

HANNE TRAUTNER-KROMANN

IGGERET  
RABBI  
JOCHANAN  
BEN  
ZAKKAI

A POLEMICAL LETTER  
- FAKE OR DOUBLE FAKE?



VALDEMAR

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## Acknowledgements

A body of research stretching over more than 40 years and occupation with Jewish Studies for about 60 years entail contact with many people who have been of great help and inspiration.

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My main teacher and inspiring mentor in Jewish Studies at the University of Copenhagen from 1970 to 1981 – and privately thereafter up until his death in 2021 – former Chief Rabbi Bent Melchior was crucial in teaching me Talmud, Midrash, and rabbinical texts, often with me as the only student. Thanks to him I qualified for a full professorship and did get a paid job.

I have met many scholars during the years, notably among them Dr. Mascha van Dort, who kindly answered my specific questions, but one person deserves my utmost thanks, namely Israel Sendrovic, a Talmudic scholar and now a retired executive vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. I met him at the Judaic Department at the Royal Library in Copenhagen more than forty years ago, as he was very interested in Jewish manuscripts. We became friends and have corresponded ever since. He read and corrected the Hebrew text of the Iggeret and its translation into English and answered many specific questions that normally only a university-educated scholar of Jewish Studies would be able to do.

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## 1.1. Introduction

The Judaica Department of The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Denmark, contains a number of valuable Hebrew manuscripts. One of them is a manuscript from Bibliotheca Simonseniana<sup>1</sup>, which claims to be a letter from the year 53, written by Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai, who warns the Jews in Rome against Paul and Christianity. Two prologues and two epilogues, mentioning sender, recipient, messenger, and date have been added to the actual letter. In the two prologues, there is also mention of a learned Rabbi of a later period, Eliezer bri (sic!) Ashkenazi, who has provided the letter with a running commentary. In addition, the second prologue tells us that the letter belongs to the learned Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort, who took the letter with him to the holy community Gogin - גוגין – presumably Cochin on the Malabar Coast in South Western India. He claims that the letter was found in the city of Rome between other old Hebrew books and that a shaliach, a messenger, from Jerusalem, Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, who happened to be in Cochin, read and explained the letter.

1 Cod. Sim. Hebr. No. 93. David Simonsen (1853-1932) was a rabbi in Copenhagen from 1879 to 1891 and chief rabbi of Denmark from 1892-1902. He was a scholar and book collector of Hebrew and Jewish literature and languages, mainly for his own research purposes. His 40.000 volume library was acquired by the Royal Library in Copenhagen in 1932, comprising a 25.000 volume Judaica. The ms. can be seen online: <https://soeg.kb.dk/search/Cod.Sim.Heb.93>



*Rabbi David Simonsen and his wife Cora in their home in the middle of Copenhagen around 1932. They are surrounded, nearly submerged in his huge book collection. He had to get an additional flat in order to have enough room for the books. (The Royal Library, Copenhagen).*

Just a superficial reading of the manuscript makes clear that it cannot be a genuine letter written by the famous Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai. Judging from the content and many later ideas and particular words, it must be much later than the year 53, but neither the real date nor place is obvious. The manuscript itself is an autograph by the scholar Salomo Dubno, presumably from around 1800<sup>2</sup>, but apart from that it is a rather enigmatic letter and needs to be analyzed. My research on it began in 1979, but I was not able to date it. I concluded it was written in the late Middle Ages, but its geographical placement was not clear either. In an effort to get closer to solving this enigma, I wrote my second doctoral thesis about Jewish polemics against Christianity from 1100 to 1500<sup>3</sup>, but I found nothing even remotely close to the specific text and form of the letter, except well-known polemical quotes from the Middle Ages. During the following years I returned from time to time to this letter and tried to collect more information and material about the persons and places mentioned in it and in the research literature<sup>4</sup>. The mysterious person Jacob van Dort, a former Jew, led me to do some research on the Protestant Pietistic mission from Halle in eastern Germany, both because he had been to Halle and was mentioned in director Callenberg's reports about the mission, and because I suspected that the letter could be a reaction to this mission<sup>5</sup>. Again I did not find any clear proof.

A further impetus to finish my work on *Iggeret* was my contact in late 2019 with Dr. Mascha van Dort who has done a lot of research to find out about the life of Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort<sup>6</sup>. All her new information about this hitherto little known person sheds a little light also upon *Iggeret* and its destiny, and this contact was a great inspiration to me to go on and finish my project. Admittedly, the new insight on the person of Jacob van Dort did not give me much help in dating *Iggeret*, but it was very interesting to read and interpret his pro-Christian missionizing books, since the angle they took directly opposed my previous work on Jewish anti-Christian polemics.

Within the scope of my research in different areas and my duties as a full professor of Jewish Studies at Lund University, Sweden, from 1990 to 2010, my work on *Iggeret* has been going on for about 40 years, with lengthy breaks. This could mean that I may be out-of-date in certain areas of this research and that I may have overlooked some relevant publications by other scholars. Still I find it worthwhile to finish and publish my results despite my inability to date and place *Iggeret*. It is my hope that some other scholar will succeed in doing that at some time.

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- 2 See H. Trautner-Kromann: "Et hebraisk skrift mod kristendommen - fra år 53? En undersøgelse af Cod. Sim. Hebr. nr. 93". In: FUND OG FORSKNING i Det kongelige Biblioteks samlinger. XXV. Copenhagen 1981 pp. 7-18 (with an English summary on p. 159). The article is based on my unpublished doctoral dissertation (in Danish) *Jødedommens forhold til kristendommen belyst ved kilder fra Talmud Babli og Hs. Cod. Sim. Hebr. Nr. 93. I+II* (126+78 pp.). University of Copenhagen 1980.
  - 3 *Shield and Sword. Jewish Polemics against Christianity and the Christians in France and Spain from 1100 - 1500*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1993. (Texts and studies in medieval and early modern Judaism 8).
  - 4 "The enigmatic *Iggeret* R. Jochanan ben Zakkai: A polemical letter against Christianity". In: *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, Volume I, pp. 69 - 75. Jerusalem 1994.
  - 5 "Jüdische Reaktionen auf die Hallische protestantische Judenmission 1728 - 1765". In *Jüdische Bildung und Kultur in Sachsen-Anhalt von der Aufklärung bis zum Nationalsozialismus*. Ed. by Giuseppe Veltri und Christian Wiese, pp. 209 - 236. Metropol, Berlin 2009. (minima judaica 7).
  - 6 van Dort, M.: *Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort, a Learned Jewish-Christian Man from Dordrecht*. December 2021.

## 1.2. The Provenance and a Poem

It has been extremely difficult to track down the genesis of the manuscript. Apart from a typed survey of “The Collection of Oriental Manuscripts in Bibliotheca Simonseniana”<sup>7</sup>, I found no immediate information about it. In fact, there was a loose piece of paper with some notes in the manuscript, unfortunately in a sloppy and difficult handwriting. It was clearly written by David Simonsen, but some of the words are totally illegible. The notes were probably written at two different times, the upper part (in ink) in 1899 when Simonsen had acquired the manuscript, the lower part (in pencil) after his purchase of a book about the letter by A. I. Dziubas around 1929, about which he gives some information<sup>8</sup>. The handwriting suggests that the writer of the lower part is an old man. The letters are faint, somewhat unsteady and unclear. The first line of the paper states ‘Cat. de Lima’, referring to a sales catalogue of books and manuscripts<sup>9</sup>. The manuscript belonged to de Lima. Simonsen also wrote ‘Sal Dubno’, a reference to Salomo Dubno as being the copyist, but the rest of the notes is difficult to read and does not really make sense. The lower part of the paper mentions A. I. Dziubas, the title of his book and year of print. Munkács, the Belzer Rebbe, and ‘Sippurei ...’ are also noted<sup>10</sup>.

How and when de Lima acquired *Iggeret* is not known. It is stated in the sales catalogue that the copyist is Salomo Dubno<sup>11</sup>. The handwriting corresponds totally to the one in Dubno’s own autographical book catalogue, *Reshima*, but the manuscript is not listed in it<sup>12</sup>. So it is known that Salomo Dubno, born in 1738 in Ukraine, died in Amsterdam in 1813, had himself copied the manuscript, but not at what time. He lived in Amsterdam 1767-72 and again after 1789 until his death. Presumably because of the controversial content of *Iggeret*, facts about its genesis and possible copies of it remained unknown.

In the beginning of the manuscript, there is a poem of homage in Hebrew to its copyist Salomo Dubno, written in a sloppy hand. The signer’s name, unfortunately, is nearly crossed totally out, only the letters heh-kuf-shin can be discerned<sup>13</sup>. The poem and the crossing out suggest up to several owners before

7 It was compiled (before 1970) by former First Librarian Dr. Rafael Edelmann who noted that manuscripts of this letter are very rare, and that Ernst Percy had done some research on a printed edition. See more in Chapter 1.5.

8 See more in Chapter 1.5. History of Research.

9 Catalog ... Hebräischer und Jüdischer Bücher, Handschriften nachgelassen von Rabbi Meijer Lehren, Rabbi Akiba Lehren, und Rabbi Moses de Lima ... , Amsterdam 1899, p. 239 nr. 4184. Dubno was at his death in 1813 the owner of 106 mss. and 2076 printed books: Folio: 571, Quarto: 884, Octavo: 539 (no. 5: *Iggeret* Vikuach, but printed). Under Nishmatim: Fol. 8, Qu. 20, Oct. 41. Unbound: 13. Mss. Fol. 8, Qu. 64, Oct. 32. Total of titles: 2182. There is no mention of *Iggeret*.

10 About the editions see Chapter 1.4.

11 Listed under C. Manuscripten it gives the title in Hebrew and then tells in German: Carton. 8\*. Fehlt bei Benjacob. 8 Bll., Schöne Schrift, von der Hand des R. Salomo (aus) Dubno .

12 *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*. I. Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana. University Library of Amsterdam. Leiden 1973. XVII. Bibliography and Booklore p. 266 No. 600: HS. Ros. 469: Catalogue of the books of Solomon b. Joel Dubno compiled by himself, Amsterdam, 1771. Also this *Reshima* went on sale in 1899, cf. note 2, but belonged to the Lehren collection. It is amazing that Dubno owned so many books already at the age of 33 years, but “the books are listed systematically with complete titles, place and date of issue and other particularities” as is stated on p. 266, so it seems to be a fact at that time and that the books were not accumulated later. According to Hagit Cohen he owned 350 titles in 1771. See her article: “The Reception of Haskalah Literature ...” in: *Studia Rosenthaliana* 42-43 (2010-2011) pp. 83-105. The information is on p. 95.

13 Thanks to modern techniques, it is now possible to decipher the crossed out words. In 2009 The Royal Library in Copenhagen made available, as digital facsimiles, the collection of manuscripts acquired in 1932 from Professor Rabbi David Simonsen.

de Lima, at least the one who wrote the poem and signed it and the one who crossed out the name. It is unlikely that de Lima himself did it, since he seems to have been a bibliophil. Here is the poem and a translation into English.

לקיים את דברי האגרת  
לאות ולשם ולתפארת  
היא מכל כתב נבחרת  
אותתיו לעין כל מבוררת  
לזכרון דכותב אצלי משומרת  
הה התורני המופלא והמופלאג  
בחכמה ומעלות ומדות המדקדק  
הגדול המשורר בשירות ותושבחות  
כמהורר שלמה דובנא זל הה  
תיהא נשמתו בצרור החיים צדרת  
חתמתי שמי לזכרון הק שמואל בלאא יעקב ש

- 1 To uphold the words of the letter
- 2 in honor and renown and glory
- 3 This [letter] of all written, was chosen
- 4 to explore its signs — everything is made clear.
- 5 As a memorial to the writer of what is here preserved,
- 6 The great sage, [learned in] Torah, the wonderful and eminent
- 7 in wisdom and virtues and qualities, the great
- 8 grammarian, the poet of poems and hymns
- 9 Our learned teacher Salomo Dubno, of blessed memory, Torah scholar,
- 10 may his soul be bound in the bond of life.

I signed my name in memory of the insignificant Shmuel, son of my master, my father, R. Jaacov, may he live<sup>14</sup>.

### 1.3. A Description of the Manuscript

The manuscript is made up of four double sheets sewn together in Quarternio with cotton thread, and nothing is missing. The paper is handmade Dutch paper from around 1800, and it is made in folio. The watermark is the image Maid of Holland, where she is holding a spear and is sitting next to the lion, holding a sword and arrows. Both are enclosed by a palisade. To the right is printed Pro Patria. The name C & J Honig is also in the watermark. The paper was very common and widespread. The folio is folded in 8°. The cover consists of a sheet like the others, on which is glued wallpaper with a typical Empire pattern, also from around 1800.

Each of the 14 pages measures 16.5 x 10.5 cm, and lines are scratched on all recto sheets<sup>15</sup>. On page 1, on which the prologue is placed, the scratch is made as a frame about 2 cm from the outer edge, but the inner edge is only 1.4 cm,

<sup>14</sup> I read בלאא as אבי בן לאדוני אבי and the last ש as שיהיה.

<sup>15</sup> The manuscript has no original pagination, only a later one, probably written by Simonsen, from 1 to 8. In this book I have added page numbers from 1 to 14 in stead of recto and verso pagination. The introduction starts on p. 1.

and there is no scratch at the bottom of the page. Moreover, a frame is sketched with ink a little closer to the text. On the rest of the recto sheets the scratch is made as a frame with a 1.3 cm margin to the outer edge, 1.4 cm to the inner edge, and 1.4 cm to the upper edge of the sheets. There is no bottom on the frame. Each frame is divided into two columns: the inner one for the letter itself measures 3.9 cm from the text to the edge, the outer one for the commentary measures 4.3 to the edge. According to the texts, the letter or the commentary can fill up the whole page. The copyist has endeavored to keep the upper margin to 1.4 cm and the bottom margin to 1.5 cm, but the latter can vary a little. The number of the lines varies according to the distribution of letter and commentary, but where the letter is written on the whole page, apart from the uppermost part of the outer column, there are between 29 and 31 lines. The



Salomo ben Joel Dubno. The picture is surrounded by a Hebrew text giving the name of Salomo ben Joel Dubno and his birth date. In smaller letters at the bottom is written: "His picture was engraved in the year Metuka" (= Sweet), giving the date in Hebrew letters as 1791.

(The picture is the work of Franciscus Sansom after Schabracq, 1780-1810. It belongs to Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-1906-2510>)

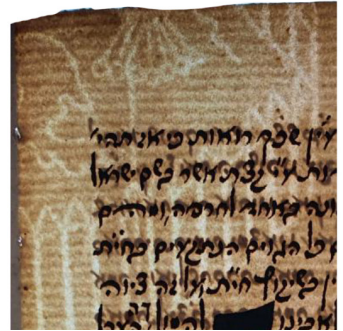
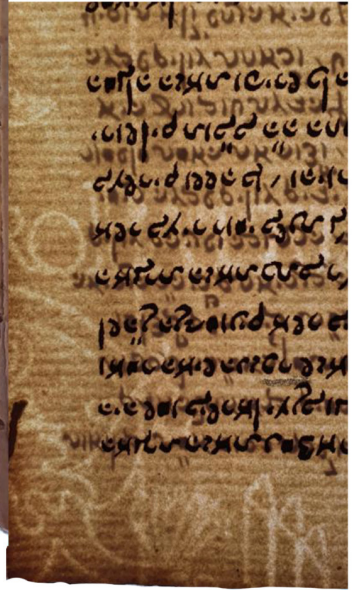
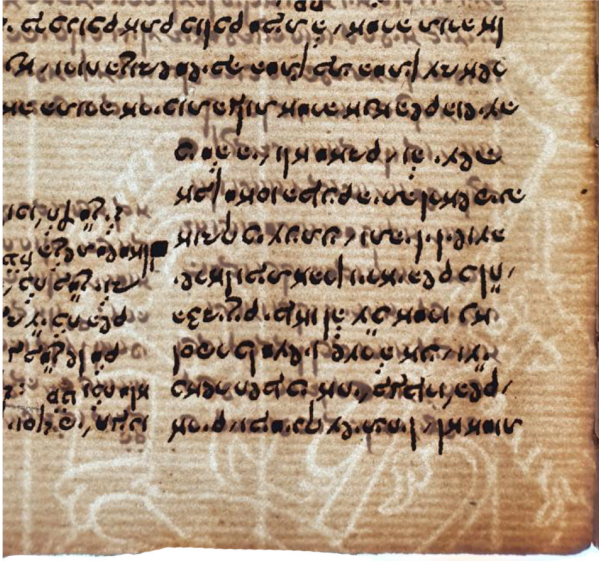
same applies to the commentary, as the number of lines varies between 33 and 37. The handwriting is German Hebrew cursive from the 18th century, very clear, neat and uniform.

The letter itself begins on the lower part of page 2, preceded by Prologue II. Text and commentary run parallel and the copyist attempts to keep both texts in parallel lines, but already on page 3, he realizes that it is not feasible. However, there is only a difference of three to four lines. The commentary is written in a smaller script than the letter itself. There are no special headings or subdivisions except on page 2 and 3. Page 3 has a horizontal line, covering half a column of both text and commentary. Hereafter the running numbering of the references of the commentary is interrupted and the numbering is started anew. At the bottom of the page there is again a horizontal line, but only in the text column. The commentary marks this as well, but not with a line, only with an open space on page 4. It is the story of the serpent that is thus separated, although the numbering of the commentary is not started anew. On page 5, there is also a horizontal line in the text, but here it is to mark the separation between the text and a gloss. The gloss is designated 'hgh' הַגָּה with a curly bracket { } around the four lines of the gloss. The lines of this gloss, moreover, are not as long as those of the text proper. The location of the gloss is strange since it belongs to the text 6 lines before. If Dubno himself had forgotten to write it earlier he would hardly have placed it in the middle of a sentence, but right after it. One must conclude therefore that he followed a source that had the gloss in this way. As the commentary itself gives an explanation to the passage, which is in part the same as that of the gloss, it is unlikely that the gloss belongs to the commentary. Normally, errors of writing are totally deleted, and if the error is corrected immediately, the correct word is written just after. If the error is only discovered later on in the proofreading, the correct word is written on top of the deleted word. It is worth noting that the commentary marks the comments both by number and lemma. The layout of text and commentary is traditional as in printed editions of the Talmud. Presumably, the numbering came later, since the commentator would not mark it by both lemma and number, unless it was done to make the commentary more easy to read. Page shift is marked by a catchword but only if a column ends at the bottom of the page. The whole copying is meticulous and carefully prepared and it appears clear and homogeneous in spite of the corrections. The somewhat uneven form of the end lines, a result of the copyist never dividing the words, does not mar the copying.

## 1.4. Manuscripts and Editions

Although the main focus of this monograph is the Hs. Cod. Sim. Hebr. 93, it will add to the knowledge about it to list some of the different mss. and editions. They are listed according to the year of copying or printing and I have tried, briefly, to note a few of the main differences between them.





The watermarks were photographed by me in small segments from different pages in Iggeret. Mascha van Dort graciously assembled the segments to form a nearly complete watermark.



One of the Dutch Pro Patria watermarks resembling the one in Iggeret, although Pro Patria is placed to the left. Courtesy Stichting Papiergeschiedenis Zaanstreek 'De Hollander'.

1. **1800 ca. Cod. Sim. Hebr. 93.**

Commentary by R. Eliezer bri Ashkenazi. 14 pages. Copied by Salomo (ben Joel from) Dubno. In the following referred to as **Cod. Sim.**

2. **1820 ca. Ms. Heb. 8° 744 JNUL<sup>16</sup>.**

In the following referred to as **Ms. 1820**

The ms. belongs to The National Library of Israel and the catalogue has the heading in Hebrew: Jochanan ben Zakkai (ascribed to him). *Iggeret*: With a commentary by R. Betzalel br"i Ashkenazi. Germany, around 1820. Hasty German handwriting”.

The pagination of the manuscript is 1-6 (12 pages), and the letter is 7.5 pages, while the commentary follows on p. 4b – 6b.

A cursory glance reveals that the text of the ms. follows the text in Cod. Sim. rather closely. It does not have a Prologue One, but only starts with Prologue Two, and it ends with the epilogues. The commentary starts at the end of page 4b and says: “Commentary by the emissary of God ... R. Eliezer br”i Betzalel”, but it is the same commentary as the one by R. Eliezer br”i Ashkenazi in Cod. Sim., so presumably the new name is a copying error. The notes in the commentary are numbered as in Cod. Sim., and it follows them very closely, but shortens them a little, and there are not as many repetitions of the marked words. Nothing is known about its provenance. The copy is very difficult and sometimes even impossible to read.

3. **1895 *Iggeret*. (Printed in) Munkacs.**

Publishing house Lazar Rokach, from Czortkow (Galizien).

In the following referred to as **Munkacs Ed.**

15 pp. + front page. Commentary by R. Eliezer br”i Ashkenazi on each page below the text of *Iggeret*.

On the front page, there is some information about *Iggeret*. R. Jochanan is called “the holy godly tanna”, and Rabban Gamliel is called Hazaken (the elder) Hanasi. It is mentioned that *Iggeret* “was until now hidden and concealed in manuscript and has never before been printed. And now it is brought to the printing house for the first time at the expenses of the young (humble) man, our teacher the rabbi Elazar ben R. Meir Rokeach, may his light shine, from Czortkow”.

Page 1 starts with Prologue Two. The text is the same as in Cod.Sim. with only minor differences and a few additions. For example, the town is not Gogin but Kovi”n, Leopold and not Leopolt, fan and not von as in Cod. Sim. There is also a line in parenthesis: “The publisher says to see the end of the letter for by whom and to whom this letter was sent”. Then comes the rest of prologue II.

In a new paragraph and divided by a big sign, six lines are printed: “God, please remember and do good for those that are good in their hearts that allowance was given to me, the youngest of thousands, to copy from the

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<sup>16</sup> The former name was Jewish National and University Library, JNUL, in Jerusalem, and I keep the original reference.

treasure of books of my relative, the rabbi the pious Rabbi ARI' LEIBISH ROKEACH, may he live long and happily, the president of court of the holy city of MAGROV, may the Lord find it well, son of the pious and holy rabbi, our master and teacher, FROM BELZ, may his memory be for a blessing, may he abide in paradise. 25th day in the month of Tevet in the section [weekly portion Exodus 6.6] 'I will redeem you with an [outstretched] arm' in the year of קבל רג ת עמרך לפק [kbl RN" T amkha lp" k - by the abbreviated era = 1890]<sup>17</sup>. MAGROV<sup>18</sup>.

This means that Elazar ben R. Meir Rokeach saw the manuscript already in 1890 and that it belonged to his relative Rabbi Ari' Leibish Rokeach in Magrov, son of the master from Belz. R. Meir and R. Ari seem to be brothers, so Ari was Elazar's uncle (father's brother).

Page 3 starts with "Miguf hakhtav" followed by 1. Introduction and then the letter itself. The relevant commentaries are printed at the bottom and the letter ends with both epilogues. But Josef ben Shimon Hapartzi in Cod. Sim. is called Josef ben Shama hpr"p here. I am not aware of what this abbreviation means.

The reference numbers to the Commentary are consecutive from 1 to 14; however, it starts again on p. 3 with numbers from 1 to 51, and on p. 10 with numbers 1 to 17, and again (on p. 15) notes 1 to 3, so all in all it adds up to 85. It is not clear why there is this division. There are no natural sections. The counting in Cod. Sim. has the same order from 1 to 14 and then anew from 1, but it ends with 71. Still, both have 85 comments all in all. On p. 9 in Commentary note 50, it is written, "And it is possible that it alludes to the name of the known someone (leshem peloni hajadua)," whereas Cod. Sim. has "the name of the Christian Jeshua (leshem hanotzri Jeshua)".

There seem to be so many divergences from the Cod. Sim. that it is unlikely that both are copied from exactly the same ms. On the other hand, the differences are not very great, so they seem to have different, but very close source manuscripts.

#### 4. 1907 Mikhtav R. Jochanan ben Zakkai miJerushalaim

In: *Sippurei mechokkekei datei hanotzrim*. pp. 50-60. Brooklyn, New York, The Hebrew Publishing Co. [no date]. In the following referred to as **Sippurei**.

According to Eisenstein in *Otzar Midrashim* p. 214, these data are false and the volume appeared in London in 1905/06. According to Friedberg: *Bibl. Lex.* (Tel Aviv 1954) p. 762 no. 548 it was printed in Krakow in 1907.

*Iggeret* is called Mikhtav in the heading, and it starts by stating that R. Jochanan ben Zakkai wrote these words at the request of Rabban Gamliel

<sup>17</sup> "Receive (you God) the singing/joy of your people" from Tefillat Shacharit: Anah beKoach. This information is from Israel Sendrovic.

<sup>18</sup> I cannot find out where this town is situated.

Hanasi to Josef ben Shama in the city of Roma (not Josef ben Shimon Harpartzi as in Cod. Sim.) and the date. A new heading says “Miguf hakhtav” and cites the first lines of the Introduction, but says Jacob and not Israel as in Cod. Sim. Only then comes the title, HaIggeret, and the rest of the Introduction, followed by the letter itself. This order and wording are very much like the Munkacs Ed., but not totally the same.

The text follows more or less closely the one in Cod. Sim. There are 75 short notes explaining mostly ‘small numbers’, so they are not by R. Eliezer unless most of the notes are very shortened and some are excluded, as, for example, note 50 in both Cod. Sim. and Munkacs Ed. Both Epilogues are printed at the end of the text. This means that neither Jacob van Dort nor R. Eliezer bri Ashkenazi are mentioned at all because neither of the two prologues has been printed.

5. **1915 Otzar Midrashim.** Eisenstein (ed.) pp. 214-218. New York. (The source is given in parentheses: *Sippurei mechokkekei datei hanotzrim*). In the following referred to as **Eisenstein**.

Eisenstein has no commentary, only a short introduction and six short notes explaining *mispar katan* (small numbers). It is not totally identical with the version in *Sippurei* although he presents it as the source. For example, he omits the Prologues and only cites them in his own foreword and then starts with the Introduction. He also mentions the Munkacs edition. Amusingly, he writes, “it was written by a miraculous editor (*mechaber pili*), and he hanged himself from a big oak *k’ribaz*...”. The phrase is a metaphor meaning that he based his words on a great authority, namely R. Jochanan ben Zakkai.

6. **1929 Igereth Rabbin Jochanan ben Sakkai.** Edited by A.I. Dziubas, Antwerp. 112 pp. In the following referred to as **Dziubas**.

It is based on a manuscript from the Belzer Rebbe. Dziubas adds an exceedingly long commentary called Beer Jitzchak after his own second name.

The text of the letter and the commentary mostly follow Munkacs but sometimes it is closer to Cod. Sim. Dziubas cites nearly verbatim the text on page one in Munkacs from Prologue II (Romi), but he does it in his own foreword on p. 5, not before the text of the letter itself. The only difference is Kovin, not Kovi”n as in Munkacs. On p. 13 Dziubas writes a small introduction about author, sender and receiver in Roma (not Romi). Only then comes Miguf hakhtav (as in Munkacs) before the first lines from the Introduction. Just before the rest of the Introduction, he writes Haiggeret as in Munkacs.

The commentaries of Dziubas are so many and so long that on most pages there are only a few lines from *Iggeret* and the comments by R. Eliezer, the rest being his own words. He has tried to find all expressions and quotes

from the Bible, Talmud, medieval polemics and the like that are parallel to expressions in *Iggeret*, but they do not really add to the understanding of the text.

The reference numbers to the Commentary by R. Eliezer br"i Ashkenazi are not the same as in Cod. Sim. and Munkacs with, all in all, 85 comments; in Dziubas there are only 66. He does not use catchword, lemma, such as Cod. Sim. and Munkacs Ed., only numbers (Hebrew letters). Some of the comments in the three editions are very similar, sometimes they differ. For example, note 50 in Cod. Sim. and note 48 in Dziubas both say, "leshem hanotzri Jeshua," which alludes to the name of the Christian Jeshua, whereas Munkacs writes "leshem peloni hajadua," alluding to the name of the known somebody.

7. **1920s? Sefer Iggeret d'rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai. 22V 12830 JNUL.** According to the JNUL systematic catalogue, the year of print is (תרפ"?) in the 1920s with 32 pp. Piment, Warsaw. In the following referred to as **1920s?**

*Iggeret* and commentary by R. Eliezer br'i Ashkenazi and a new one, Kol Jehuda, קול יהודה (sic).

No date or place stated. The front page states the title and recipient and that the purpose is to strengthen the Jewish faith. One line says, *To reject the opinions of ben Koziba who made himself Messiah*. The author refers to the Munkacs edition from 1895. There is a full page Foreword (*hakdama*) where he mentions that *Iggeret* and the commentary by Eliezer was printed two or three times earlier in Galicia. Thus, the Beginning to *Iggeret* (*Peticha haiggeret*) with Prologue Two, but not exactly as in Cod. Sim., follows on a new page. Here Leopold is with a d (ד) and the surname van Dort is very hard to read, but says something like van Dara, and R. Eliezer is called Elazar.

The commentary by R. Eliezer is rather close to the one in Cod. Sim., although there are 86 entries compared to the 85 in Cod. Sim. The modern extensive commentary, Kol Jehuda, is very long, much longer than the letter and the first commentary and ends with two full pages called News (*chidushim*). The layout is as a Talmud text with *Iggeret* in the middle and the two commentaries on the sides.

8. **1932 Warsaw. S 22V 12832. JNUL.**

Information notes: Commentary by R. Eliezer and *Kol Jehuda* by harav, author of *Tiferet Banim* al Masekhet Avot. Second edition [of no. 7?]. Warsaw, Defus Feder. 32 pp. Very close to no. 7, but not the same end page. Based on the Munkacs edition.

9. **1935 Warsaw. S 37A 487. JNUL.** Information note: Commentary by R. Eliezer and modern commentary: Kol Jehuda. Third edition.

10. **1965 Jerusalem. 65 A 1606 JNUL.** Information note: In Shik, Moshe:

*Sefer Likutei morenu harav Moshe Shik*. Photocopy of Munkacs edition.

11. 1968 New York. 71A 914 JNUL. Haim Halevi Berman (ed.), son of the author of *Kol Jehuda* (cp. no. 8) Moshe Jehuda Leib Halevi Berman. Another son, Gershon, published the book after the death of the editor<sup>19</sup>.

