

Un-writing the End: Histories and Counter-histories in the Early Modern *Yosippon*

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1 Introduction

Among the very first Hebrew books printed in Italy was *Sefer Yosippon*. Abraham Conat, who had studied medicine and copied manuscripts in earlier years, had adopted printing enthusiastically and produced in Mantua, in the mid-1470s, a remarkable small series of books that included—besides halakhic and exegetical literature that formed the main output of the earliest Hebrew presses—a few popular texts of other genres, among them *Sefer Yosippon*.¹ At the end of the book, Conat offered his readers a narrated “table of contents,” listing the subjects they would find attractive in this historical work. He mentions the genealogies of nations after Babel, stories about Daniel, Esther, Alexander the Great, the Maccabeans and Herod the Great, and he concludes with the war against the Romans and the destruction of the Temple, expressing his hope that the Temple will be rebuilt soon. In contrast to Conat’s summary of the book, however, his edition of *Yosippon* does not end with the loss of the Second Temple. The text is based on the manuscript tradition known today as Recension B, where the historical account continues even after the burning of the Temple and the fall of Masada.² The text goes on to describe how

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- 1 Alongside *Sefer Yosippon*, the press issued Jedaiah Bedersi’s ethical treatise *Behinat ha-’olam*, printed by Estellina, Abraham Conat’s wife; Judah Messer Leon’s rhetorical treatise *Nofet tsofim*, the first Hebrew book printed during the life-time of its author; a calendar of the solar months; *Sefer Eldad ha-Dani* about the history and geography of the legendary Ten Tribes and halakhic diversity (see below, p. 615); Gersonides’ Bible commentary, and parts of Jacob ben Asher’s fundamental halakhic work *Arba’ah turim*. Only the first volume of *Arba’ah turim*, *Orah hayyim*, provides a date: printing was completed on 6 June 1476, and it has been argued convincingly that the smaller works must have preceded it. According to the colophon for *Yosippon*, printing ended on the 49th day of the Omer count (5 Sivan), i.e. most likely on 11 May 1475. Cf. Colorni, “Abraham Conat,” and Offenber, “The Chronology of Hebrew Printing at Mantua.”
 - 2 On Recension B, see Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, and for an edition of the endings: Flusser, *Sefer Yosippon*, 1.430–431. For Conat’s version, in particular, see Saskia Dönitz, “Josephus Torn to Pieces,” and her chapter in this volume.

Jewish captives were brought to Rome and resettled in various parts of the vast empire, among them Sepharad. When Joseph ha-Kohen is asked, finally, where he would like to dwell, he chooses the empire's capital itself: "And Joseph asked for the island in Rome on the southside, which is surrounded on all sides by the River Tiber, and there he built houses for himself and his family as well as a synagogue to pray and a *bet ha-midrash* to study there."³

Thus, Conat's version of *Yosippon* concludes with a twist: the ending is transformed into the story of a new beginning, with the ancient historian, to whom the Mantuan paratexts ascribe *Yosippon*, establishing a small Jewish settlement at the heart of the Roman—and subsequently Christian—empire. There, just next to the imperial centre but separate from it, on a small island, the institutions of Jewish worship and prayer are established that will be key to Jewish communal life as it would continue to unfold over the next centuries.

The issue of rupture and continuation was central, of course, to Christian polemics and Jewish counter-polemics regarding the political implications and religious meanings of the disastrous failure of the First Revolt against the Romans. Did Jewish history end, where Josephus ended his account of the "Jewish War?" Could his work be used to underpin the Christian supersessionist argument that Jews had not only lost their religious and political centre, but had been expelled from history itself, and that this was to be considered God's punishment for their failure to recognize the ascendance of Christianity and the Church? Or did Jewish history continue in exile, as Josephus himself indicated at the end of the *Antiquitates Judaicae*, when he spoke of his desire to write a concise chronological account of the events that "befel us ... to this very day?"⁴

When early modern Jewish authors set out to compose larger historical works, eager to present an affirmative answer to the last question, they were frequently drawn, just like Josephus, to the form of the chronicle that would allow them to write about the continuation of Jewish history through the ages and across the globe up until their own times. Thus, Abraham Zacut's *Sefer Yuhasin*, completed in Tunis in 1504, offered a judicious account of the ongoing transmission of halakhic knowledge, including notes on the rabbinic luminaries of his own times and on the expulsions from Spain and Portugal. The

3 *Sefer Yosippon*, Mantua, [1475], [135r].

4 Josephus, *AJ* 20.267 in William Whiston's literal translation (London: W. Bowyer, 1737, vol. 1, 653), which points to the question raised by many modern Jewish historians: how could events that "befell" Jews be interpreted and transformed into "our history," as Louis H. Feldman's translation (LCL) of the same words suggests? What did history look like from the perspective of those, whose historical agency remained precarious? Cf. Bonfil, "How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance," 101–102.

chronicle used, among other sources, Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-qabbalah*, which, in turn, had added its own version to earlier rabbinic accounts of halakhic transmission from Moses to the Ge'onim.⁵ As a result, the catastrophe of 70 CE did not determine the structure of Zacut's chronicle, which followed rather the gentler internal differentiations between generations of rabbinic scholars, from Tanna'im and Amora'im to the most recent Spanish authorities. This structure reflects a rabbinic perspective that was interested in demonstrating the uninterrupted sequence of generations and the successful transmission of halakhic knowledge as an argument for rabbinic authority against the competing claims of both Karaites and Christians. Drawing on Talmudic and Islamic precedents, this approach could thematize the rupture of the *hurban*, the destruction, while still focusing on a narrative of resilience and reliable continuation.⁶ Not long after *Sefer Yuhasin* had been printed in Constantinople (1566) and Krakow (1580–1581), two further chronicles were published, Gedalyah ibn Yahya's *Shalshet ha-qabbalah* (Venice, 1586) and David Gans' *Tzemaḥ David* (Prague, 1592), that differed vastly from each other in terms of focus, scope and organisation, but had at least one major feature in common with *Sefer Yuhasin*: the history of the *hurban* was integrated into narratives of continuation, and the chronicles end in the author's own days.⁷

