

In Search of the *Editio Princeps* of the First Hasidic Book

Yosef Fagin

Toledot Ya'akov Yosef, printed in 1780, was the first Hasidic book to impart the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov (BeShT). It was penned by R. Jacob Joseph ben Zevi ha-Kohen Katz of Polonnoye,¹ a disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov. More than any other publication, *Toledot* preserves the traditions of the BeShT as they were transmitted to his disciples. R. Jacob Joseph introduces teachings with the phrase “In the name of my master” or “I heard from my teacher” some 250 times, and the printers’ introduction to *Toledot* makes note of the special relationship between the Ba'al Shem Tov and R. Jacob Joseph in very flowery terms.² For this reason, *Toledot* has been called “the single most important work in Hasidic literature.”³

There are conflicting opinions as to whether the *editio princeps* was printed in Medziborz or Korez. In this article, we augment and update the historical evidence on this debate, particularly the work of J. Bloch,⁴ the last major treatment of the issue, which was published in 1941.



Three Hasidic tales linked to the publication of *Toledot* lie at the heart of the debate regarding whether a Medziborz edition of the book was printed in 1780.

The first tale relates that R. Jacob Joseph went from door to door selling copies of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*. He charged one ducat⁵ per copy but, although he did not sell a single one, under no circumstances would he reduce his price. He despaired, but his friend Rav Yeb”i⁶ encouraged him by saying, “It is enough for the servant that he is like his master’: the Master of the Universe also offered his Torah to all the nations, and they refused to accept it, because they did not appreciate its value.”⁷

¹ R. Jacob Joseph was born in 1705 (R. Eliyahu H. Carlebach, ed., *Shivhe ha-BeShT* [Jerusalem: Makhon Zekher Naphtali 1990], #28) (= Shivhe ha-BeShT). His year of death is alternatively given as 1782 (T. M. Rabinowicz, “Jacob Joseph ha-Kohen of Polonnoye,” in *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*, ed. T. M. Rabinowicz [Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996], 239 [= EH]); “shortly after” 1782 (Gedalyah Nigal, *Tsofnat Pa'aneah: Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes* [Jerusalem: Institute for the Study of Hasidic Literature, 1989], 10 [= Nigal]) or 1784 (Shivhe ha-BeShT #28 and Yizhak Raphael, *Sefer ha-Hasidut* [Tel Aviv: A. Zioni Publishing House, 1961] [= Raphael]).

² For example, *ve-Yisrael ohav es Yosef* (a Biblical reference to the patriarch Jacob loving his son Joseph, but in this case referring to the love of the Ba'al Shem Tov for R. Jacob Joseph) *ve-natan me-hodo 'alav, terumato terumah la-Kohen* (and the Ba'al Shem Tov gave of his glory to R. Jacob Joseph, symbolic of a gift given to the Kohen).

³ Samuel H. Dresner, *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik According to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1960), p. 63 (= Dresner).

⁴ Joshua Bloch, “A Legendary Edition of the ‘Toledot Yaakov Yosef’ by Jacob Joseph ha-Kohen of Polonnoye,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, NS, v. 31, n. 3 (Jan. 1941): 245-257 (= Bloch).

⁵ Also referred to as the “red florin,” equivalent to 18 regular florins. To put the relative cost in perspective, Gershon David Hundert relates that at a printing press operating at about that time, the highest-paid skilled workers were apparently paid one ducat per week, an “extraordinarily high rate.” One may assume that less skilled workers and/or those whose skills were less in demand earned even less on a weekly basis. See G. D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 56.

⁶ R. Jacob Joseph of Ostrog, 1738-1798.

⁷ There is certainly an important subtext in this story that goes beyond the scope of our current analysis, namely, the struggle of the early Hasidim to gain credibility and acceptance. The high cost of the first edition of *Toledot* is corroborated in other Hasidic tales as well. For example, in one story, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730-1788) exclaims, “Why did the author of *Toledot* print 1,000 copies of his book and set the high price of one ducat for each copy? He should have printed just one book and I would have paid 1,000 ducats for it!” In another, R. Ze'ev of Zhitomir justifies the high price of the book, claiming

However, one purchaser of the book was found: the sage R. Yehezkel Landau (1713-1793), author of *Noda' bi-Yehudah* and an opponent of early Hasidism, who bought the entire first edition of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, printed in Medziborz in 1780, and had it burned in the Judengasse of Prague. It therefore became necessary to issue a new edition of the book, and it was reprinted in Korez that same year.⁸

Many scholars of Hasidism concur with the theory of a Medziborz edition that grew from this tale. A. Tauber did not dismiss the notion of a 1780 Medziborz edition, offering the above story as rationale for a lack of physical evidence.⁹ Samuel Dresner¹⁰ and Simon Dubnow¹¹ similarly did not discount the possibility of a Medziborz 1780 edition, and T. M. Rabinowicz cites a Medziborz 1780 edition in *The Encyclopedia of Hasidism*.¹² Moreover, several prominent bibliographers give credence to the existence

that each word of the BeShT captured by R. Jacob Joseph is surely worth more than one ducat. See S. H. Porush, *Sefer 'or yekarot* (Jerusalem, 1998), vol. 1, 111 (= Porush).

