

The Magical Cosmos of Yohanan Alemanno: Christian and Jewish Magic in the Service of a Kabbalist

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Abstract

Yohanan ben Isaac Alemanno (1435-1505?) was an Italian kabbalist, philosopher and physician. In his less known autograph, Paris, BnF héb. 849, he incorporated contemporary Christian magic sources with kabbalah, providing a practical method to ascend to the upper worlds for gaining prophecy. This article brings together Alemanno's autograph and contemporary magical works, in order to demonstrate a radical change in Alemanno's approach towards demonic magic, and the way he interpreted it using a cosmology he developed. Then, Alemanno's cosmology will be used for reconsidering a concept of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494): The *Triplex Merkabah*.

Introduction

Fifteenth-century Italy was a wonderful place for humanists, particularly those who were close to the Medici circle. With the patronage of the rulers, the court of the Medici served as a cultural crossroads, catalyzing various kinds of collaborations that produced original and translated syncretistic works — not only philosophical and medical, but also magical.¹ This was the case regarding Christian

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1 The philosophical works include, for example, Angelo Poliziano's translations of Plato's *Charmides*, Marsilio Ficino's translations of *Platonis Opera Omnia*, and John Argyropoulos' translations of Aristotle's *Physics* and *Ethics*.

kabbalah, which flourished through the works of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), according to many scholars the first Christian kabbalist.² It was in Florence that Pico met Yohanan ben Isaac Alemanno (1435-1505?), who is widely considered to have been Pico's kabbalah teacher.³ Alemanno was born in Italy to a Spanish mother and a French father. Having been studying in the school of Yehuda Messer Leon, Alemanno was educated not only in medicine and philosophy, but also in kabbalah.⁴ He wrote an extensive commentary on *The Song of Songs*, a work on immortality known as *Hay ha- 'Olamim* (חי העולמים), an unfinished commentary on Genesis known as *Eyne ha- 'Edah* (עיני העדה) and a notebook of miscellaneous quotations and

- 2 See, for example, Gershom Scholem, "The Beginnings of the Christian Kabbalah," in *The Christian Kabbalah: Jewish Mystical Books and Their Christian Interpreters*, ed. Joseph Dan, trans. Debra Prager (Cambridge: Harvard College Library, 1997), 17-51; Moshe Idel, "Jewish Thinkers versus Christian Kabbalah," in *Christliche Kabbala*, ed. Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann (Ostfildern: J. Thorbecke, 2003), 50-52. On Christian Kabbalah in general, see, for example, Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico Della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Joseph L. Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944); Joseph Dan, "The Kabbalah of Johannes Reuchlin and Its Historical Significance," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 14 (1998): 455-85. There are many more studies on Christian kabbalah, and I will mention others throughout this article.
- 3 The relationship of Alemanno and Pico has been described as a teacher-student relationship by scholars of both Pico and Alemanno. Nevertheless, this might be only partially correct; as Idel noted, Alemanno might also have been a "student" of the "teacher" Pico. See Moshe Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 111.
- 4 As Carpi has found, on February 27, 1470, Alemanno received a doctoral degree in medicine and philosophy from Messer Leon. See Daniel Carpi, "R. Yehuda Messer Leon and his activity as a doctor," *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* 1 (1972): 277-301 [Hebrew]. On biographical details about Alemanno, see Arthur M. Lesley, "The Song of Solomon's Ascents by Yohanan Alemanno: Love and Human Perfection According to a Jewish Colleague of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola," (PhD diss., University of California, 1976), 4-11; Yohanan Alemanno, *Hay ha- 'Olamim* (L'Immortale): *Parte I: la Retorica*, ed. Fabrizio Lelli (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1995), 3-17; Michele Luzzati, "Documenti inediti su Yohanan Alemanno a Firenze (1481 e 1492-1494)," in *La cultura ebraica all'epoca di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, ed. Dora Liscia Bemporad and Ida Zatelli (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1998), 71-84; Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 177-78.

drafts, which have been described as Alemanno's portable library.⁵ As recorded by Alemanno, Pico and Alemanno met in 1488 in Florence, when Pico asked him to write an in-depth commentary on *The Song of Songs*, which was later known under the title *The Desire of Solomon* (חשק שלמה).⁶ This collaboration probably influenced not only the Christian side but also the Jewish one, and it is considered as an important contribution to the development of Christian kabbalah.

In this paper I will discuss the relation between kabbalah and magic, specifically Solomonic magic, in Alemanno's world, as it is described in his autograph Paris, BnF héb. 849 (hereinafter MS Paris 849). This text reveals the usage of contemporary Christian sources by Alemanno and the efforts that Alemanno invested in incorporating such sources in his perception of gaining "the human happiness" (ההצלחה האנושית), that is, prophecy.⁷ By bringing together Alemanno's autograph and contemporary magical works, I hope to demonstrate a radical change in Alemanno's thought concerning his approach toward demonic magic (compared to his earlier works). This change results in a unique approach to kabbalah, while demonstrating a nexus between the contemporary ceremonial magic and the Jewish kabbalist.⁸ By reading what is presumably Alemanno's latest work, I

5 On the commentary of *The Song of Songs*, see Lesley, "The Song of Solomon's Ascents;" Levin, *Heshek Shelomo*. On *Hay ha- 'Olamim*, excerpts of which were published by Lelli; see Alemanno, *Hay ha- 'Olamim*. Arye Rainer has recently submitted a thesis on the commentary of Alemanno on Genesis. See Arye Rainer, "The commentary of R. Yohanan Alemanno, in his book "Eyney Haeda" to the story of creation, as a key to his understanding of the limitations of philosophy," (MA thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 2019) [Hebrew]. A systematic study of Alemanno's notebook has not yet been published.

6 See Joseph Perles, "Les savants juifs à Florence à l'époque de Laurent de Médicis," *Revue des Études Juives* 12 (1886): 245–57. A scholarly edition of *The Desire of Solomon* is now available; see Daphna Levin, *Heshek Shelomo* (Tel Aviv: Idra Publishing, 2019) [Hebrew].

7 See Alemanno's curriculum in the study of Moshe Idel, "The Curriculum of Yohanan Alemanno," *Tarbiz* 48 (1980): 303–31 [Hebrew].

8 Scholem was the first one to identify and review MS Paris 849, but in an extremely short essay in which he mentions the necessity of further study. See Gershom Scholem, "An Unknown Treatise by Yohanan Alemanno," *Kiryat Sefer* 5 (1929): 273–77 [Hebrew]. Several studies discussed MS Paris 849 in specific contexts. First and foremost, Moshe Idel wrote about some themes in MS Paris 849 in his various works. See, for example, Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations;" idem, "The Magical and Theurgical Interpretation of Music in Jewish Texts: Renaissance to Hasidism," *Yuval* 4 (1982): 33–36 [Hebrew]; idem,

will offer a new perspective on some of his ideas, namely, his cosmological and magical thoughts. I will argue that contemporary works of ceremonial magic influenced Alemanno, and that without investigating those sources, one cannot fully comprehend his later work, i.e., MS Paris 849. First, I will present an example of the connection between magic and kabbalah in the circle of Alemanno, but on its Christian side, by Mithridates. Then, I will discuss the cosmology of Alemanno, and the way he interpreted magic using this cosmology. That will lead me to the final discussion, which will address the possible link between Alemanno's cosmology and Pico's *Triplex Merkabah*, a mysterious concept that he mentioned in one of his kabbalistic theses.

Kabbalah and Magic in Fifteenth-Century Italy: The Case of *Shimmushim*

Before moving to Alemanno's work, let me begin with another figure from the same circle. Flavius Mithridates (c.1445-after 1491), alias Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada, was born in Caltabellotta as Samuel, the son of Nissim Bulfarachio, a translator and copyist of works on kabbalah, astrology, and mathematics.⁹ Mithridates himself, who

"The World of Angels in Human Form," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 3 (1983): 1-66 [Hebrew]; idem, "Between the Concept of Sephirot as Essence or Instrument in the Renaissance Period," *Italia* 3 (1982): 89-111 [Hebrew]; idem, "The Anthropology of Yohanan Alemanno: Sources and Influences," *Topoi* 7 (1988): 201-20; idem, "Astral Dreams in R. Yohanan Alemanno's Writings," *Accademia: revue de la Société Marsile Ficini* 1 (1999): 111-28; idem, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 181-87; idem, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988): 168, n. 228; idem, *Kabbalah in Italy, 1280-1510: A Survey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 177-91. Herrmann studied the reception of Hekhalot literature in MS Paris 849. See Klaus Herrmann, "The Reception of Hekhalot Literature in Yohanan Alemanno's Autograph MS Paris 849," in *Studies in Jewish Manuscripts*, ed. Joseph Dan and Klaus Herrmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 19-88. Rebiger and Schäfer studied and edited the part of *Sefer ha-Razim I* in MS Paris 849. See Bill Rebiger and Peter Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim I und II, II: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 111-14.

