

THE MANTUA EDITION OF THE ZOHAR AND ITS IMPACT ON JEWISH IDENTITY¹

The impact of the Mantua edition of the Zohar on Early Modern Jewish society is clearly detectable and has been already dealt with in scholarly research.² Such an influence can be found not only among Italian Jewry of late 16th and 17th century but in the whole diaspora and in Eretz Israel as well. How and why it was decided to print a work previously confined to a restricted circulation will be further discussed during our meeting today and I leave to my colleagues the task of investigating it. It suffices here to say that the decision was eventually taken. There had been serious concerns in some rabbinic circles concerning this disclosure of a secret lore. The well-known *responsum* by Isaac de Lattes, included in the first volume of the Mantua Zohar, tries to address such a criticism.³ One can accept or reject De Lattes' explanations but as soon the three volumes set was completed, and the Cremona edition was finished as well and started to

be distributed, there was no way back. The Zohar was finding its way to the Jewish readership, from northern Africa to Poland, from Antwerp to Safed. Together with the Zohar, some other important kabbalistic texts were printed within the same project as well. In 1557 the *Tiqqune ha-Zohar* had appeared, in 1562 the *Sefer Yetzirah* was also printed, to mention only two of them. However, the Zohar was by far the most influential single kabbalistic work to be diffused in printing and the one that made the difference in influencing future readership.

My aim in this short paper of mine is to discuss an aspect of the whole printing project that has not been analyzed so far. To my mind, such a discussion will enable us to better understand the impact of the Mantua edition on Jewish identity.

Let's start with some considerations on the setting of the Zohar within the frame of 13th century Jewish culture in the Iberian Peninsula.

¹ I am indebted to my colleague and friend Raphael Ebgi, for having generously shared with me his notes on the Alphonsine Renaissance and its influence on the Zohar. Dr. Ebgi is presently working to a larger project on the setting of the Zohar in Medieval romance literature.

² On the cultural significance of the publication of kabbalistic works, and especially of the Zohar see I. TISHBY, *Studies in Kabbalah and Its Branches* [Heb.], vol. 1, The Magnes Press, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 79-130. It is true, as pointed out by Tishby, that no direct relation exists between the burning of the Talmud, ordered by Pope Julius III in 1553 and the decision to print mystical texts. However, there is no doubt that the need to reinforce the "power of endurance" of Judaism, also through texts previously considered secret, was an answer to the material and cultural attack which the Counter-Reformation Church launched against the Jews. On the 16th-century disputation about the printing of kabbalistic works, see S. ASSAF, *Le-Fulmus al Hadpasat Sifre Qabbalah*, in IDEM, *Meqorot u-Mechqarim*, Jerusa-

lem 1946, pp. 238-246; I. SONNE, *Mi-Paulo ha-Revii ad Pius ha-Chamishi*, Jerusalem 1954, pp. 132-136; A. YAARI, *Studies in Hebrew Booklore* [Heb.], Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1958, pp. 216-219; D. TAMAR, *Studies in the History of the Jewish People in Eretz Israel and in Italy* [Heb.], Jerusalem 1986, pp. 164-165; G. BUSI, *Mantova e la Qabbalah: Mantua and the Kabbalah*, Skira, Mantova - Milano 2001.

³ Some responsa in favor of the printing of kabbalistic texts are collected at the beginning of the Mantuan edition of the *Tiqqune ha-Zohar*. They are signed by Mosheh ben Mordekay Basola Tzarfati, living in Pesaro (dated February[!] 21, 1557, fols. [2]^r-[3]^r), Mosheh ben Avraham Provenzali of Mantua (Kislew 2nd, [5]318 [October 25th, 1557], c. [3]^v-[4]^r), Yisrael ben Menachem Rovigo (c. [4]^r), Mosheh ben Yosef Bibi (c. [4]^r). The first volume of the *Sefer ha-Zohar* contains the well-known *responsum* by Yitzhaq Yehoshua ben Immanuel de Lattes, dated Pesaro, Iyyar 1st, [5]218 (April 19th, 1558), defending the printing of the book.