Two further works show how their authors found additional ways of distancing themselves from Christian assumptions about the destruction of 70 CE as fatal rupture and definitive end of Jewish history. Joseph ha-Kohen opened his *Divre ha-yamim le-malkhe Tsarfat u-malkhe bet Otoman ha-Togar* (Sabbioneta, 1554) with a prologue lamenting not the end of Jewish history, but rather the end of Jewish historical writing after "Yosippon ha-Kohen" had finished his work.⁸ It is precisely because Jewish history continued to unfold among the nations that the author now declared it desirable to resume historical writing, and since he opted for the open-ended form of the annalistic chronicle, he could continue to update his work in the eventful decades after its first print edition.⁹

5 On antecedents and sources of Ibn Daud's work, see Ibn Daud, *The Book of Tradition*, ed. Cohen, 159–188.

6 Zacut mentions the *hurban* repeatedly, but mainly to clarify chronological issues in the succession of tannaitic teachers; see, in particular, Zacut, *Sefer Yuhasin*, ed. Herschell Filipowski and Aron Freimann, 20–32. On the Talmudic and Islamic contexts of Ibn Daud's history of continuity, see Ibn Daud, *The Book of Tradition*, ed. Cohen, 1–lvii.

7 See, in particular, Ibn Yahya, *Shalshet ha-qabbalah*, 27r; Gans, *Tzemaḥ David*, 38v.

8 Joseph ha-Kohen, *Divre ha-yamim*, ed. Robert Bonfil, 1.55.

9 For a detailed analysis of the prologue, see Jacobs, *Islamische Geschichte in jüdischen Chroniken*, 92–96. For the manuscript additions, see Ms. British Library Or. 10387 and

While Joseph ha-Kohen's chronicle—with its focus on medieval and contemporary history—had no place for the events of 70 CE, they play a major role in the historical work that was printed more frequently than any other before the mid-eighteenth century, Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah* (Adrianople, [1554]). As in the other works mentioned here, the destruction of the Second Temple does not structure the historical narrative, since it begins with episodes that precede the First Revolt against the Romans and then leaps forward to the transition from Sassanid to Islamic rule in the seventh century, but it is evoked as an important issue in Ibn Verga's depictions of Jewish-Christian debates. In their context, Josephus is summoned as a witness, but not in support of Jewish arguments. It is the courtier Nicholas of Valencia, who, in his attempt to incite the Spanish king against the Jews, invokes Josephus' speech before the walls of Jerusalem in a version based on *Yosippon*. Ibn Verga skilfully adapts *Yosippon*'s text to reflect Nicholas' Christian expectation that Jewish submission would lead to salvation: "For as long as you delay your submission, you delay your salvation." The Jewish failure to act upon such advice is then presented as a testimony to Jewish obstinacy.¹⁰ Ibn Verga's evocation of Josephus, or rather *Yosippon*, as a witness to Christian theological and historical claims points to the larger Christian contexts of the reception of Josephus, in which the Jewish reception of the ancient historian—and by implication also the reception of *Yosippon*—required work. And an obvious place to begin with was *Yosippon*'s ending.

The book stood out among the early modern chronicles mentioned here, because the chronicles were "open books" with no clear endings and could be updated to reflect the ongoing course of Jewish history, whenever an author or editor considered this necessary and useful. By contrast, *Yosippon* came perilously close to suggesting an end. This was not just the obvious effect of its reliance on Josephus' oeuvre, but also a consequence of its indebtedness to Pseudo-Hegesippus' paraphrase of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, the Latin *De excidio Hierosolymitano*.¹¹ As the title signals and recent research has shown, this historical account, taking its cue from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, was entirely focused on the end of Jewish history.¹² The text is presented as the final volume of a tri-partite work, i.e. "the tail end of a totalizing historical account of the Jews," and the narrative itself emphasizes the ignominious and definitive

Or. 3656, and for their integration in the edited text: Joseph ha-Kohen, *Divre ha-yamim*, ed. Bonfil, vol. 2–3.

10 Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah*, [31r] (Ch. 32); cf. sY 78; see also Cohen, *A Historian in Exile*, 166.

11 Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 13–14.

12 Kletter, "The Christian Reception of Josephus;" Pollard, "The De Excidio of 'Hegesippus,'" 76–79; Bay, "Writing the Jews out of History," 265–285.

character of the Jewish defeat at the hands of the Romans, who enact God's punishment of the obstinate nation.¹³ *Sefer Yosippon* departed from Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus in its bold transformation of the final acts of the Jewish rebels, who die not at their own hands, but rather in heroic battle with the Romans. But it depicted a harrowing end nonetheless that could easily suggest closure rather than continuation.

How then could Jews engage with a historical work whose structure and narrative could be used in support of Christian perspectives that considered the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple and the defeat at Masada as the end not just of Josephus' historical account, or of Jewish historical writing, but of Jewish history itself? *Sefer Yosippon* carried with it the challenge to distance it from Christian expectations and to un-write the end. In this sense, it was not just Josephus' oeuvre whose early modern and modern reception in Jewish contexts depended on the activities of editors, commentators, translators and other mediators. *Sefer Yosippon*, too, required efforts to extricate it from Christian interpretations and to render it attractive for Jewish audiences, as the work continued to circulate as part of a Josephus tradition in the plural.¹⁴ On the following pages, I will first outline briefly a few early modern Jewish and Christian attempts to un-write and re-write *Yosippon's* endings before turning in the final part of the chapter to Menachem Man Amelander's comprehensive re-framing of *Yosippon* in his Yiddish edition (Amsterdam, 1743), which endeavours in a fresh and captivating manner to un-write the end and to craft a history of continuation after rupture and new beginnings. The complex dynamics of early modern Christian and Jewish receptions of *Yosippon* are presented here in terms of "history" and "counter-history" to underline the argumentative and antagonistic character of the various ways in which early modern writers engaged with endings and beginnings.¹⁵ The terms should not be taken to support a linear account, however, in which Christian "history" would invariably find its response in Jewish "counter-history." From a Christian perspective, writing and re-writing endings to *Yosippon* could be presented as a counter-historical practice, aimed at making Josephus work for Christian rather than Jewish interpretations of history. From a Jewish point of view, un-writing Christian endings could be perceived as a counter-historical attempt at undoing Christian readings of Jewish history and simultaneously as

