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8. Transmission of a history book. The second life of *Sheyris Yisroel* (1767-1988)

8.1 Jewish historiography and the open book tradition

The success of *Sheyris Yisroel* is evidenced not only by the successor chronicles in Amsterdam and Nikolsburg, but also by the significant number of editions following the first one of 1743. In total *Sheyris Yisroel* was printed again at least 26 times, including nine times in Yiddish, sixteen times in Hebrew and once in Dutch. The second edition was released in 1767; the most recent was published in 1988. In between lies the fascinating and dynamic history of the transmission of an Amsterdam Yiddish history book, a history during which the book's role changed as the times evolved. In analyzing the various editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* we encounter a continuing Jewish historical consciousness. This consciousness, however, operated mainly in the shadow of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and has thus been largely overlooked in historiography.

The study of the editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* is also worthwhile from another perspective. Over the course of time editors and publishers modified the contents of the Amsterdam history book, often erasing chapters and passages, and sometimes adding new elements. This process partly fits with the successor tradition described in the previous chapter, which invited new editors to update the history book until their own times. But the reworking of the book in order to adapt it to new audiences, and therefore the inclusion as well as removal of contents, fits into a larger Jewish tradition of transmitting manuscripts and books. This tradition, labeled by Israel Ta-Shma as the 'open book tradition', is generally studied within the context of medieval manuscript culture yet merits further inquiries as to its continuation in early modern and modern periods.⁸²⁷ This chapter endeavors to offer a contribution to this field of research.

Every student of medieval book history is familiar with the fact that for one book there often exists a wide variety of manuscripts which may differ both linguistically and qua contents. Sometimes it is practically impossible to decide which served as the *Urquelle*. These differences are partly attributable to the process of copying texts, via which unintended but different readings frequently came into existence. However, Ta-Shmna has argued that there

⁸²⁷ Israel Ta-Shma, 'The 'open book' in medieval Hebrew literature: the problem of authorized editions' in: Philip S. Alexander and Alexander Samely eds., *Artefact and text: the re-creation of Jewish literature in medieval Hebrew manuscripts* [Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester 75 (1993) 3] 17-24.

also existed a process of willing and knowing modification of contents. This was directly related to the fact that many books were intended by their authors to be works in progress that presented an interim state of knowledge. The authors themselves often reworked their books during their lifetimes, thus being themselves a source of different manuscripts. After an author's death, students and new generations of scholars continued working on his books, thereby creating an ongoing process of reworking and re-editing the original manuscript. Other books, even when delivered by their authors as finished and concluded, were opened up and modified to new insights and circumstances by subsequent generations. This manuscript culture was characteristic of intellectual life throughout Europe. In the Ashkenazi context it was mainly stimulated through the yeshivot, where manuscripts were used to teach new generations, and where both teachers and students adapted manuscripts to contemporary Jewish culture.⁸²⁸

The invention of the printing press had tremendous influence on Jewish culture and was often described as a printing revolution.⁸²⁹ Jews soon made the shift from manuscripts to books, both for Hebrew and Yiddish texts, and experienced the revolutionary effects of this shift. Manuscripts which in medieval times had been distributed only among small numbers of people belonging to the religious elite and often only in specific geographical realms were now, as printed books, suddenly available to much larger audiences and across geographical divides. Sephardic literature entered the Ashkenazi domain with great effect, introducing philosophy, Hebrew grammar and different halakhic approaches.

The shift to the printed book also changed the status of books, which as manuscripts had still been considered open to emendations and additions. The printing of books fixed their contents and created authoritative texts. However, Elhanan Reiner has argued that in the early modern period the printed Ashkenazi halakhic book retained certain features of the medieval tradition of knowledge transmission. Through a continuing process of adding glosses and comments Ashkenazi scholars still engaged with books much as they had with manuscripts, resulting in different printed editions of the same text. This process, explained by Reiner as being a means for the rabbinic elite to protect its privileged position, resulted in 'a kind of

⁸²⁸ Ibidem.

⁸²⁹ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The printing revolution in early modern Europe* (Cambridge 1983).

printed manuscript, that is, a text which, in the way it took shape, rejected the new communicative values of print culture and created a text with esoteric components'.⁸³⁰

This continuation of the 'open book tradition' not only affected halakhic books which needed constant adaptation to changing conditions, but also historiography, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate. Historiography, like halakhah, has by its nature an open character, since history does not cease to continue from the moment of a book's (temporary) conclusion. Geography is another factor of importance for both halakhah and historiography, for just as halakhah varies from territory to territory, so too do the histories of various Jewish communities. 'Printed manuscripts' could thus also be adapted to new geographical conditions.

There is one important precondition for the functioning of the 'open book tradition'. The book should be considered not as the exclusive property of the author or initial publisher, but rather as a piece of shared heritage to a much wider community. The author is only instrumental in writing the first edition; thereafter the book belongs to its new readers, new editors and new publishers, all of whom are free to interpret and rework the book according to their wishes. The modern idea of authorial intention is absent in medieval manuscript culture, as it is in its early modern and even modern continuation in the 'open book tradition'.

This chapter aims to interpret the editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* since 1743 as an example of a 'printed manuscript', which, as shared Ashkenazi heritage, was adapted over time to new reading audiences and new geographical locations. The various editions, which partly react to each other, can moreover be read as a debate about whom *Sheyris Yisroel* actually belong to and what it precisely stands for. This chapter will study the 'canonization' of *Sheyris Yisroel* in the eighteenth century, the Eastern European *Sheyris Yisroel* and its position between Haskalah and nascent Orthodoxy, the Dutch edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* and its relation with German *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and finally the twentieth-century Orthodox appropriation and scholarly historicization of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

8.2 The canonization of *Sheyris Yisroel*

The first phase in the transmission history of *Sheyris Yisroel* occurred in the eighteenth century. When *Sheyris Yisroel* was published together with *Yosippon* in 1743, the Amsterdam chief rabbi Aryeh Leib in his 'haskama' (endorsement) gave the publishers (the previously mentioned three

⁸³⁰ Elhanan Reiner, 'The Ashkenazi Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book' *Polin* 10 (1997), 85-98, there 98.

brothers) a monopoly on the books for four years, forbidding anyone else to reprint them during this period.⁸³¹ Four years was not long; another printer could republish the books already in 1747 (or even in 1746, since the 'haskama' was dated 1742), although this did not happen. Apparently the publishers had printed enough copies to meet demand for quite some time.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the book was republished at least five times, each time in Western and Central Europe.⁸³² Two editions were published in Fürth, the South German center of Jewish printing, at the presses of Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch, in 1767 and 1771 respectively. In Amsterdam Kosman ben Josef Baruch issued a new and updated edition in 1771. Thereafter the printing of *Sheyris Yisroel* moved eastwards, to Nowy Dwór (Neuhof near Warsaw), where an edition was printed in 1785, and to Silesian Dyhernfurth (today's Brzeg Dolny), where an edition was published in 1799. Each of these editions testifies to the growing popularity of *Sheyris Yisroel* among the Ashkenazi reading public. A further analysis of these editions reveals this more clearly.

First, the geography of *Sheyris Yisroel* editions in the eighteenth century gives a good understanding of the then current map of Jewish printing. The book was also printed by well-known firms which, being embedded within large commercial networks, sought to sell their publications throughout Ashkenaz. The Fürth printing firm of Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch – also known as Hayim Madfis, or Hayim the printer – was established in 1737 and printed between 80-100 Hebrew and Yiddish works by Hirsch's death, in 1772.⁸³³ The Amsterdam firm of

⁸³¹ Amelander, *SY*, i.

⁸³² Bernhard Friedberg, *Beth ekeed sefarim* (Antwerp 1928-1931), has two more editions, both printed in Fürth, respectively from 1751 and 1757, whose existence I was not able to positively verify. Not only are there are no copies of these editions available in any of the main Hebrew and Yiddish libraries, but the *haskamot* in the Fürth 1767 edition refer only to the Amsterdam edition and not to any earlier editions printed in Fürth, which makes it highly unlikely that these editions were ever printed. Yeshayahu Winograd, *Thesaurus of the Hebrew book. Listing of books printed in Hebrew letters since the beginning of Hebrew printing ca. 1469 through 1863* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 1993), gives an edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* from 1741, which is surely a mistake, as the *haskama* of Aryeh Leib Löwenstamm is dated a year later, 1742, at the start of the printing project of *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*. Most likely, Winograd copied this from Julius Fürst in his *Bibliotheca Judaica. Bibliographisches Handbuch umfassend die Druckwerke der jüdischen Literatur II* (Leipzig 1863) 320, who as well gives two more editions, one from Sulzbach, and a Hebrew translation from Zólkiew, both published in the eighteenth century, but not dated more precisely. The existence of these editions could not be positively identified, and most likely never existed. All evidence suggests that the Lemberg 1804 edition is the first Hebrew translation, as shall be discussed in this chapter. Fürst's mistaken information, however, was taken up by Marcus Meijer Roest (under his pseudonym Chaloeda) in *Navorscher's bijblad* 4 (1854) xxi-xxii and in the introduction to the Dutch edition of 1855, *Se'irith Jisra'el* (Amsterdam 1855) v, which also speaks about a 1761 edition from Fürth. Finally, Haim Gertner counts no less than ten eighteenth-century editions; however, he nowhere substantiates them, thereby indicating that he has followed the lists of editions provided by the authors mentioned above; Haim Gertner, 'Reshita shel ketivah historit orthodoxit bemizrah Europa: he'eracha mehudeshet', *Zion* 67 (2002) 295-336, there 301.

⁸³³ Heller, *Printing the Talmud*, 161-177.

Kosman, a continuation of Naphtali Rofe's printing operation, was, as noted in the previous chapter, an intellectual and rather progressive center within the city's Ashkenazi population.

The 1785 edition was printed by a non-Jewish printer, the German Lutheran Johann Anthon Krieger or Krüger, who ran a firm of four print shops just outside Warsaw in Nowy Dwór. Krieger enjoyed the protection of the Polish king Stanislaw II August Poniatowski and his large printing house served the Jewish communities in Poland – who were at that time unable to own a printing firm. Krieger operated until 1818 and printed no less than 130 books.⁸³⁴

Sheyris Yisroel was also printed in 1799, at the Dyhernfurth printing firm owned by the Mai family. Dyhernfurth was part of Prussia and was home to the Silesian minister Karl Georg Heinrich Count of Hoym (1739-1807), who is mentioned on the title page of *Sheyris Yisroel* as being the beneficent protector of Hebrew and Yiddish printing. The firm was started by Jehiel Michael Mai and was continued after his death, in 1790, by his widow, Rahel, and their sons Michael, Simon, Aron and Joseph. Eventually the firm was run solely by Joseph, an esteemed Talmudic scholar and son-in-law of R. Isaiah Berlin.⁸³⁵ *Sheyris Yisroel* was published by the widow and sons.

Second, all the editions were published together with *Yosippon*, the book to which it had been intended as a sequel. Amelander's plan succeeded: *Sheyris Yisroel* became the inseparable second part of the Yiddish *Yosippon* and in this way was disseminated throughout Ashkenaz. The last eighteenth-century edition, from Dyhernfurth in 1799, was the first (and only) to carry out the original plan. Besides *Yosippon* and *Sheyris Yisroel*, the publishers also printed in the same year a Yiddish *Tam ve-Yashar*. *Yosippon* had, from medieval times, been a fixed part of the canon of Jewish historiographical literature and was joined in early modern times by such works as *Shevet Yehudah* and *Zemah David*; now *Sheyris Yisroel* became, through *Yosippon*, part of the 'canon' of Jewish historiography. Interestingly, *Sheyris Yisroel* was still published only in Yiddish, although this did not hinder its spread throughout the Ashkenazi Diaspora.

⁸³⁴ Emanuel Ringelblum, 'Johann Anton Krieger. Printer of Jewish Books in Nowy Dwór' in: Israel Bartal, Antony Polansky, *Focusing on Galicia: Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians, 1772-1918* [Polin 12] (London 1999) 198-211; which is an English version of a Yiddish original published in *Yivo Bleter* 7 (1934). See as well: Krzysztof Pilarczyk, 'Hebrew printing houses in Poland against the background of their history in the world', *Studia Judaica* 7 (2004) 2, 201-221, there 213. The title page of *Sheyris Yisroel* reads in the Yiddish Johan Anton Krieger, whereas the German introduces the book as: 'Gedruckt in Neuhof bey Warschau, in der Koeniglichen und Republicque privilegirten Druckerey Jüdischer Bücher von Johann Anthon Krüger'. *JY* (Nowy Dwór 1785) title page.

⁸³⁵ Entry in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* on Joseph ben Michael Mai, online: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=77&letter=M> (consulted 16 August 2010).

Third, an important factor in the rapid acceptance of *Sheyris Yisroel* was surely the various ‘haskamot’ recommending the book – always together with *Yosippou* – to the reading public. The ‘haskama’ of Aryeh Leib Löwenstamm, the Amsterdam Ashkenazi chief rabbi, to the first edition expressed rabbinical trust in the book and its contents. The first edition published thereafter, in Fürth in 1767 by the pious Hayim Madfis, added no less than two ‘haskamot’ by prominent Ashkenazi rabbinical authorities. As it was not common to issue new ‘haskamot’ for publications already circulating in print, the new Fürth edition must have been considered a special occasion. The two new ‘haskamot’ were dated 1765, when Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch started his project to print the companion books. The first was issued by the local Fürth rabbi Josef ben Menahem Mendel Steinhardt (ca. 1700-1776), the second by the Karlsruhe rabbi Nathanael ben Naphtali Zvi Weil (1687-1769). Steinhardt was born in Bavaria, but served several Jewish communities in Southern Germany and the Alsace before going to Fürth, which was one of the most important *kehillot* in Germany. There he led a prestigious yeshiva and became a leading halakhic authority, remaining in contact with Amsterdam. His responsa, published as *Zikbron Yosef*, testify to his conservative stand: he forbid mixed dancing, among various other things, and condemned the rise of Hasidism.⁸³⁶ His approbation of *Sheyris Yisroel* must therefore be considered an important indication of the book’s acceptance within the canon of Jewish historiography. It certainly contributed to the work’s continued dissemination throughout Ashkenaz. Steinhardt, moreover, supported the translation of Hebrew classics into Yiddish in order to make them known among the larger Ashkenazi public. He also approved other Yiddish books, including his son’s translation of Bahya ibn Paquda’s *Treatise on the duties of the heart*.⁸³⁷

The other ‘haskama’ was given by R. Nathanael Weil, another well-known eighteenth-century rabbi; he is particularly known in reference to his main work, *Korban Nethanel* (1755). Weil studied at the Fürth yeshiva before going to Prague, where he became a student of R. Abraham ben Saul Broda. He followed Broda to Metz and Frankfurt am Main, returning to Prague after Broda’s death in 1717. In Prague he headed the yeshiva and was active in the city’s rabbinate. There is some possibility that Weil met Amelander there during his yeshiva studies. After the Prague expulsion of Jews in 1745 Weil became chief rabbi of the Black Forest area and from 1750 onwards was chief rabbi of Baden in Karlsruhe. Like Steinhardt, Weil was

⁸³⁶ Eliane Roos-Schuhl, ‘De Joseph Steinhardt, grand rabbin d’Alsace, aux Lévy, père et fils, banquiers’ *Revue du Cercle de Généalogie Juive* 52 (1997) 11-13; Berkovits, *Rites and Passages* 79.

⁸³⁷ André Neher, ‘Copernicus in the Hebraic Literature from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977) 2, 211-226, there 223-224.

known as an able Talmudist and his recommendation of *Sheyris Yisroel* as the second part of *Yosippoon* can be regarded as a sign of the work's acceptance.⁸³⁸ Both 'haskamot' granted the publisher, Hayim ben Zvi Hirsch, a monopoly of ten years for publication of the books.

