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## Making Jews Dutch

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## Chapter one

### State, citizenship, and nucleation: Dutch Jewry in transition

... The fear of the Lord and the king are like twin brothers. When the fear of heaven is lost, the fear of the king will also perish. And by the weakening of faith in the Lord, the love of the nation that is embedded in every man will weaken.<sup>1</sup>

In the above citation, Chief Rabbi of Rotterdam Menachem Mendel Löwenstamm rages against the Reform movement that was sweeping through Europe.<sup>2</sup> New Judaisms emerged in the decades following the emancipations of European Jews, and Reform Judaism especially became a viable alternative for progressive Jews in Germany. Although Reform Judaism failed to get a foothold in the Netherlands, orthodox factions united in their efforts to challenge it. Like his orthodox contemporaries, Mendel Löwenstamm condemns Reform as unauthorized, heretical, and malicious and refutes this modernized form of Judaism. For him, newly acquired citizenship did not require a more lenient approach toward religious prescriptions. On the contrary, religion and love for the nation were two sides of the same coin. Moreover, without religion, the nation was weak. According to this rabbi, the tension felt by the Reform movement between citizenship and traditional Judaism simply did not exist.

This chapter discusses the strategies of Dutch Jews for coping with the new political situation. It analyzes, in chronological order, the different Jewish responses to citizenship, from the radical democracy of the Batavian Republic to the moderate conservative government of Willem I. Dutch Jewry was divided on how to interpret and rearticulate their Judaism within the new demands of the nation-state. As a result, each Jewish faction engaged differently with its newly acquired citizenship and with political and military participation. Each found its own way to take part in or reject Dutch society. Jews who welcomed these new opportunities established the *naye kille*, wherein they

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<sup>1</sup> Els Kooij-Bas, "Nothing but Heretics: Torat ha-Qena'ot: A Study and Translation of the 19th Century Responsa Against Religious Reform in Judaism" (Tilburg University, 2006), 230.

<sup>2</sup> It is uncertain whether there is a family relationship between Moses Löwenstamm and Menachem Mendel Löwenstamm. The family name of Mendel Menachem was probably based on the *responsa* collection *pnei aryeh* (lion's face) of his father Rabbi Leyb Heiman Breslauer (1741–1809). Cf. <http://www.dutchjewry.org/genealogy/duparc/114.htm> (accessed 8 September 2014).

merged Judaism with the new political ideals. Others, like the Lehren family, resisted the nationalizing efforts but exploited the juridical implications of their citizenship. Remarkably, both groups shared discursive strands regarding religious reform, the Sephardic ideal model, and the common people's burden. This chapter will show that Jews continued to be engaged with these new discourses on religion and citizenship. They defined their Judaisms in relation to the state and not so much in opposition to each other.

### 1. *Maskilic* nucleation in the Netherlands

During the eighteenth century, the Ashkenazi community in the Netherlands doubled in size because of the continuing influx of immigrants from the German countries and Poland. The Ashkenazi population increased from 9,000 in 1720 to 22,000 in 1748, and it quickly outnumbered the Sephardi community.<sup>3</sup> Besides this demographic shift, this century also saw the budding of new groups in Dutch Jewry. A large proletariat characterized Dutch Jewry, even though economic possibilities led to social mobility and the creation of new elites. The rise in memberships<sup>4</sup> attests to this, as membership rose from six in 1708–1737 to 73 in 1737–1764.<sup>5</sup> During the latter period and afterwards, German *maskilic* teachers and scholars regularly visited Amsterdam and introduced new ideas to the Jewry.<sup>6</sup> They attracted many admirers and introduced their pupils to secular literature. Immigrants, such as Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805), Tsvi Hirsch Sommerhausen (1781–1853), Salomon Dubno (1738–1813), and many others, played a crucial role in the Dutch *Haskalah*.<sup>7</sup> They functioned as cultural bridges for the German *Haskalah*, instigated the secession of the *naye kille* in 1797, and founded several enlightened Jewish societies.

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<sup>3</sup> Michman, Beem, and Michman, *Pinkas. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland*, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Membership in the Jewish community bestowed the right to possible honorable functions in the synagogue, the right to vote in elections for and be elected as a *parnas*, and the right to be buried at Muidenberg. Membership could be obtained for 250 guilders. See D.M. Sluys, "Het instituut van het lidmaatschap bij de Hoogduitsch-Joodsche Gemeente te Amsterdam," *De Vrijdagavond* VI no. 47, 326–329; no. 48, 343–344; no. 49, 356–360.

<sup>5</sup> Figures based on the content of ACA, 714: Protocolbuch I and the index of Protocolbuch II. Cf. A.M. Vaz Dias, "Over den Vermogenstoestanden der Amsterdamsche Joden in de 17e en 18e eeuw," *De Vrijdagavond* 17 (1931), 263.

<sup>6</sup> For the controversial view that the Dutch *Haskalah* was not at all influenced by the German *Haskalah*, see Irene E. Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment (almost) without *Haskalah*: The Dutch Example," *Jewish Culture and History* 2–3 (2012).

<sup>7</sup> For visitors to the Netherlands, see Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 26–32; Joseph Michman, "Ha-shavat yehadut germania al yehadut holand bemea ha-tesha asara," in *Michmanei Yosef*.

The figure of David Friedrichsfeld (1755–1810) serves as the prototypical example of a cultural bridge that profoundly influenced the Dutch Jewish community.<sup>8</sup> In Germany, he belonged to a circle of noted *maskilim* and counted among his friends Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Naphtali Wessely (1725–1805). In 1781 he migrated to the Dutch Republic, where, together with like-minded individuals, he established the *Felix Libertate* society, a patriotic society striving for Jewish juridical equality, which became one of the first sites of *maskilic* nucleation.<sup>9</sup> Later on in 1797, Friedrichsfeld co-founded the *naye kille*. This small community, which was known for its *maskilic* ideals and religious reform and which became another important site of nucleation, was short-lived and in 1808 was dissolved by King Napoleon Louis (r.1806–1810). Because of his prominence, Friedrichsfeld was vehemently attacked in the polemical pamphlets of the Old Community (*alte kille*), the *Diskursn*, where writers corrupted his pseudonym *philosophes* into *falderappes* (scum).<sup>10</sup> Friedrichsfeld wrote several works advocating the emancipation of the Jews, such as *De Messias der Joden* (The Messiah of the Jews) and *Ophelderingen over 't advies van den Burger van Swinden*

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<sup>8</sup> For the relationship between the Dutch and German *Haskalah*, see: Frederique van Cleeff-Hiegentlich, “Reflections on the Relationship between the Dutch Haskalah and the German Haskalah,” in *Dutch Jewish History I*, edited by Joseph Michman and Tirtza Levie (Jerusalem: Tel-Aviv University, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984); Irene E. Zwiep, “Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered: The Dutch Eighteenth Century,” in *Sepharad in Ashkenaz: Medieval Knowledge and Eighteenth-century Enlightened Jewish Discourse*, edited by Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz, and Irene E. Zwiep (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2007); Irene E. Zwiep, “A Maskil Reads Zunz: Samuel Mulder and the Earliest Dutch Reception of the Wissenschaft des Judentums,” in *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, edited by Yosef Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2008).; Joseph Michman, *Michmanei Yosef: Studies on the History and Literature of the Dutch Jews* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1994), 245–262.

<sup>9</sup> Because Dutch patriotic societies refused to admit Jews into their ranks, some Jews founded their own society, which was open to members from all affiliations. Cf. Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period: Gothic Turrets on a Corinthian Building 1787–1815*, 54–56; Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 5–6. See for instance some of *Felix Libertate*’s publications: H.L. Bromet, *Aanspraak, gedaan in de societeit Felix Libertate* (Amsterdam: J.L. van Laar Mahuët en de erven Jac. Benedictus, 1795); E. Schabraq, *Aanspraak, gedaan in de societeit Felix Libertate, op den 11 maart 1795, het eerste jaar der Bataafsche Vrijheid* (Amsterdam: J.L. van Laar Mahuët en de erven Jac. Benedictus, 1795); J.L. van Laar Mahuet, *Aanspraak, gedaan in de societeit Felix Libertate op den 18 Februarij 1795* (Amsterdam: J.L. van Laar Mahuët en de erven Jac. Benedictus, 1795); M. Schalekamp, *Verslag wegens het Patriottisch Genootschap der Jooden. Vergadert in Amsterdam den 11 February, 1795 onder de zinspreuk Felix Libertate* (Amsterdam: J.L. van Laar Mahuët en de erven Jac. Benedictus, 1795); M.S. Asser, *Brief geschreven uit de societeit, alhier te Amsterdam opgericht, onder de zinspreuk Felix Libertate aan den schrijver van het geschrift over de constitutie, bijzonderlijk over deszelfs verkeerd begrip omtrent het stemrecht der jooden* (Amsterdam: J.L. van Laar Mahuët en de erven Jac. Benedictus, 1795).

<sup>10</sup> *Falderappes* derives either from the West Yiddish *gualdrapa* (horse shit), Hamburg Yiddish *galderappes* (rag), or Portuguese *galdrapa* (lean sow). Cf. Justus van de Kamp and Jacob van der Wijk ed., *Koosjer Nederlands. Joodse woorden in de Nederlandse taal* (Amsterdam/Antwerp: Uitgeverij Contact, 2006), 154; Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 216, 304, 420.

*aan de Representanten des Volks van Holland* (Clarifications concerning the advice of citizen Swinden to the representatives of the Dutch nation).<sup>11</sup>

Besides his theoretical work on the emancipation of the Jews, Friedrichsfeld also tried to realize his ideals. A couple of years after his arrival in the Netherlands, Friedrichsfeld showed his Enlightenment agenda when in 1788 he helped Verka, the wife of the merchant Joseph Moses Levy, in her battle against the chief rabbi of Rotterdam. Rabbi Breslau (1741–1809) condemned women wearing a hairpiece (*bandeau*) as immoral and forbade it because it resembled real hair and thus violated the obligation for married Jewish women to cover their hair. When the Jewish community fined Verka for wearing a *bandeau*, her husband, together with the lawyer Toussaint, subsequently asked the burgomasters of Rotterdam to negotiate on her behalf. The city authorities in their turn requested the opinion of Hendrik Albert Schultens (1749–1793), a professor in Oriental Languages at the University of Leiden. Both the professor and Verka questioned the basis of the rabbi's prohibition in Jewish law. Moreover, the rabbis of The Hague and Amsterdam permitted women to wear false hair, which proved the lack of a Jewish consensus. Unfortunately for Verka, the burgomasters nevertheless decreed otherwise and upheld the rabbi's ruling.<sup>12</sup>

A year later, Verka again ignored the chief rabbi's ruling and was excommunicated. This time, Verka received help from within the Jewish community, as Friedrichsfeld stepped into the breach for her and tried to prove to the burgomasters that Breslau's prohibition lacked a substantial Talmudic foundation.<sup>13</sup> Whether their appeal had any success is unknown. However, it is clear that Friedrichsfeld felt obligated to support her struggle against rabbinic authority, especially when it hindered her in the free expression of religion and fashion.

Another immigrant who was also repeatedly mocked in the *Diskursn* was the Polish mathematician and student of Mendelssohn, Juda Litvack (1760–1836). He was a leading figure in the emancipation of Dutch Jews, a member of the *naye kille*, and in 1806 he was part of the Dutch delegation of the Sanhedrin summoned by Napoleon, wherein

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dan Michman, "David Friedrichsfeld – a Fighter for Enlightenment and Emancipation of the Jews," in *Research on the History of the Dutch Jewry I*, edited by Joseph Michman (Jerusalem, 1975), 151–199.

