Chapter two
Civilizing the Jews: The reform of language, education, and religion

Yes, that Hamankloppen! Haman, was that not the age-old personification of the Jew-hater? When the megille was read on Purim and his name reverberated, then the Jew expressed his feelings through loud knocking. He vented all of the sorrow and suffering of his ancestry, all of the contempt, all of the injustice to which he was exposed daily; others whistle, he knocked; he was after all at home, he was after all in sjoel by himself.¹

In the above citation, the late historian Hartog Beem (1892–1987) sees in the Jewish ritual of hamankloppen the essence of Judaism: the enduring oppression and survival of the Jewish people. For Beem, the Jewish body communicated the inner life and the Jews’ struggles. As such, seeing the Jew is knowing the Jew. This idea of a relationship between inner life and outward appearance also comes to the fore during the call for the reform of the (Dutch) Jewish community. Reforming Jewish behavior would elevate the Jew from his pitiful state and would make him a useful member of society. Various proposals from Jews and non-Jews aimed at reforming Jewish religion, the educational system, and Jewish language; the Jew’s outward appearance should mirror a civilized inner core.

The following paragraphs discuss reforms directed toward elevating the Jewry in fundamental domains, such as language, education, and religion. As will become apparent, discourses representing the Jews as uncivilized and backward legitimized the (governmental) reform policy and functioned as a motor for religious change. The abolition of Jewish conspicuousness was regarded as a solution for the deplorable state of Jewry: ‘the Jewish question’. Therefore, the Jews were ordered to abandon Yiddish, to reform their religion according to modern tastes, and to adopt a secular curriculum. These reforms were widely endorsed by various factions in Dutch Jewry. However, the pressure on the Jewish way of life also contributed to resistance, which resulted in

¹Hartog Beem, De verdwenen Mediene: mijmeringen over het vroegere joodse leven in de provincie (Amstelveen: Amphora Books, 1982), 82–83. Pronunciation of the Hebrew differs in Yiddish, as they pronounce the ‘a’ vowels as an ‘o’. Beem uses the Yiddish pronunciation of the Hebrew; however, I use the more common spelling hamankloppen.
sacralizing the contested Jewish conspicuousness of the Yiddish language and expressive rituals. This chapter identifies Jewish responses to these civilizing efforts, and it will show that such efforts in some cases resulted in the essentialization and (romantic) appreciation of Jewish expressiveness, and in others lead to the refutation of such expressions.

1. The abandonment of Yiddish

The promotion of the Dutch language and the fight against Yiddish were central to the Enlightenment programs of reform in the Netherlands. Already at the end of the eighteenth century, a proposal published in De Koopman regarded the vernacular as key to elevating the Jewish masses. The naye kille and their supporters considered language crucial in the civil improvement of the Jews, and accordingly published many pamphlets in Dutch. Moreover, they introduced Dutch in the synagogue for their announcements, sermons, and calling people up to the Torah, expecting that the linguistic reform of religious rituals would elevate, emancipate, and nationalize Dutch Jewry.

Members of the naye kille found welcome support for their reform program in the government of King Louis. The High Consistory (1808) had numerous members of the naye kille and Felix Libertate among its ranks. After King Louis’ 1808 decree of the unification of the naye and alte kille, typical naye kille endeavors such as the promotion of Dutch, the reform of Jewish rituals, Jewish military service, and the education of the Jews became part of the High Consistory’s policy. For instance, in 1808 the High Consistory convinced King Louis to ordain a translation of the Pentateuch in Dutch and to require Jewish educators to teach in Dutch. The translation enforced the idea of a citizen-Jew, as it blended Dutch and Judaism. The maskilim also dominated the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, founded in 1814 by Willem I, and consequently both commissions became dispositives and developed dispositives for ‘modernizing’ the Jewish community.

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2 Despite their ferocious support of the Dutch vernacular, even the naye kille members were not versed enough in Dutch, and consequently they wrote their regulations in Yiddish. Their minutes, however, are written in Dutch. See D.M. Sluys, “Het reglement van de Adath Jescherun (de ‘neie k’hillloh) te Amsterdam,” Reprint speech, NIW 12 and 19 June 1931 (nr. 5 and 6), 5; for the minutes, see ACA, 714: 2362

3 See for the influence of the maskilim on the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, see Wallet, Nieuwe Nederlanders. De integratie van de joden in Nederland 1814–1851, 30-43.
From the foundation of the *naye kille* onwards, Jews opposed the abandonment of Yiddish and considered the use of Dutch unjewish. The use of Dutch (names) promoted intermarriage, was a sign of irreligiosity, and eventually led to the abandonment of Judaism. "Mourning over Jews like that! They want to take Kaatje and Mietje for a wife!" cries the *Diskursn* character Gumpel.\(^4\) He associates speaking Dutch and carrying Dutch names with Christianity. For the writers of the *alte kille Diskursn*, to be Jewish was something linguistic; a Jew should speak Yiddish and carry a Jewish name. Therefore, the use of Dutch was equated with conversion and a deviation from the Jewish way of life. "And then should I bring shame over myself and sign my Jewish name for a Christian? Maybe the Christian makes a mistake and thinks that that person isn’t a Jew. Is it a disgrace to be a Jew?\(^5\)" Moreover, Gumpel also ridicules the habit of many *maskilim* of using a Latinized version of their name. According to the *alte kille*, using a Dutch name was a sign of embarrassment about one’s Jewish background.

A certain son of Moushe Shoukhet, his name is Kalmen; he signs himself Carolus, and Leyb Veyzp, Louis, and the absent Arn Haker, Arnoldus. Let’s see if the forefathers of those people have signed like that. But it will appear again that they are ashamed of themselves because they are Jews. You’ll see that Carolus is going to have children one day. He is going to call [his son] Gerrit, so he is going to be called up in synagogue (N.B. if he remains a Jew): *Habokher Gerrit ben hagvir Carolus*.\(^6\)

Clearly, only Jews who were uneasy with their Jewishness removed their distinctive Jewish features in order to pass as Dutch men. Not surprisingly, this argument continues in a *Diskursn* parody of the speech of Salomon de Jonge Meyer, a prominent *Felix Libertate* member. "The blind coincidence that gave me a Jew as father did not change any of my human qualities or rights," de Meyer proclaimed.\(^7\) The citation was, however, changed into the following: "‘How can I alter my fate that my father was a Jew, and had me circumcised when I was eight days old?’ Well, is that an argument for a Jew?"\(^8\)

Accusations, such as being ashamed to be recognized as a Jew, were repeatedly directed


\(^{5}\) Ibid.

\(^{6}\) Ibid.


\(^{8}\) Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 228 and 284.
at the maskilim. According to the writers of the alte kille’s Diskursn, the adoption of non-Jewish behavior was a combination of the wish to be socially accepted by Christians and embarrassment over a Jewish background. Moreover, they challenged the maskilic idea of Judaism as a private religion. As such, the alte kille’s resistance toward the Dutch language reflects their ideal of a distinctive, discernible, and conspicuous Jewishness.

**Dutch in the synagogue**

In their discursive formations of Jewish identity, the authors of the alte kille’s Diskursn established the boundaries of Jewishness. They considered the use of Dutch ridiculous and unsuitable for a Jew. It was inappropriate for a Jew to remove the distinctive characteristics of the Jewish way of life. To eliminate the linguistic boundaries between Jews and Christians was perceived as mixing two incompatible things, a view that is emphasized when the writers use the Jewish theological concept of making a distinction (lehavdel) to describe the incompatibility between Jews and Christians. “Come here and see: Have we Jews not always been regarded on an equal footing with – to make a distinction – Christians?” However, this view contradicted the aim of many maskilim to be different only in religion. Because the alte kille authors regarded the distinctiveness of Jewish life as essential to Judaism, they fervently defended the preservation of all aspects of the Jewish way of life. Although Yiddish was at first merely a fact of life, they now interpreted its use religiously. Yiddish was not merely a language used by Jews; it was also an inextricable part of Jewish identity. For the alte kille authors, any alteration or novelty was a direct attack on Judaism and should therefore be rejected out of hand.

The use of Dutch in the naye kille’s synagogue was especially targeted. When the Diskursn character Tevele tries to start a conversion in Dutch, he is immediately rebuked. “Persistent fool! Why do you speak Dutch with me? We’re not in the synagogue, are we?” By exaggerating the customs of the naye kille’s use of Dutch, the author attempts to expose the ridiculousness of speaking the nation’s vernacular. Interestingly enough, inexperience with Dutch did not serve as an argument against its use in the synagogue. Instead, a Jew speaking any other language than Yiddish functioned as an example of a despicable deviation from the social norm.

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9 Ibid., 226.
10 There is a profound difference between Yiddish and Hebrew. Yiddish was the Jewish vernacular, while Hebrew was the holy language and was used in religious contexts.
11 Ibid., 304.
According to the *alte kille*, speaking Dutch was embarrassing and a violation of Jewish etiquette. The *naye kille*’s custom of using Dutch for its announcements countered normal, appropriate Jewish conduct. “Why else are we Jews? We must speak Yiddish among ourselves. How would it look if people in synagogue were standing together speaking Dutch!” Moreover, the new French manner of greeting was seen as being as detrimental and as ludicrous as speaking Dutch.

Reb Sender: “Do you speak Dutch in your synagogue?”

Yankev: “Yes, what do you think about that! On Yom Kippur, their rabbi went before *minkhe* to the *manhig-hakhoudesh*, paid him a compliment in Dutch with a blown kiss, and asked him about the news in the newspapers.”

Speaking foreign languages and adopting new ways of communication was nothing more than affectation and was negatively contrasted with normal Jewish religious conduct. The *Diskursn* writers adopted this anti-Frenchification discourse from Dutch spectatorial and satirical literature. French culture was used in opposition to the construction of a Dutch identity in which obtuseness was seen as something positive. Interestingly, the *alte kille*’s *Diskursn* authors blended this discursive strand into their idea of Jewishness. Jewish identity now mirrored typical Dutch identity markers, such as sobriety and self-restraint.

The writers of the *alte kille* voiced a widespread complaint, articulating the strong Jewish opposition to the use of Dutch in the synagogue. The chronicler Wing reports on the proclamation of the announcement of a day of thanks and fasting in Dutch in 1810: “Many left the synagogue, knocked on the desks, and stomped, and in every synagogue a decent proclamation was impossible.” Wing challenged the High Consistory’s reform initiatives. The abolition of what the *maskilim* considered “a

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12 Ibid., 396.
13 Cf. Ibid., 298.
14 Ibid., 306.
16 Since the Middle Ages, the Dutch government decreed special days of thanks and fasting for the well-being of the country, for victory in war, for protection against deadly diseases, etc. These days of thanks and fasting were observed by all religious denominations and communities in the Netherlands. This tradition carried on well into the nineteenth century.
horrible jargon” was one of the main objectives of the Dutch Haskalah.\(^{18}\) Therefore, the quest of the High Consistory to replace Yiddish with Dutch cannot be seen as separate from the German Haskalah and Mendelssohn’s aversion to Yiddish and promotion of German.

