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***SEFER HA-OT* – PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS ON A CRITICAL EDITION**

On 50th birthday of prof. Tomasz Sikora

INTRODUCTION

It might not have been a coincidence that Adolph Jellinek's studies dedicated to r. Abraham Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Ot*, the "Book of the Sign" or the "Book of the Letter"¹ initiated the whole chain of subsequent studies on this kabbalist's work nearly one century later. Research on the specific teachings of r. Abulafia (1240-1291?), preliminarily delineated by Gershom Scholem, has developed into a full-fledged field introduced by Moshe Idel. Recently, this has been discussed from different perspectives by Elliot Wolfson, Harvey Hames, Boaz Huss and Robert Sagerman², to mention the main scholars in this field; moreover, a significant milestone has been accomplished by r. Amnon Gross, who published in print all the extant writings, after 700 years of concealment in manuscripts. Within this chain of studies and research, there are two things obvious to anyone delving into the realm of r. Abulafia's thought:

- this very figure, when compared to others, appears as *Aliud Valde*³ of kabbalah in general,
- *Sefer ha-Ot* differentiates radically from the rest of r. Abulafia's writings (those that deal with *chochmat ha-tzeruf* and commentaries on Torah, *Moreh Nevuchim* and *Sefer Yetzirah*), being the only prophetic work that survived⁴.

¹ A. Jellinek, "*Sefer ha-Ot*, Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia vollendet im Jahre 1285" [in:] *Jubelschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag des Prof. Dr. H. Graetz*, Breslau 1887, pp. 66-85.

² In this survey, several of M. Idel's, E. Wolfson's and H. Hames' direct studies on *Sefer ha-Ot* are quoted and obviously we are referring mostly to their analyses.

³ To use Rudolf Otto's term from his *Das Heilige*. Inspiration for such application derives from the preface to the Polish translation of Oskar Goldberg's *Reality of Hebrews* (Cracow 2012, translated to Polish by T. Sikora, p. IX). There, the translator refers similarly to Oskar Goldberg (1885-1952) as to yet another radically outstanding figure in the history of Jewish thought. The translation of *Reality of Hebrews* (being available at present only in German and Polish) to English and Hebrew remains an urgent desideratum.

⁴ See however: Moshe Idel, "A Unique Manuscript of an Untitled Treatise of Abraham Abulafia in Biblioteca Laurentiana Medicea" [in:] *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*,

According to H. Hames, the “Book of the Sign” is a threefold composition, written over some years – the first two treatises are dated for the period after 1276 and the concluding one after 1285⁵, the most plausible year being 1287/8, during r. Abulafia’s brief stay on Comino Island. Generally, the argumentation provided to support these dates holds firm; however, one must stress that the first part of the book cannot be dated prior to 1280, as it explicitly comments on matters related to an unrealized encounter with Pope Nicolas III. Thus, with this slight amendment, we would like to set the dating of the first section of the “Book of the Sign” as not earlier than 1280/1. Regarding consecutive fragments, dates are corroborated by r. Abulafia himself. The second part was written in the month of Kislev 5045, meaning late 1284, and the third part was most likely composed around 1287/88, as stated twice within the text itself as 5048. There are definitely divisions in terms of the text’s form and content that go even deeper than this threefold division. Thus, we can distinguish the following set of contents in *Sefer ha-Ot*:

SECTION ONE

- 1) Opening acrostic, alluding in the first two stanzas to “inner speech”⁶, gematria 52 and *Yahoel* with reference to Moses’ mission as described in Ex. 4:2⁷.
- 2) Presentation of the Names (YHVH, HV, *Ani Vahu*, *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, Name 72⁸, YAHDVNHI) and bipolar dynamics inherent in each of them.
- 3) Testimony of ritual practice of *chochmat ha-tzeruf* with the sequence of the permuted Name 72 and its derivatives by means of sophisticated coding methods.
- 4) Presentation of the author – *Zecharyahu*, the prophet – related via “inner speech” to the angel *Metatron*⁹. Additionally, his mission to save the Jewish people is discussed.

SECTION TWO

- 1) The first stanzas present the date of composition, 5045/1284, and are followed by a discussion on the structure of *Sefer ha-Ot* itself¹⁰.
- 2) Further teachings by *Zecharyahu* followed by an auto-commentary on his mission and peregrinations (here Comino Island is mentioned by name, which means that r. Abulafia retroactively reedited this part in later years).
- 3) Explicit revelation of the forthcoming *ketz ha-yamim*, “end of days”¹¹ and a statement about the true meaning of *Sefer ha-Ot*¹².

vol. 17, eds. D. Abrams, A. Elqayam, Los Angeles, Cherub Press, 2008. Findings discussed in this paper indicate that the question of r. Abulafia’s “lost” tractates is still open until the extant kabbalistic manuscripts are properly catalogued.

⁵ Harvey Hames, “Three in One or One that is Three: On the Dating of Abraham Abulafias *Sefer ha-Ot*” [in:] *Revue des Etudes juives*, 165 (1-2) 2006, p. 181.

⁶ Throughout this paper, we use the term “inner speech” interchangeably with “endophasia.”

⁷ See below.

⁸ Called by r. Abulafia as *VHV*, being the first triplet in the table of 72.

⁹ This figure is hinted in part one only through gematrical modes and paratextual indications.

¹⁰ *Zecharyahu* states here: “Cause in his books he contained one book – and this is the half of the book, alluding to [one] half of the Name and [the second] half of the Name. And now, today it was completed as one, so that within it the Only Name was fulfilled.” See also: H. Hames, “Three in One and One that is Three...” pp. 179–189.

¹¹ See M. Idel, “The Time of the End – Apocalypticism and its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafias Eschatology” [in:] *Apocalyptic Time*, ed. A. Baumgarten, Leiden 2000, pp. 155–187.

¹² “Thus I, *Zecharyahu*, destroyer of buildings and builder of destruction, wrote this short book in the name of small YHVH in order to reveal the secret of YHVH the great.” Note that Ms. Vatican

- 4) Elaboration on the threefold nature of human body (liver, heart, brain).
- 5) Heautoscopic and endophatic experiences.
- 6) Description of battle between blood and ink.

SECTION THREE

- 1) Vision of *Toriel-Yahoel* – a battle commander with his 22 thousand warriors followed by the mirror-like vision of the sign on his forehead, signed with blood and ink.
- 2) Catoptric encounter of *Zecharyahu* and *Toriel-Yahoel* of an explicit heautoscopic and endophatic nature.
- 3) Speech of *Toriel-Yahoel* and revelation on the Torah of his sign, concluded with request to finalize the composition of *Sefer ha-Ot*.
- 4) Vision of three kings fighting each other.
- 5) Elucidation on the meaning of the battles provided by *Yahoel* – here presented as the Grey-Hair Elder¹³ sitting on the throne of judgment.

The “Book of the Sign” contains multiple themes and references to external sources. It has been stated that r. Abulafia’s composition is an apocalypse dealing with external historical events, whilst hinting at an inner, spiritual life and its dynamics¹⁴. Far from disputing these insights, we would like to delve into only some of the topics, by dealing with the minute particulars rather than presenting general conclusions. Let us sketch some initial hypotheses:

- *Sefer ha-Ot* is based on a ritual pattern visible in the earliest core of prayers contained in medieval *siddurim*. Throughout the text there are several hints at different seasons of the Jewish ritual calendar and respective holidays. This is designed in a sophisticated manner so that the themes present parallel ritual pattern, and the whole cycle is encompassed within the book. It commences with the pre-*Pesach* encounter of the prophet with YHVH, based on the analogical, pattern-like event of “the burning bush,”¹⁵ and concludes with the *Pesach* climax: *asarah makot*, “ten blows” of the third king, resembling the “ten plagues” and eventual liberation from *Mitzrayim*, resembling the coming of Messiah. Thus we may assume that the “Book of the Sign” speaks about both the political and individual-spiritual freedom of Jews from Rome-Edom and parallel materiality enslavement, respectively – either speaking about the forthcoming Messiah of the chosen people or hinting at a personal, auto-messianic metamorphosis of the prophet into a fulfilled being of angelic nature. Additionally, as r. Abulafia stated in his *Commentary on Sefer he-Haftarah*¹⁶, the book that he called “Half of the Book” should be read within the fixed ritual

240 differs here from Ms. Vatican 245 – former places “small YHVH” and the latter “small *Adonai*.” Obviously, the first version is more correct.

¹³ *Baal Seiva*.

¹⁴ M. Idel, “Inner Peace through Inner Struggle in Abraham Abulafias Ecstatic Kabbalah” [in:] *The Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, v. 2, 10/11 (2009), ed. Z. Zohar, pp. 62-96. Elliot Wolfson, “Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia and the Prophetic Kabbalah” [in:] *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: new insights and scholarship*, ed. F. Greenspahn, New York 2011, pp. 68-91, esp. 75.

¹⁵ Ex. 3:1-4:2.

¹⁶ *Metzoref ha-Sechel*, ed. r. Amnon Gross, Yerushalaim 2001, p. 107. See also H. Hames, *Like angels on Jacob’s Ladder*, New York 2007, p. 73.

routine each Shabbat, in addition to readings from the prophets. Such wording, *chetzi ha-sefer*, occurs as an auto-reference at the beginning of the second part of *Sefer ha-Ot*¹⁷. Thus we may assume that at least this fragment constituted common strata of *Sefer ha-Ot* and of the lost *Sefer he-Haftarah*. It was intended for ritual use, and most likely r. Abulafia propagated to insert it into *siddur* text. Thus, it is of no surprise that the oldest strata of *siddur* text and gematrical codes in return influenced the content of *Sefer ha-Ot* quite significantly (examples provided below).

- As in other books by r. Abulafia, there are numerous citations and several allusions to figures and notions stemming from the Torah specifically and Tanach in general. However, in *Sefer ha-Ot* these are not just merely placed as regular citations to corroborate a specific exegesis or teachings on *chochmat ha-tzeruf*, but rather they are presented in the form of refined hints that invite the reader to decode them and further lead to a more complex understanding of *Yahoel-Zecharyahu* dynamics.
- Paratextual values¹⁸ found in the manuscripts are designed to lead towards polysemantic gematrical patterns inherent in the text, where the key matrix number is 52. Thus we may propose that what unifies *Sefer ha-Ot* throughout all of its complex strata builds up to a consequent coding chain for a “Yahoel” semantic field that is submerged in the literal text and plotted even more deeply on a gematrical level¹⁹.
- As proven in precursory work over a decade ago²⁰, heautoscopy is one of the main themes within the third part of the book. However, we would like to stress that it is not restricted only to the famous catoptric vision of *Yahoel*, but it permeates through all of the text on manifold, synchronic levels of understanding. As heautoscopy relates to *the visual*, it is also corroborated by *the oral* – the endophasia theme, “the inner speech.” In fact both notions are intertwined and cannot be analyzed separately.

The following paper is divided into two separate segments:

- Part one is dedicated to a textological analysis of the extant manuscripts. It includes a depiction of each data source with elaboration on structure and each

¹⁷ The similar name of the author, *Raziel ben Shlaviel*, as a gematrical analogy to *Avraham ben Shmuel* occurs. See: *Metzaref ha-Sechel*, *op. cit.* p. 107. See also: M. Idel, “A Unique Manuscript...”, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁸ We follow D. Abrams’ insights on textological methodology for Hebrew manuscripts analysis. See his “Kabbalistic Paratext” [in:] *Kabbalah* 26 (2012), pp. 7-24 in particular and the monumental “Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory”, Yerushalaim 2010 in general.

¹⁹ These paratextual values are best visible in the Hebrew edition, as mentioned – ready to be published in a forthcoming edition.

²⁰ Shahar Arzy, Moshe Idel, Theodor Landis, Olaf Blanke, “Speaking with Ones Self – Autoscopic Phenomena in Writings from the Ecstatic Kabbalah” [in:] *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 12, nr 11 (2005), pp. 4-29. Needless to say, it is one of the groundbreaking scholarly texts on kabbalah *par excellence*. See also: Brian L. Lancaster, “On the Relationship Between Cognitive Models and Spiritual Maps” [in:] *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7, nr 11-12 (2000), pp. 231-250. M. Idel discussed also the themes of endophasia and heautoscopy in “The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia”, New York 1988: chapter: *Prophetic speech as Conversation* pp. 86-95 and chapter *The Vision of the Human Form* pp. 95-100. See also G. Scholem “Eine kabbalistische Erklärung der Prophetie als Selbstbegegnung” [in:] *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 74 (1930).

copy's possible path of development and eventually an explanation on the choice of the main sources applied for the synopsis.

- Part two discusses some sketches on the themes from *Sefer ha-Ot*, that – to the best of my knowledge – have not yet been the subject of detailed research or were just initially referenced without delving into minutiae²¹. These will be presented in a very condensed form, however in each case supported by scans of respective folios from one of the manuscripts. A few schemes and illustrations were added where applicable.