Fourth, comparison of the eighteenth-century editions with the 1743 original evidences only relatively small changes – with the exception of the 1771 Amsterdam edition. The two Fürth editions are almost nearly exactly similar, the only difference being the title page and year of publication. Compared to the original edition, only the original preface by the Amsterdam publishers and a poem containing an acrostic with Amelander's name (Menahem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi) are omitted. The text is further presented in two columns instead of one; likewise, certain paragraphs are merged and presented as a whole. Compared to the Amsterdam 1743 edition, only the orthography changed: words are sometimes spelled differently, with a tendency to write less *plene* (e.g. *הבן* instead of *האבן*, *די* and *י* instead of *דיא* and *אי*, etc.).⁸³⁹ But since this was not done in a systematic way and since the Amsterdam edition was not consistent in this respect, these changes are not particularly significant for interpreting the transmission history of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The only changes that may be especially significant are where the Fürth editions modify *לען* for the grammatically more correct *לעם*, a possible hint as to the development of Yiddish grammar. Influenced by the German environment might be the change from *זיין* into *זיין*.⁸⁴⁰ On the whole, however, the Fürth editions neatly followed the Amsterdam text.

The Amsterdam 1771 edition, by the same publisher as the original edition, allowed itself more changes. It was printed together with *Yosippoon*, which ended after the last chapter with an announcement that *Sheyris Yisroel* continued from that point forward. Kosman, in his preface to *Sheyris Yisroel*, documents the positive reception the book had received some thirty years earlier, which had come in part because it had been unavailable for so long. Kosman either did not know about the first Fürth edition or, for commercial reasons, simply ignored its existence. However, he decided to answer the requests for a new edition by the *lib habers*, lovers of the book. He left the contents of the book the same and added his own chapter, including some Hebrew poetry he had written in 1766 in honour of the elevation of William V to stadtholder of the Seven United Provinces of the Dutch Republic. Kosman also slightly

⁸³⁸ Carsten Wilke, 'Nathanael Weil' in: *Jüdisches Leben in Baden 1809 bis 2009. 200 Jahre Oberrat der Israeliten Badens* (Ostfildern 2009) 223; Emily C. Rose, *Portraits of our past. Jews of the German countryside* (Philadelphia 2001) 23-25; *Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung Juden in Baden 1809-1984. 175 Jahre Oberrat der Israeliten Badens* (Karlsruhe 1984) 36.

⁸³⁹ See e.g. *Sheyris Yisroel* (Fürth 1771) 79v.

⁸⁴⁰ Both changes are visible in *Sheyris Yisroel* (Fürth 1771) 80r.

modified the typography, and decided to print Hebrew words and names of places, countries and nations in the so-called *otiyot meruba'ot*, square script, to accentuate such terms within the rest of the text, which was set in Ashkenazi cursive.⁸⁴¹

The editions from Nowy Dwór and Dyhernfurth took the Fürth editions as their *Vorlage* and did not use the Amsterdam 1743 and 1771 editions. This is clear from a number of details. They follow the Fürth editions in using two columns instead of one, have the same paragraph structuring and follow the same orthographic changes with regards to the 1743 edition. Moreover, where the Fürth editors made a mistake in Chapter 20, the 1785 and 1799 editions simply follow: whereas Amelander wrote, *אום די יהודים צו איבר וויין*, the following editions have, *אונ' די יהודים צו איבר וויין*.⁸⁴² Decisions made by the Nowy Dwór editor resulted in small differentiations from the Fürth editions, such as removing points to end sentences and thus combining them, being carried over into the Dyhernfurth edition – demonstrating that the 1799 edition was modeled after the one from 1785.⁸⁴³

The two last eighteenth-century editions had more in common and did not include the new Kosman chapter. In comparison to the earlier editions they had even become more sober in their layout and contents. The Nowy Dwór and Dyhernfurth editions removed the *haskamot* and prefaces, and commenced immediately with the text. Apparently *Sheyris Yisroel* was already so well known that it needed no further recommendations from rabbis or any defense from the author for writing such a history. All editions until 1785 still included on their title pages the propaganda rhyme that had been written for the 1743 edition. Only in the 1799 edition did a new one appear, which was used for both *Yosippson* and *Sheyris Yisroel*; this new poem concentrating on the improvement done to *Yosippson* which updated, for the first time since the 1743 edition, the work's language and added new pictures.⁸⁴⁴ The language of *Sheyris Yisroel* remained, however, unchanged and resembled the earlier 1785 edition.

To conclude, the eighteenth-century editions of *Sheyris Yisroel*, published together with the Yiddish *Yosippson* and endorsed by no less than three *haskamot* from leading Ashkenazi rabbinical authorities, show a clear trend of growing acceptance into the canon of Jewish

⁸⁴¹ *Sheyris Yisroel* (Amsterdam 1771) preface; poems on 147v-148r; *Yosippson* (Amsterdam 1771) preface.

⁸⁴² See the first paragraph of Chapter 20 in the 1743, 1767, 1771, 1785 and 1799 editions.

⁸⁴³ Compare e.g. the first sentences of Chapter 30 in the several editions, showing that only in 1785 and 1799 after *אונ' מיסניא* the sentence does not end but continues without dot with *אבר די לנד גרבן*. See: *Sheyris Yisroel* (Fürth 1771) 79v; idem (Nowy Dwór 1785) 78r; and: idem (Dyhernfurth 1799) 52r.

⁸⁴⁴ The images are indeed different from the ones used for the 1743 edition (which were re-used in the Fürth editions), but also from those used in the Frankfurt version of *Yosippson*. Some resemble this second image catalogue, but many are used for the first time and are not especially charming artistically.

historiographical literature. The book's publishing shifted from Western to Central Europe, following trends in the Hebrew and Yiddish publishing industry. The changes within the editions remain rather small, being primarily orthographic and typographic, with only the original Amsterdam publisher updating the book freely. The tendency towards editions without *haskamot* and introductions shows, moreover, that at the end of the eighteenth century *Sheyris Yisroel* no longer needed any introduction. This could explain why in the late eighteenth-century Amsterdam series of polemical pamphlets, known as the *Diskursn*, which were exchanged between adherents and opponents of political emancipation of Jews, *Sheyris Yisroel* is invoked without introduction by one of the literary characters.⁸⁴⁵ Amsterdam Ashkenazim apparently were considered familiar with the work, as must have been many more Ashkenazim throughout Europe.

8.3 The Eastern European Sheyris Yisroel: Between Haskalah and Orthodoxy

The nineteenth century can be called in every respect the golden age of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The book was translated into Hebrew and Dutch, reprinted many times and distributed widely throughout the Ashkenazi world. In the meantime the book and its status underwent major changes related to religious and cultural developments within Ashkenazi Jewry. The 'open book tradition' enabled nineteenth-century Jews to 'open' *Sheyris Yisroel* and adapt it to new audiences.

The history of the nineteenth-century *Sheyris Yisroel* reveals an often neglected chapter within Jewish historiography. Traditionally, research has focused on the mainly German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and historiography produced by scholars like Jost, Zunz, Steinschneider and Graetz. These scholars used the new methodologies of historicism for critical yet engaged examination of the Jewish past and were active in editing new critical and annotated editions of Hebrew classics.⁸⁴⁶ However, research by Shmuel Feiner has shown that in the preceding and partly contemporary Haskalah movement history played an important role, although not within the historicist paradigm. Historical consciousness was of vital

⁸⁴⁵ Joseph Michman and Marion Aptroot eds., *Storm in the community. Yiddish polemical pamphlets of Amsterdam Jewry 1797-1798* (Cincinnati 2002) 268-269. The popularity of *Sheyris Yisroel* is also testified to by the fact that it was omnipresent in Jewish libraries, as demonstrated by the catalogues of book auctions; Irene Zwiep, 'Jewish Enlightenment reconsidered: the Dutch eighteenth century' in: Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz and Irene Zwiep eds., *Sepharad in Ashkenaz. Medieval knowledge and eighteenth-century enlightened Jewish discourse* (Amsterdam 2007) 279-309, there 299.

⁸⁴⁶ For a short survey: Michael A. Meyer, 'The emergence of Jewish historiography: motives and motifs', *History and Theory* 27 (1988) 4, 160-175.

importance to the maskilim in their redefinition of Jewish identity, though they did not produce concrete historiography.⁸⁴⁷ Feiner thus distinguished between three major tracks within nineteenth-century Jewish historiography: the critical *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholarship, the Eastern European maskilic historical production, and the traditional-canonical historiography.⁸⁴⁸

Haim Gertner, in his pioneering research on this third track, has interpreted the republications of old historical publications, such as *Yosippson*, *Zemah David* and *Sheyris Yisroel*, as having been not only mere reprints but also ‘a new form of Orthodox history writing, an epigonic form’.⁸⁴⁹ They were the result of historical curiosity yet were also a deliberate ideological reaction to the first two tracks, namely *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholarship and Eastern European maskilic historiography. These two tracks posed difficult and critical questions to the traditional idea of history, and through republications nascent Orthodoxy responded to this threat by repeating the canonical rabbinic interpretations. Gertner has also showed that the traditional books were consciously adapted to a specific audience through introductions, *haskamot*, notes and additions, and that they consequently became more important within the whole of rabbinic literature.⁸⁵⁰

The story of the nineteenth-century *Sheyris Yisroel* fits neatly into the so-called third track. As it had become in the second half of the eighteenth century an integral part of traditional Jewish historiography, *Sheyris Yisroel* shared the fate of *Yosippson*, *Shalsholet ha-qabbalah*, *Shevet Yebudah* and *Zemah David*. However, at the beginning of the century there was one marked difference: *Sheyris Yisroel* was still only available in the Yiddish original. The translation into Hebrew was, therefore, of crucial importance to the further spread of the book. In the nineteenth century there were considerably more Hebrew editions than Yiddish: thirteen and three, respectively.⁸⁵¹ We will first consider the Hebrew editions.

⁸⁴⁷ Louise Hecht in her dissertation has interpreted the maskil Peter Beer, together with other Bohemians like Jeitteles, Löwisohn and Fischer, as a ‘Zwischenstufe in Feiners dichotomischer Einleitung zwischen Haskala and Wissenschaft’, because of their practical historical research, although they were not interested in a new philosophy of Jewish history. Louise Hecht, *An intellectual biography of the maskil Peter Beer (1758-1838). His role in the formation of modern Jewish historiography and education in Bohemia* [Ph.D. Hebrew University Jerusalem, 2002] 15, 395-396.

⁸⁴⁸ Shmuel Feiner, ‘Nineteenth-century Jewish historiography: the second track’, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (1994) 17-44.

⁸⁴⁹ Haim Gertner, ‘Epigonism and the beginning of Orthodox historical writing in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe’, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 40 (2007-2008) 217-229, there 219.

⁸⁵⁰ Gertner, ‘Epigonism’, 224-226.

⁸⁵¹ Different numbers of given by: Gertner, ‘Ketiva historit ortodoksit’, 301, 324, who counts 16 editions, without further specifications. Friedberg mentions, besides those listed, editions from Zhitomir 1853, Warsaw 1875 and Lemberg 1882. I have, however, been unable to trace copies of these editions. Friedberg, *Beth eked sefarim* 2, 421.

As the following table shows, *Sheyris Yisroel* made a complete shift from Western Europe to Eastern Europe. As the centers of Hebrew and Yiddish publishing moved from Amsterdam, Fürth, Sulzbach and Prague to Vilna, Lemberg (Lvov), Zhitomir and Warsaw, *Sheyris Yisroel* did likewise. In Western Europe, including the Netherlands, a steadily growing segment of the Jewish population turned to the vernacular, whereas the vast majority of the Hebrew and Yiddish-reading public was found in Eastern Europe. This transfer from Western to Eastern Europe also affected *Sheyris Yisroel*, which was reinvented as an Eastern European Jewish work, as will be shown hereafter.

Hebrew editions of Sheyris Yisroel in the nineteenth century

Publisher	Place of publication	Year of publication
Shlomo Yarris Rapaport	Lemberg	1804
Menahem Man ben R. Baruch Romm	Vilna	1811
David Shklover	Warsaw	1839
Chave Grosmann	Lemberg	1846
Michael Franz Poremba	Lemberg	1852
Aryeh Leib Shapira	Zhitomir	1858
	[Amsterdam]	18??
	[Amsterdam]	18??
Michael Franz Poremba	Lemberg	1864
Yitschak Moshe Baksht	Zhitomir	1873
J.M. Ehrenpreis	Lemberg	1874
Hayim ben Elkana Kelter	Warsaw	1874
Nathan Shriftgiser	Warsaw	1879

Three major developments characterize the *Werdegang* of *Sheyris Yisroel* in the nineteenth century in Eastern Europe: translation into Hebrew, the book's adaptation to new audiences, and the debate between maskilim and Orthodox publishers over the character of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

The first Hebrew edition was published in 1804 at the Lemberg printing firm of Shlomo (Yarish) Rapaport, who was known as a pious Jew and who owned one of the then

several Jewish printing houses in the Galician capital.⁸⁵² The first change as compared to the eighteenth-century editions is that for the first time *Sheyris Yisroel* was printed as the main title; the previously prominently emphasized information about the book being the second volume of *Yosippson* was now presented in subtitle. Furthermore, the name of the author – Amelander – disappeared from the title page and is not mentioned anywhere else in the book. Nor are the names of the translator and editor mentioned. Only on the final page are the personnel of the printing firm revealed: Yitshak ben Zvi Hirsh, Naphtali Hirts ben Yosef Margalio and Nisan ben Mordehai. The whole presentation of this Hebrew edition expresses that *Sheyris Yisroel* had become shared Ashkenazi heritage, a heritage which was no longer controlled or owned by the author, his relatives or the original publisher.

Unfortunately, this first Hebrew edition is presented rather soberly. There is no introduction or statement from the publisher expressing why the book had been translated, nor did Rapaport request rabbinical approbation. Only on the title page is information presented about this translation project; it is stated that this lovely book had not been published previously in the holy tongue, but had meanwhile become very popular in Yiddish among the masses (כי אם בלשון אשכנז ומגודל תשוקת המון). Because of its importance, the book had now been translated, with much hard work, into clear and pure Hebrew (צה ונקי). The note on the title page also expresses hope that the book would be for its readers a ‘restorer of life’ (למשיב נפש); this Biblical expression, from Ruth 4,15, is a strong expression about the effect a book such as *Sheyris Yisroel* could have on its readers.

Not long after the first Hebrew edition, a second translation was published in 1811 at the famous Vilna printing house of Menahem Man ben R. Baruch Romm, which held a near monopoly on Hebrew printing in the Russian Empire.⁸⁵³ In this case only the title, *Sheyris Yisroel*, is mentioned; that it is the second part of *Yosippson* is not noted. The name of the author, however, returned and Amelander is introduced to the public as having been ‘a great man to Jews’ and a grammarian (איש גדול ליהודים המדקדק השלם כהרר מ' מן בן ר' שלמה הלוי). It is stated that the reason for publishing the book is that it is useful for one to know what has happened in the past and that the book offers great benefit for the reader, but that unfortunately *Sheyris Yisroel* had thus far only been rendered in Yiddish. This edition would present a text in basic Hebrew, from which both adults and children would profit. This

⁸⁵² Pilarczyk, ‘Hebrew printing houses in Poland’, 212. The publisher Shlomo Rapaport should not be confused with the *maskil* Shlomo Yehuda Rapaport (Shir), also from Lemberg. However, in 1804 the Shir was only fourteen years old.

⁸⁵³ Raphael Posner and Israel Ta-Shma, *The Hebrew book: an historical survey* (Jerusalem 1975) 145-146.

introduction to the book makes clear that the publisher and the unknown translator were unaware of the earlier Lemberg translation and so had made their own.