Despite Jewish resistance to the use of Dutch, on 23 February 1813 the High Consistory decreed: “No one shall be called up for the books of Moses, or in the synagogue, or on any other occasion with another name than the one he normally uses and under which he is known in the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages.”\(^{19}\) This decree served two purposes, namely the support of the Napoleonic Civil Code regarding the registration of citizens and the Dutchification of the Jews. The High Consistory forbade the Jewish custom of having both a civil and a religious name because it challenged the idea of a single national identity. Moreover, a Jewish name emphasized the otherness of the Jew. The decree aimed at the eradication of Jewish distinctiveness, while at the same time introducing the vernacular into the religious service, fostering and establishing the \textit{maskilic} and governmental vision of Jewishness.

The introduction of this dispositive, however, also triggered resistance and reinforced the status of traditional identity markers. On 12 December 1813, 42 Jews from Amsterdam who were against the introduction of Dutch in the synagogue requested that Willem I abolish the High Consistory in order to halt what they considered the ongoing intrusion on Jewish religion. In particular, they rejected the High Consistory’s authority.

And still the Consistory builds on the principles of the French Constitution, such as the separation of state and church and the idea that everyone can decide whether or not he wants to serve God. Immoral principles and godless purpose are as clear as the sun in the afternoon: the Consistory, through its employment of some useless paid clerks and civil servants, exhausted our funds for the poor so greatly that it can no longer distribute the necessary relief. Moreover, it has caused immeasurable debts. [We


\(^{19}\) ACA, 1241-76.
request that you abolish and destroy [the High Consistory] and allow this community to restore its own administration.\textsuperscript{20}

According to the signatories, these high employment costs and community debts proved the High Consistory's mismanagement. Moreover, they blamed the High Consistory for disseminating immoral doctrine, such as the free interpretation of religion.

In their request, they asked for the restoration of the old regulations and administration, calling people up to the books of Moses in Hebrew and the right to make announcements in Hebrew. The Hebrew family names were, in their view, essential to the religious service. "Because it is part of calling people up to the books of Moses, which is part of the religious doctrine, it should therefore be observed, and it is absurd to change. [Dutch names] are heard with contempt by every right-minded Israelite."\textsuperscript{21} The use of Dutch violated the Torah's holiness, and they considered any change in the religious service outrageous.

Their view of correct Jewish behavior dominated the signatories' request, stating that announcements in Hebrew were for the "true Jew the easiest to understand."\textsuperscript{22} Surprisingly, they asked for the return of Hebrew even though it was customary to use Yiddish. Apparently, the negative attributions of meaning to Yiddish as a 'horrible jargon' made them reluctant to ask for its return. It remains open to question whether the majority of Jews were able to understand Hebrew at all, as most of them were uneducated. However, it was not understanding of the language that was at stake, as a real Jew could understand Hebrew. For the signatories, Dutch simply did not belong in the synagogue, and it certainly was not used by those they considered to be authentic Jews.\textsuperscript{23}

The High Consistory's civilizing efforts resulted in a renegotiation of appropriate and inappropriate Jewish behavior. As we have seen, Jews fiercely resisted the mandated abandonment of Yiddish. They regarded Yiddish as ingrained in their Jewish identity. Their response was characterized by a refusal to abandon traditional identity markers. Consequently, a cultural phenomenon such as the Yiddish language became a

\textsuperscript{20} ACA, 1241-81.
\textsuperscript{21} ACA, 1241-81.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} One of those who signed, Eliazer Jonas Benjamin, had already requested on 16 May 1813 that the High Consistory allos him to use his Hebrew family name. See HC, inv.33.
focal point of strife. The language was religiously interpreted, and as such, the conflict turned into a power struggle over the authority to make religious changes.

**The Hebrew Bible translation**
The abolition of Yiddish was part of the national language politics of King Louis Napoleon. Besides Yiddish, other so-called dialects or deviations from the ‘pure’ Dutch language, such as the Frisian language, needed to be eliminated as well.\(^\text{24}\) Later, the language politics of Willem I became central to the unification of the Netherlands and the creation of a Dutch identity.\(^\text{25}\)

The Dutch translation of the Hebrew Bible became an important dispositive in the promotion of the vernacular. In imitation of Mendelssohn, who translated the Hebrew Bible into German, Dutch *maskilim* likewise advocated a Dutch translation. According to the Dutch *maskilim*, the translation was an excellent opportunity to reform Jewish education because the translation forced both teachers and students to learn Dutch. In 1809, they convinced King Louis Napoleon, who had already begun a campaign for the creation of a Dutch national identity, to issue a decree ordering a Dutch translation of the Jewish Bible. Wing reports on this *maskilic* effort: “This happened upon the request of the High Consistory to eradicate the Jewish language and to introduce Dutch among the Jews.”\(^\text{26}\) The decree stated that “the much-neglected use of the Dutch language should be encouraged and their so-called Jewish language abolished.”\(^\text{27}\)

This new Hebrew Bible translation was to become the only ‘authentic translation’ allowed to be used in the religious instruction of Jewish children. The High Consistory urged teachers and rabbis to encourage the use of Dutch and permitted only teachers who were well versed in Dutch to teach. By appointing religious instructors, the High Consistory firmly controlled the implementation of the use of Dutch. Moreover, the use of any language other than Dutch during religious instruction was criminalized. If the

\(^{26}\) Roest, ”Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795–1812,” 110.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
teacher violated this rule for the first time, he was suspended for six months; the second time, he lost his teaching permit permanently.\textsuperscript{28}

Notwithstanding government support for the Dutch translation of the Hebrew Bible, many rabbis thwarted its appearance or showed some ambivalence toward it. Although they never explicitly rejected the new translation, their actions can be considered as delay tactics.\textsuperscript{29} For instance, Berenstein reluctantly reviewed the new translation. He excused the delay and sparse commentary by stating that he was not sufficiently well versed in Dutch to judge the new translation.\textsuperscript{30} Considering his upbringing in the Netherlands and his many Dutch publications, this is quite remarkable. Moreover, he first requested a raise in salary for his commentary on the new Bible translation; “That you will see to a considerable yearly contribution, which would provide me with a worry-free life, which would enable me to embark on such a work with a spirit free from worries.”\textsuperscript{31} Contrary to his hesitation in this case, Berenstein continuously promoted the Dutch vernacular and emphasized the importance of a Dutch translation of the Jewish Bible.\textsuperscript{32}

Berenstein feared that an improper (read: Christian) translation would corrupt Jewish youth. “These translations are offensive, pernicious, and very dangerous for Israelites. The translators do not know anything of the oral law or tradition of our sages from Sinai...[F]or them, it is only history...and therefore, they omit and add letters and words.”\textsuperscript{33} Besides the undesirable Christian influence, Berenstein regarded Dutch as unsuitable for religious instruction, even with a rabbinally approved translation. According to Berenstein, Mendelssohn thought likewise. “The famous Mendelssohn, even though he was well-versed in High German, published his commentary on his

\textsuperscript{30} Michman, \textit{Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period}, 175. HC, Leeuwarden, 27 June 1810.
\textsuperscript{31} NA, SCIA, inv. 38, 15 March 1825. Berenstein quite often asks for a raise in salary; see for instance NA, SCIA, inv. 1, 1 July 1814; ACA, 1241-47, 17 March 1813.
\textsuperscript{32} For instance, ACA, 1241-47, letter to the commissary-general from 17 March 1813, wherein Berenstein supports the promotion of the Dutch vernacular. 1241-49, letter to the Supreme committee for Israelite Affairs, 10 November 1819.
\textsuperscript{33} Letter of acceptance of his function as school inspector, 19 April (year unknown) ACA, 1241-49.
famous translation in Hebrew." Berenstein did not object to the Dutch translation a priori but hesitated to eliminate the Jewish languages, as not everyone could understand Dutch. He considered it important that everyone, from the well educated to the less educated, should be able to receive Jewish education. "Every Israelite with some mental capacities is obliged to study the Talmud, which contains the oral law, but even those lacking these mental capacities are obliged to be instructed on Bible commentaries and religious law." 

For Berenstein, Jewish religion was inextricably bound up with Hebrew. Although in many history books Berenstein came to be known as the first rabbi to preach in the Dutch vernacular, his archival records tell another story. Contrary to his printed Dutch sermons, the majority of his sermons for Shabbat, the High Holidays, and special occasions such as national days of thanks and fasting were written in Hebrew. Although Berenstein endorsed the promotion of the Dutch vernacular, he was reluctant to implement it in religious instruction and writings. His argument that not everyone could understand Dutch is undermined by his written Hebrew sermons, which of course were incomprehensible for uneducated Jews. Therefore, an inability to understand the content of the sermon could hardly have been the only objection he had against Jewish instruction in Dutch. Moreover, in an earlier sermon he postulates the importance of reaching the audience, while at the same time continuing to preach in a high-flown Hebrew. Berenstein clearly shows ambivalence towards the use of Dutch. He presents himself to the High Consistory and government authorities as willing to comply with the modernizing efforts, but continues to preach and instruct in Hebrew. This paying lip-service-to change while maintaining the old structure characterized his conduct. As such, Berenstein’s actions demonstrate that a simple dichotomy between opponents and supporters of reform hardly does justice to the complex historical situation.

**Pronunciation of Hebrew**

In addition to rejecting Yiddish, the maskilim also condemned the Ashkenazic pronunciation of Hebrew. According to them, its sound corrupted the pure Hebrew. Biblical Hebrew was a focal point of Dutch maskilim, and they used it to restore pride in

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34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 ACA, 1241-122-144
Judaism. From the seventeenth century onwards, an abundance of Hebrew grammars, poetry, and prose were produced and printed in Amsterdam. Moreover, in special societies such as Tongeleth (1815), Jews wrote and recited their newly created Hebrew poetry. Hebrew was a vehicle to reclaim the bygone, heroic biblical past and a way to elevate the Jewish community. The maskilim thought that the Sephardic pronunciation reflected the biblical Hebrew more precisely, which was no surprise given the high representation of Sephardim in these societies. Moreover, the maskilim used the admirable Sephardic history and cosmopolitan culture as a model for the regeneration of the Jewish community. As such, the Ashkenazi pronunciation entangled with the discourses on ‘the Jewish question’ and the Sephardim.

The idea that the Sephardic pronunciation reflected Hebrew’s original sound was a new scientific insight. Until the beginning of the seventeenth century, scholars did not differentiate between the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic pronunciation, and before that period there is hardly any evidence of the problematic status of Hebrew pronunciation. However, under the influence of Christian theologians, who mostly adopted the Sephardic pronunciation of the Hebrew, this pronunciation came to be regarded as scientifically more accurate and correct. The adoption of Sephardic Hebrew by the theologians was probably due to the close contacts between Christian and Sephardic scholars, which in turn lead to a better appreciation for the Sephardic pronunciation.

