SECTION III
ECONOMY AND MATERIAL EXISTENCE
JEWISH TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRAN ACCORDING TO CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN SOURCES

1. According to Dr. Jacob E. Polak,1 1850s

The Jews make a living mostly by silk-weaving, glass-polishing, and working as silversmiths, goldsmiths and jewelers; they make alcohol, liquor, wine, ammonia, salt, chloric acid, sulfuric acid and nitric acid, and they are skilled in combining and separating metals; because of this they are indispensable in the production of coins, where they supervise the technical processes of this craft. Also, many of them are established physicians. One of the court physicians of the latter monarch Muhammad Shah was a Jew by the name of Haq-Nazar.2 Furthermore, they have a reputation as singers and musicians and on account of this they are oftentimes invited to entertain guests at parties.

2. According to Isaac Luria,3 Headmaster of the Alliance Israélite Universelle School in Baghdad, 1873

It seems that there are 40,000 Jews in Persia. Their occupations are:

At Teheran, Hamadan, and in the whole of the north they trade in drugs, spices, and in articles of European manufacture; some few also in

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1 Regarding this Austrian physician and ethnographer, who was Nasir al-Din Shah’s personal physician during the 1850s, and his writings concerning the Jews of Iran, see in our book above, source no. 4, entitled, “The Jews of Iran in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, as Observed by Dr. Jacob E. Polak.” For the original source of the excerpt before us see the latter’s work Persien, das Land und seine Bewohner, op. cit., p. 25. For the Persian translation of the excerpt, see K. Jahandari’s Safarnama-yi Polak, op. cit., p. 28.

2 This is Hakim (i.e. physician) Haq-Nazar, son of Hakim Ya’qub of Khunsar. Regarding him, see above, source no. 4, note 14, and below, source no. 31, entitled “On the Jewish Community of Tehran in the year 1875...,” note 9.

3 Regarding I. Luria and the complete text of his report on the Jews of Iran, published in The Jewish Chronicle [New Series], No. 233, September 12, 1873, p. 394, see in our book, above, source no. 3, entitled “On the Legal and Actual Condition of the Jews of Iran in the Year 1873,” notes 1 and 3.