In a short yet seminal article written in Hebrew in 2001, Yehuda Liebes suggested that the *Zohar* is the result of a whole literary movement⁴ that developed in mid 13th-beginning 14th centuries Castile. Such a movement aimed at enhancing a “spiritual Renaissance of the Jewish religion” after a long period of cultural stagnation. In order to substantiate his claim, Liebes offers a parallel with the Italian Renaissance: as Dante and Petrarch inaugurated a cultural innovative period, by distancing themselves from the medieval culture and drawing from classical heritage, so did the authors of the *Zohar*, by drawing from the teachings of the Tannaitic masters and shaping their work as a pseudo-epigraphic text.

This fascinating insight into the most important mystical work of Jewish tradition has been almost completely neglected by recent scholarships, with the exception of an article published in 2005 by Moshe Idel.⁵ There the Kabbalistic literary production of Castilian Jews of the last quarter of the thirteenth century is described as an unprecedented outburst of mystical creativity. Idel as well, in this regard, speaks of a “Renaissance of Kabbalah”, which has at its core the Zoharic text.

As to the causes of this period of great innovation, Idel points to the context of the majority culture in Castile at that time. In particular, he understands Castilian Kabbalah, due to its “particularistic orientation”, as a reaction to the universalistic trends of the Castilian court under Alfonso “the Learned”. To him, “forms of *agon* between different cultures created not only mimetic processes based on appropriation of conceptual structures, but also types of accelerations in a minority culture”. As a consequence, Idel stresses the importance of the fact that the Kabbalistic development in Castile took place

in “a special period of time, which itself was described in Spanish culture as a Renaissance, the Alfonsine Renaissance”. In spite of this interesting notation, Idel does not develop the parallel any further.

I am convinced that:

a) the *Zohar* is not simply a book, or a collection of scattered literary units, but the core of an overall open project shared by a circle of authors (and possibly by generations of authors), which was to lead to the creation of a Jewish mystical corpus. This corpus was envisaged by its authors as a response to the Christian literary and theological corpora available in the Iberian Peninsula during the 13th century. In particular, I see the corpus of texts collected and translated under the patronage of King Alfonso “the Learned” as the most relevant Christian equivalent to the *Zohar*. Alfonso’s project can be seen both as a starting point and as the model with which to compete.⁶

b) that the Zoharic mystical hermeneutics was partly framed within narrative models. The adoption of a literary structure as a tool for expressing a mystical message has to be seen as well against the cultural context of the time.

The project promoted by Alfonso “the Learned”

The wide horizons of this undertaking are well known, as the contributions of Jewish scholars involved in this enterprise. As pointed out by Norman Roth,⁷ for instance, Jewish authors and translators (which mainly translated from Arabic into Castilian) gave a remarkable contribution both to the scientific culture of the time and to the development of the Spanish language.

⁴ Y. LIEBES, *Ha-Zohar ke-Renesans*, in «Daat» 46 (2001), pp. 5-11. The dispute about the authorship of the *Zohar* is along and still unresolved one. For an up-to-date state of the art on the subject, see D. ABRAMS, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism*, The Magnus Press, Jerusalem - Los Angeles 2013; R. MEROZ, *The Archaeology of the Zohar*. Sifra Ditseni’uta as a Sample Text, in «Daat» 82 (2016), pp. IX-LXXXV.

⁵ M. IDEL, *On European Cultural Renaissances and Jewish Mysticism*, in «Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts» 13 (2005), pp. 43-78.

⁶ For a general overview on the Alfonsine Renaissance, see *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century*, edited by R.I. BURNS, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1990.

⁷ N. ROTH, *Jewish Collaborators in Alfonso’s Scientific Work*, *ibidem*, pp. 59-71.

As stressed by Idel,⁸ there is no doubt that this activity “had an impact on the Kabbalists’ activity”. Idel also pointed to the likely impact on Castilian Kabbalah of the magical and Hermetic texts introduced in Europe during the Alfonsine Renaissance.

