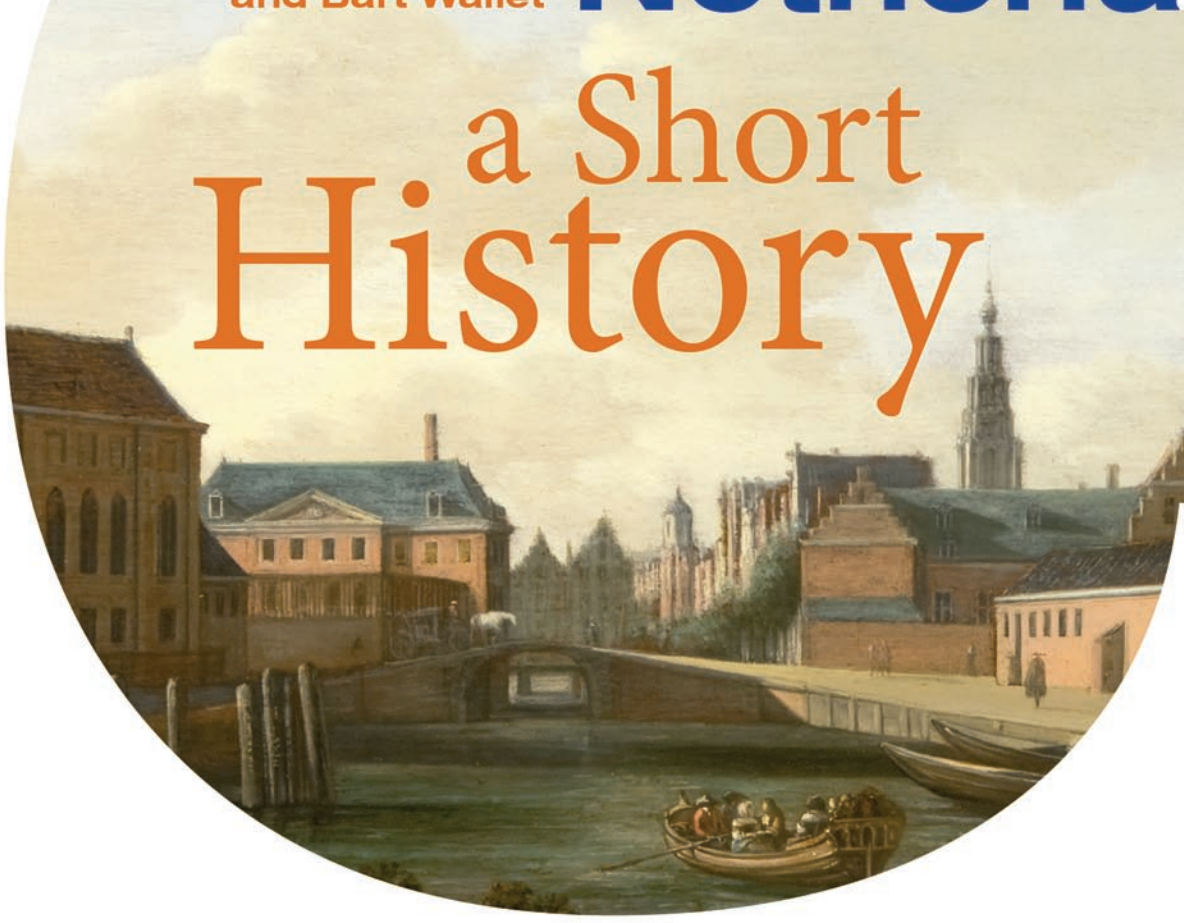
Jews in the Netherlands: a Short History

Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld
and Bart Wallet



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Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld
and Bart Wallet

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Introduction by the authors

Is it possible to describe in brief the essential elements of the history of the Jews in the Netherlands? Most people know little more than fragments of Dutch Jewish history: the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam; Jewish socialism; the devastating years of the Second World War. So where is the storyline? What happened to the Jews in the Netherlands from the moment they first settled there permanently? This book aims to present the main points of 700 years of Dutch Jewish history as a concise, continuous narrative. Many specialist studies and bulky textbooks have of course been written about the history of Jews in the Netherlands, but few of us get around to reading them. A succinct and accessible introduction to the main events has been lacking up to now. Our aim is to bring as many people as possible into contact, in a manner that makes it accessible, with the gripping and sometimes painful story of Jewish life in the Netherlands. We describe how a rapidly evolving Jewish minority succeeded in living, or sometimes merely surviving, in a Dutch society that was changing no less rapidly.

We have chosen to distil that story into a hundred entries that, taken together, present a balanced, representative picture of Dutch Jewish history. Each relates to a central event, place, person or object that helps to explain one important aspect. Each has a short text of around four hundred words, accompanied by a striking, iconic image. They are grouped by century around unifying themes that make them part of an ongoing story.

The narrative takes us from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century, with attention paid to politics, economics, culture and religion, to important rabbis but also to the typical Jewish pedlar or to antisemitism in the Netherlands. The selection has been made in such a way that both well-known and little-known aspects of the past are brought to the fore. It includes both high points and low points. This book is not intended to be the last word on the subject or to give definitive answers. Our pretentions are limited in that respect; we could have opted for countless other places or events, and not everything fitted into the format of one hundred entries. But we intend it to be a resource that will give everybody the opportunity to gain a clear overall view, a starting point from which any reader can set out to find their own way through the story of the Jews in the Netherlands.

Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld and Bart Wallet

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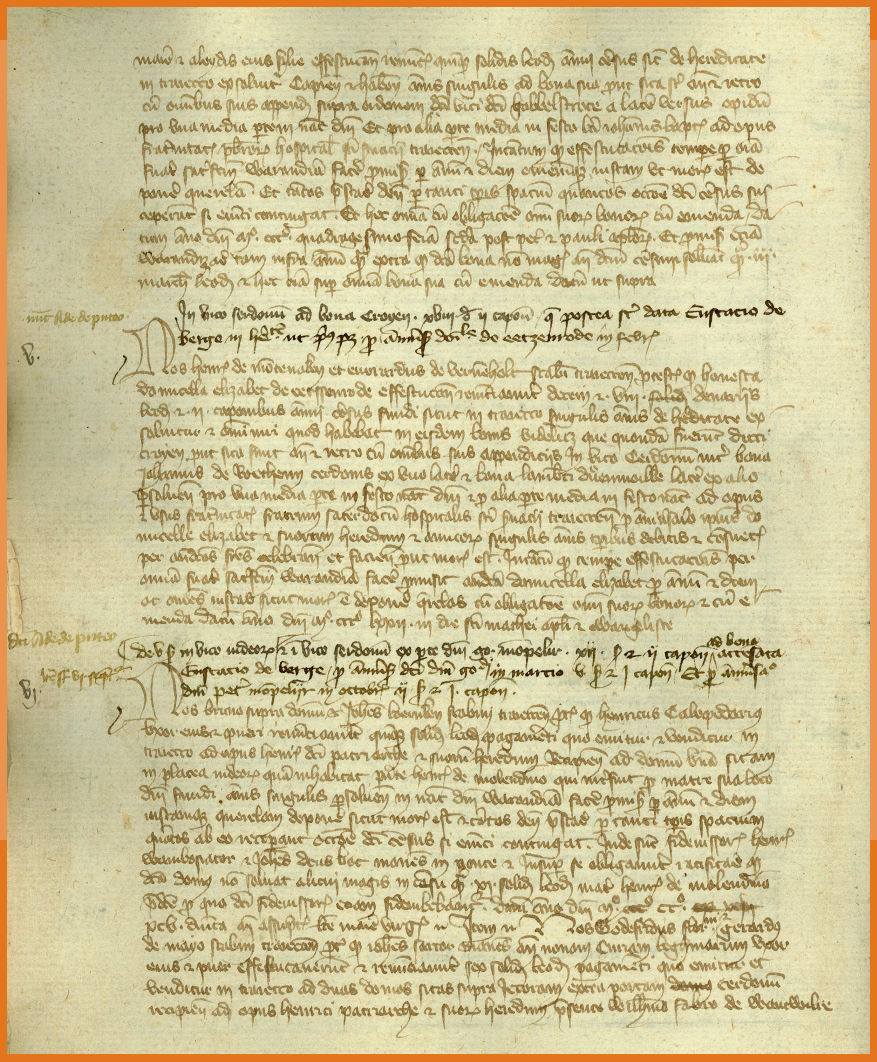
1295

Middle Ages: Jodenstraat in Maastricht



The street known as the Joden straat or 'platea judaeorum' in Maastricht was first mentioned in an alderman's document of 1295.

Collection of the Historisch Centrum Limburg, Maastricht: 14 B002 H, inv. no. 4, folio 43v. Broederschap der kapelanen Sint Servaas, Cartularium 1300–1469.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-2

The Jodenstraat ('Jew Street') in Maastricht is one of the oldest streets in the city, in a small Jewish district that includes a synagogue and a Jewish school founded in about 1295. It represents clear evidence that Jewish people lived in the Low Countries during the Middle Ages. They settled here over the course of the thirteenth century and it is not hard to guess why, since the Jews were driven out of England in 1290 and out of France in 1306. In the south of what is now the Netherlands, and in some of its eastern regions, Jews found places where they believed they could settle permanently. All were on important trade routes. As well as Maastricht, we see Jews taking up residence in the same period in Diepenheim, Goor, Oldenzaal, Zwolle, Nijmegen, Doesburg, Zutphen and Roermond. They were mainly engaged in banking and moneylending. Jews in Gelderland enjoyed the protection of their duke, based on their status as servants (*servi*) of the sovereign. As a quid pro quo, the duke could impose taxes on them.

The Black Death that held western Europe in its grip from 1348 onwards put an end to the Jewish presence in those disparate towns. Jews were seen as enemies of the Church and the Christian community, and accused of being behind the outbreak of plague. They were said to have poisoned the wells. In the German territories and the southern Low Countries, Jews were burned, drowned and murdered in retaliation. As the death and devastation spread further north, Jews in Zwolle, Utrecht, Broek, Nijmegen, Zutphen, Deventer and Kampen were targeted by angry crowds, and for the time being, Jewish life ceased in the medieval towns of the northern Netherlands.

The situation soon changed, however. From 1368 onwards we again come upon Jews, in Nijmegen and Roermond, and later in Zwolle and Venlo. In the first half of the fifteenth century, Nijmegen developed into the most important Jewish centre in the region, with its own meat market, ritual baths and cemetery. Venlo, 's-Hertogenbosch and Doesburg now each had their own Jodenstraat. Persecutions in the neighbouring German territories were probably in part a response to the immigration of Jews to these regions. Here too anti-Jewish measures made the situation increasingly unfavourable, especially since Jews were forced to wear a distinguishing mark. Accusations of usury made it more and more difficult for them to work in financial services, their most important source of income. Faced with increasing tensions, the Jews turned their backs on the Low Countries and in the sixteenth century they were no longer welcome. The initiative that led to a revival of settlement came from a quite different and unexpected direction.

'The Jodenstraat ("Jew Street") in Maastricht is one of the oldest streets in the city, in a small Jewish district that includes a synagogue and a Jewish school founded in about 1295. It represents clear evidence that Jewish people lived in the Low Countries during the Middle Ages.'

1600

Seventeenth century: the century of 'New Jews'



View of the Great Synagogue and the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, c.1680, Gerrit Adriaenszoon Berckheyde.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M 011075.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-3

Whereas in the late Middle Ages it had been increasingly hard for Jews to settle permanently in the Low Countries, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Jewish presence grew once more. First to arrive were Spanish and Portuguese 'New Christians' or 'Conversos', who came from the Iberian Peninsula. Many now reverted to the original faith of ancestors who had converted to Christianity, whether of their own free will or under duress, from the end of the fourteenth century onwards. They thereby became 'New Jews'. Out of nowhere, these Spanish and Portuguese Jews, who also became known as Sephardim, established a congregation, in theory intended only for members of the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish nation (*a nação* or *la nación*). Not long after, from the German territories, central Europe and Poland came High German and Polish Jews, known as Ashkenazim. It was the start of more than four centuries of continuous Jewish presence in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces and in the state that eventually became the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Both groups regarded the young Dutch Republic as an attractive destination, now that it had won its freedom from Spanish Catholic hegemony in a war of independence. The new state had set down freedom of conscience in what it regarded as a constitution, and Amsterdam was developing into a global trading centre that offered great economic opportunities to new migrants.

The Dutch Republic had no experience in regulating the Jewish presence in its midst. The States of Holland and West Friesland took the initiative by developing a body of Jewish Regulations (*Jodenreglement*), but these were not put into practice. In the end, the towns and villages in that part of the country had to decide for themselves what the rules should be, although they were not permitted to force Jews to wear something to mark themselves out as Jewish. Other Dutch provinces followed, until every town and region had developed a series of statutes and a policy of its own. Some welcomed Jews on certain conditions, while others banned them from their territories. This reflects the medieval concept of the nation, according to which the legal position of ethnic minorities was regulated. Jews were responsible for their internal organization, including poor relief, education, care for the sick, and the maintenance of peace and order within their ranks. They could, however, rely on the support and protection of the authorities without a collective tax being imposed on them.

The distinction between the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds was less sharply defined than such regulations suggest. Nowhere was there a ghetto. Jews and Christians met as neighbours, and increasingly in the worlds of trade and industry, scholarship and culture. True, anti-Jewish sentiments could sometimes be found on the Christian side, but above all there was enormous admiration for and interest in Jewish culture.

The Dutch Golden Age, roughly from 1588 to 1672, was a period when the Netherlands flourished in the religious, economic, cultural and social spheres, and its success benefitted all those living in the Dutch Republic, Jew and non-Jew alike. It was also a turbulent period of wars and epidemics, and the furore surrounding the arrival of the mystical messiah Sabbatai Zevi made the period even more deeply troubling for Jews. The Sephardi and Ashkenazi synagogues, built on the Muidergracht in Amsterdam in the 1670s, nevertheless attest to a triumph of stability and faith in the future.

'The distinction between the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds was less sharply defined than such regulations suggest. Nowhere was there a ghetto. Jews and Christians met as neighbours, and increasingly in the worlds of trade and industry, scholarship and culture.'

1602



Silver Torah shield donated in 1606 by Jacob and Rachel Tirado to the first Portuguese congregation in Amsterdam, Beth Jacob. It was made by Leendert Claesz. of Emden. One of the first rabbis of the Portuguese congregation in Amsterdam, Uri Halevi, also came from Emden.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam. On loan from the Portuguese Israelite Community Amsterdam: MB01881.

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Beth Jacob

Beth Jacob, founded in about 1602, was the first Jewish congregation to establish itself in Amsterdam. Jews had largely disappeared from the medieval towns of the Low Countries after their initial settlement, but in the late sixteenth century in Amsterdam, a new Jewish community arose out of nowhere. This *kehillah* was founded by a group of former New Christians. The Inquisition in Spain and Portugal had persecuted them and accused them of remaining faithful to Judaism in secret, but the fear instilled in them was not their only reason for moving to the city. Portuguese merchants were attracted by Amsterdam, which had grown to become a successful global trading centre. They were seeking new opportunities for trade between northern and southern Europe, now that the port of Antwerp was permanently blockaded by the Dutch.

The province of Zeeland made the first move, in 1587, by giving Portuguese merchants the right to trade in the northern provinces, and the States General of the Netherlands, the country's federal parliament, followed its example in 1588. The influx of Portuguese Jews quickly grew and they chose Amsterdam in preference to Haarlem, Alkmaar or Rotterdam, despite the fact that those cities were offering attractive terms and conditions in an effort to entice them.

'Jews largely disappeared from the mediaeval towns of the Low Countries after their initial settlement, but in the late sixteenth century in Amsterdam, a new Jewish community arose out of nowhere.'

The religious convictions of the newcomers were at first shrouded in mystery. In 1598 cities like Amsterdam assumed they would not practise any religion in public other than that of the Reformed Church. Slowly, however, many of the new immigrants turned, or returned, to the faith of their ancestors, encouraged by the relative tolerance laid down in a treaty that was regarded as the new Dutch Republic's constitution, the Union of Utrecht. Article XIII promised freedom of conscience in religious matters. As 'New Jews' they tried to make a new lifestyle their own, that of normative Judaism with all its commandments and prohibitions.

In 1639 the three Portuguese congregations that had meanwhile developed united into one, the Portuguese Jewish Congregation Kahal Kados de Talmud Torah, which exists to this day. It made Amsterdam the most important northern centre of the Sephardi diaspora after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

Inspired by the Portuguese example, Jews in the German Empire, Poland and central Europe were attracted by Amsterdam's economic success and relative tolerance. They wanted to build a new life for themselves and leave pogroms, wars and poverty behind. So from the early seventeenth century onwards, Jewish life was an integral part of the city.

1608



Image of Salé in North Africa, from P. Dan, *Historie van Barbaryen en deszelfs Zee-rovers* (History of Barbarians and of their Pirates), Amster dam, 1684), p. 203.

Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: 0632230_002.

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Samuel Pallache

Samuel Pallache was certainly a colourful figure, a 'man of three worlds: a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe'. He sometimes passed himself off as a commercial and diplomatic representative in the Low Countries of the sultan of Morocco, sometimes as an informant, intermediary and spy specializing in Moroccan affairs at the court of the Spanish king in Madrid. He even tried to settle permanently in Spain and convert to Catholicism, but had to leave the country in a headlong rush to avoid imprisonment by the Inquisition. Just how active he was in the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam is a matter of dispute, but he was probably a member of the Portuguese congregation Neve Salom. His grave can be found in the Portuguese Jewish cemetery in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel near Amsterdam, where he was buried in 1616. The funeral procession was accompanied all the way out to the edge of The Hague by Maurice, Prince of Orange, so eager was he to pay his last respects.

Pallache was born in about 1550 in Fez, Morocco, to a prominent Spanish Jewish rabbinical family from Córdoba that had settled in Morocco after the Jews were driven out of Spain. The course of his life was convoluted and his identity complex, as were those of many Spanish and Portuguese Jews in early modern Europe. During his career, moreover, he made inconsistent choices, based on whatever was politically and socially expedient. Pallache was a true cosmopolitan, travelling between Africa and Europe in apparently irreconcilable capacities as both a merchant and a privateer, an accredited diplomat but also a spy, a Jew yet a Christian. He was extremely wealthy but ended his days in deep poverty.

He is said to have made his first visit to the Low Countries in 1608, and between 1609 and 1614 he was involved in many diplomatic and financial transactions between Morocco and the Dutch Republic, while at the same time operating as a privateer for both countries against Spain. When Morocco and the Dutch Republic signed a treaty, Pallache was awarded a gold chain and medallion by the States General. Meanwhile he was spying for Spain and spent time imprisoned in England. His knowledge of languages enabled him to act as a negotiator and intermediary, and he served several nations in that capacity without committing himself exclusively to any of them. A prominent place in the community was reserved for the Dutch branch of the family, which now spelled its name Palache. In 1900, Isaac Palache was appointed grand rabbi of the Portuguese congregation of Amsterdam, and in 1925 his son Juda became a professor of Semitic languages at the University of Amsterdam. To this day, the Palache family is closely involved with day-to-day events concerning the Jews of the Netherlands.

'Pallache was a true cosmopolitan, travelling between Africa and Europe in apparently irreconcilable capacities as both a merchant and a privateer, an accredited diplomat but also a spy, a Jew yet a Christian. He was extremely wealthy but ended his days in deep poverty.'

1614



Arrival by barge at the Portuguese Jewish cemetery in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, 1680. Romeyn de Hooghe.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M01104.

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Beth Haim in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel

The newly established Jewish community searched for land suitable for a cemetery. Jewish graves must never be cleared, so there was a pressing need for a specifically Jewish place of burial. In 1614 Amsterdam's Portuguese Jews obtained a plot of land in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, despite fierce protests by local residents, and it still serves as a final resting place for the city's Portuguese Jewish community. Some 27,000 people are buried there.

The gravestones illustrate the cultural diversity of the Portuguese Jews, and not all of them appear to comply with the second of the Ten Commandments, which forbids the making of any sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. The writing on the gravestones is in several languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Hebrew, Latin and Dutch) and it is often accompanied by fine poetry, effigies and symbols. At first Ashkenazi Jews were buried in Ouderkerk too, and it also became the final resting place for some Black Jewish people, mostly servants.

By 1642 the High German congregation was big enough to buy a piece of land for itself, in Muiderberg. The Polish Jewish congregation, established in 1660, bought a plot next to it, and the two were joined together when the congregations merged in 1673. The cemetery is still in use to this day, and 45,000 people now lie at rest there. Monuments have been erected at cemeteries including those in Ouderkerk and Muiderberg to commemorate the Jews who died in the Shoah.

Burial in Muiderberg was not possible for every Ashkenazi Jew, since the journey from Amsterdam, often by barge, was long and expensive. So in 1714 a cemetery was laid out in Zeeburg in Amsterdam for the poor, who were unable to pay synagogue dues, and for migrants and children under thirteen years of age. Jews were also buried there if they died shortly before the Sabbath or a Jewish holiday, making a burial at Muiderberg impractical for lack of time. The high rate of immigration by Ashkenazi Jews from the early eighteenth century onwards saw Zeeburg grow to become the largest Jewish cemetery in the Netherlands, with 95,000 people interred there between 1714 and 1942. By 1914 Zeeburg was full, and a new cemetery was laid out in Diemen. After the Second World War part of the Zeeburg cemetery was cleared and the rest fell into ruin for lack of maintenance, with only around a hundred gravestones remaining. Today, Ouderkerk, Muiderberg and Amstelveen (the cemetery of the Reform Congregation of Amsterdam) are the main burial places for the Jews of the city, while an organization known as the Stichting Eerherstel Joodse Begraafplaats Zeeburg, a foundation established for the purpose, is attempting to restore access to the largest Jewish cemetery in the Netherlands and maintain it properly, in order to pay tribute to people who would otherwise be entirely forgotten.

'Today, Ouderkerk, Muiderberg and Amstelveen (the cemetery of the Reform Congregation of Amsterdam) are the main burial places for the Jews of the city.'

1615



The board of dowry organization Dotar brings the lottery bowls from the boardroom of the Portuguese congregation to the Portuguese Synagogue ahead of the lottery in 1965. From front to rear, Chacham Salomon Rodrigues Pereira, Izaak Pais, Sal Vaz Dias, David de Valença, Rehuel Cohen Lobatto, Leo Palache and *chazan* (cantor) Sal Nunes Nabarro.

Algemeen Hollands Fotopersbureau, Amsterdam, 1965. Collection of the Portuguese Synagogue, Amsterdam: F0524.

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Santa Companhia de Dotar Orphas e Donzellas

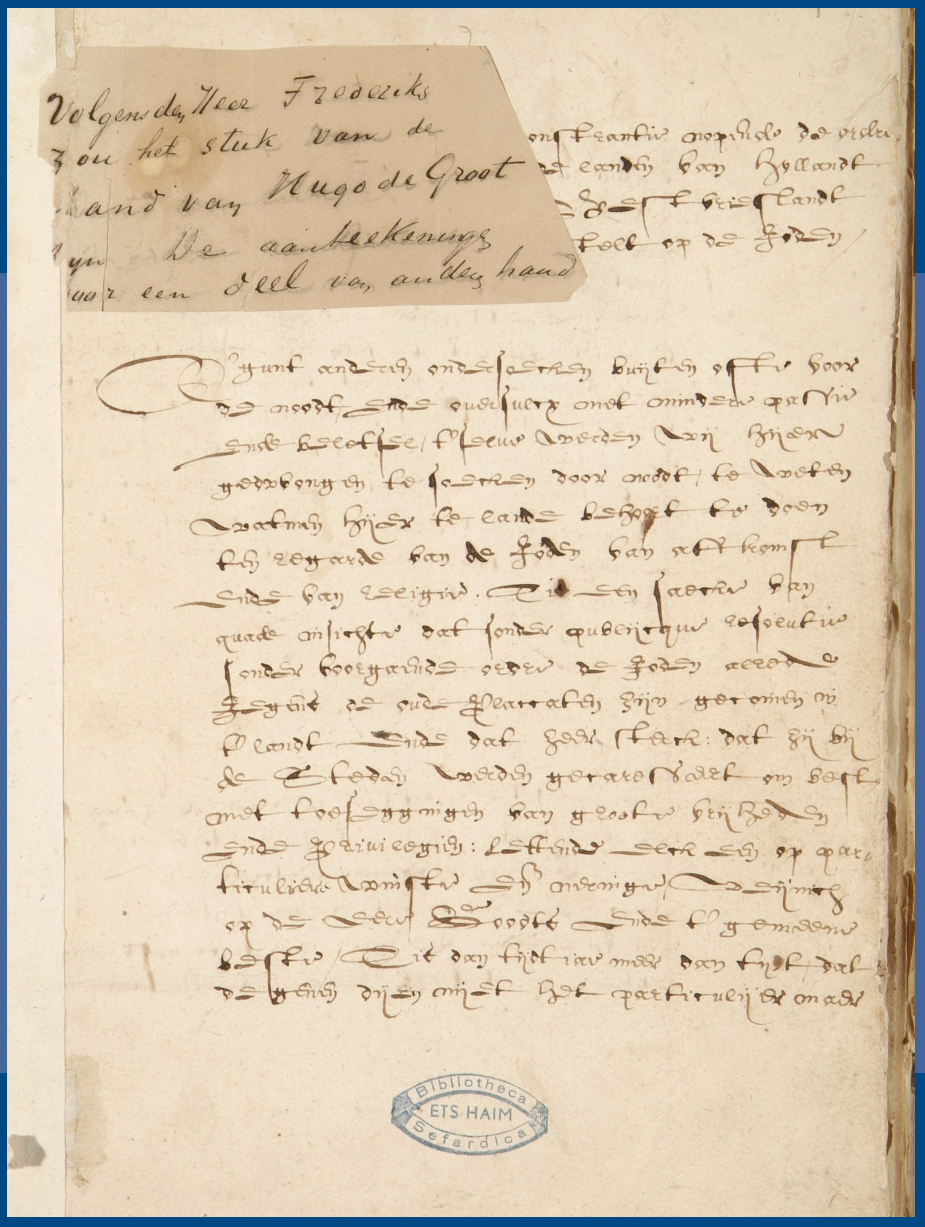
Jewish brides are traditionally given a dowry when they marry, often supplemented by a sum donated by the bridegroom's family. The Jewish community, sometimes through an organization set up to that end, might help poor families unable to afford dowries. In the late sixteenth century, the Ashkenazim in Venice founded such an organization, as did the High German congregation in eighteenth-century Amsterdam. They focused attention on their own local poor.

The Santa Companhia de Dotar Orphas e Donzellas, established in 1615 and known as Dotar, was very different in that it offered help to orphaned or impoverished girls even if they lived far beyond the borders of the Dutch Republic. Dotar was modelled after institutions in Catholic Spain and Portugal, but it imitated most closely an organization founded by Spanish Jews in the ghetto of Venice. Dotar had a similarly ethnic and religious character, as it was intended for girls who belonged to the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish nation, but it went further by offering support not just to the Sephardi diaspora but to those still living in Catholic countries (except for the Iberian Peninsula) where it was impossible to profess the Jewish faith publicly. With the assistance of Dotar, a girl could be brought into the Jewish fold and kept within Judaism by marriage to a circumcised Jew, according to Jewish law. It was a noble aim that helped the Portuguese community in Amsterdam to set itself up as the centre of the western Sephardi diaspora.

Many wealthy Portuguese Jews, especially in Amsterdam, were prepared to pay a relatively high admission fee to join Dotar. They were subjected to a ballot and if they were admitted, membership was hereditary. The large, solemn lottery held on or around Shushan Purim (the fifteenth of the month of Adar -II-) still takes place annually. Over four centuries, hundreds of girls from all round the world have attempted to secure a dowry through Dotar. Handwritten petitions replete with all kinds of fascinating details were once submitted, whereas now there are rather dry preprinted forms. Since the 1950s boys too have been able to apply for a dowry, and nowadays the work of Dotar is mostly confined to within the Dutch borders, but despite all the changes over time, it has managed to preserve a centuries-old tradition.

'Dotar was modelled after institutions in Catholic Spain and Portugal, but it imitated most closely an organization founded by Spanish Jews in the ghetto of Venice.'

1615



Fragment from the *Remonstrantie* by Hugo Grotius, 1615.

Collection of the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam: M009971.

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Hugo Grotius's *Remonstrantie*

The promise of religious freedom contained in Article XIII of the Union of Utrecht of 1579 was not made with Jews in mind. At the request of the States of Holland and West Friesland, a set of regulations for the Jews was developed in 1615, with jurist Hugo Grotius as its most important architect. Grotius raised three issues: whether it was desirable that Jews should settle in the Dutch Republic; whether, if so, they should be allowed to practise their traditional religious customs; and to what degree the damage done to Christianity and the state by their presence, were it to be permitted, could be kept within bounds.

In his *Remonstrantie* Grotius expressed himself in favour of the settlement of Jews in the Dutch Republic, but he attached limitations, such as a maximum of three hundred Jewish families in Amsterdam. His regulations were never implemented in full, since ultimately the States of Holland and West Friesland decided that each city could promulgate its own rules, except that Jews must not be forced to wear a distinguishing mark.

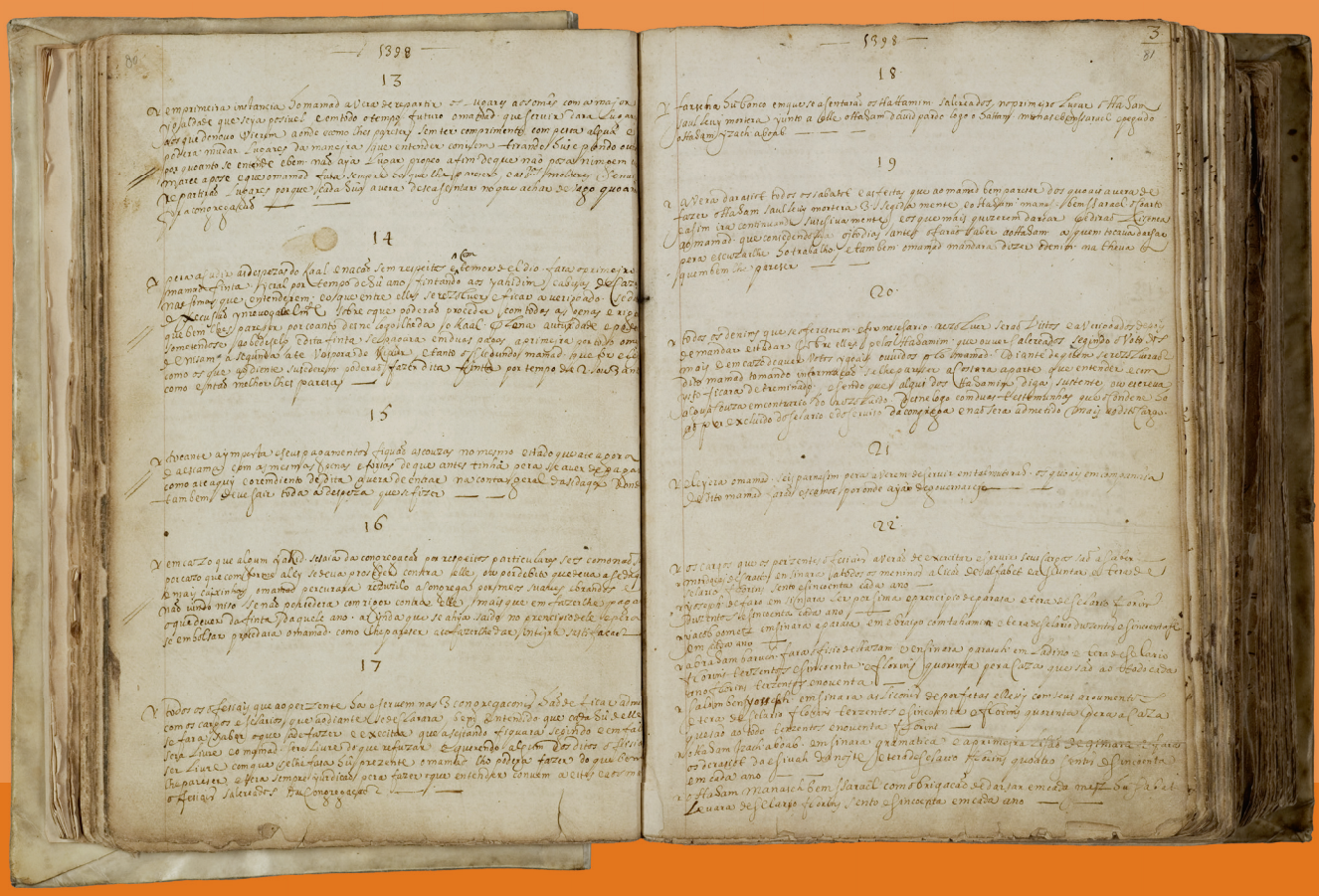
Since 1616 the city of Amsterdam had forbidden Jews from speaking or writing anything critical of Christianity, persuading Christians to convert to Judaism, or having sexual contact with Christian women. Later (from 1632 onwards), Jews were forbidden to engage in those commercial activities that were open only to citizens, occupations known as *poorters-neringen*, which amounted to excluding them from most of the trades that were organized by guilds (with the exception of the brokers', physicians', surgeons', apothecaries' and bookdealers' guilds). Restrictions were also placed on retail, and in theory Jews could have only grocery or tobacco shops.

Although they were denied full civil rights, from a European perspective the Dutch Republic had a relatively high degree of tolerance for Jews. There was no ghetto. Jews did not need to pay collective taxes, and they were not dependent on contracts that meant they continually had to fight to be allowed to stay, as was the case elsewhere. Most of the restrictions placed upon them remained in force until 1796.

By that year, other provinces had adopted more or less the same rules as the province of Holland, yet Jews were not admitted everywhere. They could not live in the city of Utrecht until 1789, for instance, nor in certain rural districts. Where they were legally admitted, the Jewish community was largely entrusted to its own leadership for the keeping of peace and good order. This explicitly included care for its own poor. Jews were given the opportunity to abide by their own system of laws as far as possible, except where monetary transactions were concerned, or anything touching upon criminality. The authorities interfered as little as possible in the affairs of the Jewish community and generally intervened only at its request. Jews meanwhile maintained good relations with the city government, as one way of strengthening their position. Jews all over Europe were aware of the relative tolerance they would encounter in the Dutch Republic, especially in Amsterdam, and it contributed in no small part to the attraction the city held for them.

'Grotius raised three issues: whether it was desirable that Jews should settle in the Dutch Republic; whether, if so, they should be allowed to practise their traditional religious customs; and to what degree the damage done to Christianity and the state by their presence, were it to be permitted, could be kept within bounds.'

1616



Article 22 of the founding statutes of the united Portuguese congregation Talmud Torah in 1639, with a specification of the division of classes, teaching staff and types of education at the Talmud Torah school and the Ets Haim yeshiva.

Archive of the Portuguese congregation in Amsterdam (SAA 334, inv. no. 19, p. 3/81), Collection of the Amsterdam City Archives.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-9

Talmud Torah

The first Jewish school in Amsterdam, Talmud Torah, was probably founded at the same time as the city's first Jewish congregation, Beth Jacob. The school became more widely known only after a second Portuguese congregation, Neve Salom, came to an agreement with Beth Jacob in 1616 that meant they would run the school in tandem. Later they were joined by a third, Beth Israel, and eventually the school fell under a united congregation that adopted the same name: Talmud Torah.

It became apparent that some pupils were unable to continue their studies in the higher school classes for lack of money, so a scholarship fund was established in 1637 under the name Ets Haim, to provide bursaries for poor students. The Talmud Torah high school or yeshiva then took that same name. Today the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos library recalls the existence of the school.

The study of Jewish law is central to Judaism and its importance was made all the greater by the fact that this new group of immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula had been cut off from normative Judaism for generations. A range of study societies came into being, including Keter Torah and Meirat Henaim, where male Conversos could master the basic principles of Judaism. So for boys there was first the Talmud Torah school and then, for advanced students who wanted to pursue their Jewish studies further, the Ets Haim yeshiva. These schools had an uncompromising structure, with six classes based on age, after the example of the Jesuits.

Their special curriculum and strict timetable soon attracted attention. The Torah was studied with the help of translations into and commentary in Spanish, while the highest classes studied the Talmud. The students also received intensive instruction in Hebrew grammar and poetry, and were trained in rhetoric and calligraphy. Each was further coached by means of education in the home, and special attention was paid to Hebrew and Spanish, along with any other subjects that particularly interested him.

Visitors from eastern Europe praised the school. Prominent rabbis were educated there and as well as serving in the Dutch Republic, they went on to lead Sephardi congregations in Italy, Hamburg, London, New York and the colonies. Alongside their religious instruction, poor boys were given lessons in reading and writing Portuguese, and they might if necessary be supplied with food, clothing, books, phylacteries or prayer shawls. In accordance with the Iberian tradition at the time, no education outside the home was given to women or girls in the early modern period. Only home schooling could drive down illiteracy among them. It would nevertheless be true to say that the Portuguese made huge efforts to educate both children and adults.

'Prominent rabbis were educated there and as well as serving in the Dutch Republic, they went on to lead Sephardi congregations in Italy, Hamburg, London, New York and the colonies.'

1635



Synagogue service in the Great (Ashkenazi) Syna gogue on the occasion of the three-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Amster dam's High German Congre gation on 14 November 1935. Martin Monnickendam, 1935.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M003250.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-10

Founding of the Ashkenazi congregation Amsterdam

Attracted by the booming economy of Amsterdam and fleeing persecution, wars and economic malaise in the German territories, the first Ashkenazi Jews settled in Amsterdam in the early decades of the seventeenth century. At first they were highly dependent on the Portuguese Jewish community, although in 1635 they established their own congregation and in 1642 bought a plot of land for a cemetery in Muiderberg. A second wave of Ashkenazi immigrants came from further east, out of Poland and Russia, as a result of the Chmielnicki pogroms of 1648–49 in Ukraine and the war between Russia, Poland and Sweden of the 1650s. This second group initially formed a *kehillah* of its own in 1660, to the immense displeasure of the existing Ashkenazi congregation, but in 1673, on the orders of the city authorities, it was forced to back down and join Amsterdam's High German synagogue.

The congregation was often led by rabbis from Germany, Bohemia and Poland, including Moses ben Jacob Weile from Prague (its first rabbi) and David ben Aryeh Leib from Lida. There were several schools providing boys with a Jewish education, as well as teachers who would come to the home. A Talmud Torah school was established in 1660 and a yeshiva, the Beth Hamidrash Ets Haim, decades later, in 1740.

In the eighteenth century the number of Ashkenazim increased hugely, mainly because of immigration. In Amsterdam alone, they completely eclipsed the Portuguese numerically after 1700, and by 1750 there were 14,000 Ashkenazim as against 4,583 Sephardim. Poverty among the Ashkenazim was dire; in the late eighteenth century in Amsterdam, 87% of the community was in receipt of poor relief. Many worked as stallholders at markets, as pedlars, servants or employees in industry. International trade, especially with the German territories and eastern Europe, or with London as a hub, was in the hands of prominent families with names including Gomperts, Goldsmid, Van Oven, Preger, Diamantschleifer and Cohen. The Amsterdam Ashkenazim included several important physicians and intellectuals, such as Hartog Alexander van Embden, David ben Phoebus Wagenaar and Eleasar Soesman.

Ashkenazim were more likely than Sephardim to live elsewhere in the Dutch Republic. Most at first opted for Rotterdam or The Hague, but later they settled in the towns and villages of the provinces Groningen, Friesland, Overijssel and Gelderland. The vast majority there lived from retail trade and the buying and selling of livestock, although they included a few rich Ashkenazi merchants, like the Boas family in The Hague, the Gomperts family in Nijmegen and the Cohen family in Amersfoort, which earned their money through banking and industry, especially the tobacco industry. The Ashkenazi congregation in Amsterdam is still to this day the largest Jewish congregation in the Netherlands.

'The congregation was often led by rabbis from Germany, Bohemia and Poland, including Moses ben Jacob Weile from Prague (its first rabbi) and David ben Aryeh Leib from Lida.'

1641



Esther Scroll, 1650, Salom Italia.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M000432.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-11

Salom Italia in Amsterdam

The Jews in the Dutch Republic soon began looking for artists to decorate important manuscripts, books and objects of a ceremonial nature, such as the *megillot Esther* (Esther Scrolls), *ketubot* (marriage contracts) or *haggadot* (small books of liturgy, prayers, songs and rituals, used at a Pesach seder). Furthermore, prominent Jews wanted to have their portraits painted for posterity.

Salom Italia (*c.*1619–1655) spotted an opportunity. He had come from Mantua to Amsterdam in 1641 as an engraver, etcher and draughtsman, and he lived and worked in the city for about fifteen years. The most famous of his works are his illustrated Esther Scrolls, his *ketubot*, his portraits of Menasseh ben Israel and Jacob Juda Leon Templo, and his illustrations in Menasseh ben Israel's *Piedra Gloriosa* of 1655.

He was not the only illustrator. His colleague Benjamin Senior Godines worked on book illustrations that include images of the five senses in the *Me'ah Berakhot* (One hundred benedictions), which he completed in 1687. Godines was responsible for the calligraphy of a 1690 medical treatise by Abraham Zacuto called *Tratado sobre Medecina que fez o Doutor Zacuto para seu filho levar consigo quando se foy para o Brazil*, taken to Brazil by Zacuto's son. He painted several Memento Mori and Vanitas pictures, for one of which he used the Portuguese cemetery in Ouderkerk as a backdrop.

In 1664 another artist, Judah Machabeu, embellished the manuscript of Chacham Saul Levi Morteira, *Providencia de Dios con Ysrael*. Abraham Machorro performed the same task with the manuscript *Respuesta a un Filosofo Hebreo* (1668) by physician and philosopher Isaac Orobio de Castro. Aron de Chaves (who died in 1705) worked as a painter both in Holland and in England, where in 1674, as the first Jewish artist after the Jews were readmitted to England, he painted Moses and Aaron with the Ten Commandments at the *heichal* (holy ark) of the synagogue on Creechurch Lane in London, consecrated in 1656.

The Ashkenazi Jew Abraham bar Jacob (*c.*1669–1730) was a copperplate engraver who made the illustrations in what is known as the Amsterdam Haggadah of 1695, including a map of the Land of Israel. The book also features a depiction of the route of the Exodus out of Egypt. It became famous in the Jewish world and had a lasting influence on the design of Ashkenazi *haggadot*. Many such beautiful objects and manuscripts can still be seen in museums, including the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam, and in world-famous libraries such as the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos and the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana.

'The most famous of his works are his illustrated Esther Scrolls, his *ketubot*, his portraits of Menasseh ben Israel and Jacob Juda Leon Templo, and his illustrations in Menasseh ben Israel's *Piedra Gloriosa* of 1655.'

1641



'Landscape in Brazil', c. 1665-c. 1669. Frans Jansz. Post.

Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-12

Kahal Kados Zur Israel in Brazil

In 1641 the prominent rabbi Isaac Aboab da Fonseca travelled from Amsterdam to Recife in Brazil. He became the spiritual leader of the first Jewish congregation on American soil, the Portuguese Kahal Kados Zur Israel. Jews, mostly from Amsterdam, had settled the northern part of Brazil when it was taken from the Portuguese by the Dutch and held by them from 1630 to 1654. The Dutch West India Company (WIC) promised freedom of religion, facing down criticism on that point from the Reformed Church in Brazil that was motivated mainly by a fear of competition.

Jews were active in trade and industry and owned many sugar mills. The colonization of northern Brazil was of relatively short duration, since from 1645 onwards the Portuguese tried to win back the territory and succeeded in doing so after a fierce war that lasted nine years. The Jews still living there in 1654 were given safe passage to Amsterdam. They included Chacham Aboab.

The Portuguese Jews took their belongings with them, including the Zur Israel congregation's book of minutes (*livro de escamot*), a tangible memento now held in the Amsterdam City Archives. Others tried their luck elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, most of them in the Caribbean or in New Amsterdam, the future New York. In about 1658 the Dutch colonized Essequibo, Cayenne and Pomeroon, and finally also Surinam, which from 1667 onwards grew into an important regional hub. After the loss of Brazil, Dutch Sephardim spread across the whole Caribbean region, including Jamaica, Barbados, Curaçao, Tobago, Martinique and St. Eustatius.

From the final decade of the seventeenth century onwards, Curaçao in particular grew to become an important trading post and meanwhile set itself up as the mother of the Caribbean Jewish community. The Jews on the islands, some of whom owned plantations, specialized in international trade. They supplied Spanish South America and from there exported raw materials such as silver, sugar, cocoa, dyes and tobacco to Europe. They also had a considerable stake in the slave trade.

The colonies in 'the West' held a powerful attraction for many Jews in the Dutch Republic, who were weighed down by increasing poverty and unemployment, but they did not represent a lasting solution, since from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards their economies declined. The successful colonization of the Western Hemisphere in the time of the Dutch Republic was coming to an end.

'After the loss of Brazil, Dutch Sephardim spread across the whole Caribbean region, including Jamaica, Barbados, Curaçao, Tobago, Martinique and St. Eustatius.'

1642



Jacob Juda Leon Templo's 'Verclaringe van den Tempel Salomons' (Disquisition on Solomon's Temple), with a portrait of the author Jacob Juda Leon, 1646; Jacob Juda Leon and reproduction by Pau Groenendijk.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M010790.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-13

The model of Solomon's Temple

In his house on what is now the Waterlooplein (Vlooienburg), as well as at fairs in Haarlem and The Hague, at the court of Orange and even across the North Sea in England, Jacob Juda Leon Templo exhibited to a broad public of Jews and non-Jews a collapsible model he had made of Solomon's Temple. Its dimensions were 1.30 x 1.20 x 0.60 metres. He put up posters to announce where and at what time of day the model could be viewed.

Jacob Juda Leon was born in Portugal in 1602. His parents fled the country in 1605 and in Amsterdam they returned to the faith of their ancestors. He studied in Amsterdam to become a rabbi and then worked there as well as in Hamburg and Middelburg. He was also a teacher at the Amsterdam Talmud Torah school and at the Ets Haim yeshiva, and he gave private lessons in Hebrew outside Jewish circles, to students including Constantijn Huygens, a poet and secretary to the Princes of Orange.

He wrote several books and translated others, preparing a vowelized Hebrew edition of the Mishnah with a Spanish translation. In 1670–1671 he translated the Psalms into Spanish and provided them with a commentary that was probably intended for his pupils. But he truly made his name with a book about Solomon's Temple, published in 1642. It was translated into Dutch and Spanish, and later into other languages. It contains a description of the temple building, with its huge walls, its galleries, rooms, gates and towers, as described in the Hebrew Bible and in other sources. In 1675 Jacob Juda Leon travelled to London with his family and his models to settle there.

