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**The Samaritan High Priest Shalma [1784-1855]
And the Arab Tailors of Nablus**
by
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The following Arabic short story about the Samaritan high priest Salama b. Ghazal b. Ishaq b. Sadaqa) Shalmia b. Tabia b. Isaac b. Avraham b. Tzedaka) was written by the late high priest between the years 1799 and 1826 and all high priests who followed him were his offspring¹[1]. Salama (1784-1855) actually served as high priest between the years 1799 and 1826 and all high priests who followed him were his offspring²[2]. After the death of Ghazal, his father, in 1787, the Samaritans lived about twelve years without a high priest because the only heir, his son Salama, was too young to take the office of high priesthood³[3]. At the age of nine, the 20th of Jumada al-Akhira 1208 A.H., 23 January 1793 A. D. the orphaned Salama started to copy the Samaritan Torah. Unfortunately, only one folio of that Torah has survived in Firkovich Sam II B 55 at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg⁴[4].

At the beginning of the nineteenth century approximately thirty Samaritan families lived in al-Khadra area, referred to in the Torah by the patriarch Jacob as “Hlqt al-Smrh”⁵[5]. The governor of Nablus was firstly Musa Bek Tuqan, followed by Mahmud ‘Abd al-Hadi. The tax collector in the Samaritan community was ‘Abd Hannuna b. Sadaqa al-Danfi. Salama had fairly good relations with the governors of the district of Nablus especially because of his knowledge of astrology (tangim) and of writing amulets

1[1] (Afterwards: Abu Shafi’, The Book on the Samaritans). A copy of his hand-written book including 351 pages (the author’s pagination is inaccurate) is preserved under the number 7036 in the Yad Ben-Zvi Library, Jerusalem. A brief description of the 98 Samaritan manuscripts prepared by the present writer in 1981 and in 1997 is available at the Yad Ben-Zvi Library. Ben-Zvi asked the priest to write this book, see A.B. Samaritan News 763-765, 1.6.2000, p.53. The late priest ben ‘Uzzi was among the first Samaritans of Nablus that I had the privilege to learn to know in the late 1960s.

2[2] Paul Kahle, Die Samaritaner im Jahre 1909. In: Palastinajahrbuch 26 (1930) pp.89-103, no.: Y. Shavit, Y. Goldstein, H. Be’er (eds.), Personalities in Eretz-Israel 1799-1948. A Biographical Dictionary. Tel Aviv 1983, p. 494 (Hebrew), Reinhard Pummer, Samaritan Marriage Contracts and deeds of Divorce. Volume I, Weisbaden 1993, oo. 152-153. No mention of this high priest in Alan D. Crown, Reinhard Pummer, Abraham Tal (eds.), A Companion to Samaritan Studies. Tubingen 1993.

3[3] Cf. Ratson Tzedaqa, Samaritan Legends. Twelve Legends from Oral Tradition Edited, Annotated and Accompanied by an Appendix: Samaritan Folk-Traditions: Selective Bibliography by Dr. Dov Noy. Haifa 1965, pp.48-50 (Hebrew).

4[4] On 1 verso a colophon in Arabic beginning with the common words “It was the beginning of the happy offspring...” This folio, 20.7x 16 cm, written space 15 x 11 cm included 22 lines, Gen 1:1-8. On the Samaritans during that period see Nathan Schur, History of the Samaritans, Frankfurt. Bern. New York. Paris 1989, pp. 139-191.

5[5] Genesis 33:19, read “hlqt hasdh” see De Sacy mentioned in note 7, p. 53. Abu Shafi’, The Book of the Samaritans, p.27 writes and known today by the name ‘al-khadra mosque’, the location of Jacob’s mourning. Today these two Hebrew words are pronounced “alqat assadi’.

(bitaqaṭ). This knowledge of predicting the future of people by watching the stars, is expressed in some of the legends collected by Ratson Tsedaqa.

