

A POEM BY THE SAMARITAN HIGH PRIEST ʿIMRĀN BEN SALĀMA AGAINST MUBĀRAK AL-MUFARRAĠĪ WHO BECAME A CONVERT TO ISLAM IN 1841

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Religion is the major theme of Samaritan Arabic poetry. Within this wide range of religion, the following topics can be included: supplication, preaches, panegyrics of the fathers, Moses, high-priests, pilgrimages, circumcision, feasts, mourning, appeal for aid, hymns, asceticism, elegies, repentance, paradise, consolation, holy sites, weddings.¹ Needless to say, secular subjects such as love in general, nature, social, psychological and economic situations, and even wine songs are represented in the Samaritan Arabic poetry written in Middle Arabic.

The subject of the following twelve line poem is rare. It is a deviation from the Samaritan religion which is, as we know, very rare among the members of the Samaritan community. The number of this religio-ethnic group today is 625.² The writer of the poem is the high-priest ʿImrān ben Salāma ben Ghazāl al-Ḥiftāwī (1809–1875).³ He became high-priest (הכהן הלווי) after the death of his father in 1856/7 until the year 1859.⁴

Among the Samaritans, there was a rumour concerning the high-priest ʿImrān, that he left (or was compelled to leave) the office of the high-priesthood during

¹ See Shehadeh 2000: 247–284.

² Tsedaka 2001: 136. The number of the Samaritans at the beginning of 2003 is 655, 309 in Nablus and 346 in Ḥolon; 346 males and 309 females; 286 married persons; 194 unmarried males and 132 unmarried females; 8 widowers or divorced males and 35 widows of divorced females.

³ About this high-priest see Ben-Ḥayyim 1957: מט; Pummer 1976; Crown, Pummer & Tal 1993: 13; A. B. *Samaritan News* 659–662 (1.5.1996), p. 3; Harviainen & Shehadeh 1994; A. B. *The Samaritan News* 633–636 (13.4.1995), pp. 180–158 and Hebrew Summary, pp. 6, 8–1; Pummer 1993: 144–146; Ben-ʿUzzi 1960: 66–86.

⁴ See Robertson 1938, col. 233, note 1. Since 1624 after Ṣadaqa ben Ghazāl (1624–26) high-priests stem from Ithamar, Levites, and no longer from Aaron. See Robertson 1938, col. 227, note 2; Tsedaka 2001: 82. Tsedaka mentions at the same page that ʿImrān functioned unofficially as high-priest since 1826.

his last fifteen years (1859–1874)⁵ because he married a woman divorced by a Samaritan who converted to Islam or because that woman was a widow.⁶ Nothing is known about that Samaritan man who belonged to the Mufarraḡī (Marḡivi) family. The name of the woman was Lea (Leqa).⁷

‘Imrān’s son (d. 1909) describes his father as ‘פרד זמנה’, ‘فريد عصره وزمانه’, ‘unique in his time’.⁸ Other epithets to be found are ‘العم المكرم المفخم كهين’, ‘عمران’, ‘المكرم الفريز’, ‘the honoured and venerated uncle the priest ‘Imrān’, ‘honoured and distinguished’.⁹ Therefore, and on the basis of the following poem, one may have doubts about the correctness of the above-mentioned rumour. Furthermore, a Samaritan written source ascribes the renunciation of the high-priesthood by ‘Imrān in favour of his brother’s young son Jacob b. Aharon the Levite (1838–1916) in 1859 to the hard situation of the tiny Samaritan community numbering 150 souls. A division of duties was established. ‘Imrān became responsible for the secular affairs of the Samaritans and he was a member of a court for sects and minorities,¹⁰ whereas Jacob, the young man, dealt with the religious issues as a high-priest.¹¹

⁵ Ben-‘Uzzi 1960:69.

⁶ It is an open secret that priests are not allowed to marry divorced women, see Leviticus 21:7. For further discussion see the two chapters (nos. 19 and 20) on marriage and divorce in the work of al-Kāfī by Muḡaḡḡab al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Salāma al-‘Askārī; Shavit, Goldstein & Be’er 1983: 385.

⁷ Its Arabic equivalents are شفيقة, فاتنة. The name of ‘Imrān’s mother was Lāyiqā Surūr from Gaza who lived over one hundred years, Ben-‘Uzzi 1960:67.

⁸ See Cowley 1909 (Vol. I): 203, 210, 211.

⁹ Cowley 1909 (Vol. I): 148 line 1, 283 line 1, 362 line 12, *al-farīz* in the sense of ‘distinguished’ is not attested in Arabic lexicons. The adjective *al-ḡaḡīr* ‘the inconsiderable, despised, miserable’ is common in Samaritan literature when writers or scribes mention their names at the end of a work. See Cowley 1909 (Vol. I): 716 line 3, 765 line 16. This adjective is similar to the equivalent English ‘humble’ used in the 18th and 19th centuries. The adjectives ‘the smallest first slave and the most humble’ (العبد الازغر الاول الاحقر) are used by ‘Imrān about himself, see Firkovich Sam XIII 23, p. 2b in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg.