Eight exemplary themes were selected:

- *Meaz* or *Mehaz*? How is *Yahoel* hidden in the first verse of *Sefer ha-Ot*
- Different terms for *avodah zarah* – “woof and warp” or “the sun and the moon”?
- *Ani vaHu* or *Ani Vaho*? The secret of *Hallel* on *Sukkot* and the unification of the Name 72 with the Name YHVH
- *Nekem Nekam* and *Gad gedud yegudenu* – the notion of *Meshichi* – *Chamishi*, “Messiah, the Fifth King”
- YAHVDVNI – Heautoscopy, endophasia and gematria patters of unification
- *Badevach* or *Bedvaro*? The beauty of the three-petaled orchid
- *Mareh* or *Marah*? Just a plain vision or a mirror-like revelation?
- Names of the angels – archons or *sarim* of the fighting kings

I. PRESENTATION OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

There are eight extant manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Ot*. In the catalogue of The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel, an additional Ms. Günzburg 133 is also mentioned, with an annotation that it also contains the composition. However, upon closer inspection, it appeared to be otherwise – for the record we added a short note about this below. All in all, this manuscript cannot be taken into consideration regarding “Book of the Sign”²². The manuscripts vary in form, date, condition and – most importantly – the wording of several crucial stanzas. On the other hand, the vocalization is pretty concise and provides clues to several unclear wordings²³. Needless to say, they do not present different versions of the text. Nevertheless upon minute inspection – and keeping in mind that r. Abulafia’s compositions contain extremely precise wording to match both the literal and gematrical meanings – all these differences and variants were noted. Illustrative material is provided from Codex München 409, which has already been published online. Permission was obtained to present several of its parts below, courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek ²⁴.

²¹ Such obvious and previously discussed themes as “blood and ink” have been consciously omitted in this preliminary presentation. E.g. see: M. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, New Haven 2002, pp. 438-448.

²² Compare: H. Hames “Three in One...”, *op. cit.* p. 181.

²³ E.g. word ארגון, assumed to be *irgun*, thus erroneously translated in some publications as “organization” or “order”, with applied vocalization becomes *Aragon* – term that r. Abulafia refers to himself in the opening acrostic, stanza *Tet*: “*Aragon* that defeats *Satan*”. (*En passant*, gematria for *Aragon* = 260, which is not accidental).

²⁴ Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cod. hebr. 409. My gratitude goes to Mrs. Helga Tichy who has agreed for the publication and previously, in 2012, provided me the copy of the microfilmed manuscript. It is accessible through the following link: <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/0007/bsb00075752/images/>. Publication presented in this paper is in

Applied abbreviations

For convenience, the following list of abbreviations is used:

- Ramat Gan - Bar Ilan 583 = **BI583**
- Oxford - Bodleian Library Ms. Reggio 55 = **OX55**
- Moscow - Russian State Library, Ms. Günzburg 732 = **GU732**
- Parma - Biblioteca Palatina Cod. Parm. 3494 = **PA3494**
- München - Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 409 = **MU409**
- Roma - Biblioteca Angelica Ms. Or. 5 = **RO5**
- Vatican - Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 240 = **VA240**
- Vatican - Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 245 = **VA245**

Brief description of the extant manuscripts Ramat Gan – Bar Ilan 583 (BI583)

Before World War II, this manuscript was housed in Vienna and almost certainly was the source for A. Jellinek's edition from 1876 and 1887. Before it came into the possession of Bar Ilan University Library, it was stored in the library of the Vienna Jewish community (Schwartz's Catalogue 258)²⁵. It is dated to the 16th century. It is the source that Jellinek refers to in his introduction: "The manuscript, containing among others this apocalypse [i.e. *Sefer ha-Ot*], is in my possession and I got it from the library of rabbi Ghirondi of Padua²⁶." Our assumption is corroborated by the fact that both the 19th edition and this manuscript have the same formal outline (two columns per half folio, stanza division in the first part, identical comments on the margins, unchanged shape of paratextual elements – diminished and enlarged letters, indicators of *nekudot meal otiot*²⁷, etc.). The text is written in a dynamically changing style, at first vocalized (a break in *nekudot* towards the end of part two, again vocalized most of part three). The characters are similar to Italian square, gradually changing to semi-cursive; nevertheless, it seems to be written by the same scribe. Exceptional notation of the Name YHVH as Y-D-V-D, copied both by A. Jellinek and r. Amnon Gross in his edition. It is comprised of folios 27-44 within one codex, on paper, without specified margins and rulers. Similar to other manuscripts that have the last folio extant, we can see here a marked colophon with an indication of when the composition was finalized – [50]48, i.e. 1288. It is very similar to manuscript RO5 when taking into consideration the content layout. The division of the text and number of folios are the same; however, different parts of the text are vocalized.

accordance with Creative Commons license 3.0: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/de/>. We would also like to take this opportunity and extend our thanks to Mrs. Yael Okun, Director of The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel, for her extensive support in providing copies of all the extant manuscripts. Finally, we feel obliged to Mr. Cesare Pasini and Mrs. Jacinta Coscia of Vatican Library, Mrs. Sabina Magrini and Mrs. Clelia Alessandrini of Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, Mr. David Benayem of Bar Ilan University Library and Mrs. Mirella Fidomanzo of Biblioteca Angelica in Rome for their consent to obtain copies of each source material.

²⁵ A. Z. Schwartz *Die hebräischen Handschriften in Österreich (ausserhalb der Nationalbibliothek in Wien)*, part 1, catalogue 258, Leipzig 1931.

²⁶ A. Jellinek, *op. cit.*, p. 66. Jellinek most likely had in mind r. Mordechai Shmuel ben Bentzion Aryeh Ghirondi (1799-1852), the chief rabbi of Padua.

²⁷ As commonly known, these are to indicate inherent gematria coding.

Oxford – Bodleian Library MS Reggio 55 (OX55)

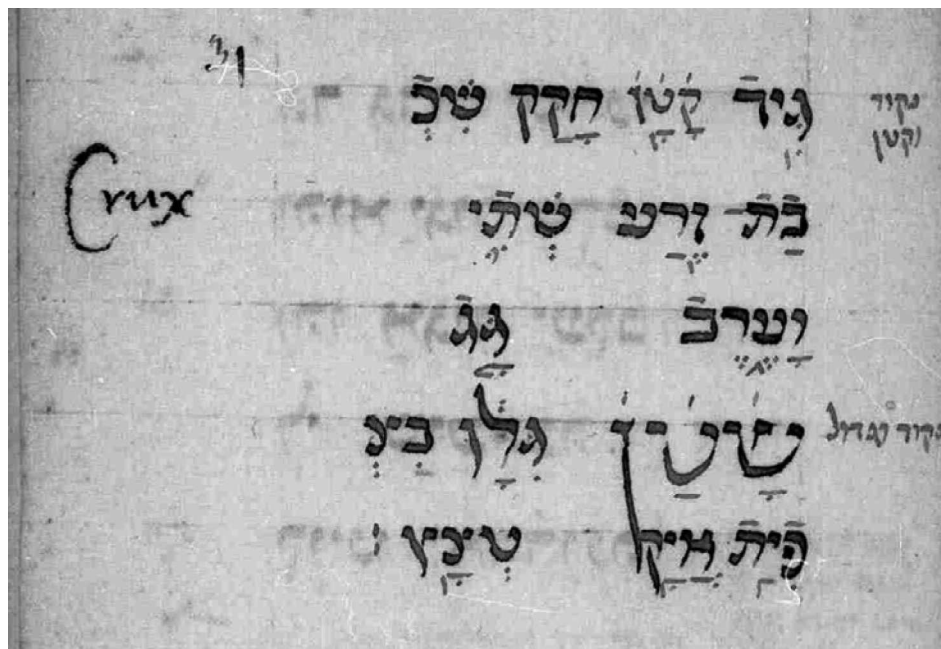
This manuscript²⁸ contains seven different texts – the last one being the “Book of the Sign”, which begins at folio 140. It is entitled *Sefer Zecharyahu*, and only towards the end do we encounter the classical name, *Sefer ha-Ot*. The copy was made by r. Elchanan Yechiel Metosiniano (from Tuscany) ben Moshe. He finished his work in Ferrara during the winter, on Wednesday, 2nd Shvat 5348 (1588), during the reign of Prince Don Alfonso. The Italian character is square, *octavo*, on paper. The beginning is missing, so the text commences from the words: *mi higid merosh...*, “Who from the beginning told the sons of Yisrael that they would be saved by the Name of YHVH.” Thus, if we assume the same pattern of font script and a density of five verses per page, about ten folios are missing. The script is richly decorated, with equalized margins and extended characters which build a perfectly rectangular shape. This is especially visible in the third part of the book, starting from *Machazeh chadash hareni*, “I had new vision...” The text is frequently distorted and corroded. There are comments visible on the margins; however, no typical paratextual indicators appear, like those in the remaining manuscripts. The text is without *nekudot*; it most likely stems from the same source as the later manuscript MU409, similar to PA3494. Ending on folio 209, it contains *chatimah*, *Tam venishlam thilah leEl Bore olam*, which is modified in other manuscripts (like in VA245). This one is quoted in r. A. Gross’ edition.

Moscow – Russian State Library, Ms. Günzburg 732 (GU732)

The complete codex from the 15th century on paper and parchment (112 written folios with total of 114 folios), entitled directly as *Sefer ha-Ot*. The signature on the title page is *Baruch labait Baruch*. It has highly ornamented Italian square script and is fully vocalized. The text is organized in 4-5-6 lines, with defined margins and rulers. Beginning with folio 20, the codex gradually deteriorates due to defective ink. It is hardly legible until folio 25b, and then it is again corrupted within ff. 28b-35a. Folios 15, 26, 37, and on in increments of 9, are written on parchment. Paratextual indicators appear in the same places as in the rest of manuscripts, e.g. words like *Koach*, *Satan*, *He*, etc. The second part of the book commences on folio 57a. It is written by a different scribe; the script is rounder and does not have sophisticated ornamentation. Broad commentary from some reader, though not legible in all parts, appears on the margins of ff. 97a, 98a, and 101a. On folios 108n-113b, there is yet another commentary written in another Italian character, comprised of permutations of letters and the Name YHVH with cypher text. The code is very simple, and one can easily see that it is also presenting permutations of YHVH. All in all, it is valuable proof of the ritual usage of *Sefer ha-Ot* by its reader(s). On the top of f. 107b, which concludes the tractate, one can see the signature (copyist? owner of the manuscript?) *Yehonatan Baruch*, which corresponds to the one placed at the beginning. Parchment f. 114b closes the codex. It contains permutations written down inside the nine-element square corresponding to one of the most ambiguous sentences in the “Book of the Sign,” appearing just after the

²⁸ A. Neubauer, A.E. Cowley, *Catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Bodleian library, and in the College Libraries of Oxford*, vol.2., *Catalogi Codd. MPP. Bibliothecae Bodleianae pars xii*, Oxford, 1886-1906, vol. 1.; ‘Supplement of Addenda and Corrigenda’, Oxford 1994. p. 782. Incorrect info is provided regarding the volume of folios – the codex ends on f. 209.

presentation of the Name 72: “A small tendon²⁹ carved the efflux of seed, woof and warp³⁰, the clothing of *Satan* and their weavings in the appearance of *Eik* (111)³¹ *Tatzat*³² (999)³³.” Here I present the scan of f. 31a from MU409 due to lack of permission to publish the very similar one from GU732:



²⁹ *Gid*. Obviously a pun to the name *Gad*, appearing later in a messianic context.

³⁰ *Sheti vaarev*. Meaning: “idolatry.” Exemplary screen from MU409 taken to show that even the Catholic censorship, by marking the word “crux,” managed to look through r. Abulafia’s intentions as to how one should understand the term “idolatry.” See the below discussion.

³¹ Being gematria of *alef* and *pele*.

³² Asemantic word with gematria 999, i.e. 9×111 . The sentence contains references to the satanic sphere “woven” via the means of idolatry. The connection between Satan and seed is supported by gematria stemming from one of r. Abulafia’s teachers, r. Baruch Togarmi: *zera lawan* = 359 = *Satan*. See: M. Idel, “Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah”, New York, p. 40. These verses also refer to the script’s magical nature, inherent in its graphic form (*tagin* in *ashuri* script appear over letter from *shaatnez getz* group, which is an anagram to *getz oz satan* “spark of Satan’s might”) and digital dimension (*eikbakar* combinatory method), which is supposed to overpower the evil urge within human nature, which is identified with unkosher food (*gid katan*, referring to *gid hanashe*), sexual pressure (*zera*) and the power of *Satan*-Adversary (*yetzer ha-ra*).

³³ Allusion to the *eikbakar* method, where permutations are based on a trinary division of 27 letters (22 basic and 5 end variants), resembling the pattern of triplets in the Name 72 (that directly precedes these verses):

ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א
צ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י
ץ	ף	ץ	ם	ך	ת	ש	ר	ק

The square in GU732 looks as follows³⁴:

גלש 333	בכר 222	איק 111
וסם 666	הנך 555	דמת 444
טצץ 999	חפף 888	זען 777

Moscow – Russian State Library, Ms. Günzburg 133

As mentioned above, this manuscript is erroneously catalogued in The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel as *Sefer ha-Ot*. We are talking about a few highly illegible ff. 87a-91a. It will not be taken further into consideration. I indicate it here just for the record, as it was included into the total of extant manuscripts by H. Hames.