9 Angela Scandalio, "Flavio Mitridate maestro di Pico della Mirandola: il cammino della Cabbala, dalla Sicilia all'Italia all'Europa del Rinascimento," *Iberia Judaica*, no. 10 (2018): 139-53. A vast bibliography on Mithridates has been

converted to Christianity around 1466-1467,¹⁰ also worked on the translations of a variety of kabbalistic texts (Abulafian kabbalah, Castilian kabbalah and others), works of Eleazar of Worms,¹¹ astronomical texts,¹² passages from the Quran,¹³ and a fragment from a work of practical kabbalah, *Shimmushei Torah* (the practical usages of the Torah), in which each biblical pericope appears with its “formative utilities in the practical Kabbalah.”¹⁴ *Liber de vocibus*, Mithridates’ translation of “The Book of Voices” (ספר הקולות), contains interpretations of passages of *Shimmush Tehillim* (the practical usages of Psalms).¹⁵ The genre of *Shimmushim* seems to have been popular in fifteenth-century Italy, sometimes in kabbalistic contexts, such as in our case. For example, the ability of Psalms 19 (Vulgate 18) and 24

collected by Andreatta and Campanini. See Michela Andreatta and Saverio Campanini, “Bibliographia Mithridatica II,” in *Flavio Mitridate mediatore fra culture nel contesto dell’ebraismo siciliano del XV secolo*, ed. Mauro Perani and Giacomo Corazzol (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2012), 289–317.

10 Scandaliato, “Flavio Mitridate,” 141.

11 See Saverio Campanini, “El’azar da Worms nelle traduzioni di Flavio Mitridate per Pico della Mirandola,” in *Flavio Mitridate mediatore fra culture nel contesto dell’ebraismo siciliano del XV secolo*, ed. Mauro Perani and Giacomo Corazzol (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2012), 47–79.

12 See Bernard R. Goldstein and José Chabás, “Isaac Ibn Al-Hadib and Flavius Mithridates: The Diffusion of an Iberian Astronomical Tradition in the Late Middle Ages,” *Journal for The History of Astronomy* 37 (2006): 147–72.

13 See Benoît Grévin, “Flavius Mithridate au travail sur le Coran,” in *Flavio Mitridate mediatore fra culture nel contesto dell’ebraismo siciliano del XV secolo*, ed. Mauro Perani and Giacomo Corazzol (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2012), 27–46.

14 “Cum utilitatibus operativis in pratica cabale.” Cited from manuscript Cod. Chigi, fol. 360 by Wirszubski, *Pico*, 150 n. 37. The works of Mithridates are currently studied, edited, and published by a joint project of the Institut für Judaistik of the Freie Universität Berlin and the Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento in Florence. Works that already have been published include *The Great Parchment*, *The Book of Bahir*, Recanati’s *Commentary on the Daily Prayers*, Gikatilla’s *Book on Punctuation*, and *The Gate of Heaven*. Some of the works of Mithridates were listed by Wirszubski in Flavius Mithridates, *Sermo De Passione Domini*, ed. Chaim Wirszubski (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities), 49–59. On *Liber Misteriorum Venerabilium*, that is, Mithridates’ translation of *Shimmushei Torah*, see Flavia Buzzetta, “Misteri e prassi cabbalistiche nel Liber misteriorum venerabilium (*Shimmushei Torah*), ms. Chigi A. VI. 190, ff. 360 r-v,” *Schede medievali* 53 (2015): 53–73. On the Hebrew *Shimmushei Torah*, see Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 138–41.

15 On *Shimmush Tehillim* and an edition of it see Bill Rebigier, *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

(Vulgate 23) to ease the pain of a pregnant woman in labor, mentioned in Mithridates' *Liber de vocibus*, also appears in a fifteenth-century Italian *L'utilità di psalmi di Davit* (The utility of the Psalms of David) in a Milanese manuscript and a Latin *Virtus et utilitas CL Psalmorum David* (The virtue and utility of the one hundred fifty Psalms of David) in a Florentine manuscript.¹⁶

The incorporation of the translated *Shimmushei Torah* with kabbalistic works, and Pico's thesis about the assurance of the divinity of Christ by magic and kabbalah, indicate a strong connection between magic and kabbalah in this circle, a connection that many scholars of Pico have discussed.¹⁷ The fact that such translated *Shimmushim* were copied by Italian scribes who were also engaged with ceremonial magic, as the Milanese and Florentine manuscripts verify, attest that at least on the textual level, works of ceremonial magic and *Shimmushim* were circulated together. The link of magic to kabbalah, which Mithridates seems to allude to by including *Shimmushei Torah* in his translated works, are not exclusive to Mithridates or Pico. In fact, magic (whether *Shimmushim* or

16 On the passage from *Liber de vocibus*, see Flavia Buzzetta, "Aspetti della magia naturalis e della scientia cabalae nel pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1486-1487)" (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Palermo, 2011), 510–11. On the use of Psalms 19 (Vulgate 18) to ease the pain of a pregnant woman in labor in the Milanese manuscript and the Florentine equivalent, see Florence Gal, Jean-Patrice Boudet, and Laurence Moulinier-Brogi, *Vedrai Mirabilia: Un Libro Di Magia Del Quattrocento* (Roma: Viella, 2017), 329. Idel argued that Alemanno's perception of the Torah as being a sequence of divine names, a concept that already appeared in Nachmanides' works, is an evolution of the tradition originated in *Shimmushei Torah* and *Shimmush Tehillim*. See Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations," 120–21. On the same concept, see also Moshe Idel, "The Concept of the Torah in Heikhalot Literature and Its Metamorphoses in Kabbalah," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981): 23–84, esp. 52–55 [Hebrew]; Mauro Perani, "Il Sefer ha-tagin da manuale masoretico a repertorio esoterico in ambienti cabbalistici dei secc. XIII–XV," in *L'eredità di Salomone: La magia ebraica in Italia e nel Mediterraneo*, ed. Emma Abate (Firenze: Giuntina, 2019), 44–48. On the wide reception of *Shimmush Tehillim*, see Bill Rebiger, "The Editio Princeps of Sefer Šimmuš Tehillim, Sabbioneta 1551," in *L'eredità di Salomone: La magia ebraica in Italia e nel Mediterraneo*, ed. Emma Abate (Firenze: Giuntina, 2019), 169–84.

17 See, for example, Wirszubski, *Pico*, 133–52; Stephen A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional, Religious, and Philosophical Systems* (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998), 115–32; Sheila J. Rabin, "Pico on Magic and Astrology," in *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays*, ed. M. V. Dougherty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 152–78.

ceremonial magic) and kabbalah played an important role in MS Paris 849 of Yohanan Alemanno, who was engaged with practical magic. As I will suggest, although the question concerning the relation of kabbalah to magic in Alemanno's thought did not escaped the attention of scholars, scholarly effort focused on astro-magical and theoretical perspectives, leaving aside any other aspects that should be studied when we are dealing with a Renaissance humanist like Yohanan Alemanno.

Yohanan Alemanno and Solomonic Magic

As Idel noted, the curriculum of Alemanno contains works of magic, in addition to works on philosophy and kabbalah. Some of those magical works are known by scholars of "Solomonic Magic" — by which I refer, generally speaking, to works that focus on methods of summoning and subduing entities, especially demons.¹⁸ In short, it is already known that Alemanno had access to *Liber Razielis* (The Book of Raziel) or *Sefer Raziel*, the *Almandel* (a work that focuses on summoning angels) and a Hebrew (translated) version of the Arabic *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* (The Aim of the Sage), which is not quite "Solomonic," but had a profound influence on the Solomonic corpus.¹⁹ Besides these,

18 This is, by no means, a clear-cut definition of a corpus. The definition of the Solomonic magic corpus is problematic, and delineating it is beyond the scope of this paper. For a review of this problematic corpus, see Julien Véronèse, "La transmission groupée des textes de magie salomonienne de l'Antiquité au Moyen âge: bilan historiographique, inconnues et pistes de recherche," in *L'antiquité tardive dans les collections médiévales*, ed. Stéphane Gioanni and Benoît Grevin (Rome: École française de Rome, 2008): 193–223. And see Véronèse recent publication, "Solomonic Magic," in *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, ed. Sophie Page and Catherine Rider, Routledge Histories (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 187–200.

