

## **Fascinated by *Josippon*: Four Translations into the Vernacular by Hans Schwyntzer, Georg Wolff, Peter Morwen, and James Howell**

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This paper traces the fascinating and complex publication history of one of the many versions of the *Antiquities* circulating in early modern Europe. Known to some of its translators as *Josippon* but originally written by the historian and philosopher Abraham ibn Daud of Toledo (ca. 1110-1180), the text covered the history of the Second Temple Period from Alexander the Great to Masada on what amounts to approximately forty single-spaced pages in modern terms. This was one of the first Hebrew texts to be translated into the vernacular, and widely read throughout Europe and northern America. The work first reached Christian Europe in 1529, when the eminent Hebraist Sebastian Münster published a Latin-Hebrew edition that would become the basis for all ensuing translations.<sup>2</sup> A German had already translation appeared in 1530, carried out by the Radical Reformer Hans Schwyntzer, who was then living in Strasbourg, followed in 1557 by a second rendering by the Swabian Pietist pastor Georg Wolff von Grimma.<sup>3</sup> But it was in English that the work found its greatest audience, in Peter Morwen's 1558 English edition, reprinted over a dozen times and especially in 1652 by the first royal historiographer James Howell's (1652), a text reprinted well into the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

With the exception of Schwyntzer, all translators included introductions, dedicatory letters and additional material that allow us to explore their stated motifs. In reflecting on

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1 Due to a family emergency, I am submitting this draft belatedly, and I look forward to your comments in Oxford.

2 Sebastian Münster, *Shelosh 'Esreh 'Iqarim. Divrey ha-bayt sheni: 'Eser Galuyot. Tredecim articuli fidei Iudaeorum: item, Compendium elegans historiarum Iosephi, complectens: acta LXX interpretum, gesta Machabeorum, facta Herodum, excidium Hierosolymitanum; item, Decem captivitates Iudæorum / hæc per Sebastianum Munsterum & Hebræis & Latinis legenda exarantur*; Münster, 1529.

3 Hans Schwyntzer, *Josippi Judische Historien. Zum Leser: Was dir weiter in disem büch zewarten sey (fromer Leser) zeyget an da ander teyl dises blats Wend umb: Ist new transferirt / und im teutschen vor nie gelesen. Strasbourg, 1530. Georg Wolff, *Josippus: Ein kurtzer Auszug vnd Begriff Josephi / des hochberümpften Geschichtschreibers / von allem so sich fürnemlich mit den Jüden zugetragen / von der Maccabeer zeit an / bis zur endlichen zerstörung Jerusalems vnd gantzen Jüdischen Reichs / Erstlich durch den hochgelerten Herrn Sebastian Münster / aus dem Ebreischen ins Latin / Jtzt aber Christlichen vnd Gottesfürchtigen Herzen zu lieb und dinst / durch Georgen Wolfffen in gut Teudtsch bracht / Weniglichen nützlich und lieblich zu lessen / Auch Regiments Personen / Geistlichen und Weltlichen wol zubetrachten. Ursel, 1557, 1560, Magdeburg, 1561.**

their work, Wolff, Morwen, and Howell explained that they chose the text for its comparative brevity and immense readability, its association with Josephus Flavius, and its political quietism. At the same time, each translator was propelled by the specific circumstances of his time and place, and by his theological and political outlook. The first three translators and their publishers, for instance, were connected to the Reformation Movement, while the fourth translator, Howell, briefly was a member of the Privy Council and, at least in theory, an advisor to the king on the eve of the Civil War.

This particular version of the *Antiquities*, the translators concluded, offered decisive advantages over comparable accounts of the same events, above all, it was short, and written in a gripping style. Wolff for example stressed the low production cost connected to a brief text that made it affordable for a broader readership, and at the same time increased the work's readability because it was less taxing on the reader:

Aus diesen vnd dergleichen vrsachen..., bin ich E.W.W. günstigen Herren bewegt worden / diese kurze Histori / Josippi für mich zuhnemen / und in Teudtsche sprach nach meinem vermögen / zu versetzen vnd Transferiren / zu gut armen Hausuettern / und armen Pfarrherrn / so nicht entweder vermögen lange / vnd weitleuffige Historien zukauffen / oder vnweilig sindt zulesen.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, Morwen agreed that the text was particularly attractive because, if compared to Josephus Flavius or other historical texts, it provided the reader “with a farre more briefe, much lesse costly, and as sufficient a commentarie for our propose, nothing inferior to the other in veritie.”<sup>6</sup>

4 Peter Morwen, *A compendious and most marueilous History of the Latter Tymes of the Iewes Commune Weale Beginnyng Where the Bible or Scriptures Leaue, and Continuing to the Vtter Subuersion and Laste Destruction of That Countrey and People: Written in Hebrew by Ioseph Ben Gorion, a Noble Man of the Same Countrey, Who Sawe the Most Things Him Selfe, and was Aucthor and Doer of a Great Part of the Same*, London, 1558, 1561, 1567, 1575 (four times), 1593, 1596, 1602, 1608, 1615, 1671, 1673, 1688; James Howell, *The vvonderful, and most deplorable history of the latter times of the Jews, and of the city of Hierusalem. Beginning where the Holy Scriptures do end. Written first in Hebrew, and now made more methodical and corrected of sundry errors*. London: 1652, 1653, 1662, 1669, 1671, 1673, 1678, 1681, 1682, 1684, 1688, 1689, 1694, 1698, 1699, 1706, 1718 (1722), 1718, Leominster, Mass., 1803, Bellow Falls, Vt. 1819.

