# **A Vision of Yemen: Questions for Study and Discussion**

Hayyim Habshush’s *A Vision of Yemen* is a rich primary source that offers glimpses of daily life and insights into politics, religion, history, and relations between people of different ethnicities, faiths, and genders. As with many primary sources, however, figuring out what we can learn from the work can be a challenge. The following questions and discussion prompts are designed to help with that task.

You will find:

1. A set of questions pertaining to the entire book that are worth considering as you read.
2. A chapter-by-chapter list of questions, designed to prompt discussions and draw attention to key issues. Since they are stand-alone units of questions, they may be used to engage readers who have read only excerpts of *A Vision of Yemen*.

Educators are welcome to utilize, modify, and distribute these questions to audiences and students as they see fit.

[Discussion Questions Applicable to the Entire Book](#_Toc523273076)

[Identifying Habshush’s Perspective and Analyzing the Relationships Between the Explorers 2](#_Toc523273077)

[Habshush’s Depiction of Yemeni Society 2](#_Toc523273078)

[Discussions Questions by Chapter](#_Toc523273079)

[Introduction: Habshush and the European Explorers (pp. 3-38) 3](#_Toc523273080)

[Introduction: The People and Politics of Yemen (pp. 39-56) 5](#_Toc523273081)

[Author’s Note (p. 63) 6](#_Toc523273082)

[Chapter 1: Arrival in Yemen (pp. 65-70) 6](#_Toc523273083)

[Chapter 2: Excavations in Ghayman (pp. 70-80) 7](#_Toc523273084)

[Chapter 3: Jews, Muslims, and Foreigners in San’a (pp. 80-87) 8](#_Toc523273085)

[Chapter 4: Strangers Among the Tribes (pp. 87-96) 9](#_Toc523273086)

[Chapter 5: Clients and Patrons (pp. 96-127) 10](#_Toc523273087)

[Chapter 6: Death and Ruins (pp. 128-154) 12](#_Toc523273088)

[Chapter 7: Jews Bearing Arms (pp. 155-157) 14](#_Toc523273089)

[Chapter 8: An Ordeal in the Desert (pp.158-168) 15](#_Toc523273090)

[Chapter 9: The Honor Code of the Najrani Jews (pp. 169-177) 16](#_Toc523273091)

[Chapter 10: Persecution (pp. 177-190) 18](#_Toc523273092)

[Chapter 11: The Bedouin (pp. 190-198) 19](#_Toc523273093)

[Chapter 12: The City of Marib and the Return to San’a (pp. 199-211) 20](#_Toc523273094)

# ***Discussion Questions Applicable to the Entire Book***

## Identifying Habshush’s Perspective and Analyzing the Relationships Between the Explorers

1. Does Habshush have an “axe to grind”? What sorts of things really anger him? To whom is he particularly sympathetic, and to whom is he particularly unsympathetic?
2. In what ways do Habshush’s prejudices, beliefs, and commitments evolve and change?
3. How do Habshush’s narrative choices affect *A Vision of Yemen*? Why do you think he jumps back and forth in time? For what purposes does he employ literary flourishes, exaggerations, surrealism, and sarcasm?
4. To what extent do Habshush and Halévy exemplify the worldviews of their respective communities? To what extent are they atypical?
5. How does Habshush describe Halévy’s character? Are his descriptions of Halévy consistent? Do they provide a coherent or believable picture of Halévy? Do you think this picture is a complimentary or negative one?
6. Is Halévy exploiting Habshush? Is Habshush exploiting Halévy? Are Glaser and Habshush exploiting each other?

## Habshush’s Depiction of Yemeni Society

1. What factors does Habshush seem to think have the most influence in determining how people treat members of other communities?
   1. What role does religious doctrine have in shaping an individual’s behavior? How about a community’s behavior?
   2. What role do poverty, financial need, and greed play in shaping individual and communal behavior?
   3. What role do concerns about honor and shame play in shaping individual and communal behavior?
2. How does the importance attributed to hospitality affect relations between Muslims and Jews, men and women, and Jews from different communities? What are the costs and benefits of a culture in which hosts take on so much responsibility for their guests?
3. Under what circumstances does Habshush interact with women who are not related to him? What does this tell you about the rules of propriety or about daily life in the places he visits?
4. Habshush describes how different Jewish communities in Yemen earn a living. What professions and economic strata do they occupy in various places? How does this reflect or influence their treatment at the hands of the Muslim majority?
5. How does Habshush depict the activities of the officials of the Ottoman empire, and how does he judge the motivations and results of their involvement in Yemeni affairs?