19 On the familiarity of Alemanno with *Sefer Raziel*, the *Almandel*, and the *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm*, see Idel, *Curriculum*, 310–12 and the notes. For the most extensive study on the Hebrew *Sefer Raziel* and the Latin tradition of *Liber Razielis*, see Reimund Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der astrologischen Literatur der Juden* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 187–294. See also François Secret, "Sur quelques traductions du *Sefer Razi'el*," *Revue des Études Juives* 128 (1969): 223–45; Sophie Page, "Uplifting Souls: The *Liber de Essentia Spirituum* and the *Liber Razielis*," in *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 79–112. For a short

Alemanno was also familiar with the *Ars Notoria* in its Hebrew version, *Melekheth Muskhelet* (מלכת מושכלת), which, as Reimund Leicht noted, Alemanno actually cites in his work.²⁰ Idel suggested that the fact that those magical works are mentioned at the end of Alemanno's gradual study curriculum implies that magic is the apex of Alemanno's thought.²¹ Some evidence in MS Paris 849 shows that Alemanno was deep into demonic and practical magic, suggesting that in his later life, Alemanno underwent a shift towards the practical, willing to incorporate materials that are neither "astral" nor theoretical.²²

review of *Liber Razielis*, see Graziella Federici-Vescovini, *Medioevo magico: La magia tra religione e scienza nei secoli XIII e XIV* (Torino: UTET libreria, 2008), 115–20. As Boudet wrote, *Liber Razielis* claims to give Solomon power, placing him as a new Moses and a *roi magicien*. See Jean-Patrice Boudet, *Entre science et nigromance: Astrologie, divination et magie dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), 196–97. This obviously influenced Alemanno, who saw himself as a new Moses (more on this below). On the Hebrew translations of the *Ghāyat*, see Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations," 113–14; Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica*, 316–23. On the *Almandel* and the Hebrew texts, see Gal Sofer, "The Hebrew Manuscripts of Maft'e'ah Shelomoh and an Inquiry into the Magic of the Sabbateans," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 32 (2014): 139–40 [Hebrew]. Several Hebrew versions of the *Almandel* exist, which I plan to publish separately. On the Latin traditions of the *Almandel* see the in-depth research of Julien Véronèse, *L'Almandal et l'Almadel latins au Moyen Âge: Introduction et éditions critiques* (Firenze: SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012).

20 See Gideon Bohak, "Rabbanite Magical Texts in Karaite Manuscripts," *Karaite Archives* 1 (2013): 28–30; Leicht, *Astrologumena Judaica*, 369–70. I would like to thank Prof. Gideon Bohak for these references. For the Latin *Ars Notoria* and the history of this work, see Julien Véronèse, *L'Ars notoria Au Moyen Âge: Introduction et édition critique* (Firenze: SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2007).

21 Idel, "Curriculum," 318–21. However, according to Idel, Alemanno's magic is an Italian philosophically oriented magic that differs from the Spanish demonic (and practical) one. The Jewish Italian Renaissance authors show, Idel argued, "an intense theoretical interest in magic, but no practice of magic, beyond the understanding of halakah as a potential magical instrument." See Moshe Idel, "Jewish Magic from the Renaissance Period to Early Hasidism," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and In Conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Paul V. M. Flesher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 86.

22 In his earlier works, Alemanno seems not to be fond of practical magic. See Levin, *Heshek Shelomo*, 160–61. Levin argued, based on a specific passage in Alemanno's work, that he was against astral magic. However, her reading of Alemanno is partial and she ignores the context — Alemanno stands against astral magic when it results in idolatry. Moreover, it seems that the discourse about magical practices had changed in the circle of Alemanno, focusing on the

Evidence of such change can already be found in his notebook, in which Idel and Garb read the following passage as having an astral meaning:

When he immerses himself in these things, then such a great efflux will come to him that he will be able to cause the spirit of God to descend upon him and hover above him and flutter about him all the day. Not only that, but 'the writing of God, the spirit of the living God' will descend upon the scroll to such a degree that the scroll will give him power to work signs and wonders in the world. And such are the books called 'sagrato' and all the incantations are the secret words which come from evil spirits.²³

Idel identified the word סגראטו in Alemanno's writing as the Italian *segreti*, secrets, and invoke the astral *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* as a possible source for this idea of drawing emanation to the scroll by the use of divine names.²⁴ Although Alemanno certainly read works of astral magic, e.g. the aforementioned *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm*, I would like to suggest that in this passage he actually mentions an important textual reference: ספר סגראטו, which I suggest reading as the Italian *sagrato*, from the Latin *sacratus*, sacred. Hence, Alemanno did not get the idea of drawing emanation to the scroll from the astral *Ghāyat*, but rather from a different source that describes the ceremonial act of consecrating a book — a well-known process in the Solomonic magic

quality rather than the legitimacy of a certain practice. See Gal Sofer, "Lover, Son and Prophet: Magic and Kabbalah in the Autobiography of Yohanan Alemanno," *Tarbiz* 86, no. 4 (2019): 694, n. 129 [Hebrew]. The shift from theoretical to practical was not the only shift that Alemanno underwent. For example, he also changed his cosmology and cosmological terms. For the cosmology of Alemanno in *The Desire of Solomon*, see Levin, *Heshek Shelomo*, 51. On the cosmology of Alemanno in MS Paris 849, see below.

23 Translated to English by Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations," 119–120. The origin of this passage is in Bodleian Library MS. Reggio 23, 164r: "וכשיהיה האדם בזמן מרובה עד ישוב החטוף (!) מורגל תקוע ושקוע באלה, הנה ישפע עליו שפע רב עד כי יוכל להוריד על עצמו רוח אלהים מרחפת עליו וחופף עליו כל היום, והיה כאלהים. ולא עוד, אלא שיוכל להוריד על המכתב, מכתב אלהים, רוח אלהים חיים עד יהיה לספר ההוא כח לחדש אותות ומופתים בעולם. וכמו אלה נקראים ספר סגראטו, וכל הלחשים הם דבורים סגראטו מרוחות רעות." This is my transcription, which differs somewhat from Idel's. For Garb's discussion on this passage, which he interpreted as a spiritual state in which "an aura or energetic field surrounds [the magician]," see Jonathan Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2004), 176–77 [Hebrew].

24 Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations," 120.

tradition, which “activates” a book so that it will have the ability to perform, especially by binding evil spirits.²⁵ To be more precise, Alemanno mentions here a version of *Liber Sacer*, sometimes known as *Liber Sacratius* or *Liber Iuratus Honorii*, a work from at least the fourteenth century that deals with a practical method not only to gain the *visio beatifica*, but also to summon and command spirits, most commonly regarded as angels — but not exclusively.²⁶ As we will see,

25 This does not mean that the astral idea of drawing emanation to a physical object should not be considered at all, but rather that there is a much clearer context which we should not disregard, because by doing so we are in fact preferring the interpretation over the text itself. The Hebrew use of the word סַאגְרָאטוּ in this specific context (i.e. a consecrated book) can be found in New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary MS. 8114, 36r. There, the demons are asked to swear on סַפֵּר סַאגְרָאטוּ so it will have power to fulfill the practitioner’s will. As Véronèse rightly noted, the act of consecration is an element that was borrowed from canonical practices. Or, in the words of Collins, “rituals often mimicked approved ecclesiastical rituals,” probably due to clerical involvement. See Véronèse, “Solomonic Magic,” 196; David J. Collins, “Learned Magic,” in *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David J. Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 348. The act of consecrating a book for Solomonic magic is at the center of *Liber Consecrationum*. See Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 8–10; Boudet, *Entre science et nigromance*, 183–84. It is interesting to see that Alemanno refers to the consecrated book as מִכְתָּב אֱלֹהִים, like the biblical Tablets of the Law. In the Florentine manuscript that was mentioned above, alongside a Latin *Shimmush Tehillim*, there is also a work entitled *De Libro Consecrando* (On the Book which is being Consecrated) that was probably copied by a different scribe. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to mention that in *De Libro Consecrando* the practitioner is instructed to use formulas from the Torah benedictions (בְּרִכוֹת הַתּוֹרָה) to consecrate his book: “Et dapoi dica questa beneditione: benedicati dio benedeóto. Benedeóto sei tu dio l’dio nostro re de lo seculo lo quale ha dato a noi lege vera et vita eterna a posta dentro da noi. Benedeóto sei tu dio che desti la lege.” See Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89, sup. 38, 40r.