5 “For this and similar reasons I have been moved to take this brief history of *Josippon* and to translate it into German according to my own abilities for good and impecunious heads of families and poor pastors who are unable to buy long and elaborate history or who were not willing to read them. “ Wolff (1557), *Den Erbar, fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeister*.

6 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History, Epistle to the Reader*.

The book, according to its translators, deserved a wide readership because it was connected to Josephus Flavius, the first-century Jewish historian of the Roman-Jewish war who was widely seen as an eye witness to the very events he recounted in his books. Yet, this text differed in decisive ways from Josephus Flavius. To begin with, it was held in Hebrew, not in Greek. It frequently unusual versions of personal and geographic names that diverged from Josephus Flavius and other historical texts covering the same era. More importantly, the work was considerably shorter and omitted some key figures and events. And like the original Josephus Flavius but unlike the versions familiar to early modern authors, the text barely mentioned Jesus.

Morwen, for example, thinking perhaps of a remark in the *Jewish War* that mentions a Hebrew-language version,<sup>7</sup> concludes that the text had been written by the same Iosephus, as the tenor and contentes of both the bookes do import, although he name him selfe in this Ben Gorion (that is) the sonne of Gorion, and in the other the sonne of Matthatias, which is a thing so common in the Iewes genealogies, that men neede not seeke farre for the like, for one man to deduct his discent from diuers names, of father, grandfather, or greate graundfather, of the fathers side, or of the mothers side.<sup>8</sup>

It was, then, “his owne epitome or bridgment of his greate boke, yet the whole history of the Jewes notwithstandinge.”<sup>9</sup>

Georg Wolff, a professor of Oriental Languages in Tübingen, comes to a more nuanced conclusion. He tells his readers that he had subjected the work to a careful analysis. He had spent an entire summer comparing the Latin and Hebrew versions of the narrative which he wants to be understood not as a critique of Münster's erudition but rather as evidence of his own (Wolff's) learning and striving for quality control. The work epitomizes the *Jewish War* and the *Antiquities*, both works of Josephus Flavius, but he was not their author. This Hebrew text, he notes, was not identical with the Greek or Latin versions of the *Antiquities* familiar to

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7 See Josephus, *War*, 1.2.

8 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History, Letter to the Reader*, 5-6.

9 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History, Letter to the Reader*, 7.

his readers.<sup>10</sup> Instead, it differed markedly from the histories composed by these authors, confusing individuals or mixing up entire narratives.<sup>11</sup> Wolff does not correct these obvious mistakes, but he replaces the unusual personal names with names more familiar to his readers: where his vorlage had Pampeius, for example, Wolff inserts the more common Pompey.<sup>12</sup> The author, whom Wolff calls „Josippus“ was also a Jew, but he was not sure when he had lived.<sup>13</sup>

Wolff speculates that he either had not read these texts or perhaps failed to read them carefully or, equally possible, willfully changed the text. He refers to Josippus throughout, and comments on his editing principles, for example when he rebukes him for misjudging the truth about a number of Roman empires by saying that “die du lieber Josippe nicht sehē wilt der verachte vnd getödtte Christus.”<sup>14</sup>

Wolff's use of the name „Josippus“ may stem from the *Book of Josippon*, the only historical work mentioned in Ibn Daud's *Dorot 'Olam*, and a book Morwen had first encountered eleven years earlier, probably in Münster's 1541 publication.<sup>15</sup> *Josippon*, one of the most important historical texts of the Jewish Middle Ages, first emerged in tenth-century Byzantine Italy and was loosely based on a number of texts, among them *Hegesippus*, an anonymous fourth-century Latin adaptation of Josephus Flavius, the eminent first-century Jewish historian

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10 Wolff (1557), *Christlicher Leser und geliebter Bruder im Herrn*.

11 Wolff (1557), *Christlicher Leser und geliebter Bruder im Herrn*.

12 Wolff (1557), *Christlicher Leser und geliebter Bruder im Herrn*.

13 Hernachmals ist kommen dieser Josippus – auch ein Jüde – In welchem Jar aber Er lebt – ist mir noch nicht gnugsam kundt –der hat aus Josepho vnd andern / als Er selbs bekandt / Einen kurzen auszug gemacht / des so in Josepho nach der lenge / beide in den 7. Büchern des Jüdischen Kriegs / vnd der 20. von der Antiquitet / altherkommen vnd Geschichten der Jüden / verfasset ist. [Wolff, *Dem Leser*]

14 “You, dear Josippon, did not wish to see the despised and murdered Christ.” See the marginal note in Wolff (1557), *Das Dritte Teil, Das VII. Capitel*.

15 Mentioned in *DMY*, 1.4-5. The standard edition is *Sefer Yosifon : . . . sadur umugah 'al-pi kitvei-yad be-levayat mavo', be'urim ve-hilufei girsa 'ot*, ed. David Flusser, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1978). Steven Bowman, “Sefer Yosippon: History and Midrash” in *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History*, ed. Michael Fishbane (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993). For a recent discussion see Saskia Dönitz, “Überlieferung und Rezeption des Sefer Yosippon. Eine Studie zur Historiographie und zum Geschichtsbewusstsein des Judentums im Mittelalter” (Ph.D., Freie Universität Berlin, 2008). As he noted: „Diesen Josippum hat Münsterus vor wenig 11 Jaren / aus Herbreischer sprach in das Latin Transferirt,“ Wolff, *Den Erborn, fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeistern*, referring to Sebastian Münster, 1541.

whose Greek writings remained unknown to a Jewish readership until Azariah de Rossi (c. 1514–1578).<sup>16</sup> In fact, our text was a rewritten *Josippon* and also served as a *vorlage* for another widely read version of *Josippon* compiled by Judah Leon ben Moses Moskoni (1328–1376) that, in turn, became a basis for one of the three printed versions of *Josippon*, the so-called edition of Constantinople (1710).<sup>17</sup> *Josippon*, then, was indirectly connected to Josephus Flavius, and it was this connection that counted for the early modern translators.