Parma – Biblioteca Palatina Cod. Parm. 3494 (PA3494)

This manuscript contains 113 folios (ff. 110-113 are empty), which are written on paper with dimensions 150 x 112 mm. It originates from 15th-century Provence. It has Sephardic square script, without ornaments. There are five lines per page, with large font. The ink is highly corroded and quite frequently illegible or even missing. At the end there is a list of family names written in Latin cursive, among them Lazaro Vittalli and members of the Cantoni family. The codex was previously a part of S. G. Stern's collection, near 82 (on the title page it appears as no. 107). The text is vocalized at a later stage. The last folio is missing³⁵. The title folio contains annotations in Hebrew and Latin/Italian: *Sefer Haoth, epistola mandata nel 1285 in Ispagna da R. Abraham fil. Samuel Abulafia*, etc.

München – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 409 (MU409)

Codex 409, written partially on parchment and paper, has the following information on the initial page: *Amplissimae reipub. Augustanae bibliothecae dono misit Ratisbona Elias Ebinger Aug. quondam Bibliothecarius MDCXXXVII*: "The utmost gift from Regensburg city council to the library of Augustinians, Elias Ebinger, the librarian, 1637." The "Book of the Sign"³⁶ is scattered in several places of the codex, in some cases in a different order with plenty of empty folios until the end at f. 124. The order and division of content is similar to that of OX55, though without the ornaments and special script of the latter, which might have been the source of the Munich copy, together with VA240/245. A similar pattern of enlarged and diminished letters, *nekudot meal otot* etc.,

³⁴ Values of each window added, in GU732 only Hebrew letters appear. A similar scheme appears in *Imrei Shefer*, Yerushalaim 1999, p. 103 and in *VeZot liYehuda*, Yerushalaim 2001, p. 20.

³⁵ B. Richler, M. Ben-Aryeh, *Hebrew manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma: Catalogue*, Yerushalaim 2000, pp. 305-306.

³⁶ Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München*, 2., größtenteils umgearb. und erw. Aufl., München 1895, p. 231.

followed as in other manuscripts. Folios 2-4 contain fragments from the sequence of permuted names and from part one, referring to respectively correct folios 46 and 15. Subsequently, folio 5 contains yet another title page with a wrong attribution – *Likutim meSefer Razel min r. Shlomo Molcho* – and transcription in Latin – *Likutem misepher Rasul de R. Schloma Malchu*. Furthermore, only folio 9 contains a stanza out of context: *Shem YHVH Tzevaot Hu Maarich kli maarechot*, which is the stanza *Shin* from the opening acrostic. In the proper order, the text begins with folio 11³⁷, meaning page 22 of the codex. From there it is enriched with *nekudot*, accents and commentaries on the margins. A major discriminant is the appearance of Latin censorship comments, which suggests that the copy might have been ordered by Catholic circles. Another plausible option might be the purchase or confiscation from Jews. The censor puts special attention to the fragments related to the prophecies (ff. 14, 20, 41, 65). There one can find annotations, e.g. folio 20a³⁸: *Ketz hasheketz higiya vechorban ovdei sheti vaerev* (in BI583: *ovdei shemesh vayareach*³⁹, here it looks like the censor's emendation), with a comment on the margin of “*contra adoratoris crucis sanctus vaticinatum*”⁴⁰. Finally, folio 46 again repeats the opening stanza with a sequence of permuted names; however, here it is vocalized and annotated with decoding attempts via the *atbash* key (first 2 lines – and indeed, this part comprises of the Name 72 recoded via *atbash*). Steinschneider's indication that this was the source of Jellinek's edition cannot be substantiated⁴¹.

Roma – Biblioteca Angelica Ms. Or. 5 (RO5)

This manuscript⁴² is from the 15th century and consists of 24 folios (1b-24a), though it is missing its ending. At the end of the codex, one can find an interesting comment by a reader who shares his identity “Me, YAPZ⁴³ from Paris, I have studied in detail this book on Thursday *chol hamoed* Sukkot 5649⁴⁴ and copied from it the most important themes⁴⁵.” On the inner title folio there is an annotation in Latin: *Liber Esdrae inscriptus, os domini locutum est, cum alius opusculis Bazelis collectis per Abraham Filium Samuel Abulafia, spectantibus ad Theoriam Cabalistiae, caractere italico*. The text is partially vocalized, and until f. 3b it keeps the two-column division and 4-5 line stanzas, with 9-12 stanzas per page. Following this, it has a simple pattern of two columns, resembling the one kept in BI583. All paratextual values are kept; however, many comments are missing. Part three of *Sefer ha-Ot* is not vocalized with the exception of the names of the archons-angels. Beginning on f. 19b, a totally different script character appears, similar to semi-cursive, whereas the material before is written in square Italian. It seems that the copy was finished by someone else or the original manuscript was destroyed with the part after f. 19b and that the remnant was added later. As previously mentioned, the form of

³⁷ M. Steinschneider mistakenly indicates f. 71, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

³⁸ Discussed and presented below.

³⁹ TB *Nedarim* 39b in explicitly anti-idolatrous context. Discussed and presented below.

⁴⁰ Similarly as in VA245, f. 8 *contra adorantes crucem*.

⁴¹ M. Steinschneider, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

⁴² A. Di Capua, “Catalogo dei codici ebraici della Biblioteca Angelica” [in:] *Cataloghi dei codici orientali di alcune biblioteche d'Italia*, I, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1878, pp. 85-103.

⁴³ Identified as r. Yisrael Isidore ben Moshe Perach Zahav Goldbloom (1863-1925).

⁴⁴ October 1881.

⁴⁵ Comment following the bibliographical note from the ALEPH catalogue of The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel, under manuscript code F11671. I could not find such annotation on the microfilmed copy.

the content is very similar to that of BI583. The division of text and the volume of the folios are identical, too. One of the differences is that YHVH is written without changing the *He* into *Dalet* in RO5.

Vatican – Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 240 (VA240)

This manuscript contains 34 folios (29 filled with text, 4 blank, 1 with a title page and catalogue number). The first page after the title folio contains the notation of the censor in old Italian, beginning with the words: “*Incerto Libro*⁴⁶ – *Liber del segno sui Sefer ha-Ot e narazioni [...] dello Zacharia [...] ad insegnare la pronocia delli 72 nomi*⁴⁷ *di Dio Cabalistici*”. The codex is written on paper and strengthened with internal bifolio on parchment. The dimensions are 204 x 146 mm. One sheet is designed for 17 bifolios. Watermarks are very similar to those on the Ms. Briquet no. 11895, which dates to 1434. Apparently, a copy was made at the beginning of the 15th century in Italy. It is written in semi-cursive and is fully vocalized. This is the only extant manuscript that is complete, without any omissions or faulty, deteriorated pages. There is no division to the stanzas – only continuous sentences in prose like text. Beginning on folio 27, where part three begins (“I had new vision...”), the text is divided into two columns. Interestingly, the first page with an opening acrostic is repeated: folio 5a is without *nekudot*, however, folio 6a has it. According to B. Richler, it was one of the sources for Jellinek’s edition from 1876, however a different form of the text is an argument against such a claim⁴⁸. Together with the second Vatican manuscript, this is the best-preserved copy. It might be an immediate copy of the common source to VA245, as is indirectly shown in the frequent divisions of words, which – whenever are not motivated by r. Abulafia’s intention – are meaningful only in the VA245 layout. In the continuous script of VA240, these are not substantiated enough in many cases. Additionally, there are a few emendations after the copyist’s mistakes, whereas VA245 presents correct text there. Finally, there are some minor differences in spelling, where *kubutz* is used instead of *shuruk* or *cholan* instead of *cholan male*.

Vatican – Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 245 (VA245)

This manuscript contains 131 folios and was written on paper with dimensions 145x107 mm. It dates to the middle of the 15th century, which is indicated by the similar watermarks to Ms. Briquet no. 11708 dated 1457. Thus, it is a bit older than VA240. The script is Sephardic, square. The text of the “Book of the Sign” appears on folios 1-109. The beginning is deteriorated on folios 1a-1d; however, the later part is preserved in good shape. The title page is preceded by a Latin annotation: “*Rabbi Zacharias, De redemptiones Judaeorum.*” The text was vocalized by r. Baruch Levi, who added on folio 109 a short colophon in Italian script: “*chizek Baruch Levi hanakdan.*” Again, B. Richler states that it was used by A. Jellinek, however the odds are against such claim⁴⁹. The ending on folio 109b contains additional *chatimah* – *Tam wenishlam thilah leEl olam* –

⁴⁶ “Uncertain book” refers to the judgmental opinion of the censor rather than his lack of recognition on the authorship and the content.

⁴⁷ Interesting to see that censor speaks about the “72 names” and not “the Name 72”.

⁴⁸ B. Richler, ed. “Hebrew Manuscripts in Vatican”, *Studi e Testi* 438, Citta del Vaticano 2008, p. 179.

⁴⁹ B. Richler, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

similar to the one in MU409. Together with VA240, it is the oldest copy, and both manuscripts should be used as *editio princeps*. In part three, a couple of sentences are missing, apparently half of the folio (f. 105-6), but this is just technical drawback, as all the other manuscripts contain these lost phrases.

Choice of source manuscripts: VA240/245

As previously mentioned, the relatively best preserved and most plausibly the oldest extant manuscripts are those kept in the Vatican. Both are dated to the early to mid-15th century. Later 16th-century copies (OX55, MU409) might have been ordered by Catholic censorship circles. The text contains slight changes, which in some instances polish the harsh words directed against idolatry. On the other hand, the Munich codex stems from the direct chain of tradition from VA240, as is visible in the vocalization, paratextual indicators and choice of variants. GU732, another 15th-century copy, is interesting mainly because it proves the ritual usage of *Sefer ha-Ot* by subsequent reader(s); however, like OX55, its ink is highly deteriorated in many places, making it illegible. Similarly, PA3494 is an early manuscript but is damaged in some places. BI583 is exceptional. Though at times hardly legible, it was used by Jellinek in his edition, which was later copied in the Jerusalem edition. Thus, it was obligatory to consult it in the synopsis, firstly because it contains several unique variants, secondly because it has had direct, unchallenged impact on the research of *Sefer ha-Ot*, even until today. One must mention here RO5, too, as this is almost exactly the same material as the copy from Bar Ilan. The advantage of RO5 over BI583 is visible in a more concise vocalization, kept through all of the first two parts, and a better level of legibility due to a more skilful scribe. One may even assume that BI583 stems from RO5; however, it cannot be stated definitely with the scarce date we are operating with. All in all, the rest of the 6 manuscripts are an important source of information in all legible parts regarding the paratextual indicators, variants of the text and vocalization. Finally, whenever ambiguous sentences are analyzed, they provide the eventual proof between assuming the scribal error and hypothetical spelling based on r. Abulafia's intentional choice (some of these instances are discussed in part two of this paper).

Regarding the relationship of VA240 and VA245, the chronological argument gives precedence to the former. On the other hand, due to the argument of "frequently split words", one should assume that VA245 resembles the author's intention. Most divisions in this manuscript stem from the codex layout, and only some of them could potentially have intrinsic kabbalistic meaning. VA245 is more coherent in that matter, whereas VA240 copies all divisions, as well as those that were the result of the text layout in the source from where it was copied. This only shows that the scribe was aware of r. Abulafia's intention and preferred to keep all divisions rather than distort the author's set of hidden meanings. The question of precedence cannot be determined based on the argument of emendations, as both copies have slight omissions in few different places, which are immediately corrected by scribes on the margins.

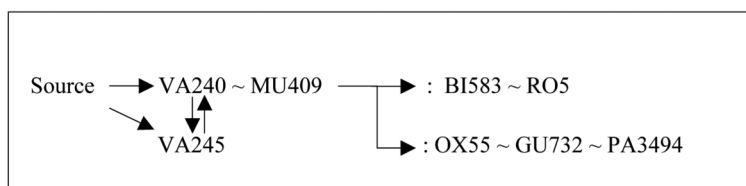
The conclusion regarding the source that would fit best to be used as technical *editio princeps* is as follows: VA240 and VA245 most likely originate from the common source that is not extant. They were independently copied from the 14th-century material – possibly even from the original autograph. Such argumentation is corroborated by the concurrent paratextual matrix visible in both copies, consequently followed in later manuscripts, especially in MU409.

Plausible formal classification and potential path of development

Regarding the division of content and number of folios, the manuscripts can be classified into three groups:

LONG VERSION	SHORT VERSION	IRREGULAR VERSION
(about 120-130 folios, 4-6 lines, square stanzas scheme, in VA245 and MU409 almost identical colophon): VA245, OX55, GU732, PA3494, MU409	(about 20 folios, thick text, rectangular non-stanza scheme, 2 columns on the page, some paratextual themes and comments are missing, differing readings): BI583, RO5	(30 folios, identical reading, vocalization and paratextual themes as in VA245 and MU409): VA240

The plausible path of development is as follows:



It must be stressed that the above model delineating the path of development is tentative and as such is based solely on dating and analyses performed by third parties. However, it is corroborated by textual investigation regarding vocalization, paratextual themes and layout.

Extant editions and translations

1) Hebrew editions:

- Jellinek, Adolf, “*Sefer ha-Ot*, Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia vollendet im Jahre 1285” [in:] *Jubelschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstage des Prof. Dr. H. Graetz*, Breslau, 1887, pp. 66-85⁵⁰
- Gross, Amnon, r. *Sefer ha-Ot*, Yerushalaim 2001⁵¹

⁵⁰ As mentioned, the edition was based on BI583 but without all comments appearing on the margins. Also, some of the paratextual indicators were omitted, and few unjustified amendments were applied.

