

and lines of rhymed prose make it his longest work.

**Ḥanukka-nāma* (The Book of Hanukah), his other long narrative, is an account of the Maccabees' successful military campaign against the Seleucid dynasty in the second century B.C.E. The extant manuscript copies are incomplete; in the introduction, however, Ben Samuel expresses his desire to continue in the tradition, begun by *Shāhīn in the fourteenth century and *'Imrānī in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, of composing versified Judeo-Persian versions of biblical and other narratives. He was unaware that in 1524 'Imrānī had in fact composed *Zafar-nāma* (The Book of Victory), a versified rendering of the First Book of the Maccabees).

Most of Ben Samuel's Hebrew compositions were hymns (Heb. *piyyuṭim*) emulating the style of the Jewish poets of medieval Spain. He also wrote a prose commentary on *Solomon ibn Gabirol's liturgical poem **Sheṭer 'Alay be-'Edim ve-Qinyan*, traditionally read on the eve of the Day of Atonement, and a versified commentary to the introduction of the same author's *Azharot* (Heb. Admonitions), hymns expounding the 613 positive and negative commandments.

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Funerary, Burial, and Mourning Practices

In the Talmud and the Midrash, death and birth are viewed as parallel processes, and the way a person died and the day of the death were thought to be significant as good or bad omens for the deceased. Many of the death, burial, and mourning customs of the Jews of the Islamic world were closer than their Ashkenazi counterparts to the practices of talmudic times. Jewish custom everywhere insists on prompt burial as a matter of respect for the dead, and this is considered to be the duty of the heirs and the entire community. The departure of the soul (Heb. *neshama*) makes the body impure, which means that it has to be purified before the burial. Many Jewish communities under Islam believed that one's death day (Ar. *ajal*) was fixed at birth, an idea common in Muslim theology. The rituals surrounding death, as with birth and marriage, were based on the halakha, but in some places were combined with local Arabo-Berber and Muslim *folklore and *magic. In other places, such as *Kurdistan, as the anthropologist Erich Brauer noted, Jews "have taken over scarcely anything from the death customs of the people around them, so that their death customs remain fundamentally Jewish" (Brauer, p. 190). The obligatory laws of burial and mourning symbolize the fact that all people, irrespective of socioeconomic status, are equal at the time of burial and during the mourning period. However, despite the fact that their earthly lives had ended, the hierarchical division between men and *women remained as differentiated as ever. Most Jewish books of the ill and the dead (Heb. *ḥolim u-metim*) in the East (and also in the West) make no special reference to women's death and burial, for women were excluded from many of the public manifestations of religion because of the centrality of the patriarchal-gendered worldview.

In Jewish communities, as in many other societies, the symbols and metaphors for death express the passage from the material to the spiritual through the use of images of rebirth and the resurrection of the dead into a new world where there is both spiritual and material compensation. Funeral ceremonies provide the living with a ritual of departure from the dead, and the ritual treatment of the body by relatives suggests a halfway situation for the deceased, who is located between the two worlds. An example is the washing of the body and the use of perfuming materials, all typical of life, as opposed to the sealing of the body's orifices.

Preparation for Burial

Preparing the body for burial had three major stages:

(1) Washing and ritual purification (*tahara*). The body was stripped of clothing and covered with a sheet, then thoroughly cleansed of dirt. All jewelry was removed and then the body was purified with water. It was customary in Jewish communities under Islam for the body to be placed on the ground in the deceased's house and covered with a sheet until the purification. In *Tunisia a loaf of bread or a piece of bread and a nail were put on the body. In Kurdistan a piece of iron was placed on it. Several customs were intended to frighten the evil spirits, such as breaking an earthenware jar in front of the house of the deceased, pouring out water from the house, and lighting a candle or an oil lamp (Ar. *qandīl*). Candles were also customarily lit at the head and foot of the body. In *Yemen the shofar was blown several times and all the windows and doors in the deceased's room were opened, with no one entering until the departure of the *neshama*.