Salama's son, Imran (1809-1874), was the high priest of the Samaritans during the period 1826-1859⁶[6] only, although, according to the Samaritan halakha, a high priest remains in his office until he dies. Salama, known often as Salama al-Kahin or al-Lawi Salama, corresponded for almost two decades with the well-known orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) in Arabic and Neo-Hebrew. This correspondence, significant in various respects, was published and translated into French by De Sacy, the pioneer of Samaritan Arabic studies in the modern era⁷[7]. Some letters by Salama were addressed to the abbot Gregoire and others to the bishop Robert Huntington (1637-1701)⁸[8]. In addition, Salama met with some European travelers who visited the Samaritan community in Nablus and they left us a positive picture of the character of this high priest⁹[9].

Salama composed prayers in Neo-Hebrew and several of these prayers are included in the collection of Cowley¹⁰[10]. He also wrote poetry in the so-called Middle Arabic, and a few examples are known to us¹¹[11]. Therefore, his name should be added to the list of Samaritan Poets in Arabic prepared by the present writer some years ago¹²[12].

Salama's marriage with Sis Shelah Ab-Sakuwwa ha-Danfi (Warda Salih Murgan al-Danafi) took place in 1805, as recorded in their ketubba (kitab al-aris¹³[13]. Firkovich Sam X 66 in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg¹⁴[14]. The couple had three sons, 'Imran, Harun and Ishaq. Salama's mother, Hadiyya, the sister of Ghazal b. Surur, was from Gaza. In light of his correspondence, it is evident that for two decades, from

6[6] See Haseeb Shehadah, A poem by the Samaritan High Priest 'Imran ben Salama Against Mubarak al-Mufarragi Who became a Convert to Islam in 1811. *Studia Orientalia*, Helsinki (in press).

7[7] Sylvestre de Sacy, Correspondence des Samaritains de naplouse pendant les annees 1808 st suiv. In: *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliotheque de Roi et autres Bibiotheques* 12 (1831) pp. 1-235.

8[8] Mathias delcor, La correspondance savants europeens, en quete de manuscrits, avec les samaritains du XVIIe au XIXe siecle. In: Jean-Pierre Rothschild, Guy Dominique Sixdenier (eds.), *Etudes samaritains pentateuque et targum, exegese et philology, chroniquques...*Louvain-Paris 1988, pp.36 seq.

9[9] Nathan Schur, History of the Samaritans, pp.162-163, Ferdinand Dexinger, *Der Taheb. Die "messianische" Gestalt bei den Samaritainern*. Habilitationsschrift. Wien 1978, pp.84-93.

10[10] A.E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy*. Vols. I-II, Oxford 1909, vol. II, pp. xxxiii, xcvi, Solomonia Tabia, pries. At the beginning of manuscript Bod. Opp. Add. 4099 there is a poem by Salama starting with (Abraham the son of Terah the origin of the faithful) and it is not included in Cowley's.

11[11] See, for example, Firkovich Sam IX 12, p. 7b and Sam XIII 58 in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, manuscript No. 7023 in the Yad Ben-Zvi Library in Jerusalem, Ratson Tsedaqa Hassafarey (ed.) *Kitab al-Tasabich* (sic!) (The Book of Commendations) the Best Wishes, Commendations and Supplications to God, Written by Samaritan Writers between 10th-20th Centuries A.D. Be Copied in Old Hebrew and Arabic, transliterated in Old Hebrew Letters. Holon, Israel 1970, pp.145-147.

12[12] Haseeb Shehadah, The Samaritan Arabic Liturgy. In: Vittorio Morabito, Alan D. Crown, Lucy Davey (eds.), *Samaritan researches Volume V. Proceedings of the Congress of the SES (Milan July 8-12 1996) and of the Special ICANAS Congress (Budapest July 7-11, 1997)*. Sydney 2000, p. 282 and his place should be no.33 and his grandson Salama moves to no. 34, etc.

13[13] This is the Arabic term given by Jacob b. 'Uzzi, see Abu Shaf , *The Book on the Samaritans*, p. 250.

14[14] Cf. now Reinhard Pummer, *Samaritan Marriage Contracts and deeds of Divorce*, I-II, Weisbaden 1993-1997, vol. I pp. 100, 152-153 (p. 153 line 6 read 1809 instead of 1909), vol. II, pp. 130-132.

