

Sefer ha-Zohar – the Battle for Editio Princeps

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by Jan Doktór; Magda Bendowska

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SEFER HA-ZOHAR – THE BATTLE FOR EDITIO PRINCEPS

Sefer ha-Zohar is a collection of anonymous mystical and theosophical writings, recorded in Hebrew and in various dialects of the Aramaic language. The discussions over the time and circumstances in which the work saw the light of day have continued since its existence was first mentioned in writing, i.e., the late 13th century, to this day. Many orthodox communities, even academic ones, continue to maintain that the text comes from the second century C. E., and that it was written by the famed tanna Shimon bar Yochai¹. Most historians believe, however, that the collection was accumulated over a longer period of time, from the mid-13th to the early 14th century, chiefly in the Castilian kabbalist milieu. Among their arguments are several inconsistencies and changes in style that appear over the course of its approximately 2500 pages. These seem to indicate that the book was not the work of a single author. It is possible that the authors relied on much older tradition, both oral and recorded. Some scholars have been trying to identify the remaining authors of the texts included in the anthology. According to Yehuda Liebes, they included outstanding Castilian kabbalists: Bahya ben Asher, Joseph ben Shalom Ashkenazi ha-Arokh, Joseph Gikatillia, Joseph Hamadan, David ben Yehuda he-Hasid and Todros Abulafia².

Currently Moses ben Shem-Tov of León is regarded as the most important author of the collection. The linguistic similarity between the main part of *Sefer ha-Zohar*, containing mystical commentaries to the weekly readings of the Torah and Hebrew writings carrying his name is so significant that there can be no doubt that they must have been penned by the same person. Besides, according to the testimony of Isaac of Acre, who specially went to Castile to search for the Zohar manuscript, it was precisely Moses of León who lived off making copies from the original and was their chief distributor. We do not know why Isaac had to travel there personally to obtain a copy of the text. It is quite likely that when Moses was selling his copies, he signed an agreement with the

¹ As late as 1759, Polish kabbalists from Podolya (Frankists) maintained that „the *Zohar* was kept secret from the days it was written from Simeon until the 5000th year from the creation of the World [i.e., until the year 1240]”. Gaudenty Pikulski, *Złość żydowska przeciwko Bogu i bliźniemu, prawdzie i sumieniu, na objaśnienie talmudystów, na dowód ich zaślepienia i religii dalekiej od prawa Boskiego*, Lwów 1760, p. 77.

² Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, State University of New York Press, New York 1993, p. 85-138; Ronit Meroz (*The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah*, „The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry” February 2007 pp. 39-56) argues that some parts of the book written in the 11th century also belong to an era preceding the Kabbalah.

buyer prohibiting the latter from making further copies, which was common practice at the time³. Isaac of Acre even came across Moses and agreed to meet him in León in order to purchase a copy of the Zohar, but the owner of the original suddenly died. It was then that Isaac heard the story of a rich man from Avila having allegedly offered the widow a huge sum of money for the original manuscript of Shimon bar Yochai, from which Moses allegedly made copies. However, the widow said that she had no such work and that her husband wrote *Sefer ha-Zohar* himself. We have no way of knowing how much truth there is in this tale. Most probably a text from which Moses of León was making copies existed and the wife had to know about it. Nonetheless, she not only did not sell the original text, but even refused to show it. Therefore, it is hard to say who were its author or authors or what writings it was composed of. It is quite possible that the matter concerned the main text in the collection, which we now regard as *Sefer ha-Zohar*, i.e., the mystical commentary on the Pentateuch. Moses did not distribute entire copies of the book, just portions. This is indicated in the diary of Isaac of Acre and is in accordance with the fact that the first authors to quote the Zohar cite only certain sections. No complete manuscript has yet been found. When the Zohar was first printed in Italy, the editors had to combine several manuscripts to produce a „complete” text.

Sefer ha-Zohar did not obtain the status of a holy book overnight. Also the selection of the texts included in it changed over time. The Catalan kabbalists influenced by Nachmanides and Shlomo ben Aderet (Rashba) regarded *Sefer ha-Bahir* as the foundation of the Kabbalah, while warning against *Sefer ha-Zohar*, which in their opinion contained many errors. In the Middle Ages *Sefer ha-Bahir*, *Sefer ha-Zohar*, and occasionally also *Sefer Yetzirah* were generally regarded as the gems of the Kabbalah. This is what Moses Cordovero thought, the man who in the third chapter of his work entitled *Or Neerav*, wrote that he regarded *Sefer ha-Bahir* and *Sefer Yetzirah* as books belonging to Zohar (*Sifrei ha-Zohar*). Also many other kabbalists, such as Menahem Lonzano⁴, considered *Sefer ha-Bahir* to be an integral part of *Sefer ha-Zohar*.

What is certain is that the writings regarded as part of *Sefer ha-Zohar* initially circulated separately and were treated as independent texts. The first one to appear was *Sefer ha-Bahir*, followed in the mid-13th century by *Midrash Neelam*, written in Hebrew and differing in terms of language and style from the rest of the collection. There is every indication that it was written even before Moses of León began to write. Other writings, such as *Raya Mehemna*, probably saw the light of day already after his death, in the early 14th century. Some scholars argue that *Sefer ha-Zohar* should also include later writings, such as *Tikunei ha-Zohar* or *Zohar Hadash*, although they did not appear in the first editions of the book, printed in Cremona and Mantua. *Tikunei ha-Zohar* appeared in print before *Sefer ha-Zohar*, already in 1557 in Mantua, while *Zohar Hadash* was incorporated in the Zohar published in Salonika in 1597.

The publication of the Zohar book, which in reality was a collection of several books, was opposed by most Jewish religious authorities, including the supporters of the Kabbalah, who argued that this was not a text fit for a mass audience. Many rabbis, when they heard about the preparations for printing, even threatened to excommunicate its publishers and readers. One document of this kind has been preserved and was published⁵. In the introduction to the Mantua edition of Zohar from 1558, Isaac Lattes of Pesaro defended the idea of its publication, arguing that the printing of the book would

³ Cf. Marc Saperstein, *Kontekst społeczny i kulturowy XII-XV w.*, [in:] Daniel H. Frank, Oliver Leaman, *Historia filozofii żydowskiej*, Warszawa 2009, p. 318.

