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Medieval Judaic Logic and the Scholastic One in the 14th – 15th Centuries Provence and Italy: a Comparison of the Logical Works by Rav Hezekiah bar Halafta (First Half of the 14th Century) and Rav Judah Messer Leon (Second Half of the 15th Century)

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Abstract: Hezekiah bar Halafta and Judah Messer Leon, who wrote in 14th – 15th century in Provence and Italy, were the first and last of "Jewish Schoolman." This short article compares two texts, in order to showing differences and similarities.
Keywords: Medieval Judaic logic, scholastic schools in Provence and Italy, Hezekiah bar Halafta, Judah Messer Leon.

1. Introduction[1]

Hezekiah bar Halafta was a 14th century Provençal Jewish philosopher. From the short references to him, most of which are found in the *colophon* of the only three manuscripts where his works are now preserved, we know the name by which he was called among non-Jews: '*maestre Bonenfant de Millau.*' He was from Millau, now in the French department of Aveyron (near the Languedoc), and lived in the first half of the 14th century, probably in the Provençal city of Rodez. He seems to have been a physician, since he wrote at least one book of medicine, bearing the title *Book of Gabriel* (in Hebrew, *Sefer Gavri'el*). However, he was also interested into various philosophical matters, since he wrote a short book on theology and Jewish religion, *The Doors of Justice* (in Hebrew, *Ša'arey ẓedeq*).

He wrote in 1320 what was probably the first text on Peter of Spain's *Summulae Logicales* in Hebrew, in form of a 'gloss-commentary' – that is to say, a 'supercommentary' on a previous Latin commentary on the *Summulae* – and having the title *mavo'*, "introduction." This text, preserved in a unique manuscript and still unpublished, has been examined in its structure and sources in 2010. The structure was compared with that of Peter's work, while the many Latin, Greek, Judaeo-Arabic and Arab-Islamic sources are listed in detail.

Judah ben Jehiel, in Italian Giuda Messer Leon, was a Jewish writer, teacher, rhetorician, and philosopher of 15th-century North-East Italy. He was born in Montecchio Maggiore around 1420 – 1425, then he lived in Padua, where he apparently attended courses at the local university.

Around 1450 or little later, he created his own Jewish academy (*yešivah*): this itinerant academy followed Judah ben Jehiel in his various workplaces, like Ancona, Bologna, Mantua. Later on, from 1480 onwards, he stayed in Naples; he fled from that place after 1495, and probably died some years later, around 1498.

In youth, probably in the years 1454 – 1455, he wrote and diffused three works, which may be included into a sort of Hebrew *trivium*, i.e. the lower division of the seven liberal arts in Medieval Latin schools, consisting of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. This seems to show Judah ben Jehiel was a real 'Hebrew Schoolman,' as can be found in many other works of his, particularly in the philosophical ones: he apparently employed concepts and methods he found in a number of works of classical Latin literature and Latin Scholasticism, for understanding aspects and characteristics of Aristotelian philosophy, and of the Bible as well. The three above mentioned linguistic works are: *The Pavement of the Sapphire* (*Livnat ha-Sappir*), about Hebrew grammar; *The Perfection of Beauty* (*Miklal Yofi*), about Latin Scholastic logic; *The Honeycomb's Flow* (*Nofet ṣufim*), about Latin rhetoric. The first and second of these works are still unpublished.

I will try to make a historical comparison between these two authors, Hezekiah bar Halafta and Judah Messer Leon, in order to find the birth and the end of the "Hebrew Scholastic logic", that is, the variable approach to Latin logicians among Jewish scholars from 1300 to 1450 circa, and the employment of that Scholastical logical methods by Medieval Judaic thinkers in Western Europe.