13 Bay, "Writing the Jews out of History," 269.

14 Cf. Schatz, "Introduction," 6.

15 For the dialogue between David Biale and Amos Funkenstein in which "counter-history" emerged as a multi-layered concept in Jewish historiography, see Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, 32–49 and Biale, "Counter-History."

an effort to establish a compelling new history of continuation. In other words, all attempts to engage with *Yosippon*'s endings were already forms of reception and provoked new and interesting forms of counter-reception, as editors, translators and printers provided their audiences with carefully crafted textual frameworks to guide their interpretations of the book.¹⁶ Menachem Man Amelander's twin set of *Yosippon* and its sequel, published in 1743, plays a pivotal role in these processes. It takes its readers beyond the polemical forms of writing and un-writing endings that dominated the early print history of *Yosippon* and suggests that it might become possible to establish a historical narrative with which Jews and Christians might engage equally and on equal terms.

2 Consolation

As we have seen, the Mantua edition of *Yosippon* follows Recension B that links the catastrophic loss of the Temple to a new beginning in the rabbinic world of synagogues and *batei midrash*, thus prising open the end again and creating a truly "open book" that invites readers to link Josephus' biography and works to the historical continuity of Jewish life and rabbinic transmission in exile.

When *Sefer Yosippon* was printed for the second time, it was in very different circumstances. After the expulsion from Spain, the brothers David and Samuel ibn Naḥmias had established in Constantinople the first printing press of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷ *Sefer Yosippon* was issued in 1510 by David and his son Samuel ibn Naḥmias with the financial backing of Jacob Tam ben David ibn Yahya and Samuel Rikomin.¹⁸ Tam, a leading rabbinical scholar in Constantinople, who had been born in Portugal and moved to Italy in 1493 before reaching the Ottoman Empire, showed further support for the publication by adding an epilogue in praise of the book. Here, he firmly anchors *Yosippon* in contemporary Jewish contexts, describing the pain and confusion caused by the expulsions from Spain and Portugal, and presenting the book as an answer to the suffering of the people: "My heart saw the terrible events and many hardships, calamities and desolation that have befallen my people,

16 For a nuanced and stimulating discussion of "counter-reception" in Jewish contexts, see Rosenzweig, "The Widow of Ephesus." For *SY*, its reception history, and counter-history, see Dönitz, "Historiography Among Byzantine Jews," 958–960; Dönitz, "Josephus im jiddischen Gewand," 57.

17 On the early history of printing in Constantinople, see Offenberg, "The Printing History;" Hacker, "Authors, Readers and Printers," 16–63, and the literature mentioned there.

18 *Sefer Yosippon*, Constantinople, 1510, [155v], colophon.

the exiles of Jerusalem in Sepharad, in the bitter and reckless expulsion ... We, in particular, who are hurled around at all times, need strong support to lean on it, as the troubles are many and frequent, and this book heals the illness to some extent, as it tells of [the events] that befell our ancestors and the miracles that occurred to them ...".¹⁹ Tam's praise for the power of *Yosippon* to heal "to some extent" and to answer questions about Jewish suffering in exile is only intelligible, of course, if the book is not framed as focused on a devastating end. And indeed, the Constantinople edition attempts even more comprehensively than the Mantua edition—and in a very different way—to un-write the end.

The edition was based on the significantly expanded manuscript tradition established by Judah Mosqoni in the fourteenth century, i.e. on Recension C.²⁰ Mosqoni's recension had created a "reception loop," as it were, in the relationship between *Yosippon* and Abraham ibn Daud's historical work. Ibn Daud had supplemented his *Sefer ha-qabbalah* on halakhic transmission with a short survey of Roman history (*Zikhron divre Romi*) and an abbreviated version of *Yosippon* (*Divre malkhe Yisra'el*), followed by a brief précis of Israel's "ten exiles" (*'Eser galuyot*) and a short midrash on the historical and redemptive meanings of Zechariah's prophecies.²¹ Mosqoni, in turn, used Ibn Daud's ending of *Divre malkhe Yisra'el* and the midrash on Zechariah to re-fashion the ending of his version of *Yosippon*.²² Following Ibn Daud, his recension foregrounded the themes of continuation and restoration, and the Constantinople edition disseminated this version in print.

In this new version, the story of Masada ends with a moving lament, a *qinah*, ascribed to Joseph ha-Kohen, who expresses grief over destruction and exile, prays for the downfall of Israel's oppressors, calls for God's vengeance, and concludes with prophecies of the rebuilding of the city and temple and the ingathering of exiles.²³ Mosqoni's recension then re-opens the historical narrative and, switching to Ibn Daud's text, creates a strong link between times of destruction and times of continuation through the figures of Titus and Yohanan ben Zakkai: Titus permitted the "remnant of Israel" to stay in a few places, among them Yavneh, and although the Roman general had intended to kill Rabban Gamliel, he listened to Yohanan ben Zakkai's pleading and

19 *Sefer Yosippon*, Constantinople, 1510, [152v].

20 Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 91–102.

21 On *Yosippon* and Ibn Daud, see Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 223–239, and Katja Vehlow's introduction to Ibn Daud, *Dorot 'Olam*, ed. Vehlow, 29–30.

22 Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 237.