<sup>12</sup> The chief rabbis of Hamburg and Frankfort also prohibited wigs. Cf. E. Slijper, "Een proces over de haardracht der vrouw bij de Joden te Rotterdam," in *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje*, edited by E. Wiersum (P.M. Bazendijk: Rotterdam, 1910); for a discussion of the wig vs. the veil in Judaism, see Leila Leah Branner, "From Veil to Wig: Jewish Women's Hair Covering," *Judaism* 1 (1993): 465–477.

<sup>13</sup> Slijper, "Een proces over de haardracht der vrouw bij de Joden te Rotterdam."

Jewish scholars needed to reconcile Judaism with the nation-state. Litvak worked as a teacher for the sons of Moses Salomon Asser (1754–1826), Eduard Asser (1809–1894) and Carel Asser (1813–1890).<sup>14</sup> In the *Diskursn*, the character Yankev ridicules his Polish background.

It is a matter of public knowledge that a louse travels from East to West. Well, I have made a line on the paper and drawn a straight line, so the louse should march straight along this line. Litvak said: “Yes certainly.” But what does the creature do? He jumps across the line. I stood there and was amazed. How was it possible? But what did I do? I looked for what was wrong and stood there thinking for another half hour....but after much thinking and effort, I found the mistake. My room was slanted and pointed southeast. So the louse was right. Following that, Litvak said: “Indeed, an ingenious idea.” And he scratched his back as he was saying it.<sup>15</sup>

Yankev refers here to the many Eastern European *betteljuden* who immigrated to the Netherlands during the eighteenth century. Because of their poverty and their involvement in crime, they had a bad reputation.<sup>16</sup> Representing Litvak as a louse connects poverty and bad hygiene with Eastern European Jews. Moreover, it emphasizes the supposedly parasitic nature of Eastern European immigrants, as they took advantage of Dutch hospitality. Also, the representation of the Eastern Jewish immigration as a mathematical law ridicules Litvak’s profession. The anecdote reveals the contempt in which many Eastern European immigrants were held and how the Dutch Jews defined themselves in opposition to them.

Besides associating immigrants with poverty, Jews from the *alte kille* ridiculed the adoption of French manners. The *maskilim*, such as Friedrichsfeld and Litvak, whom they called ‘German beggars and vagrants,’ were especially to blame. According to the *Diskursn* character Yankev, it was Jewish curiosity over new scientific inventions that welcomed these German immigrants. But once they got a foothold, immigrants soon laid down the law:

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<sup>14</sup> Henriette Boas, “De leraar Hebreuws van Eduard Asser: Samuel I. Mulder,” *Amstelodamum* 52 (1965): 126–128.

<sup>15</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 228.

<sup>16</sup> Jewish gangs specialized in robbing churches and clerics. Florike Egmond, *Op het verkeerde pad. Georganiseerde misdaad in de Noordelijke Nederlanden 1650-1800* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 1994), 146.

The children started to learn foreign languages and completely forgot our mother tongue... [They] started to absorb what those strangers taught them and wanted to read. German books were bought. At first short novels like *Heerfort und Klärchen*, or *Hermann und Ulrike*, and more of that kind. Hereafter, they were brought other books that were written in the manner of the philosophers. Things went so far that they no longer even thought about Judaism.<sup>17</sup>

In Yankev's view, novels and philosophy badly influenced the Jews and seduced them to adopt foreign ideas and manners. Later on, he even stated that "[Friedrichsfeld and Litvak] destroyed the Jewishness in many houses."<sup>18</sup> Reading secular literature, speaking any other language than Yiddish, and affected or snobbish manners were perceived as non-Jewish behavior, ousting Judaism.<sup>19</sup>

Critique was also directed at the custom of housing *maskilic* teachers, who encouraged and stimulated aberrant behavior; it starts with curiosity and ends with reading the *philosophes*, the writers of the *Diskursn* argued. Teachers and writers hosted by rich families particularly served as contact points for the dissemination of secular knowledge. The Mulder family, for instance, known for their worldly lifestyle and their salon where the local Jewish youth gathered, offered lodging to Friedrichsfeld.<sup>20</sup> During his stay there, he persuaded Samuel Israel Mulder, the founder of the Hebrew Society *Tongeleth*, to adopt the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew.<sup>21</sup> However, the impact of *maskilic* teachers was also restricted, as families deprived of private tutoring or families with no interest in secular studies remained outside their zone of influence.

Conservative Jews noticed the attraction of new ideas and scientific inventions. The character Yankev remarks, "You will see what will come of it. People started to become curious about these things. So they befriended these [immigrants], clothed and fed them. When the newcomers got this far, they turned their machines so that the sparks went right to the hearts of many of [the Amsterdam Jews]."<sup>22</sup> A striking feature of these polemical writings is the emphasis on secrecy, seduction, and exploitation by

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<sup>17</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 298–300.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>19</sup> Chief Rabbi Moses Löwenstamm also feared the threat of secular literature. In a letter dated 27 July 1803, written to his son-in-law Samuel Berenstein, then Chief Rabbi of Leeuwarden, he complains about secular writings. See, ACA, 1241-4.1.1.24

<sup>20</sup> Gans, *Memorboek. Platenatlas van het leven der joden in Nederland van de middeleeuwen tot 1940*, 223.

<sup>21</sup> For the polemics on the Sephardic pronunciation, see chapter two.

<sup>22</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 298.

*maskilic* Jews. By using this polemical tool, the Dutch Jewish community is depicted as essentially naive, being distracted from the right path by childlike curiosity.

The authors of the *Diskursn* of the *alte kille* held the *maskilim* and their *naye kille* responsible for deviation, assimilation, and the corruption of the Jewish mind. They vehemently condemned their role in seducing Jews into unjewish behavior. By depicting Jews as victims of moral corruption, they ensured that the Jewish community could not be held accountable. In this way, the community was appeased and all the blame was placed on outsiders. The foreigner, the immigrant, and the stranger seduced the Jews. By making a clear distinction between Dutch Jews and immigrants as well as assigning negative behavior to the latter, Dutch Jews could uphold the image of a pure, albeit naive, community. In this way, the *alte kille* juxtaposed themselves as pure Jews against the heretical *naye kille*.

## **2. The *naye kille***

The *naye kille's* foundation in 1797 was the result of *maskilic* discontent with the slow pace of reform after the installation of the Batavian Republic in 1795. The Batavian political constellation was a direct copy of the French Republic, modeled after the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. This new political situation paved the way for Jewish emancipation. Unfortunately for the *maskilim*, the desired Emancipation Decree of 1796 did not radically reform the Ashkenazi community. Consequently, twenty-one members, predominantly members of *Felix Libertate*, seceded and established a new community: *Adath Jeshurun*, also known as *naye kille*.<sup>23</sup>

The *naye kille* divided the Jewish community into opponents and supporters; these groups bitterly disputed each other, exposing what seemed to be a deep ideological rift within the community. The dispute centered around the question of whether the Jews should welcome this new opportunity, integrate, and become participating citizens. Ideas, however, internalized slowly, and the twenty-one members decided to build their new community based on the French political ideal of equality. Their name, *Adath Jeshurun*, which literally translates into “community of righteousness,” is one of the names denoting the Jewish people as a whole. Therefore,

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<sup>23</sup> For the chronicle of Benjamin Wing I use the translation by Meijer Roest as well as the original manuscript housed at Library Rosenthaliana. Meijer Roest, “Uittreksel Uit Eene Kronijk Van De Jaren 1795-1812,” *De Israëlitische Letterbode* II (1886, 1876): 32–33.



the name *Adath Jeshurun* was ubiquitous amongst congregations wishing to legitimize their interpretation of Judaism. For instance, German Orthodox congregations in the mid-nineteenth century named themselves *Adath Jeshurun*.<sup>24</sup> The name is also common among many contemporary Reform communities throughout the United States.<sup>25</sup> Not surprisingly, the *naye kille* chose this name because they regarded themselves as the keepers of true Jewishness.

In their *Diskursn*, they tried to convince other Jews to join them. Both the *naye* and the *alte kille* used the same format, characters, and rhetoric in their *Diskursn* in order to establish the idea that there was only one true Jewish community. The *naye kille* presented themselves as a community that would abrogate all of the injustices caused by the former Jewish leaders, the *parnasim*. In this new community, Judaism would be restored to its true meaning, and only in the *naye kille* could real observance of Jewish law be experienced. Or as the character Yankev enthusiastically comments: "I went to their synagogue. It is as true as the Law of Moses. It couldn't have been better in the Temple!"<sup>26</sup> The writers of the *naye kille* thus represented themselves as ultimately traditional.

Various prominent *naye kille* members, mostly affiliated with *Felix Libertate*, postulated the idea that the new political situation would restore the original, natural rights of humanity. For instance, E. Schabracq speaks of "rights that should be woken up," Moses Asser urges a return to the true principles of society, and Hartog Bromet regards the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the new political foundation of the French as well as the Batavian Republic, as a restoration of natural rights.<sup>27</sup> Notwithstanding the initial resistance, many of the initiatives and enlightened ideas of the *naye kille*'s most prominent members gradually entered Jewish life, and what seemed at first new and revolutionary became common ground after a few years. Moreover, the Dutch Jewish community eventually largely supported the *naye kille*'s

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<sup>24</sup> Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, ed., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA in association with the Keter Pub. House, 2007), 384.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Maxine Grossman (author) and Adele Berlin (editor), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 18.

<sup>26</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 42.

<sup>27</sup> E. Schabracq, *Aanspraak, gedaan in de societeit Felix Libertate, op den 11 maart 1795, het eerste jaar der Bataafsche Vrijheid*; Asser, *Brief geschreven uit de societeit, alhier te Amsterdam opgericht, onder de zinspreuk Felix Libertate aan den schrijver van het geschrift over de constitutie, bijzonderlijk over deszelfs verkeerd begrip omtrent het stemrecht der jooden*; H.L. Bromet, *Aanspraak, gedaan in de societeit Felix Libertate*.

supposedly radical idea of Jewish political participation. Therefore, the opposition between traditional Jews and progressive Jews cannot be made into a binary opposition, as enlightened discourse pervaded the entire Jewish community.

### ***Jewish political participation***

The *naye kille* distinguished itself from other Jewish communities on three points: its political focus, its emphasis on equality, and its religious reform according to the Sephardic model. Jewish political participation was an important spearhead of the *naye kille*. Prominent members, such as Hartog Bromet (1725–1813) and Hartog de Hartog Lémon (1755–1823), were the first Jews ever to be elected to political office in the Netherlands.<sup>28</sup> Political participation and representation along with civic duty characterized *naye kille* members. By embracing these political objectives, they envisaged a different kind of future for the Jews: a Jewish community that would break away from its insulation and contribute to society. The *Diskursn's* character Yankev explains that the political changes in France inspired them. “I have been among the French, and there I learned and saw that the [voice of the] common man must also be heard. And that the miserable Jewish leaders have power that is not heard of anywhere in the world but here [in Amsterdam].”<sup>29</sup> The democratic possibilities offered by the French Revolution encouraged and stimulated the *naye kille's* wish for a community wherein political power was more equally distributed.

