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## Without Bounds

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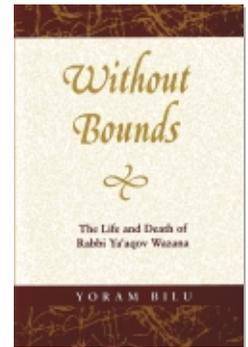
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## “Nothing of His Remains”



“He was an enigma, everything about him was mysterious,” asserted Wazana’s distant kinsman, Rabbi Shmuel Suissa. This eloquent, educated informant was doubtlessly referring to Rabbi Ya’aqov’s unusual lifestyle, the wondrous feats he routinely performed, and his impressive capacity to heal people. Greatly contributing to the riddle that these elements entail, and to the mythical halo surrounding the figure of Wazana, is the fact that memories of him lack any concrete basis linking him to reality. “Nothing of his remains. He left nothing behind,” his Moroccan friends declare wistfully.

The lack of mementoes is best explained by the fact that material possession was a low priority for Wazana, and his belongings were commensurably few and poor. However, there were certain articles that he valued beyond all others: the *bordo* that belonged to his father, and his mother’s robe from which he was never parted, and the copper ring, the magic mirror, and the amber beads—the “tools” of his trade. And what happened to his perfectly white clothes whose cleanliness signified so much in his life: the *jellaba*, the *chamir*, the *farajiyā* and the *salam*,<sup>1</sup> and the red *tarboosh* he invariably wore, into whose lining, rumor had it, were sewn amulets to protect the wearer from harm? And what became of his famed healing books—those of his forefathers and the ones he acquired deviously from the Muslim wise men—the most prized of which remained with Wazana so much that “he slept with it, ate with it,” and kept it on him [under his clothes] so that no one would take it?

According to several informants, all these vanished into thin air because Wazana had no wife, children, or brothers to claim his property. It has been noted that his room was looted when he died, whether out

of greed or people's belief that they would be blessed by possession of these objects. Makhluḥ Ben-Ḥayim, in whose house Wazana lived throughout his stay in Agouim, insists that he took none of the deceased's belongings for himself. Whatever he found he handed over to Wazana's nephew, Ya'aqov Buskila of Agouim, who died in Be'er Sheva in the early 1990s. However, the response of Buskila's widow to questions regarding Wazana's property was unequivocal: "Nothing; not a trace of anything that belonged to him!" Her brother added: "If there were brothers, to sit *shivah* [seven days of ritual mourning] for him, they would have kept something." He does not rule out, however, the possibility that the disappearance of Wazana's personal effects was divinely orchestrated, either as a means of ensuring that they did not fall into unworthy hands, or that this was Wazana's punishment for abusing the powers he was blessed with.

Wazana's friends were especially intrigued by the disappearance of his books. They are certain that some books reached Israel and there are various theories explaining their whereabouts. The prime suspects are three rabbi-healers, Wazana's former associates, whose denials of guilt are scoffed at. The latent potential of these volumes continues to fire the imaginations of informants.

Above all, the "matter of his pictures" deepens the blur that Wazana left behind. As one informant put it, "No pictures of him. Not one. When someone who had pictures of him went to look for them, he suddenly couldn't find them. The pictures vanished. No one knows who took them. Finished. Nothing. Nothing at all was left, nothing."

Without photographs or any kind of tangible evidence, the figure of Wazana becomes increasingly hazy as it is gnawed by the passage of the years and kneaded into shapes by the informants' fantasies and needs. That Wazana had no heir heightens the sense of loss, the finality of it all. "Rabbi Avraham had twelve children. All of them died. He was the only one left. It is a sad thing for the family. Everyone in that family died, may God have mercy on them," bemoaned Rabbi Shalom of Agouim. Thus a tragic veil falls on the Wazana family of Assarag, as if a sentence had been passed that no descendants would carry the memory onward through time. Even their property was destined to vanish without a trace, leaving only the memory that has become legend.