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**Mapping Jewish Amsterdam:
The Early Modern Perspective**

Dedicated to Yosef Kaplan on the
Occasion of his Retirement

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PEETERS

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Like a Blind Man Judging Colors Joseph Athias and Johannes Leusden Defend Their 1667 Hebrew Bible^{*}

THEODOR DUNKELGRÜN

*Nadie rebaje a lágrima o reproche
esta declaración de la maestría
de Dios, que con magnífica ironía
me dio a la vez los libros y la noche.*

(J.L. Borges, 'Poema de los dones')

A Pioneer of Print

BORN IN LISBON OR POSSIBLY IN CÓRDOBA, where his father would be burned in an *auto-da-fé*, Joseph ben Abraham Athias (c. 1635-1700) arrived in the safety of Amsterdam at some point in the later 1650's. Like numerous fellow crypto-Jews and New Christians, Athias openly embraced in the United Provinces the religion his family had practiced in secret in Spain, Portugal, and Brazil. In the course of an adult lifetime spent in the flourishing Dutch Republic, Athias achieved many firsts. On March 31, 1661, Athias became the first Jew to gain membership of the book-printers guild of Amsterdam.¹ While Jews and Christians had

^{*} It is a pleasure to express my gratitude to the Morasha Foundation, Amsterdam, for its generous support of my work through a research fellowship at the Menasseh ben Israel Institute, for which I am preparing a monograph on the Hebrew Bibles printed by Joseph Athias. I am much obliged to Jaap Sajet and David Wertheim for their interest and encouragement. I am particularly grateful to Dirk van Miert and Henk Nellen for invaluable comments on an earlier draft of the essay and on my translations from the Latin.

1. 'Joseph Athias, jooide, *boekverkooper*, heeft 't gilt gecocht en sijn burgerscedul vertoont Ao. 1661 den 31 Maart', cited in M.M. Kleerkoper and W.P. van Stockum Jr., *De Boekhandel te Amsterdam voornamelijk in de 17e eeuw* ('s Gravenhage 1914-1916), I, p. 10. See also I.H. van Eeghen, *De Amsterdamse Boekhandel 1680-1725*, vol. V (Amsterdam 1978), part 1, p. 340.

collaborated in the printing of books for nearly two centuries, Athias was the first Jew to co-own a printing company together with a Christian. His partners were two businesswomen, the Roman Catholic widow Suzanne Veselaer and Anna Maria Stam, heirs of prominent Amsterdam book men. Athias was also the inventor of rudimentary stereotype. Instead of taking frames apart after printing in order to reset and reuse his types, he bought a vast amount of type and kept frames of set type intact and in store, which allowed for a sharp increase in the speed and volume of a print run and for quick reprint on demand. Athias sold multiple thousands of copies of English Bibles, with false imprints, bypassing English privileges with what Dutch and English historians have called, respectively, cleverness and fraud.² In so doing, Athias was probably also the first non-converted Jew to print the New Testament. Besides these English Bibles for the British Isles and the English colonies in the New World, Athias also printed vernacular Bibles for Sephardim and Ashkenazim, Spanish and Yiddish flowing from his printing shop as they do from the mouth of the dying Loewenthal in Borges' *Emma Zunz*. Among the high points of his press were two editions of the Hebrew Bible, printed for Jew and Christian alike. In fact, Athias' *Biblia Hebraica Accuratissima* (1666-67) was the very first edition of the Hebrew Bible to include the approbations of both Jewish and Christian religious authorities in the very same edition (though it was not, as is still often claimed, the first edition to incorporate verse numbers into the Hebrew text, an honor that belongs to the Antwerp Polyglot Bible). As active as he was in the wider, non-Jewish world that Amsterdam opened up to him, Athias also enjoyed prominent standing within the Sephardic community, exemplified by his service as *parnas* of the Spanish-Portuguese Congregation *Talmud Torah*, its rabbinic academy *Ets Haim*, and its confraternity *Biqqur Holim*, as well as by his membership of the exclusive literary

2. See S. Mandelbrote, 'The Authority of the Word: Manuscript, Print and the Text of the Bible in Seventeenth-Century England', in J. Crick and A. Walsham (eds), *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700* (Cambridge 2004), p. 135-153, at 139-140; M. van Delft and C. de Wold (eds), *Bibliopolis. Geschiedenis van het gedrukte boek in Nederland* (Zwolle/Den Haag [2003]), p. 77; J. Barnard and D.F. McKenzie (eds), with the assistance of M. Bell, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. IV 1557-1695* (Cambridge 2002), p. 467-471, 617, 740; and P.G. Hoftijzer, 'The English Book in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic', in L. Hellinga, A. Duke, J. Harskamp and Th. Hermans (eds), assisted by E. Paintin, *The Bookshop of the World. The role of the Low Countries in the Book-Trade 1473-1941* ('t Goy 2001), p. 89-107, at p. 95-96.

society, the *Academia de los Floridos*.³ Along with Menasseh ben Israel, Imanuel Benveniste, Judah Leib ben Mordechai Gimpel, Samuel ben Moses Halevi, Uri Phoebus Halevi, David de Castro Tartas, Moseh de Abraham Mendes Coitinho, Moses Kosman, and the Proops family, Athias helped Amsterdam surpass Venice as the most important center in the early modern world for the printing of Hebrew and Jewish books.⁴ And while he ultimately went bankrupt, Athias was the most successful of them all.⁵

Advertising the *Biblia Hebraica Accuratissima* (1666-67)

At least once, however, Athias claimed a *primeur* that went beyond even his remarkable accomplishments. On July 2, 1667, following the sensational news of the destruction of English ships by the Dutch navy led by Michiel de Ruyter that would contribute later that month to the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, the Amsterdam weekly *Courante uyt Italien en Duytsland* published an advertisement:

At Joseph Athias', living in St. Anthony's Broadstreet, the long awaited Hebrew Bible in large octavo on fine *mediaen*-paper has been printed with great labor and at great cost, with the Hebrew notes and Latin annotations in the margin, dividing the content of the text, in the most pleasing way for every nation, so that the whole may be studied

3. See Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism. The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro. Translated from the Hebrew by Raphael Loewe* (Oxford 1989), p. 286-302, 428-430.

4. See Yosef Kaplan, 'Los sefardies en Europa', in María Antonia Bel Bravo (ed.), *Díspora Sefardí* (Madrid 1992), p. 49-90 at p. 87-88.

5. On Athias generally, see L. Fuks and R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography in the Northern Netherlands 1585-1815. Historical Evaluation and Descriptive Bibliography* (Leiden 1984 and 1987), vol. II, p. 286-339; R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Joseph Athias als uitvinder', in H. Den Boer, J. Brombacher and P. Cohen (eds), *ספר מכתם לרוד. Een Gulden Kleinood. Liber Amicorum aangeboden aan de heer D. Goudsmit ter gelegenheid van zijn afscheid als bibliothecaris van 'Ets Haim/Livraria Montezinos' van de Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Amsterdam* (Leuven/Apeldoorn [1991]), p. 155-164; D.M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans. The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (London/Portland 2000), p. 149-150, 152-154, and still A.M. Habermann, 'The Amsterdam Printer Joseph Athias the Inventor of Stereotype Printing', in idem, *Studies in the history of Hebrew printers and books* (Jerusalem 1978) (in Hebrew), p. 293-310. On Athias' printing technique, see B.J. McMullin, 'Joseph Athias and the Early History of Stereotyping', in *Quaerendo* 23:3 (1993), p. 184-207, and H. Carter and G. Buday, 'Stereotyping by Joseph Athias. The Evidence of Nicholas Kis', in *Quaerendo* 5:4 (1975), p. 312-320. On the printing shop he founded with Veselaer and Stam, see I.H. van Eeghen, 'De befaamde drukkerij op de Herengracht over de Plantage (1685-1755)' in *Jaarboek van het Genootschap Amstelodamum* 58 (1966), p. 82-100.

with ease and efficiency. It has never been printed in this way before, and so correctly, that nowhere in the entire text one single letter will be found in the whole Bible to have been misprinted (which is miraculous), and it has been read and examined in its entirety by the rabbis of the Jewish synagogue and it has also been granted approbation by the honorable lords professors of the universities of Leiden, Utrecht, Groningen and Franeker, all under the revision and direction of Mr. Johannes Leusden, professor at Utrecht. It has been dedicated to the States General and accepted by their Lordships for the worthiness of the work, and has been honored by a large golden chain with a medal.⁶

Advertising books was yet another of the numerous innovations that sprang from the commercial spirit of entrepreneurs and book men like Athias.⁷ Renate Fuks-Mansfeld asserts that Athias was the first Jew to print an advertisement in a Dutch newspaper, and Herbert Bloom and Abraham Meir Habermann even suspected that Athias was the first Jewish printer to advertise a book in a newspaper anywhere.⁸

Athias' 1666-67 Hebrew Bible was remarkable in several respects.⁹ Firstly, it was a monument to Christian-Jewish entrepreneurial and

6. 'By JOSEPH ATHIAS, wonende op de St. Anttonis Breestraet, is met groote veelvoudigen arbeyt en onkosten Gedruckt, en wert uytgegeven de lange verwachte Hebreuschen Bybel in groot Octavo in fyn groot Mediaen Pampier, met Hebreusche Notulen en Latynsche Sommiren op de kant, delende den inhoudt van den Text, op het hoogste geriefelyck voor alle Natie, om alles lichtelyck te kunnen ondersoecken; noyt voor desen so Gedruckt, en soo correct, in voegen dat er nergens in de geheele Text eenige letter fout in den gantschen Bybel sal gevonden worden (dat wonder waerdig is) en is oock van de Rabbinen der Joodsche Synagoge geheel door gelezen en geëxamineert en van haer E. als oock van de Heeren Professoren van de Academien van Leyden, Uytrecht, Groeningen, Franeker geapprobeert, alles onder de revisie en beleyt van den heer JOHANNES LEUSDEN, Professor tot Uytrecht. Is gededicieert aen de Staten Generael en van haer Hoogm. Gheaccepteert om de waerdigheid van dit werck; is vereert met een groote Goude Kettingh met een Medalie.' *Courante uyt Ialieu en Duytsland*, July 2, 1667 (Amsterdam: by Otto Barentsz Smient on the Reguliers Breestraat), p. 2, printed in *De Navorscher* 6 (1856), p. 298, and partly reprinted in L. Hirschel and A. Offenberg, 'Johannes Leusden als hebraïst' in *Studia Rosenthaliana* I (1967), p. 23-50, at p. 39-40. See also Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 292; it is paraphrased in English in H.I. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport, PA 1937), p. 49 n. 70.

7. See the contributions to R. Myers, M. Harris and G. Mandelbrote (eds), *Books for Sale. The Advertising and Promotion of Print since the Fifteenth Century* (Oak Knoll Press and the British Library 2009), and J.R. Wigelsworth, *Selling Science in the Age of Newton. Advertising and the Commoditization of Knowledge* (Aldershot 2010).

8. See Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Joseph Athias als uitvinder', p. 164; Bloom, *The Economic Activities*, p. 48; Habermann, 'The Amsterdam Printer Joseph Athias', p. 293.

9. See Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, vol. II, p. 315-316.

scholarly collaboration, Athias' Sephardic correctors working together with the Utrecht professor, Johannes Leusden (1624-1699), in the preparation, correcting and proofreading of the text.¹⁰ Long before Athias' Hebrew Bible, Jewish and *converso* book men had worked for Christian printers; but for a non-convert Christian theologian and Hebraist to edit and correct a Hebrew Bible for a Jewish printer was something as new as Amsterdam's magnificent canals and monumental city hall. But the edition was much more than an instance of cross-confessional collaboration. While Athias' first edition of the Hebrew Bible, printed in 1659-61, had the approbation of three Utrecht theologians, the new edition had the approbations of the rabbis of the Amsterdam Sephardic community and of the theologians of all four universities in the Dutch Republic.¹¹ Even the famed Bomberg Rabbinic Bibles (1518, 1525, 1548) had been published in separate issues for Jewish and Christian readerships. Here, for the first time, was one single edition of the Bible approved for all. In this spirit, paratexts were selected for their ecumenical character. The title page to the Pentateuch-volume and the colophon read *Anno 1667* – without *Domini* – while the separate title pages to the Former Prophets, Latter Prophets and Hagiographa gave *Anno ab Orbe creato 5426*, the idiom from Livy now employed for the Jewish year that corresponded (in part) to 1666. This blend of Jewish and Christian tradition was not mere make-up. The process of edition, involving the critical collation of earlier editions printed and edited by Christian Hebraists with two medieval Iberian manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, one of which had found its way from Spain to Portugal, where it was magnificently illuminated, thence to Fez, Pisa, and eventually to Amsterdam, was a veritable meeting

10. On the role of corrector in early modern book production, including discussions of the collaboration between Christians and Jewish converts, now see Anthony Grafton, *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe* (London 2011).

