Yosef Dhu Nuwas, a Sadducean King with Sidelocks

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Abstract:

This paper traces the history and fortunes of the Hellenizing Jewish family of the Tobiads from their Persian roots, to their founding of a petty kingdom at ‘Iraq al-Amir, to the Nabatean wars, to the Tubba kings of Himyar. It explores 3rd to 6th century Arabia as an extension of the Second Commonwealth, and a direct descendant of the Tobiad petty kingdom. It also covers the loss of a replica of the Ark of the Covenant adorned even today with the Tobiad/Himyar dove, now buried under a church in Axum, Ethiopia; and discusses the linguistic derivations of Saracen, mushreqoon and “Dhu Nuwas”.

The Tobiads

The history of the Tobiads dynasty has both fascinated and challenged historians and archeologists. It spans over a thousand years, covering what might be called the entire “Biblical Period”. We first learn of this dynasty through the mention of the Levitical judge Tobiyah sent by the Judean king Yehoshaphat around 849 BCE.1 Next we learn of the Tobiad tax-collectors in the Lachish ostraca, often dated immediately prior to the Babylonian captivity around 586 BCE.2 Much of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah concern Tobias the Ammonite, covering the years 538-413 BCE. There is mention of the governors of the Trans-Euphrates in the Elephantine papyri, a generation later, 495-399 BCE. In the Zenon papyri, the Tobiads are influential Jewish landowners in Trans-Jordan, before 260 BCE.3 Josephus documents the Hellenizing activities of the Tobiads immediately prior to the Maccabean revolt 205-167 BCE,4 information echoed by the author of 2 Maccabees.5 Josephus leaves open a possible connection between the Tobiads and the Herodians.6 Lastly we read of the Jewish prince “Tobiyah” described by Moses of Khorene who is said to have introduced Thaddæus, and thus Christianity, to Edessa (in modern day Şanlıurfa, Turkey). This Tobiyah is said to be the ancestor of the Armenian-Georgian royal family of Bagratuni and by some accounts the basis of their claim to “descent from King David”.7

There has been significant research concerning the Tobiads Dynasty on the basis of textual evidence and archaeological excavations at their palace in ‘Iraq al-Amir, Jordan.8 We know that the Tobiads played a prominent part in the process of Hellenization of the Jewish people. They supported first the Ptolemaic and later the Seleucid regimes in their control over the Land of Israel. Most research has focused on the Hellenistic period, but since the discovery of the Lachish ostraca and the Elephantine papyri, a great deal of attention has also been made on the post-exilic period of the Jewish people. However with the successful Maccabean revolt against Hellenism, almost all mention of the Tobiads ceases, and likewise the attention of scholars.

Moses of Khorene, however, traces a glorious continuation of the dynasty in the form of the royal family of Bagratuni, kings of Armenia. This is not the only royal family which claimed a connection to the Tobiads,

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1 2 Chronicles 17:3-8, 19:4-8
2 Lachish Ostracon 3 and 5
3 Zenon papyri (C. P. Jud. 1; C. P. Jud. 4-5)
4 Antiquities of the Jews 7:4
5 2 Maccabees 3:11.
6 In an obscure quote, both Josephus’ Antiquities Chapter 13.5.8 and 1 Maccabees 12:16 refer to an “Antipater son of Jason”. We will explore below the possibility of a tradition connecting the Tobiads with what would become the House of Herod. Clearer evidence, however, can be evinced archeologically at the Tobiad palace at ‘Iraq al-Amir, which itself is a masterpiece of Herodian architecture and masonry.
7 History of Armenia, attributed to Moses of Khorene, chapter 7
however. We wish to explore the proposed relationship between the Tobiads and the Tubba' kings of Himyar, a dynasty which controlled much of Arabia during late antiquity. The purpose of this paper is to understand who the Tobiads were, what was the extent of their kingdom, and the nature of their religion. By documenting the transition of Tobiads of Syria to the Tubba's of southern Arabia, we hope to provide a key to understanding the context, identity and religious system of the residents of Medina on the eve of Islam.

**Tobiyah the Levite under King Yehoshaphat 873-849 BCE**

In the book of 2 Chronicles, Yehoshaphat, the king of Judah, is recorded has having an official from the tribe of Levi, who's name was Tobiyah. Of course modern scholarship has no way to determine the genealogical relationship, if any, between this Tobiyah and the Tobiad dynasty, but traditional rabbinic literature views this official as the first dignitary of the Tobiah dynasty. It has been noted that Tobiah (or Tobiyah) is a name comprised of the word Tov meaning “good” and Y-H which is derived from the name of God unique to Judaism. This seems to indicate a thoroughly Jewish name, and for a Levite, the name is not at all unusual. This point will be important we consider below whether the Tobiads were “Jewish” or not.

According to biblical law, within the tribal system of Israel, the Levites performed a primarily supportive role to the priesthood. Levites naturally required a certain amount of education and training to perform their duties. In the course of time this evolved into a semi-governmental position where they were teachers, the transcribers and interpreters of the law, and chroniclers of the times in which they lived. In the period that followed the Babylonian exile, the Levites contributed to the formation of the Knesset Hagedolah (Great Synagogue) and together with the priests, formed the majority of the proto-Sanhedrin. In this way they had a large share in the administration of justice even in capital cases.

A function closely related to the interpretation of the law was that of prophecy. Both prophecy and jurisprudence shared the common goal of elucidating and applying the law. Even today, the Shulchan Aruch, the classical work of Jewish law, is called by the names of the Urim ve’Tumim, the gemstones of the High Priests breastplate used by kings and prophets for divining matters of law, government policy, and military campaigns. It is not unexpected that the vast majority of Judaic prophets were priests or Levites, and the Levitical families maintained a connection, more or less intimate, with the schools of the prophets.

From the narrative in 2 Chronicles 17:3, it can be seen that Yehoshaphat, king of Judah, pursued a policy of intensive religious and judicial reform to counter the effects of the revolt of the ten tribes and the policy pursued by Yeroboam, king of Israel. He sent his officials Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah to teach in the cities of Judah, accompanied by the Levites Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Yehonathan, Adoniyyah, Tobiyah, and Tov-Adoniyyah, and by the priests Elishama and Yehoram. For the first time we hear of significant tax revenues being collected. The later Tobiads were sometimes referred to as the governors of Amman. They were also known as far-reaching and great tax-collectors for whatever government was ruling in the Land of Israel, the Persians, Ptolemies, Seleucids or Romans. It is possible that Yehoshaphat's official "Tobiyah" was the first of the dynasty to engage in tax farming for the ruling powers.

Other than tax-farming however, this Tobiyah seemed to be limited to "judge on behalf of the Lord and to settle disputes among the residents of Jerusalem" and "The Levites will serve as officials before you." The division between religious and sovereign authority was clearly made even at this early date. Amariah, the chief priest, would be responsible for all matters pertaining to the Lord’s law, and Zevadiah, of the royal house, would be responsible in all matters pertaining to the king. Zevadiah son of Ishmael was a leader of the family of Judah, and of mixed Edomite-Judahite ancestry. From this we also see that the royal house of Judah had intermarried with the house of Edom.

**Tobiads in the Lachish ostraca**

The Lachish ostraca are a collection of approximately twenty inscribed potsherds, discovered in 1935 and 1938 in Tell ed-Duweir, located in the coastal plain of Israel, in an area identified with the ancient city of Lachish. At one time Lachish was the second most important city of the kingdom of Judah. In 586 BCE,

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9 Mazar reviews the more definitive and proposed references to the Tobiad dynasty over several centuries in "The Tobiads", 137-45, 229-38. 10 Smith's Bible Dictionary, "Levite". 11 2 Chronicles 19:4 12 Ibid.
Lachish was devastated by the Assyrians. It remained unoccupied until the time of Nehemiah when he says it had a "remnant of Israel."\(^{13}\) Excavation at Lachish revealed a set of ostraca written in the oldest examples known of Hebrew script.\(^{14}\) They were found in a burnt layer (level II) immediately beneath the mid-fifth century Persian layer and thus seem to have been written very shortly before the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, perhaps ranging up to three or four years before that event.\(^{15}\)\(^{16}\)

The following are some quotes from these letters:

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Your servant Hoshayahu has sent (this letter) to report to my lord Yaush: May the LORD let my lord hear a report of well being and a report of goodness. And now, please open the eyes of your servant as to (the purpose of) the letter that he sent to your servant last night, for the heart of your servant has been sick since you sent (it) to your servant. For my lord said: "You don't know how to read it!" As The LORD lives, nobody has ever attempted to read for me a letter! And moreover, every letter that comes to me, when I have read it, afterwards I can repeat it (in) detail! Now your servant has received (a report) saying (that) the military general Koniyahu son of 'El-Natan has gone down to enter Egypt. Concerning Hodavayahu son of 'Ahiyahu and his men, he has sent (word) to take them from here. And (as for) the letter of Tobiyahu, servant of the king (that) came to Shallum son of Yada' from the prophet\(^{17}\) saying "Beware," your servant is sending it to my lord. (Ostracon 3)\(^{18}\)
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May The LORD allow my lord to witness a good harvest today. Is Tobiyahu going to send royal grain to your servant? (Ostracon 5)\(^{19}\)

The letters appear to be the communications between a military commander Yaush and someone of lower rank called Hoshayahu. They testify to literacy well beyond the government and scribes, even among the soldiers. The ostraca mention prominently a keeper of royal grain called Tobiyahu. B. Mazar traces the genealogy of the Tobiads to the Tobiyahu of the Lachish ostraca\(^{20}\), though not all scholars agree.\(^{21}\) The ostraca combined with the Zenon papyri and Josephus make a strong case for Mazar's proposition of a Tobiad dynasty of Trans-Jordanian tax collectors.

It is difficult to reconstruct a single historical context for the letters based on such a limited sample. But it is apparent that the Babylonian invasion of Judah had not yet begun since one could travel in some safety from Lachish to Jerusalem, and harvesting crops in the Lachish's environs was still possible. It is in this context that another letter informs us of an Israelite military commander who was sent to Egypt, probably to obtain military support from Pharaoh Apries (589-570 BCE) in the imminent war against Babylon.

One distinctive feature found in the ostraca, but not found in Yehoshaphat's Tobiyah is the title "Tobiah servant (or slave) of the king" in ostracon 3:19. It is possible that the term servant/slave simply means a royal official. However, several generations later\(^{22}\)

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\(^{13}\) Nehemiah 11:30
\(^{14}\) Persia & Creation of Judaism, Book 6., Dating Ancient Near Eastern History (Part II), by Peter James; CAIS The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies, 1998
\(^{15}\) Mazar 1957, 229-238
\(^{16}\) Some scholars, identifying the Tobiad in the Lachish ostraca as the identical to that of Ezra-Nehemiah, date the ostraca to the post-exilic period. Cf. Persia & Creation of Judaism, Book 6., Dating Ancient Near Eastern History (Part II), by Peter James; CAIS The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies, 1998.
\(^{17}\) Often assumed to be Jeremiah, however on circumstantial and uncertain grounds. "The Prophet" in the Lachish Ostraca D. Winton Thomas, M.A. Regius Professor of Hebrew and Fellow of St. Catharine's College, Cambridge.; The Tyndale Old Testament Lecture, 1945
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) Mazar 1957, 229-238
\(^{21}\) Eskenazi 1992, 585.
\(^{22}\) If B. Mazar's reconstruction is correct, the name Tobiah alternates over at least nine generations of Tobiads. This is supported by newly published Ammonite inscriptions.
Nehemiah would use the term “Tobiah, the Ammonite slave.”

Ammon or Ammonites, known as the "children of Ammon," were referred to in the Bible, Assyrian and other records as a people living east of the Jordan river. The biblical tradition traces their origin to an illegitimate son of Lot, the nephew of the patriarch Abraham, as with the Moabites. The Ammonites were regarded by Jewish tradition as close relatives of the Israelites and Edomites. Attacks by the Ammonites on Israelite communities east of the Jordan were the primary reason behind the unification of the tribes under Saul, who defeated them.

In 2 Samuel 12:31, King David is described enslaving the Ammonites: "put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon". David's treatment of the captives is generally interpreted to mean that he employed them as laborers in various public works. At this time the Ammonites and other neighboring peoples in the Trans-Jordan, received the definition of "slave" according to Jewish law. The class system of "slave" would persist through the matrilineal line, even if the sovereign no longer exercised authority over them.

In the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the Ammonites seem to have been fickle in their political attitude. They assisted the Babylonian army against the Jews; encroached upon the territory of the Gad; and occupied Heshbon and Yazer; but the prophetic threatening in Jeremiah 9:26, 25:21, 27:3, and Ezra, 21:20, point to rebellion by them against Babylonian supremacy. They received Jews fleeing before the Babylonians (Jeremiah 40:11), and their king Baalis, instigated the murder of Gedaliah, the Babylonians' Jewish governor of Jerusalem and its environs by the Edomite-Judahite prince Ishmael.

It is possible that the Tobiad governors of Ammon, after intermarrying with the Ammonite royal family inherited the epithet "the Ammonite slave". Since this servitude derives from the conquest of royalty, and his affairs were not regulated day to day by his "master", the Trans-Jordanian "slave" would have several advantages. He would be considered a Jew and partake of the Temple sacrifices. But he would only be bound by the laws "which are not time-bound", releasing him from the performance of most ritual. In this way the Tobiad tax-collectors, through their marriage alignments with the Ammonite royal family, would become "slaves" to the king, fully Jews but released from most ritual, free to pursue prophetic or philosophical interests according to their tastes. The Tobiads appear to have done both.

Declaration of Cyrus, 538BCE

One of the most well known events involving the Tobiads was Tobiah's interaction with Ezra and Nehemiah during the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple. In order to understand the political tensions and the internal situation within the Trans-Euphrates, including Judea, Samaria and elsewhere following the return in 539BCE from the Babylonian captivity, we need to understand the context and mechanism of that return.

The historian Ben Sasson proposes that upon conquering the Babylon Empire, Cyrus, embarked on a policy of reconciliation with his new subjects. This policy stood in marked contrast with the bitter rule of Nabonidus the last Babylonian king, who had heavily taxed his subjects and ordered all the temples of his empire closed and their idols removed and brought to protect the capital city. Perhaps wishing to present himself as a restorer of religion and order in Babylon and benefactor of all his subjects, Cyrus issued decrees allowing the rebuilding of temples, and the return of their idols, throughout his empire.

23 Nehemiah 4:1
The proclamation by Cyrus to the exiles of Judah in Babylon permitting them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem appears to be one of several examples of Cyrus policy of restoration and rebuilding of temples.\(^{25}\) The proclamation was made during his first year of rule after conquering the Babylonian Empire. Most historians date this event to 538 BCE.\(^{26}\) This was followed by several attempts, eventually successful, over several generations, to restart the Jewish sacrificial system, rebuild the Temple, and enclose the Temple area with a wall.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe these events. The main characters in these books are Zerubavel (later Nehemiah), Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshmu the Arab.\(^{27}\) It is generally assumed that Zerubavel was "Jewish" and Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshmu were native non-Jewish "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" (Ezra 4:1). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah lend themselves to the simplistic explanation that once the Temple was destroyed, the "Jews" were exiled to Babylon. Afterwards non-Jewish colonists were moved into the Land of Israel in their place. When the "Jews" returned in 549 BCE, they started to rebuild the Temple. The local (non-Jewish) population wanted to participate in the construction of the Temple, but was denied. This led to strife and conflict between non-Jew and Jew led by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshmu against the governors of Judah.

However, upon closer examination the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and in light of archaeological findings, this simplistic explanation does not stand up to critical review. Modern scholarship suggests that Zerubavel, Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshmu were governors appointed by the Persia government for military, religious, taxation and general administration purposes. It also appears that they were each from leading families among the Jews in Babylon and returning exiles. The local population was an admixture of colonists, poorer Jewish families that had remained, and neighboring ethnic groups that had expanded into what was once the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.\(^{28}\)

David Hughes goes further and suggests that these "leading families" were related to the Jewish royal family and the previous governors of each respective area.\(^{29}\) Sanballat believed himself to be related to the royal line through the kings of Israel. Tobias was on his paternal side a Levite, and on his maternal side believed himself to be a descendant of the princes of Manasseh. These princes were governors of Ammon, Moab and Edom and through them he claimed to be related to the royal line. Geshmu was a descendant of the Jewish governors over Nabatu and Sheba, and through them to royal line. According to this theory, when Cyrus sent governors to rule over what had once been Israel and Judah, he sent men from the royal family, descendants of the former rulers of those areas. These men functioned as tax farmers for the Persian government. In order to gain acceptance with the local population and facilitate the collection of taxes they heavily intermarried with the local population, except for those associated with the "tribes of Judah and Benjamin".

Critical analysis of the text of Ezra and Nehemiah reveals that sets of four occur throughout the text: four governors, four regional districts, four high priests, four scribes, etc. Yet we find that "Jerusalem ruled throughout the entire Trans-Euphrates" (Ezra 4:20). This would imply that the Temple and religious hierarchy in Jerusalem was to function for "all of Israel" throughout the Trans-Euphrates, from Egypt to southern Syria. Thus political tension in the Land of Israel would not necessarily be centered on ethnic and religious strife, but rather on the fact that the governors, Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshmu were put in a position where they had to pay for a religious system over which they had no control. "From the taxes of Trans-Euphrates the complete costs are to be given to these men" (Ezra 6:8). This would explain the two-fold resistance to the Temple in Jerusalem, first when it has decreed that there would be a single Temple and priesthood throughout the Trans-Euphrates, and secondly when it was allowed that the Judeans could build a wall around the Temple restricting control to a single political group.

By following the "sets of four" that occur throughout the text, it can be seen that the Persian governors paralleled each other in many ways, with the exception that the religious prerogative had been specially endowed on the governor of Judea, as detailed in the following table:

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\(^{25}\) Ibid.

\(^{26}\) Secular historians identify 538 BCE as the year Cyrus conquered the Babylonian empire and issued his proclamations. Traditional Jewish sources identify the year as 371 BCE. This is calculated by the 18 years between the proclamation and the rebuilding of the second Temple, and the 420 years it stood before being destroyed in 70 CE. Thus Jewish tradition assigns only 52 years to Persian rule (370-318 BCE), whereas secular history dates it at 208 years (538-330 BCE) – History of the Jewish People, The Second Temple Era, The Artscroll History Series, by Rabbis Nosson Sherman and Meir Zlotowitz, Mesorah Publications, Jerusalem, 1979.

\(^{27}\) Nehemiah 2:10, 19

\(^{28}\) The Political Tensions Reflected in Ezra-Nehemiah by Carl Schultz, Ph.D., Houghton College, Houghton, Pickwick Publications 1980.

\(^{29}\) This material is taken from David Hughes unpublished manuscript, "Davidic Dynasty"
# Persian Governance of Trans-Euphrates

(as described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judah</th>
<th>Samaria</th>
<th>Trans-jordan</th>
<th>Arabia</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ezra 1:11</strong></td>
<td>Sheshbazzar governor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prince</strong></td>
<td>Žerubavel son of Shealtiel</td>
<td>descendants of Delaiah</td>
<td>descendants of Tobiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Priest</strong></td>
<td>Yeshua son of Yehozadak</td>
<td>descendants of Hobaiah</td>
<td>descendants of Hakkoz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Ezra 3:1 | the Israelites were living in their towns, the people assembled in Jerusalem |

| Ezra 4:1 | the enemies of Judah and Benjamin |

| Wrote to the King | Ezra 4:7 | Bishlam | Mithredath | Tabeel |
| Ezra 4:8 | Rehum the commander | Shimshai the scribe | colleagues |
| Ezra 4:9 | Judea was deserted | Babylonians | Erechites | People of Susa (Elamites) |
| Ezra 4:10-11 | Jerusalem | Samaria | other places in Trans-Euphrates |
| Ezra 4:20 | Jerusalem ruled throughout the entire Trans-Euphrates |

| The officials | Ezra 5:3, 6:12 | Zerubavel governor of the Jews | Tattenai governor of Trans-Euphrates | Shethar-Bozenai | colleagues |

| Temple Tax | Ezra 6:8 | From the taxes of Trans-Euphrates the complete costs are to be given to these men |
| Ezra 8:35 | They presented the decrees of the king to the king’s satraps and to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, who gave help to the people and to the temple of God. |

| Zechariah 6:9 | Zechariah’s symbolic crowning of Yehoshua as high priest. “This will all come to pass if you completely obey the voice of the Lord your God.” |

| Zechariah 6:10 | Yehosiah son of Zephaniah | Heldai | Tobiayah | Yedaiah |
| Zechariah 6:14 | Hen son of Zephaniah | Helem | Tobiayah | Yedaiah |

| Completion of the Temple | Ezra 6:16 | The people of Israel the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles observed the dedication of this temple of God with joy. For the dedication of this temple of God they offered one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve male goats for the sin of all Israel, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. |

| The Passover | Ezra 6:21 | The Israelites who were returning from the exile ate it, along with all those who had joined them in separating themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land to seek the Lord God of Israel. |

| High Priest | Ezra 7:1 | Ezra |

| Ezra 7:21,27 | I, King Artaxerxes, hereby issue orders to all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates, that you precisely execute all that Ezra the priestly scribe of the law of the God of heaven may request of you... [Ezra will] appoint judges and court officials who can arbitrate cases on behalf of all the people who are in Trans-Euphrates who know the laws of your God. Those who do not know this law should be taught. |
The Return, Unity and Division

Nine years before Cyrus died, Zerubavel brought the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem along with huge sums of gold and silver from the royal treasury and voluntary gifts from the local Jewish community and Temple sympathizers. Jewish families came from all over Iraq in a great procession of families to resettle the former Israelite kingdom. Include among these were the noble families of: descendants of Delaiah [Sanballat], the descendants of Tobiah, and the descendants of Nekoda [Geshmu].

These last families are immediately qualified with the note "although they were unable to certify their family connection or their ancestry, as to whether they really were from Israel" and "They searched for their records in the genealogical materials, but did not find them." It is normally assumed these families had assimilated in Babylon. But considering that these were some of the noblest families, families who helped repair the walls of the city, intermarried with the Prophets and had their own Priests and Levites, this is hard to understand. Some of the priests listed, for example the descendants of Hakkoz, even served in the Second Temple under Herod. On closer examination another explanation can be seen. It appears that the fact that they were "unable to certify their family" may have been deliberate – due to their refusal to come to the convocation at Jerusalem:

And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whatsoever came not within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of the captivity. (Ezra 10:6)

This it appears that these noble families were originally accepted as "Jewish", and appointed by Persia as leaders of the Jewish people throughout the Trans-Euphrates. This is confirmed by the Aramaic papyri of Elephantine, which directly address Sanballat and others in Jerusalem concerning matters of Jewish law and support of the sacrificial altar in Yeb. It is also confirmed by Josephus, when members of the Tobiad
dynasty became high priests in Jerusalem at that time. Their lineage was not in question, but rather their commitment to Jewish tradition was in doubt.

But for the moment, these questions of lineage had not arisen. Seven months after the return of the exiles from Babylon, they assembled in Jerusalem to build an altar. The interplay between the usage of the word “Israel” and the word “Jews” in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is instructive. At this assembly, it is one of the last times the word “Israel” is used in its inclusive sense. They established the altar. The priesthood of Yehoshua the son of Yehozadak was inaugurated. They resumed the daily sacrifices as required by Law of Moses, morning and evening. They observed the holiday of Succoth, and offerings for new moons and other holidays. All of Israel offered sacrifices and they enjoyed some kind of unity, however no walls had been erected, and the Temple had not yet been built.

There was fear from the local non-Jewish population, but this fear was not rooted in competition from a local priesthood. Zerubavel had not yet declined local participation in the building of the Temple nor had they suggested building any walls. Apparently the fear was rooted in the fact that the local population resented the fact that the Persian governors came as tax-collectors and representatives of a vast distant empire. Some tax-collectors were ruthless, collecting exorbitant amounts and enjoying the profits of their labors.33

**Building a Temple and Establishing a Priesthood in Jerusalem**

Cyrus’ proclamation recognized the former influence of Jerusalem as the spiritual capital of the Trans-Euphrates. Cyrus knew that “powerful kings” had reigned in Jerusalem who ruled throughout the entire Trans-Euphrates.34 This appeared to be his model to collect “tribute, custom, and toll”.35 There would be four governors who would oversee tax-collection, and a single Temple and judicial system to unite the people and quell rebellious tendencies. These governors would restore the ancient glory of Solomon’s kingdom, but as a vassal to the Persian Empire. The tax-collectors could indulge themselves as long as the proper tribute was relayed to the Persian treasuries.36

Cyrus’ and later Darius’ insistence on a single, central religious center was explicit. They gave orders that the complete costs for the construction of the Temple would be taken from the royal taxes of Trans-Euphrates. This included oxen, rams, lambs for burnt offerings, wheat, salt, wine and oil, whatever required by the priests in Jerusalem. These provisions were to be given daily. The Temple was to be in the service of the royal family, providing prayers for the good fortune of the king and his family. Furthermore, if anyone disobeyed these directive, “a beam is to be pulled out from his house and he is to be raised up and impaled on it, and his house is to be reduced to a rubbish heap for this indiscretion.”

The single Temple was to be the centerpiece of a unified legal system as well. Years later, King Artaxerxes would solidify this authority by decrees to “all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates”, that they should precisely execute all the legislation of Jerusalem. Jerusalem would appoint judges and court officials who would arbitrate cases on behalf of all the people of the Trans-Euphrates.37

The leadership in Jerusalem was invested by Persian ruler with tremendous power, and both the local population and the governors wanted part of this.

Setting up a sacrificial altar seemed to be a right recognized both by the local population and the Persians. Cooperation resulted in sacrifices being brought from all areas of the Trans-Euphrates, and it is reasonable to assume that each area was represented by its own local priesthood and prophets. In addition to non-Israelite priesthoods, and Jerusalem’s Yehoshua son of Yehozadak, there were the Samaritan descendants of Hobaiah, the Trans-Jordanian descendants of Hakkoz, and the Arabian descendants of Barzillai, all returning exiles from Babylon, and all claiming descent from the legitimate priesthood of Israel.38 Prophets too abounded. Jerusalem had Haggai, Zechariah and Zephaniah. Samaria had Shemaiah, Trans-Jordan had Noadiah the prophetess, and Arabia had “other prophets”.39

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33 Nehemiah 5:15  
34 Ezra 4:20  
35 Ibid.  
36 Nehemiah 5:14  
37 Ezra 7:21,27  
38 Ezra 2:69  
39 Neh 6:10
The first problem appears to have occurred when there was a desire on the part of the leaders in Jerusalem
to build a Temple. Unlike an altar, which is an open space open to all, a Temple is enclosed and implies a
priesthood in attendance. The "local population" wished to have a share in the building of the Temple, and
an implicit share in the priesthood. A share in the actual building of the Temple, or its costs, cannot have
been the main objection, because in Solomon's day Hiram donated materials to the construction of the First
Temple, and in Ezra's day, supplies and "complete expenses" were to be supplied by the royal treasury,
from the taxes collected from this same "local population": The main objection lay in the "right" and
"commandment" to build the temple, i.e. the divine selection of particular descendants of Aaron, as
confirmed by Jerusalem alone, to serve in the Temple for the benefit of the entire Trans-Euphrates. The
rejection of the local priesthoods brought the wrath of the local population on the vastly outnumbered Jewish
leadership, and brought the construction of the Temple to a halt.

Although the names of the other governors, Sanballat, Tobias and Gashmu are not yet mentioned, it can be
assumed that they supported the local population, as they lent the use of their scribes and officials to
address the Persian Kings.

What began as an attempt to restore the form of the great Solomonic Empire in the Trans-Euphrates, and
the "rebuilding the temple which was previously built many years ago", ended with religious fragmentation
and the building of multiple altars throughout the area. Altars and priesthoods sprung up in Egypt
(Elephantine), Samaria, Trans-Jordan (Iraq Al-Amir) and probably also in Arabia (Mecca?). All of these
altars faded in comparison to Jerusalem, partly because none had royal sanction, and partly because the
prophets in Jerusalem tried to prevent a religious split. They foresaw a glorious future when the whole
Trans-Euphrates would worship as one.

**Tobiah crowns Yehoshua as High Priest, 520 BCE**

The prophet Zechariah began his career in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, king of Persia (522-486
BCE), about sixteen years after the return of the first wave of immigrants from Babylonia. He was
contemporary with the Prophet Haggai. Like Ezekiel and most of the Israelite prophets, he was of priestly
extraction. He describes himself as "the son of Berechiah." Zechariah's niece, the daughter of Meshullam
married the Yonathan, the son of Tobiah. Tobiah himself married the sister of Shemaiah, one of the priestly
families who repaired the wall of Jerusalem. So the Tobiah dynasty had not only intermarried with the royal
family of Ammon, but also with the priests and prophets of Israel. It could be asserted that the Tobiah
family was being opportunistic in their choice of marriage partners, but the prophet Zechariah apparently felt
that Tobiah was sincere, important and crucial to the reuniting of the twelve tribes of Israel.

In the book Zechariah, describing events that occurred a year later, Zechariah presents Tobiah with a
special role in the symbolic crowning of Yehoshua as high priest among the noble families of the returning
exiles. While the leadership in Jerusalem was battling opposition to building an exclusive sacrificial
institution, facing difficulties from the other governors, Zechariah sought to unite the parties in the dispute by
calling them to the house of Yehosiah son of Zephaniah. In this narrative, the Hebrew names of Sanballat
and Gashmu are used, Heldai and Yedaiah respectively. Tobiah is called by the name Tobiyah, with an
extra "y", one of the four letters of the Divine Name. Zechariah had previously received a vision about these
four “carpenters”.

Zechariah gathered these three nobles in the house of Yehosiah to call them to unite behind his selection for
high priest, Yehoshua son of Yehozadak. Yehoshua had been Zerubavel’s selection for high priest, but
Sanballat, Tobiah and Gashmu had their own priestly families who also claimed authentic descent from the
priestly families of Israel. We know that later Sanballat authorized his own altar in Samaria and in
Elephantine, Egypt, and perhaps elsewhere. It could be that even at this early date the threat of separatism
was already apparent. It may be that Zechariah’s attempt at unification was to avert the risk of a multiplicity
of altars and priesthoods.

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40 Ezra 5:1
41 Zechariah 1:1. In Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 he is called "the son of Iddo," who was properly his grandfather.
42 Zechariah 6:9-15
43 The four carpenters there spoken of are discussed in the Talmud (Sukk. 52 b), and in the Midrash (Bemidbar R. 14). But both agree
that one of them refers to the Messiah.
Zechariah fashioned a crown out of silver and gold and set it on the head of Yehoshua. By this he proclaimed Yehoshua as the head of a united priesthood for all of Israel. Recognizing Tobiah’s role as chief tax collector for all the Trans-Euphrates, his noble lineage, and perhaps his claim to being a descendant of Joseph son of Jacob, Zechariah announced before the nobles assembled the special role of Tobiah:

The Lord who rules over all says, Look here is the man whose name is Branch, who will sprout up from his place and build the temple of the Lord. Indeed, he will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed in splendor, sitting as king on his throne. Moreover, there will be a priest with him on his throne and they will see eye to eye on everything. (Zechariah 6:12-13)

The word “branch” here is significant. The Hebrew word tzemach is related to netzer which means “to make grow”, but also has the sense of “preserve” as in watchman. This referred to the role of Israelite tribes who settled in the Trans-Jordan as watchman. They would build watchtowers as a kind of early warning system for all of Israel against attack. In another verse, the people of Sanballat would be called shomer, which means the guardians. When, in spite of Zechariah’s attempts at unification, sectarianism did set in, the people of Sanballat would be called “Shomerim” or Samaritans as we know them today, and the Tobiads would be called “Notzrim”, which is the word used to describe early Christians. The sense of the notzrim being an ethnic group is supported by Josephus when he quotes a Roman guard referring to the “tribe of Christians”.

There would be no reason to refer to the Christians as a “tribe” without some kind of ethnic commonality.

We will explore the relationship between the Tobiads and the Herodians below, but one point is important to note here: Everything that was said about Tobiah, Herod appeared to have applied to himself. He spent great efforts at re-building and glorifying the Temple in Jerusalem. Herod was known for his splendor. For generations, the Herodians claimed the right to keep, protect and give out the vestments of the High Priest, as the only authorized person for “installing” the High Priest into office.

Lastly Zechariah says “Then those who are far away will come and build the temple of the Lord so that you may know that the Lord who rules over all has sent me to you. This will all come to pass if you completely obey the voice of the Lord your God.” This seems to reflect the opposite tendency of Nehemiah, who tried to restrict and minimize the effect of the nations on the Jewish people, insisting on

Quick facts:
The traditionally accepted timeline as given by Leen & Kathleen Ritmeyer describing these events:

586 Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
538 Edict of Cyrus II the Great (539-530BCE) permits the return to Jerusalem of Jewish exiles. The first group returns under Zerubavel. The altar is active for sacrifices and Holyday observance for nine years.
529 A letter is sent to the Persian king by the Samaritans opposing the attempt to set up a single authorized priesthood and Temple (Ezra 4:1-6,7)
522 The building of the Temple/priesthood is ceased by order of King Cambyses (529-522BCE, Ezra 4:23-24), the son of Cyrus. He had disposed of his brother Smerdis in order to gain unchallenged rule.
521 While Cambyses is in Egypt, a Median imposter, Gaumata, claims to be the true Smerdis, raises revolt and rules for seven months. Darius the son of Hystaspes, the satrap of Parthia kills Gaumata and assumes the throne.
520 The original edict of Cyrus is found by King Darius (522-486) and is reaffirmed by him. Zechariah succeeds in united all the Trans-Euphrates under one priesthood. Tobiah crowns Yehoshua as High Priest.
519 The feast of Ahasuerus (Esther 1-3) Ahasuerus can be identified with Darius Hystaspes. Note the fully developed Persian postal system described in Esther and Herodotus.
515 The completion and dedication of the Jerusalem Temple with authorized priesthood.
514. The marriage of Esther to King Darius 509. Plot of Haman the Agagite to kill Jews throughout the Persian Empire
485-465 Reign of Xerxes I, the son of Darius the Great and Atossa, daughter of Cyrus the Great. Egypt rebels against Persia, followed by the death of Darius. More complaints against the Jews building walls. Xerxes swiftly conquers Egypt. For the next forty years, the southern border of the Persian Empire in Egypt is protected by Jewish soldiers at Elephantine (Yeb). Their settlement predates King Cambyses.
465-425 Reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus.
458 Artaxerxes commission Ezra to set up a judicial system for the entire Trans-Euphrates in Jerusalem. Ezra institutes a series of reforms.
444. Nehemiah obtains permission to build walls and set up police in Jerusalem. Nehemiah calls an assembly to prevent the exploitation and over taxing of the other governors. Nehemiah appoints gatekeepers (police force).
432 Nehemiah leaves Jerusalem after twelve years (Neh 5:14, 13:6). Later returns to Jerusalem and calls an assembly expelling intermarried Jews from the community of Israel sometime before the end of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus 425BCE.
the divorce of foreign wives, the exclusive learning of Hebrew, and the study of Torah. Here Zechariah, in words echoed by Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zephaniah, saw a future where Jerusalem will once again be the spiritual center of all the surrounding nations, with great pilgrimages of Jews and Temple sympathizers from far off nations. This was a dream, for the most part realized, under the Herodians.

Perhaps Zechariah at the time thought he succeeded in uniting the nation of Israel. When the Temple was completed in 515 BCE, before the proclamation and assembly of Nehemiah, it must have appeared that all twelve tribes Israel were united because “twelve male goats for the sin of all Israel, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.” It describes the “Israelites” (not just “Jews”), along with “all those who joined them”, observed Passover for seven days with joy.

**Appearance of Ezra, 458 BCE**

All this was possible in part because Tobiah and his son married into among the Priests and Prophets of Jerusalem. Unlike the separatist policies of Sanballat and Gashmu, Tobiah allied with Eliashiv the priest and perhaps was on close terms with other priests as well. The nobles of Judah often sent letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them.