Recent scholarship has detected more direct influence of the Alfonsine culture in the literary production of authors close to the *Zoharic* circle. For instance, Sara Offenberger⁹ has shown the impact of the *Canticles of Holy Mary*, the Alfonsine “encyclopedia of art forms”,¹⁰ which entailed more than four hundred lyric and narrative poems of praise in honour of the Virgin Mary, on the *Meshal ha-qadmoni*, a rhymed prose narrative written by Isaac Ibn Sahula, a townsman of Moses de Leon, and, as pointed out by Hartley Lachter “possibly even member of group of Kabbalists believed to be responsible for the composition of the *Zohar*”.¹¹

As we shall argue, Ibn Sahula’s work belongs to the Jewish Castilian Renaissance, and plays a crucial role in understanding the intention of the authors of the *Zohar*. The *Meshal ha-qadmoni*, in fact, can be conceived of as an encyclopaedic endeavour in its own, whose ambition was to promote a Jewish Renaissance, after a long period of crisis of the Hebrew language and culture, by substituting the “books of heretics and the sciences of Greeks and the proverbs of Arabic people” with a work written in Hebrew and containing the key to unfold the

esoteric meaning of “the holy words”. A similar attitude can be found in the *Zohar* as well, albeit with a different stress on sefirotic lore.

What has not been fully analysed by scholarship yet, is that the *Meshal* and the *Zohar* are not only influenced by their cultural context, and not only absorbed themes that began to circulate during that time, but are the results of a larger project which was to challenge the contemporary Christian encyclopaedic collections, enhancing a Jewish Renaissance, based on the revelation of the “lost” esoteric, full-fledged meaning of the Torah.

Narrative structure

The *Zohar* was conceived of as a “mystical novel” already by Gershom Scholem.¹² Recent studies developed this idea further, focusing on the literary setting of the *Zoharic* narratives and homilies. Nathan Wolski for instance has pointed out the surprising fact that “not even once throughout its more than a thousand folio pages do we encounter the Companions in a traditional Jewish setting – the house of study or the house of praying”.¹³ They rather talk while walking on the way. “The *Zohar* is certainly the first Jewish work to celebrate the way or the journey as *the* primary locus for mystical knowledge”. This aspect lead Melila Ellner-Eshed to define the *Zohar* as a kind of “mystical epic”.¹⁴

⁸ IDEL, *On European Cultural Renaissances*, cit.

⁹ S. OFFENBERGER, *Isaac Ibn Sahula and King Alfonso X: Possible Connections between the Book Meshal Haqadmoni and the Cántigas de Santa Maria*, in «Arts and Social Sciences Journal» 5 (2014), pp. 1-7.

¹⁰ BURNS, *Emperor of Culture*, cit., p. 7.

¹¹ H. LACHTER, *Spreading Secrets: Kabbalah and Esotericism in Isaac Ibn Sahula’s Meshal ha-Kadmoni*, in «The Jewish Quarterly Review» 100 (2010), pp. 111-138.

¹² G. SCHOLEM, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Schocken Publishing House, New York 1941, p. 157.

¹³ N. WOLSKI, *Mystical Poetics: Narrative, Time and Exegesis in the Zohar*, in «Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History» 28 (2010), pp. 101-128. E. FISHBANE, *Representation and the Boundaries of Realism: Reading the Fantastic in Zoharic Fiction*, in «Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jew-

ish Mystical Texts» 23 (2011), pp. 105-119, defines the investigation of the narrative dimension of *Zoharic* literature as “an exciting new avenue in the development of *Zohar* scholarship” (p. 105). The same author, in his newest book *The Art of Mystical Narrative: A Poetics of the Zohar*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018, which mainly focuses on the “aesthetics of the *Zoharic* creativity”, develops further his intuition by offering a detailed analysis of the “historical and comparative literary context within which the *Zoharic* frame-tale emerged” (p. 336). His aesthetical and critical approach sheds light on several aspects of the *Zoharic* “textual and folkloric ambience”, but leaves aside the specific identitarian and cultural strategies that lie beyond the *Zoharic* undertaking.

