Josephus in Modern Jewish Culture

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Contents

CHAPTER 3

A Tradition in the Plural: Reframing *Sefer Yosippon* for Modern Times

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In Amsterdam, the early modern port city with commercial and colonial links across the Atlantic and Indian oceans, Jews showed significant interest in historical and geographical knowledge.[1] Here, Josephus was re-claimed for Jewish contexts as 'our historian', and at the same time, *Sefer Yosippon*, a medieval version of his work, was reframed as an attractive Hebrew compendium of *Antiquities* and the *Jewish War* for modern readers. In tracing the unexpected turn from Josephus to *Sefer Yosippon* in eighteenth-century Amsterdam, this chapter explores a major example of the complexities that characterize the modern reception of the ancient historian's work. Rather than following a progressive trajectory leading from proliferating transmissions of seemingly imperfect and incompatible texts towards greater standardization, and from confused chronologies to greater historical clarity, the reception of Josephus's writings shows the intriguing richness of a tradition in the plural, which unfolds through the activities of editors, publishers, and readers who keep turning and returning to co-existing versions of Josephus's work.

1 From Josephus to *Yosippon*

A striking manifestation of extensive historical interest among early modern Jews can be found in Menasseh ben Israel's treatise *Miqveh Yisra'el* (Hope of Israel, 1650), which discusses past and present dwelling places of the legendary Ten Tribes and the messianic hopes that were associated with them. Stories about the Tribes circulated among Jews and Christians and were based on biblical verses about the end of the northern kingdom of Israel. According to 2 Kings 17:6, the ten tribes of Israel were exiled to Assyria by Shalmaneser and placed 'in Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes'. The tribes never returned from exile, but in messianic times

1 In returning to Amsterdam, this chapter builds on insights offered by Jacob Abolafia and Bart Wallet in this volume.

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they will be brought back, according to Isaiah 11:11, 'from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Kush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea'. Jews and Christians alike wrote about the Ten Tribes in medieval and, increasingly, in early modern times when travels to Asia, Africa and the Americas gave rise to new reports about ancient Jewish communities in India, on the Arabian peninsula, in Ethiopia and the Americas.[2] Menasseh ben Israel presents Antonio Montezinos's account of his encounter with members of the Tribes in Colombia and adds his own erudite discussion of the Tribes' dispersal across the globe, based on a wealth of Jewish, Christian and classical historical and geographical sources, among them Josephus's *Jewish War* and the *Antiquities*.[3]

It is Menasseh's preface 'To the Reader', however, that provides the book's most important reference to Josephus – and, within the context of Menasseh's work, an unexpected expression of historical interest. Here, Menasseh announces a project whose ambition has remained unsurpassed: he wishes to write a sequel to Josephus's work that will comprise the entire history of the Jewish people to the present day with the assistance of scholars from around the world, whether of 'his nation' (as in the Spanish version of his work) or without particular affiliation (as in the Latin and English versions), whom he asks to send him clear and truthful accounts of memorable events in their respective places to complement his Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Latin and other sources.[4] While this invitation for 'wise and learned' readers to contribute to the project with their own reports may have constituted a practical necessity given the scarcity of available sources, it also echoes Josephus's emphasis on the role of the historian as an eyewitness who describes events in which he

2 For an overview, see Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (Oxford, 2009).

3 On the work and the circumstances of its publication: Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*, ed. Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon (Oxford, 2004), 1–95; Ismar Schorsch, 'From Messianism to Realpolitik: Menasseh ben Israel and the Readmission of the Jews to England', *PAAJR* 45 (1978): 187–208; and Benjamin Braude, 'Les contes persans de Menasseh ben Israel: Polémique, apologétique et dissimulation à Amsterdam au XVII^{e} siècle', *Annales HSS* 49 (1994): 1107–38.

4 Menasseh ben Israel, *Miqveh Yisra'el, esto es, Esperança de Israel* (Amsterdam, 1650), 'Al Lector'; idem, *Miqveh Yisra'el, Hoc est, Spes Israelis* (Amsterdam, 1650), 'Lectori Benevolo'; idem, *The Hope of Israel*, 'To the Courteous Reader' (unpaginated in all editions). Menasseh was apparently not too concerned by the fact that his invitation to contribute to a universal history of the Jewish people was extended in languages that most Ashkenazim could not read. When *Miqveh Yisra'el* was finally translated, several decades after Menasseh's death, into Yiddish (Amsterdam, 1691) and Hebrew (Amsterdam, 1697), Menasseh's prefaces were replaced with a new address to the reader by the translator, Elyakim ben Ya'akov Shatz of Komarno. The Dutch translation, however, retained them, including the invitation: Menasseh ben Israël, *De Hoop Van Israël* (Amsterdam, 1666), 'Aen den Leser' (unpaginated).

was closely involved,[5] and it reflects new contemporary interest in combining existing textual sources with fresh empirical evidence, such as travel reports.[6] Menasseh's own treatise attests to the early modern fascination with both experience and erudition, as it combines Antonio Montezinos's travel account with an examination of ancient, medieval and early modern textual witnesses ranging from Xenophon to Hugo Grotius, and from Josephus to Azaryah de' Rossi.

The most remarkable aspect of Menasseh ben Israel's ambitious plan for a sequel to Josephus, however, is the context in which it occurs. Menasseh's work seeks to reassure Jews and Christians that God's promises to his people will be fulfilled, and that such fulfilment – far from requiring conversion – will consist in the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral land in messianic times, which might arrive soon. It is not difficult to see how such messianic expectations could stimulate some interest in the exilic history of the Jewish people, as demonstrated by *Miqveh Yisra'el* itself, which includes numerous references to past persecutions as well as present excellent achievements among Jews to support the argument that all divine prophecies about the dispersal of the people have been fulfilled and their redemption is imminent. The wide scope of Menasseh's inquiries in the preface to *Miqveh Yisra'el*, however, and the unprecedented range of sources he seeks to obtain for his historical project strongly suggest that the extent of his interest in historical matters far exceeded the more narrowly defined requirements of his treatise and its messianic claims. Menasseh ben Israel's announcement of a sequel to Josephus's historical work within the context of *Miqveh Yisrael* shows that, in early modern Amsterdam, messianic hopes for an end to exile and an extensive new interest in exilic history could exist side by side.

Menasseh's interest in Josephus and a continuation of his historical work may have been singular in scope, but an appreciation of historical writing is also evident elsewhere in Sephardic Amsterdam. The libraries of Sephardic scholars in the city included many works of Greek and Roman authors, with the famous historians – Thucydides, Plutarch, Livy, Tacitus and others – prominent

5 For the classical contexts, see, e.g., Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Tradition and the Classical Historian', *History and Theory* 11 (1972): 279–293; and Steve Mason, 'Josephus's *Judean War*', in *A Companion to Josephus*, ed. Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (Chichester, 2016), 13–35.

