Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 1–14 doi:10.1093/leobaeck/ybs008

*Dutch Jewry and its Undesired German Rabbinate**

By Chaya Brasz

The Netherlands has a long eastern border with Germany. Over the centuries thousands of Ashkenazi Jews have crossed it westwards, to a life in which they have enjoyed more personal security than elsewhere in Europe.[1] During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries people of all creeds freely entered the Dutch Republic, knowing that they would not be persecuted for their religious or 'heretic' convictions.[2] After a short French intermezzo between 1795 and 1813, the Kingdom of the Netherlands was established in 1815. It adhered to a liberal immigration policy and Jews continued to be among the newcomers. By natural growth and immigration the Dutch Jewish population grew to well over 46,000 in 1830 and to more than 100,000 around 1900.[3] The community continued to grow, reaching 140,000 in 1940.[4] Except for a period of four decades between circa 1840 and 1880, the majority of Dutch Jewry always lived in Amsterdam[5] where not only the largest Jewish community, but also the largest Jewish 'proletariat' in Europe had been created.[6]

Except for a small and enlightened upper class, Jews in the Netherlands were not only poor but also uneducated when, in 1796, they were granted full and equal citizenship. The decision was never reversed, but in order to adjust to their new status as 'Netherlanders of the Israelite faith', Jews had to embark on an intense process of *Dutchification*. This involved the creation of a centralized Jewish community and the

* This article is a partial result of a research project on Judaism in the Netherlands, conducted by the author for the Robert Levisson Institute for the training of Rabbis, Cantors and Teachers in Amsterdam and sponsored among others by the Prins Bernhard Cultural Fund and the Maror Foundation in the Netherlands.

[1] For a comprehensive history see J.C.H. Blom, R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld and I. Schöffer (eds.), *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, Oxford 2002; Jozeph Michman, Hartog Beem and Dan Michman, *Pinkas. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland*, Amsterdam 1999.

[2] For this period see op. cit. and Jonathan Israel's, *The Dutch Republic*, Oxford 1995.

[3] Emanuel Boekman, *Demografie van de Joden in Nederland*, Amsterdam 1936, p. 17. His data are based on official population surveys. About five percent of the Jews were of Spanish-Portuguese descent.

[4] Based on German registration data from the beginning of the National Socialist occupation. In addition to these 'full' Jews, there were 20,000 'half' and 'quarter' Jews.

[5] Boekman, p. 33.

[6] The term 'proletariat' is not used here in the meaning of a working class, but as a general term for an extremely poor population. Berlin and Paris had Jewish populations of *c.*3,000 in 1810. Amsterdam counted over 23,000 Jews, more than ten percent of the city's population. Over seventy percent of the Ashkenazim and over forty percent of the Sephardim were on poor relief, Blom, p. 176.

Jews' social and moral 'improvement' (*Verbesserung*) through education. A main feature was the drastic change of language from Yiddish to Dutch.

Between 1815 and 1870 Dutch Jews were organized under a *Hoofdcommissie tot de zaken der Israëlieten* (Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs) in which enlightened Jews had a clear majority.[7] The *Hoofdcommissie* was nominated by the central government and subject to a Ministry of Religious Affairs. It did not include any rabbis and was meant to lead the process of *Dutchification*.[8] As for religion, the *Hoofdcommissie* initiated a slow process of modernization, avoiding radicalism from both sides. It involved the gradual introduction of moderate changes in synagogues to bring them more in line with the dominant culture of Protestant churches. Prayer services had to become orderly events, including new customs of *decorum*. Rabbis were to dress like clergymen and deliver educative and moralizing sermons in the Dutch language, always glorifying the new Dutch centralized fatherland and its King. Rabbis also had to be Dutch-born or have resided in the Netherlands for at least six years and to have mastered the Dutch language.[9] This turned foreign rabbis into an undesired phenomenon and forced Dutch Jewry to educate its own home-grown Dutch rabbinate. To reach that goal, the existing traditional *beth hamidrash* in Amsterdam was gradually transformed into a modern rabbinical seminary, the *Nederlands Israëlietisch Seminarium*.[10] Teachers and rabbis who graduated from this seminary were to become the vehicles for the process of acculturation.

TRADITIONAL RABBIS

Traditional rabbis of foreign origin who already officiated in the Netherlands continued to play a role during the first decades of the nineteenth century.[11] Rabbi Samuel Berenstein, born in Hanover (1767), remained Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam and North Holland until he died in 1838. His brother-in-law, Rabbi Hartog Josua Hertzveld, born in Silesia (1781) was Chief Rabbi in Zwolle, a rabbinate comprising the provinces Overijssel and Drenthe, along the border with Germany. He was the first rabbi who held his sermons in Dutch.[12]

[7] Bart Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders. De integratie van de Joden in Nederland 1814-1851*, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 10-12.
[8] Jozeph Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period 1787-1815*, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 216-227.
[9] NA [National Archives] – Archief Ministerie van Erediensten, inv. 2.07.01.05/1 Reglement op het Kerkbestuur der Israëlietische gemeenten in Nederland, 1814.
[10] Blom, p. 199.
[11] Biographical descriptions of rabbis of German origin can be found in Michael Brocke und Julius Carlebach, *Biographisches Handbuch der Rabbiner*, vol. I, München 2004 and vol. II, 2009.
[12] D.S. van Zuiden, 'Organisatie en Geschiedenis van het Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap tot ca. 1870. School- en Armwezen', in *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. V, no. 2, July 1971, p. 193; Bart Wallet, 'Religious Oratory and the Improvement of Congregants: Dutch-Jewish Preaching in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2000, p. 172.