⁵¹ Apparently, it was based on Jellinek’s publication, but changes were applied in several places. A significant shift in the text occurred towards the end of the edition.

2) English translations⁵²:

- “Revelation and Redemption: Jewish Documents of Deliverance from the Fall of Jerusalem to the Death of Nahmanides”, transl. and ed. by George W. Buchanan, Dillsboro: Western North Carolina Press, 1978, pp. 293-307 (fragments)
- “The Messiah Texts”, transl. by Raphael Patai, Detroit 1988, pp. 178-180 (fragments)
- “The Heart and the Fountain”, transl. and ed. by Joseph Dan, New York 2002, pp. 122-128 (fragment of concluding part)
- “Sefer Ha-Ot”, transl. by Efrat Levy; Belize City: Providence University, 2006 (bilingual edition)⁵³

3) French translation:

- *Le Livre du Signe*, transl. Georges Lahy, Roquevaire 2007

4) Polish translation:

- “Inner speech in r. Abraham Abulafia’s *Sefer ha-Ot*, ‘Book of the Sign’ – critical edition, translation and interpretation”, transl. and ed. by M. Krawczyk (forthcoming, Warsaw 2016)⁵⁴

II. SELECTION OF SKETCHES ON NEW INSIGHTS

1. *Meaz* or *Mehaz*? How is *Yahoel* hidden in the first verse of *Sefer ha-Ot*

“I have separated the speech of YHVH⁵⁵ through sanctification⁵⁶ from then – from the day I got knowledge of His Name until today. Still I will separate myself through sanctification in His Name and through His distinguished sanctity I will revive in truth.”

⁵² This list does not include numerous, fragmentary translations in the research of M. Idel, E. Wolfson, H. Hames, R. Sagerman and others.

⁵³ This edition is of extremely poor quality in terms of translation (like rendering *chashmal* as “charge”) and Hebrew text. Hebrew was OCRred without any review from the Jerusalem 2001 edition and thus the same printing error towards the end of the book was copied. Whereas Jellinek and r. Gross performed a minute check of Hebrew and there were only few typing errors in their works, in the 2006 edition one can find frequent faults like *chet* instead of *tav*, *vav* instead of *zayin*, etc.

⁵⁴ It includes an already prepared and ready to be published, critical edition of the Hebrew text based on synoptic analysis, annotated with some remarks and technical hints mainly connected to Vatican manuscripts, but frequently utilizes the rest of the extant source material, too. Hopefully, it will serve as a point of reference for further studies on *Sefer ha-Ot*. A parallel English annotated translation is also forthcoming.

⁵⁵ *Et pi YHVH* is a fixed Tanachic phrase. See: Num. 14:41; 20:24; 22:18; 22:28; 24:13, Deut. 1:26; 1:43; 9:23, 1 Sam. 12:14; 12:15; 15:24, 1 Kings 1:13. Although literally it means “the mouth of YHVH”, we follow Onkelos’ indication to render it as *memra daHashem* and *gzerat memra daHashem*. On the other hand, the sentence is an obvious allusion to an endophatic, dual-channel speech, and due to the specific usage of the term *pi* instead of the neutral *pe*, there is yet another option for translation, indicating that it is “the mouth of *Zecharyahu*.” Thus all three options are as follows:

- I have separated the speech of YHVH through sanctification
- I have separated the mouth of YHVH through sanctification
- With my lips I have separated YHVH through sanctification



f. 11a

The first stanza strikes immediately with an extraordinary spelling of the term *mehaz*, which is supposed to be read as *meaz* “from now.” H. Hames states⁵⁷: “Given the importance of letter notation for Abulafia, and taking into account the possibility of scribal error, the fact that this same spelling appears in the first two stanzas of the work, would seem to suggest that it is meaningful. Given Abulafia’s preponderance⁵⁸ for playing with letters, it is possible that there is a double entendre here (or perhaps a *qri’* and *ktiv*) – read »then«, but understand »from *heh zayin*« referring to year 5007 (1247) or when permutated »from the year *zeh*« in other words from the twelfth year (*zayin* = 7, *heh* = 5). This could possibly be a reference to his childhood implying that at the age of 12, in 1252, he began studying with his father, or perhaps refer to the visions in late 1270 when he was first awakened to the potential of the divine names, really closer to eleven rather than twelve years after his first awakening in 1260.”

– The whole topic of *pi* and the dual *pipiyot* is not accidental, as it recurs throughout the entire *Sefer ha-Ot*. See also Isa. 59:21 (part of *Uva leTzion* that concludes daily *shachrit* and *Shabbat minchah*), which indicates a reversal of YHWH putting the *davar* into the mouth of the prophet. The theme is discussed further below. I would like to thank to Ewa Gordon for hinting at the aforementioned data from the Tanach.

⁵⁶ We follow the view of T. Sikora, who proposes to translate *kadosh* and its derivatives not *via* theologically biased terms but by applying more precise meanings of “separation and discernment”, which is well supported in the logic provided in Rashi’s commentary on Lev. 19:1-2: *kedoshim tihyu*, “you shall be separated.” However, in order to make the translation more clear and not to exceed revolutionary solutions, we decided to follow somewhat of a compromise of “separate through sanctification” phrase. Methodologically such application is corroborated by: O. Goldberg, *Reality of Hebrews*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89 (in Polish), to propose the best known basis.

⁵⁷ H. Hames, “Three in One...”, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁵⁸ I assume H. Hames meant here “propensity.”

We agree with Hames in that the case under discussion is an obvious instance of *kri* and *ktiv* (the claim of scribal error is unsubstantiated, as all manuscripts follow this intentional writing). However, we disagree on the proposed meanings, as most certainly such spelling is placed here to hint at gematria of 52 (= *Yahoel*, 2 x 26, *Ben*, *Eliyahu* etc.) and – what is more important due to created linkage – to yet another, classic *kri* and *ktiv*, stemming from the Torah, namely *m-z-h*. It is to be read as per the Masoretic note as *ma-ze* “what is it”: **“YHVH spoke to him: what is it in your hand? He said: a staff”**⁵⁹. Following such observation, the most plausible appropriate decoding *via*:

- juxtaposition of parallel Torah and *Sefer ha-Ot* meanings,
- tracing the modelling of *Zecharyahu* on the figure of Moses,

is as follows:

- Moses speaks with the Name 26 (anagrammatic relationship of *Moshe-Hashem*, משה השם). *Zecharyahu* speaks within endophatic mode with *Yahoel* (52 = 2 x 26).
- Moses embarks on his mission to free the people of Yisrael from the *Mitzrayim* and pharaoh. *Zecharyahu* sets off on a similar enterprise to free the Jews from the bondage of *Edom* and the pope.
- Gematria for *mateh*, “staff” = 54 (52+2). In the spirit of r. Abulafia’s methods, one could perform an experimental substitution of this word and insert *beYahoel*⁶⁰ instead: “in/together with/through/with assistance of *Yahoel*” or *beYHVH YHVH*, “in/together with/through/with assistance of YHVH YHVH.” Let us follow this substitution, keeping in mind heautoscopical and endophatic connotations, and translate Ex. 4:2 as follows: **“YHVH (26) spoke to him: *Yahoel* (52) in your might”**⁶¹. **He said: through *Yahoel* (52)”** or **“YHVH (26) spoke to him: YHVH YHVH (52) in your might. He said: through YHVH YHVH (52)”**⁶².

⁵⁹ Ex. 4:2.

⁶⁰ Obviously, one can insert here *Ben*, *Eliyahu*, *Libecha* etc., but this is not the place to build up some elaborated exegesis, rather to follow a plausible mode of revealing the hidden data *via* experiential understanding, as probably intended by the author of *Sefer ha-Ot*. However, other variants are justified similarly. Also, notions of *Yahoel* and “the staff” resembling the shape of the sign on his forehead will be discussed below. This interpretation is also corroborated by other sources. E.g. see chapter 5 in A. Paluch, *Megalleh Amukot – The Enoch-Metatron Tradition in the Kabbalah of Nathan Neta Shapira of Kraków (1585-1633)*, Los Angeles 2014, esp. pp. 179-188 with literature cited therein (mainly M. Idel’s, as duly noted on p. 33 and on), where the relationship of the *Metatron* to Moses’ staff (or rod) is discussed (p. 179 and on, esp. 182 n. 86). R. Natan Nata Spira (or Shapiro) utilizes notions stemming from *chasidei ashkenaz* that are a common source for r. Abulafia’s ideas. However, an explicit connection between gematria 54 (*mateh*) and 2+52 (*beYahoel*) within the context of Ex. 4:2 has not been discussed in this study.

⁶¹ Translation of *beyadeicha*, lit. “in your hand” as “in your might” is corroborated by Rambam’s proposals as presented in *Moreh Nevuchim*.

⁶² Let us keep in mind that in the preceding verse, Ex. 3:14, Moses first encounters *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, the Name that is itself dual in its inherent dynamics. See also A. Paluch, *Megalleh Amukot... op. cit.*, pp. 85-88 where the reference to gematria of 52 in the context of early *chasidei ashkenaz* tradition of *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* is discussed. Again, as this source must have greatly impacted r. Abulafia, it further corroborates the present analysis pertaining specifically to *Sefer ha-Ot*.

- Moses commences his mission, which eventually becomes a prelude to *Pesach*. The departure from *Mitzrayim* is an analogy to the times of the coming of the Messiah. Similarly, r. Abulafia, with a self-perception as a potential Messiah, sets off to meet with the pope before *Rosh haShana* and *Yom Kippur*. Further events and themes described in *Sefer ha-Ot* allude to the ritual annual cycle, referring to *Sukkot* and *Hoshanah Rabbah*, highly messianic holidays, to conclude further in part three with hinting at *Pesach* and the eventual appearance of the Messiah.
- As Moses is given the Torah on Sinai, so, too, *Zecharyahu* receives the call to write the “Book of the Sign,” which he receives *via* inspiration, among other places, in Messina – *mi-Sinai*⁶³.
- The notion of the staff/sceptre is central in *Sefer ha-Ot*, as the sign itself is described as “resembling the staff.” However, the terms used throughout the book are *makel* and *sharbit*, as if to stress even more within the Rambam’s mode of “revelation through concealment”⁶⁴ that *mateh* is implied *via* gematrical level of coding and points to an even more important figure – *Metatron*⁶⁵.
- To recap, the opening verse of *Sefer ha-Ot*, when substituting *Yahoel* for *mehaz*, would be as follows:

“I have separated the speech of YHVH through sanctification of *Yahoel* – from the day I got knowledge of His Name until today.”

The heautosopic notion is thus implicitly stated *via* such coding.

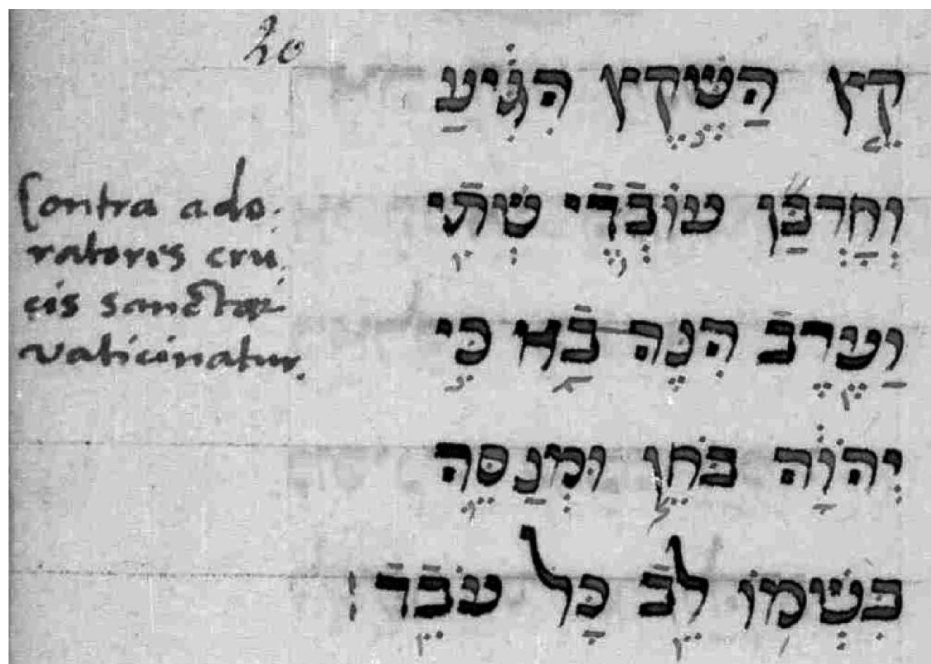
⁶³ Themes pointing directly to an analogy of r. Abulafia-Moses with reference to the very act of prophesying were discussed in: M. Krawczyk “Removing the Veil of Language. Moses’ Prophetic Torah and Abulafia’s Prophesying through Torah” [in:] *Hermaion* 2/2013, pp. 28-38 [in Polish].

⁶⁴ Adopted aptly by r. Abulafia in many places in his theoretical works, e.g. *Sitrei Torah*. See: E. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia – Kabbalist and Prophet – Hermeneutics, Theosophy and Theurgy*, Los Angeles 2000, pp. 23 and 83-86.

