

LINKS IN A CHAIN

**EARLY MODERN YIDDISH HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE NORTHERN
NETHERLANDS (1743-1812)**

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1. Introduction

1.1 *Between Gans and Zunz: defining the eighteenth century*

In April 1980 Yosef Haim Yerushalmi delivered the annual Stroum Lectures at the University of Washington. The four lectures were devoted to the intriguing relation between what Yerushalmi labeled 'Jewish history and Jewish memory'. Drawing upon the work of Maurice Halbwachs, Yerushalmi differentiated between ritual, a-temporal collective memory and the critical, historicized historiography of modern times. The lectures were published, in 1982, as a small volume, entitled *Zakhor*, and immediately sparked fierce debate about the nature and origins of Jewish historiography.¹ Central issues in this debate included the definition and internal relationship of memory and history, the nature of Jewish historical writing in the sixteenth century and the emergence of modern historical consciousness among Western European Jewry.² Despite the criticisms that *Zakhor* received upon publication, it remains the only comprehensive introduction to the history of Jewish historiography.

Yerushalmi devoted his first lecture to 'Biblical and rabbinic foundations'; the second addressed 'The Middle Ages'; the third examined the period 'In the wake of the Spanish expulsion'. In these three lectures Yerushalmi offered his interpretation of Jewish collective memory for each period. He noted ten history books which had been written in the sixteenth century, mainly by Sephardim connected to the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and argued that these works marked a 'sudden flowering' of Jewish historiography. This

¹ Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor. Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle/London 2002; 1st edition 1982).

² The most important contributions to this discussion were: Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley etc. 1993); Reuven Bonfil, 'How Golden was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?' *History and Theory* 27 (1988) 78-102; idem, 'Jewish Attitudes toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times' *Jewish History* 11 (1997) 7-50; David N. Myers, 'Selbstreflexion im modernen Erinnerungsdiskurs' in: Michael Brenner and David N. Myers eds., *Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung heute. Themen, Positionen, Kontroversen* (München 2002) 55-74; response of Yerushalmi to Myers: Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, 'Jüdische Historiographie und Postmodernismus: Eine abweichende Meinung' in: Brenner and Myers, *Geschichtsschreibung* 75-94. Some notions of this debate are discussed in: David N. Myers, 'Remembering *Zakhor*: A Super-Commentary' *History and Memory* 4 (1992) 129-146; in 2007 the *Jewish Quarterly Review* devoted a few thorough articles to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the book, which were introduced by: David N. Myers, 'Recalling *Zakhor*: a quarter-century's perspective', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 4, 487-490; Yerushalmi's stark distinction between pre-modern and modern Jewish dealings with history was nuanced by: Moshe Idel, 'Yosef H. Yerushalmi's *Zakhor*: some observations', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 4, 491-501; a criticism from the perspective of the function of memory in contemporary Jewish discourses: Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, 'A flawed prophecy? *Zakhor*, the memory boom, and the Holocaust', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 4, 508-520; Yerushalmi's use of literature as the domain of memory was questioned: Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi, 'Fiction and memory: *Zakhor* revisited', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 4, 521-529; finally, the concept of exile as the core of Jewish historical consciousness, rather than memory or providence, was stressed by: Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, 'Jewish memory between exile and history', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 4, 530-543.

historiography, however, underwent ‘an equally abrupt withering away.’³ According to Yerushalmi, it was only in the nineteenth century that a new interest in history arose, thereby leading to modern, critical historiography. This was the central theme of the lecture ‘Modern dilemmas’, the fourth and final in the series.

The first three chapters of *Zakhor* are chronological and present a continuous narrative. However, between the final two chapters there is a gap of at least a century, as Yerushalmi jumps from David Gans, of the late sixteenth century, to Leopold Zunz and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the early nineteenth century. The Haskalah movement – the Jewish variant of eighteenth-century Enlightenment movements – is only mentioned briefly, and Yerushalmi concludes that it ‘did not attain a conception of history fundamentally different from those that prevailed earlier.’⁴ Passing mention is made of the French Huguenot minister Jacques Basnage and his universal Jewish world history (a work dating from the beginning of the eighteenth century) and of the Dutch Jew Menahem Man Amelander and his *Sheyris Yisrael*, dating from 1743. Neither book figures prominently in Yerushalmi’s account, serving at best as small intermezzos in the larger narrative. In the endnotes one learns why Yerushalmi omitted the historiography of the period between Gans and Zunz:

‘The various chronicles produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries no longer represent an innovative, dynamic phenomenon. At best, they never transcend the bounds of sixteenth-century Jewish historiography, and some are even regressive in outlook or in quality. Whatever the informative value or intrinsic interest of any single work, the approach to Jewish history is thoroughly conservative, moving in well-worn grooves even when updating the chronological record.’⁵

Yerushalmi is not alone in the judgment that no significant Jewish history writing existed between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Michael A. Meyer, in his anthology of Jewish historiography, decreases the gap slightly by including the seventeenth-century Nathan Hannover and his account of the Chmielnicki pogroms of 1648.⁶ Nevertheless, Meyer still deemed the eighteenth century to have been devoid of significant historiography: ‘Even increasing exposure to the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century could not

³ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* 73.

⁴ *Ibidem* 83.

⁵ *Ibidem* 139.

⁶ Michael A. Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History. Edited, with introductions and notes* (New York 1974).

awaken serious interest among Jews either in their own history or in that of their host countries'.⁷ Meyer has reiterated this opinion in a recent entry for an encyclopedia of Jewish culture: 'Following a dearth of Jewish historical writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jewish historiography blossomed in the nineteenth.'⁸

In stressing the gap between the sixteenth-century history books and the emergence of *Wissenschaft* historiography, both Yerushalmi and Meyer followed the leading authority of American Jewish historiography, Salo Wittmayer Baron. The latter had argued that sixteenth-century Jewish historians like Azariah de' Rossi had 'found no successors' and that their works soon 'went into almost total oblivion among Jews'. It was only with nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft* that this 'constructive quest' resumed.⁹

The argument developed by Baron, Meyer and Yerushalmi has been criticized from various angles. Amos Funkenstein has argued, from the perspective of intellectual history, that 'between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, a revolution occurred that was no less radical than the concurrent scientific revolution.' In Funkenstein's opinion, a new sense of context had been introduced into the historical thinking of the period, such that historical facts only became meaningful as part of the larger context in which they were embedded.¹⁰

David N. Myers, in his discussion of Funkenstein's approach, has qualified 'revolution' as being too dramatic a term, but has admitted that Funkenstein pointed 'to a richer canvas of historical thought than that painted by Baron.'¹¹ Funkenstein assigns a key role to the Amsterdam Sephardi philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), who introduced source criticism as a method in studying the Bible, thereby historicizing the very foundations of Jewish history and thought. Likewise, the central figure of the Berlin Haskalah, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), is for Funkenstein someone who, though less radical than Spinoza had been, had already, before the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, developed a new type of historical thinking. Mendelssohn was not particularly impressed by historical narratives, but he

⁷ Ibidem 21-22.

⁸ Michael A. Meyer, 'Historiography, Jewish' in: Glenda Abramson ed., *Encyclopaedia of Modern Jewish Culture* I (London/New York 2005) 387-388.

⁹ Salo Wittmayer Baron, 'Azariah de Rossi's Historical Method' in: idem, *History and Jewish Historians. Essays and Addresses, Compiled with a Foreword by Arthur Hertzberg and Leon A. Feldman* (Philadelphia 1964) 205-239, there 239. It should be noted that Yerushalmi's appreciation of medieval Jewish historiography corresponds in considerable degree with his mentor Baron's thesis that its works 'cannot by any stretch of imagination be considered historiographic works.' (205) Both Baron and Yerushalmi single out sixteenth-century historiography as 'one of the high points in Jewish historiography' (205). Baron's other prominent student, Ismar Schorsch, argued as well that after De' Rossi and until the start of *Wissenschaft* scholarship no real Jewish historiography was written; Ismar Schorsch, *From text to context. The turn to history in modern Judaism* (Hanover/London 1994) 177-204.

¹⁰ Amos Funkenstein, 'Introduction' in: idem, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley etc. 1993) 1-21, there 14.

¹¹ David N. Myers, *Resisting History. Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton/Oxford 2003) 16.

considered history to be important insofar as it was an ontological category and could become an independent source of authority.¹² In short, Funkenstein claims that even before the nineteenth century European Jewry evidenced traces of a new historical consciousness.

Shmuel Feiner argues this point as well, but through a reassertion of modern historical consciousness within the Haskalah. Whereas Funkenstein focuses on the famous philosophers, Feiner draws attention to several lesser-known *maskilim*. After acknowledging that the eighteenth-century Haskalah had not produced proper historiography, he shows - at length - that modern conceptions of history developed within *maskilic* writing. Although these were neither scientific nor academic and did not question the religious foundations of history, the new, maskilic perception of the past opened a window for secularization, in that '[h]istory was increasingly conceived as an arena of human actions'.¹³ The maskilim questioned the traditional perception of the past and remodeled the past into a new narrative that was more compatible with the project of the Haskalah. The awareness of living in a new period led to a progressive view of history and to the development of a new schema of periodization. Rationality and morality were considered to be of enormous importance in interpreting history and in using historical examples for the new project of Jewish Enlightenment. According to Feiner, this maskilic approach to history differed from the later *Wissenschaft* conception of history, as the latter was more academic and part of the rise of science in Europe. The maskilim were on a different, and even separate, track. Whereas the Haskalah conception of history was directed inwards and aimed at the largely traditional Jewish communities, *Wissenschaft* was developed by Jewish scholars who lived outside traditional society and sought to attract the attention of the general, non-Jewish public. The maskilic historical output was in Hebrew, but the *Wissenschaft* scholars used German, so as to reach their Christian colleagues.¹⁴

Louise Hecht complemented Feiner's project by studying several eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Prague Jewish historians: Peter Beer (1758-1838), Salomo Löwisohn (1789-1821) and Marcus Fischer (1788-1858). These maskilim, writing before the rise of *Wissenschaft*, wrote in Hebrew as well as in German. Moreover, they were involved in writing proper historiography and sought to integrate the new maskilic conceptions of history into history writing. What differentiates the Prague maskilim from the later *Wissenschaft* scholars is

¹² Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 96-98; 220-229; Myers, *Resisting history*, 17.

¹³ Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History. The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (Oxford/Portland, Or. 2002) 342. The importance of the separate maskilic type of historiography alongside *Wissenschaft* scholarship is also stressed in: idem, 'Nineteenth-Century Jewish Historiography: The Second Track' in: Jonathan Frankel ed., *Reshaping the Past. Jewish History and Historians* [Studies in Contemporary Jewry X] (New York 1994) 17-44.

¹⁴ Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, passim.

that the former were not familiar with German historicism and idealism, and thus wrote in a less methodologically rigid but more creative style. The oeuvre of the Prague historians lacks any conceptualization and philosophy of history, yet their work was significant: they collected a large amount of historical sources and presented these in historical narratives.¹⁵

Whereas Funkenstein proposed to bridge the gap by suggesting a new appreciation of history among Jewish intellectuals, Feiner stressed the historical mindset of the *maskilim*. Funkenstein elaborated a continuous development of historical thinking from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. In this elaboration, *Wissenschaft* historiography held a less exclusive position. Feiner, in his depiction, underscored and advanced the emergence of a new historical consciousness from early *Wissenschaft* to eighteenth-century Haskalah. In this study I will add a third perspective, by studying a corpus of historical texts which range from the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. The texts were written in Yiddish, in Amsterdam, and include a history book – Menahem Amelander's *Sheyris Yisroel* (1743), presented as a continuation of the medieval *Sefer Yosippov* – and several chronicles: Abraham Braatbard's *A Naye Kornayk fun 1740-1752*, Zalman ben Moshe Prinz's *Kronik min shas takmad ad shnas tamah* (1788), Kosman's continuation of *Sheyris Yisroel* (1771), several anonymous chronicle fragments, and finally Bendit ben Ayzek Wing's *Lezikorn* (1795-1812).

This historical output, in Yiddish, of Ashkenazi Amsterdam, in all its variety and diversity will be presented as yet another and supplementary track to bridge the gap between sixteenth-century Hebrew and nineteenth-century German historiography. Not only in intellectual reflection on Jewish history, of Jewish philosophers and *maskilim*, as Funkenstein and Feiner had demonstrated, also in history writing proper the eighteenth century testified to a continuing interest of Jews in the past. Amsterdam Yiddish historiography were links in the chain of Jewish historiography, on the one hand continuing existing historiographical traditions and models, while on the other hand as well innovative features can be detected.

1.2 State of research

Given the scarcity of available Jewish historiography from the early modern period, it may seem surprising that hardly any research has been conducted into Amsterdam Yiddish

¹⁵ Louise Hecht, 'The beginning of modern Jewish historiography: Prague – A center on the periphery' *Jewish History* 19 (2005) 347-373; idem, *An Intellectual Biography of the Maskil Peter Beer (1758-1838): His Role in the Formation of Modern Jewish Historiography and Education in Bohemia* [Ph.D. thesis: Hebrew University 2002] (German with Hebrew summary).

historiography. This could be explained partly by the fact that such historiography was written in Yiddish, which, in *Wissenschaft* ‘psychology’, had until the twentieth century not been considered a proper language, or at best a language for women and non-educated people.¹⁶ Historiography written in Yiddish may therefore have been easily overlooked. Another explanation is that much of the corpus – with the notable exception of the frequently republished *Sheyris Yisroel* – is unpublished and only kept in manuscript, and is thus unavailable to much of the scholarly community. Furthermore, these historical texts were not written in one of the centres that had been thus far home to Jewish historians, like the cities around the Mediterranean and Prague, but in a rather new centre, Amsterdam, home to an Ashkenazi community since the 1630s. Not only in spatial, also in temporal and linguistic terms there is no direct continuation. As this thesis will show, Amsterdam Yiddish historiography was a ‘school’ on its own, yet connected to earlier Jewish historiography. The ‘isolated’ position of this corpus could also have resulted in neglect thus far.

The only book occasionally discussed in scholarly literature is the already mentioned universal Jewish history book *Sheyris Yisroel* (Amsterdam 1743), by Menahem Man Amelander. Yerushalmi, in *Zakhor*, notes Amelander’s history book in passing; he also comments, in the footnotes, that ‘the only really important parts are those parts concerning Dutch Jewry itself. For the rest, the author repeats the information he found in *Shebet Yebudah* and other sixteenth-century works, and relies heavily on Basnage.’¹⁷

That *Sheyris Yisroel* is significant only for its chapters on Dutch Jewish history has been, since Steinschneider’s *Die Geschichtsliteratur der Juden*, a routine qualification whenever the book is mentioned.¹⁸ Israel Zinberg, who authored the first comprehensive history of Yiddish-language Jewish literature, regarded *Sheyris Yisroel* as ‘the most important work of all of old-Yiddish historiographical literature’, yet also maintained that Amelander

‘was not in a position critically to distinguish common legends from reliable historical facts. Nevertheless, his work contains much valuable information regarding the history of the Jews in Germany and Poland. Unusually rich material is presented by *Sheyris Yisroel* about the Jewish community in Holland, especially Amsterdam.’¹⁹

¹⁶ Cf. Jerold C. Frakes, *The politics of interpretation. Alterity and ideology in Old Yiddish studies* (New York 1989) esp. 9-20.

¹⁷ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* 140.

¹⁸ Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Geschichtsliteratur der Juden* (Frankfurt am Main 1905) 147.

¹⁹ Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature, Translated and Edited by Bernard Martin. Volume VII: Old Yiddish Literature from Its Origins to the Haskalah Period* (2nd Yiddish edition: Vilna 1933; translation: Cincinatti/New York 1975) 233-234.

For an entry on Amelander in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* the Dutch rabbi J. Vredenburg used nearly identical wording to describe the merits of *Sheyris Yisroel*.²⁰ The first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* mentioned only that ‘though his [Amelander’s] approach is not scientific, the work contains valuable information on the history of the Jews of Holland and the settlement of German and Polish Jews in Amsterdam.’²¹ Yiddish scholars, like Max Weinreich and Chone Smeruk, acknowledged the significance of *Sheyris Yisroel* as the ‘first original historical work in Yiddish’, but furthermore barely paid attention to the book.²² Jaap Meijer, in turn, presented *Sheyris Yisroel* in a volume on Dutch Jewish historiography as a specimen of traditional Jewish historical writing, a typical popular book primarily aimed at women, with an apologetic, moral agenda. Meijer contrasted Amelander ‘pure Jewish feeling’ with Basnage’s humanistic, scholarly approach.²³ Recently, Anna Rutkowski has in a short article proposed to consider the inclusion of legendary material as a narrative strategy – while at the same time arguing that Amelander developed ‘a scientific method for the study of history’.²⁴ Finally, some preliminary linguistic remarks on the Yiddish used by Amelander were offered by the nineteenth-century Munich-based independent scholar Max Grünbaum. He concluded that *Sheyris Yisroel*, as regards its contents, ‘ist insofern eine sehr traurige Lektüre’.²⁵

Whereas Amelander and his work tended to receive at least some attention, the other Yiddish chronicles written in Amsterdam were all but overlooked by historians and literary scholars. International Jewish scholarship and general Dutch historical research have devoted virtually no attention to any of these other chronicles. While for Jewish historians the manuscript form most likely prevented them from studying the chronicles, general Dutch historians lacked the necessary knowledge of Yiddish to read these historical texts. This makes

²⁰ J. Vredenburg, ‘Amelander (Amlander), Menahem Mann ben Solomon ha-Levi’ *Jewish Encyclopedia* I (New York 1901) 490. The same opinion is voiced by: Zalman Rayzen, *Leksikon fun der Yidisber literature un presse* (Warschau 1914) 58-59; Max Erik, *Di gesbikhte fun der yidisber literatur* (Warsaw 1929) 377-378.

²¹ Ignac Schipper/Ed., ‘Amelander, Menahem Mann ben Solomon ha-Levi’ *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem 1971) Vol. 2, 802.

²² Quotation is from: Chone Shmeruk, *Praqim fun der Yisber literature-geshikhte* (Tel Aviv 1988) 133; cf. idem, *Yiddish literature: aspects of its history* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv 1978) 85; Max Weinreich depicted the eighteenth century of an era of decline for Ashkenazi Jewry, which also caused a setback for Yiddish literature, with *Sheyris Yisroel* being one of few original works, ‘a considerable achievement’, yet no literature in the strict sense; Max Weinreich, *Bilder fun der Yidisber literaturgeshikhte, fun di onhaybn biz Mendele Moykeber-Sforim* (Vilne 1928) 273. Shmeruk analysed one part of *Sheyris Yisroel* in his study: *The Esterke story in Yiddish and Polish literature: a case study in the mutual relations of two cultural traditions* (Jerusalem 1985) 38-39.

²³ Jaap Meijer, *Tussen verstrooing en verlichting. De historiografie der joden in Nederland. Eerste fase* [Balans der ballingschap 1] (Heemstede 1981); quotation on 43.

²⁴ Anna Rutkowski, ‘Between history and legend. Menachem Man Amelander as the guard of Jewish memory’, *Pardes* 16 (2010) 50-56.

²⁵ Max Grünbaum, *Jüdischdeutsche Chrestomathie. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Kunde der Hebräischen Literatur* (Leipzig 1882) 361-379, there 379.

the pioneering roles of Leib Fuks and Rena Fuks-Mansfeld all the more significant. They were the first to write a short survey of Yiddish historiography in the Netherlands, mentioning all the chronicles that were known thus far. In an article for *Studia Rosenthaliana* and later published in a revised version in the *Festschrift* for Salo Baron, they introduced the Yiddish historical works written in the Dutch Republic.²⁶ This selection meant that the Wing chronicle – covering the years 1796-1812 - was not included, since it had been written during the Batavian-French period. For Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, the significance of Yiddish history writing in the Dutch Republic lies in its innovative character. In an article devoted to Amelander, Fuks argued that *Sheyris Yisrael* was in fact the first work of the Jewish Enlightenment. According to Fuks, Amelander's decision to write the work in Yiddish, the people's language, and the work's presentation of a great deal of material that stemmed from Christian sources, established the chronicle as an innovative and early work of the Haskalah movement.²⁷

The prevailing opinion about Amelander's history book is, in short, that besides being a specimen of traditional Jewish historiography it is non-innovative and mixes legends with facts, thus being reliable only in its chapters on Dutch Jewry. So far, only Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld have disagreed sharply with such assessments, and they qualified Amelander's book as having been an early enlightened work. Apart from this dissent, it should be noted that there is as yet no scholarly, properly edited and annotated edition of *Sheyris Yisrael*. The most recent edition - a Hebrew translation, published in 1988 in Jerusalem by Haim Hominer for an Orthodox audience - was not critically edited and even included textual additions taken from other works.²⁸

Fuks not only advocated the significance of Amelander's history book; he also published a Dutch translation of parts of Abraham Haim Braatbard's *Naye Kornayk*. He

²⁶ Leo Fuks and Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Joodse geschiedschrijving in de Republiek in de 17e en 18e eeuw' *Studia Rosenthaliana* 6 (1972) 137-165; idem, 'Jewish Historiography in the Netherlands in the 17th and 18th Centuries' in: Saul Lieberman and Arthur Hyman eds., *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume I* (New York etc. 1974) 433 – 466; Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish Historiography in the Time of the Dutch Republic' *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981) 9-19.

²⁷ Leo Fuks, 'Menahem Man ben Salomo Halevi und sein Jiddisches Geschichtswerk "Sche'erit Jisrael"' *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 100 (1981) 170-186; likewise: Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography', 14.

²⁸ The edition from 1988 is a reprint from the first Hominer edition (1964). Sources added by Hominer are a letter by Avraham Farizol on the ten lost tribes, the *Shir Hapesichah* from Rav Chisdai, Glikl Hamel on Shabtai Zvi, excerpts from R. Shmuel ben David Halevi's responsa *Nachalath Shivah*, material from the *Mishnah Lemelech*, excerpts from a letter by R. Ovadiah Mi-Bartinura, passages from Reb Yosef Hen Norlingons *Yosef Ometz*, the Shach's Selichoth and lamentations, excerpts from Javetz and Reb Sheftel Hurvitz on the Chmielnicki pogroms and finally Javetz on Sephardim and Ashkenazim in Amsterdam; Hayim Hominer, *Shearith Yisrael complete. The second volume of Josphon (...) a new translation into Hebrew, with added supplementary portions which were deleted in previous editions, with added notes and preface* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1964) esp. 28-30. A new, critical Hebrew edition is in preparation by Yosef Kaplan and Chava Tumiansky of the Hebrew University.

collected passages from the chronicle which addressed political changes in the Dutch Republic from 1740 till 1752; such changes included the 1747 war with France, the inauguration of William IV as stadtholder, local unrest in Amsterdam and the tense relationship between the guilds and the Jews. Paragraphs in Braatbard's chronicle dealing with other subjects were not included in this edition. In his introduction Fuks presented the chronicle as having been the view of ordinary Jewish people, as opposed to elitist perceptions, and as having been consciously Jewish in its presentation of the facts. Braatbard – thus Fuks - strongly identified with the Dutch Republic and presented the relations between Jews and non-Jews as having been quite friendly.²⁹

No historical research has been conducted into the respective chronicles of Prinz and Wing, covering respectively the years 1784-1788 and 1795-1812. In 1875, Meijer Roest published, in his journal *De Israëlitische Letterbode*, Prinz's chronicle, in Yiddish and in a Dutch translation, and consequently also parts of Wing's account, only in a Dutch translation.³⁰ It is mainly these parts of the latter chronicle that were later used for research into the conditions of Dutch Jewry in the Batavian-French period.³¹ No significant research has yet addressed these chronicles themselves.

Ariane D. Zwiers, in her published dissertation, used parts of the chronicles by Braatbard, Prinz and Wing – some eighty pages - as a corpus for linguistic research into Dutch Yiddish of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For this work Zwiers published and translated (into Dutch) the sections that functioned as her samples, and developed a linguistic analysis which highlights specific features of Dutch Yiddish within the whole of Western

²⁹ L. Fuks, *De zeven provinciën in beroering. Hoofdstukken uit een Jiddische kroniek over de jaren 1740-1752 van Abraham Chaim Braatbard, vertaald, ingeleid en toegelicht door L. Fuks.* (Amsterdam 1960); a short qualification of the chronicle is given in the introduction: 7-14. Earlier he published part of this selection in: L. Fuks, 'Ajn naje kronajk foen 1740-1752. Uit de kroniek van Abraham Chajim, zoon van Tsewi Hirsch Braatbard, van den huize Couveren' *Maandblad voor de geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland* I (5708 – 1947/1948) 45-49; and in: L. Fuks, 'De Jiddische kroniek van Abraham Chaim Braatbard (1740-1752)' *Jaarboek Amstelodamm* 48, 113-171; and in Yiddish: 'די יידישע כראַניק פון אברהם־חיים פוקס, זי פוקס, ברעטבאָרד פון אַמסטערדאַם (1740-1752)' פּנקס פֿאַר דער פֿאַרשונג פֿון דער ייִדישער ליטעראַטור און פּרעסע 3 (נוי־אַרק 1975) 221-248.

³⁰ Prinz: Meijer M. Roest, 'Een Kronijkje van de jaren 1787-1788' *Israëlitische Letterbode* I (1875) Vols. 2-6; Wing: Meijer M. Roest, 'Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795-1812' *De Israëlitische Letterbode* I-VI (1876-1880); a German translation of a large part of this selection was published as: 'Aus der Amsterdamer Gemeinde 1795-1812' *Jeschurun* [Alte Folge] 18 (1885) 725-727, 757-759, 793-794; 19 (1886) 84-86, 117-118, 148-150, 166, 196-197, 292-293, 323-325.

³¹ Jozeph Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period 1787-1815. Gothic Towers on a Corinthian Building* (Amsterdam 1995) 58, 126, 194, 196, 198, 226; parts of Prinz' chronicle are used in the same book as well, *ibidem*, 3-4, 11; Salvador Bloemgarten, *Hartog de Hartog Lémon, 1755-1823. Joodse revolutionair in Franse Tijd* (Amsterdam 2007) 39, 53, 138, 142-148, 271-272, 305-307, 313.

Yiddish. She concluded that influence from the Dutch is evident in the works' language and orthography.³²

Summarizing the state of research, it appears that, apart from the pioneering articles of Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, little research has been conducted into Yiddish historical writing in Amsterdam. In textbooks and encyclopedias Amelander's history book is generally qualified as having mixed facts and legends and to be of value only with regard of Dutch Jewish history. Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, however, regard this book as an early specimen of Jewish Enlightenment. As concerns the other Yiddish chronicles, Ariane Zwiers used selections from them as a corpus for linguistic analysis, and Fuks published an abridged translation of Braatbard's chronicle. A historiographical analysis of Yiddish historiography written in the Netherlands remains a desideratum, not only for the broader context of the history of Jewish historiography, but also to develop a better understanding of Dutch Jewish intellectual and social history. In order to use these historical texts for writing Jewish, Dutch and Dutch Jewish history, a critical assessment of the ideology, methodology and contents is needed first.

1.3 Research questions

Such an analysis is precisely the objective of this study. The Amsterdam Yiddish historical writings will be studied from the perspective of the tradition of Jewish historiography; both continuity and discontinuity with the earlier Hebrew historiography will be examined. I will argue that the eighteenth-century Yiddish history books and chronicles have their own place within the whole of Jewish historiography, and that they adopted older historiographical methods and integrated new types of knowledge into the narrative.

This study does not intend to search for traces of 'modernity' in the corpus, nor to present this corpus as being 'the beginnings' or 'the origins' of modern Jewish historiography. Such an approach is, in my opinion, restrictive and trapped within a dichotomous approach towards 'tradition' and 'modernity', implying a 'Whiggish' perspective on historical progress.³³ I will instead study the corpus as having been part of 'the long eighteenth century', home to

³² Ariane D. Zwiers, *Kroniek van het Jiddisch. Taalkundige aspecten van het achttiende-eeuws Nederlands Jiddisch*. (Delft 2003). For a review, see: Evi Butzer: Rezension zu: *Zwiers, Ariane: Kroniek van het Jiddisch. Taalkundige aspecten van achttiende-eeuws Nederlands Jiddisch. Delft 2003*. In: *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 10.01.2005, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2005-1-019>>.

³³ For a discussion and critique of such an approach, see the clarifying article by Andrea Schatz, "'Peoples pure of speech:' The religious, the secular, and the Jewish beginnings of modernity", *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 6* (2007) 169-187. As well: Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the eighteenth century. A genealogy of modernity* (Berkeley 2004) 2-4.

conflictive tendencies, paralleling yet independent routes, full of complexity and hybridity.³⁴ In searching for this corpus's own characteristics, not a priori approached from either the past (as 'tradition') or the future (as 'modernity'), I hope to thereby fill in the previously mentioned gap between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Not such much, however, in a direct, lineary way, but more as a distinct corpus in its own right.

Through studying the historians and their works we not only acquire an understanding of the specific nature of this type of historiography, but as well of social and intellectual conditions and challenges in eighteenth century Ashkenazi Amsterdam. In contrast to the history of their Sephardic brothers, the history of Amsterdam Ashkenazim in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has only fragmentarily been written.³⁵ This thesis contributes to a better understanding of Amsterdam Ashkenazim by highlighting roles of a new, self-conscious 'secondary intelligentsia', who where in dialogue with both Sephardim and contemporary Christian society.

As the history books and chronicles are written in Yiddish, this study also addresses the position of Yiddish in Ashkenazi culture. In the literary domain Hebrew and Yiddish held throughout medieval and early modern times their own relatively fixed positions, each serving different target groups with different products. I will argue, however, that in early modern Amsterdam these boundaries shifted in favour of Yiddish. Knowledge for a long time restricted to the Hebrew domain, like historiography, now transferred to the Yiddish one, resulting in a much broader dissemination.

All of these historical writings were written in Amsterdam, and some were also published there. The context of this city, with its important global trade networks, relative tolerance towards Jews, two 'Jewish Nations' (Sephardi and Ashkenazi), open intellectual culture and the export of Yiddish books from Amsterdam to the whole Ashkenazi diaspora left its traces in Yiddish history writing. This topic will be addressed in various sections.

In studying the different editions of *Sheyris Yisrael* this thesis seeks as well to contribute to the study of the transmission of books in early modern and modern Ashkenaz. Thus far, medieval Hebrew manuscript culture has been almost alone in being researched from

³⁴ In paragraph 4.1 the nature of early modernity and the 'long eighteenth century' in the context of Jewish history and historiography will be dealt with more fully.

³⁵ This is best testified by comparing the chapters on Sephardim and Ashkenazim in both ages in the two main textbooks on Dutch Jewish history: J.C.H. Blom a.o., *The history of the Jews in the Netherlands* (London 2007); and: Jozeph Michman, Hartog Beem and Dan Michman, *Pinkas. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland* (Ede, Antwerpen, Amsterdam 1992). Since then new research on early modern Ashkenazi history in the Netherlands has been conducted notably by Marion Aptroot, Shlomo Berger and Avriël Bar-Levav, mainly on Yiddish and the Jewish book industry. Their research is extensively used throughout this thesis.

the viewpoint of transmission. In this study I wish to present the story of the transmission of an early modern history book, covering the period 1743 until 1988 and in no less than three languages.

1.4 Contents

Because almost no research had thus far been conducted into Yiddish historiography from Amsterdam, there emerged during the composition of this thesis choices as to what should and should not be included. As most texts discussed here had not been previously studied, large parts of this thesis are devoted to presentation of the corpus. I present an introduction to the history books and chronicles, a detailed description of each manuscript or its first edition and an outline of the contents of each history book or chronicle. Likewise, the authors and their socio-economic and intellectual backgrounds each receive due attention.

The corpus is mainly addressed from the angle of Jewish historiography, and this study tries to integrate the material to what we know on Jewish historiography. Part I addresses the history of Jewish historiography in medieval and early modern times. The second chapter includes a short survey of Jewish historiographical traditions, so as to provide the reader background for understanding the specific nature of Amsterdam Yiddish historiography. In the third chapter the transition from Hebrew to Yiddish historiography in early modern times is addressed, with special attention directed to the first products of Yiddish history writing in Amsterdam.

This thesis is centered around *Sheyris Yisroel*: the most comprehensive, voluminous and successful Amsterdam Yiddish history book, and the only one to have been repeatedly printed. As such it acquired a discrete and stable position within the overall corpus of Jewish historiography. The other Amsterdam Yiddish chronicles – as they were transmitted almost exclusively in manuscript form – never obtained such standing.

Part II, the chapters 4 through 6, focuses on various aspects of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Chapter 4 presents an intellectual biography of the chronicle's author, Menahem Amelander. Indeed, the genesis of this work is best understood in the framework of its author's biography and the whole of his oeuvre. Chapter 5 concentrates on *Sheyris Yisroel* itself and outlines the paratextual features of the work in connection to the preceding edition of the medieval *Sefer Yosippon*, of which *Sheyris Yisroel* was envisioned as a continuation. The chapter also includes an examination of Amelander's historical worldview and the philosophy of history underlying his

chronicle. Under the heading ‘Mediating Knowledge’, Chapter 6 investigates how Amelander used his sources. For the most part these were Jewish sources, mainly written in Hebrew, yet a significant number were written by Christians in Dutch or translated into Dutch. The differences in handling these sources are studied and explained via the model of ‘gatekeeping brokerage’.

Part III, chapters 7 and 8, examines history writing in the wake of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Chapter 7 concentrates on the chronicles that were written after *Sheyris Yisroel*. I will introduce the category of ‘successor chronicle’ to describe a fundamental historical idea in traditional Jewish historiography and demonstrate how this notion worked through in these chronicles, describing how these chronicles are connected to each other. The eighth and final chapter is devoted to *Sheyris Yisroel* and its transmission history well into the twentieth century. The different editions - in Yiddish, Hebrew and Dutch - are presented, and the ideological choices underlying their differences are explained via the continuing ‘open book tradition’. This tradition is related to the genre of ‘successor chronicles’, but whereas these are continuing history books, the ‘open book tradition’ explains changes made within existing texts.

The chapters offer both an appreciation for the type of historiography which these Yiddish history books embody and a social and intellectual positioning of these works within early modern Ashkenazi (Amsterdam) culture. This has entailed that other aspects of this corpus of texts remain largely undiscussed and warrant further research. The concentration on *Sheyris Yisroel* and its immediate successors has resulted in Leib ben Oyzer’s earlier chronicle, on Shabtai Zvi, being discussed only briefly, along with other historical products, such as pamphlets and poetry.³⁶ These latter genres, with their different yet interrelated approaches to history, and their vivid expressions of historical culture and consciousness among Amsterdam Ashkenazim, merit further inquiries.

This thesis refrains from weighing or comparing factual information presented in the chronicles against contemporary non-Jewish historiography. The stress here is on the presentation and positioning of these Yiddish chronicles within Jewish historiography.

³⁶ The chronicle of Leib ben Oyzer, furthermore, has already received quite some scholarly attention as one of the few sources available presenting a grand narrative of the movement around Shabtai Zvi. See e.g. Zalman Shazar, ‘Meshamasho shel Shabtai Zvi’, *Tarbiz* 5 (1934) 350-375; Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: the mystical messiah, 1626-1676* (Princeton 1976) passim; L. Fuks, ‘Sabatianisme in Amsterdam in het begin van de 18e eeuw. Enkele beschouwingen over Reb Leib Oizers en zijn werk’, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 14 (1980) 1, 20-28; idem, ‘A yidishe bashraybung fun Shabse Zvi’, *Di Goldene Keyt* 102 (1980) 180-186; Paul Ira Radensky, ‘Leyb ben Ozer’s “Bashraybung Fun Shabsai Tsvi”’: An Ashkenazic Appropriation of Sabbatianism’, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 88 (1997) 1/2, 43-56. This chronicle is also the only one that appeared in a modern scholarly edition: Zalman Shazar ed., *Sipur ma’asei Shabtai Zvi. Bashraybung fun Shabse Zvi* (Jerusalem 1978).

Undoubtedly, the contents of the chronicles – even more so than *Sheyris Yisroel* – are not only among the richest and most original sources on Jewish life in the Dutch Republic and its successor states, but also provide extensive information about Jewish history elsewhere and about Dutch social, economic and political history. Within the context of this thesis, I was able to address these issues only briefly.

Finally, the linguistic aspects of the Yiddish used by the various Amsterdam historians are not addressed here. This is in part, because Ariane Zwiers in her dissertation has already analyzed a selection of the chronicles from that perspective, and because analysis of the language used in *Sheyris Yisroel* and its successors in its relationship towards the various variants of early modern Yiddish and towards contemporary Dutch warrants attention from specialists in historical linguistics.

1.5 Methodological reflections

The delineation of this study deserves specific attention, as each element within the title (“Amsterdam Yiddish historiography”) must be defined and justified. Each element will thus be addressed, followed by the various methods that are applied to the corpus of texts.

In this introduction I have used the terms ‘historiography’ and ‘history writing’ to characterize the corpus of a Yiddish history book and several chronicles. In particular the term ‘historiography’ is laden with myriad connotations, and so it is wise to specify what I mean in using it and other related terms.

It is clear that, in the corpus studied here, the subject is the past. Yet the differences between *Sheyris Yisroel* and the successor chronicles are considerable. *Sheyris Yisroel* is a universal history book, covering the period from 70 to 1743, whereas the chronicles mostly concentrate on Amsterdam and function only as *Zeitgeschichte*. This raises the question of whether these sources can justifiably be collected under the classification ‘Yiddish historiography’.

This question can be posed even more forcefully. Many scholars of Jewish historiography have defined historiography as a critical reflection on the past, and have consequently excluded from their corpus history books and chronicles like the ones studied here. They tend to use the term ‘chronography’ to denote the genre of chronicles, which are organized chronologically, often in annual sections. These scholars, for their canon of Jewish

historiography, only include Biblical historical writings, Josephus Flavius, some sixteenth-century history books and modern critical *Wissenschaft des Judentums* writings.³⁷

The question is thus pertinent: why, indeed, do I use the term historiography? As Michael Bentley has argued, historiography often means two things: first, what is commonly called ‘philosophy of history’, that is, the study of ideas, ideologies and theologies of history; and second, modern analytical historiography, as performed by individuals or within particular schools of history.³⁸ Aside from these definitions, which are tied to the modern era, one can also opt for a broader definition and describe the task of the historian of historiography as the endeavor, in Ernst Breisach’s words, ‘to trace the ways in which people in Western culture have reflected on the past and what these reflections have told them about human life as it passes continuously from past to present to future.’³⁹ Bentley also mentions this type of synthetic account, which searches for connection and comparison, as a third option, and this opens the way for applying the term historiography to the ancient, medieval and early modern eras.⁴⁰

Huizinga defined history – and consequently historiography – as ‘the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past’.⁴¹ The interpretation of ‘intellectual’ is crucial. If one interprets it from the position of modern historical scholarship, there arises considerable risk that the definition will be elitist in nature. Thus it is necessary to realize that every form of historiography is embedded within a larger historical culture. Each society relates to its past – whether such past is perceived in a positive or negative way – and expresses this past through various media, including not only history writing but also oral legends and myths, architecture and arts, songs and festivals. There is continuous interaction between these media and what can be labeled ‘historical consciousness’. This term is used to describe the ways in which societies and individuals were conscious of their past and remembered, used, re-enacted

³⁷ See e.g. Heinz Schreckenberg and Kurt Schubert eds., *Jewish historiography and iconography in early and Medieval Christianity* 1 (Assen 1992) xi; the same tendency could be detected in the introduction to: Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish history*, 1-42; and is also underlying Yerushalmi’s division of Jewish memory on the one hand, and Jewish history/historiography on the other, in: *Zakhor*, passim. These authors, however, tend to overlook that in medieval and early modern times ‘chronography’ as a genre was perceived as a part of the overarching genre of the *historia* (while the broad generic use of this last term should be carefully differentiated from the subgenre which was also called *historia*); cf. Bert Roest, ‘Mediaeval historiography: About generic constraints and scholarly constructions’ in: idem and Herman Vanstiphout eds., *Aspects of genre and type in pre-modern literary cultures* (Groningen 1999) 47-61.

³⁸ Michael Bentley, *Modern historiography: an introduction* (London 1999) ix.

³⁹ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: ancient, medieval & modern* (3rd ed.; Chicago 2007) 3; likewise: D.R. Woolf ed., *A global encyclopedia of historical writing* 1 A-J (New York/London 1998) xiii.

⁴⁰ Bentley, *Modern historiography*, x.

⁴¹ Johan Huizinga, ‘A definition of the concept of history’ in: Raymond Klibansky and H.J. Paton eds., *Philosophy and history. Essays presented to Ernst Cassirer* (Oxford 1936) 1-10, there 9.

or forgot it. Historiography, including its scholarly and analytical forms, is not only always part of the historical culture but also relies upon and contests society's 'historical consciousness'.⁴²

From such a perspective, one could defend the choice to collect, under the heading 'historiography', the Yiddish history books and chronicles from eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Amsterdam. Indeed, these writings were each part of a larger historical culture, which we will encounter in studying the texts. Moreover, these writings were conscious attempts to record the past, be it as a history of centuries, decades or years. Each author realized the difference between the past and the present and was aware of his role as historian, recording and interpreting the past for, what could be called with a twist to Huizinga, the 'Jewish civilization'.

Such a broad definition of historiography, which takes into account the specific nature of a historical period, includes all the material presented and analyzed in this thesis. Having noted this, it remains useful to categorize within this broad definition of historiography, since the nature of the sources reveals obvious differences. The medieval categories of the narrative prose labelled *historia* versus the *chronica*, following the flow of years, still worked through in early modern times and also provide a valuable typology for the categorization of our corpus.⁴³ *Sheyris Yisroel*, therefore, will be presented as a history book, since it covers a large period of Jewish history. In its geographical scope it is undoubtedly the Jewish variant of the well-known medieval and early modern genre of 'universal history'. Such universal or world histories came under attack, in the eighteenth century, from Enlightenment philosophers and historians, as being nothing more than mere compilations of historical information and lacking any systematic idea. Nonetheless, in the first half of the eighteenth century the genre was still blossoming and *Sheyris Yisroel* was a worthy Jewish counterpart.⁴⁴

The *chronicae* of Braatbard, Prinz, Wing and the other smaller historiographical pieces discussed in this thesis share a common feature in that they detail – albeit at some remove in time – their own times. Most of them are structured according to years and dates. These Jewish chronicles, as with Amelander's history book, also fit perfectly into a contemporary historical genre, in this case a genre which German historians termed *Gegenwartschronistik*. This term

⁴² Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang with contributions from Supriya Mukherjee, *A global history of modern historiography* (Harlow etc. 2008) 4. The term 'historical consciousness' is often used to study not only historiography but also its wider context. In the domain of Jewish studies it has been extensively analyzed, see e.g.: Andreas Gotzmann and Christian Wiese eds., *Modern Judaism and historical consciousness. Identities, encounters, perspectives* (Leiden/Boston 2007).

⁴³ Roest, 'Mediaeval historiography', passim; Bernard Guenée, 'Histoire et chronique. Nouvelles réflexions sur les genres historiques au moyen âge' in: Daniel Poirion ed., *La chronique et l'histoire au moyen âge* (Paris 1993) 3-12.

⁴⁴ Iggers, *Global history*, 29-30.

combines two aspects typical of the genre: addressing contemporary history and choosing the genre of the chronicle, which structures history chronologically.⁴⁵

The corpus of texts is defined both by its historical contents and by its language, Yiddish. The primary reason this thesis concentrates on Yiddish historiography is because, during the period under consideration, very few works of Hebrew historiography were written, and none in Ashkenazi Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, in addition to these Yiddish chronicles, a few products of historical reflection and documentation were written in Portuguese or Spanish within the Sephardic community.⁴⁶ These texts were not included in the corpus discussed in this thesis, as they were part of Sephardic culture and are best addressed from that context. Here Yiddish history writing is interpreted as an expression of Ashkenazi culture and always connected with both the transnational and the local contexts.

Yiddish, of course, is important in this work because the thesis traces part of the social history of the language. That the Amsterdam historians chose to write in Yiddish rather than in Hebrew was a significant choice. Moreover, it demonstrates the transfer of knowledge and of literary genres from the Hebrew into the Yiddish domain. This thesis, besides positioning Amsterdam's Yiddish history writing within the whole of Jewish historiography, aims to contribute to the study of early modern, and specifically eighteenth-century, Yiddish, not from a linguistic perspective but from a social one. As such it will illustrate the role Yiddish played in the transformation or – as Shlomo Berger termed it even more straightforward - the modernization of Ashkenazic culture in the eighteenth century.⁴⁷

Finally, the corpus is qualified by the location of the writing – namely, Amsterdam. This is, again, both a practical and a conscious choice. First, in the eighteenth century little history was written by Ashkenazim outside Amsterdam. Significant numbers of original historical works were written in Amsterdam, but elsewhere very few Ashkenazim authored history books. Therefore, the characteristic nature of Amsterdam must be taken into account when interpreting the corpus of texts. For example, why was it in Amsterdam that Ashkenazim

⁴⁵ Fritz Ernst, 'Zeitgeschehen und Geschichtsschreibung' *Welt als Geschichte* 17 (1957) 137-189; Josefine Schmid, *Studien zu Wesen und Technik der Gegenwartschronistik in der süddeutschen Historiographie des ausgehenden 13. und des 14. Jahrhunderts* [Ph.D. thesis Heidelberg 1963]; Ursula Moraw, *Die Gegenwartschronistik in Deutschland im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* [Ph.D. thesis Heidelberg 1966]; A.E.M. Janssen, 'Kroniek en annalistiek, schakels in een keten' in: Jo Tollebeek a.o. eds., *De palimpsest. Geschiedschrijving in the Nederlanden 1500-2000* (Hilversum 2002) 11-25.

⁴⁶ For the various manuscripts, see: L. and R. Fuks, *Hebrew and Judaic manuscripts in Amsterdam public libraries* (Leiden 1973) 184-188; for a short treatment of the Sephardic historiography in early modern Amsterdam, see paragraph 2.7. Also a Hebrew historical scroll, *Megillat Curiel*, was written to document an assault on the Sephardi David Curiel in 1628.

⁴⁷ Shlomo Berger, *Yiddish and Jewish modernization in the 18th century* (Hebrew) [Braun lectures in the history of the Jews in Prussia 12] (Ramat Gan 2006).

developed such an interest in history that they not only reprinted and reread the classics of Jewish historiography but also started authoring such histories themselves? And how did the dynamic of port-city Amsterdam echo in this Amsterdam Yiddish history writing? Such considerations are all the more relevant since many scholars have thus far stressed that, though Amsterdam may have been the capital of the early modern Jewish book industry, Amsterdam Jewry's intellectual contributions to such efforts were minimal. Their responsibilities, according to this view, were in printing, distributing and selling the books, and they were not especially active in intellectually furthering and developing Jewish theological and literary genres.⁴⁸ This thesis, however, demonstrates that Amsterdam Ashkenazim were in fact particularly active within the domain of historiography and in this way actively contributed to the creation of a new Jewish library.

This thesis is first and foremost a historical one. The corpus of texts is approached from the perspective of a historian, so as to contextualize these sources within the period of their writing and to develop a better understanding of eighteenth-century Ashkenazic culture. At the same time, this study is also interdisciplinary in the methodologies used to outline the position of early modern Amsterdam Yiddish history writing. First, it uses the scholarship on (Jewish) historiography, with its apparatus of historiographical terminology, such as the categories of benefits of history, philosophies of history, and the genre of 'successor chronicles'. Second, post-colonial research is used so as to better grasp the hybridity of Amsterdam Ashkenazim in the eighteenth century. This particular culture, with its traditional and modern characteristics, presented a hybridity that was distinctive yet in some ways typical of such societies. Third, theories on paratexts, from the field of book history, are applied to *Sheyris Yisroel*, just as the idea of a transfer of the practice of an 'open book' from manuscript to print cultures. Fourth, from cultural anthropology and sociology scholarship on secondary elites, the concept of brokers and cultural intermediaries is used to develop a profile of the position of the Amsterdam Yiddish historians within the social stratification of Ashkenazi Jewry.

These methodologies are employed within a framework of social and cultural history, with a primary focus on the position of historiography, and specifically Yiddish historiography, within the whole of Ashkenazi culture and more precisely within Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jewry.

⁴⁸ A first criticism of this view has been launched in: Shlomo Berger, 'Yiddish book production in Amsterdam between 1650-1800: local and international aspects' in: Yosef Kaplan ed., *The Dutch intersection. The Jews and the Netherlands in modern history* (Leiden / Boston 2008) 203-212.

Through studying Amsterdam Yiddish history writing we gain an impression of Ashkenazi life in what was a century of myriad transformations and cultural changes. Such changes affected Jewish life in many ways. This thesis, therefore, is best interpreted as an effort not only to situate Amsterdam Yiddish history writing within the overall picture of Jewish historiography, but also to offer an entrance to eighteenth-century Ashkenazi life.

PART I: MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

2. Jewish historiographical traditions

Within the corpus of Jewish literature, historiography held but a small place through the centuries. It is difficult to speak of a continuous tradition of history writing, as is the case with halakhah. History writing was mostly produced in the shadow of other, more popular genres and was often an unintended result of literary activity in other fields, like polemics or liturgy. However, over the course of centuries a small corpus of Jewish historical texts was written and transmitted from generation to generation, eventually resulting in a canon of Jewish historiography which served as a model for Jewish history writers. Amsterdam Yiddish historiography was influenced by these history books, with their divergent methods and ideas about history, and so a short introduction into the major Jewish historiographical works and traditions is helpful. As chapter 6 will demonstrate, many of these previous Jewish historical works were integrated in Amelander's Jewish universal history book *Sheyris Yisrael*.

2.1 Decline of ancient Jewish historiography

It is a classic debate among Jewish historians and theologians why Jewish historiography nearly disappeared after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Until that moment, history writing had a fixed place within Jewish literature, with a rather clear profile. The tendentious, religious motivation was obvious: such texts were meant to show readers how God was involved in the history of Israel and that just as He had acted in the past, so He would act in the present. Divine involvement is shown to be ultimately determining the shape and course of the historical process. This attitude is clear in the historical narratives throughout the Hebrew Bible, in Tora, Nevi'im and Ketuvim. One other specific feature of biblical historiography is the importance attached to genealogical categories, explaining the origins and politics of peoples in terms of descent from different ancestors. Finally, popular storytellers' motifs, literary tropes and metaphors were used in the construction of the narratives, like divine tests and the success of the unpromising.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ On the specific nature of biblical historiography a vast body of scholarship exists, here it suffices to mention: Baruch Halpern, *The first historians. The Hebrew Bible and history* (San Francisco 1988); J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (2nd ed.; London 2006) 61-83. Momigliano has shown how the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, as expressions of post-exilic Jewish historiography, are influenced by Persian historiography in the use of autobiographical elements and archival documents; Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Eastern elements in post-exilic Jewish, and Greek, historiography' in: idem, *Essays in ancient and modern historiography* (Oxford 1977) 25-35.

The authors of the books of the Maccabees continued the biblical tradition of history writing, by showing how God had restored Jewish cult and autonomy. The oeuvre of Flavius Josephus is traditionally regarded as the closing of ancient Jewish historiography. Josephus wrote about both biblical times and his own period, during which Israel, after a fierce military struggle, lost its autonomy, its capital and its cult, and suffered the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Hereafter, Jewish literature primarily dealt with halakhah and 'aggada, resulting in compendia such as the Mishna, Tosephta, Midrashim and finally in the Talmuds Bavli and Yerushalmi.

Various explanations have been posited for this decline in Jewish historiography. The first is a political explanation, and was offered by scholars like the various nineteenth-century *Wissenschaftler des Judentums*. Classical historiography is defined as the history writing of political entities and personalities. Thus, the biblical books are chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah, and relate their wars and policies. Likewise, the books of the Maccabees describe the power struggle between the Hellenistic Syrian kings and the Jewish clan of the Maccabees. Finally, Josephus dealt with the last stage of the Jewish political entity and its disappearance. This type of historiography was for the most part written on behalf of kings and rulers to legitimise their authority and to memorialize their deeds for subsequent generations. Viewed from this perspective, Jewish historiography simply ends with the disappearance of the single Jewish political entity. Without Jewish sovereigns, reason advocates of this explanation, there is no Jewish historiography.

A second explanation is based on religious convictions, and we can distinguish a Jewish and a Christian variant of it. The Jewish variant holds that Jewish history can only be written in the Land of Israel. Furthermore, between the fall of the Temple and the coming of the Messiah there is the diaspora period, which is not worth recording and documenting. This intermezzo of diaspora is not considered a vital element of Jewish history. The Christian variant is much the same: after the rejection of Jesus as Messiah, the Jewish people went into the diaspora and became a nation outside history. As Hegel argued, in adhering to Old Testament traditions and not accepting Jesus the Jewish people ossified and became a living anachronism. That such a people did not produce historiography is, in this view, thus considered perfectly understandable, as they are no longer part of history.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Shlomo Avineri, 'The Fossil and the Phoenix: Hegel and Krochmal on the Jewish Volksgeist' in: Robert L. Perkins, *History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History* (Albany 1984) 47-64.

Although there was clearly a decline in the production of Jewish historiography, it did not vanish entirely. Whereas the political narratives disappeared, two religiously significant genres still addressed history writing. The mainly Sephardic genre of *shalshelet ha-qabbalah*, which proved the purity of the rabbinic tradition, had roots in the Mishna tractate *Avot* and was regularly actualised. The second genre, martyriology, was especially popular in Ashkenaz around the time of the Crusades, and presented the braveness and *qiddush ha-Shem* of the Jewish victims.⁵¹

2.2 *Shalshelet ha-qabbalah* and Jewish historiography

The classic example of this tradition is the letter of Rab Sherira Gaon (986), in which he presents a sequence for the Saboraim and Geonim. The purpose of this genre was to show the legitimacy of the *qabbalah* and to provide authority for contemporary rabbis being the spiritual children of the great leaders of Israel. The genre also had polemical purpose, namely to counter the Karaite claim concerning corruption of the Biblical tradition through the rabbinical one.⁵²

Although this *shalshelet ha-qabbalah* is certainly not historiography in the true sense of the word, it could take forms in which the importance of the given information rises above the theological and polemical purpose. Often the names of sages and rabbis are presented with biographical details. Another important offspring of this tradition is that the same principle was used for general or secular history. R. Abraham ibn Daud of Toledo wrote not only a *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* (ca. 1160), in which he concentrates on the transmission of the rabbinic tradition, but also a history of the Roman emperors until the early seventh century.⁵³

Shalshelet ha-qabbalah was not an isolated Jewish genre. Robert Bonfil has stressed its parallels with the Christian type of historiography, in which apostolic succession held an important place. Both the Jewish and the Christian authors sought to link their contemporary religious authorities, be they rabbis, bishops or popes, to earlier authoritative leaders, such as Moses or the Apostles.⁵⁴ In the Christian historiography Eusebius made this the central point of his *Ecclesiastical History* (312). In this church history Eusebius concentrated on the doctrinal

⁵¹ On the differences between Sephardic and Ashkenazic traditions of historiography: Ivan G. Marcus, 'History, story and collective memory: narrativity in early Ashkenazic culture', *Prooftexts* 10 (1990) 365-388.

⁵² Fred Astren, *Karaite Judaism and historical understanding* (Columbia SC 2004) 47-64.

⁵³ Lionel Kochan, *The Jew and his history* (London/Basingstoke 1977) 24.

⁵⁴ Bonfil, 'How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?' in: A. Rapaport-Albert ed., *Essays in Jewish historiography* (Atlanta 1991) 78-102; Gerson D. Cohen in his introduction to *Sefer ha-qabbalah* also noted the similarity to the Islamic notion of *isnad al-hadith*: Abraham ben David ibn Da'ud, *Sefer ha-qabbalah. A critical edition with a translation and notes to the Book of Tradition* (London 1969) i-lvii.

controversies and showed how the orthodox stance had won the dispute with pagans and heretics. Eusebius presented the orthodox doctrine as the original doctrinal tradition, which had been kept pure despite all heretical attacks.⁵⁵ Amram Tropper recently added to this diachronic comparison a synchronic one, by arguing for the common origin of the Jewish and Christian ‘chain of tradition’ in the Hellenistic succession list. This succession list was an important means for the Greek intellectual movement of the Second Sophistic (60-250), because it showed the continuity of Greek intellectual disciplines from the high point of the Greeks until the present.⁵⁶

Whatever the background of the *shalshelet ha-qabbalah* tradition was, the tradition was unquestionably influential in the development of Jewish historiography. Later chronicles, such as David Gans’ *Zemah David* and Amelander’s *Sheyris Yisroel*, used and adopted this principle in their descriptions of both Jewish and general history. But the genre was also one of the sources of the tradition of ‘successor chronicles’, because just as the chain of the rabbinic tradition had to be verified from time to time, so too the chronicles needed to be continued – for whatever reasons – by other chronicles.⁵⁷ Chapter 7 will further develop this argument.

2.3 *Sefer Yosippon*

One can hardly overestimate the importance of *Sefer Yosippon* to Jewish historiography. For centuries, until the end of the eighteenth century, most Jews and Christians believed that Flavius Josephus had authored the work and that it was the Hebrew version of the Greek and Latin editions of his oeuvre. However, the author was in fact a Jew from Southern Italy, who – according to David Flusser - wrote the book in 953.⁵⁸ He compiled the book (written in biblical and midrashic Hebrew) from the Apocrypha of the Vulgata, especially the two books of the Maccabees, and from the Latin edition of Josephus (known as *Hegesippus*). *Yosippon*

⁵⁵ Arnaldo Momigliano, ‘Pagan and Christian historiography in the fourth century A.D.’ in: idem, *Essays in ancient and modern historiography* (Oxford 1977) 107-126, there 110-117.

⁵⁶ Amram Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography. Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near-East* (Oxford etc. 2004); and: idem, ‘The fate of Jewish historiography after the Bible: a new interpretation’ *History and Theory* 43 (May 2004), 179-197.

⁵⁷ The concept was also of influence to family chronicles, like *Megillat Ahimaaꝰ*; Wolfram Drews, ‘Koordinaten eines historischen Bewußtseins in der mittelalterlichen jüdischen Historiographie. Das Beispiel des Ahimaaꝰ von Oria’ in: Klaus Hödl ed., *Historisches Bewusstsein im jüdischen Kontext. Strategien – Aspekte – Diskurse* (Innsbruck etc. 2004) 13-28, there 18.

⁵⁸ The debate on the dating of *Sefer Yosippon* has been meticulously analysed in: Steven Bowman, ‘Dates in *Sefer Yosippon*’ in: John C. Reeves and John Kampen eds., *Pursuing the text. Studies in honor of Ben Zion Wacholder on the occasion of his seventieth birthday* (Sheffield 1994) 349-359.

describes the biblical era up to the fall of Masada. For a long period this book was the most significant history book within the Jewish communities, besides the historical narratives within the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁹

As a true counterpart to Josephus's *oeuvre*, *Yosippon* starts with the Creation of the world and of Adam. Much attention is paid to the genealogies from Genesis, which the author connects to contemporary nations. In recording the story of the Tower of Babel, he jumps to the history of Babylonian Jews. The topic the author is truly interested in, however, is the period from Babylonian exile until the fall of Masada. *Yosippon* documents not only Jewish history but also much of the history of nations which the Jews had to contend with: the Babylonians, Greeks and Romans. Thus, *Yosippon* presents much legendary material about Alexander the Great.⁶⁰

The author's methodology has been described as careful with his sources, faithfully rendering the material he found and supplying the necessary corrections. At the same time, he applied midrashic methods to his narrative such as word plays, expanding the meaning of his original source by making allusions and re-using phrases in a literary style. His purpose was not just to inform Jews on their history, but ultimately morally didactic: from history lessons were to be learned.⁶¹ Thanks to *Yosippon*, Jewish and non-Jewish history were presented alongside each other among the medieval Jewish communities. The book was soon translated into other languages, including Arabic, Slavic and Yiddish, and was read by a non-Jewish public.⁶²

2.4 Crusade chronicles

A sudden rise in Jewish historical writing occurred around the time of the Crusades. Both the First and Second Crusades aroused immense enthusiasm among European Christians. Many

⁵⁹ David Flusser, *The Josippon [Josephus Gorionides], edited with an introduction, commentary and notes* (Jerusalem 1978-1980) 1-2 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Josippon, a medieval Hebrew version of Josephus' in: Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata, *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (Leiden 1987) 386-397. On the manuscript history of *Yosippon*, see as well: Jacob Reiner, 'The original Hebrew *Yosippon* in the Chronicle of Jerahmeel' *Jewish Quarterly Review* LX (1969) 2, 128-146. On the influence of *Sefer Yosippon* on medieval Jewish historiography: Saskia Dönitz, 'Sefer Yosippon und die historiographische Tradition des Mittelalters' in: Annelies Kuyt and Gerold Necker eds., *Orient als Grenzgebiet? Rabbinisches und außerrabbinisches Judentum* [Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes LX] (Wiesbaden 2007) 169-182.

⁶⁰ W. Jac. van Bekkum, 'Alexander the Great in medieval Hebrew literature', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986) 218-226.

⁶¹ Steven Bowman, 'Sefer Yosippon: History and Midrash' in: Michael A. Fishbane ed., *The Midrashic imagination: Jewish exegesis, thought, and history* (New York 1993) 280-294.

⁶² Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A social and religious history of the Jews* [2nd edition, revised and enlarged]: *High Middle Ages, 500-1200. Volume VI: Laws, Homilies, and the Bible* (Philadelphia 1958) 188-198.

people decided to join the Crusades and departed to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim rule. One side effect of this response to the pope's invitation was vehement anti-Jewish violence. In most places the authority of the ruler, whether worldly or clerical, was strong enough to restrain such sentiments before the local Jewish community was struck. But especially in the Rhineland, Jews became victims of crusading masses, and entire communities were murdered: Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Trier and Cologne.

The stories of these communities were later narrated in several chronicles. The victims of the First Crusade, in 1096-7, are remembered in three Hebrew chronicles. The *Mainz Anonymus*, for which no date or place of composition is known, was written by one author and describes the fate of the *kehillot* of Speyer, Worms and Mainz.⁶³ The *Solomon bar Simson Chronicle*, from 1140, was written in Mainz and is a compilation of earlier compositions. It covers the same communities and details the end of the Trier and Cologne communities.⁶⁴ The last work, the *Eliezer bar Nathan Chronicle*, named after its author, who lived from 1090 until approximately 1170, is the only one of the three chronicles for which there is more than one manuscript: in this case, a fourteenth-, a seventeenth- and two eighteenth-century-handwritten copies. This chronicle is a reworking of the Solomon bar Simson chronicle, with additions about the Trier and Cologne events that differ remarkably from Solomon's account.⁶⁵ The Eliezer bar Nathan chronicle most influenced the Jewish memory of the First Crusade, as it was used by Joseph ha-Kohen in his *Emek ha-Bakha*, which was subsequently incorporated into David Gans' *Zemah David*.⁶⁶

Only one chronicle, *Sefer Zekbirah* (Book of Remembrance), by Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn (1133-after 1196), documents the impact of the Second Crusade (1146) on Ashkenazic Jewry. The author was the head of the *beth din* in Bonn and wrote, in addition to this chronicle, *piyyutim* and responsa. Four copies of *Sefer Zekbirah* remain, in the same manuscripts as Eliezer bar Nathan's chronicle. The work describes the massacres of the Jewish communities of

⁶³ Shlomo Eidelberg ed., *The Jews and the Crusaders, the Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades* (Madison 1977) 95. For a close examination of this source, see: Robert Chazan, 'The Mainz Anonymus: Historiographic Perspectives' in: Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, David N. Myers eds., *Jewish History and Jewish Memory, Essays in Honor of Yosef Haim Yerushalmi* (Hannover NH 1998) 54-69.

⁶⁴ Eidelberg, *Jews and Crusaders*, 15.

⁶⁵ Eidelberg, *Jews and Crusaders*, 73-75.

⁶⁶ The chronicles are published and edited: Abraham Habermann ed., *Sefer gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Zarfat* (Jerusalem 1945); an English translation is provided by: Shlomo Eidelberg ed., *The Jews and the Crusaders, the Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades* (Madison 1977); an German edition and translation: Adolf Neubauer and Moritz Stern eds., *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgung während der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin 1892); Eva Haverkamp ed., *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs* [Monumenta Germaniae historica 1] (Hannover 2005). On the rendering of the First Crusade account from Solomon bar Simson over Joseph ha-Kohen to David Gans: Robert Chazan, *In the year 1096. The First Crusade and the Jews* (Philadelphia 1996) 118-120.

Bacharach, Würzburg, Ham and Sully. Prose and liturgical poems give this chronicle a special quality. The author lived during the time of the Second Crusade and is accurate in his descriptions. His inaccuracies are relatively minor.⁶⁷

The qualification 'martyriology' is often given to this corpus of chronicles, as the purpose of such chronicles is to demonstrate how the Rhineland Jews, rather than accepting baptism and saving themselves from torture and death, died for the *qiddush ha-Shem*, the sanctification of the Name.⁶⁸ Robert Chazan has argued that this emphasis on martyrdom and human bravery was typical for the new sensibility in Europe. The 'Renaissance of the twelfth century' shaped a new understanding of human possibilities and a new stress on the importance of human decisions. This resulted, in the Christian world, in the heroism of the Crusades, whereas the parallel effect among the Jewish victims was one of martyrdom. The chronicles offer clear evidence for this reasoning. In contrast to earlier Jewish historiography, the immediate role of God is small. Of course, the subject of God undergirds these histories, but the main attention is on the human heroes and villains.⁶⁹

This new type of historical narratives was part of a larger Jewish parallel to the Renaissance of the twelfth century. New types of more analytical bible commentary and Talmudic exegesis, together with the pietistic spirituality of the Chasidei Ashkenaz, were also elements of this process. However, only the innovations within Talmudic exegesis, made by the so-called Tosaphists, proved lasting. As a result of the persecutions and harsher governmental treatment towards them, Jews were gradually removed from the vibrant Northwestern part of Europe and resituated in the Central and Eastern regions of the continent. This migration severed the Jewish connection with the emerging Renaissance civilisation, once more isolating Jewish culture.⁷⁰

While the parallels with Christian historiography, such as the Latin *Gesta Francorum*, are striking,⁷¹ the differences with earlier Jewish historiography are clear. Biblical and rabbinical models of martyrdom, like the story of Daniel and his friends in the furnace, were now used to interpret the events of 1096. But the depiction of God's involvement in the sacrifice of the martyrs of 1096 is radically different from its earlier models. This is also true for the 1054

⁶⁷ Eidelberg, *Jews and Crusaders* 117-119.

⁶⁸ Cf. Lena Roos, "God wants it!": *The ideology of martyrdom of the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and its Jewish and Christian background* (Uppsala 2003).

⁶⁹ Chazan, *1096*, 92-104; Robert Chazan, *God, humanity, and history, the Hebrew First Crusade narratives* (Berkeley etc. 2000) 191-210.

⁷⁰ Chazan, *God, humanity, and history*, 212-215.

⁷¹ Robert Chazan, 'Latin and Hebrew Crusade Chronicles: Some Shared Themes' in: Susan J. Ridyard ed., *The Medieval Crusade* (Woodbridge 2004) 15-32.

South Italian family chronicle *Megillat Abima'az*⁷² and, to a lesser extent, *Sefer Yosippon*. The latter definitely influenced the authors of the Crusader chronicles. The biblical Hebrew style and the theme of suicide – as in the narratives on the conflagration of the Temple and the mass suicide at Masada - left traces in the chronicles. But the depth of the human characters, and the more detached role of God, are stark contrasts.⁷³

However, being innovative in historical perception does not mean that the Crusader chronicles were not deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. The interpretational model of the massacres was primarily biblical. Via parallel incidents in the Bible the authors tried to understand what was happening and to connect the recent past to sacred history, thereby interpreting these traumas as a continuation of that history.⁷⁴ The Jews regarded the struggle between Christians and Muslims as the final, End of Days confrontation between Gog and Magog. Jewish suffering was thus understood to be the martyrdom that hastened the coming of the Messiah.⁷⁵

The martyrs themselves were interwoven into the catalogue of Jewish heroes, thereby embedding the Crusade experiences into the familiar paradigm of Jewish history. The sense of historical continuum was the dominant one among medieval Jews. Yet it is combined in the chronicles with a realistic awareness of the complexities facing both Jews and Christians in the Crusade era. The stories are thus not merely reduced to the well-known archetypes of Jewish heroism; they are also coloured by the complex reality of various behavioural possibilities for Jews and Christians. In these texts, not all Jews are martyrs or all Christians persecutors.⁷⁶

Gerson D. Cohen has demonstrated another linkage with Jewish tradition. He describes the Ashkenazic tradition as highly liturgical, with prayer and liturgy being the key to coming into contact with God. Because during services the martyrs of the Crusades were commemorated in *piyyutim*, Cohen suggests that the chronicles were written as 'liturgical

⁷² On this chronicle, titled by Benjamin Menahem Klar *Megillat Abima'az* while others used the confusing name *Sefer yubasin* (which is also the title of Zacuto's history): Drews, 'Koordinaten eines historischen Bewußtseins', passim; a recent study and edition: Robert Bonfil, *History and folklore in a medieval Jewish chronicle. The family chronicle of Abima'az ben Paltiel* (Leiden etc. 2009).

⁷³ Robert Chazan, *God, humanity, and history, the Hebrew First Crusade narratives* (Berkeley etc. 2000). Cohen noted also influence of Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* on the Mainz *Anonymous*; Gerson D. Cohen, 'The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and the Ashkenazic Tradition' in: Marc Brettler and Michael Fishbane eds., *Minhab le-Nabum, Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nabum M. Sarna in Honour of his 70th Birthday* (Sheffield 1993) 36-53, there 38.

⁷⁴ David Nirenberg, 'The Rhineland massacres of Jews in the First Crusade. Memories medieval and modern' in: Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried and Patrick J. Geary eds., *Medieval concepts of the past. Ritual, memory, historiography* (Cambridge 2002) 279-309, esp. 285-288.

⁷⁵ Eidelberg, *Jews and Crusaders* 10-14.

⁷⁶ Robert Chazan, 'Representation of events in the Middle Ages' in: Ada Rapoport-Albert ed., *Essays in Jewish Historiography, in memoriam Arnaldo Dante Momigliano 1908-1987* [History and Theory, Beiheft 27] (Middletown CT 1988) 40-55, there 46-55.

commentary'. Via reading the chronicles people would understand the prayers they recited, and thus improve their *kavanah* during the service.⁷⁷

2.5 Anthological historiography

As Eli Yassif has demonstrated, a specific feature of medieval Jewish historiography is the anthological character of many history books.⁷⁸ The books were not in fact written, but are rather editions of selected sections from different kinds of sources, arranged in chronological order. The anthology was popular throughout the Jewish world. However, whereas Jews in the Muslim world concentrated on 'framework-bound anthologies', European Jews mainly edited chronological anthologies. This difference corresponds with the outside influences of respectively the Arab and the European worlds. In Europe there existed a richly developed genre of historiography; the Arab world, in contrast, produced myriad framework anthologies.

It is important to note the medieval perception of history writing. In the selection of sources the historical precedence or authority of the author was of great importance. A source's background, not its content, is what made it reliable. One who was writing a chronicle did not intend to present a new picture of the subject. Rather, he was dealing primarily with effective presentation of (all) known facts. The method for doing so was often by citing large bodies of texts from predecessors. This was the practice in both Christian and Jewish historiography.⁷⁹

Examples of this anthological historiography include *Sefer Yosippon* (paragraph 2.3), the family chronicle *Megillat Ahima'az* (see n. 44), *Shevet Yehudah* and *Shalsbelet ha-qabbalah* (both discussed in the next paragraph). Eli Yassif has presented another interesting and – in the context of this chapter illustrative - example of this type of historiography: Eleazar ben Asher Halevi's *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* (Book of Remembrances). This 400-page manuscript dates from the first half of the fourteenth century, and was written in Germany. Like many chronicles of the Middle Ages, its narrative begins with the creation of the world and concludes with the End of Days and the coming of the Messiah. All major events in Jewish history up to that time are recounted, whereas the *hurban ha-bayit* functioned as its middle point, dividing the narrative into

⁷⁷ Cohen, 'Chronicles and Ashkenazic Tradition' passim; cf. Susan L. Einbinder, *Beautiful death: Jewish poetry and martyrdom in medieval France* (Princeton/Oxford 2002); Adena Tanenbaum, 'Poetry and history', *Prooftexts* 24 (2004) 3, 386-400.

⁷⁸ Eli Yassif, 'The Hebrew Narrative Anthology in the Middle Ages' *Prooftexts* 17 (1997) 153-175.

⁷⁹ Cf. Theo M. Riches, 'Episcopal historiography as archive. Some reflections on the autograph of the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* (MS Den Haag KB75 F15)', *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 10 (2007) 7-46.

“before” and “after” sections. The book is a sizable anthology, with selections from many kinds of sources, including midrashim, historical tales, local legends, hagiography, journey tales, martyrological narratives and novellas. For example, Halevi used the Crusade chronicles of Eliezer bar Nathan and R. Ephraim of Bonn. But his most important source, from which he took sizable excerpts, was *Sefer Yosippon*. In ordering and selecting the texts, Halevi demonstrated his creativity and vision. In presenting canonical and non-canonical texts alongside each other, he presented a new image of the Jewish past, along with an awareness its complexity and plurality.⁸⁰

2.6 Sixteenth-century Jewish historiography

In the Renaissance era a new type of historiography was created in the Christian world, one which sought to imitate and emulate classical Latin and Greek examples, along with a newly developing interest in studying primary sources. This resulted in history books in which the medieval conception of history, as influenced by Eusebius and Augustine, was replaced by a more secular and political interpretation of history. No longer was the sequence of bishops and popes, and the legitimisation of their authority, the model according to which history was written. Nor was the authority of existing history books still taken for granted. Historians, in a marked contrast to the medieval custom of stressing continuity with predecessors, began to articulate a specific identity for their endeavor.⁸¹

Jews likewise authored history books during this period. In the Mediterranean region in particular Sephardic Jews wrote about Jewish history, but the characteristics of the books differed significantly. This makes deciding which works should or should not be identified as historiography problematic. As such, I will present an overview of the books and authors most frequently named as historiography.

Medieval historiographical traditions were continued in the sixteenth century. The traditional Sephardic genre of *shalshelet ha-qabbalah* was practiced by Abraham ben Samuel Zacuto, who lived in Tunis. He updated the chain of tradition in his *Sefer yubasin* (Book of Geneologies), written in 1504 but not published until 1566, in Istanbul. Interestingly, Zacuto

⁸⁰ Yassif, ‘Hebrew Narrative Anthology’.

⁸¹ Cf. E. Cochrane, *Historians and historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago 1981); E.B. Fryde, *Humanism and Renaissance historiography* (London 1983); Joseph M. Levine, *The autonomy of history: truth and method from Erasmus to Gibbon* (Chicago 1999).

also included a small world chronicle which addresses general history from the Creation to the sixteenth century.⁸²

The title indicates that Gedalya ibn Yahya's book is written in the same tradition: he composed *Shalshelet ha-qabbalah* (Chain of Tradition; Venice 1587). As does Zacuto's work, this book offers more than just a continuation of the chain of tradition. It contains as well an encyclopaedia with lemmas about different topics, ranging from astronomy to angels; an essay on the relationship between classic culture and Jewish history; and a history of persecutions of Jews in Europe.⁸³

Persecutions are also the theme of Shlomo ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudab* (Scepter of Judah; Adrianopol 1554), a dialogue which presents a survey of the persecutions of the Jews from Roman times to the author's day. The book is structured by fictive discussions, mostly between the Spanish king and a Christian scholar, in which the narratives of persecutions are interwoven. In the book Ibn Verga searches the sense of Jewish history and Jewish suffering in particular. He was convinced that, just as in biblical times, the reason for the many persecutions had to be sins committed by Jews.⁸⁴ In his narrative, Ibn Verga uses historical material, fiction and tales all together. This, along with the dialogue structure, led some scholars to argue that the book is not historiography but primarily part of *belles lettres*. Although on both stylistic and historical grounds there is much to say in favour of this opinion, Ibn Verga's work nevertheless became part of the historiographical corpus after it was first printed. Later historians often used *Shevet Yehudab* as a reliable historical source on the sufferings of Jews in the *galut*.⁸⁵

Whereas it is debatable whether Ibn Verga's stylistic presentation was innovative, the contents of the respective historical books written by Eliyahu Capsali and Yosef Ha-Kohen

⁸² An English edition is: Abraham Zacuto, *The Book of Lineage, or, Sefer Yobassin. Translated and edited by Israel Shamir* (Tel Aviv 2005). On Zacuto himself, see: Francisco Cantera Burgos, *Abraham Zacut, siglo XV* (Madrid [1935]). On his book: José Luis Lacave, 'El carácter del Sefer Yuhasin' *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas* 6 (1970) 195-202; Eleazar Gutwirth, 'The "Sefer Yuhasin" and Zacuto's Tunisian Phase' in: Elena Romero ed., *Judaísmo hispano, estudios en memoria de José Luis Lacave Riaño II* (Madrid 2002) 765-777.

⁸³ Abraham David, 'R. Gedalya Ibn Yahya's "Shalshelet Hakabbalah" ("Chain of Tradition"): A Chapter in Medieval Jewish Historiography' *Immanuel* 12 (1981) 60-76; idem, 'Gedalia ibn Yahia, auteur de "Shalshelet ha-Qabbalah"' *Revue des Etudes Juives* 153 (1994) 1-2, 101-132; idem, 'The Spanish Expulsion and The Portuguese Persecution through the Eyes of the Historian R. Gedalya ibn Yahya' *Sefarad* 56 (1996) 1, 45-59.

⁸⁴ Marianne Awerbuch, *Zwischen Hoffnung und Vernunft, Geschichtsdeutung der Juden in Spanien vor der Vertreibung am Beispiel Abrahams und Ibn Vergas* (Berlin 1985) 166-173.

⁸⁵ So Martin Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte in jüdischen Chroniken, Hebräische Historiographie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen 2004) 45-48. The sources used by Ibn Verga, among which Yosippon is clearly the most popular, are presented by: Fritz Baer, *Untersuchungen über Quellen und Komposition des Schebet Yehuda* (Berlin 1936). See as well: J.D. Abramsky, 'On the essence and content of *Shevet Yehudab*' [Hebrew] in: idem, *On the paths of the eternal Jew* (Tel Aviv 1985) 46-65. The best scholarly edition is still: בער (ירושלים תש"ו). ערך והקדים מברוא יצחק. הגיה וביאר עזריאל שוחט. ספר שבט יהודה, הגיה וביאר עזריאל שוחט. ערך והקדים מברוא יצחק. בער (ירושלים תש"ו).

definitely merit the qualification. Both authors presented not only Jewish history but also non-Jewish history. In fact, they presented Jewish history as part of a narrative on general history. Capsali, a rabbi from Crete, wrote two history books. The first, *Seder Eliyahu zuta* (Minor Order of Elijah), finished in 1523, is for a great part devoted to the history of the Ottoman Empire. Special attention is paid to the exile of the Sephardim from Iberia and their migration to the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁶ The second work, *Sippure Venezia* or *Divre ha-yamim le-malkhut Venezia*, deals with the history of nearby Venice and could be characterised as a city chronicle. It was concluded in 1517 and presents not only the history of the city but also of the yeshivot in the north of Italy.⁸⁷ The subjects of both chronicles characterise the peculiar situation of a Jew living on Crete, between the Islamic Ottoman Empire and Christian Venice. Capsali's sympathy lies clearly with the former.

Ha-Kohen, a Sephardi Jew established as a doctor in Genua, wrote a book in which the general history of Turkey and France enjoyed a central position: *Divre ha-yamim le-malkhe Zarfat u-malkhe vet Otoman ha-Togar* (History of the Kings of France and of the Kings of the House of Ottoman the Turk; Sabbionetta 1554). The book starts with the collapse of the Roman Empire and describes the Byzantine Empire and the rise of Islam. But the major theme of the book can be characterised as the tense relationship between Christians and Muslims. In ha-Kohen's time the Ottoman Empire was a significant threat to Christian Europe. In history ha-Kohen found the earlier phases of this story, such as the Crusades and the conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Muslims. It is clear that ha-Kohen's sympathy, as a Jew, lies with the Ottomans, who welcomed Sephardi refugees from Spain and Portugal into their empire.⁸⁸ A special edition, in which the passages dealing with Jewish history were presented and new information was added (partly from Usque's Portuguese history), was written under the title *'Emeq ha-bakha* (the Vale of Tears). This edition begins its narrative where Flavius Josephus concluded and narrates Jewish history well into 1605.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Ibidem 62-65; cf. Charles Berlin, 'A sixteenth-century Hebrew chronicle of the Ottoman Empire, the "Seder Eliyahu Zuta" of Elijah Capsali and its message' in: idem ed., *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature, in Honor of I. Edvard Kier* (New York 1971) 21-44.

⁸⁷ Ibidem 80-82; Ann Brener, 'Portrait of the rabbi as young humanist, a reading of Elijah Capsali's "Chronicle of Venice"' *Italia* 11 (1994) 37-60.

⁸⁸ Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, 'Messianic Impulses in Joseph ha-Kohen' in: Bernard Dov Cooperman ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge Mass./London 1983) 460-487; Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte* 82-104; idem, 'Joseph ha-Kohen, Paolo Giovio, and sixteenth-century historiography' in: David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri eds., *Cultural intermediaries. Jewish intellectuals in early modern Italy* (Philadelphia 2004) 67-85.

⁸⁹ An English edition of *'Emeq ha-bakha*: Joseph Hachohen and the anonymous corrector, *The Vale of Tears (Emek habakha)*, translated plus critical commentary by Harry S. May (The Hague 1971); Jacobs, 'Joseph ha-Kohen', 76-77.

Much discussed is Azariah de' Rossi's *Me'or 'enayim* (Light of the Eyes). In the book's third section, *Imre Binah*, a critical method is used to date events from the Jewish past, resulting in a different chronology as in rabbinic literature. But this is only one subject discussed by de' Rossi, as he wrote in the book numerous small studies on various topics, some concerning Jewish tradition and history, others modern science and scholarship. De' Rossi was well aware of contemporary Christian scholarship and addressed the same topics, but he adopted a consistently apologetic stance. As Joanna Weinberg has concluded, De' Rossi, in his quest for the truth, mediated between the two worlds of Jewish and Christian scholarship. However, the book also questioned certain basic assumptions in Jewish tradition concerning rabbinic chronology and the historical use of *'aggadot* by using the humanist methods of Renaissance scholarship for traditional Jewish sources. This aroused heated argument, which rendered de' Rossi thereafter suspect to some of his contemporaries and to much of the general public. The very status of this book remains much discussed. Although it contains some of the most interesting and far-reaching conclusions on matters of Jewish history, the book itself is regularly labeled as not being historiography in the proper sense.⁹⁰

Interesting, and less known, is the work of Benyamin Nehemya ben Elnatan: *Mi-Paulo ba-revi'i ad Pius ba-hamishi* (From Paul IV to Pius V). The author lived in the Italian town of Civitanova, near Ancona; his chronicle describes the anti-Jewish measures of Pope Paul IV, of which the author was a victim. Autobiographical elements are combined with a portrait of the pope and the consequences of his policy for the Jews. There are resemblances with the "local Purim *megillo?*", although the interest in the non-Jewish surroundings gives this work its own character. Isaiah Sonne, who edited the chronicle for publication, has demonstrated the stylistic influences of *megilat Ester* and *Sefer Yosippon*.⁹¹

The only Ashkenazi author in this period is David Gans, who lived in Prague. Gans, although he also wrote on astrology, was well aware of the changes occurring in science and was in contact with renowned intellectuals such as Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. In his world chronicle, *Zemah David* (Sprout of Israel; Prague 1592), he describes, in separate parts,

⁹⁰ The impressive English edition is: Azariah De' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes, translated from the Hebrew with an introduction and annotations by Joanna Weinberg* (New Haven Conn./London 2001). Important contributions to the debate on De' Rossi include: Robert Bonfil, 'Some Reflections on the Place of Azariah de Rossi's *Meor Enayim* in the Cultural Milieu of Italian Renaissance Jewry' in: Bernard Dov Cooperman ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge Mass./London 1983) 23-48; Joanna Weinberg, 'Azariah de' Rossi and the Forgeries of Annus of Viterbo' in: David B. Ruderman, *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (New York etc. 1992) 252-279; Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* 69-75; on Yerushalmi's treatment of De' Rossi: Peter N. Miller, 'Lost and found', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 4, 502-507.

⁹¹ Isaiah Sonne ed., *Mi-Paulo ba-revi'i ad Pius ba-hamishi, kbronika 'ivrit min ha-me'a ba-sheš'esre* (Jerusalem 1954) 3-18.

general and Jewish history. Among Gans' foremost sources, besides contemporary German chronicles, were the books of ibn Yahya and de' Rossi. Gans used an annalistic structure, describing the most important events, without much causal analysis. He combined religious traditionalism and veneration of the Jewish tradition with a modern scientific approach to sources and in selecting his topics. Gans did not integrate Jewish into general history, because he upheld the traditional idea that qualified the former as sacred and the latter as profane, such that they were two domains that should not be combined. However, in his Ashkenazi context, where *Me'or Enayim* had met much criticism for being too secular, the choice to present general history in itself was already remarkable.⁹²

Whereas all the other authors still wrote in Hebrew, Samuel Usque – born to a *converso* family in Portugal - opted to write his work *Consolaçam as tribulaçoens de Israel* (Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel; Ferrara 1553) in Portuguese. His choice of language was deliberate, as the book was meant for *conversos*. Just like Ibn Verga, Usque used the dialogue as the model for his work. The three conversationalists discuss over three days the history of Jewish persecutions. The first day deals with the biblical period until the Babylonian exile; the second day until the destruction of the Second Temple; the last day accounts 37 persecutions, ranging from the seventh century to 1553.⁹³

Evaluations of the characteristics of this sixteenth-century historiography differ significantly. There are two major topics of discussion: whether this historiography was influenced by the non-Jewish surroundings, and whether this corpus entailed an innovation within Jewish historiography. The main participants in this discussion have been Yosef Haim Yerushalmi and Robert Bonfil.

⁹² An excellent edition is: David Gans, *Zemah David, A Chronicle of Jewish and World History (Prague 1592)*, edited with introduction and notes by Mordechai Breuer [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1983). An introduction to Gans as a historian offers: Mordechai Breuer, 'Modernism and Traditionalism in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography: A Study of David Gans' *Tzemah David*' in: Cooperman, *Jewish Thought* 49-88; and: idem, 'R. David Gans, Author of the Chronicle Zemah David, A Typological Study' [Hebrew] *Bar-Ilan* 11 (1973) 97-118; a detailed study on the ideology behind Gans' chronicle is offered by: Ben-Zion Degani, 'The structure of the world history and the redemption of Israel in R. David Gans' 'Zemah David' [Hebrew] *Zion* (1980) 173-200. The influence of non-Jewish sources and the presentation of non-Jewish history is studied by: Jiřina Šedinová, 'Non-Jewish sources in the chronicle by David Gans, "Tsemah David"' *Judaica Bohemiae* 8 (1972) 1, 3-16; idem, 'Czech history as reflected in the historical work by David Gans' *Judaica Bohemiae* 8 (1972) 2, 74-84. Gans' scientific interests are dealt with by: André Neher, *Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution of the Sixteenth Century, David Gans (1541-1613) and his times* [translated from the French by David Maisel] (Oxford etc. 1986).

⁹³ For the same reason as *Shevet Yehudah*, Jacobs also categorises this work as novelistic and not historiographic; Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte* 48-49. Portuguese edition: Samuel Usque, *Consolação às tribulações de Israel, edição de Ferrara, 1553, com estudos introdutórios por Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi e José V. de Pina Martins* I-II (Lisbon 1989); English edition: Samuel Usque, *Consolation for the tribulations of Israel (consolaçam as tribulaçoens de Israel)*, translated from the Portuguese by Martin A. Cohen (Philadelphia 1965).

In Yerushalmi's opinion the sixteenth-century Jewish historiography is to be understood within intra-Jewish parameters. The predominantly Sephardic character of this corpus, written mostly by refugees from the Iberian peninsula, leads him to the thesis that it was a reaction to the 1492 expulsion and its aftermath. Unlike earlier expulsions this one produced much historiographical activity. According to Yerushalmi, 'Precisely because this expulsion was not the first but, in a sense, the *last*, it was felt to have altered the face of Jewry and of history itself.' In 1492 Jews were banned from all West European countries and driven to the East. Yerushalmi maintains that from this crisis a new sensibility for history writing would have risen.⁹⁴

With this intra-Jewish explanation, Yerushalmi rejects the views of historians who explain the sixteenth-century Jewish historiography as the Jewish part of the Italian Renaissance revival of historiography. According to Moses A. Shulvass it was important that the Spanish and Portuguese Jews fled to Italy, where they observed 'that within the frame of Renaissance free society the Jew had ceased to be a passive pawn of history.' This resulted in a development of Jewish Renaissance historiography that paralleled 'that of the Italians in scope and depth.'⁹⁵

According to Bonfil Yerushalmi's thesis does not accurately describe the actual historical situation. The intra-Jewish explanation does not persuade him, but he objects also to Shulvass' optimism about the character of the corpus. A detailed comparison with contemporary Italian Renaissance historiography leads Bonfil to the opinion that the Jewish historians did not succeed in adopting the new historiographical principles to Jewish history. The shift to political history was difficult to make, because a political or secular apparatus as such did not exist in Jewish society. The only interpretative model to combine Jewish and general history was the antithesis, namely history books in which persecutions and expulsions form the major part. Another possibility was to separate Jewish and general history and to write them as two separate parts, as did Gans for instance. This development marginalized the position of the Jews in European society, and so widened the gap between Christians and Jews.

⁹⁴ Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, 'Clio and the Jews, , Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century' in: David Ruderman ed., *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (New York etc. 1992) 191-218, there 203.

⁹⁵ Moses A. Shulvass, *The Jews in the World of the Renaissance* (Leiden 1973) 295-309, there 296. A similar combination of the *gerush Sefarad* and the impact of the Renaissance is advocated by: Michael A. Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish history* (New York 1974) 17-20.

One result was the rabbinic stand to withdraw so-called “general books” from the Jewish reading corpus. Among the genres subsequently affected was historiography.⁹⁶

This forms the background of Bonfil’s statement that Jewish sixteenth-century historiography was ‘the swan song of medieval Jewish historiography’. It was actually the ‘sad epilogue’ rather than an equivalent of Italian Renaissance historiography (Shulvass) or the first genuine Jewish historiography (Yerushalmi). Yerushalmi, as opposed to Bonfil, stressed the innovative character of the corpus; he considered the quantity of books adequate reason to characterise it as a ‘resurgence of Jewish historical writing’.⁹⁷

However, Bonfil not only demonstrated that the corpus was very much bound to medieval historiography; he also showed that approximately ten history books in a hundred years was not much for the period in question. While the Jewish historiographical output in the Middle Ages equaled the Christian one in size, methodology and contents, it could not follow the immense rise in the production of historiography in the Renaissance era. Apart from the fact that the novelist character of some of the history books predominate to such an extent that it is difficult to call it historiography, it was also comparatively much smaller in number than was Christian Renaissance historiography.⁹⁸

Bonfil and Yerushalmi regard sixteenth-century Jewish historiography as an incidental (Yerushalmi) or final (Bonfil) period, after which, until the nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, nearly no historiography was written. ‘The rupture has been complete and decisive’, Yerushalmi writes. Bonfil has added: ‘So long as Jews could not become the actors of a really “New History,” they could hardly conceive of a real historiography of their own.’ However, although the sixteenth-century experiment may have ended, Jewish historiography itself did not. Also in the early modern period, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jews read, produced and published history books.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Bonfil, ‘How Golden’ passim; Robert Bonfil, ‘Jewish Attitudes toward History and Historical Writing in Pre-Modern Times’ *Jewish History* 11 (1997) 1, 7-40; also Martin Kohn concluded in his study of this period’s Jewish historiography that the gap between Jews and non-Jews widened: Martin Kohn, *Jewish historiography and Jewish self-understanding in the period of Renaissance and Reformation* [Ph.D. dissertation University of California, Los Angeles, 1979] esp. 194-197.

⁹⁷ Bonfil, ‘How Golden’ 90; Yosef Haym Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish history and Jewish memory* (Seattle 1996; 2nd printing) 57.

⁹⁸ Bonfil, ‘How Golden’ 226-228.

⁹⁹ Also Meyer described the period after the sixteenth century as two centuries with ‘no major advances in the writing of Jewish history’. On Western Europe he advanced this argument: ‘In Western Europe also there are fewer works dealing with history and no important advances. Only in the nineteenth century did Jews begin to produce integrated and comprehensive histories, not merely fragments or chains of tradition.’ Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish history*, 21.

2.7 Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jewish historiography

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the interest in history among Jews remained alive. This is evident from the numerous printed editions of earlier historical literature and from the translations of these works into other languages, including Yiddish – a topic that will be addressed separately in the next chapter. New chronicles and history books were also written. In the Arabic realm Sephardi Jews wrote about the whereabouts of the Jews under Islam. In Europe both Sephardim and Ashkenazim were active in writing history. Sephardim wrote both in Hebrew and the Iberian languages, whereas Ashkenazim used Hebrew and Yiddish. This broadening of languages in writing history is characteristic of the early modern period.

In the Middle East Yosef Sambari was active. He lived in Cairo in the second half of the seventeenth century and wrote the chronicle *Divre Yosef*. The book was concluded in 1673, some years after the failure of the Sabbatean movement. Martin Jacobs has suggested that Sambari was among the followers of Shabtai Zvi, because his patron Refa'el Yosef Çelebi was an active member of the movement's Cairo branch. However, the parts dealing with the false messiah in the two manuscripts of the chronicle are deleted, so it is difficult to verify this hypothesis.¹⁰⁰

Divre Yosef is presented as the second, general part of a larger chronicle. The first part is entitled *Divre habkamim*, and is supposed to have been a Jewish history in the tradition of *shalshelet ha-qabbalah*. It is not clear whether this first part was lost or never written. The second part presents an Islamic history, from the start in the seventh century until the author's own time. The book provides the names and dates of the subsequent dynasties and its rulers. Primary attention is given to the Osmanic sultans and their governors in Egypt. But within this Islamic structure attention is also given to the region's Jewish history, including leaders of the Egyptian Jewish community, a biography of Maimonides, the kabbalists of Safed, the 1492 expulsion from Spain and the rabbis of Osmanic cities.¹⁰¹

Sambari used Jewish and Islamic sources for his unpublished chronicle. The Jewish historiography he utilized included *Sefer yubasin*, *Shevet Yehudah*, *Divre ha-yamim*, *Seder Eliyahu zuta* and *Shalshelet ha-qabbalah*, among others. Yet he also employed various non-Jewish sources,

¹⁰⁰ Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte* 109-114; cf. Shim'on Shtober ed., *Sefer Divre Yosef, elef u-me'ah shenot toladah Yehudit be-tsel ha-Islam le-R. Yosef b. R. Yitshak Sambari* (Jerusalem 1994) 13-18.

¹⁰¹ Shtober ed., *Sefer Divre Yosef* passim. In the nineteenth century Neubauer already published a part of this chronicle: Adolf Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish chronicles and chronological notes* (Oxford 1887-1895; reprint Amsterdam 1970) 115-162.

such as the Koran, Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's (1364-1442) *Kitāb al-mawā'iz* and *Kitāb al-sulūk*. The successor chronicle to the last book was used as well, *al-Nudjūm al-ẓāhira* by Abū 'I-Mahāsīn ibn Taghrībirdī (ca. 1409-1470). Although Sambari generally shortened the passages he copied from these books, he remained so close to the original texts that his style changes from episode to episode.¹⁰²

A bit further eastwards, in Iran, Bābāi ibn Lutf and Bābāi ibn Farhād, members of the same family, each wrote a chronicle. They wrote in their daily language, Judeo-Persian. Bābāi ibn Lutf lived in the seventeenth century, in the Persian city of Kāshān. Because of a royal decree of Shah 'Abbās II he had been forced to convert to Islam. The title of his chronicle is a reference to this event: *Kitāb-i Anusi*, the Book of a Forced Convert. It was written sometime after 1661. His conversion must not have been lasting, however, as his grandson Bābāi ibn Farhād wrote as a Jew about Jewish history in Persia: this latter chronicle was entitled *Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān dar bāb-i 'ibrī va goyimi-yi sāni* (the Book of Events in Kāshān Concerning the Jews; their Second Conversion). Although his grandson used the earlier chronicle as model, it is not likely that Bābāi ibn Lutf knew Muslim-Iranian or European-Jewish historiographical works. According to Vera Basch Moreen the work is 'related to the provincial forms of Iranian Muslim historiographical tradition.'¹⁰³

Bābāi ibn Lutf's chronicle relates the persecution of the Iranian Jews in the period 1617-1662; this persecution was part of the larger anti-Jewish policy that prevailed in 1565-1662. The successor chronicle covers the period 1721-1731, and is in some manuscripts written after ibn Lutf's one. Both chronicles are composed as poetry. They provide a great deal of information about Iranian Jewish history, as well as a minority perspective on Persian history. Historical facts and folk tales are presented side by side.¹⁰⁴

In Europe there continued what Shmuel Feiner has called 'traditional historiography', defined as 'the entire Jewish historical literature that had been created and had influenced Jewish society's sense of the past in the Middle Ages, in the early modern era, and in the

¹⁰² Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte* 122-127; Shimon Shtober, 'The establishment of the *R'asat al-Yahud* in medieval Egypt as portrayed in the chronicle *Divrey Yosef*: myth or history?', *Revue des études juives* 164 (2005) 1-2, 33-54, on his sources esp. 42-45.

¹⁰³ Vera Basch Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism, A Study of Bābāi ibn Lutf's Chronicle (1617-1662)* (New York-Jerusalem 1987) 50-53. Until now there is not a complete edition of the chronicle. Manuscripts are in the Judeo-Persian collections of: JTS 1444; Bibliothèque Nationale Paris 1356; Ben Zvi Institute Jerusalem 916 and 917. Some parts are published in: W. Bacher, *Les Juifs de Perse au XVI^e et au XVIII^e siècles d'après les chroniques poétiques de Babai b. Lutf et de Babai b. Farhad* (Strasbourg 1907). The grandson's chronicle is published by Vera Basch Moreen, *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan invasion: The Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kashan of Babai b. Farhad (Freiburger Islamstudien)* (Stuttgart 1990)

¹⁰⁴ Moreen, *Peril and Heroism* 117.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁰⁵ From the perspective of Bonfil's thesis, however, it should be noted that the traditional historiography of the Middle Ages was continued after a failed experiment in new political history in the sixteenth century.

The European Sephardim also wrote historiography. In Amsterdam at least two persons were involved in the activity. In 1683 there appeared *Triumpbo del gobierno popular y de la Antigüedad Holandesa* by Daniel Levi de Barrios. The work presents a history of the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam and of its institutions. Although he knew earlier historiography such as Flavius Josephus, *Sefer Yosippon* and Zacuto's *Sefer yubasin*, de Barrios' main sources were archival. He used the *Livro de Bet Haim*, the register of the burials at the Sephardi cemetery in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, as well as other administrative sources of the community. In this respect he was an innovative Jewish historian.¹⁰⁶

Like de Barrios, David Franco Mendes (1713-1790) wrote his chronicle in Portuguese, not in Hebrew. He likewise concentrated on local history, entitling his (never published) book *Memorias succintas da consternação de nosso K[abal] K[ados] de Amsterd[a]m*. He used primary sources, together with earlier Jewish and Dutch historiography. One source was Amelander's Yiddish chronicle *Sbeyris Yisroel*.¹⁰⁷ Franco Mendes also wrote the chronicle *Memorias do estabelecimento e progresso dos judeos portuguezes e espanboes nesta famosa citade de Amsterdam*, which covers the history of the Sephardi community in Amsterdam until 1772.¹⁰⁸

Within Ashkenazi circles the linkage with the earlier historiography was much clearer. Some authors continued the genre of *shalsbelet ha-qabbalah*, such as R. Yehiel Heilprin of Minsk (ca. 1660- ca. 1746) in his *Seder ha-dorot* (first published in 1769). In his introduction Heilprin clearly states that he had not desired to write a new book, but was merely making a correction and update to the earlier authoritative books. The martyriological genre was also continued, often in response to pogroms or other anti-Jewish measures. Nathan Nata ben Moshe

¹⁰⁵ Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History, The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (Oxford-Portland, Oregon 2002) 11.

¹⁰⁶ W. Chr. Pieterse, *Daniel Levi de Barrios als geschiedschrijver van de Portugees-Israelietische Gemeente te Amsterdam in zijn 'Triumpbo del Gobierno Popular'* (Amsterdam 1968); Kenneth R. Scholberg, 'Miguel de Barrios and the Amsterdam Sephardic community', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 53 (1962) 2, 120-159.

¹⁰⁷ The chronicle was published and translated into Dutch by L. and R. Fuks, 'Een Portugese kroniek over het einde van de patriottentijd' *Studia Rosenthaliana* VII (1973) 1, 8-39.

¹⁰⁸ David Franco Mendes, *Memorias do estabelecimento e progresso dos judeos portuguezes e espanboes nesta famosa citade de Amsterdam, a Portuguese chronicle of the history of the Sephardim in Amsterdam up to 1772* [edited by L. and R. Fuks, with commentary by T.N. Teensma] (Amsterdam 1975).

Hanover wrote his chronicle *Yeven mezulah* (Abyss of Despair; Venice 1653) in order to present an account to the Jewish public of the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648-1649.¹⁰⁹

2.8 *A reservoir of models and methods*

It was within this historiographical landscape that first translated Yiddish history books and consequently original Yiddish historiography came into being in the Dutch Republic in the late seventeenth century. This was a landscape in which medieval and early modern books enjoyed the same status and in which separate historiographical methods and models existed next to each other. Biblical historiography offered the early modern historians a theological understanding of history, stressing God's involvement with the Jewish people, but also served as a reservoir of narrative models, motifs and stories which could be read and applied in figurative ways.

Rabbinic and medieval historiography culminated in two genres, the Sephardic 'chain of tradition' and Ashkenazi martyriology. In both genres biblical elements were applied, such as genealogical interest and God's providence, but each was primarily an answer to contemporary conditions of Jews and in line with central cultural modes. The stress on rabbinic authorities, their orthodoxy and wisdom (*Gelebrtengeschichte*), and on the persecutions Jews were suffering in diaspora (*Leidengeschichte*) became in the centuries thereafter the two main historiographical modes. The three main functions of history writing were, thus, legitimizing rabbinic authority, remembering exemplary Jews of the past and serving as an ethical didactic for contemporary readers.

In terms of methodology Jews did not differ significantly from medieval historiography in general. As many as possible sources were collected, whereafter the author merged them into a new all-encompassing narrative. Yassif rightly stressed the anthological character of much Jewish historiography, like the influential *Sefer Yosippon*. This feature, just as the generic ones, worked as well through in early modern Jewish historiography.

¹⁰⁹ English translation by Abraham J. Mesch: Nathan Hanover, *Abyss of Despair (Yeven Metzulah), the Famous 17th Century Chronicle depicting Jewish Life in Russia and Poland during the Chmielnicki Massacres of 1648-1649* (New York 1950). About the reliability of Hanover in comparison to other sources: Edward Fram, 'Creating a tale of martyrdom in Tulczyn, 1648' in: Carlebach, *Jewish History and Jewish Memory* 89-112; on the narrative structures in the book and its importance in forging a distinct Polish Jewish identity: Adam Teller, 'Jewish literary responses to the events of 1648-1649 and the creation of a Polish-Jewish consciousness' in: Benjamin Nathans and Gabriella Safran eds., *Culture front. Representing Jews in Eastern Europe* (Philadelphia 2007) 17-45.

Sixteenth-century Jewish historiography – although predominantly Sephardic – is already a perfect demonstration of this process. Some of the authors continued the *shalshelet ha-qabbala* tradition, others were typically the history of Jewish persecutions. Some are also clearly composed in an anthological way. Simultaneously, in this period, major difficulties were as well present in coping with politics and non-Jewish, general history. Was there a Jewish equivalent to the Renaissance-style political, secularized historiography? This same issue was no less pressing two centuries later in Amsterdam Yiddish historiography.

The Amsterdam historians had studied their classics and were well aware of the ideas, methods, models and challenges. In a creative way they not only continued the tradition of Jewish historiography but also introduced significant innovations. One of these is the change of language from Hebrew to the Jewish daily language, Yiddish. The next chapter will therefore concentrate on the first phase of Yiddish historiography, first through translating the Hebrew classics, and only thereafter through authoring original historical texts in Yiddish.

3. From Hebrew to Yiddish historiography

3.1 Politics of translation

Hebrew was the nearly undisputed language of Jewish historiography until the sixteenth century. This is not surprising, since Hebrew was in these times the language of the literate class and the language of religion. This combination resulted in Hebrew historiography, which was produced by the literate class and religiously legitimated. The two main branches of Jewish historiography in the Middle Ages, namely the Sephardi chains of tradition and the Ashkenazi Crusader chronicles, both had a religious function in authorizing the rabbinic hierarchy and in remembering martyrs. This holds true for the most important medieval history book, *Sefer Yosippon*.