1788 until 1808, the Samaritans were forbidden to celebrate their Passover on Mount Karizim¹⁵[15] (=Gerizim). Salama did not know anything about the Karaites. He was convinced that there were Samaritans in Europe and firmly rejected the possibility of selling Samaritan manuscripts. He used terms “al-rayyis al-galil: imam al-sumarah, kanayis” for “the high priest (venerated head/ chief); the high priest (the priest of the Samaritans); synagogues” respectively¹⁶[16]. Salama was the last high priest to live in the old, dark, and damp priestly house which was divided into three parts¹⁷[17]. In the past that house was known by the name ‘hash-shem’, that is to say, “the name of God” because holy parchments including the names of God were preserved there in a small closet. Later those parchments were placed in a small golden box in a metal closet with other books in the synagogue¹⁸[18].

Ya’qub b. Shafiq (‘Uzzi) b. Ya’qub b. Harun b. Salama b. Ghazal (afterwards, Abu Shafi’) was born in 1899 and died on the 26th of January 1987¹⁹[19]. He served as high priest from the 20th of October 1984 until his death. His parents died when he was young; the father died in 1905/6 at the age of thirty-five. His mother ‘Aziza, the daughter of Murgan b. Salama al Altif, died in 1915/6 at the age of thirty. This small family of four members used to live in a 3.5 x 2 m room. The children, Abu Sahf I’ and his younger sister, Munira, were raised for ten years under the auspices of their mother, their grandfather Jacob b. Aaron the Levite (1840-1916) and their paternal uncle Abu al-Hasan b. Ya’quub (1883-1959). It is worth mentioning that Abu Shafi’s father, a bookseller in Palestine, visited London with three Samaritans in 1903. They were Ishaq b. ‘Iman, Nagi b. Khadr and Shelabi b. Ya’-qub b. Altif. The main purposes of this three month trip were to sell Samaritan manuscripts, to collect donations in order to assist poor Samaritan families and for opening a school. Among the manuscripts sold to a British lady named Mrs./Miss Feen/Fien²⁰[20] was an old parchment, a Finasiyye dating back to pre-Islamic times! At that time there were still four scrolls among which the famous one by Avisha’ b. Pinhas, were housed in the three or four wood and metal cabinets in the synagogue in Nablus. That synagogue, built in the thirteenth century, had room for sixty worshippers. Each head of the three priestly families held one of the three keys for the three big locks

15[15] See De Sacy in note 6, pages 57 (5 occurrences), 58, 62, 63. ...is to be found too, see p.63. The variant (Ar kryzm, two separate words) is to be found in Samaritan Arabic literature. It is included in a colophon written by Jacob b. Aaron b. Shalmia b. Talbia b. Isaac b. Abraham in 1854. See Firkovich Sam II B 164 in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg. ‘Mount Gerizim’ as two separate words in Samaritan script is also to be found. It is in a manuscript of two folios, Firkovich Sam XIV 42 from the year 1667.

16[16] Ibid. pp. 59, 60, 61, 65, 132. The word ‘kanisa’ for synagogue’ is common in Samaritan useage, see the one page manuscript Firk. Sam XIV 17 dated 1769 in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg. The terms ‘al-habr al-kana’is, kahana ‘izam, kahin a’zam, al-habr al-a’zam’ are used by Abu Shafi’, The book on the Samaritans, pp. 12, 14, 15, 16.

17[17] See Tarikh hayati by the priest Jacob the Samaritan, Nablus 1975, p. 5.

18[18] Ibid, p. 6. The word ‘ha-shem’ is written in Samaritan and square Hebrew scripts.

19[19] I drew heavily on Abu Shafi’, Wasiyyati wa-tarikh hayati found in two versions and Abu Shafi’, The Book on the Samaritans which are at my disposal (approximately, 930 pages). My thanks are due to the late high priest who allowed me to produce copies of his works in 1970. There is no direct mention of the year in which the priest was born. The one adapted to 1899 is the most reasonable.

20[20] Abul Shafi’ mentions that she was a missionary worker in Palestine and knew Arabic. See Tarikh hayati by the priest Jacob the Samaritan, Nablus 1972, p. 10.

of the iron big gate of the synagogue. This meant that the three representatives should be present to open or lock the synagogue.