⁴ Menahem Lonzano, *Shtei yadot*, Venezia 1618, leaf 122.

⁵ Simcha Assaf, *Le-polmos al hadpasat sifrei kabbalah*, „Sinai” 5, p. 360-368.

divert the readers' attention from philosophical literature, which was very popular in Italy at the time. Most importantly, however, he presented the publication of the Zohar as an important step toward redemption: the printing would facilitate the study of the book, make copies of it less expensive and more accessible, which would consequently bring forward the redemption awaited for so long.

He wrote: „Whoever is for the Lord, come here! And all the Levites rallied to him, as well as all the sons [i.e. adherents] of Simeon, sons of the divine Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai. For I am moved by zeal against those who pretend to be pious, who dress themselves in alien [gentile] dress to prevent [the people from receiving its needed] nourishment, sealing and obstructing the mouths of those who seek the Lord, saying that it is bitterly evil to print the Book of the Zohar and [other] kabbalistic works. Their only motive is hatred and envy. Let us be as little children. Let us go to school and recite our lessons: «Envy among intellectuals increases wisdom». But I have seen the opposite. Their hatred and competition is extinguishing [the fire of] wisdom. If [the rabbis] of blessed memory were correct in saying «Multiplying books increases wisdom», it must also without doubt be true that limiting [the number of books] will cause knowledge to decrease. What is even a greater shame and disgrace, those who rise up against the Lord and His Torah previously agreed that [the printing] was permissible, but now they reverse themselves – claiming to be pious but [in fact] hypocritical, blind, ignorant, foolish, and without any comprehensive understanding [*hashkafa*] of the words of the Sages of blessed memory. They have not mastered the craft of the sainted forefathers, for these blind Jews [*ha-ivrim ha-ivrim*], foolish and with weak ideas, say that since we live in the time of the government's decree of burning the Talmud they had found a valley and erected a fence in it. [...] Some of them have even done worse and stated that studying the Zohar leads to heresy and that therefore [the book] should be hidden away or burned, a process of eliminating the holy. «Hush! So that no one may utter the name of the Lord». Woe! What has happened to us! Now I shall respond: «Whoever shall seek to avenge the shaming of Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai should also seek to avenge the shame of the printers [of this book] from those who insult angels of the Lord. ...»⁶.

When *Tikunei ha-Zohar* appeared in Mantua in 1557, it did not promise the publication of further „Zoharic” writings. This could suggest that there were no plans in Mantua yet about editing, consolidating and printing all the texts as a single work and that the idea only occurred when it became known that a rival edition was being prepared in Cremona.

The collection entitled *Sefer ha-Zohar* was printed in Cremona in 1558 in the publishing house of the Christian printer Vincenzo Conti (Fig. 1). It did not have any rabbinical *haskama*, which was required since 1554 pursuant to the decision of the rabbinical synod meeting in Ferrara, nor any preface. The title page did not contain the year of publication, although it was given at the end of the book, in the colophon preceding the Inquisition's *imprimatur*: Friday *Rosh hodesh* Kislev of the year 5319 from the creation of the world – meaning November 21, 1558. The Latin text of the *imprimatur* of August 5, 1558 was signed by censor Galeaz Guacius.

The work was printed in square type, reserved thus far for prayer books and canonical texts: the Bible and the Talmud, which was regarded as a written version of the Oral Torah. Meanwhile, the kabbalists considered their own tradition, recorded precisely in the Zohar, to be the Oral Torah. The use of square type signified the elevation of *Sefer ha-Zohar* to the rank of a holy book, a medium of the revelation. It should be emphasized that all the other Hebrew books coming from that shop, with the exception of the Pentateuch, were printed in *Rashi* type, which was reserved for rabbinical writings. This

⁶ Translated by Bernard Cooperman, University of Maryland, USA.



1. Sefer ha-Zohar, Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1558.



2. *Sefer ha-Zohar*, Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1559–1560.

proves that, in the case of *Sefer ha-Zohar* the use of square type was a deliberate demonstration. Not all the possible texts were included in the collection: *Tikunei ha-Zohar* was left out, as was *Sefer ha-Bahir*, from which extensive fragments were however quoted; they were presented as *Hidushei Bahir*.

The rabbis also felt offended by the fact that the book, already enjoying cult status among the kabbalists, had the Church's seal of approval but lacked the rabbinical approval, which was already required in Italy. They were not happy with the selection of the published texts either. The publication of some segments that „revealed the secrets of the Torah” were actually labeled as sacrilegious.

Therefore it should come as no surprise that immediately after the publication of the „Christian” edition, as the Cremona version quickly came to be known⁷, in nearby Mantua, at the press of Tommaso Ruffinelli, it was decided to print *Sefer ha-Zohar* in a „corrected” version (Fig. 3). The publishers were Meir ben Ephraim of Padua, Yaakov ben Naphtali ha-Kohen of Gazolo. The basis structure of the text from the Cremona edition was preserved. Only *Midrash Rut*, *Raya Mehemna* and segments of *Sefer ha-Bahir* were omitted, while *Midrash Neelam* appeared in another place. In the Zoharic portion of Exodus several passages are brought in Aramaic whereas in Cremona they appear in Hebrew⁸. Also this edition bore the Church's seal of approval, the decision having been issued by the Mantua cardinal and archbishop and Jewish apostate Jacobus Geraldinus. The latter, appointed commissioner by the Pope, declared that the book did not contain passages that could be offensive to Christians. This approval, however, has not been published. The book was printed in *Rashi* typeface which, according to rabbinical authorities, was more appropriate. One significant difference as compared to the single-volume Cremona edition, published in a large format, was the division of the text into three volumes, printed in the successive years 1558, 1559 and 1560, in a much smaller – and handier – size.

In 1559, the Inquisition ordered the confiscation and destruction of the Talmud and all „heretical” Hebrew books also in the Duchy of Milan, which was ruled by the king of Spain and which had long resisted the anti-Talmudic orders of the Holy See. Special attention was paid to Conti's publishing house in Cremona, a town located in the Duchy. Cardinal Michele Ghislieri, chairman of the Sacrum Officium, accused that shop of printing heretical books as early as in 1557. Admittedly, Conti and his assistant, the convert Vittorio Eliano⁹ firmly rejected the charges, but this did not prevent the confiscation of all the copies of the Talmud and heretical books in the Duchy's territory. The operation was headed by a converted Jew, Dominican priest Sixtus of Siena, appointed by Ghislieri. Members of the commission appointed to vet the books included, among others, Vittorio Eliano and another Jewish convert Joshua dei Cantori as „reviewers of Hebrew books”. The list of books considered as heretical was longer than anywhere else and, in addition to Talmudic writings, also embraced Halachic codices of Alfasi and Yaakov ben Asher (*Arbaa Turim*) allegedly containing offensive statements about Jesus. In the spring of 1559, Spanish soldiers together with Inquisition members

⁷ Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud. A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud*, New York 1992, p. 502.