At the start of the nineteenth century there were thus two different translations of *Sheyris Yisroel* into Hebrew. Both printing firms must have seen commercial opportunities in such a project. The shift from Yiddish to Hebrew at the start of the century was a significant one. By being translated into Hebrew the ‘canonization’ of *Sheyris Yisroel* reached its peak. The book was no longer meant just for the larger public; it now became part of the Hebrew library of the elite. In early modern times historiography might have been considered a genre for the masses (women, children and *am ha’arets*), and was therefore written, translated and mainly transmitted in Yiddish; in the nineteenth century, however, it became – again – a Hebrew genre for the elites.⁸⁵⁴

During the nineteenth century the Hebrew language remained largely the domain of the rabbinic and maskilic elites. The rabbinic elite considered Hebrew to be their exclusive domain, with the language’s literary canon designated only for their use. The traditional school system was organized in such a way as to teach only elementary Hebrew, whereas full command of the language – and the knowledge preserved in it - remained reserved for the religious elite. Parush has labeled this ‘intentional ignorance’ and described it as a way to protect beliefs, ideas, social practices and above all the authority of rabbinic leadership from threatening elements. The maskilim, on the other hand, also wrote in Hebrew, which they regarded as a more pure language than daily Yiddish. Their use of Hebrew can be qualified as a secularization of the language, widening its use to new domains such as literature and press. The maskilic approach to Hebrew was full of paradoxes. It was an approach torn apart by the choice between an elitist language and the desire to establish an equitable, modern literary language that would be understood by many. In the second half of the century knowledge of Hebrew expanded in maskilic schools and through the spread of Zionism, yet, the vast majority of Eastern European Jews remained unable to read Hebrew books.⁸⁵⁵ The translation of *Sheyris Yisroel* into Hebrew and its almost exclusive transmission in Hebrew throughout the century was therefore not only a story of the book’s success among the elites, but also a story of the book becoming closed to many readers.

⁸⁵⁴ Gertner, ‘Ketiva historit ortodoksit’ 324.

⁸⁵⁵ Iris Parush, ‘Another look at “the life of ‘dead’ Hebrew”. Intentional ignorance of Hebrew in nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish society’, *Book History* 7 (2004) 171-214.

Although there were two different translations, all subsequent editions in the nineteenth century were republications of the first Lemberg edition. The reason for the apparent success of the 1804 edition stems from the differences between the two translations as a result of the ‘open book tradition’. The contents of both translations differ from the original Yiddish edition, yet they also differ from each other. The title page of the Lemberg translation notes that it was published with the consent of the censor and during the rule of the last ‘holy Roman emperor’ Francis II. The censor may have influenced the contents of the Hebrew edition, although it seems more likely that internal Jewish reasons should be credited with the change of contents. Compared to the Yiddish original, this Hebrew edition appears to be a significant abridgement, as the following tables of contents demonstrate.

SY 1804	SY 1743
1. The Ten Lost Tribes	1. The Ten Lost Tribes
2. Jews in Rome, 63 BCE-656	2. Jews in Rome, 63 BCE-656
3. Jews in Spain, Germany, France and England	3. Jews in Spain, Germany, France and England
4. The history of Jews from the fall of Jerusalem until the end of the Bar Kochba revolt	4. The history of Jews from the fall of Jerusalem until the end of the Bar Kochba revolt
5. From the death of R. Akiva until 240 in Eretz Yisrael	5. From the death of R. Akiva until 240 in Eretz Yisrael
	6. Jews in Babylonia after 70 CE
6. History of the Jews from emperor Constantine (314) until 614	7. History of the Jews from emperor Constantine (314) until 614
7. The beginnings of Islam, until Bustenai	8. The beginnings of Islam, until Bustenai
8. Jews under emperor Heraclius and Sisebut	9. Jews under emperor Heraclius and Sisebut
9. The Khazars	10. The Khazars
10. Jews in France, from Charlemagne until Louis the Pious	11. Jews in France, from Charlemagne until Louis the Pious
	12. Jews in the East, 905-1040
11. Jews in Spain, 967-1096	13. Jews in Spain, 967-1096
12. The Crusades in Europe	14. The Crusades in Europe

13. Benjamin of Tudela, East-West, 12 th century	15. Benjamin of Tudela, East-West, 12 th century
14. Sages, 1099-1190	16. Sages, 1099-1190
15. False messiahs, East-West, 12 th century	17. False messiahs, East-West, 12 th century
16. Jews in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, 1140-1200	18. Jews in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, 1140-1200
17. Jews in the East, 1200-1334	19. Jews in the East, 1200-1334
18. Jews in Spain, 1256-1349	20. Jews in Spain, 1256-1349
19. Jews in Italy, 1225-1394	21. Jews in Italy, 1225-1394
20. Jews in France, 1300-1670	22. Jews in France, 1300-1670
21. Jews in England, 1210-1649	23. Jews in England, 1210-1649
22. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, 1222-1400	24. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, 1222-1400
23. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal	25. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal
24. Jews in the East and the story of Shabtai Zvi	26. Jews in the East and the story of Shabtai Zvi
	27. Jews in the Ottoman Empire
	28. Jews in Eretz Yisrael
25. Jews in Ethiopia, Africa, 1523-1750	29. Jews in Ethiopia, Africa, 1523-1750
26. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, 1410-1614	30. Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, 1410-1614
27. Jews in Germany, Poland, Bohemia, 1614-1648	31. Jews in Germany, Poland, Bohemia, 1614-1648
28. The 1648 Chmielnicki Pogroms and the suffering of the German Jews	32. The 1648 Chmielnicki Pogroms and the suffering of the German Jews
29. The Sephardim in Holland	33. The Sephardim in Holland
	34. The Ashkenazim in Holland
	35. The Jews in China, India and Cochin

In total six chapters disappeared from the new Hebrew editions, almost all of which concerned the history of Jews in the East: Chapters 6, 12, 27, 28 and 35. Chapter 34, about Ashkenazi

Dutch Jewish history, was also removed. This change of contents resulted in a different *Sheyris Yisroel*. First, the concentric concept, in which the Ten Lost Tribes encircled the ‘remnant of Israel,’ disappeared and the book became instead a more regular history book, narrating chronologically events of the past. Second, the intention of Amelander to bring Sephardic and Ashkenazi history together – inspired by Amsterdam Jewish reality – was surely viewed in the Eastern European context as less relevant. In Eastern Europe there were hardly any Sephardim, and thus confronting their history would likely have been considered less urgent. The result was, despite the work’s translation from Yiddish into Hebrew, a further Ashkenazization of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Third, the local context of Dutch Jewry must have been regarded as less interesting for Eastern European Jewry. Thus, only the more exotic history of Amsterdam Sephardim was kept in the book, while the separate chapter on Dutch Ashkenazim was removed and only one section of it – about an anti-Semitic incident in the Kleve region, bordering the Dutch Republic – included in the last chapter.

Not only were chapters removed; the remaining chapters were abridged. Where Amelander had provided documentation and quoted such sources at length, such as letters, they were in most cases removed.⁸⁵⁶ Amelander’s more philosophical passages, in which he reflected on the meaning of historic events or on God’s involvement in Jewish history, were frequently left untranslated.⁸⁵⁷ Some chapters were merged, such as the last three chapters of the original edition, about Sephardic and Ashkenazi history in the Dutch Republic and Jewish history in the Far East. From each of these chapters only one paragraph was taken; these paragraphs were fused together into a new but incoherent chapter.

The second translation, published in Vilna in 1811, had an entirely different character. This edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* focuses on two topics, as announced on the title page: it presents an account of the hardships Jews had to suffer in *galut* and it narrates the history of the Ten Lost Tribes and their locations. The editor chose only to translate the first 24 chapters of the original Yiddish edition, starting with the Ten Lost Tribes and concluding with Ashkenazi history until 1400. The result was that *Sheyris Yisroel* became basically a book on ancient and medieval Jewish history, ending with a rather depressing chapter on a series of persecutions and expulsions in Central Europe. The book did not omit chapters on Eastern Jewish history, yet the result is a more Ashkenazi book than the original edition had been. In this version the book ends with an Ashkenazi chapter, as the original succeeding chapter, on the *gerush*

⁸⁵⁶ E.g. in the chapters 1 and 14.

⁸⁵⁷ See for example the beginnings of Chapters 14 and 15.

Sepharad, is left out. The difficulties of Ashkenazi life in *galut* therefore dominate the concept behind this edition. This may be related to the contemporary position of Jews in the area around Vilna, which had become part of the Russian Empire after the third Polish partition of 1795, and which was not very welcoming to its new Jewish population.⁸⁵⁸

The Vilna edition was a translation of the first 24 chapters of the original Yiddish version. Occasionally the editor changed or added to the contents. For instance, Amelander wrote that the Jews in France commemorated the victims of the 1171 Blois incident each 20 Sivan the Vilna editor added that even now this day of mourning and fasting is held by ‘us’.⁸⁵⁹ As Hominer demonstrated, the *selibot* prayer book of Lithuanian Jews included the martyrs of Blois on the day of commemoration of the victims of the 1648 Chmielnicki pogroms (*gezeirot tach ve-tat*).⁸⁶⁰ Indeed, in 1652 the Council of the Four Lands, the highest authority in Polish and Lithuanian Jewry, declared 20 Sivan a day of fasting for all Jewish communities under its authority, thereby connecting recent events to an analogous historical event.⁸⁶¹

The Vilna edition remained the only one of its kind during the nineteenth century. All other nineteenth-century Hebrew editions followed the Lemberg edition, with its broader yet significantly abridged contents. The first subsequent edition, published in Warsaw in 1839, copied the 1804 Lemberg edition but opted to restore Amelander’s name to the title page. The book was once again connected to its original author. This was nevertheless a short interval in the nineteenth-century transmission history of the book: all following editions omitted his name. Crucial in this respect was the Lemberg 1846 edition, which used the 1804 edition as its *Vorlage* and joined Rapaport in not mentioning the original author. This edition also returned Yosippon to the title page. Meanwhile, this mid-century edition was once again adapted to a new situation.

For the Lemberg 1846 edition we have, for a change, the name of the editor: Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr. His name is not mentioned explicitly, but he gives away his identity in writing ‘as I have said in my book *Tiferet Yisrael*’. Likewise, in his 1847 edition of *Zemah David* he refers to his editing work on *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁸⁶² Mohr was a prolific author and editor; we will return to his activities and ideology. He added significantly to *Sheyris Yisroel* and

⁸⁵⁸ N.N. Shneidman, *Jerusalem of Lithuania. The rise and fall of Jewish Vilnius* (Oakville ON/ Buffalo NY 1998) 3-5, 11.

⁸⁵⁹ *JY* ed. Vilna 1811, chapter 18.

⁸⁶⁰ *Sheairith Yisrael complete*, ed. Hayim Hominer (Jerusalem 1964) 140.

⁸⁶¹ Simon M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, from the Earliest Times Until the Present Day*, transl. by Israel Friedlaender (Charleston SC 2009) 152; on the actual observance of this fast: Chone Shmeruk, ‘Yiddish literature and collective memory: the case of the Chmielnicki massacres’, *Polin* 5 (Oxford 1990) 173-183.

⁸⁶² *JY* ed. 1846, 47v; *Zemah David* ed. Lemberg 1847, 119v, as cited by Gertner, ‘Ketiva historit ortodoksit’, 310.

also altered its appearance. First, he decided to separate the first paragraph of the book from the first chapter, in which Amelander reflected on the difficulties in writing Jewish history. This became a פתיחה, an introduction to the whole book – whereas Amelander’s original introduction had already disappeared from the first Lemberg edition. Second, Mohr added commentary to the text, in order to make the contents more easily understandable for a contemporary audience and to demonstrate his knowledge. For example, he explains that Constantinople and Istanbul are the same city and that Izmir is joined by its Greek name Smyrna; Lucca is further introduced (in Yiddish) as a duchy in Italy; and the Hebrew term דקדוק, which Mohr apparently considered too difficult for his audience to understand, is explained as grammar.⁸⁶³ In the section where Amelander wrote about the Persian prophet Mani, Mohr added the creative albeit incorrect interpretation that in Hebrew heretics are called *minim* after him. Likewise, he added that apostates are called *apikorsim*, after the Greek philosopher Epicurus.⁸⁶⁴ Another example of Mohr’s editing is his effort to situate *Sheyris Yisroel* on the same level as European historiography, via changing the naming of historical personages according to what was common in non-Jewish history books. Thus for example Constantine becomes Constantine *ba-gadol*, the Great, although this epithet has decisive Christian connotations.⁸⁶⁵

Third, and most significant, Mohr added an entire new part to *Sheyris Yisroel*. This section did not become a new chapter of the book but was added after the last chapter and received its own title: מִשַׁא דַּמְשֶׁק, ‘The burden of Damascus’. It is mentioned separately both on the title page and in the table of contents. Mohr’s addition presents an account of an incident from recent Jewish history, namely the 1840 Damascus Affair, in which the local Jewish community had been accused of murdering a Catholic priest and his helper. As soon as Western European Jewish communities heard about the accusations, they joined efforts and organized a Jewish diplomatic mission, directed by Moses Montefiore and Alphonse Crémieux, to the Ottoman sultan. Although the accusation was not dropped formally, the arrested Jews were freed, and throughout Europe this was celebrated by Jews as a victorious moment.⁸⁶⁶ From that moment on Montefiore’s star began rising as an advocate for Jewish solidarity, not

⁸⁶³ *JY* ed. 1846, 19v (הערצאגטהום באיטליא); 20r (בלשון לטיין גראמאטיקא); 35r (שמירנא).

⁸⁶⁴ *JY* ed. 1846, 7v; In his interpretation of Mani he followed the fifteenth-century scholar Abraham Bibago. Linguists, however, see the meaning of the term *minim* in that it refers to ‘species’ or ‘kinds’ of people. See also, in the term *apikors*: John B. Henderson, *The construction of orthodoxy and heresy. Neo-Confusian, Islamic, Jewish, and early Christian patterns* (New York 1998) 21.

⁸⁶⁵ *JY* ed. 1846, 7r; for more examples: Hominer, *Sheairith Yisrael*, 26.

⁸⁶⁶ Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: “Ritual murder”, politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge 1997).

only in Western Europe but no less among Eastern European Jewry. For them Montefiore was no less than – in the words of Abigail Green – a ‘Jewish liberator’.⁸⁶⁷

Mohr’s addendum to *Sheyris Yisrael* has been characterized by Jonathan Frankel as probably ‘the greatest circulation in the Hebrew language’ of the narrative about the Damascus Affair.⁸⁶⁸ As Mohr indicated in the short summary preceding the actual narrative, he based most of the account on correspondence between the Austrian consul in Damascus, Caspar Merlato, and his colleague in Alexandria, Anton von Laurin. Sections from these letters ended up in European newspapers, having been spread in part by Jewish advocates of the imperiled Damascus Jews.⁸⁶⁹ Furthermore, Mohr added material from chronicles and also included the related story of the Jews of Rhodes, who were likewise under threat by anti-Semites.⁸⁷⁰ Mohr’s account of the Damascus Affair fits well into what Frankel has described as the characteristic narrative structure within nineteenth-century Jewish historiography: the evil genius is the French consul Count de Ratti-Menton; the central element is the torture scene, with the Damascene Jew Isaac Yavo dying as a martyr with the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips; the conclusion is the successful mission of Montefiore and Crémieux to the East.⁸⁷¹ De Ratti-Menton is presented as an aberration of Western liberalism, while in the end European norms and values in the East prevail over blind medieval anti-Semitism.⁸⁷²

There is, however, one element in Mohr’s account that distinguishes it from the other contemporary Jewish reports. In his narrative about the Damascus and Rhodes affairs, Mohr stressed the positive exception among European consuls in the East made by the Austrian diplomats – and thus ignored the fact that the Austrian consul in Rhodes, who had initially defended the Jews, later changed his position for the worse.⁸⁷³ According to Mohr, the consuls, in standing up for the Jews, were just and therefore the best representatives of European values. Mohr ended his narrative by singing the praises of the Austrian Empire and the Habsburg rulers.⁸⁷⁴ The author, a Lemberg resident, showed himself a loyal Austrian patriot, harmonizing Jewish and Austrian interests. Certainly, Mohr must have realized that his edition

⁸⁶⁷ Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish liberator, imperial hero* (Cambridge Mass. 2010); Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (Philadelphia 2006) 68.