### Commentaries to *Iggeret*

**Ms. Krupp 1344.1 1888** Belongs to Michael Krupp, Jerusalem<sup>20</sup>. Fragment of a Hebrew ms.

The fragment consists of pp. 21 - 26 (with Hebrew letters as numbers), 5-1/2 double pages (= 11 pages), also numbered 1 to 6.

The text consists of two commentaries, *Perush Maspik* (Sufficient Explanation) and *Beur* (Commentary), following each other alternately, with six pieces - mostly one to two pages - from *Perush Maspik* and five much smaller texts from *Beur*, three to six lines each. Both texts are numbered in paragraphs and are commentaries to the same main text.

The *Beur* is numbered in paragraphs 65 to 84 in Hebrew letters and ends with *Selik haperush*. It is the same text as the commentary, *Perush Iggeret*, by Rabbi Eliezer bri Ashkenazi to *Iggeret Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai*. The text in *Beur* corresponds with *Perush Iggeret* paragraphs 52 to 69. It is clearly the same commentary, although differently numbered and with small differences.

The *Perush Maspik* is numbered in paragraphs from 94 (beginning with the last 4 lines of 93) to 154. It is clearly a longer commentary to *Iggeret Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai* than both *Beur* and *Perush Iggeret*. The manuscript seems to have been copied and written by Wolf, who added his own commentary – *Perush Maspik*. This can be deduced from the fact that the fragment concludes with the following words (in my translation):

“These are the words of the commentator with the help of Him that “graciously endowed man with knowledge” (citation from prayer), Jisakhar Avraham ben R. Wolf (?), of blessed memory, in the year of ‘Have compassion on Zion’ (= 1888)”.

“This letter was written in the holy city of Jerusalem in the year three thousand and eight hundred and thirteen in the month of Kislev after the creation of the world, and this writing was sent by (the hand of ) the pupil Jannai the Small, the pupil of R. Gamliel Hanasi from ? (d ?) the noble Josef, God’s prince among the faithful of the chosen people in the city of Rome. May Hashem protect them, Amen<sup>21</sup>”.

<sup>19</sup> I have not seen the last four editions.

<sup>20</sup> Great thanks to Dr. Abraham David, formerly Head Researcher of Hebrew Manuscripts at The Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, who helped me with the information about Michael Krupp and the personal contact with him in January 2007. Also great thanks to M. Krupp, who provided me with a photocopy of his manuscript.

<sup>21</sup> The text is not exactly the same as in Cod. Sim.

## “Secret” Copies of *Iggeret*

Judging from the differences between the printed and the two unprinted editions (No. 1 from 1800 and No. 2 from 1820) plus the two commentaries to *Iggeret* from 1888, it must have had a “secret” life. They all follow the same text quite closely, but the differences point to a longer history than just a few years. The interesting span of years is from 1800 to 1895, since all the following editions are based on the Munkacs ms. Both *Iggeret* and the 1820 version are from the Ashkenazi area, since the last one is written in “hasty German handwriting” according to the description by the JNUL. The name on the Krupp manuscript from 1888 is given as Jisakhar Avraham ben R. Wolf, an Ashkenazi name, so *Iggeret* must have been circulating in this world. Unfortunately, it does not tell us when the first version of this manuscript was written.

## 1.5. Spelling Differences Between the Editions

A comparison between differences in spelling of a few key words in the mss. 1 to 7 might give some new information. I have omitted the rest of the editions because they most likely repeat the spelling of earlier ones. The manuscript from 1820 is so difficult to read that I cannot list it in all categories. For the sake of clarity, I list the editions in a short version.

1. 1800 ca. Cod. Sim.
2. 1820 ca. Ms.1820.
3. 1895 Munkacs Ed.
4. 1907 Sippurei.
5. 1915 Eisenstein.
6. 1929 Dziubas.
7. 1920s 1920s

<b>Gogin</b> גוגין	1. Only ms. Sim. None of the names are close to Cochin!
<b>Kogn</b> קוגן	2.
<b>Kovin</b> קובין	6. 7.
<b>Kovi”n</b> קובי”ן	3.
<b>Israel</b>	1. 2. Only ms. Sim. and ms. 1820.
<b>Jacob</b>	3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

It is possible that the two early mss. refer to Israel to include all of Israel, that is, all Jews.

<b>Shimon</b> שמעון	1. Only ms. Sim.
<b>Shama</b> שמעא	3. 5. 6. 7.
שמעה	4.

<b>hapartzi</b> הפרצי	1. Only ms. Sim. The meaning is unclear.
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**hprp** הפרפ 5.  
**hprp'** הפרפ' 4.  
**hpr"p** הפרפ"ק 3. 6. 7.

**Lepolt** לעפאלט 1. 2. **Only ms. Sim. and ms. 1820.**  
**Lepold** לעפאלד 3. 7.  
**Leopold** לעאפאלד 6.

**von** פון 1. **Only ms. Sim.**  
**van** פאן 2. 3. 6.

**Dort** דארט 1. 2. 3. 6.

**bri** ברי 1. 2. **Only ms. Sim. and ms. 1820.**  
**br"i** בר"י 3. 6. 7.

From this list one could conclude that the two early manuscripts are the most close, but since I have not studied ms. 1820 in detail, and some of it is impossible to read, it is not safe to assume this. Cod. Sim. is the most noteworthy in its spelling: it is singular in its spelling four times, and three times it coincides with ms. 1820.

The Haskalah journal *Hameassef* from Shvat 1790 spells Cochin as Koshin קושין and Leopold as לעאפאלד so this is presumably the correct spelling.

## 1.6. The History of the Research

Very few scholars have discussed *Iggeret*.

Jehuda David **Eisenstein** published the letter in 1915 from the 1906 edition in *Sippurei* and gave a short description of the contents<sup>22</sup>. He is of the opinion that the author is fictitious, but that the nucleus of the letter is very old and from a time when the Jews lived so close to the Christians that it was necessary to warn the Jews against them. He also states that there are many later additions, especially themes from Jewish mysticism with allegories, *gematria*, and 'mispar katan', small numbers. But he does not discuss the letter thoroughly so it does not add any new knowledge.

Abraham Isaac **Dziubas** wrote a whole book in Hebrew, with and about the letter, and published it in 1929<sup>23</sup>. He added a lengthy commentary, called Beer Jitzchak. In his Introduction (p. 3-12) he writes that he wants to explain all the words of the letter by giving references to parallel expressions from a wealth of

<sup>22</sup> J.D. Eisenstein: *Otzar Midrashim*, New York, 1915, pp. 214-217.

<sup>23</sup> A.I. Dziubas: *Igereth Rabbin Jochanan ben Sakkai*. Antwerpen 1929. 112 pages.

Jewish sources, namely Tanakh, the two Talmudim, midrashim, Zoharim, Magen Avot of Rashbatz<sup>24</sup> and more. He also tries to explain away all the historical inconsistencies and even gives a historical overview of the period. He does not tell where and how he got hold of the manuscript, but this happened during the First World War when he was on the run somewhere in Eastern Europe because of battles between Russian and German armies. He mentions that after his work on the manuscript he saw two printed editions, namely Munkacs 1895 and the text in *Sippurei* 1907. Apart from these two editions he has no other information. His version of *Iggeret* is not identical but still very close to the text in Munkacs Ed.

Dziubas considers the letter to be authentic, written in the year 53. In his Afterword, he explains (p. 110-112) the many later expressions and elements by saying that the letter was originally written in Aramaic and later translated into Hebrew and possibly copied many times before the manuscript came into his hands. His uncritical approach means that his book does not add to the understanding of the letter and its background.

In 1944 Dziubas published his memoirs in Hebrew called “Memories from my youth up until today”<sup>25</sup>. During the First World War he lived as best he could under occupation, alternately by Russian and German troops. He says on p. 28 that he met a neighbor whose friend had copied an important manuscript, and now Dziubas himself was allowed to copy it, namely *Iggeret*, but that is all the information he gives.

In a review of Dziubas’ book, Rabbi Dr. A. **Marmorstein** totally rejects the possibility of the *Iggeret* being genuine<sup>26</sup>. He finds that the author “possessed some historical and chronological knowledge, which one does not generally find in a man who can copy four printed pages of Kabbalistic stupidities. Yet, he studied the chronologies of Abraham Zacut, David Gans and Jechiel Heilperinn. His Christian material was derived from the rich polemical and apologetical literature of the Middle Ages”.

Marmorstein calls the commentator Eliezer B.Y. Aschkenazy; it is unclear how he arrives at changing br”i into B.Y. Furthermore, he writes, “A learned man, Emanuel Jacob von Dort (?), came to a small town in Hungary (now Czechoslovakia) and assured would-be buyers that he brought this document from ‘the Hebrew treasures which are heaped up in Rome’”<sup>27</sup>. Consequently, Marmorstein must think that the town is not Cochin in India but something like Kovin in Eastern Europe<sup>28</sup>. He further writes that von Dort came in order to sell the manuscript, but nowhere in *Iggeret* is there any hint of these claims,

24 R. Shimon ben Tsemach Duran, living 1361-1444 in Spain, a polemic against Christianity and Islam.

25 The English title is *Sichronot. An Autobiography by Rabbi A. I. Dziubas*, London, 64 pp.

26 *The Jewish Guardian* from 25th July, 1930 (p. 10): “A Letter by Rabban Jochanan ben Zakka”. Marmorstein (1882-1946) was a noted European rabbinic scholar of Hungarian origin and he taught at Jews’ College, London, from 1912 to his death.

27 He does not explain why he mentions these two countries.

28 I have tried via Google to find a town in Eastern Europe with a name like Gogin, Kogin, Kovin or Kozin or something like it, but I only found a Kozin close to Kaliningrad and Lithuania and one Kozin south of Kiev. Also a Kozin north east of Lvov, which is situated south west for Dubno, according to Stetl Finder. I do not know if Marmorstein was aware of a specific place with that name or if he only surmised there existed one.

and Marmorstein does not elaborate. Later he writes that style and language alone speak against genuineness, as the language of the letter is the same as the Hebrew used “by Rabbis in Bohemia or Moravia in the eighteenth century”. He acknowledges that the author of *Iggeret* has some scholarship. He writes that it is more than probable that the letter is directed against Jacob Frank and Frankism, and if so, the author might be Eleazar Fleckeles (1754-1826), a rabbi in Moravia and Bohemia, later in Prague. “His style and knowledge resemble our letter” and the “most zealous opponent of Frankish culture and Frankism was Eleazar Fleckeles, an author of many works”. Against this, it can be said that Fleckeles “was outspoken enough in his sermons”, but that an explanation could be that the censor of Hebrew books in Prague “would have opened his eyes widely at such a presentation of earliest Christianity”. Marmorstein, too, does not read the letter as a whole and only discusses excerpts of it, but he is totally right in his rejections of its antiquity.

In 1940, Ernst **Percy** published a study and a translation into Swedish of a part of the letter<sup>29</sup>, based on the *Sippurei* version. He excluded the beginning of the letter dealing with the Creation, the Fall, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, partly because he considers the text about Christian teaching and the warning against it to be the important part, partly because the excluded passage is filled with number mysticism that “gives the interpretation great difficulties” (p. 185). The reason for his interest in the letter - provided it IS genuine - is that it proves that Jews really had as hostile feelings for early Christianity “as The New Testament let us expect to find” (p. 184). He finds many traits in the text that hint at a genuine letter, but also many that point in the opposite direction. Thus, he wavers between the two opinions, but is inclined to believe that the letter is genuine. Paradoxically, both the Jewish Dziubas and the Christian Percy are guided by preconceived opinions, although Percy is in doubt. But he cannot use this doubt in his interpretation because he does not analyse the text in its totality.

In 1980 in my unpublished doctoral dissertation,<sup>30</sup> I concluded that the text was a whole with no later additions and interpolations contrary to the assessments of earlier researchers, and therefore the letter should be placed in a much later historical period. The details from my dissertation are now incorporated into my analysis of the letter in the present book.

My second doctoral dissertation<sup>31</sup> was inspired by my interest in Jewish responses to Christian polemics against Judaism, as well as by my inability to place and date *Iggeret*. The relevant results of that work are also integrated into this book.

In 1992 Meir Bar-Ilan discussed some aspects of *Iggeret* in his article “Books

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29 E. Percy: “Miktab R. Johanan Bæn Zakkai Mijerusalem”. In: *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* V, 1940 pp. 184-205.

30 *Jødedommens forhold til kristendommen belyst ved kilder fra Talmud Babli og Hs. Cod. Sim. Hebr. Nr. 93. I+II* (126+78 pp.). University of Copenhagen 1980.

31 The Danish version *Skjold og Sværd* was finished in September 1988 and printed in 1990. The English version, slightly revised and with the Hebrew texts, is: *Shield and Sword. Jewish Polemics against Christianity and the Christians in France and Spain from 1100-1500*. Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 8. J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1993.

from Cochin”<sup>32</sup>.

Bar-Ilan argues that *Iggeret* was composed in Cochin in India because he sees many direct quotations from the work *Divrei Gad Ha-Hozeh*, which he claims only existed in Cochin. He quotes a list of words which *Iggeret* and *Divrei Gad Ha-Hozeh* have in common, but the examples are mostly ordinary words and phrases or quotations from the Bible<sup>33</sup>. More importantly, since the order of the words in the two works does not correspond at all, there is no basis for this claim. He also maintains that *Iggeret* is an unclear collection of *gematria* showing neither talent nor quality<sup>34</sup>. Bar-Ilan’s argument for placing the composition of the *Iggeret* in the period of Portuguese rule from 1502 to 1663 is not convincing since the Jews of Cochin enjoyed protection by the rajah of Cochin, who granted them religious and cultural autonomy. Thus, the vehement language used in *Iggeret* cannot be explained as reflecting proselytization by the Portuguese Christians and widespread conversions.

In June 1993, I gave a lecture at the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies, where I presented my findings on the letter, and it was printed a year later with some additions, notably regarding Bar-Ilan’s work from 1992<sup>35</sup>. These findings are also included in the present book.

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32 Bar-Ilan, Meir: “Sefarim miCochin”. In: *Peamim* 52, 1992 pp. 74-100, especially 88 ff. For literature on the Jews of Cochin, see also Bar-Ilan’s bibliography pp. 97-100.

33 Ibid. p. 91.

34 Ibid. p. 92. In an email from May 2022 he now agrees that it is from the 18th Century.

35 “The Enigmatic *Iggeret R. Johanan ben Zakkai*: A Polemical Letter against Christianity”. In *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, Volume 1, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 69-75.

# 2.1. Iggeret in Hebrew<sup>36</sup>

page 1

[Prologue I]

אגרת שכתב רבי יוחנן בן זכאי בציוויו רבן גמליאל הנשיא ליהודים אשר בעיר רומי בשנת ג' אלפים ושמונה מאות ושלשה עשר לרבא עחדש כסלו בעשרים וששה בו, עם פירוש החכם השלם הכולל כמה אליעזר ברי אשכנזי שליחא דרחמנא מעיר הקודש ירושלים תובא, ונשלח האגרת הזאת על יד תלמיד ינאי הקטן מתלמידי ר' גמליאל ליד הנדיב יוסף בן שמעון הפרצי נשיא אלקים בתוך אמוני עם סגולה בעיר רומא יעא. וזאת האגרת נמצאה בעיר רומי בין גניזות ספרי לשהאק הקדמונים אשר ביד הרומיים:

36 Transcribed from Cod.Sim. Hebr. No. 93.

Two pages from Iggeret.



## [Prologue II]

האגרת הזאת נמצאת ביד איש מלומד אחד שבא לכאן ק»ק גוגין אשר לפניו היה שמו בישראל יעקב וגם כעת מכונה לעפאלט עמנואל יעקב פון דארט ואמר האיש הנזכר שזאת האגרת נמצאת בעיר רומי בין גניזות ספרים לשה»ק הקדמונים אשר ביד הרומיים וכתוב בראש המגלה בזה הלשון. האגרת הזאת כתב ר' יוחנן בן זכאי בציוות רבן גמליאל הנשיא ליהודים אשר בעיר רומי בשנת ג' אלפים ושמנה מאות ושלש עשר ללב»ע בחודש כסליו בעשרים ושישה בו, והיות שכאן נמצא בעת ההיא שליחא דרחמנא מעיר הק' ירושלים תוב»ב ה»ה החכם השלם הכולל כמה» אליעזר ברי אשכנזי וקראה את המגלה הזאת ופירש כל הדברים אשר בה כפי מה שנראה לו:

## [1. Exordium = Introduction]

שמעו אלי בני אברהם יצחק וישראל עם סגולה בכס בחר ה' אלקי כל הארץ אשר שמו נורא בגוים והוא יברך אתכם בשלום כאשר דבר כי הוא יעשה בוודאי אשר אמר,

זכרו ועשו והזהרו במעשיו ובתורתו הק' הואיל החוש הראייה מביא לידי זכרון על כן אכתוב לכם שורש ממעשי ה' כי נורא המה, ואף שנסתרו» לה' וגם הנגלות אשר נגלה לנו אעפ»כ נרמז לנו בטעמי שני גירושין ופשטא קטן בסוד גדול ונורא,

שלאחר (א) שני גירושין תפשט הקטן שבאומות בכל העולם ולהם יתהב רשות והרמן לילך בסוד ה' כי יראי ה' המה אשר עמם סודות וברית השם וזה הוא נמסר לנו מאבותינו איש מפי איש כדי שיהיו שארית ישראל בוהר הרקיע ולא יעשו עולה עוד, וזהו הסוד אשר נמסר לנו מתורתינו הק'.

## [2. Narratio]

בתחלה ברא אלקי הרחמים את העולם (ב) מאין שהיא שבעה ובאמירה שהיא אחדותו, (ג) והשתיף את הרחמים בדין בששת ימים מספר רחם»ד»ין וינח בשביעי

וקרא אותו(ד) שבת בסוד אמ»ת ובמלואות הדין והרחמים ברא את (ה) האדם בסוד אמת מן האד»מה (ו) נוספות חמש על אמ»ת (ז) ביד השם (ח) בצלמו ביו»ד וה»ה בקריאתם (ט) כי ה»ה הקריאה מספר יו»ד הכתובה ושניהם עולים י»ד (י) ושתי ידיים עולים שבעה כימי הבריאה, (יא) וצוה את האמת מלשמור אותו מען הדעת טוב ורע היא השם והחת, (יב) וכאחת עולים שבעה (יג) היא העין שהיא הנחש (יד) ולא תוסיף העין על האמת

(א) וכיון שראה הנחש שהאיש עומד ברחם ודין, לפי שברא בו ועולה ביד השם ואשה יוצאת מאמת הלכה לבטל את האמת לעורר עין שנחסרה ע»י בחט בכח הנחש מנחש להשאיר אותם בטוב ורע בדין ורחמים ולהאבידה מתואר אדם, וכדי שיהי» דבריו נשמעים וכן הי», והאשה לקחה את עצת המסית, ותתן גם לאישה עמה לבטל

האמת (ב) לפיכך אמרה התורה ותפקחנה עיני שניהם הוא כח השטן (ג) והי' בעירם בשתי עיניהם, (ד) אשר המה ארבע ופקרו באחדות אלקינו העולה כח לפיכך (ה) קילל הקב"ה הנחש בג' חן ובעפר ובעין ובחט כל ימי חייה,

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(ו) והוא ישופך ראש בשש בחרם ובדין, (ז) ואתה תשופנו עקב ביו"ד שהוא אחדות אלהינו באין סוף, באחרית הימים ימצאנו, ואל האשה אמר הואיל שחסרת האמת יתהפך האמת לעצב מספר אמת בעצב תלדי בנים, ואל האדם אמר הואיל ששמעת אל אשתך לבטל האמת ולאורור אדמה בעבורך (ח) לפיכך קוץ היא העין (ט) ודרדר היא שלש תצמיח לך (י) לעתיד לדבר על אל אלים באחד (יא) העולים קוץ ודרדר, (יב) שתוציא ממיני העי"ן (יג) ותשאר שלש במקום הדרדר (יד) בזיעת אפיד תאכל לחם היא יה צור עולמים, (טו) עד שובך אל האמת באדמה כי ממנה לקחתה, (טז) כי עפר אתה היא החט ואל עפר תשוב לחט כי עבירה גוררת עבירה (יז) שתי פעמים חט עולה דל והיא העין שחסרת מאמת ונשאר בשלש (יח) ולקח השם אחדותו מאור הקדמון היא האמת, ונשאר את האדם בחט, (יט) ונתן במקום האחדות העין שנחסר מאמת כמו שנאמר ויעש אלקי לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם, ולפי זה קרא לאשתו (כ) חוה שהיא אחת על שם האחדות שנחסר על ידה וכיון שנאבד האחדות מיידם נשאר בו (כא) דם אשר היא שמנה בחט, ע"כ אמרה רבקה קצתי (כב) בחיי מפני בנות חת (כג) וזה הוא שאמר למך ילד לפצעי, (כד) ובהיות אחר חרבן בית ראשון מלואת עין בעין, אז תבא העין

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ואוי לעין שכך רואות כי אז תהי' האחדות ע"י קצת אשר בשם ישראל יכונה באחד לחרפה, ומהם באים כל הגוים הנתקעים בחית להאמין בשיקוף ח"ת על זה ציוה השם לאבינו להמול, (כה) הערל שהיא השלש ולהשאיר (כו) אברם האמת, כי (כז) אהי' אשר אהי' אמת, (כח) והוסיף לו חמש למלאותו בידו ובצלמו (כט) ומשרי לקח האחדות שנאבד ע"י האשה, ונתן במקומו חמש למלאות עיניה שחסרה (למד) ואעפ"כ שמה מורה על האחדות, ושם אבותינו מביאם

הגה

אהי' אשר אהי' אמת פ"י אחר כי אהי' פעמי' אהי' יעלא למספר תמא שהוא ג"כ במ"ק ט כמ"ק של אמת

העין שנחסר ע"י האדם לפיכך נקרא יעקב ישראל כדי שלא יקומו בחית

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ואשרי העין שרואה כל אלה כי היא (לא) אמת,

[3. Argumentatio]

ולעת עתה הושאל הנחש את הזהומא ממנה בן (לב) הנדה חת בשמו וחת בתוארה,

העולה (לג) משיח יצא מעם השם (לד) ומהווייתו הנחש אשר היא ג'כ חת מטוב ורע (לה) וחפה על האמת את מכסת שקרו לדבר בה חתימת עם האמת וכפר באחדות ובתורה אלהינו ולעג על דברי חכמינו עד מאוד, אבל אנו מקנאים קנאות ה ומסרנו אותו למיתה ע'י שופטינו מארצינו אשר העמיד עליו הקיסר מעירנו ונקבר בקבר סרוחה כדן רשע מסור והושלך מקברו כפגד מובס ונאבד מן העולם אך טומאתו נשאר בארץ, וקול זיעת הטומאה נשמע בכל מקום עמד הטומאה וכותב ספרים לאין קץ על מעשיו שלא ה' מעולם וקראו את שמו (לו) משיח אשר היא העין אשר תלעג לאב בטומאת הנגע (לז) ביה בשש

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ואומרים שהוא בא למלאות דברי תורה, והוא ה' בן סורר ומורה להכות (לח) בשש הטומאה את ששים ריבוי אותיות הטהור שש בשש, ונתן תורה חדשה אשר בדה מלב טומאתו (לט) להחליף האחדות בשקץ ומה לי להאריך בטומאה כי אסור להסתכל בצורתו ובהויותו, אך זאת תדעו אחינו בני ישראל המפורים באומות אל תאמינו לאנשי הפושעים הנקראים שלוחים (מם) הנרמזים בעין הרע כי המה חוטאים ומחטיאים לרבים (מא) והואיל שהטומאה הגביר יד ע'כ חזקו דתם (מב) בטורה באה' אשר אה' באמת, וחדלו לכם חלילה לכם מאדם אשר נשמה באפו כי (מג) במה נחשב הוא מן הפושעים להעמיד השלש באמת, אך הואיל שהאחדות נחסר ממנו (מד) נשאר מת מאמת וחת מחט אנושי מזוהמת הנחש וכל הנוגע (מה) בו יטמא טומאת עולמות אשר אין לו תקנה (מו) ושלוחי המות תקראם את שמם הרקב אנשי חרם ותה' מקנאים קנאת ה לעקור שרשם מן הארץ שבל יעמדו עוד וזאת ידוע תדעו שגם דבריהם השקר יתפזרו בארץ כמוץ לפני הרוח כאחד (מז) הנדרף בעין להוביש את כל הארץ בטומאה עד איזה זמן אשר נטמן מעינינו אזי יבטיל ויסיר השם את

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הטומאה מארץ וה' השם למלך על כל וה' הוא אחד ושמו אחד (מח) שהמה חת הקדושה ואשרי המחכה לו באמת, הוזהרו מפטר חמור הנדחה השה פוורה אל תשמע אל דבריו דברי שוא רק תערפו אותו בקשה ערפו בכל מיני עריפה ודחיה שבעולם, ושם עמכם איש צורך היהודי איש משחית מתלמידי ר גמליאל הנשיא (מט) חומץ בן יין שלש בן עין מתלבש בלבוש כתנות עור בוזהמת הנחש ושמו ה' לפנים בישראל שאול אכן שאול ואבדון עמו ועם דבריו, ועדיין קרא אותו ימ' ש פועל אות לאמור שהוא יכול לפעול אותות ומופתים ואינו כן כי הכל עושה בכח ובפעולו השטן והוא פועל עות אשר לא יוכל לתקן רשע ופושע יקרא את שמו הרקב לדבר על השם ועל תורתו סרה לאמור ננתקה את אמרותימו ונשליכו ממנו עבותימו אבל יושב בשמים ישחק, והשם ילעג למו והנחש אשר בחר ישכנו (נון) בלי לחש בלי השגחות עיני הראות כל לבטל לשון הרע כי אין לו יד בנחלת השם מות הוא ולא חיים שרף הוא ולא מלאך כי קליפות הטומאה מסטרא האחרי נדבק בו לדבר כל אלה בשם (נא) אמת והנוקם בו הן במיתה הן בגופו מקנא את השם יקרא וברית שלו ינתן לו ולרעו אחרי כי הוא מחלל השם בפרהסיא, ואין לו חלק בבני ישראל כי הוא מסית ומדיח את עם ה לילך אחרי אלהים אחרים, והתורה אשר לא ידעו אבותיהם מעולם, ואוי לעין הרואה את כל אלה הוזהרו מדבריו כי חכמת הטומאה בו אשר כסה בטומאת הקרי כי ספרי הקדושים מטמאין את הידים והרגלים הרוצים לילך בטומאה, וחיים המה למוצאיהם בחכמת השם ובסם המיתה ההולך בהם בטומאה

לטמא את גופו ונשמטו, ואין כל אדם יוכל להשיג ולברור את חכמת השם כי אם ע"י מתנת השם, ע"כ בקשו את שם אלקינו ביראה ובאהבה שיתן לכם לב לעשות את מצותיו ולעסוק בתורתו הקדושה בטהרה כמו שציוה לכם בשמו הרועה הנאמן,

#### [4. Refutatio]

ראו איך הנביא מזהיר אותנו באחרית הנבואה וזכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר ציויתי אותו בחורב על כל ישראל חוקים ומשפטים לא לבד לשמוע רק לעשות, כי לא הידיעה עיקור אלא המעשה עסקו בתורה שבכתב ובע"פ כי זה ראה יעקב אבינו בחלומו שנאמר ויקח מאבני המקום ומיעוט אבני שטים, וזה הוא שתי תורה והי' לאחדים תחת ראשו שנאמר ויקח את האבן כי לא שתי תורות המה הס מלהזכיר רק תורה אחת הנראית כשני פנים פנים ואחור, כי דברי חכמי' כמסמורו' לנטיעה של תורה ובכתב, ואם תקימו את דברי שתיהן אשר אלו ואלו דברי אלקי' חיים אזי תזכו לעלות בסולם אשר ראשו מגיע שמימה ומלאכי אלקי' עולים ויורדים בו להביאנו אל המקום אשר ברא השם להחיותנו עד עולמי עולמים, וזאת לכם לדעת כדי להבין את כל אלה דעו שהשונא מין אנושי הנחש הקדמוני באה בתחלה בעלילה אל נשאת פרי אדם והסית נגד ציות השם כדי להאביד עץ האדם מלהביא בכורים אלו ישראל להשם, ואחר זאת כל ימי תהו היתה מסית ומדיח את זרע אנוש ומעט מהם השכילו בשכל הטבע או בעזר השם ולא שמעו אל דברי ארורה מכח פעולו' השם, עד שבא (נב) משה אשר מספרו כמספר שבטי ישראל, (נג) העולה מן המים אשר המה אמת, ונתן התורה בטוב חוקים ומצות כמספר של איברי וגידו האדם, בשני (נד) ידים ברמ"ח ובשס"ה העולים כ"ח כדי לשמור את נפש האדם מזוהמת הנחש,

#### [5. Narratio]

וכשהלך משה ליקח נעשרת הדברות אשר המה חצי להשם וחצי לאדם אשר עליהם עומד' התורה כולה הלך המסית להסית את ישראל (נה) באחד, כי אהרן אחד, ועגל אחד ואמר בדעתם לבלבלם לא זה אל נכר כי אם אחדות אלהיכם, וכיון שבא משה וראה שעשה הנחש, הלך וביטלו באש (נו) אשר היא אחד ופיזור אותו במים לבטלו באמת לאמר לא זה אל אמת, וציוה באזהרת גדולו' לבל יעשו עוד כזה וכל הנביאים הזהירו לישראל כל ימיהם על זה וכיון שראה הנחש שהתורה והמצות נגד עצתו, הביא השטן בתוארו ובצלמו את האיש צר ואויב הרע

הזה להשחית את חלק השם בתורתו ובמצותיו, והעמיד את דבריו הטומאה אל דברי התורה הקדושה כדי להגביר טומאתו על ישראל

#### [6. Argumentatio I]

ועתה אחינו בני ישראל אל תאמינו לחלומותיו ולדבריו דברי השטן להסית אתכם לאור /לאמור/ ראשונים לא בדנו /בחנו/ וסברו את דברי השם אבל אנו יודעים את התורה ואת עמקי סודותיה, ע"כ נלכה ונעבדה עבודה אחרת, אל תשמעו להם לטמא בהם רק השמד תשמידון מהר מהאדמה כי דברי התורה והמצות השם לא ימושו עד עולם כי לא איש אל ויכזב וכן אדם ויתנחם, ע"כ הזהרו מאנשי הנחש כי עקיצתן