6 See, e.g., Anthony Grafton, with April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); and *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge, Mass., 2005).

among them.[7] A few new works, too, were produced, and Daniel Levi de Barrios's important collection of historical essays and poems, *Triumpho del Govierno Popolar* (1683–84), contains the announcement of a further attempt to publish a sequel to Josephus's work, this time in five volumes 'desde el Bello Judayco de Iosepho hasta este año de 1684'.[8] While libraries and newly composed historical works, which remained mostly in manuscript, attest to the taste of individuals, the book market points to an increasing interest in historical writing within wider Jewish contexts. In the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the Jewish printers of Amsterdam, who produced for the local market as well as Central and Eastern Europe, re-printed several early modern Sephardic historical works, including Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah* (1655 and 1709), Gedalyah ibn Yaḥyah's *Shalshelet ha-qabbalah* (1697), Abraham Zacut's *Sefer Yuḥasin* (1717) and Joseph ha-Kohen's *Divre ha-yamim le-malkhe Tsarfat u-malkhe bet Otoman ha-Tugar* (1733). Interest in these works must have developed simultaneously among Sephardim and Ashkenazim, since Ibn Verga's book was published not only in Hebrew, but also in two Yiddish translations (1648 and c. 1700). Following the example of their Sephardic neighbours, Ashkenazic authors also began to produce vernacular accounts of more recent events, among them Joseph ben Jacob Maarsen, whose *Bashraybung fun di rebeleray tsu Amsterdam* on the 'Undertakers' Rebellion' was printed in 1707, and Leyb ben Ozer, whose *Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi* was written in 1718 and published in excerpts by Jacob Emden in his *Torat ha-qena'ot* (1752).[9]

It was in these wider contexts of an emerging tangible interest in history and historical writing among Amsterdam's Jews that the most successful Jewish

7 Shlomo Berger, *Classical Oratory and the Sephardim of Amsterdam: Rabbi Aguilar's 'Tratado de la Retórica'* (Hilversum, 1996), 33–39; with additional information on Abas: Shlomo Berger, 'Codices Gentium: Rabbi Isaac Aboab's Collection of Classical Literature', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 29 (1995): 5–13; and with a different evaluation of Aboab: Yosef Kaplan, 'El perfil cultural de tres rabinos sefardíes a través del análisis de sus bibliotecas', in *Familia, religión y negocio: El sefardismo en las relaciones entre el mundo ibérico y los Países Bajos en la Edad Moderna*, ed. Jaime Contreras et al. (Madrid, 2002), 269–286 (on the libraries of Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, Semuel Abas and David Nunes Torres).

8 Miguel (Daniel Levi) de Barrios, 'Historia Universal Judayca', in *Triumpho del Govierno Popolar* (Amsterdam, 1783–1784), 1 (507 in the copy held in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana).

9 Leo and Renate Fuks, 'Joodse geschiedschrijving in de Republiek in de 17e and 18e eeuw', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 6 (1972): 137–65; Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Yiddish Historiography in the Time of the Dutch Republic', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 15 (1981): 9–19; Chava Turniansky, '*Leyb ben Oyzer: Sippur ma'asei Shabbetai Tzvi – Bashraybung fun Shabetai Tsvi ...*' (Review), *Kiryat Sefer* 54 (1979): 161–67; Paul Ira Radensky, 'Leyb ben Ozer's Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi: An Ashkenazic Appropriation of Sabbatianinsm', *JQR* 88 (1997): 43–56.

historical project of the eighteenth-century took shape. In 1743, Menaḥem Man Amelander published a revised Yiddish translation of *Sefer Yosippon*, the medieval Hebrew chronicle that was based on Josephus's works, and he added, as a second volume, *She'erit Yisra'el* (The Remnant of Israel), a Yiddish world history of the Jewish people from the end of the Second Temple period to the author's own times.[10] In contrast to Menasseh ben Israel and Daniel Levi de Barrios, Amelander was able to draw on an existing sequel to Josephus, Jacques Basnage's *Historie des Juifs* (Rotterdam, 1706–1711), which he read in a Dutch translation (Den Haag, 1726–1727).[11] At the same time, he returned to Menasseh ben Israel's complex presentation of exilic history within a messianic framework to offer an alternative to Basnage's conversionist chapters and to explain his own project. Amelander was familiar with *Miqveh Yisra'el*, but refers to it without singling it out as a model for his own work, which suggests that the close relationship between both projects may not have been the result of direct imitation, but rather of an ongoing effort to come to terms with exilic history, in which earlier attempts could not fail to leave their traces on later endeavours. In engaging with exilic history, Amelander used the same intriguing combination of religious argument and historical inquiry that could already be found in *Miqveh Yisra'el* and translated it into Ashkenazic contexts. In this act of translation, however, Amelander abandoned Menasseh ben Israel's focus on Josephus's works as fundamental for Jewish historical writing. Although he was aware of the relevance of Josephus's works and used them in *She'erit Yisra'el*,[12] he reverted to *Sefer Yosippon* as his primary point of departure.

10 Menaḥem Man ben Shlomo ha-Levi Amelander (1698–c. 1749) was a student of David Oppenheim in Prague and of the renowned dayyan and printer Moses Frankfurter in Amsterdam. He published, along with Eliezer Soesman, his brother-in-law, a Yiddish Pentateuch edition, which was printed along with *Sefer ha-maggid* under the title *Maggishe minḥah* (Amsterdam 1725–1729) and proved no less popular than the later *She'erit Yisra'el*. For his historical work, Amelander used a wide range of early modern Jewish chronicles and geographical writings in addition to Basnage's *Histoire*. For Amelander's biography as well as a rich and detailed account of the book's inception, contexts and reception, see Bart Wallet, 'Links in a Chain: Early Modern Yiddish Historiography from the Northern Netherlands, 1743–1812' (Ph.D. thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2012). The book's title may also be rendered as *Sheyris Yisroel*, reflecting the approximate pronunciation among Ashkenazic Jews in Amsterdam.

11 Basnage's work, which the subtitle described as a 'continuation of the history of Josephus', became soon an important source for the authors of the European Enlightenment, if and when they wanted to study Jewish history, religion and culture; see, in particular, Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), 81–89.

12 Menaḥem Man Amelander, *She'erit Yisra'el* (Amsterdam, 1743), fol. 1b (on Ezra and the vast numbers of Israelites who stayed beyond the Euphrates, cf. *AJ* 11.133), fol. 5b (on Fulvia and the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, cf. *AJ* 18.81–84), fol. 8a–10a (on Queen

The reasons for this were not just practical.[13] As I will argue on the following pages, Amelander's historical project needed the ongoing presence of *Sefer Yosippon*, because this medieval version of Josephus's work, unlike Josephus's own writings, offered interpretations of Jewish history that linked the work of the individual historian to the wider perspective of the biblical prophets and the Jewish nation. *Sefer Yosippon*, in turn, benefitted from its integration into the new framework of Amelander's larger historical project with its clear orientation towards present concerns, which facilitated the transformation of the medieval work into a classic for the modern Jewish world as well.