26 See the edition made by Gösta Hedegård, *Liber Iuratus Honorii: A Critical Edition of the Latin Version of the Sworn Book of Honorius* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002). Recently, Peterson published his own edition, which he also translated into English. See Joseph H. Peterson, *The Sworn Book of Honorius: Liber Iuratus Honorii* (Lake Worth, FL: Ibis Press, 2016). On the history of *Liber Iuratus*, see Robert Mathiesen, “A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the Sworn Book of Honorius of Thebes,” in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 143–62; Katelyn Mesler, “Liber Iuratus Honorii and the Christian Reception of Angel Magic,” in

it is not the only occurrence of *Liber Sacratu*s in Alemanno's works, and in MS Paris 849 it is one of the works that Alemanno used in order to sketch his own system of ceremonial magic, placing the work (*Liber Sacratu*s) as one of the steps in the ladder to human happiness. After this example of a ceremonial magic source in Alemanno's work, to which I will refer below, I will introduce MS Paris 849.

Solomonic Magic in MS Paris 849

MS Paris 849 is known to scholars as "an unknown treatise by Rabbi Yohanan Alemanno," named after the title of Gershom Scholem's short article on this manuscript, where the great kabbalah scholar identifies it as an autograph of Alemanno.²⁷ In this encyclopedic work, greatly inspired by Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, Alemanno described himself as a wanderer on a journey to other (higher) worlds, guided by his "mother," who is the personification of the Torah.²⁸ Like Dante and Virgil, the two walk hand in hand through the Infernal demonic world — the world of the elements (עולם היסודות), which corresponds to Dante's *Inferno*; the world of souls (עולם הנפשות), which corresponds to the *Purgatorio*; and the upper divine world, which corresponds to the *Paradiso*. In this journey, Alemanno, the son, learns about magical

Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 113–50; Jean-Patrice Boudet, "Magie théurgique, angélogologie et vision béatifique dans le Liber sacratu sive juratu attribué à Honorius de Thèbes," *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 114, no. 2 (2002): 851–90; Federici-Vescovini, *Medioevo Magico*, 142–47; On the British tradition of *Liber Iuratu*s, in which the redactor explicitly differentiates his own system of magic from those of the Jews, see Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic: Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 102–13; Claire Fanger, "Covenant and the Divine Name: Revisiting the Liber Iuratu and John of Morigny's Liber Floru m," in *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 192–216. On a possible connection with Jewish sources, see Richard Kieckhefer, "The Devil's Contemplatives: The Liber Iuratu, the Liber Visionu m, and Christian Appropriation of Jewish Occultism," in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 250–65.

27 Scholem, "An Unknown Treatise."

28 On the connection with *La Divina Commedia* and the personification of the Torah, see Sofer, "Magic and Kabbalah".

operations and kabbalistic concepts from his “mother” and other figures they encounter, in order to ascend and become a perfect prophet and the leader of the Jewish people.²⁹ The perfect prophet is the one who ascends to the seventh degree of prophecy, which Alemanno described in detail. While the first six are prophecy through dreams, visions, and astrology, the last degree seems quite unique. The seventh degree of prophecy has nothing to do with receiving messages from God, but rather being able to manipulate the physical world as God does:

... For this, it will not be a wonder... and if he would bring the wind, cloud and rain — heavy as flood, in order to destroy, or blessing rain to raise a righteous shoot. And if he will kill a man or a woman by his eyesight... and in whatsoever he does he shall prosper.³⁰

Those abilities are explained by mysterious creatures that obey the prophet:

Because God created creatures that are thinner than thin, [and] the earth is full of them... [and they] won't be seen neither found, but only in the hand of the prophets who enslave them by their tongues, and make wonders by them, [and] everything they thought to do.³¹

After several pages, when the “mother” and her son enter the world of the elements — the lowest demonic world — those mysterious

29 The aspiration of Alemanno to become the leader of the Jewish people is, obviously, a messianic one. On his radical messianic intention, which can only be compared to that of Rabbi Yosef della Reina, see Sofer, “Magic and Kabbalah,” 683–85. About the story of della Reina, see Gershom Scholem, “The Story of R. Joseph Della Reina,” *Zion* 5 (1932): 124–30 [Hebrew]; Joseph Dan, *The Hebrew Story in The Middle Ages* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974), 222–37. Idel considered della Reina a “Spanish” type of magician, i.e. leaning towards practical demonic magic. See Idel, *Jewish Magic*, 94–98.

30 MS Paris 849, 42r: אשר מפני זה לא יפלא... ואם ישיב את הרוח ענן ומטר שוטף כמבול לשחת או גשם נדבות להצמיח צמח צדיק לברכה. ואם המת ימית איש או אשה אם עינו ילוש לה... וכל אשר יחפוץ יעשה ויצליח.

31 MS Paris 849, 42r: כי ה' ברא בריה דקה מן הדקה המלאה הארץ... אשר לא יראו ולא ימצאו, כי אם ביד הנביאים המעבירים אותם בלשונותם ומפליאים לעשות על ידם כל אשר יזמו במחשבותם.

creatures are identified as demons.³² In this lowest world, the “mother” sent her son to study the ancient wisdom (החכמה הקדמונה) from the Babylonian *Symqalyrwn* (סימקאלירון), *Dmyaşayl* (דמיאשאיל) and *Zazawt* (זאזאווט), corrupted forms of the Latin Zamecliton, Harimazayl and Zazont. These are figures from *Liber Razielis* that are described there as those who brought the book from Babylon to King Solomon.³³ Placing himself in the shoes of King Solomon, Alemanno invokes not only the king’s authority and the king’s famous wisdom, but also the Solomonic tradition of which he was an enthusiast. Thus, *Symqalyrwn* teaches him some practices against demons from *Liber Razielis*, where Alemanno demonstrates his ability to succinctly incorporate materials into his own work:³⁴

MS Paris 849	Liber Razielis
And you should gather seven	The second herb is Artemisia... and
herbs: the <i>Arthmiza</i> will show	with it you will invoke winds and all

32 See Sofer, “Magic and Kabbalah,” 683–85.

33 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1300, 11v: “et nomen principis qui eum michi destinavit dicebatur Zamecliton, et duo sapientes qui eum portaverunt et tradiderunt michi unus ipsorum vocabatur, Harimazayl et alter dicebatur Zazont.” This passage is also appeared in *Secret*, *Sefer Razi’el*, 229. The only difference of my reading from the one of *Secret* is the name of Harimazayl, which *Secret* read Harmazayl. A seventeenth-century Hebrew translation of *Liber Razielis* seems to preserve forms that are closer to the corrupted names in MS Paris 849: *Yeyseyqieyron* (יֵיִסְיֵקִיֵּירוֹן), *Dayymasail* (דַּיִמַּאֲסַיִל) and *Zazo ʿrit* (זַאזֹוֹרִיט). See New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary MS. 8117, 60r.

34 Alemanno’s editing skills seem to be practically oriented. An example is his short version of the commentary on the forty-two-letter divine name. Alemanno’s version of this text is based on the fourth version of that commentary, which was characterized by Idel, and it is abbreviated and practically oriented. Actually, its form corresponds with magical recipe texts, specifically texts from the *Shimmushim* genre, where the holy names, or the specific Biblical verses, are listed with their properties. See MS Paris 849, 86v–87r. On the fourth version of the commentary on the forty-two-letter divine name (שם מ”ב אותיות), see Moshe Idel, “The Commentaries of Nehemiah Ben Shlomo to the Forty-Two Letter Divine Name,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 14 (2006): 164 [Hebrew]. For a list of manuscripts that preserves the fourth version of the commentary, see Naama Ben-Shachar, “R. Avigdor’s Commentary to the Forty-Letter Divine Name and Its Relation to the Commentaries of R. Nehemiah the Prophet,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 33 (2015): 120–22 n. 58 [Hebrew]. See also the recent publication of Moshe Idel, “On the Genre of Commentaries on the Forty-Two Letter Divine Name and Its Later History,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 42 (2018): 131–91 [Hebrew].

you the aerial spirits that
 you will call, and anoint a
 mirror with *Qanbas* so they
 will be seen as you wish...
 and when you will eat
Qardamomy they will be seen
 to your eyes, and [when you
 will eat] the *Tsirpolynas* they
 will appear in clouds far
 from you.³⁵

the spirits that you will wish, and you will benefit. The third herb is Cannabis... and the virtue of its juice is if you will anoint yourself with it and with juice of Artemisia, and you will place yourself in front of a mirror of steel and invoke the spirits, you will see them... the fifth herb is Cardamom... and eat it when you will call [the spirits]... the fourteenth herb is called Serpyllum... and it makes the spirits to be seen in the clouds of heaven.³⁶

Although *Liber Razielis* is quite dominant in Alemanno's magical system, it is certainly not the only work from which he borrows his magical Solomonic knowledge. When he and his "mother," that is, the Torah, wander in the lowest world, they also learn how to control demons with various ceremonial acts:

To make a big circle from this parchment, to write many names in it and in its circumference... and in its circumference you should write with blood of bat, since it resembles spirits and demons, and [write] the sacred names that begin with Agla and end with Rabur.³⁷