עקיצת עקרב ולחישתן לחיש, שרף וכל דבריהם כנחלי אש של גיהנם ואבדון, שוא ושקר, חזו וראו, איך שהזהיר אתכם ירמי' הנביא מחטאת (נז) הבא מיהודא בשלש, אשר היא כתובה בעט (נח) היא העין הרע, (נט) ברזל ביד העומדת על יד התורה אך היא על לוח הברזל מלבם כי כה אמר ה' ארור הגבר אשר יבטח באדם, (סמך) ושם בשר זרועו ועיניו מן השם יסור לבו, ולא העמיד הנביא לבד דבריו בארור, רק והי' ככרעך בערבה אשר לא יראה טוב זהו התורה שנאמר כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם, והמה לא יראו את הטוב הצפון לצדיקים לעתיד, אך ישכנו לעולם בארץ מליחה חרדים במדבר בבאר שחת כי אנשי דמים ומדמה המה ואין להם חלק בשם אלקי ישראל, אבל ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בה' כי הוא לא יראה חמימו. הגיהנם כי מקוה ישראל השם ולא אדם, והואיל שישראל מקוה על ה' לבד יהי', יהי' השם מקותו לטהר אותם, מטומאות הנחש,

#### [7. Argumentatio II]

ועזבי ה' יבושו והסרים מתורתו יכתבו בארץ צלמות, שאול ואבדון על אשר עזבו את (סא) מקור מים חיים האמת הנותן ביד ה' ומי שיעזוב התורה עזב גם ה', אשר הוא אלקינו מושיענו רופאינו ותהלתינו, והמה אומרים (סב) איה דבר ה' בעין הרע, יבא נא כי כלה כל דברי תורה ונביאים בשיקוף משומם המשקצים

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ומשממים את כל הארץ באבן נגף, ובצור מכשל בעון כליון באון גליון,

#### [8. Argumentatio III]

חלילה לכם אחינו להאמין בזה, כי תורה אשר היא דבר אלקינו יקום לעולם באין סוף והמורדים האלה נתשו את מים קרים נחלים על עוף/עוף/ זה הוא ישראל העופים בגלות והתורה מגינה עליהם ושכחו בודון לביהם את אלקי ישראל, ולשוא יקטרו, ויכשילים בדבריהם שביל אשר הי' מעולם זה התורה ללכת נתיבות דרך לא סלולה, ויאמרו לכו ונחשבו על (סג) ירום יה זהו התורה והמצוות אשר צוה ה' לנו וזהו כסא כבודו רם ונשא מחשבת זרות, הגם שאנו יודעים שלא תאבד תורה מכהן ועיצה מחכם ודבר מנביא אעפ"כ לכו ונכה את התורה בלשון הרע (סד) בזהמת הנחש לפרש אותה כאשר עם לבבינו להרע ולא להטיב, ואל נקשיבה לדברי תורה שבעל פה, ראו מה שהתורה הקדושה מתאוננת לפני ה' ואומרת הקשיבה ה' אלי ושמע לקול יריבי הישלים תחת טובה רעה, כי כרה שוחה לנפשי זכרי עומדי לפניך לדבר עליהם טובה, ולהגן דברי עליהם, כי אני חיים למוצאי ולכל בשר העושים ומקיימים דברי ארפה ממשובתם להשיב את חמתך מהם, לכן תן את בניהם ותלמידיהם לרעב לשמוע דבר ה' הגורם לחרב השטן, ותהיינה נשיהם אלו המאמינים בהם שכולו, ואלמנו, ואנשים המחזיקי אותם יהי' הרוגי מות מיתות עולם ובחוריהם אלו אנשי מלחמותיהם יוכו בחרב השם, תשמע זעקה מבתיהם מבית תפלתם, בטל את תועבת תפלתם בגודד המשחיתים פתאום בגודדי השטן לבלבלם, כי כרה שוחה ללכדינו, ופחים טמנו לרגלי, ואתה ה' ידעת את כל עיצתם עלי למות לאמור התורה חסר, וניתן במקומה העון כליון, וימללו מילין לצד עילאי זה תורה שבכתב, ויבלו קדישי עליונים זה תורה שבע"פ, וסברו להשניא זמנין ודת בלשונם הרע, לכן אל תכפר עוונם וחסאתם לפניך, אל תמחה, ויהי' נכשלים בכל עת אפי' עשה בהם להשמידם מתחת השמים, כי מרו בדבריך דברי חיים, ודעו שהמה ותורתיהם הכליון יגבירו על עלמא ועל עם קדישין, עד עידן עידנן וחצי עידן, ואז יתעדו מעל הארץ, והשם יטהר באש התורה את כל

הארץ, ומלכות עמו ישראל יתגבר על כל מלכות עלמא, אז ילכו כל העמים בתורת השם, ובעת ההיא, יחזיקו עשרה אנשים בכנף איש יהודי לאמור נלכו עמכם, כי שמענו כי ה' עמכם,

## [9. Refutatio]

ועתה אחינו שמעו אל דבריי דברי אמת, ואל תאמינו לאותות והמופתים

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הפושעי' האלה בנפשותיהם, כי מנסה ה' אתכם לדעת הישכם אוהבים אותו בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשיכם, אחרי ה' תלכו ואותו תיראו, ואיך ובמה תלכו ובמה תיראו, אם תשמרו את מצותיו אזי בקולו תשמעו, ותעבדו אותו ולא אחר, ובו ולא באחר תדבקו, כי הוא חלקיכם, אזי טוב לכם כל הימים, בינו נא זאת אחינו, שאנו נקראים קדושים על דעת משפט בכורה שלנו ונקראין ראשית תבואו ה', ואין בנו מום, כי יעקב איש תם ורוח הקודש מעיד עלינו כולך יפה רעיתי ומום אין בך, והואיל שאין בנו מום אין אנו נאכלים לבעלי כהני האדמה אשר המה (סה) במום וביד המשחית, לכן בא ויצא האש המכלה הזה מאיברינו להטיל בנו מום, שנהי' נאכל לאויבינו, (סו) אויבי הגשמי והרוחני, וביקש לסמא את עינינו במאור התורה, ע"כ התחזקו והוו לגברים אנשי השם כ' ה' אמר לכם עד עולם, אם אחרי תורתו ומצותיו תלכו אז ישמור את גופכם ונשמותיכם לקרא לכם תמים אתם בשם אלקיכם ולא במום, ראו מה שיעקב אבינו הזהיר אותנו ממום הרע הזה שיבא בתואר משיח אשר שבע תועבו בלבו באמרו לא יסור שבט מיהודא ומחוקק מבין רגליו עד כי יבא שילה ולו יקחת עמים, ראשי תיבו' שלו לא יש מום רע כישוע וריבת היו'ד היא האחדות, כי הוא ידבר על אחדות אלקינו, ולא יסור המום הזה מישראל עד כי יבא שילה אשר מלוכה כל עלמא דילי' הוא, ע"כ זוהרו ממום שבכם, שבל יהי' לכם למוקש, ותדבקו באלקיכם ובתורתו ובמצותיו, ואם תעשו כן אזי כל לשון אשר תקים עמכם למשפט תרשיע, כי אין להם שחר העולה אחד, כי המה משקרים האחדות, ואם תשמעו לי אזי טוב לכם בעו'ה וטוב לכם בעולם שכולו טוב, כי כולכם בכלל חלק לעה"ב, ואשריך ישראל מי כמוך עם נושע באלקים, (סז) ולא באדם, כי תשועות ה' תשועו' עולמים, או תאמר התורה, מן המצר קראתיך, ואתה ענני במרחב, ע"כ לא אירא מאדם הסמוכים על האדם כי השם בעוזרי, ואראה נקמו' בשונאי, כי טוב זה התורה חסה בך ולא באדם, כל הגוים סבבני, אבל בשמך אמילם, המה דחיתני לנפול ואתה עזרתני, כי אתה עוזי חזרתני וישועתי ובימינך

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ארים, ובימינך עשיתי חיל, לא אמות כאשר חשבו כי אחי' בגבורו' השם, לספר כל מעשיו שער ה' אני, וע' הצדיקים יבואו לה, ע"כ אמרו נא ישראל ובית אהרן ויראי השם כלא'ח, אודך כי עניתני, ותהי לי לישועה אבן מאסו הבונים היתה לראש פינה כי מה הי' ולא מאדם, והי' יעשה נפלאות בעינינו, וכשראה התורה אריכות הגלות אמרה אנא השם הושיעה נא אנא השם הצליחה נא, ורוח הקודש משיבה המתן בתי המתין עד אשר ברוך בא בשם אלקיך אזי ברכנוכם אתם כולכם מבית ה', אמרה תורה אל אדוני ויאיר לנו בגלות החושך הזה באורך ובאמתך (סח) לאסור חגיגו בעבותים עד קרנות המזבח במשיח בן יוסף אשר מיתתו יהי' לנו לחגה במלחמות גוג מגוג, ואחר זאת תאמר אלי אתה ואודך אלקי ארוממך הודו לה כי טוב, כי הראה לנו חסדו עולמות

במשיח בן דוד ושכר עוסקי ועושה תורה היא אשר נקראים תמימים בלי מום, ונתברכו באשרי, לאמור אשרי תמימי דרך ומי הוא זה ההולך בתורת ה', אלו אשר נצרו עדותיו בכל לבם לדרוש את המצות, ואם אתם עושים כן תקראו פועלי צדק ולא פועלי עוולה, כי בדרך השם הלכתם אשר ציהו לכם לעשות מצותיו עד מאוד, ע"כ התפללו אל השם שיתן לכם לב לעשות חוקותיו ולהבין דרכיהם לטוב, ואם תביטו אל מצותיו אזי לא תבושו ולא תכלמו עד עולמי עד, לכן אמרו נא כל בית ישראל אודך ביושר ללב, בלומדי אותי לשמור חגך ולא עשית כה לכל גוי כי בנו בחרת ואותנו למדת משפטי צדקיך ואם את חוקיך אשמור ידעתי כי לא תעזיבני עד מאוד ותדעו שגלותיכם יתגבר עליכם עד שיתמלא הסמאלשר ואבי כל בני עשו, (סט) וכח מלא שלו הוא גוג מגוג, (ע) ותאבד על ידי כח השם אשר היא אחדות אלוקינו, וישבר השם את (עא) הקשת משמאלו זהו חת הטומאה, והחץ אשר היא ג"כ ח הטומאה מימינו ותפיל אותו על הרי ישראל, אזי ידעו כל האמות את כבוד השם אשר הוא אלקי ישראל ולא אדם והוא הגלה את ישראל בעוונם והוא שב את שבות יעקב, והוא יתן לרחמים כל בית ישראל,

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ואז יקנא השם את שם קדשו המחולל בגוים, והי' השם לנו לאלקים עד עולם מיום ההוא והלאה כאשר יכנס השם את עמו ישראל מכל הארצות אשר הפיצם שם, ולא יוותר מהם עוד אחד שם, ולא יסתיר עוד פניו מהם, אחר אשר ישפך רוח קדשו על כל בית ישראל כי השם אלקים דיבר

[10. Peroratio = Conclusion]

אלו דברי המצפה על תשועו ישראל ומבקש לה' אלקינו על עזרתנו עזר מעט עד שיבא המורה צדק לנו לגאלינו ולמלוך עלינו עד עולם אמן סלה...

[Epilogue I]

הצעיר יוחנן בן זכאי מירושלים הכותב בשם רבינו אור ישראל ר' גמליאל הנשיא ובשם כל התלמידים הנלווים עמו וסרים למשמעתו ומקנא קנאת השם ותורתו הקדושה ועמו ישראל הקדושי' ובשם כל צדיקי עמינו אשר המה בירושלים, ונאמר שלו' לכם והשם יברך את עמו ישראל בשלו' עד עולם אמן בעיר הקדושה בירושלים שנת שלוש ואלפים ושמנה מאות ושלש עשר ו' בירח כסליו לבריאת עלמא:

[Epilogue II]

הכתב הלז נשלח על ידי תלמיד ינאי הקטן מתלמידי ר' גמליאל ליד הנדיב יוסף בן שמעון הפרצי נשיא אלקים בתוך אמוני עם סגולה בעיר רומא יע"א:

## 2.2. R. Eliezer's Commentary in Hebrew

For technical reasons ' is marked by one < and " is marked by two << .

פירוש מה"כ השליח הנזכר

זהו לשונו. נראה לי המעתיק אליעזר ברי לפרש דברים הסתומים במגלה הזאת

אחר שני גירושין וכו' רצה לומר אחר שני גלויות גלות בבל וגלות אדום תפשת (1)

- הקטן וכו' רצה לומר האומה ישראלית שנאמר בה כי אתם המעט מכל העמים:
- ברא מאין שהיא שבעה פ"י א"ן במספר קטן ז' ובאמירה שהיא אחדות פ"י (2)  
אמ"יה במ"ק אחד:
- והשתיף את הרחמים בדין וכו' עד וינח בשביעי פ"י כי ד"ן במ"ק ששת רחם (3)  
במ"ק שביעי:
- שבת בסוד אמת פ"י כי שבת ואמ"ת מספרם אחד במ"ק ט': (4)
- אדם בסוד אמת פ"י שגם אדם במ"ק ט': (5)
- נוספות חמש על אמ"ת שהיא ה' של אדמה: (6)
- ביד ה' פ"י אדמה במ"ק יד': (7)
- בצלמו וכו' פ"י כי צל"מו במ"ק כמספר קטן בידו' הה' עם הכולל: (8)
- כי הה' הקריאה פ"י הה' במלואות היא מספר יוד', ושניהם עולים י"ד ר"ל הה' (9)  
י' במ"ק עם ג' האותיות עולים יד':
- ושתי ידים עולים שבעה ר"ל יד' במ"ק ה' ומספר ב' משתי ידים הוא ז': (10)
- וצוה את האמת סוד האדם כנוכח מלשמור אותו מעץ הדעת טוב ורע היא השם (11)  
כי הוי' במ"ק עולה טוב, וכן החט' שהוא רע ג"כ מספרו כך כי את זה לעומת זה  
עשה אלקי' ועל ידי הטוב יכניע הרע שהוא החט':
- וכאחת עולים שבעה פירוש ב' פעמים י"ז עולה ל"ד שהוא ז' במ"ק: (12)
- היא העין ר"ל שעין במ"ק ז' שהיא הנחש במ"ק י"ו, וי"ו במ"ק ז': (13)
- ולא תוסיף העין על האמת פ"י ע"י החט' תוסיף העין של עון על האמת שיעלה (14)  
יחד במ"ק י"ו כמספר נחש במ"ק, --
- וכיון וכו' שהאיש עומד ברחם ודין לפי שברא בו ועולה ביד ה' כנוכח, ואשה (1)  
יוצאת מאמת פ"י כי אשה במ"ק כמ"ק של אמת לבטל וכו' פ"י הנחש הלכה  
לבטל האמת לעורר העין שנחסרה על ידם, ובמה רצתה הנחש לעורר עין על  
זה אמר בחט' ר"ל ע"י עין של עון בכח הנחש מנחש ולהשאיר אותם בטוב ורע  
בדין ורחמים ולהאבידם מתואר אד"ם פ"י שהוא בסוד האמת כנוכח, וזהו אומרו  
שיהי' דבריו נשמעים באמת, כנוכח:
- ותפקחנה עיני שניהם הוא כח השטן פ"י עיני במ"ק יד' ושני פעמים י"ד עולה (2)  
כח', וזהו אומרו עיני שניהם:
- והי' בעירם בשתי עיניהם פ"י כי שני פעמים עין' במ"ק י"ד כמספר עיר"ם במ"ק: (3)
- אשר המה ארבע ופקרו באחדות אלקינו פ"י כי עין במ"ק ז' ובמספר ב' של שני (4)  
העינים הוא ט' וכשתוסף עליו עוד ד' של מספר הארבע עינים יעלה י"ג כמספר  
אח"ד שהוא אחדות אלקינו העולה כח' פ"י אלהינו במ"ק עולה ר"א וששה  
אותיות וכולל הם עולה ר"ח:
- בגחן ובעפר בעין ובחט פ"י גחן במ"ק כמ"ק של ע"ן עם ג' אותיות, המילוי של (5)  
העין ועפר במ"ק כמ"ק חט' והיא מדה כנגד מדה על שהחטיא את האדם בעון:
- הוא יסופך ראש בש"ש בחר"ם ובר"ן, פ"י ראש במ"ק ששה כמספר ויו' (6)  
אותיות של חרם ודין, ומ"ק של חרם ודין הוא ר"ד שהוא עולה ג"כ וי"ו במ"ק:
- ואתה תשופנו עקב ב"יוד פ"י כי עקב במ"ק עולה יו"ד שהוא רמז לאחדות האין (7)  
סוף ב"ה כידוע:
- לפיכך קוץ היא העין קוץ במ"ק י"ו כמ"ק של מילוי העין עם ג' אותיות או (8)  
אפשר לומר קוץ במ"ק י"ו שהוא ז' במ"ק כמ"ק של ענ':
- ודרדר היא שלש תצמיח לך פ"י דרדר במ"ק יב' שהוא עולה במ"ק שלשה: (9)
- לעתיד לדבר על אל אלים באחד פ"י שהוא רמז לאמונת הנוצרים שיאמר על אל (10)  
אחד שהם אלים ב' אב ובן ורוח הוא הג' המיוחדים, וזה הוא אומרו על אל אלים  
באחד ר"ל אל אלים במ"ק י"ג כמספר אחד:
- העולים קוץ ודרדר פ"י כמ"ק של אל אלים הוא י"ג ומספר אחד של מה (11)  
שאומרים שהרוח מיחד האלים באחד הוא ג"כ מספר א' והוא ב' פעמים יג'

וכשתוסף עוד ב' של שני הפעמים יג' יעלה הכל יחד כמ"ק של קרן ודרדר שהוא רח' כח' השטן כנוכר:

- (12) שתוציא ממיני העין, פ"י שכל זה השלש הנזכר תוציא מן העין, שהוא ג"כ במ"ק י"ג כמספר אחד, וכל זה גורם העין לעורר העין הרע הזה:
- (13) ותשאר שלש במקום הדרדר פ"י כי הדרדר הוא י"ב וגם שלש כשתעשה ה"ב במ"ק, ואפשר שהוא רמז ל"ב תלמידי הנוצרים ולהשלש שנתפשט על ידם וזה אומרו ותשאר שלש במקום הדרדר שאחר מות הנוצרי תשאר השלש במקום הדרדר העולה י"ב שהם י"ב תלמידיו בעו"ה זה גרם החט' כנוכר בשביל שלא שמרו האמת שהוא ט' במ"ק, וע"י העונן נחסר מהאמת ז' שהוא ע" במ"ק, וגם פגמו בשבת שהוא ז', וכשנחסר הז' מאמת שהוא ט', ונשאר ב' וגרם טעות השלש בשיתוף עם האחדות כנוכר:
- (14) בזיעת אפ"ך תאכל לחם היא יה' צוד עולמים פ"י לחם במ"ק יה':
- (15) עד שובך אל האמת באדמה פ"י כי אמת במ"ק אדמה והוספות ה' היא י"ד כנוכר לעיל:
- (16) כי עפר אתה היא חט' פ"י עפר במ"ק חט':
- (17) ושתי פעמי' חט' עולה דל' והיא העין שחסרת מאמת פ"י דל' במ"ק ז' כמ"ק של ע':
- (18) ולקח וכו' מאור הקדמון פ"י אור במ"ק כמ"ק של אמת:
- (19) ונתן במקום האחדות העין פ"י שעין במילואו כמ"ק אחד:
- (20) חוה שהיא אחת פ"י אחת במ"ק אחד:
- (21) נשאר בו דם שהיא שמנה בחט פ"י במ"ק חית שהיא ח' מחט, ואפשר כיון שהחית מחט רמז לדם א"כ הט' מחט יהי' טומאה ר"ל דם טומאה:
- (22) מבנות חת פ"י ח' רמז לדם הנוכר ומה שכתב חת במילואו הוא רמז ג"כ ל"ב מאחד בחסרון האלף כנוכר:
- (23) חוה הוא שאמר למך ילד לפצעי פ"י ילד במ"ק עולה דם במ"ק כנוז':
- (24) אחר חורבן בית ראשון וכו' אף בשם ישראל יכונה באחד פ"י כי בזמן הבית נכנע העין הנוז' ע"י הבית שהוא במ"ק ז' כמ"ק של הע' אך אחר החורבן שהוא במ"ק כמספר חט' והחט' גורם ונחרב הבית ואז נתעורר העין הנוכר ונתמלא העין וזה אומרו מלאו עין בעין רצה לומר שנתמלא הע' בעין ר"ל עין של עון גרם להמלאות הע' אז הביא הע' וכו' ר"ל כיון שנתמלא העין שהוא במ"ק יג' כמספר אחד אז תהי' האחדות ע"י קצת אשר בשם ישראל יכונה באחד והוא רמז להנוצרים ויב' תלמידי שהחזיקו בשלש שהוא אחד ואמר ע"י קצת כי קצת תלמידי היו מקטני אמנה ישראל וקצת היו משאר אמונו הגוים, וזה אומרו מהם באים כל הגוים הנתקועים בחת' וכו' כי קליפות חת' במק' יב' כמספר יב' תלמידי, וא"ל שהחת' מחת' רמז לחת':
- (25) הערל שהיא השלש פ"י כי הערל במק' יב' והוא רמז ל"ב תלמידי שעל ידם בא השלש שהיא ג"כ מרומז בערל דהיינו כשחצטרף מספר העשיריות של הערל יחד שהם על' יעלה למספר קוף והריש של ערל יעלה הכל למ"ק ג' והוא השלש והוא סוד ג' שנים של ערלה שהתורה אסרה לנו שהוא ג' קליפות שבאנו כידוע מספר הזהר הקדוש:
- (26) ולהשאיר אברם האמת פ"י אברם במ"ק ט' כמ"ק של אמת:
- (27) אהי' אשר אהי' אמת פ"י כי ג' אלפין אשר באהי' אשר אהי' במילואם כוה אלף אלף אלף שכל אחד יעלה י"ב במ"ק וכולם יחד יעלה במ"ק לו' שהוא ג"כ כמ"ק של אמת שהוא ט':
- (28) והוסיף לו חמש למלאותו בידו פ"י שהוסיף לו ה' על אברם שהוא ט' במ"ק ועולה יד':
- (29) ומשרי לקח האחדות שנאבד ע"י האשה פ"י לקח היוד' שהיא האחדות אין סוף כנוז' שנאבד ע"י האשה שהיא חוה כנוז' ונתן במקומה חמש שהיא ה' ונקראת

שרה למלאות עיניה שחסרה ר"ל כי שרה במק, ששה, וחסר א, מעין שהיא במ"ק ז, ע"י ראיית חוה כמו שנאמר ותרא האשה כי נחמד העץ וכו' וכשנתוסף ה' לשרה נתמלא העין ר"ל כי שר' משרה הוא מספר תק' וידוע כי כף פשוטה מספר תק' וכשתנתה בראש התיבה עם ה' של שרה בסוד כה' יהי' זרעך אז נחשב הכף לשנים במ"ק ועם ה' יעלה ז' כמ"ק של ע' וזהו שנאמר למלאות עיניה וזה הוא שנאמר ותרא שרה את בן הגר וכו' מצחק וכו' שהוא לשון ע"ז ושרה באה לתקן בראייתה פגם ראיית חוה בסוד ותרא האשה וכו' כנז':

- (30) ואעפ"כ שמה מורה על האחדות פ"י כי שרה במ"ק יוד' שהיא האחדות אין סוף ב"ה ושם אבותינו מביאים וכו' לפיכך נקרא יעקב ישראל פ"י כשתצרף ג' שמות של האבות אברהם יצחק ישראל יחד יעלה במ"ק מ"ג שהוא ז', במ"ק כמ"ק של ע' כדי שלא יקומו פ"י כי ע"י שם אבותינו נתקן ונפתח העין כנוכר ולמה כדי שלא יקומו בקליפות חת' שהיא סתימות העין בסוד ותהיינה מורת רוח ליצחק ורבקה בע"ז, ותכנינה עיניו מראות וזהו שאמר אשרי עין רואה כל אלה ר"ל שאינו פוגם עיניו בכל אלה בסוד אלה אלקיך וכו' וכמאמר המקונן על אלה אני בוכיה:
- (31) כי היא אמת פ"י כיון שלא יקומו בחת' הנוכר ואשרי עין רואה כל אלה כי היא אמת ר"ל אלה במ"ק ט' כמ"ק אמת כי ע"י תיקון העין הנו' יבטל השקר שהוא ע"ז ואז האמת יש לו רגלים ויקום באמת:
- (32) בן הנדה חת בשמו וחת בתארו פ"י בן במ"ק ז' נדה במ"ק יד' שהוא במ"ק ה' וכשתצרף מ"ק של בן ומספר ה' של נדה יעלה במ"ק יב' כמ"ק של חת וגם ישוע במ"ק יז' שהוא במ"ק חת וזה הוא אומרו חת בשמו ר"ל חת פשוטה רמוזה בשמו וחת מלאו בתארו כנז' בן נדה:
- (33) העולה משיח פ"י כי גם משיח עול'. במ"ק יז' שהוא ב' פעמי' ח':
- (34) ומהויות הנחש אשר היא ג"כ ח' פ"י כי נחש ג"כ במ"ק יז' שהוא ב"פ ח':
- (35) וכפה על האמת מכסת שקרו לדבר בה' פ"י שקר במ"ק ו' וכשתוסף ו' על ט' שהוא מ"ק של אמת יעלה יה' וזה אומרו בה חתימת עם אמת:
- (36) משיח אשר היא העין פ"י משיח במ"ק יז' שהוא במ"ק ז' כמו מ"ק של ע':
- (37) ביה בשש פ"י נגע במ"ק יח' בשש ר"ל שש מ"ק של שקר שהוסיפו על אמת כנז':
- (38) בשש שהוא במ"ק שקר כנוכר לעיל:
- (39) האחדות בשקן פ"י שקן מ"ק יג' כמספר אחד:
- (40) שלוחים הרמוזי' בעין פ"י שלוחי' במ"ק רה' שהוא במ"ק ז' כמ"ק של ע':
- (41) שהטומאה הגביר יד' פ"י טומאה במ"ק רה' שהוא במ"ק ז' כמספר ע' הנו' וכשגבר ונכפל מספר ז' ועולה יד':
- (42) בטהרה באה י' אשר אהי' באמת פ"י טהרה במ"ק ר"א כמספר אהי' ואהי' פעמי' אהי' שהוא אמת כנז' כ"פ:
- (43) כי במה נחשב הוא פ"י כי במה שעולה אדם שהוא הנוצרי ה"י קורא עצמו תמיד אדם ואמר נחשב הוא מן הפושעים שהם י"ב תלמידיו להעמיד השלש באמת ולא אמר סתם נחשב בין הפושעים כי הוא במספר יב' ומן מספר ט' כמספר אמת:
- (44) נשאר מת מאמת פ"י הואיל שנחסר האלף מאמת נשאר אותיות מת, וחת מחט ר"ל כי מת במ"ק ח' שהוא ח' מחט אנושי מזהמת הנחש שהיא מ"ק ח' ומת' הנו':
- (45) וכל הנוגע בו יטמא פ"י בו היא מספר ח' הנו':
- (46) ושלוחי' מות וכו' עד אנושי חרם פ"י מות גימטרי' חרם במ"ק:
- (47) כאחד הנדרף בעין פ"י כי אחד כמ"ק עין מלואה:
- (48) שהמה ח' הקדושה פ"י כי שני פעמי' אחד יעלה כ"ו כמספר השם וכו' במ"ק ח':

- (49) חומץ בן יין שלש בן עין פ'י חומץ במ"ק רז' שהוא ט' במ"ק ויין במ"ק ז' וגם שלש במ"ק ט' כמספר חומץ, ועין במ"ק ז' כמספר יין והוא לשון נופל על לשון, וגם רמז בזה שהחמץ יוצא מכלל ישראל וכפר באחדות השם וגם אמרו שלש בן עין ר"ל שהאמית השלש וכפר באמונתו אבותינו שהוא היחוד שהוא במ"ק של מלוא העין שהוא עולה אחד כנו:
- (50) בלי לחש וכו' פ'י כי ידוע אין להסיטר. אחרי חיות מגרמה אלא ממה שיונק מהקדושה בהשגחו השם וכיון שסידר השגחתו ממנה, ואז הרשעה מעצמה תכלה, וזה אמרו בלי השגחות עיני כל הרואו כל לבטל הלשון הרע, ואפשר שרימז לשם הנוצרי ישוע העולה יז' במ"ק כמ"ק של לשון, כי אין לו יד' וכו' ר"ל כי כשיסידר השגחת העינים כנו, כי שני פעמי' ע' עולה יד', ואמר מות הוא ולא חיים כי מות במ"ק יד' ולא חיים שהוא ג"כ במ"ק יד' ואמרו שרף הוא ולא מלאך ר"ל שרף במ"ק יג' היפך מלאך כי מלאך ג"כ במ"ק יג' כי הכפ פשוטה של מלאך היא ה' כידוע ואמר שרף הוא לשון שריפה כל ארצה:
- (51) לדבר כל אלה בשם אמת פ'י אלה במ"ק ט' כמ"ק של אמת, ואמרו כל אלה שהוא רמז לע"ז בסוד אלה אלהיך וכו':
- (52) משה אשר מספרו וכו' פ'י משה במ"ק יב' כמספר שבטי ישראל:
- (53) המים אשר המה אמת פ'י מים במ"ק כמ"ק של אמת, ונתן התורה בטוב פ'י תורה במ"ק טוב:
- (54) בשני יד'ים ברמח' ושסה' העולים רח' פ'י ב' פעמי' יד' הוא מ"ק של רמ"ח שס"ה והוא ג"כ מספר רח':
- (55) באחד כי אהרון אחד פ'י אהרון במ"ק אחד וכן עגל ג"כ מ"ק אחד:
- (56) באש אשר היא אחד פ'י אחד עולה יג', שהוא במ"ק ד' כמ"ק של אש' ופיזור וכו' פ'י מים מ"ק כמ"ק של אמת:
- (57) הבא מיהודא בשלש פ'י יהודא מ"ק ר"א, והוא במ"ק ג', ורמז על חט' השלש שבא בזמן בית שני שאז נקראו על שם יהודא לבד:
- (58) בעט' היא העין פ'י עט' במ"ק יז' שהוא במ"ק ז' כמ"ק של ע':
- (59) ברזל ביד' פ'י ברזל במ"ק יד':
- (60) באדם פ'י רמז להנוצרי' שהם בטוחי' באדם שהוא משיחם ואומרים שהוא סולח חטאותיהם וזהו אומרם ומה יסור לבו וכו':
- (61) מקור מים חיים האמת הניתן ביד ה' פ'י מים מ"ק כאמת כמ"ק חיים במ"ק יד':
- (62) איה דבר ה' בעין הרע פ'י איה במ"ק ז' כמ"ק של ע':
- (63) פ'י ידים יה' זה תורה וכו' ר"ל ידים במ"ק יג' שהוא במ"ק ד' וגם התורה במ"ק ר"ב שהוא ג"כ במ"ק ד':
- (64) בלשהר' פ'י רמז ללשון לועזים:
- (65) במום וביד' פ'י מום במ"ק יד':
- (66) אויבי הגשמי והרוחני פ'י הגשמי המם האומו' העולם שונאי ישראל לעולם והרוחני הוא השטן והוא היצר הרע:
- (67) ולא באדם פ'י ר"ל לא כמו שהנוצרי' אומרי' שאלוהיהם נעשה האדם שהוא משיחם בא כדי לסלוח חטאיהם ולפדותם מגיהנם אבל אנחנו בני ישראל עם נושע בה' תשוע' עולמים:
- (68) לאסור חגיגו וכו' משיח בן יוסף פ'י חגיגו מזבח במ"ק כמ"ק משיח בן יוסף:
- (69) וכח מלא שלו גוג מגוג פ'י גוג מגוג במ"ק של מם' דמגוג עולה רח':
- (70) ותאבד ע"י כח' השם אשר הוא אחדות אלקינו פ'י כח' במ"ק יוד' שהוא רמז לאחדות כנו:
- (71) הקשת משמאלו זהו חת' פ'י קשת מ"ק ח' והחץ וכו' חץ מ"ק יז' שהוא מ"ק ג"כ ח':



*Forced conversion sermons to the Jews were held in this church, San Gregorio della Divina Pieta, just outside the ghetto in Rome. The inscription above its door is in both Hebrew and Latin and is a quote from Isaiah, chapter 65 verse 2: I constantly spread out My hands To a disloyal people Who walk the way that is not good Following their own designs. (TANAKH. A new translation. The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).*

### 3.1. Translation of *Iggeret*

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[Prologue I]

[This is]<sup>37</sup> a letter that Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai wrote at the request of Rabban Gamliel Hanasi to the Jews who are in the city of Romi in the year 3 thousand and eight hundred and thirteen according to the creation of the world, in the month of Kislev on the twenty-sixth, with a commentary by the very learned polyhistor our honoured master, Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, emissary of the Merciful God from the holy city Jerusalem - may it be rebuilt and re-established speedily in our own day! - And this letter was sent with the help of a pupil Jannai the Small [or: the (most) insignificant] of R. Gamliel's pupils to the noble Josef ben Shimon Hapartsi, God's prince among the faithful of the treasured people in the city of Roma - may God protect it! And this letter is found in the city of Romi among archives (*gnizot* - תח"ג) of the earliest books in the Holy Language that are in the possession of the Romans.

