

There is no gemara of the Jerusalem Talmud to this treatise, nor in fact to any treatise of the order *Kodashim* (comp. Buber, "Die Angebliche Existenz eines Jerus. Talmud zur Ordnung Kodaschim," in Berliner's "Magazin," 1878, pp. 100-105).

s. s.

J. Z. L.

**MEINEK, MOSES SÄKEL** (called also **Moses Isaac ben Baruch of Redwitz**): German scholar and editor; lived at Offenbach at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He published in 1715, under his own name, Naphtali Pappenheim's "Teutsche Apothek," and in 1717 a riddle in Judæo-German verse composed by an anonymous author. This riddle was reproduced, with a German transcription, by Schudt in his "Jüdische Merkwürdigkeiten" (iv., continuation iii. 108-109), Schudt referring to Meinek as a printer. In 1722 Meinek edited the anonymous "Siyumma ha-Parashiyot meha-Torah," a guide for the reader of the Law. He was probably himself the author.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.* Nos. 3632, 3976, and col. 1944; Wolf, *Bibl. Hebr.* iii., No. 1572c, iv., No. 1547c; Ben-Jacob, *Ozar ha-Sefarim*, p. 419.

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**MEÏR (MEÏR BA'AL HA-NES** = "Meïr the miracle-worker"); Tanna of the second century (fourth generation); born in Asia Minor. The origin of this remarkable scholar, one of the most striking figures of his age, is wrapped in obscurity. According to a haggadah, he was a descendant of Nero, who, says a Jewish legend, escaped death at the time of his deposition and became subsequently a convert to Judaism (Git. 56a). The mystery of Meïr's origin extends to his name, for according to the Talmud the name "Meïr" (= "one who enlightens") was given to him because he instructed the wise in the Law ('Er. 13b); as to his original name, the Babylonian Talmud (*l.c.*) gives it as "Me'asha," but the Jerusalem Talmud seems not to know it. Sometimes he is called "Nehorai," the Aramaic equivalent of "Meïr." Meïr began to study very early in life. At first he entered the school of Akiba, but, finding himself not sufficiently prepared to grasp the lectures of that great master, he went to the school of Ishmael, where he acquired an extensive knowledge of the Law. He then returned to Akiba, who, recognizing his dialectical powers, ordained him over the heads of his other disciples ('Er.

**Ordained in Youth.** *l.c.*). This ordination, which was considered invalid on account of Meïr's youth, was confirmed by Judah ben Baba (Sanh. 14a; see Rashi *ad loc.*).

Unlike his master Akiba, Meïr seems to have kept aloof from the revolutionary movement of Bar Kokba. Nevertheless he suffered greatly from its consequences. His father-in-law, Hananiah ben Teradion, fell a martyr to the Hadrianic persecutions, and his sister-in-law was taken to Rome and sold to a keeper of a house of ill fame. A tale of her rescue by Meïr, though embellished with legend, may have a foundation in fact. Urged by his wife to attempt the rescue of her sister, who, she asserted, would rather forfeit her life than her virtue, Meïr journeyed to Rome. Attired as a wealthy Roman, he went to the house to which she had been taken, and asked to see her. "She is very beautiful," said the keeper,

"but no man has as yet gained her favor." Overjoyed, Meïr offered him a large sum of money to permit her to be carried off. The keeper hesitated, fearing that it might cost him his head. "Fear not," said the rabbi; "when danger threatens thee say, 'Meïr's God, help me!'" Still the man hesitated. To convince him of the efficacy of his advice, Meïr approached a number of savage watch-dogs at the gate and by a mystic word made them cinge at his feet. His fears allayed, the keeper yielded ('Ab. Zarah 18a; Eccl. R. vii. 12).

During the Hadrianic persecutions Meïr lived abroad, but he returned to Judea after the repeal of the oppressive edicts, and took a prominent part in the reestablishment of the Sanhedrin in the city of Usha.

**At Usha.** Short-ly afterward Simeon ben Gamaliel II. was elected patriarch, and Meïr was raised to the dignity of *hakam*, in which office he was charged with the duty of preparing the subjects to be discussed in the Sanhedrin. To his activity and influence was due the adoption of the laws known as the "Institutions of Usha." To his duties in connection with the Sanhedrin Meïr added the establishment of academies of his own in Bethsan, Ammaus near Tiberias, etc., where he successively lived and lectured. A wonderful feat of memory displayed by him on one of his travels is mentioned in the Talmud. On the eve of the Feast of Purim, Meïr found himself in a small Jewish community where no copy of the Book of Esther could be found; he thereupon wrote out the book from memory without a mistake (Tosef., Megillah, ii.).