# ***Discussion Questions by Chapter***

## Introduction: Habshush and the European Explorers (pp. 3-38)

1. Consider the circumstances and motivations for Habshush’s, Halévy’s, and Glaser’s explorations into “foreign” territory. What makes them decide to go through all the effort and danger of embarking on these journeys? Do their motivations change over time?
2. Which communities do each of these explorers, Habshush, Halévy, and Glaser, belong to? Is their nationality important to them? Their religion? Their gender? Their ethnicity? Their education? Their class? Which aspects of their identity do you think are most important for understanding their thinking? Which are they consciously embracing or running away from?
3. All of the explorers engage in deceptions, disguising themselves in order to move around inconspicuously or to get themselves out of dangerous situations. Do they feel guilty about this? Are there lines which they are not willing to cross? Under what circumstances do you think their choices are or are not justifiable? What do you think would have been gained and what would have been lost had they instead chosen to always represent themselves honestly?
4. Discuss the extent to which Halévy attempted to change, help, or leave untouched the communities to which he traveled. Consider the differences between his behavior in Turkey, Romania, Abyssinia, and Yemen. What are the moral consequences and hazards of Halévy’s interventions or lack thereof?
5. Consider Halévy’s trip to contact the Jews of Abyssinia, his attempts to bring together the Jews of Europe and Abyssinia, and European views on the relationship between Jewish peoplehood and skin color. What part of this historical episode, if any, surprises you?
6. The terms “Aryans” and “Semites” were developed by 19th-century European scholars who believed that people whose languages were related should be grouped together. A language’s grammar, they claimed, could shape thought, character, and even civilization. Compare the effects of these categories which distinguish between people on the basis of the grammar of their languages with those that distinguish on the basis of skin color (e.g. white versus black) or on the basis of religion (e.g. Christians versus Jews or Muslims). What kinds of bigotry do each of these distinctions foster? What kinds of pressures did these different forms of bigotry place on demeaned groups and what options were available to them? Are all of these forms of distinction and their resulting forms of bigotry essentially the same?
7. What factors went into the choice to send Halévy, of all people, to Yemen on behalf of the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres?
8. Halévy’s report on Yemen, describing his archaeological findings and the geography of the “remote” regions in which he traveled, would later draw the attention not only of scholars of linguistics, but also of British government officials, whose job it was to look to the interests of the British empire. Do you see this as making Halévy an agent of imperialism?
9. Halévy and Glaser were rebels who fought bitterly with most people in their intellectual circles. To what extent do you view Habshush as being similar to or different from them? Do you view the trio as representing particular interest groups upon whose behalf they work? Are they part of “the establishment” or did they operate outside conventional groups?
10. Both Habshush and Glaser (but not Halévy) wanted people and governments outside of Yemen to intervene to some extent in Yemeni affairs. What did they think such intervention could accomplish? How could their advocacy be construed as pro-Yemeni or anti-Yemeni?
11. Explain Glaser’s attitude toward Islam, Muslims, Yemenis, and his own identity. Do you find his attitude surprising? Offensive? Inspiring? How does this compare to your views of Halévy?
12. Halévy and Glaser both had intense spiritual and interpersonal experiences when exploring. Often, they did not include these experiences in their academic writings, but we know about them from diaries and from the explorers’ public advocacy. Why do you think they chose to keep these things separate?
13. To what extent do you think Glaser’s interactions with Yemenis show him respecting or demeaning them and their culture.
14. Does the fact that Habshush at some point worked as an antiquities forger color your attitude toward his book? In what way?
15. Consider the statements of Halévy himself, William Prideaux, Harry St. John Philby, and S. D. Goitein concerning the debate about the extent of the connection between Habshush and Halévy. What kinds of prejudices do they showcase?