It seems likely that Templo's depiction of the Temple was the model for the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam. He travelled back from London to witness its consecration in 1675, apparently out of intense curiosity. He did not live to see the crucial moment but died shortly before and was buried in Ouderkerk. Nobody knows what happened to his model of the Temple. Perhaps it is still gathering dust in an attic somewhere. We can be certain that it survived him, since in 1771 it was put on show in The Hague. The only tangible evidence left of Jacob Juda Leon Templo's activities are his books, his posters, and written references to him and his children in the archives of the Portuguese congregation and those of the city of Amsterdam. There is also his gravestone, tucked away in the Portuguese cemetery in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel.

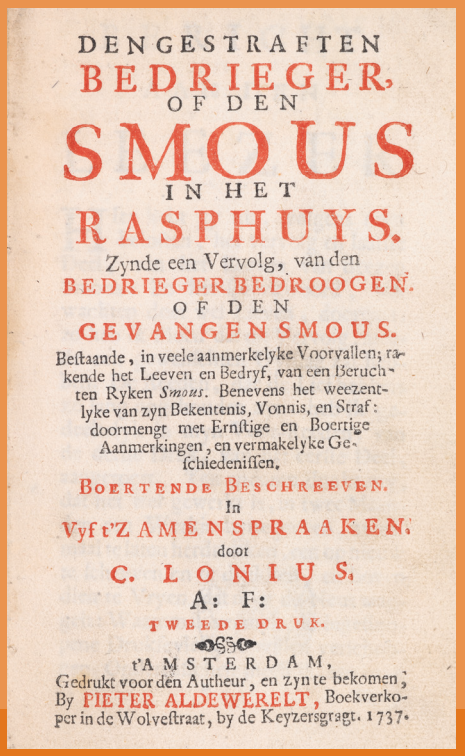
'It seems likely that Templo's depiction of the Temple was the model for the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam.'

1642



''t Rasphuys', 1650.

Collection of the Amsterdam City Archives.


DEN GESTRAFTEN
BEDRIEGER,
OF DEN
SMOUS
IN HET
RASPHUYS.
Zynde een Vervolg, van den
BEDRIEGER BEDROOGEN.
OF DEN
GEVANGEN SMOUS.
Beſtaande, in veele aanmerkelyke Voorvallen; rakende het Leeven en Bedryf, van een Beruchten Ryken *Smous*. Benevens het weezentlyke van zyn Bekentenis, Vonnis, en Straf: doormengt met Ernſtige en Boertige Aanmerkingen, en vermakelyke Geſchiedeniſſen.
BOERTENDE BESCHREEVEN.
In
Vyf t'ZAMENSPRAAKEN,
door
C. LONIUS,
A: F:
TWEEDE DRUK.
t'AMSTERDAM,
Gedrukt voor den Autheur, en zyn te bekomen;
By PIETER ALDEWERELT, Boekverkoper in de Wolveſtraat, by de Keyzersgragt. 1737.

Den Smous in het Rasphuys (The Jew in the Rasphuis), Amsterdam 1737.

Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, O 63–5768_002.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-14

Abodat Hahesed, workhouse for Ashkenazim

There was never much love lost between Portuguese and High German Jews. The Jewish congregation established at the start of the seventeenth century was intended only for Conversos, members of the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish nation. They were called the first modern Jews, as they had become fully integrated into Spanish and Portuguese society. They included successful merchants and scholars, many of whom had completed their studies at universities in Spain and Portugal and so were well aware of the latest developments in European culture. Such was their Spanish pride and sense of superiority that they looked with astonishment at the growing influx into Amsterdam of immigrants, ghetto Jews, from the German territories, central Europe and Poland, searching for new opportunities and fleeing pogroms and economic crises.

Despite the fact that in 1635 the Ashkenazim set up a congregation of their own, they remained financially dependent on the Portuguese for a long time. Many Ashkenazi Jews were found begging in the streets, which often led to them being locked away in the Rasphuis, one of the city's houses of correction, where they were forced to rasp wood into powder for use in the paint industry. While incarcerated they were unable to adhere to Jewish laws, such as the *kashrut* (dietary laws and other regulations), or to honour the Sabbath. So in 1642 the Portuguese congregation decided to set up a workhouse to keep German and Polish Jews off the streets. They would be taught a trade and, if necessary, sent back east again. It would be a way for the Sephardim to minimize damage to the reputation of the Jews of the city and thereby help to secure their own position.

A charitable organization was established for the purpose called Abodat Hahesed, which ran a workhouse until 1670. We do not know where the building was located, but the evidence shows that it mainly produced textiles. In 1670 the Sephardi congregation decided enough was enough. The Ashkenazi congregation was deemed capable of looking after its own poor, including those who had drifted to the margins of society. The two congregations worked together a great deal nevertheless, although Sephardim largely employed Ashkenazim to do manual work, which they themselves preferred to avoid. Despite the fact that in the eighteenth century the High German congregation began to outstrip the Portuguese congregation in size and subsequently in economic strength, the relationship between the two communities remained tense. Until well into the twentieth century, the Portuguese treated German and Polish Jews with a degree of condescension.

'Such was their Spanish pride and sense of superiority that they looked with astonishment at the growing influx into Amsterdam of immigrants, ghetto Jews, from the German territories, central Europe and Poland, searching for new opportunities and fleeing pogroms and economic crises.'

1644



From Johannes and Caspaares Luiken, *Het Menselyk Bedryf vertoond in 100 Verbeeldingen van Ambachten, konsten, Hanteeringen en Bedryven met Versen* (The Book of Trades), Amsterdam, 1694, 'De Dia mantslijper' (The Diamond Cutter).

Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, O 73–228_002.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-15

The start of the Jewish silk industry

Abraham Israel Pereyra was one of many Converso merchants and industrialists who, having fled the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, continued developing their economic power base after arrival in the Low Countries. Pereyra, who settled in Amsterdam in about 1644, started up a silk industry. Tobacco and diamond factories and sugar refineries were also begun by Jews, while Amsterdam became the global centre of Hebrew and Yiddish printing. Portuguese Jews often traded internationally, making use of their contacts on the Iberian Peninsula and in other countries in Europe and beyond. They also functioned as suppliers to the armed forces, or as bankers.

The period between 1648 and 1672 has been called the Golden Age of Portuguese Judaism in Amsterdam. After the Dutch made peace with Spain, the commercial activities of the Sephardim in the city reached a peak. At the end of the seventeenth century, many Portuguese Jews were active on the Amsterdam stock market and they owned a quarter of the shares in the Dutch East India Company (VOC). They slowly withdrew from the active economy to live mainly off interest from their investments.

'The period between 1648 and 1672 has been called the Golden Age of Portuguese Judaism in Amsterdam. After the Dutch made peace with Spain, the commercial activities of the Sephardim in the city reached a peak.'

The Ashkenazim focused on their hinterland – the German territories and eastern Europe – for trade and commerce, although large German-Jewish trading firms also expanded westwards, to London for example. Ashkenazi bankers like Tobias Boas in The Hague tapped new financial markets, especially abroad under the German princes, while those of more modest means traded in coins, jewels and precious metals. For both Sephardim and Ashkenazim, buying and selling stocks and shares remained an important economic activity in the eighteenth century, and many were also active in retail, as workers in various industries, as private employees, perhaps caring for the sick, or as maids, servants or draymen. Ashkenazim, in contrast to Sephardim, had particular expertise in street trading and stall-holding at markets. In the late eighteenth century, economic crises (1763 and 1772–1773) and the war with England (1780–1784) caused many bankruptcies. The decline of the VOC and the WIC in the period of French rule (1794–1815) led to a reversal of fortunes in the once so prominent Jewish trading firms and industries. The extent of poverty and unemployment among Jews was appalling. The emancipation decree of 1796, which among other things abolished economic constraints on Jews, brought no immediate relief to their generally impoverished condition. Only over the course of the nineteenth century did their economic situation begin to improve once again.

1645


THESOVRO
DOS DINIM
Que o povo de Israel, he obrigado saber, e observar.
Com duas Taboadas muy copiosas
Dedicado a os muy Nobres, Magnificos, e Prudentes Senhores Parnassim deste Venerauel Kaal Kados.
Composto por.
MENASSEH BEN ISRAEL.
Estampado em casa de Eliahu Aboab. Ano 5405.

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Fragments from the *Thesovro dos dinim* by Menasseh ben Israel and the cover of the book. Printed by Menasseh ben Israel in 1645–1647.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, ROK A-175_001; OTM: ROK A-175_002; OTM, ROK A-175_003.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-16

The *Thesovro dos dinim* of Menasseh ben Israel

In 1645 a book was printed by Menasseh ben Israel, a rabbi, scholar and diplomat who also had a publishing house. *Thesovro dos dinim* presented an accessible elucidation of Jewish precepts and was an almost literal translation of the *Shulchan Aruch* or Code of Jewish Law by Joseph Karo. It enabled former Conversos to familiarize themselves with the rules of normative Judaism. The subject was dear to ben Israel's heart, as was the Portuguese language in which the book was written. It was the language in which he had grown up before fleeing from Portugal to Amsterdam with his Converso parents in about 1614. Having trained as a rabbi in Amsterdam, in 1622 he succeeded Isaac Uziel in the Portuguese congregation Neve Salom. In the United Portuguese Congregation, however, he never occupied a prominent position within the rabbinate, although he worked there in other functions, as a teacher for example.

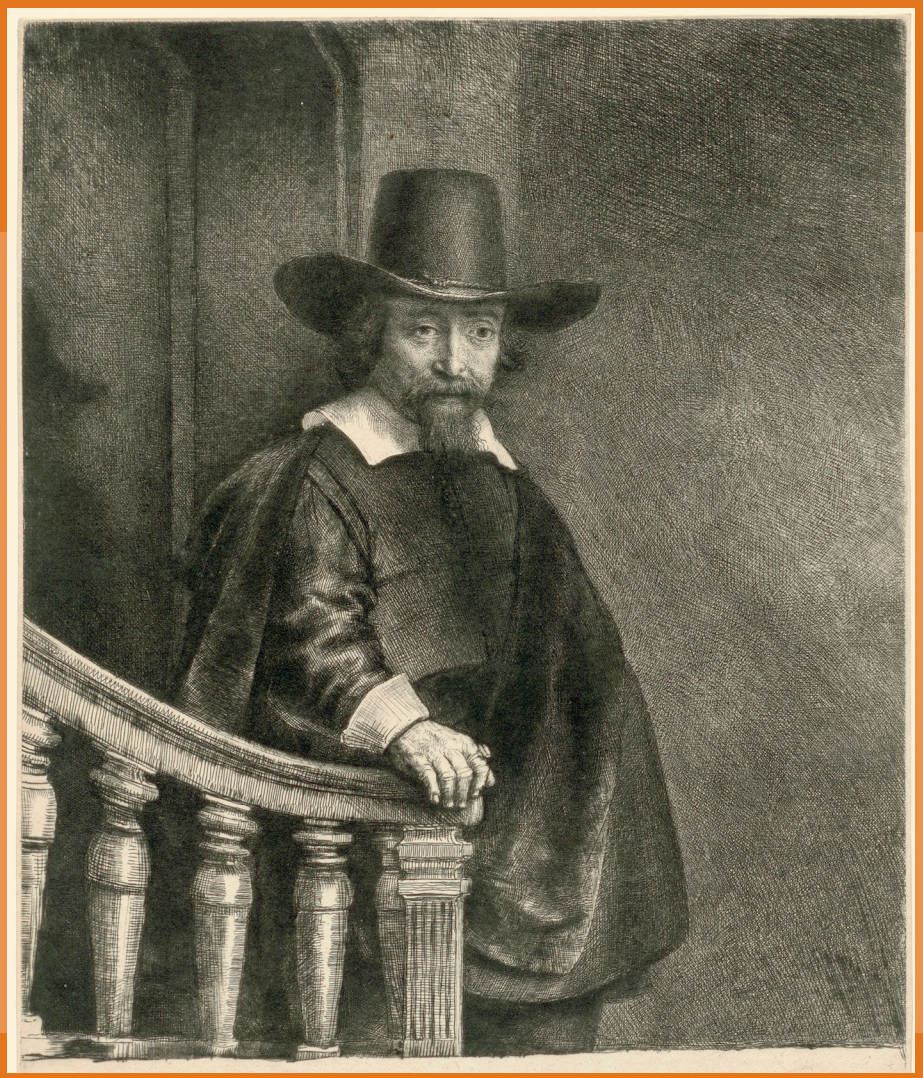
In 1626 Menasseh ben Israel set up a Hebrew printing press, the first in Amsterdam to be in Jewish hands. He published books not just in Hebrew and Portuguese but in many other languages, including Yiddish, Latin, Spanish, Dutch and English. The titles, around eighty in all, covered religious, philosophical or linguistic subjects. As well as publishing new editions of older, authoritative Jewish religious works, Menasseh offered contemporary authors the opportunity to have their work printed by him. The new books included *Sefer Elim* and *Ma'ayan Ganiem* by Solomon Delmedigo, and Isaac Uziel's Hebrew grammar. Menasseh ben Israel's own works were intended not just for the Jewish community but for the non-Jewish outside world. They included *De Creatione (*1635), *De Termino Vitae* (1635), *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* (1636), *Piedra Gloriosa* (1655) (with etchings by Rembrandt in several of its editions) and *Nishmat Chayim* (1655).

Menasseh became known for more than simply his books. He was in touch, in person or through correspondence, with many scholars at home and abroad, including Gerardus Vossius, Hugo Grotius, Caspar Barlaeus, Samuel Bochart and Paul Felgenhauer. In 1642 he was accorded the honour of welcoming Queen Henrietta Maria of England, Stadholder Frederick Henry and his son William II to the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam, then still on the Houtgracht. Princess Maria Stuart, future bride of William II, missed the event, so Prince William returned to the synagogue with her, where the Sephardi congregation repeated the ceremony.

Menasseh ben Israel played an important part in negotiations with various English dignitaries concerning the readmittance of Jews into England. In 1655 he travelled there to present a petition to Lord Protector Cromwell in person, in which he stressed the advantages of allowing Jews into the country. Disappointed that no specific provision was introduced, he returned to Amsterdam in 1657 and died not long afterwards. He was buried in the Portuguese cemetery in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel. His gravestone was restored in 1960 by British Jews out of gratitude for his efforts, which effectively brought about the return of the Jews to England.

'In 1655 he travelled there to present a petition to Lord Protector Cromwell in person, in which he stressed the advantages of allowing Jews into the country.'

1647



'Ephraim Bonus, Jewish physician', 1647. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn.

Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-17

Dr Ephraim Bueno

In 1647 Ephraim Bueno was immortalized by Rembrandt as a Jewish physician, in an engraving and in a painting. Jan Lievens made an engraving of him too. Both artists portrayed him as a distinguished and serious man, elegantly dressed. Ephraim Bueno was born in Portugal and qualified as a physician in Bordeaux in 1641. As well as practising medicine, he was a literary figure who wrote poems in Spanish and published several books, including the authoritative *Shulchan Aruch* and a Spanish translation of the Psalms. In 1656, along with Abraham Pereyra, he set up the study group Tora Or, where Portuguese Jews could immerse themselves in Judaism.

Portuguese medical practitioners like Bueno arrived in Amsterdam with training and experience. Isaac Orobio (1620-1687) had been personal physician to the Duke of Medina-Coeli. Abraham Zacuto (1575–1642) had worked as a physician in Lisbon for thirty years before moving to Amsterdam out of fear of the Inquisition. More than just a prominent medical man, he published scholarly articles. On the Iberian Peninsula, medical disciplines were known as 'Jewish' occupations.

The large number of physicians in the Portuguese community meant it might be hard for them to find work, even if they were allowed to treat non-Jewish patients. That was one reason why some, like Paulo de Lena, left and settled in Rouen, while others, including Ephraim Bueno, had alternative sources of income or were forced to accept occasional support from the Portuguese congregation to keep their heads above water financially. Nevertheless, it remained a popular profession among Jews, and several universities in the Dutch Republic, including Leiden, Utrecht, Harderwijk and Franeker, accepted them as students of medicine. Often they had already acquired the necessary expertise within their own communities and went to the university city only to take the exam.

Ashkenazi Jews did not make their presence felt as medical students until later in the seventeenth century. Hartog Alexander van Embden, for example, was a physician who also had a printing house with the printer's name Naftali Hirts Levi Rofé, and in 1725 he opened a shop selling old and new books. By about 1700, thirty Jewish physicians belonged to the Collegium Medicum in Amsterdam. Jewish doctors enjoyed an excellent reputation, and not only in Jewish circles. Joseph Bueno, father of Ephraim, was called to the sickbed of Maurice, Prince of Orange. In the Ets Haim library are several medical works written by physicians. The traditional popularity of the medical profession among Jews, Dutch or otherwise, can also be seen in later periods.

'Nevertheless, it remained a popular profession among Jews, and several universities in the Dutch Republic, including Leiden, Utrecht, Harderwijk and Franeker, accepted them as students of medicine.'

1656



Portrait of Baruch de Spinoza, 1670, artist unknown. Collec tion of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam.

On loan from The Hague Historical Museum (1877–0005–SCH), private donation.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-18

The *cherem* (ban) issued against Spinoza

The works of Spinoza seem highly topical. He advocated complete freedom of thought and speech. Everyone must be allowed to develop their own way of thinking and to express it, in print if they so wished. Spinoza was a champion of broad toleration and an opponent of revealed religions and those regimes that derived their authority from them. Church and state must always be totally separate. Spinoza rejected the notion of the supernatural power of God and wrote of a God that was the equivalent of nature (*Deus sive Natura*). Spinoza's ideas created a fundamentally new vision of humanity, God and the universe.

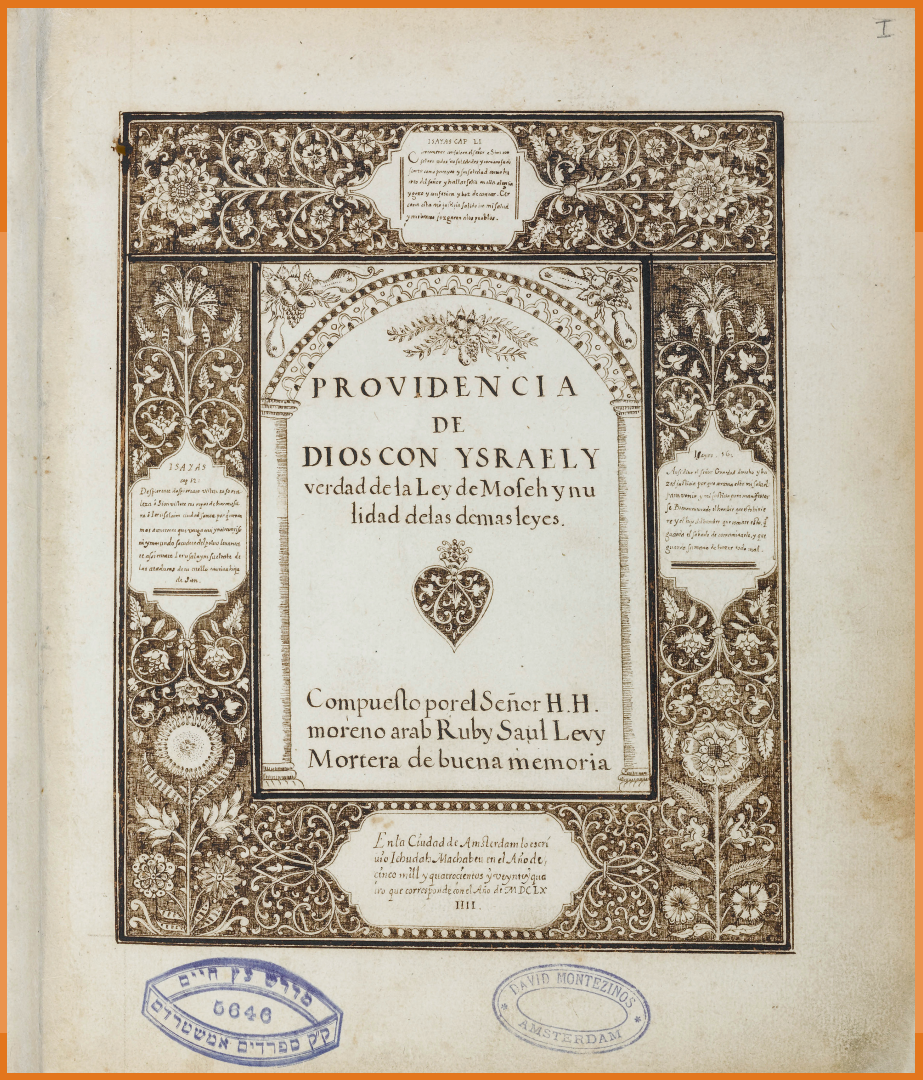
Baruch/Benedictus de Spinoza (1632–1677) was excommunicated by the Amsterdam Portuguese congregation for his beliefs in 1656 and banned from the community. The text of the *cherem* pronounced against him speaks in fierce terms of 'abominable heresies' and 'monstrous acts'.

He was born in Amsterdam, the son of a Converso, Michael de Spinoza, who had arrived from southern Europe to join the Sephardi congregation in Amsterdam and became an active member. Michael ran an international trading firm, for which Baruch worked until 1656. Like other boys of the Portuguese Jewish congregation, Baruch had earlier received a basic religious education at the Talmud Torah school, and he had taken part in debates at study meetings under the leadership of Chacham Saul Levi Morteira. During lessons in Latin, Greek and mathematics with former Jesuit and freethinker Franciscus van den Enden, he came into contact with classical literature and philosophy, but also with contemporary ideas in the writings of Hobbes and Descartes. Van den Enden was one of the leading figures in secular circles like those of the Collegiants, who had broken with the Reformed Church and with revealed religion. The development of Spinoza's thinking was also strongly influenced by two predecessors in the Sephardi congregation, heterodox thinkers Uriel/Gabriel da Costa and Daniel/Juan de Prado. In about 1661, Spinoza moved from Amsterdam to Rijnsburg, not far from Leiden University. There he supported himself by grinding lenses. He later settled in The Hague.

'Spinoza's ideas created a fundamentally new vision of humanity, God and the universe.'

Spinoza's philosophy is contained in several books, most of which appeared posthumously and anonymously, such as the *Opera Posthuma*, published in 1677. Some fifty letters known to have been written by him have survived, correspondence with freethinkers of his day. He developed his criticism of revealed religion and the Hebrew Bible in further detail in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, where he defends freedom of thought and religious toleration, and rejects the belief that the Jews are the chosen people. Spinoza is regarded to this day as a radical thinker and as one of the most important of early modern philosophers.

1656



Title page of the *Providencia de Dios con Ysrael*, a polemical treatise by Saul Levi Morteira. Calligraphy by Judah Machabeu, 1664, Amsterdam.

Collection of the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam: EH _48_C_21.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-19

Prominent spiritual leadership in the seventeenth century: Saul Levi Morteira and Isaac Aboab da Fonseca

It was Saul Levi Morteira who, from his seat in the *beit din* (rabbinical court of law), pronounced the ban against Spinoza in 1656. Morteira was an Ashkenazi Jew born in Venice, where he had studied under a famous rabbi, Leone Modena. In 1616 he found himself in Amsterdam, having accompanied the mortal remains of Elijah Montalto, personal physician to the French queen, to his final resting place in the Portuguese cemetery in Ouderkerk. Morteira served as a rabbi in Beth Jacob and later in the united Talmud Torah congregation. He was known for his critical attitude to the Conversos, who preferred Spain and Portugal to life in a more open Jewish world. Many of his most impressive sermons were printed in Hebrew under the title *Givat Sha'ul.*

Like Morteira, the first rabbis within Amsterdam's Portuguese community were mostly from other centres of Jewish population. Joseph Pardo came from Venice and Salonica, Isaac Uziel from North Africa, while Uri Halevi left Emden in Germany to introduce the new community to the principles of normative Judaism. Under their influence, and taught by them in the community's new educational establishments, a new generation of spiritual leaders emerged, including rabbis Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, Menasseh ben Israel and Moses Rafael d'Aguilar.

'He was known for his critical attitude to the Conversos, who preferred Spain and Portugal to life in a more open Jewish world.'

Isaac Aboab de Fonseca was born in Portugal and came to Amsterdam with his parents as a Converso. He became a student of Isaac Uziel and at the age of twenty-one was made *chacham* of Amsterdam's Beth Israel congregation. In 1641 he left for Brazil, to lead the Portuguese congregation in Recife. He could therefore be described as the first rabbi on American soil. There he wrote a work in Hebrew called *Zecher Asiti le-Nifla'ot El* (1646), as an expression of thanks after an attack on the city was successfully repulsed.

He returned to Amsterdam in 1654, and after being involved, as a rabbi, with the pronouncement of Spinoza's ban, he became a follower of the mystical messiah Sabbatai Zevi in 1665–1666. He translated kabbalist works by Abraham Cohen de Herrera from Spanish into Hebrew and in 1688 published a Spanish translation of the Pentateuch. He was an important initiator of the building of the famous Portuguese synagogue. On the facade, above the entrance, a passage from Psalm 5:8 still contains an allusion to his name. The inscription on his gravestone in Ouderkerk recalls that he died in 1693 at the age of eighty-eight, having served the Portuguese community for seventy years. With his death, the Sephardi congregation in Amsterdam lost one of its most important *chachamim.*

1661



Title page of the *Biblia Hebraica* by Joseph Athias, 1667.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M000009.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-20

Athias's Bible

In 1661 the *Biblia Hebraica*, the Hebrew Bible, was published by Joseph Athias's leading publishing house. Remarkably, both Jewish and Christian authorities had given their approval for its publication, and a Calvinist theology professor, Johannes van Leusden, was one of its editors. After the second edition appeared in 1667, Athias was awarded a gold medallion and chain by the Dutch federal parliament, the States General. He printed some 450 titles all told, including the *Mishneh Torah* – a code of Jewish religious law authored by Maimonides in four volumes that was completed by his son Immanuel – and the Hebrew Bible translated into Yiddish.

Joseph Athias's prestigious house was one of many Jewish publishing companies that contributed to Amsterdam's widespread reputation as an important centre of printing. The Hebrew printed in Amsterdam was distinctive, renowned for its unique and beautiful typography (known as *Otiyot Amsterdam*). Jewish publishers did not limit themselves to works in Hebrew or Yiddish but produced books in Spanish and Portuguese, and later in Dutch as well. In addition to Joseph Athias, members of the Portuguese community who owned and ran publishing houses included Menasseh ben Israel, David de Castro Tartas and Immanuel Benveniste. The latter achieved particular renown for his edition of the Babylonian Talmud, while David de Castro Tartas, having set up a press of his own in 1662, made his name with the publication of the first newspaper in Spanish to be printed by a Jewish publisher, the *Gazeta de Amsterdam*. He also published poems by Daniel Levi de Barrios, and many prayerbooks in Hebrew and Spanish in connection with the mystical messiah Sabbatai Zevi. He was responsible for publishing the seven sermons preached at the inauguration of the Portuguese synagogue in 1675, ornamented with eight engravings by Romeyn de Hooghe.

Ashkenazi publishers mostly stuck to issuing works in Hebrew and Yiddish. Uri Phoebus Halevi, grandson to one of the first rabbis of the Portuguese congregation, Uri Halevi from Emden, began his own publishing company in 1658. His output included the Yiddish newspaper *Dinstagishe un Fraytagishe Kuranten*. Rabbi Moses Frankfurter achieved fame with a publishing house that he established in 1721. But the most important High German Jewish printing firm from the start of the eighteenth century onwards was that of Solomon ben Joseph Proops, which published all kinds of books relating to Jewish law, the kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), Jewish ethics and history. He put out a catalogue, in Hebrew, of all the works he published, an innovation in its day. In 1761 Proops bought the typographical material from Athias's printing press and in 2001 a piece of furniture known as the Athias cabinet was given on permanent loan to the Amsterdam University Library, as unique heritage from Amsterdam's Golden Age.

'The Hebrew printed in Amsterdam was distinctive, renowned for its unique and beautiful typography (known as *Otiyot Amsterdam*).'

1666



Title page of a *tikkun* prayer book in Hebrew, published in Amsterdam by David de Castro Tartas amid the furore sur rounding the mystical messiah Sabbatai Zevi, Amsterdam, 1666.

Collection of the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam: EH-20–E21.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-21

Sabbatai Zevi, the mystical messiah

The appearance in 1665–66 of the mystical messiah Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76) caused a tremendous commotion. In 1665, prompted by his 'prophet' Nathan of Gaza, Sabbatai Zevi announced himself as the messiah long awaited by the Jews. The resulting messianic movement found fertile ground among Ashkenazim, who had suffered so much persecution in Poland and Ukraine in the years 1648–1655. Sephardim were no less receptive to the prospect of the end of exile and the beginning of a messianic era, after their expulsion from Spain and the persecution of Conversos by the Inquisition. Furthermore, many Jews had been influenced by a mystical tendency in the form of the Lurianic kabbalah, which had developed since the sixteenth century and spread from its spiritual centre in Safed.

All over Europe, including the Dutch Republic, pandemonium erupted when the message reached the Jewish community that the messiah had come. Rich and poor alike were drawn to the movement and went into ecstasies. Trade faltered and possessions were sold. Huge sums were given to charity. Books full of prayers of repentance and atonement in Hebrew, Spanish and Portuguese were published in Amsterdam, bearing images of the messiah seated on a throne.

'All over Europe, including the Dutch Republic, pandemonium erupted when the message reached the Jewish community that the messiah had come.'

In the summer of 1666, two letters were written and sent by members of the yeshivas Yeshuot Meshiho and Tora Or to welcome Sabbatai Zevi as the messiah. Ships were chartered to carry the poor to the Holy Land, and rich people made preparations to leave for Eretz Yisrael too, including the famous merchant Abraham Israel Pereyra, who earlier that year, under the influence of this new movement, had written a book called *La Certeza del Camino* about morality, repentance and atonement.

Not everyone was convinced, however, and among both Ashkenazim and Sephardim there was much criticism. Jacob Sasportas, later *chacham* of the Amsterdam Portuguese congregation, was a particularly outspoken opponent. When Sabbatai Zevi converted to Islam (and several Jews with him), there was immense disillusionment. Although the threads were picked up again and people returned to business as usual, some Jews remained faithful to the movement in secret. The Amsterdam rabbi Salomon Ayllon (1664–1728) and the Ashkenazi sexton Leib ben Oizer are striking examples. In Turkey there exists to this day a Muslim-Jewish Dönmeh sect, made up of descendants of the converts who followed Sabbatai Zevi.

1675



Consecration of the Portuguese synagogue in 1675, 1675. Romeyn de Hooghe.

Collection of the Amsterdam City Archives, Atlas Splitberger.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-22

Consecration of the Portuguese synagogue

The Portuguese synagogue complex on what is now the Jonas Daniël Meijerplein, ceremonially consecrated in 1675, was the work of architect, builder and master mason Elias Bouman. Tourists of the time gasped at its beauty and were astonished at the openness with which Judaism could be practised in the Dutch Republic. The Portuguese Jews were hugely proud of their new house of prayer and hung pictures of it on the walls of their homes. Their beautiful synagogue, which survived the Second World War unscathed, still commands admiration.

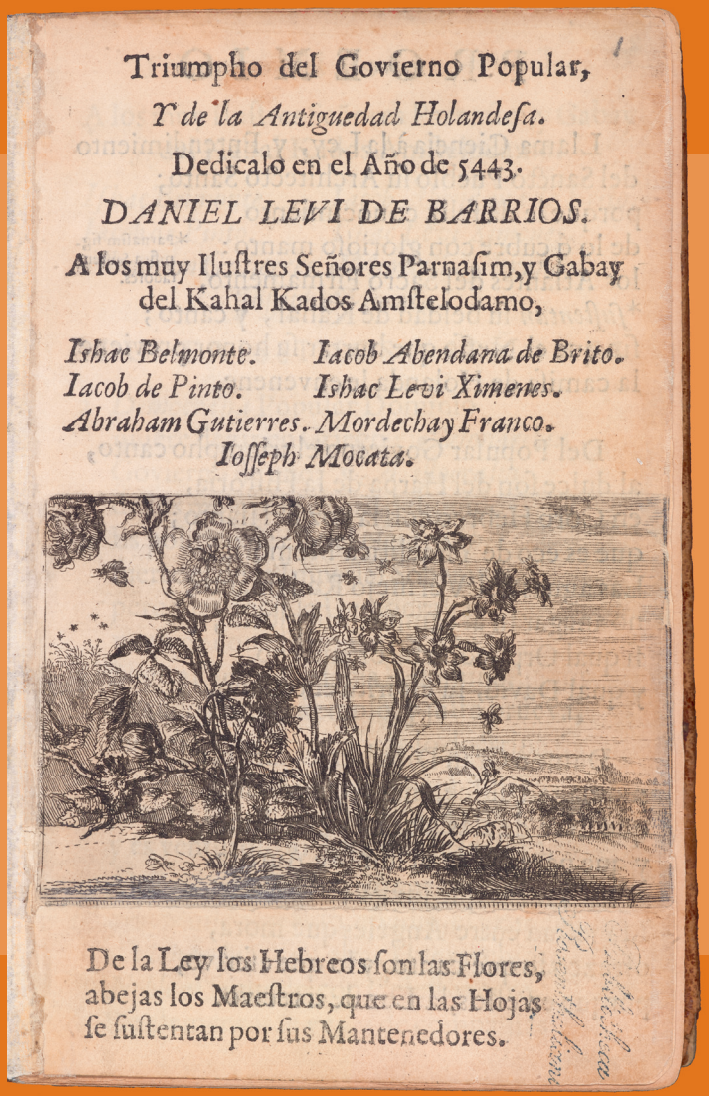
The Esnoga, as the Portuguese synagogue is sometimes called in a Spanish Jewish version of the word, is unheated, and light is provided only by hundreds of candles. As well as the house of prayer, the building includes rooms intended for the various functions of Jewish life. There is a room for the board of directors (the *mahamad*), and a Wintersnoge, which once served as a study room for the Ets Haim yeshiva and is now used for services in winter, since it can be heated. Next to it is the oldest still functioning Jewish library in the world. The synagogue also has a room for the *chacham* (rabbi), accommodation for the *chazanim* (cantors) and the *shammashim* (sextons), and a room that is at the disposal of the funeral society Gemilut Hassadim. A pawnshop was once located there too, and many of the rooms were used as classrooms. The Esnoga can hold 1,200 men and 440 women, and it served as a model for Spanish-Portuguese synagogues elsewhere in the world, including London, Willemstad, Paramaribo and New York.

'Their beautiful synagogue, which survived the Second World War unscathed, still commands admiration.'

A little earlier, in 1671, the Ashkenazi Great Synagogue across the water was consecrated. It too was designed by Elias Bouman, in collaboration with city architect Daniel Stalpaert. It had room for 399 men and 368 women. After the Polish Jewish congregation joined the High German congregation in 1673, there was presumably a need for more space, and growing immigration invited further expansion. So three more synagogues were built: the Obbene Shul in 1685, de Dritt Shul in 1700 (rebuilt in 1778) and the Naye Shul in 1730 (renovated in 1752). The four synagogues grew to become a complex that since 1987 has served as a Jewish Museum. In 1766 a fifth Ashkenazi synagogue was added within the same Jewish district, in the Uilenburgerstraat.

In response to the settlement of Jews in the towns and villages of the Dutch Republic, several synagogues were built outside Amsterdam. At first services were held in home synagogues, as they had been when Jews first settled in Amsterdam. Later it became quite common to build a synagogue, large or small, as for example in the Herenstraat in Middelburg in 1704 or the Sacramentstraat in Leeuwarden in 1754. So a network of synagogues emerged that was representative of Jewish life in towns and cities beyond Amsterdam. Some can still be viewed, although many no longer serve as places of worship.

1683



Triumpho del Govierno Popular,
Y de la Antiguedad Holandeſa.
Dedicalo en el Año de 5443.
DANIEL LEVI DE BARRIOS.
A los muy Iluſtres Señores Parnaſim, y Gabay
del Kahal Kados Amſtelodamo,
Ishac Belmonte. *Iacob Abendana de Brito.*
Iacob de Pinto. *Ishac Levi Ximenes.*
Abraham Gutierres. *Mordechay Franco.*
Ioſſeph Mocata.

De la Ley los Hebreos ſon las Flores,
abejas los Maeſtros, que en las Hojas
ſe ſuſtentan por ſus Mantenedores.

Title page of Daniel Levi de Barrios's *Triumpho del Govierno Popular*, 1683.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, RON A 5253_001.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-23

Jewish historians in the early modern period

In his *Triumpho del Govierno Popular y de la Antigüedad Holandesa*, published in 1683, Daniel Levi de Barrios (1635–1701) describes the history of his famous Amsterdam Portuguese *kahal* (congregation). Until then he had led an adventurous life and travelled a great deal, from Spain to Italy and then via Tobago to Amsterdam. He also moved back and forth between two different cultures, that of Catholic Spain and that of the Jews. In Livorno, Tobago and Amsterdam he had forged links with the Jewish world, but he had also spent twelve years living as a Catholic captain in the Spanish Army in Brussels. His work – prose, poetry and plays – therefore contains elements borrowed from classical mythology and Spanish Catholic culture as well as Judaism. The influence of Spanish literature is particularly evident. In his *Triumpho* he conveys much information about the Portuguese congregation and its institutions.

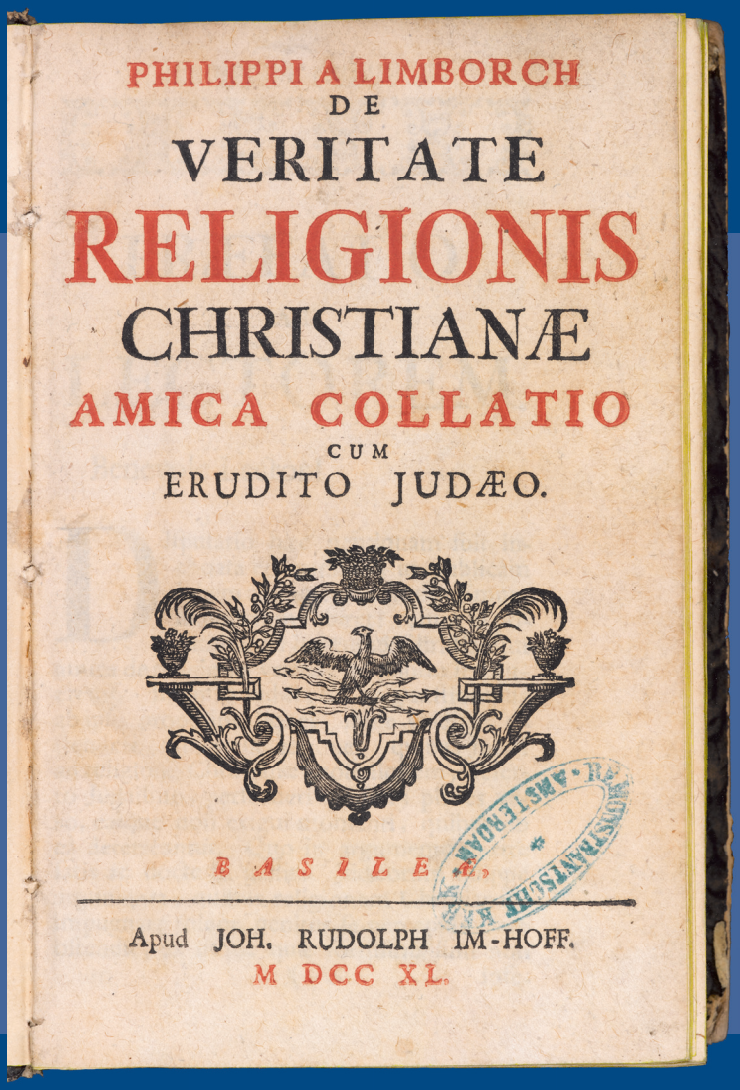
A century later, David Franco Mendes (1713–1792) elaborated upon the *Triumpho* in his *Memorias do estabelecimento e progresso dos judeos portuguezes e espanhoes nesta famosa citade de Amsterdam*. Franco Mendes, who grew up in a rich Amsterdam Portuguese milieu, was both a historian and a gifted Talmud scholar. He made a name for himself all across Europe as a Hebrew poet and playwright.

Among Ashkenazi Jews too, history was a subject of keen interest. Menachem Man Amelander (1698–*c.*1749), a historian, translator and expert in Hebrew grammar, did not confine himself to his own community but wrote a major account of Jewish history as a whole. His *Sheyris Yisroel*, written in Yiddish, was so successful that it was published in around thirty editions. The book appeared as a sequel to the medieval Jewish classic *Yosippon* and it tells of the changing fortunes of the Jews from the destruction of the Second Temple, in the year 70 of the Common Era, to the author's own time. Amelander made use of all the Jewish and non-Jewish sources he could find and attempted to reach as broad a public as possible. His book is still in use today in ultra-Orthodox circles as a history of the Jews.

Other Ashkenazim, encouraged by Amelander's success, wrote books of their own, although their work was often less revelatory in nature. Abraham Chaim Braatbard mainly described events in the Dutch Republic between 1740 and 1752, while Zalman ben Moses Prins depicted the battle between Patriots and Orangists in the Jewish quarter in Amsterdam in 1787–1788. All these works show that an awareness of having a collective memory was important to both Sephardim and Ashkenazim in the early modern era.

'Menachem Man Amelander (1698–c.1749), a historian, translator and expert in Hebrew grammar, did not confine himself to his own community but wrote a major account of Jewish history as a whole.'

1687


PHILIPPI A LIMBORCH
DE
VERITATE
RELIGIONIS
CHRISTIANÆ
AMICA COLLATIO
CUM
ERUDITO JUDÆO.
BASILEÆ,
Apud JOH. RUDOLPH IM-HOFF.
M DCC XL.

Title page of the record of the 'friendly talks' between Philippus van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro. Basileae, 1740.

Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, K 61–6890_001.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-24

Isaac/Balthazar Orobio de Castro

An argument about the truth of the Christian religion that Protestant theologian Philippus van Limborch engaged in with Isaac/Balthazar Orobio de Castro was the first of its kind. Theirs was a fierce debate, but it was respectful of convictions on both sides and the Jews were not placed before a tribunal to justify their beliefs, as so often happened in the Middle Ages.

Isaac Orobio de Castro was a physician and philosopher. Born in 1620 in Braganza in northern Portugal, he soon moved to Spain with his parents. As a crypto-Jew he learned to lead a double life, studying medicine and philosophy at the university of Alcalá de Henares before becoming a professor at the universities of Seville and Salamanca. He was also personal physician to the Duke of Medina-Coeli in Seville.

His career was interrupted when he was arrested by the Inquisition on suspicion of secret adherence to Judaism. He spent three years in prison. After his release he fled to Toulouse in France, where he worked at the university as a professor of pharmacy. In 1662 he travelled to Amsterdam with his wife and two children and became a prominent member of the Amsterdam Sephardi congregation as a *parnas* (member of the board), at the Ets Haim yeshiva among other places. He also practised medicine, making a point of treating those dependent on poor relief.

Orobio de Castro wrote poetry and philosophical treatises in defence of Judaism, such as his *Prevenciones divinas contra la vana idolatría de las Gentes.* He made his name with a treatise called *Certamen philosophicum propugnatae veritatis divinae ac naturalis* (1684), in which he attempted to refute Spinoza's philosophy, contending that reason and revealed religion were not by definition incompatible. He remains best known for his dialogues with Professor Philippus van Limborch. Their dispute was later noted down by John Locke, who witnessed it in person, as *Philippi a Limborch de Veritate Religionis Christianae, amica collatio cum erudito Judaeo* (Gouda, 1687). Van Limborch had earlier described Orobio's experiences with the Spanish Inquisition in a book on the subject.

'He made his name with a treatise called *Certamen philosophicum propugnatae veritatis divinae ac naturalis* (1684), in which he attempted to refute Spinoza's philosophy, contending that reason and revealed religion were not by definition incompatible.'

Like many other polemical religious writings, Orobio's works were not printed but circulated in manuscript. Several copies are held by the Ets Haim library in Amsterdam. His gravestone and that of his wife can be found at the Portuguese cemetery in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel.

1688



Portrait of Don Francisco Lopes Suasso, Baron of Avernas-Le-Gras, c.1688, anonymous.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam. On loan from the Amsterdam Museum.



Don Manuel, alias Isaac Nunes Belmonte, arrives at his house on the Herengracht, Amsterdam, c.1693-1695. Romeyn de Hooghe.

Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-25

Portuguese Jewish Diplomacy

As a banker and diplomat, Francisco Lopes Suasso, alias Abraham Israel Suasso, lent Stadholder William III a million and a half guilders (around seventeen million euros in today's money) to finance his crossing to England. He is said to have told the stadholder that he would not demand the money back should the course of the 'Glorious Revolution' prove less glorious than hoped. ('If You are happy, I know that You will give them back to me; if You are unhappy, then I assent to having lost them.')

Francisco was the son of Antonio Lopes Suasso, alias Isaac Israel Suasso, who came to Amsterdam from Bordeaux in 1653 and converted to Judaism. Antonio later became a member of the elite within the Portuguese community and amassed a fortune, not just by means of strategic marriages but through international trade in wool and diamonds and through investments, in the East India Company, for example. Meanwhile he continued his activities as a banker.

Typical of him and his class was his work as a diplomat and as a representative of international royalty. From 1673 onwards, Antonio arranged loans and financial transactions for King Charles II of Spain and in 1676, in recognition of his services, he was made Baron of Avernas-Le-Gras in the Southern Netherlands.

'Typical of him and his class was his work as a diplomat and as a representative of international royalty.'

Don Manuel, alias Isaac Nunes Belmonte, was a representative of that same elite. He had been the Spanish king's envoy in the Dutch Republic, acting as a mediator between the two countries. In 1693 he was made a baron. Jeronimo Nunes da Costa, alias Moses Curiel, was another member of this rich class of merchants who worked as a diplomat. As well as being a *parnas*, he paid a large sum of money for the privilege of laying the first stone for the Esnoga and delivered jacaranda wood, imported from Brazil, for its *teba* (platform) and its *heichal* (ark). He had represented the Portuguese king in the Dutch Republic since 1645, and the king had appointed him a *cavaleiro fidalgo* (knight and nobleman). In his beautiful house on the Nieuwe Herengracht, Curiel received diplomats and members of the international nobility with grand hospitality. No less a figure than Stadholder William III stayed with him in 1691.

The firm Machado & Pereyra provided important services to the States General and to Stadholder William III as official supplier to the Dutch army; it later delivered goods to the English armed forces in that same capacity. The Jewish elite used its international network to increase its own capital, but also worked to improve the wellbeing of the community. With its many connections it was an important player in the world of international politics and high finance.

