EARLY MODERN WORKSHOP: Jewish History Resources

Volume 6: Reading across Cultures: The Jewish Book and Its Readers in the Early Modern Period, 2009, The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

The Paratexts of Jacob Marcaria: Addressing the (Imagined) Reader in Mid-Sixteenth-Century Italy

Adam Shear, University of Pittsburgh, USA

ABSTRACT: For a few years in the middle of the sixteenth century (1557-1564), a Hebrew press was active in Riva del Garda (Riva di Trento) under the management of Jacob Marcaria, a physician. The business arrangements of the press seem complicated and difficult to reconstruct (having only the evidence of the printed editions): Marcaria was printer for most of the books and may be considered the publisher of some; for others, he was in partnership with Rabbi Joseph Ottolenghi of nearby Cremona. The activities of Marcaria and Ottolenghi were undertaken with the permission of the Prince-Bishop of Trent, Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo and some of the editions apparently enjoyed his patronage. Madruzzo, host of the renewed Council of Trent in the early 1560s, also patronized Marcaria by hiring him to do contract printing for the Council. Although Marcaria was only the printer for some of the works, he was the guiding force behind the press and apparently served as editor for almost all of the books, designing and drafting the title pages and writing prefaces for many of the works. The output of the press was eclectic--ranging from major halakhic texts to controversial philosophical works, and also including popular ethical works, and liturgical and other ritual works. Marcaria's paratexts--mainly title pages and prefaces--offer us an opportunity to study the ways in which Hebrew books were marketed in the middle of the sixteenth century. Other than a work on the calendar (which may have been authored by Marcaria) and a commentary on the Passover Haggadah by Isaac Abarbanel, the press seems to have specialized in producing first or second editions of older works, written before the era of print. Much attention in the history of the early modern book has focused on the impact of print on the transmission and dissemination of new works/new texts. Here I will focus on Marcaria's [attempted] mediation of the encounter between old texts and new readers by looking at his very personal addresses aimed at an imagined reader (literally addressed, in most cases, with the title "to the reader"). The prefaces are not long--usually about a paragraph. Here, I present three

representative ones--from a halakhic text, a book of "customs," and a philosophical treatise--along with their title pages. I analyze Marcaria's strategies and place Marcaria's paratexts in the context of previous work done on the role of paratexts in the history of reading, particularly in early modern Europe.

This presentation is for the following text(s):

- Abraham Klausner, Minhagim
- Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides)
- The Book of Rabbi Mordecai

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Abraham Klausner, Minhagim
1558

Translated by Adam Shear, University of Pittsburgh, USA

Abraham Klausner, *Minhagim*, 1558, in octavo

<u>title page (1r):</u>

<u>translation:</u>

Customs | of our teacher, the rabbi Abraham Klausner, nicely abridged | with annotations collected from halakhic decisors, from here and there, | printed under the regime of the Cardinal | Christophil Madruzzi, may his glory be increased. | Kislev of the year 319[1], according to the minor counting | Riva di Trent[o]

<u>verso of title page (1v):</u>

To the reader:

And even this. Whereas other authors [might be], this author is not one who is uneducated;[2] He is more powerful than his brothers.[3] For all of them went on at length and moved forward with difficulty,[4] but this man came to be brief--in order to satisfy the young and the old and not exhaust them, giving to each season[5] its law, without behaving in a frenzy.[6] Kindly read this and become acquainted with its content.[7] For praise befits it.[8]

These are the words of the physician who is not practicing, Jacob Marcaria.

Endnotes

1 colophon indicates 2 Kislev= 12 November 1558
2 lit. “does not cut reeds in the marshland”; see Jastrow, s.v. אגמא., citing BT Sanhedrin 33b and BT Shabbat 95a.
3 I. Chron 5: 2
4 after Ex 14: 25
5 lit. “time.”
6 allusion to II Kings 9:20; “driving wildly”
7 or, “understand it from within.”
8 after Psalms 65:2. I am grateful to Adam Teller for his suggestions on the translation of this passage.