It was a tenuous connection at best. The text translated here originated in a work titled *Divrey Malkhey Yisra'el* (*History of the Kings of Israel*). It was one of several texts that made up a twelfth-century Iberian Hebrew world chronicle, *Dorot 'Olam* (*Generations of the Ages*)<sup>18</sup> that celebrated the Iberian Jewish experience and stressed a quietist approach to political engagement. These ideas shaped the text, and help to explain the editorial changes made by the author. Ibn Daud abbreviated for example a number of stories of major rabbinic martyrological passages, perhaps because he questioned the efficacy of voluntary death in the name of God. He also shortened the narratives of political Jewish power, including the Maccabbean revolt and fall of Masada, and evaluated each ruler according to his own rigorous standards.<sup>19</sup> The work reached a broad Christian audience in the 1529 edition published by Sebastian Münster, one of the most prominent Hebrew scholars of the sixteenth century. Münster was well read in Hebrew literature, and issued a number of important editions. He quotes another section of Ibn Daud's work chronicle *Dorot 'Olam* elsewhere, and attaches our

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16 Azariah de Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, ed. Joanna Weinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), xxxvi-xxxix.

17 Dönitz, “Überlieferung und Rezeption des Sefer Yosippon,” chap. 5.3 contra *Josippon* (Flusser), vol. 2, 17; 25 n. 64; 38 n. 96, 48, 136. The Constantinople edition was printed in *Josiphon. History of the Jews during the Period of the Second Temple, and the War between the Jews and the Romans. Reprinted according to the complete Edition of Venice 5304 with Supplements from the Mantua Edition (5238-5240) and the Constantinople Edition (5270) with added Remarks, and Preface*. Edited by Hayim Hominer (Jerusalem: Hominer, 1971).

18 Edited in Katja Vehlow, *Dorot 'Olam. Generations of the Ages. A Critical Edition and Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). The most famous section of *Dorot 'Olam*, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* or *Book of Tradition* was edited by Gerson D. Cohen and has appeared in many languages. See Gerson D. Cohen, *A Critical Edition with a Translation and Notes of the Book of Tradition* (*Sefer ha-Qabbalah*), *Judaica: Texts and Translations* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1967; reprint, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005).

19 Rabbi Akiva and the Ten Martyrs: Cohen, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, 3.53-68, R. Moses' wife: *ShQ*, 7.18-24, Hannah: *Divrey Malkhey Yisra'el*, 4.10, Simon of Scythopolis: *DMY*, 60, Amitai, Mattathias, Aristeus: *DMY*, 72, Masada: *DMY*, 79.

text to an edition of Maimonides' *Shelosh 'Esre 'Iqarim* (Thirteen Principles).<sup>20</sup> The work appeared in Worms, in 1529, where it was the only book in Hebrew characters to appear there in the sixteenth century.

### *Translating into the Vernacular*

This was one of the first Hebrew printed texts to be published in the vernacular, and all translators acknowledge their debt to Münster.<sup>21</sup> In fact, this is the only information included in the works' first German edition (apart from an alphabetically arranged table of contents) by Johann Schwyntzer who noted that he had adapted Münster's marginal notes:

Die namen am rand wider vnd für / sind von herr Sebastian Mönstern / (der daß dis büch aussem Hebraischen ins Latein verdolmetscht) auß dem Schaffen Josepho dargeschriben / auff das sie den Leser nit irren machten.<sup>22</sup>

With the exception of Schwyntzer, who as a Radical Reformer, might have been more at ease with the use of German and who announced his work excitedly as “new transferirt / vnd im teutschen vornie gelesen“ (newly translated / and never read in German), all translators express unease with the very undertaking of a vernacular text and repeatedly warn the reader to take their message seriously, even if it was written in the vernacular.

Morwen explains that

I have not swarued ani thing from the sence and meanyng of the auctour, whiche [8] I moste attentidly did alwayes ponder and consider, as the thing most profitable for our purpose, and also that it was necessary so to doe, to reduce it unto our maner of speakyng. For whereunto serueth it, if it should not be understood: Were it not as good to remayne styll not understood in a strange tong, as not understood in our owne: If suche translations, worde for word, be to be counted in our tong, being turned

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20 He quotes a lengthy section of another section of Dorot 'Olam, namely *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* in his Münster, Sebastian. *Kalendarivm Hebraicvm* (Basel, 1527), 26-41. Described in Joseph and Bernhard Prijs, *Die Basler hebräischen Drucke, 1492-1866. Olten: Urs Graf, 1964* 45-48 and 493-94. See also Steinschneider, *Geschichtsliteratur der Juden*: 26-41.

21 „Diesen Josippum hat Münsterus vor wenig 11 Jaren / aus Hebreischer sprach in das Latin Transferirt.“ Wolff (1557), *Josippus, Den Erborn, fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeistern*.