In 1841 Hertzveld proposed to hold a rabbinical assembly.[13] His initiative came three years after the death of his charismatic brother-in-law, Chief Rabbi Berenstein, whose seat was left unoccupied. It also came four years *after* the German Rabbi Dr. Abraham Geiger organized a limited rabbinical assembly in Wiesbaden and three years *before* the official first German rabbinical assembly was held in Brunswick. Hertzveld's proposals mainly concerned already accepted matters of *decorum*: sermons in the vernacular, the abolition of the selling of *mitzwot* during synagogue services and limitation of the use of *misheberachs*.[14] In addition, the more innovative introduction of confirmation ceremonies for boys and girls and of (male) choirs were included by him. Hertzveld sought to create a national consensus on these matters.[15]

His initiative met with fierce opposition by an ultra-Orthodox group, led by Zvi Hirsch Lehren in Amsterdam. Lehren wrote a fanatical request to the Dutch Minister of Religious Affairs, signed by thirty-five followers. The Dutch rabbinical assembly was never held.[16] Hertzveld died not long after, in 1846. A year earlier, the Dutch-born Rotterdam Chief Rabbi Menachem Löwenstam had passed away,[17] and two years later the Groningen Chief Rabbi Salomon Rosenbach, who originated from Bavaria (1764), was buried as well. It is obvious that halfway through the nineteenth century this generation of traditional, but rather moderate rabbis was coming to an end. The big question was how they would be replaced.

LEHREN

The activities of Zvi Hirsch (Hirschel) Lehren against Hertzveld looked like a prelude to his later efforts to suppress the rabbinical assemblies in Germany in the 1840s.[18] The Dutch Lehren and Prins families became deeply involved, on a European scale, in the build-up of Orthodox opposition against Reform Judaism. For this, they cooperated with rabbis in Germany including Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger of Altona, then still Denmark.[19]

The Lehren brothers, Hirschel, Meijer and Akiba, were bankers by profession. Their father, Moses Lehren, who had the full rabbinical title of *moreh* as well, came

[13] Iet Erdtsieck, 'The Appointment of Chief Rabbis in Overijssel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol 30, no. 1, 1996, p. 167.
[14] Jaap Meijer, *Erfenis der Emancipatie. Het Nederlandse Jodendom in de eerste helft van de 19e eeuw*, Haarlem 1963, pp. 53-55; Van Zuiden, p. 193; Erdtsieck, pp. 167-168.
[15] Erdtsieck, p. 167.
[16] Van Zuiden, p. 193; Erdtsieck, p. 168.
[17] Identical to Emanuel Joachim Löwenstam (1806-1845).
[18] Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, New York 1988, p. 135; Aaltje E. Kooy-Bas, *Nothing but heretics: Torat ha-Qena'ot. A Study and Translation of Nineteenth Century Responsa against Religious Reform*, Diss. Utrecht 2006. pp. 49-50.
[19] Kooy-Bas, p. 48; Ismar Schorsch, 'Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate', in Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker and Reinhard Rürup (eds.), *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, Schriftenreihe Wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts, vol. 39, Tübingen 1981, pp. 217-219.

from Mannheim and was a descendent of a rabbinical family which played a prominent role in the ultra-Orthodox *Klause* in Mannheim.[20]

Each of the three Dutch-born brothers held a great amount of traditional knowledge. They were all addressed as rabbis (*morenu harav*) and they were fanatically anti-modern, mostly described as belonging to a mystic, Hasidic and Kabalistic sect, definitely not representative of Dutch Jewry. In 1817 Hirschel Lehren organized his own independent *minyan* in which he followed customs of *Hasidei Ashkenaz* and used the *nusakh Sepharad* version of the Ashkenazi prayerbook,[21] very different from Dutch custom. Schisms were forbidden under Dutch law and Lehren was prosecuted and fined, but the authorities never succeeded in putting an end to Lehren's private activities entirely. All three brothers had a private *minyan* at home.[22]

Their Mannheim background connected the Lehrens with Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger, who founded a *Talmudschule* there, before he moved on to Altona in 1836. One of his pupils was Samson Raphael Hirsch. Ettlinger and Hirsch developed into central leaders of the Orthodox opposition against Reform Judaism in Germany, later called neo-Orthodoxy. Hirschel Lehren had one more relationship with Altona, namely his banking business with David Hollander, who came to Amsterdam from Altona. His daughter was Lehren's first wife.

Over the years, the Lehren brothers considerably extended their influence in the Amsterdam Jewish community. Their strength was in their impressive knowledge, their great network, unselfish philanthropy and financial skills. In 1809 Hirschel Lehren, together with Abraham Prins and Isaac Breitbart, founded *Pekidim ve-Amarcalim*, a modern financial organization to support the deeply religious and poor Jews in Palestine.[23] It provided them with an extensive network of contacts in western and central Europe and Palestine.