For over sixty years before the arrival of Ezra, there had been an unsteady balance of power between the Persian governors. Yet the leadership in Jerusalem had no control over the use of the altar in Jerusalem. Sacrifices were brought by priests of unknown and unconfirmed lineage. Rights, traditions, and customs did not necessarily adhere to ancient Israelite custom, and may have included even hints of pagan elements. This state of affairs was unacceptable to the leadership in Jerusalem, and they requested Ezra to obtain leave of the king, Artaxerxes I Longimanus, to establish a centralized rule of religious authority that would decide all matters concerning lineage, custom and tribute. Artaxerxes agreed, and commissioned Ezra, a Jewish priest-scribe, by means of a letter of decree, to take charge of the ecclesiastical and civil affairs of the Jewish nation. A copy of this decree may be found in Ezra 7:13-28.

In an effort to suppress the seeds of rebellion, (which would eventually erupt into full scale revolt by Egypt) Artaxerxes’ decree left no doubt that the four districts of Trans-Euphrates were under the absolute religious authority of Jerusalem:

I, King Artaxerxes, hereby issue orders to all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates that you precisely execute all that Ezra the priestly scribe of the law of the God of heaven may request of you …

Everything that the God of heaven has required should be precisely done for the temple of the God of heaven. Why should there be wrath against the empire of the king and his sons? (Ezra 7:21,23)

Artaxerxes’ affirmed the prior exemption from taxation of the religious establishment. This placed the leadership in Jerusalem out of the reach of retaliation from the governors:

Furthermore, be aware of the fact that you have no authority to impose tax, tribute, or toll on any of the priests, the Levites, the musicians, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or the attendants at the temple of this God. (Ezra 7:24)

Lastly, to seal the authority of Jerusalem, as if a kind of punishment for previous abuses, Artaxerxes’ decreed that Jerusalem alone would appoint judges and court officials who would arbitrate both religious and civil cases on behalf of *all the people* of the Trans-Euphrates:

Now you, Ezra, in keeping with the wisdom of your God which you possess, appoint judges and court officials who can arbitrate cases on behalf of all the people who are in Trans-Euphrates who

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50 Ezra 6:17
51 Ezra 6:21
52 Neh 6:17-19; 13:4-7 Hence, there seems to be reasonable reasons to assume that there was a communication route between Tobiah and his proponents in Jerusalem. This account is interesting because it may help us understand the nature of the ancient route along the Wadi es-Seer and the Wadi Kafrein.
know the laws of your God. Those who do not know this law should be taught. Everyone who does not observe both the law of your God and the law of the king will be completely liable to the appropriate penalty, whether it is death or banishment or confiscation of property or detainment in prison. (Ezra 7:25-26)

Apparently these decrees, although resented, were effective. Once the decrees of Artaxerxes were presented to the “satraps and to the governors of Trans-Euphrates”, they “gave help to the people and to the temple of God.” What is interesting is that this law not only covered the Children of Israel (those who know the laws of your God), but also the local mixed population “who do not know the law”. The additional commandment that “they should be taught” hints at a policy of missionizing and forced conversion, a policy that would be followed centuries later by the Hasmoneans.

This new found authority, the establishment of a supreme religious and secular court, was the forerunner of the Sanhedrin. The first item on the agenda appears to be the over taxation of local residents. 53 This was followed by deliberation on the actions of three of the four Persian governors to intermarry with the noble of the local population. Because the main reason for these intermarriages at the governmental level was to ease the collection of taxes, the commitment of these “foreign wives” to the culture, religion and language of Israel was minimal at best. The “leaders and the officials have been at the forefront” of intermarriage, and diluting the Israelite culture which had been so carefully guarded in Babylon, customs “similar to those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Yebsites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites” began to be practiced at the highest levels in government. 54

Ezra pronounced rulings against these practices. He and the other priests were protected from reprisals from the governors of the Trans-Euphrates by royal decree. But the Persian detachment of military had been entrusted to Sanballat, and without means of enforcement, Ezra’s decrees became nothing more than sermons. Ezra attempted to build a set of walls to prevent all unauthorized priests from officiating in the sacrificial system. Seeing their loss of religious authority increasing with each brick laid, the governors sought to prevent construction of these walls. Opposition took the form of direct appeals to the king, and later through their own methods. Sanballat summoned troops from Ashdod, Gashmu hired assassins 55, and Tobiad sought to mobilize his connections in Jerusalem. 56

What Ezra needed was royal support. However the Persian king found himself dealing with increased restlessness in his empire. Also there were possible adverse effects on tax revenues should the request to have the governors divorce their local wives be enforced. So Ezra appealed to an acknowledged leading descendant of the Davidic dynasty, Nehemiah son of Hachaliah.

The proclamation and assembly, 444 BCE

Nehemiah lived during the period when Judah was a province of the Persian Empire. He was appointed royal cup-bearer at the palace of Shushan. The king, Artaxerxes Longimanus, appears to have been on good terms with Nehemiah, since he was willing to grant extended leave of absence granted to see to the restoration of Jerusalem. Nehemiah heard of condition of Jerusalem mostly from his brother Hanani. 57

Due to the grievous reports coming from Jerusalem, Nehemiah he fasted, mourned and prayed at the tombs of his ancestors, the Exilarchs, for many days. According to the book of Nehemiah, the king observed his sadness. Nehemiah explained to the king, and obtained his permission to go to Jerusalem and act as tishathath, or governor of Judea. He arrived in Jerusalem fourteen years after Ezra, in the 20th year of Artaxerxes I, (445/444 BC) with a strong escort supplied by the king, and with letters to all the pashas of the provinces through which he had to pass, as also to Asaph, keeper of the royal forests, directing him to assist Nehemiah. When Sanballat and Tobiah heard of the arrival of Nehemiah, they were quite upset because he came to strengthen the spiritual and judicial authority of Jerusalem, as it says “it grieved them exceedingly, for that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.” 58

53 Nehemiah 5:1, We are assuming for the sake of this paper that the overtaxation was one of the reasons for the urgency of Ezra and Nehemiah’s assembly and proclamation, and not that it was some kind of retaliatory attack for being excluded from the “community of Israel”.
54 Ezra 9:1-2
55 Nehemiah 6:1
56 Nehemiah 4:7
57 Nehemiah 1:2; 2:3
58 Nehemiah 2:10
With the arrival of Nehemiah, Shecaniah son of Yehiel expressed the main issue at hand: “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the local peoples”, he suggested to Ezra that the faithful should take an oath to “send away all these women and their offspring” according to the wishes of Ezra and the leadership in Jerusalem. After taking a vote in the proto-Sanhedrin the majority concurred. However there were those who dissented including Yehonathan son of Asahel, Yahzeiah son of Tikvah, Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite. Ezra went to the priestly residence of Yehohanan son of Eliashiv, the treasurer and representative of Tobiah within the Temple grounds, ostensibly with the intent of obtaining the agreement of Tobiah.\(^{59}\)

The tide of assimilation seemed unstoppable. “Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab” and their children spoke in the language of those living in Ashdod and could not speak the language of the Jews.\(^{60}\) They performed customs “similar to those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Yeusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.” \(^{61}\) A voluntary oath being insufficient, Ezra and Nehemiah, with the backing of the leadership in Jerusalem announced an assembly and proclamation:

> A proclamation was circulated throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the exiles were to be assembled in Jerusalem. 10:8 Everyone who did not come within three days would thereby forfeit all his property, in keeping with the counsel of the officials and the elders. Furthermore, he himself would be excluded from the assembly of the exiles. (Ezra 10:7)

Afterwards, the books of genealogies (family groups) were reviewed and adjusted.\(^{62}\) This determined which families had intermarried and which priests were to be declared unfit for duty. Tobiah having some support both within the Priesthood and the leadership in Jerusalem, apparently declared that his wives were proper converts and was not required to divorce them. Nehemiah was required to find additional reason to invalidate Tobiah from the “community of Israel”, due to the fact “no Ammonite or Moabite may ever enter the assembly of God”.\(^{63}\) This decree, relying on single opinion of Nehemiah, and not the vote of the leadership in Jerusalem, left the Tobiads in a somewhat indeterminate state as to whether they were to be considered “Jews” or not. The Priesthood, in particular Eliashiv, supported Tobiah, yet Nehemiah personally came to the Temple grounds to eject all of Tobiah’s belongings from the Temple treasury and as a token of rebuke had those areas “purified” from ritual impurity.\(^{64}\)

### Davidic rulers and ethnic constituency

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\(^{59}\) Ezra 10:6  
\(^{60}\) Nehemiah 13:23  
\(^{61}\) Ezra 9:1-2  
\(^{62}\) Ezra 10:16, Nehemiah 6:17  
\(^{63}\) Nehemiah 13:1  
\(^{64}\) Nehemiah 13:4  
Another son of Eliashiv, Yoiada who had married a daughter of Sanballat, left for his father in law’s protection, and may have been promised a priesthood of his own in Samaria. This was the beginning of the High Priesthood of the Samaritans and the religion of the shomrim, although it did not receive royal sanction until Alexander the Great.

The minor tractate Kuthim 2:7 [61b] says “Why are Samaritans forbidden to enter the community of Israel? Because they have become mixed up with the Cohens of the high places (idolatrous priests). R. Ishmael said: They were originally genuine proselytes. Why, then are they forbidden? Because of the illegitimate females [since they are a mixed people, they include females who may not have been born to Israelite mothers and in turn their offspring are no-Israelite since their status in this respect depends upon that of the mother] and because they do not perform the levirate duty to a married woman (but perform halitzah instead).”

It can be seen that the exclusion of Sanballat, Tobiah and Gashmu’s people were of a judicial and not genealogical nature because the tractate concludes “When may they be received [into Israel]? When they have renounced Mount Gerizim and acknowledged Jerusalem and the resurrection of the dead. From then onward a Samaritan is considered an Israelite before the law”. In other words the at that time full conversion of a proselyte was not required, only a political renunciation of Mount Gerizim and acceptance of the authority of the leadership in Jerusalem. This situation did not last however, to the point that by the first century CE, intermarriage increased to the point that Samaritans were considered distinct from “Israel”.

Abu l-Fath ibn Abi al-Hasan al-Samiri al-Danafi, a fourteen century Samaritan chronicler wrote “At this time the Children of Israel split into three factions. A loyal faction on Mount Gerizim (=Shomrim); a heretical faction that followed false Gods (=Notzrim); and the faction that followed Eli son of Yafni on Shiloh (=Yehudim).”

So after the “purge” and exclusion of powerful, noble and intermarried families, a new “Israel” was defined in the genealogical records. Thus “in the days of Zerubavel and in the days of Nehemiah, all Israel was contributing the portions for the singers and gatekeepers, according to the daily need.” But this new “Israel” would be referred to by the Samaritans, Notzrim and Sabians not as “Israel” but as “Jews”.

An interesting side note in this episode is the well developed postal system, developed by the Persians, used by Tobiah that included the use of horses and carrier pigeons. These pigeons and doves would become the symbol of the Tobiad dynasty.

**Sanballat of Samaria**

*Sanballat I, Military commander of Samaria and of the Coast*

Sanballat I envisioned himself a descendant of the kings of the Northern Tribes of Israel. From the very beginning the Northern Tribes had a relationship with Egypt. This relationship included both political and military ties. The Jewish community at Elephantine was probably founded as one of many military installations circa 650 BCE during Manasseh’s reign, to assist Pharaoh Psammetichus I in his Nubian campaign. When the Persian King Cambyses extended his empire into Egypt in 525BCE, he destroyed many of the local temples but left the Jewish places of worship intact.

While Cambyses was in Egypt, a Median imposter, Gaumata, claimed to be the true heir the throne, revolted and ruled for seven months. Darius the son of Hystaspes, the satrap of Parthia killed Gaumata and assumed the throne. (Under Darius there was the completion of the Jerusalem Temple with an authorized priesthood). But Egypt rebelled again under Xerxes, the son of Darius. For the next forty years, the

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66 Nehemiah 13:28  
67 Matthew 10:5-6  
68 Nehemiah 12:47  
69 Nehemiah 6:17  
70 Kings 12:2-3
southern border of the Persian Empire in Egypt was protected by Jewish soldiers at Elephantine (Yeb). They maintained their own temple, but at times the Jewish community suffered riots from the bitter local population. It is within this context that we find the “Elephantine papyri”, letters from the garrison to Sanballat and Tobiah.

The Elephantine papyri are caches of legal documents and letters written in Aramaic, which document a community of Jewish soldiers, with perhaps an admixture of Samaritans, stationed during the Persian occupation of Egypt. The documents cover the period 495 to 399 BCE. One letter contains replies from the leadership in Jerusalem concerning the laws of Passover. Known as “The Passover Papyrus”, it was written in the 5th year of Darius (Nothus), i.e. 419 BCE.

[To] my [brethren Yedo]niah and his colleagues the [J]ewish gar[rison], your brother Hanan[iah]. The welfare of my brothers may God [seek at all times]. Now, this year, the fifth year of King Darius, word was sent from the king to Arsa[mes saying, “Authorise a festival of unleavened bread for the [Jew]ish [garrison]”. So do you count fou[rteen days of the month of Nisan and] obs[erve the passover], and from the 15th to the 21st day of [Nisan observe the festival of unleavened bread]. Be (ritually) clean and take heed. [Do n]o work [on the 15th or the 21st day, no]r drink [beer, nor eat] anything [in which the[re is] leaven [from the 14th at] sundown until the 21st of Nis[an. For seven days it shall not be seen among you. Do not br]ing it into your dwellings but seal (it) up between these date[s. By order of King Darius. To] my brethren Yedoniah and the Jewish garrison, your brother Hanani[ah]. (A very defective strip of papyrus with writing on both sides. Text: Sachau, 6; Ungnad, 6; Cowley, 21)

Another letter, the “Petition to Bagohi” (Sayce-Cowley collection), was written some time before the 17th year of Darius (Nothus), i.e. 408-407 BCE when Sanballat (or one of the dynasty) was governor (pachath) of Samaria, and Bagohi was governor of Judah (after Zerubbavel and before Nehemiah). Sanballat’s two sons, Delaiah and Shelemiah, received a letter from Yedoniah and his companions the priests who were in Yeb (Elephantine). The letter appealed for assistance in rebuilding the Jewish Temple, which had recently been badly damaged by an anti-Semitic riot on the part of a segment of the Elephantine community. The address of this letter reads as follows:

To our lord Bagohi, the governor of Judea, his servants Yedoniah and his companions, the priests in the fortress of Yeb (Elephantine). May the God of Heaven inquire much at every time after the peace of our lord and put thee in favor before Darius the king,

In the course of this appeal, the Jewish inhabitants of Elephantine speak of the antiquity of the damaged temple:

Now our forefathers built this temple in the fortress of Elephantine back in the days of the kingdom of Egypt, and when Cambyses came to Egypt he found it built. They (the Persians) knocked down all the temples of the gods of Egypt, but no one did any damage to this temple.

The conclusion of the letter reads thus:

Now, thy servants, Yedoniah and his companions and the Jews, all citizens of Yeb, say thus: If it seems good to our lord, mayest thou think on the rebuilding of that temple (which had been destroyed by the Egyptians). Since it has not been permitted us to rebuild it, do thou look on the receivers of thy benefactions and favors here in Egypt. Let a letter with regard to the rebuilding of the temple of the God Ya-Ho in the fortress of Yeb, as it was formerly built, be sent from thee. In thy name will they offer the meal offerings, the incense, and the burnt offerings upon the altar of the God Ya-Ho; and we shall always pray for thee, we and our wives and our children and all the Jews found here, until the temple has been rebuilt. And it will be to thee a meritorious work (tsedaqah) in the sight of Ya-Ho, the God of Heaven, greater than the meritorious work of a man who offers to him a burnt offering and a sacrifice of a value equal to the value of 1,000 talents of silver. And as to the gold we have sent word and given knowledge. Also, we have in our name communicated in a letter all (these) matters unto Delaiah and Shelemiah, the sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. Also, from all that has been done to us, Arsham (the satrap of Egypt) has learned nothing.

The 20th of Marcheshvan in the 17th year of Darius the king.

What can clearly be seen from these letters is that community at Yeb considered themselves Jews and used the name “Jews” in describing themselves. They appealed to both Jerusalem and Sanballat. They received instruction in Jewish law from the scholars in Jerusalem. Yet they maintained an altar outside of Jerusalem
and saw no inconsistencies with the Judaism as practiced by the Children of Israel before the coming of Ezra (458BCE) and Nehemiah (444BCE). This independent altar at Yeb and perhaps elsewhere was a convenience for the local Jewish community, but soon it would become a matter of supreme political importance.

Sanballat Bagohi, Governor of Judea

The Bagohi mentioned in the Elephantine papyri as the "governor of Judea" is also mentioned in Josephus. There he is called "the general of the army". For the purposes of this paper we assume that Bagohi is identical with Sanballat I, and that Yedoniah is the same as Yoiada of Nehemiah and the "Jesus" of Josephus.

This implies that when Zerubavel left, Bagohi took control of Judea and was addressed as such by the Elephantine Papyri. As General of the Army, his interest would have been more in building wealth to maintain his troops than completing the Temple in Jerusalem. He was not allowed to impose a tax on the priests or the Temple itself, so he imposed it on the general public. Those who offered the daily sacrifices, were required to pay fifty shekels for every lamb. This taxation was opposed by the High Priest Yehohanan, but supported by his brother Yehoshua II. The quarrel led to a confrontation and Yehoshua II was killed by Yehohanan in a fit of rage. Bagohi punished the residents of Judea for seven years for the murder of Yehoshua II. The great distress of the residents of Judea was one of the major reasons that Nehemiah was brought from Persia, and in the end of the book of Nehemiah, the excesses of the "previous governor of Judea" is recounted.

Moses of Khorene (5th Century) traces the origin of the Smbat Bagratuni royal family of Armenia to Tobiah of Edessa (1st Century), to Sanballat Bagohi, and through him to Jewish royalty. Sanballat, like all the governors of the Trans-Euphrates, we propose were related to the royal family. These families were all intermarried with the High Priesthood, and conceivably with each other. This claim would later be adopted by the Georgian Bagratids royal family. Their Coat of Arms displays a harp in a mention of that ancestry.

It is possible that in the end, the noble Sanballat dynasty would be remembered in the royal pedigrees of Armenia, and the legends of Sinbad the sailor, "Sinbad" being a form of "Sanballat".

Sanballat II and Darius Codomannus 336-330BCE

According to Josephus, an event took place one hundred years later that would have far reaching consequences. The brother of the High Priest Manasseh married the daughter of the Samaritan ruler at that time. This Samaritan ruler also bore the dynastic title, Sanballat II.

Josephus relates the following incident:

Yaddua the son of Yehohanan (371-320) was a High Priest in Jerusalem who had a brother named Manasseh. (Yaddua in Rabbinic tradition is often identified with Shimon HaTzaddik the first). In an attempt to secure a claim to rulership Judea in addition to his own lands, Sanballat II offered his daughter Nicaso in marriage to Manasseh in an attempt to obtain the good will of the Jewish people, which Manasseh accepted. But rather than appease the leadership in Jerusalem, it created unease. The proto-Sanhedrin heard the claim that Nicaso was part of the community of Israel and permitted in marriage. They ruled however that it was forbidden because of the ruling of Ezra and Nehemiah concerning the family of Sanballat. No alteration of this ruling could be made because it would be interpreted by the general public as general permission to marry foreign wives, and that in turn would lead to “mutual society with foreigners” and assimilation.

The proto-Sanhedrin ruled that Manasseh had to either divorce his wife, or resign his position as priest. Manasseh was unwilling to resign his position as priest, something that would affect his progeny. So he appealed to his father in law Sanballat II. Sanballat II promised him not only to preserve for him the honor of his priesthood, but “to procure for him the power and dignity of a high priest, and would make him governor.

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71 Josephus, 11.7.1
72 Josephus. This is apparent both in wording used to describe the nature of Sanballat’s offer of marriage as well as the petition of Sanballat before Alexander.
73 Josephus. The wording there is they did not outright forbid the marriage, but rather claimed it would set a bad example to those "desirous of transgressing about the marriage of [strange] wives".

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of all the places he himself now ruled, if he would keep his daughter for his wife. He also told him further, that he would build him a temple like that at Jerusalem, upon Mount Gerizzin; and he promised that he would do this with the approval of Darius the king. Manasseh accepted this proposal. Josephus relates that “there was now a great disturbance among the people of Jerusalem, because many of those priests and Levites were entangled in such matches; for they all revolted to Manasseh, and Sanballat afforded them money, and divided among them land for tillage, and habitations also.”

Sanballat III and Alexander the Great

About this time, Alexander the Great, crossed over the river Euphrates, and came over Taurus Mountains, to do battle with Darius. Even though many expected the Macedonians to flee in the face of the Persians, the Persians were routed in battle, the king fled, and his family taken captive. Alexander came into Syria, and took Damascus; captured Sidon and set siege to Tyre. Alexander requested allegiance, troops and provisions from Jerusalem, which they refused to give. Sanballat II saw this as his chance to obtain favor from Alexander and he sent troops to aid Alexander, and requested in return permission to build a Temple at Mount Gerizzin. Alexander granted this. He, at length, captured Tyre, Gaza and made his way to devastate Jerusalem.

Recorded in many sources, from Josephus, the Talmud, to Ben Sirach, is the account of Alexander’s meeting with the High Priest. How Alexander expected to be met with troops and armed resistance, but was instead was met with a venerable religious procession. Alexander reaction is legendary, he alone met the High Priest and pledged allegiance to the God of the Jews. Josephus goes on to say “And when [Alexander] went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high priest’s direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the Book of Daniel was showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended. And as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present; but the next day he called them to him, and bid them ask what favors they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired. And when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired.”

Sanballat III seeing that Alexander had “so greatly honored the Jews”, he attempt to obtain further favor from Alexander, which Alexander deferred until his return from battle in Persia. Alexander, however, never returned.

Josephus at this point interrupts his description of these events to describe the “disposition of the Samaritans”. His view apparently being the result of intermarriage. He describes a people with questionable loyalty. First, they quickly change sides from Darius to Alexander, as the condition requires. Secondly, at times they deny their kinship to their Jewish brethren claiming to be Sidonians, and at other times embrace it, claiming to be the posterity of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Being, in his view, the product of intermarriage, both views were true.

Sanballat III requested and received permission from Alexander the Great to build a Temple on mount Gerizim. Sandballat did not, however, receive the recognition or tax exemptions that
Shimon HaTzaddik had received. Perhaps due to disenchantedness with the favors he had received from Alexander, or perhaps during the vicissitudes of battle, Sanballat perceived that the Persians temporarily had the upper hand, Sanballat II rebelled against the local governor installed by Alexander.\textsuperscript{74}

The revolt was crushed. Sanballat III’s troops were conscripted to Alexander’s armies. His territory was annexed to Syria and Samaria was converted to a military colony. Sanballat III and his immediate family were probably killed.\textsuperscript{75} Samaria never again achieved self rule. Apollonius is described as the ruler of Colesyria and Philistina around 160BCE.

**Religion of the Samaritans**

The ruling of Ezra and Nehemiah disallowed the claim of being part of the “Children of Israel” based on genealogical grounds. But even is so, a secondary claim was made on the basis of conversion to the faith of the “Children of Israel”.

Intermarriage is, of course, permitted if the non-Jewish partner converts before marriage. Apparently there were claims that the non-Israelish element in Samaria did have some form of conversion, because the Talmud, tractate Kuthim, discusses whether their conversion was valid or not. In the final analysis their status as “converts” is rejected on legal grounds, because they did not accept jurisdiction of Jerusalem. Josephus expands on this point, claiming that the separation of jurisdiction was absolute. Any priest accused of having eaten things *chullin* (common or profane food) or of having broken the Sabbath, or of any other crime of a religious nature, fled away to the Samaritans and claimed that he was accused unjustly. However this is in the nature of a rabbinical decree and it appears that in certain *de-facto* cases Samaritans were at one time still treated as Jews.

The orthodoxy of the Samaritans\textsuperscript{76} is praised with regard to their strictness in observing the commandments (Chullin 4a) and the rules relating to the slaughtering of meat “shechitah” (ib.), family relations “niddah” (Niddah 56b et seq.), contact with the dead (ib.), and purification “taharah”. There are cases where Samaritans can be counted in the quorum for the Birchat HaMazon prayer. Their meat and bread were at times permitted, unlike other foreigners. However, they were-considered lax in observing the law of the levirate and of marriage generally, so that marriage with them was forbidden (Kid. 76a). This unfavorable view of them seems to have prevailed toward the end of R. Meir’s life and to have then become *halacha*. In the tractate Kutim the general principle is that they are to be trusted in so far as their own practise agrees with that of the Jews: in other respects they count as non-Jews.

**Dogmas**

According to their own account in letters to Scaliger, Huntington, and others, they never postpone circumcision, even if the eighth day be a Sabbath; they allow no fire on the Sabbath; they recognize no system of “techum”; they have even children to observe the Yom Kippur fast; they make their “sukkot” of the trees mentioned in Lev. 23:40, and do not follow the Jewish customs with regard to the * lulav* and *etrog*.

With regard to Samaritan dogma, the tractate Kuthim sums up differences with Judaism by their veneration of Mt. Gerizim as against Jerusalem, and their disbelief in the resurrection of the dead. The Christian Fathers claim they did not believe angels or the immortality of the soul. Their earliest liturgies appear to confirm these statements. The essential articles of faith refer to:

- The unity of God; is the constant refrain of their liturgy. Consequent on this is the careful avoidance of anthropomorphic expressions, which has often been pointed out in the Targum. God created

\textsuperscript{74} This episode is probably connected with the Wadi Daliiyeh papyri. The Old Testament world By John William Rogerson, Philip R. Davies

\textsuperscript{75} The disappearance of the Sanballat dynasty is all the more pronounced because we find a Joseph Tobiah receiving “a loan of about 20,000 drachma in Samaria” without resistance. This loan helped him obtained the rights to tax Syria and Phoenicia. Afterwards, Joseph Tobiah made himself feared through all the cities of Syria and Phoenicia, lands that were formerly been under the governance of Sanballat.

\textsuperscript{76} The following information is based on the Jewish Encyclopedia “Samaritans”

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without hands; He rested, but not from weariness. He made man in the image of the angels; and it was an angel who delivered the Law on Sinai. Prayers are offered to Him through the merits of the Patriarchs and Moses.

- Moses as the only prophet. None can arise like unto Moses, according to Deut. 34:10; They reject the Biblical Writings and Prophet except for the Torah. The Torah is perfect, having been created before the world and brought forth by the hand of God from the depth of the very good.

- Mt. Gerizim, which is the House of God, the place in which He chose to put His name. On it the twelve stones (Deut. 27:4) are still shown; there the temple was erected; and there in the last days will the Shekinah reappear.

- The Tahev. The Messiah, which, though of less importance, is clearly defined. The term used has been variously explained as "the restorer" or "he who returns." During all the time that has elapsed since the schism of Eli and the disappearance of the Tabernacle, the world (i.e., Israel) has been suffering under the divine displeasure. It will be terminated by the coming of the "Tahev," who will restore the period of favor, establish the true religion, and destroy the followers of Ezra. He will live 110 years on earth, and then die.

- The resurrection, which will take place after the death of the Tahev, will not be to physical bodies, but will be accompanied by the final judgment, when the righteous will go into the garden of Eden, and the wicked be burned with fire. The Samaritans dwell at length on this doctrine in the funeral service. Some kind of forgiveness seems, however, to be possible after death for the faithful who die in their sins; for prayers are offered on their behalf.

In several instances, the practice of the Samaritans approximates Karaites and Islamic tradition. This agreement has often been noted. It could be coincidental, both being based on a literal and rational interpretation of the Law, and both, therefore, rejecting all rabbinic developments. However we will endeavor to show a more direct connection. One connection may indeed be the effect of the Samaritan religion on Arabia through commercial and religious connections with Egypt. But perhaps a far greater effect on Arabia may be seen from the Tobiad "Notzrim" religion of the Trans-Jordan.

In Islam, these Tobiad Jews would be known by the name "nasaara" and "ansar".

The Tobiad/Tubba kings of Arabia also tell of their ancestor Herod I (Harith al-Raish or al-Filsuf), who like Sanballat II and Shimon HaTzaddik, had the honor of meeting – and receiving approval from – Alexander the Great.

Tobias of Trans-Jordania

The Jews made their capital in Jerusalem. Sanballat made his capital in Shomron, later renamed to Sebastia. Gashmu made his capital in Arabia. The Zenon Papyri call the trans-Jordan "the land of Tobiah". The Tobiad's ancestral seat was in 'Iraq al-Amir.

'Iraq al-Amir is situated on the west bank of the Wadi es-Seer, about halfway between Amman and Jericho. According to Mazar, the Tobiad estate bordered to the west on the Jordan River, between the Wadi Nimrin and the Dead Sea; in the east it extended as far as the vicinity of Rabbath-Ammon.

C. C. Ji in "A New Look At The Tobiads In 'Iraq Al-Amir", (see the map below), explains that this trade route and was heavily defended including a fortress at the mouth of the Wadi Kafrein. Persian and later Hellenistic settlements are noticeably centered in the narrow areas located along the Wadi es-Seer and the Wadi Kafrein, and in the immediate vicinity of 'Iraq al-Amir. They were situated at high points lined up along the Wadi es-Seer and the Wadi Kafrein. They are all fortified settlements and visible to each other. The

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78 This is explored further in the author's book "The Prophet Muhammed as a descendant of Onias III" by Ben Abrahamson and Joseph Katz.
79 Tabari
80 Most of the information in these three chapters are based on C. C. Ji in "A New Look At The Tobiads In 'Iraq Al-Amir"
81 Lapp 1989, 280.
82 Mazar 1957, 142.

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inhabitants must have expended tremendous labor on the city walls and towers, which implies security was one of their major concerns. 83

This area contains a large number of early Persian settlements. It apparently contained a system of roads connecting the Jordan Valley with ‘Iraq al-Amir and the Trans-Jordan plateau. The Book of Nehemiah implies the existence of some sort of communication route between Tobiah and the Judean aristocracy facilitating Tobiah’s regular communication with the nobles in Jerusalem. It appears that Tobiah ruled the entire Trans-Jordan plateau under Persian rule. 84

During the Hellenistic period, several new fortresses and public buildings were incorporated into the already-existing Persian trade route and defense system. However, when the Tobaid family was more involved in Jerusalem, the plateau region underwent a decline. Tobiah’s territory appears to have decreased in the Hellenistic period in comparison to its size under Persian rule.

The ‘Iraq al-Amir region includes a monumental Hellenistic building (Qasr al-‘Abd), rebuilt by the Herodians in Herodian style masonry. Josephus mentions the location of the Tobiad’s estate, and his account of Hircanus’ magnificent building seems to refer to Qasr al-‘Abd. 85 In addition, the Zenon papyri mention a fortress in the land of Tobiah. 86 There is an ancient village, and scattered ancient structures. There are two rows of man-made and natural caves. The name “Tobiah” is deeply engraved near their entrances. According to Mazar, these inscriptions date to the period of Nehemiah or even earlier, and are some of the earliest examples of the official Aramaic square script that became popular in Palestine at the beginning of the Second Temple period. 87

In Samaria, the population began to call themselves shomrim, probably due as much to the city of Shomron as to the predictions of the prophets. In ‘Iraq al-Amir, the name notzrim, which literally means watchman, would also take on additional meaning due to the numerous fortifications tzurim, no less than the prophetic vision of Zechariah that the Tobiads applied to themselves. The name notzrim may be preserved Arabic Wadi es-Tzeer and Khirbat es-Tzur near ‘Iraq al-Amir. 88 Mazar suggests that tsur was used to name the Tobiad’s fortress in the days of the First Temple and the Hellenistic period.

83 C. C. Ji—A New Look at the Tobiads in Iraq al-Amir
84 On the basis of recent archaeological works, it seems preferable to see that in Trans-Jordan there were separate provinces from Samaria and Arabia in the late Iron II and Persian periods. The principal support for this suggestion lies in the findings at Tell el-Umeiri in the Madaba Plains. In 1989, the excavations at Tell el-Umeiri produced two Aramaic seals dated to the late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C.E. (Herr 1992) The impressions of these seals are reminiscent of a class of Judean seals found in the Jerusalem region, which contain the name yhud. It is often assumed that the names on the yhud seals were associated with the governor of the Persian province or the treasurer in charge of tax collection. (Herr 1992; Stern 1982, 202-206) The significance of this find is that the two seal impressions indicate the presence of Persian provinces in Trans-Jordan. (Herr 1995, 124-125)
85 Eskenazi 1992; Mazar 1957
87 Cross 1961, 191; Gera 1990, 25; Naveh 1971, 62-64; Albright, 1974, 222; Mazar 1957, 141-142
88 Mazar 1957, 140-141; Ji 1997a; 1997b; Villeneuve 1988; Waheeb 1997; Zayadine 1997, 178
The Zenon papyri

Probably one of the most important sources for this period is the Zenon papyri. Six of the papyri directly relate to Jewish affairs and the role of Tobiah. In the papyri, the Tobiads are influential Jewish landowners in Trans-Jordan during the Hellenistic period who enjoyed an autonomous status as rulers and commanded a garrison of cavalry. Tobiah (#1,4) and Yeddiah (#6) seem to have exercised considerable power and autonomy. The papyri can be fitted with other sources to see that the Tobiads were a Jewish family dynasty that wielded their power from generation to generation. The importance of Greek language and the need to work in Greek is indicated by these letters. Tobiah clearly had a Greek secretary, if he did not already possess a Hellenistic education, the pressure to educate his sons in the Greek way would have been very strong. There is no indication that Tobiah was anything but a strict Jew, in spite of his acceptance of polytheistic greetings to the king. The papyri preserves Tobiah’s letter to the Egyptian finance minister, Apollonius, which starts with the formula of Greek greeting, “many thanks to the gods” perhaps written by his secretary. Even so plural form is surprising in a letter of a strict Jew. (#4). We learned that Apollonius visited Palestine and “the Land of Tobiah”, as well as a vineyard owned by Appollonius himself in the Galilee. The content of the papyri show the clearly pro-Ptolemaic attitude of the Tobiad dynasty.

According to Josephus, the family of Tobiah was connected to the priesthood and wielded great power in Jerusalem. The great man of this family was Joseph, the son of Tobiah. Joseph stood as the highest civil functionary of the Jews under Ptolemy III Euergetes. He succeeded in obtaining from the king the tax farming rights for the whole of the Ptolemaic province.

The Tax Collectors

The administrators at Tell el-‘Umeiri appear to have organized wine production at farmsteads in the vicinity. They would have sent wine to the Babylonians and the Persians as tribute and tax. Hence, there are compelling reasons for concluding that Persian provinces existed in the Trans-Jordan including the regions of the Wadi es-Seer, ‘Iraq al-Amir, Rabath-Ammon and the Madaba Plains.

In addition, archaeological findings seem to indicate the administration of grape plantations at the farmsteads near ‘Iraq al-Amir. The regional surveys reveal that a large number of wine presses were cut into rock along the Wadi es-Seer, and in many cases they were associated with late Iron II and Persian settlements. Thus, the vicinity of Iraq al-Amir may have constituted a sort of agricultural heartland of this area. In addition, Survey Site 25, a Hellenistic site with sporadic late Iron II pottery shards, also appears to have been a rich farmstead site associated with ‘Iraq al-Amir and Qasr al-‘Abd. It is situated across the wadi south of the ‘Iraq al-Amir village and east of Qasr al-‘Abd. This site contains a number of foundation walls most of which appears to have belonged to a large rectangular structure. There are also a couple of cisterns and terraces in the vicinity.

This pattern of settlement is typical along the Wadi es-Seer and includes a prominent central site with a number of peripheral small farmsteads and villages associated with it. This land use pattern is similar to the wine production at the farmsteads in the Tell el-‘Umeiri region, and hence may point to the presence of a similar provincial, economic system in the Wad es-Seer to one in the Madaba Plains. A distinctive feature of the ‘Iraq al-Amir region is, when compared with the Tell el-‘Umeiri region, the continuation of this grape plantation pattern through the Hellenistic period. Bardbun, el-Muweina, and Survey Site 81 were continuously used in the Hellenistic period, and at the same time, a couple of new fortresses and public buildings were added to this socio-economic system. That the Tobiads inhabited this region may help

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89 Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice From the Exile to Yavneh, by Lester L Grabbe, 2000
90 The Old Testament world By John William Rogerson, Philip R. Davies
91 Josephus Antiquities 12.4
92 e.g., Bardhun, el-Muweina, Survey Site 1, and Survey Site 81
explain why many settlements and farmsteads were in continuous use from Persian to the Hellenistic period in the Wadi es-Seer region.