The Ashkenazi world was in medieval and early modern times characterized by ‘internal bilingualism’, in that Hebrew and Yiddish were used alongside each other for different domains.¹¹⁰ Hebrew was used in the liturgical domain, for daily prayers, synagogue services and study hours, and functioned as a language of communication between rabbis and some lay leaders of Jewish communities. Yiddish served as the daily spoken language for family life, economic transactions and divertimento. Not all Yiddish speakers were conversant in Hebrew, but all who mastered Hebrew knew and used Yiddish.¹¹¹

In the early modern period the relation between the Hebrew and Yiddish domains gradually changed due to at least two major influences.¹¹² First, the book printing revolution had significant and lasting influence on Jewish cultures, resulting in the entrance of Sephardic books into the Ashkenazi world, the spread of important texts to a larger audience and the

¹¹⁰ Shlomo Berger, Aubrey Pomerance, Andrea Schatz, Emile Schrijver, ‘Speaking Jewish – Jewish speak: introduction’ in: idem eds., *Speaking Jewish – Jewish speak. Multilingualism in western Ashkenazic culture* [Studia Rosenthaliana 36] (Leuven/Paris/Dudley MA 2003) VII-XV; the term ‘internal bilingualism’ is coined by Max Weinreich in his famous essay: ‘Tneveynikste tsveysprakhikayt in Ashkenaz biz der haskole: fakt n un bagrifn’, *Di Goldene Keyt* 35 (1959) 3-11; an English version in: ‘Internal bilingualism in Ashkenaz’ in: Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg eds., *Voices from the Yiddish* (Ann Arbor 1972) 279-288; Chava Turniansky, *Between holy and profane: language, education and knowledge among Eastern European Jews* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv 1994) esp. 81-87.

¹¹¹ Jean Baumgarten, ‘Bilingualism and the development of Old Yiddish literature’ in: idem, *Introduction to Old Yiddish literature*, ed. and transl. by Jerold C. Frakes (Oxford 2005) 72-81.

¹¹² On the fluidity of the borders between Hebrew and Yiddish, and the role of Yiddish in the formation of a distinct Ashkenazi identity: Shlomo Berger, ‘Functioning within a diasporic third space: the case of early modern Yiddish’, *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15 (2008) 68-86.

invention of a new Jewish canon and library.¹¹³ The traditional Hebrew texts were now published alongside new Hebrew books. Often the same publishers began printing Yiddish books, not only medieval Yiddish genres, such as *mayse biker*, but also adding new genres to the Yiddish domain.¹¹⁴ Many of these works still had a close relationship to Hebrew texts: they explained the weekly *parasha*, the text of the *siddur* and *makhzor* or introduced readers to Ashkenazi *minhagim*. Some books were translations from Hebrew originals, although often with significant appropriations, for a new audience; others were written directly in Yiddish.¹¹⁵

Second, the position of the vernacular in relation to canonical languages, such as Latin, changed in many European societies. Throughout Europe the Bible was translated into the vernacular and spread among a much larger public than before. Many other books were translated from Latin, and growing numbers of texts were written primarily in vernacular. The Dutch Republic was among the European regions where Latin was largely replaced by the local vernacular, in this case the Dutch language. Although the position of Hebrew in Jewish communities was a different one than Latin in Christian society, all this influenced Ashkenazi societies, resulting in a growing turn to Yiddish. The supremacy of Hebrew, however, was never questioned or threatened. The first Yiddish books were printed by Christian publishers, who also promoted vernacular books for their Christian audiences.¹¹⁶

Among the texts translated from Hebrew into Yiddish were history books. The Hebrew originals and their Yiddish translations enjoyed widespread popularity and most books were republished several times. The history of these translations and the subsequent adaptation to a new public has yet to be written, with the exception of a study into the ‘Ashkenization’ of *Shevet Yehudab*.¹¹⁷ Here I present a short survey of this crucial stage in the *Werdegang* from Hebrew to Yiddish historiography. As is the case for Yiddish literature in general, also Yiddish

¹¹³ Moshe Rosman, ‘Innovative tradition: Jewish culture in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth’ in: David Biale ed., *Cultures of the Jews. A new history* (New York 2002) 519-570; Elchanan Reiner, ‘Beyond the realm of the Haskalah – changing learning patterns in Jewish traditional society’, *Simon-Dubnow-Institut Jahrbuch/Yearbook* 6 (2007) 123-133.

¹¹⁴ Shlomo Berger, ‘Yiddish on the borderline of modernity – language and literature in early modern Ashkenazi culture’, *Simon-Dubnow-Institut Jahrbuch/Yearbook* 6 (2007) 113-122, there 116.

¹¹⁵ Berger, ‘Speaking Jewish’, IX-X.

¹¹⁶ Shlomo Berger, *Yiddish and Jewish modernization in the 18th century* (Hebrew) [Braun lectures in the history of the Jews in Prussia 12] (Ramat Gan 2006); Jean Baumgarten, ‘Printing, distribution, and audience of Yiddish books’ in: idem, *Introduction*, 38-71, there 40-48; Leo Fuks, ‘Amsterdam, a yidisher literatur-tseiner in 17^{tn} un 18^{tn} yohrhundert’, *Di Goldene Keyt* 115 (1985) 183-194, there 191-192; idem, ‘Zum Einfluß der niederländischen Kultur auf die jiddische Literatur des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts’ in: H.-J. Mueller and W. Röhl eds., *Fragen des älteren Jiddisch. Kolloquium in Trier 1976, Vorträge* (Trier 1977) 74-77. Irene Zwiep has demonstrated the changing role of Yiddish in the domain of grammar: Zwiep, ‘Adding the reader’s voice: early-modern Ashkenazi grammars of Hebrew’, *Science in Context* 20 (2007) 2, 163-195.

¹¹⁷ Michael Stanislawski, ‘The Yiddish *Shevet Yehudab*. A Study in the “Ashkenization” of a Spanish-Jewish Classic’ in: E. Carlebach, J. Efron and D. Myers eds., *Jewish history and Jewish memory. Essays in honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Hanover/London 1998) 134-159.

historiography is – what Marion Aptroot in the case of Yiddish Bible translations has termed – ‘a translation based tradition’.¹¹⁸ Only on the solid structure of translations, original Yiddish historiography could develop.

The translation of Hebrew history books began with the Yiddish edition of *Sefer Yosippon*. In 1546 Michael Adam, a Jewish convert to Christianity, published, at Froschauer’s Zürich-based printing firm, his translation of the work, for which he had used the 1510 Hebrew edition by Tam ibn Yahya of Constantinople. Two years previously Adam had published the first Yiddish Torah translation in two editions, one for Jews and one for Christians (Cremona 1544). The only difference between the editions were the title pages and the prefaces, each of which was directed at a different audience.¹¹⁹ That *Yosippon* was the second text translated, following the Torah, is an indication of how important and successful it was.

Despite Adam’s religious convictions, his Yiddish *Yosippon* edition became quite popular. It was republished in Prague in 1607 and Amsterdam in 1661, although without Adam’s introduction and with his name omitted from the title pages, thus turning the edition into an anonymous work. In Frankfurt am Main a slightly revised version was printed by Seligman Reis in 1692 and reprinted there in 1708. This version mentioned only the Hebrew edition and completely ignored the earlier Yiddish editions, although it followed the Adam edition in adding a small appendix on how to read and write Yiddish. Reis occasionally added to the main text, not only in the Yiddish but also the Hebrew editions, but marked his additions with an icon (a small hand).¹²⁰ Amelander prepared a new revision of Adam’s edition, as we shall see in Chapter 5, and published it as the first volume of his envisioned series of history books. After 1743 the printing of Yiddish editions of *Yosippon* continued into the twentieth century.

The same story can be told about the Sephardi history book *Shevet Yebudab*. In 1591, several decades after the first Yiddish edition of *Yosippon*, an anonymously translated Yiddish edition of *Shevet Yebudab* was published, in Krakow by Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz. This translation was in many ways adapted to the Ashkenazi reading public, to such a degree that

¹¹⁸ Marion J. Aptroot, *Bible translation as cultural reform. The Amsterdam Yiddish Bibles (1678-1679)* [unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford 1989], esp. chapter 3.

¹¹⁹ Chava Turniansky, ‘Le-toledot ha-tayts-humash – humash mit hibur’in: *Iyunim be-sifrut devarim she-ne’emru be-erev le-kevod Dov Sadan be-mele’ot lo sbemonim ve-hamesh shanah* (Jerusalem 1988) 21-58; Nokhem Shtif, ‘Mikhael Adams dray yidishe bikher’, *Filologishe sbrifn* 2 (1928) 135-168; Jean Baumgarten, ‘Yiddish Bibles’ in: idem, *Introduction*, 82-127, there 104-105.

¹²⁰ *Sefer Yosippon* [Yiddish] (Frankfurt am Main 1708) 4a-4b (Yiddish introduction), 364a (appendix on Yiddish).

Michael Stanislawski has labeled it the ‘Ashkenization’ of the Sephardic classic. The Yiddish translation stressed, more than did the Hebrew original, God’s providence and the traditional theology of Jewish sins underlying the history of suffering; it also defended the Talmud and omitted passages about Christian miracles and conversions of Jews to Christianity. The translator was unquestionably highly successful in his task, and his edition was reprinted in Amsterdam, in 1648¹²¹; in Sulzbach, in 1700; and in Fürth, in 1724. Reworked translations appeared in 1700 in Amsterdam and in 1810 in Ostrog. A completely new translation was printed in Hrubieszow in 1818.¹²²

A final example is David Gans’ *Zemah David*.¹²³ Because many Jewish men and women were unable to read the Hebrew original, Zalman Hena (Hanau) decided to prepare a Yiddish edition, albeit one without the introduction, indices and years in the page margins. He recommended the book to his audience, arguing that in reading it they would become familiar with both Jewish and non-Jewish history and thus enlarge their knowledge. Moreover, reading the book would also result in *לושטיגהייט*, divertissement.¹²⁴ In adding this somewhat ‘frivolous’ benefit to the traditional catalogue of benefits of history, Hena – and the Frankfurt rabbi who provided an *haskama* to the edition – opted for a different track than had most other historians and editors of history books.¹²⁵ The edition saw the light of day in Frankfurt am Main in 1698.¹²⁶ Hena’s Yiddish edition of David Gans’ history book was, unlike the other Yiddish translations of Hebrew historiography, not particularly successful. After the first edition no other Yiddish versions were published until 1788, although Hebrew editions

¹²¹ This edition was characterized by the linguist Jac. van Ginneken as the oldest known example of ‘Dutch Yiddish’, although it is questionable if one can speak of a separate ‘Dutch Yiddish’ in the seventeenth century; Jac. van Ginneken, *Handboek der Nederlandsche taal*. Vol. III (Nijmegen 1919) 14-15.

¹²² Stanislawski, ‘The Yiddish *Shevet*’, on the different editions: 134, 147 n.4; on the ‘Ashkenization’ of the book: 140-146.

¹²³ More translations could be mentioned, such as the Yiddish rhymed version of Nathan Neta Hanover’s *Yeven Mezulah* in 1655, two years after the Hebrew original, and another translation a few decades later, Amsterdam 1689; Israel Zinberg, *Old Yiddish literature from its origins to the Haskalah period* [A history of Jewish literature 7] (Cincinnati/New York 1975) 231.

¹²⁴ David Gans, *Zemah David* [Yiddish] (Frankfurt am Main 1698), 1b, introduction by Zalman Hena.

¹²⁵ David Myers even labelled this new benefit of history as an openness to the developing culture of leisure in Europe; Myers, *Resisting history*, 15.

¹²⁶ Hena is in most bibliographies linked with the early *maskil* Solomon Zalman Hanau, author of the Hebrew grammar *Binyan Shlomo*, but this is surely a false identification. Solomon Zalman Hanau was born in 1687 in Hanau and thus would have been 11 years old when he supposedly published the Yiddish *Zemah David*, which, regardless of how brilliant he was, is most unlikely. The publisher Zalman Hanau should therefore be distinguished from the grammarian and early *maskil*. Steinschneider still put a question mark behind the name ‘Salman Hanau’, but the catalogues of the main university libraries all name Solomon Zalman Hanau as the editor, following the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* s.v. Gans, David ben Solomon (see www.worldcat.org); Moritz Steinschneider, *Die Geschichtsliteratur der Juden*, 109. For more on Solomon Zalman Hanau, see: Feiner, *Jewish Enlightenment*, 39-41; Andrea Schatz, ‘Vorgesprochen und umgeschrieben. Die ‘neue heilige Sprache’ der jüdischen Aufklärer’ in: Michael Brenner ed., *Jüdische Sprachen in deutscher Umwelt: Hebräisch und Jiddisch von der Aufklärung bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 2002) 19-27.

continued to be printed. Zinberg assumed that the work's 'arid, protocol-like tone' was the reason that it did not appeal to a larger public.¹²⁷

The process of translating Hebrew history books into Yiddish illustrates several things. First, these Yiddish translations all functioned alongside Hebrew editions, which were reprinted repeatedly in the same period.¹²⁸ The editors of the Yiddish editions were highly conscious of this, and never sought to replace the Hebrew editions. It is telling that for the Frankfurt *Yosippson* edition of 1708 the main point of reference in discussing the new edition's innovations was not earlier Yiddish editions, on which it heavily relied, but the Hebrew edition. The Yiddish translations, in short, cannot be understood without the Hebrew editions next to them.

Second, the Yiddish translations had a different audience than did the Hebrew editions. Most Yiddish editions used the same words to characterize their intended audience: 'ordinary householders, men and women' (*Shevet Yehudab* 1591); the 'ordinary man who is not versant in the holy tongue', as well as ordinary women (*Zemah David* 1698); or simply the גימייני פֿאלק (ordinary people; *Yosippson* 1708). These qualifications were not specific for Yiddish translations of history books, but were standard for many Yiddish books.

As Jean Baumgarten has demonstrated, these characterisations describe the middle strata of Jewish communities, the *mevinim*, those who were able to read but did not have enough time or education to study Hebrew books. The appeal of Yiddish books reached further, however, because they were not only intended to be read by oneself, on one's own, but also collectively, as was common in synagogue and beth ha-midrash. The 1591 Yiddish *Shevet Yehudab*, for example, clearly states that 'everyone should buy it in order to read it with his wife and children.'¹²⁹

The audience was described in gender-precise wordings. For some Yiddish books, such as *tkhines* or the *Tsene u-Rene*, women are mentioned as the primary readers, although it is clear that men used these books no less.¹³⁰ In the case of Yiddish translations of history books

¹²⁷ Zinberg, *Old Yiddish*, 231; the second Yiddish edition of *Zemah David* was printed in Frankfurt am Main 1788.

¹²⁸ Hebrew editions of *Sefer Yosippson* were published in Mantua, in 1474; Constantinople, in 1510; Basel, in 1541; Venice, in 1544; Krakow, in 1588 and 1599; Frankfurt am Main, in 1689; Gotha, in 1707 and 1710; Amsterdam, in 1723; Prague, in 1784; Hebrew editions of *Shevet Yehudab* appeared in Amsterdam, in 1655 and 1709; Fürth, in 1724; and finally, of Gans' history book a considerable larger number of Hebrew than Yiddish editions saw daylight: Frankfurt am Main, in 1692 and 1698; Offenbach 1768, Fürth 1785.

¹²⁹ Baumgarten, 'Printing', 67-71; idem, 'Prayer, ritual and practice in Ashkenazic Jewish society' in: Berger, *Speaking Jewish*, 121-146, there 122; citation after: Stanislawski, 'Yiddish *Shevet*', 138.

¹³⁰ Chava Weissler, 'For women and for men who are like women': the construction of gender in Yiddish devotional literature', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (1989) 2, 7-24.

women are depicted as the second category after the *ba'ale-batim* who were not accustomed to read whole books in Hebrew. History, unlike halakha or kabbalah, was apparently not considered a male-specific domain but one that was useful for men, women and children alike.

However, the fact that these Yiddish editions were printed for a different social group within Ashkenazi culture than were the Hebrew ones, should – once again – not mislead us. Although the rabbinic elite occasionally voiced critical considerations of Yiddish publications, Yiddish literature as such was not directed against the Hebrew domain or its primary readers – the scholarly, mainly rabbinic elite. It is notable that not all Yiddish translations began with a Hebrew introduction – such introductions willingly or unwillingly underscoring the supremacy of Hebrew language – and that some also included a *haskama* from a local rabbi, in which people were encouraged to read the book. The *haskama* also protected the publisher by granting him exclusive rights to publishing the book for a certain period of time.¹³¹

Third, as the pioneering study of Stanislawski has demonstrated, the translators did not slavishly reproduce the Hebrew originals but in fact worked deliberately on the popularization of history books, within an Ashkenazi context. The paratext changed, addressing a new audience via a work's title page, propaganda rhymes, introduction(s) and typography. Although there remains room for discussion about the supposed secular or heterodox nature of a belletristic history such as *Shevet Yehudah*,¹³² the Yiddish translation eliminated any potential sources of anxiety about a disturbing of traditional theological ideologies. *Shevet Yehudah* changed from a Sephardic work into an Ashkenazi one, in tone, language and contents. By omitting the stories of (mass) conversions of Jews to Catholicism, the translator deleted the entire story of the Marranos and transformed the Sephardim into faithful Jews who, like the Ashkenazim of the Crusader chronicles, preferred to die for the *kiddush ha-shem*.¹³³ Thus, via omission (*Shevet Yehudah* 1591) or addition (*Yosippon* 1708) of material, Yiddish translations became suitable for the new Ashkenazi audience.

Fourth, nearly all the history books translated into Yiddish were successful. Except for *Zemah David*, these history books were republished frequently in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, accounting for their wide popularity of history among Ashkenazi Jews. Places where the new editions were printed followed the rise of new centers of Jewish publishing: after Zürich cities such as Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Krakow and Sulzbach took over.

¹³¹ David Gans, *Zemah David* (Frankfurt 1698) 1b.

¹³² Cf. Yerushalmi, 'Clio and the Jews'; Yitzak F. Baer, 'He'arot hadashot lesefer *Shevet Yehudah*', *Tarbiz* 10 (1934-1935) 152-179.

¹³³ Stanislawski, 'Yiddish *Shevet*', *passim*.

The Yiddish editions were each time printed in the heart of the Jewish book industry, attesting to their popularity and apparent commercial success.

Amelander entered this tradition of editing a Hebrew history book in Yiddish translation when he prepared his *Yosippun* edition of 1743. As we will see in Chapter 5 the edition was presented as a response to the immense interest in history among Amsterdam Jewry. Also, the language of the earlier Frankfurt 1708 edition was considered old fashioned and difficult to understand. As will be demonstrated in paragraph 5.2.5 Amelander's *Yosippun* edition did not perfunctorily follow the Frankfurt edition, but resumed the catalogue of illustrations that had characterized the first Zürich 1546 edition and the Amsterdam 1661 edition. In contrast to the other Yiddish translations of Hebrew history books, Amelander's *Yosippun* edition does not include a Hebrew introduction – although it does feature a *haskama* in Hebrew by the Amsterdam Ashkenazi chief rabbi Aryeh Leib - but instead presents two introductions solely in Yiddish: one by Amelander and one by his publishers. The short treatise on how to read and write Yiddish is also omitted. This evidences the self-confidence that Amelander and his publishing partners had in publishing books in Yiddish and can be interpreted as a subsequent step on the way from Hebrew to Yiddish historiography.

The publishers of the 1743 Amsterdam edition reflected on the translation process of *Yosippun* from Hebrew into Yiddish. They attributed it to the significant nature of the book that 'our ancestors' had undertaken the efforts to translate it, in order that everyone - men, women and children - would be able to know the history of God's miracles.¹³⁴ The definition of the audience can be interpreted both as a description of the practice of *Yosippun* reading in Ashkenazi circles and at the same time as the intended public. It is clear that the publishers wanted to reach the whole family with their edition. Unlike earlier Yiddish translations of Hebrew history books the audience is not further qualified as 'the ordinary man or woman', a sign that the educated class was not excluded. The *haskama* reinforces this impression, as such an addition was not common for Yiddish books and translations. The inclusion of children would have widened the audience even further.

The edition of *Yosippun* and the publication of *Sheyris Yisroel* were envisioned as a combined project and therefore presented to the public as a single book project. However, it is significant that Amelander first opted to revise *Yosippun*, thereby becoming acquainted with Jewish historiographical literature and styles, and that only thereafter, as a second step, did he

¹³⁴ *Yosippun* (Amsterdam 1743) vi.

write the first Yiddish-language history book, without a preceding or at least parallel Hebrew edition.¹³⁵ The success and apparent status of Yiddish editions of well-known Hebrew history books helped pave the way for Amelander. After joining that tradition, he gained the courage to publish his own Yiddish universal history book.

3.2 *The start of Yiddish history writing in Amsterdam*

Amelander, of course, was not the first to write history in Yiddish in Amsterdam. In the decades before *Sheyris Yisroel* was published several others had attempted to bring historiography from the Hebrew to the Yiddish domain, by translation or by authoring original Yiddish history texts.

In her pioneering survey article ‘Yiddish historiography in the time of the Dutch Republic’, Rena Fuks-Mansfeld rightly stresses the broader context of Yiddish publications with explicit interest in both history and contemporary society. Many of these publications could be qualified as expressions of a historical consciousness among Dutch Ashkenazim, which should be distinguished from proper history writing. Fuks-Mansfeld notes, for example, the short-lived Yiddish press and the Yiddish almanacs (*lubot*), which included short chronologies of Jewish history.¹³⁶ In the context of this chapter, it is worthwhile to examine the genre of pamphlets, in which translation played a major role, before turning to original history writing in Yiddish.

In the years leading up to publications of *Sheyris Yisroel* at least two Yiddish pamphlets dealing with contemporary history were published. These two pamphlets were both translated into Yiddish, albeit not from Hebrew but from Dutch and Portuguese, respectively. This is yet another demonstration of the fact that the interest in history among the Amsterdam Ashkenazim was influenced not only by the Hebrew historiographical legacy but also by historical interest in Dutch society at large. Furthermore, as the second pamphlet was originally written in Portuguese, it becomes again clear that the Ashkenazim shared the same interest with their Sephardic co-religionists, who also authored history books and historical pamphlets, as seen in Chapter 2.

¹³⁵ The only printed book which could possibly be considered as a predecessor to Amelander’s work is Alexander ben Moses Ethausen’s Yiddish history from the patriarchs to the destruction of the Temple in 70, *Beth Yisrael* (Offenbach 1713; second edition: Amsterdam 1724). Chone Shmeruk and Israel Bartal, ‘Contemporary Jerusalem by R. Alexandre ben Moshe Ethausen’ [Hebrew], *Shalem* 4 (1984), 445-458.

¹³⁶ Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Yiddish historiography’, 9-11.

The first pamphlet, translated from Dutch into Yiddish by the prolific school teacher and author Joseph Maarssen, is an anonymous account of the ‘Aansprekersoproer’ (undertakers’ revolt) of 1696 in Amsterdam. This revolt had been a response to an attempt by city authorities to impose funeral reforms. The revolt struck the Jewish quarter, as one of the four looted houses belonged to the Sephardic family De Pinto.¹³⁷

The other pamphlet was translated from Portuguese, although it was written by an Ashkenazi, namely the Amsterdam printer Uri Phoebus Ha-Levi. In this small booklet Ha-Levi narrates the founding myth of the Amsterdam Sephardic community and the role his grandfather Moses Uri Ha-Levi of Emden had played in the return of the Iberian *conversos* to Judaism. The pamphlet saw the light of day in 1710 or 1711 and was titled *Narração da vinda dos judeos espanhoes a Amsterdam*; a Yiddish translation appeared most probably at the same time. Unfortunately, of the Yiddish pamphlet only the title page of the second print has survived.¹³⁸

The importance of both pamphlets in the creation of Yiddish historical writing is attested by the fact that Amelander, in his *Sbeyris Yisroel*, used both as sources for his chapters on Amsterdam Jewish history. Although the second pamphlet, by Uri Phoebus Ha-Levi, has more of a historical character than does the first, about the ‘Aansprekersoproer’ (this pamphlet could even be labeled as journalism), for Amelander both were important and unique sources in composing his historical narrative.

The genre of pamphlets, with its often contemporary political component, is nevertheless, like the Yiddish almanacs, more an expression of historical consciousness than proper history writing. Somewhere between expressions of historical consciousness and historiography there should probably be situated another important source about Dutch Jewish history. It is a history book which has been lost, and so it is unclear if it was ever printed for distribution and whether it was written in Hebrew or Yiddish. The author, Maharim Maarssen,

¹³⁷ Joseph Maarssen, *Ayn basbraybung fun der rebeliray tsu Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1707); the only copy is kept in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the pamphlet is a translation of: anonymus [Pieter Rabus], *Historie van den Oproer, te Amsterdam voorgefallen, door des Stads Gr. Achth. Overheid en trouwe Borger loffelijker wijze gestild, zedert den 31sten January 1696* (Amsterdam and Rotterdam 1696); on the pamphlet: Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Joodse geschiedschrijving’, 148-149; on Maarssen’s writings: Jacob Shatzky, ‘Di hakdomes tsu Yoysef Maarssens khiburim’ *Yivo Bleter* 13 (1938) 5-6, 377-389; and: Marion Aptroot, ‘Yiddish and the German standard in the letter writing manuals of Yusef ben Yankev Maarssen’ in: Jerold C. Frakes and Jeremy Dauber eds., *Between two worlds: Yiddish-German encounters* [Studia Rosenthaliana 41] (Leuven 2009) 13-27.

¹³⁸ The Portuguese pamphlet was reprinted in 1768, and a critical edition was published by Jacob S. da Silva Rosa: Uri Phoebus Halevi: *Narração da vinda dos judeos espanhoes a Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1933). On the Yiddish translation: Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Joodse geschiedschrijving’, 140, 149-151; Mirjam Gutschow, *Inventory of Yiddish publications from the Netherlands, c. 1650-c. 1950* (Leiden etc. 2007) 112 no. 405.

was related to Joseph Maarssen, and so the use of Yiddish should not be excluded.¹³⁹ The author had been in the service of the Portuguese Jewish merchant Francisco Gomes da Costa and wrote a book on the early history of Jews in Amsterdam. We know of his book only through *Sheyris Yisroel*, as therein Amelander twice refers to Maarssen's book: first, in describing the inauguration of the Esnoga, the renowned Sephardic synagogue; and in citing Maarssen *in extenso*, in relating how the Amsterdam Ashkenazim started on Rosh Hashana 1635 with their own minyanim. The book would therefore have been written after the inauguration of the Esnoga in 1675.¹⁴⁰

The most immediate predecessor to *Sheyris Yisroel* is a Yiddish chronicle written by the sexton and trustee (*shamasb ve-ne'eman*) of the Amsterdam Ashkenazi kehillah, Leyb ben Oyzer or Levi Asser Rosenkrants (died 1727).¹⁴¹ His chronicle, which was transmitted in manuscript, consists of two parts. The first is a Yiddish translation of the Hebrew *Toledot Yeshu ha-notzri* - in Yiddish, *Gezeyres Yeshu ha-notsri* - a medieval 'counter-gospel' on the life of Jesus. Thereafter followed the *Bashraybung fun Shabse Tsvi*, the story of the pseudo-Messiah Shabtai Zvi, who around 1666 had upset large parts of the Jewish world with his claims, before his conversion to Islam under governmental pressure.¹⁴² Leyb ben Oyzer included in his narrative a translation and adaptation into Yiddish of a Dutch booklet on Shabtai Zvi, written by Thomas Coenen, a Dutch Reformed pastor in Shabtai Zvi's hometown, Smyrna.¹⁴³ Leyb ben Oyzer also presented his own findings, stemming partly from his personal experiences as a crypto-Sabbatean until at least 1706 or at last 1711, when some of Shabtai Zvi's followers had expected an all-revealing return of the supposed messiah. In total the manuscript consists of five parts, with the major part being the Shabtai Zvi narrative; this is preceded by the Jesus story and continued by two more stories on Sabbateanism after Shabtai Zvi's defection to

¹³⁹ Fuks-Mansfeld even stated simply that the book was written in Yiddish, as it is quoted by Amelander in Yiddish. Amelander, however, also cited in the same way Hebrew books. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography', 10.

¹⁴⁰ SY ed. 1743, 132v, 134r.

¹⁴¹ Leyb ben Oyzer was married to the daughter of Wolf Hijman Schats, the first chazzan of the Great Synagogue since 1671. For more genealogical material, consult: http://stenenarchie.nl/genealogie/gezin/humo1_ashk/F1281/I1627/ (consulted 17 November 2010). For an introduction to his work: L. Fuks, 'Sabatianisme in Amsterdam in het begin van de 18e eeuw. Enkele beschouwingen over Reb Leib Oizers en zijn werk', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 14 (1980) 1, 20-28. Leyb ben Oyzer is also known to have written a song for Shabbat Channukah, *Ezkeera rahamekha be-shir we-simbab*, recognizable by the acrostic used by the author; Jaap Meijer, *Het Jonas Daniël Meijerplein. Bezinning op drie eeuwen Amsterdams Jodendom* (Amsterdam 1961) 84.

¹⁴² This second part of the chronicle was published by Zalman Shazar in a bilingual Yiddish-Hebrew edition: *Sipur ma'asei Shabtai Zvi. Bashraybung fun Shabse Tsvi* (Jerusalem 1978); critical reviews on this edition appeared by: Jozeph Michman in *Studia Rosenthaliana* 13 (1979) 2, 243-244; and Chava Turniansky in: *Kiryat Sefer* 54 (1979) 161-166.

¹⁴³ Thomas Coenen, *Ydele verwachtinge der Joden getoont in den persoon van Sabethai Zevi, haren laetsten vermeynden Messias* (Amsterdam 1669).

Islam, and by a final story, on the Joseph Della Reina legend.¹⁴⁴ The chronicle had been written from the deception in 1711 until 1718, when Leyb ben Oyzer finished the work, although at the end he promised to write about yet another related story, concerning R. Yosef ben Tzur, which is not included in the manuscript.¹⁴⁵

In his preface, Leyb ben Oyzer makes clear that he wrote his chronicle to warn his readers about similar events in which individuals had claimed – or might someday claim – to have divine inspiration and to be the messiah. Throughout the chronicle the author consistently separates – with the wisdom of hindsight – between what had seemed to happen and what had in fact happened. The miracles are reduced to tricks and the prophecies to the work of Satan. In the end, for Leyb ben Oyzer the framework via which he interprets the whole history of Shabtai Zvi is metaphysical and a demonstration of the power of the ‘sitra achara’, the other, evil side. This kabbalistic concept helped Leyb ben Oyzer to make understandable why so many Jews, including himself and various prominent rabbis, had believed in Shabtai Zvi. On the final page, however, he concludes that after forty years no other conclusion can be made except that it had been *מעשה שטן*, both the work of Satan and a story of Satan.¹⁴⁶

The connection made between the traditional Jewish source on Jesus and the Shabtai Zvi narrative is telling. Leyb ben Oyzer envisioned that his history would function in the same way as the *Toledot Yesbu* had done thus far: to provide readers a counter-narrative to believers in either Jesus or Shabtai Zvi, and as a lesson from history for similar occasions in the future. Before presenting his own story, Leyb ben Oyzer first used the authority of a traditional source, not in Hebrew but in a Yiddish translation.¹⁴⁷ It is an indication that translation of Hebrew sources into Yiddish was only a first phase, to be followed by original Yiddish works. Amelander did exactly the same, in that he first published a revised edition of the Yiddish *Sefer Yosippson*, before presenting his own *Sheyris Yisrael*.

Although Shabtai Zvi was a Sephardi, Leyb ben Oyzer’s chronicle is decisively Ashkenazi. It is not only written in Yiddish and therefore directed at an Ashkenazi reading

¹⁴⁴ The stories on (crypto-) Sabbateanism after Shabtai Zvi’s conversion stemmed from Leyb ben Oyzer’s own investigations; the final narrative he received in Hebrew, as he stated, from the Amsterdam Sephardic Haham Solomon ben Jacob Ayallon (1655-1728) – someone who had also been involved in Sabbateanism. Shazar ed., *Basbraybung*, 198-199.

¹⁴⁵ For the story of R. Yosef ben Tzur, see: Raphael Patai, *The Messiah texts* (Detroit 1988) 34-36.

¹⁴⁶ Shazar ed., *Basbraybung*, 212.

¹⁴⁷ On the Yiddish *Toledot Yesbu*, see: S. Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin 1902; repr. Hildesheim 1977) 27-30.

public, it is likewise a deliberate Ashkenaziation of the Shabtai Zvi history. Leyb ben Oyzer stressed the Ashkenazi contribution to the Sabbatean movement, the false messiah's Ashkenazi contacts and next to Coenen used primarily Ashkenazi sources or eyewitnesses. The affair in the Amsterdam Sephardic community around Nehemiah Hayyon in 1713, of which he must have been personally intimately informed, was left out of his chronicle. Radensky therefore labeled Leyb ben Oyzer's chronicle as the product of 40 years of pride in the Ashkenazi contribution to the movement, even after the author became a disillusioned former sympathizer.¹⁴⁸

This chapter has demonstrated that translations from Hebrew historiographical classics into Yiddish paved the way for original history writing in Yiddish. Until publication of Amelander's *Sheyris Yisroel* these translations constituted the great majority of historical texts available in Yiddish. No less important, however, was contemporary non-Jewish historiography, as evidenced by the translation from Dutch pamphlets and booklets in late seventeenth-early eighteenth century Amsterdam. Leyb ben Oyzer's historical work, although having a small scope and a clear ideological agenda, is in both presentation (together with a translated classic) and usage of sources (Dutch alongside Jewish ones) comparable to Amelander's much larger project a few decades later. Although we know that several manuscript copies of Leyb ben Oyzer's chronicle circulated, no direct connection can be made with Amelander. The chapter in *Sheyris Yisroel* on Shabtai Zvi made use of various sources, but not Leyb ben Oyzer's narrative. The fact that Leyb ben Oyzer's and Amelander's work independently used the same methods is further indication of the importance that Yiddish translations of Hebrew sources played in the shift towards Yiddish historiography.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Ira Radensky, 'Leyb ben Ozer's "Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi": An Ashkenazic appropriation of Sabbatianism', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 88 (1997) 1/2, 43-56.

PART II: AMELANDER AND HIS *SHEYRIS YISROEL*

4. Menahem Amelander: Portrait of an Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam Ashkenazi

4.1 *The Jewish early modern age and the character of Jewish historiography*

Benedetto Croce's famous dictum that all history is contemporary history, has become a commonplace, but it fits nevertheless perfectly the history of early modern Jewish historiography.¹⁴⁹ The Amsterdam Yiddish history books and chronicles discussed in this thesis were written in the 'long eighteenth century', a period on the threshold of modernity and long considered to have been the closing of the Jewish Middle Ages.¹⁵⁰ Modernity, in Jewish history, the standard narrative claims, emerged only with the rise of the Haskalah and the change, in the wake of the French Revolution, of the political status of Jews.¹⁵¹ It is thus not coincidental that the few historians who devoted a few lines to eighteenth-century Jewish historiography often classified these history books as being wholly traditional, in that these books followed medieval historical methodology and continued existing models without significant innovations.¹⁵²

Recently, however, historians have proposed to define a 'Jewish early modern age' between the Middle Ages and modernity. Such a definition would not only add a new element for understanding Jewish history better, but bring the field of Jewish history closer to the discipline of European history at large. In the 1960's German and Anglo-Saxon historians, almost contemporaneously, introduced the term 'Frühe Neuzeit', or 'early modern age', as a definition of the period from the sixteenth until the eighteenth centuries. This period was characterized as having been a 'zentralen Umschaltphase', a period of transition for which

¹⁴⁹ Benedetto Croce, *History as the story of liberty* (London 1941) 41.

¹⁵⁰ For the traditional periodization see the influential book of Jacob Katz, *Tradition and crisis. Jewish society at the end of the Middle Ages* (New York 1993), likewise the volume edited by Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *A history of the Jewish people* (Cambridge Mass. 1976) 385; on the ideology behind this periodization: Robert Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish life in medieval Europe* (Cambridge 2010) 64-82. The concept of the 'long eighteenth century' refers commonly to the period 1680 to 1815 or even 1840. As J.C.D. Clark stated, it is considered to be 'an extended era with a unity and integrity of its own which belongs neither to "pre-modernity" nor to "modernity" as familiarly understood', in his: *English society, 1660-1832* (2nd ed.; Cambridge 2000) 14. It has been widely adopted since, cf. Frank O'Gorman, *The long eighteenth century. British political and social history, 1688-1832* (London/New York 1997); Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms eds., *Cultures of power in Europe during the long eighteenth century* (Cambridge 2007); not only in political but also cultural history: Joris van Eijnatten ed., *Preaching, sermon and cultural change in the long eighteenth century* (Leiden 2009) and Rosamaria Loretelli and Frank O'Gorman eds., *Britain and Italy in the long eighteenth century. Literary and art theories* (Cambridge 2010).

¹⁵¹ Michael A. Meyer, 'Where does the modern period of Jewish history begin?' *Judaism* 24 (1975) 328-338; David B. Ruderman, 'Michael A. Meyer's periodization of modern Jewish history. Revisiting a seminal essay' in: Lauren B. Strauss and Michael Brenner eds., *Mediating modernity. Challenges and trends in the Jewish encounter with the modern world. Essays in honor of Michael A. Meyer* (Detroit 2008) 27-42; Elisheva Carlebach, 'When does the modern period of the Jewish calendar begin?' in: *ibidem*, 43-54.

¹⁵² E.g. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor* 139; Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish history* 21-22; *idem*, 'Historiography, Jewish' 387-388.

traditional and modern characteristics could be identified. These characteristics often complemented or combined with each other, though they also sometimes clashed.¹⁵³

Jonathan Israel was among the first to identify a related distinct period in Jewish history, a period he labeled the age of mercantilism. According to Israel, in this period economic factors – in this case mercantilism – prevailed, for the first time in Jewish history, over traditions and religion; at the same time, radical enlightened thinking gradually resulted in ‘a freed, more open, and more tolerant Europe during the early modern age’.¹⁵⁴ According to Israel’s thesis, the early modern age was the period in which Western European Jews underwent a process of ‘release from the doctrinal and legal shackles of the past’.¹⁵⁵

In contrast to Israel, David B. Ruderman, in his recent seminal book on the early modern Jewish experience, proposes a definition which creates more space for internal Jewish developments. He summarizes the characteristics of this period in Jewish history into five developments: growing mobility resulting in more encounters among Jews of different backgrounds and between Jews and non-Jews; second, the growth of communal cohesion with strong lay leadership; third, a knowledge explosion resulting from the printing press and the entrance of Jewish students into universities; fourth, a crisis of rabbinic authority; and fifth, mingled identities of converso Jews, Sabbateans, Jewish converts to Christianity and Christian Hebraists. In short, the early modern period, per Ruderman’s definition, was dynamic and evidence of both the growth of internal Jewish cohesion and new levels of Jewish participation, confrontation and mingling with contemporary Christian societies and cultures.¹⁵⁶

The introduction of an ‘early modern age’ to Jewish history has widely been received as a welcome periodisation that enables historians to better understand the dynamics of Jewish life and culture between the Middle Ages and modernity. One reason the concept has been regarded as effective is that it avoids presupposing unilinear, progressive and teleological development from tradition to modernity. Likewise, the concept avoids the inadequate dichotomy of tradition versus modernity.¹⁵⁷ However, the position of the eighteenth century remains much discussed. Israel characterizes the period 1650-1713 as having been a time of expansion for European Jewry, but he identifies the eighteenth century as having been in general an ‘epoch of decline’. For European Jewry, the eighteenth century witnessed economic

¹⁵³ Ilja Mieck, *Europäische Geschichte der Frühen Neuzeit. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart etc. 1977) 22-24.

¹⁵⁴ Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the age of mercantilism 1550-1750* (London 1998) 258.

¹⁵⁵ Israel, *European Jewry*, 2.

¹⁵⁶ David B. Ruderman, *Early modern Jewry. A new cultural history* (Princeton 2010) passim.

¹⁵⁷ Ruderman, *Early modern Jewry*, 226.

and demographic deterioration of their position within European societies, even as their traditional communal structures and authorities suffered gradual dissolution. Israel concludes: 'It is hard to deny, in any case, that what was an age of tremendous economic vitality and increasing opportunity was, generally speaking, for the Jews an era of stagnation, decay, and impoverishment, both economic and cultural'.¹⁵⁸ Ruderman, however, includes the eighteenth century (at least until 1782) in his definition of the early modern age. Nonetheless, the eighteenth century did not see Jewish intellectuals proposing new articulations of Jewish cultures that were radically different from those offered by their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century predecessors. These later intellectuals continued to follow the path laid out by their predecessors and thus remained closely connected to them. It was only with the changing political landscape, which enabled civic emancipation of Jews, that modernity entered Jewish history.¹⁵⁹

Shmuel Feiner has concentrated on the eighteenth century and reached an interpretation which offers both similarities and distinctions to the arguments of Israel and Ruderman. Like Israel, Feiner stresses the impact of the secularization of Jewish culture, especially the legitimization - by a skeptical philosophy - of such pleasures as food, fashion, wigs and wine.¹⁶⁰ Like Ruderman, Feiner maintains a keen focus on internal Jewish developments. What typifies Feiner's approach, however, is his emphasis on the eighteenth century as having been a dynamic age of transformations, conflicts and schisms. For him the 'fascinating, contradiction-filled eighteenth century'¹⁶¹ was not an age of decline and stagnation, as per Israel, nor a mere continuation of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tendencies, as per Ruderman, but rather the age in which the intellectual elite broke from the religious elite and offered a new understanding of the world. In the eighteenth century, however, there were still no clear boundaries between the religious and the secular, the traditional and the modern.¹⁶² Feiner, a student of intellectual history, stresses the role of the enlightenment within early modern and modern Jewish history. He differentiates between early maskilim and the Berlin Haskalah. The early maskilim were active from the 1720's until 1770. They comprised a tiny, scattered group of Jewish intellectuals who sought to renew Jewish culture from within; they

¹⁵⁸ Israel, *European Jewry*, 237, 248, 252-253.

¹⁵⁹ Ruderman, *Early modern Jewry*, 195-202.

¹⁶⁰ Shmuel Feiner, *The origins of Jewish secularization in 18th-century Europe* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 2010).

¹⁶¹ Shmuel Feiner, 'From Renaissance to Revolution: the eighteenth century in Jewish history' in: Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz and Irene Zwiép eds., *Sephard in Ashkenaz. Medieval knowledge and eighteenth-century enlightened Jewish discourse* (Amsterdam 2007) 1-10, there 3.

¹⁶² Shmuel Feiner, 'On the threshold of the "New world" - Haskalah and secularization in the eighteenth century', *Simon-Dubnow-Institut Jahrbuch/Yearbook* 6 (2007) 33-45, there 34.

did so by introducing philosophy and natural sciences, reading non-Jewish books and to a certain degree participating in general culture.¹⁶³ The Berlin Haskalah - centered around its main ideologist, Moses Mendelssohn - manifested itself in the following two decades, and evolved into an internal Jewish revolutionary movement, furthering the birth of a self-conscious modern Jew, various manifestations of modern Jewish culture and the autonomy of the secular Jewish intellectual.¹⁶⁴

In discussing the characteristics of the eighteenth century, regardless of whether it is interpreted as having been a period of stagnation or (as is more common, and as I will also demonstrate hereafter) one of intellectual creativity, it becomes clear that contradicting tendencies, both within European societies and Jewish communities, characterized Jews during this period.¹⁶⁵ It is thus worthwhile to develop an interpretation of eighteenth-century Jewish historiography, not so much to locate this body of texts on either the (medieval) traditional or the modern side of the historical spectrum, but to analyze such texts as a cultural product of late early modern European Jewry. This is itself a dialectic process, as this historiography – especially the chronicles concentrating on contemporary history – is, as a whole, an expression of early modern culture but also, within the texts themselves, a defining, opening and closing of that same culture. The chroniclers documented eighteenth-century Ashkenazi life in its specificity and highlighted the differences with earlier medieval Jewish cultures and succeeding modern Jewish trends.

This chapter and the following ones can be read as a study of the characteristics of eighteenth-century Jewry through the lens of Amsterdam Yiddish historiography. I will first concentrate on the main history book, *Sheyris Yisroel*, and thereafter introduce and analyze subsequent elements of historiography. In order to more effectively understand the type of historiography which developed in the eighteenth century, this chapter will offer a short intellectual biography of Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi Amelander, the author of *Sheyris Yisroel*. This study of his life and works will facilitate a better understanding of the place of historiography within the whole of eighteenth-century Jewish culture.

¹⁶³ Shmuel Feiner, 'The early Haskalah in eighteenth-century Judaism' [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 67 (1997-1998) 189-240.

¹⁶⁴ Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia 2004); idem, *Moses Mendelssohn* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 2005).

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Jeremy W. Webster, 'Europe's Jews in the long eighteenth century', *Eighteenth Century Life* 30 (2005) 1, 76-91.

4.2 Ashkenazim in early modern Amsterdam

Eighteenth-century Amsterdam was home to two distinct Jewish communities, one Sephardic and one Ashkenazi. The older and more distinguished was the Portuguese (Sephardic) Jewish kehillah, founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century and functioning as the informal capital of the Western Sephardic Diaspora.¹⁶⁶ An extensive network that included relatives on the Iberian Peninsula and sister congregations in other European port cities, including Bordeaux, Hamburg and London, as well as in the American colonies, provided the Amsterdam Sephardim with an important position within international trade networks. As a result of the Thirty Years' War in Central Europe Ashkenazim also migrated to Amsterdam, predominantly from German cities. In Amsterdam they participated in the Sephardic kehilla until 1635; thereafter their numbers were large enough for them to develop their own community structures.¹⁶⁷

The city authorities recognized the two communities as being distinct and autonomous 'Jewish nations', controlled by their respective lay leaders, the *parnassim*. This same structure was applied to other ethnic minorities in the booming city of Amsterdam, which had come to attract migrants from throughout Europe. Each 'nation' was responsible for its own religious structures, education and poor relief. Such autonomy allowed the rabbinic court within the Jewish communities to enforce halakhah for community, family and civil cases. The Sephardic kehillah generally patronized the Ashkenazi one, often interfering in the latter's internal affairs. The city authorities generally supported the ruling *parnassim*, but did not hesitate to interfere when they considered such interference appropriate and in the city's interests. The Ashkenazi kehillah had its own autonomous domain, yet constantly had to reckon not only with its more distinguished Sephardic sister community but also with the city authorities.¹⁶⁸

Amsterdam was attractive to Jewish migrants for at least two reasons. First, from the sixteenth century until at least the first half of the eighteenth century the city was the commercial center of Europe. Its economy was booming and Amsterdam held a central position in colonial trade. The city was therefore in constant need of new labour forces. The

¹⁶⁶ Gérard Nahon, *Métropoles et périphéries sefarades d'occident. Kairouan, Amsterdam, Bayonne, Bordeaux, Jérusalem* (Paris 1993) esp. 71-234.

¹⁶⁷ Jozeph Michman, Hartog Beem and Dan Michman, *Pinkas. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland* (Ede, Antwerpen, Amsterdam 1992) 44-46.

¹⁶⁸ *Pinkas*, 47-48; Yosef Kaplan, 'De joden in de Republiek tot omstreeks 1750, religieus, cultureel en sociaal leven' in: J.C.H. Blom et al., *Geschiedenis van de joden in Nederland* (Amsterdam 1995) 129-173, there 137.

existence of Sephardic firms, moreover, opened even more possibilities for Jews on the labour market.¹⁶⁹ Second, the Dutch Republic, being a confederation of seven provinces, left cities much scope for their own policies. One result was that both immigration and religious policies could differ significantly between the various cities. Cities in the province of Holland, such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, were relatively welcoming to newcomers and allowed them to perform religious rites as long as such activities did not destabilize social order. As with its economic potential and possibilities, the Dutch Republic's relative tolerance, especially for ethnic and religious groups that presented no threat to public order, made it a favorable destination for Jewish migrants.¹⁷⁰

By the early eighteenth century both of Amsterdam's Jewish communities had acquired stable positions within the city. The two communities were concentrated in the eastern part of the city; they maintained large synagogues and a fully developed Jewish infrastructure. However, whereas the Sephardic population stabilized at approximately 3,000 persons, the Ashkenazi population grew from 3,200 in 1700, to over 9,000 in 1725 and to 14,000 in 1750. Ashkenazim from Central and Eastern Europe opted to settle in Amsterdam, hoping to find work in the city's still important economy. This population growth led to further extension of the Ashkenazi infrastructure, with new synagogues, an enlarged community apparatus and a growing awareness of Amsterdam's role in the Ashkenazi diaspora. Yet the economy of the Dutch Republic was deteriorating, causing Amsterdam to lose its central position in the world economy to London. Sephardic firms were the first to suffer from this setback. In the course of the eighteenth century, despite their demographic growth, the overall economic position of Jews within the Dutch Republic declined. Indeed, most Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews lived in poverty and were dependent on the poor relief work of their communities.¹⁷¹

The rise of Yiddish historiography in Amsterdam should therefore be situated in a period during which Ashkenazim had been settling in the city for several generations but were still steadily growing in numbers and expanding their community structures. At the time they remained in the shadow of the much smaller, but more affluent, Sephardic community. Although there were several successful Ashkenazi families, most people in the community

¹⁶⁹ Jonathan I. Israel, 'De Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden tot omstreeks 1750 – Demografie en economische activiteit' in: Blom, *Geschiedenis joden*, 97-126.

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by faith. Religious conflict and the practice of toleration in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., London 2007) 321-328.

¹⁷¹ Israel, 'Republiek', passim; *Pinkas*, 56-59.

were poor and had to struggle for survival. These social and economic conditions left their imprint on the body of historical texts written by Amsterdam Ashkenazim in the long eighteenth century, as we shall see especially in the chapter on the 'successor chronicles' with their exhaustive attention for food prices, living conditions and social tensions within the city.

4.3 *Menahem Amelander and his family*

4.3.1 *The Amelander and Rudelsum families*

Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi Amelander was one of the Amsterdam Ashkenazim who lived in the long eighteenth century. Unfortunately, little is known about his life. He left no personal archives, and his contemporaries did not write about him. Thus his life and his position within the Ashkenazi community can be reconstructed only on the basis of circumstantial archival material and biographical details offered in his books.

The importance of one's family for the further development of one's life could hardly be overestimated in the early modern period. As Philippe Ariès has shown, the family was distinguished by an enormous mass of sociability. Social networks, marriage patterns and career perspectives were all tightly knit to the family. Nevertheless, in the eighteenth century family life, especially in the urban middle classes, started to change. The extended family made gradually place for the nuclear family, with more attention for an individual's personal choices. Jewish families witnessed these changes too, but less rapidly and in much smaller numbers.¹⁷² In Amelander's case the traditional family networks proved to be extremely important, although he also was influenced by the newer developments.

Amelander was born in 1698 in Amsterdam. His father, Shlomo ben Jacob ha-Levi, who died in August 1711 in Amsterdam, had taken the last name Ameland from his father-in-law.¹⁷³ Nothing is known about the father's ancestral and professional background, although it has been suggested that he was related to Uri Ha-Levi, the first (and almost legendary) religious

¹⁷² Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of childhood. A social history of family life* (New York 1962) esp. 404; family historians have debated Ariès' theses extensively, but his main conclusions still hold: Steven E. Ozment, *The loving family in old Europe* (Cambridge Mass. 2001); David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli eds., *Family life in early modern times (1500-1789)* [The history of the European family I] (New Haven/London 2001).

¹⁷³ The genealogical data presented here stems from the database 'Ashkenazi Amsterdam in the eighteenth century' from the Dutch Jewish Genealogical Data Base Akevoth, see <http://shum.huji.ac.il/~dutchjew/genealog/ashkenazi/6960.htm> and the related pages (consulted 13 May 2009).

leader of Amsterdam's Sephardic community.¹⁷⁴ Amelander's mother, Rachel, was the daughter of Yehiel Ameland, the patriarch of the Amsterdam Ameland/Amelander family. Yehiel, who died on 8 March 1703 in Amsterdam, married circa 1670 and had at least three children: the previously mentioned Rachel (died in October 1722), Menahem-Manle (died in 1723, in Amsterdam) and Levie (dates of birth and death unknown).

The surname Ameland(er) has long puzzled historians, as it seems to refer to one of the small islands in the northern part of the Netherlands, Ameland. But this is an isle where – as far as is known – no Jews lived in early modern times. The name's etymology must therefore be sought elsewhere. Three possibilities emerge: first, in Leeuwarden, the Frisian capital, the synagogue was located near the Amelander Pijp (outlet); also, several Jewish families lived in the neighborhood. The name of the outlet may have been the source of the family name Amelander. Hartog Beem came across the name during his research into Leeuwarden's Jewish history, though no connection between this Frisian-Jewish family and the Amelanders in Amsterdam has been established.¹⁷⁵ Second, it has been suggested that the name refers to the German region Ammerland, which, since 1946, has been part of the Oldenburger Land in Lower Saxony and is near the northern parts of the Netherlands. The cities and villages in the Ammerland, such as Apen, Westerstede and Rastede, never had sizeable Jewish communities, though one of the few Jewish families may well have moved to the Dutch Republic and initiated the Amsterdam Ameland(er) family.¹⁷⁶ Third, as Fuks has suggested, it may be that Amelander is in fact read as Ommelander – in Ashkenazi Hebrew the two names are written the same – and that the name thus refers to the 'Groninger Ommelanden', the areas surrounding the city of Groningen.¹⁷⁷ Historical and genealogical research, however, have not come across the Jewish name 'Ommelander' in this region, which makes this third scenario highly unlikely.¹⁷⁸ Because the birthplace of Amelander's paternal grandfather, Yehiel Ameland, is unclear, it is impossible to decide which of these three explanations is correct, although the first two seem more convincing.

¹⁷⁴ Chaim Caran, 'Relationships among some early Jewish settlers in Dutch Friesland?' *Avotaynu* XX (2004) 3, 37-44.

¹⁷⁵ Caran, 'Dutch Friesland' 42; Hartog Beem, *De Joden van Leeuwarden. Geschiedenis van een cultuurcentrum* (Assen 1974) 73.

¹⁷⁶ Jits van Straten, Jan Berns, Harmen Snel, *Joodse achternamen in Amsterdam 1669-1850 / Jewish surnames in Amsterdam 1669-1850. Een inventarisatie en interpretatie / an inventarisation and interpretation* (Bennekom 2002) 150.

¹⁷⁷ Fuks, 'Menahem Man ben Salomo Halevi' 171.

¹⁷⁸ In 1745 a Michiel Levie van Ameland published an advertisement in the *Provinciale Groninger Courant*, Vol. 78, 28 September 1745. He was one of the leaders of the Groningen kehillah who, on the community's behalf, purchased a property on the Folklingestraat, in 1754, intended to become a synagogue. Thus, there is evidence of a Jew with the name 'Ameland' in Groningen – although as a contemporary and not a possible ancestor - but it is in Latin script and not spelled as Ommeland(er), which makes Fuks' suggestion highly unlikely. E. Schut, *De Joodse gemeenschap in de stad Groningen, 1689-1796* (Assen 1995) 105, 155, 237, 269.

Jacob and Rachel married sometime before 1695. They had six children, of whom Menahem Man Amelander was the fifth. The other children were Moses (died 1772), Hayyim (died 1772), Jacob (1693-1749), Ester (1695-?) and Benjamin (1701-1781).¹⁷⁹ The family did not belong to the poorest segments of the Amsterdam Ashkenazi community, as evidenced by the grandparents and the parents being buried at Muiderberg cemetery. This cemetery, located some 20 kilometers outside of Amsterdam, was intended for the more well-to-do of the community, particularly contributing members of the Ashkenazi kehillah. Poorer Jews were buried at Zeeburg cemetery.¹⁸⁰

On 18 June 1723 Amelander married Blim (or Bloeme) Isaac (1699-1775). According to the marriage contract he lived at that time in the Verversstraat, a tiny alley in the Jewish quarter. His bride lived nearby, in the St. Antoniesbreestraat, a larger street in the same quarter.¹⁸¹ She had been born, in Amsterdam, to Isaac Salomon Rudelsum (?-1719), a member and beadle of the hevra kadisha Gemiluth Chasadim, and Rachel (?-1708). Rudelsum, being a hevra employee, belonged to the second strata of the religious establishment in Ashkenazi Amsterdam. The burial society had its own synagogue, study circles and numerous other activities. Later, Blim's second brother, Salomon (or Zalman) Isaac Rudelsum, took over his father's position and served as well the hevra kadisha as a beadle.¹⁸²

Amelander's connection with his family-in-law became quite valuable for him, particularly as he and Eleasar Soesman Isaac Rudelsum (died 1780), one of Blim's two full brothers, developed a professional working relationship. Eleasar Soesman belonged to the intellectual elite of Ashkenazi Amsterdam, and he and Amelander collaborated on several publishing projects. The next paragraph will go more in depth into this relationship.

At their civil marriage ceremony Amelander and Bloeme chose as their respective witnesses Moses (one of Amelander's brothers) and Salomon Zalman Isaac Rudelsum (Blim's second brother). During the religious ceremony, on 20 Sivan 5483, Amelander's other brothers acted as witnesses. The couple had several children, though only three survived their first years: Salomon (1725-1802), Rachel (1727-?) and Jacob (1735-1817).

In his publications Amelander used the name Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi. His family name, Amelander or Amelander, was not disclosed until the Dutch Jewish second

¹⁷⁹ Menahem Man was in 1722 a witness at Benjamin's wedding; Municipal Archives Amsterdam (MAA), DTB 713/285.

¹⁸⁰ Samuel Israel Mulder, *Iets over de begraafplaatsen der Nederlandsch-Israëlitische Gemeente te Amsterdam en in het bijzonder over die te Muiderberg met ene opgave van twintig grafinschriften* (Amsterdam 1851).

¹⁸¹ MAA, DTB 713-432.

¹⁸² *SY* ed. 1743, 139v.

generation maskil Gabriel Polak revealed it in the introduction to the 1855 Dutch translation of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Polak had found, at Muiderberg cemetery, the tombstone for Amelander's daughter Rachel, to which the name Amelander had been added. After this discovery, Moritz Steinschneider added 'Amelander' as the author's final name in his influential and path-breaking catalogue of the Hebrew collections in the Oxford Bodleian Library. Hereafter, the name 'Amelander' was inseparably attached to 'Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi', not only in bibliographies and catalogues but also in historical studies.¹⁸³

Menahem Man was a typical Ashkenazi first name, combining a Hebrew and a Yiddish name. This was not uncommon in the Ashkenazi world; other notable Hebrew-Yiddish name pairings include Zvi Hirsh, Dov Ber and Benjamin Wolf.¹⁸⁴ As Amelander's first name was the same as his uncle's, one can assume that he had received a name that was popular in the family. Like many Dutch Jews, Amelander used, besides his Jewish name, an adaptation suited for use in Dutch society: Emanuel Salomon Levie.¹⁸⁵

The date of Amelander's death remains a mystery, especially as his name does not appear in either the records of the Amsterdam municipality or the registers of the Jewish cemeteries. Thus far it has been concluded that he must have died before 1767, as in that year's Torah edition, on which Amelander had collaborated, his name is presented with the abbreviation zts"l (zikhrono tsadik livrakha), indicating that the publishers were aware that he had died.¹⁸⁶ However, additional evidence facilitates more precise dating of his death. First, the legal papers for the marriages of their three children (in 1749, 1759 and 1763, respectively) all list the witness as having been not Amelander but his wife, Bloeme, and when she died, in 1775, she was registered as Amelander's widow. Second, the list of publications on which he collaborated abruptly ends, in 1743, after what had been a very intense period of editorial work that included publication of *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*. Third, an important indication is a Torah edition of 1749, which included the same editorial additions for Amelander as the 1767

¹⁸³ Menachem Man ben Salomo Halevi, *Se'irith Jisrael of lotgevallen der Joden in alle werelddelen, van af de verwoesting des Tweeden Tempels tot het jaar 1770*, ed. L. Goudsmit Azn. and G.I. Polak (Amsterdam 1855) v; M. Steinschneider, *Catalogus librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana* (Berlin 1860/1) sp. 1737, nr. 6305.

¹⁸⁴ More about this phenomenon, including an inventory list with both male and female Hebrew-Yiddish name pairs: Daniel D. Stuhlman, 'Hebrew-Yiddish name pairs', on <http://home.earthlink.net/~ddstuhlman/crc105.pdf> (consulted 13 May 2009).

¹⁸⁵ MAA, DTB 713-432.

¹⁸⁶ *Humash tikkeun sopherim* (Amsterdam 1767), title page. 1767 as terminus ante quem is given by Steinschneider, *Geschichtsliteratur*, 147; Erik, 'Geshikhte', 377; Shatzky, 'Letste shprotsungen', 256; and both editions of the *EJ* s.v. Amelander, and taken over by the catalogues of most libraries. Fuks in 1981, however, assumed that Amelander lived to be quite old, because on the 1767 and 1771 title pages the z"l indication would not be there. He must have interpreted the z"l there only in connection with Amelander's father. Fuks, 'Jiddisches Geschichtwerk', 173; cf. as well Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Joodse geschiedschrijving', 154-155, where they assume Amelander was still alive in 1776.

edition. On the title page of this earlier edition, he is presented as 'Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi z"l', whereas in 1743 on the title page of *Sheyris Yisrael* he was still referred to as 'Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi nr"u' [may God guard and bless him]. Technically the z"l could refer to his father, Shlomo ha-Levi, but a further indication in the text makes clear that Amelander himself had already passed away. At the point in the text where the commentary written by Amelander begins, the text reads: 'אמר מנחם הלוי ז"ל', 'thus says Menahem ha-Levi z"l'.¹⁸⁷ Thus, one must conclude that Amelander died sometime between 1743 and 1749. That he is not listed in the Amsterdam Jewish burial registers may be an indication that he died elsewhere and was buried outside Amsterdam. Likewise, it may be a consequence of the Amsterdam burial registers being incomplete. The latter is a more likely scenario, as Amelander's family remained in Amsterdam after his death.

4.3.2 *Amelander and Eleasar Soesman*

In the early modern period the family was of crucial importance for the development of someone's career.¹⁸⁸ Amelander's case is no exception to that rule. As noted previously, Amelander developed a professional relationship with his brother-in-law Eleasar Soesman. They were most likely about the same age and may well have already known each other from their school years. Whereas Amelander found his way within the Jewish community, Soesman became an intermediary between the Jewish and the Christian social spaces. Soesman's openness to Dutch culture is paralleled by Amelander's approach to non-Jewish sources of knowledge. In order to better understand the *milieu* in which Amelander lived and worked, it is productive to examine Soesman. This is all the more important, since Amelander and Soesman would eventually collaborate on two projects.

Amelander's brother-in-law was an intellectual who taught Hebrew to Christian students of the Amsterdam Athenaeum Illustre, although he did not hold a formal position there. At this time there were more people giving private lessons than there were official professors, and private lessons often competed with courses being taught by Athenaeum professors. As late as 1765 the city condemned this unauthorized teaching, and decreed that private lessons would only be accepted if the professor agreed. From Soesman's teaching grew his well-known 1741 Hebrew grammar book, *Mohar Yisrael*, written in Dutch, to which a

¹⁸⁷ *Hamishbah bumshei Torah* (Amsterdam 1749) 116v.

¹⁸⁸ G.A. Kooy, *Gezinsgeschiedenis. Vier eeuwen gezin in Nederland* (Assen 1985) 120-121.

Dutch-Hebrew and Hebrew-Dutch dictionary was added. Professor Cornelius Hugo Vonk, the resident Orientalist at the Athenaeum, recommended the book to the Christian audience.¹⁸⁹

Eleasar Soesman shared not only grammar and linguistics with his Christian public; he also made one of the great works of Jewish religious literature available to those unable to read Hebrew. The work in question, Isaac Aboab's *Menorat ha-ma'or* dated from the fourteenth-century and had been highly influential among Sephardim. Soesman translated Aboab's work into Dutch, and annotated it with his own remarks. The translation, entitled *De kandelaar des ligts*, was published in 1756 by a Christian publisher, Gerrit de Groot, and comprised four volumes. The book assembled important insights from the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud and presented them in a practical way, thereby offering an ethics handbook to the average Jewish reader. The multi-volume work became a huge success. Nevertheless, it is significant that Eleasar Soesman chose to present to Dutch Christians a Sephardic rather than an Ashkenazi book, a decision surely influenced by the relatively esteemed positions of Sephardim both in general society and within the Ashkenazi community. In the introduction he described the Sephardim as excelling above all other Jews because of the order and style in their literary works and their synagogue services. A few decades earlier, in 1722, Moses Frankfurter had published the first Yiddish translation of *Menorat ha-ma'or*, thus introducing it to Ashkenazim. Soesman became familiar with the book either through this Yiddish version, or through the Hebrew original, and he subsequently translated it into Dutch.¹⁹⁰

Eleasar Soesman's extraordinary position also led him into the field of Jewish-Christian polemics. For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we know of five published series of disputes between a Jewish scholar and a Christian theologian. In four of these exchanges, the Jewish representative was a Portuguese Jew. Soesman was the only Ashkenazi Jew to have engaged in this series of disputes. This says much about Soesman's position, as he not only knew Christians personally, but was also quite familiar with Christian theology.

¹⁸⁹ P.J. Knegtman, *Professoren van de stad. Het Athenaeum Illustre en de Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1632-1960* (Amsterdam 2007) 113; Jan Wim Wesselius, 'Eleasar Soesman's *Mohar Yisrael*' in: Adri K. Offenber, Emile G.L. Schrijver and F.J. Hoogewoud eds., *Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana. Treasures of Jewish booklore. Marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Lezer Rosenthal, 1794-1994* (Amsterdam 1996; 2nd ed.) 74-75.

¹⁹⁰ Isaac Aboab, *De kandelaar des ligts met deszelfs zeven lampen, of het gewoon huisboek der hedendaagsche Joden; bevattende hunnen gantschen keerkelyken burgerlyken godsdienst, met alle deszelfs plegtigbeden; en alomme vervuld met fraaye spreuken en gebeurtenissen der Talmudische Rabbynen* [eertyds in het Rabbynsch beschreven door den Wereldvermaarden leeraar onder de Portugeesche Joden Isaac Abuab; thans in het Nederduitsch vert., en met doorgaande aanm. verrykt, door Eliazar Soesman] (Amsterdam 1756); Idem, *Sefer menorat ha-ma'or hibro Yizbaq Abobab ha-Sefardi im ha-ataqah li-lesbon Ashkenaz* [hu 'ataq a'y ... Moshe Frankfurt dayan de-q"q Amsterdam ... we-hosafnu 'al ha-rishonim mar'eh maqom ha-pesuqim; huv'a le-vet ha-defus 'al yede ha-mehaber ha-na'l; uve-hishtadlut nimraz meha-yaqar ... Haim Drukker] (Amsterdam 1721). On the Yiddish translation see: Shlomo Berger, 'Ashkenazim read Sephardim in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Amsterdam' *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35 (2001) 2, 253-265, there esp. 257-259.

Whereas Sephardic Jews, owing to their history and social standing, had a more natural entrance into the Christian world of letters, an Ashkenazi Jew like Eleasar Soesman, particularly as he was from a financially modest family, would have had to exert much effort to achieve such a position. Moreover, whereas in the other four cases the Christian representative always took the initiative to open debate, in the fifth case Eleasar Soesman posed himself as eager to enter the religious debate and invited Christian theologians to convince him of the claims of Christianity. In 1741-1742 he discussed – initially under the pseudonym ‘den Geleerden Jood’ (‘the Learned Jew’) - main topics in Judaism and Christianity with the Reformed Protestant theologians Johann Wilhelm Kals, Eggo Tonkens van Hoevenberg, three anonymous authors and Jacob Fundam, a Portuguese Jew who had converted to Christianity. The discussion is striking because of its direct and open tone, particularly as Soesman seems to feel unhindered to express his thoughts about the validity of the Jewish tradition and the shortcomings of the Christian tradition.¹⁹¹

Soesman was active not only in the dominant (Christian) society, but also within the Ashkenazi community. Part of this latter activity centered on the theme of the Ashkenazi community being a Jewish minority in a Christian dominant society. Prior to his public polemics, he had prepared a Yiddish translation of a century-old polemical treatise, *Sefer Nizabon*, by Salomon Zvi Hirsh of Aufhausen. This work had originally been published in a Hebrew, German and Yiddish version, entitled *Der Jüdische Theriak* (1615), and was a refutation of the vehemently anti-Jewish publication *Jüdischer abgestreifter Schlangenbalg* (1614), penned by the apostate Samuel Friedrich Brenz. Eleasar Soesman wished to strengthen his coreligionists for the daily debates with Christian fellow-citizens and to give them arguments – notably from the Bible – to refute the lies and attacks they would encounter.¹⁹²

Eleasar Soesman collaborated on three other important projects,¹⁹³ all of which required good command of Hebrew, though they were conducted in Yiddish. The first project, in 1725, was with Amelander, and concerned the first volume of *Magishei Minhab* – a Yiddish translation of the Hebrew Bible with commentaries. The second project involved editing *Sefer Ha-Magid* (Amsterdam 1738), a Yiddish translation, by R. Jacob ben R. Jitschak Ashkenazi, of

¹⁹¹ Jan Wim Wesselius, ‘Eleazar Soesman en de Amsterdamse polemieken van 1742’ *Studia Rosenthaliana* 27 (1993) 1/2, 13-35.

¹⁹² *Sefer ha-nizabon ha-niqra Zare ha-Yehudim* [hiber Zalman Zvi mi-Aufhausen neged Friedrich Franz mi-Itingen she-hirshi’a liktov sefer reshut ha-niqra Schlangen Balg neged kelal edat Yisra’el ... we-qam ha-torani Zusman ben Yizhaq Rudelsum ... lehadpis oto be-he’eteq ha-lashon de-mishtama le-kol ofi] (Amsterdam 1737) 2, 4, 59v.

¹⁹³ In addition to these publications, Eleasar Soesman also edited in collaboration with Amelander the Yiddish translation of the ethical book *Shevet musar* (Amsterdam 1732), written by Elyahu ha-Kohen Itamari (Hebrew edition: Constantinople 1712) and published by Naphtali Hertz Levi Rofe.

the Hebrew Bible. On the title page Eleasar Soesman is identified as a book seller.¹⁹⁴ The third project was connected to the other two, and concerned a Yiddish textbook on the Torah, entitled *Migra meforash*, or *Scriptures explained* (Amsterdam 1749). This textbook adopted the catechism, the pedagogical method then very popular in early modern Europe, and so the textbook as such was the first Jewish catechism. Via its question-and-answer format the students learned the principal points of each week's Torah portion. Soesman focused on children unable to learn the extensive materials in *heder* because their teachers had too many pupils or because their programs were filled with too many other subjects.¹⁹⁵

Considered in light of his other activities, one could interpret Soesman's efforts to make the Bible better known among Ashkenazi Jews as paralleling similar trends within Christian society. Among Dutch Protestants, having knowledge of the Bible was highly esteemed; the officially sanctioned Statenvertaling (States Version, 1637) was widely disseminated, and the Old Testament served, much more than for Catholics and Lutherans, as a source for sermons and even for formation of Dutch Reformed identity. Pastors stressed the need for churchgoers to read the Bible and they therefore supported projects to translate the Bible into the vernacular. In such a climate Soesman's collaboration on Yiddish translations of the Bible, with commentaries from traditional Jewish perspectives, can be interpreted as an effort to make the Bible available for those in the Ashkenazi community who lacked sufficient Hebrew to read it in the original form. Among such readers (of whom there were many within the community) paraphrases such as the *Tsene-Rene* were highly popular and widely read. By reading the Bible themselves, in a Yiddish version, Dutch Ashkenazim would develop a better understanding of Jewish tradition and even, eventually, when needed, be better prepared for conversations about religious issues with their non-Jewish neighbours.

With Eleasar Soesman in the family, Amelander was linked to the world of Christian Hebraists, general knowledge and Jewish-Christian polemics. Soesman operated in both Ashkenazi and Protestant society and he maintained a self-conscious attitude in doing so, even though he was subject to fierce criticism from some Ashkenazim for his openness to non-

¹⁹⁴ *Sefer ha-Magid* I-III (Amsterdam 1738); Cf. Judah A. Joffe, 'Di amsterdamer Tenakh-ibersezung magischej minhoh fun 1755?' *Yivo-Bleter* 14 (1939) 229-250, there 233.

¹⁹⁵ Chava Turniansky, 'Mikra Meforash' by Eliezer Sussmann Rudelsom. An unusual Yiddish textbook for the Study of the humash' [Hebrew] in: S. Japhet ed., *The Bible in the light of its interpreters. Sarah Kamin memorial volume* (Jerusalem 1994) 497-517; idem, 'On didactic literature in Yiddish in Amsterdam (1699-1749)' [Hebrew] in: *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry*, Vol. 4 (Jerusalem 1984) 163-178; Andreas Gotzmann, *Eigenheit und Einheit. Modernisierungsdiskurse des deutschen Judentums der Emanzipationszeit* (Leiden etc. 2002) 72; M. Güdemann, *Quellenschriften zur Geschichte des Unterrichts und der Erziehung bei den deutschen Juden. Von der ältesten Zeiten bis auf Mendelssohn* (Berlin 1891) 291-292.

Jewish culture.¹⁹⁶ The same principles and border crossings between the two societies, are also to be detected in Amelander's historiographical endeavour in the 1740's, as the following chapters will demonstrate. The relation between Soesman and Amelander, their economic cooperation and shared ideas, shows the continuity between family life and work and the importance of functions of kin in the workplace – even in a relatively new and open branch such as the book industry.¹⁹⁷

4.4 *Amelander and the Western Ashkenazi yeshiva network*

There was, however, one moment when Amelander left the family and was on his own. Although he surely enjoyed a traditional Jewish education in Amsterdam, he subsequently left for Prague and concluded his studies there. Leaving Amsterdam for a yeshiva elsewhere, was a moment in which a boy had to survive outside the context of the family, a phase in which he 'emancipated' from the family – although still dependent on his parents' assistance. Travelling individually on such an early age, as did not only Jewish boys but also students in general, was a specific feature of the early modern age and constited a change in traditional patterns of family life.¹⁹⁸

Amelander's education offers a clear indication of how Amsterdam functioned within the whole of the Ashkenazi diaspora. Amsterdam was well-known in the Ashkenazi world for its Hebrew printing presses and relative tolerance, but it was not a center of Jewish learning and important yeshivot. Moreover, as studying in different places was part of the yeshiva system, a number of Amsterdam Jewish boys who wished to develop their Jewish knowledge left the city, primarily for Central European yeshivot. Different segments had become established within the Ashkenazi world, and Western and Central Ashkenazi Jewry – stretching from Metz to Prague – had a different profile than Polish Ashkenazim, with their stress on the interpretative method of *pilpul*. Whereas the Western and Central European yeshivot remained attached to the medieval yeshiva model, with a broad curriculum directed at training the students to practise rabbinic responsibilities, the Polish yeshivot went through a process of

¹⁹⁶ Aboab, *Kandelaar des ligts*, iv-v.

¹⁹⁷ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, 404.

¹⁹⁸ Kooy, *Gezinsgeschiedenis*, 120.

‘academization’, while concentrating on the hermeneutics and detailed study of Talmud.¹⁹⁹ Amsterdam, as part of this Western circuit, was oriented towards centers of learning such as Frankfurt am Main, Fürth, the Alsace and Prague.²⁰⁰

In *Sheyris Yisroel* Amelander notes that in 1713 – at the age of fifteen – he had studied under the direction of the Prague chief rabbi David Oppenheim (1664-1736).²⁰¹ The bibliophile Oppenheim was well acquainted with the Jewish communities in Amsterdam and was in direct contact with many of the Hebrew printing firms in the city. He held the most important Jewish book collection of the time, with no less than 4,800 books and 780 manuscripts, which he stored in the Hannover house of his father-in-law, Lipmann Cohen, due to concerns about the Habsburg censor.²⁰²

During the period when Amelander studied in Prague, Oppenheim was expanding his authority in an unprecedented manner. In 1702 he had become the chief rabbi of Prague, and subsequently managed to extend his span of control to the rest of Bohemia by acquiring (in 1713 and 1715) the two provincial chief rabbinic positions. In 1718 he was named the *rosh yeshiva* of Prague. Oppenheim was able to accumulate his positions of authority because of the poor conditions of large parts of the Jewish community, which suffered from natural disasters, expulsions and poverty, and because he could rely on assistance from the capital, Vienna, where his uncle was a court Jew.²⁰³

At the beginning of Amelander’s stay in Prague – and perhaps longer, although this is uncertain, as we do not know how long he studied there – Oppenheim was not the acting rosh yeshiva, but he must have offered private teachings at his house or served as a teacher at the yeshiva as well. Besides the regular Western and Central European yeshiva curriculum, which included *gafat*, - Gemara, Rashi’s Talmud commentary and the Tosafot – and *poskim* – halakhic works such as the *Arba’ah turim* and the *Shulchan arukh* -, Oppenheim may have also introduced Amelander to the kabbalah, which was deeply rooted in the tradition of the Prague rabbinate. Amelander would later deal with the growing popularity of kabbalah among Ashkenazim and demonstrate his familiarity with the topic. Students also became familiar with

¹⁹⁹ Elhanan Reiner, ‘Transformations in the yeshivot of Poland and Ashkenaz in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the debate over “pilpul”’ [Hebrew] in: Israel Bartal, Ezra Mendelsohn, Chava Turniansky, *Sefer yovel le-Chone Shmeruk* (Jerusalem 1993) 9-80.

²⁰⁰ Jay R. Berkovitz, *Rites and passages. The beginnings of modern Jewish culture in France, 1650-1860* (Philadelphia 2004) 60-62.

²⁰¹ SY ed. 1743, 122v-123r.

²⁰² Dov Schidorsky, ‘Jewish libraries’ in: Wayne A. Wiegand and Donald G. Davis eds., *Encyclopedia of Library History* (New York etc. 1994) 322-325, there 323-324; Alexander Marx, ‘The history of David Oppenheimer’s library’ in: idem, *Studies in Jewish history and booklore* (New York 1944) 238-255.

²⁰³ Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of community. The Jewish experience in the Czech lands* (Berkeley CA 2000) 24.

the local Jewish community. They often spent Shabbat and holidays with Jewish families; in return the students assisted in the education of their hosts' children. In synagogue, the students had specific places and were required to assist during the services. Oppenheim's students had certain amusements, such as staging a *Purim shpil*.²⁰⁴

Amelander's stay in Prague would later significantly influence his history book *Sheyris Yisroel*, in which he devoted much attention to Prague Jewish history and used besides his own experiences as well his ongoing contacts with Prague Jewry. Likewise, the broad Western and Central European yeshiva training had introduced him to the major works of the Jewish tradition, which he would use as sources for historical information.

Amelander also identified himself as having been a pupil of R. Moses Frankfurter (1672-1762), one of the leading rabbis in Amsterdam and a dayyan at the Ashkenazi beth din.²⁰⁵ Frankfurter's father, R. Shimon ben Israel Frankfurter (1634-1712), was likely born in Polish Skzwiezyna (Schwerin) and died in Amsterdam. The elder Frankfurter served for more than thirty years as a rabbi to the Amsterdam burial society Gemiluth Chasadim; in this position he must have worked on a daily basis with Amelander's father-in-law, Rudelsum, the beadle of the hevra. Both positions were later transferred to their sons, respectively Moses Frankfurter and Salomon Isaac Rudelsum.²⁰⁶ Shimon Frankfurter became widely known as the author of *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, which was both a halakhic standard work and a practical guide on Jewish burial rituals. Shimon adopted the family name – which referred to Frankfurt am Main – from his father-in-law, whose family probably had come from there.²⁰⁷

Amelander may have been a student of Moses Frankfurter either before or after his studies in Prague, and perhaps even both. It is possible that Frankfurter, having an extensive network in the Ashkenazi diaspora, was the person who recommended Amelander to the Prague yeshiva.²⁰⁸ It is not known what exactly Amelander studied under Frankfurter, yet by introducing himself as having been his student Amelander stressed the significance of Frankfurter in his life. Amelander's acknowledgment of his teacher may have been in recognition of the quality of the education; it may also have stemmed from more political

²⁰⁴ Kieval, *Languages* 104; Isidore Fishman, *The history of Jewish education in Central Europe. From the end of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century* (London 1944) 38-39, 122-124.

²⁰⁵ The surname is sometimes as well spelled as Frankfurt or Frankfort. I have chosen here to use the variant 'Frankfurter' which is used in most instances.

²⁰⁶ *SY* ed. 1743, 139r-139v.

²⁰⁷ Avriel Bar-Levav, *The concept of death in Sefer ha-Hayyim (the book of life) by Rabbi Shimon Frankfort* (Hebrew) [Ph.D. Department of Philosophy, Hebrew University Jerusalem, 1997] 256-284; on Moses Frankfurter esp. 257-259; idem, 'Amsterdam and the inception of the Jewish republic of letters' in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 225-237.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Fishman, *Jewish education*, 40.

reasons – as Frankfurter became Amelander’s first employer. Nonetheless, it is clear that Frankfurter held a high opinion of his student, as in 1724 he invited Amelander to work for him at his printing firm. The connections between the Frankfurter and Rudelsum families - Amelander had married into the latter, in 1723 - also likely worked in his favour.

Frankfurter was both a rabbi and a printer. This was not uncommon in Amsterdam. For example, Frankfurter’s colleague Joseph Dayyan combined his position as dayyan with owning a printing firm, and the two colleagues occasionally collaborated on printing projects. Frankfurter was active in the printing business from 1712-1714 and from 1721-1746. When he started he was able to take over material from the firm of Marcheses and Palasios, for whom he had worked previously. From 1721 onwards he printed at least 34 titles, most of which were large and ambitious projects. Frankfurter also managed to enter the Amsterdam book guild (he was a member from 1727-1739), whose membership required that one be an official citizen of Amsterdam, familiar with the Dutch language and able to pay the fees.²⁰⁹

The fact that Amelander enjoyed studies in both Amsterdam and Prague evidences not only that he was talented enough to continue studying after his *bar mitzva*, but also that his family had the financial means to send him to a yeshiva abroad. During his stay in Prague Amelander developed a far broader sense of the Ashkenazi diaspora and of Europe in general than he would have acquired had he not left Amsterdam. At the Prague yeshiva he met students from all over Western and Central Europe and got to know their traditions, stories and opinions. Furthermore, in Prague he also experienced a political climate which was less favourable for Jews than in Amsterdam. Thus he became familiar with the diversity of diaspora experiences of Ashkenazi Jews. Likewise, studying under David Oppenheim and Moses Frankfurter linked him to two influential and highly esteemed rabbis in the Ashkenazi world. His connections to these renowned teachers influenced him and furthered his career. The special attention for Prague and its religious traditions in *Sheyris Yisroel* should be explained by Amelander’s stay in Prague under Oppenheim’s direction, while Frankfurter not only employed Amelander but also influenced him with his Yiddish agenda (see paragraph 4.8).

²⁰⁹ Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud. A history of the individual treatises printed from 1700 to 1750* [Brill’s series in Jewish studies 21] (Leiden etc. 1999) 252; Rena G. Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘The role of Yiddish in early Dutch-Jewish Haskalah’ in: Shlomo Berger, Aubrey Pomerance, Andrea Schatz and Emile Schrijver eds., *Speaking Jewish – Jewish speak. Multilingualism in western Ashkenazi culture* [Studia Rosenthaliana 36] (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA 2003) 147-155, there 150-153.

4.5 Amelander and the Jewish printing industry

When Frankfurter restarted his printing firm, in 1721, he did most of the work himself. He edited works, wrote introductions to books and printed them; in all this he displayed a marked textual-philological sensitivity and awareness of the transmission process of Jewish manuscripts and books.²¹⁰ He soon took on Amelander to be an editor and corrector on several of his most prestigious projects. This had lasting influence on Amelander's life, as from that moment on the Jewish printing industry was the environment in which he employed his talents. The printing projects with which he became involved – eight in total, until he began writing his history book *Sheyris Yisroel* - offer an impression of his abilities and methodologies, along with an indication of the ideology behind these projects. To develop a paper understanding of *Sheyris Yisroel*, it should be interpreted as a subsequent step to his work on these projects, a step in which culminated much of what Amelander had learned previously.

Amelander's first involvement with a publishing project concerned the printing of the so-called rabbinic Bible, the *miqra'ot gedolot*. This was in fact the first Jewish publication of this work. Thus far it had been printed by Christian publishers, but Frankfurter now reclaimed it. In addition to the commentaries that were already part of the collection, such as Rashi and ibn Ezra, Frankfurter now included a whole series of new commentaries, bringing the total number of commentaries to no less than seventeen. Frankfurter's edition of the *miqra'ot gedolot*, entitled *Kehillot Moshe*, consisted of four large format volumes, and served a crucial role in spreading the commentaries of R. Obadiah Sforno (ca. 1475-1550), R. Menahem ben Solomon Meiri (1249-1316) and Jacob di Illescas (fourteenth century). Frankfurter also wrote a commentary of his own, which he added to the other sixteen. The project, conducted from 1724 till 1727, was supported by *haskamot* from the Sephardic and Ashkenazi rabbis of Amsterdam and one from Frankfurt am Main. As such, it was a publication that brought together Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions, a process that started especially with the printing of Hebrew books in Amsterdam.²¹¹

The small group of editors included, besides Frankfurter and Amelander, the *ger* (proselyte) Jacob ben Abraham Rishon and, at various points during the course of the project,

²¹⁰ Bar-Levav, 'The Jewish republic of letters', 229-230.

²¹¹ *Sefer kehillot Moshe, ve-hu ha-Miqra gedolah im kol ha-perushim*, Vol. 1 (Amsterdam 1724) title page and the *haskamot* (p. 1).

Abraham ben Moses ha-Levi, Naphtali Herz Levi Rofe²¹² and Frankfurter's son Samuel. This small staff collected, edited, corrected and proofread the text of the Hebrew Bible, the Aramaic Targum Onqelos, the massoretic notes (gedolah and ketanah) and the sixteen commentaries.²¹³ In the first volume Amelander introduced himself to the readers as a pupil of Frankfurter who, under the leadership of his teacher, had meticulously corrected the Biblical text. In the final volume he further praised Frankfurter for having the entrepreneurial courage and wisdom to publish these *migra'ot gedolot*. Amelander assured the readers that he had also worked extremely hard on the project. Abraham ben Moses ha-Levi had edited the commentaries, but Amelander had corrected the text of the Bible. Amelander highlighted two principles that had been important for him throughout the entire process: first, putting everything in the correct order, so as to make it easy for the reader to study the book; second, making the language as clear as possible.²¹⁴ Here we discover already one of the traits that would later also typify Amelander's historiography, namely a central place for the reader. Amelander aimed to make the reading experience as simple and comfortable as possible.

In his second publishing project, which concentrated on the Hebrew Bible, Amelander built upon the expertise he had acquired while editing *Kehillot Moshe*. These projects were conducted almost simultaneously, thereby affording Amelander opportunity to combine his work for both book projects. Amelander, together with his brother-in-law Eleasar Soesman, began an ambitious project to prepare a Hebrew edition of the Tenakh, with a bilingual Hebrew-Yiddish version of Rashi, Yiddish Bible paraphrases and a commentary written by Amelander and Soesman themselves. They had undoubtedly benefited greatly from their work on *Kehillot Moshe*, both for their textual and editing skills and for their commentary. Their joint project – a book series entitled *Magishei Minbah* - was published from 1725 till 1729.

The first three volumes – Torah, Nevi'im rishonim and Nevi'im aharonim -were printed by Frankfurter. The final volume – Ketuvim – was printed by Naphtali Herz (ha-)Levi Rofe, who had assisted in the editing process of *Kehillot Moshe*. Amelander worked on the entire project; Soesman collaborated only on the first volume, after which Naphtali Rofe joined Amelander as editor for the next three volumes. In the final volume Amelander praised his co-

²¹² More on Naphtali Herz Levi Rofe especially in paragraph 4.2.2.

²¹³ Heller, *Printing the Talmud*, 253, who (rather discourteously) gives the name R. Abraham ben R. Jacob Segal instead of Abraham ben Moshe ha-Levi.

²¹⁴ *Kehillot Moshe*, Vol. 1 (Amsterdam 1724) 1v; Vol. 2 (Amsterdam 1727) 1r.

editor as having been the saviour of the project after a period of troubles.²¹⁵ What exactly happened between Frankfurter and Naphtali Rofe is unclear, but we know that in 1727, halfway into the project, Frankfurter and Naphtali Rofe – under his Dutch name, Hartog Alexander – made a series of agreements before ‘the good men’ Levi Carpelis and Philip Ezekiel Cohen. These agreements were translated into Dutch and ratified by the notary Abraham Tzeewen. The records of the agreements offer unique and rare insight into the process of publishing *Magishei Minhab* and thus also into the workings of the Jewish book industry in eighteenth-century Amsterdam – the environment in which Amelander earned his living.²¹⁶

Frankfurter and Naphtali Rofe agreed that the latter would do the printing of the final two volumes, the *Nevi'im aharonim* and the *Ketuvim*. Because the first volume would carry the name of Frankfurter, it would be printed by Naphtali Rofe but with Frankfurter’s movable type components. These pieces were highly expensive, however, and so Naphtali Rofe’s wife stood surety. Likewise, employees of both firms would be present at the handing over of the letters so as to ensure that they were not damaged. Naphtali Rofe was allowed to use the letters only for *Magishei Minhab* and not for any other printings projects.

Every Sunday Frankfurter sent someone with enough paper, of good quality, to Naphtali Rofe, who in turn sent back the printed leaves, dry or even still wet. Naphtali Rofe promised to prepare two or three ‘bogen’ – bundles of pages printed together – per week. He was exempt from these deliveries only during Jewish festive days, when his employees were not working. Readers purchased the book via subscription and, for four groshen, received each week or every ten days a new installment of the book. This was, as far as we know, the first major Yiddish book project to be financed through reader subscriptions, a new method for spreading the risks of printing books. Apparently the approach was successful in this case, as it was subsequently used for other books – including Amelander’s *Sheyris Yisroel*.²¹⁷ Naphtali Rofe

²¹⁵ *Sefer magishei minhab, ve-bu Torah im perush Rashi ve-gam pe maspiq bi-leshon Ashkenaz al kol pasuq ve-pasuq ha-peshutah ve-gam ha-derush mi-kamah midrashim u-mejareshe ha-Torah tsyanenu ha-pesuqim 1, 2, 3 bi-fenim ve-gam ba-Rashi ve-gam ba-pe bi-leshon Ashkenaz*, Vol. 4: *Ketuvim* (Amsterdam 1729) 172r.

²¹⁶ Municipal Archives Amsterdam, Notaries’ archives (nr. 5075), archive of Abraham Tzeewen (nr. 7636), act nr. 636. I would like to thank Mrs. Odette Vlesing for her help in tracing this source.

²¹⁷ *Magishei Minhab*, I, Hakdamah bilshon Ashkenaz; Nokhem Shtif, ‘Dos abonentn-sistem af yidische sforim’ *Yidische Filologie* 1 (1924) 388-392; Kagan has argued that it took well until the last quarter of the eighteenth century before subscription lists were added to the books. Some book projects, also in Amsterdam, failed to garner the necessary number of subscribers, as Amelander noted in *Sheyris Yisroel* for Benjamin Musaphia’s commentary on the Gemara Yerushalmi; Berl Kagan, *Hebrew subscription lists. With an index to 8,767 Jewish communities in Europe and North Africa* [Yiddish] (New York 1975) ix-x; SY ed. 1743, 133r. Subscription had been introduced earlier for Hebrew books, first in Amsterdam and thereafter in Hamburg, as revealed by: Peter T. van Rooden, Jan Wim Wesselius, ‘Two early cases of publication by subscription in Holland and Germany: Jacob Abendana’s *Mikhal Yofhi* (1661) and David Cohen de

pledged to maintain the quality that Frankfurter had started the project with, and he was not permitted to alter page lengths or line widths. Moreover, he was to print no less than 350 editions of the volume of the *Nevi'im aharonim*, and Frankfurter promised not to print any until his colleague's had gone out of print.

Amelander is mentioned twice in the contract. First, Naphtali Rofe agreed to print the final volume, *Ketuvim*, according to the copy he would receive from Amelander, 'as long as Emanuel and Hartog will agree, and if it would result in a conflict, the good men will assign another, more capable one with whom both Hartog and Moses are content'.²¹⁸ Second, the printer promised to send Amelander the three books he still owed him. Most likely, these were three copies of the already printed volumes of *Magisbei Minhab*.²¹⁹

Magisbei Minhab was not an entirely new work. This series of books was prepared, as was *Kehillot Moshe*, by assembling existing material, ordering it into a new format and correcting and reworking the language, alongside some original, new additions from the editors. The main source for large parts of the work was the Yiddish Bible paraphrase *Sefer Ha-Magid*, written by the author of the *Tsene-Rene*. The project, like *Ha-Magid*, was not complete, as no translation was provided for *Divrei ha-yamim* – probably because *Divrei ha-yamim* was considered a mere repetition of *Melakhim*. Moreover, the *Megillot* were completely omitted from the collection. As Joffe has demonstrated, only the Torah translation was new.²²⁰

The strikingly innovative aspect of this project, however, was that a Yiddish Bible edition was being printed the same way as Hebrew Bibles were: namely, with the authorized commentary of Rashi and other commentaries in addition to the Biblical text. Even more innovative was that this was done not only for the Torah but also for the rest of the Bible, which had generally received less attention. In this way, *Magisbei Minhab* symbolized the 'emancipation' of Yiddish. People who were unable to study official editions of the Hebrew Bible were now given opportunity to acquire traditional Jewish knowledge in their day-to-day language. In order to reach as broad a public as possible, *Magisbei Minhab* was printed in two editions: an 'édition de luxe', in larger format and on thicker paper, for the well to do; and a

Lara's *Keter Kehunna* (1668), *Quaerendo* 16 (1986) 110-130; on the general context in which subscription was introduced: Joris van Eijnatten, 'Communicatie en publieke orde, 1450-1800' in: Willem Frijhoff and Leo Wessels eds., *Veelvormige dynamiek: Europa in het ancien régime 1450-1800* (Heerlen 2006) 341-372, there 360-362.

²¹⁸ The whole text in Dutch reads as follows: 'Hartog moet drukken wat nog te drukken is met de 5 histories en uyt legging met heubreeus rassi ende hoogduyts naar de kopij van Emanuël Levij te weten soo lang sig Emanuël met Hartog sullen verstaen, ende soo tusschen de bijde disput mogte comen, sullen de goede mannen een ander cappable stellen waer mede hartog als moes moten te vreden sijn'.

²¹⁹ 'De 3 boeken die Emanuël moet hebben moet hartog verders besorgen te weten soo verre hem manqueert.'

²²⁰ Joffe, 'Magishej minhoh' 231-232.

small edition for the less wealthy. The authors and publishers achieved their goal: *Magishei Minbah* became exceptionally successful and was reprinted many times (Joffe notes no less than 20 editions) well into the nineteenth century.²²¹

While working on the two major Bible projects, Amelander undertook one more initiative: editing an edition of *Sefer Abudraham*, which Frankfurter published in 1726. This book, written by David ben Josef ben David Abudraham, a Jew from Seville, offered detailed commentary on the siddur, the Jewish prayerbook, and the Pesach haggadah. Abudraham collected those parts of the rabbinic tradition, ranging from the Talmud to contemporary commentators, that were related to the liturgy and built from them a well-structured explanation and survey of the texts that had a key role in Jews' daily life. The author was renowned for his grammatical knowledge, which he used to interpret difficult passages in the texts.

Sefer Abudraham was concluded in 1399 but was not published until 1489, in Lisbon. When Amelander edited a new version of the book, it had last been published 160 years earlier, in 1566, in Venice. The Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Abraham ben Juda Berlin (died 1730), mentioned this fact as being a merit of Amelander's initiative. The chief rabbi granted Amelander the customary right to publish the work and forbade others to publish it for a period of ten years. Amelander himself revealed in his introductory words – in a patchwork of biblical and rabbinic phrases – that the book had become quite rare and expensive and was thus, for many people, not accessible for reading. With a nod to the famous Talmudic saying, 'there is no beth midrash without innovation' (אין בית מדרש בלא חידוש) (bHagiga 3a), Amelander noted about his new edition that: לא יהיה דפוס בלא חידוש, 'there would not be a print without innovation'. He therefore added indices to the book, which would aid the reader in finding particular sections that he wished to study further. What Amelander did not mention is that he had removed a passage about the calendar, probably because he had deemed it to be too complex for the common reader.²²²

Two aspects should be highlighted about Amelander's involvement with *Sefer Abudraham*. The first is that, although the work is written in Hebrew, it was not directed primarily at the rabbinic elite, who could study all the sources Abudraham quoted, but rather at readers who sought a short but authoritative commentary to the daily prayers. Like the Bible –

²²¹ Joffe, 'Magishey minkhe' 232-250.

²²² David ben Josef Abudraham, *Sefer Abudraham* (Amsterdam 1726) 1. The title page notes that Jacob ben Naphtali Hirsh collaborated on the edition, though he did not sign the introduction by the editor and is not mentioned in the *haskama* of the chief rabbi.

central in the two other projects - the siddur and the haggadah were an integral part of how Jews lived their daily lives. Also, this edition was part of an effort, undertaken by Frankfurter, Amelander and Eleasar Soesman, to disseminate traditional Jewish learning among the broad majority of Ashkenazi Jewry, who could not devote each day to study. The second aspect is that *Sefer Abudraham* was a Sephardic book, published initially only in the centers of the Sephardic Diaspora, but was now entering the Ashkenazi realm.²²³ Amelander clearly stimulated the spread of Sephardic knowledge among Ashkenazim.

Another project on which Amelander collaborated with his brother-in-law Eleasar Soesman was the publication, in 1732, of a more recent and contemporary book, Eliyahu ben Abraham ha-Kohen's *Shevet musar*. This book, by the Sephardic *dayyan* of Smyrna (Izmir), was first published in Constantinople, in 1712; it quickly became tremendously popular and was translated into Ladino and Yiddish. *Shevet musar* (Rod of instruction) was an ethics treatise, full of practical instructions for daily Jewish life and with a stress on the need for repentance.²²⁴ The title page and haskamot only mention Eleasar Soesman and a Jacob ben Shlomo as having been the initiators of the edition, which was printed by Naphtali Herz Rofe. On the final page, however, a small poem about the publication process appears, with an acrostic revealing the person who had actually edited the book faithfully to the first edition: Menahem ha-Levi – that is, Amelander.²²⁵

After these four projects, Amelander began working with Salomon ben Josef Proops, the founder of a publishing dynasty that survived well into the nineteenth century.²²⁶ Amelander, having garnered renown as a corrector and editor of books, now selected a classical rabbinic source: *Midrash Tanhuma*. The name of this collection of homiletic midrashim on the Torah refers to the fourth-century sage Tanhuma bar Abba. The work is divided according to the historical Palestinian three-year cycle of Torah reading. The midrash itself, however, dates from between the fifth and the ninth centuries. It became quite influential and was used by Rashi and cited in the *Yalkut* and *Arukh*.²²⁷

²²³ It is striking that only the Ashkenazi chief rabbi was asked to write a haskama, and not also the Sephardic one – as was the case with *Kehillot Moshe*. Of course, this could be partly explained as stemming from financial concerns, as publishers had to pay the rabbis for given haskamot.

²²⁴ Israel Zinberg, *The German-Polish cultural center* [A history of Jewish literature 6] (New York 1975) 165-169.

²²⁵ Eliyahu ben Abraham ha-Kohen, *Shevet musar* (Amsterdam 1732) 116v; This connection was discovered by Gabriel Polak, *Ha-Magid* 2, 26 February 1858, no. 3, 30-31.

²²⁶ Frankfurter was still connected to Amelander's labours, this time as one of the four rabbis who gave a haskama for *Midrash Tanhuma* – together with the Sephardic rabbis R. David Israel Athias and R. Jitschak Haim Abendana de Brito and his Ashkenazi colleague R. Joseph ben Shimon Akiba Ber.

²²⁷ Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*; translated and edited by Markus Bockmuehl (2nd edition; Edinburgh 1996) 302-306.

A complicating factor is that *Midrash Tanbuma* is commonly called *Tanhuma-Yelamdenu*, as does the Amelander edition on its title page: מדרש תנחומא הנקרא ילמדנו. Older sources sometimes quote Tanhuma and Yelamdenu as two different midrashim. However, according to recent research, it is likely that both names refer to the same original collection of haggadic midrashim, which came to be dispersed into different minor collections. Some were called Tanhuma, after the sage who is quoted often in the collection; others were identified as Yelamdenu, after the opening sentence of other sections of the book. This complex history has resulted in two collections, each bearing the name Tanhuma-Yelamdenu and having large parts in common, although there are also significant differences. One version was transmitted in manuscript and eventually published by S. Buber, in 1885. Amelander followed the other sub-collection, known as ‘the standard edition’, which had first been printed in Constantinople, in 1520-1522. The Mantua edition, from 1563, of this version became the direct *Vorlage* for the Amsterdam edition of 1733.²²⁸

As in the other books, Amelander presents himself as ‘of the youngsters of the Levi'im’, a recent branch to the old tribe. In the introduction he praises Salomon Proops (died 1734) – שלמה הוא ושלמה פעולתו – who had been willing to publish the book. In this work, Amelander, first of all, corrected *Midrash Tanbuma* critically, which he claimed had not been done before. Second, as with *Sefer Abudraham*, Amelander sought to make the reading of *Midrash Tanbuma* easier for the general public via helpful additions. The Mantua edition had included indices for the halakhic decisions, the *ma'asim* (stories), and the parables. Amelander in turn not only explained difficult words – such as those of non-Hebrew origin – but also elaborated upon complex issues. For this work he utilized Rashi's oeuvre and the *Arukh* (1100), R. Nathan of Rome's dictionary annex encyclopedia of words and issues in the Talmudim, Targumim and midrashim.²²⁹

The subsequent Torah edition was a large project, yet it was in line with Amelander's earlier editing work. This edition included an Aramaic translation of Onqelos, Rashi's commentary, the five *Megillot* with *Targum Sheni* (an Aramaic paraphrase and commentary on Ester), and the *haftarot*, with Rabbi David Kimhi's (Radak) commentary. Also added was a super-commentary on Rashi, *Deveq Tov*, written by the sixteenth-century Ashkenazi scholar

²²⁸ Ibidem; John T. Townsend, *Midrash Tanbuma: Exodus and Leviticus* (Hoboken NJ 1989) xi-xii; Samuel A. Berman, *Midrash Tanbuma-Yelammedenu. An English translation of Genesis and Exodus from the printed version of Tanbuma-Yelammedenu with an introduction, notes, and indexes* (Hoboken NJ 1995) x-xii.

²²⁹ *Midrash Tanbuma ha-nigra Yelamdenu* (Amsterdam 1733) iv. The book was printed in two different formats: a small one, easy to carry; and a large one, better suited for intensive study.

Simon ben Isaac Aschenburg (first printed in Venice, in 1548). Amelander clarified *Deveq Tor* and presented a commentary on it. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate a copy of the first edition of this *Hamisha humshei Torah*, but the extant 1749 edition refers to the first one, of 1735 (תצה לפ"ק), and acknowledges Amelander's work on it. The second edition, like the first one, was printed by Naphtali Herz Levi Rofe and his son-in-law Kosman ben Joseph Baruch.²³⁰

Amelander's next book project was again published by the Proops firm, which was now, after the death of Salomon Proops being operated by his children. This time Amelander presented a new edition of *Reshit Hokhma*, originally written in Safed in 1575 by Eliyahu de Vidas (1518-1592). This book is both a *musar* (ethics) book and a kabbalistic book in one. De Vidas, as the Amsterdam edition of 1737 notes on its title page, had been a pupil of the well-known kabbalist R. Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (known as the Ramak). De Vidas represented a rationalistic interpretation of the kabbalah, which was soon after the Ramak's death nearly completely superseded by Lurianic kabbalah teachings. De Vidas was active in kabbalistic circles in Safed and Hebron and constructed his mixture of practical, moral guidance with an anthological guide into the world of kabbalah. In its language, contents and metaphors the work was highly influenced by the *Zohar*, the main work of the kabbalah.²³¹

This book fits well into Amelander's publication list thus far, as it was meant to be an introductory text for those not yet initiated into this stream of Jewish mysticism. Just as *Magishei Minhab* helped non-scholars become familiar with the Hebrew Bible and *Sefer Abudraham* revealed the secrets of the prayer book to the average (Hebrew literate) reader, and just as *Shevet musar* offered what became a popular introduction to Jewish ethics, Amelander's edition of De Vidas's book would allow the broader Jewish public to become familiar with the kabbalah. De Vidas's book is well structured and written in a clear Hebrew. Amelander was not the first party in Amsterdam to release an edition of the book: in 1633 Menasseh ben Israel published David Cohen de Lara's Spanish translation of parts of *Reshit Hokhma*.²³²

The *haskamot* for the book make clear that Amelander had acquired a position in Jewish Amsterdam. While the *haskamot* noted thus far only mentioned the publishers, this

²³⁰ *Hamishab humshei Torah* (Amsterdam 1749) title page. The book was later republished by Joseph (1718-1786), Jacob (1722-1779) and Abraham (1733-1792), sons of Solomon Proops, in 1767, under the title *Humasb tikun sofrim*.

