

The Jews of Najrān: Their origins and conditions during pre- and early Islamic history, 525 -661 CE

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Abstract

The present study examines the main aspects the history of Judaism in Najrān from 525 to 661 CE. It begins by evaluating the contribution of research in the field of current study. This paper examines the controversy surrounding the date of the arrival of Judaism and its spread among Najrānites. It discusses the conditions of Najrānite Jews from the end of the Kingdom of Ḥimyar prior to the advent of Islam. The study focuses next on the conditions of the Najrānite Jews, who in early Islamic times became subject to new laws that strongly influenced certain aspects of their lives.

Introduction

During the time following the end of the Kingdom of Ḥimyar around 525 CE, and prior to the early decades of Islam, there appears to have been scant interest in the Jews of Najrān among primary sources, and this is also true of recent research.¹ True, the Christian community was the major group within the Najrān population, in addition to polytheists, but Jewish people also formed a major part of its society at that time. The reason for this lack of interest may be due to the focus of Christian and Muslim sources on Christians and polytheists, and later on Islam, and so unfortunately these sources, written by Eastern Christian and Muslim authors, provide very few details of the history of Jewish community in Najrān.

In this respect, Ali scans the available sources for the history of the Jews in the Arabian Peninsula and concludes that it is hard to find any Jewish works written during the period under study.² For the history of Judaism in South Arabia specifically, recent scholars such as Stillman, Ahroni and Tobi acknowledge that there is an absence of Jewish material concerning the history of Jews during the time under discussion, except what can be learnt from early Muslim and Christian sources.³

Most studies, including those by Wolfensohn, Stillman, Ahroni, Abū Jabal and Tobi pay special attention to particular issues regarding the existence of the Jews in Najrān such as the conversion to Judaism among the people of South Arabia (Yemen), the conflict between Judaism and Christianity in the reign of the Ḥimyarite King Dhū Nuwās (Yūsuf As'ar Yath'ar) around 525 CE and the conditions of South Arabian Jews at the advent of Islam.⁴ For Najrān, however, the area of the present research, it is difficult to find any specific study examining the context of the Jewish presence in Najrān as a major community

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¹ Najrān is an ancient city located in the south-east Arabian Peninsula, which later gave its name to a large region. H. Hamdānī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat Al-'arab*, ed. M. al-Akwa' (Baghdād: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-I'lām, Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfīyah al-'Āmmah "Āfāq 'Arabīyah", 1990), p 116.

² J. Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Ta'rīḥ Al-'arab Qabl Al-Islām* (Bayrūt: Dār al-'ilm li al-malāyīn, 1993) vol. 6, pp. 511- 513.

³ N. Stillman, *The Jews Of Arab Lands* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), p . xviii; R. Ahroni, *Yemenite Jewry Origins, Culture, and Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p 31; J. Tobi, *The Jews Of Yemen* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p 4.

⁴ I. Wolfensohn, *Tārīḥ Al-Yahūd Fī Bilād Al-'arab Fī 'l-Ġāhiliya Wa-Ṣadr Al-Islām* (Miṣr: Maṭba'at al-I'timād, 1927), pp 37- 49; Stillman, *Arab Lands*; Ahroni, *Yemenite Jewry*; K. Abū Jabal, *Yahūd Al-Yaman* (Dimashq: Dār al-Numayr, 1999), pp. 15- 30; Tobi, *Jews Of Yemen*, pp. 3- 47.

in the context of religious pluralism, even though there are a number of studies discussing the political, social, intellectual and economic history of Najrān.⁵

One study, written by Lecker, examines several issues regarding the Jews of Najrān, such as the claim that the Jewish faith arrived in Najrān in the 10th century BC, the spread of Judaism among the southern tribes, including the Banū al-Ḥārith bin Kā'b in Najrān; and the relationship between Najrānite Jews and the Muslim authority after the former became subject to two covenants given by the Prophet Muḥammad to his representative in Najrān, 'Amr bin Ḥazm and to the delegation of Najrānite Christians around 630 CE, until both communities were expelled by the Caliph 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb in 641 CE (20 AH).⁶

However, Lecker's main research focus is on the practice of Judaism among the Kinda tribe, and his discussion seems to be based only on accounts reported by Muslim historians such as al-Balādhurī (d. 892 CE/279 AH), al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897 CE/ 284 AH), Ibn-Ja'far (d. 948 CE/337 AH), Ibn-Ḥazm (d. 994 CE/ 384 AH) and Nashwān al-Ḥimyarī (d. 1178 CE/ 573 AH).⁷ These historians offer insufficient details of the Jewish history in Najrān and, in particular, regarding the extent of the spread of Judaism, the ties of Judaism in Najrān to Jewish people in Ḥijāz and Palestine, as we only learn the few details offered by the Prophet Muḥammad's covenants with the Najrānites, which subjected the Christians and Jews of Najrān to Muslim authority, as well as the controversial issue of the expulsion of these communities from Najrān.

Therefore, Eastern Christian sources such as the *Book of the Ḥimyarite*, the *Letter of Simeon of Bêth Arshām* and the *Martyrdom of Aretha* furnish valuable details explaining the relationship between the Jews of Tiberias and their co-religionists in South Arabia, particularly in Najrān, during the 6th century.⁸ These sources also shed some light on the policy of the Abyssinians towards the Jewish community after their entry into Najrān.⁹ Here, it is marked that the writing of most previous Christian sources preceded Muslim sources two centuries at least. This can be seen in the *Book of the Ḥimyarite* and the *Letter of Simeon of Bêth Arshām* which were written by unknown in the sixth century CE because both works are included with direct accounts that were reported by characters who witnessed the persecution of Najrān Christians around 518 CE.¹⁰

The present study aims to discover the most significant elements of the history of Judaism in Najrān in light of additional details offered by Eastern Christian and Muslim sources together. These elements include the arrival of Judaism, its spread among the Najrānites and the conditions of Jewish community during pre- Islamic and early Islamic history. This must be connected dynamically to the political, social, religious and economic conditions of Najrānite Jews during the period under study.