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Abraham Klausner, Minhagim
1558

Prepared by Adam Shear, University of Pittsburgh, USA

Abraham Klausner, *Minhagim* , 1558, in octavo

<u>title page (1r):</u>

מנהגים

של מה"רר אברהם קלויזנר בקצור נאה

עם הגהות נלקטו מן הפוסקים

אחת הנה ואחת הנה נדפס

תחת ממשלת

החשמן

קרישטופיל מאדרוצי יר"ה

כסליו שנת שי"ט פה

ריווא דטרינט

<u>verso of title page (1v):</u>

אל הקורא

ואף גם זאת. בהיות שאר מחבר' לאו קטלא קני באגמא המחבר הלזה. גבר באחיו. כי כולם האריכו. וינהגו בכבדות. והאיש הלזה בא בקצרה. למען ירוצה בו נערים וישישים ולא ייעפו. תת לכל זמן חוקו. ולא כשגעון ינהג. קראו נא בו.

ויודע בקרבו. כי לו דומיה תהלה.

נאום הרופא ולא לו

יעקב מרקריאה

Publisher: in Abraham Klausner, Minhagim, Riva di Trento, 1558, 1r-1v.

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Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides)
1560

Translated by Adam Shear, University of Pittsburgh, USA

Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides), *Sefer Milḥamot ha-Shem*, 1560, in folio.

title page (1r):

Book of | the Wars of the Lord | by the Divine Philosopher, The Great Teacher, Rabbi | Levi ben Gershom, may the memory of the righteous be a blessing. | Edited and elevated with choice flour from the books of | Aristotle and the other philosophers, famous from time immemorial. | Printed here, Riva di Trento, in the year 320[1], according to the shortened counting.

verso of title page (1v):

To the reader:

This time my husband[2] will be connected to me for I have borne for you [three books].[3] And it is called the Book of the Wars of the Lord, by the divine philosopher, the teacher, Rabbi Levi ben Gershon, may his memory live in the world to come, who attained heights in philosophy, speaking about the divine.

Although there appear to be in his words contradictions to our Torah and [the words of] the sages of our nation, the war was before and behind the Lord[4], [and this book forms] a helpmeet.[5] But many have called this "Wars with the Lord" and the Waters of Meribah [where the Israelites] quarreled with [God].[6] Many are [the author's adversaries], O Most High One.[7] But does he not offer an explanation for this in his introduction to the book and in the last chapter of the first treatise? And we see there: For the words of

Torah and philosophy are separate. To each his own.[8]

But I did not come to be his messenger or advocate. For the wars of the Lord we must fight. For some have already come to the aid of the Lord among the warriors.[9] [Such as] the teacher, author of the Book *Neve ha-Shalom*[10] and the others who are experts in war.[11]

Write this as a memorial in the book[12]: that all men who desire to come and attain heights, even to the ultimate end of philosophy, can see his way and learn [from this book].

And thus do not leave or foresake this book. For all others are nothing in contrast to it. And the man's name is known in Israel as the author of enlightening works, in his own war chariot [i.e. this book] and in his commentaries.[13] Therefore I will not stop my mouth[14] from reciting some of his praises and [the praises of] the majesty and glory of this work.[15] There is no need, for with your own eyes, you see how fine are the paper and the tree,[16] and also its editing with my removal of all evil from its camp, so that there be no woe for Jacob or harm to Israel.[17]

And the difficult matter was the writings that are quoted in this book, and I had many doubts about it. So I looked in the books of Aristotle and all the famous ones mentioned and brought by this author in his mind, and I quoted directly from those writings. Thus, take from the heights the fine and sifted flour, this book of the covenant, as it comes now in this book.[18] May the utterance of my lips[19] bless the one who trains my hands for battle and my fingers for warfare.[20]

These are the words of the physician who is not practicing,

Jacob Marcaria.

Endnotes

1 The date of the colophon is: Hanukkah 321= 25 Nov-2 Dec 1560. That is, the title page was laid out prior to Rosh Hashannah in 1560 and the printing was completed in late November or early December of 1560.
2 an allusion to the active intellect? I thank Lawrence Kaplan for the suggestion.
3 after Gen. 29: 34. "This time my husband will become attached [ילווה] to me, for I have borne him three sons." This is the third book by Gersonides published by Marcaria. I thank Daniel Lasker and Charles Manekin for pointing this out to me.
4 after II Chron. 13:14.