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[Prologue II]

This letter is found in the possession of a learned man who came here to the Holy Congregation of Gogin; his name was formerly among Israel [the Jews] Jacob, but who also now is called Leopold [לעפאלט] Immanuel Jacob von Dort, and this above-mentioned man said that this letter is found in the city of Romi among archives of the earliest books in the Holy Language that are in the possession of the Romans; and it was written at the beginning of the scroll as follows: R. Jochanan ben Zakkai wrote this letter at the request of Rabban Gamaliel Hanasi to the Jews who are in the city of Romi in the year 3 thousand and eight hundred and thirteen according to the creation of the world in the month of Kislev on the twenty-sixth, and since there was here at that time an emissary of the Merciful God from the holy city Jerusalem - may it be rebuilt and re-established speedily in our own day! - namely the very learned polyhistor, our honoured master Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, he read this scroll and explained all the words in it according to what it seemed to him:

[1. Exordium] (Introduction)

Listen to me, children of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, a treasured people, you did the Lord choose, God over all the earth, and His name is awe-inspiring among the nations, and He should bless you with peace just as He said, for He will certainly do what He has said.

Remember, do and take heed of His deeds and his Holy Torah; since the sense of sight brings about remembrance, therefore I will write to you the source of the Lord's deeds, for they are awe-inspiring, and even though the hidden ones

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<sup>37</sup> My own additions are inserted in [ ].

[*hanistarot*, "concealed acts") belong to the Lord, and also the revealed ones [*haniglot* "overt acts"] that are revealed to us [cf. Deut. 29,28], nonetheless it was alluded to us by the cantillation marks *Gershayim* and *Pashta Katan*<sup>38</sup>, a great and awe-inspiring secret.

For after two<sup>39</sup> (1)deportations (*shnei gerushin*) the smallest (*hakatan*) among the nations will spread (*tifshat*) throughout the whole world; and to them was given permission and authorization in order to go in the Lord's secret for they are God-fearers, and with them are secrets and the Lord's covenant; and this is what was transmitted to us from our forefathers, from man's mouth to man [directly], so that the remnant of Israel will shine in the brilliance of the firmament and not do injustice any more; and this is the secret that was transmitted to us from our Holy Torah.

## [2. Narratio] (History)

At the outset [cf. the Story of Creation and the Fall of Man] the merciful God created the world from (2)nothing -and this is seven- and with a saying -and this is his Oneness- and He (3)combined the compassion (*harahamim*) with the justice (*din*) in six days -which is the number of RHM DIN- and He rested on the seventh

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and called it (4)shabbat [= nine] -in secret truth [=nine]- and in the fullness<sup>40</sup> of the justice [= five] and the compassion [=nine] He created the (5)man [=nine] -in secret truth- from the earth [=fourteen] -five in (6)addition to truth- by the Lord's (7)name<sup>41</sup>, in (8)His image with [the letters] jud and heh in the reading of them (9)for the reading of heh (HH) amounts to 10 in the writing, and each of them [RHM+DIN and ADaMaH] amount to 14 [jad] and (10) two hands amount to seven as the days of the creation; (11)and He commanded the truth [=9=adam] to protect itself from the tree of knowledge of good and bad -this is the Lord [=3] and the sin [=4]- (12)and together they amount to seven -(13)this is the eye<sup>42</sup> [=7] that is [represents] the serpent -(14)and the eye [=7] will not exceed [overpower] the truth [=9].

(1)And when the serpent saw that the man stands in compassion and justice, because He created him therewith, and he rises with the name of God, and that a woman [=9] comes from truth [=9], it went to destroy the truth in order to arouse the [evil] eye, for it [the truth] is reduced because of it [the evil eye]; with strength the serpent practises sorcery to leave them [to struggle] in good and evil, in justice and compassion, and to destroy her from the form of man. And so that its words should be heard, and it so happened, and the woman

38 *Gershayim* (on the word *haniglot*) can also be called *shnei gerishin*, not *gerushin* as here; it is thus an allusion to *gerush*=deportation. When a *Pashta* and a *Zakef Katan* are on one word (here on *hanistarot*) it is called *Pashta Katan*.

39 A number in parenthesis like (2)deportations refers to Chapter 2.2. Translation of R. Eliezer's Commentary.

40 Fullness means letters fully spelled out and then using *mispar katan*.

41 It is written jd (jad=hand), but can also be understood as JH, short for God's name.

42 *Ayin* can mean eye or the letter *ayin* with the value of 70 or 7. Eye in the meaning of the evil eye is often used in this text. Sometimes it is written just as the letter *ayin*, which can represent both the evil eye, crime (from *avon*), and the number seven, which can be the small number of something evil as the serpent.

took the advice of the seducer, and she also gave to her husband, who was with her, to destroy the truth; (2)therefore the Torah said: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened" -this is Satan's strength- (3)and they were in their nakedness in their two eyes, -(4)and they are four- and they surrendered the oneness of our God -which amounts to strength [=28=1]- therefore (5)The Holy One, blessed be He, damned the serpent with the belly and with the dirt and with the eye and with the incisor tooth "all the days of its life".

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(6)and "they shall strike at your head [=6]" with six in destruction [=5] and justice [=1], (7)"and you shall strike at their heel [=10=1]" with ten -which is the oneness of Our God BeEin Sof- at the end of the days He will find us; and "to the woman He said": since you have diminished the truth, the truth will be changed to pain [=9] -its number is the same as truth- "in pain shall you bear children", and to the man He said: since you have listened to your wife to destroy the truth and to "curse the ground because of you" (8)therefore "thorns" [=7] -this is the eye- (9)"and thistles [=3]" -this is three [trinity]- "shall it sprout for you" (10)for in the future to talk about three gods [el elim=13] in one [echad=13] (11)-which [echad=1] amounts to thorns and thistles [=10=1]- (12) for you shall take away from them the eye (13)and there will remain three at the place of the thistles. (14)"By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat" -this is the Lord, The Rock of Worlds- (15)"until you return to" the truth in the "ground, for from it you" were taken(16)"for dust [17=8] you are" - this is the sin [17=8]- "and to dust you shall return" -to the sin- for one transgression leads to another; (17)two times sin [17] amount to 34 [=7], and this is the eye that diminishes from truth, and rests at three [trinity]. (18)And the Lord took away His Oneness from the primordial light [=9], which is the truth [=9], and it left the man [=9] in sin [9-1=8], (19)and He put in the place of the Oneness the eye that is missing from truth, as it is written: "And God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them", and therefore he named his wife (20) Eve [=19=1], for she is one because of the Oneness that was taken away because of her; and since the Oneness disappeared from them there remained in it (21) blood [=8] -this is eight in sin- therefore Rebekah said: "I am disgusted (22) with my life because of the Hittite [=8] women"; (23)and this is what Lamech said: "a lad [=8] for bruising me"; (24)and being after the destruction of the First Temple eye is filled with eye, then the eye will come.

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And woe to the eye[s] that see this for then the oneness - on account of a few that [carry] the name of Israel - are called by the One to shame, and from them all the peoples that are mired in sin come to believe in the detestable sin; because of this God commanded our forefathers to circumcise (25)the uncircumcised [=3] that is the trinity, and to leave (26)Abram [=9] with the truth, for (27)\* 'I am that I am' is truth, (28)and He added to him five [the letter heh=5 - Abraham] to complete him in His hand and in His image (29)and from Sarai He took the Oneness [the letter jud=1]that had been destroyed because of the woman, and He gave in its stead five [the letter heh - Sarah] to fill out her eyes, for she was deficient; (30)nonetheless her name [=10=1] points to the Oneness,

and the name of our forefathers brings them (\* gloss 'I am that I am' is truth - another explanation: for 'I am' [= 21] when multiplied by 'I am' adds up to the number tav-mem-alef [441] that is also in small numbers 9 like small numbers of truth) the eye that is diminished because of the man, therefore Jacob is called Israel [=1], so that they will not stay in sin.

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And happy is that eye that see all these [things] for it is (31)truth.

### [3. Argumentatio] (Warning, condemnation)

And at this time the serpent lent its filth - from it came the (32)menstruating woman's son - sin [=8] in his name and sin in his form, that adds up to (33) messiah [=16] - that went out from the Lord's people (34)and from the existence of the serpent, for this is also sin, from good and bad; (35)and he covered the truth with the garment of his falsehood to talk thereby with the signature of the people of the truth; and he denied the oneness and Torah of our God and greatly ridiculed the words of our sages; but we are zealous with the Lord's zeal, and we gave him over to death by our judges from our land that the caesar had appointed over him from our city; and he was buried in a stinking grave, according to the law for a wicked betrayer, and he was cast out from his grave as a trampled carcass and disappeared from the world. However, his pollution remained in the land, and the sound of the sweat of the pollution was heard in all places. The pollution rose and wrote books without end on his deeds that never were, and they called his name (36)messiah that is "the eye that mocks the father" [cf. Prov. 30,10] in the pollution of the affliction [nun-gimel-ayin = 15] (37)with 15 and with six [= shin-kuf-resh = falsehood]

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And they say that he came to fulfil the words of the Torah, but he was "a wayward and defiant son" [Deut. 21,18] [that came] to smite (38)with six [= with lies] of the pollution the 600.000 letters of the purity - six upon six [lies upon lies], and he gave a new Torah which he concocted from the heart of his pollution (39)in order to substitute for the oneness with abomination. But why should I dwell at length about the pollution, for it is forbidden to look at its form and its existence. However, this you should know, our brothers, the children of Israel, that are dispersed among the peoples, you must not believe in the renegades that are called emissaries [=apostles] (40)that are alluded to by the evil eye, for they are sinners and cause many to sin, (41)and since the pollution became stronger, therefore they [the Jews] intensified their belief (42) in purity with 'I am that I am' in truth; and "cease you" - far being it from you - "to glorify man, who has only a breath in his nostrils! For (43)by what does he merit esteem?" [Is. 2,22] [he is considered] among the sinners that set up the trinity as truth; but since the oneness [the letter alef=1] was taken from it (the truth) (44)there remained [the letters] death from truth and [the letter] chet from human sin from the filth of the serpent; and anyone who touches [it] (45) will be polluted with an eternal pollution for which there is no remedy. (46) And emissaries of death you shall call their putrefied name, men of destruc-

tion, and you shall be zealous with God's zeal to uproot their root from the land so that they will not rise again. And this you shall surely know that also their words of falsehood will be spread in the land as chaff before the wind like one (47) who is chased by the eye to dry out all the land with pollution until a certain time that is hidden for our eyes. Then God will stop and remove

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the pollution from the land, and "God shall be king over everything and He is one [echad=13=4] and His name is one" [cf. Zech. 14,9] (48) for they are the holy 8 [2x4], and happy is he who awaits Him in truth. Beware of the first-born of the donkey [Peter Chamor - play on Petrus], the expelled scattered sheep, do not listen to his words, words of nothingness, you shall just break his obstinacy with all sorts of demolition and destruction that are in the world. And over there there is with you a man, oppressor of the Jew[s], a destructive man of the students of R. Gamliel Hanasi, (49) a wicked son of a righteous father<sup>43</sup>, trinity of eye [evil], that is dressed in a clothing of garment of skin in the filth of the serpent, and his name was formerly in Israel Shaul. Indeed let Sheol and Abaddon be with him and his words; and still by saying that he could work miracles and wonders, but it is not like that, for he does it all by Satan's strength and actions. And he makes a [twisted] thing [poel ot] that cannot be made straight. He is a wicked sinner whose name is called putrefaction, speaking evil of God and His Torah by saying "Let us break the words of theirs, shake off their ropes from us", but "He who is enthroned in heaven laughs; and God mocks at them" [cf. Psalm 2,3-4]. But the serpent that He selected bites him (50) without hiss, without supervision of eyes that see everything, to destroy the evil speech for he has no share in God's inheritance, death is he and not life, seraph-snake is he and not an angel, for the shells of pollution from 'The Other Side' (Sitra haAcharai) is stuck to him to say all this in the name of (51) truth. And he who take revenge on him either through death or bodily harm is called zealous for God; and a pact of friendship will be granted him and his descendants after him [cf. Num. 25,12-13], for he [Paul] profanes God publicly. And he has no part among the children of Israel for he seduces and leads astray God's people to walk after other gods, and the teaching that their forefathers never knew. And woe to the eye that sees all this, beware of his words for the wisdom of pollution is in him which he concealed with the pollution of mishap [seminal discharge], for the holy books defile the hands and the feet of those who want to walk in pollution, but they are life for those who find them in God's wisdom, and the poison of death for the one that walks with them in pollution

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to pollute his body and his soul. But there is no man who can grasp and explain God's wisdom except by God's gift. Therefore you shall ask God our Lord in awe and love that He will give you understanding to do His commandments and to engage in His Holy Torah in pureness in the manner He commanded you in the name of the faithful shepherd [Moses].

#### [4. Refutatio] (Encouragement)

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<sup>43</sup> Literally: vinegar derived from ("son of") wine, which rhyme with the following sentence. Cf. Baba Mezia 83b.

See how the prophet warned us in the end of the prophecy [Mal. 3,22]: "Be mindful of the Teaching of My servant Moses, whom I charged at Horeb with laws and rules for all Israel" - not only to listen, but to perform, for the knowledge is not the main point, but the deed. Engage in the Written and the Oral Torah, for this is what Jacob our forefather saw in his dream, for it is written [Gen. 28,11]: "and he took of the stones of that place" and minimum of stones [plural] is two, and this is the two Torahs, and they became a single unit under his head for it is written: and he took the stone, for they are not two Torahs - dare not mention it! - there is only one Torah that appears as two faces, front and back, for the words of the sages are like pegs for the sapling of the Written Torah. And if you maintain the words of these two which both are the words of the Living God then you will merit to ascend on the ladder which top reaches to the sky and angels of God are going up and down on it [cf. *ibid.* verse 12] to bring us to the place which God created to keep us in life for eternity. And this you shall know in order to understand all these things: know that the enemy is the human embodiment of the ancient serpent [also: source of sin], who at first came with cunning to the bearer of human offspring [=Eve] and seduced against God's command in order to destroy the tree of man from producing firstlings - these are Israel - for the Lord; and after this all the days of bewilderment it was seducing and instigating the seed of man; and few of them understood with natural insight or with the help of God, and they did not listen to the words of the cursed (serpent) because of God's actions until Moses (52) came, whose number is like the number of the tribes of Israel; (53) he who came up from the water [=9] - that is truth [=9] -, and gave the Torah in goodness, laws and commandments as the number of parts of the body and sinews of man, in the two (54) hands [=28], in 248 [positive commandments and in 365 [negative commandments] that become 28<sup>44</sup> in order to protect the soul of man from the pollution of the serpent.

#### [5. Narratio] (History)

And when Moses went to receive The Ten Commandments, one half of them are for God and one half for man, that the whole Torah rests on them, the seducer went to seduce Israel (55) by one [echad=4], for Aharon [=4] is one, and the calf [egel=4] is one and he spoke with their knowledge to confuse them: "This is not a foreign god [el nekhov=4] but your God's Oneness". And when Moses came and saw what the serpent had done, he went and destroyed it with fire [esh=4] - (56) which is one - and he spread it in water to destroy it with truth by saying: "This is not a god of truth" [el emet=4]. And he commanded with strong warnings that they should not do anymore like this, and all the prophets warned Israel all their days regarding this. And when the serpent saw that the Torah and the commandments were against its counsel, Satan brought in his form and in his image this man "adversary and enemy is this evil" [cf. Esther 7,6]

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44 The numerical value of both 248 and 365 is 14. The two letters of 28 denotes also strength.

in order to destroy the Godly part in his teachings and commandments, and he attached his words of pollution to the words of the holy Torah in order to strengthen his pollution over Israel.

[6. Argumentatio I] (Warning against Christianity)

But now, our brothers, children of Israel, do not believe in his dreams and words, which are the words of Satan, in order to seduce you by saying [*leor*, should be *leemor*]: 'The ancients did not examine [*badnu*, should be *bachnu*] and understand God's words, but we know the Torah and the depths of its secrets; therefore let us go and worship another [type of] worship'. Do not listen to them to become unclean by them, but you shall surely destroy them quickly from the earth, for the words of the Torah and God's commandments shall not depart for ever, for "God is not man to be capricious, or mortal to change His mind" [Num. 23,19]. Therefore you shall beware of the men of the serpent for their sting is the sting of the scorpion, and their hiss is the hiss of the seraph-snake, and all their words are like rivers of fire from Gehinnom and Abaddon, falsehood and lie. Look and see how Jeremiah the prophet warned you [cf. Jer. 17,1] against sin (57) that comes from Jehuda with three [things], which is inscribed with a stylus - (58) this is the evil eye- (59) of iron by a hand that stands besides the Torah, but it is on the tablet that is concocted by their heart, for [ibid. verse 5] "Thus said the Lord: Cursed is he who trusts (60) in man, who makes mere flesh his strength", and because of this he "turns his heart from the Lord". And not only does the prophet establish his words about the cursed, but also [verse 6] "He shall be like a bush in the desert, which does not sense good" - this is the Torah, for it is written [Prov. 4,2]: "For I give you good instruction". And they shall not see the good that is kept in store for the righteous ones in the future, but they shall dwell forever "in a barren land, scorched places in the wilderness" [cf. Jer. 17,6] in "the nethermost pit - those murderous, treacherous men" [cf. Psalms 55,24], and they have no share in the name of the God of Israel, but "blessed is he who trusts in the Lord" [Jer. 17,7], for he shall not see the heat of Gehinnom, for the Lord is the hope of Israel and not a man, and since Israel is waiting for the Lord alone, the Lord will be their hope for cleaning them from the pollution of the serpent.

[7. Argumentatio II] (Warning against Apostates)

But those who forsake the Lord shall be put to shame, and those who turn away from His Torah shall be doomed to the land of gloom, Sheol and Abaddon, because they have forsaken (61) the true fountain of spring waters [cf. Jer. 17,13], which gives with the help of the Lord; and the one that will forsake the Torah also forsakes the Lord, who is our God, our saviour, our healer and our glory. But they say: [62] "Where is the prediction of the Lord?" with the evil eye "Let it come to pass!" [verse 15] for he has destroyed all the words of the Torah and the Prophets by something devastatingly detestable that makes detestable

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and they devastate all the land by a stumbling block, and by a rock of hin-

drance [cf. Isai. 8,14], by sin of destruction [avon kilajon], by iniquity of idolatry [aven gilajon = evangelion].

#### [8. Argumentatio III] (Condemnation of Apostates)

Let it be far from you, my brothers, to believe in this, for Torah that is the word of our God will stay forever without end; but these rebels [apostates] abandoned the cool water that flows [cf. Jer. 18,14] over the exhausted [*of* - must be *ajef*] - this is Israel - who are exhausted [*ofim* - must be *ajefim*] in the exile, and the Torah protects them. But they forgot in the wickedness of their heart the God of Israel, and [cf. verse 15] "they sacrifice to a delusion and are made to stumble in their" words, "an ancient path", this is the Torah, "to walk instead on byways, on a road not built up". And they say: Come and let us think of (63) the Lord's pride [jerum], this is the Torah and the commandments that the Lord commanded us, and this is the throne of His glory, elevated and exalted over strange ideas. Although we know that [Jer. 18,18] "instruction shall not fail from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor oracle from the prophet", nonetheless [they = apostates say]: "Come, let us strike" the Torah "with the tongue" of evil (64) with the filth of the serpent to interpret it according to our hearts, to do evil and not good, "and we shall no longer have to listen" to the words of the Oral Torah. See how the Holy Torah complains before the Lord saying [ibid. verse 19-20]: "Listen to me, O Lord - and take note of what my enemies say. Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit for me. Remember how I stood before You to plead in their behalf" and to protect them by my word, for I am life for them that find me, and for all flesh that do and fulfil my word; I will heal them from their apostasy "to turn Your anger away from them". [The following is a mix of citations of and comments on verse 21-23] Oh, give their children -and their pupils- over to famine, to listen to the word of the Lord that mows down Satan by the sword, and let their wives -those that believe in them- be bereaved of children and husbands, and men that encourage them shall be struck down by death -eternal death- and let their young men -these are the men of their wars- be slain by the sword of the Lord. Let an outcry be heard from their houses -from their house of prayer, destroy the abomination of their prayer by sudden wicked marauders, by Satan's troops to confuse them- "for it has dug a pit to trap us, and laid snares for my feet. Oh Lord, You know all their plots to kill me" by [their] saying: The Torah is deficient, and in its place is given 'the sin of destruction' [evangelion]. "And they will speak words against the Most High" -this is the Written Torah- "and will harass the holy ones of the Most High" -this is the Oral Torah- "and they will think of changing times and laws" [cf. Dan. 7,25] -by their evil tongue. Therefore [Jer. 18,23] "Do not pardon their iniquity, do not blot out their guilt from Your presence. And they will stumble -in everything- act against them in Your hour of wrath" to destroy them from under the heaven, for they have rebelled against Your words, which are words of life. And you shall know that they and their teaching of destruction shall exert strength over the world and over the holy people "for a time, times and half a time" [Dan. 7,25], and then they shall be destroyed? [אֶתְעַדְדָּן] from the land, and the Lord will cleanse the whole land with the fire of the Torah, and the kingdom of His people Israel will overpower

all the kingdom of the world. And then all the peoples will go in the Torah of the Lord, "and in that time ten men will take hold of every Jew by a corner of his cloak and say: Let us go with you, for we have heard that the Lord is with you" [cf. Zech. 8,23].

[9. Refutatio] (Encouragement)

And now, our brothers, listen to my words, words of truth, and do not believe in the signs and the portents

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of those who are sinners at the cost of their life, "for the Lord is testing you to see whether you really love Him with all your heart and soul. Follow none but the Lord, and revere none but Him" [Deut. 13,4], for how and by what else should you go and what else should you revere? If you observe His commandments then you will heed His orders [literally: listen to His voice] and worship Him and not another, and to Him and not to another shall you hold fast [cf. ibid. verse 5], for He is your portion; then it will be well with you all the days. Do understand this, my brothers, that we are called holy because of the law of our primogeniture, and we are called the best part of the Lord's harvests and there is no blemish in us, "for Jacob was a perfect man" [Gen. 25,27], and the Holy Spirit attests /affirms regarding us: "Every part of you is fair, my darling, there is no blemish in you" [Song of Songs 4,7], and since there is no blemish in us we are not devoured by the land-owner-priests, who are (65)in blemish and in the hand of the destroyer. Therefore this consuming fire went out from our limbs to put on us a blemish so that we will be devoured by our enemies, (66)physical and spiritual enemies, and he sought to blind our eyes with the light of the Torah; therefore be strong and be men, men of the Lord, for the Lord said so [or: is light - acc. to D. and E. mss.] to you forever. If you will walk after His Torah and His commandments then He will guard your body and your souls, saying to you: You are perfect in the name of your Lord and not with blemish. Look how Jacob, our forefather, warned us against this evil blemish that will come in the guise of a messiah, who has "seven abominations in his mind" (heart) [cf. Prov. 26,25], in saying about him [Gen. 49,10]: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh shall come, and the homage of peoples be his". The beginning letters of it [of the words in the verse form the acrostic]: There is no blemish as evil as Jeshua. And the surplus [letter] jud [of the word: jikchat=hommage] is the oneness, for it talks about the oneness of our God, and this blemish will not depart from Israel until Shiloh will come, for the kingdom over the whole world belong to Him. Therefore, beware of the blemish that is among you, so that it will not be a trap for you, and cling to your God and to his Torah and His commandments, and if you do so, then every tongue that arises to judgement over you shall sin, for there is no dawn for them -this amounts to one- for they belie the oneness. And if you listen to me, then it will be good for you with the help of the Lord<sup>45</sup>, and good for you in the world that is totally good, for all of you are included in those that have a share in the world to come.

<sup>45</sup> or: in this world - acc. to the mss.used by Dziubas and Eisenstein.

And "Oh happy Israel! Who is like you, a people delivered by" God [cf. Deut. 33,29], (67)and not by a man, for the salvation of the Lord is eternal salvation; thus says the Torah: "In distress I called on You; and You answered me and brought me relief" [cf. Psalm 118,5. The following is a paraphrase of Psalms 118,7 - 119,8]. Therefore I will not fear anyone who is dependent/relying on man, for the Lord is my helper, and I will see revenge over my foes, for it is good - this Torah. He shall take refuge in You and not in a man. All the nations have beset me, but in Your name I will cut them down; they have pressed me hard to fall, but You have helped me, for You are my strength and my might and my deliverance, and by Your right hand

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I will be exalted, and by your right hand I will be triumphant; I shall not die as they thought, for I shall live by the mighty deeds of the Lord, in order to tell about all His deeds. I am the gate of the Lord, and by the help of the righteous shall they come through it [the gate]. Say therefore, oh Israel and Aron's house and those that fear God, that His kindness endures for ever. "I praise you, for you have answered me, and have become my deliverance" [verse 21]. "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" [verse 22] for it emanated from the Lord and not from man, and the Lord will do wonders before our eyes. And when the Torah saw the length of the exile it said: "O Lord, deliver us! O Lord, let us prosper!" [verse 25] And the holy spirit answered: Wait, my daughter, wait until a blessed one comes in the name of your God, then we bless you - all of you - from the house of the Lord [cf. verse 26]. The Torah said: 'God is my Lord and He will light up for us' in the exile of this darkness with 'Your light and with Your truth' [cf. Psalms 43,3] (68)in order to bind our "festal offering to the horns of the altar with cords" [118,27] by Messiah ben Josef and his death will be for us as a festival in the wars of Gog and Magog. And after this you will say: "You are my God and I will praise You; You are my God and I will extol You" [verse 28]. "Praise the Lord for He is good", for He showed us His kindness forever [cf. verse 29] by Messiah ben David, and the reward of those that engage in the study of and performance of the Torah is that they are called perfect without blemish, and they are blessed by "Ashrei" [Praiseworthy!], by saying: Praiseworthy are those whose way is perfect; and who is he? He is the one that walks in the Torah of the Lord, those that guard His testimony with all their heart to seek His commandments. And if you do so you will be called performers of justice and not performers of injustice, for you went by the way of the Lord, He that commanded you to do His commandments exceedingly. Therefore, pray to the Lord that He will direct your attention to do His statutes and to understand their ways to the good. And if you look to His commandments then you will not be ashamed, and you will not be humiliated for ever and ever. Therefore say, please, all of the house of Israel: I will praise You with upright heart in teaching myself to protect your festivals. But You did not do so for all people, for us You chose, and us You taught Your righteous ordinances. And if I will keep Your statutes, I know that You will not forsake me utterly. [The following is a paraphrase of some parts of Ezekiel 39:] And you shall know that your exile will overpower you until Samael Sar and the father of all the children of Esau is filled up, (69)and his

full strength, this is Gog and Magog, (70)and it [the exile] shall disappear with the help of the strength of the Lord - this is the oneness of our God - and the Lord shall break (71)the bow from his [Gog's] left hand -this is the sin of the pollution- and the arrow -this is also the sin of pollution- from his right hand, and you shall let it fall on the mountains of Israel; then all the nations will acknowledge the honour of the Lord, He who is Israel's God and not a man, and He dispersed Israel because of their iniquity, and He restored the captivity of Jacob, and He will show compassion on all the house of Israel,

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And then the Lord will avenge His holy name that has been profaned within the nations, and the Lord shall be for us God for ever from this day and beyond, when the Lord gathers His people Israel from all the countries to where he has dispersed them, and there will not remain there even one of them, and no more will He hide His face from them after He has poured out His holy spirit over all the house of Israel for the Lord God has spoken.

