

ASHER, ENSEL B. JUDAH LOEB: Chief of the bet din at Slonim, Lithuania, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. He wrote two works: "Otot le-Mo'adim" (Signs for the Feasts) and "Baruk mi-Banim Asher" (Blessed Be Asher Above Sons; Deut. xxxiii. 24). The former contains a novella to Pesahim ix., and also the laws of the festivals and half-festivals. The latter comprises a homiletic commentary on the Pentateuch. Both were published at Zolkiev, in 1749 and 1752 respectively.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Walden, *Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Hadash*, ii. 7, 15; Benjacob, *Ozar ha-Sefarim*, pp. 31-83.

L. G.

I. BR.

ASHER BEN HAYYIM OF MONZON: Spanish liturgist of the fourteenth century. He was the author of a book entitled "Ha-Pardes" (Paradise), the ten sections of which are devoted to an exhaustive discussion of the benedictions, the results being epitomized in a single extract entitled "Terumot ha-Pardes" (The Heave-Offerings of Paradise). Azulai saw the manuscript in Italy, and made extracts from it, which he afterward published in his commentary "Shiyure Berakah" to the Shulhan 'Aruk, Oraḥ Hayyim. The manuscript in question was probably identical with that now preserved in the Bodleian Library. The latest authority cited in it is Yom-Tob b. Abraham of Seville.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim*, ed. Wilna, ii. 61; Michael, *Or ha-Hayyim*, p. 540; Neubauer, *Cat. Bodl. Hebr. MSS.* No. 799; Zunz, *Ritus*, p. 30.

L. G.

ASHER BEN IMMANUEL SALEM. See SALEM.

ASHER, JACOB ABRAHAM BEN ARYEH LOEB KALMANKES: Cabalistic and rabbinical author; born probably in Lemberg about the beginning of the seventeenth century; died there April 3, 1681. He wrote (1) "Sefer ha-Eshel" (The Book of the Grove), a volume of homilies, of which the first part, on Genesis, containing also some homiletical remarks by his grandfather, Joseph Kalmankes, was printed in Lublin, n.d.; and (2) "Ma'yan ha-Hokmah" (Fountain of Wisdom), an introduction to the Cabala, drawn chiefly from the works of Isaac Luria. This latter work was first printed in Amsterdam, 1652, then in Koretz, 1684, and lastly under the title "Tob we-Yashar" (Good and Right) in Berlin, 1706. Moses ibn Zur put it in rime prose under the title "Mebo Sha'ar ha-Shamayim" (The Way to the Gate of Heaven), but this was never published.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Buber, *Anshe Shem*, p. 45; Benjacob, *Ozar ha-Sefarim*, pp. 55, 350.

L. G.

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ASHER BEN JACOB HA-LEVI: Talmudic lexicographer; lived in Osnabrück, Prussia, toward the end of the thirteenth century. His father was probably the "Jacob ha-Levi" mentioned by Eliezer ha-Darshan as his teacher, and his nephew was Isaac ben Judah ha-Levi, author of פְּנֵינָה רַחֵם (Steinschneider, "Cat. Bodl." col. 1127). Asher was the pupil of Samuel ben Baruch of Bamberg. He wrote explanations of various parts of the Maḥzor, to be found in MSS. Munich, No. 423. Bodleian, No. 1102, as well as in a private MS. in the library of David Kaufmann (in "Monatsschrift," xli. 146). He is

especially severe upon the "men of France and the Islands of the Sea," complaining that they had tampered with the liturgy, in some places omitting words and in others adding to the received text. Asher is best known as the author of the small edition of the 'Aruk contained in MS. Berne, No. 200, which he compiled in the year 1290 within the space of five weeks for his nephew Isaac ben Eleazer ha-Levi. This recension contains 142 folios, and follows in the main the Regensburger MS. of the same work. Asher has, however, inserted into his edition a number of words dealing with the liturgy that are not to be found in the large 'Aruk. This manuscript served as the basis for Buxtorf's "Lexicon Hebræo-Chaldaicum."