²³¹ Lawrence Fine, *Safed spirituality. Rules of mystical piety, the beginning of wisdom* (New York 1984) 82-87. The book became very popular in the eighteenth century: Zeev Gries, 'Ethical literature in Hebrew and Yiddish' in: idem, *The book in the Jewish world 1700-1900* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon 2007) 46-56, there 49.

²³² David Cohen de Lara, *Tratado del Temor Divino extracto del doctissimo libro llamado ressit bobmá, traduzido nuevamente del Hebrayco, a nuestro vulgar idioma* (Amsterdam 1633).

time the Sephardic rabbis David Israel Athias and Yitshak Haim Abendana de Brito identified Amelander as the 'בעל פל' מדר' תנחומה', the author of the commentary to *Midrash Tanhuma*. Apparently, Amelander's edition of *Midrash Tanhuma* – for which the same rabbis had provided a *haskama* – had made an impression on them. Rabbi Eliezer of Cracow, of the Ashkenazi kehillah in Amsterdam (also known as R. Eleasar of Brody or R. Elazar Rokeah), did not note the author and instead issued a *haskama* that concentrated on the book itself.²³³

Amelander promoted his edition of *Reshit Hokhma* by explaining that, although many studied the book in order to acquire wisdom, instruction and knowledge (in a hint to Proverbs 1, 2-7 as one of the places where the notion 'reshit hokhma' appeared), the editions published thus far were not well suited for the task. Often these editions contained only an introduction and failed to provide commentary and explanations of difficult words. According to Amelander, his generation could not do without such commentary, especially because so few people were familiar with the language of the *Zohar*, an essential work for understanding *Reshit Hokhma*. Amelander criticized earlier editions for their frequent deletions of passages – especially passages dealing with either the *Zohar* or the Gemara and midrashim – not least as such deletions resulted in the editions not even being complete. Amelander was correct in this observation, as the Spanish edition of 1633, as well as many Hebrew editions, were in fact only *qizurim*, abridged editions of the original text.²³⁴

For Amelander's project, he not only prepared a new edition of the entire work, but also explained difficult words and provided commentary. He entitled this commentary לדעת חכמה, 'To know wisdom', and offered two explanations for the title. First, he explained that via the commentary he wished for the reader to become familiar with and understand the book *Reshit Hokhma*, here shortened to *Hokhma*. The second explanation was more personal: in line with certain passages in *Reshit Hokhma* dealing with gematria, Amelander explained that his name, Menahem Man Ha-Levi, had the same numerical value as *Lada'at Hokhma*. For his commentary, Amelander used the Talmud, midrashim, the Mekhilta and the *Zohar*.²³⁵

The introduction includes a particularly intriguing passage, in which Amelander states that, although he wrote the commentary, he did not care for the mystical doctrines.²³⁶ This is a somewhat confusing message on the part of the author, not least because during his studies,

²³³ Eliyahu de Vidas, *Sefer reshit hokhma* (Amsterdam 1737) ..

²³⁴ De Vidas, *Reshit* ..

²³⁵ Ibidem.

²³⁶ Ibidem.

most probably in Prague, he had surely become familiar with the kabbalah. Among Ashkenazim, since the sixteenth century, the originally Sephardic kabbalah had acquired a special place of interest.²³⁷ Why, then, if Amelander did not care for the kabbalah's mystical doctrines, did he edit a work so obviously kabbalistic as *Reshit Hokhma*? He did not explain this incongruence. One element of the explanation would obviously be that the book was not just kabbalistic but also ethical. In all of Amelander's publishing activities one finds that he had special interest in addressing the practical significance of Judaism for everyday life. Amelander sought to bring non-learned and learned Jews alike closer to the main sources of Jewish tradition. The *musar* part of *Reshit Hokhma* fits well into this frame. In the meantime, as Amelander noted in the introduction, many people had been studying the book without suitable commentaries. Amelander likely shared the traditional fears of the rabbinic class about exposing the broader Jewish community to kabbalah, as also becomes evident in the most reserved way he treated the subject of kabbalah in his history book *Sheyris Yisroel*, yet he must have also realized that such opposition alone would merely lead to people studying unsatisfactory editions of *Reshit Hokhma*, especially editions lacking proper explanations. This likely influenced Amelander to undertake a new edition of *Reshit Hokhma*, with commentary.²³⁸

In 1738 Amelander again collaborated with his brother-in-law Eleasar Soesman. This time they worked on an edition of *Ha-Magid*, the Yiddish paraphrase of the *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*, which had served as one of the main sources for *Magishei Minhab*. Soesman edited the volume; Amelander made the corrections. He was introduced as someone with a great deal of experience (אשר כבר שמעו הולך למרחקים בהגהת ספרים הרבה אין קץ). This project returned Amelander to the endeavor that had marked the beginning of his career in the book industry: making the Bible better known within the Ashkenazi Jewish community. In the introduction to this newest work he stressed precisely this goal, writing that the ordinary man, just as the scholar, should be able to study on his own – albeit not in Hebrew, but in *taytsh*, Yiddish.²³⁹

After these projects, Amelander devoted himself to Jewish history, editing a new edition of *Sefer Yosippon* and writing a sequel to it, entitled *Sheyris Yisroel*. Before turning to these

²³⁷ Jacob Elbaum, 'The influence of Spanish-Jewish culture on the Jews of Ashkenaz and Poland in the fifteenth-seventeenth centuries' *Binah* 3 (1994) 179-197; in an interesting volume the perception of kabbalah among Ashkenazim is traced since the thirteenth century: Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan eds., *Mysticism, magic and kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism. International symposium held in Frankfurt a.M. 1991* [Studia Judaica XIII] (Berlin/New York 1995).

²³⁸ Amelander's edition was successful; it was at least twice reprinted with his commentary and introduction, by Josef ben Shlomo Proops in Amsterdam 1776 and in Lemberg 1804.

²³⁹ *Sefer ha-magid* I-III (Amsterdam 1738); quotations from the introduction to the first volume devoted to the *nevi'im rishonim*.

books, which are at the center of this thesis, I will analyze the findings in this paragraph on Amelander's book projects up to that point, in the context of eighteenth-century Ashkenazi Jewry.

4.6 Jewish library awareness and the formation of a Jewish Republic of Letters

Amelander's professional career developed within the world of the Amsterdam Jewish printing industry, and this is a crucial element in his biography. In the seventeenth century the center of printing in Europe had shifted from Venice to Amsterdam, the new economic and commercial center of the continent. The city's relatively liberal policies and mild censorship practices made it the optimal location for book printing, both on the national and, most importantly, international markets.²⁴⁰ The Jewish printing industry, which had started in association with Christian printers but soon became controlled by several independent Sephardic and Ashkenazi publishers, also moved from Italy and Poland to Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. A network of authors, printers, editors, correctors, book sellers and buyers existed around the publishers. The printing houses often also served as book shops; moreover, they offered 'secular spaces' – contrasting the traditional religious spaces of the batei ha-midrash and yeshivot - where Jewish intellectuals could meet in a open and non-hierarchical atmosphere.²⁴¹

Each book project that Amelander worked on involved cooperation among several people, including editors, correctors, publishers and financiers. Sometimes these functions were all carried out by one or two persons. No matter how important Hebrew and Yiddish printing in Amsterdam had become, it remained a relatively small branch of the overall printing industry. Indeed, everyone in Amsterdam involved in it seems to have know each other.²⁴² Frankfurter, for example, not only edited and published books, sometimes by himself and sometimes together with others, but also, as *dayyan*, wrote *haskamot* for books published by other printers. Survival in the book industry necessitated that one would work for more than one printing firm. Amelander worked for Frankfurter and Proops, and his Hebrew Torah edition, *Shevet Musar* and historical books were printed by Naphtali Herz Rofe.

²⁴⁰ Van Eijnatten, 'Communicatie en publieke orde', 355-362.

²⁴¹ Zeev Gries, 'Expanding horizons' in: idem, *The book in the Jewish world 1700-1900* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon 2007) 13-19; Jean Baumgarten, *Le peuple des livres. Les ouvrages populaires dans la société ashkénaze XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris 2010) 24-26.

²⁴² Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'The role of Yiddish in early Dutch-Jewish Haskalah' in: Berger ao. Eds., *Speaking Jewish*, 147-155.

Avriel Bar-Levav has stressed the importance of Amsterdam in the inception of a Jewish ‘republic of letters’. This sixteenth-century humanistic notion of an autonomous socio-cultural space of a group of people producing and consuming literature, resulting in shared knowledge of specific texts and ideas, is, within Jewish history, generally linked to the Haskalah movement. Bar-Levav, however, demonstrates that in Amsterdam an early, formative phase of such a Jewish republic of letters developed around the printing houses, where books were published for a widening audience, and that this was followed by the growth of a Jewish imagined community which shared this Amsterdam heritage and further developed it.²⁴³

Examining Amelander’s publication projects allows us to further develop Bar-Levav’s thesis. What differentiates the early eighteenth-century Amsterdam ‘republic of letters’ from the later maskilic ‘republic of letters’ is that the former’s library remained largely traditional. Its intended readership, however, was much larger than ever before and crossed the boundaries of traditional knowledge societies. Amelander’s publications, as a whole, testify to a specific type of a Jewish library awareness; each project, in some way or another, was intended to make the central texts of the Jewish tradition - including the Bible, the prayer book, the Haggadah, ancient midrashim and the *Zohar* - better known within the Ashkenazi world. Amelander worked on an ‘imaginary Jewish library’ of traditional books, but made them fully available, in contemporary editions, to a broad audience.

Yet there appears to have been a purposive differentiation between the books directed at a Yiddish-reading public (the volumes of *Magishei Minbah* and *Sefer ha-Magid*) and those intended for the much smaller, primarily male-dominated audience trained in Hebrew (*Kehillot Moshe*, *Sefer Abudraham*, *Shevet Musar*, *Midrash Tanbuma*, the 1735 Torah edition and *Reshit Hokhma*). This differentiation was not coincidental. Amelander – as well as his colleagues, publishers and financiers – must have considered it highly important that certain texts – such as the Bible, and the principal insights of the classical exegetical tradition as expressed in its accompanying commentaries, – be known to as large a public as possible, but that certain other, more difficult texts remain reserved for people with ample training in Hebrew. Amelander’s Hebrew publications, developing the traditional rabbinic library, gained him recognition from the rabbinic elites. His efforts to spread central religious texts to larger strata of the Jewish communities should, for their part, be interpreted as an offshoot of the age of confessionalization of European societies, a time when various religions sought to connect

²⁴³ Avriel Bar-Levav, ‘Amsterdam and the inception of the Jewish republic of letters’ in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 225-237.

the common man to a new and higher level of religiosity.²⁴⁴ The same awareness of differentiation was, as we will see in the chapter ‘Mediating knowledge’, important for Amelander in editing *Sheyris Yisroel* as well.

Older historiography often describes Amsterdam, as a center of Jewish printing, as having been important only in the more technical aspects of book production and that the books published in the city had not presented any significant local intellectual contributions. The city’s Jewish printing industry, according to such historiography, centered almost exclusively around importing texts and exporting books. Shlomo Berger altered this picture by showing Amsterdam to have been an intellectual laboratory for the Ashkenazic diaspora. According to Berger, in Amsterdam not only were imported texts discussed, checked, altered and rewritten, but Hebrew and Yiddish texts were written there as well and subsequently printed and distributed.²⁴⁵ Amelander’s activity as an editor, corrector and author were typical of this process. His main methodology involved composing new editions of traditional texts by selecting material from different sources and placing them in a new order. In doing so, Amelander became familiar with the procedure of collecting diverse sources, selecting from them and unifying the selected elements into a new narrative – skills he would extensively apply while composing his *magnum opus*, *Sheyris Yisroel*.

In many of the book projects in which he was involved, Amelander was the person to correct the language and to add explanations of difficult words and concepts. He explicitly noted that he used, to a great extent, the traditional linguistic sources, like the *Arukh*, just as the often philological remarks of Rashi. Because of this, Amelander himself became known as *ba-medakdek*, the grammarian, an authority on the peculiarities of the Hebrew language.²⁴⁶ This special connection to Hebrew did not prevent him from using Yiddish. Amelander was far from elitist, and in many of his publishing activities he showed how important it was for him to reach not just the rabbinic elite but also the Yiddish-speaking majority of the community. In fact, as Irene Zwiép has demonstrated, a ‘grammarian’ in the eighteenth century was ‘a new,

²⁴⁴ Reinhard Wolfgang, ‘Sozialdisziplinierung - Konfessionalisierung - Modernisierung: Ein historiographischer Diskurs’ in: Nada Boskovka Leimgruber, *Die Frühe Neuzeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft: Forschungstendenzen und Forschungsbeiträge* (Paderborn etc. 1997) 39-55; Peter van Rooden, ‘Kerk en religie in het confessionele tijdperk’ in: Willem Frijhoff and Leo Wessels eds., *Veelvormige dynamiek: Europa in het ancien régime 1450-1800* (Heerlen 2006) 373-402. Commonly the age of confessionalization is periodised from 1555 until 1649, in recent years this final date is much debated. For the early eighteenth-century Jewish case the concept, at least, is still well applicable.

²⁴⁵ Shlomo Berger, ‘Yiddish book production in Amsterdam between 1650-1800: local and international aspects’ in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 203-212.

²⁴⁶ On the title page of the 1749 *Hamishah humshei Torah* edition Amelander was introduced as the *torani*, Torah scholar, and *ba-medakdek*, grammarian. This qualification was adopted hereafter in other republications of Amelander’s work.

professional, identity', and one that entailed having a mediating position in a multilingual setting.²⁴⁷ Amelander joined this new trend in Ashkenazi society, while at the same time connecting to traditional linguistic sources. This hybrid mixture of innovation and tradition was characteristic for the eighteenth-century type of Jewish intellectual Amelander was.

The Amsterdam Jewish printing industry served as a semi-neutral society for Sephardim and Ashkenazim; here they could meet and collaborate and thereby become part of the same 'republic of letters'.²⁴⁸ Amsterdam's peculiarity in being home to two distinct Jewish communities, each of which had its own religious, philosophical and scholarly heritage, become even further pronounced in the printing industry. The formal borders between the communities were accentuated by their respective religious establishments, yet there were significant mutual influences. The famous Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Haham Zvi (1656-1718), offers a useful example of the enormous impact that encounters with Sephardic culture had on Ashkenazi intellectuals. Indeed, Zvi's intellectual horizon became predominantly Sephardic and he made severe criticisms on the Ashkenazi education system.²⁴⁹ The printing industry was one of the main spaces where the transition of knowledge from the Sephardic to the Ashkenazi domain occurred, a transition resulting in a new fabric of eighteenth-century Ashkenazi identity.

Amelander was always highly conscious of his mainly Ashkenazi reading public, yet he was also intimately familiar with the Sephardic tradition. His list of publications can easily be read as having been an attempt to introduce the main texts from this tradition into the Ashkenazi communities. *Sefer Abudraham*, *Reshit Hokehama* and *Shevet Musar* were all originally written by Sephardic authors for a Sephardic public, and *Kehillot Moshe* included much Sephardic commentary. Likewise, the fact that Sephardic rabbis recommended certain books that Amelander had worked on demonstrated – despite the social and cultural gaps between the communities – the high degree of exchange between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in eighteenth-century Amsterdam.

²⁴⁷ Irene E. Zwiap, 'Imagined speech communities: western Ashkenazi multilingualism as reflected in eighteenth-century grammars of Hebrew' in: Shlomo Berger, Aubrey Pomerance, Andrea Schatz and Emile Schrijver eds., *Speaking Jewish – Jewish speak. Multilingualism in western Ashkenazi culture* [Studia Rosenthaliana 36] (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA 2003) 77-117, there 94-95, 115-117.

²⁴⁸ The concept of a 'semi-neutral society' originates with Jacob Katz, *Out of the ghetto. The social background of Jewish emancipation 1770-1870* (Cambridge Mass. 1973) 42-56; Bar-Levav, 'Inception', 235-236.

²⁴⁹ Schorsch, *Text and context*, 73.

4.7 The early 'emancipation' of Yiddish

One further aspect of Amelander's works merits specific attention. In addition to Hebrew books, he also collaborated on two Yiddish projects, *Magisbei minbah* and *Sefer ha-magid*. Yiddish, being the daily vernacular of Ashkenazim, had acquired in Amsterdam a stable position with the growth of the Ashkenazi kehilla. The printing industry, moreover, served not only – or even firstly – the Amsterdam Ashkenazim but primarily the Ashkenazi diaspora. The printing of Yiddish books had begun elsewhere, before Amsterdam had acquired its central position in the industry, yet in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Amsterdam the social position of Yiddish - and subsequently Yiddish books - changed in a way that can be identified as having been a gradual early 'emancipation' of the Yiddish language. This cultural shift occurred roughly a century before Yiddish in Eastern Europe developed as a literary language.²⁵⁰

For a long time, most of the historiography of Yiddish primarily devoted attention to either the supposed beginnings of Yiddish in medieval Germany or to the further development of the language in Eastern Europe since early modern times. The major turning point in this history was for these historians the construction of a Yiddish literary language, often dated somewhere between the 1860s and 1880s. Before, Yiddish was primarily a spoken language, with some literature on its own, mainly for women and illiterate, and largely in the shadows of Hebrew.²⁵¹ In this grand narrative Western Yiddish barely gets any attention, as it is considered to be a dead end alley. Illustrative is Benjamin Harshav's assertion that, although Yiddish existed already some 700 years, 'it still seemed to lack beauty in comparison with the literatures of Europe, and sublimity in comparison with biblical Hebrew', and therefore in the last 100 years, Yiddish authors – mainly in Eastern Europe – had 'to create and enrich both their language and their literature as if they were just beginning'.²⁵² He completely overlooked the developments in Western Yiddish from 1500 onwards, and even stressed that 'only the

²⁵⁰ Rena G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'The role of Yiddish in early Dutch-Jewish Haskalah' in: Berger, *Speaking Jewish*, 147-155; Shlomo Berger, *Yiddish and Jewish modernization in the 18th century* [Hebrew; Braun Lectures in the history of the Jews in Prussia 12] (Ramat-Gan 2006).

²⁵¹ Mikhail Krutikov, *From kabbalah to class struggle. Expressionism, Marxism and Yiddish literature in the life and work of Meir Wiener* (Stanford 2011) 288-291; Barry Trachtenberg, *The revolutionary roots of modern Yiddish, 1903-1917* (Syracuse, NY 2008), analyzes the ideology behind the Yiddish research of Shmuel Niger, Ber Borochov, Nokhem Shtif – who paid attention to early modern Yiddish, but largely overlooked the importance of Amsterdam and even described the eighteenth century as a period of decline (133).

²⁵² Benjamin Harshav, *The meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley 1990) 4; see as well the following pages for the swift transfer from medieval Ashkenaz to modern Eastern Europe.

particular historical and sociological position of Jews in Eastern Europe' was able to develop and guarantee 'the independent life of the language'.²⁵³

What then, is it that causes many linguists and historians to look almost exclusively to nineteenth century Eastern Europe for the development of a literary Yiddish? Harshav provides two clues. First, it was then that Yiddish was standardized and 'one, superdialectal, literary language' was forged.²⁵⁴ Second, Yiddish was a companion to the rise of Jewish nationalism and only then could fully develop into a language of the people.²⁵⁵ Others, from a Marxist or socialist ideology instead of a nationalistic, assumed that Yiddish only developed into a full-fledged language with the rise of political awareness of the Jewish proletariat.²⁵⁶ A fourth claim is made, namely the rise of a new intelligentsia, which expressed itself in Yiddish.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, a new, large Yiddish readership would account for the 'emancipation' of Yiddish.²⁵⁸ Finally, the argument has been made that until the 1860's Yiddish was not only subjected to Hebrew, but also largely – next to Hebrew - the language for religious books, while nearly no secular books were written. Haskalah, in this case, is considered as a prerequisite for the 'emancipation' of Yiddish.²⁵⁹

It seems that ideological backgrounds, to say the least, influenced these authors significantly in their historiography of Yiddish, whether nationalist, Marxist or secularist.²⁶⁰ Their concentration on Eastern Europe and the nineteenth century prevented them from considering the rich history of Western Yiddish in early modern times. Many of the arguments used for the nineteenth-century Eastern European 'emancipation' of Yiddish, could be applied to early modern Yiddish as well. The Amsterdam publishers already created a Standard Yiddish, supposedly devoid of dialectisms; Yiddish was consciously used by a new intelligentsia, while also a new, quickly broadening readership was available. The suggestions of Schaechter and Jacobs to distinguish between two Yiddish literary languages, one mainly developed in early modern Amsterdam, and the other later in nineteenth-century Eastern

²⁵³ Harshav, *Meaning of Yiddish*, 30.

²⁵⁴ Harshav, *Meaning of Yiddish*, 80; Emanuel S. Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish culture. The story of the Yiddish language movement* (New York 2000) 45.

²⁵⁵ Harshav, *Meaning of Yiddish*, 121-160; Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish culture*, 51-52.

²⁵⁶ On this view: David E. Fishman, *The rise of modern Yiddish culture* (Pittsburgh, PA 2005) vii. Although there were also Marxist and socialist historians who turned to early modern Yiddish as a true language of the masses, e.g. Ber Borochov; cf. Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary roots*, 129-133.

²⁵⁷ Fishman, *Rise of modern Yiddish culture*, viii.

²⁵⁸ Fishman, *Rise of modern Yiddish culture*, vii.

²⁵⁹ Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish culture*, 278-279; cf. the position of Chaim Zhitlovsky, in: Fishman, *Rise of modern Yiddish culture*, viii-ix.

²⁶⁰ More on this theme: Frakes, *Politics of interpretation*, passim.

Europe, seem to do more justice to the actual history of Yiddish. The first phase might in the end have been a dead end alley - although Schaechter is keen enough to stress its influence on the second phase - it was nevertheless a significant development in early modern Ashkenaz.²⁶¹ Amelander was right in the middle of this process in which the status of Yiddish gradually changed.

The first Yiddish book published in Amsterdam, *Mismor lethode*, was issued in 1644. The work was written by David ben Menahem ha-Kohen and comprised rhymed translations of stories from Torah and Megillot.²⁶² Thereafter, the number of Yiddish books published in the city grew rapidly, and no less than 500 titles were printed there, many of which were republished. Genres that in medieval times had been reserved for the Yiddish domain and aimed at female audiences made up a large proportion of books now printed in Yiddish. Such works included the paraphrase of the Bible, the *Tsene-Rene*, minhagim books, female prayer books such as *Tekhines*, books of fables, *mayse* books and other publications with popular Jewish or non-Jewish folk stories.²⁶³ Towards the end of the seventeenth century new genres had entered the Yiddish library. For example, in Amsterdam two Yiddish translations of the Bible were printed almost simultaneously; and in 1680 another classical text, the *piyyut Keter malkhut*, by Shlomo ibn Gabirol, made the transition from the Hebrew (and Sephardic) domain to the Yiddish (and Ashkenazi) domain.²⁶⁴

A number of Amsterdam publishers played crucial roles in this early 'emancipation' of Yiddish. The driving force behind the publication of new texts, which until then had been reserved for those who could read Hebrew, was Hayyim ben Jacob Drukker. From 1690 onwards he published Yiddish translations of among others Menasseh ben Israel's *Mikveh Yisrael*, Benjamin of Tudela's travelogue and *Lev hakhamim*. Drukker hired Moses Frankfurter for a Yiddish edition of the Sephardic ethics classic *Menorat hama'or* (Candelabra of light) of Isaac Aboab – the same book that Eleasar Soesman had translated into Dutch. In 1722 the

²⁶¹ Mordkhe Schaechter, 'The 'hidden standard'. A study in competing influences in standardization'in: Marvin I. Herzog, Wita Ravid and Uriel Weinreich eds., *Field of Yiddish* 3 ('s-Gravenhage/Mouton 1969) 284-304; Neil G. Jacobs, *Yiddish: a linguistic introduction* (Cambridge 2005) 297-299. Cf. Dov-Ber Kerler, *The origins of modern literary Yiddish* (Oxford 1999), which gives some attention to the earlier literary language, but concentrates in his book completely on the later, Eastern European phase.

²⁶² Simon Neuberg, 'The first Yiddish book printed in Amsterdam: Sefer mismor lethode', *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 4 (2010) 1, 7-21.

²⁶³ Lejb Fuks, 'Amsterdam, a yidisher literatur-tsender in 17tn un 18tn yohrhundert', *Di Goldene Keyt* 115 (1985) 183-194.

²⁶⁴ Marion Aptroot, 'Blitz and Witzhausen. New aspects of an old conflict' [Yiddish], *Oksforder Yidish* 1 (1990) 3-38; idem, 'In galkhes they do not say so, but the taytsh is as it stands here.' Notes on the Amsterdam Yiddish Bible translations by Blitz and Witzhausen', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 27 (1993) 1/2, 136-158; Baumgarten, *Le peuple des livres*, 26-27.

edition was published by Drukker, with a preface by Frankfurter, in which he defended the publication of serious religious books into Yiddish.²⁶⁵

The preface of Frankfurter is both an apology and a program. Referring to Deuteronomy 4, 6 he states that just as the nations are required to hear the commandments of God in their own languages, so too – and even more so – the Jews should be able to read and study Torah in the vernacular.²⁶⁶ Frankfurter notes: ‘Three reasons, therefore, are there why these matters are written in the general simple language [Yiddish]: they have the right to understand, consequently the right to know the truth and thereafter they can ensure their eternal life.’ Frankfurter’s argument, stressing the connection between learning and eternal life, clearly echoes contemporary Christian confessionalisation offensives which also linked proper religious knowledge to salvation.²⁶⁷ Frankfurter then challenges the opposition within the rabbinic establishment against the transfer of religious knowledge from Hebrew to Yiddish: ‘I heard that there are scholars who believe it is wrong to translate such books into the language of Ashkenaz and publicize matters that are written in *midrash* and Talmud. Thus, I would like to show them the contrary. It is a duty to publish books in all languages, so that a person who knows no Hebrew can study in his own language and will be rewarded exactly in the same way as students in Hebrew [...].’ The Ashkenazi Amsterdam chief rabbi, however, supported the project and gave his *haskama*; most likely, Frankfurter also defended the Yiddish agenda against Ashkenazi scholars in Central and Eastern Europe.²⁶⁸

Drukker and Frankfurter were not alone in their efforts to provide new titles to the widening circle of Yiddish readers, be they women or men, educated or uneducated. People like Rabbi Yehiel Mikhel Epstein were active in writing Yiddish books on religious customs and prayer for the same reasons Frankfurter was.²⁶⁹ The networks around Drukker and Frankfurter, in which Amelander should be situated as well, were inspired by the Yiddish agenda of the publishers and participated in the explosion of Yiddish literature in many new

²⁶⁵ Jacques Zwarts, ‘Drukker, Chajiem ben Jacob’, *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* 7 (Leiden 1927) 387-388; Shlomo Berger, ‘An invitation to buy and to read. Paratexts of Yiddish books in Amsterdam, 1650-1800’, *Book History* 7 (2004) 31-61, there 48-53.

²⁶⁶ A similar defense of Yiddish, although much shorter and less elaborated, is given in R. Zvi Hirsh Khotsh’s Yiddish translation of the *Zohar* in 1711; Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish culture*, 35.

²⁶⁷ Heike Bock, ‘Secularization of the modern conduct of life? Reflections on religiousness in early modern Europe’ in: Manuel Franzmann, Christel Gärtner, Nicole Köck eds., *Religiosität in der sekulierten Welt. Theoretische und empirische Beiträge zur Säkularisierungsdebatte in der Religionssoziologie* (Wiesbaden 2006) 143-152.

²⁶⁸ Cited after: Berger, ‘Invitation’, 48-49.

²⁶⁹ Zeev Gries, ‘On reading and readers’ in: idem, *Jewish book*, 31; Shlomo Noble, ‘R. Yehiel Mikhel Epstein, a dertsier un kemfer far yidish in 17^m yorhundert’, *Yivo bleter* 35 (1951) 121-138.

genres.²⁷⁰ Frankfurter himself edited a Yiddish translation of the mahzor, the prayer book for festive days, and Amelander worked with Frankfurter, Eleasar Soesman and Naphtali Herz Rofe on a Yiddish commentary of the Bible. Amelander's historical works, which will be examined in the next chapters, offer another example of a new genre being transferred from the Hebrew to the Yiddish domain.

The growing appreciation of Yiddish and the changing borders between Hebrew and Yiddish were strongly connected to Amsterdam.²⁷¹ First, the Sephardim, since their arrival in Amsterdam, had been publishing in Hebrew and the Iberian languages. They were also active in translating Hebrew classics into Spanish and Portuguese. The Ashkenazi printers were well aware of these Sephardic publishing practices and often benefited from them in their own professional training. Drukker, for example, worked in the printing press of David Tartas, a Sephardic Jew, before establishing his own printing house. Both Frankfurter and Drukker, in their respective prefaces to *Menorat hama'or*, referred explicitly to the Sephardic translation projects of Hebrew books.²⁷² Second, in the Dutch Republic publishing in the vernacular – including for serious and scholarly works – was far more common than in the rest of Europe, where Latin remained the dominant scholarly language. This 'vernacularization of learning' resulted in the production of 'scholarly' texts in the vernacular in genres like historiography, philosophy, theology, geography, medicine, biology, mathematics and grammar.²⁷³ The Dutch appreciation of the vernacular, next to the Sephardic tradition of translating seminal Hebrew texts, provide the necessary background to understand the rise of new genres and new titles in Yiddish.

More general considerations also stimulated the transfer of knowledge from the Hebrew to the Yiddish domain. Since the onset of book printing, around 1450, until 1800 books had gradually become more available to wider circles of society. Such widening availability was primarily due to improving trade techniques, which facilitated mass printing and thereby made books less expensive and more accessible to a larger public. Buying books

²⁷⁰ Bar-Levav, *Concept of death*, 264-265, 303-325; Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'The role of Yiddish in early Dutch-Jewish Haskalah' in: Berger, *Speaking Jewish*, 147-155.

²⁷¹ Cf. Irene E. Zwiep, 'Adding the reader's voice: early-modern Ashkenazi grammars of Hebrew', *Science in Context* 20 (2007) 2, 163-195.

²⁷² Zwarts, 'Drukker'; Berger, 'Invitation to buy and read', 48-50.

²⁷³ Arjan van Dixhoorn, 'Chambers of rhetoric: performative culture and literary sociability in the early modern Northern Netherlands' in: idem and Susie Speakman Sutch eds., *The reach of the Republic of Letters: literary and learned societies in the late medieval and early modern Europe I* (Leiden etc. 2008) 119-157; Ernestine van der Wall, 'The religious context of the early Dutch Enlightenment: moral religion and society' in: Wiep van Bunge ed., *The early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic, 1650-1750: selected papers of a conference, held at the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel 22-23 March 2001* (Leiden etc. 2003) 39-58, there 43-44; Fuks, 1981, 175.

was no longer the privilege of an educated elite who were fluent in Hebrew, but also of Yiddish-speaking middle-class readers.²⁷⁴ Commercial motives, of course, also spurred publishers to release new titles in Yiddish translation. Via publishing in Yiddish they sought to reach new sectors of the Ashkenazic public and to add them as a market for their products. Publishers targeted both the steadily growing local Amsterdam market and the large Ashkenazic communities of Central and Eastern Europe.²⁷⁵

The efforts of people like Drukker, Frankfurter and Amelander led to new kinds of books being supplied to a new type of readership, which, as Bar-Levav has noted, resulted in a redefinition of the imagined Jewish community.²⁷⁶ More specifically, this imagined community was transnational, European-wide and Ashkenazi, with a bilingual Hebrew-Yiddish library. New texts and knowledge were introduced from Sephardic culture, and Yiddish obtained an expanding position next to Hebrew as a language of culture and education. By the end of the eighteenth century one would be able to read in Yiddish translation almost all the Hebrew classics, whether envisioned to be read next to or even instead of the original texts.²⁷⁷ Amelander contributed to this process not only via his publications until 1743, but also through his history books, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The history books, next to genres such as the Yiddish press, poetry and pamphlets, demonstrate furthermore that Yiddish literature in this period was not only limited to religious genres and themes. Although early modern culture was thoroughly religious, and therefore Yiddish literary output was also for a significant part religious, it was in the flexible, quickly developing Yiddish domain instead of the more stable Hebrew domain that more secular and new genres entered.

The early ‘emancipation’ of Yiddish differed in many respects from the later, Eastern European literary Yiddish. Within the context of early modern Europe, Yiddish, however, went through a process very similar to other European vernaculars. Knowledge – although not all - was transferred from domains considered to be ‘high culture’, new genres were introduced, the authors were no longer primarily part of the rabbinic establishment and much larger strata of the population were reached. The relationship with Hebrew remained close, as both functioned with a bilingual community, but Yiddish textual culture acquired a growing position

²⁷⁴ Bar-Levav, ‘Inception’, 236.

²⁷⁵ Berger, ‘Yiddish book production’, 205, 210; Baumgarten, *Le peuple des livres*, 36.

²⁷⁶ Bar-Levav, ‘Inception’, 236-237.

²⁷⁷ Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish culture*, 35.

within Ashkenazi culture and functioned – in Baumgarten’s words – as a ‘laboratoire d’observation des changements intervenus à l’époque prémoderne’.²⁷⁸

4.8 Conclusion: Amelander as a hybrid intellectual

Thus far we have examined Amelander’s family, education and professional career in the Amsterdam printing industry. In conclusion we will summarize these findings and situate them within the larger picture of early modern Jewish history. Amelander came from a family that had been in Amsterdam for at least one generation, and this may well have given Amelander a good start, or at least a far better start than was available to most recent immigrants. His parents were buried at Muiderberg, indicating that they had almost surely belonged to the Ashkenazi middle class. Amelander married into the Rudelsum family, an established Amsterdam Ashkenazi family who were linked to the religious establishment. These family networks proved to be important for the development of Amelander’s professional career.

Amelander received far more education than did the average Amsterdam Ashkenazi boy of his age. He studied, in both Amsterdam and Prague, with well-known rabbinic authorities such as Moses Frankfurter and David Oppenheim. His geographic mobility was typical both for the Ashkenazi yeshiva educational system and for eighteenth-century Jewish intellectuals. Amelander grew up as part of a transnational Ashkenazi society, and thus was introduced in traditional Hebrew rabbinic knowledge.

In Amsterdam Amelander belonged to a network of Jewish intellectuals who shared a specific agenda. His brother-in-law Eleasar Soesman was crossing borders with Christian society, not least by publishing in Dutch, Hebrew and Yiddish, and by polemicizing with Christian intellectuals and strengthening Amsterdam Jews’ profound religious knowledge. Amelander developed his career within the printing industry, supported by Moses Frankfurter, whose Yiddish agenda he helped further by editing Yiddish Biblecommentaries and editions. The list of publications on which Amelander assisted form a significant part of a consistent, traditional Jewish library. Amelander functioned as part of the rising Jewish republic of letters and helped shape a new, reinvented Ashkenazi community.

The Amsterdam context was highly significant for Amelander’s development. Here Sephardim and Ashkenazim lived side by side and challenged each other intellectually. The

²⁷⁸ Baumgarten, *Le peuple des livres*, 14.

printing industry functioned as a semi-neutral society, where Sephardim and Ashkenazim collaborated, debated and transferred knowledge over the boundaries of (until then) fixed ethnic and religious identities. Amelander was quite active in the transfer of Sephardic knowledge to the Ashkenazi domain. Sephardim likewise influenced Ashkenazim in using the vernacular, just as Dutch society did. This resulted in what can be considered as having been an early or first ‘emancipation’ of Yiddish.

The publications Amelander worked on could be divided in two related, but different bodies. The first part, his Hebrew publications, are part of the traditional rabbinic library, which was extended by new Sephardi publications, but remained strictly within the Hebrew domain. The second part, in Yiddish, on the other hand, could be characterized as being part of a much larger offensive to spread religious and moral knowledge among large parts of Ashkenazi communities, mainly by the intelligentsia operating just below the rabbinic elite in spaces like the book industry. The publications – most of them key texts - were made reader-friendly, explaining difficult words, adding indices and deleting difficult passages, in order to disseminate religious knowledge and to intensify religious and moral conduct. The new library for a new, enlarged readership had an implicit or sometimes even explicit agenda of disciplining eighteenth century Ashkenazim.

During his professional career Amelander had different functions in the book industry, he was proofreader, corrector and editor, and finally became an author himself. In the process he learnt how to present traditional texts in a new, modern outlook to new audiences. He learned to assemble existing material, ordering this in a new format, correcting and reworking the language, explaining difficult words and passages and making new additions. All these skills – partly medieval, partly new trends in the early modern book industry – he would use extensively while composing *Sheyris Yisroel*.

Where should Amelander be positioned in the landscape of eighteenth century Ashkenazi Jewry? The answer to this question is not that easy at first sight. Should he be labeled an early maskil, per Feiner’s terminology? Although Amelander shared certain characteristics of these early eighteenth-century Jewish intellectuals - such as Sephardic influences, openness towards surrounding society, and working outside the rabbinic establishment - there were also significant differences. Amelander’s publications do not deal with science or philosophy, and he voices little if any criticism of traditional knowledge and traditional religious elites. Some figures in Amelander’s network, such as Eleasar Soesman or Naphtali Herz Rofe (the latter will be highlighted in the next chapter) can perhaps be included

in the transnational network of early maskilim, though Rofe would seem to have been too traditional to be included in this network.

On the other hand, Amelander could also not be seen as a mere representative of the rabbinic establishment, which continued traditional learning patterns. Although he contributed significantly to the traditional Hebrew library, with new and enlarged editions of central texts to be used in batei ha-midrash and yeshivot, his work was not restricted to that domain. Moreover, he never acquired a stable position within the religious infrastructure of Jewish Amsterdam, despite his solid yeshiva training, but instead found refuge in the relatively new and dynamic branch of the book industry.

A more useful and effective concept for describing Amelander, and most of his colleagues and family members, would be that of a hybrid intellectual. This concept is used in post-colonial discourses to describe intellectuals who were positioned between white ruling classes and indigenous communities. It is, however, also used for the blending or mixing of traditional and modern cultural practices and ideas.²⁷⁹ Hybridity as a concept has been used extensively in biology, linguistics, literary analysis and philosophy, with varying degrees of success. ‘Social hybridity’ has only recently started to be applied on historical contexts, including the history of Jews. Its merits are that it points to the dynamic multiplicity beyond normative ideals, to processes in which a diversity of sources, ideas and ideals fuse together. Homi Bhabha characterized this pointedly: ‘This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy’.²⁸⁰ In the strict context of colonial discourses it is always connected to operations of power, privilege and interest, in framing and discriminating the ‘Other’. Outside this context, however, ‘social hybridity’ – as demonstrated by Peter Burke – has developed in a much broader concept, not limited to hierarchical contexts, which is very helpful to analyse the dynamics of cultures. We should, nevertheless, be aware that hybridity is

²⁷⁹ See the influential book of Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid cultures: strategies for entering and leaving modernity* (Minneapolis MN 1995), for the concept see esp. the introduction; a general survey of the development of the theory of hybridity is given in: Deborah A. Kapchan and Pauline Turner Strong, ‘Theorizing the hybrid’, *The Journal of American Folklore* 112 (1999) 239-253; it is applied extensively in Latin American studies, e.g. in: Anne Lambricht, *Creating the hybrid intellectual: subject, space, and the feminine in the narrative of José María Arguedas* (Lewisburg 2007); in the field of Jewish history the concept is introduced for Late Antiquity Judaism in: Daniel Boyarin, *Border lines. The partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia 2004) 15-22.

²⁸⁰ Homi Bhabha, *The location of culture* (London 1994) 38.

an ‘outsider concept’, used by the historian, which describes changes of which communities and individuals are themselves often unaware.²⁸¹

If we avoid both a linear, progressive perspective on the rise of modernity and a simple dichotomy between the traditional and modern, the second meaning of the concept of hybridity, describing the blending and mixing of ‘traditional’ (rabbinic), ‘modern’, Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Christian cultural expressions, can be effectively applied to eighteenth-century Amsterdam Ashkenazim like Amelander. Hybridity relativizes and dissolves such binarisms, and stresses specific spaces which are ‘neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between’.²⁸²

According to Benjamin Lee such spaces are often created by diasporic migrations and inhabited by bilingual and bicultural resident nomads.²⁸³ Burke, in turn, emphasizes the importance of the cosmopolitan metropolis, like early modern Amsterdam, on the cross-roads of trade and cultures, with a very diverse population. In such spaces hybridic forms of cultures develop, especially in ‘trading zones’ or ‘frontier areas’, where people from different backgrounds and cultures meet and exchange information and knowledge.²⁸⁴

Amelander, functioning in cosmopolitan Amsterdam within the spatial realm of the book industry, one such ‘trading zone’, was part of a steadily growing diasporic community and multilingual (he had a command of Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish and Dutch). Although the term ‘resident nomad’ is definitely too strong a word, and does not do justice to Amsterdam Ashkenazim’s attachment to the city, Amelander was definitely hybrid in combining a traditional worldview and library awareness with innovative approaches, (such as targeting new audiences), the changing status of Yiddish and the openness to Sephardic and non-Jewish knowledge. Although he was not part of the rabbinic establishment and did not criticize it, he sought to include the broader Yiddish-reading public in the world of traditional Jewish knowledge. Amelander’s fusion of Sephardic knowledge in an Ashkenazi context could be described as intra-Jewish cultural hybridity, while the translation and reworking of Dutch

²⁸¹ Peter Burke, *Social hybridity* (Cambridge/Malden, MA 2009); Robert C. Young, *Colonial desire. Hybridity in theory, culture and race* (London/New York 1995). Moshe Rosman has criticized the application of the theory of hybridity for early modern Jewry, mainly because of the different organizational and social structures in colonial contexts. I agree with him that the concept should be used with ‘due diligence’ and is only selectively operative, but most of his reservations are met with in Burke’s contextualization of ‘social hybridity’ in the domain of history; Moshe Rosman, ‘Hybrid with what? The variable contexts of Polish Jewish culture: their implications for Jewish cultural history and Jewish studies’ in: Anita Norich and Yaron Z. Eliav eds., *Jewish literatures and cultures. Context and text* (Providence, PI 2008) 129-154.

²⁸² Bhabha, *The location of culture*, 219.

²⁸³ Benjamin Lee, ‘Going public’, *Public culture* 5 (1993) 165-178, esp. 174.

²⁸⁴ Burke, *Social hybridity*, 72-76.

material – as we will encounter in *Sheyris Yisroel* – is a specimen of cultural hybridity with a dominant culture.²⁸⁵

Amelander, unlike the early maskilim, was not an intellectual ahead of his time; yet his cultural hybridity was typical of many Jewish intellectuals in the eighteenth century. Although scholarly attention is most often directed at innovative thinkers, the first traces of enlightenment or modernity, in Amelander we encounter a prototype of a fully contemporary, Ashkenazi intellectual, who, via the book projects on which he collaborated, exerted significant influence on Ashkenazi readers during the eighteenth century. Amelander's case highlights for us that the eighteenth century, rather than just the end of the Jewish Middle Ages or the beginning of Jewish modernity, should be qualified as one of those periods of particular intense hybridization, as a consequence of many and varied cultural encounters (traditional/modern, Hebrew/Yiddish, Sephardic/Ashkenazi, Jewish/Christian).²⁸⁶ The next chapter will demonstrate that this hybrid context left its marks on Amelander's history writing.

²⁸⁵ Here it should be noted that hybridity as concept avoids the 'inherent weakness of explanatory models that turn culture into static binary encounters, characterized by conflict, resistance, influence, assimilation, acculturation or appropriation'. Instead, it sees Jews as 'subjective agents fully embedded within their cultural environments'; Michael L. Satlow, 'Beyond influence. Toward a new historiographic paradigm' in: Norich and Eliav, *Jewish literatures and cultures*, 37-53.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Burke, *Cultural hybridity*, 66.

5. A History of the Jewish World: *Sheyris Yisroel* (1743)

5.1 Introduction: traditional and enlightened historiography

‘You children of Israel, my brothers, this history that I have resolved to write for you, is a difficult task.’²⁸⁷ Thus opens Menahem Man Amelander the first chapter of his history book *Sheyris Yisroel*, which first saw the light of day in 1743, in Amsterdam. He continues, and lists the difficulties an author of Jewish history will encounter due to there being hardly any historiographical traditions or even sources to rely on. Amelander nevertheless succeeded in publishing a history book which covers Jewish history from the destruction of the Second Temple until his own days.

The book became immensely popular and was republished and reworked many times, well into the twentieth century. Yet it has attracted little attention from scholars. Whereas sixteenth-century Hebrew history writing has been studied extensively, as has nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* historiography, this Yiddish work of universal Jewish history appears to have been almost entirely overlooked.

The very few mentions of *Sheyris Yisroel*, however, present conflicting interpretations, which are in line with traditional conceptions of eighteenth-century European Jewry as outlined in the previous chapter. On the one hand, there are authors who – in just a few sentences – justify their neglect of the book by arguing that it is a mere continuation of Jewish medieval historiography and, because of its traditional nature, not worth further note. Yerushalmi, in his *Zakhor*, exemplifies this interpretation.²⁸⁸ However, other historians – notably Leo and Rena Fuks – advocate continued research into the book’s nature, presenting it as an early example of *Haskalah* writing. In this interpretation *Sheyris Yisroel* is viewed as a revolutionary work which paved the way for nineteenth-century professional history writing.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ SY ed. 1743, 1r.

²⁸⁸ Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*; Simon Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* VII (Berlin 1928) 484.

²⁸⁹ Leo Fuks, ‘Menahem Man ben Salomo Halevi und sein jiddisches Geschichtswerk ‘Sche’erit Jisrael’ *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 100 (1981) 170-186, there 184 (‘So kann man Menahem Man gewissermaßen als einen der ersten jüdischen Aufklärer betrachten’); Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Yiddish historiography’, 14, 19: ‘The influence of the ideas of French enlightenment, which were pervading Dutch culture at the time he wrote his book, are evident in many chapters. In this respect we can consider She’erit yisrael as one of the first works of the Jewish enlightenment, conceived and written long before the German-Jewish enlightenment started with Moses Mendelssohn and his circle. (...) Amelander might be called enlightened *avant la lettre* because of his didactic approach and his esteem for non-Jews.’ In 1972, however, both still were the opinion: ‘Hoewel Amelander zeker geen Verlichter was, maakte hij toch een optimaal gebruik van zijn mogelijkheden.’ Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Joodse geschiedschrijving’, 156.

In both interpretations *Sheyris Yisroel's* merit is judged from its position in the encounter between traditional Jewish life and modernity. Apart from the criticism of such a dichotomous interpretation of early modern Jewish history, as leveled in the former chapter, one might ask if this is the only criterion for interpreting and engaging a history book such as *Sheyris Yisroel*. Other sources, besides those which can be qualified as innovative or enlightened, also merit attention, including so-called traditional publications or more hybrid cultural productions. Such sources deepen our understanding of the intellectual and religious world of early modern Ashkenazic Jewry. Beyond the debate over the traditional versus enlightened nature of the book, *Sheyris Yisroel* presents a wide range of complex questions.

This chapter will provide an initial analysis into the book via studying the conception of Amelander's historical project – which also included *Sefer Yosippon* – and the philosophy of history underlying it. The first paragraphs present analysis of paratextual characteristics of both books; the next section concentrates on the philosophy of history; there follows an analysis of Amelander's concept of Diaspora; and the chapter concludes with a study of his methodology. Subsequent chapters will focus on the politics of source selection and usage and on the transmission history after the first 1743 edition.

5.2 Paratextual features of *Sefer Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*

5.2.1 Paratexts of Amsterdam Yiddish books

In early modern Europe authors and printers not only printed the text of books but also included title pages, tables of contents, prefaces, introductions, dedications, notes and appendices. The public needed to be convinced to buy and read a book or a particular edition. The narrative theorist Gérard Genette has labeled these media of communication the paratext of a book, which functioned as a threshold or vestibule to the text.²⁹⁰ According to Genette the paratext functioned as an “undefined zone” between the inside and outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge, or, as Philippe

²⁹⁰ Although Genette distinguished between the peritext (anything in a book that lies outside the main text) and the epitext (the discourses outside the book itself in which it functioned), paratext has since then been used by scholars commonly only to denote the first meaning. Here it suffices to take paratext as peritext.

Lejeune put it, “a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text”.²⁹¹

Although criticism has been leveled at Genette’s concentration on the nineteenth century, his stress on paratext as expression of authorial intention (resulting in less attention to the role of reader perception) and his overly rigid distinction between text and paratext, his theory has nonetheless been productively applied throughout the field of book history.²⁹² Within the context of early modern book production, Frieder von Ammon has stressed the ‘Protean’ nature of contemporary paratexts. Paratextual features of books expanded rapidly, resulting in extensive variability of paratextual strategies, by which books could be positioned in various socio-cultural contexts.²⁹³

Shlomo Berger introduced the concept into the study of Yiddish books, and demonstrated its use for dealing with both the often bilingual, Hebrew-Yiddish nature of such paratexts and the web of considerations into which Yiddish books were placed by authors and printers. Paratexts of Yiddish books show the nature of the intended public (whether the transnational Ashkenazi market or a local one), often provide justifications for a book’s publication and can reveal elements of the author’s and/or printer’s ideology. Berger concluded that the paratexts of Amsterdam Yiddish books ‘were an indispensable instrument for promoters of books who were trying to conquer people’s hearts in a deeply conservative community, where life was still determined by a strict religious tradition.’ They show that it was of pivotal interest to publishers that the Amsterdam Yiddish books be perceived as congruent with Jewish tradition and not as revolutionary.²⁹⁴

It is worthwhile to start the study of Amelander’s Yiddish history book by first concentrating on several paratextual features, which served as the entrance to the text proper. Author, publishers and printers revealed, in the paratext of the 1743 *Sefer Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*, a great deal about their understanding of the historiographical project. A review of the following paratextual characteristics follows: the title page, with the various titles and meanings; the rabbinic approbation towards the project; the prefaces; the colophons; and the visual accessories that accompanied the texts.

²⁹¹ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation* (Cambridge 1997) 2.

²⁹² William H. Sherman, ‘On the threshold. Architecture, paratext, and early print culture’ in: Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, Eleanor F. Shevlin eds., *Agent of change: print culture. Studies after Elisabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst MA 2007) 67-81.

²⁹³ Frieder von Ammon, “‘Quis dubitat de illo?’ – The ‘staging’ of religious pluralization through paratexts’ in: Andreas Höfele, Stephan Laqué, Enno Ruge, Gabriela Schmidt eds., *Representing religious pluralization in early modern Europe* (Berlin 2007) 279-299.

²⁹⁴ Berger, ‘Invitation’, citation on 56.

5.2.2 *The three brothers and the three crowns*

In 1743 two Yiddish history books were published in Amsterdam: the famous bestseller *Sefer Yosippon*, and *Sheyris Yisroel*, a completely new work which continued the story of Jewish history where *Yosippon* had concluded. Amelander served as editor for the first work; the second one he wrote himself. These two publications undoubtedly constitute the *pièce de résistance* of Amelander's productive professional life.

The two books were published together, in the same format, and were sold in the same way as *Magishei Minhab*, in weekly portions for subscribers.²⁹⁵ Therefore, we should study them first as a unity, before concentrating on *Sheyris Yisroel*. In *Yosippon*, as the first of the two publications, they are introduced together to the readers by the publishers. The Amsterdam chief rabbi Aryeh Leib²⁹⁶ gave a *haskama* for the whole project.²⁹⁷ We will concentrate here on the project's infrastructure, underlying ideology, and conceptual framework.

Besides Amelander, the work's the editor and author, various other people were involved in the project. The situation is in fact complex, as in addition to the 'regular' printers and publishers, other people are mentioned as having been publishers. What is the case? The introduction to *Sefer Yosippon* identifies three brothers - Yohanan Gabriel Sofer (1710-1785), Mordehai Gumpel Gabriel Azijnman (1717-1782) and Shlomo Zalman (1718-1796) - as the publishers of the whole project; they are also mentioned explicitly as such by the chief rabbi. Yet on the title page, and in the introduction, the prominent publisher Naphtali Herz Rofe and his son-in-law Baruch ben Joseph Kosman are also mentioned.

That Naphtali Herz Rofe (1696-1767) was involved is not surprising. Amelander knew him well, as they had collaborated on *Kehillot Moshe* and *Magishei Minhab* and Naphtali Rofe had previously published *Shevet Musar* and the 1735 Torah edition. Naphtali Rofe was in every respect part of the small elite of the Jewish community; his grandfather, father and both his brothers had served the Amsterdam Ashkenazi community as *parnassim*. The family had made its fortune in the tobacco industry, the same industry in which the Venetian Jewish family of Naphtali's mother, Marianne Abraham Italiaander, had been active. This well-to-do

²⁹⁵ Introduction *Yosippon*.

²⁹⁶ Aryeh Leib ben Saul Löwenstam (ca. 1690-1755), the son-in-law of the famous Hakham Zvi, served as Amsterdam's chief rabbi since 1740; Jac. Zwarts, 'De Nederlandsche Opperrabbijnen van het Heden en Verleden VII', *De Geïllustreerde Joodsche Post* 1 (1921) 40, 627-629.

²⁹⁷ Introduction and *haskama*, *Yosippon*, i, v. De *haskama* was issued on 13 Elul 5502, 12 September 1742, which indicates that the project started in that year and was concluded in 1743.

position enabled Naphtali - or, as he renamed himself in Dutch society, Hartog Alexander van Embden - to be among the first, and very few, in the Dutch Jewish community to attend university. He went to Harderwijk University to study medicine, and concluded his studies on 6 February 1716, with his doctorate. Thereafter he settled as a doctor in Amsterdam; he also started a book shop and, beginning in 1726, began operating a printing firm. He published Sephardic and Ashkenazi books, in Hebrew and in Yiddish.²⁹⁸ In this way he contributed to the creation of a new Jewish library.

Naphtali Rofe – other than Amelander – might be connected to the small *avant garde* in eighteenth-century European Jewry that Shmuel Feiner labeled ‘the early Haskalah’. This small intellectual elite shared a background in the economically better situated segment of the Jewish community; they were part of a tiny Jewish minority who had studied at university (often choosing medicine as their major area of focus), and they were driven by passion for knowledge. They wished to introduce the new things they had learned at university, particularly in the realm of the sciences, into the Jewish community. They published books, communicated with each other via letters and visits, and thereby formed the beginnings of a new ‘Jewish republic of letters’. Via dissemination of scientific knowledge they shaped a new type of rational thinking, comparable with contemporary developments in non-Jewish intellectual circles.²⁹⁹ Naphtali Rofe certainly fits in the profile of the small intellectual elite of Amsterdam, and also shared a number of characteristics with ‘early maskilim’ as described by Feiner.

Also involved was Kosman ben Joseph Baruch (ca. 1717-1782), who had married Naphtali’s daughter Anna Hartogh van Embden. He initially assisted his father-in-law, and continued the printing firm after Naphtali Rofe became blind, in 1766. He maintained Amelander’s *magnum opus* as one of his successful titles, as we will see in a later chapter.³⁰⁰

Yet the initiative for the book project rested not with Naphtali Rofe or his son-in-law, but with the three brothers. In their introduction they state that they had successfully turned to the publisher for help with the publication and that they had been assisted in every respect by the well known publisher/printer.³⁰¹ Naphtali and Kosman stated in turn that they had been

²⁹⁸ Hindle S. Hes, ‘The Van Embdens. A family of printers’ *Quaerendo* 11 (1981) 1, 46-52; in February 1738 Naphtali Hertz’s business was severely damaged by a fire, destroying his house, printing shop and several thousand books. He managed, however, to reopen already after three months.

²⁹⁹ Shmuel Feiner, ‘Early Haskalah in eighteenth-century Jewry’ [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 67 (1998) 189-240; idem, ‘Seductive science and the emergence of the secular Jewish intellectual’, *Science in Context* 15 (2002) 1, 121-135; idem, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, translated by Chaya Naor (Philadelphia 2004) 21-84.

³⁰⁰ Hes, ‘The Van Embdens’ 49.

³⁰¹ Introduction Yosippon.

happy to respond positively to the brothers' query; they also noted that they had even decided to use new letters for the books.³⁰²

The brothers' role must have been primarily as financiers for the whole project. In the introduction it is stressed that they had spent much money and paid Amelander well for his services.³⁰³ In early modern times the role of the publisher was a central one, whereas the author was secondary. In this case the two primary tasks of early modern publishers - arranging and paying for a book's publication - appear to have been divided over two sets of publishers: Naphtali and Kosman taking care of the first task, the three brothers the latter.³⁰⁴ The three brothers, at least, were given prominent place in the layout of the book: they are mentioned on the title page of each book and in the *haskama* of the chief rabbi; they also had a preface to the project, in *Sefer Yosippon*, and are named in the colophon at the end of the books.

What had motivated the brothers to use their capital for the publication of these books? The key to answering this question likely concerns the strong familial networks in which Amelander was embedded. The three brothers, Yohanan Gabriel Sofer, Mordehai Gumpel Gabriel Azijnman and Shlomo Zalman were in 1743 respectively 33, 25, and 26 years old; Amelander himself was already 45. There was a gap of one generation between them, which is not surprising when we know that the brothers' father, Gabriel David Essigman (?-1767), was a maternal cousin of Amelander. It was likely this family connection that led the three brothers to assist their relative in publishing his historical work.³⁰⁵

For a more complete impression of the infrastructure behind the publishing of the two books, we must mention, besides the publishers and the editor/author, the printers and typesetters. The typesetters prepared the text page by page, and the printers took care of the actual printing process. The importance of family networks is again evident, as is how whole families worked together in the Jewish printing business. Listed as printers in the colophon of *Yosippon* are Jona ben Moshe Polak (1708-1764) and David ben Berman Wing, who appear to

³⁰² Preface Hirts Levi and Kosman, SY.

³⁰³ Introduction *Yosippon*. Curiously, the name of Yohanan is not mentioned with the other two on the last page of *Sheyris Yisrael*.

³⁰⁴ On the complexity in early modern times in terminology surrounding 'publisher', 'printer' and 'bookseller', see: Peter W.M. Blayney, 'The publication of playbooks' in: John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan, *A new history of early English drama* (New York 1997) 383-422, there 389-392; Berger, 'Invitation', 35-36.

³⁰⁵ Gabriel's father, David Sofer, was married to Merle Yehiel Amelander, the sister of Amelander's mother, Rachel; this genealogy becomes clear when information from these sites is combined:

<http://shum.huji.ac.il/~dutchjew/genealog/ashkenazi/2908.htm>;

<http://shum.huji.ac.il/~dutchjew/genealog/ashkenazi/418.htm>;

http://stenenarchieff.nl/genealogie/gezin/humo1_moss/F3583/15000/;

http://stenenarchieff.nl/genealogie/gezin/humo1_moss/F6479/116835/ (consulted 2 September 2009).

have been brothers-in-law.³⁰⁶ *Sheyris Yisroel* was printed by Jona alone. On both books he was assisted by another brother-in-law, Jitschak Eizek ben Berman Wing, as typesetter, and by Eljakim ben Wolf Puzna (or Puziner). On *Yosippon* an additional typesetter, Asher ben Zanwil Schwab, collaborated.

What could have motivated Amelander and the publishing crew to commence publishing his historical project? As we have seen in chapter 3, already in 1546 *Sefer Yosippon* had been translated from Hebrew into Yiddish by the Jewish convert Michael Adam. It soon became a bestseller and was reprinted in Prague, in 1607; Amsterdam, in 1661; and Frankfurt am Main, in 1692 and 1707.³⁰⁷ The first reason for printing a new edition of *Yosippon* was likely because it had been 36 years since the previous one had been published. Given the popularity of the history book, the publishers must have been confident that there was a vast audience for the book. However, in their preface the publishers note other reasons for the new edition. They had noticed that within the Jewish community history had become extremely popular and that many people were reading history books. Most of these works, however, were, in the opinion of the publishers, full of idleness and lies, and thus not suited for the Jewish public. The republishing of *Yosippon*, wherein the history of the Jewish people was recounted in the same mode as biblical historiography, provided a viable alternative, sanctioned by the chief rabbi and the Amsterdam parnassim. Reading *Yosippon* would ensure that God's miracles would not be forgotten among the Jewish people.³⁰⁸

A further reason for the new edition of *Yosippon* was the language. This is an interesting consideration, as it shows the awareness of rapid change in the Yiddish language. The preceding 1708 Frankfurt edition – published 35 years earlier – is described as having been written in a language that had now become foreign not only to the people in Amsterdam but also to people in numerous other countries. Few people were still considered competent to read the old version. Of course there was surely some exaggeration, stemming from commercial interests, in this statement, but the language would not have been mentioned if no difference had been perceived. Moreover, this remark is one among many, as Amsterdam publishers often complained in their prefaces about the difficulty of the language in editions from elsewhere. This should be regarded as an indication of their efforts to present a Yiddish

³⁰⁶ http://stenenarchief.nl/genealogie/gezin/humo1_moss/F4654/I6768/ (consulted 2 September 2009).

³⁰⁷ Nokhem Shtif, 'Mikhael Adams dray yidishe bikher', *Filologishe sbriftn* 2 (1928) 135-168; Max Erik, *Di geschikhte fun der yidisher literatur fun di elteste tsaytn biz der Haskole tekufje* (Warsaw 1928) 373-375; a short introduction and a few excerpts from the translation of Adam in: Jerold C. Frakes, *Early Yiddish texts 1100-1750. With introduction and commentary* (Oxford 2004) 259-267.

³⁰⁸ Introduction *Yosippon*.

that was above geographical variations, even as they blamed their colleagues from elsewhere for having been overly influenced by the nature of regional variants of Yiddish.³⁰⁹

The book project is announced by the publishers, and likewise in the *haskama* of the chief rabbi, as consisting of three books. *Yosippon* was continued by *Sheyris Yisroel*, which was thus announced as *beleg sheni mi-Sefer Yosippon*, and was to be preceded by *Tam ve-Yashar*. As far as can be established, the project was never completed and *Tam ve-Yashar* was not printed.³¹⁰ The idea behind the combination of the three books was nevertheless clear. *Tam ve-Yashar* was the Yiddish edition of *Sefer Yezirah*, which described the biblical era until the period after the destruction of the First Temple.³¹¹ *Yosippon* continued until the destruction of the Second Temple, at which point *Sheyris Yisroel* assumed the narrative and finished the continuous account of Jewish history until 1743. However, in the text there is already an indication that, at least when *Yosippon* was printed, *Tam ve-Yashar*, which chronologically speaking had to have been the first volume, was not yet in print. The publishers, before introducing *Tam ve-Yashar*, present *Yosippon* as the continuation of the biblical books *Divrei ha-yamim* (I and II Chronicles).³¹² This resulted in a different series of historical books, starting with *Torah*, continued by Joshua, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, and resulting in *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*.

The three books could be connected to the three brothers, yet there was one more concept behind the project. The complete title of the book project was *Shloscha ketarim*, or three crowns, a reference to a passage from the Mishna, tractate Pirkei Avot 4:13, wherein R. Shimon bar Yochai states: ‘There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of Kehunah [priesthood], and the crown of malkhut [kingdom]; but the crown of a good name [*keiter shem tov*] excels them all.’ This passage had played an important role in rabbinic political thought. The three crowns were considered to represent the three historical layers of political and religious authority in biblical Israel – and as such were normative for contemporary Jewish life. The crown of Torah was carried from Moses via the prophets to the rabbis; the crown of

³⁰⁹ Introduction *Yosippon*; cf. Hartog Beem, ‘Yiddish in Holland: linguistic and socio-linguistic notes’ in: Uriel Weinreich ed., *The field of Yiddish: studies in language, folklore, and literature* (New York 1954) 122-133, there 125-126; Shlomo Berger, ‘Yiddish book production in Amsterdam between 1650-1800: local and international aspects’ in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 203-212, there 208-209.

³¹⁰ In 1771 *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel* were republished by the same printing firm, now headed only by Kosman ben Joseph Baruch. In the introduction to this 1771 *Yosippon* edition the printer looked back on the 1743 editions and stated that the two books were soon out of print. He did not write a word about a possible *Tam ve-Yashar* edition. *Sefer Yosippon* (Amsterdam 1771) introduction.

³¹¹ At the time of the publishing of the 1743 *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*, *Tam ve-Yashar* was already available in Yiddish; Chava Turniansky, ‘The first translations of Sefer Ha-Yashar in Yiddish’ [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 54 (1985) 567-620.

³¹² Introduction *Yosippon*, v.

priesthood went via Aharon to the kohanim, the priests. Finally, the crown of kingdom was realized in the figure of David and continued by the kings who succeeded him.³¹³

It was crucial to all three *ketarim* that they be regarded as mediating institutions between God and the people of Israel, which provides each *keter* its own realm yet at the same time interweaves it with the other *ketarim*. As Stuart Cohen has shown, the tannaim and amoraim interpreted the *ketarim* as a tripartite system, with ‘normative autonomy’ of each *keter*. There needed to be a balance of power between the three realms of authority, although it could shift in the course of history. As a reaction to the *hurban ha-bayit* in 70 CE, which significantly affected the domain of the *keter kehunah*, the tannaim and amoraim re-interpreted the model in such a way that from then on the *keter Torah*, which the rabbis themselves represented, would be the apex of a triangle which provided the base for the entirety of Jewish life.³¹⁴

In analogy to these three crowns the three books were given an extra heading, which was published at the top of the title page, before the actual title was given. *Tam ve-Yashar* was designed to be titled *Keter Torah*, because therein the narrative of Torah is retold and explained. *Sefer Yosippon* appeared under the heading of *Keter Kehuna*, since its assumed author, Joseph ben Gorion, was a *kohen* and because the priestly family of the Maccabees figure prominently in the book.³¹⁵ Finally, *Sheyris Yisroel* was given the *Keter Malkhut*. This name needed further explanation, as the concept of the *keter malkhut* was, after the disappearance of the Davidic dynasty, less easily distinguishable.

Whereas the crowns of Torah and priesthood represented the religious authorities, the crown of kingdom symbolized the Jewish civil authorities. The *hurban ha-bayit* was interpreted as the end of a tradition of Jewish political autonomy, either within an independent state or as part of a larger empire. From then on, Jews were first and foremost political subjects, and lacked political structures comparable to those of nations with some degree autonomy in a fixed territory. This meant that the concept of the *keter malkhut* needed reinterpretation if someone wished to stand by the tripartite system. In due course, at least three different positions became apparent.³¹⁶

³¹³ Daniel Judah Elazar, Stuart Cohen, *The Jewish polity. Jewish political organization from biblical times to the present* (Bloomington IN 1985) 16-17.

³¹⁴ Stuart A. Cohen, *The three crowns. Structures of communal politics in early rabbinic Jewry* (Cambridge 2007) 14-23.

³¹⁵ Introduction *Yosippon*, v.

³¹⁶ Cf. Bart Wallet, ‘Politics and Jewish communities: the centralization of Western European Jewry’ *Pe’rusb* 1 (2009) 1, see: <http://perush.cjs.ucla.edu/2009/05/05/wallet-bart-politics-and-jewish-communities-the-centralization-of-western-european-jewry/> (Consulted 12 September 2009).

The first strategy was to accept that there was no longer an earthly *malkhut* for the Jews. The *keter malkhut* now came to refer to the ultimate kingdom of God, ruler of the world, including all earthly kings to whom the Jews were now subjected. In this way, the *keter malkhut* remained in place and was even more powerful than the political structures of all other nations. This interpretation lies behind Shlomo ibn Gabirol's famous liturgical poem *Keter Malkhut*, which became part of the penitential prayers at Yom Kippur in the Sephardic rite. Ibn Gabirol depicts God as the creator of all, sovereign and in control of past, present and future.³¹⁷

Another strategy was to connect the *keter malkhut* to the lay leadership of Jewish communities. Already in the rabbinic age, the patriarchs in Palestine and the exilarchs in Babylon presented themselves as the bearers of the *keter malkhut* and sought to substantiate their claims of Davidic lineage. In situations with less communal autonomy, such as in the rabbinic age, lay leaders – such as *parnassim* and *shtadlanim* – substantiated their authority by referring to the *keter malkhut*.³¹⁸ In the 1743 edition of *Yosippon* this line of argument is used in explaining the heading of *Keter malkhut* for *Sheyris Yisrael*. Namely, this continuation of *Yosippon* presented the history of '*malkhut beit Yehuda*', the kingship of Judah, which was in different forms still intact within Jewish communities. According to the publishers a form of *keter malkhut* remained necessary, because Genesis 49, 10 stated: *לא יסור שבט מיהודה*, 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah'.³¹⁹

A third variant of this interpretation is used in *Sheyris Yisrael*. Kings may be seemingly absent from post-Biblical Jewish history, but what about the Ten Lost Tribes? Their fate plays an important role in Amelander's philosophy of history, as will be demonstrated. The first chapter of Amelander's work can be read as a lengthy effort to convince readers that the Ten Lost Tribes were still extant and that they had their own kings. Amelander introduces this section, which he based on Farissol's *Orbot olam*, by stating that he sought to console the remnant of Israel that God had not completely abandoned his people. Non-Jews might state that they have kings and we not, he explains, but that claim is not entirely true, for there are

³¹⁷ Adena Tanenbaum, 'God, man, and the universe: Solomon ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*' in: idem, *Hebrew poetry and philosophical theory in medieval Spain* (Leiden etc. 2002) 57-83. Surprisingly, Tanenbaum does not explain the title nor relates it to the theory of the *shloshe ketarim*.

³¹⁸ Daniel Judah Elazar, *Kinship and consent. The Jewish political tradition and its contemporary uses* (2nd edition; Edison NJ 1997) 66-67.

³¹⁹ Introduction *Yosippon*, v; exemplary for Amelander's use of this line of argument is his inclusion of the legend of Busthenai in the version of *Orbot olam*, SY ed 1943, 26r-29v. In the *Tsene u-Rene* on Genesis 49, 10 also the continuation of the kingdom of Judah after the fall of the Temple is stressed, e.g. in the *rashei ha-galut*, rabbis and decedents of the tribe of Judah.

Jewish kings, albeit far away and behind the magical river Sambatyon.³²⁰ This interpretation of *keter malkhut* coincides with the explanation of the title *Sheyris Yisroel*, as explained in the next paragraph.

The same introduction offers another, quite innovative interpretation of the *keter malkhut*: although *malkhut* no longer refers to Jewish forms of political administration or the kingdom of the God of Israel, it is reinterpreted in exactly the opposite way. Amelander's book was titled *Keter malkhut* not only because it recounts internal Jewish political representation, but also because it presents the history of the Jewish people in גלות עול מלכות, in exile under the yoke of kingdom.³²¹ The last two words are from Pirkei Avot 3,6, where Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakkaneh is quoted as saying: 'Whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah study, the yoke of government [עול malkhut] and the yoke of livelihood will be removed from him. Whoever casts off from himself the yoke of Torah study, the yokes of government and livelihood will be placed upon him.' In referring to this mishnaic saying the editors communicate two messages. First, there is a qualification of the experience of exile. Because the people of Israel did not opt for the yoke of Torah study, they had to go into exile. Second, *malkhut* is connected to the experience of exile and thus to the kingdoms of the nations under whose yokes the Jews suffer. From this perspective *Sheyris Yisroel* is rightly called *Keter malkhut*, because it recounts the history of the Jewish people in exile, after the *hurban bayit sheni*, during which the Jews were subject to non-Jewish political systems.³²²

Addressing their motivation for the historical project the three brothers returned once again to the Pirkei Avot. A fourth crown is mentioned there, one which has no religio-political nature and therefore has no place in narratives about power constructions in Jewish history. This fourth crown is the *keter shem tov*, the crown of a good name, and the publishers expressed their hope to achieve this crown as a reward for all their efforts and expenses in furthering the publishing project. The brothers stressed that everything they had done was intended to please God.³²³

³²⁰ SY ed. 1743, 2r-4v; the same attention for possible Jewish kings in the chapters 29 and 35.

³²¹ Introduction Yosippon, v.

³²² Somewhat surprisingly, neither in the prefaces nor elsewhere in *Sheyris Yisroel* is reference made to the 'four empires'-theory based on the book of Daniel (in Hebrew *malkhut* is used for empire). In many medieval and early modern Jewish history books (like Christian ones) the theory was applied, as in David Gans' *Zemah David* – who was assured that he lived in the fourth empire, while the next stage, the messianic era, was about to begin. Ben-Zion Degani, 'The structure of the world history and the redemption of Israel in R. David Gans' 'Zemah David' [Hebrew] *Zion* (1980) 173-200, there 179-180, 196-199.

³²³ Introduction Yosippon, v; SY final page.

5.2.3 *The Remnant of Israel*

The title page of *Sheyris Yisrael* is difficult to misinterpret. The page opens with the text: כתר מלכות והוא חלק שני מספר יוסיפון בלשון אשכנז. The words מספר יוסיפון are written in the largest type, showing the importance of the bestseller *Yosippon* for the so-called second part. The publishers clearly wanted to use the popularity of *Yosippon* for the marketing of *Sheyris Yisrael*. In a font slightly less large כתר מלכות is announced, stressing the connection with the (supposed) other two volumes in the printing project. In much smaller type the proper name of the book is finally given, שארית ישראל, Remnant of Israel. From a marketing perspective the publishers must have considered this name less attractive, as it did not yet resonate in the memory of the intended readership. All three titles, however, had in common that they were framing the readers' perceptions of the book itself. In early modern times, titles functioned first as a commercial tool for publishers, but in the eighteenth century authors had obtained significant say in the titling, which they used to introduce, offer commentary on or summarize the text's subject. Through the title an author sought to instruct the readership in how his text should be read or interpreted.³²⁴ Although the concept of the 'three crowns' was introduced and explained by the three fraternal publishers, and although the work's second title (presenting it as volume two of *Sefer Yosippon*) also had evident commercial origins, the third title, *Sheyris Yisrael*, was explained by the author in his preface and could therefore be read as an expression of authorial assertion.

The name *Sheyris Yisrael* revealed no less about the book and its ideology than did the heading *Keter malkhut*. The term would have been familiar to Amelander's intended readership, as it is part of the *siddur* and is cited in *tabanun*, the second part of the prayers of supplication. In the first part of *tabanun* the congregation humbles itself before God, confessing its sins. The second part, in which the worshippers express their hopes for forgiveness, opens with the prayer: 'Guardian of Israel (*shomer yisrael*), protect the remnant of Israel (*sheerith yisrael*); Do not let Israel be destroyed; Those who say "Shema Yisrael"'. This liturgical poem, *pyyyut*, was, in the Middle Ages, said during the week before Rosh Hashanah, but it gradually became part of the daily *tabanun* prayers, which were ultimately formalized in nineteenth-century *siddurim*.³²⁵ It can

³²⁴ Eleanor F. Shevlin, "To reconcile *Book* and *Title*, and make 'em kin to one another": the evolution of the title's contractual functions', *Book History* 2 (1999) 42-77.

³²⁵ Lawrence A. Hoffman, *My people's prayerbook. Tachanun and concluding prayers* [My people's prayerbook 6] (Woodstock, VT 1997) 87-93.

be assumed that in eighteenth-century Amsterdam the prayer was already widely known, including outside the immediate context of the liturgy for the month of *Ellul* in preparation for Rosh Hashanah.

Given the specific nature of liturgical practices, which by their daily or at least regular repetition become easily familiar to the confessants, we can assume that the title *Sheyris Yisrael* would have evoked the said prayer.³²⁶ As such the title must have referred primarily to a context of penitence, awareness of Israel's sins and dependence upon God's mercy.

Yet this was not the only or even the main connotation Amelander aimed at in choosing the title. The term *sheerith yisrael* in the prayer is a quotation from the Bible. This exact wording is used three times: in Jeremiah 31:7, Micah 2:12 and Zephaniah 3:13. The concept of 'the remnant of Israel' is frequently invoked in exilic and post-exilic Biblical writings. In the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah it is one of the central ideological concepts, and the terminology is also used in Ezekiel, Amos, Micah and Zephaniah. The 'remnant of Israel' is re-interpreted each time in different contexts: from Judah as the rest of the united Israel of the twelve tribes (2 Kings 17:18), to the remaining inhabitants in Eretz Israel during the Babylonian Exile (Isaiah) or – exactly the opposite – the exiles in Babylonia (Jeremiah). The use of the term is meant to give the remnant legitimacy as the only and true continuation of the whole of Israel, adhering to God and to the Torah. In the Biblical writings it is not so much politics or territory that define this continuity, but instead almost entirely religious convictions and practices.³²⁷

Many scholars qualify the 'remnant of Israel' phrase as the solution for the prophetic tension between two not easily combinable messages. On the one hand the prophets have a message of judgment over Israel's sins, yet they also promise a peaceful future and a reconciliation between God and Israel. In order to maintain both messages, all of Israel will suffer God's judgment; however, through judgment God will elect a remnant to be the bearer of his promises.³²⁸

There are two layers of usage in the terminology 'remnant of Israel'. The first relates to historical reality, that is, the fact that after warfare and exile only one part of Israel remained. The second layer seemed to have been lost. This context stresses the responsibility of the remnant to preserve the covenant which had been forged between God and all of Israel. The

³²⁶ Jeremy Schonfield, *Undercurrents of Jewish prayer* (London/Portland, Oregon 2006) 62f.

³²⁷ R.E. Clements, 'Šā'ar' in: G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, Heinz-Josef Fabry eds., *Theological dictionary of the Old Testament* 14 (Grand Rapids 2004) 272-286; more detailed: Gerhard F. Hasel, *The remnant. The history and theology of the remnant idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, 3rd edition (Berrien Springs, MI 1980).

³²⁸ Hasel, *The remnant* 202-203.

second layer has an explicit eschatological connotation. The ‘remnant of Israel’ is not only the result of destruction, but is also connected to promises of redemption and restoration. It involves a return from exile, a rebuilding of Jerusalem and of the Temple and a peaceful coexistence between Israel and the nations.

The eschatological interpretation of the ‘remnant of Israel’ is particularly strong in the book of the prophet Zephaniah. It is to this book that Amelander refers when he explains the nature of his title. In Zephaniah the eschatological ‘Great day of the Lord’ is described, a time when judgment is dispensed over Israel and the nations. In the end it appears that there will remain an ‘afflicted and poor people’ which shall find refuge in the name of the Lord. They are the *sheerith yisrael*, which will do no injustice anymore, refrain from lying and experience peace and quietness.³²⁹

The ‘remnant of Israel’ presupposes that there is another part of Israel. In the Biblical writings this part nearly disappears. But in rabbinic tradition this segment of Israel again claimed its position; next to the remnant the ‘Ten Lost Tribes’ returned. In continuation with the ‘remnant of Israel’ discourse, the ‘Ten Lost Tribes’ are also interwoven into an eschatological vision. In the Talmud and elsewhere, they are supposed to live beyond the river Sambation, which during weekdays is so turbulent as to be uncrossable. Only on Shabbat is the river in complete silence, but neither the ten nor the two tribes will cross it, so as to not to violate the Shabbat commandments. In the messianic age, however, the messiah will be able to cross the river and unite the whole of Israel and will then bring them to Eretz Israel.³³⁰

As will be shown elsewhere in this thesis, Amelander was highly conscious of the eschatological connotation of the title *Sheyris Yisroel*. In the introduction to his book, he refers explicitly to Zephaniah 3, 13: “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” (OJPS) The three explanations for the title he offers are closely

³²⁹ Ehud Ben Zvi, *A historical-critical study of the book of Zephaniah* [Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 198] (Berlin 1991) 234-238.

³³⁰ See e.g. Genesis Rabbah 73, 6; Flavius Josephus, *The great Roman-Jewish war*, ed. D.S. Margoliouth (Mineola, NY 2004) 388-393; there is extensive literature on this subject, I here only refer to: Shalva Weil, ‘Beyond the Sambatyon: the myth of the ten lost tribes’ *Ariel* 85-86 (1991) 25-31; Andrew Colin Gow, *The red Jews. Antisemitism in an apocalyptic age, 1200-1600* [Studies in medieval and Reformation thought 55] (Leiden etc. 1995) 23-30. Parallel to rabbinic literature, the phrase ‘remnant of Israel’ is also used in early Christian writings, starting with Paul’s letter to the Romans 9:27. See e.g. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the letters of Paul* (New Haven/London 1989) 68-73; V. Hertrich and G. Schrenk, ‘Remnant’ in: Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich eds., *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*; abridged in one volume by Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids 1985) 523-526.

related to this *pasuk* and employed the rabbinic method of Bible commentary, which Amelander was familiar with from his education and previous book projects.

The first explanation concentrates on the words *sheerith yisrael*. In the book the history of the remnant of Israel after the loss of the ten tribes will be told. *Sheyris Yisrael* comprises the history of the two remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin, and a part of Levi, from whom the author was a descendant. This explanation shows that Amelander connected his book closely to the discourse about the Ten Lost Tribes, about whom no history was to be related (as they are absent) but who are already represented in the title.³³¹

The second and third explanations concentrate on the connection between the ‘remnant of Israel’ and the phrase about not speaking lies. Amelander presented himself as one of the remnant of Israel who, according to the prophecy, did not speak lies. Accordingly, everything he had written in his book had been researched thoroughly, and anything he had held doubts about had not been included. Amelander thus used the phrase to defend his credibility and to stress the accuracy of his history book.³³²

The third explanation applies the phrase ‘nor speak lies’ to those Jews who refused to speak lies (and thereby become unfaithful to Judaism) and who therefore preferred to die for the *Kiddush ha shem* (sanctification of the Name) rather than to live with lies. Amelander connected the continuation of the *pasuk* to these faithful Jews, who would receive their reward in the eschatological future. They would be raised from the dead and would ‘feed and lie down’ in Eretz Israel and no one would make them afraid anymore. Amelander connected part of his historical narrative, namely the deaths (mainly during the Crusades) of Jews who had chosen to die rather than to convert to Christianity or Islam, with the prophecy of Zephaniah.³³³ In doing so, he explicated his eschatological historical philosophy in which history and historical events became connected to eschatological promises and thus achieved a sense and relevance which transcended historical reality.

Amelander clearly chose for his book a title which expressed at least part of his conception of history. For him it is clear that contemporary Jewry is a remnant of a larger Israel, and that for this remnant several promises are given in the Bible which relate to an eschatological future. As an encapsulation of his historical narrative Amelander spans his

³³¹ SY ed. 1743, v, Yiddish introduction.

³³² Ibidem.

³³³ Ibidem.

eschatological ideology, thus connecting his present readership with the past and with the future of a (re-)united, complete Israel.

5.2.4 Paratextual poetry

After the three titles the language on the title page of *Sheyris Yisrael* changes from Hebrew to Yiddish. The mixing of both languages was quite common on title pages of contemporary Yiddish books, and each language had its own function therein. Hebrew served to stress the serious religious character of a book, whereas Yiddish was used to attract as large a readership as possible.³³⁴ Here, a so-called Yiddish ‘title page poem’ follows, which was another way to present the text of the book to potential readers in a most favourable way. The poem reads:

איר ליבה לייט טוט גשווינד לויפן
אונ' טוט אייך באלד אזו איין מעכטיג (ספר) קויפין
דען דא אין ווערט דר צילט אלי דיא וואונדר גשיכטן
דיא גאט האט אן אונש יהודים טאן ריכטן
פון דיא צייט דש יוסיפון האט אויף גהערט צו שרייבן
אונ' וואז מיר יהודים אין גלות האבן טון בלייבן
דען מיר יהודים זיין פר שפרייט גווארן
אין אלי עקין פון דר וועלט
(מזרח מערב צפון דרום) וויא זיא ווערן גמעלט
(הש"י) זאל ווייטר היטן דיא איבר בלייבונג פון ישראל
אונ' זאל אונז שיקן אונזר רעכטר (גואל)
דז זאל גשעהן אין קארצי טאגין
דרויף וועלן מיר אמן זאגין³³⁵

The poem addresses potential readers directly and describes the main contents of the book, in an effort to persuade them to buy it. In the poem two of the titles are connected to the contents: as the second part of *Yosippon*, the book continues its story, documenting the history of the remnant of Israel. It ends with a blessing for the people of Israel and with the

³³⁴ Berger, ‘Invitation’, 37.

³³⁵ *SY* ed. 1743, title page. Translation: ‘Dear people walk speedily/ and buy yourself soon such a mighty book/ because therein all miraculous histories are narrated/ that God let happen to us/ from the period that *Yosippon* had stopped writing/ and what held us Jews in diaspora/ because we Jews are spread/ in all corners of the world/ east, west, north, south, as they are called/ let God further protect the remnant of Israel/ and send us our true saviour/ which will happen soon/ to that we will say amen.’

wish that God would soon send the Messiah. Such an ending was topical in Yiddish ‘title page poems’; likewise, many such poems presented a short description of the book’s contents. In the early modern age, Yiddish books, unlike Hebrew ones, almost always had a title page – and sometimes also prefaces – written partly or entirely in verse.³³⁶

The introduction of poems onto the title page should be understood as part of the development of the title page as such since the beginning of the print revolution. Some sixty years after the first printed books, title pages had become common and helped standardize the book as a physical object. The title page served a predominantly commercial role: it needed to draw attention to the book, present a short summary of the contents and stress the book’s availability. As concerns the function of ‘title page poems’ it is important to note that from the late sixteenth until well into the eighteenth century title pages also functioned as advertising for forthcoming or already published works. Publishers printed many more title pages, often before the book itself was printed, and spread these throughout their distribution networks and had them displayed at print and book shops.³³⁷

In *Sheyris Yisroel* more poems are included. After the title page follows the chief rabbi’s Hebrew approbation, and thereafter a Hebrew preface by the publishers Naphtali Herz and his son-in-law Kosman. Naphtali Herz and Kosman stress their efforts in the printing of the two books, which were directed at all Jews, young and old, and were of the best possible quality. Their preface concludes with a Hebrew poem, of which the first letters form their names and in which the two books are connected to preceding biblical history. Two more prefaces follow, both by Amelander, the first in Hebrew and the second in Yiddish, and both conclude with a poem. The first poem, an acrostic of Menahem ben Shlomo ha-Levi, has each line ending with the word Israel and praises God’s protection and providence for the remnant of Israel. The Yiddish poem, also an acrostic but this time of Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi, is, like the one on the title page, directly addressed to the readers. Amelander assures them that he had worked hard on the book and that he had examined many sources but included only material that would be acceptable to reasonable readers. Furthermore, Amelander again offers a summary of the book’s contents, noting that it contains the stories of the rabbis and sages, of persecutions and of how kings had treated Jews throughout history. Finally, he asks his readers for a favourable verdict on his work.

³³⁶ Berger ‘Invitation’, 37-39.

³³⁷ Shevlin, ‘Book and Title’, 46-49.

Poetry in the paratext of books had become fairly common in the early modern age. In learned books friends or colleagues of the author would praise a work and its author as being most important. Some even employed Latin, in an obvious display of their knowledge. In books aimed at the larger market poems were directed at readers, in order to persuade them to buy and enjoy the book. It seems that in *Sheyris Yisroel* both types of poetry were included: Hebrew poems, showing the serious character of the book and the team that had worked on it; and Yiddish poems, presenting the book in direct relation to the intended readership.

The mixture of seriousness and commercial interests also merged in the paratextual features at the end of the book. Included there, next to the colophon and a concluding apology from the publishers for any mistakes, is a table of contents. The chapters do not have titles, but each chapter is preceded in the running text by a short description of its contents. In the table of contents the same strategy is used: someone searching for particular historical information could easily find the relevant chapter. Including such a table of contents would have made the book more user-friendly and thus commercially more attractive. At the same time an inclusion of a table of contents also gave the book a more serious appearance.

5.2.5 The 'visualization' of Jewish history

The Amsterdam 1743 editions of *Yosippun* and *Sheyris Yisroel* not only present Jewish history in a contemporary Yiddish, thereby bringing the work to the vast majority of the Ashkenazi communities, but also include images. In their introduction to both books, the publishers – the three previously mentioned brothers - inform the readers that they had taken great efforts in having made such 'elegant illustrations'.³³⁸ There was, nevertheless, a great difference between the first and second book: *Yosippun* includes no less than 59 illustrations; *Sheyris Yisroel* only three.

The decision to include images in both books was significant. It was part of a major trend in early modern Jewish printing, a trend that reached its high point in the first half of the eighteenth century. The first illustrations in printed Jewish books were in the first Yiddish edition of *Yosippun* (1546), and in a few sixteenth-century Yiddish books printed in Italy, including a book of fables and a haggadah. Inclusion of images was in many ways a significant

³³⁸ Introduction by the publishers to: *Sefer Yosippun bilshon Ashkenaz* (Amsterdam 1743), v. In the 1771 Amsterdam edition Kosman ben Joseph Baruch confirms that the brothers had bought the illustrations and brought to the printing firm of his father-in-law and himself; *Sefer Yosippun* (Amsterdam 1771) introduction.

development, especially as it evidenced the ‘expansion of the visual’, in that no longer was it only images of the elite that were portrayed, but also the daily life of ordinary Jews.³³⁹ When Hebrew and Yiddish printing moved towards new printing centers north of the Alps, such as in Basle, Sulzbach, Fürth, Frankfurt am Main and Amsterdam, the practice of including illustrations expanded rapidly but remained restricted to only a few genres. Falk Wiesemann distinguishes seven of these genres: books of fables, zodiac motifs in *lukhot* and *mahzorim*, *minhagim* books, editions of *Yosippon*, editions of the Yiddish Bible paraphrase *Tsene-Rene*, *haggadot*, and the *Megillat Ester*.³⁴⁰

There are two remarks to be made about this list of genres. First, all the genres that used illustrations were directed at a broader public rather than at the rabbinic intelligentsia alone. Genres typical for the religious elite, such as *halakhah*, Bible commentaries and even *musar* literature, were not illustrated – the only visual element allowed was the title page and decorative elements at the end of a chapter or the book as a whole. Full-scale illustrations only appear in books that were intended for a broad public; such illustrations offered extra help in interpreting the text and made the book more appealing for purchase. Second, a significant number of the books with illustrations are written in Yiddish. Especially Yiddish books, a fairly new and growing market, were considered suitable for having this innovation included, precisely because their language was directed at all Yiddish-reading Jews. Yiddish literature had not yet been canonized in the same way as had the Hebrew one, and this allowed authors and publishers to experiment with new trends in the printing industry. of which the inclusion of illustrations was a major one.³⁴¹

In the first half of the eighteenth century illustrations had become an integral part of editions of *minhagim* books, *haggadot*, the *Tsene-Rene* and *Yosippon*. A clear assortment of images used for these (mostly) Yiddish books is discernible. The images were primarily connected to one genre, but in more than one case illustrations crossed genre boundaries and were re-used in a new context. This often meant that such an illustration was connected to

³³⁹ Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, ‘The expansion of the visual: reflections on sixteenth century illuminated Yiddish books’ *Jewish History* 20 (2006) 231-241.

³⁴⁰ Falk Wiesemann, ‘Das ‘Volk des Buches’ und die Bilder zur Bibel vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert’ in: idem, *‘Kommt heraus und schaut’: Jüdische und christliche Illustrationen zur Bibel in alter Zeit* (Essen 2002) 9-34, there 12-23.

³⁴¹ Wiesemann’s claim that it was almost exclusively Yiddish books does not hold, as shown by Diane Wolfthal. Likewise, Shmeruk’s thesis that illustrated Yiddish books did not pave the way for illustrated Hebrew editions of these books is falsified by Wolfthal with regard to books of customs. Wiesemann, ‘Volk des Buches’ 23; Chone Shmeruk, *The illustrations in Yiddish books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The texts, the pictures and their audience* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1986) vii, 39; Diane Wolfthal, *Picturing Yiddish. Gender, identity, and memory in the illustrated Yiddish books of Renaissance Italy* (Leiden, Boston 2004) 202-203.

another story than the one for which it had been created. In the beginning of the eighteenth century most illustrations were modeled on earlier ones, and publishers seldom instructed an artist to make a new series of illustrations.³⁴²

When the publishers of our edition of *Yosippou* claim that they had ordered ‘such elegant illustrations’, they did not mean that their edition featured new illustrations. Rather, their statement means that they had had an Amsterdam artist rework the existing catalogue of *Yosippou* images. Comparison with earlier editions - the first Yiddish edition, of Zürich 1546 (the first illustrated Yiddish printed book ever), the Amsterdam edition of 1661 and the 1709 Frankfurt edition - presents a clear picture of how the visualization of early Jewish history developed.³⁴³ First, there is obvious continuation from the 1546 to the 1743 editions with regards to many illustrations. In each new edition such an illustration is used again, often with little difference, save enough to reveal the hand of an often unknown artist who had reworked it. Second, the topics of the illustrations remained the same, even if a different illustration as in the *editio princeps* had been used. Apparently, illustrations deemed too difficult for the artist to reproduce, or in which the topic was presented in a manner not suitable for the intended public, were replaced with others.

A closer examination of the 1743 Amsterdam edition alongside the preceding 1661 Amsterdam and 1709 Frankfurt am Main editions helps illustrate this process and sheds some light on the Amsterdam publishers’ claim about their ‘elegant illustrations’. The Frankfurt edition has more illustrations than the Amsterdam one, 71 in total – 73, if two decorations at the end of the book are included. That was an unprecedented number of illustrations, and the publisher Zelikman Reis proudly announces on the title page that his edition has copper engravings of images that were not found in the earlier editions of *Yosippou*.³⁴⁴ The illustrations are actually woodcut, but Reis was not the only person, or even the first, to confuse woodcuts and copper engravings; the publisher of the 1692 Sulzbach *Tsene-Rene* had done the same.³⁴⁵ The first edition, of 1546, and the 1661 Amsterdam edition each have 66 images, all of which are the same. In the 1661 edition some illustrations are simplified, but the artist remained very close to the original illustrations.

³⁴² Shmeruk, *Illustrations in Yiddish books*, 14, 17.

³⁴³ For a detailed analysis see the first appendix.

³⁴⁴ *Sefer Yosippou* (Frankfurt am Main 1709) title page; in the introductions, both the Hebrew and the Yiddish one, no information is given about the illustrations.

³⁴⁵ Milly Heyd, ‘Illustrations in early editions of the *Tsene-U’Rene*: Jewish adaptations of Christian sources’ *Journal of Jewish Art* 10 (1984) 64-86, there 65.

The expansion of the traditional catalogue of *Yosippon* images in the 1709 Frankfurt edition resulted in a much greater variety of styles than in the first two editions. Besides the rectangular illustrations that were part of the 1546 edition, new ones were also included. These are oval illustrations, surrounded by decorative elements in the popular style of ‘Strapwork’.³⁴⁶ This style was made famous by the Swiss Protestant illustrator Jost Amman in his Bible illustrations, which were also used in the 1704 Frankfurt edition of the *Tsene-Rene*. This likely influenced Reis in his *Yosippon* edition. He was fortunate that there existed an edition of Flavius Josephus illustrated by Amman, which he could use for his own Yiddish edition.³⁴⁷ Heyd describes the characteristics of Amman’s style as follows: ‘[t]he ends curl or bend outwards and are occasionally shaded towards the edges of the cartouches to give an illusion of plastic relief.’³⁴⁸ A third category in the Frankfurt edition consists of portraits of kings and emperors, portrayed as medieval German knights.

The publishers of the 1743 Amsterdam edition selected a smaller but significant number of illustrations and opted for stylistic uniformity. In contrast to the Frankfurt edition, no ‘Strapwork’ illustrations are included, but only rectangular woodcuts and a series of portraits. Whereas the portraits in the Frankfurt edition are clearly of different origins - some are small woodcuts surrounded by bold lines, others show large figures without any frame separating them from the text - the Amsterdam edition has only portraits in a frame with bold lines. The portraits are generally smaller than the illustrations of historical scenes, but since they are all situated within the same type of frame the book’s illustrations show stylistic uniformity. The same can be said about the quality of the illustrations; each is clear and concentrates on the central theme, whereas in the Frankfurt edition some illustrations are dark and too complex for a rather small illustration.

It is beyond doubt that the publishers of the 1743 edition used not the immediately preceding Frankfurt edition as their *Vorlage* but rather the 1661 Amsterdam edition, thus at the same time remaining closer to the first edition of 1546. In most cases the 1743 edition copied the illustrations from the 1661 edition, sometimes very neatly, other times more freely. Details within an illustration are changed rather frequently, e.g. in the illustration of Queen Tomyris with the head of King Cyrus (copied from Holbein in the *editio princeps*), one of the women

³⁴⁶ Gordon Campbell, *The Grove encyclopedia of decorative arts* 2 (Oxford 2006) s.v. ‘Strapwork’.

³⁴⁷ 1569.

³⁴⁸ Heyd, ‘Illustrations’ 70.

portrayed was changed to a man for the 1743 edition.³⁴⁹ Two illustrations from the 1661 edition are merged into a new illustration (illustration 4a and 5a). Several illustrations were not copied; other changed by duplicating another and re-using it within a new narrative framework. The result is that 1743 edition presents 59 illustrations, 7 fewer than in the *Vorlage* from 1661.

The illustrations in early modern Jewish printed books almost always derive from Christian originals. Those used in the 1743 edition have a clear Christian *Vorlage*, often the Bible illustrations of Hans Holbein the Younger in his *Historiam Veteris Testamenti icones ad vivum expressae*.³⁵⁰ Holbein's illustrations were used in the first 1546 edition and later copied. Holbein was popular among illustrators, along with Mattheus Merian the Older, Virgilius Solis and Amman. Their illustrations were used as models in both Christian and Jewish publications. Often an illustration is used for a different topic, as seen in the first illustration in the Amsterdam *Yosippou*. As Wiesemann has shown, here we see someone with the head of King Belsazar, a figure which originates in Holbein's picture of King Saul decapitated by the Philistines.³⁵¹

Yosippou was not unique in joining the tradition of Holbein iconography. The artist and his successors Merian and the Dutch Pieter Hendriksz. Schut were highly successful not only in the German lands but also in the Dutch Republic.³⁵² One example is the famous 1695 Amsterdam Haggadah, which does not continue the existing tradition of Haggadah pictures – established in the early Italian editions – but instead reworks a series of illustrations by Merian. The emphasis on the ritual and liturgical aspects is replaced by a purely Biblical, visual narrative, modeled after Merian's Bible illustrations that are themselves adaptations of Holbein's images. Likewise, some of Merian's illustrations of classical Roman history are taken up and re-used in the context of the Haggadah narrative.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ See the appendix under illustration 8a.

³⁵⁰ Hans Holbein der Jüngere, *Bilder zum alten Testament. Historiam Veteris Testamenti icones ad vivum expressae* (München 1884).

³⁵¹ Wiesemann, 'Volk des Buches' 12-13. The appendix reveals many more cases.

³⁵² Mattheus Merian, *Die Bilder zur Bibel. Mit Texten aus dem Alten und Neuen Testament*, ed. Peter Meinhold (Hamburg 1965); Wilco C. Poortman, *Bijbel en Prent. Deel IIa Boekzaal van de Nederlandse Prentbijbels. Deel IIb Boekzaal van de werken van Flavius Josephus in de Nederlandse taal* ('s-Gravenhage 1986) 56-92.

³⁵³ A later edition, the 1712 Amsterdam one, expanded the Merian illustrations with more traditional ones inspired by the 1629 Venice Haggadah. Rahel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, 'Von der Holbeinbibel zur Amsterdamer Haggadah' *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 75 (1931) 4, 269-286; idem, 'Zur Amsterdamer Haggadah' *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 76 (1932) 3, 239-241; Kurt Schubert, 'Die Weisen von Bne Braq in der Haggadaillustration des 18. Jahrhunderts' *Artibus et Historiae* 9 (1988) 17, 71-81; B. Narkiss, faksimile uitgave Jerusalem 1972; Shalom Sabar, 'From Amsterdam to Bombay, Baghdad, and Casablanca: the influence of the Amsterdam Haggadah illustration among the Jews in India and the lands of Islam' in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 279-299.

In the beginning of Hebrew and Yiddish printing the publishers were Christians, as Jews were often not allowed to own printing presses. In most cases Christians and Jews collaborated in preparing Hebrew and Yiddish books, and Christian publishers offered illustrations from Christian Bible editions and history books for inclusion in Jewish publications. The first illustrated printed Yiddish book, the *Yosippson* edition of 1546, was printed by the Christian publisher Christoffel Froschauer.³⁵⁴ A year before the *Yosippson* edition, he had printed a Christian Bible with no less than 322 illustrations, and in 1547 and 1548 the monumental Swiss chronicle of the Reformed pastor Johann Stumpf was published (*Gemeiner Loblicher Eydgnoſchafft Stetten, Landen und Völckeren Chronik wirdiger thaaten beschreibung*). Stumpf's chronicle numbered a stunning 4000 illustrations, including maps. When the Yiddish *Yosippson* was in preparation, the publishing firm had a wealth of illustrations from both the illustrated Bible and the forthcoming chronicle. The printer decided to use these illustrations as well for *Yosippson*, and thus laid the foundation for the Yiddish catalogue of illustrations that was still in use in 1743.³⁵⁵

Research has shown that well into the first half of the eighteenth century only slight changes were made to accommodate the illustrations to the new Jewish public. Illustrations of God were modified, as were misspellings in Hebrew words and visualizations of Christological interpretations of biblical stories. Only in the second half of the eighteenth century was there growing awareness of the Christian character of the images, leading Jewish publishers to strengthen the Jewish elements.³⁵⁶

Jewish readers of the 1743 Amsterdam *Yosippson* were confronted with depictions of classical Jewish stories, such as Queen Ester before Ahashverosh (ill. 9a), Judah the Maccabee (ill. 26a) and the pious Hannah and her seven sons (ill. 25). However, these depictions were in clearly European Christian contexts. The Jewish heroes in these stories were not depicted as Jews but as Christians, dressed in fashionable clothing and armored as late medieval, early modern knights. This surely could have evoked a sense of estrangement within Jewish readers, such that they regarded this Jewish history as foreign. Obviously, alienation from one's own history was not the work's intention – indeed, it was contrary to the vision of the authors and

³⁵⁴ The first Hebrew printed book that was illustrated, was a book of fables, Isaac ibn Sahula's *Mesbal ha-kadmoni* (Brescia 1491), with over eighty woodcuts. It was a mere continuation of the manuscript tradition of books of fables, which were always illustrated; Diane Wolfthal, *Picturing Yiddish. Gender, identity, and memory in the illustrated Yiddish books of Renaissance Italy* (Leiden/Boston 2004) 89.

³⁵⁵ Shmeruk, *Illustrations in Yiddish books*, 18-33. On Stumpf: Hans Müller, *Die Geschichtschreiber Johann Stumpf. Eine Untersuchung über sein Weltbild* (Zürich-Selnau 1945).

³⁵⁶ Heyd, 'Illustrations' 69, 79; Wiesemann, 'Volk des Buches' 23-30.

printers – but such separation could result from employing the same pictorial language as was used by contemporary Christians to express their beliefs. Another interpretation is possible. The illustrations show Jews in another era of history, during which they had been not mere subjects of politics, but rather agents. In that period Jews had been present at courts as kings and queens and fought on the battlefields, just as had the other nations of the world. According to this line of argument, the illustrations could have spurred feelings of pride among the Jewish public and strengthened their self-image vis à vis the surrounding dominant culture.