⁸⁶⁸ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 410.

⁸⁶⁹ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 145; cf. Ronald Florence, *Blood libel: the Damascus Affair of 1840* (Madison Wis. 2004) 108-115.

⁸⁷⁰ On contemporary historiography on the Damascus Affair – sometimes including the Rhodes affair – see: Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 400-411.

⁸⁷¹ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 411.

⁸⁷² Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 406.

⁸⁷³ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 158-163.

⁸⁷⁴ *SY* ed. 1846, 47v-48r.

of *Sheyris Yisroel*, including his addendum, would be distributed not only among Austrian Jews but also in the neighbouring communities under Russian rule. There the position of Jews was far more restrained than in the Habsburg Empire, and until Nicholas I's death in 1855 Hebrew publications on the Damascus Affair could not be published.⁸⁷⁵ Mohr's explicit praise for the Austrians' tolerant attitude towards the Jews must therefore have had significant impact on Russian Jewish readers, showing them the better position of their neighbouring co-religionists.

'The burden of Damascus' has a few characteristics in common with the preceding *Sheyris Yisroel* chapters. In the same way as Amelander had done, Mohr shows the interrelation between general, political and Jewish history. Whereas Amelander stressed Dutch tolerance and the fortunate fate of Dutch Jewry, Mohr expressed his gratefulness towards the Austrian government – and implicitly portrayed Austrian Jewry as privileged. Moreover, the central martyrdom scene resembles similar ones in *Sheyris Yisroel* – such as the plight of Ashkenazi Jewry during the Crusades (in Chapter 14), the martyrdom of the *marrano* Yitschak Castro (in Chapter 22), and the victims of Chmielnicki (in Chapter 32). Despite the gap from 1743 to 1840, Mohr's addendum can be interpreted as a continuation and actualization of Amelander's narrative. Yet it holds an agenda inspired by contemporary nineteenth-century ideologies, as will be discussed below.

All Hebrew editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* printed after 1846 adopted Mohr's changes: the short introduction, commentaries and the 'Burden of Damascus' became integral parts of the late nineteenth-century editions. These editions differ from each other only in small respects. The Zhitomir 1858 edition, for example, printed the short introduction in a smaller type than the normal text, whereas the Warsaw 1874 and 1879 editions no longer contained any table of contents. Such typographical and editorial changes are the main characteristics differentiating the various editions. The Austrian chauvinism of Mohr, however, disappeared from later editions printed outside the Habsburg Empire under Russian rule. The story from Rhodes was recounted, but the last few sentences, which praised the Austrians, were omitted.

Two nineteenth-century editions appeared with Amsterdam as their supposed place of publication and without years of publication. Since the 'Burden of Damascus' is added, they must have been published after 1846, yet major characteristics (paper quality, Hebrew typography) indicate that they were not published in Amsterdam but somewhere in Eastern Europe. Catalogues of major libraries holding these editions suggest Lemberg, Warsaw and

⁸⁷⁵ Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, 409.

Prussian Königsberg as possible places of publication and give dates such as 1852, 1858 and 1860. Lemberg was the most likely place of publication for the 143-page edition, since its version of 'Burden of Damascus' includes the praises for the Austrians.⁸⁷⁶ The other one, printed in a smaller script and totaling 90 pages, must have been printed outside the Habsburg Empire, as it lacks the concluding passages on the Austrian efforts for the Jews.

The sequence of editions after 1846 could only be reconstructed via a small detail on the title page. The 1846 Lemberg edition introduced the book as: ספר שארית ישראל הוא חלק שני מספר יוסיפון. This exact phrase appears on the title pages of the two undated editions, the one from Zhitomir 1873 and those from Warsaw 1874 and 1879. A different version appears on a number of editions following the one published by Michael Franz Poremba in Lemberg in 1852: ספר שארית ישראל והוא חלק שני מספר יוסיפון. This version, with 'and' combining both titles, appears as well on the title pages of the editions Zhitomir 1858 and Lemberg 1864. The Lemberg 1852 edition thus became the *Vorlage* for a number of subsequent editions (one by the same publisher), whereas the others adhered to Lemberg 1846. One peculiar exception is the edition published by J.M. Ehrenpreis in Lemberg in 1874, wherein *Yosippoon* completely disappears from the title page. Although it remained a single edition, together with Vilna 1811 this can be regarded as the ultimate success of *Sheyris Yisroel*: starting as a part two to an authoritative book yet ending up as an authoritative book in its own right.

During the nineteenth century the 'open book' tradition kept *Sheyris Yisroel* open to changes, both erasings and additions. The book became acceptable for the elites through its translation into Hebrew and was adopted to the Eastern European context by removing much information about Eastern Jewry; it was also updated to present times via addition of the 'Burden of Damascus' section. Furthermore, the Amsterdam ideology of Amelander was replaced by the Austrian chauvinism of Mohr; in the Russian context this was again modified and adapted to a new political and social reality. The fact that Amelander's name was omitted from nearly all these title pages – with the exceptions of Vilna 1811 and Warsaw 1839 – was indicative of the degree to which *Sheyris Yisroel* had become an 'open book'.

There remains one theme to be examined. What were the ideologies behind these various Hebrew editions? This is not easily determined for all editions, but for some it is fairly apparent. The history of these editions can be described as a debate between adherents of the

⁸⁷⁶ For this edition, however, if a place of publication is given, it is usually Königsberg, as proposed by most catalogues, following Hominer, *Sheairith Yisrael*, 27.

Eastern European Haskalah and Orthodoxy over the character of *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁸⁷⁷ Proponents of each movement claimed the book for their respective progressive or conservative agendas.

In 1839 *Sheyris Yisroel* was printed for the first time in Warsaw, in a decisively Orthodox edition. The book was preceded by a new *haskama* issued by the Warsaw rabbi Zvi Jacob ben Eliyahu and jointly signed by David from Opatów (or, in Yiddish, Apt), who served as *dayyan* for the Warsaw *beth din*, and by two persons serving as *moreh zedek* (rabbinical assistant) in the Warsaw Jewish community: Zvi Hirsh (son-in-law of the Ga'on)⁸⁷⁸ and Yitschak Itsek ben David. The *dayyan* was most probably David Jedidiah ben Israel, who served no less than 40 years in Warsaw and died April 14, 1842.⁸⁷⁹ The Warsaw rabbinate was at the time a stronghold of the *Mitnaggedim*, who were contending against *Hassidism* and Eastern European *Haskalah*. The *haskama* encouraged the reading of *Sheyris Yisroel* for two reasons: first, in order that present generations would become familiar with what had happened from the day *galut* commenced until close to contemporary times; and second, to discover the grace of God, who kept his covenant and guarded the people of Israel during hardships everywhere on earth. Historical curiosity and theological interpretation went hand in hand here: the historical narrative of Amelander is regarded as a demonstration of God's guidance. Through the new *haskama* *Sheyris Yisroel* was once again approved by the rabbinic elite as part of the Orthodox canon of historiography.⁸⁸⁰

The influential Lemberg 1846 edition was, however, inspired by a different ideology. The publishing firm of Chave Grosmann was, together with the firm of Joseph Schnayder, a stronghold of printing in the Eastern European *Haskalah*. Grosmann was part of an influential family of Hebrew printers, which included the Madfes and Letteris families, and was active from her husband death, in 1827, until 1849.⁸⁸¹ The editor Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr (1815-1868) was an influential and highly prolific moderate *maskilic* author. He belonged to a small circle of Galician *maskilim*, students of the philosopher Nahman Krochmal (1785-

⁸⁷⁷ Although I use here the overall qualifications 'Eastern European Haskalah' as well as 'Eastern European Orthodoxy', there were striking differences between Polish, Galician and Lithuanian *maskilim*, just as *mitnaggedim* and various *Hasidic* groups were not all of the same opinion in regards to European culture. For the different appropriations of *Sheyris Yisroel*, however, these broad terms suffice. Cf. Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland. A history of conflict* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon, 2005) 249-250.

⁸⁷⁸ It is not clear which Ga'on is meant. The Ga'on of Vilna had a son-in-law called Zvi Hersh Donchin, but his dates and places of residence do not match this *haskama*.

⁸⁷⁹ *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. Warsaw.

⁸⁸⁰ *Haskamot* for classic works was a way to strengthen the authority of these books; Gertner, 'Ketiva historit orthodoxit', 304; Gries, 'Nineteenth century', 117-119.

⁸⁸¹ Gertner, 'Epigonism', 226; Anna Majkowska-Aleksiewicz, *Historia drukarstwa Galicji Wschodniej, w latach 1815-1860* (Wrocław 1992) 71, 93.

1840),⁸⁸² which included Menahem Mendel Lefin and Mohr's brother-in-law Jacob Bodek (the author of a sequel to *Qorot ha-ʿitim*). He published in both Hebrew and Yiddish and translated works from Hebrew into Yiddish and from German into Hebrew. Particularly influential were his pioneering activities in the Jewish press. Together with Bodek he edited a Hebrew journal, *Yerushalayim* (Żólkiew 1844-1845), and in 1848-1849 he was in charge of the Lemberg Yiddish *Zaytung*, which had 200 subscribers.⁸⁸³

Mohr, as a good student of Krochmal, was especially attracted to history and geography. He wrote a number of books on these topics and presented new editions of almost every classic of Jewish historiography, including *Yosippon*, *Shevet Yehudah* and *Zemah David*, and Menasseh ben Israel's *Mikveh Yisrael*. Each of the latter works included commentary by Mohr and some were updated. His edition of *Zemah David* serves as an example: next to the original text of David Gans, which narrated general and Jewish history until 1593, Mohr added the continuation, by David ben Moshe Reindorf, covering the years 1593-1692 (ed. Frankfurt 1692) and completed the edition with his own successor chronicle for the period 1692 to 1846.⁸⁸⁴ Mohr implemented both the 'open book tradition' and the traditional conception of continuing Jewish historiography, not for traditional objectives but for purposes of Jewish enlightenment. He did not treat *Sheyris Yisroel* as something foreign: he accepted the book as part of the canon of Jewish historiography and presented it anew to his Eastern European audience.

Masa Damesek should be understood from the whole of Mohr's historical publications. This addendum to *Sheyris Yisroel* was part of Mohr's efforts to familiarize Jews with general history and politics and to construct a new maskilic pantheon alongside the traditional rabbinic catalogue of Jewish heroes. He published on Columbus and the discovery of America (this particular work was actually a free adaptation of Joachim Heinrich Campe's children's book *Die Entdeckung von Amerika*)⁸⁸⁵, biographies of Napoleon Bonaparte and the contemporary Napoleon III, and two books related to Austrian contexts: one on archduke Carl Ludwig (1771-1847), the brother of emperor Francis; and one on marshal Count Radetzky.⁸⁸⁶ The Austrian chauvinism noted in *Masa Damesek* likewise characterizes the latter two

⁸⁸² On Krochmal's philosophy of history, Feiner wrote in *Haskalah and history*, 115-125.

⁸⁸³ Israel Zinberg, *A history of Jewish literature 10: The science of Judaism and Galician Haskalah* (Cincinnati/New York 1977) 5.

⁸⁸⁴ Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 309-310.

⁸⁸⁵ Cf. Annegret Völpel and Zohar Shavit, *Deutsch-jüdische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Stuttgart 2002) 63; Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 82-83.

⁸⁸⁶ William Zeitlin, *Bibliotheca Hebraica post Mendelsobniana* (Leipzig 1891-1895) 242-244; Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 140, 142.

publications. There is even more intertextuality with Mohr's Jewish historiography: he published a biography of the Austrian Jewish railway magnate and philanthropist Hermann Tedesco,⁸⁸⁷ a history of the Rothschild family and a work on Moses Montefiore and his wife. In *Masa Damesek* Montefiore is the central figure, the 'Jewish liberator'⁸⁸⁸; the activities of James baron de Rothschild are also mentioned with gratitude, at which point Mohr directs readers seeking more information about the Rothschild family to his book *תפארת ישראל*, published in 1843.

Mohr's historical activities, of which his edition of *Sheyris Yisrael* and the inclusion of *Masa Damesek* are an integral part, thus show a consistent pattern. He wanted his Jewish audience to be familiar with both Jewish and general history; he showed himself to be a loyal citizen of the Habsburg Empire, particularly in stressing his confidence in the best intentions of the imperial family towards their Jewish subjects; and he expanded the catalogue of noteworthy Jewish figures by including prominent contemporary families and persons. These no longer included only great rabbis and scholars, but also figures who were successful in modern European society and who could serve as examples of well-integrated Jews – according to maskilic standards – who showed their solidarity with their fellow Jews through philanthropy and Jewish diplomacy.⁸⁸⁹

Mohr was typical of what Feiner called the new generation of Galician maskilim, who often moved to Western Europe, were pessimistic about the continuing dominance of Hasidism, and regarded with sorrow the rise of an acculturated but religiously indifferent class. In between Hasidism and 'pseudo-Haskalah', they strived for what they saw as the true maskilic ideology.⁸⁹⁰ Mohr, like the other Galician maskilim, welcomed the 1848 revolution, expecting to soon acquire full emancipation. During the revolution Mohr wrote a Yiddish pamphlet on his interpretation of the events; in one month no less than 5,000 copies were sold. In his journal, the *Zaytung*, he encouraged his readers to cease paying the special Jewish tax. Yet Mohr was a moderate maskil. He hoped for changes in the wake of 1848, but remained a staunch adherent of the Habsburg monarchy. After the new constitution of 4 March, which the emperor issued under pressure due to the circumstances, Mohr happily saw

⁸⁸⁷ Cf. Katarína Hrdská, *Židovska Bratislava* (Bratislava 2008) 82.

⁸⁸⁸ In his biography of Montefiore Mohr mentions as well *Masa Damesek*: Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr, *Keter shem tov* (Lemberg 1847) 7.

⁸⁸⁹ In his continuation to *Zemah David* Mohr did the same: he not only included in his narrative the Besht and the Ga'on of Vilna, but also Mendelssohn, Wessely and Jacobson; Gertner, 'Epigonism', 224-225.

⁸⁹⁰ Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 138-140; idem, 'The pseudo-Enlightenment and the question of Jewish modernization', *Jewish Social Studies* 3 (1996) 1, 62-88.

his monarchism and his wish for emancipation coming together. In his journal he published a Yiddish translation of the constitution and urged his readers to seize the new opportunities that it opened. After 1848 he realized that full emancipation was still not eminent, but Mohr – and other maskilim – still hoped to further the Haskalah via helping the Austrian government and the Habsburg monarchy.⁸⁹¹

Mohr's method was characteristic of the moderate Galician Haskalah.⁸⁹² He tried to integrate his new maskilic pantheon into the classical rabbinic catalogue of important figures. He thus modified classical and accepted history books, adding his own commentaries and additions. The 1846 edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* with *Masa Damesek* is in every sense a representative example of Mohr's approach.