1690



Distribution of monies sent from Amsterdam to the Terra Santa, as gifts to individuals in Jerusalem, Safed and Hebron, and to the Sephardi congregations and yeshivas in those cities.

Collection of the Portuguese Synagogue of Amsterdam, Collection of the Amsterdam City Archives: SAA 334, inv. no. 19, p. 825, 5440/1680.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-26

Hesqia da Silva and international philanthropy

Hesqia da Silva arrived in Amsterdam from Jerusalem in 1690 with a manuscript under his arm. It was published in 1692 as *Pri Chadash*, a critique of Joseph Karo's *Shulchan Aruch* that questioned its authority. As a *shaliach* (emissary) Da Silva attempted to collect money for the poor in Eretz Yisrael, and to that end he appealed in a sermon in the Esnoga to the morals of the Portuguese congregation.

Da Silva was offered the post of *chacham* to the Amsterdam Sephardi congregation, but he refused, horrified by what he came upon in Amsterdam. He said the Portuguese would quickly become embittered if he preached that they should live according to the commands and prohibitions of Jewish law, while their frivolity and immoral behaviour would cause him considerable distress were he to be their rabbi. Instead he managed to persuade the merchant Jacob Pereyra to provide money to set up a yeshiva in Jerusalem that would bear his name (Beth Jacob). Da Silva took personal charge of the yeshiva until his death in 1695.

It was not the first time (nor the last) that emissaries from Eretz Yisrael visited Jewish communities to collect money for the Holy Land. Several Jewish congregations held their own funds from which money was sent to Jews in Eretz Yisrael. The Sephardi congregation in Amsterdam sent money annually to the inhabitants of the four holy cities, Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron, through an association it had established called Terra Santa. In the nineteenth century the foundation Pekidim and Amarkalim, under the leadership of the Lehren family, took over that task on behalf of Dutch and European Jews.

It was not the only form of international charity. The Jewish community in the Dutch Republic often sent money to help Jews in need, whether independently or in collaboration with communities elsewhere, as was the case when the freedom of Jewish captives in the war-torn Balkans was purchased in the late seventeenth century. Amsterdam's Portuguese congregation also put money aside through its Cativos society to help companions in adversity, members of the same 'nation', for example by rescuing them from the clutches of the Inquisition and thereby retaining them for Judaism. As we have seen, the Amsterdam-based Portuguese dowry organization Dotar operated both at home and abroad. Jewish philanthropy never restricted itself purely to the Netherlands but always had an international dimension.

'The Jewish community in the Dutch Republic often sent money to help Jews in need, whether independently or in collaboration with communities elsewhere, as was the case when the freedom of Jewish captives in the war-torn Balkans was purchased in the late seventeenth century.'

1692



'Portuguese Synagogue, the Courtyard and Women's Entrance', 1675–1700. Romeyn de Hooghe.
Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-27

Sara Dias da Fonseca

As a widow, Sara Dias de Fonseca ran her husband's tobacco concern for twelve years. She employed fourteen people and made enough money to support two families. Then in 1692 she went bankrupt and died not long afterwards. In the written histories, the role of women within the Jewish community of the Dutch Republic has often received less than due attention. Both Sephardi and Ashkenazi women were actively involved in trade and industry. Spanish culture, itself influenced in turn by Islam, becomes clearly visible in the Dutch Republic when we examine the position of Portuguese women. They often took refuge behind a male representative, but were nevertheless active and independent. Johebed de Casseres carried on her husband's cotton trade and Guiomar Henriques ran an international trading company dealing in sugar. The wife of Abraham Nunes helped her husband with the manufacture of candles and after his death transferred the business to her son-in-law. Rachel Preto ran a tobacconist's shop. Clara Musaphia supplied flour for the production of matzos and many other women, especially those born into a normative Jewish milieu, took on work that supported the life of the community, whether in the ritual baths, in the production of kosher bread or in healthcare.

'They often took refuge behind a male representative, but were nevertheless active and independent. Johebed de Casseres carried on her husband's cotton trade and Guiomar Henriques ran an international trading company dealing in sugar.'

Portuguese women tried as far as possible to avoid dirty work, which they preferred to leave to their servants. Taxation records from 1742 describe many of them as making their living as rentiers, so they seem to have been actively involved in investing their capital in order to preserve and increase their wealth. They also owned a large amount of real estate, which they offered for rent. By such means they did their best to secure an income for themselves and for future generations.

Ashkenazi women were less active in international trade but for that reason all the more visible on the streets, as business partners of their husbands, as independent tradeswomen or as housemaids. Of the nine Ashkenazi women assessed for taxation in 1742, five are described as working, as against four with a private income. Among the Portuguese the proportions are very different; of the 51 women, 50 are described as of independent means and only one as a businesswoman, or 2%. This demonstrates the difference in mentality and culture, but behind the facade the reality was often quite similar.

1696



'House of David de Pinto', c.1695. Romeyn de Hooghe.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam (Collection of J. van Velzen): M007547.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-28

The *Aansprekersoproer*

Prejudices against Jews seem to have been firmly rooted in the society of the Dutch Republic. This was obvious when, along with the residences of wealthy Amsterdam burgomasters and other persons of authority, the house of the prominent banking and trading family De Pinto in Sint Antoniesbreestraat was the target of looting during what became known as the *Aansprekersoproer* (sometimes rendered in English as the Undertakers' Riots) of 1696. It seems that to the angry mob of poor Amsterdammers who were protesting against measures surrounding the introduction of a new funeral tax, wealth and Jews were one and the same. In reality Jews had nothing to do with the enactment of the new legislation. The storming of the house therefore seems to point to a prejudice against Jews, who up to that point had rarely been confronted physically with such incidents.

A degree of hostility towards Jews and their religion can sometimes be detected in theological and polemical writings. Theologians including Gisbertus Voetius, Antonius Hulsius and Abraham Costerus were sometimes guilty of it. In 1715 all the Jews in Nijmegen were temporarily arrested, in response to accusations that they had murdered a Christian child in Kleve, Germany, for religious reasons. In the eighteenth century, stereotypes of Jews emerged more clearly. The word *smous* – possibly derived from the Jewish name Mousje (Moses) – was often used to express anti-Jewish feelings. It meant Jewish thief or cheat. The term was used in the daily vernacular or in literature when people chose to write condescendingly about Jews, whether Sephardim or Ashkenazim. It was deployed during the stock market crash of 1720, in which Jewish brokers were again subjected to physical violence. In caricatures, comedies and verses, such as those published in *Het groote Tafereel der dwaasheid* (The Great Scene of Foolishness, 1720), Jews were ridiculed as *smous*, and in the years between 1730 and 1740, writers including Claus van Laar and Jacob Campo Weyerman deployed stereotypes of Jews that were clearly inspired by prejudice against Jews.

'The word *smous* – possibly derived from the Jewish name Mousje (Moses) – was often used to express anti-Jewish feelings. It meant Jewish thief or cheat.'

None of this seriously harmed the standing of Jews in the Dutch Republic. Over the course of the eighteenth century, their economic and social position became entrenched. Prominent Jews were highly influential not just in their own communities but in political and diplomatic circles in Amsterdam, in The Hague, and indeed at a European level. They used their influence not just for the benefit of their own affairs but more widely. In the years since they first settled in the Dutch Republic, the Jews had acquired such a powerful position that an *Aansprekersoproer* or other expression of anti-Jewish sentiment could do little to detract from it.

1700

Eighteenth century: a time of expansion and stability



Jews hawking their combs and spectacles, J. Le Francq van Berkhey, *Natuurlyke Historie van Holland* (Natu ral History of Holland), Volume 4. Amsterdam, 1779, Plate V, explained as follows: '*... en den Smous die zyne kammen en Brillen rondvent, met meer soortgelyke omstandigheden*' (... and the *smous* who is hawking his combs and spectacles, with more of suchlike situations).

Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, OG 63–6323.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-29

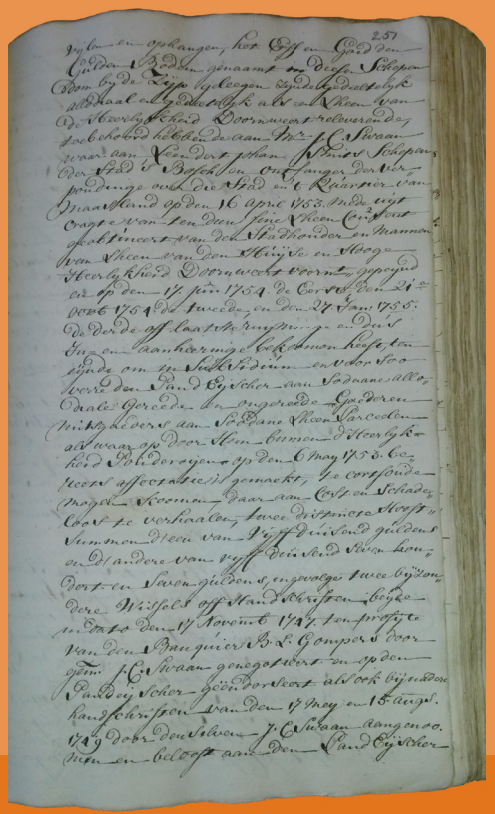
The eighteenth century brought a further stabilization of Jewish life, both in Amsterdam and elsewhere in the Dutch Republic. The Jews were expanding in many senses: demographically, geographically, economically and intellectually. Amsterdam had by this point grown to become the largest Jewish city in Europe and was regarded internationally as a beacon of tolerance, charitable works and economic success. The Jewish book industry had acquired a prominent place on the world stage. The Portuguese congregation provided rabbis and *chazanim* (cantors) for the Sephardi diaspora. Jews were less likely than in the past to respect the strict rabbinical tradition and Jewish ethics.

In many other cities and villages of the Dutch Republic, the Jews flourished and became an integral and valued part of urban and rural culture. They were on increasingly friendly terms with Christians and they were often in contact with the authorities at a city, regional and national level. Jews had a good relationship with the court of the stadholder and the House of Orange. Then again, among Christians there was prejudice and a fear of economic competition, especially from 'foreign Jews', who were often excluded and rejected. New Jewish immigrants, mostly from the German territories, Poland and central Europe, triggered demographic growth of unprecedented proportions. Ashkenazim were said to have overtaken Sephardim in numbers irrevocably, and now they were doing so economically as well. 'They're going up and we down,' noted a Portuguese Jew in the second half of the eighteenth century. Despite this growth, economic restrictions placed on them formed an increasing obstacle to the wellbeing of many Jews, and deep poverty was becoming more common among them. Yet there was light on the horizon and the voice of the Jews was now being heard. In the second half of the eighteenth century they became more politically engaged and were receptive to the ideals of the Enlightenment, which received a great deal of attention in eighteenth-century Europe. In several works, such as the *Reflexoens politicas* (Reflections on Politics) by Isaac de Pinto and by Mordechai van Aron de… in the journal *De Koopman* (The Merchant), Jews appealed unambiguously for emancipation and the removal of the existing restrictions.

'The eighteenth century brought a further stabilization of Jewish life, both in Amsterdam and elsewhere in the Dutch Republic. The Jews were expanding in many senses, demographically, geographically, economically and intellectually.'

The ideals of the American and French revolutions confirmed expectations that had been current among Jews for some time. Non-Jewish society had a growing tendency to accept Jews as equals and give them more rights, so the emancipation decree of 1796 did not arrive out of the blue. The granting of equal rights to the Jews was a final destination on a long journey. At the same time, it represented a promising beginning for Jews in a new era for the Netherlands.

1702



Transaction of 1755 in which ‘den Banquier B.L. Gompers’ provides large loans.

Collection of the Gelders Archief: 0124–428, f. 251.



‘View of the synagogue, Nonnenstraat, Nijmegen’, after 1893. G. Frohwein.

Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-30

Baruch/Benedictus Levi Gomperts

The Gomperts family initially operated out of Kleve in Germany, where their progenitor Gompert Salomon had made a fortune by supplying alcohol and tobacco to the troops of the Dutch garrison. He also set himself up as the leader of the Jewish congregation in Kleve, before later settling in Emmerich. In the second half of the seventeenth century his descendants created an internationally famous trading and banking firm, with branches in Germany, central Europe, England and the Dutch Republic.

The family continued Salomon's work as supplier to the army and expanded into the realm of high finance, providing credit and loans to the aristocracy in several countries. Reuben and Moses Gomperts were active in Amsterdam and by the eighteenth century the Gomperts family was one of most prominent in the Ashkenazi elite of the Dutch Republic.

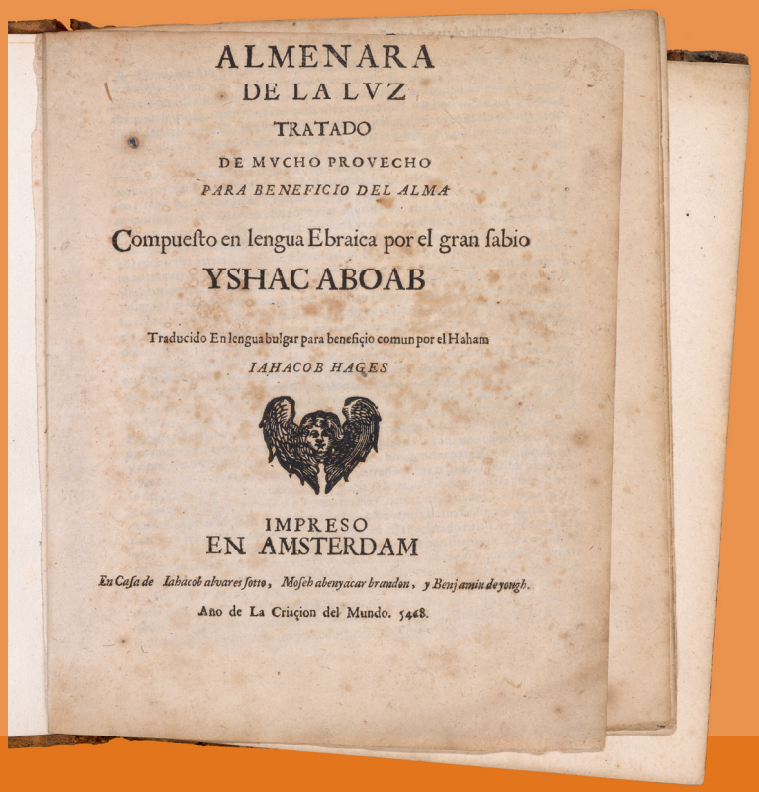
The leading light among them was banker Baruch Levi Gomperts, who settled in Nijmegen in 1702. The States of Gelderland had already recognized the Gomperts's commercial interests, and in 1690 the family was offered protection and the right to settle in any town in the province.

'By the eighteenth century the Gomperts family was one of most prominent in the Ashkenazi elite of the Dutch Republic.'

By 1697 Nijmegen had a home synagogue. On settling there in 1702, Baruch appointed himself protector of the Jews and in 1721 he managed to acquire for them a limited number of civil rights, granted mainly to Jews from whom the city authorities were hoping to gain some advantage. Partly as a result, several Jewish tax collectors from the city's bank, along with physicians, merchants, artisans and manufacturers, played an important role in the economic development of Nijmegen. In 1752 Baruch Gomperts bought a building that was to serve as a synagogue. He also concerned himself with the fate of the Jews internationally. In 1744 he and several other prominent Ashkenazim in the Dutch Republic, including Tobias Boas in The Hague, made use of his relationship with the States General to request intervention against an edict banishing Jews from Prague.

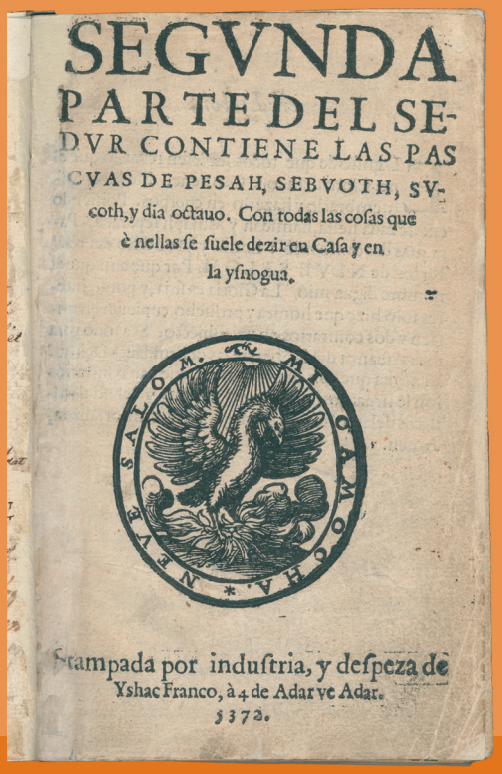
After a temporary settlement of Jews in the Middle Ages, Nijmegen distinguished itself once again with the arrival of the Gomperts family, in whose wake the settlement of Jews there in the early modern era was secured.

1708


ALMENARA
DE LA LVZ
TRATADO
DE MVCHO PROVECHO
PARA BENEFICIO DEL ALMA
Compueſto en lengua Ebraica por el gran ſabio
YSHAC ABOAB
Traducido En lengua bulgar para beneficio comun por el Haham
IAHACOB HAGES
IMPRESO
EN AMSTERDAM
En Caſa de Iahacob alvares ſotto, Moſeh abenyacar braudon, y Benjamin de yongh.
Ano de La Criaçion del Mundo. 5468.

Title page of Isaac Aboab's *Almenara de la Luz. Tratado de mvcho provecho para beneficio del alma*, Amsterdam, 5468 [1708].

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: RON A 279.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Stampada por induſtria, y deſpeza de
Yshac Franco, à 4 de Adar ve Adar.
5372.

Title page of a prayerbook in Spanish called *Segunda parte del Sedur*, Amsterdam, 1612.

Collection of the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam: EH-9–H-29.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-31

Spanish edition of Aboab's *Menorat ha-Ma'or*

Among the Sephardi diaspora, major works of Hebrew literature by Spanish Jews were often republished and sometimes translated, so that Conversos in particular could get to know them after they entered into the world of Judaism. One such book was Isaac Aboab's fourteenth-century *Menorat ha-Ma'or*, published in Amsterdam in 1708 under the Spanish title *Almenara de la Luz* (Candelabra of the Light). The book is largely about the ethics of Judaism and the Spanish edition made its content more accessible.

Portuguese and Spanish were the main languages in which the Amsterdam Portuguese communicated with each other in the early modern era, both verbally and on paper. Spanish was often used for literary and scholarly works. In two literary academies, the Academia de los Sitibundos and the Academia de los Floridos, Spanish and Portuguese literature were studied and discussed, philosophical questions raised and new works introduced. So links with the Spanish and Portuguese culture of the countries of origin were maintained, and they were reinforced by the continual growth in the number of immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula. Furthermore, boys received lessons in Portuguese and Spanish at school, while Latin was taught on a private basis to future students of medicine and others.

The records of the Portuguese congregation were written mostly in Portuguese, with Spanish texts included here and there. Portuguese Jews sought out notaries in the city who were able to draw up wills, marriage contracts and other important documents in Portuguese or Spanish. Portuguese Jews usually commanded several languages and if they did not, then Portuguese interpreters and translators could often help them.

Of course many Portuguese Jews also spoke Dutch and could read it, but for some the language proved an insurmountable barrier. It is not until the late eighteenth century that the Dutch language begins to appear in documents rather more often, although the influence of Dutch on the Portuguese and Spanish in which they were written is detectable far earlier. In the eighteenth century the Portuguese preferred to speak French, incidentally, in vogue at the time as the language of the elite. The degree to which Portuguese Jews mastered Hebrew is difficult to gauge, especially in the case of new immigrants. The generation born in Amsterdam did at any rate gain a reasonable knowledge of Hebrew through the congregation's education system. The command of many languages by the Portuguese in Amsterdam certainly gave them a huge advantage locally and internationally, and enabled them to operate in a range of fields.

'Portuguese and Spanish were the main languages in which the Amsterdam Portuguese communicated with each other in the early modern era, both verbally and on paper.'

1710



'View of the Portuguese and High German Synagogues in Amsterdam', c.1752. Adolf van der Laan (engraver) and Pieter van Gunst (printer).

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-32

Chacham Tsvi

Chacham Tsvi Hirsch Ashkenazi (1660–1718), one of the most prominent European rabbis of his day, was received with many honours in 1710 and appointed chief rabbi of the High German congregation in Amsterdam. He was immediately given an unusually generous salary. He had lived, studied and worked in several European cities, and adopted the Sephardi title *chacham* after completing his studies at the yeshivas in Salonica and Belgrade. He had also been chief rabbi of the Sephardi congregation of Sarajevo.

Chacham Tsvi became especially famous after the publication of his *Responsa Hakham Zevi* in 1712, in which he answers questions put to him by scholars of various European Jewish congregations. The book gives us an insight into the problems that Jews and their congregations were dealing with at the time. His career in Amsterdam was short-lived. There was disagreement with the board of his own congregation, partly concerning the duration of his appointment and the size of his salary. A conflict also developed between him and the Portuguese congregation, especially its *chacham*, Solomon Ayllon, with whom Tsvi initially had a good relationship.

Their quarrel mainly concerned the distribution of the book *Oz Le-Elohiem* by the travelling kabbalist Nehemiah Chiya Chayon, who was suspected by Chacham Tsvi of being a secret follower of the mystical messiah Sabbatai Zevi. Chayon sought support among the Portuguese for the distribution of his work. The leadership of the Portuguese congregation took advice from Chacham Tsvi because it distrusted its own Chacham Ayllon, whom it likewise suspected of Sabbateanism. After careful consideration and in consultation with a *shaliach* from the Jerusalem community in Amsterdam called Moses Chagiz, Tsvi decided to ban Chayon.

Ayllon, however, turned the situation to his advantage and won the board of the Portuguese congregation to his side. After a fresh investigation, Chayon's ideas were approved by Ayllon and his allies as based on the traditional mystical teachings of the kabbalah. A bitter pamphlet war followed, in Amsterdam and other European cities. Chacham Tsvi refused to make any concession or apology to the Portuguese leadership and was put into the ban along with Moses Chagiz by the Portuguese congregation as a result. He decided in 1714 to give up his post in Amsterdam. The Portuguese congregation was therefore able to cut its ties with both of them, which is particularly ironic because not long afterwards the works of Chayon were rejected by that same congregation. The authority of the Sephardi congregation over that of the Ashkenazi congregation had, however, meanwhile been restored.

'There was disagreement with the board of his own congregation, partly concerning the duration of his appointment and the size of his salary.'

1717



The De Castro Pharmacy, formerly Muiderstraat 16, currently Roeterstraat 19, Amsterdam.
Photograph by Patrick Sternfeld.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-33

The pharmacy owned by Esther, widow of physician Jacob de Castro

No Jewish women appear to have studied medicine at universities in the Dutch Republic or beyond in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet women were certainly working in the health and care sectors. They assisted physicians, surgeons and apothecaries in the exercise of their professions, and looked after the sick and dying within their communities. It should be noted, however, that in the seventeenth century especially, Ashkenazi women (and men) were frequently called upon to care for sick Portuguese Jews, since the latter preferred not to soil their hands with such a task.

Jewish women were often active as midwives, one example being Simca de Campos, granddaughter of Chacham Isaac Uziel from North Africa. She assisted at the birth of Simón, the son of Daniel Levi de Barrios, who wrote a sonnet for her as a token of thanks.

Jewish women will have learned all these professions in the familiar environment of the family, while others studied to be assistant apothecaries. Should they be widowed, they could carry on in their husbands' line of business. The widow of physician Jacob de Castro must have trained in this way. After her husband's death in 1717, she took on Eliasib Nathanel Sarfati as foreman at the shop in the Jodenbreestraat. Later, in 1721, he successfully passed an exam to qualify as an apothecary. In 1795 there were thirteen Jewish apothecaries in Amsterdam, three of them Ashkenazi. One premises, formerly in the Muiderstraat, still exists as a pharmacy and bears the name De Castro.

'Jewish women will have learned all these professions in the familiar environment of the family, while others studied to be assistant apothecaries.'

Jews were therefore well represented in the medical sector in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but for some decades yet there were no Jewish hospitals or psychiatric institutions. In exceptional cases Jews used the existing city institutions, with the Jewish community providing kosher food. Those who were ill generally received treatment at home, invisible to the outside world. Some Jews even had a kind of hospital in their homes, or cared for physically or mentally disabled people on a permanent, private basis, paid by the family or by the Jewish community.

As well as the Jewish public sector, with organizations such as Bikur Holim, which employed its own physicians and surgeons, there were many private welfare organizations that looked after the sick, just as the guilds did. The Sephardim had an association for mutual aid called Temime Darech, which focused on care for the sick. The majority of members of such organizations were female. It was a way for women to seek protection against unexpected misfortune, while their involvement in the care sector assured them of a source of income.

1723



Country seat Doornburgh on the River Vecht near Maarssen, by D. Stoopendaal, originally depicted in 1719 in *De Zeegepraalende Vecht* (The Triumphant Vecht) and again here in 1791 in *De Vechtstroom* (The River Vecht).

Allard Pierson, University of Amsterdam, OF 80-35.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-34

Doornburgh and other country estates on the Amstel and the Vecht

The country house Doornburgh in Maarssen, purchased by Jacob de Chaves in 1723, was one of many rural estates on the Amstel and Vecht rivers bought by Portuguese Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The owners would spend long summers there, sometimes as long as six months, or around three weeks if they were rather less well off. Their country seats were beautifully laid out, with delightful trelliswork featuring complex structures and astonishing gardens all round, with fountains and statuary. They often bore the signature of famous architects, including Daniel Marot and Philip Vingboon.

They made a tremendous impression on visitors, who included the Utrecht printer François Halma in 1720. 'This place is a paradise, which is why quite a few Amsterdam Israelites have their resorts here,' he wrote. Dignitaries were welcomed. Stadholder William V and his wife honoured the Pereyra family with a visit to their country seat Luxemburg in 1772. These were places to enjoy nature and the outdoor life, and to relax for a while in the gardens or arbours. Fishing, hunting and horse riding took place, small boats were sailed and people swam. Books were read, music was played and poetry written, by the scholar Moses Chaim Luzatto from Padua, for example, who came as a guest. There was also much interest in collections of rare plants and exotic fruit, and people would visit each other to drink tea and admire the splendours of the estate. Great flocks of gardeners were hired annually by owners to maintain the grounds. We have evidence that Joseph Suasso de Lima did exactly that in 1748.

'Their country seats were beautifully laid out, with delightful trelliswork featuring complex structures and astonishing gardens all round, with fountains and statuary.'

Judaism was not neglected in these country estates, sometimes to the displeasure of the Reformed Church Council of Maarssen or the burgomasters of Utrecht. In the seventeenth century, services were held in a room in one of Maarssen's country houses, and in the eighteenth century, Sephardi Jews designated a building there as a synagogue. An Ashkenazi synagogue followed a few decades later.

The supply of kosher meat was guaranteed by the appointment of a *shochet* (ritual slaughter), who also served as a cantor, sexton and religious studies teacher for the children, and the Sabbath and Jewish holidays were celebrated. The people of Maarssen were astonished by the many huts built for the celebration of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles). The interiors of country houses of this kind featured marble floors, oak staircases, ceilings of moulded plaster or painted panels showing coats of arms or allegorical tableaux. They also displayed Sabbath lamps, *Sifrei Torah* (Torah scrolls), and paintings or tapestries depicting scenes from the Bible. Many Jews enjoyed their country summers and as autumn drew in they returned to their residences in the city refreshed.

1725



Synagogue at the Boompjes in Rotterdam, 1790. Jer. Snoek.

Collection of the Rotterdam City Archives, RI-841.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-35

Zwolle, The Hague and Rotterdam: newly emerging Jewish communities

Aside from Amsterdam, the cities of Zwolle, The Hague and Rotterdam became the most famous centres of Jewish life. Zwolle, where Jews had settled in the Middle Ages, was an important home port in the east of the Dutch Republic in the eighteenth century. There the guilds of Jewish merchants had more rights than anywhere else in the country. David Jacobs Stibbe was named chief rabbi of Zwolle in 1772 and served the Jewish community there for almost seventy years. His fame spread far and wide. He had arrived originally as a *chazan* (cantor) and *sofer* (transcriber of Torah scrolls), and meanwhile ran a pharmacy.

From the late seventeenth century onwards, The Hague became an important city for Jews of independent means and for prominent Portuguese Jewish diplomats serving European royal houses. Families like the Lopes Suassos, the Teixeira de Mattos, the De Pintos, the Machados and the Pereyras exchanged Amsterdam for The Hague, the seat of the stadholder's court, and lived a luxurious life there. The city's two Portuguese congregations merged in 1743. From then on they held services in the regal and elegant synagogue built on the Prinsessegracht in 1726, designed by famous French architect Daniel Marot at the behest of the Portuguese congregation Honen Dalim.

Ashkenazi Jews settled in the city at around the same time, some employed by Sephardim, others living as independent entrepreneurs. From 1748 onwards they were under the inspiring leadership of Chief Rabbi Saul Halevi. In the time of the Dutch Republic, The Hague was home to the only Jewish community outside Amsterdam that had a Hebrew printing shop, owned by Leib Soesmans.

Jewish Rotterdam has a longer history. In 1610 it became one of the first cities, after Alkmaar and Haarlem, to offer Jews the chance to settle and to practise their religion freely, although 'with all quietness'. But first at least thirty Jewish families would have to come and live there. This requirement had its origins in commercial interests. The minimum number was not reached and so the charter was withdrawn in 1612. Jewish life in Rotterdam did not get into its stride until the arrival of the De Pinto family in 1647. Having fled from Antwerp and earlier from Portugal, the De Pintos established a famous academy for Jewish studies, the Jesiba de los Pintos, which moved to Amsterdam along with the family in 1669. The Portuguese congregation in Rotterdam, which included the famous De la Penha family, ceased to exist as such in 1736.

Ashkenazi Jews came to Rotterdam mainly in the second half of the seventeenth century, and as tobacconists, money changers, shoemakers, tailors, small tradesmen and servants they turned the city into the most important Jewish centre outside Amsterdam. In 1725 the famous synagogue at the Boompjes was consecrated. It was destroyed during the bombing of Rotterdam in 1940. It had been the only synagogue in western Europe with a clock on its front wall.

'In 1725 the famous synagogue at the Boompjes was consecrated. It was destroyed during the bombing of Rotterdam in 1940.'

1725



'Naien Jahres und ekstra Simches Toireh Courant', written in Yiddish and Dutch as a parody of Jewish life and its traditions in the form of a dialogue between R. Hanokh and his wife Gerritje, c.1800.

Collection of the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam: EH 20 B 67_12.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-36

Mikra meforash

In Amsterdam more than 220 titles were published in Yiddish between 1644 and 1750 alone. Yiddish was the language of the Ashkenazi Germanic diaspora, written in Hebrew script. The books were intended for an international readership, but they also filled a local need. Among them was the *Mikra meforash* by Eliezer Soesman Rudelsum and his brother-in-law Menachem Man Amelander, printed in the early eighteenth century. It had a clearly educational function and was intended to initiate children into Judaism by means of a conversation between a teacher and a pupil. Anyone wishing to reach the Ashkenazi public needed to write in Yiddish.

A study of Judaism such as the *Minhogiemboek* (1645) might be on display, with its explanation of Jewish laws and customs, or the *Tsenerene* (1648), a Yiddish commentary on the Hebrew Bible aimed above all at women. Yiddish was also the medium of everyday conversation and public information, as well as being used by the Ashkenazi congregation for administrative purposes and to note down its decisions. It was the language in which commercial establishments corresponded and women wrote their shopping lists and recipes.

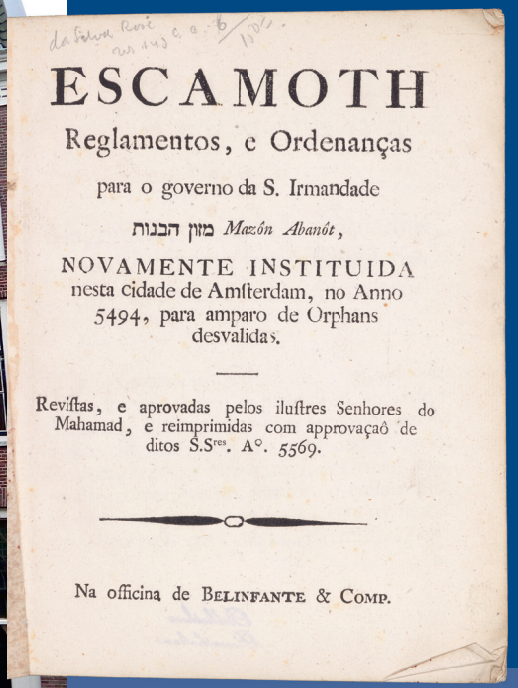
The elite among the Ashkenazim learned about political and economic developments in the world from the first ever Yiddish newspaper, called the *Dinstagishe un Fraytagishe Kuranten* (1686–1687). The less well educated benefitted from Yiddish almanacs packed with chronicles, stories, advice on health and diet, and information about the weather. Knowledge of Hebrew generally remained limited. In 1686 Rabbi Eljakiem published the Hebrew compendium *Leshon Limmudim* to teach children to wr ite a pure form of Hebrew. Among Ashkenazi Jews, Hebrew was mainly the language of prayer and religious texts. The Yiddish spoken and written in the Dutch Republic is sometimes referred to as West Yiddish, and from the late seventeenth century onwards it was often enriched by words and expressions borrowed from Dutch, which helped to make it increasingly distinct from the Yiddish used in other regions.

In the late eighteenth century, knowledge of Dutch and German spread more widely, especially among the Ashkenazi elite. The progressive *Naye Kille*, which split from the established Ashkenazi congregation in Amsterdam in 1797, introduced Dutch into its synagogue services. Yet that same *Naye Kille* also published in Yiddish in order to reach as broad a public as possible. Legislation by King William I in 1817 forbade the use of Yiddish as a medium of instruction in synagogues and schools, and over time an entire tradition of the Jews in the Netherlands was lost as a consequence.

'Anyone wishing to reach the Ashkenazi public needed to write in Yiddish.'

1734





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Reglamentos, e Ordenanças

para o governo da S. Irmandade

מזון הבנות *Mazón Abanót*,

NOVAMENTE INSTITUIDA
nesta cidade de Amsterdam, no Anno 5494, para amparo de Orphans desvalidas.

Reviftas, e aprovadas pelos iluftres Senhores do Mahamad, e reimprimidas com approvaçaó de ditos S.S^res^. A°. 5569.

Na officina de BELINFANTE & COMP.

Former Ashkenazi girls' orphanage Megadlé Jethomot at Rapenburgerstraat 169–171 in Amsterdam.

Photograph by Patrick Sternfeld.

Title page of the revised regulations of the Portuguese Jewish girls' orphanage Mazon Habanot, founded in 1734 in Amsterdam, 1809.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: UBM, Br. Ros K a 24.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-37

Mazon Habanot

The Portuguese Jewish girls' orphanage Mazon Habanot was founded in 1734 as a day-care facility for girls who belonged to the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish nation. They were taught to read, sew and knit, and had the 'fear of God' inculcated into them. Portuguese Jews bought the items they made, thereby helping to pay the expenses. In this respect the Portuguese showed themselves to be closely wedded to Jewish tradition, in which care for orphans was firmly anchored, its importance stressed several times in the rabbinical sources. It was a special *mitzvah* (good, religious deed) to take in orphaned children and ensure they would be able to marry.

In Jewish Amsterdam this was a teaching that found willing listeners. Driven to Amsterdam by war, persecution or economic malaise, the community had many orphans, whether lacking fathers or without parents at all. We know that Sephardim took in orphans and among Ashkenazim it will have been no different. The Santa Companhia Dotar Orphas e Donzellas (1615), Dotar for short, helped to give orphaned girls and the young daughters of poor families dowries far beyond the borders of the Dutch Republic, although only if they belonged to the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish nation. In the eighteenth century a more locally oriented dowry association came into being in the Ashkenazi community.

'It was a special *mitzvah* (good, religious deed) to take in orphaned children and ensure they would be able to marry.'

Aby Jetomim was set up in 1648 as a fund that enabled poor orphaned Portuguese boys to be given an elementary education and to learn a trade. It was modelled on the Catholic *Padre de Huérfanos* organizations, such as existed in the Iberian Peninsula. The boys were trained to become teachers (whether of religion or other subjects), booksellers, brokers, diamond cutters, barber-surgeons or wigmakers, and clothing and books were donated. Aby Jetomim was one of a kind, with an extremely progressive curriculum, and it later came to be regarded as a model elsewhere in the Sephardi world.

In 1738, a few years after the founding of Mazon Habanot, the Ashkenazi boys' orphanage Megadlé Jethomim was established. It began as a fund to help boys who were living at home, paying for their education, clothing and food. An orphanage for Ashkenazi girls followed in 1761. With the exception of Mazon Habanot, it was not until the nineteenth century that such organizations became institutions housed in specific buildings, where children could stay day and night. The Second World War put an end to most of them. Megadlé Jethomim resumed its work for a while after the war, but now only monuments and plaques remain, like those on the Waterlooplein and in the Rapenburgerstraat. Dotar alone was ultimately spared abolition.

1737



Jews in front of the synagogue on the Levendaal in Leiden, built in 1762, c.1788. J. Timmermans.

Collection of Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-38

A Jewish quota in Leiden

From the beginning of the seventeenth century, Jews felt strongly attracted to Leiden, mainly because of its university. The attraction was mutual. For the university, where the study of theology had an important place, good contact with Jews was of the greatest importance. By drawing upon their expertise, the staff could delve more deeply into Judaism and gain a better command of Hebrew. The convert Isaac Pallache was appointed as a university teacher in Leiden, and Jewish students of medicine could always be found there. Often they stayed for only a short time, just long enough to pass their medical exams and gain a doctorate before leaving again.

Permanent Jewish settlement began later, in the early eighteenth century, and as in many other towns and villages of the Dutch Republic it did not happen without a struggle. There was a fear of competition. The guilds resisted, demanding the numbers be limited. A quota for Jews was not in fact unusual. Numerical limits were a common phenomenon in the Europe of the day and even suggested by Hugo Grotius in his *Remonstrantie*, although they were never implemented in Amsterdam.

The growth in the Jewish population between 1733 and 1740 was regarded as so alarming that in 1737 a list was drawn up with the names of twenty-eight households currently living in Leiden. That was to be the limit; 'no other Jews' were to be allowed to reside there or to acquire 'burghership' (citizenship rights). A representative of the Jewish community, Barent Salomons Cohen, was charged with ensuring the rule was obeyed and with keeping the city authorities informed of any new marriages, births and deaths, or 'the coming of foreign Jews'. It was those new ('foreign') Jewish immigrants from the German territories who caused fear, above all because they might damage the local economy.

In the city of Groningen the 'coming of foreign High German Jews and Smousen' was forbidden in 1710, and placards to the same effect can be found elsewhere too. In the province of Drenthe only three Jews were allowed to come and live permanently in a village, and then only on condition they were useful. Access to 's-Hertogenbosch was also limited.

For travelling Jews with no fixed abode, who often moved from one annual fair to the next or sold their wares in the countryside, an organization called a *reis-chewre* (travel association) was set up, with mobile synagogues. It enabled Jews to fulfil their religious obligations and had its own rabbi and cantors. Two synagogue inventories made the enterprise complete. More permanent settlement often resulted, as was the case in Leiden, where the decree of 1737 became a dead letter. Despite protests, especially from the economic sector, the Jewish community expanded further around its attractive synagogue on the Levendaal.

'It was those new ("foreign") Jewish immigrants from the German territories who caused fear, above all because they might damage the local economy.'

1740



'Masked Ball on the Occasion of the Jewish Purim Festival', 1780. Caspar Jacobszoon Philips, after Pieter Wagenaar (II).
Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M001405.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-39

Musical performance in the house of Francesco Lopes de Liz

Jews were great enthusiasts for entertainment, often to be found in coffeehouses, gaming houses and brothels. Among the Portuguese, theatre was a favourite, which is far from surprising given their background, since in the Spanish Golden Age it was in its heyday.

At first the synagogue was used as a theatre, for performances of *Dialogo dos Montes* by Rehuel Jessurun in 1624, for instance. The leaders of the Portuguese community put an end to such practices in 1632, saying they did not square with a sense of decorum and *bom Judesmo* (civilized, refined Judaism). With synagogues no longer available to be used as theatres, private houses were thrown open for theatrical performances and large audiences (mostly Portuguese) were invited. Later in the seventeenth century, warehouses were converted into theatres. As well as Spanish plays, the French repertoire was sometimes drawn upon, in Spanish translation. Despite an official request to the city authorities, Jews were not allowed to perform plays in the city's main theatre.

The liking for theatre among the Portuguese becomes tangible in probate inventories, where in some cases drawers full of Spanish comedies are listed. Moreover, innumerable writers in the Portuguese community wrote plays in Amsterdam, including Daniel Levi de Barrios, although we cannot be certain whether his works were actually performed in the city. Jacob Barrocase translated plays from Spanish into Dutch for the benefit of Amsterdam theatregoers.

'In the eighteenth century the younger generation of Jews visited dance halls as well as the theatre, even on the Sabbath or other holy days.'

As well as theatre, the Sephardim had a love of music. A harpsichord was often a feature of a Portuguese interior and musical evenings were commonly a part of social life. A musical society or opera company would generally come to the home to perform, or a soloist might be invited, as in the house of Francesco Lopes de Liz in The Hague.

This was also likely to happen among the High German Jewish elite. The Ashkenazim loved the theatre too, but in their case Yiddish theatre and the plays performed in the main theatre in Amsterdam. Around Purim in particular, many humorous productions were staged, under the heading of *Purim spiel*. One of the authors, Sjloume Duikelaar, became idiomatic in Dutch, his name distorted into *slome duikelaar* (literally, sluggish tumbler) and used ever since to indicate a drip or sluggard. But entertainment was not limited to Purim; it took place all year round. In the eighteenth century the younger generation of Jews visited dance halls as well as the theatre, even on the Sabbath or other holy days. In 1784 a Jewish opera and stage school was set up by Jacob Dessauer, at a time when women were becoming part of the *tableau de la troupe*. The repertoire consisted of Yiddish versions of popular French, Italian and German operas. In short, the Jews had no lack of amusement in the Dutch Republic. Each group, from within its own culture, added colour to life in the early modern era.

1740



Detail of the building that housed the Beth Hamidrash Ets Haim from 1883 onwards. Rapenburgerstraat 109, Amsterdam.

Photograph by Patrick Sternfeld.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-40

Founding of the Beth Hamidrash Ets Haim

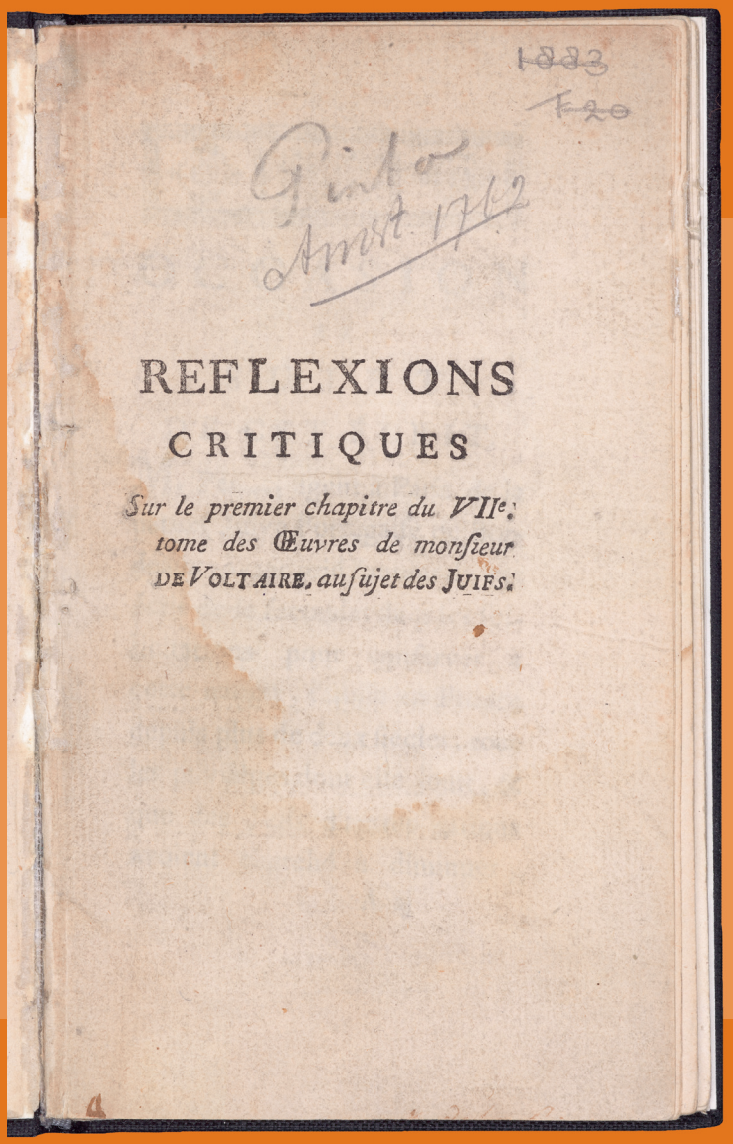
At first Ashkenazi Jews did not have such a structured form of education as the Sephardim. Most of their schooling was privately arranged. Teachers who were under compulsory supervision by the chief rabbi came to the home, but they often lacked a thorough knowledge of Hebrew, so in 1660 the Ashkenazi congregation set up a school. It was given the same name as the Portuguese school, Talmud Torah, and it was aimed mainly at educating poor children.

Yiddish remained the medium of communication, but in the eighteenth century especially, the Ashkenazim took the initiative to teach children better Dutch. A prayerbook by Joseph ben Jacob van Maarssen was published, translated into Dutch from the Hebrew. The prayerbook and the Torah were the classic teaching tools of Jewish education. By 1728 the book was already in its second printing. Like his father, Maarssen had been a Jewish schoolmaster, and with his *Joods ABC Boeck* (Jewish ABC Book) he intended to facilitate a 'very good and competent' education in the Dutch language 'for the young children of that same nation'.

'The establishment of the Beth Hamidrash gave an important boost to the study of Judaism within the city's Ashkenazi community.'

In 1740, with the arrival of Chief Rabbi Arjey Leib ben Saul Loewenstamm from Rzeszów in Poland, son-in-law of Chacham Tsvi, the Ashkenazi Beth Hamidrash Ets Haim was established, initially in the Dritt Shul. In 1883 it moved to the Rapenburgerstraat. With his Polish Jewish background, Leib was astonished at the low level of education among his congregation in Amsterdam. The establishment of the Beth Hamidrash gave an important boost to the study of Judaism within the city's Ashkenazi community, but it could not match the international reputation of the Sephardi Ets Haim yeshiva, where a new generation of rabbis was trained. Until well into the nineteenth century, the Ashkenazim continued to draw their spiritual leaders from the centres of Judaism in eastern Europe.