⁸ Ronit Meroz claims that these passages were originally composed in Hebrew in Palestine or Egypt some time in the 11th century (Ronit Meroz: The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah, *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry*, February 2007, p. 40-41).

⁹ Grandson of Eliyahu Levita, known as Bachur (1468-1549) - a grammarian, teacher of Hebrew, proofreader in Bomberg's publishing house, author of the treatise *Masoret ha-masoret* (1538), the Talmudic lexicon *Tishbi* (1541), the Aramaic dictionary *Meturgeman* (1541), the Yiddish adaptation of the Italian chivalric romance Buova d'Antona known as *Bovo-bukh* (1507).

searched all the homes for Talmud and Talmudic writings. Books not included in the list were returned to owners, especially kabbalist books, the publishing of which Sixtus himself ardently supported. Conti's publishing house was also checked. Among other works, they found two thousand copies of Zohar there, which were left intact¹⁰. This was a yet-unsold part of the significant edition from 1558, reputed to run to 3,000 copies.

The gentle treatment by the Inquisition surely was not a good recommendation for this edition in Jewish communities. Therefore a new edition was released, with a completely different title page. However, there is every indication that a certain deception was perpetrated. Namely, the alignment of the text in both Cremona editions is identical, and so are the page numbers. But it would not be possible to reproduce the original layout so faithfully. So what has likely happened was that only a new title page was printed to replace the original title page, which was removed. Also added was an unnumbered page containing an introduction. In it, there are references to the Mantua edition, the purpose of which was to provide additional confirmation that this Cremona edition was being published after the Mantua one. The copies changed in this manner, preserved from the first edition, went on sale as the second edition, implying that the remaining edition was printed after the Inquisition's edict. On the new title page, in the chronogram which is a quotation from 1 Samuel 12: 22, the alleged year of the start of printing is given as 319 (1559) and that of its completion as 5320 (1560) (Fig. 2), i.e., already after the Inquisition intervention. The title page, like the whole text with the exception of the new introduction, was printed in square type. Only a brief annotation at the bottom, using *Rashi* typeface (which is harder to read) says that the text was printed with the consent of the inquisitor, printed at the end of the book. Indeed, the church imprimatur, which was already printed in the first edition, can be found there.

In the foreword, set in *Rashi* type, in order to emphasize the difference between the status of the commentary and that of the whole book, Vittorio Eliano criticized the Mantua edition, accusing it of using an inappropriate typeface for such a holy work, and also of omitting such important segments as *Midrash Ruth*, *Raya Mehemna* or *Hidushei ha-Bahir*.

However, in the proofreader's introduction to the Mantua edition, one can also detect references to the Cremona edition: „We know that others want to sow destruction and will be overcome with confusion, and will mix up various writings. And that is because they got stuck deep in a bog and they do not know the right way”. There is also an allusion there to the large format of the Cremona edition: „They opened their mouths and extended their tongues because they used pages as big as the Lebanon cedar”¹¹. This was when a battle, waged for several centuries, began, aimed at determining which edition constituted *editio princeps*, i.e., contained canonical text, that would be binding on successive publishers. The Cremona publisher Vittorio Eliano wrote that the Cremona edition was based on six manuscripts, two of which were regarded as the key ones (literally: „they were like eyes to us”), with one of them reportedly coming from Egypt and the other from Palestine. Where discrepancies were encountered, the version that appeared in more manuscripts got printed. If the proofreaders agreed that it was the best one, it was the only one to get printed. If they preferred the „minority” version, it was printed on the margins using „small Spanish typeface” (meaning *Rashi*) next to the text

¹⁰ Franco Bontempi, *Storia delle comunità ebraiche Cremona e nella sua provincia*, Milano 2002, p. 118-120; Heller, *Printing*, p. 232.

¹¹ Isaiah Tishby, who, like other bibliographers, insists that *Sefer ha-Zohar* was first published in Mantua in the years 1558-60, only infers from it that „as early as 1558, plans were known for printing Zohar in Cremona”. Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, Oxford 1989, p. 98.



3. *Sefer ha-Zohar*, Mantua: Meir ben Ephraim, Yaakov ben Naphtali ha-Kohen, 1558–1560.



4. *Sefer ha-Zohar*, Lublin: Zvi Kalonimos Jaffe, 1623.

appearing in most manuscripts. We just do not know if the six manuscripts we mentioned contained all the texts published in the collection, but that does not appear to be very probable. In reality, then, the edition had to rely on a smaller number of manuscripts.

Immanuel ben Gabriel Kuropoli and Abraham ben Meshulam Modena, the publishers of the Mantua edition, maintained that they created their version on the basis of ten various manuscripts. It is impossible to verify that information because, true to the tradition in place at the time, after printing the text they considered to be „canonical”, they probably destroyed the input materials.

We do not know who prepared the Zohar manuscripts for the Cremona edition. It may have been the Christian Oriental scholar and mystic Guillaume Postel (1510-81). It is known that he had encouraged his Jewish friend Moses Basul to print kabbalist works and, according to his own accounts, he succeeded in persuading Basul that *Sefer ha-Zohar* must first appear in print in the original language before a Latin translation of it becomes available¹². Postel completed his first translation of *Sefer ha-Zohar* into Latin as early as 1553 and had the requisite manuscripts. He was also an advocate, translator and interpreter of *Sefer ha-Bahir*. It is he who may have persuaded the Cremona publishers to attach extensive segments of that treatise to their edition of Zohar. However, Postel's involvement in the preparation of the edition could not be indicated in print because by the late 1550s he was already confined to a Rome prison, charged with heresy. The publisher of a work bearing Postel's signature would certainly not obtain the Church imprimatur, which Conti was careful enough to secure.