11. The edition of 1666-7 contains the 'Judicium Rabbiorum Synagogae Amstelodamensis', in Hebrew and Latin, signed by Isaac Aboab, Aharon Sarfati and Moshe Raphael d'Aguilar. Following a letter, in Hebrew and Latin, by the correctors to the reader, it contains the approbations of Abraham Heidanus, Johannes Coccejus and Allardus Uchtmannus (for Leiden University), Gisbertus Voetius, Andreas Essenius, Franciscus Burmannus (for Utrecht University), Johannes Terentius (for Franeker University) and Jacobus Alting (for Groningen University). The 1659-61 edition, *Biblia Sacra Hebraea Correcta & Collata cum antiquissimis & accuratissimis exemplaribus manuscriptis & hactenus impressis* (Amsterdam: Joseph Athias 1661), had an approbation from the University of Utrecht only, signed by Gisbertus Voetius, Andreas Essenius, and Matthias Nethenus.

of textual traditions.¹² The advertisement's brief remark 'dividing the content of the text' (*delende den inhoudt van den Text*) referred to the fact that both the chapters and verses in the Christian tradition as well as the *sedarim*, *parashiyot* and *pesuqim* of the Jewish tradition were noted. Superimposing two different systems of textual division and organization into its *mis-en-page*, the Leusden-Athias' edition incorporated both Christian and Jewish textual traditions. In this way, a Jew reading the weekly Torah-portion in the *Esnoga* and a Christian theologian consulting the Hebrew source text for a given passage could find what they were looking for with equal ease and efficiency. But in the context of the new, multi-confessional urban space that was early modern Amsterdam and the *Religionsgespräche* that took place there, Athias' Hebrew Bible was also a powerful instrument with which Jews and Christians could quickly identify and refer to a biblical passage according to the other's tradition, too. Athias' Hebrew Bible not only reflected Jewish-Christian scholarly collaboration and interaction, it also enabled it. It was made in Amsterdam, and it was made *for* Amsterdam.

But could this really be the first Hebrew Bible to be printed without a single typographical error, as Athias boasted? Amsterdam was the mercantile metropolis of the seventeenth century *par excellence*, and in the mid-1660's it was a harbor teeming with ideas as much as with merchandise, a marketplace of speculation financial and spiritual, or as the Sephardi writer Joseph Penso de la Vega unforgettably put it in the Averroistic title of this treatise on the Amsterdam stock exchange, a *confusión de confusiones*. As Athias' Hebrew Bible was being edited, the baffling news had filled the city's streets that the Messiah had arrived, in the person of Shabtai Tsevi. Athias had catered to the Sabbatian craze by printing the nocturnal liturgy designed by Nathan of Gaza, and the three Rabbis who had signed the approbation of Athias' Hebrew Bible had all, at least initially, been known supporters of the new Messianic movement.¹³ Still, in the age of

12. Now Ms. B 241 of Hispanic Society of America. See B. Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (Jerusalem 1969), p. 82-83; G. Sed-Rajna, *Manuscrits hébreux de Lisbonne* (Paris 1970), p. 66-69; T. Metzger, *Les manuscrits hébreux copiés et décorés à Lisbonne dans les dernières décennies du XVIIe siècle* (Paris 1977), p. 102-109; *Catalogue de vente de la succession de feu M.D. Henriques de Castro Mz.* (Amsterdam 1899), nr. 475, p. 44-48.

13. See G. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi. The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676*, translated by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky (London 1973), p. 518-545, particularly p. 522-527. On the Sabbatian movement in Amsterdam, see Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, p. 209-234, and most recently A. van der

the hand-press, Athias' claim that his Bible had been printed without any typos was even more fantastic than the news that the Savior has been spotted in Smyrna. In 1666 the demand for Sabbatian prayer books was so strong, that Athias felt compelled to print an apology for the typographical errors in his edition, implicitly acknowledging that he had preferred to print and sell them when demand was high than have them carefully proofed.¹⁴ It must have been more by bluff than by credulity that Athias is said to have offered a gold coin to anyone who could find an error in his Hebrew Bible.¹⁵ Yet he was truly proud of the exacting labors of his three correctors – Joshua da Silva, Samuel Pinto, and Abraham Senior Coronel – and the way they collaborated with Leusden, the Utrecht Hebraist and follower of Gisbertus Voetius, who had already been involved in the 1659-61 edition. Athias' advertisement might have been hyperbole, but behind it laid real diligence, real textual scholarship, and a beautiful book indeed. The consent of the States General of the United Provinces for such an edition, and the handsome token of gratitude they granted the printer, confirmed general approbation and esteem for what would become known as the Leusden-Athias Bible.¹⁶

A contemporary Jewish reader from England, however, is said to have found some four-hundred errors in it.¹⁷ Daniel Ernst Jablonski, while preparing an edition of his own, found even more, and informed Leusden thereof. A.K. Offenbergh, collating ten different copies in public and private collections in the Netherlands, discovered that they all differed in ways that suggest that while the sheets were indeed sent to Leusden for correction as they came off the press, in some cases Athias went ahead

Haven, *From Lowly Metaphor to Divine Flesh: Sarah the Ashkenazi, Sabbatai Tsevi's Messianic Queen and the Sabbatian Movement* (Amsterdam 2012). For Athias' edition of the Sabbatian prayer book, see also Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 314-315.

14. See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 525-526.

15. This is reported in the autobiography of the Hungarian punch-cutter and printer Nicholas Kis, *Mentség* (Kolozsvár 1698), quoted in translation by Carter and Buday, 'Stereotyping by Joseph Athias', p. 316, and in Habermann, 'Joseph Athias', p. 294-295.

16. The copy bound especially for the States General, four volumes in one, is now in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague, shelf mark 142 D 19. A second handsome copy now in the same library (shelf mark 141 F 1) belonged to the Amsterdam antiquarian and bibliophile David Henriques de Castro Mz. [= Mozeszoon], and is the copy listed as nr. 466 in *Catalogue de vente*, p. 40. On Henriques de Castro's collection, see Julie-Marthe Cohen, *Onder de hamer: de veelzijdige verzameling van David Henriques de Castro (1826-1898)* (Amsterdam 1999).

17. Reported by Nicholas Kis in 1698, see Carter and Buday, 'Stereotyping by Joseph Athias', p. 316.

and used the uncorrected sheets anyway where the differences were minor (like an erroneously dotted *shin* or *sin*).¹⁸ The claim that his Bible contained no errata whatever was one that Athias himself must have known to be as true as the imprints in his English Bibles.

Johannes Leusden: a Christian Hebraist of the Dutch Republic

Examinó, después, la piccita de Gryphius-Ginzberg. Había en el suelo una brusca estrella de sangre; en los rincones, restos de cigarrillos de marca húngara; en un armario, un libro en latín – el Philologus hebraeo-graecus (1739) de Leusden – con varias notas manuscritas.
(J.L. Borges, ‘La Muerte y la brújula’)

Hebrew had been taught at universities in the Low Countries since the founding of the trilingual college of Leuven in 1518, and it had flourished in the Dutch Republic at all four of its newly founded universities, Leiden (1575), Franeker (1585), Groningen (1614), and Utrecht (1636).¹⁹ This tradition of Christian Hebrew learning prepared Dutch scholars intellectually for an encounter with the New Christians who began arriving in the Dutch Republic from Antwerp, Lisbon and elsewhere, and converted to their ancestral Judaism. Liberated, like the Dutch, from Spanish tyranny, their presence contributed in manifold ways to the self-perception of the United Provinces as a ‘New Israel’, while intellectual interaction with Jewish scholars like Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac Orobio de Castro enhanced Christian scholarship, just as Hugo Grotius had hoped when he argued, with caution and not without anti-Jewish prejudice, for the admission and toleration of Jews in the newborn Republic.²⁰

18. See Hirschel and Offenber, ‘Johannes Leusden’, p. 40–41.

19. See P.T. van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century. Constantijn L’Empereur (1591–1648) Professor of Hebrew and Theology at Leiden* (Leiden 1989).

20. See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, passim; T. Dunkelgrün, ‘“Neerlands Israel”: Political Theology, Christian Hebraism, Biblical Antiquarianism and Historical Myth’, in L. Cruz and W. Frijhoff (eds), *Myth in History, History in Myth* (Leiden 2009), p. 201–236. E. Rabbie, ‘Grotius and Judaism’, in H.J.M. Nellen and E. Rabbie (eds), *Hugo Grotius, theologian: essays in honour of G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes* (Leiden 1994), p. 99–120; and A. Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis. Seventeenth Century Apologetics and the Study of Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah* (Cambridge, MA 1984).

The scholarship of Johannes Leusden exemplifies this Christian-Jewish encounter in the Dutch Republic.²¹ A particularly accomplished Hebraist, Leusden's learning had been formed both by a local academic tradition and by his encounters with Jewish scholars. He had studied theology and oriental languages at Utrecht with Meinardus Schotanus, Carolus Maetsius, Gisbertus Voetius and Christian Ravius (Raue), and had been sent by the Utrecht city council in order 'to study the Talmudic language with the Jews in Amsterdam', for five months before taking up his chair of Hebrew at Utrecht in July 1650 with an inaugural lecture *De Vita Iudaeorum*.²² Already by 1657, he had published the Books of Jonah and Joel, in Hebrew and Aramaic, with the Massorah magna and parva and the commentaries of Rashi, Abraham ibn Ezra and David Kimchi, all with renderings thereof into Latin by Leusden, sophisticated editions which essentially offered a complete Latin translation of the *Miqraot Gedolot* of these prophets.²³ Editions like these endeared him to those Christian scholars eager to study the textual tradition of the Hebrew Bible but less competent in decoding its intricacies. By the time he began to collaborate with Athias, Leusden had become an expert

21. On Leusden see J. Cost Budde, 'Johannes Leusden', in *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, N.S. 34:1 (1944), p. 163-186, and Frederik Samuel Knipscheer, 'Leusden, Johannes', in P.C. Molhuysen and P.J. Blok (eds), *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek, deel 9* (Leiden 1933), p. 601-602, and Hirschel and Offenberg, 'Johannes Leusden als hebraïst'. Offenberg notes (there, p. 24) that Cost Budde – writing in 1943 – fails to mention the secondary literature on his topic written by Jewish scholars.

22. 'Op 't voordragen van den Heere Eerste Burgemeester is verstaen dat M[agister] Joannes à Leusden [...] sich t'Amsterdam bij de Joden sal gaen oeffenen in de Talmudische Tale ende tot dien eynde hem gegeven sal worden bij provisie een subsidie van hondert guldens.' See G.W. Kernkamp (ed.), *Acta et Decreta Senatus. Vroedschapsresolutiën en andere bescheiden betreffende de Utrechtse Academie, eerste deel, tot April 1674* (Utrecht 1936), for 11 February, 1650, p. 252. On 29 April 1650, Leusden is given an additional hundred guilders to continue his Talmudic studies in Amsterdam (see there, p. 255). No names of Jewish teachers are given. Perhaps a first connection was made by Ravius, who had left Utrecht to teach Oriental languages at the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam in 1646-47 and would later be accused of Judaizing. See D. van Miert, *Humanism in an Age of Science. The Amsterdam Athenaeum in the Golden Age, 1632-1704* (Leiden/Boston 2009), p. 64-66, 212-214. Ravius himself seems to have bought the Hebrew types from the press of Menasseh ben Israel, and taken them with him to Uppsala. See Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 112-114, and G.J. Toomer, 'Ravis, Christian (1613-1677)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford 2004), <www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23174>, accessed 1 June 2012. Another possibility for Leusden's introduction to Athias is Voetius, who had personal relations with Jacob Abendana. Alternately, he might have simply met him in Amsterdam of his own accord.

23. Johannes Leusden, *Jonas Illustratus...* (Utrecht: Gisbertus a Zijll and Theodorus ab Ackersdijck 1656) and idem, *Joel Explicatus* (Utrecht: Johannes à Waesberge 1657).

in highly technical disciplines of Hebrew and Jewish scholarship.²⁴ Like other seventeenth-century Dutch Christian Hebraists, Leusden's knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish traditions was informed not only by life-long reading of Hebrew and Jewish literature and encounter with Jewish scholars, but also by his first-hand acquaintance with contemporary Jewish life and ritual. His mature works of Hebraic and Aramaic scholarship are illustrated by asides and observations regarding Jewish customs he witnessed at Amsterdam. His collaboration with Athias throughout the 1660's was a business partnership, but it was also an example of the new kind of cultural and religious exchange that was possible in seventeenth-century Amsterdam.