⁶⁵ See also: Robert Sagerman, *The Serpent that Kills or the Serpent Gives Life*, Leiden - Boston 2011, pp. 212-216, and esp. 214 where exactly the passage from Ex. 4:3 about “the staff” is discussed by r. Abulafia in his *Sitrei Torah*, p. 33: “And it was said (Ex. 4:3), ‘Put your hand out and seize it by the tail.’ And he put out his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand (בכפר).” [This should be read] “In twenty-six (ו”י בכ”ה),” because with six in his hand (ו”י בכ”ה are, ‘In his hand are six (ו”י בכ”ה).’ [bolded – M. Krawczyk]. Note that “six” is representative of *Metatron*.

2. Different terms for *avodah zarah* – “warp and woof” or “the sun and the moon”?

“End had come for the abomination and destruction for idolatry. Here comes their [fall], as YHVH tests and probes with His Name the heart of each servant”.



f. 20a

Most probably due to non-Jewish censorship, this fragment appears in different manuscripts in several versions. “Idolatry” is rendered from the expression *ovdei shemesh vayerach*⁶⁶, literally “servants of the sun and the moon”⁶⁷, which is of course some sort of euphemism like *akum* = *ovdei kochavim*, “servants of the stars”, and means *avodah zarah*. The version in other manuscripts (e.g. MU409 VA240, VA245) is *ovdei sheti vaerev* “servants of warp and woof”⁶⁸, and in another copy (PA3494) we find yet another variant of *ovdei sheker vaerev*, “servants of false and mixing.” In another (GU732) we find *ovdei averah* [illegible or seemingly erased word], “servants of transgression.” The version from BI583 has been chosen here exceptionally, as it is the most evocative and precise in indication to exact meaning. On the margin of VA245 (repeated in VA240 in paraphrase) there is a comment written by a censor: *contra nos advocantes crucem obloquitur*, “sneeringly calls for revolt against the cross.” In MU409 we see: *contra adoratoris crucis sanctus vaticinatum*.

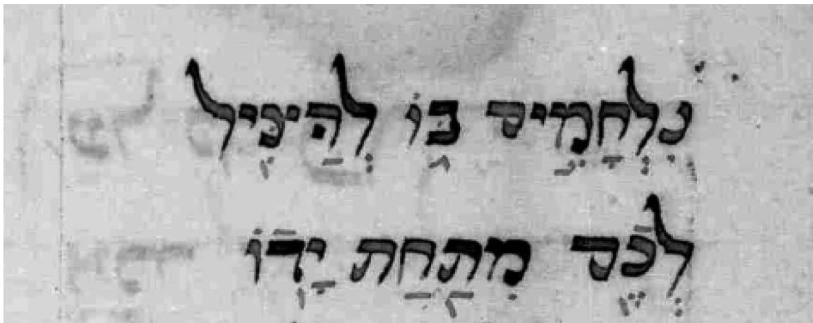
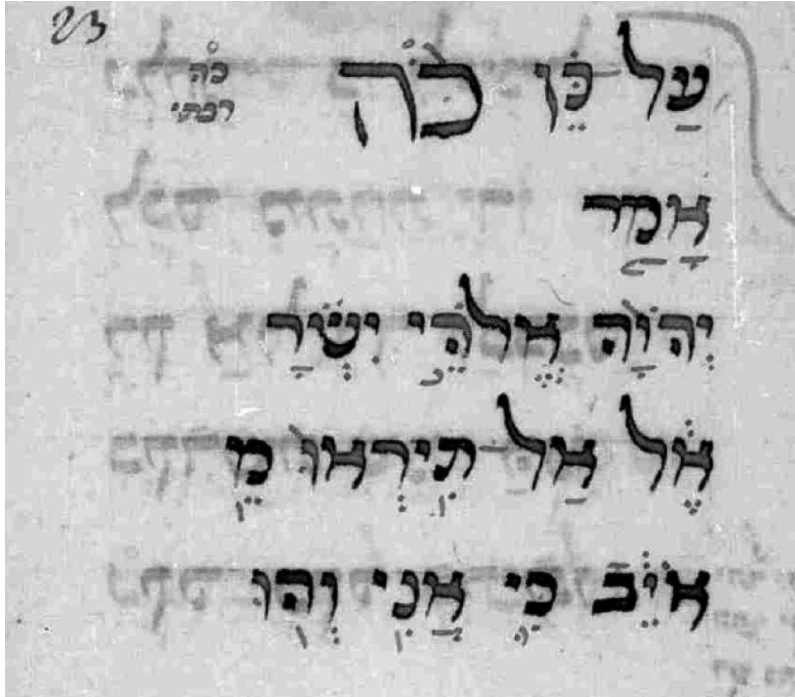
⁶⁶ Appearing in BI583.

⁶⁷ As stated above, stemming from TB *Nedarim* 39b.

⁶⁸ Based on Lev. 13:48. See the whole chapter on this notion in connection to Edom in: R. Sagerman, *The Serpent that Kills...*, pp. 255-356.

3. *Ani vaHu* or *Ani Vaho*? The secret of *Hallel* on *Sukkot* and the unification of the Name 72 with the Name JHVH

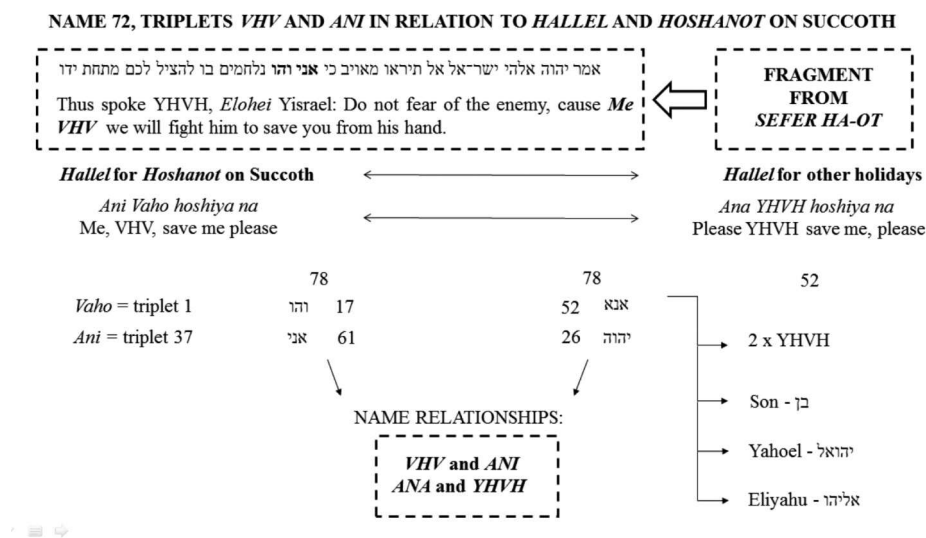
“Thus spoke about this⁶⁹ YHVH, *Elohei* Yisrael: Do not fear of the enemy, cause *Me VHV* we will fight him to save you from his hand.”



f.23a and 23b

⁶⁹ Note the enlarged font in the word *ko* (=25). Following *im ha-kollel* rule, it has gematria of 26. See also *Sefer ha-Yashar* [in:] *Metzoref ha-Sechel*, *op. cit.*, p. 99, where *ko* is also presented in special manner, in a similar, revelatory context. Yet again, corroborated by common strata of *chasidei ashkenaz* as interpreted by r. Spira: A. Paluch, *Megalleh Amukot...* *op. cit.*, p. 182 in the same vein. From our perspective, the evident source in the Torah to connect all these ideas (*ko*, *Metatron*, dual-subjectivity, teleological aspect of YHVH etc.) is the verse Gn. 22:5 from *Akedah*, read during each daily *shachrit*: *Vaani vehanaar nelcha ad ko*, “me and the Young will go towards *ko* [there].”

Only in BI583 can one find an unsubstantiated emendation of the scribe writing in this passage, *אני והוא* “Me and Him.” Jellinek left this version unchallenged⁷⁰, but in the Jerusalem edition it is deliberately changed and the correct version appears⁷¹. However, VA240, VA245 and other manuscripts do not misspell anything. On the contrary, what is encoded here is the unification of YHVH with the Name 72 within the expression *Ani VHV* “Me⁷² VHV.” *Ani* and *Vaho* are the 37th and 1st triplet respectively of the Name 72, which together total in gematria to $61 + 17 = 78$. According to Rashi, the gematrical equivalence of these triplets to the expression *Ana YHVH* ($52 + 26$) enabled a substitution of the latter in the ritual of *Hoshanot* during *Hallel* on *Sukkot*⁷³. Thus, instead of the standard version of *Hallel*, where the version *Ana YHVH hoshiya na* is recited, during the *Hallel* on *Sukkot* one says, “*Ani Vaho hoshiya na*”, “Me-VHV” or *Ani Vaho*, which clearly indicates an endophatic unification of the subject chanting the *Hoshanot* together with the Name 72. Furthermore, this endophasia repeats itself on a higher level. The structure of gematria for *Ana YHVH* ($52 + 26$) shows, that *Ana* is a substitute for *Yahoel* ($=52$) in his unification relationship with YHVH ($=26$). Also, the order of the triplet invoked is not deprived of meaning. *Ani* = 37, which in *mispar katan* refers to *chochmah*, “wisdom”, the second *sefirah*, and *Vaho* = 1 refers to the subject that gains this wisdom. To recapitulate, this idea is presented on the scheme below:



Finally, it is important to note the inherent hint of the unification of *VHV* as the representation of the Name 72 ($=216$) and the Name YHVH ($=26$) and *Yahoel* ($=52$), as

⁷⁰ A. Jellinek, „*Sefer ha-Ot...*”, *op. cit.* p. 68.

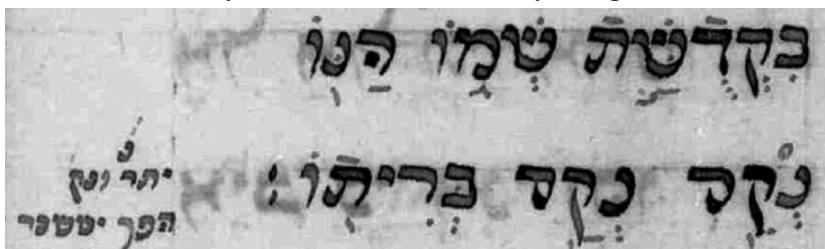
⁷¹ See: *Sefer ha-Ot*, Yerushalaim 2001, p. 4.

⁷² There are two options for the rendition here – either to keep *Ani Vaho* as proper names related to triplets from the Name 72 or to follow translation, assuming that *VHV* is representative of the Name 72 itself, being singular in its plurality (that is why verb that follows in this verse is deliberately set by r. Abulafia in plural).

⁷³ See: *Machzor for Sukot*, Artscroll, New York, 2013 s. 118-119, 364 etc. Also: TB, Mishnah *Sukkah* 4:5.

$216 = 4 \times 52 + 8^{74}$, or to translate it further with reference to already discussed notion of the “staff” = $216 = 4 \times 54$ (*mateh*)⁷⁵.

**4. *Nekem Nekam* and *Gad gedud yegudenu* – the notion of *Meshichi* – *Chamishi*⁷⁶
“In discerned sanctity of His Name he will surely avenge His covenant.”**



f. 23b

In all manuscripts except OX55, a brief and puzzling note of the copyist appears, next to *nekem nekam*: “additional/redundant *nun* in *nekem*, and instead of *nun* one should replace it with *Issachar*.” If we apply such a substitution, the following new meaning emerges: **“Because Issachar will avenge his covenant.”** This is definitely quite a stark interference within the core text, and one should assume that it stems directly from the author’s intentional operation to create a pun here, as Issachar is the fifth son of Jacob and Leah and as such is called *ben chamishi* (Gn. 30:17). This theme is developed into a full-fledged proclamation at the very end of *Sefer ha-Ot*: “Lo! Here is the **fifth** warrior – he is **my Messiah** that will rule after the reign of four kingdoms.” As already exposed by M. Idel, *chamishi* is a permutation of *Meshichi*, “my Messiah”, which, related once again to Issachar as “the fifth son”, should be read as **“Son – My Messiah.”** Leaving aside the connotations to the Judeo-Christian realm of thought, as suggested by the interpretative conclusions of R. Sagerman and H. Hames, it is again commendable to stress that for r. Abulafia, gematria of *ben* = 52 primarily points to *Yahoel*, the lesser YHVH and in this sense the “son-like being” in relation to YHVH *gadol*. Furthermore, *Yahoel-Metatron* is the donor of knowledge within the mirror-vision and the “father-like” subject to the cardinal bond of “inner speech” and heautoscopy with the “son-like being” on a lower level, i.e. *Zecharyahu*, the prophet⁷⁷.

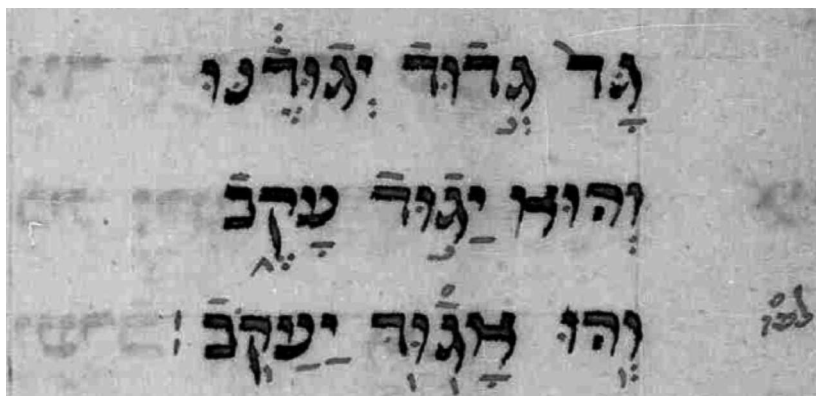
⁷⁴ Being a reduction of 26 to 8.