As we will see below when discussion the Religion of the Tobiads, many of the traits of this dynasty bear remarkable, if not purposeful, similarities to the stories of Joseph son of Jacob. Tax collection is another area for which the Biblical Joseph was renown. As viceroy to Pharaoh, Joseph was invested with sole responsibility for the collection of taxes to prepare for a future famine, due to his unique divinely guided insight and skill in management of the Kings revenue.

**Religion of the Tobiads**

Unlike the Samaritans, the religion of the Tobiads is not fully understood. An important indication may be derived from four rock-cut a dovecoote or pigeon houses called “columbarium”. A common thread that unites these columbaria is that they are each a detached block of rock, and the niches were carved facing approximately east. These columbariums were at the west end of the Tobiah’s cave complex. We propose that the columbaria at ‘Iraq al-Amir were used for diplomatic communications and religious purposes.

In the Israel’s *shfelah* region, hundreds of columbarium caves with thousands of small niches hewn in their walls were examined. These caves were cut in the 3rd century B.C.E. and were used until the 4th century C.E. Scholars have suggested that the caves were designed for raising sacred doves for the cult of Aphrodite-Atargatis. Especially noteworthy is the fact that doves and pillars were the symbols of this goddess as shown in Cypriot coins and clay models. Maresha was a major Edomite city and with the conquest of the region by Alexander the Great the city was settled by retired Greek soldiers as customary. Maresha developed as a Hellenistic city encompassing a multitude of Greek and oriental cultures including Sidonians and Nabateans. Maresha was reportedly served as a center for the cult of the sacred doves of Aphrodite during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. Significant in this context is the fact that the Nabataeans also erected many columbaria at Petra. From this fact, we see some possible relationship between the Edomites, Nabateans and the Tobiads.

It is interesting that the people of Maresha were later forced by Yochanan Hyrcanus I to embrace Judaism, but the columbaria caves at Maresha continued to be used even after their conversion. Herod appears to have been born in Maresha and adopted dove-breeding for divination purposes. Herod built small columbarium towers around the pools in his palace (Josephus J. W. 5.4.4). At Masada small niches were found hewn in long rows in the walls of a round structure dated to the time of Herod.

*Mu’llagah ed-Deir* is a cave consisting of two parallel chambers with windows and doors all cut in the rock of the cliff, and Conder characterized this cave as a religious hermitage. In the Byzantine period also *Mu’llagah ed-Deir* served a religious purpose, as attested to by the wooden floors and local oral traditions. A further support for the Tobiah’s connection with divination by doves comes from a small quarry site which includes a dove carved into a rock, measuring 15 x 15 cm. This rock-carving seems to be a religious expression in light of the pains taken to make it symmetrical and artful.

Of related interest is the discovery of several idol niches situated along the Wadi es-Seer. These niches primarily found in the vicinity and the Sidonian commercial colony in the *shfelah*, which might further suggest political and cultural cooperation between the Tobiads and the Nabatean in Trans-Jordan during the early Hellenistic period. They are each rectangular niches hewn in large detached rocks. Although they are without any traces of idols or idol blocks in the ‘Iraq al-Amir region, there are hints of pagan influences. Therefore, it is clear that the first steps toward the Hellenization in the Tobiah family took place no later than the 3rd century BCE. This seems to indicate that non-Jewish religious influence came together with the

93 Oren 1965, 221
94 Oren 1968, 81; cf. Kloner 1997, 33
95 Bliss - Macalister 1902, 52-61; Oren 1968, 58-59; Peters - Thiersch 1905.
96 See Belloni 1996, 67.
97 Yadin 1966, 138
98 Conder 1889, 94-96
Hellenization of the Tobiads. It is widely known that during the Hellenistic period, Tobiah’s influence was not in the political and economic sphere alone, but in the social and religious as well. 99

The Tobiads were interested in the management of the Temple in Jerusalem. We propose this is due to the prophetic tidings of Zechariah during the time of Nehemiah (Neh 13:49). The closing chapter of the Book of Nehemiah pays special attention to Nehemiah’s action against Tobiah. Eliashiv put one of the temple rooms at Tobiah’s disposal and allowed him temple precincts. Nehemiah interpreted this development as a danger to Jewish religion and took immediate action. 100

The Tobiads used doves and carrier pigeons for communications purposes. In keeping with their proposed ancestor Joseph son of Jacob, they could discern stars, dreams and receive visions from heaven. The dove, we propose, became associated with these “messages from heaven” and in time became a symbol of the Messenger from Heaven. The angels in general would be important to the Tobiads, but one angel in particular was the protector of Joseph: the angel Gabriel. 101 There seems to be a monastic content to their religion as seen by Mu’llagah ed-Deir. Meditating in caves, going into the desert, awaiting divine revelations from angels, would become a common theme by the time of John the Baptist.

Tobiad symbolism abounds in the New Testament: when Jesus is seen receiving the Holy Spirit after his baptism in the form of a dove, or when the angel Gabriel announces a special birth to Mary and Elizabeth. The name Jesus (Yeshua’) is closely related with the name of the High Priest Yehoshua’. Zachariah, the husband of Elizabeth, is reminiscent of the Prophet Zachariah. Lastly, Jesus’ relationship with “tax collectors” and the use of “upon this rock” metaphor in connection with Peter, may hint at elements of a proto-Christian, Tobiad faith. The founding of the religion of the Notzrim, a word used even today for Christianity, may not have been in Bethlehem, but in ‘Iraq al-Amir. 102

The Maccabeans period

Alexander the Great died without obvious or legitimate heir

Alexander the Great died in battle in 323 BCE and there was no clear indication who would rule the newly-conquered and barely-pacified Empire. Perdiccas had assumed provisional leadership. He divided Alexander’s empire between the Macedonian generals of Alexander’s army. However the satrapies handed out by Perdiccas became power bases for each general to launch his own bid for power. After Perdiccas was assassinated, all semblance of Macedonian unity collapsed. Fourty years of war between former generals ensued, before the Hellenistic world settled into four stable power blocks:

- The Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt,
- The Seleucid Empire in the east,
- The kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor, and
- Macedon.

Before Alexander, the Persians had tried to recreate the form of the great Solomonic Kingdom in the Trans-Euphrates as a vassal to the Persian Empire. By the time Alexander had defeated Persia, he had not yet confirmed the rights of the satrapies of Sanballat, Tobiah and Gashmu. The Land of Israel became hotly contested between the Ptolemy dynasty in Egypt and the Seleucid dynasty in Syria, changing hands several times. Ptolemy I Soter was Alexander’s the Great’s childhood friend and possibly his half-brother. Seleucus I Nicator was a general who had proved himself in a campaign in India. In 300 B.C. Seleucus I opened Antioch up to the Jews and gave them equal status with Greeks while under Ptolemy I many other Jews settled in Alexandria, Egypt.

99 Tcherikover 1961, 154
100 Fensham 1993, 261
101 Gabriel knows seventy languages, all of which he taught to Joseph (Sotah, 36b; compare Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah fragment in Wertheimer, “Bate Midrashot,” iv. 25, where Zaggzgael is mentioned as instructor in the seventy languages, the other angels understand only Hebrew (Hag. 16a; Sotah, 33a)). The highest of these intelligences being the active intellect of the Tenth Sphere, identified by the Islamic sources (according to “Cuzari,” i. 67) with the angel Gabriel and the Holy Ghost,
102 Backgrounds of early Christianity, by Everett Ferguson, 2003
The Ptolemies and their love for the Temple

The Ptolemaic kingdom was founded when Ptolemy I Soter declared himself Pharaoh of Egypt, creating a powerful Hellenistic state stretching from southern Syria to Cyrene and south to Nubia, including the Trans-Euphrates and Arabia. Alexandria became the capital city and a center of Greek culture and trade. To gain recognition by the native Egyptian populace, they named themselves as the successors to the Pharaohs and took on their customs.

There was a long history of Jewish settlement in Egypt: The Persians had used Jewish and Samaritan troops in Egypt under Sanballat to protect their southern border. Alexander the Great ordered that the Samaritan troops of Sanballat should follow him into Egypt, promising to give them lands, ordering them to guard that country. Ptolemy I Soter captured Jerusalem by coming on the Sabbath day bringing sacrifices. The unsuspecting residents were unprepared when Ptolemy’s troops seized control of the city. Ptolemy then forcibly settled many Jews and Samaritans in Egypt. He distributed many of them into garrisons, and at Alexandria gave them equal privileges of citizens with the Macedonians themselves; and required of them to take oaths of fidelity. Eventually other Jews went of their own accord into Egypt, because of the “goodness of the soil, and the liberality of Ptolemy”.

Hellenized Coins of High Priests Onias I and Onias II

Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283 BCE to 246 BCE) then took over the kingdom of Egypt. Josephus relates that as part of his effort to assemble a universal library in Alexandria, Philadelphus enjoined seventy [seventy-two] Jewish scholars to translate the Torah from Hebrew into Greek under the supervision of the High Priest in Jerusalem. The High Priest Eleazar was a brother of Onias II. This work is known as the Septuagint (LXX). Philadelphus also set free a hundred and twenty thousand Jewish and Samaritan slaves, at the advice of Aristeus, a Temple sympathizer. At the advice of Andreas, the captain of the guard, and Aristeus, Philadelphus also sent first fruits, sacrifices, “a multitude of vessels”, precious stones, gold items, including the table of shewbread, as gifts to Jerusalem.

The Jews also obtained honors from the “kings of Asia”: Seleucus I Nicator made them citizens in those cities which he built in Asia, and in the lower Syria, and in the metropolis itself, Antioch. He granted them privileges equal to those of the Macedonians and Greeks, honors that lasted well into Roman times.

Ptolemy looses the Trans-Euphrates to Syria, but retains tax rights

The Seleucid Empire had designs on Syria, Phonecia and Judea. Antiochus III the Great (222–187 BCE) made war against Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-205 BCE). Antiochus attacked the Ptolemaic province of southern Syria and Phoenicia, and by 199 BCE he seems to have had possession of it. Scopas briefly recovered it for Ptolemy Philopater. But in 198 BCE Antiochus defeated Scopas at the Battle of Panium, near the sources of the Jordan, a battle which marks the end of Ptolemaic rule in Judea. Most of the general population of Jews and Samaritans who had suffered taxation supported the Seleucids, but the High Priest and Jerusalem supported Ptolemy.

After devastating Jerusalem, Antiochus sent gifts to the temple. He declared a pension for sacrifices, wine, oil and frankincense. He declared all materials to be used to “repair the work about the Temple”, after the devastation of war, to be tax free. He reaffirmed the Persian tax exemption on the priesthood: “Let the senate, and the priests, and the scribes of the temple, and the sacred singers, be discharged from poll-money and the crown tax and other taxes also”. He granted a general tax exemption to the entire city for three years. He reaffirmed Jerusalem’s role as a single judiciary for the entire Trans-Euphrates (limited to

103 Josephus, Antiquities 12.2.2
104 Further books were translated over the next two centuries in Alexandria.
105 In modern terms Aristeus would be called a “Noahide”. He said “that though I be not of kin to them by birth, nor one of the same country with them, yet do I desire these favors to be done them, since all men are the workmanship of God” and “I have learned by particular inquiry; for both these people, and we also, worship the same God the framer of all things.”
106 Josephus, Antiquities 12.2.4
religion, and excepting Greeks). He declared “let all of that nation live according to the laws of their own country” and “and he that transgresses any of these orders, let him pay to the priests three thousand drachmae of silver.”

After this Antiochus tried to pacify Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–181 BCE), and create a treaty of friendship. Antiochus gave Ptolemy his daughter Cleopatra in marriage, and yielded up to him the tax-rights of Cælesyria, and Samaria, and Judea, and Phoenicia, by way of dowry. This allowed Ptolemy to continue to farm taxes in the Trans-Euphrates, but did not allow him to retain garrisons there.

**Joseph Tobiah wins “tax-rulership” of the Trans-Euphrates**

Ptolemy VI Philometor (180 to 145 BCE), son of Cleopatra, began to tax the High Priest Onias II. However, either due to the prior exemption of Antiochus or some other reason, he refused to pay it. Ptolemy threatened invasion. When pressed by the nobles, Onias II threatened to resign. Joseph Tobiah, a nephew of Onias II, requested permission to petition Ptolemy to forgo the tribute-money, or at least a part of it. Onias II permitted Joseph, to go to Ptolemy and gave him the authority to speak to the people in his name. Instead Joseph won tax farming rights for himself.

Joseph received the Egyptian envoy and gave them presents. Joseph first raised a loan of about 20,000 drachma in Samaria to make his bid to become the main tax collector for Ptolemy throughout the Trans-Euphrates. There were other Syrian and Phoenician nobles who came to Alexandria in order to bid for the same position, and who derided Joseph on account of his insignificant appearance. Joseph, based on his family’s position for many generations as tax collectors for the Trans-Euphrates for the Persians was able to win for him the Egyptian king’s friendship. In addition, according to Josephus, he offered twice the bid of his opponents and secured the contract for farming the taxes. He was given initial funds and 2,000 cavalry. Joseph Tobiah’s domains, as promised by Ptolemy, included the entire Trans-Euphrates: Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, Trans-Jordan and Arabia. Josephus says that Joseph Tobiah made himself feared through all the cities of Syria and Phoenicia. When a city would refuse to pay taxes, he would kill the principle men and send the sum of their estates to Ptolemy.

Joseph left Alexandria as “ruler” προστάτης of the Trans-Euphrates. Joseph retained his office of tax-farmer until his death, twenty-two years later.

**Heliodrus and plundering the Temple Treasury**

According to 2 Maccabees, Onias III quarreled with the Temple superintendent, Simon the “Benjamite”. Simon was his half brother and nephew to Joseph Tobiah. (The appellation “Benjamite” in Hebrew is benyamin, but should be read bar yonai, referring to the Tobiad “dove” which is yonah in Hebrew and Aramaic.) It is also a play on words, in the bible benyamin was originally ben oni, similar to ben choni (Onias). Simon and his brother Menelaus are both given this appellation. Incidently, bar yonai is specifically used by Jesus to describe Peter in the New Testament. Mathew is also called a “tax collector” and a Levite, and Jesus stayed at the house of Zacchaeus the “tax collector”. These appear to be indications of Tobiad religion notzrut in the New Testament

The quarrel was about the taxation of the market place next to the Temple. Simon Tobiah went to the governor of Tarsus and described to him the treasury in the temple, indicating that the king could take it if he was made high priest. The governor then told the king, Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 BCE), who sent his minister Heliodorus to Jerusalem. Heliodorus tried to enter the temple to take some of the treasure, but was seized with terror and beaten. Heliodorus was carried away on a stretcher and Onias III offered a sacrifice for the man’s recovery, worried that the king would think the Jews had done this to him. It is said, however, that Simon Tobiah brought a false accusation to the king that it was Onias III who had threatened Heliodorus and began to exact revenge with the help of Apollonius, the governor of Cælesyria and Phoenicia (who held the position Sanballat once did), Onias began to appeal to the king. He died and his brother, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164BCE) took the throne. The new king did not forgive the high priest’s failed attempt to take the Temple treasures. When Antiochus IV Epiphanes became king, Onias was obliged to yield to his own half brother Simon Tobiah, who took on the name Jason after attaining High Priesthood.

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107 In the Samaritan Torah, the name is benyamin consistently written as ben yamim. It is interesting to note that in Araabic al-yamamah means “dove.”

108 Simon, who took the name Jason upon his ascension to High Priesthood, was buried in a magnificent Tomb in the Kidron valley across from the Temple. On that tomb, the name of Jason’s father has been deliberately defaced, in an effort to distance Jason from the legitimate priesthood.
Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Maccabbee Rebellion

During the three years of his priesthood Jason had given many proofs of his loyalty to the Hellenistic party by building a gymnasium in Jerusalem and by introducing many Greek customs. However Antiochus IV Epiphanes wanted more money than Jason was prepared to take from the Temple treasury. Menelaus, having been sent to Antiochus to pay the annual tribute, took the opportunity to promise more revenue than Jason if the king would grant him the office of high priest. Antiochus granted Menelaus’ request. Antiochus sent an officer and a troop of Cyprian soldiers to subdue any opposition that might be attempted by the followers of the deposed high priest Jason and to collect at the same time the sum Menelaus had promised. Onias III made a public protest of this and escaped to “the inviolable sanctuary of Daphne, near Antioch.” Menelaus and Andronicus lured Onias out of the garden sanctuary with sworn pledges of nonviolence but then put Onias to death.

Meanwhile Jason had not abandoned his claims to the high-priesthood, and while (170 BCE) Antiochus was waging war against Egypt, Jason made himself master of Jerusalem and forced Menelaus to seek refuge in the citadel. Antiochus regarded this as an act of rebellion, and, having been compelled by the Romans to leave Egypt, he marched against Jerusalem, massacred the inhabitants, and plundered the Temple; in this he is said to have been assisted by Menelaus. According to 2 Maccabees, it was Menelaus who persuaded Antiochus to Hellenize the Jewish worship, and thereby brought about the uprising of the Judeans under the guidance of the Maccabees. Antiochus IV Epiphanes failed to put down the Maccabean rebellion, and his successor, Antiochus Eupator, executed Menelaus as a concession to the Jews.

Demetrius I Soter overthrew Antiochus Eupator, and Alcimus traveled to Antioch to secure the assistance of the Seleucid king to put down the rebellion. Demetrius sent an army under Bacchides to establish Alcimus in the high priesthood at Jerusalem. When Bacchides and his army returned to Antioch, the Hasmonean Judah Maccabee attacked and overcame Alcimus, and drove him also to Syria. There he secured from Demetrius another army, led by Nicanor, who, failing to overcome Judah by treachery, attacked him directly, but was defeated and killed. A third and greater army, under Bacchides again, was dispatched to reinstall Alcimus. Judah was defeated and killed. Alcimus established as high priest and a strong garrison was left in Jerusalem to maintain him. But he did not long enjoy his triumph, since he died soon after. One of the major changes he made in the Temple was to pull down the low wall of the temple that divided the court of the Gentiles from that of the Israelites, symbolically undoing the work of Ezra over a hundred years before.

Later this low wall was rebuilt with twelve gates, one for each tribe, at which worshipers would gather for prayer. The symbolism was clear, different paths to the Almighty were recognized, but the distinction between the role of Jew and non-Jew remained. Later the prayers at these twelve gates became the basis for public prayer, and when six more prayers were added after the destruction of the Temple, the prayer became known as the eighteen benedictions, or Shemoneh Esrei prayer, prayed three times a day by Jews until today.

Various early theories concern the identity of the Wicked Priest in the Dead Sea scrolls. The Wicked Priest “ruled over Israel” (1QpHab 8.10) and was able to partake in “plundering” (9.7) has persuaded most scholars to exclude from consideration the predecessors of the Hasmonean High Priests, who did not share their ability to attack other nations militarily, having been militarily subjugated to Egypt or Syria, and their successors, who were dominated by the Romans. The Wicked Priest was once called “by the name of the truth” (8.8-9), but later turned to evil. The Wicked Priest probably refers to either Melenaus or Alcimus. The Moreh Tzedek probably refers then to Onias IV who fled to Egypt.

Joseph’s other son, Hyrcanus – A Split in the Tobiad dynasty

Before the Maccabean revolt, Joseph had seven sons and a daughter by his first wife, descended from Seleucid nobility. These first sons were sympathetic to Seleucids. His grandsons of this marriage included Jason, Menelaus and Alcimus.

However Joseph had another son by a second marriage. He married the daughter of his brother who lived in Egypt. His only son from this marriage was Hyrcanus Tobiah, who’s sympathies lay with the Ptolemies.

On the birth of a prince, (who would become Ptolemy VI Philometer, in 181BCE), Joseph felt too old to visit Alexandria. Because his older brothers were not sympathetic to Ptolemy, he sent Hyrcanus to bear his congratulations to the court. Joseph's representative in Alexandria, Arion, was sympathetic to newly enthroned Seleucus IV Philopator. Arion refused to recognize Hyrcanus. Hyrcanus, emboldened, put Arion
in chains, and in this way won both the favor of Ptolemy V Epiphanes and his courtiers. Ptolemy decided that Hyrcanus would inherit his father's office of ruler and tax-farmer of the Trans-Euphrates.

The older sons of Joseph supported the Seleucids and met Hyrcanus Tobiah with armed resistance. Hyrcanus defeated them, and killed two of them. Hyrcanus Tobiah was supported in battle by troops loyal to Onias IV, son of the deposed priest Onias III. Seleucus IV Philopator was busy raiding the Temple treasuries, so Hyrcanus Tobiah retreated from Jerusalem and created a fortified estate in Iraq al-Amir and continued to pursue his claim, granted by Persia and confirmed by Ptolemy, to be ruler of what was left of Ptolemic Trans-Euphrates. Hyrcanus Tobiah carried on war with the Arabs in the name of Ptolemy, and ruled the district east of the Jordan.

Both for his own comfort, and also as a safeguard against attacks by his brothers, Hyrcanus Tobiah built the castle of Tyre and various other strongholds, ruling there until the death of Seleucus IV Philopator (175 BCE). Ptolemy V Epiphanes also died (181 BCE), leaving two young sons; but when Hyrcanus Tobiah saw that Antiochus Epiphanes, the new king of Syria, possessed great power, and when he realized that he would be unable to vindicate himself for his war upon the Arabs, he committed suicide (175 BCE), and his property was seized by Antiochus. His claims to all of Trans-Jordan and Nabatea would be taken on by his grandson Antipatris, where Antipatris was not only the name of one of Alexander the Great's generals, but also a play on words "against Petra". His son would marry an Arabian princess, Cypros, daughter of Aretas III Philhellen King of Nabatea. Their son would be named after Aretas, and Latinized to Herod.

Perhaps felt the need to emphasize the lines of continuity between himself and his predecessors at 'Iraq al-Amir. Hyrcanus may have tried to regain his leadership inside his family by underlining his inheritance to the ancestral estate at 'Iraq al-Amir by building a royal residence comparable with or superior to those of his ancestors at the site. Many years later Herod the Great would rebuild 'Iraq al-Amir in magnificent Herodian style.

There was a close link between the Oniads and the Tobiads. During Antiochus IV Epiphanes second campaign against Egypt, 2 Maccabees says a false rumor was spread that Antiochus had been killed. Jason tried to reclaim the High Priesthood with the support of Tobiad cavalry, but failed in the attempt. Jason was ultimately forced to move from country to country in exile until he finally died in Sparta.

Onias IV, like Jason before him, sought refuge among the Tobiads. Onias IV would escape to Egypt in 159 BCE, when the Maccabees came to power. Onias would request from Ptolemy VI Philometor, whom Hyrcanus had honored at his birth, with permission to build a Temple in Egypt, him in the Nomus of Heliopolis. His ancestors would include the Boethusians as well as the Quraish of Mecca. This is further discussed in the authors work "The Prophet Muhammed as a descendant of Onias III"

The Temple of Onias IV

Josephus in the The Wars of the Jews\textsuperscript{109}, refers to the Onias who built the Temple at Leontopolis as "the son of Simon", which was the name of Onias III as well as his father. Onias III was murdered at Antioch in 171 BCE. A mere youth at the time of his father's death, he had fled to the court of Alexandria in consequence of the Syrian persecutions, perhaps because he thought that salvation would come to his people from Egypt. Ptolemy VI was King of Egypt at that time. He had not yet given up his claims to Coele-Syria, Judea and Arabia. He w and gladly gave refuge to such a prominent personage of the neighboring country. Onias requested the king and his sister-wife, Cleopatra, to allow him to build a sanctuary in Egypt similar to the one at Jerusalem, where he would employ Levites and priests for the use of Jews and non-Jewish Temple sympathizers. He referred to the prediction of the prophet Isaiah that a Jewish temple would be erected in Egypt and Arabia.

In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt (Heliopolis), and a monument at the border thereof (Mecca) to the Lord. (Isaiah 19:19)

According to Josephus, the temple of Leontopolis existed for 343 years, though modern historians correct that number to 243. He relates that the Roman emperor Vespasian feared that through this temple Egypt might become a new center for Jewish rebellion and therefore ordered the governor of Egypt, Lupus, to demolish it. Lupus died in the process of carrying out the order; and the task of stripping the temple of its treasures, barring access to it, and removing all traces of divine worship at the site was completed by his successor, Paulinus, which dates the event to c. March - August 73.

\textsuperscript{109} War i. 1, § 1; vii. 10, § 2.
The Onias temple was not exactly similar to the Temple at Jerusalem, being more in the form of a high
tower; and as regards the interior arrangement, it had not a candelabrum, but a hanging lamp. The building
had a court (τέμενος) which was surrounded by a brick wall with stone gates. The king endowed the temple
with large revenues—a fact that may have suggested to the writer of the letters mentioned above the wealth
of wood and sacrificial animals.\(^\text{110}\)

Many of the Jewish settlers in the Land of Onias were military colonists who served in the army of the
Ptolemeid kings. Ananias (Onias V) and Chelkias (Chalcis), the sons of Onias IV, both served as generals in
the army of Cleopatra III (r.117-81 BCE).

The Maccabees

Judas the Maccabee led a revolt against Syria. He used guerrilla warfare to win victories against the
Syrians despite commanding a numerically inferior army. Judas the Machabee toke the first steps to rebuild
the Kingdom of Solomon as a Judeo-Arab confederation. He fought Samaritan and Arab tribes and
conquered Edom, and forced the population to convert to Judaism. He made an alliance with the
Nabataeans, an ancient people who lived in southern Jordan, Canaan, and northern Arabia. Jehuda the
Maccabee (r. 167-160 BCE) also “turned aside to the land of the Philistines; he tore down their altars, and
the graven images of their gods he burned with fire; he plundered the cities and returned to the land of
Judah. Although the Maccabees claimed the entire Trans-Jordan as their domain, their benefactor was
neither the Seuclid refugees in Syria, nor the Ptolemies in Egypt, but rather a new rising power, that of Rome.

The success of the Maccabees inspired fear and respect in Egypt and Arabia. When Alexander Balas
brought his army against Ptolemy and lost, he fled to the Nabataeans in northern Arabia. There he was
assassinated and Zabdiel, the Arabian king of Saba’, sent his head to Ptolemy, whose grandfather had
established the altar at Mecca under the supervision of Onias IV. At one point in the battle against the
Seleucids, Jonathan the Maccabee (r. 161 to 143 BCE) “turned aside against the Arabs who are called
Zabadeans, and he crushed them and plundered them.” This was not simply the conquest of the victor; the
Maccabees felt they were the inheritors to the kingdom of the Trans-Jordan, the shadow of the former
Kingdom of Israel. Their conquests among the Arabs were their way of reuniting the “Jews”, the lost tribes
of Israel, into one kingdom.

The Zabad family were originally members of the tribe of Judah. Zabad means “He has given” or “gift.” 1
Chron. 2:36-37. Yet his descendent was one of three men ordered to divorce their foreign-born wives. The
tribe of Zabadeans was apparently the result of their intermarriage. The Zabadeans seems to have some
connection to the Tobiads and their Notzrim religion. It is interesting to note that there was a “Zebedee”
who was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. He knew many of Jesus’ disciples because his sons were
James and John. Also, he had several hired servants, including Simon Peter and Andrew.

The next generation, who were not descendants of Judah the Maccabee, who called themselves the
Hasmoneans, continued to push into Arabia, Alexander Yannai conquering them along with the Gileadites
and Moabites. However, he lost his entire army after being ambushed by Obodias (Abdullah), king of the
Arabians, and escaped to Jerusalem only to find more insurrections. He put these rebels down as well,
although Josephus says in War of the Jews that he had “no reason to rejoice in these victories”. Alexander
Yannai was hated for his heavy taxation and cruelties. But as hated as he was, this was offset of the love of
the people for their queen, Salome Alexandra.

The Hasmoneans

The Pharisees had opposed the conquests of Alexander Yannai, and of his policy of the forced conversion
of his subjects to Judaism. They saw this as a means of grabbing power and a detriment to true religion. In
response to this mutiny, Alexander Yannai is said to have crucified 800 Pharisees, sparing none except the
brother of the queen, Shimon ben Shetach. As side note, Josephus – who claimed to be a Pharisee himself
– betrays his sympathies when he describes these events. After coldly describing the death of 800
Pharisees, he mentions that the queen permitted a few of their murderers to be executed but “when the
men called on the ghost of Alexander Yannai to console the slain [those who had crucified the Pharisees],
the bystanders were said to have broken out into tears.”

\(^{110}\) Archeologist Flinders Petrie, in his dig of Tell al-Yahudi in 1905/6 identified remains of this temple.
According to an article written by Prof. Louis Ginzberg, the 8,000 Pharisees who fled Jerusalem emigrated to Egypt and Syria, with Judah ben Tabbai leading one group to Ptolemy in Egypt. The other group went to Syria were said to have met with intense violence and that most of them were massacred near Chalcis, leaving only a small remnant who took refuge in Beit Zabdai (see Zabadeans above).

With Alexander Alexander Yannai crucifying hundreds of his own people as his victims watched their family members get tortured to death before them, it is hard to think of a less likely ally to the Essenes, yet that is what is implied by a copied letter referred to as the Prayer for King Jonathan, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls:

[Column B] “A song of holiness unto king Jonathan and all the congregation of your people, Israel, who are in the four winds of heaven, peace be [for] all, and upon your kingdom, your name be blessed.

[Column A] “Praise the Lord, a Psalm… of You loved as a fa[ther]; you ruled over… vacat… and your foes were [will be] afraid… the heaven… and to the depths of the sea… and upon those who glorify him… the humble from the hand of adversaries… Zion for his habitation, ch[ooses]…

[Column C] “…because you love Isr[ael]… in the day and until evening… to approach, to be Remember them for blessing on your name, which is called… kingdom to be blessed… for the day of war… to King Jonathan…”

We have Josephus’ uncorroborated report that the wife of Aristobulus fulfilled Judas the Essene’s prophecy, which could mean that Salome Alexandra was an Essene sympathizer who was able to convince her second husband Jonathan to make concessions towards them. Antiquities says that Alexander Yannai had crucified the 800 men on the advice of Diogenes of Judea and that after Alexander Yannai died, Alexandra had that advisor put to death. Other, less likely possibilities are that the scroll has been misinterpreted due to the missing fragments or that another, otherwise unknown contender to the throne had the same name. Another more presumptuous supposition has been made that the letter was brought in by a Sadducee convert and so did not reflect the opinion of the Dead Sea community. A more likely possibility, assuming there even was a conflict between the Dead Sea community and Alexander Yannai, is that the praises were diplomatic in nature. The sons of Onias IV had convinced Cleopatra III to make an alliance with Alexander Yannai against Lathyros despite the fact that they were Judean dissidents, so it would not be too surprising if the Essenes were a part of this alliance or a similar one.

The Seuclids and the Ptolemies fought the Nabateans as part of what they understood to be their right to Arabia as granted by Alexander the Great. They fought battles through their proxies: the Oniads, the Tobiads, the Maccabees, the Hasmoneans and the Herodians. In spite of being vassals and proxies to Persia, Syria, Egypt and eventually Rome, these local rulers did not forget the Tobaid claim to the Trans-Jordan and Arabia, secretly harboring intentions of their own Judeo-Arab kingdom.

The Roman Historian, Cornelius Tacitus (56-117CE) described it this way: “While the Assyrian, Median, and Persian Empires dominated the East, the Jews were slaves regarded as the lowest of the low. In the Hellenistic period, King Antiochus made an effort to get rid of their primitive cult and Hellenize them, but this would-be reform of this degraded nation was foiled by the outbreak of war with Parthia, for this was the moment of Arsaces’ insurrection. Then, since the Hellenistic rulers were weak and the Parthians had not yet developed into a great power (Rome, too, was still far away), the Jews established a dynasty of their own. These kings were expelled by the fickle mob, but regained control by force, setting up a reign of terror which embraced, among other typical acts of despotism, the banishment of fellow-citizens, the destruction of cities, and the murder of brothers, wives, and parents. The kings encouraged the superstitious Jewish religion, for they assumed the office of High Priest in order to buttress their regime.”

111 Tacitus, Histories, Book 5, Ch. 8
The rise of the Sadducees and retreat of the Pharisees

It is difficult to state at what time the Pharisees, as a party, arose. Josephus first mentions them in connection with Jonathan, the successor of Judas Maccabeus ("Ant." xiii. 5, § 9). One of the factors that distinguished the Pharisees from other groups prior to the destruction of the Temple was their belief that all Jews had to observe the purity laws (which applied to the Temple service) outside the Temple. The major difference, however, was the continued adherence of the Pharisees to the laws and traditions of the Jewish people in the face of assimilation. As Josephus noted, the Pharisees were considered the most expert and accurate expositors of Jewish law.

During the Hasmonean period, the Sadducees and Pharisees functioned primarily as political parties. Although the Pharisees had opposed the wars of expansion of the Hasmoneans and the forced conversions of the Idumeans, the political rift between them became wider when Pharisees demanded that the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus choose between being king and being High Priest. In response, the king openly sided with the Sadducees by adopting their rites in the Temple. His actions caused a riot in the Temple and led to a brief civil war that ended with a bloody repression of the Pharisees, although at his deathbed the king called for reconciliation between the two parties. Alexander was succeeded by his widow, Salome Alexandra, whose brother was Shimon ben Shetach, a leading Pharisee. Upon her death her elder son, Hyrcanus, sought Pharisee support, and her younger son, Aristobulus, sought the support of the Sadducees. The conflict between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus culminated in a civil war that ended when the Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC and inaugurated the Roman period of Jewish history.

Josephus attests that Salome Alexandra was very favorably inclined toward the Pharisees and that their political influence grew tremendously under her reign, especially in the institution known as the Sanhedrin. Later texts such as the Mishnah and the Talmud record a host of rulings ascribed to the Pharisees concerning sacrifices and other ritual practices in the Temple, torts, criminal law, and Governance. The influence of the Pharisees over the lives of the common people remained strong, and their rulings on Jewish law were deemed authoritative by many. Although these texts were written long after these periods, many scholars believe that they are a fairly reliable account of history during the Second Temple era.

Upon Hyrcanus' death, however, Aristobulus jailed his mother and three brothers, including Alexander Jannaeus, and allowed her to starve there. By this means he came into possession of the throne, but died one year later after a painful illness in 103 BC. Aristobulus' brothers were freed from prison by his widow; Alexander reigned from 103–76 BC, and died during the siege of the fortress Ragaba. Alexander was followed by his wife, Salome Alexandra, who reigned from 76–67 BC. She was the only regnant Jewish Queen. During her reign, her son Hyrcanus II held the office of High Priest and was named her successor.
Josephus mentions the three main parties of this time were the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. One way of looking at these groups is in terms of their ideology: Rationalists, Mystics and Monastics.

Another way to look at these groups is according to historical context during the Second Commonwealth and the centuries afterwards:

- **The “Northern Tribes”**
  - The "Sanbalat" Jews, who followed Helenism and intermarried with the Phonecians, controlled the shipping along the coast of Israel and Egypt. One branch of these families was immortalized in the tales of Sinbad (Sinbad). They assimilated into the Tobiad **Notzrim**.
  - The "Sanbalat" Jews faithful to their sacrificial religion on Mount Gerizim. Always Known as Shomrim (Samaritans), they were repressed during the Second Commonwealth. They did not attain a “Golden age” until after the the Bar Kochba revolt was crushed and the resulting sanctions against "the Jews". They rallied under the king of Palmyra “Ben Netzer”.

- **The “Tribes of Joseph”**
  - The "Tobiad" Jews, who followed Helenism and intermarried with the Greeks. Many of the “Greeks” mentioned by the New Testament were actually Tobaid.
  - The "Tobiad" Jews faithful to their monastic religion became the Essenes, and they were later retroactively identified by Constantine as Notzrim and thought by him to be the early Christians.
  - The "Tobiad" Jews who followed Helenism, Paganism and intermarried with the Arabs carried on the role of Tax Collectors. Odenathus, the husband of Zenobia and ruler of Palmyra was their king. He called himself "Ben Netzer" and claimed to be ruler of all Jews and Samaritans. His kingdom was destroyed in 270CE. His people were called the Adzites (Aus and Kazraj) when they invaded Medina. They were also called Ansar. The rulers however escaped to Edessa (Sanliurfa) in Asia Minor.
  - The Hyrcanus branch of the “Tobiads” became the Herodians, which escaped to Himyar.

