Rabbi Moshe Chefetz (or Hefes) 1663-1711

Rabbi Moshe ben Gershom (1663-1711) known as Rabbi Moshe Chefetz (of Hefes) was a rabbinic scholar from Italy. Born in Trieste, raised in Venice, he lived as a private tutor teaching Talmud and Midrash. He wrote poetry, and dealt with philosophy, math, and natural sciences.
A member of the prominent Chefetz family (or Gentili, in Italian) of Northern Italy, he was considered a child prodigy and studied under the renowned R. Solomon Nizza. One of his poetic works written at age 13, appeared in the famous Venice edition of the Bible (1675-78).
Among the writings of Rabbi Chefetz we could mention:

- *Chanukkat HaBayit* (lit. *Dedication of the Temple*), a book that details the construction of the Second Temple and all of his vessels and utensils (Venice, 1696). The book includes illustrations and tables by the hand of the author.
- *Melekhet Machasebet* (*Intentful Work*), a superb commentary on the Torah (Venice, 1710) based on traditional interpretations but also upon the principles of secular science. The book includes a portrait of the author. His portrait in *Melekhet Machashebet* (see below) was the first ever published in a Hebrew book (first edition, 1710). The name of the book, Melekhet Machashebet was also a sophisticated way to seal the name of the author, common practice among Sephardic Rabbis of the time: the word *machasehbet* in Hebrew is the acronym of: ***M****oshe* ***Ch****efetz* ***sh****okhen* ***b****e'ir* ***T****rieste*, Moshe Chefetz, who lives in the city of Trieste.

At the bottom of the portrait it says: "*ben me-a shana…* anokhi hayom", which literally means: "I'm one today hundred years old". When you see the portrait you notice that rabbi Chefetz was obviously younger. The numerical value of the Hebrew word*me-a* (=40, 1, 5)) is 46, i.e., the real age of rabbi Moshe

Cheftez in this portrait.
A philosophical study on the five books of the Torah, by Rabbi Moshe Chefetz. Impressive complete copy containing a detailed copper engraving frontispiece, a leaf with the portrait of the author, clean-shaven and ministerial, and a leaf with geometric sketches. Another sketch on leaf 57.
Moses b. Chefetz (1663-1711) was born in Trieste and raised in Venice. Considered to be a child prodigy, he studied under the renowned R. Solomon Nizza, and developed into a fine rabbinic decisor as well as a scholar familiar with the disciplines of mathematics and the sciences. His best-known for this philosophical commentary.
His age at the time of printing is written in a colophon under his portrait, “ben me’ah shana” (literally 100 years old) the gematriya value of me’ah being 46. Many misunderstood that this was a gematriya and thought that he was 100 years old at the time he wrote the book. Unfortnaltelly, rabbi Mishe passed away when he was just 48 years old
In 1550 Alvise Bragadin established a Hebrew press in Venice, thus ending a brief monopoly in Hebrew printing in Venice enjoyed by Guistiani (after the closing of the Bomberg press). This press continued as one of Venice’s leading Hebrew print-shops, issuing Hebrew titles in the 18th C under several generations of Bragadins (the last of whom was Alvise III). Throughout the years, the output of the Bragadini press was considerable, and covered the gamut of Hebrew works. The press was somewhat unusual, however, in that the Bragadins themselves did not always take an active role in their printing-house, leaving its operation to other printers, and lending their name to other presses.
[8], 98 leaves three illustration plates.
Melechet Machshevet, on the Five Books of the Torah, based upon natural sciences and philosophy, by R. Moshe Chefetz. Venice: Bragadin, [1710]. First edition. Complete wide-margined copy on high-quality paper. Includes an engraved frontispiece, a leaf with an engraved portrait of the author, and a leaf with geometric diagrams. Another diagram on leaf 57. The following caption appears beneath the portrait, alluding to the age of the author at the time of the printing: “Moshe Chefetz here in the picture, in 1710, at the age of me’ah” – at the age of 46 (numeric value of me’ah), though

