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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 Yisroel*, 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

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[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 Yosippon* - 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 contuing 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 detacted.

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 exeption 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 Meditteranean 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 Yehudah* 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 Yudisher literature un presse* (Warschau 1914) 58-59; Max Erik, *Di geshikhte fun der yidisher 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 Yisher 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 Yidisher literaturgeshikhte, fun di onhaybn biz Mendele Moykher-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 verstrooiing 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 Hebraïschen 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 Yisroel*. 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 Josiphon (…) 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 Turniansky 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 Israëlietische 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

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[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 Amstelodamum* 48, 113-171; and in Yiddish: ל. פוקס, 'די יידישע כראָניק פון אברהם־חיים ברַאַטבאַרד פון אַמסטערדאַם (1740-1752)' פּנקס פֿאַר דער פֿאָרשונג פֿון דער יִידישער ליטעראַטור און פּרעסע 3 (ניו־יאָרק 1975) 221-248.

[30] Prinz: Meijer M. Roest, 'Een Kronijkje van de jaren 1787-1788' *Israëlietische Letterbode* I (1875) Vols. 2-6; Wing: Meijer M. Roest, 'Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795-1812' *De Israëlietische 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 Turrets 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 historal 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 Jiddisj. Taalkundige aspecten van het achttiende-eeuws Nederlands Jiddisj.* (Delft 2003). For a review, see: Evi Butzer: Rezension zu: *Zwiers, Ariane: Kroniek van het Jiddisj. 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* (Berkely 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 Yisroel* 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 Avriel 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 eight 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 continuating 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 editon: 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

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[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 laballed *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 Poiron 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

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[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.