2. Comparison Between the Two Texts

2.1. Texts

We will consider the contents of the MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mich. 314, and of the MS Firenze, Biblioteca mediceo-laurenziana, Pluteus 88, n. 52, copied at Ancona in 1456, folios 1-129; very probably it is the archetype of the work – i.e., that from which the whole other manuscripts were copied. Generally speaking, the work is divided into two 'parts,' *ḥeleq* (including five sections and three ones respectively), 'sections,' *šaʿar* (about each treatise of the work), and 'chapters,' *pereq*. See also the general introduction to the book on folios 5r, l. 1 – 6v, l. 19.

In the following table, I draw a comparison of the general survey of Hezekiah's text and Judah Messer Leon's one, as it results from the chapters of the whole text of the former, and the three out of eight sections of the latter, where the themes seem to be pertaining to each other.

Table no. 1

Hezekiah bar Halafta, *Introduction (to the logic)*	Judah Messer Leon, *The Perfection of Beauty*
Introduction	Introduction
	Part 1, section 1, divided into nine chapters:
Chapter 1 (on dialectic and voice)	Chapter 1, on the meaning of logic and its causes
Chapter 2 (on sound and voice)	Chapter 2, on the meaning of definition (*gevul*) and its parts
Chapter 3 (on noun)	Chapter 3, on the meaning of noun and verb
Chapter 4 (on verb)	
Chapter 5 (on speech)	Chapter 4, on the meaning of subjectivity and the meanings of subject and object
Chapter 6 (on sentence)	
Chapter 7 (on categorical sentences)	

Chapter 8 (on sentences which agree upon both of them [i.e. terms] in one thing)	
Chapter 9 (on the three species of sentences)	
Chapter 10 (on negation and its being contrary)	
Chapter 11 (on the species of hypothetical sentences…)	
Chapter 12 (…and on their agreement)	
Chapter 13 (on modal sentences)	
Chapter 14 (on the five universals)	
Chapter 15 (on 'difference' [as such])	
Chapter 16 (on 'genus of genera')	Chapter 5, on the genus and the species
Chapter 17 (on 'property')	Chapter 6, on the difference, the property, and the accident
Chapter 18 (on 'accident')	
Chapter 19 (on the agreement of universals)	
Chapter 20 (on the many meanings of a universal thing)	Chapter 7, on the capacity of the objects and the meaning of the true and untrue subjectivity, as substantially and accidentally one, as well as the superior definition and the inferior one
	Chapter 8, on the meaning of the definition, the description (*rošem*), the definite thing, and the described one
Chapter 21 (on substance)	Chapter 9, on the meaning of the category (*ma'amar*) and its parts, i.e., the ten categories
Chapter 22 (on quantity)	
Chapter 23 (on relatives)	
Chapter 24 (on quality)	
Chapter 25 (on action and passion)	
Chapter 26 (on opposites)	
Chapter 27 (on prior and posterior)	
Chapter 28 (on what is together)	
Chapter 29 (on movement)	
Chapter 30 (on the previous categories)	
Chapter 31 (on a Scholastic question, namely: 'whether it is possible to determine the predicated subject as far as it is a subject, or not')	
Chapter 32 (on another Scholastic question, namely: 'whether the name [or: noun] of the adjective can be a subject in a sentence, (or not)'	
	Part 1, section 2, divided into 10 chapters:
Chapter 33 (on sentence and syllogism)	An introduction of the section, about the clear division of it into chapters
Chapter 34 (on the figures of syllogism)	Chapter 1, on the meaning of the speech and its introduction and its parts
Chapter 35 (on *loci*)	Chapter 2, on the meaning of that way (*ṣad*), and the introductions having those ways, and the