- 35 ומכל עשב האדמה תקח לך שבעה: את הארטמיזא תקרא רוחות ואיריות
 ויראו לך, ואת מיני הקאנבאש תמשח מראה לטושה בה יראו לרצונך... ואת הקרדמומי באכלך
 ממנו יולדו לך לענין, ואת הצירפולייניש יראו לך בעבים רחוקים ממך.
- 36 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1300, 26v-28r: "Secundus herba est
 artemisia... et cum ista invocabis ventos et omnes spiritus quos volueris et
 proficies. Tertia herba est canapis... et virtus succi eius est si unexeris te cum
 ipso et cum succo artemisia et posueris te ante speculum calibis et invocabis
 spiritus videbis eos... Quinta herba est cardemomum... et istam comede
 quondam invocaveris... [28r] Quartadecima herba dicitur serpillum... et facit
 videri spiritus in nubibus celi..."
- 37 MS Paris 849, 49r: לעשות עגול גדול מקלף זה לכתוב סביבותיו ואל תוכו שמות רבות...
 ועל סביבותיו יכתב נא מדם העטלף, להרמותו אל רוחות ושדים, את שמות קדושים ראשיתם
 The son learns those acts from Adai and Blian, who, as
 Scholem already noted, are two figures that appear in *Sefer Ha-Tamar* (The Book
 of the Palm), with which Alemanno was familiar. See Scholem, "An Unknown

This is just a glimpse of an entire ceremony that has been written, in my opinion, under the influence of *Liber Iuratus Honorii* — the aforementioned *Liber Sacer*. In *Liber Iuratus* the magician is instructed to copy the “Seal of God” on a parchment, using bat's blood as an ink.³⁸ *Liber Iuratus* also refers to the hundred names of God, with the first being Agla and the last Rabur — exactly as mentioned by Alemanno.³⁹ After those instructions, the “mother” and her son came across three angels that are known, again, from *Liber Razielis*: Pan̄tapyrwn, Aq̄rtwn, and Sndalwn.⁴⁰ Those three angels explain the different elements of

Treatise,” 275; Idel, “Curriculum,” 312 n. 74. However, Adai and Blian's teaching in MS Paris 849 does not derive from *Sefer Ha-Tamar*, which explicitly rejects their knowledge. See Abu Aflah, *Sefer Ha-Tamar*, ed. Gershom Scholem (Jerusalem: Workmen's Printing Press, 1926), 6–7. Scholem identifies Blian as the Arabic form of Apollonius but does not recognize Adai. In my opinion, Adai is Idris, who is identified with Hermes. It is important to note that some information attributed to Hermes in *Liber Razielis* can be found in the teaching of Adai and Blian in MS Paris 849, e.g., in folio 48v: ותני נא לו מקנה בושם עץ אלעוד (and give him perfume of al'wd, Costus, Crocus, Musk, Tymyamy and blood of Upupa [Hoopoe] to fumigate the house with). Al'wd is the Arabic العود, aloes. See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1874), 2190. Tymyamy is the Latin thymyama (from the Greek θυμιάμα), which was used in the Vulgate (Exod 25:6) as the equivalent of the Hebrew קטרת, an incense. Cf. *Liber Razielis* in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1300, 33v: “dixit hermes quod non est tale subfumigium ad invocandum spiritus sicut ambra et lignum aloes et costus mustus(!) crocus et sanguis hupupe cum thimiamate” (Hermes said that there is no great suffumigation for invoking spirits as amber and aloes wood and fresh Costus, Crocus and blood of Hoopoe with Thimiamate). About Idris as Hermes, see Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 121–57. About *Sefer Ha-Tamar* and its possible contribution to the Kabbalistic concept of *Maggid*, i.e. an entity that reveal secrets to the Kabbalist, see Shlomo Pines, “Le ‘Sefer ha-Tamar’ et les ‘maggidim’ des kabbalistes,” in *Hommage à Georges Vajda: études d'histoire et de pensée juives*, ed. Gérard Nahon and Charles Touati (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), 333–63. Neither the origin of *Sefer Ha-Tamar* nor its dating are clear. Different speculations have been made concerning this data, however, an updated systematic research of *Sefer Ha-Tamar* remains scholarly desiderata.

38 See Hedegård, *Liber Iuratus Honorii*, 69; Peterson, *The Sworn Book of Honorius*, 72–73.

39 See Hedegård, *Liber Iuratus Honorii*, 112; Peterson, *The Sworn Book of Honorius*, 184–85.

40 The names of the angels suggest that Alemanno consulted an already corrupted Hebrew translation of the Latin (or rather Castilian) version, since the kabbalist who was fascinated by the figure of Metatron would probably recognize his name and avoid its Latinized corrupted form. A Latin manuscript of *Liber*

the ritual and their necessity. For example, the magician is instructed to walk with white shoes or barefoot while summoning demons, for by that he expresses the superiority of the human body over the demonic one, because demons' legs are in the form of birds' legs.⁴¹ The magician should have strong red wine with him, because it will make him braver.⁴² He should also have a wand, so that he can use it to hit the demons if they disobey him.⁴³ These kinds of interpretation of Solomonic ritualistic acts are rare but not entirely new, especially in Italy.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, Alemanno not only interpreted *Solomonic* practices, but also incorporated them into his cosmology. As far as *Liber Iuratus* is concerned, Alemanno adopted its aggressive — one might even say *negromantic* — attitude towards angels.⁴⁵ This attitude is expressed in a scene where the “mother” and her son start ascending to the upper worlds.

Razielis clearly shows that Aqrṭwn and Sndalwn are Metatron and Sandalfon. See Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1300, 25r: “Pantaseron, Mitaitron, Sandalfon.”

- 41 MS Paris 849, 51r: והמנעלים או לבנים או יתף ילך במלאכתם להכניעם ביופי פעמי האדם עליהם אשר הם כרגלי כל צפור כנף ולא יוכלו לשנותם לעולם.
- 42 MS Paris 849, 51r: ...הבבוק מלא יין טוב רחני עז הכח אדום לשתות בצמא בקראנו אותם... והיין המחזק את הלב ומשמחו ומגבירו ללחום כנגדם ומסיר היגון והאנחה והפחד והרעדה מהלב.
- 43 MS Paris 849, 51v: השבטים להכותם במקל כאתונות להטותם הדרך הישר אם יטו מדרך האתרים.
- 44 See, for example, *De occultis et manifestis* of Antonio da Montolmo, which was studied, edited, and translated by Nicolas Weill-Parot, “Antonio Da Montolmo’s *De Occultis et Manifestis* or *Liber Intelligentiarum*: An Annotated Critical Edition with English Translation and Introduction,” in *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 219–93.
- 45 Mesler, “Christian Reception,” 134. By *negromantic* I mean that related to *negromancy*. On *negromancy* see Frank Klaassen, “Necromancy,” in *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, ed. Sophie Page and Catherine Rider, Routledge Histories (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 201–11. As Mathiesen noted, there is a similarity between one of the operations of *Liber Iuratus* and the methods of the *Clavicula Salomonis* — an explicit demonic work. See Mathiesen, “A Thirteenth-Century Ritual,” 150. It is most probable that the author of *Liber Iuratus*, who was familiar with demonic magic, cast angelic elements into a pre-existing demonic text.

The Cosmology of Alemanno and Pico’s Triplex Merkabah

Throughout his work, Alemanno sketches a complex cosmology that, as already mentioned, was inspired by Dante’s *La Divina Commedia*. In Alemanno’s work, the lowest world is the elemental and demonic world; the middle world is the world of the planets, the zodiac, and the *anima universalis* – the universal soul (הנפש הכוללת); and the upper world contains seven heavens and three separated worlds. The upper is the world of names (עולם השמות), the middle is the world of the Sephirot (עולם הספירות), and the lower is the world of letters (עולם האותיות). Alongside this cosmology, in a later stage of the writing, Alemanno added four “rungs outside the Sephirot” (מדרגות שלא בכלל) (הספירות): the impure Sephirot (ספירות לא טהורות),⁴⁶ sacred names (שמות קדושים), camps of the divine presence (מחנות שכינה), and legions of angels (כתות מלאכים). In the manuscript, these four rungs are placed inside the upper world, but we should keep in mind that they are later additions, as the difference between the first and the second edited version of the outline of the manuscript verifies.⁴⁷ Thus, the reader needs to treat them as miscellaneous materials, which belong to different parts of the cosmology. In the following schematic table, I provide an overview of the structure of the cosmology:

The Upper World (Paradiso)	World of Names	Rungs outside the Sephirot
	World of Sephirot	
	World of Letters	
	Seven Heavens	
The Middle World (Purgatorio)	World of Souls	
The Lower World (Inferno)	Fire	
	Air	
	Water	
	Earth	

46 Alemanno took the system of the left emanation from Moses of Burgos, most probably through Joseph ibn Waqar’s work “The Book of Roots,” which was known to Pico in the Latin translation *Liber de Radicibus*, made for him by Mithridates. See Chaim Wirszubski, “Giovanni Pico’s Companion to Kabbalistic Symbolism,” in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion: Presented to Gershom G. Scholem*, ed. Efraim Elimelek Urbach (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 352–62; Paul Fenton, “R. Joseph Ibn Waqar’s *Sefer Shoreshei Ha-Qabbalah*: A Kabbalistic Lexicon,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 4 (1999): 148–49 [Hebrew].