5 Gen 2: 20
6 see Numbers 20:13
7 after Ps 56:3.
8 lit. “They with theirs and we with ours.” After BTBerakhot 8a.
9 after Judges 5:23
10 i.e. Abraham Shalom; see Herbert Davidson on Shalom’s attempts to reconcile Gersonides’ and Maimonides’ views. (*The Philosophy of Abraham Shalom* [Los Angeles, 1964], pp.10-11.) *Neve Shalom* was first printed in Constantinople in 1539 and was re-printed in Venice in 1574/75.
11 after Song of Songs 3:8
12 Exodus 17:14
13 a pun on II Kings 2:12 “chariot of Israel and its horsemen” רכב ישראל ופרשיו
14 after Job 7:11
15 He refers here to the printed edition not the literary “work” as the next sentence makes clear.
16 a play on Mishnah Avot 3: 7 “How lovely the tree; how lovely the ploughed field [[ניר].”
17 after Numbers 23:21 (with “harm” and “woe” reversed)
18 The first “book” refers to the literary work, while the second “book” refers apparently to this edition.
19 see Is. 57:19. Elisabeth Hollender informs me that variations on this phrase are common in the Italian and Ashkenazic piyyut traditions from the 13th century on. I am grateful to her for her help with this passage.
20 after Ps. 144:1.

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Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides)
1560

Prepared by Adam Shear, University of Pittsburgh, USA

Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides), *Sefer Milḥamot ha-Shem* , 1560, in folio.

<u>title page (1r):</u>

ספר

מלחמת השם

להפלוסוף האלהי הרב הגדול רבי

לוי בן גרשון זצ"ל

הוגה והורם סולת מתוך ספרי

ארסטו ושאר פלוסופי

אש[ר] מעלום אנשי

שם:

נדפס פה ריווא דטרי"נט

שנת ש"כ לפ"ק

<u>verso of title page (1v):</u>

אל הקורא

הפעם ילוה אשי אלי. כי ילדתי לך. ותקרא ספר מלחמות השם להפלוסוף האלהי הרב רבי לוי בן גרשון זלה"ה. אשר בפלוסופיא עלה עד למרום. וידבר על אלוהים. ואף כי נראין כדבריו סותרים תורתינו וחכמי אומתינו. ולה' המלחמה פנים ואחור עזר כנגדו. כי רבים יכנוהו מלחמות עם השם. והמה מי מריבה אשר רבו. ורבים לוחמים לו מרום הלא הוא התנצל על ככה בהקדמת הספר ובפרק אחרון מאמר ראשון: ראנו משם: כי דברי תורה לחוד: ודברי פלוסופיא לחוד. אינהו בדידהו: ואנן בדידן: ואני לא באתי להיות לו מלאך מליץ ישר: וכי מלחמת ה' נלחם: הלא כבר בא לעזרת ה' בגבורים: הרב בעל ספר נוה השלום: ושאר אנשי מלומדי מלחמה: אך כתוב זאת זכרון בספר: כי כל האיש החפץ לבא ולעלות במעלות ועד תוכן קצה הפלוסופיא ראה דרכי וחכם: ואל יעזוב ואל יטוש ספר הזה: כי כלם כי אין נגדו: ולהאיש מודע בישראל שמו: חבר חבורים מחוכם: ברכב ובפרושים ע"כ אחשוך פי מלספר קצת שבחו: גם אדר והוד מלאכה הזאת: אין צריך: כי בעיניך תראה: כמה נאה נייר זה כמה נאה אילן זה: גם הגהתיו והסירותי מקרבו כל רע: לאראה עמל ביעקב ואון בישראל: והדבר קשה הכתובים בספר הזה: ושהיה לי ספק ספיקא בו: ראיתיו בספרי ארסטוטלוס ושאר אנשי השם הזכיר והביא בכלותיו המחבר הלז: וצרפתינהו לי משם: ע"כ מהרי קח קמה סאה סלת :ספר הברית: ועתה כבא הספר הזה: ינובבון שפתיך ברוך המלמד ידי לקרב: ואצבעותי למלחמה

כה דברי הרופא ולא לו

יעקב מרקריאה

Publisher: in Levi ben Gershon, Sefer Milhamot ha-Shem, Riva di Trento, 1560, 1r-1v.

