

Christ Church Library MS 188

An introductory guide by Jeremy I. Pfeffer

Paper (ff. 224), in folio: Neubauer OX 2455; IMHM Film No. F 15580.

The binding – embossed leather on board with two engraved metal clasps – is of a style similar to that of late 16th and early 17th century German sacred texts (Fig.188.1). The watermark in the front endpaper is a Basilisk and closely matches Briquet 1392 and Tschudin 311, both dated 1602 (Fig 188.2).

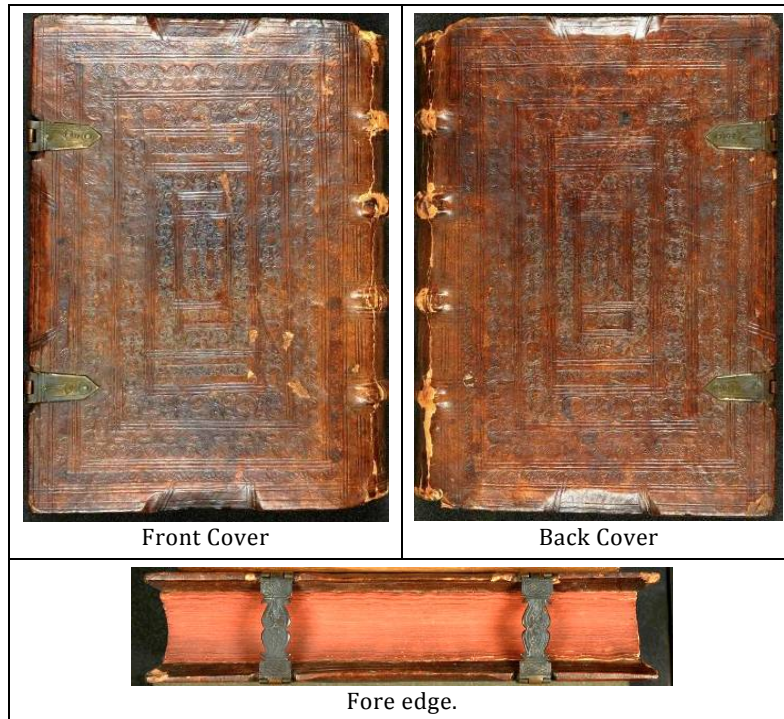
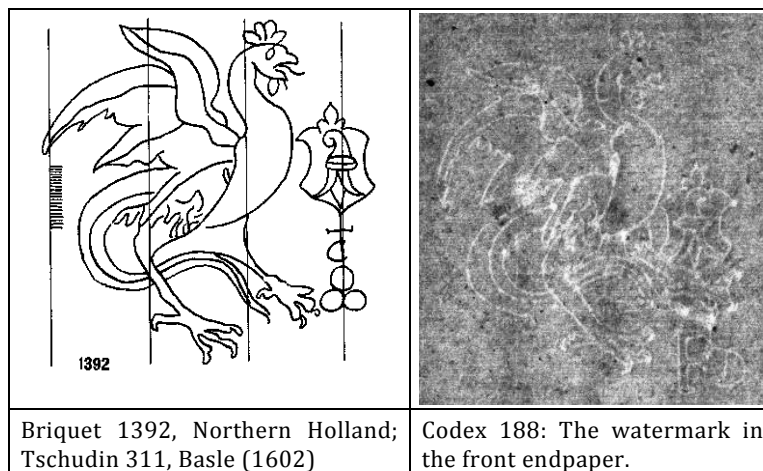


Fig. 188.1: The panelled leather binding and clasps of codex 188, typical of German bindings of the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

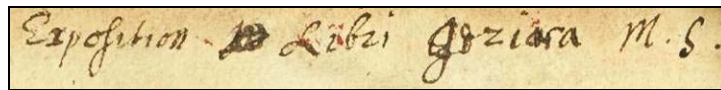


Briquet 1392, Northern Holland; Tschudin 311, Basle (1602)

Codex 188: The watermark in the front endpaper.

Fig.188.2: The watermark in the front endpaper of codex 188. The fly leaf was most probably added when the codex was bound and the Basilisk watermark confirms both the place, northern Europe, and the date, early 17th century, when this was done.

A small inscription in the top left hand corner of the inside of the back cover reads: *Exposition Libri Jetzira M.S.*



The entry in Kitchin's catalogue is only a little more informative: *Akiba ben Josef: Expositio Libri Jetzira (seu) Liber Creatonis.*

CLXXXVIII.
Codex chartaceus, in folio, ff. 220.
AKIBA BEN JOSEF: Expositio Libri Jetzira (seu)
Liber Creatonis.

The work referred to in the inscription is an exposition of *Sefer Yetzirah* (ספר יצירה), the earliest known book of Jewish esotericism. However, the codex actually contains much more than this. It is, in fact, a *mélange* of several Kabbalistic and Maimonidean texts, written in more than ten different Sefardi scripts: square, cursive and semi-cursive. These are interspersed, in turn, by a miscellany of annotations and entries, some quite possibly the work of a 17th century Christian Kabbalist, all illustrated and decorated by arcane orange-coloured scrawls, doodles and markings (Fig 188.3).



Fig 188.3: Folio 25r of codex 188. An example of the arcane orange-coloured scrawls, doodles and markings.

Setting aside the interspersed entries and annotations, the codex contains ten Kabbalistic and four Maimonidean texts. The Kabbalistic texts comprise:

- I. Two copies of *Sefer Yetzirah*, one complete and one an extract.
- II. Six texts relating to a 16th century exposition of *Sefer Yetzirah* written by Shlomo ben Shimon Turiel, a contemporary in Safed of R. Josef Caro (1488-1575), the author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, and of R Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), one of the most prolific exponents of the teachings of the *Zohar* and pre-Lurianic Kabbalah.
- III. A compilation of Biblical, Midrashic, Zoharic and Rabbinical citations relating to Abraham, the forefather of the Hebrews and, by tradition, the author of *Sefer Yetzirah*.
- IV. A description of the form of the Kabbalistic Tree of *Sefirot*.

The Maimonidean texts are:

- I. The 613 *Mitzvot* (religious ordinances incumbent on a Jew) enumerated by Maimonides, listed in the order in which they appear in the *Torah* (Pentateuch).
- II. The queries said to have been put to Maimonides by the wise men of Lunel, Provence, and his replies to them.
- III. The opening to Maimonides' purported last testament to his son.
- IV. An alphabetic subject index to Maimonides' fourteen volume code of *Halakhah*, the *Mishne Torah* or *Sefer Yad HaHazzakah*.

There is an earlier Hebrew foliation in some of the texts and catch-words at the foot of the verso in others. There are, however, a few problems with the number and order of the folios. Two are missing: fol. 17 and that which should be between fols. 167 and 168. There are also two errors in the foliation: what should have been fol. 23, turns up as fol. 77, and judging by its content, fol. 206 should actually follow fol. 216.¹ Nevertheless, considering the diversity of its contents and scripts, there are relatively few errors in the collation.

For our purposes, the contents of the codex will be examined under four *ad hoc* headings:

- I. The Kabbalistic Texts.
- II. The Maimonidean Texts.
- III. The Christian Kabbalah Entries and Annotations.
- IV. The Arcane Orange-coloured Scrawls, Doodles and Markings.

Part I. The Kabbalistic Texts

1. *Sefer Yetzirah* (ספר יצירה): "Book of Formation" or "Book of Creation" (the complete copy on fols. 3r–7r and the extract on fols. 136r–137r).²

Tradition attributes the composition of *Sefer Yetzirah* to the biblical forefather Abraham and its later transmission or redaction to the Talmudic Sage R. Akiba.³ There are several different extant versions of the work; no other Jewish text exists in so many versions nor is there any other like it. The text here is an example of what is known as the Short Version. It is divided

¹ Curiously, the writing on fol.91v and folio 196 is upside down.

² For a comprehensive English introduction to this work see: *Sefer Yetzirah – The Book of Creation* by Aryeh Kaplan, Weiser Books, Boston MA. USA (1997); for a concise introduction see: *An Introduction to the Sefer Yetzirah* by Christopher P. Benton: www.maqom.com/journal/paper14.pdf.

