THE TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA’S
BOOK OF TRAVELS FROM THE TWELFTH CENTURY TO 1633

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Abstract

This thesis explores the transmission and reception of Benjamin of Tudela’s *Book of Travels*, a twelfth-century Hebrew travel narrative. Scholarship of the *Book of Travels* is fragmentary, descriptive and largely focused on what the narrative can tell scholars about the twelfth-century Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. This study presents a methodological shift away from an intra-textual examination of the text by seeking to answer how the text has been transmitted, how successive copiers and printers have changed the text, and how readers interpreted and used the text between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries.

It begins with an outline of the extant manuscripts through a codicological examination and textual comparison. Based on a close reading of the manuscripts, it illustrates how the *Book of Travels* has survived in four separate textual witnesses. This study, however, highlights the centrality of the Jerusalem manuscript, which carried the transmission of the *Book of Travels* from manuscript into print. Whilst scholars have argued that the text has been edited and redacted, this thesis offers a more nuanced argument for scribal intervention as copyists, and later printers, altered the text through error and deliberate omissions and additions. Consequently, there is no single transmission of the *Book of Travels*. Although the core of the text remained unchanged, readers would have encountered different texts through the lens of copyists and printers.

The second half of the thesis addresses the medieval and early modern reception of the *Book of Travels*. It argues that the narrative was used in a variety of contexts, from polemics, to biblical geography and history by medieval Jewish scholars. The early modern reception, discussed more broadly, indicates that the printed Hebrew editions of 1543 and 1556 were read by an Sephardic audience for the purposes of connecting to their Iberian heritage, with an additional layer of interpretation which linked the text to the hope for redemption and the coming of the Messiah. As the text becomes introduced to Christian readers in both Hebrew and Latin, the *Book of Travels* was initially understood and used in a similar manner. The 1583 Hebrew edition and first Latin translation of 1575 also applied the text to history and biblical geography. This study thus illuminates the continuity in the way in which the *Book of Travels* was understood – as an eye-witness and authoritative source which found contemporary resonance with later readers. The second Latin translation of 1633 represents an evolution in the way in which the *Book of Travels* was interpreted, as the text was now engaged polemically to attack the Jews.

This study also investigates the censorship of the *Book of Travels*. It analyses not just the text which has been excised through self-censorship, and the prohibition and expurgations proscribed by both the Italian and Spanish Inquisitions, but also how this impacted the transmission and reception of the narrative. It is shown that whilst Inquisitorial censorship was seemingly systematic, it was unevenly applied and did not impact on the *Book of Travels’* transmission.

This thesis is ultimately a pioneering study of the afterlives of a Hebrew travel narrative which enjoyed a rich manuscript and printed tradition. In attracting both Jewish and Christian readers alike, the *Book of Travels* endured and continued to find relevance amongst audiences. As a result of its versatility the *Book of Travels* achieved a prominent position within the Jewish and Christian worlds crossing cultural and religious divides between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries.
Declaration

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Above all else, I wish to express my gratitude to G-d who controls and provides all.
A Note on Translations

All translations are my own. In the instance of place names, reference has been made to the English translations of the *Book of Travels* by Adolf Asher (1840) and Marcus N. Adler (1907) to maintain continuity. Any errors remain my own.
Chapter 1. Introduction

Within the genre of Jewish travel literature, few works are more celebrated than that of Benjamin of Tudela’s Sefer Masa’ot, or Book of Travels. Its author, Benjamin of Tudela, has been called the ‘Jewish Marco Polo’,¹ with the narrative an oft-quoted source for the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds of the twelfth century. This is, however, not a study of the person of Benjamin of Tudela – his motivations to travel or his authorial intentions. Rather, this is a study of Benjamin’s Sefer Masa’ot (hereafter the Book of Travels) as an enduring text.

The Book of Travels details Benjamin’s travels from Spain, more specifically Navarre, across Mediterranean Europe to the Holy Land, around the Middle East and back to the Iberian Peninsula via North Africa. Whilst the account also speaks of India, the Far East (China) and Eastern and Northern Europe, it is doubtful that Benjamin actually travelled to these regions.² Stylistically the Book of Travels is renowned for the brevity of its descriptions and its formulaic and repetitive nature. In short, it details the journey time between cities (given in various measures such as parasangs, days or miles), the size of the Jewish community and the names of the leading rabbis. The majority of these entries are comprised of a few lines, although at times, Benjamin offers a more interesting detail or comment. Five cities, however, are conspicuous for their greater length and detail of the description, namely: Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Baghdad and Cairo. Very little is known about the text’s author. The hakdamah (Prologue) states that it is the travel account of Benjamin son of Jonah. There are no dates provided in the narrative; the only date given is found in the Prologue which states that Benjamin returned to Castile in 1173 (See Appendix 1). Scholars are thus left with a name and a travel narrative of some 40 pages.³ This

³ There appears to be a Spanish scholarly tradition which gives Benjamin’s date of birth as 1130, although neither source provides evidence for this claim. See Ángel Sáenz-Badillos, Literatura hebrea en la España Medieval (Madrid: Fundación Amigos de Sefarad: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1991), p. 181 and José Ramón Magdalena Nom de Déu, ‘Testimonios arqueológicos del Oriente Próximo reflejados en el Séfer-Masa’ot de Benjamín de Tudela (Síria-Palestina, Mesopotamia y Egipto)’, Arbor, 180 (2005), 465-88 (p. 465).
prompted one historian to note that ‘Benjamin is one of those enigmatic figures in literary history who make their mark with one work and then are heard no more’.⁴

It must be noted that this thesis understands the *Book of Travels* to be an authentic (if embellished) travel narrative of a journey in the late twelfth century written by Benjamin of Tudela.⁵ It is, however, not concerned with Benjamin of Tudela’s intentions or the meaning of the text. Rather it will ask how medieval and early modern readers answered these questions. The specific passages used throughout the present study are therefore only discussed in relation to the transmission and reception of the *Book of Travels*.

There are two central questions which have occupied historians’ pens with respect to Benjamin of Tudela: the date of his travels and what motivated him to undertake such a journey. To address the latter question first; S.D. Goitein emphasised that travel was common enough amongst Jews to become a ‘humdrum experience’ to the extent that seasoned travellers would not ‘waste a word’ on such a frequent event.⁶ In the absence of an explicit reason stated by Benjamin in his account, not only for the journey but also why it was recorded, historians have used the internal textual evidence to suggest a number of motivations. On this evidence of its basic context, some believe that Benjamin’s objective was to become acquainted with and understand the Jews of other countries.⁷ Elka Weber has posited that the journey was a reconnaissance mission to ascertain which areas might be potential places for future settlement should Christian Europe become too dangerous for the Jews to remain.⁸ Joseph Shatzmiller, in assessing the general trends of travel in the twelfth century, and the religious constraints of Jewish travel in particular, suggested that Benjamin was concerned with

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⁵ As the anonymous Prologue states, Benjamin recorded either what he saw or what he heard from other, trustworthy persons. Since it is unlikely that Benjamin of Tudela travelled to places such as India and China, amongst others, the descriptions rely on hearsay which has the propensity for exaggeration and the fantastical.


problems of hospitality and thus recorded the size and names of community heads to aid other travellers.\textsuperscript{9}

The label of merchant is most often attached to Benjamin of Tudela. This motivation was best summarised by Meyer Waxman who, based on Benjamin’s accurate descriptions about trade and commerce, concluded that he was a merchant.\textsuperscript{10} Although Yoseph Levanon has expressed reservations on this, he still wrote that Benjamin’s ‘occupation was probably that of a merchant’.\textsuperscript{11} Whilst many historians subscribe to the merchant hypothesis others have focused on Benjamin’s descriptions of the Holy Land and visits to holy sites (including graves) to suggest that he was a pilgrim. Levanon, citing Benjamin’s focus on Jewish communities, contended that Benjamin travelled with messianic intentions; his accounting of the Jews began the process of locating Jewish exiles for the ingathering of the exiles which was an indication of the arrival of the messiah.\textsuperscript{12} Motivated through messianic hope, Benjamin undertook a personal pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{13} David Gitlitz has also acknowledged Benjamin’s ‘eyewitness information about pilgrimage activities’ but stops short of labelling Benjamin a pilgrim.\textsuperscript{14} Historians have clearly mined the Book of Travels for any insight into Benjamin’s motivations, but the textual evidence is open to interpretation. As Joseph Prawer succinctly stated, Benjamin’s motivations ‘have never been satisfactorily explained’.\textsuperscript{15} Historians have, therefore, been unable to offer a conclusive motivation for Benjamin’s travels.

The date and length of the journey has also been the subject of debate. Here too historians have turned to the internal textual evidence to offer a range of interpretations with C. Raymond Beazley exclaiming in 1901 that ‘the date of Benjamin of Tudela’s

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{10}Meyer Waxman, \textit{A History of Jewish Literature}, 5 vols (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1960), 1, p. 436. Although Waxman asserts this conclusion he continues by writing that we do not know the purpose of Benjamin’s travels and makes two further suggestions, pilgrimage and travelling to acquaint himself with the world’s Jewish communities.
\bibitem{12}Jewish tradition believes that one hallmark of the coming Redemption is that half the world’s Jewish population will be settled in the Holy Land.
\bibitem{13}Levanon, p. 280.
\end{thebibliography}
travel may be fixed from internal evidence’. Cecil Roth devoted an entire article to the chronology of the Book of Travels. Sifting through the nugatory historiography, two prevailing date ranges are offered, either 1159/60 to 1173 or 1165/6 to 1173 on names which can be identified and the date of certain twelfth-century world events. This includes, but is not limited to, the identification of rabbis and secular rulers and natural disasters. Marcus N. Adler offers a slightly different, and perhaps more realistic interpretation. In a textual note to the 1907 English translation, Adler used the textual evidence to conclude that Benjamin of Tudela was outside of Europe between 1166 and 1171. Adler, therefore, did not presume to fix a start or end date for Benjamin’s travels. Whilst the internal evidence has certainly provided historians with a broad chronological range in which to situate the Book of Travels, without an explicit statement of the year of departure and return, no firm dates can be attached to the journey.

Despite the number of possible motivations and suggested dates, the scholarly debate remains within the realm of speculation, with no definitive conclusions. As the above discussion demonstrates, an intra-textual examination of the Book of Travels can only advance the scholarship so far. Since the textual evidence is circumstantial and cannot be relied on, scholars who focused on the unanswerable questions have not taken the opportunity to explore the wider implications of such a rich text. Moreover, such questions become irrelevant when moving beyond a text-based inquiry in favour of contextualising the Book of Travels’ transmission and reception. The purpose of this study is to set aside such questions and focus on the Book of Travels’ manuscript transmission, its early print history and its readership to understand how the text survived between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries and what this tells us about how contemporaries understood this work.

16 Beazley, p. 225.
18 See Adler’s textual notes to the English part of his translation; Abraham David, ‘Jewish Travelers from Europe 12th-15th centuries’, Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos, 62 (2013), 11-39 (p. 13) and María José Cano Pérez, ‘Los Notables Judíos de Cataluña y el sur de Francia según el ‘Sefer Masa’ot’ de Benjamin de Tudela’, Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos, 53 (2004), 73-95. Pérez’s article reveals that many of the rabbis named towards the beginning of the journey were well-known scholars and published authors, with many descended from notable and powerful families. Whilst seminal for why this may have been significant for Benjamin the traveller, the article relies on an intra-textual method of study.
19 Adler, English Part, Note 1, pp. 1-2. Unless otherwise noted, the pagination refers to the Hebrew part of Adler’s text. See Shalev, ‘Explorer’, p. 18.
Malachi Beit-Arié has noted that c.70,000 handwritten Hebrew books, including medieval and post-medieval and fragmentary works, have survived. This is ‘a very small portion of the entire book production of the Jewish people’. The Book of Travels has therefore withstood centuries of Jewish migrations, persecutions and book burnings to endure to the present day. This is no insignificant feat. With a textual history of over 800 years, scholars have rightly been transfixed by the narrative and continue to find relevance in the text, if only to shed light on the past. It is, however, of equal importance to study the Book of Travels’ transmission and reception. This represents a methodological shift from the text to the narrative’s transmission background and context. In the period under discussion there are four extant manuscripts and five printed editions, three in Hebrew and two in Latin. One aim of this study is to determine how accurately the text has been transmitted. In short, the Book of Travels has not survived in an unaltered form but has undergone changes which have produced different textual witnesses. This is not a new discovery. Adler’s 1907 English translation and critical Hebrew edition produced extensive Hebrew notes indicating the variants across the manuscripts. Whilst this is an invaluable resource, the textual comparison lacks any meaningful context. This thesis simultaneously uses and builds on Adler’s scholarship. A textual comparison between the manuscripts and between the manuscripts and printed editions illuminates the relationship between the textual witnesses. In turn, it is shown that despite the textual differences, the Book of Travels remains the same essential text. Furthermore, this study challenges scholars’ bold claims (of which more below) that the Book of Travels has undergone editing. In providing textual evidence, it will be argued that the text experienced scribal intervention and changes during the printing process rather than wholesale revision.

The different states of the text are only significant in light of the fact that the Book of Travels can be read today because a contemporary audience read and perpetuated the text beyond its twelfth-century origins. That the Book of Travels was preserved attests to its continued readership. How contemporary and later readers interpreted the Book of Travels underpins the present study. Initially transmitted in Hebrew, the sustained use of the narrative within the works of Jewish authors contributes to our knowledge of medieval and early modern Jewish culture and intellectual life. A study of the Book of Travels’ Hebrew reception would only provide

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a one-sided perspective of the text’s reception. In the sixteenth century, the *Book of Travels* was transmitted to a Christian audience. This was first achieved through Hebrew print, and subsequently in Latin translation. How an exclusively Jewish text came to be appropriated by a Christian intellectual elite is discussed within the broader context of the transmission of ideas. Whilst it was not unusual for Christians to borrow from Jewish learning, particularly within the realm of biblical exegesis and Jewish-Christian polemics, it was unique to take a Jewish travel narrative and find relevance in the text for Christian study. The *Book of Travels*, therefore, acts as a case study. It allows for an examination of the role of books within the Jewish world, but also how specific texts crossed religious divides and became shared knowledge.

