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LITERARY GLEANINGS.

BY DR. A. NEUBAUER.

X.

Joseph Al-Ashkar.

ACCORDING to Moses ibn Habib, in his עזרת נשים, the name of אשקר (see further on the variations) is an Arabic name of a male, and means "red" (Jellinek, קונטרס המזכיר, second edition, 1893, p. 14). Al-Ashkar becomes later a family name, probably analogous to the family name in Italy, ג'ן הארוזים, and De Rossi. The late E. Carmoly wrote, in 1860, a biography, in Hebrew, of Joseph ben Al-Ashkar (*Otsar, Nehmad*, III., pp. 105-108) according to MSS. in his possession. These MSS. being now dispersed, and Hebrew being less accessible than English, I thought it advisable to repeat this biography, with some additions. The first name of the Al-Ashkar family which is known at present is R. Samuel, the physician, resident at Sevilla. In the writings of Joseph, where he mentions his father Moses and his grandfather Judah as physicians, this epithet is not given to Samuel, his great grandfather. The vision which Judah had when an angel predicted to him, in the month of Siwan, 5151=1391, the ruin of Sevilla and the calamity of the Jews in Spain (Carmoly, p. 105), does not rest on an historical document. Nevertheless, Judah left Sevilla for Malaga. He was followed by his son Moses, who left two children, viz., Judah and Joseph. With the expulsion from Spain they emigrated, like many others, to Algeria, when Judah settled at Mustaganam and Joseph at Tlemcen. In the last place many learned men had already settled, and Joseph Al-Ashkar was made chief of the school there.

His Works.—Joseph mentions (No. 8) seven treatises composed by him. The chronological order of them is difficult to establish. I shall, therefore, enumerate them in alphabetical order of the titles.

1st.—אברך (Genesis xli. 43), "Young," a commentary on Rashi's *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, which was read by his pupil every week on Sunday (see No. 4). This treatise is, perhaps, to judge from the title, Joseph's first production, and is at present lost.

2nd.—עץ חיים (Genesis iii. 24), "The Way to the Tree of Life," a commentary on the *Toor Orah Hayyim* of Jacob ben Asher. From the quotations which Joseph here gives we might conclude that he must have had a good library at his disposal. However, the works and authors found here are very well known. Joseph says that he wrote

this commentary at the request of some חברים (young Rabbis?). Of his own books he mentions Nos. 6 and 7. This MS. came from Carmoly's Library (*Catalogue* No. 14) to that of Baron Günzburg at St. Petersburg. My friend Dr. Harkavy was kind enough to examine it for me. Here Joseph quotes two *responsa* concerning the כל נדרי, the one by the famous Levi ben Gersom (see *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, t. xxxi. p. 599, which will appear shortly), and the other by Isaac, son of Mardoché [Qamhi, called Maestro Petit] (*op. cit.*, p. 729).

3rd.—מרכבת המשנה (Gen. xli. 43), "Chariot of the Mishnah," a commentary on the *Mishnah Aboth* ("Sayings of the Fathers") MS. in the Bodleian Library, and another in the possession of Carmoly (*Catalogue* No. 21), now at Munich, in the Merzbacher Library (see *Catalogue* of the late Rabbincicz, No. 77), with some poems by the author, and some by his brother Judah, by Maimon ben Saidoon and Moses Cansino, not found in the Oxford MS., but in the collection of poetry No. 1919. Joseph quotes in this treatise No. 6.

4th.—עדות ביהוסף (Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7), "Testimony in Joseph," a treatise on שחיטה ובדיקה ה', according to Maimonides, to be found in the same MS. as above, 3rd. The author says that he composed Nos. 1, 3, 6, and 7 (to which five works the ה in יהוסף alludes) for the benefit of his pupils, who read on Sunday Rashi's *Commentary on the Pentateuch* (see above, No. 1), on Monday Maimonides' *Mishneh Thorah*, and on the other days the Talmud (*Otsar Neh. III.*, p. 107). There are poems on the subject of the treatise by the author and by Moses Al-Ashkar (see below, p. 402).

5th.—פורת יוסף (Genesis xlix. 22), "A Fruitful Bough of Joseph," treatise on Massorah, quoted in No. 7, in the state of composition, at present lost.