1742



Title page of Isaac de Pinto's critical response to Voltaire's ideas about Jews and Judaism, *Reflexions critiques sur le premier chapitre du VIIe tome des Oeuvres de monsieur de Voltaire au sujet des Juifs* (Critical Reflections on the First Chapter of the Seventh Volume of M. de Voltaire's Works on the Subject of the Jews), French edition published in Paris, 1762.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, Ron A-3045.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-41

Isaac de Pinto

Isaac de Pinto (1717–1787) was a descendant of a famous family that had come from Lisbon via Antwerp to join the Jewish community in the Dutch Republic, first in Rotterdam and later in Amsterdam. He had a broad education and had mastered many languages, in which he corresponded with famous philosophers and maintained contact with the European elite of his day, including the court of the Dutch stadholder. In 1748 he helped to finance Stadholder William IV's war against France.

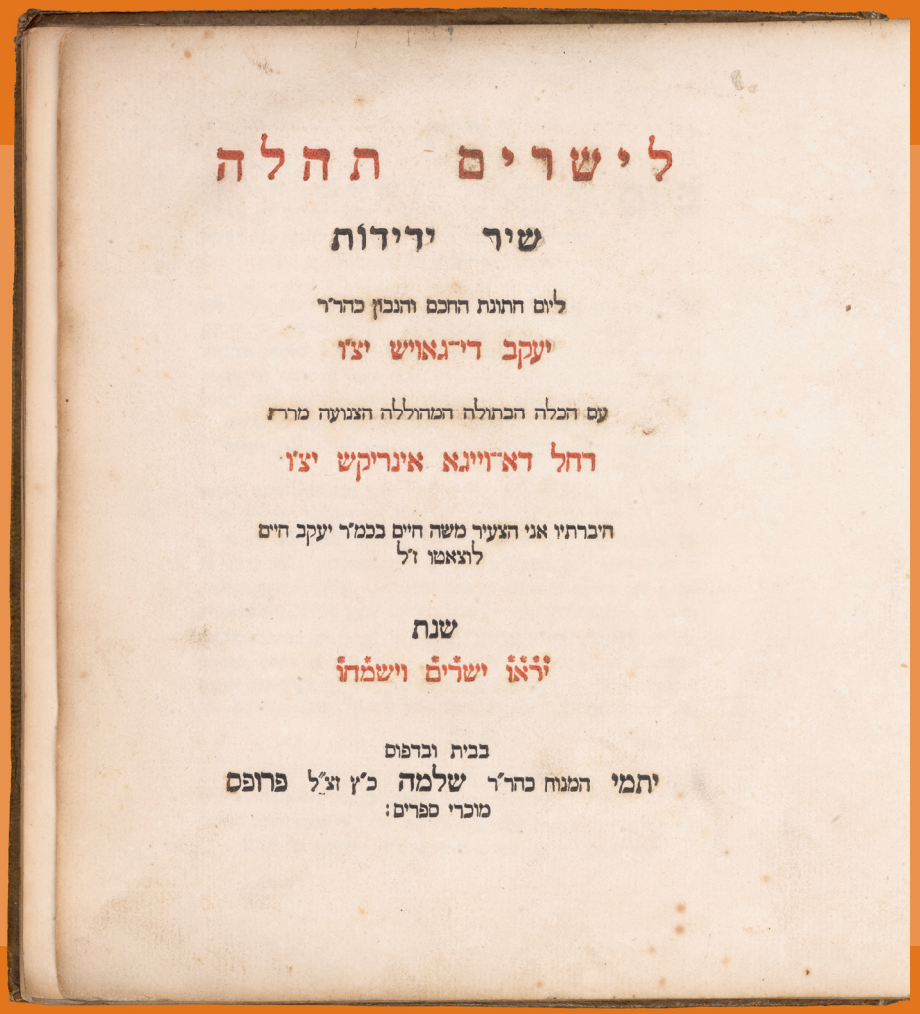
As an economist, De Pinto developed innovative theories about trade, credit and national debt, which he set down in books including his *Traité de la circulation et du crédit* (Amsterdam, 1771) and *Essai sur le luxe* (Amsterdam, 1762). Like other members of his family, Isaac dedicated himself to the leadership of his Portuguese congregation. As a *parnas* he became its treasurer, and from 1742 onwards he implemented a number of reforms aimed at putting it back on a healthy financial footing.

'Why does a Portuguese congregation have a duty to care for poor Jews from all over the world?' he asked. He believed it was no longer a matter of charity but of self-destruction. A minority of the community (one third) was sustaining the majority. The economic restrictions placed upon Jews in Amsterdam and elsewhere were in his opinion the main cause of the high unemployment and immense poverty that prevailed in the Portuguese Jewish community. One of the solutions he proposed was a plan to send Jews to 'the West' (in other words, the colonies). With the help of the Ashkenazi congregation, he organized a petition addressed to the city of Amsterdam, asking for the ban on Jews joining guilds to be lifted.

In 1748 Isaac de Pinto finally published his plans for reform and his exposition concerning the state of the Portuguese congregation, under the title *Reflexoens politicas tocante a constituiçaō da naçaō judaica.* He then made a name for himself in a debate with Voltaire, who, despite his supposedly enlightened ideas, had mocked Jews and their religion in his *Oeuvres Complètes* (Geneva, 1756). De Pinto responded to Voltaire with an *Apologie pour la nation juive* (Amsterdam, 1762), in which he presents himself as a proud Portuguese. He believed that Voltaire had neglected to draw a distinction between the often wealthy Sephardim, with their refined manners, and the Ashkenazim, whom he regarded as far poorer and sometimes unprincipled, as a result of persecution and economic misery. The arguments deployed suggested Voltaire's criticism was justified, as long as he made clear he was not referring to the Sephardim. The De Pinto house in the Sint Antoniesbreestraat is one of several places that ensure Amsterdam will never forget this remarkable family.

'De Pinto believed that Voltaire had neglected to draw a distinction between the often wealthy Sephardim, with their refined manners, and the Ashkenazim, whom he regarded as far poorer and sometimes unprincipled, as a result of persecution and economic misery.'

1743



לישרים תהלה

שיר ידידות

ליום חתונת החכם והנבון כהר"ר

יעקב די־גאויש יצ"ו

עם הכלה הבתולה המהוללה הצנועה מרת

רחל דא־ויינא אינריקש יצ"ו

חיברתיו אני הצעיר משה חיים בכמ"ר יעקב חיים
לוצאטו ז"ל

שנת

יִרְאוּ יְשָׁרִים וְיִשְׂמָחוּ

בבית וכרפוס

יתמי המנוח כהר"ר שלמה כ"ץ וצ"ל פרופס

מוכרי ספרים:

Title page of Moses Chaim Luzatto's *La-Yesharim Tehillah*, Amsterdam, Proops, 5503 [1743].

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, RON A-4948.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-42

Moses Chaim Luzatto and *La-Yesharim Tehillah*

In the mid-eighteenth century particularly, there was a revival of Hebrew literature among the Amsterdam Sephardim. Back in the seventeenth century, several Portuguese Jews had made their name by writing Hebrew literature, including Joseph Penso de la Vega with his *Asirei Hatikva*, Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto with *Yesod Olam*, and Salomon ben David de Oliveira with *Ayelet Ahavim*. The excellent standard of education enjoyed by the Portuguese congregation created a fertile medium; talented students at the Talmud Torah school and the Ets Haim yeshiva learned to write prose and poetry in Hebrew.

In the eighteenth century the writing of Hebrew literature in Amsterdam was no doubt spurred by the arrival of Moses Chaim Luzatto (1707–1746), the most prominent Hebrew poet of his day, who stayed in the city from 1735 to 1743. During his time in Amsterdam he wrote the famous wedding poem *La-Yesharim Tehillah* (Song of Praise for the Righteous) on the occasion of the marriage of his student Jacob de Chaves to Rachel da Veiga Henriques. The De Chaves family had made Luzatto warmly welcome in the Dutch Republic and *La-Yesharim* was probably a reference to its virtue.

Luzatto also worked as a teacher to David Franco Mendes (1713–1792), who in 1769 set up a literary society called Amadores das Musas, as part of which he and others wrote Hebrew literature, often in the form of translations of classic works originally written in French, Italian, Spanish or Portuguese. They included *Gemoel Atalya* (Amsterdam, 1770), which bears a close resemblance to the tragedy *Athalie* by Racine. A substantial collection of Hebrew poetry was published under the title *Kinnor David* by Franco Mendes and other members of the society, including Isaac Cohen Belinfante, author of many poems in Hebrew, of which one, *Minchat Nedaba*, is an ode to Franco Mendes.

The literary society had a certain affinity for the ideas of Moses Mendelssohn, who attached great importance to a thorough knowledge of Hebrew and of secular culture. Franco Mendes wrote contributions in the form of poems and short biographies of Amsterdam Sephardim for the magazine *Ha-Me'assef* (The Collector), published in Germany from 1784 to 1811 by an association strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, called Doreshei Leshon Ever (Friends of the Hebrew Language). The revival of Hebrew literature shows that the Portuguese community of eighteenth-century Amsterdam did not operate in isolation but engaged with broader developments in European Jewish culture.

'Luzatto, the most prominent Hebrew poet of his day, stayed in the city from 1735 to 1743.'

1744



Portrait of Tobias Boas, describing him as 'a rich Jewish banker in The Hague'. Benjamin Samuel Bolomey, eighteenth century.

Collection of the Musée historique de Lausanne.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-43

Tobias Boas

Out of the mainly poor Ashkenazim in the Dutch Republic, a small elite formed. Its tone was set by Tobias Boas (1696–1782) in The Hague, the grandson of an immigrant from Poland. His father had established a trading firm that dealt in jewels, gold and textiles. Tobias expanded the business and transformed it into an internationally famous private bank. He made loans worth millions to several European royal families and to the court of the stadholder, where he was known as 'one of the best of the Jews that are here'.

Boas used his connections with the States General to defend the position of Jews elsewhere. In 1744, along with the Gomperts family, he asked the Dutch Republic to prevail upon Empress Maria Theresa to prevent the expulsion of Jews from Prague. Decades later, in 1781, Maria Theresa's son Emperor Joseph II came to visit him in The Hague. Boas was also highly regarded by the Swedish royal family and maintained excellent relations with the king of Poland. He married his children to prominent members of the European Jewish elite, including offspring of the Gomperts, Wertheimer, Oppenheimer and Kann families. Meanwhile he lived as a pious Jew and set himself up among the Ashkenazim as the undisputed leader of all Jews resident in The Hague. He was crucial in enabling the remuneration of The Hague rabbi Saul Halevi. Boas's house, known tellingly as 'Solomon's Temple', was the centre of Jewish religious and intellectual life in the city.

'In 1744, along with the Gomperts family, Boas asked the Dutch Republic to prevail upon Empress Maria Theresa to prevent the expulsion of Jews from Prague.'

Because of his international activities, Boas had a keen interest in Jewish life outside the Dutch Republic. In a letter to Ezekiel Rahabi, a prominent member of the Jewish community in Cochin, India, and representative of the VOC on the Malabar coast, he asked eleven questions about Jewish life in India. In 1768 Rahabi sent him a Hebrew manuscript in response that is still seen as an important source on the history of the Jews in Cochin.

A home teacher ensured that Boas's children received a thorough Orthodox Jewish upbringing. Chaim Joseph David Azulai, an envoy from the Jewish community in Hebron who visited The Hague in 1778, was deeply impressed and wrote of his admiration in his diary. Boas's business empire was taken over by his children after Tobias died in 1782 and sustained for another ten years until, in 1792, as the result of a series of economic crises that included repercussions of the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, it ultimately fell prey to bankruptcy.

1747



‘Post Gelderland and Joden Savannah in Surinam’ [date unknown]. G.B.C. Voorduin.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M000989.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-44

The Surinam project

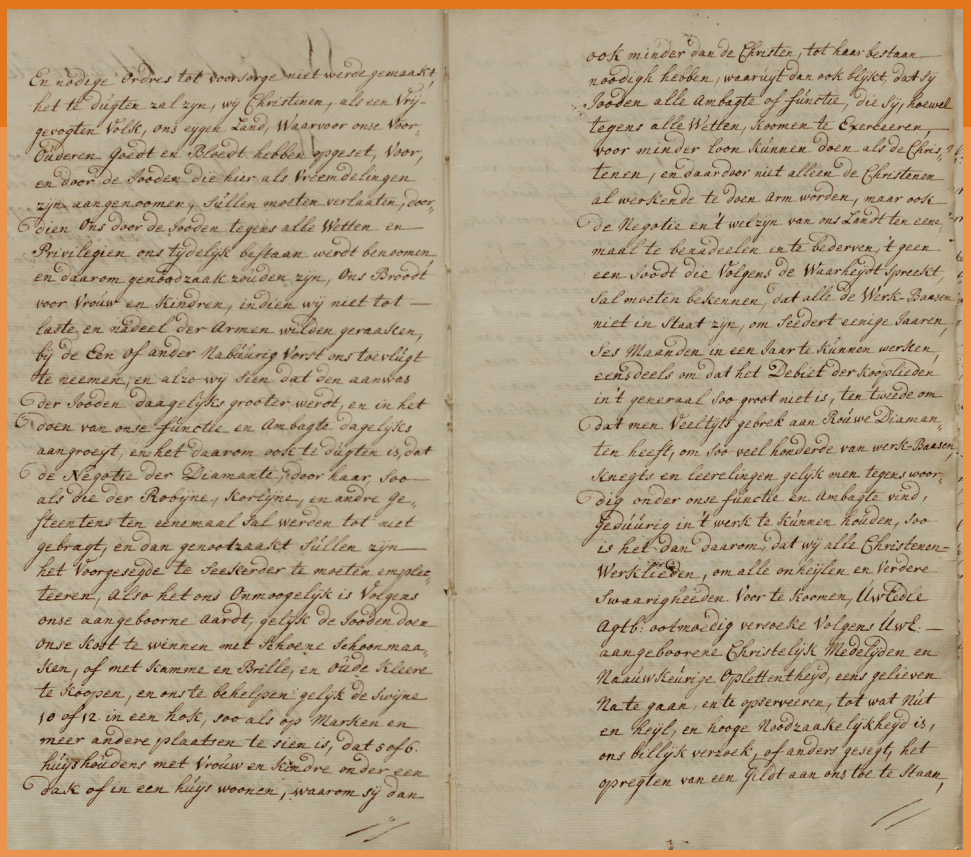
In 1747 Amsterdam's Portuguese congregation devised a plan to send a third of its poor to Surinam. The remarkable sum of 100,000 guilders was set aside for the colonization scheme (equivalent to around a million euros), of which 30,000 guilders was to cover the purchase and cultivation of land in that part of the New World. It was not the first time the Portuguese congregation had sought a solution to the problem of poverty that involved sending the poor away, although it had no legal power to expel Jews from the city. It did so nevertheless, and it was not unique in its approach. While the Dutch Republic transferred only a modest number of poor people to its colonies, other powers such as Britain, France and Portugal implemented similar measures on a bigger scale.

The Surinam project was probably inspired by Britain's Georgia colonization plan of 1733, in which Jews were also involved. Members of Amsterdam's Portuguese congregation had attempted to make clear from the very start that there was no permanent place among them for the less fortunate, or for non-Sephardi Jews. Since 1622 it had been sending away even Jews of its own 'nation', initially in the direction of Italy and Greece, in the belief that they would be better able to support themselves there.

When the centre of gravity in international trade shifted westwards, to include regions beyond the Atlantic Ocean, opportunities were explored for sending poor people there, especially those of the Spanish and Portuguese nations. Across a full two centuries, the Portuguese congregation's bookkeeping included annual accounts that make it possible to trace emigration flows of the poor. High German, Polish, Italian, North African and Levantine Jews frequently had to go in search of an alternative destination and a more hospitable reception after only a short stay, and with only a few coins to their name. Like many Jewish congregations elsewhere in the Dutch Republic and in Europe as a whole, the Portuguese *kehillah* in Amsterdam felt forced by the economic restrictions imposed by the authorities to exclude certain Jews or send them abroad. The policy failed, however, even with regard to the Surinam project. In the late eighteenth century the problem of poverty was far from solved, and 55% of Amsterdam Portuguese were in receipt of charity.

'Members of Amsterdam's Portuguese congregation had attempted to make clear from the very start that there was no permanent place among them for the less fortunate, or for non-Sephardi Jews.'

1748



Petition, addressed to the city authorities in the name of Christian diamond workers, arguing they should be allowed to set up a diamond guild. Amsterdam, 1748.

Collection of the Amsterdam City Archives: SAA 5061, inv. no. 694, 1747–1748, p. 77.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-45

Jewish diamond cutters and the guild

Poverty among Jews in the Dutch Republic can indeed be attributed in part to the economic restrictions placed upon them in Amsterdam and other towns and villages. A joint request by the leaders of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi congregations of Amsterdam in the mid-eighteenth century, asking the government of the city to end the ban on guilds, achieved nothing. The guilds had a powerful position in the economic order. The fear of Jewish competition was acute. In 1748 Christian diamond cutters and polishers even made an official request to the city authorities to be allowed to set up a diamond guild and thereby keep Jews out of the sector. The authorities declined to go that far.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the 1748 petition, especially concerning what non-Jews thought about the living and working environment of many Jews. In their petition, the Christian diamond workers expressed their anger at the mere presence of Jews in the city. In their view, the Dutch Republic was in danger of being swamped by Jews. As a result, they, as Christians, ought in turn to seek refuge in a neighbouring country. That was the only way they could hold their own economically, rather than falling into poverty. All this despite the fact that their ancestors had fought so fiercely for the country's freedom, with 'property and with blood'. The Jews had been allowed in as 'foreigners', but now, the petitioners said, they were building a life for themselves by contravening all kinds of laws.

'In the view of the Christian diamond workers, the Dutch Republic was in danger of being swamped by Jews.'

Jews multiplied quickly, according to the Christian diamond cutters, and furthermore they worked for a pittance, making fair competition impossible. It was not in their own nature, the petitioners wrote, to work and live as the Jews did, who earned their daily bread by cleaning shoes or selling combs and spectacles. Jews, they claimed, lived ten or twelve to a 'tiny room' and 'five or six households with women and children under one roof or in the same house', and could therefore get by on less. The Christian workers had no wish to stoop to such a level. Although their petition was in vain, it was not until 1796, with the emancipation decree, that it became impossible for Christians to obstruct Jews legally.

1749





Frontage and detail of the former Portuguese Jewish old men's home Mishenet Zequenim at 33 Nieuwe Herengracht in Amsterdam.

Photograph by Patrick Sternfeld.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-46

Mishenet Zequenim

The attractive entablature above the front door of the house at 33 Nieuwe Herengracht has survived. It states that from 1794 it was the location of Mishenet Zequenim, the old men's home of the Portuguese Jewish congregation, established in 1749. The daily prayers were said there together and in the room facing the garden was a permanent *sukkah* (tabernacle).

Jewish charitable institutions were a particularly visible presence in the eighteenth century, but many existed far earlier. Right from their founding, the Jewish congregations applied the classic model of the Jewish *kehillah* to the organization of their social structure, which was then further developed according to the most modern ideas about care for the poor, with impressive examples for all to see, such as a Workhouse or a House of Correction. The Portuguese also adopted many forms of charity, in whole or in part, from the Iberian pattern, such as the dowry organization Dotar and the orphanage Aby Jetomim.

Jews, like Christians, established all kinds of charitable organizations, whether collectively or as private initiatives, that could care for members of the community and insure them against times of need. Insurance payments covered the costs. Because of the status of the 'Jewish Nation', responsibility for its members lay with the Jewish community. When Jews first settled there, some parts of the Dutch Republic made it an explicit condition of residence that they must care for their own poor, so the Jews set up institutions to look after the destitute, the elderly, the sick and the dying. They also created organizations to take on the tasks surrounding death and burial, or to care for widows and orphans, or women around the time of childbirth.

Girls of marriageable age who were living in poverty were helped to get a dowry. Clothing was given to people in need, as were food, bedding and fuel. It is interesting to note the difference between initiatives undertaken by women of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities. Portuguese women left the configuration, administration and financial management of charitable institutions to their male colleagues, whereas High German Jewish women often took on such tasks themselves. Nevertheless, many wealthy Portuguese women set up philanthropic foundations under their own names.

'Whatever organizational structure was chosen, the Jewish community in the Dutch Republic, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, with its well-developed public and private care sector, remained broadly faithful to the Jewish principle of mutual responsibility.'

Whatever organizational structure was chosen, the Jewish community in the Dutch Republic, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, with its well-developed public and private care sector, remained broadly faithful to the Jewish principle of mutual responsibility.

1756



View of the restored synagogue in Brielle, 2014.

Photograph in the Collection of the Local Archives of Voorne-Putten and Rozenburg, Brielle.



Yad or pointer with shield; the *yad* was given as a gift to the Jewish congregation in Brielle in 1817–1818 by the Kats family when a new Torah scroll was brought into use, while the shield, connected to the *yad* sixty years later in 1877–1878, was donated to that same congregation by Pinchas Levie and his wife, on the occasion of the bar mitsvah of their son Eliezer.

Collection of the Dutch Silver Museum, Schoonhoven.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-47

Admittance of Jews to Brielle

Not all Jews lived in the major cities. In the eighteenth century they could increasingly be found in smaller urban settlements and in the Dutch countryside. The first indication of a Jewish presence in Brielle and other towns and villages on the island of Voorne-Putten dates back to the early eighteenth century. In 1756 a number of wealthy Jews approached the local authorities in the small port town of Brielle, requesting freedom of religion and appealing for equal civil rights. They also campaigned to be allowed to run shops selling whatever products they chose, and to work as tailors, shoemakers, watchmakers and barber-surgeons – a list that gives us an insight into the ways Jews had of earning a living in the Dutch Republic.

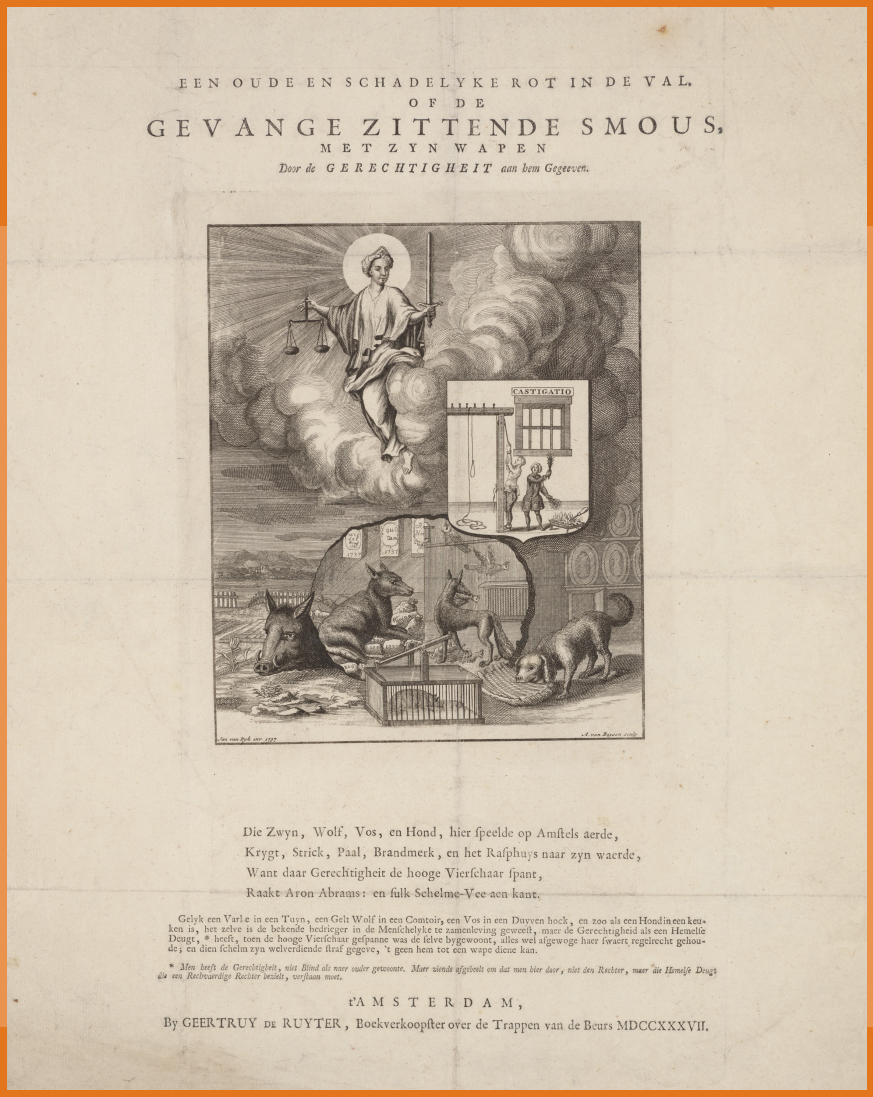
After careful consideration, the local authorities in Brielle responded positively to the request, although Jews were banned from joining the armed citizens' militia. They could now become members of the Grootkramersgilde, a guild that offered access to trade in all kinds of goods. These concessions drew Jews to Brielle and the surrounding area. Immediately after the 1756 decree, a butcher arrived, and livestock farmers, slaughterers and merchants were soon to be found in several villages on the island.

'These concessions drew Jews to Brielle and the surrounding area.'

In 1787 the first Jew, Salomon Davids, was admitted to the village of Zuidland to run a business trading in coffee and tea. The conditions placed upon his settlement were the same as those imposed on Jews elsewhere in the Dutch Republic. He had to produce proof of good behaviour, as had been the case in the province of Gelderland since 1726, for example. This made it possible to distinguish between 'honest and well-to-do merchants' and 'foreign High German Jews or Smousen', whom people preferred to keep out.

Jewish life in Brielle firmly took root, with a synagogue that was restored in 2014. Further evidence is provided by a silver *yad* (Torah pointer) with a small shield attached. The shield was given to the synagogue by Pinchas Levie on the occasion of his son Eliezer's bar mitsvah in 1878. The *yad* with the shield survived the Second World War, but not in the Dutch-Jewish community. Oddly, it had found its way into the Dutch Silver Museum in Schoonhoven.

1773



EEN OUDE EN SCHADELYKE ROT IN DE VAL,
OF DE
GEVANGE ZITTENDE SMOUS,
MET ZYN WAPEN
Door de GERECHTIGHEIT aan hem Gegeeven.

Die Zwyn, Wolf, Vos, en Hond, hier ſpeelde op Amſtels aerde,
Krygt, Strick, Paal, Brandmerk, en het Raſphuys naar zyn waerde,
Want daar Gerechtigheit de hooge Vierſchaar ſpant,
Raakt Aron Abrams: en ſulk Schelme-Vee aen kant.

Gelyk een Varke in een Tuyn, een Gelt Wolf in een Comtoir, een Vos in een Duyven hock, en zoo als een Hond in een keuken is, het zelve is de bekende bedrieger in de Menſchelyke te zamenleving geweeſt, maer de Gerechtigheid als een Hemelſe Deugt, * heeft, toen de hooge Vierſchaar geſpanne was de ſelve bygewoont, alles wel afgewoge haer ſwaert regelrecht gehoude; en dien ſchelm zyn welverdiende ſtraf gegeve, 't geen hem tot een wape diene kan.

* *Men heeft de Gerechtigheit, niet Blind als naer ouder gewoonte. Maer ziende afgebeelt om dat men hier door, niet den Rechter, maer die Hemelſe Deugt als een Rechtvaerdige Rechter bezielt, verſtaan moet.*

t'AMSTERDAM,
By GEERTRUY DE RUYTER, Boekverkoopſter over de Trappen van de Beurs MDCCXXXVII.

'Imprisoned Smous', 1737.
A. van Buysen.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam (Collection of J. van Velzen): M007341.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-48

Theft in Diemen: Jews and gangs of robbers

In the summer of 1773 a band of robbers travelled to Diemen by boat, where they tried in vain to raid an inn and a farm. A woman raised the alarm and the men were arrested. Most of them were High German Jews. Portuguese Jews were less often involved in crime. While the numerical ratio of Ashkenazim to Sephardim between 1700 and 1795 was around 4:1, between 1680 and 1795 the proportion of Ashkenazi as opposed to Portuguese Jews identified as criminals was ten times as great, at 40:1. They were usually of no fixed abode, and many operated in the countryside and the border areas, but sometimes they struck in the cities. Their field of activity was such that they paid little attention to political boundaries. Portuguese criminals operated towards the south, in Brussels and Paris and all the way to Spain, sometimes also in England. Ashkenazi Jews had the German territories and eastern Europe as their hinterland. That was where they had the most contacts, since it was where they had come from originally.

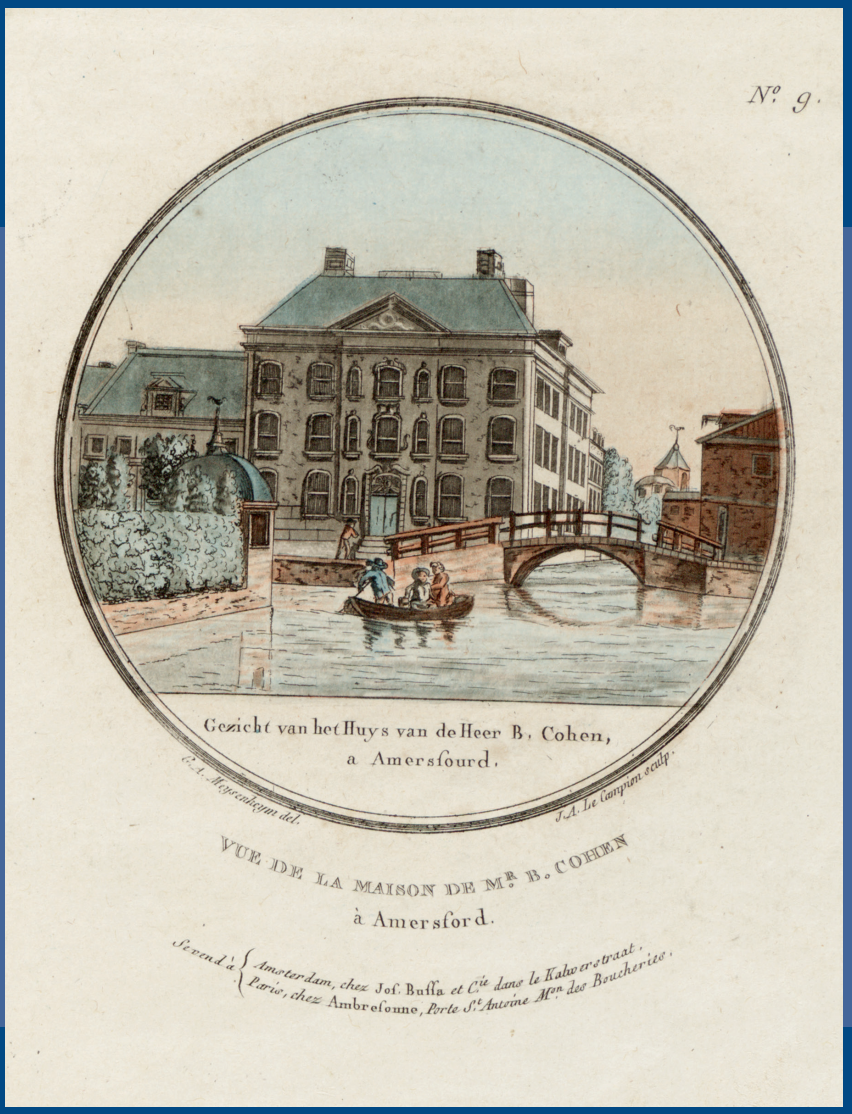
The criminal activities of a small group troubled the established communities of Jews, who over time and with considerable difficulty had gained rights in the villages and towns. In the court archives, criminal Jews are often called *smousen* in the negative sense of Jewish thief or cheat. Many eighteenth-century ordinances were directed at this mass of indigent Jews. Jewish criminals tended not to operate independently but as part of loose associations, whether with each other or with non-Jews.

'Jewish criminals tended not to operate independently but as part of loose associations, whether with each other or with non-Jews.'

Poverty was the main motivation for both women and men who obtained money by illegal practices. Jews active in criminal circles were usually skilled or unskilled workers engaged in a broad range of occupations, as street traders or draymen, or as servants, diamond cutters, tobacco workers or shop assistants. A few were soldiers or sailors. Generally speaking, Jewish criminals were not members of established Jewish congregations, which felt better off without them. Yet they often observed Jewish practices, the Ashkenazim among them especially. According to their non-Jewish associates they often spoke 'Jewish' (in other words, Yiddish) between themselves. Portuguese Jews at the margins of society seem to have been less strict in their adherence to the rules of their religion, often ignoring them altogether.

Criminal Jews tended to leave their wives and children behind in the towns and cities and rarely involved them directly in their illegal activities. To that extent they stuck to the traditional Jewish roles for men and women. The Jewish community might well offer material assistance to women and children who found themselves in difficulties after the man of the family was imprisoned or sentenced to death. Efforts were made to keep them on board and to secure their future. We do come upon a few women, both Sephardi and Ashkenazi, who earned a little extra income in the criminal circuit, as prostitutes, or worked in those circles as washerwomen or maids. One such trail leads to Zeeburg, where the children of Ashkenazi prostitutes were buried.

1787



'View of the House of Mr B. Cohen at Amersfoort', 1750–1800. J.A. Le Campion, G.A. Meysenheym, Jos. and Cie Buffa, Ambresonne.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam (Collection of J. van Velzen): M007534.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-49

Benjamin Cohen and Jewish Orangists

From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, Jews in the Dutch Republic were increasingly involved in national politics, especially in the conflict between the democratic Patriots and the supporters of Stadholder William V, known as Orangists. Partly inspired by Enlightenment ideals and the American Revolution, the Patriots resisted the weak policy of the stadholder and demanded a more democratic form of government. Jews emerged as fervent supporters of the House of Orange and its stadholder, and Jewish Orangism became more visible than ever in the 'civil war' of 1786–1787. In 1785 William V fled The Hague after the Patriots took power. The house of Benjamin Cohen (1726–1800) in Amersfoort served as the headquarters of the stadholder's army and William himself stayed there from time to time, awaiting the arrival of Prussian troops who had been called upon to lead a counteroffensive against the Patriot army.

Benjamin Cohen was a prominent Jewish merchant. He owned tobacco plantations in the Dutch Republic and traded in diamonds. He was also a banker who supported Jewish intellectuals, and in the 1790s he lent some eight million guilders to the Prussian government. Cohen had moved to Amsterdam in 1786, where he was immediately elected to the position of *parnas*. His Orangism was beyond doubt and in that he was not alone. Many Jews remained loyal to the House of Orange and indeed fought for it. In Amsterdam's Jewish quarter in 1787, at the height of the conflict, a Jewish police force was deployed to quash fighting between Patriots and Jews and to restore order.

Jewish Orangism was one of the reasons why after 1796 the revolutionary government hesitated for a long time before putting into practice the rights given to the Jews by the emancipation decree of that year. Jews were Orangists, after all, and so in theory hostile. As a matter of principle, however, the Patriots gave all Jews civil rights and Jewish Orangism went underground. Only after William Frederick, Prince of Orange, landed on the beach at Scheveningen in 1813 did Jewish enthusiasm for the House of Orange come out into the open once more.

'The house of Benjamin Cohen (1726–1800) in Amersfoort served as the headquarters of the stadholder's army and William himself stayed there from time to time.'

1795



'The Pedlar', from M. de Sal lieth, *Verzameling van Ver schillende gekleede mans- en vrouwenstanden ter oefening van jonge schilders en liefhebbers* (Collection of Differently Clad Male and Female Stations in Life for the Exercise of Young Painters and Enthusiasts), Amsterdam, 1833.

Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: OTM, KF 62–784.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-50

Counting Dutch Jews throughout the ages

How many Jews were living in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? It is not easy to give precise numbers. During the Amsterdam census of 1795, the monitors complained that it was practically impossible to arrive at a precise count of Jews because of overpopulation in the Jewish district. They explained the problem as follows. 'The crowding in the Jewish quarter is in some places so great that every spot, right up to the attic, is occupied by so many people and the immodesty of many of that nature in such houses was such that none of the district masters has dared to vouch that there might not be several people, children above all, who were overlooked.'

It is clear that in the eighteenth century, Amsterdam grew to become the largest Jewish metropolis in Europe and presented itself internationally as a hugely important centre of Jewish life. Within the Dutch Republic, most Jews lived in Amsterdam. The number of Portuguese Jews in the city was relatively high at first, rising from 2,000 in 1650 to 4,000 in 1700. But from the start of the eighteenth century, mainly because of immigration from eastern and central Europe, the Ashkenazim took the lead numerically, growing from 1,000 souls in 1650 to 9,000 in 1725. Their numerical preponderance continued to increase. By the late eighteenth century, according to a census held then, 24,000 Jews were living in Amsterdam, 20,000 of them Ashkenazim. The Sephardi community had barely grown at all since 1700. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Jewish population formed around a tenth of the total for Amsterdam.

> '"The crowding in the Jewish quarter is in some places so great that every spot, right up to the attic, is occupied."'

In 1808, 31,000 Jews were found to be living in Amsterdam as against 1,871 in The Hague, 2,113 in Rotterdam and 14,649 in the rest of the country. The total came to around 50,000. That figure increased further over time, as a result of both demographic growth and immigration, reaching 140,000 in 1940. By that point the Jews of Amsterdam, some 70,000 in number, were once again about ten per cent of the city's population. Only 30,000 Jews survived the Second World War, yet Dutch Jewry managed to recover and there are now around 38,000 Jews in the Netherlands. If people with only a Jewish father are added, then the number is as high as 52,000.

1795



Print showing the entry of Louis Napoleon into Amsterdam, c.1808. J.A. Loutz after a drawing by J.A. Langendijk.
Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M000076.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-51

The Founding of Felix Libertate and the split between the *Alte* and *Naye Kille*

The society Felix Libertate (Happy through Freedom) was set up in Amsterdam in 1795 after the Patriots took power and established the Batavian Republic. Its purpose was to fight for Jewish civil rights and to achieve equal treatment. A majority of members were Ashkenazim, a few Sephardim joined them, and one third were non-Jewish. The society's strategy was to win sympathy and support, both inside and outside the Jewish community, for emancipation of the Jews. All members were supporters of the Patriot movement.

Hartog de Hartog de Lémon, Hermannus Leonard Bromet and Moses Salomon Asser were leading figures within the society. They struggled to gain the support of the Jewish congregations. Asser reflects on this in his autobiography. 'I wrote several brochures supporting the right of the Jews to Batavian Civil Rights. Other members too made themselves useful in this regard, but a large majority of Jews, stirred up by their miserable religious leaders, were against us.'

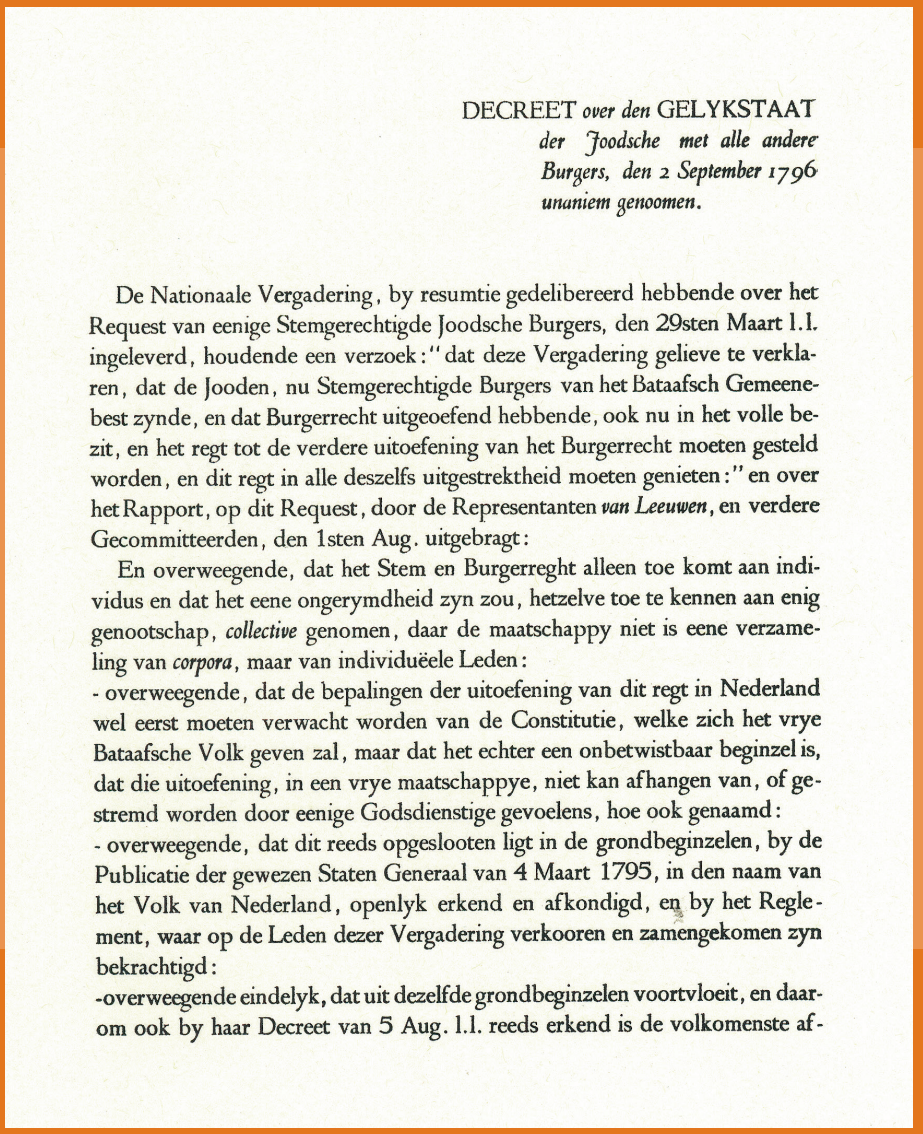
One of the first things Felix Libertate did was to have the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen', the basic text of the French Revolution, translated into Yiddish, making it possible for most Ashkenazi Jews to learn about the ideals of the Batavian Revolution and develop sympathy for the cause. Members also published many pamphlets of their own and delivered countless speeches. They tried to persuade a broad public that Jews would be good, active citizens.

'The society's strategy was to win sympathy and support, both inside and outside the Jewish community, for emancipation of the Jews.'

After the Jews were granted full civil rights in the emancipation decree of 2 September 1796, Felix Libertate demanded that the statutes of the Amsterdam Ashkenazi congregation be reviewed. The refusal of the *parnassim* to comply with this demand led to a split. Twenty-one members left the congregation. A ban was placed on them and they set up a new congregation called Adas Yeshurun, with Isaac Graanboom as their rabbi. A bitter controversy followed, partly fought out in Yiddish pamphlets collectively known as *Diskoersn* (Discourses). In 1797–1798 one series of pamphlets was printed and spread through the old congregation, the *Alte Kille*, the other through the new, the *Naye Kille*.

Felix Libertate ceased its activities in 1798, satisfied as it was with the election of two of its members to the National Assembly. The division in Jewish Amsterdam persisted, however. King Louis Napoleon decided in 1808 that Adas Yeshurun must unite once more with its mother congregation. But the activities of Felix Libertate had borne fruit; Jews in the Netherlands were entering a new era.

1796



DECREET *over den* GELYKSTAAT
der Joodsche met alle andere
Burgers, den 2 September 1796
unaniem genoomen.

De Nationaale Vergadering, by resumtie gedelibereerd hebbende over het Request van eenige Stemgerechtigde Joodsche Burgers, den 29sten Maart l.l. ingeleverd, houdende een verzoek: "dat deze Vergadering gelieve te verklaren, dat de Jooden, nu Stemgerechtigde Burgers van het Bataafsch Gemeenebest zynde, en dat Burgerrecht uitgeoefend hebbende, ook nu in het volle bezit, en het regt tot de verdere uitoefening van het Burgerrecht moeten gesteld worden, en dit regt in alle deszelfs uitgestrektheid moeten genieten:" en over het Rapport, op dit Request, door de Representanten *van Leeuwen*, en verdere Gecommitteerden, den 1sten Aug. uitgebragt:

En overweegende, dat het Stem en Burgerreght alleen toe komt aan individus en dat het eene ongerymdheid zyn zou, hetzelve toe te kennen aan enig genootschap, *collective* genomen, daar de maatschappy niet is eene verzameling van *corpora*, maar van individuëele Leden:

- overweegende, dat de bepalingen der uitoefening van dit regt in Nederland wel eerst moeten verwacht worden van de Constitutie, welke zich het vrye Bataafsche Volk geven zal, maar dat het echter een onbetwistbaar beginzel is, dat die uitoefening, in een vrye maatschappye, niet kan afhangen van, of gestremd worden door eenige Godsdienstige gevoelens, hoe ook genaamd:

- overweegende, dat dit reeds opgeslooten ligt in de grondbeginzelen, by de Publicatie der gewezen Staten Generaal van 4 Maart 1795, in den naam van het Volk van Nederland, openlyk erkend en afkondigd, en by het Reglement, waar op de Leden dezer Vergadering verkooren en zamengekomen zyn bekrachtigd:

-overweegende eindelyk, dat uit dezelfde grondbeginzelen voortvloeit, en daarom ook by haar Decreet van 5 Aug. l.l. reeds erkend is de volkomenste af-

Text of the Emancipation Decree of 1796.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: D0007208.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-52

Emancipation decree

On 2 September 1796 the day finally came. The parliament of the Batavian Republic, the successor state to the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, voted in favour. Jews in the country were given equal civil rights. No Jew would ever 'be excluded from any rights or advantages pertaining to the Batavian Citizen, and that he may wish to enjoy, provided he possesses all that is demanded and fulfils all the conditions that are required of every active citizen of the Netherlands by the general Constitution'. From that moment on, Jews were equal to all other residents of the Batavian Republic as far as their rights and duties were concerned. They could occupy any public office (including those of the judiciary), were entitled to vote and eligible for election, and could settle anywhere in the country. Economic restrictions were abolished.

The emancipation decree brought an end to the semi-autonomous status of the 'Jewish Nations', and to the powers of the *parnassim* and the rabbis, so we should not be surprised that emancipation met with fierce resistance from the old Jewish establishment. Henceforth it would no longer be possible to arrange certain affairs internally, according to Jewish law.

'"No Jew would ever be excluded from any rights or advantages pertaining to the Batavian Citizen."'