The Jews should thus seize the opportunity and become involved in the nation's politics. The *Diskursn* continuously report on the elections for the National Assembly and inform the Jews how to cast a vote: “[Y]ou give your vote to this or that elector. Consequently, he again chooses a good, honest man for the government in your name. So you take part in making the government. Isn't that a great gift from Heaven?”<sup>30</sup> According to the *naye kille*, citizenship encompassed civil rights *as well as* civic duty. Their idea of citizenship reflects the ideal of the political citizen postulated by various enlightened philosophers, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778).<sup>31</sup> The *naye kille* promoted an

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<sup>28</sup> For a thorough analysis of Hartog de Hartog Lémon's life and contributions to the emancipation of Dutch Jewry, see Bloemgarten, *Hartog de Hartog Lémon, 1755–1823. Joodse revolutionair in Franse Tijd*.

<sup>29</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 32.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> See for instance Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract, and Discourses by Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. by G.D.H. Cole (London/Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1923).

active political attitude because the citizen was responsible for the creation and maintenance of a good government through casting a vote. “[W]hen I have the same rights as all the other inhabitants, when I can take part in the formation of a government, when we can have Jews in the government, when it has already come to this in our country, praise and thank God – [this] is to take care of the good and well-being of the country!”<sup>32</sup>

This active citizenship as a Jewish moral obligation was promoted throughout the *Diskursn* and in various pamphlets distributed by *naye kille* members. For instance, according to Bromet, Jewish political participation was God’s command.

See, Israel, by the happy Revolution, the horn of the house buds forth [Ez 29:21] through human rights and decreed liberty and equality – [this] has given you permission, too, in the midst of the nations, to open your mouth and stand up for your rights, where you and others take part. See there! Through my mouth, the whole of Israel is given the opportunity to speak out. This is the wish of the one and only Supreme Being, Jehovah the Lord.<sup>33</sup>

Bromet regards the Batavian Revolution and the new possibilities for Jewish participation as religiously mandated. God himself, he argues, urges the Jewish voice to be heard. He directly connects the new Batavian Republic with God’s commandments.<sup>34</sup> By including the Jewish religion in the new political situation, the *Diskursn*, not surprisingly, promoted the election of two Jewish representatives—Bromet and Lemon—to the National Assembly.<sup>35</sup>

The *naye kille*’s response to citizenship does not mean that the *alte kille* rejected Jewish political participation; however, they objected to Bromet and Lémon as representatives of Dutch Jewry, as the character Yankev explains:

Look Anshel, if they had come to our community first, before having founded the assembly, and said: “We address [a petition to] you. Now, there are Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood. All nations are equal now. Come, we shall help you. Cooperate for

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<sup>32</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 78.

<sup>33</sup> H.L. Bromet, *Aanspraak, gedaan in de societeit Felix Libertate*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 38, 42, 78, 80, 82, 84, 92.

the good of Israel. We shall strike while the iron is hot.” Wouldn’t that have been better? But the conflict became a fight to the finish. One wouldn’t yield to the other.<sup>36</sup>

According to the *alte kille*, the *naye kille* instigated a power struggle and as a result divided the community. It is interesting that the *alte kille* speaks of equality between nations and interprets the change as pertaining to the whole of the community, while the *naye kille* refers to equality between individuals. Apparently, the *alte kille* did not object so much to equality *an sich* but rather to the idea of an individually experienced religion.

### ***The ideal of equality***

Equality was another major pillar of the *naye kille’s* ideology. No rich man was better than any poor man, as they explained repeatedly in their *Diskursn*. They condemned the religious and social benefits the rich Jewry received in *alte kille*. Whether one is called up for the Torah, gets the best choice of meat, or receives a burial place should not be determined based on one’s economic position, they argued. Instead, the *naye kille* claimed to distribute the honorary (synagogue) functions and privileges equally. Their first *Diskursn* starts with criticizing the *alte kille* for favoring the rich over the poor. When Gumpel boards the ferry, he greets Anshel and discloses, “Last week on the Sabbath all the rich were called up, so I thought this Sabbath it must be the turn of the poor people.” “What do you think?” the character Anshel replies, “That it goes in our synagogue as in yours? That a difference is made between a rich and a common man? We are all equal: the *manhig* [leader] is no better than the common man.”<sup>37</sup> In line with the Enlightenment ideals, the *naye kille* maintained that every man was equal before God and that “inherited” riches did not entitle someone to religious privileges.

Because every person was equal in the eyes of God, public offices should be available to all Jews and not only some selected – and wealthy – families. Merit rather than inheritance should be the sole reason for granting someone public office. In their *Diskursn*, they mention the example of the inherited office of the *chazzan* in the Ashkenazi community. Inherited office was common in the *alte kille*. For instance,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>37</sup> In order to distinguish between the usurpation by the *alte kille* and their own just management, the *naye kille* named their leaders *manhiqim* instead of *parnasim*, which literally translates as “providers of livelihood.” Ibid., 28.

affluent families fulfilled the functions of *parnas* because eligibility for elections depended on the amount of taxes paid. Moreover, the office of chief rabbi of Amsterdam had become almost hereditary since the appointment of Arye Leyb ben Saul Löwenstamm in 1740; the consecutive rabbis all belonged to this family. The *naye kille* condemned the tradition of hereditary offices because it hindered social mobility. It kept the poor out of office and solidified social stratification. “But if someone is a poor man, the *parnosim* will do their best to see that his children will enter their father’s profession and inherit his junk business. But to encourage them to buy guild-rights or citizenship...God forbid!”<sup>38</sup> According to the *naye kille*, the *alte kille* was fully responsible for sustaining the Jewish “culture of poverty.”<sup>39</sup>

The *naye kille* emphasized its own rationality and empathy. It represented itself as an enlightened community in which the concerns of the common man were being respected and safeguarded. It condemned the *alte kille*’s cruel measures in collecting (tax) debts and portrayed the *alte kille*’s *parnasim* as greedy, without any consideration for the hardships of the poor.

But they shouldn’t humiliate him – God forbid – so he can’t come to synagogue any more, or hang him publicly. Or if someone dies at his home, the corpse should not be left in front of him, making him ill from suffering or even – God forbid – die.<sup>40</sup> No, brother, listen. Everything you will see or hear at the *naye kille* will be humane and without aggression, whereas everything that goes on in the *alte kille* is just plain power, domination, and claims.<sup>41</sup>

A similar empathetic approach recurs in the *naye kille*’s policy regarding the misconduct of the meat hall director. The hall director, regardless of his transgression, was met with benevolence, and the problem was settled without public shaming, which would not have been the case in the *alte kille*.<sup>42</sup> This handling clearly shows that the *naye kille* refrained from employing the religious control model of the *alte kille* and adapted their community to the new political situation, wherein membership of a religious community

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Oscar Lewis, *Five Families Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

<sup>40</sup> If someone failed to pay the community taxes or was excommunicated, the *parnasim* refused to bury the corpse. For a description of such an occurrence in 1740, see chapter five.

<sup>41</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 50.

<sup>42</sup> ACA, 714:2.1.2362, 20-21.

was voluntary. The *naye kille* incorporated the new political ideal of equality not only in their management but also in their religious service. As such, community practice and policy consolidated the idea of an engaged Judaism.

### ***The Sephardic ideal***

In addition to French political ideals, the Portuguese community of Amsterdam profoundly influenced the *naye kille's* reform. For many *maskilim*, the Sephardim represented the ideal Jews because they engaged with secular literature, owned thriving international businesses, and mingled with Christians. The Portuguese synagogue of Amsterdam, by far the largest in Europe, epitomized Sephardic success and supremacy. Consequently, the way the Sephardim combined a Jewish lifestyle with worldly and secular knowledge inspired many *maskilic* reforms. Their social standing, education, and affluence became something to aspire to, and therefore their (religious) conduct and customs (*minhagim*) served as an example to enlightened Ashkenazim.<sup>43</sup>

The Sephardim likewise represented themselves as 'ideal Jews' in opposition to the 'backward' Ashkenazim, while they continuously stressed their own 'noble' Iberian descent.<sup>44</sup> Sephardi intellectuals employed the Ashkenazi-Sephardi distinction with its consonant air of superiority and condescension in their struggle for citizenship. Isaac da Pinto (1717–1787), for instance, refutes Voltaire's attack on the Jews by heralding the cultural, economic, and social accomplishments of the Sephardim while denouncing the

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<sup>43</sup> Schatz, "Returning to Sepharad: Maskilic Reflections on Hebrew in the Diaspora," 263–277; Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," *Leo Beck Year Book* (1989): 47–66. Not surprisingly, the idea of a superior Sephardic history inspired scholars of Jewish history of Sephardic descent, such as Isaac da Costa (1798–1860) and Juda Palache (1886–1944). Irene E. Zwiep, "Pascal in potentia... Isaac da Costa on Spinoza and Pantheism," *Rosenthaliana* 42–43 (2011–2010): 151–152.; Yaniv Hagbi, "Juda Palacha's History of Hebrew Literature," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 42–43 (2011–2010): 177. Moreover, contemporary historians also herald the 'Golden Age' of Sephardic history. Cf. Jane S Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Zion Zohar, ed., *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). However, this perspective has been challenged. Cf. Mark R Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Darío Fernández-Morera, "The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise," *The Intercollegiate Review* 2 (2006): 23–31.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*; Yosef Kaplan, "Gente Política: The Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam vis-à-vis Dutch Society," in *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others: Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, edited by Chaya Brasz and Yosef Kaplan (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001); Yosef Kaplan, "The Portuguese Community in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam and the Ashkenazi World," in *Dutch Jewish History I*, edited by Joseph Michman (Jerusalem, 1989).

Ashkenazim for their degradation and debasement.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, the proposal of Mordechai van Aron for the elevation of Jewry portrays the Ashkenazim as less honest than the Sephardim. “No doubt honesty is not pursued everywhere; however, this accusation [of dishonesty] is more applicable to the High German than to the Portuguese Jews.”<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Mordechai van Aron praises the Portuguese for their part in international trade and banking, which brought prosperity to the Dutch Republic.<sup>47</sup> The proposal by Abbé Grégoire in *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs* also portrays the Sephardim in a favorable light; he names Menasseh ben Israel and refers to the Jews of Toledo as examples of sophistication.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly enough, these proposals for the elevation of the Jewish community all display a patronizing tone regarding the Ashkenazi Jews and consequently fostered the discourse of a desolate, destitute, and deprived Jewry.

The Sephardim represented for the *maskilim* the possibility of integration while maintaining a Jewish identity. This was especially obvious to them in the works of Sephardic scholars, such as Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), Isaac ben Judah Abarbanel (1437–1508), and Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657). All of them incorporated worldly knowledge into their Jewish writings and thus offered a model of engagement with the outside world. The works and lives of Sephardic scholars proved that a Jewish lifestyle did not need to be secluded or isolated. That is why the *maskilic* journal *Ha-me’assef* was especially interested in publishing the biographies of Spanish Jews.<sup>49</sup> In the lives of Spanish Jews, the *maskilim* saw the realization of their ideas and ideals.

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<sup>45</sup> The *ma’amad* constantly distinguished between their own admirable status compared to the “impoverished and uncivilized” Ashkenazim. Cf. Yosef Kaplan, “Gente Politica: The Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam vis-à-vis Dutch Society.” Moreover, in France the Sephardim tried to acquire citizenship only for themselves, without including the Ashkenazim. Frederic Cople Jaher, *The Jews and the Nation: Revolution, Emancipation, State Formation, and the Liberal Paradigm in America and France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 128. For an account of the Sephardic supremacy displayed in the Netherlands throughout the ages, see the forthcoming article by Jaap Cohen, “The Action Portuguesia. Legitimizing National Socialist Racial Ideology as a Dutch Sephardic Strategy for Safety, 1941–1944.”