The first maskil to opt for the Sephardic pronunciation was Naphtali Hirsch Wessely (1725–1805), who wanted to rejuvenate Ashkenazi Jewry according to the Sephardic model. Wessely held the Sephardim in such a high esteem that he adopted their customs and arranged to be buried in a Sephardic cemetery. In his Words of Peace

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37 For an extensive analysis of the revival of Hebrew in the Netherlands in the eighteenth century, see Zwiep, “Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered: The Dutch Eighteenth Century.”
and Truth, Wessely emphasizes the pleasant sound of the Sephardic Hebrew. “One cannot believe how superior the correct pronunciation of our brethren in the East and West is to that in use among ourselves; for the beauty and the pleasantness of the sound of their vowels for the ear makes an impression on the soul of the speaker.” Wessely connects the pronunciation with decorum and believes that the Sephardic pronunciation could elevate and regenerate the Jewish community. Moreover, like his fellow maskilim, he tried to recapture and relive the time when he believed the Jewish religion had been pure (namely biblical times) and not yet corrupted by Ashkenazi customs.

Despite Wessely’s lack of success in convincing the Jews to adopt the Sephardic pronunciation, some years later the Dutch maskil and Hebraist Moses Lemans (1785–1832) considered it time for the Jews to adopt the “scientific and more religiously correct” Sephardic pronunciation. This was the start of a ferocious pamphlet war over the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew. The pamphlet war exposes the tension between maskilic intellectuals and their opponents on the question of Jewish scholarly authority, and more precisely the question of who had the authority to change, annul, or install a new minhag. Because both sides regarded themselves as the only ones capable of interpreting Jewish law, they considered the others to be non-Jews and deviants. Central to this dispute was the question of authority, and consequently the pronunciation polemics primarily focused on discrediting the other side and developed into long tirades against the other’s supposed heresy.

Moreover, these polemics demonstrate how the maskilim constructed their Jewish identity in opposition to Ashkenazic customs, which were perceived as irrational, erroneous, and offensive. The maskilic advocacy of the Sephardic ideal resolved the issue of the negative connotations associated with the Ashkenazic lifestyle and with backward Jewish linguistic elements and was perceived as a step forward in the Jewish community’s civic improvement. Because of the pressure on the Ashkenazic pronunciation, opponents ferociously defended what they perceived to be essential for Jewishness and for the Jewish religion; they embraced the Ashkenazic pronunciation as an indispensable linguistic marker. As such, Hebrew pronunciation demarcated and constructed the boundaries of Jewish identities.

Hebrew pronunciation polemics

In 1808, at the young age of 23 and probably unintentionally, Lemans started the pronunciation polemics with a short Hebrew article of only a couple of pages, titled *Ma’amor imrei tserufa* (Article on Pure Speech). In it, Lemans employed scientific as well as theological arguments for the abandonment of the Ashkenazic pronunciation. This publication on the correct pronunciation of Hebrew fitted well into his later educational program, as he published a Dutch translation of the Bible, a Dutch-Hebrew dictionary, and various Hebrew grammars. Moreover, he was a member of Tongeleth and founded the society *Hanokh la na’ar al pi darkho* (Train a child in the way he should go, taken from Prov. 22:6), which used Dutch translations of the Bible and of Hebrew prayers as educational tools.44

The publication of *Ma’amor Imrah Tzerufa* should be seen in the light of his educational program, which had a strong emphasis on the proper use of Hebrew and which regarded language as a means of edifying the Jewish community.45 Because of the general maskilic disavowal of rabbinic authority and the use of the scientific method, Lemans did not seek rabbinic approval for his publication.46 As a matter of a fact, he argued that his proposition was perfectly in line with Jewish tradition. “This article is about the phonology of the holy language, the forefathers and their history, and correct pronunciation, according to the testimonies of the first grammarians and Masoretes, Talmud scholars, and Tiberians, regarding the true holy language.”47 He continues by stating that his work is flawless and widely endorsed. “Because there is nothing [religious] forbidden or permitted, pure or impure in this article, it does not need a letter of rabbinic approval.”48

Lemans was confident in his argument and powers of persuasion; publishing arose out of a desire to bring about the truth. “I did it for the truth, as you and I know. I

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46 It was a widespread custom to ask for rabbinic approval of a Jewish religious work. Sometimes, the granting of haskamot (rabbinic approval) caused a dispute between rabbis or revealed their opposing views. Cf. Yitzhak Eric Zimmer, *Gahlatan shel hahamim: peraqim be-toledot ha-rabanut be-Germanyah be-me’ah ha-shesh-esreh uve me’ah ha-shiva-esreh* (Be’er Sheva: Ben Gurion University, 1999).
loved the truth and not money and all that is tedious. The publication of this article was to establish truth and not for the sake of profit.”\textsuperscript{49} Just as Wessely did, he emphasizes the truth as the motivation for the reform of Jewish rituals. For Lemans, it was important to establish his sincerity and authority. In his introduction, Lemans identified himself as part of a group of maskilic reformers, as his brochure was requested by “devotees to Ashkenazi Jewish students like me.”\textsuperscript{50} By establishing the adoption of the Sephardic pronunciation as a widely supported desire, Lemans legitimized his reform proposals.

Lemans regarded religion and science as equally important in establishing what he called the “true pronunciation of the holy tongue.” In Lemans’ eyes, history, linguistics, and Rashi (1040–1105) provided reliable evidence for the correctness of the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew. Lemans derived his authority from the Jewish sages as well as from secular sources, such as scientific analysis and historical accounts, and he developed three distinctive scientific arguments to prove his case. According to Lemans, the Sephardic pronunciation was more authentic, but had unfortunately been forgotten. The adoption of this pronunciation was therefore not a new invention, but a return to the old situation.\textsuperscript{51} Furthermore, linguistic theory and phonology demonstrated the correctness of the Sephardic pronunciation.\textsuperscript{52} Its phonation was more closely related historically to the languages spoken in Egypt, and hence more accurate than the Ashkenazic pronunciation.\textsuperscript{53}

Lemans’ scientifically based Jewish exegesis resulted from the shifting discursive constellations of science and religion. The blending of science and religion, which were already apparent in the methods of German biblical scholars, legitimized and established the later Wissenschaft des Judentums, which provided Judaism with a scientific basis. Lemans’ scientific method also comes to the fore in his publication on Talmudic mathematics in 1816.\textsuperscript{54} Furthermore, the large amount of space in Lemans’ brochure devoted to historical facts can also be seen in the light of the German maskilic use of history to formulate and legitimize their own sought-after Jewish future.\textsuperscript{55} That not

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 3.
\textsuperscript{51} Lemans, Ma’amor Imrah Tzerufah, 4.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 5–6.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{54} Moses Lemans, Proeve van Talmudische Wiskunde, waarin gehandeld wordt over de kundigheden.... (Amsterdam: Geysbeek & Comp., 1816).
\textsuperscript{55} Shmuel Feiner, Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness, trans.
everyone appreciated this new historical foundation for the Jewish language was well acknowledged by Lemans. In his final appeal, he once again highlights his use of secular and religious sources when he refers simultaneously to God and Plato. “The one who loves Socrates also loves Plato, but he loves the truth most. Even though I am young, I please God with my knowledge.”

Lemans had already anticipated what would soon become a ferocious pamphlet war, and he tries to appease his audience. “I ask of every reader, that they shall study these things quietly and moderately and not hurry to jump on and divide up the new things that you have heard, even if it is against what you have thought until now to be a certain truth.” Moreover, by insisting that he only wants to discuss the matter, he hopes to circumvent a polemic not based on solid arguments. His attempt to keep the discussion grounded in purely rational arguments was futile, however, and his young age especially would become one of the focal points of criticism.

Soon after Lemans’ proposal, an anonymous pamphlet was published arguing against the adoption of the Sephardic pronunciation. The pamphlet, aptly titled Divrei Mesharim (Words of Righteousness), warned “our brothers, Jewish students, that they should not enter into the heated argument of the writer.” In the very first lines, the author(s) discredited Lemans based on his age, and throughout the pamphlet Leman’s ignorance will be given as the reason for his erroneous thoughts. Because of his youth and presumed lack of knowledge, he misinterpreted the Jewish sources and strayed from the righteous path. “[A]nd here, as if he outweighs [the tradition of the Ashkenazi pronunciation, he] pokes his nose between great scholars and Gaon, who were not challenged by any sage of that time.”

The anonymous writer(s) blamed the former naye kille and Felix Libertate member David Friedrichsfeld for corrupting the mind of the young Lemans as well as other students. They claimed that he manipulated the young Lemans into proposing

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56 Lemans, Ma’amor Imrah Tzerufah, 4.
57 Ibid.
58 Anonymous, Divre Mesharim : Ve-hu Neged Divre ha-mehaber Ma’amor Imrah Tzerufah... (Amsterdam, 1808).
59 Ibid.
60 David Friedrichsfeld was highly influenced by the ideas of Mendelssohn and Wessely on the Hebrew language. He was under the patronage of the Mulder family and taught Samuel Mulder, founder of the
such an outrageous idea. “Who is he, and for what purpose is it, that [Lemans’] heart was filled with abomination of the Lord and [consequently he argued] to abolish the pronunciation. For evil! And enough with the persuasion of the evil waters\textsuperscript{61} that are in every heretic and in the books of \textit{Be Abedan.}\textsuperscript{62} According to the anonymous writers, Friedrichsfeld’s ideas went beyond a proposal for reform; his heretic thoughts placed him outside of Judaism: he was an unbeliever and an apostate. By rejecting the possibility of a historically developed phonation and making accusations of heresy and wickedness, the discussion quickly turned into a ferocious dispute. Friedrichsfeld was blamed for corrupting the youth in order to enlarge his group of followers. According to the anonymous writers, Lemans misinterpreted sources and wrongly employed philosophical arguments to establish the rules for the vocalization. “If there would be a rule in it,” the writers argue, “it would be recounted by the \textit{Gaon.}\textsuperscript{63}"

Immediately after the anonymous polemic against Lemans was published, two of his teachers published pamphlets in his defense.\textsuperscript{64} Both of these polemics, one from Tzvi Hirsch Sommerhaussen (1781–1853) and one from David Friedrichsfeld, were printed by the publishing house Emden and Son. Sommerhaussen continues the harsh polemical tone and calls the \textit{Divrei Mesharim} authors “destroyers” and “saboteurs,” expressions indicating that it is they who are damaging Jewish religion. Sommerhaussen regards himself as “a friend against the destroyers; they are liars that consolidate crookedness and slander the young man, the writer of \textit{Imrah Tzerufah.}\textsuperscript{65} Like Lemans, he justifies himself by stating that “some outstanding individuals asked for honesty and the truth.” By referring to the approval of high-standing individuals, Sommerhaussen tried to establish his credibility and sway Jewish public opinion in his favor.

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\textsuperscript{61} This is a rabbinic expression for bad thoughts.