A Theologian Attacks: Samuel Maresius vs. Joseph Athias

The collaboration between Leusden and Athias, and the edition they produced, provoked a published attack by one of the most prominent conservative theologians in the Dutch Republic. Shortly after their Hebrew Bible was published in 1667, the Huguenot Samuel Maresius (Des Marets, 1599-1673), who had succeeded Franciscus Gomarus (François Gomaer, 1563-1641) on the chair of theology at Groningen, bought a copy, for eight guilders, from his colleague, the Hebraist Jacobus Alting, who had taken over Gomarus' Hebrew classes.²⁵ Maresius is remembered primarily for his strident public defense of Calvinist orthodoxy against Remonstrants, Catholics, Socinians, Millenarians, Cartesians, followers of Isaac la Peyrère, and others.²⁶ On 23 August 1669, the mercurial Maresius penned

24. On March 5, 1660, Leusden inscribed the *album amicorum* of his student, Abraham de Zadeler, who was about to depart on a tour of Europe after living in Leusden's house for two years, with a saying from the Talmud regarding the traveller's prayer (bT Berakhot 29b, unidentified in the manuscript). See Koninklijke Bibliotheek (The Hague), Ms. 131 E 4, fol. 120 recto.

25. On Maresius, see Doede Nauta, *Samuel Maresius* (Amsterdam 1935). On his acquisition of a copy of the Leusden-Athias Hebrew Bible see there p. 379 n. 162.

26. According to his earliest biographer, Maresius was 'een geduyrige geessel tegen alle tegenpartijders der Godlijke Waerheydt, een schrick voor Jesuijt en Capucijn, een mond-stopper voor Socinianen en Arminianen, en een gebit in de mond van all Nieuwigheydts-drijvers, onvergelyckelijke Voorstander der Godlijke Waerheydt waerop hij soo stipvast stondt, dat hij daervan noyt ter recht of ter slincker handt afweeck.' Gregorius Mees, *De laetste Weecke des Aerdschen Leevens van de Wijdtberoemde Leeraer en onverwinnelijke Voorvechter der onvervalschte Godsgeleertheydt, de Heer Samuel Maresius, in sijn leven Professor der H. Theologie en Kerckelijcke Historien in de Hooge Schoole, en Pastor der Fransche Gemeynte in Groningen; seer Godtzaligh en Rechtzaligh ontslapen den 18 May 1673 (...)* Nevens de Origineele Copien van 'r geene de E. Deputaten der Synode Amptshalven nae Maresii

yet another of his polemical pamphlets. After attacking Descartes and Dutch adherents of Cartesian philosophy ('part of which I don't understand, and part of which I understand and of which I disapprove'), and taking swipes at Jesuits and Socinians, Maresius observed:

Regarding the distinction between the *Qeri* and *Ketiv* in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, I always judged that the marginal reading is to be preferred over the one set in the text itself, according to the agreement between text and faith, especially in Psalm 22:17, according to the judgment and consensus of each and every of the most learned Christians, who are of the opinion that at that verse not *as a lion* is to be read, as the Jews would have it, but rather *they have pierced* or *they have thrust through*. And certainly, since Sixtinus Amama, a man most versed in this kind of studies and most worthy of the Church, concedes in the third book of his *Anti-Barbarus Biblicus*, Book 3, p. 461, that out of the villainy of the Jews and their hatred for the Truth of the Gospels regarding the crucifixion of Christ in many Hebrew Bibles the *Keri* at this passage is not noted, I have noticed with astonishment that so many reverend and excellent men, great Rabbis in their knowledge of Hebrew letters, have not noticed and punished this impious crime, in that recent Amsterdam edition of Joseph Athias, of the year 1667, which they have commended so pompously and abundantly to the Christian Republic.²⁷

doodt gedaen hebben aengaende de versoeninge met de Heer Altingh (1674), p. 1, cited in Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 414. On Maresius as the strongest opponent of La Peyrère, see Eric Jorink "Horrible and Blasphemous:" Isaac la Peyrère, Isaac Vossius, and the Emergence of Radical Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Republic', in Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (eds), *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700. Volume I* (Leiden 2008), p. 429-450. On Maresius' defence of orthodoxy, see also John Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism* (Leiden 1982). For Maresius' attacks on his contemporaries, see more recently Michael Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden 1995), p. 14-15, 34-37; Howard Hotson, *Paradise Postponed. Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Birth of Calvinist Millenarianism* (Dordrecht 2000), p. 24-25, Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (New York 2001) and Jeffrey K. Jue, *Heaven upon Earth. Joseph Mede (1586-1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (Dordrecht 2006). For a recent minority view, the argument that Maresius should be seen as a force of moderation, tolerating the freedom of philosophizing if kept within the secluded confines of academic philosophy, see Malcolm de Mowbray, 'LIBERTAS PHILOSOPHANDI. Wijsbegeerte in Groningen rond 1650', in H.A. Krop, J.A. van Ruler and A. Vanderjagt (eds), *Zeer kundige professoren. Beoefening van de filosofie in Groningen van 1614 tot 1996* (Hilversum 1997), p. 33-46.

27. 'Circa distinctionem $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ *Keri* & *Chetibb* in texto Hebraico V[eteris] T[estamenti] semper existimavi lectionem marginalem nonnunquam praeferrere debere textuali, iuxta analogiam textus & fidei, ut nominatim Psal. XXII. 17 ex iudicio & concensu Doctissimorum quoruncumque Christianorum, qui censent ibi reddendum non *sicut leo*, ut Judaei vellent, sed *perfoderunt* sive *transfixerunt*. Et certe cum Sixtinus Amama, Vir in eo genere studii versatissimus et optime meritus de

Maresius had zoomed in on one of the most contested passages in the biblical text. The traditional Christian reading of Psalm 22:17 reads: *For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me, they pierced my hands and feet.* The King James Bible here accurately reflects both the Septuagint and the *Psalterium iuxta Graecos* ascribed to Jerome. Since Christian antiquity, the verse has been read as a prophecy of the crucifixion, a typological tradition that builds on the words cried out by Jesus on the Cross, *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34), which are the first verse of this same Psalm. In Latin and in Greek, the citation is highlighted by the fact that the texts of both Matthew and Mark give the verse first in transliterated Aramaic before translating it. At John 19:24, furthermore, the soldiers dividing Jesus' clothing are even said by the evangelist to do so in order that the verse immediately following in the Psalm, 22:18 (*they divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment*), might be fulfilled (ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῆ). Within the very text of the Gospels, the Hebrew Psalm is woven into Christian prophecy. As Gregory Vall has shown, this tradition is cemented in late antique Greek, Latin and Syriac literature (in Athanasius, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Jerome, and Theodore of Mopsuestia, among others), and confirmed by medieval scholastics.²⁸ As early as Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*

Ecclesia, Judaeorum nequitiae et odio in veritatem Evangelicam de crucifixione Christi, tribuat quod in multis Bibliis Hebraicis το Keri hoc loco non annotetur *Antibarbari Lib[ro] 3 p. 461*. non sine stupore observavi, tot Viros Reverendos et Clarissimos, magnosque in literis Hebraicis Rabbinos, hoc scelus non animadvertisse in illa nupera editione Amsterodamensi Josephi Athias, anni 1667. quam ab accuratione & fidelitate, tam pompose & prolixè Reipubl[icae] Christianae commendarunt; ut illis testimoniis & commendationibus nixus impius ille hostis Christi, suam editionem ausus sit inscribere Celsissimis & Potentissimis DD Ordinibus Gen[eralibus] Foederati Belgii, et hac arte egregium honorarium ab illis adhamare. Non nescio Viros quosdam doctos pertendere το *Chetibb* ipsamque lectionem textualem posse Christi crucifixione applicari commodo sensu; sed praeterea quod hic abeant in diversa, nec voto vivitur uno, (quam etiam diversitatem recutiti trahunt in rem suam), non erat saltem concedendum impio illi nebuloni, ut hoc loco una litura [sic] το Keri, quod alibi ex sua Masora retinet passim, eriperet Christianis telum istud primum, quo Judaicam incredulitatem ab illius ἀθετησι fortiter et constanter impugnarunt; ut sit etiam à D. Coccejo, uno caeteroquin ex illis approbatoribus, qui id ipsum in suo tractatu contra Iudaeos, p. 207, ... Samuel Maresius, *Epistola ad Amicum* ... (Groningen 1669), p. 8-9. The epistle survives in an apparently unique copy in the collection of the Bibliothèque Wallonne, kept in the University Library, Leiden. I am most grateful to Dr. Dirk van Miert for helping me consult it. On the publication of this epistle, see Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 378-379.

28. See Gregory Vall, 'Psalm 22:17B: "The Old Guess"', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116:1 (1997), p. 45-56, at p. 46, and the discussion of scholarship on this ancient problem in Kristin

(mid-second century CE) the divergent Jewish and Christian readings of Psalm 22:17 had become signposts at the crossroads of the Parting of the Ways.

The Hebrew text as it took shape in the centuries of Masoretic transmission gave rise to an even deeper difference. In place of 'they have pierced' the Hebrew text as transmitted reads 'like a lion' (*ka'ari*), a variant that gave rise to Christian charges of deliberate Jewish corruption of the Hebrew text.

When Christian printers started producing editions of the Hebrew Bible and new Latin translations of the Psalter, the verse posed new, particularly thorny problems. In the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, the *converso* editors directed by Alfonso de Zamora emended the Hebrew text to accord with the Latin and Greek, and printed *karu* ('they have dug' and by extension, 'they have pierced').²⁹ In a short note in the massive apparatus of the *Massorah Finalis* appended to the final volume of the 1525 Rabbinic Bible, the editor Jacob ben Haim ibn Adoniyah of Tunis noted that he had seen a few Hebrew manuscripts which gave *karu* as the written text (*ketiv*) and *ka'ari* in the margin as the text to be read instead (*qeri*), even though they were not counted in the lists of Masoretic variants.³⁰ Christian scholars found it, however, and Jacob ben Haim's observation provided what some saw as further evidence of intentional textual corruption by Jews.³¹ Even the converted Rabbi Johannes Isaac Levita (1515-1577), a professor of Hebrew at Cologne and one of the sixteenth century's staunchest defenders of the trustworthiness of the Jewish transmission of the Hebrew text, claimed that just like Jacob ben Haim he had seen a Hebrew manuscript in his grandfather's library with *karu* in the text and *ka'ari* as the *qeri*.³² Isaac's citation of Jacob ben

M. Swenson, 'Psalm 22:17: Circling around the Problem Again', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123:4 (2004), p. 637-648.

29. See Christian David Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London 1897), reprinted with a prolegomenon by H.M. Orlinsky (New York 1966), p. 924-925.

30. See the *Massorah Magna* in the fourth volume of the second Rabbinic Bible, **כתובים** (Venice: Bomberg 1525), vol. IV, sig. II 113 verso.

31. See, for example, Petrus Galatinus, *Opus de Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis* (Ortona a Mare: Hieronymus Soncino 1518, and Basel: Joannes Hervagius 1561), p. 341 in the 1561 edition.

32. See Johannes Isaac Levita, *Defensio Veritatis Hebraicae Sacrarum Scripturarum...* (Cologne: Jacob Soter 1559), p. 112: 'Huc accedit, quod Rabbi Iacob filius Haym, vir doctissimus in Magno Massoreth in Maarechet Aleph scribebat: כָּאָרִי וְקָרִי כָאָרִי id est, in

Haim's observation, the identification of its location and its Latin translation, served to further broaden Christian scholars' awareness of this otherwise obscure note in the forest of the *Masorah Finalis*, and it furnished Christian scholars with 'Jewish' evidence against the traditional 'Jewish' reading to Psalm 22:17.³³

Sebastian Münster (1488-1552), the leading Lutheran Hebraist of the first half of the sixteenth century, sought a middle road. In his edition of the Hebrew Bible with his Latin translation he printed the traditional Jewish reading *ka'ari* ('like a lion') in the Hebrew text, but as his own Latin translation he gave *foderunt* ('they have pierced') and in his commentary to this Psalm he cited the medieval work of Jewish polemic against Christian prophetic readings of the Hebrew Bible, the *Sefer Niz-zahon*.³⁴ Even Sanctes Pagnini, the Dominican from Lucca who produced the first complete Latin translation of the entire Hebrew Bible since antiquity, had not dared to go that far, translating the verse as *foderunt manus meas, & pedes meos*, in what he presented as a literal translation from the Hebrew.³⁵ In the sixth volume of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible, its editors, Benito Arias Montano, Franciscus Raphelengius, Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie and his brother Nicholas, courageously gave the Masoretic *ka'ari* in the text. In the interlinear Latin translation *ad verbum*, which was Montano's revision of the Latin translation of Sanctes Pagnini, Montano gave *quasi leo manus meas et pedes meos*, and in the margin, as if it were the *qeri*, he printed *foederunt manus meas et pedes meos*.³⁶ But in the *Masorah Finalis* as edited by Jacob ben Haim for Daniel Bomberg in

quibusdam libris correctis inveni scriptum in textu כָּאָרִי et lectio, scilicet in margine erat כָּאָרִי & c., hoc ide[m] ego Iohannes Isaac ipsa veritate & bonae conscientiae testari possum quod huiusmodi Psalterium apud auum meu[m] viderim, ubi in textu scriptum erat, כָּאָרִי, et in margine, כָּאָרִי. Et ita omnia olim exemplaria habuisse, haud dubito.'

