Emmanuel Hai Ricci (1688-1743)

Rabbi Ricci (or Riqi) was born in Ferrara, Italy. When he was six his father died and his mother's brother, Jedidia Rabbino, undertook to provide for the family and the education of the children. On Rabbino's death his son took charge of the family and married Ricci's sister. At the age of 20 Rabbi Ricci began to travel around various Italian cities, making his living as a teacher. In 1717 he was ordained rabbi in Trieste by R. Hillel Ashkenazi.

He then settled in Israel but because of a plague that ravaged the country, in which his daughter died, Rabbi Ricci left Eretz Israel. On his way back to Italy, his ship was captured and taken to Tripoli, but he was released after 40 days. He settled in Leghorn, but later journeyed to Smyrna, Salonika, Constantinople, and London. He spent two years in Aleppo and in 1737 he arrived in Jerusalem, where he stayed for three years. In 1741 he returned to Leghorn to settle business matters connected with his books. While on one of his trips he was murdered by robbers.

His books, in the order in which they were written, are

(1) **Ma'ase Chosheb** (Venice, 1716), a commentary on the building of the Mishkan, the tabernacle built in the desert

(2) **Chosheb Machashabot** (Amsterdam, 1727), on the technical Halakhic issues which bear no Biblical textual source, known as Halakha leMoshe miSinai, like the size of a mikveh or some specifics of the Tefilin, etc. The book also analyzes homiletic commentaries on the Bible and Talmud;

(3) **Hon 'Ashir** (Amsterdam, 1731), this is probably his main work, a commentary on the six orders of the Mishna, written in Gorizia and completed and expanded in Safed.

Click **here** Download Rabbi Ricci's main work, HON ASHIR, on the Mishna, from *Hebrewbooks.org*

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Rabbi Ricci also composed a famous Kabbalistic work: Mishnat Chasidim (Amsterdam, 1727), a book modeled on the six orders of the Mishnah, with each order divided into tractates. Rabbi Ricci considered that the act of Creation lies beyond the

power of human understanding and arrived at the conclusion that the Kabbalistic idea of tzimtzum (withdrawal) is essentially metaphorical, based on the pasuq: melo kol ha-aretz kebodo as referring to the providence of God, which is found everywhere.