	order of the introductions into three (syllogistic) figures (*temunot*) and its general orders according to truth and untruth
Chapter 36 (a so-called 'introduction to the student' [not found in Peter of Spain's work])	Chapter 3, on the meaning of equality, together with some doubts (about it)
Chapter 37 (on sophistic disputations, and on fallacies)	Chapter 4, on opposite and its parts
Chapter 38 (on common noun)	Chapter 5, on the meaning of the complex introduction and its parts, and the meaning of the rhythmical (*tenahit*) introduction
Chapter 39 (on accidents)	Chapter 6, on the association (*qušeret*)
Chapter 40 (on various references of passages of treatise n. 7 of Peter of Spain's work)	Chapter 7, on the division
Chapter 41 (on various subjects in different passages of the work)	Chapter 8, on the causality (*sabatiyyit*)
Chapter 42 (on time)	Chapter 9, on the temporarily (*zemaniyyit*)
Chapter 43 ('the universals, not the individuals, have definitions': this passage might be an erroneous interpretation of treatise 12, chapter 1: 'Distribution is a multiplication of a common term, made by an universal sign')	Chapter 10, on the locality (*meqomiyyit*)
Final note (a defence of logic)	Part 1, section 3, divided into 8 chapters:
	An introduction to the section, according to the clear division of it into 8 chapters
	Chapter 1, on the meaning of the propaedeutics (*haẓaʻah*) and its parts
	Chapter 2, on the hypotheses (*ha-šorešim ha-munaḥim*) in a propaedeutic thing
	Chapter 3, on the meaning of the particular propaedeutic thing and the general one, in a limitation (*hagvalah*) and its specific generalities
	Chapter 4, on the meaning of the proposal no-limitation, which is not limited only, or not limited at all, and in a general way, with a permutation (literally, 'translation', *haʻtaqah*), and its specific generalities
	Chapter 5, on the meaning of the proposal no-limitation, which is not limited only, or not limited at all, and in a general enthymeme (literally, 'semen', *simin*), without a permutation, and its specific generalities
	Chapter 6, on the meaning of true proposal
	Chapter 7, on the meaning of metaphor (literally, 'expantion', *harḥavah*)
	Chapter 8, on the meaning of exclamation (*qeriʼah*)

From the above comparison we can suggest that Hezekiah's text and Judah Messer Leon's one have, at the beginning, the same purpose, i.e. that to be a sort of introduction to logic; but further on, they differ from each other in a more pronounced contrast.

2.2. Comparison

Now let us consider three passages from Hezekiah's work, which can be useful to notice the peculiarities of his text compared with Judah Messer Leon's one in his own introduction (MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mich. 314, folios 43r, ll. 13-19, 43v, ll. 1-6 and 9 sg., and 44r, l. 20 – 44v, l. 1):

> Upon them (i.e. the Latin philosophers), I have seen a commentary on the introduction (*mavo'*) which enclosed the generalities of logic in the most possible short space (…) and, in their language, it is called *Tractatus*. (…); (after) having looked for it for a long time, I have found it and I have read it (…) and I have translated it from their language into ours (i.e. from Latin into Hebrew). Since, in some passages, this commentary expatiated on (some points) for no reason, I have abbreviated it, and I have taken from it only the passages which aroused no doubts. I have not translated this work for somebody who is equal to Aristotle or Averroes, but for somebody who is equal to myself (…).
> We would better to gain the gifts of the commentator's mouth from the Prince of philosophers, Aristotle. He said, at the beginning of the *Physics*, that what is general is more clear to us than what is particular by nature. There is evidence of this that the perception of a general thing temporarily precedes the perception of a particular thing in the children. As a matter of fact, at first the child sees his father in every man and his mother in every woman; then, when his intelligence becomes stronger, he distinguishes his father among many men and his mother among many women (…).
> Now, logical texts are long and difficult for us, although they were not so difficult for their contemporaries (…) therefore a summary (of logic) was needed and (…) the scholar called Master Peter of Spain wrote this very useful summary that gives us many precepts about interesting subjects.
> Now, since everything should have four causes, i.e. material, agent, formal and final, let us be interested in this summary. We say that the material cause is the syllogism and its parts; the agent cause is the author (i.e. Peter of Spain); the formal cause is the division of text in two *summulae* and of *summulae* in parts. (…)
> In every (logical) disputation three conditions should be: somebody who asks, somebody who replies, somebody who judges between the two. If so, this is a question among three people (point one). A four thing is needed, i.e. the argument of the disputation; therefore this is a question among four people (point two).
> General answer to the two objections: one and the same person should ask and reply at the same time (…) and there is no need of a judge; moreover, the subject of the disputation would be included in the question too.
> Reply: Without a question and an answer, a man by himself cannot dispute, that is to say, there should be two conditions in him, the answer and the question; therefore, you should say that the art of logic is a 'question among two people (…).'
> There is difference between 'logic' 'proper' and 'dialectic' 'proper', since 'logic' denotes a mere term, whereas 'dialectic' denotes a question among two people, as we said above.