**Historiography**

It is gradually becoming a scholarly commonplace that the subject of travel studies, and its manifold genres, is an academic discipline in its own right. Under this umbrella term is the growing focus on medieval travel studies. Neither, however, are ‘new’ areas of research; rather there have been many contributions made to the fields of travel and trade, voyages and exploration, pilgrimage and travel literature. It is the last group which is of concern here, as scholars across disciplines have devoted more serious study to medieval travel literature. The most recent scholarship will be outlined thematically to show how the scholarship has evolved into a popular field of research but without any significant scholarly debate. Second, the small, but noteworthy historiography of medieval Jewish travel literature will be surveyed. Finally, the third section will discuss the fragmentary scholarship of the *Book of Travels* and locate it within the wider field of medieval travel literature. The historiography thus serves as the backdrop to this study to assess the prevailing themes of ethnography, genre and intra-textual examination which have dominated travel studies, and highlight how such themes have influenced the study of Jewish travel literature.

Within the broader discipline of travel literature, modern scholars have noted that the early historiography did not produce significant analytical works. Donald R. Howard observed in 1980 that medieval pilgrimage narratives were a ‘forgotten body

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of writings’ collecting dust.\(^{22}\) The modern field of research is, therefore, a recent development in response to the growing interest in travel literature. In the 1980s, frameworks were developed in which to examine medieval travel literature. Scholars such as Howard and J.P.A. van der Vin sought to evaluate why travel literature survived, the uses of travel literature and how to account for inaccuracies in the texts.\(^{23}\) Since the late 1980s, the field of research has been concerned with how travel narratives can inform scholars about the medieval past. This has focused on questions of the perceptions of the “other” vis-à-vis a traveller’s own identity.\(^{24}\) Scholars have concluded that much can be learned about the identity of the authors through their accounts rather than the identities of the peoples and places they are writing about. Questions of ethnography, the self and the “other” have all remained pertinent to the study of travel literature and reflect the historical trend to examine how Western Europeans imagined their world.\(^{25}\) A second trend to emerge in the historiography of the 1990s is scholarship on such themes as audience, authority and influence.\(^{26}\) There is, therefore, an ever-growing historiography in which the boundaries for exploring travel literature remain fluid and questions of how to analyse the narratives are still being put forth. As Jean-François Kosta-Théfaine notes ‘the riches [of the field] are just beginning to be discovered’.\(^{27}\) Nonetheless, the foundations for a rich, interdisciplinary field has helped to add another dimension to understanding life in the Middle Ages.


\(^{27}\) Kosta-Théfaine, p. viii.
In his recent monograph, Martin Jacobs stated that although medieval Jewish travel literature has been attracting a scholarly audience for some time, ‘this body has been largely underestimated and the critical scholarship on it has been relatively meagre’. Jacobs uses Zunz’s 1841 study to study set the boundaries of the field of research which have endured to this day. Jewish travel literature has been mined for information for Jewish historical geography and, consequently, the majority of scholarship has largely treated these narratives as reliable, eye-witness accounts of factual travels. Any information in the narratives which does not make sense is, as Jacobs correctly points out, either attributed to hearsay recorded by the traveller or dismissed as interpolations by later copyists resulting in the derogation of these sections. Jacobs’ historiographical assessment is an accurate summary of the state of the field of research. There are, however, a few other studies which have contributed to the foundations of the field of medieval Jewish travel literature.

Medieval Jewish travel literature began to attract attention in the nineteenth century. This is congruent with the wider trend of greater interest in travel writing as a whole. Accounts of foreign travel as well as guide books were a popular genre and commercially successful in the nineteenth century. They fostered curiosity, wonderment and adventure, mixed with a desire for the acquisition and possession of these distant lands. Travel accounts detailed individual travel experiences, guides and instructions for future travellers, religious admonition and advice on imperial administration. Above all, they recorded scientific, geographical, ethnographical and anthropological discoveries. This was an age of classification, of Europeans attempting to situate themselves within an imperialistic world in the pursuit of economic and territorial expansion. Jewish interest in travel literature is more difficult to ascertain. Elkan Nathan Adler links Jewish travel to the character of the wandering Jew with Jews travelling as merchants, exiles, pilgrims and ambassadors. Perhaps, then, Jews

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28 Jacobs, p. 7.
29 Jacobs, pp. 7-8.
took an interest in their brethren’s accounts as it linked Jews across the Diaspora, described the geography of Scripture and provided mercantile guidance.

A number of scholars produced survey texts of Jewish literature which included encyclopaedic entries of Jewish geography and travel. The earliest scholarship concluded that medieval Jewish travel literature was read for enjoyment and was of no further significance.32 It was not until the 1980s that medieval Jewish travel literature attracted more scholarly analysis. Levanon used the narratives of Benjamin of Tudela and Petachia of Regensburg (1174-87) to demonstrate that Jewish travel during the Crusades was inextricably linked to Jewish longing for the messianic redemption. Prawer, on the other hand, read the narratives of Benjamin of Tudela, Jacob ben Nathanel (1153-87) and Petachia of Regensburg as religious pilgrimage accounts which preserve the cultural memory of holy sites venerated by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Both scholars situated their analysis within the context of the Crusades, an approach which concurs with historians who have situated medieval pilgrimage within the Crusader movement33 and links the emergence of travel literature with the Crusades.34 Nevertheless, Levanon and Prawer’s interest in the narratives remained intra-textual and focused on what the texts can tell historians about the past.

There appears to be no further scholarship published in relation to medieval Jewish travel literature as a corpus until the 2000s. Elka Weber’s study recognised that medieval travel had received less attention than (early) modern travel and sought to address why. Through a comparative approach Weber detailed the similarities between medieval Jewish, Christian and Muslim travellers. The opening chapters questioned why travellers wrote and for whom and argued that a relationship exists between writer and reader. Weber wrote of the ‘observer’ and the ‘observed’, authorial voice, intentions and how the resulting narratives came about. The first part of the study is

unique because it examines travel narratives beyond their use as evidence for the past.⁴⁵ One theme to emerge from Weber’s work is that travellers not only recorded their observations, but also second-hand information as part of writing for a specific audience.⁴⁶ Second, that travel narratives were regularly revised, either by scribes or editors.⁴⁷ The potential for editing is thus reduced to a commonality across the corpus of medieval travel literature. In this vein, Weber’s comparative research shows that the Book of Travels was not exceptional in experiencing textual alterations.

The question of genre in relation to medieval Jewish travel literature, a common theme within travel studies, has been explored by Ayelet Oettinger. The article examined six Jewish travel narratives to ascertain why Hebrew itineraries emerged in the twelfth century and questioned whether they can be considered a separate genre by comparing common characteristics, such as their formulaic pattern, straightforward language and brevity, across the texts. It also briefly touched on the subject of audience and authority and states ‘itineraries were written for others to read and to believe’.⁴⁸ Whilst persuasive at points, Oettinger offers generalisations rather than any real depth and lacks comparative examples with which to strengthen the argument. Oettinger does, however, present a strong case to determine how the tradition of Hebrew itineraries emerged and concluded that enough commonalities are present to class Hebrew itineraries as their own genre. Like Weber, Oettinger focused on the texts rather than the travellers themselves and began to establish the foundations for future comparative study and to consolidate the position of the scholarship of Jewish travel literature.

Martin Jacobs is the most recent scholar to produce any significant treatment of Jewish travel literature. His 2015 monograph examined how medieval and early modern Jewish travellers experienced the Islamic world ‘as part of their search for definitions of identity, community and home’.⁴⁹ Jacobs thus maintains the traditional use of travel literature, in this case specifically Jewish travel writings, for ethnography

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⁴⁵ See Weber, Traveling Through Text.
⁴⁶ Weber, pp. 57-60.
⁴⁷ Weber, pp. 52-55.
⁴⁹ Jacobs, p. 17. See also ‘From Lofty Caliphs’. Jacobs has also produced scholarship on Jewish travellers and mental mapping, see ‘The Sacred Text as Mental Map: Biblical and Rabbinic “Place” in Medieval Jewish Travel Writing’ in Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schafer on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, 2 vols, ed. Ra’anan S. Boustan, et. al (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1, pp. 395-417.
to explore ethnic and religious identity in relation to the “other”, in this instance Muslims, Karaites and Samaritans. The most significant contribution made by Jacob’s for the present study is the extensive survey of medieval and early modern Jewish travel literature. Here Jacobs’ showcased the manifold forms of Jewish travel writing, from itineraries and lists of holy sites to letters and poetry. Jacobs concluded that Jewish travel writing underwent fundamental changes between the medieval and early modern periods concerning perception and representation and, in particular, how the authors placed themselves within their writings.\(^{40}\) It is further revealed that Jewish travel accounts are a multifaceted corpus which offers an array of Jewish perspectives of the East. Whilst their historical significance is brought to the fore, Jacobs has demonstrated that Jewish travel literature is open to new forms of interrogation and that intra-textual examinations have not been exhausted. Nevertheless, the critical study of the different genres of Jewish travel literature in the first part of the monograph creates new avenues for a contextual examination of these texts.

In 1999, Galit Hasan-Rokem commented that the ‘scholarly treatment of Jewish medieval travelogues have addressed these texts foremost as historical and ethnographic documents. They have rarely been appreciated for their literary talent and craftsmanship invested in them or for their imaginative power or their potential to generate cultural images’.\(^{41}\) Hasan-Rokem’s comment gives the impression that Jewish travel literature has received a great deal of scholarly attention, which is not entirely accurate. One can say that scholars have begun to engage more with medieval Jewish travel literature, particularly since the 2000s, but that there is not yet any sustained scholarly analysis. What Weber, Oettinger and Jacobs have achieved, however, is to bring this body of literature to the fore. Their research has begun the conversation that within medieval travel literature is a vibrant corpus of Jewish travel literature whose scope for research remains to be explored, not only from the perspective of their authors, content and purpose, but also as cultural artefacts which can provide insight into how the texts have been preserved and their audiences.

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\(^{40}\) Jacobs, p. 207.

A cursory glance of the English and non-English scholarship\footnote{See for example: María José Cano, ‘Las relaciones judeo-árabes en oriente prósimo según el viajero hispano-judío Benjamin de Tudela’ in Claves para la paz en el Mediterráneo, ed. Khadija Saidi and María José Cano, (Granada: Alcántara, Asociación para el Desarrollo de las Relaciones entre España y Marruecos: Instituto de la Paz y los Conflictos, Universidad de Granada, 2006), pp. 28-38; Annelies Kuyt, ‘Die Welt aus sefardischer und ashkenazischer Sicht: die mittelalterlichen hebräischen Reiseberichte des Benjamin von Tudela und des Petachja von Regensburg’, Chloe, 34 (2003), 211-231; Giancarlo Lacerenza, ‘Echi biblici in una leggenda: Tiro in Beniamin da Tudela’, Annali (Istituto Universitario Orientale), 56:4 (1996), 462-470; Stefan Schreiner, ‘Benjamin de Tudela, un judío sefardi de viaje por el oriente islámico’, El Olivo, 33/34 (1991), 107-122; Salvatore Tedeschi, ‘L’Ethiopie dans l’itinéraire de Benjamin de Tudèle’, Abbay, 13 (1988), 77-90.} of the Book of Travels would suggest that a comprehensive and vibrant historiography exists, and yet the opposite is true. Despite being oft mentioned and quoted in a diverse range of sources the scholarship remains piecemeal. There are innumerable publications which include the Book of Travels in a nugatory fashion and mine the account for place-specific quotes or the historical roots of peoples and places. It would make for a tedious task to enumerate all the sources in which the Book of Travels is used as evidence. Scholars, therefore, must delve into a broad range of sources to begin to understand Benjamin of Tudela and the Book of Travels. As such, there is no single, definitive monograph on which to draw, resulting in a lack of critical analysis and, like the scholarship of medieval travel literature, dialogue between scholars. Nevertheless, the most recent scholarship on Benjamin of Tudela has begun to move away from nugatory and descriptive works to more investigative research.

The historiography of the Book of Travels begins in the nineteenth century. The general trend, which has continued into the present day, has been to use the narrative as a literary text to inform historians about the Jewish and non-Jewish medieval world. David Mesher rightly noted that ‘every modern study of a remote or obscure Jewish community uses Benjamin of Tudela’s descriptions’.\footnote{David Mesher, ‘Benjamin of Tudela’ in Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopedia ed. Jennifer Speake, 3 vols (New York and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003), 1, pp. 86-88 (p. 87).} Furthermore, Jacob Seide placed Benjamin of Tudela ‘among the outstanding travellers of the Middle Ages…[and is] perhaps superior to most other travellers, namely in being a man of learning and a very faithful recorder of observed facts.’\footnote{Jacob Seide, ‘Medicine and Natural History in the Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela (1100-1177), Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 28 (1954), 401-07 (p. 401).} As a result, historians traditionally understand the Book of Travels to be a factual, eye-witness account of an actual journey made in the twelfth century. One of the purposes of the present study is to investigate whether this is a modern phenomenon, or if the use of the Book of
Travels as an eye-witness source has its roots in an earlier period, thereby providing continuity in the way in which the narrative was understood.

Alanna E. Cooper’s work summarised multiple versions of the legend of the Ten Lost Tribes as recorded by Jewish travellers. Cooper sought to explain why the legend has captured the Jewish imagination for so many centuries. The argument heavily relies on the Book of Travels, well known for its descriptions of the Ten Lost Tribes, to illustrate that the Lost Tribes are portrayed as an archetypal representation of a positive diaspora. Whilst Copper also employed the narrative as a literary text, in the examination of the closing passages of the Book of Travels and their relation to diaspora, Cooper briefly addressed the question of transmission. She noted that, based on Adler’s assessment, the passages are incongruous with the rest of the narrative and are indicative of a later editor, writing in a footnote that ‘[t]he text’s evolution between the twelfth century…and the sixteenth century is still an open question’. Cooper’s remark reveals that the text’s transmission has remained understudied but that such as study would help to inform its use as a literary text.