22 “The names in the margins are from Sebastian Münster (who had translated this work from Hebrew into Latin) and they circumscribe the acts of Josephus, lest they confuse the reader.” Hans Schwyntzer, *Josipi Judische Historien, Inhalt dises buchs*.

into our words onely. This therefore was chiefly endeouored, that it might be framed and come most nie unto uour vulgare tongue, not to our vulgare words only, and yet it shoulde not be disframed, nor disgresse from the true meanyng of the Historiographer.<sup>23</sup>

### *The (relative) absence of Jesus*

The translators chose to publish a text that, while describing the Second Temple period, an era of uttermost importance to Christian writers because it was the time of Jesus, mentioned the same in passing only. Ibn Daud notes vaguely that “[i]n those days, Jesus the Christian was captured.”<sup>24</sup>

Ibn Daud dates Jesus here, somewhat unconventionally, to the rule of King Aristobulus, as part of a comprehensive polemical argument that sought to disassociate Jesus from the beginnings of Christianity and to discredit Jesus as a redemptive figure, a common practice in medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemics. One might imagine that the Christian translators would set out to fill this lacuna or to explain this noticeable absence of Jesus. But they do not engage this idea at all. Instead, they somewhat surprisingly accept Ibn Daud's argument and ignore its polemical impetus. Münster for example notes in the margin: “Hic fuit alius Iesus à saluatore, multis eũ preueniẽs annis.”<sup>25</sup> Schwyntzer is more explicit and remarks “Diser Jesus war nit Christ / dan er ist vil jar ers nach komen.”<sup>26</sup> Wolff notes in the margins that “Dis ist ein ander Jesus / nicht vnser Seligmacher gewesen, söder viel jar vor jm.”<sup>27</sup> But he bemoans the absence of a larger narrative on Jesus and closes his introduction with a brief version of the *Testamonium Flavium*, a Christian addition to Josephus Flavius that addresses Jesus in greater

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23 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History, Introduction to the Reader*.

24 This early dating of Jesus, an often-repeated trope in medieval Jewish anti-Christian polemics, is discussed in greater detail in Vehlow, *Dorot 'Olam*, chap. 3. It forms part of Ibn Daud's argument undermining the authority of Jesus and the New Testament. See Jacob Reiner, “The English Yosippon,” *JQR* 58, no. 2 (1967), 135-136.

25 “This was another Jesus, not the savior, who had lived many years earlier.” Münster (1529), *Shelosh 'Esreh Iqarim*, 62.

26 “This Jesus was not Christ because he came many years after him.” Hans Schwyntzer, *Josipi Judische Historien*, 39.

27 “This is a different Jesus, not our redeemer, and [this was] many years before him.” Wolff (1557), *Josippus*, [78].

detail than the original text.<sup>28</sup> Morwen, like Howell and the 1711 Amsterdam edition of Ibn Daud's *Dorot Olam*, omits the brief note on Jesus altogether, but he explains that

There was at ý time one Iesus a wise man (if it be lawful to cal him a man: for he was a worker of wöderful [and] strange workes, [and] a teacher of such mē as gladly did heare the truth, [and] had many disciples both of the Jewes, [and] also of the gētils: This mā was Christ whō, after he was accused of the chiefe rulers of our natiō, [and] condēned bi Pilate to be crucified, thei neuerthesse ceased not to loue which loued him euen frō ý beginning. To these he appeared the 3. day aliue, according as the prophets by deuine inspiratiō had told before, aswel of this, as also of many other wöderful thinges which should be done by him. And euē unto this day the christiā sect which toke their name of him doth continue.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Meaning of History in Wolff, Morwen, and Howell*

#### *Georg Wolff (1557)*

In 1557, the Swabian pastor Georg Wolff von Grimma (fl. 1530–1561), unaware of Schwyntzer's work, published a second German translation. He called it *Josippus: Ejn kurtzer Auszug vnd Begriff Josephi, des hochberümpften Geschichtschreibers, von allem so sich fürnemlich mit den Jüden zugetragen, von der Maccabeer zeit an, bis zur endlichen zerstörung Jerusalems vnd gantzen Jüdischen Reichs* (*Josippon: A short excerpt of Josephus, the very famous historian, concerning all the things that happened to the Jews, from the period of the Maccabees onwards to the destruction of Jerusalem and the entire Jewish empire*). In contrast to Schwyntzer, whose translation contained little more than the text itself, Wolff included a number of brief texts such as a dedication, an introduction, and a list of corresponding names of the month in Latin, Hebrew, and German. His text was twice reprinted, in Ursel and in Magdeburg.

In Wolff's eyes, the past revealed God's acts in history. Virgil had already noted that farmers greatly profited whenever they accepted their divinely-given living conditions.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, were people to heed the divine warnings expressed in the Bible and in the many

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<sup>28</sup> "Weil Josippus wie vorgemelt – das herrlich zeugnis von Christo mit stillschweigen vbergeht – damit nun die Histori aud dis fals keinen mangel habe – hat mirs gefallen die wort Josephi wie sie lauten dem Christen Man zu gut hierher zusetzen das er sie auch wissen möge." Wolff (1557), *Josppi. Von dem Herrn Jesu Christo*.