The ultra-Orthodox were not represented in the *Hoofdcommissie*, something they did not desire either, but they were very present in the rabbinical and Amsterdam community sphere. Meijer Lehren (1793-1861) was president of the Amsterdam congregation for over thirty years.[24] They were also on boards of welfare institutions and Meijer Lehren succeeded Abraham Prins as president of the rabbinical seminary in 1827 till he died in 1861.[25] In 1829 he invited Rabbi

[20] 'Shalshelet Lehren', [Hebrew] in Sigmund Seeligmann (bearb.), *Catalog der reichhaltigen Sammlung hebräischer und jüdischer Bücher, Handschriften, Portraits etc, nachgelassen von Naphtali Hirz van Biema in Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 1904; Mordechai Eliav, 'Dutch Jewry and the Palestinian Yishuv in the 19th Century', [Hebrew] in Jozeph Michman, *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry*, II, Jerusalem 1979, pp. 142-144;

[21] Combination of Polish Ashkenazi ritus with Sephardi ritus of Palestine, as created by Isaac Luria.

[22] Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, pp. 178-192.

[23] Mordechai Eliav, *Love of Zion and Men of HOD – German Jewry and the Settlement of Eretz-Israel in the Nineteenth Century*, [Hebrew], Tel Aviv 1970, pp. 14-22; Arieh Morgenstern, *The Return to Jerusalem: The Jewish Resettlement of Israel, 1800-1860* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 2007, pp. 115-145.

[24] Van Zuiden, p. 192.

[25] Lion Wagenaar, *Rede uitgesproken in de eerste algemeene vergadering der Vereeniging tot Steun van het Ned. Israël. Seminarium, gehouden te Amsterdam op Zondag 2 juni 1918*, Amsterdam 1918, p. 6.

Ettlinger – then still leading his *Talmudschule* in Mannheim – to head the Dutch seminary.[26] Ettlinger declined. In 1839 David Hollander, Hirschel Lehren's father-in-law, donated a building to the rabbinical seminary in Amsterdam.[27]

Their main concern was the preservation of traditional *talmudic* studies. Therefore, in 1843, the first Dutch rabbinical candidates of the Dutch seminary were sent over to Rabbi Seligmann Bamberger at the *talmud* academy in Würzburg, for additional education.[28] Ettlinger had studied there. They also went to Emden, where Dr. Samson Raphael Hirsch was working at the time. Hirsch taught them *rhetorica*. In Würzburg they received classical language education on a private basis in order to prevent them from entering Dutch universities, where they of course would be exposed to a non-Jewish and modern academic world, something preferred by enlightened board members of the seminary, but forbidden by the more traditional ones.[29] The Lehren's influence was felt among students of the seminary in Amsterdam itself as well. In 1847 one of them complained to the *Hoofdcommissie* that students were obliged to attend daily prayer services and *talmud* study in the private home of Meijer Lehren. Teachers, who graduated from the seminary and had to lead prayer services in the congregations in which they were nominated, were ridiculed for not being sufficiently familiar with western Ashkenazi rites and customs. Some were even labelled *hasidim*.[30]

GERMAN RABBIS

It is not surprising, that several synagogue boards developed an absolute dislike of the seminary as a backward institution. In Rotterdam, a small but critical Jewish middle-class was aware of the fact that in Germany modern rabbis had entered the scene, having combined rabbinical training with university education and a doctorate, a model they considered desirable for the Netherlands as well. Similar opinions existed in Maastricht, Groningen and Zwolle. They were encouraged by a change in the Dutch constitution, separating State and Church (1948). This caused expectations of a loosening of government control over the nomination of foreign rabbis.

In 1849 such a German rabbi applied for the Zwolle rabbinate and was approved by the provincial Great Synagogue Council. However, this Dr. Jacob Fränkel met with opposition from the ultra-Orthodox, including those in Amsterdam. His nomination was put on hold.[31] The Rotterdam rabbinate was even more crucial. With some 3,400 Jews, Rotterdam was the second largest Jewish community in the

[26] Jaap Meijer, *Moeder in Israël, een geschiedenis van het Amsterdamse Ashkenazische Jodendom*, Haarlem 1964, pp. 80-81.
[27] Wagenaar, p. 17.
[28] Michman, *Pinkas*, p. 88.
[29] On this matter the Lehrens differed from Ettlinger and Hirsch, who were both educated at universities and examples of the early acceptance of university studies in German Orthodoxy.
[30] Van Zuiden, p. 194; M.H. Gans, *Memorboek*, Baarn 1971, p. 364.
[31] Erdtsieck, p. 169.

country and part of an understanding of 1820 in which the rabbis of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague had agreed to a joint policy.[32] Rotterdam's board members were divided into old-fashioned *parnasim* and modern liberals. A serious opposition developed when a 'hyper-Orthodox' rabbi from Germany, Dr. Benjamin Hirsch Auerbach of Darmstadt, was chosen among a list of eleven German candidates.[33] Protests successfully prevented his arrival, after which a Dr. Josef Isaacsohn was invited, who was not on the list but apparently recommended by an interested party. Considerable opposition now developed from another direction, among people who did not want a foreigner as their rabbi:

> Yes, wrong it is, absurd and daring, to nominate as our pastor, a man, strange to our language and customs! . . . How will it be possible for those, who in the first years will not be able to speak our beautiful mother tongue [Dutch] in a tolerable way, to deliver edifying sermons before the congregation? . . . Or does one think that the simple congregation will be able to understand the German language as it will be spoken from the pulpit? Would not it then be endlessly better to stick to Yiddish? . . . And beyond sermons, isn't it an indispensable condition for the servant of the Lord, that his lay-people will be able to understand him, whenever they turn to him for consolation, help, advice and deeds?[34]

However, the synagogue board was deeply impressed by his rhetorical talents and modern outlook. Isaacsohn was Rabbi of Emden, where he had succeeded Rabbi Hirsch, when the latter relocated to Frankfurt am Main. Isaacsohn married Amalie Ettlinger, daughter of the Altona Rabbi Ettlinger. He was the first modern rabbi with a doctorate to be nominated in the Netherlands, but, coming from the Ettlinger-Hirsch and Lehren network, he was also the first neo-Orthodox rabbi and far less moderate than first perceived. Moreover, Isaacsohn never stopped delivering his excellent sermons in German. He was at odds with his liberal board for the next twenty years.