- **The “Tzadokite Priesthood”**
  - All of the Tobiads kept to some degree the Notzrim religion and they were faithful to the Oniad priesthood, so they were all Sadducees, but of different flavors. The Herodians and other Sadducees, originally assimilationists and favoring Helenism, became the core of the zealots when their sovereignty was threatened.\(^{112}\) The New Testament calls them, "the lost sheep of Israel".

- **The “Tribes of Judah”**
  - The Pharisees, mostly a popular movement, represented the Jews as well as fully converted Arabs (Idumeans, Moabites and Ammonites) under Persian influence.

- **The “Kingdom of Sheba”**
  - The Idumeans, Moabites and Ammonites had been brought under the control of the Hasmonaeans and as such were referred to as “the Jews” or “Herodians”. The Nabateans, the peoples of Sheba and Himyar retained their independence through constant battle with the Hasmonaeans/Herodians. It is ironic when the kingdom Herod was finally destroyed by Rome, the last Herodians sought refuge with Himyar bringing great wealth and revitalizing that kingdom.
  - The Adzites (Aus and Kazraj) invaded Medina after 270CE, displacing “the Jews” and causing constant warfare. Peace was only achieved under king Abu Karib Tubba’, a descendant of Tobiah, and Qusai of the Quraish, a descendants of Onias IV in 412 CE.
  - The descendants of “Ben Netzer” finally joined the Quraish when they left Edessa and traveled to declare allegiance to the Prophet at the first declaration of Aqaba in 621CE.

\(^{112}\) Rashi on this point claims that Bar Kochba was a descendant of Herod.
Fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom

The Maccabbee Revolt (167 BCE) began a twenty-five-year period of Jewish independence made possible by the steady collapse of the Seleucid Empire under attacks from the rising powers of the Roman Republic and the Parthian Empire. However, the same power vacuum that enabled the Jewish state to be recognized by the Roman Senate c. 139 BC was later exploited by the Romans themselves. Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, Simon's great-grandsons, became pawns in a proxy war between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great that ended with the kingdom under the supervision of the Roman governor of Syria (64 BC). The deaths of Pompey (48 BC), Caesar (44 BC), and the related Roman civil wars relaxed Rome's grip on Israel, allowing a brief Hasmonean resurgence backed by the Parthian Empire. This short independence was rapidly crushed by the Romans under Mark Antony and Octavian. The installation of Herod the Great as king in 37 BC made Israel a Roman client state, ending the Hasmonean dynasty. In 44 AD, Rome installed the rule of a Roman procurator side by side with the rule of the Herodian kings (specifically Agrippa I 41-44 and Agrippa II 50-100, see also Iudaea province).

The inheritors of the Hasmonean & Herodian tradition: the Catholic Church

It is interesting that the first two Maccabee books were accepted into the Roman Catholic canon through the Council of Trent in 1566, being accepted already by Greek and Russian Orthodox churches. The fact that the author gives unabashed compliments towards Rome for its faithfulness gives a sure standing for dating 1 Maccabees before Pompey's desecration of the Jerusalem Temple in 63 B.C. It is perhaps ironic that books dedicated towards Jewish nationalism, something Judaism had always strived for but Christianity surrendered, would be admitted into the Roman Catholic canon yet left out of the Jewish one. By accepting Maccabees, it implicitly endorses the Hasmonian Dynasty, and in effect canonizes the Sadducee party of which Jesus was in conflict with in the gospels. The installation of a Hasmonean kingdom also in some ways helped produce the Herodian kings who killed John the Baptist and supposedly committed the “Slaughter of Innocents” in the Gospel of Matthew. Every gospel portrays Jesus as speaking out against the Herodians and the Temple priesthood it was associated with. A closer look at 1 Maccabees, which is generally believed to have originally been written in Hebrew, has shown that despite its seemingly positive attitude towards the Onias priesthood, it ultimately endorses Jonathan and Simon’s appropriation of their priestly office. These books appear to be the lasting legacy of the Tobiad notzrim, the proto-Christians.

Antipatris and Herod

Hyrcanus had an Idumean friend named Antipater, an important official in the Hasmonean kingdom, who according to Josephus was “in his nature an active and seditious man; who was at enmity with Aristobulus, and had differences with him on account of his good-will to Hyrcanus.” His name was originally Antipas, the same name as his father, who had been the general in charge of Idumea after Alexander Yannai had conquered it and had also “made a league of friendship with those Arabians, and Gazites, and Ascalonites, that were of his own party, and had, by many and large presents, made them his fast friends.” Antipater was married to a woman named Cypros, a daughter of one of the “eminent men” or Idumea, who bore him four sons and a daughter, the second son being the future Herod the Great, who was born in 73 B.C. This friend of Hyrcanus began to secretly rile many powerful Jews against Aristobulus, reminding them that Hyrcanus was the older brother. He also tried to convince Hyrcanus that Aristobulus was getting constant advice to have him killed, but Hyrcanus “gave no credit to these words of his, as being of a gentle disposition, and one that does not easily admit of calumnies against other men,” although Josephus said that these attributes caused accusations that he was “unmanly.”

But eventually Antipater convinced Hyrcanus II to flee with him to King Aretas of Arabia, after which the two of them promised that if Aretas would help Hyrcanus take control of Judea, the twelve Arabian cities that Alexander Yannai had conquered would be restored to his kingdom. Aretas invaded Judea with 50,000 men and defeated Aristobulus, and the younger brother was forced to flee to Jerusalem. Josephus reports that after this defeat, most of the public support went over to Hyrcanus while the priests remained loyal to Aristobulus. Josephus describes how Aristobulus was forced to take refuge in the Jerusalem temple:

Scaurus went on to invade Arabia, laid Pella to waste, but became affected by a famine in Petra. Hyrcanus II sent Antipater with a supply line, and Scaurus in turn sent him to negotiate a tribute of 300 talents out of King Aretas. One of Aristobulus’ sons, Alexander, who had escaped Pompey, was able to raise an army and overrun Judea and rebuild the wall around Jerusalem and the other cities. Scaurus’ successor, Gabinus,
and Marcus Antonius defeated Alexander in Jerusalem and then followed him to Alexandrium, where he ultimately surrendered. At the request of Alexander’s mother, Gabinus had the remaining fortresses in Hyrcanum, Macherus, and Alexandrium demolished so that they would not be used in another war. Gabinus then put Hyrcanus in control of the Temple in Jerusalem in 57 B.C., but handed the government over to an aristocracy and divided the nation into five portions: Jerusalem, Gadara, a portion for Amathus, Jericho, and Sepphoris.

Herod’s claim to royalty was based on his descent from the Kings of Menashe, descent from the Prophets and the High Priests Zadok, and a vague claim to be a descendant of David. He felt he was the rightful ruler of the entire Trans-Euphrates, heir to the Persian governors Tobias and Geshamu and installed by Rome. He continuously waged wars against the Arabs and continued the Maccabees policy of territorial expansion. The name Herod is a form of Harith, as is its Latinized form “Aretas”.

In 36 CE, Pontius Pilate is ordered to Rome by Vitellius to stand trial for cruelty and oppression, including the execution of Samaritans without proper trial (some). Vitellius returns the high priest’s vestments to control of the Herodians, and replaces the High Priest. Jonathan (son of Annas) became High Priest. Marcellus becomes governor of Judea.

**Herod’s Judeo-Arab Kingdom**

For three hundred years Israel was a vassal state to Babylon, Ptolemy and then to the Seleucid monarchy. In 175 BCE Antiochus Epiphanes came to throne in Syria and within ten years the Maccabees revolted and routed Syrian domination in Israel. Judah the Maccabee did not claim the title “king”, only Nasi—prince, but in 141 BCE, his brother Simon accepted the dignity of high-priest and king. A large assembly “of the priests and the people and of the elders of the land, [declared] to the effect that Simon should be their king and high priest forever, until there should arise a faithful prophet”.

Recognition of the Hasmonean dynasty by the Roman Senate soon followed and for the first time, Israel was ruled by a priest-monarch of the tribe of Levi. The Hasmoneans ruled by force, and several of the royal family were murdered by its own members to prevent rival claimants. This situation was unfavorable to the Davidic house, and a notice in al-Makrizi, seems to indicate the exodus of Davidic descendants from Israel to Babylonia at the beginning of Hasmonean rule.  

The rivalry between Hasmoneans, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, brought about a civil war in 68-63 BCE. The war ended with the invasion of the Roman general Pompey and the forfeiture of the freedom of the Jewish people. Israel was forced to pay tribute to Rome and placed under the supervision of the Roman governor of Syria. From 63-40 BCE the government officially was in the hands of Hyrcanus, but in actuality the power rested with his Roman-Arab advisor Antipatris and his son Herod.

In an attempt to rid Israel of the house of Herod and claim the throne, Aristobulus’ son Antigonus, through the mediation of the Babylonian Exilarch, obtained Parthian troops and aid. The Parthians troops defeated the Roman army and Herod fled to Rome. Hyrcanus was captured by the Parthians and held in the Exilarch’s quarters in Nehardea, but not before Aristobulus cut off his ears to render him unfit for Hight Priesthood.

Hyrcanus lived for a time under house arrest. The Exilarch, it seems, had the intention of founding a high-priesthood for Babylonia through marriage to the exiled Hyrcanus. (As late as the third century certain inhabitants of Nehardea claimed their descent back to the Hasmoneans). After three years Herod returned with Roman troops to besiege Jerusalem. Antigonus’ supporters were slaughtered, and he was beheaded. Herod assumed supreme and total power. Herod proceeded to eliminated all his rivals, the aged Hyrcanus, his daughter Alexandra, and her two children, Miriam (whom Herod married) and Aristobulus (whom Herod drowned). This ended the Hasmonean house, with the exception of Herod's children.

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113 I Macc. xiv. 41
114 The chronicle of Ahmad ibn Ali De Sacy as cited in “Chrestomathie Arabe,” i. 100; Herzfeld, “Gesch. des Volkes Yisrael,” ii. 396
115 Josephus, Antiquities 15, Paragraphs 1, 2
116 Josephus, Antiquities 15, Paragraphs 2, 4
117 Herod left three children: Archelaus, Phillippe and Antipater (also called Herod). Archelaus, which was the most evil of the three, inherited Jerusalem and the main portion of the Judea from his father. Antipater and Phillippe were given other areas like Trans-Jordan with minor Jewish populations (neither of the latter two played a great role in the Jewish nation, Phillippe ruled until his death and Antipater was eventually exiled by the Romans). When Archelaus became king, the people revolted against him and after a ten-year struggle succeeded in ousting him. When that happened, the Romans exiled him and confiscated his property; Judea was annexed to the Syrian territories of the Roman Empire and was put under the rule of Roman procurators.
All the Hasmonean kings adopted a policy of territorial expansion. This led to the problem of what to do with the non-Jewish population in the newly annexed territories. Although opposed by the Pharisaic-Rabbinic leadership and without any historical precedent, an early Hasmonean king, Yochanan Hyrcanus, began a policy of forced conversion to a limited form of Judaism. Sadducean leadership, under Alexander Yannai began an active program of seeking and encouraging converts that was especially successful among other Semitic peoples.

According to Josephus, Herod – his mother an Arab princess – actively sought to combine Jewish Israel with Arab Trans-Jordan in one large Judeo-Arabic kingdom. Although he never succeeded territorially, his building enterprises in Jerusalem and elsewhere made a lasting impression on the entire region. Josephus says that just as Athens was the center of all things Greek, the Temple in Jerusalem had become the focal point for a vast Judaic nation consisting of Jews and Arabs, Parthians and Babylonians, Jews beyond the Euphrates and the Adiabeni or Assyrians. Temple sympathizers arrived en mass for the Pentecost – Succot holiday. They included Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Babylonians, Egyptians, Cretes and Arabs. Six hundred years before the Prophet, the Arabs and Jews were one nation with one common religion. A vast Judaic nation from the Niles to the Euphrates that performed the Festival – Hagg pilgrimage and shared in the Korban Shlaimim temple offering of which they were allowed to eat. They were called alternatively Gerrim, Kenites, Nethinim, and Salamai (=muslim).

The Talmud sheds an interesting light on the relationship of "Jews" in this Judaic Nation after the destruction of the Temple. Rabbi Akiva told this parable, "A fox [Herod, Idumean Arabs] was once walking alongside a river. He saw fish [Pharisaic Jews] swimming in groups from one place to another. The fox said to them, "From what are you fleeing?" They replied, "From the nets that fishermen [Romans] cast (to catch us)." He said to them, "Would you like to come on the dry land so that you and I can live together in the way that our ancestors did? [When Jews and Arabs lived together]" They replied, "Aren't you the one that is called the cleverest of animals? You are not clever, but foolish. If we are afraid in the water where we live, how much more afraid we would be on the land where we would surely die?"

Alexander, the son of Herod, who was slain by his father, had two sons Alexander and Tigranes, by the daughter of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia. The king of Armenia at the time, Tigranes, was accused at Rome and died childless; Alexander and his sons were sent to take possession of the kingdom of Armenia by Nero; Vespasian made one son, Alexander, king of an island in Cilicia after he married Jotape, the daughter of Antiochus, the king of Commagenia. But these descendants of Alexander, soon after their birth, deserted the Jewish religion, and went over to that of the Greeks. Only the descendants of Herod’s other son, Aristobulus IV, retained any sense of Jewish identity.

Herod of Chalcis (d. 48 AD)

Herod of Chalcis (d. 48 AD), was a son of Aristobulus IV, and the grandson of Herod the Great, Roman client king of Judaea. He was the brother of Herod Agrippa I and Herodias. He was vested the rulership of

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118 This is explained more thoroughly in the Author’s essay "From Bar Kochba to the Prophet Muhammed". Forced conversion is prohibited in Judaism. But as the Hasmonean king declared his conquered subjects to be his property, technically as "slaves” Avedim (c.f. Abdullah) they could be forced to convert to a limited form of Judaism that did not include most of the ritual requirements.

119 Seder HaDoros and Josephus state that she was from the royal family of Edom and her name was Kapidon the Edomite). As mentioned above, Yochanan Hyrcanus forcibly converted the Edomites to Judaism and made them slaves to the House of the Hasmonaens. Thus, since Herod’s mother was an Edomite, she was considered a slave and passed on that status to her son.

120 Josephus, Wars. Preface, Section 2.

121 Acts 2:9

122 Targum Onkolos on Exodus 2:25 and elsewhere renders Kenites (descendants of Yethro, the first convert) as Shlamai, probably related to the Korban Shlaimim. Syed Abu-Ala’ Maududi’s "The Meaning of the Qur’an" basing himself on Qur'an 2.131-133 says [Though the Jews] were originally Muslims, they had swerved from the real Islam ... So much so that they had even given up their original name “Muslim” and adopted the name “Jew” instead, and made religion the sole monopoly of the children of Israel”. The word “Islam” represents the infinitive, the noun of action, of the factitive stem of the Arabic root “salam,” and is rightly compared (Zunz, “Literaturgesch.” p. 641; comp. Steinschneider, "Polemische und Apologetische Literatur,” p. 266, note 56) with the use of the “hif’il” of “shalam” in later Hebrew; e.g., Pesik. 125a (“mushlam”); Tan., ed. Buber, Gen. p. 46 bb. (where “hishlim” is used of proselytes). (J.E. Islam)

123 Berachot 61. It is interesting to note that Rabbi Akiva himself was descended from Arab converts to Judaism.
Chalcis, a kingdom north of Judaea, as tetrarch. After the death of his brother, he was also given responsibility for the Temple in Jerusalem, as well as the appointment of the Temple's High Priest. He appointed Ananias, who is mentioned in Acts, was appointed by him. His first wife was his cousin, Mariamne. She bore him a son, who was also named Aristobulus, and who eventually became ruler of Chalcis. After Mariamne's death, he married his niece Berenice, with whom he had two sons, Berenicianus and Hyscanus. After his death the kingdom was given to Herod Agrippa II. In 75 CE, Agrippa receives Arca from the Romans, east of present-day Tripoli to his realm. The last "king of the Jews" has few Jews to rule from Syria.

Tobiad Revolt & Annexation of Nabatea, 106 CE

Aristobulus, anxious to regroup and form a base from which he could operate, sparked a revolt against the king of Nabatea. During this revolt Rabel II Soter, the last Nabtean king, was killed in 106 CE. In return, the Romans invaded and created the province of Arabia Petraea in 107 CE. It was placed under direct Roman rule. The Herodians fled south to old kingdom of Himyar.

The details of Rome's annexation of Nabatea are not known. Some epigraphic evidence suggests that it was a military operation of conquest, with forces from Syria and Egypt. What is clear, however, is that by 107 CE, Roman legions were stationed in the area around Petra and Bostra, as is shown by a papyrus found in Egypt. The Empire gained what became the province of Arabia Petraea (modern southern Jordan and north west Saudi Arabia). But even though Nabatea was under direct rule, Rome placed it under the supervision of a general, Vaballathus Nasor, who was himself descended from the elder branch of the Tobias.

Vaballathus made his base in Palmyra boldly brandishing the Tobiad name "Netzer", granted by the Prophet Zechariah. Vaballathus Nasor began a dynasty of Helenized "Sadducean" Arabs.\(^{124}\)

In spite of Rome's direct control of Nabatea, it was a hotbed of resistance during the first revolt under Trajan (115-117CE) and under the second revolt led by Bar Kochba revolt against Hadrian (132-135 CE). The Bar Kochba revolt was heavily supported by Adiabene, whose king and queen were Temple Sympathizers as well as Parthia. When Rome invaded Parthia, It was the Jewish border colonies that bore the brunt of the attack, and earned them the respect of the Parthians. The Jews were rewarded with the official recognition of a king in exile, the Jewish Exilarch.

During this period the Tobians, helenized Jews were adopting Christianity in great numbers. Many of the "Greeks" mentioned in the New Testament were helenized Jews who had abandoned religion, or children of intermarriage between Greek and Jew. The Rabbis in Israel tried to directly combat the effect of helenization by forbidding Jewish fathers to teach their sons Greek, the international language of the time. The Septuagint was abandoned and Rabbi Akiva commissioned Aquila to produce a new Greek translation. And when Julius the Apostate, in an effort to revive the old Roman empire and values, promised to allow the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple, it was thwarted by Helenists cum Christians due to accusations they brought before the emperor. This resulted in the Sanhedrin formulating a prayer against heretics and slanders to be recited in the daily prayers.

The Pharisees worked from a position of power because they were the only legal form of Judaism recognized by the Roman empire: Sadducean, Samaritan, Essene and Christianity all being labeled as dangerous and illegal innovations. This was largely due to the fact that Pharisaism had popular support and in addition the Sadducees and Herodians had played a major part in the revolts while the Pharisees generally sued for compromise. The tension was great. In 234 CE, the Roman favoritism towards the Pharisees (now more properly termed Rabbinic Jews) resulted in a fierce struggle spring between the Jews and Samaritans, the former under the guidance of a certain Caudius. This contest lasted so long that Alexander was at length induced to interfere, and restored peace in the country by the execution of many of both parties. It is also from this period that Christians retain a memory of being "fed to the lions" by the Romans obstensively blaming it on the [Rabbinic] Jews.

Many of the Rabbinic Jews found their way to Babylon, were academies were founded. The Jews found favor with the rulers of Parthia. This close relationship with the ruling powers meant that many Jews were

\(^{124}\) The use of the term Netzer/Notzrim must be distinguished. Many of Jesus' followers came from this group, so he was called Yeshuah HaNotzri. Later the followers of Jesus were called Notzrim, or Nasaara in Aramaic/Arabic. However the group in Palmyra was related to another branch of Notzrim, unrelated related to the followers of Jesus. The king of Palmyra styled himself "Ben Netzer" not to associate himself with Christianity, but rather to claim the divine right of rule of the Tobiad family over the entire Trans-Jordan.
involved in taxation or other government functions. This provided a living for many Jewish communities and provided a modicum of stability resulting in the development and flowering of Rabbinic literature, rivaling and eventually surpassing that of the land of Israel.

The Sadduceas and Herodians, often families of enormous wealth, were not so lucky. They, in turn headed towards Alexandria in Egypt, the Trans-Jordan and Arabia. One of the greatest achievements of these wealthy refugees was the construction of the Marib dam in southern Arabia, allowing for the cultivation of crops in a formerly arid wasteland. The other achievement was the development and regulation of commerce along the “Silk Road”.

In summary, one branch of the Tobiads, that of Aristobulus of Chalcis, fled to Arabia. The people of Toviah stayed in the Trans-Jordan, and developed Palmyra into a commercial center. Roman Emperor Severus found a member of the Tobiad dynasty to rule over them, a general in the army called Vanaballat son of Nazor. They were later referred to as Samaritans because the name Notzrim had increasing become associated with the rising religious movement of Christianity. The third, and last branch that we will study, took root in Edessa.

**Tobias of Edessa**

Moses of Chorene (circa 410 – 490s) calls Tobias of Edessa, *Prince Juif*, and says: "After the ascension of our Saviour, the Apostle Thomas, one of the twelve, sent one of the seventy-six disciples, Thaddæus, to the city of Edessa to heal Abgar and to preach the Gospel, according to the word of the Lord. Thaddæus came to the house of Tobias, a Jewish prince, who is said to have been descended from Pacradouni (perhaps Bagratuni the Persian Governer of Judea). Tobias, having left Archam (=Iraq al-Amir), did not abjure Judaism with the rest of his relatives, but followed its laws up to the moment when he believed in Christ.”

Eusebius (263–339 CE) in his *Ecclesiastical History* mentions the figure of Tobias who lived in Edessa and mediates the contact between Thaddaeus and Abgar. From this, one could deduce that Christianity in Edessa had ties to Judaism.

The historian A. von Gutschmid proposes that it was not Abgar V, the contemporary of Jesus who accepted Christianity, but in fact a later prince by the same name -- Abgar IX (179-214 CE) "who first turned Christian and thereby helped this religion to erupt.” Nevertheless without exception the ancient authors who speak of a Christian King Abgar of Edessa mean that one with whom Jesus is supposed to have been in correspondence.

In either case, the Jewish Exilarch is also referred to in the apocalyptic literature as the “Messiah” and “Son of David” so it is possible that the a king Abgar was in fact in touch with the Exilarch, by means of a descendant of Tobiah, but that is pure conjecture.

Narrative Concerning the Prince of the Edessences.

10 To these epistles there was added the following account in the Syriac language. "After the ascension of Jesus, Judas, who was also called Thomas, sent to him Thaddeus, an apostle, one of the Seventy. When he was come he lodged with Tobias, the son of Tobias. When the report of him got abroad, it was told Abgarus that an apostle of Jesus was come, as he had written him.

11 Thaddeus began then in the power of God to heal every disease and infirmity, insomuch that all wondered. And when Abgarus heard of the great and wonderful things which he did and of the cures which he performed, he began to suspect that he was the one of whom Jesus had written him, saying, 'After I have been taken up I will send to thee one of my disciples who will heal thee.'

12 Therefore, summoning Tobias, with whom Thaddeus lodged, he said, I have heard that a certain man of power has come and is lodging in thy house. Bring him to me. And Tobias coming to Thaddeus said to him, The ruler Abgarus summoned me and told me to bring thee to him that thou mightest heal him. And Thaddeus said, I will go, for I have been sent to him with power.

13 Tobias therefore arose early on the following day, and taking Thaddeus came to Abgarus. And when he came, the nobles were present and stood about Abgarus. And immediately upon his entrance a great vision appeared

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125 Eusebius, Church History 1.13.11 and 13: The Legendary Correspondence of Jesus and Abgar
to Abgarus in the countenance of the apostle Thaddeus. When Abgarus saw it he prostrated himself before Thaddeus, while all those who stood about were astonished; for they did not see the vision, which appeared to Abgarus alone.

**Palmyra and the "Jewish" Silk Road**

The trade followed two routes: one by the Red Sea, Egypt and Alexandria, the other from the Persian Gulf through the Syro-Arabian desert under the control of Palmyra. The caravans travelled right across the desert to the great merchant centers on the Euphrates, Vologesias, about 55 m. southeast of Babylon, or Forath or Charax close to the Persian Gulf. The trade was enormously profitable, not only to the merchants but to the town, which levied a rigorous duty on all exports and imports; at the same time formidable risks had to be faced both from the desert-tribes and from the Parthians, and successfully to plan or convoy a great caravan came to be looked upon as a distinguished service to the state, often recognized by public monuments erected by “council and people” or by the merchants interested in the venture.

These monuments, a conspicuous feature in Palmyra, took the form of statues placed on brackets projecting from the upper part of the pillars which lined the principal thoroughfares. Thus arose, beside minor streets, the imposing central avenue which, starting from a triumphal arch near the great temple of the Sun, formed the main axis of the city from south-east to north-west for a length of 1240 yards, and at one time consisted of not less than 750 columns of rosy-white limestone, each 55 ft. high. The capable performance of these functions, which often involved considerable pecuniary sacrifices, ensured public esteem, honorary inscriptions and statues; and to these honors the head of a great house was careful to add the glory of a splendid tomb, consecrated as the “house of eternity,” (cf. Eccles. xii. 5) of himself, his sons and his sons’ sons for ever. These tombs, which lie outside the city and overlook it from the surrounding hills, a feature characteristically Arabic, remain the most interesting monuments of Palmyra. Some are lofty towers containing sepulchral chambers in stories; others are house-like buildings with a single chamber and a richly ornamented portico; the sides of these chambers within are adorned with the names and sculptured portraits of the dead. As a rule the buildings of Palmyra do not possess any architectural individuality, but these tombs are an exception. The style of all the ruins is late classic and highly ornate, but without refinement.

Palmyra was a truly cosmopolitan Arab city. Merchants from all countries converged there. In this desert oasis the Jews formed part of a mixed population that included Arameans, Arabs and even Persians. It celebrated the religions of Judaism, Temple Sympathisers, Notzrim (unrelated to Christianity), primitive Christianity, various Greek gods, and the worship of Baal.

**The Crisis of the Third Century**

Despite a number of crises, the Roman Empire had stood firm since its inception under Augustus. But after Emperor Alexander Severus was murdered by soldiers in 235 CE, Roman legions were defeated in a campaign against Sassanid Persia, and the empire fell apart. General after general squabbled over control of the empire; the frontiers were neglected and subjected to frequent raids by Carpians, Goths, Vandals and Alamanni, and outright attacks from aggressive Sassanids in the east. Finally, by 258, the attacks were coming from within, when the Empire broke up in to three separate competing states. The Roman provinces of Gaul, Britain and Hispania broke off to form the Gallic Empire. The end of the Severan dynasty (235-284 ce) and the reign of Diocletian were a period of Roman crisis, confusion and deterioration. There were Invasion of Teutonic people to west and Parthians to the east. Diocletian started the first major persecutions of Christians, caused by the requirement for a sacrifice/oath of loyalty.

The situation of the Jews in Israel became desperate due to the constant despoiling of Israel by the weakened Roman army and the heavy taxation of the inhabitants, reducing them to poverty. The instigators
of this heavy taxation were the governors of Palmyra, who also claimed the rights and honors of the Tobiads. This directly affected support for schools of learning, which soon migrated to away from Israel to Babylon.

The wars between the Jews and the Ansar (Samaritans with Tobiad king)

Rome's hold on Palmyra was weakened by the first attack of Ardashir (Persia) in 230-232 CE. A year later a fierce struggle spring up in Palestine between the Jews, led by a certain Caudius, and the Samaritans led by the governor of Palmyra. These confrontations lasted so long that Roman Emperor Alexander was induced to interfere and restore peace in the country by the execution of many of both parties.

The governing dynasty of Palmyra: Vaballathus, Lucius Septimius Herod (Hairān) and Lucius Septimius Odainath claimed the Tobiad title of Ben Netzer. Islamic historians mention a Jew in Palmyra, Abu Ya'kub, who provided genealogies of the lineage of Ben Netzer from Tobiah, and before that to Joseph son of Jacob.

The Abarbinel comments on the verse in Daniel: "I considered the horns; and behold, there came up among them another little horn". This is Ben Nezer, "There came up among them another little horn" This is the kingdom of the Kuthites (Samaritans). "The winter is past" This is the kingdom of the Kuthites...the time is coming when the kingdom of Kuth (the sectarians) shall be destroyed, and the kingdom of heaven shall be revealed.

The confrontations between the Jews and the Samaritans reached a climax, when in 259 CE Odenathus destroyed the Jewish community and academy in Nehardea, Babylon.

The destruction of Nehardea — twelve years after the leading Rabbinic scholar Rav's death, and five years after that of Shmuel — led to its place being taken by a neighboring town, Pumbedita, where Yehudah ben Ezekiel, a pupil of both Rav and Shmuel, founded a new school. During the life of its founder, and still more under his successors, this school acquired a reputation for intellectual keenness and discrimination. Pumbedita became focus of the intellectual life of Babylonian Israel, and retained that position until the end of the gaonic period.

While the Exilarch in Babylon regarded the entire Judaic nation from the 'Nile to the Euphrates' as his dominion, the Rabbis passed negative judgment on his subjects. They questioned the Jewish descent of most of them. They said "Babylonia is healthy [in Jewish culture and descent]; Mesene [southern Iraq] is dead [intermarried with the Arab bedouins]; Media [northwest Iran and southern Azerbaijan] is sick; and Elam [Kurzistan, the Iranian province on the Persian Gulf] is dying."

Palmyra the Robber Kingdom

Palmyra was allegedly founded by Solomon, based on II Chron 8:4. Hostility to Palmyra (called Tadmor) is expressed in the Talmud. Jewish tradition records 80,000 Palmyrenes assisted the destruction of the first temple, and 8000 at the destruction of the second. Jews served in the Roman military units raised in the 3rd cent., and converts from Tadmor are recorded in Palestine. Many Palmyrene Jews are buried in the catacombs of Beit Shearim. Benjamin of Tudela found 2000 Jews there in the 12th cent.

There is literary and epigraphic evidence, from the Second Temple era until the third century CE, of Jews from Palmyra coming to the Land of Israel and being buried there. The Jews exerted considerable social and religious influence on the ruling class, which at that time was Arab. For a while, during the rule of King Odenathus, Palmyra's influence increased under Roman protection.

126 Goldziher, "Muhammedanische Studien," i. 178
127 Daniel 7:8
128 Song of Songs 2:11
129 Papa ben Nasr (Odenathus) destroys Nehardea in 570 (Seleucid era), in Kahana, ed., Seder Tanna'im ve-'Amorai'īm 4
130 Kiddushin 71b
131 Jerusalem Talmud Taanit, 68a, Midrash Eicha 2:2
While the two great empires of Rome and Persia were thus competing against each other, Palmyra succeeded in gaining its independence, even attaining an influential position in the East in the years 260-272. During this short span of time, its conquests and influence also extended to Palestine and Egypt.

Jewish traditions describe Odenathus, as a robber baron and refer to him disapprovingly as the 'brother' of 'Esav':

Our Rabbis taught: Royal captives have the status of ordinary captives but those that are kidnapped by highwaymen are not regarded as ordinary captives. Was not, the reverse, however, taught? — There is no contradiction between the rulings concerning royal captives since the former refers [for example] to the kingdom of Ahasuerus while the latter refers to the kingdom of [one like] Ben Nezer. There is also no contradiction between the two rulings concerning captives of highwaymen since the former refers to [a highwayman like] Ben Nezer while the latter refers to an ordinary highwayman.

As to Ben Nezer, could he be called there 'king' and here 'highwayman'? — Yes; in comparison with Ahasuerus he was a highwayman but in comparison with an ordinary robber he was a king.

(Kethuboth 51b)

R. Johanan, the spokesman of the Jews of that generation, declared: “Hail unto him who witnesses the fall of Tadmor.”

Odenathus was assassinated and his son Vabalathus was made king (rex consul imperator dux Romanorum, "illustrious King of Kings" and corrector totius orientis) of the Palmyrene Empire. The real power behind the throne was his mother Zenobia. With the legions at her disposal, and aided by the continuing struggle for Rome, Zenobia conquered Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor and Lebanon. She even adopted the title of Augustus for herself and her son. The wide support she found in the East testifies to the strong desire for independence that prevailed in the Trans-Jordan in those days. Others, however, were not prepared to join Zenobia, and she did not succeed in rallying the East to her standard when the Roman emperor set out to subject Palmyra.

The conflict between the Jews and the Notzrim of Palmyra did not end when that city was crushed by Rome in 270 CE, but continued even in Medina.

Odenathus

Odenathus’ full name was Lucius Septimius Odainath. His gentilicium Septimius shows that his family received the Roman citizenship under an emperor of the Severan dynasty, and thus it was the leading family in Palmyra since the 190s. He was the son of Lucius Septimius Herod (Hairān), the "senator and chief of Tadmor", the son of Vaballathus (Wahballath), the son of Nasor. His Arabic name was أذِينة (Othayna) which is related to the Hebrew "Ethan" which means "strong, solid and enduring". In the Talmud he was called Papa ben Netzer.

The year when Odenathus became chief of Palmyra is not known, but already in an inscription dated 258 he is styled "the illustrious consul our lord" (N.S.I. No. 126). In his wife, the renowned Zenobia, he found an able supporter of his policy.

The defeat and captivity of the emperor Valerian in 260 left the eastern provinces largely at the mercy of the Persians; the prospect of Persian supremacy was not one which Palmyra or its ruler had any reason to desire. At first, it seems, Odenathus attempted to propitiate the Persian monarch Shapur I; but when his gifts were contemptuously rejected (Petr. Patricius, 10) he decided to throw in his lot with the cause of Rome.

The neutrality which had made Palmyra’s fortune was abandoned for an active military policy which, while it added to Odenathus's fame, in a short time brought his native city to its ruin. He fell upon the victorious Persians returning home after the sack of Antioch, and before they could cross the Euphrates inflicted upon them a considerable defeat.

Then, when two usurping emperors were proclaimed in the East (261), Odenathus took the side of Gallienus the son and successor of Valerian, attacked and put to death the usurper Quietus at Emesa (modern Homs) and was rewarded for his loyalty by the grant of an exceptional position (262). He may have assumed the

132 Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 4
133 Vogüé, Syrie centrale, Nos. 23, 28; Cooke, North-Semitic Inscriptions. Nos. 126, 530
title of king before; but he now became totius Orientis imperator, not indeed joint-ruler, nor Augustus, but independent lieutenant of the emperor for the East (Mommsen, Provinces, ii. p. 103).

In a series of rapid and successful campaigns, during which he left Palmyra under the charge of Septimius Worod his deputy (N.S.I. Nos. 127-129), he crossed the Euphrates and relieved Edessa, recovered Nisibis and Carrhae (modern Harran). He even took the offensive against the power of Persia, and twice invaded the Persian capital Ctesiphon itself; probably also he brought back Armenia into the Empire. These successes restored the Roman rule in the East; and Gallienus did not disdain to hold a triumph with the captives and trophies which Odenathus had won (264). Odenathus celebrated his victories in the East sharing with his eldest son Hairan (Herodes) the eastern title "king of kings".

While observing all due formalities towards his overlord, there is considerable evidence that Odenathus aimed at becoming emperor; but during his lifetime there was no conflict with Rome. He was about to start for Cappadocia against the Goths when he was assassinated, together with Hairan, by his nephew Maeonius. There have been suggestions that this deed of violence was instigated by Rome, but there is no evidence in the historical records to corroborate the charge.

According to Historia Augusta, Maeonius killed Odenathus and his son Hairan during a celebration, because of a conspiracy organized by Zenobia, second wife of Odenathus, who wanted their son Vaballathus to succeed Odenathus instead of Hairan (who was the son of Odenathus by another woman). According to Gibbon, the murder was revenge for a short confinement imposed by Odenathus to Maeonius for being disrespectful. After his death (266-267), Zenobia succeeded to his position and practically governed Palmyra on behalf of the young Vaballathus.