This controversial milestone in the history of the Jews of the Netherlands was fought for by a small group of progressives. The society Felix Libertate, set up in 1795, had got the issue onto the agenda of the National Assembly. A representation made to parliament by members of that society influenced the debate, in which arguments for not giving Jews any civil rights were rebutted during discussion of their religious concepts, their supposedly poor behaviour, their political (Orangist) beliefs and the possible disadvantages of emancipation for the Dutch state. A heated debate arose in the National Assembly as to whether Jews could be trusted as loyal citizens. There was also a fear of competition, should all economic restrictions be lifted. Nevertheless, the radical reformers won the day. Like other minority groups – Catholics, Baptists, Lutherans and Remonstrants – Jews were seen as deserving completely equal treatment.

The emancipation decree brought advantages mainly to the better off Jews; new professions opened up for them and as taxpayers they now had a say in politics. Poor Jews will barely have noticed any change. Only over the course of the nineteenth century was political emancipation translated into an active policy of integration.

1797



Portrait of Hartog de Hartog De Lémon, 1807, artist un known.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M008412.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-53

First Jewish parliamentarians

Now that Jews had acquired equal civil rights under the emancipation decree of 1796, they had an opportunity to go into politics. As early as 1798, two Amsterdam Jews were chosen to take seats in the parliament of the time, the second Constituent National Assembly. They were Hermannus Leonard Bromet (1724–1812) and the physician Hartog de Hartog De Lémon (1755–1823), the first Jews in Europe ever to be elected to a national parliament.

Bromet and De Lémon were active in a radical grouping, a movement that had seized power in a coup and then almost immediately left the stage as the result of another coup. In the few months available to them, the Jewish parliamentarians made use of their position, with the support of the government, to dismiss what they saw as the conservative *parnassim* of the *Alte Kille*. They were successful in the short term, but the measures were withdrawn again that same year with the turning of the political tide.

De Lémon and Bromet were both among the founders of Felix Libertate. De Lémon had qualified as a medical practitioner and from 1788 he worked part-time treating the poor of the Ashkenazi congregation. He distanced himself from it in 1797 out of dissatisfaction with the politically conservative line taken by the Ashkenazi leadership in Amsterdam and attempted, through a new congregation called Adas Yeshurun, to develop a Jewish way of life that brought together social participation and Jewish identity. He was convinced that Yiddish needed to make way for the new national language, Dutch.

'They were the first Jews in Europe ever to be elected to a national parliament.'

Bromet was a wealthy merchant who had lived and worked in Surinam for twenty years and seen how successfully Jews there had integrated into the white elite. On his return – bringing with him 'the young Negro Candide' – he was amazed at the restrictions placed upon Dutch Jews and set about working for change. Through his membership of the Société Amicale, in which Isaac de Pinto played a central role, he became familiar with the new Enlightenment ideas. After the Patriots took power he succeeded, along with De Lémon, Asser and his Christian friends, in making many of his ideals a reality. Although progressive Jews were in a small minority, they had the political wind in their sails, and with the help of the government they managed to bring about both social equality and modifications to Dutch Jewry.

While De Lémon and Bromet were active at a national level, other Jews entered local government. Clearly Jews were no longer living as 'foreigners' in the Batavian Republic. They now bore a share of governmental responsibility.

1800

Nineteenth century, the century of integration



The symbiotic Dutch Jewish identity found expression in the synagogue. The traditional prayer for the government, Hanoten Teshuah, became a prayer for the royal house. Here we see a Torah mantle from Arnhem created to cele brate the investiture of Queen Wilhelmina in 1898.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam, on loan from the Nederlands-Israëlietische Hoofd-synagoge Arnhem: MB00749.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-54

In 1800 the Jewish community in the Batavian Republic had been in possession of full civil rights for only a few years. A small part of it, the upper stratum plus a handful of progressive Jews, benefitted from the new opportunities. For the vast majority, however, the emancipation decree seemed to have made no difference at all. Jews tended to live together in particular districts of the major cities, of which Amsterdam had the largest Jewish community. Among themselves the Ashkenazim almost always spoke Yiddish, the Germanic language of the Jewish diaspora, while the Sephardim still spoke a little Portuguese but by this point were using a great deal of Dutch. At the start of the new century, Jews were still a clearly identifiable social group.

A century later, in 1900, much had changed. By then Jews were living in even the smallest places in the countryside, to which they had begun to move, little by little, in the eighteenth century. Yiddish had given way to Dutch everywhere and Jews were full participants in society. Virtually all Jewish children now attended state schools. Jewish schools had closed down, with just a handful of exceptions, in order to promote the integration of the new generation. Children were given a few hours of Jewish lessons in addition, so that they would retain the necessary knowledge of Hebrew and of the prayers. The nineteenth century was without question the century of Jewish integration. The government and the Jewish elite worked closely together to achieve that aim, and they were ultimately successful because of the Jewish community's eagerness to acculturate. Dutch nationality was embraced, love of the House of Orange persisted, and deliberate efforts were made to create a specifically Dutch-Jewish identity, in which Dutch nationality and Jewishness would go hand in hand. Despite all this, antisemitism was a reality and Jews were confronted with it in their daily lives, although the country did not experience political antisemitism.

With Jews now participating fully in society, internal cracks became visible. Better-off Jews became active in the liberal political movement, while from the end of the nineteenth century onwards an increasing number of poor Jews – who represented the overriding majority – became enthusiastic supporters of socialism. This generated fierce debates in Jewish circles. Rabbis and other Jewish leaders had the challenging task of keeping everyone within a single Jewish community.

'Dutch nationality was embraced, love of the House of Orange persisted, and deliberate efforts were made to create a specifically Dutch Jewish identity.'

1808



The Jewish lawyer Jonas Daniël Meijer (1780–1834), a grandson of Benjamin Cohen, was given a central role by King Louis Napoleon in the organization of the Jewish congregations, as chair of the Upper Consistory. Oil painting by Louis Moritz, c.1830.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam, on loan from the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Legacy J.E. Meijer: MB00338.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-55

Opperconsistorie

From the time when Jews first settled in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, each local Jewish community, from Amsterdam to Appingedam, was independent of all the others. Each congregation had its own board members and rabbis, maintained its own contacts with local burgomasters and aldermen, and set out its own policies. Of course, there were contacts between different Jewish congregations and between rabbis, but they were informal.

That had to end, believed Louis Napoleon, who became ruler of the Kingdom of Holland in 1806. Since Jews now had equal rights as citizens, the 'Jewish Nations' no longer existed. The function of the Jewish community must henceforth be purely religious. To achieve this, a national religious 'denomination' needed to be set up, along the lines of the Protestant denominations. Local Jewish congregations must be united in a hierarchical structure, with a national administration. Its leaders would be appointed by the king and responsible to him. In France, on which the system was modelled, this was already happening. In 1808 Napoleon Bonaparte, brother to Louis, approved the setting up of a Consistoire Central, to be in charge of all French Jews. In that same year the Kingdom of Holland followed, creating an Upper Consistory. It was responsible for establishing a national structure and for putting government policy into action. Most of those appointed to the Upper Consistory by Louis Napoleon were enlightened, progressive Jews who shared his ideals. It was chaired by the famous lawyer Jonas Daniël Meijer.

'The Upper Consistory was responsible for establishing a national structure and for putting government policy into action.'

King Louis Napoleon was disturbed by the fact that Amsterdam had two Ashkenazi congregations, the conservative *Alte Kille* and the progressive *Naye Kille*. He pressured the two into uniting and the progressive leaders were put in charge, both of the united Amsterdam congregation and of the new countrywide Upper Consistory. It was felt this would ensure the plans were quickly put into practice, Jews would become 'good, civilized' citizens, and the great poverty among them could be combatted. The Upper Consistory, however, proved unable to do much at all. Most Jewish congregations and rabbis were indignant at this infringement of their autonomy and made repeated efforts to escape the new measures, but the failure of the Upper Consistory was ultimately caused by politics at a higher level. In 1810 the Kingdom of Holland ceased to exist. It was annexed by Napoleon Bonaparte and made part of France. From 1810 to 1813, Dutch Jews formally became French Jews and were governed by the Consistoire Central in Paris. There too, complaints arrived thick and fast about the meagre successes achieved in what had been Holland.

After the French withdrew from the country in 1813, most Dutch Jews were certain of one thing: the Upper Consistory must not be reinstated. In its brief existence it had made itself extraordinarily unpopular with its radical measures. But what should be put in its place? What should the future of Dutch Jewry look like?

1809

Letter from the Jewish community in Tiberias to the Amsterdam leaders of Pekidim and Amarkalim, dated 10 May 1883.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: archives of Pekidim and Amarkalim, 20:50.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-56

Pekidim and Amarkalim

Jews were involved with the Holy Land throughout their history. *Shadarim*, emissaries of the Jewish communities in the holy cities of Jerusalem, Safed, Hebron and Tiberias, travelled around Europe collecting money. When in 1809 two of those emissaries, Jacob Rapoport and Raphael Matalon, visited the Netherlands, a new initiative was born. Izak Goedeinde, Abraham Prins and Hirschel Lehren set up Pekidim Ve'amarkalim Arei Hakodesh (Officials and Supervisors of the Holy Cities). At first members of the organization merely accompanied the emissaries on their fundraising trips through Europe, but very soon it took over the collection of money.

Pekidim and Amarkalim quickly grew to become the leading financier of the Jewish community in Palestine. Funds were raised all over western Europe to support synagogues, yeshivas, hospitals, social care and the alleviation of poverty in the holy cities. Its leadership, in which the three Lehren brothers were the main players, took important decisions in the Netherlands concerning Jewish life in Palestine. The chief rabbinate of Constantinople, which had coordinated aid to the holy cities up to that point, was sidestepped. From the first half of the nineteenth century, Amsterdam was the most important place for Jews living in Eretz Yisrael.

'Pekidim and Amarkalim quickly grew to become the leading financier of the Jewish community in Palestine.'

In the Netherlands, as in France, Germany, Switzerland, Britain and North America, Pekidim and Amarkalim had a tight network of local representatives. In even the smallest of places, money was collected for the Yishuv, the Jewish communities in the Holy Land. In the synagogue it was an established beneficiary of donations, while in the early twentieth century red-and-white collection boxes – showing pictures of the graves of the patriarchs and matriarchs – found their way into living rooms.

Rapid communication and modern fundraising methods ensured that Pekidim and Amarkalim enjoyed prestige and respect far beyond the Dutch borders. In an era when European Jews were integrating into disparate societies everywhere, Pekidim and Amarkalim enabled them to hold onto the link with Eretz Yisrael. It was not until the rise of the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century that Pekidim and Amarkalim encountered serious competition. It then also came under fire, since as a traditional Jewish organization it supported mainly Torah scholars and the study of the Torah, whereas the Zionists collected money for modern agricultural colonies. Nevertheless, Pekidim and Amarkalim remained an important player until well into the twentieth century, both in Europe and in Palestine.

1814



From 1817 the Israelite denom ination had the right to use its own coat of arms, with a small version of the national coat of arms included. It shows a gold en lion, crowned, on a red field, with a bundle of arrows in one paw and the other resting on a sky-blue shield with the Star of David depicted on it in white. The NIK adopted the coat of arms once again after marking its second centenary in 2014. Painting by Piet Bultsma, 2013.

Collection of the Nederlands-Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-57

Israelite denomination

The withdrawal of the French in 1813 left a vacuum, and William Frederick of Orange quickly stepped into it, declaring himself 'Sovereign Prince'. In 1814 he was crowned King William I. He soon had to concern himself with the Jewish community, since a major division had emerged regarding the best course to take. The older leaders and rabbis wanted to return to the situation before the emancipation of 1796 and become a 'Jewish Nation' once again. But the more enlightened leaders did not want to abandon the achievements of the Batavian-French period, which had brought equality of civil rights and a national organizational structure.

William I settled the matter: emancipation was retained and a new 'Israelite denomination' would be set up. It was to be organized along the same lines as the Protestant denominations and fall under the Departement voor Hervormde Eredienst (Department for Reformed Religious Affairs). This gave the government control over the different religions and enabled it to implement an enlightened policy.

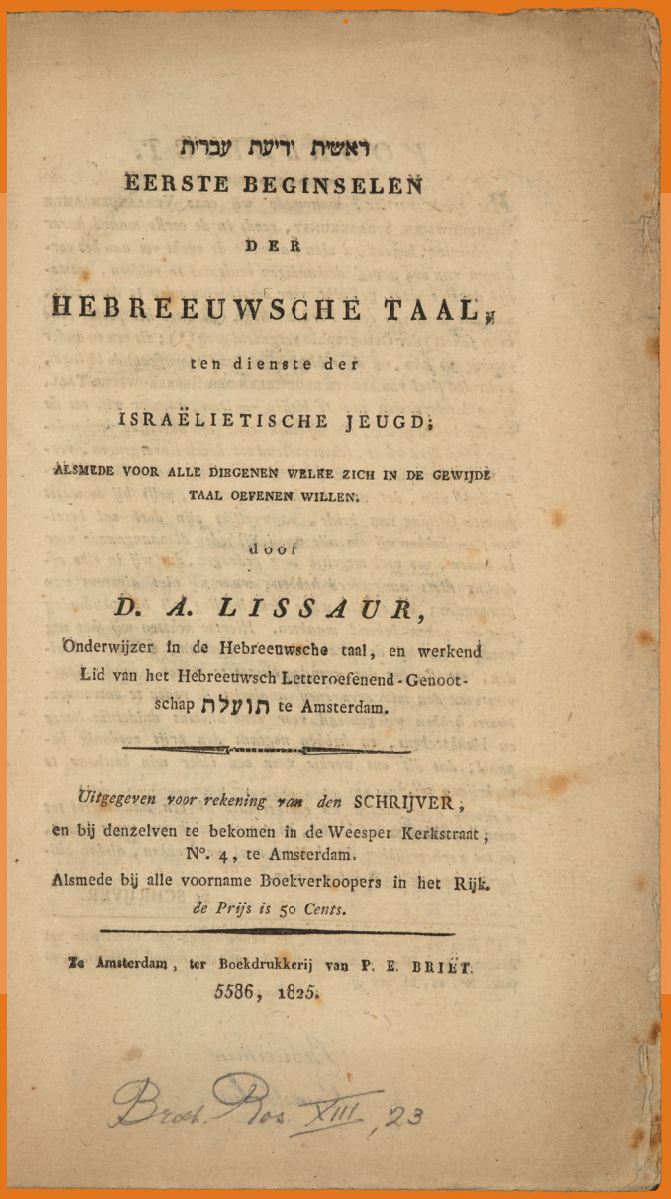
All Sephardi and Ashkenazi congregations fell under the new Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap (Israelite Denomination) and an Executive Committee for Israelite Affairs was put in charge. It was responsible for a far-reaching centralization of Jewish life; all Jewish congregations were brought under provincial jurisdiction, each province having its own chief rabbi. At the top, the Executive Committee prepared policy for the Jewish community that the minister and the king almost always adopted. It also ensured that government policy was complied with in all Jewish congregations, right across the country.

'The Israelite Denomination had a moderate Orthodox profile.'

The Israelite Denomination had a moderate Orthodox profile. In synagogues the *halacha* – Jewish law – was observed as strictly as ever and every rabbi or chief rabbi had to be Orthodox. The members, however, were completely free to make their own choices in their personal lives. Stress was laid above all on the requirement that the Jewish community must become fully Dutch. Citizenship, love of the fatherland and support for the House of Orange were the main values propagated, and they were closely linked to Judaism by the administrative leaders and rabbis. All this was aimed at building a new identity that was both fully Dutch and fully Jewish.

After the separation of church and state in 1848, the Israelite Denomination needed to be separated from the government. The reorganization was not completed until 1870; a small part became the Portuguese Israelite Denomination (PIK) and the majority the Dutch Israelite Denomination (NIK). Both carried forward the structures and ideas of 1814, but now as free, independent Jewish bodies.

1817



ראשית דיעת עברית

EERSTE BEGINSELEN

DER

HEBREEUWSCHE TAAL,

ten dienste der

ISRAËLIETISCHE JEUGD;

ALSMEDE VOOR ALLE DIEGENEN WELKE ZICH IN DE GEWIJDE TAAL OEFENEN WILLEN.

door

D. A. LISSAUR,

Onderwijzer in de Hebreeuwsche taal, en werkend Lid van het Hebreeuwsch Letteroefenend-Genootschap תועלת te Amsterdam.

Uitgegeven voor rekening van den SCHRIJVER,
en bij denzelven te bekomen in de Weesper Kerkstraat, N°. 4, te Amsterdam.
Alsmede bij alle voorname Boekverkoopers in het Rijk.
de Prijs is 50 *Cents.*

Te Amsterdam, ter Boekdrukkerij van P. E. BRIËT.
5586, 1825.

Broch. Ros. XIII, 23

Many of the countless textbooks for Jewish schools were put together by members of the literary society Tongeleth, which attached great impor tance to the use of a meticulous, biblical Hebrew. David Abraham Lissaur was one of them.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-58

Decision on education: Jews must learn Dutch

Jews may on paper have been citizens with equal rights, but that had yet to be tested in practice. So the government, in collaboration with the Jewish elite, developed an integration policy to ensure that Jews would participate fully in Dutch society. Language policy was key. Jews must make the transition from Yiddish to Dutch. Their 'mumbo jumbo' would only further isolate Jews and have a bad influence on their culture, Minister Repelaer van Driel believed.

Education was seen as the main means of achieving integration. A law was passed on 10 May 1817 laying down that in Jewish schools for the poor, only Dutch and Hebrew would henceforth be spoken. Yiddish was forbidden. The timetable changed too. As well as Jewish subjects like reading the Torah and learning Hebrew prayers, there would now be general subjects such as Dutch, geography and mathematics. It was the only way to enable a new generation to take its place in society as true Dutch citizens.

The policy was implemented sensitively. Although in theory Yiddish could no longer be spoken in schools, in practice that was impossible to achieve. Most of the teachers did not speak Dutch, as they came from Poland or the German states. Moreover, hardly any good lesson material was available in Dutch. So, first of all considerable efforts were made to train new Dutch Jewish teachers and the publication of Dutch-language schoolbooks was encouraged. Only once those basic requirements had been met, in about 1835, was the switch from Yiddish to Dutch forced through. A special inspector, Samuel Israël Mulder, had the job of checking whether the 'old gibberish' was still being used or whether the school had taken to using the 'language of the fatherland'. As soon as Mulder discovered that lessons were still being given in Yiddish, the school's governors would be sent a strongly worded letter, saying that by the time of the next inspection the school must be fully Dutch speaking. Otherwise the crucial subsidy would be withdrawn. That threat achieved its purpose, since the mostly poor Jewish communities could not possibly keep their schools going without financial support from the government.

'Only once those basic requirements had been met, in about 1835, was the switch from Yiddish to Dutch forced through.'

The policy was a resounding success. The new generation of Jews was fluent in Dutch. Western Yiddish, the variant of Yiddish spoken in the Netherlands, died out within a century. Only words and phrases taken up by the Dutch and specific to Dutch Jews lingered on as reminders, from *stiekem*, *mazzel* and *gein* to *lef*, *smoes* and *gotspe*. The wish to assimilate and the longing to give the children a better future ensured there was hardly any resistance to the language policy.

1827



Photograph of Akiba Lehren, c.1850.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F003829.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-59

The brothers Hirschel, Jacob and Akiba Lehren

A 'restless or tumult-thirsty zealot' was how the managerial elite of the Jews of the Netherlands described Hirschel Lehren (1784–1853). Along with his brothers Jakob Meijer (1793–1863) and Akiba (1795–1876), he regularly obstructed the integration policy that the government had developed in collaboration with the foremost Jewish leaders.

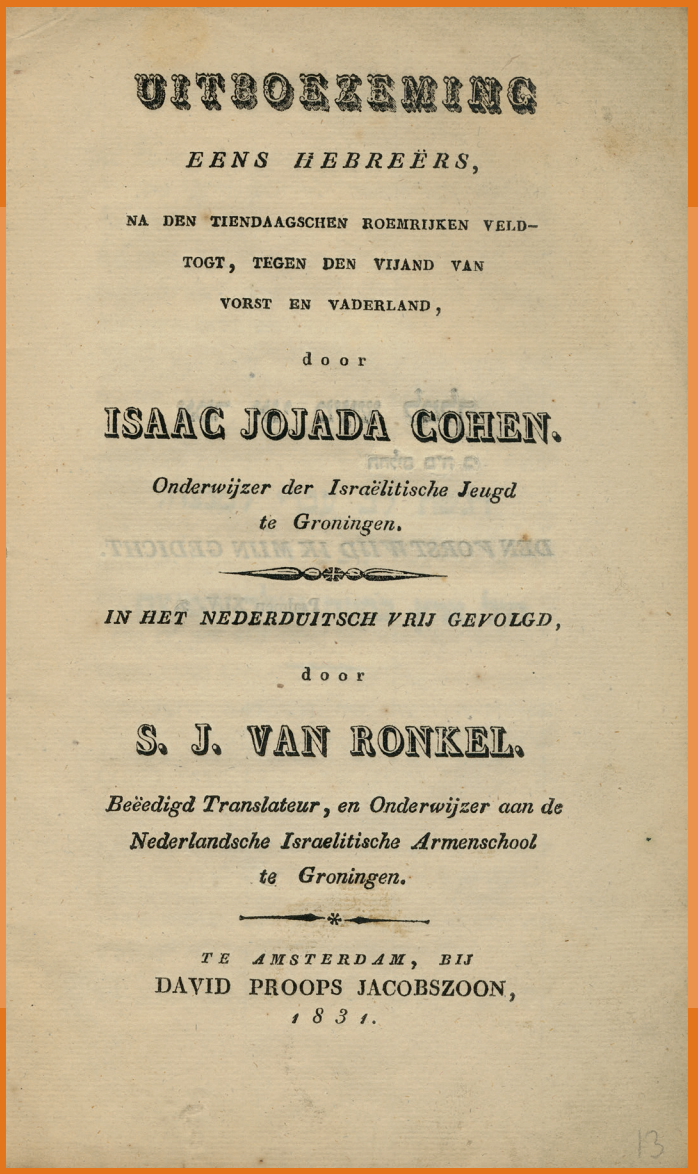
The Lehren brothers wanted Dutch Jews to remain fully connected with the international Jewish community. As members of a prominent banking family, they were completely financially independent, so they dared to oppose the policy. They protested against the changes to Jewish education, battled against religious innovations and coordinated the resistance of Orthodox Jews in central and western Europe to the rise of Reform Judaism.

The piety of the Lehren brothers attracted much attention; they fasted at least two days a week, spent many hours each day studying the Torah, were fascinated by the mystical kabbalah and held their own synagogue services at home. Amid members of the integrated top stratum of Dutch Jewry, they were a striking phenomenon. Their own synagogue services, in which eastern European Hasidic customs were observed rather than the Amsterdam rite, met with fierce resistance from the administrative elite. The brothers were said to be sowing the seeds for a sect of their own and creating division. Although alternative synagogue services were banned in 1827, the ingenuity of the Lehrens was such that they proved impossible to stop. All three brothers had a strong orientation towards the international Jewish community. They were key figures in Pekidim and Amarkalim, received Jewish scholars from all over Europe and kept in touch with practically all the Orthodox leaders. They supported the development of Orthodox Judaism with their knowledge, networks and financial resources, and regarded the emergence of Reform Judaism as a serious threat. At the same time, they dedicated themselves fully to Dutch Judaism.

'The Lehren brothers wanted Dutch Jews to remain fully connected with the international Jewish community.'

Despite fierce conflicts, their piety and devotion won them respect, and the brothers were regularly asked to fill prominent posts. They became directors of the Dutch Israelite Seminary and the Amsterdam orphanage for boys, Megadlé Jethomim, as well as having seats on the board of the Jewish Community of Amsterdam (NIHS), where they made immense efforts to ensure that integration into Dutch society did not come at the expense of loyalty to Judaism.

1830



UITBOEZEMING

EENS HEBREËRS,

NA DEN TIENDAAGSCHEN ROEMRIJKEN VELD-
TOGT, TEGEN DEN VIJAND VAN
VORST EN VADERLAND,

door

ISAAC JOJADA COHEN.

Onderwijzer der Israëlitische Jeugd
te Groningen.

IN HET NEDERDUITSCH VRIJ GEVOLGD,

door

S. J. VAN RONKEL.

Beëedigd Translateur, en Onderwijzer aan de
Nederlandsche Israelitische Armenschool
te Groningen.

TE AMSTERDAM, BIJ
DAVID PROOPS JACOBSZOON,
1831.

Title page of one of the many expressions of Jewish patriotism around the time of the Belgian Revolution. As well as Hebrew, deliberate use was made of newly acquired knowledge of the national language, Dutch.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: D009808.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-60

Belgian Revolution

While in the north Jews cooperated fully with the government's integration policy, it met with resistance among Catholics in the southern provinces. The Southern Netherlands had been part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands since 1815. William I's attempts to impose the Dutch language on French speakers and to bring the Catholic Church under his supervision provoked fierce opposition there. In 1830 a revolution broke out and it resulted, to the surprise even of the rebels themselves, in the creation of a new state: Belgium.

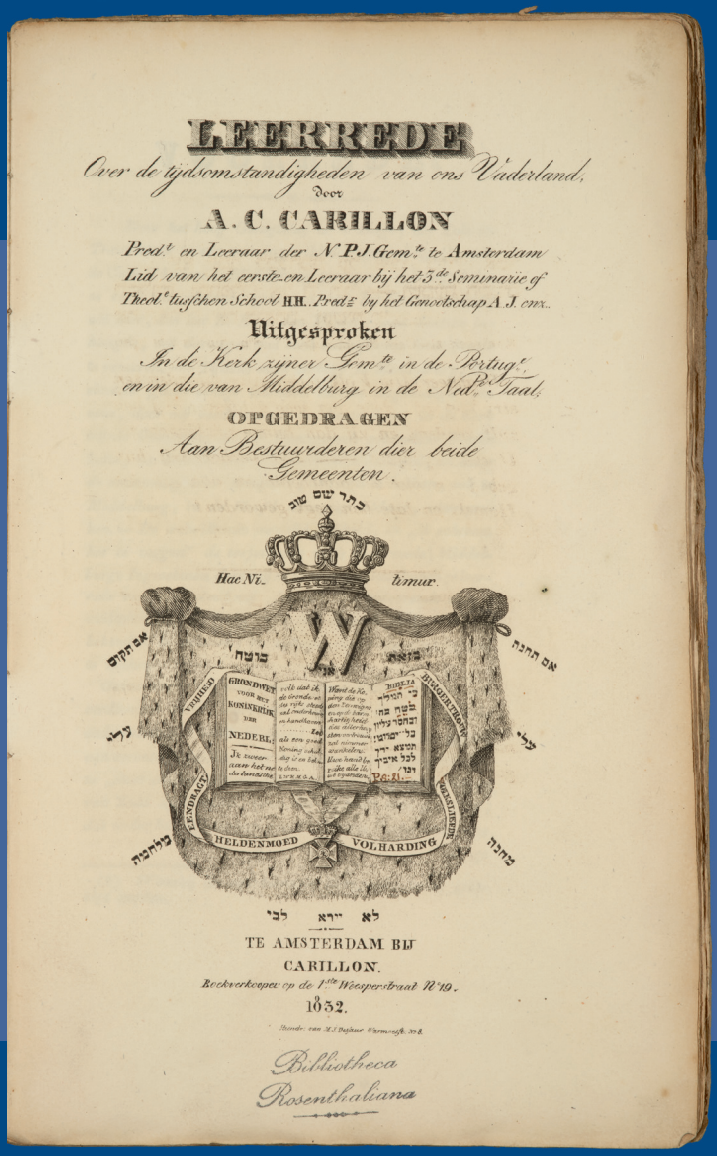
For Dutch Jews this was a welcome opportunity to show that they were prepared to give their all for king and fatherland. With far greater frequency than other population groups, they volunteered to serve in the army. Alongside non-Jewish troops, they went into battle against the rebellious Belgians in the Ten Days' Campaign. General Baron Chassé, who defended the citadel of Antwerp against the Belgians, had nothing but praise for the dedication of the Jewish soldiery. His commendation was disseminated with pride throughout Dutch Jewry.

Dutch nationalism was also expressed wholesale in the countless poems, brochures and sermons that were written, published and sold in large numbers in this period. The intellectual Moses Lemans wrote a long historical poem in Hebrew under the telling title *Pesha Belgi* – 'the sins of Belgium'. A teacher at the Jewish school in Groningen, Isaac Jojada Cohen, wrote a Hebrew poem that was published alongside a Dutch translation entitled 'Uitboezeming eens Hebreeërs na den tiendaagschen roemrijken veldtogt' (Outpouring of a Hebrew after the glorious Ten Days' Campaign). It was a way of convincing all Dutch people that the Jews had been on the right side.

In the province of North Brabant, unrest continued for a long time. There were many among its Catholic population who felt considerable sympathy for the Belgian Revolution, which made things difficult for the Jews living there, since they were regarded as firm supporters of the House of Orange. In Eindhoven the windows of the synagogue were smashed, and in Oisterwijk the books and possessions of the Jewish congregation were taken to a place of safety since 'this province is none too disposed towards Holland'. The Amsterdam Jews who had moved to cities like Brussels and Antwerp after 1815, to escape poverty and to look for work, found themselves in a particularly awkward position. No less than a third of the Jewish population left the new state of Belgium after 1830 and returned to the Netherlands.

'For Dutch Jews this was a welcome opportunity to show that they were prepared to give their all for king and fatherland.'

1832



LEERREDE

Over de tijdsomstandigheden van ons Vaderland,

door

A. C. CARILLON

Pred.t en Leeraar der N. P. J. Gem.te te Amsterdam

Lid van het eerste en Leeraar bij het 3.de Seminarie of

Theol.e tusschen School HH. Pred.r by het Genootschap A. J. enz.

Uitgesproken

In de Kerk zijner Gem.te in de Portug.e

en in die van Middelburg in de Ned.e Taal.

OPGEDRAGEN

Aan Bestuurderen dier beide

Gemeenten.

Hac Ni- timur.

HELDENMOED VOLHARDING

TE AMSTERDAM BIJ

CARILLON.

Rockverkoopen op de 1.ste Weesperstraat N.o 19.

1832.

Bibliotheca

Rosenthaliana

Aron Cohen Carillon, pioneer of the Dutch-language sermon, published his works at a small publishing house owned by his son Benjamin Cohen Carillon. They nevertheless attracted the attention of leading literary and cultural magazines.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-61

First Dutch-language sermon in Middelburg

It was decidedly symbolic that not Amsterdam but Middelburg, capital of the province of Zeeland, became the first place where a sermon in Dutch was delivered in a synagogue. By an Amsterdammer, incidentally, teacher and preacher of the Portuguese Israelite Congregation: Aron Cohen Carillon. He had advocated preaching in the national language for a long time but was unable to convince his own congregation. He was forced to carry on addressing them in Portuguese, even though a large proportion of his listeners would promptly leave each time, being unable to understand a word. In Middelburg Carillon saw his chance. Fluent in several languages, he had been involved in a case at the law court in Zeeland as a translator and interpreter. He offered to deliver to the Jews of Middelburg a sermon he had given before in Portuguese, but in Dutch this time. They agreed. It was called 'Leerrede over de tijdsomstandigheden van ons Vaderland' (A Sermon About the Current Condition of our Fatherland) and it was full of patriotism, affection for the House of Orange and fierce criticism of the rebellious Belgians. It was even published.

Carillon's efforts suited government policy. As early as 1814 the leaders of Jewish congregations were asked 'to impose on the rabbis or delegates the obligation to instil in their laypersons, through sermons, love of the fatherland and their sovereign, the defence of the same, the practice of all social virtues, the engagement in honest trade, and the abhorrence of sloth and begging'. Sermons were seen as important instruments of integration. By deploying the weight of religious authority, Jews could be nurtured to become 'cultivated, useful' citizens. It was a completely new idea. Traditionally, sermons were preached only occasionally in the synagogue. Moreover, the *droosje*, as a sermon was known in Western Yiddish, was strongly *halachic* (relating to Jewish law). It usually focused on ancient and complicated Jewish legal texts and their interpretation.

'Sermons were seen as important instruments of integration. By deploying the weight of religious authority, Jews could be nurtured to become "cultivated, useful" citizens.'

The change of language, from Yiddish or Portuguese to Dutch, brought many other changes with it. The content altered significantly, coming to concern citizenship rather than *halacha*. This provoked a good deal of resistance, especially in the major cities. Outside Amsterdam especially, pioneering work was done on the Dutch sermon. The Executive Committee introduced a sermon competition, which greatly stimulated its use. The last bastion of the Yiddish *droosje* was Leeuwarden. There sermons were delivered in Yiddish until the death of Chief Rabbi Bendit Dusnus in 1886. When his successor began preaching in Dutch, quite a few elderly men angrily walked out of the synagogue. The strict guidelines for preaching imposed by the government in the early nineteenth century gradually disappeared, and sermons started to feature more *halacha* and internal Jewish issues again. The compulsory robe for the rabbis was not abolished, however. Their dress remained a permanent feature of official ceremonies, just as it did for Protestant clergy, for whom vestments had been made a requirement in the same period.

1833



A haberdashery cabinet that in the early decades of the twentieth century was still used by the Van Blijdesteijn family when they went out calling at farmhouses.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: MB02159.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-62

Van Blijdesteijn

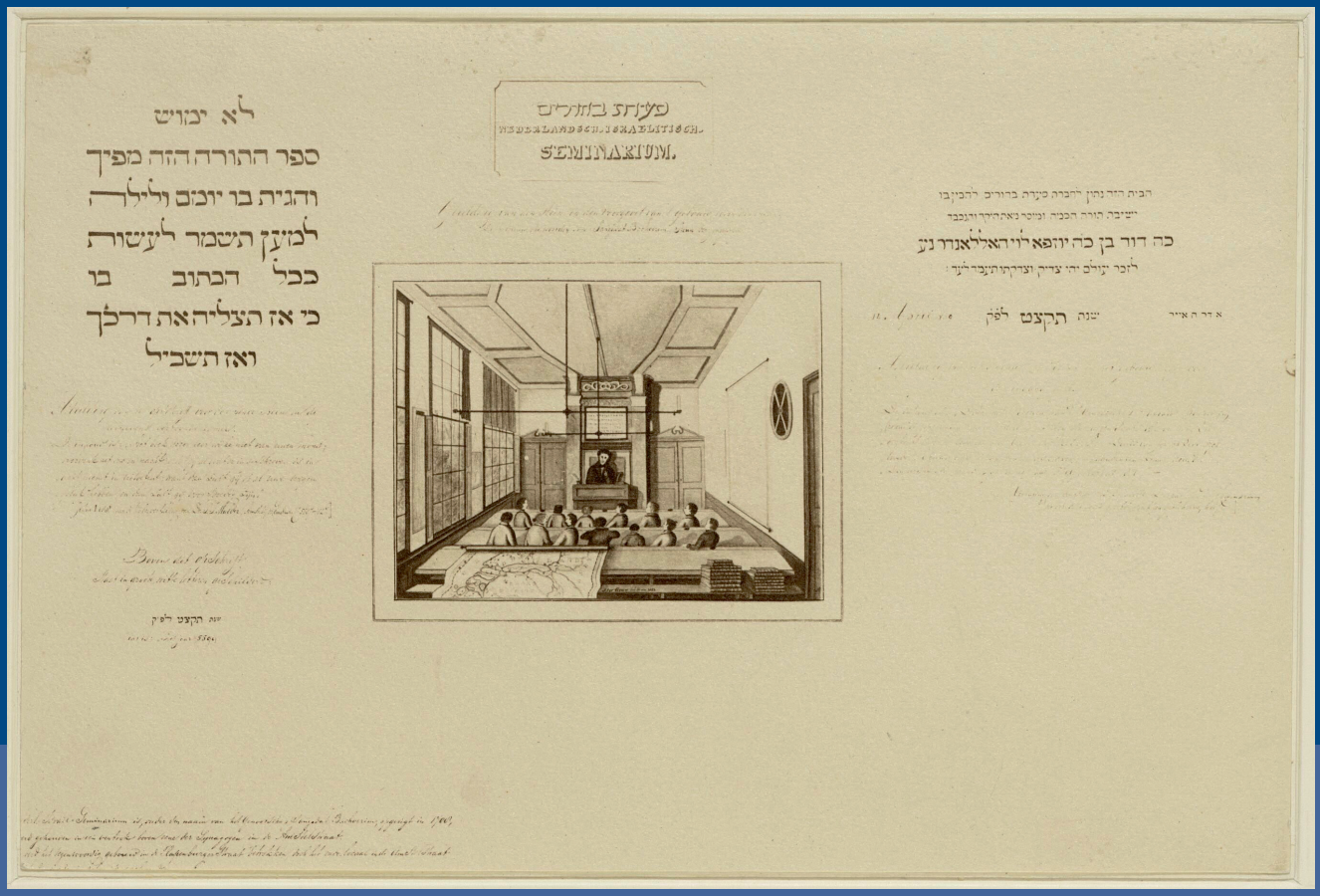
Although emancipation meant that Jews could in theory choose any occupation available to them, the economic profile of the community changed only slowly. As in the rest of society, most young Jewish people took up the same line of work as their parents. In Amsterdam that included the diamond industry, and all over the country Jews traded goods on a small scale. They were trusted as stallholders, sold their wares in towns and cities as hawkers, or moved through rural areas as pedlars with their goods on their backs. They carried mainly manufactured items and textiles, spending several days at a time calling at farms and hamlets. 'Such Jews are to be found everywhere in our country, since they earn their living by buying, selling or bartering old and new goods,' a contemporary wrote.

Some pedlars settled in the countryside. From a central location they would serve the surrounding area. They carried everything with them: fabrics, knickknacks, lottery tickets. Larger orders were noted down for delivery later. Over the course of the nineteenth century, more and more such small traders set up a shop that initially served as their base of operations. The shops gradually took over the job of the pedlars. That was the course taken by the business begun in 1833 by German Jewish immigrant Hijman van Blijdesteijn in Ophemert in the Betuwe. At first, he was one of the many 'clothing Jews' and his sons trekked from one farm to the next. 'Samuel and Emanuel, they work together well', went a local rhyme. 'Samuel sells the rags, Emanuel buys the pelts'. They were soon running a shop too, however, and it became increasingly important.

'"Samuel sells the rags, Emanuel buys the pelts."'

Countless textile and clothing businesses like Van Blijdesteijn were to be found all over the Netherlands. They were typical family businesses, passed on from father to son. Relatives in nearby places often had comparable shops. Van Blijdesteijn was one of the most successful, especially after it moved to Tiel in 1924. There it grew to become a regional fashion centre. As well as selling a wide range of textile products, from corsets to lengths of fabric, Van Blijdesteijn specialized in off-the-peg garments. During the Second World War the owners managed to survive in hiding, while the business was carried on by a pro-Nazi *Verwalter* (custodian). After the liberation of the Netherlands it resumed business as before, and with a striking advertising policy and its own fashion shows it became a household name all over the country. The firm still exists and the family remains in control.

1836



Interior of the Dutch Israelite Seminary at Rapenburgerstraat 177 in Amsterdam. Drawing by Johannes ter Gouw, 1853.
Collection of the Amsterdam City Archives.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-63

Dutch Israelite Seminary

Foreign rabbis were a source of exasperation both to the government and to the Jewish elite. They spoke Yiddish or German and therefore hindered the integration of Dutch Jews. Although the contracts they signed when they were appointed now stated that they must quickly learn Dutch, far from all rabbis did so. Moreover, foreign countries were increasingly seen as a potential source of discord. Dutch Jews had stayed together as a single community, but many Jewish communities in central Europe had split into Orthodox and Reform congregations. It was feared that foreign rabbis might bring schismatic ideas of a similar kind with them to the Netherlands.

Huge importance was therefore attached to Dutch training for rabbis and teachers of religion. It was the only way to produce religious leaders who fitted into the Dutch Jewish community and set Dutch Jews an example in good citizenship and patriotism. In 1836 a start was made with the founding of the Dutch Israelite Seminary. This was actually a restart, since from 1740 onwards Jews could study at the Ashkenazi Beth Hamidrash Ets Haim and from 1760 onwards poor boys were supported in their studies by the association Sa'adat Bachurim. Many boys in those days, after beginning their studies in Amsterdam, went abroad to acquire the diploma that qualified them as rabbis. The Dutch seminary was intended to put an end to that. It taught both religious and secular subjects, and after a while rabbinical students were also required to take courses at the university. So there were now rabbis who, in addition to having a thorough grounding in religious matters, could participate fully in discussions in society. As well as gaining the *halachic* knowledge – of Jewish laws – that they would need in order to take good decisions, they were made to focus on learning how to preach.

From 1839 onwards the seminary was located in the Rapenburgerstraat in Amsterdam. Until the Second World War it was where teachers and rabbis for the whole of the Netherlands were educated. Years passed before the ambitious plans bore fruit, and until the second half of the nineteenth century, chief rabbis were still often brought in from Germany. Eventually, however, the entire spiritual leadership of Dutch Jewry was trained at its own Dutch Israelite Seminary. After the Second World War, the seminary had to adjust to the new situation. It could no longer function as the central institution for the instruction of all Dutch rabbis, but devoted itself instead to providing the Jewish community with a broader education and to training teachers.

'So there were now rabbis who, in addition to having a thorough grounding in religious matters, could participate fully in discussions in society.'

1845



When in 1984 the synagogue built into the dike at Sliedrecht – unique of its kind – was photographed, it was in a dilapidated state. Since then the building, like countless rural synagogues, has been renovated and made accessible to the public.

Photograph by Willy Lindwer, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F301352.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-64

Dike synagogue in Sliedrecht

For Dutch Jews the nineteenth century was the century of the countryside. Since the economy in the major cities had stagnated and there was mass unemployment, many Jews left Amsterdam. In search of a new life, some moved to the colonies, or to Britain or the United States. Others tried to find work elsewhere in the Netherlands. Groups of Jews settled in small towns and villages all over the country. Often moving from job to job, they attempted to secure a permanent place for themselves.

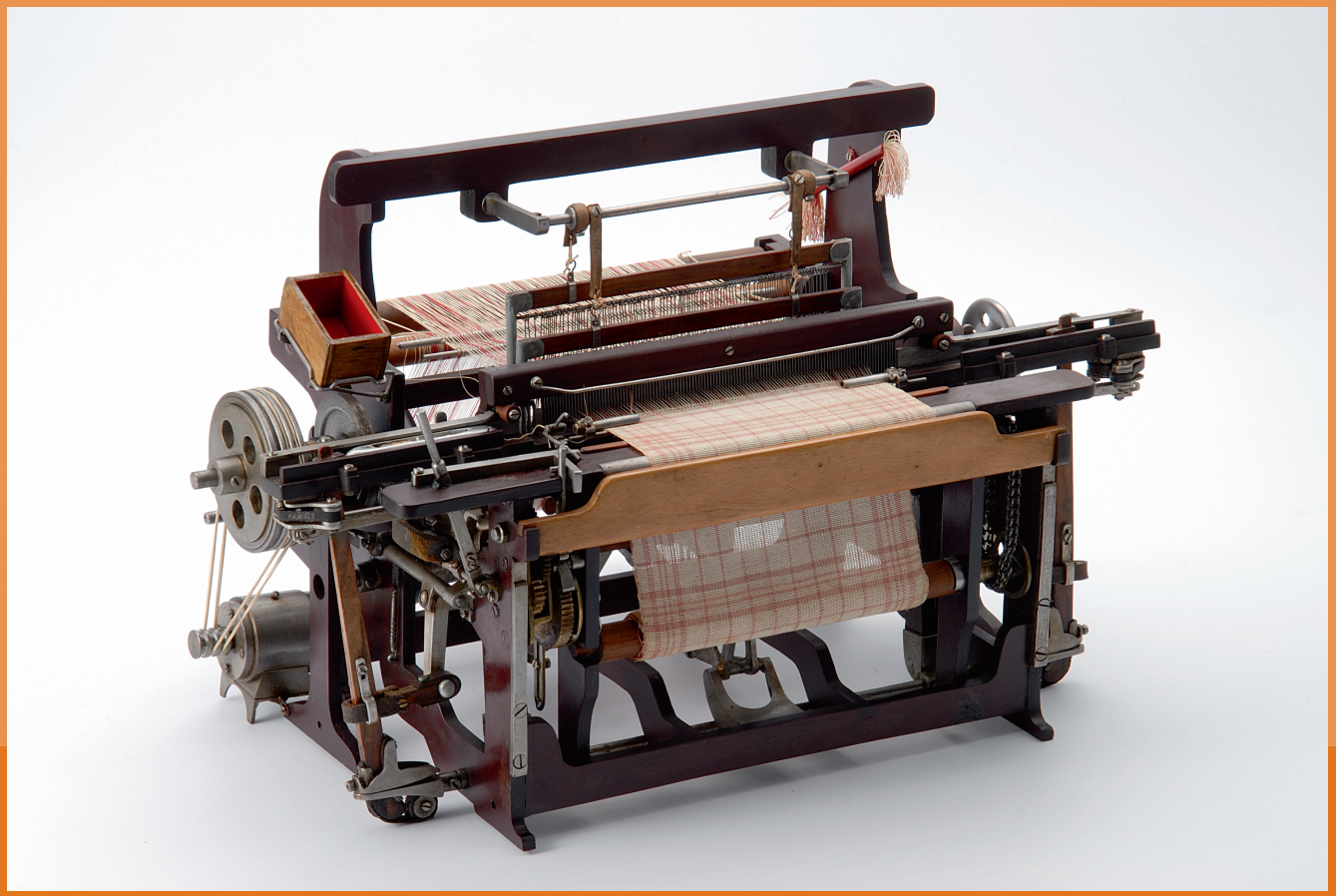
The pioneers almost always started by putting in place the basic requirements of a Jewish life. First of all they needed at least one kosher slaughterer who also worked as a butcher. Not until kosher food became available was there any chance that a community might grow. At the home of one of the families, a room would be set up as a synagogue, and as soon as ten men were present – a *minyan* (quorum) – a request was submitted for recognition as an official Dutch Israelite congregation. Next came supervision by the chief rabbi and a small amount of financial support.

If growth continued, a proper synagogue would be built. In the tiniest of places, simple brick houses of worship arose, with just enough space to provide local Jews with somewhere to pray. The synagogue in the village of Sliedrecht is a good example. After modest beginnings at the end of the eighteenth century, the small Jewish community there slowly grew to become a permanent part of the strongly Protestant Alblasserwaard region. The number of Jewish families in the area was not large and intermarriage meant they were tightly interwoven. The same applied practically all over the country and gradually regional Jewish identities emerged. With support from the government and the local population, Sliedrecht's synagogue, built into the inner side of the dike along the River Merwede, had its opening ceremony in 1845. Fifty or so Jews from Sliedrecht, Hardinxveld and Giessendam listened to a sermon by religious teacher Levi Godschalk Wanefried from Dordrecht. The community had no teacher of its own for some years. None of those who were engaged served the village on the dike for very long, incidentally. The salary was extremely modest.