Asher must not be confounded with a man of the same name who lived during the twelfth century, and perhaps belonged to the same family and who corresponded with Eliezer ben Nathan (רַחֵם), and lived in Worms or that neighborhood. According to Gross ("Magazin," x. 76), this latter Asher was the son of Jacob ben Isaac ben Eliezer of Worms (Zunz, "L. G." p. 156). Perles thinks that Eleazer ben Asher ha-Levi, who collected the valuable "Sefer Zikronot," was his son (Neubauer, "Medieval Jewish Chronicles," i. xx.; Gaster, "Chronicles of Jeremiah," p. 1). From the similarity in names, Perles argues that the family of Asher ben Jacob ha-Levi must be connected with the older Ha-Levi family of which Zunz has given ("Literaturgesch." p. 156) the pedigree (compare also Salfeld, "Nürnberger Memorbuch," pp. 104, 361).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Zunz, *Ritus*, p. 195; Perles, in *Monatsschrift*, xxv. 372, and in *Jubelschrift zum Siebzigsten Geburtstage des Prof. Dr. H. Grütz*, pp. 1 et seq.; Kaufmann, in *Monatsschrift*, xxxiv. 185 et seq.; Weiss, in *Monatsschrift*, xli. 146; Neubauer, *Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts of Bodl. Libr.* col. 311.

L. G.

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ASHER BEN JEHIEL: Eminent Talmudist; born in western Germany about 1250; died in Toledo, Spain, 1328. His family was prominent for learning and piety; his father having been a learned Talmudist, and one of his ancestors (not his grandfather) having been ELIEZER BEN NATHAN (רַחֵם).

Asher ben Jehiel was the most prominent disciple of Meir b. Baruch of Rothenburg, and, like his teacher, was in all probability the victim of blackmail by the government, which desired to deprive him of his fortune. His emigration from Germany was probably involuntary; for, according to his own statement, he possessed considerable means while in Germany, but in later years could not assist his son

Jacob, whose poverty prevented him from honoring the Sabbath with special garments and meals ("Tur Oraḥ Hayyim," § 242). Moreover, Asher's

son Judah testifies to the fact that he died in poverty ("Bet Talmud," pp. 372-375). After leaving Germany he settled first in southern France, then in Toledo, of which latter city he became rabbi on the recommendation of Solomon Adret.

In his religious attitude he resembled his teacher, Meir of Rothenburg, representing the rigorous school which was averse to lenient decisions in legal matters, even when theoretically justified ("Responsa," xlvii., c. 2). He was also opposed to secular knowl-

edge, especially philosophy; thanking God for having saved him from its influence, and boasting of possessing no knowledge outside the Torah. His position was clearly defined by him when he stated that philosophy is based on critical research, and religion on tradition; the two being incapable of harmonization. Of philosophy, he said, it may be truly stated, "None that go unto her may return" ("Responsa," iv. 9). Asher, however, had the courage of an independent opinion and laid down the principle: "We must not be guided in our decisions by admiration of great men; and in the event of a law not being clearly stated in the Talmud, we are not bound to accept it, even if it be based on the works of the Geonim" (Weiss, "Dor Dor we-Dorshaw," v. 63). His liberalism, however, is sometimes orthodoxy in disguise. He declares, for instance, that the liturgy of the Geonim does not fall under the Talmudic rule forbidding change in the wording of the traditional prayers (Maimonides, "Yad," Berakot, i. 16). Similarly, his decision against praying more than three times a day ("Responsa," iv. 13) is really on the side of rigorous orthodoxy. His assertion that the words *למשה מסיני* ("an oral law revealed to Moses on Sinai") do not always bear a literal meaning, but signify, in general, a universally adopted custom, must not be taken as a liberal interpretation bearing out the theory of oral tradition (so Z. Frankel, in "Darke ha-Mishnah," 20), but as an apologetic attempt to uphold rabbinical authority. The latter view is borne out by the context (Hilkot Mikwaot 1, in the twelfth volume of the usual Talmud editions).

His Religious Attitude. Asher possessed vast Talmudic knowledge, methodical and systematic, and was distinguished for terseness in summing up long Talmudic discussions, the final results of which he indicated clearly. His attitude, however, toward secular knowledge made his influence on the Spanish Jews a narrowing one. He espoused the cause of the anti-Maimonists—even becoming their leader—and desired the synod to issue a decree against the study of non-Jewish learning. Together with his sons he thus transplanted the strict and narrow Talmudic spirit from Germany to Spain, where it took root and turned the Spanish Jews from scientific research to the study of the Talmud.