The animosity between the Samaritan Jews living in Palmyra and the academies of Babylon is not only apparent from Odenathus' destruction of the rabbinic academy in Nehardea in 259CE, but also in a quote from the Jerusalem Talmud. The Talmud explains that after the murder of Odenathus and his son, Zenobia first assumption was that the crime had been committed by a rabbinic scholar:

Zeira ben Chanina was kidnapped in the town Safsufa (a villiage in the Upper Galilee). R' Ammi and R' Shmuel went to appease [the Palmyrenes] on his account. They came before Queen Zenaya. "He is accustomed to receiving [God's] blessing, He should make miracles for you", she mocked them. A Saracene134 came in holding a sword. "This is the sword that killed Ben Netzer [Odenathus]135 and his brother [son, Hairan]." Ze'era bar Chanina was released.136

Zenobia

Zenobia’s near ancestry is not known for certain. According to Scriptores Historiae Augustae137, a collection of biographies attributed to the fourth century, Zenobia claimed to be a descendant of the Queen of Carthage, the King of Emesa, and Queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt. According to that source, Zenobia sent an imperial declaration in 269CE to the citizens of Alexandria, Egypt, describing the city as “my ancestral city”. A historian in Zenobia’s court, Callinicus Dutorius, dedicated a ten-book history on Alexandria’s history to a ‘Cleopatra,’ who can only be Zenobia.

That Zenobia believed she was descended from Cleopatra, is not doubted. After revolting against Rome and before her capture, Zenobia sent Emperor Aurelian the following message “From Zenobia, Queen of the East, to Aurelian Augustus. None save yourself has ever demanded by letter what you now demand. Whatever must be accomplished in matters of war must be done by valour alone. You demand my surrender as though you were not aware that Cleopatra preferred to die a Queen rather than remain alive, however high her rank….If [the forces] we are expecting from every side, shall arrive, you will, of a surety, lay aside that arrogance with which you now command my surrender.”138

134 Saracen. The earliest date-able reference to Saracens is found in Ptolemy's Geography. "Sarakene" is a region in the Northern Sinai named after the town Saraqa located between Egypt and Palestine. The difference between the two accounts of Saracens is that Malalas saw Palmyrans and all inhabitants of the Syrian desert as Saracens and not Arabs, while the Historia Augusta saw the Saracens as not being subjects ofZenobia and distinct from Palmyrans and Arabs.
135 The murder of Odaenathus and his son Hairan was attributed to Odenathus’ nephew Maeonius. However many suspected Zenobia, because her son Vaballath now became heir in her stepson’s stead.
136 Yerushalmi, Trumos 8:6 46a
137 Trebellius Pollio, Historia Augusta: Tyranni Triginta 27.1, 30.2
138 According to Flavius Vopiscus one of the authors of the Historia Augusta, Zenobia's response was written by Nicomachus in Aramaic as dictated by Zenobia, then translated into Greek; however, the authorship of this letter has been the subject of great controversy. Some scholars propose that it was actually written by Longinus, others scholars propose that Longinus tried to dissuade the queen from sending it.
The author(s) of Historia Augusta however dismiss Zenobia's claim to be a descendant of Cleopatra as "wild fantasy". Her father, Julius Aurelius Zenobius, ancestry is traceable up to six generations and includes Sampsiceramus, the first King of Emesa (modern Homs, Syria) as Zenobia claimed. Yet none of Zenobia's paternal ancestors had previously claimed descent from Cleopatra or the Queen of Carthage. So descent from these famous historical figures would seem to have to come from her maternal side.

Very little is known about Zenobia's mother. She is often said to be Egyptian. Reconstructions from Islamic histories would have her be Zabbai of Arabia, a descendant of Rabbel II "Soter", King of Nabataea [71-106CE], and Iotape the daughter of Sohaemus, King of Emena, and Drusilla the granddaughter of Cleopatra VII of Egypt. However, Zenobia was the first to ever mention this claim.

Fourth-century Christian writers had a different explanation for Zenobia's ancestry. Athanasius of Alexandria [c.293-373CE] writes, "Zenobia was a Jew and a patron of Paul of Samosata." Philastrius Bishop of Brescia [died before 397] mentions "a certain Zenobia, Queen in the East, [who] at that time seemed to Judaize" According to the Ecclesiastical Chronical of Gregory Bar-Hebraeus, Paul of Samosata fled to "a certain Jewish woman by the name of Zenobia, who had set out from the Persian regions of Syria against Rome". These quotes must be taken with caution, because Christian writers wanting to slander someone's name would often say they were Jews or accuse them of being crypto-Jews or of having Jewish sympathies.

In royal burial grounds of Beth She'arim, Israel there is the tomb of Karteria, "the mother of Zenobia". The Greek inscription is incised on a white marble slab of catacomb 18 and is preceded by the formula in "Praise be to the pious". Various Jewish symbols accompany the inscription. However, it expresses the not-so-Jewish idea that Zenobia, daughter of Karteria is "pious" because she "always does actions praiseworthy in the eyes of mortals" (rather than the sight of God, etc). The phrase "built this monument, so that…you may enjoy…new and indestructible riches" has been interpreted to be a denial of the resurrection. Unlike other bombastic titles used by Queen Zenobia, this "Zenobia" uses no title.

Perhaps a solution to this problem may be found with Marcus Antonius Felix, procurator of Judea under Claudius. Tacitus says Felix's wife Drusilla was the "granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra". Yet Josephus describes the marriage of Felix to Drusilla, sister of Herod Agrippa and former wife of Azizus, King of Emesa. We might suppose that Felix was married twice. In fact historian Suetonius says that Felix became, in consequence of several marriages, "husband of three queens". So scholars have concluded that first two were named Drusilla and the third is unknown.

The first Drusilla was a daughter of King Ptolemy of Mauretania and Queen Julia Urania of Mauretania. Drusilla's paternal grandmother Queen of Mauretania Cleopatra Selene II, was a daughter of Ptolemaic Greek Queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt and Roman Triumvir Mark Antony. Drusilla's maternal grandfather African King Juba II of Mauretania claimed to be a descendant of the sister to the General of Carthage, Hannibal. Hannibal's family, the Barcids, claimed to be descended from Dido's younger brother. At first sight, since there is no suggestion that Alexander Helios or Ptolemy Philadelphus had any children, one would conclude that Drusilla, granddaughter of Cleopatra, would be the only person to fit all of Zenobia's claims.

However, Felix and this Drusillas divorced between 54-56CE had no known issue. Felix and the Judean Drusilla, had a son, Marcus Antonius Agrippa who he died along with his wife in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius on 24 August 79CE, and a daughter, Antonia Clementiana. Antonia Agrippina could be a daughter from their son's marriage (this name was graffiti in a Royal Tomb in Egypt). Clementiana became a grandmother to a Lucius Annelius Domitius Proculus. Two possible descendants from this marriage are Marcus Antonius Fronto Salvianus (a quaestor) and his son Marcus Antonius Felix Magnus a high priest in 225CE.

So we are left with the possibility that either Drusilla remarried after her divorce from Felix (scholars have suggested that she married Sohaemus, King of Emena – the brother of the first husband of the Judean Drusilla), or that Zenobia believed herself to be descended from Felix's first wife, when in fact she was descended from his second Jewish wife.

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139 Her father, Zabaii ben Selim or Iulius (or Julius) Aurelius Zenobius, was a chieftain of Syria in 229CE. Inscriptions found at Palmyra show that Zenobia's father had a Greek name: Antiochus. However, according to Augustan History (Aurel. 31.2), his name was Achilleus and his usurper was named Antiochus (Zos. 1.60.2).
140 The theory that her mother was Egyptian is based on the fact that Zenobia knew the ancient Egyptian language very well and had a strong predisposition toward the ancient culture of Egypt.
141 BS II 183
142 PIR2 A 828, Tacitus, Histories 5.9
143 Antiquities of the Jews 20.7.2. Note this King Azizus was the brother of Sohaemus, the proposed ancestor of Zenobia.
144 Suetonius, Claudius 28
Zenobia’s relationship with Jews is not known for certain. In Egypt for example, where she restored the
ancient rights of protection (refuge) to a Synagogue in Lower Egypt, her actions can be explained in terms
of sympathy to Jews or imitation of her claimed ancestor Cleopatra. The declaration reads:

“By order of the Queen and King, in place of the previous tablet of the dedication of the house of
prayer, let there be written above what had been written below: ‘King Ptolemy Euergetes
[proclaimed] the house of prayer as a refuge’". At the bottom of the inscription appears in Latin -
“The King and Queen have ordered (this).” 145

One could speculate that Zenobia and her son Wahaballat had some connection with the Samaritan flavor of
Judaism due to the similarity of this proclamation and the request of the Elephantine community to Sanballat
for protection four hundred years earlier, but lacking further evidence nothing can be said.

Reconquest by Aurelian, migration of the Azdites

In 270 CE, Aurelian had become Roman Emperor, perhaps the first capable emperor in 30 years. After
defeating the Alamanni, who were threatening to invade Italy, Aurelian turned his attention to the lost eastern provinces - the Palmyrene Empire.

Asia Minor was recovered easily; every city but Byzantium and Tyana surrendered to him with little
resistance. The fall of Tyana lent itself to a legend; Aurelian to that point had destroyed every city that
resisted him, but he spared Tyana after having a vision of the great philosopher Apollonius of Tyana, whom
he respected greatly, in a dream. Apollonius implored him, stating: "Aurelian, if you desire to rule, abstain
from the blood of the innocent! Aurelian, if you will conquer, be merciful!" Whatever the reason, Aurelian
spared Tyana. It paid off; many more cities submitted to him upon seeing that the emperor would not exact
revenge upon them. Aurelian defeated Queen Zenobia in the Battle of Immae and again, decisively, in the
Battle of Emesa. Within six months, his armies stood at the gates of Palmyra, which surrendered when
Zenobia tried to flee to the Sassanid Empire. The "Palmyrene Empire" was no more.

Aurelian turned his attention to Palmyra. There he would be known to Islamic
historians as the the Adzites (Aus and Kazraj) when they invaded Medina. They began to conquer
the Jewish population and took control. The rulers however escaped to Edessa (Sanliurfa) in Asia Minor.

The Palmyrenees fled south at the approach of the Romans. There they would be known to Islamic
historians as the the Adzites (Aus and Kazraj) when they invaded Medina. They began to conquer
the Jewish population and took control. The rulers however escaped to Edessa (Sanliurfa) in Asia Minor.

The Palmyrenees brought with them Judaism, primitive Christianity and paganism, the worship of Baal. The
priests among them settled in Khaybar. The pagans among them decorated the Ka’aba with idols, making
the idol of Hubal (Baal) the largest. When referring to their loyalty to the Tobiad dynasty they were referred
to as Al-Nasara (later as the Ansar). When referring to their current idolatry, they were referred to as Al-
Mushriquun. When referring to their Sadducean Judaism, they were referred to as Jews (al-Yahud).

Their new king was Shamir Yuhar’esh II (c. 275 CE). He styled himself King of Saba, Dhu Raydan,
Hadramawt and Yamnit. Although he was a good deal poorer than Odenathus, his lineage was finer. His
mother was the Queen of Bilqis (Chalqis), the sole heir of the line of Aristobulus, king of Chalqis, the last of
the Herodians. In order to endear himself to his new subjects, and aware of the connection between the
Herodians and the Tobiads, Shamir Yuhar’esh was the first to style himself Tubbah, staking his own claim to
the rights and honors of the Tobiads. The name "Shamir" was in reference to the Samaritans.

Bilqis the "Queen of Sheba"

Bilqis is the Arabic term used for the “Queen of Sheba”, the seeker of the wisdom of King Solomon. It is
quite possible that Solomon had some diplomatic contacts with some Arabian queen, though whether these
really were with a monarch in South Arabia, or Ethiopia or other details are impossible to say from historical
evidence.

Bilqis was the name given in Islamic literature Queen of Sheba (not actually given a personal name) in
Qu’ran, 27:15-45, to whom the hoopoe (hudhud) is said to have brought a letter from King Solomon. Bilqis is

145 From an inscription found in Cairo, assumed to be from an unidentified community in Lower Egypt (CIJ, II, 1449=CPJ, III, 1449)
mentioned by Ibn Hisham, Sirat al-nabi including the text of the whole poem. Guillaume wondered how Ibn Ishaq came to insert a literary poem into a serious historical work, and speculated that the poem had evidence of relatively recent history.

The historian Jacqueline Pirenne worked out from genealogical information based on al-Hamdani’s Iklil that there indeed was another Bilqis. This Bilqis was the husband of a qayl or local prince of Yemen called Baril or Barig Dhu Bata’, known from South Arabian inscriptions and to be placed in the mid-third century C.E. According to the genealogy worked out by Dr. Javad Ali in "The history of Arab nations before Islam", the name of the local prince was Yasir Yuhan’em II, the last king of Old Himyarite dynasty. In this case, it was a Jewish queen who went to seek the advice of an Arab king. The prefix Yuha- in the names of many kings of Saba and Himyar referred to the four letter Hebrew name of God, and would give rise to the name Jahiliyya, which originally was Yuhaliyya or the Land of God.

The wife of Shamir Yuhar’esh’s lineage is traced as follows: Aristobulus IV, king of Chalcis; his sons Herod (Al Harith), Agrippas (Africas), and Aristobulus (Dhu Al Adh’ar); Saifi, [Chal]qais, Al Eishra (or As Sairah, Sharahil meaning of Israel?); Dhu Jadan; Ah Hudhad (or Shurahil); Queen of Bilqis (Chalcis) wife of Yasir Yuhan’em II, last king of the Old Himyarite dynasty.

This Queen of Bilqis (Chalqis) was the sole heir of the line of Aristobulus, king of Chalqis, the last of the Herodians and Hasmoneans, and the mother of the first Tubba’, the rulers of the Jewish kingdom of Arabia.

The Himyarites, Tubbas and Kindah

The earliest mention of “Himyar” comes from Pliny the Elder in the first century CE, but it is unclear whether he intended an ethnic group or some kind of kingdom. In the next century, in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea mentions Charibael (perhaps derived from Makriv-El, offering to God) “king of the two nations (ethne), the Homerite and the Sabaean.” In the first centuries CE, the Himyarites seem to have been led by princes, qayls, and chiefs, rather than kings. In the sixth century there is mention of kings of Himyar.146

Tubba’, with the plural Tababi’ah, was used a dynastic title (comparable to Fir’awn for the Pharaohs of Egypt, and Kisra for the Sasanid kings, etc.) This line of Himyarite rulers controlled the south-western part of Arabia from the late third century CE to the early sixth century. For the purposes of this paper, Tubba’ was a title derived from Tobiah, to indicate the rights and honors of that dynasty going back to their role as Persian governors responsible for the entire Trans-Jordan.

In approximately 275 CE, Shamir Yur’ish Tubba’ overthrew the Sabaean rulers in Yemen, together with the independent rulers in Hadramawt, and constituted himself “king of Saba and Dhu Raydan and of Hadramawt and Ymt”. We propose that this resurgence of the ancient kingdom of Himyar was due to the influx of migrants from Palmyra, who were later referred to as the Azd (Aus and Kazraj).

Almost all the Tubba’ rulers mentioned by Islamic authors, most notably by al-Hasan b. Ahmad al-Hamdani (d. 334/945) in his Iklil, can be validated from South Arabian inscriptions, but a definitive dynastic list is difficult to worked out.147 In the appendix of this work is a proposed genealogy based on Dr. Javad Ali in “The history of Arab nations before Islam”, and supplemented by Tabari.

There were close links between the the kings of Himyar and the Kindah, ‘Amr b. Tubba’”s patronage of ‘Amr b. Hujr al-Kindi illustrates the closeness of these links, as does his giving in marriage his own niece to ‘Amr b. Hujr.

The Kindah was the great Arabian tribe which, according to Islamic historians, migrated from Hadramawt to central Arabia, although as in many cases this may be an inversion of what actually happened. In the third century CE, Kindah was established in southwestern Najd with their center at Qaryat al-Faw, an important settlement on the main caravan route from Yemen and Najran northward to Najd. They appear as auxiliaries

146 The Hism al-Ghurab inscription (CIH 621) speaks of their being killed by the Abyssinians. See Beeston, “The Himyarite Problem,” 1-7.
147 See Beeston, "Hamdani and the Tabibi’ah,” 5-15; El2, s.v. Tubba’ (A. F. L. Beeston).
of the kings of Saba, and then, after ca. 275 CE, of the Himyarite kings. In the second half of the fifth century, Kindah are found further to the north. It seems that, as part of the general policy of extending Himyarite power into central Arabia at this time, the chief of Kindah was placed in power as a king over the local Arab tribes there of Ma'add. The Islamic historians make the Himyarite ruler involved here either Abu Karib As'ad Tubb'a or his son Hassan Yuha'min, whose reigns should be placed, according to the inscriptions, in the second quarter of the fifth century. The fortunes of Kindah were thus for long connected with the rulers of South Arabia, until the fall of the Hirriyarites under the Abyssinians.

Hujr’s son 'Amr, used the name al-Maqtsur, apparently because he was "limited, confined" to his father's sphere of power and unable to expand it. He succeeded Hujr in the main center of Kindah authority, Najd, with another branch of the family under his brother Mu'awiyyah al-Jawn controlling the eastern Najd regions of Hadhramaut Hajar and Bahrayn.⁴⁸

**Kenites, the Kenizzites and Kadmonites**

"Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: Any land which Hashem showed Moshe (at the time of his death) is subject to the obligation of ma'aser." (Bava Basra 56a)

The Gemora notes that this is coming to exclude the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites and Kadmonites (for although these lands were promised to Avraham Avinu, they were not included in the Seven Nations that were promised to the Jewish people; these were not shown to Moshe and are not subject to the ma’aser obligation).

The Gemora cites a baraisa regarding the identity of these lands: Rabbi Meir says that these are the Naphtuchim, the Arabians and the Shlamaites. Rabbi Yehudah says that they are Mount Seir, Ammon and Moav. Rabbi Shimon says that they are Damascus, Asia Minor and Aspamia.

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¹⁴⁸ The above overview is based on C.E. Bosworth’s notes in his translation of This History of al-Tabari, Volume V, pp. 122-123.
¹⁴⁹ Targum Onkelos always translates Keini as Salamah.
¹⁵⁰ Since their forced conversion to Judaism by Alexander Yannai, 100BCE, the Edomites were considered full “Jews”.
¹⁵¹ Iraq al-Amir, the capital of Tobias’ Notzrim, was located in Ammon.
¹⁵² In the year 37, Roman Emperor Caligula transferred Damascus to Nabataean control by decree. The Nabataean king Aretas IV Philopatris ruled Damascus from his capital Petra. However, around the year 106, Nabataea was conquered by the Romans, and Damascus returned to Roman control.
¹⁵³ Pliny the Elder mentioned a people called the Nazerini in his Historia Naturalis (Book V,22). Bernard Duborg (1987) connects Pliny’s Nazerini with proto-Christians, and Dubourg dates Pliny’s source between 30 and 20 BCE and, accounting for the lapse of time required for the installation in Syria of a sect born in Israel/Judea, suggests the presence of a Nasoraean current around 50 BCE. Pliny the Elder indicates that the Nazerini lived not far from Apamea, in Syria in a city called Bambyx, Hierapolis or Mabog.
Tosfos Yevamos 115a DH Amar brings the Gemara in Bava Basra 56a that identifies Asya [Minor] with Keini mentioned in Bereishis 15:19, although this probably represents a common confusion with the name Keinizi. Referring to the Roman province embracing the Western part of the peninsula of Asia Minor, bequeathed by King Attalus to the Roman republic.

The Keini are reported in rabbinical sources to have lived near Moav, to the west of the Dead Sea. The Targum translates Keni as Shaalmite, an Arabic tribe. We propose that Shaalmite is derived from Qurban Shelamim and is the source of the word Muslim.

The Keini also reported lived in Ir HaTemarim (Palm City [Palmyra]), which may be identified with Chatatzon Tamar, to the west of the Dead Sea.

Overview of the Jewish Kingdom of Himyar

The influx of Palmyrenes to Himyar revitalized the aging Himyar dynasty. During this period, the Kingdom of Himyar conquered the kingdom of Sheba and took Redan for its capital instead of Ma'rib. Later on, Redan was called "Zifar". They developed the trade routes from the Red Sea through Medinah to Petra and along the Silk Road to east. The 'Tubba' kings boasted of a string of Minarets, acting as fire beacons, along the silk road that could relay messages of religious or political nature to the east within a day. The 'Tubba' kings also supported the priesthood of the Quraish in their maintenance of the Ka'aba at Mecca. The sacrifices, holidays and even pagan customs at the Ka'aba attracted pilgrimage from all across Arabia. In addition the Tubba' kings oversaw the pilgrimage from Arabia to Jerusalem on the 9th of Av to mourn the destruction of the Temple. At least one Tubba' prince was buried in Beit Shearim in Israel with all the great princes and rabbinic scholars of Israel, along with the mother of Zenobia.

Beginning in the fourth century CE, local trade began to fall. The Nabateans were in revolt in north of Hijaz. The Roman had gained superiority over the naval trade routes after the Roman conquest of Egypt, Syria and the north of Hijaz; and lastly, because of inter-tribal warfare. Most of their income came from taxes on caravans on the Silk Road and not to local traffic. The families of Qahtan were disunited and scattered about all over Arabia.

This period witnessed a lot of disorder and turmoil. The great many foreign and civil wars cost the people of Yemen their independence. During this era, the Aksumites invaded Tihama & Najran for the first time in 340 CE, making use of the constant intra-tribal conflict of Hamdan and Himyar. The Aksumite occupation of Tihama and Najran lasted until 378 CE, whereafter Yemen expelled the Aksumites. After the Ma'rib Dam last Great Flood (450 or 451 CE) weakened Himyar further and led to its near collapse. The later Tubba' kings were left with mostly a title, and functioned not much more than wealthy businessman.

For the most part the kings of 'Tubba' were interested in commerce. They jealously guarded the routes and left day-to-day management of the kingdom to their counselors, who came from the tribe of Lakhmids. While the Tubba' kings embraced the form of Judaism that the refugees had brought from Palmyra, with its Sadducean, Samaritan and Tobiad influences, the Lakhmids had gradually allowed the introduction of Byzantine Christianity into Arabia.

In the fifth century, Himyar found itself between the competing empires of Christian Byzantium and Zoroastrian Persia. Neutrality, and good trade relations with both empires, was essential to the prosperity of the Arabian trade routes, both of which had allies and even established colonies in Arabia. But this policy of tolerance was leading to the disintegration of the kingdom.

About the year 418 CE, the King of Himyar, Abu-Kariba Assad Tubba’, undertook a military expedition into northern Arabia in an effort to eliminate Byzantine influence. The Byzantine emperors looked to the Arabian Peninsula as a region in which to extend their influence, thereby to control the lucrative spice trade and the route to India. Without actually staging a conquest of the region, the Byzantines hoped to establish a protectorate over the pagan Arabs by converting them to Christianity. The cross would then bear commercial advantages as it did in Ethiopia. The Byzantines had made some progress in northern Arabia but had met with little success in "Jewish" Himyar.

During this time in Persia, the Mazdakites religion had greatly increased. They persecuted the Jews and Christians, and rioted in various Jewish towns in villages, kidnapping children to convert to their religion. The Jewish Exilarch Huna VI had a daughter who married Mar Hanina (the head of the academy) and a son, Mar Zutra II. But when Huna VI died without a son, a rival claimant Pachda was appointed to the Exilarchate. A power struggle ensued. When Pachda had no male heir, Mar Zutra II became the next...
Exilarch. In the interval, it seems the conflict between the Mazdakites and the Jews took on the nature of an armed conflict.

The new exilarch, Mar Zutra II, did not obtain the right to autonomous self defense from King Kovad (488-531 CE). He raised an army including an elite group of four hundred soldiers for the defense of Jewish community. Being denied autonomy, he declared independence. He succeeded in maintaining an independent state for seven years (513-520 CE), collecting revenue even from the non-Jewish population of Iraq. Active measures by the king Kovad put an end, at length, to the Exilarch's state: Mar Zutra, only twenty-two years of age, and Mar Hanina were crucified (520 CE) on the bridge of Machoza.[2] his capital; and his infant son, Mar Zutra III., was carried to Israel, where founded a new line of Nasiim, Patriarchs. The charge against the Exilarch: misuse of tax money for his person use.

Abu-Kariba's grandson Shamir al-Janah, who had been sent to China, married the daughter of the Jewish Exilarch Huna V (r 465-470) and from this union Dhu Nuwas was born. Upon the failure of his "uncle" Mar Zutra II to create a Jewish state in Persia, Dhu Nuwas returned to Arabia, killed the Lakhmid usurper and sacked the Byzantine colony of Najran, and attempt to rally all Arabia to his cause. He was the first to adopt Persian, Rabbinic Jewish customs and introduced them to Arabia. By adopting the more conventional version of Judaism, he hoped to claim the rights and honors of a Tobiad ruler of the Trans-Jordan, from the "Nile to the Euphrates". He styled himself "The King of all the [Twelve] Tribes".

In any case, it is known that by the 6th and 7th centuries, Judaism flourished in Himyar; and in inscriptions dating from those centuries Jewish religious terms such as "Rahman" ("the merciful," a divine epithet), "the god of Israel", and the "Lord of Judah" bears testament to this fact.

The Byzantines pressured the Jews in Tiberias to make Dhu Nuwas stop. Eventually Byzantium provided ships for Himyar to be invaded by Abyssian troops. Dhu Nuwas was killed in ensuing battle, and this brought to the end the last remnants of the Second Commonwealth, 450 years after the destruction of the Temple. The dreams of the Tobiad, would be king of the Trans-Jordan, who traced his lineage and rights to Joseph the interpreter of dreams, for the moment were left unfulfilled.

In the following chapters we will discuss the individual rulers of Himyar.

**Shamir Yuhar'esh II Tubba', 275 CE**

Shamir Yuhar'esh II Tubba' began his rule sometime before 275 CE. He was the first ruler of the revived Himyarite Kingdom. We propose that his newfound position of power was due to two factors: first, marriage to a noble family widely respected in the region and second, the influx of wealthy merchants from Palmyra.

The line of Herod / Hasmoneans had all but disappeared by the end of the 3rd century. Aristobolus had tried to revolt in Nabatea, only to be pursued by Rome and flee to Himyar. His descendant, a daughter who claimed the title "princes of Chalcis" married Yasir Yuh'an'em II, and from this marriage would come Shamir Yuhar'esh II. This marriage gave Shamir Yuhar'esh II claim to the House of Herod, Hasmonean, Tobiad and through Toviah, on the maternal line, to King David. Some of this history became conflated with the story of the Queen on Sheba, who was given the name Bilqis, perhaps derived from the name "Chalcis". The Himyar kings were fond of titles, but this title carried little substance. One thing that stuck, however, was the sense that the Himyar kings were now the defender of the faith, the faith of Judaism as they understood it.

Shortly after or perhaps concurrent with, this marriage was another fortuitous event. In 270 CE, the Roman legion crushed the independent state of Palmyra. The numerous refugees flooded Medina and Mecca. They brought with them numerous skills in trading, taxation, and the logistics of transporting merchandise. With these newfound skills, Himyar began to prosper. Five years later, Shamir Tubba' led his troops to victory over Nadjran, Mareb and Hadhramaut. He succeeded in uniting much of Yemen, assuming the new title "King of Saba and Dhu Raydan and Hadhramaut and Yamnat" Yamnat is generally understood to be the Southern part of Yemen.

His marriage to nobility, brought him the title "Tubba" claiming the rights and privileges of the renowned Tobiad dynasty. This title would have been quickly recognized by the Palmyrene refugees. It was used by all the Himyarite kings after him. "Dhu al-Qarnayn before me submitted himself [to God], a king to whom the other kings became humble and thronged [his court]. He reigned over the Eastern and Western lands, yet sought the means of knowledge from a wise, rightly guided scholar (Tobiah)"[154] And also to the Queen of

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Sheba/Chalqis “Before his time, Bilqis was my paternal forebear (literally, “aunt”) and ruled over them until the hoopoe came to her.”

The Tubba' kings were amply praised for their courage and leadership in Yemeni prophecy/poetry. Shamir Tubba’s was able to gain decisive control of the sea routes for trade and commerce. According to Tabari, Shamir Tubba’ was important enough to negotiate on equal terms with the king of the Parthian empire. Shamir Tubba’ founded a second Himyarite dynasty that within a hundred years would completely conquer and absorb the old Sabean state. The rival kingdom with Mareb as the capital would cease to exist. The Axumites, who had become a strong power and had occupied the Tihama and part of the highlands more than once, would be driven back to Ethiopia.

The refugees from Palmyra brought with them other things as well: idolatry and the worship of Baal, which they called Hubal. According to Islamic historians, the first person to erect idols inside and round the Holy Ka’bah was Amer Ibn Luhay Al-Khuzaie, who brought Hubal from Ardh Al-Jezira in Al-Sham (Syria), and put it over the pit which was used as the coffer of the Ka’bah, where the remains of the Temple treasures were buried. He was the first to call for the worship of idols in grounds kept holy by the descendants of Onias for hundreds of years.

Requests by the monotheists in Arabia for Shamir Tubba’ to remove this abomination went unheeded. The polytheists of Palmyra argued, apparently successfully, that Oniad sanctuaries, including Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem never had gates or guards to prevent all those who wished to come and worship at the holy place. Alcimus, the Tobiah high priest had even pulled down the low wall of Ezra that divided the court of the Gentiles from that of the Israelites. The powerful Yemenite king liked this vision of cosmopolitanism. He liked the riches it brought. The old Oniad priesthood retreated to Khaybar.

The monotheists who had lived for generations in Medinah, found themselves outnumbered by the polytheistic “nasaara” Jews. Tension between the Nasaara Polytheists and the Yahud Monotheists was strong. Memories of Odenathus’ taxation were not yet forgotten and the usurpation of the altar of Onias in Mecca only added to intensify the conflict.

Shamir Yuhar’esh II Tubba’ had three sons which are known through inscriptions: Yarim Yuharhib, Yasir Yuhan’im III who was a contemporary of Ezana king of Ethiopia, and Tharin Yakrib who would become ruler of Himyar when the sons of Yasir Yuhan’im III did not produce an heir.

**Yasir Yuhan’im III Tubba’**

In 73CE, the Temple of Onias in Heliopolis has been sealed. Even by that time it had fallen into disrepair, but as it was upon a large mound of sand which had been enclosed by a wall. It is perhaps with reference to the Temple of Onias that the New Testament gives the parable of the foolish man “who built his house on the sand”, while the Solomon was the wise man “who built his house upon a rock” in Jerusalem.

The religion of the kings of Himyar was, at its base, the remnants of the Oniad missionizing religion, which provided altars for non-Jewish “Temple Sympathizers” with the intention of bringing them close to monotheism. Waves of Sadducean Levites and Priests had come of Arabia to participate in the missionizing effort. Even Paul the Apostle, after his conversion to Christianity, went to Arabia first before all other places to bring the Good News to the nations. Even though Paul was unsuccessful, and had to escape Arabia with his life, the more traditional Oniad missionaries gained great respect. These communities of priests and levites would attach themselves to great Arabian tribes as their clients. The ancient priests believed they could predict the future. They were employed as poets and acted as “early warning” for imminent attack.

Abyssinia (Ethiopia) had remained faithful to the religion of Onias. Abyssinian kings would often bury themselves with a monument that was intended to look like the tall tower of Onias’ Temple. These stele would have doors and windows carved out of stone to imitate the detail of that tower. However, several decades before Constantine would declare Christianity the official religion of Rome, Abyssinia embraced Christianity as its official religion. Religious differences, however, did not deter Abyssinia claim on Arabia, based on Ptolemy’s claim and the ethnic relations on both sides of the red sea. This claim had great economic importance because taxation was more effective if the same country controlled both sides of the red sea.

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155 Tabari, p. 174
In order to achieve more effective taxation Ezana king of Abyssinia sent emissaries and Christian bishops in 300 CE to the kings of Himyar to negotiate a trade agreement, as well as to try and establish greater diplomatic and religious ties. The Christian bishops were informed that a large portion of Himyar were Nasaara (Notzrim). So they reported back to king Ezana that they had found great sympathy and common religion among the kings of Himyar. Narjan, a pilgrimage spot in a fertile valley on the trade route was allowed to become an Abyssinian Christian colony. Medina remained a centre of Jewish influence. The old conflict between the Tobiad Notzrim and the Edomite “Jews” gradually began to take on on elements of a conflict between Christianity and Judaism, as both Rome and Persia tried to attract adherents to their side during their almost continual warfare.

Christianity at that time was expressed in a wide variety of hetrodox and even heretical beliefs. This is the reason that the Nasaara of Medina could be mistaken for Christians. Just a few years later, in 325 CE, the Council of Nicaea, a Christian emulation of the ancient Jewish “Sanhedrin”, discussed these heresies and attempted to settle upon universally agreed doctrine. Uniformity of belief was of great religious significance and at the same time of great political importance for Byzantium who was trying to strengthen its hold over its conquered territories.

After their migration from Palmrya, the Nasaara who were later called by Islamic historians “Adzites” split into the two great tribes of the Aus and the Kazraj. They were described as Yemenite tribes, when actually they were Syrian Arabs under the protection of a Yemenite King. At least one historian calls the Palmyrians, ethnic “Jews”. The Hadith says that they highly esteemed the fast of Yom Kippur (Ashura).156 However their mix of pagan ritual also gave them the name “polytheists”. Byzantine considered them Christians due to the name Nasaara. But in the end, since none of these names fit, they were given the name “ansar”, not to be confused with the ansar that assisted the Prophet after the Hijra.

Although Yasir Yuhan’im III had at least three sons based on inscriptions, his brother Tharin Yakrib Tubba’ assumed leadership. His son, Zamir Ali Yahbir Ill, called ‘Amr Dhi al-Adh’ar by Tabari was the next ruler, followed by his son ‘Tharin Yuhan’im Tubba’, who received the mission sent by Constantius. Tabari calls Tharin Yuhan’im by the names Tubba’ al-Aqrān and Zayd.

**Lakhamids and Ghassanids**

The Lakhamid Kingdom was founded by the Lakhum tribe that emigrated from Yemen in the 2nd century and ruled by the Banu Lakhm, hence the name given it. The founder of the dynasty was ‘Amr, whose son Imru’ al-Qais (328-363CE, not to be confused with the famous poet Imru’ al-Qais who lived in the 6th century) converted to Christianity. Gradually the whole city converted to that faith. Imru’ al-Qais dreamt of a unified and independent Arab kingdom and, following that dream, he seized many cities in Arabia. He then formed a large army and developed the Kingdom as a naval power, which consisted of a fleet of ships operating along the Bahraini coast. From this position he attacked the coastal cities of Iran (Persia) - which at that time was in civil war, due to a dispute as to the succession - even raiding the birthplace of the Sassanid kings, the province of Pars (Fars).

In 325, the Persians, led by Shapur II, began a campaign against the Arab kingdoms. When Imru’ al-Qais realised that a mighty Persian army composed of 60,000 warriors was approaching his kingdom, he asked for the assistance of the Roman Empire. Constantius II promised to assist him but was unable to provide that help when it was needed. The Persians advanced toward al-Hirah and a series of vicious battles took place over al-Hirah and the surrounding cities. Shapur II crushed the Lakhmid army and captured al-Hirah. He ordered the extermination of its population in retaliation of their raids on Pars. In this, the young Shapur acted much more violently than was normal at the time in order to demonstrate to both the Arab Kingdoms and the Persian nobility his power and authority. Shapur’s title in Arabic is Zol ‘Aktāf meaning owner of the shoulders, as he pierced the shoulders of his captives and chained them to each other by a rope. He installed Aus ibn Qallam and gave the city autonomy, thus making the kingdom a buffer zone between the Persian Empire's mainland and the territory of other Arabs in the Peninsula.

Two years after his death, in the year 330, a revolt took place where Aus ibn Qallam was killed and succeeded by the son of Imru’ al-Qais, ‘Amr. Thereafter, the Lakhmids’ main rivals were the Ghassanids, who were vassals of the Sassanids' arch-enemy, the Byzantine Empire. The Lakhmid kingdom was a major centre of the Nestorian sect of Christianity which was nurtured by the Sassanids, as it opposed the Orthodox religion of Byzantium.