⁷⁵ Similar unification was performed in the 17th century by r. Natan Spira, again inspired by earlier strata from the 12th century, common to r. Abulafia’s thought. See A. Paluch, *Megalleh Amukot...* pp. 64, 84-88 where a reference to *ana* in *Hallel* is discussed, without, however, mentioning the explicit source of the notion inherent to the ritual of *Sukkot*; and pp. 96-97 where the attempt by r. Spira to unify the multiplication of 52 with 216 is discussed. He explains that the discrepancy of 8 in the equation $4 \times 52 = 208$ and 216 is in fact 4 instances of the two-letter *ben* “son” ($4 \times 2 = 8$) (see p. 96 op. cit. n. 94 and the source cited in n. 95). However, on subsequent p. 97, the incorrect equation of $4 \times 52 \neq 216$ is not commented on further as to include *im ha-kollel* rule, referring not to the four-time appearance of the word *ben*, but to the total of such multiplication by its component letters.

⁷⁶ Obviously, the notion of *Meshichi-Chamishi* has been discussed by M. Idel previously in several places, e.g. “Mongol Invasions and Astrology: Two Sources of Apocalyptic Elements in 13th Century Kabbalah” [in:] *Hispania Judaica Bulletin*, vol.10, Yerushalaim 5774/2014, pp. 145-169. We would like to contribute here with another set of data that to the best of my knowledge has not been yet exposed.

⁷⁷ Also see references to the kabbalistic sources on this theme in: M. Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, New Haven – London 1998, s. 358 and detailed analysis on pp. 85-94. Elaborating further in a similar vein in: *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, New York 2007.

“Gad, a troop shall troop upon him, but he shall troop upon him; *VHV* union of Yaakov”



f. 31b

As previously mentioned⁷⁸, this verse plays on the pun of *gid* “tendon” appearing in the preceding verse and the name Gad. This sentence quotes Gn. 49:19. A reference to Gad’s tribe appears here to allude to the Mongol army – at least on the plain, external level of understanding. G. Lahy provides another interpretation, though seemingly unaware of the citation from Gn. 49:19, in his French edition: “[This verse] is an allusion to *tzeruf* method known as *abgad*. ‘Av’ is the father, in this case ‘Jacob’. R. Abulafia introduces a play with letters *gimmel-dalet* from the name *Gad*: *Gad gedud yegudenu vehu yagud akev – VHV agud Yaakov*.”⁷⁹ It should be noted, though, that it is not r. Abulafia who presents the letter permutation, but rather such homoiophonic recombinations are inherent parts of the Torah. The kabbalist cites them aptly, as he is focused on such operations on language. Furthermore, part of the citation from the Torah – *vehu yagud akev* – is subsequently transformed to *VHV agud Yaakov* and has common gematria = 213. Moreover, it is crucial to observe how the progression of the addition in these sequences appear, as here one can find terms and gematrical values that r. Abulafia has a tendency to bring out repeatedly in *Sefer ha-Ot* and his remaining compositions:

- 1) *vehu yagud akev*: 6+5 = **11** [=HV], 11+6=17 [=VHV], 17+1 = **18** [=Chai]; 18+10=28, 28+3=**31** [=El], 31+6=37 [=Chochmah], 37+4=41; 41+70 = **111** [=Alef], 111+100=211, 201+2=213.
- 2) *VHV agud Yaakov*: 6+5 = **11** [=HV], 11+6=17 [=VHV]; 17+1 = **18** [=Chai], 18+3 = **21** [=Ehyeh], 21+6=27, 27+4=31 [=El]; 31+10=41, 41+70 = **111** [=Alef], 111+100=211, 201+2=213.

To proceed further, *Vehu yagud akev – VHV agud Yaakov* are anagrammatic and semi-mirror-like expression. Here we find a deeper digital coding. Both expressions are comprised of 3 words, which, according to *im ha-kollel* rule, when adding 1 for each word in the set to the total = 213, we arrive at gematria of 216 – the number of letters in the Name 72. Thus, the encoded meaning and rationale for the citation and recombination

⁷⁸ See the presentation of GU732.

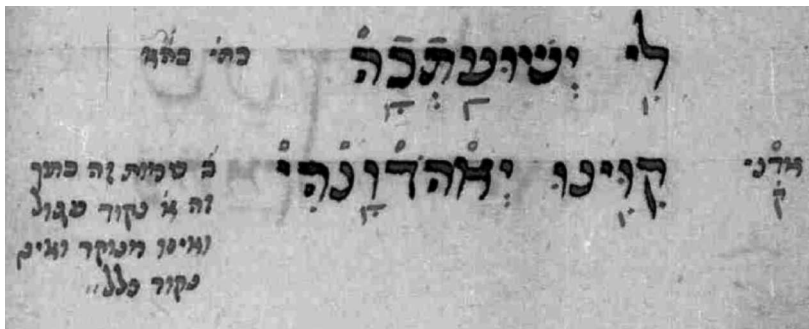
⁷⁹ *Le Livre du Signe*, op. cit., p. 11.

of the Torah verse is as follows: “Within Torah there is hidden teaching on 216 (*vehu yagud akev*), however the mind of the prophet must discern it *via* an act of permutation according to methodology of *chochmat ha-tzeruf* (*VHV agud Yaakov*) – and such ability is within the range of each descendant of Yaakov-Yisrael – *Yesh Rael*.” Lastly, this elaboration on hidden notions is corroborated by an example of simple yet typical to the “secrecy to reveal” mode of arrangements by r. Abulafia. Namely, here we find an allusion to *temurah* repeated throughout *Sefer ha-Ot* relation *meshichi-chamishi*, “my Messiah – the fifth”, as Gn. 49:19 marks exactly the beginning of the fifth *aliyah* on Shabbat reading for *parashat Wayechi*.

Last but not least, one must stress the ritual context of *arba kosot* “four cups of wine” during Pesach *seder* and the redemptive meaning of “the fifth cup” – the one reserved for the Messiah or to Elijah (to repeat, gematria 52), the only one not to be drunk during the *seder*⁸⁰. As each cup represents each era of oppressors - Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome – “the fifth cup” represents the “fifth kingdom of the Messiah”.

5. YAHVDNHI – Heautoscopy, endophasia and gematria patters of unification

“For⁸¹ your salvation we hope, YAHVDNHI”



f. 31b

YAHVDNHI is the unification of the names *Adonai* and YHVH, the former being the *kri* of the latter's *ktiv*. It is present nowadays in almost every Sephardic *siddur* based on *kavvanot* and *yichudim*⁸². Its gematria, 91, being a ratio of 7 x 13 or 3.5 x 26, is identical to *SaEl* “*El* saves”, *Amen* – the signature for each *brachot* and with *rashei teivot* of the key verse of *Ashrei* (Ps. 145:16) relates – not accidentally – to the letters *Peh* (“mouth”), *Alef* (the initial for *Adonai*), *Yud* (initial for YHVH): *Poteach Et Yadeicha*. In order to relate this data to the endophatic theme permeating throughout *Sefer ha-Ot*, one should recall the opening words of the *ouvre*: *et pi* “the mouth.” The association between gematria 91 for the Name YAHVDNHI with *Peh* “mouth” in reference to endophasia is corroborated in a particular fragment from the *Zohar*. Though obviously we cannot assume any direct and mutual influence of the *Zohar* on r. Abulafia's work, it is nevertheless worthy to quote an interesting elaboration (especially in the context of the

⁸⁰ TB *Pesachim* 118a.

⁸¹ Note that *liyeshuatchah* is split. A double *yud* appears and a final *he* is added with the mark of *nekudah meal ot*. Such intentional script also points to the Name *YaH*.

⁸² E.g. *Siddur Avodat ha-Shem*, Yerushalaim 5758.

“warrior-like” visions of *Zecharyahu* and the teachings on “the day of judgment”, “end of days” and the notion of “inner speech”⁸³) on the meaning of this very name:

“The sword of the Holy One Blessed Be He – the sword of judgment in the spiritual realms – is hinted at in the very name YHVH. The *Yud* represents the handle of the sword and also the *sefirot* of *Keter* and *Malchut*. The *Vav* is the body of the sword, the six directions of the world, *Tiferet*, combining judgment with mercy. The two letters *He* symbolize the **two sharp cutting edges (*pipiyot*)**⁸⁴, **of the sword, two mouths (*peh* and *peh*)** – **the higher mouth, *Malchut*, and the mouth of the judge in this world**⁸⁵. It is written regarding these two mouths: »Pursue justice, true justice, in order that you may live, and inherit the land which the Lord your G-d gives you«⁸⁶. The repetition of the word »justice« in the text refers to the two decisions involved in justice: the decision of the court in the spiritual realms and the concurrent decision of the court in the physical realm. From this we see that there is judgment involved in everything, no matter how small the matter, as we have learnt »No-one bruises their finger in this world unless it was so decreed against him in heaven«⁸⁷. The sheath of the sword of justice is the name *Adonai*, representing *Malchut*, when combined with the merciful holy name YHVH. The unity of these is the meditative state of union with the infinite symbolized by the names when spelled together: YAHVDNHI.”⁸⁸

E. Wolfson aptly highlights the relationship of the Name discussed in the *Zohar* with the contemplative teachings of r. Abulafia, where the emphasis on auditory and verbal experiences relates his actions directly to the realm of the Names and their recombinations⁸⁹. Referring to the Name⁹⁰:

“When the lower splendor, *Adonai* [i.e. the tenth gradation or *Shechinah*] joins with the supernal splendor, YHVH [i.e., the sixth gradation or *Tiferet*] the hidden name [i.e. YAHVDNHI, the combination of the two names⁹¹] is produced, which the true prophets know and [by means of which] they [visually] contemplate the supernal splendor”.

Additionally, the linkage of YHVH to the sixth *sefirah* points to *Metatron* and the letter *Vav* that represents him⁹², while also being an initial of the Name 72⁹³. For the time

⁸³ If we prefer a rather internal, spiritual reading of *Zecharyahu*’s visions over historically related senses.

⁸⁴ See the analogical context of *pipiyot* in Ps. 149:6 that is read daily and on Shabbat *shachrit* in *pesukei dezimra* section.

⁸⁵ Highlighted in the context of endophasia.

⁸⁶ Deut. 16:20.

⁸⁷ TB *Chulin* 7b.

⁸⁸ *Zohar*, *Shoftim* 274b. Based on transl. by r. Simcha Shmuel Treister http://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380122/jewish/The-Sword-of-Judgment.htm [access 1 XII 2011].

⁸⁹ However, we also find in r. Abulafia’s work descriptions of teachings on the visualization of the letters of the Name and their anthropomorphic representations, e.g. the well-known vision of 22 thousand letters/warriors accompanying *Yahoel*.

⁹⁰ *Zohar* 1:110b.

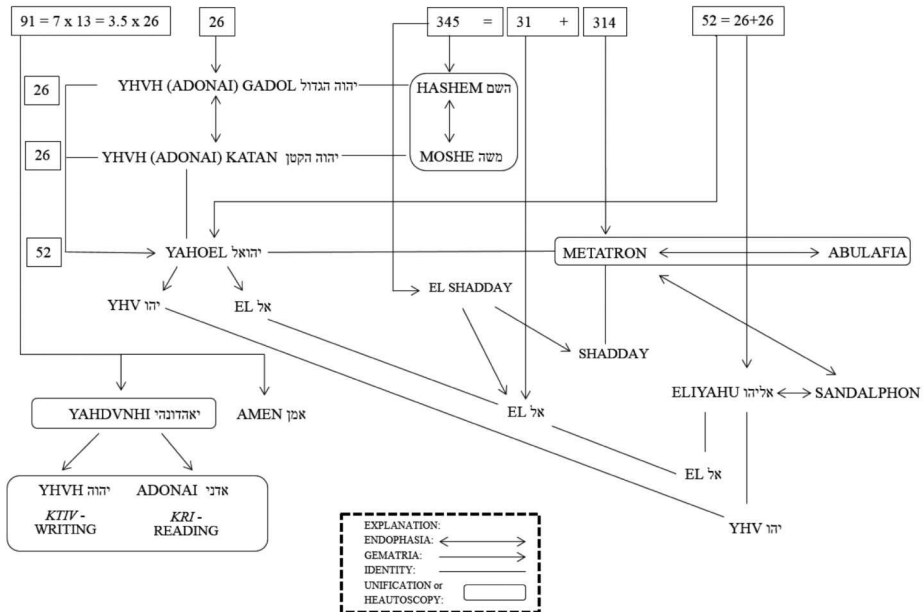
⁹¹ See Mark Verman, “The Development of Yihudim in Spanish Kabbalah” [in:] *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism: The Age of the Zohar*, Jerusalem 1989, pp. 25-41, where one can find further analysis of the discussed *yihud* appearing in r. Gikatilla’s *Ginnat Egoz* and corpus of *Tikkunei Zohar*. Further gematria 91 examples, like *sukkah* and *malaakh*, are presented there in connection to *Metatron*.