[10. Peroratio] (Conclusion)

These are the words of the one who awaits eagerly the salvation of Israel and begs the Lord our God regarding help to us, a little help, until the righteous teacher will come to us to deliver us and rule over us for ever. Amen, selah.

[Epilogue I]

The young/modest Jochanan ben Zakkai from Jerusalem who wrote in the name of our rabbi, the light of Israel, R. Gamaliel Hanasi and in the name of all the students who follow him and give heed to his bidding; and he is very zealous for the Lord and for His holy Torah and His holy people Israel, and in the name of all the righteous of our people who are in Jerusalem, and it is said: Peace be onto you, and may the Lord bless His people Israel with peace for ever, amen. In the holy city in Jerusalem year three thousand and eight hundred and thirteen 26 in the month of Kislev according to the creation of the world:

[Epilogue II]

This writing was sent with the help of a pupil Jannai the Small (or: the (most) insignificant) of the pupils of R. Gamaliel to the noble Josef ben Shimon Haparsi, God's prince among the faithful of the treasured people in the city of Roma - May God protect it!

## 3.2. Translation<sup>46</sup> of R. Eliezer's Commentary

Commentary of our honoured teacher, the above-mentioned emissary, and

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<sup>46</sup> Page notes and additions [in sharp brackets] in the text itself are mine. I render *vekhule* or *vekhu* = etc.; *rotzeh lomar* or *r"l* = i.e.; *mispar katan* = small number and *m"k* = s"n; *perush* = explanation and *p"* = expl.

these are his words. It seems to me that the copyist/translator Eliezer explains words that are unclear in this scroll.

- (1) *After two deportations* etc. - i.e. after two deportations, the Babylonian Exile and the Roman Exile [dominion], *the smallest will spread* etc. - i.e. the Israelite people about whom it is written: “indeed, you are the smallest of peoples” [Deut. 7,7]:
- (2) *created from nothing -and this is seven-* expl.: *nothing* in small numbers is 7; *and with a saying -and this is Oneness-* expl.: *saying* in s”n is one<sup>47</sup>:
- (3) *and he combined the compassion with the justice* etc. until *and He rested on the seventh* expl.: for *justice* in s”n is sixth, *compassion* in s”n is seventh<sup>48</sup>:
- (4) *shabbat -in secret truth-* expl.: for the number of shabbat and truth is one and the same in s”n: 9:
- (5) *man -in secret truth-* expl.: for also man in s”n is 9:
- (6) *five in addition to truth-* for this is [the letter] h in earth [*adamah* =fourteen]:
- (7) *by the Lord’s name* - expl.: earth in s”n is jd<sup>49</sup>:
- (8) *in His image* etc. expl.: for His image [*tzalmo*=22] in s”n is like small number of jud heh with the *addition*<sup>50</sup>:
- (9) *for the reading of hh* - expl. hh with fillings<sup>51</sup> is the number ten, *and each of them amount to 14* -i.e. hh j in s”n together with the three letters amount to 14:
- (10) *and two hands amount to seven* - i.e. *jd* in s”n are 5, and the number 2 from two hands are 7:
- (11) *and He commanded the truth* - [in] secret the man, as mentioned - *to protect itself from the tree of knowledge of good and bad -this is the Lord* - for *hvj*<sup>52</sup> in s”n amount to good (*tob* = 17), and likewise the sin, which is bad, its number is also like it [17], for G”d made the one close to the other, and with the help of the good He will overpower the evil, which is the sin:
- (12) *and together they amount to seven* - explanation: two times 17 amount to 34, which is 7 in s”n:
- (13) *this is the eye* - i.e. eye in s”n is 7, which is the serpent, in s”n 16, and 16 in s”n is 7:
- (14) *and the eye will not exceed [overpower] the truth* - expl.: by means of the sin you can add [the letter] *ayin* from crime (*avon*) to the truth [7 + 9], which will amount together in s”n to 16, like the number of serpent in s”n:

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- (1) *And when* etc. *that the man stands in compassion and justice, because He created him therewith, and he rises with the name of God* - as mentioned, *and that a woman comes from truth* - expl.: for woman in s”n is like s”n of

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47 Saying (*amira* in Hebrew letters) has the number value 13, and one (*echad* in Hebrew letters) has the number value 13, therefore saying is the same as Oneness.

48 Justice (*din*) = 10 equals six (*sheshet* = 10), compassion (*racham*) = 14 equals seventh (*shevii*) = 14.

49 It is written jd (jad = hand), but can also be understood as JH, short for the name of the Lord, so as not to write the holy letters.

50 *im hakholel* means *addition of one* to the total numerical value of the letters – jud = 11 and hh = 10 plus 1 = 22.

51 The letter h = 5 adds up to 10 with *fillings* (in Hebrew *millui* or as here *milluot* - h can be written either *ha*, *hh* or *hv*, in this case it is written hh), and hh in s”n is 1, and j is 10.

52 Short for the tetragrammaton - its number value in s”n is also 17.

truth - *to destroy* etc. - expl.: the serpent *went to destroy the truth in order to arouse the [evil] eye, for it [the truth] is reduced because of it [the evil eye]*. And with what did the serpent wish to arouse [the evil] eye? Regarding this it said: with sin<sup>53</sup> -i.e. with the help of eye (*ayin*) from crime (*avon*) - *with strength the serpent practises sorcery to leave them [to struggle] in good and evil, in justice and compassion, and to destroy her from the form of man* - expl.: for he is in secret the truth, as mentioned, and this is what it says, *so that its words should be heard* in truth, as mentioned:

- (2) “*Then the eyes of both of them were opened*” -*this is Satan’s strength*- expl.: [two] eyes in s”n are 14, and two times 14 [four eyes all in all] amount to strength [both are 28], and this is what it says: *the eyes of both of them*:
- (3) *and they were in their nakedness in their two eyes* - expl.: for two times eye in s”n are 14 as the number of nakedness in s”n:
- (4) *and they are four- and they surrendered the oneness of our God* - expl.: for eye in s”n is 7 and with the number 2 from *their two eyes* it is 9, and when you add to it 4 more from the number of the four eyes, it adds up to 13 like the number of One [*echad* = 13], for this is *the Oneness of our God- which amounts to strength*- expl.: *Our God* in s”n amounts to 21, and six letters and *addition* [see note 5] amount to 28:
- (5) *with the belly and with the dirt and with the eye and with the incisor tooth* - expl.: belly [=16] in s”n is like s”n of eye; with three letters [from eye] and *fillings* from the eye [3 + 13 =16]; and *dirt* in s”n is like s”n of *incisor tooth* [both are 17], and this is punishment fitting the crime, because it made the man sin with crime:
- (6) *and “they shall strike at your head” with six in destruction and justice* - expl. head in s”n is six like the 6 letters of *cherem* and *din*, and s”n of *cherem* and *din* are 24, which also amount to 6 in s”n:
- (7) “*and you shall strike at their heel*” *with ten* - expl.: for heel in s”n amounts to ten, which is an allusion to the oneness of HaEin Sof, Blessed be He, as is known:
- (8) *therefore “thorns” -this is the eye-* thorns in s”n are 16 as s”n of *fillings* of the eye with 3 letters, or it is possible to say thorns in s”n are 16 which are 7 in s”n like s”n of eye.
- (9) “*and thistles*” -*this is three-* “*shall it sprout for you*” - expl.: thistles in s”n are 12 which amount in s”n to three:
- (10) *for in the future to talk about three gods (el elim) in one* - expl.: for this is an allusion to the faith of the Christians [emunat hanotzrim], for it is said about one god that they are two gods, father and son, and spirit, which is the third, that are united; and this is what it says: *about three gods in one* - i.e. *el elim* in s”n are 13 as the number of *echad*:
- (11) -*amounts to thorns and thistles-* expl.: as s”n of *el elim* are 13, and the number of *echad* of what they say - that the spirit unites the gods in one - this is also the number of one, and this is two times 13, and when you further add 2 from the two times 13 it all adds up together as s”n of thorns and thistles, which is 28 - Satan’s strength as mentioned:
- (12) *for you shall take away from them the eye* - expl.: for all this, the three as mentioned, you shall take away from the eye, for it is also in s”n 13 as the

<sup>53</sup> Or incisor (of venom) since *chet* means both, so it could be a play of words.

- number of echad, and all this causes the eye [sin] to wake up this evil eye:
- (13) *and there will remain three at the place of the thistles* - expl.: for the thistles are 12, and also three, when the 12 are made into s"n, and it is possible that this is an allusion to the 12 disciples of the Christians and to the trinity that was spread by them, and this is what it says: *and there will remain three at the place of the thistles*, for after the death of the Christian [hanotzri = Jesus] the trinity will remain in the place of the thistles, that amount to 12, for they are his 12 disciples in this world, and this caused the sin, as mentioned, because they did not guard the truth, that is 9 in s"n, and because of the crime there was subtracted from the truth 7, which is sin [ayin=70=7] in s"n. And they also spoiled shabbat, which is 7, and when the 7 was subtracted from truth, which is 9, there remained 2, and they caused the error of the trinity with the cooperation of the oneness, as mentioned:
  - (14) *"By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat" - this is the Lord, The Rock of Worlds*- expl.: bread in s"n is 15 [as Lord jh=15]
  - (15) *"until you return to" the truth in the ground...* - expl.: for truth in s"n is ground with the addition of 5, which is 14 as mentioned above:
  - (16) *"for dust [17=8] you are" - this is the sin [17=8]*- expl.: dust in s"n is sin:
  - (17) *two times sin [17] amount to 34 [=diminish=7], and this is the eye that diminishes from truth* - expl.: 34 in s"n is 7 like s"n of sin:
  - (18) *[And the Lord] took away etc. from the primordial light [=9]* - expl.: light in s"n is like s"n of truth:
  - (19) *and He put in the place of the Oneness the eye* - expl.: for eye with its *filling* is like s"n of one:
  - (20) *Eve [=19=1], for she is one* - expl.: one [fem.] is in s"n one [masc. - both are 13]:
  - (21) *there remained in it blood [=8] -this is eight in sin [chet]*- expl.: in s"n [the letter] *cheit* which is [the letter] *ch* in [the word] *sin [chet]*; and it is possible - since the [letter] *cheit* in [the word] *sin [chet]* is an allusion to blood - that the [letter] *tet* in [the word] *chet* is pollution, i.e. blood of pollution:
  - (22) *because of the Hittite [chet = 8] women* - expl.: *ch* is an allusion to blood, as mentioned, and as regards writing *chet* with its *filling* [=12] it is also an allusion to 12 from one [echad] without the alef [chad], as mentioned:
  - (23) *and this is what Lamech said: "a lad [=8] for bruising me"* - expl.: *lad* in s"n amounts to blood in s"n, as mentioned:
  - (24) *after the destruction of the First Temple etc. - also that [carry] the name of Israel are called by the One* - expl.: for in the time of the Temple the eye/ sin [ayin] surrendered, as mentioned, because of the Temple [bait=7] , which in s"n is 7 like s"n of the [letter] *ay[in]*. Surely, after the destruction [*chrbn*=17], which in s"n is like the number of *chet* [=17] - and the sin brought about that the Temple was destroyed - and then the eye [sin] was awakened, as mentioned, and filled the eye [sin]; and its saying *eye is filled with eye* means that the [letter] *ay* is filled with *ayin* i.e. [the letter] *ayin* in crime [*avon*] brought about the filling of the [letter] *ay*; then [the letter] *ay* will bring etc. i.e. since the eye was filled - which in s"n is 13 like the number of one - *then the oneness on account of a few that [carry] the*

*name of Israel are called by the One* - and this is an allusion to the Christians and his 12 disciples, for they hold on to the Trinity that is one. And it said *on account of a few*, for a few of his disciples were of those lacking faith among Israel, and a few were from believers from other peoples; and this is what it said: *from them all the peoples that are mired in sin come* etc. for the shells [*kelipot* = evil forces] of sin are in s”n 12 as the number of his 12 disciples, and it is possible to say that the [letter] *chet* from [the letter] *chet* [in the word *sin*] alludes to the 12 [*chet* =12].

- (25) *the uncircumcised [arel =3] that is the trinity* - expl.: for *arel* is in s”n 12, and this is an allusion to his 12 disciples for by them the Trinity came, which is also alluded to by *arel*, namely when the numbers with tens from *arel* are put together, for they are 70 and 30 which add up to the number 100, and with the [letter] *resh* in *arel* it all adds up to 3 in s”n, and this is the Trinity, and this is in secret for 3 years of Orlah, which the Torah forbids us, for they are the 3 shells that are in the nut as is known from the holy Book of Zohar.
- (26) *and to leave Abram with the truth* - expl.: Abram in s”n is 9 as s”n of truth:
- (27) *‘I am that I am’ is truth* - expl.: for the 3 *alefin* [letter *alef*] in ‘I am that I am’ are with their fillings *a-l-f a-l-f a-l-f* and each of them adds up to 12 in s”n, and all of them together amount in s”n to 36, which is also in s”n like truth, which is 9:
- (28) *and He added to him five to complete him in His hand* - expl.: for He added to him [the letter] *h*, to Abram, which is 9 in s”n, and it [Abraham] adds up to 14:
- (29) *and from Sarai He took the Oneness that had been destroyed because of the woman* - expl.: He took the [letter =1] *jud*, which is the Oneness, Ein Sof, as mentioned, *that had been destroyed because of the woman*, and she is Eve, as mentioned, *and He gave in its stead five* which is *h*, and she was called Sarah, *to fill out her eyes, for she was deficient* - i.e. that Sarah<sup>54</sup> in s”n is six, and 1 is missing from eye, which in s”n is 7, because Eve’s seeing, as it is written: “When the woman saw that the tree was good” etc. and when *h* was added to Sarah the eye was filled - i.e. that *sr* from Sarah is the number 500, and it is known that final *kaf* is the number 500, and when it is placed in the beginning of the word with *h* from Sarah, in secret [Genesis 15,5]: “So [*kh*] shall your offspring be”, then the [letter] *kaf* is numbered as two in s”n and with *h* it adds up to 7 as s”n of *ay*[in]<sup>55</sup>, and it is this that is written *to fill out her eyes*, and it is this that is written [Genesis 21, 9]: “And Sarah saw Hagar’s son” etc. “playing” etc., and this is an expression for idolatry, and Sarah came to amend with her seeing the blemish of Eve’s seeing, in secret “When the woman saw” etc., as mentioned.
- (30) *nonetheless her name points to the Oneness* - expl.: for Sarah in s”n is ten, which is the Oneness, Ein Sof, blessed be He, *and the name of our forefathers brings* etc. *therefore Jacob is called Israel* - expl.: when you join the three names of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Israel together it adds up in s”n to 43, which is 7 in s”n like s”n of *ay*[in] *so that they will not stay* - expl.: for by the help of the name of our forefathers the eye was amend-

<sup>54</sup> Sarah is mistakenly written for Sarai, which in s”n is six.

<sup>55</sup> Eye is the evil eye, so that the sentence now means: So evil shall your (Chistian) offspring be.

ed and opened, as mentioned, and why? *so that they will not stay* in the shells of sin, which is the obstruction of the eye in secret; [Genesis 26,35]: “and they were a source of bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah” in idolatry, [Genesis 27,1]: “and his eyes were too dim to see” and this is what it says: *Happy is an eye that see all these* i.e. that he does not destroy his eyes with all these, in secret [Exodus 32,4]: “This is your god” [or: “These are your gods” - about the molten calf] etc. And as the saying of the mourner [Lamentations 1,16]: “For these things do I weep”:

- (31) *for it is truth* - expl.: *so that they will not stay* in sin, as mentioned, and *Happy is an eye that see all these* for *it is truth* i.e. these in s”n are 9 as s”n of truth, for because the amendment of the eye, as mentioned, the lie will be destroyed, and it is idolatry, and then the truth which has two legs<sup>56</sup> will stay in truth:
- (32) *menstruating woman’s son - sin in his name and sin in his form* - expl.: son in s”n is 7, menstruating woman in s”n is 14, which in s”n is 5, and when s”n of son and the number 5 of menstruating woman is combined, it adds up in s”n to 12 as the s”n of sin [cht], and also Jeshua in s”n is 17 which in s”n is sin [cht], and it is this that is written: *sin in his name* i.e. ordinary sin is alluded to in his name, and total *sin in his form*, as is mentioned: *menstruating woman’s son*:
- (33) *that adds up to messiah* - expl.: for also messiah adds up in s”n to 16, which is two times sin [ch]:
- (34) *and from the existence of the serpent, for this is also sin* - for serpent is also in s”n 16, which is two times sin:
- (35) *and he covered the truth with the garment of his falsehood to talk thereby* - expl.: falsehood in s”n is 6 and when you add 6 to 9, which is s”n of truth, it amounts to 15 [jh] and this is what is written: *thereby with the signature of the people of the truth*:
- (36) *messiah that is the eye* - expl.: Messiah in s”n is 16, which in s”n is 7 as s”n of eye [ay]:
- (37) *with 15 and with six* - expl.: affliction in s”n is 15; *with six* i.e. six is s”n of falsehood that are added to truth as mentioned:
- (38) *with six* which is s”n of falsehood as mentioned above:
- (39) *the oneness with abomination* - expl.: abomination in s”n is 13 as the number of one:
- (40) *emissaries [=apostles] that are alluded to by the [evil] eye* - expl.: emissaries in s”n are 25, which in s”n is 7 as s”n of ay[in]:
- (41) *and since the pollution became stronger* - expl.: pollution in s”n is 25, which in s”n is 7 as the number of ay as mentioned, and when it gets stronger then the number 7 is doubled and it amounts to 14:
- (42) *in purity with ‘I am that I am’ in truth* - expl.: purity in s”n is 21 [=3] as the number of ‘I am’, and ‘I am’ and two times ‘I am’ is truth as mentioned several times:
- (43) *for by what does he merit* - expl.: for by what [mh=9] - which amounts to man [adm=9] and this is the Christian - did he always call himself? Man! And it says: *he is considered among the sinners*, who are his 12 disciples, *that set up the trinity as truth*; but it does not simply say: *is considered*

<sup>56</sup> Soncino ed. Shabbat 104a: “And why does falsehood stand on one foot, whilst truth has a brick-like foundation? Truth can stand, falsehood cannot stand.” Note 8 explains: “each of the letters of *sheker* is insecurely poised on one leg .... whereas those of *emet* are firmly set, each resting on two ends, the *m* too resting on a horizontal bar”.

among the sinners but he [hva=12] with the number 12, and among [mn] [with] the number 9 as the number of truth:

- (44) *there remained* [the letters] *dead from truth* - expl.: since the letter alef is taken away from truth there remained the letters *mt* [=dead], and [the letter] *chet from sin* - expl.: for dead in s"n is 8, which is 8 [ch] from *human sin from the filth of the serpent* which [sin] in s"n is 8 and dead as mentioned:
- (45) *and anyone who touches it will be polluted* - expl.: it [bv] is the number 8 as mentioned:
- (46) *And emissaries of death* etc. until *men of destruction* - expl.: death [mvt] in gematria is destruction [cherem - both are 14] in s"n:
- (47) *like one who is chased by the eye* - expl.: for one in s"n is like eye with *filling* [both are 13]:
- (48) *for they are the holy 8* - expl.: for two times one adds up to 26 as the number of the Lord [meaning the Tetragram JHVH], and 26 is in s"n 8:
- (49) *a wicked son of a righteous father, trinity of eye [evil]* - expl.: vinegar [chvmts] in s"n is 27 which is 9 in s"n, and wine in s"n is 7, and also trinity in s"n is 9 as the number of vinegar, and eye in s"n is 7 as the number of wine; and this is a play on words but also an allusion to this that he became sour [wicked] and left the community of Israel and denied the Oneness of the Lord; and they also said: *trinity of eye* - i.e. that he verified the trinity and denied the faith of our fathers, which is the Unity [monotheism], which is in s"n as the eye with fillings which amounts to one as mentioned.
- (50) *without hiss* etc. - expl.: for it is known that the Sitra Acharai has no animal that gnaws except from what it sucks from the holy in the providence of the Lord, and when He removed His providence from it then the wickedness was destroyed by itself, and this is what is written: *without supervision of eyes that see everything to destroy the evil speech*, and it is possible that it alludes to the name of the Christian Jeshua that amounts to 17 in s"n as s"n of speech, *for he has no share* etc. i.e. that when he removes the supervision of the eyes as mentioned, for two times eye adds up to 14, and it says: *death is he and not life*, for death in s"n is 14, *and not life* and this is also in s"n 14 and its saying: *seraph-snake is he and not an angel*, i.e. seraph in s"n is 13, the opposite of of angel, for angel is also in s"n 13, for the final kaf in angel [mlakh] is 5 [500=5] as is known, and the word seraph means conflagration of the whole earth.
- (51) *to say all this* [literally: these (things) *alh*] *in the name of truth* - expl.: these in s"n are 9 as s"n of truth and its saying *all these* is an allusion to idolatry, in secret: [Exodus 32,4]: "This is your god" [or: "These are your gods" - about the molten calf], cf. Perush no. (30).
- (52) *Moses whose number* etc. - expl.: Moses in s"n is 12 as the number of the tribes of Israel:
- (53) *the water that is truth* - expl.: water in s"n is as s"n of truth [=9] *and gave the Torah in goodness* - expl.: Torah in s"n is goodness [both are 17]:
- (54) *in the two hands, in 248 [positive commandments] and in 365 [negative commandments] that become 28* - expl.: two times hand is s"n of 248 and 365, and it is also the number of strength [k(oa)ch]:
- (55) *by one, for Aharon is one* - expl.: Aharon in s"n is one [echad] and calf is

- also in s”n one [both are 13]:
- (56) *with fire -which is one-* expl.: one amounts to 13, which in s”n is 4 as s”n of fire, *and he spread* etc. expl.: s”n of water is as s”n of truth:
- (57) *that comes from Jehuda with three [things]* - expl.: Jehuda in s”n is 21, and this is in s”n 3, and it is an allusion to the sin of the trinity that came in the time of the Second Temple, for at that time it was called by the name Jehuda only:
- (58) *with a stylus -this is the evil eye-* expl.: stylus in s”n is 16 which in s”n are 7 as s”n of eye:
- (59) *of iron by a hand* - expl.: iron is in s”n 14:
- (60) *in man* - expl.: an allusion to the Christians for they trust in a man that is their messiah, and they say that he forgives their sins, and it is this that is written: “ *turns his heart from the Lord*” etc.
- (61) *the true fountain of spring waters which gives with the help of the Lord* - expl.: waters is in s”n as true [both are 9], like s”n of spring is as s”n of help [written *jd* - both are 14]:
- [62] “*Where is the prediction of the Lord?*” *with the evil eye* - expl.: where in s”n is 7 as s”n of *ay[in]*:
- (63) expl.: *the Lord’s pride, this is the Torah* etc. - i. e. pride<sup>57</sup> in s”n is 13, which in s”n is 4, and also the Torah is in s”n 22, which is also in s”n 4:
- (64) “*with the tongue*” of evil - expl.: an allusion to a language of foreigners [lashon loazim - especially Greek]:
- (65) *in blemish and in the hand* - expl.: blemish is in s”n hand [14]:
- (66) *physical and spiritual enemies* - expl.: the physical are the peoples of the world that hate Israel for ever, and the spiritual is Satan, and this is the evil inclination:
- (67) *and not by a man* - expl.: i.e. not as the Christians say that their god was made into man, who is their messiah, that came to forgive their sins and redeem them from Gehinnom, but we, the children of Israel, are a people that is delivered by the Lord with an eternal salvation:
- (68) *in order to bind our festal offering* etc. *Messiah ben Josef* - expl.: festal offerings [=23] and altar [=21] are in s”n as s”n of Messiah ben [=23] Josef [=21]:
- (69) *and his full strength, this is Gog and Magog* - expl.: Gog Magog in s”n with [the letter] mem in Magog adds up to 28 [strength]:
- (70) *and it [the exile] shall disappear with the help of the strength of the Lord - this is the oneness of our God* - expl.: strength in s”n is ten and this is an allusion to oneness as mentioned:
- (71) *the bow from his [Gog’s] left hand -this is the sin-* expl.: bow in s”n is 8 *and the arrow* etc. arrow in s”n is 17 which is also in s”n 8.

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57 In the Iggeret itself is written *jerum*, but here it is written explicitly *jerim*(=8), although it is numbered as *jerum*=13! As it is a play of words on Jeremiah 18,18:“Come let us devise a plot against Jeremiah” - the name is changed to *jerum jah* or *jerim jah* to give it a new meaning - it is understandable that the Perush writes *jerim* since it is closer to the name Jeremiah - *jerim*(i)ja.

### 3.3. The Text of Iggeret without the Mystical Elements<sup>58</sup>

#### Introduction

Listen to me, children of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, a treasured people, you did the Lord choose, God over all the earth, and His name is awe-inspiring among the nations, and He should bless you with peace just as He said, for He will certainly do what He has said.

Remember, do and take heed of His deeds and his Holy Torah; since the sense of sight brings about remembrance, therefore I will write to you the source of the Lord's deeds, for they are awe-inspiring, and even though the concealed acts belong to the Lord, and also the revealed ones that are revealed to us, nonetheless it was alluded to us by the cantillation marks, a great and awe-inspiring secret.

For after two deportations the smallest among the nations will spread throughout the whole world; and to them was given permission and authorization in order to go in the Lord's secret for they are God-fearers, and with them are secrets and the Lord's covenant; and this is what was directly transmitted to us from our forefathers, so that the remnant of Israel will shine in the brilliance of the firmament and not do injustice any more; and this is the secret that was transmitted to us from our Holy Torah.

#### History

At the outset the merciful God created the world from nothing and with a saying - and this is his Oneness - and He combined the compassion with the justice in six days - and He rested on the seventh and called it shabbat - in secret truth - and in the fullness of the justice and the compassion He created the man by the Lord's name in His image, and He commanded the truth to protect itself from the tree of knowledge of good and bad - good is the Lord and bad is the sin that represents the serpent and it will not overpower the truth.

And when the serpent saw that the man stands in compassion and justice, because He created him therewith, and he rises with the name of God, and that a woman comes from truth, it went to destroy the truth in order to arouse the evil, for the truth is reduced because of the evil; with strength the serpent practises sorcery to leave them to struggle in good and evil, in justice and compassion, and to destroy her from the form of man. And so that its words should be heard, and that it so happened, the woman took the advice of the seducer, and she also gave to her husband, who was with her, to destroy the truth; therefore the Torah said: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened" - this is Satan's strength - and they were in their nakedness - and they surrendered the oneness of our God - therefore The Holy One, blessed be He, damned the serpent with the belly and with the dirt and with the evil and with the incisor tooth "all the days of its life". And "they shall strike at your head in destruction

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<sup>58</sup> It might help the reader to understand *Iggeret* better when most of the mystical elements and the enumeration are removed.

and justice” and you shall strike at their heel – in the oneness of Our God - at the end of the days He will find us; and ”to the woman He said”: since you have diminished the truth, the truth will be changed to pain - ”in pain shall you bear children”, and to the man He said: since you have listened to your wife to destroy the truth and to ”curse the ground because of you” therefore ”thorns” - this is the evil - ”and thistles” - this is three [trinity] - ”shall it sprout for you” for in the future to talk about three gods in one, which amounts to thorns and thistles, for you shall take away from them the evil and there will remain three at the place of the thistles. ”By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat” - this is the Lord, The Rock of Worlds - ”until you return to” the truth in the ”ground, for from it you” were taken ”for dust you are” - this is the sin - ”and to dust you shall return” - to the sin - for one transgression leads to another; two times sin is the evil that diminishes from truth and rests at three [trinity]. And the Lord took away His Oneness from the primordial light, which is the truth, and it left the man in sin, and He put in the place of the Oneness the evil that is missing from truth, as it is written: ”And God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them”, and therefore he named his wife Eve, for she is one because of the Oneness that was taken away because of her; and since the Oneness disappeared from them there remained in it blood - this is sin- therefore Rebekah said: ”I am disgusted with my life because of the Hittite women”; and this is what Lamech said: ”a lad for bruising me”, and being after the destruction of the First Temple evil is filled with evil, then the evil will come.

And woe to the eyes that see this for then the oneness - on account of a few that carry the name of Israel - are called by the One to shame, and from them all the peoples that are mired in sin come to believe in the detestable sin; because of this God commanded our forefathers to circumcise the uncircumcised, that is the trinity, and to leave Abram with the truth, for ’I am that I am’ is truth, and He added to him the letter h - Abraham - to complete him in His hand and in His image; and from Sarai He took the Oneness - the letter jud - that had been destroyed because of the woman, and He gave in its stead the letter heh - Sarah- to fill out her eyes, for she was deficient; nonetheless her name still points to the Oneness, and the name of our forefathers brings them the evil that is diminished because of the man, therefore Jacob is called Israel, so that they will not stay in sin.

And happy is that eye that see all these [things] for it is truth.

### **Warning, condemnation**

And at this time the serpent lent its filth - from it came the menstruating woman’s son [=Jesus] - sin in his name and sin in his form, that adds up to messiah - that went out from the Lord’s people and from the existence of the serpent, for this is also sin, from good and bad; and he covered the truth with the garment of his falsehood to talk thereby with the signature of the people of the truth; and he denied the oneness and Torah of our God and greatly ridiculed the words of our sages; but we are zealous with the Lord’s zeal, and we gave him over to death by our judges from our land that the caesar had appointed over him from our city; and he was buried in a stinking grave, according to

the law for a wicked betrayer, and he was cast out from his grave as a trampled carcass and disappeared from the world. However, his pollution remained in the land, and the sound of the sweat of the pollution was heard in all places. The pollution rose and wrote books without end on his deeds that never were, and they called his name messiah that is "the eye that mocks the father"<sup>59</sup> in the pollution of the falsehood.

