

But Where is the Zohar!?

Why is the text of the Zohar not in the CAL, and why are the unique vocabulary items of the texts of the Zohar not in the CAL?

The Zohar, it is now admitted by almost all respected scholars, was written in Spain in the 13th century C.E. Its lexicon, like its grammar, is a mix of forms from all the periods of canonical Jewish Aramaic literature, along with a large number of innovated vocabulary items of various kinds. For reasons too numerous to list here, we do not consider it to have been composed within the “Late Jewish Literary Aramaic” tradition like the texts we have included even though it obviously was intended to be taken as such.¹

Since the vocabulary of the Zohar is derivative, it may be assumed that all (or surely 99% or more) of the real Aramaic vocabulary found therein is already attested in earlier Jewish Aramaic texts and is already included in the CAL database. To be sure, there are more than a few examples of legitimate words that have been given a new (or rather, misunderstood) meaning in the Zohar. But given that the authorship of the Zohar clearly did not speak a consistent Aramaic dialect of some kind, such vocabulary, as well as the many innovative terms--many of which that were probably intended to be totally mysterious--must not be included in a lexicon of the two millennia of legitimate classical Aramaic.

HOWEVER, we remain open to the possibility that here and there the Zohar does have a legitimate Aramaic usage not found in any other Jewish Aramaic text. Readers are urged to share such discoveries with us.

For those interested in the “Aramaic” text of the Zohar, the complete critical text as prepared by Prof. Daniel Matt for his multi-volume Pritzker edition in English, is available at Stanford University:

[https://www.sup.org/zohar/?d=Aramaic%20Texts%20\(PDFs\)&f=index](https://www.sup.org/zohar/?d=Aramaic%20Texts%20(PDFs)&f=index)

Many lists of the vocabulary have also been prepared over the centuries. In particular we recommend Boaz Huss, “A Dictionary of Foreign Words in the Zohar - A Critical Edition”, *Kabbalah* 1 (1996), pp. 167-204 [In Hebrew] and Daniel Matt's : <https://aramaiczohar.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/danielmattglossary.pdf>

¹ We provided a more detailed argument of this position in a paper we delivered at University College London in 2009, still awaiting publication by that department, as part of a series of international conferences devoted precisely to this question. Regrettably, not all of our colleagues have been convinced.