## Introduction: The People and Politics of Yemen (pp. 39-56)

1. Neither the Jews nor the other minorities that appear in *A Vision of Yemen* were associated with “foreign” migrations. They are at least as old and at least as native to Yemen as the dominant groups. Do you think this makes the tensions surrounding majority/minority relations in Yemen different from those in the United States?
2. What does the designation of being “weak” entail in the Yemeni tribal system? Are “weak” people protected or penalized by the system? What are the rights and responsibilities of patrons and clients in the tribal system?
3. In what way did the Ottoman reforms, which formally abolished some of the legal discrimination against Jews, have negative consequences?
4. What aspects of Ottoman involvement in Yemen met with Habshush’s approval?
5. What were the motivations of individual European travelers to Yemen?
6. What were the purposes of the stipulations in the pact imposed on *dhimmis*? Were there problems when Muslims chose not to implement the pact? In what way did the Jewish experience of Islamic rule in Yemen differ from their treatment in other Muslim countries?
7. In what way was the experience of Yemeni Jews living under tribal law (*Taghut*) different from their experience living under Islamic law? What concerns governed the relationship between Jewish clients and their Muslim patrons in the tribal system of law and honor? What concerns governed Zaydi Muslim attitudes toward Jews?
8. How do the varying amounts of the bloodwite penalty reflect and reinforce the status of minorities within the social and legal hierarchy?
9. How did 19th-century natural disasters and geo-political events affect Yemeni history?

## Author’s Note (p. 63)

1. What does the author’s note tell us about Habshush’s motivations for writing his book? What do you think he is implying about his own agenda and how it compares to that of Halévy and Glaser?

## Chapter 1: Arrival in Yemen (pp. 65-70)

1. Habshush describes two Muslim imams in very negative terms. What does he seem to be implying about their religion and religiosity? Does he blame Islam itself for their behavior or does he think their negative behavior stems from something else?
2. Habshush begins the chapter in a grandiose style punctuated by sarcasm. Why do you think he writes this way? Is there a genre of literature he is trying to imitate? Does it strike you differently when, instead of reading it to yourself, you recite it aloud dramatically, like the narrator in a play or a storyteller laying out his tale’s setting?
3. What can we glean about Habshush’s background, interests, and personality, based on his description of his initial encounters with Halévy?
4. Why is Habshush drawn to Halévy and Halévy’s journey?
5. What does Habshush think of the pervasive Jewish interest in the ten lost tribes?

## Chapter 2: Excavations in Ghayman (pp. 70-80)

1. What are the attitudes of Habshush, the Jews of Ghayman, and the Muslims of Ghayman, toward the town’s ancient ruins?
2. Where are women mentioned in this particular episode? What can we gather about the extent of their presence in public places?
3. On page 72, Habshush interacts with a Muslim schoolmaster. They exchange threats, taunting banter, and similar forms of verbal sparring and, at the same time, there is a deadly serious concern for life and limb. What can we learn about individual personalities, Muslim-Jewish relations, and the tribal protection system from all of this?
4. What do you think of Habshush’s deception in Ghayman? Do you think such deception is hurtful or disrespectful? Is it a reasonable survival mechanism or is it merely a form of hijinks reflecting the young Habshush’s mischievousness or the old Habshush’s desire to dramatize his tale?
5. Habshush describes the labor, surroundings, appearance, and demeanor of Muhsunah, an impoverished Muslim woman, in harsh detail. He also muses about what she must be thinking. Why does Habshush fixate on her? Is his description mean-spirited and intended to evoke the reader’s derision? Is it intended to evoke the reader’s compassion for the difficult circumstances in which she lives? Does Habshush revile Muhsunah, pity her, or respect her? Is it Muhsunah’s religion, her gender, her poverty, her strength, or something else about her that draws his attention? In describing her, what do you think Habshush, knowingly or unknowingly, reveals about himself?
6. Habshush describes Muhsunah, a Muslim woman, as “a woman of valor,” a Biblical phrase typically used by Jewish husbands in describing the ideal woman. What do you think is the significance of Habshush’s use of this phrase? Is he being sarcastic? Is he making a statement about what it’s like to be poor or what it’s like to be a woman? Is he commenting on the potential similarities between Muslims and Jews?
7. This chapter includes two meals, one in which Habshush is a guest of Muhsunah’s family and another where he is the host. To what extent do the hosts’ and guests’ religious differences color their interactions with each other?
8. Habshush frequently mentions his desire to get paid and make a living, even when it requires engaging in questionable activities. Why do you think Habshush the author emphasizes this? Is he just being honest? Are these discussions of money a narrative device to explain away dangerous or ridiculous behavior? Or do you think they illustrate a significant point about power relations?

