

**MANDELSTAMM, BENJAMIN** (1805–1886), Hebrew author. Born in Zagare, the older brother of Leon \*Mandelstamm, he received both a traditional and a secular education. In the 1840s, he moved to Vilna and became one of the extremists in Haskalah circles. In a memorandum which he presented to Max \*Lilienthal when the latter visited Vilna in 1842 during his survey of the condition of Russian Jewry, Mandelstamm accused Russian Jewry of six faults which were responsible for their backwardness: (1) Russian Jews do not speak the Russian language, but rather some confused tongue; (2) they dress quaintly; (3) they do not participate sufficiently in the arts; (4) nor in the crafts; (5) they have no factories; and (6) they are neither farmers nor herdsmen.

The only solution recognized by Mandelstamm was harsh governmental intervention “forbidding the printing of the Talmud, completely removing from circulation books on the Kabbalah and Ḥasidism, dissolving the *heder* thus removing the teachers (*melammedim*) who devour the children, and educating the children of Israel in Russian.” When the enlightened community of Vilna established its own synagogue (*Tohorat ha-Kodesh*), Mandelstamm criticized it sharply for not daring to reform its liturgy and religious customs. In 1877 his writings and memoranda were published in Vienna under the title *Ḥazon Binyamin ben Yosef mi-Ma’aleh ha-Shekedim* (*Ḥazon la-Mo’ed*) with an introduction by Perez \*Smolenskin, a collection of great importance for the history of the Russian Haskalah during the 1840s. Mandelstamm also published a collection of aphorisms entitled *Mishlei Binyamin* (in *Ha-Asif*, 1885 and 1886).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Kressel, *Leksikon*, 2 (1967), 403–4; Zinberg, *Sifrut*, 6 (1960), 209–12, 214–6.

[Yehuda Slutsky]