A number of the 59 illustrations in *Sefer Yosippon* was used more than once. The same portrait is used for both King Darius (ill. 2a) and King Philip (ill. 12c); the illustration of the Jews leaving Babylon in the time of King Cyrus (ill. 6) is also used for the return of the Jews under King Talmi (ill. 21b); and the depiction of the battle of Vespasianus (ill. 60a) is re-used to depict Titus before Jerusalem (ill. 70a). In this way there are five such pairs, and one illustration (a scene of a city siege) is used three times. It is first used for Herod's siege of Jerusalem (ill. 43a), thereafter for the sieges of the cities of Yodfat and Seleucia (ill. 63a and 65a). From a rather small catalogue of images the printers made their choices to illustrate the text, including re-using the same images in the same book for different causes. Because the books were sold in (often weekly) issues, a few pages per issue, most buyers would not have recognized such repetitions. Only in the end, when they brought the bundle of papers to a book binder, would they have realized what had happened with the illustrations. Of course, there remains the question if this would have bothered most readers. Illustrations made the reading experience much more pleasant; moreover, many of the illustrations might have already been known from earlier editions or from other printed books. Shmeruk even suggests that the repeated use of illustrations was a parallel to the Jewish textual tradition of using traditional comparisons, idioms and metaphors in different contexts in new texts.³⁵⁷

Sheyris Yisroel received only three illustrations: one dedicated to the Roman siege of the city of Beitar; a second one depicting the Persian king while an old Jewish sage explains to him his dream; and the third one showing a war against the Jews in Ashkenaz. Each of these images had been used before in the *Yosippon* edition and originated from the Zürich edition. The first is the same siege illustration that had been used three times in *Yosippon* (ill. 43a, 63a, 65a). The second illustration had been used to illustrate Herod with his advisors (ill. 44a), and the third one had earlier illustrated a battle between the Romans and the Jews (ill. 73a). This

³⁵⁷ Chone Shmeruk, 'The itinerary of an illustration since 1593' *Journal of Jewish art* 8 (1981) 3, 54-59, there 59.

last illustration goes back to a larger scene in Stumpf's chronicle, where it was used to depict the battle of Julius Cesar in the Cimbrian war and the battle between the Turks and the crusaders at Dorylaeum (1147). The illustration was cut into two pieces, and both were used for *Yosippon* (the other half was used two times, ill. 60a and 70a). For *Sheyris Yisroel* the left half was re-used for yet another history.³⁵⁸

The most likely reason for the limited number of illustrations in *Sheyris Yisroel* is that the publishers could not use an existing catalogue of images, as this was the first time the book had been published. Furthermore, it was probably too costly to have an artist design new illustrations. The only option was to re-use a limited number of woodcuts from *Yosippon* that fit stories of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

Two of these illustrations have military themes, which for early modern Jews was a practice connected to the non-Jewish, dominant society. Jews lacked their own political territorial entity to defend, and, with few exceptions, they did not opt for employment into European armies.³⁵⁹ Early modern Jews were pacifistic by practice, not persuasion. In her study of sixteenth-century images in Italian Yiddish books, Diane Wolfthal labels the Jewish depiction of military-related imagery as a crossing of the borders of traditional Jewish life. Although lacking military power, Jews had a complex relationship with it, and could have used such images as a vehicle for expressing Jewish pride or anger against Christian military dominance. The Jewish visualization of military themes was one element demonstrating the innovative nature of Jewish Renaissance images. As the pictorial history of the *Yosippon* editions and *Sheyris Yisroel* demonstrates, this feature continued well into the eighteenth century.³⁶⁰

The third illustration shows a king sitting on his throne, holding a scepter in his left hand and receiving a visitor, who kneels before him. This scene is situated in the left section of the illustration; the other half is used to show what is happening in the background. We see people outside the palace, apparently awaiting the results of what is transpiring inside. This illustration is modeled after Holbein's picture of King David receiving the woman of Tekoah (from 2 Samuel 14).³⁶¹ The *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel* artist used the same composition, with

³⁵⁸ Shmeruk, *Illustrations in Yiddish books*, 26-28; <http://franktigue.com/Bijbel%20Bladen/1547%20STUMPF%20leaf%20Fine%20wc%20TURKS%20defeat%20CRUSADERS/index.html> (consulted 4 January 2010).

³⁵⁹ Wolfthal mentions some cases of Jewish involvement with war and weapons, but they are still so few that they do not alter the predominant view; Wolfthal, *Picturing Yiddish*, 151-152.

³⁶⁰ Wolfthal, *Picturing Yiddish*, 132-133, 151-154.

³⁶¹ Holbein, *Icons*, II. Sam. XIV.

the narrative placed on the left, and King David on his throne and the woman kneeling before him. In contrast to the adaptation, the background in the original is filled in rather soberly. The eighteenth-century artist's strategy of adopting the central scheme of an illustration but changing various elements within the picture was common in the early modern era. Within the framework of more or less canonized pictorial structures an artists could adopt illustrations to his own taste and talent and to the new reading public.³⁶²

The illustrations of *Sefer Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel* exemplify how Jewish cultural expressions, such as copper engravings and woodcuts, are tightly bound with contemporary Christian culture. Although the textual and narrative traditions differed, Jewish and Christian Bible editions that were directed at lay people, and history books as well, often presented their readers with the same images. These images, originating from Christian sources, were slightly adapted to a Jewish reading public, thus leaving the task of accommodating picture and text to the captions. The result was surely that the books became more attractive for purchase and that the combination of narrative and visual elements succeeded in eliciting imagination of the past. Heyd concludes that the use of pictures in books is both 'definitely indicative of growing Christian influences' at large in early modern Jewish society and at the same time a 'desire to "modernize" the Jewish book' in order to attract 'the less orthodox and more assimilated type of Jew, thus preserving him from complete alienation from the traditional sources.'³⁶³ Indeed, both conclusions apply to the two Amsterdam history books discussed here.

5.3 *Amelander's idea of history*

5.3.1 *Sheyris Yisroel as Jewish historiography*

The study of *Sheyris Yisroel's* paratext has revealed the outlines of Amelander's philosophy of history. The book's three titles together present different yet complementary introductions to the contents. *Keter malkhut* is an approach to political history and the role of Jews in it. *Heleq sheni mi-sefer Yosippon* positions *Sheyris Yisroel* in the vast body of Jewish historiography. *Sheyris Yisroel* presents an eschatological interpretation of Jewish history. The other paratextual features, such as the Hebrew and Yiddish prefaces, poetry and a table of contents, evidence the author and publishers' intention to stress both the seriousness of the book and their wish for

³⁶² Cf. Wischnitzer, 'Holbeinbibel' 274.

³⁶³ Heyd, 'Illustrations', 86.

broad readership. The inclusion of illustrations even strengthened the character of *Sheyris Yisroel* as a book for young and old readers.

In this section we will map Amelander's philosophy of history by examining his defense of history writing, his approach to temporal and spatial connections within Jewish history and two central themes in *Sheyris Yisroel*: the Ten Lost Tribes and the diaspora experience.

5.3.2 Benefits of history

Writing history in an early modern Jewish community such as Amsterdam was not an activity free of contentions. As the history of Jewish historiography presented in Chapter 2 demonstrates, there was considerable hesitation and even opposition to history writing. Maimonides spoke for many when he concluded that such writing 'is a sheer waste of time'.³⁶⁴ After the de' Rossi affair, which showed the critical potential of historical research, history writing became even more disputed than it had been in medieval times.³⁶⁵

A Jewish author commencing to write history thus had to defend himself and to convince his readers of the legitimacy and usefulness of history writing. It is not coincidental that nearly all early modern Jewish history books open with a section in the introduction listing the benefits of history.³⁶⁶ Jewish historians were not unique in this respect, as their Christian counterparts also developed comparable categories of uses of history. The importance of these sections, in both Jewish and Christian historiography (and no less in later Enlightenment historiography), was not solely or even primarily rooted in the necessity of defending history writing.³⁶⁷

First and foremost benefits of history were expressions of a metahistory, namely the firm belief that history was meaningful and that via knowledge of the past people could acquire deeper insight into the process of history and the development of a redemptive future. History was, in the end, sacred history: a series of actions by God, leading to the end of the world.

³⁶⁴ Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah* (Tel Aviv 1948) 131, introduction to Sanhedrin XI. For a detailed discussion of this quote and Maimonides' perception of history and history writing in general, see the classical article by Salo W. Baron, 'Maimonides' historical outlook', *Proceedings of the American academy for Jewish research* 6 (1934-1935) 5-113. There is, however, discussion if Maimonides only meant Arabic historiography or sacred i.e. Jewish historiography as well; see: Bonfil, 'Jewish attitudes', 13-14.

³⁶⁵ Weinberg, 'Translator's introduction', xx-xxi, xlii-xliv.

³⁶⁶ Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 14.

³⁶⁷ A useful survey of early modern historiography is provided by: Anthony Grafton, *What was history? The art of history in early modern Europe* (Cambridge 2007).

Contemporary readers could grasp their own position in history by connecting to the past and the future. This religious philosophy of history, expressed in two different but related variants in Christianity and Judaism, served as one of the main legitimations of history writing. In the early modern period many historians and theologians searched for new ways to write history, which sometimes resulted in situating 'sacred history' at a distance from political history. Nonetheless, fundamental deviations from the overall concept of 'sacred history' were seldom.³⁶⁸

The other line of argument, no less religious yet more focused on daily life, regarded history to be a textbook for morality. Cicero, for example, developed this idea of history as 'magistra vitae'.³⁶⁹ Proper history writing should show how good actions eventually result in peace and prosperity or at least in God's eternal blessing, whereas bad and immoral conduct leads to severe consequences for the individual or collective involved. Historical examples of punishment and reward were supposed to strengthen moral norms among readers and spur them to live in a God-fearing and proper way. To achieve this goal history writing provided models of exemplary lives, including, in both Catholic and Protestant historiography, church fathers, martyrs and good rulers, and, in Jewish history writing, rabbis and Jewish martyrs. In the early modern period interpretation of this exceptional benefit of history became, especially via the influence of classical authors, less focused on one's leading a sanctified life and more on one's public life. This contributed to the success of history writing in a period when the concept of 'sacred history' was much debated and applied less overtly.³⁷⁰

Amelander was thus not doing anything particularly remarkable in continuing the tradition and he utilized the myriad benefits that any student of history could acquire. He was in good company by opening his work's section on the benefits of history by citing Deuteronomy 32:7 (OJPS): 'Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee, thine elders, and they will tell thee.' Amelander explains this passage with a short commentary in which he argues that the past

³⁶⁸ Irena Backus, *Historical method and confessional identity in the era of the Reformation (1378-1615)* [Studies in medieval and Reformation thought 94] (Leiden 2003) 329, 339-341; Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: ancient, medieval & modern* (3rd ed.; Chicago 2007) 88, 166-167, 199; John Tosh and Seán Lang, *The pursuit of history. Aims, methods, and new directions in the study of modern history* (4th ed.; Harlow 2006), 29-31; an influential Christian expression of this line of thought, contemporary to Amelander, is to be found in: Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edward's philosophy of history. The reenchantment of the world in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton NJ 2003); for the development of this argument within Jewish thought: Jacob Neusner, 'The religious uses of history: first-century Palestine and third-century Babylonia' in: idem, *Talmudic Judaism in Sasanian Babylon: essays and studies* 1 (Leiden 1976) 25-45, there esp. 33, 45.

³⁶⁹ 'Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia nisi oratoris immortalita commendatur?'; Cicero, *De oratore* 2, 36.

³⁷⁰ Breisach, *Historiography*, 38, 56, 160, 189; Backus, *Historical method*, 251, 339-340.

shows us the works of God, which are sincere. A Jew must therefore consider the days of the world and understand the years of all generations, and ask the fathers and the elders, who are understood to be the most learned, to tell about the past.³⁷¹

Having legitimized his project by referencing this biblical text, Amelander then enlists no less than five benefits of history. First, he stresses the great value of studying the past. To engage oneself with history would teach the student *יראה*, fear, and *אהבה*, love, both of which appear to be two sides of the same coin. History shows how God helped the faithful and that they were able to do great miracles. This teaches man to love God and to fear Him. Only in such a status would God guide and assist the Jewish people today. History, the other side, shows that God punishes the evil ones, as had happened at the Tower of Babel, the generation of the flood and Sodom and Amora. In this respect history would teach man to fear doing evil.³⁷² In his narrative Amelander occasionally refers explicitly to this benefit of history, such as in the account of the false messiah Shabtai Zvi. The lesson of this story, according to Amelander, is that in the end the bad people were revealed and suffer greatly, whereas God would bless the righteous ones: *זוא זאל פר לארן אלי דיא (שונאים) פון גאט. אונ' דיא (צדיקים) זאלן זיך זטארקן. גלייך דיא זון זיך זטארקט אין זיין אויש גין אמן.*³⁷³

In enlisting fear and love as an ethical benefit of history, Amelander implicitly refers to one of the books he had edited previously, namely De Vidas' *Reshit Hokhma*. This work was divided into five 'gates' of wisdom, the first two being 'Fear' and 'Love'. De Vidas' application of the kabbalistic notion of two kinds of fear - the fear for God and the fear of sin - can be recognized in Amelander's description.³⁷⁴ History, as Amelander implies through his use of the two categories, was one of the instruments to teach men to stay on the correct, moral path, to love and to fear God and to refrain from sin.

The second benefit is the practical use of history, its showing how someone should live his life. Interestingly, the non-Jewish context is prominent in this part of Amelander's argument. He states that knowledge of the past teaches *דרך ארץ*, the ways of behaviour in general society. The past presents examples of how other Jews lived in a majority culture, thereby offering lessons to contemporary Jews.³⁷⁵

³⁷¹ SY ed. 1743, iii.

³⁷² SY ed. 1743, iii-iv.

³⁷³ 'In this way all the haters of God will perish. And the righteous will strengthen. Like the sun rises in the morning. Amen.' SY ed. 1743, 109r.

³⁷⁴ Cf. Louis Jacobs, *A Jewish theology* (New York 1973) 177-178; Fine, *Safed spirituality*, 85-89. As biblical base for connecting fear and love commonly Deuteronomy 10, 12 is invoked.

³⁷⁵ SY ed. 1743, iv.

Third, in early modern society wisdom was connected to a person's age: the older the person, the wiser he was. The Jewish ideal of life was precisely to acquire the status of a wise man. Amelander argues that the study of history could help in this process. He even quotes 'a sage' who stated that knowledge makes a man old without years - that is, that one's degree of wisdom, not his age, is the decisive factor: 'Because someone who is young but has read and learned much, knows much more than an old person who has learned nothing.' To further strengthen his thesis, Amelander quotes R. Jose ha-Galili's saying: אין זקן אלא מי שקנה חכמה - אפילו יניק וחכים and yet wise.³⁷⁶

For his fourth benefit of history, Amelander turns to Torah. He argues that all of Bereshit and Shemot until the twelfth chapter is narrative, without halakhic material. This surely has a special meaning, because otherwise Torah would have been written differently. For explanation Amelander turns to Rashi, who noted that the histories of the past were good to know because they could 'teach you good ways and good manners'. This was demonstrated for all of Torah by the Ralbag, Gersonides, who, according to Amelander, had shown the use of the many stories (mayses) in Torah. Gersonides' commentaries are indeed known for beginning with the literal meaning, the *peshat*, of the biblical text, and thereafter revealing the philosophical and ethical meanings hidden in the narrative. Via this method Gersonides illustrated the practical use of each biblical story as a pedagogical completion of the more general halakhic portions.³⁷⁷ Amelander even refers his readers to the Yiddish translation of Gersonides' תועלייות הרלב"ג. Amelander contended that, just as biblical stories had practical use, the post-biblical narratives were likewise replete with meaning and potential benefits for the reader.³⁷⁸

The fifth benefit of history, closely connected to the eschatological interpretation of history already demonstrated in his title, Amelander presents not in his introduction but throughout the history book. Several times he connects the historical narrative to biblical prophecies, thereby showing the prophecies' realizations in history. Studying history not only presents the Bible's adequacy but also the position of contemporary readers in the metahistorical framework in which Amelander's work was embedded. Just as these prophecies

³⁷⁶ ב"ר, Kidushin 1, 32b; SY ed. 1743, iv.

³⁷⁷ Robert Eisen, *Gersonides on providence, covenant, and the chosen people. A study in medieval Jewish philosophy and Biblical commentary* (Albany 1995) 91-92.

³⁷⁸ SY ed. 1743, iv.

were fulfilled, so too would the ultimate ones – the coming of the Messiah, re-unification with the lost tribes, the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple – become reality.³⁷⁹

Comparing Amelander's list of the benefits of history with the catalogues of his predecessors leads to the conclusion that although Amelander was original in his expressions, he remained firmly rooted in the traditional strategies of legitimizing and defending the writing and reading of history. The first, third, fourth and fifth benefits all fit into a traditional theological defense of history, in which trust in God's providence and belief in principles (such as reward and punishment and hope of redemption) are strengthened.³⁸⁰ Capsali, for example, in the introduction to his *Seder Eliyahu zuta*, stresses God's providence and his just rule; he also presents history as being a source of wisdom (next to two kabbalistic inspired principles, דעת ובינה, knowledge and understanding), and invokes, as does Amelander, Gersonides' interpretation of biblical narratives. Amelander, however, was unfamiliar with Capsali's chronicle, which was then only extant in manuscripts.³⁸¹

The second pragmatic benefit, as Shmuel Feiner has demonstrated, is more interesting, innovative and even contested. That history could have considerations beyond religion was not an argument without dispute. Certain prominent rabbis, including Gersonides and Obadiah Sforno, supported the use of biblical history as a source for models for life. Many argued, as had De' Rossi, that Torah was a sufficient source for such examples and that post-biblical history therefore needed different legitimization. Amelander, however, adopted in this respect a position comparable to that of Capsali, who had written very clearly that history could teach a person to 'become more precise, hone his intelligence, and learn the affairs of the world, be they its [commercial] negotiations and its guiles and manipulations, the conduct of wars and the necessary stratagems, or how to speak to people in a fitting manner'.³⁸² Capsali and Amelander consciously chose to apply Gersonides and Sforno's opinions about the biblical to the post-biblical domain. In doing so, they chose a position closer to contemporary European historiography than did many of their Jewish fellow historians. However, for both of

³⁷⁹ In connecting history with eschatology Amelander was not alone, already Rashi in his commentary to Deuteronomy 32:7 – following the midrash Sifre - is doing the same. Commemoration of the past should lead to attention for the future and convince people that it is in God's power to bring the 'days of the Mashiah and the days of the world to come'.

³⁸⁰ Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 13-17; Jacobs, 'Joseph ha-Kohen', 69, 75.

³⁸¹ Eliyahu ben Elqana Capsali, *Seder Eliyahu zuta I*; ed. Aryeh Shmuelevitz and Meir Benayahu (Jerusalem 1975) 10.

³⁸² Bonfil explains Capsali's exemplary use of history as an application of ideas of humanist Renaissance writers in Jewish historiography; Bonfil, 'Attitudes', 18.

them the pragmatic benefit remained merely one in addition to, if not in the shadow of, the other theologically grounded benefits.³⁸³

In this respect, it is striking that Amelander did not follow the strategy of De' Rossi and David Gans, who had declared the domain of history writing to be halakhically neutral, and thus a domain in its own right. Gans states in his introduction: 'Since from this work of mine neither impurity nor purity, neither prohibition nor permission emerge, my heart empowered me to put my mind to the task of writing this book.' De' Rossi, who inspired Gans to write this passage, used the concept of neutralism to defend the application of critical methods to post-biblical history.³⁸⁴ Gans, in turn, regarded the merit of historiography to be that it, among other things, provided Jews material for intelligent conversation with Christians such that they could thus find 'grace and respect' in their eyes.³⁸⁵ Amelander apparently did not feel the need to define his historical work as a separate, neutral domain alongside other more concretely legitimized genres. For him the traditional, theological benefits of history were sufficient enough, besides the more pragmatic use of history.

For Amelander the benefits of history were much more than simply the traditionally required arguments for engaging oneself with history. They show how, for Amelander, history was interwoven with his theological opinions, as the stage through which and on which God showed how to live and what to live for. Yet, on the other hand, history was not detached from everyday life; it was in fact a source of instructions for how to live a decent and pious Jewish life in a non-Jewish society.

5.3.3 Temporal and spatial connections

Amelander's *Sheyris Yisrael* is a so-called universal or world history book.³⁸⁶ It encompasses Jewish history over a lengthy period, from 70 CE until his own time, and concerns Jews throughout the world, from China to the Americas, from Africa to Russia. The pressing question for any historian is how to organize his materials in both temporal and spatial terms in a practical and meaningful way. Amelander also had to find a way to combine the histories

³⁸³ Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 13-16; Capsali, *Eliyahu zuta* I, 10 (translation by Feiner); cf. Bonfil, 'Attitudes', 16-21, 30-31.

³⁸⁴ Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 15-17; David Gans, *Zemah David. A chronicle of Jewish and world history (Prague, 1592)* [Hebrew]; ed. Mordechai Breuer (Jerusalem 1983) 7 (translation of Feiner).

³⁸⁵ Breuer, 'Modernism and traditionalism', 70-71.

³⁸⁶ R. de Schryver, *Historiografie. Vijftienvintig eeuwen geschiedschrijving van West-Europa* (Leuven, Assen/Maastricht 1990) 129-131.

of Jews living in temporally, geographically and culturally very different contexts into a single narrative. As there were no previously written Jewish history books that could serve as a model for a Jewish universal history, he had to draw inspiration for structuring his narrative from other sources.³⁸⁷ The following chapter will demonstrate how the Dutch version of *Histoire des Juifs de Jésus-Christ jusqu'à notre temps*, a sizable history book written by the French-Dutch Huguenot pastor Jacques Beauval de Basnage, served as Amelander's primary model. Here we will offer an initial analysis based on the final version of how Amelander ordered and structured his material.

Amelander divided his narrative into 35 chapters, which recount Jewish history chronologically from the *burban bayit sheni* until the eighteenth century, yet also meander between different geographical entities. The chapters are untitled, but each is preceded by a short summary of its contents. These summaries usually present both the periodization and geographical topic of the chapter. Most of the chapters appear to begin rather randomly at a certain year and to finish abruptly (e.g. Chapter 9 covers the period 612-740; Chapter 12 concerns 935-1040 and Chapter 24 recounts 1222-1380). Nowhere in the book is this chosen periodization explained.

An historian's periodization is not just drawing a line through time; it also reveals which conceptual categories the author used to designate a period.³⁸⁸ Although most of Amelander's periodization appears to have been dictated first of all by the materials he had found (which had left him with large temporal gaps), his arrangement of this material reveals certain caesuras that he saw in history, in particular the fall of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Both Chapters 4 and 6 take this singular event as their starting points for narrating respectively the histories of Jews in Palestine and in Babylonia. The ascension to the throne of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire, is the *terminus ante quem* for the Chapter 7, whereas Chapter 11 uses the rise of Charlemagne as a line of demarcation. In the history of Middle Eastern Jewry the appearance of Mohammed is presented in Chapter 8 as the opening of a new period. These three caesuras were politically inspired, but other ones were determined by what Steinschneider has labeled the Jewish *Leidensgeschichte*: the first Crusade (1096) and its horrific consequences for Ashkenazi Jews (Chapter 14), the respective medieval

³⁸⁷ Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish history*, 1-42.

³⁸⁸ On the politics of periodization in European historiography: Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and sovereignty. How ideas of feudalism and secularization govern the politics of time* (Philadelphia 2008).

expulsions from France, England and the Iberian peninsula (Chapters 22, 23, 25) and finally the *gezeirot tach ve-tat* in 1648 in Eastern Europe (Chapter 32).

The periodization used in *Sheyris Yisroel* is a mixture of political history and the history of Jewish suffering. Whereas the first group of events was, in contemporary general histories, considered of the utmost importance, the latter – although deeply connected to contemporary political developments – was specific to periodizing Jewish history. Both aspects reveal basic ideas behind *Sheyris Yisroel*. Throughout the book political history serves as a framework in which Jewish history is positioned. Although Amelander had no intention of writing a history of Roman emperors, Arabic khaliefs, French kings or Roman popes, he used their sequencings as a categorizing principle. Each personage was described and evaluated only from the perspective of Jewish history, or, more precisely, whether they had acted in a positive or negative way towards their Jewish subjects. Interestingly, as seen in Chapter 2, David Gans, in his *Zemah David*, still separated Jewish and political history into separate sections, whereas Amelander, in *Sheyris Yisroel*, integrated the two into one grand narrative. Amelander's historical narrative is not a closed intra-Jewish story, but instead takes seriously the societal and cultural environments.

The second aspect was no less important. Amelander, like many of his predecessors and successors, interpreted Jewish history in diaspora basically as one of suffering. Although he also directed much attention to periods when Jews had fared better, within the diasporic experience the well-known persecutions, expulsions and pogroms served as demarcations, thereby resulting in a grand narrative of Jewish history that is characterized by these events. This aspect of *Leidensgeschichte* described the relations between Jews and non-Jews, influencing the course of Jewish history in dramatic ways, even resulting in new diasporas. Jews in this way were predominantly presented in a passive role, as victims. This was, however, supplemented by a description of the internal dynamics of Jewish communities. This description focused on the great rabbis, scholars and leaders and their major works and achievements. This *Geistesgeschichte* in its turn afforded Jews a more active and positive role.³⁸⁹ Amelander focused a number of chapters primarily or completely on rabbinic sages, including Chapters 5 and 6, on rabbinic cultures in Palestine and Babylonia and Chapter 16, on medieval Jewish intellectuals like Maimonides and Rashi.

³⁸⁹ On the combination of *Leidensgeschichte* and *Geistesgeschichte* in later nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* historiography: Andreas Gotzmann, *Eigenheit und Einbeit. Modernisierungsdiskurse des deutschen Judentums der Emanzipationszeit* (Leiden etc. 2002) 141-143, 160, 279-280.

Next to periodization, cultural geography has an important function in how a universal history book such as *Sheyris Yisroel* is structured. The material is arranged in a chronological way but is also grouped in geographic entities. As Moshe Rosman has recently stressed, the spatial dimension of an historian's work is no less important than the periodization used.³⁹⁰ Amelander, in the introductory lines before each chapter, offers a precise geographic description, varying from Rome in Chapter 2, to Germany, France, England, Bohemia and Hungary in Chapter 14 and Constantinople, Greece and the Ottoman Empire in Chapter 27. There are chapters in which a number of neighbouring countries are taken together. Other chapters follow contemporary political geography and concern only one country. Behind Amelander's geographic structuring Amelander, however, there is a metastructure: all of his material is divided over two transnational geographic entities - the East and the West - roughly following the lines between first the Eastern and Western Roman Empire and consequently between the political entities of Islam and Christendom.

Amelander explicitly introduces the division between the Jews of the East and the West in his second chapter:

איך וויל ערשטליך נאך ריכט געבין דש אלי דיא יהודים דיא פֿר טריבן זיין נאך חלה אונ' חבור אונ' אין מצרים אונ' אין דש לאנד יהודה. אין גריקן לאנד אונ' אין דש גאנצי אוישטרשטי רייך. דיא היישן מיר. דיא אויף (מזרח) זייט וואונין. אונ' אלי די יהודים דיא פֿר טריבן זיין גווארין אין אטליא. שפאניא. טייטש לאנד. ענגלאנד. אונ' פֿראנקרייך. דיא היישן מיר אויף דיא (מערב) זייט:³⁹¹

In this passage Amelander lists several countries in the East and the West. For some he uses the Hebrew name, like *Mizrayim* for Egypt and *Yebudah* for Palestine, but for others, especially countries in the West, he restricts himself to Germanic alternatives. In this book Amelander often randomly uses Hebrew and Germanic synonyms within Yiddish, but here there may be more conscious use of the later alternatives. Instead of *Spania* he could have used *Sepharad*, and instead of *Taytsland*, *Ashkenaz*. These names, however, had in Amelander's period developed

³⁹⁰ Moshe Rosman, 'Jewish history across borders' in: Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman eds., *Rethinking European Jewish history* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon 2009) 15-29.

³⁹¹ 'I will first pay attention to all the Jews they were expelled to Halah and Habur and Egypt and in the land of Judah. In Greece, and in the whole Eastern Empire. Those we will call the ones who live on the Eastern side. And all the Jews that were expelled to Italy, Spain, Germany, England, and France, those we will call the ones who live on the Western side.' Amelander, *SY*, 8r.

from mere synonyms for Spain and Germany into two categories of world Jewry, and thus represented a slightly different way of structuring Jewish history than Amelander did.³⁹²

The crucial difference between both concepts is where to locate Spain: in the East or the West? From a Christian perspective Spain belonged to Christian Europe, even if in medieval times it had generally been in Islamic hands. Jews, like Muslims, used to stress the connections between the Iberian Peninsula and the Middle East, as did Abraham ibn Da'ud in his *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah*, wherein he constructed a continuous line between the Babylonian geonim and the rabbis in Spain. After the 1492 *gerush Sefarad* the several diasporas of Sephardic Jewry spread the concept of Sepharad to large parts of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern world. In contrast, the spread of Jews from medieval Germany to the rest of Europe resulted in a comparable growth of the concept of Ashkenaz.³⁹³

Amelander did not divide his chronicle into the internal Jewish categories Sepharad and Ashkenaz; instead he used the general European concept of political geography. This was not entirely unique in Jewish historiography. One of Amelander's predecessors, Joseph ha-Kohen, used in his chronicle *Divrei ha-yamim le-malkhe Tsarfat u-malkhe Otoman ha-Togar* (1554) exactly the same division between Christian and Islamic empires, as represented by France and the Ottoman Empire.

In the arrangement of the chapters the two lines of East and West in *Sheyris Yisroel* become clear. First, there is the history of the Jews in the East, told largely as a continuing story in the Chapters 4-8, 12, 15, 19 and Chapter 26, on the impact of Shabtai Zvi. Thereafter the story of these particular Jews divides into three geographically ordered chapters: Chapter 27, on the Ottoman Empire; Chapter 28, on Eretz Yisrael; and Chapter 29, on Africa. The history of the Jews in the West is narrated in a comparable series of chapters: Chapters 2, 3, 9, 11-15³⁹⁴ and Chapter 18, which ends in the year 1200. Here again the story divides into five geographical areas, three of which Amelander concluded before his own time, partly due to the effect of expulsions: Chapter 21, on Italy (describing Jewish history until 1394); Chapter 22, on France (1300-1670); and Chapter 23, on England (1210-1649). In the two other areas the concepts Sepharad and Ashkenaz appear as geographic, ethnic and cultural concepts, both

³⁹² On the formation of a transnational Ashkenazi identity, partly in response to a similar Sephardic identity: Joseph Davis, 'The reception of the *Shulhan 'Arukh* and the formation of Ashkenazic Jewish identity', *AJS Review* 26 (2002) 2, 251-276.

³⁹³ Davis, 'Reception *Shulhan 'Arukh*', 275-276. On the role of Yiddish in this process: Berger, 'A diasporic third space', *passim*.

³⁹⁴ Chapter 15 is part of both lines, since it narrates the position of Jews in the East and West according to Benjamin of Tudela's *Masa'ot Binyamin*.

originating in the original motherland and thereafter following the diaspora's new areas. The history of Sephardic Jewry is covered in Chapters 20, 25 and 33, and Ashkenazi Jewry in Chapters 24, 30-32 and 34.³⁹⁵

It is more than a coincidence that in Amelander's structure the two lines of Western Jewish history - the Sephardic and Ashkenazi - both end in Amsterdam. Amelander, for his narrative, let the Sephardic and the Ashkenazi diasporas meet in Amsterdam. He thus expressed an opinion that what had happened in Amsterdam – namely, two main streams in Judaism coming into contact again and mutually influencing their beliefs and cultures - was of historical importance. Amelander was well aware of this process, as he was an agent in bringing Sephardic heritage within the reach of Ashkenazim – as shown in chapter 4 on his earlier publications. *Sheyris Yisroel* itself was an expression of the encounter between Sephardic and Ashkenazi cultures.

Thus, although in *Sheyris Yisroel* the overarching geographical division - that between the Christian West and the Islamic East - is generally a political one, within this structuring Sepharad and Ashkenaz are not overlooked. They are presented as parallel lines within the West, thereby evidencing that Amelander was well aware of the comparable nature of these two diasporic transnational communities. Furthermore, that both lines end in Amsterdam reflects the reality of the interaction between Sephardim and Ashkenazim in the city, of which *Sheyris Yisroel* can be regarded a product.

Periodization and cultural geography are together the backbone for the structure of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The book develops chronologically, by presenting two fundamentally parallel lines, sometimes further subdivided into smaller geographic unities. Amelander organized his material in such a way that a larger grand narrative of Jewish history appears. There is, however, a further aspect in his structure that deserves separate attention, as it reveals yet another aspect of Amelander's philosophy of history.

5.3.4 The utopic Ten Tribes

Around the two lines of Jewish history - the Eastern and the Western - Amelander construed a circular structure whose main theme was the Ten Lost Tribes. The first chapter addresses the

³⁹⁵ A few chapters do not fit entirely into the geographical framework and are more thematic in nature: Chapter 10 narrates the specific case of the Khazar conversion to Judaism; Chapter 16 deals with both Eastern and Western sages from 1099-1190, and Chapter 17 offers the reverse picture of false Messiahs on both sides.

question of where the Ten Tribes could be located after the expulsion from Eretz Yisrael. Amelander closes the circle by concluding his book with a chapter on the Jews in India and China. Here he informs his readers about two other exotic Jewish communities, which could well be descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes, as he concludes.

The question of the whereabouts of the Ten Lost Tribes became in early modernity deeply connected to the discovery of new parts of the world and the spread of colonialism. Jews had always believed the Ten Lost Tribes to still exist somewhere, behind the magical Sambatyon river. Only in messianic times would the two remaining tribes and the ten lost ones be united. Geographical discoveries aroused new expectations among Jews that the Ten Lost Tribes were about to be found, a discovery which would signal the start of the messianic age. From the sixteenth century onwards there was huge interest among Jews in theorizing about the Ten Lost Tribes and for reports from exotic countries that potentially indicated discovery of the lost Jews.³⁹⁶

The quest to find the Ten Lost Tribes in newly discovered areas had resulted not only from traditional religious beliefs. It was also greatly influenced by the broader European discourse on the exotic Americas and Indies. As Michel de Certeau has demonstrated, early modern European interest in the new territories first of all reflected the longings and expectations of Europeans. The inhabitants of the East and West Indies and the Americas were used to mirror European dreams for utopias. The vast material written about these inhabitants subjected them, stressed their alterity and at the same time attached new meanings to them.³⁹⁷ In the Jewish case, Indians came to reflect Jewish utopian longings for the messianic era. From the sixteenth century onwards, rumours spread that the Indians were actually Jews, descendants of the Ten Tribes. They were thought to be hiding their Jewish identities from the newly arriving Europeans, but to occasionally reveal their knowledge of Hebrew and Judaism in small yet significant details. Whereas Jews were everywhere in the world a minority, the Indians-as-Ten-Tribes were supposed to be strong, independent and ruled by their own kings. Jews tried to supersede their present minority position through this utopian fantasy about the discovery of the Ten Lost Tribes in the new territories.

³⁹⁶ See for instance, next to the literature mentioned hereafter: Chone Shmeruk and Israel Bartal, 'Telaot Moshe: the first Yiddish written geography book, and the description of Erez Israel by R. Moshe ben R. Abraham the proselyte' [Hebrew] *Cathedra* 40 (1986) 121-137; Sara Zfatman-Biller, 'A Yiddish epistle from the late sixteenth century concerning the Ten Tribes' [Hebrew] *Kobez al Yad* 10 (1982) 217-252.

³⁹⁷ Carla Freccero, 'Toward a psychoanalytics of historiography: Michel de Certeau's early modern encounters', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100 (2001) 2, 365-379.

Amelander's emphasis on the Ten Lost Tribes was part of this larger Jewish discourse. He was familiar with most literature on the subject and used it at great length. The fact that he lived in Amsterdam is also significant. The city was one of the main ports in contact with the East and West Indies and the Americas, and along with myriad exotic products there also entered the city a continuous stream of stories and rumours. Many of these were published in pamphlets and leaflets and enjoyed widespread popularity. Amsterdam Jews participated in this enthusiasm, partly from their own experiences. The extraordinary stories were scrutinised for information about exotic Jews. Following the Dutch conquest of Cochin in India in 1663, a rumor spread that the Dutch had encountered Jewish communities, Amsterdam Jews decided to send an expedition to India to verify these stories and to determine the character of the communities. Upon returning, with positive accounts, the expedition's findings were soon published and spread widely among Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews.³⁹⁸

In *Sheyris Yisrael* the narrative on the Ten Lost Tribes and their possible descendants is based on these specific Amsterdam sources, as well on two earlier related books: *Iggeret orbot olam* (1525), by the Italian Renaissance Jew Abraham ben Mordechai Farissol; and *Mikveh Yisrael* (1650), by the Amsterdam Sephardic rabbi Menasseh ben Israel. Farissol's work was the first book written by a Jew on the geographic discoveries; it was based on Christian sources, but Farissol evaluated these findings in his own religious tradition. He was convinced that with the location of the Ten Lost Tribes Israel's redemption would be near. Although Farissol was critical and skeptical towards all overly positive accounts (especially the claims of a certain David Reuveni, who had professed to be a messenger from the Ten Lost Tribes), he was convinced of the existence of Jewish communities descending from the Ten Lost Tribes and concluded that there was room for cautious optimism.³⁹⁹

Amelander was most directly inspired by Menasseh ben Israel, whose messianism drove him to investigate the Ten Lost Tribes. In his book *Mikveh Yisrael* Menasseh ben Israel describes the discovery, in South America, of some of the lost tribes as one of the signals for the coming of the Messiah. Likewise, the intensification of Jewish suffering after 1492, and on the other hand the prominence of Jews in countries such as the Dutch Republic, resulted in

³⁹⁸ Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and blacks in the early modern world* (Cambridge 2004) 206-213.

³⁹⁹ David B. Ruderman, 'A Jewish view of the new geographical discoveries' in: idem, *The world of a Renaissance Jew. The life and thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Cincinnati 1981) 131-143.

Menasseh's optimistic view that redemption was forthcoming.⁴⁰⁰ Amelander followed Farissol and Menasseh and wove this eschatological vision into the structure of his book.

As a summary Amelander concludes the first chapter by presenting an exegesis of Isaiah 49:8-9: "Thus saith the Lord: in an acceptable time I will answer thee (...) Saying to the prisoners: 'Go forth' – alluding to the tribes that are trapped beyond the river Sambatyon and unable to cross until messianic times - 'to them that are in darkness: 'Show yourselves' – a reference to tribes hidden behind the dark mountains - 'they shall feed in the ways' – the tribes expelled to the creek Gozen and the city Madi. Amelander perceived the topic of the Ten Lost Tribes through biblical prophecies such as Isaiah 49 that placed the reunification of the ten tribes with the two remaining ones in the messianic era. Amelander thus ended his exegesis with the traditional formula: 'It will be the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, that we will experience this soon in our days, Amen'.⁴⁰¹

In the last chapter Amelander relies heavily on Menasseh ben Israel's material on the tribes in *Mikveh Yisrael*. He evokes the story Menasseh had heard from a certain Aaron Levi Montezinos, who claimed to have found in the West Indies a secret Jewish tribe living among the Indians, saying the *Shema* and speaking Hebrew. According to Amelander this story was surely reliable because Menasseh had heard it himself from Montezinos and had qualified him as a faithful witness.

This story and others, told by both Jews and non-Jews, brought Amelander to the conviction that the prophecy in Deuteronomy 28:64 had been fulfilled: 'And the Lord shall scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, even wood and stone.' Yet the fulfillment of this negative prophecy – that Jews would be scattered across the world - was for Amelander a positive sign. With reference to R. Akiva in Makkot 24b he states that the fulfillment of negative prophecies offers reassurance that God will likewise fulfill the positive prophecies. Here Amelander's choice of title, *Sheyris Yisrael*, the structure of his book and his eschatological reading of Jewish history come together. Isaiah 11:11-12 offers the positive prophecy which had yet to be fulfilled, but which would not last much longer, since the negative prophecies had already been fulfilled: 'And it shall come to

⁴⁰⁰ Richard H. Popkin, 'The rise and fall of the Jewish Indian theory' in: Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard Henry Popkin eds., *Menasseh ben Israel and his world* (Leiden etc. 1989) 63-82; Ernestine G.E. van der Wall, 'Petrus Serrarius and Menasseh ben Israel: Christian millenarism and Jewish messianism in seventeenth-century Amsterdam' in: *ibidem*, 164-190, esp. 174; Rivka Schatz, 'Menasseh ben Israel's approach to messianism in the Jewish-Christian context' in: *ibidem*, 244-261, esp. 252-253.

⁴⁰¹ Amelander, *SY*,4v.

pass in that day, that the Lord will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people [שאר עמיו], that shall remain from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elan, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth.’ Amelander explains, in short, that the dispersed of Israel - the Ten Lost Tribes, along with the scattered members of Judah, - the two remaining tribes, whose history as the *Sheyris yisrael* Amelander has narrated in his book, will be reunited and return to Eretz Yisrael in due course.

In his interpretation of Isaiah 11 Amelander follows Menasseh closely, as he did in refuting the objection that could be made against this interpretation of these biblical prophecies. Had they not already been fulfilled upon the return from the Babylonian exile? No, Menasseh and Amelander argued, the verse speaks about a ‘second time’, which could not have been the return from the Babylonian exile, as at that time only a small segment of the whole Jewish people had returned to Eretz Yisrael. Also Isaiah 43:5-6; 60:10 and Ezekiel 39:28 clearly included elements that had not been fulfilled during the return from Babylonia, and were therefore applicable only to a future return of both the two and the ten tribes.⁴⁰²

Amelander developed a circular structure, opening and ending with the Ten Lost Tribes. The message of this structure is clear: with the discoveries of new parts of the world, the Ten Lost Tribes would also be discovered, thus enabling fulfillment of positive prophecies. The *Sheyris yisrael* would be reunited with the whole of Israel, ‘that it will happen soon in our times, Amen.’⁴⁰³ Amelander’s circular structure situates the history of Jews in the East and West in an eschatological framework that is both typically early modern and thoroughly theological. Jewish history in diaspora, in Amelander’s interpretation, was clearly an intermezzo between biblical and messianic times.

5.3.5 *The concept of galut*

The circular structure of *Sheyris Yisrael* reinforces the interpretation that the book is fundamentally a history of Jewish diaspora experiences. Even though it may be considered an intermezzo, Amelander still deemed it legitimate to be studied and kept for the generations to

⁴⁰² Menasseh ben Israel, *Miqveh Yisrael. Esto es, Esperança de Israel* (Amsterdam 1650) 79-87; the Dutch edition used by Amelander: idem, *De hoop van Israël* (Amsterdam 1666) 79-86. The reference to Isaiah 60, 10 and Ezekiel 39, 28 is not made by Menasseh, but added by Amelander himself to strengthen the interpretation of Menasseh.

⁴⁰³ Amelander, *SY*, 146r, which are the final words of *Sheyris Yisrael*.

come, not least as studying diaspora history held many benefits for early modern Jews. As noted, for Amelander as for many of his predecessors, diaspora was a period typified by *Leidensgeschichte*, only to be balanced by *Gelehrtengeschichte*.

For Amelander, suffering was at the essence of *galut*. In many chapters he recounts how Jews were mistreated by non-Jews, as well as persecutions and expulsions. Amelander notes different explanations for these discriminatory activities by non-Jews. Blood libel (Chapters 21, 23, 24) and avarice (Chapters 22, 23, 30) are the most commonly mentioned causes of Jewish suffering. Likewise, Amelander attributes motives for anti-Jewish persecutions and expulsions to jealousy (Chapter 22), desire for conversion (Chapter 23), accusation of collaboration with an enemy (Chapter 24), alleged poisoning of wells (Chapter 24), God's providence (Chapter 31) and infertility of a king (Chapter 32). These socio-political motives focus on the alterity of Jews in non-Jewish societies, in that Jews were both a religious and an ethnic minority. They followed different religious practices, which were sometimes considered threatening by the surrounding non-Jewish society. Moreover, they formed a different 'nation' as opposed to the dominant one, and were thus often thought to constitute a potential ally to enemies.

Behind these socio-political motives for persecutions there was a much deeper religious question: why were Jews suffering so much in diaspora? Amelander reflects on this question in Chapter 25, on the *gerush Seфарad*. Although he does not inform his readers, his exposition here is taken largely from ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehuda*, which addresses the issue of *galut*, in the same context of the 1492 events and the start of the Sephardic Diaspora. Amelander, however, modified and omitted parts of ibn Verga's reasoning.

Just like ibn Verga Amelander begins by repeating the traditional rabbinic view that *galut* is fundamentally God's punishment for the sins of the Jewish people. Ibn Verga and Amelander hold that God so severely punished the Jews in *galut* – in fact, more so than he had done previously to any other people, even though other nations had committed much greater sins. The clue to understanding this paradox, as both authors found, is in Amos 3:2: "You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth — that is why I will call you to account for all your iniquities".⁴⁰⁴ Amelander expands ibn Verga's argument for his Yiddish readers, and translates the Hebrew 'singled out' into the Yiddish 'loved', leading to the conclusion that, precisely because he loves Israel, God is punishing them. Amelander explains that God is

⁴⁰⁴ Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda* (ed. Baer), 129.

already doing so in this world and at these times, in order that Israel will arrive purified in the *olam haba*, the world-to-come, whereas the non-Jewish nations – especially those who are committing far worse crimes – will have to suffer in the life hereafter.⁴⁰⁵

This interpretation of Amos 3:2 by ibn Verga and Amelander is presented as the theological fundament explaining the suffering of Jews in *galut*. This introduces the question about what sins of the Jews had caused all these persecutions. Amelander's subsequent list offers no less than five different explanations, which he claims to have found in various sources, without noting that they all stemmed from ibn Verga's *Shevet Yebuda*.

The first explanation is that the Jews were still suffering because of the sins of their ancestors during the exodus from Egypt with the golden calf (Exodus 32 and 34) and their subsequent sins in the Land of Israel. Jeremiah's dictum, 'Our fathers sinned and are no more/ and we must bear their guilt' (Lamentations 5:7), remained true. The collective guilt of Israel caused the Jewish people to go into diaspora. Amelander here followed ibn Verga, whose argument leads back to the Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 54a, which states that the people of Israel would never have been sent into *galut* if they had not sinned with the golden calf.⁴⁰⁶

The second, and midrashic, explanation both authors offer is that when Jews are not firm in their identity, *galut* results in the hostility (*sin'ab*) of the nations. This hatred has as its ultimate focus Torah, given at Mount Sinai (*Sina*), which arouses *sin'ab* from those whom the Jews live among in exile. In particular, the Torah commandment not to eat and drink together with non-Jews – because these daily rites lead to unification – provokes outside anger. This reasoning was a common rabbinic interpretation of *galut*, based on the exegesis of Mount Sinai in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Shabbat 89a-89b: 'What is Mount Sinai? The mountain that brought enmity (*sin'ab*) upon the nations of the world'. Rashi further developed the idea and made the connection with the rituals of eating and drinking.⁴⁰⁷

Third, Amelander follows ibn Verga in enlisting a set of three motives for why non-Jews were jealous of Jews, resulting in envy and persecutions: faith, women and money. When Jews acted with any of these three motives in a negative manner, they afforded non-Jews reasons to persecute them. If a Jew was not faithful to Torah, and committed *avoda zara*, he was, from a halakhic perspective, guilty and deserved the death penalty. If the penalty was not executed, the Jews' collective position in society was weakened. The jealousy of women was

⁴⁰⁵ *SY* ed. 1743, 99v.

⁴⁰⁶ *SY* ed. 1743, 99v; Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yebuda* (ed. Baer), 129.

⁴⁰⁷ Rashi, commentary on Exodus, parashat Yitro, passuk 'For you have done it'.

another trap for Jews, in that a Jewish man giving in to a non-Jewish woman could result in accusations against all Jews. Also, when a Jew badly mishandled financial affairs, he made all Jews equally responsible. Jews, therefore, should realize that their behaviour with regards to these three motives could result in *bilul ba-shem*.⁴⁰⁸

Fourth, there were Jews swearing false oaths, despite the fact that these were strictly forbidden by halakha.⁴⁰⁹ Amelander employs ibn Verga's reference to Abraham ibn Ezra, who had explained that such an act, in which the name of God is used, in fact holds God in contempt. When absolute truth is connected to lies, one is therefore actually denying God's existence. Thus, for Ibn Ezra, even swearing in vain is reason enough for God to extend *galut* to the Jews.⁴¹⁰

The final explanation is Jewish arrogance. There were Jewish individuals from the wealthy class who wished to rule over the nations and who were not content with their present positions in society. Moreover, in the year of the *gerush*, Jews began fighting among themselves in synagogue during the Yom Kippur service, even beating each other with the light of the hekhal (*ner tamid*). Arrogance, thus, was not only destroying the position of Jews in society but was also weakening internal Jewish relations. Amelander again follows ibn Verga in accusing individuals 'who have sought to dominate the nations'.⁴¹¹

Amelander ends his catalogue of explanations for God's punishing of the Jews apodictically with the conclusion: *גאט איז גרעכט. אונ' מיר זייני שולדיג*, 'God is just, and we are guilty'.⁴¹² Although Amelander relied heavily on ibn Verga's catalogue, he omitted one of the reasons ibn Verga offered: namely, the killing of Jesus by the Jews.⁴¹³ Whereas ibn Verga - in the immediate aftermath of the *gerush Sefarad* - had taken this Christian argument seriously and included it in his catalogue without further reasoning, Amelander did not include it as he had with ibn Verga's other reasons. Most likely, he rejected the Christian accusation of Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death and thus did not consider it among the Jews' sins that had caused *galut*.

⁴⁰⁸ SY ed. 1743, 99v; ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda* (ed. Baer), 129.

⁴⁰⁹ EJ (2nd ed.), s.v. 'oath' [authored by Moshe Greenberg].

⁴¹⁰ Abraham ibn Ezra, commentary on Exodus, passuk 'Lo tisah'; SY ed. 1743, 99v; ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda* (ed. Baer), 130.

⁴¹¹ SY ed. 1743, 99v; ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda* (ed. Baer), 130.

⁴¹² SY, ed. 1743, 99v; this is a direct translation from ibn Verga's: 'וצדיק הוא ה' וכאלה רבות עמנו, וצדיק הוא ה', in: *Shevet Yehuda* (ed. Baer), 130.

⁴¹³ Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda* (ed. Baer), 129.

Ibn Verga's exposition of the reasons for *galut* has been described as innovative, as he not only reproduced the traditional rabbinic arguments but also added 'purely naturalistic reasons'. Whereas the first two explanations are strictly theological, being partly located in the biblical past and responsible for the pure fact of *galut* itself, the next three explanations all concern Jewish acts within *galut*. These latter acts are thus responsible for the perpetuation of *galut*. Ibn Verga, besides presenting theological explanation, also tried to offer a sociological analysis of Jewish suffering, so as to facilitate understanding of Christian attitudes towards Jews.⁴¹⁴ By reproducing Ibn Verga's arguments, Amelander automatically adopted the same philosophy on the concept of *galut*.

Although the immediate cause for Amelander's exposition was the *gerush Seфарad*, he interpreted this event as but one example of Jewish suffering in diaspora; he also seized the opportunity to explain in more detail the theological framework from which the persecutions should be understood. Moreover, as Jews were still living in *galut*, he did not speak of a distant past but narrated as much about Jews in earlier ages as in present times. Contemporary readers were thus instructed about their own situation.

5.4 Methodology

For Amelander Jewish history was the history of the remnant of Israel since the *burban ha-bayit* until his own time. This history was positioned in an eschatological framework in which the Ten Lost Tribes played a major role, as did the upcoming reunification of Israel with the coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple. This eschatological perspective also coloured his historical narrative, in which he looked for signs of the forthcoming redemption. But what can be noted about his methodology – whether applied consciously or unconsciously? Where had he found his sources and how had he selected the appropriate materials?

Thus far, the few historians who have referred to Amelander's history book nearly all emphasize that he mingled history and legends into one narrative, thereby making *Sheyris Yisroel* an unreliable source for proper historiography. The only chapters singled out as trustworthy are those on Dutch Jewish history, as here Amelander was writing about contemporary history

⁴¹⁴ Shubert Spero, 'The impact of the Spanish expulsion on Jewish historiography' in: idem, *Holocaust and return to Zion: a study in Jewish philosophy of history* (Hoboken NJ, 2000) 163-185, there 166-168. Some even describe *Shevet Yehuda* therefore as 'reminiscent of the intellectual ambience of the early Enlightenment': Eliezer Schweid, *The classic Jewish philosophers: from Saadia through the Renaissance* (Leiden etc. 2008) 450.

which he and other eyewitnesses had experienced and he was not relying on dubious sources. These historians stress that Amelander, in not distinguishing between fact and legend, was a traditional chronicler and not in line with developments in eighteenth-century European historiography.⁴¹⁵ Leo and Rena Fuks, however, in their opinion that *Sheyris Yisroel* should be regarded as an early work of Jewish Enlightenment, attribute a proper critical sense to Amelander. He would have studied his sources thoroughly, distinguishing between trustworthy and unreliable historical accounts, and would have oriented himself on contemporary non-Jewish, critical historiography.⁴¹⁶

In the next chapter I will examine Amelander's sources and how he used them in composing his own narrative. Here I will concentrate on several issues fundamental to Amelander's methodology: the question of composition, the relation between facts and legends, and his narrative strategies. These interrelated topics will demonstrate how Amelander regarded the position of historian.

As the next chapter will demonstrate, Amelander used an impressive number of sources. From these sources he took fragments, which he translated from Hebrew and Dutch into Yiddish and ordered according to his chronological and geographic framework. Materials from different sources were thus combined, sometimes with reference to the original sources, sometimes not. Amelander presented himself not so much as the author of *Sheyris Yisroel* but as its compiler. He collected sources and presented the materials to his readers.⁴¹⁷ Of course, Amelander developed strategies towards his sources and actively sifted and ordered – and was thus, as the next chapter will explain, far from being a naïve collector of historical sources. His self-image as a compiler, however, is telling. It reveals that he positioned himself within the tradition of medieval Jewish historiography, with its stress on *compilare* (to compile), *colligere* (to collect), and *aggregare* (to assemble), and did not follow antiquarian and philosophical trends in contemporary European historiography that emphasized archival research.⁴¹⁸

In the Middle Ages collecting was part of a general mentality in both Europe and the Middle East. As a literary method it was so popular among Jews that Marc Bregman has labeled it a 'medieval Jewish passion'.⁴¹⁹ Amelander, in his earlier work, had become familiar with the idea of a compilation, having edited *Midrash Tanbuma*, an outstanding specimen of a

⁴¹⁵ See the introduction to this thesis.

⁴¹⁶ Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Joodse geschiedschrijving'; Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography'; Fuks-Mansfeld, 'The role of Yiddish'.

⁴¹⁷ *SY* ed. 1743, 99v.

⁴¹⁸ Bonfil, *History and folklore*, 32.

⁴¹⁹ Marc Bregman, 'Midrash Rabbah and the medieval collector mentality', *Prooftexts* 17 (1997) 1, 63-76, there 68.

collection of materials from very different sources being integrated as a new composition.⁴²⁰ By interpreting the task of the historian mainly as a compiler rather than a researcher, and thereby 'cloaking his authorial persona within the authoritative works of others', Amelander stepped into the tradition of medieval historiography. However, this also meant that he risked becoming a 'slave to his documents, whose errors he piously passed on'.⁴²¹

Amelander's entering a tradition in which historiography was basically a work of compilation significantly influenced the character of his historical narrative. Through an intensive process of selecting, combining and composing, materials from a wide variety of sources were now presented alongside each other, resulting in a new overall composition. Amelander's *Sheyris Yisroel* thus shares a number of characteristics with what Eli Yassif has labeled 'anthological historiography' (see paragraph 2.5).⁴²² First, there is a duality between the chronological, and complete as possible, history, and the anthological ordering of texts, which had been collected according to the author's taste and ideology. Second, the original text's authority derives not from its historical approach but from the status of the book or the personality. Third, in the end the totality of the work outweighs its parts in importance, in that all selected fragments are assimilated into 'an encompassing chronological conception'.⁴²³

Each of these characteristics can also be applied to *Sheyris Yisroel*. Amelander included material from myriad kinds of sources; likewise, he respected the authority of traditional Jewish history books and of narrative materials within the Talmud and other rabbinic writings, and thus included both historical and legendary material in *Sheyris Yisroel*. Myth and history merged organically in a unified narrative.⁴²⁴ One example of this mingling is the inclusion, in Chapter 8, of the Bustenai legend, which had been constructed to strengthen the legitimacy of the Babylonian exilarch, complete with a miraculous ending.⁴²⁵ Amelander adopted it into his history of Babylonian Jewry, since its source, Farissol's *Orbot olam*, was in his opinion trustworthy. He did not question how reliable the story itself was, but instead restricted himself to his opinion on the authority of the original source.

Amelander's critics are correct in that he included legendary material within his historical narrative. Yet there is more to be noted in this respect. The overall composition, in

⁴²⁰ Bregman, 'Midrash Rabbah', 64-65.

⁴²¹ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Genealogy, form and function in medieval historiography' in: idem, *The past as text. The theory and practice of medieval historiography* (Baltimore/London 1997) 99-110.

⁴²² For a broader overview of the genre of the anthology (of which historiography is only one part), its genesis and development into modern times: David Stern ed., *The anthology in Jewish literature* (Oxford 2004).

⁴²³ Eli Yassif, 'The Hebrew Narrative Anthology in the Middle Ages' *Prooftexts* 17 (1997) 153-175, there 157, 160-161.

⁴²⁴ Bonfil, *History and folklore*, 25-26.

⁴²⁵ Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew folktale: history, genre, meaning* (Bloomington, Ind. 1999) 317-332.

which all fragments were integrated, is no less important. Amelander's philosophy of history, described previously, served as the main structure for connecting all the material. His eschatological interpretation of Jewish history positioned both the historical and legendary fragments into a new grand narrative, thus adding new interpretations. The value of *Sheyris Yisroel* as a history book is not so much in the historical validity of all of its accounts, but rather in the transfer of historical and pseudo-historical material from other domains into Yiddish and in the philosophy of history behind it.

Consequently the Jewish historiographical traditions that had been developed during the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, in both the Sephardic and Ashkenazi domains, left their traces on *Sheyris Yisroel*. Via Sephardic historiography 'the chain of tradition' entered the history book, for example in Chapter 6, where the sequence of Babylonian rabbis from Rab to rabbi Jose is given. The Ashkenazi matyriological tradition is also integrated into *Sheyris Yisroel*, notably in Chapter 14, on the Crusades, a chapter which highlights several Jewish 'martyrs' who preferred death over baptism, and in Chapter 18, on twelfth-century European Jewish history. In the chapter that Amelander wrote on the Amsterdam Ashkenazim he applied the *shalshelet ha-qabbala*-tradition to his own community and made the sequence of rabbis the main structure of his narrative, integrating other materials into this structure.

As a result of the different nature of Amelander's sources, the style throughout *Sheyris Yisroel* is highly variable. Many fragments are taken from originally non-Yiddish sources, and so various styles of the original sources remain recognizable in the new context of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Besides a running narrative, in which the author is sometimes present as narrator through the formula 'omar', Amelander also employed narrative strategies of direct speech and of epistles. This resulted in a vivid style, easily readable for the Yiddish audience.

Throughout *Sheyris Yisroel* Amelander is occasionally present in connecting histories to biblical and rabbinic intertext – another characteristic of traditional Jewish historiography.⁴²⁶ Amelander's use of biblical quotations will be discussed shortly. On the whole, however, the number of cases in which Amelander connects histories to biblical contexts is sparse. Moreover, in most cases these quotations and references are already part of one of the sources Amelander used for his narrative. The result is that most of *Sheyris Yisroel* presents Jewish history in a rather naturalistic fashion, rarely commenting or referring to existing biblical and other modes of interpretation.

⁴²⁶ Bonfil, *History and folklore*, 37-40.

A good example of the few cases in which the narrative is significantly coloured by biblical models would be the previously mentioned legend of Bustenai. There existed a wealth of legendary material on Bustenai, the first exilarch under Islamic rule, from which Amelander opted for the account of Farissol. This account integrates elements of the biblical Ester and Daniel narratives in a strengthening and interpreting of the Bustenai legend.⁴²⁷ As in the book of Daniel, the last Persian king was prevented from murdering the heirs to the Davidic dynasty via a dream, which could only be interpreted by an aged Jew. The young boy Bustenai, the last descent of David, was saved and honoured richly, and, as had Daniel, received an important position in the court. When he finally became exilarch, he was – like Mordechai, as recounted in the Esther scroll - led through the city in the royal carriage, with people exclaiming: ‘Thus does the king to the one he appoints to be exilarch, whom everyone in his empire should honour and respect!’ Applying the biblical models to Bustenai’s history demonstrates that, as concerns Jewish history, God’s protection for the people of Israel had not been restricted to the biblical era but indeed remained in force. Readers of *Sheyris Yisroel* would thus be reassured in their faith, especially via this reinforced connection between Bustenai to Isaiah 37:31: ‘And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward’. For present readers, it is clear that Amelander not only saw in the history of Bustenai a sign of hope, but that in using this specific text – with reference to his own title, in the word *Sheyris* – he also held the same view about contemporary times.

5.5 Conclusion: *Sheyris Yisroel* as a hybrid history book

Sheyris Yisroel can only be understood if it is interpreted as part of a larger historical project. It was envisioned as part two of the popular medieval history book *Sefer Yosippon* and was connected to the rabbinic narration of biblical history *Tam ve-Yashar*. As such, even though Amelander was composing a new book, his first objective was to situate his efforts within existing Jewish historiography, and he held the authority of traditional sources in high esteem. *Yosippon* was not only instrumental as an authoritative predecessor work; it also offered Amelander both a defense of history writing as such and a methodological example. Amelander’s wish to weave *Sheyris Yisroel* into the fabric of existing Jewish historiography is

⁴²⁷ More invocations of the book of Daniel in chapter 18, where the three martyred rabbis of Blois are compared to the three friends of Daniel in the oven (for the history of this analogy see: Susan L. Einbinder, *Beautiful death. Jewish poetry and martyrdom in medieval France* (Princeton 2002) 45-69) and in chapter 20, where Don Abraham Benveniste acts as a dream interpreter for king Alphonso XI.

also demonstrated by his largely traditional catalogue of various benefits of history, which stress theological and ethical merits of developing familiarity with the past. Qua methodology Amelander used the same strategy as did *Yosippon* and most other medieval Jewish history texts, as he describes the task of the historian as being first and foremost a compiler as opposed to a researcher. From a great variety of sources, Amelander made selections and composed his own historical narrative, thereby making *Sheyris Yisroel* an early modern example of ‘anthological historiography’.

Amelander’s *magnum opus* thus first of all shared many characteristics with traditional Jewish historiography – and deliberately so. Amelander himself was also very present in the book, composing the narrative and developing a philosophy of history with distinctively contemporary eighteenth-century features. The fact that the book was written in Yiddish instead of Hebrew was quite innovative and part of a transfer of the genre of history writing from the Hebrew to the Yiddish domain. Amelander’s history book could reach a much larger public than had any Jewish history book in Hebrew. The paratextual features of *Sheyris Yisroel* testify to the publishing team’s wish not only to be considered serious but to appeal to a large public. Besides Hebrew titling, prefaces and a *haskama*, Yiddish poetry and several pictures were added. The same mingling of traditional and contemporary is also evident in the inclusion of a pragmatic benefit to the catalogue of benefits of history – continuing an innovation which had entered Jewish historiography in the sixteenth century.

The closest we can get to Amelander’s own ideas of history is through the book’s narrative structure and the exegesis of its title. He agreed with preceding Jewish historiography that Jewish history in Diaspora was characterized by suffering instigated by the outside non-Jewish world, suffering that would in some way be balanced by the internal blossoming of Jewish knowledge. Amelander, however, as an early modern Amsterdam Ashkenazi intellectual was part of two major changes in Jewish society.

First, in Amsterdam Sephardim and Ashkenazim lived alongside each other and, especially in the book industry (where Amelander was active), were collaborating and influencing each other. In *Sheyris Yisroel* both traditions are described on equal footing and even end up together, side by side, in two closing chapters on Amsterdam Jewry. The reconnecting of the two major Jewish traditions in Amsterdam could, in Amelander’s vision, well be interpreted as paving the way towards the ‘end of Jewish history’, the finishing of Diaspora. Second, Amsterdam, being a principal agent in the colonial trade, was at the forefront in the discovery of new territories and new cultures – discoveries which had attracted much attention

from Jews and non-Jews alike. Early modern Ashkenazim hoped to be reconnected not only with Sephardim, but also – as the remnant of Israel – with the Ten Lost Tribes. The latter, it was thought, could very well be found in the newly discovered territories, possibly among the indigenous peoples. Amelander expressed this eschatological vision via a circular structure around *Sheyris Yisroel*, by beginning and ending the work with the quest for the lost tribes and the existence of far-flung, exotic Jewish communities.

Amelander himself can be described as a ‘hybrid intellectual’, in whom traditional and innovative characteristics joined together. Likewise, the only book he authored himself, *Sheyris Yisroel*, is no less a hybrid book and as such is a typical product of eighteenth-century Ashkenazi culture. Amelander connected himself to traditional historiography and its philosophy and methodology, yet he also introduced innovations in language, philosophy and marketing. The generally sober depiction of Diaspora history of previous, traditional Jewish historiography is uplifted by Amelander through an optimistic narrative framework. This framework was inspired by an eschatological vision connected to traditional Jewish knowledge yet deeply coloured by early modern experiences. The context of Amsterdam, with its two sizeable and influential Jewish communities (Sephardic and Ashkenazi, respectively) and the thriving colonial context (which offered, among other things, a continuous exchange of new information) led Amelander to write a Diaspora history within an eschatological frame, in which past and present are uplifted by the promises of a positive future that may well be near.

6. Mediating knowledge. Amelander and his sources

6.1 Hebrew, Yiddish and Dutch sources

6.1.1 Sources: a classification

To write his history book, Amelander had to find source materials. In contemporary non-Jewish historiography there was a trend - namely, antiquarianism - that sought archival materials, old manuscript traditions and the like,⁴²⁸ but Amelander, in his approach, remained within earlier Jewish and non-Jewish methodologies of history writing. He collected all available printed sources dealing with Jewish history after 70 CE and from these sources composed his historical narrative via a process of selection, comparison, editing and omitting. His methods show similarities with Renaissance humanist historiography, in that he critically weighed his sources, compared different interpretations and decided for his readers what the most plausible version of a certain history was.⁴²⁹

This chapter will study in detail how Amelander dealt with his sources and what this entailed for the narrative he presented to his Yiddish readership. A complication in investigating the sources of *Sheyris Yisroel* is that Amelander was not consistent in noting his sources. The Dutch sources in particular are not identified for the readers; similarly – and without any evident criteria Jewish source-references are also often not provided. However, in comparing *Sheyris Yisroel* with the sources that would have been available to Amelander we can identify them and analyse Amelander's policy in handling his sources.

Amelander introduces his sources to his readers at the beginning of his book:

האב גשריבן אלי זאכן די אונש יהודים איז איבר גקומן אויש (ספרי קודש) גלייך (צמח דוד . שלשלת הקבלה . דברי הימים לר' יוסף הכהן) אונ' (ספר ארחות העולם מר' אברהם פריצול) אונ' אויש דש (ספר מקוה ישראל לחכם מנשה בן ישראל) אונ' נאך (מכמה ספרים חשובים) אונ' דר בייא האב איך גבראכט זאכן (מכמה ספרי אומות) דיא בקענט זיין פֿר ווארהאפטֿיגֿי שרייברש . גלייך (יוסף בן גוריון הכהן) גטאן האט אין זיין (ספר).⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ An introduction and discussion of the relevant literature on antiquarianism in: Angus Vine, *In defiance of time: Antiquarian writing in early modern England* (Oxford 2010) esp. 2-21.

⁴²⁹ E.B. Fryde, *Humanism and Renaissance historiography* (London 1983) 5-13, 37-47, 109.

⁴³⁰ SY, vi-vii, introduction of the author. Translation: 'I have written all things that happened to us Jews from sacred books such as *Zemah David*, *Shalshelet ha-qabbalah*, *Divrei ba-yamim* of Rabbi Josef ha-Kohen and the book *Orhot ha-'olam* of Rabbi Avraham Farissol and from the book *Mikveh Yisrael* from Hakham Menasseh ben Israel and from several

This short passage conveys a great deal of information. First, that Amelander relied upon both Jewish and non-Jewish books. Yet the manner of presentation is significant: the Jewish, Hebrew language books are mentioned first and identified by name, whereas the non-Jewish sources are mentioned subsequently, but not by name. Amelander then notes that in this method of identification he was following the alleged author of the authoritative *Sefer Yosippon*, Josef ben Gorion ha-Kohen, and thereby makes clear that using non-Jewish sources alongside Jewish ones required extra legitimization. I will return to this topic later.

Second, within the corpus of Hebrew books he differentiated between the first three books and the next two. The first three are taken together within brackets and qualified as ‘sacred books’. The second two receive merely the normal title of ספר, or book. What is the difference? The first three are, within the definition of Jewish history writing, important examples of Jewish historiography: *Zemah David* is a universal chronicle; *Shalsbelet ha-qabbalah* is an example of the genre of rabbinic succession lists; and *Divrei ha-yamim* is a monograph on French and Ottoman history, or, more generally, the story of Christian and Islamic empires.⁴³¹ Amelander first of all connected with the existing tradition of Jewish historiography, using his corpus as sources and invoking their authority. Why else would he qualify them as ספרי קודש, using a term reserved for religious books? These Hebrew history books were halakhically sanctioned by Moses Isserles, in his *Mappah*, and therefore allowed to be read – completely or partially – even on the Sabbath. Some decades later R. Jacob Emden ruled that the first parts of *Zemah David*, *Sefer yubasin* and *Yosippon* had to be considered as ספרי קודש because the miracles of God for his people are exposed in them.⁴³²

However, besides the sanctioned tradition of Jewish historiography, Amelander also consulted books that were not considered proper history books, but which addressed different subjects and included historical information. As examples of this genre Amelander singled out two related works, Abraham Farissol’s geographic and cosmologic treatise *Iggeret orbot ha-olam* and Menasseh ben Israel’s messianistic *Mikveh Yisrael*.⁴³³ It is probably not coincidental that

other important books and as well I have brought things from several non-Jewish books, known to be written by reliable authors, as Josef ben Gorion ha-Kohen did in his book.’

⁴³¹ On Amelander’s use of *Zemah David* see note 233; examples of Amelander’s use of *Shalsbelet ha-qabbalah* on *SY* ed. 1743 21r, 61v, 63, v, 92v; and of *Divrei ha-yamim* on *ibidem*, 25r, 75r, 112r.

⁴³² Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 16-17; Weinberg, ‘Translator’s introduction’, xx-xxi.

⁴³³ Used e.g. on *SY* ed. 1743, 2r, 26r, 111 r (*Orbot ha-olam*); 2r, 141v, 144v (*Mikveh Yisrael*). Amelander wrongly assumed that Menasseh ben Israel had written *Mikveh Yisrael* originally in Dutch; the work was in fact composed in Spanish. He himself used the Hebrew version. *SY* ed. 1743, 2r, 133r, 141v. See further note 253. On the versions of *Iggeret orbot olam* available to Amelander: David B. Ruderman, ‘Appendix IV: Editions of the *Iggeret Orbot Olam*’ in: *idem*, *The World of a Renaissance Jew. The life and thought of Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol* (Cincinnati 1981) 164-166.

Amelander used these two works, along with *Zemah David*, for his first chapter and that both were vitally important for the idea of history underlying the *Sheyris Yisroel* project.

Amelander offered, in these few lines, a good description of his main sources, which upon further analysis can be divided into three main categories: Hebrew historiography; other Jewish sources, primarily in Hebrew; and sources written in Dutch by non-Jews. Each category can be subdivided more precisely. Amelander's position in the Hebrew printing industry was surely a crucial factor in his having access to the various sources. Jews were not permitted to have official bookshops in Amsterdam, but the printing houses sold their own publications and those of other houses and served as meeting places for Jewish intellectuals.⁴³⁴ The city was also home to several significant Jewish libraries, both within the Ashkenazi community and within the Sephardic community. The latter included the well-known Ets Haim library (founded 1616).⁴³⁵ Moreover, Amelander's brother-in-law's acquaintances with learned non-Jews also surely opened the possibility for Amelander to study Dutch-language sources.

6.1.2 Hebrew historiography

Although in his introduction Amelander mentioned only a few Jewish history books explicitly, he used all of these that were in print and available to him. Amsterdam, being the center of the Jewish printing industry, offered the best environment in which to write a history book. Most of the earlier historiography had been reprinted in Amsterdam, and was thus available in relatively new editions. Amelander also used in *Sheyris Yisroel*, besides the history books mentioned in the introduction, ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah*⁴³⁶ and Zacuto's *Sefer Yubasin*.⁴³⁷ Amelander's most important Hebrew source, however, was *Zemah David*. This chronicle provided a multitude of historical details over a long period, though it separated Jewish and

⁴³⁴ Rena G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'The Hebrew book trade in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century' in: C. Berkvens-Stevelinck, H. Bots a.o. eds, *Le magasin de l'univers. The Dutch Republic as the centre of European book trade* (Leiden 1992) 155-168; idem, 'The role of Yiddish in early Dutch-Jewish Haskalah' in: Berger, *Speaking Jewish*, 147-155.

⁴³⁵ Ilse Valerie Cohnen, 'Zur Geschichte der Bibliothek "Ets Haim" / "Livrarria D. Montezinos" in Amsterdam', *Zeitschrift für Bibliotheks- und Bibliographie XV* (1968) 56, 371-378.

⁴³⁶ For *Shevet Yehudah* Amelander could use the Hebrew edition printed in Amsterdam by Shlomo Proops in 1709, or the Yiddish translation published in Amsterdam in 1648 and 1700. Also in Fürth a Yiddish version saw the light in 1724. Wiener is correct in pointing out the significant influence of *Shevet Yehudah* on *Sheyris Yisroel* – such as on pages 30r, 46v, 51v, 65v, 71r, 78v, 82r, 87v, 88r, 92v – but errs in stating that Amelander 'den Schevet Jehuda niemals anführt, wie häufig er ihn auch benutzte.' On pages 5r and 92v *Shevet Yehudah* is explicitly named as Amelander's source, although the first time he is criticizing Ibn Verga's account of the Roman emperor Augustus. Solomon ibn Verga, *Liber Schevet Jehuda*, ed. M. Wiener (Hannover 1856) xxii-xxiii.

⁴³⁷ *SY* ed. 1743, e.g. on 39r, 40r, 42r, 64r; *Sefer Yubasin* was published by Shlomo Proops, Amsterdam 1717.

general history and did not provide a continuous narrative.⁴³⁸ The other sources offered Amelander material only for specific chapters. Some of the chronicles of the sixteenth century, such as Josef ha-Kohen's *Emek ha-bakha*⁴³⁹ and the two history books by Eliyahu Capsali, were still, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, unpublished and existed only as manuscripts, which were unavailable to Amelander. Portuguese works, in particular Samuel Usque's *Consolaçam as tribulaçoens de Israel*, were inaccessible to Amelander, as he did not read the language.

Besides the corpus of earlier Hebrew historiography, Amelander also used books covering the events of the previous hundred years. Contemporary Hebrew historiography generally covered only one event, namely, the Chmielnicki pogroms in Ukraine, Belarus and Poland in 1648-1649. These pogroms had not only been a huge shock to Polish Jewry but had also spurred a significant number of Polish Jewish refugees to go to Amsterdam. Amelander used the available sources on the 1648-1649 pogroms; some of these chronicles can be described as chronicle-like, whereas others take the form of lamentations. Amelander found accounts of what had happened in Eastern Europe in Nathan Neta Hanover's *Yeven mezulab*; this was the largest chronicle and was available in the Hebrew original (first edition Venice 1653; last edition Dyhernfürth 1727) and in a Yiddish translation (Amsterdam 1655; a second translation: Wandsbeck 1738). Another chronicle, *Zok ha-itim* (Krakow 1650; Venice 1656) was written (in rhyme) by R. Meir ben R. Shmuel of Szczebrezeszyn. The third account of the events of 1648, which became Amelander's major source on the events, was a scroll of darkness – *Megillat eifa*, written by R. Shabbetai ben Meir Katz - which had been first published in a book of lamentations: *Selibat ve-qinot al ha gezerot tab ve-tat* (Amsterdam 1651). It was later added to the Amsterdam 1709 edition of *Shevet Yehudah* as the latest account of the series of persecutions presented by Shlomo ibn Verga.⁴⁴⁰

In addition to the historical accounts of the *gezerot tab ve-tat*, Amelander used four other sources. Perhaps owing to his time in Prague, he devoted much attention to the history of Prague Jews. His connection to Prague also most likely helped him obtain the chronicle of Yehuda Leb ben Joshua Portit, *Milbama be-shalom* (Altdorf 1719), which recounts the Swedish siege of Prague in 1648 and the Jews' courageous stance during the war.⁴⁴¹ The anti-Jewish

⁴³⁸ SY ed. 1743, e.g. on 21r, 22v, 25v, 40r, 78v.

⁴³⁹ Published for the first time in Vienna 1852.

⁴⁴⁰ On the various narrations of the 1648-1649 pogroms: Fram, 'Tale of martyrdom'; Teller, 'Jewish literary responses'.

⁴⁴¹ Šedinová, 'Hebrew literary sources to the Czech history of the first half of the 17th century. End of the Thirty Years' War in the testimonies of contemporaries', *Judaica Bohemiae* 23 (1987) 1, 38-57, there 41 n. 12.

riots in the German cities of Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg, in 1614 and 1730, respectively, also received Amelander's attention. For Frankfurt am Main he utilized a lengthy historical poem in Hebrew and Yiddish, *Megillas Vinz*, authored by Abraham Helen.⁴⁴² For the events in Hamburg Amelander used as his sole source the eyewitness account *Oz mintabab*, which had been written in Hebrew by Solomon ben Judah Löb of Dessau and published, in 1734, by Moses Frankfurter's Amsterdam printing firm.⁴⁴³

Finally, an important source about Dutch Jewish history was a history book by Maharim Maarssen. The author had been in the service of the Portuguese Jewish merchant Francisco Gomes da Costa and had almost certainly written a book on the early history of Jews in Amsterdam. Amelander refers to Maarssen's book twice: first, in describing the inauguration of the Esnoga, the renowned Sephardic synagogue; and again, citing Maarssen *in extenso*, in relating how the Amsterdam Ashkenazim started their own minyanim on Rosh Hashana 1635.⁴⁴⁴ Maarssen's book has been lost, and thus it remains unclear if it was ever printed and whether it was written in Hebrew or Yiddish.

6.1.3 From *halakha* to almanacs: other Hebrew sources

Because the corpus of Hebrew historiography is relatively small, and because Amelander could not access all the history books from his time that are now available to us - as they were obtainable only in manuscript and were not in Amsterdam - he had to find his material elsewhere. Here Amelander's professional experience in the book industry proved fruitful. Through both his training in *yeshiva* and his editing of the classics of Hebrew literature he was familiar not only with the most important sources, but also with less significant works known only to a few learned men. For this analysis, I have categorized the sources in various genres - although Amelander in handling his sources did not show a specific genre-awareness. As we will see, for him the most important question was the authority of the author rather than the genre to which a source could be reckoned.

⁴⁴² Gutschow, *Inventory*, 13 no. 9.

⁴⁴³ Already Meijer Marcus Roest noted this in his *Catalog der Hebraica und Judaica aus der L. Rosenthal'schen Bibliothek* (Amsterdam 1875) Vol. 2, 291; a more detailed analysis of Amelander's use of *Oz Mintaba* is made by Mirjam Gutschow, *Menabem Mans jiddischsprachigen Geschichtswerk "Se'eriss Jisro'el", exemplarisch dargestellt anhand der "Geserass Henkeipotche"* [Magisterarbeit Fachbereich II - Germanistik, Universität Trier 1999]; cf. Bar-Levav, 'Jewish republic of letters', 234.

⁴⁴⁴ SY ed. 1743, 132v, 134r.

First, Amelander used the main ‘religious’ sources from the formative period of rabbinic Judaism: both Talmudim - the Yerushalmi and Bavli, the latter of which includes the Mishnah - and various midrashim, mainly on the Torah but also on the rest of the Bible (from the Midrash Rabba collection).⁴⁴⁵ The *Yalkut*, the twelfth-century compilation of haggadic material related to the Tenakh narratives, should be mentioned here.⁴⁴⁶ In these sources Amelander found material for his descriptions of prominent rabbis, which supplemented the information he found in the *shalshelet ha-qabbalah* stream of historiographical literature.

Second, in seeking historical information Amelander consulted the Bible commentaries. From his previous work on *Kebillot Moshe* and *Magishei Minba* he was familiar with nearly every known commentary. From the commentaries in *Kebillot Moshe* he used the Targum of Jonathan ben Uziel on Torah and Nevi'im, as well as Rashi, and R. David ben Josef Kimhi. Of the works of Rabbi Jitschak Arama, whose commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Canticles were included in *Kebillot Moshe*, Amelander used a different work: Arama's popular commentary on Torah, *Agedat Jitschak* (Venice 1573).⁴⁴⁷ Another source was the commentaries on Torah and Nevi'im by the messianistic Sephardic politician and rabbi Don Jitschak Abarbanel.⁴⁴⁸ Sources such as these provided Amelander with geographical information and rabbinical opinions about the ancestry of specific nations, as well as useful stories. Arama, for instance, was an important source for the narrative on the Gnostic prophet Mani.⁴⁴⁹

Third, Amelander used a part of Hebrew literature, which was in fact reserved for the religious elite: namely, *halakha*.⁴⁵⁰ A good example is Amelander's introduction of the title ‘morenu ha-rav rabbi x’. From *Zemah David* Amelander knew that the Maharil, R. Ja'aqov Molin advocated the ‘morenu’ title as a mark of true knowledge and wisdom. Amelander, however, went a step further and reconstructed the debate concerning this invention. In Abrabanel's Bible commentaries he found that the Maharil regarded the notation as a copying of the Christian world. However, in a halakhic treatise of Rabbi Levi ibn Habib, Amelander found clear refutation of the new title. Amelander understood that responsa and halakhic literature were tied to the historical context in which they had been written, and were thus an unforeseen source for historical research. Whereas most of his contemporaries turned to

⁴⁴⁵ SY ed. 1743, e.g. 2r, 13r, 15r, 144v, 148v.

⁴⁴⁶ SY ed. 1743, 65r.

⁴⁴⁷ The commentary, section ראחחחח, provided Amelander with material on the Persian prophet Mani; SY ed. 1743, 21r.

⁴⁴⁸ SY ed. 1743, 100r-101r.

⁴⁴⁹ SY ed. 1743, 21r.

⁴⁵⁰ Zeev Gries, ‘Elite literature: halakhic works and textual commentaries’, in: idem, *Jewish book*, 35-45.

halakhic literature only for practical, juridical questions, Amelander noticed the historical evolution within halakha and documented these changes in *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁴⁵¹

Fourth, practical books on *musar* - Jewish ethics, in general or on specific topics - also contributed to the extensive historical narrative of *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁴⁵² *Even bohan*, an ethics book written in *maqama* style by Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, informed Amelander about the crusades to Jerusalem and their impact on Jews.⁴⁵³ In his chapter on the history of the Amsterdam Ashkenazim, Amelander quotes Shimon Frankfurter's bilingual Hebrew-Yiddish *Sefer ha-hayim*, a book on rituals related to death. Frankfurter was the father of one of Amelander's teachers.⁴⁵⁴

Fifth, in books belonging to various genres – such as rabbinic responsa - Amelander found letters written by historical personages on topics that interested him. These letters were primary source material, and as such had different status than that of secondary sources like the classic Hebrew chronicles. Amelander used such letters as evidence for his historical narrative. In the text of *Sheyris Yisroel* he occasionally cites from these letters *in extenso*. He used no less than three letters by Maimonides, written to sages in Yemen, Marseille and Arabia, respectively; each letter concerns the Rambam's fight against false messiahs who had brought division within Jewish communities. Especially useful was a collection of polemical letters from the Sephardic rabbi Jacob ben Aaron Sasportas, who had served the London, Hamburg and Amsterdam communities. In these letters, which were dispatched throughout the Jewish world, the rabbi warns against the rise of the Sabbatean movement in 1666 and renounces Shabtai Zvi's claims. In the period when Amelander likely began working on *Sheyris Yisroel* the son of Sasportas arranged for his father's letters to be printed, thereby providing Amelander a wealth of historical information.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵¹ SY ed. 1743, 117r; Levi ibn Habib, *She'elot u-teshuvot* (Venice 1565), which includes the treatise *Kontres ha-semikhab* on rabbinical ordination issues. The debate on the title is analysed in: Isidore Fishman, *The history of Jewish education in Central Europe. From the end of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century* (London 1944) 29-32. Interestingly, Amelander in this respect preceded the plea of Soloveitchik; Haym Soloveitchik, *The use of responsa as historical source. A methodological introduction* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1990).

⁴⁵² On this genre, which was directed at both elite and popular Jewish cultures: Zeev Gries, 'Ethical literature in Hebrew and Yiddish' in: idem, *Jewish book*, 46-56.

⁴⁵³ SY ed. 1743, 75v; Amelander most likely consulted *Even bohan* in the collective volume: Shlomo ibn Gabirol a.o., *Ha'lakh, sefer mi'har ha-peninim* (Venice 1546).

⁴⁵⁴ Shimon Frankfurter, *Sefer sha'ar Shimon hu'atak mi-sefer ha-hayim* (Amsterdam 1714); on this book: Bar-Levav, *Concept of death*, passim.

⁴⁵⁵ Maimonides, Moshe ibn Tibbon, Nahmanides, Isaac Leon ben Zur, *Sefer ha-mitsvot* (Amsterdam 1660); Maimonides, *Igrot u-she'elot u-teshuvot le-rabenu Mosheh ha-Maimoni* (Amsterdam 1712); Jacob Sasportas, *Sefer zizot kezur novel Zevi* (Amsterdam 1737), which is printed together with Sasportas' responsa collection *Ohel Ya'akov*. On Sasportas, see: Jac. Zwarts, 'De Nederlandsche Opperrabbijnen van het heden en verleden III', *De geïllustreerde Joodsche post* 1 (1921) 9, 131-133.

Sixth, a genre that was related to historiography, and which in Amelander's times was quite popular, was travel literature.⁴⁵⁶ Travelogues not only offered accounts of different cities and countries, but also provided stories and legends about the Jewish communities in such places. Four important and widely distributed travel stories were used extensively in *Sheyris Yisroel*. The account of the ninth-century Ethiopian Eldad ha-Dani, who traveled throughout the Jewish world with stories about a presumed Jewish kingdom (comprising several of the Ten Lost Tribes) in Africa, was used by Amelander in several chapters, such as when addressing the Ten Lost Tribes or Ethiopian Jewish history.⁴⁵⁷ The second travelogue, the *Masa'ot Binyamin* of the twelfth-century Benjamin of Tudela, is the author's account of a journey from Spain through Southern Europe and to the Arab, Indian and African worlds. He visited no less than 300 cities and provided much information on them. Amelander used the travelogue as a source for his chapters on specific Jewish communities, and even devoted an entire chapter to Tudela's travels.⁴⁵⁸ Another travelogue that offered Amelander additional valuable information was the *Sibuv ha-rav Petakhiah mi-Regensburg*, the account by the Bohemian rabbi Petakhiah of a journey, at the end of the twelfth century, through Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East and the Balkans. Amelander used this travelogue for geographical descriptions and historical information.⁴⁵⁹ For detailed information about the discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Amelander turned to Farissol's *Iggeret orbot olam*, which he mentions in the introduction.⁴⁶⁰

Seventh are books of a more philosophical nature, a genre of which traditionally Ashkenazim had been somewhat hesitant, sometimes even explicitly denouncing such philosophy of Sephardic origin. Three books should be mentioned here, two by the Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel and one by the medieval Spanish philosopher and poet Yehuda ha-Levi. Ha-Levi wrote a series of dialogues, between the Khazar king and a Jewish sage, about the central doctrines of Judaism. Initially, a philosopher, a Christian and a Muslim had also been given opportunity to convince the king of their respective faith systems. Ha-Levi used the narrative about the mass conversion of the Khazars to Judaism as the framework for

⁴⁵⁶ Van Eijnatten, 'Communicatie en publieke orde', 354.

⁴⁵⁷ *JY* ed. 1743, 1r, 2v; Eldad ha-Dani's account was printed both separately and together with other related books. An edition Amelander could have used is the Venice 1648.

⁴⁵⁸ Amelander could use both a Hebrew edition of the *Masa'ot Binyamin* (Amsterdam 1698) or a Yiddish one (Amsterdam 1691); Gutschow, *Inventory*, 35 no. 99. For a detailed analysis of the Yiddish translation, see: Shlomo Berger, *Translation between language and culture. Benjamin of Tudela's Travels in Yiddish (Amsterdam 1691). Inaugural lecture as professor of Yiddish language and culture at the University of Amsterdam on November 2, 2005* (Amsterdam 2005).

⁴⁵⁹ *JY* ed. 1743, 32r, 65r; Yehudah he-Hasid, *Sibuv ha-rav Petakhiah mi-Regensburg* (Prague 1595).

⁴⁶⁰ For more information, note 253.

his philosophy of Judaism; he was credited with historical credibility by later authors, including Amelander. The book was originally written in Arabic, but was soon translated into Hebrew, by Judah ibn Tibbon.⁴⁶¹ Amelander also used the only book Menasseh ben Israel wrote in Hebrew, *Nishmat hayyim* (Amsterdam 1652), in which the author discusses the idea of reincarnation of the human soul. Amelander was, at least for *Sheyris Yisrael*, not so much interested in the main topic of this book; rather, he found in it proof that a Jewish medical doctor – Zedekiah – had served in the court of the French king Louis the Pious. The other book by Menasseh ben Israel, *Mikveh Yisrael*, also mentioned by Amelander in his introduction, was published in Spanish and later translated into Hebrew, Dutch and Yiddish. In *Mikveh Yisrael* Menasseh ben Israel developed his ideas on the Ten Lost Tribes. He had a major impact on Amelander, as we saw in Chapter 5.⁴⁶²

Eighth, prayer books often contained historical information. Previously I mentioned a *selihot* prayer book which included a narrative on the 1648 pogroms in Eastern Europe. In another *selihot* prayer book, compiled by Abraham ben Isaac Auerbach, the author entrusted the public with the fact that he had personally given an Aron ha-kodesh to the Amsterdam Ashkenazi community.⁴⁶³ Furthermore, Amelander mentions that old *mahzorim*, prayer books for festive days, had been a source for his narrative on the martyrdom of Rabbi Amnon, the author of the *piyyut* ונתנה תוקף and – as Amelander wrongly supposed - the *seliba* תא שמע. It is unclear, however, if Amelander consulted these *mahzorim* himself, since the same reference to these prayer books is made in *Shalshelet ha-qabbalah* in its description of R. Amnon's death.⁴⁶⁴

Finally, the ninth category of Hebrew literature that Amelander explicitly mentions are the *luhot*. These are most often bilingual Hebrew-Yiddish almanacs, providing, in Hebrew, a Jewish and Christian calendar for the year to come, a schedule with the times when the sun would rise and set and a short survey of Jewish history; and, in Yiddish, myriad kinds of practical information about transportation, prices and local markets in the Netherlands.⁴⁶⁵ Such almanacs, which enjoyed widespread popularity in the Dutch Republic, illustrate a growing

⁴⁶¹ Yehuda ha-Levi, *Sefer ha-kuzari* (Basel 1660); on its reception in Ashkenaz and Amelander's role in it: Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the shaping of Jewish identity, 1167-1900* (Cambridge 2008) esp. 180-193.

⁴⁶² Menasseh ben Israel's *Mikveh Yisrael* was first published in Spanish in 1650; translated into Dutch in 1666, in Yiddish in 1691 and in Hebrew in 1698. On the Yiddish edition: Gutschow, *Inventory*, 35 no. 100.

⁴⁶³ SY ed. 1743, 134v; Abraham ben Jitschak Auerbach, *Selihot ve-toshabot* (Amsterdam 1677).

⁴⁶⁴ SY ed. 1743, 94v; Cf. Ulf Diedrichs ed., *Das Ma'assebuch. Altjiddische Erzählkunst* (München 2004) 635, and the literature on these *mahzorim* mentioned there.

⁴⁶⁵ Leib Fuks, 'Amsterdam, a yidisher literatur-tsentner in 17tn un 18tn yohrhundert' *Di Goldene Keyt* 115 (1985) 183-194, there 188. On the genre within Jewish literature: Elisheva Carlebach, 'Palaces of time: illustration of Sifre Evronot', *Images* 2 (2008) 1, 21-44; idem and Edward Portnoy, 'Calendars', *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, consulted on: <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Calendars> (accessed 10 October 2010).

demand for regulated time and testify to the tendency towards regulation of society.⁴⁶⁶ In his chapter on Sephardic history in the Netherlands Amelander mentions that one of his sources was a *luab*, by Hayyim Drukker, for the year 5479 (1718-1719) – though Amelander publicly corrects Drukker for having incorrectly dated the inauguration of the Esnoga, the Amsterdam Sephardic synagogue.⁴⁶⁷

The listing of these genres demonstrates that Amelander was remarkably knowledgeable about Hebrew literature and did not shy from using either sources intended for the rabbinical elite – such as *halakha* – or more day-to-day bilingual sources, such as *lubot*. In his broad inclusive approach Amelander did not restrict himself to the existing historiography. Indeed, he was able to add new information and new details by using sources which had thus far not been consulted to these ends. Amelander's competency in doing this stemmed in large part from his combined training at *yeshiva* in Amsterdam and Prague and his experiences editing Hebrew books from very different genres. A further argument for Amelander's broad approach is that he also consulted the few extant sources in Yiddish.

6.1.4 Folktales, poetry and pamphlets: Yiddish sources

Amelander, being the first person to write a history book in Yiddish, could not rely upon original historiography in that language. There were, nevertheless, certain Yiddish genres which interested him, as they offered unique historical information or retellings of stories already known from Hebrew sources. Such Yiddish sources, however, were not of utmost importance to Amelander. He presumed that his readers were familiar with the existing body of Yiddish literature, and so preferred to concentrate on his Hebrew and Dutch sources.⁴⁶⁸ In addition to these sources, Yiddish sources occasionally served as additional material.⁴⁶⁹

The first Yiddish genre in question is that of folktales, which were highly popular among the Yiddish-reading public. There were a few collections that brought together haggadic material from the Talmudim and midrashim along with stories about miracles conducted by Ashkenazi rabbis from medieval times. German folktales, often in 'Ashkenized' versions, were

⁴⁶⁶ Van Eijnatten, 'Communicatie en publieke orde', 344.

⁴⁶⁷ *SY* ed. 1743, 132v. On Drukker: Jacques Zwarts, 'Drucker, Chajiem ben Jacob', *Nieuw Nederlands Biografisch Woordenboek* 7 (Leiden 1927) 387-388.

⁴⁶⁸ *SY* ed. 1743, 11r.

⁴⁶⁹ Some Yiddish historical reports that were in print during the time of the compilation of *Sheyris Yisrael* were not used by Amelander, like the *Viner gezyre* (Cracow ca. 1609) or Hayim Alshech's *Teshuat Yisrael*; more on Yiddish material extant during that time: Zinberg, *Old Yiddish literature*, 232-233.

also added to these collections. The goal of these stories – or *mayses*, in Yiddish – was moralistic, in that they encouraged Jews to live an observant Jewish life. The stories were detached from their historical contexts and made timeless so as to be easily connected and relevant to the reader's everyday life.⁴⁷⁰

The first collection, published in Basel in 1602, was titled *Mayse bukh*, and was republished, reorganized and edited several times before the Amsterdam 1723 edition, which gained widespread authority. Amelander was most likely able to consult this *editio definitiva*, which brought together no less than 254 stories. Amelander, however, assumed that his readers were familiar with both the *Mayse bukh* and the Yiddish Bible paraphrase *Tsene-Rene*, and thus mainly referred to these works for further information and restricted himself to narrating histories that were yet unknown among the Yiddish-reading public.⁴⁷¹ For instance, for the account of the martyrdom of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, Amelander referred to the already mentioned old *mabzōrim* and to the *Mayse bukh* for fuller treatment of the story.⁴⁷²

Besides the *Mayse bukh* there were also separate stories printed. One of these, *Seyfer mayse nisim*, by Yuzpe Shammes, recounts stories concerning the Jewish community of Worms. The book strengthened Amelander in his conviction – which he based on remarks in the Bible commentaries of David Kimhi and Abravanel – that the Jews from Worms were descendants of Jews from the tribe of Benjamin who (like the Iberian Jews) had arrived in the area during the First Temple period. These earlier Jews had remained in Europe after the rebuilding of the Temple, because they realized that it was not yet the messianic time of redemption.⁴⁷³ The book also includes an account of the more recent expulsion of the Jews from Worms in 1615-1616, which Amelander reworked for his own book (albeit without mentioning the source in his text).⁴⁷⁴

Another Yiddish source which provided Amelander with historical information was poetry. In the early modern age Amsterdam, together with Prague, was one of the places where

⁴⁷⁰ The genre and the most important specima are dealt with from an historical perspective in: Lucia Raspe, *Jüdische Hagiographie im mittelalterlichen Aschkenas* [Texts and studies in medieval and early modern Judaism 19] (Tübingen 2003).

⁴⁷¹ SY ed. 1743, 11r.

⁴⁷² SY ed. 1743, 94v. Modern scholarly editions and translations are: Moses Gaster ed., *Ma'aseh book. Book of Jewish tales and legends. Translated from the Judeo-German*. 2 Vols. (Philadelphia 1981); Ulf Diederichs ed., *Das Ma'asehbuch. Altjiddische Erzählkunst* (München 2004) for the *mayse* on R. Amnon, see 632-636; Astrid Strack ed., *Un beau livre d'histoires. Eyn schön Mayse bukh. Facsimilé de l'editio princeps de Bâle (1602)* (Basel 2004). A short introduction and selection of a few passages in: Frakes, *Early Yiddish texts*, 488-496. The narrative on R. Amnon is analyzed in detail in: Raspe, *Jüdische Hagiographie*, 130-198.

⁴⁷³ Yuzpe Shamesh ed., *Seyfer mayse nisim* (Amsterdam 1696 and 1723); Gutschow, *Inventory*, 39 no. 117, 71 no. 247; see on this intriguing book: Lucia Raspe, 'The black death in Jewish sources: a second look at *Mayse nissim*', *JQR* 94 (2004) 3, 471-489.

⁴⁷⁴ SY ed. 1743, 121v-122r.

historical poetry was written. This poetry addressed both international Ashkenazi culture and local affairs. The data collected by Shmeruk show that at least ten historical poems - often based on popular melodies, so as to be sung - had been published in Amsterdam by 1743.⁴⁷⁵ Amelander used the previously mentioned bilingual *Megiles Vints*, about the 1612-1616 anti-Jewish uprising in Frankfurt am Main, and probably also the historical song about the fire in that city's Jewish quarter in 1711 (although Amelander incorrectly dated it to 5476 – 1716).⁴⁷⁶

A very popular genre in early modern times was the pamphlet. This was a short, unbound booklet of a few pages, and told a short story, commented on a particular political or military situation, or propagated religious beliefs. Often a pamphlet presented a short commentary on contemporary events.⁴⁷⁷ Amelander used at least three pamphlets, all in Yiddish, each of which had been originally written in Portuguese or Dutch. The fact that pamphlets were translated into Yiddish demonstrates that Amsterdam Ashkenazim were eager to use new media, such as the pamphlet, within the cultural setting of their own community.⁴⁷⁸

The first pamphlet is a Yiddish translation of the Portuguese *Noticias dos Judeos de Cochim*, written by Moseh Pereyra de Paiva (Amsterdam 1687). The spread of the Dutch colonial empire resulted in continuing encounters with new territories. Stories about these exotic countries and their inhabitants became very popular among the Dutch population. One result of these colonial experiences was that the Amsterdam Sephardic community learned of a Jewish community in the Indian city of Cochin, a territory recently acquired by the United East Indies Company. In 1685 the community sent a delegation of four persons to Cochin for further inquiries. The delegates returned in 1687, and recounted their story enthusiastically; one delegate, Moseh Pereyra de Paiva, published a travel pamphlet replete with detailed information about the 'exotic' Jews. Within ten days this pamphlet – which had originally targeted Amsterdam's Portuguese Jews – was translated into Yiddish; this Yiddish pamphlet apparently became so popular that it was republished twice within the next 25 years. The travel

⁴⁷⁵ Chone Shmeruk, "Historical songs" in Yiddish, published in Amsterdam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' [Hebrew] in: Jozeph Michman ed., *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry* 4 (Jerusalem 1984) 143-161.

⁴⁷⁶ JY ed. 1743, 120v-121v; Ruth Rubin, 'Historical and topical' in: idem, *Voices of a people. The story of the Yiddish folksong* (New York 1973) 199-229, there 207-208.

⁴⁷⁷ D.J.H. ter Horst, 'Over het begrip pamflet', *Bibliotbeekleven* 7 (1932) 8-30; Craig E. Harline, *Pamphlets, printing, and political culture in the early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht 1987); Van Eijnatten, 'Communicatie en publieke orde', 364-365; Roeland Harms, *De uitvinding van de publieke opinie: pamfletten als massamedia in de zeventiende eeuw* [Ph. Dissertation Utrecht University 2010].

⁴⁷⁸ French Jewry created a pamphlet literature of its own only at the end of the eighteenth century; Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley 2003) 132, 166, 171-178, 192.

report was an important source for Amelander in his description of the Cochin Jewish community.⁴⁷⁹

The second pamphlet which Amelander consulted is a Yiddish translation from Dutch, by the prolific school teacher and author Joseph Maarssen – either a brother or son of Maharim Maarssen – of an anonymous account of the ‘Aansprekersoproer’ (undertakers’ revolt) of 1696 in Amsterdam. This revolt had been a response to an attempt by city authorities to impose funeral reforms. The revolt struck the Jewish quarter, as one of the four looted houses belonged to the Sephardic De Pinto family. In his Amsterdam chapters Amelander used material from this pamphlet.⁴⁸⁰

A third pamphlet was likewise translated from the Portuguese, although it was written by an Ashkenazi, namely the Amsterdam printer Uri Phoebus Ha-Levi. In this small booklet Ha-Levi narrates the founding myth of the Amsterdam Sephardic community and the role of his grandfather Moses Uri Ha-Levi of Emden played in the return of the Iberian *conversos* to Judaism. The pamphlet saw the light of day in 1710 or 1711 and was titled *Narração da vinda dos judeos espanhoes a Amsterdam*, a Yiddish translation appeared most probably at the same time. Unfortunately, of the Yiddish pamphlet only the title page of the second print has survived.⁴⁸¹ Amelander used ha-Levi’s account in his narrative on the Amsterdam Sephardim.⁴⁸²

6.1.5 Other Jewish sources

Besides Hebrew and Yiddish published sources, Amelander mentions at least three other Jewish sources which he used in writing *Sheyris Yisroel*. First, he narrated stories which he must

⁴⁷⁹ Unfortunately no copy of the two first Yiddish editions are preserved, thus sharing the fate typical of much ephemera literature; two editions were printed in Amsterdam, both titled *Kenis der yehudim von Cochim oder tsaytung aus Indien* (Amsterdam 1687; 1713) – of which the 1713 edition is presently kept at the Bodleian Library in Oxford – while in Prague one more edition was published, titled: *Wahrhaftige kantschaft oder kbidushin aus Ostindie* (Prague 1688); on the significance of Pereyra de Paiva’s pamphlet see e.g.: Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and blacks in the early modern world* 206-213, 444; idem, ‘Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva: an Amsterdam Portuguese Jewish merchant abroad in the seventeenth century’ in: Yosef Kaplan ed., *The Dutch intersection. The Jews and the Netherlands in modern history* (Leiden /Boston 2008) 63-85; Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Joodse geschiedschrijving’, 147-148; Gutschow, *Inventory*, 33 no. 92; 57 no. 194.

⁴⁸⁰ Joseph Maarssen, *Ayn bashraybung fun der rebeliray tsu Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1707); the only copy is kept in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the pamphlet is a translation of: anonymus [Pieter Rabus], *Historie van den Oproer, te Amsterdam voorgevallen, door des Stads Gr. Achth. Overheid en trouwe Borgers loffelijker wijze gestild, zedert den 31sten January 1696* (Amsterdam and Rotterdam 1696); on the pamphlet: Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Joodse geschiedschrijving’, 148-149; on Maarssen’s writings: Jacob Shatzky, ‘Di hakdomes tsu Yoysel Marsns khiburim’ *Yivo Bleter* 13 (1938) 5-6, 377-389; and: Marion Aptroot, ‘Yiddish and the German standard in the letter writing manuals of Yousef ben Yankev Maarssen’ in: Jerold C. Frakes, *Between two worlds: Yiddish-German encounters* [Studia Rosenthaliana 41] (Leuven 2009) 13-27.

⁴⁸¹ The Portuguese pamphlet was reprinted in 1768, and a critical edition was published by Jacob S. da Silva Rosa: Uri Phoebus Halevi: *Narração da vinda dos judeos espanhoes a Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1933). On the Yiddish translation: Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Joodse geschiedschrijving’, 140, 149-151; Gutschow, *Inventory*, 112 no. 405.