The bodies of both women and men were purified by laying them out on a wood plank or a stone slab and washing them with perfumes, soap, rose water, or orange water. This was done by members of the society of washers (Heb. *hevrat roḥašim*, Ar. *ghassālin*, Pers. *morde shūrhā* and *morde shūyhā*) of the same sex as the deceased. The *hevrat roḥsim* was a

part of the *hevra qadisha* (sacred society; Maghrebi Jud.-Ar. *al-ḥebra*; Neo-Aram. *ḥav-rāye*), which also included the grave-diggers and those who carried body. The *hevra qadisha* was a basic charitable society in every Jewish community. Women members of the society heated the water for the washing and sewed the burial clothes. In Iranian and Afghan cities only the corpses of upper-class Jewish men were purified with water scented with roses, myrtle, and other flowers and herbs. In *Iran, a venerable and pious individual received a "great washing" (Heb. *reḥiṣa gedola*) that included many prayers and more elaborate washing. In Kurdistan, if the deceased was a youth or a maiden, betrothal songs would be sung by women as the body was washed.

(2) Dressing. The body was dressed in burial clothing (Heb. *takhrikhim*), the style of which varied in different times and places. According to *Cairo Geniza documents, the profound reverence for the sanctity of the Sabbath found its expression in the wish to be buried in one's Sabbath clothing. Considering the attitudes toward nakedness, clothing the dead body in several layers of garments, including undergarments, but with no jewelry was common among Jews and Muslims alike. Jewish men of higher status were buried in two cloaks, three robes, a washed turban of fine linen, new underdrawers, and a new waistband?, all from the deceased man's possessions. If the dead man belonged to the lower middle class, the clothing was commonly a tunic, two robes, a cloak, and a scarf which also covered a large part of the body. Wuḥsha, a successful and independent Jewish businesswoman (late 11th–early 12th century), ordered for her burial a *dabīqī* (fine linen) robe, a *mulā'a* (cloak), a *talī* (very fine linen) skullcap, a wimple, a *dabīqī* kerchief, a veil, and a Tustari *kisā'* (cloak) (Goitein, vol. 4, p. 188). The corpses of both sexes were wrapped in white sheets, and white strips (Ar. *kafan* or *madraj*) were used to tie the bodies. Shrouds were a part of women's trousseaux in upper-class families in the Middle Ages, and their

decoration was similar to that of the wedding dress. Linen shrouds served as protection against the evil eye and magic in some communities, and the remainders of rabbis' shrouds were used by women to sew amulets for their children. In Judeo-Maghrebi society, the various items of clothing were usually made of linen or cotton fabric, and men's corpses were dressed in them in a precise order: the headdress (Jud.-Ar. *'araqiyya*), trousers (Ar. *sirwāl*), an undergarment (Jud.-Ar. *qemizza*), jacket (Jud.-Ar. *qssot*), headband (Jud.-Ar. *'amāma*), ritual prayer shawl (Heb. *ṭalit*) with the fringes often removed, and overcoat (Jud.-Ar. *ujeh le-kfen*). In *Yemen a man's hair was shaved after his death, whereas women's hair was not, as was the case while they were living. Men's corpses were dressed in their holiday clothes and enveloped in the Sabbath cloak (Ar. *shamla*), while women were dressed in their wedding clothing (Ar. *lūluwī*). In *Libya the shoes of the dead were buried with the corpses so that no one could wear them again.

(3) Burial. Jewish burial takes place as soon as possible after death—usually on the same day as the death, or, if not possible, the following day. The cemetery is a sacred place, and in many countries, the tombs of saintly rabbis (Heb. and Jud.-Ar. *ṣaddiqim*) were *pilgrimage sites. The cemetery was often referred to euphemistically as *bet ḥayyim* (the house of the living) in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. The Hebrew term *bet qevurot* (graveyard) is also found. Throughout *Morocco and parts of *Algeria, the common *Judeo-Arabic term was *me'ara* (lit. cave in Heb.; cf. the Cave of Machpelah in Gen. 23). This was also the name used in Yemen. In Libya, in addition to *bet ḥayyim*, Jews called their cemetery in Judeo-Arabic *metṭa* (lit. bed in Heb.). The body was carried on a bier (called variously Heb. *mitṭa*, Ar. *lawḥa*, Neo-Aram. *shaqlit*, or Kurd. *darbaste*) and buried with no coffin. The encirclement (Heb. *haqafot*) of the corpse seven times in the cemetery before the burial was a widespread practice.

