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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

### Bemerkungen zur Orthographie der nichthebräischen Ausdrücke in den hebräischen schriftlichen Denkmälern Mitteleuropas

Dieser Artikel befasst sich mit praktischen Aspekten der Orthographie von nichthebräischen Ausdrücken in jüdischen schriftlichen Quellen, einschließlich epigraphischer Denkmäler, meist aus dem 18.–19. Jh. Einige Ortsnamen und Familiennamen werden hier präsentiert, die auf jüdischen Textilien und Silbergegenständen zu finden sind. Die Orthographie von nicht-hebräischen Ausdrücken in den böhmischen Ländern wies vor allem auf die Orthographie des Jiddischen (*o* – *ʾ*) oder auf die deutsche Schreibweise der tschechischen Klänge (*č* = *tsch* = *טש*, *ř* = *rsch* = *רש*).

## "All That suffering": Hebrew Narratives about the Prague Easter Massacre of 1389 and Their Interaction with the Latin Material

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The Prague Easter massacre of 1389 has remained to this day a subject of interest for many historians, who have attempted to reconstruct and analyse the event.<sup>1</sup> In doing so they have relied on testimonies from Latin, Hebrew, Czech and German language environments, some written by Jews as well as Christians, which fall into a wide range of generic and formal categories.<sup>2</sup> Yet these documents are extremely problematic as historical sources, a fact that has not always been sufficiently acknowledged by those employing them.<sup>3</sup> With a single exception, all the documents we have are of literary character, and thus have their particular agendas, narrative strategies and traditions within which they operate. So far, no archaeological evidence related

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank those who supplied me with translations of core Hebrew texts, Prof. Wout J. van Bekkum from the University of Groningen and Dr. Erik Ottenheim from Utrecht University; as well as my colleague Daniel Soukup from Palacký University in Olomouc.

<sup>2</sup> See Evina Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium: Kritická edícia Pašijí pražských židov* [MA Thesis] (Brno, 2010). Available at <[http://is.muni.cz/th/180028/ff\\_m/Steinova\\_diplomovapraca.pdf](http://is.muni.cz/th/180028/ff_m/Steinova_diplomovapraca.pdf)>. Retrieved on 10th October 2012.

<sup>3</sup> See Václav V. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, vol. 3 (Prague, 1893), 338–40; František M. Bartoš, *Čechy v době Husově: 1378–1415* (Prague, 1947), 80–82; Jiří Spěvák, *Václav IV. (1361–1419). K předpokladům husitské revoluce* (Prague, 1986), 197–99; Tomáš Pěkný, *Historie Židů v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague, 1993), 34–37; and especially Jan Podlešák, "K postavení židů ve feudální společnosti (zvláště v českých zemích)," *Židovská ročenka* 5741 (1980–81): 27–32; and Jan Podlešák, "Pražský pogrom roku 1389 ve světle soudobých literárních svědectví," *Židovská ročenka* 5749 (1988–1989): 75–82.

to the massacre has been found,<sup>4</sup> nor do we have reliable administrative and legal sources to contrast with narrative material.<sup>5</sup> To describe the preserved narrative material pertaining to the events of 1389, we might use the analogy of a stone thrown into water. While the stone disappears under the surface and so becomes irretrievable, it triggers a set of circles on the water that can be observed and studied. An optimist would say that perhaps, with a great deal of caution and ingenuity, we can say something about the massacre relying on the literary material it triggered and we should strive to do so. On the other hand, if we take a more sceptical view, we might need to admit that the historical reality of the massacre of 1389 is not retrievable and we should desist from trying to reconstruct it. In that case, we could reformulate the research question and focus on the literary testimonies *per se*, studying them in their own right without the need to turn them into testimonies of the massacre.

I would like to adopt the latter approach and discuss the Hebrew literature that grew out of the trauma of 1389. One of

my reasons is that the Hebrew material has not so far been given space comparable to the attention given to the Christian sources and much of it remains unstudied. Some of this material has been referenced as a supplementary source for analysing the Prague Easter massacre, but it was hardly treated in its own right or in combination with other Jewish sources and in the wider context of traditions of Hebrew written culture. Once we cease to focus narrowly on the massacre itself, the connection between the various strains of the Hebrew narrative becomes more prominent. Furthermore, their links to the Christian sources can then be substantiated not only on the basis of the common trigger – the stone that generated the circles on the Jewish as well as Christian water – but also with regard to more direct influences of written and oral traditions, whether by means of borrowing, or of opposition and reaction.

The Hebrew sources on the massacre of 1389 may be divided into three categories.<sup>6</sup> The first involves liturgical material, and above all the *selicha* of Avigdor Kara, *Et Kol ha-Tela'a* (“All that suffering”),<sup>7</sup> which is believed to have been inspired by his experience of the massacre.<sup>8</sup> We also possess a distinct record

<sup>4</sup> Excavations of a medieval Jewish cemetery in Prague took place between 1997 and 2000, but no evidence that could be associated with the massacre in 1389 was found. See Michaela Wallisová, “První etapa výzkumu židovského hřbitova na Novém Městě pražském. Předběžná zpráva,” *Archeologica Pragensia* 14 (1998): 141–48; Michaela Wallisová, “Předběžná zpráva o záchranném archeologickém výzkumu v letech 1997–2000 na židovském hřbitově ve Vladislavově ulici na Novém Městě pražském,” *Archeologica Pragensia* 16 (2002): 73–97; and Vítězslav Kuželka, “Výsledky antropologického výzkumu ze středověkého židovského pohřebiště na parcelách čp. 1390/II a 76/II ve Vladislavově ulici v Praze,” *Archeologica Pragensia* 16 (2002): 99–118.

<sup>5</sup> The only reliable diplomatic material that can be associated with the massacre is a short remark in the synodal acts of the Prague archbishopric from 1391, to be discussed later. A charter is published in František Palacký, *Ueber Formelbücher zunächst in Bezug auf böhmische Geschichte. Nebst Beilagen*, vol. 1 (Prague, 1842), 150–51, but given that it is preserved in a formulary and displays strong parallels with an earlier charter of Wenceslaus II., its historical authenticity cannot be taken at face value. I was unable to unearth other diplomatic material pertaining to the massacre.

<sup>6</sup> I am not going to discuss all the Hebrew-written material that makes reference to 1389, since not all was accessible to me. I was, for example, unable to consult some of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century histories that are likely to contain reference to the Prague massacre: *Sefer Yohassin* of Abraham Zacuto, *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel* by Samuel Usque, and *Me'or Einaim* of Azariah dei Rossi.

<sup>7</sup> Edited in Israel Davidson, *Osar ha-shira we-ha-piyyut* (New York, 1923), 387, no. 8550. English translation in Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales. The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia, 1999), 196–98. Older Czech poetic translation as Avigdor Karó, “Všechny pohromy,” in *Zpěvy zavržených. Malá antologie hebrejského básnictví X.–XIX. století*, ed. and transl. J. Langer (Prague, 1993), 58–63. The newest Czech translation in Pavel Sládek, “Avigdor Kara. Selicha Et kol ha-tela'a (Všechny strasti),” in *Raši (1040–1105). Vznik biblického komentáře ve frankoporynských židovských centrech* (Praha, 2012), 481–86.