Eastern European Orthodoxy responded to the maskilic interpretation of *Sheyris Yisroel* by releasing its own editions. In 1858 the Hassidic rabbi Aryeh Leib Shapira published an Orthodox edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* in Zhitomir. The Shapira printing press was started by a local Slavuta rabbi, Moshe Shapira, who specialized in religious books. The firm enjoyed great authority in the Hasidic world and published only books that fitted the Hasidic worldview.⁸⁹³ Two of Shapira's sons continued their father's printing firm after his death, in 1838, to little success: accused of murdering an employee, they ended up in Siberia. Their children moved to Zhitomir, where from 1847 onward they published the traditional canon of religious books, refusing any work that might be regarded as secular.⁸⁹⁴ They were leading figures in the Orthodox opposition against the Galician Haskalah. In 1851 Aryeh Leib Shapira, one of the grandchildren of Moshe, established his own printing firm.⁸⁹⁵ His decision to include *Sheyris Yisroel* in his catalogue demonstrated his conviction that the Orthodox should not leave the book in maskilic hands. At the same time the didactic catalogue of traditional Jewish role models, such as rabbis and martyrs, as presented in *Sheyris Yisroel* was regarded by the Orthodox as a counterweight against the maskilic genre of biographies of prominent Jews.⁸⁹⁶ Surprisingly, however, Aryeh Leib Shapira did not use an edition from before 1846, most likely

⁸⁹¹ Salo Wittmayer Baron, 'The Revolution of 1848 and Jewish scholarship, part II: Austria' *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 20 (1951) 1-100, there 38, 74-77; Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 140-141.

⁸⁹² Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 150-151.

⁸⁹³ Zeev Gries, 'Jewish books and their authors in the nineteenth century' in: idem, *Jewish book*, 113-137, there 116; Michael Stanislawski, 'The "Vilna Shas" and East European Jewry' in: Sharon Liberman Mintz and Gabriel M. Goldstein eds., *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein* (New York 2005) 97-102.

⁸⁹⁴ David Asaf, 'Shapira family' in: *The Yivo encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, consulted on: http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Shapira_Family (consulted 9 September 2010).

⁸⁹⁵ Raphael Posner and Israel Ta-Shma, *The Hebrew book: an historical survey* (Jerusalem 1975) 146.

⁸⁹⁶ Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 307, 325-327, 334.

because none were available to him. Mohr's edition was used as *Vorlage* and even his *Masa Damesek* was included. The name of the controversial author was not mentioned in the book, and thus both *Sheyris Yisroel* and *Masa Damesek* were presented to the audience without mention of the original authors. The same process was applied to the other Mohr editions of Jewish historiography: Orthodox printers used them without problems, albeit without mentioning Mohr's name and by sanitizing the book for their Orthodox readers.⁸⁹⁷

The second half of the nineteenth century saw tremendous expansion in the world of Jewish publishing. Jews were again permitted to print Hebrew and Yiddish books in the Russian Empire (such publications had been forbidden in 1836 – with the exception of the Vilna and Zhitomir presses), Warsaw developed into a major center, and Lemberg and Vilna retained their prominence.⁸⁹⁸ The publishing history of the Hebrew *Sheyris Yisroel* shows the same transitions: in the 1860's one edition was printed in Lemberg; the 1870's saw no less than four different editions -- two in Warsaw, one in Zhitomir and one in Lemberg. The debate between Orthodox and maskilim over *Sheyris Yisroel* remained, although the book was most often printed by Orthodox firms. The Lemberg non-Jewish printing firm of Michael Franz Poremba, who besides Hebrew books also published Ukrainian and Polish works, printed no less than two editions, in 1852 and 1864. Commercial profit was Poremba's most important objective, and his Jewish associates must have convinced him to print *Sheyris Yisroel*. As he was based in Lemberg and held favourable opinions towards emancipation movements, Poremba most likely shared Mohr's ideas about the book.⁸⁹⁹ Also in Lemberg the printer and bookseller Jacob Ehrenpreis printed and sold the book. Ehrenpreis, a pious Jew, was close to Hasidism, although his works included not only religious literature but also secular Hebrew books.⁹⁰⁰ The edition printed in 1873 in Zhitomir by Isaac Moses Bakst was decisively Orthodox. Bakst had studied at the local rabbinical seminary and was a lecturer in Talmud and an author himself.⁹⁰¹ In Warsaw *Sheyris Yisroel* was republished in Mohr's edition by Hayim ben Elkana

⁸⁹⁷ Gertner, 'Epigonism', 225; Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 309-311, 313.

⁸⁹⁸ Kenneth Moss, 'Printing and publishing after 1800' in: *The Yivo encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, 1459-1468*, there 1461-1462.

⁸⁹⁹ Anna Majkowska-Aleksiewicz, *Historia drukarstwa Galicji Wschodniej, w latach 1815-1860* (Wrocław 1992) 83-85, 94-98, 114-119; Philipp Hofeneder, 'Das ukrainische bzw. ruthenische Buch- und Verlagswesen in Galizien in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts', *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Buchforschung in Österreich* 2007-2, 29-47, there 33.

⁹⁰⁰ Hagit Cohen, *At the bookseller's shop. The Jewish book trade in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem 2006) 65-67.

⁹⁰¹ *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. Isaac Moses Bakst.

Kelter, who had a large and multilingual printing business,⁹⁰² and by Nathan Shriftgiser, who took over his father's firm in 1831 and acquired fame with his 1872 Talmud edition.⁹⁰³

The Eastern European Hebrew editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* demonstrate how an eighteenth-century Yiddish history book from Amsterdam could be adapted via the 'open book tradition' to new audiences and new ideologies. Being translated into Hebrew allowed the book to become acceptable to the elites, even as abridgments strengthened the Ashkenazi character of the book. Likewise, *Sheyris Yisroel* was in the nineteenth century both an Orthodox and a maskilic book. The Orthodox – Mitnaggedim and Hasidim – regarded the work as an affirmation of both their Orthodox philosophy of history and the Orthodox pantheon of Jewish sages and martyrs. Republishing and reading the book reinforced the traditional rabbinical narrative to the Orthodox world.⁹⁰⁴ The book was thus once again given a *haskama* to afford it further legitimation. Maskilim, most notably Mohr, used *Sheyris Yisroel* to encourage Jews to take notice of both Jewish and general history and to introduce via additions both a new ideal of Jewish participation in the secular world and an expanded Jewish pantheon.

8.4 *The Yiddish Sheyris Yisroel in the nineteenth century*

In the nineteenth century, in addition to the at least thirteen Hebrew editions, *Sheyris Yisroel* was also republished in Yiddish, in editions explicitly targeted at the broader Eastern European Jewish public.⁹⁰⁵ In every respect these editions were overshadowed by the Hebrew ones. There were significantly fewer Yiddish editions printed, and one was greatly influenced by development within the Hebrew *Sheyris Yisroel*.

*Yiddish editions of Sheyris Yisroel in the nineteenth century*⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰² Kelter was the first one who printed a book in Esperanto; Aleksander Korzhenkov, *Zamenhof: the life, works and ideas of the author of Esperanto* (New York/Rotterdam 2010) 16.

⁹⁰³ Nathan's father, Zevi Hirsch Nossonowitz of Lutomirsk, took over in 1811 Kruger's Nowy Dwór type of Hebrew, and changed his name in Shriftgiser (type caster); Raphael Posner, Israel Ta-Shma, *The Hebrew book: a historical survey* (Jerusalem 1975) 146.

⁹⁰⁴ Cf. Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 323, 325-332; Gertner, 'Epigonism', 222, 227, 229.

⁹⁰⁵ Cf. Feiner, *Haskalah and history*, 241-247.

⁹⁰⁶ Different numbers given by Gertner, who counts five nineteenth-century Yiddish editions, although without further specification: Gertner, 'Ketiva historit ortodoksit', 301, 324. Fuks, 'Jiddisches Geschichtswerk', 182, mentions a Klausenburg (Kolószvar/Cluj) 1858 edition, which he describes as the last edition known to him of *Sheyris Yisroel*. A 1914 list of the New York Public Library mentions a Yiddish edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* printed at J. Lebensohn's famous Warsaw printing firm of 1890 (72 pages). Presently this edition is, however, no longer in the holdings of NYPL, and is nowhere else to be traced and therefore not included in this chapter. For the list see: www.preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1914_works-relating-to-jews.pdf (consulted 10 September 2010). The Warsaw

Publisher	Place of publication	Year of publication
Abraham Yehudah Leib Mayerhofer	Żółkiew (Zholkva)	1807
Josef Schnayder	Lemberg (Lwów/Lviv)	1850
A.J. Madfes	Lemberg	1873 ⁹⁰⁷

Each of the three editions differs from the others. The first one, from 1807, is linked with the eighteenth-century editions and is a republication of the Fürth versions of *Sheyris Yisroel*. Żółkiew, in the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, was among the most important centers of Hebrew printing in Eastern Europe. The publisher was also strongly connected to Amsterdam, having been started by Uri Phaybush ben Aharon ha-Levi. His descendents remained in the printing business in various places until the start of the Second World War. From 1791 onwards Abraham Yehudah Mayerhofer operated his printing business in Żółkiew, with permission of the Austrian government. After his death, in 1811, his son and grandson continued the firm.⁹⁰⁸ The Żółkiew edition did not retain the few changes made in the Dyhernfurth edition of 1799, such as the new introduction on the title page, but instead adhered to the Fürth version, the only differences being that the table of contents and the *haskama* of the German rabbis were omitted.

The 1850 Lemberg edition offers an entirely different story. This edition was printed by Josef Schnayder, who from 1808 till 1853 owned a successful printing business and book shop. The quality of his printing was not especially good, but his books were very popular in Galicia, with annual output ranging from thirteen titles in 1815 to no less than 298. He printed in Hebrew, Yiddish, German and Polish. He also collaborated with Michael Franz Poremba (also known as Michal Franciszek Poremba), who after Schnayder's death took over the firm. Schnayder was, along with the printing firm of Chave Grosmann, known to be open to printing *maskilic* works. Abraham Menahem Mendel Mohr had some of his books, including his biography of Moses Montefiore, printed by Schnayder.⁹⁰⁹ This 1850 Lemberg edition differs from the other editions. First, it follows the Amsterdam 1771 edition, and thus includes

1890 edition is also mentioned by and used for: Adolf Lewin, 'Geschichte, Geographie und Reiseliteratur der Juden' in: J. Winter and Aug. Wünsche eds., *Die jüdische Literatur seit Abschluß des Kanons. Eine prosaische und poetische Anthologie mit biographischen und litterargeschichtlichen Einleitungen II* (Trier 1896) 289-473, there 417-421.

⁹⁰⁷ Wrongly noted as 1875 in many catalogues and listings, e.g. the JNUL catalogue, 67 A 83 Buber Collection.

⁹⁰⁸ Pilarczyk, 'Hebrew printing houses', 212; Heller, *Printing*, 101, 285-303.

⁹⁰⁹ *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950* 10 (Vienna 1994) 360; Majkowska-Aleksiewicz, *Historia drukarska*, 42-43, 83-84.

the chapter that Kosman ben Joseph Baruch had added to update the history book to 1771 (although without the historical poetry). Second, this edition was adapted linguistically to its new audience and to new modes of writing Yiddish. Eastern Yiddish variants of the language were used, and the text was punctuated.

Third, this edition is a clear example of the effects of the ‘open book tradition’. The 1771 Amsterdam edition was not republished integrally. Like the Lemberg and 1811 Vilna Hebrew editions, this Yiddish edition abridged the contents of the book. Chapters 27-30 and 33 were left out: Chapters 27 (on the Jews in the Ottoman Empire) and 28 (on the Jews in Erez Yisrael) were also omitted from most Hebrew editions, as were Chapters 29 (on the African Jews), 30 (on Ashkenazim in Germany, Bohemia and Moravia) and 33 (on the Amsterdam Sephardim). The removal of Chapter 30 is particularly surprising, as it dealt with a part of history that would have been close to many Ashkenazi readers in Eastern Europe. However, other chapters which had been left out in the Hebrew editions were included in this version. The Lemberg 1850 edition is therefore not merely a copy of the more popular Hebrew editions published there in the same decade. Chapters 1-12, 15-16 and 22 were published integrally, whereas all other chapters were significantly abridged. Parts of the book where Amelander was more reflective, such as in the first part of Chapter 18, were omitted, as were evidential materials such as letters (e.g. in Chapter 26), and chapters on Eastern and Sephardic Jewry were amended (Chapters 13, 19, 20, 25, and 26). This did not mean that chapters on Ashkenazi history (Chapters 14, 24, 31, 32) were not occasionally abridged. The editor deleted and abridged chapters, especially in the second half of the book, which suggests that his main motivation was not so much ideology but commercial incentive not to make the book too thick. The preparations for publication must have been rushed, as the original numbering of the chapters was still used, despite chapters having been omitted. The chapter on the Jews in India and China that had been published before the chapter on Amsterdam retained its original number (35), but was followed by Chapter 33. All this suggests that the edition was prepared hastily and that little time and effort were dedicated to achieving an outstanding edition.

The third nineteenth-century edition was published in Lemberg in 1873. Its publisher, A.J. Madfes, was a scion of the printing family that had started with Uri Faybush ben Aharon ha-Levi and included Chave Grosmann.⁹¹⁰ This edition of *Shbeyris Yisroel* is in effect not a proper Yiddish edition of the Amsterdam history book, but rather a translation of the Hebrew

⁹¹⁰ Pilarczyk, ‘Hebrew printing houses’, 212.

Lemberg 1846 version. This new edition shared most characteristics of the Hebrew 1846 edition, including deletion and abridgment of chapters, and addition of commentary and of *Masa Damesek*. The *petikha* section, however, is omitted, as is most of the chapter on Italian Jews from 1225 until 1394 (Chapter 19 in Mohr's edition), which is reduced to a few lines. In the final chapter the last section on Indian Jewry was left out, and in *Masa Damesek* the Rhodes narrative is condensed to one sentence and the praise for the Austrian government is not included. The chapter on Shabtai Zvi is reduced to a brief note that the narrative is not included, since the story is well known and anyone interested could read more in *Sefer me'ora'ot Zvi* of Jacob Sasportas.⁹¹¹ The book – which lacks page numbering – is translated into contemporary Eastern Yiddish and punctuated like the 1850 edition.⁹¹² It is also the first Yiddish edition not to mention Amelander's name as the author, as had become common in the Hebrew edition.

The three nineteenth-century Yiddish versions of *Sheyris Yisroel* demonstrate the same effects of the 'open book tradition' as is the case with the many more Hebrew editions. *Sheyris Yisroel* was translated and retranslated; its contents were abridged, omitted and added to. In short, each publisher and editor felt free to do with the book whatever he wanted to do. Both ideology (maskilic or Orthodox) and commercial intentions motivated their reworkings of *Sheyris Yisroel*. The book was sold throughout the Eastern European Jewish world in these versions, both Hebrew and Yiddish, and appeared regularly in advertisements of book shops alongside other accepted history books.⁹¹³

8.5 *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Dutch 1855 edition

In Western Europe Jewish scholars influenced by historicism initiated new, critical research into Jewish history. They looked for new historical resources, studied archives, edited and published old manuscripts and introduced a new interpretation of Jewish history; this new

⁹¹¹ *JY* ed. Lemberg 1873, chapter 23: פרק כד דא מעכט דר ציילט דו מעשה פון דעם שבתי צבי רק ווייל דו מעשה און שון גדרוקט און ספר מאורעות צבי און דאס און ביי אוטלכן שכים ע"כ האבון מור דם פרק נושט מעתיק גוועזן ווייל ווער עס וויל דו מעשה ליינן דר קאן זיך פארטען און ספר מאורעות צבי דארט שטייט דו מעשה מוט מער אריכות און מוט מער פרטים שרייבן: *Sasportas'* book circulated both in Hebrew and Yiddish translation in Lemberg, printed respectively in 1865 by Michael Franz Poremba and in 1862 by Zvi Hirsh Zucker.

⁹¹² E.g. יידן instead of יודן, זענין instead of זענן, and גינייט instead of גיניט. Examples taken from Chapter 28, *JY* ed. Lemberg 1873.