To date, there has been no systematic treatment of the Book of Travels’ transmission and reception. Articles have sporadically appeared which have explored these subjects, two of which were published in 2010. Margaret Kim and Zur Shalev addressed the text’s reception in the early modern world. Kim’s article investigated how the narrative was received and interpreted by English Protestants in the seventeenth century in relation to trans-Atlantic colonial expansion. Kim argued that early modern Protestant readers were interested in the Book of Travels because it led to debates the role of the “other” in colonisation and expansion and an interest in difference (ethnic identity) which led to toleration of groups of “others”, such as Jews. Whilst Kim contributed an ethnographic piece to Benjamin scholarship, this was accomplished through a framework of the text’s reception, and ultimate transmission to the Americas. Shalev’s study explored Arias Montano’s 1575 Latin translation and its impact on biblical geography and the text’s introduction to the

45 Alanna E. Cooper, ‘Conceptualizing Diaspora: Tales of Jewish Travlers in Search of the Ten Lost Tribes’, AJS Review, 30:1 (2006), 95-117 (p. 98). I have chosen to include Cooper’s article here rather than in the section on Jewish travel literature as it is more relevant to the present discussion.
46 Cooper, p. 116.
European Republic of Letters (further explored in Chapter 5).

Both Shalev and Kim’s articles move beyond descriptive and evidentiary uses of the *Book of Travels* and focused on the interest it continued to generate amongst an early modern readership.

Shalev asserted that further research was needed to trace the significance and impact of the *Book of Travels* after 1575. The present study builds on Shalev’s work and, in the first instance, extends Shalev’s argument that Montano was solely interested in the text for the study of biblical and sacred geography. As will be shown, the prefatory material written by Montano, which precedes the Latin text, contains additional information about Montano’s interest in, and his decision to translate the *Book of Travels*, which furthers our understanding of the 1575 edition. Second, this thesis answers Shalev’s call to examine the *Book of Travels*’ transmission and reception beyond 1575. By including L’Empereur’s 1633 Latin translation it will explore why the text was translated a second time and what this meant for the *Book of Travels* reception in the seventeenth century.

Questions of authenticity, linked with the *Book of Travels*’ transmission, have also been raised. As early as 1899, C. Raymond Beazley asked why Benjamin of Tudela was ‘classed with such fable-mongers as Sir John Mandeville and Psalmanazaar?’ further stating ‘is not the narrative trustworthy as far as Baghdad?’. Most recently, Francois-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar commented that it has been ‘argued that Benjamin of Tudela’s narrative might much more be the fruit of scholarly culture than that of a real travel experience’. Rolf-Peter Schmitz, Giancarlo Lacerenza and Juliette Sibon have all analysed the literary structure – such as the route, description of Jewish communities and their numbers, and places – of the *Book of Travels* to determine its authenticity. Schmitz argued that Benjamin was a factual narrator who was not prone to providing fantastical tales about the East which medieval readers of travelogues seemed to expect. Whilst highlighting inconsistencies in the account, Schmitz accepted that Benjamin did not personally visit places east of Baghdad but relied on others’ reports. On the whole, he concluded that Benjamin was a reliable and

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49 Shalev, ‘Explorer’ p. 17.
trustworthy author. Schmitz did not further the debate, but rather provided the evidence by which scholars can continue to use the *Book of Travels* as a factual travel narrative.

Lacerenza and Sibon argued the exact opposite. Lacerenza agreed with Prawer in the dating of the text to c.1165-1173 but noted that the text contains earlier geopolitical references (no examples are explicitly stated) which would date the *Book of Travels* to c.1140-60. Lacerenza dismissed this possibility and concluded that these earlier references are either derived from outdated information or sources which contaminated the text. This prompted Lacerenza into an examination of the structure and content of the *Book of Travels* in which it was argued that Benjamin of Tudela was a merchant-traveller who composed a travelogue containing both factual and fictitious sections and contains redactional strategies. As such, Lacerenza concluded that the *Book of Travels* had been embellished by an erudite and anonymous editor.

Sibon began with a presentation of the tradition concerning the authenticity of the *Book of Travels* and the person of Benjamin. An assessment of the inconsistent provision of information, such as six lengthy interruptions in an otherwise repetitive text, and the fact that one can find similar material in contemporary Hebrew and Arabic accounts, led Sibon to conclude that there never was a Benjamin who travelled, but a person or persons who collated and compiled information to satisfy the demands of an audience for the outlandish and unusual (which is in direct opposition to Schmitz who understood the narrative to be a true record of Benjamin’s journey). Sibon, however, did not seek to diminish the value of the *Book of Travels*, but rather to use it to demonstrate how wide the frame of reference and learning was for its medieval Jewish author(s). Here again, an intra-textual approach is pursued to address the narrative’s authenticity. The argument remains unconvincing because Sibon’s bold claims are not supported by textual evidence. The line of inquiry of the present study, which seeks to understand the *Book of Travels’* contemporary reception, reveals that readers, at least until the seventeenth century, were not troubled by questions of

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54 Lacerenza, p. 95.
authenticity. Whether the text is a true record of a journey is thus irrelevant if readers interpreted it as a factual account.

Two final articles must also be taken into consideration, those of Reuven Kashani and David Jacoby. Kashani’s article is a superficial overview of the *Book of Travels*.\(^{56}\) Similarly, Jacoby addressed the standard questions of chronology, the purpose in listing Jewish communities and Benjamin’s motivations to travel to also provide a broad picture of the *Book of Travels*, without claiming to be exhaustive.\(^ {57}\) Both Kashani and Jacoby state that the *Book of Travels* is the work of an editor. Bold claims such as these, along with Sibon, which lack textual evidence in support, are fully addressed in Chapter 2.

The above has presented a brief survey of the current state of research pertaining to the *Book of Travels*. It has shown that scholars have used the narrative as a literary text, demonstrating the value of its contents. This has, however, come at the expense of examining the contexts in which the *Book of Travels* has survived. The same can be argued for research into the reception of the *Book of Travels* (with credit to Zur Shalev who has made some strides in this area). This thesis moves beyond the narrow confines in which the *Book of Travels* has been traditionally used. Rather than a textual autopsy of the narrative, it focuses on the extant manuscripts and early modern Hebrew and Latin editions to understand how the *Book of Travels* survived and remained relevant to subsequent audiences.

**Structure**

The *Book of Travels* is not only an important medieval travel narrative, it is one of the most important medieval Jewish texts to survive. This in itself is unique; in an era from which many texts have not survived the *Book of Travels* did. Moreover, amongst those medieval texts which were not lost, many lost their significance and ceased to be read in the sixteenth century (although many were rediscovered by scholars in the late nineteenth century). This is, however, not the case for the *Book of Travels*; as will be shown, the *Book of Travels* was never relegated to the status of a forgotten text which was later re-discovered, but was kept ‘alive’ from the later Middle

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Ages through to the Enlightenment. Rather, the Book of Travels is an exceptional text for having both a continual manuscript tradition and an enduring print tradition. This is, therefore, a case study of a twelfth century text which has enjoyed a sustained interest by audiences who have preserved the text. As such, it will not just explore the chronological transmission of the Book of Travels, but also how the text has engendered a number of interpretations based on how, and in what contexts, it was read.

There are, by necessity, limits to this study. Whilst the Book of Travels has been transmitted in the centuries after 1633, to include the vernacular translations would have extended the research beyond any meaningful discussion. It will, therefore, only consider the Book of Travels’ transmission from its twelfth century origins to the extant manuscripts of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries and the Hebrew printed editions of 1543, 1556 and 1583. It will then trace how the Book of Travels was transmitted from Hebrew into Latin, and examine the first translation of 1575 and the subsequent 1633 translation. This enables a diachronic examination of the text by considering the continuation of the Book of Travels in both manuscript and print. It also facilitates a broader discussion about the sustained interest in the Book of Travels, by both Jewish and Christian audiences, across the centuries without the artificial boundaries of periodisation. It will thus be possible to trace the continuities and changes in the narrative’s transmission and reception.

One of the over-arching themes of this thesis is transmission. As this study will demonstrate, transmission here is understood to mean both the chronological transmission and the textual state(s) of the Book of Travels. To date, no scholarship has posed the question: what are the states of the manuscripts? In other words, are all the manuscripts the same text or has the Book of Travels survived in different textual witnesses? Concomitantly, no codicological examination of the manuscripts has ever been published; yet, it is essential to understand the physical characteristics of each if we are, in turn, to understand the narrative’s transmission. Chapter 2 addresses these questions and outlines both the codicological data of each manuscript and discusses the textual differences found across the extant medieval manuscripts of the Book of Travels. Chapter 3 explores the Hebrew printed editions to determine their textual similarity and what their relationship is, if any, to the manuscripts. Based on intensive comparative readings of the manuscripts and sixteenth century Hebrew editions, it is argued that there is no one Hebrew transmission of the Book of Travels.
The second theme of the present study is reception. This is inextricably linked with transmission; it was only possible for the Book of Travels to enjoy a continuous transmission because people read the text. The present study, therefore, also examines the Book of Travels according to how it was received by its medieval and early modern Jewish and Christian audiences. As outlined above, the modern historiography has, for the most part, tended to view the Book of Travels as a factual travel narrative; this is particularly true as the text has been accepted as authoritative for its descriptions of the Jewish communities of the twelfth century. It remains to be seen, however, why historians have accepted the Book of Travels as fact, and whether this has always been the case. As this thesis will show, this reputation has its antecedents in the medieval period.

How the Book of Travels has been read and used in a Jewish context has never previously been explored. Building on the foundations of the Hebrew manuscript and print transmission, Chapter 4 details six examples of Jewish scholars who quote from the Book of Travels in its manuscript tradition. Each of the examples shows the diversity of the contexts in which the narrative was quoted, from polemical discussions to biblical geography and biography. There is, however, a disparity of evidence between the reception of the manuscripts and the reception of the printed editions. Consequently, only the reception of the 1543 and 1556 editions can be more broadly discussed. It focuses on an Iberian audience who sought to reclaim their literary and cultural heritage, whilst perhaps seeking solace in the Book of Travels' descriptions of the dispersed Jewish people. The chapter closes with a discussion of the Book of Travels transmission beyond an exclusively Jewish audience. By the late sixteenth century, the Book of Travels had attracted Christian attention. The 1583 edition offers a concrete example of Christian use. The narrative was not only being read in Hebrew by Christians but was also translated into Latin. Chapter 5 examines this transmission. First translated in 1575 by Benito Arias Montano, the edition introduced the Book of Travels to an even wider Christian audience (beyond that of the 1583 Hebrew edition). Although Montano’s edition was successful, a subsequent translation was produced by Constantijn L’Empereur in 1633. The Latin editions can been seen as both transmitters and receivers of the Book of Travels; as translators Montano and L’Empereur embody the dual role of reader and author, simultaneously reading and interpreting the Book of Travels for their own diverse interests and then deciding to translate it for a specific audience in mind.
Chapters 2, 3 and 5 all discuss the *Book of Travels*’ successive transmission from century to century and from Hebrew to Latin. From this it could be assumed that the *Book of Travels* experienced an unhindered transmission. It has never previously been suspected that an apparently innocuous text was thought to be dangerous. The manuscript and print evidence, however, reveals periods in which the *Book of Travels* incurred censorship, both Jewish self-censorship and ecclesiastical censorship in the period under discussion. Chapter 6 focuses on both the content that was censored and why. As will be seen, neither the self-censorship nor that of the ecclesiastical authorities hindered the transmission and reception of the *Book of Travels*.

This thesis offers a new approach to the study of the *Book of Travels*, one which does not simply engage with the narrative as a text to be mined for facts to shed light on the twelfth century Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. Rather it approaches the text from a new direction – its manuscript and print traditions – to place the *Book of Travels* in different contexts. By examining the text across a significant time span, it shows that the *Book of Travels* continued to be transmitted because different audiences adapted it for their own specific uses. Consequently, the *Book of Travels* experienced varying levels of textual intervention as copyists and printers liberally changed the text. The *Book of Travels*, as will be shown, enjoyed a multiplicity of uses. Until the sixteenth century, whether read in Hebrew or Latin, by a Jewish or Christian audience, the *Book of Travels* was understood to be an eye-witness account of a twelfth century journey to be used for information about the historical past. Early modern Jews added additional layers of meaning when Iberian exiles sought to recreate the lives that they lost after the Expulsion. By the late sixteenth century, the interpretation of the *Book of Travels* within a Christian context changed. In the first instance, it attracted suspicion from the Church for its messianic overtones and numerous Christian references. Second, through the 1633 edition, the *Book of Travels* entered into the realm of Jewish-Christian polemics. This thesis, then, offers a study of the afterlives of a Hebrew travel narrative, its textual changes and accumulation of meanings from its twelfth century origins to 1633, to demonstrate how the *Book of Travels* has remained relevant to subsequent audiences.
Chapter 2. ‘Rabbi Benjamin’: The Book of Travels in Manuscript

When Adolf Asher published his English translation in 1840 he bemoaned the fact that he did not have a single manuscript to consult; his text solely relies on the 1556 printed edition. Sixty-seven years later, Marcus Nathan Adler published a second English translation and is widely considered superior to Asher’s for two reasons: first, the translations is based on the manuscript held at the British Library, and second, the text of the manuscript is provided with Hebrew footnotes which indicate the textual differences across the medieval manuscripts and Asher’s edition. Asher’s edition also listed all of the printed editions, since 1543, known to him in Hebrew, Latin, French, Dutch, Yiddish and in English excerpt; Adler, however, provided a list with brief descriptions of the surviving manuscripts. Whilst further lists and descriptions of the manuscripts (and by extension the printed editions) have appeared since 1907, notably in Ignacio Gonzalez Llubera’s 1918 Spanish translation, José Ramón Magdalena Nom de Déu’s 1989 Spanish translation and, most recently, Abraham David’s 2013 article, there has been no significant research into the textual transmission of the manuscripts.

Manuscript copies of the Book of Travels have been produced from the Middle Ages until as late as the twentieth century. Whilst it would make for a fascinating study to follow the manuscript tradition beyond the age of print, the purpose here is to examine the manuscripts produced before 1543 – the year of the first printed edition of the Book of Travels, which focuses this chapter on the pre-print transmission of the Book of Travels. There is a gap of approximately 200 years between the twelfth century composition of Benjamin’s narrative and the fourteenth-century London manuscript where nothing is currently known about the text’s transmission and reception. Internal evidence from the text does not suggest that the narrative was first transmitted orally. There are four extant manuscripts before the 1543 printed edition. Of these, three are complete texts, respectively held at the British Library, the Casanatense Library at Rome, and the National Library of Israel. The fourth is a fragment held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The aim of this chapter is to establish the transmission of the Book of Travels to determine the state(s) of the text. The first section individually examines the

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1 David, pp. 11-39.
2 Sibon’s article in fact argues that the author compiled information from a range of sources to produce the text, further suggesting that the narrative was always transmitted as a written account. See p. 221.
manuscripts and outlines their codicology and unique transmission history. The second section seeks to answer if, and how, the text changed from its twelfth-century origins to the extant Hebrew copies of the manuscript before the age of print. To do so, it will highlight the textual differences seen across the manuscripts. From this data, it will be shown how the *Book of Travels* has survived in four separate textual witnesses. This chapter will also respond to scholars’ claims that the *Book of Travels* has been redacted by one or more editors. This study does not deny that the text has undergone revision; rather, it provides the textual evidence in which to understand to what extent, and in what ways the *Book of Travels* has undergone editing. As will be seen, the textual differences, or variants, which have contributed to the different states of the text, are not just the result of scribal error; variants also include textual interpolations and self-censorship, in addition to passages which have not survived from one exemplar to the next. As a result, this chapter argues that from the *Book of Travels*’ twelfth-century origins to the Jerusalem manuscript of c.1520 different textual witnesses have been transmitted across the centuries.