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Be Abedan} was a meeting place of early Christians where religious disputes were held. The term is used as an expression for the books of heretics or Jewish sectarians. See further Talmud Bavli, trans. Sorincon, Sabbath 116a. Anonymous, \textit{Divre Mesharim}, 1.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 1.

\textsuperscript{64} It is also no wonder that the three of them were later members of the \textit{Letteroefenend Genootschap Tot Nut en Beschaving} (Literary Society for the Common Good and Civilization) founded by Sommerhausen and active in \textit{Tongeleth}, an organization for the promotion of the Hebrew language. Cf. Buijs, “Tot nut en eer van ’t jodendom. Joodse genootschappen in Nederland;” Maarsen, “’Tongeleth’, een joodsch letterkundige kring in de 19e eeuw.”

\textsuperscript{65} Tzvi Hirsch Sommerhaussen, \textit{Rodef Mesharim} (Amsterdam: van Emden en zoons, 1808), 2.
In return, Sommerhaussen accuses the writers of *Divrei Mesharim* of heresy. The pamphlet opens with Isaiah and reveals his argumentation: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that change darkness into light, and light into darkness; that change bitter into sweet, and sweet into bitter! (Isaiah 5:20).” By opening with this verse, Sommerhaussen compares the anonymous defenders of the Ashkenazi pronunciation with the persons rebuked by Isaiah. They were mistaken and twisted good into evil, just as the anonymous writers corrupted Lemans’ sincere proposal.

According to Sommerhaussen, two opposite camps emerged in the community, either adhering to the Sephardic pronunciation or opposing its implementation. “And we hear an opposite voice, and we see groups with competitors and participants proding each other, and the wise man in between vigorously calls, and [as a result] the voices of the snakes will disappear.” Here Sommerhaussen compares the advocates with the wise and characterizes the opponents as snakes, and thus presents the pronunciation dispute as a struggle between good and evil, rationality and irrationality. Consequently, Sommerhaussen emphasizes his own rationality and moderation.

At the end of Sommerhaussen’s denouncement, he lists several arguments against the writer(s) of *Divrei Mesharim*. First, Sommerhaussen challenges the accusation against Friedrichsfeld for corrupting the youth, which he calls “an absolute lie.” Moreover, he objects to the anonymous authors’ claim that Lemans’ work is “worthless, ridiculousness, foolish, and confusing.” According to Sommerhaussen, the “boy is true and honest in his belief.” He also wonders why “those envious fools did not arise openly to rebuke him.” Sommerhaussen refers here to the anonymity of the writer(s) of *Divrei Mesharim*. He believes jealousy was their incentive, because if they objected to Lemans’ proposition honestly, they would have faced him openly.

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67 Ibid., 2.
In addition to Sommerhaussen, Friedrichsfeld also intervened and defended his former student Lemans. He wrote a *Ma’anah Rah* (Gentle Answer) to “the furious and the enraged” who “published evil slander” and accuses the writers of *Divrei Mesharim* of being “liars” who “even hid their names,” and he hopes that God may wipe them “away from the entire universe on earth.”\(^69\) Like Lemans and Sommerhaussen, he starts his pamphlet by addressing the Jews in Amsterdam in an attempt to get public opinion on his side. “You all are sons of Jacob, those residing in Amsterdam; teachers and rabbis, leaders and acquaintances, brothers, friends, and companions are you. I chose to come to you to judge between me and my wicked enemies as sinners of the soul.”\(^70\)

Friedrichsfeld’s tone is extremely polemical as he mercilessly faults the anonymous writers. He calls the writers “dead men” and compares them with “vermin, which crawls on the surface of the earth” and with “dogs.” They are a “shame and a disgrace, and they hide behind the mask of flattery.” He rages throughout his pamphlet against the anonymous writers, who he considers “stupid” and “evil.” He cannot understand why someone could possibly object to Lemans’ proposal. “As if we said to abolish customs and traditions....and not to believe in the covenant anymore.”\(^71\) With this remark, Friedrichsfeld touched upon an important aspect, namely the question of who had the authority to change or reform Jewish customs.

Not surprisingly, a response came from the defenders of the Ashkenazi pronunciation. This polemic, called *Meshiv Hema* (Furious Answer), was, like the *Divrei Mesharim*, anonymous. Why these authors concealed their names is puzzling. Maybe the highly polemical tone and tirades against Lemans, Sommerhaussen, and Friedrichsfeld were easier to write anonymously. Another reason could be the dominant position of *maskilim* in the High Consistory. Because they were also responsible for the distribution of many jobs, such as teaching positions, it was probably wise not to antagonize the sitting *maskilic* elite.\(^72\) Although many motives can be discerned, it remains striking that the *maskilim* choose to openly publish their opinions while their opponents hid their identities.

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\(^{69}\) David Friedrichsfeld, *Ma’anah Rah* (Amsterdam: van Embden en zoons, 1808), 2.


\(^{71}\) Ibid.

In *Meshiv Hema*, the author sets out “to strengthen belief and annul the words of *Rodef Mesharim* and *Ma’anah Rah*.”73 This author, like his predecessors, is of the opinion that he is honoring God’s commands. In this respect, both supporters and opponents of the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew regarded their point of view as perfectly compatible with Jewish law. Moreover, both parties saw fit to emphasize their belief in the Jewish religion and their observance of Jewish law. Because of this shared understanding, the polemicists accuse each other of violation of Jewish law and of apostasy.

“Who of us is greater than those people [the *rishonim* and *achronim*] upholding our traditions in order to strengthen our faith?” the anonymous author rhetorically asks.74 To doubt the ancient Jewish sages was unthinkable in his eyes, and he attempts to set it straight and “not like the writer of *Rodef Mesharim* to foster arguments and to tell lies about the righteousness ancients in words of pride and disdain.”75 The author refrains from accusing Lemans of heresy, as “he has more important things to discuss.” For instance, Sommerhaussen misinterprets the late chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Saul Löwenstamm, when he claims that this scholar favored the Sephardic pronunciation.76 In the opinion of the anonymous author, Sommerhaussen is “stupid” and “speaks nonsense and lies.”77 And after accusing the supporters of the Sephardic pronunciation of being “sinners” and “heretics,” the writer clarifies why he so zealously defends the Ashkenazic pronunciation.

The anonymous author lists three arguments for his defense. Firstly, the author reveals one of the most important aspects of orthodoxy, namely the equating of tradition and Torah. “Everyone should speak in the known language, and so much the more as the *minhag* of Israel is law, impossible to annul.”78 This is a position held by many in the orthodox camp, and it explains why they accused anyone who deviated from the current tradition of apostasy and heresy. A second argument, deriving from this point of view, is the absolute authority of the Jewish sages. “They follow the twisted and perverted path, and secondly it is called heresy, as everyone who mocks the words of the sages is a

73 Anonymous, *Meshiv Hema* (Amsterdam, 1808), x.
74 Ibid., 2.
75 Ibid.
77 Ibid., 2–3.
78 Ibid., 3
heretic.” And thirdly, to a “lesser degree,” they “enlarge their evil group.”79 In short, the anonymous author ignores the arguments of Lemans’ and subsequent authors. Instead, he denounces the maskilic writers as evil heretics, incapable of interpreting the Jewish sources. Additionally, this last polemic in the Sephardic pronunciation controversy does not put forward any new arguments. Just like Friedrichsfeld’s polemic, accusations and attempts to besmirk the opponent’s reputation make up most of the content. Neither camp shies away from tirades and ad hominem attacks. Friedrichsfeld in particular devotes several pages to his fury, which, considering his depiction as someone who corrupts the youth, is not surprising.

Both opponents and defenders of the Sephardic pronunciation were convinced that they were voicing the correct religious truth, and as such, each challenged the other’s religious authority and credibility. Moreover, they connected the Hebrew pronunciation with their Jewish identity. For supporters of the Haskalah such as Friedrichsfeld, Sommerhaussen, and Lemans, the Sephardic Jew was the ideal, and they regarded their pronunciation as superior and authentic. In contrast, the anonymous writers considered all historically developed traditions authoritative, and they perceived any attempt to change these as heresy and a threat to religion. Both camps regarded each other as heretics, incapable of interpreting the Jewish sources. Their conflicting points of view reveal their different ideas on the future of Judaism, either reformed to fit the Sephardic ideal or preserved in adherence to the status quo.

2. Educating the Dutch Jews

Education was an important tool in the elevation of impoverished Jewry. It functioned as the dispositive of the new discourses on nation(-building), citizenship, and Jewishness. In this new discourses however, the Jewish religion and the Yiddish language as aspects of Jewish education were pushed to the side in favor for the secular (state) discourse. Education became a means to install and communicate the nation’s values. Not surprisingly, European maskilim focused their efforts on the reformation of the Jewish school system. Educating Jewish youth was, according to them, a first step in the regeneration of the Jewish community. Likewise, the High Consistory attempted to

79 Ibid., 4
reform the Jewish educational system. Their efforts concentrated especially on schools for the poor. Teaching them Dutch and providing them with the ‘essential’ religious values would, as most maskilim assumed, deter them from begging and laziness. By learning useful skills, poor youth would be able to rise from poverty and participate as honest Jewish citizens in society.

Reform of the Jewish schools
Both the Sephardic community and the Ashkenazi community provided religious education for poor Jewish children. From the start, discourses on education were intrinsically linked to religious discourses. School names such as Talmud Torah attest to this discursive entanglement, and curriculum consisted mostly of Hebrew grammar, Jewish prayers, and biblical and Talmudic texts. Sephardic schools were held in high esteem, while the Ashkenazic school system was considered seriously flawed. The evaluation of school systems was linked to discourses on the Jew, which came to regard the Sephardim as ideal Jews in contrast to the ‘backward’ Ashkenazim. As a result of this constructed binary, the Ashkenazic schools for the Jewish poor, with their traditional curriculum, became a focal point for Dutch maskilic reform, and this motivated the


81 A typical feature of Jewish schools was the segregation between religious and secular education. Jewish education encompassed three types of schools, namely religious schools, secular schools, and separate seminaries. Religious schools had three levels. At the first level, the students learned Hebrew grammar and the daily prayers, and at the second level they also learned the translation of and commentary on the Hebrew Bible. Only at the third level was the Talmud taught. Seminary education comprised Jewish law and the Talmud. Contrary to religious education, the secular school was primarily devoted to language. The students learned Dutch spelling, writing, and reading as well as writing Hebrew letters and arithmetic. Some schools also taught the students French, history, and geography. Dodde and Stultjens, "Jewish Education in Schools in the Netherlands from 1815 to 1940," 68–78.

foundation in 1808 of an educational organization called Hanokh la na’ar al pi darkho. This organization developed teaching methods and published several manuals. It also promoted a secular curriculum, which would provide Jewish youth with the tools to earn a decent income. The organization used education as a tool to battle poverty, simultaneously establishing and legitimizing the new maskilic Jewish ideal type.