Let now consider some passages of the introduction to Judah Messer Leon's *The Perfection of Beauty*. I will paraphrase and comment on MS Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Pluteus 88, n. 52, folios 5r, l. 4 – 6v, l. 19:

> The great Rabbi… the Sage… Rabbi Judah, known as Messer Leon, said: 'As I saw some men of our Torah who devoted themselves to pose as philosophers (*mitfalsefim*)'. Here, as in other points of the text, the author wants to underline his full orthodoxy, for example, as to the creation of the world. He says again and again he is using the language of the Law (*lešon ha-dat*) but, at the same time, he uses full Latin Scholastic philosophical terms and concepts, translating them into Hebrew. It seems that Messer Leon is not explicitly translating word by word, but writing a personal work, in which there are no interpolations or influences by other authors. Often, in his introduction, he repeats the phrase 'I said' (*amarti*).

He expatiates upon the word *yofi*, 'beauty,' that he uses to underline the value of the work he is writing (see for example folio 5v, ll. 23 and 28).

On folio 6r, ll. 8 sg., he declares that: 'My intention to denote this text is in the form of an introduction and preface (*petihah we-mav'o*).' *Mavo'* is the typical term that Hezekiah bar Halafta uses as a title for his work, so we could suppose that Messer Leon know it – as a matter of fact, we have only one unique MS of the text of Hezekiah, made in Italy in 1469 in Nardò (South Italy).

At the end of folio 6r, Messer Leon explicitly quotes Book 2 of Aristotles' *Metaphysics* (*ka'ašer hitba'er ba-ma'amar ha-šeni mi-Sefer Ma'aḥer*): 'Here we read the name of this work as 'Perfection of Beauty', because there are in it, among the generalities, a great number of particularities… and 'Beauty' has correction as its aim… and it is my intention to carry the disciples from simpler thing to more complex ones, and from the general things to the particular ones.'

From folio 6v onwards he begins to explain the meaning of his work, part by part. Generally speaking, he affirms (on folio 6v, ll. 1-7) that his book is divided in general into two main parts: the first part would speak about the roots of his work (*šoršey ha-mela'kah*) and its generalities and its meanings in form of an introduction (*mav'o*) and the 'expansion of the centres' for understanding them in their depths and in their praises, in the translated books inside it. The second part would cause the destruction of the dialectical arguments and the ways of the sophistic elenchus, so that the man would be preserved from what is evidently not correct, deceitful and untruth, and on the contrary he would be sure about the beginning of the thought, without any studying and question (about it), be it beautiful or ugly. More in particular, the first five sections of the work, according to Judah Messer Leon himself, are about simply things, introductions, propaedeutics, syllogistic figures and a study of the introductions and some of their definitions.

See now how the same previous passage is given differently by both authors, Hezekiah and Messer Leon, about 'noun,' as follows (MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mich. 314, folio 50v, ll. 2-7):