## Chapter 3: Jews, Muslims, and Foreigners in San’a (pp. 80-87)

1. In narrating “the Ashkenazi’s” experience of San’a, Habshush describes the Jewish community’s fear of their Muslim neighbors. Who exactly are they afraid of and what do they fear will happen? Are they afraid of the rulers and the law, of common people taking matters into their own hands, or of thoughtlessly cruel children? Are they afraid of harm being visited upon Jewish individuals who “misbehave” or of harm to the Jewish community as a whole? Are the dangers the Jews face seen as a universal phenomenon or is it particularly different in San’a or in Yemen?
2. Why do Halévy’s hosts tell him the story of the Ashkenazi? What lesson do they want him to learn from it?
3. What is the significance of Habshush’s Muslim acquaintance in the market of the apothecaries? How does he relate to Habshush?

## Chapter 4: Strangers Among the Tribes (pp. 87-96)

1. In what respects is Habshush similar to Halévy and different from the other people in his community?
2. Both here and later in the book, Habshush describes his strong interest is gravesites. Why are graves important to him?
3. In this chapter, Habshush switches from writing in Hebrew to writing in Arabic. Why did he write in Hebrew in the first place and why did he switch into Arabic? What does Habshush’s conversation with Glaser indicate about the intended audience(s) of *A Vision of Yemen*?
4. This chapter features three different stories of Jews being captured by individual Muslims and then saved or rescued, also by Muslims (pp. 90-91, 94-95, 95-96). What are the different kinds of interactions between individual Jews and Muslims, and between the Jewish and Muslim communities as a whole. What concerns govern these interactions? When the Muslims are hostile, kind, or protective toward Jews, are they motivated by religion? By honor? By poverty? By greed? By a respect for the rule of law? By individual friendship or personal animus? Or by something else?
5. How does Halévy persuade the Jews of Abyssinia to accept him?
6. Why does Habshush pretend to Halévy that he can visually spot ancient buildings far off into the distance, when in fact Habshush has guessed that the buildings are located there based on logical inference? What is the point of this minor deception?
7. Why do you think Habshush draws parallels between the role of the synagogue and that of the mosque?
8. What is Habshush’s attitude toward messianism, as discussed on p. 95?
9. On p. 96, Habshush claims that he cannot read the ancient inscriptions he is copying, yet he also claims that he understands something of what they mean. Why do you think Habshush makes these claims?

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## Chapter 5: Clients and Patrons (pp. 96-127)

1. Why is Habshush’s former host reluctant to assume that role again?
2. Habshush characterizes Halévy as being unsympathetic to the fears of others because he himself is so brave. Do you see that characteristic elsewhere in the book? Do you see the opposite?
3. How does the tribal system affect the way the Muslim tribesmen of Nihm treat the Jews of their community? How does this in turn affect the way Jews comport themselves?
4. Are you surprised by the “scandal in al-Madid”? If so, by what aspect of it? Why do you think Habshush decides to relate it? Is he trying to show readers how very strange or how very typical small-town life is in al-Madid? Do you think he trying to shock you out of your preconceptions?

Is he enjoying the vulgarity of it or is he demonstrating prudishness? What is the effect of him “gossiping” to his readers?