¹⁴ M. HELLNER ESHED, *A River Flows from Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2005.

Zohar scholars, in fact, failed to notice that the epic/narrative element is a key and common feature of 13th century encyclopaedism. It plays a great role in the project of Alfonso, and in other great thinkers of the time, as for instance in Ramon Llull, a contemporary of Alfonso, and an author acquainted with Jewish mysticism. As shown by Mary Franklin-Brown, Llull, influenced by his “early apprenticeship in troubadour lyric”, conveyed his cultural and theological program through narrative and visual exegetical tools.¹⁵

More than that, the Zoharic *Lust zu fabulieren* has to be analysed against the background of the rising interest, among the Jewish communities of the thirteenth century, for non-Hebraic secular romances and poems. As shown by Leviant,¹⁶ at that time, both the common folk and the rabbis “fell victim of the charms of non-sacred literature”. As early as the 12th century, we can find learned men such as the Tosafist Samuel ben Meir comparing “the exchanges of the lovers in the *Song of Songs* to the ballads of the troubadours”, or exegetes such as Isaac ben Yehuda Halevi colouring their interpretation of biblical passages with chivalric motifs. This trend found its peak in 1279, when a fragment of the history of King Arthur (with an interesting reference to “the book of the *Kesta del Sangraal*” - ליברו דילא - קשטא דיל סנגראאל) was translated into Hebrew. It is noteworthy that the translator justified his undertaking with the following words: “The reason for my translation was that sinners will learn the paths of repentance and bear in mind their end and will return to the Name”.

So far, the Zohar scholarship has neglected the connection between Zoharic narrative strategies and contemporary literary culture. On the one hand, the Zoharic authors absorbed specific literary elements and strategies from the culture of their time and set them in a new narrative framework, so to give new meaning and relevance to them. Doing this, they created an original kind of mystical literature, capable

of supplying the Jewish audience with a Hebrew form of epic narrative. On the other hand, by conveying their doctrines through this literary tool, they were able to transfer their theories from a profane dimension to a sacred one, providing them a new spiritual and metaphysical significance.

We can now bring more on focus the assumption made by Yehudah Liebes we mentioned at the beginning. The Zohar can be compared to the Italian Renaissance, as far as it conveys a larger project, aimed at stirring Jewish cultural resistance against Christian cultural and theological models. A group of Jewish intellectuals, who were well aware of what was going on in contemporary Christian elite culture in the Iberian Peninsula, shaped a response that was not only “mimetic” but represented also a kind “acceleration” as Idel has put it.

In doing this, the Zohar kabbalists were aiming at an identarian strategy, in the same way Italian Humanistic ideals and, later, Italian Renaissance, represented an identarian answer to the political and cultural supremacy of the “barbarians”.

By defining the Zohar a Renaissance-like phenomenon, we gain a new perspective on the Zohar Mantuan edition as well and we can fully appreciate the work of Mantuan and Cremona editors and typographers as an identarian project.

I will follow here the path first set by Elizabeth Eisenstein in her seminal two volumes work on *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, first published in 1979.¹⁷ I am aware of the scholarly debate the book has aroused and cannot discuss in the present paper the aspects of Eisenstein work I don't agree with. However, I believe that Eisenstein is basically right in defining the Renaissance as a process “initiated in the age of scribes and perpetuated in the ages of printers”. What differentiates the Italian Renaissance of 15th-16th century from previous “Renaissances”, for instance the 12th century one, is the fact that

¹⁵ M. FRANKLIN-BROWN, *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago - London 2012, p. 137.

¹⁶ C. LEVIANT (ed.), *King Arthur: A Hebrew Arthurian Romance of 1279*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse - New York 2003 (originally in

IDEM, *Masterpieces of Hebrew Literature*, New York 1969).

¹⁷ E. EISENSTEIN, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, 2 vols., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979.

the latter were confined to world of the manuscript while the former was perpetuated by the invention of typography. Obviously Italian Renaissance is much more than just printing, but it stands to reason that without printed books the process initiated by Humanists like Petrarca wouldn't had reached its enduring influence on Western civilization.