Interestingly enough, his arrival served an additional purpose: the ultra-Orthodox instantly included him in the rabbinical commission, installed to decide on the admission of foreign rabbis. Isaacsohn immediately declared war on Dr. Jacob Fränkel, still waiting for the Chief Rabbinate of Zwolle. Fränkel originated from Pommerania (1814) and sympathized with Rabbi Dr. Zacharias

[32] SAA [Municipal Archives Amsterdam] 1241 Familie Berenstein, Inv. 4.2.1.2/67.
[33] D. Hausdorff, 'Dr. Josef Isaacsohn en zijn tijd', in *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1959, pp. 131-144.
[34] *Nederlandsch Israëlietisch Nieuws en Advertentieblad*,vol. 1, no. 6, 21/12/1849, p.1. "Ja verkeerd, ongerijmd en gewaagd is het, de man, die vreemd is aan onze taal en gewoonten, tot onze zielenherder te benoemen.[. . .] Hoe is het mogelijk, dat zij, die in de eerste jaren niet in staat zullen zijn, onze schoone moedertaal dragelijk te spreken, voor de gemeente met stichting zullen prediken? [. . .] Of denkt men dat de smalle gemeente in staat is, de duitsche taal, zoo als zij van den kansel gesproken moet worden, te kunnen verstaan? Ware het dan niet oneindig beter, dat men het Jargon behield? [. . .] Maar, behalve de leerredenen, is het niet een onmisbare vereischte in den dienaar des Heeren, dat zijne leeken hem kunnen verstaan, zoo dikwerf zij zich tot hem wenden, om bij hem troost en hulp, raad en daad te vragen?" Author's own translation.

Frankel, who was to become founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau (1854). Ettlinger and Hirsch vehemently opposed the latter's positive-historical approach[35] and so did the Lehrens and Isaacsohn in the Netherlands. Archival material reveals Hirschel Lehren's great influence on rabbinical nominations,[36] but he lost this battle for – at the positive request of the *Hoofdcommissie* – Dr. Fränkel's nomination in Overijssel was approved by the government in 1852. He remained there until his death in 1882 and was a respected rabbi, even though he had continued to preach in German.

Two more German rabbis were nominated in equally liberalizing congregations. In Groningen in 1852, Dr. Jakob Rosenberg from Fulda entered a congregation that had become the scene of schism over the introduction of a (male) choir.[37] An opponent of the German rabbinical assemblies, Rosenberg was an acquaintance of Lehren.[38] As a rabbi he was a total failure. He bluntly refused to learn Dutch and never adjusted.[39] Fired by his board he left his rabbinate in 1861.

In Maastricht, a Dr. Salomon Cohn was inaugurated in 1853. He had received his rabbinical training at the Presburg *yeshivah* – the spiritual centre of Hungarian Orthodoxy and the most important rabbinical academy of central Europe – before he sought further education in Altona. Cohn also studied philology at the University of Breslau. He was just as close to Ettlinger as Isaacsohn and married to Regine Ettlinger, another daughter of the Altona rabbi. He and Isaacsohn soon expressed clear opinions against moderate innovations, like confirmation ceremonies.[40] Cohn continued to speak German as well and left for Mecklenburg-Schwerin in 1859.

Nevertheless, within a short period of three years – between 1850 and 1853 – four modern German rabbis had been nominated in provincial districts outside Amsterdam, among them two who actively opposed growing liberal tendencies in the Jewish community. From around 1840 to 1880, Dutch Jewry outside Amsterdam was in a majority position and in most provincial towns a small liberal middle-class dominated the congregations. Dr. Jacob Fränkel was the only rabbi nominated in spite of the ultra-Orthodox opposition against this growing ideological and demographic 'threat'.

[35] For the different religious ideologies see: Michael A. Meyer, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 2, New York 1997, pp. 138-151.

[36] Archive J. Fränkel, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, inv. nrs. 56, 71, 84, 85, 89, 118, 124, 127, 131.

[37] Wout J. van Bekkum, 'De afgescheiden Gemeente Teschuath Jisraël te Groningen', in L. Ast-Boiten en G. Zaagsma (eds.), *De Folkingestraat: Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Groningen*, Groningen 1996, pp. 63-69; Stefan van der Poel, *Joodse Stadjers, de Joodse gemeenschap in de stad Groningen 1796-1945*, Assen 2004, pp. 55-71.

[38] He was the author of response 5 in *Torat ha-Qena'ot*; Kooy-Bas, p. 50 n. 93.

[39] Van der Poel, pp. 49, 56, 60-61, 66-69.