⁸ A. Tauber, "Defusei Korez," *Kiryat Sefer* I (1924-25): 304-305 (= Tauber); Bloch, 247-248. At least one aspect of this story – that *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* was burned by opponents of Hasidism – appears to be true. By many accounts the *Toledot* was burned in several cities, including Brody, Prague, Vilna, and Cracow. For Brody, see Dresner, 68, citing Joseph Perl's satire, *Migaleh tamirin* (Lemberg: M.F. Poremba, 1864), p. 3; Y. Alfasi, "Rabbi Yaakov Yosef ha-Kohen mi-Polonnoye" in *Encyclopedia le-Hasidut* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 2000), p. 277 (= Alfasi); T. M. Rabinowicz, "Jacob Joseph ha-Kohen of Polonnoye," in EH, 239; Bloch, 251 and 255; Moshe Hallamish, "Jacob Joseph Ben Zevi Ha-Kohen Of Polonnoye," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, XI: 41 (= Hallamish); and Mordecai Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1970), p. 135 (= Wilensky). A story in *Da'at Moshe (Vayigash)* relates that in the city of Brody, by order of the *beit din*, copies of *Toledot* were set ablaze in front of the house of the Maggid, R. Mihel of Zloczow. The son of the Maggid of Kozniz wrote, "My own eyes saw that when my father and teacher, my master, the holy Maggid of Kozniz was visiting Brody, he passed down a certain street and stopped suddenly before a particular house. He was asked by his companions why this particular house was so different from the others that the Maggid of Kozniz had stopped to stare at it. The Maggid answered that he was unable to bear the impurity of the house. Upon inquiry it was learned that it was in that very place that copies of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* were burned, and it was this impurity that was felt by the Maggid." See Dresner, 68-69 and Abraham Kahane, *Sefer ha-Hasidut* (Warsaw: L. Levin-Epstein, 1922), p. 113 (= Kahane). Regarding the burning of *Toledot* in Prague, see Bloch, 251 and Wilensky, 135. Regarding Vilna see T. M. Rabinowicz, "Jacob Joseph ha-Kohen of Polonnoye," in EH, 239; Kahane, 113; Bloch, 251 and 255 (citing in part S. J. Fuenn's *Kiriah Ne'emanah*, Warsaw, 1860, pp. 138-139); Dresner, 68, citing M. Teitlebaum's *ha-Rav mi-Liadi* (Warsaw, 1910), 36, and Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden* (1900), vol. XI, p. 560. Friedberg also writes that "according to the tradition of the Hasidim, many of the first edition copies of *Toledot* were burned by order of R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna;" see H. D. Friedberg, *Bet 'eked sefarim* (Antwerp, 1928-1931), 645. For Cracow see Jacob Bernard Agus, "Burning of Books," in EH, 61-62 and T. M. Rabinowicz, "Jacob Joseph ha-Kohen of Polonnoye," in EH, 239; Wilensky, 135; and both Dresner, 68, and Bloch, 255, citing Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden* (1900), vol. XI, pp. 114 and 559.

In a tale related in *Shivhe ha-BeShT*, R. Yehiel Mihel of Zloczow traveled (although his son was gravely ill) to try and prevent a burning of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* in 1781 (also see Kahane, 113-114). Another tale holds that R. Jacob Joseph himself reportedly argued before the Heavenly Tribunal in protest of the burning of the book (*Shivhe ha-BeShT* #210; see Bloch, 252, Dresner, 70, and Wilensky, 42). According to another version, the author of *Toledot* entered the chamber of the Heavenly Court, crying out in anger against those who were burning his book, and against the Polish government, which had issued a decree allowing the book to be burned. R. Jacob Joseph demanded of the Heavenly Court that it examine the book page by page to see if it contained anything improper. The Court searched thoroughly but could not find anything objectionable. R. Jacob Joseph demanded that it be examined a second time. Again, the Court found nothing. R. Jacob Joseph asked that the dots placed above certain words (to indicate emphasis) be examined lest one of the dots was written out of hubris rather than for the sake of Heaven. Again, the Heavenly Court found no wrongdoing, and decreed that whoever incites others to destroy copies of *Toledot* will eventually become an apostate, and that the government that allowed copies of the book to be burned will be abolished (see Kahane, 115, and Dresner, 71). An unsigned and undated polemic issued around 1781, known as the "*Shever posh'im*" manuscript, also clearly suggests that *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* be burned. See Mordechai Wilensky, "*Bikoret 'al sefer Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*," in *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume: Studies in History and Philology* (New York: Conference on Jewish Relations, 1953), pp. 183-189.