<sup>29</sup> Morwen (1558), lxviii; similarly Howell (1652), 107. Cf. *Josephus, Ant. 18.63-64*.

ways in which God had protected the Church against the acts of the devil, David's blessing, that is, the return of the Messiah, would surely come to pass.<sup>31</sup> History mattered because the past demonstrated that God was trustworthy, kept his word, and punished the sinful, and especially those who had rejected the divine teachings and those of the Church. This was particularly evident in the history of the Jews who had been punished for deicide and for their stubborn disregard for God's message, beginning with the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, to the complete loss of sovereignty and the Temple:

Nach solchem solten wir ferner auch fleissig lesen vñ erwegen / allerley Historien... da wurden wir als durch erfahrung lernen / wie solche nichts anders sinde denn ein spiegel / vnd beyspiel / darinn Gott klerlich beweiset / vnd zeuget aller Welt / das er ob seinem wort halte / allerley sünde grewlich strafe / aber am aller hefftigsten und schrecklichsten die verachtung seines worts / vñ warrer rechtschaffnen Religion.<sup>32</sup>

It was only logical that the Jews had been so miserably dispersed among the nation, and their was so pitiful that it could cause a stone to cry. Now, if God did not hesitate to treat his own people in such a manner, what would happen to Christians who ignored the message entailed here?<sup>33</sup>

Ein verstockt / verblendt / armselig/ forchtsam Volck / desgleichen in aller Welt nicht ist / die nimmermehr der hoffnung / so si siech trösten / fro und gewerdwerden / Das wahrlich ein steinern hertz sein müste / so sich darob nicht entsetzen / vnd vor Gottes zorn forchten lernen wolte / Ja es möchte nicht unb illich einen wol wundern / wie

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30 Wolff (1557), *Josippus, Den Erborn fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeistern*.

31 "Dann würde gewisslich vber vns komen der segen Dauids... denn hie allein – vnd ja sonst nirgendt auff Erden – haben wir die gantzen histori oder Geburt – Himels und der Erden – wie die Schrifft es nennet – die schöpfung des Menschen – seines fals – des zorns und gnaden Gottes – des gluecks und vngluecks der Christlichen Kirchen – wie die so wunderbar durch Gott von anfang wider die stürmwinde des Teuffels – vnd der walt – ist geschützet – geregieret – gefüret – vnd verteidigt worden – das dennoch der Hellen Poften sie nicht vbermlöget haben – wi offt sie es versucht – vnd vnderstanden." Wolff (1557), *Josippus, Den Erborn fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeistern*.

32 "We should therefore consider such histories... then we might learn from experience that those are nothing but a mirror, an example through which God clearly shows and gives public testimony that he keeps his word, punishes sin in the most terrible manner, and especially the disregard for his word and the true orthodox religion." Wolff (1557), *Josippus, Den Erborn, fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeistern*.

33 Wolff (1557), *Josippus, Den Erborn, fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeistern*.

Gott so grausam vber ein Volck zürnen könne / Aber sein Wort mus summa war und  
erfüllet werden / Welchs solch vnglöck durch Mosen / vnd die Propheten / lang zuuor  
verkündigt.<sup>34</sup>

Jews assume here a hermeneutical role, to borrow a term coined by Jeremy Cohen.<sup>35</sup> In Wolff's eyes, the text was important not only because it tells a history of the Jewish people in a particularly informative and entertaining manner but, perhaps, more importantly, because it challenges its readers to identify with Israel in complex ways: the Christian readers are the New Israel, but at the same time they are called upon to distance themselves from the wrongdoings of the Jews. The reader's gaze shifts away from Jewish history, and focuses on the lessons he might be expected to heed for her own times. This text then, does not address the Jewish past—after all, the fate of the Jews was firmly inscribed as a negative foil to the Christian narrative of salvation—but the Christian future. Indeed, if God didn't spare his own people, would he spare Christians, aliens and strangers to the original redemptive story? Lest his Christians readers repent, Wolff seemed to imply, they, too, remained in danger of receiving similar punishment.<sup>36</sup> This text then addressed not the fate of the Jews, but the future looming for contemporary Christians. Now then, Wolff called upon his readers, the time had come to pray that God may root out all heretics and create unity among the faithful.<sup>37</sup>

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34 "A stubborn blinded poor and fearful people. There is none like them in the world, and they constantly comfort themselves. Only someone with a heart of stone could fail to be shocked and not fear God's ire. One might wonder how God could be so angry at his own people. But his word remains supreme and fulfilled, a calamity long ago announced by Moses and the prophets." *Wolff (1557), Josippus, Den Erborn, fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn Burgermeistern.*

35 Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law. Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press 1999), 2.

36 "... Weilnun zu allen zeiten – solcher verechter gnug gewesen – vnd jetziger zeit leider auch mehr denn zuuiel – Wuerdt man nun sich nicht bekeren – sonder fort farn – es vbermachtet – vnd Gott auch zur endtlichen straff erbittern – so wuerdt die schulden unser Gott gerecht und one schulde sein – unser verdammis aber billich – Hat er seiner Vetteren – Blutfreunde – vnd verwandten Landtsleut nicht verschonet – Warumb soll er unser Landfremden vnd Fremdling verschoenen – die wir vns weder Predigen – noch lernen – Exemple und erfahrung bewegen – vnd vermanen lassen – durch Bus und besserung – Gottes zorn abzubitten – bnd jm in das schwerd zufallen – welchs wir gnugsam gespüret und gefület – das ers gezücket ist – vnd warlich noch nicht eingesteckt." *Wolff (1557), Josippi, Christlicher Leser vnd geliebter Bruder im Herrn.*

37 "Darumb were jetzt zeit / das man mit Ernst und von Herzen Bete / Gott sölt weren und steuren / allen Rotten vnd Secten / Corruptelen vnd falschen Leren und Lerern / friede und einigkeit zu pflanzen." *Wolff (1557), Josippi, Den Erborn fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn.*