In a letter to a friend written in 1555, Postel wrote that he is „travelling to the insignificant town of Sabbioneta, in the vicinity of Cremona, to see the Hebrew press there and the apostate [Cornelius ben Baruch ha-Levi] Adelkind”¹⁴. The Jewish publishing house in Sabbioneta was set up in 1551 by Joseph ben Yaakov Shalit of Padua and Yaakov ben Naphtali of Gazolo in the house of Tobias ben Eliezer Foa. In 1553, Tobias Foa became the sole owner of the business, as the previous owners moved to Mantua to Tommaso Ruffinelli's publishing house. From Venice, Foa recruited the renowned printer and publisher Cornelius Adelkind together with his son David. Adelkind previously worked with Bomberg, then with Di Gara, Bragadini, and later, together with his son, he also printed books for Giustiniani. In Sabbioneta, he collaborated with Tobias Foa. In 1553, he published there, among other works, Maimonides's *Moreh Nevukhim* with commentaries¹⁵. This was the last edition of the work before the one that only came 190 years later. Therefore, he looked like the ideal publisher of Zohar, especially in the original version, which Postel wanted to publish first. While in Sabbioneta, Postel met Vincenzo Conti, a Christian who acted as a publisher and printer of Hebrew books. According to Moritz Steinschneider, Conti replaced Adelkind in Sabbioneta in 1555¹⁶. It is not clear what happened to Adelkind.

¹² Indeed, in the introduction to *Sefer Tikunei ha-Zohar* from 1557 Moses Basalo proposed the printing of the full text of Zohar. However, subsequently, possibly due to pressure from other Jewish authorities, he changed his mind and accepted the view that the study of Zohar could lead to a devaluation of the Oral Torah (Talmud) and Halakha; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor; the Editor and the Text. The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century*, Philadelphia 2007, p. 191.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

¹⁴ Quoted after Heller, *Printing*, p. 161.

¹⁵ It is worth noting that Maimonides's text was also printed in square type, with the commentaries printed in *Rashi* typeface.

¹⁶ Moritz Steinschneider, David Kassel, *Jüdische Typographie und jüdischer Buchhandel*, Bamberger und Wahrmann Verlag, Jerusalem, 1938, p. 26.

Postel evidently reached some agreement with Conti. When the latter set up his own Hebrew publishing business in Cremona in 1556, he immediately began to prepare to print Zohar. Postel regarded it as a miracle that it was possible to publish *Sefer ha-Zohar* in Hebrew in Cremona, with the help of Jews who collaborated with Conti. We do not know how much actual influence he had on the shape of that edition. He identified himself very strongly with it and, upon being released from prison he made a second translation of Zohar into Latin based precisely on that edition, which he surely regarded as the canonical one. However, with the stigma of heretic sticking to him, he did not manage to find a publisher for his translation, all the more so as strict censorship was already in place in Italy by then.

Bibliographers are nearly unanimous in their conviction that first came the three-volume Mantua edition from 1558-1560, and the single-volume Cremona edition, whose printing was also completed in 1560, was second. In doing so, they do not go into details that would make this assumption questionable. For example, Isaiah Tishby maintains that the printing of Zohar in Cremona first occurred in the years 1559-1560, which would be consistent with what the title page of the second edition says. However, this is contradicted by an illustration in the English edition of his book. In it, we come across a facsimile of the title page of the first edition, with the caption „Title-page of the Cremona edition of Zohar, 1558. *British Library*”¹⁷. However, it follows from the text that the author had never come across the first edition or seen its title page. Probably that illustration was added by the publishers themselves without consulting the author: apparently the work in the British Library collections is the rarely encountered first Cremona edition, with the substituted title page described by Tishby, which should really be regarded as the second edition.

In 1597, a new version of *Sefer ha-Zohar* appeared in Salonika, which differed rather substantially from the Cremona and Mantua editions. It was published in two volumes by Safed kabbalists Salomon bar Isaac ha-Kohen Ashkenazi and Naphtali ben Joseph. It contained a different selection of Zohar writings than that used in Cremona, including, among other things, *Tikunei ha-Zohar* and *Zohar Hadash*. The text of individual writings was additionally corrected and supplemented based on manuscripts coming from the circles of Safed kabbalists. This edition, too, laid claim to the status of *editio princeps*.

In Europe, the Cremona edition was regarded as the benchmark all the way until the 18th century, and it served as the basis for two further editions of this book: in Lublin in 1623 and in Sulzbach in 1684 (Fig. 5 and 6). In Lublin, this task was accepted by Zvi ben Avraham Kalonimos Yaffe, who ran a printing shop since the early 17th century. He published the text without getting rabbinical *haskamot*¹⁸. The Lublin edition of the Zohar was financed by Joshua ben Israel of Austria, who previously had the second Lublin edition of the Babylonian Talmud published by that shop. In the introduction to that edition of the Zohar, Natan Shapiro wrote: „May this small [edition] be grand”. This was a reference to the common description of the Cremona edition, printed *in folio* in one volume, called *Zohar Gadol* (Grand Zohar), while the Lublin edition used a smaller page size. Significantly, the title page ornaments and the format of that edition clearly borrow

¹⁷ In his *Mishnat ha-Zohar* (Yerushalayim 1940 vol. 1 and 1961 vol. 2), English translation: *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, Oxford 1989, p. 97.

¹⁸ In this regard he was faithful to family tradition. In 1595, when the system of rabbinical approvals was already in force, his grandfather Kalonimos ben Mordekhai Yaffe, in a volume entitled *Levushei Or Yekarot*, which was a part of the great work by Mordekhai ben Avraham Yaffe, printed Menachem Recanati's *Beur al ha-Tora* together with commentary, daringly refusing to insert any rabbinical approval.



5. Sefer ha-Zohar, Sulzbach: Moses ben Uri Shraga Bloch, 1684.

LIBER S O H A R

Sive
Collectanea

De dictis & gestis R. Schimeon Filii Jochai, Doctoris Tannæi, & Mischnaici, & Discipulorum ejus, aliorumque coetaneorum, qui ante & post excidium Hierosolymitanum in Palestina floruerunt.

Secundum ordinem Sectionum Pentateuchi in Commentarii mystici & Cabbalistici formam digesta.

Quibus intermixti sunt Tractatus varii antiquissimi juxta tenorem textuum Legis Mosæicæ variè distributi: una cum quorundam Excerptis, ut sunt.