1. Habshush describes a tribal war and blood-feud that begins when one tribe shelters a band of robbers who had attacked a Jewish man under another tribe’s protection. To what extent does Habshush demonstrate admiration for or discomfort with the tribesmen’s values?
2. In what ways was Ottoman rule in Yemen beneficial to the Jews and in what ways was it harmful? What effect did the Ottoman-Zaydi conflict have on the Yemeni Jewish community?
3. When Ibn Mi’sar demands the Jews pay him a crushing second set of *jizyah* (poll) taxes, saying that his tribesmen are poor and that the Jews are rich, Habshush comments, “This answer shows Ibn Mi’sar’s great compassion for his tribesmen, for their poverty had increased since they had ceased their raids out of fear of the Ottoman Empire.” Is Habshush’s commentary sarcastic or is he in fact sympathetic to Ibn Mi’sar’s desire to take care of his own? Do you think he is making an argument about religious versus financial motivations for anti-Jewish policies?
4. What arguments does Ibn Mi’sar’s cousin use to try to persuade him to treat the Jews better?
5. What do his questions to the 140-year-old man tell us about what Habshush believes and values?
6. Why do you think Habshush chooses to describe these particular wedding customs? Why do you think he decides to describe the unusual way people in al-Madid go about fishing?
7. In what way is the expulsion of the Jews to Mawza in 1679 still relevant to the Jews living in Yemen two centuries later?
8. What are the consequences of the Jews of Shira’ being so poor?
9. “A dispute about the kabbalah” features a group of Jews who have come to believe that the custom of the women in their community to leave some of their hair exposed is immodest and in violation of the dictates of Jewish holy texts. These are the “rigorists.” By contrast, the “literalists” argue that to change the custom and impose new modesty regulations is to disparage their ancestors and contravene the way religious law works. Do you know of any other similar disputes going on in the 21st century, either among Jews or among members of other religions?
10. Habshush compares the Jewish dispute over modest hairstyles to the Yemeni Muslim dispute over public singing. How did the religious leaders in both cases end up resolving these disputes?
11. Halévy’s intervention in the hairstyle dispute is one of only three such interventions mentioned by Habshush. Which side does he favor? Do you think it was appropriate for him to intervene in the manner that he did? If he had favored “the other side” would that change your opinion?
12. How does Habshush view the work of copying inscriptions? Is it just a means of earning a living or does the work have deeper meaning for him?
13. What do you think of Habshush’s description of “the common folk” and their tendency towards occasional inaccuracies and superstitions? Is this condescending? Is it just realistic? What does it indicate about how Habshush views himself?

1. What is it about Halévy that surprises the Qarawi man? Do you think their interaction reflects some of the larger issues surrounding European penetration into the non-European world?
2. Compare the treatment of the Qarar, the Jews, and the Hujar.
3. What values and concerns are motivating the people involved in the dispute about the Hujri widow and the response to the murder of her husband?
4. How does the bloodwite payment work in theory and in practice? What purposes does it serve?
5. Dissect the story of Sulayman al-Maswari, which connects personal tragedy to macro political events.
   1. Who is Imam ‘Ali ibn al-Mahdi ‘Abdallah, who are his opponents, and what is his political situation?
   2. Who is Imam Muhammad ibn Yahya, who are his allies, and what are his political goals?
   3. Why is there a financial problem and what are the various ways in which Muhammad ibn Yahya attempts to solve it?
   4. Why does the government come to focus attention on the Jewish community of San’a?
   5. Habshush depicts several Jewish characters in this story as being personally dishonest. How are these people treated by the Muslim authorities and what are the various forms of punishment which are inflicted on the rest of the Jewish community as a result?
   6. What details of the death of Sulayman al-Maswari does Habshush provide? What do you think is his point in providing these details?
6. According to Habshush, how does Ottoman interference change the actual standard of living in Yemen and how do people perceive their standard of living?
7. Habshush depicts famine using a set of lyrical metaphors. What impression do the metaphors provide and how do they tie in with Habshush’s political views, patriotism, and attitude towards outside involvement in Yemen?
8. What happens to the Jewish community during the jockeying for power between the Turks, the two competing imams, and the tribes?

## Chapter 6: Death and Ruins (pp. 128-154)

1. How do Habshush, Halévy, Yusuf al-‘Uzayri, and Salim treat each other during their stressful journey together?
2. What do you think we are supposed to gather from Habshush’s incomplete description of the encounter with the shepherd girl?
3. What are the different circumstances and social values at play when Habshush enters uninvited into the home of a Jewish woman?
4. What aspects of the lives of the Jews of al-Ghayl attract special comment from Habshush? To what extent does he view them as members of his own community or as people who are foreign to him? How does this relate to his motivations for joining Halévy’s on his journey and writing *A Vision of Yemen*?
5. According to Habshush, in what ways do the Muslim tribesmen show respect for Jewish observance of the Sabbath?
6. Why do you think the people were both “eager” to eat the locusts and were “ordered to come from every town and village” to do so?
7. When Habshush describes the tribesmen’s punishment of the Jewish man who worked on the Sabbath to gather locusts to eat, do you think Habshush depicts the tribesmen’s motives in a positive or negative light?