Abu Shafi' received his basic education, religious and secular, in three different systems. First, his demanding religion teachers were Salama b. 'Imran and Ibrahim b. Khadr. The Torah as well as prayers from Marqe Durran were taught. Secondly, he attended a Protestant missionary school where he was supposed to learn mainly Arabic and English. The old, liberal and modest teacher Abu nadir was not successful. Thirdly, the school of E. K. Warren founded in 1912 was considered a good place for Abu Shafi' to learn various subjects such as English, arithmetic, history, geography and religion, especially the basics of cantillation. That school was in two big houses in the Samaritans' quarter, one for the boys and the other for the girls. The number of the pupils in each house was about seventy, distributed into three classes. The age of the pupils varied between five and twenty years. Yet, it should be emphasized that the major part of learning and education was achieved by Abu Shafi' himself. He taught himself both Hebrew (called in one place, the Jewish language) and English, and was fond of reading books. In his youth, history, love stories, and novels attracted him. But later he turned to scientific and philosophical works.

In 1937 Abu Shafi' married 'Afaf (Yafa²¹[21]) the daughter of Ghazal b. Khadir the priest (1924-1998) and they had ten children, five sons and five daughters²²[22]. The gap in education and in age between the new couple was great. The elder son Sahfiq ('Uzzi) and so the high priest was known by the Kunya "Abu Shafi'" in colloquial Arabic. He tried to move from Nablus to Holon near Tel Aviv in 1961. This hidden desire was hinted at in his written and recorded testament, approximately two decades later²³[23]. He declared that he wished to move to Holon in order to serve as Kohen and if it was needed even to live in a tent. This aspiration was not realized, as he confessed, because of the interference of his cousin, the priest Sadaqa. The real reason behind the denial of the request of the priest to move to Israel is different. Anyone who reads the biography of Abu Shafi' comes to the inevitable conclusion that the Israeli authorities needed him to stay in Nablus and continue to function as a source of information. He visited Israel after the war of 1967, met the president and the prime minister of Israel and Dr. Z. Ben Hayyim. Abu Shafi' worked hard for the Jewish Agency more than eighteen years, thereby endangering his life. In addition he wrote for the newspapers, the Palestine Post and Davar for more than eighteen years, and for ha-Aretz for twenty-one years. His attempts to get adequate compensation were in vain²⁴[24]. On the other hand, he and his family succeeded in getting Israeli identity cards and "new immigrant" certificates.

21[21] The name in Arabic means 'virtuous, righteous' and in Hebrew 'beautiful'.

22[22] See A.B. Samaritan news 715-717, 31.7.1998, p. 15. The boys are Shafiq, Mu'in, Aziz, Gazal and Mu'ayyid. There is no mention of the daughters in the testament but in other places. They are 'Aziza, 'Amal, Salam, 'Ibtisam and Raga'.

23[23] This testament has several versions by the passage of years. The one in my possession consists of thirty pages and it was written when the priest was eighty years old. Any special characteristics of the priest without a reference means that they are based on this testament.

24[24] See Tarikh hayati by the priest Jacob the Samaritan, Nablus 1975, p.171.

Abu Shafi' was courageous, open minded, liberal, frank, diplomatic and modest. It is really rare, in my opinion, to find an old man living in a traditional middle eastern society saying to his wife "habibati or habibiti", let alone putting it down in writing. In addition he included a small chapter entitled 'My love Story' which had lasted seven years and were the sweetest years of his life. This long story did not end with his marriage with the daughter of his maternal uncle. Yet, while mentioning the names of his five sons one-by-one, he refrained from mentioning the names of his five daughters and the name of his wife.

Abu Shafi' was active in various fields. Socially, he had good relations with Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze dignitaries such as Yitshak Ben-Zvi, Dr. Yisra'el b. Ze'ev (Wolfson), Moshe Shertuk, Menahem Kapeliouk, Akram Z'etir, Dr. Muhammad Amin, Hasan al-Katib, Father Zakariyya, the head of the Latin monastery in Nablus, and Dr. Ahamd Hamza. He was among a small Samaritan delegation, Sadaqa b. Ishaq, Nagi Nhadr and 'Abd Ibrahim, which met the Jordanian king Talal in 1951. On the other hand, his connections with some of his relatives were not free from rancour, envy and jealousy.