2 'A Book of Wonderful Things'

At the beginning of the modern period, most Ashkenazic Jews knew little about Josephus, the historian who had written the *Jewish War* and the *Antiquities*. They did not relate to 'Josephus' as an author, because the author they admired was called Yosef ben Gurion ha-Kohen, and 'Yosefus' was interpreted as the title of one of the versions of his work. A good example for the pervasive identification of Josephus with 'Yosef ben Gurion' are the lists of 'Authores y Libros Ebreos' that precede the Spanish, Latin, English, Dutch, Yiddish and Hebrew versions of Menasseh ben Israel's *Miqveh Yisra'el*. Although Menasseh refers in his main text invariably to 'Flavio Iosepho' or 'Iosepho', the lists mention only 'Ioseph ben Gurion'.[14] In Jewish contexts, these shifts and slippages occurred as the result of the indirect transmission of Josephus's writings: medieval and early modern Jewish readers acquainted themselves with Josephus through *Sefer Yosippon*, the Hebrew chronicle, which had been composed in Southern Italy in the tenth century on the basis of Latin renditions of Josephus's historical works.[15]

Helena of Adiabene, cf. *AJ* 20.17–96), and fol. 14b (on conflict between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria, *BJ* 2.487–98).

13 The publication of a Yiddish translation of entire works of Josephus – even on the basis of the existing Dutch translations – would obviously have been a very extensive and expensive project, which may also have struggled to compete on a book market where interested readers had access to Dutch and German translations on the one hand and to existing Yiddish editions of the compact *Sefer Yosippon* on the other hand.

14 It goes almost without saying that the Yiddish and Hebrew versions, which were based on the Dutch translation, render 'Josephus' also in the main text as 'Yosef ben Gurion'.

15 *Sefer Yosippon*'s main sources are the Latin translation of the *Antiquities* commissioned by Cassiodor, and Pseudo-Hegesippus, i.e. *De Excidio Hierosolymitano*, a Latin translation of the *Jewish War*, which was wrongly attributed to the church father. For the sources, contexts and dating of *Sefer Yosippon*, see Saskia Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption des*

In the absence of Hebrew translations of Josephus's Greek works, *Sefer Yosippon* remained popular among Jews throughout the medieval and early modern period. This is no surprise, since *Sefer Yosippon* offered its readers access to many intriguing and entertaining narratives, among them a few additions to Daniel and Esther from the Septuagint, parts of the books of Maccabees, a version of the Alexander romance, and plenty of material from the *Antiquities* and the *Jewish War*. In fact, *Sefer Yosippon* could easily be perceived as a work celebrating, above all, the noble achievements of the Jewish people among the nations, since it dedicates many chapters to the Hasmonean kings, the splendour of the Second Temple, and the heroic deeds of individual men, women and children, before turning, in its second half, to the Jewish revolt against the Romans and its devastating end. The title page of an early eighteenth-century edition of the Yiddish *Yosippon* characterizes the work as follows: 'It is a book of wonderful things, [telling] what happened to our ancestors in the Second Temple [period], how they prospered and succeeded in all their wars. It also speaks clearly of the Temple building, its great glory, the elevated status (*romemut*) of the kings of Israel and their wisdom up to the end of the destruction of the Temple.'[16] Such praise for the book clearly indicates that *Sefer Yosippon* was not read as part of a 'lachrymose' history of the Jewish people. This, and the fact that the work is completely unapologetic about its occasional attention to the history of other nations and use of non-Jewish sources, may have resonated with modern readers, but it was clearly not enough to secure its ongoing relevance.

In the early nineteenth century, an increasing number of Jewish readers began to follow the early modern example of Menasseh ben Israel and others: they turned to Josephus's original writings, previously transmitted predominantly in Christian contexts, and started to study them in vernacular

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Sefer Yosippon (Tübingen, 2013), 2–21; Saskia Dönitz, 'Historiography among Byzantine Jews: The Case of *Sefer Yosippon*', in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Leiden, 2012), 951–68 (esp. 953–60 on sources and *Yosippon* as 'counter-history'); and David Flusser's introduction to his edition of the work: *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. David Flusser, vol. 2 (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1980), 74–148; for an English summary: David Flusser, '*Josippon*, a Medieval Hebrew Version of Josephus', in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Leiden, 1987), 386–97. For an illuminating discussion of Pseudo-Hegesippus that will also be relevant to further research on *Sefer Yosippon*, see Richard Matthew Pollard, 'The *De Excidio* of "Hegesippus" and the Reception of Josephus in the Early Middle Ages', *Viator* 46 (2015): 65–100. *Josippon: Jüdische Geschichte vom Anfang der Welt bis zum Ende des ersten Aufstands gegen Rom – Hebräisch-Deutsche Textausgabe*, ed. and trans. Dagmar Börner-Klein and Beat Zuber (Wiesbaden, 2010) offers a helpful apparatus.

16 *Sefer Yosippon* (Frankfurt, 1707/1708), title page.

renditions or in new Hebrew translations.[17] At this point, *Sefer Yosippon* looked as if it might disappear from Jewish bookshelves. And yet, this was not the case. The chronicle continued to circulate among modern Jewish audiences, at first in Western Europe and then in Central and Eastern Europe,[18] even during the decades in which the maskilim and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* began to promote the ancient historian rather than the medieval 'impostor' among their Jewish readers.[19] The complex reasons for the ongoing popularity of the medieval chronicle have not yet been fully explored,[20] and it remains a formidable task to trace the diverse routes of its modern reception and transmission. Here, I will focus on just one aspect, i.e. on Amelander's historical project, as it played a particularly important role in rendering the medieval work acceptable to modern readers. While Amelander's project represented the culmination of a long early modern transmission process, it simultaneously launched the modern career of the work.

For the purposes of his project, Amelander reframed *Sefer Yosippon* by adding a new introduction, revising the Yiddish translation, and linking it to *She'erit Yisra'el* as its sequel. He presented an interesting defence of the chronicle against its Christian detractors,[21] and proposed a new angle for its reception in contemporary Jewish contexts that succeeded in laying the foundation for its relevance to generations of modern readers. As a result, the Josephus tradition continued to unfold through multiple and only partially compatible versions of Josephus's works: it remained a tradition in the plural. This was confirmed a century later, as will be discussed briefly at the end of this chapter, when Abraham Menaḥem Mendel Mohr, a Galician maskil, added a further

17 Kalman Schulman's Hebrew translation of the *Jewish War* was published in Vilna, 1861–1862; the *Antiquities*, however, which form the basis of a very large part of *Yosippon*, were only partially available in Hebrew before Abraham Schalit published his complete translation in the twentieth century.

18 Amelander's edition – *Sefer Yosippon* with *She'erit Yisra'el* – was reprinted five times until 1800 (twice in Fürth, and once in Amsterdam, Nowy Dwór and Dyhernfurth). Between 1780 and 1880, at least 18 Hebrew and six Yiddish editions of *Sefer Yosippon* were published in Central and Eastern Europe.

19 See, e.g., the acrimonious critique of *Sefer Yosippon* in Peter Beer's *Geschichte der Juden von ihrer Rückkehr aus der babylonischen Gefangenschaft bis zur Zerstörung des zweyten Tempels nach Flavius Josephus* (Wien, 1808), xxi–xxii; for a detailed account of attitudes to *Sefer Yosippon* in Beer's Prague, see Louise Hecht, *Ein jüdischer Aufklärer in Böhmen: Der Pädagoge und Reformer Peter Beer (1758–1838)* (Wien, 2008), 211–14.

20 On aspects of *Sefer Yosippon*'s relevance to modern Jewish readers, in particular Micha Yosef Berdyczewski, see Steven Bowman, '"Yosippon" and Jewish Nationalism', *PAAJR* 61 (1995): 23–51, and Orr Scharf's chapter in this volume.