*Peter Morwen (1558)*

In 1558, Peter Morwen or Morvvyng (d. c. 1573), a fellow of Magdalen College at Oxford; published a first English translation of Münster's text, the *A compendious and most marueilous History of the Latter Tymes of the Iewes Commune Weale Beginnyng Where the Bible or Scriptures Leaue, and Continuing to the Vtter Subuersion and Laste Destruction of That Countrey and People: Written in Hebrew by Ioseph Ben Gorion, a Noble Man of the Same Countrey, Who Sawe the Most Things Him Selfe, and was Aucthor and Doer of a Great Part of the Same.*<sup>38</sup>

Morwen carried out his translation at the instigation of an unnamed “certayne honest ma[n] prynter of Lo[n]den, studiousse in his vocation of the commoditie of this our cuntrey”<sup>39</sup> who had suggested that he translate this important text “so there might be likewise an vnderstanding and declaration to al men in the English tong as wel as in other, of the destruction of so famous a commune wealth.”<sup>40</sup> This man, who remained anonymous in the first editions, was Richard Iugge or Jugge (c. 1517–1577), an important printer of the English Protestant bookprinting world.<sup>41</sup> Morwen divided his work into three parts: *The State of the Machabees*, *The State of the Herodians*, and *The Warres of the Jewes*, a section subdivided into *The Warres of the Jewes* and the *Historie of the Siege of Jerusalem*.

The reader, Morwen warns, was about to embark on a difficult journey:

Thou shalt read here of terrible and horrible eventes of sedicion and rebellion, yea there was no such cruelti exercised upon them by their external ennemies, as they bled amongst themselves one upon an other, subiectes against their princes, and subiectes:

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38 The book “monopolized the field of popular Jewish history in England,” according to Edwin II. Wolf, “The First Book of Jewish Authorship Printed in America,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1971): 229. See also above n. 2. See Wolf, “First Book,” 231, n. 2. Isaac Landman, *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia . . . an Authoritative and Popular Presentation of Jews and Judaism Since the Earliest Times* (New York: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1939), Vol. 6, 210; Vol. 39, p. 170; also Clarissa P. Farrar and Austin P. Evans, *Bibliography of English Translations from Medieval Sources*, ed. Austin P. Evans, *Records of Civilization Sources and Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 272, n. 2298; Robert Cummings and Stuart Gillespie, “Translations from Greek and Latin Classics 1550-1700: A Revised Bibliography,” *Translation & Literature* 18, no. 1 (2009): 21. Discussed in Gutwirth, “L'accueil fait” and Jacob Reiner, “The English Yosippon,” *JQR* 58, no. 2 (1967).

39 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History, Epistle to the Reader*, 3.

40 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History, Epistle to the Reader*, 3-4.

41 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History, Epistle to the Reader*, 2. From the second edition that appeared in 1561 to the editions of 1579, all forewords name the first printer. Reiner, “Yosippon”: 128-129; Gutwirth, “L'accueil fait.”

in so muche the nothing hastened their destruction so greatlye as their own doggidnesse (and intestine hatred). Be thou warned therefore by their harmes, and take hede that thou maist avoid the like.<sup>42</sup>

Morwen likened the biblical prophecies concerning Jerusalem to contemporary London, and thought that the warning entailed in Jerusalem's destruction warranted a vernacular text. Morwen's approach to history is ecumenical and embraces many texts. Where Wolff, for example, refers to the Roman sources as proof for Josippus' history, Morwen points to pagan histories as moral stories: If studying the ancient and medieval heroes from Hercules, Julius Cesar to the legendary King Arthur allowed a reader to reflect upon the morality and consequences of their and, ultimately, her own acts, how much more so was this the case when it came to the well-known history of the Jews.<sup>43</sup> If the pagan and godless Romans easily defeated the Jews, God's people, this demonstrated just how great God's displeasure and ire was.<sup>44</sup>

#### *James Howell (1652)*

In the seventeenth century, our text featured in the altercation between Puritans and Royalists that included a vitriolic debate regarding the establishment of organized Jewish communities in England. The Puritans favored a "Resettlement," but the campaign met with opposition, and a number of books and pamphlets were published to support or counter the readmission of the Jews. In 1652, in the midst of this debate, the Welsh historian James Howell (c. 1594–1666) issued an updated translation of *Divrey Malkhey Yisra'el*. His book, *The Wonderful, and most Deplorable History of the Latter Times of the Jews, and of the City of Hierusalem*, was divided into two books, the first of which consisted of seven chapters, and the second book five chapters.<sup>45</sup>

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42 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History*, 11-12.

43 "As when thou seest the Jewes here afflicted with divers kinds of misery, because they fell from God: then maist though be admonished hereby to see the better to thine owne waies, least the like calamities light upon thee, unless thou be so fond to thinke God will more spare thee, which art but a wild Olive and but grafted unto y stock of faith, if though bring ether naughty fruit or no fruit, then he did the natural brauNches which sprang naturally of y rote itself." Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History*, 10-11.