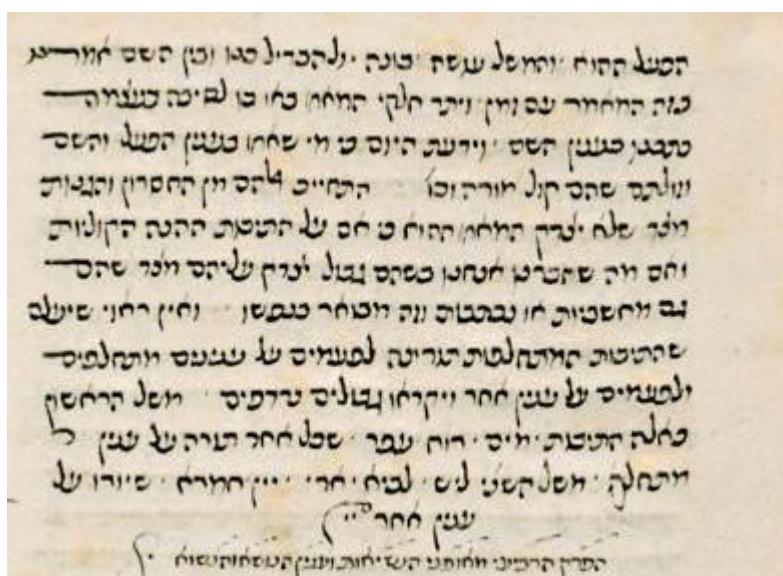> 'Chapter three. The definition of noun is: 'a signifying voice' etc.'
> Contrary to this one it is such. And 'Ptolemy' is a noun of a branch (*'anaf*) which this is not existent, and what is not existent does not teach anything. If so, the 'noun' of 'Ptolemy' is not signifying and, as they say, the noun is signifying.
> The response to it is as follows. Everything signifying noun is a certain thing, and, if the noun 'Ptolemy' is not signifying 'Ptolemy,' since it is not existent, this is signifying what it is, and how it is (for example) its expression in the living beings is also possible to be understood and interpreted, like a wall (*kotel*), and we said that

this is the form of 'Ptolemy'. As a matter of fact, this noun is signifying to be a thing, and this is its form.'

On the contrary, in Judah Messer Leon (MS Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Pluteus 88, n. 52, folios 8v, l. 17 – 9r, l. 9) it is written as follows:

Table n. 2

'Chapter three. The definition of noun and verb:

The noun is a definition which denotes something without giving it a temporal connotation, **without a part of it signifying**, in a general sense, **what this noun means, for example 'man**.' **Now they include in that definition a place of the genus**, because it is more general than the noun; **in fact, every noun is a definition, but not conversely**. Moreover, what we have assumed in this speech outside it are in a different position, **since in what they say it means the noun is different in**

meaning from the definitions without a meaning, which are not nouns according to the logic. **For what concerns the fact of not having a temporal connotation, the noun is different from the verb since it signifies (i.e. the verb) a concept with time; on the other hand, for what concerns its parts without a meaning, it is different from the speech, according to its species which have a meaning in themselves.**

The verb is a definition that signifies a 'thing' with a temporal connotation, and no part of it, alone, is significant, meaning from which derives from it. This is the speech related to the verb and, for example, 'speaks.' Intention: we have already explained the difference between the verb and the noun as regards the temporal connotation, and the other parts of the speech which are on them for a cause in itself, we said all that in relation to the noun. Nowadays, those who study the issue of the noun and the verb, and, on the contrary, are not interested in the 'voice' that signifies etc. – it is necessary that, since the misfortune and calamity, **this speech is not perfect**, if not on the basis of these words, i.e. the 'voices,' and if we have associated them as they are definitions, **the speech is perfect as they are thought or written** – and this is clear *per se*. It is not possible to determine whether the different words are significant either due to different meanings, or due to a different other thing, and they are called 'synonym *(nirdafim)* definitions'.'

See now a series of examples of these things (folio 9a, ll. 9-12).