'In the tiniest of places, simple brick houses of worship arose.'

When the urban economy picked up strongly in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the Industrial Revolution, Jews gradually started to move back from the villages to the cities. By the end of the century, many synagogues had closed again and the trend continued in the early twentieth century. A robust Jewish community remained in only a few rural districts.

1852



Scale model of a loom as commonly used in the textile industry, made in 1948 by a former employee of the Elias textile factory in Eindhoven.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: MB02149.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-65

Salomonson steam engine in Nijverdal

The traditional Jewish trade in textiles produced countless Jewish clothing businesses, while others took the step into manufacturing fabrics. Until the early nineteenth century, textile manufacture was very much a cottage industry. Workers, mostly women, wove woollen cloth and strips of cotton fabric at home, which were then marketed by manufacturers. The Industrial Revolution brought the rapid emergence of textile factories. Jews were very active in Twente, in the east of the country, the most important region of the Netherlands for textiles.

In 1816 two brothers, Godfried and Hein Salomonson in Almelo, set up a trading firm dealing in cotton. They were continually in touch with relatives in Britain, so they soon became aware of the revolutionary developments taking place there. In 1851 they bought an empty factory in the recently established village of Nijverdal, demolished it and had a modern factory built. There they installed a steam engine and ten looms, imported from England. It was a crucial innovation. At the opening in 1852, King William III immediately gave them the designation 'royal'. The business was a resounding success. It grew rapidly and most of its products were for export to the huge colonial market of the Dutch East Indies. Just two years later there were already 360 looms. In 1889 the company's own bleaching facilities were added and in 1929 its own steam-powered spinning mill. In the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth, the business was among the 100 biggest industrial enterprises in the Netherlands.

'The Industrial Revolution brought the rapid emergence of textile factories.'

A large proportion of the population of Nijverdal worked at what since 1872 had been called the Koninklijke Stoomweverij (KSW, Royal Steam Weaving Mill). 'Old Mr' Godfried Salomonson had a patriarchal relationship with his workers, regarding himself as a father whose responsibility it was to care for them. Working conditions were therefore comparatively pleasant for the time.

Salomonson was far from the only successful Jewish textile manufacturer. In Borne a firm belonging to the Spanjaard family dominated the village, while the town of Enschede had factories owned by families called Menko, Van Dam, Van Gelderen and Rozendaal. Jewish textile industries grew up outside Twente as well. Most of the Twente-based businesses remained in family hands until the second half of the twentieth century when, because of a crisis in the textile industry, they went under or could survive only by entering into mergers. KSW merged with its rival Ten Cate in 1952 and the resulting firm took over Spanjaard in 1961. Royal Ten Cate is still a successful Dutch company, listed on the stock exchange. In addition to textiles, Jews were well represented in the food industry, from which Unilever emerged, the chemicals and pharmaceuticals industry (with Akzo and Organon as iconic players) and the diamond branch, in which names like Asscher, Boas, Gassan and Coster were guarantees of a good product. After the Second World War, however, Antwerp took over the diamond trade from Amsterdam.

1856



VOLLEDIG

GEBEDENBOEK

DER

NEDERLANDSCHE ISRAËLITEN,

VOOR HET GEHEELE JAAR,

MET EENE

NEDERDUITSCHE VERTALING.

HET HEBREEUWSCH, BIJEENGEBRAGT EN NAGEZIEN,

DOOR

G. I. POLAK,

EN DE VERTALING, ONDER DESZELFS TOEZIGT, BEWERKT

DOOR

M. S. POLAK *Lm. Hm. Dr.*

MET KERKELIJKE GOEDKEURING.

AMSTERDAM, BIJ

DE WED. D. PROOPS JZ. EN J. L. JOACHIMSTHAL.

5612—1852.

סדור

תפלה נכונה

הוא סדר

תפלה לכל השנה

עם

תרגום הללנדית

מתורגם בדברים עתיקים בשום שכל ומפורש

ע"פ באורי חכמי ישראל הקדמונים

וגדולי המתרגמים.

בהוצאות אלמנת המדפים המנוח כ' דוד פרופס כ"ץ זצ"ל

והמוכר ספרים כ' יוחנן יאאכימסטהאל יחי'.

אמסטרדם

בדפוס אלמנת המנוח כ' דוד פרופס כ"ץ זצ"ל.

שנת תרי"ב לפ"ק.

The title page of a prayerbook that was reprinted and edited countless times, Gabriel Polak's edition, with a full translation by Moses Salomon Polak.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam: Ros. 3811 A 13.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-66

Seven-penny prayerbook

There were two books that no Jewish bookcase could be without: a *chumash* with Rashi and a *tefillah*. The former was an edition of the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, including commentary by the authoritative medieval rabbi Rashi. The latter was a daily prayerbook containing the Hebrew prayers that Jewish men had to say in the morning, at noon and in the evening. Both books would be read until they fell apart, so the Jewish presses ran hot providing everyone with fresh copies.

With the rise of Dutch as a language spoken among Jews, demand for bilingual editions of the Hebrew Bible and the prayerbook increased. A Dutch translation of their prayerbook had been available to Sephardi Jews since 1791 and one for Ashkenazi Jews followed in 1822. The translation was not permitted to take the place of the Hebrew prayers, but it served to explain exactly what was being said. That function had previously been fulfilled by translations into Yiddish and Portuguese.

Gradually, various editions appeared of the daily prayerbook (the *siddur*) and specific prayerbooks for Jewish Holy Days (*machzorim*) that included Dutch translations. Two leading Dutch Jewish intellectuals were particularly active in the translation and publication of both the Hebrew Bible and the prayerbook, Samuel Israël Mulder and Gabriël Isaac Polak. They were famous for their extensive knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish tradition, and they enjoyed the confidence of the chief rabbi. Their translations of the Bible and prayers found eager buyers.

In 1856 Gabriël Polak produced a new edition, with useful instructions for the Dutch-speaking reader. Distributed by the famous Amsterdam bookseller and publisher Joachimsthal, it was to become the most successful. One edition after another came off the presses and Polak's prayerbook was repeatedly supplemented and reworked until the Second World War.

The success of Polak's *Gebeden der Israëliten voor het geheele jaar* (Prayers of the Israelites for the Whole Year) was attributable in part to the fact that Joachimsthal also published a 'seven-penny version'. From the late nineteenth century onwards, 'seven pennies' (*zeven stuivers*) stood for a cheap edition, since there were several single-price shops that charged sevenpence for all their items. The 'seven-penny prayerbook', as it became known, was used in lessons for Jewish children, given as a gift at bar mitzvahs and consulted daily by countless Dutch Jews. The Hebrew prayers with Dutch instructions accompanied them from day to day.

'The "seven-penny prayerbook", as it became known, was used in lessons for Jewish children.'

1857



GETUIGSCHRIFT

BURGEMEESTER EN WETHOUDERS VAN AMSTERDAM *hebben aan*

Nathan Levi

leerling eener OPENBARE KOSTELOOZE SCHOOL, *bij het verlaten der school, dit* GETUIGSCHRIFT *verleend tot een vereerend bewijs dat hij, gedurende den geheelen leertijd, bijzondere redenen van tevredenheid gegeven, en het onderwijs met vrucht genoten heeft.*

Zij hopen dat dit getuigschrift hem eene aansporing zal zijn, om op denzelfden weg voort te gaan.

AMSTERDAM, *25 Juli* 1878.

De hoofdonderwijzer

W. L. Uildriks

BURGEMEESTER en WETHOUDERS voornoemd

De SECRETARIS

Certificate awarded to Nathan Levy in 1878, on the occasion of his leaving the state school.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: D002155.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-67

Van der Brugghen Education Act

In 1848 revolutions broke out all over Europe, and fear that the same might happen in the Netherlands led to the introduction of a new liberal constitution, which stated that there must be a stricter separation between church and state. There was also to be less interference by the government in religious communities. This had major consequences for everyone, including the Jewish community. The Israelite Denomination would henceforth have to stand on its own two feet, independent of the department in The Hague, and the crucial subsidies for Jewish education were abolished.

As a result, in 1857 the Lower House of parliament adopted a law on primary education, introduced by minister Van der Brugghen. It came into effect in 1861. The government would no longer support private schools. Any community that wanted schools of its own was free to have them, but it would need to bear all the costs.

The Jewish community was faced with a choice: continue with its own schools or switch to state education. Although financial arguments undoubtedly played a part, the decision to opt for the latter was mainly a matter of conviction. If Jewish children went to state schools, it would mark a significant step towards integration into Dutch society. They would also get better jobs. The Jewish schools rapidly disappeared from 1861 onwards and by 1915 only three remained. The arrival of Jewish children at state schools meant those schools had to adapt. Education had previously been strongly Christian in nature. Now a neutral alternative was sought. Exactly what this meant differed from place to place. In Rotterdam, for example, 'biblical history' was taught in state schools, including stories about Jesus. In Amsterdam the entire subject was abandoned.

'If Jewish children went to state schools, it would mark a significant step towards integration into Dutch society.'

To supplement state education, Jewish congregations set up special religious schools, which gave Jewish lessons after normal school hours, teaching Hebrew, the Bible and Jewish prayers. Since the state school timetable was continually being extended to include new subjects, there was less and less room for Jewish lessons. The process of turning children into Dutch citizens went smoothly, but in many cases Jewish education was dropped, to the frustration of religious leaders and rabbis who had opted for state education with such confidence. It was not until the twentieth century that a small part of the community changed course and chose to create its own special Jewish education system.

1860



Coin minted in honour of Michel Henri Godefroi by Jacob Samuël Cohen Elion in 1879.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam (Collection of J. van Velzen): M007690

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-68

Michel Henri Godefroi: the first Jewish government minister

Proud. That was how Dutch Jews felt in 1860. One of their leading men, lawyer Michel Henri Godefroi (1813–1883), had been appointed minister of justice. He was the first Jewish government minister in the Netherlands and very much aware of his Jewishness. At the time of his appointment he was chair of the Executive Committee for Israelite Affairs, where he had devoted himself to the interests of Dutch Jews since 1844.

It had taken a good deal of time for a Jew to rise to the position of minister. In 1798 the Batavian Republic became the first country with Jewish parliamentarians, but in William I's Kingdom of the Netherlands, Jewish political activity was limited to local councils. The parliament had become the domain of aristocratic gentlemen – who inevitably did not include Jews. That did not change until the political revolution of 1848 and the coming of a new liberal constitution. In 1849 Godefroi became the first Jew elected to the Lower House. He was a moderate liberal and he managed to win over both liberal and conservative voters. He avoided the political game and adopted above all the position of a lawyer in politics.

Godefroi could have become a minister sooner. In 1852 the heavyweight liberal politician Johan Rudolph Thorbecke pushed him to the fore, precisely because he was a Jew, keen as the de facto Prime Minister was to show that the Netherlands really had become a liberal country. King William II, however, had no interest in creating that impression and put up resistance. Godefroi took the honourable course and withdrew citing health reasons. In 1860, however, he allowed his appointment to go through and was a minister in two successive, short-lived cabinets. By 1862 he was a backbencher again. Was a Jewish parliamentarian supposed to engage in Jewish politics? Godefroi was reluctant, but when the interests of Dutch Jews were endangered, he saw it as his duty to defend them. He realized that his supporters were not just his Amsterdam constituency but the whole of Dutch Jewry. Godefroi protested against the paucity of government subsidies to the Jewish community and fought discrimination against Jews abroad.

'Was a Jewish parliamentarian supposed to engage in Jewish politics?'

Godefroi symbolizes the eagerness of Jews in the Netherlands to take part in Dutch society, with input from their own background. His determination to defend state education is characteristic, since he believed it enabled Jewish children to become thoroughly integrated. In return he was more than willing to accept that according to the law, their integration must be based on 'Christian and social virtues'.

1865



A°. 5625. Eerste Jaargang. A°. 1865.

NIEUW ISRAËLIETISCH WEEKBLAD.

Abonnementsprijs per jaargang.
Voor Amsterdam . . . . . ƒ 5.—
Voor de overige plaatsen binnen het rijk, franco . . . 5.50
Afzonderlijke Couranten 0.15

VRIJDAG 15 SEPTEMBER.
N°. 7.
Uitgever: J. B. DE MESQUITA.

Prijs der Advertentiën.
Van 1—5 regels, behalve het zegelgeld . . . . ƒ 0.50
Iedere regel meer 0.07½
Kapitalen of buitengewoon groote letters worden dubbel berekend.

Verschijnt elken Vrijdag. — Bijdragen, brieven enz., uiterlijk MAANDAG en Advertentiën WOENSDAG aan het Bureau van dit Blad (MUIDERSTRAAT, V 260).
Brieven, toezendingen enz., franco; ongefrankeerde worden bepaald geweigerd, tenzij die van onze vaste Correspondenten afkomstig en van een kenmerk teeken voorzien zijn.
Men teekent in bij alle solide BOEKHANDELAREN en POSTDIRECTEUREN des Rijks.

CORRESPONDENTEN: J. E. Davidson, *te 's Gravenhage.* — Gebr°. Haagens, *te Rotterdam.* — G. da Costa Gomez de la Penha, *te Utrecht.*

BERIGT.

Wegens de feestdagen zal het volgende Nommer WOENSDAG ek. verschijnen.

De Reorganisatie van het Israëlietisch Kerkgenootschap in Nederland.

IV.

VERGELIJKING VAN HET AMSTERDAMSCHE ONTWERP MET HET DOOR DE CONSTITUEERENDE VERGADERING VASTGESTELDE REGLEMENT.

(Eerste gedeelte.)

Wanneer wij met onpartijdigheid de in het hoofd dezer genoemde reglementen willen beoordeelen, en met onbenevelden blik wikken en wegen het vóór en tegen van die beide voorstellen om tot eenen algemeenen band voor het Israël. kerkgenootschap te geraken, dan is het in de eerste plaats noodig om het standpunt duidelijk aan te geven waarop men zich in deze zal hebben te plaatsen.

De volgende vragen moeten tot grondslag strekken om de wijze van beschouwing van het te kiezen standpunt en de daaruit voortvloeijende kritiek te regtvaardigen.

1°. Wat zal die centrale band betoekenen?

2°. Welke magt moet aan het centraal orgaan worden toegekend?

3°. Welke gevolgen zal de vestiging van zoodanig centraal orgaan hebben voor de ontwikkeling van het Jodendom en het Joodsche gemeenteleven?

I.

Wij hebben in onze voorafgaande beschouwingen den geschiedkundigen loop van de aangelegenheid der organisatie van ons kerkgenootschap aangetoond. Daaruit valt het niet moeijelijk na te gaan, dat het centraal orgaan zal worden geroepen om als tusschenmagt, intermédiair, tusschen de Hooge Regering en de Israëlietische kerkelijke gemeenten op te treden. Dat orgaan zal vervangen de tegenwoordige Hoofdcommissie tot de Zaken der Israëlieten in Nederland; vele van de attributen dier Commissie, gegrond op den voormaligen toestand, zullen komen te vervallen, zoo zij al nu niet reeds zijn buiten werking getreden. Datgene alleen wat van strenge algemeene belang is voor *alle* Israël. kerkelijke gemeenten kan behouden blijven en worden overgedragen aan de zorg van het centraal orgaan; al wat daarentegen partiëel voor eenig ondergeschikt gedeelte van het kerkgenootschap behoort, van eene enkele gemeente tegenover eene andere, of van eene gemeente binnen haren eigen boezem, moet uitgesloten blijven van de bemoeijingen des hoofdorgaans. Dat orgaan vertegenwoordigt het geheel als eene ondeelbare zamenhangende massa; het daalt niet neder tot de onderdeelen; *algemeene* en geene andere dan algemeene belangen voor het Israël. kerkgenootschap ziedaar den werkkring van het centraal orgaan. Op dat zuivere standpunt plaatst zich de Amsterdamsche kerkeraad bij de beoordeeling van het reglement der Constitueerende Vergadering, en dat standpunt bleef gehandhaafd in zijn tegenontwerp.

Wij hebben nog zeer onlangs (*Weekblad voor Israëlieten*, N°. 5) op zeer gevoelige wijze den staf zien breken over de houding van Amsterdam in deze zoo gewigtige aangelegenheid. Men heeft goedgevonden ter publieke kennis te brengen, dat Amsterdam niets van het ressort Noord-Holland wil weten; en dat er in de geheele administratie van het kerkgenootschap verwarring heerscht, die door de wel begrijpelijke, maar uit een parlementair oogpunt zonderlinge houding van Amsterdam allezins wordt vermeerderd.

Het valt zeer gemakkelijk aan te vallen, van uit de hoogte met minachting op het miskende Amsterdam neder te zien, maar waar zijn de bewijzen voor een en ander? Waaruit toch blijkt dat Amsterdam niets van het ressort Noord-Holland wil weten? Welk bewijs bestaat er voor zoodanige aantijging? Omdat Amsterdam jaarlijks gedurende de middendagen van het Loofhuttenfeest geene ressortale vergadering belegt? Maar welk doel zou die vergadering hebben? Om kerkbesturiders te benoemen? Die verordening bestaat niet meer; zij is ingetrokken. Om begrootingen goed te keuren of andere finantiële questien te bespreken of te regelen? Zoo er van dien aard door de belanghebbende gemeenten waren aangeboden; zoo de gemeenten van het ressort slechts den *wensch* hadden doen kennen om door de Hoofdsynagoge in een of ander belang te worden ondersteund, ter zijde gestaan, dan zou er geen oogenblik gemarzeld zijn, daar waar noodig de krachtige hand te bieden. De gemeenten Zaandam, Enkhuizen, Beverwijk kunnen getuigen, dat Amsterdam zich niet onttrekt aan de krachtdadige ondersteuning waar het belangen van kerkelijken aard geldt. Of zou het zijn dat de gemeenten van het ressort verstoken zijn van geestelijk toezigt, van geestelijke hulp, waar die door haar gevorderd wordt: waar is het bewijs dat zulks werkelijk heeft plaats gehad? Neen, al bedraagt het kerkelijk quota van de 13 gemeenten in het ressort nog zoo weinig, de geestelijke der Hoofdsynagoge is onvermoeid ijverig werkzaam daar, waar zijne hulp, voorlichting, raad of tusschenkomst wordt ingeroepen. Of heeft Amsterdam getoond niets van het ressort te willen weten, toen het de verkiezing gold van afgevaardigden voor de Constituerende Vergadering? Het maakte in de daartoe belegde *ressortale* vergadering verre weg de meerderheid uit, naardien de meeste gemeenten in Noord-Holland geen of geen ander gevolg aan de oproeping hadden gegeven dan de kennisgeving, dat zij hare adhaesie schonken aan de keuzen, die gedaan zouden worden. Maakte het nu van die meerderheid gebruik om uitsluitend zijne gemeenteleden te benoemen, of werkte het mede om een plaatsvervanger uit de Israël. gemeente te Haarlem te kiezen, die dan ook inderdaad bij de Constituerende Vergadering later werd opgeroepen, daar zitting nam en even als de gekozen leden uit de Hoofdsynagoge niet *deze*, maar het *Synagogaal ressort van Noord-Holland* vertegenwoordigde?

Wij werpen dus dat verwijt terug en verklaren het verwijt, dat Amsterdam van het ressort niets wil weten, als ongemotiveerd, als onbewezen, als ongepast.

En waarlijk, wanneer Amsterdam zou streven naar suprematie, naar oppergezag, het ware niet moeijelijk geweest alle 13 gemeenten in Noord-Holland zich te zien scharen rondom de Hoofdsynagoge, even als zulks in een ressort, bestaande uit een gedeelte der Zuid-Hollandsche gemeenten, heeft plaats gegrepen. Maar Amsterdam gunt elke gemeente al datgene wat het voor zich zelf verlangt: zelfstandigheid, zelfstandig bestuur, zelfstandige ontwikkeling, zonder vreemden invloed, zonder vreemde overheerschung van buiten af. Waar toch is het bewijs dat de gemeenten in Noord-Holland, bijv. den Helder, Haarlem, Weesp, Zaandam, Alkmaar, Hoorn, om geene andere te noemen, zijn achteruit gegaan, omdat Amsterdam niets van haar wilde weten, of omdat de Hoofdsynagoge niet meêdoogend die armen in bescherming of onder patronaat heeft genomen? Ware het Amsterdam te doen geweest om pressie uit te oefenen, wat zou dan rationeler zijn geweest, dan dat het zou belet hebben het schenken van adhaesie van alle Noord-Hollandsche gemeenten aan het reglement der Constituerende Vergadering?

En nu de verwarring? Waarin bestaat verwarring? Wij voor ons, hoeveel moeite wij ons ook getroost hebben om het bewijs daarvoor te vinden: wij moeten gul bekennen, dat zij alleen heerscht in het brein van den schrijver van het boven aangehaalde opstel (*Weekblad voor Israëlieten* N°. 5). In welke gemeente heerscht verwarring? In Rotterdam of in drie ruikers in de hand, bestemd om den Omaud en het Oranu Hakaudesch te toojjen.

Vrolijk en moedig had Mendel zijn last aan de voeten der vrouwen nedergelegd. Het deed hem tot in het binnenste van zijne ziel goed, toen de bejaarde Malko den geur van het versche loof inademende, de handen met de witte manchetten ophief en met heldere stem zeide: „Mendel, dat is even als de poosek (het bijbelvers) zegt: ריח שדי אשר ברך ה׳ (als de geur des velds door den Eeuwige gezegend). Met eene gelukkigmakende oplettendheid, zoo als hij die nooit had gekend, toonde hij de wanden van het lieve heilige bedehuis naar de aanwijzingen van de blinde Malko, die hare bevelen met zoodanige zekerheid gaf, alsof in dit gebouw het licht haror oogen scherper was dan dat der vrouwen. Voor de oude, rijke Genendel droeg hij met zekeren trots de mand, waaruit zij de kalmoplaten strooide, en vooral die plaatsen rijk bedacht, waar eertijds hare vrome vader en twee harer geliefde behuwdzoons hadden gebeden, toen zij onder de levenden behoorden. Met heilige aandoening zag hij hoe Händele met vrome huivering de kransen en ruikers op de trappen voor de Heilige Arke nederlegde en het niet waagde die plaats te betreden. Hij nam ze van daar op en bragt ze op haren wensch ter plaatse hunner bestemming en zag in ootmoed en bewondering den blik der jonkvrouw op, waarmede zij hem haren dank te kennen gaf.

(Wordt vervolgd.)

MENDEL GIBBOR,

door

A. BERNSTEIN.

Uit het Hoogduitsch.

(Vervolg.)

Zoo leefde Mendel dan vergenoegd, opgeruimd en vrolijk het geheele jaar door, niet op de dorpen maar binnen de gemeente. Nadat hij door zijn handalag opgehouden had gedacht te zijn, schuwde niemand hem te plagen, ja hij moest zich menige moedwillige bejegening getroosten, zoo als dat steeds met een geboeiden Gibbor het geval is. En zoo als in de meeste gevallen gewende Mendel zich aan den overmoed van zwakke menschen en had daarvoor slechts een droevig, stil lachje, dat aan zijn krachtig, forsch geteekend gelaat somtijds de uitdrukking gaf, die levendig herinnerde dien treurigen trek, welken velen der uitstekendste Grieksche kunstenaars aan het hoofd van een rustenden Hercules wisten te geven.

Niet lang geleden echter was iets met hem gebeurd, dat eene geheele omkeering bragt in zijn wezen en zijn beroep. Op den laatsten Erew Schewonus (dag vóór het Wekenfeest) was hij vrolijk naar het woud getogen, om versche berkentakken tot opsmukking van het geliefde heilige bedehuis te halen, en hij keerde terug als een boeteling, zoo groot, dat hij slechts met wagenwijd geopende groote deuren der synagoge kon binnen treden. Toen hij het godshuis met de gewone betuiging ברוך הבא בשם ה׳ (hoe eerbiedwaardig is deze plaats) begroette, klonk zijne stem vol en krachtig. Hij vond daar drie feestelijk getooide vrouwen, aan wier voeten hij zijn last nederlegde. Daar stond de kleine, krachtige, eerbiedschendende gestalte der steenoude blinde Malko, die haren naam (koningin) met alle regt handhaafde. Haar hoofd, met een snoer paarlen en gouden krans getooid, hield zij regtop; hare oogen, welke voor het buitenlicht gesloten waren, stonden nogtans helder en schenen bericht met een inwendig licht. Twee roode zijden linten, aan het hoofddoosel bevestigd, hingen gedeeld op haren zijden borstlap neder en omsloten haar van ouderdom bleek en mager gelaat. De hemelsblauwe boven rok met koorden bezet hing ruim plooijend neder van haar gedelijden jak. Aan hare regterhand stond in gelijksoortig feestgewaad de rijke, oude Genendel, die in leed of vreugde bij geen vroom werk achterbleef, en nu een maud met gouaden kalmus droeg, welke zij voornemens was op den grond uit te strooijen. Links van Malko stond hare kleindochter, de teedere Händele, wier jonkvrouwelijke haarlokken uit eerbied voor het godshuis met een roodzijden doek geheel waren omhuld, en wier gelaatstrekken een getrouwe afdruk waren van die harer grootmoeder, voor zoover de frische jeugdelijke bloei gelijken kan op de trekken van den vergevorderden ouderdom. Zij had twee kransen om haren arm en drie ruikers in de hand, bestemd om den Omaud en het Oranu Hakaudesch te toojjen.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-69

Front page of the first edition of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* in 1865.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Allard Pierson, the collections of the University of Amsterdam.

Founding of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*

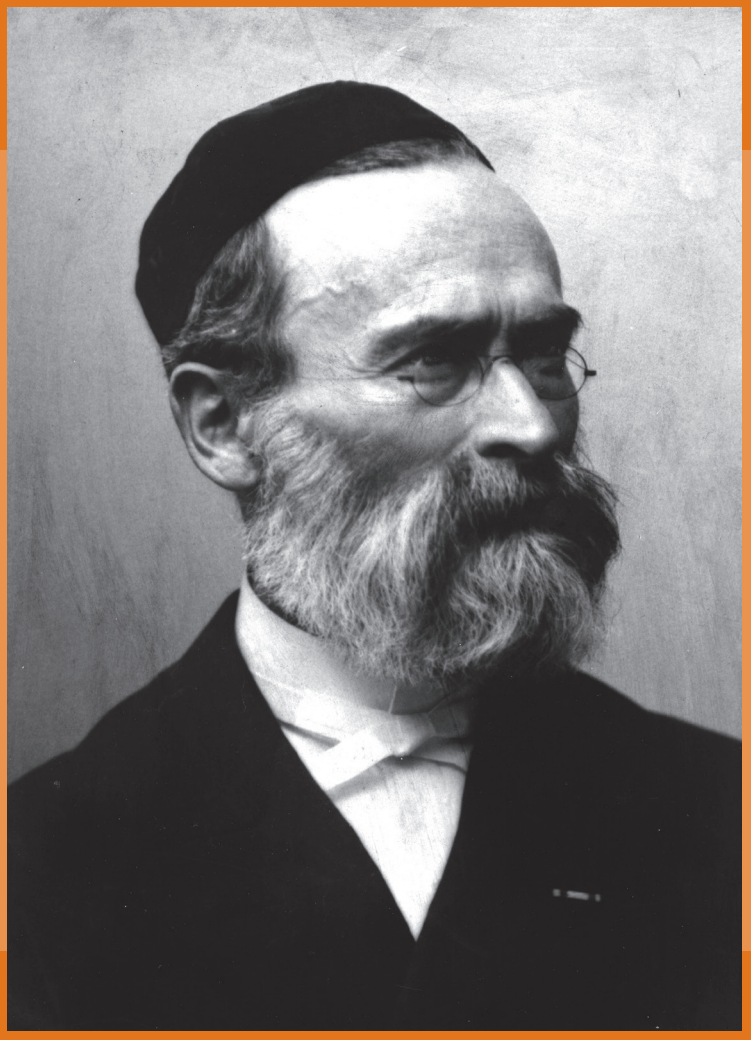
The *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, known as the *NIW* for short, describes itself these days as the oldest weekly news magazine in the Netherlands. There was nothing at the start to indicate its potential longevity. It was simply one of many Jewish magazines fighting for the attention of Dutch Jews in the nineteenth century. The *NIW* quickly grew to become the leading mouthpiece of Orthodox Jews in Amsterdam. Other periodicals were based elsewhere, like the *Weekblad voor Israëlietische Huisgezinnen* in Rotterdam, or had a more Reform profile, like *Het Weekblad voor Israëlieten*. Under the editorial team of Meijer Marcus Roest, Jacob Mendes Chumaceiro, Philip Elte and Levie David Staal, its course until the Second World War was stable and it was Orthodox, supportive of the House of Orange, and critical of both Reform Judaism and Zionism.

From 1875 onwards the *NIW* was published by the firm Joachimsthal, which was also a bookseller. It managed to push the weekly to great commercial heights, turning it into the best-read Jewish magazine in the Netherlands by far. No matter how much readers might disagree with the course it took, sagacious Dutch Jews could never really ignore the *NIW*. Because of the variety of its news and updates on Jewish affairs in the Netherlands, its reports about Jews elsewhere, its articles on popular science, its supplement and its indispensable personal announcements, everyone found something in it to suit their taste. The growth and range of the Jewish press bolstered communication between Dutch Jews and encouraged Jews to empathize with each other, although internal debate also increased. The press shaped opinion and brought the like-minded closer together, making regional differences less important. Jews were also active beyond the specifically Jewish press. Journalism was a new profession in which the first crop of well-integrated Dutch Jews easily found jobs, ranging from the hands-on work of the correspondent to the editorship of newspapers. Hartog Hijman Tels, for example, became the first editor-in-chief of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in 1844, while its main competitor in that city, the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, was led by Louis Keyzer.

'Sagacious Dutch Jews could never really ignore the *NIW*.'

The *NIW* was one of the few Jewish periodicals to start publishing again immediately after the Second World War. Its character had changed, however. It now wanted to be a platform for the full breadth of the Dutch Jewish community. It also became explicitly Zionist and its strong bond with Israel was plain. It is now the oldest news magazine in the Netherlands and is still seen by Dutch society as the mouthpiece of the Jewish community.

1874



Portrait photograph of Chief Rabbi Joseph Hirsch Dünner, c.1900.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F0001359.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-70

Joseph Hirsch Dünner becomes chief rabbi

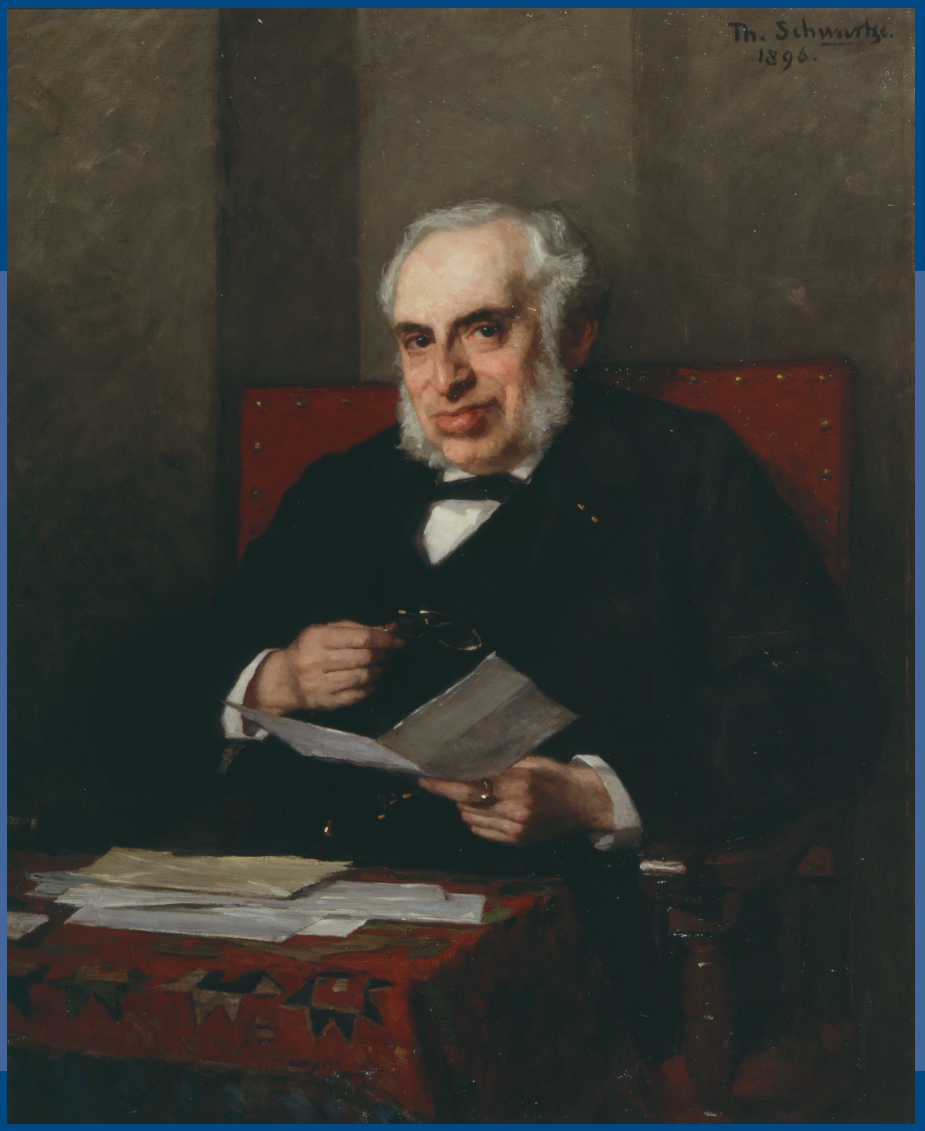
Joseph Hirsch Dünner (1833–1911) placed his stamp on Jewish Amsterdam more firmly than anyone else: it must be Orthodox, intellectual, cultured and Dutch. As head of the Dutch Israelite Seminary, he instructed the new generation of Jewish spiritual leaders in the Netherlands from 1865 onwards. In 1874 he was appointed chief rabbi to the province of North Holland, with his headquarters in Amsterdam.

Dünner wanted at any cost to prevent a split between Reform and Orthodox Jews in the Netherlands, such as had happened in Germany. He succeeded. Everyone, from pious to free, remained in the united congregation, bound together by the conviction that Dutch Jews would always pursue a moderate middle way. Dünner, originally from Cracow, had made this clear in his inaugural speech on his appointment as chief rabbi. He regarded it as the task of a modern rabbi not to stay in his study but to lead the community, to show it a new route forward, to promote unity and prevent division so as to 'progress along a peaceful course'. To that end, 'knowledge of Judaism and of civilization more generally' were equally necessary. Against that background, he reorganized the seminary where rabbis were trained. He ensured that the students learned how to preach effectively and developed a broad knowledge of the Western intellectual tradition, in other words, Greek philosophy and Roman law and politics. The Talmud was no longer taught in the traditional Jewish way but instead by the modern historical-critical method. Although he was opposed to a similarly modern treatment of the Bible, his academic ambitions meant that Orthodox colleagues abroad frowned at Amsterdam's chief rabbi. Other chief rabbis in the Netherlands, the old guard, also expressed criticism of Dünner.

'Dünner cared for Dutch Jews like a loving but strict father.'

His students, however, adored him. After a while practically all the posts of chief rabbi in the Netherlands were filled by those Dünner had taught. They described him as the 'Great Master', as a Jewish and academic genius, who cared for Dutch Jews like a loving but strict father. With his moderate middle course he preserved unity and managed to keep out Reform Judaism that was meeting with such success in Germany. Dünner's positive vision of Zionism was the one thing most of his students declined to adopt, finding it hard to reconcile with their pronounced Dutch nationalism and with traditional Jewish ideas about a return to the Land of Israel only after the coming of the messiah.

1880



Oil painting of Abraham Carel Wertheim by Thérèse Schwartze, 1896.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M001250.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-71

Abraham Carel Wertheim

Abraham Carel Wertheim (1832–1897), known to friend and foe alike as A.C., was the uncrowned king of Jewish Amsterdam. He built up the family firm Wertheim and Gomperts from 1858 onwards till it became a leading bank. With a tax assessment totalling a thousand guilders, he was one of the wealthiest residents of Amsterdam. He had a strong conviction that a banker must work in the service of society, so whenever he invested money he took into account employment opportunities and the flourishing of the Dutch economy. Moreover, after 1881 he refused to participate in the issuance of bonds to Russia, as a protest at the ferocious pogroms taking place in that country.

Like his Portuguese Jewish friend and ally Samuël Sarphati, Wertheim was a highly respected man. He was a member of countless clubs and associations, chair of a society that was developing plans to close off and drain the Zuider Zee, and actively involved in the theatrical world. Politically he worked on behalf of the liberals, had a seat for many years in the Provincial States of North Holland and eventually became a member of the Upper House of parliament. When he was challenged there to defend his Jewish identity, he replied, 'I do not sit in the States General as a Jew, nor for the Jews. My entire past proves that I neither recognize nor make any distinction between the various denominations.'

Wertheim is symbolic of the typical Dutch-Jewish collaboration between generally non-pious leaders and Orthodox rabbis. He was not pious himself, neither eating kosher nor obeying the Sabbath laws, but he nevertheless devoted himself heart and soul to the Jewish community. Prominent figures like Wertheim ensured that rabbis had full control within their synagogues but also made clear that their authority stopped at the door. What Jews did at home and in the public domain was their own responsibility. As Wertheim put it, 'In the church' – by which he meant the synagogue – 'we are Israelites; outside it we must be in the full, wholehearted, indivisible sense of the word fellow citizens.'

Out of that conviction, Wertheim was for years a member of the 'central council' of the Nederlands-Israëlietische Hoofdsynagoge Amsterdam, the synagogue of the city's Ashkenazi congregation. In fact from 1886 to his death he was its chair. He got along well with Orthodox leaders such as Akiba Lehren and Chief Rabbi Joseph Hirsch Dünner. There was mutual respect, and the typically Dutch collaboration between Orthodox rabbis and liberal-minded leaders was regarded as extraordinary and cherished as such. Until well into the twentieth century, tolerant non-pious leaders of Orthodox congregations were described as 'Wertheimian'. In Amsterdam Wertheim has never been forgotten; a monument to him can be found in the park named after him.

'"In the church, we are Israelites; outside it we must be in the full, wholehearted, indivisible sense of the word fellow citizens."'

1881



Photograph of the Yiddish performance 'Tog un Nacht' (Day and Night) by the An-Ski drama circle, directed by Jakob Weislitz, 1936.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F004121.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-72

Arrival of eastern European Jews

Fleeing pogroms in the Russian Empire, tens of thousands of Jews from eastern Europe arrived in the Netherlands from 1881 onwards. Most were on their way to other destinations, whether the United States, Britain or South America. The port cities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam received most of this migrant influx. Reports in the mainstream press as well as the Jewish press alarmed the Jewish community: eastern European co-religionists must be helped. Existing Jewish aid organizations, such as the Dutch branch of the French Jewish Alliance Israélite Universelle, organized collections of money and clothing. New aid committees were set up too, like the Montefiore Society in Rotterdam, which offered practical help to asylum seekers in transit. A small proportion of the eastern European arrivals decided to stay in the Netherlands. They tended to settle in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, often in the same districts. In Amsterdam the Blasiusstraat became known as a Russian Jewish 'island' in the city. The mostly pious migrants founded their own synagogues, with services that adhered to eastern European customs.

During the First World War, new Jewish migrants arrived from eastern Europe. Among other places, they settled in the seaside resort of Scheveningen and after the war some continued to live there. They had their own synagogue in which two different services were held. Sons were still sent to the famous yeshivas in eastern Europe for their training. The newly founded eastern European Jewish community spoke Yiddish and remained aloof from Dutch Jewish life for many years. One segment brought the secular, mainly socialist Yiddish culture along with it and united to form the cultural society Sch. An-Ski. Others then set up the Oost-Joods Verbond (Association of eastern Jews). Both organizations provided lessons in Yiddish for children, cultural education and social care.

'Jews from the east aroused mixed feelings among Dutch Jews.'

Jews from the east aroused mixed feelings among Dutch Jews, who felt a connection with them and empathized with their lot. The eastern Jews' generally serious religious commitment and knowledge were noted with respect. At the same time, integrated Dutch Jews felt a sense of great distance; the newcomers understood little about Western civilization. Yiddish, which had recently made way for Dutch after something of a struggle, now returned with the migrants. Although the number of eastern European Jews in the Netherlands remained limited, their integration into Dutch Jewish society did not go smoothly. As long as they lacked Dutch nationality, they could not become full members of Jewish congregations and were therefore buried in pauper graveyards such as those at Zeeburg and Diemen. It was not until after the Second World War that they began to take a full part in Dutch Jewish life and gradually abandoned their own organizations.

1890



Tweede Jaargang. — No. 91. VERSCHIJNT EENMAAL IN DE WEEK. Zondag 3 April 1892.

DE

Talmudjood.

Per drie maanden Gld. 0,75. Vooraf betaalbaar.

TOUJOURS EN FACE. – RECHT DOOR ZEE.

Voor een geheel jaar Gld. 2,80. Vooraf betaalbaar.

Redactie: MEERSEN (bij Maastricht.) | Verantwoordelijk Uitgever: J. RUSSEL. | Administratie: MEERSEN (bij Maastricht.)

Is de Ritueele moord historisch bewezen?

Deze vraag, lezer, wil ik trachten u te beantwoorden. Ik zal de bewijzen bijeenzetten die er *vóór* en die er *tegen* zijn, en dan kan ieder zelf oordelen. Ik verzoek al mijne lezers als zij den een of anderen vriend hebben, die waan den ritueelen moord toch maar niet gelooven kan", — dien vriend uit te noodigen nu dit stukje eens te lezen.

Door ritueelen moord wordt verstaan: »De »moord door de Joden, *op bepaalde wijze* gepleegd op Christenen, en die *ten doel heeft* »Christenbloed te bekomen, hetwelk die Joden »dan *in hun Paaschbrooden*, in de driehoekige »broodjes, die zij op den *Vereerdag* eten, en »bij hun *begrafenis-* en *huwelijksplechtigheden*, »gebruiken." — Dat is de moord der Joden, naar men beweert, volgens hun Talmudischen Ritus voorgeschreven, de moord, die dan overal waar de Talmudjoden leven, ook in Nederland, gevolgd zou worden.

Is het BEWEZEN, dat *die* ritueele moord door de Joden gepleegd wordt? Zullen wij nu trachten te bewijzen er *vóór*; — straks geven wij de bewijzen, die er *tegen* pleiten.

Er *vóór* dus zijn de volgende bewijzen:

1º De getuigenissen van *geschiedkundige werken*:

a. De »*Acta Sanctorum*", door de *Bollandisten* uitgegeven, verhalen er vele o. a. de 20 volgende, van de XIIe tot de XVIIe eeuw, namelijk: 1130 te Norwich, 1179 te Parijs, 1181 te Londen, 1230 te Weissemburg, 1235 te Lincoln, 1429 te Wurtemberg, 1401 te Diessenhofen, 1407 te Krakau, 1413 te Tongeren, 1420 te Limburg, 1462 te Rinn, 1475 te Trente, 1480 te Venetie, 1490 te Gardia, 1494 te Tyrnau 1503 te Wahlkurn, 1520 te Büring, 1590 te Szydlow, 1592 te Wilna, 1597 te Szalow, — de geschiedkundige waarde der »Bollandisten" nu is *zeer groot*.

b. De »*Monumenta Germaniae historiae*", — stukken voor de Duitsche geschiedenis, — door een 20-tal der *beroemdste* Duitsche geschiedvorschers, waaronder vele geleerde Priesters, geven eveneens van twintigtal ritueele moorden de geschiedenis aan: 1071 te Blois, 1160 te Gloester, 1236 te Fulda, 1260 te Weissemburg, 1261 te Pforzheim, 1283 te Mainz, 1286 te Oberwezel, 1294 te Bern, 1289 te Swaben, 1292 te Colmar, 1292 te Constance, 1293 te Crems, 1302 te Kemken, 1303 te Wizens, 1380 te Hagenbach, 1453 te Breslau, 1505 in Boheme, — en vele anderen, die ook door de »Bollandisten" en andere werken worden vermeld.

Dit *nauwkeurig* nu onder de geschiedenissen wordt volgenderwijze samengesteld: ieder der geleerde medewerkers nam *een streek* tot onderwerp zijner navorschingen. Na jaren lange studie over die streek, gaf hij de door hem echt bevonden stukken: annalen, decreten, gerechtstukken, enz. dier streek uit. De »Bollandisten" bestudeeren meer ieder een tijdperk; beide *groepen* echter dier geleerde geschiedvorschers, die hun leven aan die taak besteden, kwamen tot de ontdekking dier *menigvuldige* ritueele moorden *door geheel* Europa: Italie, Duitschland, Spanje, Oostenrijk, Frankrijk, Polen, Limburg, enz., gelijk de opgenoemde plaatsen aanwijzen.

c. Baronius in zijne »*annales*" noemt er *vele, minstens* 20; o. a. 1244 te Londen, 1476 te Beieren, 1303 te Thuringen, 1401 te Thur, 1480 te Tarvisio, 1510 te Tyrnau, enz. Baronius nu was tot de XVIIe eeuw, het grootste geschiedkundig gezag dat bestond. Later stonden de nog zekerder »Bollandisten" en de »Monumenta Germaniae historiae" op.

d. H. Murer »Helvetia Sancta", geeft het verhaal van den ritueelen moord in 1287 te Bern, 1315 te Praag gepleegd.

e. J. Dubravius »Historiae Bohemiae", geeft van 15 dier moorden het verloop.

f. D. de S. Martin »Galliae historia", geeft o. a. die van 1321 te Annecy, 1330 te Uberlingen, enz.

g. J. Vilderaan »Chronique" noemt er 4 of 5.

h. Bonfinius »*Fasti Hungarici*" verhaalt die van 1494 en 1485.

i. N. Upton »De Militia" zet die van 1452 te Savona, 1454 in Castillë uiteen.

j. Calmenares »Hist. de Ségovis" verhaalt die van 1468 te Sepulneda.

k. Rigord »Hist. de Louis Philippe" noemt 1181 als datum en verhaalt de gebeurtenis.

l. Meichelbech »Historiae Prisingae" verhaalt die van 1225 te Munchen, en meer deze andere.

m. de *Grande Chronique* noemt 1235 te Westminster, 1239 te Londen, 1240 te Norwich, 1244 te Londen, 1279 te Northampton, 1279 te Londen, en geeft alle omstandigheden aan.

n. Cluverius »Epitoma historiae", deelt die van 1257 te Londen mede.

o. Joana Lexi, »de Pseudo Messii" dito, 1250 te Saragossa.

p. Rodorus »Bavaria Sancta" dito 1882 te Munchen, 1285 te Munchen, 1338 te Munchen, 1486 te Regensburg, 1540 te Beieren.

q. Simon Hathi »Historia B. Alberti" dito in Polen. 1454 1457, 1458, 1569, 1574, 1590, 1495, 1597 enz. enz.

r. Bonelli Monumenta Ecclesiae Tridentini.

s. Pirro Pinzio Croniche de Trente.

t. De Ponte Super inquisitione contra Judaeos in processu Beati Semeonis.

u. Florent. de Worcester Chronica; *Gaguinus* Generaal der orde SSs. Trinitatis. Chronica.

v. »*Thomas de Catimpré* De ratione vitae.

w. Martin Crusius Annalen van Swaben; *Abt van Clony*: Chronijk.

x. Bekeerde Rabbijnen zie 2º c.

y. Nieuwere Schrijvers (12 opgenoemd) zie 4º en 5º d.