[40] *Weekblad voor Israëlieten*, vol. 1, no. 30, 7 March 1856, Amsterdam, pp. 2-3; Hausdorff, 'Dr. Josef Isaacsohn', p. 141; also my upcoming article, Chaya Brasz, 'For the Deaf and Dumb? Confirmation Ceremonies in Dutch Judaism', in Yosef Kaplan and Dan Michman (eds.), *The Religious Cultures of Dutch Jewry*, Leiden scheduled for 2014.

REFORM IN AMSTERDAM

Separation between State and Church (1848) led to the slow establishment of a new central organization, no longer subordinated to a government ministry. During the long period of reorganization internal tensions came to the surface about the character of Dutch Judaism and its representative Ashkenazi organization, the *Nederlands Israëlietisch Kerkgenootschap,* which was finally established in 1870.

Liberal leaders in Amsterdam realized that innovations introduced in synagogues of provincial towns – like the development of (male) choirs to create more orderly services – had not reached the Dutch capital. Amsterdam was becoming rather backward when compared with the rest of the country. Ahasuerus S. van Nierop, an influential liberal jurist and politician, had pushed for synagogue reform since the 1840s.[41] New efforts coincided with the spontaneous arrival, in 1859, of a German Reform rabbi, Dr. Isaac Löb Chronik,[42] who advertised himself with a series of highly intellectual lectures.[43] Prominent liberals joined forces with him in *Shochrei Dea,* a Society for Reform of Dutch-Israelite Public Worship.[44] Not long after they published a very moderate plan for the Amsterdam congregation, two opposing assessor rabbis distributed an official pamphlet with a negative reaction.[45] Tension rose and a letter was sent to *Rabbiner* Hirsch in Frankfurt, who returned a nine-page long epistle against Chronik's ideas. Hirsch was even invited to become Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam to save the congregation from reform and when he declined, he was made a symbolic member.[46] Following one of his Saturday sermons, Chronik was physically attacked.[47] Not long afterwards, he left the country. In Amsterdam, negotiations led to the introduction of a (male) choir. *Shochrei Dea* was abolished and Van Nierop became president of the new *Nederlands Israëlietisch Kerkgenootschap* in 1870.

JOSEPH HIRSCH DÜNNER

In this same period, enlightened Jews were seeking to incorporate the Rabbinical Seminary into a Dutch university.[48] In response, Orthodox Jews felt the

[41] A.S. van Nierop, *De Israëlitische Kerk in Nederland. Feiten en Wenken ten aanzien eener Nederlandsch Israëlitische Kerkhervorming,* Amsterdam 1846.

[42] *Weekblad voor Israëlieten*, vol. 5, no. 4, 19 August 1859, Amsterdam, p. 4. and following issues. The Chronik affair was earlier described by Judith Frishman, 'Gij Vromen, zijt Nederlanders! Gij, Onverschilligen, zijt Israëlieten! Religious Reform and its Opponents in the Mid-Nineteenth Century in the Netherlands', in *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1996, Assen, pp. 146-150; Meijer, *Erfenis*, pp. 59-62.

[43] *Weekblad voor Israëlieten,* vol. 5, no. 14, 28 October 1859, Amsterdam, p. 3; *Idem,* no. 16, 11 November 1859, p. 2.

[44] *Nederlandsche Staatscourant*, no. 252, 24 October 1860, pp. 1-2.

[45] *Weekblad voor Israëlieten,* vol. 5, no. 45, 1 June 1860, pp. 2-3.

[46] Louis Lamm, 'Samson Raphael Hirsch en Amsterdam: zijn correspondentie met Hajiem Isaac Bing', in *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, vol. 75, no. 47, p. 22 March 1940, p. 13, Amsterdam; Meijer, *Erfenis*, p. 62.

[47] *Weekblad voor Israëlieten,* vol. 5, no. 52, 20 July 1860, p. 3.

[48] Jozeph Michman, 'De strijd om de benoeming van dr. J.H. Dünner tot rector van het Nederlandsch-Israëlitisch Seminarium', in *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. XXII, no. 2, Assen 1988, pp. 165-169.

urgent need to preserve it as an independent institution under a solid Orthodox, charismatic rabbi, who had a doctorate as well. Without that doctorate the Seminary could not be recognized by the Ministry of Education, on which it was dependent as an academic institution. However, no suitable candidate was available in the Netherlands itself. Instead, prominent rabbis from Germany – among them Dr. Samson Raphael Hirsch – were invited.[49] All declined the position.

At last, in 1858, Meijer Lehren was introduced to a student of classical philology in Bonn. Joseph Hirsch Dünner had come from Krakau (Cracow), in Galicia, where he had received a traditional *yeshivah* education.[50] Dünner, who had Austrian nationality, was influenced by Galician *haskalah* and moved to Germany in the early 1850s, followed by his brothers, where they germanized the family name from Diner to Dünner. Dünner's thorough knowledge of *talmud* was an attractive feature to Lehren. In addition, his pending doctorate was to the pleasure of enlightened Seminary board members. Dünner held the abilities to please all sides and meet the conditions set by the Ministry of Education to fit the job of rector of a modern rabbinical seminary. In 1862 such a modern seminary was finally created in Amsterdam, combined with what is known today as a *kandidaats* (Bachelors) programme in classical philology at a Dutch university. The educational plan the 29 year-old Dünner wrote showed similarities with the programme of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau.[51]

The Dutch seminary was not embedded in a substantial middle-class culture. It stood in the centre of one of the poorest Jewish neigbourhoods of Amsterdam. The Dutch students Dünner was to train as rabbis and teachers were twelve and thirteen-year old boys from poor families, who were smart enough to be admitted to the seminary's grammar school. A few would make it to the rabbinate. This is the way in which the so deeply desired Dutch rabbinate was finally created, and as soon as Dutch rabbis started to fill the empty rabbinical seats, German rabbis became even less desired than before. The reason for this was simple. The seminary depended on government subsidies. German rabbis would leave the Dutch students of Dünner's school without jobs and threaten those subsidies.