I think that the Zohar Renaissance can be termed in exactly the same way. It was initiated in 13th century Castile and perpetuated in 16th century Italy through printing. It is such a two-steps development that gives to the project its full-fledged status of a Jewish-Renaissance. Neither the 13th century undertaking nor the 16th century printing, taken separately, wouldn't have achieved such a relevance. To put it in different words, the Mantuan (and the Cremona) Zohar are "old wine in new vessel". But it is only in this combination that we can fully appreciate the taste of a daring mystical utopia.

"Rabbi Meir said: Do not look at the vessel, but rather at what it contains; there may be a new vessel filled with aged wine, or an old vessel in which there is not even new [wine]". (Avot 4,20). Let us ignore Rabbi Meir's advice for a moment and look at the vessel. The printing of the Zohar has changed dramatically the audience of the work. No matter how refined and intelligent the project of the Castilian kabbalists was, being confined to manuscript dissemination greatly hindered its diffusion. As we learn from the preface by Immanuel of Corropoli, in his *haqdamat ha-magiah*, Zohar manuscripts were quite rare in 16th century Italy, and could be obtained from their jealous owners with many efforts only.¹⁸ As we have seen, Liebes has brilliantly stressed the Renaissance-like import of the Zohar. But the fact that such an assessment has first surfaced in a scholarly essay published in 2001, shows that in its original setting, Zoharic lore was only potentially an influent identitarian project. In order to really affect a sizable portion of the Jewish world, it lacked the necessary penetration.

¹⁸ In the preface to the first volume of the Mantuan edition of the *Zohar* (fol. [4]r), the editor – Immanuel ben Gavriel of Corropoli from the Gallichi family – describes his work of textual editing, for which he used, among others, manuscripts owned by Yehudah ben Mosheh Blanis and Elyaqim ben

Mantua kabbalistic school and the Zohar

Mantua itself offers us a good example of this situation. Until the second half of the 16th century, the interest for kabbalistic text was relatively scarce among the Jews living in the city.¹⁹ We know that Yehudah Hayyat had composed here his influential commentary on *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, being requested to do this by Jacob Jabez, who had reached Mantua after being exiled from Spain and later from Portugal. However, at the eve of the printing of the Zohar it didn't exist in Mantua a kabbalistic school. The editors and the printers who produced the Zohar edition came from far away. Immanuel of Corropoli, of the Gallichi family, was born in Central Italy. Corropoli is a town in nowadays Abruzzo; in 16th century it belonged to the Aquaviva family and was ruled by them. Immanuel of Benevento came from the town in Campania, Southern Italy, while Isaac de Lattes was of Provençal origin. Among the people involved in the printing project, only Ya'aqov of Gazzuolo seems to have been linked to the Mantua region, Gazzuolo being located some 20 km away from Mantua itself. Abraham of Modena, the son-in-law of Isaac de Lattes, who acted as editor and proof-reader moved from Bologna to Mantua just to supervise the printing of the kabbalistic works. In his letters to his father-in-law, who resided in Pesaro, he has left us with a vivid description of the material difficulties of his task: Avraham complains about the bad food and the exhausting rhythm of work in a hostile atmosphere where quite a few co-religionists openly criticized the project. During this period Immanuel of Benevento died and Immanuel of Corropoli probably departed from Mantua, leaving Avraham to conclude their work. We know that in 1561, as soon as the printing of the Zohar was finished, he returned to Bologna. The subsequent texts were printed by Ya'aqov of Gazzuolo alone, who himself then left Mantua in 1563 to seek his fortune in Venice. Only

Yeshayah of Macerata, and an "ancient" codex brought from Safed.

¹⁹ I have outlined the development of kabbalistic studies in Mantua during the 16th and 17th centuries in my *Mantova e la qabalah*, cit.

after the printing of the Zohar and is spreading throughout Italy, Mantua became a centre of kabbalistic learning, and played a pivotal role in this domain, as we know, for instance, from the activity of rabbi Moses Zacuto.

