

uscript of his supercommentary to Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch is still extant, while his "She'arim," on things permitted and those prohibited, which Moses Isserles used, has been preserved in fragments only; extracts from it are included in the Basel edition of the "Sha'are Dura" (1547). A "Seder ha-Get" by Isserlein, which is mentioned by some authorities, is perhaps the basis of the form of divorce given in Moses Minz's responsum No. 123. Three of Isserlein's liturgic pieces show him to have been a man of much talent, but not a poet.

Isserlein's responsa were highly important for the religious life of the German-Polish Jews. What Joseph Caro neglected in the Shulhan 'Aruk, Moses Isserles supplied in his notes; and Isserles often cites opinions of Isserlein's to which Caro had paid little attention. Even Solomon Luria, who as a rule was very independent in his views, considered Isserlein's opinions as authoritative. He said: "Do not deviate from his words; for he was great and eminent" ("Yam shel Shelomoh" to Giṭ. iv. 24).

It is difficult to characterize Isserlein's standpoint in his many decisions, which cover almost the entire religious and social life. He was, on the whole, inclined to a rigorous interpretation of the Law, excepting in the case of an 'AGUNAH; he always endeavored to facilitate the woman's remarriage. His severe views were due chiefly to his own asceticism; for, being himself accustomed to self-denial, he saw no special hardship in a decision that curtailed any of the joys of life. He spoke very bitterly, however, against those who out of mere professional envy, and in order that the views of others might not prevail, placed a stricter interpretation on the laws. Isserlein was opposed to severe punishments, and decided that the way ought to be made easy for the return of a penitent to Judaism, and that he should not be discouraged by the necessity of a too rigorous atonement; for

**As a Legal Authority.** he maintained that a return to Judaism involved a denial of three kinds of pleasure, and entailed a large amount of suffering which should be counted to the credit of the penitent.

In many cases Isserlein's decisions are true reflections of German Talmudism in the fifteenth century, with all its strong and its weak points. Thus he could hardly make up his mind to observe the comet in 1456, because, according to the opinion of an old codifier, star-gazing was one of the practises of magic forbidden in the Bible. Nevertheless he permitted a sick person to consult a magician, if the latter did not belong in the category of the magicians forbidden in the Pentateuch.

Isserlein's works are most valuable for the study of Jewish history in the Middle Ages on account of the rich material they contain regarding the civilization of that period.

Isserlein is a pet name for Israel.

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L. G.

**ISSERLES, MOSES BEN ISRAEL (ReMA):** Polish rabbi, code annotator, and philosopher; born at Cracow about 1520; died there May 1,

1572. His father was a rich and prominent Talmudist, and it may be concluded from the terms "ha-ḳazin" and "ha-parnes," which his son applies to him (preface to "Meḥir Yayin"), that he was the chief of the community. Isserles studied in his native city, and then under Shalom Shekna, rabbi of Lublin, whose son-in-law he became. Among his fellow pupils were his relative Solomon Luria (MaHaRShaL), and Ḥayyim b. Bezaleel, who later was his opponent. Isserles returned to Cracow about 1550, when he established a large yeshibah and, being a wealthy man, supported his pupils at his own cost. Three years later he was ordained rabbi and was named one of the three dayyanim to form the rabbinate of Cracow, which community had as yet no chief rabbi ("ab bet din"). In 1556, when the plague ravaged Cracow, Isserles went to Szydlowiec, where he wrote his "Meḥir Yayin."

While still young Isserles was recognized as an authority in rabbinical matters. As early as 1550 his relative Meir Katzenellenbogen of Padua, a man of eighty years, had applied to him to use his influence in forbidding the unlawful printing in Poland of the "Mishneh Torah," which was causing Katzenellenbogen heavy loss. Isserles in ten responsa defended the interests of the aged rabbi of Padua. He also corresponded with many other rabbis, among them Joseph Caro, who answered him in a very considerate manner.

A close friendship existed between Isserles and his relative Luria, though, as will be seen, they differed later on various matters (Isserles,

**Relations with Solomon Luria.** Responsa, No. 6). In many respects their aims were similar: both aimed at the truth in their decisions, both worked for the furtherance of Talmudic literature, and both ascribed

great importance to customs ("minhagin"). In certain other matters, however, there was great opposition between the two friends, especially in their attitude toward philosophy. Luria was the adversary of philosophy; Isserles, its warm defender, declaring openly that the aim of man is to search for the cause and the meaning of things ("Torat ha-'Olah," III., ch. vii.). Isserles accordingly devoted a part of his time to philosophy. When Luria reproached him for having based his decisions on Aristotle's teachings, he replied that he followed Maimonides, and that he studied Greek philosophy only from the "Moreh"; further, that he pursued his philosophical studies on Sabbaths and holy days only, when people generally took walks, and that it was better to occupy oneself with philosophy than to err through Cabala (Isserles, Responsa, No. 7). The fact that Isserles studied the "Moreh" on Sabbaths and holy days—on which days the reading of profane literature was particularly forbidden—shows how much he appreciated philosophy in general and Maimonides in particular.