THREE GERMAN RABBIS

Around 1900 all Chief Rabbis were Dutch with three remarkable exceptions: Dr. Dünner himself, Dr. Louis Landsberg in Maastricht, and Dr. Bernhard Löb Ritter in Rotterdam. Although Dutch Jews prefer to emphasize the 'Polish' origin of

[49] Wagenaar, p. 11; Lamm, p. 13; Meijer, *Erfenis*, p. 62.

[50] On Chief Rabbi Dünner: S. L. de Beer, 'Haraw dr. J.H. Dünner, een karakterschets' in *Hakehilla*, VIII, 1962/3; *Bij den Honderdsten Geboortedag van Dr. J.H. Dünner*, reprints of articles and speeches published in the *Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad*, Amsterdam 1933; Jaap Meijer, *Rector en Raw. De levensgeschiedenis van dr. J.H. Dünner (1833-1911)*, Heemstede 1984; J. Melkman, 'Dr. J.H. Dünner, 1833-1911', in Hugo Heymans en Jozeph Melkman, *Menorah 5701*, Amsterdam 1940; Michman, 'De strijd'.

[51] Meijer, *Rector en Raw*, p. 94.

Dr. Dünner, from a cultural point of view he had much more in common with German rabbis. With his Galician *maskilic* background, his German education and doctorate, his intellectualism and style of worship, he was a modern rabbi in the German sense, though clearly Orthodox. In spite of protests from liberal lay leaders, Dünner also became Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam and North Holland. It was Akiba Lehren, the last surviving Lehren brother who, in 1874, two years before passing away, finally decided that Dünner should fill that rabbinical seat which had been empty since 1838. He successfully pushed for Dünner's nomination against a serious Dutch candidate, the Amsterdam Rabbi Joseph Wijnkoop. Dünner kept both positions – the Rectorate and the Chief Rabbinate – until he died in 1911.

When raising the question where Dünner fitted in the landscape of the European rabbinate, it is obvious that he became well engaged in the Orthodox reaction against Reform Judaism:

> Dr. Dünner found a broad field of activity in Amsterdam. The Reform movement had reached its summit by then – two years after the publication of Geiger's *Urschrift*[52] – and also in the Netherlands many circles adhered to the Reform movement.[53]

Although that observation in a German newspaper might be a bit exaggerated, this was precisely what Akiba Lehren meant to do with Dünner's nomination – shield Dutch Jewry from reform. Dünner himself was independent, not a follower of *Rabbiner* Hirsch or anyone else, but after reading the protocols of a general meeting of the German *Allgemeine Rabbiner-Verband* in 1897, he declared himself in favour of a separate *Verband gesetzestreuer Rabbiner* in Germany, thus also emphasizing the Dutch rabbinate's separateness from mainstream Judaism in Germany.[54] This policy, continued by his pupils, explains why German-Jewish refugees during the 1930s had severe problems with the Dutch rabbinate. It did not respect the *halakhic* decisions of the rabbinate of the German *Einheitsgemeinde*.[55]

Dünner was a strictly Orthodox rabbi, but he had a modern and positive-historical approach to rabbinical education and also showed a strong attachment to *Eretz Israel* and the Hebrew language. In 1898 he took sides with political Zionism.[56] Most of his pupils did not follow him on this subject.

[52] Referring to Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judenthums*, Breslau 1857.

[53] 'Het levenswerk van Dr. J.H. Dünner z.g.' in *Honderdsten Geboortedag*, p. 56. (Translated article from *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, Hamburg 2/11/1911). "Dr. Dünner vond in Amsterdam een ruim arbeidsveld. De reformbeweging had toenmaals – het was twee jaar na de verschijning van Geiger's Urschrift – haar hoogtepunt bereikt en ook in Nederland waren vele kringen de reformbeweging toegedaan." Author's own translation.

[54] Archive J.H. Dünner, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, Box 1, no. 24.

[55] Chaya Brasz, 'Dutch Jews and German Immigrants: Backgrounds of an Uneasy Partnership in Progressive Judaism', in Judith Frishman, David J. Wertheim, Ido de Haan, Joël Cahen (eds.), *Borders and Boundaries in and around Dutch Jewish History*, Amsterdam 2011, p. 135.

[56] Ludy Giebels, *De zionistische beweging in Nederland, 1899-1941*, Assen 1975, pp. 11-15.