⁹ Tauber, 304.

¹⁰ Dresner, 247.

¹¹ S. Dubnow, *Toledot ha-hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Dvir Co Ltd., 1930), p. 138 (= Dubnow).

¹² T. M. Rabinowicz, "Jacob Joseph ha-Kohen of Polonnoye," in EH 239.

of a 1780 Medziborz edition of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*. These include Yizhak Ben-Yaakov,¹³ H. D. Friedberg,¹⁴ and I. Zinberg.¹⁵ As recently as 1993, bibliographer Yeshayahu Vinograd did not reject the possibility that copies of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* had been printed in Medziborz in 1780.¹⁶

Another version of the tale also relates to the difficulty R. Jacob Joseph had in selling the book, but arrives at a different conclusion. In this version R. Landau does not buy a single copy of the first edition. It goes as follows:

When R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye printed his holy work *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, 1,000 copies were published. R. Jacob Joseph took them to Berdichev, intending to sell them at the fair at one ducat per copy. Although he remained at the fair all day, no one bought a book since they were all occupied with other matters. R. Jacob Joseph despaired, and [because of his great stature] his demeanor plunged the world into grave danger. Sensing this danger, R. Ze'ev of Zhitomir,¹⁷ author of *'Or ha-Me'ir*, immediately traveled [by way of *kefitsat ha-derekh*, or a “contraction of the way”] to Berdichev. R. Jacob Joseph exclaimed to him that the Torah is waiting in the corner (“*munahat be-keren zavit*”), ready to be taken, yet no one wants it. [And in some versions of the story, the Berdichever¹⁸ and R. Ze'ev of Zhitomir both sensed that Berdichev was in grave danger. The Berdichever asked R. Jacob Joseph why he was so upset, given that people are so distracted on the day of the fair and could not possibly have time to focus on the book.] R. Ze'ev of Zhitomir asked R. Jacob Joseph: Are you any different than G-d, Blessed is He, who asked all the nations if they wanted to accept the Torah? The nations refused, until finally the Jews accepted it. R. Jacob Joseph replied, “You have consoled me, and had you not succeeded in doing so, all of Berdichev might have been destroyed, G-d forbid.” R. Ze'ev of Zhitomir bought 100 copies of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, for which he paid 100 ducats. To make doubly certain, he later returned and bought another 150 copies. The Berdichever also bought 150 copies to resell. The rest were put up for sale in the city, and hearing what had transpired, the townsfolk bought up the remainder.¹⁹

Yet another version relates that when *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* came into the hands of R. Landau, he condemned the book to be burned. R. Landau threw the book on the ground and stamped on it. This act came to the attention of R. Jacob Joseph, who had since died.²⁰ R. Jacob Joseph appeared in a dream to his student, R. Jacob Samson of Shepetovka,²¹ and instructed him to travel to Prague to challenge R. Landau to a disputation. R. Jacob Samson set out for Prague and, upon his arrival, disguised himself as a beggar. He then proceeded to the home of R. Landau and engaged him in a lengthy discussion (debate?) on certain Biblical passages. R. Landau was astonished by his guest's wisdom and acuity. R. Jacob Samson then informed R. Landau that he was a Hasid, among “the lowest” of R. Jacob Joseph's disciples. He also revealed that he had come to warn R. Landau against burning copies of *Toledot* since “there is no punishment without warning.” Thereupon R. Landau removed the book from beneath his feet, kissed it,

¹³ Yizhak Issac Ben-Yaakov, *'Otsar ha-sefarim* (Vilna: Romm, 1880), p. 619.

¹⁴ H. D. Friedberg, *Bet 'eked sefarim* (Antwerp: s.n., 1928-1931), p. 645.

¹⁵ Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1976), v. 9, *Hasidism and Enlightenment (1780-1820)*, p.85 (“published simultaneously in two neighboring cities, Korets and Mezhirech”), citing Dubnow's *Geshikhte Fun Khasidism*, v. I, p. 226.