47 See Sofer, “Magic and Kabbalah,” 686–87.

When the son and his “mother” ascend to the upper world, they start by describing the angelic seven heavens as they appear in *Sefer Ha-Razim* (The Book of Secrets), where each heaven is inhabited by different angels and spirits that can perform different things.⁴⁸ This part also contains materials from works such as the Hebrew version of *Liber Lunae* (The Book of the Moon, ספר הלבנה) — an astro-magical treatise that focuses on the construction of images — and the astral *De viginti quattuor horis* (On the Twenty Four Hours), as well as, again, *Liber Razielis*.⁴⁹ Most of this part is a list of sacred names, some of them described as Meforashim (explicit, מפורשים), corresponding to planets and zodiac signs. For example:

The angels of Saturn are Qpsy'l [and] Hwzy'l. The angels of Jupiter are... [the angel] of Aries Hsdy'l... and there are explicit names above them... the first ŠNMSNNSYNYH...⁵⁰

These kinds of sacred names can act on the physical world, and through a quite simple mechanism Alemanno describes the source of this ability: the top layer of the upper world, that is the world of names, does not contains all the divine names but rather ten specific names, which Alemanno mentions through passages that he cites from Rabbi Yosef Gikatilia's book *Sha'are Ora* (Gates of Light, שערי אורה).⁵¹ Those ten names are the essence (עצמות) of God, and they correspond to the ten Sephirot in the second world that receive the emanation from those names, and in turn affect the world of letters:

The letters are as matter to the ten paths that called ten Sephirot... and the Sephirot are as forms and shapes to the twenty-two letters, so they [the Sephirot] move, revolve, combine and join them [the letters] to [create] different sayings

48 Published by Rebiger and Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim I*.

49 Scholem was the first to notice the appearance of *Liber Lunae*. See Scholem, “An Unknown Treatise,” 276. On the Hebrew *Liber Lunae* see Fabrizio Lelli, “Le Versioni Ebraiche Di Un Testo Ermetico: Il Sefer Ha-Levanah,” *Henoch* 12 (1990): 147–64.

50 MS Paris 849, 64r: מלאכי שבתי קפציאל הוויאל. מלאכי צדק... לטלה חסדיאל... יש שמות מפורשים עליהם... ראשון שנמסננסנייה

51 The work of Gikatilia was translated by Mithridates for Pico. See Mithridates, *Sermo De Passione Domini*, 55–56.

and names and verbs as they wish. And they will be the letters that move the separate intelligences of the different heavens.⁵²

The Sephirot in the second world act on the letters and combine them in order to create different sayings — potent sacred names, such as the names of the separate intelligences, namely, the angels of the seven heavens who rule over the planets and the zodiac. I assume that this exact mechanism stands behind the epistle of Rabbi Isaac of Pisa, who knew Alemanno and was familiar with his teachings.⁵³ In this epistle, which has been identified and studied by Idel, Isaac describes that:

The first part [of Kabbalah] is the sacred names, which are true beings that exist in an absolute existence, [and] which are produced by the power of letters combination of the glorious ten names of the blessed God, that is the ten Sephirot, by the twenty-two letters... and the pure man... will have the power to act with them as he wishes, and to instantly make signs and wonders. And they [the sacred names] all stand in palaces (הכלות), and each has its own angel or specific angels in the world of angels, [and] when the right person will adjure the angel by the name of its superior to do a specific act, it will instantly fulfil his wish. And this is the practical part of the wisdom of Kabbalah.⁵⁴

There are more similarities between Isaac's epistle and Alemanno's works, some of which have already been discussed by Idel. Moreover, the mechanism that Isaac describes sketches the difference between practical kabbalah — which Alemanno named "the practical Sephirotic wisdom" (חכמת הספירה המעשית) — and the theoretical-

52 MS Paris 849, 77r: והספירות ... עשר ספירות עשר נתיבות הנקראות עשר ספירות... הם לכ"ב אותיות כצורות וגשמות להם להניעם ולגלגלם ולצרפם ולחבר מהם אמרות שונות ושמות ופעלים כרצונם. והיו המה לאותיות השכלים הנבדלים לרקיעים המניעים אותם.

53 For an edition and study of this epistle see Moshe Idel, "The Epistle of R. Isaac of Pisa in Its Three Versions(?)," *Kovetz Al-Yad* 10 (1982): 163-214 [Hebrew].

54 The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Oxford, England Ms. Opp. 576, 434v. Published in Hebrew by Idel, "The Epistle of R. Isaac," 200-01: החלק הראשון הם השמות הקדושים אשר הם עצמים אמתיים נמצאים מציאות גמור יוצאים מכח צירוף אותיות העשרה שמות הנכבדים מהאל ית' אשר הם עשרה הספירות, באמצעות הכ"ב אותיות... והאיש הטהור... יהיה לו כח לפעול בהם כרצונו ולעשות אותות ומופתים ברגע. וכלם עומדים הכלות הכלות, וכל אחד יש לו מלאך או מלאכים מיוחדים בעולם המלאכים אשר בהיות האדם הראוי לכך משביע המלאך בשם הממונה עליו לעשות פעולה מיוחדת, תכף ימלא שאלתו. וזה הוא החלק המעשי מחכמת הקבלה.

cosmological (“theosophical”) kabbalah, namely, “the theoretical Sephirotic wisdom” (חכמת הספירה העיונית).⁵⁵ The distinction between the practical and theoretical stands also behind the concept of *Ma’aseh Bereshit* (מעשה בראשית) and *Ma’aseh Merkavah* (מעשה מרכבה), when Alemanno states in another work:

Ma’aseh Bereshit is the knowledge of creation, which is known through *Sefer Yetsirah*, and its purpose is to create a world... and everything is by the wisdom of the combining of letters...and *Ma’aseh Merkavah* is the perception of the spiritual world.⁵⁶

In Alemanno’s *The Desire of Solomon*, the distinction between the two seems to be based on the natural versus the divine:

Ma’aseh Bereshit, which is the secret of the creation and the nature of the planets and the nature of the hyle... and *Ma’aseh Merkavah* which is the divine secrets as the separate [intelligences] and the Sephirot.⁵⁷

Overall, it seems that *Ma’aseh Bereshit* focuses on the creation act of nature through the combination of letters, while *Ma’aseh Merkavah* focuses on the spiritual world and its perception. Therefore, the three upper worlds are the *Merkavah*, while the fourth — containing angels and practical methods to use sacred names — corresponds to *Ma’aseh Bereshit*.⁵⁸

While keeping in mind the role of Alemanno’s cosmology in dividing kabbalah, we can now turn to Pico’s definition of kabbalah. When he defined kabbalah in his kabbalistic theses, Pico divided:

55 For a discussion of definitions of Kabbalah in the circles of Alemanno, see Idel, “The Epistle of R. Isaac,” 181–84.

56 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. héb 270, 1r: מעשה בראשית הוא ידיעת: היצירה הנודע מספר יצירה ותכליתו לדעת לברא עלם... והכל בחכמת צרוף האותיות... ומעשה מרכבה הוא השגת העולם הרוחני...

57 Levin, *Heshek Shelomo*, 620: מעשה בראשית שהם סודות הבריא והטבע הגלגלי וטבע: ההיולי... ומעשה מרכבה שהם הסודות האלקיות כנבדלים וכספירות.

58 The reliance of the practical *Ma’aseh Bereshit* on the Sephirotic *Ma’aseh Merkavah* is also expressed when Alemanno introduces the name of forty-two (שם מ”ב), explaining that: “The masters of the *Merkavah* combine the letters of [the name of] forty-two, since there is nothing like it for operations and [magical] acts.” (ומגלגלים בעלי המרכבה אותיות של מ”ב כי לפעולות ולגבורות אין כמוהו). See MS Paris 849, 86r.

