**Hebrew Readers' Perception of Olga Tokarczuk's *The Books of Jacob***

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While teaching at the University of Haifa in Israel about Jewish topics in Polish literature I decided one day to discuss with the students the novel in letters by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Lejbe i Siora czyli listy dwóch kochanków* (*Levi and Sara or The Jewish Lovers*) published in Polish 1821 (in English in 1830).

I admit that, under the influence of the Polish generally accepted narrative depicting this work, I told my students about its uniqueness on a global scale: at the first half of the 19th century, a well-known Polish writer wrote a novel in which all the main characters are Jews, not some minor characters, but a whole group of heroes, positive and negative presented in their own Jewish world. This novel was discussed in a similar way by a well-known Polish literary historian, the late prof. Władysław Panas[[1]](#footnote-1). One of the students, however, did not want to accept such a story, insisted that the author's attitude towards his heroes was anti-Semitic to the core, and that in the descriptions of a group of Hasidim, the student could clearly sense pure hatred. After a stormy discussion, attempts to locate contemporary anti-Semitism in time and explain Niemcewicz's characteristic attitude towards his heroes, we went home. But I left puzzled by another question, not if Niemcewicz was or was not an anti-Semite, but why my student’s perception of the novel was so completely different from professor’s Panas. Of course, it happened because "the author died, and the reader was born"[[2]](#footnote-2).

The citation comes from Roland Barthes's theory which has evolved since its inception. Skipping the thorough and detailed analysis of the development of thoughts about the role of the reader in a literary work, I will only mention a derivative of Barthes' thought - Julia Kristeva's *intertextuality*, described by Stanisław Fiszer: “According to Kristeva, each text is a "mosaic" made up of other texts; in other words, its intertextuality lies in the fact that it draws from the texts written before it. Thus, the analysis of a literary text cannot be limited to considering it in isolation from other works."[[3]](#footnote-3). Fiszer further notes in his article that French culture scholars call this phenomenon a "library” but refer it to both the writer and the reader. For each book takes on meaning according to what we have already read; and vice versa: each book read modifies the value/meaning of our "library".[[4]](#footnote-4)

On the other hand, the role of the reader of translated literature is even more complex. Brian James Baer, ​​in his study of this subject, while mentioning Stanley Fish[[5]](#footnote-5), perfectly synthesized basis for the further deliberations:

“…. meaning is constructed within specific communities of readers. And although we commonly associate translated texts with travel across cultural boundaries - the word translate means ‘to carry over’ - they are read within a target culture […] This is a necessary starting point for any study of the reading of translated literature.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

I am going to present a few examples of possible interpretative shifts caused by such a ‘carrying over’ of the meaning of the literary work to the target culture. I will show how the works of selected non-Jewish writers dealing with Jewish topics, and in particular with Jewish mysticism, can be understood differently by a Hebrew-language reader. What do I understand by ‘Hebrew-language reader’? I refer to a recipient representing Jewish culture who knows this culture and who is also familiar with the recent history of Jews, shortly speaking a Hebrew language reader with humanistic education.

I will briefly discuss the works of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz ‘*Levi and Sarah*’ (1821) and of Eliza Orzeszkowa ‘*Meir Ezofowicz*’(1879), then of Stanisław Vincenz ‘*On the High Uplands*’ (1936-1971), Maciej Płaza ‘*Golem*’ (2021) and finally, in this broad context, I will go to Olga Tokarczuk’s ‘*The Books of Jacob*’ (2014), where I will try to show possible problems of perception of works translated into Hebrew.

The novels by Niemcewicz and Orzeszkowa from today's perspective of Polish literature are extremely didactic texts, written in the spirit of their epochs: the Enlightenment and Positivism. Both authors, Niemcewicz and Orzeszkowa, were figures deeply involved in the social and political problems of Poland, which, incidentally, did not exist on the map of Europe at that time. For both authors, the search for means to integrate society and possibly eliminate economic and cultural differences within this society, which, in their opinion, was one of the reasons for the collapse of the state, was an element of their creative mission. These authors in their other works dealt with various groups. In ‘*Levi and Sarah*’, and in ‘*Meir Ezofowicz*’ they took upon themselves to deal with the ‘Jewish topic.’ Although the two works belong to different epochs, they concern the same issue: an uneducated, non-progressive society cannot develop, according to the authors stagnation means going backwards. For Niemcewicz and Orzeszkowa, it is clear that Jewish communities closed in their small towns and villages, often without close contact with the outside environment (in the authors’ perception – Polish environment) inhibit both their own and surrounding communities’ development, lead to poverty and backwardness, and completely prevent any dialogue with the neighboring culture (presumably, of course, Polish).