Born in Amsterdam, Zacuto had studied in Poland before settling in Verona and then Venice, his residence for more than 25 years. He had greatly contributed to the publishing of many kabbalistic texts by Hebrew printing presses in Venice and had gathered around him a circle of important disciples. When he was appointed Chief Rabbi of Mantua in 1673, Zacuto brought with him his remarkable library, assembled in his Venetian years and containing all of the major Lurianic works as well as a vast collection of magical texts. It was probably in Mantua that he completed a monumental commentary to the Zohar. A great theoretician with respect to devotional tendencies in Jewish mysticism, Zacuto prepared many anthologies of *tiqqunim* (lit. “restorations”), or liturgical manuals, according to the Kabbalah. In Mantua he founded a special congregation known as *Chadashim la-Beqarim*, which gathered some of the leading rabbis and scholars of the city and continued to be active until the Emancipation at the end of the 18th century. From Casale Monferrato and Reggio Emilia, Venice and Alessandria, in Piedmont, the most eminent kabbalists turned to Zacuto for bibliographical advice and study guidelines or to communicate to him their doubts and experiences. Zacuto’s correspondence, seemingly far away from the cultural mainstream in Europe, can also be read as a partial analytic commentary to the later Kabbalah in Italy and shows to what extent Judaism there, at the end of the 17th century, was fully immersed in kabbalistic doctrines, and especially in Zoharic mysticism.

With Zacuto’s arrival, Mantua became the primary mystical centre in Italy, a role which it maintained until the late 18th century. As demonstrated by the large number of manuscripts still preserved in the city, many little kabbalistic circles, where Zacuto’s works were painstakingly copied and annotated, were active throughout this period. In some cases, we even possess note-

books referring to Zacuto’s lessons in Mantua and indicating exact dates with summaries of the subjects discussed and of the objections raised. The scores of manuscripts written in Mantua in these years provided the basis for a rich textual tradition. Repeatedly copied, they travelled as far as Central and Eastern Europe. Some of the first editions of kabbalistic texts printed in remote Poland in the late 18th century were derived from manuscripts of the Mantuan school.

A Jewish Renaissance made true

We all know how the Zohar stresses the secret status of kabbalistic teachings. At the same time, we also know that this very secrecy became popular thanks to the impact of printing. Confronted with such a diffusion of the work, we must ask ourselves if the Zohar promoted its own success. I mean, if it had qualities other works didn’t have. I am convinced that its narrative frame, and its focus on the charismatic personality of Shimon bar Yochai, greatly contributed to its diffusion. Printing has changed the status of the Zohar but in so doing has exploited qualities inherent to the book. As we have seen, from its very conception the Zohar was meant to be the trigger of a Jewish Renaissance. It was shaped by a Renaissance-like circle, and focused on a Renaissance-like narrative, the academy of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai being the symbol of a spiritual renewal with clear Messianic overtones.

The editors of the Mantua Zohar were well aware of the decisive role of printing as a promoter of the inborn messianism of the work. Isaac de Lattes links the spreading of the Zohar to the coming of the Messianic salvation. As the messianic time is approaching – he writes in his responsum – the secrets of the Torah not only can be revealed to a larger readership. To diffuse them amounts to a religious duty, since such an action will foster the coming of the Messiah.²⁰ We must bear in mind that the Zoharic Renaissance isn’t an erudite pastime but has a crucial messianic goal, clearly stressed by its 16th centuries editors. Typographical diffusion fulfils

²⁰ See De Lattes’ *responsum* on the printing of the Zohar in the first volume of the Mantua edition: ועוד יש תשובה אחרת וכוללת גם על שאר הטענות ועל

הראשונות והאחרונות מספקת והיא שספר הזהר נתחבר ונכתב בדורו של רשב"י שהסכימו בו מן השמים כי היה ראוי לכך וגלגלו זכות ע"י ועל ידי תבריו הזכאים כדי שבסוף הימים

the original aims of the Zohar, by spreading the spiritual awakening envisaged by the Castilian 13th century circle. A Messianic awakening is per se a “rescue of the many”. The collective mission fostered by the Zohar needed an appropriate tool in order to be implemented and it found it in mid-16th century Italy. We started our short journey in Castilla and are now back in Mantua.