21 For Amelander's vindication of *Yosippon* in the context of his 'hidden polemic' against Basnage, see Bart Wallet's chapter in this volume.

supplement to Amelander's work and published *She'erit Yisra'el*, by then circulating mainly in Hebrew, with a short account of the so-called Damascus Affair. Amelander's editorial work had found a maskilic counterpart in Mohr's revised version, and *Sefer Yosippon* continued to travel through modern times alongside its historical supplements, which retained a reference to it on most of their title pages.

3 A Tradition in the Plural

In the introduction to his edition of *Sefer Yosippon*, Menaḥem Man Amelander recapitulates the details of the various versions of the work as he understood them:

> One should know that the name of the author of this book was Yosef ben Gurion ha-Kohen; he wrote the book in the sacred language (*loshn ha-qoydesh*) and called it *Yosippon*, because he wanted to make his name small, which shows that he was a great *ḥossid* (pious man) … He also wrote a very large book in Latin, named *Yosefus*; this was translated much later into various languages and also into Dutch, and all the nations consider it a mighty book.[22]

Amelander reiterates two major misconceptions that had shaped the transmission of Josephus's writings via *Sefer Yosippon*, while also seeking to eliminate a few errors. The first misconception concerned Josephus's name, the second his work, and together they had supported the proliferation of divergent texts that characterizes the Josephus tradition.

When *Sefer Yosippon* describes its main source as the 'book of Yosef ben Gurion', it clearly refers to Josephus's writings. This is evident not the least in those instances where the anonymous author of the chronicle mentions that

22 *Keter kehunah ve-hu Sefer Yosippon bi-leshon Ashkenaz*, ed. Menaḥem Man Amelander (Amsterdam, 1743), 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated). Although the 'Haqdamah' is unsigned, possibly because it is still loosely based on Tam's introduction (see below), it forms clearly part of Amelander's editorial work as described in the 'Introduction of the Publishers': he revised the Yiddish translation of Yosippon, and in the course of his revisions, replaced the earlier Yiddish introductions that had been printed alongside Tam's Hebrew preface (Amsterdam 1661, and Frankfurt 1707/1708), with his new Yiddish version of Tam. For a discussion of the introduction in the context of Yiddish book history, see Shlomo Berger, *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam: Early Modern Yiddish Books in Paratextual Perspective* (Leiden, 2013), 123–30.

not everything from 'the book of Yosef ben Gurion' has been incorporated into his own account.[23] Obviously, the medieval author was unaware of the passages in the *Jewish War* where Josephus speaks of himself as the son of Mattityahu, since he followed Pseudo-Hegesippus, where the patronym is not included, and thus identified the historian with Yosef ben Gurion, a military leader in Jerusalem mentioned only briefly in the *Jewish War* (*BJ* 2.563) and Pseudo-Hegesippus, but in the same context as Josephus.[24] As a result, medieval and early modern Jews spoke of 'Yosef ben Gurion ha-Kohen' when referring to Josephus and the circumstances of his life and work.

Over the next centuries, *Sefer Yosippon* circulated widely, and while some versions of the chronicle carefully preserved the distinction between the medieval work and its ancient sources, it was erased in others. When Judah Leon ben Moses Mosqoni (1328–after 1370) attached a detailed introduction to *Sefer Yosippon*, he claimed that Yosef ben Gurion was the author of both the Hebrew chronicle and a longer Latin version intended for the Romans, and that 'Yosippon' was a diminutive form of Yosef's name, chosen by the ancient author himself, because he was a very modest man.[25] In addition, Mosqoni provided a recension of the text that includes pseudo-autobiographical passages, where Yosef ben Gurion is presented as a first-person narrator who refers to the Hebrew chronicle as his own work.[26] The passage at the beginning of the *Jewish War*, where Josephus speaks of his Greek work as a translation of 'the account which I previously composed in my vernacular tongue',[27] may have contributed to the confusion, as it suggests that a Hebrew or Aramaic historical work preceded his Greek writings.

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23 See, e.g., *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. David Flusser, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1978), 174 (ch. 40, 6–10).

24 Cf. ibid., 1: 299 (n. 2), and Dönitz, 'Historiography among Byzantine Jews', 953. Zunz reports that his friend, the great Galician scholar Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport, already identified the passage in Ps.-Hegesippus – and the omission of Josephus's patronym in the Latin work – as the reason for the identification of Yosef ben Gurion with the historian; see Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (Berlin, 1832), 149 (n. c).

25 Judah Leon ben Moses Mosqoni, 'Haqdamah le-Yosippon', *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums – Otzar tov* 3 (1876): 017–023 (022). Abraham Berliner and Moritz Steinschneider transcribe the father's epithet 'Mosconi' and interpret it as a family name, but the origin of the name and its correct transcription remain uncertain; cf. Moritz Steinschneider 'Jehuda Mosconi', *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 3 (1876): 94–100 (95); for an alternative reading, see Steven Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204–1453* (Tuscaloosa, 1985), 133.

26 Cf. Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 92–97; Dönitz, 'Historiography among Byzantine Jews', 964.

27 *BJ* 1.3; the remark refers probably to a lost Aramaic version; see Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, 2nd ed. (London, 2002), 174–84.

In 1480, Abraham Conat printed *Sefer Yosippon* in Mantua with a postscript that reiterated the misattribution, although the published text avoided the error.[28] The next edition, printed in Constantinople in 1510, reverted to Mosqoni's longer recension with its pseudo-autobiographical claims and included a new introduction by Tam ben David ibn Yaḥya, who relies on Mosqoni and refers to Yosef ben Gurion as the author of the work. When the third edition of *Sefer Yosippon*, printed in Venice in 1544, quoted Abraham Conat's postscript and Tam ibn Yaḥya's introduction on the title page, the false attribution became authoritative. Until the nineteenth century the Venetian title page and Tam's introduction were reproduced in all Hebrew prints and, at least in part, in many Yiddish editions of the medieval chronicle. In this wider context, Amelander's seemingly inconspicuous remarks on the author and various versions of *Sefer Yosippon* take on new significance. His Yiddish introduction was published under the Hebrew title given to Tam ibn Yaḥya's text in all earlier Yiddish editions, 'Introduction in Praise of the Book', and takes up many of Tam's themes, but replaces the Hebrew text rather than translating it, thus signalling both continuity and novelty.

Amelander confirms a central feature of the medieval and early modern transmission of *Sefer Yosippon*: Jewish writers and readers were fully aware of the shifts, duplications and splits that characterize the Josephus tradition. They knew that for them, Yosef ben Gurion was the author of *Sefer Yosippon*, while he was known to Christians as the author of a work that was both the same and different. They had heard of the various names that were associated with their author, and they interpreted these names as titles of works that were related to the Hebrew chronicle. Amelander engages further with the plurality of versions within the Josephus tradition by seeking to offer an explanation for it. He points out that the work known as 'Yosefus' incorporated far more material than the Hebrew *Yosippon*, because it was addressed to readers who were unfamiliar with Jewish books, such as the Torah, Prophets and other unspecified works. Since the author of *Yosippon* was a wise man, he understood, according to Amelander, that he should offer his Hebrew readers a concise narrative and not exhaust them with long-winded and convoluted tales.[29]

Amelander departs still further from Tam's introduction, when discussing the reception of the work. There may have been readers in eighteenth-century Amsterdam and elsewhere in Europe who were familiar with Tam's 'Praise of the Book' and may have recalled that Tam mentioned not only Yosef ben

28 All references to the author were eliminated in the main text; see *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Flusser, 2: 17, and Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 71–72.