Both authors, biasedly exaggerated the flaws of the group that had (in their opinion), a negative impact on the development of Polish Jews and the possibility of them joining the mainstream of Polish culture in the 19th century. In order to learn the topic deeper Orzeszkowa studied works on Jewish spirituality, and it was by all means exceptional and admirable. She was brave enough to carry on her work as a writer in a male-dominated world, her dealing with an unpopular topic is even more admirable. Indeed, Orzeszkowa's studies of the subject are clearly noticeable when reading her book ‘*Meir Ezofowicz*’, and although her attempts to understand the basics of Jewish mysticism are quite misguided and harmful, yet her work is still praiseworthy.

Niemcewicz with his naive characters Levi and Sara also deserves similar attention. When reading his novel, the dichotomous division of the Jewish world into definitely evil and utterly positive is too strong. A Polish reader, or a literature historian, may be delighted by the fact that a novel written by a "Polish goy", giving Jewish heroes priority, is unique on a global scale. However, it is difficult to expect a similar reception from a potential Hebrew-language reader. A Hebrew-reader who in his "library"probably has much more than any other reader, books about hostile attitudes towards Jews in European countries over the centuries, about discrimination against Jewish minorities and, finally, about the history of WWII and the Holocaust, will catch immediately in “*Levi and Sarah”* references of what developed in the second half of the 19th century, like widespread openly anti-Jewish, racist narrative.

So is it appropriate to explain to a concerned student that Niemcewicz's times were different and that his novel has nothing to do with twentieth-century anti-Semitism? Assuming the theory that "the author is dead", probably not.

A much later, twentieth-century novel by another “Polish goy” - Stanisław Vincenz, the four-volume work "On the High Uplands" is a story about the non-existent world and culture of the 19th century Eastern Carpathians, where the people lived next to each other: the mountain people - Hutsuls, Jews, Poles, Armenians, where many languages ​​were spoken, people prayed to many gods, professing different religions, while living in peace. This monumental work is full of Jewish mysticism. Apart from Hasidic stories, partly based on original Hasidic texts, the sources of which can be found in Shivchey ha Besht, books by I.L. Peretz and Martin Buber, there are also stories heavily processed by Vincenz. Some of them are his original pieces only stylized as Hasidic, inspired by Jewish mysticism. This author, who knew the secrets of Jewish spirituality, sometimes first-hand - from local rabbis from Carpathian villages, but also from books and studies on the topic, created in his work an unusual mixture of images and quotes. They form a utopian world based on primal, ancient principles, the sources of which should be sought in antiquity, but also in Jewish thought, especially that relating to the place of the little man in the miraculously created world. Contemporary Hebrew-language readers will undoubtedly read elements of their own culture in this work, but they will certainly notice their specific role in the composition of the entire work. They will refer to the work of Vincnez as a whole, the work of art – creation compiled from many elements, from which only one is a Jewish element.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In 2021, Maciej Płaza published the novel ‘Golem’, which was very well received on the Polish market and nominated to the most important annual Polish literature price called Nike. Płaza in his novel used the known story of a golem, originating from Jewish traditions, a creature in the form of a human, but without a soul, which for centuries inspires the imagination. He can be found in Hasidic legends, Yiddish literature and even pop culture. Maciej Płaza recalled his character in order to immerse the reader in the world of the shtetl in Podolia at the beginning of the 20th century. Kabbalistic and messianic themes are balanced with a realistic image of Hasidic culture and customs. All this, including the legendary figure, takes on a new life. In one of the many positive, enthusiastic reviews of the novel, we read:

“*For the Jewish community, he is (the golem) an ideal listener, because local Jews can entrust him with the greatest secrets and complain about their loved ones […] As readers, thanks to these stories, we get a compendium of knowledge about Hasidic norms, customs, duties and prohibitions, and at the same time we learn how they restrict and hurt heroes.”[[8]](#footnote-8)*