23 SY in BAV, MS Borg.ebr.1, 190v (https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.ebr.1, accessed 28 July 2022).

spared the scholar's life.²⁴ In reproducing Mosqoni's text, the Constantinople edition found a way to address Josephus' omission of the world of rabbinic teaching from his account. The text evokes vividly the precarious situation for the Sages after the *ḥurban*, while simultaneously affirming continuation even more emphatically than the Mantua edition had attempted with its brief mention of the Bet ha-midrash on the Tiber island. The episode involving Titus and Yohanan ben Zakkai leads to an extensive apology for the Roman leader, a "just and honest man" (*tsaddiq ve-yashar*), whose misfortune it was to become entangled in the history of destruction.²⁵ Responsibility for the catastrophe rests with the Jewish people alone, who did not preserve unity among themselves, as the subsequent part, the midrash on Zechariah's prophecies, explains in great detail. The midrash correlates Zechariah's dark prophecies to events of the Second Temple period and singles out Agrippa II and the rebels as those who brought destruction to the land. The Constantinople edition, again following Mosqoni, offers an abbreviated paraphrase of the midrash, reminding its readers repeatedly of the parts of *Sefer Yosippon* where they could find a full account of the events. The narrative culminates in prophecies of consolation taken from Zechariah and Ezekiel.²⁶

In this version, the "un-written end" does not only point to the continuation of rabbinic transmission in exile and future restoration of the sovereignty of the people. It also serves as a two-fold argument against Christian claims. Firstly, Titus cannot be considered a tool of God's plan to punish the Jewish people for resisting Christianity, since it was Jewish internal strife that brought about the catastrophe. And secondly, the promises about the restoration of the Davidic kingdom are still valid, since Zechariah's prophecies apply only to the

24 SY in BAV, MS Borg.ebr.1, 191r; Ibn Daud, *Dorot 'Olam*, ed. Vehlow, 344–345; SY in Constantinople, 1510, [151v]. The episode is also included in *Sefer ha-qabbalah*, and is followed by a summary that links the destruction of the Temple directly to Yohanan ben Zakkai's successful transfer of rabbinic teaching to Yavneh: "After the destruction of the Temple, he went up to Jamnia and judged Israel from there, enacting new laws and making hedges about the Torah, up to the time when he passed away in Jamnia." Cohen's edition inserts a chapter ending after this passage, but in the contexts discussed here, it may be mentioned that in the early print editions the account continues uninterrupted, presenting the generations of the Tanna'im, until a new heading announces the next chapter on the Amora'im.

25 SY in Constantinople, 1510, [151v]. In the subsequent illustrated editions of the Yiddish *Yosippon*, two different perceptions of Titus compete against each other. While *Yosippon's* text emphasises Titus' compassion, it is illustrated, in Ch. 92, with a portrait inscribed *Titus ha-resha'* ("Titus the wicked"), the form in which Titus' name appears in *b. Gittin* 56b and in midrashic literature. (The inscription is missing only in Frankfurt 1707/1708, where a different portrait was chosen.)

26 SY in Constantinople, 1510, [152r], referring to Zech 14:6 and Ezek 39:25–29.

rulers of the Second Temple period, who were not of Davidic descent. In light of this argument, *Yosippon* could be read as a source of reassurance and hope despite its dramatic descriptions of death and devastation.

When Tam ibn Yahya situated *Yosippon* poetically in the contexts of the expulsions from Iberia, he could highlight the “healing” power of the work, because its ending had been transformed thoroughly to reflect continuation and an ongoing promise of restoration.²⁷ In the next edition of the work, such importance was attributed to Tam’s introduction that it was placed at the beginning of the book as a new prologue. The edition was published in Venice in 1544, when Hebrew printing was taken up briefly by the Farri brothers.²⁸ Cornelio Adelkind, who had worked for Daniel Bomberg until the fortunes of the famous printer declined, supervised the edition, which reproduced the Constantinople edition with only few modifications.²⁹ Among them are three polemical lines against Esau and Edom, i.e. Rome, that—in the transition from Islamic to Christian lands—disappeared from Yosef ha-Kohen’s *qinah*: “And may he arise in his great goodness to take vengeance from all nations, as is written in his prophet’s book: ‘I will wreak my vengeance on Edom through my people Israel’ [Ezek 25:14]; and his prophet said also: ‘The House of Jacob shall be fire and the House of Joseph flame, and the House of Esau shall be straw; they shall burn it and devour it’ [Obad 1:1].”³⁰

The Venetian edition formed the basis of all subsequent print editions of *Yosippon*, and one might say that in Mantua, Constantinople and Venice already much of the editorial work was accomplished that made it possible for *Yosippon* to be received in Ashkenazic contexts north of the Alps.

3 Endings in a Christian Key

At the same time, *Sefer Yosippon* had not gone unnoticed among Christian Hebraists. Its reception, however, remained for a long time somewhat messy and incomplete. The combination of theological, philological and historical

27 The second part of Tam’s epilogue was taken from Mosqoni’s introduction to *Yosippon* and ended on a similar note.

28 Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books*, 199–201.

29 Thus, Ch. 63 ends in the Constantinople edition at an earlier point than in the Venice edition, which may explain partially why Sebastian Münster chose it as the cut-off point for his edition; see below, p. 610.

30 *Sefer Yosippon*, Constantinople, 1510, [151v]; the beginning is included in *Sefer Yosippon*, ed. Flusser, 1.431 (SY 89, lines 146–149). Venetian censorship laws were tightened in 1543, but not strictly enforced: Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press*, 76–85.

interests that shaped the engagement of many Christian readers with the work, left its traces also on their treatment of *Yosippon's* endings.³¹ This is obvious already in the various approaches chosen by Sebastian Münster, who was the first to translate and publish parts of the book in Christian contexts. Münster's interrelated interests in Hebraica, chronology, history and geography found an early expression in his *Kalendarium Hebraicum* about Jewish chronology (Basel: Johann Froben, 1527) that includes excerpts from Ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-qabbalah*. The very abbreviated presentation covers Ibn Daud's history from Adam to the Second Revolt against the Romans and may appear, at first glance, rather unremarkable.³² When we come across the story of Titus and Yoḥanan ben Zakkai that Ibn Daud included not just in *Divre malkhe Yisra'el* but also, in slightly extended form, in *Sefer ha-qabbalah*, one may wonder, however, whether Münster did not adapt the text to Christian contexts already in his first brief encounter with Ibn Daud's work. In the Hebrew text, Münster reproduces Ibn Daud's tale of Vespasian who advised his son Titus before leaving for Rome to honour Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, the great Sage. In the Latin translation, however, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai disappears, and Titus is advised "to honour Rabbi Joseph the historiographer" (*ut honoret Rabbi Ioseph historiographum*).³³ Münster then continues with Ibn Daud's text about the date of the destruction of the Temple, but instead of linking Titus to Yoḥanan ben Zakkai and a history of continuation, Münster only mentions the murder of Yishma'el ben Elisha', the High Priest, and of Simon ben Gamliel, the Nasi. The same passage that Ibn Daud had used to create an account of (precarious) continuation has seemingly turned through a few small twists into the history of a quite undeniable end. Münster, however, continues with his excerpts. The final lines mention the Bar Kokhba Revolt, followed by a note on the redaction of the Mishnah and the medical works of Galen and Hippocrates. Here, Münster's scholarly interest in Jewish and pagan religious and cultural productivity clearly consigns theological arguments to the margins.