³ An entry on fol.21v gives the date of the redaction as “3874 A.M.(114 C.E.) 46 years after the destruction of the Second Temple.”

into six chapters by analogy to the six Orders of the *Mishna*⁴ and these are further sub-divided into *Mishnayot* (משניות) or what here are also termed *Masechtot* (מסכתות) (Fig 188.4).⁵

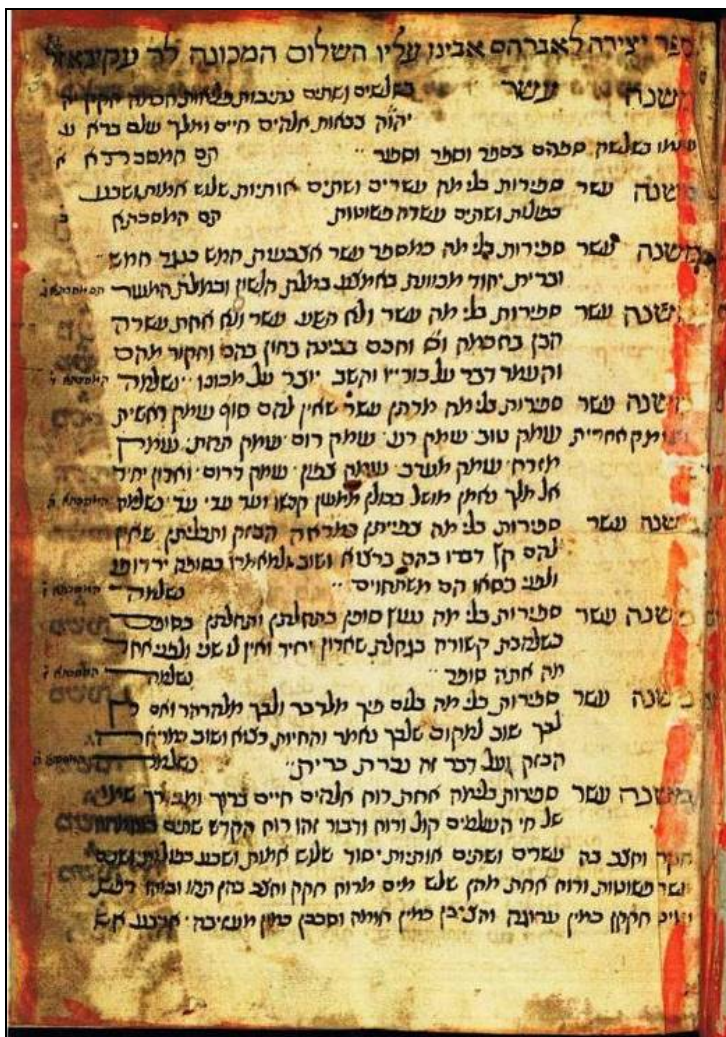


Fig 188.4: Folio 3r. The first page of *Sefer Yetzirah*.

The work opens with the declaration that the Universe was created by the God of Israel through thirty two “wondrous paths of wisdom.”⁶ Specifically, ten numbers or Sefirot (the origin for the Sefirot of later Kabbalah) and the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet: three "Mother" Letters: Aleph, Mem, Shin (א, מ, ש); seven "Doubles": Bet, Gimel, Dalet, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav (ת, פ, ר, ד, כ, ג, ב); and twelve "Simples" or "Elementals": He, Waw, Zayin, Heth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samekh, Ayin, Tsade, Qoph (ק, צ, ע, ג, נ, ל, י, ט, ח, ז, ה, ו, ש, ז, ט, י, ל, ג, נ, ע, צ).

The notion of the thirty two “wondrous paths of wisdom” is taken from the account of the Creation in *Genesis* 1, in which the word אלהים (God) occurs altogether thirty two times.⁷ Ten

⁴ The Hebrew text of the first printed edition of *Sefer Yetzirah*, Mantua 1562, was based on the Short Version (~1300 words).
⁵ The use of the term *Masechta* (מסכתא), which is usually translated as Tractate, as a synonym of the term *Mishna* which is usually used to denote the basic unit into which Talmudic texts are sub-divided, is anomalous and confusing.
⁶ These are listed in the opening to the redacted extract of *Sefer Yetzirah* on fols. 136r–137r and also on fol. 53v.
⁷ The number 32 written in Hebrew letters makes the word לב, meaning ‘heart’, the ruler of the spiritual.

times in the expression “God said – ויאמר אלהים;” these are paralleled by the ten Sefirot. The remaining twenty two instances parallel the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Of these, the three occasions on which the text reads “God made – ויעש אלהים” parallel the three “Mother Letters;” the seven repetitions of “God saw – וירא אלהים” parallel the seven “Doubles” which leaves twelve “Simples” or “Elementals.”⁸

As its name implies, *Sefer Yetzirah* is concerned with the mystery of Formation or Creation. In Jewish thought, there are two types of Creation: יש מעין – ‘something from nothing’ (*creatio ex nihilo*), and יש מיש – ‘something from something.’ The former is principally God’s prerogative but He has granted man the ability to create ‘something from something’: not just physical things but abstract creative endeavours too. *Sefer Yetzirah* is concerned primarily with creation by means of the manipulation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The creative powers latent in *Sefer Yetzirah* are hinted at in the following Talmudic anecdote:

R Ḥanina and R. Oshaia studied *Sefer Yetzirah* every Sabbath eve and, by this means, a calf third grown [to full size] was created for them and they ate it.⁹

With the passing of the Talmudic era, a cloak of silence was cast over occult activities. Only in the 12th and 13th centuries did Jewish mystical teachings once again become a subject of mainstream study. Emerging from the Gerona circle of Kabbalah, their dissemination throughout the Jewish world was advanced by Nahmanides devotion to Kabbalah and the appearance of *Sefer HaZohar* in 1290 which would replace *Sefer HaBahir* as the authoritative text of Kabbalah.

2. An exposition of *Sefer Yetzirah* written by Shlomo ben Shimon Turiel (fols. 9r–203v)¹⁰.

Turiel produced this work between 1557 and 1571, most probably in the city of Safed, Northern Israel.¹¹ Born to a family from the city of Teruel, Aragon, he was a child of the first post-Expulsion generation and only reached the Promised Land (ארץ הצבי) at the age of 52 after years of wanderings and privations:

And in the year 5317 (1557) when I was 52 years of age ...and I was in the Holy Land, those whom I dearly love gathered together with my friends...and asked me to pass on to them some of the insights into the Wisdom of Truth (חכמת האמת)¹² that I had received from my saintly masters. And they beseeched me to write a book for them from which they might know and understand a little of the Wisdom of Truth.

⁸ Kaplan, *Op. cit.* p.7.

⁹ *TB Sanhedrin* 65b.

¹⁰ This commentary was the subject of a master’s thesis by Ruth Ben Natan: תורות קבליות ב”אשת נעורים” לר’: שלמה לבית טוריאל (*Kabbalistic Teachings in “A Wife of Youth” by R. Shlomo Turiel*), Mount Scopus Library, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Call No. BM 525 A7 T6732, System No. 365717. Its main chapter headings are (i) The Doctrine of the Sefirot, (ii) The Influence of Magic on the Heavenly Beings and (iii) The End of Days.

¹¹ The shorter name שלמה טוריאל appears as an acrostic in the opening lines of fol. 9r; the full patronymic שלמה בן שמעון בן אברהם בן חיים לבית טוריאל (Shlomo ben Shimon ben Abraham ben Chaim Turiel) is found on fol. 9v. Teruel in Aragon, Spain, had a large Jewish community until the Expulsion in 1492:

https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0019_0_19755.html

¹² The term by which Turiel refers to esoteric knowledge.

And even though I knew the inadequacy of my knowledge and understanding, I had to accede to their wishes. And so, turning to God, in whom I have always put my trust, to help me, I girded my loins and to satisfy the wishes of my friends, I wrote two books: the first called “The Book of the Acquisition of Knowledge” (ספר קנין) (דעת) and the second, this one, which is an exposition of our forefather Abraham’s *Sefer Yetzirah*, attributed to R. Akivah who composed six Orders of Mishna of Kabbalah (שהוא חיבור שיתא סדרי משנה של קבלה) which is the Wisdom of Truth called “The Wife of Youth” (אשת נעורים).¹³

Turiel adds that the Masters of Kabbalah (בעלי הקבלה) took the name “The Wife of Youth” (*Eshet Neurim*) from the following biblical verses:

“Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth; a loving hind and graceful doe; may her breasts allure you at all times and may you be ever infatuated in her love” (*Proverbs* 5:18-19).

The Masters’ purpose in this was to evoke the loving and joyful relationship, as well as the intimacy, that should prevail between a devotee and the Wisdom of the Truth (חכמת האמת) and the Wisdom of the Occult (חכמת הסוד) veiled within the Torah:

“For after the soul departs from the body, it has no positive and negative *Mitzvot*, nor narratives, but just the Occult (הסוד) and this is what will serve it in the Hereafter.”¹⁴

Turiel believed that the correct and fitting way for a practising Jew to shape his way of life is through Kabbalah. There was, however, a shortage of suitable books to guide beginners: “For by our many iniquities, most were lost in the multiplicity of forced conversions and only a few remain” (fol. 116r). The purpose of this commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* was to make the secrets of Kabbalah more accessible. Turiel does not, however, make any claim to originality. He writes: “And don’t imagine that it is from pride or a haughty heart that I set out to interpret this profound book...For I have not added or invented even one word...they are all things received from the mouths of my Masters” (fol. 97v).

There is a copy of Turiel’s exposition in the National Library of Israel, Jerusalem. Written in a fine semi-cursive Sefardi script, it is a well preserved manuscript and contains a properly ordered copy of the work.¹⁵ By contrast, at least five different scripts can be identified in the writing here and there are numerous instances of duplicate texts. The overall impression is that what we have here are some of the original working papers from which the final ordered text of the exposition was distilled. These comprise:

- i. Two Preambles to Turiel’s exposition, both in a neat semi-cursive Sefardi script (Fig.188.5): Preamble I, fols. 9r-14r; Preamble II (incomplete), fols. 22r-22v & 77r-79r.
- ii. Two Introductions to *Sefer Yetzirah*, including chapter headings, each in a different semi-cursive Sefardi script: fols. 15r-16r and 18r-19v, respectively.