⁵ H. Philby, *Arabian Highlands* (Washington, DC: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp 213- 418; I. Shahīd, *The Martyrs Of Najrān* (Bruxelles: Soc. des Bollandistes, Bd. Saint-Michel, 1971); 'Ā. al-Bilādī, *Bayna Makkah Wa-Ḥaḍramawt* (Makkah: Dār Makkah, 1982), pp. 222- 339; 'A. Dalāl, *Al-Bayān Fi Tārīkh Jāzān Wa-'asir Wa-Najrān* (Cairo, 1995); pp .124-144, 183- 208. H. al-'Amrī, *Ṭarīq Al-Bukhūr Al-Qadīm* (Ṣan'ā': al-Jumhūrīyah al-Yamanīyah, Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Siyāḥah, 2004), pp. 57- 68; G. Ibn- Jurays, *Najrān, a study of history and civilization*(1st - 4th centuries AH/ 7th -10thCE) (Abhā:, 2004), pp. 22- 436.

⁶ M. Lecker, 'Judaism Among Kinda and the Ridda Of Kinda', *Journal Of The American Oriental Society*, 115 (1995), p. 636.

⁷ A. al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh Al-Ya'qūbī* (Leiden: Brill, 1883), vol. 1, p, 298; A. Ibn-Ḥazm, *Jamharat Ansāb Al-'arab* (Miṣr: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1948), p. 491; A. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ Al-Buldān* (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmīyah, 1978), p 73; Q. Ibn-Ja'far, *Al-Kharāj Wa-Ṣinā'at Al-Kitābah* (Baghdād: al-Jumhūrīyah al-'Irāqīyah, Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-'Ilām, Dār al-Rashīd, 1981), p273; N. al-Ḥimyarī, *Mulūk Ḥimyar Wa-Aqyāl Al-Yaman*, ed. A. Mu'ayyad and I. Jarāfī (al-Qāhirah: al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafīyah wa-Maktabatuhā, 1987), p. 87.

⁸ Tiberias is an ancient city located in north-east Palestine. Anonymous, 'Kissat Istishhād Al-Qiddīs Al-Ḥārith Ibn-Ka'b', Manuscript (Washington, n.d.), p. 443, Congress Library Catalogue; A. Moberg, *The Book Of The Ḥimyarites* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1924), p. ixx; Shahīd, *Martyrs Of Najrān*, p 45.

⁹ Anonymous, 'Kissat Istishhād Al-Qiddīs Al-Ḥārith', p. 85; Moberg, *The Book Of The Ḥimyarites*, p. cxxxix.

¹⁰ I. Ya'qūb, *Al-Shuhadā' Al-Ḥimyarīyūn Al-'arab Fi Al-Wathā'iq Al-Suryānīyah* (Dimashq, 1966), p 83.

The origins of Judaism in Najrān

Although Judaism was apparently the first monotheistic religion to arrive in Najrān for a considerable period of time, no precise date for this arrival has been found. The only way to reach an answer is to correlate this with the history of Judaism in South Arabia, since Najrān was consistently a major part of the ancient Yemenite states, in particular during the Sabaean and Ḥimyarite periods.¹¹ In this respect, there are two rival accounts of the arrival of Judaism in Najrān.

In the first account, the existence of Judaism in Najrān can be dated back to the reign of the Sabaean governor of Najrān, al-Qulummās bin al-Afa'ā, who converted to the religion of King Solomon, known in Islam as the Prophet Suleiman, around the 10th century BC; this governor was subsequently responsible for the spread of Judaism among his people during this ancient time.¹² This account seems to be based on Biblical and Qur'anic texts which date the arrival of Judaism in Yemen to around the 10th century BC, as mentioned, when the Queen of Sheba accepted the call of Solomon, the King of Israel, and converted to his religion¹³. These Biblical and Qur'anic texts are discussed by several researchers, who are divided into two groups: Lecker, who is in the first group, describes the story of al-Qulummās as a "historiographical legend" because of the absence of documentary evidence, while Abū Jabal sees that southern inscriptions say nothing about an exact time for the arrival of Judaism in Yemen¹⁴. Both researchers claim that what is reported of the encounter between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba may be a legend rather than a historical account. In the second group, Stillman and Mahrān believe the Biblical and Qur'anic suggestions and agree that the existence of commercial relationships between South Arabia and Palestine favours the idea that the Jewish faith reached Yemen.¹⁵ This can be seen by the number of Jews who resided near stations on the trading route for incense and spices.¹⁶ Mahrān also offers further evidence relating to the Qur'anic text, which explicitly refers to the Kingdom of Sheba, its great power, and its people's worship of the sun, which corresponds to epigraphic and archaeological research.¹⁷

With regard to the Najrānite Jews, the suggestions by Mahrān and Stillman accord with the fact that many Jews chose to live in and around the city centre of Najrān where the camel caravans stopped, as most of them worked in trade, hand crafts and financial activities, which required living near the market centre.

The second account is reported by a group of Muslim storytellers, who relate that the arrival of Judaism in South Arabia took place at the beginning of the 5th century CE, when King Tūbb'a Abū Kariba As'ad became the first Ḥimyarite ruler to convert to Judaism.¹⁸ This story recounts that King Tūbb'a

¹¹ M. Farah, *Al-Jadīd Fī Tārīkh Dawlat Wa-Ḥaḍārat Saba' Wa-Ḥimyar* (San'ā': Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Siyāḥah, 2004), vol. 2, p 828.