He wrote some hand-written books in Arabic, copied many manuscripts²⁵[25], corresponded with Yitshak ben Zvi (1883-1963), ²⁶[26] the second president of Israel, was a correspondent and served as a source of information in Nablus for the Hebrew newspaper Do'ar Hay-Yom, Davor, Haaretz and the English one Palestine Post. His reports about aggression, fights and robberies, which were written in Arabic, were translated into Hebrew by the Jewish journalist M. Kapeliuk. Those reports, at least at the beginning were not published. His work in journalism caused him political hardships particularly during the 'general strike' in 1936 and the 'peasants revolt' in 1938. In addition he engaged in several occupations such as palmistry, distilling and selling arrack²⁷[27], and commerce. Abu Shafi' put it clearly—the job of high priesthood since his grandfather's time is equal to nothing and its holder will starve if he does not have another occupation²⁸[28].

Among Abu Shafi''s books, mention should be made of "The Book on the Samaritans", 'My Testament and Story of my Life', 'A Partial Arabic Translation of Yitshak Ben-Zvi's Sefer Hash-Shomronim, and the Samaritan Sacrifice of Passover in Hebrew

²⁵[25] Such as the following manuscripts: Ms SamI in Seminar fur Semitistik und Arabistik in Berlin, a Samaritan Torah with Tiberian vocalization from 1944; the Yad ben-Zvi Library in Jerusalem, Mss nos 7015, 7029, 7034, 7055, 7061, 7090. Abu Shafi' used to copy manuscripts as a means of livelihood. He had nice handwriting and people, especially foreigners, came and bought what 'his pen has bled' (yastarun ma yanzifuhu qalami). In addition he worked five years as a scribe for his cousin, the high priest 'Imran b. Ishaq (1889-1980) and copied over thirty manuscripts.

²⁶[26] See Gabriella Sreindler Moscati, The Correspondence between the Samaritans and Yizhaq ben-Zvi, New Evidence for their Cultural and Political Relationship. In: Vittorio Morabito, Alan Crown, Lucy Davey (eds.), Samaritan Researches Volume V. Proceedings of the Congress of the SES (Milan July 8-12 1996) Special Section of the ICANAS Congress (Budapest July 7-11 1997). Sydney 2000, pp. 365-374.

Needless to say, this correspondence needs still further research and the publication of some samples preserved in the Yad ben-Zvi Library and in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem would be required.

²⁷[27] Called by him 'a despicable profession' (mihna mardula). The usual word that he gives for 'arrack' is 'khamr'.

²⁸[28] See Tarikh hayati by priest Jacob the Samaritan, Nablus 1975, p. 4.

published in 1934²⁹[29]. A short treatise dealing with Samaritan scholars and their Arabic writings is included in the Book of the Samaritans, though it is available separately³⁰[30]. Abu Shafi' translated manuscripts from Arabic into Hebrew including a pamphlet entitled "Who are the Samaritans" which was published in Holon in 1965 by Ibrahim Sadaqa, the husband of one of the daughters of Abu Shafi'. It should be noted especially that Abu Shafi' has translated the Samaritan Pentateuch into Arabic and has pointed out the difference between the translations of Abu Sa'id (thirteenth century), Rab Sa'adia Gaon (882-942) and the well-known Septuagint. This work, which took three years (1935-1938), was given to Yishak Ben-Yvi who failed to find an adequate purchaser for it³¹[31]. The priest decided to sell this translation because he needed money for his marriage. My continuous attempts since the 1970's to find any traces of such a translation have been fruitless.

Abul Shafi' produced copies of the Samaritan Torah and the defter (collection of prayers) with vocalization in order to teach his children and to preserve the traditional oral pronunciation. He claimed that some 'ignorant, frantic and reactionary persons' forbade such an action. Their argument was that these signs of vowels are considered an addition to the holy text of the Torah (Deut 4:2, 13:1)³²[32]. The priest Jacob resisted the temptations to sell old manuscripts for any sums of money (abaytu an abi'a al-khalida bi-l-fani)³³[33].