MIDRASCH RUTH, seu Commentarius mysticus in librum Ruth.
EXCERPTA SEPHER HABBABHIR; seu Libri illustris, à R. Nechonja F. Hakkanæ ante Excidium Urbis conscripti.

TOSIPHTA, seu Additamentum in Sectiones quasdam Legales.

RAJA MEHIMNA, seu Pastor fidelis; i. e. Commentario Mosi oralis mystica in varias Legis suæ historias textusque alios.

CHIBBURAH KADMAAH, seu Opus antiquius, de Apparitionibus Mosi.

HECHALOTH, seu Descriptio Mansionum alterius seculi: Tractatus tres.

SITHRE THORAH, seu Arcana Legis.

MIDRASCH HANNEELAM, seu Commentarius occultus.

RASE De RASIN, seu, mysteria mysteriorum.

SABHA, seu Historia de Senec quodam in Sectione Mischnæ enarrata.

JANNLIKA: seu historia de puello quinque annorum in sectione Debarim.

MIDRASCH CHASITH, seu Commentarius mysticus in Canticum Cantorum.

MAAMAR TA CHASI; seu Dissertatio, cujus initium, Veni, Vide.

MATHNITHIN, seu Traditiones singulares.

PEKUDIN, seu Enarratio Præceptorum.

Excerpta Librorum Adami, Chanoch, Abrahami, Salomonis, R. Hammenia Senioris; R. Jehia Senioris, R. Jefa Senioris, R. Crispadai & R. Akiba, &c.

& in specie

Tractatus de Arcanis R. Schimeonis Jochaidæ tres, qui sunt:

SIPHRA De ZENITHA, seu Liber Mysteriorum.

HADRA RABBA, seu Synodus major.

HADRA SUTA, seu Synodus minor.

In quibus omnibus continetur
Fundamentum totius
Cabbalæ unicum, i. e.
Doctrina

De Deo; De Personis in Divinitate, De Nominibus divinis; De quatuor Mundis, seu rerum omnium systematibus; De anima, ejusque gradibus; De Angelis bonis & malis; De Messia; De Homine, & membrorum ejus mystica significatione; De Paradiso; De Gehenna; De vario Animæ statu post mortem; De peccato; De Virtutibus; De rebus variis antiquorum & similibus.

Opus quod

CORPUS CABBALÆ

cicci potest:

Ab omnibus Literaturæ Hebræicæ Cultoribus summi semper habitum: nunc autem cum Emendationibus Orientalium, Commentario, Parallelismis, Indice Locorum Biblicorum, multisque Dissertationibus antehac omissis, nec non priorum Editionum per singula folia connotatione magna curâ recentè editum; impressumque

SULZBACH,

Typis Moysi Bloch, & operâ Johannis Hoff.

ANNO M DC LXXXIV.

Prostat Norinbergæ, apud Wolfgangum Mauritium Enderum.

from the Mantua edition (Fig. 4). This must have been deliberate action, an accidental imitation of the title card used in Mantua is out of the question. Could this be designed to imply that the text will be a repetition of the Mantua version, despite the fact that it really was based on the Cremona one? Was the idea to lull the internal Jewish censors, the authorities supporting the Mantua version, into complacency?

Zvi Kalonimos Yaffe had to display extraordinary determination in order to publish the book in the „Christian”, meaning the Cremona, version. One concession to the „Talmudists” was to print the book using *Rashi* typeface. This was the time when the great authority on the Talmud, Samuel Eliezer ben Yehuda ha-Levi Edels (1555-1631), served from 1616 to 1625 as the rabbi of Lublin and rector of the local yeshiva. He wrote, among other things, the commentaries included in the second Lublin edition of the Babylonian Talmud, published by Zvi Kalonimos Jaffe. He may have also been the promoter of the Lublin edition of *Sefer ha-Zohar*.

The controversy surrounding the Cremona edition of the Zohar resurfaced in 1665 at the time of the birth of the great Messianic movement. Its leader, Sabbatai Zvi of Smyrna (1626-1676), hardly ever parted with a copy of his beloved Grand Zohar, whose cover was encrusted with precious stones¹⁹. The book became cult reading among his followers, arousing ever bigger misgivings on the part of the Orthodox. Blocking of the printing did not help. The Christian publishing house in Sulzbach printed *Sefer ha-Zohar* again in 1684. In 1664, Christian August, Count Palatine of Sulzbach, a fervent Catholic and kabbalist, set up a printing house specializing in the printing of kabbalistic works. Abraham Lichtenhaler, a Christian printer employed in the shop, published a huge kabbalist anthology ordered by him, a Latin translation, by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, of *Kabbala denudata, seu Doctrina Hebraeorum Transcendentalis et metaphysica atque Theologica*²⁰. In 1684, management of the print shop was taken over by Jewish printer Moses ben Uri Shraga Bloch. This was because the Count Palatine decided, together with his close friends and advisers, Franz Mercurius von Hellmont and Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, to publish *Sefer ha-Zohar*, and later also other kabbalist works, in the original language. They divided the cost of printing among themselves in three equal parts²¹. That edition was meant both for Christians and for Jews, as emphasized by the title page, on which the relevant information was supplied both in Hebrew and in Latin. Also the foreword was written in Latin by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth. The text followed the Mantua edition, but also included those parts of the Cremona edition which were omitted in Mantua. Again the book was printed in square type. In part of the print run, the Hebrew text on the title page is preceded by the Latin version: *Liber Sohar siue Collectanea de dictis et gestis R. Schimeon, Filii Iochai, Doctoris Tannaei, s. Mischnaici, et discipulorum eius aliorumque coaetaneorum...*²². Interestingly, here too, just as in Lublin while reprinting the Cremona edition, the publishers referred to the Mantua version, and even invoked the prestige of its publishers. This edition repeats in its entirety the Halakha decision in favour of printing the book, issued by Isaac Lattes and included in the Mantua edition.

¹⁹ David J. Halperin, *Sabbatai Zevi. Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, Oxford; Portland, Oregon 2007, p. 136.

²⁰ Vol. I 1677, Vol. II 1678; the third volume appeared in Frankfurt am Main in 1684.

²¹ Magnus Weinberg, *Die hebräischen Druckereien in Sulzbach (Ihre Geschichte; ihre Drucke; ihr Personal)*, „Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft” 1903 (1), *passim*.