When we specify here that the reader participates in the everyday life of the townspeople not only in work and study, but also in prayer in the synagogue, rituals in the mikveh or in the Hasidic Tish, we can easily guess that the book is of special informative value to the Polish reader, who unfortunately knows little about Jewish culture and religion today. However, if this book were to be translated into Hebrew, its Hebrew reader would probably be bored with didactic descriptions of rituals or ordinary activities that are obvious to him. Here is the example:

*Yakov read from the card: the ninth of the year 3830. Tisha B'Av, date of the destruction of the Temple. The feast that commemorates it is the most mournful day of the year. Some have argued that the Messiah was born that day.* [Kindle, loc. 160]

Especially the first part of Płaza's book would be unbearable for a Hebrew- reader, its didactic interruptions would disturb the flow of the story as these interruptions would be evident to him. Would breaking through this instructive part of the novel allow the Hebrew- reader to appreciate many other values ​​of the book, such as the varied language, interesting plot solutions, the interpenetration of the sacrum and profanum, etc.? We have to wait for the translation ...

The translation of "*The Books of Jacob*" by Olga Tokarczuk into Hebrew is already available. It is difficult to talk about a work that is talked and written about in so many languages. In Poland, the mega-novel by Tokarczuk is well known, but after the author was acclaimed a Nobel Prize winner of the year 2018 and was translated into several languages, like Hebrew and English, international literary meetings in reading clubs, universities, and press reviews take place constantly. One of them was an academic-public meeting in zoom organized by Portland State University in May 2022 with the participation of professor Bożena Schallcross and Haim Watzman, at the same time Olga Tokarczuk was in Israel where she was invited to various meetings, gave several talks and received honors.

During these meetings, the most talked about work was ‘*The Books of Jacob’*, as the intriguing novel due to its size and unusual subject. In it, Olga Tokarczuk talks about Jews who are not entirely Jewish, she talks about the history of Poland, which in no way resembles the Poland we know today or which we know from the 19th century literature.

Here I will mention a few possible problems in the context of perception of the book among Hebrew readers. The first and definitely dominant in the reception of this work by a humanistically educated Hebrew-language reader is the genre dilemma, the question of whether it is a history book, or a fiction merely inspired by history. Tokarczuk deliberately wrote the work in a way that generates such a doubt, as already noted by one of the first readers of this work - Przemysław Czapliński:

"*The Books of Jacob" is a fictional and historical novel, kept in a realistic convention and referring to magical realism, a chronicle of the family and a panorama society. It is literature and more than literature.”[[9]](#footnote-9)*

Elsewhere, the same researcher notes that:

*"... everyone talks about Frank except the narrator. Nobody formulates a definitive explanation. Thanks to this, Frank remains a historical and full-fledged figure, and at the same time - completely unclear.*"[[10]](#footnote-10)

This uncertainty as to whether it is a pure history, or a deeply processed history may disturb the Hebrew-reader. The extraordinary hero, who Frank undoubtedly is, is for a non-Hebrew-reader a picturesque character, attractive in every respect. For a belonging to Jewish culture Hebrew reader, Frank represents an unwanted page in the history of Judaism. This reader’s attitude to the movement of Jacob Frank is more critical because, as the already quoted Czapliński noted:

"*Frank co-created the history of the Jewish diaspora, but (in these histories), he is treated like Luther in the Catholic Church - as the creator of the most dangerous split.*"[[11]](#footnote-11)

Frank's mysticism is a peculiar taboo subject, a tainted subject; kind of embarrassing and therefore rather overlooked. This is underlined by scholars who inspired by Tokarczuk’s book wrote its reviews. Rachel Elior points to the fact that the topic of Frank was not well and objectively researched until recently. She says:

“*The known facts related to Frank's character, which were wrapped up in trials under the auspices of the Catholic Church, were discussed in the research literature until recently by decisive judicial positions that were influenced by the rabbinical point of view alone*.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Yonatan Meir, while writing his comments in the afterword to the Hebrew edition of “*The Books of Jacob*” presents sort of history on research on Frank - the list of the academic publications on Frank’s mysticism starting from Gershom Scholem’s through Rachel Elior’s to Paweł Maciejko’s works. Meir also points that the recent research, presenting Frank from more universal and global perspective is known to rather small number of readers, mostly specialists in the field, obviously more popular is the perception of Frank according to the negative, rabbinical point of view.