A couple of years later, Münster returns to Ibn Daud and publishes *Divre malkhe Yisra'el* in Hebrew and Latin, preceded by Maimonides' *Thirteen Principles* (Worms: Schöffner, 1529). With this publication, Münster adds a

31 For a detailed overview on the Latin, German and English reception, see Vehlow, "Fascinated by Josephus," 413–435; Ibn Daud, *Dorot 'Olam*, 63–73.

32 It is no surprise that Münster adds a note of caution to the Talmudic claim, reproduced by Ibn Daud, that Jesus was Yehoshua' ben Perahyah's disciple, and thus lived far earlier than the Gospels claim; Münster, *Kalendarium Hebraicum*, 59.

33 Münster appears to have read the abbreviation ריב"ז as Rabbi Yosef ben Gurion, mistaking the letter *zayin* for *gimel*, a mistake found already earlier in the text: Münster, *Kalendarium Hebraicum*, 59 and 61.

variant to previous approaches that either emphasized the dramatic and drastic end of Yosippon or sought to un-write it and re-open the narrative. Münster faithfully reproduces Ibn Daud's brief introduction to *Divre malkhe Yisra'el*, which formulates explicitly the argument for the ongoing validity of the prophecies about the restoration of the Davidic kingdom that was also folded into the midrash on Zechariah. He now also presents the story of Titus and Yoḥanan ben Zakkai accurately. And yet, he interferes more purposefully than in the earlier publication with the text's endings: he deletes Ibn Daud's references to the ingathering of exiles and the restoration of the Jewish people at the end of *Divre malkhe Yisra'el* and omits the midrash on Zechariah, keeping only the promise of a return of the Davidic kingdom. On the following two pages, he directly addresses the Jewish reader in a Hebrew and Latin postscriptum, proclaiming the fulfilment of the prophecies about the return of the Davidic kingdom, deploring Jewish intransigence and calling on the Jewish reader to convert. Even if this may have been a somewhat perfunctory addendum, aimed at contemporary Christian readers who needed to be reassured of Münster's unwavering commitment to the fundamentals of the Christian faith,³⁴ it was also an effective way to un-write the end differently. According to this conversionist "un-written end," Jews will have a part in the promised future of the Davidic kingdom, but only if they accept the end of their history as a people and join the Christian fold.

Münster's edition of Ibn Daud's work was published as an "elegant compendium of Josephus' histories" (*Compendium elegans historiarum Iosephi*). Ibn Daud's name completely vanished from the work, as it was ascribed, in Münster's Latin preface, to "Iosippus Iudaeus." A difference between Josephus and "Iosippus" was thus established, but *Divre malkhe Yisra'el* rather than *Sefer Yosippon* was attributed to the later author.³⁵ The compendium was almost immediately translated into German by Hans Schwyntzer as *Josippi Judische Historien* (Strasbourg, 1530). Schwyntzer's edition contains none of the framing texts of Münster's work—neither the preface nor the conversionist postscriptum—which renders it remarkably "neutral."³⁶ The same cannot be said, however, for German, English and Latin editions of the work that, after a hiatus of twenty years, enjoyed great popularity in the 1550s and into the seventeenth century. As Katja Vehlou has shown, these renditions either replicated

34 Cf. Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster*, 77–79 and 81–86; Burnett, "A Dialogue of the Deaf."

35 Münster, *Shelosh 'esreh 'iqqarim*. Accordingly, the running page headers consist of "Yosef" in Hebrew and "Iosippus" in Latin.

36 For contexts of his work, see Vehlou, "Fascinated by Josephus," 417.

Münster's alternative "un-written end," gesturing towards conversion, or they invoked in stark terms the end of the Jewish nation.³⁷

Münster returned to *Sefer Yosippon* with his *Iosephus hebraicus* (Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1541). This time the title page promises a translation of the work itself, "based on the Constantinople edition." The reader, however, who might have expected Münster to follow the Hebrew text closely, would have found the edition quite perplexing. A few changes certainly appeared sensible to contemporary readers: Münster continued to argue for Josephus' authorship of the work, which required him to dismiss the first pages of *Yosippon* as interpolations, since they clearly refer to medieval history and geography. Thus his edition only began with the Daniel story in Chapter 3.³⁸ This does not explain, however, why the volume is surprisingly slim. It is a small remark on the title page that hints at the reason: the work comprises sacred histories "a captivitate Babylonica usque ad praesidem Pilatum." Consequently, the text breaks off soon after Münster inserted into his Latin commentary the Testimonium Flavianum with its reference to Pilate. The final section includes the beginning of Agrippa II's reign, where the Hebrew text offers a short preview of events. In the Constantinople edition, the passage ends with the date of the destruction of the Second Temple, which brings Chapter 63 to a close. Münster may have found that this offered a convenient caesura: the preview of the end could stand in for the end itself. It remains remarkable, however, that Münster's decision to finish his work at this point left two fifths of the book (as printed in Constantinople) unedited and untranslated.³⁹ The reader, who might have relied on the information offered on the title page, would also discover something else when closely studying the ending: Münster used for the text itself the Mantua edition rather than Constantinople. He could have found the final words of his edition only in Conat's version: "And in Agrippa's days, the Second

37 Vehlow, "Fascinated by Josephus," 417–425. Vehlow's analysis also situates the reception of the work carefully in its respective Protestant and Catholic contexts.