¹³ Folios 13r, 20r, 22r & 217r.

¹⁴ Fol. 13r in the margin (Fig. 188.9) and fol. 15r. The implication is that the Torah is as important as a source of esoteric knowledge as it is of the *Mitzvot*.

¹⁵ Ms. Heb 4°537, fols. 53r-132v. The manuscript also contains three homilies composed by Turiel: two Sabbath homilies, fols. 2r-9r and 122r-124v, and a third on the subject of Redemption, fols. 127r-132v.

iii. Three draft versions of Turiel's exposition on *Sefer Yetzirah*, each comprising texts, diagrams and arrays of Kabbalistic letter permutations and combinations:¹⁶

Version I (semi-cursive Sefardi script): fols. 149r-192v (folios א to מד, according to a discernible older Hebrew foliation);

Version II (semi-cursive Sefardi script): fols. 48r-70v, 74r-76r & 82r-104r. There is a partial colophon (date only) on the last page of this draft (fol. 47v) which reads (in translation): "Finished and completed on the 3rd of Adar I in the year 5331 (Monday, February 8, 1571 in the Gregorian calendar).

Version III (cursive Sefardi script – Fig. 188.6): fols. 24r-47v, 106r -117v, 118r-123v & 130r-134v (folios כה to מח, יג, כד, ז to יב & א to ה, respectively, according to a discernible older Hebrew foliation).

iv. A self-contained set of Kabbalistic diagrams diagrams and letter arrays (semi-cursive Sefardi script) that is not part of a text or one of the three draft versions (fols. 137v-146v).

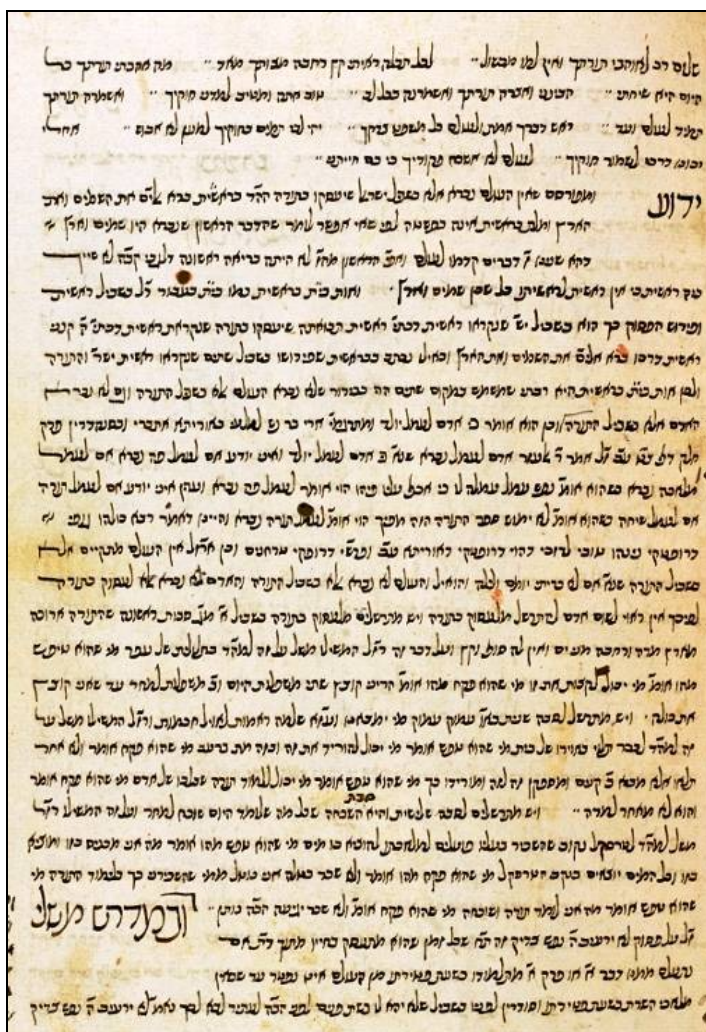


Fig. 188.5: Fol. 9r. The first page of Preamble I: an example of the fine semi-cursive Sefardi script. The initial letters of the phrases in the first four lines form an acrostic of Turiel's Hebrew name, שלמה טוריאל.

¹⁶ Many of the arrays are unfilled or incomplete.

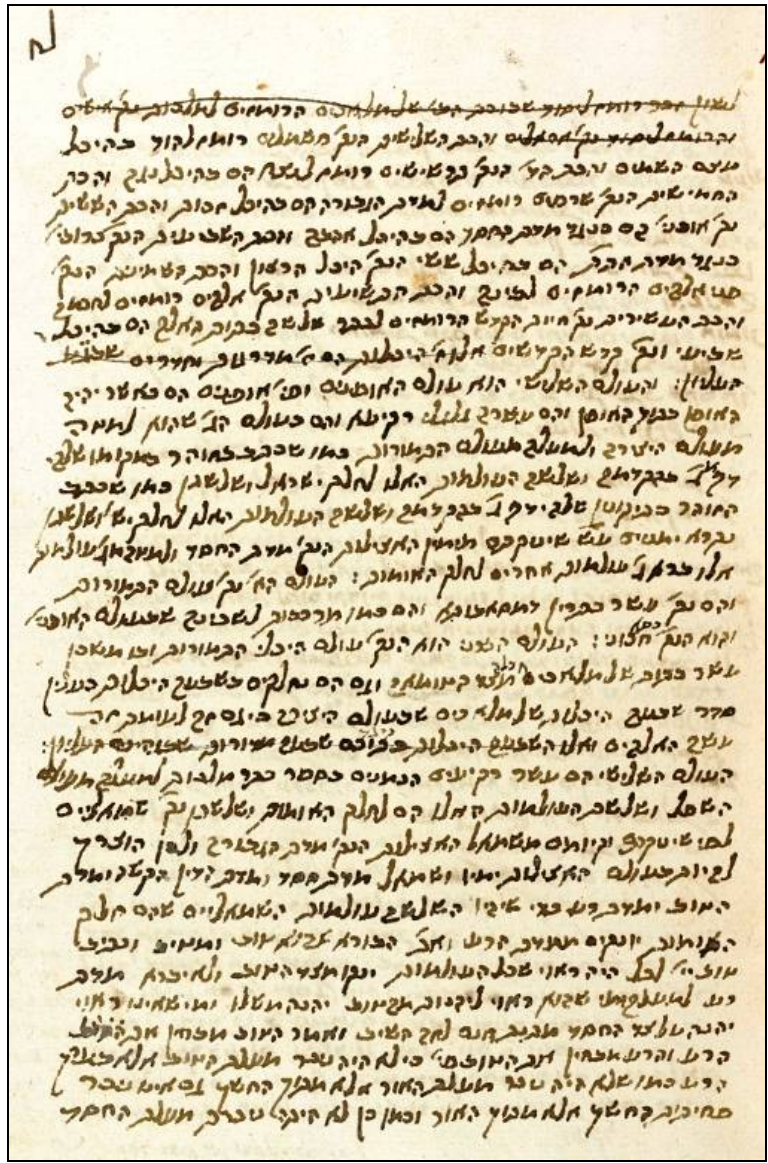


Fig. 188.6: Fol. 37r of codex 188: an example of the less polished cursive Sefardi script of Version III. Note the Hebrew foliation in the top left hand corner: לח = 38.

The sense that what we have here are early drafts of the exposition is borne out by the numerous textual corrections found in each of the three versions and the annotations and cross-references regarding missing texts and the need to add pages to accommodate them. Numerous annotations and corrections are inscribed between the lines of the texts, in a variety of different scripts, some neat others rudimentary (Fig. 188.7). The texts were evidently reviewed (proof read) by someone other than the copyist, perhaps by Turiel himself, who entered these corrections and annotations in a different and usually less polished script.¹⁷

A number of anomalous folios with crudely written miscellaneous entries are interspersed amongst these texts (Fig. 188.8). Others contain Turiel's own rough notes, some in the first person, many of which were subsequently transcribed into one or other of the three versions (Fig. 188.9).

¹⁷ For examples of the corrections and annotations see fols. 150r to 151r for Version I, fol. 49r for Version II and fol. 117v for Version III.