In Tokarczuk’s book, as in history, the problem is undoubtedly Frank himself, who, despite the controversy, is a character constructed in such a way that he is not easy to judge. And although a non-Hebrew- reader will be rather ambivalent about cited below Czapliński's opinion, a reader coming from Jewish culture will have a stronger, rather negative judgement. Here is what Czapliński said:

*“... he was a religious poacher. He abandoned Judaism in favor of Sabbataism. Then he converted to Islam. He converted from Islam to Catholicism. Perhaps he died Orthodox. He took a part of each faith, trying to make a coherent whole from the fragments.*"[[13]](#footnote-13)

It's just that Judaism cannot be abandoned so easily, after all, according to the beliefs of Jews, a person is born a Jew. Hence, as Paweł Maciejko notes, in the Jewish tradition, any voluntary conversion of Jews to other religions has always been treated as a kind of crime, tragedy and failure, as well as the worst form of persecution when the conversion was forced by gentiles. But in the case of Jacob Frank, the hatred for him was so great that (as we know from history) his greatest adversary, Jacob Emden, considered his conversion a miracle, even wrote a poem expressing his joy at the separation of the Frankists from the native Jews.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Maybe that is why a literary critic Beni Ziffer dedicated a long part of his review of “*The Books of Jacob*” proving that in form it represents “fantastic realism”[[15]](#footnote-15) and pointing that Tokarczuk’s Frank is presented in too positive, far from reality way:

 “*So much for the dry details about the life of Jacob Frank, who in the history of the people of Israel is perhaps no more than a curiosity, although a curiosity that has stimulated the imagination of many Kabbalah scholars and creators, Jews and non-Jews. However, Tokarczuk turned the familiar story on its head: she expropriated Jacob Frank from the Jewish story and turned him in her novel into a figure of a revolutionary, a man of the Enlightenment, whose luck ran afoul, and he was not born in France or England but in the most remote region of Europe, mentally and culturally much closer to the Ottoman East than to Europe of the Age of Enlightenment”.[[16]](#footnote-16)*

Having said that Ziffer imagines potential reader of Tokarczuk’s book:

“*To this end, let us picture a reader somewhere in the world, who browses the book without having a clue about the history of Christianity, and the histories of Jacob Frank and Shabtai Zvi before him and the trail of influences they left behind. Is it possible to succeed in the novel even without knowing all of these? The answer is definitely yes. […] What will keep him* [the reader – DBF] *in constant tension here will be the compressed energy of the many happenings and turns, and the entry of more and more new and strange characters into the circle of his friends on Jacob Frank's journey. From the point of view of that reader, Jacob Frank will be seen as a complete and convincing fictional character even without the crutches of historical truth.*”[[17]](#footnote-17)

However despite what Ziffer noted above it has to be said that the attitude of the Hebrew-reader to the descriptions of Frank’s baptizing, converting from Judaism to Christianity, would probably be interpreted in a specific way, adopting Jewish perspective representing negative attitude towards the conversion from Judaism to other religion.[[18]](#footnote-18) ….

Paradoxically, having instilled this rather negative attitude towards the character of Frank, the Hebrew-language reader is best-prepared to read “*The Books of Jacob*”. Supposedly he is one of the few who does not meet Jacob Frank for the first time. In addition, elements of Jewish mysticism, terms such as tzimtzum, tikun, sources cited in the novel, such as Mishna, Gemara, or mentioned characters such as Baal Shem Tov, are clear to him and do not require translation. To the extent that the problem of over didacticism may arise when the author, perhaps not as insistently as Maciej Płaza in Golem, but still instructs her public:

*“Such a rectification, or tikkun, consisted in the holy man joining with the sinner’s soul, step by step, passing through all three of the soul’s different forms. First the nefesh of the holy one- his animal spirit – connected with the sinner’s nefesh, and then, when it become possible, ruach – the feelings and will of the holy one – joined with the sinner’s ruach, so that in the end, the holy one’s neshama – that divine aspect we all carry within ourselves – could join with the sinner’s neshama*.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

In the above fragment, text in Polish, English and in any other language apart form Hebrew, carries, due to the original Hebrew words like “nefesh”, “ruach” and “neshama”, an exotic and esoteric value. In Hebrew this fragment does not stand out in any particular way. The above Hebrew words are used frequently in both everyday and religious language.