⁹² Note the aforementioned description of the sign on the forehead of *Yahoel*, resembling “the staff” or “scepter” and “separating between blood and ink.”

⁹³ More on the sources of these relations in: E. Wolfson, *Along the path*, New York 1995, p. 150. Regarding the linkage of the dual-element symbol of *Magen David* and the Name 72 together with *Metatron*, see: Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, p. 366. On the connection of

being, due to limited space for this discussion, the following scheme marks the even more complex relations based on the fundamental gematria of 26, its multiplication to 91, connections described within *Sefer ha-Ot* and its broad background:

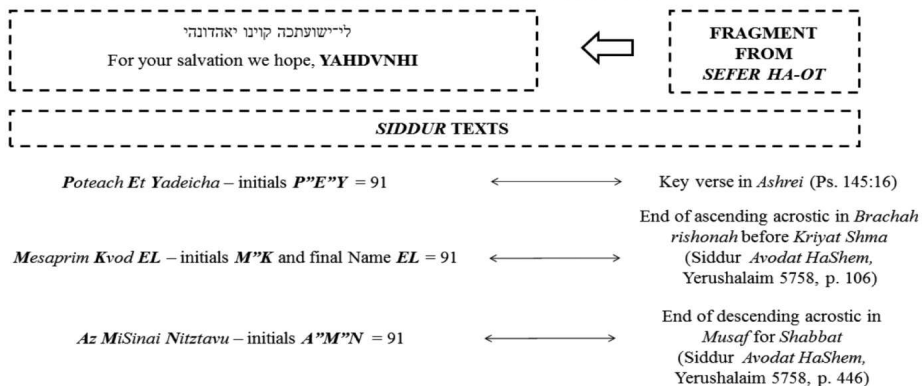
STRUCTURES FOR HEAUTOSCOPY, GEMATRIA AND ENDOPHASIA



Exemplary occurrences of gematria 91 in *siddur* old strata material are outlined below:

GEMATRIA 91

WITH EXAMPLES OF ITS CODING WITHIN OLD STRATA MATERIAL FROM *SIDDUR*



Magen David and YHVH with reference to gematria for *barach* 222 and a discussion of the endophatic fluctuation of subjects in human-Name relationship, see: M. Krawczyk "Some remarks on the *bracha* - blessing - or the rule of 222" [in:] *Ex nihilo* 2(6), Cracow 2011, pp. 47-56 [in Polish].

Finally, just to hint at a further direction of research (to be discussed elsewhere), quite obvious, yet indirect, allusions to the endophatic relationship of the “double mouth” and “two direction flow of speech” (as described in beginning of the third part of *Sefer ha-Ot* in the vision of *Yahoel*, where the same “loss of control” occurs when *Yahoel* overwhelms *Zecharyahu*⁹⁴) appear within the ritual activity of the commonly known introduction to the essentially silent (!) *Amidah*:

אדני שפתי תפתח ופי יגיד תהילתך

Adonai, [You] open my lips⁹⁵, and my mouth⁹⁶ will speak about your glory

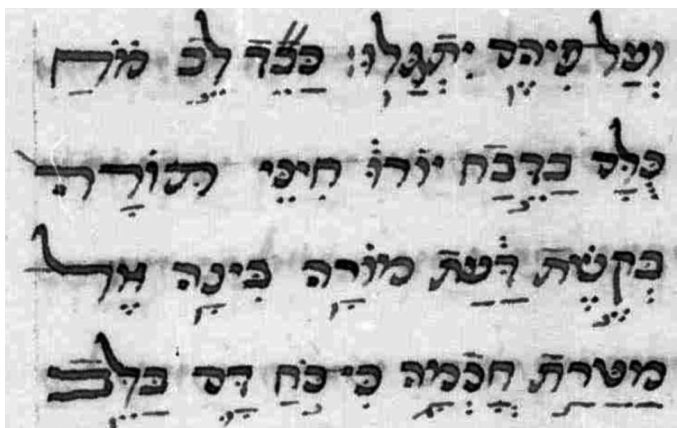
In a similar vein, enriched with the redemptive notion of endophasia, we read in Ps. 81:11, i.e. the fragment of *pesukei dezimra*, part of daily *shachrit*:

אנכי יהוה אלהיך, המעלך מארץ מצרים, הרחב פיך ואמלאהו

I am YHVH that uplifted you from the land of Mitzrayim, open your mouth wide and I will fill them.

6. *Badevach* or *Bedvaro*? The beauty of the three-petaled orchid

“Liver, heart, brain – all of them within [three-petaled] orchid shoot⁹⁷ the arrows of Torah from the bow of Knowledge, aiming Understanding towards the target of Wisdom, etc.”



f. 109b

⁹⁴ “I wished to speak to call the Name *Elohai* for him to support me, but the possibility of speech abandoned my spirit. And it happened in this moment, when **the Man** saw how greatly terrified I am, that he **opened his mouth and spoke to me – then he opened my mouth and I answered to his word**. While I was saying, might came back to me and changed me into **new man** and thanks to [this might] I opened my eyes.” In Jellinek’s edition: pp. 81-2. See a bit different translation in: Sh. Arzy *et al.*, “Speaking with Ones Self...”, p. 12.

⁹⁵ The passive human element to be activated by the external impact of YHVH, who performs some sort of “invasion” to become internalized in utterance.

⁹⁶ Activated through YHVH’s “invasion”, i.e. endophatic speech.

⁹⁷ Double meaning: *shoot* or *teach*, intentionally used as such by r. Abulafia.

Here we find one of the most interesting expressions in the “Book of the Sign”, namely *badevach*. Reuven Alcalay’s dictionary⁹⁸ provides a note: *davach* (English) *ophrys*, “bifol”, i.e. one of the species of the orchid family, “*Ophrys insectifera* L.” and “*Ophrys apifera* L.” Its bloom has three characteristic corolla petals in a regular shape, and the internal ones with filaments and stigma follow a visible dual pattern. Apparently, this three-petaled orchid inspired r. Abulafia to build his metaphor of a harmonic relationship between the “liver, heart, brain” triad. R. A. Gross made an unsubstantiated emendation of *devach* to *dvaro*⁹⁹, which is corroborated neither in VA245/240 and other manuscripts nor in A. Jellink’s edition, nor even in the source of this 19th edition (BI583). Let us investigate deeper why r. Abulafia chose to use this very uncanny word in this context:

- *Rashei tevot* (initials) for *kaved* (liver), *lev* (heart), *moach* (brain) spell *MeLeCh*, (written backwards), “king” with *sofei tevot* (endings) spelling *ChaBaD*.¹⁰⁰
- *Rashei tevot* for *davach* = *Daat* (Knowledge), *Bina* (Understanding), *Chochma* (Wisdom) (written backwards), names of three *sefirot* in the higher palace.
- *Ophrys apifera* is a species originating in the Malta Archipelago¹⁰¹. Thus, it is very plausible that r. Abulafia, during his stay on Comino, when he finished the third part of *Sefer ha-Ot* and reedited the former two, was inspired by the harmony and beauty of the blooming orchid:



Ophrys apifera L.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *Milon Ivri-Angli Shalem*, Yerushalaim 1963, s. 398, the modern Hebrew name is *dvornit*.

⁹⁹ *Sefer ha-Ot*, op. cit. p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ See also *VeZot liYehuda*, op. cit., p. 30. Cited, too, in: M. Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, New York–Albany 1989, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ http://www.maltawildplants.com/ORCH/Ophrys_apifera.php [access 13 II 2015].

¹⁰² Credits to David Evans based on Creative Commons 4.0 license. Original accessed at 15 II 2015 <http://cnx.org/contents/185cbf87-c72e-48f5-b51e-f14f21b5eabd@9.1:169/Biology>. We would

- One should further research the question of the intentionality of naming this very threefold plant by using the root *dalet-bet-chet*, so precisely hinting at a series of analogies in the sphere of sublime ideas within the Jewish thought, characteristic not only to r. Abulafia's teachings. It is also reflected in the division of Israelites, Levites and *Kohanim* (resembling the realm of the stars, moon, and sun, related to the other three *sefirot*¹⁰³ *Tiferet*, *Netzach* and *Hod*), the aforementioned discernment of *sefirot Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Daat*, the threefold systematics of soul *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah* related, as mentioned to three body centres, *kaved*, *lev*, *moach*.
- We find a triadic approach inherent in *chochmat ha-tzeruf*, in its three main categories: *michtav* (writing), *mivta* (utterance), *machshav* (thought); one will find it also in the application of the tripletic Name 72 and Tetragrammaton (being in fact Trigrammaton: YHV) in r. Abulafia's meditative practice.
- Within the themes of *Sefer ha-Ot*, apart from the previously mentioned ones, we find: the triadic colours of the sign on *Yahoel*'s forehead – blackness dividing between white and red – three kings fighting each other, teachings on 33 paths of Hebrew roots, permutations and elements enumerated by *Sefer Yetzirah* (22 letters, 10 *sefirot*, 1 Name YHVH), the Name of the sign on the forehead *YHVA YHVH YAVH*, metaphors referring to *Zecharyahu*'s "chariot" made of "cloud" (*av* = 72, allusion to the Name 72) and "dew" (*tal* = 39 = 3 x 13 = 3 x *echad* = 1, 1, 1 = 111 = *alef*)¹⁰⁴, to recall the main ones.

Triplicity in r. Abulafia's systematics, spotted by M. Landauer and A. Jellinek, reflects themes and inspirations much closer to the core of Jewish thought than those inherent in non-Jewish trinitarian theologies¹⁰⁵. Instead of assuming an external inspiration for the number "three", let us imagine that during his lonely stay on Comino, r. Abulafia performed an intensive meditation, gazing at the orchid flower – perhaps such practice lasted for several weeks. Let us assume that it might have been the source and the focal point for the structure of kabbalist thought – multilayered and opalescent with plethora of shades. The hyper-aesthetic harmony of concrete¹⁰⁶, the down-to-earth beauty of an orchid that evokes the highest levels of spiritual realms almost compels one to at least ponder upon such interpretation.

like to hint here only that apart from the three petals that constitute the above described pattern of the semiotic field, we can easily see the dual nature of the inner part of the bloom – the plausible relation to the dual nature of the sign that r. Abulafia speaks about (and apparent allusions to *dam ve-deyo*, *Yahoel-Zecharyahu*, etc.) will be discussed in a forthcoming publication.

¹⁰³ *Sefer ha-Ot* refers here to 1 Kings 29:11. This part is read during *shachrit* within the *pesukei dezimrah* section, right before the reading of *Shirat ha-Yam*.

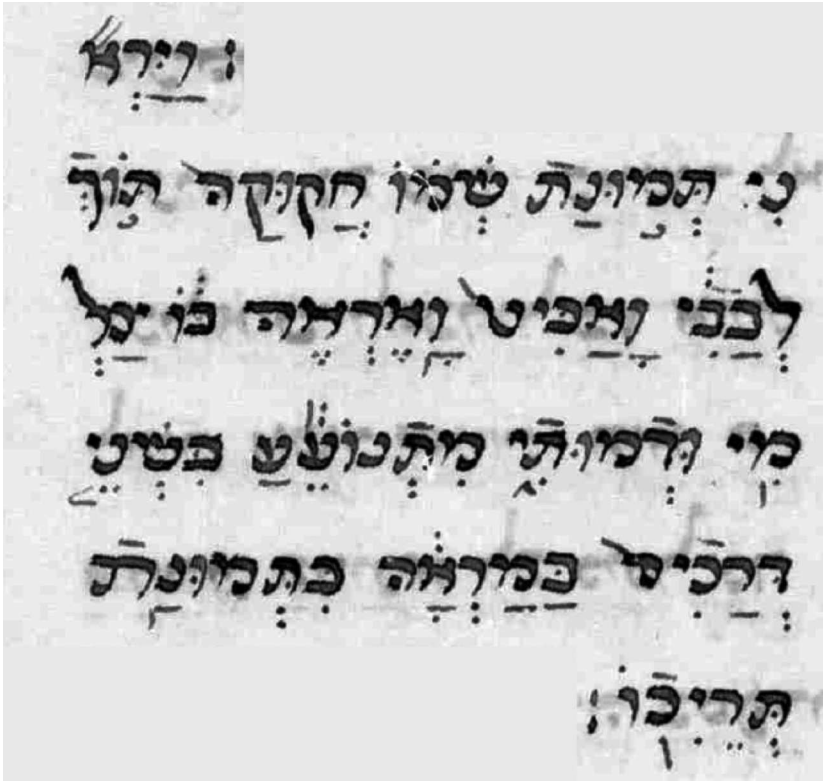
¹⁰⁴ To be precise, this is the first "water element" chariot that carries *Zecharyahu*. The second one, described in the following stanza, is described as a "fire element." This recalls two liminal experiences that *Eliyahu* (=52) had to undergo – passing through Jordan and transformation in flames. See 2 Kings 2:8-11.

¹⁰⁵ See M. Verman "The Power of Threes" [in:] *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, XXXVI (3), 2008 pp. 171-181, where numerous examples, many of which could be treated as direct inspirations to r. Abulafia's thought, corroborate such claim.