¹⁰ See Ben-‘Uzzi 1960: 66 “He held a respected position in the Turkish government similar to a member in magistrate’s court in our time” (وقد تولى منصباً محترماً في الحكومة التركيّه) (يشبهه عضو البدياه في زماننا). Ben-‘Uzzi, known as Abū Shafīq (1899–1987) was the grandson of Jacob ben Aharon.

¹¹ See Ben-‘Uzzi 1974: 43–44: ،تولّى الامامة يوم كان فتى في زمن عمه الكاهن عمران، أسندها اليه بحياته لما أنس به من فطنة وذكاء ولانه هو ايضاً (اي الكاهن عمران) كان منصرفاً الى ادارة شؤون الطائفة، التي كانت يومئذ تعجها الفوضىّة ويثقل كاهلها الفقر وتنو تحت طائل الاضطهاد. فضلاً عن كونه كان عضواً في محكمة الطوائف والاقليات ليتمثل طائفته ويدافع عن حقوقها.

In addition to that, the high-priest 'Imrān functioned as an informant and teacher for J. H. Petermann¹² in reciting the Samaritan Pentateuch, had connections with the British consul in Jerusalem, James Finn (1846–1862), and the ambassador in Istanbul and played a central role in the acquisition of the Samaritan manuscripts in the dasht (geniza) of Nablus in 1864 by the Karaite leader Abraham Firkovich (1787–1874).¹³ Last, but not least, he was a prolific writer of hymns and poems in Samaritan Aramaic and Arabic as well as a copyist and witness for marriage contracts.¹⁴ He wrote poems in Arabic when he was nineteen years old as demonstrated in a manuscript written and copied by him in 1828 shows.¹⁵ Among the works by 'Imrān there are a commentary of two parts on the book of Exodus and a treatise on inheritance.¹⁶ The attempt of Mills to teach 'Imrān the English language was not successful.¹⁷

The difficult situation of the family of the priest 'Imrān, as we shall see later, should be taken into consideration with regard to their being led to resign from the high-priesthood. His father, Shalma b. Ṭabia (1782–1857), also stepped down from the high-priesthood. Shalma described his community as *širdīma*, “a fragmented group”.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that 'Imrān's successor in the high-priesthood, his nephew, Jacob ben Aaron, faced in 1878 an attempt to dismiss him of his office. A *procès-verbal* (*maḍbata*) was admitted to the government. The appeal was supported by a great number in the Samaritan community including two priests who were his cousins. This position of the cousins was not in accordance with the testament of their father 'Imrān discussed below. The claim that Jacob the high-priest was 'evil doer' (*mufsid*) and should be punished was turned down because 'the respected ones' (*al-mu'tabarīn*), in the community were on the side of Jacob. The antagonists intended to 'seize the findings of the synagogue' (*dabṭ*

¹² See Gaster 1906: 514, 519; Petermann 1868: 3.

¹³ See Harviainen & Shehadeh 1994: 170 seq. In those days Samaritans had good relations with the Karaites in Jerusalem, see A. B. *Samaritan News* 258–259 (28.4.1980), p. 38.

¹⁴ See Cowley 1909 (Vol. II): xcvi (index of authors); Roberson 1938, col. 405 (Index of names of Samaritans); Roberson 1962, col. 298. See the following manuscripts of marriage contracts in the Firkovich collection housed in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg: Sam X, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 90, 91. These manuscripts date back to the 20's until the 50's of the 19th century. Compare also Ms Sassoon 716 found today in JRUL as Sam 377 and Firkovich Sam IX 268, MS Shechem High Priest (נ"ב) 21 in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. See Pummer 1993; 1997.

¹⁵ Firkovich Ms Sam XIII 23 in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg.

¹⁶ Number three and number 53 in a hand-written list of Samaritan Arabic books at the disposal of the priest 'Abd al-Mu'īn Ṣadaqa. A copy of this list was given to me by its writer 'Abd al-Mu'īn Ṣadaqa in 13 March 1975 and I thank him for it.

¹⁷ Mills 1868: 186.

¹⁸ Hassafarey 1970: 145.

mawğūdāt al-kanīsa).¹⁹ Another example of a Samaritan person who converted to Islam in the first half of the 19th century in 1841 is reported by Jacob Joseph Ṣadaqa al-Shalabī born in 1829. A woman called Ġalīla²⁰ (Yokheved) Ishāq al-Asmar al-Danafī, the widow of Shalabī ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ben Ṣadaqa married a Muslim lover. Her fourteen year old son Isaac was forced to embrace Islam and was given the name Aṣad while his sister Zağlūla died as a result of torture.²¹

Samaritans today still tell of Mubārak’s being present at the horrible incident in which this woman and her two children were forced to embrace Islam. What he saw and heard led him immediately to declare that he accepts Islam. Though he continued to celebrate Samaritan feasts with his family he became excommunicated by the family of the priests and the other families which strongly condemned the event in order to deter others from following him.²² Mubārak was put upon a horse and passed through the city of Nablus in a procession of triumph.²³ The subject of Samaritan conversion into Islam during the last few centuries need a separate investigation. Generalizations without evidence such as “Up until 1859 ... many Samaritans were killed and others were forcefully converted to Islam”²⁴ do not contribute much to our knowledge and understanding.