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The Book of Rabbi Mordecai

Sefer Rav Mordekhai

1558

Translated by Adam Shear, University of Pittsburgh, USA

***Sefer Rav Mordekhai*, 1558 [Kislev 319], in folio.**

<u>title page (1r):</u>

The Book of Rav Mordecai

And Mordecai went out in a royal garb[1] [with] annotations

and a crown and fine linen[2], an index of all the laws at its head.[3]

And this was not performed with honor and dignity[4] since the days of old.

Printed by the Gaon, our teacher and rabbi, Joseph Ottoleng[hi], may God preserve him,

under the regime of the lord, the Cardinal Christophil Madruzz[o], may his glory be increased.

[Printed in] Kislev of the year 319 [i.e. November-December 1558] according to the minor counting

here in Riva di Trent[o]

<u>verso of title page (1v):</u>

To the Observer[5]:

Those who rejoice to exultation are glad to find a man[6] who fears the Lord[7] and profits God by his righteousness,[8] and takes of the spirit that was upon him[9] for the many. This is the gaon, our teacher and rabbi Joseph Ottolenghi [lit. Ottolengo], may God preserve him, in his perception of the greatness of this *Book of Rav Mordecai*. For all rabbis[10] wax mighty in power [with this book],[11] and it excels over all.[12]

And the full account of the greatness of Mordecai--is this not written in the book you have before you[13], in every line? From each line, a novel interpretation or a legal judgement is set out. But from times of old, it has been hidden in the baggage.[14] One did not see it and its glory was changed to that which does not profit.[15] For it was swallowed within the books of the Rabbi from Fez [Alfasi], one [interpretation] here or one there. And it was sliced into several parts. And not everyone was privileged to have it between his hands and always upon his forehead.[16]

He [i.e. Rabbi Ottolenghi] said to print it on its own base[17] and on its own podium.[18] And without anything extraneous[19], except for the annotations of the author.[20] And most of them are light sown[21] on the edge of the codex.[22] And in addition to this, [he also said to print] *Tosafot* to "The Eves of Passover,"[23], from small works that were not lost.[24]

And he commanded me saying to take hold of this, and withdraw not your hand from this,[25] to the point of polishing and erasing all the errors and mistakes. All this, but only possibly[26] [can I erase] those that remain and are hidden after the editing of this gaon. And I act according to the command of this holy man. And thus I was at work on it daily and I came to do my work on it. And I saw it was not arranged according to his judgements, although full of his gems. It would tire a man to find what came to mind.[27]

I said to him to open a gate[28] that would not consist of a mixture of things. And with different things, do not mix them.

[So] I have erected markers[29] for it in order to rescue them from the burden of a king and his ministers.[30] Thus did the people of the Lord march down to the gates[31]--gates that our fathers did not know.[32] So that knowledge may come easily to the wise man.[33] And all the judgements are within reach of those who desire them[34] without your eyes having to wander across the whole book and the numbers [of judgements] for they are more than can be told.[35] For perhaps something is omitted, a sign and a reminder[36] of the pearls of his words for [the book] is overflowing [with] novel interpretations and judgements, and many customs [for] those who judge,[37] and everybody else.[38] It is all here. And even [so-called] foolish customs without a basis in the early commentators will be sustained on a firm basis[39] and will find support.[40]

Therefore whoever is eager for life,[41] please hurry and take the choice products of the land[42]

These are the words of the physician who is not practicing,

Jacob Marcaria, son of the honorable, our teacher and rabbi David Marcaria, may his memory live in the world to come.