The presence of women in the funeral procession was not recommended, and in some

communities sons were not allowed to participate in their father's funeral. The funeral procession in Libya used to pass through the synagogue, where the Qaddish prayer was said. In Yemen the mourners walked barefoot during the funeral procession and wore a black *ṭalit*. In both Yemen and *Baghdad, a **piyyuṭ* by *Ibn Gabirol, *Shokhne batte ḥomer lamma tis'u 'ayin* (O dwellers of homes of clay, why do you raise your eye?), was chanted as the body was brought into the graveyard. In Iran, dirges were sung in the funeral procession, and the anthropologist Laurence Loeb observed in *Shiraz that "if an especially beloved son had died, sorrowful Persian poetry was sung to the accompaniment of the *kemanje* (spiked fiddle)" (Loeb, pp. 206–227). In certain times and places, Jewish funerals took place at night to avoid harassment by Muslims who sometimes regarded funeral processions as public displays of religion in violation of the Pact of 'Umar. By contrast, in the southern Moroccan region of *Oulad Mansour, Jewish funeral processions customarily passed through Berber villages, where the local Muslim inhabitants would ritually express their sorrow and, if acquainted with the deceased, would join the procession. In the *Ghardaia oasis of the Algerian *Mzab, dust consisting of gold, silver, and soil from the Holy Land was scattered as a farmer would sow grain as the cortege approached the cemetery. In Kurdistan, a certificate of ownership for four cubits of earth in the Holy Land (Neo-Aram. *ketavim arba dera'e qora*) purchased from rabbinical emissaries was placed in the deceased's hand after the body was washed.

Before leaving the cemetery the mourners washed their hands and did not dry them with a towel. Professional wailing women, as was customary in the East, were paid to praise the dead. Their loud cries and weeping externalized the emotions of loss and sorrow. In Iraq they were called *'iddādāt* (those who enumerate the deceased's qualities). The women engaged in *gedāda*, the custom of scratching or gashing their faces as a sign of mourning, even though it was specifically

prohibited in Lev. 19:28 and condemned by the rabbis, but often they limited it to symbolic ritualized gestures.

The land of the cemetery was purchased with funds from the communal treasury or dedicated for this purpose by individuals. There was no payment for the place of burial or the work of the buriers. The dead were buried in a special hierarchy determined by their socioeconomic status and sex. In *Sefrou, Morocco, the society of *gomle ḥasadim* (those who perform acts of loving-kindness) was responsible for the burial of Jews and for the traditional meal (*se'udat havra'a*) in the mourners' house.

Mourning

In all cultures, the mourning period is a period of passage for the living. During this period, the dead person and the mourners are both part of one group, which is in a liminal stage between the world of the living and that of the dead. The Jewish mourning period is divided into three successive stages, each marked by prohibitions and rituals. The most intensive mourning period is the seven days following the death, a period marked by a large number of taboos and prohibitions, such as washing, changing one's clothing, using makeup, jewelry, and perfumes, and wearing shoes. Men and women are not allowed to cut their hair, men do not shave their beards for the whole first month after the death, and in many communities large wall mirrors in the mourners' home are covered. The most visible sign of the mourning period is the rending of the clothing of the close relatives before the funeral begins. It was customary for mourners to sit on the floor or later, under the influence of modern Western customs, on low stools. The meal of consolation (Heb. *se'udat havra'a*), the first meal eaten on returning from the funeral, traditionally consists of hard-boiled eggs and other round foods. During the days of mourning, relatives and friends brought food to the mourning house. In North Africa no meat was eaten and no wine was drunk except for *mahya* (fig brandy), whereas Yeme-

nite Jews did eat meat and drink wine. In Libya, mourners ate unleavened bread throughout the seven days, perhaps because its Arabic name, *faṭīra*, was reminiscent of the Hebrew word *peṭīra* (passing away). In the *Maghreb the seven days of mourning were referred to as "closed in" (Jud.-Ar. *la-zger*, from Heb. *hesger*); elsewhere they were called *shiv'a* (lit. seven), as throughout Western Jewry.