Isserles also occupied himself with the secular sciences; and whereas Caro says that a man must devote all his time to the study of the Torah and the Talmud, Isserles decides that one may now and then occupy himself with the secular sciences provided he is not led into heresy through studying them (Shulhan 'Aruk, Yoreh De'ah, 246, 4). He himself had

an extensive knowledge of astronomy and a great liking for history. It was Isserles who induced his pupil David Gans to write the historical work "Zemah Dawid." Isserles was opposed to "pilpul" (Responsa, No. 78); and he taught his pupils how to interpret the Talmud in a simple way (*ib.* No. 38).

Some of his responsa are written in an elevated style of versified prose, as are his prefaces, though, as he himself declared, he had never studied Hebrew grammar (*ib.* No. 7). Isserles was also an excellent scribe, and in the scroll of the Pentateuch which he wrote and which is preserved in the synagogue—originally his house, which he gave to the community for a place of worship—there are fourteen readings different from those in other scrolls

**Connection with Council of Four Lands.** (see "Ha-Maggid," i. 54, ii. 16). Isserles was prominent in the COUNCIL OF FOUR LANDS, which was established in his time. A quarrel having broken out among the rabbis, he launched an anathema against those

who were desirous of continuing the agitation and would not await the decision of the rabbinical congress at the fair of Lublin (Responsa, Nos. 63, 64).

Owing to the fact that he was one of the founders of rabbinic learning in Poland and Germany, and was recognized as the authority not only in rabbinic law but also in Cabala, philosophy, and the secular sciences, legends attached themselves to him. Many curious stories are told of the number of years he lived, of the number of works he wrote, etc. (comp. Azulai, "Shem ha-Gedolim," i., *s.v.* "Mosheh Isserles"). Even at the present day the Polish Jews consider him a saint, and on the anniversary of his death large numbers make a pilgrimage to his tomb at Cracow ("Ha-Maggid," 1903, No. 18). In the epitaph on Isserles' tombstone occurs the following "From Moses [Maimonides] to Moses [Isserles] there was none like Moses" (comp. Deut. xxxiv. 10). This is an exaggeration, but there is a resemblance between the two, as both were halakists, and both devoted a large part of their time to philosophy.

Isserles' writings may be divided into two classes of works: (1) halakic, and (2) philosophical, cabalistic, exegetical, and scientific. It is on the former that his great reputation rests. His zeal for the Law and his vindication of Ashkenazic customs spread his fame far and wide. Indeed, he may with justice be called the Ashkenazic codifier; for he was to the Ashkenazim what Caro was to the Sephardim. Like Caro, he wrote a commentary to the Arba' Turim, entitled "Darke Mosheh," of which two parts were printed (i., Fürth, 1760; ii., Sulzbach, 1693). An abridgment of this work, entitled "Kiz-zur Darke Mosheh," was published with the text in Venice, 1593. This commentary contains a severe criticism of the "Bet Yosef." It is also the source of Isserles' other work, "Mappah," which is both a criticism of and a supplement to Caro's Shulhan 'Aruk. Isserles saw that Caro's "table" was not sufficiently "prepared"; for Caro as a

**Isserles and Caro.** Sephardi had neglected the Ashkenazic minhagim. He therefore provided the Shulhan 'Aruk (= "Prepared Table") with a "Mappah" (= "Table-Cloth"), consisting of notes ("haggahot") inserted in Caro's text.

These notes first appeared in the Cracow edition of the Shulhan 'Aruk (1571), in Rashi type to distinguish them from the text of Caro.

The authorities receiving special attention in the "Darke Mosheh" and "Mappah" are the ARAKONIM and, more particularly, the minhagim, to which Isserles attached great importance. The importance of the minhag had already been pointed out by Solomon Luria, who declared that the minhag outweighed the Law ("Yam shel Shelomoh" to B. K. x. 42). Isserles went still further: he established the minhag in several cases as the standard authority. "The minhag is the Law," he said ("Darke Mosheh" on Tur Yoreh De'ah, 116). "One must not act contrary to the minhag" (Shulhan 'Aruk, Oraḥ Hayyim, 619, 1). Still, even in establishing the minhag as an authority, he did not do so indiscriminately, because he made a distinction among minhagim. Where the minhag seemed to him absurd, he declared it to be unacceptable (Shulhan 'Aruk, Yoreh De'ah, 160, 18). It must be added that when Ashkenazim now speak of the Shulhan 'Aruk they understand by it both Caro's text and Isserles' notes, and that when there is a conflict between the two, Isserles is taken as the authority.