⁹¹³ Cohen, *At the bookseller's shop*, 118; see the advertisements of Jacob Ehrenpreis, Lemberg, in: *ha-Magid* 14 April 1874, 124; L.J. Schapira, Warsaw, in: *Ha-Magid* 27 October 1875, 366; Aharon Faust, Krakow, in: *Ha-Magid* 28 February 1877. Furthermore, as Hagit Cohen has informed me (email 7 December 2002), the Romm brothers from Vilna sold a Warsaw edition in 1886, and J. ha-Cohen Ginzburg from Bobroisk offered a Warsaw edition in 1892.

interpretation differed from both traditional historiography and the moralistic, didactic maskilic approach to history. These historians were spurred not by the legitimacy of rabbinic tradition and the idea of a continuing historical narrative. Rather, they turned to history with modern questions about matters such as Jewish integration and participation in surrounding cultures and Jewish intellectual history. The traditional religious narrative had to make way for political, cultural and intellectual interpretations of Jewish history. History, for these historians, replaced religion and ethnicity as the common denominator of Jews and as counterbalance against assimilation. No less important, they began to use modern methodologies, interpreting the past as having been fundamentally different from the present, thereby detaching past and present. Schorsch has summarized the historic agenda of these nineteenth-century scholars as one that stressed the right of free inquiry, introduced a new concept of time, exercised conceptual thinking and intensively engaged Jewish sources from the past.⁹¹⁴

These scholars, who became known by the name *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, no longer wrote in Hebrew and Yiddish, the traditional Jewish languages, but instead used modern languages, most often German, as well as French and English. They had high regard for classical Hebrew, which they considered pure and a language of culture; Yiddish, however, was considered to be jargon and not even a proper language, and literature written in Yiddish was viewed as second-rate and not worth studying.⁹¹⁵ This likely explains why *Sheyris Yisroel* nearly completely disappeared from modern Jewish historiography. Although in Eastern Europe the book enjoyed tremendous popularity, in Western Europe the new Jewish historians hardly referred to it. Hebrew historiography, such as *Shevet Yebudab* and *Zemah David*, was held in far higher regard; moreover, it was studied and used extensively. *Sheyris Yisroel*, however, suffered from the fact that Amelander had written it in Yiddish and because the Hebrew translations from Eastern Europe generally remained unavailable to the *Wissenschaftler* – and probably also because they realized that such editions were anything but reliable.

Indicative of how *Sheyris Yisroel* was regarded in the circles of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is a surprising exchange in 1846 between Selig Cassel (1821-1892) and Fürchtegott Lebrecht (1800-1876). Cassel, who had received a Jewish education and had studied with Leopold von Ranke, was a typical exponent of the German Jewish approach to history: he denationalized Jewish history, emphasizing its religious component, and viewed the work of

⁹¹⁴ Ismar Schorsch, *From text to context. The turn to history in modern Judaism* (Hanover N.H. 1994) esp. 1-5, 151-157, 158-204; summary on 179-181; Meyer, 'The emergence', passim.

⁹¹⁵ See e.g. for the negative opinion of Zunz, Steinschneider and Graetz on Yiddish: Matthias Richter, *Die Sprache jüdischer Figuren in der deutschen Literatur: Studien zu Form und Funktion* (Göttingen 1995) 80-81.

medieval Sephardic intellectuals as a high point of Jewish history.⁹¹⁶ In 1850 he wrote an influential article about Jewish history, of no less than 200 pages, for the important encyclopedia edited by Johann Samuel Ersch and Johann Gottfried Gruber. Michael Brenner has described Ersch and Gruber's project as 'probably the best comprehensive work on Jewish culture published up to that point'. Cassel converted to Protestantism in 1855, calling himself Paulus Stephanus Cassel, and eventually became a missionary for the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.⁹¹⁷ Lebrecht had studied under the Hatam Sopher in Pressburg and the Christian Hebraist Wilhelm Gesenius in Halle. He specialized in Talmud and medieval Hebrew literature. Until 1848 he worked as a teacher at the Berlin *Lehrer-Seminar* founded by Leopold Zunz; after 1856 he became head and librarian of the *Veitel Heine Ephraim'sche Lehranstalt*. Lebrecht was widely respected for his philological and historical studies.⁹¹⁸

In 1845 Lebrecht wrote a study, published in the *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums*, about four sages (ge'onim) who had traveled from the Middle East to the Iberian Peninsula in the tenth century. Lebrecht claimed to be the first to have found the right explanation for their having done so. He proposed to read the Hebrew phrase *הכנסת כלה*, which was used in *Sefer yubasin*, as 'income for the school'. He concluded that the sages had undertaken their journey so as to collect money for the Babylonian yeshivot.⁹¹⁹ Lebrecht, however, was shortly thereafter accused of plagiarizing *Sheyris Yisroel*. Someone, under the pseudonym Hoof, showed in the *Literaturblatt des Orients* that this interpretation was found in *Sheyris Yisroel* and that Lebrecht must have used the book without referring to it.⁹²⁰ Cassel wrote about the same matter and, although he wrote in a more sober style than did Hoof, also showed that Amelander had presented the same interpretation. For his evidence, Cassel used the 1767 Fürth edition. Cassel added that Amelander's interpretation was credible but explicitly noted that this was not because Amelander had been a critical scholar—according to Cassel, he

⁹¹⁶ This was a typical *Wissenschaft* approach to the Jewish past; cf. Schorsch, 'Sephardic supremacy', passim; idem, 'From Wolfenbüttel to Wissenschaft: the divergent paths of Isaak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz' in: idem, *From text to context*, 233-254, there 240.

⁹¹⁷ Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the past: interpreters of Jewish history* (Princeton 2010) 35; Alan Levenson, 'The apostate as philosemite: Selig Paulus Cassel (1821-1842) and Edith Stein (1891-1942)' in: Dagmar C.G. Lorenz, Renate S. Posthofen eds., *Transforming the center, eroding the margins. Essays on ethnic and cultural boundaries in German-speaking countries* (Columbia 1998) 132-145.

⁹¹⁸ Peter Haber, *Zwischen jüdischer Tradition und Wissenschaft: der ungarische Orientalist Ignác Goldziher (1850-1921)* (Cologne/Weimar 2006) 110; *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. Lebrecht, Fürchtegott, consulted on <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=135&letter=L>, (10 September 2010).

⁹¹⁹ Fürchtegott Lebrecht, 'Historische Bemerkung über den Reisezweck der vier Geonim aus Bari im Jahr 960' *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums* II (1845) 2, 99-102.

⁹²⁰ Hoof, in: *Literaturblatt des Orients* 6 (1845) 23.

had had a not especially critical mind—but precisely because he had been an exponent of traditional thought, ‘der ich auch hier wieder in diesen Dingen die Wahrheit zutraue’.⁹²¹ Cassel did not regard Amelander as having been a fellow historian but saw him instead as the voice of Jewish tradition.

Lebrecht vehemently defended himself against the accusations of academic impropriety. First, he explained how he had learned of *Sheyris Yisrael*. According to Lebrecht, as the book was not especially important he could not have been expected to have read it, and that his having ever done so was in fact highly unlikely (‘sehr unwahrscheinlich’). Some weeks after publication of his article he was contacted by the former rabbi of Königsberg, J.M. Goldberg, who told him that Amelander had already proposed the same solution. Lebrecht claimed not to have seen *Sheyris Yisrael* since he was a teenager at yeshiva, and noted that he wished to find out what the book said about the four sages. He sent one of his students to copy the relevant chapter, but the student forgot to note the name of the publisher and the year and place of publication. Thereafter Lebrecht forgot to ask Goldberg for the same details for a subsequent article, in which he would be the first to write about the similarity between Amelander’s and his own interpretation. In the meantime, however, Goldberg sold the book to Cassel, who used it for his own article.⁹²² Hoof was also active in the Berlin world of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and, according to Lebrecht, must probably have heard him talking about *Sheyris Yisrael*.

Second, Lebrecht attacked Cassel’s interpretation of *Sheyris Yisrael*. After having studied the book (and discussed it with Leopold Zunz), he was not so convinced as Cassel that Amelander was an uncritical author. Although Amelander had written for women, he knew Hebrew and Aramaic, was highly erudite and his composition of facts was hardly poor. His work could certainly not stand up to modern critical scholarship, yet he was not merely a simple representative of traditional knowledge. Cassel argued that Amelander should be trusted precisely because he was not critical and had simply been rendering traditional knowledge. Lebrecht, however, argued that the gap between the tenth century and Amelander was far too wide for Amelander to be considered a convincing representative of reliable oral traditions. According to Lebrecht, Amelander had developed a good point about the four sages, but the

⁹²¹ Selig Cassel, ‘Zur Wissenschaft des Judentums. Ueber geschichtliche und literarhistorische Arbeiten dieses 5. Jahrzehntes (Schluß)’, *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judentums* III (1846) 224–240, there 234.

⁹²² Later on, Cassel used this edition of *Sheyris Yisrael* for his famous encyclopedia article on Jewish history, and in an article on the Khazars in which he credited Amelander as having been the first to translate the letters of Chasdai into German (sic); Selig Cassel, ‘Beilage I. Der Brief Josef’s des Chazarenkönigs’ in: idem, *Magyarische Altertümer* (1848) 183–219, there 187.

only way to accurately reach such a conclusion was proper philological research, precisely what Lebrecht had been doing.⁹²³

This discussion between Berlin *Wissenschaftler* shows how *Sheyris Yisroel* was viewed: a book which no one could be expected to have read, while those who had read it regarded it as traditional and uncritical. This discussion is referred to, albeit not in detail, by the Amsterdam Jewish scholars Gabriel Polak and Levie Goudsmit Azn. in their introduction to the Dutch edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*. They regarded this minor debate as evidence of the book's worth for contemporary study of Jewish history and concluded that *Sheyris Yisroel* 'also nowadays by famous and learned contemporaries is regarded as of general authority and a truthful source'.⁹²⁴ Polak and Goudsmit thus translated the book into Dutch and edited it, as did their German colleagues, with other historical source, adding extensive commentary and annotations. Through the Dutch translation Amelander's history book would become acceptable as an historical source for Jewish scholars.⁹²⁵

But there was at least one more reason for this translation. In the introduction to the edition the editors stated that they were offering the book to their compatriots and co-religionists, to the Dutch and to the Jewish public. Jaap Meijer has raised the suggestion that this edition was a Jewish response to the first history of Dutch Jewry written by the Protestant Pietist Jan Hendrik Koenen in 1843: *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland*. Koenen, a friend of the poet and convert to Christianity Isaac da Costa, had written a rather factual account of the history of Jews in the Netherlands, an account which did hide the author's Christian convictions.⁹²⁶ Although Polak and Goudsmit do not mention this reason explicitly, Meijer's suggestion that the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* was a counter-history to Koenen is quite plausible. A number of footnotes in the edition reference Koenen.⁹²⁷ If Meijer's suggestion was indeed the case it would be an irony of history that whereas the original 1743 edition was a counter-history to Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs*, the 1855 Dutch edition served the same purpose towards Koenen's *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland*.

⁹²³ Fürchtegott Lebrecht, 'Zur Wissenschaft des Judenthums. Die Gefangennahme der vier Geonim aus Bari, und die Niederlassung zweier derselben in Andalusien. (Fortsetzung und Schluß)', *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums* III (1846) 422-433.

⁹²⁴ '...nog thans door vermaarde en geleerde tijdgenooten als van algemeen gezag en waarachtige bron aangeduid.' *Se'arith Jisrael*, vi.

⁹²⁵ Cf. on comparable editions of *Emek ha-bakha* and *Shevet Yehudah*: Ismar Schorsch, 'The lachrymose conception of Jewish history' in: idem, *From text to context*, 376-388, there 377-378.

⁹²⁶ Jaap Meijer, H.J. Koenen: *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland (1843): historiografische analyse* [Balans der ballingschap 2/3] (Heemstede 1982); Likewise: Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish historiography', 18-19.

⁹²⁷ Menachem Man ben Salomo Halevi, *Se'arith Jisrael of lo'gevallen der Joden in alle werelddelen van af de verwoesting des Tweeden Tempels tot het jaar 1770*, transl. L. Goudsmit Azn., ed. G.I. Polak (Amsterdam 1855) 110, 137, 373, 537.

Both Goudsmit and Polak had been active in the Netherlands for quite some time in disseminating the ideas of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* among Dutch Jewry. Gabriel Izak/Jacob Polak (1803-1869) was in frequent contact with most German *Wissenschaftler* and contributed to their journals, in both German and Hebrew.⁹²⁸ He used these contacts for this edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁹²⁹ Polak edited religious books, wrote Hebrew stories, conducted historical research, catalogued books and was a teacher.⁹³⁰ Goudsmit also edited religious books, but aimed more at the broader Dutch Jewish public, which he wished to educate and to ‘civilize’.⁹³¹ He regarded history as a proper instrument to reach that goal. In 1853-1854 he edited the journal *Israëlietische Galerij*, in which he collected myriad types of stories, legends, and myths on Jewish history in order to edify the readers. The stories encouraged the journal’s readers to be proud Jews, to act in a civilized way and to adhere to religious and civil morals.⁹³² After this journal failed, Goudsmit tried once again, publishing the monthly *De Echo van Israël* (1855), which was also short lived.⁹³³ Thereafter, until his death in 1876, Goudsmit edited the *Weekblad voor Israëlieten*, which was considered by the rival *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* as too oriented towards German Jewry and too lenient towards Reform Judaism. Goudsmit had frequent clashes with representatives of traditional Judaism, as well as with Marcus Meijer Roest, who was also highly interested in *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.⁹³⁴

The publication of the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* complemented the agendas of Goudsmit and Polak. Goudsmit wrote in the introduction that he regarded the spreading of Jewish history as a means of keeping alive the faith of Jews in the God of their fathers. Moreover, besides strengthening faith the book would also, according to Polak, serve the edification of Dutch Jews. Indeed, he regarded his translation as ‘a stone in the great building of civilization’.⁹³⁵ As a scholar, for Polak the editing of the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* was a way to present a Dutch Jewish source according to the strict rules of the German *Wissenschaft des*

⁹²⁸ In *Ha-Magid*, for example, he wrote on R. Moses Frankfurter and on Amelander in the issue of 26 February 1858 (2 no. 3), 30-31. On Amelander he basically provided the same information as in the Dutch 1855 edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*.

⁹²⁹ Moritz Steinschneider provided him with some information orally; *Seëriyth Jisrael*, 353.

⁹³⁰ Jacques Zwarts, ‘Polak, Gabriel Jacob’ in: *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* 6 (Leiden 1924) 1143-1144.

⁹³¹ L. Goudsmit Az., *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* (NIW) 11 (1876) 30, 2-3.

⁹³² *Israëlietische Galerij, of Verzameling van Joodsche Legenden, Mythen, Kronieken, Vertellingen, enz., betreffende Israëlieten uit alle landen en alle eeuwen*. Onder hoofdredactie van L. Goudsmit Azn. (Amsterdam 1853-1854). Cf. Roest, *Catalog*, 233.

⁹³³ *De Echo van Israël*. Onder hoofdredactie van L. Goudsmit Azn. en met medewerking van onderscheidene letterkundigen (Amsterdam 1855).

⁹³⁴ ‘Politiek’, *NIW* 3 (1867) 22, 85; [J. Mendes Chumaceiro], ‘Staat L. Goudsmit Az. te boek als een “beroerder van Israël”’, *NIW* 8 (1872) 20, 1-2; idem, ‘Het “Weekblad voor Israëlieten” en de Geestelijkheid’, *NIW* 8 (1872) 22, 1-2; B.P., *NIW* 8 (1872) 4, 3; Isaac Lipschits, *Honderd jaar NIW. Het Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad 1865-1965* (Amsterdam 1966) 9-12, 16-17, 20.

⁹³⁵ *Seëriyth Jisrael*, iv.