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156 Sahih Muslim Book 6, Number 2528:
The Ghassanid emigration has been passed down in the rich oral tradition of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. It is said that the Ghassanids came from the city of Ma'rib in Yemen. There was a dam in this city, however one year there was so much rain that the dam was carried away by the ensuing flood. Thus the people there had to leave. The inhabitants emigrated seeking to live in less arid lands and became scattered far and wide. The proverb “They were scattered like the people of Saba” refers to that exodus in history. The emigrants were from the southern Arab tribe of Azd of the Kahan branch of Qahtani tribes.

The king Jafna bin ‘Amr emigrated with his family and retinue north and settled in Hauran, where the Ghassanid state was founded. From him the Ghassanid line are also sometimes known as the Jafnids. It is assumed that the Ghassanids adopted the religion of Christianity after they reached their new home.

The Romans found a powerful ally in the new coming Arabs. The Ghassanids were the buffer zone against the Lakhmids penetrating Roman territory. More accurately the kings can be described as phylarchs, native rulers of subject frontier states. The capital was at Jabiyah in the Golan Heights. Geographically, it occupied much of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, and its authority extended via tribal alliances with other Azdi tribes all the way to the northern Hijaz as far south as Yathrib (Medina).

**Tharin Yuhan'im Tubba’**

The kings of Himyar, for their part, attached great importance to Judaism as known during the Second Commonwealth. Herods’ mix of Hellenism, Tobiadism, strict observance of tradition combined with cosmopolitanism, and romantic dreams of reuniting the Children of Israel, was the role model for these kings.

Tharin Yuhan'im Tubba’, also know as Zayd Tubba’ al-Aqran (the later Tubba’), with magnamity and in keeping with his toleration of all religious expression, received a mission sent by the Byzantine Emperor Constantius in 343 CE. The Christian historian Baronius writes that mission was able to convince Tharin Yuhan'im to embrace orthodox Christianity and abandon his herodox views. Later historians were able to tell that this change had little permanent effect.

Meanwhile Byzantium, fearing sympathy with Persia, worked to extricate the Jews from the Christians. In 341 CE, the Council of Antioch (Canon 1) in Syria tried to regulate and limit the relationship between Christians and Jews. So widely prevalent was the joint feasting of Christians with Jews on the Passover that they passed legislation forbidding it on threat of excommunication.

In 350 CE, after successfully uniting Abyssinian kingdom under Christianity, they received the right from Byzantine to claim Arabia for their own. Even though several military forays into Himyar yield uncertain results, from the middle of the fourth century the sovereign of Axum (between the Red Sea and the Nile) joined to his other titles that of King of the Himyarites. During this era, the Aksumites invaded Tihama & Najran for the first time in 340 CE, making use of the constant intra-tribal conflict of Hamdan and Himyar. The Aksumite occupation of Tihama and Najran lasted until 378 CE.

In 362 C.E, Roman Julian waged a vigorous war in which Mesopotamia and Babylonia proper were involved. On his way to besiege the Persian capital of Ctesiphon, he announced plans to rebuild the Jewish Temple and even began construction. Emperor Julian met the Sadducean Jewish leaders in Antioch promising to make Jerusalem a Jewish city again, who joyfully accepted this news. He orders the Jewish Temple's reconstruction. He appointed Alypius to carry out the task. He wrote to Pharisic Patriarch Hillel II, who did not share their enthusiasm.

The Rabbinic Jews, under the banner of the Exilarch, sided with Persia. This resulted on the battlefield, great resentment against the Jews. Birta in Armenia was deserted by its inhabitants, Jews, who removed themselves to Jewish fortresses under the protection of the Exilarch. In retaliation the Romans burned the place. The same fate befell the more important city Firuz Shavur (Pyrisabora), which also possessed a large Jewish population; Mahoza, too, near Ctesiphon, Raba's birthplace and the seat of his academy, was also laid in ashes, together no doubt with many other towns in which Jews dwelt.

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158 called Bithra by Sozomen (iii. 20)

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In May of the next year, Julian besieged the Persian city of Ctesiphon, pushing Persian forces back into the city without capturing it. Emperor Julian died on the Persian frontier by a Persian cavalryman's lance, and the next day Flavius Jovianus (Jovian) (331-64), a Christian replaces him as Roman emperor. The reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem is halted by Julian's death, opposition by the rabbis, and an earthquake on May 19, which also destroys half of the ancient city of Petra. Emperor Jovian makes a humiliating peace with the Persians, and blame was laid on all the Jews, Sadducean, Samaritan and Rabbinic for the losses to the Persians.

Persecutions under an increasingly Christianized Rome led to disturbances. The Tobiad leadership which had fled Palmyra, set up a "council of the Righteous" in Edessa (Sanliurfa, in modern day Turkey). The Jewish community, as well as the remaining Christians, began to follow the calendar as announced by the Edessian council.

By 359 CE, Byzantine persecution of the Rabbinc Jews in Tiberias had grown to such an extent that the Sanhedrin was forbidden from meeting. The inability to call witnesses created a growing disunity over fixing of the Jewish calendar between the Jews of Antioch (Edessa) and of Tiberias. In an attempt to keep the Jewish communities unified, Patriarch Hillel II publishes the astronomical (calculations) principles for regulation of the Jewish calendar. However many Jews, particularly with Sadducean/literalist tendencies, did not accept this change, and demanded that witness come before a court declare the new moons and intercalations. Without this biblical institution, the calendar would necessarily begin to float, being eleven days shorter each year and no extra month inserted to synchronize with the solar year.

The attempt at forming a Sanhedrin in Edessa quickly met with Byzantine resistance. An old Edessan chronicle mentions at least two synagogues, one of which was the nascent Sanhedrin, was turned by Bishop Rabbula into the chapel of Mar Stephen in 412CE.\(^{159}\)

Tharin’s son, Malki Karab Yuha'min Tubba’, assumed leadership after him.

**Malki Karab Yuha'min Tubba’, c. 378CE**

Malki Karab Yuha'min Tubba’ ruled just after some of the most severe conflicts between Rome and Persia had occurred, and the results of those conflicts were still working themselves out. Emperor Jovian, the Christian successor to Julian, was keenly aware of his precarious position far from supplies. He ended the war with Persia unfavorably for Rome. Persia won Armenia but not before it had converted to Christianity. The Huns move to the Russian steppes. Germanic Visigoths settled in Roman borders. Emperor Valens requested Gratian's help in defeating the Goths in Thrace. But the help did not arrive, resulting in a massacre of the Roman Army.

Rome for its part invoked strict discipline in religious matters. Valentinian I, who named his brother Valens Emperor of the East, sought to break all ties between Christianized Jews and their Jewish brethren by numerous legislation, including forbidding Christians to rest on the Jewish Sabbath in the Council Of Laodicia. In 375CE, Damasus I asserted the teaching authority of Roman bishop over all Christians, including bishops, by interpretation of Petrine Legacy (Matthew 16:18), marking the transformation of the Bishop of Rome into the Pope (Papa). Judaism was outlawed in Rome.

In Byzantium, Emperor Theodosius I summoned a council of the whole church, the Second Ecumenical Council of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. While he refused to condemn Judaism, as Rome had, he rule that all Christians shall believe in God as defined by the Nicene Creed, making religious intolerance among Christians a matter of legislation for the first time.

The pressure of Imperial decree spread the teachings of Orthodox Christianity, forcing the heterodox and even non-Christian Nasaara, to fall in line with Orthodox teachings. Theophilus I begins destroying ancient Egyptian temples, and causing the practice to sweep over Egypt. In Callinicum (Mesopotamia) a synagogue located on the Euphrates was looted and burned by Church officials. St. Ambrose, one of the four Latin doctors of the Catholic church, defended the action. He reprimanded Theodosius the Great for ordering the local Bishop to pay restitution, even though expropriation was illegal under Roman law. St. Ambrose offered to burn the synagogue in Milan on his own.

\(^{159}\) The notice is repeated in pseudo-Dionysius of Tellmahre and by Bar Hebræus. The latter relates also ("Eccl. Chron." i. 359) that the Moslem Mohammed ibn Ṭahir built a mosque in 825 where formerly there had been a synagogue.
In Arabia, the spread of Orthodox Christianity was felt most keenly in Najran, which traditionally had ties with the Abyssianians. It is at this point in time that the Polytheistic Palmyrian Jews referred to Nasaara could properly be referred to as “Christianized Jews”. Although when under siege by Abu-Kariba, the Aus and Kazraj would still be described as Jews. “Feeling rage against two Jewish tribes who settled at Yathrib, who richly deserve the punishment of a day of violence!”

In this context, Malki Karab Yuha’min Tubba’ declared its independence from Persia. Although the Lakhmids continued to be under Persian rule, Himyar achieved certain autonomy. Observing the importance of cavalry in recent battles among the Romans, Tubba’ began to assemble a cavalry of his own.

Abu Karib As’ad Tubba’, r.390-420CE

Abi Karib As’ad came to power as epidemics and social upheavals along with Gothic invasions rocked the Roman Empire. Theodosius I died in 395CE, and his son Honorius Flavius (364–423) succeeds to the western throne, his other son Arcadius (377-408) to the eastern throne. The Roman Empire permanently split and the Visigoths renounced their allegiance to Rome. In the West, Honorius confiscated gold and silver which had been collected by the synagogues to be sent to Jerusalem. Judaism was defined as an unworthy superstition (superstitio indigna). Honorius was greatly influenced by St. Ambrose, and his legislation is considered to be a repercussion of the reign of Julian the Apostate. Yazdegird I king of Persia (399-421 CE) had friendly relations with the Jewish people, which perhaps influenced Eastern Roman Emperor Arcadius to be relatively friendly to the Jews in the East.

In this time of persecution of the Jewish religion, a false Messiah for the Jews named Moses appeared in Crete. In Arabia, a different kind of ruler was taking up the cause of Tribes of Israel.

Given the preoccupation of Western and Eastern Roman Empires as well as the Persian Empire, Abu Karib As’ad succeeded to expand his territories into central Arabia in the first half of the fourth century. He changed the royal title from that of the founder Shamir Yur’ish “Lord of Saba, Dhu Raydan, Hadramawt and Yamant” to include “and of their Arabs (i.e., Bedouins) in Tawd and Tihamah”, a title used by all the succeeding Tubba’ kings. Al-Tawd denoted the mountain range of the Sarat, which divided Yemen between its coastland, Tihama, and its inland plateau, Najd. Given his descent from Tobiah, and Tobiah’s connection with Alexander the Great, it is not surprising that Abu Karib’s fame ensured the later growth around him of a fantastic romance and epic similar to that of, and, as noted above, conceivably inspired by, that of Alexander the Great.

The Tubbas viewed themselves as the continuation of the Davidic Dynasty, as Tabari has ‘Amr b. Tuban As’ad reciting "We exercise royal power over all other peoples; we have the connections of nobility and power, after the two Tubba's. We assumed royal power after Dawud (David) for a lengthy period, and we made the kings of East and West ourslaves."

Seige of Yathrib

About the year 418 CE, Abu-Kariba Assad Tubba’, undertook a military expedition into northern Arabia in an effort to consolidate his control and eliminate Byzantine influence.

The Byzantine emperors had long eyed the Arabian Peninsula as a region in which to extend their influence, thereby to control the lucrative spice trade and the route to India. Without actually staging a conquest of the region, the Byzantines hoped to establish a protectorate over the pagan Arabs by converting them to Christianity. The cross would then bear commercial advantages as it did in Ethiopia. The Byzantines had made some progress in northern Arabia but had met with little success in “Jewish” Himyar.

Abu-Kariba’s forces reached Yathrib, and passed by it at the beginning of his expedition (i.e. on his outward journey). He met no resistance and left one of his son of the king behind as governor. In spite of the fact the Palmyrenes had been accepted as refugee by Abu-Kariba’s ancestor, Shamir Yur’ish Tubba’, they did not recognize the authority of this Tubba’ king. Within a short time a mob of the people of Yathrib had killed his son. On his return journey, Abu-Kariba discovered what had happened and returned to punish the city. He now came to the town with the intention of reducing it to ruins, extirpating its people and cutting down its date palms. When they heard of his plans, this tribe (bayy) of the Ansar banded together against him in

160 Tabari, p. 172
161 See E12, s.v. Tubba’ (A. F. L. Beeston)
order to defend themselves. Their chief at that time was ‘Amr b. al-Tallah, one of the Banu al-Najjar, and then of the Banu ‘Amr b. Mabdhul.\footnote{Related by ibn Humayd-Salahamah-Muhammad b. Ishaq, in Ibn al-Kalbi and reproduced substantially by Ibn Ishaq in the Sirat al-nabi of Ibn Hishim.}

The word Ansar has come to mean the “Helpers” of the Prophet after his hijrah in 622 CE to Medinah. Here another, older meaning is used. The “Tribe of Ansar” is used, specifically to describe the Palmyrene Nasaara, who were both ethnically related and part of the Tobid Notzrim. The Arabs inhabiting Yathrib, were traditionally recorded as coming from the Banu Qaylah bt. Halik, with its two branches of the Aws and the Khazraj. Al-Najjar were a clan of the Khazraj, and the ‘Amr b. Mabdhul part of their subclan Mazin. The ‘Adi mentioned below were another subclan.

While Abu-Kariba was engaged in the seige, two rabbis (the term used, ahbar, is more properly translated “priest” in the sense of “Cohen”) from the Jews of the Banu Qurayzah, who had heard about Tubba’s intention of destroying the town and its people, came to him. Although a poem brought by Tabari speaks of one rabbi/priest “Until there came to me a priest of Qurayzah, a rabbi to whom, by your life, the Jews accorded primacy.” “Primacy” may refer to a descendant of Onias or a descendant of King David. The Qurayzah were one of the three main Jewish tribes in Yathrib, confederates of the Aws. One may speculate a connection between the rabbis/priests of Yathrib and Qusai ibn Kilab who appeared at the same time.

They related a prophecy, current at the time, to the King, that a Prophet would come from the tribe of Quraish in Medinah, and thus the settlement should not be destroyed. This could relate to the Prophecy of Daniel 9, which says the Redeemer would come 490 years after the destruction of the Temple (70CE) or the crushing of Bar Kochba (132CE). It could also relate to the Quraish being the last line of Zaddokite Priests, descended from Onias IV. Lastly, if the name Medinah was current at that time, it may have something to do with the Prophet Jethro and Midian. In any event, Tubba desisted from what he had intended to do regarding Medina and took these rabbis/priests with him.

Perceiving that the two Palmyrene rabbis/priests had special knowledge and being impressed at what he had heard from them. He departed from Medina, took them with him to Yemen, and embraced their religion. The names of the two rabbis were Ka'b (Jacob) and Asad (related to Said/Ezra), both from the Banu Qurayzah and paternal cousins of each other.\footnote{The names of the two rabbis as given here come from the Ibn Ishaq version of this story, from an uncertain source} Historian Michael Lecker has pointed out that al-Samhudi cites Ibn Zabalah that the names of the two men were Suhayt/Sukhayt and Munabbih, from the Medinan Jewish tribe of Hadl, who were actually clients of the more powerful Qurayezah.\footnote{See al-Samhudi, Waf'd al-waf'd, 1, 190; Lecker, “The Conversion of Ijimyar to Judaism and the Jewish Banu Had of Medina,” 134-3 5.}

A certain poet of the Ansar, one Khalid-b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzzd b. Ghaziyyah b.’Amr b.’Abd b.’Awf b. Ghamn b. Malik b. al-Najdr, perhaps hinted that a comet was visible “So ask ‘Imran or ask Asd, then, at the time when [the army] came, when the morning star was still visible.” The poet mentions that Abu-Kariba came with the Banu Awf and the al-Najarah, this reinforces the idea that the Palmyrene refugees had sworn allegiance to the Yemenite king almost a century before. He also mentions the “terrifying cavalry hosts of Abu Karib”\footnote{Tabari, p. 173, comment from C.E. Bosworth’s SOAS translation}.

In spite of the adoption of the religion of the Palmyrene Jews, Abu Kariba still did not trust the Palmyrenes. He left behind at Yathrib a group of Himyarite men “of personal achievement and valor, whose deeds are praised” The latter term is rabbi muhammadi in Arabic which could be taken as presaging the coming of the Prophet Muhammad.\footnote{Ibid. p. 178}

The Oniad Religion before Qusai ibn Kilab

It is further recorded how these two rabbis/priests went to various temples and idols to destroy them and cleans the land of idolatry. The nature of this idolatry had devolved from the Oniad missionizing movement of the 2nd century BCE. The priests, Cohens, called Kahins, took on the connotation of soothsayer. Others specialized in, magic and drawer of omens from the flight of birds,\footnote{Ibid p. 171} They used to pray and offer up sacrifices, and then speak under inspiration.\footnote{Ibid. p. 178} Their prophetic/visionary speech took the form of gnomic...
pronouncements, in assonantal, rhymed prose. “A woman with her eyelids never looked forth like with a look full of penetration, as when al-Dhi’bi made pronouncements when he spoke in saj’.”

This was done at any altar, and Abu Kariba was not aware of the special nature of the Ka’aba in Mecca, until told by the Banu Haydil and the rabbi/priests from Yathrib.

Abu Kariba had a Kahin named Shafi, b. Kulayb al-Sadafi. One time Tubba’ asked him, “What does there remain of your learning?” Shafi’ replied, “An eloquent piece of historical lore-and a veracious item of knowledge.” He said, “Can you find a people with a kingdom equal in status to mine?” Shafi’ replied, “No, except that the king of Ghassan has numerous offspring (nail).” Tubba’ said, “Can you find any king superior to him in status?” He replied, “Yes.” He said, “Who has such a kingdom?” He replied, “I find it belonging to a pious and God-fearing man-who has been made strong by conquests-and who has been described in the Scriptures (al-zabur, literally “the Psalms of David”) - his community is given a superior status in the sacred books (al-sufar)-and he will dispel darkness with light - Ahmad the prophet-blessed be his community until he comes! [He is] one of the Banu Lu’ayy-and then of the Banu Qusai.” Tubba’ sent for a copy of the scriptures and perused them; and lo and behold, he found there the Prophet’s description.

Qusai of the Banu Lu'ayy of Fihr or Quraysh who was an ancestor, five generations removed, of the Prophet of Islam. He is said to have restored the Ka'bah to the primitive monotheistic worship of the millat ibrahim after it had lapsed into pantheism under the Jurham.168

Jurhum (Djurhum or Djurham) were an ancient tribe who migrated from Yemen, although probably from Palmyra, who were said to have migrated northward to Hijaz and to have taken over Mecca and its altar from the “Amelekites” from the years 270CE to 400CE. They were displaced by the local Hijazi tribe of Khuza'ah. Individuals with the nisbah of al-Jurhumi were still known in the time of the Prophet.

Dr. Günter Lüling explained that Reichart Dozy had already explained the peculiar Central Arabian people named Gurhum from very early pre-Islamic times169 - they are in Arabic-Islamic tradition divided into the first and the second Gurhum - as the two waves of Israelite emigration which, after the destruction of the first Temple in the sixth century BCE and the destruction of the second Temple in the first and second century CE, poured into Central Arabia, where these heretically secessed Simeonite-Ishamelite Israelites, to whom at least the common people of Israel had always maintained some kinsmanlike relationship and in particular important trade-connections, had been already dwelling since the turn to the millennium BCE.

Since from Islamic tradition it appears that the Gurhum carried on Israelite cult-traditions (they also owned the Psalter)(41) and because the Gurhum obviously came from the environ of Bahrain, where the town Gerrha lies, one of the important trade-centers of antiquity, and considering that antique historiography depicts this town as founded by refugees who had come to that area, Dozy came to set up the equation “Guthum = gerim (that is, ‘Jewish emigrants’) from (the ger-town) Gerrha.”

This equation “Gurhum = emigrants of Gerrha” has now again been represented in modified form by Toufic Fahd. The essential improvement on Dozy is that Fahd for the first time definitely localizes Gerrha, pointing out that it is not to be identified, as hitherto by mistake, with the place al-Ga’ran near al-Qatif. Fahd takes as a basis of the name Gerrha the Arabic place-name g r h.(43) But this speculation, already undertaken by Dozy, about the relation between the people-name Guthum and the town-name Gerrha, can be given a better foundation. I would like to assert that gurhum is the retrograde formation of a singular from a word gerahim, which should be regarded as a Hebraic-Aramaic-Greek influenced formation of a plural to designate the inhabitants of Gerrha, i.e. for gerahi, “someone from Gerrha.” T. Fahd does not go as far as to claim this origin of the name Gurhum. He contents himself with the statement that the people of Gerrha were “Araes arabis,” “emigrés Araméens.”(44)

Now we proceed beyond Dozy and Fahd by adding a further aspect. This aspect, which should enable the drawing of a more precise, more historical picture of Central Arabia, inundated throughout a millenium by heretical Israelites, is the theme “Levites and Minaeans.”

A 1961 essay of Roland de Vaux (45) continued the research work of the turn of the century, especially picking up the thread of Hubert Grimm. (46) We cannot report the research of de Vaux; here we can only name the problem, which had been discussed around the turn of the century and which now is obviously again becoming topical, in order then to present our very brief attempted solution based on R. B. Serjeant.

The Minaeans seem to have had their center in the town Ma’in, one of the most important towns of the

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168 Tabari, p. 175, text and comment from C.E. Bosworth’s SOAS translation
169 R. Dozy, Israeliten zu Mekka, 134ff.; 186ff
incense-trade at the northern border of the Yemen, and they maintained a considerable trade-colony at Ma'in Musran (i.e., the Ma'in of Musri = Dedan). And with these Minaeans were, as many inscriptions of the second half of the pre-Christian millennium show, Levites, even female Levites, who had remarkably much to do with funds, capital and other assets, a fact whose importance will become evident presently. (47)

Rededication of the Ka'aba

Abu-Kariba took the two rabbis/priests with him. It is said that he converted to Judaism at this point, but what is more likely, given that polytheism persisted even after this point, is that Abu-Kariba accepted the priesthood of Medina who taught a form of Palmyrene, Sadducean, Tobiad Judaism. The acceptance of Judaism, was not the acceptance of rabbinical commandments, but rather the restoration of the sacrificial system of the Second Commonwealth. This fit well with the lineage of the Tubba's, and brought great fame and almost legendary importance to Abu-Kariba.

As he set out back to toward Yemen, a group of men from Hudhayl advised him to plunder the sanctuary of Mecca. They said “O king, allow us to lead you to an ancient, largely obliterated treasury which previous monarchs have overlooked and which contains pearls, chrysoliths, rubies, gold, and silver.” referring to the Temple treasures that had been hidden there. These treasures had been removed by Idumean troops when they were allowed to enter the Temple grounds in Jerusalem by the Zealots, days before the Temple fell to Roman troops. They said “[It is] a temple in Mecca which its people worship and pray by,” meaning sacrifices and assemblies. Generations later, Abdul Muttalib Ibn Hashim, the grandfather of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) was the first to beautify the Holy Ka'bah. He put in it two golden cherubim (gazelles), which he had found in the well of Zamzam. Abdul Muttalib also decorated the door of the Ka'bah with ancient Temple Treasures.

Abu-Kariba’s people were descended from the people of Saba and Himyar. They were devotees of idols and their worship. Even the king had only a distant relationship to the Hasmonean kings. The two rabbis/priests
discouraged him on religious grounds. They said: "The sole intention of these people is to bring about your destruction and the destruction of your army. If you do what they are urging you to do, you and everyone with you will assuredly perish en bloc." Tubba' inquired what were the religious practices that are practiced there. They replied, "When you get there, do as its devotees do: circumambulate it, venerate and honor it, shave your head in its presence and behave with humility until you leave its precincts." He asked them, "What is preventing you yourselves from doing that?" They retorted, "By God, it is indeed the temple of our forefather Abraham, and it is just as we have informed you; but the local people have interposed as obstacles, between us and the temple, various idols they have set up around it, and blood they shed there." Referring to levitical purity, they replied that "They are unclean polytheists," or words to that effect.

Tubba' recognized the soundness of their advice and the veraciousness of their words. It was revealed to him in a dream that he should cover over the temple, so he covered it with sheets of woven palm leaves. Then in a second dream it was revealed to him that he should cover it with something better than that, so he covered it with Yemeni cloth (al-ma'dur). Then in a third dream, that he should cover it with something even better than that, so he covered it with women's robes and pieces of finely woven Yemeni cloth joined together (al-muld'ah wa-al-wasd'il). According to what they assert, Tubba’ was the first person to put a covering over the Ka'bah @433 He also ordered its guardians “Levites”, from Jurhum to keep it in a state of ritual purity, not letting any blood, dead bodies, or milath, that is, [cloth used for] menstruation, come near it, and he provided it with a door and a key. @434 The Jurham were an ancient tribe, traditionally accounted Yemeni in genealogy, who were said to have migrated northward to Hijaz and to have taken over Mecca and its shrine from the Amelekites (Nabateans) before being themselves displaced by the local Uijdzi tribe of Khuza'ah.

Then he set out for Yemen accompanied by his troops and the two rabbis. When he reached Yemen he summoned its people to enter into the same religion as he had done, but they refused until they were able to test it by means of ordeal by fire, which they had in Yemen. According to what the Yemenis assert, there was in Yemen a fire, by means of which they would settle matters in dispute among themselves; the fire would devour the wrongdoer but leave the one who had suffered injury unscathed. Another tradition is that they only followed the track of the fire in order to repel it, for they said that whoever was able to drive it back was the most worthy of credence.906 This being reminiscent of Elijah’s test of the prophets of Baal, who had a test who’s prayers could ignite their sacrifice. A similar test being mentioned in the midrash as during the time of Caliph ‘Umar “

Israel will say to the king of the Arabs, “Take silver and gold and leave the Temple.” The king of the Arabs will say, “You have nothing to do with this Temple. However, if you want, choose a sacrifice as you did in the past, and we will also offer a sacrifice, and with the one whose sacrifice is accepted, we will all become one people.” The Jewish people will offer theirs, but it will not be accepted because the Satan will lay charges against them before The Holy One, Blessed is He. The descendents of Keder will offer theirs, and it will be accepted… 170

At this point, it is recorded that the Himyartes agreed to accept Tubba”s religion; “from this time onward, and because of this episode, was the origin of Judaism in Yemen.” Although what is meant here is not rabbinical Judaism as known today, but the Sadducean sacrificial system, and the Ka’aba as the New Jerusalem, along with its Sanhedrin (Dar al-Nadwah) and its Nasi, Qusai ibn Kilab, descendant of Onias IV.

The first person to set up a door that could be locked in the Holy Ka’bah was Tubba’ As’ad Al-Himiyari. Anush Ibn Seth (the Prophet Enoch) and Jurhum were believed to have also done the same.

Commercial interests on the Silk Road

Abu Kariba’s main accomplishment was not just in uniting Arabia, but also in controlling a greater part of the “Silk road”. Jews began to settle in the cities located along the Great Silk Road since the 4th century CE. For the most part, they were traders who spoke and wrote in Aramaic. Archeological evidence testifies to the presence of Jewish traders from Arabia to China.

In Kyrgyz national epic poem Manas, which dates back to the 10th century CE and probably incorporates earlier traditions. Manas, the name of a town and oasis in central Xinjiang Province in the modern Uighur Autonomous Region of China, is also the name of the legendary epic hero of the Kyrgyz people, described as a son of Jakup – Yaacov, probably referring to the son of Joseph, Menashe. This epic poem mentions

170 Sefer Eliyahu, Pirkei Moshiach, p. 236
several cities with sizeable Jewish communities, among them Samarqand, Bukhara and Baghdad, as well as various places in the Middle East, including Jerusalem which is described as a "Holy City for Jews."

In his memoirs Marco Polo, who passed through the territory of Kyrgyzstan during his voyage to China, mentioned numerous Jewish communities along the Silk Road and in China, where Jews were called the “people with colored eyes” and were allowed to build synagogues. According to the Russian researcher Vladimir Bartold, during the 10th century the Jewish population in the eastern regions of Iran was larger than that of the Christians. Khorezm, Osh, Kokand and Samarqand hosted famous communities of Jewish scholars who called themselves khabs, an Uzbek word derived from the Hebrew haver ("friend, colleague") which they used to distinguish themselves from the "commoners."

The famous Arab geographer Al-Maqdisi (946-1000), who traveled extensively in the lands of Islam, mentioned the cities of Osh, Balasagun, Uzgen, Taraz and others as having communities of akhl-az-zimma (non-Muslims, mostly medieval Jewish traders). These Jews were of Middle Eastern origin and habitually were active as traders, moneychangers and bankers. Some geographical information about the Silk Road, particularly names of towns, reached even Spain: the famous atlas compiled by Abraham Crescas in Palma de Majorca, Catalonia, in 1375-77 contains a map of Kyrgyzstan with the lake Issyk-Kul and the cities of Talas and Jerusalem as a holy city for Jews.

Taxing the commerce on the Silk Road generated enormous wealth for Abu Kariba. This in turn brought a renewed hope and vigor to the Kingdom of Himyar. Abu Kariba had plans of re-establish the Second Commonwealth, not based in Jerusalem but in Mecca. His plans needed a High Priest and Nasi to lead the religious aspect of his kingdom. He granted this position to Qusai ibn Kilab ibn Murrah.

Qusai ibn Kilab ibn Murrah, 400-480CE

Qusai ibn Kilab was a descendant of Adnan, whom for the purposes of this paper we assume was Onias IV. Qusai was the great-grandfather of Shaiba ibn Hashim (Abdul-Mutallib). Qusai is amongst the ancestors of Sahaba and the progenitor of the Quraysh. He was fifth in the line of descent to the Prophet Muhammad, and attained supreme power at Makkah by appointment of Abu Karib As'ad Tubba'.

He was born into the famous Quraysh tribe. After his father's death his mother Fatimah bint Sa'd ibn Sayl married Rabi'ah ibn Haram from the Bani Azra tribe, who took her with him to as-Sham where she gave birth to a son called Darraj. Qusai grew up knowing no other father than Rabi'ah. When a quarrel broke out between Qusai and some members of the Rabi'ah tribe, they reproached him as they would a foreigner and betrayed the fact that they never regarded him as one of their own. Qusai complained to his mother and related to her the reproach he heard. Her answer was as defiant as it was proud. "O my son," she said, "your descendence is nobler than theirs, you are the son of Kilab ibn Murrah, and your people live in the proximity of the holy house in Makkah." This was the cause of Qusai's departure from as Sham and return to Makkah.

His seriousness and wisdom soon won him the respect of the Meccans. When Qusai came of age, (Hillel) Hulail ibn Hubshiyyah the chief of Banu Khuza'a tribe was the trustee and guardian of the Ka'bah. Soon Qusai asked for and married Hubba, daughter of Hulail. He continued to work hard at his trade and acquired much affluence, great respect, and many children. When his father-in-law died after a fierce battle which ended in arbitration, he committed the keys of the Ka'bah to Hubba, wife of Qusai. Hulail preferred Qusai from his own sons as Qusai was outstanding among Arabs of his time and therefore according to Hulail's will, got the trusteeship of the Ka'bah after him.

The first person to roof-over the Holy Ka'bah was Qusai ibn Kilab. He reconstructed the Ka'aba from a state of decay and settled his nearest of kin in houses surrounding the Ka'aba - his brother Zuhrah, his uncle Taym ibn Murrah, the son of another uncle Makhzum ibn Yaqaza, and his other cousins Jurmah and Sahn who were less close. These and their posterity where known as Quraysh of Hollow, whereas his more remote kinsmen settled in the ravines of the surrounding hills and in the countryside beyond and where known as Quraysh of the Outskirts. People did not use to build houses in the vicinity of the Holy Ka'bah, but on the outskirts of Makkah Al-Mukarramah. Those who built their houses around the Holy Ka'bah were known as Quraish Al-Bawatin. These were the original Ahl Bayt, the priesthood descended from Onias IV, the last Zaddokite priest. The ravine surrounding the Ka'aba was used for slaughtering and offering of sacrifices, and remenicent of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, was called “the kitchen” (al-matabikh).@369

He assembled a Sanhedrin made up of Christianized Jews (Nasaara), Sadducean Jews (Yahud) and what was left from the old Oniad missionizing priesthood (Jurham), as well as monotheists and polytheists. The
Sanhedrin was a spacious dwelling which was known as the House of Assembly (Dar el Nadwah) for all of Arabia. Leaders of different clans met in this hall to discuss their social, commercial, cultural and political problems. A provident leader, Qusai created laws so that pilgrims who went to Makkah were supplied with food and water, which was paid for by a tax that he persuaded his people to pay. He distributed the responsibilities of looking after the visitors during pilgrimage taking care of Ka'bah, warfare and pacifying amongst myriad tribes living in Makkah.

It was a marked characteristic of Qusai's line that in each generation there would be one man who was altogether pre-eminent. Among his four sons Abd Manaf was already honoured in his lifetime. However he preferred his first born, Abd-al-Dar, although he was the least capable of all; and shortly before his death he invested all his rights, powers, and transferred to him the presidency (Nasi) and right to control the calendar (Naasa) of the House of Assembly.

The Sadducean Sanhedrin in Mecca

In Rome and Byzantium, Jews were being purged from all public offices and dignities in the Roman empire. In 359 CE, Emperor had forbidden the Rabbinic Sanhedrin from meeting. By 410 CE, the Sadducean Sanhedrin moved from Antioch to Edessa, Syria but it was soon confiscated for the Church. Five years later, Emperor Theodosius II publically reprimands the Rabbinic Patriarch Gamaliel II and strips him of the rank of 'praefectus praetorio'. Theodosius II commanded that all the contributions and donations which were collected for the Patriarch of Palestine, for the purpose of charity, and the promotion of the study of the law and similar purposes, should be delivered into the imperial treasury. Abu Karib agreed to allow a Sanhedrin to be set up in Mecca. He appointed Qusai ibn Kilab to perform this task.

With the death of Gamaliel II in 425CE, the patriarchate and the Rabbinic Sanhedrin associated with it is ended. In 439CE, The Code Of Theodosius II (Byzantine Empire) was the first imperial compilation of anti-Jewish laws since Constantine. All Jews were prohibited from holding important positions involving money, including judicial and executive offices. The ban against building new synagogues was reinstated. Theodosius was the Roman emperor of the East (408–450). The Code was also readily accepted by Western Roman Emperor Valentinian III (425-455).

Although the Sadducean Sanhedrin in Edessa moved to Mecca, not all of the Christianized Jewish scholars relocated to Arabia. A group called the “council of the righteous” remained. Edessa, now called Sanliurfa in Turkey, boasts the oldest mosque in Turkey, built by the Umayyad king Mervan II between 744 and 750CE. The Sanhedrin formed the basis for the oldest Islamic university was also situated there.

Harran was a centre of Christianity from early on, the first place where purpose-built churches were constructed openly. However although a bishop resided in the city, many people of Harran retained their ancient pagan faith during the Christian period, and thus the Sabian culture was born in Harran.

**Hassan Yuha'min Tubba’, r.420-450CE**

Hassan was the eldest son of Abu Kariba. The noble sons of Himyar and others from the Arab tribes used to serve the kings of Himyar during their period of royal power. The Kindah swore allegiance to the kings of Himyar. When Hassan b. Tubba’ led an expedition against the Jadis, he appointed the chief of Kindah, 'Amr b. Hujr al-Kindi as his deputy over affairs in his absence. The Lakhmides swore allegiance to the kings of Himyar. Hassan’s brother Sharhib II Ya'far married the daughter of the chief of Hira, forming an alliance with the Lakhmides.

In the first centuries CE., the Himyarites seem to have been led by princes, qayls, and chiefs, rather than kings. Although beginning Hussan’s grandfather, Malki Karab Yuha'min Tubba’, the leading family claimed the title *malik* (king) after he claimed independence from Persia. In turn he appointed regents who used the title *qayl*, and meaning “prince,” a potentate subordinate to a *malik* or king, as well as the meaning of “tribal chief.”

