traffic with India was still lively. Nevertheless, Egypt remained the main gate through which the Yemen was in contact with the outer world and in this capacity we find it in the Book of Maqamat of the Yemenite poet Yihya az-Zahiri, who travelled and wrote in the second part of the xvith century.

Yihya Zakharya [1] b. S'adya b. Ya'aqov az-Zahiri was a gifted writer and a remarkable personality. There is no need to dwell here on his literary work in general [2], but something must be said about his book of 'maqamat', before we can appreciate its references to Egypt and the Jews living there [3].

As the author states himself in the introduction to his work, he

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[1] The very strange identification of the Arabic Yahya (pronounced Yihya in the Yemen) with the Hebrew Zakharia, which has been common in the Yemen since the earliest times to the present day, is explained by Y. Rasabi (himself a promising young scholar of Yemenite origin) as a confusion of the two names which occur together in the seventh verse of Sura 19 (Leshonenu, vol. 13, p. 165, note 1). The confusion obviously has taken place already in Islam, for the famous legend of the never-congealing blood of the murdered prophet Zechariah (L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. IV, p. 304), which in the Prot-evangelium of James, 24, was told of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist (L. Ginzberg, *ib.*, vol. VI, p. 396), is attributed by the Muslims to John (called Yahya) himself.—The nisba az-Zahiri is obviously derived from az-Zahira, a village near Tan'im, east of San'a, cf. Rathjens, *Sud-Arabienreise*, vol. 3, map 3, 3 *c*-4 *c*. The place is inhabited by Jews up to the present day.

[2] In the 45th maqama, which is the last (p. 466 in the ms. used by me, see next note), he mentions the following books : 1. A commentary on difficult Aggada-passages. 2. His Commentary on the Pentateuch called Seda Lad-derekh. 3. 'Anaq, a didactical poem on linguistics. 4. His book of Maqamat. Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are still existent. In addition, many poems of his have been preserved, while another book of philosophical content, obviously lost, is mentioned by Kehati, *Zion* (old series), 3, p. 44.

[3] A testimony for the great popularity of the book is the considerable number of manuscripts extant. H. Schirman, *Bulletin of the Schocken Research Institute*, vol. 3, 1937, p. 188, enumerates *nine* of them. I am using a MS. not mentioned by Schirman, which was put at my disposal by the courtesy of the proprietor, M. Ya'ish Naddaf of Jerusalem, comparing at the same time the MSS. of the Hebrew University Library and the Schocken Institute. Some sections of the book have already appeared in print, cf. the list published by Schirman, *loc. cit.*