The life of Abul Shafi' was hard and he described it more than once as 'a tragedy' (ma'-sa). As a father he did not derive much pleasure from the intellectual achievements of his sons and suggested that rational people should, in fact, give a banquet when somebody passes away. As for himself, he desired that his coffin be made of strong wood painted green and the grave ought to be two and half meters deep and one meter wide. Planting flowers and especially roses beside the grave would be appreciated. He did not like mourning and wearing black clothes (la 'uhibb al-hidad wa-la libs al-sawad). Therefore, he beseeched his wife, his daughters and his grandchildren not to mourn over thirty days.

²⁹[29] The first book is mentioned in the first note. This work was translated by A. Mani, the Hebrew teacher in Nablus, into Hebrew. This typewritten translation of 263 pages is found under the no. 7043 in the Yad Ben-Zvi Library. The name of the second book of Shu Shafi is (Arabic)..... Nablus 1974, 394 pp. The partial translation of 61 pages is found in Manuscript No. 7088 in the Yad Ben-Zvi Library in Jerusalem. It seems that most of the books used by Ben-Zvi for writing his book 'Sefer ha-Shomronim' were bought from Abu Shafi'.

³⁰[30] Yad Ben-Zvi Library Manuscript no. 7033. See Kneset 4 (1939) pp. 321-327, notes and additions by Israel ben-Ze'ev and Yitshak Ben-Zvi. These two scholars, who were friends with the priest Abu Shafi', asked

³¹[31] Abu Shafi', Wasiyyati wa-tarkh hay ati, p. 175. In Abu Shafi', The Book of the Samaritans, there is a small chapter pp. 201-206 dealing with the differences between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Masoretic Pentateuch.

³²[32] Abu Shafi', The Book of the Samaritans, p. 124 (in fact it should be 224; Cf. Rudolf Macuch, The Importance of Samaritan Tradition for the Hermeneutics of the Pentateuch. In: Abraham Tal, Moshe Florentin, Proceedings of the First International Congress of the societe D'Etudes Samaritanes. Tel-Aviv, April 11-13, 1988. Tel Aviv University 1991, pp. 14-15.

³³[33] Literally 'to sell the eternal for the temporal'.

In the following story of the High Priest Salama b. Ghazal b. Ishaq b. Ibrahim b. Sadaqa and the Arab tailors of Nablus during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is presented as it appeared in Abu Shaf I's hand-written book on the Samaritans in 1960. The only modification I made is the addition of the two dots on the ta- ' marbuta which were missing in several cases. The story would have had some interest for Palestinian dialectology had it been written in spoken Arabic of Nablus. The stroke / denotes the end of a page and the beginning of another³⁴[34]. The English translation follows the Arabic text.

From the copyist, the Arabic written story has been omitted from this article along with the footnotes 35-41. The full article can be located at the University of Helsinki and the publication of the A.B. Samaritan News, 6.4.2001 785-788 Holon Israel.

Translation:

The Unwritten Stories

The Priest Salama b. Ghazal and the Tailors

This is a true story of a recent period. It had not been written down before we transcribed it from those who heard it from their parents and knew it. We present it here, as well as, the following one as part of the stories of this priest⁴². The priest Salama was renowned for his piety, simplicity and spiritual contacts, as well as for his poverty and lack of means. He was skilled in science of astrology which he had learned from his father Ghazal. As a result he was close to Arab governors and leaders who ruled this town [Nablus] and who helped him a little to meet the needs of daily life and support his large family.

This is Salama the priest who was mentioned above in the survey of his father's and his life⁴³. He was the only son of the priest Ghazal and his wife Hadiyya the Samaritan from Gaza and the sister of Ghazal b. al-Surur, his friend. The child was born after the family returned from Gaza [to Nablus]. At that time the Samaritans of Nablus refrained from giving in marriage one of their daughters because of a dispute between him and some influential Samaritans. Consequently, he moved to Gaza and lived there for a period of time with respect and honour among the Samaritans. They gave him the best of their daughters in marriage and did not let him go back until strong urging and insistence of the notables of Nablus who expressed their regret and sorrow for what they had done against him.

³⁴[34] Abu Shafi', The Book on the Samaritans, pp. 183-186.

⁴² It is entitled "The story of Salama al-kahn with Husain 'Abd al-Hadi', pp. 187-196. Two other stories in Hebrew about Salama are included in Ratson Tsedaqa, Samaritan Legends..., pp.49-56.

