



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NOTES ON THE LIFE OF MENACHEM DI LONSANO.

BY PROF. DAVID KAUFMANN.

So little is known of the life of Menachem ben Jehudah ben Menachem di Lonsano, the excellent Masoretic and Midrashic scholar, lexicographer, and poet¹, that even ever so small a contribution tending to throw some light on his biography deserves to be thankfully received. We find such contribution contained in an epistle, which I publish herewith for the first time from a manuscript collection of letters in my possession (formerly Mortara, 12). We learn here a fact which was hitherto unknown; namely, that Lonsano, at a very advanced age, was compelled by poverty to visit Italy and to appeal to his countrymen for assistance. Lame on both legs, blind in one eye², bent and broken by age, the old man saw again the land which he may have left when a boy, after having dwelt in Jerusalem for forty years, for it cannot even be said with certainty that Lonsano had been born in Italy³. The fame that had gone before him, and which was enhanced by his ethical and didactical work, *The Way of Life*, which had perhaps then already appeared in print⁴ in Constantinople, was far surpassed by his appearance and exuberant erudition. His learning became particularly apparent in his sermons which he was twice permitted to give in the synagogue of the Italian congregation where our letter was written. He showed that he surpassed all others in his mastery of the whole field of Midrashic literature. People therefore did not merely content themselves by aiding him and seeing him off on his journey; but, mindful of the fatigues of the road, doubly dangerous for a man stricken like him, tried to relieve him of them as much as possible. We do not know the name of the man to whom the letter of recommendation was directed, but he must have been a man of great wealth and princely generosity, otherwise they would not have sent him this letter in behalf of Lonsano by special messenger.

Lonsano himself has almost always been anxious not to make use of the opportunities, offered him by his poems, to give information about his own life; and the heaviest blow that had befallen him

¹ Compare particularly Landshut, עמורי העבודה, I, 178-185.

² Ever since he was ten years of age he had been compelled, on account of his weak eyes, to wear spectacles, see שתי ידות, f. 81 a: עני ואביון אני הלוש; f. 81 a: וכעז עיני והיוהר רע כי הצי עור אני כי כנן עשר השבע מאד ומוכן לזרענות וכל ימי מכאובי וכעז עיני והיוהר רע כי הצי עור אני כי כנן עשר שנים הייתי כשהוצרכתי להתחיל להשחמש במראות.

³ Ad. Jellinek, מצריך, V, n. 1.

⁴ This seems to follow from the words of our epistle.

from a friend, whom he had induced to come to Jerusalem, and who ruined him in the most treacherous manner, is no more than hinted at by him¹.

When we consider the frequent and violent attacks made by him, in his lexicographical work *Maarich*, on the celebrated commentator of the Midrash Rabba, Rabbi Issachar Baer Cohen Ashkenazi, of Szebreszyn, we are led to believe that a personal quarrel, a profound discord, must have separated these two men. At any rate, the assumption that Menachem di Lonsano had made R. Baer Cohen's acquaintance in the Holy Land cannot well be rejected. The tradition that the author of the *Mathnath Kehunah* died in Jerusalem is undoubtedly correct². It is true Jacob Reifmann thought he had finally settled the question by simply referring to the tombstone which is said even at the present day to mark at Szebreszyn the grave of the great commentator of the Midrash³. But on a closer inspection of the alleged epitaph, it becomes apparent that we have here a memorial tablet and not a tombstone. The inscription shows no date whatever, not even the year of death. It has been a custom, which even now survives, to erect memorials in the cemeteries for great men that were born in the town or the province, even when they had died in ever so remote a country. The Jews in Poland follow this usage for their Rabbis or learned men that died abroad. Ch. N. Dembitzer⁴ has proved this especially for Lemberg. Issachar Baer Cohen is not, therefore, buried in Szebreszyn, but in the Holy Land, where also the remains of his great critic, the unhappy Lonsano, rest⁵.