29 *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated).

Gurion's Hebrew and Latin versions, but also two early translations of the Hebrew work: a Greek translation attributed to Strabo and a Latin translation attributed to Bishop Gregory of Tours.[30] Amelander's more erudite readers will have appreciated that the new Yiddish introduction offered a clearer picture of the multiple works associated with Josephus and tacitly eliminated the spurious Greek and Latin translations of *Sefer Yosippon* from the Josephus tradition. They may also have noticed that Amelander emphasized the high regard for Josephus's work among 'all the other nations' who cherished their Greek, Latin and vernacular versions. At the very same time that the respect for Josephus's writings began to undermine the reputation of *Sefer Yosippon* in the Christian world, Amelander used the Christian admiration for 'Yosefus' to convince his Jewish readers of the ongoing relevance of *Yosippon*. Whether Amelander also felt that it was justifiable to retain *Sefer Yosippon* alongside 'Yosefus' as part of a tradition in the plural, because the Dutch edition of Josephus's works, which he consulted for *She'erit Yisra'el*, included Pseudo-Hegesippus and thus pointed to multiple versions of Josephus's work among Christians as well, we do not know.[31] He probably considered this detail too insignificant for his Jewish readers to include it in his praise for *Sefer Yosippon*.

Despite its modified and more precise account of *Yosippon*'s complex reception, Amelander's new introduction was certainly not enough to establish a place for the Hebrew chronicle among modern readers. With strong assumptions about its ancient provenance and the privileged position of the Hebrew text still attached to it, *Sefer Yosippon* remained firmly linked to the medieval and early modern world. As Jewish readers became more fully acquainted with the – now increasingly competing – versions within the Josephus tradition, a stronger framework was needed to encourage the ongoing transmission of *Sefer Yosippon* alongside 'Yosefus'. This was provided by Amelander's larger historical project, which clearly echoed Menasseh ben Israel's approach to exilic history and transformed it for the purposes of the present moment.

Two aspects of Amelander's project, in particular, were conducive to the modern career of *Sefer Yosippon* as a reconfiguration of Josephus's work and

30 Tam's introduction followed Mosqoni's account, cf. Judah Leon ben Moses Mosqoni, 'Haqdamah le-Yosippon', 022.

31 Willem Sewel's Dutch edition followed the French translation of Robert Arnauld d'Andilly and was published under the title *Alle de werken van Flavius Josephus … Nog zyn daarby gevoegd de Vyf Boeken van Egesippus …* (Amsterdam, 1704). Lambert van Bos's earlier Dutch edition (first printed in Dordrecht, 1665) included Pseudo-Hegesippus as well. Sewel's translation was revised by Siwart Haverkamp, and Amelander will most likely have used the 1732 or 1737 edition.

will now be explored further. Amelander presented a strong religious argument for the 'hope of Israel', which was grounded firmly in *Sefer Yosippon*, as the chronicle allowed Amelander to link the loss of past sovereignty to the promise of its future restoration. The Ten Tribes that had played such an important role in *Miqveh Yisra'el* were summoned as well and now helped to complete the argument that rested on *Sefer Yosippon*. At the same time, Amelander justified and provided space for the keen interest of his readers in historical inquiry and in their present times and places. In Menasseh ben Israel's work, such extensive historical interest was already perceptible alongside the messianic argument, but it remained unclear how these two aspects of his work might relate to each other. Addressing this question for his own work, Amelander re-affirms and re-authorizes the supplementary form of Jewish historical writing that had been typical of the early modern period: he provides a model for linking contemporary interest in exilic history to an overarching narrative of loss and restoration that could form the basis of critical investigations of the present moment from the standpoint of the Jewish nation. As a result, *Sefer Yosippon*, which had offered Amelander an anchor for his religious argument, was in turn linked to wider horizons, as it became part of contemporary historical inquiries and interpretations.

4 A Narrative of Loss and Restoration

In his introduction, Amelander evokes the splendid times of the Second Temple by repeating Tam's (and Judah Mosqoni's) descriptions of Yosef ben Gurion's life and illustrious family history. Yosef is associated with the families of Gurion and Gorigion. Gurion, who appears in the *Jewish War* at first only as part of Yosef ben Gurion's name, but may be identical to Gurion, the 'democrat' of high rank, who was later killed by the Zealots (*BJ* 4.358), is inserted into the history of Josephus's family, 'the greatest family of priests in the city of Jerusalem'.[32] Similarly, Naqdimon ben Gurion, who is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud because God performed a miracle for him in making the sun break through again after sunset,[33] joins Josephus as his brother. Finally, Gorigion is claimed for Josephus's family on his mother's side. Gorigion is the name of Gurion, the victim of the Zealots, in the much longer version of the story told in *Sefer Yosippon*. Here, Gorigion fought heroically in many wars and was popular among the inhabitants of Jerusalem as a wealthy and

32 *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated).
33 b. Ta'anit 19b–20a.

righteous man, before being murdered by the rebels against Rome.[34] Yosef ha-Kohen himself is depicted as a wise man, military leader, priest, and author of prophetic insight, who was praised by the rabbinic sages for his numerous great books and wrote *Sefer Yosippon* because he had seen the Second Temple when it was intact and then was an eyewitness to its destruction.

In Amelander's narrative, wisdom, righteousness, prosperity, priestly integrity and prophetic vision emerge as the virtues of a state of Jewish sovereignty that has to be defended against two hostile forces: the Romans from without and internal strife from within. In notable contrast to Tam's introduction and earlier Yiddish prefaces, Amelander emphasizes the historical responsibility of the rebels within the larger framework of the divine plan: Gorigion 'was killed by Yoḥanan [i.e. John of Gischala], the leader of the rebels – it was on their account that Jerusalem (for our great sins) was destroyed'.[35] Here, Amelander reproduces one of the main explanations for exile provided in ancient and medieval Jewish sources: it was *sin'at ḥinam*, 'gratuitous hatred', that caused the destruction of the Second Temple.[36]

Amelander's edition of *Yosippon*, however, is not intended only as an invitation to contemplate the past. The author also encourages his readers to turn their eyes towards the future. *Sefer Yosippon* is presented as a witness to the historical arc that allows for the memory of destruction to be linked to hope for future restoration. Amelander reminds his audience of the final pages of *Sefer Yosippon* (as printed in Venice and translated into Yiddish), where Yosef ben Gurion is depicted after the fall of Masada reciting many prophecies (here translated following the Yiddish text):

> Our teacher Moses said: 'If you are scattered to the ends of the heavens, from there God your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back' (Deuteronomy 30:4), and King David says God will 'do good to Zion again with his good will', so that 'the walls of Jerusalem will be rebuilt' (Psalms 51:20); where among all the peoples is a people with such hope to be helped as the people of God our God, for God, indeed, is 'the hope of Israel and helps them in times of suffering' (Jeremiah 14:8).[37]

34 *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Flusser, 1: 328.

35 *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated).