Almost three centuries later and some 2000 kilometres away, the Zohar Renaissance conceived in Castile is now being accomplished in Mantua.

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SUMMARY

In an important article that appeared in 2001, Yehudah Liebes compared the editing of the Zohar to the atmosphere of the Italian Renaissance. In the present article, this “Renaissance” spirit is linked to the printing of the mystical work, which took place in Italy in the middle of the 16th century. The thesis examined is that the typographic diffusion fulfills the original goals of the Zohar, spreading the spiritual awakening envisioned by the Castilian circle of the 13th century. Just as the Italian Renaissance finds its consecration through printing, in the same way, the mystical Renaissance, promoted by the circle of the Zohar, becomes permanently “established” only when the work is brought to the printing press.

KEYWORDS: Zohar; Kabbalah; Hebrew Typography.

Continuation of the footnote nr. 20:

בדורו של משיח בקרבת הישועה בזכות זה יגאלו ישראל. וכמו שבמצרים היה צריך לזכות ישראל בדם פסח ובדם מילה כדי להוציאם מאותו הגלות והיה די במצות כי לא היה הזמן רק זמן תורה כלומר שהגיע העת לפרסמה כן כדי להוציא ישראל מהגלות הזו צריך שיזכו בידיעת הנסתר כי כל הנביאים לא נבאו לימות המשיח אלא על זה ואל יהיה זה בעיניך פלא וצא וחשוב כי הזמן ענין אלדי לא תושג אמתתו כי אם למי שבראו. וכמו שברא עצמים מתחלפים זה נכבד מזה כן גזרה חכמתו שתגלה יפעת מאורו פעם והתעלם פעם ותהיה האמת מבהקת בעולם השפל כשמש בתקופת תמוז. ולפעמים תהיה האמת נעדרת או תהיה בעלטה ובאפלה אין רואה ולא שיהיה העכוב מצדו חלילה שאין כילות אצל המשפיע אבל מצד המקבלים שאין הדור ראוי והגון לכך. והקש על התורה הקדושה כי הזמן נחלק עליה כמו שאמרו ז"ל שני אלפים תהו שני אלפים תורה שני אלפים ימות המשיח כי הב' אלפים הראשונים לא היו ראויים לתורה ובאותו הזמן היתה התורה גנוזה כבית גניזו חתומה באוצרותיו כמוסה עמו ולא זכו בה רק

יחידי סגולה כאבות והשבטים ואחר נתפרסמה במעמד ששים רבוא בהר סיני. כן סתרי תורה היו עד הנה סתומים לא נודעו כי אם לבני עלייה והנם מעטים לפי שלא בא זמנם להתפרסם ועל כן לא היו נביאים כי אם אחד מעיר ושנים ממשפחה. אבל בשני אלפים של ימות המשיח עם היות שבעונותינו עברו מה שעברו תתפרסם זאת החכמה ותתגלה לכל הלא תראה רש"י ז"ל כפ"י שיר השירים בדוגמא מפסוק ישקני מנשיקות פיהו ז"ל ומובטחים מאתו להופיע עוד עליהם לבאר להם סוד טעמיה ומסתר צפונותיה ומחלים פניו לקיים דברו וזה וישקני מנשיקות פיהו. וכל שכן עתה שקרובה הישועה להגלות. הלא תראה ההתעוררות המופלג כי נגע בלב כל איש ואיש מיושבי הארץ לבקשו בדמים יקרים ולהעתיקו ביגיעה רבה ובהוצאה לא מעט. זה סימן מובהק כי באו ימי פקודה עת הזמיר הגיע דלזמיר אניש כי לזייל באורח סודות התורה לקיים ובלכתך בדרך. וקול התור תורי זהב עם נקודת הכסף נשמע בארצנו כי לפי דברי הזהר זכות למוד ספרו הוא המלאך הגואל.

