

Judah Leone Moscato. *Judah Moscato Sermons: Edition and Translation, Volume 1.*

Eds. Gianfranco Miletto and Giuseppe Veltri. Studies in Jewish History and Culture 26. Leiden: Brill, 2011. xiv + 572 pp. \$283. ISBN: 978-90-04-17900-4.

In the last thirty years a number of scholars have published critical editions and annotated English translations of Renaissance Hebrew texts written by learned Italian Jews who were deeply engaged with contemporary intellectual life. These include Isaac Rabinowitz (*The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow: Sefer Nophet Suphim*, 1983), David Ruderman (*A Valley of Vision: The Heavenly Journey of Abraham Ben Hananiah Yagel*, 1990), and Joanna Weinberg (*Azariah de' Rossi: The Light of the Eyes*, 2001). These works showed how, respectively, rhetoric, mystical autobiography, and chronology were Jewish no less than Christian or pagan pursuits. To this group we may now add a critical edition and English translation of sermons by Judah Moscato (1522/23–1590), a rabbi and preacher in the northern Italian city of Mantua.

Judah Moscato Sermons was edited by Gianfranco Miletto and Giuseppe Veltri with the collaboration of a team of international scholars. It consists of a Hebrew edition of the first ten sermons in Moscato's *Nefusot Yehudah* (*Scatterings of Judah*), based on the Venice, 1589 printing. Besides the Hebrew text and an English translation, Miletto and Veltri offer an introduction entitled "New Documentation Concerning Judah Moscato." This essay situates Moscato in his intellectual context, summarizes salient features of *Nefusot Yehudah*, and presents twenty-one archival documents in Italian, Latin, and Hebrew, drawn from Mantuan repositories. The editors promise several subsequent volumes that will contain translations of the remainder of Moscato's sermons.

There are two principal audiences for this publication. First, to scholars of Jewish culture in premodern Europe this book constitutes a new edition of Moscato's sermons, useful to scholar and student alike. Second, it provides experts in Renaissance intellectual history with an accessible example of how Italian Jews of this period were actively involved, along with their Christian neighbors, in the study

and adaptation of Greek and Latin classics. Specialists in Renaissance moral philosophy may be interested in the ways in which Moscato uses and appropriates Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Seneca's *Ad Lucilium epistolae morales*. Scholars of Renaissance rhetoric may be curious to see how Moscato employed Ciceronian and Quintillian rhetorical models. And students of Neoplatonism may find Moscato's many Neoplatonic excurses helpful in their ongoing effort to delineate and describe that key philosophical trend of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Well-arranged indexes make these tasks easier.

The ten sermons translated in this volume concern the following topics: music theory; Psalms 120–34, the so-called “Songs of Ascents”; the attributes of God; creation *ex nihilo*; the order of biblical books; rabbinic homiletics on creation; causes of creation; the relationship of Platonic to rabbinic thought; man as a microcosm; and man's tripartite soul, explained by means of various philosophical and medical doctrines. The themes and content of these sermons are eclectic to an extreme, and the text presents a considerable challenge to the translator. Moscato's style is digressive and allusive, and requires great skill to understand, let alone render in intelligible English. This, by and large, has been accomplished, and the world of scholarship is richer for it.

A few features of this work are puzzling. The bibliography does not differentiate between primary and secondary works. It is not clear why the editors chose to retain some paratextual materials from the 1589 edition, such as the dedication, but exclude others, such as the original table of contents and the title page. The reader is not told whence comes the list of abbreviations in the Hebrew portion of the text; it is not to be found in the original Venetian edition. The English translations are occasionally burdened by the use of excessively elevated style. The Hebrew term *mahut* is rendered as “quiddity,” when “essence” might better serve readers not schooled in scholastic thought (14, 162). Similarly, the word *ne'emar* is translated as “predicated of,” when “said of” would have sufficed (13, 161). But these are minor quibbles regarding a work that provides a fine service to the world of scholarship and will be interesting, relevant, and important to students of Renaissance intellectual history and the history of the Jews alike.

ANDREW D. BERNIS

University of California, Los Angeles