The second German exception in 1900 was Dr. Louis Landsberg in Maastricht, who had replaced Dr. Salomon Cohn in 1860 and stayed there until he died in 1904. Although he was an Orthodox rabbi, he was the most moderate of all the German nominations and very critical about the weak attitudes and indifference of the liberal Dutch lay leadership.[57] Landsberg and Dünner worked well together in educational matters.[58]

The third German rabbi was Dr. Bernhard Ritter.[59] When Dr. Isaacsohn finally ended his ongoing struggle with the Rotterdam synagogue board by resigning in despair (1870), the board waited for no less than fifteen years after which, at a moment when no Dutch candidates were available, it invited Ritter, Rabbi in Prenslau. He was born in 1855 in Reinersdorf, Prussia, and had studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau. Coming from a non-Orthodox seminary, the Rotterdam synagogue board expected him to be liberal. Soon after his nomination in 1885, it became clear however, that Ritter was in fact a staunch Orthodox rabbi. He became at least as well-known abroad as Dünner and they differed on several issues, amongst them Zionism. In 1927 Ritter left Rotterdam in bitterness after a conflict over the status of those Jews in the congregation who had entered into mixed marriages.[60]

The influence of *Rabbiner* Hirsch of Frankfurt am Main remained persistent in the Dutch Jewish community, even beyond Hirsch's death in 1888, but the practical consequences of Hirsch's convictions were not accepted in the Netherlands. According to Hirsch the really faithful had to separate themselves from the *Einheitsgemeinde* (the German model of unified congregations in which Orthodox education and an Orthodox *minyan* functioned next to Reform education and prayer services). They had to establish exclusively Orthodox and independent *Austrittsgemeinde* (separated congregations) of convinced believers alone. In the Netherlands Liberal and non-observant Jews, who formed the majority of the membership, remained tolerated even in leading positions of Orthodox congregations. Dutch Jews were proud to present their community as an *Einheitsgemeinde*, but that could not hide the fact that by preserving its exclusively and strictly Orthodox rabbinate, Dutch Jewry definitely stood apart from mainstream developments in Germany and most other countries. From that perspective the whole community had become an *Austrittsgemeinde*. Moreover, since the observant minority had become very small – less than fifteen per cent at the beginning of the twentieth century – the community had lost the soul of most of its members.

[57] *IBRI, Bladen voor Israëlietische en Algemeene Volksbeschaving*, vol. 1, 1869, no. 1-12, pp. 1-48.
[58] N.L. Dodde, 'Jewish Education in Schools in the Netherlands from 1815 to 1940', in *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1996, p. 83.
[59] D. Hausdorff, *Jizkor. Platenatlas van drie en een halve eeuw geschiedenis van de joodse gemeente in Rotterdam van 1610 tot c.1960*, Baarn 1978, pp. 50-55.
[60] Ibid., pp. 53-55.

LIBERAL JUDAISM

Several historians have addressed the question why Liberal Judaism remained absent within Dutch Jewry for so long.[61] Most of their arguments are very plausible and in combination with each other, they provide us with a whole range of circumstances, explaining that long-term absence of Liberal Judaism. Among them is the argument pertaining to the socio-economic structure of the community, its poverty and the lack of a substantial middle-class. Reform or Liberal Judaism essentially was a middle-class phenomenon. There was also the stringent regulative influence of the Dutch government while implementing its process of *Dutchification*, combined with a Jewish leadership which preferred a typical Dutch middle-of-the-road policy: avoiding conflicts. Moderate adjustments of *decorum* in Dutch synagogues made Judaism more 'civilized' in outlook and prevented liberal Jews from developing more extreme requests. While a secularization process was taking place, no serious discussion developed on the ideas and essence of Judaism. An additional reason might also have been the early emancipation of Dutch Jewry. They simply did not have the same need for reform which German Jews must have felt.

All these reasons are valuable parts of the story, but some of them also are quite unsatisfactory. The long-term absence of a serious internal discussion on Judaism in the Netherlands provides not only a reason, but a new question as well: Why did the discussion remain absent for so long? Therefore, part of the answer might also be found in the words of the German Liberal leader Caesar Seligmann, who was quoted in 1931 in a Dutch newspaper as stating that the "silence of a cemetery" prevailed in Dutch Judaism.[62] Earlier, in 1922, when describing the great indifference in western European Jewry he wrote:

> This desolate condition dominates at worst in countries, where, like in Holland, each reform was suppressed with fanatic force.[63]

The absence of a substantial middle class may have hampered the beginning of a serious discussion on Judaism, but in several provincial towns like Zwolle, Groningen and even in a larger community like Rotterdam, a slowly developing middle class made itself felt around 1840, resulting in Rabbi Hartog Hertzveld's effort to discuss an awakening taste for confirmation ceremonies and synagogue choirs. His initiative to organize a rabbinical assembly could have become the beginning of a serious discussion on Judaism. It was however fanatically suppressed by a small ultra-Orthodox group led by the Lehren brothers, who

[61] Dan Michman, *Het Liberale Jodendom in Nederland 1929-1943*, Amsterdam 1988, pp. 27-34; Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, pp. 173-176, 192-204, 232-234.

[62] Dan Michman, p. 69. Michman quoted the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* of 12/7/1931. "stilte van een kerkhof". Author's own translation.

[63] Caesar Seligmann, *Geschichte der jüdischen Reformbewegung*, Frankfurt am Main 1922, p. 144. "Am schlimmsten herscht dieser trostlose Zustand in den Ländern, wo, wie in Holland, jede Reform mit fanatischer Gewalt unterdrückt wurde". Author's own translation.

engaged Dutch Jewry in their active wars against Reform Judaism in Germany. Until 1862 they succeeded in preventing the development of a modern Dutch rabbinate by denying university education to rabbinical students. When the first modern German rabbi, Dr. Jacob Fränkel, entered the country in 1849, they took control over the process of nomination and mobilized the Ettlinger-Hirsch network in Germany for further nominations. It was in the interest of their own position of control, that they left the Amsterdam rabbinical seat empty for so long – from 1838 to 1874 – and the nomination of Rabbi Dünner as Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam in 1874 was Akiba Lehren's final effort to preserve the type of ultra-Orthodox Judaism he deeply believed in, even though he was forced to make quite a lot of compromises on the way.