36 On this form of the 'cathartic rationale' for exile, see Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, 1993), 203.

37 *Sefer Yosippon* (Venice, 1544), 155a; *Sefer Yosippon* ed. Amelander, 239a.

In a further prophetic speech, Yosef ben Gurion reminds his readers of the earlier chapters of his book and links his historical narratives about kings, priests and exile to a larger interpretive framework of prophecy and fulfilment. Referring to Genesis, Ezekiel and Zechariah, he shows that the course of history confirms the biblical verses and that the promise of the ingathering of exiles will eventually be fulfilled:

> And the Prophet Zechariah adds: 'Woe upon the reckless shepherd who deserts the sheep; a sword will strike his arm and his right eye, his arm will wither, and his right eye will become blind' (after 11:17) – this refers to King Agrippa who brought Vespasian and his son Titus upon Jerusalem, and he also alludes to Yoḥanan [of Gischala], Simon [ben Giora] and Eleazar, the leaders of the rebels who have caused this and done all the great evil that happened in Jerusalem.... And the Prophet Zechariah continued and said: 'His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives on that day', until God's *shekhinah* will return to rest in Jerusalem, in the Third Temple, which our descendants will see.[38]

Amelander encourages his readers to study Yosef ben Gurion's book as a reminder of things past as well as things to come: 'He recorded everything as a memorial (*gedekhtnis*) for [the people of] Israel, so that they will hope to see the building of the Third Temple, which will never be destroyed, just as he wrote down at the end of the sixth book ... the prophetical words of our holy prophets and offered proof [for them], so that we shall not abandon our hope.'[39] In *Sefer Yosippon*, Amelander finds invaluable material for his argument – material that was absent from Josephus's work. Adapting Arnaldo Momigliano's famous phrase, he might have concluded that *Yosippon* saw 'what Flavius Josephus did not see'.[40]

Amelander's emphasis on the firm link between memory and hope in his introduction to *Sefer Yosippon* betrays an urgency that is never fully explained.

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38 *Sefer Yosippon* (Venice, 1544), 155b; *Sefer Yosippon* ed. Amelander, 240a.

39 Ibid., 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated).

40 Momigliano was referring, of course, to apocalyptical trends and the institution of the synagogue, but his conclusion might have resonated with readers of *Sefer Yosippon* who turned to Josephus and compared both works: 'Risulta in Flavio Giuseppe un giudaismo appiattito, non falso e non triviale, ma retorico, generico e poco reale.' 'Ciò che Flavio Giuseppe non vide', in Arnaldo Momigliano, *Pagine ebraiche*, ed. Silvia Berti, 2nd ed. (Rome, 2016), 79–91 (90); in English: 'What Josephus Did Not See', trans. Joanna Weinberg, in Arnaldo Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, CT, 1987), 108–19 (119).

That his insistence on connecting the past to the future has to do with contemporary concerns emerges only gradually in the 'Introduction of the Publishers'[41] and in the first chapter of *She'erit Yisra'el*. The 'Introduction of the Publishers' explains that *Sefer Yosippon* has acquired a sequel,[42] *She'erit Yisra'el*, which has never been printed before and will bear the additional title *Keter malkhut* (Crown of the Kingdom). This sequel describes, as the publishers point out, the suffering of the people of Israel in the kingdoms of exile, while also speaking of the kingdom of the House of Judah, which 'can still be found in many places, as is written in the verse "the sceptre will not depart from Judah"'.[43] The publishers' reference to Genesis 49:10 with Jacob's blessing of Judah reveals the kind of concern that also motivated Amelander. Since the biblical verse speaks of what must have appeared a broken promise of ongoing sovereignty, it could cast doubt on all other prophecies as well. It is this problem that Amelander himself addresses explicitly in the first chapter of *She'erit Yisra'el*. Here, he returns to the accounts of the Ten Tribes that he could find in Menasseh ben Israel's *Miqveh Yisra'el* and Abraham Farissol's *Iggeret orḥot 'olam* (Epistle on the Ways of the World, 1586), and he uses them to show that the promise of Genesis 49:10 is still valid. Since kings can be found among the Ten Tribes, it is obvious that the Jewish people have not been abandoned and that they have reason to hope for their return to sovereignty in their ancestral land.

Amelander's discussion of Genesis 49:10 can be seen as an attempt to address tensions between biblical prophecy and exilic history that may have given rise to uncertainty and doubt among his Jewish readers. But it soon becomes clear that any concerns among them must have been amplified by the polemical use of the biblical verse they encountered among Christians. Amelander explains that he writes about the Ten Tribes 'to offer consolation to the remnant of Israel, so that they will not think that the Holy One, blessed be he, has … entirely forsaken them, as some among the nations say, [namely] that they are justified because they have kings, and we do not'.[44] Here, as in other texts from Amsterdam, it becomes possible for a moment to picture how Christians may have discussed biblical verses with their Jewish

41 For more details on the three publishers – the brothers Yohanan Sofer, Mordecai Gumpel and Shlomo Zalman – see Wallet, 'Links in a Chain', 112–14.

42 The publishers use *vervolg*, the Dutch word for 'continuation' or 'sequel', in their Yiddish text, pointing indirectly to Basnage's work, whose Dutch title describes it as a *vervolg* to Josephus.

43 *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamat ha-madpisim' (unpaginated).

44 Amelander, *She'erit Yisra'el*, fol. 2a.

neighbours in the streets and marketplaces of the city.[45] It also becomes clear that the fascination with the theme of sovereignty, to which *Yosippon* responded and which it nourished, had many facets. It was enjoyable and edifying to dwell on historical narratives about kings, priests and soldiers at the time of the Second Temple, and it was vital to hope for future sovereignty in the land, but this was not all. There was also a question of sovereignty in the present, shaped by conflicting Jewish and Christian interpretations of exile, supersession and the biblical prophecies, which meant that the link between memories of loss and hope for restoration depended on Jewish kingdoms somewhere in the world, at the present moment. This aspect of the theme of sovereignty, oriented towards present needs and concerns, was now foregrounded not only by dedicating the first chapter of *She'erit Yisra'el* to it, but also by returning to the Tribes in the final chapter on present Jewish communities in India and China. Here, *Sefer Yosippon* is mentioned again – and, somewhat surprisingly, in a new role. Having referred to the work in his introduction – in line with previous readings of the 'wonderful book' – as a rather positive account of the Second Temple period, Amelander now evokes its accounts of many persecutions as proof that, contrary to Christian claims, the biblical prophecies of return and redemption had not been fulfilled at that time.[46] A 'lachrymose' reading of *Yosippon* is thus re-introduced not as a remnant of a conservative 'medieval' attitude to exilic history but rather as part of a contemporary argument against Christian supersessionism. The records of exilic history between the first and last chapters of *She'erit Yisrael* then provided along with *Sefer Yosippon* extensive material to demonstrate the continuity of the promise, as they depicted how God 'extended his mercy' to his people 'before … kings and oppressors' and saved them from all evil.[47]

In his apologetic attempt to explain why the promise of Genesis 49:10 must be considered still valid, Amelander reveals how fragile the link between memory and hope had become in the exilic present. It was undermined by Jewish uncertainty as well as Christian certainties. *Sefer Yosippon*, therefore, now depended on support: it had to be supplemented by an account of the exilic history of the Jewish people to the present day that would confirm

45 Orobio de Castro's interpretation of Gen 49:10 and the wider contexts in which the verse was read among Dutch Jews and Christians in the century preceding Amelander's work are discussed in Anne Oravetz Albert, '"A Civil Death": Sovereignty and the Jewish Republic in an Early Modern Treatment of Genesis 49:10', in *Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of David B. Ruderman*, ed. Richard I. Cohen et al. (Pittsburgh, PA, 2014), 63–72.

