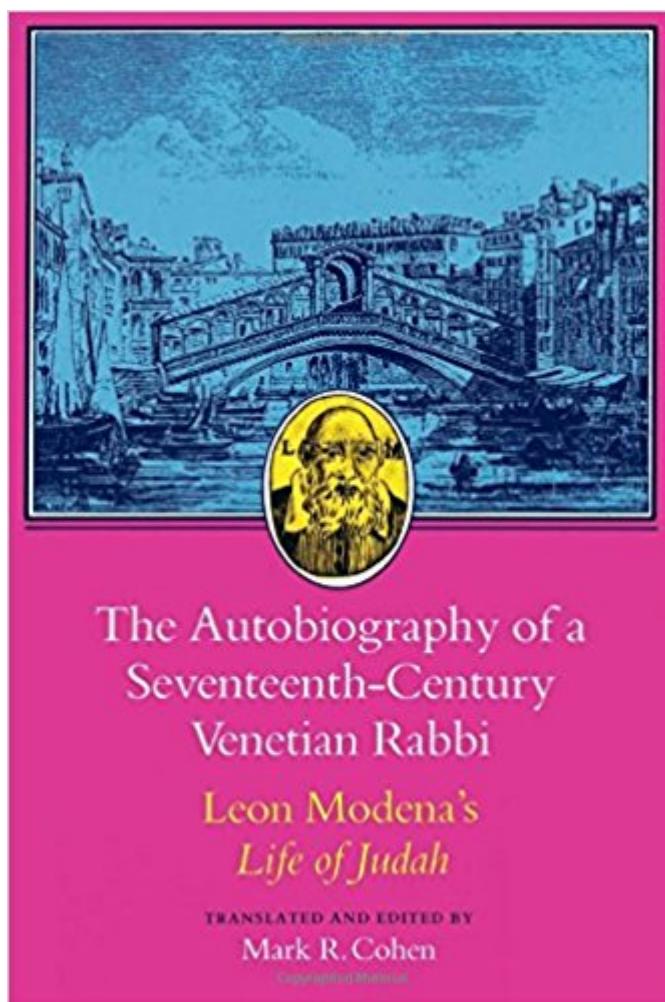


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# The Autobiography Of A Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi



## Synopsis

Leon (Judah Aryeh) Modena was a major intellectual figure of the early modern Italian Jewish community--a complex and intriguing personality who was famous among contemporary European Christians as well as Jews. Modena (1571-1648) produced an autobiography that documents in poignant detail the turbulent life of his family in the Jewish ghetto of Venice. The text of this work is well known to Jewish scholars but has never before been translated from the original Hebrew, except in brief excerpts. This complete translation, based on Modena's autograph manuscript, makes available in English a wealth of historical material about Jewish family life of the period, religion in daily life, the plague of 1630-1631, crime and punishment, the influence of kabbalistic mysticism, and a host of other subjects. The translator, Mark R. Cohen, and four other distinguished scholars add commentary that places the work in historical and literary context. Modena describes his fascination with the astrology and alchemy that were important parts of the Jewish and general culture of the seventeenth century. He also portrays his struggle against poverty and against compulsive gambling, which, cleverly punning on a biblical verse, he called the "sin of Judah." In addition, the book contains accounts of Modena's sorrow over his three sons: the death of the eldest from the poisonous fumes of his own alchemical laboratory, the brutal murder of the youngest, and the exile of the remaining son. The introductory essay by Mark R. Cohen and Theodore K. Rabb highlights the significance of the work for early modern Jewish and general European history. Howard E. Adelman presents an up-to-date biographical sketch of the author and points the way toward a new assessment of his place in Jewish history. Natalie Z. Davis places Modena's work in the context of European autobiography, both Christian and Jewish, and especially explores the implications of the Jewish status as outsider for the privileged exploration of the self. A set of historical notes, compiled by Howard Adelman and Benjamin C. I. Ravid, elucidates the text.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mark R. Cohen, Winner of the 2010 Goldziher Prize, The Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations at Merrimack College

Text: English, Hebrew (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Geoffrey Brown  
Reading a real life autobiography of a prolific Jewish Renaissance Venetian writer, orator, tutor, parent has changed the way I thought I understood this colorful era in Jewish history. Although it is one individual's perspective, Rabbi Modena's candor is infectious-the editor and translator has provided pre and post articles as well as a distinctly academic reservoir of historical notes that enliven the autobiography's content.

Excellent quality! Seller stated that the book was in good condition, and it is!

The Autobiography Of A Seventeenth Century Venetian Rabbi is a unique and interesting book. It is unique in that it is one of the only autobiographies ever written by a rabbi of such stature. The book is very interesting due to the inside view it gives the reader into Jewish life in the Italian ghetto at that period in history. Not often do we find such a marvelous first hand account of history. Aside from the holistic historic perspective it gives, the personal life of Leon De Modena is an amazing story of survival. His tragic life is reminiscent of the life of Job. The book also gives us a clue of Leon Modena's genius and talents as an author, scholar, playwright and poet. The book contains two parts; one, the autobiography itself (which I highly recommend). The other part consists on various essays on the autobiography, the author and the historic outlook. In the essays Leon de Modena was portrayed as a typical product of the renaissance period. Leon de Modena was by no means "typical". Another flaw is the manner in which the essays portrayed his autobiography as a characterless perspective, when in fact the book is full of personal feelings and emotions. The lame attempt to define and describe Leon Modena's character which is found in the essays is an understatement of the largest scale, bordering the term 'insult'. Leon Modena's life was so colorful

that no artist can paint the colors, no writer can read his limits, and no book can define his character. For comments, contact: Eli Bernstein 6B Kobelke st. Dianella 6059 WA Australia

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