¹⁶ Yeshayahu Vinograd, *'Otsar ha-sefer ha-'Ivri* (Jerusalem: ha-Makhon le-Bibliographia, 1993), p. 455 (= Vinograd).

¹⁷ Died 1798.

¹⁸ R. Levi Yizhak of Berdichev, 1740-1810, author of *Kedushat Levi*.

¹⁹ R. Yaakov Shelomo Topolinsky, *'Imrei sefer* (Jerusalem: s.n., 2003), p. 487; see also Raphael, 15; Dresner, 66; Kahane, 113.

²⁰ Thus presumably dating the events of the story between 1782 (the death of R. Jacob Joseph) and 1793 (the death of R. Landau).

²¹ Died 1801.

and assured R. Jacob Samson that he would not burn it as he had originally intended.²² This final tale seems to establish that R. Landau did not buy the full print run of the supposed Medziborz 1780 first edition and burn it in Prague.²³



Though he lived to see its printing, R. Jacob Joseph was either unwilling or unable to supervise the publication of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*,²⁴ or perhaps he was uninterested in doing so, and therefore he did not edit *Toledot* before its publication.²⁵ The Korez 1780 edition includes an apology by the typesetter, Alexander Ziskind b. Mordecai of Zhitomir, who was then living in Korez²⁶: “Since this holy book was printed from several writings copied from the manuscripts of the author, may he live, and would require one search after another in the body of the books from the hand of the author in several places, do not blame us [if the text contains a departure from the original intent].” In other words, the work was not produced with the benefit of a master autograph copy, which led to a number of apparent inconsistencies in the text (for example, the same statement is quoted in the name of one teacher on one occasion but in the name of another on another occasion). It is clear from the text that the book is a collection of teachings and thoughts compiled over many years. For example, in one passage R. Jacob Joseph wrote that “many holy ones were killed for our sins this year 1752 in the land of the Ukraine,” and several times he wrote “I heard from my teacher [the BeShT], may he live forever...,” indicating that the selection was written before 1760, when the Ba'al Shem Tov died.²⁷

Bibliographic data indicate that R. Solomon b. Abraham of Lutsk entered into a partnership with Simon b. Judah Loeb Ashkenazi to finance the publication of a number of kabbalistic and Hasidic books, including the publication of *Toledot*, at the printing press of Zevi Hirsch b. Aryeh Leib Margolis in Korez.²⁸ R. Solomon was an editor of scholarly texts, a close disciple of the Maggid of Mezhirech,²⁹ and the author of *Dibrat Shelomoh*, published posthumously in Zolkiew (Zholkva) in 1848.³⁰ R. Solomon also worked in partnership as a printer in Poritsk.³¹

The owner of the printing-press, Zevi Hirsch Margolis, started his career in Novy Oleksiniec (near Brody), where he worked from 1766 to 1776,³² and produced the first known anthology of anti-Hasidic proclamations, *Zemir 'aritsim ve-haverot tsurim*.³³ In 1776, Margolis moved to Korez³⁴ and remained in

²² *Divrei no'am* (Warsaw: M.V. Halter, 1892). Also see Kahane, 117-125; Louis Jacobs, “Landau, Ezekiel of Prague,” in EH 275; Alfasi, 277; Dresner, 71-73; Dubnow, 166; Wilensky, 42.

²³ Dubnow is convinced that the tale of R. Jacob Samson's defense of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* is simply an allegory in the form of the classic “*vikhuah*” (religious disputation). See Dubnow, 166.

²⁴ Zeev Gries, “The Hasidic Managing Editor,” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert (Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), p. 149 (= Gries, Managing Editor).

²⁵ M. Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 100 (= Rosman); Z. Gries, *Sefer, sofer ve-sipur be-reshit ha-hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1992), 54-56 (= Gries, Sefer).

²⁶ Gries, Sefer, 54.

²⁷ Dresner, 245; Nigal, 9-10; Kahane, 116.

²⁸ Gries, Managing Editor, 148; Tauber, 304.

²⁹ Gries, Managing Editor, 147.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Gries, Managing Editor 147; H. D. Friedberg, *Toledot ha-defus ha-'Ivri be-Polonia* (Tel Aviv, 1950), 93 (=Friedberg, Toledot).

³² M. Vander, “ha-Defus ha-'Ivri be-Polonnoye,” *'AleI sefer* 5 (1978): 121 (= Vander).

