Judah Leon ben Moses Moskony

Judah Leon ben Moses Moskony was born in 1328 in Ohridya, Bulgaria. He was a student of R’ Shmarya of Crete and R’ Ovadia of Egypt. He belonged to the group of Jewish rationalists who worked in the Byzantium in the 14th-15th centuries. He wandered through several Middle Eastern lands: Egripon-Negroponte, Cyprus, Little Asia and Egypt. Over the course of his journeys he also reached Morocco, Italy and France. Eventually he settled in Majorca and there he dealt in medicine. He died before the year 1377.

During his journeys he arranged travels in which he searched for Hebrew manuscripts, and created for himself a rich, rare library of books in Hebrew and Arabic. He wrote: “After this I gave all my heart to seek, search, and investigate the works of sages which achieved acclaim in wisdom, to satisfy the soul yearning for their words before calamity would strike me; I was not quiet nor did I rest until in my poverty I purchased, arranged, and dictated some of them for a high price, and with the blood of my heart and the will of my soul I wrote them. It was that Adonai, my God, arranged before me the wealth of my influence and helped me for many days, and I acquired for myself many books in all areas of wisdom.” (Otzar Tov of Berliner-Hoffman, p. 20).

His creations include works in the fields of Hebrew grammar, biblical commentary, and philosophy. His works on grammar were neither completed nor published.

Two of his important undertakings are the editing of an edition of Josiphun, and the writing of a supercommentary on the exegesis of R’ Avraham ibn Ezra on the Torah by the name “Even HaEzer.” Moskony edited the edition of Josiphun in the year 1356. In his introduction he related that in his hands were four short manuscripts of the book which differed from one another in a fundamental manner, but that he also possessed “the full work,” namely the complete version on which he based his edition. According to him the [anonymous] work was written in Hebrew by Yosef ben Gurion, and only afterwards translated into Greek and Latin.

He wrote his work “Even HaEzer” on the commentary of ibn Ezra on the Torah during the years 1361-1370. According to his own testimony in his introduction, he examined approximately thirty supercommentaries on the exegesis of ibn Ezra, which were revealed to his eyes over the course of the years of his wandering. Among them he mentioned eleven by their published names. In his opinion, the supercommentaries which predated him did not zero in on the true intentions of R’ Avraham ibn Ezra, and therefore there is room for a new and improved supercommentary which will shed light on the secrets of the author. Moskony related to the bitter criticism towards the commentaries of ibn Ezra, and he attributed it to the difficulty of students in explicating the alluded to intentions and secrets of the author. He himself used allegorical-philosophical exegesis to explain the secrets of ibn Ezra. His language is flowery, and often-times he deals with and expands greatly upon esoteric matters independently, without direct reference to the commentary of ibn Ezra. This expanded commentary, which includes more than seven hundred pages, survived as a lone manuscript (London Montefiori 49), and as yet has not been published.