This emphasis on educational reform was not only a maskilic effort. During the French period and afterwards, the government issued various decrees on the improvement of the educational system, and the Education Act of 1806 can be considered as the most important one, making education an important dispositive of the new nation. Under the auspices of the High Consistory, reform of the Jewish educational system leapt forward. The improvement of the educational system was one of their key goals, and they considered Jewish youth as pivotal in transforming the Jewish community into good citizens. Moreover, education provided many opportunities to introduce the Dutch language and a secular curriculum.

In order to map the problems of the Jewish educational system, the government appointed J.D. Meyer as a school inspector. His task was to make an inventory of the Jewish schools for the poor. On 17 January 1809, he described how he witnessed several problems during his inspection. First, the classrooms were too small and unhealthy, which was “contrary to the hygiene regulations.” Meyer refers here to the new Education Act of 1806 for state schools, which ordered that “classrooms should be clean and hygienic, and should be aired in between class times and cleaned twice a week.” The Education Act also prevented over-crowded conditions, as it stated that a single teacher should not teach more than 70 students at one time. Views on clean and fresh air were applied to the teaching conditions of schools. According to the educational reformers, unhealthy conditions hindered a stimulating learning environment. Therefore they directed the first reform efforts toward the establishment of healthy

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83 Joseph Michman, Hartog Beem, and Dan Michman, Pinkas. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland, 72–73. The Jewish educational system was also segregated along economic lines. Affluent Jewish families employed private teachers, while Jews from the middle class sent their children to private schools. R. Reinsma, “Pogingen tot assimilatie en emancipatie van het Joodse kind in Nederland na 1796. Israëlitische scholen onder de koningen Willem I en II,” Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis 4 (1964): 448–466.
84 HC, inv.1, 17 January 1809.
86 Article 4. “When the number of students exceeds seventy people, an assistant or second teacher, if possible, shall be employed.” Verzameling van wetten betrekkelijk het Lager Onderwijs in Zuid Holland.
classrooms. At the end of the nineteenth century, the connection between healthy surroundings and moral elevation would also be applied to housing for the working class and the poor. Even though the act restricted the number of students, it did not entirely provide for a spacious educational environment. The Ashkenazi Talmud Torah School of the Uilenberger synagogue, for instance, was referred to in 1822 as the "Uilenberger storehouse." 87

In addition, the moral conduct of both teachers and students was in dire need of improvement. According to Meyer, "the behavior of both teachers and students is such that it contributes more to a detrimental effect on their morality than it improves their capabilities." 88 He was appalled by the teachers' punitive abuse. "[I]n these schools, we can say, punishment is abused, causing not only cruelty, insensitivity, and shamelessness, but also arousing and fostering lecherous thoughts, which should not come to mind, especially not among children." 89 Meyer’s vision of punishment resembles the educational views of the eighteenth-century German pedagogues known as the philantropines. Following Rousseau, they emphasized rewarding good behavior instead of punishing bad behavior. In addition, the Maatschappij tot Nut van ’t Algemeen, a voluntary organization which aimed at elevating the masses, advocated rewarding instead of punishing. They even distributed educational material that enabled the educator to list the students' good behavior. 90

Meyer’s third point of criticism concerned the teachers’ capabilities and education. The Education Act of 1806 devotes a large section to the professionalization of the teacher. A system of examination was installed to improve the quality of teachers. 91 As such, governmental reform of the educational system became a means to control and internalize the new national values. Teachers who displayed ignorance and misconduct received a single warning and then lost their teacher’s permit. 92 Although the act attempted to ban untrained teachers, it lacked proper implementation and supervision. Thus Meyer could visit a Jewish school were the teacher obviously lacked

87 Rietveld-van Wingerden, "Van segregatie tot integratie. Joods onderwijs in Nederland (1800-1940)," 60.
88 From the Verzameling van wetten betrekkelijk het Lager Onderwijs in Zuid Holland.
89 Ibid. Although the government prohibited corporal punishment in class beginning in 1820, until the 1950s it was customary for teachers to use a stick.
90 Arianne Baggerman and Rudolf Dekker, De wondere wereld van Otto van Eck. Een cultuurgeschiedenis van de Bataafse Revolutie (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2009), 64–86.
91 From the Verzameling van wetten betrekkelijk het Lager Onderwijs in Zuid Holland.
92 Ibid.
competence; Meyer described him as "over 84 years old and blind." In short, the school Meyer described, with its packed classroom, corporal punishment, and incompetent teacher(s), symbolized the detrimental state of the Jewish educational system.

The Education Act of 1806 and the improvement of state schools influenced the High Consistory to intensify their reform efforts. Despite their endeavor change was slow, and in 1813 the High Consistory reported to the Amsterdam School Commission: "The Israelite schools are, compared to the general school system, backward." The High Consistory blamed physical hindrances and a disregard for their regulations for this failure. In 1817, the reform efforts received support from important legislation. Willem I banned Yiddish and restricted religious instruction in favor of a secular curriculum, allowing only half of class time to be devoted to religious education. As a result of the shifting discursive formations of the Jew, the use of Dutch and economic independence replaced religion as more important elements of Jewishness. For secular instruction the children could attend a public school, which many students did. However, some Jewish schools also provided a secular curriculum. Moreover, the same Education Act barred untrained teachers and made school inspection a state concern. Although many changes had been implemented, the quest for better schooling continued. Fifteen years later, in 1828, Jewish education and school facilities were still lacking, according to the Amsterdam school commission: "[T]he Jewish population of this city [Amsterdam] is... very backward in education; although the Israelite schools for the poor have been much improved, there is nonetheless a lack of possibilities for Jewish children to get an education." 

Despite various implemented improvements, school attendance remained low. Less than 60% of all children aged six to twelve, including Jewish children, attended school. Social and economic circumstances were responsible for the reluctance of the Jewish poor to attend school, because some families depended on the income of all family members, including the children. Even though the school board held the parents

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93 HC, inv.1, 17 January 1809.
94 HC, inv. 17, 12 January 1813.
96 SCIA, inv. 51, 31 January 1828. It is important to remember that the reform efforts were directed at schools for the Jewish poor. Private schools, such as the Ashkenazi Talmud Torah, and private teachers, who were hired by affluent Jewish families, remained outside the sphere of influence of the High Consistory and later the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs.
accountable, families often kept children at home.\textsuperscript{97} A second reason for low school attendance was the lack of schools for the poor. Only half of the Jewish children in Amsterdam could find seats in a classroom. In a city such as Rotterdam, the opportunities were even less favorable, and in 1840 the schools still turned away one third of the children.\textsuperscript{98} Consequently, school attendance among the Jewish poor was minimal.

Ironically, the scarce schooling opportunities were an unwanted consequence of the Education Act of 1806. The combination of a restricted number of teaching permits and a lack of trained Jewish teachers resulted in a teachers’ shortage. That is why teachers from Poland and Germany still found employment in Jewish schools, even though they had little knowledge of the Dutch vernacular. According to a governmental report in 1806, these teachers turned their students into “de petites Polonaise ou Allemandes.”\textsuperscript{99} Despite these educational efforts, the elevation of the Jewish poor continued to be a point of concern. Although the school system offered many opportunities to remodel the Jewish poor into worthy Jewish citizens, a combination of lack of schools and indifference prevented the poor from fully benefitting.

\textbf{A Jewish signature}

A central issue in reform of the Jewish educational system was religion. Half of the curriculum comprised religious instruction, and some schools offered solely religious teaching. For the secular curriculum, most Jewish children attended state schools. There were two problems Jewish children faced when attending these schools: they had a Christian character and were open on the Sabbath. The statutes of the state schools explicitly stated their religious orientation, “educating [the children] into all social and Christian virtues.”\textsuperscript{100} Therefore, some Jewish parents hesitated to enroll their children in a Christian environment. This happened mostly outside of Amsterdam, because in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam the state schools enrolled many Jewish students, and the

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{97} ACA, 714, Minutes, 27 June 1798 t/m 1806, p. 34.
\bibitem{98} Dodde and Stultjens, “Jewish Education in Schools in the Netherlands from 1815 to 1940,” 71.
\bibitem{99} Cited in: Dodde and Stultjens, “Jewish Education in Schools in the Netherlands from 1815 to 1940,” 74.
\bibitem{100} From the \textit{Verzameling van wetten betrekkelijk het Lager Onderwijs in Zuid Holland. Gorinchem, J. Noorduyn en Zoon, 1846}. Rules for the lower school system within the Batavian Republic 1806, art. 22.
\end{thebibliography}
Christian identity proved to be a hollow phrase. On the other hand, some state schools refused Jewish children, fearing they would jeopardize the Christian character of the school. Regardless of the nationalizing policies of the successive governments, Dutch society remained segregated along denominational lines.

The entanglement of the discourses on Christianity, citizenship, and nation-building in the Dutch educational system proved to be an obstacle for the integration of Jews. As a result, the employment of Christian teachers at Jewish schools was considered problematic by both sides. Christians hesitated to teach in an all-Jewish environment such as the Jewish quarter, and Jews considered a Christian educator incapable of teaching their children the essentials of Jewish life.

Because of the restricted Jewish access to Christian schools, Jews sent their children to Jewish schools. Educational segregation also characterized the policy of the Amsterdam School Committee in 1828 as it proposed to employ two ‘unqualified’ Jewish teachers in vacant positions, because Christian teachers did not want to become Jewish schoolteachers or live in the Jewish quarter. “It is clear that an Israelite, although unfavorable compared to the other candidates, could be of great value. And we favor... seeing Jewish schoolteachers within [the school] walls. We propose to let only Jews fill the vacant positions.”

In order not to arouse opposition from the maskilim because it promoted Jewish segregation and jeopardized the principle of equality, a specific job description was drawn up in order to attract Jewish applicants. Thus, besides teaching the regular courses, knowledge of Hebrew and of Judaism were required. The city council even proposed omitting the word Israelite because that would be “inappropriate and too conspicuous.” According to them, the ability to teach Hebrew would suffice, as that would only attract Jews, because "the civilized Israelite" knew Hebrew. Because both the

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102 Dodde and Stultjens, “Jewish Education in Schools in the Netherlands from 1815 to 1940.”
103 See for instance the later school struggle, schoolstrijd, between 1848 and 1917, which revolved around the question of whether religious schools were eligible for state financial support. Surprisingly enough, and contrary to Christian schools, Jewish schools were financially supported by the government, albeit scarcely.
104 Contrary to Roman Catholics and Protestants, until 1848 Jews were encouraged to establish their own schools. Cf. Rietveld-van Wingerden and Miedema, "Freedom of Education and Dutch Jewish schools in the Mid-nineteenth Century," 31–54.
105 SCIA, N152, letter dated 31 January 1828.
committee and the city council knew that according to Dutch law religious affiliation could not be a selection criterion, they hid their intentions by emphasizing the Jewish nature of the school. Their wish to employ Jews probably resulted from the fact that Jewish education was already segregated. Moreover, pragmatic considerations, such as a lack of teachers, contributed to their willingness to set aside equality.