It was during these days, when the ‘Ulamā’ declared the Samaritans not to be *Ahl al-Kitāb* (‘People of the Book’) that the Samaritan community underwent hardship. It was claimed that the Samaritan community did not possess any book of the following five holy books: the Torah, the New Testament, Psalms (Zabūr), the Prophets and the Qur’ān. The help to counteract this sensitive and dangerous accusation came from Jerusalem. Its Sefardi Chief Rabbi Ḥayyim Avraham Gagīn (1842–1848) known as Ḥakham Bāshī acknowledged in a document that the Samaritans are a branch of the children of Israel and they do believe in the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch.²⁵

The governor of the Nablus district in the period in question was Maḥmūd ‘Abd al-Hādī the Qaysī and clashes between Qaysī and Yamanī factions were inflamed.²⁶ The British consul in Jerusalem, James Finn, also extended some help

¹⁹ See page 237, the last page in manuscript No. 7087 in Yad Ben Zvi Library in Jerusalem.

²⁰ Other secular equivalents to Yokheved are نجلة، نجلاء، جلول .

²¹ See Ben-Zvi 1970: 50–51.

²² I learned this from my friend Binyamim Tsedaka in a letter dated October 15, 2000. Compare what Jacob El-Shelabī say in the previous note.

²³ See Ben-Zvi 1970: 51.

²⁴ See Pummer 1993: 4.

²⁵ Elazar 1977: 33; Rogers 1855: 30.

²⁶ See Nimr 1975 (Vol. I): 168, 269, 274–275; Busch 1861: 139–146; Schur 1989: 139–147; Browne 1806: 47; al-Dabbāğ 1965.

to the Samaritans.²⁷ Minorities in Nablus were distinguished from the Muslim majority by the colour of their headcloths. Christians, numbering in the last quarter of the 19th century five hundred, used the blue colour, the two hundred Jews used the yellow colour and the Samaritans, about one hundred fifty, had the red colour.²⁸ For two decades until 1849 the Samaritans were prohibited to celebrate their Passover (Feast of Qurban) on Mount Gerizim.

The poem in question is a sort of condemnation of the act of Mubārak²⁹ (Mbārak, in spoken Arabic) Ibrāhīm Mufarrāġ (Barukh Avraham Marḥiv) namely, leaving the Samaritan religion and embracing Islam. His new name became Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Misilmānī and it is claimed that the contemporary al-Misilmānī family in Nablus stem from him.³⁰ But it should also be noted that the Arabic family name is known in Nablus since at least 1819, that is to say, more than two generations before the conversion of Barukh.³¹ The late high-priest Jacob ben ʿUzzi (1899–1987) related that the name of the father of the Misilmānī family was Mubārak Mufarrāġ. His family, the Marḥivi, comes in the second or third place with regard to number after āl Alḥif. After the division of Palestine (1947) the majority of its members moved to live in Jaffa and later in Ḥolon. The rest of Marḥiv family live in Nablus and most of its members are workers and craftsmen. The number of the descendants of Mubārak (Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Misilmānī) surpasses much the number of Marḥivi family.³²

This short poem is preserved, as far as we know, in two manuscripts. The first manuscript has no title and it was copied by the priest ʿAbd al-Muʿīn Ṣadaqa in Nablus. This priest, as mentioned before, is the great-grandson of ʿImrān the high-priest, the author of this poem.³³ The poem is on page 80. This manuscript including 109 pages numbered by Samaritan characters consists of the following sections:

²⁷ On this period see Finn 1878; Warren 1876: 206–235; Mills 1868; Rogers 1863; Rogers 1855, *A. B. Samaritan News* 258–259 (28.4.1980), pp. 34–41.

²⁸ Warren 1876: 207–208. Compare the twenty-fifth tale of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

²⁹ Other Arabic equivalents to Barukh are راطب، ممتكن، مكين، معظم، محمود see Firkovich MS. Sam. III 2 page 46a. This manuscript housed in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg was copied in 1331 A.D.

³⁰ *A. B. Samaritan News* 722–724 (9.10.1998), p. 80, Ben-ʿUzzi 1960: 38: وهي أيضاً عائلته اسلمت من قبل مئة سنة تقريباً ويزيد عدد افرادها الآن عن المئة ('[āl al-Misilmānī] and it was a family that embraced Islam about one hundred years ago and the number of its members today exceeds one hundred').

³¹ ʿĪsa al-Misilmānī, See Firkovich Ms Sam XIV 33, p. 3b, in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg.

³² See Ben-ʿUzzi 1960: 39.

³³ Sincere thanks are due to my friends the priest and Yefet ben Ratson Tsedaka who sent me a copy of the manuscript.

A) Fragment from Memar Marqe, pp. 1–16 in Samaritan script and marginal remarks are added such as Arabic translations of Samaritan Aramaic words such as: אנחה = فائده ('benefit'); תבהת = أرض بائره = ארעה באירה ('uncultivated land'); רביתינה = لا يريد = לא צבה ('does not want'); تخجل = أطفالهم ('their children'); טליותה = حدائته ('his youth'); קלומה = ذاته ('himself'); כתייה = بارده ('cold, f. s.').³⁴ At the end of this section the following colophon is given:

זה מצאתי אתו בספר שלח אתו לי חבר מן בריטאניא והוא יאמר הן זאת המוספות מצא אתם
בספרי מימר מרקה אשר נמצאו שם והם לא ימצאו במימר מרקה אשר בידנו על כן בדלתי אתם
לשפת הקדש עד מן ידרש יקרא אתם יוכל למבדילותם ואני העני הדל אלעור בר צדקה כהנה בשכם
אאל ישועתא 1964/12/2.

