance of two messiahs: ben-Yosef (also named ben-Ephraim) and ben-David. The former is a belligerent messiah, who will precede the latter and pave the way for him (see Klauzner, 1955, pp. 402–403).

21. The major part of his extant poem has been published. See Mekiton, 1966; Seri and Tobi, 1976.
an extensive midrashic commentary on the Pentateuch. Some of his poems are written in Hebrew, others in Arabic, and still others in Aramaic. In many of his poems, stanzas in Hebrew and Arabic would alternate, often intermixed with Aramaic. Indeed, Shabazi was able to wield these three Semitic languages with equal facility and dexterity.

Shabazi's immense literary output, however, provides an extremely scanty yield with respect to his personal life. His writings are dominated by religious and national themes. Reference to his personal life would, as a general rule, be injected in his work insofar as it merged with or reflected the national or communal experience. Thus the precise date of his death has not so far been conclusively determined. All we know is that he must have died after 1679, the year in which the major part of the Jews of Yemen were exiled to Mauza (see Ratzaby, 1961). Shabazi had personally experienced this most fateful event in the history of Yemenite Jewry; he lived through it and lamented it.

From his writings, however, we learn that he was born in Śbez, one of the villages around Ta'izz. He wandered from one Jewish community to another, and he spent some years in Sanaa among the Jewish sages whom he mentioned with great reverence. From two poems, which were dedicated to Yemenite rulers, we may infer that he was a prominent figure in Yemenite Jewry, possibly a spiritual leader recognized by the authorities. One of these two poems bears the superscription: “Composed on the day in which he, Sayyid Ḥasan, ascended the throne” (Ratzaby, 1958, pp. 298–300). It seems safe to assume that Shabazi came to pay tribute to the new ruler on behalf of the Jewish communities in Yemen. Indeed, our Baqqāša seems to refer to this particular role when it addresses him as “foundation of the earth, who was steadfastly faithful to the House of Israel, and stood for them in time of affliction like a firm wall . . . [and who] defended them and pleaded their cause” (Il. 28–31).

Were Shabazi's roles as leader, scholar and intercessor the motivating factors for his exceptional sanctification? While these and other factors must have played a role in this respect, they were not, in my opinion, the major factors. Yemenite Jewry had produced personages of greater stature than Shabazi in terms of leadership and scholarship. Yet it did not accord them sainthood. It seems to me that the reason for the veneration of Shabazi by the Jews of Yemen is to be found in the nature and tenor of his poetry, the themes of which are predominantly religious and nationalistic. The suffering of the exile and the great expectations for messianic redemption ring throughout his poems. Indeed, his jubilant and exuberant references to the imminent arrival of the Messiah fanned

22. Hemdat Yāmin (2 volumes); published in 1977.
sparks of hope amid the ashes of despair. Many of his poems are enveloped in a cloud of mystical terms which at time baffles penetration. Indeed qabbalism, esotericism, allegory, theosophy, and cosmology are all abundantly represented in his poetry. Many of his poems are still chanted by the Yemenites on various occasions, accompanied by dances and rhythmical movements. Rabbi Koräh aptly characterizes this poetry as a blending of supplications and praise to the Creator, ethics and faith, joy and rejoicing. It strives to elicit a smile from the mouth of the oppressed. He adds that the Yemenite attitude toward Shabazi’s poetry is like the study of the Torah. “The congregation is forbidden to desecrate poetry with any conversation. They strain their ears to hear the poems. One moment they are overjoyed, the next they shed a tear. ... Scenes of heavenly spheres are revealed to them, and it is impossible to graphically depict this” (Mekiton, 1966, p. 3).

Shabazi is certainly the most luminous figure and most gifted poet whom Yemenite Jewry had produced. With him Hebrew poetry in Yemen reached its highest bloom. Shabazi exercised a deep and lasting influence on the Yemenite Jewish poets who followed his footsteps. With his death, however, the decline of Yemenite Hebrew poetry was quick and precipitous.