The president of the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, Jacob Mendes de Leon, disapproved of religious educational segregation. Via a friend, he discovered the committee’s letter to the city council. “There is great evil in entrusting to the less capable candidates the primary education of our fellow believers only because the candidates are Jews. If the school committee fulfils its duty, it cannot employ incapable people for the education of useful members of society.” Even though he admits that there is a lack of educational possibilities for affluent Jews and that other schools reject Jews, Mendes de Leon considers the incorporation of Hebrew and Jewish religion into the curriculum as the essential problem. The entanglement of religious and secular discourses in the Jewish educational system formed an obstacle to the integration of Jews in Dutch society. “Only rarely do affluent Israelite fathers request that their children be educated in Hebrew and Jewish religion.” According to Mendes de Leon, such an emphasis in Jewish education would lead to “segregation and not fraternization.” Mendes already hints at the trend among affluent Jews to disregard religious prescriptions and embrace secular culture.

Mendes de Leon preferred a universal school, where “general concepts of religion could be taught, which could be accepted by all denominations.” Contrary to his enlightened view of religion, the majority of the Christian denominations opposed general education and argued instead for the right to establish their own religious schools. According to him, a specific Jewish curriculum, which included Hebrew grammar and Jewish religion, was better left in the hands of private tutors. Mendes de Leon probably had in mind the maskilic custom of sending their children to two separate

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106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
schools. For education in secular subjects Jewish children attended Christian state schools, and for religious education they attended independent Jewish schools. However, the majority of the Jewish community disliked this two-tier system and preferred schools where both religious and secular subjects were taught.\textsuperscript{110}

Even though the majority of Jewish children were taught at Jewish schools, Berenstein still feared the decline of Jewish religious education and the abandonment of Judaism. He considered affluent Jews especially liable to moral deterioration, as their children no longer received a Jewish education.

Some egoists, in love with their own views, spoiled by metaphysical inventions, overwhelmed with sophism….disturbed the vineyards of the Eternal, and unfortunately their poison spread swiftly among the less religiously educated, while their unjust doctrines freed them from religious education. The penetrating poison travelled, especially among the more affluent segment; they violated the godly commands but also did not educate their children in the religion, so they did not have any knowledge of religion. Therefore, it is no surprise that they do not live according to the rules of the holy religion. Every clairvoyant should have foreseen the decay of the religious schools.\textsuperscript{111}

For Berenstein the loss of religious education indicated the renunciation of religion, and he blamed the \textit{maskilim} for the assimilation of affluent Jews. Berenstein is probably referring to rich families, for instance the Asser family, who were known for their acculturated, non-Jewish lifestyle.\textsuperscript{112} Only religious education could, as Berenstein presumes, halt the abandonment of the Jewish religion.

However, his warnings were futile; with the Education Act of 1857, which divided primary education into state and independent schools, Jewish parents predominantly sent their children to state schools. Consequently, beginning in 1857 Jewish religious education declined, while general school attendance for secular education, provided at Dutch state schools, increased. Moreover, the loss of the subsidies from the government for religious education also contributed to a decline in religious schools.\textsuperscript{113} The

\textsuperscript{110} Dodde and Stultjens, “Jewish Education in Schools in the Netherlands from 1815 to 1940,” 75.
\textsuperscript{111} ACA, 1241-47. Concept letter to Lord and King, undated.
separation between religious and secular education eventually contributed to a lesser appreciation of religious education. Despite efforts such as the distribution of clothing, and bread and rewarding regular Jewish school attendance with books and certificates, Jewish parents were reluctant to enroll their children in Jewish schools. A combination of economic dependence on children for the family income, the full educational program at state schools, and the decline in religious observance meant that Jewish school attendance among Jewish children between the ages of six and twelve dropped from 39.8% in 1870 to 1% in 1918.\textsuperscript{114} Jewish religious education at the beginning of the twentieth century was no longer part of the Dutch Jewish lifestyle, and this fits well into the picture of a predominantly non-observant Dutch Jewry.

The civilizing efforts that aimed at educating the Jewish poor into god-fearing and nation-loving citizens came at the cost of a decline in Jewish school attendance.\textsuperscript{115} Despite the enthusiastic efforts of the government, the maskilim, and Berenstein, the complicated educational structure, the overloaded curriculum, and the socio-economic problems hindered religious instruction. For a long time, the reformers were unable to bridge the gap between the needs of the poor and the importance of education. Despite the various obstacles the Jewish community faced in reforming the educational system, the dispositive of education nonetheless delivered the nationalistic message. At the end of the nineteenth century, most Jews attended public schools, and Yiddish ceased to be the lingua franca of Dutch Jewry.\textsuperscript{116} The reform of the educational system opened up and established a new way of looking at the Jews, namely as a group within Dutch society that only differed in religion. The dispositive of education broke down the walls of the Jewish nation and turned the Jews into citizens.

3. Religious reform


\textsuperscript{115} In contrast to Sonnenberg-Stern, who regards educational reform as a failure, I argue that Dutch Jewry embraced secular education, which came at the cost of religious education. Sonnenberg-Stern, Emancipation and Poverty: the Ashkenazi Jews of Amsterdam, 1796–1850, 141–148.

Besides banning Yiddish and restructuring the educational system, religious reform was another important dispositive in the discourse on ‘the elevation of the Jewry’. Religious reform emphasized decorum, especially in the synagogue. Improvement of synagogue behavior was, however, not a new or even uniquely maskilic phenomenon. Beginning in the eighteenth century, the parnasim had constantly warned the congregation not to cause disturbances when entering the synagogue, not to sing along with the hazzan (the Jewish cantor), and not to place children on the almemmer (the elevated platform in the synagogue where the Torah is read).\textsuperscript{117} Because of the synagogue’s double function as a house of prayer and gathering place, the services were noisy and characterized by people constantly entering and departing.\textsuperscript{118} Notwithstanding the many functions of the synagogue, throughout the eighteenth century the parnasim were constantly concerned with appropriate synagogue behavior, as Article 23 of the Jewish community regulations from 1737 shows: “Everyone shall behave peacefully and in the fear of God in the synagogue, and anyone who, against regulations, addresses someone improperly or with abuse shall immediately leave the synagogue and will not be readmitted unless he pays, to the benefit of the poor, a fine of six guilders.”\textsuperscript{119} Moreover, the community regulations also prohibited interrupting the hazzan during the service: “That in the synagogues no one shall start the prayer out loud before the hazzan, or interrupt, or cause any disorder in the prayers; the transgressors shall lose four guilders for the benefit of the poor.”\textsuperscript{120}

However, at the end of the eighteenth century the discursive constellations changed, linking discourses on ‘the Jewish question’ with decorum. As a result, the issue of noise changed from an internal matter to a matter related to the ‘Jewish question.’ The turbulent services came to symbolize Jewish incivility and an inability to internalize appropriate behavior. The clinging of the Jews to their uncivilized rituals was regarded by persons such as Wilhelm von Dohm and Abbé Grégoire as reason for withholding

\textsuperscript{117} On the almemmer, see for instance Protocolbuch II, 253; on entering the synagogue, see Protocolbuch II, 501; on fighting during the service, see Protocolbuch II, 401.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Handvesten van Amsterdam}, art. 23, 482.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., art. 86, 493.
emancipation from the Jews. Therefore, one of the foci of the maskilim’s quest for civil equality was the reform of synagogue practices, and in particular those practices with a cacophonous and chaotic appearance. In this way, the former concern of the Amsterdam community regarding appropriate synagogue conduct transformed into a political objective entangled with discourses on the supposed incivility of the Jew. Moreover, by abrogating inessential Jewish rituals, religious reform also redefined the essence of Judaism as an elevated and decorous religion.

**The naye kille’s liturgy**

The *naye kille* used the dispositive of religion to introduce several liturgical changes, with the aim of a decorous and orderly service. The compilation of their new liturgy, the *Sefer Meliẓ Yosher*, describes their service and also provides Chief Rabbi Graanboom’s legitimization of reform. An important objective was to banish the communities’ multivocality, which was considered a cacophony. For instance, the mourner’s prayer (*kaddish*), which formerly every congregant had prayed for himself, was now to be recited together and aloud. In addition, the penitential prayers (*selihot*) were now said verse by verse, and some were excluded from the service. Furthermore, flowers were prohibited on the *Shavuot* as they disturbed the congregant’s spiritual mindset.

The *Diskurs* of the *naye kille* heralds their new service and emphasizes the *naye kille*’s superior take on Jewish liturgy. An important aspect of their reform was that the rituals should edify the community, and they judged all *minhag* according to this criterion. The *Diskurs* character Gumpel hints at this point when he claims that the *naye kille*’s service was also popular with members of the *alte kille*: “Why not? They get more pleasure from the *naye kille*’s *minhogim*.” According to the *maskilim*, external behavior reflected a person’s inner self, and consequently silence and order in synagogue services mirrored one’s civility and adherence to Judaism. Religious rituals in this respect were not only intended to serve God, but also an important marker of one’s sociability. This connection between the manner in which the liturgy was performed and one’s place in


123 Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 148.
society was supported by both the *maskilim* and by the *alte kille’s parnasim*, who also continuously stressed the need for decorous services. The *maskilim* identified themselves as civil citizens and regarded the liturgy as their representation. This additional meaning attributed to religious rituals legitimized reform. Moreover, the emphasis on decorous liturgy also enforced the idea of the synagogue as a house of worship. In the synagogue, the congregants could experience spirituality and come close to God. No wonder the *Diskursn* character praises their orderly and decorous services. “I went to their synagogue. It’s as true as the Law of Moses. It couldn’t have been better in the Temple! During the *shmoune-esre* [the central prayer of Jewish liturgy], no one is heard praying aloud. During the repetition of *shmoune-esre* no one sits down.”124 And later on, he continues: “[I]n that synagogue the people pray and they don’t talk. They are – by God – the best Jews one can imagine.”125 Yankev starkly contrasts the *alte kille’s* synagogue, where everyone talked and disregarded proper conduct during prayer, with the decorous liturgy at the *naye kille*. In this binary construction, the *alte kille* represented the old, traditional order, with their backward manners and displays of ill behavior, behavior which the *naye kille* regarded as essentially unjewish. Their redefinition of Judaism was constructed in opposition to their representation of the *alte kille*. Decorum was now essential to the Jewish religion.