<sup>8</sup> That Kara was a survivor of the massacre is now a widely accepted opinion expressed for example by Otto Muneles; Otto Muneles – Milada Vilímková,

of the event contained in the Anonymous Hebrew Chronicle of Prague dated to 1615.<sup>9</sup> Finally, three accounts of the event feature in the Jewish chronicles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: *Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah* (“The chain of tradition”) of Gedaliah ibn Yahya, an exile from Spain, who composed an extensive history of the persecutions of Jews in Italy between 1549 and 1587;<sup>10</sup> *Divrei ha-Yamim* (“The Chronicle”) and *Emeq ha-Bacha* (“The veil of Tears”) of Joseph ha-Kohen, also of Spanish descent working in Northern Italy between 1558 and 1575;<sup>11</sup> and in *Tsemach David* (“Offshoot of David”) of David Gans, a Prague astronomer and historian who completed his world history in 1592.<sup>12</sup>

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*Starý židovský hřbitov v Praze* (Prague, 1955), 105. See also Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 139. Apart from the *piyyut*, there is also a short entry in the *memorbuch* of Prague reading: “May God remember the killed and burnt people of Prague because they delivered their souls on the unity of the (divine) name, with this reward...” See Siegmund Salfeld, *Das Martyrologium des Nürnberger Memorbuches. Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1898).

<sup>9</sup> See Avraham David – Leon J. Weinberger (transl. and ed.), *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague, c. 1615* (Tuscaloosa, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> See Abraham David, *The Historiographical Work of R. Gedalyah Ibn Yahya, the Author of the Book Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah* [doctoral dissertation] (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1976); and Abraham David, “R. Gedalya ibn Yahya’s *Shalshelet Hakabbalah* (“A Chain of Tradition”): a Chapter in Medieval Jewish Historiography,” *Immanuel* 12 (1981): 60–76. See also Gedaliah ibn Yechia, *שלשלת הקבלה* (Jerusalem, 1962). Available at <<http://www.hebrew-books.org/6618>>. Retrieved on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

<sup>11</sup> See Joseph ha-Kohen, *Sefer Emeq ha-Bakha (The Vale of Tears). With the Chronicle of the Anonymous Corrector*, ed. K. Almbladh (Uppsala, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> See André Neher, *Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution of the Sixteenth Century. David Gans (1541–1613) and His Times* (Oxford, 1986). Also Dean P. Bell, “Jewish and Christian Historiography in the Sixteenth Century. A Comparison of Sebastian Münster and David Gans,” in *God’s Word for Our World*, vol. 2, eds. Harold J. Ellens et al. (London, 2004), 141–58; Mordechai Breuer, “Modernism and Traditionalism in Sixteenth-Century Jewish Historiography. A Study of David Gans’ *Tzemah David*,” in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B. D. Cooperman (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 49–88; and André Neher, “David Gans (1541–1613), disciple du

To the pool of Jewish testimonies must be added the Christian pool of narratives, which should be mentioned at least briefly since it interacts, albeit not necessarily directly, with the Hebrew material.<sup>13</sup> Particularly relevant is the central Christian source, a set of five literary texts in Latin and Czech known collectively as the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* (“The Passion of the Jews of Prague”), which construct the eruption of anti-Jewish violence as a Host Desecration Narrative. This corpus is believed to have been composed from an eye-witness perspective, and together with the *piyyut* forms the oldest layer of material surrounding the wave of violence in 1389. For this and other reasons, these two sources lend themselves most readily to comparison and they will be contrasted later on. The Christians produced other historiographic and narrative texts, some of them relying on the first-wave narratives from the *Passio* corpus, and some independent of them. Two that will be mentioned in this paper are the accounts of the Prague massacre preserved by Tileman Elhen of Wolfhagen in his *Limburger Chronik* and by the 16<sup>th</sup>-century humanist and Hebraist Sebastian Münster in his *Cosmographia Universalis*.<sup>14</sup>

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Maharal de Prague et assistant de Tycho Brache et de Jean Kepler,” *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 52.4 (1972): 407–13.

<sup>13</sup> A partial overview is to be found in Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 18–45; see also Barbara Newman, “The Passion of the Jews of Prague: The Pogrom of 1389 and the Lessons of a Medieval Parody,” *Church History* 81.1 (2012): 1–26; and Josef Truhlář, “Verše o bouři židovské v Praze r. 1389,” *Věstník České akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění* 9 (1900): 295. I deal with the Christian texts in similar manner separately in another forthcoming article.

<sup>14</sup> An overview is to be found in Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 29–42. Apart from those mentioned here, two fifteenth-century historiographic works deserve particular mention, the *Historia Bohemica* of Enea Silvio Piccolomini and *Tractatus de longo schismate* of Ludolph of Sagen, both describing the events of 1389 in a way that differs from and even contradicts the narrative of the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, rejecting the Host Desecration Accusation of the Passion.

Chronologically, the oldest Jewish text relating to the Easter massacre of 1389 is the *selicha* of Avigdor Kara, composed between 1389 and 1439, when Kara died.<sup>15</sup> In previous scholarship, this text has been overused as a historical document without much reflection on its literary character. As Susan Einbinder has stressed, martyrdom poetry cannot be used as historically accurate record. Nor should it be discarded as ahistorical and thus irrelevant. Instead, it must be read in the totality of its particular literary tradition and evaluated against that context.<sup>16</sup> The late 14<sup>th</sup>-century *selicha* is a remarkably late example of Jewish martyrdom poetry, a tradition that had culminated in the twelfth and the thirteenth century. The massacre of 1389 was by no means the only act of anti-Jewish violence in 14<sup>th</sup>-century Bohemia and Austria, but to my knowledge it was the only one that led to a production of a *piyyut*, and moreover one that could have been inserted into the penitential liturgy of the Prague community. A century later, in 1492, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain inspired responses that fell into other genres, as will be shown. The choice of martyrdom poem is thus particularly interesting and may perhaps have been prompted by a desire to communicate a particular standardized message, to reach the standard audience for the *selichot* and encourage a similar attitude in the audience.

One thing that is noticeable on a reading of *Et Kol ha-Tela'a* is that it builds extensively on earlier texts falling into the tradition of martyrdom poetry. The standard plethora of images deployed in the poem may be compared to the literary description of the

first major massacres of 1096, a historical event more than three centuries earlier yet exerting a powerful influence on how successive waves of violence were to be described,<sup>17</sup> or to the poetic treatment of the death of the Blois martyrs of 1171, which Einbinder sees as one of the major models for later martyrological writing among the Jews.<sup>18</sup> While it is true that there are a few images in the *piyyut* that can best be explained as referring to a particular historical reality, such as breaking of the tombstones,<sup>19</sup> the majority of the images deployed in the *selicha* are topoi to the extent that they cannot be connected with historical reality in a direct manner. For example, the poetic description of the desecration of the Torah scrolls has little particular substance beyond traditional lament about burned books.<sup>20</sup> Rather, the sig-

<sup>15</sup> Kara died fifty years after the massacre, as his well-known tombstone at the Prague Jewish cemetery attests. That would suggest that he was quite young at the time of the wave of violence, perhaps in his twenties. Cf. with the case of Meir ben Baruch of Rothenburg, who composed a lament about the Paris burning of Talmud in 1242. Meir died in 1293, i.e. more than 50 years after the burning; Susan Einbinder, *Beautiful Death. Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in France* (Princeton, 2002), 74–75.