Shabazi was an ardent spokesman of Yemenite Jewry before earthly kings and before Heaven. He brought to his brethren knowledge of the nearness of God, and of His love for them, and he expressed their yearnings for Him. He stirred with his mighty poetic chords their innermost feelings and revived in them the hopes of redemption which they had cherished for centuries. His poetry was viewed by Jews in Yemen as “a ladder set up on the earth with its top reaching up to the Heavens” (Mekiton, p. 3). It is no wonder, then, that they responded by sanctifying him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Goitein, S. D. 1939e. *Mas'âôt Habîšû*. Tel-Aviv.

THE TEXT OF THE *BAQQĀSĀ*

הַכְּשָׁה

Introduction:

1. אַתָּה יִלְכְּחֹבּ בַּכְּשָׁה נַאִי לְאָמַרְתָּע עַל כָּבֵר הַצִּידְקָא אֲדוֹדֵהְוָנָא.
2. מָחוֹרֵנָא הַרְבּוֹנָא הָמוֹדֵא לְבִין גַּלְגֵל עָיִן חֲמַרְדַּרְוָנָא הַחוֹבָמָא.
3. הָכָּלִיל הַנֶּתֶנָא הַאֲדַלֶּה מַמְרַדְוָא שְׁלוֹם שְׁבָנָא צִיוָאָא: 1
4. יְרֵא לֶהָלְוָא לָכֵנָא חָאָלָנָא בֵּי יִשְׂרָאֶל הַבָּאָסִי לְהָשָּׁמָעְתָּא עַל כָּבֵר
5. הָצִידֵק מִי שָׁמַי לְחָלָל וּאֱיוֹדֵא צָעֵר בְּנוֹפֵר לְלָכַפָּלעֲא עַל
6. עֶמָּה אַצְלָא כָּבֵר הַצִּידְקָא בָּרוֹחָא אֲפָמָא רוֹחֲפָא בֶּדָאָה 2
7. דַּרְזָא לְכִמָא אַחֲתָא שָׁשִי בַּיָּא חוֹלוֹכֵין מְגָזִין על הָקָבר אֲזִיל
8. לַהֵמֵא בָּלְוָשָׁנָאוָא צְרֵיצָה חוֹלוֹכֵין לָמֵר שָׁמַי בָּדֵרָא הָרְדוּנָא
9. עָצֵיְמָא דְּמַשָּׁה אֲמָרְתָּא בָּלוֹכָבָא לַכָּבָר והָכָּשָׁה לְלָכַפָּלעֲא הַהוֹלוֹכָלִים
10. לְהָשָּׁמָעְתָּא עַל הָקָבָר הַזָּה שָׁלָא יִתְיָה טְמָאָה מַקְדָּחֲא לִיָּלָה חַיִיָּא
11. מְזוֹיעָה רָדִיכָא עַל בֵּרְזִי אָמָא הָאָמָא בָּלְחָל שֶׂהָרָא טְרֶיצָא מְסְבִּלָה
12. קְדֵם שִּׁלְחָא וָגֵמָא אוֹחְרָא שָׁנוּבָא זַאֵמָא לַכֻּלֵּי לֵעָשָּׁהָא כְּגַּכּ שָׁעְבָּהָא כְּגַּכּ
13. לַעֲלִיָּא 3
14. שָׁלָא יְלָא וָלֵכָא מַיָּי לְשָׁנָאוָא קְדֵם שִּׁלְחָא עַל כָּבֵר הַצִּידְקָא
15. כָּדִי שָׁקִיעָא עֵלִי עֶמָּה מַקְדָּחֲא שְׁכָחָאָה כְּחַדְרֵי לָלָא אֲלוֹחֲכָא לְאֵיָהָא
16. לְשָׁלָמָא 4 וְעַתָּה שְׁמָא שְׁפִּיחֲאָה שְׁמָאָה וּעְשִית 5 רְחִיתָא, כְּכַל הָוִיטָא מְפִית.