Translation: That is what I found in a book sent to me by a friend from Britain. He says that these additions he has found in copies (books) of Memar Marqe kept there [Britain] and they are not included in Memar Marqe which is available to us. Therefore I changed them into the holy language so that every one who likes to read them can distinguish between them. I am the poor and humble Ef'azar ben Tsedaka the priest in Nablus, 20th of December 1964 AD.³⁵

B) Bilingual glossary, Samaritan Aramaic from Memar Marqe and Hebrew (עברי/תרגום) arranged according to alphabetical order, pp. 17–25. These nine pages, divided as a rule, into two columns (sometimes a third column is added at the beginning in which the root of the word is indicated) consist of approximately two hundred words. As a title for this section it is stated that these words used in Memar Marqe appear in more than one form.³⁶ A few examples are in order: דובב = אויב ('enemy'); לב, לבב, נפש = קלום, קנום, דרש = בעי ('to ask for'); עבר = געז ('to pass'); שריו = בראשית ('at the beginning'); שגר = שלח ('to send'). At the end of this section there is a colophon saying that the same priest copied it on the 24th of December 1963³⁷, almost one

³⁴ Pages 5, 6, 7, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 repectively.

³⁵ This manifestation of Neo-Samaritan Hebrew reminds us of mediaeval Hebrew under the impact of Middle Arabic, the absence of *ש* in the first two phrases, asyndetic clause, Britain is written as in Arabic, plural feminine which does not refer to human beings is regarded as feminine singular (זאת המוספות) etc. עד has the meaning of حتى, in order, so that. The two words after the year are not ordinary, especially the last one. These two words are analogous to the common Samaritan colophon ال اسماعيل, the followers of Ishmael.

³⁶ מלים מן מימר מרקה אדינן מרי עליו רצון מרו וזאת המלים המצאו על מותר מן צורה אחדה . The last words are a kind of calque from the Arabic language على أكثر من .

³⁷ זה מה מצאתי מן זאת המלים ואני עבדה אלעור בר צדקה כהנה בשכם מול הרגרי. אודה את יהוה . 1963/12/24

year before writing the first section.

C) Collection of prayers, hymns, *bit durrān* ('string of pearls') and songs of praise by various priests, elders and poets taken from the book of Dr. Cowley³⁸ and other source at the disposal of the scribe in Nablus dating back to the year 1708. The authors of this religious material are 'Āmram Dāre ('Imrān al-Zamān), Ab Gillūgā b. Qala, the elder Ṭabīa b. Darta, the high-priest Ṭabīa b. Tsedaka, Shalma b. Ab Zahuta b. Yosef ha-Maṭri., the elder Ḥizqīa b. 'Ābed El, Abraham b. Yūsef haq-Qābbāši, Ṭabīa b. Isaac, 'Āmrām b. Shalma b. Ṭabīa, Abraham Jacob al-Danfī known as al-'Ayye, Ṭabīa b. ab Zahūta, Abisha'. In addition one finds poems in the Arabic language and script as well as two testaments in Arabic by the high-priests 'Imrān and his grandson Tsedaka b. Isaac Tsedaka (1894–1971), the father of the scribe Eḥazar Tsedaka ('Abd al-Muṭīn Ṣadaqa). This third section of the manuscript under discussion is the largest one. It begins on page 27 and ends at the the end, on page 109. The date of copying this part is the 26th of November 1986.

Marginal notes and explanations in Arabic can also be found in this section. On the top of page 70 the reader finds the two words יצר אסרת יצר and their Arabic translation is added above them عقد نييه ('setting of intention'). In the light of the material given in this third section, namely the poems, it is safe to say that 'Imrān experienced poverty, deaths of members of his family, desperation and failure in his first marriage at least. Some sources speak about a third marriage.³⁹ Besides, the general conditions of the Samaritan community in Nablus were not encouraging. 'Imrān's father, Salāma, was very poor and tried to earn livelihood as a tailor.⁴⁰ He describes himself in one of his supplications as "humble, poor, unfortunate, in need, weak".⁴¹ Samaritan oral tradition speaks about a close friendship between Salāma and Ḥusain 'Abd al-Hādī, the governor of Gaza. The later used to help the high-priest financially.⁴² A written evidence by 'Imrān himself from the year 1826 speaks about very high prices in Nablus. The price of an ounce of meat was thirty

³⁸ Cowley 1909.

³⁹ See Gaster 1940: 128. Mills 1868: 184 wrote about the second and third wives: "Both wives were living together with their husband on the best of terms". Some Samaritans such as Salāma ben Yaḥqūb ben Murḡān al-Danfī from the 18th century married seven times. On the other hand the New Testament states that the Samaritan woman married five times and she had an illegal sixth, see John 4:18.