Meïr infused new life into the development of the Halakah. He introduced the rule of testing the validity of a halakah on rational grounds. The dialectical power displayed by him in halakic discus-



Synagogue at the Alleged Tomb of Rabbi Meir at Tiberias.

(From a photograph.)

sion was so great that most of his hearers followed him with difficulty. "He was able," says the Talmud, "to give a hundred and fifty reasons to prove a thing legally clean, and as many more reasons to prove it unclean" ('Er. 13b). This excess of dialectics is given in the Talmud as the only reason why his halakot did not receive the force of law; the *pros* and *cons* offered by him were so nearly equal in strength that one never knew his real opinion on a subject. In the deduction of new halakot from the Biblical text Meïr used with great caution the hermeneutic rules established by his teacher Ishmael, regarding them as unreliable; and he rejected Aki-

ba's method of deducing a new halakah from a seemingly superfluous particle in the Scriptural text (Sotah 17a; Sifre, Balak, 131). Meir's greatest merit in the field of the Halakah was that he continued the labors of Akiba in arranging the rich material of the oral law according to subjects, thus paving the way for the compilation of the Mishnah by Judah ha-Nasi.

Meir's haggadot won by far the greater popularity; in this direction he was among the foremost.

place with the traditional sayings of the Fathers are these: "Have little business, and be busied in the Torah"; "Be lowly in spirit to every man"; "If thou idlest from the Torah, thou wilt have many idlers against thee"; "If thou laborest in the Torah, He hath much to give unto thee" (Ab. iv. 14). Other maxims of his, on study and the fear of the Lord, have been transmitted by Johanan: "Learn the ways of the Lord with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul"; "Watch at the gates of the Law";



INTERIOR OF THE ALLEGED TOMB OF RABBI MEIR AT TIBERIAS.

(From a photograph by Elkan N. Adler, London.)

Well versed in the Greek and Latin literatures, he would quote in his haggadic lectures fables, parables, and maxims which captivated his hearers.

**His Haggadah.** To popularize the Haggadah, gadah he wrote haggadic glosses on the margin of his Bible and composed midrashim. Both glosses and midrashim are no longer in existence, but they are quoted in the midrashic literature, the former under the title "Torah shel Rabbi Meir," or "Sifra shel Rabbi Meir," and the latter, on the Decalogue, under the title "Midrash Anoki de-Rabbi Meir" (Gen. R. ix. 5). To Meir is attributed also a collection of three hundred fables, three of which are referred to in the Talmud (Sanh. 38b; see *ÆSOP'S FABLES AMONG THE JEWS*). Among those of Meir's maxims that have found a

"Keep the Law in thy heart"; "Let the fear of the Lord be always before thine eyes and keep thy tongue from evil words"; "Cleanse and make thyself pure that thou mayest stand without sin before the Lord, and He will be with thee" (Ber. 17a).

An instance of Meir's humility and love of peace is related in the Midrash. Among his hearers was a woman who never missed a lecture of his. Once, the discourse being more prolonged than usual, the woman returned home late in the evening. This infuriated her husband, who turned her out-of-doors and swore that he would not take her in until she had spat in Meir's face. Refusing to do this, she lived separated from her husband. When Meir was informed of the incident he went to the woman and, pretending to have a sore eye, requested her to

spit in it to heal it (Lev. R., Deut. R.). Meir was noted for his hatred of ignorance. "He that gives his daughter to an 'am ha-arez is as though **Hatred of** he put her before a lion" (Pcs. 56a). **Ignorance.** "He who leaves an 'am ha-arez in his house asleep and returns to find him awake may be sure the house has been polluted" (Toh. 8a). Still he would rise before an old man, even if he were an 'am ha-arez (Yer. Bik. 65c).

Meir's experience of the world was wide and varied, and the Haggadah records several of his social maxims: "Love the friend who admonishes thee and hate the one who flatters thee; for the former leads thee to life and the future world, while the latter puts thee out of the world." "Conciliate not thy friend in the hour of his passion; console him not when his dead is laid out before him; question him not in the hour of his vow; and strive to see him not in the hour of his disgrace" (Ab. R. N. xxix.; comp. *ib.* xxxvi. and Ab. iv. 18, where these maxims are given in the name of Simeon ben Eliezer). Meir was fond of discoursing upon traveling. "When thou art in Rome do as the Romans do" (Gen. R. xlviii.). "Travelers should go in threes, for a single traveler is likely to be murdered; two are likely to quarrel; but three will always make their way in peace" (Eccl. R. iv.). Meir exalts work and recommends parents to instruct their children in a clean trade (Kid. 82a). "He who does not work on week-days will end by being compelled to work even on Sabbaths; for idleness leads to misery, and misery to crime; and once a prisoner, the idler will be forced to labor even on the Sabbath" (Ab. R. N. xxi.). "It is not the trade followed but the merit of the workman which makes him rich or poor" (Kid. *l.c.*). Those who run after riches are reproved by Meir in the following saying: "Man comes into the world with closed bands as though claiming ownership of everything; but he leaves it with hands open and limp, as if to show that he takes nothing with him. Yet if man has sought the best course in life, his reward awaits him beyond the grave; there he finds the **Maxims** and **Views.** table set for a feast of joy that will last through eternity" (Eccl. R. i.).