33. See, for example, Gilbert Genebrard, *R. Iosephi Albonis, R. Davidis Kimhi, et alius cuiusdam Hebraei anonymi argumenta, quibus nonnullos fidei Christianae articulos oppugnant. G. Genebrardo BA. Theologo Interprete. Ad eorum singulas disputationes eiusdem interpretis responsa...* (Paris: Martin Lejeune 1566), p. 81-85.

34. Sebastian Münster, *Hebraica Biblia Latina Planeque Nova ... Tralatione ...* (Basel: Isengrin and Petri 1534-35, second edition 1546), p. 1176 (translation), p. 1177-1178 (commentary).

35. Sanctes Pagninus, *Utriusq[ue] Instrumenti Nova Translatio ...* (Lyon: Antoine du Ry for Francesco Turchi, Domenico Berticino and Giacomo de Giunti, 1528), fol. 189 recto.

36. See *Hebraicorum Bibliorum Veteris Testamenti Latina interpretatio, opera olim Xantis Pagnini Lucensis: nunc verò Benedicti Ariae Montani Hispale[n]sis, Francisci Raphelengii Alnetani, Guidonis & Nicolai Fabriciorum Boderianum fratrum collato studio ...* (Antwerp: Christopher Plantin, without date, but with an approbation dated 1571), sig. Ec2 verso.

Venice it had been the other way around: Ben Haim had reported seeing manuscripts where the *ketiv* was *karu* but *ka'ari* the *qeri*. By switching the pair, the Antwerp editors deliberately eclipsed what they must have known to be Masoretic tradition, preserving the Jewish textual tradition as edited by Jacob ben Haim in the main body of the text (and ignoring Johannes Isaac's opinion that the original reading must have been *karu*). Even the elder Johannes Buxtorf, whose profound antipathy towards Jews was matched by profound Judaic erudition, printed *ka'ari*, with a hollow dot referring to the Masorah, as in Bomberg's edition.³⁷

When Menasseh ben Israel (1604-1657), the man who served many Christian scholars of the mid-seventeenth century in the Dutch Republic and beyond as their most important living source for Jewish learning (and like Athias, born and raised a Catholic Portuguese), printed a Hebrew Bible in Amsterdam in 1636, his text gave only a dotted *ka'ari*, without indication of any *qeri* or *ketiv*.³⁸

Within a year of the publication of Menasseh's edition, the authorized translation of the Bible into Dutch appeared, commissioned during the Synod of Dordt nearly twenty years before. Building on the earlier efforts of Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde and the invaluable commentaries and editions by the elder Johannes Drusius, the Dutch translation of the Old Testament in the *Statenvertaling* was largely the work of Johannes Bogerman, Wilhelmus Baudartius and Gerson Bucerus, subsequently submitted, like the King James Bible, to an editorial committee for review. Studying the translators' surviving working notes on *Job*, Cees Verdegaal showed how deep and rigorous had been the translators' study of the Hebrew Bible and reliance on Jewish exegetical traditions.³⁹ Nonetheless, the States Bible here followed tradition and translated Ps. 22:17 as *zij hebben mijne handen en voeten doorgraven*.

37. See Johannes Buxtorf (ed.), *Biblia Sacra Hebraica & Chaldaica Cum Masora ...* (Basel: Ludwig König 1618-1619 and 1620), Vol. IV, sig. YY 3 recto. Jacob ben Haim's note of manuscripts reading *karu* is printed on sig. B 2 verso. On this edition, see Joseph Priejs, *Die Basler hebräischen Drucke (1492-1866)* (Olten/Freiburg i. Br 1964), nr. 219, p. 331-343, and Stephen Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564-1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden 1996), p. 169-202.

38. See כתובים (Amsterdam: Menasseh ben Israel for Henricus Laurentius 1636), fol. 1 verso. On Menasseh ben Israel as a printer, see Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 99-135. On Menasseh generally, his press and his contacts with the learned Christian world, see the recent synthesis in A. Offenber, *Menasseh ben Israel (1604-1657). A Biographical Sketch* (Amsterdam 2011).

39. See Cornelis M.L. Verdegaal, *De Statenbijbel en de Rabbijnen* (PhD thesis, Tilburg 1998).

Johannes Georgius Nisselius was a poor orientalist from the Palatinate and a Leiden drop-out who edited Arabic and Ethiopic texts for the Leiden Elseviers before starting a press of his own. In January 1659 he barely beat Athias to a privilege to print his Hebrew Bible.⁴⁰ The edition was published posthumously – Nisselius died in 1662 – and while it came commended by such Christian Hebraist authorities as Johannes Coccejus and Allardus Uchtmannus, the text of Psalm 22:17 in Nisselius' edition gave *ka'ari* as both the *ketiv* in the text and the *qeri* in the margin. It is one of the numerous errata that mark his output, a typo that shall forever prevent us from knowing which of the two he actually believed to be *ka'ari*.⁴¹

That same year, the Leiden Hebraist and Walloon pastor Anthonius Hulsius published an attack on Isaac Vossius, whose critical studies of the Septuagint and the chronological investigations of Joseph Scaliger had brought him to an entirely different calculation of the age of the world than that provided by the Hebrew Bible.⁴² Hulsius devoted a short chapter to Ps. 22:17, in which he argued that the Hebrew here was not the original text. 'This passage has always aroused my indignation against the Jews', Hulsius wrote, 'not because they have corrupted the passage, for that is to speak without informed knowledge and to accuse without ground, but rather because they are reluctant to acknowledge the variant reading observed by their own Masorites.'⁴³ Quoting Jacob ben Haim's observation from the *Massorah Finalis* in both Hebrew and Latin, Hulsius adds 'if the Jews had conspired to corrupt this passage, that collector would surely never have displayed the evidence like that.'⁴⁴

40. On Nisselius as a printer of Hebrew, see Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 45-49.

41. See *Sacra Biblia Hebraea ...* (Leiden: Nisselius 1662), sig. 4 **xxx** verso.

42. Anthonius Hulsius, *Authentia Absoluta S. Textus Hebraei Vindicata Contra Criminationes Cl. Viri Isaaci Vossii*. (Rotterdam: Arnoldus Leers 1662). The object of Hulsius' attack is Isaac Vossius, *De Septuaginta interpretibus, eorumque translatione & chronologia dissertationes* (The Hague: A. Vlacq 1661). On Vossius' Septuagint scholarship and the fierce debates it aroused, see S. Mandelbrote, 'Isaac Vossius and the Septuagint', in D. van Miert and E. Jorink (eds), *Isaac Vossius (1618-1689) Between Science and Scholarship* (Leiden 2012), p. 85-117. I am very much obliged to Scott Mandelbrote for providing me with a copy of this extraordinary article prior to its publication.

43. 'Hic ego semper indignor Judaeis, non quod locum corruperint, hoc enim est imperite loqui et inique accusare, sed quod diversam lectionem a suis Masoretis observatam nolint agnoscere.' Hulsius, *Authentia Absoluta*, p. 91.

44. 'Nec sane iste collector istiusmodi testimonium unquam perhibuisset, si Judaei in istam corruptionem conspirassent.' Hulsius, *Authentia Absoluta*, p. 91.

By the time Leusden set out to edit the Hebrew text anew for Athias, Psalm 22:17 came with fifteen centuries of Judeo-Christian exegetical polemic. It was weighed down by more recent accusations of deliberate Jewish corruption of passages foretelling the crucifixion, and by the advance of Christian knowledge of the Masoretic tradition. It formed, in short, one of the most formidable obstacles to a Christian biblical scholar's collaboration with a Jewish printer, one of the daunting stumbling blocks for the edition as a whole. It is therefore all the more remarkable that the text as Leusden edited it, as Athias printed it, and as theologians from all four Dutch universities approved it, offers only *ka'ari*, 'like a lion.' The *resh* is dotted, as if it had a Masoretic annotation, but it has none. The text includes numerous *ketiv-qeri* annotations, but none here. Perhaps the authorities of Bomberg, Plantin, and Buxtorf sufficed; perhaps the Rabbis censored it; perhaps Leusden decided to sidestep the problem entirely. We don't know.

Maresius – one of the dedicatees of Hulsius' attack on Isaac Vossius – knew exactly what he was doing when he turned to Ps. 22:17. He noted correctly that both the 1661 and 1667 editions of Athias' Hebrew Bible did not print *karu*. Studying the work of Dutch Christian Hebraists like Amama and Hulsius, Maresius, too, had learned that within the Jewish textual tradition itself, there was evidence for manuscripts that had *karu* in the consonantal text (the *ketiv*) and *ka'ari* in the margin as the way to read it (*qeri*). Thanks to Maresius' precise page reference, we can identify his primary source as the 1656 edition of the *Anti-Barbarus Biblicus* by Sixtinus Amama.⁴⁵

The star pupil of the elder Johannes Drusius and his successor on the chair of Hebrew at Franeker, Amama read through the Rabbinic Bible, Johannes Isaac, and the Antwerp Polyglot, and reached a conclusion similar to that of Hulsius (in fact, Hulsius' text of 1662 seems to be a condensed and unacknowledged paraphrase of Amama's text of 1659). With deep admiration for Masoretic tradition, Amama was forced to answer the question: if Jacob ben Haim had found the variant reading as a *ketiv/qeri* pair, then why had Hebrew Bibles since then not printed them as such? How had the accepted Hebrew consonantal text become

45. Sixtinus Amama, *Anti-Barbarus Biblicus Libro Quarto Auctus* (Franeker: printed by Isdardus Albertus for Louis and Daniel Elsevier 1656), p. 458-461.

ka'ari, without any *qeri*? Here, in the passage referred to by Maresius, Amama had an additional story to tell, one which he remembered hearing many times from his teacher, Johannes Drusius. According to this account, Bomberg had in fact wanted to print *karu*, based on Jacob ben Haim's observation in a minority of manuscripts, but had been prevented from doing so for fear that a Jewish readership would refuse to buy any copies of his edition. The reading persisted, Amama held, 'partly out of the ambition and pertinence of the Jews, and partly out of the pusillanimity of our printers and the indolence of Christians.'⁴⁶ With no little irony, Amama and Hulsius, while defending the authenticity of the Hebrew text against the Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint respectively, ended up, in the case of Ps. 22:17, defending the reading offered in the very texts whose authenticity they set out to demolish.