⁴⁰ Ben-Uzzi 1960: 183-184. A story about this priest and the tailors of Nablus was translated into English by the present writer and published in *A. B. The Samaritan News 785–788* (6.4. 2001), pp. 185–175.

⁴¹ See Cowley 1909 (Vol. I): 217, line 2 (עבדך דל ועני ומסכין וצריך ונשיש) and lines 14, 18; p. 218 line 17 and see p. 743.

⁴² Ben-Uzzi 1960:187-196.

silver and the price of a saa of corn reached eleven Qurūsh ('piasters').⁴³

A virgin girl who did not like 'Imrān became his first wife in 1826 when he was seventeen years old.⁴⁴ All the children that she gave birth to (some say thirteen, others five) have died.⁴⁵ Then 'Imrān married for the third time Lā'iqa bint As'ad (1820–1910) whom he loved and she gave birth to four children, three boys, El'azar, Salāma and Ishāq, and a daughter called Zahra.⁴⁶ It seems that the daughter Badriyya was born from the other wife of 'Imrān. The great-grandson of 'Imrān, the priest 'Abd al-Mu'tin Ṣadaqa (Abū Waḍḍāḥ, El'azar Tsedaka, born in 2.2.1927) calls her "Our lady the late Lā'iqa may God sanctify her secret" and gives the venerated epithet "Imrān al-zamān" to her husband.⁴⁷ El'azar the son, as well as 'Imrān's two younger brothers, Isaac and Aaron, died while 'Imrān was alive.⁴⁸

⁴³ See MS Firkovich Sam III 19, p. 23a in the margin, in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg *وكانت ذلك السنه غلاشديد عظيم...وفيه اللحم ٢*.

(فضه وصاع القمح لحق احده عشر قرش) Compare Ms Firkovich Sam XIII 18 of the same year, saa of corn six, a rotl of meat eighty four, rotl of rice forty four, rotl of oil seventy two.

⁴⁴ She is most likely Ḥānunjah bint Ya'qūb bint Ṣadaqa al-Danfī as indicated in the Ketubbah (marriage contract) in Firkovich Sam X 21 and 84 in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, והיא בעת ההיא נערה בתולה, her dowry was 4900 Egyptian units of currency. The term "Egyptian pieces" (قطع مصريات) is used since the 17th century as shown in Firkovich Sam XIV 1. Other sorts of money such as maṣārī, maḥmūdī, 'ādī, qirāta, niṣf akkl, bishlī are mentioned in Firkovich Sam XIV 35. Cf. A. B. Samaritan News 544–545 (7.10.1991), pp. 55–76, Vilsker 1992; Pummer 1993: 35, who says that 'Imrān was 24+ years!

⁴⁵ See the marginal note by El'azar Ṣadaqa in the manuscript of Nablus page 77 and compare Petermann 1868: 3. On the basis of a letter by the priest El'azar Ṣadaqa sent to me on 8 November 2000 the following information is indicated. The high priest was called "Umrān al-Zamān" due to his efforts to take care of the Samaritan community in all aspects of life. His first wife was Laṭīfa who gave birth to thirteen children who all died except one daughter called Warda. His second wife was Lā'iqa who gave birth to Ishāq, Salāma and a daughter named Badrī. He left the office of high priesthood because he was fat. Mubārak was named "al-ma'kūs". This information is based on oral tradition.

⁴⁶ Zahra 'Imrān Salāma got married in 1865, see MS. BL Or 12375d. This marriage is mentioned only in Kahle's list where there is a mention of six Samaritans who married three times see Kahle 1930: 89–103.

⁴⁷ The full name of the priest is 'Abd al-Mu'tin Ṣadaqa Ishāq 'Imrān Salāma Ghazāl Ishāq Ibrāhīm Ṣadaqa (سيدتنا المرحومه لائقه قدس الله سرها) in the manuscript discussed below, page 77 in the margin and see page 83 in the margin and page 98 at the top.

⁴⁸ See the following selected lines of a poem on page 77:

צריך בכפני	אבי עני בלא כסף
בתולה לא תרציני	ורב מאד לקחו לי
וכלם מתו לפני	בא לי ממנה בנים
היתה כרחצוני	עד לקחתי אחרית
והנם שני	נשאר לי ממנה בנים

His son Isaac visited London in 1903 and sold some Samaritan manuscripts to the Jewish Rabbi Moses Gaster (1856–1939) and to the British Library.⁴⁹ Wardah (Şiṣ) was thirteen years old in 1855 when she married Şāliḥ ben al-Shaikh Ibrāhīm āl Şāliḥ al-Murğān ben Salāma al-Danafī, the maternal uncle of her father.⁵⁰ Educated elders of the Samaritan community either passed away or were ineffective and the ignorant ones and the bankers (Şarrāfūn) were the leaders and had the upper hand on the community.⁵¹ Evil intentions and idle talk prevailed. People were engaged with their carnal appetites. ‘Imrān the high-priest in person was hit and kicked by a soldier in a public place in Nablus and the new ruler was present.⁵²

In view of the facts stated above, it is no wonder to find that ‘Imrān became fed up with such a life (عائف حياتي) and has expressed his deep sadness and mourning in several lines as shortly we shall see. He wished on several occasions to depart this earthly life and to be buried beside his father in a very deep grave.⁵³