And they say that he came to fulfil the words of the Torah, but he was "a wayward and defiant son"<sup>60</sup> that came to smite with lies of the pollution the 600.000 letters of the purity - lies upon lies, and he gave a new Torah which he concocted from the heart of his pollution in order to substitute for the oneness with abomination. But why should I dwell at length about the pollution, for it is forbidden to look at its form and its existence. However, this you should know, our brothers, the children of Israel, that are dispersed among the peoples, you must not believe in the renegades that are called apostles that are alluded to by the evil eye, for they are sinners and cause many to sin, and since the pollution became stronger, therefore the Jews intensified their belief in purity with 'I am that I am' in truth; and "cease you" - far being it from you - "to glorify man, who has only a breath in his nostrils! For by what does he merit esteem?"<sup>61</sup> He is considered among the sinners that set up the trinity as truth; but since the oneness was taken from the truth there remained death and human sin from the filth of the serpent; and anyone who touches it will be polluted with an eternal pollution for which there is no remedy. And apostles of death you shall call their putrefied name, men of destruction, and you shall be zealous with God's zeal to uproot their root from the land so that they will not rise again. And this you shall surely know that also their words of falsehood will be spread in the land as chaff before the wind like one who is chased by the eye to dry out all the land with pollution until a certain time that is hidden for our eyes.

Then God will stop and remove the pollution from the land, and "God shall be king over everything and He is one and His name is one"<sup>62</sup> for they are the holy, and happy is he who awaits Him in truth. Beware of the first-born of the donkey [Peter Chamor - play on Petrus], the expelled scattered sheep, do not listen to his words, words of nothingness, you shall just break his obstinacy with all sorts of demolition and destruction that are in the world. And there is with you a man, oppressor of the Jews, a destructive man of the students of R. Gamaliel Hanasi, a wicked son of a righteous father, trinity of evil that is dressed in a clothing of garment of skin in the filth of the serpent, and his name was formerly in Israel Shaul. Indeed let Sheol and Abaddon be with him and his words; and still they called him, let his name be blotted out, a miracle maker<sup>63</sup> by saying that he could work miracles and wonders, but it is not like that, for he does it all by Satan's strength and actions. And he makes a [twisted] thing that cannot be made straight. He is a wicked sinner whose name is called putrefaction, speaking evil of God and His Torah by saying "Let us break the words of theirs,

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59 Cf. Proverbs 30,10.

60 Deut. 21,18.

61 Isaiah 2,22.

62 Cf. Zechariah 14,9.

63 Poel ot - play on Paulus.

shake off their ropes from us”, but ”He who is enthroned in heaven laughs; and God mocks at them”<sup>64</sup>. But the serpent that He selected bites him without hiss, without supervision of eyes that see everything, to destroy the evil speech for he has no share in God’s inheritance, death is he and not life, seraph-snake is he and not an angel, for the shells of pollution from ’The Other Side’ (Sitra haAcharai) is stuck to him to say all this in the name of truth. And he who take revenge on him either through death or bodily harm is called zealous for God; and a pact of friendship will be granted him and his descendants after him<sup>65</sup>, for Paulus profanes God publicly. And he has no part among the children of Israel for he seduces and leads astray God’s people to walk after other gods and the teaching that their forefathers never knew. And woe to the eye that sees all this, beware of his words for the wisdom of pollution is in him which he concealed with the pollution of mishap, for the holy books defile the hands and the feet of those who want to walk in pollution, but they are life for those who find them in God’s wisdom, and the poison of death for the one that walks with them in pollution to pollute his body and his soul. But there is no man who can grasp and explain God’s wisdom except by God’s gift. Therefore you shall ask God our Lord in awe and love that He will give you understanding to do His commandments and to engage in His Holy Torah in pureness in the manner He commanded you in the name of the faithful shepherd [Moses].

### **Encouragement**

See how the prophet warned us in the end of the prophecy: ”Be mindful of the Teaching of My servant Moses, whom I charged at Horeb with laws and rules for all Israel”<sup>66</sup> - not only to listen, but to perform, for the knowledge is not the main point, but the deed. Engage in the Written and the Oral Torah, for this is what Jacob our forefather saw in his dream, for it is written<sup>67</sup>: ”and he took of the stones of that place” and minimum of stones is two, and this is the two Torahs, and they became a single unit under his head for it is written: and he took the stone, for they are not two Torahs - dare not mention it! - there is only one Torah that appears as two faces, front and back, for the words of the sages are like pegs for the sapling of the Written Torah. And if you maintain the words of these two which both are the words of the Living God then you will merit to ascend on the ladder which top reaches to the sky and angels of God are going up and down on it to bring us to the place which God created to keep us in life for eternity. And this you shall know in order to understand all these things: know that the enemy is the human embodiment of the ancient serpent [also: source of sin], who at first came with cunning to the bearer of human offspring [=Eve] and seduced against God’s command in order to destroy the tree of man from producing firstlings - these are Israel - for the Lord; and after this all the days of bewilderment it was seducing and instigating the seed of man; and few of them understood with natural insight or with the help of God, and they did not listen to the words of the cursed (serpent) because of God’s actions until Moses came, whose number is like the number of the tribes of Israel; he who came up from the water - that is truth - and gave the Torah in goodness,

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64 Cf. Psalms 2,3-4.

65 Cf. Numbers 25,12-13.

66 Malachi 3,22.

67 Genesis 28,11.

laws and commandments as the number of parts of the body and sinews of man, in the two hands, in 248 positive commandments and in 365 negative commandments that become 28 in order to protect the soul of man from the pollution of the serpent.

### History

And when Moses went to receive The Ten Commandments, one half of them are for God and one half for man, that the whole Torah rests on them, the seducer went to seduce Israel by one, for Aharon is one, and the calf is one and he spoke with their knowledge to confuse them: 'This is not a foreign god but your God's Oneness'. And when Moses came and saw what the serpent had done, he went and destroyed it with fire - which is one - and he spread it in water to destroy it with truth by saying: 'This is not a god of truth'. And he commanded with strong warnings that they should not do anymore like this, and all the prophets warned Israel all their days regarding this. And when the serpent saw that the Torah and the commandments were against its counsel, Satan brought in his form and in his image this man "adversary and enemy is this evil"<sup>68</sup> in order to destroy the Godly part in his teachings and commandments, and he attached his words of pollution to the words of the holy Torah in order to strengthen his pollution over Israel.

### Warning against Christianity

But now, our brothers, children of Israel, do not believe in his dreams and words, which are the words of Satan, in order to seduce you by saying: 'The ancients did not examine and understand God's words, but we know the Torah and the depths of its secrets; therefore let us go and worship another [type of] worship'. Do not listen to them to become unclean by them, but you shall surely destroy them quickly from the earth, for the words of the Torah and God's commandments shall not depart for ever, for "God is not man to be capricious, or mortal to change His mind"<sup>69</sup>. Therefore you shall beware of the men of the serpent for their sting is the sting of the scorpion, and their hiss is the hiss of the seraph-snake, and all their words are like rivers of fire from Gehinnom and Abaddon, falsehood and lie. Look and see how Jeremiah the prophet warned you<sup>70</sup> against sin that comes from Juda with three [things], which is inscribed with a stylus - this is the evil eye - of iron by a hand that stands besides the Torah, but it is on the tablet that is concocted by their heart, for "Thus said the Lord: Cursed is he who trusts in man, who makes mere flesh his strength", and because of this he "turns his heart from the Lord". And not only does the prophet establish his words about the cursed, but also: "He shall be like a bush in the desert, which does not sense good" - this is the Torah, for it is written<sup>71</sup>: "For I give you good instruction". And they shall not see the good that is kept in store for the righteous ones in the future, but they shall dwell forever "in a barren land, scorched places in the wilderness"<sup>72</sup> in "the nethermost pit - those murderous, treacherous men"<sup>73</sup>, and they have no share in the name of the God

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68 Cf. Esther 7,6.

69 Numbers 23,19.

70 Cf. Jeremiah 17,1 ff.

71 Proverbs 4,2.

72 Cf. Jeremiah 17,6 f.

73 Cf. Psalms 55,24.

of Israel, but "blessed is he who trusts in the Lord", for he shall not see the heat of Gehinnom, for the Lord is the hope of Israel and not a man, and since Israel is waiting for the Lord alone, the Lord will be their hope for cleaning them from the pollution of the serpent.

### **Warning against Apostates**

But those who forsake the Lord shall be put to shame, and those who turn away from His Torah shall be doomed to the land of gloom, Sheol and Abaddon, because they have forsaken the true fountain of spring waters<sup>74</sup>, which gives with the help of the Lord; and the one that will forsake the Torah also forsakes the Lord, who is our God, our saviour, our healer and our glory. But they say: "Where is the prediction of the Lord?" with the evil eye "Let it come to pass!" for he has destroyed all the words of the Torah and the Prophets by something devastatingly detestable that makes detestable and they devastate all the land by a stumbling block, and by a rock of hindrance<sup>75</sup>, by sin of destruction and by iniquity of idolatry<sup>76</sup>.

### **Condemnation of Apostates**

Let it be far from you, my brothers, to believe in this, for Torah that is the word of our God will stay forever without end; but these rebels [apostates] abandoned the cool water that flows<sup>77</sup> over the exhausted - this is Israel - who is exhausted in the exile, and the Torah protects them. But they forgot in the wickedness of their heart the God of Israel, and "they sacrifice to a delusion and are made to stumble in their" words, "an ancient path", this is the Torah, "to walk instead on byways, on a road not built up". And they say: Come and let us think of the Lord's pride, this is the Torah and the commandments that the Lord commanded us, and this is the throne of His glory, elevated and exalted over strange ideas. Although we know that "instruction shall not fail from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor oracle from the prophet", nonetheless [the apostates say]: "Come, let us strike" the Torah "with the tongue" of evil with the filth of the serpent to interpret it according to our hearts, to do evil and not good, "and we shall no longer have to listen" to the words of the Oral Torah. See how the Holy Torah complains before the Lord saying: "Listen to me, O Lord - and take note of what my enemies say. Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit for me. Remember how I stood before You to plead in their behalf" and to protect them by my word, for I am life for them that find me, and for all flesh that do and fulfil my word; I will heal them from their apostasy "to turn Your anger away from them".<sup>78</sup> Oh, give their children - and their pupils - over to famine, to listen to the word of the Lord that mows down Satan by the sword, and let their wives - those that believe in them - be bereaved of children and husbands, and men that encourage them shall be struck down by death - eternal death - and let their young men - these are the men of their wars - be slain by the sword of the Lord. Let an outcry be heard from their houses - from their house of prayer, destroy the abomina-

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74 Cf. Jeremiah 17,13 ff.

75 Cf. Isaiah 8,14.

76 The two words *avon kilajon* and *aven gilajon* both make a play on evangelion.

77 Cf. Jeremiah 18,14 ff.

78 The following is a mix of citations of and comments on Jeremiah 18,21-23.

tion of their prayer by sudden wicked marauders, by Satan's troops to confuse them - "for it has dug a pit to trap us, and laid snares for my feet. Oh Lord, You know all their plots to kill me" by [their] saying: The Torah is deficient, and in its place is given 'the sin of destruction' [evangelion]. "And they will speak words against the Most High" - this is the Written Torah - "and will harass the holy ones of the Most High" - this is the Oral Torah - "and they will think of changing times and laws"<sup>79</sup> - by their evil tongue. Therefore<sup>80</sup> "Do not pardon their iniquity, do not blot out their guilt from Your presence. And they will stumble - in everything - act against them in Your hour of wrath" to destroy them from under the heaven, for they have rebelled against Your words, which are words of life. And you shall know that they and their teaching of destruction shall exert strength over the world and over the holy people "for a time, times and half a time", and then they shall be destroyed from the land, and the Lord will cleanse the whole land with the fire of the Torah, and the kingdom of His people Israel will overpower all the kingdom of the world. And then all the peoples will go in the Torah of the Lord, "and in that time ten men will take hold of every Jew by a corner of his cloak and say: Let us go with you, for we have heard that the Lord is with you"<sup>81</sup>.

### **Encouragement**

And now, our brothers, listen to my words, words of truth, and do not believe in the signs and the portents of those who are sinners at the cost of their life, "for the Lord is testing you to see whether you really love Him with all your heart and soul. Follow none but the Lord, and revere none but Him"<sup>82</sup>, for how and by what else should you go and what else should you revere? If you observe His commandments then you will listen to His voice and worship Him and not another, and to Him and not to another shall you hold fast, for He is your portion; then it will be well with you all the days. Do understand this, my brothers, that we are called holy because of the law of our primogeniture, and we are called the best part of the Lord's harvests and there is no blemish in us, "for Jacob was a perfect man"<sup>83</sup>, and the Holy Spirit affirms regarding us: "Every part of you is fair, my darling, there is no blemish in you"<sup>84</sup>, and since there is no blemish in us we are not devoured by the land-owner-priests, who are in blemish and in the hand of the destroyer. Therefore this consuming fire went out from our limbs to put on us a blemish so that we will be devoured by our enemies, physical and spiritual enemies, and he sought to blind our eyes with the light of the Torah; therefore be strong and be men, men of the Lord, for the Lord said so to you forever. If you will walk after His Torah and His commandments then He will guard your body and your souls, saying to you: You are perfect in the name of your Lord and not with blemish. Look how Jacob, our forefather, warned us against this evil blemish that will come in the guise of a messiah, who has "seven abominations in his mind"<sup>85</sup>, in saying about him: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from

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79 Daniel 7,25.

80 Jeremiah 18,23.

81 Cf. Zechariah 8,23.

82 Deuteronomy 13,4.

83 Genesis 25,27.

84 Song of Songs 4,7.

85 Cf. Proverbs 26,25.

between his feet, until Shiloh shall come, and the homage of peoples be his”<sup>86</sup>. The beginning letters of it<sup>87</sup>: There is no blemish as evil as Jeshua. And the surplus [letter] jud<sup>88</sup> is the oneness, for it talks about the oneness of our God, and this blemish will not depart from Israel until Shiloh will come, for the kingdom over the whole world belong to Him. Therefore, beware of the blemish that is among you, so that it will not be a trap for you, and cling to your God and to his Torah and His commandments, and if you do so, then every tongue that arises to judgement over you shall sin, for there is no dawn for them - this amounts to one - for they belie the oneness. And if you listen to me, then it will be good for you with the help of the Lord, and good for you in the world that is totally good, for all of you are included in those that have a share in the world to come. And ”Oh happy Israel! Who is like you, a people delivered by” God<sup>89</sup> and not by a man, for the salvation of the Lord is eternal salvation; thus says the Torah: ”In distress I called on You; and You answered me and brought me relief”<sup>90</sup>. Therefore I will not fear anyone who is relying on man, for the Lord is my helper, and I will see revenge over my foes, for it is good - this is Torah. He shall take refuge in You and not in a man. All the nations have beset me, but in Your name I will cut them down; they have pressed me hard to fall, but You have helped me, for You are my strength and my might and my deliverance, and by Your right hand I will be exalted, and by your right hand I will be triumphant; I shall not die as they thought, for I shall live by the mighty deeds of the Lord, in order to tell about all His deeds. I am the gate of the Lord, and by the help of the righteous shall they come through it [the gate]. Say therefore, oh Israel and Aron’s house and those that fear God, that His kindness endures for ever. ”I praise you, for you have answered me, and have become my deliverance”. ”The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone” for it emanated from the Lord and not from man, and the Lord will do wonders before our eyes. And when the Torah saw the length of the exile it said: ”O Lord, deliver us! O Lord, let us prosper!” And the holy spirit answered: Wait, my daughter, wait until a blessed one comes in the name of your God, then we bless you - all of you - from the house of the Lord. The Torah said: ’God is my Lord and He will light up for us’ in the exile of this darkness with ’Your light and with Your truth’<sup>91</sup> in order to bind our ”festal offering to the horns of the altar with cords”<sup>92</sup> by Messiah ben Josef and his death will be for us as a festival in the wars of Gog and Magog. And after this you will say: ”You are my God and I will praise You; You are my God and I will extol You”. ”Praise the Lord for He is good”, for He showed us His kindness forever by Messiah ben David, and the reward of those that engage in the study of and performance of the Torah is that they are called perfect without blemish, and they are blessed by ”Ashrei” [Praiseworthy!] by saying: Praiseworthy are those whose way is perfect; and who is he? He is the one that walks in the Torah of the Lord, those that guard His testimony with all their heart to seek His commandments. And if you do so you will be called performers of justice and not performers of

86 Genesis 49,10.

87 The words in the verse form the acrostic.

88 Of the word: jikchat=homage.

89 Cf. Deuteronomy 33,29.

90 Cf. Psalms 118,5. The following is a paraphrase of Psalms 118,7 - 119,8.

91 Cf. Psalms 43,3.

92 Jeremiah 118,27 ff.

injustice, for you went by the way of the Lord, He that commanded you to do His commandments exceedingly. Therefore, pray to the Lord that He will direct your attention to do His statutes and to understand their ways to the good. And if you look to His commandments then you will not be ashamed, and you will not be humiliated for ever and ever. Therefore say, please, all of the house of Israel: I will praise You with upright heart in teaching myself to protect your festivals. But You did not do so for all people, for us You chose, and us You taught Your righteous ordinances. And if I will keep Your statutes, I know that You will not forsake me utterly.<sup>93</sup> And you shall know that your exile will overpower you until Samael Sar and the father of all the children of Esau is filled up, and his full strength, this is Gog and Magog, and the exile shall disappear with the help of the strength of the Lord - this is the oneness of our God - and the Lord shall break the bow from Gog's left hand - this is the sin of the pollution - and the arrow - this is also the sin of pollution - from his right hand, and you shall let it fall on the mountains of Israel; then all the nations will acknowledge the honour of the Lord, He who is Israel's God and not a man, and He dispersed Israel because of their iniquity, and He restored the captivity of Jacob, and He will show compassion on all the house of Israel. And then the Lord will avenge His holy name that has been profaned within the nations, and the Lord shall be for us God for ever from this day and beyond, when the Lord gathers His people Israel from all the countries to where he has dispersed them, and there will not remain there even one of them, and no more will He hide His face from them after He has poured out His holy spirit over all the house of Israel for the Lord God has spoken.

### **Conclusion**

These are the words of the one who awaits eagerly the salvation of Israel and begs the Lord our God regarding help to us, a little help, until the righteous teacher will come to us to deliver us and rule over us for ever. Amen, selah.

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<sup>93</sup> The following is a paraphrase of some parts of Ezekiel 39.

## 4.1. The Construction and Content of *Iggeret*

The manuscript without the commentary by R. Eliezer consists of a main part, the letter itself, with the “message”, two “prologues”, and two “epilogues”.<sup>94</sup>

**Prologue 1**, standing alone and in a frame on p. 1, states that

- it is a letter written by R. Jochanan ben Zakkai at the request of R. Gamliel Hanasi<sup>95</sup> to the Jews in Rome in the year 3813 after the creation of the world on Kislev 26
- there is a commentary to it by the learned Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, God’s emissary from Jerusalem
- it was sent by Jannai the Small, a pupil of R. Gamliel
- to Josef ben Shimon Hapartzi, God’s prince among the Jews in Rome
- it was found among the earliest Hebrew books of the Romans.

**Prologue 2** states that

- the letter was in the possession of a learned man, Lefalt (Leopold) Immanuel Jacob van Dort, who brought it with him to the town Gogin
- he said it was found in Rome among the Romans’ earliest books in Hebrew
- then follows a shortened version of Prologue 1
- ending with more information about the commentary by R. Eliezer.

The only important new information in Prologue 2 is that *Iggeret* was in the possession of van Dort and brought by him to Cochín.

**Epilogue 1** repeats the names of the senders, but here R. Jochanan is called the “humble”, R. Gamliel “The light of Israel”, and the letter is written in the name of not only R. Gamliel but also all his loyal pupils, and actually all the people of Israel, and a short greeting and prayer are added. The date is then stated.

**Epilogue 2** is more like a postscript in which the messenger, the addressee, and Rome are mentioned. Interestingly, “in the city of Rome” is followed by the usual epithet for Jerusalem [ כּוּנְיָ ] May God protect it.

## 4.2. The Two Prologues and Two Epilogues

In medieval times it was normal to date letters at the end, and this might suggest that the epilogues are the oldest, and the two prologues are added later. This is not to say that the epilogues were originally part of the letter; they could be a later addition. The omission of references to R. Eliezer, the finding of the

<sup>94</sup> Page and line refer to the English translation.

<sup>95</sup> Kobler, F: *Letters of Jews through the Ages*. Vol. 1, London 1952, p. 46. Kobler gives three examples from Talmud Babli 11b of messages sent by Rabban Gamliel I Hanasi to Jewish communities. In a short introduction to these examples Kobler describes how Rabban Gamliel dictated letters to the scribe Jochanan. It is probably these texts that gave the author of *Iggeret* the idea of mentioning Rabban Gamliel as the sender of it.

letter, Gogin and van Dort point in the same direction.

**Prologue 1** seems to have been added later. Briefly and concisely, it mentions the circumstances of the letter and nearly looks like a “notification”. Provided the commentary is a later addition, Prologue 1 could still be older than the commentary, because the mention of it is very short and might without difficulties have been interpolated. Also the last words about the place of discovery might be a later addition.

**Prologue 2** appears to be the younger of the two. Here the fate of the letter is mentioned, a new person – van Dort – is introduced, and the letter is now also called a scroll. In addition it is mentioned that R. Eliezer wrote his commentary “here”, and supposedly it refers to Gogin, something that Prologue 1 does not mention.

### 4.3. The Division of the Main Text

The letter itself can be divided into:

Page refers to the Hebrew text, lines to the English text.

	page 2	lines 1-19
1. Introduction		
2. History: Creation, Forefathers	2-5	20-92
3. Warning against Christianity	6-9	93-168
4. Encouragement to Torah studies	9	169-196
5. History: Moses	9-10	197-212
6. Warning against Christianity	10	213-240
7. Warning against apostates	10-11	241-251
8. Condemnation of apostates	11	252-298
9. Encouragement to keep faith	11-14	299-396
10. Conclusion	14	397-399

### 4.4. The Composition of the Letter

**1. The Introduction** names the addressees.

#### **2. History : Creation, Forefathers**

The listeners are admonished to ‘remember’ God’s teaching. This is attained by hinting at the historical background and tradition of the Jewish people and its special position and ‘secret’. The account of the Creation, the Fall of Man, and the establishment of Abraham’s covenant are phrased very clearly and in an elegant way. The mystical interpretation of numbers is an organic part of the text, and its ad hoc explanations contribute to the logical proceeding of the story. The transition from one phase to the next is coherent and there are no sudden breaks. For example, the account starts to tell that God created the world, then man, then man is warned to beware the tree of knowledge of good

and evil, whereby the evil snake – that is, ‘evil’ – is introduced and creates the passing on to the next phase where the snake is the “main person”. There is also inner coherence in every single phase, often via mystical interpretations of numbers. This can be clearly illustrated by arranging the phases schematically. This method is based on an article by František Daneš<sup>96</sup> but here it is somewhat modified. The method entails looking at the text as a chain of utterances, each consisting of ‘Thema’ and ‘Rhema’ as two complementary parts of an utterance: “In fast jeder Aussage unterscheidet man das, worüber etwas mitgeteilt wird (das Thema) und das, was darüber mitgeteilt wird (das Rhema, die Aussage im eigenen, engeren Sinne)” (p. 72)<sup>97</sup>. Thus one Rhema can be made Thema in the following utterance, here marked by bold, and a Thema can have more Rhemas attached to it. The method is useful as an aid for close reading both regarding the composition of the text and for the understanding of its content, but it is not exhaustive or the only useful method.

The linear order of utterances of text in the letter:

	Thema	Rhema
1. line 20-35	<b>God</b>	created the world created man warns against the tree of knowledge warns against the <b>serpent</b>
2. line 36-40	<b>serpent</b>	sees man in God’s compassion wants to destroy man will awake sin seduces the <b>woman</b>
3. line 41-43	<b>woman</b>	follows the serpent seduces the <b>man</b>
4. line 44-46	<b>man and woman</b>	victims of Satan’s force apostates from <b>God</b>
5. line 47-69	<b>God</b>	damns the serpent the woman the man leaves man in sin shows compassion, clothes woman and <b>Adam</b>
6. line 70-72	<b>Adam</b>	names his wife Eve Eve is sinful Adam is full of <b>sin</b>

<sup>96</sup> F. Daneš: “Zur linguistischen Analyse der Textstruktur”. In: *Folia Linguistica*, Tomus IV, 1970, p. 72-78.

<sup>97</sup> In nearly every utterance a distinction is made between what something is declared to be about (the Thema) and what is said about it (the Rhema, the message in its own narrow meaning).

7. line 73-79 **sin** makes Rebekah (woman) disgusted with life  
 creates sin  
 makes oneness sinful  
 shames God's name  
 creates **shame/ sin** (Christianity)
8. line 80-92 **God** demands circumcision for sin (trinity)  
 gives Abram truth  
 is truth  
 names Abram Abraham  
 Sarai Sara  
 Jacob Israel

Arranged in this way, it is easier to see the coherence of the text, and it is clear that the author is a skilled rhetorician. Very slowly he leads the reader via the Creation, the Fall of Man, and rehabilitation by Abraham's covenant, circumcision, to the next section.

### 3. Warning against Christianity

The essence in the letter is: the serpent, the messiah of lies

Again, it is illustrative to go on with the schematic exposition of the following utterances.

9. line 93-94 **serpent** is filth  
 is son of filth = **messiah**
10. line 95-98 **messiah** comes from God's people and snake  
 hides the truth  
 denies God's oneness  
 ridicules **our** sages
11. line 99-100 **we (Jews)** are zealous  
 give **Jesus** over to death
12. line 101-103 **Jesus** is buried in a stinking grave  
 is cast out from grave as a carcass  
**disappears**
13. line 104-109 **pollution (Christians) remain**  
 are heard in all places  
 write books on his imaginary deeds  
 calls him messiah  
 says **he** fulfills the words of Torah
14. line 110-113 **he / Jesus** is wayward and defiant  
 comes with a new Torah  
 substitutes oneness with abomination



has corrupted God's teaching and exchanged it with the iniquity of idolatry [aven gilajon], close in sound to evangelion.

#### **8. Condemnation of apostates**

This section is a long damnation of the "rebels" and by using passages from Jeremiah, chapter 18, which the author weaves into his own words, it is formulated as a very sharp condemnation of the apostates. In the end, it is said that Christianity will rule over the whole world for some time, but then it will be destroyed.

#### **9. Encouragement to keep faith**

This extremely long section is an encouragement to "my brothers" to keep faith, formed as a paraphrase of some Bible passages from especially Torah and Psalms, interwoven with warnings against the Christians. It ends with a promise of salvation and that "the Lord will gather his people Israel from all the countries to where he has dispersed them".

#### **10. Conclusion**

The few lines concluding the letter stress the author's eager waiting for the salvation of Israel, and it ends with the usual end formulations, *amen* and *sela*.

## **4.5. Comments on the Composition**

The analysis of the composition has shown that the letter has a clear pattern. Apart from 1. Introduction and 10. Conclusion, the eight remaining parts form a tripartition that is repeated. The first partition is a historical presentation of man's, that is, the Jews' fight against the serpent/evil, by telling stories from the Torah, thereby giving them authority (part 2). The second partition is the warning that Christianity = evil (part 3), and the third partition is encouragement to pursue Torah studies, which equals adherence to faith with the following promise of salvation (part 4).

Then this tripartition is repeated. The first partition is a historical presentation of Moses, that is, the Jews, and the molten calf, that is, evil (part 5). The second partition is the warning against Christianity, but this time elaborated with a warning against and condemnation of apostasy (parts 6, 7 and 8), which shows that this is the central point of the letter. The third partition is encouragement to adherence to faith with the promise of salvation (part 9).

Also the proportioning, represented by the number of lines of the different parts, is carefully composed. In the first tripartition, the historical part and the warning have the same dimensions, whereas the encouragement segment is only a third. Here, the main point is to give authority to the letter, and then to the warning, and to a lesser degree, to point out the desirable. In the second tripartition, however, the letter had already been given authority, so the historical background is only sketchy, whereas the warning is as strong as in the first tripartition. But this time, the encouragement is heavily weighted, four

times as much as in the first tripartition and more than in the warning, so that the end result is that the audience pays much more attention to the encouragement, especially as it is something positive and desirable.

In the following, it is shown schematically and approximately, counting lines in the English text:

History	part 2	72
Warning	part 3	75
Encouragement	part 4	27
History	part 5	15
Warning	part 6-8	85
Encouragement	part 9	97

Even though it is only a rough estimate that is not to be seen as rigorous, it gives a clear impression of the composition of the letter. It resembles classical rhetorical speech with its different components:

1. exordium (introduction = part 1)
2. narratio (presentation of case = parts 2 and 5)
3. argumentatio (arguments pro et contra = warning parts 3 and 6-8)
4. refutatio (refutation = encouragement parts 4 and 9)
5. peroratio (conclusion = part 10)

These five points are mirrored in the construction of the letter, although not one to one and cannot be seen as a coincidence. In any case, this text bears witness to a high rhetorical level and very careful planning of the text.

The art of classical rhetoric was slowly becoming known to many learned Jews by the early fifteenth century. The Italian Jew Judah Messer Leon (ca. 1425-95) wrote his book about rhetoric *Nofet Tzufim* (The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow) that was printed around 1476 in Mantua, where he applied the classical rhetorical rules to the Hebrew Bible<sup>98</sup>. He was followed by others, like Azariah de Rossi (c. 1511-1578) and especially Judah Moscato (c. 1533 - 1593), who stressed persuasive rhetoric. A. M. Lesley gives a short, useful overview of Medieval Hebrew rhetoric and its impact on later Hebrew literature<sup>99</sup>. The books by Moses Hayim Luzatto (1707-1747) were also influenced by knowledge of rhetoric, and they were well-known both in Italy and Holland and most likely also influenced the German Meassefim<sup>100</sup>.