¹² 'A. Hishām, *Kitāb Al-Tijān Fī Mulūk Ḥimyar*. ed. F. Krenkow. (Haydarābād al-Dakkan: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmānīyah, 1347 AH), p 163; al-Ḥimyarī, *Mulūk Ḥimyar*, p87; H. al- Hamdānī, *Kitāb Al-Iklīl Min Aḥbār Al-Yaman Wa-Ansāb Ḥimyar*, ed. M. al-Akwa' (San'ā': Iṣḍarrāt wizarāt al-ṭaqafa wa al-syaḥāt, 2004), vol. 8, p 202.

¹³ Kings 10:1; Chronicles 9:1–12; Matthew 12:42; Surat al-Naml 20-44.

¹⁴ Lecker, 'Judaism Among Kinda', p 636; Abū Jabal, *Yahūd Al-Yaman*, p 16.

¹⁵ Stillman, *Jews Of Arab Lands*, p 3; M. Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah Min Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (al-Azārīṭah, al-Iskandarīyah: Dār al-Ma'rifah al-Jāmi'īyah, 1995), vol. 3, p 134.

¹⁶ Stillman, *Jews Of Arab Lands*, p 3; Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah Min Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, p 134.

¹⁷ Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah*, vol. 3, p 135.

¹⁸ It is important to inform that most Muslim sources we adopt here rely on the oral tradition that were transmitted by early Muslim storytellers in writing much information of their works. Most of those storytellers lived during the first three centuries of Islam. See: F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), p 69; al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh Al-Ya'qūbī*, vol. 1, p 298; 'A. Ibn-Hishām, and M. Ibn-Ishāq, *The life of Muhammad* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p 8; A. Ibn-Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn- Khaldūn Al-Musammá Kitāb Al-'ibar Wa-Dīwān Al-Mubtada' Wa-Al-Khabar Fī Ayyām Al-'arab Wa-Al-'ajam Wa-Al-Barbar Wa-Man 'āsarahum Min Dhawī Al-*

invaded Yathrib (the previous name for Medina), but two Jewish rabbis visited his camp and persuaded the king to stop the war and return to Yemen with his army because Yathrib might become the home of a Qurayshī prophet emigrating at a later time. Then King Tūbb'a took away both Jewish rabbis, who accompanied him on his journey back to Yemen and convinced him to convert to the Jewish faith.¹⁹

In the second part of the Muslim account, King Tūbb'a adopted Judaism as the official religion of his country and undertook to spread it among the peoples of southern Arabia.²⁰ The two rabbis of Yathrib played a significant role in preaching about Judaism throughout the Ḥimyarite provinces, including the northern areas that included the Ḥimyarite region of Najrān, and as a result, the new religion received a significant number of converts among the peoples of southern Arabia, although others remained polytheists.²¹

In the region of Najrān, the two Muslim historians al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn- Qutaybah state that Judaism gained a number of converts during that time, particularly among the people of Banū al-Ḥārith bin Kā'b.²² Unfortunately, these Muslim historians did not provide many more details of the activities of the Jewish missionaries, the religious practices, or the extent of conversion to Judaism amongst the people of Banū al-Ḥārith bin Kā'b. The account reported by these historians simply states that "some of the Banū al-Ḥārith bin Kā'b converted to Judaism".²³ This particular account leads us to deduce that the number of converts to Judaism among the Najrānites appears to have been smaller than in other southern regions, mainly Ḥaḍramawt, 'Adan, Ṣan'ā, Ḍafār and Kinda, where Jews gradually formed a large proportion of the population. As evidence, the number of Jewish people in Najrān by the time of the invasion by the Ḥimyarite king around 518 CE was small, while the presence of Jews in Ḍafār, the capital of the Ḥimyarite kingdom, for example, seems to have been larger.

Ali and Wolfensohn argue in favour of the authenticity of the King Tūbb'a story, as a historical phase in which Judaism was adopted as the official religion of the Ḥimyarite kingdom, but not as the date of the arrival of Judaism in the region.²⁴ Both believe that Judaism had already become established before the reign of King Tūbb'a, by suggesting two main causal factors: the existence of commercial connections between Yemen and Palestine and the immigration of Jewish groups to southern Arabia due to Roman persecution.²⁵

Beeston considers that the story of King Tūbb'a Abū Kariba As'ad might refer to a conversion to the "Rahmanist cult", rather than to Judaism.²⁶ Meanwhile, Lecker disagrees with this view by offering a fragment of this account reported by a Kindite Jew living in the pre- and early Muslim period.²⁷ According to Lecker, this account "speaks explicitly on the conversion of Ḥimyarite to Judaism".²⁸ In other words,

Sulṭān Al-Akbar, 5th ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Qalam, 1984), vol. 2, p. 62; M. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, 1987), vol. 2, p. 98; 'I. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil Fī Al-Tārīkh*, ed. C. Tornberg (Bayrūt: Dar Ṣādir, 1995). vol. 1, p. 381; 'A. al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj Al-Dhahab Wa-Ma'ādin Al-Jawhar* (Bayrūt: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyah, 2005), vol. 2, p. 61.

¹⁹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh Al-Ya'qūbī*. vol. 1, p. 298. Ibn-Hishām, & Ibn-Ishāq. 1955. The life of Muhammad. p. 9. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*. vol. 2, p. 98. al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj Al-Dhahab*. vol. 2, p. 61.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh Al-Ya'qūbī*, vol. 1, p. 298; 'A. Ibn-Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ārif Li-Ibn- Qutaybah*, ed. M. Ismā'īl 'Abd Allāh Ṣāwī (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), p. 621.

²³ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁴ Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal*, vol. 6, 538. Wolfensohn, *Tārīḥ Al-Yahūd*. p. 39.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ A. Beeston, 'Ḥimyarīte Monotheism' in *Studies In The History Of Arabia* (Riyadh, 1984), pp. 149-154.