---

1. וכָּתָבָמָא לַעֲלִיָּא אֲמָא.
2. בּּעַתָּה שָׁשָּׁה.
3. חֵסָוֹלָה.
4. Thus raised in the Manuscript. The word has been added by the scribe.
5. Deut 23:22
6. בּוכָיבָא.
7. Deut 23:24
A PETITION (BAQQĀSHA) ADDRESSED TO RABBI SHALOM SHABAZI

8. Num 30:3
9. Jonah 2:9
10. “His (Heavenly) record-book will be scrutinized, namely account will be taken in Heavens of his failure to pay his vows.

11. Should be מחות
12. יומרי רבנים
13. זו
14. Exod 23:15; 34:20
15. בַּעַר שָׁרוּר
16. עַלְמָן מְלָךְ הָגָו
17. See Berak 58b.
18. Prov 10:25
19. Based on Dan 12:3
20. Read סְליָם
21. Exod 23:25
22. Read

23. Isa 59:21

24. I Sam 25:29

25. Dan 12:3

26. With the words “Let the (supplicant) express here his own wish and desire,” the author allows an insertion of a personal petition.

27. פלוני ב פלוני.

28.bibhar

29. Another pause for insertion of a personal petition.
A PETITION (BAQASH) ADDRESSED TO RABBI SHALOM SHABAZI

30. literally "prison." The reference, however, is to the Ga'afar, "exile" (see line 110).
31. The full name of the saint is given here. Abba Shalom ben-Yosef al-Shabazi.
32. See the prayer added to the Amidah of Rosh Hashanah and Jewish holy days.
33. See Isa 6:3. 34. See Ps 141:2. 35. See note 30. 36. See the Mishnah of Amida. 37. See the Holy Name, blessed be He."
108. See Jer 31:17

109. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

110. See the prayer of the ʿAmidāh.

111. See Lam 5:7

112. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

113. See Lam 5:7

114. See Jer 31:17

115. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

116. See the prayer of the ʿAmidāh.

117. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

118. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

119. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

120. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

121. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

122. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

123. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

124. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

125. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

126. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

127. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

128. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

129. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

130. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

131. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

132. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

133. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

134. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

135. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

136. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

137. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

138. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

139. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

140. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

141. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

142. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

143. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

144. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

145. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

146. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.

147. See Jer 17:14. See also the prayer of ʿAmidāh.
A PETITION (BAQQAf4) ADDRESSED TO RABBI SHALOM SHABAZI

138. יש להניב את קבוריין יבדוי אצלה
139. כ överヘڅכן דכ פטרן קכרצך סוס על מבוקרים והנני ויבש
140. הובר על כן חחושת והזורה כלpen חשה עמון למען שוק
141. ברוחם בבראראן את תפחל וברוחם הילך השם לבראראן
142. שלמה רפאה הנפש רפאה הנפשᒲעברךילאראך וגהן על
143. על כל הזרחי וכיוני בהר שקרא לעברךילאראך וגהן על
144. והם כאן יכלו לארוזי העולמים והם הקוענות האמן גשגז