<sup>46</sup> Mordechai van Aaron, “Brief van Mordechai van Aron,” *De koopman of Bydragen ten opbouw van Neêrlands koophandel en zeevaard 2* (1770): 429.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Abbé Grégoire, *Nieuwe bedenkingen over de Joden, en bijzonderlijk over die van Amsterdam en Frankfort, door den heer Gregoire, oud bisschop van Blois, senateur, enz* (Den Haag: Belinfante & Comp., 1807), 6–7.

<sup>49</sup> David Joshua Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz: the Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000–1250* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), 12.

The Sephardim thus offered the *maskilim* a new Jewish paradigm.<sup>50</sup> As a result, Sephardic liturgy inspired the *naye kille's* reform.<sup>51</sup> The *Melitz Yosher*, a collection of liturgical regulations compiled by the son of the Isaac ben Abraham Graanboom, rabbi of the *naye kille*, list the *naye kille's* new liturgy and regulations. All of the changes introduced are carefully substantiated by Graanboom, with reference to rabbinical sources and texts. The *naye kille* was particularly keen to adopt the decorous aspects of Sephardic liturgy. For instance, the Sephardic custom of reciting *Kaddish* (the mourner's prayer) aloud together with the whole congregation replaced the Ashkenazi custom of reciting it individually.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the new community adopted the ritual of holding the Torah scroll in front of the congregation before the reading of the Torah. While the *naye kille* liturgy abolished various prayers, it introduced the *aleinu* prayer after the afternoon and evening service.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, the Sephardim's pragmatic interpretation of the Jewish sources inspired the *naye kille*, which introduced the Sephardic food habits during Passover. At Passover Jews abstain from leavened food. According to the Ashkenazi rabbinical tradition, certain foods such as beans and rice are forbidden at Passover because they increase in size. The Sephardim, however, permit the eating of such legumes. The Sephardic Passover food habits inspired the *maskilim*, and the German Jewish scholar Saul Berlin (1740–1794) adopted the custom in his responsa collection *Besamim Rosh*, which was followed by later Reform communities. Graanboom likewise allows the eating

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<sup>50</sup> Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," 47. In a similar vein, Louis C. Dubin regards Italian Jewry as the ideal model, mirroring the goals of German Jewry. Cf. Louis C. Dubin, "Trieste and Berlin: The Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of the Haskalah," in *Toward Modernity: The European Model*, edited by Jacob Katz (New York: Transaction Publishers, 1987), 208.

<sup>51</sup> There is a discussion between Ellenson and Michman about the nature of the *naye kille*. Michman is of the opinion that it is a political movement and that the religious changes are minor. Moreover, because they stay within the boundaries of Jewish law, he argues, it is not a forerunner of the Reform movement. According to him, the *naye kille* merely wanted to copy the Sephardim out of a sense of inferiority. Ellenson, on the other hand, regards the *naye kille* as a typical solution to the challenges of modernity, and in that sense he argues that the *naye kille* is a minor reform movement. Both authors assume that the reform movement is a break with Jewish tradition; however, many Reform rabbis employed the same Jewish sources to prove their point. I will not delve into this essentialist discussion of the true nature of the *naye kille* but instead focus on the historical context and self-labelling of their community. D. Ellenson, "Emancipation and the Directions of Modern Judaism: The Lessons of Meliz Yosher," *Studia Rosenthaliana*, 1 (1996); Joseph Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period. Gothic Turrets on a Corinthian Building 1787–1815*, 128–134.

<sup>52</sup> Aron Moses Isaac Graanboom, *Melitz Yosher* (Amsterdam: 1808, n.d.), 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



of such foods, and he considers the Ashkenazi practice an erroneous custom as well as an unnecessary economic hardship.<sup>54</sup>

The Sephardic stance on the interpretation of Jewish law also comes to the fore in its attitude towards the Jewish commandment not “to touch the corners of the face with a razor.” Images of *naye kille* members such as Moses Salomon Asser and Hartog de Hartog Lémon indicate that they followed the Sephardic policy of leniency towards shaving. The clean-shaven faces of the Portuguese attracted the attention of foreign travelers visiting Amsterdam.<sup>55</sup> The Jewish scholar Moses Hagiz (1671–1750) condemned them for it, calling them a “nation of shaved men who wear wigs and travel in coaches.”<sup>56</sup> The eating of legumes during Passover, the introduction of Sephardic liturgy, and the absence of a beard all reflected the *naye kille*’s efforts to adjust Judaism to modern times; they regarded the Sephardim as the first modern, integrated Jews.

A new religious zeal characterized the *naye kille*. They argued that their community served God and Judaism best. Although the *naye kille* portrayed itself as restoring true Judaism, their regulations reflect contemporary discourses on politics and decorum. The reinvention of Judaism along political and Sephardic lines characterizes the *naye kille*’s response and helps explain the shifting boundary between religious and secular spheres.

### ***The alte kille’s response***

The *alte kille* opposed the *naye kille* at every turn, maintaining that they violated Jewish law. Oblivious to the new situation, which annulled their semi-autonomous status and punitive powers, the leaders of the *alte kille* employed their outdated legal tools. They referred to Jewish community regulations, which stated that no one could leave the community, install a *minyán* (the quorum of ten Jewish men necessary for synagogue service), utilize other community’s institutions, or oppose any regulations or the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>55</sup> Philip Skippon, “An Account of a Journey Made Thro’ Part of the Low Countries, Germany, Italy, and France (1663),” in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 6 (London, 1732), 406; Saskia Coenen Snijder, “Madness in a Magnificent Building,” in *City Limits: Perspectives on the Historical European City*, edited by Judith Owens, Glenn Clark, and Greg T. Smith (Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 290; Gans, *Memorboek. Platenatlas van het leven der joden in Nederland van de middeleeuwen tot 1940*, 109.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Kaplan: Yosef Kaplan, “The Self-Definition of the Sephardic Jews of Western Europe and Their Relation to the Alien and the Stranger,” in *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2000).

*parnasim*'s decisions.<sup>57</sup> If one violated the community regulations, one was fined a thousand guilders.<sup>58</sup> Rejection characterized the *alte kille*'s response as it obstinately held on to its regulations and refused to comply with the new political situation.

The chronicler Bandit ben Eizik Wing reports in his chronicle *Lezikorn* (1795–1812) that the *parnasim* threatened everyone who joined or considered joining the *naye kille* with a thousand-guilder fine.<sup>59</sup>

On 18 March 1795, the *parnasim* announce that they have heard that some members, the so-called provisional leaders, have made a request to the provisional government in The Hague to found a new community and try to seduce the members of our community to secede and join them. They argue that the church is separate from the state, and everyone can do as he pleases. The *parnasim* warn everyone not to listen to those people and be seduced to secede. They remind the community of Article 22 of the Jewish regulations and threaten whoever conspires against the community or establishes a meat hall, ritual bath, or synagogue with a fine of thousand guilders...[The names] of the ones who violate Article 22 or purchase meat outside the meat hall or use another ritual bath will be published.<sup>60</sup>

Unaffected by these threats, the members of the *naye kille* argued that they had no intention to return and were therefore excused from paying the thousand-guilder fine.<sup>61</sup> “You have to pay a thousand guilders if you want to go back to the *alte kille*,” they argued.<sup>62</sup> According to the *naye kille* and the new government regulations, every person was free in his service to God. Paying the fine was unnecessary in the eyes of the writers of the *naye kille Diskursn*. “[T]hey [announced the fine] in order to frighten the others, so that they will not run over to the other side. But brother, it won’t work.”<sup>63</sup>

### *Public shaming*

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<sup>57</sup> ACA, *Handvesten van Amsterdam, Jodenreglementen*, art. 21–22.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 22.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of Wing’s conservatism, see Bart Wallet, “Ideologie, politiek en geschiedenis, Bendit ben Eizek Wing en zijn Amsterdamse kroniek *Lezikorn* (1795–1812),” *De negentiende eeuw* 29 (2005).

<sup>60</sup> Roest, “Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795–1812.”

<sup>61</sup> The thousand-guilder fine was a considerable amount of money, considering that the wages of an unskilled laborer were only around 300 guilders a year for a six-day workweek. Hubert Nusteling, *Welvaart en werkgelegenheid in Amsterdam 1540-1860. Een relaas over demografie, economie en sociale politiek van een wereldstad* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1985), 252.

<sup>62</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 44.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Many Jews viewed the *naye kille* members as dissenters and violators of Jewish tradition. The chronicler Wing, a strong supporter of the old regime, constantly spouts his criticism of the *naye kille* and its *Felix Libertate* members. He refers to them as unbelievers and destroyers of Judaism. Wing also reports how the common people disliked the members of the *naye kille* and condemned both sides for stirring up the masses.<sup>64</sup> In a similar vein, the authors of the *alte kille's Diskursn* persistently accused the *naye kille* of unjewish behavior. The members of the *naye kille* were supposedly oblivious to Jewish law and behaved more like Christians than like Jews. They wanted to marry Christian wives and disregard Jewish dietary laws.<sup>65</sup> Surprisingly, the *naye kille* likewise accused the *alte kille* of violating Jewish law.<sup>66</sup> Both sides used the same rhetorical religious critique to discredit each other. As such, strict adherence to Jewish law defined both communities. Although the new (revolutionary) government abolished institutionalized excommunication, religious observance still functioned as a powerful tool to ostracize deviance.

Besides fining newly seceded members, the *alte kille* hung the names of *naye kille* members in a cage outside the synagogue. By publicly shaming these violators of the community's regulations, the *alte kille* hoped to force them to rejoin. This form of social control was common in the *alte kille*, especially before Jewish emancipation. Violators of community regulations or Jewish law were exposed, fined, and excommunicated by the Ashkenazi community.<sup>67</sup> However, in the new political climate religious observance became a matter of personal consciousness, which could not be compelled or publicly displayed. Nevertheless, despite the changing role of religion in society, the conspicuous display of a punishment still caused harm.

Just how aggravating the public shaming of religious violators had become is demonstrated by the revolutionaries' interest in the *alte kille's* offenders' list. On Friday 10 March 1795, after the list's publication, French soldiers, patriots, and Jews marched into the synagogue. With the help of armed forces and the placement of soldiers on each side of the *bimah* (the raised platform for the reading of the Torah), the temporary

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<sup>64</sup> Roest, "Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795-1812", 35.

<sup>65</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 22, 190, 222.

<sup>66</sup> See for instance, *Ibid.*, 74, 76, 80 and 86.

<sup>67</sup> Tsila Rådecker, *Schuld En Boete in Joods Amsterdam. Kerktucht Bij De Hoogduitse Joodse Gemeente 1737-1764*, Menasseh Ben Israel Instituut Studies VIII (Amsterdam, 2013), *passim*. See for the exercise of religion social control in the Sephardic community, Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, 108–195.

revolutionary Jewish commission dismissed the former *parnasim* and installed itself in the synagogue. They also removed the list of 'offenders' and handed it over to the newly installed Procurer-General. The chronicler Wing reports that after removal of the list, some "rascals" burst in and violently demanded the list. They "pushed onto the *bimah* and blasphemed." Only after some people who were still present in the synagogue convinced them that the list was already removed did the "rascals" clear out.<sup>68</sup> In the *Diskursn*, the public display of the names of *naye kille* members in a cage outside the synagogue functioned as a symbol of the power of the *alte kille*. As long as the *parnasim* could decide the norms with which the Ashkenazim should comply, they could control the community. The removal of such a conspicuous power symbol as the list communicated for the revolutionaries the message of the beginning of a new era, in which the power of the *parnasim* and thus religious authority generally was nullified. It epitomized the redefinition of religion as a private matter outside of the authority of rabbis, *parnasim*, and their ilk. The continued use of the cage by the *parnasim* in the conflict with the *naye kille*, however, showed its enduring effectiveness and the *parnasim's* reluctance to give up their instruments of power.

