

‘FIRE BEARING FIRE’: AN UNKNOWN ZOHARIC TEXT AND THE
BEGINNING OF ZOHARIC COMMENTARY IN THE EARLY FOURTEENTH
CENTURY – THE CASE OF R. MENAHEM RECANATI AND R. JOSEPH
ANGILET

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The debate concerning the authorship and compilation of the Zohar remains at the forefront of scholarly discourse and investigation. In this article we suggest that the Italian R. Menahem Recanati and the Aragonese R. Joseph Angilet, two kabbalists who were active in the post-discovery generation of the Zohar, were among the first commentators of this newly revealed literary corpus originating from Castile. Through analysis of a relatively large zoharic fragment not found in any publication or extant manuscript of the Zohar but fortunately quoted in their respective commentaries on the Zohar, we compare their exegetical styles and attitudes towards this body of mystical literature. Since both kabbalists consider the Zohar to be an ancient and authoritative text, its teachings can, as far as they are concerned, override the mystical and exegetical conclusions even of the revered school of Nachmanides.

The appearance of the same otherwise unknown zoharic text in the works of both Recanati and Angilet provides us with an opportunity to study the contents of this unique text – the mystery of sacrifice – as well as to examine the Zohar through the eyes of these two important medieval kabbalists.