Endnotes

1 after Esther 6:8 and 8:15
2 after Esther 8:15
3 This is an allusion to the bonus feature of the index, *Simane Mordechai* by Ottolenghi which could be sold together with this edition or sold separately for those who already had a Talmud or a *Sefer Rev Alfasi* with the *Mordechai* in it.
4 after Esther 6:3
5 The sense here is "to the reader"; however, I leave the more literal translation to distinguish from prefaces where Marcaria specifically addresses the "reader" (*koreh*).
6 after Job 3:22 "those who rejoice to exultation and are glad to reach the grave." Marcaria replaced קבר (grave) in Job with גבר (man) here.
7 after Psalm 112:1, "happy is the man who fears the Lord"
8 after Job 22:3, "Is it any advantage to the Almighty that thou art righteous?"
9 after Numbers 11:25,
10 lit. "halakhic decisors" (*poskim*)
11 after Job 21:7.
12 after Prov 31:29 (*Eishet Ḥayil*)
13 after Esther 10:2; "before you" lit. "before him," i.e. the "examiner," or reader.
14 see I Sam 10:22.
15 after Jeremiah 2:11.
16 Exodus 28:38
17 cf Daniel 11: 20, 21, 38.
18 cf II Chron. 34:31.
19 lit. "and there was no stranger with it"; cf. I Kings 3:18.
20 For discussion of the "hagahot" in this and other additions, see A. Helprin, "Sefer ha-Mordecai in Light of Its Printings" [in Hebrew], *Iyunim be-sifrut ḥazal, ba-mikra, uve-toldot yisrael*, ed. Y. Gilat et al (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 1982), pp.329-330.
21 Ps. 97: 11
22 "at the edge of the *maḥberet*"=a play on "at the edges of the camp [*maḥaneh*]" (e.g. Judges 7:17)?
23 i.e. the tenth chapter of Tractate Pesaḥim
24 lit. "trodden on"; see Jastrow s.v.רכס

25 a play on Eccl. 7: 18: “grasp the one without letting go of the other”
26 See BT Ḥagigah 4b “all this, and only perhaps,” (Soncino trans.)
27 lit. “to find what came up to his spirit.”
28 “Gates” here and in the following sentences also refers to sections or chapters of a book.
29 see Jeremiah 31:21.
30 see Hosea 8:10: ויחלו מעט ממשא מלך שרים. Marcaria changes the *ayin* in מעט to a *lamed*, thus yielding the phrase “rescue from the burden” similar to the phrasing found in Is. 46:2 (מלט משא). Thus, he conflates the two verses to yield the full phrase. Cf. BT Bava Batra 8b where the phrase from Hosea is quoted in support of the notion that Torah scholars should be exempt from poll taxes (“the burden of kings and their servants”).
31 Judges 5:11.
32 lit. “did not fear”; after Deut 32: 17. See JPS New which notes the Arabic root “sha’ara” implying: “did not know.” Regardless of whether Marcaria knew Arabic (which is unlikely), this usage appears in Hebrew philosophical texts (see Klatzkin, 4: 128).
33 Proverbs 14:6
34 Psalms 111: 2.
35 after Psalms 40:6
36after Exodus 13:9.
37 see Ex 18:22
38 after Psalms 49:2.
39 lit. “sustained on cedar”; after Psalms 41:4, modifying יסעדנו על-ערש to יסעדנו על ארז .
40 i.e. biblical support.
41 after Ps. 34:13
42 Gen : 11. I have altered the order of this sentence for clarity in English.
43 The exact meaning of this phrase is obscure. Lit. “the physician--but not for himself,” as trans. in Joshua Bloch, “Hebrew Printing in Riva di Trento,” pamphlet, New York: NYPL, 1933, p.6 n.20 (reprinted in *Hebrew Printing and Bibliography,* ed. Charles Berlin [New York, NYPL/Ktav, 1976]. Bloch cites Samuel Krauss and Moritz Steinschneider who had previously commented on this phrase. Bloch speculates that Marcaria relocated from Cremona to Riva del Garda after taking ill, and “therefore went to the Tyolese mountains, where the delightful climatic conditions and the luxuriance of the vegetation are most favorable for the treatment of patients suffering from pulmonary disease.” While Bloch’s comment certainly evokes pleasant images of the lake region of northern Italy, Meir Benayahu rightly pointed out that this is entirely speculative and that Marcaria’s phrase may simply mean “MD--but not acting in that capacity,” identifying himself as a physician but stating that he is not acting as one in writing prefaces or managing the press (*Ha-defus ha-ivri be-Kremona* [Jerusalem: Makhon Ben Ẓvi, 1971], p.113 n. 2). But Benayahu’s suggestion is also conjectural and requires a less literal reading of the phrase. Krauss and Bloch offer a reading that is closer to a plain sense reading-- “ve-lo lo” = “and not to himself.” (Benayahu also points out that Bloch’s assumption that Marcaria had lived in Cremona and had been a rabbinical judge and member of Ottolenghi’s yeshiva was also conjecture. (ibid, p.113). Indeed, Bloch’s only evidence for halakhic activity by Marcaria is his signature on a responsum in the Tamar-Ventorrozzi case, from 1566, after the end of the printing press in

