

From: Mike Tabor [mailto:taboruk@googlemail.com]

Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2009 5:36 PM

To: Norman Lamm

Subject: Shir Ta-ev

Dear Rabbi Lamm

Hi!

I thought you might be interested in the below. Its part of a correspondence I have had with a Rabbi Dr Natan Ofir. He is a graduate of Yu. Was chaplain in HU and now head of a jewish meditation centre in Jerusalem. He contacted me for his research into nigun ect

I am not an academic nor the son of of an academic.....but its good to see that the seminal idea of Shir -taev in its kabbalistic context

Mike

Thank you for the lead to Sefer Hanigunim of Habad. That sounds really important.

About שיר תאב

I wrote about it in an article that I published as an introduction to Torei Zahav

The book entitled Torei Zahav begins with a 200 page kabbalistic commentary on Shir HaShirim (The Song of Songs) composed in Mainz 1814.

The source is actually Tikunei Zohar 10, and was elaborated on by R. Naftali Herz Scheuer in Torei Zahav.

הרא"ן, שם, עמ' כח מצטט את 'תיקוני הזוהר'. בתיקון העשירי כתוב 'בראשית, שיר תא"ב, והאי איהו שיר משוב מכל השירים, תאב כל השירים'. ראה תיקוני הזוהר, מהדורת ראובן מרגליות, ירושלים, דף כד, ע"ב (עמ' 48).

-----Original Message-----

Torei Zahav - English Introduction¹

11/19/2009

The book entitled *Torei Zahav*² begins with a 200 page kabbalistic commentary on Shir HaShirim (The Song of Songs)³ composed in Mainz 1814. The primary author, Rav Avraham Naftali Herz Scheuer⁴, 1753-1822, (hereon referred to by the acronym Maharan⁵), was a leading Rabbi in Germany. His grandson and successor in the Mainz Yeshiva, Rabbi Shmuel Bondi published *Torei Zahav* in Mainz in 1875. This is the last kabbalistic work known to have been printed in Germany and is a rich source of Torah and spirituality.

For the printed version, R. Shmuel added many comments and expositions, incorporated several original exegetical and homiletical works and collated halachic responsa. Thus the book is the most important record available to preserve a taste of the rich learning, thought and interests in Mainz of the 18th-19th centuries. Long out of print, the reprint by Feldheim publishers is a welcome milestone. Now readers can easily explore, enjoy and analyze the many original insights and explications.

R. Shmuel Bondi added extensive annotations, commentaries and excurses to his grandfather's manuscript. Thus in printed form is not only Maharan's kabbalistic commentary on Shir HaShirim, but also "Shekel Hakodesh" (Maharan's commentary to Esther, Eicha and Ruth) and a Shabbat hagadol lecture by Maharan from 1800. In addition, R. Shmuel printed his own original works – "Brit Kodesh" on brit milah, "Torah Ohr" and several halachic exchanges with his contemporaries such as in the machine matzoh controversy, milah on Shabbat, laws of ritual slaughter, eruv and permitting agunot.

Maharan was born December 1753 in Frankfurt am Main and died 1822 in Mainz at age 68, two days after Succot. When he was 17, he married Perl Lucka, the daughter of one of the wealthiest personalities in Prague. His financial concerns taken care of, he was able to devote himself to Torah learning and was one of the very few Rabbis who did not need to receive a salary from the community. He became an influential halakhic authority in Germany, leading the Yeshiva in Mainz for more than 40 years and serving as Mainz Chief Rabbi for 19 years. The famous Hatam Sofer, who had studied in the Mainz Yeshiva in 1776-1777, later addressed Maharan with flowery titles such as "*Gaon Yisrael*" and "*Mofet Hador*".

Maharan studied in Mainz under the tutelage of his father Rabbi David Tevele Scheuer who served as Rav and Av Beit Din in Mainz for 15 years until his death in 1782 at age 71. Maharan succeeded him and developed the Yeshiva into one of the most important in Germany. At least 36 of his students were appointed to official rabbinical positions in Germany and France. The French Revolution wrought changes in Mainz, and under French rule was called Mayenz. At first Maharan welcomed Napoleon, but when pressure was applied on the Rabbinical authorities to abrogate halacha for Jewish soldiers, Maharan resigned his Rabbinical post in protest, returning only later in 1814.

During the winter of that year, he succumbed to the plague that resulted from the siege of Mayenz. During several days of delirious fever, he recited viduy, preparing for his demise. It is told that he revealed kabbalistic secrets which his listeners were unable to fathom. Upon miraculously recovering, Maharan determined that he had been granted additional life to complete his unfinished mission – printing his insights into Shir Hashirim⁶. Thus he set about preparing a manuscript with the intention of publishing them as a book entitled *Torei Zahav*⁷. However, it was not until 60 years later, that *Torei Zahav* was actually published by his grandson R. Shmuel Bondi.

Shmuel, born in 1794 on Purim was the son of Bela, Maharan's daughter who married Rabbi Yonah

- Bondi from Prague. Shmuel was only 12 when his father passed away at age 38 and his mother returned with her three children to her father's home. Thus, Shmuel grew up in the home of Maharan, became his favorite pupil and eventually took over the leadership of the Mainz Yeshiva.

In the 19th century the Reform movement became a major challenge to Orthodoxy and a struggle ensued over control of Jewish affairs in many German communities including Mainz. R. Shmuel Bondi spearheaded the drive to found the Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft with an independent synagogue and school for the Orthodox kehilah. His son in law, Rabbi Dr. Marcus Lehman, was appointed rabbi of the Orthodox community and guided the day school which began with 53 children in 1856. Rabbi Shmuel died in 1877 at age 83.

Very little has been written to describe one of the most important Yeshivot in Germany - the Yeshiva in Mainz. Only sparse references can be found to the Roshei Yeshiva there. The reissuing of Torei Zahav thus helps fill a lacuna in the spiritual and intellectual history of German Jewry.