Meir's generosity and confidence in God are illustrated by the following details of his private life given in the Midrash (Eccl. R. ii. 18). By successfully following the calling of public scribe he earned three shekels a week. Of these two were spent on his household and one was given to poor fellow students. When asked why he did not save something for his children he answered, "If my children are good the Lord will provide for them, for it is said, 'I was young and I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed demanding bread' [Ps. xxxvii. 25]. If my children are not good they deserve nothing, and it would be aiding the enemies of the Lord if I left them wealth." With all his piety, Meir showed a spirit of great tolerance. He declared that a heathen who occupied himself with the Torah was as worthy of Judaism as a high priest, for it is said, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes . . . which if a man do, he shall live in them" (Lev. xviii. 5). He explained this to mean that eternal happiness was not the heritage of the

Jews exclusively (Sifra to Lev. *l.c.*). Thus Meir is said to have lived on friendly terms with heathen scholars, with whom he had religious controversies; he was especially intimate with the Greek philosopher Euonymus of Gedara, to whom he paid a visit of condolence on the death of the latter's parents (Gen. R. lxv.; Lam. R., proem. 2).

Meir's tolerance, however, is best shown by his attitude toward the apostate ELISHA BEN ABUYAN (Aher), his teacher. Of all Elisha's colleagues he alone, perhaps in the hope of reclaiming him for Judaism, continued to associate with him and discuss with him scientific subjects, not heeding the remonstrances of some pious rabbis who regarded this association with some suspicion. Meir's attachment for Elisha was so great that on the death of the latter he is said to have spread his mantle over his friend's grave. Thereupon, according to a legend, a pillar of smoke arose from it, and Meir,

**Relations** paraphrasing Ruth iii. 13, exclaimed, **with Aher.** "Rest here in the night; in the dawn of happiness the God of mercy will deliver thee; if not, I will be thy redeemer" (Hag. 15b). The same haggadah adds that at the death of Meir smoke ceased to issue from Elisha's grave. Notwithstanding his tolerance, Meir's treatment of the Samaritans was very severe; and he enacted several laws that were destined to widen the breach between them and the main body of Judaism (Hul. 6a). The Midrash (Gen. R. xv.; Pesik. R. 23) reports several religious controversies between Meir and Samaritan scholars concerning creation, resurrection, and similar subjects.

The later part of Meir's life was saddened by many misfortunes. In one day he lost two promising sons, who died suddenly on a Sabbath while he was at the house of study. A story is related in a midrash (quoted in Yalk., Prov. 964) of the fortitude shown on that occasion by Meir's learned wife, BE-RURIAH. Controlling her feelings, she withheld the knowledge of their death from her husband during the Sabbath in order that the day should not be profaned by weeping and lamentation, and on the conclusion of the Sabbath sought to console her husband with a parable. Shortly after the death of his sons Meir lost his wife. According to a legend, she committed suicide after having been dishonored by one of her husband's pupils (Rashi to 'Ab. Zarah 18a).

The last years of Meir's life were passed in Asia Minor. He was induced to leave Palestine because of the conflict that arose between him and the patriarch. The origin of this conflict was the change introduced by Simeon in the ceremonial of the Sanhedrin. Custom required its members

**Opposes** to rise when the president, the judge, **the** or the reader entered the academy. **Patriarch.** Simeon, having an exaggerated idea of his dignity, issued an order that the assembly should rise as a body only on his own entrance, while on the entrance of the judge only the first row, and on that of the reader only the second row, should rise. Meir and Nathan (the judge) felt justly offended at this new arrangement and determined to show Simeon's unfitnes for his office by puzzling him with difficult halakic questions which he would be unable to answer. Informed of this con-

spiracy. Simeon expelled them from the Sanhedrin, but he could not prevent them from writing difficult questions and distributing them among its members. Compelled to readmit both Nathan and Meir, he contrived that their names should not be recorded in the ordinances enacted by him. Nathan submitted, but Meir continued to embarrass the patriarch by addressing to him difficult questions. When, at last, the patriarch threatened excommunication, he answered, "I do not care for your sentence unless you can prove to me on whom, on what grounds, and under what conditions excommunication may be imposed," and left the Sanhedrin (Yer. M. K. iii. 81a).