46 Amelander, *She'erit Yisra'el*, fol. 145b.

47 Ibid., 'Haqdamat ha-meḥabber' (unpaginated).

the validity of its prophecies. *She'erit Yisra'el*, in turn, depended on *Sefer Yosippon*, as the latter provided the authoritative foundation and justification for contemporary interpretations of Jewish history in the light of biblical promises. One might even say that the structure of promise and fulfilment that was so fundamental for Christian interpretations of the Bible was now, in the transmission of *Sefer Yosippon*, adapted for Jewish purposes. While *Sefer Yosippon* provides an account of the promise, *She'erit Yisra'el* speaks of its ongoing validity in the present. For this interpretive framework to work, however, one book could not exist without the other. Amelander had created a supplementary framework of historical interpretation in which the two books had become interdependent.

5 'If Someone Loves Reading Newspapers and Histories …'

Sefer Yosippon and *She'erit Yisra'el* had become, in the words of the short preface of the publishers to the second work, 'twin books' (*sefarim te'omim*).[48] This seems an apt description not just because the books reflect upon each other as supplementary parts of an overarching narrative of loss and future restoration, but also because they share an interest in historical matters that clearly transcends this larger interpretive framework. The parts of *Sefer Yosippon* that are dedicated to the histories of ancient Rome and Alexander the Great, and the quest for a comprehensive account of all that has happened to the Jewish people among the nations, as expressed by Amelander, clearly exceed the necessities of the religious argument for the validity of prophecies and promises, and are no longer entirely bound by it.

It is a three-fold argument that Amelander presents in favour of historical writing. First of all, he points to the curiosity of his readers and hints at the entertaining as well as useful aspects of *Yosippon*: Yosef ben Gurion decided to start his account with the beginning of the world to please his readers, and he included stories about Daniel and Esther that were missing from the Bible to make his account useful. In a second step, Amelander explains that historical writing is a perfectly legitimate form of entertainment, because it can rely on a biblical precedent. He introduces this aspect of his argument by pointing to the sections of *Sefer Yosippon* that touch upon the history of other nations:

48 Ibid., 'Eleh divre ba'ale madpisim' (unpaginated).

> It also tells of all the things that happened to the other peoples at these times; it tells, for example, of the birth of Alexander the Macedonian, and of the great strength he acquired, so that he conquered the entire world, and many other stories that every Jew may well read, even a great rabbinical scholar (*talmid ḥakham*), since the author, may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing, wrote the book with this intention: if someone loves reading newspapers (*kurante* [sic]) and histories, then he shall read in this book, because those who read in this book will have their reward just as if they had read the Chronicles of the Bible.[49]

Amelander's readers were obviously eager to find out about past as well as present circumstances and events in the wider world, not the least through early newspapers such as the *Amsterdamsche Courant* or the *Leydse Courant*.[50] It is remarkable that Amelander considers *Sefer Yosippon* as a work that may respond to the interest of these readers in the history of other nations and in current affairs – two aspects that had not been highlighted in earlier Hebrew and Yiddish introductions.[51] Clearly, it made only sense to encourage these readers to study *Sefer Yosippon* now that the work had obtained a 'second part', which covered recent times, if not quite 'the news of the day'. The 'Introduction of the Publishers' confirms Amelander's claim about the curiosity of his readership and adds a warning: a Jew should avoid 'histories and other things that are trivialities and lies', because it would be 'a transgression to take [them] into his hands, and all the more so to read them'. The publishers urge their readers to turn instead to *Sefer Yosippon*, which will be a legitimate book for the 'many people who love to read about what happened in ancient times'.[52] Obviously, the publishers were more concerned about the moral legitimacy of

49 *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated).

50 Even a Yiddish newspaper, the *Dinstagishe un Fraytagishe Kuranten*, had been published in Amsterdam in the late seventeenth century. It is not known for how long it survived, since only the issues from August 1686 to December 1687 are still available in copies. See Hilde Pach, 'Arranging Reality: The Editing Mechanisms of the World's First Yiddish Newspaper, the *Kurant* (Amsterdam, 1686–1687)' (Ph.D. thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2014).

51 For *Sefer Yosippon* as a book that could respond to Jewish interest in the history of other nations, see Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1990), 257. Amelander's particular emphasis on Alexander the Great may have been motivated not only by the ongoing Jewish interest in the Alexander romance, but also by contemporary non-Jewish interest in the emperor and his expeditions in the 'East'; cf. Pierre Briant, *The First European: A History of Alexander in the Age of Empire* (Boston, MA, 2017).

52 *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamat ha-madpisim' (unpaginated).

reading 'newspapers and histories' than Amelander who refers to his curious readers without judging their interests.

The third part of Amelander's argument for the legitimacy of historical writing in general and the study of *Sefer Yosippon* in particular returns to the latter's role within a larger supplementary framework and extends it. *Sefer Yosippon* constitutes not only a first part to a 'second part', but is itself already a supplement. It relates to *Divre ha-yamim*, the biblical book of Chronicles, not just as a precedent, but also as a continuation: 'Chronicles is the narrative of what happened from the beginning of the world until the Second Temple was built, where [this] book takes up the narrative [to tell] what happened until the destruction of the Second Temple and how Israel went into exile'.[53]

Reframing *Sefer Yosippon* as a work that men, women, and even a *talmid ḥakham* may find pleasant and useful offers an interesting answer to the issue of its legitimacy as a historical work, but it also raises new questions. An important aspect of Amelander's careful and highly reflective re-positioning of *Sefer Yosippon* within a supplementary framework of Jewish historical writing is the doubt that he expresses about his own qualification as a historian. Does the supplementary framework support his authorial position or does it rather undermine it? How can he, an ordinary man, compare himself to the ancient historian who was a priest, a great man and an eyewitness? Amelander raises these questions in his introduction to *She'erit Yisra'el* and answers them by pointing to his method, which constitutes common ground with Yosef ben Gurion.[54] While Yosef had first-hand knowledge of many contemporary events described in his book, he had to rely on the historians of other nations for earlier times. Similarly, he, Amelander, will use authoritative historical works from the other nations to complement his Jewish sources. It is by minimizing the role of originality in historical writing and emphasizing the commitment to a judicious use of historical material obtained from Jews as well as non-Jews that Amelander seeks to justify the comparison between himself and the ancient author. His perceptive readers, however, may have noticed that the issue remains unresolved: the tension between the introduction to *Sefer Yosippon*, which praises Yosef ben Gurion for his prophetic powers, and the introduction to *She'erit Yisra'el*, which has no place for prophets or visionary historians, is glaringly obvious.[55]

