

Acknowledgements

The research and writing of this book took place over a long, frequently interrupted, period. My original idea was to write about King Solomon as a timeless legend and myth in various cultures. Yet the more headway I made in the vast amount of source materials, the less I could avoid acknowledging that this was a Sisyphean task. The abundance of sources and the extensive research literature that has emerged over the last century or so regarding diverse aspects of the figure of Solomon led me to relinquish my original plan and to limit its scope. This book, then, is not intended to retell even a small portion of the legendary traditions about Solomon.¹ Instead, it focuses on those places and instances where his (imaginary) legendary biography intersects with those of Jesus Christ and of Aristotle, the Greek philosopher. Solomon is the axis around which this trio revolves and is the thread that binds it together. The book is based on the premise that there exists a correspondence, both overt and implied, between these three biographies—a correspondence that has taken shape within a vast, multifaceted field of texts for more than two thousand years.

First and foremost my thanks goes to Chaya Naor for her endeavor in translating the first version of the book. Throughout my years of research and writing, particularly in the final stages, I have been fortunate to receive assistance, insights, and input—both gentle and stern—from colleagues and friends. I am very grateful to all of the following: Professor Sara Klein-Braslavy, Professor Yuval Rotman, Dr. Yuval Haruvi, Dr. Maya Shabat (Pinhas), Dr. Yuval Rubovitch, Itamar Levin, Dr. Maoz Cahana, Professor David Katz, Razia Geselson and Jean-Luc Allouche (to whom I am grateful for his generous and indispensable help), and to Michal Engel and Carl Yonker for improving the final version.

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¹ See Faerber (1902); George Salzberger (1907, 1912); Seymour (1924); *Legends of the Jews*, by Ginzberg (1909), which as of 2003 has come out in six editions; and Bialik and Ravnitzky (1931-1934), which since its second edition has been the most popular and influential collection of Talmudic legends (taken largely from the Babylonian Talmud) in modern Hebrew culture. I should also mention here the most bizarre book on this subject, by the radical American author Moncure D. Conway (1832–1907): *Solomon and Solomonic Literature*, 1899; see review by Tyler (1990).

and Jesus at the Strasbourg Cathedral. My gratitude is also due—not for the first time—to Professor Günter Stemberger:

טוב פֿרײַ מִחֶרֶץ וּמִפֶּז וְתִבְוֹאתַי מִכֶּסֶף נִבְחָר

(“My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold. And my yield than choice silver”, Proverbs 8:19)

Finally, but in truth first and foremost, this book could not have been written without Zohar, who once again has accompanied me along the entire journey, every up and down. Of such a partner Solomon must have thought when he wrote:

וְרוּחַ מַפְּנִינִים מִכֶּרֶה

(“she is more precious than jewels”, Proverbs 31:10).

Early versions of several chapters of this book have appeared in the *Culture and Literature* supplement of the newspaper *Ha'aretz*; in the book *Books and Libraries* published by the Zalman Shazar publishing house, Jerusalem; and in the *Festschrift* in honor of Professor Peter Schäfer (thanks to Dr. Reimund Leicht, one of its editors, for his important comments). Those chapters appear here in expanded and supplemented form.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Tamar Dror.



Fig. 1 South portal of Notre-Dame de Strasbourg, Christ and King Solomon by Jean Vallastre, photo by Jean-Marc Pascolo, © Wikimedia Commons.