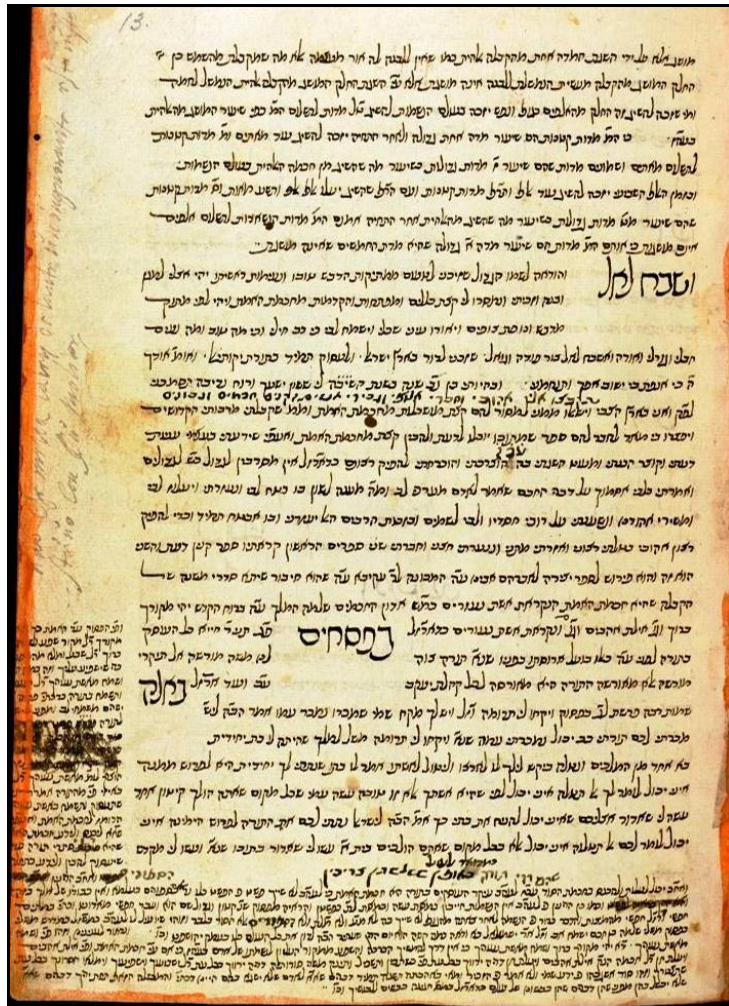


Fig. 188.7: Fol. 13r. Note the fine script of the text and the correction, in a cruder script, above the fourteenth line. The correction is in Turiel's hand and adds the words missed out when the text was transcribed from the original note on fol. 20r (Fig. 188.9). The long text in the margin is an extract from the Introduction to *Sefer Yetzirah* on fol. 15r. Note also the faint Latin inscription in the left margin; attempts to decipher it have so far failed.



Fol. 16r

Fol. 16v

Fig. 188.8: Folio 16. An anomalous folio. No other folio has the same watermark (see Fig. 188.18) and the verso page is landscape orientated.

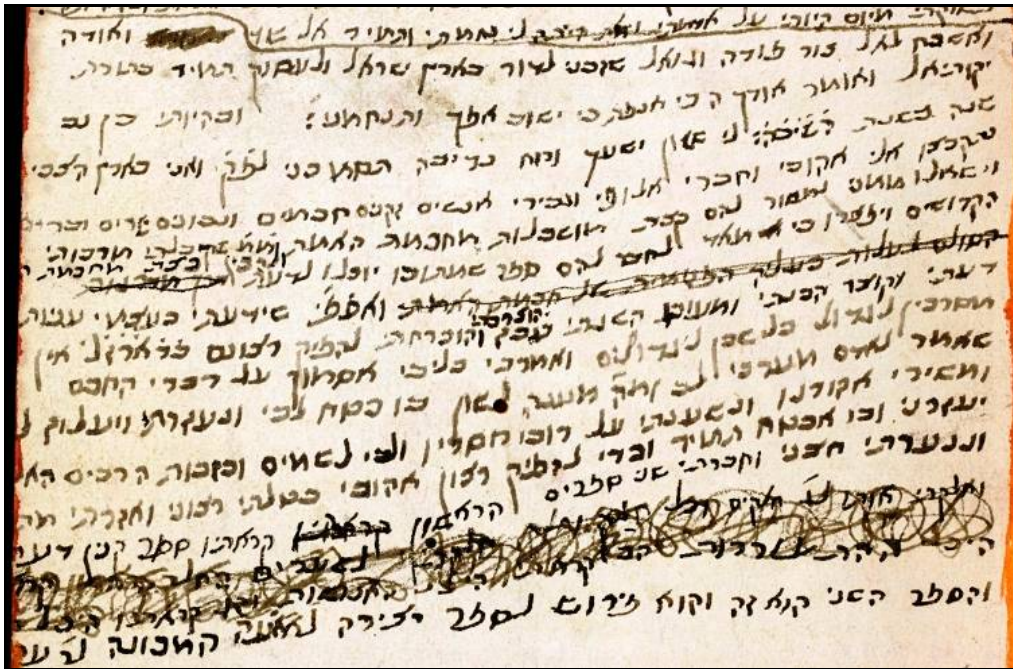


Fig. 188.9: Fol. 20r. An example of Turiel's rough notes. The text is that cited above (in translation) in which Turiel describes how his friends had beseeched him to write a book explaining the Wisdom of Truth etc.. It was transcribed onto fol. 13r but the copyist missed out a part and this was later corrected: see Fig. 188.7.

The matching entries on fols. 185v and 149r, respectively, are an example of the cross references. The former reads (in translation): “This [the following paragraph] is missing above from the end of the commentary of *Mishna* 3 of Chapter 1, folio *Aleph*” (Fig. 188.10). The “*Aleph*” refers to the older Hebrew foliation of the page on which the commentary on *Mishna* 3 appears; the corresponding modern pencilled foliation is 149r. The complementary entry on that page, at the end of the commentary on *Mishna* 3 and in a different and less polished script, reads (in translation): “The end of this commentary is missing from here and appears at the end of the book” (Fig. 188.11).

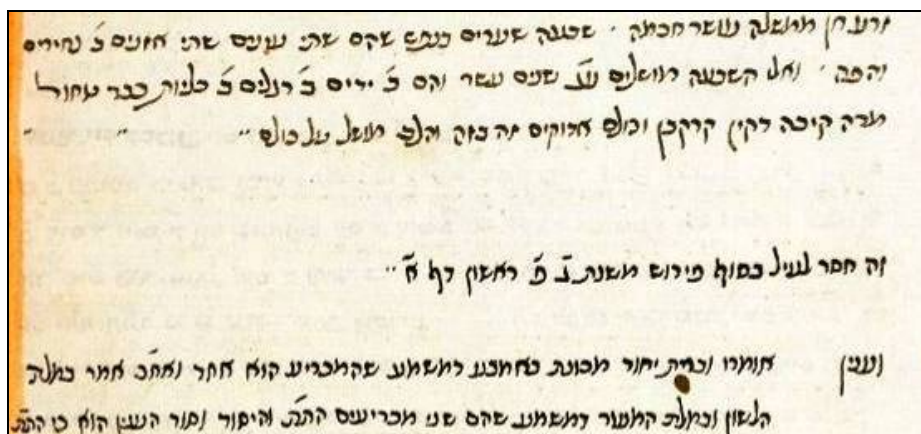


Fig. 188.10: Fol. 185v with the cross-reference that reads - זה חסר לעיל בסוף פירוש משנה ג' פי ראשון דף א' (This is missing from the end of the commentary above on *Mishna* 3 of Chapter 1, folio *Aleph*) - inscribed in the space between the paragraphs.

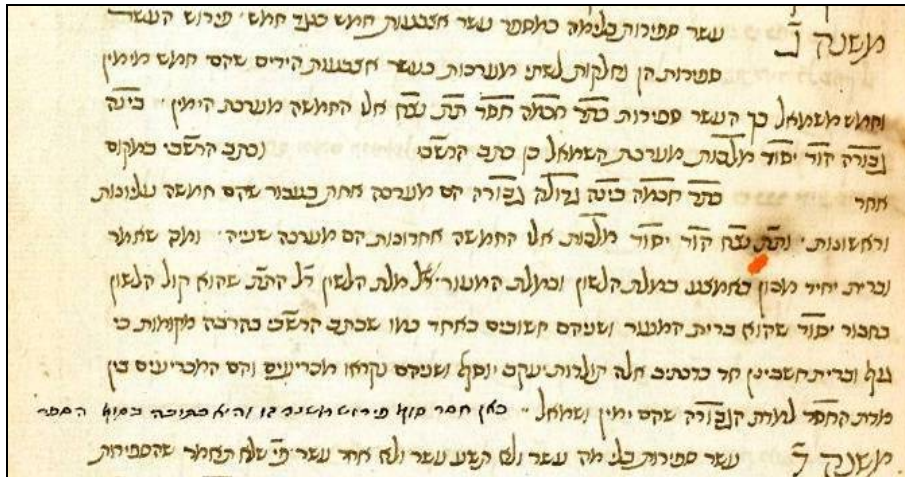
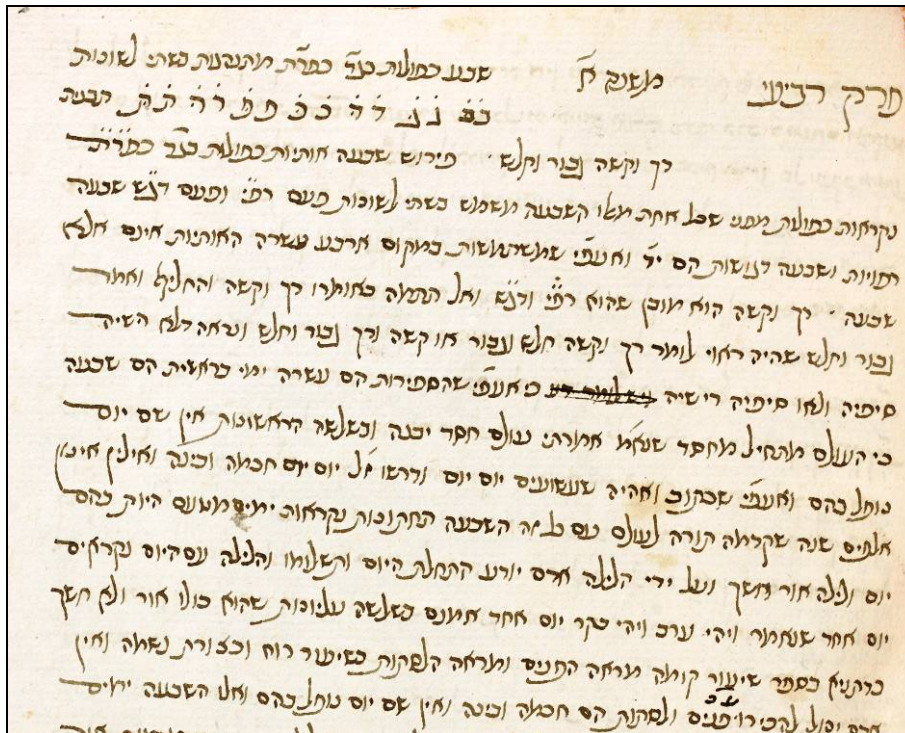