²⁷ M. Lecker, 'The Conversion Of Ḥimyar To Judaism And The Jewish Banū Hadl Of Medina', *Die Welt des Orients*, 26 (1995), pp. 129-136. The Lecker's fragment reported in the Missing Ibn- Zabala's History of Medina, see A. Samhūdī, *Khulāṣat Al-Wafā Bi-Akhhār Dār Al-Muṣṭafá* (Dimashq: al-Maktabah al-ʿIlmiyah, 1972), p. 167.

²⁸ Lecker, 'The Conversion Of Ḥimyar', p. 636.

the story of King Tūbb'a's conversion to Judaism and his adoption of it as the official religion of the Ḥimyarite kingdom is very possibly correct, because one of those who told the story had received the details from his grandmother, who was a witness to those events.

For the present researcher, the story of the King Tūbb'a Abū Kariba As'ad's campaign to Yathrib is likely real historical event despite it perhaps legend elements, especially his debates with the two Jewish rabbis. An important inscription in the Dawādmī town in Saudi Arabia at the moment records that the the King Tūbb'a Abū Kariba As'ad and his army that consisted of several southern tribes crossed through this place in his wars against some rebelling tribes and the Lakhmid kingdom in the north.²⁹ The inscription text clearly refers to political conflict here but the commercial factor was most probable present because of increasing the importance of the caravan route between the south and north of Arabia in that time. That all provides strong evidence to accept the possibility of invading Yathrib and Mecca by the King Tūbb'a due to the commercial importance of both cities on the caravan route. As a result, the commercial factor may be play role in transmitting Judaism from Yathrib to South Arabia.

In total, as the previous researchers propose, it seems very likely that Judaism had existed in Najrān, as in other Yemenite regions, from early times, probably from the 10th century BC, rather than from the time of the story of King Tūbb'a Abū Kariba As'ad, which took place at the beginning of the 5th century CE. This suggestion is further supported by the reports from two Christian historians, Philostorgius and Theodorus Lector, and by epigraphic research.³⁰ These two historians agree that Judaism had arrived several centuries earlier, perhaps since the meeting of King Solomon and Queen of Sheba, but its converts were still few in number compared to the worshippers of the sun, the moon and local deities³¹. The significance of both these Christian accounts is that they reveal further details that describe the status of Jews in South Arabia as being a small community living among a majority of polytheists.³² Notably, both Philostorgius and Lector lived during the 5th and 6th century CE, possibly during the reign of King Tūbb'a, which makes both reports reliable in confirming that Judaism existed in Yemen before his appearance.

The second piece of evidence is the funerary inscription of a Ḥimyarite Jew, discovered in Palestine, which may date back to the first century CE, and which reports that he came to trade but died and was then buried in a Jewish cemetery.³³ This important inscription gives reliable and indirect evidence that Judaism reached South Arabia before the reign of King Tūbb'a. It also provides another significant piece of evidence for the existence of commercial relationships between ancient Yemen and Palestine, which may have contributed to the spread of Judaism in southern Arabia for several centuries before the birth of Christ.

However, it is difficult to reject the Muslim accounts completely, due to a number of reliable reports which support their authenticity. Ibn al-Kalbī reports one significant account, which narrates that many polytheists of Ḥimyarite and Hamdān abandoned the idol Ya'ūq and Nasr in order to convert to Judaism.³⁴ The correlation between the al-Kalbī account and Piotrovski's observation of the inscriptions

²⁹ H. Philby, 'Motor Tracks and Sabaeen Inscriptions In Najd', *The Geographical Journal*, 116 (1950), p. 202; Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal*, pp. 2, 572.

³⁰ J. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Seu Bibliotheca Universalis, Integra, Uniformis, Commoda, Oeconomica, Omnium SS. Patrum, Doctorum Scriptorumque Ecclesiasticorum* (Migne, 1857). vol. 35, p 211. Philostorgius, *Philostorgius Church History*, trans. and ed. P. R. Amidon (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), p. 40.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ahroni, *Yemenite Jewry*, p 40- 41; N. Nebes, 'The Martyrs Of Najrān And The End Of The Ḥimyar', in *The Qur'ān In Context, Historical And Literary Investigations Into The Qur'ānic Milieu*, 1st ed. (Leiden. Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 27-59, p 39.

³⁴ M. Ibn- al-Kalbī, *Kitāb Al-Aṣnām*, ed. A. Zakī (Al-Qāhirah: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1924), p 44.

of southern Arabian temples can clearly be seen.³⁵ These inscriptions show that the disappearance of the worship of traditional gods seems to be a remarkable feature in southern Arabia during the 4th and 5th centuries CE.³⁶ Al-Kalbī's and Piotrovski's accounts agree that what happened during the reign of King Tūbb'a As'ad Abū Kariba is that Judaism became the official religion, replacing the worship of polytheistic forms.

As a result, the story of King Tūbb'a probably indicates the acknowledgement of Judaism as the official religion of Ḥimyarite after many centuries in which the Jews were a minority and a form of polytheism remained the official religion.

The status of Najrānite Jews during the Pre-Islamic era (500-622 CE)

During the time preceding the rise of Islam, the Jewish community of Najrān passed through three main political reigns: Ḥimyarite, Abyssinian and Persian. These reigns affected several aspects of the presence of the Jews in Najrān, particularly the spread of Judaism among Najrānites, the practice of religion and the relationships between the Najrānite Jews and the society around them.