Judentums. Yet this edition, in its practical emphasis on morality and faith, was a typical product of the Dutch contribution to the field of Jewish studies.⁹³⁶

As were the other nineteenth-century editions, so too was the Dutch *Sheyris Yisroel* adapted to its new public. First, that the book was originally a sequel to *Yosippon* was no longer deemed necessary to note, and so the title page and introduction make no mention of it. The book was also published alone; a companion Dutch translation, by Goudsmit, of *Yosippon* was subsequently planned and announced, but never appeared.⁹³⁷ Several years later, in 1868, a Dutch *Yosippon* was published, translated not by Goudsmit but by M.L. van Ameringen and commented and edited by Polak.⁹³⁸

Second, the paratext of the book changed. This Dutch edition was alone among all the nineteenth-century *Sheyris Yisroel* editions in that it was published according to the new insights of editing historical sources as developed by German historians. The book was heavily annotated, with footnotes on almost page to reference the sources for Amelander's text or to expand and comment on his narrative. The newest scholarly insights were added and the whole community of *Wissenschaftlers* could be found in the notes: Leopold Zunz, Moritz Steinschneider, Marcus Jost, Julius Fürst, Heinrich Graetz, Salomon Geiger, Selig Cassel, Elyakim Carmoly, and (from the Netherlands) Samuel Israel Mulder. Although Polak's policy was not to critically weigh every piece of information provided by Amelander but instead to focus primarily on additional information and to explain the text if necessary for those unfamiliar with the subject, he could not restrain himself from occasionally criticizing Amelander's interpretations. For example, he noted his doubts about the authority of Eldad ha-Dani, whom Amelander trusted completely, and mentioned that Amelander's chronology was not always reliable.⁹³⁹

Third, the Dutch edition had a decisively Dutch character. The editors had chosen as their *Vorlage* the 1771 Amsterdam edition and thus included the new chapter of Baruch ben Joseph Kosman, which dealt almost entirely with Dutch Jewish history. Polak, in making

⁹³⁶ Irene E. Zwiep, 'A maskil reads Zunz: Samuel Mulder and the earliest Dutch reception of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*' in: Kaplan, *Dutch intersection*, 301-317.

⁹³⁷ An advertisement by the publisher J.B. de Mesquita announced an edition by Goudsmit and Polak, 'bewerkers van Scërieth Jisrael in de Nederduitsche taal', thus using *Sheyris Yisroel* to promote *Yosippon*. People interested were invited to subscribe. *Algemeen Handelsblad* 5 July 1855, 4.

⁹³⁸ Joseph ben Gorion ha-Kohen, *Josephus Gorionides, uit het Hebreem'sch vertaald, door M.L. van Ameringen, met geschied- en letterkundige aantekeningen en ophelderingen verrijkt, door G.I. Polak* (Amsterdam 1868). This edition, published by I. Levisson and D. Proops Jz, left out the first few chapters of *Yosippon* from the creation until the fall of Babylon, as the editors were convinced that these were not part of the original tenth-century *Yosippon*.

⁹³⁹ *Scërieth Jisrael*, 5, 17, 69, 561.

additions both in and to the text, provided extra information to his readers. The most significant additions concerned the history of Dutch Jewry. In order to balance the attention given to Amsterdam's Jewish communities, Polak added a lengthy article on the history of the Jews in The Hague, originally published in the *Jaarboeken voor de Israëlieten* in 1836. Moreover, Polak updated the article with contemporary information, such as the note that Barend Samuel Berenstein had since 1848 served as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of The Hague.⁹⁴⁰ He had earlier added more information about Uri ha-Levi, the Ashkenazi first rabbi of the Amsterdam Portuguese Jews, including two statements from Sephardim attesting to ha-Levi's excellence as their rabbi.⁹⁴¹ One more addition was carried over from the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* and translated into Dutch. This concerned the expulsion of the Jews from Bohemia and Moravia by the empress Maria Theresia, and afforded a glorious role to the eventually successful efforts of Dutch Jewry and the Dutch States-General to prevent the expulsion.⁹⁴²

Fourth, the Dutch edition was also a modern one, a product of the nineteenth century. Goudsmit and Polak had difficulties with Amelander's emphasis on the persecutions in *galut*, and at several points they remarked on the great difference between the enlightened present and the dark medieval past. Thus, in the chapter on the Crusades, Goudsmit noted that he would have preferred not to translate everything Amelander had written there, but that he had nonetheless kept to the original text. Concerning the section on the blood libel in Norwich, Goudsmit made clear that such nonsense was, unlike in the Middle Ages, no longer believed. Finally, Amelander, in Chapter 25, wrote about the *gerush Sepharad* and tried to give explanations for the persecutions and expulsions of Jews; the new editors, however, entirely omitted the section from their translation, as they considered it no longer related to the nineteenth century.⁹⁴³

Thus, the Dutch edition was, just as much as the Hebrew and Yiddish editions, a typical product of the nineteenth century. Yet whereas in Eastern Europe *Sheyris Yisroel* became caught between Orthodox and maskilic interpretations, in the Netherlands it was treated as a historical source which could serve two purposes: assisting in the enlightenment of Dutch Jewry and demonstrating Dutch Jewish scholars' ability to collaborate internationally in the

⁹⁴⁰ *Se'irith Jisrael*, 583-588; taken over from: 'Iets over de Israëlieten te 's Gravenhage' in: *Jaarboeken voor de Israëlieten* 2 (1836) 121ff.

⁹⁴¹ *Se'irith Jisrael*, 543-544.

⁹⁴² *Se'irith Jisrael*, 610-615; taken over from: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 25 November 1850, no. 48, 658-660; this journal had the information from an article by Elyakim Carmoly in the *Archives israélites de France*. Interestingly, Carmoly referred in his article to Kosman's continuation to *Sheyris Yisroel* as one of the sources for part of this history.

⁹⁴³ *Se'irith Jisrael*, 174, 364, 402.

framework and paradigm of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The editors had some success in their mission. The book was sold in issues, starting from 24 October 1853, and received attention both in the Netherlands and abroad.⁹⁴⁴ The list of subscribers also testifies to the widespread interest in the book. After its completion, Gabriel Polak's edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* became for some scholars once again an acceptable resource for historical research and was occasionally used for such purposes, e.g. by Jost and Graetz.⁹⁴⁵ Ludwig Philippson's *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, however, considered both the original and the translation to be merely a 'Volksbuch', or popular book, rather than real historiography. Only Polak's commentary gave the edition slightly more weight.⁹⁴⁶ On the whole, however, *Sheyris Yisroel* shared the fate of *Yosippon* in the nineteenth century and remained ignored by most historians.⁹⁴⁷ In the Netherlands the Dutch edition, in critical editions of both Ashkenazi and Sephardic mahzorim, was used to provide historical background for certain liturgical poems and prayers.⁹⁴⁸

The original Yiddish edition, finally, garnered attention from linguistic scholars interested in 'Mischsprachen' (mixed languages), who considered *Sheyris Yisroel* an interesting example of the mixture of Hebrew, German and Dutch.⁹⁴⁹ Yet another appropriation of *Sheyris*

⁹⁴⁴ *Navorscher's bijblad* 4 (Amsterdam 1854) xxi-xxii; *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht* 10 (Utrecht 1854) 336; 11 (Utrecht 1855) 151.

⁹⁴⁵ Isaac Marcus Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Secten* 2 (Leipzig 1859) 196; Isaac Marcus Jost, 'Geschichtliche Bemerkungen und Berichtigungen IV' *Ben-Chanania* 2 (1860) 566-568; the South German rabbi Adolf Lewin, trained at the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary and pupil of Graetz, testified at the end of the century to the generally obscure nature of the book and its popular character, and is precisely for that reason remarkably positive; Adolf Lewin, 'Geschichte, Geographie und Reiseliteratur der Juden' in: J. Winter and Aug. Wünsche eds., *Die jüdische Literatur seit Abschluß des Kanons. Eine prosaische und poetische Anthologie mit biographischen und literargeschichtlichen Einleitungen* II (Trier 1896) 289-473, there 417-421: 'Dieser sonst ganz unbekannt Mann hat die Literatur der Demüthigen durch ein bedeutames Werk bereichert. Der Stein, dem die Bauleute verachtet haben, ist zum Eckstein geworden. (...) Zu dieser Amhaarezlitteratur, welche uns wichtiger und in ihre Wirkungen weit werthvoller ist, als viele hochgelehrten Folianten, gehört auch des Obengenannten 1743 in Amsterdam erschienen Scheerith Israel. (...) ...und oft so schön und richtig erzählt, dass man es auch in unsere Zeit noch mit Vergnügen lesen würde.'

⁹⁴⁶ Anonymus, 'Literaturbericht. VIII', *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 29 October 1855, no. 44, 558-560, there 559. The author wrote that the well-known (!) *Sheyris Yisroel* was 'mehr Volksbuch als ein Muster der Historiographie, und entspricht den jetzigen Anforderungen nicht mehr. Indeß ist eine angemessene Bearbeitung für das Volk noch immer von Werth. (...) ...bei den vielen Mängeln des Werkes war es aber eine höchst günstige Zugabe, daß Herr G.I. Polak, der rühmlichst bekannte Schriftsteller, eine Menge von Anmerkungen hinzufügte, in denen er Berichtigungen, Auseinandersetzungen und Bemerkungen namentlich literarischen Inhalts, aus der ganzen ältern und neuen Literatur giebt. Gewundert hat es uns, daß keiner der beiden Herren Bearbeiter es unternahm, die Geschichte bis jetzt fortzuführen, wodurch es für die Leser neuen Werth bekommen hätte.'

⁹⁴⁷ Steven Bowman, 'Yosippon' and Jewish nationalism', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 61 (1995) 23-51, there 39-40. With the rise of Zionism, however, the status of *Yosippon* changed, whereas *Sheyris Yisroel* remained fixed in the yeshiva canon.

⁹⁴⁸ *Gebeden voor de Vastendagen. Naar den ritus der Nederlandsch-Portugese Israëlieten, op nieuw in het Nederduitsch vertaald door Jb. Lopes Cardoso, Jr.* (Amsterdam 1858) 163-164, 190-191; *Gebeden en Klaagliederen voor den treurdag van Ab. Naar den Nederl. Israëli. ritus. Hebreuwsch en Nederduitsch. Met eene historische inleiding, bewerkt door G.I. Polak en M.L. van Ameringen* (Amsterdam 1868) x.

⁹⁴⁹ Max Grünbaum, an independent scholar of linguistics and literature working at Munich's library, included *Sheyris Yisroel* in his chrestomathy, a collection of passages from Yiddish literature meant as an aid for studying the language; Max Grünbaum, *Jüdischdeutsche Chrestomathie. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Kunde der Hebräischen Literatur* (Leipzig 1882) 361-379.

Yisroel was *Sippurim*, the romantic project of the Prague publisher Wolf Pascheles. This series of German booklets was intended to present the legends of the Prague ghetto, in order to strengthen Jewish national consciousness and increase the reader's involvement in Jewish matters.⁹⁵⁰ Pascheles also invited other scholars to contribute popular stories, and *Wissenschaftler* like Jost, Steinschneider and Max Letteris did so. Marcus Jastrow (1829-1903), who was at the time completing his studies in Berlin and Halle and was later a Reform rabbi in Warsaw, Worms and the United States, contributed a romanticized retelling of the account in *Sheyris Yisroel* of the 1648 pogrom in Niemirow and Tulczyn.

Jastrow structured the story around several main characters, including the local rabbi Jehiel Michel, the tax collector Reb Shaul, Reb Gawriel from Kiev (the richest man in the country) and the Kozak leader Chmielnicki (abbreviated to Chmel). Jastrow maintained himself throughout as the omniscient narrator, and readers were familiarized with the story via invented discussions. Jastrow emphasized the date of 20 Sivan, the day the Niemirow Jews had been slaughtered, but noted that on the same date a year later Chmielnicki himself was killed (in reality, Chmielnicki died in his bed, in 1657).⁹⁵¹ In this case, *Sheyris Yisroel* was not considered a proper historical source, but rather a *Fundgrube* of Jewish popular stories and a goldmine for scholars interested in folklore. Paschele, however, not only or even primarily objected to scholarly research, but considered his collection of stories to be a means of preserving Jewish narrative traditions. Such traditions could in this way be passed on to new generations, such that a new and revived romantic Jewish national consciousness could be forged. Paschele enjoyed some degree of success with this project, as the series was reprinted several times in the nineteenth century and was read by Jews and non-Jews alike; for his efforts he was even awarded a gold medal by the Habsburg emperor Franz Joseph.⁹⁵²

Before he settled in Munich, Grünbaum was for a period a private teacher in Amsterdam and worked as well in New York. In Amsterdam he may have encountered *Sheyris Yisroel*, while his American experiences coloured his analysis of the influence of Dutch on Amelander's Yiddish, as he compared it to language experiences of German Americans. Ludwig Fränkel, 'Grünbaum, Maier' in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 49 (1904) 589-594.

⁹⁵⁰ Wolf Pascheles ed., *Sippurim. Eine Sammlung jüdischer Volkssagen, Erzählungen, Mythen, Chroniken, Denkwürdigkeiten und Biographien berühmter Juden aller Jahrhunderte, besonders des Mittelalters* (Prague 1856) 363; *ibidem* (Prague 1858) 3, where the project is described as 'in bunter Mannigfaltigkeit vorzüglich die Sagen des Prager Ghetto in freundlich erzählender gemüthlicher Weise dem Leser darbeut', and as an exploration of the 'reichen, verborgen gebliebenen Schachte der jüdischen Sage'.

⁹⁵¹ First published in *Sippurim* (Prague 1854) as 'Chmel. (Zum Theil aus Scheriris Jisroel.)' 201-209; in a later edition: *ibidem* (Prague 1882) 201-209. A Hebrew-letter version appeared as well for Yiddish readers; the story could found there also: *ibidem* (Prague 1864) 187-195. On Marcus Jastrow, presently foremost remembered as the author of the rabbinic Aramaic dictionary, see: Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland. A history of conflict* (Oxford/Portland, Oregon, 2005) 151, 161-164, 180, 186-188.

⁹⁵² *Sippurim* (Prague 1856) 3; *ibidem* (Prague 1858) 363.

Despite all the attention *Sheyris Yisroel* received in the nineteenth century, there was one objective that Goudsmit and Polak did not achieve. In the introduction to the book they announced that not only were they working on a successor chronicle to *Sheyris Yisroel* which would cover the period from 1770 until their own time but that they had also already collected much relevant material for the project.⁹⁵³ A Dutch successor chronicle never appeared, however, and the 1855 edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* remained the only one of its kind.

8.6 Between Ultra-Orthodox marginality and academic research

The nineteenth century had been the century of fame for *Sheyris Yisroel*. After the 1870's, however, the number of new editions dropped, and in the twentieth century few editions saw the light of day (two before the Second World War and two thereafter). In Western Europe new research into the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* created a new body of Jewish historical texts and a new canon of Jewish historiography. *Sheyris Yisroel* was no longer needed and was superseded by nineteenth-century scholarship. Just as *Sheyris Yisroel* had once been part of a typical Jewish library, Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden* was now everywhere present. In the middle of the nineteenth century the new Dutch edition could, for a short time, keep the book well known among Dutch Jewry. Soon, however, new history books were written (such as Sluijs' and Hoofien's *Handboek voor de Geschiedenis der Joden*) that would replace Amelander's magnum opus. In Eastern Europe maskilim had used the authority of *Sheyris Yisroel* for several decades to create a new openness for Jewish history and to introduce a new Jewish pantheon. With the rise of new research, also in Russia and Poland, and a gradual turn to German and Russian as new languages of Jewish scholarship, *Sheyris Yisroel* came to have served its purpose and was no longer needed. Scholars who now mentioned the book were often highly critical, including Dubnow, who labeled Amelander 'an ordinary compiler' who 'was even unable to compose an independent chapter about the history of Jews in Holland.'⁹⁵⁴ The only people who remained committed to *Sheyris Yisroel* were the Eastern European Orthodox, for whom the book remained part of the canon of Jewish historiography.

⁹⁵³ *Se'arith Jisrael*, viii.