6th.—צפנת פענח (Genesis xlix. 45), *Zaphnath-paaneah* ("Hidden Matter"), a Kabbalistic treatise, divided according to the orders of the Mishnah, made at the request of his brother Judah and of Judah son of Solomon, כלץ, finished on Monday, the 18th of Elul, 5289=1529. Joseph mentions a Kabbalist with the name of Aaron, son of Haggai, הקרוי. At the end of the MS. there is a poem by the author's brother (the name is not legible; most likely Judah) in praise of the book. The same MS. has also the treatise of Maimonides with the title of שושן סודות. On the fly-leaf we read the following date:— בין אספניול לאלגיר מלחמה ערה אב שמונ, "War between the Spaniards and Algeria the last day of Siwan, 5343=1583 A.D." The MS., which was the property of a religious institution called *Milliard House*, in London, is now in the possession of the Rev. Mr. Row, a Wesleyan minister, formerly at Oxford.

7th—*רפואת הנפש*, "Comforting the Soul," ethical treatise, divided into chapters; at beginning of each is a Biblical verse, in which healing is mentioned. He quotes here Nos. 1, 3, 4, and 6 as already finished, and he prays to God to assist him to terminate his work in hand, called *פורת יוסף* (see No. 5).

8th.—*ספר התפוח*, "Book of the Apple," called also "The New Words of Joseph" (*חידושי דברי יוסף*), containing a commentary on Proverbs xxx. 9, to end, and explanations and dissertations on Aggadic passages. Here Joseph says that it is his seventh book (*שבעה ספרים כנגד התורה שחצבה עמודיה שבעה*). The six are the following: *ספר צ'רי*: (unknown at present), and Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8. The MS. of this treatise is now at the University Library of Cambridge, Add. 1746, formerly Carmoly, No. 23.

To another branch of the Al-Ashkar family belongs Moses ben Isaac Al-Ashkar, whose residence was in Egypt, and later on in Jerusalem. It seems that he was an exile from Zamora. He is the author of *Responsa* which he despatched to Greece, Syria, Algeria, Tunis, Cyprus, Italy, and Palestine. This collection, printed in Sabionetta in the year 1553, is very important for Rabbinical geography. Moses wrote also observations on Shem Tob ben Shemtob's *מ' האמונות*, and he is the author of Liturgies. In MS. Günzburg, p. 731-4, is to be found, among other Liturgies, a *וידוי* by him, where the name is written *אלאשכאר*. According to Conforte,¹ he made a commentary on the *Tur Yoreh Deah*. The Cambridge MS. Add. 1009, 1, contains a *Responsum* by him, addressed to Elija Capsali.

In MS. Günzburg, No. 401, which contains *Responsa* by Italian Rabbis, there is one by Abraham ben *אלאשקאר*.²

The Hebrew MS. No. 446 of the Bodleian Library has the following mutilated entry (amended and revised):—

בפנינו ערום התומי מטה הודה היקר והשנוב
 צודיקה יצו שהוא חייב לחכם הנעלה נ
 היקר ונעלה בכמהרר יהודה אלאשקר יל
 החכם רבנו סעדיה יצו שלש מאות וששים
 זהב בנדקה ויניציאנום מלוה גמורה זקופה
 מעבשיו וקבל עליו כ"ר צודיקה בשבע
 בשית שקורם שיכנס ראש חודש ניסן
 שיפרעם לו בלי שום עכוב כלל והיא
 ביום כ לחודש אדר הנהדר שעה

¹ Conforte, p. 31*b*, where *סמוכה* is a misprint for *סמורה*.

² *Steinschneider Catal.*, Bodl. Col., 1765.

The Paris MS. 842 was copied for a Moses לִשְׁקָר אֲבִן, probably Ibn Al-Ashkar, and finished the 13th of Elul, 5224=1464, at Oran ; but this name cannot represent the Moses mentioned above.

Joseph Sambari (*Med. Jewish Chron.*, p. 161) mentions Abraham and Solomon אֱלֵאֲשָׁאָר, both in Egypt, the latter a very munificent man.

Jacob Alascar is to be found in a MS. of the late Dr. L. Loewe, according to Dr. Hirschfeld, in the *Revue des Etudes Juives*, t. xxv., p. 260, note.

XI.

The MSS. of the late Mosé Lattes.