**Expedition to Iraq**

Continuing in the path of his father, Hassan led an expedition with the army of Yemen, aiming at confirming
his power over the land of the Arabs and even into lands held by the Persians. But when the expedition reached a certain spot in the land of Iraq, Himyar and the tribes of Yemen refused to go on further with him and wanted to return to their own homeland and families. They approached and spoke Hassan's brother Sharhib I Ya'fir (also called 'Amr), who was with him in the army, and incited him to mutiny. "Kill your brother Hassan, and we will make you king over us in his stead and you can lead us back to our homeland." He agreed to their plan, and Hassan's brother and his followers from Himyar and the tribes of Yemen agreed to kill [915] Hassan, except for Dhu Ru'ayn al-Himyari, who forbade Sharhib I Ya'fir to do this and told him, "You are the ruling house of our kingdom; do not kill your brother and thereby dissolve the uniting bonds of our house," or something like that. But Sharhib I Ya'fir rejected his words, although Dhu Ru'ayn was a leading noble of Himyar @472 This is confirmed by @Nashwan al-Hirmari, claiming a connection for them with the previous ruling house of Saba'.

The heir to the Tubba' dynasty had for generations spent most of his time maintaining some kind of control over trade on the Silk Road. To this end, he was constantly involved in commerce, as well as military forays into Arabia to enforce his authority. He had no time for the day to day management of Himyar. Hassan had appointed 'Amr b. Hujr al-Kindi as regent to take care of these matters.

Hassan's son As'ad was only ten years old when his father was assassinated, so Sharhib I Ya'fir found no difficulty in declaring himself regent until As'ad would come of age.

Sharhib I Ya'fir ('Amr Tubba'), 450CE

When Sharhib I Ya'fir killed his brother Hassan and assumed the royal power in his stead, he took his father's administrator 'Amr b. Hujr al-Kindi into his personal service. 'Amr b. Hujr was a man of sound judgment and sagacity. 'Amr b. Tubba' intended to honor him and at the same time to diminish the status of his brother Hassan's sons. His intention was to become more than regent, and deprive Hassan's sons of their claim to royal authority. As part of this policy he gave Hassan daughter in marriage to 'Amr b. Hujr. This caused a discontent among the Himyarites, and among them were some young men who were concerned about her, because none of the Arabs had previously been bold enough to desire a marriage alliance with that royal house of Himyarites. Hassan's daughter bore a son 'Amr b. Hujr named al-Harith b. 'Amr. (Al-Harith killed al-Nu'man I in @431 and ruled Iraq to the Tigris River).

Sharhib I Ya'fir had married a princess of the Lakhmides. The Lakhmid Kingdom was founded by the Lakhum tribe that emigrated from Yemen in the 2nd century and ruled by the Banu Lakhm, hence the name given the whole tribe. The founder of the dynasty was 'Amr (268–295CE), whose son was Imru' al-Qais (295–328CE, not to be confused with the famous poet Imru' al-Qais who lived in the 6th century). Imru' al-Qais converted to Christianity. Gradually the whole city converted to that faith. Sharhib I Ya'fir's son, Sharhib II Yakif, (r.-460-467, also called Rab'ah b. Nasr and Zayd b. 'Amr) was raised as a Christian (hence the name Nasr), and functioned as emissary of the court of Himyar to the Byzantines.

According to a poem brought by Tabari, Sharhib I Ya'fir boasted "We exercise royal power over all other peoples; we have the connections of nobility and power, after the two Tubba's (Asad and Hassan)." It is said that he made a monument to his honor in the royal city and capital of the Himyarites, Zafar "We wrote down in Zafar the ancient writings of glory, so that the chiefs of the two towns (al-qaryatan, sc., Mecca and al-Ta'if ) 475 might read them.

When Sharhib I Ya'fir established himself in Yemen, he found it expedient to purge the nobles of Himyar. They reason that he gave was that they had advised him for the murder of Hassan. It is said that Sharhib I Ya'fir was unable to sleep and suffered permanent insomnia. It reduced him to a state of exhaustion, so he set about asking the physicians, and the soothsayers and diviners who work by examining physiognomy, what was the matter with him, saying, "I am deprived of sleep, and can get no rest, and insomnia has reduced me to a state of exhaustion." one of them told him, "By God, no [916l man has ever killed his brother or a blood relation wrongfully, as you killed your brother, without losing his sleep and incurring sleeplessness." On being told this, 'Amr set about killing all those members of the nobles of Himyar and tribes of Yemen who had urged him to kill his brother Hassan, except for Dhu Ru'ayn who had urged him not to do so.

Not long afterward, Sharhib I Ya'fir died.
Rabi'ah b. Nasr al-Lakhmi ('Abd Kulal) r.~460-467

After Sharhib I Ya'fir, his son Rabi'ah b. Nasr ('Abd Kulal b. Muthawwib) succeeded to the position of regent. This was because the sons of Hassan I were small, except for As'ad II, whom the jinn had rendered mentally unbalanced. Hence Rabi'ah b. Nasr assumed the royal power [temporarily], fearing lest someone outside the royal house of the kingdom might covet it. He was qualified to exercise this power through his mature years, his experience, and his excellent powers of governing.

Even though the Tubba's primary concern was commerce, and left day to day running of the domain their increasingly Christianized regents, they continued to feel that they were "defenders of the faith" and outlawed any form of Byzantine Christianity. Not unlike the last days of the Jewish revolts in the Holy Land, any tendancy towards Christianity was considered not only heresy, but aroused suspicion for sympathies for the other side. Tabrar relates that Rabi'ah b. Nasr had been taught a non-Trinitarian Christianity ('ala din al-Nasariyyah al-ula) as a more perfect form of notzrut by a man of Ghassan who had come from Syria. He used to conceal this from the Himyarites. But the missionary Ghassan was attacked and killed.

There related to us Ibn Humayd-Salamah-ibn Ish5q, from a [911]certain scholar, that Rabfaii b. Nasr had a dream that alarmed him and that continued to disquiet him. He gathered all the Cohens (kahins, soothsayers), but they were unable to provide him with an answer, so he sent for Satih and Shiqq, considered the most knowledgeable. Satih's (real) name was @RabFb. Rabi'ah b. Mas'-ud b. Mdzin b. Dhi'b b. 'Adi b. Mdzin b. Ghassdn, and because of his genealogical connections with Dhi'b he was called al-Dhi'bi. Shiqq was the son of Sa'b b. Yashkur b. Ruhm. b. Afrak b. Nadhir b. Qays b. 'Abqar b. Anmir.@ 459  Satih and Shiqq reappear : here for the Lakhmid Rabi'ah but also (anachronistically) for al-Nu'man (M) b. al-Mundhir (IV) and Khusraw An-asharwldn in predicting the fall of the Persian kingdom and the triumph of the Arabs

Satih interpreted his dream to mean that the Abyssinians (al-Habash) will swoop down on Rabi'a'sland and will then rule over all the land from [912] Abyan to Jurash, not in his time, but in "sixty or seventy years" and that "it will be cut short after seventy-odd years have gone by-and then all of them there will be slain or will be expelled from it as fugitives." Iram of Dhu Yazan 463 will assume the task of killing and expelling them Iram is identified with the Biblical Aram, son of Shem (Gen. x. 22-23; 1 Chron. 1. 17), But his dominion too will be cut short by a prophet to whom the inspired revelation (al-wahy) will come-from on high, from the progeny of Ghdlib b. Fhir-son of Malik b. al-Nadr 464, that is, from Quraysh. When Satih had finished, Shiqq entered and confirmed all these things. Shiqq said, "A youth neither base nor inadequate for what he attempts-he will issue forth from the house of Dhu Yazan" but his dominion will be "cut short " and "ended by a prophet who will be sent-who will come with right and justice-among the people of religion and virtue-the dominion will remain among his people until the Day of Separation."

Taking this into consideration, it is said that Rabi'a fitted out his sons and other members of his house for the journey to Iraq, together with what they needed, and wrote on their behalf to one of the kings of Persia called Shapur, son of Khurrazdd, @468 [Presumably the reference is to Shabur I, since his father Ardashir I's mother was Khurrazad. See Justi, Namenbuch, 96-97] who allowed them to settle at al-Hirah. Al-Nu'man b. al-Mundhir, the king of al-Hirah, was a descendant of Rabi'ah b. [914] Nasr; he is al-Nu'man b. al-Mundhir b. 'Adi b. Rabi'ah b. Nasr, that same king in the genealogy and the lore of the scholars (ahl) of Yemen .469 Thus the dream becomes an explanation for the movement of a South Arabian group like the Lakhmid family from Yemen to Iraq.

What we have here is a story from the South Arabian tradition, meant to explain the presence of the (genealogically) South Arabian Lakhmids in Iraq and al-Hirah. The story is traced back to the time of a generation after Shamir Yur'ish/Yuhar'ish, i.e., the first part of the fourth century, and Rabi'ah b. Nasr al-Lakhmi is made the father of 'Ad-1, who in the Lakhmid king lists dependent upon Ibn al-Kalbi (see n. @414 above) is regarded as the progenitor of the line, the first figure in the royal genealogy, father of 'Amr 1, the father of Imru' al-Qays I. At the end of the story of the dream, the Lakhmids are made to migrate from Yemen to al-Hirah in order to escape the prophesied invasion of the Abyssinians, being allowed to settle at al-Hirah by the Persian king Shapur I (see al-Taban).

[As'ad II] Tubba' ~440-r.450-518

Satih used only to be called al-Dhi'bi by the Arabs because he came from the progeny of Dhi'b b.'Adi. When Rabi'ah b. Nasr died and the royal power in Yemen became concentrated into the hands of Hassan II b. Tubdn As'ad Ab! Karib b. Malik Karib b. Zayd b.'Amr Dh! al-Adh'dr

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At that point, Tubba’ b. Hassan recovered his sanity and was restored to health. He demanded his full rights as king of Arabia, and for the moment abolished the office of regent. This was a setback for the Byzantines who had been making gains in Arabia for Christianity by means of the Lakhmids. As’ad was highly knowledgeable about the stars, the most intelligent among those who had learned [the sciences] in his time, and the one with the most information and lore concerning both the past and what was to come after him in the future. Hence Tubba’ b. Hassan b. Tubba’ b. Malikay Karib b. Tubba’ al-Aqran was raised to the kingship. Himyar and the Arabs stood in intense awe of him. He then sent his sister’s son al-Harith b. ‘Amr b. Huir al-Kindi at the head of a powerful army against the @882 lands of Ma’add [Ma’add is a general designation for the North Arab tribes in Islamic times, as is also that of his father’Adnan and his son Nizar. Ma’add was originally, in pre-Islamic times, a tribal group in central Arabia, presumably the Nizar of the Namarah inscription Of A.D. 328, and then in the early sixth century the Ma’add are mentioned in South Arabian inscriptions as the North Arab subjects of Kindah. See Ibn al-Kalbi-Caskel-Strenziok, Jamharat al-nasab, I, Table I, II, 1-2, 379; EI2, s.v. Ma’add (W. M. Watt)] al-Hirah, and the districts adjacent to them both.

**Missionizing Movement**

The Tobiads had always known the importance of swift communications, whether using doves during Roman times, or horses to swiftly deliver messages. As’ad Tubba’ commissioned a chain of of synagogues along the silk road from Arabia to China. Each of these houses of prayer was equipped with a Minaret. “Tubba’ built a chain of Minarets (al-manar) spanning the expanse between him and them, and when any affair occurred, they lit fire beacons at night, and the news was thereby conveyed in a single night.” Lighthouses (al-manar) spanning the expanse between him and them, and when any affair of moment occurred, they lit fire beacons at night and the news was thereby conveyed in a single night. These fires were used to communicate religious matters like the new month, and intercalation or commutation of the calendar, as well as secular business affairs.171

@483 There is epigraphic evidence for the existence of adherents of Judaism in Yemen proper during the later fifth century, in that the Bayt al-Ashwal inscription was erected at Zafax by a man called Yhwd’ Ykf/Yehfidd Yakkuf (for Yankuf), clearly a native South Arabian, who invokes “the Lord of Heaven and Earth” and “His people (S2b) Israel” and who mentions the king Dhara”amar Ayman (H), who ruled in the later fourth century. See Miffier, “Eine hebraeisch-sabaesche Bilingual aus Bait al-Agwal, 117-23; Robin, in LArabie antique de Karib’fl a Mahomet, 145-46. Judaism seems to have made rapid advances at the Himyarite court, with three of the leading noble families, those of Harridan, Yaz’an, and Hasbah, becoming converts. There was in the later fifth and early sixth centuries an important Jewish trading community on the island of Yotab6 (not yet specifically located, but some- where near the mouth of the Gulf of ‘Aqabah; see Smith, “Events in South Arabia in the 6th Century A.D.,” 4.28-29; Z. Rubin, “Byzantium and Southern Arabia- the Policy of Anastasius,” 388-89), which was controlled by a local chief called Amorcesos and which probably served as a base for mercantile activities down the Red Sea as far as the shores of Yemen. After ca. A.D. 450-60 the South Arabian inscriptions begin to give the “Lord of Heaven and Earth” the proper name of Rahhindrin, one equally used by the Christian monotheists and, in the early seventh century, by Muhammad’s rival among the Banui Hanifah of al-Yamama, Musaylimah.

**Al-Harith, General of [As’ad II] Tubba’**

Al-Harith, the son of ‘Amr b. Hujr who had married the sister of As’ad, was appointed the general of As’ad’s armies. . Also known as Al-Harith b. ‘Amr al-Maqsur, he flourished in the first thirty years or so of the sixth century. He was a dominating personality on the political and military scene of Arabia and the adjacent fringes of the Byzantine and Persian lands. The Lakhmids and the chiefs of Kindah had had connections, despite being rivals for the control of north- ern and eastern Arabia; already in the later fifth century.

Al-Harith attack on the Byzantine frontiers in Syria led by two of al-Harith’s sons, Hujr and Ma’di Karib, in ca.

171 The Arabs used to light fires to guide travelers to shelter and entertainment. These fires, ‘the fire of hospitality,’ ‘the fire of war,’ etc.. are constantly referred to in the ancient Arabic poetry. No less than thirteen fires are enumerated by them. During Second Temple times, when Rosh Chodesh was declared, the Sanhedrin would light fires on mountaintops to let everyone know that it was the new month. As each town saw a fire lit, they would light a fire on its mountaintop so that the news of the new month would spread. Toward the end of the Second Temple period, this system was changed to dispatchin horses because the Samaritans were deliberately lighting fires on the wrong day in order to confuse the Jewish community.
500 CE, forcing the Greeks to agree to a peace treaty in 502 CE. This was followed by a campaign against the Lakhmids. Tabari says that Al Harith marched against al-Nu'man b. Imr' al-Qays b. al-Shaqi-qah. Al-Nu'man and a number of his family were killed, and his companions were routed. In this way the royal power of the house of al-Nu'man passed away, and al-Harith b. ‘Amr al-Kindi succeeded to their former power and possessions.

Ibn al-Kalbi says that Al Harith had begun these attacks against the Lakhmids even in the days of Rabi'ah. Ps.-Joshua the Stylite, Chronicle, trans. 45-46, states that the Arab (i.e., Kindi) invasion of the Lakhmids took place when al-Nu'man was away with the Persian army combatting the Greeks, which would place an attack by al-Harith on al-Hirah in 503 CE. It is probable that the Kindi ruler was then able to control the greater part of the Lakhmids dominions from 503 CE till 506 CE, the years when the Byzantine-Persian war was at its most intense, and Kawad was unable to afford the Lakhmids any assistance. According to the Bakri tradition, al-Mundhir, bereft of Persian help, had to agree to marry al-Harith's daughter Hind, who, as a Christian, was subsequently held in great honor at al-Hirah and was the founder of a monastery in the region of al-Hirah, the Dayr Hind (al-Sughra).

According to Tabari, Al-Harith continued on, to meet the king of Persia, Qubadh. Qubadh was a Zindiq who did only good deeds, who abhorred shedding blood and who, in his dislike for shedding blood, treated his enemies with leniency. In his time, heretical opinions (al-ahwa') became rife, and the people came to regard Qubadh as a weak ruler. Al-Harith b. 'Amr al-Kindi, however, set out with a numerous and well-equipped army, until the two forces met at the bridge of al-Fayyam. 360 [central Iraq, near Hit on the Euphrates] When al-Harith saw Qubadh's weakness, he began to covet the Sawad, and ordered the men in his garrison posts (masdlihihi) to cross the Euphrates and carry out raids into the Sawad. When Qubadh confronted Al-Harith, Al-Harith disclaimed responsibility. "I haven't done anything, and don't know anything about it; it was some Arab robbers, and I myself cannot keep a firm hand over the Arabs except by financial subsidies and regular troops." Which Qubadh granted him. Qubadh made over to him the side of the lower Euphrates bordering on the Arabs, comprising six tassfiis. Al-Harith b. 'Amr al-Kindi at that point sent a messenger to Tubba' in Yemen, saying, "I covet strongly the kingdom of the Persians, and have already acquired six tassugs of it. So gather your troops together and advance, for there is nothing between you and their kingdom, since the king does not eat meat and does not consider the shedding of blood lawful, for he is a Zindiq."

While some of this may indeed be legend, it is known that between approximately 525 CE and 528 CE, Al-Harith was indeed able to expel the Lakhmids from al-Hirah, having taken over parts of the Iraqi borderlands some twenty years before. From 528 till his death in 531, Kawad was preoccupied with warfare with the Byzantines, with the emperor Justin I at the outset and then with the great Justinian I, this warfare being centered on Georgia and Transcaucasia on one front and on the Upper Mesopotamian frontier on another. Eventually, Lakhmid power was reestablished on the Iraq fringes, backed by the might of their traditional patrons and supporters, the Sasanids. At some unspecified point, al-Mundhir managed to get hold of al-Hdrith b. ‘Amr, who had had to retreat into the interior of northern Arabia after clashing with the Byzantines and Ghassdnids on the Syrian frontiers. Al-Mundhir seized the Kind! leader's camels, killed al-HArith himself, and massacred forty-eight members of the ruling house of Kindah.

**The Royal House: Hassan [II], Shamir al-Janah, and Ya'fur**

According to Tabari, Tubba' assembled his troops at the invitation of Al-Harith, and advanced until he encamped at al-Hirah. He drew near to the Euphrates. Al-Harith b. ‘Amr ordered a canal to be dug for him as far as al-Najaf, and this was done: this is the Canal of al-Hirah. He encamped against there and sent his nephew Shamir Dhu al-Janah against Qubadh. @363 It is said that he fought with Qubadh and routed him, compelling him to flee as far as al-Rayy. He then caught up with Qubadh there and killed him. @364 but this has no basis in historical fact. Perhaps a prince or general of Qubadh is implied.

As'ad Tubba' now sent Shamir Dhu al-Janah to Khurasan and his son Hassan to Sogdia (al-Sughd), telling him, "Whichever of you reaches China first shall become ruler over it." Each one headed a mighty army.

**Ya'fur**

As'ad further sent his nephew Ya'fur against the Romans (Byzantines). Al Tabari quotes a poem which says that Ya'fur came at al-Jabiyah a settlement in the Golan region south of Damascus was a main residence of the Byzantines' allies, the chiefs of the jafnid family of Ghassin, probably their summer encampment, and it was further important in the periods of the Arab conquest of Syria and of the early Umayyads as a military encampment and concentration point for troops. @365
Ya'fur is said to have proceeded with his army to Jerusalem (said to be “Rome Romiyyah”) which submitted to him and then he proceeded to Constantinople (al-Qustantiniyyah) where the Romans perceived what was happening and fell upon them and killing them, with not a single man escaping.

In all these mentions of conquest, it was not in the nature of a strong ruler coming with overwhelming troops setting up a government with defined borders, rather it was in the nature of a “Mafia boss” demanding his share in the business of the area and staking out his territory. The sympathy for rulers of Himyar, the fear of Bedouin raids, the well concealed secrets of caravan trading, induced trading centers along the Silk Road to pay their tribute to their Arab “masters” and encouraged Nabatean traders to settle from Abyssinia to India and China. In this sense, although not recognized by either Byzantium or Persia, the domain of the Tobiads regained its former glory and extended further to India and China.

War between the Exilarch and the Mazdakites

When Kavad's came to power, a new faith which he had brought into existence within the Mazdaean religion came to being. A considerable number of people followed him in that heretical innovation, and his movement became prominent on account of this. Among those who carried out missionary work for him among the masses was a certain man from M.dh.riyyah (?) called Mazdaq, son of Bamdad@381. Among the things he ordained for people, made attractive to them, and urged them to adopt, was holding their possessions and their families in common. The question of whether there were two Mazdakite revolts, one toward the end of Kavad's reign and another one at Khusrav's accession or shortly after it, has been much discussed. Most recently, Crone has suggested that it is simplest to assume that a single revolt broke out on Khusrav's accession in 531 CE, at a time when he was combating the rival succession claims of his elder brother Kdwds and military control over the realm was obviously relaxed. Khusrav may have bought time by offering the Mazdakites some degree of toleration, and he certainly brought the protracted, but by now rather desultory war with Justinian to an end. Once firmly in command of affairs he turned on the Mazdakites, massacred them and gradually restored order in the land.

The Jews, recently coming under immediate Persian domination, underwent years of suffering. From 470-474 CE a series of violent acts occurred, such as the destruction of synagogues, prohibition of the study of the Law, the forcible delivery of children to the Fire Temples, the imprisonment and execution of Amemar b. Mar Yanuka and Meshershiya. The destruction of Sura also took place at this time. The attacks were rewed in when Kawad came to power in @500CE. In 501 Rabina, the last of the Amoraim (quoters) died and the Talmud was closed; succeeding teachers were called Savoraim (explainers).

Huna VI had a daughter who married Mar Hanina (the head of the academy) and they had a son, Mar Zutra II. But when Huna VI died without a son, a rival claimant Pachda was appointed to the Exilarchate. A power struggle ensued. In the end it was agreed that Mar Zutra II would marry the daughter of Pachda. When Pachda had no male heir and it became apparent that Mar Zutra II would be the next Exilarch, Pachda resisted. He was removed four years later by King Balash through the exertions of Mar Hanina. In the interval seems the conflict between the Mazdakites and the Jews took on the nature of an armed conflict.

During this time in Persia, the Mazdakites religion had greatly increased. They persecuted the Jews and Christians, and rioted in various Jewish towns in villages, kidnapping children to convert to their religion. The Jewish Exilarch Huna VI had a daughter who married Mar Hanina (the head of the academy) and a son, Mar Zutra II. But when Huna VI died without a son, a rival claimant Pachda was appointed to the Exilarchate. A power struggle ensued. When Pachda had no male heir, Mar Zutra II became the next Exilarch. In the interval, it seems the conflict between the Mazdakites and the Jews took on the nature of an armed conflict.

Shamir Dhu al-Janah, ~495-517

172 Shab. 11a

173 The immediate cause of the uprising, however, was the assassination of the school principal Isaac, regarding which no accurate information exists. From the fact that Mar Hanina took part in the struggle, it may be deduced that it was of a religious character.
After Tubba' there came Zayd b.'Amr and Shamir Yur'ish b. Yasir Yun'irn b. 'Amr Dhi al-AdMir@ his paternal cousin. It was Shamir Yur'ish who raided China, built [the commercial ties with] Samarqand and laid out as an encampment (bayyara) al-Hirah, 453 and it was he who recited the verses, “I am Shamir Abu Karib al-Yamani; I urged on the horses from Yemen and Syria, In order that I might attack the slaves who had rebelled against us, [when we were] in the lands beyond China.” This of course reflected the quelling of business rivals and securing the economic territory for the Tubba’s, not actual conquest.

Shamir Dhu al-Janah traveled on until he reached Samarqand. Presumably to Transoxania via Khurasan, Hassan having, as it later appears, preceded him to Sogdia and then China. Shamir besieged it (attempted to seek economic exclusivity) but was unable to capture any part of it. When he realized that, he went approached one city guard, and interrogated him about the city and its ruler. The man told him that, regarding its ruler, he was the most stupid of mankind, with no interest except in drinking and eating, but that he had a daughter and it was she who decided the affairs of the populace. For the purposes of this paper we propose that this “ruler” was Huna V the 27th Exilarch.

As for Ibn Ishaq’s account, he has mentioned that the member of the Tubba’ dynasty who went to the Orient was Tubba’ the Second (@al-akhar); namely, Tubba’ Tuban As’ad Abu Karib b. Malki Karib b. Zayd b. ‘Amr Dhi al-Ach’ar, who was the father of Hassan. This genealogy in Ibn Hisham is attested in the inscriptions as reigning ca. 425CE.

**Shamir’s marriage to the daughter of Huna V, 27th Exilarch**

Shamir sent his business contacts to her with a present, explaining his territorial ambitions, “Inform her that I have only come from the land of the Arabs because of what I have heard about her intelligence, and in order [891] that she might marry me and I might acquire through her a boy who will rule over both the Persians and the Arabs. (Because the Exilarch had intermarried with the Persian royal house, they had a reasonable claim to rulership of Persia, as the Exilach Shalum (Salman Farsi) would claim when he indeed succeeded to conquere Persia.)[Tell her also] that I have not come seeking wealth but that I have here with me four thousand chests of gold and silver and that I will hand it over to her and proceed onward to China. If I succeed in gaining the land, she will become my wife; but if I perish, all that wealth will be hers.”

When his message was brought to her, she said, “I have fallen in with his wishes, so let him send what he has mentioned.” Following the story of Arabian nights, or perhaps the origin of it, it is said that he sent to her four thousand chests, with two men inside each chest. When they got inside the city; they sprang out [from the chests] and seized control of the gates. Shamir is then said to have continued towards to China (India), encountering the Turks, reaching his final destination only to find that Hassan had preceeded him by three years. According to what certain people have mentioned, the two of them remained in China until they died, their stay there extending to twenty-one years.

The economic fruits of the labor of Shamir and Hassan were sent back to As’ad Tubba’s. With this wealth, and in consideration of his advancing years, As’ad relocated in Mecca, where he lodged in the ravine of the sacrifices (al-matabikh). As’ad Tubba’ died in Yemen. However, none of the kings of Yemen after him ever sallied forth from Yemen on raids to any other land. His reign lasted for one hundred and twenty-one years. The Minaret system of communication was used to communicate the deaths of Ya’fur. Hassan and their father As’ad.

During this time of commercial activity, the regents of Himyar had grown used to their power. Marthid-ilan Yanuf Aslam, the son of Rabia b. Nasr, attained power after him.

**Marthid-ilan Yanuf Aslam, d.-521**

Marthid-ilan Yanuf Aslam, also called Ma’di Karib, is attested in inscriptions as ruling in 521-2CE @631. We have therefore only a year or so for Lakh’iathah’s inscription and the accession of Dhid Nuwas. One suggestion for resolving this tight chronology was: that the title Ma’di Karib Ya’fur was the the throne-name assumed by the usurping Lakbi’athah, just as his successor Dhu Nuwds was to assume the throne-name of Yasuf As’ar Yath’ar (see n. 488 below). But this suggestion does not seem to have found much favor. At all events, one can only treat the tale of Lakh’iathah’s sodomitical proclivities as a pretext for his murder with caution.

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174 Supplying the “and” from the Cairo text
175 proposed by Altheirn and Stiehl, Die Araber in der Alten Welt, V/ 1, 3 77-7 8
Apparently, upon the death of Shamir, Marthid-ilan Yanuf Aslam claimed to be king and regent of Himyar, being that the sons of As’ad, Yafur, Shamir and Hassan had all died without known issue. But his reign only lasted one or two years when he died and his son Lakhi’athah assumed power.

Lakhi’athah Yanuf Dhu Shanatir, d. 521

The affairs of Himyar fell into disorder at this point, and the people became split up. A great disturbance occurred between the Christian leaning, formerly polytheist, Nasara and the Sadducean leaning Yahud, in spite of the fact that both descended from the Palymarene refugees. A man of Himyar who did not stem from the royal house of Himyar, called Lakhi’athah Yanuf Dhu Shandtir, took power and claimed to be ruler of all Himyar. He declared for the Byzantines and tried to introduce Christianity as the official religion with his supporters from Najran. He assassinated the nobles of Himyar, and treated with scorn the ruling families of the kingdom.

In a poem quoted by Tabari, describing the general chaos, grab for power, and destruction of the Tobiad-Sadducean religious values: “Himyar is massacring its own sons and expelling its own princes and creating humiliation for itself with its own hands. Destroying its own worldly prosperity with light-headed fantasies of its own, but what it destroyed of its religion was even greater.” As noted by Noldeke the wording of the entire poem, with such words in it as dayya’at, ulm, israf, takhsaru, etc., is very reminiscent of Qur’anic phraseology and concepts.

Lakhi’athah Yanuf Dhu Shanatir was allegedly a practitioner of sodomy. In addition to the killing and oppression he inflicted the noble family, when he heard that a youth from the royal family had reached the age of puberty, he sent for him and abused him, so that the youth could never rule after him (i.e., because of the dishonor). Although it has been speculated his actual crime was that he baptized them.

Yosef Asher Dhu Nuwas (King with beautiful Sidelocks) r. 521-525 CE

The actual name of Dhu Nuwas (this being a nickname or cognomen), of the family of Yaz’an, emerges from an inscription dated June-July 523CE. His name is given in the inscription as Yusuf As’ar Yath’ar, with the title “king of all the tribes” a much more modest one than the usual grandiose ones of the Himyarite kings, such as “king of Saba’, Dhu Raydan, Hadramawt, and Yamanat, together with the Arabs of the Tawd and the Tihamat”. This change of title reflects the fact, that while claiming the descent from the rulers of Himyar, Dhu Nuwas’ rule had taken a different direction, one with a greater emphasis on unity than territorial expansion.

The chronology adopted here for Dhu Nuwas, including the actual martyrdoms at Najran and the events that followed, is based on the chronology of Francois de Blois, after a very thorough sifting of the evidence from Byzantine Greek and Syriac sources and from contemporary South Arabian inscriptions. Here we confirm that the martyrdoms took place at the traditional date of 523CE and not in 518CE, as argued by some other historians.
Dhu Nuwas' father had predeceased the Tubba' king Asa’d. When As’ad did pass away, apparently Dhu Nuwas was out of the country. Upon hearing news of his grandfather’s passing, Dhu Nuwas headed back to Arabia to claim the rulership of Himyar, and deal with the Lakhmid regent who had taken advantage of the Tubba’ king’s old age. Dhu Nuwas killed Lakh’athah Yanuf Dhu Shanatir, and forced Dhu Shanatir’s nephew, Ma’di Karib Ya’fur, to flee to Hira between June 521 CE and June 522 CE. Concerning the length of Dhu Nuwas’s reign, tradition gives him one of thirty-eight years, a vastly exaggerated number, although that may indeed have been his age when he died.

Ibn Hisham gives Dhu Nuwas the name Zur’ah and says he became ruler of Himyar at a very young age: “At last it was the turn of the last of the youths from that line of kings [to be abused by Dhu Shanatir], Zur’ah Dhu Nuwas (b. Shamir, nephew of) Tuban As’ad (b. Hassan b.) Abu Karib b. Malki Karib b. Zayd b. ‘Amr Dhu al-Achar, the brother of Hassan. Zur’ah had been only a small boy when his brother was killed, and had grown up into a fine and handsome youth, with an attractive appearance and intelligence.”

In 517 CE, the enthronement of a Jewish king led Christians to seize a major town of the Himyarite kingdom. In spite of his youth, after mustering an army, Dhu-Nuwas inflicted a costly defeat on the rebels, taking many prisoners, and destroying their church.

Learning of the sad plight of Jewish communities in the Byzantine Empire, he resolved to force the Christian emperor to stop persecuting his Jewish subjects and to treat them justly. To accomplish this objective, Dhu-Nuwas ordered several Christian merchants who had come to his capital on business to be seized and executed.

Sidelocks

Unlike any of the Tubba’ rulers before him, Yosef Asher Dhu Nuwas is believed to have had a connection to rabbinical Judaism. He is known in Arabic literature by the descriptive nickname Dhu-Nuwas (Lord Sidelocks) because of the long curly locks he wore in accordance with Rabbinical Judaism, which forbids removal of hair from the corners of the head. This practice was not kept among the Sadducees, hence it made such a strong impression on the population that it became cognomen. Dhu-Nuwas also used an additional Hebrew name - Yussuf Asar (Joseph Asher). His mother being the daughter of the Exilarch Huna V, gave him great reason to embrace Rabbinical as opposed to Sadducean Judaism. It is also believed that he was formally connected to Patriarch in Tiberias before he acceded to the throne.

Ibn Hisham says that he was the last of the kings of Himyar. This is because all the other descendants, Dhu Yazan, came from Abu Kariba’s younger son Sharhib Il Ya’fire (‘Amr Tubba) who had adopted Christianity. Dhu Nuwas, on the other had had embraced rabinnic Judaism (tahawwada), and the Himyarites followed him in this path.

Christian sources, notably the Syrian Book of the Himyarites and The History of the Nestorians, give his name as Masrug, which is a corruption of the word mushreqoon, which means polytheist or easterner. It seems that Dhu Nuwas was all these things, a Sadducean King with Rabbinic Sidelocks, who tolerated the polytheists, Kahins (Cohens, soothsayers), and astrologers. He abandoned the bombastic and territorial titles of his predecessors, and took the title “Prince of all the Tribes [of Israel]”. He was prince and ruler of the syncretic kingdom of Yuha-illiya, which means “the Land of the LORD”, which later Islamic historians would call Jahiliyya “the land of ignorance”.

Brief Jewish Autonomy in Persia under Mar Zutra II, 30th Exilarch

With the rise of persecute from the Mazdakites, Mar Zutra II (r. 508-520 CE), was unable to obtain the right to autonomous self defense from King Kovad (r488-531 CE). He raised an army including an elite group of four hundred soldiers for the defense of Jewish community. Being denied autonomy, he declared independence. He succeeded in maintaining an independent state for seven years (519-520 CE), collecting revenue even from the non-Jewish population of Iraq. The spirit of revolt spread, and in 518 CE, the entire community of Samaritans revolted against Byzantine Emperor Justin I.

182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
Active measures by the king Kovad put an end, at length, to the Exilarch's state: Mar Zutra, only twenty-two years of age, and Mar Hanina were crucified (520 CE) on the bridge of Machoza,[2] his capital; and his infant son, Mar Zutra III., was carried to Israel, where founded a new line of Nasiim, Patriarchs. The charge against the Exilarch: misuse of tax money for his person use. The "Temple tax" collected by the Exilarch was taken over by Kovad, and applied to both Jews and Christians between the ages of 20 and 50, no doubt after Roman example. The Exilarch's army was absorbed into Kovad's army, and were allowed to desist from active operations on the Passover.\(^{184}\)

Large-scale changes in the pattern of Jewish settlement took place. Many decided to leave Babylonia altogether; and since the Roman Empire was not a safe alternative, the direction of the emigration was at first southward to Arabia and eastward to India and even China.

**Immigration of Mar Zutra III, Tiberias and Dhu Nuwas**

Mar Zutra III’s execution resulted in the immigration of his young son Mar Zutra III from Babylonia to Tiberias. Mar Zutra III's appointment as head of the Tiberias Academy put him in the seat of authority for Jews of other countries. His appointment was closely related to the activity of the Jewish sages in Himyar, and Dhu-Nuwas's embrace of Rabbinic Judaism. Indeed, these historians connect the Himyar king's ambitions with the arrival of Mar Zutra III, pointing to a political alliance devised by Mar Zutra, and the Jewish population of Palestine, in conjunction with the kingdom of Himyar, with its numerous Jews and proselytes led by a Jewish king, to restore a Jewish state in Land of Israel.

One historian reports that "Jewish priests (Cohanim) from Tiberias ... formed part the suite of King Dhu Nuwas and served as his envoys in negotiations with Christian cities."\(^{186}\)

Hamza al-Isfahani states that "Dhu Nuwas halted at Yathrib when once he was passing through, and was favorably impressed by the Jewish faith [over the Nasara faith]. Hence he adopted it for himself, and the Jews of Yathrib incited him to attack Najran and to inflict trials and tribulations on the Christians there."\(^{187}\) Hamza states that one half of the inhabitants of which were then Jews. Hamza explains Dhu Nuwas' purpose in visiting Medina was in order to relieve the Jews from the oppressive attacks of the Aws and Khazraj (Ansar). It is reasonable to assume that like Abu Kariba before him, Dhu Nuwas wished to unify Arabia, and reaffirm the supreme religious role of the Quraish. This agrees with the history of Medina, and is in excellent keeping with the sectarian bias which led Dhu Nuwas to the attack of Najran.