In his relatively short testament the following information is available. ‘Imrān does not want shouting, noise and increase in mourning on his death. He asked his family to take care in washing⁵⁴ his corpse and covering it with winding sheet. The coffin should be taller than him and made of the best wood. The washing bench (*dakka*) should be new. After his funeral both should be kept for the use of other Samaritans in the future. Reading from the Torah follows putting the dead body in the coffin. He asks his children Ishāq (d.1932) and Salāma (d. 1909) and his wife (her name is not indicated) to continue their life as before. The key of a sort of an attic (*siddi/e*) should be kept with Ishāq only and not even with his mother. ‘Imrān had a shop shared by Jacob the son of his brother and with Ya‘qūb al-Mūsa. The father ‘Imrān says to his son Ishāq: consult your cousin Ya‘qūb, Ishāq Luṭfi and others in the Samaritan community who like you especially Murğān

An elegy on his son Epazar is to be found on pages 81–82 beginning with:

زاد بلبالي وقل الاضطبار ودموعي فوق وجناتي غزار
على فراق مهجة كبدي والروح حرق فؤادي آه اين العزار

See Ben-Uzzi 1960: 66–67.

⁴⁹ See Gaster 1906: 513.

⁵⁰ See Robertson 1938, col. 333. Mills 1868: 194 writes: “The males are marriageable at fourteen, and the females at ten, and in some cases as early as eight years of age”.

⁵¹ Such as Jacob al-Shelabī who was illiterate but was one of the Samaritan leaders and tourists’s guide who lived mainly on tips (*baqšiš*, *bağšiš*) from them, see Smith 1870: 291 seq.; Warren 1876: 226.

⁵² See A. B. *Samaritan News* 258–259 (28.4.1980), p. 40. At the same day the priest wrote a letter to James Finn the British consul in Jerusalem.

⁵³ See pages 75 line 2, 92 line 13, 98 line 12.

⁵⁴ The term used here is غسل, other terms to be found in Samaritan Arabic literature are مغسل, تغسيل, see Cowley 1909 (Vol. II): 852, 853, 854, 855, 858, 866.

the husband of your sister. The big house goes to Isaac and the small one to Salāma. The rest of the building (*dār*) will be divided into three thirds (apparently, Isaac, Salāma and their mother). The father urges his son Isaac to read, learn and preserve his faith during all his life. With regard to Isaac's marriage the father advises him to follow the choice of his mother. 'Imrān urges his son Isaac to marry if possible the daughter of his sister Zahra the wife of Ishāq Luṭfī. Such a marriage would be realized if Ishāq Luṭfī agrees to give his daughter to Isaac instead of Isaac's fiancée al-sinyūra (!) to the son of his wife⁵⁵. On the basis of a letter written by 'Imrān in 1858 to al-Khawāḡa 'Ōda it is clear that the priest had a share in an oil press and quarrels with regard to business⁵⁶. The priest used to visit Jerusalem for commercial reasons and stayed overnight at Karaite homes. Petermann mentions that one day 'Imrān told him that the place of hell is in fact Jerusalem.⁵⁷

Charles Warren wrote about 'Imrān whom he knew personally:

A delightful old gentleman, the only one of the Samaritans I had any sympathy with ... told me his melancholy state ... he felt he was gradually dying day by day, and talked of being fed on poisonous food; poor old man, whatever was the cause, it was evident he was sinking slowly, and that his energies were going; probably his house in Nāblus was filled with impure air from the bad arrangements within, or perhaps it was constitutional alone seemed to guard the treasures of the Samaritans...and prescribed charcoal for his disorder, which appeared to be a kind of dysentery ...⁵⁸

A few lines by 'Imrān are in order:

عمران اسمي وكل زمني خراب فارقت الاحباب واضحيت حزين

My name is 'Imrān (in written Arabic 'Umrān, 'prosperity, flourishing') and all my life is destruction, I parted from the beloved ones and became grieved.⁵⁹

بعد فقد الاحباب كيف ناري تنام وكيف التذّ بطعام منسجم بمرار
عمران يقول يا رب انعم بالوفاه على الايمان وشريعة الخمس اسفار

After the loss of the beloved ones how my passion (fire) will sleep (die down) and how can I enjoy food mixed with bitterness. 'Imrān says: "O Lord bestow upon me death while having faith in the five books (Torah)".⁶⁰

مشتغلين لاتمام شهوة نفوسهم وفي حب النساء ضاعت الرجال

They are busy in satisfying the lust of their souls and in the love of women men were lost.⁶¹

⁵⁵ See pages 92–93.

⁵⁶ See Firkovich Ms Sam XIV 25, in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg.

⁵⁷ Petermann 1860: 279.

⁵⁸ Warren 187: 225–226.

⁵⁹ See page 75 line 5.

⁶⁰ Page 82 lines 8 and 11.

⁶¹ Page 98 line 7.