Asher's extant works are: a commentary on Zera'im, the first order of the Mishnah, with the exception of Berakot; a commentary on the sixth order (Toharot); on the treatises Nedarim (third order), and Tamid; glosses like the Tosafot on several Talmudic treatises; a volume of responsa; and an abstract of the Talmudic laws (Halakot). His fame rests on the last-mentioned, constructed on the plan of Alfasi's work. Omitting the haggadic portions of the Talmud, and all the laws not practised outside of Palestine, such as the sacrificial, criminal, and political ones, Asher made an abstract of the practical Halakah, leaving out the discussions, and concisely stating the final decisions. Though in this respect he follows the example of Alfasi, he differs from him in quoting later authorities, notably Alfasi, Maimonides, and the Tosafists. Asher's work superseded Alfasi's

within a short time. It became so popular that it has been printed with almost every edition of the Talmud under the title "Rabbenu Asher," abbreviated ר"א (Rosh). His son Jacob compiled, under the title "Piske ha-Rosh," a list of the decisions found in the work. Commentaries on Asher's Halakot were written by a number of later Talmudists, among whom were: YOM-TOB LIPMAN HELLER, who wrote "Ma'adane Melek," "Ma'adane Yom-Tob," "Lehem Hamudot," and "Pilpela Harifta"; Nathaniel Weil, who wrote "Korban Nethanael"; and Phineas Selig of Lask, who wrote "Ateret Paz." Compare BERLIN, SAUL B. ZEBI HIRSCH.

Asher had eight sons, of whom the most prominent were JUDAH and JACOB.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim*, s.v.; Michael, *Or ha-Hayyim*, No. 543; Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.* col. 743; Grätz, *Gesch. der Juden*, 3d ed. vii. 233 et seq.; Weiss, *Dor Dor we-Dorshaw*, v. 61-70.

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ASHER BEN JOSEPH. See ANSHEL.

ASHER BEN JUDAH LOEB LANDAU. See LANDAU, ASHER.

ASHER KUBO. See CUBO, ASHER.

ASHER, LEMEL HA-LEVI: Polish Talmudic scholar; lived at the end of the eighteenth century. Together with his two sons, Yehiel Michel ha-Levi of Glogau and Moses ha-Levi of Glogau, he wrote homilies on the Pentateuch, published in 1820 under the title "Hut ha-Meshullash" (The Threefold Cord).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Zedner, *Cat. Hebr. Books Brit. Mus.* p. 61; BenJacob, *Ozar ha-Sefarim*, p. 171.

H. R.

I. BR.

ASHER, LEON: German physician; born April 13, 1865, in Leipsic. He is the son of Dr. David Asher, for many years secretary to Chief Rabbi Nathan M. Adler in London. Leon Asher, after graduating from the public school in Leipsic, studied medicine at the university of that city from 1885 to 1890, and received the degree of M.D. Having worked in the line of medical and psychical research, he went in 1891 to Heidelberg, where he was engaged as laboratory assistant with W. Kühne and G. Quincke. In 1894 he became assistant at the Bern Physiological Institute in Switzerland, and in 1895 privat-docent at the university. He spent the summer vacations of 1896-98 in the laboratory of the physiologist Hering in Leipsic, and in 1901 was appointed professor of medicine in Bern University.

Asher's researches cover a wide field in nervous and muscular physiology, including the physiology of the sense functions and of the transformation of tissue. Aided by the Berlin Royal Academy of Sciences, he experimented considerably in the direction of ascertaining the qualities of lymph and the precise mode of its formation; the majority of his conclusions are now accepted in the medical world. He edits, together with K. Spiro, an annual entitled "Ergebnisse der Physiologie."

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His Works. In this respect he follows the example of Alfasi, he differs from him in quoting later authorities, notably Alfasi, Maimonides, and the Tosafists. Asher's work superseded Alfasi's

ASHER BEN LEVI (known also as 'Abd al-Masih): Legendary boy convert and, subsequently,