38 Münster, *Iosephus hebraicus*, Praefatio (unpaginated). Azariah de' Rossi was among those who welcomed Münster's critical remarks about presumed interpolations; cf. De' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, 331.

39 See also below, n. 46. The first complete Latin translations of the work were published by Johannes Gagnier (Oxford, 1706) and Johann Friedrich Breithaupt (Gotha, 1707), and in their criticism of Münster both followed Scaliger, who had sharply criticized Münster's edition for its incompleteness, unreliability and failure to recognize the pseudepigraphic character of the work: Scaliger, *Elenchus trihaeresii Nicolai Serarii*, 41–45; cf. also Grafton and Weinberg, "I Have Always Loved the Holy Tongue," 202–207. For a summary of the positions of De' Rossi, Scaliger and Casaubon on the authorship of *Yosippon*, see Zeldes, *Reading Jewish History in the Renaissance*, 140–152.

Temple was destroyed, and great wars erupted in the entire land of Judaea and the entire land of Aram."⁴⁰

The Latin part of the edition translates these words and offers a final long comment by Münster that links Agrippa I tentatively to the Apostle Paul (based on Acts 26), and recapitulates Josephus' account of Agrippa's deification and death (*AJ* 19.343–350). After this juxtaposition of the apostle and the king, the comment ends with words that in a rather factual manner re-iterate the Christian emphasis on the devastating end of the "Jewish War": "Atque interim Agrippa iunior praefuit tetrarchiae Philippi Bathanaeae, & Trachonitidi, sub quo & Ierosolyma destructa fuit."⁴¹

It was left to another author to provide readers with a first complete translation of *Sefer Yosippon*—and it would be a translation not into the *lingua franca* of Christian scholarship, but rather into the vernacular of Ashkenazic Jews.

4 Un-writing the End in Two Languages

The first complete edition of *Yosippon* produced north of the Alps was Michael Adam's Yiddish translation, published by Froschauer's press in Zurich in 1546, just two years after the Venice edition, on which it relies. Michael Adam was a convert, who had assisted Konrad Pellikan and Paul Fagius with their Hebrew endeavours.⁴² Before publishing his *Yosippon* translation, he had translated Jonah Gerondi's *Sefer ha-yir'ah*, published by Froschauer in the same year as *Yosippon*, and he had very likely contributed as an editor to the Yiddish Pentateuch translation published by Paulus Fagius in Constance in 1544.⁴³ The translator lived at the seams between Christian and Jewish worlds, and he created a beautiful edition that invited both audiences to engage with it.

The edition was produced with great care. Adam's own Yiddish introduction affirms Josephus as the author of *Yosippon*, situates the book in the wider context of contemporary translations from Hebrew into the vernacular,

40 *Sefer Yosippon*, Mantua, [91v]; the words would also be included in the Venice edition, [92v]. Azariah de' Rossi had already noticed the proximity of Conat's and Münster's editions in their omission of Vespasian's enthronement in Rome: De' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, 332. Leopold Zunz identified the Mantua edition as Münster's *vorlage*: Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge*, 154 note b); cf. also Prijs, *Die Basler hebräischen Drucke*, 97. Münster himself refers explicitly to Conat's praise of the book and quotes from it in his "Praefatio."

41 Münster, *Iosephus hebraicus*, 178.

42 For the few known biographical details, see Sidorko, "Zürich und der hebräische Buchdruck," 114–115.

43 Shtif, "Mikhael Adams dray yidishe bikher."

outlines some of the content, and speaks proudly of the many illustrations that adorn the book.⁴⁴ These themes would have been of interest to both Jewish and Christian readers. More specifically relevant for Jewish readers was the next part: Adam kept Tam ibn Yahya's Hebrew prologue on the significance of *Yosippon* after the expulsions from Iberia. In the main part, Adam also clearly addressed Jewish readers when adding many explanations of expressions that might have sounded unfamiliar in Yiddish. Another feature, however, was certainly intended mainly for a Christian audience and might have looked odd to Jewish readers: the Hebrew text of the title page and Tam's prologue were vocalized. Adam further included a brief explanation of the transcription of Yiddish vowels—a supplement that both Jewish and Christian readers may have found useful.⁴⁵ But how did Adam approach *Yosippon's* end? Remarkably, the presentation of his translation amplifies the messages of continuation and consolation for the Jewish people on the final pages of the book. Joseph ha-Kohen's *qinah* and the quotes from Zechariah and Ezekiel are presented bilingually, in Hebrew and in Yiddish translation. This renders their self-assertive un-writing of the end visually very prominent. Rather than seeking to un-do the un-writing of the end that he found in his Venetian *vorlage*, as, for instance, Münster had attempted, Adam creates more space for it and faithfully reproduces it. Thus, the edition turns into a quite explicit attempt to communicate to Jews why the book matters to them, and to Christians why the book matters to Jews.⁴⁶

44 Froschauer used woodcuts from the famous *Zurich Bible* and *Stumpf's Chronicle*, some of them based on designs by Hans Holbein the Younger; see Sidorko, "The most beautiful printed book."

45 The text is nearly identical to the explanation appended to the Yiddish translation of *Sefer ha-middot* (*Orhot tzaddiqim*), published anonymously in Isny (1542). For an analysis of the short description, which appears to address primarily Jewish readers, who would not have needed instruction in reading and writing the consonants, see Frakes, *The Cultural Study of Yiddish in Early Modern Europe*, 20–23, 33–34, and for the transcription and translation of both versions: 92–93 and 124–125. Cf. also Max Weinreich, *Shtaplen*, 106–115.