Maresius' attack on the Leusden-Athias Hebrew Bible followed Amama and aimed for the Achilles-heel of the Masoretic tradition – a variant reading that suggested that what had become the Masoretic text was in fact not the original reading to begin with. But Maresius presented 'the villainy of the Jews and their hatred for the Truth of the Gospels regarding the crucifixion of Christ' (*Judaeorum nequitiae et odio in veritatem Evangelicam de crucifixione Christi*) as Amama's explanation, while Amama had written no such thing. Maresius' dishonest presentation of the opinion of one of the most accomplished Christian Hebraists in the United Provinces would exacerbate the tensions that arose when Jews and Christians studied each other's understanding of the text they ostensibly shared. In referring to a passage containing Amama's account of nearly

46. Amama, *Anti-Barbarus Biblicus* (1656), p. 461: 'Christianis, cum editiones Bibliorum Ebraïcorum adornare inciperent, quominus marginalem lectionem restituerent, Judaei resistere. Ex quo enim superiori seculo literas Ebraïcas, ringentibus Judaeis, didicere Christiani [sic], incrementa sumsit aemulatio inter Judaeos et Christianos. Incrementa sumsit pertinacia, adeo quidem ut nihil Christianis gratificari voluerint. Aemulatio magna orta est inter typographos nec non correctores Judaeos et Christianos. Atque in hoc certamine praepotuerunt Judaei. Namque Christianorum animos metus damni fregit. Ausus enim fuit Judaeus quidam, corrector editionis cuiusdam Venetae, denunciare Bomberg, cum is locum hunc ad fidem correctissimorum codicum, quos R[abbi] Jacob ben Cajim notat, restituere vellet, se procuraturum apud suos ne ullum exemplar istius editionis emeretur. Id quod ex cl[arissimo] Drusio saepe me audire memini. Quam pauca vero Bibliorum Ebraïcorum exemplaria etiamnum inter Christianos divendantur, Bibliopolae optime testabuntur. Atque ita huius qualiscunque defectus, quem in hodiernis codicibus agnoscimus, originem, librorum descriptorum incuriae; conservationem vero et durationem eiusdem, partim Judaeorum pertinaciae et ambitioni, partim nostrorum Typographorum pusillanimitati & Christianorum socordiae adscripsim.'

two centuries of Jewish-Christian printing rivalry, Maresius' pamphlet became an assault on multiple targets: Jewish-Christian collaboration, the trustworthiness of the Hebrew text as transmitted by the Jews, on Leusden as an editor and biblical scholar, and on the orthodoxy of the Dutch protestant theologians who had approved it. A response could not wait.

The Rebuttal

Mere weeks after Maresius' pamphlet appeared, it was met by a counter-attack, dated November 4, 1669, and signed by Joseph Athias himself (the Latin text of which may be found as an appendix to this article, along with an English translation):

*A Blind man on Colors, that is, a defense of Joseph Athias against the inept, absurd and unlearned censure of the well-known gentleman Doctor Samuel Maresius, in which he judges like a blind man the excellent and universally admired edition of the Hebrew Bible of the year 1667, in an epistle to a friend recently published.*⁴⁷

Anyone with a basic humanist education would have known the origin of the expression *caecus de coloribus*. One of the best-known entries in Erasmus' *Adages*, certainly the most popular collection of proverbs in early modern Europe, was a saying drawn from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, 'Let the cobbler stick to his last' (*ne sutor ultra crepidam*). Under this heading Erasmus filed several similar ancient sayings, among them one from the second book of Aristotle's *Physics*, about 'a blind man judging colors.' These expressions, Erasmus notes, 'have become proverbial among academics of our own day for disputing on subjects of which a man knows nothing.'⁴⁸ The meaning of the title of Athias' pamphlet is clear: Maresius is the blind man, ignorant of Hebrew scripture, and he should not judge what he cannot see. By implication, Athias told Maresius: *schoenmaker, houd je bij je leest!*

47. *Caecus de Coloribus Hoc Est Josephi Athiae Justa Defensio contra ineptam, absurdam et indoctam reprehensionem viri celeberrimi D. Samuelis Maresii, quâ judicat tanquam Caecus de praestantissima, et ubique celebrata Bibliorum Hebraicorum editione anni 1667 in epistola ad amicum nuper divulgata*, Pag. 9 (Amsterdam: Typis Auctoris 1669).

48. See R.A.B. Mynors, *Adages I vi 1 to I x 100* (Toronto/Buffalo/London 1989) [= Collected Works of Erasmus vol. 32], p. 14.

The pamphlet is remarkable in several respects, not least for the complete absence of caution vis-à-vis Christian political and religious authorities. Athias' pamphlet is a full-blown attack on a senior Christian theologian in the United Provinces. It displays no attempt to avoid outright confrontation, nor does one find in it expressions of the kind of anxiety provoked among the Sephardi religious leadership by the ideas of Athias' contemporary, the young Spinoza, or fear of displeasing the local government. On the contrary, the author of the pamphlet seems certain of the support of the States General. Nor does the pamphlet include any of the condemnations of Christianity, Catholic or Reformed, that mark the defenses of Jewish tradition composed by seventeenth-century Western Sephardim engaged in theological disputations, as exemplified by a treatise against another Huguenot composed nearly simultaneously by Athias' close acquaintance, Isaac Orobio de Castro, *parnas* of the Congregation *Talmud Torah* for that very year, 5430 (1669-1670).⁴⁹ And its satirical tone prevents us from joining it to the serious, 'friendly conversations' that took place between Jewish and Christian scholars in the Dutch Republic at the time, such as that between Orobio de Castro and Philippus van Limborch.⁵⁰ But what are Athias' arguments, exactly?

Writing in the second person, Athias addresses Maresius directly. He begins by reviewing the admiration of scholars from across Europe for his edition, and its commercial success. If the quality is so universally acknowledged, attacking it can only be slander. In a surprising rhetorical move, Athias then attacks Maresius for his failure to observe Christian teachings, such as the commandment to love one's enemy. Athias then shifts back to a Jewish perspective, pointing out that this kind of behavior will certainly not bring the conversion of the Jews any nearer. Athias never did anything to harm Maresius, who never approached him personally to point out and discuss his problems regarding the edition, but rather immediately attacked him in print. Athias then doubles back to yet another accusation of Maresius' deficient Christianity. Invoking the Sermon on the Mount, Athias points out that attacking him without cause was a transgression of the prohibition (in Matthew 5:22) against

49. See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, p. 239-243 (for Orobio de Castro's attack on an anonymous Huguenot) and p. 428 (for Orobio's service as *parnas* in 1669-70).

50. See Philippus van Limborch, *De veritate religionis Christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judaeo* (Gouda: Justus van der Hoeve 1657), and Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, p. 270-285.

carrying anger towards one's brother without cause. One by one, Athias then discusses the reasons for which Maresius' ire towards his Bible might have been raised. Firstly, the endorsement of leading theologians (many of whom were already enemies of Maresius), whom Athias says were invited to approve the edition not for their animosity towards Maresius but for their superior command of Hebrew and the acquaintance with them on the part of 'our people' (the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam). A second possible cause was the fact that Maresius himself had not been invited to attach his name to the edition (it had been Maresius' enemy, Jacobus Alting, who signed for Groningen University). The addition of Maresius' name, Athias gibes, 'would have driven away its buyers rather than attracted them', because of his well-known ignorance of Hebrew. To demonstrate the latter, Athias quotes nine passages from Maresius' own major work, his *Collegium Theologicum sive breve systema universae theologiae*, containing basic mistakes in Hebrew. Finally, Athias proceeds to discuss the passage that Maresius says had provoked his indignation, Psalm 22:17. Athias points out that in the most esteemed editions of the Hebrew Bible prior to his own, those of Bomberg, Plantin, Buxtorf and others, the reading is identical to his. Have they all committed a heinous act? Are they all impious scoundrels? Why did Maresius only attack Athias? 'Why have you not pierced through (*peregisti*) all those authors, guilty of the same crime, why have you not slandered them in the same way that you have slandered me?' Athias asks, cleverly using a synonym (*peragere*) of the term (*karu, foderunt*) at the heart of their dispute. The Masorah, Athias writes, is 'like a fence around the law' (*quasi sepes legis*), a silent quotation of Rabbi Akiva's dictum, in *Pirque Avot* 3:13 (מסרת סייג לתורה). Nowhere in the Masorah, he asserts, is *karu* actually given in the margin as the *qeri* (Jacob ben Haim and Johannes Isaac had seen evidence only of the reverse). Then Athias gives a philological argument. If Maresius wanted to read 'they have pierced' in this verse, it need not be by emending *ka'ari* into *karu*, but rather by taking the previous word in the verse, *hiqifuni* ('[they] have enclosed', in the King James) as such, for its root וקף, can mean *destroy, cut, thrust through*, as well. It is a striking exegetical move – one which leaves the text as transmitted in Jewish tradition intact, but does not preclude its interpretation according to Christian tradition. Maresius, in claiming that by only printing *ka'ari*, and not 'the *qeri*', had

turned the Christian reading into a marginal one rather than the textual one. As if he had not yet pulled the rug from under Maresius' feet, Athias points out that Maresius was thereby doing something particularly Jewish: preferring the *qeri* to the *ktiv*. If there were any printing errors, Athias concedes in concluding, he instructed them to be corrected by pen.⁵¹ Athias ends by emphasizing the high praise his edition had garnered and the precious gold chain and medal the States General had presented him as his reward, and by inviting Maresius to come see it for himself. But he signs off with a threat: 'if you should undertake to slander my Bible again, I will respond without delay, for I lack neither the will, nor the printing press, with numerous employees sufficiently instructed to be of service to me. And I hope that the Lords States will not forbid me my justified defense, that if again you should defame me with clever quips, I will print a pamphlet with the title *An Ass to the lyre*.' The latter expression, too, was lifted directly from Erasmus' *Adages*. Found in Varro (via Gellius), Jerome, Lucian and Athenaeus, Erasmus explained it as 'a hit at people who lack judgment through their ignorance, people who have dull ears.'⁵² Athias had demonstrated Maresius' blindness. If the Groningen professor dared attack again, he would be shown to be deaf, too.

Contested Authorship

On rational grounds, at least, the Leusden-Athias Bible had been triumphantly defended. But the pamphlet begs the question: did Joseph Athias, so proud of the Jewish-Christian collaboration on his Hebrew Bible, and so dependent on the approbations of theologians from all four Dutch universities, really call Gomarus' successor blind? Did a Jewish printer in Amsterdam in 1669 have the nerve to call into question the learning of a Calvinist professor of theology, to call his judgment 'inept,

51. In the copy (shelf mark 13 E 6) of the 1666-67 Athias-Leusden Bible in the Ets Haim-Livraria Montezinos of the Portugeesch-Israëlitische Gemeente, Amsterdam, A.K. Offenbergh discovered precisely such work of correction by hand. See Hirschel and Offenbergh, 'Johannes Leusden', p. 41.

52. See M.M. Philips and R.A.B. Mynors (eds), *Adages Iii to Iv100* [= Collected Works of Erasmus Vol. 31] (Toronto 1982), p. 344-345.

absurd and unlearned'? Did he know Maresius' massive system of Calvinist theology so well, that he could find the Hebrew errors in it? Was his Latin this good? Was Athias brave? Was he reckless? Was he even the true author?

The pamphlet is written in the voice of Athias, its author speaks as if he is Athias, and it is signed in Athias' name. The title page, with the words *typis auctoris*, confirms his authorship. The Groningen Hebraist Jacobus Alting, however, in a letter to Anthony Perizonius (the Hebrew lecturer at the Academy of Deventer and the father of the more famous Jacob Perizonius), voiced his suspicion that in fact the true author of the pamphlet was not Athias but Johannes Leusden, and that the Utrecht professor had published it in Athias' name, an assessment that scholars have followed ever since.⁵³

Leusden had as many motivations to attack Maresius as did Athias, if not more. His reputation as a scholar had been called into question, as well as his orthodoxy as a Christian. The command of Latin need not have been Leusden's imput: it was not uncommon for Amsterdam Sephardim who had been born and educated as Catholics in the Iberian Peninsula to have strong Latin.⁵⁴ As for the precise reference to Maresius' system of Calvinist dogmatics, Leusden would certainly have had a much greater knowledge of Maresius' theological works than Athias. And what the reference to the *Mishna* is concerned, Leusden would probably have known the *Pirqa Avot* even better than Athias. Two years before their Hebrew Bible was published, Leusden had issued his own edition of the *Sayings of the Fathers*, the Hebrew text accompanied by a Latin translation and critical notes. There, Leusden had translated Rabbi Akiva's words at *Avot* 3:13 as 'Massoret est sepes legi', nearly identical to the version in

53. 'Ego semper suspicatus fui Leusdenium illorum Bibliorum censorem praecipuum, defensionem illam pro Athia evulgasse.' Alting to Perizonius, in *Opera Omnia Theologica; Analytica, Exegetica, Practica, Problematica: & Philologica in Tomos quinque tributa* (Amsterdam: Gerardus Borstius 1687) vol. V, p. 374. This is the source for J.C. Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebraea* I (Leipzig and Berlin: Liebezeit 1715), p. 552-553. See also Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 378-379; Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 293. Cost Budde, 'Johannes Leusden', p. 180, adds the *Caecus* to his bibliography of Leusden's works, noting (there, p. 176): 'Vermoedelijk moeten wij n.l. in hem ook den auteur zoeken van het door Jos. Athias onder eigen naam uitgegeven pamflet.' Christiaan Sepp was more cautious: 'Of Leusden zelf de auteur van dit opstel [*Caecus de Coloribus*] was, kan ik niet beslissen. Onwaarschijnlijk is het niet.' See his *Het Godgeleerd Onderwijs in Nederland gedurende de 16 en 17 eeuw, Tweede Deel* (Leiden 1874), p. 172.