<sup>16</sup> Einbinder, *Beautiful Death*, 10–11.

<sup>17</sup> See Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, 1987); Robert Chazan, *In the Year 1096... The First Crusade and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1996); and Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God. Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia, 2006). There are also many parallels with *piyyutim* mentioned by Einbinder; by Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 101–02; and in Wout J. van Bekkum, “Oh Sevilla! Ach Castilia! Joodse klaagzangen uit de 15e eeuw,” *Ter Herkenning* 19.4 (1991): 243–53.

<sup>18</sup> Einbinder, *Beautiful Death*, 45–69.

<sup>19</sup> “Your free house they have destroyed, the place where my fathers are buried, unearthing bones and breaking their headstones”; Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 198. The action is depicted also in the Latin narratives; Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 21: “Petre epytaphiorum scisse et confracte sunt in cimiteriis eorum, monumenta eorum per cristianos aperta sunt, nec tamen ulla corpora Iudeorum surrexerunt.” The stones of the graves were cracked and broken in their cemetery, and their sarcophagi opened by the Christians, yet no bodies of Jews rose from the dead (Mt 27:52–53).

<sup>20</sup> “I cried in a faint voice as they mocked, burnt and shredded holy books, the Torah given by Moses as our inheritance”; Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 198. Cf. with the much more detailed and evocative description in the Latin narratives on the same subject; Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 21: “Et velum a synagoga Hebreorum receptum est. Et cum eo omnes libri prophetarum, Moysi et Talmut atque ad usus cristianorum usque translatus.” The curtain of the Jewish synagogue was torn in two (Mt 27:51), and with it also all the books of the prophets, Moses and the Talmud, and taken for the use of the Christians.

If there is a grain of truth in the latter, the scrolls were not destroyed or burned



nificance of such elements must be understood as a function of their choice, juxtaposition and variation. In the absence of reliable documents against which to judge the narrative of the poem, it is impossible to determine the points at which these images have been activated and retrieved from the pool of tradition to reflect a historically anchored experience as distinct from those points at which they simply serve rhetoric within a certain discourse, such as the proper behaviour vis-à-vis a violent Christian mob or affirmation of hierarchy within the ideal Jewish community.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the *piyyut* must be analysed not only in terms of what it expresses, but also in terms of what it suppresses: alternative, competing voicing of the same event that might undermine its own interpretation and authority.<sup>22</sup> We can observe such a dissonance among the Christian sources, where the Passion of the Jews spawned at least five versions providing contradictory, competing interpretations of the Easter massacre.<sup>23</sup> In the Jewish circles, however, we miss such a plurality of voices, even though there is much that could have been argued about, as will be shown. Is it because, unlike in the Latin milieu, there were few who could apply themselves to the extant literary traditions to

make their voices heard? Or is it because the particular tradition is less flexible when it comes to expressing certain viewpoints?<sup>24</sup> Einbinder stresses that the composers and primary audience of martyrdom poetry were young male Jewish scholars, such as was Kara in 1389.<sup>25</sup> It served to affirm the ethos of this particular group within the Jewish community, even at the expense of other, competing groups with distinct opinions about acceptable behaviour in times of crisis and the right manner of interaction with the gentiles.

A few examples from comparison of the *piyyut* with the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* can illustrate this point. Unlike *Et Kol Ha-Tela'a*, which does not provide a single name, the Latin narratives refer consistently to one Jonas, who is described as *princeps Iudeorum*, i.e. the prince of the Jews.<sup>26</sup> This personage might easily be regarded as a fictitious character in an otherwise half-serious mock-narrative based on the Passion play and on student satire, if it were not for external evidence that also refers to one Jonas the Jew. Jonas' house was known in Prague into the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when it was still referred to as *domus Ionaie Judaei*<sup>27</sup>

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completely, as the *selicha* would have us believe, but retained, perhaps in order that they might be sold back to the community at a later time.

<sup>21</sup> See Johannes Heil, “Ashkenazic *Piyyut*. Hebrew Poetic Prayer in a Latin Environment (the Tenth to the Twelfth Centuries),” in *A History of Prayer: The First to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R. Hammerling (Leiden, 2008), 337–65; and Jeremy Cohen, “The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles in Their Christian Cultural Context,” in *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp (Sigmaringen, 1999), 17–34.

<sup>22</sup> See Jeremy Cohen, “Between Martyrdom and Apostasy. Doubt and Self-Definition in Twelfth-Century Ashkenaz,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.3 (1999): 431–73; and Lucia Raspe, “The Black Death in Jewish Sources. A Second Look at *Mayse Nissim*,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 94.3 (2004): 471–89; also Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 133.

<sup>23</sup> See Evina Steinová, “Jews and Christ Interchanged. Discursive Strategies in the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*,” *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 17 (2012): 73–86.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ivan G. Marcus, “Hierarchies, Religious Boundaries and Jewish Spirituality in Medieval Germany,” *Jewish History* 2.1 (1986): 7–26; also Johannes Heil, “Beyond ‘History and Memory’. Traces of Historiography in the Middle Ages,” *Medieval Jewish Studies Online* 1 (2007–08): 61.

<sup>25</sup> Einbinder, *Beautiful Death*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. in Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 20: *Jonas autem princeps Iudeorum ait: “Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem, mortem autem perpetuam.”* Jonas, however, the prince of the Jews said: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death (Mt 26:30), even death eternal (Phil 2:8).”

Also in the version *Historia de cede Iudeorum Pragensi*, where Jews do not feature as the protagonists, this Jonas is mentioned explicitly; Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 28: *Et incipientes a Iona, omnes pariter occiserunt, exceptis parvulis, quos baptismi gratie reservaverunt.* And starting from Jonas, they killed all of them without distinction, apart from the little ones, whose they spared for the sake of baptism.

<sup>27</sup> Václav V. Tomek, *Základy starého místopisu Pražského. Vol. 1* (Prague, 1865), 215, no. 124.

(and this house, also plays a role in the Latin narratives<sup>28</sup>). What is more, we have records of Jonas' financial transactions which can be dated to the period after the massacre, thus indicating that he survived the Easter frenzy.<sup>29</sup> Most importantly, however, Jonas is mentioned by Johannes Wetzlar, a theologian of the University of Prague, in his *Dialogus super Magnificat* (1427), as an associate of the criticised emperor Wenceslaus IV, and so a figure of some political importance.<sup>30</sup> Was this Jonas a wealthy money-lender, comparable to Lazar the Jew who was in good standing with the king a generation earlier?<sup>31</sup> Could he be one of the *parnasim* who used to deal with the Christian authorities and were thus most visible for them, but would also command authority among fellow Jews? That is mere conjecture, but it is clear that for the Christian inhabitants of town, Jonas was the symbolic head of the Jews and thus targeted in the Christian narratives as such.