In the first quarter of the 6th century CE, the Najrānite Jewish community played a major role in the history of Najrān. Judaism was already an established influence, as can be seen from the existence of several synagogues, particularly around the town centre.³⁷ According to the Book of the Ḥimyarites and the Letter of Simeon, these synagogues were under the rule of a number of Jewish rabbis who had come from Tiberius.³⁸ These accounts provide clear evidence of a connection between the Jews in Palestine and the Jewish community of Najrān which seems to have begun as far back as the 5th century CE, if not before. Moreover, the accounts given by the Book of the Ḥimyarites and the Letter of Simeon offer further evidence of the Jewish religious activities which these rabbis undertook, such as transmitting the Torah, teaching Hebrew and performing Jewish rituals of worship, which will be discussed in detail later.³⁹ Moreover, it is very probable that Palestinian Jewish rabbis worked to spread their religion not only among the Najrānite people in the town, but also amongst the Bedouins, the Banū al-Ḥārith bin Kā'b in particular, as related by Muslim historians.⁴⁰

By the time of the invasion of Najrān by the Ḥimyarite King, Dhū Nuwās around 525 CE, Jews represented a major part of multi-faith Najrānite society, in addition to Christians and polytheists.⁴¹ Christian and Muslim accounts largely agree that the Najrānite Jews invoked the help of the Ḥimyarite king, which resulted in the massacre of Christians known as al-Ukhdūd (trench), but the difference here is in the details of the context of the story. The Christian version states that the dissemination of Christianity in Najrān created serious tensions with Judaism, and this resulted in violent actions against Jewish synagogues.⁴² The Muslim accounts, however, do not refer to the destruction of a Jewish synagogue, only indicating that a Najrānite Jew invoked King Dhū Nuwās because Christians had killed

³⁵ M. Piotrovskii, *Al-Yaman Qabla Al-Islām Wa-Al-Qurūn Al-Ūlā Lil-Hijrah: Al-Qarn Al-Rābi' Ḥattā Al-'āshir Al-Milādī* (Bayrūt: Dār al-'Awdah, 1987), p. 243.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Moberg, *Book Of The Ḥimyarītes*, p cxxiii.

³⁸ Ya'qūb, *Al-Shuhadā' Al-Ḥimyarīyūn*, p 92; Shahīd, *The Martyrs Of Najrān*, p 45.

³⁹ Moberg, *The Book Of The Ḥimyarītes*, p cxxiii; Ya'qūb, *Al-Shuhadā' Al-Ḥimyarīyūn*, p 92; Shahīd, *The Martyrs Of Najrān*, p 45.

⁴⁰ al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh Al-Ya'qūbī*, pp 1, 298; M. Ibn-Ḥabīb, *Kitāb Al-Muḥabbar*, ed. Ilse Lichtenstadter (Bayrūt: al-Maktab al-Tijārī lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', n.d.), Ibn- Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ārif*, p 621.

⁴¹ Moberg, *Book Of The Ḥimyarītes*, p cxxiii; Ya'qūb, *Al-Shuhadā' Al-Ḥimyarīyūn*, p 25; M. the Syraic, *Tārīkh Mār Mīkhā'il Al-Suryānī Al-Kabīr, Baṭriyark Anṭākīyah* (Ḥalab: Dār Mārdīn, 1996), vol. 2, p. 68.

⁴² Moberg, *Book Of The Ḥimyarītes*, p cxxiii; Ya'qūb, *Al-Shuhadā' Al-Ḥimyarīyūn*, p 25.

his sons.⁴³ Both Christian and Muslim accounts agree that Abyssinian (Ethiopian) military intervention was the most serious reaction to the persecution of Christians in Najrān, and that it led to the collapse of the kingdom of Ḥimyarite and the death of its final ruler Dhū Nuwās.⁴⁴

The circumstances of Najrānite Jews during the period of Abyssinian occupation has been an interesting question for recent research. The claim is that the Abyssinian campaign must have persecuted the Najrānite Jews and destroyed their synagogues, and may have dispersed them to many areas across Arabia.⁴⁵ For Tobi, however, the lack of available information means that there is not a clear picture of the circumstances of southern Arabian Jews under this new Christian rule.⁴⁶ He agrees with Ali in considering that Judaism may have receded somewhat after the collapse of the Ḥimyarite kingdom, but not to the extent that Shahīd and Aḥituv suggest, because Judaism in Najrān and other south Arabian towns alike maintained its existence among southern Arabian societies.⁴⁷

A valuable statement offered by the Book of the Ḥimyarites reveals some of the obscurity surrounding the status of Najrānite Jews under Abyssinian occupation.⁴⁸ This book reports further details on the arrival of the Abyssinian King Kālēb in Najrān after destroying the capital of the Kingdom of Ḥimyarite, Ṣafār, and killing many Ḥimyarite Jews.⁴⁹ In Najrān, most Jews survived the massacre because they tattooed their hands with the sign of the Cross.⁵⁰ The book claims that the Abyssinian king understood this deception, but tolerated it, as he said: "Although these are not worthy of pity because they have crucified their Lord and murdered His servants, nevertheless, lest they should think that the victorious Cross is not a strong place of refuge and a deliverer from all evils to all who seek shelter by it, those who show on their hands the victorious sign of the Cross of our Saviour and Him who makes us victorious may live either because they are believing..."⁵¹

This statement clearly shows that the Abyssinians avoided further violent actions against the Jews of Najrān after the overthrow of the Ḥimyarite state. This can be understood in the light of some southern Arabian inscriptions that provide important details on relevant aspects of Abyssinian policy during the reign of the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, Abraham when he died after failing in his armed campaign against Mecca.⁵² Abraham's aim was to extend his military and political dominance and support the position of Christianity throughout the occupied regions, including Najrān, by sending missions and

⁴³ Ibn-Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn- Khaldūn*, vol. 2, p. 96; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 118; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil Fī Al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 393.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Kissat Istishhād Al-Qiddīs Al-Ḥārith*, p. 85; Moberg, *Book Of The Himyarites*, p. cxxxix; Ya'qūb, *Al-Shuhadā' Al-Ḥimyarīyūn*, p. 121; Ibn- Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn- Khaldūn*, vol. 2, p. 96; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 118; Ibn-Hishām and Ibn-Ishāq, *The life of Muhammad*, p. 25; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil Fī Al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 393; 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj Al-Dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 62.