**First Abyssian Invasion, 518CE**

News of this deed soon reached Byzantium, a challenge of this sort could not go unpunished, but the Byzantine emperor, Justin I, was embroiled in a war with the Persians and a Samaritan revolt in Palestine. He decided, therefore, to write to the Christian king of Ethiopia, who was a good deal closer to Himyar, to act as Christendom's avenger. The Ethiopian king was more than anxious to oblige the emperor's request.

In 518, the Ethiopian troops landed in Himyar, Dhu-Nuwas's forces soundly defeated the invaders. Flushed with success, he now saw himself as the champion of Arabian Jewry.

He embarked in 523CE on his campaign to eliminate the Abyssinians and the indigenous Christians of southwestern Arabia. The eight hundred-strong Abyssinian community in Zafar was put to death and the Abyssinian-held fortresses in Shamir taken. Tihama was conquered, and Najran compelled to give hostages and to endure a blockade. Then in November of that same year 523, Najran was attacked and occupied, its Christian population massacred, the churches burned down, and Greek and Abyssinian traders there killed. It was this attack upon Najran for which Dhu Nuwas was remembered, especially in the annals of Christian martyrologies, and gave justification for pre-emptive strikes against Jewish communities until well after the crusades.

**History of Najran**

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\(^{184}\) Justi, l.c. p. 370
\(^{185}\) Bar-Hebreus, l.c. p. 85
\(^{186}\) S. Safrai, "From the Abolition of the Patriarchate to the Arab Conquest (425-W)," in History of the Jewish People, Ben-Sasson, ed., pp. 358-359
\(^{187}\) Hamza al-Isfahani, in Ta’rikh, p.113
Three hundred years earlier, when the Shamir Yuhar'eesh II Tubba' conquered the Sabeans in 280 CE, Najran came under the control of the Himyartites. Najran was a community with ethnic ties to Abyss, and may have been an Abyssinians colony. Some time during the 3rd century the people of Najran sided with the Abyssinians who sent a governor. The Himyar ruler Yarim Yuharhib (Ilsharah Yahdib) crushed this rebellion, although his brother entertained a delegation from Ezana, king of Abyssia. The Lakhmid king Imru Al-Qays attacked Najran in 328CE. Under the influence from Axum, the Christians in Najran thrived and started an alliance with Aksum again at the beginning of the 6th century, which Dhu Nuwas wished to oppose.

Ibn Ishaq reported, “There were in Najran remnants of people who adhered to the religion of 'Isa (Jesus), followers of the Gospel, virtuous and upright.” Here “remnants” means Jews who had adopted Christianity. Najran included a portion of people who were descendants of the Palmyrian refugees. The head of their community was 'Abdallah b. al-Thamir. Byzantine Christianity was introduced in Najran under the influence of a man called Faymiyan, “from the remnants of the adherents of that faith had come among them [from Palmyra]; he summoned them to his religion and they adopted it.” Hishim reported that Faymiyin was Zur'ah Dhu Nuwas, before he converted to Judaism. But N61deke, trans. 177 n. 3, thought that Faymiyin was most likely a shortened form of Euphemin, so that this Greek name would point to a man coming from the Byzantine lands. But since his time there has been further investigation of the origins of this story of the introduction of Christianity to Najrdn, in particular, by A. Moberg. Moberg traced the story of the Arabic sources, with its theme of the wandering ascetic from Syria, to Persian Christian romantic legends of Yazdin-Pethion, involving the martyrdom in Persia in 447 of Pethion, whose name yielded the Arabic form Faymiy-dn. See the discussion of his views in J. Ryckmans, op. cit., 441-42.

Ma'di Karib Ya'fur was placed on the throne of Himyar by the Abyssinians in late 518 or early 519, as part of a direct extension of Abyssinian influence into Yemen, involving even a permanent mission in Zafar, where -judging from their names- Abyssinian representatives built a palace for themselves during the reign of Ma'di Karib Ya'fur's predecessor Marthad ilin Yani

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Najran

@ Dhu-Nuwas soon recovered from this humiliating defeat

@ Revolt of Najran

However, Dhu-Nuwas soon recovered from this humiliating defeat and rebuilt his forces. In the meantime, a revolt in the northern Himyartite center of Najran (c. 523), which was inhabited chiefly by Christians, led to many Jewish casualties. The town's governor, a Christian named Harith (Aretas) ibn-Kaleb, although a feudatory of Dhu-Nuwas, resented his status as a vassal to the Jewish king (he may also have not performed his feudal duties in the war against Aidug). In any case, the governor's feelings were paralleled by the town's Christian population, which also refused to obey the king's orders.

There came to him a Jew called Daws from the people of Najran, who told him that the people of Najran had unjustly slain his two sons:510 he now sought Dhu Nuwas's help against them. The people of Najrdn were Christians. Dhu Nuwas was a fervent partisan of the Jewish faith, so he led an expedition against the people of Najrdn, killing large numbers of them. A man from the people of Najrdn fled and in due course came to the King of Abyssinia. He informed the king of what the Yemenis had committed and gave him a copy of the Gospels partly burned by the fire. The King of Abyssinia said to him: "I have plenty of men, but no ships [to transport them]; but I will write to Qay-ar (i.e., the Byzantine Emperor) asking him to send me ships for transporting the soldiers." Hence he wrote to Qay-ar about this matter, enclosing the [partly] burned copy of the Gospels, and Qay-ar dispatched a large number of ships.511

When the Najran rebels spurned Dhu-Nuwas's peace terms, he besieged the town and reduced its inhabitants to such straits as they were forced to capitulate. Harith and several hundred of the rebels were executed. A heavy tribute was also levied on the remaining Christians in the kingdom in reprisal for the persecution of Jews in Christian countries.

Out of them there escaped only one man, called Daws Dhu Tha'laban (crucified ones), on one of his horses, who traveled through the sands until he threw his pursuers off.507 [Dhu Tha'laban was the name of one of the eight great noble families of Himyar, influential either during the period of independent Himyartite royal power or during that of Abyssinian and then Persian domination over southwestern Arabia that followed the extinction of the Himyartite ruling dynasty, Tha'lab being apparently a tribal name. Epigraphic evidence does support the fact that the Dhu Tha'laban came from the Najran area. See N61deke, trans. 186 n. i; EI2, s.v.
He (i.e., Ibn Ishdq) related: Dh-a Nuwds marched against them with his forces of the Himyarites and the tribes of Yemen. He gathered the people of Najrdn together, and summoned them to the Jewish faith, offering them the choice between that and being killed. They chose being killed, so he dug out for them the trench (al-ukhdid). He burnt some of them with fire, slew some violently with the sword, and mutilated them savagely until he had 506 killed nearly twenty thousand of them.

The news of the suppression of the Christians of Najran spread like wildfire and became more exaggerated with each telling. The number of victims was inflated in Christian sources and influenced Arabic accounts. The first number for those executed was 200; then 400; 1,706; 4,252; 10,200; 12, 100; 20,000; and finally, 70,000. In another version even more horrendous - and completely unsubstantiated in fact - was a story that Dhu-Nuwas had offered peace terms to the defeated rebels and then invited them to a great banquet to celebrate the occasion. The Christian guests had just settled in to feast when the ground gave way, and they collapsed into a huge trench, which had been dug beforehand and filled with soaked flammables by the king's men. Torches were then thrown into the trench, and the victims perished in smoke and flames.

Incredibly, echoes of these supposed atrocities at Najran found their way into the literature of Eastern Christianity; some scholars believe that there is even an allusion to a "burning" of Christians in the Quran. (Sura 85:4-5) The distinguished historian Salo W. Baron has pointed out that these atrocity stories should not be taken literally, and that in reality they served as an excuse for Christian intervention in Himyar. Preparations for such an enterprise had been observed in the Ethiopian capital at the beginning of the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (the son and successor of Justin I). The horror tales may also have helped to cover up treaty-breaking by the Ethiopians, still smarting from their earlier defeat, as well as to serve the Christians on a par with other martyrologies. Baron also notes that much of the martyrlogy of the Eastern churches dealing with the Najran affair are written in a traditional and almost stereotypic vein, as when a 9-year-old Christian girl is reputed to have spat in Dhu-Nuwas's face, exclaiming, "May thy mouth be closed, Jew—killer of the Lord."

Concerning Dhu Nuwas and his troops, there narrated to us Ibn Humayd-Salamah b. al-Fadl-Muhammad b. Isha-q, who said: God sent down to His Messenger the words "Slain were the Men of the Trench, with the fire abounding in fuel," to His words "... and God, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy." [See n. 489 above.] It is said that 'Abdalldh b. al-Thdmir, their leader and imdm, was among those whom Dhu Nuwas killed, but it is also said that 'Abdallah b. al-Thdmir was killed before that event, killed by a previous ruler. He was the founder of that faith [at Najrdn], and Dhi Nuwds only slew adherents of 'Abdalldh's religion who came after him.

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A Christian campaign against the Jewish king was initially instigated by a Syrian bishop named Simeon. He traveled through northern Arabia trying to stir up the pagan tribes against Dhu-Nuwas. The pagan tribesmen wanted no part of a campaign against the Himyarites. Simeon then turned to the Byzantines to wage war against Dhu-Nuwas, and urged the emperor to imprison the teachers of Judaism in Tiberias and compel them to appeal to Dhu-Nuwas to stop his persecution of Christians. The Byzantine emperor, although anxious to eliminate the Jewish king, was still engaged in a conflict with Persia and preferred that his Ethiopian ally undertake the task.

[Refugees from Najrdn and the other places in Yemen and Hadramawt where there had been persecutions (the Syriac Book of the Himyarites mentions that these occurred in five towns, Zafdr, Najrdn, "the town of Hadramawt," Marib, and [Ha]jjarEn, see Shahid, "Byzantium in South Arabia," 38) probably managed to escape to Abyssinia and possibly to Byzantine territory at the head of the Red Sea. At all events, the news speedily reached the Christian kingdoms of Axum and Byzantium, and the sufferings of the Najrdnitnes entered their martyrologies (the Ethiopian Church adopted into its calendar the commemoration of the sama'tata Negrdn, "witnesses of Najrdn," on 26 November; see H. M. Hyatt, The Church of Abyssinia, 32-.

The martyrdoms at Najr5n involved essentially, as noted in n. 487 above, the local Monophysites, and the Church of Abyssinia was also Monophysite. Byzantium was Melkite, and persecuted Monophysites within the empire's boundaries, but southwestern Arabia was sufficiently far from the imperial heartlands for theological niceties not to count in the face of a Judaizing ruler and his persecution of Christians. Justin halted his own persecution of the Monophysites within his dominions, and utilized the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria as his intermediary with the Abyssinian Najds! or Negus in Axum. Eventually, a fleet of some sixty merchant ships commanded by the Byzantine authorities set out from Adulis, the port of Axum on what is now the Eritrean coast under the leadership of the king in Axum, K516, who had the regnal name of t11a Asb6ha (rendered by Procopius, The Persian War, I.xx. 1 - 13, as Helh~sthaios for Heilesbaios; in a South Arabian inscription Tsbh). This was probably in the spring or summer of 5.2 5. Uh-3b's activities as the restorer of Christianity in South a la were o earn ime renown wit n t e . ter isposing 0 f, Nuwiis, t11a Asb6ha seems to have erected a victory inscription in Ge'ez, one which is unfortunately only fragmentarily legible, at Marib. He very probably engaged in a campaign of revenge, slaughtering great numbers of Himyarites and destroying their idols and temples. He certainly embarked upon an extensive program of church building in southwestern Arabia, details of which are given in the Greek-possibly with a Syriac Vorlage-hagiographical Vita Sancti Gregentii, whose extensive information here has been made the subject of a close study by Ifran Shahid. See N61deke, trans. 18 8 n. i; Smith, "Events in South Arabia in the 6th Century A.D.," 454-55; Murad Kamil, "An Ethiopian Inscription found at Mareb," 56-57; Altheim. and Stiehl, Die Araber in der Alten Welt, V/1, 385-91; eidem, Christentum am Roten Meer, 1, 445-57; Shahid, "Byzantium in South Arabia," 23-94.]

When Daws Dhu Tha'laban threw off his pursuers in this manner, he pressed onward until he came to Qay~ar, the ruler of al-Rfim.5 14 [Here the narrative returns to the account of Ibn al-Kalbi broken off by this parenthesis from Ibn Isha-q.] He requested his help against Dhfi Nuwds and his troops, and told him what his people had suffered from them. QayW replied, however, "Your land is distant from our own and too remote for us to be able to reach it with our own armies, but I will write on your behalf to the king of Abyssinia, for he is a Christian also. He is nearer than us to your land, hence can give you aid, protect you, and exact vengeance on your behalf from those who oppressed you and who violently shed the blood of you and your coreligionists."

@Second Abyssian invasion

The Ethiopian Negus (ruler), Kaled Ella Asbaha, required little persuasion to go to war, for the Jewish kingdom had long been a thorn in his side. Asbaha, however, was shrewd as well as being a fanatic Christian. He was aware that the importance of the Arabian Peninsula had increased along with Byzantine-Persian tensions. During periods of peace, the Byzantines tended to use caravan routes through Persia to trade with India. With embittered relations between the powers, the Byzantines sought trade routes that bypassed Persia. The only viable alternative was the sea route contested by the two Red Sea rivals, Ethiopia and Himyar. Asbaha hoped to monopolize trade route by wresting the strategic Straits of Bab-al-Mandeb from Himyarite control.

@Dhu Nuwas attempts to prepare to repulse invasion

While his enemies were preparing to invade his territory, Dhu-Nuwas did not remain idle. He endeavored unsuccessfully to secure allies from among the pagan Arab tribes, and from the Sassanid king of Persia. By the year 525 CE, the Ethiopians and the Byzantines were ready to strike. The Negus of Ethiopia had put together and equipped a powerful army, and the Byzantine emperor had provided his ally with the necessary
fleet to transport the troops to Himyar. Dhu-Nuwas took measures to prevent the landing of the Ethiopian army by barring the most likely invasion points with chains. His efforts, however, proved fruitless, and the Ethiopian troops were able to disembark near Tafara on the Red Sea coast.

@Complicity of Christian Arabs

Asbaha had taken steps to inform the Christian Arabs of the region of his plans, and they attacked the Himyarites as Dhu-Nuwas deployed his army to meet the invasion force of the Ethiopians.

@Battle between Abyssians and Himyarites

In the ensuing battle, the Jewish king fell back on his faithful, courageous cavalry to repel the invaders, but they were overwhelmed by the larger army of the enemy. The capital of Dhu-Nuwas fell into the hands of the enemy, along with his wife, and all the treasures of his kingdom. Realizing that all was lost, and unwilling to be taken alive, the impetuous king charged his steed over a great rock jutting over the sea. The waves swept his body out to sea. So died the last Jewish king of Himyar. Dhu Nuwas was defeated by the Abyssinians soon after Pentecost 525CE, killing himself shortly afterward,(see al-Tabari).

TBD
This manuscript is still in preparation, comments are invited. The following points will be addressed by the manuscript.

1. Linguistic derivation of Saracen

2. The Asd took control of the Ka'aba and displaced the negro populace who had served the Temple for the past three centuries (the Jurham).

3. The Jurham fled to Habash (Abyssia) and complained to the king there. This angered the Abyssian rulers and from 350 CE the sovereign of Axum (between the Red Sea and the Nile) joined to his other titles that of King of the Himyarites.

4. The Oniad (Tzaddokite) priesthood remained at the Ka'aba (the ancestors of the Quraish), but their sympathies during times of trouble would remain with the Abyssinian rulers. (This is perhaps why the Prophet, when his followers were suffering their greatest persecution, sent them to Abyssinia).

5. The Talmud (Menuchos) discusses the Temple of Onias in Egypt. Immediately afterward it discusses Jewish priests who serve an alter in the trans-Jordan. This other altar, they claim was idolatrous. I propose they were referring the Ka'aba when the idol Hubal was still placed there.

6. The Haddith referring to "Jews declaring their times of prayer by fire" refers to declaring the new month

7. Abu Karib's grandson As'ad Tubba, had control of the "silk road" to Yemen, set up a string of synagogues between Mecca and China (India?) to spread his religion and communicate with his representatives in the far east.

8. After the failed attempt at creating a independent Jewish State in Babylon by Mar Zutra in 470CE, the Persian King began to wipe out the exilarch's family.

9. One daughter escaped to Samarqand, where she met Yasir Tubba (grandson of the still living king), on one of his business trips to the east.

10. Dhu Nuwas was the son of this daughter and Yasir Tubba.

11. When Hassan Yuha'min Tubba passed away, Dhu Nuwas returned to Yemen to claim the throne

12. Dhu Nuwas refers to "beautiful sidelocks" in the Persian style, a custom unheard of in Arabia, and implies his adoption of Persian Judaism

13. Dhu Nuwas' family symbol of a dove was derived from the Tobiad custom of raising doves

14. While the approach of the Jewish of Ezra, and later the Babylonian academies was to be restrictive in the usage of the term "Jew" to those who followed their traditions. The approach of the Exilarch was to be inclusive, declaring Samaritans, Helenists, Sadducees, and even Jews who had adopted some proto-Christian ideas (Nasaara) - to be his subjects.

15. Dhu Nuwas adopted title of "King of all the Tribes", refers to all the tribes of Israel.

16. Dhu Nuwas' attack on Najran was to create a "Jewish State" and was in direct imitation of the attempt by Mar Zutra, and led to a similar attempts in the years before and after by the Samaritans.

17. Dhu Nuwas brought out a replica of the Ark of the Covenant to rally troops against Abyssinia. Abyssinia won the war and captured the Ark which is still on display in Axum adorned even today with the Tobiad/Himyar dove

18. Dhu Nuwas returned to Yemen to claim the throne and eject the "evil" (Christian) Chief Luhay'ath Yanuf who had assumed power during the later years of the kings rule.

19. The Nasaara were Jews who had adopted some Christian teachings. As such both Jews and Nasaara continued to keep Ashura (Yom Kippur) albeit with different calendars.
20. The Nasaara and the Aliahudi were both "People of the Book" because they were both Jews (i.e. descended of those who had practiced Judaism during the second temple period).

21. According to rabbinic sources, the first links to Arabia go back to the time of Joshua, when a contingent of Israelites were sent to battle the treacherous Amalekites and ended up settling in Yathrib (Medina). Subsequently, a group of King Saul's warriors, repudiated for their disobedience in sparing the young son of the Amalekite king, settled in northern Arabia in the vicinity of Yathrib. A more formal Israelite colony is said to have settled in the same region during the reign of King David. Similarly, the legendary encounter between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon attests to the antiquity of the stories relating to Israelite-Arabian contacts. Indeed, the queen's visit to Jerusalem is supposed to have culminated in the conversion to Judaism of many of her Sabean subjects. In addition, it is believed that under King Solomon, seafaring Israelites who navigated the Red Sea on their way to the "land of gold" (Ophir) established trading stations along the coast, and in the more important towns of southern Arabia. In time, these trading stations became colonies.

22. During the prophet Jeremiah's time (6th century BCE), a large migration of Jews is said to have gone to southern Arabia, and tradition has it that when, years later, the Hebrew priest and scribe Ezra (5th century BCE) commanded the descendants to return to Jerusalem, they refused; whereupon, Ezra pronounced an everlasting ban upon them. As a result of this legend, which is devoid of historicity, no Jew of Yemen gives the name of Ezra to a child.

23. The destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (586 BCE) led many Judeans, it is believed, to seek safety in the Arabian Peninsula. The Jews of San'a in Yemen have a legend that their forefathers settled there 42 years before the destruction of the First Temple. A far more extensive migration of Jews to Arabia, and one that takes us out of the realm of legend and into history, followed the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) by the Roman legions of Titus.

24. After the Romans had laid waste to Jerusalem, a number of Jews managed to escape the city and fled in part to Egypt and northern Arabia. That Jews were present during this period in northern Arabia is proved by the existence of tombstones on ancient sites halfway between Medina and Eretz Israel. These grave markers date to years before and after the destruction of the Second Temple. From these fugitives from Roman persecution sprang three important tribes: the Banu Karnuka; the Banu Nadir; and the Banu Kuraisa. These tribes had their center in Yathrib. To the north of Yathrib was situated the oasis and district of Khaibar, which was inhabited by a large Jewish colony.

25. Legend has it that the Jews of Khaibar were descendants of the Biblical Rechabites, who, according to the command of their progenitor, the redoubtable Jonadab, abstained from drinking wine and, opposed to the materialism of city life, dwelt only in tents. Their asceticism was supposedly commended by the prophet Jeremiah. Barely a day's journey from Khaibar, many smaller Jewish communities stretched in a long line by the side of a fruitful wadi—the so-called Valley of Villages. To protect themselves against marauding Bedouins, the Jews built a line of fortresses (castles) on sites overlooking their communities. Although the region they inhabited was not so culturally felicitous as the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, the Jews nevertheless flourished. Quite a few led a nomadic life; others occupied themselves with agriculture (date-growing), cattle breeding, caravan commerce, arms traffic, and the crafts.

26. The Jews became especially numerous and powerful in the southern part of Arabia (notably in Yemen), a rich and fertile land of incense and spices and a way station on the routes to Africa, India, and the Orient. This was the Arabia Felix ("happy land") of the classical geographers, a region, its inhabitants boasted, "the very dust of which was gold, and whose men were the healthiest, and whose women gave birth without pain." Unlike their brethren in the Hejaz, the Jews of Arabia Felix lived without racial or political cohesion, scattered among the Arabs. Many families wandered about as nomads or were engaged in growing spices. Others had settled as merchants in the ports of the area, at the time centers of world trade, from which goods from India and Persia were Trans-shipped to Egypt and Byzantium.

27. The Jews of southern Arabia differed from the native tribes in one respect only - their religion. They clung unservingly to it, observing the dietary laws, honoring the Sabbath, and celebrating the holidays of their people. They communicated with the Jews of Palestine and, even after the end of the Patriarchate in 429 CE, willingly subordinated themselves to the sages in Tiberias, whence they received, as well as from the Babylonian academies, religious instruction in interpretations of the Bible.
28. Although living among a pagan population, the Jews of Yemen enjoyed great prestige among their Arab neighbors. A somewhat similar situation existed in the Hejaz where Arab tales have preserved the memory of many Jewish heroes and poets. The common Arab phrase, "Faithful as Samuel," for example, is a reference to a Jew, Samuel ibn Adiya, who won proverbial renown for his honesty, high principles, and courage. Some of the principal tribes of the Arabian Peninsula proudly traced to statements in the Bible their origins and kinship to the Jews. The northern tribes of the Hejaz regarded Ishmael, son of Abraham and half-brother to Isaac, as their ancestor; the southern tribes of the peninsula considered themselves the descendants of Joktan, younger son of Eber, and a great grandson of Shem. (Gen. 10:26-29, and Chron. 1:19,20) Living in such congenial surroundings, the Jews enjoyed complete freedom and, being subjected to no restraints, were thus able to defend their religious opinions without fear and to communicate them with impunity to their pagan neighbors. Under these circumstances, it was scarcely surprising that many sheikhs developed an interest in Judaism and became converts. When a sheikh became a Jew, his whole clan usually followed him.

29. Especially remarkable in the history of Arab-Jewish relations is the story of the conversion to Judaism of several kings of Himyar. The Himyarites, a powerful tribe, gradually expanded their territory by defeating the inhabitants of neighboring entities (Sabea, Raidan, Hadramut, and Yamnat) to form a viable independent kingdom approximating in its boundaries to present-day Yemen. At the height of its power, the Himyarite kingdom dominated the entire Arabian Peninsula.

In 1962, a Hebrew inscription found in Caesarea, dating to the late 3rd or early 4th century, mentions Nazareth as one of the places in which the priestly (kohanim) family of Hapizzez was residing after Bar Kokhba's revolt (132-135 AD).[35] From the three fragments that have been found, it is possible to show that the inscription was a complete list of the twenty-four priestly courses (cf. 1 Chronicles 24:7-19; Nehemiah 11:12), with each course (or family) assigned its proper order and the name of each town or village in Galilee where it settled. An interesting aspect of this inscription is that the name for Nazareth is not spelled with the "z" sound (as one would expect from the Greek gospels) but with the Hebrew tsade (thus "Nasareth" or "Natsareth").[36] Eleazar Kalir (a Hebrew Galilean poet variously dated from the sixth to tenth century A.D.) also mentions a locality clearly in the Nazareth region bearing the name Nazareth (נצרת) (in this case vocalized "Nitzrat"), which was home to the descendants of the 18th Kohen clan or 'priestly course', Happitzetz חפץ, for at least several centuries following the Bar Kochva revolt.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazareth#Etymology
List of High Priest during pre-Hasmonean Temple period

Seraiah (Sareas) (2Ki 25:18), son, last H-P in 1st Temple, exec 587/586BC, issue: Jozadak, Jachin, father of Joarib, father of Idaiah, followed by five generations, names unknown, to [H]Asmoneaus, ancestor of the Hasmoneans, a.k.a. the Maccabees and Eniachin, ancestor of several high-priests, among whom were Alcimus, 47th H-P, father of Theophilus, father of Matthias I, 61st H-P

Yehozadak, carried captive to Babylonia, officiated in the "first" synagogue, father of Jeshua II, 32nd H-P (below)

Yehoshua II (Hag 1:1), son of Yehozadak (above), who returned from the "Babylonian Captivity" with Zerubavel, the royal heir; was 1st High-Priest of the "Second Temple", 538/7-c500BC

Joiakim, 33rd H-P (Neh 12:10)

Eliashiv (470-433 BCE or 445-430BC) (Neh 13:4)

Yehohanan (432-372BCE) during reign of Artaxerxes II Mnemon, Persian Shah 404-359/358BC

Yaddua (371-320 BCE) Jaddua (Jaddus) [Ant. XI,7, # 2], who met with Alexander "The Great" of Greece in 332BC (Neh 12:11) also called Shimon HaTzadik? Talmud


Simon I (280-240 BCE), son of Onias I, and grandson of Jaddua, also called Shimon HaTzadik? to in Ecclus. 50:1-21

Elazar, brother of Simon I, contemporary of Ptolemy II Philadelphus 283-246 BCE

Onias II, Tax rights given to Ptolemy V Epiphanes on wedding of with Antiochus III the Great's 222–187 BC daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V Epiphanes 204–181 BCE (wedding at 204BCE?) Uncle of Joseph Tobiah. [Hughes: d 226BC, contemporary of Ptolemy Euergetes 246-222 BCE.]

Simon II (219-199 BCE), son of Onias II, also called Shimon HaTzadik? Simon II, (d198BC) (Ecclus. 50:1-21)

Onias III, (185-175BCE) deposed 175BC, murdered 171BC, contemporary of King Seleucus IV Philopator of Syria and Ptolemy VI Philometor (180 to 145 BCE) of Egypt

Onias IV. deprived by Lysias, went to Egypt 159BC, built a temple at Heliopolis in return for “help in wars”, in Egypt, in reign of King Ptolemy VI Philometor

Ananias, son of Onias IV, in exile in Egypt, meantime a secondary-line, the Hasmoneans, filled the vacant office of the high-priest

Ananelus, son of Ananias, [Hananeel "The Egyptian"], son, returned to Jerusalem, Israel, upon the overthrow of the Maccabee high-priests 37BC issue: (a) Boethus, 56th H-P (b) Camydus (c) [name] (dau)

Jason (175-172 BCE). brother to Onias III, was a High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem. (Tomb has a pyramid on top) asked Menelaus to deliver money to Antiochus, also called Simon the Benjaminite. [took an Hellenized name; original name was Joshua or Jesus], induced King Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria (175-163BCE) to depose Onais III and make him H-P; and, after holding office for three years, was himself supplanted by

Menelaus (171-161 BCE), the brother of Simon the Benjaminite (II Macc. iv. 23). styled self Onias IV, 172-165, executed 162BC. Lysimachus, co-priest.

Alcimus was a High Priest of Israel for three years, (162-159 BC or 162-153BCE), put in office by the Syrian King Demetrius 161-159BC
Interim, 7 years

Jonathan I, H-P 153-142, bro of Judas Maccabee

Simon III, H-P 142-135, bro

Hyrcanus I [John], 135-105, usurped the throne 129BC & became King-Priest

Aristobulus I, 105-104/3BC

Alexander Alexander Yannai, 104/3-76BC
The Rulers of Sheba and Himyar

The list presented here for the Saba'ian rulers, is derived and processed from their inscriptions. Beginning of their kingdom is unknown, but may be c. 900 B.C. Yusif Asar, the last of the kings of Saba' is known as "Zinavas" in the local folklore of Arabia & in the Islamic literature. You can use the unabridged book of Dr. Javad Ali about the history of Arab nations before Islam. This book is translated to Persian & I have benefited from it. The main work is in Arabic itself.

Mukribs of Saba'

1) Yatha' Amar Bayin I
2) Yada' Il Bayin I
3) Samah Ali Yanuf I
4) Yatha' Amar Watar I
5) Yakrib Malek Zarih
6) Yakrib Malek Watar I
7) Samah Ali Yanuf II
8) Yada' Il Bayin II
9) Yatha' Amar Watar II
10) Yada' Ab I
11) Yada' Il Bayin III
12) Yakrib Malek Watar II
13) Yatha' Amar Bayin II
14) Karab II Watar I
15) Yada' Ab II
16) Akh Karab
17) Samah Ali Watar
18) Yatha' Amar Watar II
19) Yada' Il Zarih son of 17
20) Samah Ali Yanuf III son of 18
21) Yatha' Amar Watar III son of 18
22) Yada' Il Bayin IV son of 20
23) Zamir Ali Zarih I son of 21
24) Yatha' Amar Watar IV son of Samah Ali Yanuf son of 20
25) Karab Il Bayin I son of 24
26) Samah Ali Yanuf IV son of 24
27) Zamir Ali Watar son of 26?
28) Samah Ali Yanuf V son of 27
29) Yatha' Amar Bayin III son of 28
30) Yakrib Malek Watar I
31) Zamir Ali Yanuf son of 30
32) Karab Il Watar II son of 31
33) Samah Ali Zarih son of 32
34) Karab Il Watar III son of 33
35) Il Sharih I son of 34
36) Yatha' Amar Watar III son of 35
37) Yakrib Malek Watar IV son of 36
38) Yatha' Amar Bayin IV son of 37
39) Karab II Watar IV son of 38
40) Yada' Il Bayin VI son of 39
41) Samah Ali Yanuf VI son of 39?
42) Yatha' Amar Watar V son of 39?
43) II Sharih II son of 41
44) Zamir Aly Bayin I son of 41
45) Yada' Il Watar II son of 44
46) Zamir Ali Bayin II son of 45
47) Samah Ali Yanuf VII son of 46
48) Karab II Watar V son of 47
49) Karab Watar Watar son of Ham Athat
50) Karab Malek Watar VI son of 49
51) Wahab Shamsam son of Halik Amar
52) Wahab Il Yahiz I son of Saraw
53) Anmar Yuha'man I son of 52
54) Zamir Ali Zarih II son of 53
55) Nessa Karab Yuha'man son of 54
56) Wahab Il Yahiz II
57) Zamir Ali Bayin III – beginning of Hemyarite calendar (109 B.C.)
58) Anmar Yuha'man II son of 56
59) Yasir Yuha'nem I
60) Shamir Yuha'resh I son of 59 – contemporary of Gedrut & Biget kings of Ethiopia
61) Yarim Aymin son of Awsalat Rafshan
62) Karab II Watar Yuha'nem I son of 56
63) Alhan Naftan son of 61
64) Famar Yamhab

Kings of Saba' & Ziridan

65) Sha'ram Awtar son of 63
66) Il Sharih Yahzib I son of 64
67) Yazil Bayin son of 64 – contemporary of Azbet & Germet kings of Ethiopia
68) Hauzath Yazi' son of 65?
69) Karab II Watar Yuha'nem II son of 57 – contemporary of Zuskales king of Ethiopia. Had coinage
70) Watar Yuha'min son of 66
71) Zamir Ali Zarih III son of 69
72) Nessa Karab Yuha'min Yuharhib son of 66
73) Karab II Bayin II son of 71
74) Yasir Yuhasdiq
75) Sa'd Sham's Asri' son of 66
76) Murthid Yuha'mid son of 75
77) Zamir Ali Yahbir I son of 74 – had coinage
78) Tharin Yahib Yuha'min son of 77
79) Zamir Ali Yahbir II son of 78
80) T'Shamdar Yuha'min – had coinage
81) T'Mdan Bayin Yuhaqbiz – had coinage
82) ?Hutar Athat Yafish
83) T'Karab Athat Yuhaqbiz
84) T'Sharah Aymin
85) T'RBShams Namran
86) T'Sad Um Namran
87) T'I Ez Nawfan Yuhasdiq
88) Yasir Yuha'nem II

Kings of Saba' & Ziridan & Hazarmut & Yamnit

89) Shamir Yuha'resh II son of 88
90) Yarim Yuharhib son of 89?
91) Yasir Yuha'nem III son of 89? – contemporary of Ezana king of Ethiopia
92) Tharin Ayfi' son of 91
93) Zari' Amar Aymin I son of 91
94) Karab II Watar Yuha'nem III
95) Tharin Yahib Yuha'ring son of 98
96) Zamir Ali Yahbir I son of 95
97) Tharin Yuha'nem son of 96 – 1st Christian Ruler
98) Malla Karab Yuha'min son of 97 – c. 378/ 84 A.D.
99) Zari' Amar Aymin II son of 98
100) Ab Karab As'id son of 98 – c. 433/439
101) Hasan Yuha'min son of 100
102) Sharhib Il Yahif son of 100 – c. 450/456
103) Sharhib Il Yakif – c. 460/466
104) Mudi Karab Yan'im son of 103 – c. 467/473
105) Luha'yath' Yanuf son of 105
106) Naftan son of 103
107) Murthid Alan Yanuf
108) Mudi Karab Yahif – c. 516/522
109) Yusif Asar – 518/524 to 525/531 A.D.

And then Ethiopians
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The Tobiad / Tubba Dynasty (cont')

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Aristobulus revolted against Nabateans. Rabel II Soter, the last Nabtean king, was killed in 106 CE. Romans invaded and created the province of Arabia Petraea in 107 CE. The Chalcedians fled to Himyar.

| Al-Eishra  |
| As-Sairah, Sharahil |
| of Israel? |

| Dhi Jadan |
| Al-Hudhad or Sharahil |

Queen of Biqis (Chalcis) == Yasir Yuhan'em II sole heir (last king of Old Himyarite dynasty)

Shamir Yuhar'esh II Tubba', 275 CE immigration of asdites after

King of Saba, Dhu Raydan, Hadramawt and Yamnit (2nd Himyarite Kingdom)

| Yarim Yuharhib | Yasir Yuhan'im III cont. of Ezana king of Ethiopia |
| Tharin Ayfi'  | Zari' Amar Aymin I Karab Il Watar Yuhan'em III |

Zamir Ali Yahbir III

'Mar Dhi al-Adh'ar brother of Hassan

| Tharin Yuhan'im Tubba' al-Aqran, Zayd, The mission sent by Constantius |
| Malki Karab Yuha'min, c.378 CE Malikay, Malki Karib |

Sanhedrin moves from Edessa to Yathrib c400

"Arabs" Zari' Amar Aymin II Ab Karab As'id Tubba' c.433CE

Abu Karib As'ad, Tuban Sa'ad Abi Karib, 390-420CE

King of Saba, Dhu Raydan, Hadramawt, Yamnit and of their Arabs (Bedouins) in Tawd and Tihamah

King of Himyar

| Sharib II Ya'fir, c.450 |
| 'Amr Tubba', Muthawwib, Mawthaban |

Ruled Iraq to Tigris

27th EXILARCH

Huna V

Mu'di Karab Yan'im c.467CE

Luhay'ath Yanuf c.467CE

Murthid Alan Yanuf Dhu Shandir

Killed al-Nu'man I 431

Hanan V

input error in level of King of Himyar

Mu'di Karab Yan'im 495-r.521-525CE

King of all the Tribes (King with beautiful Sidelocks)

Mu'di Karab Ya'fir, c.516CE

Rabiah ibn Mudhar, 'Afir, r.516-518CE fled to Hira ~518

Mu'di Karab Ya'fir expelled Abyssians 575CE

Madi Karib
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