³³ Oleksiniec, 1772. See Gries, Managing Editor 148 and Vander 121. One wonders if the publication of *Zemir 'aritsim ve-haverot tsurim* lent a sense of urgency to the printing of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*. Possibly the early Hasidim needed a published work to serve as an ideological response to *Zemir 'aritsim*. This could explain why it took twenty years for the teachings of the

the printing business, together with his son-in-law, Samuel b. Issachar Ber ha-Levi Segal.³⁵ These two men are credited with establishing what A. Tauber refers to as the “first wave” of publishing in Korez, which lasted from about 1777 until about 1781-1782.³⁶

At the invitation of R. Jacob Joseph’s son (R. Avraham Shimshon Katz, who served as the head of the *Beit Din* in Rashkow before emigrating to Israel) and son-in-law (R. Avraham Dov-Ber, head of the *Beit Din* in Khmelnik),³⁷ R. Solomon and his partner, Simon Ashkenazi, financed (but did not edit) the publication of *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef*.³⁸ The title page of the 1780 Korez edition credits the press of Zevi Hirsch b. Aryeh Leib Margolis and his son-in-law, Samuel b. Issachar Ber ha-Levi Segal. Given that R. Avraham Shimshon Katz and R. Avraham Dov-Ber controlled the publication of *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef*, it seems highly unlikely that an extra edition was printed in Medziborz.

A side-by-side chronology³⁹ of the first Hebrew books printed in Korez and Medziborz is also instructive.

Korez	Year Printed	Medziborz	Year Printed
‘Ein ha-Hashmal ★	1777	Or Penei Mosheh	1810
Derekh ’Emunah	1778	’Arba‘ Turim	1811
Sefer ha-Shem ⊗/⊕	1778	Sefer ha-Zekhirot	1812
Sefer ha-Zohar ★	1778	’Arba‘ Turim	1816
Sefer Yetsirah ★	1779	B’er Mayim	1817
Hen Tov ★	1780	Hanhagot Yesharot	1817
Pardes Rimonim ★	1780	Sefer ha-Hayim	1817
Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef ★	1780	Sefer ha-Hayim	1817
Tikunei ha-Zohar ★	1780	Selihot	1817
Ben Porat Yosef ★	1781	Raziel ha-Mal’akh	1817
Hok le-Yisrael ⊕	1781	Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef	1817
Magid Devarav le-Ya‘akov ★★/⊕	1781		
Minhagim ★★	1781		
R’eshit Hokhmah ★/⊕	1781		

★ = Printed by Zevi Hirsch b. Aryeh Leib Margolis and his son-in-law, Samuel b. Issachar Ber ha-Levi Segal.

★★ = Printed by Zevi Hirsch b. Aryeh Leib Margolis & Partners.

⊗ = Not in Vinograd. ⊕ = Not in Tauber.

Ba‘al Shem Tov to be committed to print. If this is the case, one could argue that the content of *Toledot* must be viewed, at least partially, through the lens of polemic and that its teachings are colored by the friction between the early Hasidim and their opponents. In this regard see Kahane 117.

³⁴ Vander, 121.

³⁵ Gries, Managing Editor, 148. Samuel b. Issachar Ber simultaneously operated presses in Korez and Polonnoye from 1789 to 1792; Polonnoye imprints from that time note that he was a printer “here and in Korez.” He was born around 1755, making him about 25 years old when *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef* was first printed. Samuel b. Issachar Ber’s father (Menahem b. Issachar Ber ha-Levi Segal) and brother (Isaac b. Issachar Ber) were employed as proofreaders at the press in Korez, and his brother-in-law, Hayim, worked as a typesetter. See Vander 118 and 121.

³⁶ Tauber, 302.

³⁷ See title page of Medziborz 1817 edition, figure 2 below. See also Porush, 106 and Bloch, 246.

³⁸ Gries, Managing Editor, 149.

³⁹ All bibliographic data with the exception of *Toledot Ya‘akov Yosef* is according to Friedberg, *Toledot*, 93, Tauber, 302-304, and Vinograd, 455 and 599-600.

This comparison shows that printing was well-established in Korez when *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* was published in 1780. No printing facilities existed in Medziborz at that time; it was nearly 30 years after the printing of *Toledot* in Korez that Hebrew printing became available in Medziborz.