⁴⁵ I. Shahīd, 'Byzantium In South Arabia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 1979, pp. 23- 94; Y. Aharoni and S. Aḥituv, *The Jewish People* (New York: Continuum, 2006); F. Skolnik and M. Berenbaum, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA in association with the Keter Pub. House, 2007).

⁴⁶ Tobi, *Jews Of Yemen*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ali, *Al-Mufaṣṣal*, pp. 6, 541; Shahīd, 'Byzantium In South Arabia', p. 56; Tobi, *Jews Of Yemen*, p. 4; Aḥituv, *Jewish People*, p. 131

⁴⁸ Moberg, *Book Of The Himyarites*, p. cxxxviii

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ The remainder of the sentence is missing in the original text. Ibid.

⁵² Abraham is known as Abraha al-Ashram in Muslim sources, who ruled Yemen until 571 CE.

rebuilding its great church.⁵³ He also tried to win the friendship of tribal chieftains to support his rule by performing other construction works, notably rebuilding the Ma'arib dam.⁵⁴

The aim of this moderate policy in general, and in Najrān in particular, may have been to maintain the stability of the Abyssinian rule throughout the Yemenite regions and thus to make economic gains by ensuring the safety of the commercial route that passed through Najrān and other southern cities under the rule of the Abyssinians. Moreover, the Jewish community did not seem to have formed a great enough number to threaten the existence of Christians in Najrān after the collapse of the Ḥimyarite Jewish domination.

The Abyssinian rule over Yemen continued for about 50 years until the Ḥimyarite Jewish leader Sayf bin Dhī-Yazan defeated them with Persian military support, although he did not rule for long, as he was later killed by his own guards.⁵⁵ The death of Sayf led to South Arabia falling under foreign occupation again, this time under the Persian commander Vahriz, who came to support the Yemenites against the Abyssinians.⁵⁶

During the period of Persian rule, the conditions for Jews likely improved and Najrān became a major centre for Judaism, in addition to Ḥaḍramawt, Kinda and Ḥimyarite, and enjoyed the semi-independent tribal rule of the Banū al-Ḥārith bin Kā'b and their Christian allies.⁵⁷ Under this rule, the Najrānite Jewish community led a peaceful life, as did Christians and polytheists.⁵⁸ Hence, they found in Najrān a suitable place to trade, practise crafts and engage in cultivation.⁵⁹ As evidence, Ibn-Ḥabīb narrates a significant story of a commercial partnership between nobles of Mecca, in particular 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib Ibn- Hāshim, the Prophet Mohammed's grandfather, and a Jewish trader from Najrān.⁶⁰ This commercial partnership offers direct evidence for the commercial health of the Najrānite Jews during that time of pre-Islamic history. Also, it can be concluded that the positive stability gave Jews the freedom to worship in synagogues, hold religious festivals and perform religious rituals.

From the accounts above, we can understand that Judaism had converts among the Najrānites in addition to possible non-Najrānite Jews coming to trade, and the presence of those Jewish people would have been in both the urban centre and the rural Bedouin areas. However, during the three different historical periods, when Yemen was ruled in turn by Ḥimyarites, Abyssinians and Persians, the size of the Jewish community in Najrān apparently remained small in comparison to Christians and polytheists. Therefore, the political and religious impact of Judaism, in particular after the end of the Jewish Ḥimyarite state, was almost non-existent, as can clearly be seen in the dominance of the tribal polytheistic rule of

⁵³ M. Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Fī Tārīkh Al-'Arab Al-Qadīm* (Riyāḍh: al-Mamlakah al-'Arabīyah al-Sa'ūdīyah, Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn- Sa'ūd al-Islāmīyah, Lajnat al-Buḥūth wa-al-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1977), p 379; M. Bāfagīh, *Tārīkh Al-Yaman Al-Qadīm* (Bayrūt: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabīyah lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1985), p. 162; S. Johnson, *The Oxford Handbook Of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 285.

⁵⁴ Mahrān, *Dirāsāt Fī Tārīkh Al-'Arab Al-Qadīm*, p. 379; Bāfagīh, *Tārīkh Al-Yaman Al-Qadīm*, p 162; Johnson, *Oxford Handbook*, p. 285.

⁵⁵ al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh Al-Ya'qūbī*, pp. 1, 226; Ibn- Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn- Khaldūn*, vol. 2, p. 73; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 139; Ibn-Hishām and Ibn-Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad*, p 33; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil Fī Al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p 407.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ 'A. al-Shujā', *Al-Yaman Fī Ṣadr Al-Islām* (Dimashq, Sūrīyah: Dār al-Fikr, 1987), p 59; Piotrovskii, *Al-Yaman Qabla Al-Islām*, p 243; J. Abduly, 'Ahl Al-Dimmah Fi Al-Yemen Khilal Al-Ahd Al-Nabawi Wa Al-Khilafati Al-Rashidah', Attarikh-Alarabi.Ma, 2011, <http://www.attarikhalarabi.ma/html/ADAD53partie8.htm>.

⁵⁸ J. Dā'ūd, *Adyān Al-'Arab Qabla Al-Islām Wa-Wajhuhā Al-Ḥaḍārī Wa-Al-Ijtimā'ī*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: al-Mu'assasah al-Jāmi'īyah lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1988), p 232; S. Dughaym, *Adyān Wa-Mu'taqadāt Al-'Arab Qabla Al-Islām* (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnānī, 1995), p 57; Abduly, 'Ahl Al-Dimmah Fi Al-Yemen'.⁵⁹ *Al-Mufaṣṣal*, vol. 6, p 539; Dā'ūd, *Adyān Al-'Arab*, p. 232; Dughaym, *Adyān Wa-Mu'taqadāt Al-'Arab*, p 57.