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98 Alexander Altmann: "Ars Rhetorica as Reflected in Some Jewish Figures of the Italian Renaissance". In: *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 1983, p. 1-22. See especially pp. 12 and 17.

99 Arthur M. Lesley: "A Survey of Medieval Hebrew Rhetoric". In: *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*, Vol. 1, 1984, p. 107-133.

100 Ibid. p. 127: "It is difficult to draw a clear boundary between the perhaps interrupted, eccentric continuity of Hebrew rhetoric in Italy, from Messer Leon to Moses Hayim Luzatto, and the early Haskalah in the North. When the German meassefim, in an entirely distinct cultural setting, looked to Hebrew sources for confirmation of their educational, literary, and political values, they came across and adopted as ancestors the Italian, Spanish, and Provençal writers whose work was preserved in Holland and Italy among some of the learned."

## 4.6. Knowledge of Jesus and Christianity

The examination of the structure of the letter and its contents has shown that the letter itself is a coherent unity, whereas the two prologues and probably also the epilogues are later additions. Thus, it is reasonable to exclude these four later parts in the following examination of the information about Christianity and its founders in the letter.

### About Jesus

1. 'Ben nidda' – son of a menstruant woman
2. Denier of God's oneness and Torah
3. Ridicules words of the sages
4. Given over to death by the judges of the Jews
5. Buried in a stinking grave
6. Cast out of the grave, disappeared
7. Was called messiah
8. Offers a new Torah
9. His 'pollution' remained
10. Jesus 'went out from our limbs'

### About Peter, Paul, and the apostles

1. Peter – 'firstborn of the donkey' speaks words of nothingness
2. Paul – Shaul – destructive pupil of R. Gamliel
3. Oppressor of the Jews
4. Denier of God
5. Seduces God's people
6. Emissaries = apostles 'cause many to sin'

### About Christians

1. Men of the serpent (evil)
2. Trust in man (Jesus)
3. Murderous and treacherous men
4. Landowner priests
5. Deniers of the Oral Torah
6. Changers of times and laws
7. 'Belie the oneness'
8. Claim to fulfil the words of Torah, but give new Torah
9. Emissaries of death (missionaries)

### About Christianity

1. Written by one who is close to Judaism
2. Evangelion is the 'sin of destruction'
3. Trinity, not Oneness
4. Innumerable books about Jesus' 'deeds that never were'
5. Exerts strength over Israel and the whole world

All these points show a certain knowledge of Christianity. It is known that Jesus was a Jew, that he was killed and that he disappeared, and that he was called messiah. Peter is only known in a rudimentary way, whereas there is more knowledge of Paul. His name was originally Saul, he was a pupil of R. Gamliel, but after apostasy, he seduced Jews into idolatry and became an enemy of the Jews. The apostles are called apostates, sinners and missionaries. Christians deny the Oral Torah and to a certain degree also the Written Torah by distorting it; they believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and the priests are landowners. Christians claim to supplant the Jews as God's people and want to exterminate the Jews. Christian teachings are presented as based on Trinity, belief in Jesus and the Gospel, and there are innumerable Christian writings. Christianity is called uncircumcised, has other celebrations and wants to dominate the world.

#### **4.7. Comments to R. Eliezer's Commentary**

The main part of R. Eliezer's commentary explains or adds mystical numbers, but there is also a clarification of words and concepts that are not totally clear from the letter, e.g. "two deportations" meaning "Babylonian Exile" and "Roman Exile", noted in the text as (1), and the concept of 'the punishment fitting the crime' that is added to (5). There are also some very long explanations, mostly regarding Christianity and Christian concepts, such as, three gods (10), Trinity and the twelve disciples, as in (13), (24) and (50), regarding Jesus (32), (49), (60) and (67), but also regarding God's Oneness as for example in (29) and (30). This means that a few comments are really helpful, whereas most of them add to the difficulties with mystical numbers. All in all, the Commentary has 14 + 71 explanations.

## 5.1. Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort

Another clue to solving the riddle of the *Iggeret* could be Jacob van Dort. Did he write the letter himself? Did he bring it from Europe to Cochin? Or did he actually find it in Cochin? Finding out about his life might help to answer these questions<sup>101</sup>.

Authors like Fischel<sup>102</sup>, Weinstein<sup>103</sup>, Bar-Ilan<sup>104</sup>, de le Roi<sup>105</sup> and Callenberg<sup>106</sup> and recently and most extensively, Mascha van Dort<sup>107</sup> have written about Jacob van Dort or mentioned him. His name is known for a translation into Hebrew of the Quran, for some excerpts of the Chronicles of the Jews from Cochin, and from *Iggeret Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai*. Nothing more about him was known until Mascha van Dort started her research in 2019. The following is mostly based on her work, supplemented with my own findings and interpretations of Jacob's texts in close collaboration with her from November 2019 to May 2021.

Jacob van Dort was born Jewish<sup>108</sup> in Dordrecht (often only called Dort) in the province of South Holland, but converted to Catholicism<sup>109</sup> in Aachen on December 5, 1745, and, on an unknown date, to Protestantism, at the latest in 1752<sup>110</sup>. He added Leopold Immanuel to his name at his first conversion, but I will generally call him Jacob van Dort or just Jacob. He had connections with Amsterdam and with Callenberg from the Protestant institute of mission, Institutum Judaicum, in Halle, which missionized intensely, and with some effect, among the Jews in Germany and in Poland from 1728<sup>111</sup>. In 1752, Jacob visited Callenberg on May 16 and 17<sup>112</sup>, and again in the beginning of April 1753, and

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- 101 M. van Dort's research from 2019 to 2021 has given me most of the relevant information about his life, hitherto totally unknown. See her book *Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort, a learned Jewish Christian man from Dordrecht*. 2021.
- 102 Fischel, Walter J.: "The Exploration of the Jewish Antiquities of Cochin on the Malabar Coast". In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 87, 1967 pp. 230-248. On p. 240-242 he mentions that Jacob was looking for old manuscripts and made extracts from them.
- 103 Weinstein, M. M. (1972). A Hebrew Qur'an Manuscript. *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2, p. 19-52.
- 104 Bar-Ilan, Meir: "Books from Cochin". *Pe'amim*, 52, 1992 pp. 74-100 (Hebrew). Bar-Ilan, Meir: *Words of Gad the Seer: Printed for the first time from Cambridge MS Oo.1.20, Copied at Cochin, India in the 18th Century*. (Hebrew and English). 2015.
- 105 J.F.A. de le Roi: *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden*. Karlsruhe und Leipzig 1884, Vol. 1 pp. 200-436. About van Dort (de Dort) see pp. 341-343.
- 106 Callenberg, J. H. (1752-1758). *Fortwährende Bemühung um das Heil des Jüdisches Volck überhaupt erwehnet*, Halle 1752-58. He actually started writing about the mission from Institutum Judaicum in many volumes and editions from 1728 until his death in 1760. These volumes were printed several times and with different titles during the years, so the best way of finding specific information is to go by the dates.
- 107 She describes his life and work in great detail, based a little on some of the mentioned researchers, but she has found a wealth of new information from many different Dutch and German archives, and from the archives of Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC, (United East India Company) regarding Colombo and Cochin.
- 108 He himself writes in *Iggeret*, Prologue II that "his name was formerly among Israel [the Jews] Jacob, but who is also now called Leopold Immanuel Jacob von Dart". The spelling of his name is not always consistent, von or van is here spelled fei-vav-nun פן and Dort is spelled dalet-alef-resch-tet דארט , Dart or Dort. He is called de Dort by de le Roi, by others de Dart, De Dors and mi dort/medart.
- 109 Callenberg: 11. Band, Siebentes Stück, S. 85 § 7. May 16, 1752 C. writes: "Des Abends var der Proselvyt, van Dort bey mir. Er sagte: er habe in Jülich von einem Jesuiten ein zu Gorcum von der Wahrheit der christlichen Religion herausgegebenes Buch zu lesen bekommen .... habe er sich zu Aachen am 5. des Christmonats 1745 in der römischen Kirche taufen lassen". See also M. van Dort p. 16.
- 110 Ibid: Neuntes Stück, 3. Kapitel. p. 20-21 regarding April 1753: Here he mentions a visit by Jacob who gave Callenberg his booklet about Matthew 2, 23: *Kurtzer Versuch des heiligen Geistes um Matthäi Ehre zuretten*. Printed in October 1752. Here Jacob writes that he is now belonging to the evangelical religion. For the full title see note 20.
- 111 See de le Roi and Callenberg.
- 112 Band 11, Siebentes Stück § 8. van Dort asked for and got six missionary books, two in Hebrew (one of them The



Hanne and Per outside Paradesi synagogue in Cochin. The tower with a clock and the year 1760. The synagogue is to the left, the cemetery to the right.

once more on May 8, 1753. In May 1754, he traveled to Ceylon because he was hired by VOC to teach Hebrew at the Dutch Reformed Seminary in Colombo. He visited Cochin for nine months in 1756 and again for only two months in the beginning of 1761. He then returned to Colombo and was due to sail to The Netherlands at the end of this year, having finished his contract with the VOC, but he died on October 23, 1761, probably from a tropical disease.

According to Mascha van Dort, Jacob was born in Dordrecht around 1715 and might have studied at a *beit midrash* with Rabbi Juda Leib in Dordrecht, since he claims in his book from 1750 that between 1735 and 1741, he worked as a rabbi in Dordrecht and other places. After his and his brother's conversion in 1745, they worked as bankers, and in 1747 they established a printing house for magazines in Aachen. This venture did not succeed, as Jacob was imprisoned once in 1749 and two times in 1750 due to debts, but was helped to escape<sup>113</sup>.

In 1750 Leopold published his book *Das Buch der anbrechenden Morgenröthe* (The Book of Emergent Dawn)<sup>114</sup>. On page two Jacob explains his purpose with the book: to show the Jews (actually he writes 'das Judenthum', Judaism) that they are waiting in vain for the coming of the Messiah since he had already come. Jacob will prove this by citing from the Old and New Testament, from Talmud and other rabbinical books. He explains that he named the book *Morgenröthe* in order to bring the Jews, who are led by the darkness of the night onto a wrong track, by the true light and emergent dawn to the "lieben heil-land" – the Beloved Savior.

Pages 3 to 26 give an account of a friendly conversation between the Christian Immanuel and rabbi Daniel about why Jesus is the true Messiah. In the beginning, Immanuel quotes the Bible as proof (bottom of p. 4 to 6), while Rabbi Daniel tries to reject his interpretations, but already on pp. 11-12, Daniel is convinced and quotes many passages from different Jewish sources that he himself interprets as regarding Christians and not Jews. On page 17, Immanuel quotes in Aramaic from Zohar, regarding Shema Jisrael and then translates it into German, explaining Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad as three names meaning one God, just as God, (the holy) spirit and Jesus is one God. On p. 25, Rabbi Daniel uses a little *gematria* so that the number value of different quotes proves the truth of Jesus as the true Messiah. He claims that in the Kabbalah, he has found regarding the Pesach sacrifice (Numbers 9:12) 'etzem lo jisberu בו'ט לא ישברו "they shall not break a bone of it" - that the number value is the same as in 'jeshua notzri יה'שוע נוצרי יה' Jesus from Nazareth is God – both having the number 757. Actually, the quote is 've-etzem' ועצם but to make the value the same he omits the 've'. He also uses *gematria* regarding the 'man' (bread - Exodus 16:15) 'vecham hashemesh venamas' והחם השמש ונמס "for when the sun grew hot it would melt" and says the number value is the same as in 'jeshua notzri teva djh echad' יה'שוע נוצרי טבע דיה אחד "Jesus

Gospel of Lucas) and one in jüdischdeutsch (yiddish) *Licht am Abend*, a very well-known missionary book from Halle.

113 M. Van Dort p. 30.

114 The subtitle is *Esaias 8. Cap. v. 20. Ja, nach dem Gesetz und Zeugniß, werden Sie dass nicht sagen, so werden sie die Morgenröthe nicht haben. Ein sehr schön Gespräch unter zwey guten Freunden, einem Juden-Rabbiner Namens Rabbi Daniel/ und seinem Nachbarn einem guten frommen Christen, Namens Immanuel/ zusammen getragen durch Leopold Immanuel Jacob von Dort, Convert. Jud. gewesenen Rabbinen in Holland. Giessen/ gedruckt bey Johann Christoph Schröder, 1750. 31 pages. For more information see M. van Dort p 31 ff.*

von Nazareth einer der goetl Natur”, Jesus from Nazareth is of a godly nature. Both have the same number value, 855. He goes on with the name Immanuel, saying it has the same number value as ‘koach tivo el veadam’ כח טבעו אל ואדם – “die Kraft seiner Natur ist Gott und Mensch” - the force of his nature is God and Man - both 197. This gematria is very simple, just taking the full value of each letter and adding them together.

The book is in the form of a dialogue, but it is not a real one, as Immanuel is extremely well-versed in the Jewish writings and their explanation. Actually he is much more knowledgeable of the Jewish sources than the rabbi, so it is clear that the arguments are written by the same author. The names of the rabbi and the Christian reflect this: the rabbi’s name Daniel means ‘God is my judge’ and the Christian’s name Immanuel means ‘God is with us’. The conversation is also quite naive: the aim is to show how the rabbi slowly becomes convinced of the truth of Christianity by asking questions of and then getting answers from the “friendly Christian neighbor,” who has a “great love” of the rabbi. It is mainly done by either of them citing passages from the Jewish Bible and rabbinical writings and then interpreting them as regarding Christians and non-Jews, if the quotes are positive and vice versa. The whole conversation ends with Immanuel baptizing Daniel with the new name Paulus in the wish that like Paulus from the New Testament he will bring many of his brothers to the true faith. Daniel in return promises Immanuel that he will write a big book in order to bring his ‘Mitbrüder’ (fellow brothers) from “the Egyptian darkness into the true dawn”. The book might reflect Jacob’s personal experiences.

After the main text of the Morgenröthe, Jacob reprinted a version of his *Erklärung über das Evangelium St. Matthaei am 2. Capitel v. 23*<sup>115</sup>. *Erklärung* is a 5-page defence of the truth of Matthew 2, 23: “And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene”. Jacob writes that the Jews say that nowhere in the Prophets and also not in the whole Old Testament is this written, and therefore they maintain that the whole Gospel of Matthew is “null and void”. Jacob wants to defend the “Holy Gospel”, and he argues “in the name of the Holy Trinity” by citing several passages from the Bible about Israel’s sins and the salvation of the righteous<sup>116</sup>. He then turns to the word **netzer** נוצר meaning guardian<sup>117</sup>. This part ends with a long praise of Jesus as the guardian of “we believers” (we the Christians) and references to several Bible citations.

In the following part about **netzer** נוצר (a twig), Jacob claims that the words in Isaiah 11,1: “But a shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse, a **twig** shall sprout from his stock,” and such words as shoot, branch, root, in many other passages in the Prophets prove that they are about the messiah, and as Jesus according to Jacob IS the Messiah, the Gospel is substantiated. The Jewish people do not recognize the messiah, but the heathens that now believe in

115 It seems that already in 1747 Jacob had published the same text as his own first booklet, probably printed on his own press. No version of this print has been preserved, so it is only known from Jacob’s third book *Kurtzer Versuch ... De Jesu Nazareno* from 1752, in which he mentions it. See M. van Dort p. 21 ff.

116 Fex. from Malachi 2:7; Isaiah 26:2.

117 Fex. Exodus 34:7; Proverbs 27:18.

Christ will be called **netzurim** נְצוּרִים, the guarded / saved, and the Jews of today also call the Christians by this name. (Actually, Christians are called **notzrim** נּוּצְרִים, possibly related to the town name of Nazereth). But the Jews will be called **netzirim** נְצִירִים „verwahrloste”, (the superseded/neglected) and they cannot be saved<sup>118</sup>. It refers to the Christian supersessionist theology that argues that the Christians have replaced the Jews as the people of God.

He ends *Erklärung*... with the following words: “Now my dear brothers in the flesh ...” (Matthew is right ...) “Please, open your eyes and hearts and look at the one you despise (=Jesus)” and convert “what I from the middle of my heart want and counsel you to do – “welches ich aus innerem Herten euch wünsche und rathe”.

The tone in this text is restrained and friendly, inviting the Jews to become Christians and trying to convince them by quoting well-known passages from the Bible. The booklet is similar to other publications by converts at that time, who felt a need to explain their reasons for conversion to people who were dear to them and were also anxious to get their loved ones to convert as well<sup>119</sup>.

Jacob published his third book in 1752: *Kurtzer Versuch*... (A brief attempt to avenge the honor of the Holy Ghost in Matthew; About Matthew 2, 23. Regarding Jesus being a Nazarene)<sup>120</sup>.

Contrary to the friendly tone in both *Morgenröthe* and *Erklärung* from 1750, *De Jesu Nazareno* is a harsh polemic against “the well-known R. David Levi in Amsterdam,” who has tried through lies to deny the divine Gospel of Matthew and who has called Matthew a notorious arch-liar. Jacob calls him “a blind otter” who, in an ugly way, insults the author’s saviour. As in his *Erklärung* from 1750, Jacob cites Matthew 2,23 and then goes on: “The rabbi is screaming triumphantly that he wants someone to show him where in the whole Holy Writ a word that looks like “our” (the Christians’) Nazareno is written”. The rabbi says that Matthew is a liar in this passage and that he is likely also a liar in other passages. Thus, the Gospels are not to be trusted. Jacob as a „true proselyte” had written a letter to the rabbi, who did not answer him. Therefore, Jacob will publicly try to save the honour of “my Jesus” and the holy divine Gospel. He rebuts the rabbi’s “blind madness” by interpreting different Bible verses. Jacob even quotes some kabbalistic teachings and gematria, but in reality only to mock this rabbinical tradition. Interpreting Exod. 34, 5-7 Jacob tries to prove his point and claims that by repeating the name of God three times one can easily imagine that it means God, Messiah and the holy Trinity. His remarks regarding verse 7 are now directed at the rabbi – „du verstockter”, „deiner Narrheit”, „schmähender Mund” and later in derogatory language to

118 This word does not exist in Hebrew, but from the context its meaning is clear.

119 For examples and literature see Hanne Trautner-Kromann: “Jüdische Reaktionen auf die Hallische protestantische Judenmission 1728-1765” in: Veltri and Wiese (eds.): *Jüdische Bildung und Kultur in Sachsen-Anhalt von der Aufklärung bis zum Nationalsozialismus*. minima judaica 7, 2009, pp. 209-236.

120 *Kurtzer Versuch Des heiligen Geistes in Matthäi Ehre zu rächen; Ueber Matth. 2, 23. De Jesu Nazareno gethan den 23. October 1752 von einem zur allein wahren seeligmachenden Evangelischen Religion nunmehr sich treulich bekennenden Rabbinen Leopold Immanuel Jacob von Dort. Cum Censura. Leipzig, gedruckt bey Christian Ehrenfried Förstern.* This booklet of eight pages has one page of dedication in Latin: “Excellent men, highly discreet and regarded and of great excellence; highly esteemed Sir Dean and the other professors of the theological faculty in the beautiful academy here in Leipzig, most famous patrons of my greatest affections and respect. To these few names in sincere dedication and intention of mind says LILVD” (translated by me). It is an attempt to get a teaching position at the university. See Mascha van Dort pp. 36 ff.

the Jews in general. He also comments on Hebrew words to show his knowledge of grammar. The purpose is to show the Jews the difference between we, Christians, *Wohl uns!*, and the Jews, *Wehe euch!* He hopes that in the end the Jews will realize the true faith and become *netzurim*, נְצוּרִים the protected (Christians) and not *netzirim* נְצִירִים the neglected/ superseded (Jews). The whole is a blend of Christian conversionist writing, more or less hostile, and a “scientific” attempt at explaining words, Bible passages and Hebrew grammar. It is a strange booklet, directed at times at Rabbi David Levi, at other times at you (singular) or at you, Jews, and in the end also at the “hochgeehrtester Leser”, the highly esteemed reader, with whose “gütigsten Urteil und Gunst”, kindest judgement and favor, Jacob clearly wants to recommend himself to the Christian world.

He was not hired as a teacher at the University of Leipzig but was accepted as a student on March 3, 1753<sup>121</sup>. For some reason he did not study long. On November 5, 1753 he writes a letter from Osnabrück, seemingly working there as a lector of oriental languages, to a Christian writer and statesman, J.M. von Loën, asking for permission to translate one of his books, *Die einzige wahre Religion* (The Only True Religion), into Hebrew. Jews from Poland had asked him for help in deciding which Christian denomination they should convert to and the book could be of help<sup>122</sup>. Interestingly, Jacob signs his letter de Dors, lect. Orient.

On March 25, 1754, Jacob is hired by the Dutch VOC, Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, The United East India Company, to be a Hebrew teacher for the Dutch Reformed Seminary in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). He sails out on May 20 and arrives on December 31, 1754<sup>123</sup>.

Already in November 1755, he is allowed to travel to Cochin on the Malabar Coast (now Kerala, in South Western India), where there were several well-known Jewish communities<sup>124</sup>. He stayed there from January 1 to October 11, 1756. Here he copied extracts of *Divrei HaJamim* (Chronicles), a Hebrew book about the history of the Jews of Cochin, including a description of their books, belonging to the Patriarch of the Jews in Cochin. He signed it Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort<sup>125</sup>. In 1757, he translated these extracts into Dutch and they were later translated into German and published in 1789, and translated back into Hebrew and published in 1790<sup>126</sup>. During the years 1757-1760 he also translated a Dutch translation of the Quran into Hebrew, and he wrote in the manuscript: “I, Immanuel Jacob Medart, have now translated it into the holy language, written here at Kogen, by David, the son of Isaac Cohen of Berlin”<sup>127</sup>. It seems that Jacob found many manuscripts in Cochin, among them probably *Iggeret*.

121 See M. van Dort p. 42.

122 For more details see M. van Dort p. 44 f.

123 Ibid. p. 45 ff for many interesting details about his stay and work there.

124 Ibid. p. 55 ff.

125 Ibid. p. 69. See also Meir Bar-Ilan: “The Discovery of *The Words of Gad the Seer*” in: *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 6, No. 11, 95-107 (1993).

126 It was published in *Hameassef*, the Hebrew quarterly journal of the Haskalah. See M. van Dort p. 70.

127 Weinstein, M. M. (1972). He identified Immanuel Jacob Medart as Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort, since the Hebrew letter ך, here pronounced ‘me’ means ‘from’, which is ‘van’ in Dutch, making Medart ‘van Dort’. See also M. van Dort p. 81.

He was back in Colombo in March 1757 and teaching again<sup>128</sup>. In 1759, there were plans of reorganizing the teaching of the seminary and all teachers were requested by the governor to write a report regarding their instruction. Jacob reported in a letter dated October 8, 1759 that after studying Hebrew grammar, they were reading “the true and unfailing words of Moses and those of the prophets,” and he teaches the interpretation of the text<sup>129</sup>. Beginning March 1760, there were new instructions for all teachers including Jacob. He was to teach Hebrew only one morning a week, thus reducing his work. On December 5, the governor proposes a reform of the seminary among other things to discontinue “the study of the so-called basis languages of Greek and Hebrew...”<sup>130</sup>. His dismissal was made official on February 5, 1761, so his work for the VOC was slowly coming to an end.

Jacob got permission to visit Cochin once more, and he arrived there January 14, 1761. On his first visit he had started translating parts of the New Testament into Hebrew for the leader of the Jewish community and chief merchant of the VOC, Ezekiel Rahabi<sup>131</sup>, and now he had to deliver the last part of this translation and that of the Quran<sup>132</sup>.

Jacob only stayed for two months in Cochin as he had to be back in Colombo in time for his planned return ship to the Netherlands in 1761. Unfortunately, he died on October 23, 1761 in Colombo, according to the record of the VOC, and nothing more was heard of him<sup>133</sup>.

## 5.2. Rabbi Eliezer bri Ashkenazi

In Prologue I, it is written that *Iggeret* has “a commentary by the very learned polyhistor, our honoured master Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, emissary of the Merciful God from the holy city Jerusalem.”

In Prologue II, it is written, “This letter is found in the possession of a learned man who came **here** to the Holy Congregation of Gogin .... and he said that this letter is found in the city of Romi .... and since there was **here** at that time an emissary of the Merciful God from the holy city Jerusalem ... namely the very learned polyhistor, our honoured master Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, he read this scroll and explained all the words in it according to what it seemed to him”<sup>134</sup>.

So the two prologues are similar regarding the presentation of Eliezer, except for the addition in the second prologue, where it is clearly stated that the letter is now in Cochin (here) and not in Rome.

The commentary states in its introduction: “It seems to me that the copyist/ translator Eliezer bri explains the words that are unclear in this scroll”. Here

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128 For his teaching see M. van Dort pp. 72-78.

129 Ibid. p. 76.

130 Ibid. p. 78.

131 Ibid. p. 60 ff.

132 Ibid. p. 79.

133 Ibid. p. 84.

134 Meir Bar-Ilan writes in *Peamim* 52 p. 94 that Eliezer was a shaliach in Rome. This is a misreading, both prologues state that he was a shaliach from Jerusalem, not that he was in Rome. Bar-Ilan also seems to believe that “and since there was **here** at that time ...” refers to Rome, but this **here** is clearly referring to Gogin.

the name Ashkenazi is not mentioned, and it is unclear who the "me" is – Eliezer or another person?

It is very difficult to find out who this Eliezer was. In *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 5, p. 627, (printed in 1972) under the heading "Cochin and the Holy Land", written by W.J. Fischel, an emissary R. Eleazar Bari from Jerusalem is mentioned. Fischel writes: "The hopes of a return to the Holy Land connected with the appearance of the pseudomessiah, Shabbetai Zevi, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century found an echo even in this remote corner of the Diaspora. A close contact between Cochin and the Holy Land was established from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, through emissaries from Eretz Israel, e.g. R. Eleazar Bari<sup>135</sup> from Jerusalem (c. 1740) ...". In the entry "The Dutch period 1663 to 1795" (ibid. 623) he writes that there were close ties between the Jews of Cochin and those of Amsterdam and most of the religious books for Cochin were printed in Amsterdam.

It is not likely that Bari or bri is a name, although it is sometimes written as such without any quotation marks as is usual in shortened forms. It should probably be written br"i, ben rabbi/son of rabbi with a first name beginning with the letter jud, like son of Jacob and the like. In my work, I use the form of the name as it is found in the different manuscripts and sources I am discussing.

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135 Unfortunately, he does not give the source for this information or discuss the name Bari.

Road signs: Jew Town Road. Jew Cemetery. Cochin.



A number of researchers have mentioned more or less in passing persons with the name Eliezer, Eliezer Ashkenazi or Eliezer bri – sometimes together with the remark that he is a shaliach from Jerusalem or is even called Eliezer Hagerushalmi. Until now I have not found any manuscript or article or reference where the three names are used – Eliezer bri Ashkenazi – except in *Iggeret R. Jochanan ben Zakkai*. As it is possible that R. Eliezer bri Ashkenazi is actually the same person as Eliezer Ashkenazi and/or Eliezer bri, I will try to present the material I have at my disposition. The best known scholars that have commented on an Eliezer connected to Cochin are Simha Asaf, Aryeh Leib Frumkin/ E. Rivlin, and Avraham Ya'ari.

Simha Asaf published a few pages in Hebrew about a manuscript with different laws from Cochin<sup>136</sup>. He writes that among the different manuscripts that he brought from India to the University Library of Jerusalem, there was also a manuscript from Cochin of special interest. He quotes short passages from different pages beginning with the entry: “This book belongs to Isaac Haligua צחק הלגואה”. And later, “It is a present from the abovementioned to me David Jehuda Ashkenazi”. Asaf explains that Haligua belonged to the circle of Jewish honourable persons in Cochin, and David Ashkenazi came from Cochin to Bombay where he established a Hebrew printing house. Then Asaf quotes different excerpts from the manuscript, some of which are from a work with laws about get and chalitza called *Likutei Jechiel*, by R. Jechiel Tzaadi. On page 37a, the manuscript has a date: “In the year 5486 after the creation (1726), the learned Jehuda Arie gave me, Jechiel Tzaadi, authority (reshut) to ritual slaughter and examination of the lungs (shechita and bedika)”. Other dates in the ms. are 1750 and 1741. Asaf quotes some lines from page 24b: “In order to nullify the faith of those who are erring, Shabtai Tzvi, Jeshua Notzri and all those who believe in them. Shabtai Tzvi is in gematria the spirit of falsehood (ruach sheker). Jeshu son of Miriam Josef is in gematria Shabtai Tzvi.... I learned this from the mouth of shaliach Jerushalaim, our honoured teacher and rabbi Eliezer bri. May the Merciful guard and bless him (נר”)”<sup>137</sup>. Asaf does not discuss the name bri either and there is no quotation mark between br and i.

Aryeh Leib Frumkin<sup>138</sup> wrote a book about learned men from Jerusalem and only noted the name Eliezer Hagerushalmi. Eliezer Rivlin added a note in the revised and enlarged edition (p. 83 in Part One), where he discusses whether Eliezer br”i Ashkenazi from *Iggeret* (he refers to the Munkacs edition from 1895 and therefore uses the full name) is the same person as Rabbi Eliezer Hagerushalmi, but concluded that Eliezer in *Iggeret* is probably a fictitious person because it is a polemic against Christianity, and therefore it would be dangerous to state the real name. Rivlin writes the name br”i without any comment.

In the monumental book from 1951 by Avraham Ya'ari, in which he tried to collect all the names of messengers from Eretz Israel to the Golah (diaspora), from the destruction of the Second Temple until the nineteenth century,

136 Asaf, S.: “On a manuscript from Cochin” in: *Kiryat Sefer* 13 (1936-37) pp. 402-404 (in Hebrew).

137 Ibid p. 404.

138 Aryeh Leib Frumkin: *Sefer Toldot Chokmei Jerushalaim*. (Vilna 1874). Ed. by E. Rivlin, Jerusalem 1928-30. Reprint Tel Aviv 1969.

he used a wealth of sources<sup>139</sup>. He writes<sup>140</sup>, “In the second quarter of the Eighteenth Century we find a shaliach from Jerusalem in the city of Cochin (Kog’in) on the coast of Malabar in India, who preached there against shabtainism. R. Jechiel Tzaadi, a yemenite Jew who lived in Cochin, wrote this information in his *Sefer Likutim*: “In order to nullify ....”<sup>141</sup>.