44 Morwen (1558), *A compendious and most marueilous History*, *Epistle to the Reader*.

45 S. above n. 2 for the full reference.

Upon opening the book, the reader encounters, still on the title page, a quote from Hosea 13:9 in the Vulgate's translation that leaves no doubt as to the author's intention: "Perditio tua ex Te, *Israel*." This verse was frequently read in supercessionist fashion and as a reminder that the Jews had ceased to be God's favorite people and had been replaced by the true Church.<sup>46</sup>

Howell approvingly noted in his introduction, that most Christian lands had followed the example set by England's King Edward the First and had expelled the Jewish communities. The first Christian Prince that expelled the Jews out of his Territories, was that heroic King, our Edward the first; who was such a sore scourge also to the Scots; and it is thought divers families of those banished Jews fled then to Scotland, where they have propagated since in great numbers; witness the aversion that nation hath above others to hogs flesh. Nor was this their extermination for their Religion, but for their notorious crimes, as poisoning of wells, counterfeiting of coines, falsifying of seales, and crucifying of Christian children, with other villainies.<sup>47</sup>

Recalling Jewish history and the many calamities Jews had suffered in post-biblical times, Howell goes through a long list of anti-Semitic statements: Jews poison wells, kill Christian children, counterfeit money and falsify seals, and they stink.<sup>48</sup> Here, they are also connected to the Scots.

Jews might flourish from the Maghreb to India, and especially in the Ottoman Empire, but in Europe proper, this was rare. Although Howell was surely aware of the thriving Jewish presence in the Netherlands, he associates the existence of Jewish communities with England's

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46 See the slightly later commentary on Hosea in Edward Pococke, *The theological works of the learned Dr. Pocock, Sometime Professor of the Hebrew and Arabick Tongues, in the University of Oxford, and Canon of Christ-Church; Containing his Porta Mosis, and English Commentaries on Hosea, Joel, Micah, and Malachi. To which is prefixed, an Account of his Life and Writings, never before printed; with the addition of a new General index to the Commentaries*, ed. Leonard Twells, (London, 1740), vol. 1, 656. I would like to thank Scott Ettinger for this reference. Rashi and Kimchi interpret this verse similarly, although they draw different conclusions.

47 Howell (1652), *The Wonderful, and most Deplorable History, Epistle Dedicatory*.

48 Howell (1652), *The Wonderful, and most Deplorable History, Epistle Dedicatory*. In a letter to a friend from 1653, Howell notes that "[t]ouching Judaism, some corners of our city smell as rank of it as doth yours there." Quoted according to Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 160 and Howell in a letter to a friend in Amsterdam in 1653 in Reiner, "Yosippon," 142, n. 34; Solomon Zeitlin, "Josippon," *JQR* 53, no. 4 (1963): 277, n. 5 mentions the 1688 edition in this context.

adversaries, especially with Portugal, “born of a Jews bum crack,”<sup>49</sup> and Rome where “[t]hey live ...very quietly under the Popes nose, and St. Mark makes no scruple to entertain them at Venice.”<sup>50</sup>

Again, the Jews in the text personify contemporary Christians. Howell cautions his readers then to change their way of life, lest they experienced a fate similar to the Jews.<sup>51</sup> Howell’s sentiment did not carry the day and, following Oliver Cromwell’s decision in 1655, Jews re-established communities in England. Nonetheless, his translation was immensely popular, and scholars brought the *Wonderful, and most Deplorable History of the Latter Times of the Jews* to northern America where it was among the first Jewish texts to be published.<sup>52</sup> A Quaker Press, Bill Blake & Co. in Bellows Falls, Vermont printed the book for the last time in 1819, although this edition does not mention Howell as a translator.<sup>53</sup> The publishers did not share Howell’s virulently anti-Jewish feelings, and the introductory paragraphs of this text close with a prayer and a messianic hope for a Jewish future in a Jewish land that would, needless to say, hasten the return of the Christian Messiah:

Tho the Lord for a time hath cut off this his people, and “turned their fruitful land into barrenness,” yet he hath abundantly shewed us in his word, that the fullness of the Gentiles being come in, God will have mercy upon, and take into his favor this antient people, reestablish them in their own land in security, and without all doubt, restore the land to its former fruitfulness. All which let us humbly pray to God the Father, that for his infinite mercies in Jesus Christ, he will speedily accomplish “and turn the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs.”<sup>54</sup>

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49 Howell (1652), *The Wonderful, and most Deplorable History*, *Epistle Dedicatory*.

50 Howell (1652), *The Wonderful, and most Deplorable History*, *Epistle Dedicatory*.

51 Howell (1652), *The Wonderful, and most Deplorable History*, *Epistle Dedicatory*.

52 Wolf, “First Book,” 233.

53 For Bill Blake and his company see John J. Duffy, Samuel B. Hand, and Ralph H. Orth, “Blake, Bill,” in *The Vermont Encyclopedia*, ed. Bill” “Blake (Lebanon, NH; London: University Press of New England, 2003), 58.

54 Howell, *The wonderful, and most deplorable history* (1819), Preface.

*Protestant Notes in the Text*

Many of the text's early editors and printers were leading Protestant intellectuals, and connected to the new centers of Hebrew learning that were springing up across Europe during the sixteenth century.<sup>55</sup> Sebastian Münster was a leading intellectual, and he published his edition in 1529, the year in which he joined the Protestant Reformation and accepted a Chair in Basel. Schwyntzer, born in Silesia, was a student of Valentin Krautwald (1465–1545) in Stieglitz where he worked as a lector before joining the Radical Reformation under Kaspar von Schwenckfeld (1489–1561) in Strasbourg. Beginning in 1530 at the latest, Schwyntzer published the writings of the Radical Reformation and later worked as a civil servant in Strasbourg.<sup>56</sup> The Pietist Georg Wolff taught at the university in Tübingen, and translated a number of works into Hebrew. Morwen was briefly forced to seek refuge in Germany for his Protestant leanings, and served as rector at several churches, before he was elected to the canonry of Lichfield Cathedral. The introductions accompanying their translations at times reveal these sympathies, for example in Wolff's frequent conjuring up of "der Bawren glück vnd wolfart"<sup>57</sup> in a work that focuses on the proper conduct and redemption of the individual lay Christian. T