<sup>28</sup> Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 19: *Videntes autem huiusmodi rabiem scribe, sacerdotes et Pharisei, congregati sunt in atrium principis Iudeorum, qui dicebatur Ionas*. When the scribes, priests and the Pharisees saw this madness, they assembled in the palace of the prince of the Jews, who was called Jonas (Mt 26:3–5).

<sup>29</sup> See Alexandr Putik, "On the Topography and Demography of the Prague Jewish Town prior to the Pogrom of 1389," *Judaica Bohemiae* 30–31 (1994–95): 38.

<sup>30</sup> Johannes Wetzlar, *Dialogus super Magnificat*, V, 2099–2117: "*Vidisti corde superbo Jonam cum sociis Pynco reliquisque per urbis vicos Pragensis incidere, turpiter ipsos subsannare fideles Christi. Sed, miserande, obvie Judeis, o consiliarie, mitram vertice de capitis manifeste deposuisti et "dominos" apellasti "patresque" scelestos Judeos*." You [i.e. one of the favorites of Wenceslaus IV.] saw the proud Jonah with Pinkas, his associate, and others assailing the faithful of Christ in the streets of the city of Prague and mocking them shamefully. Furthermore, oh you miserable advisor [of the king], you ostensibly doffed your hat before the Jews and called the accused Jews "lords and fathers", in Ernst-Stephan Bauer, *Frömmigkeit, Gelehrsamkeit und Zeitkritik an der Schwelle der großen Konzilien. Johannes Wetzlar und sein Dialogus super Magnificat (1427)* (Mainz, 1981), 274.

<sup>31</sup> Putik, "On the Topography and Demography", 34.

In contrast, there is no Jonas in the *selicha* of Avigdor Kara. Instead, a comparable central role is given to an anonymous rabbi, described here as the head of the holy congregation, his brother and his son.<sup>32</sup> We do not learn the names of this trio, perhaps because these figures were recognisable to those to whom the *piyyut* was addressed without the need for identification, or perhaps because they have first and foremost of symbolic and rhetorical rather than historical relevance in this version of the (hi)story.<sup>33</sup> Unlike Jonas, who survived – perhaps because he was able to buy his way out – according to Kara the rabbi was killed because he was unwilling to bargain with the Christian mob and remained constant in his faith. Jewish ideological resistance is the leitmotiv in the *selicha*, unites it as a composition and also ties it to the older *piyyutim* where a similar stance is expressed. All the many individuals who populate this *piyyut* choose to die a martyr's death rather than accept the pollution of baptism.<sup>34</sup> Just like the unnamed rabbi, they are not identified and no clue is provided about their earthly existence, nor do they diverge from the standards of martyrdom poetry in a way that would make then concrete human individuals rather than literary types.

But what about people like Jonas? Jews with earthly histories who did survive, perhaps precisely because they were willing to

<sup>32</sup> Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 197 (in English translation): "Left without comfort as the head of the holy congregation, its guardian, falls; the rabbi, his pious brother and his only son."

<sup>33</sup> As Marcus notes, the Ashkenazi communities had two distinct elites – the rabbis who acted as spiritual and legal leaders, and the elders, who acted as political authorities and communicated with the Christians; Ivan G. Marcus, "A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis. The Culture of Early Ashkenaz," in *Cultures of the Jews. A New History*, ed. D. Biale, (New York, 2002), 454–55. Kara, being a member of the former group, naturally had an interest in depicting primarily the rabbinical leadership. For the same reason, the Christian authors saw first and foremost the *parnas*, ignoring the rabbis. Note also Einbinder's conclusions about the authors and addressees of the martyrological poetry; Einbinder, *Beautiful Death*, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Marcus, "Hierarchies," 11–12.

compromise their faith and bow to the Christian pressure? The *selicha* is naturally silent on this matter. Again, this is in contrast to the Latin version of the (hi)story, which highlights the fragility of Jewish resistance and its futility. The Jews that populate the Passion of the Jews of Prague deny their Jewishness and thus manage to survive. We hear, for example, about two Jews who dress as priests and even tonsure their heads in order to escape the ravaging mob. When interrogated by Christian passers-by, they deny they are Jewish to save their lives.<sup>35</sup> A few sentences later a Jewess on her baptism professes to have seen the Virgin Mary above the gates of the Jewish Town. A group of Jews are described as baptised “of their own accord” (*proprio desiderio*) and others as incarcerated by the town officials, obviously preferring this option to the *kiddush ha-Shem* glorified in the *selicha*.<sup>36</sup> The synodal acts of 1391 confirm, too, the presence

<sup>35</sup> Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 20: *Stantes autem cristiani foris in plateis viderunt duos Iudeos per medium eorum equitantes et insequentes eos cursu celeri clamabant et dicebant: “Vere, vos ex illis estis. Nam et effigies et habitus vestri manifestos vos faciunt” At illi negaverunt et dixerunt: “Nescimus, quid dicitis” ostendentes eis coronas in capite noviter rasas, ut mentita et simulata iniquitate appareant sacerdotes, et ita simulacione iniqua evaserunt manus cristianorum.* And the Christians who stayed outside, in the street, saw two Jews galloping by them and they ran after them shouting: “You also are one of them. Your faces as well as clothes give you away (Mt 26:69–73).” But they denied that and said: “We don’t know what you are talking about (Mt 26:70),” showing to them freshly tonsured heads, so that they might seem by such a deceit and trickery to be priests. And so they escaped from the hands of the Christians thanks to this cunning pretence.

<sup>36</sup> Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 23: *Eadem itaque die et aliis post hoc sequentibus plurimi utriusque sexus infantes Hebrei proprio ipsorum desiderio baptizantur. Cum quibus et una Iudea antiqua, que post regenerationis lavacrum suo retulisse dicitur confessori, quod beatam virginem Mariam, Genetricem Domini nostri Iesu Christi, stantem viderit supra portam Iudeorum. Hii baptizati predicabant Christum dicentes: “Vere, qui crucifixus est, Filius Dei erat.” Illi autem, qui vivi post ignem et ferrum remanserunt, reclusi sunt captivi in pretorio.* On the very same day and in the following many Jewish children of both sexes have been baptized of their own accord. Together with them also one very old Jewess, who was said to have

of newly baptised Jews in Prague.<sup>37</sup> None of these Jews have room in the *piyyut*, which expresses unity of will to martyrdom on the part of the Jewish community. In fact, it might be suggested that the poem consciously obliterates those who do not fit into its ideological picture, as if they had never existed and their acts had never happened.<sup>38</sup>

All the same, these Jews cannot be altogether purged from the picture, since it is they, the survivors, who are the addressees of this *piyyut* and who are to perform it.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the author is another suspicious survivor, who is left out of the *piyyut* too.<sup>40</sup> This *selicha*, then, served not only as a communal remembrance of those that chose martyrdom, but also related to those that survived. By erasing their deeds from communal history, these survivors with a guilty conscience could go on. At the same time, they were presented with the example of the approved behaviour as a model and as a rebuke.<sup>41</sup>

Kara’s *piyyut* may equally be regarded as orientated not only inwards, criticizing the behaviour of the survivors, but also outwards, as a polemical voice against the Christian persecutors,

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confessed to the priest after the baptism that she had seen the holy Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, standing above the gate of the Jewish Town. And these baptised Jews prophesied Christ saying: “Surely he was the Son of God! (Mt 27:54)” As for those who survived the fire and the sword, they were put into the custody in the municipal hall.

