he got rid by feigning madness [1], or the really moving story—in the sixteenth maqama—of his marriage to the beautiful Hanna in a town of Persia, who bore him twin sons, but died suddenly. On his return to the Yemen he had to leave his little sons with his brother-in-law (who is mentioned by name), but when he saw them again after fourteen years, he was greatly delighted to find the boys reciting poems in honour of the books studied by them. In reality, the whole story is only a frame for the poems on the books mentioned, and the author, as we shall soon prove, was in Persia only once.

In order to get solid ground beneath our feet, we must take recourse to those passages in which the author speaks almost in plain language about his life and his travels. These are found in maq. 25, p. 284, maq. 39, p. 417, and maq. 45, p. 466. From these passages it can be deduced beyond doubt that Zakharia travelled from the Yemen to India (Cochin and Calicut in the present Madras province and states), Persia (Hormuz), Basra, Bagdad, Mosul, Nisibis, Aleppo, Damascus, Safad, Tiberias, Kafr Kana, Nablus, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaffa and from there by ship to Egypt, from where, through 'Kush' (Upper Egypt) he returned to the Yemen. The motives for his travels were, as he says in maq. 19, p. 211-212, that he had often heard [2] wise men praising those who acquired knowledge by travelling, and particularly—as stressed in maq. 41, p. 431 and 433—his desire to get exact information about the calculations concerning the advent of the Messiah which was then expected almost every day [3]. The date of these travels can be fixed accurately. For in 1562 Zakharia was in Tiberias (maq. 25, p. 284), while he came back to the Yemen about five years before the catastrophe

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[1] A wide-spread, almost international, motif. It is repeated in maq. 25 (p. 295-296) with the difference that there the unhappy bridegroom of an invalid princess frees himself by pretending to be a weaver—a most despised occupation in the Orient. Cf. a similar story e. g. in Bauer, *Das Palaestinische Arabisch*, p. 179.

[2] This seems to show that Yemenites were used to travel abroad in those days.

[3] The year 1575 and, then, 1579 were the dates for which the coming of the Messiah was calculated, maq. 21, p. 237. No wonder therefore that the author was very much depressed when 1579 arrived without anything happening, maq. 24, p. 268.