54. See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*.

Athias' pamphlet.⁵⁵ There are other reasons to give credence to Alting's suspicion of Leusden's clandestine authorship of our pamphlet. Alting was not just a bystander to this affair. As we have seen, it had been Alting who had signed the approbation to Athias' Hebrew Bible for Groningen University on April 22 (May 2 n.s.) 1667. Ten years earlier, Alting had conducted a correspondence, in Hebrew, with one of the editors of the Athias-Leusden Bible, Abraham Senior Coronel.⁵⁶ While his correspondence with Coronel seems to have ended when the latter refused to convert to Christianity and stopped answering letters, Alting had remained well-connected and well-informed. It has been Alting, too, from whom Maresius had bought his copy of the Leusden-Athias Hebrew Bible in the first place, curiosity for the edition trumping his animosity for Alting.⁵⁷

Identifying the true author of the *Caecus de Coloribus* would determine our understanding of it as a source for Christian-Jewish relations in the early modern period generally, and for the intellectual history of Western Sephardim in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic in particular. If the author of the pamphlet was Athias, our text belongs to the history and literature of Jewish-Christian religious apologetics and polemic. In that case, it would demonstrate the pride and confidence with which Athias defended the edition he printed, and the equal terms, confessional and intellectual, on which he believed that defense could take place. It would exemplify the way he placed himself firmly in two distinct traditions, one Christian, one Jewish: the printing history of Hebrew Bibles, primarily by Christian printers (he does not list Jewish ones), and the history of the Masoretic textual tradition, that is, the Jewish transmission of the Hebrew biblical text. If written by Athias,

55. Johannes Leusden (ed. and transl.), *Tractatus Talmudicus פרקי אבות Pirqe Abboth sive Capitula Patrum ...* (Utrecht: Meinard van Dreunen 1665), p. 35, the cursive indicating a word not in the Hebrew (this book is not listed in Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*).

56. Alting's Hebrew correspondence with Senior Coronel is printed in Jacobus Alting, *Fundamenta Punctuationis Linguae Sanctae* (1654), with its own pagination starting on sig. Bb5 recto. On Alting, see W. van Bekkum, 'Die Hebraistik in den Nördlichen Niederlanden: Jacobus Alting (1618-1679) in Groningen', in *Aschkenas* 14:2 (2004), p. 447-468, reprinted in G. Veltri and G. Necker (eds), *Gottes Sprache in der philologischen Werkstatt* (Leiden/Boston 2004), p. 49-74; G.A. Kohut, 'The hebrew letters of Jacob Alting', in A. Marx and H. Meyer (eds), *Festschrift für Aron Freimann zum 60. Geburtstag* (Berlin 1935), p. 70-76, and T. Dunkelgrün, 'The Humanist Discovery of Hebrew Epistolography' (forthcoming).

57. Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 379 n. 162.

furthermore, the pamphlet would offer yet another instance of a phenomenon about which Yosef Kaplan has taught us so much: the employment of Christian arguments, Christian scholarship, and Christian values by an Iberian-born New Christian in defense of the Judaism he had only practiced in secret before but now openly embraced in the safety of Amsterdam, in a *Religionsgespräch* with his new Calvinist hosts.⁵⁸

The case for Leusden's authorship, however, is strong. In a letter to Anthony Perizonius, written three months after the publication of *Caecus de Coloribus*, Alting reported the rumor that Athias had been called before Amsterdam's municipal magistrates, to whom the printer declared that he was not the author of the pamphlet.⁵⁹ If the author was not the Sephardi printer but the Utrecht Hebraist, then the *Caecus de Coloribus* was not one part of a dispute between a Jew and a Christian, but rather an inter-Christian polemic between two Calvinists, with the Jew as a straw man. In that case, Athias' name and person served Leusden as a ploy to attack Maresius, a theologian twenty-five years his senior and the adversary of his Utrecht mentor, Gisbertus Voetius, and of many of their friends and theological allies. Leusden, if he is the true author, employed the figure of the Jew to point out to Maresius his ignorance of Hebrew, and to remind him of the foundational truths of Christianity. In seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Jews were more than new, colorful neighbors who, like the Dutch, had escaped Spanish tyranny: they were the descendants of the ancient Israelites with which the Dutch deeply identified, the native teachers of a language and a literature from which Dutch humanist and theologians drew deep lessons about the origins of Christianity, and – as in the case of the Karaites – Jewish precedents to justify the Protestant Reformation. Varieties of Judaism could serve Dutch thinkers, playwrights, painters and poets, be they Republican or Orangist, Libertine or Calvinist, rhetorically, pedagogically, intellectually, artistically.

58. See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, particularly p. 235-262; Yosef Kaplan, 'Bom Judesmo: The Western Sephardic Diaspora', in David Beale (ed.), *Cultures of the Jews. A New History* (New York 2002), p. 639-669. See also, more recently, Benjamin Fisher, *The Centering of the Bible in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: Jewish Religion, Culture and Scholarship* (PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2011).

59. See Alting to Perizonius, February 19, 1670, in Jacob Alting, *Opera Omnia Theologica*, vol. 5, p. 374. S[igmund] S[eligman] reports, however, in A. Freimann (ed.), *Zeitschrift für hebraeische Bibliographie* 15:1 (1911), p. 12, not having found any documentary evidence in the Amsterdam municipal archives substantiating the rumour.

If Leusden was the author of *Caecus de Coloribus*, the pamphlet therefore belongs to an entirely different genre, one that includes Petrus Cunaeus' *De Republica Hebraeorum*, Dionysius Vossius' Latin translations of the treatise on idolatry from Maimonides' *Mishne Torah*, and plays and poems of Vondel who, according to an old legend, consulted Athias before publishing his plays.⁶⁰

A particular puzzle is posed by the incomplete citation of Matthew 18:6. In full the verse reads *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea*. As cited in the pamphlet, however, the verse does not include the words 'which believe in me.' Rhetorically, the omission makes it possible for the object of the Gospel's teaching to include non-Christians. Would Athias dare to reproduce the verse from Christian Scripture imperfectly, in a pamphlet praising the perfection of his own Hebrew Bible? Or was the omission the work of Leusden, who needed to sharpen a scriptural arrow aimed at Maresius?

We may never know whether Leusden or Athias composed the pamphlet. Sometimes the historian sees the past like a blind man judging colors, and perhaps can say no more than the poet: *No sé cuál de los dos escribe este página* (J.L. Borges, 'Borges y yo').

Aftermath

The official printer to Groningen University received 100 copies of the *Caecus de Coloribus* free of charge.⁶¹ It seems Athias and/or Leusden wanted to make absolutely sure not only that Maresius would read it, but that every Groningen scholar however remotely interested in the affair would have access to a copy. The lone voice of protest in Groningen and its *Ommelanden* seems to have come from the parish of Middelstum, some 17 km north of Groningen. A *gravamen* of indignation was submitted thence to Groningen Synod, 'that a Jew had treated so ignominiously one

60. T. Dunkelgrün, "'Neerlands Israel': Political Theology, Christian Hebraism, Biblical Antiquarianism and Historical Myth'. On Athias' friendship with Vondel, for which there is no extant evidence, see Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 305.

61. See Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 378-379.

of the foremost advocates and protectors of the honor of the Crucified.’ Accordingly, it was argued, ‘The Christian Synod ought to seek out ways for the high government of the country to obstruct, limit and muzzle the impertinence, so that the Jews, once they are put to shame, may learn not to commit blasphemy again.’⁶² The good people of Middelstum seem to have considered the States General’s support of the edition at least as grave a transgression as Athias’ attack on Maresius. As Jacobus Alting reported in a letter to Balthasar Bekker, the gravamen inquired

Whether the most noble Synod was not obliged to keep a close watch on the insolence and heresy of the Jews, voiced publically in print as well, such as appears in the writing of Joseph Athias against the most learned gentleman Samuel Maresius, and whether one must not recommend to the country’s highest powers, so that the Jews may be prevented from such [deeds], and their mouths may thereby be sealed.⁶³

The charge was a little premature: after calling on the Synod to punish Athias’ blasphemy, they inquired whether anything blasphemous against the Christian religion could be found in Athias’ pamphlet. From subsequent silence, it would seem that the Synod did not. In fact, their next decision regarding the printing of Jewish texts was their approval of the annotated Latin translation of Isaac Abravanel’s Commentary on Hosea by the Groningen theologian Franciscus van Husen of Wetsinge.⁶⁴ One contemporary source even suggested that Athias had such support

62. ‘[dat een Jood] een der voornaemste voorstanders en beschermers van de eere des gecruysten soo smadelijk bejegende’ [...] ‘dat de Christelike [sic] Synodus op middelen diende verdacht te wesen, waardoor de stoutigheden door de hoge maghten des landes tegengegaen, ingebonden en gemuijllbandt mochten worden, opdat de Joden beschaemt gemaect zijnde moogen leeren voortaan niet meer te lasteren’, transcribed from archives of the Classis Groningen in G.A. Wumkes, ‘Sprokkeling uit oude kerkacten inzake de Joden’, in *Groningsche Volksalmanak: jaarboekje voor geschiedenis, taal- en letterkunde der provincie Groningen* (1911), p. 83-88 at p. 86; also cited in S. Seeligman, ‘Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der Joden in Amsterdam. I. Joseph Athias’, *Kadimah* (1911), p. 178-184, at p. 179.

63. ‘Of niet het Hoog-Eerwaerdige Synodus behoort te letten op de grote Insolentien en Godslasteringe der Joden, ook in publijke schriften geuytet, gelijk blijkt uyt het schrift van Joseph Athias tegen den hoogverlichteden H[eer] Maresius, en of men niet aan de hooge machten des Lands sulks hadde te recomanderen, ten eynde de Joden sulks geweert en de mont mochte gestopt worden?’ Alting, *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, p. 375, transcribed in J.B.F. Heerspink, *De Godgeleerdheid en hare Beoefenaars aan de hoogeschool te Groningen*, part I (Groningen 1864), p. 31, and Seeligman, ‘Bijdrage’, p. 183, Nauta, *Samuel Maresius and Cost Budde*, ‘Johannes Leusden’, p. 176. See also Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*, p. 293.

64. See Wumkes, ‘Sprokkeling’, p. 88. The edition appeared as Franciscus van Husen, *Rabbi Isaaci Abrabanelis Commentarius in Hoseam cui & Praemisum proemium in duodecim prophetas minores latinitate donatum una cum notis ...* (Leiden: Jean du Vivie 1687), unmentioned in Fuks and

in Groningen (in the person of the Hebraist Alting) that he could have successfully taken Maresius to court.⁶⁵

Within a month, Maresius himself responded with yet another pamphlet – a full discussion of which lies beyond the purview of the present essay – in which he acknowledged the quality of Athias' edition, but stood by his opinion regarding the correct reading and the intentional corruption of the verse by the Jews. He also charged that the Jews had no right to call the Hebrew Scriptures 'Bible': only the Old and New Testaments together deserved that title.⁶⁶

Maresius quickly became an adversary of Christian Hebrew studies more generally. On November 26, 1669 (i.e., after receiving Athias' pamphlet but before the publication of his response) he argued publicly that for students of theology or for pastors, knowledge of Hebrew was not even necessary, an argument that went straight in the face of the argument, made by Sixtinus Amama (otherwise Maresius' main authority) among others, that knowledge of Hebrew was a critical necessity for every Christian cleric.⁶⁷ At Groningen, Maresius' quarrel with the Hebraist Alting continued, and deepened, in public, the two professors hurling abuse at each other – *Heretic! Anti-scripturarius!* – in front of their students. They would only be reconciled on Maresius' deathbed, where Alting still refused to visit him.⁶⁸

If the Leusden-Athias' edition of the Hebrew Bible continued to be criticized by later editors like Clodius and Jablonski, it is because it continued to serve as the base-text for subsequent editions, especially in the 1705 edition by Everardus van der Hooght.⁶⁹ By then, the affair seems to

Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography*. On Van Husen (ab Huisen), see P.C. Molhuysen and P.J. Blok (eds) *Nieuw Nederlands Biografisch Woordenboek* 4 (Leiden 1918), p. 792.

65. See Nauta, *Maresius*, p. 379 n. 166, with reference to Balthasar Bekker, *Defensio justa et necessaria, quae est epistola apologetica ad ... Samuelem Maresium* (Franeker 1673).