But not only the translators, the list of printers, too, reads like a Who's Who of the emerging Protestant publishing elite. Theirs was an interconnected world, and many of the participating writers and printers collaborated or knew each other. The printer of Münster's Latin-Hebrew edition, Peter Schöffer the Younger of Worms (d. 1540–1597) who is better known as the publisher of the *Tyndale* translation of the New Testament, for instance knew Hans Schwyntzer, the first German translator.<sup>58</sup> This might have been due to their commitment to the Radical Reformation, and probably also a business connection, and it seems that Schoeffer printed for Schwyntzer's publishing house.<sup>59</sup> The two publishers of Wolff's edition headed new Lutheran presses that disseminated one of the earliest news

55 Thomas Willi, "Hebraica Veritas in Basel; Christliche Hebraistik aus jüdischen Quellen," in *Vetus Testamentum Supplements*. Leiden. 92 (Leiden: Brill, 2002) and G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Dover, N.H.: Manchester University Press, 1983), 180–220.

56 ADB, vol. 33, Leipzig 1891, p. 364. Seipt, Allen Anderss: Schwenkfelder hymnology and the sources of hte first Schwenkfuelder hymn-book printed in America, Philadelphia 1909, p. 38f.

57 "the farmer's happiness and well-being" in Wolff (1557), *Josippus, Den Erbarn fürsichtigen wolweisen Herrn*.

periodicals, the *Meßrelationen*, in addition to Lutheran writings in Low German.<sup>60</sup> Peter Morwen, the first English translator, was connected to Richard Iugge or Jugge (c. 1517–1577), a prominent printer of the Protestant cause who instigated the translation and whose family published the work's first six editions. Iugge who is probably best known as the printer of the *Bishop's Bible* also served as Royal Printer under Queen Elizabeth, and was one of the original members of the Stationers' Company, a corporation of papermakers, bookbinders and booksellers.<sup>61</sup>

Like the translators, the readership, too, seems to have been predominantly Protestant. An exception is the great Joseph de Voisin (d. 1685), a professor at the Sorbonne, who included excerpts in his seminal edition of Friar Raymond's *Pugio Fidei* (Dagger of Faith), one of the most learned polemical texts of the thirteenth century.<sup>62</sup>

### Conclusion

*Divrey Malkhey Yisra'el* was one of the first Hebrew texts to be translated into the vernacular in the sixteenth century. The book circulated widely amongst German- and especially English-speaking Protestants who identified in new ways with Israel and the Jewish past. The work's popularity was probably a byproduct of the author's indirect identification with Josephus

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58 Münster used the c. 1513 *editio princeps* of *DMY* in Münster (1529). For the publishing activities of the Schöffers family see Friedrich W. Roth, *Die Mainzer Buchdruckerfamilie Schöffers während des XVI. Jahrhunderts und deren Erzeugnisse zu Mainz, Worms, Strassburg und Venedig: enthaltend die Drucke des Johann Schöffers 1508-1531, des Peter Schöffers des Jungeren 1508-1542, und des Jvo Schoeffers 1531-1555*, vol. 9, Beiheft zum Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1892 repr., Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1968), 141; Marvin J. Heller, *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book: an Abridged Thesaurus*, vol. 33, Brill's Series in Jewish Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2003), Vol.1, xxxv.

59 F. Wilhelm Emil Roth, *Die Mainzer buchdruckfamilie Schoeffers waehrend des xvi*, Issues 9-10, p. 117.

60 Manfred Knopp, *Die Druckerei zu Ursel, 1557-1623: Versuch eines Porträts* (Oberursel: Magistrat der Stadt Oberursel, 1990); Manfred Knopp, *Nicolaus Henricus und Cornelius Sutor: Bürger und Drucker zu Ursel* (Oberursel: Magistrat der Stadt Oberursel, 1964). Wolfgang Kirchener or Kirchner (d.1593), a prominent printer of the Bible and of Lutheran writings in Low German. Hans Lülfig, "Kirchner, Wolfgang," in *Neue deutsche Biographie*, ed. Otto Graf zu Stolberg-Wernigerode and Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1977), vol. 11, 656.

61 Morwen (1558), Epistle to the Reader in the editions of 1558, 1561, 1567 and 1575. The 1615 edition explained that this had been "a friend. . .," neither mentioned Iugge. See also Reiner, "Yosippon": 128-129; Gutwirth, "L'accueil fait."

62 Joseph de Voisin, *Raymundi Martini Ordinis Prædicatorum Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Judæos* (Leipzig, 1687), 711-13.

Flavius, the great first-century Jewish historian whose writings were particularly popular among Protestants, because many of whom identified with Israel.

Josephus was one of the first authors to consider the relationship between religious and political power, ideas of great importance to early modern Protestants in particular. Josephus suggested that Jewish society should be viewed as a political entity that knew no distinction between civil and religious law and was guided by the supreme lawgiver, Moses. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these ideas might have resounded with the Erastians, thinkers who argued that the state should have jurisdiction over religious matters.<sup>63</sup> For these political theorists, Josephus' theocracy served as a model, and offered a divine imprimatur for the legal monopoly of the civil sovereign. Their call for a readable Josephus was answered by a string of mostly Protestant-leaning scholars and publishers, and *Divrey Malkhey Yisra'el*, was one of the books they chose to print.

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63 Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Fania Oz-Salzberger, "The Jewish Roots of Western Freedom (in Hebrew)," *Azure* 13 (2002): 88-132.