Meir died somewhere in Asia Minor. "Bury me," said he to his pupils, "by the shore, that the sea which washes the land of my fathers may touch also my bones" (Yer. Kil., end). Though during life Meir had many adversaries, after his death the tribute paid to his virtue and greatness was universal. "He opened the eyes even of the wise in the Law" is said of him in the Talmud (E'r. 13b). An amora said: "The Creator of the world knows that Meir had not his equal in his time" (*ib.*). R. Jose, in pronouncing Meir's funeral sermon at Sepphoris said: "He was a great man and a saint, and was humble withal" (Yer. Ber. ii. 56b). Of all the Tannaim, Meir's name is most widely known among the people. In the house of every pious Jew there is a money-box hung on the wall in which the inmates deposit their alms for the poor of Palestine; this box is called "Meir Ba'al ha-Nes Pushke."

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**MEIR (MAESTRO BENDIG) OF ARLES.**  
See BENDIG, MEIR.

**MEIR BEN BARUCH HA-LEVI:** Rabbi at Vienna from 1360 to 1390; a native of Fnlida (Isserlein, "Terumat ha-Deshen," No. 81). His authority was acknowledged not only throughout Germany, but even by the Spanish rabbis (Isaac b. Sheshet, Responsa, No. 278). He acquired great celebrity through his introduction into Germany of the rabbinical system of ordination. Owing to persecutions, the number of competent rabbis had decreased, and persons unqualified were inducted into rabbinates. To prevent this Meir issued an order to the effect that no Talmudical student should officiate as rabbi unless he had been ordained and had acquired the title of "morenu" (Isaac b. Sheshet, *l.c.* Nos. 268-272). At first the order provoked the opposition of many rabbis, who accused Meir of a desire to rule; but they afterward accepted it. Later Meir assumed authority over the French rabbis, and sent to France ISAIAH B. ABBA MARI with authority to appoint rabbis there.

Although Meir left no work, it appears from Jacob Mölln, who frequently mentions him in his "Minhagim," that he collaborated with his contemporaries Abraham Klausner and Shalom of Neustadt in the compilation of a work on ritual customs.

Two "tehinnot" for the 10th of Adar and the 23d of Iyyar respectively are ascribed to Meir.

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**MEIR CALW (CALVO; קאלו):** Biblical commentator; the country and year of his birth are unknown. As he quotes Levi b. Gershon it may be assumed that he lived not earlier than the fifteenth century. Meir Calw was the author of a commentary on the Pentateuch entitled "Minḥaḥ Ḥadashah," extracts from which were published by Heidenheim in one of his editions of the Pentateuch (Rödelheim, 1818-21).

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D.

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**MEIR OF CLISSON:** French Talmudist of the first half of the thirteenth century. He is mentioned in an extract from "Pa'neah Raza" (MS. Halberstam) on Gen. ii. 23 as a Bible commentator. Gross takes him to be identical with Meir ben Baruch, who emigrated to Jerusalem in 1211 together with his brother the tosafist Joseph of Clisson and many other French rabbis.

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S. S.

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**MEIR B. DAVID:** Grammarian of the last third of the thirteenth century. He wrote, under the title "Hassagat ha-Hassagah," a criticism of Ibn Janah's "Kitabal-Mustalḥak." Meir's work is known, however, only through passages quoted by Profiat Duran ("Ma'aseh Efoḏ," pp. 116, 173). Joseph ibn Kaspi, who knew Meir b. David personally, quotes, in his supercommentary on Ibn Ezra, an explanation which he heard from Meir's lips (see Dukes, "Nahal Kedumim," p. 9). Meir is probably identical with the grammarian R. David, whose note on Job vii. 4 is quoted by Abraham Bedersi in his work on synonyms, "Ḥotam Toknit" (p. 189; comp. Introduction, p. x.).

T.

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**MEIR BEN ELEAZAR** (known also as **Meir Lombard** [למברט, לונבורט] *ha-Darshan*): French liturgical poet of the first half of the thirteenth century. He wrote: (1) a series of poems to be recited on the seventh evening of Passover, some of which are arranged in alphabetical order; (2) a dirge beginning "Ziyyon zefirat pe'er," giving at the end in an acrostic "Meir Ḥazak"; (3) an alphabetical introduction to the Targum of Ex. xiii. 21, a passage which is read on the seventh day of Passover. The last-named poem is composed of six strophes, of four verses each, beginning with "It hazuta we-dugma." According to Landshuth ("Ammude ha-'Abodah," p. 159), Meir was the author of the dirge beginning "Abbirah millin," which is recited on the Ninth of Ab; but Zunz ("Literaturgesch." p. 360; Supplement, p. 38) ascribes it to Meir of Rothenburg (comp. *ib.* p. 469).

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**MEIR BEN ELIAKIM:** German liturgist; probably lived at Posen toward the end of the sev-