Another coercive measure was the restriction of the *naye kille's* access to the community's institutions, such as the meat hall, the synagogue, the cemetery, and the *mikveh* (the ritual bath). Those institutions facilitated the observance of a wide range of religious prescriptions. Because the *naye kille* founded its own institutions, it could in theory ignore this threat. However, for other social services, such as medical care, it remained dependent. The *alte kille*, aware of the thorny situation, used every measure imaginable to ostracize the deserters. For instance, according to the writers of the *naye kille*, the *parnasim* forbade doctors and midwives to assist *naye kille* members, which was a draconian measure considering the dangers of childbirth. Not surprisingly, the *naye kille* strongly condemned their exclusion from medical care. As the *Diskursn* character Yankev remarked, "You call those people human? Inhuman is what they are, jackass! A woman is already lying three days in childbirth, and they don't allow her to see a doctor. Would they act differently for their own dependents?"<sup>69</sup>

Withholding medical assistance from *naye kille* members was related to the *alte kille's* finances. The community employed two doctors to assist the poor. One such

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<sup>68</sup> Roest, "Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795-1812," 41.

<sup>69</sup> Michman and Aptroot, *Storm in the Community*, 208-210.

doctor was Hartog de Lémon, who because of his involvement with the *naye kille* lost his appointment.<sup>70</sup> A surprising element in all this is that *naye kille* members could have easily turned to a gentile doctor or midwife; no one forced them to utilize the community's facilities. Their reliance on the Jewish healthcare system demonstrates the enduring interdependency of Jews in the Jewish quarters. A non-Jewish doctor was probably more expensive, and the poor economic situation of many *naye kille* members forced them to utilize the community health resources. Even though the *naye kille* replaced many other community institutions, the employment of doctors exceeded its financial resources.

The ostracism of the *naye kille* was effective in some cases, as some of their members returned to the *alte kille*; this was probably due to social exclusion and the economic boycott of their products, because the *alte kille* regarded them as unkosher. Their exclusion from Jewish life compelled some *naye kille* members to reconcile with the *alte kille* and pay the thousand-guilder fine. In 1799, Ber ben Isaac Kampen requested to be readmitted to the *alte kille*. According to Wing, "he regrets that he has been persuaded to secede from the community, and he wants to oblige himself to help preserve as usual every community regulation, just as before."<sup>71</sup> Ber ben Isaac Kampen paid the thousand-guilder fine and returned to the *alte kille*. Around the same time, the son-in-law of Isaac Ger Welcher, Jehuda ben Lozi Kantman, also asked to be readmitted to the *alte kille*. After he recommitted himself to the community regulations and paid the fine, the *parnasim* granted his wish.<sup>72</sup>

### ***The naye kille's legacy***

Despite the *naye kille's* extensive media campaign and its commitment to improve the social religious status of the common people, the community remained small and on the fringe. At its peak, it had only 500 members.<sup>73</sup> Notwithstanding the return of some members who had formerly seceded and its abolition in 1808, the *naye kille* altered the ideological landscape of the Jews. A reason for this relatively strong influence was the role of its prominent members. With the establishment of the High Consistory in 1808

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<sup>70</sup> ACA 714: Protocolbuch IV, 122, 148.

<sup>71</sup> HS ROS 74, Wing, *LEHikorn*, 115.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> For an analysis of the number of members, see Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period*, 59, in particular note 15.

by King Louis and the *Hoofdcommissie, tot de Zaken der Israëlitien* (Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs) in 1814 by King Willem I, many of the *naye kille* members gained influential positions.

These Jewish institutions became vehicles or dispositives in the nationalization or Dutchification of the Jews. They reorganized Jewish communities throughout the Netherlands, centralized their authority, and controlled their conduct. A French-based hierarchical system of smaller as well as larger synagogues organized into departments was installed. The institutions developed educational renewal, pushed through religious reform, and abolished Yiddish, the lingua franca of the Jews. Members of these institutions were appointed by the government, and in that way it directly influenced the direction of policies established by these members. Each department reported regularly and sometimes even daily to the general board of these institutions. Although the later governments of King Louis and Willem I lacked the radical democracy of the Batavian Republic, the *maskilic* reform agenda launched during the revolution carried effectively into these institutions.

The *maskilim* took hold of these new positions created by the government. For instance, the Asser family fulfilled various functions within the new Jewish organizational structure, and throughout the nineteenth century this family affected the Jewish community. As lawyers and judges, they established themselves as leading figures in the community. Michel Henri Godefroi (1813–1882), related by marriage to the Assers, was the first Jewish minister in the Netherlands.<sup>74</sup> The *naye kille* had thus been especially attractive to the budding administrative Jewish elite.

Prominent *maskilim* such as the Assers left their mark on Dutch Jewry. With their strong ideas about Judaism and their leading positions in the new Jewish organizational structures, they reformed and altered many aspects of the Jewish community, such as the introduction of a secular curriculum in Jewish schools. Their strong political commitment and their ideal of Jewish political participation proved to be long lasting. Particularly interesting in the merging of what Bart Wallet called the “old and the new elite” at the beginning of the nineteenth century is that the former animosity between members of the *naye* and *alte kille* moved to the background. In the documents of the High Consistory and Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, former *naye kille* members

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<sup>74</sup> Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, 39–40. Cf. Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period*, 139–143. Until the present day, the name of Asser is connected with political office.

such as the Assers are not accused of having too much of an enlightened agenda or reprimanded for their previous membership in the *naye kille*. As a matter of fact, the enlightened agenda and the ideals of a civilized and elevated Jewry would later become the norm. Discourses on equality, education, and citizenship became part of Jewish identity and imbued the policies of the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, and in a few years these new discourses became internalized by the whole Jewish community. Jews were born citizens, and the idea of a separate nationality became an anomaly.

### 3. Orthodox nucleation

Next to the *maskilic* nucleation, the Netherlands has been regarded by many Dutch historians as the bulwark of orthodoxy.<sup>75</sup> For a long time, Jewish historiography depicted the orthodox opposition to Jewish reform as Jews staunchly clinging to tradition.<sup>76</sup> In this paradigm, the *maskilim* equal modernism and are the harbingers of new times. The opposition epitomizes conservatism and adherence to the status quo. The orthodox failed to grasp the changing times; they remained stubborn and held on to old, 'obsolete' ideals. However, as Jacob Katz demonstrated, orthodoxy was as much a result of the changing situation as were the *maskilic* responses.<sup>77</sup> Neither the *maskilim* nor the orthodox were consistent in their ideals, and their points of view were constantly renegotiated in opposition to each other. The rift between the orthodox and the *maskilim* was fluid, and the ideological content was continuously redefined. Moreover, both groups shared similar ideas and ideals. However, no group espouses the fluidity of the situation more than the Lehren family.

#### *The Lehren family*

The Lehren family's opposition to the reform-minded policy of the semi-governmental Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs was instrumental in the construction of Dutch

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<sup>75</sup> R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, "Moeizame aanpassing (1814–1870)", 226–227; Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, 174–176; Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period*, 158–183.

<sup>76</sup> See for instance Jaap Meijer, *Erfenis der Emancipatie. Het Nederlands Jodendom in de eerste helft van de 19e eeuw*, 21–23; Jaap Meijer, *Moeder in Israël. Een geschiedenis van het Amsterdamse Asjkenazische jodendom* (Haarlem: Uitgeverij Bakenes, 1964), 74; Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period*, 180; Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, esp. 82–83, 312, 331.

<sup>77</sup> Jacob Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1998), 216–217. Cf. Moshe Samet, *Ha-hadash asur min ha-Torah. Prakim be toledot ha-Orthodoxia* (Yerusalem: Carmel, 2005); Moshe Samet, "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism*, 3 (1988): 249–269.

orthodoxy. The Lehren family and their circle of admirers functioned as a site for nucleation and took the lead in developing an orthodox response to Jewish emancipation. During the nineteenth century, three sons of the *parnas* Moses Lehren, who resided in The Hague, left their mark on the Jewish community. The eldest brother Herschel (1784–1853) together with his father-in-law was director of the bank Hollander and Lehren.<sup>78</sup> He was co-founder of the organization *Pekidim ve-Amarkalim* (Officers and Treasurers), established in 1809, which collected money for the *yishuvim* (religious communities) in the Holy Land.<sup>79</sup> The second brother, Jacob Meijer (1793–1861), was president-curator of the Jewish Seminary from 1827 until his death.<sup>80</sup> After the death of his elder brother Herschel in 1853, Jacob and his brother Akiba (1795–1876), supervised the *Pekidim ve-Amarkalim*. The youngest Lehren brother, Akiba Moses, functioned for many years as a *parnas* in the Jewish community of Amsterdam.<sup>81</sup>

Because of their wealth, Jewish scholarship, and authority in the Jewish community, the Lehrens were not only able to develop their own Judaism but also to inspire many other Jews. Just like the *naye kille* before them, the orthodox faction postulated an answer to the question of ‘Dutch’ Jewry’s future. The Lehren family and their circle strongly opposed any infringement on their religious authority. They envisaged a Jewish community firmly rooted in tradition, which looked more to other Jews for its sense of belonging than to the new state and its national citizenship. In Eastern European Jewish scholarship the Lehrens found a solution for the future of the Jews, and they introduced Talmudic scholarship as an essential aspect of Jewish identity.

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<sup>78</sup> In 1805, Herschel married Hannah, the daughter of David ben Joseph Hollander-Levy. In 1806, his daughter Tsiporah-Gelle was born; his wife probably died in childbirth. Three years later Herschel married again, this time to Jannetje Simon Goldsmith. The marriage remained childless, which was typical of many other Lehren marriages. See <http://akevoth.org/genealogy/ashkenazi/8423.htm> (accessed 6 June 2013).

<sup>79</sup> This organization, co-founded with Abraham Prins and Salomon Reuben, centralized the collection of funds for the Holy Land. Previously, the Sephardim also collected the funds for the Ashkenazim. Out of dissatisfaction with the large portion of these funds distributed to the Sephardim, the Ashkenazim, under guidance of Prins, Reuben, and Lehren, founded their own organization. Joseph Michman, *Michmanei Yosef: Studies on the History and Literature of the Dutch Jews*, 229–234.

<sup>80</sup> Jacob was married to Frederica Levy Samuels in 1817 and had three daughters with her. See <http://akevoth.org/genealogy/ashkenazi/12969.htm> (accessed 6 June 2013). Cf. Meijer, *Erfenis der Emancipatie*, 21.

<sup>81</sup> Akiba married his 15-year-old niece Tsiporah-Gelle in 1822. The marriage remained childless. Although according to the law of the Dutch Republic marriages in the third and fourth grade, for instance between uncle and niece, were forbidden, the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities were often exempted. Donald Haks, *Huwelijk en GEHin in Holland in de 17e en 18e eeuw* (Utrecht: Hes Uitgevers, 1985), 44–46.