**The Extant Manuscripts**

**London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27089**

**Origins:** Probably 14th century, Ashkenazi hand

**Provenance:** Giuseppe Almanzi; Asher & Co.; British Museum, now Library

**Folios:** 149r to 161v of 169 folios. Comprised of 23 texts.

**Codicology:** Quarto book, Paper, 195mm x 135mm, 39-42 lines per page, no marginalia

**Binding:** 12 or 13 quires in a 19th century binding as rebound by the British Museum

**Colophons:** None

**Library Stamps:** British Library on folios 149r, 155r and 161r

The oldest of the extant manuscripts of the *Book of Travels* is part of the Almanzi Collection (No. 195) now held at the British Library. Whilst the text is complete, a fire (of unknown date) has damaged the majority of the leaves in the middle of the inner margin, with folios 149-152 suffering the greatest damage. Although the *Book of Travels* is the eldest of the texts bound in this manuscript, one
which has presumably passed through many hands, there is little para-textual data. A single marginal note, written in a 19\textsuperscript{th}/20\textsuperscript{th} century hand is a notation that one would expect to find in a critical edition. It simply informs the reader that a section of Benjamin’s text is out of place (See Textual Comparison below).\(^3\)

The damage to the folios has affected the ability to attach a more precise date to the manuscript. A partial watermark is preserved on f.160. It cannot, however, be accurately identified as the page which would have contained the rest of the watermark has been completely burnt (and repaired with nineteenth-century paper). Nonetheless, the presence of a watermark suggests that the manuscript is unlikely to be dated before 1320, as paper was routinely watermarked from around this time, and is thus indicative of a fourteenth century date. The ALEPH catalogue of the National Library of Israel’s possible date of the late thirteenth century may therefore be mistaken.

The Book of Travels is bound with twenty-two other texts ranging from letters attributed to Maimonides, to the text of Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer and the Book of Eldad ha’Dani along with a number of midrashic and medieval rabbinc commentaries. This miscellany of texts has been (re)bound by the British Museum in the nineteenth century (most likely in the 1860s). There are a number of factors which may illuminate how these texts came to be bound together. First, the twenty-three texts are produced by eight different scribal hands. As mentioned above, the Book of Travels is written in a fourteenth-century Ashkenazic hand. Texts four, five, seventeen, eighteen and twenty to twenty-three are also all copied in an Ashkenazi hand dating from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. More specifically, texts five, seventeen and eighteen are accompanied by colophons; the first two texts are respectively dated to 1507 and 1504; all three were copied in Venice (given as מישטרי [Mestre]).\(^4\) Texts one to three, letters attributed to Maimonides, are in a sixteenth century Hispano-oriental hand. Interestingly, the middle eleven texts are a blend of styles. Texts six and seven are copied by the same scribe in a rabbinic Italian hand, though one influenced by the German style. Similarly, texts eight to sixteen, copied in a ‘firm Italian cursive hand’ as described by George Margoliouth, are also heavily influenced by the German style.\(^5\) Once again, these texts date to the sixteenth century. Thus, we have a miscellany where half of the texts are copied in a distinctive Hispano-Oriental or Ashkenazi style,

\(^3\) The author of this note may very well be Marcus Nathan Adler.
\(^4\) Mestre is the urban area of the mainland of Venice.
while the other half are Italian but with strong German influences. These texts may have, therefore, been bound together based on their similar palaeography and close date-range.

The *Book of Travels*, on the other hand, stands out both for its age and its lone scribal hand. The palaeography is of particular interest. The Ashkenazic hand further complicates the possibility of determining where the text was copied or for what purpose. As will be seen in Chapter 4, the manuscripts primarily enjoyed a Sephardic reception and yet the oldest manuscript, after an approximately 200 year lacuna, is in Ashkenazi script. This may be reconciled in three ways. According to Malachi Beit-Arié, one-fifth of almost all of the extant dated medieval Hebrew manuscripts were written by immigrant scribes who normally adopted the local codicological practices.\(^6\) One possibility, therefore, is that a Sephardic individual with a copy of the *Book of Travels* moved to an Ashkenazic community (traditionally Northern France and Germany) and produced a copy of the *Book of Travels* using the local script. It may also be that an Ashkenazi scribe travelled to the Iberian Peninsula to copy the narrative, albeit a scribe who maintained their own script. Alternatively, the *Book of Travels* had already entered into Ashkenazic circulation at an earlier date and was being transmitted as such. Although ultimately unanswerable, all of these possibilities are suggestive of an Ashkenazic transmission by the fourteenth century. The London manuscript is therefore significant as it provides a firm example of an Ashkenazi reader of the text.

An examination of the miscellany by subject-matter is equally baffling with respect to the *Book of Travels’* inclusion. The common thread across the texts is the number of commentaries (particularly *midrashim*) which have been bound together – 10 in total. It might therefore be asked where Benjamin fits; nevertheless, it is not the only travel narrative. Text Eight (f.93a-95b) is a *midrash* of the ten exiles which befell the Jews. It is followed by the *Book of Eldad ha’Dani*, a ninth century travel narrative\(^7\) as well as ‘other similar legendary matter’ as described by Margoliouth.\(^8\) The tract, unknown within scholarship, describes the four Jewish exiles of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Although this provides a link between two texts of a similar nature,

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\(^7\) Eldad ha’Dani’s account has traditionally been discounted, citing its many parallels with the medieval letters of Prester John. See Jacobs, pp. 43-44.

\(^8\) Margoliouth, 3, p. 462.
there is not enough evidence to draw any substantial conclusions regarding how Benjamin’s text came to be included.

Little other para-textual data accompanies the text which might shed light on its ownership. Within the manuscript itself there is neither colophon nor ownership note present. On the folio preceding the Book of Travels there is what appears to be an ownership note; it is, however, part of the previous quire, and is not complete due to page trimming.

The manuscript formed part of the Almanzi Collection. Giuseppe Almanzi (1801-61) was a bibliophile and scholar, whose father gradually built up a library. Almanzi himself travelled across Europe to add to his private collection. In a catalogue made of Almanzi’s library in 1864, Benjamin of Tudela is indeed listed. Under the ‘Manuscripts’ heading (ספרים כתיבת יד), No. 195 lists 17 texts, of which Benjamin of Tudela is number 15.9 At first glance, it appears that there are fewer texts in this catalogue than those listed by Margoliouth; on comparison, however, the same titles do appear on both lists. It is possible then, that Luzzatto’s catalogue did not explicitly name all the texts within a quire (for example text five is listed by Luzzatto as ‘Ten Exiles’ (עשר גליות) but omits Eldad ha’Dani as the continuing text on the same page) whereas Margoliouth did. This demonstrates that in the 1860s Benjamin was already bound with these texts as part of Almanzi’s library. It is also interesting to note that Almanzi owned three printed copies of the Book of Travels: the 1633 Latin edition, the 1764 Leipzig edition and Asher’s 1840 edition.10 Sometime between 1860 and 1865, much of the Almanzi library was in the possession of Asher & Co. who then sold the books on to the British Museum in 1865.

As stated above, a date cannot be accurately fixed to the London manuscript although a fourteenth-century date is likely. As such, the earliest history of the Book of Travels, from the narrative’s composition in the 1170s to the London manuscript is entirely lost. The significance of the London manuscript lies in the fact that it is the earliest manuscript with which to trace the transmission of the Book of Travels and that the first evidence for the text may not be in Iberia at all but in Ashkenaz. Any attempts to reconstruct the transmission from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries must remain in the realm of conjecture.

9 Samuel David Luzzatto, Catalogue de la bibliothèque de litterature hébraïque et orientale de feu Joseph Almanzi (Padua: Antoine Bianchi, 1864), p. 27.
10 Luzzatto, pp. 11-12.
Rome, Casanatense Library, Ms. 3097

Origins: 1428, Italian hand

Provenance: Anonymous Italian ownership note. Cardinal Girolamo Casanate

Folios: 1r to 28r of 120 folios. There is a lacuna of approximately two leaves of text between folios 11v to 12r. Comprised of 16 texts

Codicology: Quarto book, Paper, 200mm x 137mm, 26 lines per page, marginalia are present on a number of pages. A Latin table of contents from the 18th century precedes the text on an unfoliated leaf. Note on foliation and damage to the manuscript by a modern Italian librarian

Binding: 13 quires in a twentieth century binding as rebound by the Laboratorio di Resauro del libro

Colophons: One directly after the text

Library Stamps: BIBLIOTHEA. CARD. H. CASAN. D. O. PRAED, the stamp of Cardinal Girolamo Casanate on f.1v.

Unlike its predecessor, the second extant manuscript of the *Book of Travels* contains a wealth of data with which to better understand the transmission and reception of the narrative. The *Book of Travels* is the first of sixteen texts bound together in this miscellany, which includes texts about travels to the Holy Land, the *Book of Eldad ha’Dani* (also extant in the London manuscript), a Kabbalistic work, letters from Maimonides, and messianic-related texts. There are two foliation systems seen in the book: one in the top-left corner, written in pencil, and the second in the bottom-left corner. A Latin table of contents has also assigned roman numerals to the texts, of which more below. This study uses the top-left numbering system when referring to the folios.

Benjamin’s account is the first text in this miscellany (ff. 1r-28r). Gustavo Sacerdote recorded that texts one to eleven (until f.114r) were written in an Italian hand, with the remaining texts written in an Italian cursive hand. Adler, on the other hand, wrote that all of the texts were copied in the same hand. Consultation of the

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11 These texts are not known by scholarship.
13 Adler, English part, p. xiv. Unless otherwise noted, the pagination refers to the Hebrew part of Adler’s text.
physical text proves that it is Sacerdote who is correct as the hand changes for the final four texts; nevertheless, there is an error in Sacerdote’s numbering and the catalogue should state that texts one to twelve (not eleven) are all copied in the same hand. An examination of the quire structure shows that the scribal hand changes in the twelfth quire (ff.109r-118v) where Text thirteen, Maimonides’ Epistle to Shmuel ibn Tibbon begins on f. 114v. Texts thirteen, fourteen and fifteen fill the remaining folios of the twelfth quire. The final text, Signs of the Messiah (ff.119r-120r), is written in a quire of its own. It does not, however, fill the whole quire and leaves two, unpaginated, blank pages.

The chain and laid lines of the paper are clearly visible, although there are no discernable watermarks. This may be due to the repair and rebinding of the folios in the 1960s. In comparison with the London and Oxford texts the watermark evidence is less important for the Rome manuscript as the manuscript can be dated from subsequent colophons in the miscellany. As will be seen, the manuscript contains significant para-textual data which, when combined, provides greater insight into the transmission of the text.

The colophon after the Book of Travels is divided into three sections: the first two lines give thanks to God, the middle three lines detail when the copying was completed, and the final two lines are a comment on the text by the scribe. The name of the scribe is not recorded.

I thank you, Hashem, with all of my heart; I tell of all your wonders so long as my soul is in me. I give praise and thanks before you.

And I am the most junior, the smallest of the youth, of all the great and young. It should be known that today is called Thursday. It is called the Day of Judgement. I have completed the book called ‘Benjamin knows’ on the Thursday 6 November [18 Mar Cheshvan] the exact month in 15 days it will be exact [perhaps meaning that it took fifteen days to copy]. May Hashem become known.

14 Adler suggests the Hebrew date in brackets stating that the characters have been erased (here Adler means faded) from the manuscript. The date of 5189 corresponding to 1428 in the Gregorian calendar, is consistent with dates given in other colophons by the same scribe. See Adler, p. 73. Closer examination of the spacing between words in the colophon suggests that there is not sufficient space for these letters.
It appears that this book of Rabbi Benjamin is not complete; however, here I have not found more of it written down.16

This colophon reveals a number of insights. First, the title given to Benjamin’s travels ‘בנימין יודע’ (Benjamin knows) is a most interesting appellation. The title of the text in the Rome manuscript is ‘ספר בנימין’ (The Book of Benjamin). The London manuscript, on the other hand, does not entitle the text. Instead, the scribe has written the first line of the text in a larger script, writing it slightly above the rest of the narrative, therefore transforming the words ‘זה ספר מסעות שחבר ר’ בנימין’ (This is the book of travels of [our] friend Rabbi Benjamin) into the title. The Rome manuscript thus provides a new and unusual title for the narrative. What does ‘Benjamin knows’ mean? This did not escape the notice of Marcus Nathan Adler nor his relation Elkan Nathan Adler. The younger Adler cited Psalm 103:7 which begins, ‘יודיע דרכיו’ meaning ‘He made known His ways’. Noting the connection between the two phrases, E.N. Adler suggested that the title of the narrative was ‘בנימן יודיע’ – ‘Benjamin made known’ which is ‘not inappropriate to a description of travels’.17 If we accept Adler’s suggestion, the author of the colophon must have been aware of the phrase in Psalms and believed it to be an apt designation for a book of travels. Although impossible to know the scribe’s exact intentions behind the title, it does imply that the scribe understood Benjamin’s text to be one which imparted information (whether true or fictitious) to a reader.