⁴⁸² *SY* ed. 1743, 131r and following pages.

have heard from acquaintances and relatives. These eyewitness accounts provided him with first-hand information. Such was the case with the story of the desecration of Jewish bodies at the Muiderberg cemetery of the Amsterdam Ashkenazim in 1724, when the cemetery's non-Jewish guards exhumed recently buried bodies and sold the clothing and *tallitot* on the market. After a certain R. Hirsch from nearby Naarden became suspicious, two delegates of the Amsterdam kehillah were able to obtain a full confession. The two delegates were Amelander's teacher and mentor R. Moses Frankfurter and his brother-in-law Salomon Isaac Rudelsum, respectively teacher and beadle of the burial society *Gemilut Hasadim*. Amelander's vivid description of the incidents in question makes clear that both men had informed him about the events.⁴⁸³

Second, Amelander also drew upon his own experiences. In his book Amelander himself is barely present, except for a section in which he relates the modern history of Prague Jewry. He took from his written sources the story that on the bridge over the Vltava River a crucifix with Hebrew inscription had been erected, before which Jews were forced to kneel.⁴⁸⁴ Many refused to do so, and were killed. To this information Amelander offers his own experience:

גלייך איך זעלבן האב בייא גוואונט אין דו יאר (תע"ג) דו איין שטודענט איין יודיש פֿראה האט דען קאפּף דורך גהאקט דא איבר. אין דיא צייט דש איך בין גוועזי אין פראג אום צו לערנן (אצל הגאון אב"ד ור"מ כמהור"ר דוד אופינהיים זצ"ל) דאך זיינן אין דיא צייט זוא פֿיל יהודים אין פראג גוועזן דש זיא גפֿילט האבן דש דריטי טייל פֿון די שטאט.⁴⁸⁵

Amelander not only testified to the credit of his source by his own eyewitness account, but also added information about the size of Prague Jewish community when he had studied there, in 1713. Surprisingly, Amelander did not mention the deadly plague that struck Prague the same year, which resulted in many deaths, also among the city's Jews.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ SY ed. 1743, 139r-139v.

⁴⁸⁴ Amelander used Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, 1896. An almost contemporary account of the treatment of Jews on the bridge in Prague in: Shlomo Berger ed., *Travels among Jews and gentiles by Abraham Levie Amsterdam 1746. Edition of the text with introduction and commentary* [Hebrew language and literature series 3] (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2002) 68.

⁴⁸⁵ SY ed. 1743, 122v-123r. Translation: 'I myself have witnessed in the year 5703 [1713] that a student decapitated a Jewish woman because of this reason. In the period I was studying in Prague with the Ga'on av-beth-din our rabbi and our master David Oppenheim zts"l, there were so many Jews in Prague that they covered a third part of the city.'

⁴⁸⁶ In Amsterdam even an historical song was published on the Prague plague, which narrates what happened in no less than 109 four-line stanzas; *Ayn nay klog lid... iber den groysn ersbreklekbn ipesh velkber po bek"k Prag on geboybn hot...*

After his stay in Prague Amelander must have maintained close ties to Jews in the city. After offering his personal experiences in Prague, in the next chapter he discusses the French conquest of the city in 1742, which caused great poverty and hunger among the Jewish citizens. Just before finishing his book, Amelander must have added the good news that had arrived on Tuesday 19 Tevet 5503 (1743) via letters to ‘the holy community of Amsterdam’ from Prague, namely that the French had left Prague and that the Habsburg armies had moved in, without – surprisingly – looting the Jewish quarter. Amsterdam Jews, and most probably Amelander himself, must have been in contact with Prague Jews and thus informed about their fate.⁴⁸⁷

6.1.6 *The question of non-Jewish sources*

Amelander did not restrict himself to Jewish sources, but also used books written by non-Jews. In the early modern period authors often felt the need to legitimate this choice. Some scholars qualify the use of non-Jewish sources by Jewish authors as a sign of ‘modernism’,⁴⁸⁸ an ‘innovation’,⁴⁸⁹ or even a ‘break away from the traditional attitudes of Jewish historians, broadening the fond of historical material’⁴⁹⁰; such usage is thus considered as having been the roots of the nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In using material written by Christians, the Jewish authors willingly or unwillingly admitted that Hebrew texts could no longer suffice as the only source of knowledge.⁴⁹¹ However, Bonfil has argued that in medieval times Jews had used non-Jewish sources and that this had not been problematic, and was therefore not thematized by historians or others. Only in the early modern period - when the geographical and intellectual gap between Christians and Jews became increasingly wider as a result of demographic changes, ghettos and the ‘secularization’ of European societies – did non-Jewish sources come to be considered problematic and thus in need of legitimization.⁴⁹²

(Amsterdam ca. 1714); on this song: Shmeruk, ‘Historical songs’, 155; Chava Turniansky, ‘Yiddish song as historical source material: plague in the Judenstadt of Prague in 1713’ in: Ada Rapoport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein eds., *Jewish history. Essays in honour of Chimen Abramsky* (London 1988) 189-198.

⁴⁸⁷ SY ed. 1743, 131r.

⁴⁸⁸ Breuer, ‘Modernism and traditionalism’, 54-62.

⁴⁸⁹ Jacobs, ‘Joseph ha-Kohen’, 69-70.

⁴⁹⁰ Šedinová, ‘Czech history’, 15.

⁴⁹¹ Jiřina Šedinová, ‘Non-Jewish sources in the chronicle by David Gans, “Tsemah David”’ *Judaica Bohemiae* 8 (1972) 1, 3-16.

⁴⁹² Bonfil, ‘Attitudes’, 29.

Sixteenth-century historians realized that to achieve the objective of writing a comprehensive chronicle or history book about either Jewish or general history, they had to turn to Christian sources. Azariah de' Rossi, for his *Me'or enayim*, consulted – besides more than 150 Jewish sources – no less than 100 non-Jewish books. He used the latter sources in an apologetic way, as in drawing from these outside sources he sought to show the reliability of Torah. For example, he collected material about prominent non-Jews, such as Alexander the Great, who had acknowledged the wisdom of the Jews and praised them for their intellectual achievements. De' Rossi also searched in his non-Jewish sources for converts to Judaism, who as such would offer living testimony for his thesis about the intellectual superiority of Judaism.⁴⁹³ Joseph ha-Kohen also made extensive use of humanist histories, but he was careful to avoid adopting any such philosophies of history and remained within the traditional Jewish perception of history.⁴⁹⁴

There were, however, significant differences between the various sixteenth-century Jewish historians. Some, like Capsali, chose to conceal their non-Jewish sources and at best only hinted when they had been used. By obscuring such sources, Capsali was able to maintain a significant degree of intellectual control in how his work was read. The rise of the printing industry had made many sources available to a larger public, thereby allowing for people to check the reliability of his Hebrew chronicle. Such verifications would reveal how Capsali had manipulated his sources to strengthen his case.⁴⁹⁵ Others, like Gans, did not hesitate in explicitly naming their Christian sources and were even rather accurate in providing the provenance of particular histories.⁴⁹⁶

Amelander steered a middle course. He openly admitted and defended his use of non-Jewish sources, yet at the same time did not name them but introduced them via qualifications like *umot* [the nations], *sofrei ha-umot* [the authors of the nations] or *hakhamei ha-umot* [the wise men of the nations].⁴⁹⁷ Whereas Jewish sources are often – though definitely not always – mentioned together with the material that was used in *Sheyris Yisroel*, non-Jewish sources are generally referred to only in a general way.⁴⁹⁸ Only once does Amelander explicitly

⁴⁹³ Joanna Weinberg, 'Translator's introduction' in: Azariah de' Rossi, *The light of the eyes*. Translated from the Hebrew with an introduction and annotations by Joanna Weinberg [Yale Judaica series XXXI] (New Haven/London 2001) xiii-xlv, there xxiii, xxxii-xl; Bonfil, 'The place of Azariah de Rossi', 38-41.

⁴⁹⁴ Jacobs, 'Joseph ha-Kohen', passim.

⁴⁹⁵ Bonfil, 'Attitudes', 30-31.

⁴⁹⁶ Šedinová, 'Czech history', 8-12.

⁴⁹⁷ *SY* ed. 1743, e.g. on 10r, 23v, 25r, 25v, 35r, 75v, 140v.

⁴⁹⁸ The same choice was made by R. Alexander Ethausen: Shmeruk and Bartal, 'Contemporary Jerusalem', 447. Tumiansky has stressed from her vast knowledge of early modern Yiddish literature the uniqueness of Amsterdam

identify his main Gentile source, namely the Rotterdam Huguenot pastor Jacques de Basnage de Beauval's Dutch translation of the impressive *Histoire des Juifs, depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à présent pour servir de continuation a l'histoire de Joseph*.⁴⁹⁹ On another occasion Amelander presents a Christian source, the *Histoire universelle de la Chine* of Alvarez Semedo, as if he had read it himself. Yet he had actually copied the entire entry from Basnage, thus giving his readers the false impression that he had studied the book himself.⁵⁰⁰ Whether as a conscious strategy or as a consequence of his rather unique knowledge of the Dutch language, Amelander acted in the same way as Capsali: he remained the only person with precise knowledge of the sources, thereby rendering it difficult for readers to verify his narrative.⁵⁰¹

For his use of non-Jewish sources Amelander referred to *Sefer Yosippon*, an authoritative history book for which the assumed author, Josef ben Gorion ha-Kohen, had also taken material from Gentile sources. Although Amelander argued that he could not be compared with Josef ben Gorion, whom he considered to have been a far more important man than himself, he maintained that, as regards their credibility and love of truth, they were the same. To ground this claim, Amelander quoted Maimonides: קבל האמת ממי שאמרו [receive the truth from whoever it says].⁵⁰² Amelander thus dared to follow in Josef ben Gorion's steps, and like him to use both Jewish and non-Jewish sources. Amelander also introduced the same criteria of 'truth' and 'credibility' to defend his application of Gentile authors, this time with a quotation from the Talmud: כל האומר דבר חכמה אפילו באומות נקרא חכם [everyone who speaks wise words, even someone from the nations, is called a sage].⁵⁰³

Next to this fundamental conviction about the legitimacy of using non-Jewish authors, Amelander also introduced more practical arguments. He informed his readers that for the period after the *Nevi'im* – with the notable exception of *Yosippon* – there were practically no history works left, especially not with the broad global focus that Amelander himself had.

Jews' use of Dutch sources written in Latin characters: Chava Turniansky, 'Yiddish and the transmission of knowledge in Europe', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 15 (2008) 5-18, there 17; also the two Amsterdam Yiddish Tenakh translations were influenced by the 1637 Dutch Statenvertaling and Luther's 1545 German translation: Marion Aptroot, 'In galkhes they do not say so, but the taytsh is as it stands here.' Notes on the Amsterdam Yiddish Bible translations by Blitz and Witzgenhausen', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 27 (1993) 1/2, 136-158.

⁴⁹⁹ SY ed. 1743, 132v. Fuks incorrectly states that Amelander in contrast to his other non-Jewish sources 'Basnage aber, sein Vorbild und seine wichtigste Quelle, nennt er immer bei Namen.' Fuks, 'Jiddisches Geschichtswerk', 178; likewise Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography', 14.

⁵⁰⁰ SY ed. 1743, 140v. Amelander did the same in other instances, e.g. with Socrates Scholasticus on page 22r, and in referring to the chronicles of the kings of France, Spain or Persia.

⁵⁰¹ Addressing the dating of the inauguration of the Esnoga, the Portuguese synagogue of Amsterdam, Amelander wrote: האב איך עש גפונדן אין דש בוך פון באניישי דר שרייבר אך אזו גלייך איך דא גשריבן האב. SY ed. 1743, 132v.

⁵⁰² Maimonides, *Shmonei perakim*, 1. Quoted in the introduction of SY.

⁵⁰³ bT, Megillah 16a. Quoted in chapter 1 of SY, 1r.

As reasons for this lack of resources, he referred topically to the *galut* and the many expulsions of Jews. Many history books were surely lost because of these historical developments. Likewise, Jews who wished to write history books were unable to do so, as not knowing works of Jewish historians in distant countries precluded them from being able to cover the entirety of whatever history they sought to address. Amelander argued that it would have been impossible for him to write about contemporary Jewish history, in particular, without consulting non-Jewish sources.

Still, it is significant how Amelander describes his procedure:

דיא פֿר צילונג ווער איך נעמן צום ערשטי פֿון אונזר יודישי שרייבר אונ' דר נאך ווער איך אך ברענגן
וואש דיא (חכמי האומות) דר פֿון גשריבן האבן דיא גהאלטן ווערן פֿר ווארי שרייברש.⁵⁰⁴

The Jewish sources were consulted and presented first, and then the non-Jewish sources. Hereafter we will study in more detail what consequences this position entailed for Amelander's narrative, but here it suffices to note that Amelander, in presenting his sources, deliberately offered a sequencing which favoured Jewish over non-Jewish sources.

6.1.7 *Amelander's non-Jewish sources*

Although the number of non-Jewish sources that Amelander consulted is limited compared to the Jewish books and pamphlets he used, the impact of such sources is nevertheless considerable. Non-Jewish sources are, in Amelander's case, all in the Dutch language. As an educated resident of Amsterdam, and having a close relationship with his brother-in-law Eleasar Soesman, who acted as an intermediary between Jews and Christians, Amelander had learned Dutch, or at least enough to read Dutch texts. Interestingly, the famous rabbi Jacob ben Zvi Emden (1697-1776), a contemporary of Amelander, wrote that it was in Amsterdam that he had learnt the Latin script 'until I even became skilled in reading the Dutch language and gazettes'.⁵⁰⁵ In Prague Amelander may have learned some German, but the sources he used for *She'erit Yisroel* do not indicate mastery of the German language. With the code *sofrei ha-umot* he therefore always referred to sources written in or translated into Dutch.

⁵⁰⁴ SY, 1r. Translation: 'I will take the narrative in first instance from our Jewish authors and thereafter I will present as well what the 'sages of the nations' – that are considered truthful authors - wrote thereon.'

⁵⁰⁵ In his *Megilat sefer*, 125-126; cited after: Zeev Gries, 'On reading and readers' in: idem, *The book in the Jewish world 1700-1900* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon, 2007) 20-34, there 25.

As noted in his first chapter, Amelander used most of his Dutch sources in particular for describing more recent history, with the exception of one very important source. He especially needed non-Jewish sources for his chapter on the history of the Ashkenazim in the Dutch Republic, because there was little historical material about them – in contrast to the Sephardim. Amelander thus had to seek as much material as possible to be able to compose a chapter comparable to the one on the Amsterdam Sephardim. First, he used two pamphlets concerning a blood libel case in the city of Nijmegen in 1715. The Dutch politician and poet Jan Jacob Mauricius (1692-1768) had defended the Nijmegen Jews against this false accusation and later published his contributions to the affair. Amelander recommended to his readers that the booklets be used in discussions with authorities and non-Jews should there be another blood libel case.⁵⁰⁶ Second, Amelander used an article from the Dutch press, probably from the *Amsterdamsche Courant*, to describe the entry, in 1735, of the new chief rabbi Eleasar ben Shmuel of Brody into the city of Amersfoort en route to Amsterdam. Amelander quoted the article so as to communicate the great respect with which the city's burgomasters had received the rabbi.⁵⁰⁷

Amelander used another non-Jewish source for his description of Mohammed and the origins of Islam. This was a Dutch translation of a collection of Christian material on Mohammed's life and doctrine. Amelander preferred this source, as it was less mythical in nature than were the Jewish sources he consulted. Amelander quite consistently chose to follow the interpretation of the Austrian humanist, diplomat and historian Johannes Cuspinianus.⁵⁰⁸

The most important source Amelander used, both for contemporary and for earlier periods, was the previously mentioned history book by Jacques Basnage.⁵⁰⁹ As the following

⁵⁰⁶ SY ed. 1743, 138v; Jan Jacob Mauricius, *Kort bericht wegens de Historie van zekeren Izaak Saxel en de beschuldiging der Joden te Nijmegen over het slachten van een christenkint* (Amsterdam 1716); idem, *De Remonstrantie aan den Raad der stad Nijmegen door de Joden* (Amsterdam 1716).

⁵⁰⁷ SY, 140r. The entrance of Eleasar of Brody in Amersfoort and Amsterdam was reported by the *Amsterdamsche Courant*, 's *Gravenhaagsche Courant* and the *Oprechte Haerlemsche Saterdagse Courant* of 18 September 1735. A special pamphlet was published to mark the event: *Blyde toejuiching van den geslagte Abrahams, aan den Hooggeleerden Heer Eleasar van Broda, oud omtrent 50 jaren, geboortig van Poolen* (Amsterdam 1735).

⁵⁰⁸ 'Mahomets leven. Uit verschreide Christe schryvers getrokken' in: *Mahomets Alkoran, door de Heer Du Ryer uit de Arabische in de Fransche Taal gestalt; Benevens een tweevoudige Beschrijving van Mahomets leven; En een verhaal van des zelfs reis ten hemel; Gelyk ook sijn samenspraak met de Jood Abdias*; translated by J.H. Glasemaker (Leiden 1721) 477-506; on Amelander's account of Mohammed, compared to Hebrew historiography, see: Bart Wallet, 'Mohammed als valse profet. Vroegmoderne joodse historici over de islam', *ZemZem* 2 (2006) 1, 115-123, 161.

⁵⁰⁹ Fuks should be credited with the first, although short, analysis of Basnage's influence on Amelander; Fuks, 'Jiddisches Geschichtswerk', 179-180. Basnage's impact on Jewish historiography at large was described by Raz-Krakotzin as: 'he was the one who constituted the framework that was accepted by subsequent Jewish historians.'

paragraphs will demonstrate, Basnage not only provided most of the material for *Sheyris Yisroel* but was also a direct source of inspiration. Amelander used the Dutch translation of the revised fifteen-volume 1716 French edition, published in Amsterdam in 1726-1727 in two volumes, entitled *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus, of Algemene historie der Joodsche Naatsie*.⁵¹⁰

As the title suggests, Amelander had an important factor in common with Basnage. Just as Basnage wrote his history book as a sequel to the books of Flavius Josephus, Amelander likewise continued the so-called Hebrew version of Josephus, *Yosippon*.⁵¹¹ Both books therefore shared the same aims and periodization: a history of Jews throughout the entire world, from 70 CE until contemporary times. Amelander in his book proudly claimed to be continuing the work of Josef ben Gorion ha-Kohen, yet nowhere shared with his readers the nature of his main source. The suggestion, raised by Leo Fuks and others, that Amelander had been inspired by Basnage's book to write *Sheyris Yisroel* is nevertheless highly plausible.⁵¹² The nature of both projects as continuations to Josephus/Yosippon and Amelander's intensive use of Basnage's book leave little room for other interpretations. The following paragraphs will present examples of Amelander's use of Basnage, all of which reinforce this interpretation. Basnage himself had already expressed the hope that, though his book was mainly written for a Christian audience, Jews too would enjoy his book.⁵¹³ The list of subscribers to the Dutch edition indeed evidenced interest from several Sephardic Jews, and Basnage later noted that he had not received any criticism about his book from within the Jewish community.⁵¹⁴ This Jewish interest in Basnage may have influenced Amelander, as he was surely not only highly impressed by the abundance of unknown material in Basnage's work, but also inspired to

Indeed, Basnage should be seen as the founder of the very field of post-biblical Jewish history.' Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, 'Jewish memory between exile and history', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 4,530-543, there 539.

⁵¹⁰ On the French and Dutch editions, see: Gerald Cerny, *Theology, politics and letters at the crossroads of European civilization. Jacques Basnage and the Baylean Huguenot refugees in the Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster 1987) 184-185.

Basnage's book was as well translated in various languages, commented and republished in a pirated Catholic edition, see *ibidem*, 183-185.

⁵¹¹ For Basnage's imitation of Josephus, see: Cerny, *Theology, politics and letters*, 188.

⁵¹² See note 335.

⁵¹³ Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, i.

⁵¹⁴ Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus* (Amsterdam 1726), 'lijst der inteekenaars', Sephardim on this list are Isaac Dias da Fonseca, Benjamin Aboab, Jacob Abrabanel Junior, Aaron Jacob Cardosa Junior, Benjamin Ricardo Junior and Elyazib Nethanel Sarfatie (the first of these, however, was excommunicated from the Sephardic community in 1712 on accusation of 'Karaism', and in 1713 converted to the Reformed Church (Yosef Kaplan, *An alternative path to modernity: the Sephardi diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden etc. 2000) 145, 238-239, 245, 254, 272-275, 278); the third was a wealthy businessman and emerged on more subscription lists for Dutch books in the first half of the eighteenth century, like David van Hoogstraten and Matthaeus Brouërius van Nidek eds., *Groot algemeen historisch, geografisch, genealogisch, en oordeelkundig woorden-boek... I* (Amsterdam etc. 1725) and Bernard Picart's *Naaukeurige beschryving der uitwendige godtsdien-plichten...* ('s-Gravenhage etc. 1727), cf. John Clopham, *The Bank of England, a history I* (Cambridge 1945) 282; Cerny, *Theology, politics and letters*, 186.

provide - especially to a Jewish leadership - a Jewish alternative to Basnage's unmistakably Christian narrative.

Basnage's book described Jewish history, as well as Jewish religion, sects and practices. As such the scope of the book was far broader than that of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Amelander thus concentrated on the strictly historical chapters, only incidentally using material from other chapters. Basnage's book was based primarily upon the works of the Christian Hebraists, particularly their (often antiquarian) studies into aspects of Judaism – these studies often presented open fascination with kabbalah – and their Latin translations of Jewish classics, including Hebrew historiography. Basnage hardly used Hebrew sources, and research has shown that he most likely had only weak command of the Hebrew language.⁵¹⁵ Although he used David Gans, ibn Yahya and ibn Verga, he did not consult any works of Joseph ha-Kohen or Zacuto.⁵¹⁶ These sources allowed Amelander to compare what he found in Basnage against different sources and thereby to create his own historical narrative. The following paragraphs will illustrate this with examples.

Basnage's book was unique in its broad scope and in the importance he attributed to the post-Biblical history of the Jews. Christians, after the rise of Christianity, commonly perceived Jewish history as irrelevant, or at best as showing what happened to those who opted not to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Basnage's perception, however, was different. He was driven by a sincere sympathy for the Jewish people, who, according to his account, had throughout history been the victims of persecutions. Jewish history was, not only for Basnage but also for many medieval and early modern Jews and even some modern Jewish historians, essentially a story of suffering. He pitied the Jews for their sufferings and condemned the perpetrators.⁵¹⁷ He concluded his book with a plea for tolerance towards the Jews, arguing that they should be allowed to contribute to society and to freely practice their religion. He praised the Dutch Republic for bringing into practice such a policy of tolerance.⁵¹⁸

Yet Basnage's book was unambiguously a Christian work. Indeed, the author occasionally switched roles from historian to theologian, thereby rendering the book, as Adam Sutcliffe has concluded, 'a work of profound ambiguity'. Basnage's history of the Jews was

⁵¹⁵ Lester A. Segal, 'Jacques Basnage de Beauval's *l'Histoire des Juifs*: Christian historiographical perception of Jewry and Judaism on the eve of the Enlightenment', *Hebrew Union College Annual* LIV (Cincinnati 1983) 303-324, esp. 308-309. On his process of writing Basnage wrote himself as well: Jacques Basnage, *Corrispondenza da Rotterdam, 1685-1709*, edita con introduzione e note a cura di Myriam Silvera (Amsterdam/Maarssen 2000) 236, cf. 241-242.

⁵¹⁶ Cf. Cerny, *Theology, politics and letters*, 188.

⁵¹⁷ Segal, 'Basnage', 309-310.

⁵¹⁸ Laurent Berek, 'Vision du messianisme Juif et apologétique chrétienne dans *l'Histoire des Juifs* de Jacques Basnage', *XVIIe siècle* 45 (1993) 2, 247-271, esp. 269-271.

decisively Protestant, and the roles of objective historian and Reformed pastor sometimes resulted in barely hidden tensions within the text.⁵¹⁹ Basnage did not conceal his desire for the conversion of Jews to Christianity, which he believed would happen in the end of times. Yet he despised the fact that the Catholics had forced the Jews to convert and was filled with anger when describing medieval disputations, forced conversions and the Spanish Inquisition. Basnage believed that faith should be a matter of free will and that the open attitude of the Protestants therefore stood a better chance for the Jews to convert than the Catholic use of force. Basnage, as a Huguenot refugee from Catholic France, presented throughout his book his solidarity with the Jews confronted through times with the same Catholicism. As evidenced in Basnage's writing, identification between the exilic experiences of the Jews and the Huguenots and the persecutions each group had suffered from the Catholics led to a generally sympathetic stance towards the Jewish people.⁵²⁰ However, to maintain his stark black-and-white portrayal of Catholicism's and Protestantism's respective attitudes towards the Jews, Basnage had to omit Martin Luther's blatant anti-Jewish expressions⁵²¹

Basnage's description of Jews and Judaism was not entirely positive, not least his description of rabbinic Judaism, which was coloured by the polemics between Protestants and Catholics. For him the position of the rabbis, with their stress on the significance of the Oral Torah, was analogous to how the Roman Catholic Church put the church tradition on a par with the Holy Scriptures. According to Basnage, both the rabbinic and Catholic positions used their traditions to falsely interpret the Bible, thereby resulting in nominianism, superstitions and non-rational mysticism. The corruption of High Priests and rabbis equated that of the Popes and bishops. Basnage's sympathy was clearly with the Karaites, whom he described as having been the Jewish variant of Reformed Protestants, each group adhering solely to the authority of the Bible. Basnage, in his description of Jewish history, by analogy criticized the Roman Catholic Church, its doctrines and institutions, although this never transformed his book only into a confessional polemic. As an early enlightened intellectual, moderation was an important virtue for Basnage, and this helped restrain him from pressing his descriptions of the analogies between rabbinic Judaism and Roman Catholicism to unnecessary lengths.⁵²²

⁵¹⁹ Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge 2005) 88-89.

⁵²⁰ Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, 80, 84-85.

⁵²¹ Jonathan M. Elukin, 'Jacques Basnage and the *History of the Jews*: anti-Catholic polemic and historical allegory in the Republic of Letters', *Journal of the history of ideas* 53 (1992) 4, 603-630.

⁵²² Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, xi-xii; Elukin, 'Basnage', passim; Segal, 'Basnage', 310-312; Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment*, 85-87.

For a traditional Ashkenazi Jew such as Amelander, Basnage's descriptions of rabbinic Judaism must have been unacceptable, as were his theological convictions. Basnage attributed great significance to biblical prophecies, which – as he sought to show – were fulfilled in Christ and the subsequent history of the Christian Church. He had two target audiences in mind while stressing the accuracy of biblical prophecies: first, the Jews, so as to convince them that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah; and second, skeptic intellectuals – influenced by Spinoza – who needed to be persuaded that the Bible was a reliable and trustworthy source.⁵²³ Amelander might have considered Basnage's theological judgments, along with his depiction of Rabbanism, unacceptable for his Ashkenazi reading public and thus decided to mention only once the name of his most important source.

Basnage and Amelander, however, were similar in that each attached great value to biblical prophecies. Amelander's use of these prophecies, and his emphasis on traditional Jewish interpretations of them, may well have been a deliberate subtext and a hidden polemic with Basnage. Despite their concerns for a historically accurate account of the past, both historians saw the past as a mirror for the future. By examining when and to what extent biblical prophecies had been fulfilled, one could predict where he himself stood in the metahistorical narrative.

6.2 Strategies of editing sources

6.2.1 The narrative structure of Sheyris Yisroel

Amelander, because he was based in Amsterdam, was unable to consult sources elsewhere in the Jewish world. Only in the last section was he able to use sources – including letters and his own accounts – rather than just printed accounts. As such, Amelander's main task was to integrate material from his Hebrew and Dutch sources into a new Yiddish narrative. Amelander described his task as being to compose, rather than to write, a history book.⁵²⁴ How he dealt with these sources shows his self-perception and how he imagined his intended public. It is thus worthwhile to examine the various strategies Amelander employed in using his sources.

⁵²³ Berek, 'Messianisme', passim; Elukin, 'Basnage', 608-610.

⁵²⁴ *JY* ed. 1743, 99v.

The first, and most important, strategy of reworking, using and editing his sources could be called the structural one. *Sheyris Yisroel* consists of 35 chapters, starting with a chapter on the Ten Lost Tribes and concluding with the history of the Jews in China, India and, in particular, Cochin. A comparison of Amelander's table of contents with Basnage's Dutch edition reveals striking resemblance. *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus* is divided into two parts: the first, comprising books 1 to 4, deals with the history and elements of Judaism, explaining the differences between various groups, including the Samaritans, Sadducees, Pharisees, Karaites, Essenes and the Herodians. Much attention is paid to the contents of the Kabbala, also in comparison with Christianity. Finally, Judaism's essential notions are presented, such as the image of God, creation, providence, law and sin. For obvious reasons, Amelander did not use this first part of Basnage.

Amelander's relation to the second part of Basnage's work, however, is different. Basnage's books 5 and 6 remain thematic and concentrated on Judaism, with chapters on the Messiah, the Sanhedrin, the festivals, prayers and practices. But from Book 7 onward Basnage begins to narrate Jewish history, starting with the Ten Lost Tribes and finishing with a discussion of the contemporary condition of Jews in the world. Books 7 through 9 were Amelander's main guide through centuries of Jewish history and offered him a structure for narrating the story once again, this time to a Yiddish speaking audience, as the following table demonstrates.

Basnage, <i>Vervolg op Flavius Josephus</i>	Amelander, <i>Sheyris Yisroel</i>
<i>Book 7</i>	
1. The source of Jewish sufferings	
2. The tribes in the East	
3. Jewish authors on the Ten Lost Tribes	
4. The Ten Lost Tribes in Tartaria, America and the East Indies	1. The Ten Lost Tribes
5. Jews in India and China	
6. The Ten Lost Tribes in Iraq, falsification of the river the Sambation	
7. The beginnings of Jews in Egypt, Ethiopia and Arabia	

8. The Diaspora in Italy	2. Jews in Rome, 63 BCE-656
9. Jews in Spain, Germany, France, etc.	3. Jews in Spain, Germany, France and England
10. The beginnings of Jews in France	
11. The history of Jews, from the fall of Jerusalem until the Bar Kochba revolt	4. The history of Jews, from the fall of Jerusalem until the end of the Bar Kochba revolt
12. The history of the revolt under Adrian, Bar Kochba, R. Akiva – until 138	
13. The students of R. Akiva and the other sages	5. From the death of R. Akiva until 240 in Eretz Yisrael
<i>Book 8</i>	
1. History of the Jews, from 138 until Emperor Severus	
2. History of the Jews in the Roman Empire from Severus until the end of the 3 rd century	
3. History of the Jews in Babylonia, from Severus until the end of the 3 rd century	6. Jews in Babylonia after 70 CE
4. History of the Jews in the 4 th century	7. History of the Jews from Emperor Constantine (314) until 614
5. The Jews under Emperor Julian and the subsequent emperors	
6. History of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 5 th century	
7. History of the Jews in the Western Empire, 5 th century	
8. History of the Jews in Persia, 5 th century	
9. On the Ten Lost Tribes in Persia, Arabia, Ethiopia, 7 th century	
10. Continuation of Chapter 9, as well as on other Jews in Persia	[8. The beginnings of Islam, until Bustenai]
11. Immerians and Jewish Homerites	

12. Jews in the Roman Empire, Constantinople, Italy, Spain and France, 6 th -7 th century	
13. Jews under Emperor Heraclius and Sisebut	9. Jews under Emperor Heraclius and Sisebut
<i>Book 9</i>	
1. The Khazars	10. The Khazars
2. Jews in the East, 8 th -9 th century	
3. History of the Jews in the Empire, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, 8 th -9 th century	11. Jews in France, from Charlemagne until Louis the Pious
4. Jews in the East, 10 th -11 th century	12. Jews in the East, 905-1040
5. Jews in the West, 10 th -11 th century; persecutions in Spain	13. Jews in Spain, 967-1096
6. On Yosippon and the persecution of Jews in England	
7. Jews in Germany and the Crusades	14. The Crusades in Europe
8. Benjamin of Tudela, East-West, 12 th century	15. Benjamin of Tudela, East-West, 12 th century
9. Petachias, 12 th century	
10. Sages, 12 th century	16. Sages, 1099-1190
11. False messiahs, East-West, 12 th century	17. False messiahs, East-West, 12 th century
12. Jews in East and West, 12 th century	18. Jews in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, 1140-1200
13. Why Christians established oppressive laws for Jews	
14. Ecclesiastical councils on the Jews	
15. Continuation of Chapter 14	
16. Jews in the East, 13 th -14 th century	19. Jews in the East, 1200-1334
17. Jews in Spain, 13 th -14 th century	20. Jews in Spain, 1256-1349
18. Continuation of Chapter 17	
19. Jews in Italy, 13 th -14 th century	21. Jews in Italy, 1225-1394
20. Jews in France, 13 th century until the	

expulsion	
21. Continuation of Chapter 20	22. Jews in France, 1300-1670
22. Jews in England, 13 th -14 th century	23. Jews in England, 1210-1649
23. Jews in Germany, Hungary etc., 13 th -14 th century	24. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, 1222-1400
24. Jews in Spain, 15 th century until 1492-1496	
25. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal	25. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal
26. Jews in the East: Persia, Armenia, Media etc., 15 th -17 th century	
27. Jews in the East: Syria; and the story of Shabtai Zvi	26. Jews in the East and the story of Shabtai Zvi
28. Jews in Eretz Yisrael	28. Jews in Eretz Yisrael
29. Jews in Ethiopia, Egypt, Africa, last two centuries	29. Jews in Ethiopia, Africa, 1523-1750
30. Jews in the Ottoman Empire, last two centuries	27. Jews in the Ottoman Empire
31. Jews in Italy, 15 th -17 th century	
32. Continuation of Chapter 31	
33. Jews in Germany, 15 th -16 th century	30. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, 1410-1614
34. Jews since the Reformation	31. Jews in Germany, Poland, Bohemia, 1614-1648 (corresponds with Basnage, Chapter 35)
35. Jews in Poland, Bohemia, Germany in the last century	[32. The 1648 Chmielnicki Pogroms and the suffering of the German Jews]
36. Jews in Holland	33. The Sephardim in Holland
37. Continuation of Chapter 36; their scholars	[34. The Ashkenazim in Holland]
38. Present state of the Jews in the world	35. The Jews in China, India and Cochin
39. On the conversion of the Jews	

This comparison shows that Amelander followed, but did not copy, Basnage's structure. Some of Amelander's chapters (e.g., chapters 6, 9-17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26-28, 30, 31 and 33) correspond precisely to the topic of one of Basnage's chapters. In other instances Amelander combined the topics of two or more of Basnage's chapters in his own narrative, such as with chapters 1-5, 7, 18, 20, 22, 25 and 33. Topics which Basnage addressed in two chapters were brought together by Amelander into a single chapter.

But Amelander did two more things. He omitted the topics of those chapters in Basnage's book that were obviously characterized by the latter's Christian, even Protestant, convictions. For example, the programmatic chapters which open and conclude Basnage's book – chapters which concern the reasons for Jewish suffering and discuss the conversion of the Jews, and which were rooted in Basnage's biblical exegesis – are omitted by Amelander. Likewise, Basnage's historical chapters dealing with Jewish converts to Christianity, church policies towards Jews and the theology and impact of the Reformation on European Jewry (chapters 8/1, 9/13-15, 9/34, 9/39) were also omitted. This does not mean that Amelander did not use some materials from these chapters for other chapters in his work – in fact, he did – but it illustrates that he opted not to follow Basnage's structure in cases where Christian interest or periodisation prevailed.⁵²⁵

Amelander added several chapters not found in Basnage's magnum opus: Chapter 8, on the rise of Islam; Chapter 32, on the 1648 Chmielnicki pogroms; and Chapter 34, on the history of Ashkenazim in the Dutch Republic. Basnage hardly touched upon the rise of Islam; quite oddly, he overlooked the 1648 massacres in Eastern Europe and reduced Dutch Jewish history to the story of the Sephardim. Amelander took the opportunity to correct Basnage's shortcomings in these areas.

Amelander utilized Basnage even further. He not only closely adhered to the structure of Basnage's work, but also used, in each of his chapters (except for the one about the Dutch Ashkenazim (Chapter 34)), material from the earlier author's book. Although Amelander did not restrict himself to Basnage, and used – as I showed previously – many other sources, in certain chapters, he even followed the paragraph structure of Basnage's chapters (9-11, 13, 17-31, 33). This meant, in most cases, that Amelander followed Basnage's line of argument, often omitting paragraph subjects that were too detailed or too Christian, and adding other materials, mainly from Jewish sources. Although Amelander did not structure his chapters in paragraphs,

⁵²⁵ E.g. some material from Basnage's chapter 9/34, not related to the Reformation and its attitude towards Jews, was used for Amelander's chapter 30.

and only sometimes started a new subject on a new line with the first word(s) in large letters, the arrangement of his material follows the structure of his main source. An example will illustrate this: Amelander's Chapter 19 (on the Jews in the East, 1200-1334) compared with Basnage's Chapter 16 of Book 9.

<i>Basnage 9/16</i>	<i>Amelander 19</i>
1. Decay of the Nation in the East	x
2. Persecution by the Khalief	x
3. Joseph left for Aleppo	x
4. Joseph returns	x
5. Nahmanides	x
6. His life and works	x
7. Revolt in Egypt	
8. Two kinds of Mamaluks	
9. Their attitude towards Jews	
10. Simeon Duran to Africa	x
11. Rise of the Mongols	x
12. Jews and Argoun Khan	x
13. Revolt and fall of the Abbasids	x
14. Jews at the court of the Mongol Abu Said	x
15. Eating of Pesah lamb during Holy Supper	

In this chapter Amelander's thematic structure mirrors Basnage's, with only two major differences. Amelander's abridged the material into an easily readable narrative, leaving out paragraphs 7-9, which he apparently considered one regime change too many for his reading public. Amelander concentrated on Jewish history, and where Basnage provided more background information about history and culture in general, he restricted himself to his main argument. The second part Amelander omitted was Basnage's last paragraph, which concerned a Christian theological discussion of negligible interest to the Yiddish audience of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

For other chapters, such as 1-8, Amelander used certain materials from Basnage but rearranged the materials in a new order. In these chapters Amelander used considerably more material from other sources than from Basnage, thereby affording himself more freedom to

rethink the subject, compare different accounts and construct a logical order for presenting his narrative. One example of such a chapter is Chapter 12, which concerns the history of the Jews in the East from 905 until 1040. Amelander opens the chapter with material from Basnage's Book 9, Chapter 4, which covers the same subject.⁵²⁶ But Amelander, after his introductory comments which start the narrative on the exilarchs and geonim, takes his material from *Sefer Yubasin*, a passage about the struggle between the exilarch Uqba and the Pumbeditha rosh yeshiva Cohen Tzedek and about the exilarch David ben Zakkai.⁵²⁷ For his presentation of the next Sura rosh yeshiva Amelander provides both the opinion of David Gans in *Zemah David* – namely, that a weaver was chosen – and *Yubasin's* account that Mar Hai bar Yanai became the next leader of the famous Babylonian academy.⁵²⁸ Amelander resumes his narrative on Saadia Gaon, again following *Yubasin*. He skips the part in Zacuto's *Yubasin* where the author begins explaining the functioning of the exilarch and the gaon in general, and continues where *Yubasin* resumes the historical account of Babylonian Jewry.⁵²⁹ The final section, in which a commentary is presented on the waning and end of the institution of the exilarch, was written by Amelander himself and documents his own reflections on the topic. In short, this chapter offers an example of Amelander not following Basnage's structure, but instead taking as his main source material certain sections of *Yubasin* and adding information from Basnage and Gans, and ending with his own conclusion.

What was the result of Amelander's decision to follow Basnage's structure and to combine, abridge, omit from and add to it? Precisely in doing so Amelander showed both his dependence on Basnage as well as his own historical vision. As demonstrated in Chapter 5 the narrative structure of *Sheyris Yisroel* follows the political categories of the Islamic versus Christian realms, whereas within the Western line both Sephard and Ashkenaz have a respective section, each culminating in the two concluding chapters on Amsterdam. Around the story of the Jews in East and West, a circular structure was made with the theme of the Ten Lost Tribes. Amelander relied heavily on Basnage's structure, but rearranged the chapters in such a way that his own, new structure became apparent.

In his use of the political categories of East and West Amelander simply followed Basnage. Basnage did not precisely define East and West, but in 7/8, while starting his narrative on the Western side, he contrasted the subjects of the earlier chapters – Babylonia,

⁵²⁶ Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, 1617.

⁵²⁷ Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer Yubasin* (Cracow 1580) 120v-121r.

⁵²⁸ Zacuto, *Yubasin*, 121r; Gans, *Zemah David*, 113.

⁵²⁹ Zacuto, *Yubasin*, 121r-122r, 128r-128v.

Egypt, Arabia and Ethiopia - with the West or the (West) Roman Empire.⁵³⁰ In two respects, however, Amelander made his own decisions. First, to Basnage's chapter on Sephardim in Amsterdam Amelander added a chapter on Ashkenazim in Amsterdam, thus balancing Basnage's interest in Sephardim. Amelander also stressed the importance of the meeting of both Diasporas in Amsterdam. Second, whereas Basnage was also interested in the fate of the Ten Lost Tribes, and addressed the topic in several chapters, Amelander made an important variation. Besides a first chapter on the Ten Lost Tribes, he rearranged the material for the last chapter in such a way that the thematic circle was closed. Whereas Basnage concluded his book with a chapter on the future conversion of the Jews to Christianity, Amelander ended *Sheyris Yisroel* with a chapter on the Jews in India and China. The information given in this chapter partly stems from Basnage's much larger Chapter 9/38, about the current state of Jews in the world. Amelander took from this chapter only the information dealing with two exotic Jewish communities, which he concluded could well be descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes. For both the first and the last chapters, Amelander extensively used two other sources, namely the books by Abraham Farissol and Menasseh ben Israel.

The narrative structure of *Sheyris Yisroel* is thus a first and important example of how Amelander employed his sources, reworked them and adapted them according to his own religious disposition so as to make them suitable for a new, Yiddish reading public.

6.2.2 *Abriding information*

Besides adapting the structure of Basnage's work, Amelander also developed strategies to rework material he had found in various sources before including it in his own historical narrative. One such strategy was to abridge information from the original source prior to presenting to his Yiddish reading public.

A good example is Chapter 15, in which Amelander recounts the twelfth-century voyage of Benjamin of Tudela. In his travelogue *Masa'ot Binyamin*, Tudela described the conditions of Jews in the over 300 cities he had visited, both in 'the West' and 'the East'. Whereas Basnage raised criticism over the value of Tudela's travelogue as a historical source, Amelander stressed – without mentioning Basnage's objections – that Tudela was 'a reliable man, who could be trusted'. He based his trust in Tudela on the results of an inquiry

⁵³⁰ Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, 1339.

conducted by the Castilian Jews upon Tudela's return from his travels. The inquiry had been completely positive.⁵³¹

Basnage reordered the information he found in Tudela's travelogue into his two geographical categories, namely East and West. Amelander made a different choice and followed the route of Tudela's voyage, from Spain, through France, Italy, Rumania, Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria to Erez Yisrael, Mesopotamia and Persia. He thus did not rely on Basnage's presentation of Tudela, and instead used the Hebrew original.⁵³² Amelander also shortened Tudela's travels considerably. He omitted numerous cities that Tudela had visited, including Gerona, Pisa and Lucca in Italy, and skipped entirely the last segment of Tudela's travel, through Egypt and back to Spain via Italy and Germany. The result was a much shorter and more intelligible chapter, in which he included only the stories he had deemed special enough to retell. Amelander revealed his selection criterion at the end of the chapter, when he noted about the cities he had left out:

אונ' ווייל דיא זאכן וואס ער דא פֿון שרייבט בקענט זיינן. אונ' ניט פֿיל (הדושים) זיינן. האבן מיר עש שטיין גלאזט. דער עש וויל לייאנן קען עש אין דש (ספֿר מסעות בנימן פֿינדן):⁵³³

First, he did not want to write about things his audience already knew, and thus limited Tudela's travels to parts that were less well known. Second, the availability of a source also apparently played a role. Since *Masa'ot Binyamin*, both in Hebrew and Yiddish, was easily available to his readers, Amelander could make his own selection and direct readers interested in further information to the original source.

6.2.3 Interpretative additions

The next strategy was precisely the opposite to the strategy of abridging: on a number of occasions Amelander made additions to the information he had found in his source(s). Amelander used this strategy to place his own emphases. Especially at the beginnings and ends

⁵³¹ Amelander, *SY*, 54r en 54v; cf. Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, 1643.

⁵³² There existed a Yiddish translation, printed in Amsterdam 1691, as well, but Amelander wrote that he used the Hebrew original; Amelander, *SY*, 54v. The editor of the Yiddish edition had used not the Hebrew version but a Dutch translation as its *Vorlage*, which may be why Amelander opted to turn to the Hebrew original. A comparison between Amelander's chapter and the characteristics of the Yiddish edition, as analyzed by Shlomo Berger, also shows that Amelander did not use this translation but stayed much closer to the Hebrew original. Berger, *Translation*, passim.

⁵³³ Amelander, *SY*, 61r.

of chapters Amelander presented readers an interpretational framework, within which the facts from the various sources gained extra relevance. In most instances Amelander's own additions and remarks - commenting, introducing and expanding the material he found in his sources - are indicated by the Hebrew formula *אמר המזכר*, *אמר הכותב* or *אמר הכותב* (thus says the author/the one who writes).⁵³⁴

A first example is Chapter 17, which discusses nine false messiahs. The material for this chapter stems from Basnage, Ibn Verga and Benjamin of Tudela, but Amelander added an introduction and concluding remarks. He started with a quotation from the midrash *Yalkut Shimoni* to Isaiah: *יא' עניותא לישראל*, paraphrased in Yiddish as: *עש שטיט ישראל שין אן דז זיא* (to suffer poverty and humility is befitting upon Israel).⁵³⁵ Why so? According to Amelander, Jewish history demonstrates that in moments when Israel was prosperous and successful, but still in exile, the course of events always went awry. In particular, at such moments persecutions began or internal troubles broke out. The previous chapter had addressed an impressive list of Jewish sages, all of whom had enjoyed widespread respect. However, in the same generation numerous false messiahs had appeared. Amelander thereby not only connected Chapters 16 and 17, but also provided a theological explanation for the appearance of false messiahs.⁵³⁶ The chapter was concluded, of course, with the wish that the real messiah would come 'soon and in our days', when the *pasuk* from Isaiah (11:10) would become reality: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.'

The same strategy is used in the next chapter, Chapter 18, which deals with European Jewry in the twelfth century. Amelander used various sources for this chapter: *Divrei ha-yamim*, *Shevet Yehudah*, and *Even bochan*, as well as Basnage's Chapter 12 (of Book 9). As before, Amelander begins with a quotation, this time from Leviticus 26, 44: 'And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly'. Amelander again connects the chapter with the previous one: after sorrow and persecutions like those recounted in Chapter 17, God always sends someone who

⁵³⁴ SY ed. 1743, 11r, 51r, 54r, 99v. Only on 2r this formula introduces another source.

⁵³⁵ SY ed. 1743, 65r; *Yalkut Shimoni to Isaiah*, chapter 48, remez 466.

⁵³⁶ Basnage, *Vernolg*, 1670, took a different route and connected both chapters in a different way by comparing the sages and false messiahs to the Christian saints, some of whom were also mad. He concluded: 'Ieder volk heeft zyne gekheden, schoon dat ze van den anderen verschillen, en terwyl men over die van anderen lacht, geeft men geen acht op zijne eige.'

is a מליץ טוב, a good interceder, a non-Jew who helps Israel in its troubles. In this chapter Bernard of Clairveaux plays this role, as based on information from Basnage. In this way God showed that he was not rejecting Israel. Amelander thus gave history a teleological meaning: Biblical passages provided an interpretative framework to interpret historic events properly, showing that such events were part of something far larger.

Amelander also revealed his personal stance via the inclusion of wishes. In Chapter 17 the reader had already encountered the wish for the real messiah. In Chapter 26, about the false messiah Shabtai Zvi, Amelander repeated this wish, with a reference to Malachi 4:5, and even goes a step further by dooming the enemies of God:

זוא זאלן פֿר לארן אלי דיא (שונאים) פֿון גאט. אונ' דיא (צדיקים) זאלן זיך שטארקן. גלייך דיא זון
זיך שטארקט אין זיין אויש גין אמן.⁵³⁷

A final example of this strategy is that Amelander amended personal experiences to the information he found in his sources. An earlier example, already noted, is paragraph 4.2.5, on the history of Prague's Jews. Chapter 33, on Amsterdam's Sephardim, illustrates this strategy. Amelander added to this chapter a religious wish, namely that God would bless the Sephardim, along with additional material based on information he found in Basnage (9/36 and 9/37), Maharim Maarssen and Hayyim Drukker. In discussing Benjamin Musaphia, as Basnage had also done, he added that Musaphia's fine commentary on the Gemara Yerushalmi had been slated for publication in 1741 but that the project had been halted and that the book was still not in print. Amelander also knew that Rabbi Judah Templo had written numerous other books which likewise remained in manuscript form.⁵³⁸ The information Amelander added to this chapter shows his extensive involvement in the Amsterdam printing industry and his knowledge of book projects and manuscripts privately held among Amsterdam Jewry.

Through making additions Amelander was able to give a specific – traditional – theological interpretation to Jewish history, often demonstrating elements of his historical understanding. The strategy of using quotations from the Tenakh and sifrut Chazal built upon Amelander's earlier works, in which he engaged intensively with traditional religious texts. In a midrashic way he now reconnected and actualized *pesukim*, as universal rules to be applied to incidental historical events. In this way history was no longer a mere continuation of events, but rather a confirmation of traditional Jewish beliefs.

⁵³⁷ 'Like this all enemies of God will loose. And the just will strengthen. Like the rising sun becomes stronger. Amen.'; SY ed. 1743, 109r.

⁵³⁸ SY ed. 1743, 133r-133v.

6.2.4 Omitting of information

Amelander's fourth strategy was the deliberate omission of information found in the original source. This was done not to summarize or shorten details, but to omit information that did not fit into the framework of *Sheyris Yisroel*. There are numerous examples of this strategy.

First, although Basnage was an important source for him, Amelander left out numerous passages which he considered too Christian.⁵³⁹ In Chapters 18 and 24 - on medieval European Jewry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, respectively - Amelander made extensive use of Basnage's corresponding chapters (9/12 and 9/23), yet in both instances he ignored stories about Jews who had converted to Christianity. The first is the account about the Cologne Jew Herman who was baptized after a dream and became an Augustinian monk; the second the story of a young Jewish boy whose wish to convert aroused tumult in the Jewish community, resulting in a large-scale altercation in Frankfurt am Main between Jews and Christians, during which several people died and a fire destroyed much property. The omission of the first story did not influence the interpretation of history, but in the second case it did. In Amelander's presentation the attack of Christians on Jews became just another anti-Jewish action, whereas in Basnage's account it the action was initiated on behalf of a Jewish boy.

In line with this avoidance of overtly Christian passages, Amelander also left out passages about church policy regarding Jews, passages in which Basnage sought to understand how these policies began and developed. Basnage's nuanced but clearly Protestant perspective on the importance of the Reformation, including its importance for European Jewry, was likewise completely omitted by Amelander. He had no interest in the internal divisions within Christianity, he did not inform his readers about the Reformation and depicted Christians and churches in medieval and early modern times as having been fairly consistent in their attitudes towards Jews.

Second, Amelander omitted and deliberately overlooked Basnage's critical accounts of traditional Jewish sources. For instance, Basnage raised criticism about the authenticity and reliability of Yehudah ha-Levi's *Kuzari* and parts of the *Masa'ot Binyamin* of Benjamin of Tudela (in his Chapters 9/1 and 9/8). Amelander, however, presented both stories (in his Chapters 10

⁵³⁹ Also chapters that did not fit Amelander's ideology were not reproduced, e.g. Basnage's chapter 8/11 on an Ethiopian Jewish nation, the Homerites, who converted to Christianity.

and 15) as completely historical. With regard to the Khazars he even noted that he would not be surprised if among that nation Judaism was still predominant.⁵⁴⁰ Similarly, in Chapter 29, Amelander quoted at length a passage from *Orbot olam*, presenting it as historical, whereas Basnage, in his Chapter 9/29, had falsified the passage. Amelander simply ignored the criticism and did not mention it to his Yiddish readers, all the while liberally using the sources which Basnage had found dubious.

Third, Amelander omitted information which he considered, from an intra-communal Jewish religious standpoint, unsuited for his Yiddish reading public. In Chapter 27 he wrote, as did Basnage, about Gedalya ibn Yahya, the author of *Shalsbelet ha-qabbalah*, one of the sources enthusiastically used by Amelander. Ibn Yahya's attempts to reunite rabbanites and Karaites were discussed by Basnage but omitted by Amelander. This information, for Amelander, may have discredited Ibn Yahya as a reliable, unquestionably traditional Jewish source, next to the fact that such a reunionification was an undesirable scenario, and was therefore omitted. Another example is found in Chapter 29, where Amelander extensively presented a letter by Shlomo Molcho. However, Amelander omitted from the letter a passage in which Molcho discusses a mystical vision he had seen, in which it was revealed to him that Rome would be struck by disaster. In introducing the letter, Amelander wrote:

מיר וועלן דען גאנצן ברייב ניט טראנצלירטירן וויל דרינגן זיינן גרוישי (סודות).⁵⁴¹

This was made further explicit in the letter itself, where Amelander left out the passage and added in parentheses:

(איך האב ניט גוועלט דען (מראה מעתיק) זיין ווייל (קבלה) זאכן דריין שטיין).⁵⁴²

Amelander deliberately omitted the mysteries and kabbalistic wisdom for his readers. There are at least two explanations for this decision. The first, and most important, is that Kabbalah was considered to be intended exclusively for the rabbinic and religiously educated elite, not for the general Yiddish-speaking audience Amelander was writing for. Only those able to read Hebrew and having full mastery of the authoritative rabbinic corpus of texts were to be given opportunity to become familiar with the kabbalistic mysteries.⁵⁴³ Yet there may also be a

⁵⁴⁰ Basnage, on the contrary, concluded in his *Vernolg*, 1592: 't Geen 'er 't verdrietigst in is, is, dat na al dit omvragen het niet nalaat even onzeker te zijn, of 'er een koninkrijk Kozar is; of liever het is klaar dat 'er geen is, nademaal noch de Joodt, die zo grote belangen heft om het te ontdekken, noch de Christenen die gereist hebben, deszelfs ligging niet kunnen aanwijzen, en dat alles wat wy verhaalt hebben, op fabelen gegronnd is, of op ene overlevering van bewyzen versteken.'

⁵⁴¹ 'We will not translate the whole letter, because it contains great mysteries'; Amelander, *SY*, 113r.

⁵⁴² 'I didn't want to include it completely because there is Kabbalah in it'; Amelander, *SY*, 113v.

⁵⁴³ This policy is in line with the general transfer of knowledge from Hebrew into Yiddish: Chava Turmiansky, 'Yiddish and the transmission of knowledge in Europe', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15 (2008) 5-18, there 11-12.

second explanation, as we saw already paragraph 4.5 as Amelander himself was hardly enthusiastic about Kabbalah. As such, he omitted kabbalistic passages from *Sheyris Yisroel* both out of personal conviction and respect for the traditional boundaries between the rabbinic elite and the community.

6.2.5 Monocausal argumentation

The last strategy could be called monocausal argumentation. Often various sources presented differing accounts of an event or, less incongruously, offered different explanations for it. Amelander occasionally chose to present the different renderings to his readers, thereby leaving it to them to decide which account or interpretation they considered most convincing. In most instances, however, he made the choice himself and presented only the account or interpretation which he considered best.

In Chapter 2 we find an example of Amelander doing both. About the policies of Emperor Augustus with regard to his Jewish subjects Amelander's sources offered completely contrasting accounts. Ibn Verga, in his *Shevet Yehudah*, presented a harshly negative image of the emperor as having been an enemy of the Jewish people and responsible for the deaths of many Jews. Amelander, however, refers to 'all reliable authors' and especially to *Sefer Yosippon*, in which a totally different picture is presented of Augustus, namely, as having been a great friend of the Jewish people, giving the Jews Roman citizenship, affording them freedom of religion and acknowledging the authority of the Sanhedrin. Amelander sided, out of what he called his *libshaft* [love] for truth, with *Yosippon* and publicly corrected *Shevet Yehudah*.⁵⁴⁴

He followed the other strategy, however, immediately thereafter, in discussing Emperor Tiberius. As his source he used Basnage (7/8), who provided two interpretations: one from Flavius Josephus, the other from Philo of Alexandria. The story in question concerned Tiberius' expulsion of no less than 4,000 Jews from Rome to Sardinia. According to Philo this was the result of false accusations against them by Tiberius' friend Sejanus. Josephus, however, blamed a Jewish swindler who had filched from Fulvia, a Roman lady who had converted to Judaism, having told her that he would bring money to the Temple in Jerusalem but in fact kept for himself. After Tiberius heard about this story, he expelled the 4,000 Jews. Basnage offered both interpretations, but found Philo the more reliable, because after Sejanus'

⁵⁴⁴ Amelander, *SY*, 5r-5v. In his criticism of *Shevet Yehudah* Amelander followed Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, 1342.

death Tiberius had invited the Jews to return to Rome.⁵⁴⁵ Amelander, however, made a different choice, and only presented Josephus' interpretation, introduced as 'the book of Yosippon to the Romans'.⁵⁴⁶ The most convincing reason for Amelander's choice is surely the trustworthiness he attributed to Josephus – whom he believed to have authored the Hebrew *Sefer Yosippon*, to which his *Sheyris Yisrael* was the sequel.

Another example is King Philip's expulsion of the Jews from France in 1300. As his source Amelander again used Basnage, who presented three different explanations for the king's decision. The first reason was that a Jew had bought a Host, intending to defile it, but while doing so saw a Christian child, whom he decided to kill. The Host, however, miraculously saved the child. The Jew was arrested and brought to the stake a copy of the Talmud – which was unable to save him. The second explanation, about which Basnage was very brief, concerned sorcery by French Jews. The last, and according to Basnage the most reliable explanation, was the avariciousness of King Philip. He needed money and so expelled the Jews and confiscated their properties.⁵⁴⁷ Amelander was definitive about the explanation:

דיא אורזאך דר פֿון ווערט פֿון דיא (סופרי הנוצרים) אויף פֿיל אלירלייא מאנירן גטריבן. דיא איך פֿון גווישי רעדין האלב האב ניט גוועלט שרייבן. אבר דר (עיקר) וואר. דיא אורזאך דש דר קינג זער געלט גריג וואר. אונ' וואלט זיך ברייכֿן. דורך דש געלט פֿון דיא יהודים.⁵⁴⁸

Thus, Amelander followed Basnage in his conclusion, but provided his readers with only one explanation; he mentions the existence of other explanations, but the reason for his decision to omit them is concealed. For the reader familiar with Basnage there could, however, be no doubt that Amelander considered the first two explanations - false accusations about French Jews killing children, and sorcery - insulting and unreliable and therefore not worth sharing with his Yiddish-reading public.

6.3 Mediation and brokerage structures

⁵⁴⁵ Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, 1348.

⁵⁴⁶ Amelander, *SY*, 5v-6r.

⁵⁴⁷ Basnage, *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, 1759-1760.

⁵⁴⁸ 'Christian authors give a variety of possible reasons, which I didn't want to write down for obvious reasons. But the case was that the reason was that the king was very greedy and he wanted to enrich himself with the Jews' money.' Amelander, *SY*, 89v.

All five strategies - adapting the structure of Basnage's book, abridging, omitting and adding to the information found in the sources and Amelander's preference for monocausal reasoning - are demonstrations of Amelander's mediation between two source domains and his target domain. He brought knowledge from the Hebrew corpus of the religious establishment into the language of the whole Ashkenazi community, just as he transferred knowledge from the non-Jewish society into the Jewish community through using Dutch sources. In order to better understand the dynamics of these transfers of knowledge, two equivalent and interchangeable anthropological-sociological concepts are helpful: the cultural intermediary and the broker.

The concept of cultural intermediary or cultural broker originates in the field of anthropology; it became influential in the broader scholarly community when it was picked up and developed by the French historian Michel Vovelle and by the French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu.⁵⁴⁹ Vovelle introduced the cultural intermediary to break through static interpretations of - primarily - medieval and early modern history in terms of elite versus popular culture. The intermediary, according to Vovelle, was a dynamic person who navigated between both worlds, who could act both as a defender of established ideologies and as a mouthpiece for popular revolutionary movements. As such he could act both top-down - vertically disseminating opinions from the so-called elite culture among larger groups in society - and bottom-up - expressing peoples' dissent in such a way that political, cultural and religious establishments heard them. Some cultural intermediaries combined both roles, others - because of their specific position or particular ideas - acted exclusively from one or the other role. The merit of Vovelle's conceptualization of the cultural intermediary is that it highlights the crucial role of such diverse functions as teachers, local clergy, postmen and barbers in the spread of cultural knowledge, thus providing a much more nuanced and multi-faceted interpretation of cultures.⁵⁵⁰

The same concept was also elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu, but with a different focus. Vovelle placed the cultural intermediary in a historical framework and observed a transformation from a more traditional type of intermediary, who operated within a socially more strictly defined society, to a number of new forms of intermediary roles. Bourdieu used

⁵⁴⁹ For a short survey of the development of the concept of cultural brokerage, see the introduction to: Margaret Connell Szasz ed., *Between Indian and white worlds. The cultural broker* (Norman OK, 2001) 3-20; a fully developed theory based on and applied to contemporary society is provided by: M.A. Jezewski, 'Evolution of a grounded theory. Conflict resolution through culture brokering', *Advances in Nursing Science* 17(1995) 3, 14-30; M.A. Jezewski and P. Sotnik, *The rehabilitation service provider as culture broker. Providing culturally competent services to foreign born persons* (Buffalo, NY 2001).

⁵⁵⁰ Michel Vovelle, 'Les intermédiaires culturels' in: idem, *Idéologies et mentalités* (Paris 1982) 163-176.

the concept mainly for his analysis of modern twentieth-century society and within the field of culture. As such, he wrote about ‘new cultural intermediaries’, without, however, qualifying the new and providing appropriate periodization. Bourdieu’s intermediaries are people like producers, journalists, critics and writers whose work is the provision of symbolic goods and services and the dissemination of ideas via modern mass media. Such figures are in continuous tension with traditional intellectuals and challenge their authority. For Bourdieu these intermediaries play a crucial role in contemporary consumer capitalism, in that they shape the taste and wishes of consumers.⁵⁵¹

Cultural brokerage theory has developed significantly since Vovelle and Bourdieu. Among other aspects, the self-conscious and creative role of the intermediary is highlighted, stressing the intermediary’s active role in controlling access to cultural production, such as the gradual establishing of routines through which he searches for and selects content. As concerns content, research examines the strategies for inclusion and exclusion, and seeks, for specific cases, to pinpoint the underlying ideology of these strategies, be it conservatism or the intermediary’s desire to change his target group via his activities.⁵⁵²

The concept of cultural brokerage has also been employed in various history studies, ranging from colonial contexts to nineteenth-century European rural Catholicism, and early modern media history to early twentieth-century Japan.⁵⁵³ The concept is highly promising for the field of Jewish studies, although its application is just beginning. Besides an article about the travel agent as a cultural broker in the migration of East European Jews to the United States of America,⁵⁵⁴ the most important publication is *Cultural intermediaries* (2004), a volume edited by David Ruderman and Guiseppe Veltri. Here the concept is applied to early modern Jewish intellectuals in Italy, albeit without much attention for the theory of cultural brokerage. According to Ruderman, the blurring of medieval cultural and religious boundaries in sixteenth-century Italy offered new opportunities for cultural exchange between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, as well as new encounters between Jews and Christians, thereby resulting in a

⁵⁵¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique social du jugement* (Paris 1979) passim.

⁵⁵² Sean Nixon and Paul du Gay, ‘Who needs cultural intermediaries?’, *Cultural Studies* 16 (2002) 4, 495-500; Keith Negus, ‘The work of cultural intermediaries and the enduring distance between production and consumption’, *Cultural Studies* 16 (2002) 4, 501-515.

⁵⁵³ E.g.: Szansz, *Between Indian and white worlds*; G. Rooijackers, ‘Opereren op het snijpunt van twee culturen: middelaars en media in Zuid-Nederland’ in: P. te Boekhorst a.o. eds., *Cultuur en maatschappij in Nederland* (Heerlen 1992); idem, *Rituele repertoires. Volkscultuur in oostelijk Noord-Brabant, 1559-1853* (Nijmegen 1994) 82-87; Robert Darnton, Daniel Roche, *Revolution in print. The press in France, 1775-1800* (Berkeley etc. 1989); Elise K. Tipton and John Clark eds., *Being modern in Japan. Culture and society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu 2000).

⁵⁵⁴ Daniel Soyer, ‘The travel agent as broker between old world and new: the case of Gustave Eisner’, *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 21 (1993), 345-368.

new corpus of texts. A characteristic that is emphasized about these new Jewish intellectuals is their expertise outside the realm of halakhah – a marked difference with the Jewish knowledge elite in medieval times. These Italian Jewish intellectuals enjoyed careers as rabbis, authors, playwrights, doctors and even as a composer. Furthermore, their mobility is highlighted, particularly their traveling between different countries and the concomitant spreading of knowledge; such spreading occurred, in part, via the intellectuals' conscious and unconscious interactions with Christian surroundings via friends and patrons. Their impact upon both the Christian and Jewish societies was made especially significant due to the rapid growth of the book industry. Printed books were being distributed to larger, and growing, audiences than ever before.⁵⁵⁵

Where Ruderman uses the concept of 'cultural intermediaries' for an intellectual elite, in the case of Amelander and his *Sheyris Yisroel* we would remain closer to Vovelle's theory of cultural brokerage. Amelander shared some characteristics with the Italian predecessors: he traveled (between the Dutch Republic and the Habsburg Empire); he was not theoretically involved in halakhah; and above all he was very active in the Jewish printing industry. Eighteenth-century Amsterdam saw a constant influx of new immigrants and was home to dynamic Jewish communities, which were more established than the young sixteenth-century Sephardic communities in Italy. But unlike the sixteenth-century intellectuals, Amelander was closer to the traditional Jewish structures, studied at a yeshiva, cooperated with one of the Ashkenazi dayyanim and edited seminal traditional texts. Moreover, Amelander, unlike his brother-in-law Elieser Soesman Rudelsum, was also not in frequent and open dialogue with Christian intellectuals. His encounter with non-Jewish knowledge was via books and other written materials. But though Amelander may fit less well into the more elite category of intellectuals, he was - with his knowledge of Hebrew, Yiddish and Dutch and his efforts to spread new narratives of history among Ashkenazi Jewry - even more of a cultural intermediary. Whereas the Italian intellectuals, inspired by Renaissance ideals, had sought to develop their individuality and creativity and thereby contribute to intellectual production and debate in contemporary Italian society and Jewish communities, Amelander was satisfied with transferring existing knowledge to the Yiddish domain. In these transfers he executed his role as middleman perfectly.

⁵⁵⁵ David B. Ruderman, 'Introduction' in: idem and Guiseppe Veltri eds., *Cultural intermediaries. Jewish intellectuals in early modern Italy* (Philadelphia 2004), 3-23.

Amelander's position within the social stratification of Jewish Amsterdam made him a prototype cultural intermediary. As noted previously, Amelander had enjoyed a traditional training and education, through which he had acquired the same knowledge as many within the religious establishment, including becoming familiar with Hebrew and the vast corpus of traditional texts. However, he never obtained a corresponding career as a rabbi or any paid position within the kehillah. He found 'refuge' within the printing industry, though this left him always dependent on approval for new projects and thus not assured of steady income for his family. Socially, therefore, he was much closer to the vast masses of the Jewish community – people unable to read Hebrew, and with only partial fluency in written Yiddish. Amelander, with his jobs in the printing industry and his network among the rabbinical elite, held an inter-hierarchical role between the two circuits. This afforded him access to many sources. Yet his social and financial position was similar to that of most Amsterdam Jews, who had to struggle for a daily living. What differentiated Amelander from the religious establishment was not only his social position but also his knowledge of Dutch. Within the Jewish community it was mainly the business elite who had frequent dealings with Dutch colleagues. These elites were generally able to speak some Dutch, and to read it as well. Amelander belonged to a rather small segment within the Jewish community that combined traditional Jewish knowledge with familiarity with contemporary Christian writings.⁵⁵⁶ As such he had a unique position in the communication network: most other people had only restricted access, but Amelander had entry into all domains. It was precisely this combination that enabled Amelander to mediate between the three domains and to exploit this situation to his own ends.⁵⁵⁷

As a cultural intermediary Amelander had to deal with cultural borders, in his case the border between Christian and Jewish knowledge societies and that between Hebrew- and Yiddish-reading publics. As an in-between Amelander was thus active in border crossing; in some cases his crossing went smoothly, but more often it was difficult and sometimes even impossible.⁵⁵⁸ In Gould and Fernandez's typology of five types of brokerage relations, Amelander's activity can be described as gatekeeping brokerage.⁵⁵⁹ The gatekeeper holds a key position in the access and distribution of knowledge, because as an intermediary he is in a position to decide what knowledge from outside he grants – or bars – access to his own

⁵⁵⁶ Gries, 'On reading and readers', 28.

⁵⁵⁷ Alain Degenne and Michel Forsé, *Introducing social networks* (London 1999) 119-130.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. G.S. Aikenhead and O.J. Jegede, 'Transcending cultural borders: Implications for science teaching', *Research in Science and Technology Education* 17 (1999) 45-66.

⁵⁵⁹ R. Gould and R. Fernandez, 'Structures of mediation: A formal approach to brokerage in transaction networks', *Sociological Methodology* 19 (1989) 89-126.

domain. As Paul Hirsch demonstrated in his study of modern popular music industry, gatekeepers hold an independent position and are the ones to decide.⁵⁶⁰ In this case I would like to differentiate between within-group gatekeeping and between-groups gatekeeping. Within-group gatekeeping is the mediation between two different groups within the same community, in this case between the knowledge of the Hebrew establishment and the Yiddish of the community. The between-groups gatekeeper is someone who is part of the target group and who decides what knowledge from an outsider he would give entry to the community. Amelander operated in this role when he brought Christian knowledge to the Jewish community, and he was actively involved in selecting such information.

The difference between both types of gatekeeping brokerage concerned what the Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich labeled internal and external multilingualism. The relation between Hebrew and Yiddish can be described as internal bilingualism, in which both languages function within the same Ashkenazi community but with different roles and often with different reading publics. Amelander's brokerage between both language domains was simultaneously an honouring of this given differentiation and an effort to redefine the roles of both languages. External multilingualism, as defined by Weinreich, refers to languages spoken by different ethnic groups in the same territory. In this case, Amelander mastered both the internal Jewish languages and the main co-territorial language, Dutch. The use of the external language was primarily reserved for contacts with non-Jews.⁵⁶¹

I would like to give an example of both types of gatekeeping brokerage, starting with within-group gatekeeping between the Hebrew and Yiddish domains. Amelander is generally very open about his Hebrew sources; he mentions them to his readers, and provides citations and paraphrases. As he explained in his chapter on the *hakamei ha-Talmud*, he regarded it as his task to present his readers with knowledge which had not yet been transferred to the Yiddish domain.⁵⁶² Only in a few cases did Amelander deliberately exclude information found in his Hebrew sources. In 4.3.4 we encountered one such example: Amelander excluded a significant part of Shlomo Molcho's letter, because of the mystical kabbalistic contents of the prophecy which Molcho's related. Amelander consented with the traditional view that Kabbalah was exclusively for the rabbinic elite and could be dangerous in the hands of non-learned people.

⁵⁶⁰ Paul M. Hirsch, 'Processing fads and fashions: an organization-set analysis of cultural industry systems', *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1972) 639-659.

⁵⁶¹ Max Weinreich, 'Inevyknkste tsvey-shrakhikayt in Ashkenaz biz der Haskole: faktn un bagrifn', *Di goldene keyt* 35 (1959) 80-88.

⁵⁶² *SY* ed. 1743, 11r.

As the author of a book aimed at the whole Ashkenazi community, he could therefore not include mystical passages. As a true gatekeeper he closed the gates for knowledge which he regarded as the exclusive right of the rabbinic elite.

Basnage's book, already much debated, was the object of Amelander's position as a between-groups gatekeeper between the Christian and Jewish domains. Although Basnage's work was Amelander's prime source, and included a stunning amount of historical facts and narratives, and was written with clear sympathy to the Jews, it was nonetheless a Christian book. Amelander thus acted as a much stricter gatekeeper towards Basnage than he did towards his Hebrew sources. He left out all chapters and passages from Basnage that were clearly influenced by the author's Christian convictions. For example, he omitted the two chapters on church politics regarding Jews in the Middle Ages, which Basnage had written in order to find out what motivated Christians towards anti-Jewish measures, and passages concerning possible conversion of Jews to Christianity.⁵⁶³ However, Basnage's intellectual interest was incompatible with Amelander's vision of a Yiddish history book.

Basnage's extensive passages on the philosophies of Maimonides, Menasseh ben Israel and Mortara were reduced by Amelander to small topics which concentrated on the authors' lives, mentioning only the titles of their books.⁵⁶⁴ The same happened to Spinoza, whom Basnage was especially interested in: Amelander restricted himself to only a few lines about Spinoza, clearly disapproving and evidencing little understanding of the Sephardi philosopher, yet praising Spinoza's adversary R. Jitschak Orobio:

אונ' האט איין בוך גשריבן קגן שפינאזי דר אך איין יהודי (ספרדי) וואר. דר האט איין נייאי (אמונה) גוועלט אויף ברענגן. דא האבן אך גאר פֿיל נוצרים קיגן אים גשריבן.⁵⁶⁵

It is clear that Amelander deemed the intellectual discussions too heavy for his intended audience; he concentrated instead on historical narratives and devoted little attention to the history of Jewish thought. It could also be the case here that the traditional Ashkenazi

⁵⁶³ E.g. Basnage, *Vervolg*, 1640, 1748-1749, 1893-1900.

⁵⁶⁴ E.g. Basnage discussed at length Menasseh ben Israel's political theory and his exegesis of the image Nebekadnezar saw. From the same chapter on Amsterdam Sephardim Amelander removed completely the passage on Abraham Israel Pilzaro and his interpretation of the passage in Genesis about the scepter of Shilo (Gen. 49,10), in which Basnage was particularly interested as a messianic biblical passage. Basnage, *Vervolg*, 1662ff.

⁵⁶⁵ Amelander, *SY*, 133v.

reluctance and even rejection of philosophy – since the responsum of Rabbi Gershom ben Judah – played a role.⁵⁶⁶

A last example of Amelander's gatekeeping activities is his Ashkenazi correction to the Sephardi dominance in Basnage's book. Basnage, as an intellectual, was far more interested in the acculturated Sephardic communities and their histories than in the less integrated Ashkenazi Jews. Basnage and Amelander each offer a chapter on medieval Jewish sages. Basnage concentrates on Sephardim like Abraham ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Moses and David Kimhi and Shlomo Jarchi. Amelander addresses only a few of them and balances the Sephardim by including Ashkenazi rabbis like Rashi, Tam and the Ribam.⁵⁶⁷ He also complements Basnage's chapters on the Amsterdam Sephardim with a separate chapter on the Amsterdam Ashkenazim. As a gatekeeper between his Christian source and his Ashkenazi reading public, Amelander hindered the entrance of Christian, intellectual and overly Sephardi-oriented passages, in order to finally create a Jewish, Ashkenazi narrative for as large an audience as possible. Amelander's gatekeeping resembles the effort of the translator and editor of the Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah*, who transformed this Spanish-Jewish classic – as Michael Stanislawski has shown – into an Ashkenazi book via both omitting and adding information. Yet whereas Amelander was seeking a balance between Sephardi and Ashkenazi history, giving each its own place, the Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah* tried to turn Sephardim into Ashkenazim so as to make them more understandable to the Yiddish reading public.⁵⁶⁸ Amelander's experience with a living Sephardic community in Amsterdam, an experience shared by part of his local reading public, must have been crucial in his decision to give Sephardim, in addition to Ashkenazim, their own part in the book and to respect the differences in history and culture. In this respect, Amelander's work is a novelty as compared to earlier Ashkenazi historiography. Gans' *Zemah David* was still dominated by what Ismar Schorsch called a 'sense of Ashkenazic superiority', as evidenced by the author's criticism of the Sephardic tendency to convert to Christianity in times of persecutions, as opposed to Ashkenazim, who were presented as opting for martyrdom.⁵⁶⁹

6.4 Cultural contact and conflict

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Shear, *The Kuzari*, 181.

⁵⁶⁷ Basnage, *Vervolg*, 1658-1669; *JY* ed. 1743, chapter 16.

⁵⁶⁸ Stanislawski, 'The Yiddish *Shevet Yehudah*', *passim*.

⁵⁶⁹ Ismar Schorsch, 'The myth of Sephardic supremacy' in: *idem, From text to context*, 71-92, there 72.

Amelander's role as gatekeeper was clear in both positions: he left out specific rabbinical knowledge from the Hebrew corpus and stripped Dutch sources of their Christian worldview and interests. But what did Amelander do when his two source groups presented different narratives and interpretations? This was quite often the case, not only for the political history of the countries where Jews lived, but also for internal Jewish history. The position of a gatekeeping broker is always one of latent conflict between the various circuits he mediates between. Amelander in such cases generally favoured the Hebrew sources and opposed his Dutch sources.⁵⁷⁰ Three examples may exemplify this principle.

First, Amelander used his Hebrew sources in a rather uncritical way, even in cases where Basnage had presented critical analyses for most of them. Basnage dedicated an entire chapter to *Sefer Yosippon*, arguing that it could not have been written by Flavius Josephus and dating the chronicle to the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh century.⁵⁷¹ Amelander, nevertheless, ignored Basnage's criticism and presented *Yosippon* in his introduction as having been written by Josephus around 70 CE. The same is true for other sources, including *Orbot olam* by Farissol and *Zemab David* by David Gans.⁵⁷² In short, Amelander did not wish to question the authenticity and reliability of traditional Hebrew sources.

Second, the same argumentation is true for the question of the historicity of the *Masa'ot Binyamin*, the *Kuzari* and the story about David Reubeni. Amelander presented these three stories as historical accounts, yet, having surely read that Basnage had falsified many of the claims made in these stories, he must have concluded that each was barely if at all historical.⁵⁷³ Thus, Amelander also rejected Christian criticism concerning the historicity of well known Jewish histories.

Third, in those passages in which Basnage explicitly criticized one or more Jewish sources, and doubted or rejected the account provided by the material, Amelander nearly always sided with the Hebrew sources and left the criticism unmentioned. In other cases,

⁵⁷⁰ A similar position was taken by Alexander Ethausen in his treatment of non-Jewish sources: Shmeruk and Bartal, 'Contemporary Jerusalem', 449. In medieval historiography, in cases of conflictive sources historians opted for either the source with the greatest authority, or sided with the majority of sources; Franz Josef Schmale, *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt 1985) 88-89.

⁵⁷¹ Basnage, *Vernolg*, 1630-1640, on 1639 he concluded: 'De beweegreden van dezen bedrieger ontdekt men licht, want hebbende een Historie gevonden van zyne Naatsie, die wel geschreven was, en weinig bekent van die, waar voor men die gemaakt hadt, besloot hy 'er een diergelyke in het Hebreuwsch onder zynen naam uit te geven. (...) Hy stal uit den waren Josefus tot den naam vanhet geslacht toe, waar op hy zich wilde inenten. De list is hem gelukt...'

⁵⁷² Basnage, *Vernolg*, 1821, 1892.

⁵⁷³ On Basnage's and Amelander's evaluation of the *Kuzari*: Shear, *The Kuzari*, 192, 205-206.

Amelander publicly declared his preference for Jewish knowledge over Gentile sources. An example is Amelander's account of the Jewish medical doctor Montalto, who had served in Maria de' Medici's court. He was granted the privilege of having horses kept ready for him on *Shabbat*, in case someone should be deadly ill, so that he could come as quickly as possible after the holy day had ended. According to the Gentile sources' account, on *Shabbat* the doctor would have objected to going immediately to help the sick. But, as Amelander stated: וועלכש (דברי חז"ל) איך ניט וואול גלאבן קען ווייל עש איז קיגן (דברי חז"ל).⁵⁷⁴

Only occasionally did Amelander opt to follow a Dutch source instead of a Hebrew one. This is the case with numbers and dates, which were given more precisely in the Christian sources than in the Jewish ones. The only instance in *Sheyris Yisroel* where Amelander explicitly mentions Basnage is when he challenges Chaim Drukker's statement - made in a *luab* for the year 5479 (1719) - that the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam had been inaugurated in 5432 (1672). Referring to Basnage, Amelander claimed that the correct date was 5435 (1675).

A second case in which Amelander favored Dutch over Hebrew sources was in regard to exotic parts of the world, about which much less was known in the period the Hebrew chronicles were written. As such, Amelander's account of Mohammed and Islam is based entirely on a Dutch source: *Mabomets leven uit verschreide Christe Schryvers getrokken*. The stories this source presented about Mohammed offered a less mythical and more reliable account of the prophet of Islam. Amelander, as a true gatekeeper, thereby introduced new facts and theories into the Jewish world – albeit on Islam, which would have been considered a rather innocuous topic.⁵⁷⁵

Amelander's preference for Hebrew over Dutch sources can be explained by his principal loyalty to his own community. It is here that the difference between within-group and between-groups gatekeeping brokerage becomes significant. The norms for cultural brokerage within one's own group are much more strict than those for cultural contact with the outside world. As a member of the Jewish community Amelander regarded himself as being part of the larger Jewish historiographical tradition and considered his intellectual projects as reworking and adding to the books of his predecessors. He was very open towards Dutch historiography as long as it did not significantly contradict traditional Jewish knowledge. Serious criticism was precluded by the *sensibilités collectives*, the collective sensibilities which define group codes of the

⁵⁷⁴ SY ed. 1743, 90v.

⁵⁷⁵ More detailed about Amelander's account of Mohammed and Islam: Bart Wallet, 'Mohammed als valse profet. Vroegmoderne joodse historici over de islam', *ZemZem 2* (2006) 1, 115-123, 161.

group in order to strengthen collective identity.⁵⁷⁶ Amelander, being socially dependent of the rabbinical and administrative establishment, was well aware of such sensibilities. He thus avoided taking critical positions, concentrating instead on the facts and stories themselves and only introducing new materials and interpretations that were thought not to challenge the interests of the Jewish community. In medieval times it was the gatekeeper's task to open the city gates for people who contributed to the wealth and well-being of the citizens and to close the gates to anyone who jeopardized the interests of the city. This is precisely what Amelander did in the transfer of knowledge from Hebrew and Dutch domains into the Yiddish one.

⁵⁷⁶ Philippe Joutard and Jean Lecuir ed., *Histoire sociale, sensibilités collectives et mentalités. Mélanges Robert Mandrou* (Paris 1985); Rooijackers, *Rituele repertoires*, 87.

PART III: IN THE WAKE OF *SHEYRIS YISROEL*

7. Successor chronicles. Amelander and his epigones (1740-1812)

7.1 Successor chronicles: towards a genre definition

Amelander's history book *Sheyris Yisroel* appeared to be a great stimulus for others to start writing history themselves as well. The book is, therefore, not only a culmination of earlier Hebrew historiography, but as well the start of a new, small but significant tradition of mainly Yiddish historiography. This new historiography in a way did exactly the same as Amelander did before them, they choose to continue an important and widely accepted history book. Whereas Amelander presented *Sheyris Yisroel* as the sequel to *Sefer Yosippon*, and thus narrated Jewish history from where Yosippon ended until his own times, Amelander's successors took *Sheyris Yisroel* as their starting point.

This procedure, resulting in the formation of a chain of history books each continuing where the predecessor stopped, is a specimen of what could be qualified as the successor tradition in Jewish historiography. It was, however, not a uniquely Jewish historiographical tradition, also in other cultures – Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist – the same approach towards historiography was very common. Knowing this, it might surprise that thus far barely any attention has been paid to this tradition. Although some authors writing about such sequels, continuations or successors, noted the procedure, a theory is still lacking. In this chapter I will present the relation between *Sheyris Yisroel* and its successors as a case study of the successor tradition in search for a better understanding of its dynamics.⁵⁷⁷

Before concentrating on the eighteenth century Amsterdam Jewish adoption of this tradition, it is worthwhile to look first after its origin and development. In ancient historiography historians often referred to predecessors, in a bid to benefit from their authority, but at the same time with the wish to imitate them. The rhetorical technique of 'imitation' was not a literal copying, but profiting from what predecessors had reached by continuing and emulating their work. In some cases this resulted in Latin and Greek chains of history books, with the often explicit belief underlying that the last in the line was also the best.⁵⁷⁸ In medieval historiography the successor tradition had become one of the main trends

⁵⁷⁷ A first examination of this topic I presented in: Bart Wallet, 'Ongoing History: The Successor Tradition in Early Modern Jewish Historiography' in: Shlomo Berger and Irene E. Zwiep eds., *Epigonism and the dynamic of Jewish culture* [Studia Rosenthaliana 40] (Leuven/Paris/Dudley MA 2008) 183-194.

⁵⁷⁸ John Marincola, *Authority and tradition in ancient historiography* (Cambridge 2003) esp. 217-257, see as well the appendices with Latin and Greek continuators.

because fitted best the dominant interpretation of history. History was, by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, seen as the unfolding of God's plans with the world in which each detail, how unimportant it might look like, could have a part. Historiography was, therefore, teleological, written towards a yet unknown but certain end under the care of God's providential governance. History writing was thus basically chronicling past and present through a theological scope.⁵⁷⁹

An influential notion of biblical historiography was the idea of a chosen nation or group which served in particular as the bearer of God's promises for the future. For anyone living in present times it was of crucial importance to belong to that particular nation or group. Historiography served as one of the means to articulate such groups identities and their borders. Christian historiography started with Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (312), in which not political structures were chosen as the bearer of history but the church. In his book Eusebius stressed the importance of the apostolic succession, continuously providing lists of names of bishops in which a direct connection was made to the apostles and thus to the original teachings of Jesus. At the same time Eusebius made clear which preachers were heretics, deviating from the orthodox doctrine which was handed over faithfully by the authorized succession. Eusebius in his book presented the church as God's chosen people and stressed that its present leaders could be trusted as the guardians of the original doctrine. As such this history book was historical apologetic, to show the authority and reliability of the orthodox church. Eusebius wanted to strengthen his readers in their conviction that the church was God's agent on earth and the future recipient of the fulfillment of God's promises.⁵⁸⁰

Jewish historiography functioned in much the same way. Here it was not the apostolic succession, but the transmission of the rabbinic tradition that was central and considered the orthodox core of Judaism. Also here this authoritative tradition was separated strictly from heretics, such as the Karaites. The Jewish variant of this tradition, the *shalshelet ha-qabbalah* as presented in chapter 2, never fully developed in more elaborate historiography as was the case with Eusebius. But *shalshelet ha-qabbalah* clearly expressed the same convictions and philosophy of history in its stress on the validity of the rabbinic succession from Moses to

⁵⁷⁹ R.W. Burgess and Michael Kulikowski, 'The history and origins of the Latin chronicle tradition' in: Erik Kooper ed., *The medieval chronicle VI* (Amsterdam/New York 2009) 153-177.

⁵⁸⁰ Eusebius, *The church history*, translation and commentary by Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids 2007) e.g. 119-120, 124-126, 138-140, 162-163, 167, 169; A. Momigliano, 'Pagan and Christian historiography in the fourth century AD' in: idem, *Essays in ancient and modern historiography* (Oxford 1977) 107-126, esp. 110-117; G.W. Trompf, *Early Christian historiography. Narratives of retribution* (London/Oakville 2000) 109-157. An analysis of Eusebius from the perspective of modern communication theory provides: Doron Mendels, *The media revolution of early Christianity. An essay on Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids 1999).

contemporary rabbis. History functioned as the background for the continuity of rabbinic tradition.

This dynamic of continuity as the backbone of a linearly developing history invited others simply to continue, which is exactly what happened. Eusebius' chronicle was influential both in the Western and Eastern variants of Christendom, and spawned several successor chronicles. In the Byzantine tradition Eusebius was continued by a triad of Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomenus and Theodoretus, continuing where Eusebius ended and writing from the same providential philosophy of history.⁵⁸¹ In the Latin world Eusebius became well known through the translation and continuation by Jerome, while Prosper Tiro of Aquitania, Hydatius and Rufinus also wrote translations, abridgments and continuations of Eusebius. These in turn prompted their own continuations: Prosper's work, for example, was continued by both Marius of Avenches and Victor of Tunnana. The chronicle of the latter was, furthermore, continued by John of Biclaro.⁵⁸²

Such a chain of successive chronicles developed in Jewish and Islamic historiography as well, although these did not have a standard chronicle comparable to Eusebius.⁵⁸³ In Jewish historiography the genre of *shalshelet ha-qabbalah*, starting in the tractate Avot in the Mishnah, was further developed in the famous letter of Rav Sherira Gaon (986), updated in Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* (c. 1160) and continued by Abraham ben Solomon of Torrutiel (b. 1482) and others.⁵⁸⁴ In Islamic historiography the famous history book of Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari* (915), was prominent and continued by several others. In contrast to its Jewish and Christian counterparts, Islamic historiography recognized it as a separate genre and titled it the *dhayl* (continuation). The genre qualification was included in the title, as was the case with Qutb al-Din Musa al-Yunini's (d. 1326) *Dhayl Mir'at al-Zaman*, the continuation of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzi's (d. 1256) famous universal history *Mir'at al-Zaman fi Ta'rikh al-A'yan*.⁵⁸⁵

Why was this successor tradition so successful in medieval historiography? Three important reasons should be noted. First, this genre fitted well in the dominant philosophy of

⁵⁸¹ Trompf, *Early Christian historiography*, 213-252.

⁵⁸² For these and other successor chronicles: R. de Schryver, *Historiografie. Vijftienvintig eeuwen geschiedschrijving van West-Europa* (Leuven, Assen/Maastricht 1990) 84-89; 101-102, 105, 112, 114-115, 134, 137, 139-140, 143-144, 146-149, 154-155, 158, 164. xxx (articles on Tunnana and Biclaro)

⁵⁸³ For Hindu and Buddhist examples of the same tradition: Michael Witzel, 'On Indian historical writing. The role of the Vamçavalis', *Journal of the Japanese association for South Asian studies* 2 (1990) 1-57.

⁵⁸⁴ A. David ed., *Two chronicles from the generation of the Spanish exile* [Hebrew; Kutresim 52] (Jerusalem 1979); cf. Adolf Neubauer, *Medieval Hebrew chronicles* I (Oxford 1887) 101-114.

⁵⁸⁵ C.E. Farah, *The 'dhayl' in medieval Arabic historiography* (New Haven 1967); L. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian historiography. Al-Yunini's Dhayl Mir'at al-Zaman* (Leiden etc. 1998) 2vols.; C.F. Robinson, *Islamic historiography* (Cambridge 2003) 177-180.

history, namely that there was only one universal and immutable history which could not be changed, only continued. Therefore there was no need for independent research and accepted history books were not questioned. The task of the historian was to continue the project of his predecessors and to show that also in his own times there was no interruption of tradition and thus continuity in religious and political matters.⁵⁸⁶ Also historians who did not choose the model of the successor chronicle, remained within the same tradition since they shared the same concept of history. They could start their history book with Creation, Noah or Moses, but then only abridged the accepted predecessors up until the time from which they were really starting their narrative. Their philosophy of history was not different from the ones in the successor tradition: they all wanted to show continuity in history, stressing God's providence and using a teleological methodology.

Second, the successor tradition was well suited to strengthen the legitimacy of the dominant religious and/or political elites. With the idea of apostolic or rabbinic succession at its base, historiography had no use to question earlier accounts of history. The authority of contemporary elites was grounded on the idea of continuity with widely accepted predecessors. Successor chronicles therefore accepted the account of earlier histories and presented today's rabbis, bishops or popes as the legitimate bearers of tradition. Most history books were structured according to the sequence of rabbis, bishops, popes and kings.⁵⁸⁷

Third, authority was also important for the authors themselves. In this time of history originality was not the most important characteristic of a historian.⁵⁸⁸ To have his book of history accepted he preferably joined authoritative predecessors, hoping that as a continuation to these books his own work would be successful as well. As Marincola concluded for ancient historians, by continuing their predecessors work they expressed their wish to be seen as practitioners of a serious history.⁵⁸⁹ The successor chronicler wanted to be regarded as a faithful bearer of the accepted historiographical tradition, and therefore chose to line up in a longer chain of history books. Historians were therefore deliberately epigonic by choice, they

⁵⁸⁶ A.J. Gurevich, *Categories of medieval culture* (London etc. 1985) 129. This contrasts with the more optimistic approach of ancient historians, who wanted to emulate their predecessors and were often very polemical; Marincola, *Authority and tradition*, 221-225.

⁵⁸⁷ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Genealogy, form and function in medieval historiography' in: idem, *The past as text. The theory and practice of medieval historiography* (Baltimore/London 1997) 99-110.

⁵⁸⁸ Schmale, *Funktion und Formen*, 94.

⁵⁸⁹ Marincola, *Authority and tradition*, 254.

did not have the wish or intention to be an original intellectual presenting new and controversial interpretations of history.⁵⁹⁰

This successor tradition became seriously questioned by the rise of Renaissance historiography. Instead of ecclesiastical, providential historiography, politics as a secular category was rediscovered in classical pre-Christian Latin and Greek historiography. The reverence for traditional authoritative history books was also challenged by a new stress on originality and individuality. Historians no longer wanted just to continue, but started to look with new eyes and new questions towards earlier historiography. New chronologies, new interpretations, new methods and models were used and presented. Historians started to look for primary sources and used these to question the accepted history books. The sequence of bishops and the legitimization of their authority was no longer the premise of history, but was replaced by a more secular and political interpretation of history.

As Bonfil has demonstrated, Jewish historiography had serious problems to answer this shift in historical methodology and philosophy. As a group in society devoid of a political entity, a genuine Jewish political history was not within the reach of Jewish historians. The only interpretative model to combine Jewish and general political history was its antithesis, as the books that focus on persecutions and expulsions show. The other option was to present Jewish and general history in two separate sections, as is the case with David Gans' *Zemah David*.⁵⁹¹ As Gans' wrote: 'However, in order to separate the holy from the profane, I have set aside for these matters a special section of the book. Thus, that which deals with the living God will not be mixed with secular events.'⁵⁹² Moreover, Gans' choice also had to do with his fundamental historical interpretation that Jews living in Diaspora – under the last of the four kingdoms from the Book of Daniel – had a passive role in history, until the messianic age would start.⁵⁹³

Jewish historiography, therefore, continued writing history in the traditional way. Amelander's choice to first edit a Yiddish edition of *Sefer Yosippon*, and thereafter continue with *Sheyris Yisroel* was typical for the status of contemporary Jewish historiography. He was, however, not alone. In Christian historiography too, next to the new style of historical writing, the successor tradition was continued, in some cases well into the nineteenth century. In the

⁵⁹⁰ For the concept of epigonism, see: Berger and Zwiep, *Epigonism*, esp. 1-8.

⁵⁹¹ R. Bonfil, 'How golden was the age of the Renaissance in Jewish historiography?' in: A. Rapaport-Albert ed., *Essays in Jewish historiography* (Atlanta 1991) 78-102; idem, 'Jewish attitudes toward history and historical writing in pre-modern times', *Jewish History* 11 (1997) 7-40. Cf. David Biale, *Power & powerlessness in Jewish history* (New York 1986) 113.

⁵⁹² Cited after: Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish history*, 125.

⁵⁹³ Degani, 'Structure of world history', 196-200.

Netherlands the principal Dutch history of the eighteenth century provides a good example: Jan Wagenaar wrote 21 volumes of his *Vaderlandsche Historie* (1749-1759), which was continued by both Joh. Munniks with seventeen volumes and Petrus Loosjes Azn. in no less than 48 volumes.⁵⁹⁴

With the 'choice' to write a successor chronicle, whether deliberate or as a mere consequence of the still dominant historical paradigm, Amelander and his own successors as well, accepted the underlying concepts of this type of traditional historiography. They accepted the authority of their predecessors and stressed the continuity both in history and history writing. Also the Amsterdam historians were epigonic by choice. This did not, of course, prevent them to take within the boundaries of the genre new courses, as the study of Amelander's successors will show.

7.2 *Successors to Sheyris Yisroel*

After the publication of *Sheyris Yisroel* in 1743 several Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jews started to write historical works as well, an activity which before that time was barely undertaken by them. All of them chose to write in Yiddish, not in Hebrew, which was before Amelander the common language for historiography. In most cases the link with Amelander was in some way made clear, through a publication together with *Sheyris Yisroel*, the date of starting the chronicle or the title given to the chronicle. Only in two cases a clear link with *Sheyris Yisroel* is lacking, although these are also clearly part of the same interest in history. In the follow paragraphs we will analyse subsequently the various Yiddish chronicles written in the wake of Amelander's magnum opus – while thereafter these writings will be evaluated from the perspective of the successor tradition in Jewish historiography.

7.2.1 *Braatbard's Ayn Naye Kornayk fun 1740-1752*

⁵⁹⁴ L.H.M. Wessels, *Bron, waarheid en de verandering der tijden. Jan Wagenaar (1709-1773), een historiografische studie* (The Hague 1996). Earlier examples of successor chronicles in the Netherlands during the Renaissance era: Karin Tilmans, *Historiography and humanism in Holland in the age of Erasmus. Aurelius and the Divisiechroniek of 1517* (Nieuwkoop 1992) 300-303, 310-313, 317, 320. The Divisiechroniek was continued until the eighteenth century, whereafter Wagenaar and his successors took over: De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 155.

The first continuation is written in the decade after the publication of *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁵⁹⁵ Although neither in the introduction nor in the text the history book of Amelander is mentioned, it is very likely that it is intended as a successor chronicle. There are three arguments that may support this claim. First, the chronicle starts where Amelander ended his history, in 1740. It could therefore be read as a direct continuation of chapter 34 on the history of Ashkenazim in Amsterdam, which finished with the appointment in 1740 of Aryeh Leib ben Saul – the son-in-law of Haham Zvi – as chief rabbi.

Second, the title is indicative, as it is a *new* chronicle. It has to refer to an earlier history book, but which one? We have no copy or even evidence of another chronicle before this one, written by the author himself or someone else, and also in the introduction the author is not hinting at an earlier work of himself. *Sheyris Yisroel*, however, was widely known and enjoyed popularity in such a degree that it is not too far-fetched to assume that the author by using the name *Ayn Naye Kornayk* wanted to repeat the same strategy Amelander had used himself: gaining acceptance by connecting to an authoritative predecessor.⁵⁹⁶

Third, the biography of the author, Abraham Hayim ben Zvi Hirsh Braatbard (1699-1786), is probably the most convincing clue connecting both projects. As Rena Fuks-Mansfeld has shown, Braatbard worked as a Hebrew type-setter in several Amsterdam Jewish printing firms, at least from 1725 until 1732.⁵⁹⁷ Like Amelander, Braatbard worked on several publication projects of Moses Frankfurter and they even worked together on the *Magishe minha* project and on the publication of *Shevet musar*.⁵⁹⁸ Both authors were active in the same industry and must have known each other rather well. It does not go too far to suggest, as Fuks-Mansfeld does, that Amelander has worked for a long time on *Sheyris Yisroel* and that Braatbard might well have been inspired by seeing his learned colleague collecting material and working on his history book. *Sheyris Yisroel* and *Ayn Naye Kornayk* both were written within the Hebrew

⁵⁹⁵ The manuscript is held in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana; signature Hs.Ros. 486.

⁵⁹⁶ That Amelander's history book is published in 1743, while Braatbard already started in 1740, is no convincing argument not to believe that the 'new chronicle' was intended as a continuation to Amelander. As already demonstrated, Amelander ended his narrative in 1740, and Braatbard must have been collecting material at least from that time. But, as will be shown later, he wrote the chronicle largely retrospectively. Moreover, his material over the years 1740-1743 is not very much. Contra: R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography in the time of the Dutch Republic', *Studia Rosenthaliana* XV (1981) 1, 9-19, there 15.

⁵⁹⁷ R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Abraham Hayim ben Zvi Hirsh Braatbard. A Hebrew type-setter in the first half of the eighteenth century', *Zutot, perspectives on Jewish culture* 1 (2001) 133-137; next to the titles mentioned by Fuks-Mansfeld, Braatbard collaborated on: Yosef Moshe ben David, *Sefer haq Yosef* (Amsterdam 1730) 52v.

⁵⁹⁸ *Sefer megishe minha, beleq sheni: nevi'im rishonim* (Amsterdam ...) at the final page of the text; Eliyahu ben Abraham Ha-Kohen, *Shevet musar* (Amsterdam 1732) 113r, 116v.

and Yiddish printing industry, which clearly acted as one of the Jewish intellectual centers in eighteenth century Amsterdam.⁵⁹⁹

The chronicle of Braatbard comprises the years 1740-1752, a period characterized by the author as absolutely unique, although he did not explain this uniqueness in comparison with other periods in history.⁶⁰⁰ The book starts with the flooding in the meteorologically extraordinary winter of 1740 of the county Bentheim, a neighbouring German region very close to the Dutch Republic in religion, language and politics, and ends with the inauguration of the new Houtgracht synagogue in Amsterdam in 1752. As these two topics already reveal, Braatbard concentrated in his chronicle on the events in the Dutch Republic, and only now and then narrated what happened elsewhere. Even within the Dutch Republic he did not tell much about what happened outside the province of Holland, and specifically outside Amsterdam. The Braatbard chronicle is in that sense typical for a city chronicle.

Leo Fuks in his introduction to the Dutch translation of part of the chronicle suggested that Braatbard ended in 1752 because his father died a year before and the author probably had to take over his father's business as a money exchanger. Apart from the fact that we have no proof that Braatbard took over his father's position, it makes more sense to interpret Braatbard ending in 1752 out of his specific Amsterdam and Orangist focus. Braatbard clearly interpreted the inauguration of the new synagogue as an important apotheosis of Amsterdam Ashkenazi life, a happy end after a period of serious troubles also for Amsterdam Jewry. He therefore added, after the chronicle, as well the liturgy for the inauguration that the chief rabbi, Aryeh Leib, had composed. Furthermore, in 1752 stadtholder William IV of Orange, an important character in the chronicle of whom Braatbard was an outspoken and ardent adherent, was buried in Delft, thus providing for the chronicler a reasonable end.⁶⁰¹

Unlike Amelander, who wrote a universal history book, Braatbard choose the genre of a chronicle. He documented contemporary times and structured the book according to the years with in total no less than 291 chapters.⁶⁰² While the title page showed the Christian years

⁵⁹⁹ Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Braatbard', 136-137.

⁶⁰⁰ Abraham Hayim Braatbard, *A naye kornayk fun 1740-1752*, Hs.Ros. 486, introduction: אין קארץ צו שרייבן אזו לנג דיא וועלט ווערט שטיאן ווערט ניש ווידר אזו איין צייט קומן אז אין דיא צוועלף יאר גווען זיין.

⁶⁰¹ Fuks, *De zeyen provincien*, 7; Braatbard, *Kornayk*, final pages and chapter 281 (William IV), 285 (Naye Shul).

⁶⁰² The chronicle has 285 chapters, but in three instances Braatbard counted double and in one section he counted three chapters wrong, see notes 317-319. Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld abusively give a total of 295 in: *Hebrew and Judaic manuscripts* I, 218, although Fuks elsewhere gives a total of 285, e.g. in 'Ajn naye kronajk foen 1740-1752. Uit de kroniek van Abraham Chajim, zoon van Tsewi Hirsch Braatbaard, van den huize Couveren', *Maandblad voor de geschiedenis der joden in Nederland* I (5708) 1, 45-49, there 46.

1740-1752, in the book itself the Hebrew years are used: 5500-5512. Within the text both Christian and Jewish dates are used, without any apparent methodology behind it.⁶⁰³ This dual use of Christian and Jewish dates could be interpreted as an indication of both the level of integration of Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jewry of which also the contents give testimony and of internal changes within the Ashkenazi world, including elements from contemporary culture in a Jewish framework. Twice Braatbard even forgot to start a new Hebrew year, jumping from 5503 to 5505 and from 5510 to 5512. Under 5503 and 5510, however, also events that happened in 5504 and 5511 were narrated. This is another indication that Braatbard thought in both Jewish and Christian years, and two times continued within the Christian year, but forgot to start a new Jewish year. Further evidence is provided by the first chapters of the years 5505, 5506, 5507 and 5508, which all start in the Christian years respectively 1745, 1746, 1747 and 1748; the years 5509, 5510 and 5512 are, however, starting with the Jewish years in the autumn of respectively 1748, 1749 and 1751.

The number of chapters devoted to the several years differ significantly, depending on the material Braatbard had. The section on the year 5506 (1745-1746) he concluded with: ווייטר שליס איך דז יאר דען איך קען ניט מער שרייבן אז וואס פוציארט איז.⁶⁰⁴ The next chapter, which opens the new section on the year 5507 (1746-1747), however, opened with the announcement that in 1747 happened so much and that there are so many *חידושים* (news), especially related to the war, that Braatbard would even not be able to narrate it all.⁶⁰⁵ The difference in number of chapters is shown by the next table:

Year	Number of chapters
5500 (1739-1740)	6 ⁶⁰⁶
5501 (1740-1741)	6
5502 (1741-1742)	7
5503-4 (1742-1744)	16
5505 (1744-1745)	13
5506 (1745-1746)	9

⁶⁰³ Compare e.g. chapters 55 and 57.

⁶⁰⁴ 'I conclude the year because I can not write more than what had happened.' Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 57.