Moreover, Tokarczuk’s attempts to touch upon Jewish mysticism may cause a different kind of problem for a Hebrew reader, the conflict between the literary fiction and historical sources/facts may lead to certain confusion, which was experienced by the Jewish mysticism consultants of the book’s Hebrew edition. Jonatan Meir, while praising author’s attempt to write a novel educating Polish readers by showing them multicultural, multireligious community, presenting Jewish culture from a close distance, found the following problem: confusion

*“Hebrew sources are not reflected here, but indirectly, in a translation from a translation. Therefore, copying the book and translating it into Hebrew was not a simple task at all, and required careful editing, a return to the Hebrew sources, and their integration into the text, without damaging the author's fluid language and the unique point of view she presents. In this context, a number of extraneous matters that arose from that linguistic and textual night were also corrected - until it can be said that in some ways the translation surpasses the original.”[[20]](#footnote-20)*

This fact regarding the special quality of the Hebrew translation was confirmed by the author of the book herself during her meeting with the Israeli readers at The Open University of Israel in Ra’anana on 19th of May 2022. Tokarczuk admitted that the Hebrew translator of the novel Miriam Borenstein became sort of expert and adviser to the translators to other languages, who often consult Borenstein since she has finished her work. It has to be stressed that Hebrew addition of the book involved a bigger group, what underlines Elior:

*“The author's critical feminist insights, and historical knowledge of Polish literature, add a new and enriching dimension to the discussion. The author and translator, the scientific editors, the proofreaders, and all the partners in the work on the book published by Carmel in Jerusalem, deserve all the praise for the great effort they invested in bringing this challenging work, which opens a new discourse on old pressing problems, and adds unexpected angles of view, to the knowledge of Hebrew readers interested in history and literature and in the complex interrelationships between them.”[[21]](#footnote-21)*

Summing up those thoughts on the perception of Tolarczuk’s book in Israel it has to be said that undoubtedly the Hebrew reader of ‘*The Books of Jacob’* is an exceptional reader and perhaps much more critical than any other. His ears and eyesight are much more sensitive. A great example of this is the online meeting, which I mentioned earlier. The invited speakers symbolically represented the following readers: non-Hebrew (Polish English speaker - prof. Bożena Shellcross) and Hebrew (writer and translator - Haim Watzman). The first one interpreted the novel in the context of Polish history and literature, and her review was extremely positive. The second one - Watzman representing the Jewish culture pointed out Tokarczuk's inaccuracies, even mentioned that Tokarczuk presented a "very shallow version of Kabbalah".

Nevertheless, both in the reviews in Israeli press and during the meetings with the writer in Israel, one can detect this sense of surprise and then gratitude and appreciation for a Polish writer dealing with such a deeply Jewish subject. The surprise resulting from the complicated Polish-Jewish relations.

1. Stanisław Panas, *Pismo i rana. Szkice o problematyce żydowskiej w literaturze polskiej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo DABAR 1996), pp. 9 – 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Roland Barthes, ‘The death of the author’, trans. by S. Heath, in *Image – Music - Text* (London: Fontana 1977), pp. 142-148. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Stanislaw Fiszer, ‘Recepcja powieści oczyma francuskiego kulturoznawstwa’, *Powiesc dziś,* *Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika*, 2019, hal-02520207, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. S. Fiszer, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Fish, Stanley, ‘Interpreting the Variorum’, in *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 147–174. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Brian James Baer, ‘Translated Literature and the Role of the Reader’, in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. by Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014), p. 336. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The translation of excerpts from this extraordinary piece will be published in 2023 in Carmel Publishing House, in the translation to Hebrew language by Marta Stankiewicz. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Sylwia Góra, ‘Wędrowny święty? O książce „Golem” Macieja Płazy’ (*Wandering Saint? About the book "Golem" by Maciej Płaza)*, *Kultura Liberalna* 16 (2021), https://kulturaliberalna.pl/2021/04/20/wedrowny-swiety-o-ksiazce-golem-macieja-plazy/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Przemysław Czapliński, ‘"Księgi Jakubowe", czyli dwieście lat samotności. Recenzja nowej książki Olgi Tokarczuk’ (‘The Books of Jacob, or two hundred years of solitude. Review of the new book by Olga Tokarczuk’), *Gazeta Wyborcza,* 21 October 2014, https://wyborcza.pl/7,75410,16835955,ksiegi-jakubowe-czyli-dwiescie-lat-samotnosci-recenzja-nowej.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. P. Czapliński, [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. P. Czapliński, [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Rachel Elior, המסע הגדול דרך שבעה גבולות חמש שפות ושלוש דתות (ועוד אחת) אל אמונה חדשה – לאחר מאתיים שנה: סקירה על ספרי יעקב מאת אולגה טוקרצ’וק