The final line of the colophon is certainly the most intriguing with the scribe’s claim that his exemplar is incomplete (specific examples will be discussed in the textual comparison below). The final words ‘I have not found more of it written down’ warrants further examination. The implication here is that the copyist sought other copies of the Book of Travels to enable him to fill in the lacunae and thus produce a complete text. It is revealed, however, that this was not achieved and another manuscript was not consulted. This raises questions of the text’s transmission in Italy. First, if it was indeed copied in Italy, this would place the Book of Travels in Italy sometime before 1428. This is significant as it means that the Book of Travels reached

15 I am indebted to Professor Sacha Stern for his assistance in clarifying some of the wording in this colophon, and for his suggestion that Thursday was equated with the planet Jupiter, known by the name צדק (tzedek, justice). Dr Anthony Kleerekoper has also suggested that it could refer to בית דין (beit din, Jewish court of law) which traditionally sat Mondays and Thursdays.
16 Rome MS 3097, f.27r.
17 Adler, p. 73.
Italy before the arrival of Iberian exiles in 1492. Second, the scribe was aware that a longer text of the *Book of Travels* existed elsewhere, either because he had read it elsewhere, or was perhaps even told. From this it would seem that there was a significant circulation of the *Book of Travels*, as a single individual had been able to encounter the text twice. Yet the scribe was not able to find another exemplar from which to include the missing passages. This suggests that, whilst the *Book of Travels* may have been a relatively well-known work, physical copies of the narrative were not that readily available in Italy in the early half of the fifteenth century.

Adler’s 1907 edition notes that there is a significant lacuna in the Rome manuscript. The length of text missing is approximately two folios, from the middle of Benjamin’s description of Teeman to the end of the description of Hamah.\(^{18}\) The extant text of the Rome manuscript is thus incomplete. Why this might be is addressed in the textual comparison below.

The colophon immediately following the *Book of Travels* does not name the scribe. As noted, however, the first twelve texts are copied by the same hand. Further colophons by the scribe, extant after other texts, can be found on folios 40v, 42r, 56r, 71r, 100v, and 113r. In the final colophon the scribe is named as Isaac of Pisa:

לאלופ ה"ר יצחק מפיסא ר"בכמה מנחםntpוי עמו כסין שנה

The champion, the Rabbi Yitzchak [Isaac] from Pisa, when I was with Rabbi Menachem being employed by him for a year.\(^{19}\)

The hand of the first twelve texts can therefore be identified as that of Isaac of Pisa. The colophon further provides the fact that he was employed by Rabbi Menachem. The colophons, however, do not name the place of copying, and my attempt to identify Rabbi Menachem, or the career of Isaac of Pisa, have been unsuccessful. Whilst the colophons provide the earliest history of the manuscript, some gaps remain.

Exactly what underpins the overall conception of the collection of the first twelve texts can only be assumed. On the whole, the book may be termed an “intended miscellany”\(^{20}\) comprised of texts which Rabbi Menachem sought for his library and personal use. Perhaps he had an interest in travel literature, or intended to journey to the Holy Land, which would explain the presence of the four travel texts. It is also conceivable that the travel texts, alongside the text about the coming of the messiah

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\(^{18}\) Adler, pp. 30-32.
\(^{19}\) Rome, f.113r.
\(^{20}\) With thanks to Jessica Coatesworth for providing this terminology.
and the text of legends of Moses’ life, were read as works of history. Without any direct evidence of Rabbi Menachem’s usage however, reasons for why these specific texts were commissioned must remain speculative.

An Italian ownership note, of an unknown late medieval or early modern date, has also been preserved on f.56v. It states that the book was owned by Samuel Sahadun of Santa Fiora (a commune in the province of Grosseto in Tuscany) who had moved to Sorano (also in Grosseto):

Questo libro e di me Samuello
Sahadun ebreo di S. Fiora
Et adesso abita in Sorano
e[...] dio loguardi di male [a third illegible Hebrew letter] 'א 'י

This book belongs to Samuel Sahadun, a Jew of Santa Fiora, and now he lives in Sorano and may God protect him from evil.21

This evidence provides the next link for the manuscript’s transmission, albeit with no knowledge of the exact timeline. The Book of Travels left Rabbi Menachem’s possession at some point and, at a later, unknown, date was owned by Samuel Sahadun. Therefore, sometime between 1428 and 1740 (the date of the Latin table of contents), the Book of Travels was owned by a Jew in Tuscany, prior to its acquisition by Cardinal Girolamo Casanate in Rome.22

In addition to the colophons and Italian ownership note there are five main instances of marginalia scattered throughout the text, though not all are legible or comprehensible. Many of the words written in the margins belong to Isaac of Pisa who, during the copying process, must have accidentally skipped over them. In noticing his mistake, such as the ‘שם’ on f.2r, Isaac of Pisa corrected himself. This is equally seen in the Jerusalem manuscript, where there are a number of examples of a word, or words, written between the lines of text in the scribe’s hand. Here too the scribe omitted them by accident only to realise the error and return to self-correct the text.

The first two examples of marginalia, on f.5r and f.9r respectively, are written in the same unknown hand. Both instances are a single word without any explicit indication of what they refer to. The first is the word ‘מה’ (what), on f.5r. It is written next to Benjamin’s description of Sinon Potamo (the ancient city of Zeitoun, the

21 Rome, f.56v. I am indebted to Simona Perugia for her assistance with the note.
modern Lamia in Greece) which tells of a group called בלכזין (Valachi’in according to Adler). Benjamin describes a mountain-dwelling people who descend to attack the land of Greece and have close ties to the Jews:

They are not strong in the religion of the Christians and call themselves Jewish names. Some say they are Jews who they call “our brothers” and when [the Valachi’in] find [the Jews] they rob them but do not kill them like the Greeks. They have no law.23

It is not known exactly what the reader is questioning here, but the ‘what’ may be one of incredulity at what Benjamin relates.

The same hand is seen again on f.9r. with the word קבר (‘grave) written next to Benjamin’s section on Nablus. The narrative, as read in the Rome text, relates that a group of Jews claim descent from the tribe of Ephraim and that buried among them is [the biblical] Joseph:

Unlike the Rome manuscript, the London and Jerusalem manuscripts do contain the word קבר (‘grave).25 Our unknown reader may have been aware of this, either through access to another manuscript or perhaps even a printed edition, and supplied the word in the margin knowing of this alternate reading. Not only do these marginalia demonstrate a concrete degree of engagement with the text, but in supplying the word קבר, it supports the earlier argument that the Book of Travels was a known text. A third Hebrew marginal note is found on f.10r, though this time in a different hand. Little can be said about this note as it is incomplete, possibly from trimming or damage, and is therefore unintelligible. This is similarly seen on f.24r where the note again appears incomplete, possibly due to the damage, and subsequent repair, of the folios.

The two folios (f.27v to 28v) between the Book of Travels and the next text, which details an anonymous journey to Israel to visit the graves of righteous individuals, entitled ספר מסעות (The Book of Travels) in Sacerdote’s catalogue, are

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24 Rome MS 3097, f.9r.
25 Adler, p. 24; Jerusalem MS 82647, f.12v. Adler employs square brackets to indicate where words in the London manuscript have been ‘obliterated’. Where this is the case, Adler uses the Rome manuscript to complete the text.
largely blank. The blank folios are part of the third quire of the manuscript which includes Benjamin’s *Book of Travels* (from f.17r) and the first folio of the Book of Travels to Israel (f.29r). They are, therefore, not a later addition. As stated, the colophon to Benjamin’s narrative is written on f.27r with the verso side blank; f.28r, however, contains the line of a biblical passage written in a different hand:

ויהי היום ויעבור אלישע אל-
שונם ושם אשה גדולה וי
אליה

The line is from the beginning of a passage from 2 Kings, 4:8 which reads: ‘And it happened one day that [the prophet] Elisha travelled to Shunam. A great woman was there’. The final two words written by the scribe, one of which is illegible, are not found in the biblical passage. This fragmentary line, of unknown date, cannot be dismissed but bears no consequence to Benjamin’s text. Folio 28v. is also blank, giving the manuscript the appearance of wasting an expensive commodity. Blank folios, however, do elevate the status of a manuscript, suggesting wealth and a certain status of the owner.

Blank folios also precede the *Book of Travels*. The unfoliated leaves contain notes from two different hands. The first is an explanatory note, in Italian, written by a modern librarian drawing attention to the incongruity in foliation. It also informs readers that page 43 is torn and is therefore missing about one-third of the page. Second is a date and table of contents, written in Latin, in an eighteenth-century hand. The year given above the table of contents is 1740 and is written again on the title page above ‘ספר בנימן’ on f.1r. The Latin table of contents is numbered with Roman numerals and gives the titles contained in the manuscript in both Latin and transliterated Hebrew. This is likely to be a cataloguing exercise by a librarian of the Casanatense Library, again perhaps on acquisition.

The contents only list fifteen texts, compared with the current binding which contains sixteen. The fourth text in the book, also listed as such in Sacerdote’s catalogue, is *Travels outside of Israel*. This short text begins on f.37r but has not been assigned a Roman numeral and is thus excluded from the table of contents. It would appear, then, that the contents-creator failed to recognise this as the beginning of a new text and did not label it, thus omitting it from the contents as the result of an oversight.
The list is not just comprised of titles and authors but supplies additional information. The entry for the *Book of Travels* states that it is not necessarily true, has been edited and proceeds to give two bibliographic references:

*R. Beniamin ben Jona? Tudelensis [Hisp---]*  
Massaoth R. Beniaminani *Itinerarium*  
*R. Beniamin fabulis plenum pluries edit[---]*  
*Vid. Bartoloccius Bib. heb. Tom. I. p. 674. n.344*  
*Wolphius T.I. pag 242. n.395*

Rabbi Benjamin son of Jonah from Tudela [in Spain?]
The Travels of Rabbi Benjamin *Itinerary*
Rabbi Benjamin is full of fictions; edited many times
See Bartolocci Bib. heb. Vol. 1. p. 674. n.344
Wolphius V.1. pag 242. n.395

Here, the writer has given the full title of the text and its Latin equivalent. An authoritative note is then made stating that the *Book of Travels* is ‘full of fictions’ and has been ‘edited many times’. This may or may not be the personal opinion of the contents- creator as the final two lines refers the reader to two bibliographies. The first directs the reader to Giulio Bartolocci’s (1613-1687) *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica de scriptoribus et scriptus Hebraicis* published in four volumes between 1675 and 1693 (a fifth volume was published posthumously in 1694). An entry for Benjamin is indeed found in volume one, pages 674-76, in which Bartolocci states that the narrative is wrapped in stories.26 The second reference cites the four-volume *Bibliotheca Hebraea* compiled by Johann Christoph Wolf (1683-1739) between 1715 and 1733. Benjamin is indeed located in volume one on pages 247-49 with much of the entry echoing Bartolocci.27 The purpose, then, is to direct readers to bibliographic sources which provide further details about the text as well as listing the Hebrew and Latin editions.

The final example of para-textual data is the library stamp prominently displayed on the first folio of the *Book of Travels*. The stamp, at the centre-bottom of


27 Johann Christophe Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebraea, sive notitia tum auctorum Hebraeorum cujuscunque aetatis, tum scriptorium quae Hebraice exarata vel conversa sunt*, 4 vols (Hamburg and Leipzig: Christiani Liebezeit, 1715-33). Wolf studied at Wittenberg before being appointed a professor in Hamburg. At the time, the Oppenheimer collection, of Oxford fame, was housed there and provided the basis for Wolf’s bibliography. Even less appears to be known about Wolf than Bartolocci. See the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia online: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14978-wolf-johann-christoph [accessed 10 September 2015].
f.1r reads: BIBLIOTHEA. CARD. H. CASAN. D. O. PRAED; it indicates that the book is part of the library of Cardinal Girolamo Casanate (1620-1700). Born in Naples, Casanatense entered the Church and held the position of Prefect in the Vatican Library, was a member of the Roman Inquisition and elected cardinal in 1673. A man of erudition, Casanate amassed one of the largest libraries in Rome; not only was it open to scholars, the Cardinal also established it as a centre to study theology as well as an inquisitorial library to aid the work of the censors. Upon his death, the library passed into the hands of the Dominicans of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva. The collection was moved to the monestary’s Sala Monumentale in 1725, with the Dominicans continuing to add volumes to the collection. The library passed to the state in 1873. The Casanatense Library, as it is now known, does not have information relating to how the collection was compiled; they do not know with any certainty which works originated in Cardinal Casanate’s collection, nor what was acquired in transfers between the library and the Holy Office. Equally, bequests were made to the library, such as that of Cardinal Garampi in 1792. By 1920 the library consisted of some 5,000 volumes. It cannot therefore be known when or how the Book of Travels came to be held by the Casanatense Library; nevertheless, its acquisition was certainly before 1897 when it was entered in Sacerdote’s catalogue.

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Opp. Add. 8vo36**

**Origins:** 15th century Sephardic script

**Provenance:** Unknown

**Folios:** 58r to 63v of 75 folios. Comprised of 15 texts.

**Codicology:** Quarto book, Fragment, Paper, 214mm x 140mm, 29 lines per page, no marginalia

**Binding:** 12 quires in a 19th century binding

**Colophons:** None

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In comparison to the London and Rome manuscripts even less is known about the Oxford manuscript. In this instance, the *Book of Travels* has survived in a fragmented form which is manifest in two ways: first, the manuscript begins in the middle of Benjamin’s description of Baghdad; second, the text remains incomplete as a further four leaves are missing. Thus the Oxford text begins on f.58r with the introduction of Daniel, son of Chisdai, who is the Head of the Captivity and ends with the description of the kingdom of France (as seen in the three other extant manuscripts) on f.63v. The missing leaves are between f.60v and f.61r. The former ends with Benjamin’s words on the city of Rudbar:

משם שלשה ימים לרודבר

From there it is three days to Rudbar

Whilst the London, Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts contain the complete description of Rudbar, the Oxford text abruptly ends. The narrative is picked up again in the middle of the description of two synagogues found in Egypt, one belonging to the men of Israel and the other to the men of Babylon. A significant portion of the *Book of Travels* is thus lost from the Oxford manuscript, including the entire story of David Alroy and the descriptions of Persia, India, China, Abyssinia and Nubia.

Almost nothing is known about the ownership of the Oxford manuscript. The absence of a colophon, ownership note, marginalia and library stamps within the Benjamin folios further highlights the isolation of this manuscript in comparison with the complete extant manuscripts. A single defining feature allows this fragment to stand out from the other textual witnesses. The scribe has enlarged the word ‘ומשם’ (from there) to clearly delineate where one place description ends and another one begins. Such signposting is not unusual and was a common method of guiding the reader through a text.