⁶⁰ M. Ibn-Ḥabīb, *Kitāb Al-Mūnammaq Fī Akhbār Quraysh*. ed, Ḳhvurshīd Aḥmad Fāriq (Bayrūt: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1985), p. 90.

the Banū al-Ḥārith bin Kā'b and their allies in the Christian community. A possible explanation for this minimal impact is that the Jews of Najrān were not keen to disseminate the Jewish faith among the Najrānite people, but simply focused on economic activities such as trade, cultivation and banking interests, which helped them to develop their wealth.

It is thus reasonable to assume that the practice of such economic activities by Jewish people would have contributed to the growth of the Najrān economy, as noted in the rising Najrān market becoming one of the most developed Arab markets during the pre-Islam time. As a result, it may also be assumed that the majority of Najrānites, in particular Christians and polytheists, positively accepted the existence of the Jewish community as a part of Najrān society. Thus, all this seems to have enabled the Jewish community to enjoy freedom in practising their religion.

Najrānite Jews under Islamic rule (631 - 661 CE / 10 - 40 AH)

Perhaps the first indication of the Jewish presence in Najrān in the Islamic era is given by al-Balādhurī and Ibn-Ja'far, who report an important account of the Jews of Najrān concerning the written covenant between the Prophet Muḥammad and a deputation by the Christian community of Najrān in 630 CE/ 09 AH.⁶¹ Both authors relate that Najrānite Jews entered into the written covenant together with the Christians but as subordinates of them.⁶² Unfortunately, neither writer provides any more details explaining, for example, that possibly Jewish representatives accompanied the Christian deputation to meet the Prophet Muḥammad or how those Najrānite Jews became subject to the Prophet Muḥammad's covenant. Nonetheless, by reading the details of this covenant, it is important to point out that the covenant specifically states "to Najrān and their followers the protection of God (*jiwār Allāh*) and the pledge (*dhimmāh*) of Muḥammad the Prophet..."⁶³ This particular statement means that all the terms of the covenant could include other communities living in Najrān in addition to the Christians. Thus, we can confidently assume that al-Balādhurī and Ibn-Ja'far mean in their statement that the Jewish community of Najrān enjoyed the same rights as those given to Christians in protecting houses of worship and freedom of religion and community authority in local matters, in exchange for paying the toll tax (*Jizyāh*) in the same way as other People of the Book across Arabia.

The second account referring to the Jews of Najrān is offered by the Prophet Muḥammad's official decree to his first governor in Najrān, 'Amr bin Ḥazm, in 631 CE/ 10 AH.⁶⁴ In this decree, the Prophet ordered 'Amr bin Ḥazm to protect the religious freedoms of the Jews and collect no more than a dinar per year (or equivalent in garments) per adult as a poll tax.⁶⁵ This was the same as for the Christian community. Furthermore, Jews (and Christians) who converted to Islam were to be considered as Muslims, with the same rights and duties.⁶⁶

⁶¹ It is widely agreed that the time of Islamic era began with the emigration of the Prophet Muḥammad to Medina in 622 CE.

⁶² al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ Al-Buldān*, p 77; Ibn- Ja'far, *Al-Kharāj*, p 273.

⁶³ M. Ibn-Sa'ad, *Al-Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā* (Bayrut: Dar Sadir, n.d.), vol.1, p. 287; M. al-Ḥiwālī, *Al-Wathā'iq Al-Siyāsīyah al-Yamanīyah Min Qabla Al-Islām Ilá Sanat 332 AH* (Baghdād: Dār al-Ḥurrīyah, 1976); al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ Al-Buldān*, p76; M. Hamidullah, *Majmū'at Al-Wathā'iq Al-Siyāsīyah Lil-'ahd Al-Nabawī Wa-Al-Khilāfah Al-Rāshidah*, 5th ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1985), p. 93; see the translation of covenant in; W. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), p359; J. Morrow, *The covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the world* (Tacoma, Washington: Angelico Press, Sophia Perennis, 2013), p. 113.

⁶⁴ Ibn- Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn- Khaldūn*, vol. 2, p. 473; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 196; Ibn-Hishām and Ibn-Ishāq, *The life of Muhammad*, p. 645; Hamidullah, *Majmū'at Al-Wathā'iq*, p. 117.

⁶⁵ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 196; Hamidullah, *Majmū'at Al-Wathā'iq*, p. 117.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

From this decree, it is clear that the Prophet Muḥammad adopted a fixed standard in his policy towards non-Muslims in Najrān, whether Jews or Christians. Thus the content of the decree of 'Amr bin Ḥazm confirms what is assumed above for the Jews of Najrān; namely, to enjoy the same rights as those given to Christians in the protection of their properties and synagogues, and freedom of worship.

After the Prophet's death, the Muslim state was ruled by the Righteous Caliphs (successors), beginning with the first Caliph, Abū-bakr al-Ṣiddīq. This caliph renewed the Prophet's covenant for non-Muslims in Najrān by another written accord in 632 CE/ 11 AH.⁶⁷ The renewed accord contained the same rights as those offered by the Prophet before, particularly protecting religious freedom, practices of worship and places of worship.⁶⁸ From this accord, the status of the Najrānite Jews seems to have been one of peaceful enjoyment of religious freedom and the practice of economic activities as a non-Muslim community.