⁶⁰⁵ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 58. In chapter 55 this was already announced by Braatbard, ensuring his readers that he would not only tell what happened in detail but also would provide the *און ליגנו*, explanations.

⁶⁰⁶ Braatbard twice numbered a chapter 6, which brings to total of chapters on 5500 on 7.

5507 (1746-1747)	26
5508 (1747-1748)	85
5509 (1748-1749)	70 ⁶⁰⁷
5510-1 (1749-1751)	36 ⁶⁰⁸
5512 (1751-1752)	8

This table shows that the stories that were the most important to Braatbard happened in the years 5508 and 5509. At the background of the chronicle is the War of the Austrian Succession, which lasted from 1740 until 1748, but in which the Dutch Republic was only involved since France attacked the Southern Netherlands in 1744. Most of the battles did not directly involve the Dutch and Braatbard only started documenting the war when it reached the Republic itself and the population started to ask for the elevation of William IV as stadtholder of all the seven united provinces. Braatbard documented the call for Orange and its success neatly in his section on 5508. Another consequence of the war was social unrest, caused by the high taxes to finance the war and by the economic effects which hit the trade, resulting in the 'Tax collectors' Rebellion (*Pachtersoproer*) of 1748. Ordinary people, mainly Orangists, attacked the houses of the tax collectors, who symbolized the corrupt and autocratic political style of the ruling class. Braatbard's account of the rebellion, in the section on 5509, is still considered one of the main sources on this event, offering at least one of the most vivid descriptions. In between the chronicle tells about the weather, the prices of food, criminality and events in the Jewish communities.

The chronicle in its present, final state must have been written at least after 1755, using earlier notes made by the author from 1740 onwards, while organizing his material in annual sections. That becomes clear in several ways. First, in an entry in the section on 5502 (1742) Braatbard tells about a pump erected on the Amstelveld and adds that it was finally removed in 1748.⁶⁰⁹ Second, chapter 9 narrates that the *av beth din*, the acting chief rabbi, ordered to check all mazot if they were really kosher. Unfortunately he found out many were not, and to the dismay of many poor people they had to be burnt. Now, the title '*av beth din*' is followed by the traditional abbreviation *z"l*, *zikhrono livraha* (of blessed memory), an

⁶⁰⁷ Braatbard made a mistake in numbering his chapters, between chapter 179 and chapter 180 he gave three more chapters with wrong numbers. This makes the real number of chapters in this section not 70 but 73.

⁶⁰⁸ Here Braatbard did also not count well and twice gave a chapter 241 and 264, which brings the real number of chapters in this section on 37 and the total on 291.

⁶⁰⁹ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 13.

indication that at the time of writing the person had died. The chief rabbi at that time was Aryeh Leyb, who died in 1755, indicating that the chronicle had been written thereafter.⁶¹⁰ More chapters in the chronicle have materials that crossreference to later years, all giving evidence that the book was edited afterwards and is not just a regularly updated diary.⁶¹¹ The chronicle as we have it now was even not finished completely, in some chapters Braatbard left open spaces to write the dates in later.⁶¹²

Braatbard made clear in his introduction that he wrote his book as a memory (לזכרון) for the coming generations, until eternity, and for both young and old people. He asked the readers to read the chronicle properly and assured them, both in the introduction and the concluding remarks of the book, that he wrote everything in a very precise and truthful way. An interesting remark is that he invited his readers to compare his chronicle with those written by others about the same period to find out that he did not lie about the past events.⁶¹³ Braatbard thus was well aware that he was not the only one chronicling contemporary events in Amsterdam, which could hint at other Ashkenazim or at non-Jewish chroniclers.⁶¹⁴ We have no knowledge of surviving Jewish chronicles documenting the same period, but this line might hint at more Yiddish historiography than presently extant to us.

The way Braatbard addressed his readers, stressing the importance of his chronicle, may well be an indication of a wish to have his book published.⁶¹⁵ The reworking of his material in a chronicle comprising the years 1740-1752 could be interpreted in the same way. Unfortunately for the author, despite his contacts within the Hebrew and Yiddish printing industry, his chronicle was not printed and only survived in manuscript form, most probably the autograph since binding, paper and the used Ashkenazi cursive seem to be contemporary. The manuscript has in total 202 8° foliopages, with the text covering 176 pages, and is bound in half-vellum with the title written on the spine. The chronicle was unknown and most likely kept in the family until, after the Second World War, the librarian Leo Fuks, acquired the manuscript in 1948 for the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁰ Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld give abusively 1753 as the date of writing, but it must have been at least two years later; Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic manuscripts* I, 217.

⁶¹¹ See for example the chapters 41, 48 and 80.

⁶¹² As the several chapters in the section on 5500 (1-6).

⁶¹³ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, concluding remarks.

⁶¹⁴ The best known non-Jewish contemporary chronicling Amsterdam history is Jacob Bicker Rajje; Machiel Bosman, *De polsslag van de stad. De Amsterdamse stadskroniek van Jacob Bicker Rajje (1732-1772)* (Amsterdam 2009).

⁶¹⁵ Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography', 15-16.

⁶¹⁶ Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic manuscripts* I, x, 218.

There is one peculiar aspect about the manuscript. In the middle of the text, between the chapters 53 and 54, there are two pages, written partly in a different type, with three Hebrew *piyyutim*, liturgical poems. The first one is a prayer directed to ‘our God and the God of our fathers’, expressing trust in Him, confessing sins and asking for help against evil people, who are destroying cities and starting wars. The prayer consists of 7 lines. All words in the same line start with the same letter, the first line with the א, the second with the מ, and each line further one of the letters of the name אמשטרדם (Amsterdam). Each line has nine words, which is stressed by a sentence following the prayer: מיוסד בתשע אותיות שהוא כנגד ט שמורה על: חיים וקיים לעולם.⁶¹⁷ The letter ט, with the number value of 9, is in kabbalistic circles interpreted as a shortening for טוב, good, thus the prayer in a very symbolic way is asking for the good of Amsterdam. But ט is also referring to the ninth *sefirah* in the kabbalah, the יסוד, foundation, which is interpreted as the basis for the existence of the world grounded in God’s eternal existence.⁶¹⁸ In the creation story according to Bereshit 1, in its turn, the word טוב as a qualification is also frequently used. Amsterdam, in this way, is also rooted in God’s creation and connected to God’s eternity. The prayer is, therefore, passionately asking God to save the city of Amsterdam.

The second *piyyut* is a version of the traditional *Aneinu*, in which through repeating the sentence ‘answer us’ the community pleads before God for his help and protection. God is addressed as the God of Abraham, the fear of Isaac (Gen. 31, 42), the mighty one of Jacob, the helper of the tribes, the stronghold of the Matriarchs, the father of the orphans and the judge of the widows. The *Aneinu* prayer is said during the five traditional fasting days, such as the Tenth of Tewel and Tisha be’ Av. It has, at such days or periods, a place at the *minha*, evening, services during weekdays.⁶¹⁹

In the final prayer God is asked for forgiveness because of the great sins, pleading for his mercy. Furthermore, his blessing and help is asked for the leaders of the country and its defense, and his anger over the murderous enemies. This prayer also has seven lines, the first letters of which form the word ‘Amsterdam’. The content of the prayer should therefore be connected with contemporary events in the city. Although the three prayers are not introduced, there are one line sentences in between in Yiddish indicating that these prayers are

⁶¹⁷ ‘Founded on nine letters which equal ‘tet’/nine, safeguarding life and exist forever.’

⁶¹⁸ Daniel Matt ed., *The Zohar. Pritzker edition* 5 (Stanford 2009) 385.

⁶¹⁹ Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, *The Lord is righteous in all his ways. Reflections on the Tish’ah be-Av kinot* (Jersey City NJ 2006) 10-11, 39-41.

said by the community in synagogue (...דא אויף האט קהל ווייטר גזאגט...).⁶²⁰ The three prayers should therefore be connected to the next chapter, 55, in which is narrated about the special *selibot* services that started from May 23, 1746 onwards, every Wednesday evening from 18:00 until 19:00 hours, because of the war with France. That is further substantiated by a contemporary Dutch pamphlet which provided the translation of the three prayers and the following standard prayers.⁶²¹ In this translation the play with the Hebrew language has disappeared, and likewise the sentence indicating the kabbalistic notions expressed in the first prayer. The prayers were specifically prepared, on order of the parnassim, on the occasion of the war, while also no less than 26 Psalms were to be recited.⁶²² At the end of the chapter Braatbard wrote that he even translated the *selibot* prayers into Yiddish (*taytsh*), but did not include them because he was not sure if he did well to do so.⁶²³

The chronicle is written in a very vivid style, in a colloquial Yiddish influenced by the Dutch vernacular.⁶²⁴ Especially terms dealing with everyday life, such as products, money, and political structures, are taken from Dutch, while through Dutch also some French words entered his chronicle (גיפאצירט).⁶²⁵ Sometimes Braatbard used the common Dutch word, but then provided his readers also with the proper Yiddish terminology. As for example twice in chapter 284: the first sentence on national donations held on March 5, 1752 for all poor school children in the Dutch Republic, where Braatbard wrote, that ‘איין קולעקטע גמאכט ווארן צו זאגן’ and second, a bit later, writing about neighbourhoods: ‘...בירט אודר שכונה...’.⁶²⁶ As the prayers referred to above already show, the Hebrew type-setter Braatbard was also familiar with the Hebrew language and now and then added some Hebrew phrases – mainly wishes –, but without turning his chronicle in a mixture of Yiddish and Hebrew which could have made it difficult to read for many.⁶²⁷

7.2.2 Kosman’s Chapter 36, 1771

⁶²⁰ ‘Thereafter the congregation continued...’

⁶²¹ *Translaet van het Hebreuws gebed, der Hoogduytsge Joodze Natie, binnen Amsterdam, Dat in hunne Kerk, ter gelegenheid der Weekekyke Bedestonden, Die gehouden werden alle Woensdagen des Namiddags, de klokke zes uren, gedaan werd* (Amsterdam: by Eleke van Belkom, [1747]).

⁶²² At least since 1688 Jews participated in the nationwide special dayes of prayer, fasting and thanksgiving, which were proclaimed by the national authorities (States General) and had an important place in the Dutch civil religion; Peter R. van Rooden, ‘Dissenters en bededagen: Civil religion ten tijde van de Republiek’, *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 107 (1992) 703-712.

⁶²³ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 55 and the preceding pages for the three poems/prayers.

⁶²⁴ Cf. Ariane Zwiers, *Kroniek van het Jiddisj. Taalkundige aspecten van achttiende-eeuws Nederlands Jiddisj* (Delft 2003) 450-510.

⁶²⁵ Gepatsirt (happened); final sentence of chapter 55; chapter 185.

⁶²⁶ ‘offerings or *nedove* were collected’; ‘neighbourhood or *shkhone*’; Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 284.

⁶²⁷ See e.g. the introduction.

The most direct continuation of *Sheyris Yisroel* is added to the republication of the book in 1771 by Kosman ben Joseph Baruch, who in 1743 had printed the first edition together with his father-in-law Naphtali Herz Rofe. Kosman revealed in his introduction that *Sheyris Yisroel* had been received very well by the public and the book had already been out of print for a long period. Many people asked for a new edition, and therefore Kosman decided to provide one.

Kosman did even more. After Amelander's text, Kosman added one more chapter, written by himself. In this continuation 'I added everything which happened to our Jewish brethren in the whole world since the first edition', of course only as far 'as it is known to me'. But: 'particularly what happened in our community in Amsterdam'.⁶²⁸ He was right to add that, because most of chapter 36 is devoted to what happened in the Dutch Republic, and specifically to Jews in the city of Amsterdam. He started his narrative in 1745 with the expulsion of the Jews from Prague and Bohemia, stressing the active role of Dutch Jewry and the Dutch States General in the revoking of the ban of expulsion by the Habsburg authorities in 1748. Parallel to this Jewish diplomacy trajectory, Amsterdam Jews collected money for the bereaved Bohemian fellow Jews.

Furthermore the remainder of the chapter concentrates exclusively on Dutch Jewish history, with two main themes: the house of Orange and religious developments. First, the elevation of William IV and William V to stadtholder in respectively 1747 and 1766 is told by Kosman, together with the enthusiastic reaction within the Jewish community. The same happened at the wedding of William V and Wilhelmina of Prussia in 1767 and during their Amsterdam visit one year later, when they were received in a synagogue decorated in orange. The visits of other royals or nobility, such as Edward August, duke of York in 1766, the king of Denmark and prince Heinrich of Prussia in 1768, were also recorded for prosperity.

Second, the death of chief rabbis within the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities was recorded by Kosman: in 1753 R. David Israel Athias died, in 1755 R. Aryeh Leyb and in 1760 R. Jitschak Hayim Abendana de Brito. Newly appointed were R. Saul ben R. Aryeh Leyb from Dubno, the son of the late chief rabbi, and R. Salomo Salem from Belgrade. Kosman as well chronicled the growth of the number of synagogues, a clear indication of the continuing expansion of Amsterdam Jewry. In 1752 the Houtmarkt synagogue was inaugurated, while in 1766 the Uilenburger synagogue started its services.

⁶²⁸ Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi Amelander, *Sheyris Yisroel* (Amsterdam 1771), verso-side of the title page.

Kosman's intention was to chronicle only the most important things, meant as a 'nice memory for our descendents'.⁶²⁹ This resulted in a rather factual recording of past events, concentrating on the political and religious elites, while ignoring the political tensions in Dutch society and its impact on Amsterdam Jewry. He had the same Orangist conviction as Braatbard, but wrote in a much more sober style and failed to give explanations for historical processes. The contrast between Amelander's impressive history book, well written and with a broad overview, and Kosman's chapter is clear. In a way, Kosman betrayed Amelander's wide scope with adding his factual and geographically limited chapter. The last entry in Kosman's continuation is telling of his restrictive local scope: he concluded with the reopening of the Amsterdam Muider gate in 1771, which had been closed since 1769 due to a subsidence, whereafter he added the traditional wish for the rebuilding of the Temple soon and in our days.⁶³⁰

7.2.3 *Prinz' Kronik min shnas takmad ad shnas takmah, 1788*

This chronicle, written by Zalman ben Moshe Prinz, might as well be considered a continuation of *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁶³¹ The author mentioned in his conclusion that he had written two large chronicles, at least one of which he did not bring in print yet.⁶³² He introduced the first one as follows:

אונ' איך האב נאך איין אנדרן קראניק דש איז נאך עש שארית ישראל בימעלט. אונ' איז אויך אזוי גרויש. דש
שרייבט ביז ר' משה חזן אויז.⁶³³

⁶²⁹ SY, ed. 1771, introduction.

⁶³⁰ Fuks makes mention of a copy of the first edition of *She'orit Yisrael* with in handwriting the continuation of Kosman added, but also with two more pages full of information. This might be the work of Kosman himself or of someone else. The copy was in his private collection, but is presently not part of the Fuks Collection at Tresoar, Leeuwarden. L. Fuks en R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Joodse geschiedschrijving in de Republiek in de 17e en 18e eeuw', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 2 (1972), 137-165, there 155.

⁶³¹ Only one copy is known and kept in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Ros. 19 D 36. In 1870 another copy was sold to the Emanuel congregation in New York, and in 1936 mention is made of a copy in the library of Columbia University – which is presently not in its catalogues. For more on these copies, see: Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 77. The copy sold to New York was used by Meijer Roest for a re-publication with a Dutch paraphrase of the contents: Meijer M. Roest, 'Een Kronijkje van de jaren 1787-1788' *Israëlietische Letterbode* 1 (1875) Vols. 2-6.

⁶³² Roest is the only author who understood Prinz rightly that he had written two more chronicles; Roest, 'Een kronijkje', I; all other authors without further discussion assumed he had written only one chronicle; Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Joodse geschiedschrijving'; Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 77-78.

⁶³³ 'And I have another chronicle in continuation to *Sheyris Yisroel*. And it is that large that it continues until R. Moshe Hazan.' Zalman ben Moshe Prinz, *Kronik min shnat takmad ad shnat takmah* (Amsterdam 1788) 9v.

Prinz thus wrote a continuation to *Sheyris Yisroel* up until the time of R. Moshe Chazan, which refers to the appointment of Moses ben Phoebus Glogau as a precantor in the Amsterdam Ashkenazi community in 1786.⁶³⁴ Prinz expressed his intention to have this manuscript printed, in case his other history books would be successful. Unfortunately, this chronicle covering more than 40 years of Jewish history, was most probably never printed and the manuscript is lost to us, this reference being the only indication of its existence.

The second large chronicle was given a name inspired as well by *Sheyris Yisroel*: שארית עם קדוש (*Sheyris am koudesh*), the remnant of the holy people. Via the title Prinz referred to the *tabanun* prayer, starting with the words *Shomer Yisrael*, in which God's protection is asked for the *sheerit yisrael*, the *sheerit am ehad* and the *sheerit am kadosh*. In the final stanza the *piut* has:

שומר גוי קדוש
שמר שארית עם קדוש
ואל יאבד גוי קדוש
המשלשים בשלוש קדושות לקדוש⁶³⁵

Prinz via this title not only connected his chronicle to Amelander's, but also expressed the same idea of Jewish past as the history of the remnant of Israel, a holy people. About the contents of this chronicle Prinz wrote that one could read miraculous histories in it, which he wrote down with pleasure. It is not completely clear whether Prinz had *Sheyris am koudesh* already printed or not, but he revealed at least one important aspect about the social role of history books in Ashkenazi Amsterdam, when he wrote:

מיין גרויש בוך צו צו הערן איז איין גרויש ליפהאברייא. אונ' דא שטיגן וואונדר זאכן אין בימעלט. דש בוך קען יעדער איינר הערן פֿר וויניג געלט.⁶³⁶

Prinz mentioned twice that his book was to be heard, showing that history books were read aloud in family circles or in other group meetings, a characteristic of early modern culture in which orality was still an important feature. History was both edifying and amusing,

⁶³⁴ Cf. the poem Moses ben Judah Pina dedicated to the same occasion, Hs.Ros. Pl. B-67.

⁶³⁵ 'Guardian of the holy nation/ Protect the remnant of the holy people/ Don't let the holy nation be destroyed/ Those who proclaim three-fold sanctifications to the Holy One.'

⁶³⁶ 'To listen to my large book is a great pleasure. It narrates about miracles. For little money everyone can hear the book.' Prinz, *Kronik*, 9v.

strengthening faith but at the same time a nice activity, being attractive for large audiences, therefore written in Yiddish and read aloud also for those not able to buy such a book or to read even Yiddish. The use of rhyme in some parts of the chronicle made it easier to read and repeat its contents.⁶³⁷

Also of *Sheyris am koudesh* we have no copy left, either in manuscript form or in print, but the present chronicle, *Kronik min shnas takmad ad shnas takmah*, is an extract by the author taken out of his larger chronicle and has been printed.⁶³⁸ The *Kronik* is not the only trace left of Prinz' historical activities, also an historical poem on the impact of the Batavian Revolution on Amsterdam Jewry is still extant.⁶³⁹ In his little *Kronik*, with in total no more than nine 16° folios, the tumultuous years 1784-1788 are narrated, during which the enlightened democratic Patriotic movement turned against stadtholder William V of Orange and the last one only succeeded in taking control of the country again with the help of the Prussians.⁶⁴⁰ Just like Braatbard, also for Prinz national politics are the main story of his chronicle, told from the perspective of Amsterdam orangist Jewry.

The chronicle has fifty paragraphs and is structured according to the Jewish years, starting in 5544 (1784), with the rise of the Patriotic movement in the wake of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784), and ending in 5548 (1788), when the stadtholder was re-established in The Hague and the most prominent Patriots had left for France. Interesting is that Prinz used the Jewish and Christian years side by side, as in the first paragraph: שנת תקמ"ד למספרם, ל1784. The word 'according to their way of counting', shows that Prinz saw the Christian years as part of Dutch

⁶³⁷ Van Eijnatten, 'Communicatie en publieke orde', 347; on reading Yiddish books aloud: Berger, 'An invitation', 39; Gries, 'On reading and readers', 32.

⁶³⁸ As becomes clear in paragraph 12, *Sheyris am koudesh* narrated this period with much more details than the *Kronik* did. Prinz, *Kronik*, 1v.

⁶³⁹ The poem was before the Second World War in the Amsterdam collection of E.G. Vedder and consulted by Shatzky; after the war Jaap Meijer acquired a copy, which is now kept at the Amsterdam Municipal Archives. It is titled: לזכרון וואש דא איז גישעהן בק"ק אמשטרדם פון ר"ח ניסן תקנ"ה ביז חצי תמוז תקנ"ה אין קארצין בגריפן (Amsterdam 1798). Prinz deals in the song mainly with soldiers desecrating the Great Synagogue on Shabbat, a history also recounted by Wing in his chronicle. More on this poem: Shatzky, 'Letzte shprotsungen', 256; Shmeruk, 'Historical songs', 156-157; Gutschow, *Inventory*, 128 no. 469, in which she mistakenly doubts if a copy is still extant; Jonathan N. Cohen ed., *Hebraica and Judaica printed before 1900. Catalogue of the Jaap Meijer collection* (Amsterdam 1999) 32-33, no. 18. Shatzky mentioned in his article one more piece of narrative prose from 1798 as the product of Prinz, which is however disputed by others; Shatzky, 'Letzte shprotsungen', 257; Gutschow, *Inventory*, 127 no. 466.

⁶⁴⁰ For a short survey of Dutch Jewish history in this period, see: Jozeph Michman, 'Prelude – Parnasim and Patriots' in: idem, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period 1787-1815. Gothic Turrets on a Corinthian Building* (Amsterdam 1995) 1-22.

⁶⁴¹ 'In the year [5]544, 1784 according to their way of counting, it really started everywhere in Holland.' Prinz, *Kronik*, 1r.

society. In the same way he provided dates of days as well, first the Jewish and thereafter the Christian date. Also Christian festive days are mentioned, like “Pentecost Tuesday”.⁶⁴²

Much attention is paid to what happened in the Jewish years 5547-5548 (in total 46 paragraphs), or the Christian years 1787-1788 (in total 47 paragraphs). 5544 (1784) received only one paragraph, 5545 (1785) two, while 5546 also received only one paragraph, which occurred already in 1787. Clearly the stress of the chronicle is laid on the period in which the Prussians fought the Patriots and the Orangists were in a winning mood. In contrast to Braatbard, who besides his main topics also provided all kinds of other stories, Prinz’ chronicle is structured very well and has a clear plot. All material is woven into a single narrative, with no digressions. Amsterdam is the place of action, while only a few important happenings outside Amsterdam are narrated, such as the refuge of the stadtholder in Benjamin Cohen’s house in Amersfoort and the arrest at Goejanverwellesluis by the Patriots of princess Wilhelmina on her way to The Hague.⁶⁴³

The chronicle is published in 1788 and must have been written in that same year, using material Prinz collected since 1784. One indication that he wrote the chronicle *aus einem Guss* rather than day by day or year by year, is the clear structure of the chronicle, centered around the civil war between Patriots and Orangists, while leaving everything else aside and clearly writing towards the climax: the re-institution of the stadtholder. Another indication are the dates, which are not in all cases provided correctly, showing that Prinz wrote some time afterwards (see note 456). For example, in paragraph 4 Prinz narrated about a certain captain Van Zon who wanted Jews to serve in the city guard as well. Prinz dated this event 1787, but it actually took place one year earlier.⁶⁴⁴ The third indication is that Prinz provided information from the perspective of 1788, like that after the entry of the Prussian army in Amsterdam on 11 Octobre 1787 the Leidsepoort (Leiden Gate) remained open day and night ‘until now’ עד) (הנה).⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴² Prinz, *Kronik*, 1v, 8r; Prinz meant the so-called Third Day of Pentecoste. The Jewish dates Prinz provided do not in all cases correspond to the appropriate Christian ones, an indication that he wrote his chronicle afterwards or that he was just careless. See e.g. paragraph 23 which equals 22 Elul 5544 to 7 September 1787, which had to be 5 September; or in paragraph 35 where 4 Cheshwan 5548 is equaled to 14 October 1787, but should have been 16 October. Cf. Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 306, 313. The right date of the events is, however, the Christian one, indicating that this served as his main method of dating. See e.g. paragraphs 48 and 49 on the celebration of the birthday of William V, for which 29 Adar Rishon as the Jewish date is given, which equals to 27 March 1788, while the Christian date provided as well, 8 March 1788, is the correct one. Cf. the narration of the same events in: ‘Plegtigheden’, *Leeuwarder Courant* 15 March 1788, page 11.

⁶⁴³ Prinz, *Kronik*, 2r, 2v.

⁶⁴⁴ Prinz, *Kronik*, 1v.

⁶⁴⁵ Prinz, *Kronik*, 5r.

Prinz not only wrote from an Amsterdam perspective, but also for an Amsterdam Ashkenazi public. From the information he gives, it is clear that he suspected that his readers were also familiar with the Amsterdam Jewish quarters. He speaks of *מיר אמשטרדאמיר*, ‘we Amsterdammers’, and mentions persons that must have been well known characters: the brother of Peysi Mitshe Royt (Red Hat), Reykhele Frantsman, Itsik Papirman and Shlemiel Khone.⁶⁴⁶ There are no indications in the text that Prinz reckoned with an audience outside Amsterdam or the Dutch Republic.

Prinz’ purpose with his chronicle was two-fold. First, he saw the history he narrated as one full of God’s miracles, and therefore a strengthening of faith in God. In his introduction Prinz even wrote that God gave him the idea to write the chronicle. Second, the chronicle also has an entertaining function: people were supposed to forget their sorrows while reading the booklet.⁶⁴⁷ While the first reason for the chronicle was widely accepted in Jewish historiography, the second one was often regarded with suspicion. Prinz, however, did not hesitate to write it down, because he must have known that for the people he wrote for – the Amsterdam Ashkenazim – this was precisely the reason why they were so fond of history books. Moreover, at least since the beginning of the eighteenth century there was already a tradition of publishing Yiddish books providing light entertainment, as is demonstrated by a Yiddish adaptation of Boccaccio’s *Decameron* titled *Sheyne artleke geshikhtn*.⁶⁴⁸

The chronicle is written in short sentences, with some parts in rhyme: the title page, part of the introduction, part of the paragraphs 32 and 38 and the final part in which the author told about his other books.⁶⁴⁹ Because of this structure of short sentences, partly rhyming, it is perfectly suited to be read aloud. The language is contemporary Yiddish, with some influences from Dutch and French, but Prinz used Hebrew as well – and much more than Braatbard did.⁶⁵⁰ Prinz spiced his narrative not only with jokes on the Patriots but as well with quotations from Tenakh (no less than 65 times – including references to the *parashiot hashavua* as date indications), the Talmud (tractate Jebamot), the Hagadah shel Pesah, Shabbat songs and the morning prayers.⁶⁵¹ A good example is paragraph 27 on the Jews in The Hague celebrating the surrender of the city to the Orangists:

⁶⁴⁶ Prinz, *Kronik*, 3v, 6r, 7r.

⁶⁴⁷ Prinz, *Kronik*, introduction.

⁶⁴⁸ Marion Aptroot, ‘I know this book of mine will cause offence...’: A Yiddish adaptation of Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (Amsterdam 1710)’, *Zutot* (2003), 152-159.

⁶⁴⁹ Prinz, *Kronik*, title page, 1r, 4v, 7r, 9r.

⁶⁵⁰ For a linguistic analysis of Prinz, in comparison with Braatbard and Wing, see: Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 450-570.

⁶⁵¹ See the Dutch translation of Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 300-321.

אונ' עש וואר אין דען האג שמחת בית השואיבה מיט דיא יהודים
וימצא הדבר אשר חשבו ליהודים
וויא דיא טעגין פרטייאן האבן וועלן שלעכטי זאכן טאהן מיט דיא יהודים
ויכו בכל אויביהם ובביזה לא שלחו את ידם.

The tensions between the Patriots and the Orangist Jews are narrated with quotations from Ester Scroll, and hence at the same time interpreted as a continuation of the confrontation between the anti-Jewish Haman and the Jews. In the second line Ester 9, 25 is paraphrased, while in the fourth line Ester 9, 5 and 9, 16 are combined: 'The Jews in 'The Hague celebrated Simchat bet hasho'eva [the water ceremony during Sukkot], and it happened 'that the Jews thought' [after Ester 9, 25], that the adversaries [Patriots] wanted to do bad things with the Jews, 'and they struck all their enemies' [Ester 9, 5] 'but on the spoil they laid not their hand' [Ester 9, 16].⁶⁵² Biblical quotations thus do not only serve to show the author's knowledge, but also offer interpretations of contemporary events through associations.

Surprisingly, in paragraph 32 Prinz also wrote several lines completely in Hebrew, using a rabbinic style with some elements from traditional prayers. The passage is furthermore written in rhyme:

נהפך צרותינו
ובא גאולה קטנה עלינו
שנהפך מחשבותם הדעה שיחשבו עלינו
ויקוים ביום הזה תשובת ה' בהרף עין שראינו בעינינו
וכמעט בצהרים יחשבו להוריד החצים בגבולינו
לכן על הנס הזאת נודה לך ה' אלוהינו ואלהי אבותינו
לכן אנחנו מצפים שישלח לנו גואל צדק במהרה בימינו.⁶⁵³

The only possible explanation for this fragment has to be that Prinz wanted to show his ability in Hebrew, in order to raise his status within the Ashkenazi community as someone who was not only fluent in Yiddish, but also mastered the Hebrew language.

⁶⁵² Cf. Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 308.

⁶⁵³ Prinz, *Kronik*, 4v.

Prinz' chronicle is a well composed short history book in prose and poetry, documenting an important period in Dutch history but from a decidedly Amsterdam Jewish point of view. Prinz in that sense wrote a chronicle much like Braatbard, with the same view from below, thus offering a unique and vivid perspective on the political events in the Dutch Republic.

7.2.4 Chronicle fragments, 1766 and 1779

While Braatbard, Kosman and Prinz all in some way directly connected their chronicles to *Sheyris Yisroel*, there are a few Amsterdam Yiddish chronicles which are written within the same genre but without an outspoken link with *Sheyris Yisroel*. They are nevertheless presented in this chapter side by side with the actual continuations, because they are also to be considered part of the same 'school' of Dutch Yiddish historiography and as such also influenced by the publication of *Sheyris Yisroel* in 1743.

The first history to be mentioned, are a couple of chronicle fragments which were until now unknown.⁶⁵⁴ The manuscript, entitled *מנחם ציון*, The one that comforts Zion, is a volume with short summaries of *derashot* written down by Menahem Mendele ben Leyb z"l and held by him and some of his colleagues in Amsterdam synagogues and for the *hevra Lomdei bahurim*.⁶⁵⁵ The manuscript is dated 5521 and with the Christian year 1760. All of the manuscript is in Hebrew, except a few additions written with different hands in Yiddish. These are found on the reverse side of the cover of the book opposite the title page, the first two pages, on both sides of the first numbered folio page after the title page and on a separate sheet of paper. These are, besides genealogical notes, a text in memory of a certain R. Gukher, attached to the so-called *Dritt Shul* (Third Synagogue), and two chronicle fragments.

It is not certain if these fragments were part of a larger body of history writing, or only written down in this family notebook to record two single important events. Stylistically it is, however, written in much the same way and with the same interests as the other Amsterdam Jewish chroniclers, like Braatbard and Prinz. The fragments seem to be written by different hands, suggesting that two different family members wrote them down. Both fragments are

⁶⁵⁴ I found them in a uncatalogued manuscript, kept at the library of the Catholic University Leuven, kept together with a couple of other Hebrew manuscripts from different places and periods. They are published for the first time with this thesis, see appendix 2.

⁶⁵⁵ *Menahem Zion* has 164 numbered folios, and 11 folios more with indices, e.g. of the *derashot* according to the *parashiot ha-shavuab*. The *derashot* are mostly on the weekly lessons, but as well on parts of the Haphtarah, the Mishnah, and the Talmud Bavli.

also to be dated after the year appearing on the title page, 1760, but the same is true for some *derasha* notes, dated e.g. 5545 (1785).⁶⁵⁶ *Menabem Zion* seems to have been a manuscript which was updated by different family members – whose names are chronicled in the genealogical fragments – over the course of several decades.

The first fragment gives account of the celebration in Amsterdam's Jewish quarter on 8 March 1766 of the 18th birthday of William prince of Orange, which was at the same time the day he assumed his position as stadtholder of the United Dutch Provinces. It was celebrated in all synagogues and the chief rabbi gave a sermon in honour of the new stadtholder William V. He had also written a song, starting with the words: *אראניה אישי יי ונהלתו* (Orange, man of the Lord, and his heritage). At eight o'clock in the evening lights were lit in all the streets and houses, and with the lights all kinds of motives – flowers, stars, houses, snakes – were expressed. On 13 March the parnassim R. Mordechai Rat and R. Maharim Maarssen went with a coach with four horses to The Hague to hand over a present to the stadtholder on behalf of Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jewry. The fragment is concluded in Latin script and in the Dutch language: 'Willem prins van oranie' (William prince of Orange).⁶⁵⁷ The second fragment gives a detailed account of the thunderstorm of the 1st of January 1779. Between five and half past five fire hit the earth, and the houses trembled. Lightning stuck two houses, which burnt down.⁶⁵⁸

The interest in the wellbeing of the family of Orange is shared by the author of the first fragment with Braatbard and Prinz. The weather is as well important to all chroniclers, not only Jewish. It is striking that many people started to write down their meteorological findings after 1 January 1779. Not only our author, others also must have experienced these weather conditions as highly exceptional and worthy of chronicling.⁶⁵⁹ The importance attached to the weather is also demonstrated by Zalman Isaac Boel's Yiddish historical poem of only a few years later, documenting the severe winter of 1784.⁶⁶⁰ One more similarity with the other chronicles is the parallel use of Jewish and Christian dates in both fragments, although preference is given to the Jewish date and the civil one is introduced as 'according to their way of counting'.

⁶⁵⁶ Menahem Mendele ben Leib, *Menabem Zion*, 129r.

⁶⁵⁷ Menahem, *Menabem Zion*, unnumbered page opposite title page.

⁶⁵⁸ Menahem, *Menabem Zion*, 1r.

⁶⁵⁹ H.A.M. Geurts and A.F.V. van Engelen, *Historische weerkundige waarnemingen V* (De Bilt 1992) 87, 171, 194, 199, 254, 269, 288.

⁶⁶⁰ Gutschow, *Inventory*, no. 434; J.S. da Silva Rosa, *Een Joodsch-Duitsche beschrijving van den strengen winter in bet jaar 1784 te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1939); Shmeruk, 'Historical poetry', 149.

Both fragments are written in Yiddish, with some Hebrew words and spiced with Dutchisms. In the first fragment for example the words זאלדרז קעלדרש [attics, basements] are clearly taken from Dutch, while the second one uses words such as דונדר [thunder] and אקוראהט [accurate]. Also the use of the Latin script indicates at least a basic knowledge of the Dutch language.

7.2.5 Wing's *Lezikorn*, 1795-1812

7.2.5.1 Contents

Undoubtedly one of the most original and important specimens of Amsterdam Yiddish historiography is the chronicle *Lezikorn* [*Lezikaron*, As a remembrance] by Bendit ben Ayzek Wing over the period 1795-1812, a period of lasting changes for Dutch Jewry.⁶⁶¹ *Lezikorn* is just like the chronicle fragments of 1766 and 1779 no successor chronicle to *Sheyris Yisroel* in a direct sense, but has to be mentioned here as the conclusion of the blossoming of Yiddish historiography in the Netherlands, since after *Lezikorn* no other chronicles are known to us.

The opening of *Lezikorn* has, however, an implicit reference to *Sheyris Yisroel*. The chronicle starts in the winter of 1795, which is described as even colder than the one of 1740.⁶⁶² Since the author is born in 1761 he did not experience the winter of 1740 himself, but in the chapter in *Sheyris Yisroel* on Amsterdam Ashkenazi history this winter is presented as the most severe, that even the old people could not remember having experienced something like that before. People even died of the cold and birds fell out of the air.⁶⁶³ Braatbard also wrote about this very cold winter, but since his manuscript was not published, it is obvious that Wing knew of the severity of the winter of 1740 through *Sheyris Yisroel*. By starting with this reference to *Sheyris Yisroel*, Wing connected his chronicle just as Braatbard, Prinz, and Kosman did to Amelander's *magnum opus*.

Lezikorn does not have an introduction, but simply starts in the winter of 1795, when the French armies entered the Dutch Republic and the enlightened Patriot party started the Batavian Revolution, resulting in the new Batavian Republic as a puppet state of revolutionary

⁶⁶¹ I have given a first analysis in: Bart Wallet, 'Ideologie, politiek en geschiedenis. Bendit ben Eizek Wing en zijn Amsterdams kroniek *Lezikorn* (1795-1812)' *De Negentiende Eeuw* 29 (2005) 3, 185-204. Part of the information in this chapter on Wing's chronicle is based on the article.

⁶⁶² Bendit ben Ayzek Wing, *Lezikorn*, Hs.Ros. 74-I, 1.

⁶⁶³ Amelander, *SY*, 140r.

France. In the chronicle the author gives detailed account of what happened from the start of the Batavian Republic until 17 August 1812, the day of the battle of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* with the Russians over the Russian holy city of Smolensk. The chronicle stops there, in the middle of the history of Napoleon's Russian expedition, because Wing died and was buried at Muiderberg cemetery on 20 September 1812.

The fact that Wing started his chronicle with the entry of the French armies in the Dutch Republic is a clear indication that he must have realized that he experienced important times worth documenting in a single chronicle. It also shows that political and military history is structuring his chronicle, giving it a plot in which all events got their own significance. Everything is described from a clear Amsterdam perspective, showing the consequences of the Batavian Revolution in the city and for the city authorities. But he is not limiting his attention to the city and also documented what took place in the political center of The Hague and increasingly gave attention to international politics.

Lezijkorn chronicles both Jewish and general history. Jewish history is mostly restricted to what happened in the Amsterdam Ashkenazi kehillah, with some attention for the Sephardim. Now and then Wing narrates about Jewish communities outside Amsterdam, such as the inauguration of the Uithoorn synagogue and the death of the Rotterdam chief rabbi. Jewish history outside the Batavian Republic only get marginal attention, Wing writes about the Paris *Grand Sanhedrin*, but mainly from the Dutch Jewish perspective, namely the discussion about whether or not sending representatives to Paris.⁶⁶⁴ Once Wing writes about England Jewry, on the suicide of an important London Jew, Abraham Goldsmid, who shot himself in the throat.⁶⁶⁵ Finally, he provides as background information to the French conquest of Kovno (present day Lithuanian Kaunas) that out of 4,000 inhabitants no less than 2,000 were Jewish.⁶⁶⁶

Amsterdam Ashkenazi history is prominently present in the chronicle. The information provided could be divided into three categories. First, much attention goes to the tensions between enlightened and traditional Jews, which ultimately resulted in the split of the kehillah for nearly ten years in a traditional *Alte Kille* and a progressive *Naye Kille* (1797-1808). Second, Wing shows the changes in the politico-juridical position of the Jews in society

⁶⁶⁴ 74, December 1807.

⁶⁶⁵ 74, 10 October 1810; Goldsmid was born in the Netherlands and became a famous banker in London and the principal competitor to the Rothschild family. Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830. Tradition and change in a liberal society* (Ann Arbor MI, 1999) 252-254.

⁶⁶⁶ 74, 14 July 1812.

following the formal Emancipation decree of 1795, resulting e.g. in Jews being active in politics and being appointed in the civil service. Third, the chronicle is a rich source for the study of the social and religious stratification of Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jewry, in providing information about elections, appointments and deaths of parnassim, cantors and beadles, jubilees of people important in the community and short notices of weddings and deaths in his own family.

Next to Jewish, general history is documented in Wing's chronicle. Most of it could be characterized as political and military history, which compared to contemporary non-Jewish historiography is no surprise, since other historians and chroniclers also mainly wrote about institutional and political history.⁶⁶⁷ Wing's attention to politics could be analyzed as three concentric circles, each dealing with another geographic realm. First, Amsterdam is the centre of his chronicle and Wing clearly identifies with the city as 'our city'. Political changes in the city are followed precisely and he also provides an insight in how the combating political ideologies, enlightened Patriotism and Orangism, were received among the Amsterdam population. Sometimes he writes about fires and public executions. Second, the changes on the national level of respectively the Batavian Republic (1795-1806), the Kingdom Holland (1806-1810) and as annexed provinces of the French Empire (1810-1813), is also prominently present. He describes the country as 'unzere medines' (our provinces), and documents the political turmoil in The Hague, new laws, but also shocking national events, such as severe storms causing many casualties and damages and the 1807 explosion of a gunpowder-ship in Leiden with devastating consequences.

The third level is international politics. Wing was well aware of the interaction between the three levels and therefore attached great importance to developments in international politics. Much attention goes to the relationship with England, during the Dutch Republic an important trading partner. Wing documents when there was postal service to and from England and when not. Also the war – as a puppet state of France – with the English, with battles in the northern part of the province of Holland and in Zeeland, was given due attention. Very hard for the Dutch, and also Amsterdam Jewry, was the Continental System introduced by Napoleon in 1806 as an embargo against British trade. Its consequences become duely clear from Wing's chronicle. From the moment Napoleon Bonaparte seized power, Paris is more and more present in the chronicle. Napoleon's wars, conquests, peace negotiations are documented on a daily basis. Important battles are described neatly, including the positions of

⁶⁶⁷ Denys Hay, *Annalists and historians. Western historiography from the eight to the eighteenth centuries* (London 1977) 181.

the armies, numbers of deaths, wounded and prisoners-of-war and the names of the prominent generals.

Wing shows his talent as a historian and political analyst in that he not only narrates the two stories of Jewish and general history, but links them as much as possible. He shows the interaction between the Amsterdam Jewish communities on the one hand, and municipal, national and international politics on the other hand. The relations between the authorities and the parnassim are described in detail, just as the consequences of governmental politics on the position of Amsterdam Jewry. The notion that with the Batavian Revolution also the position of Amsterdam Jews had changed, could be described as one of the principal ideas behind *Lezijkorn*.

The chronicle is structured both according to the Jewish and the Christian chronology. The chronicle starts with a heading of the Jewish year 5555, but in effect the first entry opens with the beginning of the Christian year 1795. Thereafter the chronicle provides both headings of the Jewish and Christian years. Furthermore Wing follows the Christian dates, starting with 17 January 1795 and ending with 9 September 1812. Sometimes the Jewish date is given as well, mainly by entries dealing with what happened within the Jewish community. The number of entries of every year differs greatly:

Year	Entries
1795	69
1796	40
1797	38
1798	64
1799	76
1800	29
1801	37
1802	16
1803	22
1804	13
1805	34
1806	74
1807	58

1808	89
1809	155
1810	93
1811	143
1812	144 ⁶⁶⁸

The great differences could be explained by the important political developments. In 1795 the Batavian Revolution took place, with all its consequences, in 1798 there were a number of coups in The Hague, while in 1799 there was an English invasion in the northern part of Holland. The years thereafter it were mainly international political developments that caused a high number of entries: in 1806 the war between France and Prussia, in 1807 the continuation of this war and the war between France and Spain. Also for 1808, until the beginnings of 1809, much attention goes to the war in Spain. In 1809, then, it is the war between France and the Habsburg Empire, while the entries on 1810 extensively narrate the annexation of the Kingdom of Holland to the French Empire. In 1811 the recruitment of soldiers and the visit of Napoleon to Amsterdam are the main topics, while in 1812 Napoleon's Russian campaign is responsible for the high number of entries.

7.2.5.2 Manuscripts

Lezikorn was, just as Braatbard's chronicle and the fragments, never published. We do have, however, a number of different manuscript versions of the chronicle, providing us a unique insight in the process of writing and copying the chronicle. When the first curator of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Meijer Marcus Roest, published the chronicle of Zalman ben Moshe Prinz in the Jewish cultural magazine *De Israëlitische Letterbode*, he was consequently approached by Mozes M. Benjamins jr. in 1876 telling that in his family a much similar chronicle was kept. Roest found Wing's chronicle interesting to publish some parts of it as well in *De Israëlitische Letterbode*, in Dutch translation, and later on as well in German in the German Jewish journal *Jeschurun*.⁶⁶⁹ Roest selected primarily those passages that narrated the internal

⁶⁶⁸ These are the number of entries in Hs.Ros. 74, but if we also include the ones only kept in Hs.Ros. 534-7 we have a total of 147 entries over 1812. For more on the different manuscripts of *Lezikorn*, see the discussion below.

⁶⁶⁹ Meijer M. Roest, 'Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795-1812' *De Israëlitische Letterbode* I-VI (1876-1880); idem, 'Aus der Amsterdamer Gemeinde 1795-1812' *Jeschurun* 1885, 40 – 1886, 40. Roest added some commentary, mainly giving the civil names next to the Jewish names used in the chronicle.

struggles within the Amsterdam Ashkenazi kehillah. Via Roest the chronicle became part of the collection of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana up to date.

The manuscript kept at the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana comprises no less than 10 handwritten copy-books. In three copy-books, Hs.Ros. 74, a continuous story is narrated from 1795 till 1812. The seven other copy-books, Hs.Ros. 534, comprise the draft version, with several overlapping passages. The producer of the manuscript is uncertain. Lejb and Rena Fuks argue that it must have been the writer Shlomo ben Hayim Jehiel Levie, who should have copied it in 1815. They argue so following a note of the former curator of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, J.H. Hillesum, on the cover of 74-I.⁶⁷⁰ Ariane Zwiers mentions the opinion of L. and R. Fuks, and restricts herself to the remark that both manuscripts are written by the same author – whether this is Levie or someone else.⁶⁷¹ It is my opinion, as I will demonstrate, after studying both sets of manuscripts, that they are the autograph of Wing himself, except a few pages in 534-7.

The relation between the different versions of the chronicle reveal us the conception of the chronicle. First, I will concentrate on the various copy-books comprising Hs.Ros. 534. They contain the following:

534-1: Winter 1795 until 28 June 1804; 90 pages

534-2: Winter 1795 until 12 June 1797, 52 pages

534-3: 12 July 1797 until 16 December 1802; 52 pages

534-4: 25 August 1804 until 26 January 1809; 88 pages

534-5: 27 January 1809 until 5 June 1810; 94 pages

534-6: 12 July 1810 until 28 October 1811; 88 pages

534-7: 29 October 1811 until 9 September 1812; 74 pages

The copy-books 2 and 3 are the oldest version. Although they are written in a regular Ashkenazi cursive, they are clearly work in progress. Words, sentences, but sometimes also complete entries are crossed out (2, page 22; 3 page 41). Now and then, in a later stage, sentences are added (3, page 20). Once Wing after the description of a later event suddenly

⁶⁷⁰ L. and R. Fuks, *Hebrew and Judaic manuscripts in Amsterdam public libraries* (Leiden 1973) 218.

⁶⁷¹ Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 79-81. In an earlier article she, however, assumed that Wing produced the manuscripts himself: Ariane D. Zwiers, 'A Yiddish chronicle of the Batavian Republic 1795-1812' in: A.K. Offenbergh a.o. eds., *Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana. Treasures of Jewish booklore, marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Leeser Rosenthal 1794-1994* (Amsterdam 1994) 84-85.

האב פר געסין אום בעוה צו מעלדן... (2, page 44).⁶⁷² At the same time, it is clear that this version is not Wing's daily notebook. Not only because of the regular writing of the text, also because of the replacing of entries. In copy-book 3 on page 41 a subsection on 8 August 1801 was removed, which however on page 42, after a couple of other entries, occurred again, apparently in the place where Wing wanted the entry to have. Wing must have had an earlier version with the primal version of the entries. Possibly these were the small notes on paper which can be found in different places within the copy-books.

The second version could be found in the copy-books 1 and 4-7. The first copy-book comprises 90 unnumbered, neatly written pages. Just as the first version here there are no classifications within the text. The entries follow each other with separating lines, divisions in subsections or marginal indications for the beginning of a new entry. Short summaries in the margin, as in the final version in Hs.Ros. 74, are still lacking in this version. In copy-book 4 one could, however, discern a development towards the final version. Between the various paragraphs small lines indicating the end of a paragraph are made, while in the margin the new Jewish and Christian years are mentioned. Now and then already a summary is given in the margin (e.g. for the entry on 13 January 1807). Although this copy-book is written in a regular hand, some words and sentences are blotted out.

The development which started in copy-book 4, continued in 5-7. Here too there are separating lines and the years are mentioned. But, on the other hand, the copy-books more and more show that they are work in progress. While 5 is still fairly proper, 6 and 7 are chaotic, with a lot of erasures, inkblots and now and then blank pages. For example, there are two entries connected to 17 May 1809, one general and one Jewish. In 534-5 the general entry is written down in the copy-book, the Jewish entry however on a separate small piece of paper attached to the page with a needle. In Hs.Ros. 74 both entries are written down after each other. Another example offers 6 June 1809. In 534-5 the entry on this date is written later on in minute letters between two other entries. In 74 it became part of the running text.

Between copy-books 5 and 6 there is a gap of a few entries, which in turn are given in 74. The entries on 15 and 25 June, and 2, 3, 4, 9 and 10 July 1810 are missing. These must have been written either in an earlier version, as continuation to the series 534-2 and 3, or between both copy-books there must have been another, small copy-book or a collection of small

⁶⁷² 'I have forgotten to mention above...'

notes, comprising the missing entries. In copy-book 6, by the way, many entries are crossed out with one or two strokes of ink. This might have happened when Hs.Ros. 74 was written and the author crossed out those entries he already wrote down in the definitive version.

Copy-book 7 is only partly used. Of the total of 138 pages only 74 are used. Besides, a single page is added. Remarkably, copy-book 7 continues the narrative further than in 74. A short entry not given in 74-III, is written down in 534-7 with the same hand. Thereafter someone else takes over and adds a few more pages, all dated 9 September 1812, but dealing with the situation of the French army in Russia in August. Stylistically it is, however, the same. It is one more argument for the idea that Wing himself was both the writer of 534 and 74. Wing wrote his chronicle in a complex process of different versions. When he became ill, someone else had to take over his work. From that moment on the handwriting changed. He probably dictated the last entries to his wife or one of his sons.⁶⁷³

The final version, Hs.Ros. 74, consists of three copy-books:

I: Winter 1795 until 22 May 1802

II: 1 June 1802 until 25 February 1811

III: 28 February 1811 until 26 August 1812

All three copy-books have the same format. The entries are classified according to dates. In conclusion of an entry a page long line follows. When there are more entries for one date, sometimes a new paragraph is started but no line is made, while at other times a line is made and for the same date a second entry is given. In the margin a short summary of the contents of the entry is given. Both the Christian and Jewish years are written down in the margin, most of the times in very large script.

Copy-book I has a title page drawn with ink, but only the title *Lezijkorn* is inscribed. A preface or introduction is missing. Copy-book II has only a ornamental title page, but nothing is inscribed, while copy-book III not even has a title page. The pages of the three copy-books are numbered and the numbers continue in each copy-book. Copy-book I has pages 1-123, copy-book II pages 124-314, while copy-book III continues from page 315 until 422.

⁶⁷³ Additional evidence for the argument that these manuscripts are the autograph, is what Meijer Marcus Roest wrote in his introduction to his selection out of this chronicle: ‘...deelde de heer M.M. Benjamins Jr. alhier ons mede, dat hij in het bezit is van eenige handschriften, geschreven door wijlen zijn grootvader B.I. Benjamins...’ Thus, in the Benjamins family these manuscripts were considered to have been written by Bendit ben Ayzek Wing himself. Roest, ‘Kronijk 1795-1812’, first issue (unnumbered page).

Especially on the first years we have three versions: 74-I and a part of II; 534-2 and 3 and 534-1. On the later years we only have two versions to our disposal: 74-II and –III and 534-4 till 7. Comparison between these versions shows that there are small differences, mainly to be traced back to the process of copying and editing the definitive version. For example, different spellings of words are used, but these are internally hardly consistent. Also the order of the sentences sometimes changes between the versions. Only now and then there are additions or erasures. The entry on 23 February 1795, for example, is much longer in 74-I than in 534-1, and while 534-1 has an entry on the funeral of two hazzanim at 27 March 1795, this is missing in 74-I. A complete entry lacking in the final version is, however, very rare. Most of the times in Hs.Ros. 74 the entry is a bit more elaborated or a bit more compressed. With regard to the contents there are no differences.

Now and then the order of the entries is different, showing that Wing in his final version sometimes chose a different order. One example is taken from the year 1806:

534-4	20 June	new prayer Shabbat Synagogue service
	24 June	Death of Dresden Couriers on peace
	19 July	Royal family leaving
74	20 June	new prayer and synagogue service Couriers on peace
	24 June	Death of Dresden
	19 July	Royal family leaving

In 74 the introduction of a new prayer in honour of the royal family of Louis Napoleon is linked to the description of the following synagogue service, where the prayer was used for the first time. In 534 these were still two independent entries, separated by a line. Unclear is why Wing replaced the entry on the couriers travelling between London and Paris, with the goal to start peace negotiations.

One marked difference is that in 534 the (Christian) months are written in Hebrew script, while in 74 Wing chose to write the dates in Latin script. In any case in both versions now and then Dutch fragments are added. In most cases this is highly functional for the

narrative. For example, sentences spoken in Dutch by enlightened Jews in synagogue are given in Dutch in the chronicle. In this way the shocking impact of using Dutch in public in synagogue becomes very clear. Between the Dutch fragments in 534 and 74 there are small differences. For instance, 534-1 has: ‘Meent gij dat nog die Oranje Tijd is/ neen wij zullen zelfs kiezen geen dispoten – want wij zijn vrij’, while 74-I gives: ‘Meent Gij Dat nog die Oranje tijd is/ Neen, wij zullen zelfs kiezen/ geen Dispoten/ want wij zijn nu vrij & Een vrij volk kunnen & zullen zelfs kiezen.’⁶⁷⁴

Also the names of Christians, such as authorities and military personnel, are in all versions written in Latin script. The same happens with the names of enlightened Jews such as Carolus Asser and H. de H. Lemon, sometimes accompanied by their Hebrew names, respectively Kalman ben Moushe Shouchet and Hirts ben Hirsh Wiener. This ‘scriptural policy’ of Wing accentuates the striving for integration of these progressive Ashkenazim. Also the Iberian names of the Sephardim are chronicled in Latin script, like Da Costa Athias (74-I, page 47).⁶⁷⁵

Next to Dutch, French and even Latin coloured Wing’s Yiddish. These ‘internationalisms’ were characteristic of late eighteenth century Western Yiddish, but the degree in which Wing uses these words show his familiarity with Dutch bourgeois culture that had adopted the French language if not completely, at least to a high degree.⁶⁷⁶ To give just a few examples of French words used in Wing’s chronicle: *bataille*, *antichambre*, *desert*, *canaille*, *maire*, *artillerie*, *attaque*, while some words were Hollandized like *gedejeneerd*, *gerangeerd* and *gegalientiert* (*geguillotineerd*), indicating that Wing adopted these internationalisms via the Dutch language.⁶⁷⁷ From Dutch Wing adopted in his Yiddish text the Latin expression *vice versa*.⁶⁷⁸

The Latin script, Dutch fragments and the internationalisms in Wing’s Yiddish manuscripts clearly point to a growing degree of integration in Dutch society. The author, apparently, assumed that his readers had mastered both languages and scripts well enough to read his chronicle. Of course, we should keep in mind that the chronicle was never printed and remained in manuscript, but at least for the most direct circle of family and friends he must

⁶⁷⁴ Translations: ‘Do you think it’s still the Orange period/ no we will choose ourselves no tyrants – because we are free’; and: ‘Do you think it’s still the Orange period/ no, we will choose ourselves/ no tyrants/ because we are free now & and a free people can & will choose themselves.’

⁶⁷⁵ Hs.Ros. 74-I, 36, 47.

⁶⁷⁶ Neil Jacobs, *Yiddish: a linguistic introduction* (Cambridge 2005) 45-46.

⁶⁷⁷ Hs.Ros. 74-I, 43 (באטטאליע), 45 (אנטיחאהמבער), 56 (קאנאליעס), 58 (דעסערט), 76 (מערא), 97 (גידעשאניהרט), 98 (ארטעלרי); 74-II, 144 (אקטאקי), 147 (גראנשיהרט).

⁶⁷⁸ Hs.Ros. 74-I, 101 (וויהוע ווערסט).

have felt free in his usage of languages. This multilingualism is unique for Wing's chronicle, and not shown by the earlier chronicles of Braatbard and Prinz, although the chronicle fragments also had one or a few words in Dutch and in Latin script. Since Wing was part of the conservative wing within the Amsterdam Ashkenazi community and condemned the use of Dutch within formal Jewish matters, his use could not be explained as a sign of progressivity. In the Amsterdam Jewish circles to which Wing belonged, knowledge of Yiddish and Dutch must have been common, just as the codeswitching between both languages. As Marion Aptroot has argued, in the late eighteenth century the barriers between internal and external multilingualism became blurred, and other languages than Yiddish and Hebrew were used for inner-Jewish communication. Not only progressive Jews, also members of the *Alte Kille* – as shown by the *Diskursn* – were part of this process.⁶⁷⁹ In general Wing used in both versions of 534 less Dutch and Latin script than in 74. For example, in 534-6 in the entry on 14 July 1810 the text of the decree annexing Holland to France is taken up completely, but in Yiddish translation. Only the headings, like '1 Hoofstuk' [sic], are in Dutch. In 74 the whole decree is written down in Dutch and in Latin script (74-II, pages 282-286).

A more detailed comparison between the three versions shows, besides small differences in the order of words and sentences, differences in spelling and lexicon. Both versions in 534 are in general more plene in the spelling of words, e.g. וואשיר (534) versus וואשר (74) and גידרונגין (534) versus גדרונגין (74). As well, both versions of 534 use more words of Hebrew origins (whether part of the Yiddish language corpus or not), where 74 has replaced these partly by words of Germanic origins. A good example is one of the first sentences of the chronicle:

74-I: 1740 איזה ימים דש נאך קעלטיר וואהר אלו בשנת⁶⁸⁰

534-1: 1740 עז וואהר איזה ימים נאך קעלטיר אלו בשנת

534-2: 1740 עז וואהר איזה ימים נאך קעלטיר כמו בשנת

⁶⁷⁹ Marion Aptroot, 'Yiddish, Dutch and German among late 18th century Amsterdam Jewry' in: Jonathan Israel and Reinier Salverda eds., *Dutch Jewry: its history and secular culture (1500-2000)* (Leiden etc. 2002) 201-211. A linguistic discussion of a contemporary Yiddish song, with much the same features: I.M. Hillesum, 'A Hollendish-Yidish Kalelid fun sof 18tn yohrhundert', *Filologishe sbriftn* 2 (1928), 348-352.

⁶⁸⁰ 'In these days it was colder than in 1740'.

In the oldest version, 534-2, the Hebrew word כמו is used, while the other two – including the final version 74 – opted for אלו. One more example shows this transition from Hebrew to Germanic alternatives:

74-I: משום דש פאטריאטישימיס אין האללאנד האט הולך וגובר גוועזן⁶⁸¹

534-1: משום דש פאטריאטישימיס כאן במדינות האט גובר גוועזן

In the first version, 534-2, this sentence is lacking, showing that it was only added in the second version, 534-1, and reworked in the final version, 74-I. The reverse, however, we encounter as well, where a Hebrew word in 74 replaces a Germanic original in 534:

74-I: בינינו ובן הצרפתים⁶⁸²

534-2: צווישן אונז אונד דיא צרפתים

Although it is true that in 534 in general more Hebrew elements are used in the text, this does not happen in such a degree that we should characterize it as a conscious strategy of Wing to make the final version as pure Germanic a Yiddish as possible. Not only did he use too often a Hebrew word in 74 where he did not do so in 534 for such a conclusion, Wing in that should have been more consistent. In 74, for example, he used to denote the French both the Hebrew צרפתים and the Germanic פראנצויסן.⁶⁸³ In general, Hebrew is used by Wing in Biblical quotations, for specific Jewish functions, like *parnassim*, for religious terminology and wishes (e.g. *Jamim tovim*), and for dates, numbers and interjecting words (משום, על ידי).⁶⁸⁴

In conclusion, the final version is Hs.Ros. 74, offering a continuous narrative from 1795 until 1812, and being the autograph. In Hs.Ros. 534 we are confronted with various earlier stages of the chronicle, including a few last entries which due to Wing's passing away were not written in the definitive version of the chronicle. The fact that the last entry is written in a different hand is a clear indication that after Wing became ill, someone else took over and wrote down the final entry, probably dictated by Wing. This part, however, was never written down in Hs.Ros. 74.

⁶⁸¹ 'Because Patriotism in Holland had grown'.

⁶⁸² 'Between us and the French.'

⁶⁸³ Cf. Zwiers, *Kroniek*, 457-458.

⁶⁸⁴ Hs.Ros. 74-I, 35-36, 60.

There is one other manuscript of *Lezikorn*, presently kept at the City Archives Amsterdam.⁶⁸⁵ In 1846 the prominent Amsterdam Jew Samuel Israel Mulder ordered a copy of the chronicle, probably to use it as a source for a history of Dutch Jewry.⁶⁸⁶ He borrowed it from Mozes Benjamins, Wing's grandson. The author and poet Abraham Delaville copied the book, which was given the title *Sefer jaldei hazman*, and Mulder himself wrote a Hebrew introduction to the chronicle. The manuscript is a duplicate of Hs.Ros. 534, with the only difference that Delaville used his own spelling of the Yiddish language.⁶⁸⁷ At the end Delaville added two pages with the names of 70 parnassim, classified according to years.

7.2.6 Trebitsch' Qorot ha-ittim

One more chronicle should be mentioned here, although it was neither written in the northern Netherlands nor in Yiddish. Still it could not be overlooked in a chapter on the continuations to *Sheyris Yisroel*, since it is an important sequel to Amelander's history book. Here it will suffice to stress its significance as a successor chronicle, without studying the book in more detail. The chronicle in case is written in rhymed prose by the Moravian Abraham Trebitsch (ca. 1759-1837) in both Hebrew and *Judendentsch*, German in Hebrew characters, and titled *Qorot ha-ittim*, the events of times.⁶⁸⁸ Trebitsch went, like Amelander, to yeshiva in Prague and might have heard there for the first time about the history book of their alumnus. The title page of the book already clearly shows the connection to *Sheyris Yisroel*.

קורות העתים
חלק ראשון

⁶⁸⁵ Municipal Archives Amsterdam, archive 714, inv.nr. 99 (*not* 100 as the inventory gives). Mulder's Hebrew introduction could be found on de pages i-iv. The chronicle has 288 pages, plus 5 more for the introduction and 3 more for the list of Amsterdam parnassim. Michman knew of the copy written by Delaville, and compared it to the fragments published by Roest. Since he did not check the original copies held at the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, he was not able to properly explain the differences between Delaville and Roest; Michman, *Dutch Jewry*, 58, n. 10.

⁶⁸⁶ On Mulder, see: Henriëtte Boas, 'De leraar Hebreuws van Eduard Asser: Samuel I. Mulder' in: idem, *Herlevend bevaard. Aren lezen in joods Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1987) 45-57.

⁶⁸⁷ Delaville's manuscript has just as Hs.Ros. 534-7 also the paragraph on 9 September 1812 (which is lacking in Hs.Ros. 74), writes also the Christian months in Hebrew script, follows 534-2 in the order of the sentences of the Dutch quotations, and has de same order as 534-4 regarding the events between 5-13 January 1809. This all shows that Delaville took 534 as his source manuscript.

⁶⁸⁸ Studied seriously for the first time in: Jiřina Šedinová, 'Hebrew historiography in Moravia at the 18th century – Abraham Trebitsch (around 1760-1840)?' *Judaica Bohemiae* 10 (1974) 51-61; more extensively in: Iveta Vondrářková [now: Cermanová], 'The events of times' by Abraham Trebitsch of Mikulov (Nikolsburg). The chronicle and its relationship to the development of modern historiography' *Judaica Bohemiae* 37 (2001) 92-144.

ממקום שהשארית ישראל סיים, בפרק שלשים ושתים, משנת התק"א לבריאת ארץ ושמים, עד שנת תקס"א שאנו מונין היום, האמת כתבתי, ולא כזבתי, בנייר החקירה, ובדיו הידיעה, בקסת הסקירה, וקנה היגיעה.⁶⁸⁹

The author, Abraham Trebitsch, testifies to the popularity of *Sheyris Yisroel*, naming without further introduction the history book and presenting his book as the continuation from chapter 32 onwards. Trebitsch thus took the last chapter of *Sheyris Yisroel* on Central and Eastern European Jewry, documenting their history from the 1648 Chmielnicki pogroms until contemporary times. In this chapter also the history of the Jews in Prague, Bohemia and Moravia is prominently present. By continuing from chapter 32, and thus leaving the final chapters on Dutch Jews and the Indian and Chinese Jews aside, Trebitsch already revealed that his chronicle concentrates on Jewish and general history mainly in the Czech lands.

Trebitsch' chronicle documents the period 1740 until 1801 in chronological order, structured according to the Jewish years, and he did so since 'there is no writer who would desire to write up the new events'.⁶⁹⁰ His objective was clearly to narrate contemporary history in sequence to *Sheyris Yisroel*, and thus demonstrates to have had the typical traditional successor conception of history, as a continuing story only in need of bringing up to date. Trebitsch – serving as a secretary to the Moravian Land Rabbinate in Nikolsburg - started writing his chronicle in the early 1790's and, while he was born around 1760, wrote the first part of his chronicle about a period of history he had not lived in himself. For that period he used written material, books, pamphlets, letters, and oral testimonies. Most of the chronicle, however, deals with the period of history Trebitsch experienced himself. Much attention goes to the various wars in which his region became involved, such as the Silesian Wars, the War of the Bavarian Succession and the wars of revolutionary France.⁶⁹¹

The character of *Qorot ha-ittim* is much like the Amsterdam Yiddish successor chronicles to *Sheyris Yisroel*. Trebitsch concentrates on a rather short period of history, from a local perspective and mainly focusing on his own region. Like the Amsterdam chroniqueurs, he opted for the chronicle form, using the years and dates as structuring principle. He also writes both on general and Jewish history, showing – much like Wing – the intertwining of both.

⁶⁸⁹ 'The events of time. Part one. From where *Sheyris Yisroel* ends, in chapter 33, from the year 5501 from the creating of earth and heavens, until the year 5561 in which we are now, I have written the truth, and not I didn't lie, with proper research, and enough knowledge, strictly reviewed, and creating with hard work.' Abraham Trebitsch, *Qorot ha-ittim, beleq risbon* (Brünn 1801), title page.

⁶⁹⁰ Trebitsch, *Qorot*, 5r.

⁶⁹¹ Vondrášková, 'The events', 108, 110-112, 120-121.

There is, however, one marked difference. While the Amsterdam chroniclers identified passionately with their city, the Republic and its authorities, Trebitsch showed no Czech or Moravian patriotic sentiment at all. He only identified with the Jewish community.⁶⁹²

That Trebitsch chose to continue *Sheyris Yisroel* and not David Ganz' *Tsemab David* is remarkable. The Prague Ganz showed just like Trebitsch much interest in Jewish and general history in Central Europe, and must have still been considered an important Jewish intellectual in late eighteenth-century Moravia.⁶⁹³ Trebitsch also mentioned *Tsemab David* in his introduction as one of his sources, next to *Yosippon*, *Sheyris Yisroel* and Heilprin's *Seder ha-dorot*, but opted for *Sheyris Yisroel* as predecessor. This must have been not only because of *Sheyris Yisroel*'s popularity, but also because it was the book bringing history close by – up until around 1740 – and as well presented Jewish and general history in one running narrative, while *Tsemab David* separated these rigidly. *Sheyris Yisroel* and its authority must have been the best imaginable predecessor for what Trebitsch wanted to do: a chronicle on the events of the times, both within and outside the Jewish community.

Against the background of the relatively isolated position of Moravian Jewry, one could understand Trebitsch' attitude of non-identification with the surrounding population, while at the same time it gives some credit to Iveta Cermanová's claim that *Qorot ha-ittim* 'disrupted the Jewish isolation from the surrounding world and the occurrences in that world' through documenting general together with Jewish history.⁶⁹⁴ Although the Habsburg emperor Joseph II in 1778 issued his 'Toleranzpatent', which granted Jews more possibilities, the Moravian Jews lacked the liberties Amsterdam Jews enjoyed. Trebitsch' political attitude is indicative of this marked difference between Amsterdam and Moravian Jewry. In comparison with the Amsterdam Yiddish chronicles Trebitsch' chronicle shows much the same historical outlook and method, strengthening the traditional conception of God as ultimate ruler of history and at the same time describing from a clearly Jewish perspective local, national and international politics.

As the title page showed, the book printed in Brünn 1801 was only the first half of the chronicle. For a long time people assumed Trebitsch did not write the second part. Therefore a Galicean *maskil*, Jacob Bodek, decided to continue on his turn Trebitsch' narrative in the chronicle *Qorot nosafot*, further events, chronicling Central and Eastern European history

⁶⁹² Vondrášková, 'The events', 123.

⁶⁹³ On the influence of Ganz on Trebitsch: Šedinová, 'Hebrew historiography', 55; Vondrášková, 'The events', 113-114.

⁶⁹⁴ Vondrášková, 'The events', 131.

– both general and Jewish – from 1802 until 1830. It was published in 1851 in Lemberg together with Trebitsch's first half, annotated by Bodek.⁶⁹⁵ Only quite recently the manuscript of Trebitsch's own second part was found in private ownership, documenting the period from 1801 until 1833. The Second Part deals with the Napoleonic wars and the restoration period within the context of the Habsburg Empire. Methodologically and stylistically Trebitsch continued simply his First Part, using as his main source the German-language Austrian press. A note on the title page shows that already in 1817 the state's censor refused the part of the chronicle that was ready at that time to be printed. In turn, this manuscript of the Second Part, was continued by an anonymous author in a few pages added to the manuscript up until 1871, with the same focus on mainly Czech Jewish history.⁶⁹⁶

Trebitsch's first part and its successive sequels are perfect illustrations of the continuation of the tradition of successor chronicles up until the nineteenth century, forming altogether a chain starting with *Yosippön*, continuing with *Sheyris Yisroel* and ending in a variety of different chronicles from Amsterdam, Nikolsburg and Lemberg.

7.3 The authors: socio-economic profiles

Who were the authors of the Amsterdam Yiddish chronicles? Generally they are thus far in historiography opposed to the intellectual Amelander and described as being part of the lower classes within the Ashkenazi community.⁶⁹⁷ I would like to propose a different approach to the background of the authors and their relationship to *Sheyris Yisroel*. I will first introduce the authors and thereafter analyze their position within the social stratification of Ashkenazi Amsterdam.

To start with Abraham Hayim ben Zvi Hirsh Braatbard. He introduced himself as 'ממשפחת קווברין', from the Kovrin family, most probably a hint to the origin of the family in the Polish *shtetl* of Kobryn (presentday in Belarus). The family name Braatbard or Braatbaard,

⁶⁹⁵ Reuven Michael, *Hakativa ha-historit ha-yehudit me-ha-Renaissance ad ha-et he-badasha* (Jerusalem 1993) 91-94.

⁶⁹⁶ The second part of *Qorot ha-ittim* – which is in the private collection of Rabbi Josef Buxbaum in Jerusalem – is studied extensively in an unpublished Czech dissertation by Iveta Cermanová [Prague 2005], which includes the complete Hebrew text; a survey of the second part is given in: Iveta Cermanová, 'The second part of the chronicle "The events of times" ("Qorot ha-ittim") by Abraham Trebitsch of Mikulov (Nikolsburg)' *Judaica Bohemiae* 40 (2004) 22-60; idem, 'The censorship of Hebrew manuscripts in Vienna in the early 19th century: the case of Abraham Trebitsch' *Judaica Bohemiae* 39 (2003) 93-103.

⁶⁹⁷ L. Fuks, 'De Jiddische kroniek van Abraham Chaim Braatbard (1740-1752)' *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 48 (1956) 113-171; Fuks, *De zeven provinciën*, 8; Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography' 16; the first step towards a redefinition is already given in: Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Baatbard'.

broad beard, was already in use by his father and should therefore not be applied directly to the chronicler. Abraham Hayim was born in May 1699 in Amsterdam to Zvi Hirsch ben Shmuel Braatbard (died Amsterdam 1751), while the name of his mother is unknown (died Amsterdam 1762). Braatbard thus was only six years younger than Amelander. He was the oldest of the family and had three sisters, Dina, Brendele and Edel, and also three brothers, Shmuel, Nathan and Shlomo. Braatbard – under his Dutch name Hyman Hartogs and living at the Houtgracht - married on 18 November 1729 in Amsterdam to Shifra Hayim (1704-1779), also born in an Amsterdam Ashkenazi family.⁶⁹⁸ Together they had nine children: Shmuel (1734), Hirsh (1740-1826), Eva (1743-1794), David (1747-1807), Judith (1748) and four more daughters. This means that during the period Braatbard was writing his chronicle, he got most of his children. There is no mention made of the birth of the children in the text, indicating that Braatbard did not envision his chronicle just for his family but for a much larger public. Braatbard died in 1784 and was buried at Zeeburg cemetery, where the less well to do Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jews found their final resting place.⁶⁹⁹

Braatbard's father was a broker, a money-changer, and enjoyed a yearly income of 600 guilders.⁷⁰⁰ Fuks suggested that after his father's death in 1751 Braatbard took over his position and had therefore to stop further developing his chronicle.⁷⁰¹ This might be the case. At least Braatbard's attention for the value of money and the currency rates in the chronicle shows that he was familiar with his father's profession.⁷⁰² As stressed before, Braatbard worked in the Jewish printing industry as a type-setter for Hebrew books. For that he needed a proper traditional Jewish education in order to become familiar with the Hebrew language and the traditional corpus of texts. Furthermore, as Fuks-Mansfeld demonstrated, he worked side by side Moses ben Shimon Frankfurter, Amelander and Elieser Susman Rudelsum.⁷⁰³ There he must not only have got the idea to write a continuation to *Sheyris Yisroel*, but also become acquainted with the agenda of Frankfurter to encourage Yiddish publications.

⁶⁹⁸ MAA, DTB 717/309, 18 November 1729. Braatbard signed in Latin script, showing his familiarity with the Dutch language. He wife did not. He lived at that time at the Houtgracht, within the Jewish quarter.

⁶⁹⁹ Genealogical information in this paragraph is taken from the database 'Ashkenazi Amsterdam in the eighteenth century' of the Dutch Jewish Genealogical Data Base Akevoth. The Braatbard family documented the expansion of the family on the fly-leaf of a copy of *Sefer miqra meforash* (Amsterdam 1749), presently in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Ros. 1891 D 18. In case of differences between the database and the family genealogy, I followed the last one.

⁷⁰⁰ Fuks, 'Jiddische kroniek', 114.

⁷⁰¹ Fuks, *De zeven provinciën*, 7.

⁷⁰² E.g. Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 246 and 283.

⁷⁰³ Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Baatbard', 136.

Kosman ben Joseph Baruch, also known as Jacobus Benedictus, was embedded in one of the most prominent Ashkenazi family networks in the Dutch Republic.⁷⁰⁴ He was born in Amersfoort around 1717, a son to Baruch Kosman (1691-1720) and Rebecca Isaac Italiaander (1694-1735). His father came from Rotterdam, where his grandfather Moses Kosman served as a parnas; due to his marriage he moved to Amersfoort, the residence of a few important Jewish families making their fortunes in the tobacco industry. His mother, Rebecca, belonged to the Italiaander family, who together with the related Cohen family dominated the tobacco business and was active all over Europe. Rebecca's grandfather, Abraham Benjamin Italiaander, came – as the family's last name suggested – from Venice.⁷⁰⁵ Kosman thus grew up in a wealthy Jewish family, which enabled him to get a good Jewish education – probably with private teachers.

As was the case with elite families all over Europe, but especially in the small Ashkenazi elite, there was a high level intra-family marriage. Kosman married within the family, with Anna Hartog van Embden (Amsterdam ca. 1721-Amsterdam 1777), a granddaughter of his aunt Marianne Italiaander. Her father, his cousin and from now on father-in-law, was Hartog Alexander van Embden, also known as Naphtali Herz Rofe.⁷⁰⁶ He was besides medical doctor also publisher, among others of *Sheyris Yisroel* in 1743. Kosman moved to Amsterdam and entered the firm of his father-in-law as a printer, publisher and bookseller. First together, and after Naphtali Herz became blind in 1766, he continued the firm himself. Of Amelander's titles, apart from *Sheyris Yisroel*, he also republished *Magishe Minha* (1753, 1754, 1759, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771) and the Torah edition with *Devek Tov* (1749).⁷⁰⁷ Kosman's list further consisted out of the traditional genres, such as Tenakh editions, siddurim and mahzorim, but the Amsterdam Ashkenazi takkanot and a Yiddish weekly on books (אמשטרדאמשי יודיש וואכליכי נייש פּר צילר) were also printed by Kosman. He printed both in Hebrew and Yiddish.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁴ For the family genealogies, see: <http://home.zonnet.nl/h.muntjewerff/genealogy/josephvanembden/joseph.htm> and http://stenenarchief.nl/genealogie/gezin/humo1_ashk/F1037/I1302/ and related pages (consulted 28 June 2010).

⁷⁰⁵ Johannes Jacobus Herks, *De geschiedenis van de Amersfoortse tabak* [Economisch- en sociaal-historische onderzoeken, nieuwe reeks 5] ('s-Gravenhage 1967) 198-201.

⁷⁰⁶ Hindle S. Hes, 'The Van Embdens. A family of printers in Amsterdam' *Quaerendo* 11 (1981) 1, 46-52.

⁷⁰⁷ This last one was as well republished in 1767 by Joseph, Jacob, Abraham, sons of Solomon Proops: *Humash tikken saphrim* (Amsterdam 1767).

⁷⁰⁸ Mirjam Gutschow, *Inventory of Yiddish publications from the Netherlands, c. 1650-c. 1950* (Leiden etc. 2007) nrs. 343, 375, 383, 386, 388, 389.1, 393-395, 398-399, 401-402, 404, 443; Shatzky, 'Letzte shprotzungen', 253-254.

Via both the family lines of his wife and himself Kosman was related to not only the Van Embden family but also to one of the most prosperous and influential Ashkenazi families, the Cohen's from Amersfoort, and to the progressive Asser family. Moses Salomon Asser, a nephew to Kosman's wife, in his autobiography described the family he grew up in as enlightened and intellectual, always in tension with the religious establishment. According to Asser, his grandfather, Naphtali Herz Rofe, was one of the very few progressive Jews in Amsterdam.⁷⁰⁹ Kosman was, needless to say, close to Naphtali Herz, but via the rest of the family related to the ruling elite as well. Parnassim were all around him, just as business men and Jewish intellectuals. Not only his cousin and father-in-law, as well the husband of his daughter Sara (ca. 1751-1805), Joachim Benjamin van Embden (1741-1826) – also known as Yohanan Levi Rofe –, studied medicine at university. A university degree in general, and one in medicine in particular, was considered among the cultured Ashkenazi elite as a conclusion of someone's education, rather than an economic necessity.⁷¹⁰ Often, besides their academic profession, they continued to work in the family businesses. Thus Joachim, a cousin to Kosman's wife and a second cousin to himself, continued the family business together with Kosman's son Baruch (1748-1795). He entered the firm as a printer's apprentice, became a partner in 1770 and finally became the owner in 1785.⁷¹¹ The third child of Kosman and Anna, Hartog (1758-1787), also worked in the printing firm, but lived relatively short, leaving his wife behind with one daughter.⁷¹²

Kosman was, together with Naphtali Herz, among the ones to whom Joachim dedicated his medical dissertation, which he defended in 1761 at Utrecht university. About Kosman, Joachim wrote, interestingly: 'Cognato meo conjunctissimo, rerum talmudicarum pertissimo, in rebus theologicis praeceptorio meo colendo'. It shows that Kosman was familiar with the traditional Jewish corpus of texts, and that he studied together with Joachim.⁷¹³

Kosman as a publisher and bookseller had access to all necessary sources to write history, while in his family network he could hear additional more or less confidential information. His chapter is, however, rather factual and does not offer surprising insights which could be expected from a person with Kosman's position. The progressive stand of most of his family, becoming clear in their choice for the *Naye Kille* during the 1797-1808 split,

⁷⁰⁹ I.H. van Eeghen, 'Autobiografie van M.S. Asser', *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 55 (1963) 130-165.

⁷¹⁰ Both external and internal factors led to the fact that Jews primarily studied medicine; David B. Ruderman, *Jewish thought and scientific discovery in early modern Europe* (Detroit 2001) passim, but esp. 50-52.

⁷¹¹ Hes, 'The Van Embdens', 49-51.

⁷¹² Gutschow, *Inventory*, nr. 409.

⁷¹³ Cited after: Hes, 'The Van Embdens', 50.

did not leave traces in his sequel to *Sheyris Yisroel*. On 26 February 1782 he was buried on Muiderberg cemetery, where the well to do members of the Ashkenazi kehillah found their resting place.

Like Braatbard and Kosman, Prinz was a scion of an Amsterdam Jewish family, of which his grandfather Salomon Nathan Prinz was at least already living in the city. Prinz was a generation younger than Amelander and Braatbard, born in Amsterdam in 1745 in a family of four children to Mozes Salomon Prinz (1717-1796) and Ester Hartog (1716-1782). Prinz married twice, first in 1768 to Branca Mozes Jacob (1741-1798)⁷¹⁴, and the second time in 1798 to Abigael Eliaser Schoelapper (1747-1813). The first marriage resulted at least in one child, which died and was buried in 1769 at Zeeburg cemetery. Prinz died at 22 December 1806 and was buried also at Zeeburg.⁷¹⁵

In his chronicle Prinz introduced himself to his reading public as a typical Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jew, living in the mainly Jewish Uilenburg quarter, next to Jitje the midwife.⁷¹⁶ Supplying such very specific information suggests that Prinz aimed primarily at fellow Amsterdam Jews, who knew his neighbour. The rest of his chronicle is written in a style supposing intimate knowledge of the geography and main characters of Jewish Amsterdam. Prinz qualified himself as *מענשטיר גלערנטיר און איין אום*, an unlearned person, thus positioning himself within the poor majority of the community, which was unable to study Talmud Torah.⁷¹⁷ One may wonder, however, if this was not merely modesty or simply a topos, since his chronicle is spiced with quotations from the traditional Hebrew corpus of religious texts, indicating that he was not just an ‘unlearned person’ but was very well at home in the key texts.

Prinz – who had a weak stomach and was therefore careful with regard to his food⁷¹⁸ - gave even more information about his socio-economic position in the chronicle. He described his daily occupation as being a *פֿעטיר בינדר*, a cooper who makes or repairs casks and wooden vats, further described as:

⁷¹⁴ MAA, DTB 744/165, 13 May 1768; Prinz signed in Latin script, his wife with a circle. Prinz lived at that time in the Bakkersstraat, his wife in the Zwanenburgerstraat.

⁷¹⁵ http://stenenarchief.nl/genealogie/gezin/humo1_ashk/F7038/I10966/ (consulted 23 June 2010), and related pages.

⁷¹⁶ Prinz, *Kronik*, reverse side of the titlepage: *איך זלמן בן משה פרינץ וואון נעבן יטכי מולדת אויף אוילין בורג*. Prinz' Hebrew is not completely correct, *מולדת* should be *מילדת*.

⁷¹⁷ Prinz, *Kronik*, 9v.

⁷¹⁸ Prinz, *Kronik*, 7r.

און וואש איין מענש אלש איך בין דז טוא איך אייך זאגן. איך טוא אלץ טאג פֿר דיא פרנסה דעם ראץ שלאגן.
דארום אויך אלז איר לייט איין טעות מעכט פֿינדן אזוי זעלט איהר לייט אן מיר עקסקוזירן.⁷¹⁹

Writing his chronicles was for Prinz something he did after work in the evenings, and therefore he could have made some mistakes. Undoubtedly his position as a cooper was different from one in more intellectual surroundings, such as the rabbinate, schools or the book industry. At the same time it is remarkable that Prinz was a cooper, since there was a cooper guild active in the city, and most guilds chose from the moment Jews immigrated to the city in the late sixteenth century to protect the interests of the residing members and not to admit Jews within the guild. The only guilds known to have accepted Jews were the book industry, medical, bird buyers' and brokers' guilds.⁷²⁰ Prinz' apparent success in becoming a cooper in Amsterdam demonstrates that, although it was hard work, he had acquired an economically not unstable position within the Amsterdam Jewish community. Prinz might have slipped through, but could also have been working on behalf of a non-Jewish cooper within the industry.

In his chronicle Prinz gave one example of his ability as a cooper. On 7 March 1788, a Friday, the celebrations for the birthday of the stadholder prince William V started.⁷²¹ The Orangist party, which was now again in power in the city, ordered that everyone should illuminate their houses – lighting all of the city from behind the windows with little cans in which candles were put. A run broke out on the little cans, and the prizes rose to one 'stuiver' (five-cent piece) a can. After narrating this, Prinz wrote:

צו מזל איך האב נאך יושט ביא גיפאל איין אלטי בליקה קאפי קעטיל דער היים גיהאט
מיט איינגן לעכר דריין
דא האב איך אלן צייט מיין קאפֿי אויף גיווארמט
דש וואר נאך מיין בעשטע הויז ראט אונ' דער צו נאך איין ירושה פֿון איין עביר מימלה
אונ' וויא איך דש גיהערט האב אלש דש אזוי גיהט איך ניט לאי
אונ' האב דיא קעטיל אין שטיקר גשלאגין
איך האב ניט קענן נאך דיא לומרט דער מיט גיהן

⁷¹⁹ 'And I will tell you what a person like me does. All day I make barrels for a living. Therefore, if you people will find a mistake, excuse me for that.' Prinz, *Kronik*, 9v.

⁷²⁰ Jan Wagenaar, *Amsterdam, in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophandel, gebouwen, kerkenstaat, scholen, schutterye, gilden en reggeringe, beschreeven* 9 (Amsterdam 1766) 54, 159, 194-196, 199, 244.

⁷²¹ Prinz introduced 7 March as the birthday of the prince, which was actually 8 March. Most probably on 7 March the festive activities started, lasting till 12 March. On 8 March, Prinz narrates in his next chapters, the birthday was celebrated in the Amsterdam synagogues and in the Jewish quarters; Prinz, *Kronik*, 8r-9r.

עש איז נאך גוהט אלש מן זיך מיט עש זיינגן קען העלפן
עש איז נור ווערילש גוט אונ' איך האב בליקז דרויש גימאכט אונ' בין אן דיא בערש דער מיט גיגאנגן
איך האב נאך דרויש אנטפאנגין ו' זהובים י"ח ב"ש
נור איך האב קיין אויף שלאק וועלן נעמן פון דיא לייט
איך האב מיך דא ניט וועלן אן פֿר זינדגין⁷²²

Prinz was able to turn the old tin coffee kettle, a legacy of his great-aunt, into little cans which could be used for the illumination. At the same time this passage also shows his rather modest living, as he presents the kettle as his best household effects and as something which he could no longer bring to the pawnbroker. Apparently he was from time to time without sufficient money and then brought things to the pawnbroker.

The qualification by Jacob Shatzky of Prinz as the first proletarian author in Yiddish should, however, be regarded as not only too ideologically loaded, but as an underestimation of Prinz' actual economic position.⁷²³ Although Prinz introduced himself as an unlearned Jew, and showed to be very familiar with and close to everyday life in Ashkenazi Amsterdam, he must have had a good traditional Jewish education and managed to obtain as a cooper a rather stable economic position. Another indication that Prinz was not among the poorest people in the Jewish quarters is that he was able to have his chronicle booklet printed, which surely must have cost him a considerable sum of money. That he must have enjoyed at least some success, could be extracted from the fact that a few years later he published a historical song on the effects of the political changes after the Batavian Revolution on Amsterdam Ashkenazim.⁷²⁴

The authors of the chronicle fragments could not be identified with certainty. But it is certain that they were written within the family circle of Menahem Mendele ben Leyb, the author of the notices on the weekly *derashot*. In the manuscript on several pages genealogical notes were written down, enabling us to reconstruct the family. The father of the main author, (Juda) Leyb Zalman, is remembered with a short notice after his death in 5547 (1787). The author himself was born in 5504 (1744), and he had a sister, Tserele (born 14 Cheshvan 5506,

⁷²² 'Luckily, I accidentally had still an old tin coffee kettle at home; with a few holes in it; I used to warm my coffee in it; it was my best household effect and moreover a heritage of my great-aunt; when I heard it went like that, I was not lazy; but broke the kettle in pieces; I could in any case not bring it to the pawnbroker; it is good when someone can help himself with what he has; it's only earthly material and I made six little cans out of it and I went with it to the market; I got six guilders and eighteen nickels for it; but I did not ask any extra charge from the people; I did not want to commit such a sin.' Prinz, *Kronik*, 8v.

⁷²³ Jacob Shatzky, 'Di letste shprotsungen fun der yiddisher shprakh un literatur in Holland', *Yivo Bleter* 10 (1936) 232-265, there 254.

⁷²⁴ Shatzky, 'Letzte shprotsungen', 256-257; Shmeruk, 'Historical songs', 156-157.

9 November 1745), and a brother: Menashe. The death of Menahem Mendele on 3 Iyar 5550 (17 April 1790) – and his burial one day later - is reported on the back of foliopage 40 by his son Zelig ben Menahem Mendele. On the back of the book cover one more name is mentioned, of which the relationship to the family is not clear, and surprisingly in Dutch, with Latin characters: ‘Amst.& den 17 mije 1763 Abr. Franz. den Jong’ (Amsterdam, 17 May 1763).⁷²⁵

Although we do not know much about the author of *Menahem Zion* and his family members, the most probable chroniclers, the manuscript offers us an insight in the circles the family lived in. Menahem Mendele gave *derashot* in synagogues and for hevrot, like the hevra Lomdei bahurim. In his manuscript he also made notices of the *derashot* of others, people he must have been familiar with. He mentioned, for example, the Amsterdam dayyan Itsik Frankfort, the son of the famous publisher Shimon Frankfurter and brother to Amelander’s teacher Moses Frankfurter. But also R. Leyb Wanefrieden (Levi Alexander Ziskind from Wanfried, born 1727, he passed away in Amsterdam 1797), who was attached to the beth hamidrash Talmud Torah and gave regularly lectures (shi’urim) on Shabbat. In the same circles R. Ber (Barend) Hitelmacher (1696-1774), a teacher at the Lomdei Torah, could be positioned, just as Hirts Hammelburg, the son of the late Amsterdam dayyan Feis Hammelburg, who shared his father’s insights with Menahem Mendele.⁷²⁶ The author, thus, functioned within the religious infrastructure of Ashkenazi Amsterdam. That becomes clear as well from a short text in memory of the late R. Gukher, who served in the *Dritt Shul*.⁷²⁷

The manuscript contains one more page with information about the family, written by Mendele ben Zelig Mendele Hazan. As the name already indicates, this Mendele served as a cantor in synagogue and was insulted by two residing parnassim and a few others. He wrote their names down in the manuscript, ‘as an eternal memory’ and in order that his children would never mingle with their offspring. The parnassim were Fisl ben Ephraim and Shalom Cohen, the others Ayzek ben Hirsh Polak, Jonah ben Eliezer Hirschel, Hayim ben Yom Eshbe, Hayim ben Leib Noah, Ephraim ben Hayim Shechs and David Eli ben Saul Minden.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁵ Menahem Mendele, *Menahem Zion*, reverse side of the cover; unnumbered first and second folio pages; numbered folio page 1v; 38v, 40v.

⁷²⁶ Other names mentioned are: Ayzek Polak, Zemele Melamed, Meir Frank, Meir ben Abraham Frank ha-niqra (also called) R. Meir Krin, the Ga’on Ber Madsht, Hayim b”b (Braatbard?), Leib ben Hirts Levi, Ati Keesing, Hayim Melamed and Lipman Gobits; Menahem Mendele, *Menahem Zion*, 96r, 101v, 102r, 104r, 107r, 109r, 113r, 116r, 120r, 122r, 126r, 145r, 156r.

⁷²⁷ Menahem Mendele, *Menahem Zion*, unnumbered first folio page, v.

⁷²⁸ Menahem Mendele, *Menahem Zion*, 1v.

Whoever of the family wrote the chronicle fragments, he was raised in a traditional Ashkenazi family, close to the religious establishment, and must have had a solid Jewish education. The fragments themselves are too short to say much about the authors, but the manuscript as a whole gives a clear indication of their social background.

The last Amsterdam Yiddish chronicler was Bendit ben Ayzek Wing (1758-1812). He was related to one of the other chroniclers, Zalman ben Moshe Prinz. Prinz was the grandson of Bele Bendit Wing, who in turn was the sister of Bendit ben Ayzek's grandfather. They both thus shared a great-grandfather. Further, Zalman's brother, Jacob ben Moshe Prinz, also married within the Wing family. The strong sense of family identity and the importance of the extended family in early modern times, make it probable that both chroniclers have known each other. Maybe even Prinz' engagement with historiography stimulated Wing to do the same for his own period.

Like Prinz and Braatbard, Wing grew up in an Amsterdam Ashkenazi family. His great-grandfather, Bendit Jacob Winnig, settled in the city in the seventeenth century. The family name was spelled in different ways, Winnig, Wienek and Wing all were in use. The confusion only ended when in 1811 everyone was required to register with a fixed surname, and the family adopted the name Benjamins. The background of the family, before settling in Amsterdam, is unknown. The final name Wing might indicate that they came from the German village of Windecken. That is at least the background of the same family name in Frankfurt am Main, from where many Jews emigrated to Amsterdam.⁷²⁹

Wing was born to Isaac (Ayzek) David Wienek (1731-1803) and Judith Mozes Levie-Content (1730-1805).⁷³⁰ He was their eldest son, next to three more sons, Leizer (Eliaser, 1760-1822), Hayim (Hijman, born 1763), and Hirts (Hartog; 1762-1836), and a sister, Ester (1766-1839). The family was rather well to do, mother Judith brought into the marriage a dowry of no less than fl. 888,-. Father Ayzek, on his turn, bought in 1783 at a public sale the seat in the women's section of the synagogue which had thus far been in his father's hands, for fl. 280,-. That the family buried their loved ones at Muiderberg, instead of Zeeburg, is one more indication of their relatively prosperous economic position.⁷³¹

⁷²⁹ Jits van Straten, Jan Berns, Harmen Snel, *Joodse achternamen in Amsterdam 1669-1850, een inventarisatie en een interpretatie/ Jewish surnames in Amsterdam 1669-1850, an inventarisation and an interpretation* (Bennekom 2002) 137, 212; cf. A. Dietz, *Stammbuch der Frankfurter Juden* (Frankfurt am Main 1910).

⁷³⁰ See for the family genealogy: <http://akevoth.org/genealogy/ashkenazi/7702.htm> and related pages (consulted 28 June 2010); in addition genealogical material from the chronicle is used.

⁷³¹ http://stenenarchief.nl/genealogie/gezin.php?id=F4585&hoofdpersoon=I6641&chosensize=50&direction=0&screen_mode=STAR (consulted 28 June 2010).

In 1785 Bendit married Ester Philip de Jongh (1762-1821), a daughter of the influential Liepman ben Wolf Rintel (Philip de Jongh).⁷³² Together they got three children, David (1788-1815), Elkan (1790-1815)⁷³³ and Mozes (1795-). Mozes would continue the family after the early death of his brothers. Mozes' son, likewise called Mozes Benjamins, was the one who donated the chronicle to the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana on instigation of Meijer Marcus Roest. In 1811 the Wing family lived at Rapenburgerstraat 10, in the middle of the Amsterdam Jewish quarter. Wing's brother Leizer, who remained unmarried, lived with the family.⁷³⁴ Not long after adopting the new family name Bendit died. He was buried at Muiderberg on 14 Tishri 1812.

Wing was close to the center of power in Ashkenazi Amsterdam. Although he himself never became a parnas, via his family he was very well informed about what happened at the highest administrative level of the kehillah. Possibly he was in contact with his namesake, the parnas Bendit ben Leman Wing Khalfen (Chalfon). This family member, a grandson of family founder Bendit Jacob Wing, was very prominent in the kehillah. His nickname, Khalfen, indicated his trade: a money-changer.⁷³⁵ But Wing could get his inside information much easier. Both his father-in-law and his two brothers-in-law served as parnassim. Liepman ben Wolf Rintel was, just as his father had been, in the years Wing wrote his chronicle one of the most prominent and influential parnassim. Gradually he transferred his position to his son Elchanan ben Liepman Rintel, also known under his civil name Elkan Philip de Jongh.⁷³⁶ The sister of Wing's wife, Rozetta or Reitsche, married within the family, with Liepman ben Itsek Rintel. He was a parnas as well. Finally there was the Nijmegen family, who via Ester's mother was related to the Rintels. This family too had parnassim and people on other significant positions.

Wing, thus, had an extensive network among the elite of Ashkenazi Amsterdam. Neither he, nor his father or brothers, however, ever acquired positions as parnas or in the administration of the poor relief. They must have had a position just below the ruling establishment. Still they had own seats in the Great Synagogue and Wing once was an elector

⁷³² MAA, DTB 755/251, 22 September 1785; both Wing and his wife signed in Latin script, an indication that his wife too enjoyed a pretty good education. Wing lived at the Rapenburgerstraat, his wife at the Zwanenburgwal, both in the Jewish neighbourhoods of the city.

⁷³³ Elkan left a manuscript on Hebrew vocalisation, דיני האזונית, Hs.Ros. 362 (Fuks nr. 468).

⁷³⁴ Leizer was fully part of family life and gave his nephew Mozes on behalf of his bar mitzvah a seat in the Great Synagogue (1808); the certificate is kept as Hs.Ros.Pl. C-4 in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (Fuks nr. 661).

⁷³⁵ Straten a.o., *Achternamen*, 158.

⁷³⁶ Bart Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders. De integratie van de joden in Nederland 1814-1851* (Amsterdam 2007) 33, 38, 47, 94, 149, 156, 160-161, 184, 186, 251.

for the selection of a new chief hazzan.⁷³⁷ He described his brother Leizer as one of the intimi of the chief rabbi.⁷³⁸ About himself, Wing once wrote that he had great influence among the poorer Jews.⁷³⁹ Wing's own economic position is not clear, but he must have been active in business, since in his chronicle several times he made mention of the bankruptcy of Amsterdam business firms.⁷⁴⁰

Samuel Israel Mulder, who let Abraham Delaville write a copy of the chronicle for himself, gave in his introduction more inside information on the Wing family. He described both the Wings and the Rintels as staunch Orangists. They also abhorred the activities of the progressive Jews, who acquired emancipation of the Jews and founded the *Naye Kille*. Wing's brothers Hirts and Leizer were known for their struggle against the *Naye Kille*, and the three brothers remained hostile to its former members also after the reunification of the kehillah. Wing lived close by the Ashkenazi synagogue complex, in the so-called Vinkebuurt.⁷⁴¹

Mulder knew Wing's children well. The oldest one, David, he described as wise, pious and a lover of science (חכמה) and ethics (מוסר). Together with the second son, Elkan, Mulder studied after dinner the weekly Torah portion and other religious books (ספרים קדושים). The third son, Mozes, still alive during Mulder's time, became a parnas and the gabay of the hevra Gemilut Hasodim. Mozes lent the chronicle to Mulder, because he knew that the latter was interested in the history of the Ashkenazi kehillah.⁷⁴²

7.4 Secondary intelligentsia

All Amsterdam chroniclers have a few characteristics in common. First, they grew up in Ashkenazi families with a history of several generations in Amsterdam. This explains their commitment with and concern for both the Ashkenazi kehillah and the city of Amsterdam. They also show a great familiarity with the political institutions of the Dutch and Batavian Republics, and a fine sense for the political and ideological differences within society. The

⁷³⁷ Wing, *Lezikorn*, Hs.Ros. 74, 13 August 1809.

⁷³⁸ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 9 February 1809.

⁷³⁹ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 30 November 1809.

⁷⁴⁰ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74-II: 301, 3 December 1810; 74-III: 328, 30 May 1811.

⁷⁴¹ Samuel Israel Mulder, 'Mavo' in: Wing, *Sefer jaldei ha-zman* (MAA, archive 714, inv.nr. 99), ii-iii; also Roest described Wing as a 'staunch adherent' to the Alte Kille in 'Kronijk 1795-1812', first issue; and likewise Shatzky, 'Letzte shprotsungen', 257: הגם ווינג איז זייער טענדענציעז און באלייכט דעם פראגרעסיווען פליגל פון דעם האלענדישן ידנטום מיט א פארביסענער איינזייטיקייט...

⁷⁴² Mulder, 'Mavo', iii.

character of their chronicles, for a large part city chronicles, could be explained by the shared Amsterdam background of the authors.

Second, the chroniclers show all that they had a proper traditional Jewish education, which was more than primary education at the *bedarim*. They were all well versed in the main sources of the Jewish tradition and had more than just a basic knowledge of the Hebrew language. But next to a Jewish education, they also enjoyed at least a basic education in Dutch. They signed their marriage acts in Latin script, used Dutch sentences in Latin script or in Hebrew characters in their chronicles and used Dutch sources – as the next paragraph will show. Just like Amelander they combined traditional Jewish knowledge with a familiarity with Dutch culture, while choosing to write in Yiddish for the majority of the Ashkenazi community.⁷⁴³

Third, their economic positions are also telling. Braatbard and Kosman were both working in the Jewish book industry, in positions where they came in contact with a large variety of sources as well as contemporary intellectuals. Wing, and probably Braatbard in a later stage, was active in business, while Prinz was the only one doing manual labour as a cooper. All of them had a more or less secure economic position, with Prinz as the only possible exception, as becomes clear from his familiarity with the pawnbroker. Kosman and Wing both belonged to prominent Ashkenazi families, with important networks, although their political and ideological positions were quite different, while Kosman's circle was more enlightened and Wing's more traditional. Important, however, to notice, neither Kosman nor Wing ever entered the small class of the ruling Ashkenazi elite themselves as *parnassim*, although they had many among their family members. All of the chroniclers wrote their histories next to their regular positions.

These characteristics of the Amsterdam Yiddish chroniclers give us a clear indication of their position within the social stratification of Ashkenazi Amsterdam.⁷⁴⁴ They had acquired knowledge with was part of the domain of the traditional – religious and administrative – elites, but never acquired a comparable position. None of the chroniclers served as a rabbi or as a yeshiva teacher, or ever became a *parnas*. Each one of them had to be satisfied with a

⁷⁴³ The chronicles provide further evidence for Aptroot's thesis: 'In the 18th century, Dutch Jews were more or less conversant with Dutch, which led to an increasing Hollandisation of Dutch Yiddish. (...) While most Jews, for better or for worse, spoke Dutch, few of them learned to read or write it.' The chroniclers were in that sense, with their Dutch knowledge, in the vanguard of the Ashkenazi community. Aptroot, 'Yiddish, Dutch and German', 204.

⁷⁴⁴ The same formation of an alternative elite in Poland is described by Elhanan Reiner, 'The Ashkenazi elite at the beginning of the modern era: manuscript versus printed text' in: Gershon David Hundert ed., *Jews in early modern Poland* [Polin 10] (London 1997) 85-98.

position just under the traditional elites, within the modern and expanding branche of the book industry or in business. They, however, did not give up their intellectual aspirations, but used these for a different objective as they would have done when part of the elites. While the traditional religious elite wrote in Hebrew and primarily in the genres of halakhah, kabbalah and musar, they opted for the genre of historiography and chose to write in Yiddish.

The Amsterdam chroniclers, therefore, could be described as a typical secondary intelligentsia or elite. Characteristic for a secondary elite is that it has ties both upward to the ruling elites and downward to broader groups within a society. They are not part of the central ruling groups, but ‘maintain positive solidary orientations to the center and are not entirely alienated from the preexisting elites’, while at the same time they are close to ‘some of the broader groups of the society’.⁷⁴⁵ As such they are well suited to function as an in-between between elites and wider strata of the population and often function as ‘bearers of sociopolitical transformation’.⁷⁴⁶ Unlike the traditional elites, they do not have vested interests in the existing situation, while at the same time they are driven by a wish to change things not only for themselves but as well for broader groups in society. Members of a secondary elite are often caught in processes of change and differentiation, which was a typical condition of the second half of the eighteenth century.⁷⁴⁷

The Yiddish chronicles of eighteenth century Amsterdam are the product of authors who on the one hand had partly a training and education through which they were closer to the religious and/or administrative elites – although without halakhic and kabbalistic knowledge –, but on the other hand did not have a fitting position. They were employed just below the elites, and in social and economic respects much closer to the broader strata of the Amsterdam Ashkenazi community. The unique socio-economic position made them best suited to be active on the borders between elite and popular cultures and between Dutch and Ashkenazi societies. The choice of both historiography and Yiddish fit well in this framework. Historiography, and especially contemporary history writing, was the perfect genre to bring together their interest in community and society and their wish to share their insights with the vast majority of the Ashkenazi community. Yiddish was best suited for this task. Members of the elites above them wrote in Hebrew, the lingua franca of the Jewish religious and intellectual world in which they participated. For them there was no pressing need to communicate in

⁷⁴⁵ S.N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, change, and modernity* (New York etc. 1973) 41-42, 346.