Like its predecessors the Oxford fragment is bound in a miscellany of nineteenth century origins. As listed by Adolf Neubauer, the *Book of Travels* is the tenth of fifteen texts. In addition to Benjamin’s narrative the book contains a number of homiletic texts, commentaries on the Pentateuch, a fragment of a historical work and two examples of printed texts all copied on paper. With the exception of the sixth

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31 This is indicated, albeit somewhat confusedly, in Adler’s critical notes. See Note 23, p. 50 and Note 1, p. 63.
text (Oriental cursive) the remaining fourteen texts, the *Book of Travels* included, are copied in a Sephardic script although in different hands.\(^{33}\) Missing from Neubauer’s catalogue is a date range of the texts.

An examination of the quire structure – twelve in total – reveals that eleven of the texts are copied onto their own quires. The tenth quire, of which Benjamin is the first text, includes three other texts which all follow each other; where the *Book of Travels* ends on f.63v the next text immediately begins with the title ‘Merciful One’ (רחמנא), which is a biography of Maimonides. The next text in the quire begins with the chapter heading ‘The camp of Israel by the flag’ (מחנה ישראל על דגל), whilst the final text, ending on f.69v is about Nachmanides’ controversy with Paulus Christianus. The miscellany can thus be understood as a modern guard-book of fragments to prevent the loss of the texts.

There are four watermarks preserved on folios 60, 61, 63 and 67 respectively. They are, however, partial fragments which cannot be matched as the fifteenth-century paper does not reach into the binding but has, instead, been repaired with modern paper which has been used to bind the text. Consequently, accurate measurements of the watermarks cannot be obtained and they cannot, therefore, be identified. F.63 contains the best preserved half of the watermark; it is a hand with the fingers spread and with the thumb visible to the first knuckle of the index finger. This can be a range of hands as grouped by Gerhard Piccard. Numbers one to forty were all used between the late-fourteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries. If the watermark is from this grouping, it would accord with the fifteenth-century catalogue date. Within Piccard’s catalogue, there are two other groups which match the description, numbers 106 to 109 and numbers 114 to 119. This would, however, provide an early sixteenth century date between 1516 and 1529.\(^{34}\) As it is not possible to match the range of hands with the watermark in the manuscript, the broad fifteenth century date stated in the ALEPH catalogue cannot be more precisely dated.

**Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, MS Heb 82647**

**Origins:** c.1520, Italian calligraphy\(^ {35}\)

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\(^{34}\) *Wasserzeichen Hand und Handschuh*, ed. by Gerhard Piccard (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997).

\(^{35}\) The Aleph Catalogue qualifies the hand as Italian medium calligraphy. The approximate date of the manuscript provide by the Aleph Catalogue is based on this paleographical evidence.
Provenance: Shlomo Zalman Halberstam (1832-1900); Abraham Epstein (1841-1918).

Folios: Single text in binding, ff.2r to 38v

Codicology: Quarto book, Paper, 217mm x 156mm, 19-20 lines per page, some instances of marginalia

Binding: 19th or 20th century

Ownership Note: Shmuel Yitzchak Minervi; Shlomo Zalman Halberstam; Abraham Epstein

Colophons: None

Library Stamps: National Library of Israel; Bibliothek der Isr(aelitische) Kultusgemeinde – Wien

The fourth and final of the pre-print extant manuscripts is bound as a lone manuscript in a nineteenth or twentieth-century binding. It has not been possible to determine the quire structure of the manuscript due to severe damage to the binding. During the rebinding process additional pages have been added before the manuscript. The first is a facsimile copy of the first page of the British Library manuscript; the second is a facsimile copy of a page of another copy of the Book of Travels also held at the Bodleian Library. They are identical to images used in Adler’s 1907 edition. This confirms the date of the binding to the twentieth-century, but also proposes a post-1907 date. Since not all of the folios have been securely sewed into the modern binding, an attempt (of an unknown date) has been made to repair this with tape. Whilst its current form is a standalone text the physical evidence indicates that the folios have been altered. This is most clearly seen on f.35r where a marginal note has been cut-off (as will be discussed below). It is likely that the folios were trimmed to fit a specific binding. This has, in turn, affected the ability to accurately measure the numerous watermarks present in the manuscript. Partial watermarks, of varying sizes, are found on folios: 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31, 35, 36 and 39. It has, therefore, not been possible to identify the watermarks to corroborate the c.1520 date given by the ALEPH catalogue.

Significantly, the Jerusalem manuscript contains the most ownership information of the extant manuscripts. In addition to the library stamps on ff. 2r and 38v, two ownership notes help trace the manuscript’s transmission from the sixteenth
century to the present day. Using the manuscript’s ‘modern’ foliation, f.2r and f.21r contain identical signatures. The first is written directly under the title ‘The Travels of Rabbi Benjamin’ (מסעות של רבי בנימן), whilst the second is written vertically in the margin of f.21r. The ALEPH catalogue identifies the ownership signature as Shmuel Yitzchak (Samuel Isaac) Minervi. It has not been possible to further identify the person of Shmuel Yitzchak Minervi. What can be deduced is that at some point the Book of Travels was in his possession.

Subsequent evidence exists for the Jerusalem manuscript’s nineteenth century ownership. The ALEPH catalogue records that the Book of Travels was owned by Shlomo Zalman (Solomon) Halberstam (1832-1900). This is based on Hebrew letters seen in the top left-hand corner of f.2r. Above the Hebrew title and library stamp of A. Epstein are the initials ש, ז, ח, ה an acronym for Shlomo Zalman Chaim Halberstam. This is followed by No. 141 written below the Hebrew initials. A complete catalogue of his manuscripts, of some 411 items, was compiled in 1890 entitled Kehillat Shlomo. On consultation of the Halberstam catalogue, there is no mention of the Book of Travels. As such, whilst Halberstam’s ownership of the manuscript can be securely ascertained by the presence of his initials, what the number underneath refers to cannot be determined. Halberstam was a Polish Jew who spent the majority of his income amassing a personal library; amongst his collection were a number of rare and valuable manuscripts. Halberstam became an important personality in the journalistic world of Vienna in the late nineteenth century. Upon his death, many of his books were bequeathed to the Jewish community library in Vienna.

Internal evidence from the manuscript names a second owner – A. Epstein. A library stamp in the top left-hand corner of f.2r, on a diagonal, reads ‘Bibliotheck A. Epstein’, identified as Abraham Epstein. How and when the Book of Travels was acquired by Epstein is not known. Epstein was not a native of Vienna but had moved to the city from Russia in 1876. Like Halberstam, he too possessed a large personal library which included a number of manuscripts. It has not been determined whether Halberstam and Epstein were acquainted in Vienna, although it is not beyond the realm of possibility. Relevant here is that a fifteenth-century Italian manuscript of Benjamin

I am indebted to Ofra Lieberman of the National Library of Israel for directing me to this evidence.

With kind thanks to the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York for consulting their copy of Kehillat Shlomo.

of Tudela’s travels circulated amongst nineteenth-century Jewish bibliographers.\textsuperscript{39} Epstein and Halberstam’s ownership, thus accounts for the German library stamp at the centre-bottom of f.2r (the stamp appears again on f.38v in the bottom left-hand corner, although cut-off in the binding) which reads ‘Bibliothek der Israilitische Kultusgemeinde – Wien’, or ‘Library of the Jewish Community – Vienna’. In all probability, the manuscript was acquired by the library after Epstein’s death in 1918 where it remained until its acquisition by the National Library of Israel. The remaining library stamps belong to the NLI and appear on a number of folios (2r, 13r, 19r, 27r, 34v). Despite its Italian origins and current home in Israel, the scholarship commonly refers to the manuscript as either the Epstein or Vienna manuscript.\textsuperscript{40} This thesis has termed it the Jerusalem manuscript in keeping with the naming trend of its three predecessors.

For reasons which will become apparent below the Jerusalem manuscript was almost certainly copied in Italy. This conclusion can be drawn from the few instances of marginalia seen across the text. Each page has been carefully ruled, the lines of which can still be seen, with the scribe rarely straying from the lines. Where the copyist has diverged from the ruled lines, in most cases it is to include a word, or words inadvertently missed and the copyist has returned to correct the error (as seen above with the Rome manuscript). Examples can be found on f.15r, f.28r. and f.31r, amongst others. One of the pieces of para-textual data is a note by the scribe on f.35r. written in the same hand as the copyist of the Book of Travels. The incomplete note reads:

\textit{ואני המעתיק לא...בהעתיק הראש הר'...}

\textit{And I, the copier did not…in the copy of the head the rabbi…}

The note has, unfortunately, been rendered unintelligible due to page-trimming of an unknown date. Based on the words ‘in the copy’ it appears that the scribe is passing comment on the exemplar being used. What can be read of the note appears to suggest that the scribe sought to convey a message to readers regarding something that was not included in the text. What that something was, cannot be known.

\textsuperscript{39} This is further evidenced by the fact that Lazar Grünhut made his German translation of Benjamin’s text from this manuscript. See Lazar Grünhut, \textit{Die Reisebeschreibungen des R. Benjamin von Tudela}, 3 vols (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kaufman, 1903-4).

\textsuperscript{40} See Adler, English part, pp. xiv-xv; Nom de Déu, p. 14; Jacobs, n.51, pp. 233-34.
One of the more conspicuous features of the Jerusalem manuscript is the signature of an Italian censor at the bottom of f.38v, which reads: ‘Visto par mi Fra, Luigi da Bologna. Luglio 1599’ (‘Seen by me, Brother Luigi of Bologna. July 1599’). Hebrew books were the subject of intense scrutiny by the Church in early modern Italy and the Jerusalem manuscript is proof that Hebrew books of all genres, not just religious tracts, were subject to ecclesiastical censorship – a central conclusion of this thesis. The censorship of the Jerusalem manuscript and the *Book of Travels* is fully treated in Chapter 6.

The date of 1599 does, however, allow the manuscript’s early history to be narrowed down. William Popper lists the dates and locations of various Italian censors; Luigi da Bologna appears to have been active between 1596 to c.1606 working as an inquisitorial censor in Mantua (1596-7), Modena and Reggio (1596-1602) and Ancona (1602). By linking this timeline to that of the Jerusalem manuscript we can conclude that the manuscript was present in either Modena or Reggio in 1599. This is not to suggest that its provenance is in either of these cities as the manuscript can easily have travelled from its place of copying to a new location. Nonetheless, the Italian hand, coupled with the censorship evidence is strong enough to suggest that the manuscript was indeed copied in Italy and remained there for at least 80 years. At some unknowable point, the manuscript surfaced in Ashkenazi Europe and has been preserved. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the evidence is substantial enough to suggest that it is this textual witness (or a near identical version) which provided the base text for the 1543 and 1556 Hebrew editions.

Each of the manuscripts outlined above possesses similarities as well as unique features which help piece together a larger picture of the *Book of Travels*’ manuscript transmission. Whilst the textual differences are enumerated in greater detail in the following section, the codicology provides valuable data towards an understanding of the broader transmission process. The London and Oxford manuscripts have been bound within miscellanies, most probably to prevent the loss of the text. All have been rebound in modern bindings. Whilst this has served to protect the manuscripts, it has also resulted in the loss of other significant codicological data such as the quire structure and marginalia (in the instance of the Jerusalem manuscript) and the facility

to offer a more accurate date of the manuscripts through the identification of the watermarks. In the case of the London, Oxford and Jerusalem manuscripts, it is possible to suggest that the survival of the manuscripts may be in part due to the Jewish bibliophiles who sought out Hebrew texts for their personal libraries. It is also noteworthy that all of the manuscripts are quarto books. This size facilitated an easy transmission since such books can simply be picked up and held, as well as moved. From a reception perspective, quarto books are used in both the synagogue and at home.\textsuperscript{42} The size of the manuscripts thus suggests that the \textit{Book of Travels} was intended for personal and portable use.

The extant manuscripts are from consecutive centuries, respectively from the fourteenth (London), fifteenth (Rome and Oxford) and sixteenth (Jerusalem) centuries. This demonstrates that the \textit{Book of Travels} enjoyed a continuous manuscript transmission before the age of print. It is further indicative of a degree of popularity of the text which contributes to the continuous copying of the narrative. What remains to be seen is how these manuscripts relate to each other – whether the manuscripts share a base text or if they were copied from different exemplars. The following section will outline a detailed textual comparison to explore this question and establish the version(s) in which the \textit{Book of Travels} has survived.

\textbf{Textual Comparison}

As has been stated, Adler included a critical apparatus in his edition of the London manuscript. The notes, in Hebrew, comprise a textual comparison of the extant manuscripts and indicate where the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts, as well as Asher’s edition, differ from the London text. Whilst Adler’s recording of the variants is immensely useful, no studies (to the best of my knowledge) have been undertaken in which this data has been interpreted. It is the purpose of this section to understand how the manuscripts are related to each other, their transmission, and how the textual differences affected the reception of the \textit{Book of Travels}. In undertaking a thorough comparison of the manuscripts, the data will equally inform how accurately the text has been transmitted between manuscript and print. Furthermore, as the original text is lost, an urtext cannot be reconstructed. Nevertheless, the \textit{Book of Travels} has survived in altered textual states, as will be outlined below.

A close reading of Adler’s critical apparatus reveals that he logged everything from variation in spelling of places and proper names, to omissions and interpolations, as well as a number of significant instances where the manuscripts disagree. It is not the intention here to simply replicate Adler’s notes; rather, the following section will outline the key examples which highlight the textual variations across the extant manuscripts. This will establish the states of the text and how each stands as a textual witness to Benjamin’s narrative today.

When Adler introduces the Oxford manuscript into his critical notes, he comments that the manuscript ‘coincides with the London text except when the contrary is stated in the notes’. Adler is correct in indicating that the Oxford manuscript does indeed largely follow that of the London text, with the majority of variants in the realm of spelling and the in/exclusion of qualifying words. Owing to the Oxford text’s fragmented nature the textual comparison below, which was undertaken based on a full collation of the manuscripts, is predominantly drawn between the complete London, Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts.

How the Book of Travels is titled differs, as does the wording of the הַקְדָּמָה (hakdamah, Prologue) which precedes the text, although the Prologue of each manuscript contains the same essential content and intention. The London manuscript straightaway introduces the text with Benjamin’s name and origins. The scribe has enlarged the letters and used this first line as the title which reads:

This is the book of travels that was composed by Rabbi Benjamin son of Jonah from the land of Navarre.