יקום תרבות הזירה המקוונת לתרבות עיברית,26 במאי 2022. [https://www.yekum.org/2021/05/%d7%94%d7%9e%d7%a1%d7%a2-%d7%94%d7%92%d7%93%d7%95%d7%9c-%d7%93%d7%a8%d7%9a-%d7%a9%d7%91%d7%a2%d7%94-%d7%92%d7%91%d7%95%d7%9c%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%97%d7%9e%d7%a9-%d7%a9%d7%a4%d7%95%d7%aa-%d7%95%d7%a9%d7%9c/](https://www.yekum.org/2021/05/%D7%94%D7%9E%D7%A1%D7%A2-%D7%94%D7%92%D7%93%D7%95%D7%9C-%D7%93%D7%A8%D7%9A-%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%A2%D7%94-%D7%92%D7%91%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%A9-%D7%A9%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%9C/)

 “*Frank saw himself as a "third" antinomian Messiah, and said that he came to abolish all books, all customs, and all laws, and promised his believers that he would free them from death, and bring them to eternal life. Two antinomian messiahs were known before him who influenced him: Shabti Zvi (1626-1676), who said in the 17th century that he came to abolish the "Torah of the Tree of Good and Evil" and replace it with the "Torah of the Tree of Life", and his successor, Bruchia Rousseau of Thessaloniki (1720-1677?) , the leader of the "Dunma", who announced the cancellation of all laws at the time of redemption.* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. P. Czaplinski, [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Paweł Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement, 1755-1816* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2011), p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Beni Ziffer, משיח שקר, סופרת אמת |

"ספרי יעקב": יצירת מופת מופלאה שלא נופלת מ"מאה שנים של בדידות"

הארץ, 4 ביוני 2020.

*That's why I don't believe Tokarczuk when she vehemently denied in various interviews any connection to the style of fantastic realism. After all, it is impossible not to notice easily that she devotes herself to the style of phantasmagoric and surreal invention in the style of Marx. However, it must be admitted that she manages to stay true to the historical facts and be careful not to overplay them. This is immediately evident at the beginning of the book and the choice of Podolia as the starting point of the plot*. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. B. Ziffer, [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. B. Ziffer, [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. B. Ziffer, „*That's when "The Book of the Way" begins, the third and central division of the novel, which covers the period when Jacob Frank returned from the Ottoman East to Poland at the head of a large congregation of believers. Here the idea of combining the three religions - Jewish, Christian and Muslim - matures in him. "The first, Shabti, is the one who opened the way through Islam, and in his brotherhood (the Thessalonian successor, B.C.) he turned to Christianity... One must pass through Christianity as one passes a river." The path to the redemption of the Jewish people, he claims, must pass through Christianity: One should turn to Christianity, make peace with Esau. We have to go into the darkness... because only in the darkness is redemption waiting for us." To this is added a practical aspect: a Jew who is baptized into Christianity will be able to live as a human being, that is, as a free person.”* [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Olga Tokarczuk, *The Books of Jacob,* trans. by Jennifer Croft (……..), p. 792. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jonatan Meir, המאמר שלפניכם, של חוקר השבתאות והפרנקיזם פרופסור יונתן מאיר, העורך המדעי של המהדורה העברית של “ספרי יעקב”,שימש כאחרית דבר לספר. פרופסור מאיר נותן סקירה קצרה על הדרך שבה הוצג יעקב פרנק, הן במחקר המדעי, והן בספרות היפה, לאורך הדורות [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. R. Elior, [↑](#footnote-ref-21)