53 Ibid., 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated).

54 Cf. Wallet's similar argument in his contribution to this volume.

55 The disappearance of Yosef's prophetic faculties in the introduction to *She'erit Yisra'el* is remarkable not the least because the introduction to *Sefer Yosippon* had been more emphatic about them than Tam ibn Yaḥya, who provided its *vorlage*. While Tam speaks of the book as 'the closest to prophecy' (*ha-yoter qarov el ha-nevu'ah*) after the sacred

In addition to the ambivalences regarding the position of the author, the supplementary framework also creates ambivalences regarding historical perspective. The introductions by Amelander and the publishers support two interpretations of Jewish history that appear to be at odds with each other. On the one hand, the narrative of loss and restoration preserves memories of persecution suffered among other nations, and nourishes hope for the ingathering of exiles in the land of their ancestors. The publishers praise Amelander's work for its account of 'all the things that have happened to us Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple to this day: how the Holy One, blessed be he, had mercy with us in exile and did not allow us to perish in our enemies' lands, just as he swore to our ancestors and [said] that he will return us to our inherited land'.[56] Here, a perspective prevails that emphasizes hostility and violence in the lands of exile, and the prospect of future dissociation from them. On the other hand, the edition justifies the vivid interest among Jews in their own history and present circumstances along with their attention to the history of other nations, which signals involvement rather than detachment.

It is possible though that the tension between these two perspectives ultimately contributed to the success of Amelander's work as a translator, editor and author. The Amsterdam edition of *Sefer Yosippon* shows that the supplementary framework could turn seemingly contradictory positions into complementary perspectives. The edition presents its overarching narrative of loss and restoration as a framework that enables and encourages interest in the times and places of exile rather than discouraging it. Only twenty years earlier, the author of a history of Israel before the destruction of the Second Temple had dismissed any interest in exilic history in just a few lines: 'What is now written on what happened after the destruction of the Second Temple and further, I do not consider useful, since we Jews are now scattered among the seventy nations, until the Holy One, blessed be he, will have mercy upon us and lead us into the Land of Israel.'[57] Amelander's 'twin books' offered an alternative to such a perspective, which proved very successful. Interpreting exile as a time of preservation and unbroken promises allowed for critical perspectives on the violence of exile as well as wide-ranging historical inquiries into all aspects

scriptures, Amelander characterizes it as 'truly prophecy' (*mamash nevu'ah*); see *Sefer Yosippon* (Venice, 1544), 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated); and *Sefer Yosippon* ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamah le-shevaḥ ha-sefer' (unpaginated).

56 *Sefer Yosippon* ed. Amelander, 'Haqdamat ha-madpisim' (unpaginated).

57 Alexander ben Moses Etthausen, *Bet Yisra'el u-vet ha-beḥirah* (Offenbach, 1719), 'Haqdamah rishonah' (unpaginated). The work was re-printed in Amsterdam, 1724. See also Berger, *Producing Redemption*, 131–32; and Shmeruk, Chone, and Israel Bartal, '"Contemporary Jerusalem" by R. Alexander b. Moses Etthausen' (Hebrew), *Shalem* 4 (1984): 445–58.

of continuity and change in Jewish life. Within this larger framework, writing about exilic history – remote, recent or contemporary – could unfold and flourish.

6 Epilogue

In 1804, *She'erit Yisra'el* was printed in an abridged Hebrew version by an unknown translator in Shlomo Yarish Rapaport's publishing house in Lemberg. In this new version, the book ends with the settlement of the Sephardic Jewish community in Amsterdam and Antonio Montezinos's letter on the Ten Tribes in the New World, taken from Menasseh ben Israel's *Miqveh Yisra'el*.[58] This Hebrew edition was quite successful and reprinted several times. *Sefer Yosippon*, too, was reprinted in Hebrew and Yiddish, and although the 'twin books' were no longer published together, they continued to circulate in the same places at the same time, and the title pages of *She'erit Yisra'el* still referred to the book as 'the second part' of *Sefer Yosippon*.[59]

In 1846, a new edition was published in Lemberg by the prolific maskil and editor Abraham Menaḥem Mendel Mohr. It refers, again, to *Sefer Yosippon* on the title page, uses the Hebrew text of 1804, includes explanations in parentheses, and adds *Masa Dameseq*, an account of the suffering and rescue of the Jews of Damascus after they had been accused of 'ritual murder' in 1840. The short treatise is based on a collection of newspaper reports, which in turn were based largely on communication received from diplomats in Beirut and Alexandria, Paris and Vienna. Mohr contrasts the involvement of the French consul in the persecution and torture of Jewish leaders in Damascus and the complacency of other consuls with the determination of the Austrian consul, Caspar Merlato, to save the Jews.[60] Mohr's text harks back to *She'erit Yisra'el* and to its theme of the unbroken promise of preservation and restoration.

A year later, however, Abraham Mohr presents a darker picture in a book that might be seen as a further supplement and simultaneously takes its readers back to the very beginnings of the project to combine a religious

58 [Menaḥem Man Amelander], *She'erit Yisra'el ve-hu ḥeleq sheni mi-Sefer Yosippon* (Lvov, 1804), fol. 51b.

59 Another Hebrew version of *She'erit Yisra'el*, printed by Menaḥem Man ben Baruch Romm in Vilna 1811, included only the chapters up to the year 1400 and dropped the reference to *Sefer Yosippon* on its title page. It was the Hebrew translation from 1804, however, that was reprinted throughout the nineteenth century; see also Wallet, 'Links in a Chain', 292.

60 Abraham Mohr, 'Masa Dameseq', in [Menaḥem Man Amelander], *She'erit Yisra'el hu ḥeleq sheni mi-Sefer Yosippon* (Lemberg, 1846), fol. 45b–48a.

argument about the promise of restoration with profound interest in exilic history: Mohr now publishes Menasseh ben Israel's *Miqveh Yisra'el* in full, restoring the original context of Montezinos's letter and expanding on the theme of the Ten Tribes, with which *She'erit Yisra'el* had ended the year before, by adding numerous excerpts and references from Farissol to Johann Gildemeister. In his preface, Mohr expresses his concern about his brethren, the Jews in Western Europe, in France, Britain and the Ashkenazic lands, who celebrate the first successes of emancipation: 'What have they gained other than just the rights of man as such (*mishpat ha-adam be-asher hu' adam*)? If we gradually take upon us the yoke of the state as citizens, why do we not also enjoy its fruits like they do? Shall we only accept what is bad, and not also receive what is good? At what do our brethren rejoice, if not at flickering rays – deceptive light amidst clouds of darkness and gloom?' All hope is not lost, however, writes Mohr, and points to the promise of return and restoration, whose fulfilment is guaranteed by the ongoing presence of the Ten Tribes who continue to represent Jewish sovereignty in the lands of exile.[61]

This conjuncture in Mohr's text of an overarching religious narrative about persecution and restoration on the one hand, and a discerning political critique of the fragmentary and limited character of emancipation and ongoing hostility towards Jews in the Middle East and Europe on the other hand is perhaps the strongest evidence for the productivity of the supplementary framework of Jewish historical writing that supported the reconfiguration of Josephus's work in Amsterdam in 1743 and the relevance of *Sefer Yosippon* for modern times.

61 Menasseh ben Israel, *Miqveh Yisra'el*, ed. Abraham Menaḥem Mendel Mohr (Lemberg, 1847), fol. 1b ('Davar el ha-qore').