Moreover, in another pamphlet Yankev explicitly states that being a proper Jew is connected to reciting the *shmoune-esre* silently. To be Jewish was now a matter that extended beyond the boundaries of religious observance. The performance itself was elevated as a religious prescription. It differed from the *kavana*, which aimed at right intention in prayer, as it moved from the inner motivation to the experience of others. How others perceived the religious ritual was fundamental to the proper execution of Jewish liturgy. As such, the performance of the Jewish prayers was as important as their content. Moreover, in this discursive entanglement, moral etiquette such as orderly and calm behavior became part of religion. “You know, you people pray *shmoune-esre* aloud and you shout among yourselves. But at the *naye kille* it is a *minheg* [custom] that *shmoune-esre* is always prayed quietly. It has satisfied all pious and knowledgeable Jews, and they’ve enjoyed this *minheg.*”126

124 Ibid., 42.
125 Ibid., 44.
126 Ibid., 156
Jewishness consisted of silent reciting as well as critical reflection on religious practices. To think for oneself, the Enlightenment adage, was applied as justification for the reform of the rituals. To be truly Jewish was to rethink and reevaluate Jewish tradition. The search for what being Jewish entailed was important. Again, this thinking, regardless of power structures or doctrines, was contrasted with the conduct of the alte kille. According to the naye kille, fear and usurpation motivated adherence to certain traditions. It is unclear whether Yankev in the previous citation is alluding to the custom of selling honorary functions or referring to the dominance of affluent Jewish families in office. Graanboom is here represented as a truly enlightened soul, averse to worldly weaknesses. Contrary to the alte kille, he searches for the real and untainted Jewish liturgy.

The link between morality and order also comes to the fore in the description of the parnasim’s social behavior. They lacked etiquette, did not know how to start a decent conversation, and refused to listen to other people’s arguments. With their rough behavior, they represented themselves as uncivil and lacking respectable manners. This depiction of the parnasim contrasted starkly with the enlightened ideal of rationality and the emphasis on polite conversion and exchange of opinions. Politeness was associated with the upper class, and they developed a taste for the display of correct etiquette in their salons. This preoccupation with society’s rules was also noticeable in various spectatorial and journals, wherein readers were reminded how to behave in public. According to the naye kille, the parnasim were clearly unaware of these developments and oblivious to society’s demands.

You know that at the alte kille, when there are four people, they talk at the same time, as if there were nine. Well, the men who ran and fro [trying to reconcile the two killes] – poor things – did that for the well-being of everybody. As you can imagine, they received them with every honor at the naye kille. No loud words, no two people talking at the same time. Everybody was given the opportunity to ask questions and given a reply in turn. Everything in order with the greatest politeness. Well, when they returned to the alte parnosim in order to report, there was as much screaming among

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them as in a Polish Diet. Screams everywhere – one couldn’t figure out what the other was saying or wanted.128

Revealing in this account of the parnasim’s conduct is the comparison with the Polish Diet. Eastern Europe functioned as a metaphor for the backwardness of Jews, and their customs, language, and physical appearance were used as a contrast with the enlightened and acculturated Western Jews. Therefore, describing the parnasim’s conduct as Polish—and thus as backward, maladjusted, and unreasonable—helped to foster the newly invented image of the adapted, civilized, modern Jew. Moreover, by referring to the Polish Diet, they tried to discredit the chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Moses Löwenstamm, as they alluded to his Polish origins and to the many Polish schoolteachers working in the Jewish community. In the Diskursn of the naye kille, being Polish was considered something entirely negative.

Through the removal of redundant prayers and minhagim, the naye kille’s Rabbi Graanboom tried to recapture the essence of Jewish rituals. Thus the exclusion of some of the selihot emphasized the meaning of the text, and repetition after the hazzan created a sense of harmony. Graanboom also eliminated prayers that he considered redundant, and several piyyutim (liturgical poems), which were mostly additions dating from the Middle Ages, were seen as an unnecessary prolongation of service and omitted because they only led to “idle talk and distracted the congregation.”129 All of these novelties contributed to a new liturgical structure. In that sense, these adjustments to the Jewish service resembled the later German Reform, which likewise removed ’redundant’ prayers. By abbreviating the Jewish liturgy, the naye kille connected the idea of usefulness with the essence of the Jewish service.

In addition to prayer, other customs or minhagim were judged according to their utility and decorum. For instance, the custom to walk in front of a funeral procession with an alms box was abolished.130 In the Diskursn, Yankev explains why: “The alms box is just a custom. Do you know why they use an alms box? With the rattling, they can warn the kohens so that they will stay at four yards distance from the corpse. But when a

128 Michman and Aptroot, Storm in the Community, 158.
129 Graanboom, Melız Yosher, 4.
130 By 1920 this custom was no longer in use. Jehoeda Brilleman, Minhagee Amsterdam. Joodse religieuze gebruiken in Amsterdam in de loop der eeuwen (Amsterdam: Nederlands Israëlitisch Seminarium, 2007), 247; See also the painting by H.J. Burgers (1834–1899), Een begrafenis in de Amsterdamse Jodenbuurt reproduced in Gans, Memorboek, 401.
shames (secretary) and gaboim (trustees) go in front, then one can easily see that a funeral is approaching.” 131 Jewish conspicuousness and noise were no longer considered appropriate for funeral processions. Silence should accompany the dead to their last resting place. The naye kille feared that the custom of making a round through the neighborhood and stopping at various synagogues displayed the Jews as a noisy, attention-attracting horde.

The call for decorum and efforts to restrict conspicuous religious consumption also come to the fore in the elimination of the selling of mitzves (honorary functions or mitzves ausrufen). This practice was regarded as distasteful and therefore came under attack. 132 Moreover, it made a distinction between rich and poor, because only the affluent good afford mitzves. The customs regarding the appointment of the hatan torah and hatan bereshit (the ones to read the last and the first sentence of the Torah during Shemini Atseret and Simhat Torah) were likewise changed. Those appointments resulted in high expenses for the hatanim, as they were expected to organize elaborate festivities. Refusal of the honorary function resulted in a fine of fifty guilders. 133 Because of the burden the festivities put on the poor, the naye kille altered the custom. “On shemini atseret they sold the mitsves of khosn-toure and bereyshis. But they announced beforehand that one can also honor someone else with it. And so that nobody shall ruin himself with expenses or treats or something else.” 134 The naye kille represented itself as enabling the poor to observe the Jewish religion in all of its facets. This inclusive attitude towards all Jews is constantly emphasized in their Diskursn, and they contrasted it with the alte kille’s conduct. Conspicuous religious consumption, especially of affluent Jews, not only counteracted contemporary notions of etiquette but also countered the political ideal of equality.

The naye kille also applied the idea of equality to synagogue dress code. In order to enable the poor to attend synagogue, they abolished the custom of wearing sargenes (a white shroud) during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. With the abandonment of such a garment, the congregants appeared to be equal in the eyes of the community. Moreover, it emphasized a private experience of religion. “[T]hey have

131 Michman and Aptroot, Storm in the Community, 412.
132 Graanboom, Meliz Yosher, 4.
134 Michman and Aptroot, Storm in the Community, 156.
realized that the wearing of sargenes is just a fashion. Therefore, one can pray devotedly without the sargenes.” 135 Additionally, abolishing the custom of wearing sargenes helped the poor because the garment was expensive. “Some [wear sargenes] to impress other people. And it can happen that someone has his sargenes in the pawnshop and stays away from the synagogue out of shame. And many go to enormous troubles – poor things – to get their sargenes out of the pawn shop.” 136 Religion was thus experienced in the mind of the religious believer and not through the conspicuous display of clothing.

The Sefer Melitz Yosher provides an additional argument against the sargenes custom, namely that putting on and taking off the robes disturbed the service and affected correct devotion to the prayers. 137 As such, decorum and utility reinforced the idea of the need for religious reform. In the naye kille’s new liturgy, the idea of equality and decorum fostered the abolition of conspicuous religious rituals. Too openly showing off with either money or the performance of Jewish rituals was considered tasteless and rude. For the naye kille, Jewish rituals were measured against contemporary values. Rituals that countered the idea of respectability or equality were useless and therefore could not be essentially Jewish.

The question of what was an authorized minhag and what was not stood at the foundation of the naye kille’s liturgical changes. Was the ritual essentially Jewish, or was it mistaken and erroneous? The naye kille, just as many Jewish reform communities after them, believed that a minhag was a historically developed custom. A minhag could be abrogated if it countered what they considered the appropriate performance of Jewish law. As such, although the liturgical changes appear to be cosmetic, they reveal the naye kille’s different approach to the minhag as a historical construct.

Various discursive strands blended together in the naye kille’s liturgical reform. Ideas about appropriate behavior as well as the new political ideal of equality blended with the wish to alter Jewish rituals according to contemporary taste. Jewish rituals should elevate and edify the community. Moreover, every Jew should be able to perform in the synagogue service regardless of their financial means, making the political ideal of equality essential to Jewish liturgy. Furthermore, the display of conspicuous religiosity was banned. The proposed reforms of the naye kille tried to fit Jewish practices into

135 Ibid., 148.
136 Michman and Aptroot, Storm in the Community, 148.
137 Graanboom, Melitz Yosher, 4.
contemporary discourses on etiquette and taste. This resulted in a paradoxical situation in which Jews were on the one hand prohibited from showing off their religiosity, and on the other hand encouraged to alter the rituals in accordance with fashion. The liturgical reform shows how political objectives were drawn into the religious sphere, while at the same time religious expression was restricted. As such, the naye kille's liturgical reform exposes the ambivalent boundaries between the secular and the religious spheres.

**Governmental religious reform**

The shifting constellations of secular and religious discourses also come to the fore in the dispositive of government law. During the time of the Batavian Republic, the government began to issue ordinances concerning appropriate religious behavior. Following the French example, the government banned religious expressions in public space, and the chronicler Wing reports on 2 September 1796 that “the government issued an order to the parnas of the month that hazzanim and shamashim were not allowed to go around in the street wearing a talith [prayer shawl] and a jabot.”138 Three days later, a government decree prohibited other Jewish public religious activities, such as building sukkot (temporary huts) on the Jewish streets for the feast of Tabernacles and saying the prayer of the new moon (maanvieren), which was done outside in a minyan or another sort of group.139 This decree was followed by yet another prohibition of public prayer when on 3 October the parnasim forbade the tashlikh prayer, a prayer said by natural flowing water in order to cast off previous sins after the first day of Rosh Hashanah and before Yom Kippur. The prayer was banned as a “religious ceremony.”140 Likewise, Catholic public rituals such as processions were restricted. The government pushed religious expressions out of the public sphere and replaced them with rituals praising the state. The state promoted civic religion by planting the Freedom Tree, a custom introduced during the French Revolution, and ordering all churches to uphold the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Discursive entanglements of secularism and religion underlay these dispositives restricting religion in the public sphere.

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138 Benjamin Wing, LEHikorn, 24.
140 Benjamin Wing, LEHikorn, 26.
The subsequent government of Willem I further legitimized the state’s encroachment on religious authority, and in 1813 decorum in and outside the synagogue became a government concern. As a result, the High Consistory, in cooperation with the government, ordained a list of articles prohibiting supposedly inappropriate aspects of the Jewish religion. Two articles especially restricted public performance of Jewish religion. Article 4 prohibited “any religious ceremony, such as the carrying of the books of Moses or the performance of the blessing of the moon, on the streets and in public space,” and Article 5 stated, “It is also forbidden to be on the street or in public space wearing religious clothing and ornaments, such as shrouds [sargenes], tefillin [phylacteries] and talith.”141 The regulations restricted the authority of the rabbinate in matters relating to religion, but also defined religion as something private that needed to be observed outside the public realm.