The speculative part of the Cabala four ways... The first is what I call the science of the revolution of the alphabet... The second, third, and fourth is the triplex Merkabah, corresponding to the three parts of particular philosophy, concerning divine, middle, and sensible natures.⁵⁹

There is no consensus among scholars concerning the term “Triplex Merkabah.” Wirszubski argued that this refers to the triangular forms inside the Sephirotic tree.⁶⁰ Following Yates, Idel argued that this refers to the three worlds — the divine Sephirotic world, the astral world, and the physical world.⁶¹ Farmer, on the other hand, explains that the Triplex Merkabah is the intellectual, animate, and corporeal realms.⁶² I would like to suggest that Pico’s Triplex Merkabah corresponds to Alemanno’s cosmology. We find two parts of kabbalah in Pico’s thesis: the first is the combination of letters, corresponding with Alemanno’s *Ma’aseh Bereshit*, and the second is the philosophical part, which he divided into three. In Alemanno’s cosmology, the spiritual realm, the upper world, actually consists of three worlds, as I mentioned above — the world of names, the world of Sephirot, and the world of letters. Those, for Alemanno, are the *Merkavah*, which he also explains as a threefold ten Sephirot: adopting the idea from Rabbi Yosef Ibn Waqar,⁶³ Alemanno suggests that there are three sets of ten Sephirot. In Alemanno’s work, those three sets are the upper prophetic (נבואיות), the middle intellectual (מחשביות), and the lower visual (מושגות בצפיה) Sephirot. The prophetic Sephirot correspond to the world of names, while the intellectual and visual Sephirot correspond to the world of the Sephirot and the world of letters, respectively:

And [the prophets] did so as the astrologers... who according to them there were two kinds of zodiac — sensible and intellectual. And they [the prophets] thought like that about two kinds of Sephirot — visual and intellectual. And when Moses came... he saw and observed and prophesied that those Sephirot that are

59 Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, 521.

60 Wirszubski, *Pico*, 136–38.

61 Idel, “The Epistle of R. Isaac,” 182 n. 118.

62 Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, 520.

63 On Ibn Waqar’s concept, see Moshe Idel, “The Sephirot above the Sephirot,” *Tarbitz* 51 (1982): 11 n. 58; Fenton, “Sefer Shoreshei Ha-Qabbalah,” 160–61.

considered close to the source... and he called them “names,” by the names that refer to the prophetic Sephirot.⁶⁴

While Pico’s distinction between practical and theoretical kabbalah might not follow Alemanno’s, since his speculative one (*speculatiuam cabalae*) consists of four parts that include the “revolution of the alphabet,” we can notice that he mentions that his Triplex Merkabah correspond to the three natures: the divine, the middle, and the sensible natures. In my opinion, these categories correspond to Alemanno’s set, that is to say, the prophetic (corresponds with Pico’s divine nature), intellectual (corresponds with Pico’s middle nature), and visual (corresponds with Pico’s sensible nature). Assuming this is indeed the case, it is still difficult to decide the direction of the transmission of the Triplex Merkabah concept, especially because we have no evidence that Alemanno and Pico met before 1488.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Alemanno also used his threefold system to describe the way in which the prophet ascends through magical practices in order to see the Merkavah (צפיית המרכבה).⁶⁶

The Key to the Gates of Heaven: Ascending Through Magic

The threefold Sephirotic system was important to Alemanno, and is far more complex than I have described, since Alemanno used it in different ways and created an elaborate system of correspondences. Such use of the threefold system can be found where the “mother” and her son wish to ascend to the upper world, and two problems emerge in the mind of the son: the first is the ability to ascend, and

64 MS Paris 849, 91v-92r: ועשו כזה כהוברי שמים... והיו לפי דעתם שני מיני מזלות המושגות: בחוש והנודעות במחשבה, וככה גזרו על שני מיני ספירות מושגות בצפיה ומושגות במחשבה. ובבא משה... ראה והביט וחזה כי אלו הספירות הנחשבות הקרובות במעלה אל המקור... וקרא להם שמות בשמות אשר הם מורות על הספירות הנבואיות.

65 Idel, “The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations,” 111.

66 Receiving the beatific vision through magical practices is one of the main goals of the practitioner of *Liber Sacratius*. See Boudet, “Magie théurgique, angélologie et vision béatifique.” Alemanno is familiar with practices for ascending to the divine world, or heavens, also through the well-known Hekhalot literature. He incorporated into MS Paris 849 large portions of what is considered to be a part of this literature. See Herrmann, “The Reception of Hekhalot Literature.” For discussions of the Hekhalot literature in the context of the study of Jewish magic see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 329-338; Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 316-330.

the second is the ability to get into the heavens, since their gates might be closed. The “mother” calms her son, while addressing his concerns:

I will go down with thee to the bottom of the earth, and I will also surely bring thee up to the chiefs of the ten armies above, higher than the highest, and higher than them⁶⁷ are rungs of three tens... and if this gate of the lord will be closed, and will not open, behold, for the key is in my hand: in one edge there are seven teeth, tooth for tooth, and hand for hand [of the key]⁶⁸ will be square and not circle, with three circles upon the top of it.⁶⁹

In this passage, two concepts are introduced — the “three tens” Sephirotic system, which I have already discussed, and the key to the gates of heaven. The “mother” described a specific kind of key with seven teeth (i.e., ridges), a square handle and three circles at its top edge, probably in a triangular shape, given that Alemanno uses the phrase *עגולה משולשת* (might be translated as “triangular circle,” but it probably refers to three circles). The description of the key holds certain meanings, which the “mother” explains:

On seven gates — you are already full of years, from gate to gate, [which] one tooth opens without closing. And if they will not answer you, and will frighten you by their voice, and will defeat you with the light of their faces — behold, I ascend in a triplex way: flesh, spirit, soul, power, will, knowledge. They will look and stare upon these three which I have: my power and flesh will cause them to answer me, my will and spirit will force them to embellish the noise of their voice [to be] like my own voice, my knowledge and soul will bring them to wear mottled, dyed, speckled and grizzled clothes — whatsoever my eyes desire, they [the angels] will not keep from them. But if they will not obey me, I shall call the seasons and command the four winds of

67 Cf. Eccles. 5:8.

68 Cf. Exod. 21:24.

69 MS Paris 849, 55v-56r: ואנכי אעלך גם עלה אל שרי צבאות, ואנכי אעלך גם עלה אל שרי צבאות, ואנכי אעלך גם עלה אל שרי צבאות... ואם זה השער לה' יהיה מעלה עשרה גבוה מעל גבוה וגבוהים עליהם מדרגות שלשה עשרות... ואם זה השער לה' יהיה סגור לא יפתח הנה נא בידי מפתח: על צדה האחת שבעה שנים שן תחת שן, ויד תחת יד רבוע יהיה לא עגול, עם עגולה משולשת על ראשה, בה דלתי שחקים נפתח.

heaven to stop pouring rain upon them, and dew of lights... Thus, I will ascend by my hands and feet — watch me and follow.⁷⁰

The “mother” reveals the significance of the key to the gates of heaven and its components. Its seven teeth are representations of achieving the seventh degree of prophecy, which Alemanno claimed he achieved during forty-nine years, spending seven years at each degree since he was thirteen.⁷¹ The first step to open the gates of heaven is, therefore, the seventh degree of prophecy. As we already saw, this degree was described by Alemanno as the ability to manipulate the physical world through subjugating demons. This evidently aggressive approach towards demons seems to be directed also towards angels: the “mother” threatens to call the four seasons and winds of heaven to harm the disobedient angels. In my opinion, this “calling” might frighten the angels only if by “the four seasons and wind,” Alemanno refers either to the names of the different angels and seasons that are listed in *Liber Lunae* or those of *Liber Razielis*, both of which Alemanno knew and quoted extensively in MS Paris 849, as we have already seen. This is also in concordance with the most striking evidence for the treatment of angels as demons, possibly inspired by *Liber Iuratus* — the ascending of the “mother” in a “triplex way” (עולה משולשת).⁷²

Fear is embodied in Solomonic works in different forms, since the act of summoning demons is basically the magician’s invitation for a frightening dialogue between two sides: the human and the demonic. The summoner tries to bind and control the demon, while the latter resists. This rather aggressive dialogue can be described as

70 MS Paris 849, 56r: כי על שבע שערים שבעת שנים, משער לשער שן אחת פותחת ואין סוגר. והיה אם לא יענוך, ובקולם יבהילוך ובאור פניהם יפילוך, הנה אנכי עולה משולשת: בשר רוח נשמה כח חפץ ידיעה. המה יביטו יראו בי את שלשת אלה לי: כחי ובשרי יניעם להשיבני, חפצי ורוחי יכניעם להשביח שאון קולם כקולי, דעתי ונשמתי יביאם להלביש אותם בגדים שרוקים חמוצים נקודים וברודים, ככל אשר ישאלו עיני לא יאצלו מהם. כי אם בזאת לא ישמעו לי, אל תקופות השנה אקרא ועל ארבע רוחות השמים אצוה מלהמטיר עליהם מטר וטל אורות... ובכן עלה אעלה בידי ורגלי ממני תראה ובא אחרי. I wish to thank Prof. Gideon Bohak for his important note concerning the reading of מלהמטיר. It is probably a reference to Isa. 26:19, where the dew is mentioned as reviving. Thus, stop pouring this dew is a death threat toward the angels.