66. Samuel Maresius, *Messiae crucifixio asserta contra Judaeos; sive Samuelis Maresii justa expostulatio adversus quemdam pseudo-Christianum, abutentem larva et nomine hominis Judaei, ad virus suae maledicentiae effundendum, occasione notae τὸν Keri et Chethib, in nupera editione Hebraica Veteris Testamenti fraudulenter omissae, ad comma 17. Psal. XXII. Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos* (Groningen: Edzard Agricola 1669), discussed briefly by Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 379.

67. See Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 378.

68. See Nauta, *Samuel Maresius*, p. 369-385 (on the conflict between Maresius and Alting) and p. 400-405 (on Maresius' deathbed).

69. On Van der Hooght, see R. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'Everardus van der Hooght (1642-1716), the Last of the Christian Hebraists in the Dutch Republic', in Irene Zwiép e.a. (eds), *Omnia in Eo*.

have long been over. Among the critics, the odd pamphlet attacking the Leusden-Athias Bible continued to appear.⁷⁰ Among the Jews, one imagines that Athias' exchange with Maresius to be among the motivations for the 1677 *ascama* (resolution) by the elders of the Portuguese Synagogue prohibiting religious disputation between Jews and Christians.⁷¹ The most attentive reception of the affair, however, is to be found in the correspondence of Alting with Balthasar Bekker (1634-98), a former student of Alting and Maresius and then a pastor at Franeker. Alting's attempts to find the Cartesian Bekker a position at Groningen were obstructed by Maresius, and Bekker moved to Amsterdam where he wrote the book for which he is remembered, *De Betoverde Weereld* (Amsterdam 1691-93, translated as *The World Bewitch'd*, London 1695).⁷² Long before that, however, it was Bekker to whom Spinoza confided that he, in fact, was the author of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the object of Maresius' next fiery pamphlet.⁷³

If, as the poet laments, everything must come to an end, so too did this debate. Joseph Athias went on with the daily business of the book. There were new editions to prepare, new books to print, new opportunities to seize, new risks to take, new privileges to acquire or circumvent, new battles to wage.⁷⁴

Studies on Jewish Books and Libraries in Honour of Adri Offenbergh Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam (Leuven 2006) = *Studia Rosenthaliana* 38/39, p. 256-261.

70. See *Celeberrimorum Leusdeni atque Athiae Bibliorum Sphalmata Quinque Consensu ac Auctoritate Amplissimae Facultatis Philosophicae Criticis Illustrant Animadversionibus Praeses M. Gerhardus Mejer, Hamburg[ensis] et Joh[annes] Georgius Burkhardus, Ulm[ensis] respondens ...* (Wittenberg: Matthaeus Henckelius [16]87).

71. See Stadsarchief Amsterdam 334, Archief van de Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente, nr. 19, 'Livro dos Acordos da Nação e Ascamoto', p. 769, cited in Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, p. 272 n. 32, 273 n. 33.

72. See A.C. Fix, *Fallen Angels: Balthasar Bekker, Spirit Belief, and Confessionalism in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht 1999); J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*; A. Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge 2003).

73. See the letters from Alting to Bekker March 15, 1670 in Alting, *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, p. 375. See also the letter from Alting to Bekker written in September 1673 (there, p. 436). On Maresius' attacks on Spinoza, see Y.Y. Melamed and M.A. Rosenthal, *Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise. A Critical Guide* (Cambridge 2010), p. 77-78, 86.

74. On one particular such battle, see recently M. Bendowska and J. Doktor, 'Waad Arba Aracot i Amsterdamska Biblia w Jidysz historia pewnej karty tytułowej', *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 233 (2010), p. 89-100.

From Joseph to Yosef...

With affection and gratitude, these musings on the vicissitudes of an Iberian New Christian who became the most successful Jewish book man of Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, and on his pamphlet *A Blind Man on Colors*, are offered to his namesake, our master historian of the Western Sephardic diaspora in the early modern period, who came, long ago, from the opposite end of the Hispanic world, and through whose mind and heart Spanish, Hebrew, English, Dutch and the *mame loshen* flow freely, as they did in Athias' printing shop, as they do in the work of his blind compatriot, who followed him to Jerusalem, and, touching the walls of Old City, demonstrated that some blind men can judge colors after all.

*Si para todo hay término y hay tasa
y última vez y nunca más y olvido
¿quién nos dirá de quién, en esta casa,
sin saberlo, nos hemos despedido?*

(J.L. Borges, 'Límites')

Appendix I

Caecus de Coloribus Hoc Est Josephi Athiae Justa Defensio contra ineptam, absurdam et indoctam reprehensionem viri celeberrimi D. Samuelis Maresii, quâ judicat tanquam Caecus de praestantissima, et ubique celebrata Bibliorum Hebraicorum editione anni 1667 in epistola ad amicum nuper divulgata, Pag. 9 (Amsterdam: Typis Auctoris 1669)⁷⁵

Prodiit hoc Anno 1669. Mense Septembri Samuelis Maresii ad amicum epistola, in qua, praeterquam quod D. Voetium sub speciosa pacis petitione non leviter perstringit, etiam stupida ac supina lapsus Hebraeae Linguae ignorantia reprehendere conatur Biblia a me, ea, qua nunquam antehac ab alio, cura edita, et a Typographicis purgata vitiis: quae ea de causa in Anglia, Gallia, Germania, Dania, aliisque orbis terrarum partibus a viris doctissimis laudantur, expetuntur, et quovis ferme comparantur pretio. Siccine me diceris proscindis pro egregie praestita circa hanc editionem accuratissimam opera? Nonne te lex Christi docet abstinendum esse a maledictis et invectivis scurrilibus? Qua quaeso fronte tu hominem, qui nunquam vel verbulo te laesit, ita palam, quantum in te est, studes infamare. Docet utique te Salvator tuus Lucae 6 vers 27 *ut diligas inimicos tuos, beneficias iis qui te oderunt, et benedicas iis qui te devovent*. At quam egregie legem hanc observes inde cuique notum, quod ne amicos quidem diligas, verum odio persequaris, et ignominiosis vexes nominibus eum, cujus animum nunquam subiit vel minima te laedendi cogitatio. Hos si credas Christiani mores quicquam conducturos ad gentis nostrae conversionem, longe falleris. Si quid existimasses perperam impressum esse, blandis illud verbis indicare mihi debuisses; modestis ego vicissim literis monstrassem toto te errare coelo, eaque, quae ibi Hebraicè annotata vel non annotata sunt, captum tuum superare, teque de iis judicare ut coecus de coloribus. Nebulonem me appellas, parum memor praecepti Salvatoris tui Matth. 5. 22 *Quicumque, inquit, irascitur fratri suo temere, tenebitur iudicio, et quicumque dixerit Fatue, tenebitur gehenna ignis*: nisi forte putes te legibus solutum esse, solosque plebejos edictum illud concernere. Ut verbo dicam, summopere nobis offenculo es, cum tamen noveris procul dubio *quod ei, qui offenculo fuerit uni ex parvis, praestiterit, ut suspendatur mola asinaria ex collo ejus, ac demergatur in profundo maris*. Et quamvis dixeris me veram non habere fidem; non tamen ideo impune tibi erit hoc pacto a fide tua alienum me efficere: lex saltem nostra hanc prohibet impudentiam, nec permittit, ut religionis alterius hominem asperis diceris, multo minus mendaciis, proscindamus. Illud forte movit vel auxit tuam indignationem, quod Bibliis meis praefixa conspiciantur ejusmodi Theologorum nomina, quorum famam & existimationem tu scriptis tuis virulentis studuisti per omne nefas lacerare: Verum ea de causa Theologorum illorum non petii iudicia; sed ideo quod illos scirem celeberrimos esse, et genti

75. The four-page pamphlet seems to survive in only two copies, one in the Bodleian Library and one in the Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Strasbourg. I am most grateful to Madame Brigitte Wengler for providing me with a digital reproduction of the latter copy, from which the text given here is transcribed. Text set between square brackets (full spellings of abbreviations, page numbers, etc.) has been added. The *mise-en-page* of the pamphlet has been preserved.

nostrae notissimos, tum etiam, utpote linguae Hebraeae peritissimos, optime de Bibliis hisce iudicium ferre posse. At, inquires, meum quoque nomen potuisses praefigere: credo equidem hanc tui in me meaque Biblia odii praecipuam esse causam; sed scias oportet, nomen tuum, si praefixum fuisset, abacturum potius qua pellecturum fuisse Bibliorum emptores. Omnes enim tam Judaei quam Christiani probe norunt tuam in Hebraicis imperitiam; quo fit, ut non nisi vitiose pleraque linguae illius vocabula legas: et ne temere illud videar asseruisse, quaedam exhibebo specimina, unde sole meridiano clarius constabit, miserum te et infelicem esse Hebraeum, et plane pueriliter impingere, dum [p. 3 = sig. A 2 recto] voces Hebraicas Latinis Literis legendas junioribus propinas. In Systematis namque tui editione secunda, quae mihi ad manum est,

Pag. 12 ראשונים vertis *roschanim* pro *rischonim*.

23 אהיה vertis *eheje* pro *ehje*.

134 Dicis quod ירה denotet *docere*, cum nunquam talem habeat significationem.

Ibid. המשפטים vertis *hamispatim* pro *hammischpatim*.

135 המצות vertis *hamitzveoth* pro *hammitzvoth*, omittis dages, & legis scheva post brevem vocalem.

171 בושרה vertis *boschera* pro בשורה *beschora*.

182 לשאול vertis *lescheol*, pro *lischol*, legis duplex scheva ab initio.

278 הצדיק legis *hitsedik* pro *hitsdik*, cum scheva quiescente post vocalem brevem.

Studiosi certe, qui extremis solummodo labiis degustarunt Nostram Linguam, sciunt has voces aliter esse pronunciandas: cujus et inscitiae procul dubio te puduit, postquam gravissimos hos errores tuos cerneret omnibus compertos esse: cum postremis in editionibus non amplius voces Hebraicas Literis Latinis expresseris. Sed ad rem potius accedamus. *Non sine stupore*, inquis, dicere jure debuisses, *stupiditate observavi tot viros reverendos & clarissimos, magnosque in Literis Hebraicis Rabbinos scelus hoc non animadvertisse in illa nupera editione Josephi Athias anni 1667*. Bibliorum meorum approbatores Magnos appellas in Literis Hebraicis Rabbinos: mirum ergo, cum noveris quam curta sit tibi domi suppellex, quod adversus tot Rabbinos Christianos hiscere nihilominus ausus fueris; rectius utique fecisses, si ipsorum acquievisses iudicio. Scelus me commisisse dicis: at quo in negotio Scelus illud consistat, animitus opto mihi monstrari: illudne Scelus est, quod in margine Ps. 22.17 non sit annotatum כָּאֵרִי T^h Keri? Quis obsecro te docuit adiungendum in margine T^h Keri? Bibliorum Hebraicorum plerasque inspicias editiones & MS.S [sic] exemplaria, et vix decimo cuique adscriptum in margine videbis T^h Keri, et tamen impium nebulonem me appellas propter omissum hoc Keri. Scelus ergo juxta tuam opinionem admiserunt, & impii sunt nebulones Bombergus, Plantinus multis in editionibus, Angli in polyglottis, Buxtorfius, Jansonius, Veneti, aliique, qui omnes omnia marginali nota eodem modo, quo et ego, vocem hanc impresserunt. Cur non ante criminis ejusdem reos peregisti omnes illos autores, idemque in illis quod in me carpisti? Sed rem ipsam examinemus; toto coelo te errare dico, dum margini adscribendum esse censes T^h Keri: est enim contra fidem omnium Masoretharum & Masorae, ut & contra auctoritatem plerorumque probatissimorum exemplarium. Ostende, quaeso, ubi Masora (quae est quasi sepes legis), doceat, vocem כָּאֵרִי esse cethibh et כָּאֵרִי keri? Neque enim in Hebraicis te tantae auctoritatis esse censeo, ut tibi soli tanquam authentico Scriptori Fides

sit adhibenda. Erubescit jurisconsultus sine lege loqui; etiam te pudeat, quod tot viris eruditis audeas adversari nulla nixus probabili ratione. Regeres forte כֹּאֲרִי explicandum esse per *transfoderunt*, ac per consequens legendum per כֹּאֲרִי. Resp[ondeo] non esse necessarium, ut per *transfoderunt* explicetur; commode satis exponi potest per *sicut leo*, et verbum הִקְפִּינִי per *perfora-* [p. 4 = A 2 verso] *runt* a radice נִקְרָה, quod *perforandi, incidendi et frangendi* significationem habet; ut talis sensus sit: *nam circumdederunt me canes, coetus maleficorum perfoderunt mihi, sicut leo, manus meas et pedes meos*. An non aequè crucifixionem probare posset haec expositio, ac falsa vocis כֹּאֲרִי interpretatio per *transfoderunt*? Quin imo miror summopere, te, cum Christianus sis, T^o Keri marginale praeferentem τ^o cethibh textuali, in Iudaeorum castra descendere, et quasi nobiscum judaizare. Nos quidem textuali voci praeferimus marginalem, sed me non latet Christianos vocem eligere textualem tanquam authenticam, et ab ipsis Librorum Authoribus profectam.