The second manuscript, by the high-priest ʿImrān ben Salāma ben Ghazāl al-Ḥiftāwī, which includes the poem on Mubārak Ibrāhīm Mufarraġ who left the Samaritan religion in 1841 is kept in Berlin. It is Ms. Or. Quart. 1095 in the Staatsbibliothek and consists of 229 folios of prayers for the Sabbaths of Pentecost, Yom Maqrata (reading day of the Torah in remembrance of revelation on Mt. Sinai) and the feast of harvest. This manuscript was copied in 1845 by Shelaḥ b. Abraham b. Shelaḥ b. Ab Sakuwwa ha-Danfi. The poem in question is added at the end of the manuscript in 227b. A description of this manuscript as well as a publication of the poem accompanied by a Hebrew translation, were published in the periodical *A. B. Samaritan News* in 1998.⁶² It is to be noted that the poem in this manuscript appears in Samaritan letters while in the Nablus manuscript, the script is Arabic.

Moreover, there are several differences between the texts of the poem in these two manuscripts.⁶³ It should be stated that the Hebrew translation is not always accurate. The poem on Mubārak / al-Musilmānī was written in 1262 Ḥiġra, 1846 A.D. five years after his conversion.⁶⁴ It is known to us that this Mubārak was in 1840 one of the scribes of Ms No. 7023 in Yad Ben-Zvi Library in Jerusalem. A year later Mubārak / al-Musilmānī copied a prayer found in Ms. Or. Quart. 538 in Berlin on the 28th of Rabīc 1257 Ḥiġra, 9 September 1841 A.D. The high-priest ʿImrān, who condemned the conversion of Mubārak in the following poem, wrote these words in the same place “ها خرج كاتبها وله الحروق من دت” “משה הצדיק אליו דת מחמד הזנדיק”, which means “Its scribe having burns has left the religion of the God-fearing Moses for the religion of Muḥammad the atheist (*zendik*)”.⁶⁵ One more piece of information about Mubārak is that he was one of the three scribes of Ms No. 7023 in Yad Ben-Zvi Library in Jerusalem. Mubārak accomplished his part in 1840, his brother Saʿd in 1857 and Ṣālīḥ ben Ibrāhīm ben Ṣālīḥ ben Muḡān al-Danfī in 1849.

⁶² *A. B. Samaritan News* 722–724 (9.10.1998), pp. 79–81.

⁶³ I did not examine the Berlin manuscript and here I depend on the version published in *A. B.*

⁶⁴ *A. B. Samaritan News* 722–724 (9.10.1998), p. 80.

⁶⁵ *A. B. Samaritan News* 722–724 (9.10.1998), p. 84.

قاله رحمه الله عندما خرج مبارك ابراهيم
مفرج عن הדת⁶⁶ لعنه الله لعنة
ابدياً الى يوم الدين
اللهم امين

لا شك انه كان مع الشيطان مشارك ⁶⁷	يا حيف اين كان عقلك يا مبارك
بل كان يسده عقلي ويغريني فشارك ⁶⁸	ما بقيت اظن فيك كذا يا مغفل
بقي لك قبول ولو كثرت اندارك ⁶⁹	طمس على عقلك كيد الشيطان ولا
خير لك يا معكوس من معيارك ⁷⁰	يا ليت ذهبت من الدنيا متوفياً
خاب الامل واطلمت جميع انوارك	تاملنا فيك تكون اهلاً للصلاح
أو طالع مولدك كان غير مبارك	يا ترى طمع دنياك الذي دهاك
وما بقي غداً انطفاءً لنارك ⁷¹	كيف كان حتى ضيعت الآخره سواء
كيف لا وانت خائن خمس اسفارك ⁷²	جنان النعيم صار عليك حرام
هو خصيمك يا مسكين ان كنت تدارك	من سيدنا الرسول ما بقي لك قبو
وما في اليد حيله على دفع عارك ⁷³	اسفي والله عليك بما وقعت فيه
يشفع الكليم وتكون الجنه دارك ⁷⁴	لو كنت توفيت كنا نتامل الاجتماع
وبعد كل ذا الضلال ما بقيت مبارك ⁷⁵	وبعد هذا الحال الامل فيك محال

מן עזב דת משה
לית לו שם מושיע
יגוז לגו אשה
ולא הוה כל טוב עמה⁷⁶

⁶⁶ Originally in Samaritan script. The title is missing in the Berlin manuscript.

⁶⁷ Berlin manuscript reads: الشيطان instead of مبارك, انا, شيطان respectively.

⁶⁸ Berlin manuscript reads: ويعزن instead of بانك, ويغريني respectively.

⁶⁹ Berlin manuscript reads: اندارك instead of اكثرته, اندارك respectively.

⁷⁰ Berlin manuscript reads: حير instead of متوفياً, خير respectively.

⁷¹ Berlin manuscript reads: ان تنطفي, نارك instead of, عاد يمكن, سوى, الخرى, سواء, انطفاءً, لنارك respectively.

⁷² Berlin manuscript reads: لانت, خائن, خمس instead of, لانت, حابي, لخمس respectively.

⁷³ Berlin manuscript reads: هو in line 9 instead of هو and الله is missing and ما, به, يه, respectively.

⁷⁴ Berlin manuscript reads: الاجتماع, الكليم instead of الاجتماع, الرسول respectively.

⁷⁵ Berlin manuscript reads: بعد, هذه instead of بعد, هذا respectively.

