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Links in a chain: Early modern Yiddish historiography in the northern Netherlands (1743-1812)

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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" / "Livraría 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: *Selibot 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 Moshe 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 Christians 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 nominalism, 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 Abridging 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 *Vervolg*, 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.