some misunderstood it to mean one hundred years of age (see below). R. Moshe Chefetz (1664-1711, Otzar HaRabbanim 14709), Italian rabbi, researcher and philosopher. Born in Trieste, he was raised in Venice, where he later disseminated Torah. He possessed wide ranging knowledge of Torah, G-d and nature, as is portrayed in this book – Melechet Machshevet. He composed this book to find solace for the untimely passing of his son R. Gershom, author of Yad Charuzim. R. Moshe died at the young age of 48 on 30th Cheshvan 1711 (R. Chananel Nepi in his book, printed as part of Toldot Gedolei Yisrael of R. M.Sh. Ghirondi, Trieste 1853, p. 239). Samuel David Luzzatto (Shadal) quotes a tradition transmitted by Italian Torah scholars, which maintains that the sages of his generation, upon hearing of the text of the caption R. Moshe intended to place beneath his portrait in his book, tried to dissuade him from doing so, warning him that it is not something one can make jest of. He did not heed their warning, and passed away within that year (Igrot Shadal, VII, p. 1013).
With numerous illustrations of the Temple's structure and its vessels and a large folding map of the Temple's structure. Chacham Moshe Chefetz was born in 1663 in Trieste, Italy. He studied under the sages of Venice, including Chacham Shlomo ben Yeshaya Nitza. Was a Talmid Chacham who was proficient in philosophy and nature as well as music. In 1678, the Bible was printed in Venice. Printed on its first page was a poem by Chacham Moshe Chefetz. The book Machbarot Emanuel by Chacham Emanuel ben Shlomo of Rome, which was hand-copied in the same time in Venice, included a short commentary by Chacham Moshe Chefetz on the poem '□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□'. In (1699) he published his book Chanukat HaBayit – the form of the Temple, in Venice. In (1699) his son, Gershom, passed away during a plague. In that year, Chacham Moshe Chefetz published his son's book Yad Charuzim which inlcuded a eulogy by his Rav, Chacham Shlomo NItza, for his son, Gershom Chefetz. In (1710) he published in Venice his book Melechet Machshevet – on the Torah, which had many following editions. Chacham Moshe Chefetz passed away in 1711, when he was only 48 years old. The book was printed in two stages. Initially, the text of the book was printed with blank pages left for the illustrations. These were later added by embossing.

el rabino Moshé Jefetz sobre la creación del “segundo día”

En su comprensión de la creación, el rabino Moshé Jefetz ofrece una de las explicaciones más lúcidas y cercanas a lo que hoy denominamos **ciclo del agua**. Basado en el Midrash, en la Guía de Perplejos de Maimónides y en los Sabios del Talmud, Jefetz afirma que la separación entre “aguas superiores” y “aguas inferiores” no describe una división mística en planos cósmicos, sino la **diferenciación entre el agua en estado líquido y el agua en estado gaseoso**. Esa separación —dice— es la creación del ciclo natural del agua.

Maimónides ya había señalado que, en el segundo día, Dios estableció las leyes físicas que gobiernan el comportamiento del agua. En *Guía de Perplejos* 2:30 explica que el *rakia* fue creado a partir del agua, y que parte de esa agua “se separó, de algún modo, y quedó sobre el aire” (□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□ □□□). De acuerdo con esto, los “cielos” del segundo día no son los *shamaim* de Génesis 1:1 —que alude al universo entero— sino el **cielo visible**, la zona atmosférica donde se forman nubes y vapores.

El rabino Jefetz desarrolla este concepto en su obra *Melejet Majashebet* (Venecia, 1710; Varsovia, 1914, pp. 10-11). Identifica las “aguas superiores” con **vapores y nubes**, surgidos por la evaporación del agua terrestre. Siguiendo la etimología talmúdica, señala que la palabra *shamaim* es la unión de *esh* (fuego o calor) y *maim* (agua). Para Jefetz, el cielo es literalmente el producto del **calor que actúa sobre el agua**.

Explica así el versículo “Que haya un *rakia* en medio de las aguas” (Gn 1:6). Según su lectura, la orden divina puede parafrasearse como: “Que haya dentro del agua (*betoj hamaim*) un cuerpo sutil, móvil y expansivo, que ascienda por su

liviandad” –es decir, **vapor**. Este es su texto original: **“…□□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□”.**

Para Jefetz, *rakia* no significa la expansión del espacio, sino la expansión del **agua convertida en vapor**. “Así como el agua puesta sobre fuego se transforma fácilmente en vapor –escribe– ese vapor, al encontrar frío, vuelve a convertirse en agua”: **“□□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□□”.**

De este modo, Jefetz interpreta que en el segundo día fueron puestas en funcionamiento las leyes físicas que permiten que el agua exista simultáneamente como **líquido** y como **gas**. La “separación entre las aguas” es, para él, la primera descripción bíblica de la **evaporación y la condensación**. Allí comienza el ciclo del agua: las aguas inferiores (océanos) liberan vapor; ese vapor asciende y forma las aguas superiores (nubes); luego, al enfriarse, retorna a la tierra en forma de lluvia.

Esta identificación fue compartida por otros sabios. Ribbí Itzjak Samuel Reggio escribió: “Parte de las aguas se congregó arriba y se convirtieron en nubes” (Torat haElohim, Viena, 1821, p. 4). Ribbí Menashé ben Israel explicó que la división del segundo día condujo directamente a la **formación de la lluvia** (*El Conciliador*, p. 3).

La ciencia moderna confirma esta lectura: las nubes son “masas visibles de gotas de agua o cristales de hielo suspendidos en el aire”. El geógrafo John Lynch lo expresó de manera sorprendentemente acorde con la Torá: “Vivimos en un planeta de agua… existe un océano alrededor nuestro y otro sobre nosotros”. Difícil encontrar una formulación más precisa de las “aguas inferiores” y “aguas superiores”.

Así, según Jefetz, el segundo día no describe solamente una división metafísica, sino la creación del **mecanismo esencial que hace posible la vida en la tierra**: el ciclo del agua.

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See **HERE** the book Chanukkat haBayit