1. How does Habshush depict Halévy’s behavior in al-Hazm, Banat ‘Ad, al-Far’, and Ma’in? What angers him about Halévy? What does he like about him?
2. How do Habshush, Halévy, and the local community relate to the ancient ruins and artifacts they encounter?
3. How does Habshush relate his experience with Halévy to his own life before and after the journey?
4. In Ma’in Habshush twice encounters people who mistake him for a demon because his appearance is so foreign, but then persuades to view him as their fellow. (Later, in Baraqish, he will also be mistaken for a demon.) What do you think is the purpose of these stories?
5. What do you think of Habshush’s attitude toward Harun al-Sa’di?

1. Near the ruin of Baraqish, Habshush seeks hospitality from Muslims three times: from the woman in the tower house, from the woman worrying about her son, and from some Bedouin men who are grilling fish. Contrast these three interactions. What statuses do and do not matter in these interactions? Are people concerned about religious differences? Gender differences? The difference between locals and foreign travelers? What do we learn about the people whom Habshush encounters and about Habshush’s expectations of how he will be treated?
2. Explain Habshush’s experience in the graveyard in the ruins of Baraqish. What is he saying about what matters to him?
3. What interests Habshush about the ancient architecture at Baraqish?
4. How do the tribal rules of combat reflect and influence the treatment of various segments of society?
5. What does Habshush speculate about the deaths of the youths on the road to Rakid? What are his reasons for his conclusion? Do you think there is a “lesson” to this story? If so, what?
6. When describing the Jewish families of the Jawf region, Habshush reflects on the whole notion of family lineage and attachment to ancestral land. What do you think he is saying here and how does it relate to *A Vision of Yemen* as a whole?

1. What are the different kinds of prejudices on display in “the murder of Ibn Qamla (continued)”? What statuses make a person vulnerable? What statuses offer protection?
2. Habshush disgustedly describes a woman who, out of a desire to be hospitable, invites him to partake of the raw meat she is eating. What do you think of Habshush’s description and reaction?

## Chapter 7: Jews Bearing Arms (pp. 155-157)

1. What is Habshush’s impression of the Jews of Khabb? In what ways are they similar to or different from other Jews he has encountered?
2. In the midst of a local dispute, the Jews turn to Halévy for legal arbitration. Why do they do so? Why does Habshush think Halévy should intervene? Why does Halévy think he should not? What does Halévy ultimately do and what is Habshush’s reaction? How does Habshush’s account compare with Halévy’s own account of intervention, as described in the footnote? How does this episode compare with the episode about women’s hair coverings?

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## Chapter 8: An Ordeal in the Desert (pp.158-168)

1. Habshush mentions a number of superficial interactions he has with hired guides, and then describes having intimate conversations with one particular guide, Hadhlul. What factors do you think affect the kind of relationships the explorers have with their guides? To what extent are their relationships predetermined by religious or national identities and other “structural” differences beyond their control? To what extent are they determined by their individual personalities?
2. How does Hadhlul try to help Habshush and Halévy? What impedes Habshush from accepting his help? How does Hadhlul react to Habshush’s particular needs?
3. What compromises is Habshush forced to make as a result of his extreme hunger, thirst, and fatigue?
4. How do Habshush and Halévy’s interactions with the Muslim Bedouin of Najran compare with their interactions with the Jewish Najrani men, Mari Matrud and Mari Ma’id?
5. To what extent are the religious practices of the Jews of Najran different from or the same as Habshush’s usual practices?

## Chapter 9: The Honor Code of the Najrani Jews (pp. 169-177)

1. How and for what purpose does Habshush initially deceive Mari Ma’id’s family?
2. Based upon the mother’s words, does honor killing seem like a common or rare occurrence in this community? Is Habshush surprised?
3. To what extent is Sa’idah, the pregnant girl who is threatened with death, a passive or active participant in the events around her?
4. In Habshush’s narrative about honor killing, we never meet the cousins called upon to do the actual deed. Instead, Habshush lets us hear the potential victim’s perspective, and the perspectives of those who in one way or another are enablers or are complicit in the potential killing, but not those of the would-be killers themselves. How do you think this affects the story?
5. What role does Habshush wish to play in all this? Are his intentions entirely honorable?
6. How did Sa’idah end up in a situation where she could be raped?
7. Do you think the subsequent responses to the threat of honor killing are affected by the fact that Sa’idah’s behavior was entirely chaste? Do you think the response would have been different if she had become pregnant by having consensual sexual relations?
8. Why didn’t Sa’idah cry out during the attack? What calculations were going through her mind?