<sup>37</sup> C. Höfler, *Prager Concilien in der vorhusitischen Periode* (Prague, 1862), 40: *Item Archiepiscopus dat XL dies indulgentiarum quocienscunque quis oraverit pro neophytis i.e. judeis baptizatis.* Also, the archbishop decrees forty days of indulgences every time someone shall pray for the neophytes, i.e. the baptized Jews.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Einbinder, *Beautiful Death*, 18.

<sup>39</sup> See Marcus, “A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis”, 463–64; Cohen, “Between Martyrdom and Apostasy”, 435–36; and Cohen, “The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles”, 21–22.

<sup>40</sup> One might wonder how Avigdor Kara survived unscathed, if one believes his version of the events. His survival contrasts starkly with the fate of the three scholars that is central to his poem.

<sup>41</sup> See Cohen, “The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles”, 21–22 and 34.

their ideological pressure on the community, and their version of the events that stressed the conversion, death and demise of the Jews.<sup>42</sup> We cannot know the relative chronology of the two strains of narrative, the Christian and the Jewish, and whether the *piyyut* was composed shortly after the events it describes, when the author was a young scion, or possibly decades later, when he was a mature and revered scholar.<sup>43</sup> In any case, the Christian narratives of the event were already circulating in Prague and as far as in Hessen, Germany, within a few years of 1389.<sup>44</sup> These attest to oral transmission in local vernaculars, which was the channel via which the narrative could reach also the Jewish community of Prague and its rabbi. Two of the verses in the *piyyut* seem to hint that Avigdor Kara was aware of the Christian claims and wrote his composition with a prior knowledge of the Christian narrative. The verse “*Since I have heard the libel of many and danger around me*” may be associated, perhaps, with the Host Desecration Accusation articulated by *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, e.g. in the form of short catchy songs in Latin and vernacular.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand the reference to libel was a part of the standard repertoire of the martyrological poetry, and thus does not amount to much as historical evidence.<sup>46</sup> The other significant verse is more interesting, since it

<sup>42</sup> Einbinder, *Beautiful Death*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> That the *piyyut* might have been written many years after 1389 was suggested to me by Elisabeth Hollander during a discussion.

<sup>44</sup> The Passion narrative was recorded in the German *Limburger Chronik* of Tileman Elhen of Wolfhagen which was finished within a decade of the massacre; see Arthur Wyss (ed.), *Tileman Elhen von Wolfhagen. Die Limburger Chronik*. MGH, Dt. Chron. IV, 1 (Hannover, 1883), 79. One of the major manuscripts containing the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, Praha, Národní knihovna VIII F 20, was dated to 1398.

<sup>45</sup> Such songs can be found in ms. Praha, Národní knihovna České republiky VIII.F.20. More about these in Daniel Soukup, “Latinské a české verše o pražském pogromu roku 1389 – ke dvěma pozapomenutým žakovským skladbám”, *Česká literatura* 60.5 (2012): 711–26.

<sup>46</sup> Einbinder, *Beautiful death*, 37.

is odd with respect to established vocabulary: “*Why, they have committed atrocities and acted in malice, devised schemes to cover up the killing*”.<sup>47</sup> This remark could be read literally, just like the reference to desecration of the Jewish cemetery, i.e. as an indication that the Christian party secondarily produced some (narrative) material to explain the eruption of violence and to excuse the pillaging that ensued. If a possible Jewish tendency to stereotypical description is discounted in this case, the verse does seem to refer to an actual account produced by the Christian party concerning the massacre. Such a description would fit the Host Desecration Accusation presented in the *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*. Indeed some of the versions of *Passio Iudeorum* themselves indicate that the Host Desecration was secondary to the event, and just an excuse for pillaging and violence.<sup>48</sup> This is the viewpoint of the *piyyut* as well, which rather than chastising the Christian masses partaking on the violence, downplays the Christian ideological perspective by describing it as a scheme, a libel and a secondary production to excuse murder and theft. An attack of this kind on the rival interpretation of the events of 1389 might also be informed by the desire to label the Christian narrative, or elements of that narrative as dangerous and unacceptable for the potential Jewish audience. As has been implied, the two communities, Jewish and Christian, were by no means hermetically sealed from each other and particularly on the level of vernacular and oral literature, transmission could and would occur.

The record in the Anonymous Hebrew Chronicle of Prague indirectly confirms what may have been Avigdor Kara’s fear of the contamination of the Jewish by the Christian narrative. While this record was copied roughly in the same period and intellectual climate as the historiographies of early modern

<sup>47</sup> According to Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 196–97.

<sup>48</sup> See Steinová, “*Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*: fakt a fikcia o pogrome v roku 1389” (forthcoming).



period, its roots may be older and possibly reflect a view closer to the times of the massacre. The chronicle relies primarily on local sources, including oral traditions and non-Jewish material, rather than on then available contemporary Jewish and Christian historiographers, such as David Gans or Sebastian Münster, and thus it reflects the sentiments of the Prague community beyond the rabbinic elite.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, the record of 1389 is the first entry in the chronicle, which follows events up to 1611. The next entry after 1389 relates to 1465, more than 75 years later.<sup>50</sup> It is only with the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century that the entries become chronologically denser and it seems that for the anonymous chronicler the event of 1389 was the earliest tangible trace of communal history, reiterated perhaps via the recital of *Et Kol Ha-Tela'a* in the synagogue.

The chronicle's record of the massacre of 1389 refers to the Easter massacre as "the decree of Janek" (*gezerah Yanek*), a reference that has no counterpart in the Hebrew source pool and posed a puzzle for the editor.<sup>51</sup> In fact it can be traced to the Christian narrative documents concerning the Easter massacre. The Passion of the Jews of Prague names one Ješko, or Johannes in Latin, as the ringleader of the Christian mob.<sup>52</sup> Ješek or Ješko

<sup>49</sup> David and Weinberger, *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague*, 8–13.

<sup>50</sup> David and Weinberger, *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague*, 21–22.

<sup>51</sup> "Our chronicle refers to this event as the decree of Yanek; however the identity of the author of the decree is unknown"; *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 19 (version *secundum Ieškonem*): *Tunc unus ex plebe cristianorum nomine Ieško quadratus, cum esset quasi pontifex anni et temporis illius, prophetavit dicens: "Expedit vobis, ut omnes pariter Iudei moriantur <pro> populo cristiano, ne tota gens pereat."* Then one of the Christian mob by the name of Ješko the Witty, who was as if the high priest that year (Jn 11:49), spoke up: "It is better for you that all the Jews die for the Christian people, so that the whole nation may not perish (Jn 11:50)."

Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 24 (version *secundum blasphemiam*): *Unus autem ex ipsis, Iohannes nomine, cum esset pontifex anni illius, prophetavit dicens: "Expedit vobis, ut omnis plebs Iudea moriatur pro populo cristiano, ne pereat."* One of them, however, by the name of John, who

were Czech forms of the name John and Janek is yet another colloquial version of the same name in Czech. Given the function in which he appears in the Hebrew chronicle, this is in my opinion the very same character as in the Latin tradition. In *Passio*, this Janek/Ješko is identified as a *rusticus quadratus*, an obscure term in Latin that can perhaps be traced back to the Czech "Hloupy Honza" and translated into English as "Johnnie the Simpleton".<sup>53</sup> He should not be confused with a historical figure, since the various authors of the Passion texts consciously assert his fictitious character, e.g. when he is also given as the pseudo-author of the narrative.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Johnnie the Simpleton features in numerous Czech folktales as an archetype of the uneducated but nevertheless witty and even cunning peasant.<sup>55</sup> In the context

was the high priest that year (Jn 11:49) spoke up: It is better for you that the whole Jewish nation dies for the Christian people, so that they do not perish. (Jn 11:50)"

Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 28 (version *Historia de cede Iudeorum Pragensi*): *Quidam autem ex illis, Iohannes nomine, alta voce clamabat dicens: "Nunc in die festo non reliquamus semen eorum in terra. Morte turpissima condempnemus eos, ne forte superveniens rex cum complicitibus suis eripiat eos de manibus nostris."* However, one of them, by the name of John, shouted out in a loud voice: "Now in the festive day we shall not leave their seed on the earth (Mt 26:5). We shall punish them with the shameful death, lest the king with his companions come and save them from our hands."

<sup>53</sup> See A. Vidmanová, "Sedlák hranatý nebo chlap jak se patří?" *Listy filologické* 123.1 (2000): 52–58; František Mareš, "Ješko rusticus quadratus," *Český časopis historický* 9.2 (1903): 202–03; and Konrad Burdach, *Der Dichter des Ackermann aus Böhmen und seine Zeit* (Berlin, 1926–32), 361–67.

<sup>54</sup> It should not be assumed, however, that there was necessarily no historical Ješko/Johannes behind this literary image. Just as in case of the *piyyut*, the image on the level of literary tradition could have been activated by association with a historical fact. Ješko/Johannes was a very popular name in Prague at the time. For example, one Ješek was an owner the house opposite the Old-New Synagogue in 1342; Putik, "On the Topography and Demography," 22.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Andrew L. Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Budapest, 2005), 56–57. This narrative figure may be also compared to Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk and the Latin *Unibos* from *Versus de unibove*; see Rudi Künzel, "Oral and Written Traditions in the *Versus de unibove*," in Jean Goossens, Ludovicus

of the Passion, he is a symbol of the headless popular mob that committed the atrocities in 1389 and from which the educated authors of the Latin narratives criticising their co-religionists wished to distance themselves.<sup>56</sup> I believe that the surfacing of the name in the Hebrew indicates that at a certain point the Jewish community of Prague became recipients of the Latin-Czech tradition, in which the perpetrators of the violence in 1389 were symbolically represented by this folk-tale character. We know that the narrative material about the massacre circulated in an oral form within a few years of the event.<sup>57</sup> A Czech versified account of the Prague massacre shows that the material entered the vernacular language environment, and in this form, unlike in Latin, it was accessible to the Jews of the city.<sup>58</sup> It was probably via these channels that the story of Janek the mobster entered the Jewish milieu and merged with the Hebrew tradition of persecution kept alive via the recital of *selicha*. After all, this kind of blending is a phenomenon observed in other parts of Ashkenaz in earlier periods, for example when the Christian saint St. Emmeram of Regensburg was re-appropriated by the community of Mainz as their pious rabbi Amram in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup>

Milis and Werner Verbeke (eds.), *Medieval Narrative Sources: A Gateway into the Medieval Mind* (Leuven, 2005), 205–30.

<sup>56</sup> Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 53–55; cf. Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 136.

<sup>57</sup> Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 43–44 and 58–59. The Czech versicle about the massacre features in manuscript executed by one Wenceslaus de Praga, *baccalarius*, in 1398; Praha, Národní knihovna České republiky VIII.F.20. Cf. catalogue record available at <[http://www.manuscriptorium.com/apps/main/en/index.php?request=show\\_record\\_num&param=1&mode=&client=>](http://www.manuscriptorium.com/apps/main/en/index.php?request=show_record_num&param=1&mode=&client=>)>. Retrieved on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Gans was using Czech chronicles, such as the Chronicle of Dalimil, but had no command of Latin; Šedinová, “Old Czech Legends”; and Bell, “Jewish and Christian historiography”, 148. Cf. Heil, “Ashkenazic *Piyyut*”, 68–69, on contacts between the Hebrew and Czech language environments.

<sup>59</sup> See Lucia Raspe, “Emmeram von Regensburg, Amram von Mainz. Ein christlicher Heiliger in der jüdischen Überlieferung,” in M. Brocke – A. Pomerance – A. Schatz (eds.), *Neuer Anbruch. Zur deutsch-jüdischen*

The *piyyut* of Avigdor Kara had an interesting afterlife beyond the community of Prague in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, the Sephardic Jews, under the impression of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal, and adapting to Italian humanism, began to write historiographical works along Christian lines. The majority of the Jewish historians focused on the lachrymose history of the persecution and strove to collect and examine extant accounts of such events, starting with Abraham Zacuto in *Sefer Yohassin* (1498) and Solomon ibn Verga in *Shevet Yehuda* (1554).<sup>60</sup> Just like the martyrological poetry of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century emanating from the Tosafist milieu, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century historiographic impulse served to address the trauma of persecutions and tribulations, but this time in a new guise and with a new, often messianic undertone. *Piyyutim*, such as *Et Kol Ha-Tela’a*, were re-framed as prose historiographic accounts, and in the process of this rewriting their original message was transformed and their content excerpted.

Kara’s *selicha* surfaces in this literary environment in the 1550s, when it is detectable in the writing of Joseph ha-Kohen<sup>61</sup>

*Geschichte und Kultur* (Berlin, 2001), 221–41; also Heil, “Ashkenazic *Piyyut*”, 56–57.

<sup>60</sup> Although it was not published until 1554 in Adrianople, ibn Verga was already drafting his work in 1520s. He lived and worked in Portugal and Ottoman Empire; see Michael A. Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History* (New York, 1971), 110. See also Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Messianic Impulses in Joseph ha-Kohen,” in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. B. D. Cooperman (Cambridge, 1983), 460–87.