**Romantic visions of the Jewish ritual: The case of hamankloppen**

Pressure on Jewish rituals also resulted in a nostalgic appreciation of former rituals that came to be considered indecorous and had been abolished. Exuberance and liveliness came to be regarded as authentic expressions of Jewishness, reflecting its essence. This is especially noticeable in the case of hamankloppen, a ritual performed during the reading of the megillat Esther (Esther scroll) at Purim. Whenever the name of the wicked Haman is mentioned, Jews, especially children, make noise with rattles or by stomping with their feet. The first to condemn the hamankloppen was the naye kille. Their members disapproved of it because it countered what they regarded as decorous behavior, and accordingly they eliminated it from their liturgy. Not surprisingly, the naye kille’s reevaluation of Judaism according to modern tastes attracted criticism from the alte kille. In a fictitious Diskursn regulation, they ridicule the naye kille’s quest for decorum. “All are obliged to attend the reading of the megile at Purim, so the khazn must learn to read the megile in the evening and in the morning. But the children are forbidden to use their noisemakers. That is no custom for respectable people.”142

Jewish communities outside Amsterdam also attempted to abrogate or reform the custom. For example, in 1805 the Jewish community of Leeuwarden permitted hamankloppen only for young boys allocated a special place in the synagogue. Instead of

141 ACA, 1241, 76.
142 Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 412.
stressing the need for decorum, the community gave pragmatic and religious reasons for the reform. They feared potential damage to the interior of the synagogue if people would stomp their feet. Moreover, the community claimed that the congregation was unable to hear the reading of the megillat Esther because of the noise. Therefore, the hamankloppen resulted in a violation of the commandment to hear the megillat Esther. To ensure the congregation would obey, the parnasim imposed a fine of one rijksdaalder (two and a half guilders) “on anyone besides the young boys who would disturb the reading.”

Notwithstanding the alte kille’s resistance to the abolition of hamankloppen, this naye kille reform, among many others, was supported by the High Consistory, and in 1809 it abolished and criminalized the hamankloppen. Likewise, Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam Berenstein condemned the custom. However, hamankloppen was still practiced, and years later, in 1824, Chief Rabbi Berenstein was still attempting to abolish it. On Saturday 13 March 1824, at the request of the parnasim, Berenstein announced that “making noise and rattling in the synagogue during the reading of the Esther scroll is not religious and is against order and decorum.” Yet former parnas S.M.A. Prins publicly contested the chief rabbi’s authority during the reading of the megillat Esther, and the parnasim complained about the incident in a letter addressed to the chief of the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs.

[S]uddenly a noise arose and the chief rabbi acted in accordance with us and asked the crowd to behave silently in the synagogue, because making noise is not religious and does not derive from religious principles. S.M.A. Prins, the old parnas treasurer and financing member of the Great Synagogue Board of the Community, replied with a loud voice and a mocking gesture of his finger to the chief rabbi: “You don’t have a say over it; you need to be silent; this is a matter for the parnasim.”

The parnasim tried to remove Prins from the synagogue, but they failed. After the incident, both the parnasim and the chief rabbi expected that Prins would be remorseful and that they could “cover it again with the cloak of compassion.” However, Prins held

143 Beem, De verdwenen mediene, 83–85.
144 ACA, 1241, 78.
145 SCIA, inv. 35, Jan–March 1824.
146 Ibid.
his ground, and consequently the *parnasim* lodged a complaint against him with the prosecutor. If Prins would offer his apologies to the chief rabbi, they would retract the complaint. They end the letter with the wish that the Commission will support them in the maintenance of order in the synagogue and "that all means will be used to restrain whatever hinders the performance of religion in the synagogue." The issue of *hamankloppen* divided Amsterdam Jewry and became a locus of power struggles. A person such as Prins regarded it as an essential part of the Purim celebration. Prins’ opposition reveals the continuing tension between the Jewish lay leaders and the rabbinate. Notwithstanding Prins’ position as a lay leader, his adherence to the Lehren family probably also contributed to his resistance.

Almost 50 years later, in 1872, the issue of *hamankloppen* still lingered. In a letter sent to the weekly *Nieuw Israelitisch Weekblad* (New Israelite Weekly), a reader with the revealing pseudonym Veritas complained about the *hamankloppen* and the extinguished candles in the Great Synagogue on the eve of *Tisha B’Av*, which was in his view against “our contemporary understanding of decorum and decency.” He continues, “[W]henever Haman is mentioned, [students] hammer against the chandeliers. You see, I believe that both things need to be cleared away. Truly, if those things belong to the essence of Judaism, then our religion is pathetic.”

A couple of weeks later, a certain Y. answered his letter. Y. was of the opinion that although the “children of the Talmud Torah School are invited, they do not knock against the chandeliers. They are merely given a hammer, which, if one moves it, creates a sound, and which does not hinder [the service] at all.” And he continues, “[M]aybe in the past there may have been disturbances, but because of repeated warnings, there are none anymore;” but he contradicts himself by adding, “[A]nd although it is written that every good thing has its drawback and can be used for the wrong purpose, it does not mean that the thing itself is bad.”

147 Ibid.
148 Since the foundation of the Ashkenazi community, the *parnasim* and the rabbinate challenged each other’s authority. In 1712, for instance, the power struggles between the *parnasim* and the chief rabbi resulted in the dismissal of Haham Tzvi, one of the great scholars of his time. D.M. Sluys, "Hoogduits-Joods Amsterdam van 1635 tot 1795," in *Geschiedenis der joden in Nederland*, edited by Hk Brugmans and A. Frank (Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf N.V., 1940), 344–352.
149 *Nieuw Israelitisch Weekblad*, 26 July 1872.
150 Ibid.
According to the author, the custom, like many others, was established in order to capture the attention of the masses (especially the children) and place emphasis on the commandment, “You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek (Deut. 25:19).”\textsuperscript{151} The writer clearly sides with Veritas in agreeing that the hamankloppen was contrary to modern taste and decorum, but he stresses the impact the ritual could have on less educated Jews, namely to get them involved in Judaism. Furthermore, he concludes that one should not abolish a minhag Israel authorized by the Shulkhan Arukh.\textsuperscript{152} For this writer, hamankloppen was not a faulty custom, but rather a useful tradition with a solid textual basis. As both letters show, hamankloppen was still in use despite efforts to eliminate it from the Purim festivities, and the question of what belonged to Jewish tradition was matter of perception, which did not walk the thin line between respectability and utility.

In addition to the anonymous writer Y., others also incorporated discourses on usefulness into the establishment of expressive Jewishness and bemoaned the abandonment of theatrical rituals. For instance, in a periodical of the orthodox rabbi Samuel Hirsch (1808–1888), an author regrets the changes made to the rituals and reminisces that in his grandfather’s time, during Purim the houses were “filled with shouts” and “masked masses filled the streets.”\textsuperscript{153} In this exposition, nostalgia and the longing for a joyous Judaism expressed in Purim rituals became entangled with what was perceived as the true meaning of Purim, namely that Mordechai was a proud Jew who defended the Jews from their enemies.\textsuperscript{154}

A century later, nostalgia with its implicit critique of the rationality of the enlightened reform is also noticeable in historian Hartog Beem’s descriptions of the vanished, forgotten Jewish world after the devastation of World War II. In his oy un vey portrayal of Jewish life, he muses on the loss of expressive and festive rituals.

Decorum almost became the idolized ideal. Many picturesque old customs, wherein the masses were a bit too loud for the new taste, were regarded as not churchy

\textsuperscript{151} Amalek is the biblical archetype of the enemy of the Jews. Haman was an Amelkhite, and by making noise whenever his name is mentioned, he is blotted out.
\textsuperscript{152} NIW, 30 August 1872.
enough and sacrificed to this idol. The making of hakofes, the calling for the kol haneorim, and many other uses of the Simhat Torah were abolished. It was not decent to dance in exuberant joy with the Sifree Torah or to just leave one's place to honor the beloved scrolls. It didn't go much better with the custom of selling mitzves, miesjeejirtse calling, and the Hamankloppen.155

For the author in the orthodox periodical as well as for Hartog Beem, the expressive rituals encompass a certain realness of experience. They are the reflection of the inner world of the Jew, connecting daily life with Jewish history. Emotion, empathy, and exuberance are necessary tools to understand the experiences of the Jewish ancestors. By reliving Jewish history, as in the festival of Purim, one's negative experiences as a Jew are redeemed. In addition to this historical—and in a sense eternal—bond with the Jews from the past and the Bible, the body plays a pivotal role in communicating essential Jewish truths. Dancing, knocking, shouting—it all contributed to strengthening the bonds between Jews, history, and religion. It was with the body that they believed the Jew relived and revived religion.

4. Conclusion
During the nineteenth century, the government and the maskilim held the Jewish way of life responsible for the unfortunate state of Dutch Jewry. Education, religious reform, and the abandonment of Yiddish in favor of Dutch were dispositives intended to elevate the Jews and integrate them into Dutch society. Reform aimed at removing those features that distinguished the Ashkenazi Jews from either the Sephardic or the Christian ideal. This construction of a binary between Ashkenazim on the one hand and Sephardim on the other hand attributed a negative meaning to Ashkenazic Judaism. In particular, conspicuous rituals such as hamankloppen and mitzve ausrufen were no longer regarded as befitting and belonging to the Jewish religion. In addition, other distinctive aspects such as the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew fell out of favor. The educational system, the religious framework, governmental policy, and the maskilim were all dispositives in the attribution of new meaning to the Jew, the Jewish religion, and its place in Dutch society. As a result, former elements of the Dutch Jewish community, such as Eastern European influence in the Jewish educational system and

155 Beem, De verdwenen mediene, 82–83.
Yiddish, were no longer seen as part of it. The promotion of the vernacular through the educational system and the religious framework as well as the ban on foreign teachers and the ordination of the translation of the Hebrew Bible attest to this. As a result, the civilizing efforts constructed and stabilized a new ideal to which the Jews should adhere and also legitimized reform by depicting Dutch Jewry as backward and unmodern.

This new discourse on the Jew and the redefinition of the Jewish community as uneducated, uncivilized, and backward produced its own discourse of rejection. Intertwined with the discourse on the elevation of the Jewry was the new attribution of meaning to Judaism as a private religion without expressive rituals. One response to these reform efforts was the essentialization of Jewish distinctiveness. Orthodox elements in Jewish society rejected the Dutch language and the new liturgical reforms because they fell short of what was perceived as typical Jewish Ashkenazi conspicuousness. Consequently, the civilizing and nationalizing efforts of both the maskilim and governmental committees attributed new meanings to Jewishness and triggered a plethora of Jewish responses. Depending on the situation, Jews took an orthodox or a maskilic point of view. They responded variously by embracing the reform proposals, merely paying lip service, or essentializing traditional identity markers. As such, the discourses on the civilization of the Jews produced and constructed the emergence of different Judaisms.