As to Isserles' system, it may be said that he was more inclined toward restrictive decisions ("mahmir"), especially in his rulings concerning kasher food (see, for instance, Shulhan 'Aruk, Yoreh De'ah, 35, 5; 107, 2 *et passim*). But he has been judged too severely by modern Maskilim, who have accused him of making arbitrary restrictions, of inventing customs, and of causing heavy pecuniary losses by his reliance on the minhagim (P. Smolenskin, "Am 'Olam," ch. xiii.). These accusations are unjustified, because Isserles was consistent in principle, inasmuch as he regarded the minhag as the norm for the practise on both the liberal and the restrictive sides. Throughout his "Darke Mosheh," "Mappah," and responsa occur many liberal decisions of his which are

**Liberal Tendencies.** based on the minhag, but are contrary to the decisions of other casuists ("posekim"), including Solomon Luria. In general he adapted his decisions to the spirit of the time in which he lived;

and he gave a liberal decision when he saw that a restrictive one would prove burdensome ("She'elot u-Teshubot ReMA," No. 50).

Isserles touches also, in his halakic decisions, on the question of the superiority of the Hebrew language and the sacred characters. He allows one to read on Saturdays non-religious works if written in Hebrew (Shulhan 'Aruk, Oraḥ Hayyim, 307, 16). The Targumim have the same sacred character as the Hebrew ("Darke Mosheh" on Tur Eben ha-'Ezer, 126). The square characters are sacred because the scroll of the Law is written in them; and he forbade the writing of non-religious works in such characters (Shulhan 'Aruk, Yoreh De'ah, 284, 2).

His other halakic works are:

"Torat Haṭṭat," also called "Issur we-Hetter" (Cracow, n.d.), a treatise on what is lawful and unlawful, arranged according to the "Sha'are Dura" of Isaac of Düren, and written before the "Mappah." Later Isserles added notes to this work (*ib.* 159 1). Eliezer ben Joshua of Shebrzyn and Jacob Rzeszower (Reischer) wrote commentaries on the "Torat Haṭṭat": that of the former was entitled "Dammesek Ell'ezer"; that of the lat-

ter, "Minhat Ya'akov." The work was severely criticized by Hayyim b. Bezaleel in his "Wikkuah Mayim Hayyim" and by Yom-Tob Lipmann Heller in his "Torat ha-Asham."

"She'elot u-Teshubot ReMA" (*ib.* 1640), a collection of 132 responsa, many of which were addressed to him by other rabbis. In these responsa Isserles sometimes criticizes Solomon Luria, Shalom Shekna (his own master; see Responsa, No. 30), Mordecai b. Hillel (*ib.* No. 100), and others.

"Haggahot" (Prague, 1604), notes to Jacob Weil's "She'fitot u-Bedikot."

Notes on Mordecai b. Hillel (Isserles, Responsa, No. 38).

His works of a philosophical character are "Mehir Yayin" (Cremona, 1559) and "Torat ha-'Olah" (3 vols., Prague, 1659). The former is a philosophical work in which he treats the Book of Esther as an allegory of human life. The "Torat

**Philo-  
sophical  
Works.** ha-'Olah" is a philosophical explanation of the Temple, its equipment, and its sacrifices. In the description of

the Temple, Isserles follows Maimonides' "Yad." Bet ha-Behirah, even in those cases where Maimonides is in conflict with the Talmud ("Torat ha-'Olah," I, ch. ii.). According to Isserles, the entire Temple and its appurtenances—their forms, dimensions, and the number of their parts—correspond to things either in divine or in human philosophy. For instance, the seven parts of the Temple (*ib.*) correspond to the so-called seven climates. The women's courtyard and its four chambers correspond to the active intelligence and the four kingdoms, mineral, vegetable, animal, and rational, which receive their form from the active intelligence ("Torat ha-'Olah," I, iv., vi., viii.). He also follows Maimonides in many philosophical points, as, for example, in a belief in the active intelligence, and regards the angels not as concrete bodies, but as creative; every power of God being called "angel" (messenger) because it is an intermediary between the First Cause and the thing caused or created (*ib.* II., xxiv.; III., xvii.; comp. "Moreh," ii. 6).