PROFESSORS LATTES, brothers of the deceased, have presented his fifty-two Hebrew MSS. to the Ambrosian Library at Milan. Amongst them is the MS. of Elijah del Medigo's dissertations on the intellect, made at the request of Pic dela Mirandola, formerly in the possession of the Treves family at Venice (see Dr. Steinschneider's Catalogue of the Schönblum's MSS., 1872, No. 24, H., and *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, xxxvii., p. 187). The treatise begins as follows:—

גַּם כִּי סִבְבוּנֵי צְרוּת הַזְּמַנִּיּוֹת הַכּוֹלְלוֹת לְרֹב הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַמְּיוֹחָדוֹת לְאוֹמְתָנוּ
בְּקוֹם עֲלֵינוּ זָדִים לְבַלְעֵנוּ עַל לֹא חָמַס בְּכַפְנוּ אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָלָה עַל רוּחָנוּ אֲמָרוּ
פַּעֲלָנוּ וְהַפְּרַטְיוֹרֵת הַמוֹצְאוֹת אֲתִי וְזוֹלָתָה זֶה הַהֲתַעַסְקוֹת בְּעֵינֵי הַתּוֹרָה
וּמִשְׁפָּטֵיהָ כַּחֵק בְּעֵלֵי הַדָּת וְנוֹסֵף עַל זֶה לְהִיּוֹת הַדְּבָר וְהַמַּחְלֻקָּת בְּדְרוּשִׁים
הָעֲמוּקִים הַנִּפְלְאִים הָאֵלֶּה הַקְּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לֹא כָרוּ הַפִּילוֹסוֹפִים לְכַפֵּק בָּם קוֹדֵם
זְמַן אֶפְלָטוֹן עַד זְמַנְנוּ וְרֹאשׁ הַפִּילוֹסוֹפִים לֹא הִשְׁלִים הַחֲקִירָה בָּם מִיוֹחַס
לְעוֹרֵת אֶצֶל הַמּוֹן הָאֲנָשִׁים מִיִּמָּ לְבַקֶּשֶׁת עַר הַחֲשׁוֹב מֵאֲדוֹנֵי אֵיטָלְיָא יוֹאֲנֵ
דְּפִיצִי מִמִּירְנֹדוֹקָא אִישׁ מִצְלִיחַ מְדַבֵּר בַּחֲכָמָה אֲמַרְתִּי אֲנִי אֵלִיא מִקְנֵדִיאָה
בֶּן מֵר רַב מִשָּׁה דְּלִמְדִינֹגוּ אַכְתָּבָה וַיְהִי מָה וַאֲיִן רְצוֹנִי שִׁיחֲשׁוֹב עֲלָיו לְעוֹת
וְלִהְרִיסָה אֲבָל לְזִרְיוֹת וְלַחְרִיצוֹת וְאֵהֶבֶת הַחֲכָמָה כֹּאֲשֶׁר יֹאמֵר הַפִּילוֹסוֹפִים
בְּשָׂמִים וְהָעוֹלָם :

Another MS. contains poetical pieces by the physician Ephraim Luzzatto (5509=1749), who lived some time in London, according to the following lines on the title-page:—

אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים יְלִידֵי הַרּוּפָא אֶפְרַיִם לוֹצֵאֲנוּ עֲלֵינוּ רוּחַ הַשִּׁיר בִּימֵי
עֲלוֹמֵנוּ מֵאֵז בְּאַרְץ אֵיטָלְיָא וְאֲבִיהֶם הַתֵּל בָּם וַיִּשְׁלִיכֶם אֶל אֶרֶץ אַחֲרַת
כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְהֵמָּה בָּכִים וּמִשׁוֹטְטִים בַּחֲצוֹת לִנְדוּן וְנָם צָדָה לֹא עָשׂוּ לָהֶם

This is followed by the following lines (with vowel points):—

שִׁיר לֹא אֲדַע גַּם שְׂרַעְפִי לֹא שָׂמוּ	הֵן אֲשֶׁקוּלֶךָ רֵאשִׁית דְּרָבּוּ קִנְיִ
אִם מוֹלַדְתִּי תַחְקוֹר הֵן הִיא לוֹצֵאֲנוּ :	אִם נָא תִשְׁאַל לְשָׂמֵי אֶפְרַיִם אֲנִי