46 In the meantime, Sebastian Münster had remained interested in *Yosippon*, but just when Michael Adam might have hoped that the Christian scholar would acknowledge the merits of his work, he was harshly rejected. Already in 1544, Münster had mentioned in a letter to Andreas Masius that he had heard about the new Venetian edition of the work, whose "first part" he had translated three years ago, and a few weeks later, he reports to Pellikan that Schreckenfuchs had sent him the Venetian print. In 1550, he writes to Pellikan that he is now translating *Yosippon's* description of "the destruction of Jerusalem," and asks whether Pellikan has the Venetian edition so that he might compare a few passages. In the following paragraph, Münster mentions Michael Adam, who had used the Venetian print—indeed probably Pellikan's copy—for his Yiddish translation, but only to say

Over the following 200 years, the further reception of *Yosippon* in Ashkenaz north of the Alps unfolds at a rather hesitant pace. The Krakow edition of 1589 follows in text and layout closely the Venetian version of 1544 with Tam's preface, its table of contents and arrangement of the text in two columns, although it uses semi-cursive rather than square letters, its colophon refers to the typesetters only and does not include words in praise of the book. Overall, the book attests to the uneven printing standards in Krakow after the splendid beginnings of the press, when a Krakow edition could hardly be told apart from a Venetian book, and in contrast to the Zurich edition, the volume shows no specific engagement with *Yosippon*. In 1607, Michael Adam's Yiddish translation was re-printed in Prague, but without Adam's name.⁴⁷ The title page, now in Yiddish, diverges from its predecessors to emphasise Yosef ben Gurion's captivity as an instance of *qiddush ha-shem*, while omitting the reference to the respect the author had enjoyed among the Romans, and it concludes with the hope for the rebuilding of the Temple "that we would like to see." This wish foreshadows the book's ending that remained textually the same, while being visually enhanced: the printer's mark shows the temple, reaffirming the hope for restoration.⁴⁸

When *Yosippon* was re-printed in Yiddish in Amsterdam in 1661, a resolute effort was made to render the work more familiar and attractive for contemporary readers. The Yiddish language of the translation is revised, the editor adds his own short Yiddish preface to Michael Adam's preface, and a new set of woodcuts is included. Adam's emphatic bilingual rendition of biblical prophecies and promises at the end, however, is preserved. An important transformation of the work occurs in terms of the format: in Frankfurt, where the Hebrew *Yosippon* is published again, the work is printed in octavo as a book to carry in one's pocket, or as the printer says, as a book that readers "can carry with them in the streets and marketplaces."⁴⁹ This development continued with

that Adam was in prison and he had refused to bail out "the scoundrel." Münster, *Briefe*, Nr. 23–24 (88–94) and 48 (179–183); Sidorko, "Zürich und der hebräische Buchdruck," 115.

47 The colophon that included Adam's name was omitted. In addition, the known copies of this quarto edition lack—after the title page and table of contents—the second quire, which would have included prefaces. Numeration starts with the third quire, where the main text begins. This is the case for the copy of the Wagenseil Collection and the three copies described in detail in Sixtová, "Hebrew Printing in Prague, 1512–1672," 459–460. As the first quires were sometimes printed at the end, it is possible that the second quire was never produced. (I am grateful to Olga Sixtová for this information.)

48 On the use of Giustiniani's famous Venetian printer's mark in Prague, see Heller, "The Printer's Mark of Marco Antonio Giustiniani."

49 *Sefer Yosippon*, Frankfurt, 1689. A further Yiddish edition was printed in Frankfurt in 1707/1708.

the Amsterdam edition of 1723 which, after the small but quite voluminous Frankfurt edition, was produced as a relatively slim book, but at a price: the type is tiny.

Over this long period, the editions remain faithful to the structure of *Yosippon* as established in Venice, and editors saw no reason to re-engage with the question whether *Yosippon*'s endings reflected sufficiently the continuation of Jewish history to their own days. This changed, however, when Menachem Man Amelander turned to *Yosippon* and prepared a new Yiddish edition. It was published in Amsterdam in 1743, re-printed frequently,⁵⁰ and became the most successful early modern version of the work.

5 Continuation in “the East” and in “the West”

The title page of Amelander's edition does not betray the significance of the new undertaking: it merely highlights that the Yiddish language has been adapted to contemporary usage and that letters and illustrations have been refreshed. The preface explains, however, that *Yosippon* has now acquired a supplement, titled *She'erit Yisra'el*. This chronicle of Jewish life in exile “from the time when Josephus stopped writing to the present moment”⁵¹ linked *Yosippon* to the group of Hebrew chronicles mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Just like them, *She'erit Yisra'el* presented a global and open-ended history of the Jewish people and was shaped by a strong commitment to the continuation of Jewish life “here and now.” Just as the Krakow edition of Zacut's *Sefer Yuhasin* had proclaimed a new centre of Jewish learning in Poland and Gans' *Tsemah David* had emphasised the successful relationship of the Jewish community with the emperor in Prague, Amelander now depicts flourishing Ashkenazic and Sephardic life in Amsterdam. Although Amelander did not interfere with the established Venetian form of *Sefer Yosippon*, he changed its ending in a very expansive and decisive way, twinning the work with a chronicle that re-opened the historical narrative and took it to the times and places of *Yosippon*'s contemporary readers. Connecting *Yosippon* to *She'erit Yisra'el* created an overarching narrative of loss and redemption that gave meaning to exilic history as proof of God's ongoing promise to his people, and justified the lively interest among early modern Jews not just in ancient history, but also in the history of their own times and places. Thus, the chronicle achieved the

50 Six re-prints followed in less than 60 years: Fürth, 1767 and 1771; Amsterdam, 1771; Nowy Dwor, 1785; Dyhernfurth, 1799; Lvov, 1801.