²² Magnus Weinberg, *Die hebräischen Druckereien in Sulzbach (1669-1851)*, Frankfurt am Main 1904, p. 104.

All that was left for the Orthodox to do was to withdraw their objections to the printing of the book and press for the choice of the Mantua edition, regarded as less dangerous. In 1715 and 1728, the book was printed twice in Amsterdam (Fig. 7). It had the approval of, among others, Amsterdam rabbis Salomon Ayilon and Abraham ben Judah and of Yaakov Kohen of Prague. No mention was made on the title page about the Cremona, Lublin or Sulzbach editions. What was written there was that it was a repetition of the Mantua edition. This demonstrated the consensus of Jewish religious authorities, which guaranteed the status of *editio princeps* to the Mantua edition.

Since then no one has tried to repeat the Cremona edition. The first Cremona edition from 1558 is ignored or totally unknown. Admittedly, bibliographies mention a Cremona edition, but only the second one, from the years 1559-60, which is portrayed as chronologically the second one after the Mantua edition, which confirms in this way the status of the Mantua edition as *editio princeps*²³. It is the latter that is used to this day not only by religious Jews but also by historians, and it is the book from which quotations are made, without even indicating any longer which edition is involved. Sometimes this may cause many problems, e.g., when it is necessary to verify quotations from *Sefer ha-Zohar* published in writings by older kabbalists, including Christian ones, e.g., in the records of public disputes between Frankists and rabbis in Kamieniec Podolski (1757) and Lwów (1759). These are places where – at the request of the Frankists – the Cremona edition was still used, despite the fact that a short time earlier, in 1750 and 1756, the Mantua version was printed twice in Żółkiew.

Similarly, the subsequent Polish editions (Korzec 1778, Szklów 1786-1787, Połonne 1790, Żółkiew 1783-1794, Sławuta 1798-1799) were all limited to the Mantua version. In each of them, it was stated on the title page that they faithfully ("page-by-page") followed the Amsterdam – not the Mantua – edition, as if the latter were unknown in the Polish lands! This makes it look like ostensible „orthodoxy”. Besides, no mention is made whatsoever about the Cremona, Lublin or Sulzbach editions, which were strongly preferred in the Polish kabbalist milieu.

We know that the Żółkiew edition was accompanied by violent controversy, which delayed the printing by ten years. In the early 1730s, there were plans to print *Sefer ha-Zohar* in the Cremona version, specifically in the year 5500 (1740), in which the Messianic revelation prophesied for years was expected²⁴. This is attested to by the letter from Hayyim Alshaiikh from Wrocław, written in 1734 to Salomon Zalman of Lwów who was a member of the Venice Rabbinate at the time. In it, he wrote: „I have received a request from Polish scholars, particularly from the Rabbi of the city of Żółkiew [...] who is a brother of the famous [...] Rabbi Judah of Opatów [...] He sent me one chapter of the Zohar, asking me to send it, in turn, to Padua to Rabbi Moses Hayyim Luzzatto for an explanation [...] their chief purpose being to publish his commentary, as the Zohar is being reprinted in the city of Żółkiew in a deluxe edition”²⁵.

²³ The one exception among historians is Daniel Abrams. In his edition of *Sefer ha-Bahir* he unequivocally accepts the Cremona edition, which contained nearly a half of the text of *Sefer ha-Bahir*, as *editio princeps*. However, he appears to take no interest at all in the problem of the Mantua edition and the battle for the status of *editio princeps*. Daniel Abrams, *The Book Bahir. An Edition Based on the Earliest Manuscripts*, Los Angeles 1994, p. 236.

²⁴ More on the Messianic fever at that time in: Jan Doktor, *Początki chasydyzmu polskiego*, Warszawa 2004, p. 60-118.

²⁵ Quoted after Simon Ginzburg, *The Life and Works of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto*, Philadelphia 1931, p. 59.

In 1735, the rabbis of all of Europe, including Poland²⁶, put an anathema on Luzzatto's writings, which blocked this publishing plan. Finally, it was decided to print *Sefer ha-Zohar* in the Mantua version in Żółkiew. In the kabbalist milieu this was interpreted as a censoring of the original message. The dispute became quite famous as it coincided with religious conflicts with a messianic background that were preoccupying Polish Jewry at the time.

Dov Ber Birkental of Bolechów mentioned in his *Divrei Binah*, a book written about 1800, that in 1752 in Lwów his father had had a guest, an acclaimed heretic and messianist Yehuda Leib Krysa. Dov Ber wrote that Krysa had come to study an Amsterdam edition of the *Zohar*²⁷. The significance of this reference comes from the fact, that two years earlier, the *Zohar* had been published in nearby Żółkiew following the popular Amsterdam editions of 1715 and 1728, based on the Mantua version. What then did Krysa have in mind? He must have striven to study another version of the *Zohar*, different from the easily obtained Żółkiew edition. For some reason, Dov Ber did not want to disclose which edition had been in the possession of his father for Krysa to study (provided it was a printed version, and not a manuscript).

Throughout the 18th century, the controversy over the *Zohar* in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth involved not only competing printed editions of the book, but also the manuscript versions. The handwritten texts were still studied and often differed from the printed ones. Among the rabbis, the manuscripts aroused more acute distrust and even enmity than the Cremona edition.

In the mid-18th century, two mass movements of a mystical or Messianic nature emerged in Poland, i.e., Frankism and Hassidism. They took a firm position in the dispute over *editio princeps*, strongly coming out in favour of the „original” *Sefer ha-Zohar*, meaning the Cremona version. The attitude of Baal Shem Tov (The Besht) to the *Zohar*, as described by the Hassidic hagiography, not only reflects historical facts, but also indicates the importance of this work to the Hassidic community. In the collection of the oldest tales about the life of the Besht and his comrades, *Sefer Shivchei ha-Besht*, written in the 1780s and first printed in 1815 in Kopyś and Ostróg (Yiddish), we come across this description of an incident in Kutu in the 1730s:

”One day, the Besht persuaded the rabbi of the holy community of Kutu to give him *Sefer ha-Zohar*. As he was walking home, he was accosted by his brother-in-law, Rabbi Gershon. And the brother-in-law asked him, «What are you hiding under your coat?» The Besht did not want to tell him. Rabbi Gershon climbed down from his cart, pulled out *Sefer ha-Zohar* from under the Besht's coat, and took it from him, telling him in an agitated voice: – «One could think *Sefer ha-Zohar* is just what you need!»²⁸.