Pergis meam exagitare editionem, *quam*, inquis, *ab accuratione et fidelitate tam pompose et prolixè reip[ublicae] Christianae commendarunt, ut illis testimoniis et commendationibus nixus impius ille hostis Christi suam editionem ausus sit inscribere celsissimis et potentissimis DD Ordinibus generalibus Foederati Belgii, et hac arte egregium honorarium ab ipsis adhamare*. Merito viri illi celeberrimi ab accuratione et fidelitate meam commendarunt editionem, qua nulla accuratior a quoquam ante publici juris facta est: pariter enim a Rabbinis et Christianis perfecta fuit, et si forte post impressionem mendum remanserit, hoc penna fuit emendatum, in quo correctionis opere etiamnum ex ministris meis aliqui sunt occupati. Nullus unquam, quod citra jactantiam ausim affirmare, tales Hebraea Biblia sumptus impendit; notas ejusmodi Hebraicas, quibus multae tolluntur difficultates, margini nullus adscripsit; nemo unquam emisit in publicum a Synagoga nostra et plerisque simul Belgii Academiae approbata Biblia. Merito ergo, inquam, approbata mea editio est, et Celsissimis inscripta DD. Ordinibus generalibus, qui ea de causa maxima me persecuti sunt munificentia: in laboris quippe indefessi remunerationem dono mihi dederunt auream catenam cum numismate aurea ab ea pendulo, cujus visendi desiderio si captus sis, ubi Amstelodamum veneris, eam oculis tuis lustrandam exhibebo; ut ejus splendore motus felicius quid *Belgio tuo orthodoxo*, de quo minus gratum tibi iudicium tulerunt DD. Professores Leidenses, tentare incipias, atque simile vel majus adhamare praemium. Plurima possem addere, sed in praesens desino, hoc unicum adjiciens, me, si de novo Biblia mea carpere pergas, sine mora tibi responsurum: neque enim vel animus, vel Typographia deest, satis multis instructa ministris, mihi ad nutum inservientibus; et spero DD. Ordines justam mei defensionem mihi non interdicturos, quo minus, si iterum me diceris proscindas, impressurus sim Libellum sub hoc titulo; *Asinus ad lyram*. Vale vir reverende et celeberrime a

Tuo Josepho Athia

Amstelodami 4 Novembr[is] 1669

Appendix II

A Blind man on Colors, that is, a defense of Joseph Athias against the inept, absurd and unlearned censure of the well-known gentleman Doctor Samuel Maresius, in which he judges like a blind man the excellent and universally admired edition of the Hebrew Bible of the year 1667, in an epistle to a friend recently published

This year, in the month of September, a letter from Samuel Maresius to a friend was published in which, besides the fact that behind a charming petition for peace he insulted Dr. Voetius not lightly, he also tried, with stupid and thoughtless ignorance of the Hebrew language, to catch an error in the Bible printed by me as it has never been edited and printed before by someone else, purged of typographical errors. For this reason, it has been praised by learned men in England, France, Germany, Denmark and in other parts of the world, and it is in demand and ordered from all directions for a consistently good price. Do you insipidly censure me with clever quips for the exceedingly outstanding service of a most accurate edition? Does the law of Christ not teach you to abstain from jeering and abusive slanders? How, I beg you, and with what countenance, can you be so eager to bring ill repute to a man who never damaged you with as much as a word, as openly as you could? Surely your Savior teaches you in Luke 6:27 that you should *Love your enemies, do good to them who hate you, bless those who curse you*. Yet how surpassingly well you observe this law, since, as everybody knows, you do not even love your friends, but rather pursue, with hatred and abuse and by shameful names, him in whose mind even the slightest thought of ever harming you never entered. If you believe that these moral teachings of the Christian will bring about the conversion of our people, you are greatly mistaken. If you had judged something to be wrongly printed, you should have informed me of it with agreeable words. In turn, I would have shown in modest letters that you are completely mistaken, and that those things, which are annotated there or not annotated in Hebrew, surpassed your understanding, and that you judge them like a blind man judging colors. You call me a worthless fellow, insufficiently mindful of the commandment of your savior in Matthew 5:22, *Whosoever, he says, is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment...and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of bell fire*. Unless perhaps you think that you are not bound by laws, and that that edict only concerns the simple folk. As I will say with a word, you totally offend us, even though you will doubtless know *that whoso shall offend one of these little ones [which believe in me], it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*⁷⁶ And as much as you will have said that I do not have the true faith, you will nonetheless be accountable for alienating me in this way from your faith with impunity. Perhaps your indignation was provoked or increased by the fact that, attached to the front of my Bible, the names appear of theologians whose fame and esteem you, in your poisonous writings, have taken pains to

76. Matthew 18:6. The words 'which believe in me' are in the text of the Gospel, but omitted from the citation of that verse in this pamphlet.

ruin in every wicked way. Yet it is not for that reason that I have sought the opinions of those theologians, but rather because I knew them to be the most distinguished and the best known by our people, and furthermore, because I knew that they, since they are superbly skilled in Hebrew, would be able to provide the best judgment of this Bible. But, you will say, you could have prefixed my name to it as well. Indeed, I believe this [i.e. the fact that I did not] to be the principle cause of your hatred of me and of my Bible. But you must understand that your name, if it had been mentioned in the front matter of the Bible, would have driven away its buyers rather than attracted them. For all Jews as much as all Christians know your ignorance of Hebrew, hence you can only read most words in that language mistakenly. And in order that that may be seen not to have been claimed thoughtlessly, I will present certain pieces of evidence, from which it will be established clearer than the noonday sun, that you are a miserable and pitiable Hebraist, and rail [against me] in an obviously childish way, while you give Hebrew words in Latin letters for the young to read. For in your *Systema*, in the second edition which I have before me⁷⁷, on page 12 you transliterate ראשונים as *roschanim* instead of *rischonim*, on page 23 you transliterate אהיה as *eheje* instead of *ehje*. On page 134 you say that ירה means to teach, even though it never has that meaning. On the same page you transliterate המשפטים as *hamiscpatim* instead of *hammischpatim*. On page 135 you transliterate המצות as *hamitzevoth* instead of *hammitzvoth*, you omit the dagesh, and you read a sheva after a short vowel. On page 171 you read בשרה as *boschera* instead of *beschora*. On page 182 you give לשאול as *lescheol* instead of *lischol*, you read a double sheva at the beginning. On page 278 you read הצדיק as *hitsedik* instead of *hitsdik*, with a quiescent sheva after the short vowel.

Students who have tasted our language only with the very edges of their lips know for sure that these words are to be pronounced differently, and without doubt the ignorance thereof has put you to shame, after you saw that those grave errors of yours are known to all, since in the later editions you expressed Hebrew words with Latin letters no further. But let us proceed to a more important topic. *Not without astonishment*, you say, though more correctly you should have said *not without stupidity*, *I have noticed that so many reverend and excellent Rabbis, who are great in their knowledge of Hebrew letters, have not noticed and punished this impious crime, in that recent 1667 edition of Joseph Athias.*⁷⁸ You call the men who approved my Bible great Rabbis in their knowledge of Hebrew letters. How astonishing, since you know how limited your domestic furniture is, because you nonetheless dared to mutter against so many Christian rabbis. In any case, you would have acted more correctly, if you would have given in to their opinion. You say I have committed a heinous act, but of what matter that heinous act consists I

77. Athias is referring to Samuel Maresius, *Collegium Theologicum sive breve systema universae theologiae, comprehensum octodecim disputationibus collegialiter habitis in Academia Provinciali Ill. Ord. Groningae et Omlandiae. Editio 2, priori multo accuratior et duplò fere auctior* (Groningen: Joannes Nicolaus 1649). Maresius' *Systema* was first published in 1645, and reprinted in 1649, 1656, 1659, 1662, 1673, 1691 and 1694.

78. See Maresius, *Epistola ad Amicum*, p. 9.

heartily hope will be shown to me. Is that heinous act, that in the margin at Psalm 22:17 the *keri* כָּאָרִי is not noted? Who, I beg you, taught you that the *keri* is to be added in the margin? You may consult most editions and manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, and in barely one in ten of them will you see the *keri*, and still you call me *an impious scoundrel* for having omitted this *keri*. In your opinion therefore, Bomberg, Plantin in many editions, the English in the Polyglot, Buxtorf, Jansonius, the Venetians and others who have all omitted a marginal note in the same way, and printed this word like I have done, have all committed a heinous act and are impious scoundrels. Why have you not pierced through all those authors, guilty of the same crime, why have you not slandered them in the same way that you have slandered me? But let us examine the matter itself. I declare, by heaven entire, that you are mistaken, in believing that the *keri* must be written in the margin. For it is against the faith of all the Massorites and the Masorah, and also against the authority of the majority of the most outstanding texts. Show me, I beg you, where does the Masorah (which is like a fence around the law) show that the word כָּאָרִי is the *ketiv* and כָּאָרִי is the *keri*? In fact, I think that you do not have such authority in Hebrew, that one should put faith in you alone as if in an authentic scribe. A lawyer would blush speaking without the Law. And it puts you to shame, too, because you dare to oppose so many learned men on the basis of no acceptable reason. Perhaps you judge that כָּאָרִי must be understood as *they have pierced*, and must therefore be read as כָּאָרוּ. I respond that it is not necessary that it be understood as *they have pierced*. It can be explained properly enough as *like a lion*, and the word הִקְיִפוּנִי translated as *they have thrust through*, from the root נִקַּף, which has the meaning *to thrust through, to cut through, to fracture*, such that the meaning would be: *for dogs have surrounded me, the assembly of the wicked has thrust through to me, like a lion, my hands and my feet*. Can this explanation not prove the crucifixion in the same way as the erroneous interpretation of the word כָּאָרִי as *they have pierced*? On the contrary, I am completely astonished that you, being a Christian, prefer the marginal *keri* to the textual *ketiv*, descending to the encampments of the Jews and nearly Judaizing with us. Indeed we prefer the word in the margin to the one set in the text, but it does not escape me that Christians choose the word in the text as the authentic reading, and the one coming from the Authors of the [Holy] Books themselves.

You continue to violently attack my edition, *which*, you say, *they have commended to the Christian Republic so ostentatiously and generously for its accuracy and fidelity, such that relying on those testimonies and recommendations that impious enemy of Christ dared to dedicate this edition to the most noble and sovereign Lords the States General of the Dutch Republic, and by that cunning fraud to secure a handsome honorarium from them.*⁷⁹ Those most distinguished men have commended my edition justly for its accuracy and its fidelity, none more accurate than which was ever published before. It was read through equally by Rabbis and Christians, and if perhaps after the printing an error remained, it was corrected by pen, in the work of which correction some of my employees are engaged

79. See Maresius, *Epistola ad Amicum*, p. 9.

even now. No one ever invested so much in a Hebrew Bible, which I would dare to affirm without boasting. In the same way, no one [before] has added such Hebrew notes, by which many difficulties are removed, in the margin. No one has ever published a Bible that was simultaneously approved by our Synagogue and by most of the scholars at Dutch universities. It is therefore justified, I say, that my edition is approved, and that it is dedicated to the most noble Lords, the States General, who for this reason have granted me the greatest munificence. As a reward for indefatigable labor, they have given me a golden chain with a golden medal hanging from it, which, if you should be desirous to see it, when you come to Amsterdam, I will show it to shine into your eyes, so that moved by its splendor you may begin to try something with more success for your orthodox Netherlands, of which the Lords Professors at Leiden have held a judgment not so agreeable to you, and to secure a similar or greater reward. I could add much more, but I end for the moment, adding only this one thing, that if you should undertake to slander my Bible again, I will respond to you without delay, for I lack neither the will, nor the printing press, with numerous employees sufficiently instructed to be of service to me. And I hope that the Lords States will not forbid me my justified defense, that if again you should defame me with clever quips, I will print a pamphlet with the title *An Ass to the Lyre*. Fare well, reverend and distinguished sir,

Yours,

Joseph Athias,

Amsterdam, November 4, 1669

The End