The Lehren family welcomed many impoverished Jews and Jewish scholars to their table out of concern for the common man and his burdens. The late Chief Rabbi Dünner (1833–1911) appreciated the charitable efforts of Akiba toward Eastern-European Jewish immigrants. “With courtesy, honesty, and humility were they received in his house. Because of their strange morals, customs, and traditions, they did not have refuge in our community.”<sup>82</sup> In addition, Karl Marx regarded the Lehrens’ charity positively. “Like the great London Jew Sir Montefiore, Lehren sacrificed a lot for those who remain in Jerusalem. His office is one of the most picturesque one can image. Large groups of Jewish agents [of banking houses] gather each day, together with numerous Jewish theologians, and at his doorstep all kinds of beggars perch.”<sup>83</sup> Surprisingly, the Lehrens found in Marx a staunch supporter, as both pushed for the improvement of the lower classes.

The Lehrens’ charitable efforts can be seen in light of the adoption of Hasidic customs and the practices of the Lurian Kabbalah. In the Kabbalah, there is the idea that the Divine Spirit was stored in vessels. At one point these vessels broke, causing the Divine Sparks to scatter throughout the world. The performance of a good deed restores the content of the vessel. This repair, or *tikun olam*, secures redemption and thus the coming of the Messiah.<sup>84</sup> Charity, in this kabbalistic sense, receives an extra spiritual dimension. This additional religious meaning could explain why the Lehren family devoted so many more of their financial resources to benefit poor Jewish immigrants than did other well-to-do Jewish families.

The hospitality of the Lehren family towards Eastern European Jewish immigrants received a negative response from the members of the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs; they distrusted the many admirers the Lehren family attracted. In a report from 1822, they already speak of a thousand supporters of the Lehren family, and they feared their influence on the modernization of the Jewish community. So many Jews from Eastern Europe, with their distinctive dress and strong adherence to Jewish tradition, could frustrate the enlightened policy set out by the Supreme Committee for

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<sup>82</sup> Cited in: Gans, *Memorboek*, 348.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Cf. Meijer, *Erfenis der Emancipatie*, 21–22.

<sup>84</sup> Sabbatai Zvi and especially Jacob Frank argue the other way around and hold that evil deeds repair the broken vessels and thus hasten the coming of the Messiah. Cf. Gershom Gerhard Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973); Pawel Maciejko, *The Mixed Multitude: Jacob Frank and the Frankist Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2011).

Israelite Affairs. Or as a functionary of poor relief in The Hague, Salomon Zurkann, articulated:

[The Lehren sect's] intention is to promote zealotry and superstition among people of lesser means, and to halt the advancement of civilization and Enlightenment as well as to hinder the advancement of useful handiwork and crafts, which is especially dangerous because Sir Lehren is rich and affluent, and his influence on the lower classes is great and can thus become dangerous.<sup>85</sup>

Samuel Elias Stein, secretary of the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, likewise calls Herschel Lehren a “fanatic” and a “zealot” who wished to split and divide the community.<sup>86</sup> In his view, the Lehrens’ charity was nothing more than an attempt to attract as many followers as possible. According to Stein, the Lehrens founded a separate Jewish community by means of distributing favors and alms. “He established a separate, mystical, kabbalistic liturgy. By the use of various fanatic means, within ten years he gained ten thousand proselytes. In order to maintain their respect, he called the sect *Hasidim*, pious people.”<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, the Jewish community in the first half of the nineteenth century, already burdened by the many Jews dependent on poor relief, was reluctant to accept the arrival of so many destitute immigrants. “[T]he natural consequence of [the Lehren sect] will be that strange and needy foreign Israelites will nestle in the community, hoping to be financially rewarded when they join the Lehren sect of the wealthy Sir Lehren.”<sup>88</sup> In various *maskilic* writings, the Eastern European Jew symbolized backwardness and stubbornness.<sup>89</sup> This negative image intensified in the Netherlands,

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<sup>85</sup> NA, HC, inv. 360, 14 January 1825. Cf. Jacob Belinfante, *Jaarboeken voor Israëlitien in Nederland*, vol. 4 (’s-Gravenhage: H.P. de Swart en Zoon, 1837), 176, 183.

<sup>86</sup> NA, HC, inv. 360, 14 January 1825.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> For the negative *maskilic* attitude towards Polish Judaism, see Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 274–276, 281–284. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Eastern European Jew came to symbolize the ‘real’ Jew. Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 270–286. This image of the real Jew is apparently hard to resist, as the commissioners of *Oostjoodse Passanten en Blijvers. Aankomst, opvang, transmigratie en vestiging van joden uit Rusland in Amsterdam en Rotterdam, 1882-1914* consider the Eastern European Jew to be more Jewish than the Jew from Amsterdam. Peter Tammes ed., *Oostjoodse Passanten en Blijvers. Aankomst, opvang, transmigratie en vestiging van joden uit Rusland in Amsterdam en Rotterdam, 1882-1914*, vol. IX (Amsterdam: Menasseh ben Israel Instituut Studies, 2013), 7.

probably because of the influx of so many Eastern European Jewish immigrants; they were pejoratively called *Pollaken*.<sup>90</sup> A *roman à clef* from 1877, titled *Episode uit het Leven van R. Awroom Prins* (Episode from the Life of Rebbe Awroom Prins), reflects this pejorative depiction as it uses the Lehrens' house and their many Polish guests as décor. This novel narrates the imaginary life of Abraham Prins, co-founder of the *Pekidim ve-Amarkalim*, wherein the author derogatively describes the groups of poor Jews gathering around the Lehrens' house, waiting to be (financially) endowed:

There was no fellow believer from far-away Poland or Jerusalem who did not first take up his residence at the home of R. Abraham [Prins], who usually delivered him to the fatherly concerns of the Lehen family, who appreciated hosting at their table Polish Israelites who, on their turn, did not fail upon their return to their fatherland to praise this family, which caused literally the migration of a nation of Jews from Poland and Jerusalem, who all feasted at the well-appointed table of the Lehen family in Amsterdam; they had no other luggage with them besides their distinctive clothing and a good portion of Talmudic knowledge, learned at a *yeshiva*, a Talmud school, and they flaunted their knowledge, all to make the Lehrens' family Sabbath more pleasant.<sup>91</sup>

By inviting poor Talmudic scholars to their table, the Lehrens influenced the religious landscape, as Hasidism became one of the many Judaisms available to Dutch Jewry. The steady influx of Eastern European Jews introduced this type of Judaism to the Netherlands, and the facilitation of Hasidism by the Lehrens contributed to the budding of circles of Hasidic scholars. Contrary to the *maskilic* refutation of the Talmud as an essential part of the Jewish identity, the Hasidim endorsed and constructed their Judaism around a renewed appreciation of it. Moreover, by endorsing Jewish scholarship, the Lehrens fostered a new spiritual *élan*. Religious study and scholarship were essential aspects of their Jewish identity. Like the *naye kille* before them, the Lehen family judged someone on the basis of their merits instead of their financial means; religious honors should go to the pious and not to the affluent. Surprisingly, even

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<sup>90</sup> Analyses of the immigration of Eastern European Jews to the Netherlands regrettably rarely pay attention to perceptions of them. See Tammes, *Oostjoodse Passanten en Blijvers*, 36, 42, 46. For the use of the word *pollak* (*polak*, *polk*), see Justus van de Kamp and Jacob van der Wijk, *Koosjer Nederlands. Joodse woorden in de Nederlandse taal*, 484–485.

<sup>91</sup> L.B. Perel, *Episode uit het Leven van R. Awroom Prins* (Amsterdam: J. de Jong, 1877), 17–18.

the isolated Lehrens internalized the concept of equality in their version of Judaism. As such, the Lehrens show that it was their context more than their ideological differences that brought them into conflict with the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs. Two conflicts in particular typify their resistance and their new take on Judaism. The first is the establishment of the Lehrens' private *minyán*, and the second is the media campaign they launched against the Brunswick Rabbinical Conference in 1844.

### *The Lehrens' private minyan*

In 1817, Herschel Lehren founded his own private *minyán*, wherein he followed the Sephardic version of the Ashkenazi rite. The religious gatherings took place at the Lehrens' house, located on Rapenburgerstraat.<sup>92</sup> Lehren's struggle to maintain his private *minyán* can be divided into several stages. At first, the conflict was only between the *parnasim* of the Amsterdam Ashkenazi community and Herschel Lehren. With reference to the community regulations, the Ashkenazi community forbade private *minyanim*.<sup>93</sup> Also, the semi-governmental Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs joined the conflict and prohibited Lehren's *minyán*. They referred to the Constitution of 1815, which granted freedom of religion only to existing denominations.<sup>94</sup> The commission therefore constantly tried to prove the sectarian nature of Lehren's private *minyán*. Later on, the Dutch authorities also intervened, which resulted in the temporary approval of Lehren's private *minyán*. With reference to a Napoleonic law, the *code pénal* 291–294 that forbade gatherings of more than 20 persons, the private *minyán* was legally sanctioned in 1822 by both a lower and a higher court in Amsterdam.<sup>95</sup> Because the meetings hardly ever exceeded 20 persons, Lehren could maintain his separate services. Here Lehren successfully employed state law in defense of his private *minyán*.

The Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, frustrated by the legalization of the *minyán*, continued its quest against Lehren and requested both the State Council (*Raad van State*) and King Willem I to prohibit the *minyán*. Lehren, reluctant to await the

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<sup>92</sup> Jaap Meijer, *Het Verdwenen ghetto. Wandelingen Door de Amsterdamse Jodenbuurt* (Amsterdam: Joachimstal, 1948), 77–78.

<sup>93</sup> Since the Emancipation Decree of 1796, the Ashkenazi community could not impose their regulations on Dutch Jewry. However, oblivious to the new situation, the *parnasim* constantly tried to wrest control by reference to many obsolete community rules. An additional argument the *parnasim* used for the prohibition of a private *minyán* was their loss of income, as they could no longer sell the *mitzvot* (honorary functions) in the synagogue. See, HC, inv. 38, nr. 46. Cf. Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, 181–182.

<sup>94</sup> Meijer, *Het verdwenen ghetto*, 78.

<sup>95</sup> Wallet, *Nieuwe Nederlanders*, 182.

outcome, moved to The Hague in 1824. There he also met fierce resistance from several *maskilim* in the community. Finally, with the royal decree of 30 March 1827, the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs triumphed, stating that every private *minyan* had to be suspended. However, when Lehren returned to Amsterdam in 1834 he ignored the royal decree and continued his private *minyan*, despite various attempts of the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs to stop him.<sup>96</sup> In the end, the Lehren 'sect' prevailed, exposing the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs' relative lack of authority and powerlessness.

Lehren used several legal strategies to authorize his private *minyan*. At first, he used the existing church regulations to his own benefit. According to the Jewish regulations in Amsterdam, a private *minyan* could be established when a person was in poor health, which Lehren claimed to be. However, considering Lehren's ascetic lifestyle, this argument was contested by the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs, who disputed Lehren's fragile health. In a meticulous report of 41 pages, the committee argued that Lehren's sickness was his own fault and resulted from a strict physical and mental regime. "It would be no surprise if he is to blame for it, as he sacrifices his health to the benefit of his soul with chastisements, fasting, excessive bathing, not wearing broadcloth, and other more extravagant and superstitious actions."<sup>97</sup> According to this line of argument, Lehren intentionally caused his own health problems, and because he was to blame for his own poor condition, he could not use this as an excuse to have a private *minyan*.