It is hard to imagine that the Besht could be hiding any other copy than one from the Lublin edition, a single volume, in a smaller format than the Cremona book. The three-volume Mantua edition would probably be too large to hide there. Besides, they were not yet available in Poland then, they were only reprinted in Żółkiew in 1750, i.e., some twenty years after the developments described above. Nonetheless, it is already possible to sense an uneasy air surrounding that book. At any rate, care was being taken to ensure it does not get into unauthorized hands and that it only gets to be read by trustworthy kabbalists, or at least that it be studied under their guidance.

²⁶ J. Doktor, *Początki chasydyzmu polskiego*, p. 70-76.

²⁷ Paweł Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude. Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement 1755-1816*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2011, p. 12.

²⁸ J. Doktor (ed.), *Sefer shivchei Habesht*, Kraków - Budapeszt 2011, p. 79.

The Frankist eruption began in December 1755, together with the arrival of an esteemed student of the Zohar, Jakub Frank (1726-1791), in the Republic of Poland²⁹. In the years 1750-1752, Frank studied that book in Smyrna in the famous yeshiva of Issachar of Podhajce, who had to flee Poland when he was accused of messianic heresy in 1725. In 1755, after arriving in Poland, Frank announced a new messianic strategy of public actions, which he termed as „walking real”. He urged his supporters to come out of hiding and openly campaign for their faith based on *Sefer ha-Zohar*, needless to add, in the Cremona version. The Frankists, who called themselves Zoharists or Contra-Talmudists, juxtaposed Zohar to Talmud as the only legitimate interpretation of the Torah³⁰.

A witness to these developments, the Bernardine monk Gaudenty Pikulski wrote the following about it:

”In 1755, when Frank, the guide of contemporary Contra-Talmudists, came from Turkish lands to Podolya and outside to Lwów, Lejbowicz was advising them to publicly prove the mystery of the Holy Trinity from Zohar and to stop hiding it in the synagogues. When they did so, the rabbis, threatening to put an anathema on them, forbade them to read and sell the Zohar (which was just freshly printed in Żółkiew). In addition, they ordered those Contra-Talmudists to return the Zohar to them as a forbidden book, and when they refused to obey the order, they started to put an anathema on them in synagogues and that was the first time they quarreled in the Kamieniec Consistory”³¹.

This excerpt is incomprehensible outside the context of these developments, i.e., the battle between the advocates of the Cremona, or „original”, version, as the Frankists would have it, and the Mantua version of *Sefer ha-Zohar*. The rabbis seized copies of the Cremona edition and put an anathema on those who were using them and refused to destroy them, while, on the other hand, they supported the publishing of the book in Żółkiew in the Mantua version.

The Contra-Talmudists were accusing the publishers from Żółkiew of censoring the book, which was to contain the common truths of Christianity and Judaism. „The Talmudists [...] could have falsified both Zohar and other Kabbalists, the Sabbateans have been complaining about it [...] The excuse given by the Talmudists for erasing those words from the Book of the Zohar, and for banning the reading of it, is that the aforesaid Simeon reputedly inserted this warning at the end of his translation: *Hos arcanum Filii non revelatur...* [...] That secret or mystery will not be revealed to anyone, until the Messiah arrives, because by then (as Isaiah says) the Earth will be filled with Divine learning”³². It remains unknown how many copies were seized and destroyed during the campaign. The stigma of a book that, even if not heretical, was definitely a suspicious one, stuck for good to the Cremona version. The book itself is extremely rare. We know of just two preserved specimens: one is in the library of Bologna University, the other in

²⁹ Cf. on this subject: J. Doktor, *Śladami mesjasza-apostaty, Żydowskie ruchy mesjańskie w XVII i XVIII wieku a problem konwersji*, Wrocław 1998, p. 141-234.

³⁰ In their manifesto adopted for the Kamieniec Dispute, the Frankists wrote that „of all the explanations of the Scriptures, those supplied by Zohar are the best and the only true ones”. Cf. Franciszek Kleyn (ed.), *Coram iudicio recolendae memoriae Nicolai de stemmate Jelitarum a Dembowa Góra Dembowski... Pars III: De decisorii Processus inter infideles Judeos...* Lwów 1758, pages not numbered.

³¹ Gaudenty Pikulski, *Złość żydowska przeciwko Bogu i bliźniemu, prawdzie i sumieniu na objaśnienie talmudystów na dowód ich zaślepienia i religii dalekiej od prawa Boskiego*, Lwów 1760, p. 228.

³² G. Pikulski, *op. cit.*, p. 43-46.



7. *Sefer ha-Zohar*, Amsterdam: Solomon ben Joseph Proops, 1715.



המשכילים יתירו כוהר הרקיע ומצדיקי

ספר הזוהר על התורה

מדתנא האלקי ר' שבעון בן יודאי זיל

עם סתרי תורה ומדרש בעולם ועם קדושי אור ה' מרעיהו מתיבול וחוסמת' על הזה כרשויה וגם המראה מהם כלדומכל כפוקי הניד עם תאו' האר' ז'ל ע' ס דרך הנות ולמטה מרח' מקומות מור' ס קודדכור והמרי בינה עם פרושו הכל על גסון

והנה בעיון נמרץ ובהשגחה פרטית כאער עיניכם תחזנה מוש' ס כפ' אער נרפס

באמשירדם חלק שלישי ספר ויקרא

והנכסני מהלם בחותמות גדולות * ביומי מבודדת * גם נבלימות רהצים לו' ה' סביב כעטרת מופתם מקומות נבבק אסורית * וכו' ליחזרות * להיות ולפס חמת * לכל סבי' ליתת נעדרת וכו' כל יקסס סהים * יאלל חבוקשו ככל בודק חיות *
בכיצות יקראוהו סבי תרי נמרו דלפכה במכורסמים בשמורס אשר הם מעולם הסגי כסס * ה' ה' החתך הגיוחד הרבני המולגג הימים וחרקן זה רגה הכמה כ"ס מחורר **שבעון** ציהו' יהודה לבי **אש כנזי** * והסני בדומה לו ה"ה הרבני המולגג בהורה וציראלם ופתסידו הצור מו' **שלמה** בהעני מוח' הצורס **ברויצק** ינ' ו' יבלס ה' בעלס והס' מעבודתם שלומה חכ' יד