One must also question the logic of the first tale that describes the sale of all Medziborz first editions to R. Landau. The sale of even one copy of this book to an opponent of Hasidism seems unlikely, let alone the entire print-run. Moreover, as Bloch noted, the Jewish community records of Prague make no mention of a mass burning of *Toledot* in 1780 that would have required a second printing in Korez that same year.⁴⁰

Shimon Dubnow contends that some copies of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* printed in Korez in 1780 were printed with a title page that read “Medziborz,” either to increase their value (since Medziborz was the town where the BeShT was buried), to avoid censorship by the authorities in Korez, or because the Korez press may temporarily have been moved from Korez to Medziborz in 1780 expressly in order to print *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* (presses were sometimes transferred from town to town at that time).⁴¹ These theories are unfounded. Firstly, no physical evidence exists for a 1780 Medziborz edition – even one bearing a Medziborz title page that was actually printed in Korez – whereas physical evidence does exist for a Korez 1780 edition. Secondly, the contention that the Korez press was moved 135 kilometers to Medziborz is logistically and technically unrealistic. It would require an entire printing-press to be dismantled and reassembled in another city, all in the space of one year.⁴² Furthermore, R. Jacob Joseph's other books were printed in Korez, beginning only one year later with *Ben Porat Yosef*, which suggests that there was no need for a Medziborz edition, at least for reasons of enhancing their value or avoiding censorship.

Alfasi speculates⁴³ that the source of the confusion surrounding the date of the Medziborz publication stems from the fact that the same biblical verse is used as a chronogram in both the Korez 1780 edition and the Medziborz 1817 edition (“יקמת ועליית אל המקום”). In the Korez edition, the letters ק, מ, and נ are in larger typeface, denoting the year 1780. In the Medziborz edition, the letters ק, ת, ע, א, and ו are in larger typeface, denoting the year 1817. Although it is an acute observation, the assumption that the verse used to date the work is the source of the error would also assume that readers overlooked the fact that the title page of the Medziborz 1817 edition clearly notes that this is the “second edition” (Figure 2, below). Perhaps the fact that the introduction to the Medziborz 1817 edition was essentially reprinted from the Korez 1780 edition – including the prayer “may G-d lengthen his (R. Jacob Joseph's) days and years and may he merit to bring his other thoughts to fruition, all that which he can recall” (see Figure 3, below) – led to confusion regarding the publication date of the Medziborz edition. Yet the approbation of R. Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Opt that appears in the Medziborz 1817 edition, immediately following this introduction, states clearly that “it was seen fit to publish *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* a second time (emphasis mine) in Medziborz.”

⁴⁰ Bloch, 254. Another of Bloch's reasons for dismissing a Medziborz 1780 edition seems less viable. Bloch notes that the *editio princeps* of *Toledot* is referred to as “*Toledot* with dots” since, as indicated earlier (see note 8), dots were placed on those words in the text requiring additional emphasis. Bloch claims that, according to Hasidic lore, these dots are imbued with spiritual and mysterious meaning, and while they appear in the Korez 1780 edition of the book, they are lacking in other editions. See Bloch, 254-255 (also Kahane, 112). Clearly, proponents of a Medziborz 1780 edition could counter that a Medziborz printing may have also featured these dots, but copies of this edition are simply not available because they were burned.

⁴¹ Dubnow, 138-139.

⁴² See Vander regarding the printing process at that time in Poland.

⁴³ Y. Alfasi, *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* (Tel Aviv: Makhon Talpiot, 1997), p. 67 (= Alfasi, *Toledot*).

Shivhei ha-BeShT notes Korez 1780 as the first edition of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*.⁴⁴ The Chabad Library cites Korez 1780 as the first edition; JTS and JNUL have Korez 1780 as the earliest available edition and do not have a Medziborz 1780 edition listed in their substantial collections.⁴⁵ Menahem Mendel Slatkine's emendations to Ben-Yaakov's bibliography *Otsar ha-sefarim*⁴⁶ cite Bloch's conclusion that the Medziborz 1780 edition never existed⁴⁷ and Yoav Elstein's bibliography of Hasidic literature notes a Korez – but not Medziborz – 1780 edition.⁴⁸ A variety of observers including Moshe Hallamish,⁴⁹ Gedalyah Nigal⁵⁰ and Yizhak Alfasi⁵¹ note Korez 1780 as the first edition. S. H. Porush similarly claims that while there have been theories of a Medziborz edition of the *Toledot*, there is no proof of its existence.⁵² The preponderance of evidence seems to suggest that the Korez 1780 edition is the *editio princeps* of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*.

⁴⁴ *Shivhei ha-BeShT* #28.

⁴⁵ Alfasi relates that upon his arrival in Israel, R. Jacob Joseph's son (R. Avraham Shimshon) distributed copies of the first edition of *Toledot*, since he had no children to whom to bequeath them. One copy was donated to a *kolel* in Jerusalem and ultimately made its way into the Jewish National University Library's collection. See Alfasi, *Toledot*, 68; cf. Hallamish, 41.