Both the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts provide similar titles, also in larger letters than the rest of the script. The Rome manuscript entitles the text ‘ספר בנימין’ (The Book of Benjamin); the Jerusalem scribe of the manuscript writes ‘מסעות של רבי בןימין’ (The Travels of Rabbi Benjamin).

With slightly different phraseology, each state that Benjamin left his native Tudela and travelled ‘in many far lands’, a phrase used in all of

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43 Many of the scribal changes seen in the Jerusalem manuscript are under-recorded by Adler in favour of citing Asher’s translation. As a result, some of Adler’s notes regarding this manuscript are incorrect.
44 Adler, p. 39.
45 London, f.149r.
46 Rome f.1r.
47 Jerusalem f.2r.
the manuscripts. The Prologue continues to relate that Benjamin wrote all that he saw and heard from trustworthy men as well as things not yet heard about in the land of Sefarad (Spain). All of the manuscripts agree that Benjamin returned ‘to Castile in the year 4933 (קשתל)’. The Prologue ends with Benjamin’s credentials, calling him ‘a man of knowledge, educated and a master of Torah and law (איש מניח והמשכיל ובשל תורה והלכה)’ stating that all that Benjamin has written has been found to be true ‘because he is a man of truth (כי הוא איש אמת)’. To segue into the text, the London and Rome manuscripts, with Rome’s additional words in square brackets, similarly write that the narrative is about to begin:

וזה תחלת ספרו: [אמר ר’ בנימן]... 

And thus begins his book: [Rabbi Benjamin says:] first I went…

The Jerusalem manuscript, not too divergent, also tells of Benjamin’s departure:

אמר ר’ בנימן בר יונה ז”ל יצאתי תחלה... 

Rabbi Benjamin son of Jonah of blessed memory says I went in the beginning...

It is significant that the Prologue is found in the London manuscript, the oldest extant text. There is no evidence, then, to suggest that the Book of Travels ever circulated without the Prologue as it is present in all of the extant manuscripts. Nonetheless, due to the over two hundred year gap between the composition of the Book of Travels and the first extant manuscript, that of the London text, it is plausible that the Prologue was added at a later point; this remains hypothetical, however, as the earliest transmission is lost. The Prologue, however, remains important to the narrative as a whole as it is the introduction by which the text is presented and Benjamin is portrayed as a learned and trustworthy source.

On a macro-level there are over 200 instances across the manuscripts where a word (or words) are inserted, excluded, interpolated or have been changed by the scribe. Most commonly this amounts to qualitative words which have been introduced or omitted by a scribe at an unknown point in the manuscript transmission, such as: שם (there), مدريد (very), דמי (about), זה (it is), אשר (which), לער (to the city) and הנקרא (called), among others. One such example is Benjamin’s description of the palace of

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48 Whereas the London and Jerusalem manuscripts provide the year using alpha-numerical notation the Rome text has the year written out in full. See Appendix.
49 London, f.149r; Rome, f.1r.
50 Jerusalem, f.2r.
51 See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the Prologue in the printed editions.
Vespasian in Rome, which the London manuscript describes as being large and very strong:

There is the palace of Vespasian a large building and very strong

The Rome manuscript is nearly identical but omits the word **מאד**:

There is the palace of Vespasian a large building and strong

whereas the Jerusalem manuscript likens the palace to a temple:

There is, like a temple, the palace of King Vespasian, a large and very strong building.\(^{52}\)

The majority of these variants are minor and do not alter the reading of the text.

Likewise, there are over 200 occurrences of entire lines and sections which are included, excluded or divergent – the more significant of which will be discussed below. These textual differences provide one set of examples which begin to show that there are indeed different states of the manuscript texts. To cite two examples of such occurrences; Benjamin notes Montpellier’s centrality to medieval trade routes. The London manuscript lists the places where merchants come from:

Men come to it to trade from everywhere; from the Christian lands, from Lombardy, the great kingdom of Rome, from all the land of Egypt, from the land of Israel, from the land of Greece, France, and from Asia and England and from all the languages of the nations

The Rome manuscript omits many of the places seen in the London text:

Men come to it to trade from everywhere; from the Christian, and from Lombardy, the kingdom of the great Rome and Ishmael [Muslim lands], and from all the lands of the languages of the nations

The Jerusalem manuscript only slightly differs from the London text:

Men come to it to trade from everywhere; from the Christian lands, [Muslim lands], and from all the lands of the languages of the nations

\(^{52}\) Adler, Note 30, p. 7.
Men come to it to trade from everywhere; from the Christian lands from the cities and from Lombardy, the kingdom of the great Rome Ishmael [Muslim lands], from all the land of Egypt, from the land of Israel, from the land of Greece, the land of France, the land of Spain and England and from all the languages of the nations.53

Notably absent is Benjamin’s reference to Asia, although it includes Spain in the list of merchants. At what point these textual changes were made is impossible to ascertain; it might well be that the base text used by the Rome scribe already excluded this list whereas the Jerusalem scribe intentionally interfered with the text. What one can begin to see is that Benjamin’s text has undergone some form of editing throughout the transmission process.

Some of the excluded lines, which also produce textual divergences, may be the result of Augensprung, or eye-leap of the copyist. This occurs when the same word is written a second, or multiple times, in close proximity in a text and, in glancing away during the copying process, the scribe resumes copying from the wrong line.54 One example of this occurs in Benjamin’s retelling of the discovery of a cave containing graves on Mount Zion. As related in the London manuscript, Rabbi Abraham tells of the plan to enter the cave the next day:

וענה לו ר’אברהם והך קברי בית דוד למלכי יהודה הם וכלמחר אני ואתה ואילו האנשים נראה מה יש שם בלמדר שני האנשים... And Rabbi Abraham replied to him, these are the graves of the house of David the kings of Judah. Let us enter the next day, I and you and these men, and see what is there. The next day they sent for the two men...

The Rome manuscript includes a number of minor differences but does not deviate from the text:

וענה לו ר’אברהם והך קברי בית דוד למלכי יהודה הם וכלמחר שלחו בשביל שני האנשים... And Rabbi Abraham the pious replied to him, these are the graves of the house of David they are the kings of Judah. Tomorrow let us, I and you and these men, see what is there. The next day they sent for the two men...

The Jerusalem manuscript greatly differs from the London text, omitting Rabbi Abraham’s statement of intent:

וענה ל’אברהם כי קברי בית דוד למלכי יהודה הם כלמחר שלחו בשביל שני האנשים... And Rabbi Abraham replied to him that they are the graves of the house of David, the house of Judah. The next day they sent for the two men.55

53 Adler, Notes 31-37, p. 3.
54 This could also lead, however, to scribes copying the same line twice, although there are no instances of this in the extant manuscripts of the Book of Travels.
It is the word "ולמחר" is the cause for the Jerusalem copyist’s *Augensprung*. As such, many of the excluded lines are the result of copying errors.

Another theme related to the in/exclusion of lines across the manuscripts is cities. There are about ten examples of cities which may appear in one or more of the manuscripts but are not found in the others. For example, the city of Ascoli is mentioned in the London manuscript but not in the Rome manuscript. The former relates:

...Rabbi Isaac. From there it is about a day’s journey to Ascoli and there are about forty Jews there led by Rabbi Consoli, Rabbi Tzemach, his son-in-law and Rabbi Joseph. From there it is two days to Trani

The Rome manuscript, without Ascoli, reads:

...Rabbi Isaac. From there it is two days to Trani.56

Equally there are instances where a city is present in the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts but not the London text. For example, the London manuscript details the cities of Beit Gavrin and Saint Samuel but not Toron des Chevaliers:

From there it is five parasangs to Beit Gavrin which is Marishah and there are only three Jews there: From there it is it three parasangs to Saint Samuel

Rome and Jerusalem both include this city between Beit Gavrin and Saint Samuel, although their texts differ in the name, and in the number of Jews. The Rome text states that there are no Jews:

From there it is five parasangs to Beit Gavrin, which is Marishah and there are only three Jews there: From there it is five parasangs to Toron des Chevaliers and there are no Jews there. From there it is three parasangs to Saint Samuel

Whereas the Jerusalem manuscript reads that Toron des Chevaliers can be identified as Shunem and has a Jewish community of 300:

56 Adler, Note 26, p. 10.
From there is it five parasangs to Bein Gavrin, which is Marishah and there are only three Jews there. From there it is five parasangs to Toron des Chevaliers which is Shunem and there are about 300 Jews. From there is it three parasangs to Saint Samuel.  

Although the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts describe the city of Toron des Chevaliers, the texts relate entirely different information – Rome stating that there are no Jews in the city and Jerusalem quoting about 100 Jews. As will be seen, numbers given throughout Benjamin’s text are variable across the manuscripts.

The existence of a lacuna in the Rome manuscript owing to missing leaves has been indicated above. It is further noteworthy for a city which is included in the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts but not in the London text. Whilst in the Holy Land, Benjamin describes Teeman, where Simon the Righteous is buried. From there, he states, it is three days to Meron where the graves of Hillel and Shammai are. The Rome manuscript, however, stops just short of the graves of Hillel and Shammai; the narrative resumes approximately a page and a half later, in Adler’s text, towards the end of the description of Hamah. The text of the Rome manuscript thus reads:

From there it is one day to Teeman which is Timante and there is the grave of Simon the Righteous and many from Israel are buried. From there it is one day to Gusha which is Gush and there are about twenty Jews there. From there it is two parasangs to Medon, which is Meron. There is immediately one cave and there is and not but seventy men escaped.

The final line is not intelligible; it begins with the description of the cave in Meron but ends with 70 men escaping. The lacuna, however, is not the result of scribal error as Isaac of Pisa employed catchwords to facilitate the binding. The catchword at the bottom of folio 11v. is קבר (graves) which accords with how the line continues in the London and Jerusalem manuscripts. It can, therefore, be assumed that the exemplar used by the scribe did contain these descriptions which have since been lost in the manuscript. At what point this occurred cannot be determined.

57 Asher’s notes in the second volume of his critical translation are key to identifying some of these cities, see pp. 93-95. Adler, Note 38, p. 27. Adler does note that Beit Gavrin is misspelled in both the London and Jerusalem texts.  

58 Adler, p. 30.

59 Rome f. 11v-12r; Adler, pp. 30-32.
The above example also includes the city of Gush which is not in the London manuscript. It is not possible to know if the exemplars of the extant manuscripts contained these cities or if these are yet more examples of Augensprung owing to the frequency of the word 'ומשם' (from there). What these examples do begin to show is that there is sufficient evidence to propose that the extant manuscripts are not direct copies of each other.

The numbers given by the Book of Travels vary greatly across the manuscripts. This is manifested in two ways: 1) the distances measured between places; and 2) the number of Jews given for cities. Combining these two results in over 50 discrepancies with respect to numbers quoted in Benjamin’s narrative. For example, the distance to Ibelin (Yavneh) is quoted by the London manuscript as being five parasangs:

ומשם חמש פרסאות לאיבלין היא יבנה

From there it is five parasangs to Ibelin, which is Yavneh

The Rome and Jerusalem texts, using alpha-numerical notation, agree with each other but offer an alternate distance of three parasangs:

ומשם ג פרסאות לאיבלין היא יבנה

From there it is three parasangs to Ibelin, which is Yavneh.51

For the distance to India the London and Jerusalem manuscripts agree on a journey of eight days:

ומשם דרך ח' ימים להודו

From there it is a journey of eight days to India

The Rome manuscript states it is only a journey of two:

ומשם ב' ימים מהלך להודו

From there it is two days distance to India.62

An example where none of the manuscripts agree is the distance to the city of Meron. The London manuscript quotes three parasangs:

ומשם שלש פרסאות למדון היא מרון

From there it is three parasangs to Medon, which is Meron.

The Rome manuscript states that it is only a distance of ‘ב’, two parasangs, whereas the Jerusalem manuscript differs further with a distance of ‘ששה’ six parasangs.63

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60 Jerusalem f.16v; Adler, pp. 30-32. This is, however, an instance where Adler’s notes cannot be wholly relied upon as he has not cited the inclusion of Gush in the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts.
61 Adler, Note 26, p. 28.
62 Adler, Note 26, p. 61.
63 Adler, Note 36, p. 29.
incongruent distances do not greatly impact the reading of the text, especially as it is unlikely that Benjamin’s narrative was used as a practical travel manual. For some of these instances, the explanation simply lies with scribal error, especially with the use of Hebrew letters to represent numbers (as will be further explained below).

Any discussion of the numbers of Jews in the Book of Travels must be approached with caution. This is especially true for the numbers of Jews given as scholars do not know if the numbers refer to individuals, if it is limited to Jewish males or if they represent the number of Jewish households; the numbers simply cannot be taken at face-value. Nonetheless, they are integral to the text as they inform the reader of where Jewish communities may be found. It also, and more importantly, illustrates the dispersion of the Jewish people, emphasising their exilic state, and in some descriptions their relationship to the surrounding non-Jewish society. Disagreement over the numbers of Jews can be problematic as it might lead readers to a false sense of a Jewish presence in any given place, or vice-versa. Whilst two of the three manuscripts might agree, there are instances when the London, Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts give wholly disparate numbers of Jews. Where the London and Rome manuscripts cite שלשים מאה יהודים (three hundred Jews)’ in the city of Ramlah, the Jerusalem manuscript states שלש יהודים (three Jews)’. For the city of Gival (גבעל) the London manuscript states that there are 150: כמ מאה ומשים מישראל (about 150 from Israel)’; Rome writes: כמ קכו (about 126)’ and the Jerusalem text has: כמ חמש (600)’.

64 Adler, Note 21, p. 28.
65 Adler, Note 25, p. 19.
The most famous example is the number of Jews living in Jerusalem. The London and Jerusalem manuscripts echo each other, reading: ‘כמו מאתים יהודים’ (There are around two hundred Jews). The Rome manuscript uses alpha-numerical notation. What is problematic is that the alpha-numerical notation in the manuscript is unclear. The letter given by the copyist can either be read as ‘ד’ (4) or as a ‘ר’ (200). Since the London and Jerusalem manuscripts agree, it is entirely plausible that the Rome manuscript is also a ‘ר’, which would align the manuscripts into agreeing that 200 Jews lived in Jerusalem. The discrepancies in numbers, both for distances and the number of Jews, could give vastly different senses of the size of the Jewish diaspora to readers.