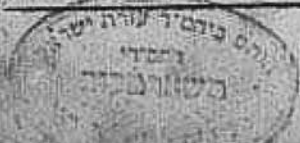
נרפס פה קק קארעין

רדת מו' בלה דקננוני המיווח' הגדול הרבי' הדוכס יוזפטהרטהרובקי כנאלעיה ליטעווכקי כנלרהכטי לאלהי יר' ה' *
ברפוס המפסותסירס ה"ה מו' **צבי הירש** נרדגני מו' הרי' ליה יניו' וחהנו ה"ה מו' **שמואל** נמיה' יסער נער סגל *
כשנת כו' סס חלקת מחוקק ספון **לפק**

הרבים כמוכנים לעולם ועד : גל עיני ואכפפה נפלאות

לחודשים : יושע נפתר עליו כצל שרי יתנו

וואלו וואלו וואלו



8. Sefer ha-Zohar, Korzec 1778.

the British Library in London³³. To some extent, this fact is explained by our suppositions to the effect that the title page was replaced in two thousand copies and sold as the second edition. However, copies of the 1623 Lublin edition are also rare. This makes it extremely difficult for historians and bibliographers to interpret this phenomenon.

The row involving the Frankists led to the imposition of lasting restrictions on the publishing and study of the Kabbalah, including *Sefer ha-Zohar*. The grand rabbinical court at Brody, made up of 14 rabbis, among them the land rabbi of Ruthenia Chaim Rapaport of Lwów, Isaac ha-Levi of Głogów, Yaakov Levi Landau of Tarnopol and Natan Nata of Brody, placed an anathema on the Frankists. It was confirmed on September 18, 1756 by the *Vaad Arba Aratzot* meeting in Konstantynów and expanded to all the kahals. The text of the excommunication was sent out to all the communities, where it was to be read out in synagogues each month. The court banned the study of *Sefer ha-Zohar* by persons of less than 30 years of age, without even distinguishing between the various editions, under the condition they used a printed edition, not a manuscript.

In the wake of this decree, the Zohar was not printed in Poland for the next 22 years. However, the decree's validity expired in 1764, together with the collapse of the institution of the head censor of Polish Jews *Vaad Arba Aratzot*. In 1778, the Zohar was published by the Hassidic publishing house in Korzec, riding the tide of another Messianic campaign. That edition was followed by further ones. *Sefer ha-Zohar* became the basic reading in Hassidism, but that was already the Mantua version. Certainly, it would be worthwhile to check whether later editions of Zohar, the 18th century ones in particular, followed either the Amsterdam or the Mantua edition, as the publishers claimed on title pages. Such research is beyond the scope of the present paper. Nonetheless, in the Hassidic sources there are mentions of ritual reading of fragments of Zohar which are missing in the Mantua edition, e.g. a commentary on Isaiah 53 about a suffering servant of YHVH. In the collection of hagiographic stories about the Seer of Lublin in Yiddish, *Nifloes ha-Choze* we read: „It was a custom that every year on Pesach the Rabbi used to lend an arm to the greatest of his holy disciples, who could recite the Torah, Isaiah Chapter 53:1 accurately and with reverence: *Who hath believed our report?* and the entire fragment of *Zohar* pertaining to that verse”³⁴. The fragment in question must have been the one removed, according to the Frankists, from the printed text of Zohar by the „rabbis”.

It remains an open question whether, at the court of the Seer the passage was read from a printed edition, and if so, which one was it, or from a manuscript which were in much use and esteem at the time.

³³ For example, this was the rationale given in the catalogue of the auction at which a Cremona copy of *Sefer ha-Zohar* was offered: „The rarity of the Cremona edition may be due to the fact that at the time of the burning of the Talmud in Cremona in 1559, the militia sent to execute the order were not able to distinguish one Hebrew book from another, and may have inadvertently thrown into the pyre copies of the newly published Zohar as well; Cremona, Vincenzo Conti 1558 \$10,000-15,000”. This is not to say that this story or the explanation itself are credible.

³⁴ *Nifloes ha-Choze*, Warszawa 1911, p. 7.

Magda Bendowska, Jan Dóktór – *Sefer ha-Zohar – the Battle for Editio Princeps*

Sefer ha-Zohar appeared in print for the first time in Cremona in 1558, in the printing house of Christian printer Vincenzo Conti. It lacked the rabbinical approval or the introduction. The year of publication was not printed on title page, but it did appear at the end of the book, in the colophon preceding the Inquisition's *imprimatur*: Friday *rosh khodesh* kislew of the year 5319 from the creation of the world, i.e., 21 November 1558. The Latin text of *imprimatur* was signed by censor Galeaz Guacius on 5 August 1558.

Immediately after the publication of the „Christian” edition, as the Cremona book was referred to, it was decided to publish a „corrected” edition of *Sefer ha-Zohar* in the nearby Mantua, in the printing house of Tommasso Ruffinelli. The principal composition of the texts from the Cremona edition was retained, but with the omission of *Midrash Ruth*, *Raya mehemna* and some sections of *Sefer ha-bahir*, while *Midrash neelam* was moved to a different location in the book.

A battle then began to determine which edition constituted *editio princeps*, i.e., contained the canonical text, binding for subsequent publishers. In Europe, the Cremona edition was considered the model one until the 18th century and it served as the basis for subsequent editions of the work: the 1623 Lublin edition and the 1684 Sulzbach edition.

In 1715 and in 1728 the book was published twice in Amsterdam. On title page there was no mention of the Cremona, Lublin and Sulzbach editions. It was indicated that this was a repetition of the Mantua edition. This was evidence of the consensus of Jewish religious authorities, guaranteeing the *editio princeps* status to the Mantua edition.

No-one has attempted to repeat the Cremona edition since then, it has been ignored or completely unknown. Some bibliographies do mention a Cremona edition, but only the second one, from the years 1559-60, presented as the second one after the Mantua edition. The Mantua edition retains the status of *editio princeps*, it is used to this day not only by religious Jews but also by historians.

Keywords: Kabbalah, Hebrew old prints, Zohar, editio princeps