⁴⁶ Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, Ltd., 1965, p. 313.

⁴⁷ Slatkine also seems to indicate that the Medziborz 1780 edition is not cited by Friedberg in *Bet 'eked sefarim*. This is only partially correct. The Antwerp 1928-1931 edition of *Bet 'eked sefarim* (645 #199) lists both a Korez 1780 edition and a Medziborz 1780 edition of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* and notes that "according to the tradition of the Hasidim, the first printing of the book was burned immediately after it was printed." The Tel Aviv 1956 edition of *Bet 'eked sefarim* (p. 1061, #322) makes no mention of the Medziborz 1780 edition of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, noting that "according to the tradition of the Hasidim, by edict of R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna, many copies of the first edition were burned immediately after they were printed."

⁴⁸ Y. Elstein, *A Bibliography of Hasidic Literature* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1996), 497 (= Elstein).

⁴⁹ Hallamish, 41.

⁵⁰ Nigal, 10. Earlier, however, Nigal seemed to agree with the notion that both Medziborz and Korez editions were printed in 1780. See Gedalyah Nigal, *Manhig ve-'edah* (Jerusalem: Yehuda Printing, Ltd., 1962), p. 35.

⁵¹ Alfasi, *Toledot*, 65.

⁵² Porush, 106.

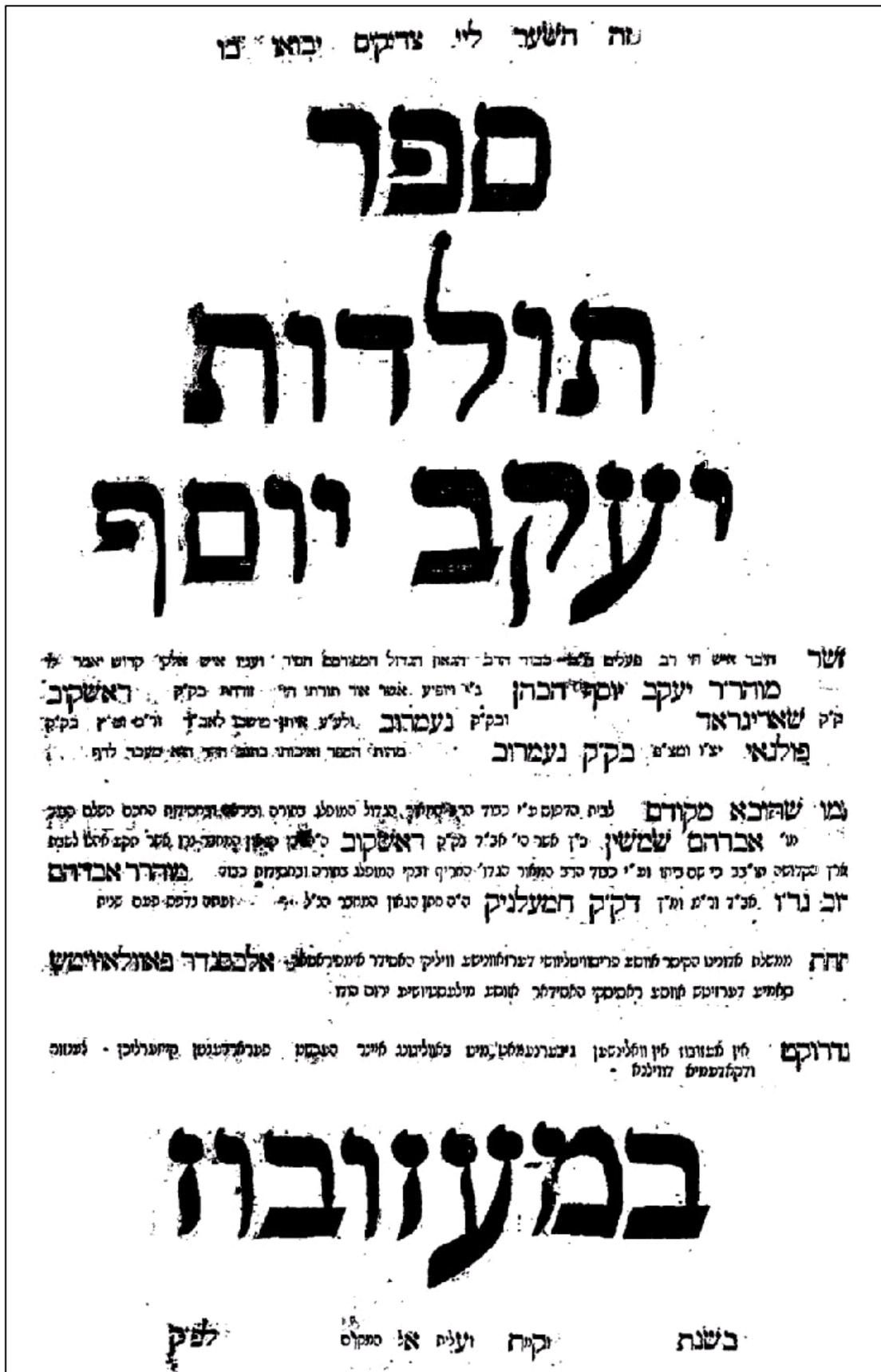


Fig. 2. Title page of the Medziborz, 1817 edition of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*.

זה ספר

תולדות

אלהם אגודל צענקים לצרחתיו שפתי כן יתמו לנת ומיניה יבקשו תורה תולדותיהן של נדיקים מצ"ט תולדות
 במקום אב מלאכה מלאכה מלאכה שבתורה אך דכתיב במשכן דלוקרי מקדש משם ינאה אורה
 בצבודה שבטנים הכוזב מדבר מקום כניסת הכהן הגדול אשר יקח ולמד בבית מדרשו של שם משמן עוב בישבת