The Yiddish term *yahrzeit* (pronounced variously *yaršet* and *yarsyat*) in Judeo-Maghrebian and some Middle Eastern communities designates the anniversary of the death, a custom adopted by Mediterranean Jews from medieval Ashkenazi Europe into the local languages and halakhic literature. A unique custom in Jewish communities under Muslim regimes was the *hashkava* (lit. laying to rest; pronounced *hashkaba*), the remembrance of the deceased in the cemetery, in the deceased's house, or in the synagogue through study of the Torah or a *mišva* meal. The remembrance prayers (*hashkava*) were said in the cemetery during the seven days of mourning and on the thirtieth day (Ar. *shahr*) ending the period known as the *sheloshim* (lit. thirty), as well as on the anniversary (Ar. *al-ām*). In Iranian communities a *mullah-tora khawān* (reader of the Torah) was invited during the seven days of mourning to read selections from the Torah and other legends in Hebrew and Persian as an expression of mourning. In Iraq a professional reader (Ar. *qāri*) was hired to read for the ascent of the deceased's soul. These customs are parallel to the Muslim practice of having a Qur'an-reciter.

Graves and Gravestones

The styles of gravestones (Heb. *maševot*) varied widely even within a single country like Morocco, ranging from small natural stones, with or without inscriptions, to raised cenotaphs with compartments for memorial candles, and to anthropomorphic graves with symbolic indications of the gender of the deceased (see Muller-Lancet and Champault, pls. 228, 230–234). This was a result of the

socioeconomic status of the deceased and their families, on one hand, and of practices assimilated from the surrounding Muslim culture, on the other. Minna Rozen has noted three principal types of Jewish gravestones in *Turkey. The first consists of small horizontal limestone ones from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries with brief inscriptions, and these both increase in size with time. The other two types are prism-shaped and tablet-shaped. The former resembles a coffin and has decorated sides. It sits directly on the ground or on an oblong foundation. The tablet style is usually a large slab of marble sometimes up to six meters (20 feet) and, in addition to the inscription, can have vegetal designs (see Rozen, pp. 60–63, pls. 1–6). The Haskoy cemetery in *Istanbul is a fine example of the influence of Ottoman culture and art on the Jewish manner of burial, as can be seen in the decorations and in the carving of a candle niche in combination with the shape of *miḥrāb* or *hilye*. In Morocco and Iran only important rabbis and *ṣaddiqim* were rewarded with magnificent gravestones; in contrast, ordinary people had simple gravestones marked with their name and date of death. The name of the deceased was inscribed on a small gravestone in the villages of the Atlas Mountains, but in the cities the gravestones were large, reflecting Spanish influence. In *Tetuan, Mogador (*Essaouira), and other cities of Spanish Morocco, the gravestones were embedded with long decorated inscriptions in fine Hebrew. The shortage of stones for gravestones in Baghdad at the beginning of the twentieth century led to the use of clay and bricks instead, with inscriptions written on paper and covered with glass.

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Ghez, Paul

Paul Ghez was born in *Sousse, Tunisia, in 1898. At the age of eighteen, he was wounded while serving as a volunteer in a French artillery unit during World War I. After studying law in France, he became a lawyer and joined the group around **La Justice*, a newspaper that supported the *assimilation of Tunisian Jews into French culture. He was also a member of the Jewish council and head of the veteran’s organization Les Anciens Combattants. Ghez volunteered again for the French army during World War II. From 1942 to 1943,