Muslim sources are still silent, however, in relation to the Jews of Najrān until 641 CE/ 20 AH when the second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattāb, evicted the Christians of Najrān to Kūfa in Iraq.⁶⁹ Muslim historians such as al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE/ 310 AH) and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233 CE/ 630 AH) report that the Jewish community was also driven out of Najrān and were compensated with new properties in a town near Kūfa, known later as Najrāniyyat al-Kūfa.⁷⁰ These historians, however, did not come to an agreement concerning the actual reason behind the eviction of the Najrānite Jews, except that they argued for the expulsion of the Christians in particular.⁷¹ Most of them agree that one of the Prophet Muḥammad's clauses prohibited the practice of usury (*Ribā*), but those Najrānite Christians still practised it in their economic activities.⁷² However, local historians in Yemen such as al-Alawī (d. 9th CE/ 3th AH), Ibn-Ya'qūb (d. 10th CE/ 4th AH), Ibn al-Mujāwir (d. 1291 CE/ 690 AH) and Al-Thaqafī (d. 12th CE/ 6th AH) recorded that Jews and Christians remained existing in Najrān during the 9th, 12th and 13th centuries, and their presence was significant in property ownership, trade and crafts.⁷³

Here, a clear contrast between the two groups of historians arises question of how Jews and Christians remained in Najrān while Umar's decree states that they must leave the region. Tobi supposes that this decree was only fully applied to the Christians and Jews of Najrān's city centre, but not to those who settled in other villages and towns in the area.⁷⁴ The link between the 'Umar's decision and geographical site as Tobi suggests appears at not an important value. Instead, there seems strong relation between 'Umar's decree and two major clauses of the Prophet's first covenant. One of them clearly refers that the practice of usury is forbidden whereas another one stipulates that the other members of the Christian and Jewish communities will not be responsible if one of them commits a transgression.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Ibn- Sa'ad, *Al-Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 358; al-Ḥiwālī, *Al-Wathā'iq Al-Siyāsīyah al-Yamanīyah*, p. 160; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*, vol. 2, p. 196; Hamidullah, *Majmū'at Al-Wathā'iq*, p. 109.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk. Al-Kāmil Fī Al-Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 446; A. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb Al-Ashraf*, ed. R. Ba'labakkī (Bayrūt: Yuṭlabu min al-Sharakah al-Muttaḥidah lil-Tawzī', 1996), vol. 10, p. 323; Ḥ. Ibn-Zanjawayh, *Kitāb Al-Amwāl*, ed. A. Asyūṭī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2006), vol. 2, p. 447.

⁷⁰ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ Al-Buldān*, p. 76; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh Al-Umam Wa-Al-Mulūk*, vol. 3, p. 446; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil Fī Al-Tārīkh*, vol. 6, p. 409.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibn- Sa'ad, *Al-Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 358; Ibn- Zanjawayh, *Kitāb Al-Amwāl*, vol. 2, p. 447.

⁷³ A. al-Alawī, *Sīrat Al-Hādī Illā Al-Ḥaqq Yahyá Ibn- Al-Ḥusayn* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1972), pp. 67-79; Y. Ibn- al-Mujāwir, *Ṣifāt Bilād Al-Yaman Wa-Makkah Wa-Ba'd Al-Ḥijāz, Al-Musammāh, Tārīkh Al-Mustabṣir* (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīnīyah, 1996), p. 238; A. Ibn-Ya'qūb, *Sīrat Al-Imām Al-Manṣūr Billāh Al-Qāsim Ibn 'alī Al-'ayyānī*. ed. A. Ḥabashī (Ṣan'ā': Dār al-Ḥikmah al-Yamānīyah, 1996), p. 106; S. al-Thaqafī, *Sīrat Al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn-Sulaymān*, 532-566 H (Giza: 'Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Insānīyah wa-al-Ijtīmā'īyah, 2002). P. 43.

⁷⁴ Tobi, *Jews Of Yemen*, p. 36.

⁷⁵ Ibn- Sa'ad, *Al-Ṭabaqāt Al-Kubrā*, vol. 1, p. 287; al-Ḥiwālī, *Al-Wathā'iq Al-Siyāsīyah al-Yamanīyah*, p. 94; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ Al-Buldān*, p. 76. Hamidullah, *Majmū'at Al-Wathā'iq*, p. 93. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 359.

Therefore, Caliph 'Umar most likely order them to leave Najrān but at the same time he took the second clause into consideration, by allowing those who were not involved in practicing usury to remain. The decision to expel Christians and Jews from Najrān was likely only implemented for those who practiced usury. As a result, some Christians and Jews apparently remained in Najrān as a part of its population.

Conclusion

The date of the arrival of Judaism in Najrān is a controversial issue, but it seems to have developed over a long period in which the number of Jews was small, until King Tūbb'a acknowledged Judaism as the official religion for Ḥimyarites, including the region of Najrān. From the evidence one can deduce that Judaism arrived in Najrān via two main communities: the Jews of Palestine and the Jewish community of Yathrib in Ḥijāz. During the period under study, the conditions of the Jews of Najrān were often impacted by what happened to their co-religionists in Yemen, as can be seen in the receding of Najrānite Judaism under Abyssinian occupation but its subsequent flourishing under Persian rule, and later under tribal rule, prior to the advent of Islam.

During the early Muslim era, the circumstances of Najrānite Jews were regulated by Muslim rules for non-Muslims. These laws offered Jews a measure of peace and protection, as can be seen in the freedom of religious practice, the protection of property and the right to economic independence, whilst respecting Muslim law. From this one can deduce that the conditions of Najrānite Jews became closer to those of the Christian community rather than those of other southern Arabian Jews. This can be observed in the offer of one official accord for both communities, regulating their conditions under Muslim rule. Therefore, Najrānite Jews and Christians were entitled to the same rights and duties, to equal freedom of religion and protection of property. This equal treatment can also be seen clearly in Umar's decree to expel both communities from Najrān and send them to Iraq, but provide compensation in the form of property. That also can be assumed in remaining a part of Jews in Najrān who did not involve in practising usury.

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