Riva.)

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ספר רב מרדכי
Sefer Rav Mordekhai
1558

Prepared by Adam Shear, University of Pittsburgh, USA

***Sefer Rav Mordekhai* , 1558 [Kislev 319], in folio.**

<u>title page (1r):</u>

ספר רב מרדכי

ומרדכי יצא בלבוש מלכות הגהות

ועטרת בוץ מראה מקום. מכל הדינים בראשו. לא נעשה

כן יקר וגדולה מימי קדם. נדפס על ידי הגאון

מהר"ר יוסף אוטילינג י"ץ תחת

ממשלת האדון

הגרדינאל קרישטופיל מאדרוץ

ירום הודו

כסליו שנת שלש מאות ותשעה עשר עשר לפרט קטן

פה ריווא דטרי"נט

<u>verso of title page (1v) :</u>

אל הצופה

השמחים אלי גילי ישישו כי ימצאו גבר' איש ירא ה' החפץ' לשדי' כי תצדק' ויאצל מן הרוח אשר עליו לרבים. ה"ה הגאון מהר"ר יוסף אוטילינגו י"ץ. בראותו מעלת ספר הרב מרדכי הנז'. וכי כל הפוסקי' גברו גם עתקו חיל' והוא עלה על כלנה' ופרשת גדולת מרדכי הלא היא כתובה על ספר כשעומדים עליו. בכל שורה. בשורה מוצאת. חדוש או פסק דין. והיה מימי קדם נחבא אל הכלם. אין רואה. הומר כבודו בלא יועיל. להיותו מובלע בתוך ספרי הרב מפא"ס. אחת הנה ואחת הנה. ויבתרו אותו לכמה חלקים. ולאו כל אדם זוכה להיות בין ידיו ועל מצחו תמיד. אמר להדפיסו על כנו. ועל עמדו. ואין זר אתו. כי אם עם הגהות המחבר מעצמו. ורובם מאור זרוע בקצה המחברת. ונוסף על זה. תוספות מערבי פסחים. מקטנים דלא אירכסו. ויצו עלי לאמור אחוז בזה. ואל תנח ידיך. עד מרוק. ומרוק ומחוק כל הטעיות ושגיאות. כולי האי ואולי. הנשארים והנסתרי' אחרי הגהת הגאון הנזכר. ואעשה כדבר איש האלוהי. ויהי בעבדי עליו יום יום ואבא לעשות מלאכתי. וראהו בלתי מסודר בדיניו. אם כי מלאו מפניניו. ילאה איש למצא העולה על רוחו. אמרתי לעשות לו פתח שער לבלתי היות שם ערוב. ועם שונים אל יתערב. אציב עליו ציונים למען מלט ממשא מלך ושרים. אז ירדו לשערים עם ה'. שערים לא שערום אבותינו. ודעת לנבון יקל. וכל הדינים דרושים לכל חפציהם. מבלתי התשוטטו עיניו בכל הספר ומספרם כי עצמו מספר. ואולי נשמט דבר מה. לאות ולזכרון על פניני אמריו כי מלאו על כל גדותיו. חדושים ודינים. גם מנהגים רבים. אשר ישפוטו הם. גם בני איש. הכל המה. וכמנהג של שטות. ולא :יסדום הראשונים. יסעדנו על ארז ואסמכוהו אקרא. לכן חושו נא. וקחו מזמרת הארץ. מי החפץ בחיים

נאום הרופא ולא לו

יעקב מרקרי"אה בכמ"ר דוד מרקרי"אה זלה"ה

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