1. In the middle of this story about Sa’idah, Habshush tells the story of another woman who is in fact in a position to fend off her would-be rapist. What do you think is the purpose of juxtaposing these two stories? Is Habshush blaming the victim or showing just how blameless the victim is? Is he casting blame on one community or another for failing to support women? Is he trying to show what kinds of circumstances lead to women being made vulnerable or being empowered? Do you think it is significant that the woman who fended off the rapist had been raised as a boy, and already had a previous history of rebelling against a man (her husband)?
2. The Bible implies that a chaste woman will naturally cry out in the midst of a sexual assault, whereas a willing participant will not (Deuteronomy 22). Do you think that Habshush is trying to make a point by showing the rebellious, unconventional, non-demure woman as able to call for help and gain the support of her community; while the obedient, demure, well brought-up girl is unable to do so?
3. What is Habshush’s first proposed solution to stop the honor killing? How would it have helped? Do you think his proposal is a good one?
4. What is Halévy’s objection to Habshush’s proposal? Do you sympathize with Halévy’s response? What is the problem with Halévy’s solution and why does Habshush nonetheless give in to him?
5. What is Habshush’s second proposed solution? Why does the mother object to it? What does this say about how the mother views her daughter? Does she hate her?
6. Halévy objects to Habshush’s second proposal on several different grounds. What are they? Which of his objections do you think have merit? Which do you think are obnoxious?
7. What does Habshush end up doing? What, realistically, do you think he could have done better? Who do you think got hurt? And who would have been hurt had he acted otherwise?
8. In what respects does Habshush share the same cultural values as Sa’idah’s family? In what respects is he different from them and does he share Halévy’s values? To what extent does his identity as a San’ani shape his views, knowledge, and behavior in this instance?

## Chapter 10: Persecution (pp. 177-190)

1. How does Habshush describe gender relations in the Dahdah market?
2. How do people in the market ensure their safety?
3. Why does Habshush consider moving to Najran? What does he value in a home?
4. Why had Mari Ma’id bought himself a New Testament, even at such great expense?
5. How does Hunbukh treat Habshush and Halévy? Does his behavior match the expectations of the others around him?
6. What can we learn from the tribeswomen’s behavior toward Habshush and Halévy?
7. Habshush and Halévy disagree on several occasions regarding how to get themselves out of dangerous situations. Which solutions does Habshush favor and which does Halévy favor?
8. How had the Jewish old man, who scared off the robbers, ended up living so far away from San’a?
9. Why is the Jewish man they meet alone on a road in Barat dressed like a tribesman? Is it indicative of Jews having little to fear or much to fear there?
10. What do you think of the attitudes of Habshush and Halévy when Halévy pressures the recalcitrant Habshush to climb a mountain to a fortress to look for inscriptions? How does Habshush respond?
11. In the polygamous household of Dawud Jamil, which woman actually has control over the home? Why do you think this is the case?
12. Why does Imam al-Nasir persecute the Jews of San’a? How do they respond practically? How do they resist intellectually?

1. What is Habshush’s view of the Ottoman Sultan? What about the Sultan’s representatives in Yemen?
2. What happened to Harun al-Sa’di, the impoverished alfalfa eater who gave his wife’s rings to help Habshush and Halévy?

## Chapter 11: The Bedouin (pp. 190-198)

1. Why does Habshush resent Halévy’s treatment of him? How does he respond to it later in the chapter?
2. How do Halévy and Habshush respond to the physical hardships of their journey?
3. Why is Habshush so happy to kill the scorpion?
4. How do the competing frameworks of hospitality and fear of strangers, economic concerns, and religious concerns affect the Bedouins’ treatment of Habshush and Halévy?

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## Chapter 12: The City of Marib and the Return to San’a (pp. 199-211)

1. Why do Halévy and Habshush come into conflict over who is going to collect transcriptions?
2. How does the family of al-Mashriqi respond to his murder? How does the tribal chief respond? What does each side want from the other?
3. Why are Habshush and Halévy afraid to have their transcriptions discovered?
4. What does Habshush think about those who claim to be harbingers of the messiah?