Fig. 188.11: Fol. 149r, which is numbered א in an older Hebrew foliation, with an annotation in a cruder script at the end of the commentary on *Mishna* 3 (the penultimate line in the image above) that reads סוף פירוש משנה זו והיא כתובה בסוף הספר (The last part of the commentary on this *Mishna* is missing from here and appears at the end of the book).

The many instances of duplicate texts are exemplified by the virtually identical texts in fol. 158r (Version I), fol. 58r (Version II) and fol. 123r (Version III) shown below, each from a different one of the three versions of Turiel's work. Other duplicate texts involving just two of the versions are:

- fols. 48r–53v (Vers. III) & fols. 186r–192v (Vers. I);
- fols. 56r–57r (Vers II) & fols. 156r–157r (Vers I);
- fols. 88r–89v (Vers II) & fols. 170r–171v (Vers I);
- fols. 91v–104r (Vers II) & fols. 173v–185v (Vers I);
- fols. 130r–134v (Vers III) & fols. 149r–153r (Vers I).



fol. 158r (Version I);

פרק רביעי משנה א' אבד פעולת כ"ב פקרת מתקנת כ"ב לאונות
כ"ב נ"ד דה' כ"כ פ"כ דה' ת"ת רבבה דך
וקזה צדור וקל' פירוש אבד חזיתות פעולות כ"ב פקרת הם
נקראות פעולות מופת שכל אחד מהם השבוע משמש באת לאונות פנים ד"כ ושש ד"ג
ז' דפיות ז' דגשות הם י' ואעפי' שמשמשות במקום ארבע עקה החזיתות חנים חלם אבד
דך וקזה הוא מוכן שהוא ד"כ וד"ג נאל' תמה באומר דך וקזה והחלף ואמר צדור
ומש' שהיה ראוי לעמד דך וקזה חלם וצדור חו' קזה ודך צדור חלם וערה דלח דושיה
סיפיה ולח סיפיה דושיה כ' אעפי' שהפירות הם עשרה ימי בדאשית הם אבד כ'
העולם מהחל מחמד אנאמר חמרת עלם חמד יבנה ובלשה הרחטנות אין שם יום נופל
בהם ואעפי' שבתוב ואהיה אשועים יום יום ודרשו ק"ל יום יום חמא וכנה ואילן אינן
חלפים שנה שקדמה הנה לעלם עם כלזה השבוע תחנתות נקראות ימים מאעם היות
בהם יום ולנה חור וחמד ועל ידי הלך חדס יודע התחלת היום והשלמו והלנה עם היום
נקראים יום אחד שנה ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד חמסם בשלשה עליונות שהוא כלל חור
ולח חמד כדנ"א כ"כ שיער קומה מראה הפנים ומראה הלפתות בשיער רוח ובצורת

fol. 58r (Version II)

פרק ד' משנה א' אבד פעולות כ"ב פקרת מתקנת כ"ב לאונות
(אונות וכו' פ' לעיל פקרת) אלו ש' ביאר קצת
מעשיית הספר הראשון ובלשה ספרים שבחלקו הכל אובדן שהוא ספר
ז' אונות אמת וערה כ"ב לבאר פקרת ד' קצת מעשיית הספר השני שהוא ספר
ה' פעולות וביאר ואלה כ"ז אונות כ"ב פקרת מתקנת כ"ב פעולות ע"כ כ' כל
אור ועל מעשה כ' פקרת לאונות פנים כ' פקרת פנים כ' פקרת פנים כ' פקרת פנים
וכ' פקרת פנים כ' פקרת פנים כ' פקרת פנים כ' פקרת פנים כ' פקרת פנים
אלה ה' וכלה ה' אונות על כ"ב פקרת מתקנת כ"ב פקרת מתקנת כ"ב פקרת מתקנת כ"ב
וחז"ל באור כ' יום ראשון הרוחם למנה חסד ובאור ג' יום שני דומה למנה
הסחז ובאור ד' יום שלישי הרוחם למנה נדב' כ"ב ובאור כ"ג יום רביעי הרוחם
למנה נדח ובאור פ"ג יום חמישי הרוחם למנה ק"כ ובאור ד"ג יום ששי
הרוחם למנה יחוד ובאור פ"ד יום שבת הרוחם למנה מלכות כללית כ"ב
אבד כלל מלבד ואעפי' שהפירות הם עשר ימי בדאשית הם אבד כ'
כי העולם מהחל מחמד אנאמר חמרת עלם חמד יבנה ובלשה הרחטנות
אין שם יום נופל בהם ואעפי' שבתוב ואהיה אשועים יום יום ודרשו ק"ל
יום יום חמא וכנה ואילן אינן חלפים שנה שקדמה הנה לעלם עם כלזה
השבוע תחנתות נקראות ימים מאעם היות בהם יום ולנה חור וחמד ועל ידי
הלך חדס יודע התחלת היום והשלמו והלנה עם היום נקראים יום אחד שנה
ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד חמסם בשלשה עליונות שהוא כלל חור
ולח חמד כדנ"א כ"כ שיער קומה מראה הפנים ומראה הלפתות בשיער רוח
ובצורת

fol. 123r (Version III)

A full elucidation of Turiel’s Kabbalah is far beyond the remit of this study, but there is one aspect that deserves our attention if only by reason of the many folios devoted to it in the manuscript, namely, the diagrams and arrays of letter combinations and permutations: the Mystical Potencies that are the tools of Creation (Figs.188.12, 188.13 & 188.14).

Fig 188.12: Fol 128r. Mystical notions found in meditative Kabbalah: (i) The number of possible permutations of seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen letters (n factorial, $n!$): 5,040, 40,320... 6,227,020,800 “and from here on go and calculate what the mouth cannot utter and the ear cannot hear.” (ii) A list of some of the “sevens”: the seven stars in the sky (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Moon); seven days of Creation; seven openings to the soul (two eyes, two ears, the mouth and two nostrils); seven firmaments; seven earths; seven Sabbatical years.

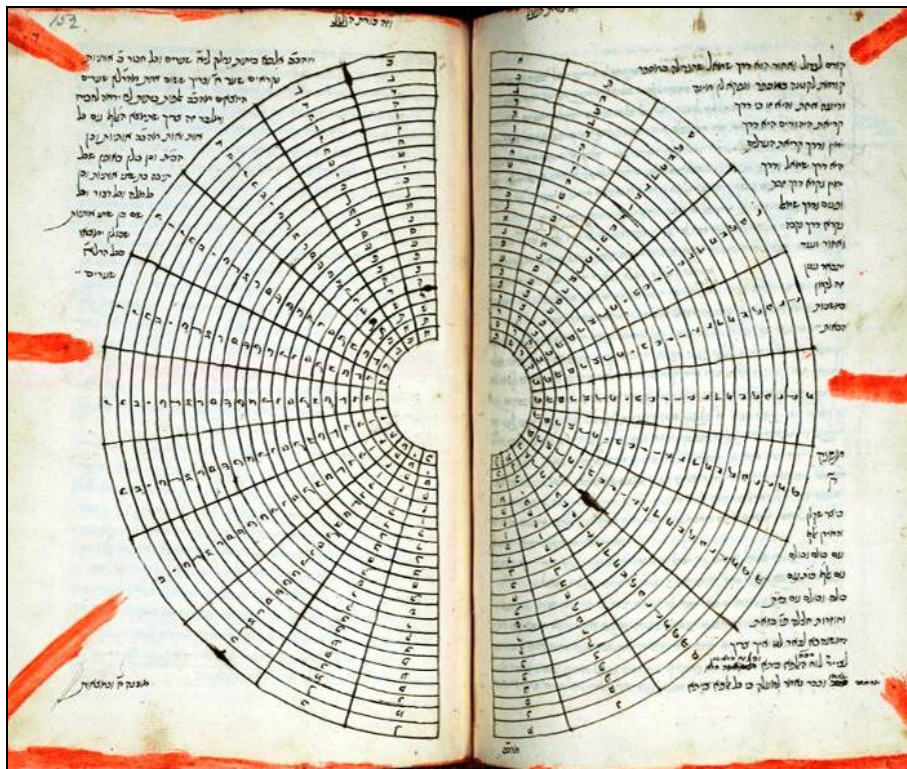


Fig.188.13: Folios 151v-152r. The fourth *Mishna* in Chapter 2 of *Sefer Yetzirah* reads: “Twenty two foundation letters: He placed them in a circle (גלגל - Galgal) like a wall with 231 Gates.” In general, the number of straight lines that can connect pairs of points on a circle is given by the formula $L = n(n-1)/2$, where L is the number of lines and n the number of points. Thus, the number of lines that can connect pairs of the 22 letters arranged in a circle is $L = 22(22-1)/2 = 231$; these are the 231 Gates. According to the early Kabbalists, this number is hinted at by the *gematria* of the last three letters of the word ישראל (Israel): ראל = 231.