51 Amelander, *She'erit Yisra'el*, title page.

task of dissociating *Yosippon* comprehensively and decisively from Christian supersessionist claims and any attempts to write post-exilic Jews out of world history.⁵²

In his undertaking, Amelander made judicious use of a Christian work that could serve as the basis for his own historical project: he drew on Jean-Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* (Den Haag, 1706–1707), conceived as a sequel to Josephus that was soon translated into Dutch, which made the work accessible to Amelander. For Basnage, a Huguenot author who had found refuge in the Netherlands, Jewish history had not ceased to matter after the destruction of the Temple. In the context of renewed lively interest in the Hebrew Republic and in Jewish laws and institutions in the seventeenth century, it was possible for Basnage to count on wide-spread interest in his undertaking, and he made sure to frame his chronicle by ending it with a vision of the eventual conversion of Jews.⁵³

When Amelander set out to re-open the historical narrative again after *Yosippon*, he did so in a two-fold way, turning first to Jews in “the East” and then to “the West.”⁵⁴ In a first step, he takes his readers back to the wars preceding the destruction of the First Temple and to the exile of the ten tribes of Israel. He reproduces the legendary accounts, based on Biblical verses, of vast numbers of Jewish people residing in Persia, Ethiopia, Babylonia and beyond, referring to Josephus, *Yosippon* and *Sefer Eldad ha-Dani*.⁵⁵ In doing so, Amelander also sheds new light on an intriguing aspect of the earliest print history of *Yosippon*. Already in Mantua, *Sefer Eldad ha-Dani* had been printed alongside *Yosippon*,⁵⁶ and in Venice, the small work was issued just a few months after *Yosippon* had left the press.⁵⁷ That it might be possible to perceive a connection between the two books, however, was not made explicit and becomes apparent only in Amelander's first chapter: suggesting a link between *Yosippon* and Eldad ha-Dani with his stories about the Ten Tribes was yet another possibility to un-write the end. The existence of the Tribes demonstrated that, far from marking an end, exile could sustain the continuation of Jewish life:

52 For an analysis of these dynamics and Menasseh ben Israel's earlier attempt to produce a sequel to Josephus' work, see Schatz, “A Tradition in the Plural,” 62–65.

53 On Amelander's relationship to Basnage, see Wallet, *Links in a Chain*, 178–208; Wallet, “Hidden Polemic.”

54 Amelander, *She'erit Yisra'el*, 5r, following Basnage's nomenclature and structure.

55 For a nuanced investigation of the diverse traditions about the Ten Tribes, see Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes*.

56 See above, p. 599 n. 1, and Perry, *Eldad's Travels*, 13 and 37–41.

57 The anthology, in which *Sefer Eldad ha-Dani* was included, would be the last Hebrew book published by Adelkind in the press of the Farri brothers: Habermann, *Ha-madpis Cornelio Adelkind*.

the Tribes prospered in their new dwelling places and even had kings, armies and a degree of political sovereignty. Thus, they could offer consolation and reassurance to Amelander's readers, who "should not think that the Holy One Blessed be He has abandoned us entirely, Heaven forbid, as some of the nations say, namely, that they are justified, because they have kings and we don't."⁵⁸ God's promise that the "sceptre will not depart from Judah" (Gen 49:10) was still valid.⁵⁹ Since some readers, however, might have been sceptical of the existence of the Tribes, Amelander reproduces Isaac Akrish's fascinating account of his own disbelief in the stories he heard about the Tribes, when he lived in Constantinople and Egypt, and of his encounter with Samuel Shullam, the famous physician and first editor of Abraham Zacut's *Sefer Yuhasin*, who persuaded him to reconsider the matter in light of reliable testimony to their existence.⁶⁰

Having assured his readers of the continuation of Jewish life in "the East," Amelander re-opens the narrative a second time, turning to "the West," and more specifically to the Jews of Rome. Here, one almost expects to find Josephus on the Tiber island with its synagogue and Bet ha-midrash, as Conat's edition had depicted it. Amelander, however, offers a far more comprehensive account of Jewish self-assertion in Rome. Already Augustus, he informs his readers, "awarded the Jews civil rights (*burger rekht*), so that they should be equal to all the other nations; he also granted them the freedom to worship and to observe their Shabbat and holidays publicly ... They had their own jurisdiction (*mishpat*), and if a serious matter occurred, they sent a letter to the Sanhedrin that resided in Jerusalem. They also had their particular street, where they lived on the other side of the Tiber, until Titus defeated Jerusalem and brought many thousands of Jews as captives to Rome. At that time, the space for Jews became too small, and the Jews who had come with Titus were given—also on account of their great poverty—a different place ... but the Jews who lived near the Tiber continued to reside there."⁶¹

Amelander's striking narrative clearly reflects the language, realities and aspirations of Sephardim and Ashkenazim in early modern Amsterdam far more accurately than the experience of the ancient Jewish community in

58 Amelander, *She'erit Yisra'el*, 2r, alluding to Christian interpretation of Gen 49:10.

59 For the Dutch contexts, nuances and ramifications of this claim, see Albert, *Jewish Politics*, 254–296.

60 Akrish had published his brief work *Qol mevasser* in Constantinople, ca. 1577, and it was reprinted several times; Amelander refers explicitly to the edition published in Offenbach in 1720. Basnage had opened his Seventh Book with reports on the Ten Tribes, and Amelander takes up this theme for his own purposes, crafting a chapter that is largely independent of Basnage.

61 Amelander, *She'erit Yisra'el*, 5v.

Rome. Not even the distinction between long-standing residents and newly arriving exiles, in which his readers might have recognized tensions that affected their own community, is omitted.⁶² Amelander arrived at his lively picture by using Basnage's more detailed and intricate account that often refers to Paul's stay in Rome, while stripping it of all its negative or ambivalent nuances.⁶³ In this sense, Basnage and Amelander remained involved in creating histories and counter-histories, and they continued to disagree about the future of the Jewish people. However, the situatedness of Amelander's Yiddish oeuvre at the interstices between Jewish and Christian worlds—reminiscent of Michael Adam's earlier work—also points to new possibilities. The parallel between Amelander's and Basnage's depiction of Jews with *burger rekht* (in Yiddish) or *Burgerrecht* (in Dutch) suggests that, at least for a moment, the Christian and Jewish historians might have agreed that endeavours to “un-write the end” should form part of a historical opening in the present that would involve the establishment of civil rights for Jews and thus a more equal basis for engaging in debates about endings, beginnings and the continuation of Jewish exilic life.

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62 On the complex relationship between the Polish Jews who had fled to Amsterdam after the persecutions and wars of the 1640s and 1650s and the established Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities, see Teller, *Rescue the Surviving Souls*, 259–271.

63 Basnage, *Vervolg*, 2.1343.

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