

Zohar - Preface To The CD ROM Edition

A. Text and Translation

The Hebrew text of the Zohar in this CD ROM is essentially that of the Rom Vilna printed edition (1924). As indicated in the Translator's Preface, the Hebrew text on which the Soncino translation is based is, for the most part, that of the Mantua edition. Inasmuch as the Vilna edition, itself, is largely based on the Mantua edition, the discrepancies should be comparatively few. However, there are many passages which vary to a greater or a lesser degree.

We have noted most of these variances on the appropriate pages. The notes indicating a discrepancy between the Hebrew text and the Soncino translation appear in a special type face and are labeled "Note". When an omission or discrepancy is described by the number of lines in the Hebrew, this is always just an approximation. The actual number of lines will vary with your window size.

In addition, the Soncino translation has omitted a number of passages because the translators believed they were too complex or involved to be translated into understandable English, or because there were questions concerning the reliability of the text. Such passages are marked either by a long sequence of periods, or, most often, by a note indicating the reason for the omission. These notes are also in a special type face and are labeled "Tr. note".

The English text is that of the five-volume Second Edition of the Soncino Zohar published in 1984. No changes have been made in this text, except that the term "Tetragrammaton" has been substituted for the four-letter Hebrew term for the Deity and its English equivalents, and the term "Kah" has been substituted for the 2-letter Hebrew term for the Deity. The British spellings of "colour", "centre", etc have been retained, and the user should be aware of this when searching for terms where the British spelling differs from common American usage. For the convenience of the user, footnotes have been embedded into the body of the text. They are distinguished by a special type face and are labeled "Tr. note".

B. Transliteration

The Soncino transliteration of Hebrew words is the generally accepted scholarly and academic one. It does not correspond to the modern Israeli usage, and thus we have "Bereshith" instead of "Bereshit". In addition, because of technical font problems, the 'h' with a dot underneath it (signifying "chet") appears as an ordinary 'h'. The accent over the letter 'e' indicating the "ay" sound is also not shown. Thus, the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet appears as He. However, the fact that it is italicized and the context in which it appears should prevent any misunderstanding of the text.

C. Other Sections of the Zohar

The Soncino translation is that of the main body of the Zohar in which its principal doctrines are expounded, as well as part of the Raya Mehemna. The Raya Mehemna consists of several different passages, which appear to the side of the main Zohar on various

pages. Much of it is not translated. However, the printed Soncino Zohar does include a translation of some of these passages on their appropriate pages. In the CD ROM version, these passages are placed under a separate menu choice, titled "Raya Mehemna", both for Hebrew and for English. Each passage starts with a page title identifying where it goes, and the translation of the main text at that place has a note indicating where the Raya Mehemna appeared in the original text.

Other portions of the Zohar, e.g. the Tikkunai Zohar, are included on this CD ROM in Hebrew only, for the benefit of users who wish to make use of these texts without the aid of the translation.

Zohar - Translators' Preface

The aim of this translation is, on the one hand, to make the Zohar accessible to English readers, on the other hand, to afford assistance to those who struggle with its intricacies in the original. For the sake of the latter a good deal has been included which, as far as the former are concerned, might perhaps have been spared, especially if they have never studied the Hebrew Bible. The greater part, however, will probably be intelligible enough, even to those who have no knowledge of Hebrew.

As has been pointed out above, the printed editions of the Zohar contain intercalations from other, allied, works, which are paged along with the Zohar itself. These are not included in the present translation, which confines itself to what may be called the Zohar proper. Certain individual passages have also been omitted for reasons given where they occur. There are also minor omissions (indicated by the sign...) of passages containing plays upon Hebrew words and similar matter unsuitable for translation. With these qualifications, the translation may be regarded as complete for the part of the text covered by the first volume, viz. up to the end of Vayera (p. 120b).

Certain parts of the Zohar- notably the comments on the opening sections of Genesis-are highly enigmatical, and in the absence of an authentic tradition their true meaning is a matter of conjecture. An attempt has been made to give a faithful translation of these also, accounting for practically every word in the original. The result has perhaps been to reproduce only too faithfully the tenebrosity of the original, for which the reader may not be thankful. But he will know, at any rate, that he is getting the authentic Zohar and not the translators' own ideas; and he may find assistance in an appendix and a glossary in which the translators indicate their own view of the general trend and purpose of these passages.

In printing the Biblical quotations with which the Zohar abounds, a device has been adopted which it is hoped the reader will find useful. The main text-headings, that is to say, the verses from the Pentateuch which the Zohar sets out to expound in regular order, are printed in small capitals. The subsidiary text-headings, that is to say, other verses from the Bible which are made the subject of disquisitions illustrative of the main text, are printed in italics. Repetitions of these texts, or incidental quotations, are printed in ordinary type between quotation marks. This distinction will enable the reader to see at a glance where he is and with what subject the Zohar is dealing at any point.

A further effort has been made to bring order and system into the text by careful paragraphing and by a judicious use of parentheses. (It should be remembered that in the original text not only these aids, but even punctuation marks, including full stops, are inserted very sparingly, and then not infrequently at the wrong place!) The result, it is hoped, will be to show that the Zohar is by no means such a jumble as is usually supposed, that with all its discursiveness it

follows a well-defined course, and that there is a reason why most of its reflections are inserted just where they are and not somewhere else.

The Biblical references are in all cases to the Hebrew text (or to the American Jewish translation). The renderings have also been taken where possible from this version or the English Revised Version. In many cases, however, it has been necessary to give the Hebrew quite a different rendering, in order to make it accord with the lesson which the Zohar seeks to derive from it-often in lordly disregard of the context or even the rules of grammar.

The translation has been made in the main from the Mantuan text of the Zohar, but occasionally a reading has been adopted from the Amsterdam text. The paging of the Mantuan text has also been inserted.