⁷⁶ These four lines are missing in the Nablus manuscript and appear in Samaritan characters in the Berlin manuscript.

TRANSLATION

He Said it⁷⁷ when Mubārak Ibrāhīm Mufarraġ Left the Religion.

May God curse him⁷⁸ forever until the Day of Judgement, O God Amen.

What a pity, where was your mind O Mubārak? No doubt it was cooperating with the devil.

I did not think you would do that O fool, but my mind was directing and tempting your vain boasting.

The devil's deception dominated⁷⁹ your thinking and you are not accepted⁸⁰ anymore, even your vows⁸¹ were numerous.

If only you had passed away from this world it would be better for you, O overturned because of your shame⁸²!

We hoped that you will be worthy of righteousness, disappointment came and all your lights grew gloomy.

I wonder, did the greediness of this world befall upon you or was the star of destiny of your birthday unblessed?

What happened so that you have lost the hereafter altogether⁸³ and the future⁸⁴ of your fire (hell) will not extinguish.

Paradise became forbidden to you, why should not be so since you are disloyal to your Torah?⁸⁵

⁷⁷ The pronoun is in the third person masculine singular though the feminine would be expected because it refers to 'poem' which is feminine in Arabic, spoken and written alike. Yet it seems possible to explain this masculine pronoun as referring to words which are masculine such as *šīr*, *kalām* meaning 'poetry, speech'.

⁷⁸ Literally, may God curse him a curse forever. In ordinary structure in written Arabic one finds either لعنه الله لعنة أبدية or لعنه الله إلى الأبد .

⁷⁹ The usage of the verb طمس ('to efface, erase, wipe out') with the preposition على is meaningless. Therefore I translated 'dominated', taking into consideration that the required verb in this connection is طغى .

⁸⁰ Accepted by the Samaritan community. The reader has to bear in mind that this statement is declared by the high-priest, the highest religious authority.

⁸¹ First of all the phoneme dāl which is used in cities instead of the phoneme dā in literary Arabic as well as in fellahite dialects, for instance. Secondly, the standard plural form of the singular *nadr* is *nudūr*. The form *andār* is not known in Arabic and it was chosen because of the needed rhyme -ārik.

⁸² معيار in the sense of عار (shame, disgrace) is used also on page 98 line 8 in the Nablus manuscript.

⁸³ Either in the meaning of the colloquial 'sawa' or the written expression 'awā'an bi-sawā'.

⁸⁴ The literal translation is 'tomorrow' and, in fact, the additional sense of *bukra* in Palestinian Arabic was attached to the equivalent literary word.

⁸⁵ Literally 'your five books'.

You are no longer accepted⁸⁶ (or to be forgiven) by our lord the messenger (Moses), he is your antagonist⁸⁷, O miserable if you can realize⁸⁸

My grief on you, by God, for what has occurred to you and nothing can be done in order to drive away your disgrace

Had you died we could have hoped to meet, Moses⁸⁹ would have interceded and paradise would be your abode

After this state you are hopeless⁹⁰ and after all this delusion you are not Barukh (his Hebrew name which means 'blessed') anymore

He who left the religion of Moses

Has no salvation

He will step into fire

Even though everything he did was good

To conclude, an attempt was made to deal with what was at our disposal concerning the life and works of the high-priest 'Imrān ben Salāma ben Ghazāl al-Ḥiftāwī (1809–1875). The main idea of the poem discussed is that Samaritans who convert their religion (in this case to Islam) have no chance of going to paradise. In another short poem it is obvious that Samaritans will enter the 'abode' viz 'the paradise' either through their good deeds which please God or repentance for the slips they committed⁹¹. This denomination of research, articles devoted to single scholars are important desiderata in Samaritan studies and their significance go beyond the "Who is Who" series.

⁸⁶ Compare Cowley 1909 (Vol. II): 463, line 8; 765 line 8 below.

⁸⁷ The ordinary form is *خَصِمٌ*.

⁸⁸ The third verbal form is used instead of the fourth because of rhyme.

⁸⁹ Originally 'speaker' and the meaning is obvious *كليم الله* which is an epithet of Moses.

⁹⁰ Literally 'hope in you is absurd'.

⁹¹ See the Nablus manuscript page 98:

يا ليت شعري بعد الباب ما الدار	الموت باب وكل الناس داخله
يرضي الاله وان خالفت فالنار	الدار جنبه عدن ان عملت بما
فاختر لنفسك اي الدار تختار	هما محلان ما للمرء غيرهما
وان هفوا هفوة فالرب غفار	ما للعباد سوى الفردوس ان عملوا

Death is a door and all people will enter it, I wish I knew what is the abode next to the door.

The abode is the Garden of Eden if you worked to please God and if you disobeyed then fire (hell).

They are the two places that a human being has, so chose for yourself one of them!

Human beings have nothing but paradise if they acted [well] and if they made a slip God is much-forgiving.

Similar opinion with regard to repentance is expressed by 'Imrān in the handwritten book *Kitāb sabīl al-lahfān li-ma'rīfat al-īmān* by El'azar ben 'Šadaqa ben 'Amram, Nablus 1979, p. 2. I thank the priest El'azar and Yefet ben Ratson Tsedaka for the copy of this work too.

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