Fig.188.14: Folios 166v & 167r. The array on fol. 166v has the last 120 of the 720 possible permutations of the six Hebrew letters that form the word בראשית (In the beginning). The previous 600 are listed on fols. 164r-166. The copyist of Version I missed out the number תרעב = 672 at the bottom of the third from the right of the narrower columns of numbers, and erroneously started the fourth column with it. As a result, he was one number short when he came to the end of the last column and entered תשיט. The mistake was later realized and the letter ט = 20 was written over the יט to make תשן = 720, but the preceding 90 incorrect entries were not amended. There is a similar mistake on the duplicate of this page in Version III (fol. 127v). The sentence in the lower margin of fol. 166v reads (in translation): “Seven letters make five thousand and forty permutations.” It relates to the arrays of permutations of the seven “Doubles” letters (ת, ר, פ, כ, ד, ג, ב) that start on fol. 167r but of which only the first two columns are filled. The arrays in Arabic numerals that fill the remaining columns on fol.167r continue on fol. 167v; their import has yet to be resolved but they may well be part of the Christian Kabbalah Entries and Annotations considered in Part IV below.

3. A compilation of Biblical, Midrashic, Zoharic and Rabbinical citations relating to Abraham, the forefather of the Hebrews and, by tradition, the author of *Sefer Yetzirah* (fols. 198r to 203v).

Abraham is traditionally the father of monotheism. The *Book of Genesis* records the many encounters and verbal exchanges he had with God.¹⁸ These gave him a unique and close knowledge of Him which he bequeathed to his children. They in turn, not only guarded this legacy but also added to and embellished it, intending thereby to enhance their ancestor’s repute. The result is the abundance of legends and stories about “our father Abraham” found throughout the Hebrew classics, of which his authorship of *Sefer Yetzirah* is just one.

Written in a semi-cursive Sefardi script reminiscent of those in Versions I and II, though somewhat more relaxed, these six folios are evidently a fragment from a larger work (Fig. 188.15). The text begins on fol. 198r, in mid-sentence and there is a Hebrew foliation that runs

¹⁸ Chapters 12 to 22,

from סז (67) to עב (72). And as the passage begins, so it ends in mid-sentence on fol. 203v, and with a catchword in the bottom margin that leads nowhere. There is no colophon.

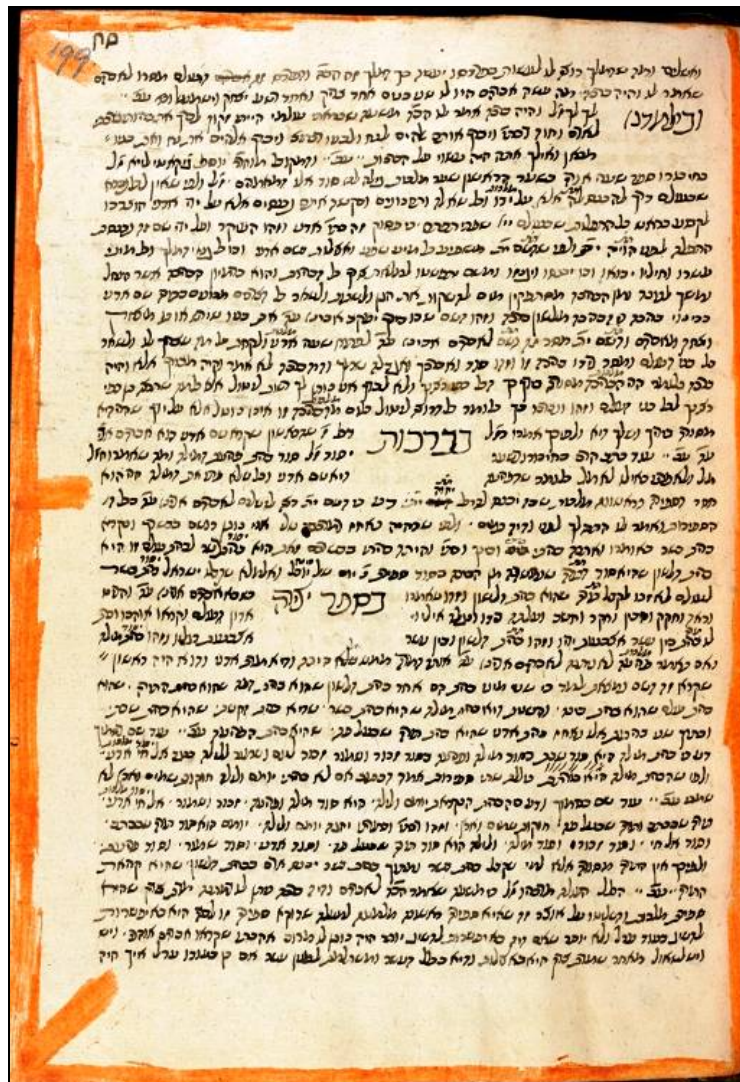


Fig. 188.15: Folio 199r. Note the Hebrew foliation in the top left-hand corner: סח = 68. The text is evidently a fragment from a larger work.

4. A description of the form of the Kabbalistic Tree (fols. 218r–222v).¹⁹

The Kabbalistic Tree is a topological representation of the thirty two “wondrous paths” – the ten Sefirot and the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet – by which the God of Israel created the world. The Sefirot are represented by ten circles and the letters of the alphabet by twenty two channels (צנורות lit. tubes) that link specific Sefirot. There are a number of alternative forms of the Tree but they all have possess these basic components.

This text may also be by Turiel; there are some similarities between the script here and that in the second of the two Introductions to *Sefer Yetzirah*. Furthermore, in the first paragraph of the work, the writer refers to “what we wrote above”. Turiel’s name does not, however, appear anywhere in the text nor is any date given for its composition (Fig. 188.16).

¹⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephirot>

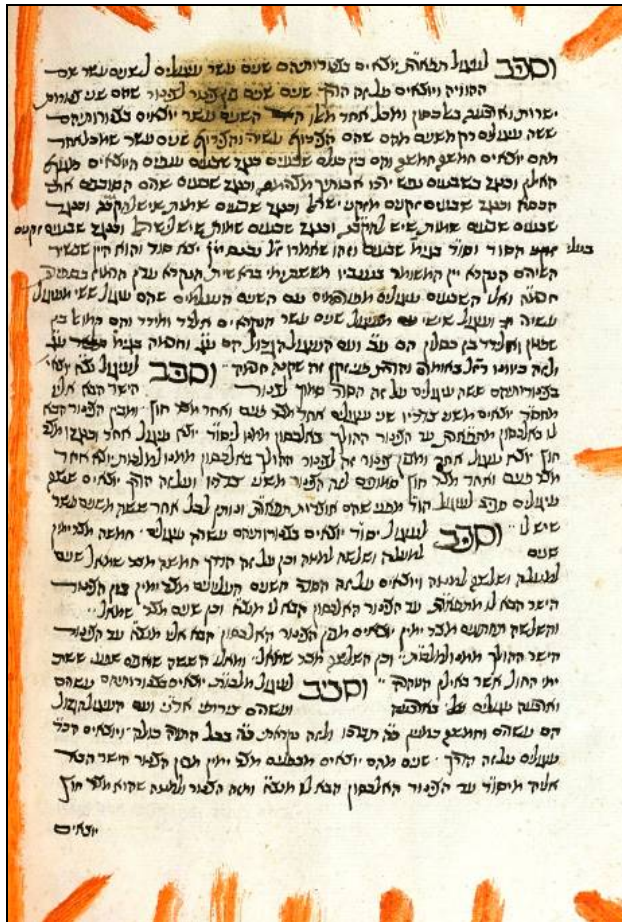


Fig. 188.16 Fol. 220v. The text delineates the number and orientation of the “channels” that emanate from certain of the Sefirot and that link them to others.