In fact, the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs argued, Lehren was not ill at all. The second 'health' argument the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs used to deny the legality of the *minyan* was Lehren's illness itself. "One who chastises himself, day and night, at untimely hours, abides in the open air, and who eventually travels abroad to a hundred-mile distance, cannot be sick."<sup>98</sup> Lehren's extensive activities and ascetic lifestyle were thus held against him by the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs. For the committee, Lehren's appeal was questionable and highly unlikely. Strangely enough, the committee refrained from demanding a doctor's declaration and only speculated on the supposed dishonesty of Herschel Lehren.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 182–189.

<sup>97</sup> NA, SCIA, inv. 298, 5 November 1822.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

However, not every member of the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs was so eager to abolish Lehren's private *minyán*. Immanuel Capadoce (1751–1826), for instance, unsuccessfully requested that his fellow members allow Lehren's *minyán*. Capadoce believed Lehren to be an honest and sincere man with only noble intentions. "I am of the opinion...not to hinder the man in the observance of his religious principles as long as it does not pose any real danger to the state's peace or to order in the community to which he belongs. We all know him to be a respectable and honest man."<sup>99</sup> He also rejected the idea that Lehren's private *minyán* was indicative of a new sect of Judaism. Capadoce's intention was to settle the dispute with Lehren and come to some sort of financial compromise, as Lehren would no longer attend the regular synagogue services. For him, Lehren's private *minyán* could perfectly coexist with the Jewish community. However, Capadoce's efforts were futile.

The *maskil* Stein, who was known to be a fervent opponent of the Lehrens, argued otherwise. According to Stein, Lehren was a menace to society, a dangerous Hasid. With his private *minyán*, he tried to split the Jewish community. Stein argued that the establishment of a private *minyán* counted as the foundation of a new Jewish community, and he refused to "give any footing to the establishment of new sects." He connected the *minyán* with the emerging Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe, a completely separate rite.

It is madness to try to prove that a temporary service with ten persons on some occasions at some Israelite's house would amount to a new community. However, if someone devotes a room in his house to be a synagogue, prays there three times a day with ten or more persons, and uses a liturgy – whether acknowledged or not – .... [A]nd if one wants to argue that no community can go without a separate administration and the authority of a rabbi, than one understands the case wrongly...[C]ommunities can exist without the authority of a chief rabbi.<sup>100</sup>

For Stein it was clear: Because Lehren devoted a room in his house to prayer, it proved his wish for separation. The issue here circled around the question of the definition of community and, more precisely, the essential elements of an independent community. Not surprisingly, Stein excluded Jewish institutions such as the meat hallmeat hall and

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<sup>99</sup> SCIA, inv. 360.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

the *mikveh* from his definition, as he employed the definition of Judaism as a religion. For Stein, the theological principle defined the community. In this line of argument, every alternative liturgy served as an indicator of a community. Stein states, "All gatherings of more than ten persons of the age of thirteen or older can be regarded from a religious perspective as a religious community."<sup>101</sup>

Stein's definition closely followed that of Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam Samuel Berenstein, which was no wonder, as Berenstein in general endorsed the enlightened initiatives employed by the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs. Moreover, Berenstein showed a similar dislike for the Lehrens, whom, like Stein, he regarded as a dangerous sect and a threat to Jewish unity. It therefore suited Berenstein to define a community in strictly liturgical terms, namely based on the ability to have a *minyan*. "[A]ccording to Israelite religious law, the appointment of ten Israelite men who have reached the age of thirteen to execute the Israelite religion in itself amounts to an entirely religious Israelite community."<sup>102</sup> Interestingly enough, with the help of Berenstein, Stein employed a religious concept of community to serve his purpose, namely the establishment of a single authoritative Jewish community and rite.

### *The Hasidic influence*

For his private *minyan*, Lehren used the Lurian liturgy, which was a mixture of the Polish Ashkenazi rite and the Sephardic rite of Palestine, which was a novelty in the Netherlands but very common among Hasidic sects in Eastern Europe. One of the important differences was that the Lurian liturgy added kabbalistic thought to the service: meditations supplemented prayers and religious acts, because the correct 'spiritual' mindset should accompany religious observance.<sup>103</sup> This mindset would enable one's connection to the Divine. Furthermore, special secret meanings and numerology were read into existing songs and hymns. A notable example of this addition of kabbalistic thought is the Sabbath hymn *Lecha Dodi*, which celebrates the Sabbath by employing sexual metaphors. Also, the Lurian liturgy introduced meditations (*cavanoth*)

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and its Development*, Dover Edition reprint 1995 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), 49.

that helped to discern the name of God by employing certain text combinations.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, the Hasidim included extra fasting days beyond the traditional Jewish religious calendar. Ascetic behavior, including flagellation, was an important aspect of the Hasidic lifestyle.

Lehren was known for his eccentric behavior as well as his strict, ascetic regime. On the Sabbath he spoke only Hebrew and wore white garments. He immersed himself daily in the *mikveh*, which was at that time not heated. Moreover, he exposed himself to cold weather, flagellated, and fasted. How exceptional this kind of behavior was for enlightened Jews comes to the fore in their reports on the Lehren family. Stein in particular considered these Hasidic restrictions alien to the Jewish religion and referred to several important opponents of Hasidim (*Misnagedim*), such as the Vilna Gaon, to underscore his opinion.<sup>105</sup> “Chief Rabbi Elias from Vilna... Chief Rabbis Ezekiel from Prague, Steinhardt from Fürth, Lobel from Nowogzodeck, and Chief Rabbi Lemberg... all demonstrate the harmfulness of this sect.”<sup>106</sup>

Asceticism also characterized other Lehren family members. A seminary student wrote a letter to the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs in 1847 complaining about the strict, harsh culture imposed by Meijer Lehren at the seminary. Despite the introduction of a secular curriculum, the seminary remained a bulwark of orthodoxy.

It is probably known to Your Honor that every student studying at the seminary is obliged to go to synagogue at Governor M. Lehren's instead of attending our synagogue. There they use the Portuguese rite, and every morning after morning prayers a full hour is devoted to Talmudic study. The morning services are held very early; before Purim they start at half past five. Meanwhile at [our] synagogue it starts at a quarter past seven. [Services at the Lehrens] take more than twice as long as in [our] synagogue, making the services and the Talmudic study's duration no less than three hours.<sup>107</sup>

The long sessions at the Lehrens' *minyán*, the student complains, kept him from study and sleep. “Because we have to wake up at five and there's no time left in the morning, I

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> NA, SCIA, inv. 360.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> NIW, 26 January 1940, reprint by D.S. van Zuiden. Cf. Gans, *Memorboek*, 364.



ask, when can we study?"<sup>108</sup> Moreover, because of the strict time schedule, there is no time to devote to the sciences, which were an integral part of study at the the seminary. Also, being educated within the Hasidic tradition contributed, according to the student, to the general Jewry's contempt for and unfamiliarity with the German rites. Concluding his letter of complaint, the author refers to the Lehrens' power and connections; this compelled him and his fellow students to complain anonymously. "I know you would say, 'Who can account for the truth in this unsigned letter?' But weak and helpless creatures like us are afraid of the schemes of the mighty family Lehren. I do not dare to sign my name."<sup>109</sup> It is this image of the Lehren family as (perhaps much too) serious Jewish scholars, whose interest lay mainly in the endorsement of Talmudic study, which comes to the fore in many historical documents. Moreover, it is precisely the return to an exclusive Jewish lifestyle which frustrated the Supreme Committee of Israelite Affairs in its efforts to establish a unified and emancipated Jewry.

The Lehren family became a nucleation site for Hasidic scholars, who were mostly impoverished immigrants from Eastern Europe. These immigrants brought Jewish scholarship and religious observance back to the table as an essential and respected aspect of the Jewish lifestyle. They were warmly welcomed by the Lehrens, but their inward Judaism and emphasis on Jewish texts and sources countered the espousal of secular discourse by the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs. The committee's rational and integrated Judaism collided with the Lehrens' kabbalistic reinvention of traditional Judaism. Although their ideas about the place of Judaism in society differed profoundly, the example of Lehren's private *minyán* shows that both the Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs and Lehren used the existing political framework for their own benefit. The Supreme Committee for Israelite Affairs tried to establish religious unity by prohibiting any deviation. Lehren, instead, used the new religious freedom to legitimize his own version of Judaism and thus fostered Jewish religious plurality. In this sense, both antagonists developed their Judaisms in close relation to the state's new constellation. Of particular interest in Lehren's liturgical reform is the employment of the Sephardic rite, which apparently served as a model for both the *maskilim* and their opponents. Liturgical reform characterized both antagonists

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

and was thus not a typical Enlightenment endeavor. The Lehrens' orthodoxy was thus similar to the committee's reform, mostly driven by the wish for renewal.

### **Torat ha-qena'ot vis-à-vis Reform**

In an attempt to halt what they considered the ongoing intrusion on Judaism, the attraction of Jews to the new Reform movement, and Jewish conversion to Christianity, the Lehrens assembled orthodox scholars to condemn leniency towards Jewish observance. The media campaign orchestrated by Herschel Lehen and Abraham Prins in defense of their interpretation of Judaism and the validity of the Talmud and against infringement on 'orthodox' authority by Reform rabbis differed in its scope, range, and unity from previous Dutch orthodox resistance.<sup>110</sup> Lehen and Prins attracted 69 scholars and 37 *responsa* from Holland, Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Alsace-Lorraine, and Krakow to join them in their struggle against Reform Judaism. The immediate cause for the collection of 37 *responsa* against Reform Judaism was the Brunswick Rabbinical Conference in 1844, which abolished the *Kol Nidre* (the opening prayer of *Yom Kippur*) and permitted inter-faith marriage. Both Lehen and Prins regarded the conference as a horror and a threat to Judaism. One main theme of the *responsa* collection, *torat ha-qena'ot*,<sup>111</sup> was the question of authority.<sup>112</sup> All of the authors rejected the authority of the Reform rabbis and the possibilities of intermarriage and set out to establish the validity of contested Jewish rituals such as circumcision, Jewish liturgy, adherence to the Sabbath, and dietary laws.. Although the *responsa* did not formulate a coherent view on Judaism, it nonetheless contributed to a meaningful response to what the writers perceived as the horrors of the modern time, namely the increasing divergence from Jewish tradition and the Reform movement's rejection of the Talmud.

Five contributions, from both the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi communities, came from the Netherlands. Responses came from Rabbi Menachem Mendel Löwenstamm

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<sup>110</sup> Compare for instance, Haim's petition, the pronunciation polemics and the *Diskursn* of the *alte kille*.

<sup>111</sup> *Torat ha-Qena'ot* means law of jealousy and it refers to Numbers 5:29. The law proscribes what to do in case of suspicion of an adulterous wife. The suspected wife had to be brought for a priest, who let her drink a bowl of bitter water. If she was innocent, the bitter water did not harm her, if not she was cursed. Cf. Numbers 5: 11-28. Interesting is the question why Lehen and Prins choose particular this name for their *responsa* collection. Did they envision Reform to be an adulterous wife, who revolted against her husband, the true Judaism? Or did they perceive Reform to be adulterous because they incorporated foreign knowledge and things alien to Judaism?