48. שלמה רפאה הנפש רפאה הנפש
49. See the conclusion of the ‘Amidah.
50. See Ps 66:9; 121:3
51. See the Qaddis prayer
52. רכז
172 רבן על אבותנו והבינוى על נשים ובנות בניינו.
173 לשליחי התהום לעצם על קבר היה המたりי כי שיעלה וה-abortionות.
174 כי אםستر עפרת במעגלה קירבה ו.Tipo
175 המברת יחיה propagated by 108 superstitions שמחה בארץ עתה ואל כה שיבורה.
176 עכשו כן 109 מאמר שירסת הילולא ומקרא
177 בנטני ולא ראו שירסת הילולה ומקרא
178 שמחה הילולא ורמא וקבל דרמות והריאו בצער.
179 ואיתו וירא מה לבבנו מיה רכחות ותקחים ממשלת טבון.
180 החלצה הרבונה והבללה: רבש"ע אנונימי והימים ברוח הקדוש.
181 חכמה והרים והר קבר או כחלקה אשר הרות זה בלשה.
182 מבכרות ותпонת ללבנון חסודת תורה שלמה שלמה משאולה.
183 לפיו צוונה בשלום כאלו חרב שאלה
184 לרבו צוונה בשלום שאלה
185 לأخبار להנהמה להנהמה בנסים הנוסים נאמנים רעים.
186 זה ברקע שמכרו את א뽑ה רחובagements עזות.
187 הפּתּוּרַת וไฟล์ סוף אחלה פרטנים כי אופנים מפלים והתווננים.
188 ושבחים את המצות לה לאלוהים כי אינן מקהלת בשמם.
189 מתיו סופיון ורס חלון נשלות נשיקה שלזרות פורדה פעות.
190 שארית צוונה ליילם שמעת עטש עזר לא שמום.
191 מפי צוונה יצרני מהדור זכרונות וזכורים קורבים.
192 יהאל צוונה לברנונין ופי צוונה יזרני ודיכן ורכז.
193 שם חנין בזרואגונין и וראה יהאל ממקום רבים וברון.
194 הל)findViewById התפוני לأخلاقקש למחוסל המהפכי: אלוהים על קרב.
195ราชการ לאו זכרה לא באיצן על קרב לא женני ובזכות.
196 מופר זכרון שמחיה שהיתה שלזה הל Tmax התעלה במחרת.
197 על הנופים שלשה לה רפואה ושמירה לא ולשאה.
198 על הנופים שלשה לה רפואה ושמירה לא ולשאה.
199 אם כי עבדך כי יאמכו זכור על זכרת אבון.
200 שלמה לפני ברך ישראל מחברת ובמות.
201 כשם רוחם לזרם על פליטתו וזרוםו המчасית.
202 המבה והעניב והבשר וה},${ והשגיח לכל לעنة ועון.
203 אמרו משל ומעל כל ישראל אחיםшкиו.
204 כל תחיים זכרו וה humili יכמב המזרח ולמען.
205 ישראל עון אלו מעבון או מי שמעם כמלת וי.
206 משכוןו וצורה ואל תעש עגון כל פלוגת ברו.

53. See the Mūsāf prayer for Shabbat and rosh hōdeš.
54. See the ‘Amidah prayer
55. See Lam 4:8
56. See ibid 4:4
57. See ibid 4:4
58. See ibid 4:4
59. See ibid 4:4
A PETITION (BAQQÂṣa) ADDRESSED TO RABBI SHALOM SHABAZI

...
is replete with Qabbalistic and mystical allusions. For insightful studies on Qabblah and Jewish mysticism, see Thisbi (1957); Scholem (1974); Blumenthal (1978).
A PETITION (BAQQĀʾĂ) ADDRESSED TO RABBI SHALOM SHABAZI

[...

76. Exod 2:24
77. See Ps 103:5
78. מקדש שבת ביא
79. Exod 15:26
80. נומז
81. Deut 7:15
82. Exod 23:25
83. Ibid 23:26
84. Joel 2:26
85. Mal 3:20
86. Isa 57:19
87. Ibid 57:18
88. Ibid 58:8
89. See 2 Kgs 20:1–11; 2 Chron 32:24–26
90. See Num 12:13
91. See Prov 3:2
92. Ps 90:10
93. תיב לفتحי"ז זריז ו다가לי. See the Conclusion of the "Amidah"
אתחכים יקרו חולים כمحا숴 הדבר וגו המדים באו וגו המעיון ושלב
שיכונים את לבי חדש ולא ישוב עviar להעניך והדברים של שלא תחום
הפתעה ריקת זו:)
ידי חזו כלב יי ישראל שלח האומות בשמש וגו יאמר
אמרו אוח כҺהבה אלימלך אברם בן יעקב אבי המצות
והנה נחת אצלו שלם ינ ברוך ובברינו ובבר כל ישראל
אכן וכר:)}
A PETITION (BAQQĀṢĀ) ADDRESSED TO RABBI SHALOM SHABAZI

(Samples from the Ms.)
עבכ ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נusalem האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמות האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
לעוה נשמת האלוהים זכרון צדוק נר עיניים לשגיא
והנה ידידי יחל לי נועש קדימה לארון
אלה אלהים זכ...