הנה פה עמנו עומד היום חכם א' מירושלם עיר הקודש שמו כמהדר מנחם
 מלונצאנו יצו שם נמצא ושם היה יותר מארבעים שנה מסתפח בנחלת השם
 והוא חסיד לאל עליון • יעיד עליו חברו ספר דרך חיים • אשר משם יראה
 הרואה כמה רב גובריה בענוה ויראת חטא • לשמע און שמענוהו • ועתה עיננו
 ראתהו ובאננינו שמענו כמה מילי מעלייתא די נפקו מפומיה בשני דרושים

¹ שהי ירוח, f. 140 b, half a verse is missing, which may have contained the name of his faithless friend :

	אשר ארח לחברה
אשר אני הביאתיו לציון	אבהיהו ושמתיו לי גבירי
והוא חכם צרני ושפך	דמי לבי ואכל את בשרי
וסבב אלמנת היות לאשתי	וגלות לי ואוי לבני ולברי

² David Conforte, קורא הרווח, ed. D. Cassel, f. 41 a ; Luncz, *Jerusalem*, I, 120, n. 198, who, however, follows Reifmann.

³ בית איצר הספרות, ed. Gräber, I, 2.

⁴ כלילה יופי, I, 41 a.

⁵ Luncz, *Jerusalem*, I, 115, n. 184.

עשה לעינינו • מצורף למה דתהינן ליה אקנקניה ואשבכנהו על חד תרין
ממה ששמעה אוננו ותבן הלא הוא זקן ושבע ימים פסח שתי רגליו ושתום
העין ועינו אחת רעה עכ"ז רוב צערו וגודל עניו הכריחוהו לבא בגלילות
אלה לבקש אוכל לנפשו ולנפש בני ביתו העטופים ברעב בהר הקדש בירושלם •
ויהי כי בא אל המלון הזה כראות הקלני את האיש ואת שיחתו הצריכה תלמוד •
נכמרו רחמיהם עליו ועשו אתו ברכה במנה הראויה להתכבד • אך אין הקומין
משביע כי לחזור אל הארץ אשר שם נתקבל צריך לאסוף על יד מעות לא
מעט • באופן כי צריך הוא להיות נודד ומכתת רגליו מעיר לעיר וממדינה
אל מדינה למצא סיוע שיהיה בו ממש לשוב אל מקומו • אי לזאת עלה
במחשבה לפניו לבא אל משכן כבודו • כי היכי דלימטייה למר חלק במצוה
רבה זו הוכל מעלין לארץ ישראל אמנם אנחנו שראינוהו נגוע מוכה אלקים
ומעונה בחו' [מ]לת[נ]ו עליו לא הנחנהו לצאת כי חשבנו למשפט תרגו עליו
הדרך נתרבה ההוצאה ולכן יעצונו כליונתו להנאתו ולטובתו של צדיק זה
לשלוח שלוחנו זה במקומו כי ידענו תעלה אגרתנו זאת לפני מזבחך לרצון
כאלו בא אתו החכם בעצמו בארצך ודרך בארמנותיך נא למען השם צא נא
לקראת שלוחנו זה בפנים מאירות והענק תעניק לו מן הטוב ההוא אשר
הטיב ה' לך כי בגלל הדבר הזה מן השמים יטיבוך וירכו לך שנות חיים
ושלום : ~ :

A RESPONSE OF SOLOMON B. ADERET.

(See *J. Q. R.*, pp. 228-38 and 277-81.)

I HAVE also in my possession a copy of pp. 228-38 of the responses of Sol. b. Aderet published by Prof. Kaufmann, together with some corrections by Edelman, and two references by Dr. Steinschneider to his *H. B.* viii. 88 and xi. 135 (comp. also above, p. 222, notes). My copy however contains also the verdict which follows immediately in the MS. the responses mentioned, and which Dr. Steinschneider quotes: מכתב ר' יוסף בלשים בונדואה פלכון וכו'. Dr. Neubauer, *Cat. Bod.*, p. 763, cites the first part of it and gives all the signatures. The whole of this verdict is already printed in the collection of responses of Isaak b. Sheshet, No. 220, and is entitled לחכם הרב רבי משה אברבאליה ששלח אלי תשובות חכמי גירונדא. The signatures of the learned men of Gerona are the same as in the MS., with the exception of a few variations only; the names of שאלתיאל חזן and שלמה רבאליה are missing. On the other hand, the transmitter of the verdict of the learned men of Gerona to Isaak b. Sheshet, who signs last as