 זקן זה שקיה חכמה לא מש מתוך חבלו מימים ימימה חדודו קדם ללבוט נאלכה
 ומלל את החכמה ואת החכמה ואת העתה העלומה חכמה נעלמה מצין כל חי ומצוף השמים נסמרה סלכה
 לא היטוק מכלל קבלה חלו ואלו דברי חלקים חיים יחדיו יאיו חמים על ראשו נור ועטרה פורתו אימנתו אמונה אומן שבועים יום יום
 חסן יסופת חכמה ודעת טטה ודעת תורה ירלח ה"י סוף שוננו מבית גנוי המלך אונג"ל של ירלח שמים וירלח ויאמר מה
 נורח כל לו לקרן מורחיה האיר פני המורה עד שבחברון מחברות הקד"ש חיטר לטורה ויוסף דעת ידיעת
 בית רב מוכק הפידול ופרישא עמוד עולם טנינא דנארע איש חלקים קדוש ישראל טנינא קדישא אשר פני חבל
 מחכמתו האירה כסוד שם תפלתו מואר"ר צעש"ט זכרנו לברכה בנור החיים נפשו עורה אשר
 העמיד תלמידים רבכה מגדולי ישראל יאיתו לחוה לנרד על הכר אל מול פני המורה רבים וכן שלמים החלצק
 צעטר רגלו לשוח בנמו דבריו והיו הדברים שמתחן כתיבתו מסיני מפי הגבורה והשואה מים לנמו אחר שכל נה"י
 בדברו בטעם יסוק סלג כל דבר מתחלק לכל אדם לפי שיפול ואין לעמוד על סוף דעהו בתורתו של ר' מאיר כחנות שור
 באלף צינה מודע לבינה הקרת וישראל אהב את יוסף ונתן מאוזו עליו תרומתו
 תרומה-לכךן ביתר שאת ורם יתירל

הדור

אחס ראו לס ונלכה בלור ה"י חידוש הוא שחידשה תור' קאו מוארי כי נהמד הוא להשכיל כל שהא תפאר'
 לעושהו יטאר גבר לעמד' הטורח כל שלא ראה מואור' מימו והחמר ה"י לו לחמר שרש פורה יביע
 לראו חכמת אדם מלאש' שלנורה צוקנתו מה הוא אומר אמיר' נעימה כחיבה יבינא ערוכה בכל ושטורה ועוד ירו נטו'
 פשות ספרים רבכה אשר צכתובים על סגיות כו"ה וש"ה אכע"ט גמרת ואכצ"ה סברא ודין קמנא קמן הכהן אפס קנאו להבצעים
 מיטרת כדכס לזונה רבים בירלח ה"י טורה השם יאריך ימיו ושנתיו ויזכה להניח מחשבתו לפועל כל שיטתו בזיכרה שורך
 ימים ושנת חיים ושלום יוסיפו לו תוספת מרוב על עיקר וברית גופ' ונארל
 בימיו ובימיו טאשע יאדה וירושלים במהרה אמי"ר

Fig. 3. Second page (top half) of the Medziborz, 1817 edition of *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*.