<sup>112</sup> Kooij-Bas, "Nothing but Heretics", 55. Cf. Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands. Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility*, 216-254.

from Rotterdam (d.1868); Chief Rabbi Baruch Bendit Levy Dusnus from Leeuwarden (1811–1886), a family member of the Lehrens; Chief Rabbi Jacob Ferares (1819–1882), the Sephardi chief rabbi of The Hague; Moses Abraham from Amsterdam; and the son of Chief Rabbi Samuel Berenstein, Berisch (1808–1893), who after his father’s death became rabbinical assessor instead of chief rabbi because of internal political objections. All of these influential figures responded to the call of Prins and Lehren, some more extensively than others. Moreover, the authors developed various attitudes concerning the pace and speed of Jewish adaptations. For instance, Berisch Berenstein contributed with an elaborate and substantial response to strengthen the Talmud’s authority. The moderate and beardless<sup>113</sup> Jacob Ferares wrote a response, as did the conservative Rabbi Dusnus, who is remembered as the last rabbi to ever preach in Yiddish.<sup>114</sup> The Dutch contributions thus came from both ends of the religious spectrum.

Although their attitudes toward the ‘modernization’ of the Jewish community differed profoundly, all of the contributions denied the Reform rabbis’ authority in interpreting the Talmud. Moreover, they all established the authority of the Talmud and its validity as a divinely ordained source. For instance, Menachem Mendel Löwenstamm wondered why the Reformists would adorn themselves with a rabbinic title. “If this band of traitors – what it actually is – denies the oral Torah and the power of the Talmud, how can they crown themselves with the beautiful laurel of the masters of the Talmud, flattering themselves with the name ‘rabbis?’”<sup>115</sup> The other Dutch responses made a similar argument, denying the Reform rabbis’ authority as they misunderstood and distorted the Jewish sources. Dusnus formulates it as follows:

All these words show the observer that this meeting like every other meeting has no power or authority to abolish any custom of the holy customs of Israel, let alone the power or authority to permit a prohibition of the *Gemara* [part of the Talmud] and the *posqim* [deciders of Jewish law]. Therefore, there is no substance in what the men of this assembly will permit, be it during this assembly or – which we do not hope – in case they will assemble again. Everything is null and void like a broken jar; every teaching that is against *Gemara* and the *posqim* is null and void.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> See chapter four for a discussion of the beard as a Jewish identity marker.

<sup>114</sup> Gans, *Memorboek*, 372, 461.

<sup>115</sup> Kooij-Bas, “Nothing but Heretics,” 225.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

Besides validating the eternal truth of the Talmud, the writers of the *responsa* accuse the Reform rabbis of apostasy. They repeatedly use the abusive word *apikoros*, a common Greek Talmudic word for heretic. Other words generally used to denote their withdrawal from Judaism include traitors, liars, deceivers, rebels, transgressors, and many other negative descriptions.<sup>117</sup> Most of the Dutch responses barely engage with the arguments put forward by the Brunswick Assembly. The (Dutch) contributors depict the Brunswick participants unfavorably and do not shy away from polemical argumentation. Although Menachem Mendel Löwenstamm explicitly states that his *responsum* is not a polemic, he nonetheless constantly accuses the Reform rabbis of deception. “They will disguise themselves and act like a stranger, and they will gouge out the eyes of these people. These are the ways of all flatterers and hypocrites, in whose heart denial and heresy struck root.”<sup>118</sup> Questioning their honesty and sincerity serves as a motivation to instantly reject their arguments and proposals for religious reform.

The supposedly detrimental influence of the Brunswick Assembly on the masses concerned the respondents. In light of the decline of synagogue attendance and the struggle over the hegemony of Judaism, they feared that Reform Judaism would win the hearts of the Jews. They sincerely dreaded leniency towards Jewish rituals and customs, which, according to the arguments of the contributors to the *torat ha-qena’ot*, was only a means to attract followers. “I am speaking to the masses of Israel, heaven forbid that one will deviate from the ways of the Torah and of worship that our ancestors have followed,” Dusnus remarks. Berish Berenstein also worries about the possible attraction of the Brunswick Assembly. “Our brothers, sons of Israel know that we did not oppose them for the sake of our own honor, but in order to protect the innocent from being captured in their snare.”<sup>119</sup>

### *Jews vis-à-vis the state*

Another important theme in the *torat ha-qena’ot* is the relationship between the state and the Jewish community. Both Löwenstamm and Berish Berenstein address this issue. They considered it important to make sure that the laws of the state and religious observance harmonized. This was especially important since an often-heard criticism

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 413.

concerning the Jewish community was their double loyalty and their favoring of the Jewish tradition above the well-being of the state. Their responses are thus an attempt to show that the Jewish religion and citizenship did not conflict. Moreover, Löwenstamm claimed that the government's wish was that Jews would meticulously observe their religion. According to Löwenstamm, observance of Jewish religion and obedience to the government were two sides of the same coin.<sup>120</sup> Rejecting a strict observance, as the Brunswick Assembly proposed, amounted to disobedience and rebellion against the state. The polemical depiction of the Assembly as a rebellion against all authority fits neatly into the overall argument of *torat ha-qena'ot* that the Reform rabbis did not respect any authority.

Berish Berenstein also emphasizes the relationship between good citizenship and a stringent adherence to Jewish law. For him, the two supplemented each other. One problematic aspect of this position was the questions raised at the 1806 Sanhedrin assembly in Paris. This body of rabbis, ordained by Napoleon, had to deal with questions concerning the relationship between Judaism and the state, and in particular the question of whose authority prevailed. One result was that the rabbis approved intermarriage to counter the accusation of disloyalty, as allowing marriage only between Jewish couples would send the message that the Jews did not want to mingle with Christians or regarded themselves as better than their fellow citizens. With reference to the decision made at the Sanhedrin, the Brunswick Assembly also adopted the possibility of intermarriage. Berish Berenstein, however, stresses the dissimilarities of the two assemblies: the Brunswick Assembly was freely attended, while the Sanhedrin was forced upon the Jews. "The latter did not gather because they themselves wanted to, but because a brutal ruler had asked them whether our law opposed the laws of that country."<sup>121</sup> A bit further on in the text, Berish Berenstein states that disregard for state laws places someone in the rabbinical category of *rodef*, someone who pursues a person in order to kill him. According to some interpretations of rabbinic law, such a person can be 'legally' murdered in order to prevent the killing of an innocent. "They depended on the words of Jeremiah, and were not blind to what is written in Hoshen Mishpat 425 that someone who transgresses the laws of the country causing the desecration of God's

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 408.

name belongs to the category of *rodef*.<sup>122</sup> Berish Berenstein thus argues that the decisions made at the Sanhedrin were made under a threat to life and that the Jews could 'kill' the rulings of the Sanhedrin. In addition, he also holds that the Assembly "misinterpreted their words and abbreviated where they should have extended."<sup>123</sup> Either way, the Sanhedrin could not be held responsible for their decision to validate intermarriage, and one could even argue that they did not validate intermarriage at all.

Löwenstamm also posits that Judaism is compatible with obedience to the government by referring to the law *dina de-malkhuta dina*, the idea that the law of the country is binding. "Lift your eyes and see, for true faith is found in the words of the Talmud. It orders us to preserve, observe and establish all the commandments and laws of the King, under the shadow of the wings of his kingdom in which we take refuge."<sup>124</sup> Löwenstamm here appeases possible objections against the Talmud as being outdated and hostile to the new nation-state. By stating that the Talmud requests state obedience of Jews, Löwenstamm solves the question of Jewish disloyalty; he argues that the *dina de-malkhuta dina* "puts upon us the great obligation to always pray for the welfare of the kingdom and its house and for the welfare of the entire nation, and to strive for its welfare and good always."<sup>125</sup>

In order to stress continual Jewish loyalty to the government, Menachem Mendel Löwenstamm praises Jewish military participation. This argument seems a bit peculiar, since Jewish subscription was a total failure and the late chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Moses Löwenstamm (1747–1815), went to great lengths to prevent it.<sup>126</sup> However, unhindered by Moses Löwenstamm's efforts or by historical accuracy, Menachem Mendel Löwenstamm praises biblical Jewish military accomplishments. "We did not refrain from teaching the children of Judah how to use a bow, we sent our sons to the battlefield with a courageous heart, to drive out the enemy and the avenger from the borders of our country."<sup>127</sup> Moreover, the Jews sacrificed themselves for the well-being

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> ACA, 1241-480. Cf. Michman, *Dutch Jewry During the Emancipation Period*, 184–202; Roest, "Uittreksel uit eene kronijk van de jaren 1795–1812."

<sup>127</sup> Kooij-Bas, "Nothing but Heretics," 229.

of the state. "A lot of blood was spilt and their lifeblood fled from their eyes."<sup>128</sup> For Löwenstamm, military participation and good citizenship were divinely ordained in the Talmud. By emphasizing the harmony between the Talmud and state law, he attempted to prove the eternal historical validity of the Talmud and thus its plausibility in modern times.

The various orthodox Dutch responses all stressed the relevance of the Talmud for the present day and refused to accept any incongruence between Jewish law and the state. By denying any authority to the Reform rabbis and accusing them of heresy, they blotted them and their ideas out. The respondents in the *torat ha-qena'ot* considered the Reform movement as outside the Jewish framework and approached the movement as any would any other sectarian group in Jewish history. Moreover, they represented their interpretation of Judaism as eternally valid regardless of historical changes, and as such represented orthodoxy as the genuine answer to the questions of modern times.

#### **4. Conclusion**

National identity and the introduction of citizenship as a new dispositive compelled Jews to rethink the place of Judaism in society. Several patterns of responses, often conflicting, can be identified in the wake of the legal transformation of Jews into citizens. Decades after legal emancipation, the modes of implementing citizenship continued to be disputed. This chapter identified two central modes of response. The *maskilim* heralded the new opportunities and embraced the idea of Judaism as a religion stripped of its civil powers. They welcomed civic duties, which enabled them to fully integrate into Dutch society, and viewed themselves firstly as citizens and secondly as Jews. Their response was to embrace and incorporate secular discourse. The Lehrens, on the other hand, opposed assimilation and developed ways to strengthen and impose their vision on Judaism; withdrawal characterized their response.

However, to portray these two ends of the spectrum as a dichotomy between traditional and progressive does not do justice to the historical situation. The boundaries between Jewish groups were flexible, fluid, and much more complex than a simple binary opposition presumes. Although the historical actors portrayed themselves in terms of reform and orthodox or new and old, they engaged with the same discursive

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 230.

strands. For instance, both the *maskilim* and the so-called 'orthodox' formulated ways to reconcile Judaism and citizenship. Secondly, a concern for the common Jew characterized both groups. Additionally, the Sephardic liturgy was an ideal that inspired the Lehrens and the *naye kille* alike. As such, reform of religious rituals and the incorporation of enlightened ideals were not restricted to the *maskilim*.

Both the Lehrens and the *naye kille* were part of the same constellations, yet each constructed its own ideal Judaism. Besides from the above-mentioned shared discursive strands, each also added its own particular discourses on Judaism to the mix. The *maskilim* were influenced by secularism and the Lehrens by Hassidism. This led to diverging attributions of meaning to Judaism. In relation to the state, two discourses developed. The Lehrens formulated a transnational Judaism. They looked to other Jews for their sense of belonging. They felt they were part of a larger Jewish community stretching beyond national borders, sharing history, religion, and faith. The *maskilim*, however, constructed Judaism as part of the structure of the modern nation-state. As Jews, they felt intimately connected to their fellow citizens. They declared their loyalty through the performance of civic duties, the adoption of the national culture, and the endorsement of Judaism as a religion rather than as a nation. As a result of citizenship for the Jews, the unified Dutch Jewry broke into different voices.