5. The watermarks in the Kabbalistic Texts.

In contrast to the many differences between their scripts, there is one feature which is common to all the Kabbalistic texts: their watermarks. The copy of Turiel’s work in the Jerusalem manuscript, the three drafts in codex 188, the description of the form of the Kabbalistic Tree and the miscellaneous interspersed folios and are all on Italian paper that exhibits one or other of the following four mid-sixteenth century (c.1565) watermarks: Briquet 496, 552, 636, 649 or their countermark (Fig.188.17). There are just two exceptions: the anomalous fol. 16 (Fig. 188.7 above) and the blank fol. 194 (Fig. 188.18)

<p>Anchor in Circle with Star above - Single Line. Briquet 552; Reggio Emilia 1566.</p>		<p>Anchor in Circle with Star above - Double Line. Briquet 496; Reggio Emilia 1565</p>	


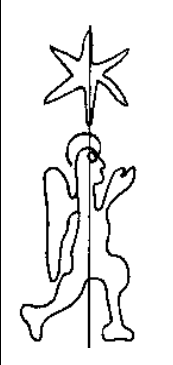

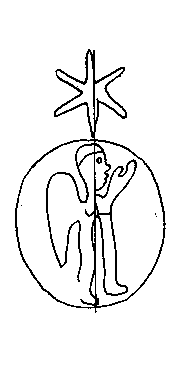
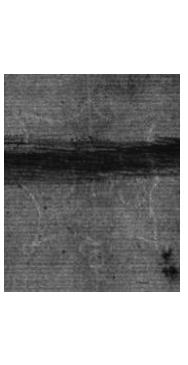
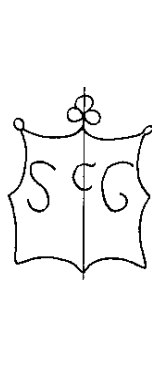
					
Angel Running with Star above. Briquet 636; Vicenza 1562/72.		Angel Praying in Circle with Star above. Briquet 649; Vicenza 1562/72.		Shield with "S~C" and Trefoil. Countermark to the two Angel Watermarks.	

Fig. 188.17: The Italian watermarks in the Kabbalistic texts in codex 188.


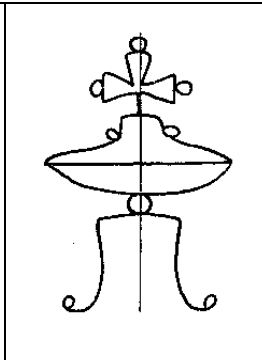

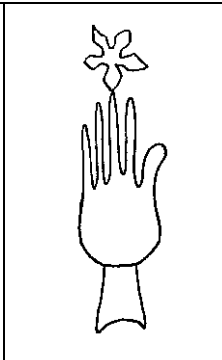
			
Folio 194: Cardinal's Hat; Maltese Cross above. Briquet 3417; Venzone 1540		Folio 16: Hand; Fingers open & flower above. Briquet 10790; Rome 1567/8	

Fig. 188.18. The Italian watermarks in the blank separator folio 194 and the anomalous fol. 16 (Fig. 188.8 above).

Part II The Maimonidean Texts

1. The 613 *Mitzvot* (Divine ordinances incumbent on Jews) enumerated by Maimonides, listed by the order in which they appear in the weekly readings of the Torah (fols. 205r–205v & 207r–210v).

This format, which does not appear in Maimonides' own writings, is attributed to Abraham ibn Hassan Halevi²⁰ and was published as an appendix in the first Hebrew Bible printed by Daniel Bomberg, (Venice, 1517). Written originally in Arabic, it comprised just a bare list of the Biblical precepts arranged in the order of the weekly readings, however it was subsequently enlarged by its Hebrew translator, Judah ben Shoshan, whose version this is.²¹

2. An alphabetic subject index to Maimonides' code of *Halakhah*, the *Mishne Torah* or *Sefer Yad HaHazakah* (fols. 211r–211v).
3. Maimonides' purported last testament to his son (fol. 206v).

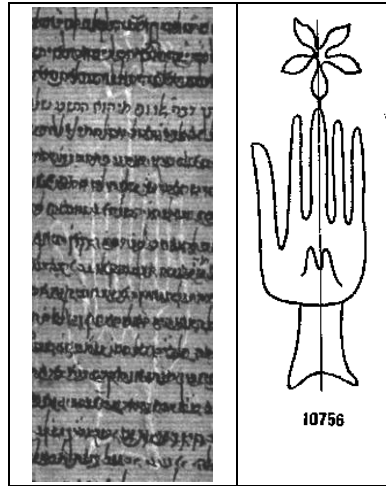
²⁰ A 16th century Turkish Rabbi.

²¹ There is no colophon as such but the copyist/translator, Judah ben Shoshan, gives his name at the end of the Introduction on fol. 205r, adding that he had also included some of his own glosses.

4. The twenty five queries put to Maimonides by the “wise men of Lunel” and his replies to them (fols. 212r–216v & 206r-206v).²²

The same watermark is found in all the Maimonidean manuscripts scripted by Judah ben Shoshan (fols. 205 to 217); it most closely matches Briquet 10756 (Fig. 188.19).

Fig. 188.19: The watermark in the Maimonidean Mss. (ff.205 to 217): Hand - Fingers open - 5 Petal Flower above: Letter M on back of hand. Briquet 10756 (Perpignan 1526)



Part III The Christian Kabbalah Entries and Annotations

An entry in Latin letters at the top of the left hand column of the grid on fol. 167v offers a possible clue as to how the codex may have come by its N. European binding (Fig.188.20).

The import of the numbers in the array on fol. 167v has yet to be resolved but the words in the top left-hand corner of the grid are clearly recognizable as transliterations of the names of the five summer months of the Jewish calendar: *Iyar*, *Sivan*, *Tammuz*, *Ab* and *Elul*. Furthermore, row four in the column, immediately below the word *Sivan*, appears to read 6 *Shavuot*: the festival of *Shavuot* that marks *inter alia* the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, is celebrated on the sixth day of the month of *Sivan*. Row five, immediately below *Tammuz*, reads 17..., which is traditionally the day in the month of *Tammuz* on which the walls of Jerusalem were breached prior to the destruction of the Temple and which Jews keep as a fast day And row seven, below the word *Ab*, reads 9..., which is traditionally the day in the month of *Av* on which the Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE and is also kept as a fast day.

No less intriguing are the “words” in the far left column on the opposite page (168r). They appears to be a list of thirteen years written in the recognized abbreviated Hebrew *anno mundi* notation: the first is 5340 (1579CE) and the last 5566 (1805CE). The word in Hebrew lettering repeated in the left margin, אשנא, is evidently a phonetic spelling of the word שנה meaning ‘year.’ There are other instances of phonetically spelled Hebrew writing in the codex (for example fol. 2r) and the similarity between them suggests they were all written by the same person. This, taken together with the transliteration of the Hebrew names of the months

²² Some modern scholars have questioned the authenticity of this correspondence.

י. קאפח, שאלות חכמי לונלל ותשובות הרמב"ם, כלום מקוריות הן? ספר זכרון להרב יצחק נסים, סדר שני, ירושלים תשמ"ה, עמי רלה-רנב;
 י. שילת, כלום תשובות הרמב"ם לחכמי לונלל מזוייפות הן? שם, עמי רנג-רנו; י. קאפח, תשובה, שם, עמי רנז.
 י. שילת, איגרות הרמב"ם, א, ירושלים תשמ"ח, עמי תצא-תקי.

and the European style of the numerals in the grid on p,167v, points to his being a European, although, in view of his limited knowledge of Hebrew, almost certainly not a Jew.

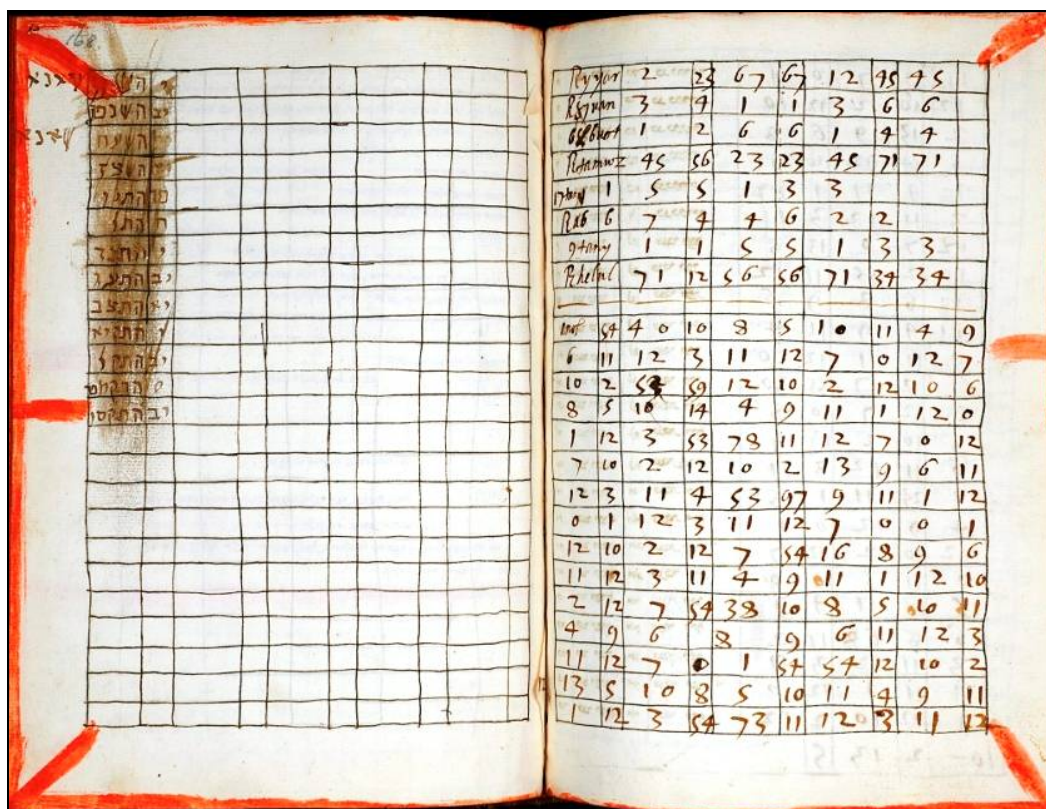


Fig.188.20: Folios 167v-168r. Note the entries in letters of the Latin alphabet in the top left-hand corner of the grid on fol. 167v, and the phonetically spelled Hebrew in the left margin of fol. 168r. Note the stub low down in the gutter between the folios and the just discernible Hebrew foliation כא = 21 in the top left-hand corner. Folio כ = 20 has been torn out, leaving just the stub.