Whether the dominant influence of this ultra-Orthodox minority in shaping Dutch Judaism was a desirable phenomenon or not, of course depends on whom one asks. A modern, pluralistic Jewish community was definitely not created, and although at first sight Orthodox Judaism seemed to have gained tremendously, the lack of an environment in which a healthy dialogue could take place meant that it stagnated and limited it to a small minority in the end.

When Liberal Judaism finally arrived on the scene in the late 1920s, it came via the United States and England. By then, Dutch Liberal Jews considered Liberal Judaism in Germany too old-fashioned because, for example, in Germany men and women as a rule sat apart from each other, even in Liberal synagogues.[64] Therefore it was the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London that caught their attention and the first Liberal rabbi nominated in the Netherlands was Meir (Max) Lasker, who arrived from the United States.[65]

A Liberal Jewish rabbinate with German rabbis only came into being during the 1930s, enforced by Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany who simply overwhelmed the more radical Dutch membership.[66] From 1934 Dr. Ludwig Jacob Mehler from Berlin was the Liberal Rabbi of Amsterdam, and in 1938 Dr. Hans Andorn settled in The Hague. Both were graduates of the *Berlin Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Mehler had also studied at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Both learned Dutch while living and working in the Netherlands. A Dutch *Einheitsgemeinde* with the Liberal congregations under its wing was, however, never established.

The arrival of German Jews, looking for a safer place to live, strengthened Dutch Orthodoxy as well, but it was even earlier that observant Dutch Jews understood that Hirsch's *Thora im derekh erets* was becoming outlived in the Netherlands. Before Hitler seized power in Germany, they had already invited Dr. Jacob Neubauer of Würzburg to come to the Netherlands, which he finally did in 1933.[67] Neubauer was a modern *talmudist* and a great scholar who, as a teacher in the Rabbinical Seminary

[64] Brasz, 'Dutch Jews', p. 133.
[65] Dan Michman, pp. 40-46, 52-56.
[66] Brasz, 'Dutch Jews', pp. 135-136.
[67] Benjamin de Vries, 'Dr. Jacob (Jekutiel) Neubauer', in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Genootschap voor de Joodsche Wetenschap in Nederland*, VII, Amsterdam 1956, pp. 37-42.

of Amsterdam, had a serious influence, but time was running out. Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands in 1940 and Neubauer perished in Bergen-Belsen.

During the Nazi period seventy-five per cent of the Dutch-Jewish population was murdered. Of the pre-war Orthodox rabbinate of twelve rabbis, only three survived. Those three rabbis, together with an equally damaged lay leadership, started to rebuild the *Nederlands Israëlietisch Kerkgenootschap* in 1945. The two Liberal congregations had numbered some thousand members before the war. Close to nothing was left of them. Their Rabbis Mehler and Andorn had died in Bergen-Belsen in 1944, like most of their members, among whom was Anne Frank.[68]

A few survivors of these Liberal congregations, most of them German Jews, restarted the Liberal congregation of Amsterdam. In 1949 they invited Rabbi Dr. Robert Raphael Geis, a German rabbi who had lived in Palestine during the Nazi period and was eager to return to Germany.[69] His presence in the Netherlands was only temporary. In 1953 he was followed by another German rabbi from Israel, Dr. Schlomo Rülf from Haifa.[70] Both these rabbis spoke German and the congregation, in full agreement with Dr. Rülf, concluded that it could never develop into a Dutch congregation without a Dutch rabbi.[71] After reading thus far, this will not surprise anyone. The replacement of German rabbis by Dutch ones was already starting to show a pattern. Thus, in 1954, Rülf was replaced by the Dutch Jacob Soetendorp. He was born in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Amsterdam and was an advanced student of the pre-war Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary. After a short period of additional study, in 1955, he became the first Dutch rabbinical student opting for *Liberales Judentum,* and on the same occasion he was to be the last Liberal rabbi to be ordained by Dr. Leo Baeck in London.[72]

CONCLUSION

This event, symbolically reminding us of Dutch Jewry's continuous dependency on German rabbis, brings us also to our conclusions on Dutch Jewry and its German rabbinate. In spite of their tremendous contribution, German rabbis were always on their way out. In the beginning they stood in the way of the process of *Dutchification*. Later on they contradicted its outcome: Dutch Jews had become far too Dutch for foreign rabbis. Nevertheless, close to everything in the Dutch-Jewish community seems to have come down the River Rhine, including of course many Dutch Jews themselves. But for many decades strong dykes and barriers scrupulously selected what was allowed to be absorbed by the green meadows of Holland and what was not. Whatever was admitted had to become Dutch as soon as possible and this included its Rabbinate.

[68] Brasz, *In de tenten van Jaäkov, Impressies van 75 jaar Progressief Jodendom in Nederland, 1931-2006*, Amsterdam–Jerusalem 2006, p. 79.
[69] See the article by Andrea Sinn in future volume of LBI YB.
[70] See in this volume the article by Robert Jütte.
[71] Brasz, *In de tenten*, pp. 99-103.
[72] Ibid., p. 115.