<sup>61</sup> Ha-Kohen mentions it as a source by name. See Ha-Kohen, *Emeq Ha-Bakha*, 50 (in English translation): “And it happened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> in the month of Nissan, in the year nine and forty and hundred and five thousand, this is the year nine and eighty and three hundred and one thousand, that the people of Prague which is in Bohemen, surrounded the vineyard of God, the house of Israel, all the people around, each came with his axe like woodcutters, and they stretched their hand towards them, and they put many to the sword, and the mountains were trembling, and their dead bodies were like refuse, in the middle of the streets, in that agitated time, they despised the Law of God, and ignored the word of the Holy of Israel, anyhow, their anger did not turn away,

and possibly also of Gedaliah ibn Yahya.<sup>62</sup> Ha-Kohen treated the *selicha* selectively, abridging it to fit his particular agenda. In the *Emeq ha-Bacha*, he also chose to extend the account of 1389 provided by the *piyyut* with Christian material, which can be identified as the *Cosmographia Universalis* of Sebastian Münster.<sup>63</sup> Münster, writing in German, was not acces-

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and again their hand was stretched, and they burned many of them by fire, and they turned over those who sleep in the dust, and they broke their tombstones completely, and there was no one to save them, on the day of God's wrath, and many of those miserable Jews saw that the evil had occurred to them, and that they were set apart in that agitated time, because Wenceslaus was no longer king in Prague in that time, because he went to Hungary, therefore this trouble befell them, and each would kill his brother and friend and wife and sons and daughters, to prevent the uncircumcised from harassing them, their cry ascended to heaven, see O God and look up and defend their cause, and Rabbi Avigdor lamented and read a penitential hymn about them in that time."

<sup>62</sup> Gedaliah ibn Yahya was certainly familiar with the work of Ha-Kohen, and thus possibly taken over the description from him; see David, "Shalshet Hakabbalah", 67. Cf. שלשלת הקבלה, 277 (in English translation): "In the year five thousand one hundred forty-nine there were many troubles for the Jews in the city of Prague."

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Münster's description of the reign of Wenceslaus IV.; Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographiae Universalis libri VI* (Basel, 1552), 808: *Sub eo* [i.e. Wenceslaus IV.] *multa fiebant in Bohemia scandala et enormia facinora. Miseri Iudaei populari tumultu spoliantur sine causa, viri quoque insontes sine noxa exquisitis et novis cruciatibus plectebantur. Vuenceslaus usus tyrannide, tandem a baronibus regni captus, quattor mensibus et diebus 7. custodiae est traditus, donec per fratrum suum Ioanem marchionem ducem Lusaciae et Procopium Moraviae marchionem est liberatus non sine reipublicae ingenti iactura. Cum ergo tyrannide, socordia, luxu omnia scedaret, conquestu provinciales Sigismundo fratri regi Ungariae iterum a Sigismundo est captus ut securius custodiretur, Alberto duci Austriae est traditus.* During his reign [i.e. Wenceslaus IV.], many misdeeds and terrible crimes took place in Bohemia. Poor Jews were robbed without a cause in a popular upheaval, and innocent guiltless people were tortured in new, terrible ways. Wenceslaus gave himself to tyranny and then seized by the barons of the realm and held in custody for four months and seven days, until he was freed by his brother John, the margrave and duke of Lusatia, and by Procopius the margrave of Moravia, not without great damage to the state. And when he [returned] to

sible to Ha-Kohen directly but via the Italian translation printed in Venice in 1558.<sup>64</sup> Gedaliah ibn Yahya and Joseph ha-Kohen also had access to other printed works from Venice and the surrounding area,<sup>65</sup> and so we can speculate that the *selicha*, too, reached Italy via one of the Venetian printing shops specializing in Hebrew texts.<sup>66</sup> Alternatively, the source was the Prague printing workshop of Tsemach-Katz, which produced *Seder selichot k-minhag Prag* containing *Et Kol Ha-Tela'a* in 1529.<sup>67</sup> Prague enjoyed a particularly lively link with Venice,<sup>68</sup> and thus circulation of printed books may be assumed. The works of Joseph ha-Kohen and Gedaliah ibn Yahya were printed in this part of Italy, *Divrei ha-Yamim* in Sabionetta in 1554<sup>69</sup> and *Shalshet ha-Kabbalah* in Venice in 1587,<sup>70</sup> and since David Gans writing at the end of the century in Prague had access to both of these works, which he used as sources for his *Tsemach David*,<sup>71</sup> this further strengthens the impression of particularly close ties

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tyranny, sloth and luxury, the nobility ceded to his brother Sigismund, king of Hungary, [and he was] again captured by Sigismund and, in order that he should the better be guarded, was handed over to Albert, the duke of Austria.

<sup>64</sup> Matthew A. McLean, *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster. Describing the World in the Reformation* (Aldershot, 2007), 175.

<sup>65</sup> See Ha-Kohen, *Emeq ha-Bakha*, 26–27; and David, "Shalshet Hakabbalah", 67.

<sup>66</sup> For the printing workshops of Hebrew books in Venice, see Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid (eds.), *The Jews of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore, 2001), 24–25.

<sup>67</sup> Otto Muneles, *Bibliografický přehled židovské Prahy* (Prague, 1957), 14.

<sup>68</sup> Breuer, "Modernism and Traditionalism", 52–53; also Neher, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Revolution*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Ha-Kohen, *Emeq ha-Bakha*, 14.

<sup>70</sup> Fred Astren, *Karaite Past and Jewish History* (Columbia, 2004), 63; Jiřina Šedinová, "Non-Jewish Sources in the Chronicle by David Gans, *Tsemah David*," *Judaica Bohemiae* 8 (1972): 5.

<sup>71</sup> Šedinová, "Non-Jewish Sources," 12; also Jiřina Šedinová, "Old Czech Legends in the Work of David Gans (1592)," *Judaica Bohemiae* 14.2 (1978): 98; Breuer, "Modernism and Traditionalism," 5; and Neher, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Revolution*, 123 and 149–50.

between the city and Northern Italian Jewish communities. Just like the Italian historians, Gans employed *selicha* selectively and in combination with an unidentified Christian source, again most probably the *Cosmographia Universalis* of Münster,<sup>72</sup> but

<sup>72</sup> Hebrew text in David Gans, *Sefer Cemach David* (Warszawa, 1859), [no page numbers].