⁴³ See pages 65-66. One line is devoted to Ghazal and four lines to his son Salama. That is why rendered 'targamat hayit' which means 'biography' by 'survey'.

The priest Salama was extremely simple, religious and pious. He practiced tailoring as a profession not because he mastered it but because he regarded it the only occupation through which it would be possible to earn money to support [literally: spend on] his family, especially because he had no other income and no one among his impoverished community was able to help him. Yet, some of them did help him in renting a very modest and small shop in the bazaar on the street [wakala, guild?44] of the tailors in Nablus.

He worked for a long period making qanabiz (traditional men's robes) for simple villagers for a small fee. In spite of the fact that he was not skilled in this profession, people chose him as their tailor, causing envy among his neighbouring Arab tailors, who hated him and asked him to raise his fees and even threatened him. Since he did not pay attention to them, they decided to harm him by accusing him of stealing and complaining to the governor of Nablus, the oppressor Musa Bey Tuqan. To make the charge, they secretly placed in his shop pieces of cloth that they accustomed to steal from their own clients. Then a delegation from them went and met Musa Bey Tuqan. They presented to him the matter of this Samaritan priest who steals the property of Muslims considering such action as lawful. They all testified and swore in front of the governor that they were telling the truth.

The Bey who knew the priest did not believe them at first sight and rebuked them harshly. He said to them: You envy this poor and humble person and treat him unjustly. He is simple, pious and above any suspicion. They answered: Our lord, if you do not believe us you can immediately send⁴⁵ some of your men to search his shop. We are sure that there are some stolen goods [pieces] in it. If our statement turns out to be false then we would be ready to accept the punishment that our lord imposes on us. The Bey agreed and commanded some of his men to go and search the priest's shop. He instructed them that if they found any stolen goods as charged by the tailors they bring both the stolen goods and the owner of the shop. If they do not find anything they should not bring the priest and bother him. They went and searched Salama's shop though he did not know why they came and what they were looking for. When they found the stolen pieces that the complainants themselves had put there, they asked him to accompany them to Bey and he did. When they arrived before the Bey with what they found, the priest stood in front of the Bey. The Bey, feeling pity for the priest, asked him to tell the truth. The priest denied having any knowledge of the stolen goods. The Bey, who did not suspect that the charges that the charge was a trick by the tailors, became furious and thought that the priest was lying and refuses to acknowledge the truth. So he raised his hand to slap him [nobody he slapped remained alive] but Salama moved aside from the blow. The Bey's hand hit the wall. The blow was so hard that the Bey fainted because of the intense pain. Before he regained consciousness one of his brothers led the priest Salama by the hand and said to him: Go away and save yourself, you poor man, before you get killed. He opened the door for him and ordered the guards to let him go. The priest took to his heels not believing he was safe. He also did not know either what was the source of this misfortune. When he arrived home he hid in the cellar below a floor tile and had been

44 The exact meaning is unclear.

45 The literal translation is 'then you have to...' and this is unreasonable here.

intended for such purposes for a long time. He remained in hiding until Bey's messenger showed up. When Bey regained consciousness he felt a great pain in his hand. He tried to move his hand but could not. Orthopaedic therapists and physicians tried to cure him but their attempts to mitigate the pain or enable him to move his hand were in vain. Then the Bey asked about the priest and what they did to him. (He feared that they might have killed him). His brother came close to him and informed him that he took the priest to his home. Musa Bey thanked him for doing that and requested him to go and apologize to the priest and fetch him, believing that no one else could help him. The Bey's brother hurried to the priest's house and after some difficulty the priest showed up and agreed to accompany him. When he arrived, the Bey apologized to him and asked him to appeal to God and pray for healing. Salama did and the pain vanished and the hand was healed. Salama was honoured and rewarded with a large sum of money and gifts for his family and an outfit for him. Though the Bey believed in Salama's innocence, he could not understand how the stolen pieces came to the shop. Yet when the Bey brought the tailors who had complained and started beating them with stick⁴⁶ some of them unveiled the truth and confessed that they themselves had placed the pieces that they had stolen from their clients in the shop. They received punishment which they had brought upon themselves, and they paid a fine which was given to the priest. After that the Bey remained grateful to the priest and extended to him a helping hand. END.

⁴⁶ Literally 'he put them under the rod'.