⁹⁵⁴ Simon Dubnow, *From Cromwell's Commonwealth to the Napoleonic Era* [History of the Jews IV], translated from Russian by Moshe Spiegel (South Brunswick NJ 1971) 297; the German translation uses the even stronger qualification 'geistloser Kompilator' (as cited by Fuks, 'Jiddisches Geschichtswerk', 183). From the passage it becomes clear, however, that Dubnow has not read the full Yiddish edition, but only the abridged Hebrew one, which has a much more fragmentary character.

The first two twentieth-century editions were published in Warsaw, which was continuing to strengthen its position within the Hebrew printing industry at the expense of Vilna. A wide variety of both traditional and new books were published in Warsaw. After World War I the city became the Polish capital, and in 1923 accounted for no less than 70% of the production of Yiddish books in the world.⁹⁵⁵ One of these was a Hebrew edition of *Sheyris Yisroel*; it does not contain a date of publication, but since the book features the text 'Printed in Poland' it must have been published after 1918, when Poland regained its independence. The edition is without doubt an Orthodox one, as the title page provides additional information about who had edited the book: יצא לאור בשלמות מחדש על ידי הר"ר משה מענדל בהרב הר"א ז"ל: וואלדען מחזיק סקלאב בעיר הפלך קעלץ. This Moshe Mendel Walden was the son of rabbi Aaron Walden (1838-1912), who had been central to the late nineteenth-century cultural revolution in Polish Hasidism, which had opened the way for more research and study and had spurred among Hasidim a higher esteem for intellectual activities. Both Waldens were prolific authors, editors and booksellers. Aaron Walden was a Hasid and a follower of R. Menahem Mendel of Kotz and R. Isaac Meir Kalter of Gur. He was a typical exponent of the Orthodox interest in history and historiography; he prepared a new and expanded edition of the rabbinical bio-bibliographic history *Shem ha-gedolim* of Azulai, entitled *Shem ha-gedolim be-hadasb* (Warsaw 1864).⁹⁵⁶ His son, Moshe Mendel Walden, continued his father's activities; he became a rabbi in Kielce (קעלץ) and authored, edited and printed books. He wrote extensively on the history of Hasidism in Poland, among other topics, in his book *Nifla'ot Yitshak*.⁹⁵⁷ The edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* fitted into the Waldens' ideology: interest in Jewish historiography, but within the defined parameters of Orthodoxy. The book was printed in a sober presentation, containing the same contents as had the preceding Warsaw 1879 edition (published by Nathan Shriftgiser, whose father had likewise published books), but without a table of contents.

The other Warsaw edition, also in Yiddish, was published around the same time (catalogues give 1920 as a date, but no year is identified in the book itself) by the bookseller I. Knaster and printed by Sz. Sikora and I. Milner (also Mylner). This edition had a local character: Knaster even had his address (Franciskaner 39, Warsaw) printed on the title page. At that address I. and Mordekhai Knaster had their book shop; a series of Yiddish books were

⁹⁵⁵ Moss, 'Printing and publishing', 1467.

⁹⁵⁶ Gertner, 'Epigonism', 221-224.

⁹⁵⁷ Yohanan Lederman, 'Sur l'influence du *Shem ha-Guedolim* du rabbin 'Haïm Joseph David Azoulai ('Hida) dans la bibliographie hébraïque, de la fin du XIII^e siècle au XX^e siècle', *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem* 2 (1998) 25-38, there 15-17; *ÉJ* s.v. Walden.

printed there by Sikora and Milner. This Warsaw edition follows completely the 1873 Lemberg version, which was itself a translation of the Hebrew edition. Linguistically this twentieth-century edition is updated, but its contents remained largely the same. That it is an Orthodox edition becomes obvious in comparing *Masa Damesek* with the original Hebrew version of Mohr. The Rhodes story, just as in the 1873 edition, is summarized in one line; likewise, God, rather than the Austrian government, is now praised and thanked. The introduction to the story notes that it narrates ‘ וואס השי"ת האט זי גיטון דורך דעם צדיק השר מהר"ר משה מנטפארע והשר 'המליץ ר"א אברהם קרעמא נ"י. Montefiore, who is portrayed as a *zadik*, and Crémieux have become instruments in God's hands for delivering the Damascus Jews. What Mohr once intended as a maskilic story, one that would demonstrate new ways of international Jewish solidarity and which portrayed Montefiore and Crémieux as modern Jewish heroes, had now become an Orthodox tale, one that strengthened and reinforced the traditional Orthodox worldview.⁹⁵⁸

After World War II two further editions of *Sheyris Yisroel* were published in Hebrew, both within the Ultra-Orthodox segment of Israeli society. They were the initiative of Hayim Hominer (1913-1997), a scion of a well-known rabbinical Israeli family. He was a grandson of R. Shmuel Hominer, who had been not only a prolific author of *seforim* (religious Hebrew books), but also among the founders in 1874 of the Haredi Meah Shearim neighbourhood in Jerusalem. Hayim Hominer's father, Shlomo Hominer, was a butcher and gabbay of the Ashkenazi Hevra Kadisha burial society and a highly respected figure in the Jerusalem Haredi world.⁹⁵⁹ Hominer's maternal uncle R. Yosef Zvi ha-Levi (1874-1960) was the first Chief Rabbi of Yafo-Tel Aviv and among the founders of the new Zionist city. The first Hominer edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* was dedicated to him in 1964.⁹⁶⁰ Hominer studied at the religious Zionist *yeshiva* of rav Abraham Isaac Kook, the prominent first Ashkenazi chief rabbi during the British Mandate. Besides being a business man, Hominer was also active in relief work for Jerusalem's poor and sick and owned a small printing firm.⁹⁶¹

⁹⁵⁸ SY ed. Knoster, Warsaw 1920, 68-72.

⁹⁵⁹ In two of Hominer's five *Yosippon* editions he included a short biography of his grandfather, albeit in a hagiographic mode, which has been republished and translated into English as: 'Reb Shmuel Huminer. One hundred years since their arrival in our Holy Land (1871-1971)', on: www.bazach.com/huminer/pdf/r_shmuel.pdf (consulted 18 September 2010); a more complete history of the family in: Hayim Hominer, 'The holy seed its remnant. The origins of the Huminer family in the Holy City of Jerusalem' on: http://www.bazach.com/huminer/pdf/huminer_history.pdf (consulted 18 September 2010).

⁹⁶⁰ Hominer introduces his uncle extensively in: *Sheairith Yisrael*, 7-12.

⁹⁶¹ Biographical information from the university library of the Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, which acquired Hominer's library in 1999; cf. http://bibliothek.uni-halle.de/projekte/bibliothek_chajim_hominer/ and the

For Hominer *Sheyris Yisroel* was part of the traditional Orthodox canon of Jewish historiography Hominer republished many such works at his Jerusalem printing firm, including *Yosippon* (1956), *Sheyris Yisroel* (1964) and *Zemah David* (1966). In doing so, Hominer restored the link to *Yosippon* which had been lost to many nineteenth-century editions. This should actually be credited to Hominer's father, who, after the *Yosippon* edition, had encouraged his son to continue with *Sheyris Yisroel*.⁹⁶²

Hominer's editions, despite resulting from the Orthodox adaptation of modern scholarly methodology, uphold traditional Jewish beliefs. This resulted in hybrid editions. Hominer researched the various editions and presented a well-reasoned explanation for his choice. In the case of *Yosippon* he chose the 1510 cut-and-paste Constantinople edition by Yehudah ibn Moskoni, and asked the Orthodox scholar and editor R. Abraham J. Wertheimer to preface the book. Typical of the hybrid character of all Hominer's editions is that despite all the scholarly remarks Wertheimer upheld the view that *Yosippon* had originally been written by Flavius Josephus.⁹⁶³ The same is true for the *Sheyris Yisroel* edition. Hominer testified to the fact that he had studied the relevant editions available in the Jewish National and University Library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, even going so far as to offer in his introduction a short survey of these editions.⁹⁶⁴ At the same time, Hominer made sure not to use 'heretical' scholarship and cited only books that were acceptable to the Orthodox yeshiva world.

Hominer titled his edition *Sheairith Yisrael complete*, thereby indicating that his edition was the first complete Hebrew translation of *Sheyris Yisroel*. His study of the various Hebrew editions led him to use the 1811 Vilna edition for the first 24 chapters of his own edition. These chapters were translated by the Vilna editor. For the remaining eleven chapters he made his own translation of the 1743 Yiddish original edition, as the Hebrew text of the 1804 Lemberg edition was far from complete.⁹⁶⁵ Hominer's research thus resulted in the first complete Hebrew edition of *Sheyris Yisroel* and what was in fact the third translation of the book into Hebrew. It was also the first Hebrew edition since 1846 not to include *Masa Damesek*. The 1771 addition of Baruch ben Joseph Kosman was likewise left out. This edition aspired to restore the original 1743 text to modern Hebrew readers.

family genealogy on: <http://www.bazach.com/huminer/hebrew/ftmn.asp?GEDID=643> (consulted 18 September 2010)

⁹⁶² *Sheairith Yisrael*, 7.

⁹⁶³ Steven Bowman, 'Yosippon' and Jewish nationalism', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 61 (1995) 23-51, there 45-47.

⁹⁶⁴ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 16, 20-28.

⁹⁶⁵ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 13-15.

Yet that is only half the story. The ‘open book tradition’ was still very much alive for Hominer and he did not hesitate to add new material to the text. At various points in the book Hominer added passages from other Hebrew sources, mostly to complete Amelander’s narrative. Hominer did not use results from recent historiography, but only information from classical Hebrew historiography and religious books. For example, from *Sefer Yubasin* he added the letter of Rabbi Abraham Farissol about the Ten Lost Tribes; in Chapter 10 he included the original Hebrew correspondence between R. Hisdai and the Khazar king, as well as R. Hisdai’s *Shir ha-petikha*; and in Chapter 26, on Shabtai Zvi, he added a passage from Glickl von Hameln’s chronicle. Hominer also added material from responsa by R. Shmuel ben R. David ha-Levi and Haham Zvi, and *selibot* prayers and *keinot* written by R. Shabse ha-Cohen (Shach).⁹⁶⁶ In part these additions are related to the translational turn from Yiddish to Hebrew, such as the inclusion of original Hebrew letters from accepted editions, rather than re-translating them from Yiddish to Hebrew, as the earlier editions had done (with different results in each case). The additions were also a further accentuation of the traditional character of *Sheyris Yisrael*, not least as they offered more information about important rabbis and further liturgical material. Whereas Mohr in 1846 had tried to expand *Sheyris Yisrael* to the maskilic side, Hominer did precisely the reverse. For him the book was entirely Orthodox and he emphasized this aspect even further.

Hominer also annotated the text, but in a very sober way in no way comparable to the Dutch *Wissenschaft des Judentums*-style edition of Goudsmit and Polak. The footnotes contain sources, additions and corrections to Amelander’s text. Sometimes Hominer checked Amelander’s sources and found that the author had made a mistake, such as when he shifted to the evening something that according to the *Shevet Yehudah* had happened in daytime.⁹⁶⁷ More often Hominer added material, such as in naming a few more books written by the Maharil than had Amelander.⁹⁶⁸ A sizable majority of the footnotes contain corrections to the text of *Sheyris Yisrael*. These are mostly very factual and do not address interpretations provided by Amelander. For example, where Amelander writes that Yehudah ha-Levi had edited the *Kuzari*, Hominer corrects him, noting that the famous poet had actually authored the book. And where Amelander notes that Rashi and Rambam had met and that the Rambam had used Rashi’s commentaries, Hominer states that Rashi had in fact lived earlier than Rambam and

⁹⁶⁶ For the complete list of additions made by Hominer, see: *Sheairith Yisrael*, 28-30.

⁹⁶⁷ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 148.

⁹⁶⁸ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 228.

that the latter nowhere cited Rashi's work. Hominer also corrects Amelander, noting that Haham Zvi had been born not in Ofen (Buda) but in Meseritsch.⁹⁶⁹

Hominer's historiographical project enjoyed some success. His *Yosippon* edition was reprinted several times, although *Zemab David* saw only one edition. *Sheyris Yisroel* was reprinted once more, and most recently, in 1988. Through Hominer's edition *Sheyris Yisroel* continued to be read in Haredi circles. That *Sheyris Yisroel* had not been forgotten in the Haredi sector at the end of the twentieth century is demonstrated by the expansionist Hasidic Chabad movement. The late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Schneerson, even referred to the book in recounting a story about the matriarch of Chabad Hasidism, Rivka Schneerson (1833-1914), the granddaughter of the Second Rebbe and wife of the Fourth Rebbe, Shmuel. The stories of her life serve as didactic models for Lubavitcher women, and *Beis Rivka*, the Chabad school system for girls, is named for her. What should women do on a Sabbath evening? Rivka Schneerson would read aloud from the Yiddish *Tsene-Rene*, *Yosippon* or *Sheyris Yisroel* as other women listened.⁹⁷⁰ If contemporary Hasidic women wish to emulate Rivka's reading habits, they must either to turn to old Yiddish versions or obtain the modern Hebrew edition of Hominer.

Hominer's edition, although (from a scholarly point of view) being full of defects, can nevertheless be credited with reviving interest in the book among researchers.⁹⁷¹ Research on *Sheyris Yisroel* started slowly in the second half of the twentieth century, but one of the current initiatives is a new scholarly edition of the book, including translation into modern Hebrew.⁹⁷² This translation could be the first version of the book to be printed solely for its historical worth, as both a resource on Jewish history and a valuable work for understanding eighteenth-century Ashkenazi Jewry. The 'open book tradition' will finally reach its limits in the historicist approach to a classical text of Jewish historiography.

8.7 *The transmission of Sheyris Yisroel*

This chapter has shown how an Amsterdam Yiddish history book of 1743 came to be transmitted throughout Europe and even to Israel over the course of nearly 250 years and in

⁹⁶⁹ *Sheairith Yisrael*, 64, 123, 281.

⁹⁷⁰ Menahem Mendel Schneerson, *Reshimos 112-157* (New York 2004) 483, 490.

⁹⁷¹ Modern scholarly use of *Sheyris Yisroel* e.g. in: Menahem Valdman, *מעבר לנהר כוש* (Jerusalem 1989) 6, 94, 311; Abraham Grinboim, *Prakim be-historiographia shel yabadut Russia* (Jerusalem 2006) 11, 13.

⁹⁷² The project was initiated by Chava Turniansky and Yosef Kaplan of the Hebrew University; http://jewish.huji.ac.il/faculty/yiddish_faculty/Turniansky.html (consulted 12 September 2010).

three languages. The contents of the work changed over time and were deeply influenced by contemporary ideologies, via which the book entered different canons and libraries. What happened to *Sheyris Yisroel* is not unique to this book alone. Indeed, the same sort of story can be told about other classical history books, such as *Shevet Yehudah* and *Zemah David*. The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate that the ‘open book tradition’, with its roots in medieval manuscript culture, continued to operate in the Ashkenazi world until well into the twentieth century.

Sheyris Yisroel began, in 1743, as both a traditional and innovative work. Traditional, in the sense that it accepted the authority of earlier Hebrew historiography, maintained the Orthodox philosophy of history and presented a theological interpretation of Jewish past and present. Yet it was also an innovative work, as it transferred historiography from the Hebrew into the Yiddish domain, familiarized the larger Yiddish-reading public with elite knowledge and used, unashamedly and on a large scale, Christian sources for its narrative. During the nineteenth century *Sheyris Yisroel* was thus claimed by both maskilim, who accentuated its innovative aspects, and by Orthodox, who stressed its traditional outlook. In the long run, *Sheyris Yisroel* survived in the twentieth century only in the Haredi world, as part of a conservative approach to Jewish history and as a counter-history towards modern historical scholarship. Amelander’s magnum opus thus evolved from a daring and innovative initiative into an established element of the traditional yeshiva canon. If anything, the transmission history of *Sheyris Yisroel* demonstrates that the book is not the author’s but of anyone who wishes to use it for his or her own purposes.