In many other points, however, he differs widely from Maimonides. He follows ALBO in fixing the number of the articles of faith or fundamental principles ("ikkarim") at three; viz., belief (1) in the existence of God, (2) in revelation, and (3) in divine retribution. To ALBO's six derived principles Isserles adds three: free will, tradition, and the worship of God alone ("Torat ha-'Olah," I, xvi.). Belief in the creation of the world is in his eyes the most important of the derived principles; and he refutes the seven arguments of the philosophers against it (*ib.* III., xlv., xlv., lxi.). He does not, however, consider it necessary to believe in the end of the world (*ib.* ii. 2)—another point on which he differs from Maimonides (comp. "Moreh," ii. 27).

As Isserles lived at a time when the Cabala predominated, and as he was a contemporary of Isaac Luria, Hayyim Vital, and other cabalists, it was natural that he should be influenced by mystical views. Although, as has been already said, he was opposed to the Cabala, he devoted a part of his time to its study. His "Torat ha-'Olah" is full of cabalistic opinions. He appreciated the Zohar, believing it to have been revealed from Mount Sinai; and he rejoiced when he found that his philosophical views were confirmed by it ("Torat ha-'Olah," I, xiii.; II., i.). He occupied himself, too, with the study of GEMATRIA (*ib.* I., xiii.), and believed that a man

might perform wonders by means of combinations ("zerufim") of holy names (*ib.* III., lxxvii.). But he refutes the cabalists when their opinions do not agree with philosophy. In general, Isserles endeavored to prove that the teaching of true cabalists is the same as that of the philosophers, the only difference being in the language employed (*ib.* III., iv.). Still in halakic matters he decided against the Zohar ("Darke Mosheh" on Tur Orah Hayyim, 207; *ib.* on Tur Yoreh De'ah, 65).

The other works of Isserles are:

Commentary on the Zohar (unpublished).

"Yesode Sifre ha-Kabbalah," a treatise on the Cabala, mentioned in "Darke Mosheh" on Tur Orah Hayyim, 61.

Notes and additions to Zacuto's "Yuhasin." Cracow, 1580.

Notes to Elijah Mizrahi's supercommentary on Rashi, a part of which has been published by Joseph Kohen-Zedek in "Meged Yerahim," ii. Lemberg, 1856.

Notes on the "Moreh Nebukim" and on the commentaries on that work by Shem-Tob and Efodi. Published by Kohen-Zedek in "Ozar Hokmah," No. 2.

Commentary on the Haggadah of the Talmud, mentioned in "Torat ha-'Olah," I, ch. lxxxiii.

Commentary on Sanhedrin ("Darke Mosheh" on Tur Orah Hayyim, 486), on Shabbat ("Torat ha-'Olah," I, ch. xix.), and on Sukkot, entitled "Megillat Setarim" (*ib.* I, ch. viii.).

Commentary on the Song of Solomon (*ib.* I, ch. xv.).

Commentary on Peuerbach's "Theorica" (Michael, "Ozerot Hayyim," No. 189; Oppenheim, "Kehillat Dawid," No. 1673).

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S. S.

M. SEL.

**ISSI (ISI, ISSA).** See ISE and JOSE.

**ISTRIA:** A small peninsula at the northern end of the Adriatic Sea, having about 320,000 inhabitants, of whom 285 are Jews. Ethnographically it is Italian, although politically it is under Austrian rule. At times it has included the city of Trieste, which now forms a province by itself and has a very important Jewish community. In Istria, as in almost the whole of Europe, the Jews conducted banks for lending money, the first of them being opened in 1380 at Capo d'Istria; others were subsequently founded at Isola, Pirano, Rovigno, Pola, and Veglia. The street in which the Jewish bankers and their associates were located was called "Ghetto"; and this name was preserved even after their departure.

The most important of these banks seems to have been that in Pirano, of which the "capitoli" ("capitula Judæorum Pirani"), i.e., agreements between the city of Pirano and the said bankers, approved

by the republic of Venice in 1484, are still extant. Under these "capitoli" the city of Pirano was obliged to provide the Jews with sound animals for slaughter according to Hebrew rites, and with a field for a cemetery, and to permit them to invite other "Zudei," including teachers for their sons, to settle in the city. Jews above thirteen years of age were obliged to wear an "O" on their clothing, but not within Venetian domains. Jewesses were exempt from this rule. The Jews did not possess a synagogue, but their religious services were held in a house under the protection of the city. At Isola