Dus 4 *groepen* van wereldberoemde geschiedkundigen, — en 24 andere historische werken kunnen wij genaakkelijk en met zekerheid opnoemen, die den bloedmoord *met bestlstheid* getuigen als geschiedkundig zeker, die het verhaal dier moorden met vele bijzonderheden geven, die in ALLE landen van Europa en door ALLE eeuwen de bewijzen dier moorden vonden.

2º De getuigenissen *der Joden zelf*:

a. in den loop der processen werden *minstens* 75 *maal* de beschuldigden nu eens 3 dan weer 4, 10, 20 ja soms 50, 80, 150 door den [illegible] dood gebracht; de rechters bevonden hun moord *bewezen*. Aldus getuigden de Joden de waarheid. Sinds de Joden de wereldmacht in handen hebben weten zij echter immer den dans te ontspringen.

b. in den loop der processen over die moorden hebben, naar mijne bevinding, 30 *maal de Joden* den ritueelen moord *bekend*, — óf wel de beschuldigden zelf, óf wel voor het gerecht geroepen bekeerde Joden, die de zaak dan ophelderden. O. a. bekenden de moordenaars van Pater Thomas in 1840, bekenden de moordenaars van Trente 1475, van Alexandrië in 1803, van Corfu in 1812 (zie no 4.)

c. Vele bekeerde Rabbijnen hebben den ritueelen moord bekend:

o. a. de bekeerde Rabbijn: Neophitu in zijns werk, uitgekomen in 1803. (deze werd R. K. Priester en kloosterling.)

de bek. Rabbijn Paolo Medici in zijn werk uitgekomen in 1738.

de bek. Rabbijn Josué voor Paus Joannes XXIII in tegenwoordigheid van 2 Rabbijnen.

de bek. Rabbijn Pfefferkom in zijne werken

de bek. Rabbijn Joannes de Feltra in al zijne werken

de bek. Rabbijn Chiarini in zijn werk uitgekomen in 1834 (deze werd R. K. Priester)

de bek. Rabbijn Al Afichi in den loop van het proces van 1840

Ook is nog onlangs door de Jodin Ben Nord die Katholiek was geworden, bekend aan de Overste der Fransche Religieuzen van Jerusalem en aan den reuzigen Durfort–Civrac, dat zij bij 3 Ritueele moorden was tegenwoordig geweest: 1828 te Alexandrië, 1840 te Aleppo, 1854 te Aleppo; te Latakirch, waar zij toen woonde, ontvingen de Joden het Paaschbrood uit Aleppo, kant en klaar. Waarom was dit?..... Kon men in Latakirch geen *ongedeesemd* brood maken?...

Alle deze Joden — die, Katholiek geworden, toch wisten dat zij niet ongestraft mochten liegen en lasteren, verklaarden herhaaldelijk en plechtig, dat de ritueele moord OVERAL bestaat, waar Joden zijn, — dat *de Rabbijnen* het bloed eischen volgens den Ritus, dat zij het in hun Paaschbrood mengen, enz. Wij hebben bij voorkeur ook 4 bekeerde Rabbijnen en Joden *uit onze dagen* genoemd, opdat men niet zou denken, dat de ritueele moord slechts een »middeleeuwsch" gevalhi

3º De *verschijnselen bij de ritueel vermoorden*.

In alle landen van Europa en Azie, waar de ritueele moorden ontdekt worden, vindt en vond men weleer *dezelfde* wonden, *dezelfde* verminkingen op de lijken, – *afgehele bloedafzuiging*, de »*kunstkerven*de" aan den hals, wonden *aan de polsen* en *aan het been*. Hoe kunnen alle historici toch *afspreken* dit door alle eeuwen, in alle landen te verzinnen, dat de Joden *altijd* de kinderen vermoorden? Hoe kunnen de Priesters

Front page of the antisemitic periodical *De Talmudjood*.

Collection of the Catholic Documentation Centre, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen: KDC Ta210.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-73

The Talmud Jew

In the late nineteenth century, the concept of 'antisemitism' emerged. With the integration of Jews advancing rapidly, their opponents began to stir themselves: Jews were being given prominent positions, while they were a bad influence on society and loyal only to each other. Antisemites regarded every Jew as suspect. Jews were said to constitute an eastern race of their own, which could not possibly live together in harmony with Europeans. This new, racist hatred of Jews was different from the earlier anti-Judaism, which had attacked Jews and Jewishness on religious grounds.

Anti-Jewish ideas and stereotypes were abundant in Dutch society, and social antisemitism was converted into a political programme all over Europe in the late nineteenth century. Political parties and individual politicians set out to reduce the influence of the Jews. In the Netherlands they failed to take root.

The new antisemitic ideas did not pass the Netherlands by, however. In 1889 in Leiden a notorious defamatory pamphlet by a German called August Rohling was published entitled *Wat is toch de Talmud*? *En wat is een Talmud-Jood*? (What is the Talmud? And what is a Talmud Jew?) The booklet was illustrative of a mixture of religious and racist antisemitism, claiming that the Talmud taught Jews to despise and deceive others. Jews were therefore not to be trusted. Jewish circles warned as soon as it was published that it represented an attempt to sell 'curse-inflicting German antisemitism'.

A year later a weekly magazine was set up under a similar title in Meerssen in the southern province of Limburg, *De Talmudjood*. It aimed to combat 'the growing influence of Israel in Limburg' and it deployed all the antisemitic clichés: Jews were usurers, ritual murderers, vampires, spreaders of infectious diseases and fraudsters. Jews from the southern provinces were attacked by name, or by the use of descriptions that everyone found transparent. Joseph Russel, the publisher, wanted to break through politically and he proposed making an antisemitic float for carnival. That, however, was prevented by the authorities. The magazine, which had around a thousand mainly Catholic subscribers, was inundated with complaints. The courts soon convicted Russel of libel, but he took refuge in Belgium and continued his activities from there. The periodical met with much resistance; it was made clear everywhere that this kind of blatant, vulgar antisemitism was out of keeping with Dutch tradition. Meanwhile, ideas of the same kind, although expressed in less extreme terms and lacking a political vanguard, could be heard in all sorts of contexts right across society.

'Anti-Jewish ideas and stereotypes were abundant in Dutch society.'

1894



Group photograph of the leaders of the ANDB in 1911, with its president Henri Polak at the centre.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F000746.

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Founding of the General Diamond Workers' Union of the Netherlands

Extreme poverty ensured that socialism was embraced by many Jews. The promise of improved working conditions and intellectual betterment naturally appealed to them. After a successful strike they set up one of the first trade unions in the Netherlands, the Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkersbond (ANDB, the General Diamond Workers' Union of the Netherlands). Under the leadership of its socialist 'rabbi' Henri Polak (1868–1943), it grew to become a formidable workers' movement and employers increasingly needed to take account of it. Among its successes was the introduction of an eight-hour working day. Although non-Jews were active in the diamond business, a large majority of diamond cutters and polishers were Jewish. This made the ANDB Jewish in character.

Jews played a leading role within the broader socialist movement as well. In the major cities especially, a fair proportion of Jewish workers were won over to socialism. This happened relatively late, at the end of the nineteenth century. One important obstacle was socialist rejection of the monarchy. Jewish workers had real difficulty setting aside their traditional affection for the House of Orange; a Jewish gang that made it impossible for socialists to hawk their newspapers in the Jewish quarter in Amsterdam was not called 'Voor Oranje' (For the House of Orange) for nothing. In the countryside and in the smaller towns, most Jews belonged to the middle classes and were mainly active in liberal parties. This caused political division within Dutch Jewry, and the leadership had the difficult task of keeping everyone together.

'The ANDB grew to become a formidable workers' movement and employers increasingly needed to take account of it.'

Although criticism of all religions was widespread within socialism and Judaism was by no means spared, a remarkable number of socialist Jews were nevertheless members of Jewish congregations. Those who kept the Sabbath and went to the synagogue may have been fewer than in the past, but the vast majority continued to have their sons circumcised, and opted for Jewish weddings and funerals. No matter how sharp and vehement criticism of the liberal Jewish leaders and Orthodox rabbis became, there was no definitive rift.

Within the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) and the Communist Party, Jews were active at all levels, from local party leadership and local councils all the way up to the national parliament's Lower House. Gradually such activism led to improvements in working conditions, and new opportunities opened up to the Jewish proletariat. This further increased involvement with the cause of social democracy, which made the leaders of the SDAP rather uncomfortable, since they feared it might be branded a 'Jewish party'. They therefore ensured that not too much attention was paid to Jewish issues in the socialist newspaper *Het Volk*. Solidarity between workers must remain the primary goal.

1899



Commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Dutch Zionist League, in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, 1939.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F000466_E.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-75

Founding of the Dutch Zionist League

For many years in the nineteenth century, the course seemed clear. All over Europe, Jews were engaged in a process of integration and with the passage of time it would be completed successfully everywhere. Countries like the Netherlands were a shining example to Jews in eastern Europe, where emancipation was encountering opposition.

Two factors shattered this optimistic vision of the future. Firstly, the new form of antisemitism meant that Jews faced exclusion, discrimination and, in eastern Europe, pogroms. Even in countries where integration was far advanced, attention was once again being drawn to their background. Secondly, the rise of all kinds of new national movements – among the Czechs and Poles for instance – prompted the founding of a similar nationalist movement among Jews.

Zionism was an attempt at an answer to the rise of antisemitism and nationalism across Europe. As a Jewish nationalist movement, it aspired to establish a country where Jews could live, work and govern themselves. There was a preference for the Land of Israel, although some were willing to consider other parts of the world. The integration of Jews as individuals having proven so difficult, it would surely be better if the Jews integrated as a separate people instead. Then antisemitism would disappear.

The Zionist movement started in Basel in 1896 and in 1899 the Nederlandse Zionistenbond (NZB, the Dutch Zionist League) was founded. Its founders saw the movement mainly as a way of helping Jews in eastern Europe, who, with pogroms continuing in Russia, were in urgent need of a solution. Few people had Dutch Jews in mind as well, and even fewer considered emigrating to Palestine themselves. The NZB remained a small movement until the Second World War and never counted more than 1 per cent of Dutch Jews among its members. Most chief rabbis rejected Zionism as an impermissible anticipation of the Messianic Age. Furthermore, many Jews regarded it as damaging to their integration in the Netherlands and as in conflict with their pronounced love of their country.

But the NZB was exceptionally visible, because of its effective organization, appealing leaders and strong international network, and when the situation in eastern Europe and later in Germany became increasingly threatening, Dutch support for Zionism grew. It expressed itself through a growth in the membership, but above all through involvement with other Zionist initiatives. The Joods Nationaal Fonds (Jewish National Fund), which collected money for the purchase of land, was extremely popular with many Jews. In 1992 the NZB remodelled itself as the Federation of Dutch Zionists, and since then its role has been modest.

'Furthermore, many Jews regarded Zionism as damaging to their integration in the Netherlands and as in conflict with their pronounced love of their country.'

1900

Twentieth century: a century of extremes



In the second half of the twentieth century, Judaism became publicly visible in society, for example at collec tive celebrations of Hanuk kah, held at central locations. These often involved prom inent representatives of the government. Here Eberhard van der Laan, mayor of Am sterdam from 2010 to 2017, lights the Hanukkah lamp on Dam Square.

Photograph by Patrick Sternfeld.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-76

It was the century in which extremes came together, in which Dutch Jews filled unprecedentedly prominent positions, in which Dutch music, dance, literature, journalism, politics and academia would be impossible to imagine without Jews. At the same time, it was a century with an unimaginable nadir. During five years of war, the Jews were stripped of all their rights, driven out of everyday life and ultimately murdered in huge numbers.

The history of the Jews in the Netherlands did not come to an end after 1945 and a new chapter is still being written. Zionism, which had found little popularity before the war, became widespread and the State of Israel now impacts upon almost all Jews emotionally. In the shadow of the Shoah, hope and life have risen again.

'More and more Jews chose to experience their identity outside the existing institutions.'

Dutch Jewry became increasingly diverse. Alongside the Orthodox congregations, new religious groupings came into being, while more and more Jews chose to experience their identity outside the existing institutions. Among family and friends, through culture and individual spirituality, Jewish traditions were passed on and redesigned.

Whereas before the war Jews had been the most noticeable minority community in the Netherlands, they were now one of many in a multicultural country. The strong focus from the 1960s onwards on remembering the persecution of the war years meant that for several decades, society paid a great deal of attention to Jews, Judaism and Israel.

1905



The JNF collecting tin could be found in countless Jewish living rooms. Over time there were various designs, but the colour was always blue. This is an art deco tin from 1926.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M006448.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-77

Blue collecting tin of the Jewish National Fund

On the mantlepiece, on the table or in the cupboard, from 1905 onwards the blue collecting tin of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) appeared in more and more Jewish living rooms. People were expected to contribute around the time of festive events in the private sphere, or on Jewish holidays. Others filled the tin with coins week by week. The local JNF official would come round regularly to empty it. The money was used to buy land in Palestine so that Jewish settlements could be established there, the aim being to create 'a strong Jewish farming community' in what must become their own Jewish country, as the JNF put it in 1910.

The JNF was set up in 1901 by the worldwide Zionist movement and in 1902 a separate Dutch branch was created, which naturally came under the control of the executive of the Dutch Zionist League. But while the latter remained a highly political organization with a limited following, the JNF became exceptionally popular. Not only Zionists but many others joined in the JNF's activities. Soon several regular campaigns were part of the Dutch Jewish calendar: the almond campaign at Tu BiShvat (New Year of the Trees), the flowers campaign at Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks) and the honey campaign at Rosh HaShanah (Jewish New Year). The JNF collecting tins became a formidable competitor to those of Pekidim and Amarkalim. The purchase of land, the planting of trees and the building of settlements appealed to the imagination more powerfully than support for venerable scholars in the old Jewish district of Jerusalem. In 1907 a tree certificate was added to the collecting tin. People could make a present to Palestine of one or more trees. With the growth of the JNF, the number of forests in which trees could be planted also grew. Some were explicitly intended to be supported by the Dutch, such as a Queen Juliana Forest and the Haarlem Park, both established after the Second World War. After the assigning of the League of Nations Mandate to Britain in 1920, when under British supervision a start could be made on the building of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, interest in the JNF grew further. It was one of the first Jewish organizations to resume its activities after the Second World War. Inevitably it was not long before letters were sent to the international headquarters urgently requesting a fresh supply of blue collecting tins for the Netherlands, and so the JNF remained a presence in the Dutch Jewish living room.

'Not only Zionists but many others joined in the JNF's activities.'

1908



Card from around 1930 advertising the business of A. and Iz. Marcus, where kosher meat was sold under rabbinical supervision.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: D002537.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-78

Marcus's butcher business in Zwolle

On 15 May 1908, eight-year-old Leo Marcus laid the first stone for a new butcher's shop and slaughterhouse on the Oude Vismarkt in the centre of Zwolle. What then arose was a building in seventeenth-century Dutch style, featuring a stepped gable, cross-windows with small panes, shutters and a big awning. A stone in the facade made clear what went on inside: '*Yn it Fryscke slachthuws*' (In the Frisian slaughterhouse). Anyone knowing no better would think this was one of the original old city-centre buildings, but nothing could be further from the truth. The prestige project was the work of the brothers Abraham and Izaac Marcus. They had taken over the kosher butcher's from their mother and it had been in the family since 1785. Together they developed it into a modern, successful business. The old-style building gave it a serious aura, while the inscription in stone, written in Frisian, recalled their birthplace of Dokkum in the province of Friesland.

Marcus's was far from the only kosher outlet in Zwolle, in fact retailers of kosher food jostled for custom. There were kosher butcher's shops in even the smallest places, often handed down from father to son. Many Christians shopped in them too. Around the turn of the twentieth century there was a widespread belief that kosher meat was safer and more hygienic than other meat, and Jewish butchers profited as a result. Competition between them was fierce. The brothers carefully divided up their tasks. Abraham bought cows at the livestock market, ensured that the *shochet* slaughtered them, and then turned them into sausages and other meat products. Izaac focused on the business customer. He set up an outlet in The Hague and organized deliveries to hotels and restaurants. The designation 'purveyor to the royal household' did wonders, and through a network of agents all over the country Marcus's sausages sold widely.

'Many Christians shopped in kosher butcher's shops too.'

Leo joined the business early on and established kosher restaurants in The Hague and Rotterdam. The Second World War put an end to it all. Leo Marcus managed to survive in hiding, but the restaurant in Rotterdam was bombed, the butcher's shop in Zwolle was looted and the snack bar in The Hague was taken over by a non-Jewish 'custodian'.

Marcus's was one of the few kosher meat businesses to start up again after the war. The government now allowed kosher butcher's shops only in the major cities. Moreover, they were permitted to slaughter animals for the Jewish market exclusively, so kosher butchers outside Amsterdam could survive only by running an 'ordinary' section next to the 'kosher' one. In 1957 Slagerij Marcus moved to Amsterdam, the only place where there was still a modest clientele for kosher products. Today it is the last butcher's shop in the country whose products are certified by the Amsterdam rabbinate, and the go-to place for salted beef, raw beef sausage and all those other traditional Dutch Jewish kosher meat products.

1911



A calendar that famous publisher and bookseller Joachimsthal published in aid of De Joodse Invalide. It shows an elderly man and woman sitting under a tree with a Star of David in it, and at the centre the number 25, a reference to De Joodse Invalide's silver jubilee. Stars of David shine out from the corners, c.1935.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M005448.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-79

De Joodse Invalide

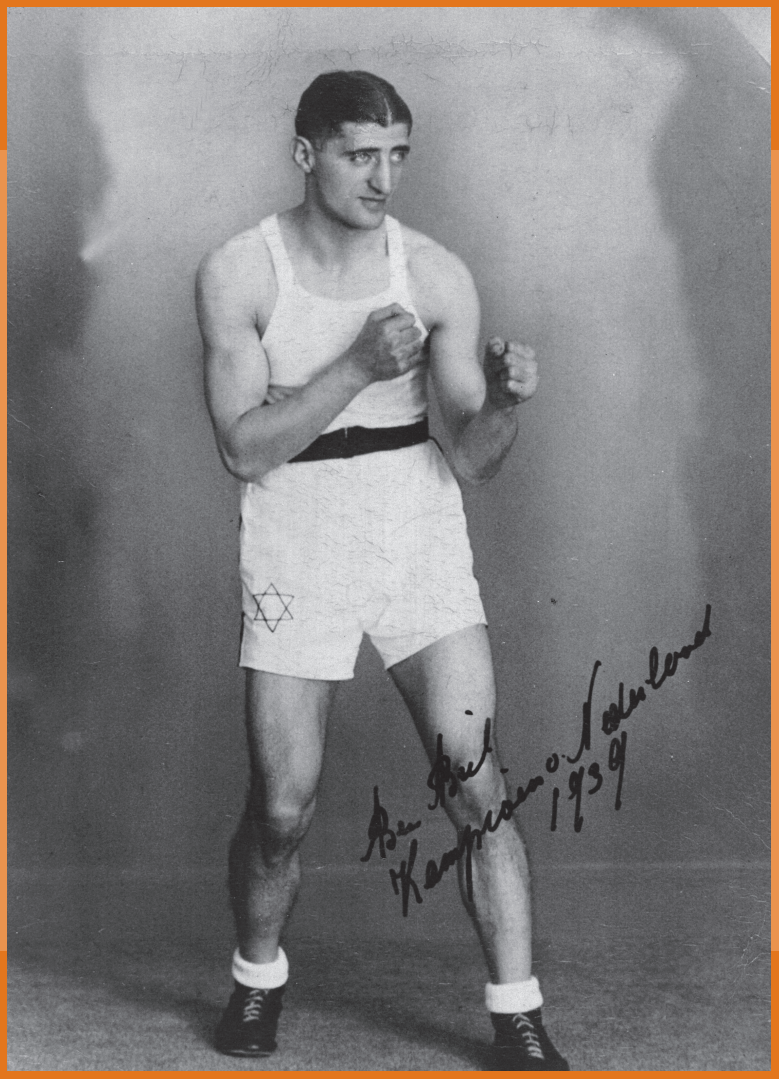
Dutch Jewry had always upheld a strong tradition of care. Jewish congregations had committees for aid to the poor, which often supported large numbers of people. Help ranged from matzos at Pesach and coal in winter to long-term support for poor families. The bigger Jewish congregations had their own orphanages, homes for elderly men and elderly women, and hospitals, where a committee set up for the purpose would pay for the poor to be cared for and nursed. Amsterdam had a Dutch Israelite Hospital and a Portuguese Israelite Hospital, both of which were intended to treat the poor.

In the twentieth century an impressive social infrastructure grew out of that traditional base of care facilities. New, modern institutions were established, while older organizations were modernized, a process often made possible by gifts from ordinary Jews and support from local authorities in towns and villages. The Dutch government was taking more and more account of the different population groups in its subsidy policy, and as a result the Jewish community discovered new opportunities. This government policy later became known as *verzuiling* (literally, 'pillarization'), treating different communities as separate 'pillars', and it presented the Jews with some far-reaching choices. In the nineteenth century a conscious decision was made to seek as much connection as possible with society as a whole; hence the choice for state schools. Moreover, many Jewish small businesspeople and affluent individuals became active in liberal politics, while Jewish workers were drawn to socialism. So the time when Jews as a whole were able to form a separate group in society had come to an end. Nevertheless, the government was taken up on its new policy, especially in the social sphere. Partly because of the subsidies now available, countless new Jewish organizations could finance their activities. The Apeldoornsche Bosch, in Apeldoorn, took on mental healthcare, for example, while the Paedagogium Agisomog cared for children with learning difficulties.

An absolute showpiece was De Joodse Invalide, founded in 1911. A socially engaged rabbi called Meijer de Hond developed many social and religious initiatives with the aim of reaching the poor Jewish population. This did not make him particularly popular with other rabbis, who thought De Hond was far too closely engaged with the common people, but he was held in high esteem by many Amsterdam Jews. De Joodse Invalide was one of his inventions. It grew to become the most modern care home in the whole country. The fundraising campaigns led by its director Isaac Gans were legendary both for their creativity and for the sums they brought in. After the Second World War, Dutch Jewry continued to have a strong social infrastructure, with the Centraal Israëlietische Ziekenverpleging (founded in 1916) as its own hospital, along with welfare organizations for children and young adults, various homes for the elderly, and institutions for Jewish mental healthcare and for disabled people.

'The most modern care home in the whole country.'

1928



Portrait photograph of Ben Bril as Dutch champion in 1939.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F300252.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-80

Ben Bril at the Olympic Games

'If you were my son, I'd send you to bed with a bowl of porridge,' said the doctor who examined Ben Bril (1912–2003) shortly before his first boxing match. The thin legs sticking out from his shorts did not look promising. After the match, however, the doctor could only admit he had been mistaken. The aspiring boxer had won his very first fight.

It was the beginning of a triumphal march by a young man from Amsterdam's old Jewish quarter. Having started out as a streetfighter, Bril developed into the most famous boxer in the Netherlands. At fifteen he won his first national title and a year later he made his Olympic debut. He was Dutch champion eight times over, and in 1936 he became world welterweight champion. He never did win an Olympic medal. In 1932 the Dutch Boxing Association declined to send him to Los Angeles – one member of the board was an antisemite – and in 1936 he refused to go to the Games in Berlin as a protest against the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany. But he did win a gold medal at the 1935 Maccabiah Games, a Jewish Olympics in which Jewish sportspeople from all over the world competed.

In Jewish circles there were traditional reservations about sport. The rabbis regarded it as *bitul Torah*, a waste of time that ought to be devoted to studying the Torah. Nevertheless, from the early twentieth century onwards sport became extremely popular among Jews. It was strongly encouraged by Zionists in particular, since it fitted with their vision of creating a new, sports-loving Jewish generation – not pale students with their noses in books but strong young people who would be able to build their own country. In the Netherlands as elsewhere, many Jewish sports clubs had a Zionist background. Once a year a Jewish Sports Day was held, with competitions between clubs. The Jewish sports association Maccabi was created as an umbrella organization for Jewish sports clubs and it was in charge of the Dutch delegation to the international Maccabiah Games. Ben Bril's career showed that Jewish sportspeople were often active on two different levels. They took a full part in open competitions and the usual clubs, but engaged with Jewish sporting life as well. It was a pattern that continued after the Second World War. Maccabi still functions as an umbrella organization, while Jewish sportspeople have proven equally successful wearing the Dutch shirt.

'Nevertheless, from the early twentieth century onwards sport became extremely popular among Jews.'

1929



The Reform Congregation of The Hague had never been large and initially it was not revived after the Second World War. After recommencing its activities, however, in 1976 the congregation grew and managed to acquire ownership of the city's historic Portuguese synagogue, built in 1726.

Photograph by Willy Lindwer, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F301322.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-81

Start of the Reform Congregation of The Hague

For a long time Dutch Jewish leaders and rabbis had managed to keep Reform Judaism out. They regarded the nineteenth-century movement, which had met with particular success in Germany, as a threat to Jewish unity in the Netherlands. It was a type of Judaism in which modern life and Jewish law were aligned as far as possible.

In the twentieth century cracks appeared in that much trumpeted unity. Eastern European Jews had arrived with their own version of Orthodoxy, and in 1929 the first Reform Congregation was set up – in The Hague. Not long afterwards, in 1931, a second congregation followed, this time in Amsterdam. German Jewish migrants especially had not felt at home in Dutch Orthodox synagogues, and they took the initiative. They were supported by a handful of Dutch Jewish pioneers who were seeking inspiration for a modernization of Judaism. The search made it an exciting adventure, fuelled by the enthusiasm of a first generation, but there were countless internal conflicts too. Because what exactly needed to be changed? Should the Reform Movement in the Netherlands take its lead from the radical British tendency or from the more moderate German variant? In The Hague and Amsterdam two different choices were made.

'Dutch Jewish pioneers were seeking inspiration for a modernization of Judaism.'

Resistance by Orthodox rabbis, and often by more liberal administrative leaders too, was fierce. By means of brochures, speeches and newspaper articles, they warned against the new Reform Movement. As more and more German Jews arrived, however, it became clear that Reform Judaism held little appeal for Dutch Jews. Its atmosphere bore the stamp of the German Jews and its rabbis were invariably German speakers. Until after the Second World War, the Reform Congregations remained relatively small and were worlds of their own, in the shadow of the two historical 'denominations', the Dutch Israelite Denomination and the Portuguese Israelite Denomination.

1933



This poster by Samuel Schwarz was printed on the occasion of an Art Evening in aid of the Main Fund for the Benefit of Jewish Refugees, held in the Stadsschouwburg in Amster dam on 29 May 1933. It shows, among other things, a burning house, the Star of David, a mask, a violin and a stave with the treble clef.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M001626.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-82

Arrival of German Jews

The rise of the Nazis in Germany set a stream of refugees in motion, many of whom came to the Netherlands. German Jews were steadily being excluded from society, losing their jobs and professions and finding themselves cast out of associations and institutions. Immediately after Hitler took power in 1933, it was clear to many German Jews that they needed to seek a safe refuge.

The Netherlands was the obvious place to go; it was close by and neutral. The Dutch government had a strict policy, however. Only those with valid papers and sufficient funds were allowed into the country. A few could stay, but the Netherlands saw itself mainly as a country of transit. The migrants were left to their own devices when it came to finding a permanent destination, which usually meant the United States, Palestine or a South American country. Because the Netherlands did not regard German Jews as asylum seekers but as ordinary migrants, the government left it to private aid organizations to receive them. Dutch Jews took action, alerted by terrifying newspaper reports and the stories they were hearing. As early as 1933, a Committee for Special Jewish Interests came into being, with a subsection called the Committee for Jewish Refugees. It offered financial and practical help to the newcomers.

Among the migrants were many intellectuals, including writers, painters and filmmakers. The Nazis had labelled their art *entartet*, degenerate, and claimed it was sowing confusion that undermined National Socialist ideas. Several Amsterdam publishers specialized in literature by German exiles. Querido and Allert de Lange published books by famous German and German Jewish authors whose works had been banned in Germany.

Between 1933 and 1937 alone, 35,000 German Jews crossed the border into the Netherlands. Many travelled onwards, but by the time the Germans invaded in 1940, around 15,000 German Jews were living in the Netherlands. Some were in one of the eight reception camps, while others had received permission to settle elsewhere. A relatively large number were living in Amsterdam-Zuid, so many in fact that they became known as 'Beethovenstraat Jews', after one of the district's busiest streets.

Both German and Dutch Jews had strong identities of their own, which made integration and cooperation hard to get off the ground. The distressing situation beyond the border aroused profound feelings of solidarity in Dutch Jews, but the difference in language and culture produced a good deal of incomprehension on both sides. Like the eastern European Jews, German Jews therefore remained visible as a distinct group, alongside the Dutch Jewish majority.

'A relatively large number were living in Amsterdam-Zuid, so many in fact that they became known as "Beethovenstraat Jews".'

1939



Watercolour by Leo Kok, painted in Westerbork in 1944, showing freight wagons standing ready with their doors open. People get in, carrying their possessions. On the left several men look on, including, recognizably, camp commandant Albert Gemmeker. In the background is the boiler house with a heavily smoking chimney.

Collection of Leo Kok, on loan from Mr and Mrs Nijstad-de Wijze, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: MB01468.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-83

Westerbork

Westerbork was a village nobody had heard of, in the northern province of Drenthe. At an isolated spot, far from any built-up area, a Central Refugee Camp was built for the many German Jews who were fleeing to the Netherlands. A government minister had decided that in this reception camp, refugees could receive help in their search for a place to live permanently elsewhere in the world. The isolated location would prevent the refugees from integrating into Dutch society – because if they did, it would only make their departure more difficult. An earlier plan to build the camp on the Veluwe had been rejected by Queen Wilhelmina, who felt it would be too close to her crown estate of Het Loo.

The cost, estimated to be at least a million guilders, was covered by the government, but the authorities assumed that the Dutch Jewish community would eventually pay the money back. The reception of refugees was a charitable activity and the government, with watertight logic, did not regard that as its task. Westerbork opened in the autumn of 1939. Dutch Jews were intensively involved in the running of the camp. A synagogue was furnished for the new residents, religious instruction was organized, and clothes and books were collected. They accepted that money would have to be raised to recompense the government for the acquisition of the land and construction of the camp.

When German troops invaded the Netherlands on 10 May 1940, some 1,100 German Jews were living in Westerbork. They could no longer go anywhere; all their migration plans had been shattered. In 1942 the occupier gave Westerbork a new function, as the central transit camp for the Netherlands. For many, Westerbork was a gateway to death. Step by step, Dutch Jews were removed from society. They were forced to make themselves visible by wearing a yellow Star of David, lost their jobs and their companies, and were ordered to move to places where Jews were as yet still tolerated. Then the deportations began. Anyone who had not managed to go into hiding in time was picked up by the Dutch police or by German soldiers and in many cases taken by train to Westerbork.

'For many, Westerbork was a gateway to death.'

Powerful diaries have survived about time spent in the camp at Westerbork, and they give an impression of what life in the barracks there was like. Countless people, most of whom did not know each other, were crammed into a barrack together. Once a week a train would depart 'for the east'. In total, 93 transport trains left, taking Dutch Jews to the extermination camps. Most of the trains went to Auschwitz or Sobibor. Altogether, 107,000 Jews were deported from Westerbork. Only 5,200 of them survived.

After the country was liberated, Westerbork was given a new function as a place to accommodate members of the Dutch National Socialist Movement, the NSB. At first they were guarded by recently liberated Jewish survivors. Not long afterwards it became a place to house Moluccans who had fled the Dutch East Indies, today's Indonesia. Not until 1970 was a monument erected and in 1983 a remembrance centre was built.

1941



Nameplate on a Jewish Council building at Amstel 93, Amsterdam. Photograph by Johan de Haas, c.1942.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam/heirs Johan de Haas: F000137 (Beeldbank WO2-NIOD-Collection Joh. de Haas).

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-84

The Jewish Council

In all their occupied territories, the Nazis quickly set up *Judenräte*, Jewish Councils, in which prominent Jewish leaders and rabbis were asked to take seats. These new bodies were the only representatives of the Jewish community allowed to communicate with the government and the occupying forces. As time went on, the Jewish Councils were given all kinds of tasks and issued with orders. They were made responsible for affairs that included religion, healthcare, social care and education.

In the Netherlands a Jewish Council for Amsterdam was established on 13 February 1941. It was led by two chairmen who each had a formidable track record in the Jewish community: the experienced administrator Abraham Asscher and the Zionist leader David Cohen. The office was at Nieuwe Keizersgracht 58. Both men accepted the job because they thought it would enable them to slow down the implementation of Nazi decisions and negotiate to prevent the imposition of even worse policies. By the spring of 1942, the Jewish Council was being forced to collaborate in the deportation of Jews from Amsterdam.

The Jewish Council gradually gained almost complete control over the Jewish community in the Netherlands, creating a huge bureaucracy in the process. Orphans needed to be cared for, Jewish schools to be run, and there was a weekly magazine to publish, *Het Joodsche Weekblad* – it all required a great many people. Employees of the Jewish Council were given a *Sperr*, a temporary exemption from deportation. In late 1941 several Jewish Councils were set up elsewhere in the country, although in practice they fell under the authority of the leaders in Amsterdam. They were given similar tasks, and over the course of 1942 they were increasingly deployed to organize deportations, which needed thorough preparation. The Nazis made the Jewish Councils into accessories in all their occupied territories. Some members did everything they could to use their inside knowledge to save people. Walter Süskind, head of the Amsterdam Jewish Council's luggage and public order services, saved at least 600 children from deportation and had them taken into hiding. The Jewish Council in Enschede worked in close cooperation with a local resistance group formed by Pastor Leendert Overduin and managed to save a relatively large number of Jews by finding them hiding places.

As the Jewish population of the Netherlands steadily shrank, the Jewish Councils became surplus to requirements. Staff members were no longer exempt from deportation and they and their leaders were deported in late 1943. At the end of September 1943, the Jewish Councils ceased to function. They had always been extremely controversial. During the war there was fierce criticism of those who in effect had agreed to implement Nazi policy, and after the country was liberated, the Jewish community set up a Jewish Council of Honour that was asked to arrive at a verdict. Both chairmen of the Jewish Council were convicted and banned from performing any function in the Jewish community for the rest of their lives. After lengthy argument the verdict was suspended, but the two men were never rehabilitated.

'By the spring of 1942, the Jewish Council was being forced to collaborate in the deportation of Jews from Amsterdam.'

1942



Anne Frank as a pupil at the Joods Lyceum in Amsterdam, in a photograph from Decem ber 1941.

Photograph collection of the Anne Frank Stichting Amsterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-85

Anne Frank

'As I've told you many times, I'm split in two. One side contains my exuberant cheerfulness, my flippancy, my joy in life and, above all, my ability to appreciate the lighter side of things. By that I mean not finding anything wrong with flirtations, a kiss, an embrace, an off-colour joke. This side of me is usually lying in wait to ambush the other one, which is much purer, deeper and finer.' Anne Frank (1929–1945) had only just turned fifteen when she confided those words to her diary.

The Franks moved to Amsterdam from Frankfurt am Main in 1934, part of the wave of German Jewish migrants. They settled into a new home on the Merwedeplein. Anne and her sister Margot soon found their feet and their father Otto managed to continue his successful career as a businessman. The family did not acquire Dutch nationality, so they were still German when the Nazis declared German Jews stateless in 1941.

For her thirteenth birthday on 12 June 1942, her parents gave Anne a diary. In it she kept an account of her development as a teenager against the background of the persecution of the Jews, which increasingly interfered with her daily life. She was no longer allowed to attend a state school and instead had to go to the Joods Lyceum, specially founded for the purpose. After her sister Margot was ordered to report for deportation to a labour camp in Germany, the family decided on 6 July 1942 to go into hiding. They moved into an annex at the back of Otto Frank's business premises on the Prinsengracht, in the heart of Amsterdam's ring of canals. The office workers at the company agreed to attend to their needs. The family of Otto Frank's business partner Hermann van Pels joined them there, as did the dentist Fritz Pfeffer.

'In the diary Anne Frank kept an account of her development as a teenager against the background of the persecution of the Jews, which increasingly interfered with her daily life.'

Anne's diary presents a vivid picture of life in hiding: the dependence on others, the sharing of just a few rooms, the fears and dreams for the future. That life was cruelly shattered on 4 August 1944 when German and Dutch police arrested the eight inhabitants of the annex. They were probably betrayed, but by whom has never become clear. They were deported to Nazi camps.

Otto Frank was the only one of the eight to survive the camps. He was given his daughter's diaries, which were found in the annex after they left, and decided to publish them. The first Dutch edition appeared in 1947. In 1950 German and French translations followed, and in 1952 the diaries were published in English. Anne Frank's lucid writing style and sharp observations made her into the face of the Shoah, as the persecution of the Jews before and during the Second World War came to be known. The annex was turned into a museum in 1960 and ever since, with new editions of the diary and stage and film versions, Anne Frank's fame has grown inexorably.

1945



Service of thanksgiving in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam attended by Jews who had emerged from hiding, held on 9 May 1945, just a few days after liberation.

Photograph by Boris Kowadlo, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F001278. Collection of the heirs to Boris Kowadlo / Netherlands Photo Museum, Rotterdam.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-86

Return

With the capitulation of the German occupying forces on 5 May 1945, the Netherlands was liberated. The country celebrated exuberantly. Jews who had survived the war in hiding, some 16,000 in total, were delighted with their re-won freedom. At the same time, an immense shadow fell over them as the fate of their deported family members and friends became increasingly clear. Just 5,500 Jews returned from the camps. Of the Jews who had fled abroad, some came back to the Netherlands. The extent of the mass murder was evident before the end of 1945. Some 75 per cent of Dutch Jews had been murdered.

The survivors had to pick up their lives again. They tried to bring together what remained of their families and did their best to reclaim their homes. Because of the massive housing shortage immediately after the war, years might pass before proper arrangements could be made. If their shops and businesses were in the hands of good 'custodians', they could be taken over again by their Jewish owners soon after the country's liberation, but often the restitution did not go smoothly. The reception given to returning Jews varied. Sometimes a whole village might turn out to welcome them, but in many cases the repatriated encountered indifference, or even harsh treatment. As if to illustrate this, not all the clothes, furniture and jewellery left with non-Jewish neighbours and acquaintances were given back to them on their return.

'Recompense for injustices done was formalistic and bureaucratic.'

The restoration of the rights of Dutch Jews was a laborious process. When the occupying forces withdrew, the anti-Jewish laws introduced by the Nazis were abolished straight away, but recompense for injustices done was formalistic and bureaucratic. Moreover, the government adopted the fundamental assumption that no distinction should be made between Jews and other Dutch people. The exceptional position of Jews in the war years was deliberately overlooked. Some people and Jewish organizations had to wait until the 1950s to receive redress.

Many set about rebuilding the life of the Jewish community in the Netherlands with unbridled energy. Impoverished, it received financial support, especially from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Although initially there were attempts to construct the community entirely anew, within a few years most of the prewar Jewish organizations were back. They offered the roughly 30,000 remaining Dutch Jews everything they needed to live a fully Jewish life.

1945



When the establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, Jewish organizations in the Johannes Vermeerstraat put out flags. Along with the new flag of Israel, they also flew the flag of the Netherlands.

Photograph collection of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: NIW001001554.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-87

Johannes Vermeerstraat

'Not only is the entire Jewish community sitting there in card indexes, it's also registered in the heads of the people who earn their living in these offices. The community is so small that every member of it is known, directly or through acquaintances, to one of the sixty office workers in the street.' Max Snijders, later a famous journalist, made that observation about the Johannes Vermeerstraat in Amsterdam in 1958. He was not exaggerating; many Jewish institutions had their offices in that street in Amsterdam-Zuid and many Jewish youth movements came together there too.

It started at number 18, and the presence of Jewish organizations in the Johannes Vermeerstraat then grew rapidly. In 1945 the Contact Committee of the Jewish Coordination Committees, which coordinated the rebuilding of the Jewish Netherlands, moved in. It offered help in obtaining restorative justice, finding family members and attempting to emigrate. Its social department, which the following year became the independent organization Joods Maatschappelijk Werk, remained in the building. Number 22, as was said at its opening in 1947, must 'for want of better already be a small part of Eretz Yisrael'. For those who could not yet emigrate, this was the antechamber to the Jewish state that was now being built. It functioned as the headquarters of the Dutch Zionist League, the Jewish National Fund, the Collective Israel Action Foundation and Hachshara & Alijah.

At number 24 came Beth Am, a 'people's house' intended to be a place for all Amsterdam Jews, where associations and organizations of all kinds could organize activities. The Dutch Zionist Students Organization gave courses on Jewish history and held meetings in the building, and the socialist Poale Zion Movement held a Mayday celebration there at which the Israeli national anthem Hatikvah and the socialist Internationale were sung equally loudly.

Next door at number 26 was the consulate of the State of Israel, where Dutch Jews could sort out practical matters such as how to send money to family in Israel or set up trading links with Israeli companies, as well as preparing for emigration. A special department, the Tarboetressort (Cultural Resort), organized Hebrew lessons in the building and elsewhere in the country. In times of crisis and war in Israel, the Johannes Vermeerstraat hummed with activity. Volunteers came to register for work in Israel, blood was donated and big demonstrations always ended there. Until the 1990s the Johannes Vermeerstraat was indisputably one of the central locations of Jewish life in the Netherlands. Since then most of the organizations have moved elsewhere.

'Indisputably one of the central locations of Jewish life in the Netherlands.'

1946



On 20 November 2003 JMW protested against the cabinet's cost-cutting plans and a petition was delivered in The Hague. The proposed cuts threatened to make care for Jewish war victims impossible.

Photograph collection of Joods Maatschappelijk Werk.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-88

Joods Maatschappelijk Werk

The organization Joods Maatschappelijk Werk (JMW) became known to some as the fourth denomination. It certainly reached and supported many unaffiliated Dutch Jews who were rarely if ever to be found even on the edges of the three official Jewish 'denominations', the Dutch Israelite Denomination, the Portuguese Israelite Denomination and the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism. JMW had a strongly inclusive vision from the start: anyone who was Jewish qualified for assistance, irrespective of religion, politics or background.

Social work that before the war had been carried out by the local Jewish Committees for Aid to the Poor and countless dedicated organizations was clustered in Joods Maatschappelijk Werk, founded on 28 November 1946. Many of those older bodies joined JMW, which helped them to professionalize and combine their resources. Cooperation at a national level meant that Jews outside the major cities could be offered the support they needed. With the rise of the welfare state, JMW was officially recognized as the main Jewish social organization.

While it met all sorts of general needs by providing social workers, help in the home and coffee mornings, problems related to the war placed their stamp on the organization. JMW made it possible to talk about the psychological effects of the Second World War on survivors and their offspring. In society at large, JMW developed into an authoritative representative of survivors and in 1972 it successfully appealed for the introduction of a Wet Uitkering Vervolgingsslachtoffers, a law entitling victims of wartime persecution to special payments. As a result, Jewish survivors at last started to receive state benefits of the kind that had long been available to wartime resistance fighters.

'With the rise of the welfare state, JMW was officially recognized as the main Jewish social organization.'

In its early years especially, JMW facilitated the emigration of Jews, whether to Israel or to the United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa. Soon the immigration of newcomers was added to its areas of concern. The Dutch allowed a limited number of displaced eastern European Jews to settle in the Netherlands after the Second World War and the Jewish community was held entirely responsible for them, both financially and practically. Jewish refugees and asylum seekers, including Arab, Hungarian and Russian Jews, have been assisted by JMW ever since.

In addition to social work in the strict sense, JMW increasingly stepped onto socio-cultural terrain. In the 1980s a call for recognition arose from the second generation and from young victims who had gone into hiding as children. JMW picked up these signals and organized projects (conferences, cafés, theme days, social networks and so on) that were aimed at developing and reinforcing the identity of both groups. Meanwhile it provided socio-cultural activities for the first generation, especially outside Amsterdam, to combat loneliness and social isolation among Jews.

JMW increasingly became a hub in a broader network of Jewish social infrastructure, including care homes, a nursing home, a hospital and psychiatric services.

1947



One of the new youth movements that came into being after the war was the Orthodox Zionist Bnei Akiva. At first it was under the umbrella of the Jewish Youth Federation, which later declined in importance partly because Bnei Akiva became independent from it. This photograph shows a summer camp in the 1946–1948 period.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F010746.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-89

Convention of the Jewish Youth Federation

'We young people now need to take a decision. It's up to us, the youth,' the chair of the Dutch Zionist League, Jaap van Amerongen, impressed upon young Jews at their Convention in Soest in an emotional speech. Whereas older people often go back on earlier decisions, young people must remain faithful to the fire of revolution; they must not just talk about emigrating to Israel but actually do it. 'He observed that for some of us life would be easier in Eretz Yisrael, but for many of us harder. Still, our decision must not depend upon that, because there was only one way.'

That was a dominant conviction in Dutch-Jewish youth movements, which were remarkably strong after the war. On 14 October 1945 the Jewish Youth Federation started up again with fifteen branches spread right across the country and some five hundred members. Within a year there were twenty-two branches and 571 members. The most prominent branch was in Amsterdam, and it had been given the telling name of Shear-Jashub, meaning 'a remnant will return'. The 'Jewish Brigade', Jewish soldiers from Palestine in the British army of liberation, played an important part in the creation of the Jewish youth movement. Youth work leaders known as *shlichim* (emissaries) were sent from Palestine. Among the first of them was Jitschak Slijper, who reported for duty as soon as he could, in 1946. 'Our task is to retain Jewish youth for Israel,' he said. In the youth movement, young Jews were to be made ready to live there and to be taught Hebrew. 'The main priority is that we must construct a country.'

'"Our task is to retain Jewish youth for Israel."'