Later in his book Ya’ari repeats this information but with an introduction: “In the same years [the 1750s are mentioned above] lived as part of Shlichut Jerusalem in Cochin at the coast of Malabar in India R. Eliezer Bri. There he transmitted to one of inhabitants of the city, the yemenite R. Jechiel Tzaadi, an allusion to the belief in Shabtai Tzvi, and he wrote that in his notebook (pinkas): “In order to nullify ....”. Then he adds in a note: “The first date in this ms. is from the year 1726 and the last is from the year 1750. It consequently has to be assumed that the shaliach was in Cochin in approximately 1740”<sup>142</sup>. It is remarkable that in the commentary to *Iggeret* by R. Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, the words Shabtai Tzvi, spirit of falsehood (ruach sheker) or Jeshu son of Miriam Josef are not found.

It is possible that Eliezer bri is the same person as Eliezer bri Ashkenazi in *Iggeret*, but the sources here only mention Eliezer bri, without Ashkenazi. If the two really are the same person Eliezer bri seems to be well versed in the art of gematria, as can also be seen from Eliezer bri Ashkenazi’s commentary to *Iggeret* with all the examples of gematria.

Of interest is the manuscript Oo.1.20 which is dated 1756 and is described briefly by Stefan Reif<sup>143</sup>. He lists five manuscripts and four of them are of special interest: “1. .... The Words of Gad the Seer (דברי גַּד הַחֹזֶה) ...”<sup>144</sup>. “2. .... Disputation between Saul Levi Morteira of Amsterdam and the Christian priest, דְּרֵי רוֹהַן (=Abbé de Rohan)<sup>145</sup> .... According to the title page this was translated from Dutch to Hebrew by Eliezer”. “4. .... Various alphabets including Kabbalistic, Samaritan, Syriac and Arabic. A loose sheet bound between ff. 25 and 26 contains the signature of Ezekiel Rahabi ....” “5. The Dream הַחֲלוֹם of a London clergyman of friendship and goodwill towards Jews. The Hebrew is said to be a translation produced by Eliezer from an English original published in a journal and provided by Samuel Levy”. So according to Reif, this ms. connects the names of Eliezer and Ezekiel Rahabi, but from two different manuscripts, nr. 2. Disputation and no. 4. Various alphabets.

Looking at the ms. itself, it is difficult to read the first leaf with a table of con-

139 Avraham Ya’ari: *Sheluchei Eretz Israel*. Jerusalem 1951, 947 pp.

140 On p. 173 three last lines to p. 174 first two lines plus note 74. Ya’ari refers to the ms. and to Simcha Assaf p.402-404. Then Ya’ari writes: “Jechiel Tzaadi got licence הַרֵר to slaughter in 1726 and the last date that is in his *Sefer Likutim* is 1750. This shaliach is not known from any other source”.

141 Ya’ari probably quoted the text from Asaf 1936-37, but Ya’ari calls the book *Sefer Likutim*, not *Likutei Jechiel*.

142 Ya’ari p. 393 top lines 3-8. Note 210.

143 Reif, Stefan C.: *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library*, pp. 499-500. 1997.

144 Meir Bar-Ilan has published articles and a book about *Words of Gad the Seer* (2015), but it is outside the scope of my work to deal with this ms.

145 See Wilke, Carsten L.: “Questions d’un prêtre de Rouen à un rabbin d’Amsterdam: La réception multilingue et multiconfessionnelle d’un écrit clandestin de Saül Levi Mortera”. Publication Name: La lettre clandestine 27 (2019), pp. 141-169. From academia.edu/ Questions d’un prêtre de Rouen. Wilke writes that Mortera’s work was among the six most frequently copied (polemical) writings in the secret corpus of works of the Jews in Amsterdam and Mortera wrote two more polemical manuscripts.

tents as the upper right part is missing, and many lines are impossible to read, but another leaf is attached with a more clear transcription of some of the lines<sup>146</sup>. Furthermore, in 1893 Solomon Schechter described and commented on the same manuscript, and his work has served me as an aid to reading and understanding the table of contents line by line without too much guessing<sup>147</sup>.

1. עקב מנוול יעב

..... ???

2. כמר יחזקאל - [with a dot above each of the first three letters]

..... our honored rabbi Ezekiel

3. ר גד החוזה ומגילת

..... (sefe)r Gad Hachoze and megillat (Achashverush that)

4. [נמ]צא הוא בתוך הספרים

..... [was] found among the books

5. ר נחש האדמוני בעיר

..... the reddish<sup>148</sup> snake in the city

6. - [with a dot above each of the last three letters]

..... Rome (Romi) and ...

7. - [with two dots above the letter g in Kogin]

Also was translated (or copied?) by him in the city of Cochin The Book of Disputation

8. של הרב המבהק כמהר שאול לוי מור

of the distinguished Rav our honored teacher R. Shaul Levi Mor [teira]

9. עם הכומר הנוצרי המלומד די רוואן וגם

with the learned Christian priest de Rohan and they are<sup>149</sup>

10. כג שאלות ותשובות וסימן 'עוברי בעמק הב'כא מעין

23 questions and answers, and he marked [it] "They pass through the valley of Baca

11. שיתוהו ברכות יעטה מורה' ובסופו קע'ה שאלות ששאל

regarding it as a place of springs, as if the early rain had covered it with blessing" [Psalms 84,7 - the meaning is uncertain] and in its end 175 questions that asked<sup>150</sup>

12. החכם הנוצרי חנ'ל בלי תשובתו וסימנו ענה כסיל כאלתו

the learned Christian that is mentioned above without his answer and he marked it "Answer a fool according to his folly" [Mishlei 26, 4-5] - [with a dot above the three letters in the word Answer]

13. נעתק מלשון הולנדי

it was translated from the Dutch language

14. ללשון יהודי

into the Jewish language [Yiddish]

Line 15: גם ספר החלומות שנעתק על ידי חכם אליעזר עיין

146 Scans from Cambridge: MS-OO-00001-00 020-000-00008 (the clear one). The other has the same numbers except the last digit that is 9. Both lists of contents might be of a later date.

147 Schechter, S.: "Notes on Hebrew MSS. in the University Library at Cambridge". VI. Source: *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1893, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 136-145. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1450113>.

148 It should probably be "hakadmoni" = the original snake.

149 Schechter reads or emends the word from gam to hem.

150 Line 11. and 12. are impossible for me to read. Schechter seems to be able to read it from the original ms. I have added the sources of the Bible quotations in line 11, 12, 17, and 18.

Also *The Book of Dreams* that was translated (or copied?) by the learned Eliezer, see

Line 16: במקומו

in its place

Line 17: שנת כל בלי יוצר עליך לא יצלח וכל לשון

the year of “‘No weapon formed against you’ shall succeed, and every tongue

- [with dots above each letter in the first four words, which add to the year 1786]

Line 18: תקום אתך למשפט תרשיע

that contends with you at law you shall defeat” [Isaiah 54,17]

Line 19: לפק

by the abbreviated era.

In the end of the last line 1676 A.D. is written in a different hand.

Taken together:

.....our honored rabbi Ezekiel

..... (sefe)r Gad Hachoze and megillat (Achashverush that)

..... he found among the books

..... the reddish (or original) snake in the city

..... Rome and ?

The Book of Disputation was also translated by him in the city of Cochin

by the distinguished Rav our honored teacher R. Shaul Levi Morteira

with the learned Christian priest de Rohan and they are

23 questions and answers and he marked [it] ”They pass through the valley of Baca

regarding it as a place of springs, as if the early rain had covered it with blessing” and in its end 175 questions that were asked by

the learned Christian that is mentioned above without his answer and he marked it ”Answer a fool according to his folly”.

It was translated from the Dutch language into Yiddish.

Also *The Book of Dreams* that was translated (or copied?) by the learned Eliezer, see

in its place

the year of “‘No weapon formed against you’ shall succeed, and every tongue

that contends with you at law you shall defeat”

by the abbreviated era. 1676 A.D.

Both in lines 7 and 15, the word “also” is found, but in line 7: “Also was translated by him” it is unclear if this “also” refers to the books *Gad Hachoze* and *Megillat Esther* in line 3 or something that is now impossible to read, and we do not know what “him” refers to. In line 15, it says, “Also *The Book of Dreams* that was translated by the learned Eliezer” and again, this “also” is unclear. It is possible that lines 7 and 15 are connected so that both books were translated by Eliezer<sup>151</sup>. From this, it seems to be clear that *The Book of Disputation* was

151 Generally, it is a problem here that the Hebrew word for translate and copy could be the same in earlier times, but a modern dictionary mentions that the meaning of translate is obsolete. I do not know when the modern word *tirgem* came into use.

translated from Dutch to Yiddish by someone, maybe Eliezer, and *The Book of Dreams* was translated by Eliezer.

Schechter also described the ms. *Hachalom*, The Dream, also called *Sefer Hachalomot*, *The Book of Dreams*, and he quotes from its Hebrew introduction<sup>152</sup>: “This dream was written by one of the Christian scholars in England and he said he dreamt it in the city of London .... and I am the translator - as I was messenger of a community (shaliach mitzva mikollut ir hakodesh) ...in Jerusalem<sup>153</sup> ... and I was present in the holy congregation Kogin (Cochin) ... and I saw this Dream among the booklets of *Divrei Hajamim*, it was printed in the English language in the city of London in the year ..... according to their reckoning, which is .... according to my reckoning, and I asked מכור mkhvr (it is not a usual shortening but could mean the honored rabbi) Samuel Levi<sup>154</sup> jitzu (“may his rock and protector protect him”, used for a person that is still alive) to translate it for me into German and he did, and in order to make it known to the children of my people I translated it into the holy language. Thus said [khd כד with two dots above the letters, probably meaning כמא דאמר = thus said] the translator [bri shdrch ברײ שדרך with two dots above both the first and the second r, probably meaning ben R. Jacob shelicha derachmana – שליחא – דדרחמנא – son of Rabbi Jacob, messenger of the Merciful”.

Thus, according to Schechter, *The Book of Dreams* was translated from German into Hebrew by the shaliach bri. Taken together with the table of contents, which states on line 15, “Also *The Book of Dreams* that was translated by the learned Eliezer”, we can add the name Eliezer to the shaliach bri so that we end up with hashaliach Eliezer bri.

Thanks to the extensive research by M. van Dort<sup>155</sup>, there may be other possibilities of finding out who Eliezer bri Ashkenazi might have been, assuming that he is the same as Eliezer bri and Eliezer Ashkenazi. He may even be one of the Jews who had discussions with Christian missionaries, according to reports from the Protestant mission in Madras<sup>156</sup>. She has found at least four references to discussions between German Jews, one of whom is a rabbi, and Protestant missionaries in Madras<sup>157</sup>.

The first meeting on July 14, 1746, was between Fabricius and “one of the two Jews after an invitation”, implying that he knew them from before and wanted to talk with him. Fabricius showed the Jew his Hebrew Bible and let him read Psalm 22, and also gave him some small books in Yiddish that he could read. Since he does not refer to a substantial discussion, the Jew was probably not the rabbi.

152 The quote is listed under 8. (28 and 29) on p. 141. It is on the scan MS-OO-00001-00 020-000-00065. The translation is mine.

153 The ms. *Iggeret* uses the full Aramaic form: Shalicha deRachmana in both Prologues.

154 Somehow Schechter forgot to write the word Levi, but the name can be seen.

155 She has a great ability to find a lot of references to these names via the internet, which she communicated to me via emails. I will present some of the more interesting passages that she has found.

156 M. de Dort, p. 64 note 434. She cites reports from *Der Königl. dänischen Missionarien aus Ost-Indien*. She has actually found several more, so it seems it was not unusual for the missionaries to discuss with Jews who came voluntarily. These four examples seem to her to be the most relevant regarding Eliezer.

157 The missionary was probably Johann Philipp Fabricius, who came to the mission in Tranquebar in 1740, but moved to the one in Madras in 1742. In 1749 Johann Christian Breithaupt joined him.

The second meeting was on July 16, 1746, when both came, and Fabricius mentions that they were very well versed in Hebrew. They had hard discussions of passages from the Bible, such as Isaiah chapter 53 and chapter 7 verses 10-16, and Haggai chapter 2 verses 7-10. Both parties were convinced of their own truth. Especially one of them, a rabbi, was a hard opponent. Fabricius writes that “they went away with hard hearts”, but still he asked them to visit him again<sup>158</sup>.

The third meeting was on June 2, 1750, and Fabricius writes that the rabbi's views are even harder than before<sup>159</sup>. He had with him a Jew from Aleppo who spoke Hebrew and Portuguese and had been in India for some years, and he was not so hard an opponent. Passages from the Bible that the Christians used to interpret Jesus as the Messiah were rejected by the rabbi, as well as the Fifth Book of Moses, chapter 18, verse 18.

The fourth discussion was on September 26, 1754<sup>160</sup>. This time it is “a German rabbi, who travels around in Turkey, Judea and Egypt where there are Jews” and he came via Cochin together with a Jew from Cochin in order to get some money in Madras that the Cochin Jew would bring to Jerusalem. The rabbi had already visited “one of us”, it must be Breithaupt a week before. Based on many Bible passages they discussed the offering of animals as opposed to the offering of Jesus as atonement for the sins of man and also whether Jesus was the Messiah. Besides, the rabbi also knew the New Testament, which was also discussed. Fabricius does not mention that the two visitors were hard opponents; on the contrary, he claims that he made the rabbi “confus” (disoriented) and that he did not know what to answer.

As Fabricius does not use any names, it is not possible to prove that these passages refer to Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, but they give an impression of real discussions between Jews and Christians in that area and in that period.

M. van Dort thinks that Eliezer Ashkenazi was in Cochin, at least during the years 1746 to 1760 as she also refers to the manuscript Oo.1.20, which is dated 1756. According to her, Eliezer Ashkenazi obtained *The Book of Dreams* from Samuel Levy from Surat<sup>161</sup> and translated it in Cochin. This would characterize Eliezer Ashkenazi as a learned Jew, a copyist and translator, who traveled between Cochin and Surat. Surat was on the ship route from Cochin to Yemen<sup>162</sup>.

If this Eliezer bri is Eliezer bri Ashkenazi from *Iggeret*, he must have met Jacob van Dort when he was in Cochin in 1756 and then wrote the Commentary to *Iggeret*. Both men translated and copied works for Ezekiel Rahabi, who was the leader of the Jewish community in Cochin and chief merchant of the Dutch East India Company in this city.

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158 Der Königl. dänischen Missionarien aus Ost-Indien, 1749 p. 939. Digitale Bibliothek: Hallesche Berichte

159 Ibid. 1753, p. 139.

160 Ibid. 1757, p. 1379-1380.

161 Fischel, W.J.: The Immigration of “Arabian” Jews to India in the Eighteenth Century, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 33, 1965, p. 2. Fischel only mentions his name, nothing more.

162 M. van Dort in an oral communication Oct. 17, 2021.

Thus, there are some key words that help establish Eliezer as being in contact with Ezekiel Rahabi in Cochin in 1756, and the same goes for Jacob van Dort who was translating parts of the New Testament from German into Hebrew for Rahabi.



*Paradesi Synagogue, Cochin.*

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## 6. Conclusion

It is obvious that *Iggeret* is not from the year 53 C.E., nor is it written by Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai. Judging from expressions from mystical writings like the Zohar, the overwhelming use of gematria, and the quite extensive knowledge of Christianity, it is clearly much younger.

The condemnation of the concept of the Trinity, a new Torah (The New Testament), and the Apostles, is clearly polemical, and there are traits from Medieval Jewish polemics against Christianity.

But compared to the many polemical texts from France and Spain from 1100 – 1500 that I have studied earlier, there are not many shared elements here. Especially the use of rhetoric is new, something I have not seen in earlier polemics. Some ideas and phrases are only found after 1500 and even later. Furthermore, the main point of the letter deals with apostasy and must therefore belong to a period when Jews were exposed to severe Christian pressure to convert. It is remarkable that *Iggeret* does not really condemn the Christians for physical violence and even murder as was the case in earlier polemics, but concentrates on warning the Jews against Christianity and apostasy. The strong warning in *Iggeret* against the use of the Jewish scriptures by Christians in “new and false ways,” and the claim that Christians write an endless number of books about Jesus point to times of strong Christian missionary efforts and a real danger of Jews becoming convinced that Jesus actually was the Jewish messiah. The claim that Christians use Jewish knowledge and teaching with the aim of confusing and seducing Jews could be directed at the Protestant mission from Institutum Judaicum in Halle or others like it.

Apostasy among the Jews in Europe was a growing phenomenon in the 18th Century, due to many factors. The failed Shabtai Tzvi movement in the middle of the 17th Century, the many wars, the growing period of enlightenment and the widespread poverty among Jews made some of them wonder if the Christian faith might be the right choice for improving their lot, economically, socially and professionally. These factors, alongside the fear that the Messiah might already have come, could be the background of this letter’s vehement warnings<sup>163</sup>.

With regard to the form of *Iggeret*, the prologues and epilogues are not really necessary for the letter itself. Actually, they are not consistent with the *Iggeret* and seem to me to be added on later. The claim that Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai wrote the letter at the request of Rabban Gamaliel Hanasi to the Jews in Rome could be included because the letter mentions Peter and especially Paul<sup>164</sup>: “there is with you a man, oppressor of the Jew[s], a destructive man of the students of R. Gamliel Hanasi .... and his name was formerly in Israel Shaul ... they called him, let his name be blotted out, a miracle maker<sup>165</sup>”. It was known that Peter and Paul had close connections with Rome, and the mention of Rabban Gamliel Hanasi and Jochanan ben Zakkai could be inspired by the fact that

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163 See Trautner-Kromann, H.: ”Jüdische Reaktionen ...”, 2009.

164 *Iggeret* p. 8.

165 Play on poel ot which in Ashkenazi pronunciation sounds like Paulus.

in the Talmud, R. Gamliel is mentioned for writing letters about the calendar to the Jewish world<sup>166</sup>. Franz Kobler writes: "Rabbi Judah said that he and Rabban Gamaliel sat together with the elders on the terrace of the Temple mount, and Johanan the scribe sat before them and Rabban Gamaliel said to him: 'Write to our brethren in [so-and-so] as follows'<sup>167</sup>. In note 1, he adds: Letters of this kind had to be signed also by the Vice-President of the Sanhedrin".

The question is: who wrote *Iggeret*? On the face of it the answer is: Jacob van Dort or Eliezer bri Ashkenazi, but it could also be an anonymous author. Jacob van Dort is out of the question since his life and books prove that he became a sincere Christian. Eliezer bri Ashkenazi is doubtful as it is still not clear who he was. And if he really was a shaliach from Jerusalem why would he both compose the letter himself and write a commentary to it. The reason could, of course, be in order to confirm the letter as genuine, so he cannot be totally ruled out as the author<sup>168</sup>. The last possibility is an anonymous author, and in that case, it is still not possible to give a definitive answer unless another letter like it is found.

The next question is why *Iggeret* surfaced in Cochin in the middle of the 18th Century and how it came to light in Amsterdam about fifty years later, when Solomo Dubno copied it.

Jacob van Dort might have acquired *Iggeret* in Europe and brought it to Cochin, or he found it among the books of the Cochin Jews. It is not probable that he bought it in Europe or in Amsterdam, since he had no reason for doing so when he was on his way to Ceylon, but finding it in Cochin could be a possibility. It would be strange, though, if the letter was sent to Cochin by Jews in Amsterdam for example, given the small risk of apostasy in Cochin and India, where Christianity was not strong. Furthermore, the mention of van Dort is vague since it only occurs in the second prologue. His name could easily have been added later on.

Another possibility is that it was Rabbi Eliezer who brought *Iggeret* to Cochin, where he gave or sold it to Jacob van Dort – "since this letter is found in the possession of a learned man who came here to the Holy congregation of Gogin" as is written in the second prologue. But again, why should van Dort have any interest in such a letter. It is not known that he traded in manuscripts, only that he translated or copied manuscripts for Rahabi, and he did not have connections with Jews except those in Cochin. So this selling could be fictitious.

The last question is the path *Iggeret* took from a hidden letter to printed versions.

Dubno copied *Iggeret* around 1800 in Amsterdam, and a manuscript very much like it but not totally identical is dated to about 1820 and described as being from Germany. Already here, the name of the author of the commentary is changed from Eliezer to Betzalel. The difference between the two names

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166 Sanhedrin 11b.

167 Kobler, Franz: *Letters of Jews through the Ages*. Volume One, p.46.

168 M. van Dort is convinced that Eliezer wrote the commentary to *Iggeret* himself, may be even *Iggeret*, and she argues her case in a forthcoming article.

is so great that it seems to be intentional and not an error of the copyist. The next trace of it is dated 1888, but these are fragments of two commentaries, not *Iggeret* itself. Still, they do tell us that the letter was well known at that time since it already had two different commentaries, although they follow the original commentary by R. Eliezer rather closely. Besides, the longer commentary, *Perush Maspik*, mentions the name of the commentator as "Jisakhar Avraham ben R. Wolf (?) of blessed memory, in the year 1888". From this we can deduce that he was already dead in 1888, and that someone afterwards took the trouble to "publish" or copy the commentaries. At this time, the name of the commentator is not hidden, provided he is a real person. Dziubas claimed that he copied his manuscript from another manuscript of *Iggeret* during the First World War and only later saw the first printed edition. So already in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century several different copies of the manuscript must have been around.

*Iggeret* only really became known when it was published as a book in 1895 in Munkacs, and it was followed by quite a number of editions, most of them printed in Eastern Europe. The path from Amsterdam in 1800 to the Rokeach family in Belz and other towns in the Lvov district in Galicia might be explained as a direct or indirect contact between descendants of the well-known Rabbi Eleazer Rokeach of Amsterdam (1665-1742), and Shalom Rokeach (1779 – 1855), the founder of the Chassidic Belz dynasty, followed by his son Joshua (1825-1894). This can be interpreted in different ways. Amsterdam could be the point in common for Dubno and the Rokeach family. Another possibility is that Lvov is the point in common. Dubno studied in this town and had also later contacts with the scholars there, as might be the case with the family of the Belzer Rebbe. Finally Dubno's son might have copied the letter, or after the death of his father, he could have brought the original letter with him to Vilna, where he lived in 1821. It is known that he owned a part of his father's manuscripts and books, but how an eventual contact between him and the Belzer Rebbe was established can only be conjectured.

A new and possibly too daring point of view could be that it is all fake. The mention in the prologues of Jacob van Dort and Eliezer bri Ashkenazi could be in order to conceal a total fraud. It would have been possible for writers at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to fabricate a false document like *Iggeret* if they wanted to, and it is known that some of them actually did produce such forgeries.

During the years of my research I have asked scholars from several countries if they have ever seen or heard about *Iggeret* or a text like it. No one had. In October 2009 when I visited the Jewish National and University Library (now National Library of Israel), I asked the following scholars about it<sup>169</sup>.

Professor Chaim E. Cohen<sup>170</sup> graciously looked into a sample of the text of *Iggeret* and answered in an email in Hebrew to me that he agreed that it is not

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169 At the library I met by chance Dena Ordan, freelance Hebrew-English translator, mainly in the field of Judaica, and I told her about my research. She was extremely kind and helpful and put me in contact with other colleagues or they answered her directly and then she sent me the answers. I owe her and the scholars mentioned above great thanks.

170 Department of Hebrew Language and Semitic Linguistics, Tel Aviv University. My translation of his email.

authentic. He wrote: "The language looks like an imitation of (late) rabbanite language with something from kabbalistic writing, musar, haskalah and more, in a great mixture. The fact that there is gematria in it does not mean that it is unlikely that Solomo Dubno himself wrote *Iggeret*. A man like Dubno was able, if he wanted, to insert gematria into his writing. More than this, I do not know".

Via Dena Ordan and Professor David Assaf,<sup>171</sup> I got an answer in Hebrew from Yehoshua Mondshine<sup>172</sup>: "I do not know this matter but there is absolutely no doubt that the originality of *Iggeret* has already been disproved on the basis of a linguistic analysis". Dena Ordan also asked Professor Zeev Gries. He had never heard of this text, but warned me that Dubno may have forged the document<sup>173</sup>.

According to Z. Krzemien, Dubno did not have close contacts with Christians, nor did he own many books about Christianity or books written by Christians<sup>174</sup>. The sales catalogue of his book collection shows that he owned a few polemical works against Christianity, such as *Ezer ha-emunah* by Moses ha-Kohen de Tordesillas from the 14th century, *Chizuk emunah* by the Karaite scholar Isaac ben Abraham of Troki, *Toldot Yeshu*, and Yom Tov Lipman Muelhausen's *Sefer nitzachon*<sup>175</sup>. "Taking into account Dubno's critical view of Christians, which he expressed in *Alim li-terufah*<sup>176</sup>, and his negative opinion of Jews who abandoned the traditional Jewish lifestyle and became assimilated into Gentile society, it is highly unlikely that he would enjoy the company of non-Jews"<sup>177</sup>. Furthermore, she writes,<sup>178</sup> "Dubno's *Alim li-terufah* promotes a more traditional worldview and it sharply accentuates the difference between Jews and Gentiles who are presented in an unambiguously negative way, as they are accused of distorting the true meaning of Scripture to serve their own purposes ..... non-Jewish scholars who disdain the trusted interpretations of our sages of blessed memory and who refuse to accept their unblemished tradition, while interpreting Scripture according to their own fancy". This information suggests that Dubno had the background for being able and willing to write polemics against Christianity.

One thing is what Dubno was able to write himself, but judging from the copied mistakes and corrections in his version of *Iggeret*, he did not author it, unless he copied it multiple times with possible mistakes. He might have copied it in good or not so good faith, unless he wrote it all including the commentary in order to make it look genuine and sell it. Indeed, there are other authors who were able to and actually did write fake documents. One of the most notorious forgers was Isaac Satanow. He was born in Satanov in Podolia in 1732 and died in 1804. He settled in Berlin in 1771 or 1772, and he was the most prolific writer in the early Haskalah period and wrote in many genres and had an interest in mysticism.

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171 History Department, Tel Aviv University. My translation of his email.

172 An Israeli rabbi, scholar, and librarian at the library.

173 He worked at the Department of Jewish Thought, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

174 Krzemien, Zuzanna: *Shaping the Jewish Enlightenment: Solomon Dubno (1738-1813), an Eastern European Maskil*. (Dissertation at University College London, May 2019).

175 Ibid. p. 92.

176 Dubno wrote a prospectus with a long introduction called *Alim li-Terufah*, Leaves for Healing, to Moses Mendelssohn's German translation of the Bible. My addition.

177 Krzemien, *ibid.*, p. 92.

178 Ibid. p.161.

”Satanow demonstrated a wealth of knowledge of the Hebrew language, ranking as a model stylist throughout the Haskalah period”<sup>179</sup>.

”In his book with proverbs *Mishle Asaf*, he so blended the style of the Bible with modern fine writing that the critics of his time were at a loss how to characterize the work. Some were inclined to revere it as a relic of antiquity, while others attacked the author as a literary charlatan who desired to palm off his own work as a production of the ancient writers. Rabbi Joseph ben Meir Teomim made a clever criticism: ’I do not really know to whom to ascribe these sayings [of the “Mishle Asaf”]; it may be the publisher himself has composed them; for I know him to be a plagiarist. He, however, differs from the rest of that class in this respect, that they plagiarize the works of others and pass them for their own, while he plagiarizes his own works and passes them for those of others’ ”<sup>180</sup>.

If he really did write *Iggeret*, how would he be aware of a historical person like Jacob van Dort? It would be possible since both Satanow and Dubno belonged to the circle of the Hebrew journal *Ha-Me’assef*, which was established in 1785. In 1790 this journal published excerpts from a Hebrew document *Divrei Ha-Jamim* (Chronicles) about the history of the Jews of Cochin, translated by van Dort into Dutch, then via German into Hebrew, translated, published, and commented on in *Ha-Me’assef* by the editor, N.H. Wessely.

People like Dubno and Satanow belonging to the Jewish enlightenment movement were certainly aware of the works of Moses Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1747), the Italian kabbalist and author of ethical works and poetry. He also wrote a treatise on rhetoric, in which he showed his thorough knowledge of classical rhetoric. He lived in Amsterdam from 1735 to 1743 and was a well-known person in the highest Jewish circles. Dubno worked in libraries in Amsterdam and is known for having (re)discovered Luzzatto’s play *La-Yesharim Tehillah*, written in Amsterdam. It is also a fact that Amsterdam Jews were busy with writings about polemics and rhetoric in the 17th and 18th century<sup>181</sup>.

Given the high rhetorical style of *Iggeret*, it would be somewhat strange if an unknown German Jew, such as, Eliezer bri Ashkenazi would be able to write such a polemical and rhetorical letter. It is much more likely that it was written either by an anonymous author in the 17th or possibly 18th century, or by writers like Dubno and Satanow. Personally, I believe it is a fake letter from the end of the 18th Century, but this needs to be proved.

The enigma is still not solved.

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179 See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 14: 905.

180 Quoted from Wikipedia: Isaac Satanow.

181 Communicated to me in a letter dated Amsterdam, 14.10.1997, from Professor, Dr. Shlomo Berger. ר”ב

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ICGERET RABBI JOCHANAN BEN ZAKKAI.  
A POLEMICAL LETTER - FAKE OR DOUBLE FAKE?

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UDGIVET AF FORLAGET VALDEMAR APS

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The Judaica Department of The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Denmark, contains a copy of a letter from the year 53, written by Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai, who warns the Jews in Rome against Paul and Christianity. It was thought that the original letter belonged to the learned Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort from The Netherlands, who took the letter with him to the holy community of Gogin - יגוג - presumably Cochin on the Malabar Coast in South Western India.

However, judging from the content and later ideas and particular words, the letter must be much younger and cannot have been written by Jochanan ben Zakkai. The

manuscript itself contains an autograph by the scholar Salomo Dubno, presumably from around 1800.

The analysis of the letter shows that it is composed according to the classical rhetorical pattern and that the main purpose is to warn the Jews against apostasy and especially to encourage them to keep their Jewish faith. It has not proven possible to date or place the letter with certainty, but it might be as late as from the 18th century. Hopefully, another scholar will some day be able to solve the enigmas of this remarkable letter, which falls within the tradition of Medieval Jewish polemics against Christianity.