There is an unbroken Hebrew foliation discernible in the folios of Version I of Turiel's exposition by which folios 167 and 168 are numbered יט = 19 and כא = 21, respectively; folio כ = 20 is missing. The stub visible in the gutter between folios 167 and 168 indicates that a folio was torn out of the codex at this point (Fig. 188.20). What was on this folio and why it was removed is one more of the unknowns of this codex.

But it is perhaps the first four pages that are the most mysterious. There is a black phonetically spelled inscription – שיר אשירים אשר לישלמו – the letters of which have been over-written in orange paint on fol. 1r. It is a misspelling of the first line of *Song of Songs*, the biblical love-poem composed by King Solomon, which, when written correctly, reads שיר לשלמה אשר השירים (Fig. 188.21). Similar writing, with similar Messianic connotations, appears on fols. 1v, 2v and the verso of the end fly-leaf (Fig 188.22).

But even more curious is the primitive image on fol. 2r of a person wearing a *Tallit* (prayer shawl) and *Tefillin* (Phylacteries), holding what looks like a pointer or pen in his right hand. Drawn in black and highlighted in orange, it is surrounded by a cacophony of phonetically spelled Hebrew words. The intended meaning of some of these can be deduced but not sufficient to construct a coherent text. One phrase that stands out is יהודה בהנ דאויד

מהלך מאשיאח, which, allowing for the phonetic spelling, means 'Judah son of David, the Messiah King' (Fig.188.23).²³



Fig. 188.21: Folio 1r. The letters of the phonetically spelled inscription - שיר אשירים אשר לישלמו - over-written in orange.

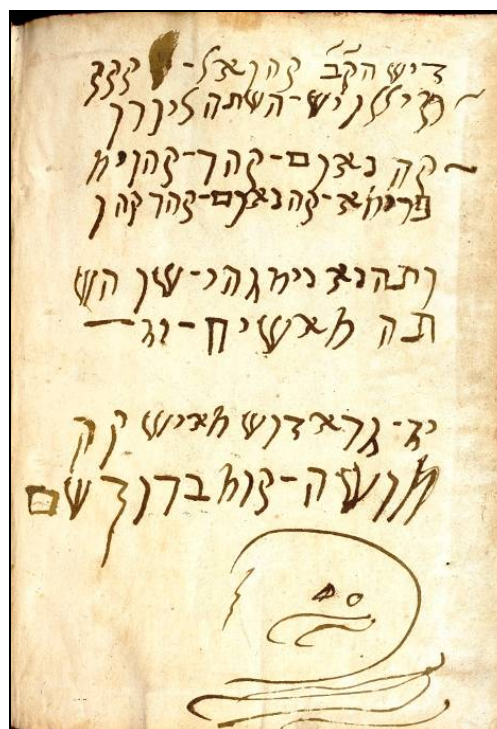


Fig. 188.22: The writing and doodle on the verso of the end fly-leaf. The same doodle appears in orange in the folios shown below in Figs. 188.24 & 188.25.

²³ The paper of folios 1 & 2 is of an inferior quality and there are no watermarks.



Fig.188.23: Folio 2r. The sketch of a person wearing a Tallit (prayer shawl) and Tefillin (Phylacteries). Note the phrase יהודה בן דאיד מהלך מאשיאח (Judah son of David, the Messiah King) below the hand on the right-hand side of the page. Other phonetically spelled words can be made out but the sense of the text itself, if indeed it has any cogent meaning, is unclear.

Part IV The Arcane Orange-coloured Scrawls, Doodles and Markings

Every page of the codex, without exception, has some orange-coloured scrawl, doodle or marking, some covering the whole page, some between the lines of text and others in the margins; even the fore edge, head and tail have been painted orange (Figs. 188.24 to 188.26).



Fol. 29v



Fols. 173v - 174r

Fig. 188.24: Examples of the arcane orange-coloured scrawls, doodles and markings.



Fig.188.25: Folios 7v-8r, a crude sketch showing the twelve signs (houses) of the Zodiac and the seven 'stars' – Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter – together with the names of the angels that Kabbalah assigns to each.²⁴

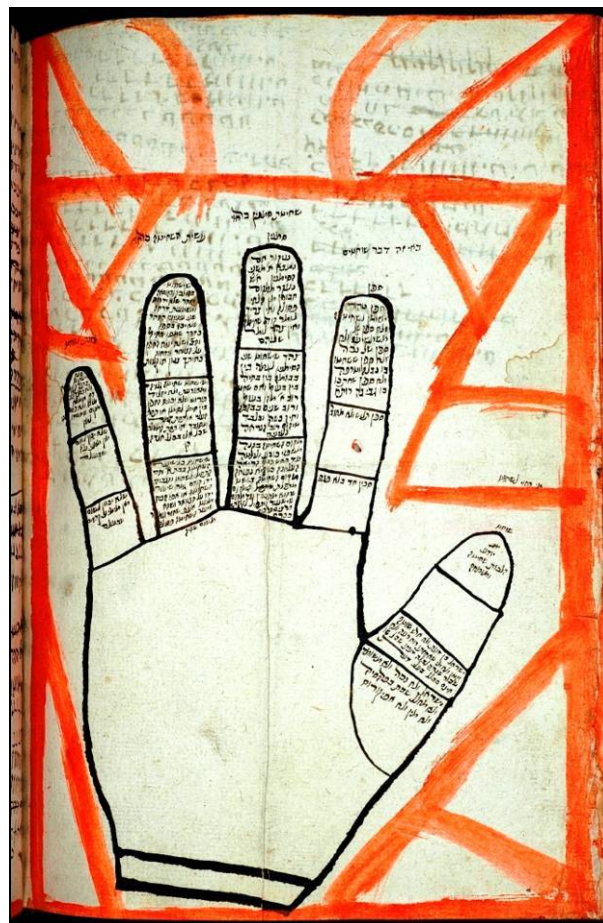


Fig.188.26: Fol. 195v: An mnemonic of the laws of *Shehitah* (the Jewish method of slaughtering Kosher animals for human consumption) in the form of an open hand. One of the five principle requirements of *Shehita* is inscribed in each finger. The thumb delineates "Who is fit to be a *Shoḥet* (a slaughterer);" the index finger: "Which implement should be used – a knife;" the third finger: "Where the cut should be made – the trachea and oesophagus;" the fourth finger: "How the cut should be made;" the fifth finger: "What the *Shoḥet's* thoughts and intentions should and should not be when carrying out his work."

²⁴ *Jewish Magic and Superstition* by Joshua Trachtenberg, [1939], p.251: on line at www.sacred-texts.com.

Summarising, the overall impression is that several separate manuscripts, most but not all Kabbalistic, was cropped and bound into a single codex, not always ensuring they were in the right order or even relevant to one another and that this was done somewhere in northern Europe early in the seventeenth century. When the ubiquitous orange-coloured markings and doodles were drawn, or by whom and for what purpose, cannot be ascertained with any certainty, but it must have been after all the various manuscripts had been collected together and numbered: the number 224 is writ large in orange paint on fol. 223v (Fig.188.27), which would have been fol. 224v counting the folio of which only the stub remains between fols: 167v & 168r (Fig.188.20).



Fig.188.27: Fol. 223v, the final page of codex 188. The folio number 224 is writ large in orange paint on the page facing the fly sheet numbered 244r. The pairs of Hebrew letters, written in rows and reminiscent of children's writing exercises, are a feature of many of the sundry scrawls.

There remains the question of who arranged to have this mélange of folios bound in such an ornate and presumably expensive binding. I would conjecture that it was a Christian collector of Hebrew manuscripts, the same person as drew the sketch of a person wearing a *Tallit* (prayer shawl) and *Tefillin* (Phylacteries) on fol. 2r and who wrote the phonetically spelled words in black on that and other pages, the transliterations in letters of the Latin alphabet of the names of the five summer months of the Jewish calendar on fol. 167v and the list of thirteen years written in the abbreviated Hebrew *anno mundi* notation on fol. 168r. He may well have been a follower of Christian Kabbalism who looked upon Jewish mystical literature as a source of magical knowledge and this might explain many of the doodles. Clearly, more research needs to be done on this enigmatic codex.

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January 2017