¹⁰⁶ To use the wording of T. Sikora.

7. *Mareh* or *Marah*? Just a plain vision or mirror-like vision?

“And I saw the image of His Name carved in my heart and I watched and saw in it my *tzelem* and my *demut* moving in two ways in the mirror, in the image of two¹⁰⁷.”



f. 101a

Following the well-supported assumption that heautoscopy is all throughout the *Sefer ha-Ot*, especially at the beginning of the third part when *Yahoel/Toriel* appears with his army of 22 thousand warriors¹⁰⁸, it would be worth considering translating the term *Marah* not as “vision”, but according to its main meaning, i.e. “mirror.” *Nekudot* in the

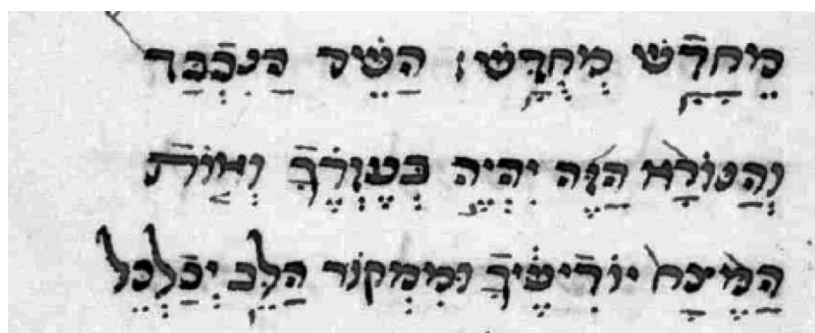
¹⁰⁷ There are two options to read this word. 1) *Treich* is Aramaic for *gerash*, “he divorced, divided” (TB *Gittin* 85b); thus the translation would be “in the image of its division”. 2) Aramaic *tarei* “two” and another reading – “rows.” VA240 and VA245 present a combined spelling of *tarei-ko* or *tarej-KV*. Proposed reading, though tentative, sound most plausible. I would like to thank r. Moshe Bloom for hinting at such readings.

¹⁰⁸ Most scholars (M. Idel, E. Wolfson, H. Hames, e.g. Sh. Arzy *et al.*, “Speaking with Ones Self...”, p. 12.) perceive this number as a connotation of 22 Hebrew letters. A more accurate explanation, though not excluding the former, can be found in TB *Yevamot* 64a: “*Shechinah* does not descend on no less than twenty-two thousand sons of Yisrael.” Thus *Sefer ha-Ot* speaks about the people of Yisrael *par excellence*, being the biological basis for the Dwelling of YHVH. *Zecharyahu*, by merging in a catoptric state with *Yahoel*, takes over the authority to represent all the people of Yisrael on his redemptive mission.

extant manuscripts exclude the ambiguity of the word, which does not appear at all in another possible vocalization of *Mareh*, meaning “appearance, vision”¹⁰⁹. Also other arguments support the claim to reject the translation of *Marah* as “vision.” The first is based on the well-known citation from *Shaarei Tzedek*, authored by r. Natan, r. Abulafia’s student¹¹⁰; the second argument stems from *Imrei Shefer*, apparently the last book composed by r. Abulafia. The following rendition is based on an original source of the corrected edition by r. Amnon Gross¹¹¹:

“And if he still has enough strength to move on with zeal, then his inwardness will appear as outside and reveal itself through the power of pure imagination **in the form of impeccable mirror (*marah zakah*)**. This is exactly the *flame of revolving sword*¹¹², which goes back and while rotating lets it come into being in front. And [he] knows that **his innermost being is something outside of him**, as if to resemble *urim* and *tumim* [...]. Among kabbalists this is called *malbush* (“the garment”, gematria 378, equivalent to *chashmal*)¹¹³.”

Zecharyahu perceives his angelic self in front of him, i.e. *Yahoel*, and at first we witness the description of the sign appearing on the latter’s forehead. However, at one instance, while *Zecharyahu* receives attributes from *Yahoel*, it is mentioned that the “**sign on the forehead will announce you**” – explicitly referring to the former self, i.e. *Zecharyahu*:



f. 108a

The second quote connects the notion of endophasia and the fluctuation of an active subject in the context of practice with the Hebrew alphabet. Again, the motive of mirroring experience occurs:

“And they [the letters], with their forms, are called the Clear Mirror, for all the forms having brightness and strong radiance are included in them. And one who gazes at them in their forms will discover their secrets **and speak of them, and they will speak to**

¹⁰⁹ See the study on mirror symbolism with reference to heautoscopy: T. Sikora, *EUOI – Studies in Catoptric Symbolism and Metaphor*, Cracow 2004 [in Polish], esp. chapter on Jewish sources, pp. 125-170.

¹¹⁰ The text is quoted in G. Scholem’s *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, however a different, more literal translation is provided below.

¹¹¹ *Shaarei Tzedek*, Tel Aviv 2008/5768, s. 41-42.

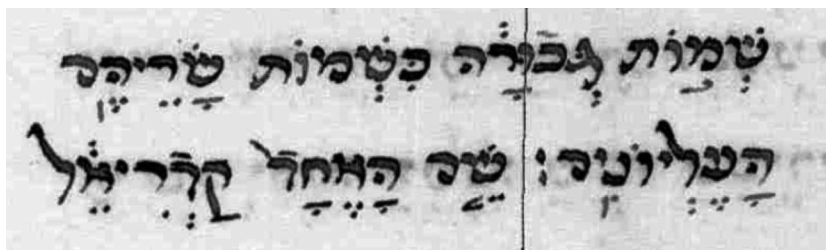
¹¹² Gn. 3:24.

¹¹³ See also *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Warsaw 1997, pp. 200-201 [in Polish], quoted, too, by T. Sikora, *EUOI*, op. cit., p. 143. There, pp. 130-131 the reading of *marah* instead of *mareh* according to r. Moshe Kordovero in the vision of Ezechiel, chapter 1, is discussed.

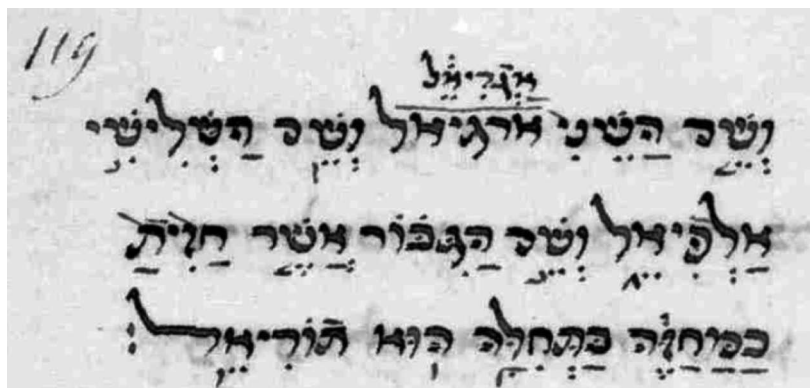
him¹¹⁴. And they are like an image in which a man sees all his forms standing in front of him, and then he will be able to see all the general and specific things”¹¹⁵.

8. Names of the angels – archons or *sarim* of the fighting kings

“Names of might, as per names of their archons above: name of the first one is *Kadriel*, name of the second – *Agdiel*, name of the third – *Alefiel*, and the name of the warrior that you saw in the vision in the beginning is *Toriel*.”



f. 118b



f. 119a

In the well-known fragment that concludes *Sefer ha-Ot*, the war between the three kings is described. Afterwards, we become acquainted with the names of their protective angels or – to be precise, according to the narrator’s wording – the “names of might, as per names of their archons above”¹¹⁶. Additionally, the name of the first king from

¹¹⁴ Parts of both citations were bolded for the purpose of this paper.

¹¹⁵ *Imrei Shefer*, Yerushalaim, 1999 p. 106. Translation after: Sh. Arzy *et al.*, “Speaking with Ones Self...”, p. 10. Instead of *marah*, we have the classic term *aspaklariah meirah*: והם עם צורותיהם נקראות אספקלריאה המאירה.

¹¹⁶ *Sareihem*. Here we encounter the term also known in the classic commentary by Rashi, in reference to *saro shel Esau* (Gn. 32:24-31). The concept of *sarim*, archons or protectors of a particular people, is described in the work of O. Goldberg. In his *Reality of Hebrews*, he explains that these denote the *elim*, *elilim* or *elohim* of each people. YHVH wages wars with them, thus forging in the battle of history “the real-time monotheism”, to be accomplished when YHVH’s Name would be united by the end of days.

Zecharyahu's catoptric vision is revealed (*Toriel*), and finally the name of the angel that elucidates the meaning of the wars is stated, which is *Yahoel* (or to be precise: *Yehoel*). Thus we have the following names:

- 1) *Kadriel*
- 2) *Agdiel*
- 3) *Alefiel/Alfiel*
- 4) *Toriel/Turiel*
- 5) *Yahoel/Yehoel*

Ad.1) In some previously published research, an alternative vocalization of *Kedariel* is proposed, however this is neither supported in the oldest manuscripts VA240/245 nor in the remaining six on the list: GU732, MU409, RO5 and PA3494 (BI583 and OX55 do not have *nekudot* for the term). Four extant manuscripts are fully enriched with *nekudot* here, but another three – BI583 (Jellinek's source), OX55 and RO5 – are indeed not vocalized. However, as an exception, *nekudot* appear exactly within the names of the angels in RO5, solely. *Kadriel* is an archon assigned to *Ishmael*¹¹⁷.

Ad.2) All the extant manuscripts provide a version: *Agdiel*. Repeated in previous papers, the version *Magdiel* originates from the mistake in A. Jellinek's edition (source BI583 does not have such flaw; also r. Gross' edition presents a correctly spelled name). A reference to the "biblical name that was conceived in the Middle Ages as referring to Christianity (commentaries of Rashi and Ramban on Gn. 36:43 and r. Bahya ben Asher to Gn. 36:39)"¹¹⁸ would demand acknowledging that *Magdiel* is some sort of distorted version of *Agdiel*. This actually might be true, as *Magdiel* is mentioned in Gn. 36:43 and 1 Krn 1:54 as the king of Edom and similarly, in *Sefer ha-Ot*, *Agdiel* is the representative of Rome-Edom.

Ad.3) *Alefiel* represents the powers of the East, i.e. Mongol hordes. One possible reading (but not according to manuscripts' vocalization) is *Elefiel* or *Alfiel*, meaning "El of my thousands", which would suggest an analogy to the *Shechinah* comprised of 22 thousands accompanying *Yahoel*¹¹⁹ or a representation of the Ten Lost Tribes.

Ad.4) and 5) Vocalization of *Turiel* appears in the oldest VA240/245, nevertheless *Toriel* is extant in MU409, PA3494, BI583, RO5, GU732 (it is the only word with *nekudot* appearing in this part of BI583 and RO5). It seems to be identified with the Man leading the army of 22 thousand warriors, and though he is differentiated from *Yahoel*, both seem to be epiphanies of *Metatron*¹²⁰. One can also identify *Turiel* with *Zecharyahu* (**looking into the mirror**) and at the same time with *Metatron/Yahoel* (**looking from the mirror**), which does not constitute any greater contradiction than identification of *Metatron/Yahoel* – the Warrior, leading the army, with the Grey-Hair Elder, sitting on the mountain of judgment. For the catoptric systems described in *Sefer ha-Ot* are multiplied

¹¹⁷ Compare: M. Idel, "Mongol Invasions and Astrology: Two Sources of Apocalyptic Elements in 13th Century Kabbalah" [in:] *Hispania Judaica Bulletin*, vol. 10, Yerushalaim 5774/2014, p. 154. *Kedar* is one of *Ishmael's* descendants, see Gn. 25:13.

¹¹⁸ See M. Idel, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹¹⁹ As discussed above, n. 108.

¹²⁰ According to M. Idel (*op. cit.*, p. 154), *Turiel* (*Toriel*) originates from *Tora El*, thus represents Judaism and most probably, r. Abulafia himself.

and replicated, sometimes appearing in a hierarchic order and sometimes in multifocal, synchronic ones¹²¹.

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¹²¹ *Metatron* himself is both *naar* “the youth” and *zaken* “the old” and as said, the dual of nature as hinted in 52 = 2 x 26 gematria. See: M. Idel, *Mystical Experience of Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 117-118 and 165, E. Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 21-22, 135-136 and *Abraham Abulafia – Kabbalist and Prophet*, p. 83.

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Mikołaj Krawczyk – *Sefer ha-Ot – Preliminary Insights on a Critical Edition*

The paper encompasses a review of selected themes and textological analysis of "Book of the Sign", *Sefer ha-Ot*, by 13th century kabbalist, r. Abraham Abulafia. Part one includes a depiction of eight extant source manuscripts with an analysis of the structure and possible path of development of each copy and eventually – an explanation on the choice of the main sources applied for the synopsis. Part two sketches on the themes from *Sefer ha-Ot* that have not yet been the subject of detailed research or were just initially hinted without delving into minutiae. These are supported by scans of respective folios from one of the manuscripts. Some schemes and illustrations were added, too, where applicable.

Keywords: Abraham Abulafia, Book of the Sign, ecstatic kabbalah, endophasia, heautoscopy, kabbalistic textual theory, prophetic kabbalah, Hebrew manuscripts, gematria