⁷⁴⁶ Eisenstadt, *Tradition*, 346.

⁷⁴⁷ Eisenstadt, *Tradition*, 91.

Yiddish, since they had their own networks and writing in Yiddish was in those circles even considered to be of lesser status. The secondary elite, however, although able to communicate in Hebrew, choose to write in Yiddish, the daily language of the broader community, to which they were socio-economically closer. The transformative capacities of the secondary intelligentsia had in this way an effect on the social status of Yiddish, becoming the language of the historiographical genre and an agent in the communication policies of the secondary elite.

The role of the successor chroniclers as a secondary intelligentsia is congruous with the analysis in the former chapter of Amelander as an intermediary between the Hebrew, Dutch and Yiddish domains. Although Amelander as an editor and author of a series of books had a slightly different position than his 'epigones', he was also an in-between between elites and community. Amelander's position was as a Jewish intellectual a bit more successful than Braatbard's, Prinz' and Wing's, and may be comparable to Kosman's, he still remained outside the formal structures of the ruling groups. His relatively better position might have served as a stimulus for his successors to engage in the same endeavour. Wittingly or unwittingly they were all transforming Ashkenazi culture and bridging gaps between various groups, while at the same time introducing new knowledge and new horizons.

7.5 The sources for contemporary history writing

Between Amelander and his successors there was, however, one marked difference. While Amelander wrote about centuries of history and on Jews in different geographical realms, his successors all concentrated on *Zeitgeschichte*, contemporary history, and restricted themselves to local and national history, with only some attention to international, European history. Amelander could use the rather small, but still significant corpus of Hebrew historiography, next to Dutch history books. The chroniclers, in their turn, because they were writing on their own time, did not have comparable texts to their disposal and had therefore to use different materials. The sources used by the chroniclers could be divided in three categories: written Jewish sources, written general sources and finally oral history and own experiences. These materials were often used as complementary sources, although there was a clear hierarchical

ordering which favored written over oral sources. Yet all sources, Jewish and non-Jewish, written and oral, were interacting and part of one 'information society'.⁷⁴⁸

7.5.1 *Written Jewish sources*

In the first category there was not much material available to the chroniclers. Braatbard only mentions letters from Jews in Frankfurt am Main directed to the Amsterdam Jewish leaders. The first of these letters told about locusts who darkened the air completely and finally settled on a field just outside the city. Only by using guns farmers and citizens achieved to expel them after two or three days. In his chapter based on this letter Braatbard gives a seldom insight in how he worked:

איין בריב הב איך הערן לייאנן בייא איין קצ[י]ן אויז פראנקפורט אן דיא מיין[.]. דיא בריב האב איך
ניט קענן נאך לאזין אום זיא אין איין בוך צו זעצן[.]. דר ווייל איך אלי ניאי זאכן הב אויף איין בוך גשריבן.⁷⁴⁹

Braatbard, in most cases, tried to copy the material he could get, including letters, and wrote it down in a book, most probably the source book for his chronicle. In this case he only heard the letter read aloud – on 13 October 1749 - in the house of an Amsterdam Jewish leader, but was unable to copy.

More letters arrived from Frankfurt, telling the Amsterdam Jewish leaders about the revolt in the local Jewish community in 1749. Jews broke in the *kaalshtub*, the community meeting room, and drove out their parnassim by force. Braatbard was amazed by this revolutionary event, and wondered why this exactly happened. A few chapters later he returns to the topic, since a lot of new letters had arrived in Amsterdam on the *makblonkes*, discord, in the Frankfurt Jewish community. The cause appeared to be a tax of a million guilders which the authorities levied on the Jewish community, which the parnassim had to raise from among the members.⁷⁵⁰ Kosman at the start of his chapter narrates about one letter arriving from the

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. Robert Darnton, 'An early information society: news and the media in eighteenth-century Paris', *American Historical Review* 105 (2000) 1-35.

⁷⁴⁹ 'I heard a letter from Frankfurt am Main read aloud by a leader. I could not reread the letter to place it in a book, as I have written down all new things in a book.' Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 241a.

⁷⁵⁰ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 241b, 249; the struggles were part of a larger series of battles within the Frankfurt Jewish community over the division of power, which was concentrated in the hands of a very small oligarchy; Dean Phillip Bell, *Jewish identity in early modern Germany. Memory, power and community* (Aldershot, Burlington VT 2007) 69.

Prague Jews in Amsterdam on their expulsion in 1745, requesting the help of their co-religionists.⁷⁵¹ Prinz, in his turn, did not use any Jewish written material for his chronicle.

Wing was a different case. First, he lived in a period in which the Amsterdam Jewish community was highly politicized and the battle between the various groups was, among other things, fought out in the public sphere via many publications. Second, he was close to the ruling establishment of the Ashkenazi kehillah and thus enjoyed entrance to the community archives. Wing thus used the publications of the enlightened society Felix Libertate, the series of pamphlets titled *Uri un' Hirsch* by Joachim of Embden, and the minute books of the Ashkenazi kehillah.⁷⁵² The first two materials, respectively written in Dutch and Yiddish, were widely on sale in the Amsterdam Jewish quarters. Of the series of pamphlets, by the way, no copies are left and Wing is the only source mentioning them. Another series of competing pamphlets, the *Diskursn* of the *Naye Kille* and *Alte Kille*, in turn were not used by Wing, although they enjoyed widespread popularity.⁷⁵³ Next to the minute books of the kehillah to which Wing through his family members must have acquired access, he also used publications of the Amsterdam chief rabbi Moses Saul Loewenstamm. This must have been rather easily accessible for Wing, since he could have taken notice of these in synagogue when they were announced publicly, or via his brother who was intimate to the chief rabbi.⁷⁵⁴

Letters as sources for history writing were a new feature in early modern historiography. They were not only read aloud in public, but also copied and sometimes even printed as 'Neue Zeitungen'.⁷⁵⁵ In all these forms, they served as material for chroniclers – also in Ashkenazi Amsterdam. The letters used by Braatbard and Kosman as well provide some insight in the information networks Amsterdam Ashkenazim were embedded in. Just like Amelander before, Frankfurt am Main and Prague are the Jewish communities with which most direct contact is maintained.

⁷⁵¹ Kosman, *JY* ed. 1771.

⁷⁵² Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 17 March 1795; 2 April 1795; 18 October 1796, 19 October 1810. Also a governmental decree translated into Yiddish and printed by the Proops firm was consulted: Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 1 and 5 June 1802.

⁷⁵³ A representative selection of these pamphlets are published and translated by Jozeph Michman and Marion Aprotroo in: *Storm in the community. Yiddish polemical pamphlets of Amsterdam Jewry 1797-1798* (Cincinnati 2002).

⁷⁵⁴ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 1 September 1810. Once Wing got an extract from M.S. Alexander, secretary to the Chief Consistory, of a letter of protesting Jewish school teachers, which testify that Wing had also access to the national Jewish organizational structures; Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 10 July 1810.

⁷⁵⁵ Silvia Serena Tschopp, 'Wie aus Nachrichten Geschichte wird: Die Bedeutung publizistischer Quellen für die Augsburger Chronik des Georg Kölderer' in: William Layher and Gerhild Scholz Williams eds., *Consuming News. Newspapers and Print Culture in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)* [*Daphnis* 37 (2008) 1-2] (Amsterdam/New York 2008) 33-78, there 56-58.

7.5.2 Written non-Jewish sources

The second category was much more important. All chroniclers used newspapers extensively. The Dutch Republic was a European centre of the press, where many local and international newspapers were printed and spread or exported. In the newspapers national and international news was provided, next to business and sea news and advertisements. The newspapers only gave the facts, acquired via a network of correspondents and by copying without hesitations from other newspapers, and did not give analyses or commentaries to the news. In Amsterdam, since 1672, all newspapers were centralized and came under the authority of the municipality and fused together into one title: the *Amsterdamsche Courant*. Three times a week the newspaper came out, on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Concurrence came from newspapers from other cities, like Haarlem and The Hague, which were famed for international news and news from the States General and the stadtholder's court respectively. In Amsterdam as well French, English and Italian newspapers were printed and distributed from there.⁷⁵⁶ Only for a short period of time, as far as we know, there were Jewish newspapers in Yiddish, the *Dinstagishe un' Fraytagishe Kurantn* (1686-1687), the one printed by Kosman (although mainly dealing with news from the book industry): the *Amsterdamse Yudishe Vokhlikhe Nays Far Tseyler* of 1776, and later on the *Wochtenlikhe barikhtn* (1781).⁷⁵⁷

The Amsterdam Yiddish chroniclers could easily get newspapers, they were on sale and to read in many places in the city. Those chroniclers working in the book industry often were able to read the newspapers at work, since many publishing firms were at the same time bookshops. Nowhere the chroniclers make any mention of specific Jewish newspapers, and when they do name newspapers they are the Dutch. Braatbard no less than 16 times explicitly mentioned the newspaper as his source, while for many other chapters he must have used this resource as well.⁷⁵⁸ The newspaper was his main source for news from outside Amsterdam, whether from the rest of the Dutch Republic or international. For example, Braatbard's narration of the battle between the French and the Dutch in the southern provinces is followed via the newspaper, just as this is the source for the fact that the peace negotiations

⁷⁵⁶ D.H. Couv e, *Van couranten en courantiere uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 1951).

⁷⁵⁷ Hilde Pach, 'Die Amsterdamer „Dinstagishe un' Fraytagishe Kurantn“ (1686-1687): wie j disch war die erste jiddische Zeitung?' in: Susanne Marten-Finnis and Markus Winkler eds., *Die j dische Presse im europ ischen Kontext, 1686-1990* (Bremen 2006) 17-25; idem, 'In Hamburg a High German Jew was murdered': the representation of foreign Jews in the *Dinstagishe un' fraytagishe kuranten* (Amsterdam, 1686-1687)' in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 213-223; Shatzky, 'Letzte shprotzungen', 254.

⁷⁵⁸ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 40, 56, 87, 165 (two times), 144, 145, 185, 193, 216, 223, 239, 246, 270, 271, 273.

were successful and that the French would leave the territory of the Dutch Republic.⁷⁵⁹ How important the newspaper was for Braatbard becomes clear when he concludes a chapter on a severe storm in Amsterdam and surroundings and its devastating consequences, with:

אלי אונגליקן קען איך אום מיגליך שרייבן. דען די קראנט האט אלו ניט שרייבן קענן:⁷⁶⁰

Prinz used the newspaper as well as source, although he mentioned it only once in his short chronicle when he wrote that after the humiliating arrest of princess Wilhelmina at Goejanverwellesluis by the Patriots, her brother, the Prussian king, immediately sent his troops to help the Orangists in their civil war.⁷⁶¹

Wing used for his large chronicle different newspapers, although he only scarcely mentions the name of the newspapers.⁷⁶² But that he used more than one, we know from his April 1797 entry where he tells that his account rests on two newspapers. Also on 4 April 1810 Wing informs his readers that he used several newspapers.⁷⁶³ Wing mentioned, in contrast to Braatbard and Prinz, both Dutch and international newspapers. The Dutch newspaper he mentioned explicitly was the *Koninklijke Courant* (Royal Newspaper).⁷⁶⁴ This newspaper, which was published by the government, had in the course of time due to the changing political situation different names. Wing notes every change of the name in his chronicle.⁷⁶⁵ To what extent Wing used the newspapers as his source is clear from that his telling that an extra issue is published, so that he could add new information.⁷⁶⁶

The principal foreign newspaper mentioned is the *Hoff courant* from London, sometimes also named *Hoff gazēt*.⁷⁶⁷ In periods with a normal post service with London this newspaper came directly to Amsterdam. In periods when this connection was interrupted, the

⁷⁵⁹ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 165, 223.

⁷⁶⁰ 'It is impossible to write about all misfortunes, because the newspaper could not write everything.' Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 87.

⁷⁶¹ Prinz, *Kronik*, 2v.

⁷⁶² E.g. Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 15 May 1805; 11 June 1806; 19 June 1806; 20 April 1808; 11 October 1808; Winter 1809; 17 May 1809; 5 June 1809; 18 July 1809; 31 October 1809; 2 January 1810; 23 March 1810; 4 April 1810; 9 April 1810; 3 July 1810.

⁷⁶³ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: April 1797; 4 April 1810.

⁷⁶⁴ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 24 September 1808; 22 July 1809; 7 November 1809; 25 February 1810; 4 April 1810. He also used the newspapers of Lieve van Ollefen and Redelinkhuizen, the first one being the *Nationaale Bataafsche Courant* (1795-1797); Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: April-May 1797.

⁷⁶⁵ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 20 July 1810; 21 July 1810.

⁷⁶⁶ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 13 June 1800; 2 June 1802.

⁷⁶⁷ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 17 October 1798; 12 November 1805; 31 July 1808.

newspaper followed another route. In 1807 and 1809, for example, it arrived via Vienna.⁷⁶⁸ Most probably Wing must have meant the *London Gazette*, the official British court newspaper, which started in 1665. The newspaper had as well a French edition, titled *La Gazette de Londres*.⁷⁶⁹ Wing, thus, did not have to read English in order to read this newspaper. But, in that case, of course, he had to be able to read French. Most likely, however, is that Wing himself never read the British newspaper, but only copied from the Dutch newspapers the entries they took over. For example, Wing's citation of the newspaper on the peace between England and Spain in 1808 could be found in the major Dutch newspapers, with reference to the English newspaper.⁷⁷⁰

Once Wing mentions explicitly a French newspaper: on 14 July 1810 he narrates that the contents of the decree of annexation of Holland to France is published in the *Moniteur* from Paris of 10 July.⁷⁷¹ He must have meant the *Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel* (1795-1810), continued as the *Moniteur universel* (1811-1848). This newspaper was in then the most important French journal. In the Dutch newspapers often material was taken from the *Moniteur*, and Wing in turn took it over in his chronicle, as he did with the 14 July 1810 entry.⁷⁷²

Letters were another important source, often the chroniclers tell about letters arriving in the city full of information about what happened elsewhere. In some instances these letters were published in the newspapers, but in other cases they circulated among the Amsterdam population. Braatbard, for example, gave account of the severe winter of 1749 and its effect in Hamburg, which was so large that he would not have believed it were it not out of such a reliable source, a letter from Hamburg.⁷⁷³ Another letter came in the same year from The Hague, narrating how the Turkish ambassador tried to murder a Jew but was eventually taken in the act and consequently expelled from the Dutch Republic.⁷⁷⁴ Also letters from France, about the festivities in Paris in February 1749, were used by Braatbard.⁷⁷⁵

Wing used letters as well, but in contrast to Braatbard, he had full access to them. He quotes from letters of the Amsterdam burgomaster or The Hague ministers directed at the

⁷⁶⁸ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 2 April 1807; 24 February 1809.

⁷⁶⁹ K. Baschwitz, *De krant door alle tijden* (2nd ed.; Amsterdam n.y.) 87.

⁷⁷⁰ See. e.g. *Opregte Haarlemsche Courant*, 2 August 1808.

⁷⁷¹ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 14 July 1810.

⁷⁷² Wing must have had at least had some basic knowledge of the French language. His transcription of French words in Hebrew script, shows clearly that he was familiar with the French pronunciation of the words. For example, he writes פלע for *palais* and קאהר for *corps*. On the *Moniteur*, see: Baschwitz, *De krant*, 68-76. On the 14 July 1810 entry: *Opregte Haarlemsche Courant*, 14 July 1810.

⁷⁷³ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 205.

⁷⁷⁴ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 237.

⁷⁷⁵ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 207.

Ashkenazi parnassim.⁷⁷⁶ A letter to his relative Bendit Wing Khalfen he even cited in full in Dutch.⁷⁷⁷ Also for international political developments he used letters, but most of these letters were published in the newspapers and were as such not a new and unique source used by Wing.⁷⁷⁸

The same could be said of the extensive use by Wing of the bulletins of the French army, official periodicals through which the most important military developments were communicated to the population of France and its puppet states.⁷⁷⁹ The army was very keen in organizing a continuous stream of information during the campaigns in Spain (1808-1809), the Habsburg Empire (1809) and in Russia (1812). They were issued by the French head quarters, which changed every time again. Wing noticed when the bulletins arrived via Paris in Amsterdam and used them abundantly.⁷⁸⁰ Even when he did not find useful information in them, he made mention of it. The series from Spain comprised 33 bulletins, the one from Austria 30 ones. For the war in Russia Wing used 12 bulletins in Hs.Ros. 74, and one more in Hs.Ros. 534-7.⁷⁸¹ Since the bulletins were translated and published in the Dutch newspapers, that was the most easy way for Wing to have had access to this important source of information. The *Fenille politique du département du Zuiderzee/ Staatkundig dagblad van het Departement der Zuiderzee*, which was the official newspaper and continued the Royal Newspaper, even published the bulletins in French and Dutch.⁷⁸²

There were, however, more official publications used by the chroniclers. Both municipal and national authorities issued placards, ordering concrete measures in response to political and economic developments in national and city life. These placards were not only read aloud from the city hall but also hung in different places in the city, including the Jewish quarters.⁷⁸³ The chroniclers took notice of these placards, as did Braatbard who told that in 1746 first via the newspaper, but thereafter also with a placard the Amsterdam population was

⁷⁷⁶ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 26 June 1798; 26 May 1808.

⁷⁷⁷ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 26 June 1798.

⁷⁷⁸ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 1 April 1809; 20 July 1809; 4 August 1809; 31 July 1810.

⁷⁷⁹ Napoléon and Alexandre Goujon, *Bulletins officiels de la Grande Armée* (2 Vols.; Paris 1822). A modern edition: Napoléon, *Proclamations orders du jour et bulletins de la grande armée* (Paris 1964).

⁷⁸⁰ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 7 May 1809.

⁷⁸¹ Wing, *Lezijkorn*, 74: 22 November 1808 until 7 March 1809; 7 May 1809 until 10 August 1809; 11 July 1812 until 26 August 1812; Hs.Ros. 534-7: 9 September 1812.

⁷⁸² See e.g.: *Opregte Haarlemsche Courant* 26 November 1808; 10 December 1808; 27 December 1808; 24 June 1809; *Fenille politique du département du Zuiderzee/ Staatkundig dagblad van het Departement der Zuiderzee* 11 July 1812; 12 July 1812; 13 July 1812; 14 July 1812; 15 July 1812 etc.

⁷⁸³ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 201.

ordered to pay extra taxes of 2% on one's possessions.⁷⁸⁴ Wing did the same and even sometimes cited them *in extenso*.⁷⁸⁵

Two more general sources are mentioned. Braatbard was the only one of the chroniclers using pictorial material. When on the 4th of February 1752 William IV was buried in Delft, all over the Dutch Republic printed pictures were sold, giving those who were not present – among them Braatbard – an idea of how the funeral was conducted.⁷⁸⁶ Prinz, in turn, made mention of pamphlets printed by the Patriots which were hung in the windows of the Amsterdam printing shops, where the public could read them.⁷⁸⁷

7.5.3 Oral sources and own experiences

Next to the newspapers, the third and final category was the most important source for the chroniclers: oral history and their own experiences.⁷⁸⁸ All of them assure their readers many times that they were themselves present and witnessed everything and thus their accounts are reliable. Braatbard, in this way, narrates how a pick-pocket acted on the ice during winter time, about horrific public executions, festive illuminations in the city and the revolt against the tax collectors.⁷⁸⁹ Braatbard was continuously on search for information, in order to include this in his chronicle. He was so even on Shabbat, as demonstrated by what he told about what happened on 14 September 1748. Prince William IV was in Amsterdam to settle issues with the city authorities. When Braatbard heard the rumor that some of the present magistrates would be set out of their offices, he went out to find out what was going to happen. He saw at Rusland, an Amsterdam street, the carriages of the magistrates who did not step out and stayed inside. At around noon, Braatbard told, everyone ran towards the city hall at Dam square where it was announced which magistrates were deposed and which new ones were given the

⁷⁸⁴ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 56; see also chapters 206 and 253.

⁷⁸⁵ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 10 September 1799; 28 November 1805; 17 April 1808; 29 July 1809; 14 July 1810.

⁷⁸⁶ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, 281.

⁷⁸⁷ Prinz, *Kronik*, 2v.

⁷⁸⁸ These autobiographical references make the chronicles sometimes nearing egodocuments, if broadly defined, but the fact that these references nearly always deal with impersonal documentation and barely deal with personal thoughts and feelings gives them a distinct character; cf. J.H. Chajes, 'Accounting for the self. Preliminary generic-historical reflections on early modern Jewish egodocuments', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95 (2005) 1, 1-15. They also differ from contemporary family chronicles and memoirs; Debra Kaplan, 'The self in social context: Asher ha-Levi of Reichshofen's *Sefer Zikbronot*', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007) 2, 210-236; Robert Liberles, "'She sees that her merchandise is good, and her lamp is not extinguished at nighttime': Glikl's memoir as historical source', *Nashim* 7 (2004) 11-27.

⁷⁸⁹ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 46, 53, 95, 114, 120, 124. More eye witness accounts by Braatbard in the chapters 13, 19, 20, 41, 68, 71, 87, 140, 145, 146, 162, 208, 213, 218, 240, 266b, 271.

positions. Hereafter the lucky ones stepped out of their carriages and went to the 'Herenlogement', the hotel where the prince of Orange stayed, to thank him wholeheartedly. They formed a procession, which took half an hour. All the time Braatbard was watching and later recorded everything for his chronicle.⁷⁹⁰

Braatbard's role as a walking collector of information is both his strength and his weakness. His chronicle is unique in the sense that it provides a perspective on Amsterdam society and politics from the position of a regular Amsterdam inhabitant and an Ashkenazi Jew. He recorded what he saw in a very vivid way and gives us an idea of a popular understanding of what happened in the city. There were, however, limitations for Braatbard. His knowledge was often restricted to the public domain. A few times he narrated what happened on the streets, but as soon as the prince of Orange, the authorities or the bailiff went inside the city hall, their offices or houses Braatbard could not tell what took place inside. Only now and then via newspapers he later could add this information.⁷⁹¹ Once he was unable to narrate what happened, when, at the funeral of the admiral Hendrik Gravé in the New Church, the multitude of people made it impossible for Braatbard to enter the church in order to give account of the service.⁷⁹²

The chronicle fragments in *Menahem Zion* are both based on personal experiences, giving eyewitness accounts of the celebrations in the Ashkenazi kehillah when William V was elevated to the position of stadtholder in 1776 and the weather conditions in the beginnings of 1779.⁷⁹³ Kosman's chapter barely provides any information about political developments or daily life in Amsterdam, but concentrates on the main events such as inaugurations of synagogues and delegations of the *parnassim* to the States General or the family of Orange. Kosman neatly gives the names of the delegates and short descriptions of the meetings with the authorities. He could have noted this information since 1743, but it is also very well possible that he used his network among the *parnassim* to acquire this information.⁷⁹⁴

Prinz wrote from his own experiences as well. He described how the war between the Patriots and the Orangists had an effect on daily life in Amsterdam, and often wrote out of the perspective of 'us Jews' or 'us Amsterdammers'. Specific for Prinz is that he more than the

⁷⁹⁰ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 152.

⁷⁹¹ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 157, 213.

⁷⁹² Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 218.

⁷⁹³ Menahem Mendel, *Menahem Zion*, i, iv.

⁷⁹⁴ Kosman, *JY* ed. 1771.

other chroniclers wrote about the emotions evoked by the events. Characteristic is the following passage on erev Yom Kippur 1787:

דיא זעלביגן צייט ווארן מיר יהודים אין אמשטרדם אין בטריפטן נארהייט גיוועזן
אונ' בפרט דיא ערב יום כפור תקמ"ח דא האבן מיר אנדרשט ניקש גיזעהן דיא גאנצין טאג
אלש קאנונין פֿר ביא רייטן אויף וועגינז דש דיא ערד האט דער פֿון גיציטרט
אונ' מיר ווארן אין בטריפטן אנגשטן.⁷⁹⁵

The war preparations of the Patriots in the city, with the Prussian armies nearing Amsterdam, made the Amsterdam Jews scared and Prinz recorded how he and his fellow Jews feared. Fear is the emotion Prinz wrote about most, but when finally the Orangists won he expressed the happiness among Amsterdam Jewry.⁷⁹⁶ Prinz then tried to obtain Orange paper, which was sold by Itsek Papirman on Vlooienburg, in order to decorate his house. But when he approached the shop he saw a long line of people and found out that the prices were exorbitant. He was not able to acquire any of the new Orange paper and had to make do with some Orange line.⁷⁹⁷ Next to emotions, Prinz wrote about how the city looked like during the period in which the gates were closed and outside the city the fields were inundated in order to keep the Prussians away.⁷⁹⁸

Wing must have experienced much of what he described in his chronicle himself, but yet he is very reserved in writing about his own presence or involvement. In 1798 he wrote that the parade of cannons was nice to see.⁷⁹⁹ A parade of, among others, Jewish cavalymen he witnessed himself as well.⁸⁰⁰ At more of such public events Wing was present and he took notice.⁸⁰¹

Closer came, however, events in his own life circle. Thus he narrates about a winter shower in summer 1801:

⁷⁹⁵ 'In that time we Amsterdam Jews were in great fear./ and especially the day before Yom Kippur we saw the whole day nothing else/ but artillery passing by on horse carts, that the earth was trembling./ And we were sad and frightened.' Prinz, *Kronik*, 3v.

⁷⁹⁶ Prinz, *Kronik*, 1v, 2v, 3v, 4v, 7v.

⁷⁹⁷ Prinz, *Kronik*, 7v-7r.

⁷⁹⁸ Prinz, *Kronik*, 4r, 4v, 6r.

⁷⁹⁹ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 4 March 1798.

⁸⁰⁰ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 19 May 1798.

⁸⁰¹ Wing, *Lezikorn*, 74: 19 June 1798.

די גרעשטע פֿר וואונדֿרונג וואהר פֿרייטאג אום יא שלעק האב מיט מיין אייגן הענד פֿר איין מיראקעל דש איז פֿון מיין דאק ארונטר גנומן אונ' וואהר נאך זא שטייף אונ' קאלט וויא מיטטיל אין ווינטר.⁸⁰²

The entries on marriages and deaths in the family are of course based on Wing's own account.⁸⁰³ The same is true of the entry on the reprimand Wing got from the Minister of Police and Justice because of his resistance against the conscription of Jews in the army.⁸⁰⁴ The most personal account we get when both sons of Wing are summoned for first the draft and thereafter the examination for military service. His youngest son, Elhanan, achieved, after being selected, to avoid military service because of his weak health. David, however, drew the second take a place by lot and only after much effort and stress was allowed to launch a substitute, who would serve in the army instead of him. That Wing was able to arrange a substitute for his son, indicates the relative wealth of the family.⁸⁰⁵ These events were, however, the only times Wing deviated from his primarily political interest and offered some autobiographical details, which says much about the impact these events had on the author.⁸⁰⁶

Next to own experiences, conversations with eyewitnesses were important sources to the chroniclers. Braatbard was not only informed about the events in Frankfurt am Main via letters, but as well through conversations with pedlars who came from there to Amsterdam.⁸⁰⁷ Also about the events in Prague in 1745, when the Brandenburg king conquered the city, Braatbard was informed by refugees from that city.⁸⁰⁸ Another important source to Braatbard must have been his brother, Samuel Braatbard, whom he mentioned only once. In Amsterdam the guilds protested, especially at times of economic recession, against the activities of Jews working in the same branche but outside the guilds. When one of these guilds, the cotton printers, organized a campaign against their Jewish colleagues, these gave voice to their dissent

⁸⁰² 'The greatest miracle was Friday at 11 o'clock. With my own hands as a miracle I took the ice from my roof and it was just as hard and cold as in the middle of the winter.' Wing, *Lezjekom*, 74: 22 July 1801.

⁸⁰³ Wing, *Lezjekom*, 74: 13 September 1803; 23 September 1804; 2 January 1805; 6 March 1805; 11-12 March 1806; 22 August 1807; 24 September 1808; 31 January 1810.

⁸⁰⁴ Wing, *Lezjekom*, 74: 30 November 1809.

⁸⁰⁵ Wing, *Lezjekom*, 74: 15 March 1811; 20 January 1812; 9 February 1812; 10 February 1812; 17 February 1812; 19 February 1812; 6 March 1812.

⁸⁰⁶ The general lack in the chronicles of family history, autobiographical details, financial bookkeeping details, markedly differentiates these chronicles from contemporary diaries as analysed e.g. in: Jeroen Blaak, *Literacy in everyday life: reading and writing in early modern Dutch diaries* (Leiden 2009).

⁸⁰⁷ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 241b.

⁸⁰⁸ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 36, 45.

via four of their leaders, being one of them Samuel Braatbard. Through his brother the chronicler must have got inside information about the progress of their case.⁸⁰⁹

Wing must have had comparable conversations with his family members, providing him with unique inside information. An example is the speech his brother-in-law Elhanan Rintel gave on behalf of the Ashkenazi kehillah while they were received in audience by king Louis Napoleon on 30 August 1808. Wing gave a neat account of its contents. While he himself was not present, he could only have heard of what took place during the meeting via his brother-in-law.⁸¹⁰ Wing also spoke eyewitnesses of events, like a Brabant businessman who experienced a fire in an Amsterdam inn.⁸¹¹

More oral resources for the chroniclers were the announcements made by the town-criers, going through the city with news on order by the municipal authorities.⁸¹² The Ashkenazi community also had such a crier, who went through the Jewish quarters for announcements. Prinz, for example, gives account of the kehillah-crier inviting everyone to go to synagogue for special instructions related to the political situation.⁸¹³ All chroniclers noticed rumors in the city, while at the same time staying cautious about the reliability of this source of information.⁸¹⁴ Sometimes, however, rumors were deliberately left out as they were not to be believed. Rumors stood for the chroniclers on the bottom of the 'Informationspyramid': they had to be checked and verified, preferably with written documentation.⁸¹⁵

Since the chroniclers wrote more than Amelander did on political and military history, their sources were overwhelmingly non-Jewish. Especially the newspapers were an extremely rich source of information to them, next to letters, pamphlets and eyewitness accounts, either from themselves or others. The chroniclers used these sources altogether and as many as possible, as did many of the contemporary non-Jewish colleagues. They had, in the words of Benedikt Mauer, a 'kumulativ-additives Kommunikationsverständnis': in order to reach an account of past events that was as reliable as possible, they connected material from a variety of sources. In constructing their narrative they attached to some sources more reliability

⁸⁰⁹ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 204.

⁸¹⁰ Wing, *Lezjkor*n, 74: 30 August 1808.

⁸¹¹ Wing, *Lezjkor*n, 74: 15 February 1795.

⁸¹² Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 234, 239.

⁸¹³ Prinz, *Kronik*, 2r.

⁸¹⁴ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapters 44, 112, 118, 149, 150, 152, 178, 183, 222, 256, 258, 266a, 271, 278; Prinz, *Kronik*, 4r; Wing, *Lezjkor*n, 74: 30 March 1809; 22 May 1809.

⁸¹⁵ Braatbard, *Kornayk*, chapter 128; cf. Henk van Nierop, 'And yea shall hear of wars and rumours of wars'. Rumour and the revolt of the Netherlands' in: Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer eds., *Public opinion and changing identities in the early modern Netherlands. Essays in honour of Alastair Duke* (Leiden 2007) 69-86.

than others: written sources stood above oral ones, official documents stood higher in the 'Informationspyramid' than newspapers. A story became more credible, the more sources provided it, and the more it came from 'higher' qualified sources.⁸¹⁶ The relative position of the chroniclers within the Ashkenazi community was ultimately connected to their possibilities of verification. Wing, with many *parnassim* in his family, had access to more resources than Braatbard had, who had to restrict himself mainly to the public domain and was unable to provide inside information from within the authoritative bodies of both the Ashkenazi *kehillah* and the city.

7.6 Conclusion: Amelander and his epigones

This chapter presented a corpus of Yiddish historiography mainly written in Amsterdam – with the exception of Trebitsch' *Qorot ha' itim* – as 'successor chronicles' to Amelander's *Sheyris Yisroel*. What can we say, in conclusion, about the relation between Amelander and these 'successor chronicles'?

First, there are different ways to continue an authoritative work. Amelander himself chose to present his history work as the second part of *Sefer Yosippom*, but none of his successors followed the same procedure. Kosman wrote an extra chapter and added that to a new edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*, thus attaching his own history work even closer to Amelander's magnum opus than his example did with *Yosippom*. Braatbard, Prinz and Trebitsch all wrote 'successor chronicles' starting where Amelander ended, in 1740, and connecting their work via the title with Amelander's. Braatbard named his chronicle *A Naye Kornayk*, Prinz opted for *Sheyris am koudesh*, and Trebitsch presented his *Qorot ha'itim* in the subtitle as the continuation of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

Wing's chronicle is only indirectly a successor chronicle to Amelander, since it starts in 1795 and does not continue where Amelander or one of the other chroniclers stopped. He was, however, also influenced by *Sheyris Yisroel* and connected his chronicle in a more literary way to his example. Wing referred in the opening of his chronicle to the winter of 1740, a very severe one as Amelander wrote at the end of his book, and compared it with the winter of 1795. Braatbard, like Wing, also opened with the winter of 1740. Both Braatbard's and Wing's chronicles in this way continue Amelander's narrative. Finally, the chronicle fragments cannot

⁸¹⁶ Benedikt Mauer, 'Gemain Geschrey' und 'teglich Reden': Georg Kölderer: ein Augsburger Chronist des konfessionellen Zeitalters (Augsburg 2001) 49-69.

be linked to *Sheyris Yisroel*, but they give testimony to the fact that following the publication of *Sheyris Yisroel* history writing became a rather popular activity among Amsterdam Ashkenazim.

Second, the social position of Amelander and his successors has striking similarities. They all had a relatively good traditional Jewish education, mastered Hebrew and were familiar with the canonical corpus of texts.⁸¹⁷ However, they did not have positions that matched their intellectual background, but were active just below the religious and administrative elites. The book industry, in which Amelander, Braatbard and Kosman were active, offered a haven for Jewish intellectuals and, as a relatively new industry, was more open to those who wanted to push the borders. Prinz and Wing, who happened to be relatives, were active in manual labour and business and could only in their free time devote themselves to history writing. The social position of Amelander and his successors could be described as that of a secondary intelligentsia, people in between the traditional elites and the vast masses of the Ashkenazi community.⁸¹⁸ This position made them well suited to act as intermediaries and brokers between elite and popular cultures and Dutch and Ashkenazi societies, and therefore they all chose to write in Yiddish, while using Hebrew and Dutch sources. The fact that Amelander as an editor of several books was not only in temporal but as well intellectual terms somewhat ahead of his successors, only added to their wish to continue Amelander's work and achieve the same successes as he did.⁸¹⁹

Third, the successors all accepted the authority of Amelander, continued his work for their own times, but did not rework any part of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The second characteristic of 'successor chronicles', as presented in the first paragraph of this chapter, is also adopted by the Amsterdam chroniclers: they strengthen the authority of the dominant elites. Kosman, who comprised the period 1740-1771, showed that in the most clear way, with continuing the sequence of Amsterdam Sephardic and Ashkenazi chief rabbis started by Amelander. Braatbard, Prinz and Wing also register the continuation of power within both communities. Nowhere the ruling elites are challenged with critical remarks.

Fourth, there are, however, clear generic differences between *Sheyris Yisroel* and its successor chronicles, at least at first sight.⁸²⁰ While *Sheyris Yisroel* presented a world history of

⁸¹⁷ This familiarity with Hebrew and the traditional corpus was typical for most authors of Yiddish books; Chava Turniansky, 'Yiddish and the transmission of knowledge in Europe', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15 (2008) 5-18, there 9-10.

⁸¹⁸ Cf. Reiner's 'alternative elite'; Reiner, 'Transformations', 80.

⁸¹⁹ Cf. Berger and Zwiep, 'Introduction', 2.

⁸²⁰ Marincola has shown that in ancient historiography reference to predecessors did not mean that the continuators were not able to follow their own patterns and use techniques of contrast and polemic while continuing their work; Marincola, *Authority and tradition*, 221-225, 242, 254.

Jews over a long span of time, 70-1740, all successors are city or at best national chronicles and limited to one or more decades. While *Sheyris Yisroel* is a proper history book, the successors are *Gegenwartschronistik*, chronicling contemporary events. It is telling that both Braatbard and Prinz explicitly termed their manuscripts *Kornayk* or *Kronik*, which demonstrates that they were conscious of the historiographic tradition they joined. As far as I could establish, they were the first in the history of Jewish historiography to use this term, which originated in Christian medieval historiography. In Dutch society the term ‘chronicle’ (Chronyk/Chronijke/Kroniek) was widely used for both local and national history and as the heading for a short chronology in popular almanacs.⁸²¹ Wing, in turn, opted for a more traditional name: *Lezikorn*, referring to the medieval Ashkenazi tradition of *Sifrei zikaron* – books to function as a memory to persecutions and heroic deaths of Jewish martyrs.⁸²² His title might entail a pointed interpretation of the treatment of the parnassim and Chief Rabbi by progressive Jews and the authorities. However, as regards the methodology and contents of *Lezikorn* no significant differences to the earlier chronicles could be found.

While Amelander used the existing Hebrew historiography extensively, next to Dutch language history books, the successors had newspapers, letters and their own experiences as main sources. While Amelander opted for a thematic approach, with geography as an important structuration, all successors adhered to the annalistic method of chronicle writing. These differences, however, could also be overvalued. Braatbard, Kosman, Prinz and Wing all, in some way, continued Amelander’s chapter 34 on Dutch Ashkenazi history, while Trebitsch explicitly indicated that he continued from chapter 32 on Central European Jewish history. When we compare these chapters with the products of the successors, there are striking resemblances. Chapter 34 is also written in a chronological way, documenting a variety of topics, from the development of the Ashkenazi kehillah in Amsterdam, to the sequence of Amsterdam chief rabbis, weather conditions, a local revolt (the 1696 *Aansprekersoproer*) and a blood libel case in Nijmegen. The chroniclers documented the same topics for their own periods, and one could easily continue reading from chapter 32 to Trebitsch and from chapter 34 to Braatbard, Kosman, Prinz and Wing.

Fifth, there is nevertheless one important difference, which shows that within the boundaries of the genre of successor chronicles innovation took place. Amelander had some

⁸²¹ The Short Title Catalogue Netherlands, for Dutch books published until 1800, enlists no less than 34 books with ‘Chronyk(e)/Kroniek’ in their titles.

⁸²² E.g. Ephraim of Bonn’s twelfth-century *Sefer Zikaron*.

interest in politics, but only from the perspective of Jewish history. He wrote about Roman emperors and Arabic khaliefs and their retinue, but mainly to document their attitudes towards their Jewish subjects. It is telling that in chapter 32 nothing is said about the political system of the Dutch Republic or about the house of Orange.⁸²³ General history is only interesting to Amelander as background for Jewish history. All chroniclers, born in families who settled some generations earlier in Amsterdam, in turn, demonstrated a vivid interest in city, national and even international politics and document the developments on their own merit. Kosman adapts still the most to Amelander's scheme, he pays a lot of attention to the relations between the Oranges and the Jewish communities. The other chroniclers, Braatbard, Prinz and Wing all write exhaustively about politics, even in cases when there is no clear link with Jewish history. Wing neat documentation of the achievements of the French armies is only one example of this interest. Amelander's *Sheyris Yisroel* paved the way for his successors, who continued his work, but at the same time crossed existing boundaries and brought municipal and national politics within the Yiddish domain. In this way they could also be considered to continue the short lived life of the Amsterdam Yiddish press.⁸²⁴

The growing attachment to the own city and region and the political involvement – whether Orangist or patriotic – demonstrated by the chroniclers hint at an important development in eighteenth-century Dutch Jewry. Already before the Emancipation era Jews defined themselves in Dutch political terms, contributed to the public debates and fights – thus preceding the latter development of Jewish participation in national politics. As well, the local patriotism of which each chronicle gives a clear statement, paved the way for the rise of Dutch nationalism within the Jewish community. While in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic the provinces and cities still had a strong political voice, during the Batavian-French period the country was centralized. Dutch Jews participated in both phases, transforming like other Dutchmen their local patriotism into modern nationalism.⁸²⁵

The concepts of 'successor chronicles' and 'epigones' mutually strengthen each other. While the first describes the nature of the book products, the latter concentrates on the authors. Both serve to connect the Amsterdam Yiddish chroniclers to Amelander and his

⁸²³ That Amelander did not write about the Orange family could be explained out of the fact that at the time of publication of *Sheyris Yisroel* it was the so-called Second Stadtholderless Era (1702-1747).

⁸²⁴ Hilde Pach, 'Moushe's choices: was the compositor of the oldest Yiddish newspaper a creator or an epigone?' in: Berger and Zwiep eds., *Epigonism*, 195-204.

⁸²⁵ Bart Wallet, 'Amsterdam in de Jiddisje geschiedschrijving. De vorming van een Amsterdams-joodse identiteit', *Grine Medine* 43 (June 2011) 3-9. Jaap Meijer, precisely for this reason, labeled Braatbard's chronicle as a symptom of early assimilation; Meijer, *Verstrooiing en verlichting*, 25-26.

Sheyris Yisroel. Epigones, as newly defined by Berger and Zwiep, are not just mere followers, but true carriers of culture and a dynamic force within its development.⁸²⁶ The Amsterdam Yiddish chroniclers are a perfect example of this process, they deliberately chose to continue Amelander's work, did not step out of the authoritative successor tradition, which connected them to the whole body of Jewish historiography. But, at the same time, from within the boundaries of this traditional genre openness arises for the world the chroniclers lived in, expressing interest in city life and politics, national and international developments. Here it suffices to state that the study of the chronicles of Braatbard, the anonymous authors of the fragments, Kosman, Prinz and Wing demonstrated the dynamics of early modern successor chronicles through a variety of continuation strategies and both adhering to traditional patterns and opening new perspectives. To write a successor chronicle, in that sense, was more a strategy than a limitation.

⁸²⁶ Berger and Zwiep, 'Introduction', 3-4.

8. Transmission of a history book. The second life of *Sheyris Yisroel* (1767-1988)

8.1 Jewish historiography and the open book tradition

The success of *Sheyris Yisroel* is evidenced not only by the successor chronicles in Amsterdam and Nikolsburg, but also by the significant number of editions following the first one of 1743. In total *Sheyris Yisroel* was printed again at least 26 times, including nine times in Yiddish, sixteen times in Hebrew and once in Dutch. The second edition was released in 1767; the most recent was published in 1988. In between lies the fascinating and dynamic history of the transmission of an Amsterdam Yiddish history book, a history during which the book's role changed as the times evolved. In analyzing the various editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* we encounter a continuing Jewish historical consciousness. This consciousness, however, operated mainly in the shadow of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and has thus been largely overlooked in historiography.

The study of the editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* is also worthwhile from another perspective. Over the course of time editors and publishers modified the contents of the Amsterdam history book, often erasing chapters and passages, and sometimes adding new elements. This process partly fits with the successor tradition described in the previous chapter, which invited new editors to update the history book until their own times. But the reworking of the book in order to adapt it to new audiences, and therefore the inclusion as well as removal of contents, fits into a larger Jewish tradition of transmitting manuscripts and books. This tradition, labeled by Israel Ta-Shma as the 'open book tradition', is generally studied within the context of medieval manuscript culture yet merits further inquiries as to its continuation in early modern and modern periods.⁸²⁷ This chapter endeavors to offer a contribution to this field of research.

Every student of medieval book history is familiar with the fact that for one book there often exists a wide variety of manuscripts which may differ both linguistically and qua contents. Sometimes it is practically impossible to decide which served as the *Urquelle*. These differences are partly attributable to the process of copying texts, via which unintended but different readings frequently came into existence. However, Ta-Shmna has argued that there

⁸²⁷ Israel Ta-Shma, 'The 'open book' in medieval Hebrew literature: the problem of authorized editions' in: Philip S. Alexander and Alexander Samely eds., *Artefact and text: the re-creation of Jewish literature in medieval Hebrew manuscripts* [Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester 75 (1993) 3] 17-24.

also existed a process of willing and knowing modification of contents. This was directly related to the fact that many books were intended by their authors to be works in progress that presented an interim state of knowledge. The authors themselves often reworked their books during their lifetimes, thus being themselves a source of different manuscripts. After an author's death, students and new generations of scholars continued working on his books, thereby creating an ongoing process of reworking and re-editing the original manuscript. Other books, even when delivered by their authors as finished and concluded, were opened up and modified to new insights and circumstances by subsequent generations. This manuscript culture was characteristic of intellectual life throughout Europe. In the Ashkenazi context it was mainly stimulated through the yeshivot, where manuscripts were used to teach new generations, and where both teachers and students adapted manuscripts to contemporary Jewish culture.⁸²⁸

The invention of the printing press had tremendous influence on Jewish culture and was often described as a printing revolution.⁸²⁹ Jews soon made the shift from manuscripts to books, both for Hebrew and Yiddish texts, and experienced the revolutionary effects of this shift. Manuscripts which in medieval times had been distributed only among small numbers of people belonging to the religious elite and often only in specific geographical realms were now, as printed books, suddenly available to much larger audiences and across geographical divides. Sephardic literature entered the Ashkenazi domain with great effect, introducing philosophy, Hebrew grammar and different halakhic approaches.

The shift to the printed book also changed the status of books, which as manuscripts had still been considered open to emendations and additions. The printing of books fixed their contents and created authoritative texts. However, Elhanan Reiner has argued that in the early modern period the printed Ashkenazi halakhic book retained certain features of the medieval tradition of knowledge transmission. Through a continuing process of adding glosses and comments Ashkenazi scholars still engaged with books much as they had with manuscripts, resulting in different printed editions of the same text. This process, explained by Reiner as being a means for the rabbinic elite to protect its privileged position, resulted in 'a kind of

⁸²⁸ Ibidem.

⁸²⁹ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The printing revolution in early modern Europe* (Cambridge 1983).

printed manuscript, that is, a text which, in the way it took shape, rejected the new communicative values of print culture and created a text with esoteric components'.⁸³⁰

This continuation of the 'open book tradition' not only affected halakhic books which needed constant adaptation to changing conditions, but also historiography, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate. Historiography, like halakhah, has by its nature an open character, since history does not cease to continue from the moment of a book's (temporary) conclusion. Geography is another factor of importance for both halakhah and historiography, for just as halakhah varies from territory to territory, so too do the histories of various Jewish communities. 'Printed manuscripts' could thus also be adapted to new geographical conditions.

There is one important precondition for the functioning of the 'open book tradition'. The book should be considered not as the exclusive property of the author or initial publisher, but rather as a piece of shared heritage to a much wider community. The author is only instrumental in writing the first edition; thereafter the book belongs to its new readers, new editors and new publishers, all of whom are free to interpret and rework the book according to their wishes. The modern idea of authorial intention is absent in medieval manuscript culture, as it is in its early modern and even modern continuation in the 'open book tradition'.

This chapter aims to interpret the editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* since 1743 as an example of a 'printed manuscript', which, as shared Ashkenazi heritage, was adapted over time to new reading audiences and new geographical locations. The various editions, which partly react to each other, can moreover be read as a debate about whom *Sheyris Yisroel* actually belong to and what it precisely stands for. This chapter will study the 'canonization' of *Sheyris Yisroel* in the eighteenth century, the Eastern European *Sheyris Yisroel* and its position between Haskalah and nascent Orthodoxy, the Dutch edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* and its relation with German *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and finally the twentieth-century Orthodox appropriation and scholarly historicization of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

8.2 The canonization of *Sheyris Yisroel*

The first phase in the transmission history of *Sheyris Yisroel* occurred in the eighteenth century. When *Sheyris Yisroel* was published together with *Yosippon* in 1743, the Amsterdam chief rabbi Aryeh Leib in his 'haskama' (endorsement) gave the publishers (the previously mentioned three

⁸³⁰ Elhanan Reiner, 'The Ashkenazi Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book' *Polin* 10 (1997), 85-98, there 98.

brothers) a monopoly on the books for four years, forbidding anyone else to reprint them during this period.⁸³¹ Four years was not long; another printer could republish the books already in 1747 (or even in 1746, since the 'haskama' was dated 1742), although this did not happen. Apparently the publishers had printed enough copies to meet demand for quite some time.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the book was republished at least five times, each time in Western and Central Europe.⁸³² Two editions were published in Fürth, the South German center of Jewish printing, at the presses of Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch, in 1767 and 1771 respectively. In Amsterdam Kosman ben Josef Baruch issued a new and updated edition in 1771. Thereafter the printing of *Sheyris Yisroel* moved eastwards, to Nowy Dwór (Neuhof near Warsaw), where an edition was printed in 1785, and to Silesian Dyhernfurth (today's Brzeg Dolny), where an edition was published in 1799. Each of these editions testifies to the growing popularity of *Sheyris Yisroel* among the Ashkenazi reading public. A further analysis of these editions reveals this more clearly.

First, the geography of *Sheyris Yisroel* editions in the eighteenth century gives a good understanding of the then current map of Jewish printing. The book was also printed by well-known firms which, being embedded within large commercial networks, sought to sell their publications throughout Ashkenaz. The Fürth printing firm of Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch – also known as Hayim Madfis, or Hayim the printer – was established in 1737 and printed between 80-100 Hebrew and Yiddish works by Hirsch's death, in 1772.⁸³³ The Amsterdam firm of

⁸³¹ Amelander, *SY*, i.

⁸³² Bernhard Friedberg, *Beth ekeed sefarim* (Antwerp 1928-1931), has two more editions, both printed in Fürth, respectively from 1751 and 1757, whose existence I was not able to positively verify. Not only are there are no copies of these editions available in any of the main Hebrew and Yiddish libraries, but the *haskamot* in the Fürth 1767 edition refer only to the Amsterdam edition and not to any earlier editions printed in Fürth, which makes it highly unlikely that these editions were ever printed. Yeshayahu Winograd, *Thesaurus of the Hebrew book. Listing of books printed in Hebrew letters since the beginning of Hebrew printing ca. 1469 through 1863* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1993), gives an edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* from 1741, which is surely a mistake, as the *haskama* of Aryeh Leib Löwenstamm is dated a year later, 1742, at the start of the printing project of *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*. Most likely, Winograd copied this from Julius Fürst in his *Bibliotheca Judaica. Bibliographisches Handbuch umfassend die Druckwerke der jüdischen Literatur II* (Leipzig 1863) 320, who as well gives two more editions, one from Sulzbach, and a Hebrew translation from Zólkiew, both published in the eighteenth century, but not dated more precisely. The existence of these editions could not be positively identified, and most likely never existed. All evidence suggests that the Lemberg 1804 edition is the first Hebrew translation, as shall be discussed in this chapter. Fürst's mistaken information, however, was taken up by Marcus Meijer Roest (under his pseudonym Chaloeda) in *Navorscher's bijblad* 4 (1854) xxi-xxii and in the introduction to the Dutch edition of 1855, *Se'irith Jisra'el* (Amsterdam 1855) v, which also speaks about a 1761 edition from Fürth. Finally, Haim Gertner counts no less than ten eighteenth-century editions; however, he nowhere substantiates them, thereby indicating that he has followed the lists of editions provided by the authors mentioned above; Haim Gertner, 'Reshita shel ketivah historit orthodoxit bemizrah Europa: he'eracha mehudeshet', *Zion* 67 (2002) 295-336, there 301.

⁸³³ Heller, *Printing the Talmud*, 161-177.

Kosman, a continuation of Naphtali Rofe's printing operation, was, as noted in the previous chapter, an intellectual and rather progressive center within the city's Ashkenazi population.

The 1785 edition was printed by a non-Jewish printer, the German Lutheran Johann Anthon Krieger or Krüger, who ran a firm of four print shops just outside Warsaw in Nowy Dwór. Krieger enjoyed the protection of the Polish king Stanislaw II August Poniatowski and his large printing house served the Jewish communities in Poland – who were at that time unable to own a printing firm. Krieger operated until 1818 and printed no less than 130 books.⁸³⁴

Sheyris Yisroel was also printed in 1799, at the Dyhernfurth printing firm owned by the Mai family. Dyhernfurth was part of Prussia and was home to the Silesian minister Karl Georg Heinrich Count of Hoym (1739-1807), who is mentioned on the title page of *Sheyris Yisroel* as being the beneficent protector of Hebrew and Yiddish printing. The firm was started by Jehiel Michael Mai and was continued after his death, in 1790, by his widow, Rahel, and their sons Michael, Simon, Aron and Joseph. Eventually the firm was run solely by Joseph, an esteemed Talmudic scholar and son-in-law of R. Isaiah Berlin.⁸³⁵ *Sheyris Yisroel* was published by the widow and sons.

Second, all the editions were published together with *Yosippon*, the book to which it had been intended as a sequel. Amelander's plan succeeded: *Sheyris Yisroel* became the inseparable second part of the Yiddish *Yosippon* and in this way was disseminated throughout Ashkenaz. The last eighteenth-century edition, from Dyhernfurth in 1799, was the first (and only) to carry out the original plan. Besides *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*, the publishers also printed in the same year a Yiddish *Tam ve-Yashar*. *Yosippon* had, from medieval times, been a fixed part of the canon of Jewish historiographical literature and was joined in early modern times by such works as *Shevet Yehudah* and *Zemah David*; now *Sheyris Yisroel* became, through *Yosippon*, part of the 'canon' of Jewish historiography. Interestingly, *Sheyris Yisroel* was still published only in Yiddish, although this did not hinder its spread throughout the Ashkenazi Diaspora.

⁸³⁴ Emanuel Ringelblum, 'Johann Anton Krieger. Printer of Jewish Books in Nowy Dwór' in: Israel Bartal, Antony Polansky, *Focusing on Galicia: Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians, 1772-1918* [Polin 12] (London 1999) 198-211; which is an English version of a Yiddish original published in *Yivo Bleter* 7 (1934). See as well: Krzysztof Pilarczyk, 'Hebrew printing houses in Poland against the background of their history in the world', *Studia Judaica* 7 (2004) 2, 201-221, there 213. The title page of *Sheyris Yisroel* reads in the Yiddish Johan Anton Krieger, whereas the German introduces the book as: 'Gedruckt in Neuhof bey Warschau, in der Koeniglichen und Republicque privilegirten Druckerey Jüdischer Bücher von Johann Anthon Krüger'. *JY* (Nowy Dwór 1785) title page.

⁸³⁵ Entry in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* on Joseph ben Michael Mai, online: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=77&letter=M> (consulted 16 August 2010).

Third, an important factor in the rapid acceptance of *Sheyris Yisroel* was surely the various ‘haskamot’ recommending the book – always together with *Yosippou* – to the reading public. The ‘haskama’ of Aryeh Leib Löwenstamm, the Amsterdam Ashkenazi chief rabbi, to the first edition expressed rabbinical trust in the book and its contents. The first edition published thereafter, in Fürth in 1767 by the pious Hayim Madfis, added no less than two ‘haskamot’ by prominent Ashkenazi rabbinical authorities. As it was not common to issue new ‘haskamot’ for publications already circulating in print, the new Fürth edition must have been considered a special occasion. The two new ‘haskamot’ were dated 1765, when Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch started his project to print the companion books. The first was issued by the local Fürth rabbi Josef ben Menahem Mendel Steinhardt (ca. 1700-1776), the second by the Karlsruhe rabbi Nathanael ben Naphtali Zvi Weil (1687-1769). Steinhardt was born in Bavaria, but served several Jewish communities in Southern Germany and the Alsace before going to Fürth, which was one of the most important *kehillot* in Germany. There he led a prestigious yeshiva and became a leading halakhic authority, remaining in contact with Amsterdam. His responsa, published as *Zikbron Yosef*, testify to his conservative stand: he forbid mixed dancing, among various other things, and condemned the rise of Hasidism.⁸³⁶ His approbation of *Sheyris Yisroel* must therefore be considered an important indication of the book’s acceptance within the canon of Jewish historiography. It certainly contributed to the work’s continued dissemination throughout Ashkenaz. Steinhardt, moreover, supported the translation of Hebrew classics into Yiddish in order to make them known among the larger Ashkenazi public. He also approved other Yiddish books, including his son’s translation of Bahya ibn Paquda’s *Treatise on the duties of the heart*.⁸³⁷

The other ‘haskama’ was given by R. Nathanael Weil, another well-known eighteenth-century rabbi; he is particularly known in reference to his main work, *Korban Nethanel* (1755). Weil studied at the Fürth yeshiva before going to Prague, where he became a student of R. Abraham ben Saul Broda. He followed Broda to Metz and Frankfurt am Main, returning to Prague after Broda’s death in 1717. In Prague he headed the yeshiva and was active in the city’s rabbinate. There is some possibility that Weil met Amelander there during his yeshiva studies. After the Prague expulsion of Jews in 1745 Weil became chief rabbi of the Black Forest area and from 1750 onwards was chief rabbi of Baden in Karlsruhe. Like Steinhardt, Weil was

⁸³⁶ Eliane Roos-Schuhl, ‘De Joseph Steinhardt, grand rabbin d’Alsace, aux Lévy, père et fils, banquiers’ *Revue du Cercle de Généalogie Juive* 52 (1997) 11-13; Berkovits, *Rites and Passages* 79.

⁸³⁷ André Neher, ‘Copernicus in the Hebraic Literature from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977) 2, 211-226, there 223-224.

known as an able Talmudist and his recommendation of *Sheyris Yisroel* as the second part of *Yosippoon* can be regarded as a sign of the work's acceptance.⁸³⁸ Both 'haskamot' granted the publisher, Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch, a monopoly of ten years for publication of the books.

Fourth, comparison of the eighteenth-century editions with the 1743 original evidences only relatively small changes – with the exception of the 1771 Amsterdam edition. The two Fürth editions are almost nearly exactly similar, the only difference being the title page and year of publication. Compared to the original edition, only the original preface by the Amsterdam publishers and a poem containing an acrostic with Amelander's name (Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi) are omitted. The text is further presented in two columns instead of one; likewise, certain paragraphs are merged and presented as a whole. Compared to the Amsterdam 1743 edition, only the orthography changed: words are sometimes spelled differently, with a tendency to write less *plene* (e.g. *הבן* instead of *האבן*, *די* and *י* instead of *דיא* and *אי*, etc.).⁸³⁹ But since this was not done in a systematic way and since the Amsterdam edition was not consistent in this respect, these changes are not particularly significant for interpreting the transmission history of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The only changes that may be especially significant are where the Fürth editions modify *לען* for the grammatically more correct *לעם*, a possible hint as to the development of Yiddish grammar. Influenced by the German environment might be the change from *זיין* into *זיין*.⁸⁴⁰ On the whole, however, the Fürth editions neatly followed the Amsterdam text.

The Amsterdam 1771 edition, by the same publisher as the original edition, allowed itself more changes. It was printed together with *Yosippoon*, which ended after the last chapter with an announcement that *Sheyris Yisroel* continued from that point forward. Kosman, in his preface to *Sheyris Yisroel*, documents the positive reception the book had received some thirty years earlier, which had come in part because it had been unavailable for so long. Kosman either did not know about the first Fürth edition or, for commercial reasons, simply ignored its existence. However, he decided to answer the requests for a new edition by the *lib habers*, lovers of the book. He left the contents of the book the same and added his own chapter, including some Hebrew poetry he had written in 1766 in honour of the elevation of William V to stadtholder of the Seven United Provinces of the Dutch Republic. Kosman also slightly

⁸³⁸ Carsten Wilke, 'Nathanael Weil' in: *Jüdisches Leben in Baden 1809 bis 2009. 200 Jahre Oberrat der Israeliten Badens* (Ostfildern 2009) 223; Emily C. Rose, *Portraits of our past. Jews of the German countryside* (Philadelphia 2001) 23-25; *Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung Juden in Baden 1809-1984. 175 Jahre Oberrat der Israeliten Badens* (Karlsruhe 1984) 36.

⁸³⁹ See e.g. *Sheyris Yisroel* (Fürth 1771) 79v.

⁸⁴⁰ Both changes are visible in *Sheyris Yisroel* (Fürth 1771) 80r.

modified the typography, and decided to print Hebrew words and names of places, countries and nations in the so-called *otiyot meruba'ot*, square script, to accentuate such terms within the rest of the text, which was set in Ashkenazi cursive.⁸⁴¹

The editions from Nowy Dwór and Dyhernfurth took the Fürth editions as their *Vorlage* and did not use the Amsterdam 1743 and 1771 editions. This is clear from a number of details. They follow the Fürth editions in using two columns instead of one, have the same paragraph structuring and follow the same orthographic changes with regards to the 1743 edition. Moreover, where the Fürth editors made a mistake in Chapter 20, the 1785 and 1799 editions simply follow: whereas Amelander wrote, **אום די יהודים צו איבר ווינן**, the following editions have, **אונ' די יהודים צו איבר ווינן**.⁸⁴² Decisions made by the Nowy Dwór editor resulted in small differentiations from the Fürth editions, such as removing points to end sentences and thus combining them, being carried over into the Dyhernfurth edition – demonstrating that the 1799 edition was modeled after the one from 1785.⁸⁴³

The two last eighteenth-century editions had more in common and did not include the new Kosman chapter. In comparison to the earlier editions they had even become more sober in their layout and contents. The Nowy Dwór and Dyhernfurth editions removed the *haskamot* and prefaces, and commenced immediately with the text. Apparently *Sheyris Yisroel* was already so well known that it needed no further recommendations from rabbis or any defense from the author for writing such a history. All editions until 1785 still included on their title pages the propaganda rhyme that had been written for the 1743 edition. Only in the 1799 edition did a new one appear, which was used for both *Yosippson* and *Sheyris Yisroel*; this new poem concentrating on the improvement done to *Yosippson* which updated, for the first time since the 1743 edition, the work's language and added new pictures.⁸⁴⁴ The language of *Sheyris Yisroel* remained, however, unchanged and resembled the earlier 1785 edition.

To conclude, the eighteenth-century editions of *Sheyris Yisroel*, published together with the Yiddish *Yosippson* and endorsed by no less than three *haskamot* from leading Ashkenazi rabbinical authorities, show a clear trend of growing acceptance into the canon of Jewish

⁸⁴¹ *Sheyris Yisroel* (Amsterdam 1771) preface; poems on 147v-148r; *Yosippson* (Amsterdam 1771) preface.

⁸⁴² See the first paragraph of Chapter 20 in the 1743, 1767, 1771, 1785 and 1799 editions.

⁸⁴³ Compare e.g. the first sentences of Chapter 30 in the several editions, showing that only in 1785 and 1799 after **אונ' מיסניא** the sentence does not end but continues without dot with **אבר די לנד גרבן**. See: *Sheyris Yisroel* (Fürth 1771) 79v; idem (Nowy Dwór 1785) 78r; and: idem (Dyhernfurth 1799) 52r.

⁸⁴⁴ The images are indeed different from the ones used for the 1743 edition (which were re-used in the Fürth editions), but also from those used in the Frankfurt version of *Yosippson*. Some resemble this second image catalogue, but many are used for the first time and are not especially charming artistically.

historiographical literature. The book's publishing shifted from Western to Central Europe, following trends in the Hebrew and Yiddish publishing industry. The changes within the editions remain rather small, being primarily orthographic and typographic, with only the original Amsterdam publisher updating the book freely. The tendency towards editions without *haskamot* and introductions shows, moreover, that at the end of the eighteenth century *Sheyris Yisroel* no longer needed any introduction. This could explain why in the late eighteenth-century Amsterdam series of polemical pamphlets, known as the *Diskursn*, which were exchanged between adherents and opponents of political emancipation of Jews, *Sheyris Yisroel* is invoked without introduction by one of the literary characters.⁸⁴⁵ Amsterdam Ashkenazim apparently were considered familiar with the work, as must have been many more Ashkenazim throughout Europe.

8.3 The Eastern European Sheyris Yisroel: Between Haskalah and Orthodoxy

The nineteenth century can be called in every respect the golden age of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The book was translated into Hebrew and Dutch, reprinted many times and distributed widely throughout the Ashkenazi world. In the meantime the book and its status underwent major changes related to religious and cultural developments within Ashkenazi Jewry. The 'open book tradition' enabled nineteenth-century Jews to 'open' *Sheyris Yisroel* and adapt it to new audiences.

The history of the nineteenth-century *Sheyris Yisroel* reveals an often neglected chapter within Jewish historiography. Traditionally, research has focused on the mainly German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and historiography produced by scholars like Jost, Zunz, Steinschneider and Graetz. These scholars used the new methodologies of historicism for critical yet engaged examination of the Jewish past and were active in editing new critical and annotated editions of Hebrew classics.⁸⁴⁶ However, research by Shmuel Feiner has shown that in the preceding and partly contemporary Haskalah movement history played an important role, although not within the historicist paradigm. Historical consciousness was of vital

⁸⁴⁵ Joseph Michman and Marion Aptroot eds., *Storm in the community. Yiddish polemical pamphlets of Amsterdam Jewry 1797-1798* (Cincinnati 2002) 268-269. The popularity of *Sheyris Yisroel* is also testified to by the fact that it was omnipresent in Jewish libraries, as demonstrated by the catalogues of book auctions; Irene Zwiep, 'Jewish Enlightenment reconsidered: the Dutch eighteenth century' in: Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz and Irene Zwiep eds., *Sepharad in Ashkenaz. Medieval knowledge and eighteenth-century enlightened Jewish discourse* (Amsterdam 2007) 279-309, there 299.

⁸⁴⁶ For a short survey: Michael A. Meyer, 'The emergence of Jewish historiography: motives and motifs', *History and Theory* 27 (1988) 4, 160-175.

importance to the maskilim in their redefinition of Jewish identity, though they did not produce concrete historiography.⁸⁴⁷ Feiner thus distinguished between three major tracks within nineteenth-century Jewish historiography: the critical *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholarship, the Eastern European maskilic historical production, and the traditional-canonical historiography.⁸⁴⁸

Haim Gertner, in his pioneering research on this third track, has interpreted the republications of old historical publications, such as *Yosippson*, *Zemah David* and *Sheyris Yisroel*, as having been not only mere reprints but also ‘a new form of Orthodox history writing, an epigonic form’.⁸⁴⁹ They were the result of historical curiosity yet were also a deliberate ideological reaction to the first two tracks, namely *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholarship and Eastern European maskilic historiography. These two tracks posed difficult and critical questions to the traditional idea of history, and through republications nascent Orthodoxy responded to this threat by repeating the canonical rabbinic interpretations. Gertner has also showed that the traditional books were consciously adapted to a specific audience through introductions, *haskamot*, notes and additions, and that they consequently became more important within the whole of rabbinic literature.⁸⁵⁰

The story of the nineteenth-century *Sheyris Yisroel* fits neatly into the so-called third track. As it had become in the second half of the eighteenth century an integral part of traditional Jewish historiography, *Sheyris Yisroel* shared the fate of *Yosippson*, *Shalsholet ha-qabbalah*, *Shevet Yebudah* and *Zemah David*. However, at the beginning of the century there was one marked difference: *Sheyris Yisroel* was still only available in the Yiddish original. The translation into Hebrew was, therefore, of crucial importance to the further spread of the book. In the nineteenth century there were considerably more Hebrew editions than Yiddish: thirteen and three, respectively.⁸⁵¹ We will first consider the Hebrew editions.

⁸⁴⁷ Louise Hecht in her dissertation has interpreted the maskil Peter Beer, together with other Bohemians like Jeitteles, Löwisohn and Fischer, as a ‘Zwischenstufe in Feiners dichotomischer Einleitung zwischen Haskala and Wissenschaft’, because of their practical historical research, although they were not interested in a new philosophy of Jewish history. Louise Hecht, *An intellectual biography of the maskil Peter Beer (1758-1838). His role in the formation of modern Jewish historiography and education in Bohemia* [Ph.D. Hebrew University Jerusalem, 2002] 15, 395-396.

⁸⁴⁸ Shmuel Feiner, ‘Nineteenth-century Jewish historiography: the second track’, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (1994) 17-44.

⁸⁴⁹ Haim Gertner, ‘Epigonism and the beginning of Orthodox historical writing in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe’, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 40 (2007-2008) 217-229, there 219.

⁸⁵⁰ Gertner, ‘Epigonism’, 224-226.

⁸⁵¹ Different numbers of given by: Gertner, ‘Ketiva historit ortodoksit’, 301, 324, who counts 16 editions, without further specifications. Friedberg mentions, besides those listed, editions from Zhitomir 1853, Warsaw 1875 and Lemberg 1882. I have, however, been unable to trace copies of these editions. Friedberg, *Beth eked sefarim* 2, 421.

As the following table shows, *Sheyris Yisroel* made a complete shift from Western Europe to Eastern Europe. As the centers of Hebrew and Yiddish publishing moved from Amsterdam, Fürth, Sulzbach and Prague to Vilna, Lemberg (Lvov), Zhitomir and Warsaw, *Sheyris Yisroel* did likewise. In Western Europe, including the Netherlands, a steadily growing segment of the Jewish population turned to the vernacular, whereas the vast majority of the Hebrew and Yiddish-reading public was found in Eastern Europe. This transfer from Western to Eastern Europe also affected *Sheyris Yisroel*, which was reinvented as an Eastern European Jewish work, as will be shown hereafter.

Hebrew editions of Sheyris Yisroel in the nineteenth century

Publisher	Place of publication	Year of publication
Shlomo Yarris Rapaport	Lemberg	1804
Menahem Man ben R. Baruch Romm	Vilna	1811
David Shklover	Warsaw	1839
Chave Grosmann	Lemberg	1846
Michael Franz Poremba	Lemberg	1852
Aryeh Leib Shapira	Zhitomir	1858
	[Amsterdam]	18??
	[Amsterdam]	18??
Michael Franz Poremba	Lemberg	1864
Yitschak Moshe Baksht	Zhitomir	1873
J.M. Ehrenpreis	Lemberg	1874
Hayim ben Elkana Kelter	Warsaw	1874
Nathan Shriftgiser	Warsaw	1879

Three major developments characterize the *Werdegang* of *Sheyris Yisroel* in the nineteenth century in Eastern Europe: translation into Hebrew, the book's adaptation to new audiences, and the debate between maskilim and Orthodox publishers over the character of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

The first Hebrew edition was published in 1804 at the Lemberg printing firm of Shlomo (Yarish) Rapaport, who was known as a pious Jew and who owned one of the then

several Jewish printing houses in the Galician capital.⁸⁵² The first change as compared to the eighteenth-century editions is that for the first time *Sheyris Yisroel* was printed as the main title; the previously prominently emphasized information about the book being the second volume of *Yosippson* was now presented in subtitle. Furthermore, the name of the author – Amelander – disappeared from the title page and is not mentioned anywhere else in the book. Nor are the names of the translator and editor mentioned. Only on the final page are the personnel of the printing firm revealed: Yitshak ben Zvi Hirsh, Naphtali Hirts ben Yosef Margalio and Nisan ben Mordehai. The whole presentation of this Hebrew edition expresses that *Sheyris Yisroel* had become shared Ashkenazi heritage, a heritage which was no longer controlled or owned by the author, his relatives or the original publisher.

Unfortunately, this first Hebrew edition is presented rather soberly. There is no introduction or statement from the publisher expressing why the book had been translated, nor did Rapaport request rabbinical approbation. Only on the title page is information presented about this translation project; it is stated that this lovely book had not been published previously in the holy tongue, but had meanwhile become very popular in Yiddish among the masses (כי אם בלשון אשכנז ומגודל תשוקת המון). Because of its importance, the book had now been translated, with much hard work, into clear and pure Hebrew (צה ונקי). The note on the title page also expresses hope that the book would be for its readers a ‘restorer of life’ (למשיב נפש); this Biblical expression, from Ruth 4,15, is a strong expression about the effect a book such as *Sheyris Yisroel* could have on its readers.

Not long after the first Hebrew edition, a second translation was published in 1811 at the famous Vilna printing house of Menahem Man ben R. Baruch Romm, which held a near monopoly on Hebrew printing in the Russian Empire.⁸⁵³ In this case only the title, *Sheyris Yisroel*, is mentioned; that it is the second part of *Yosippson* is not noted. The name of the author, however, returned and Amelander is introduced to the public as having been ‘a great man to Jews’ and a grammarian (איש גדול ליהודים המדקדק השלם כהרר מ' מן בן ר' שלמה הלוי). It is stated that the reason for publishing the book is that it is useful for one to know what has happened in the past and that the book offers great benefit for the reader, but that unfortunately *Sheyris Yisroel* had thus far only been rendered in Yiddish. This edition would present a text in basic Hebrew, from which both adults and children would profit. This

⁸⁵² Pilarczyk, ‘Hebrew printing houses in Poland’, 212. The publisher Shlomo Rapaport should not be confused with the *maskil* Shlomo Yehuda Rapaport (Shir), also from Lemberg. However, in 1804 the Shir was only fourteen years old.

⁸⁵³ Raphael Posner and Israel Ta-Shma, *The Hebrew book: an historical survey* (Jerusalem 1975) 145-146.

introduction to the book makes clear that the publisher and the unknown translator were unaware of the earlier Lemberg translation and so had made their own.

At the start of the nineteenth century there were thus two different translations of *Sheyris Yisroel* into Hebrew. Both printing firms must have seen commercial opportunities in such a project. The shift from Yiddish to Hebrew at the start of the century was a significant one. By being translated into Hebrew the ‘canonization’ of *Sheyris Yisroel* reached its peak. The book was no longer meant just for the larger public; it now became part of the Hebrew library of the elite. In early modern times historiography might have been considered a genre for the masses (women, children and *am ha’arets*), and was therefore written, translated and mainly transmitted in Yiddish; in the nineteenth century, however, it became – again – a Hebrew genre for the elites.⁸⁵⁴

During the nineteenth century the Hebrew language remained largely the domain of the rabbinic and maskilic elites. The rabbinic elite considered Hebrew to be their exclusive domain, with the language’s literary canon designated only for their use. The traditional school system was organized in such a way as to teach only elementary Hebrew, whereas full command of the language – and the knowledge preserved in it - remained reserved for the religious elite. Parush has labeled this ‘intentional ignorance’ and described it as a way to protect beliefs, ideas, social practices and above all the authority of rabbinic leadership from threatening elements. The maskilim, on the other hand, also wrote in Hebrew, which they regarded as a more pure language than daily Yiddish. Their use of Hebrew can be qualified as a secularization of the language, widening its use to new domains such as literature and press. The maskilic approach to Hebrew was full of paradoxes. It was an approach torn apart by the choice between an elitist language and the desire to establish an equitable, modern literary language that would be understood by many. In the second half of the century knowledge of Hebrew expanded in maskilic schools and through the spread of Zionism, yet, the vast majority of Eastern European Jews remained unable to read Hebrew books.⁸⁵⁵ The translation of *Sheyris Yisroel* into Hebrew and its almost exclusive transmission in Hebrew throughout the century was therefore not only a story of the book’s success among the elites, but also a story of the book becoming closed to many readers.

⁸⁵⁴ Gertner, ‘Ketiva historit ortodoksit’ 324.

⁸⁵⁵ Iris Parush, ‘Another look at “the life of ‘dead’ Hebrew”. Intentional ignorance of Hebrew in nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish society’, *Book History* 7 (2004) 171-214.

Although there were two different translations, all subsequent editions in the nineteenth century were republications of the first Lemberg edition. The reason for the apparent success of the 1804 edition stems from the differences between the two translations as a result of the ‘open book tradition’. The contents of both translations differ from the original Yiddish edition, yet they also differ from each other. The title page of the Lemberg translation notes that it was published with the consent of the censor and during the rule of the last ‘holy Roman emperor’ Francis II. The censor may have influenced the contents of the Hebrew edition, although it seems more likely that internal Jewish reasons should be credited with the change of contents. Compared to the Yiddish original, this Hebrew edition appears to be a significant abridgement, as the following tables of contents demonstrate.

SY 1804	SY 1743
1. The Ten Lost Tribes	1. The Ten Lost Tribes
2. Jews in Rome, 63 BCE-656	2. Jews in Rome, 63 BCE-656
3. Jews in Spain, Germany, France and England	3. Jews in Spain, Germany, France and England
4. The history of Jews from the fall of Jerusalem until the end of the Bar Kochba revolt	4. The history of Jews from the fall of Jerusalem until the end of the Bar Kochba revolt
5. From the death of R. Akiva until 240 in Eretz Yisrael	5. From the death of R. Akiva until 240 in Eretz Yisrael
	6. Jews in Babylonia after 70 CE
6. History of the Jews from emperor Constantine (314) until 614	7. History of the Jews from emperor Constantine (314) until 614
7. The beginnings of Islam, until Bustenai	8. The beginnings of Islam, until Bustenai
8. Jews under emperor Heraclius and Sisebut	9. Jews under emperor Heraclius and Sisebut
9. The Khazars	10. The Khazars
10. Jews in France, from Charlemagne until Louis the Pious	11. Jews in France, from Charlemagne until Louis the Pious
	12. Jews in the East, 905-1040
11. Jews in Spain, 967-1096	13. Jews in Spain, 967-1096
12. The Crusades in Europe	14. The Crusades in Europe

13. Benjamin of Tudela, East-West, 12 th century	15. Benjamin of Tudela, East-West, 12 th century
14. Sages, 1099-1190	16. Sages, 1099-1190
15. False messiahs, East-West, 12 th century	17. False messiahs, East-West, 12 th century
16. Jews in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, 1140-1200	18. Jews in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, 1140-1200
17. Jews in the East, 1200-1334	19. Jews in the East, 1200-1334
18. Jews in Spain, 1256-1349	20. Jews in Spain, 1256-1349
19. Jews in Italy, 1225-1394	21. Jews in Italy, 1225-1394
20. Jews in France, 1300-1670	22. Jews in France, 1300-1670
21. Jews in England, 1210-1649	23. Jews in England, 1210-1649
22. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, 1222-1400	24. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, 1222-1400
23. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal	25. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal
24. Jews in the East and the story of Shabtai Zvi	26. Jews in the East and the story of Shabtai Zvi
	27. Jews in the Ottoman Empire
	28. Jews in Eretz Yisrael
25. Jews in Ethiopia, Africa, 1523-1750	29. Jews in Ethiopia, Africa, 1523-1750
26. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, 1410-1614	30. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, 1410-1614
27. Jews in Germany, Poland, Bohemia, 1614-1648	31. Jews in Germany, Poland, Bohemia, 1614-1648
28. The 1648 Chmielnicki Pogroms and the suffering of the German Jews	32. The 1648 Chmielnicki Pogroms and the suffering of the German Jews
29. The Sephardim in Holland	33. The Sephardim in Holland
	34. The Ashkenazim in Holland
	35. The Jews in China, India and Cochin

In total six chapters disappeared from the new Hebrew editions, almost all of which concerned the history of Jews in the East: Chapters 6, 12, 27, 28 and 35. Chapter 34, about Ashkenazi

Dutch Jewish history, was also removed. This change of contents resulted in a different *Sheyris Yisroel*. First, the concentric concept, in which the Ten Lost Tribes encircled the ‘remnant of Israel,’ disappeared and the book became instead a more regular history book, narrating chronologically events of the past. Second, the intention of Amelander to bring Sephardic and Ashkenazi history together – inspired by Amsterdam Jewish reality – was surely viewed in the Eastern European context as less relevant. In Eastern Europe there were hardly any Sephardim, and thus confronting their history would likely have been considered less urgent. The result was, despite the work’s translation from Yiddish into Hebrew, a further Ashkenazization of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Third, the local context of Dutch Jewry must have been regarded as less interesting for Eastern European Jewry. Thus, only the more exotic history of Amsterdam Sephardim was kept in the book, while the separate chapter on Dutch Ashkenazim was removed and only one section of it – about an anti-Semitic incident in the Kleve region, bordering the Dutch Republic – included in the last chapter.

Not only were chapters removed; the remaining chapters were abridged. Where Amelander had provided documentation and quoted such sources at length, such as letters, they were in most cases removed.⁸⁵⁶ Amelander’s more philosophical passages, in which he reflected on the meaning of historic events or on God’s involvement in Jewish history, were frequently left untranslated.⁸⁵⁷ Some chapters were merged, such as the last three chapters of the original edition, about Sephardic and Ashkenazi history in the Dutch Republic and Jewish history in the Far East. From each of these chapters only one paragraph was taken; these paragraphs were fused together into a new but incoherent chapter.

The second translation, published in Vilna in 1811, had an entirely different character. This edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* focuses on two topics, as announced on the title page: it presents an account of the hardships Jews had to suffer in *galut* and it narrates the history of the Ten Lost Tribes and their locations. The editor chose only to translate the first 24 chapters of the original Yiddish edition, starting with the Ten Lost Tribes and concluding with Ashkenazi history until 1400. The result was that *Sheyris Yisroel* became basically a book on ancient and medieval Jewish history, ending with a rather depressing chapter on a series of persecutions and expulsions in Central Europe. The book did not omit chapters on Eastern Jewish history, yet the result is a more Ashkenazi book than the original edition had been. In this version the book ends with an Ashkenazi chapter, as the original succeeding chapter, on the *gerush*

⁸⁵⁶ E.g. in the chapters 1 and 14.

⁸⁵⁷ See for example the beginnings of Chapters 14 and 15.

Sepharad, is left out. The difficulties of Ashkenazi life in *galut* therefore dominate the concept behind this edition. This may be related to the contemporary position of Jews in the area around Vilna, which had become part of the Russian Empire after the third Polish partition of 1795, and which was not very welcoming to its new Jewish population.⁸⁵⁸

The Vilna edition was a translation of the first 24 chapters of the original Yiddish version. Occasionally the editor changed or added to the contents. For instance, Amelander wrote that the Jews in France commemorated the victims of the 1171 Blois incident each 20 Sivan the Vilna editor added that even now this day of mourning and fasting is held by ‘us’.⁸⁵⁹ As Hominer demonstrated, the *selibot* prayer book of Lithuanian Jews included the martyrs of Blois on the day of commemoration of the victims of the 1648 Chmielnicki pogroms (*gezeirot tach ve-tat*).⁸⁶⁰ Indeed, in 1652 the Council of the Four Lands, the highest authority in Polish and Lithuanian Jewry, declared 20 Sivan a day of fasting for all Jewish communities under its authority, thereby connecting recent events to an analogous historical event.⁸⁶¹

The Vilna edition remained the only one of its kind during the nineteenth century. All other nineteenth-century Hebrew editions followed the Lemberg edition, with its broader yet significantly abridged contents. The first subsequent edition, published in Warsaw in 1839, copied the 1804 Lemberg edition but opted to restore Amelander’s name to the title page. The book was once again connected to its original author. This was nevertheless a short interval in the nineteenth-century transmission history of the book: all following editions omitted his name. Crucial in this respect was the Lemberg 1846 edition, which used the 1804 edition as its *Vorlage* and joined Rapaport in not mentioning the original author. This edition also returned Yosippon to the title page. Meanwhile, this mid-century edition was once again adapted to a new situation.

For the Lemberg 1846 edition we have, for a change, the name of the editor: Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr. His name is not mentioned explicitly, but he gives away his identity in writing ‘as I have said in my book *Tiferet Yisrael*’. Likewise, in his 1847 edition of *Zemah David* he refers to his editing work on *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁸⁶² Mohr was a prolific author and editor; we will return to his activities and ideology. He added significantly to *Sheyris Yisroel* and

⁸⁵⁸ N.N. Shneidman, *Jerusalem of Lithuania. The rise and fall of Jewish Vilnius* (Oakville ON/ Buffalo NY 1998) 3-5, 11.

⁸⁵⁹ *JY* ed. Vilna 1811, chapter 18.

⁸⁶⁰ *Sheairith Yisrael complete*, ed. Hayim Hominer (Jerusalem 1964) 140.

⁸⁶¹ Simon M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, from the Earliest Times Until the Present Day*, transl. by Israel Friedlaender (Charleston SC 2009) 152; on the actual observance of this fast: Chone Shmeruk, ‘Yiddish literature and collective memory: the case of the Chmielnicki massacres’, *Polin* 5 (Oxford 1990) 173-183.

⁸⁶² *JY* ed. 1846, 47v; *Zemah David* ed. Lemberg 1847, 119v, as cited by Gertner, ‘Ketiva historit ortodoksit’, 310.

also altered its appearance. First, he decided to separate the first paragraph of the book from the first chapter, in which Amelander reflected on the difficulties in writing Jewish history. This became a פתיחה, an introduction to the whole book – whereas Amelander’s original introduction had already disappeared from the first Lemberg edition. Second, Mohr added commentary to the text, in order to make the contents more easily understandable for a contemporary audience and to demonstrate his knowledge. For example, he explains that Constantinople and Istanbul are the same city and that Izmir is joined by its Greek name Smyrna; Lucca is further introduced (in Yiddish) as a duchy in Italy; and the Hebrew term דקדוק, which Mohr apparently considered too difficult for his audience to understand, is explained as grammar.⁸⁶³ In the section where Amelander wrote about the Persian prophet Mani, Mohr added the creative albeit incorrect interpretation that in Hebrew heretics are called *minim* after him. Likewise, he added that apostates are called *apikorsim*, after the Greek philosopher Epicurus.⁸⁶⁴ Another example of Mohr’s editing is his effort to situate *Sheyris Yisroel* on the same level as European historiography, via changing the naming of historical personages according to what was common in non-Jewish history books. Thus for example Constantine becomes Constantine *ba-gadol*, the Great, although this epithet has decisive Christian connotations.⁸⁶⁵

Third, and most significant, Mohr added an entire new part to *Sheyris Yisroel*. This section did not become a new chapter of the book but was added after the last chapter and received its own title: מִשַׁא דַּמְשֶׁק, ‘The burden of Damascus’. It is mentioned separately both on the title page and in the table of contents. Mohr’s addition presents an account of an incident from recent Jewish history, namely the 1840 Damascus Affair, in which the local Jewish community had been accused of murdering a Catholic priest and his helper. As soon as Western European Jewish communities heard about the accusations, they joined efforts and organized a Jewish diplomatic mission, directed by Moses Montefiore and Alphonse Crémieux, to the Ottoman sultan. Although the accusation was not dropped formally, the arrested Jews were freed, and throughout Europe this was celebrated by Jews as a victorious moment.⁸⁶⁶ From that moment on Montefiore’s star began rising as an advocate for Jewish solidarity, not

⁸⁶³ *JY* ed. 1846, 19v (הערצאגטהום באיטליא); לוקא; 20r (בלשון לטיין גראמאטיקא); 35r (שמירנא). אומיר (שמירנא).

⁸⁶⁴ *JY* ed. 1846, 7v; In his interpretation of Mani he followed the fifteenth-century scholar Abraham Bibago. Linguists, however, see the meaning of the term *minim* in that it refers to ‘species’ or ‘kinds’ of people. See also, in the term *apikors*: John B. Henderson, *The construction of orthodoxy and heresy. Neo-Confusian, Islamic, Jewish, and early Christian patterns* (New York 1998) 21.

⁸⁶⁵ *JY* ed. 1846, 7r; for more examples: Hominer, *Sheairith Yisrael*, 26.

⁸⁶⁶ Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: “Ritual murder”, politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge 1997).

only in Western Europe but no less among Eastern European Jewry. For them Montefiore was no less than – in the words of Abigail Green – a ‘Jewish liberator’.⁸⁶⁷

Mohr’s addendum to *Sheyris Yisrael* has been characterized by Jonathan Frankel as probably ‘the greatest circulation in the Hebrew language’ of the narrative about the Damascus Affair.⁸⁶⁸ As Mohr indicated in the short summary preceding the actual narrative, he based most of the account on correspondence between the Austrian consul in Damascus, Caspar Merlato, and his colleague in Alexandria, Anton von Laurin. Sections from these letters ended up in European newspapers, having been spread in part by Jewish advocates of the imperiled Damascus Jews.⁸⁶⁹ Furthermore, Mohr added material from chronicles and also included the related story of the Jews of Rhodes, who were likewise under threat by anti-Semites.⁸⁷⁰ Mohr’s account of the Damascus Affair fits well into what Frankel has described as the characteristic narrative structure within nineteenth-century Jewish historiography: the evil genius is the French consul Count de Ratti-Menton; the central element is the torture scene, with the Damascene Jew Isaac Yavo dying as a martyr with the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips; the conclusion is the successful mission of Montefiore and Crémieux to the East.⁸⁷¹ De Ratti-Menton is presented as an aberration of Western liberalism, while in the end European norms and values in the East prevail over blind medieval anti-Semitism.⁸⁷²

There is, however, one element in Mohr’s account that distinguishes it from the other contemporary Jewish reports. In his narrative about the Damascus and Rhodes affairs, Mohr stressed the positive exception among European consuls in the East made by the Austrian diplomats – and thus ignored the fact that the Austrian consul in Rhodes, who had initially defended the Jews, later changed his position for the worse.⁸⁷³ According to Mohr, the consuls, in standing up for the Jews, were just and therefore the best representatives of European values. Mohr ended his narrative by singing the praises of the Austrian Empire and the Habsburg rulers.⁸⁷⁴ The author, a Lemberg resident, showed himself a loyal Austrian patriot, harmonizing Jewish and Austrian interests. Certainly, Mohr must have realized that his edition

⁸⁶⁷ Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish liberator, imperial hero* (Cambridge Mass. 2010); Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (Philadelphia 2006) 68.

⁸⁶⁸ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 410.

⁸⁶⁹ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 145; cf. Ronald Florence, *Blood libel: the Damascus Affair of 1840* (Madison Wis. 2004) 108-115.

⁸⁷⁰ On contemporary historiography on the Damascus Affair – sometimes including the Rhodes affair – see: Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 400-411.

⁸⁷¹ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 411.

⁸⁷² Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 406.

⁸⁷³ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 158-163.

⁸⁷⁴ *SY* ed. 1846, 47v-48r.

of *Sheyris Yisroel*, including his addendum, would be distributed not only among Austrian Jews but also in the neighbouring communities under Russian rule. There the position of Jews was far more restrained than in the Habsburg Empire, and until Nicholas I's death in 1855 Hebrew publications on the Damascus Affair could not be published.⁸⁷⁵ Mohr's explicit praise for the Austrians' tolerant attitude towards the Jews must therefore have had significant impact on Russian Jewish readers, showing them the better position of their neighbouring co-religionists.

'The burden of Damascus' has a few characteristics in common with the preceding *Sheyris Yisroel* chapters. In the same way as Amelander had done, Mohr shows the interrelation between general, political and Jewish history. Whereas Amelander stressed Dutch tolerance and the fortunate fate of Dutch Jewry, Mohr expressed his gratefulness towards the Austrian government – and implicitly portrayed Austrian Jewry as privileged. Moreover, the central martyrdom scene resembles similar ones in *Sheyris Yisroel* – such as the plight of Ashkenazi Jewry during the Crusades (in Chapter 14), the martyrdom of the *marrano* Yitschak Castro (in Chapter 22), and the victims of Chmielnicki (in Chapter 32). Despite the gap from 1743 to 1840, Mohr's addendum can be interpreted as a continuation and actualization of Amelander's narrative. Yet it holds an agenda inspired by contemporary nineteenth-century ideologies, as will be discussed below.

All Hebrew editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* printed after 1846 adopted Mohr's changes: the short introduction, commentaries and the 'Burden of Damascus' became integral parts of the late nineteenth-century editions. These editions differ from each other only in small respects. The Zhitomir 1858 edition, for example, printed the short introduction in a smaller type than the normal text, whereas the Warsaw 1874 and 1879 editions no longer contained any table of contents. Such typographical and editorial changes are the main characteristics differentiating the various editions. The Austrian chauvinism of Mohr, however, disappeared from later editions printed outside the Habsburg Empire under Russian rule. The story from Rhodes was recounted, but the last few sentences, which praised the Austrians, were omitted.

Two nineteenth-century editions appeared with Amsterdam as their supposed place of publication and without years of publication. Since the 'Burden of Damascus' is added, they must have been published after 1846, yet major characteristics (paper quality, Hebrew typography) indicate that they were not published in Amsterdam but somewhere in Eastern Europe. Catalogues of major libraries holding these editions suggest Lemberg, Warsaw and

⁸⁷⁵ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 409.

Prussian Königsberg as possible places of publication and give dates such as 1852, 1858 and 1860. Lemberg was the most likely place of publication for the 143-page edition, since its version of 'Burden of Damascus' includes the praises for the Austrians.⁸⁷⁶ The other one, printed in a smaller script and totaling 90 pages, must have been printed outside the Habsburg Empire, as it lacks the concluding passages on the Austrian efforts for the Jews.

The sequence of editions after 1846 could only be reconstructed via a small detail on the title page. The 1846 Lemberg edition introduced the book as: ספר שארית ישראל הוא חלק שני מספר יוסיפון. This exact phrase appears on the title pages of the two undated editions, the one from Zhitomir 1873 and those from Warsaw 1874 and 1879. A different version appears on a number of editions following the one published by Michael Franz Poremba in Lemberg in 1852: ספר שארית ישראל והוא חלק שני מספר יוסיפון. This version, with 'and' combining both titles, appears as well on the title pages of the editions Zhitomir 1858 and Lemberg 1864. The Lemberg 1852 edition thus became the *Vorlage* for a number of subsequent editions (one by the same publisher), whereas the others adhered to Lemberg 1846. One peculiar exception is the edition published by J.M. Ehrenpreis in Lemberg in 1874, wherein *Yosippoon* completely disappears from the title page. Although it remained a single edition, together with Vilna 1811 this can be regarded as the ultimate success of *Sheyris Yisroel*: starting as a part two to an authoritative book yet ending up as an authoritative book in its own right.

During the nineteenth century the 'open book' tradition kept *Sheyris Yisroel* open to changes, both erasings and additions. The book became acceptable for the elites through its translation into Hebrew and was adopted to the Eastern European context by removing much information about Eastern Jewry; it was also updated to present times via addition of the 'Burden of Damascus' section. Furthermore, the Amsterdam ideology of Amelander was replaced by the Austrian chauvinism of Mohr; in the Russian context this was again modified and adapted to a new political and social reality. The fact that Amelander's name was omitted from nearly all these title pages – with the exceptions of Vilna 1811 and Warsaw 1839 – was indicative of the degree to which *Sheyris Yisroel* had become an 'open book'.

There remains one theme to be examined. What were the ideologies behind these various Hebrew editions? This is not easily determined for all editions, but for some it is fairly apparent. The history of these editions can be described as a debate between adherents of the

⁸⁷⁶ For this edition, however, if a place of publication is given, it is usually Königsberg, as proposed by most catalogues, following Hominer, *Sheairith Yisrael*, 27.

Eastern European Haskalah and Orthodoxy over the character of *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁸⁷⁷ Proponents of each movement claimed the book for their respective progressive or conservative agendas.

In 1839 *Sheyris Yisroel* was printed for the first time in Warsaw, in a decisively Orthodox edition. The book was preceded by a new *haskama* issued by the Warsaw rabbi Zvi Jacob ben Eliyahu and jointly signed by David from Opatów (or, in Yiddish, Apt), who served as *dayyan* for the Warsaw *beth din*, and by two persons serving as *moreh zedek* (rabbinical assistant) in the Warsaw Jewish community: Zvi Hirsh (son-in-law of the Ga'on)⁸⁷⁸ and Yitschak Itsek ben David. The *dayyan* was most probably David Jedidiah ben Israel, who served no less than 40 years in Warsaw and died April 14, 1842.⁸⁷⁹ The Warsaw rabbinate was at the time a stronghold of the *Mitnaggedim*, who were contending against *Hassidism* and Eastern European Haskalah. The *haskama* encouraged the reading of *Sheyris Yisroel* for two reasons: first, in order that present generations would become familiar with what had happened from the day *galut* commenced until close to contemporary times; and second, to discover the grace of God, who kept his covenant and guarded the people of Israel during hardships everywhere on earth. Historical curiosity and theological interpretation went hand in hand here: the historical narrative of Amelander is regarded as a demonstration of God's guidance. Through the new *haskama* *Sheyris Yisroel* was once again approved by the rabbinic elite as part of the Orthodox canon of historiography.⁸⁸⁰

The influential Lemberg 1846 edition was, however, inspired by a different ideology. The publishing firm of Chave Grosmann was, together with the firm of Joseph Schnayder, a stronghold of printing in the Eastern European Haskalah. Grosmann was part of an influential family of Hebrew printers, which included the Madfes and Letteris families, and was active from her husband death, in 1827, until 1849.⁸⁸¹ The editor Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr (1815-1868) was an influential and highly prolific moderate *maskilic* author. He belonged to a small circle of Galician *maskilim*, students of the philosopher Nahman Krochmal (1785-

⁸⁷⁷ Although I use here the overall qualifications 'Eastern European Haskalah' as well as 'Eastern European Orthodoxy', there were striking differences between Polish, Galician and Lithuanian *maskilim*, just as *mitnaggedim* and various *Hasidic* groups were not all of the same opinion in regards to European culture. For the different appropriations of *Sheyris Yisroel*, however, these broad terms suffice. Cf. Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland. A history of conflict* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon, 2005) 249-250.

⁸⁷⁸ It is not clear which Ga'on is meant. The Ga'on of Vilna had a son-in-law called Zvi Hersh Donchin, but his dates and places of residence do not match this *haskama*.

⁸⁷⁹ *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. Warsaw.

⁸⁸⁰ *Haskamot* for classic works was a way to strengthen the authority of these books; Gertner, 'Ketiva historit orthodoxit', 304; Gries, 'Nineteenth century', 117-119.

⁸⁸¹ Gertner, 'Epigonism', 226; Anna Majkowska-Aleksiewicz, *Historia drukarstwa Galicji Wschodniej, w latach 1815-1860* (Wrocław 1992) 71, 93.

1840),⁸⁸² which included Menahem Mendel Lefin and Mohr's brother-in-law Jacob Bodek (the author of a sequel to *Qorot ha-ʿitim*). He published in both Hebrew and Yiddish and translated works from Hebrew into Yiddish and from German into Hebrew. Particularly influential were his pioneering activities in the Jewish press. Together with Bodek he edited a Hebrew journal, *Yerushalayim* (Żółkiew 1844-1845), and in 1848-1849 he was in charge of the Lemberg Yiddish *Zaytung*, which had 200 subscribers.⁸⁸³

Mohr, as a good student of Krochmal, was especially attracted to history and geography. He wrote a number of books on these topics and presented new editions of almost every classic of Jewish historiography, including *Yosippon*, *Shevet Yehudah* and *Zemah David*, and Menasseh ben Israel's *Mikveh Yisrael*. Each of the latter works included commentary by Mohr and some were updated. His edition of *Zemah David* serves as an example: next to the original text of David Gans, which narrated general and Jewish history until 1593, Mohr added the continuation, by David ben Moshe Reindorf, covering the years 1593-1692 (ed. Frankfurt 1692) and completed the edition with his own successor chronicle for the period 1692 to 1846.⁸⁸⁴ Mohr implemented both the 'open book tradition' and the traditional conception of continuing Jewish historiography, not for traditional objectives but for purposes of Jewish enlightenment. He did not treat *Sheyris Yisroel* as something foreign: he accepted the book as part of the canon of Jewish historiography and presented it anew to his Eastern European audience.

Masa Damesek should be understood from the whole of Mohr's historical publications. This addendum to *Sheyris Yisroel* was part of Mohr's efforts to familiarize Jews with general history and politics and to construct a new maskilic pantheon alongside the traditional rabbinic catalogue of Jewish heroes. He published on Columbus and the discovery of America (this particular work was actually a free adaptation of Joachim Heinrich Campe's children's book *Die Entdeckung von Amerika*)⁸⁸⁵, biographies of Napoleon Bonaparte and the contemporary Napoleon III, and two books related to Austrian contexts: one on archduke Carl Ludwig (1771-1847), the brother of emperor Francis; and one on marshal Count Radetzky.⁸⁸⁶ The Austrian chauvinism noted in *Masa Damesek* likewise characterizes the latter two

⁸⁸² On Krochmal's philosophy of history, Feiner wrote in *Haskalah and history*, 115-125.

⁸⁸³ Israel Zinberg, *A history of Jewish literature 10: The science of Judaism and Galician Haskalah* (Cincinnati/New York 1977) 5.

⁸⁸⁴ Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 309-310.

⁸⁸⁵ Cf. Annegret Völpel and Zohar Shavit, *Deutsch-jüdische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Stuttgart 2002) 63; Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 82-83.

⁸⁸⁶ William Zeitlin, *Bibliotheca Hebraica post Mendelsobniana* (Leipzig 1891-1895) 242-244; Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 140, 142.

publications. There is even more intertextuality with Mohr's Jewish historiography: he published a biography of the Austrian Jewish railway magnate and philanthropist Hermann Tedesco,⁸⁸⁷ a history of the Rothschild family and a work on Moses Montefiore and his wife. In *Masa Damesek* Montefiore is the central figure, the 'Jewish liberator'⁸⁸⁸; the activities of James baron de Rothschild are also mentioned with gratitude, at which point Mohr directs readers seeking more information about the Rothschild family to his book *תפארת ישראל*, published in 1843.

Mohr's historical activities, of which his edition of *Sheyris Yisrael* and the inclusion of *Masa Damesek* are an integral part, thus show a consistent pattern. He wanted his Jewish audience to be familiar with both Jewish and general history; he showed himself to be a loyal citizen of the Habsburg Empire, particularly in stressing his confidence in the best intentions of the imperial family towards their Jewish subjects; and he expanded the catalogue of noteworthy Jewish figures by including prominent contemporary families and persons. These no longer included only great rabbis and scholars, but also figures who were successful in modern European society and who could serve as examples of well-integrated Jews – according to maskilic standards – who showed their solidarity with their fellow Jews through philanthropy and Jewish diplomacy.⁸⁸⁹

Mohr was typical of what Feiner called the new generation of Galician maskilim, who often moved to Western Europe, were pessimistic about the continuing dominance of Hasidism, and regarded with sorrow the rise of an acculturated but religiously indifferent class. In between Hasidism and 'pseudo-Haskalah', they strived for what they saw as the true maskilic ideology.⁸⁹⁰ Mohr, like the other Galician maskilim, welcomed the 1848 revolution, expecting to soon acquire full emancipation. During the revolution Mohr wrote a Yiddish pamphlet on his interpretation of the events; in one month no less than 5,000 copies were sold. In his journal, the *Zaytung*, he encouraged his readers to cease paying the special Jewish tax. Yet Mohr was a moderate maskil. He hoped for changes in the wake of 1848, but remained a staunch adherent of the Habsburg monarchy. After the new constitution of 4 March, which the emperor issued under pressure due to the circumstances, Mohr happily saw

⁸⁸⁷ Cf. Katarína Hrdská, *Židovska Bratislava* (Bratislava 2008) 82.

⁸⁸⁸ In his biography of Montefiore Mohr mentions as well *Masa Damesek*: Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr, *Keter shem tov* (Lemberg 1847) 7.

⁸⁸⁹ In his continuation to *Zemah David* Mohr did the same: he not only included in his narrative the Besht and the Ga'on of Vilna, but also Mendelssohn, Wessely and Jacobson; Gertner, 'Epigonism', 224-225.

⁸⁹⁰ Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 138-140; idem, 'The pseudo-Enlightenment and the question of Jewish modernization', *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1996) 1, 62-88.

his monarchism and his wish for emancipation coming together. In his journal he published a Yiddish translation of the constitution and urged his readers to seize the new opportunities that it opened. After 1848 he realized that full emancipation was still not eminent, but Mohr – and other maskilim – still hoped to further the Haskalah via helping the Austrian government and the Habsburg monarchy.⁸⁹¹

Mohr's method was characteristic of the moderate Galician Haskalah.⁸⁹² He tried to integrate his new maskilic pantheon into the classical rabbinic catalogue of important figures. He thus modified classical and accepted history books, adding his own commentaries and additions. The 1846 edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* with *Masa Damesek* is in every sense a representative example of Mohr's approach.

Eastern European Orthodoxy responded to the maskilic interpretation of *Sheyris Yisroel* by releasing its own editions. In 1858 the Hassidic rabbi Aryeh Leib Shapira published an Orthodox edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* in Zhitomir. The Shapira printing press was started by a local Slavuta rabbi, Moshe Shapira, who specialized in religious books. The firm enjoyed great authority in the Hasidic world and published only books that fitted the Hasidic worldview.⁸⁹³ Two of Shapira's sons continued their father's printing firm after his death, in 1838, to little success: accused of murdering an employee, they ended up in Siberia. Their children moved to Zhitomir, where from 1847 onward they published the traditional canon of religious books, refusing any work that might be regarded as secular.⁸⁹⁴ They were leading figures in the Orthodox opposition against the Galician Haskalah. In 1851 Aryeh Leib Shapira, one of the grandchildren of Moshe, established his own printing firm.⁸⁹⁵ His decision to include *Sheyris Yisroel* in his catalogue demonstrated his conviction that the Orthodox should not leave the book in maskilic hands. At the same time the didactic catalogue of traditional Jewish role models, such as rabbis and martyrs, as presented in *Sheyris Yisroel* was regarded by the Orthodox as a counterweight against the maskilic genre of biographies of prominent Jews.⁸⁹⁶ Surprisingly, however, Aryeh Leib Shapira did not use an edition from before 1846, most likely

⁸⁹¹ Salo Wittmayer Baron, 'The Revolution of 1848 and Jewish scholarship, part II: Austria' *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 20 (1951) 1-100, there 38, 74-77; Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 140-141.