71 MS Paris 849, 40r.

72 Alemanno changed the biblical phrase עגלה משולשת (a heifer of three years old), to עולה משולשת, which still preserves the original meaning, since עולה also means a sacrifice. I translated עולה משולשת as “ascend in a triplex way,” but other words that preserve the ternary meaning of משולשת might be suitable.

a power struggle — the demon is doing his best to control the Solomonic practitioner, while he makes efforts to control the demon. The “emotional” subduing instrument, the emotion that one uses to control the other in this ritual, is fear. In an unknown Hebrew copy of the *Ydea Salomonis* preserved in the Cairo Genizah,⁷³ the practitioner refers to the demons he summons, addressing each aspect that might be used by them to frighten him:

Come to this circle, appear in front of our eyes peacefully, quietly, without any ugliness and tremble, to fulfill our desire and wishes. Come, and do not delay by any means.⁷⁴

This is also the case in the oldest manuscript of the *Clavicula Salomonis*, where the practitioner addresses the demons:

I exorcise you and command you, do not delay, and come without noise but with all affabilities, and no deformities.⁷⁵

73 The *Ydea Salomonis*, also known as *De quatuor annulis*, exists in two versions, solely in Latin. Thorndike listed four manuscripts of this work. See Lynn Thorndike, “Traditional Medieval Tracts Concerning Engraved Astrological Images,” in *Mélanges Auguste Pelzer: Etudes d’histoire Littéraire et Doctrinale de La Scolastique Médiévale Offertes à Monseigneur Auguste Pelzer* (Louvain: Bibliothèque de l’Université, 1947), 250–51. Another Latin manuscript has been discussed by Boudet and by Véronèse. See Boudet, *Entre Science et Nigromance*, 145–49; Véronèse, “magie salomonienne,” 201. To these five manuscripts I would like to add a Latin manuscript in which I have found another copy of the *Ydea*: Prague, The National Library of the Czech Republic, XIII.F.24, 101r–112r. The *Ydea* in this manuscript seems to share similarities with the one in the Florentine manuscript (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89, sup. 38). I would like to express my gratitude to Petra Hofbauerová from the National Library of the Czech Republic for providing me with access to this manuscript. Few Hebrew recensions of the *Ydea Salomonis* have survived. See Gal Sofer, “The Seal of Bileth: Its Position in the Kevitza Literature and the Mafte’ah Shelomoh Cycle” (MA thesis, Ben-Gurion University, 2016), 52–57 [Hebrew].

74 Cambridge, T-S NS 162.89, 1r: ותבאו אל העגולה ה(זא)ת להתראות לפני עינינו בשלוה והשקט בלי ש זום כיעור ורעדה להשלים חופצ(ג)ו ומשאלות לבינו באו ולא תאחרו בשום פנין. I would like to thank Prof. Gideon Bohak for his suggestions concerning this fragment. The letter ת of ומשאלות was densely written above the line.

75 Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica 114 (now in a private collection, Coxe. 25), 85: “vos exorciso et vobis impero ut nullam moram faciatis et sine strepitu et absque omni affabili[tate] et sine aliqua deformitate

Alemanno was well aware of this Solomonic approach to demons, and in fact elaborates on it in the lower demonic world:

... to seal your ears when you hear the voice of their thunder [which they make] so you will be thrown down in front of them because of the fearful voice in your ears. And do not hear them, and do not fear them... [and] when you call them, they will come in crooked ways and different and scary forms... look down to the ground, and do not answer them... if you will call them with divine names and courage... they will come with terror and fear, and will answer you with a voice that is loud and clear as the day.⁷⁶

The same aspects that Alemanno addressed in the lowest world while invoking demons are now turned towards angels in the upper world. The “mother” described herself ascending in a “triplex way,” armored with three couples: flesh-power, spirit-will, and soul-knowledge. The triad power-will-knowledge might be a reference to the Christian *potentia, sapientia* (or *scientia*) *et voluntas*,⁷⁷ and is used by the “mother” to address three aspects of the dialogue with the unwilling angels: their obedience, which will be achieved by her flesh-power; their terrifying voice, which will be embellished by her will-spirit; and their deformed appearance, which will be tamed by her soul-knowledge. The fact that this triad is described as circles on the top of the key to the gates of heaven, and that the “mother” described herself armored

veniat. I would like to thank Dr. Cis van Heertum and Prof. Carlos Gilly, who helped me get access to this manuscript.

76 MS Paris 849, 51v-52r: לאטום אזניך בשמעך קול רעמיהם להפילך לפנייהם מקול פחדים ... באזניך ולא תשמע אליהם ולא תירא מהם ... בקראך אותם יבאו בארחות עקלקלות ובצורות שונות מהבילות (!) ... הבט נא בארץ ולא תענם ... אם תקראם עם שמות אלהיות ואבירות לבב ... יבאו באימה ופחד וישיבו לך בקול רם וברור כיום.

77 It is important to note that Ficino knew, according to Copenhaver, that “the trinity of *potentia, sapientia et bonità* appears in altered form, with *voluntas* replacing *bonità*.” See Brian Copenhaver, “Hermes Theologus: The Siense Mercury and Ficino’s Hermetic Demons,” in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation: Essays in Honor of Charles Trinkaus*, eds. John O’Malley, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Gerald Christianson (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 172. If Bartolucci is right about the possibility that Alemanno met Ficino in 1481, this might be the pathway of the transmission of this idea. See Guido Bartolucci, *Vera Religio: Marsilio Ficino e La Tradizione Ebraica* (Torino: Paideia, 2017), 79–105. In any event, Levin’s argument that Pico wrote his thesis based on his conversations with Alemanno is, for now, baseless. See Levin, *Heshek Shelomo*, 24 n. 24.

with them *while* she ascends to the upper world, suggest a possible connection with the Merkavah, and more specifically — the triplex Merkabah of Pico.⁷⁸ If I am right, Alemanno created a system of correspondences that can be summarized as follows:

Merkavah	Worlds	Human	Attributes	Angels/Demons
Prophetic Sephirot	The World of Names	Soul	Knowledge	Appearance
Intellectual Sephirot	The World of Sephirot	Spirit	Will	Voice
Visual Sephirot	The World of Letters	Flesh	Power	Obedience

Epilogue

Alemanno's pairing of contemporary ceremonial magical sources with kabbalistic works enabled him to create a new system of kabbalah — a practical method to ascend to the upper worlds through, among other instruments, ceremonial magic. In his autograph, he created an encyclopedic work that organizes magical practices incorporated with kabbalistic ideas. All of these practices were popular in fifteenth-century Florence among Jews and Christians who sought ancient wisdom: magic and kabbalah. Alemanno, as I mentioned above, explicitly counts Solomonic practices as part of the ancient wisdom (החכמה הקדמונה). Like Pico, who perceived that magic and kabbalah are both play a theological role (by assuring the divinity of Christ), Alemanno saw them as essential to open the gates of heaven. Besides the fact that kabbalah and Solomonic practices share the same ancient origin, in the eyes of Alemanno, the connection between magic and kabbalah in his and in Pico's thought relies on the connection between the first and the second part of kabbalah — the combination of letters and the divine worlds. There are, of course,

78 It is tempting to see the description of the key to the gates of heaven as a representation of the ten Sephirot — on its top the three upper Sephirot, and on the bottom edge the seven lower Sephirot. This, however, is not explicitly mentioned by Alemanno.

differences between Pico's and Alemanno's approaches to magic, as the former condemned demonic magic, while the latter seems to be a supporter of that kind of practice, or at least perceived it as a legitimate practice. Arguably, social context might have contributed to such a difference — Pico was more subject to criticism than Alemanno and was in fact criticized for his unconventional theses. It is also important to note that these two figures modified their approaches from time to time. Pico, for example, changed his approach towards astrology, and Alemanno changed his towards ceremonial magic.

The world of correspondences and “spiritual links” that Alemanno created was not entirely unique. With the help of a kabbalistic theory — heavily influenced both by the Renaissance Neoplatonic revival and by contemporary magical works — he explained magical operations and popular esoteric knowledge. His autograph in MS Paris 849 is, therefore, highly important for the study of the reception of magic among kabbalists, as well as the reception of kabbalistic ideas in Christian kabbalistic circles.