The annual convention brought together young Jewish people from all over the Netherlands. There were passionate speeches, music and dancing, and the raising of flags. The convention continued to be held even after the Jewish Youth Federation split into two distinct Zionist youth movements, the socialist Habonim and the Orthodox Bnei Akiva. Both were part of large international umbrella organizations and engaged a series of new youth leaders from Israel. For young adults who had already decided to emigrate, there were farms where agricultural training was provided with a view to building a new country. Such 'kibbutzim' existed in Gouda and 's-Graveland, for example.

The youth movement enabled young Jewish people to meet, took them out of their isolation and helped them to develop their Jewish identity. The evening meetings organized by the local branches, the winter and summer camps, and the Convention itself created a lasting connection between many young people and the lives of Dutch Jews more generally. Some members took the step of emigrating to Israel, while others remained in the Netherlands and dedicated themselves to the Jewish community. This held true not just for Habonim and Bnei Akiva but for smaller youth movements, such as the Orthodox, non-Zionist Hashalshelet and the left-wing Zionist Hashomer Hatzair.

1948



PROCLAMATIE
JOODSE STAAT

16 MEI 1948

Landelijke Meeting

van de Nederlandse Zionistenbond ter gelegenheid van de
PROCLAMATIE VAN DE JOODSE STAAT

op ZONDAG 16 MEI a.s.
des middags om 2 uur in de grote zaal van het
CONCERTGEBOUW TE AMSTERDAM

SPREKERS:
Dr S. KLEEREKOPER — Prof. Mr I. KISCH
Mr K. J. EDERSHEIM — G. BOLLE

Medewerking wordt verleend door het koor van het kinderdorp
„Ilaniah" te Apeldoorn

Toegang vrij!

Poster announcing the national meeting to mark the procla mation of the State of Israel in 1948.

Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M002368.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-90

Celebration of Israel in the Concertgebouw

The Concertgebouw in Amsterdam was packed on Sunday 16 May 1948. Jews had come together from all over the country to celebrate the proclamation of the new Jewish state of Israel. They were received by Jewish scouts and guides, who saluted them. Everywhere, indoors and out, the new blue-and-white Israeli flag was on display. 'Long live the Jewish State' was the continual cry. The countless visitors were filled with happiness and enthusiasm, mixed with profound emotion.

So many people came – some four thousand in all – that the main hall of the Concertgebouw could not hold the throng. A second room was hired, then a third, but still it was not enough. An improvised open-air programme was quickly organized and outside the building, on the J.W. Brouwersplein, a Zionist heavyweight, lawyer and author Abel Herzberg, spontaneously gave a dynamic speech. Inside no fewer than ten speakers stood ready, representing the full range of Dutch Jewry. 'Today there is no place for romanticism and jubilant spirits,' said a twenty-year-old student. 'But the founding of the republic of Israel is medicine for our poisoned young souls. We are not going to Palestine to conquer it from the Arabs or the British, but to plant and sow, to sing and write poetry, to heal and be healed.' The meeting ended with mass singing of the Hatikvah, the Zionist song that had now become the Israeli national anthem.

'Israel is medicine for our poisoned young souls.'

There was considerable sympathy for Israel not just among Jews but across broad segments of society. Dutch artists, under the leadership of the director of the Stedelijk Museum Willem Sandberg, decided to offer the young state a collection of artworks for a museum in Israel, as 'proof of friendship and empathy'. A special campaign was launched to collect funds to help the paramilitary organization Haganah, which later became the Israeli Defence Forces, to pay for the war the young state was fighting. It was a huge success and it quickly became a permanent organization, collecting money every year for Israeli causes under the name Collectieve Israël Actie. This enthusiastic celebration of the founding of the State of Israel was a key moment in the creation of a new Jewish identity in the Netherlands, and in that identity the new Jewish state gained a permanent place, along with the persecution of the Jews during the Second World War. Involvement in the ups and downs of Israel remained undiminished in the decades that followed, no matter how different the political angles from which it expressed itself.

1949



On 1 December 1961, shortly after she had turned up out of nowhere as an adult, Anneke Beekman gave a television interview to Louis Frequin. Unsurprisingly, the programme was aired by the Catholic broadcaster KRO.

Photograph by Hugo van Gelderen/Anefo, Collection of the National Archives in The Hague.

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Anneke Beekman

On 24 February 1949 Anneke Beekman disappeared, at least as far as the authorities were concerned. The young Jewish girl had survived the war in hiding with the three Catholic Van Moorst sisters in Hilversum. When they discovered that her parents had been murdered, the sisters assumed Anneke would stay with them, but the Jewish guardianship foundation Le-ezrath Ha-jeled (Helping the Child) had other ideas. Jewish children who had been in hiding must return to the Jewish community, small as it was, and be placed with family members or in Jewish children's homes. Anneke was referred to Le-ezrath Ha-jeled, but the Van Moorst sisters refused to comply. On 24 February she was smuggled over the border to a Belgian convent.

Along with another smuggled Jewish girl, Betsy Meljado, Anneke was quickly baptized as a Catholic. The Dutch and Belgian police, and the Jewish community, searched for Anneke in vain. Betsy was eventually found, but Anneke turned up again only after she became fully adult, at the age of twenty-one. She had spent all that time in a convent, first in Belgium, later in France, and she emerged as a self-consciously Catholic young woman.

Anneke Beekman became a symbol for the distressing battle over the fate of Jewish wartime foster children. The two Jewish denominations published a special polemical book on the subject, campaigns were mounted and the Jewish youth movement celebrated Beekman's birthday in her absence. Despite all the media attention and public pressure, however, the Van Moorst sisters were not persuaded to cooperate and where she was living remained unknown until after she came of age.

Some four thousand wartime foster children had survived the war in hiding and half of them saw at least one parent return to take care of them. Over the other two thousand a painful tug-of-war took place between former resistance fighters and foster parents on one side and the Jewish community on the other. A Committee for Wartime Foster Children was set up by the government but after years of fierce debate it failed to agree, and the Guardianship Board had to discuss each dossier and come to a decision on each case separately. Most of the children were entrusted to Jewish family members or to Le-ezrath Ha-jeled, but around five hundred eventually grew up in non-Jewish families. Some did not discover their true identity until the 1990s, at the Congres voor het Ondergedoken Kind (Congress for the Child in Hiding During the War), attendance at which was huge, or at one of the many subsequent meetings on a smaller scale.

'A symbol for the distressing battle over the fate of Jewish wartime foster children.'

1954



Rabbi Jacob (Jaap) Soetendorp's charisma radiated out across Dutch society in general, well beyond the Jewish community.

Photograph by Sven Parsser, photograph collection of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: NIW001003166.

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Jacob Soetendorp, rabbi of the Netherlands

The leaders of the Reform Congregation of Amsterdam got talking with Jaakov Zutan (1914–1976) during a reception at the Israeli embassy. They were looking for a Dutch rabbi for their shrinking congregation; it was the only way Reform Judaism in the Netherlands would have a chance of survival. Jaakov Zutan's real name was Jacob (Jaap for short) Soetendorp and he had emigrated to Israel as a Zionist. But in 1953 he decided, for various reasons, to return to the Netherlands with his family. He was looking for a good job.

Soetendorp, as he was soon called once more, was by this point well-known among Dutch Jewry. Born in the old Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, he had trained at the Orthodox Dutch Israelite Seminary, where he achieved the rank of religious instructor. He had never completed his training as a rabbi, but he had made his name within Jewish education, as a propagandist for the Zionist movement and as a leading member of staff at the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*. His passionate speeches and challenging vision attracted a lot of attention.

Soetendorp took up the offer of the Reform Congregation of Amsterdam and from 1954 onwards succeeded in putting Reform Judaism on the map in the Netherlands. Inspired by British and American Jewish examples, he altered its strongly German Jewish identity and made it attractive to Dutch Jews, especially those who had been alienated by Orthodoxy. The Reform Congregation began to grow and in 1966 it built a new, modern synagogue close to the RAI convention centre. It needed to demonstrate that Jews in the Netherlands really did have a future. With his charisma, Soetendorp quickly made a name for himself outside Jewish circles. Although he represented a small congregation, he grew to become 'the rabbi of the Netherlands'. Whenever newspapers, radio or television went looking for a Jewish voice, they soon arrived at Soetendorp. He succeeded in conveying his message in terms that had wide appeal. He devoted himself fully to the emerging Jewish-Christian dialogue, believing good relations with the churches were important for those Jews who had chosen to stay in the Netherlands. He also regarded such dialogue as representing a remarkable transformation and a new future for the relationship between Jews and Christians.

'Whenever newspapers, radio or television went looking for a Jewish voice, they soon arrived at Soetendorp.'

As well as generating a larger congregation in Amsterdam, the growth of Reform Judaism ultimately led to the founding of nine new Reform Congregations elsewhere in the country. Appreciation for Soetendorp's commitment became visible when a street in Amsterdam was named after him, and the success of his efforts was made evident on a whole new level in 2010 when a big modern synagogue was consecrated. It went on to fulfil an important role in Jewish Amsterdam as a religious and cultural centre.

1958



One of the central locations of post-war Jewish life was and remains the Mouwes grocery shop. It was originally located in the Utrechtsestraat but followed its clients and can now be found in the Kastelenstraat in Buitenveldert.

Photograph by Patrick Sternfeld, 2015.

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Buitenveldert and Amstelveen

'Here lives a young Jewish generation that wants to get behind the wonderful work known as the preservation, continuation, and building of legitimate Judaism.' That was how Amsterdam's chief rabbi Aron Schuster welcomed the opening of the first synagogue in a new residential district called Buitenveldert in 1965. It was no overstatement. Right after the first brick was laid in 1958, young Jewish families were seen to be developing a fondness for the place. It offered the possibility of a fresh start, in a modern, green part of town that was nevertheless close to Amsterdam-Zuid, where most of the Jewish shops and facilities were to be found.

The Jewish residents of Buitenveldert took the initiative. They organized themselves into a working group that had in mind a young, vigorous and modern Jewish life. In no time they had their own *ganon* for early learning, a crèche, a Hebrew course and cultural evenings. According to the new residents, the opening of the first synagogue in 1965 had actually come a little late.

While Buitenveldert mainly attracted young Jewish people from older districts of Amsterdam, nearby Amstelveen developed a greater attraction for Jews from outside the city. Each therefore acquired a character of its own. What was then the fastest growing village in the Netherlands became a place for Jews who, often with young children in mind, wanted to live closer to Jewish facilities. Outside Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam, it was not easy to pursue a family life that was completely Jewish. In Amstelveen too, residents took the helm and the Algemeen Joodse Vereniging laid the groundwork that enabled the community to flourish.

Jewish facilities followed the young, after a slight delay. One Jewish institution or shop after another exchanged Amsterdam Zuid for Buitenveldert or Amstelveen in the 1980s. It had become clear that this was where the heart of Jewish life was now beating, and the boundary between Buitenveldert and Amstelveen blurred. The schools, the old people's home, the hospital, the synagogue, kosher shops and restaurants gave Buitenveldert and Amstelveen a colour all their own. The Kastelenstraat became what the Jodenbreestraat had been to the old Jewish quarter: the place where on Fridays, before the Sabbath began, everyone came upon friends and acquaintances while doing the shopping.

'It had become clear that this was where the heart of Jewish life was now beating.'

1962



The Hollandsche Schouwburg changed from a place of amusement into a place of deportation and ultimately became a monument to murdered Dutch Jews.

Photograph by Jeroen Nooter, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F900077.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-94

The Hollandsche Schouwburg

It was a subdued gathering. On 4 May 1962 the Hollandsche Schouwburg was officially opened as a monument to the expulsion of Jews from Dutch society. That marked the end of a long and sometimes painful search for a suitable function for the place from which, between 20 July 1942 and 29 November 1943, more than 46,000 Jews were sent to Westerbork, with the concentration camps as their final destination.

In 1945, after the liberation of the country from Nazi rule, it was at first almost as if nothing had happened in the building. The new owners, who had acquired the former theatre in wartime, simply started using the place again for parties and gatherings. Then in 1946, when it became known that a 'night of festivities' was to be organized in the Hollandsche Schouwburg, protest arose. It rapidly swelled and the Amsterdam city council forbade the event. A committee was hastily formed that managed to buy the building and then offered it to the Municipality of Amsterdam so that it could be given an appropriate function. Initially there was no intention to make the Hollandsche Schouwburg as a whole into a monument. A plaque or a small commemorative space might be possible, but other than that the building must be used to the full once more, preferably by an organization that was sensitive to the significance of the location, such as the National Institute for War Documentation or an Israel Centre. In 1958, however, the decision was finally made that the Hollandsche Schouwburg would become one of the first monuments in the Netherlands to give a central place to the persecution of the Jews.

That course of events is typical of how the memory of what we now call the Holocaust took shape. After the war, Jews were not permitted to create a monument anywhere in the public domain, in a street or square. The single exception was rather poignant: a monument of Jewish gratitude was offered to Dutch society in 1950 by a group of Jews as an expression of thanks for its help during the war years. The government wanted there to be one monument per town or district to commemorate all Dutch war victims. Special attention to the murdered Jews did not fit into this plan. Jewish congregations therefore set up monuments in Jewish cemeteries and in synagogues. Change came only over the course of the 1960s. When Jacques Presser presented his chronicle of the persecution of the Jews, *Ondergang* (*Ashes in the Wind: The Destruction of Dutch Jewry*), in the Hollandsche Schouwburg in 1965, a shock ran through the Netherlands. Jewish suffering at last received full attention.

From that moment on, monuments to murdered Jews appeared in streets and squares throughout the country. As the time began to arrive when fewer and fewer living witnesses were left, in the 1990s, the attention became increasingly personal. For instance, there was a growth in the number of *Stolpersteine*, little monuments in the form of square cobblestones with a brass top on which with the names of murdered Jews were engraved. These were laid into the pavement in front of their last homes. The Hollandsche Schouwburg has since developed into a monument and a place of remembrance, and has a modest function as a museum. In 2021 Amsterdam unveiled a National Holocaust Names Memorial, within walking distance of the Hollandsche Schouwburg on the Weesperstraat, where all the Jews, Roma and Sinti who were deported from the Netherlands and murdered are immortalized, each of their names inscribed on a brick.

'One of the first monuments in the Netherlands to give a central place to the persecution of the Jews.'

1966



Wedding of Princess Beatrix and Claus von Amsberg in the Westerkerk in Amsterdam, 10 March 1966.

Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau.

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Wedding of Beatrix and Claus

While the Netherlands celebrated, Dutch Jews were silent. The wedding of Crown Princess Beatrix to Claus von Amsberg, a German, touched a nerve. For the first time in centuries, representatives of Jewish public bodies were absent from a celebration held by the House of Orange. No flags were hung out at the synagogues or other Jewish buildings, and seats in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam that had been reserved for rabbis and Jewish leaders were left empty.

Dutch Jews did not take the matter lightly. There had been intense debates: how would the House of Orange and society in general react to a boycott? Ought they not to support the decision of the Dutch parliament that had approved the marriage? Yet in the end the decision was made to disengage. The war years were still too fresh in the memory to allow Jews to celebrate the fact that a German count was marrying the Dutch crown princess, no matter how clearly research by the Jewish 'historian of the fatherland' Loe de Jong had shown that Claus personally did not put a foot wrong during the war.

The wedding marked a turning point. It showed Jews that they were listened to by Dutch society – because increasing attention was being paid to the persecution of the Jews, but also because they were increasingly seen as 'the conscience of the Netherlands'. Society was changing rapidly as a result of the cultural revolution of the 1960s and it was looking for a new morality, which it found in the Second World War. The war taught what was right and what was wrong. This in turn made society receptive to Jews and to their support for the State of Israel.

'The wedding marked a turning point. It showed Jews that they were listened to by Dutch society.'

Links with the House of Orange were strengthened again later. Prince Claus deliberately gave his first interview after the wedding not to a major newspaper or a television channel but instead to the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*. A personal visit to Israel by the couple in 1978 ensured that many embraced them once more. Although the government, because of its foreign policy, had allowed them to visit only as tourists, Beatrix and Claus made no secret of their sympathy for Israel. The crown princess wore a blue-and-white outfit, consciously reflecting the national colours of Israel, and the couple met a range of Israeli politicians. When Beatrix was invested as queen in 1980, no objections were heard from Jewish circles. Of course some Jews were republicans and a wide diversity of political beliefs existed among them, but the tension of 1966 had completely gone. It heralded a reign in which representatives of the House of Orange frequently attended important events in the Jewish community.

1967



Mayor of Amsterdam Mr Ed van Thijn and Mrs Annetje Fels-Kupferschmidt, chair of the Auschwitz Comité, during the annual Auschwitz Commemoration at the Nieuwe Ooster Cemetery in Amsterdam, 29 January 1989.

Photograph by Rob Rob Bogaerts / Anefo photo collection, National Archives, The Hague.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-96

Jewish mayors of Amsterdam

It was not deliberate policy, nor was it wholly by chance: after the war Amsterdam had one Jewish mayor after another. Ivo Samkalden was the first of them, an experienced civil servant and lawyer who became mayor of Amsterdam in 1967 after a job as justice minister. It was a difficult time, with protests, riots and in 1969 a student occupation of the Maagdenhuis, the headquarters of the city's university. Samkalden ruled with an iron hand. He banned young people from sleeping rough on Dam Square, as had become common, and ordered the police to end the occupation of the Maagdenhuis. It won him respect, although he faced plenty of criticism from his own PvdA (Labour Party) supporters. Samkalden did not say much about his Jewish identity, but neither did he shrink from involving himself in fundraising for Israel, despite protests from Arab countries.

When Samkalden stepped down in 1977 he was succeeded by Wim Polak, who had started out as a journalist for the socialist newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* and was finally appointed mayor after years spent in municipal politics and two brief periods as state secretary in the national government. In 1980 he was called upon to put down riots prompted by the investiture of Queen Beatrix and made an official visit as mayor to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, thereby reinforcing his bond with Israel. He vigorously opposed the granting of a permit for a collection on behalf of the Nederlands Palestina Komitee. Not until after he left mayoral office in 1983 did he devote himself to the Jewish community at an administrative level.

> '"I refuse to allow myself to be categorized by others, whether fellow Jews or non-Jews."'

Perhaps the most outspoken Jewish mayor was Ed van Thijn, who wore the chain from 1983 to 1994. He explicitly linked his political commitment to his background among the Jewish working classes of Amsterdam and to his experience of wartime persecution. He was also clear about his identity. 'I experience my Jewishness very consciously, feel strongly connected with Judaism as such, but want to be able to determine entirely for myself what that means for me and what relevance it has for me in situations where I need to make concrete choices. I refuse to allow myself to be categorized by others, whether fellow Jews or non-Jews. Nothing and nobody can prescribe for me how I wish to experience my own identity.'

After an intermezzo with Schelto Patijn, Job Cohen took up the baton in 2001. His efforts to keep the peace in Amsterdam after the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Muslim extremist, through dialogue and targeted interventions, won him respect at home and abroad. When in 2010 he left the city for national politics, an end came (for the time being) to Amsterdam's series of iconic Jewish mayors.

1970



'A million signatures for Russian Jews' (800,000) presented on 26 March 1982 to minister Max van der Stoel by Job Aalders, Awraham Soetendorp and the reverend J. Littooy.

Photograph by Rob Bogaerts/Anefo, Collection of the National Archives in The Hague.

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Committee for Solidarity with Jews in the Soviet Union

After the war, Dutch Jewry was consciously international in orientation, just as it had been in the beginning, four centuries earlier. Jews in the Netherlands naturally looked to Israel and the United States, but they also attached great importance to solidarity with Jews in perilous situations elsewhere. In the 1950s much attention was paid to the position of Jews in the Arab world, but by far the most successful campaign was for the millions of Jews in the Soviet Union, who were unable to practise Judaism and for whom emigration was virtually impossible. The refuseniks, Soviet Jews denied permission to emigrate to Israel, were the central focus. They were the Jewish counterparts to the dissidents who were supported everywhere in the West.

In 1970 a Dutch Committee for Solidarity with Jews in the Soviet Union was created in The Hague. Similar committees were formed all over western Europe and in the United States. The aim was to use public campaigns to make the fate of Soviet Jews visible and so increase pressure on the communist authorities. The Committee for Solidarity used as its slogan 'Let my people go', a reference to the biblical story about the exodus from Egypt. It had a broad composition and could count on virtually undivided support from all the Jews of the Netherlands. Reform rabbi Awraham Soetendorp acted as its figurehead, and through the media and politics he was successful in bringing Soviet Jews to the attention of the public.

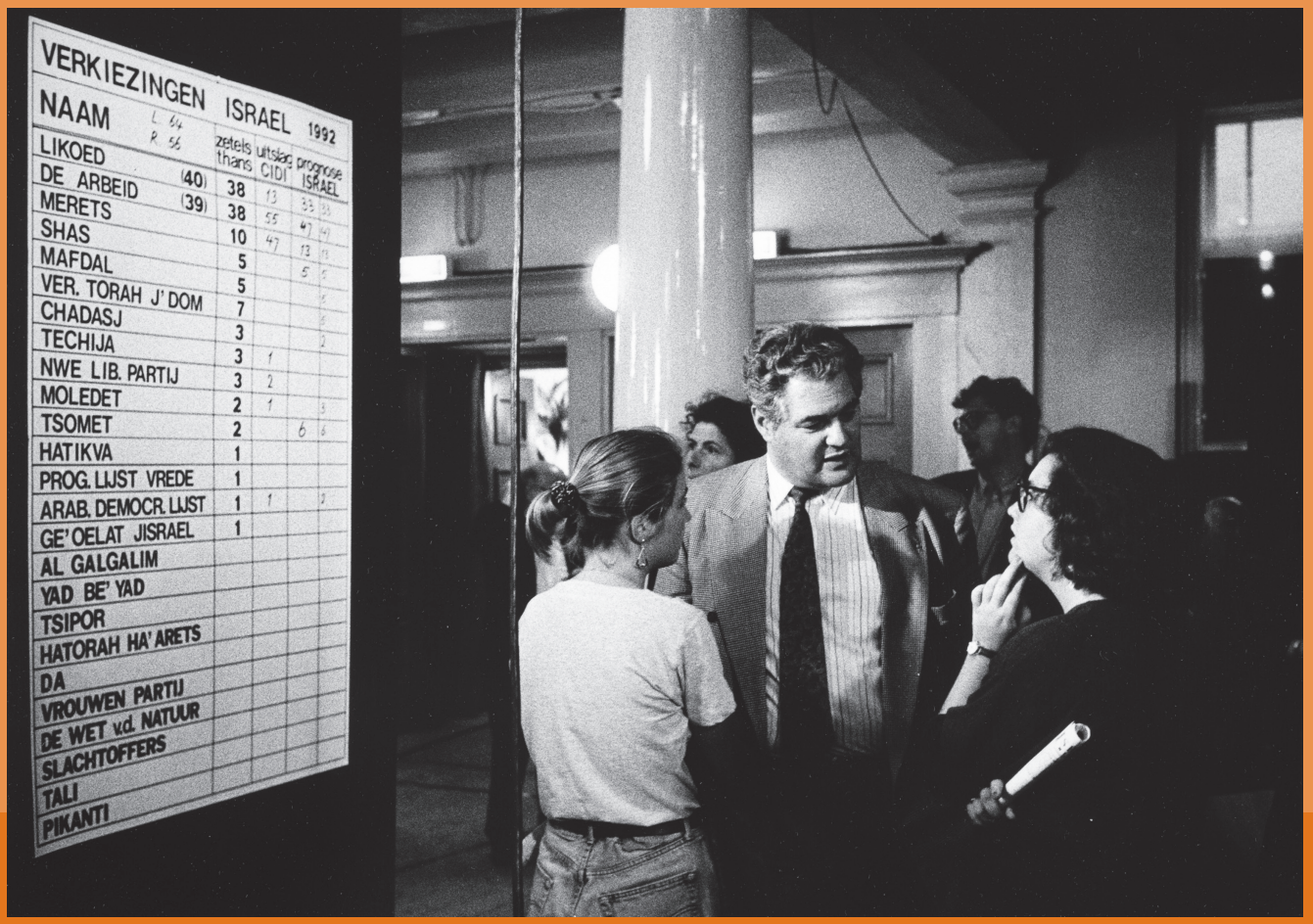
'"Let my people go."'

Large-scale demonstrations at the Dockworker statue, a Second World War memorial, in Amsterdam, protests in front of the Soviet embassy and a petition signed by almost a million people in the space of a few weeks showed there was support right across Dutch society. The fate of Soviet Jews was closely bound up with the Cold War and seen as a shared Western interest.

The Dutch embassy in Moscow represented Israel, which no longer had diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and it was used by thousands of emigrating Soviet Jews. The Verbond van Oost- en Midden-Europese Joden, an alliance of Eastern European Jews in the Netherlands, gave material support to Jews behind the Iron Curtain, mainly in the form of parcels. Meanwhile individual Jews travelled to the Soviet Union as tourists to encourage the refuseniks in person, slip them Hebrew books and give them religious objects.

When in 1989 the Berlin Wall fell, Soviet Jews could finally be Jews in freedom and emigrate. The Committee for Solidarity had fought for that right on the Dutch political stage for almost twenty years, with such success that partner organizations abroad watched in admiration.

1974



Election results nights, organized by the CIDI whenever elections took place in Israel, won themselves a fixed place on the agenda of many politicians and Dutch Jews. This photograph gives an impression of the debate in 1992, with visitors talking in front of a results board. They include the Reform rabbi David Lilienthal.

Photograph by Han Singels, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M005614.

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CIDI

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, between Egypt and Syria on one side and Israel on the other, the foundations were laid for what in 1974 became the Centre for Information and Documentation Israel (CIDI). The institution's goal was to provide politicians in The Hague and the Dutch public with the most recent and appropriate 'information and documentation', especially about the Arab-Israeli conflict. There was a fear that the Dutch government, which had chosen Israel's side in 1973 and as a result had been punished with an oil boycott, might buckle. The CIDI wanted to keep the Netherlands firmly in the pro-Israeli camp.

Other initiatives arose in that same period. The Dutch Zionist League (NZB), which previously had something of a patent on the theme of Israel in the Dutch media, was faced with changing attitudes. Zionist young people with a critical outlook complained about the League, saying it was a place where everyone talked about Israel without ever going there. They felt, moreover, that it was in the interests of Israel to reach an accommodation with the Palestinians. The recently founded Israel Working Group advocated a two-state solution and wanted to explain Israel's position by means of campaigns and lessons in secondary schools. While it criticized the NZB's position, its main opponent was the Nederlands Palestina Komitee, which had opted to support the Palestinian movement centred on the PLO.

'Naftaniel had a broad network among politicians in The Hague and the media in Hilversum.'

The CIDI was led by its director Bob Levisson, who soon became an authoritative voice on Israel and the Middle East. Research into the signing of certificates of Aryan descent by staff at Dutch multinationals in order to promote economic relationships with Arab business partners produced a breakthrough. It led to a parliamentary inquiry and a strict policy of opposition to the signing of any such document. The person who had set up the inquiry was a former leading light of the Israel Working Group, Ronny Naftaniel. He was Levisson's first staff member and later took over from him. Naftaniel had a broad network among politicians in The Hague and the media in Hilversum, and was much in demand as a commentator and analyst.

From the early 1990s onwards CIDI took up the theme of antisemitism. An annual monitor started noting antisemitic incidents, legal proceedings were initiated against its more extreme manifestations and great emphasis was placed on education. That the CIDI did not represent all Dutch Jews became clear to a wider public when in 2001 A Different Jewish Voice was set up with the explicit intention of articulating an alternative view. It called attention to the Palestinian cause and was often critical of Israeli policy. In the media the two organizations demonstrated the internal diversity of Dutch Jewry.

1974



Photo of religious instruction at the Cheider, c.1985.

Photograph by Willy Lindwer, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F300472.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-99

Start of the Cheider

While many Dutch Jews were cutting their ties with Jewish congregations, in Orthodox Judaism a new group was forming, the ultra-Orthodox. The split became visible with the founding of a new school, the Jewish Children's Community Cheider. It started with five pupils in the living room of Orthodox Jewish resistance fighter Adje Cohen and was intended as an alternative to the existing Jewish primary school Rosj Pina and the secondary school Maimonides. Up to that point the two schools had taught pupils from Orthodox, Reform and secular families, which meant that many in the Jewish community knew each other from an early age.

Cohen was prompted to take his initiative by dissatisfaction with the amount of lesson time devoted to Jewish subjects. Because Rosj Pina and Maimonides taught the Dutch national curriculum, there was relatively little time left for subjects like Hebrew and Judaism. The Cheider focused strongly on schools in bulwarks of Orthodox Judaism like Antwerp, London and New York. The children were divided into separate classes for girls and boys and Jewish subjects were given far more weight.

The setting up of the Cheider caused shock in the Jewish community. There was a fear that it would lead to a split in the Dutch Israelite Denomination. Many also wondered whether the small community could afford two separate Jewish schools. Yet the Cheider managed to make a place for itself alongside existing institutions.

The new school shone light on something that had already been underway for some time; in the bosom of Dutch Orthodoxy a group had emerged that concentrated strongly on a formerly eastern European Orthodox Judaism. The new custom of having young Dutch Jews study for a period at a yeshiva abroad after secondary school brought them into contact with this form of Orthodoxy. In the Netherlands too, the international phenomenon of *chozrim b'teshuvah* emerged: Jews brought up in a secular environment were turning to Orthodox Judaism.

Soon after the Cheider came into existence, it became clear that ultra-Orthodoxy now had a permanent place in the community, as did the growing Reform Congregations and the increasing number of secular Jews. It meant that in the 1980s the Dutch Israelite Denomination needed to recognize officially that it no longer represented the entire Jewish community, only its own subscribing members. It was still the largest Jewish organization, but it could no longer ignore increasing diversity.

'Ultra-Orthodoxy now had a permanent place in the community.'

1979



Photo of a winning team at Yom Ha Football in 1995, including the Amstelveen rabbi Ies Vorst at the centre with professional footballer Marcel Liesdek. Sports journalist Frits Barend can be seen in the back row.

Photograph by Han Singels, Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: M006863.

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Yom Ha Football

They had no idea it would become a tradition but they certainly enjoyed it, arranging for spontaneously formed Jewish football teams to play against each other for a whole day. The original organizers were soon able to confirm that their initiative met a need. Yom Ha Football, the day of football, grew to become an annual event with a fixed place on the calendar of the Jewish community. The number of participants grew rapidly too, and Jewish teams from surrounding countries soon became familiar faces.

At Yom Ha Football, Jews whose lives were deeply bound up with the community met other Jews who did something Jewish only once a year, namely play football. That breadth of interest made Yom Ha Football into one of the few events that bridged all the differences. Lining the pitch, Orthodox, Reform and secular Jews all urged on friends and family with equal enthusiasm.

Yom Ha Football was among the expressions of a new type of cultural Judaism. After the Second World War, many Jewish congregations and organizations gained a 'cultural committee' to organize all kinds of activities, from talks and slide evenings to car rallies and performances on stage. In those days the main role of culture was to bring non-active Jews closer to those who were religious or Zionists.

In the 1970s, however, 'culture' increasingly grew into a force in its own right. Jewish culture became a way for many Dutch Jews to give shape to their identity. Religious commitment or a close bond with Israel were no longer a precondition. Jewish music, books, films and cuisine attracted a good deal of attention, and each had festivals where enthusiasts could meet. This cultural Judaism is flexible and independent of specific interests and motivations, so it fitted with the strong emphasis from the seventies onwards on personal identity and authenticity.

The vigorous growth of Jewish cultural activities meant the range was broad. Cultural Judaism as such is more difficult to chart than religious or Zionist Judaism because of its flexible character. The success of a Jewish Book Weekend, a Jewish Music Festival and a Jewish Film Festival coincided with the success of the Jewish Museum, whose exhibitions and accompanying programmes of activities offered culturally interested Jews much that was to their liking.

'This cultural Judaism is flexible and independent of specific interests.'

1990



Impression of the discussions at one of the follow-up con ferences to Woudschoten. The women's bags speak volumes ('Build a Bridge to the Future' and 'State of Israel is Born').

Photograph by Han Singels, Collec tion of the Jewish Museum Amster dam: M006855.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-101

Woudschoten

Conference centre Woudschoten in Zeist became famous among Dutch Jews. Many conferences were held there, ranging from a meeting of the Zionist women's movement WIZO to courses in Hebrew by the Tarboetressort. Yet from 1990 onwards the name 'Woudschoten' acquired a meaning all its own. 'I've been to Woudschoten' meant that you had attended one of the conferences for and about Jews born after the war. A generation became visible there that had previously tended to be overshadowed by wartime survivors.

In 1981 nobody yet spoke of a 'post-war generation', but in an article in the *Haagse Post* journalist Helene Weijel called its members (and herself) 'children of the concentration camp syndrome'. They had not experienced the Second World War directly, but much was passed down to them by a parent or parents. They were 'children who had to make everything right', and they often struggled mightily to live up to their parents' expectations. Either there was a terrifying silence about the war or it was spoken about continually; in either case the war was never absent. It marked a whole generation.

'"Children of the concentration camp syndrome."'

From 1990 onwards, with the support of Joods Maatschappelijk Werk, large conferences were held at Woudschoten. There was a sense of recognition, and discussion groups talked about what it meant to be the 'post-war generation'. Many people who had grown up outside the Jewish community and were kept away from it by their parents, often out of fear, found a new interpretation of their Jewish identity through Woudschoten. 'For me it was spine-chilling,' one participant said afterwards. 'I'd never seen so many Jews in one place.'

Woudschoten led to the creation of an organization called 'Jewish post-war generation' (*Joodse naoorlogse generatie*, or Jonag for short). It was intended to be a platform for meetings, but also to act in the interests of its members within and beyond the Jewish community. A new generation had become visible, but still national political debates about how to care for war victims made no mention of the impact on the children of survivors.

1995



The first female rabbi in the Netherlands, Elisa Klapheck, is festively received in the Uilen burger synagogue in Amster dam under a *chuppah* (wedding canopy).

Photograph by Pauline Prior. Collection of the Jewish Museum Amsterdam: F900961.

DOI: 10.5117/9789463726696-102

Beit Ha'Chidush

While the number of Jews who were unaffiliated had reached almost eighty per cent, organized Judaism had steadily become more variegated. The prewar situation in which the vast majority were registered in the books of the Dutch Israelite Denomination seemed to belong to a distant past. From the 1990s onwards, the range of Jewish religious movements that had their own congregations and synagogues only increased.

In 1995 a handful of enthusiasts began organizing independent synagogue services, inspired by American synagogues for homosexuals. The aim was to give gay Jews their own spiritual place, where they would be fully accepted. Even earlier, beginning in 1980, the association Sjalhomo had set in motion the emancipation of Jewish LGBTQ+ people, and with its exuberant parties it attracted attention both in the gay world in general and among Jewish communities in the Netherlands. The initiators, however, wanted more.

The monthly services soon started to attract heterosexuals as well, people who were looking for alternative Jewish traditions, had an intense interest in spirituality, and felt an affinity for the Jewish Reconstructionist and Jewish Renewal movements of progressive American Jews. As a result, the new congregation, Beit Ha'Chidush (House of Renewal), expanded rapidly. From 1997 onwards it met in Amsterdam's historic Uilenburger synagogue, continued to embrace gay emancipation, and every year, during Gay Pride, organized a special Queer Shabbaton. But it also wanted to bring about other progressive reforms. It decided that everybody with at least one Jewish parent should be allowed to join, while anyone with one Jewish grandparent could be accepted after a special confirmation ritual. The norms of admission were therefore more open from the start than those of the Orthodox and Reform congregations.

'An intense interest in spirituality.'

This small congregation came under the spotlight when it appointed the Netherlands' first female rabbi, Elisa Klapheck. From 2005 to 2009 she led her community and was its public face. Internally a new progressive prayerbook was written, along with the congregation's own *haggadah*. After Klapheck, several more female rabbis followed, both at Beit Ha'Chidush and in the Reform Congregations.

Other congregations too emerged independently of the official Jewish 'denominations' in the Netherlands, such as the reconstructionist Open Jewish Congregation Klal Yisrael in Delft, the Masorti (conservative) congregation in Weesp and the Beth Shoshanna Congregation in Deventer. In many cases they had strong links with international Jewish movements, showing that the prewar specifically Dutch Jewish identity was gradually being replaced by one with a distinctly international profile. Dutch Jewry had become fully part of international, mainly American Jewish and Israeli developments.

1997



Members of the Centraal Joods Overleg, including Ronny Naftaniel and Henri Markens, negotiate with the cabinet of Prime Minister Wim Kok about the return of Jewish wartime assets.

Roger Dohmen Photography/Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau.

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Centraal Joods Overleg

Who exactly represents the Jewish community in the Netherlands? Who consults with the government when Jewish interests are at stake? Who can speak to the media in the name of Dutch Jews? These questions were asked increasingly frequently and forcefully in the years after the war. The government sought interlocutors; the journalists filled their notebooks with names.

For a long time the Dutch Israelite Denomination adhered to the view that there was really only one representative, and that was the denomination itself, with alongside it, in a junior role, the far smaller Portuguese Israelite Denomination. As membership steadily declined, it became harder to cling to that conviction. Moreover, specialized discussion partners emerged on specific themes. On matters concerning Israel, the Dutch Zionist League and later the CIDI stepped forward; on matters of social care and coming to terms with the Second World War, Joods Maatschappelijk Werk was the primary mouthpiece. Reform Jews were represented by the charismatic rabbis Jacob Soetendorp and his son Awraham. In response to controversial affairs in society, such as the possible release of the 'Breda Three' (German war criminals imprisoned in the Netherlands), the Menten Affair (an investigation into a Dutch war criminal) and the Fassbinder Affair (about an allegedly antisemitic play), a coalition was often formed for the occasion so that the Jewish community could speak with one voice.

One obstacle preventing any permanent form of cooperation was the fact that the Orthodox rabbinate could not recognize Reform Judaism as a legitimate Jewish movement. Collaboration in the field of religion was therefore impossible. The solution was found in 1997 with the creation of the Centraal Joods Overleg (CJO), which encompassed all the largest Jewish organizations. It would not deal with religion but concentrate on 'external interests', representing Dutch Jewry in the broader society.

Almost immediately after its founding, the CJO had a major dossier to handle. A heated international debate had arisen over inadequate redress for the Jews after the war and the money of murdered Jews that had not been given back by banks and insurance companies. In the Netherlands this came onto the agenda after the discovery of some of the records of Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co., the bank used by the Nazis to rob Dutch Jews of their property and possessions. After intensive consultation, the CJO reached a settlement with the Dutch government, the banks, the stock exchange and the insurance companies in 1999 and 2000. A total of 364.74 million euro was given back. The Bureau Maror-gelden has been responsible ever since for the distribution of the money, to ensure that it contributes to the advancement of Jewish life in the Netherlands. Although the extent to which the CJO represents all Jews is sometimes disputed, it has grown both internally and in society to become the self-evident umbrella organization of Dutch Jewry.

'The self-evident umbrella organization of Dutch Jewry.'

2011



Discussion in the corridor during a committee meeting in the Lower House about ritual slaughter, with invited guests from the Jewish and Muslim communities. From left to right: SGP senator Gerrit Holdijk, Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs, former PvdA politician Harry van den Bergh and State Secretary Henk Bleker, 13 December 2011.

Photograph by Pierre Crom/Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau..

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Debate on ritual slaughter

In a short time a fierce political and public debate arose that filled the pages of newspapers and television news programmes for months. The Party for the Animals (PvdD) introduced a private members' bill that would make it obligatory to render livestock – especially cows or sheep – unconscious before they could be ritually slaughtered according to Jewish and Islamic practices. Jewish law, the *halacha*, is unambiguous on this point, however, specifying that the *shochet* must kill the animal instantly by drawing a sharp knife across its throat, making a single incision. Stunning is not permitted. The bill therefore meant that the existing practice of ritual slaughter in order to produce kosher meat would be banned.

When the consequences sank in, Dutch Jews were shaken awake. This meant that one of the religious rights the Jews in the Netherlands had enjoyed ever since settling in the country in the seventeenth century was about to be withdrawn. It would be particularly problematic for Orthodox Jews, who would have to import all their meat from abroad. But non-Orthodox Jews felt this concerned them too. The debate, which began with the rights of animals, ended up being about the consequences that such rights would have for two important religious minorities. It became so fierce because it was not simply a matter of ritual slaughter. Other Jewish religious precepts too, such as the circumcision of boys on the eighth day after birth, were coming under suspicion. The impression arose that a rapidly secularizing society was having increasing difficulty with explicitly religious practices.

'The impression arose that a rapidly secularizing society was having increasing difficulty with explicitly religious practices.'

The bill gained a substantial majority in the Lower House, so it looked as though the last kosher butcher in the Netherlands would have to shut up shop. The Upper House, however, which needed to test the proposed law against the Dutch constitution, was fiercely critical and decided to reject it with reference to religious freedom. Consultation followed between the Dutch government and Jewish and Islamic organizations, aimed at improving methods of ritual slaughter as far as possible. The debate was not confined to the Netherlands. In other European countries too, ritual slaughter was high on the agenda and in some cases it was banned. The outcome of the Dutch debate therefore acquired international significance and was closely followed and commented upon in Europe, the United States and the Middle East.

2012



The Jewish Cultural Quarter was officially opened by Crown Prince (now King) Willem-Alexander. He was warmly welcomed by director Joël Cahen.

Photograph by Dirk P.H. Spits/Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau.

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Jewish Cultural Quarter

The old Jewish district in Amsterdam was where it had all started, far back in the sixteenth century. It was where the first 'New Christians' from Portugal settled, who later turned themselves into 'New Jews'. They were soon joined by Ashkenazi Jews, from the German and eastern European territories. Until the early twentieth century, it was the beating heart of Dutch Jewry, where all the prominent synagogues, the rabbinical schools, the markets with Jewish stallholders and the Jewish shops were to be found. With the expansion of the city and urban regeneration in the first half of the twentieth century, the district began to empty. In Amsterdam-Oost and Amsterdam-Zuid new districts came into existence that had a clearly Jewish character.

But as the area lost its Jewish residents, tourists became increasingly interested. Already in the nineteenth century the picturesque and 'truly Dutch' character of the Jewish quarter was praised and painted. Eventually it came to be perceived as an old, truly Jewish district, after the Second World War especially. That did not prevent the demolition of large parts of it for the benefit of urban regeneration and the laying of a metro line. The heart of the old district, the Jodenbreestraat, disappeared almost completely.

While the last kosher shops moved elsewhere, the historic synagogues remained, both the majestic Esnoga of the Portuguese Israelite Congregation and the complex of four Ashkenazi synagogues on the Jonas Daniël Meijerplein. Whereas the small Portuguese congregation continued to use the Esnoga, the Ashkenazi synagogue complex fell into ruin as it awaited a new function. For decades the Jewish community and the municipality of Amsterdam failed to find a use for it, until a decision was finally made: the Jewish Historical Museum (JHM) must be located there.

'A high-quality showpiece in Amsterdam.'

The JHM, founded in 1930, was in the old Waag (Weigh House) on the Nieuwmarkt, but it was keen to expand. In 1987 the fully restored synagogue complex reopened as a museum. It soon developed into a magnet for tourists and staged high-profile exhibitions that drew many visitors. As well as having a permanent exhibition about the history and culture of Jews in the Netherlands, it exhibited a great deal of art.

In 2012 the old Jewish quarter became a museum district once and for all. The Jewish Historical Museum, the Esnoga and the Hollandsche Schouwburg together made up the Jewish Cultural Quarter, a high-quality showpiece in Amsterdam for tourists and countless school classes. The history and culture of Jewish Amsterdam has ever since been presented in these three buildings in all its diversity, with all its high and low points.

Furthermore, in 2016, in the former teacher training college opposite the Hollandsche Schouwburg, the National Holocaust Museum opened as part of the same cluster. It aims to document the terrible story of the murder of around 75 per cent of Dutch Jews.

In 2021 the Jewish Historical Museum renamed itself the Jewish Museum Amsterdam, the better to express the broad scope of its exhibitions.

Glossary

Ashkenazi (*pl.* Ashkenazim) Jews with a background in central and eastern Europe
bar mitzvah religious adulthood of a boy on his 13th birthday
beit din (pl. *batei din*) rabbinical court of law
beracha (pl. *berachot*; *here: berakhot*) benediction, blessing
bitul contempt, disparagement
chacham (pl. *chachamim*) Sephardi chief rabbi; wise, learned person
chazan (pl. *chazanim*) cantor
cherem ban, excommunication; ostracism
chumash the Pentateuch, Torah, or Five Books of Moses
chuppah wedding canopy; wedding ceremony
chozrim b'teshuvah Jews brought up in secular environment who turn to Orthodoxy
derasha (Yiddish: *droosje*) sermon
Eretz Yisrael Land of Israel
haggadah (pl. *haggadot*) small book of liturgy, prayers, songs, and rituals used at a Pesach seder
halacha Jewish law
halachic relating to or dictated by *halacha*; permissible or acceptable according to *halacha*
heichal the ark in a synagogue which holds the *Sifrei Torah*; term used by Sefardim.
kabbalah the Jewish mystical tradition
kahal congregation, Jewish community
kashrut body of Jewish dietary laws and regulations
kehillah (Yiddish: *kille*) a Jewish community
ketubah (pl. *ketubot*) marriage contract
machzor (pl. *machzorim*) prayerbook used for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur
Mahamad the board of directors of a Sephardic synagogue
Me'ah 100
megillat Esther (pl. *megillot Esther*) Esther Scroll
minyan quorum required for certain religious obligations
mitzvah good deed; ritual commandment
parnas (pl. *parnassim*) president or trustee of a congregation; (plural) board of directors of a congregation; administrator of different organizations within a community
Pesach Passover
Rosh HaShanah Jewish New Year
Sefer Torah (pl. *Sifrei Torah*) Torah scrolls
Shabbaton retreat or gathering over the Sabbath
shadar (pl. *shadarim*) rabbinical emissary
shaliach (pl. *shlichim*) emissary
shammash (pl. *shammashim*) sexton of a synagogue
Shavuot Feast of Weeks
shochet ritual slaughterer
siddur (pl. *siddurim*) prayerbook
sofer (pl. *sofrim*) scribe trained in transcribing religious texts on parchment
sukkah temporary dwelling used during the holiday of Sukkot; tabernacle
teba raised platform in a Sephardi synagogue from which the Torah is read and services are led

tefillah prayer, services, or an individual prayer
tikkun volume containing the Hebrew text of the *chumash*, without vowels or accents
Tu BiShvat New Year of the Trees
yad metal or wooden pointer used to follow the text when reading Torah; literally 'hand'
Yishuv the body of Jewish residents in the Land of Israel before the proclamation of the State of Israel; literally 'settlement'

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Bart and Tirtsah

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Abbreviations:
StR: *Studia Rosenthaliana*

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