⁸⁹² Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 150-151.

⁸⁹³ Zeev Gries, 'Jewish books and their authors in the nineteenth century' in: idem, *Jewish book*, 113-137, there 116; Michael Stanislawski, 'The "Vilna Shas" and East European Jewry' in: Sharon Liberman Mintz and Gabriel M. Goldstein eds., *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein* (New York 2005) 97-102.

⁸⁹⁴ David Asaf, 'Shapira family' in: *The Yivo encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, consulted on: http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Shapira_Family (consulted 9 September 2010).

⁸⁹⁵ Raphael Posner and Israel Ta-Shma, *The Hebrew book: an historical survey* (Jerusalem 1975) 146.

⁸⁹⁶ Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 307, 325-327, 334.

because none were available to him. Mohr's edition was used as *Vorlage* and even his *Masa Damesek* was included. The name of the controversial author was not mentioned in the book, and thus both *Sheyris Yisroel* and *Masa Damesek* were presented to the audience without mention of the original authors. The same process was applied to the other Mohr editions of Jewish historiography: Orthodox printers used them without problems, albeit without mentioning Mohr's name and by sanitizing the book for their Orthodox readers.⁸⁹⁷

The second half of the nineteenth century saw tremendous expansion in the world of Jewish publishing. Jews were again permitted to print Hebrew and Yiddish books in the Russian Empire (such publications had been forbidden in 1836 – with the exception of the Vilna and Zhitomir presses), Warsaw developed into a major center, and Lemberg and Vilna retained their prominence.⁸⁹⁸ The publishing history of the Hebrew *Sheyris Yisroel* shows the same transitions: in the 1860's one edition was printed in Lemberg; the 1870's saw no less than four different editions -- two in Warsaw, one in Zhitomir and one in Lemberg. The debate between Orthodox and maskilim over *Sheyris Yisroel* remained, although the book was most often printed by Orthodox firms. The Lemberg non-Jewish printing firm of Michael Franz Poremba, who besides Hebrew books also published Ukrainian and Polish works, printed no less than two editions, in 1852 and 1864. Commercial profit was Poremba's most important objective, and his Jewish associates must have convinced him to print *Sheyris Yisroel*. As he was based in Lemberg and held favourable opinions towards emancipation movements, Poremba most likely shared Mohr's ideas about the book.⁸⁹⁹ Also in Lemberg the printer and bookseller Jacob Ehrenpreis printed and sold the book. Ehrenpreis, a pious Jew, was close to Hasidism, although his works included not only religious literature but also secular Hebrew books.⁹⁰⁰ The edition printed in 1873 in Zhitomir by Isaac Moses Bakst was decisively Orthodox. Bakst had studied at the local rabbinical seminary and was a lecturer in Talmud and an author himself.⁹⁰¹ In Warsaw *Sheyris Yisroel* was republished in Mohr's edition by Hayim ben Elkana

⁸⁹⁷ Gertner, 'Epigonism', 225; Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 309-311, 313.

⁸⁹⁸ Kenneth Moss, 'Printing and publishing after 1800' in: *The Yivo encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, 1459-1468*, there 1461-1462.

⁸⁹⁹ Anna Majkowska-Aleksiewicz, *Historia drukarstwa Galicji Wschodniej, w latach 1815-1860* (Wrocław 1992) 83-85, 94-98, 114-119; Philipp Hofeneder, 'Das ukrainische bzw. ruthenische Buch- und Verlagswesen in Galizien in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts', *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Buchforschung in Österreich* 2007-2, 29-47, there 33.

⁹⁰⁰ Hagit Cohen, *At the bookseller's shop. The Jewish book trade in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 2006) 65-67.

⁹⁰¹ *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. Isaac Moses Bakst.

Kelter, who had a large and multilingual printing business,⁹⁰² and by Nathan Shriftgiser, who took over his father's firm in 1831 and acquired fame with his 1872 Talmud edition.⁹⁰³

The Eastern European Hebrew editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* demonstrate how an eighteenth-century Yiddish history book from Amsterdam could be adapted via the 'open book tradition' to new audiences and new ideologies. Being translated into Hebrew allowed the book to become acceptable to the elites, even as abridgments strengthened the Ashkenazi character of the book. Likewise, *Sheyris Yisroel* was in the nineteenth century both an Orthodox and a maskilic book. The Orthodox – Mitnaggedim and Hasidim – regarded the work as an affirmation of both their Orthodox philosophy of history and the Orthodox pantheon of Jewish sages and martyrs. Republishing and reading the book reinforced the traditional rabbinical narrative to the Orthodox world.⁹⁰⁴ The book was thus once again given a *haskama* to afford it further legitimation. Maskilim, most notably Mohr, used *Sheyris Yisroel* to encourage Jews to take notice of both Jewish and general history and to introduce via additions both a new ideal of Jewish participation in the secular world and an expanded Jewish pantheon.

8.4 *The Yiddish Sheyris Yisroel in the nineteenth century*

In the nineteenth century, in addition to the at least thirteen Hebrew editions, *Sheyris Yisroel* was also republished in Yiddish, in editions explicitly targeted at the broader Eastern European Jewish public.⁹⁰⁵ In every respect these editions were overshadowed by the Hebrew ones. There were significantly fewer Yiddish editions printed, and one was greatly influenced by development within the Hebrew *Sheyris Yisroel*.

*Yiddish editions of Sheyris Yisroel in the nineteenth century*⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰² Kelter was the first one who printed a book in Esperanto; Aleksander Korzhenkov, *Zamenhof: the life, works and ideas of the author of Esperanto* (New York/Rotterdam 2010) 16.

⁹⁰³ Nathan's father, Zevi Hirsch Nossonowitz of Lutomirsk, took over in 1811 Kruger's Nowy Dwór type of Hebrew, and changed his name in Shriftgiser (type caster); Raphael Posner, Israel Ta-Shma, *The Hebrew book: a historical survey* (Jerusalem 1975) 146.

⁹⁰⁴ Cf. Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 323, 325-332; Gertner, 'Epigonism', 222, 227, 229.

⁹⁰⁵ Cf. Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 241-247.

⁹⁰⁶ Different numbers given by Gertner, who counts five nineteenth-century Yiddish editions, although without further specification: Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 301, 324. Fuks, 'Jiddisches Geschichtswerk', 182, mentions a Klausenburg (Kolószvar/Cluj) 1858 edition, which he describes as the last edition known to him of *Sheyris Yisroel*. A 1914 list of the New York Public Library mentions a Yiddish edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* printed at J. Lebensohn's famous Warsaw printing firm of 1890 (72 pages). Presently this edition is, however, no longer in the holdings of NYPL, and is nowhere else to be traced and therefore not included in this chapter. For the list see: www.preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1914_works-relating-to-jews.pdf (consulted 10 September 2010). The Warsaw

Publisher	Place of publication	Year of publication
Abraham Yehudah Leib Mayerhofer	Żółkiew (Zholkva)	1807
Josef Schnayder	Lemberg (Lwów/Lviv)	1850
A.J. Madfes	Lemberg	1873 ⁹⁰⁷

Each of the three editions differs from the others. The first one, from 1807, is linked with the eighteenth-century editions and is a republication of the Fürth versions of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Żółkiew, in the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, was among the most important centers of Hebrew printing in Eastern Europe. The publisher was also strongly connected to Amsterdam, having been started by Uri Phaybush ben Aharon ha-Levi. His descendents remained in the printing business in various places until the start of the Second World War. From 1791 onwards Abraham Yehudah Mayerhofer operated his printing business in Żółkiew, with permission of the Austrian government. After his death, in 1811, his son and grandson continued the firm.⁹⁰⁸ The Żółkiew edition did not retain the few changes made in the Dyhernfurth edition of 1799, such as the new introduction on the title page, but instead adhered to the Fürth version, the only differences being that the table of contents and the *haskama* of the German rabbis were omitted.

The 1850 Lemberg edition offers an entirely different story. This edition was printed by Josef Schnayder, who from 1808 till 1853 owned a successful printing business and book shop. The quality of his printing was not especially good, but his books were very popular in Galicia, with annual output ranging from thirteen titles in 1815 to no less than 298. He printed in Hebrew, Yiddish, German and Polish. He also collaborated with Michael Franz Poremba (also known as Michal Franciszek Poremba), who after Schnayder's death took over the firm. Schnayder was, along with the printing firm of Chave Grosman, known to be open to printing *maskilic* works. Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr had some of his books, including his biography of Moses Montefiore, printed by Schnayder.⁹⁰⁹ This 1850 Lemberg edition differs from the other editions. First, it follows the Amsterdam 1771 edition, and thus includes

1890 edition is also mentioned by and used for: Adolf Lewin, 'Geschichte, Geographie und Reiseliteratur der Juden' in: J. Winter and Aug. Wünsche eds., *Die jüdische Literatur seit Abschluß des Kanons. Eine prosaische und poetische Anthologie mit biographischen und litterargeschichtlichen Einleitungen II* (Trier 1896) 289-473, there 417-421.

⁹⁰⁷ Wrongly noted as 1875 in many catalogues and listings, e.g. the JNUL catalogue, 67 A 83 Buber Collection.

⁹⁰⁸ Pilarczyk, 'Hebrew printing houses', 212; Heller, *Printing*, 101, 285-303.

⁹⁰⁹ *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950* 10 (Vienna 1994) 360; Majkowska-Aleksiewicz, *Historia drukarska*, 42-43, 83-84.

the chapter that Kosman ben Joseph Baruch had added to update the history book to 1771 (although without the historical poetry). Second, this edition was adapted linguistically to its new audience and to new modes of writing Yiddish. Eastern Yiddish variants of the language were used, and the text was punctuated.

Third, this edition is a clear example of the effects of the ‘open book tradition’. The 1771 Amsterdam edition was not republished integrally. Like the Lemberg and 1811 Vilna Hebrew editions, this Yiddish edition abridged the contents of the book. Chapters 27-30 and 33 were left out: Chapters 27 (on the Jews in the Ottoman Empire) and 28 (on the Jews in Erez Yisrael) were also omitted from most Hebrew editions, as were Chapters 29 (on the African Jews), 30 (on Ashkenazim in Germany, Bohemia and Moravia) and 33 (on the Amsterdam Sephardim). The removal of Chapter 30 is particularly surprising, as it dealt with a part of history that would have been close to many Ashkenazi readers in Eastern Europe. However, other chapters which had been left out in the Hebrew editions were included in this version. The Lemberg 1850 edition is therefore not merely a copy of the more popular Hebrew editions published there in the same decade. Chapters 1-12, 15-16 and 22 were published integrally, whereas all other chapters were significantly abridged. Parts of the book where Amelander was more reflective, such as in the first part of Chapter 18, were omitted, as were evidential materials such as letters (e.g. in Chapter 26), and chapters on Eastern and Sephardic Jewry were amended (Chapters 13, 19, 20, 25, and 26). This did not mean that chapters on Ashkenazi history (Chapters 14, 24, 31, 32) were not occasionally abridged. The editor deleted and abridged chapters, especially in the second half of the book, which suggests that his main motivation was not so much ideology but commercial incentive not to make the book too thick. The preparations for publication must have been rushed, as the original numbering of the chapters was still used, despite chapters having been omitted. The chapter on the Jews in India and China that had been published before the chapter on Amsterdam retained its original number (35), but was followed by Chapter 33. All this suggests that the edition was prepared hastily and that little time and effort were dedicated to achieving an outstanding edition.

The third nineteenth-century edition was published in Lemberg in 1873. Its publisher, A.J. Madfes, was a scion of the printing family that had started with Uri Faybush ben Aharon ha-Levi and included Chave Grosmann.⁹¹⁰ This edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* is in effect not a proper Yiddish edition of the Amsterdam history book, but rather a translation of the Hebrew

⁹¹⁰ Pilarczyk, ‘Hebrew printing houses’, 212.

Lemberg 1846 version. This new edition shared most characteristics of the Hebrew 1846 edition, including deletion and abridgment of chapters, and addition of commentary and of *Masa Damesek*. The *petikha* section, however, is omitted, as is most of the chapter on Italian Jews from 1225 until 1394 (Chapter 19 in Mohr's edition), which is reduced to a few lines. In the final chapter the last section on Indian Jewry was left out, and in *Masa Damesek* the Rhodes narrative is condensed to one sentence and the praise for the Austrian government is not included. The chapter on Shabtai Zvi is reduced to a brief note that the narrative is not included, since the story is well known and anyone interested could read more in *Sefer me'ora'ot Zvi* of Jacob Sasportas.⁹¹¹ The book – which lacks page numbering – is translated into contemporary Eastern Yiddish and punctuated like the 1850 edition.⁹¹² It is also the first Yiddish edition not to mention Amelander's name as the author, as had become common in the Hebrew edition.

The three nineteenth-century Yiddish versions of *Sheyris Yisroel* demonstrate the same effects of the 'open book tradition' as is the case with the many more Hebrew editions. *Sheyris Yisroel* was translated and retranslated; its contents were abridged, omitted and added to. In short, each publisher and editor felt free to do with the book whatever he wanted to do. Both ideology (maskilic or Orthodox) and commercial intentions motivated their reworkings of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The book was sold throughout the Eastern European Jewish world in these versions, both Hebrew and Yiddish, and appeared regularly in advertisements of book shops alongside other accepted history books.⁹¹³

8.5 *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Dutch 1855 edition

In Western Europe Jewish scholars influenced by historicism initiated new, critical research into Jewish history. They looked for new historical resources, studied archives, edited and published old manuscripts and introduced a new interpretation of Jewish history; this new

⁹¹¹ *JY* ed. Lemberg 1873, chapter 23: פרק כד דא מעכט דר ציילט דו מעשה פון דעם שבתי צבי רק ווייל דו מעשה און שון גדרוקט און ספר מאורעות צבי און דאס און ביי אנטלכן שכים ע"כ האבון מור דם פרק נושט מעתיק גוועזן ווייל ווער עס וויל דו מעשה ליינן דר קאן זיך לייען און ספר מאורעות צבי דארט שטייט דו מעשה מוט מער אריכות און מוט מער פרטים שרייבן: Sasportas' book circulated both in Hebrew and Yiddish translation in Lemberg, printed respectively in 1865 by Michael Franz Poremba and in 1862 by Zvi Hirsh Zucker.

⁹¹² E.g. יידון instead of יידן, זענין instead of זענן, and גינייט instead of גיניט. Examples taken from Chapter 28, *JY* ed. Lemberg 1873.

⁹¹³ Cohen, *At the bookseller's shop*, 118; see the advertisements of Jacob Ehrenpreis, Lemberg, in: *ha-Magid* 14 April 1874, 124; L.J. Schapira, Warsaw, in: *Ha-Magid* 27 October 1875, 366; Aharon Faust, Krakow, in: *Ha-Magid* 28 February 1877. Furthermore, as Hagit Cohen has informed me (email 7 December 2002), the Romm brothers from Vilna sold a Warsaw edition in 1886, and J. ha-Cohen Ginzburg from Bobroisk offered a Warsaw edition in 1892.

interpretation differed from both traditional historiography and the moralistic, didactic maskilic approach to history. These historians were spurred not by the legitimacy of rabbinic tradition and the idea of a continuing historical narrative. Rather, they turned to history with modern questions about matters such as Jewish integration and participation in surrounding cultures and Jewish intellectual history. The traditional religious narrative had to make way for political, cultural and intellectual interpretations of Jewish history. History, for these historians, replaced religion and ethnicity as the common denominator of Jews and as counterbalance against assimilation. No less important, they began to use modern methodologies, interpreting the past as having been fundamentally different from the present, thereby detaching past and present. Schorsch has summarized the historic agenda of these nineteenth-century scholars as one that stressed the right of free inquiry, introduced a new concept of time, exercised conceptual thinking and intensively engaged Jewish sources from the past.⁹¹⁴

These scholars, who became known by the name *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, no longer wrote in Hebrew and Yiddish, the traditional Jewish languages, but instead used modern languages, most often German, as well as French and English. They had high regard for classical Hebrew, which they considered pure and a language of culture; Yiddish, however, was considered to be jargon and not even a proper language, and literature written in Yiddish was viewed as second-rate and not worth studying.⁹¹⁵ This likely explains why *Sheyris Yisroel* nearly completely disappeared from modern Jewish historiography. Although in Eastern Europe the book enjoyed tremendous popularity, in Western Europe the new Jewish historians hardly referred to it. Hebrew historiography, such as *Shevet Yebudab* and *Zemah David*, was held in far higher regard; moreover, it was studied and used extensively. *Sheyris Yisroel*, however, suffered from the fact that Amelander had written it in Yiddish and because the Hebrew translations from Eastern Europe generally remained unavailable to the *Wissenschaftler* – and probably also because they realized that such editions were anything but reliable.

Indicative of how *Sheyris Yisroel* was regarded in the circles of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is a surprising exchange in 1846 between Selig Cassel (1821-1892) and Fürchtegott Lebrecht (1800-1876). Cassel, who had received a Jewish education and had studied with Leopold von Ranke, was a typical exponent of the German Jewish approach to history: he denationalized Jewish history, emphasizing its religious component, and viewed the work of

⁹¹⁴ Ismar Schorsch, *From text to context. The turn to history in modern Judaism* (Hanover N.H. 1994) esp. 1-5, 151-157, 158-204; summary on 179-181; Meyer, 'The emergence', passim.

⁹¹⁵ See e.g. for the negative opinion of Zunz, Steinschneider and Graetz on Yiddish: Matthias Richter, *Die Sprache jüdischer Figuren in der deutschen Literatur: Studien zu Form und Funktion* (Göttingen 1995) 80-81.

medieval Sephardic intellectuals as a high point of Jewish history.⁹¹⁶ In 1850 he wrote an influential article about Jewish history, of no less than 200 pages, for the important encyclopedia edited by Johann Samuel Ersch and Johann Gottfried Gruber. Michael Brenner has described Ersch and Gruber's project as 'probably the best comprehensive work on Jewish culture published up to that point'. Cassel converted to Protestantism in 1855, calling himself Paulus Stephanus Cassel, and eventually became a missionary for the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.⁹¹⁷ Lebrecht had studied under the Hatam Sopher in Pressburg and the Christian Hebraist Wilhelm Gesenius in Halle. He specialized in Talmud and medieval Hebrew literature. Until 1848 he worked as a teacher at the Berlin *Lehrer-Seminar* founded by Leopold Zunz; after 1856 he became head and librarian of the *Veitel Heine Ephraim'sche Lehranstalt*. Lebrecht was widely respected for his philological and historical studies.⁹¹⁸

In 1845 Lebrecht wrote a study, published in the *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums*, about four sages (ge'onim) who had traveled from the Middle East to the Iberian Peninsula in the tenth century. Lebrecht claimed to be the first to have found the right explanation for their having done so. He proposed to read the Hebrew phrase *הכנסת כלה*, which was used in *Sefer yubasin*, as 'income for the school'. He concluded that the sages had undertaken their journey so as to collect money for the Babylonian yeshivot.⁹¹⁹ Lebrecht, however, was shortly thereafter accused of plagiarizing *Sheyris Yisroel*. Someone, under the pseudonym Hoof, showed in the *Literaturblatt des Orients* that this interpretation was found in *Sheyris Yisroel* and that Lebrecht must have used the book without referring to it.⁹²⁰ Cassel wrote about the same matter and, although he wrote in a more sober style than did Hoof, also showed that Amelander had presented the same interpretation. For his evidence, Cassel used the 1767 Fürth edition. Cassel added that Amelander's interpretation was credible but explicitly noted that this was not because Amelander had been a critical scholar—according to Cassel, he

⁹¹⁶ This was a typical *Wissenschaft* approach to the Jewish past; cf. Schorsch, 'Sephardic supremacy', passim; idem, 'From Wolfenbüttel to Wissenschaft: the divergent paths of Isaak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz' in: idem, *From text to context*, 233-254, there 240.

⁹¹⁷ Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the past: interpreters of Jewish history* (Princeton 2010) 35; Alan Levenson, 'The apostate as philosemite: Selig Paulus Cassel (1821-1842) and Edith Stein (1891-1942)' in: Dagmar C.G. Lorenz, Renate S. Posthofen eds., *Transforming the center, eroding the margins. Essays on ethnic and cultural boundaries in German-speaking countries* (Columbia 1998) 132-145.

⁹¹⁸ Peter Haber, *Zwischen jüdischer Tradition und Wissenschaft: der ungarische Orientalist Ignác Goldziher (1850-1921)* (Cologne/Weimar 2006) 110; *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. Lebrecht, Fürchtegott, consulted on <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=135&letter=L>, (10 September 2010).

⁹¹⁹ Fürchtegott Lebrecht, 'Historische Bemerkung über den Reisezweck der vier Geonim aus Bari im Jahr 960' *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums* II (1845) 2, 99-102.

⁹²⁰ Hoof, in: *Literaturblatt des Orients* 6 (1845) 23.

had had a not especially critical mind—but precisely because he had been an exponent of traditional thought, ‘der ich auch hier wieder in diesen Dingen die Wahrheit zutraue’.⁹²¹ Cassel did not regard Amelander as having been a fellow historian but saw him instead as the voice of Jewish tradition.

Lebrecht vehemently defended himself against the accusations of academic impropriety. First, he explained how he had learned of *Sheyris Yisrael*. According to Lebrecht, as the book was not especially important he could not have been expected to have read it, and that his having ever done so was in fact highly unlikely (‘sehr unwahrscheinlich’). Some weeks after publication of his article he was contacted by the former rabbi of Königsberg, J.M. Goldberg, who told him that Amelander had already proposed the same solution. Lebrecht claimed not to have seen *Sheyris Yisrael* since he was a teenager at yeshiva, and noted that he wished to find out what the book said about the four sages. He sent one of his students to copy the relevant chapter, but the student forgot to note the name of the publisher and the year and place of publication. Thereafter Lebrecht forgot to ask Goldberg for the same details for a subsequent article, in which he would be the first to write about the similarity between Amelander’s and his own interpretation. In the meantime, however, Goldberg sold the book to Cassel, who used it for his own article.⁹²² Hoof was also active in the Berlin world of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and, according to Lebrecht, must probably have heard him talking about *Sheyris Yisrael*.

Second, Lebrecht attacked Cassel’s interpretation of *Sheyris Yisrael*. After having studied the book (and discussed it with Leopold Zunz), he was not so convinced as Cassel that Amelander was an uncritical author. Although Amelander had written for women, he knew Hebrew and Aramaic, was highly erudite and his composition of facts was hardly poor. His work could certainly not stand up to modern critical scholarship, yet he was not merely a simple representative of traditional knowledge. Cassel argued that Amelander should be trusted precisely because he was not critical and had simply been rendering traditional knowledge. Lebrecht, however, argued that the gap between the tenth century and Amelander was far too wide for Amelander to be considered a convincing representative of reliable oral traditions. According to Lebrecht, Amelander had developed a good point about the four sages, but the

⁹²¹ Selig Cassel, ‘Zur Wissenschaft des Judentums. Ueber geschichtliche und literarhistorische Arbeiten dieses 5. Jahrzehntes (Schluß)’, *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judentums* III (1846) 224–240, there 234.

⁹²² Later on, Cassel used this edition of *Sheyris Yisrael* for his famous encyclopedia article on Jewish history, and in an article on the Khazars in which he credited Amelander as having been the first to translate the letters of Chasdai into German (sic); Selig Cassel, ‘Beilage I. Der Brief Josef’s des Chazarenkönigs’ in: idem, *Magyarische Altertümer* (1848) 183–219, there 187.

only way to accurately reach such a conclusion was proper philological research, precisely what Lebrecht had been doing.⁹²³

This discussion between Berlin *Wissenschaftler* shows how *Sheyris Yisroel* was viewed: a book which no one could be expected to have read, while those who had read it regarded it as traditional and uncritical. This discussion is referred to, albeit not in detail, by the Amsterdam Jewish scholars Gabriel Polak and Levie Goudsmit Azn. in their introduction to the Dutch edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*. They regarded this minor debate as evidence of the book's worth for contemporary study of Jewish history and concluded that *Sheyris Yisroel* 'also nowadays by famous and learned contemporaries is regarded as of general authority and a truthful source'.⁹²⁴ Polak and Goudsmit thus translated the book into Dutch and edited it, as did their German colleagues, with other historical source, adding extensive commentary and annotations. Through the Dutch translation Amelander's history book would become acceptable as an historical source for Jewish scholars.⁹²⁵

But there was at least one more reason for this translation. In the introduction to the edition the editors stated that they were offering the book to their compatriots and co-religionists, to the Dutch and to the Jewish public. Jaap Meijer has raised the suggestion that this edition was a Jewish response to the first history of Dutch Jewry written by the Protestant Pietist Jan Hendrik Koenen in 1843: *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland*. Koenen, a friend of the poet and convert to Christianity Isaac da Costa, had written a rather factual account of the history of Jews in the Netherlands, an account which did hide the author's Christian convictions.⁹²⁶ Although Polak and Goudsmit do not mention this reason explicitly, Meijer's suggestion that the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* was a counter-history to Koenen is quite plausible. A number of footnotes in the edition reference Koenen.⁹²⁷ If Meijer's suggestion was indeed the case it would be an irony of history that whereas the original 1743 edition was a counter-history to Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs*, the 1855 Dutch edition served the same purpose towards Koenen's *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland*.

⁹²³ Fürchtegott Lebrecht, 'Zur Wissenschaft des Judenthums. Die Gefangennahme der vier Geonim aus Bari, und die Niederlassung zweier derselben in Andalusien. (Fortsetzung und Schluß)', *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums* III (1846) 422-433.

⁹²⁴ '...nog thans door vermaarde en geleerde tijdgenooten als van algemeen gezag en waarachtige bron aangeduid.' *Se'arith Jisrael*, vi.

⁹²⁵ Cf. on comparable editions of *Emek ha-bakha* and *Shevet Yehudah*: Ismar Schorsch, 'The lachrymose conception of Jewish history' in: idem, *From text to context*, 376-388, there 377-378.

⁹²⁶ Jaap Meijer, H.J. Koenen: *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland (1843): historiografische analyse* [Balans der ballingschap 2/3] (Heemstede 1982); Likewise: Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography', 18-19.

⁹²⁷ Menachem Man ben Salomo Halevi, *Se'arith Jisrael of lo'gevallen der Joden in alle werelddeelen van af de verwoesting des Tweeden Tempels tot het jaar 1770*, transl. L. Goudsmit Azn., ed. G.I. Polak (Amsterdam 1855) 110, 137, 373, 537.

Both Goudsmit and Polak had been active in the Netherlands for quite some time in disseminating the ideas of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* among Dutch Jewry. Gabriel Izak/Jacob Polak (1803-1869) was in frequent contact with most German *Wissenschaftler* and contributed to their journals, in both German and Hebrew.⁹²⁸ He used these contacts for this edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁹²⁹ Polak edited religious books, wrote Hebrew stories, conducted historical research, catalogued books and was a teacher.⁹³⁰ Goudsmit also edited religious books, but aimed more at the broader Dutch Jewish public, which he wished to educate and to ‘civilize’.⁹³¹ He regarded history as a proper instrument to reach that goal. In 1853-1854 he edited the journal *Israëlietische Galerij*, in which he collected myriad types of stories, legends, and myths on Jewish history in order to edify the readers. The stories encouraged the journal’s readers to be proud Jews, to act in a civilized way and to adhere to religious and civil morals.⁹³² After this journal failed, Goudsmit tried once again, publishing the monthly *De Echo van Israël* (1855), which was also short lived.⁹³³ Thereafter, until his death in 1876, Goudsmit edited the *Weekblad voor Israëlieten*, which was considered by the rival *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* as too oriented towards German Jewry and too lenient towards Reform Judaism. Goudsmit had frequent clashes with representatives of traditional Judaism, as well as with Marcus Meijer Roest, who was also highly interested in *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.⁹³⁴

The publication of the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* complemented the agendas of Goudsmit and Polak. Goudsmit wrote in the introduction that he regarded the spreading of Jewish history as a means of keeping alive the faith of Jews in the God of their fathers. Moreover, besides strengthening faith the book would also, according to Polak, serve the edification of Dutch Jews. Indeed, he regarded his translation as ‘a stone in the great building of civilization’.⁹³⁵ As a scholar, for Polak the editing of the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* was a way to present a Dutch Jewish source according to the strict rules of the German *Wissenschaft des*

⁹²⁸ In *Ha-Magid*, for example, he wrote on R. Moses Frankfurter and on Amelander in the issue of 26 February 1858 (2 no. 3), 30-31. On Amelander he basically provided the same information as in the Dutch 1855 edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

⁹²⁹ Moritz Steinschneider provided him with some information orally; *Seëriyth Jisrael*, 353.

⁹³⁰ Jacques Zwarts, ‘Polak, Gabriel Jacob’ in: *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* 6 (Leiden 1924) 1143-1144.

⁹³¹ L. Goudsmit Az., *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* (NIW) 11 (1876) 30, 2-3.

⁹³² *Israëlietische Galerij, of Verzameling van Joodsche Legenden, Mythen, Kronieken, Vertellingen, enz., betreffende Israëlieten uit alle landen en alle eeuwen*. Onder hoofdredactie van L. Goudsmit Azn. (Amsterdam 1853-1854). Cf. Roest, *Catalog*, 233.

⁹³³ *De Echo van Israël*. Onder hoofdredactie van L. Goudsmit Azn. en met medewerking van onderscheidene letterkundigen (Amsterdam 1855).

⁹³⁴ ‘Politiek’, *NIW* 3 (1867) 22, 85; [J. Mendes Chumaceiro], ‘Staat L. Goudsmit Az. te boek als een “beroerder van Israël”’, *NIW* 8 (1872) 20, 1-2; idem, ‘Het “Weekblad voor Israëlieten” en de Geestelijkheid’, *NIW* 8 (1872) 22, 1-2; B.P., *NIW* 8 (1872) 4, 3; Isaac Lipschits, *Honderd jaar NIW. Het Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad 1865-1965* (Amsterdam 1966) 9-12, 16-17, 20.

⁹³⁵ *Seëriyth Jisrael*, iv.

Judentums. Yet this edition, in its practical emphasis on morality and faith, was a typical product of the Dutch contribution to the field of Jewish studies.⁹³⁶

As were the other nineteenth-century editions, so too was the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* adapted to its new public. First, that the book was originally a sequel to *Yosippon* was no longer deemed necessary to note, and so the title page and introduction make no mention of it. The book was also published alone; a companion Dutch translation, by Goudsmit, of *Yosippon* was subsequently planned and announced, but never appeared.⁹³⁷ Several years later, in 1868, a Dutch *Yosippon* was published, translated not by Goudsmit but by M.L. van Ameringen and commented and edited by Polak.⁹³⁸

Second, the paratext of the book changed. This Dutch edition was alone among all the nineteenth-century *Sheyris Yisroel* editions in that it was published according to the new insights of editing historical sources as developed by German historians. The book was heavily annotated, with footnotes on almost page to reference the sources for Amelander's text or to expand and comment on his narrative. The newest scholarly insights were added and the whole community of *Wissenschaftlers* could be found in the notes: Leopold Zunz, Moritz Steinschneider, Marcus Jost, Julius Fürst, Heinrich Graetz, Salomon Geiger, Selig Cassel, Elyakim Carmoly, and (from the Netherlands) Samuel Israel Mulder. Although Polak's policy was not to critically weigh every piece of information provided by Amelander but instead to focus primarily on additional information and to explain the text if necessary for those unfamiliar with the subject, he could not restrain himself from occasionally criticizing Amelander's interpretations. For example, he noted his doubts about the authority of Eldad ha-Dani, whom Amelander trusted completely, and mentioned that Amelander's chronology was not always reliable.⁹³⁹

Third, the Dutch edition had a decisively Dutch character. The editors had chosen as their *Vorlage* the 1771 Amsterdam edition and thus included the new chapter of Baruch ben Joseph Kosman, which dealt almost entirely with Dutch Jewish history. Polak, in making

⁹³⁶ Irene E. Zwiep, 'A maskil reads Zunz: Samuel Mulder and the earliest Dutch reception of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*' in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 301-317.

⁹³⁷ An advertisement by the publisher J.B. de Mesquita announced an edition by Goudsmit and Polak, 'bewerkers van Scërieth Jisrael in de Nederduitsche taal', thus using *Sheyris Yisroel* to promote *Yosippon*. People interested were invited to subscribe. *Algemeen Handelsblad* 5 July 1855, 4.

⁹³⁸ Joseph ben Gorion ha-Kohen, *Josephus Gorionides, uit het Hebreem'sch vertaald, door M.L. van Ameringen, met geschied- en letterkundige aantekeningen en ophelderingen verrijkt, door G.I. Polak* (Amsterdam 1868). This edition, published by I. Levisson and D. Proops Jz, left out the first few chapters of *Yosippon* from the creation until the fall of Babylon, as the editors were convinced that these were not part of the original tenth-century *Yosippon*.

⁹³⁹ *Scërieth Jisrael*, 5, 17, 69, 561.

additions both in and to the text, provided extra information to his readers. The most significant additions concerned the history of Dutch Jewry. In order to balance the attention given to Amsterdam's Jewish communities, Polak added a lengthy article on the history of the Jews in The Hague, originally published in the *Jaarboeken voor de Israëlieten* in 1836. Moreover, Polak updated the article with contemporary information, such as the note that Barend Samuel Berenstein had since 1848 served as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of The Hague.⁹⁴⁰ He had earlier added more information about Uri ha-Levi, the Ashkenazi first rabbi of the Amsterdam Portuguese Jews, including two statements from Sephardim attesting to ha-Levi's excellence as their rabbi.⁹⁴¹ One more addition was carried over from the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* and translated into Dutch. This concerned the expulsion of the Jews from Bohemia and Moravia by the empress Maria Theresia, and afforded a glorious role to the eventually successful efforts of Dutch Jewry and the Dutch States-General to prevent the expulsion.⁹⁴²

Fourth, the Dutch edition was also a modern one, a product of the nineteenth century. Goudsmit and Polak had difficulties with Amelander's emphasis on the persecutions in *galut*, and at several points they remarked on the great difference between the enlightened present and the dark medieval past. Thus, in the chapter on the Crusades, Goudsmit noted that he would have preferred not to translate everything Amelander had written there, but that he had nonetheless kept to the original text. Concerning the section on the blood libel in Norwich, Goudsmit made clear that such nonsense was, unlike in the Middle Ages, no longer believed. Finally, Amelander, in Chapter 25, wrote about the *gerush Sepharad* and tried to give explanations for the persecutions and expulsions of Jews; the new editors, however, entirely omitted the section from their translation, as they considered it no longer related to the nineteenth century.⁹⁴³

Thus, the Dutch edition was, just as much as the Hebrew and Yiddish editions, a typical product of the nineteenth century. Yet whereas in Eastern Europe *Sheyris Yisroel* became caught between Orthodox and maskilic interpretations, in the Netherlands it was treated as a historical source which could serve two purposes: assisting in the enlightenment of Dutch Jewry and demonstrating Dutch Jewish scholars' ability to collaborate internationally in the

⁹⁴⁰ *Se'irith Jisrael*, 583-588; taken over from: 'Iets over de Israëlieten te 's Gravenhage' in: *Jaarboeken voor de Israëlieten* 2 (1836) 121ff.

⁹⁴¹ *Se'irith Jisrael*, 543-544.

⁹⁴² *Se'irith Jisrael*, 610-615; taken over from: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 25 November 1850, no. 48, 658-660; this journal had the information from an article by Elyakim Carmoly in the *Archives israélites de France*. Interestingly, Carmoly referred in his article to Kosman's continuation to *Sheyris Yisroel* as one of the sources for part of this history.

⁹⁴³ *Se'irith Jisrael*, 174, 364, 402.

framework and paradigm of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The editors had some success in their mission. The book was sold in issues, starting from 24 October 1853, and received attention both in the Netherlands and abroad.⁹⁴⁴ The list of subscribers also testifies to the widespread interest in the book. After its completion, Gabriel Polak's edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* became for some scholars once again an acceptable resource for historical research and was occasionally used for such purposes, e.g. by Jost and Graetz.⁹⁴⁵ Ludwig Philippson's *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, however, considered both the original and the translation to be merely a 'Volksbuch', or popular book, rather than real historiography. Only Polak's commentary gave the edition slightly more weight.⁹⁴⁶ On the whole, however, *Sheyris Yisroel* shared the fate of *Yosippon* in the nineteenth century and remained ignored by most historians.⁹⁴⁷ In the Netherlands the Dutch edition, in critical editions of both Ashkenazi and Sephardic mahzorim, was used to provide historical background for certain liturgical poems and prayers.⁹⁴⁸

The original Yiddish edition, finally, garnered attention from linguistic scholars interested in 'Mischsprachen' (mixed languages), who considered *Sheyris Yisroel* an interesting example of the mixture of Hebrew, German and Dutch.⁹⁴⁹ Yet another appropriation of *Sheyris*

⁹⁴⁴ *Navorscher's bijblad* 4 (Amsterdam 1854) xxi-xxii; *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht* 10 (Utrecht 1854) 336; 11 (Utrecht 1855) 151.

⁹⁴⁵ Isaac Marcus Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Secten* 2 (Leipzig 1859) 196; Isaac Marcus Jost, 'Geschichtliche Bemerkungen und Berichtigungen IV' *Ben-Chananja* 2 (1860) 566-568; the South German rabbi Adolf Lewin, trained at the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary and pupil of Graetz, testified at the end of the century to the generally obscure nature of the book and its popular character, and is precisely for that reason remarkably positive; Adolf Lewin, 'Geschichte, Geographie und Reiseliteratur der Juden' in: J. Winter and Aug. Wünsche eds., *Die jüdische Literatur seit Abschluß des Kanons. Eine prosaische und poetische Anthologie mit biographischen und literargeschichtlichen Einleitungen* II (Trier 1896) 289-473, there 417-421: 'Dieser sonst ganz unbekannt Mann hat die Literatur der Demüthigen durch ein bedeutames Werk bereichert. Der Stein, dem die Bauleute verachtet haben, ist zum Eckstein geworden. (...) Zu dieser Amhaarezlitteratur, welche uns wichtiger und in ihre Wirkungen weit werthvoller ist, als viele hochgelehrten Folianten, gehört auch des Obengenannten 1743 in Amsterdam erschienenes Scheerith Israel. (...) ...und oft so schön und richtig erzählt, dass man es auch in unsere Zeit noch mit Vergnügen lesen würde.'

⁹⁴⁶ Anonymus, 'Literaturbericht. VIII', *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 29 October 1855, no. 44, 558-560, there 559. The author wrote that the well-known (!) *Sheyris Yisroel* was 'mehr Volksbuch als ein Muster der Historiographie, und entspricht den jetzigen Anforderungen nicht mehr. Indeß ist eine angemessene Bearbeitung für das Volk noch immer von Werth. (...) ...bei den vielen Mängeln des Werkes war es aber eine höchst günstige Zugabe, daß Herr G.I. Polak, der rühmlichst bekannte Schriftsteller, eine Menge von Anmerkungen hinzufügte, in denen er Berichtigungen, Auseinandersetzungen und Bemerkungen namentlich literarischen Inhalts, aus der ganzen ältern und neuen Literatur giebt. Gewundert hat es uns, daß keiner der beiden Herren Bearbeiter es unternahm, die Geschichte bis jetzt fortzuführen, wodurch es für die Leser neuen Werth bekommen hätte.'

⁹⁴⁷ Steven Bowman, 'Yosippon' and Jewish nationalism', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 61 (1995) 23-51, there 39-40. With the rise of Zionism, however, the status of *Yosippon* changed, whereas *Sheyris Yisroel* remained fixed in the yeshiva canon.

⁹⁴⁸ *Gebeden voor de Vastendagen. Naar den ritus der Nederlandsch-Portugiesche Israelieten, op nieuw in het Nederduitsch vertaald door Jb. Lopes Cardoso, Jr.* (Amsterdam 1858) 163-164, 190-191; *Gebeden en Klaagliederen voor den treurdag van Ab. Naar den Nederl. Israëli. ritus. Hebreuwsch en Nederduitsch. Met eene historische inleiding, bewerkt door G.I. Polak en M.L. van Ameringen* (Amsterdam 1868) x.

⁹⁴⁹ Max Grünbaum, an independent scholar of linguistics and literature working at Munich's library, included *Sheyris Yisroel* in his chrestomathy, a collection of passages from Yiddish literature meant as an aid for studying the language; Max Grünbaum, *Jüdischdeutsche Chrestomathie. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Kunde der Hebräischen Literatur* (Leipzig 1882) 361-379.

Yisroel was *Sippurim*, the romantic project of the Prague publisher Wolf Pascheles. This series of German booklets was intended to present the legends of the Prague ghetto, in order to strengthen Jewish national consciousness and increase the reader's involvement in Jewish matters.⁹⁵⁰ Pascheles also invited other scholars to contribute popular stories, and *Wissenschaftler* like Jost, Steinschneider and Max Letteris did so. Marcus Jastrow (1829-1903), who was at the time completing his studies in Berlin and Halle and was later a Reform rabbi in Warsaw, Worms and the United States, contributed a romanticized retelling of the account in *Sheyris Yisroel* of the 1648 pogrom in Niemirow and Tulczyn.

Jastrow structured the story around several main characters, including the local rabbi Jehiel Michel, the tax collector Reb Shaul, Reb Gawriel from Kiev (the richest man in the country) and the Kozak leader Chmielnicki (abbreviated to Chmel). Jastrow maintained himself throughout as the omniscient narrator, and readers were familiarized with the story via invented discussions. Jastrow emphasized the date of 20 Sivan, the day the Niemirow Jews had been slaughtered, but noted that on the same date a year later Chmielnicki himself was killed (in reality, Chmielnicki died in his bed, in 1657).⁹⁵¹ In this case, *Sheyris Yisroel* was not considered a proper historical source, but rather a *Fundgrube* of Jewish popular stories and a goldmine for scholars interested in folklore. Paschele, however, not only or even primarily objected to scholarly research, but considered his collection of stories to be a means of preserving Jewish narrative traditions. Such traditions could in this way be passed on to new generations, such that a new and revived romantic Jewish national consciousness could be forged. Paschele enjoyed some degree of success with this project, as the series was reprinted several times in the nineteenth century and was read by Jews and non-Jews alike; for his efforts he was even awarded a gold medal by the Habsburg emperor Franz Joseph.⁹⁵²

Before he settled in Munich, Grünbaum was for a period a private teacher in Amsterdam and worked as well in New York. In Amsterdam he may have encountered *Sheyris Yisroel*, while his American experiences coloured his analysis of the influence of Dutch on Amelander's Yiddish, as he compared it to language experiences of German Americans. Ludwig Fränkel, 'Grünbaum, Maier' in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 49 (1904) 589-594.

⁹⁵⁰ Wolf Pascheles ed., *Sippurim. Eine Sammlung jüdischer Volkssagen, Erzählungen, Mythen, Chroniken, Denkwürdigkeiten und Biographien berühmter Juden aller Jahrhunderte, besonders des Mittelalters* (Prague 1856) 363; *ibidem* (Prague 1858) 3, where the project is described as 'in bunter Mannigfaltigkeit vorzüglich die Sagen des Prager Ghetto in freundlich erzählender gemüthlicher Weise dem Leser darbeut', and as an exploration of the 'reichen, verborgen gebliebenen Schachte der jüdischen Sage'.

⁹⁵¹ First published in *Sippurim* (Prague 1854) as 'Chmel. (Zum Theil aus Scheriris Jisroel.)' 201-209; in a later edition: *ibidem* (Prague 1882) 201-209. A Hebrew-letter version appeared as well for Yiddish readers; the story could found there also: *ibidem* (Prague 1864) 187-195. On Marcus Jastrow, presently foremost remembered as the author of the rabbinic Aramaic dictionary, see: Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland. A history of conflict* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon, 2005) 151, 161-164, 180, 186-188.

⁹⁵² *Sippurim* (Prague 1856) 3; *ibidem* (Prague 1858) 363.

Despite all the attention *Sheyris Yisroel* received in the nineteenth century, there was one objective that Goudsmit and Polak did not achieve. In the introduction to the book they announced that not only were they working on a successor chronicle to *Sheyris Yisroel* which would cover the period from 1770 until their own time but that they had also already collected much relevant material for the project.⁹⁵³ A Dutch successor chronicle never appeared, however, and the 1855 edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* remained the only one of its kind.

8.6 Between Ultra-Orthodox marginality and academic research

The nineteenth century had been the century of fame for *Sheyris Yisroel*. After the 1870's, however, the number of new editions dropped, and in the twentieth century few editions saw the light of day (two before the Second World War and two thereafter). In Western Europe new research into the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* created a new body of Jewish historical texts and a new canon of Jewish historiography. *Sheyris Yisroel* was no longer needed and was superseded by nineteenth-century scholarship. Just as *Sheyris Yisroel* had once been part of a typical Jewish library, Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden* was now everywhere present. In the middle of the nineteenth century the new Dutch edition could, for a short time, keep the book well known among Dutch Jewry. Soon, however, new history books were written (such as Sluijs' and Hoofien's *Handboek voor de Geschiedenis der Joden*) that would replace Amelander's magnum opus. In Eastern Europe maskilim had used the authority of *Sheyris Yisroel* for several decades to create a new openness for Jewish history and to introduce a new Jewish pantheon. With the rise of new research, also in Russia and Poland, and a gradual turn to German and Russian as new languages of Jewish scholarship, *Sheyris Yisroel* came to have served its purpose and was no longer needed. Scholars who now mentioned the book were often highly critical, including Dubnow, who labeled Amelander 'an ordinary compiler' who 'was even unable to compose an independent chapter about the history of Jews in Holland.'⁹⁵⁴ The only people who remained committed to *Sheyris Yisroel* were the Eastern European Orthodox, for whom the book remained part of the canon of Jewish historiography.

⁹⁵³ *Se'arith Jisrael*, viii.

⁹⁵⁴ Simon Dubnow, *From Cromwell's Commonwealth to the Napoleonic Era* [History of the Jews IV], translated from Russian by Moshe Spiegel (South Brunswick NJ 1971) 297; the German translation uses the even stronger qualification 'geistloser Kompilator' (as cited by Fuks, 'Jiddisches Geschichtswerk', 183). From the passage it becomes clear, however, that Dubnow has not read the full Yiddish edition, but only the abridged Hebrew one, which has a much more fragmentary character.

The first two twentieth-century editions were published in Warsaw, which was continuing to strengthen its position within the Hebrew printing industry at the expense of Vilna. A wide variety of both traditional and new books were published in Warsaw. After World War I the city became the Polish capital, and in 1923 accounted for no less than 70% of the production of Yiddish books in the world.⁹⁵⁵ One of these was a Hebrew edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*; it does not contain a date of publication, but since the book features the text 'Printed in Poland' it must have been published after 1918, when Poland regained its independence. The edition is without doubt an Orthodox one, as the title page provides additional information about who had edited the book: יצא לאור בשלמות מחדש על ידי הר"ר משה מענדל בהרב הר"א ז"ל: וואלדען מחזיק סקלאב בעיר הפלך קעלץ. This Moshe Mendel Walden was the son of rabbi Aaron Walden (1838-1912), who had been central to the late nineteenth-century cultural revolution in Polish Hasidism, which had opened the way for more research and study and had spurred among Hasidim a higher esteem for intellectual activities. Both Waldens were prolific authors, editors and booksellers. Aaron Walden was a Hasid and a follower of R. Menahem Mendel of Kotz and R. Isaac Meir Kalter of Gur. He was a typical exponent of the Orthodox interest in history and historiography; he prepared a new and expanded edition of the rabbinical bio-bibliographic history *Shem ha-gedolim* of Azulai, entitled *Shem ha-gedolim be-hadasb* (Warsaw 1864).⁹⁵⁶ His son, Moshe Mendel Walden, continued his father's activities; he became a rabbi in Kielce (קעלץ) and authored, edited and printed books. He wrote extensively on the history of Hasidism in Poland, among other topics, in his book *Nifla'ot Yitshak*.⁹⁵⁷ The edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* fitted into the Waldens' ideology: interest in Jewish historiography, but within the defined parameters of Orthodoxy. The book was printed in a sober presentation, containing the same contents as had the preceding Warsaw 1879 edition (published by Nathan Shriftgiser, whose father had likewise published books), but without a table of contents.

The other Warsaw edition, also in Yiddish, was published around the same time (catalogues give 1920 as a date, but no year is identified in the book itself) by the bookseller I. Knaster and printed by Sz. Sikora and I. Milner (also Mylner). This edition had a local character: Knaster even had his address (Franciskaner 39, Warsaw) printed on the title page. At that address I. and Mordekhai Knaster had their book shop; a series of Yiddish books were

⁹⁵⁵ Moss, 'Printing and publishing', 1467.

⁹⁵⁶ Gertner, 'Epigonism', 221-224.

⁹⁵⁷ Yohanan Lederman, 'Sur l'influence du *Shem ha-Guedolim* du rabbin 'Haïm Joseph David Azoulai ('Hida) dans la bibliographie hébraïque, de la fin du XIII^e siècle au XX^e siècle', *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem* 2 (1998) 25-38, there 15-17; *ÉJ* s.v. Walden.

printed there by Sikora and Milner. This Warsaw edition follows completely the 1873 Lemberg version, which was itself a translation of the Hebrew edition. Linguistically this twentieth-century edition is updated, but its contents remained largely the same. That it is an Orthodox edition becomes obvious in comparing *Masa Damesek* with the original Hebrew version of Mohr. The Rhodes story, just as in the 1873 edition, is summarized in one line; likewise, God, rather than the Austrian government, is now praised and thanked. The introduction to the story notes that it narrates ‘ וואס השי"ת האט זי גיטון דורך דעם צדיק השר מהר"ר משה מנטפארע והשר 'המליץ ר"א אברהם קרעמיא נ"י. Montefiore, who is portrayed as a *zadik*, and Crémieux have become instruments in God's hands for delivering the Damascus Jews. What Mohr once intended as a maskilic story, one that would demonstrate new ways of international Jewish solidarity and which portrayed Montefiore and Crémieux as modern Jewish heroes, had now become an Orthodox tale, one that strengthened and reinforced the traditional Orthodox worldview.⁹⁵⁸

After World War II two further editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* were published in Hebrew, both within the Ultra-Orthodox segment of Israeli society. They were the initiative of Hayim Hominer (1913-1997), a scion of a well-known rabbinical Israeli family. He was a grandson of R. Shmuel Hominer, who had been not only a prolific author of *seforim* (religious Hebrew books), but also among the founders in 1874 of the Haredi Meah Shearim neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Hayim Hominer's father, Shlomo Hominer, was a butcher and gabbay of the Ashkenazi Hevra Kadisha burial society and a highly respected figure in the Jerusalem Haredi world.⁹⁵⁹ Hominer's maternal uncle R. Yosef Zvi ha-Levi (1874-1960) was the first Chief Rabbi of Yafo-Tel Aviv and among the founders of the new Zionist city. The first Hominer edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* was dedicated to him in 1964.⁹⁶⁰ Hominer studied at the religious Zionist *yeshiva* of rav Abraham Isaac Kook, the prominent first Ashkenazi chief rabbi during the British Mandate. Besides being a business man, Hominer was also active in relief work for Jerusalem's poor and sick and owned a small printing firm.⁹⁶¹

⁹⁵⁸ SY ed. Knoster, Warsaw 1920, 68-72.

⁹⁵⁹ In two of Hominer's five *Yosippon* editions he included a short biography of his grandfather, albeit in a hagiographic mode, which has been republished and translated into English as: 'Reb Shmuel Huminer. One hundred years since their arrival in our Holy Land (1871-1971)', on: www.bazach.com/huminer/pdf/r_shmuel.pdf (consulted 18 September 2010); a more complete history of the family in: Hayim Hominer, 'The holy seed its remnant. The origins of the Huminer family in the Holy City of Jerusalem' on: http://www.bazach.com/huminer/pdf/huminer_history.pdf (consulted 18 September 2010).

⁹⁶⁰ Hominer introduces his uncle extensively in: *Sheairith Yisrael*, 7-12.

⁹⁶¹ Biographical information from the university library of the Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, which acquired Hominer's library in 1999; cf. http://bibliothek.uni-halle.de/projekte/bibliothek_chajim_hominer/ and the

For Hominer *Sheyris Yisroel* was part of the traditional Orthodox canon of Jewish historiography Hominer republished many such works at his Jerusalem printing firm, including *Yosippon* (1956), *Sheyris Yisroel* (1964) and *Zemah David* (1966). In doing so, Hominer restored the link to *Yosippon* which had been lost to many nineteenth-century editions. This should actually be credited to Hominer's father, who, after the *Yosippon* edition, had encouraged his son to continue with *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁹⁶²

Hominer's editions, despite resulting from the Orthodox adaptation of modern scholarly methodology, uphold traditional Jewish beliefs. This resulted in hybrid editions. Hominer researched the various editions and presented a well-reasoned explanation for his choice. In the case of *Yosippon* he chose the 1510 cut-and-paste Constantinople edition by Yehudah ibn Moskoni, and asked the Orthodox scholar and editor R. Abraham J. Wertheimer to preface the book. Typical of the hybrid character of all Hominer's editions is that despite all the scholarly remarks Wertheimer upheld the view that *Yosippon* had originally been written by Flavius Josephus.⁹⁶³ The same is true for the *Sheyris Yisroel* edition. Hominer testified to the fact that he had studied the relevant editions available in the Jewish National and University Library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, even going so far as to offer in his introduction a short survey of these editions.⁹⁶⁴ At the same time, Hominer made sure not to use 'heretical' scholarship and cited only books that were acceptable to the Orthodox yeshiva world.

Hominer titled his edition *Sheairith Yisrael complete*, thereby indicating that his edition was the first complete Hebrew translation of *Sheyris Yisroel*. His study of the various Hebrew editions led him to use the 1811 Vilna edition for the first 24 chapters of his own edition. These chapters were translated by the Vilna editor. For the remaining eleven chapters he made his own translation of the 1743 Yiddish original edition, as the Hebrew text of the 1804 Lemberg edition was far from complete.⁹⁶⁵ Hominer's research thus resulted in the first complete Hebrew edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* and what was in fact the third translation of the book into Hebrew. It was also the first Hebrew edition since 1846 not to include *Masa Damesek*. The 1771 addition of Baruch ben Joseph Kosman was likewise left out. This edition aspired to restore the original 1743 text to modern Hebrew readers.

family genealogy on: <http://www.bazach.com/huminer/hebrew/ftmn.asp?GEDID=643> (consulted 18 September 2010)

⁹⁶² *Sheairith Yisrael*, 7.

⁹⁶³ Steven Bowman, 'Yosippon' and Jewish nationalism', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 61 (1995) 23-51, there 45-47.

⁹⁶⁴ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 16, 20-28.

⁹⁶⁵ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 13-15.

Yet that is only half the story. The ‘open book tradition’ was still very much alive for Hominer and he did not hesitate to add new material to the text. At various points in the book Hominer added passages from other Hebrew sources, mostly to complete Amelander’s narrative. Hominer did not use results from recent historiography, but only information from classical Hebrew historiography and religious books. For example, from *Sefer Yubasin* he added the letter of Rabbi Abraham Farissol about the Ten Lost Tribes; in Chapter 10 he included the original Hebrew correspondence between R. Hisdai and the Khazar king, as well as R. Hisdai’s *Shir ha-petikha*; and in Chapter 26, on Shabtai Zvi, he added a passage from Glickl von Hameln’s chronicle. Hominer also added material from responsa by R. Shmuel ben R. David ha-Levi and Haham Zvi, and *selibot* prayers and *keinot* written by R. Shabse ha-Cohen (Shach).⁹⁶⁶ In part these additions are related to the translational turn from Yiddish to Hebrew, such as the inclusion of original Hebrew letters from accepted editions, rather than re-translating them from Yiddish to Hebrew, as the earlier editions had done (with different results in each case). The additions were also a further accentuation of the traditional character of *Sheyris Yisrael*, not least as they offered more information about important rabbis and further liturgical material. Whereas Mohr in 1846 had tried to expand *Sheyris Yisrael* to the maskilic side, Hominer did precisely the reverse. For him the book was entirely Orthodox and he emphasized this aspect even further.

Hominer also annotated the text, but in a very sober way in no way comparable to the Dutch *Wissenschaft des Judentums*-style edition of Goudsmit and Polak. The footnotes contain sources, additions and corrections to Amelander’s text. Sometimes Hominer checked Amelander’s sources and found that the author had made a mistake, such as when he shifted to the evening something that according to the *Shevet Yehudah* had happened in daytime.⁹⁶⁷ More often Hominer added material, such as in naming a few more books written by the Maharil than had Amelander.⁹⁶⁸ A sizable majority of the footnotes contain corrections to the text of *Sheyris Yisrael*. These are mostly very factual and do not address interpretations provided by Amelander. For example, where Amelander writes that Yehudah ha-Levi had edited the *Kuzari*, Hominer corrects him, noting that the famous poet had actually authored the book. And where Amelander notes that Rashi and Rambam had met and that the Rambam had used Rashi’s commentaries, Hominer states that Rashi had in fact lived earlier than Rambam and

⁹⁶⁶ For the complete list of additions made by Hominer, see: *Sheairith Yisrael*, 28-30.

⁹⁶⁷ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 148.

⁹⁶⁸ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 228.

that the latter nowhere cited Rashi's work. Hominer also corrects Amelander, noting that Haham Zvi had been born not in Ofen (Buda) but in Meseritsch.⁹⁶⁹

Hominer's historiographical project enjoyed some success. His *Yosippón* edition was reprinted several times, although *Zemab David* saw only one edition. *Sheyris Yisroel* was reprinted once more, and most recently, in 1988. Through Hominer's edition *Sheyris Yisroel* continued to be read in Haredi circles. That *Sheyris Yisroel* had not been forgotten in the Haredi sector at the end of the twentieth century is demonstrated by the expansionist Hasidic Chabad movement. The late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Schneerson, even referred to the book in recounting a story about the matriarch of Chabad Hasidism, Rivka Schneerson (1833-1914), the granddaughter of the Second Rebbe and wife of the Fourth Rebbe, Shmuel. The stories of her life serve as didactic models for Lubavitcher women, and *Beis Rivka*, the Chabad school system for girls, is named for her. What should women do on a Sabbath evening? Rivka Schneerson would read aloud from the Yiddish *Tsene-Rene*, *Yosippón* or *Sheyris Yisroel* as other women listened.⁹⁷⁰ If contemporary Hasidic women wish to emulate Rivka's reading habits, they must either to turn to old Yiddish versions or obtain the modern Hebrew edition of Hominer.

Hominer's edition, although (from a scholarly point of view) being full of defects, can nevertheless be credited with reviving interest in the book among researchers.⁹⁷¹ Research on *Sheyris Yisroel* started slowly in the second half of the twentieth century, but one of the current initiatives is a new scholarly edition of the book, including translation into modern Hebrew.⁹⁷² This translation could be the first version of the book to be printed solely for its historical worth, as both a resource on Jewish history and a valuable work for understanding eighteenth-century Ashkenazi Jewry. The 'open book tradition' will finally reach its limits in the historicist approach to a classical text of Jewish historiography.

8.7 *The transmission of Sheyris Yisroel*

This chapter has shown how an Amsterdam Yiddish history book of 1743 came to be transmitted throughout Europe and even to Israel over the course of nearly 250 years and in

⁹⁶⁹ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 64, 123, 281.

⁹⁷⁰ Menahem Mendel Schneerson, *Reshimos 112-157* (New York 2004) 483, 490.

⁹⁷¹ Modern scholarly use of *Sheyris Yisroel* e.g. in: Menahem Valdman, *מעבר לנהר כוש* (Jerusalem 1989) 6, 94, 311; Abraham Grinboim, *Prakim be-historiographia shel yabadut Russia* (Jerusalem 2006) 11, 13.

⁹⁷² The project was initiated by Chava Turniansky and Yosef Kaplan of the Hebrew University; http://jewish.huji.ac.il/faculty/yiddish_faculty/Turniansky.html (consulted 12 September 2010).

three languages. The contents of the work changed over time and were deeply influenced by contemporary ideologies, via which the book entered different canons and libraries. What happened to *Sheyris Yisroel* is not unique to this book alone. Indeed, the same sort of story can be told about other classical history books, such as *Shevet Yehudah* and *Zemah David*. The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate that the ‘open book tradition’, with its roots in medieval manuscript culture, continued to operate in the Ashkenazi world until well into the twentieth century.

Sheyris Yisroel began, in 1743, as both a traditional and innovative work. Traditional, in the sense that it accepted the authority of earlier Hebrew historiography, maintained the Orthodox philosophy of history and presented a theological interpretation of Jewish past and present. Yet it was also an innovative work, as it transferred historiography from the Hebrew into the Yiddish domain, familiarized the larger Yiddish-reading public with elite knowledge and used, unashamedly and on a large scale, Christian sources for its narrative. During the nineteenth century *Sheyris Yisroel* was thus claimed by both maskilim, who accentuated its innovative aspects, and by Orthodox, who stressed its traditional outlook. In the long run, *Sheyris Yisroel* survived in the twentieth century only in the Haredi world, as part of a conservative approach to Jewish history and as a counter-history towards modern historical scholarship. Amelander’s magnum opus thus evolved from a daring and innovative initiative into an established element of the traditional yeshiva canon. If anything, the transmission history of *Sheyris Yisroel* demonstrates that the book is not the author’s but of anyone who wishes to use it for his or her own purposes.

Conclusion/Summary

In the long eighteenth century Amsterdam was the cradle for a small yet significant corpus of Jewish history texts. History books, chronicles, pamphlets and historical poetry were produced in both the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities. Surprisingly, and in contrast to the vast majority of preceding Jewish historiography, these texts were written not in Hebrew but in the vernacular of the communities, respectively the Iberian languages and Yiddish. This dissertation has concentrated on one part of this larger corpus, namely the Yiddish history book and chronicles written after the publication in 1743 of Menahem Amelander's *Sheyris Yisroel*.

Modern scholarship had thus far almost entirely overlooked this corpus, resulting in a gap between sixteenth- and nineteenth-century Jewish historiography. What does it entail when we include Amsterdam Yiddish historiography within the larger narrative of the history of Jewish historiography? To answer this question, I first focused on a presentation of the various historical texts, which included, besides the well-known *Sheyris Yisroel*, several chronicles and fragments. The next step was to analyse the nature of this body of historiography, the idea of history behind it, and its sources and methodology. All this together provide the pieces for picturing the character of eighteenth-century Amsterdam Yiddish historiography.

The first thing to stress is the continuity between earlier Jewish historiography, as described in the second chapter, and these Yiddish historical texts. *Sheyris Yisroel*, presented as the continuation to *Sefer Yosippon*, was envisioned to be an integral part of preceding historiography. Besides the commercial reasons for this, Amelander also adopted the same methodology and interests. Like many of his medieval and early modern predecessors, Amelander regarded the task of the historian to be one of primarily composing a compilation of materials from various sources, including earlier historical texts. *Sheyris Yisroel* could therefore be described, as could *Sefer Yosippon*, *Shevet Yebuda* and a number of other histories, as being 'anthological historiography'. This methodology also meant that Amelander included Jewish historiographical traditions, such as 'the chain of tradition' and martyriology, in his own historical narrative. Next to methodology, *Sheyris Yisroel* is also characterized by the same stress on diaspora history as *Leidensgeschichte*, caused by the non-Jewish majority towards a Jewish minority, but is balanced by the wealth of internal Jewish *Geistesgeschichte*.

Sheyris Yisroel, thus, was clearly intended to be a continuation of earlier Jewish historiography and should be interpreted primarily as such. The chronicles that continued

Amelander's narrative each sought ways to connect their own histories to *Sheyris Yisroel*. In these history books, however, other Jewish historiography is barely present (with the exception of Abraham Trebitsch's Bohemian *Qorot ha'ittim*). This mainly concerns the character of the continuations to *Sheyris Yisroel*, which all concern contemporary history and should therefore be characterized as *Gegenwartschronistik*. All together, however, the Amsterdam Yiddish historical texts should be considered as the subsequent links in a continuous narrative of Jewish historiography.

But this is not all that should be noted about the characteristics of Amsterdam Yiddish historiography. There were also significant changes as compared to earlier Jewish historiography, including the change of language. As shown in chapter 3, the transfer of the genre of historiography from the Hebrew to the Yiddish domain was prepared by the rise and popularity of Yiddish translations of Hebrew history books. Amelander stepped into this tradition by first editing a new Yiddish *Sefer Yosippon*, before composing his own historical narrative *Sheyris Yisroel*. In opting to employ Yiddish as their primary language of history writing, the Amsterdam historians contributed to what could be called the early 'emancipation' of Yiddish. The choice of language also influenced the intended public. This readership was no longer only the Hebrew-reading elite, male dominated and largely from the religious establishment, but now counted the vast majority of Ashkenazim, including women and even children. Yiddish historiography, thus, was able to reach a much larger reading public than Hebrew historiography ever had.

No less innovative is the conscious fusion of Sephardic and Ashkenazi traditions in *Sheyris Yisroel* and the interest in both Sephardic and Ashkenazi history in the whole body of Amsterdam Yiddish historical texts. For the composition of his historical narrative Amelander relied on both Sephardic and Ashkenazi sources; he described the histories of both traditions in an even-handed and balanced manner, avoiding Ashkenazi bias or dominance. He described both traditions separately in different chapters, yet he did not regard them as parallels or as competitors but rather as two legitimate elements of Judaism. The continuing chronicles to *Sheyris Yisroel* are all clearly written from an Ashkenazi perspective, but all include the history of Amsterdam Sephardim.

A third innovative characteristic is that the historical texts made extensive use of non-Jewish sources. They did so consciously and, although sometimes hiding exact non-Jewish sources, vehemently defended the use of non-Jewish material. *Sheyris Yisroel* was a Jewish mirror to the Dutch edition of Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs*. However, whereas Basnage's history

book was a sequel to Flavius Josephus, Amelander's book was presented as the continuation of Josephus' supposed Hebrew chronicle *Sefer Yosippon*. Dutch-language history books, pamphlets, letters and newspapers all served as sources for the various Yiddish historical texts. Some of these sources were typical products of the media revolution in early modern Europe and the growing availability of news to wider audiences. The Yiddish historical texts profited significantly from offshoots of this media revolution.

Amelander's politics of source selecting is described in Chapter 5 as an example of gatekeeping brokerage. We should thereby differentiate between within-group and between-groups gatekeeping. The first concerns the Hebrew sources, whose contents were cleansed of excessively intellectual and overly mystical passages before being presented to the Yiddish public, whereas between-groups gatekeeping describes Amelander's politics towards his non-Jewish sources. He stripped from these sources any evident Christian interpretations and convictions, criticisms of traditional Jewish sources and views, and over-attentiveness towards Sephardim and intellectual history. The result was a new Yiddish historical narrative, with elements from both Hebrew and Dutch sources, but one in a completely new context and in a new master narrative.

The idea of history behind *Sheyris Yisroel* is amenable to traditional Jewish perceptions of the past, yet at the same time evidences distinctively early modern features. The history described in the book is typified as Diaspora history, to which classic rabbinic theological convictions were applied. Diaspora was considered to be a result of Jewish sins and a punishment from God; however, just as God's negative promises turned out to be true, Amelander held to the belief that the positive ones would also be fulfilled. He defended history writing as such mainly with the standard catalogue of history's benefits. Yet he stressed, more than most of his predecessors had, the practical values, for contemporary society, of knowing history.

Specific to Amelander's early modern approach is the emphasis on Jewish history after 70 CE as the history of 'the remnant of Israel' – as the title indicates. In the choice of this title Jewish history became connected to the other part of Israel, which had disappeared in the shadows of history but remained, according to traditional rabbinic convictions, somewhere as an identifiable entity. The Ten Lost Tribes were at once a theme connected with pre-Diaspora Jewish history and with post-Diaspora Jewish history, as it was supposed that in the messianic future the remnant of Israel and the Ten Lost Tribes would be reunited. Amelander turned to these convictions in the composition of his history book when he decided to encapsulate the

narrative of Jewish Diaspora history with first and last chapters that address the search for the Ten Lost Tribes. This altered the traditionally rather somber depiction of Jewish Diaspora as being predominantly *Leidensgeschichte*. The narrative structure of *Sheyris Yisroel* suggests that Sephardic and Ashkenazi diasporas had met in Amsterdam, a historical event to be situated on the eve of the reunification with the Ten Lost Tribes. The tone of the two chapters on the Ten Lost Tribes is optimistic and expresses the view that with the growing expansion of colonial empires and discovery of new territories the Ten Lost Tribes could well soon be found.

Amelander's successors do not address questions about either the legitimacy of history writing or any theological-philosophical evaluations of Jewish history. The genre of the chronicle implied fixation on chronological developments within contemporary history, without prerequisite overview for developing an evaluation of past events. The choice, however, to interpret certain contemporary events – such as the Patriot Revolt in the 1780's or the Batavian Revolution in 1795 – by connecting them to biblical events via inclusion of citations from Tenakh, testifies to a continuity of Jewish historiographical models. The extensive attention to political and military history, on the other hand, often without specific relation to the history of Amsterdam Jews, demonstrates the growing interest in general history.

These innovative characteristics can be explained by the specific context of early modern Amsterdam. It was here that the Sephardic and Ashkenazi diasporas met, thereby breaking through the relative isolation of each tradition. In Amsterdam, Sephardim and Ashkenazim lived alongside each other, worked together and became familiar with each other's traditions. The Jewish book industry in particular was one of the semi-neutral zones where Sephardim and Ashkenazim collaborated and engaged in intellectual encounters. The transfer of knowledge from Sephardic sources to the Ashkenazi domain was facilitated by the continuous exchange of ideas within book shops and printing presses. Amelander and Braatbard both worked within the book industry, a setting which created opportunities to know not only about the Sephardic tradition but also European culture in general. Dutch books, pamphlets and newspapers circulated in Jewish printing firms, which were always part of the larger context of Amsterdam's book industry.

The Amsterdam context is also significant in explaining Amelander's optimistic eschatological philosophy of history. Amsterdam, being an important agent in colonial trade, was also an intersection in the European communication network. New information – about exotic lands and countries and their histories, old and new colonies – arrived from overseas

with returning merchants and seamen. Leaflets with such stories enjoyed widespread popularity amongst the Dutch population. Amsterdam Jewry shared this interest, but interpreted such news from a distinct, Jewish perspective, one in which the Ten Lost Tribes and the messianic age played a major role.

Finally, the Amsterdam context can be referred to in explaining the early ‘emancipation’ of Yiddish. The Dutch Republic in early modern Europe was among the pioneers in the vernacularization of learning. The Dutch language was used not only for publications aimed at the broad public but also for scholarly purposes for which Latin had previously been the only language. The transfer of historiography from the Hebrew to the Yiddish domain is a clear pendant to this larger process of growing significance for the vernacular.

Amsterdam Yiddish historiography, thus, can be characterized as simultaneously traditional and innovative. With reference to postcolonial theory, Amelander has been described in Chapter 3 as a hybrid intellectual, and, in Chapter 4, *Sheyris Yisroel* as a hybrid work. Hybridity is a typical feature for societies in transition and for intellectuals between different cultural traditions. The concept thus applies well to eighteenth-century Ashkenazi Jewry, especially in Western Europe. As with European culture at large, for Ashkenazi Jewry the eighteenth century was one of transition, but in a way that the traditional and innovative formed a complex unity. What in a later period would be set in opposition to each other, now coexisted peacefully. Amsterdam Yiddish historiography remained fully part of traditional Jewish historiography – in its methodology, legitimation of history writing and contents – yet at the same time was turning towards a new, broad Ashkenazi audience, shifting language and developing distinctive early modern interests.

The agents in the rise of Amsterdam Yiddish historiography – namely, the authors – were all part of what could be labeled as the secondary elite or intelligentsia of Ashkenazi culture. Most of these figures had enjoyed a traditional education, in which they became familiar with the traditional corpus of texts. They knew Hebrew and often, as was the case with Amelander, could write in the language. Within the setting of the Jewish book industry they could easily access all relevant sources. But what distinguished them from the rabbinic elite was that they did not obtain positions within the establishment, and socioeconomically stood much closer to the vast majority of Ashkenazim, who were poor and fluent only in Yiddish. The relatively young book industry was one of the spaces between the Hebrew establishment and the Yiddish majority, and it served as a harbor for the secondary elite. The secondary position

explains the transfer of knowledge from the Hebrew domain, to which the historians had access despite not belonging to its elite, to the Yiddish domain, which in social terms was significantly closer to them.

The success of *Sheyris Yisroel* is evidenced both by the fact that the book's narrative was continued by a number of successors (the topic of Chapter 7) and by the transmission history of the book itself (Chapter 8). The continuations of *Sheyris Yisroel* had their own distinctive characteristics, but most were city chronicles and only dealt with contemporary history. Yet, as 'epigones' they continued Amelander's history book. The term 'successor chronicles' is introduced to grasp the idea of a continuity within history and history writing. The genre, which has roots in ancient times and was standard in medieval periods, had changed in early modern times into a typical, traditional type of historiography. In the eighteenth century an author's opting for the genre of 'successor chronicles' was clear indication of a traditional conception of history. The nature of Amsterdam Yiddish 'successor chronicles' was therefore also highly influenced by the traditional character of the genre. This did not, however, within the borders of the genre prevent their testifying to a changing appreciation within general society and to an interest in politics and military history.

The transmission history of *Sheyris Yisroel* makes evident that the 'open book tradition', itself rooted in medieval manuscript culture, was until the twentieth century still functioning within Ashkenazi culture. The paratext and contents of the book are continuously adopted towards new audiences, via inclusion of new information but also by omitting large parts of the original. The book was translated into Hebrew no less than three times, into Dutch once, and once from Hebrew back into Yiddish. Although the book was canonized in the eighteenth century, in the nineteenth century – despite a debate between adherents of Eastern European Haskalah and Orthodoxy over the book's nature – *Sheyris Yisroel* became part of what Shmuel Feiner named the third track of modern Jewish historiography. In 1743 Amelander's *magnum opus* had been a daring undertaking – being the first universal Jewish history book in ages – but a century later its role had changed. The book became an earmark of Orthodoxy and a counterhistory to new historiography inspired by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Presently, it is still in the margins of early twenty-first-century Ultra Orthodoxy that Amelander's book continues to play a role.

To conclude, Amsterdam Yiddish historiography was simultaneously not only neatly connected to previous medieval and sixteenth-century Hebrew historiography but was also developing the genre further through innovations. The track of nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft*

des Judentums historiography largely overlooked – intentionally or not – Amelander and his epigones, yet *Sheyris Yisroel* continued to reach a large Ashkenazi public.

Samenvatting

In de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw was Amsterdam een van de belangrijkste centra van Hebreeuwse en Jiddische boekdrukkunst. Rabbijnen en geleerden uit heel Europa reisden naar de stad om daar hun publicaties in druk vereeuwigd te zien. In de historiografie is hierdoor het beeld ontstaan van Amsterdam als een plaats waar kennis van elders werd gedrukt en vervolgens ook weer werd geëxporteerd naar de rest van Europa. In Amsterdam, dat naast de Portugees-joodse gemeenschap ook een snel groeiende Asjkenazische gemeenschap kende, werd echter ook origineel werk geschreven in het Hebreeuws, Jiddisch en de Iberische talen. In deze dissertatie wordt een deel waarvan belicht: de geschiedschrijving in het Jiddisch door Amsterdamse Asjkenazische auteurs.

Die keuze is om nog een reden van belang. Wie de handboeken opslaat over joodse historiografie, zal zien dat er veel aandacht is voor de Hebreeuwse geschiedschrijving tot het einde van de zestiende eeuw enerzijds, en de moderne geschiedschrijving in talen als Duits, Frans en Engels sinds het begin van de negentiende eeuw anderzijds. In de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw valt er een gat, waarin voornamelijk bestaande geschiedschrijving werd herdrukt en slechts weinig nieuw, origineel werk verscheen. Dit beeld behoeft bijstelling, zo is mijn stelling. In achttiende-eeuws Amsterdam werd weliswaar niet langer in het Hebreeuws en nog niet in de landstalen geschreven, maar ontstond een bescheiden corpus van Jiddische historische teksten. Die teksten, één universeel joods geschiedwerk en een aantal kronieken, worden in deze dissertatie gepositioneerd in het geheel van de joodse geschiedschrijving. Hoe verhouden deze werken zich tot bestaande historiografische tradities, waarin wordt naar nieuwe wegen gezocht en wat is de impact van deze werken?

In het eerste deel wordt daartoe eerst een beknopt overzicht gegeven van de traditie van joodse geschiedschrijving – grotendeels vervaardigd in het Hebreeuws. Deze boeken stonden ook ter beschikking van de Amsterdamse historici en in het geval van de voornaamste van hen, Menachem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi Amelander, is ook duidelijk dat hij die intensief heeft gebruikt. De Sefardische traditie van de *sjalsjelet ha-qabbalah*, de ‘keten der traditie’, waarin de nadruk valt op de sequentie van opeenvolgende rabbijnen die garant staan voor de authenticiteit van de rabbijnse traditie, was daarbij minstens zo belangrijk als de Asjkenazische traditie van martyriologie, waarbij nadruk valt op het documenteren van joodse *Leidensgeschiede*. Methodologisch valt het sterke anthologische karakter van veel geschiedschrijving op: auteurs

verzamelde zoveel mogelijk eerder materiaal en plaatsten dat, al dan niet bewerkt, in een nieuw geschiedverhaal.

Het derde hoofdstuk laat zien dat de stap van Hebreeuwse naar Jiddische geschiedschrijving niet uit de lucht kwam vallen, maar werd voorbereid door een toenemend aantal vertalingen van Hebreeuwse historische klassiekers naar het Jiddisch. De opkomst van de boekdrukkunst gaf deze ontwikkeling vleugels. Veel van de middeleeuwse en zestiende-eeuwse Hebreeuwse geschiedwerken kregen een Jiddische pendant, die vaak al via een redactieproces waren aangepast aan het nieuwe, grotere Asjkenazische publiek. De Amsterdamse Jiddische geschiedschrijving is voorbereid door deze Jiddische vertaaltraditie. Veelzeggend is dat zowel het geschiedwerk van Leyb ben Oyzer over de valse messias Shabtai Zvi als Amelanders boek beide geschreven zijn als vervolg op een Jiddische vertaling van een Hebreeuwse klassieker. Van de Hebreeuwse geschiedschrijving, via de vertalingen in het Jiddisch, loopt zo een rechtstreekse lijn naar de Amsterdamse Jiddische geschiedschrijving.

Het tweede deel concentreert zich op het pièce de résistance daarvan: Amelanders *Sheyris Yisroel* (1743). In hoofdstuk 4 wordt eerst de auteur in de context van achttiende-eeuws Asjkenazisch Amsterdam gepositioneerd. Amelander kwam uit een familie die al langere tijd in de stad verbleef, kreeg een traditionele joodse opvoeding, studeerde zowel in Amsterdam als aan een jesjiewe in Praag en ging werken in de joodse boekindustrie. Uit een analyse van Amelanders oeuvre vóór de verschijning van *Sheyris Yisroel* blijkt dat hij veel ervaring opdeed met het verzamelen en redigeren van bronnen en met het presenteren van kennis op een zo aangenaam mogelijk manier voor de lezer. Uit alles blijkt een poging om de klassieke joodse werken, zoals de Hebreeuwse Bijbel, het gebedenboek en de kabbalistische Zohar, toegankelijk te maken voor een zo breed mogelijk publiek. Dat betekende ook dat Amelander niet alleen in het Hebreeuws, maar ook in het Jiddisch werkte. Amelander voegde zich hierbij naar de Amsterdamse drukkers Chaim Drukker en Mozes Frankfurter, die welbewust klassieke Hebreeuwse werken – die tot dusver tot het exclusieve domein van de geleerde, rabbijnse elite hadden behoord – naar het Jiddisch vertaalden. Een belangrijk element in Amelanders oeuvre is dat hij zich intensief inliet met de Sefardische traditie. In de boekindustrie werkten Asjkenaziem en Sefardiem veel samen, drukten elkaars werken en vond er een intellectuele uitwisseling plaats. Amelander werkte mee aan de ‘culturele transfer’ van Sefardische kennis naar het Asjkenazische lezerspubliek.

Deze elementen zien we bij elkaar komen in het schrijven van *Sheyris Yisroel*, zo laat hoofdstuk 5 zien. Amelander redigeerde allereerst een nieuwe Jiddische editie van de joodse

historische klassieker *Sefer Yosippon*, waarin de joodse geschiedenis tot aan de val van Jeruzalem in 70 wordt beschreven. *Sheyris Yisroel* werd vervolgens gepresenteerd als het tweede deel van deze klassieker, waardoor Amelander gebruik maakte van de autoriteit van dit werk voor zijn eigen, in het Jiddisch geschreven geschiedwerk. Hij beschreef op zijn beurt de joodse geschiedenis van 70 tot aan zijn eigen tijd, 1743. Dit hield automatisch ook een brede scopus in: joden woonden in tal van landen en Amelander wilde zoveel mogelijk van hun geschiedenis achterhalen. De titel van het boek is veelzeggend: ‘rest van Israël’. Joodse geschiedenis sinds 70 was principieel diasporageschiedenis – en slechts het verhaal van twee van de oorspronkelijk twaalf stammen van Israël. De verloren ‘tien stammen’ speelden in Amelanders ideeënwereld een belangrijke rol: zowel in het eerste als laatste hoofdstuk van het boek vroeg hij aandacht voor de zoektocht naar de ‘tien stammen’. Het rabbijnse idee dat met de vondst van deze stammen de hereniging van heel Israël zou plaatsvinden en daarmee de messiaanse tijd zou inluiden, kreeg in de vroegmoderne tijd veel aandacht. Zeker in Amsterdam met z’n sterke koloniale handelsnetwerken was er een levendige belangstelling in de exotische volkeren die werden ontdekt en leefde bij de Amsterdamse joden de hoop dat zo ook de ‘tien stammen’ spoedig zouden worden gevonden. Het bij elkaar komen van de twee belangrijkste joodse tradities, de Sefardische en Asjkenazische, zoals Amelander dat in Amsterdam meemaakte en hij in de twee voorlaatste hoofdstukken beschreef, kon daarbij al als een voorbereidende fase gezien worden.

Amelander beoogde met *Sheyris Yisroel* de traditie van joodse historiografie voort te zetten. Hij sloot aan op *Sefer Yosippon*, gebruikte bestaande historiografische tradities en deelde de traditionele geschiedvisie: diaspora was een gevolg van Israëls zonden, in essentie daardoor een verhaal van *Leidensgeschichte*, slechts in balans gehouden door *Gelehrtengeschichte*. In zijn nadrukkelijk eschatologische insteek, zijn vroegmoderne belangstelling voor de ‘tien stammen’ en zijn keuze om niet in het Hebreeuws maar de volkstaal Jiddisch te schrijven, zien we echter duidelijk nieuwe elementen. Om Amelander en *Sheyris Yisroel* te positioneren, moeten we daarom voorbij de dichotomie traditie en moderniteit grijpen naar het concept van de ‘hybride cultuur’. In een hybride cultuur komen traditionele en moderne elementen samen naast elkaar voor, zonder dat ze – zoals een fase later zou gebeuren – tegenover elkaar geplaatst worden. Zowel de achttiende eeuw als een *Sattelzeit* in de Europees-joodse geschiedenis beschouwd kan worden, zo was ook de Amsterdams Jiddische geschiedschrijving met zijn hybride karakter volop deel van die transitiefase.

Dat wordt nog duidelijker in hoofdstuk 6, waarin de bronnen die Amelander voor *Sheyris Yisroel* heeft gebruikt in kaart worden gebracht en zijn omgang daarmee wordt geanalyseerd. Amelander bleek niet alleen de eerdere Hebreeuwse historiografie gebruikt te hebben, maar ook tal van andere Hebreeuwse werken uit andere genres. Hij hanteert in zijn omgang met Bijbelcommentaren en halachisch werk daarbij een historiserende benadering, waarmee niet alleen in de werken naar historische informatie wordt gezocht, maar die werken zelf ook onderdeel van geschiedenis zijn. Eveneens maakte hij gebruik van de Jiddische literatuur, zowel volkse verhalenboeken als pamfletten en almanakken. Belangrijk is echter dat hij zich niet tot joodse bronnen beperkte, maar ook christelijke, in het Nederlands geschreven boeken gebruikte. De belangrijkste daarvan, Jacques Basnage's *Vervolg op Flavius Josephus*, kan zonder twijfel als zijn belangrijkste bron en inspiratie gekenmerkt worden. Basnage leverde Amelander niet alleen veel informatie, maar beïnvloedde hem ook in de opbouw en structuur van zijn werk en zijn hoofdstukken. *Sheyris Yisroel* heeft een sterk anthologisch karakter: Amelander heeft uit al zijn bronnen passages genomen, bewerkt en samengesmeed tot een nieuw narratief. Om Amelander's omgang met z'n bronnen te duiden, wordt gebruik gemaakt van het model van 'gatekeeping brokerage': Amelander was als een poortwachter die besloot welke kennis uit het 'hogere' Hebreeuwse en het christelijke domein toegelaten kon worden tot het Jiddische domein. In beide gevallen hield hij kennis achter, die hij niet geschikt achtte voor zijn lezers. In het algemeen hechtte Amelander als de bronnen elkaar tegenspraken meer geloof aan zijn Hebreeuwse dan zijn christelijke bronnen.

Het derde en laatste deel presenteert de geschiedenis die na de eerste editie van *Sheyris Yisroel* in 1743 is verschenen. Daarbij is in hoofdstuk 7 aandacht voor de Jiddische kronieken die in de voetsporen van *Sheyris Yisroel* verder gingen, terwijl in hoofdstuk 8 wordt gekeken naar de edities van *Sheyris Yisroel* die sinds 1743 tot aan 1988 verschenen. Beide hoofdstukken laten de grote invloed van *Sheyris Yisroel* zien, tot diep in de twintigste eeuw. De kronieken in hoofdstuk 7 worden benaderd vanuit het idee van 'successor chronicles', zoals Amelander een vervolg op *Sefer Yosippon* schreef, zo pakt diverse Amsterdamse Asjkenaziem – en één Moravische Asjkenazi – de draad op ná *Sheyris Yisroel*. Maar waar Amelander een universele joodse geschiedenis schreef over een lange periode, daar beperkten deze chroniqueurs zich tot *Zeitgeschichte* en beschreven vrijwel alleen wat in Amsterdam gebeurde. Dat wordt ook duidelijk uit hun bronnen, die voor het overgrote deel niet-joods zijn. Opvallend is dat de algemene politieke geschiedenis het kader is geworden waarbinnen vervolgens de stedelijke joodse geschiedenis wordt gepositioneerd. Hierin geven deze kronieken al vroeg blijk van politiek

bewustzijn en beschrijven ze ook joods politiek engagement, vooral met de Oranjes. Hierin gaan zij ten opzichte van Amelander een duidelijk eigen weg. De auteurs van de kronieken blijken een vergelijkbaar profiel als Amelander te hebben, een goede joodse opleiding en banen in de joodse boekindustrie of de handel. Zij vormen een tweede of alternatieve intelligentsia, onder de rabbijnse en bestuurlijke elite, zonder vooraanstaande posities, maar met goede joodse kennis. Tegelijkertijd stonden ze sociaal-economisch dicht bij de grote meerderheid van de Asjkenazische gemeenschap, die geen Hebreeuws kon lezen en slechts Jiddisch gebruikte. De keuze voor Jiddisch is daarmee typerend voor deze tweede intelligentsia: de kennis waar zij toegang toe hadden in het Hebreeuwse en christelijke domein werd door hen gebracht naar het Jiddische domein.

Amelanders geschiedwerk werd niet alleen voortgezet door andere historici, maar ook talloze malen opnieuw gedrukt. De transmissiegeschiedenis van *Sheyris Yisroel* sinds 1743 wordt beschreven vanuit het idee van het ‘open boek’: de omgang uit de periode waarin slechts manuscripten bestonden en waarbij kopiïsten nieuwe versies aanpasten aan een nieuw lezerspubliek. De analyse van de transmissie van *Sheyris Yisroel* laat zien dat die middeleeuwse omgang met teksten ook in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw nog volop werd toegepast in de Asjkenazische wereld. Het boek werd drie keer vertaald in het Hebreeuws, een keer vanuit het Hebreeuws terugvertaald naar het Jiddisch, verscheen in het Nederlands en kende in totaal na 1743 minimaal 12 Jiddische, 15 Hebreeuwse en 1 Nederlandse drukken. De inhoud kon per druk verschillen. Er werden hoofdstukken uit verwijderd die voor een nieuw publiek niet interessant genoeg werden gevonden, terwijl er ook nieuwe informatie aan werd toegevoegd. De functie van het boek veranderde ondertussen aanzien: waar Amelander met z’n keuze voor het Jiddisch een nieuwe richting insloeg, werd het boek in het Hebreeuws opgenomen in de klassieke ‘canon’ van joodse historiografie, terwijl het vervolgens – met de opkomst van de moderne geschiedschrijving – een specimen werd van traditionele, orthodoxe geschiedschrijving. De twee laatste edities uit Jeruzalem (1964 en 1988) komen uit de ultra-orthodoxe hoek, waar *Sheyris Yisroel* nog altijd als een betrouwbaar handboek voor joodse geschiedenis wordt gezien.

Het corpus aan Amsterdamse Jiddische geschiedschrijving wilde geen breuk met de bestaande, Hebreeuwse geschiedschrijving bewerken, maar beoogde juist continuïteit. In geschiedvisie en methodologie werd naar de bestaande tradities gekeken. In de praktische uitvoering blijken de Amsterdamse historici echter nieuwe wegen in te slaan: hun keuze voor het Jiddisch was meer dan slechts een taalkeuze, maar verried een bewust idee om geschiedenis

voor een breder publiek te schrijven. De grote betekenis van Amelander was dat hij binnen de joodse geschiedschrijving de eerste was die een grote, universele joodse geschiedenis schreef, daarbij het werk van Basnage spiegelend. De chroniqueurs die na hem kwamen onderscheidden zich door een sterke politieke focus en een duidelijk engagement met Amsterdam en de Nederlandse Republiek. Vanaf de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw bevond *Sheyris Yisroel* zich, tenslotte, in een specifieke joodse historiografische 'canon', die een groot publiek bleef trekken tot in de twintigste eeuw. Dat gebeurde in de schaduw van de *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, maar was voor de ontwikkeling van het historisch besef in de Asjkenazische wereld van beslist niet minder belang.

Appendix 1: The development of illustrations in the Yiddish *Yosippon* editions, 1546-1743

	Illustration	Zürich 1546	Amster- dam 1661	Frankfurt a.M. 1708	Amsterdam 1743	Source
1	Head of King Belshazzar	x	x	x	x (black and white tiles)	Holbein, Saul conquered by the Philistines, Icones, I Paralib. X
2a	King Darius	x	x		x	
2b	King Darius			x		
3	Daniel in the lion's cave	x	x	x	x	Holbein, Daniel in the lion's cave, Icones, Danielis XIII (mirrored)
4a	Samson and the lion	x	x		x (fused together with 5a)	Compositional scheme as Albrecht Dürer, Samson tötet den Löwen 1496-7
4b	Samson and the lion			x		
5a	Samson and Delilah	x	x		x (fused together with 4a)	
5b	Samson and Delilah			x		
6	Return from Babylon	x	x	x (with considerable changes)	x	Holbein, Icones, I Esdrae I (mirrored)
7	King Cyrus	x	x	x (mirrored)	x	Stumpf, Gemeiner., Brustbildnis eines Königs in Rüstung mit Krone, Szepter und umgürtetem Schwert
8a	Queen Tomyris with the head of king Cyrus	x	x (decoration dress disappeared)		x (as Amsterdam 1661 but second woman turned into a man)	Holbein, Judith with the head of Holofermus, Icones, Judith XIII
8b	Queen Tomyris with the head of			x		

	king Cyrus					
9a	Esther before Ahasuerus	x	x (decoration throne disappeared)		x (as Amsterdam 1661 but throne has more relief, and the floor has black and white tiles)	Holbein, Icones, Esther I & II (mirrored)
9b	Esther before Ahasuerus			x		
10	Sanballat working on his temple	x	x (simplified, no birds and clouds in the air, less people)		x (as Amsterdam 1661, but the tower has got bricks in the top)	Stumpf, the city Victory (according to Smeruk); Strumpf must have copied: Holbein, Tower of Babel (with bricks in the top!, but also clouds and birds)
11a	King Nectanebo II	x	x		x	Stumpf, Gemeiner., Brustbildnis eines langbärtigen Fürsten mit breitkrepigem Hut, Krone und Szepter in Rüstung (in Josippon scepter removed)
11b	King Nectanebo II			x		
12a	King Philip	x	x			
12b	King Philip			x		
12c	King Philip				x (the same as 2a)	
13a	Alexander the Great	x	x			
13b	Alexander the Great			x		
14a	Alexander the Great	x	x (decoration of the pillars disappeared)		x (less refined)	
14b	Alexander the			x (the same		

	Great			as 2a and 12c)		
15	The wild man	x	x		x	Stumpf, Hercules Alemannus
16a	Landscape Smidmim with mountains	x	x			
16b	The city Smidmim with mountains			x		
17a	Emperor Antonius	x	x		x (but head not longer with black background; Hebrew name not in Ashkenazi cursive but in quadrate letters; pillars en decoration disappeared)	Stumpf, Antonius
17b	Emperor Antonius			x		
18	Aliorus	x	x	x (but mirrored)	x	Stumpf, Gemeiner..., Brustbildnis eines bärtigen Fürsten mit geschultertem Szepter in Rüstung
19	King Talmi (Ptolemy)	x	x	x (but mirrored)	x	Stumpf, Luther
20	Meal			x		
21a	Talmi allows the Jews to return to Jerusalem	x	x			
21b	Talmi allows the Jews to return to Jerusalem				x (same as 6)	Holbein, Icones, I Esdrae I (mirrored)
22a	Miraculous images above Jerusalem	x	x		x	Holbein, Icones, II. Machab. V
22b	Miraculous images above Jerusalem			x		
23	Philip the evil	x	x	x	x	

	one			(mirrored)		
24	People around a table			x		
25	Hannah and her seven sons	x	x		x	Compositorial scheme as Augustin Hirschvogel, Hanna und ihre sieben Söhne, Vienna 1549
26a	War between the Jews and the Greeks	x	x		x	
26b	War between the Jews and the Greeks			x		Holbein, Icones, Numeri XVI (mirrored)
27a	King Anibal	x	x			
27b	King Anibal			x (same as 2a, 12c and 14b)		
27c	King Anibal				x (same as 18)	Stumpf, Gemeiner..., Brustbildnis eines bärtigen Fürsten mit geschultertem Szepter in Rüstung
28	Head above city	x	x	x (the city and the soldiers changed, gate added)	x (a different gate added, city wall now partly build up of bricks)	
29a	The young spy	x	x	x (mirrored)		
29b	The young spy				x (the same as 2a, 12c, 14b and 27b)	
30	Angel above Jerusalem	x	x	x	x	Stumpf, Emperor Heinrich battling in the Alsace; composition after Holbein, Icones, II. Paralib. XXXII
31a	Hyrchanus kneeling for the ark	x	x		x	Holbein, Icones, II Paralib. I (Salomon praying in the temple)
31b	Hyrchanus			x (the same as 29a)		

32	King lying before city wall			x		
33a	Antigonus battled by his brother Aristobulos	x	x		x (church tower added, crown disappeared)	Holbein, Adoni Bezek tortured (Judges 1,6)
33b	Antigonus (portrait)			x (same as 23)		
34	Battle of Antigonus			x		
35	Queen Alexandra			x		
36a	Pompeius	x	x		x (considerable changes, face revealed)	Stumpf, Gemeiner..., Brustbildnis eines Fürsten in Rüstung mit Helm und Szepter im Profil nach links (mirrored)
36b	Pompeius			x (same as 2b)		
37a	Battle Alexander	x (same as 26a)	x (idem)		x (idem)	
37b	Battle Alexander			x		
38a	Emperor Julius Caesar	x	x (but more soberly decorated)			
38b	Emperor Julius Caesar			x		
38c	Emperor Julius Caesar				x (same as 40a; but black background removed; bricks)	
39	Commander in Pompeius' army			x		
40a	Emperor Augustus	x	x (more soberly decorated; bricks)			
40b	Emperor Augustus			x		

41	Kamius			x		
42a	Emperor Antonius	x (same as 17a)	x (idem; more soberly decorated)			Stumpf, Antonius
42b	Emperor Antonius			x		
43a	Siege of Jerusalem	x	x		x	
43b	Siege of Jerusalem			x		
44a	Hyrchanus before Herod	x	x		x	Compositional scheme as Holbein, Icones, II. Sam. XIV
44b	Hyrchanus before Herod			x		
45a	Escape via coffin of Alexandra and Aristobulos	x	x		x (with additions)	
45b	Escape via coffin of Alexandra and Aristobulos			x		
46a	Emperor Antonius	x (same as 17a and 42a)	x (idem)		x (idem; without black background; much more sober, no pillars and decoration)	Stumpf, Antonius
46b	Emperor Antonius			x		
47a	Storm in Judah	x	x			
47b	Storm in Judah			x		
48a	Queen Mariamne led out of Jerusalem	x	x		x	Adaptation of Holbein, Icones, Numeri XXXI (mirrored, Moses removed, focused on the scene with the lady, and soldiers added)
48b	Queen Mariamne led out of			x		Holbein, Icones, Numeri XXXI (mirrored)

	Jerusalem					
49a	Pillars in the Temple	x	x		X (side decorations removed; black and white tiles in the floor; pillars not blank but richly decorated; houses added in the background)	
49b	Pillars in the Temple			x		
50a	The Temple	x	x		x (side decorations removed; walls from bricks)	
50b	The Temple			x		
51	Priests, Levites and others in the Temple	x	x	x	x	Holbein, Icones, I. Paralib. XVI
52a	King Arbulios	x	x (decoration on the clothing removed)			
52b	King Arbulios			x		
52c	King Arbulios				x (same as 7)	Stumpf, Gemeiner., Brustbildnis eines Königs in Rüstung mit Krone, Szepter und umgürtetem Schwert
53a	The death of Absalom	x	x	x (side decoration removed)		
53b	The death of Absalom				x	Sebald Beham, Biblicae Historiae, Tod Absaloms (mirrored; buildings added)
54a	Emperor	x	x		x (simplified;	

	Tiberius				no black background; sober decoration; text around the head removed)	
54b	Emperor Tiberius			x		
55a	Emperor Gaius	x	x			
55b	Emperor Gaius			x		
55c	Emperor Gaius				x (same as 38c)	
56a	Emperor Valerianus	x	x		x (strongly simplified; no black background; sober decoration; text around the head removed)	
56b	Emperor Valerianus			x		
57a	Pharisees killing a man	x	x			Holbein, Joav kills Amaza
57b	Pharisees killing a man			x		
58a	Battle between Pharisees and heroes of Agrippa	x	x		x (strongly simplified)	
58b	Battle between Pharisees and heroes of Agrippa			x		
59a	Emperor Nero	x	x			
59b	Emperor Nero			x (same as 42b)		
59c	Emperor Nero				x (same as 56a)	
60a	Vespanianus' army	x	x		x	The right half of: Stumpf, Cimbrian war (see for other half 73a)
60b	Vespanianus' army			x		Holbein, Icones, Numeri XVI
61	Hanging battering-ram	x	x	x	x	

62a	Riding battering-ram	x	x		x	
62a	Riding battering-ram			x		
63a	Siege of the city Yodfat	x (same as 43a)	x (idem)		x (idem)	
63b	Siege of the city Yodfat			x (same as 6)		
64	King Agrippa			x (same as 41)		
65a	Siege of the city Seleucia	x (same as, 43a and 63a)	x (idem)		x (idem)	
65b	Siege of the city Seleucia			x (same as 16b)		
66a	Battle near the Jordan	x	x		x (with some changes, cross next to crescent)	Holbein, Icones, Exodi XIV & XV
66b	Battle near the Jordan			x		
67a	Emperor Vitellius	x	x			
67b	Emperor Vitellius			x (same as 54b)		
67c	Emperor Vitellius				x	
68a	Emperor Vespasianus	x	x			
68b	Emperor Vespasianus			x (same as 56b)		
68c	Emperor Vespasianus				x (same as 56a and 59c)	
69	Titus			x		
70a	Titus and his army	x (same as 60a)	x (idem)		x (idem)	The right half of: Stumpf, Cimbrian war (see for other half 73a)
70b	Titus and his army			x (same as 26b)		Holbein, Icones, Numeri XVI (mirrored)
71	The conquest of Jericho	x	x	x (no decorations)	x (no decorations; mirrored and changed significantly)	Compositional scheme as Sebald Beham, Eroberung Jerichos, Frankfurt a.M. 1537
72a	Battle between	x	x		x	Compositional

	Israel and Amalek					scheme as Augustin Hirschvogel, Vienna 1547
72b	Battle between Israel and Amalek			x (same as 66b)		
73a	Battle between the Jews and the Romans	x	x		x	The left half of: Stumpf, Cimbrian war (see for other half 60a and 70a)
73b	Battle between the Jews and the Romans			x (same as 34)		
74a	Battle between Elazar and the Romans	x (same as 26a and 37a)	x (idem)		x (idem)	
74b	Battle between Elazar and the Romans			x		
75a	Titus	x	x			Stumpf, Titus
75b	Titus			x (same as 69)		
75c	Titus				x	

Appendix 2: Chronicle fragments, *Menahem Zion* (Amsterdam 1760)

Fragment 1 – opposite the title page

זה הותך ועשוי לזכרון בשנת תקכ"ו לפ"ק ביום ש"ק [שבת קודש] כז' אדר ולמספרם ח' מערץ בשנת 1766

איז ווילעם דער פֿיפֿדי פֿרינג ח"י שנים אלט גווארדן דא האבן מיר אונש
משמח גוועזין אין אלי שולין אונ' האבין דיא קרונין אויף גצונדין אום
דרייא אויר אונ' אדוננו מוריננו ורבינו מה'ור שואל נר"ו האט גדרשנת
דער נאך האבן מיר איין זמר גזונגין דיא ער האט גמאכט בגינט מיט אראניע
אישי י"י ונחלתו אונ' דש האט גדערט ביז נאכט דער נאכ' בשק" אום ח' אויער
האט מן ליכטר אן גיצונדען אין אלי גאסין הייזר קאמרין זאלדרז קעלדרש
זיין פֿיל רארי טייטין גזעהן גווארן פון ליכטר גמאכט הייזר קאשטעלן
שטערנז שלאנגין אלר לייא בלומן מן האט גקענט איין פעלד פון דיא
גאס אויף נעמן
ג' ניסן איז פו"מ ר' מרדכי ראט ופו"מ ר' מאהרים מארשין גאנגין מיט איין קוטש מיט
פֿיר פֿערד נאך דען האג אונ' העבן גבראכט איין מתנה לאדונינו הפרינג
ירום הודו אונ זיין דא גבליבן איבר שבת עד יום א.

Willem prins
Van oranie

Translation

This is put on paper as a memory in the year 5526 on the holy Shabbat 27 Adar and according to their counting 8 March 1766

William V became 18 years, therefore we
rejoiced in all our synagogues and we have lighted the chandeliers
at three o' clock and our lord, our master and rabbi Shaul, may he live long, preached
thereafter we sung a song made by him, starting with 'Orange
man of the Lord and his inheritance' and it lasted until night, at eight o' clock there was a noise

all the lights were lit, in the streets, houses, rooms, attics, basements
there were many curiosities to be seen made with lights: houses, castles
stars, snakes, all kinds of flowers, someone could have taken
a whole field of them from the street

On 3 Nisan parnas u-manhig R. Mordechai Rat and parnas u-manhig R. Maharim Maarsen
went by carriage

With four horses to The Hague and have brought a present to our lord, the Prince
The most mighty, and they stayed there over Shabbat until Sunday.

Willem prins

Van oranie

Fragment 2 – first page after the title page

הי' י' לילה י"ג טבת שנת תקלט איז איין שוועהרי אום וועטיר גוועזן אלז
בייא מענשין גדענקין עז גלייכן ניט איז גוועזן פֿיר אודר פֿינף מאהל
האט עז גבליצט זעהר שטערק אלש ממש דש פֿיאר איז אויף דר ערט
גפאלין צווישן פֿינף און 'הלבר זעקס איז איין שווערה בליץ און' דרויף
איין דונדר קומין אלז ממש דיא בתים גציטרט העבן און' בוישן זיין דא
פֿון ב' הייזר מיט איין מול אין דיא בראנט גאנגין השי' ישמרות ויציל עמו
ישראל אמן ובעת הזאת היתה למספרם אקוראהט שנה חדשה 1779

Translation

... Evening of 13 Teveth of the year 5539 there was a severe thunderstorm as
Had not happened since time immemorial, four or five times
Lightened struck very strongly until the fire really hit the earth.
Between five and halve past five there was a strong lightening and thereafter
A came a thunder that really shook the houses and outside
Two houses were set alight at once. The Lord will protect us and help his people
Israel, Amen, and at the time it was precisely according to their counting New Year 1779.

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