

Maimonides Institute Celebrates 200th Anniversary of Chaim ben Atar

The 200th anniversary of Chaim ben Atar will be celebrated next Sunday, July 18, at the Maimonides Institute, 1620 Murray Avenue. Chaim ben Atar is the most celebrated scholar of North African Jewry. He is best known for his Or Ha-chaim, a commentary upon the Bible widely in use among Jews in all countries. He was also a noted cabbalist and, what is less known, an important forerunner of Chassidism. He was in fact a contemporary of the Bal Shem, the founder of the Chassicic movement.

The work of Chaim ben Atar and his contemporaries, principally his friends and disciples will be on exhibit all day at the Maimonides Institute. Among the interesting items will be a recently discovered diary by a follower of ben Atar which sheds much biographical light on the celebrated 18th century scholar. Supplementing the exhibit are also a number of volumes specially lent for the occasion by the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York City. A lecture on the life and works of Chaim ben Atar will be presented by Rabbi Wolf Leiter at 8 p. m.

At the same time there will be on exhibit the literary treasures of North African Jewry, covering a period of six centuries and rabbinica of Morocco, Algiers and Tunis. Letters, manuscripts, as well as many specimens of native printing of rare beauty and craftsmanship, will be on display. This unique collection of the Maimonides Institute is one of the few in this country.