קמט בעיר פראג התאפכו אנשים רקים ביום אסרו חג של פסח בשנת ה' אלפים קמ"ט ועלו על עם יי בחרבות ובקררומות כחוטבי עיצם ויהרגו אותם בחוצות ובתיהם שרפו באש, גם הוציאו ישני עפר מקבריהם, עיין בסליחות שישד מהר"ר אביגדור קרא המתחלת את כל התלאה בסנין קט"ר מסרר דק"ק פראג, ועיין בחלק שני:

קמט 1389. בימי הקיסר ווענצל מלך ביהם לאי היה מורא מלכות רק כל איש הישרי בעיניו יעשה אשר בסיבת זה התאספו בעיר הגדולה פראג גנך רצון הקיסר ושריו אנשי רקים ופוחזים ועלו על היהודים אשר שם ויהרגו אותם בחוצות ואת רכושם בזוו והיה זה בשנת קמט אלף

שפט לנצרים ועיין בחלק ראשון

Czech translation in Muneles, *Starý židovský hřbitov*, 104: 5149. *V městě Praze shromáždili se lidé bohaprázdní den po velikonocích* [t.j. po svátku Pésach, na svátek Isru Chag] *v roce 5149 a vystoupili proti lidu Hospodinovu s meči a sekerami jako dřevorubci, a vraždili je na ulicích a jejich domy spálili; také vytáhli zesnulé z jejich hrobů, viz elegii, kterou zbasnil mhr Avigdor Kara, která začíná: “Všechno to neštěstí” v odstavci 164 liturgického pořadu svatého města Prahy, a podívej se do druhého dílu.*

5149. 1389. *Vě dnech císaře Václava, českého krále, nebylo žádné bázně před královstvím, nýbrž každý dělal, co se mu líbilo, a z této příčiny shromáždili se ve velkém městě Praze, proti vůli císaře a jeho knížat, lidé bohaprázdní a násilní a vyšli proti Židům, kteří tam byli, vraždili je na ulici a majetek jejich plundrovali; a bylo to v roce 149* [t.j. 5149], *1389 podle křesťanů a viz v prvním díle.*

On the day after the Easter [i.e. the festival of Pesach] men with no respect for God gathered in the city of Prague, in 5149 [i.e. 1389] and rose against the people of the Lord with swords and axes like woodcutters, and murdered them in the streets and burned their houses. They also dragged out the deceased from their graves, see the *selicha*, which was written by mhr Avigdor Kara, which starts with: “All the Suffering” in the paragraph 164 in the liturgical order of the holy city of Prague. See also the second volume.

In the days of Emperor Wenceslaus, the King of Bohemia, there was no awe of the royal power, but everybody did what he wished, and because of this men violent, with no respect for God gathered in the great city of Prague, against the will of the emperor and his princes, and came out against the Jews, who were there. They murdered them in the streets and plundered their possessions. This happened in 149 [i.e. 5149], 1389 according to the Christians. See also in the first volume.

he refers directly to the liturgy of Prague. His agenda, too, steers away from the martyrological message of the *selicha*.

To sum up, what impression can we gain from these various sources about the reception of the events of the 1389 in the Jewish environment? From an early stage the *selicha* of Avigdor Kara seems to have functioned as the primary repository of memories about and historical consciousness of the massacre of 1389 among the Jews in the city. The Anonymous Chronicle of 1615 preserved the traces of an alternative narrative which might have existed in the Prague community before 1611, the last date in the chronicle, and which integrated the oral Christian tradition as it was available in the local environment. Even though the two traditions – of Jewish martyrdom expressed by Kara, and of the Host Desecration that rings through the Passion of the Jews of Prague – were ideologically incompatible, they were merged on a narrative level and in this process not only the Jewish, but also the Christian story was re-written to sustain this new narrative. In the account from the Anonymous chronicle, martyrs are not mentioned, nor is the Host Desecration accusation.

Interestingly, we see somewhat similar “re-telling” of the massacre in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on both sides. Again, the Jewish narrative strand comes into contact with non-Jewish influences, both in the form of Christian authorities such as Sebastian Münster, who could be consulted to enrich the account of the massacre, and in the Christian practices of history-writing. The original Hebrew narrative is re-written as a result, but also this also leads to the re-writing the Christian history in turn.

Ultimately, even rabbi Kara’s dirge can be understood as a re-writing the Christian story by the placing of the stress on martyrdom to counter the story of slaughter, conversion and denial coined by the Christian party and circulated in a form that could reach the Jewish audience as well. Kara’s allusion to the “*libel of many*” and “*schemes to cover up the killing*” may be evidence of the many paradoxes of the *piyyut*, specifically that even the pious rabbi was exposed to and conversant with



the Christian version of the events and writing in response to it. The metaphorical circles on the water of Christian and Jewish literary traditions were thus always close and we must remain alert to this proximity and the way that it stimulated writing and re-writing, acceptance and rejection.

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## RÉSUMÉ

**«Toutes ces souffrances»: les narrations hébraïques du pogrom de Prague de l'an 1389 et leurs interactions avec la matière écrite d'une langue latine**

Nous avons peu de savoir factuel sur le pogrom de Pâques qui s'est passé à Prague en 1389. Même, l'événement a déclenché

une composition d'un nombre remarquable des textes littéraires dans l'environnement littéraires chrétien et juif étant dans un dialogue mutuel. Les compositions juives les plus notables sont rentrées dans les catégories génériques traditionnellement juives, cependant elles démontrent une connaissance des narrations chrétiennes, qui se préoccupaient avec le pogrom, et elles peuvent être considérées, entre autres, comme la réponse aux activités littéraires et allégations chrétiennes. La *selicha* du Rabbin de Prague Avigdor Kara († 1439) *Et Kol Ha-Tela'a* et une entrée dans une chronique juive Anonyme de Prague de 1615 sont les deux textes juifs les plus remarquables à cet égard. Bien que la *selicha* met l'accent sur la souffrance de la communauté, la résistance à une idéologie chrétienne et le martyre, elle fait aussi une référence à une des narrations chrétiennes du pogrom, le *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, en même temps refusant son accusation de profanation d'hosties et réécrivant un compte rendu de sa conversion et soumission en l'histoire du martyre et de la victoire. Le compte rendu dans la chronique Anonyme indique que de certains segments de la communauté juive étaient affectés par la version populaire d'une narration chrétienne qui avait été accessible à cette communauté par la langue vernaculaire.

## Demography and the Dissemination of Yiddish in Eastern Europe

Jits van Straten

My historical and demographic investigation into the origin of East European Jewry has shown that the idea that the dissemination of the Yiddish language in Eastern Europe was a function of Jewish immigration is fundamentally unsustainable. The inevitable conclusion is that the Yiddish language must have spread among an autochthonous Jewish population: an essential difference. In my paper, I hope to demonstrate how I reached this conclusion.

The basic assumption of linguists is that Yiddish was brought to Eastern Europe by Jews who fled to Poland and Lithuania as a result of the pogroms in Germany during the Middle Ages. One important implication of this assumption is that the number of Jews in Eastern Europe in 1500 must have been low, because there were not all that many Jews living in Germany in that period. Since the development of the Yiddish language in Eastern Europe cannot be detached from the historical and demographic development of East European Jewry, on which it is based, I will have to start with an historical and demographic introduction.

In 2004 I showed,<sup>1</sup> mainly on the basis of the *Germania Judaica*, that there is no evidence for mass migrations of German Jews to Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages. East European historians like R. Mahler<sup>2</sup> and B. D. Weinryb,<sup>3</sup> have likewise been

<sup>1</sup> Jits van Straten, "Jewish Migrations from Germany to Poland. The Rhineland Hypothesis Revisited," *The Mankind Quarterly* 44.3–4, 367–83.

<sup>2</sup> Raphael Mahler, *Toldot hayehudim bepolin* (Merhavia, 1946).

<sup>3</sup> Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland. A Social Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia, 1973), 32 and 197.