Let now see some passages of Paulus Venetus, *Logica Parva*, first critical edition from the manuscripts with introduction and commentary by Alan R. Perreiah, Leiden, Brill, 2002, pp. 3-4, as follows:

9. […] **Nomen est terminus significativus sine tempore cuius nulla pars aliquid significat ut 'homo.' In ista definitione ponitur 'terminus' loco generis quia omne nomen est terminus et non converso. Secundus dicitur 'significativus' quia termini 'non significativi non sunt nomina apud logicum** licet grammaticum ut 'omnis,' 'nullus' et similia. **Tertio dicitur 'sine tempore' ad differentiam verbi et participii qui significant cum tempore. Quarto dicitur 'cuius nulla pars aliquid significat' ad differentiam orationis cuius partes significant.**
[10] **Verbum est terminus temporaliter significativus et extremorum unitivus cuius nulla pars aliquid significat ut 'currit' vel 'disputat**.' Dicitur primo 'temporaliter significativus' ad differentiam nominis quod significat sine tempore […] Ceterae autem partes ponuntur sicut in definitione nominis.
[11] Oratio est terminus significativus cuius aliqua pars aliquid significat […] **Orationum alia perfecta alia imperfecta. Oratio perfecta est illa qua perfectum sensum generat in animo auditoris […] Oratio imperfecta est illa qua imperfectum sensum generat in animo auditoris […] etc.**

See also the translation by Alan R. Perreiah, Munchen – Wien, Philosophica Verlag, 1984, pp. 122-123, as follows:

Section 2 – Noun. [...] A noun is a term significative without time. No part of a noun signifies something separate: for example, 'man.' This definition places it in the genus of a term; because every noun is a term; but not every term is a noun. Secondly, it says 'significative' because those terms which are not significative are

not nouns according to the logician; but they are nouns according to the grammarian; for example, 'every,' 'no' and the like. Thirdly, it says 'without time' in order to differentiate it from verbs and participles which signify with time. Fourthly, it says 'no part of which signifies something separate' *per se* in order to differentiate it from a statement (*oratio*) whose parts signify objects separate [from it].

Section 3 – Verb. A verb is a term significative temporally and unitive of extremes. No part of a verb signifies something separate; for example, 'runs' and 'disputes.' It says 'significative temporally' first to differentiate it from a noun which signifies without time [..] The remaining parts of the definition then are just like those in the definition of a noun.

Section 4 – Statement. A statement (*oratio*) is a term some of whose parts signify something separate […] Statements (*orationum*) are perfect or imperfect. A perfect statement is what generates a perfect sense in the mind of a hearer […] An imperfect statement is that which generates an imperfect sense in the mind of a hearer […] etc.

As a matter of fact, the text of Paulus Venetus' *Logica parva*, if not the only one, is surely one of the main sources of these texts. It has to inform the context and the spirit of the *Perfection of Beauty,* as found in the above mentioned passages.

3. Conclusion

To sum up, a tentative comparative comparison of both works, Hezekiah bar Halafta's and Judah Messer Leon's ones, show that they were the first and the last ones of a general history, typically of the so-called 'Hebrew Scholasticism' as it arose from 13th-century Latin Scholasticism and developed in 14th-century Provence, in a simpler form (where the Arab-Islamic and Judeo-Arabic works were prevalent, as I have wrote in many articles), and concluded in 15th-century Italy. As a matter of fact, Judah Messer Leon tried to follow the most magnificent aspects of Italian and especially Venetian Latin Scholasticism at the Paduan School, in particular following its previous master, Paolo Nicoletti Veneto (d. 1429), and (implicitly!) its contemporary master and scholar, Gaetano da Thiene (d. 1465) – and I would like to examine this one in the next future.

Notes

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1. See Mauro Zonta, "Structure and Sources of the Hebrew Commentary on Petrus Hispanus's *Summulae Logicales* by Hezekiah bar Halafta, *alias* Bonenfant de Millau," in Andrew Schumann (ed.), *Judaic Logic*, 'Judaism in Context' 8, Gorgias Press, Piscataway N.J. 2010, pp. 77-116; see also Charles H. Manekin, "Scholastic Logic and the Jews," in *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 41 (1999), pp. 123-147, on pp. 145-146 (list of chapters of the *Perfection of Beauty*).