The above examples have illustrated the textual differences which do not impact the reading or interpretation of the *Book of Travels*. It has, however, begun to indicate that the manuscripts are far from identical. Some of the discrepancies are clear scribal errors whilst others support the argument for different states of the text. As will be outlined below, there are a number of larger sections which highlight more significant textual differences. Not only do these have the potential to affect the reading of the text, these passages further the argument that the *Book of Travels* has survived in four separate textual witnesses.

There are a number of indications that the copyists of the London, Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts queried whether their exemplar was correct or complete. Many of these instances are identified by Adler in his notes and, at times, attempts have been made to explain the section of text in question. As stated earlier, it is Isaac of Pisa, the copyist of the Rome manuscript, who is most aware of his exemplar’s lacunae evidenced by his declaration in the colophon discussed above: ‘It appears that this book of Rabbi Benjamin is not complete in this version, however, I have not found more of it written down’. In addition to the significant lacuna between Teeman and Hamah already mentioned, further comparison of the textual witnesses reveals that the Rome manuscript is missing a number of sections. All four examples are found in the closing pages of the *Book of Travels*. Missing are the passages about: the Land of

66 Adler, Note 26, p. 23. See also Adler, English Part, p. 22.
67 The sixteenth century Hebrew editions all quote שמות (200).
68 See for example the Synagogue of Ezekiel, Adler, Note 25, p. 44.
69 An example is seen earlier in the text but, as Adler notes, it is due to a missing leaf in the manuscript. See Adler, Note 1, p. 30.
Aswan (אֲסָוָן); Mount Sinai and a town at the foot of the mountain called Tur Sinai; Palermo and Messina; and the description of the Slavs and Russia. Whilst the passage from Aswan is also omitted in the London manuscript (but found in the Jerusalem text), the other three are extant in the London and Jerusalem manuscripts but omitted in the Rome text. Two possibilities thus present themselves: 1) the exemplar did not contain these passages; and 2) Isaac of Pisa, for an imperceptible reason, did not copy them, although the former is the likely explanation.

Whilst the number of Jews are integral to Benjamin’s narrative, equally central are the rabbinic names listed as the heads of the Jewish communities. The Rome manuscript, however, contains over 15 occasions where the names, at some unknown point, were removed. In the city of Acre, the London text names three rabbis: 

There are about 200 Jews there led by Rabbi Tzadok, Rabbi Yaphet and Rabbi Jonah. From there it is three parasangs to Haifa

whereas the Rome manuscript omits these names: 

There are about 200 Jews. From there it is three parasangs to Haifa.

It seems highly improbable that Isaac of Pisa intentionally excluded the lists of rabbis. This may be one area which prompted Isaac of Pisa to exclaim in his colophon that he has not found ‘more of it written down’ as the style of the text has been to always include the names of the rabbis for each place. As such, where the names are omitted, it is more likely that they are not present in the exemplar, especially since there are no comparable instances in the other surviving manuscripts.

The evidence for lacunae in a scribe’s exemplar is greatest for the Jerusalem manuscript. On the first line of f.24v, the Jerusalem scribe had drawn a vertical line in the text as a clear signpost to the reader that some of the text is missing. The small vertical line follows Benjamin’s description of the city of Kufa. The London manuscript describes a mosque in Kufa:

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70 Adler, Notes 2 and 10, p. 62.
71 Adler, Note 24, p. 69.
72 Adler, Note 9, p. 70.
73 Adler, Note 12, p. 72.
74 The Jerusalem manuscript also contains a single instance of this. See Adler, Note 24, p. 5.
75 Adler, Note 15, p. 21.
The Jerusalem manuscript offers a different reading which does not include the line about the grave of Muhammad’s son-in-law:

From there is it one day to the city of Kufa and there is the grave of King Jeconia and on top is a large building and a synagogue before it. There are about 7,000 Jews. From there it is half a day to Sura...

Here, the London manuscript relays that Muhammad’s son-in-law is buried in Kufa, using the word משוגע (madman). In lieu of this line in the Jerusalem manuscript, the copyist has written a vertical line to note the omission. What must be asked of the text here is whether it is the exemplar which is deficient or if it is the Jerusalem scribe who has expurgated the line. If the latter, then the exemplar must have contained some sort of textual anomaly for the Jerusalem copyist to realise a lacuna existed. On the other hand, the omission could originate with the Jerusalem manuscript as a form of self-censorship, as it is consistent with other references to Muhammad in the Jerusalem text. Similar examples are also present in the Rome and Oxford manuscripts, detailed below. The above evidence is substantial enough to argue that copyists of the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts were correct in suspecting that their exemplars were not necessarily accurate or complete. This conclusion leads to the parallel question of scribal interference and its prevalence in the manuscripts. The following pages provide examples which display where scribes, at some point in the Book of Travels’ transmission, have changed or added interpolations into the text.

The Rome and Oxford manuscripts also diverge from the London text in their descriptions of Kufa. Where the London manuscript refers to the Prophet Muhammad as מושعون (Muhammad the madman) and the Oxford text reads ‘ Mercedes’ (Muhammad). This is

76 Only half of this sentence is translated by Adler ‘the Mohammedans come hither...’, probably because of the word לקדשות. The London text usually employs להתפלל to indicate a sacred site where Muslims pray. Adler, English Part, p. 45.

77 Jerusalem, f.24v; Adler, Note 30, p. 45.

78 Adler, Note 30, p. 45.
not an isolated example as there are four additional examples relating to the Prophet Muhammad found in the manuscripts. The first and second examples are found in Benjamin’s lengthy description of Baghdad. In the opening lines of the passage, Benjamin states that the caliph is descended from Muhammad:

"It is a great city [and] the head of the kingdom is the Caliph Emir al Muminin al Abbasi from the family of the madman"

Conversely, the Rome manuscript does not employ ‘madman’ but Muhammad:

"From the family of the madman called Muhammad"

The Jerusalem manuscript is more reserved with the generic term prophet:

"From the family of their prophet."

As the narrative continues, Benjamin further describes how the Exilarch of Baghdad has been invested with power by the Caliph:

"He has great authority over all the communities of Israel invested by Emir al Muminin, lord of the Muslims, for thus the madman commanded his seed"

The Rome and Oxford manuscripts employ Muhammad rather than ‘the madman’:

"For thus Muhammad commanded his seed."

The Jerusalem text contains the same line but omits the name Muhammad:

"For thus he commanded him and his seed"

The third example also demonstrates how the London manuscript employs the expression ‘madman’ not seen in the later manuscripts. In Benjamin’s description of the prophet Ezekiel’s grave, the London text recounts a visit by Muhammad:

"The synagogue [of Ezekiel] has properties, land and villages which belonged to the king Jeconiah and when the madman came he established them all as belonging to the entire synagogue of Ezekiel"

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79 Adler, Note 11, p. 35.
80 Adler, Notes 7-10, p. 40.
The Rome and Oxford manuscripts continue their use of מ maçד whilst the Jerusalem text omits the full line.\textsuperscript{81}

The final instance is similar to the first in that several lines are omitted from the Jerusalem manuscript where Muhammad is mentioned a number of times. This again comes from the Baghdad passage, where the London text describes the interactions between the Exilarch and the Caliph. The passage begins with a description of the distinctive clothing worn by the Exilarch:

...ועל הסודר רדיד וחותם מחמד כתוב עליו ובא לפני המלך ומנשק ידו והמלך יקום לפניו ולכבודו בכסא שצוה מחמד לעשות לו ומכח שלום ושלום על המלך...

...on the cloth there is a scarf with the seal of Muhammad written on it. He [the Exilarch] comes before the king [Caliph] and kisses his hand. The king rises before him and places him on his throne opposite him which Muhammad had commanded to be made for him. All of the Muslim princes who come to the court of the king stand before him. And the Head of the Exile sits on the throne as commanded by Muhammad to affirm the verse “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until he comes to Shiloh, and to him the people will gather” [Gen 49:10]. And all the communities in the land of Shinar...\textsuperscript{82}

In comparison, the Jerusalem manuscript has a vastly truncated version:

...על הסודר רדיד [sic] על הקהל וַאָרֶר...

...on the cloth there is a scarf. And all the communities in the land of Shinar...\textsuperscript{83}

Where the Book of Travels has referred to Muhammad, the Jerusalem manuscript has omitted them. The probability that this is the result of self-censorship is high (See Chapter 6). What cannot be known, however, is whether this originated in the exemplar or with the Jerusalem copyist. Based on the Kufa example, the latter would appear more likely; however, there is no sign from the Jerusalem scribe that the exemplar gave further indications of lacunae which would then be seen in the other three examples. An explanation, however, might be found by addressing the term משועשע (madman) as seen in the manuscripts.

The use of ‘madman’ is not confined to the Book of Travels but was commonly employed in the medieval Jewish world.\textsuperscript{84} Although nothing can be known about the

\textsuperscript{81} Adler, Note 23, p. 44. Here Adler’s notes are contradictory: In Note 23 Adler comments that the Rome manuscript has מחמד albeit vocalised, yet the previous note (n.22) states that the entire line, like the Jerusalem manuscript, is omitted. This is incorrect and the line is indeed present in the Rome manuscript, f.16.

\textsuperscript{82} Adler, Note 21, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{83} Jerusalem, f.22r.

\textsuperscript{84} See for example Yehuda Shamir, ‘Allusions to Muhammad in Maimonides’ Theory of Prophecy in His “Guide of the Perplexed”’, Jewish Quarterly Review, 64:3 (1974), 212-224, especially p. 215. See
exemplars used for the extant manuscripts, some assumptions can be made. The Rome, Oxford and Jerusalem manuscripts are all Sephardic. Some of the exemplars may be of Spanish origin, possibly from al-Andalus (Muslim controlled Spain) which may reflect how Muhammad is referred to. The terminology for Muhammad used in the Rome manuscript is somewhat contradictory, on the one hand qualifying who the ‘madman’ is and on the other hand, explicitly referring to Muhammad. In this case, the wording of the Rome manuscript is either an exact copy of the exemplar, which may have undergone its own scribal interference, or the text has been altered by Isaac of Pisa. The Oxford manuscript suggests a degree of sensitivity to the surrounding Islamic culture, writing Muhammad rather than ‘madman’. Since the exact transmission cannot be known, it is again an open question as to whether that was the state of the exemplar or whether the Oxford copyist altered the text. Finally, the Jerusalem manuscript’s exemplar may have also been produced in Spain. It is therefore plausible that all references to Muhammad, for whatever reason, had already been expurgated prior to being copied in Italy. Readers of the London or Rome texts, who would have encountered משוגע (madman) would thus have had a different reading experience, to those who read the Oxford and Jerusalem manuscripts. Whilst this textual difference can only be traced in the realms of conjecture, what the examples clearly show is a level of scribal interference. Whether any of this terminology was preserved from Benjamin’s twelfth-century context, or deliberate changes have been made at some stage in the transmission process (particularly because Hebrew texts were often privately produced) it has contributed to producing different states of the text.

One final example of scribal intervention is seen in the description of Rome where Benjamin names a number of palaces. One of these palaces, according to the London manuscript, is simply described as being outside of Rome:

There is a palace outside Rome

The Jerusalem manuscript qualifies this by stating that the palace belonged to Titus:

There is the palace of Titus outside of Rome.

85 Adler, Note 25, p. 7.
Not only has extra information been added, but the choice of wording differs (ארמי/מחויב ויהל). The additional details may be the result of the manuscript’s Italian origins and a copyist who knew more of the topography, or perhaps even legends, of Italy’s Roman landscape (in comparison to the narrative’s Spanish origins). If Isaac of Pisa has indeed made such a change, it would provide a concrete example of the updating of the Book of Travels for a contemporary audience.

There is no doubt that the Jerusalem manuscript contains the most evidence for scribal interference, although in what period of the text’s transmission is impossible to determine. A further four examples (not all of which will be outlined in detail) of significant inclusions and omissions of text further distinguishes the Jerusalem manuscript. Across the extant manuscripts, Benjamin’s description of Hebron and the Cave of Machpeleh varies in length, with the London text including the most information, the Rome manuscript slightly less and the Jerusalem manuscript even less than that of Rome. The meaning of the passage, however, is retained and does not significantly affect the text’s reception.

The Book of Travels is one of the few texts which preserve the story of David Alroy, a false messiah from the twelfth century. The textual witnesses do diverge in their recording of this episode, although the differences are too numerous to detail in full. The Jerusalem text’s retelling, however, contains lines which are not in the London or Rome manuscripts relating to the Exilarch’s warning to David Alroy that he must cease his actions. The following quote provides an example of how passages in Benjamin’s account may be transmitted differently; here the London and Jerusalem texts are combined, with the latter’s additional words in bold:

ואם לא אנהוג את כל היהודים מכל מלכותי בותחת הייחות של כל הקהלות שבארץ

וכם כל הקהלות ארוש במלכות משוער את אהיה הזה ולא ישפוך דם נקי אז כתבו

[The Caliph] said to the [Exilarch] that if not he would kill all the Jews in the kingdom. At that time, all of the communities were troubled in the land of Persia. They sent letters to the Exilarch and to the Heads of the Academies [yeshivot] of the communities which were in

86 An Arabic account, contemporary with Benjamin of Tudela, also contains the story of David Alroy. Here, Alroy is identified as Menachem ben Sulayman, but known as Ibn ar-Ruhi. See Moshe Perlmann’s critical translation, ‘Sama’al al-Maghribi Iḥam Al-Yahud: Silencing the Jews’, Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, 32 (1964), 1-232 (pp. 72-74). As Perlman notes, al-Maghribi was a Muslim convert from Judaism who wrote Silencing the Jews as a polemical tract in the 1160s. On the name al-Ruji and his identification with David Alroy, see Norma Golb ‘The Messianic Pretender Solomon ibn al-Ruji and his son Menahem (the so-called “David Alroy”)’ (The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago) https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/false_messiah-1.pdf [accessed 09 August 2015].
Baghdad “Why should we die before your eyes, we and also the communities in the kingdom? Restrain this man and do not let him spill innocent blood. Then the Head of the Exile wrote to him.” 87

The Jerusalem text’s interpolation embellishes the story by adding the reaction of the Jewish communities. The letter also acts as an injunction giving readers of the Book of Travels a sense that the Exilarch did attempt to stop Alroy. Perhaps this links with Benjamin’s glowing depiction of the Exilarch in the Baghdad passage as a powerful figurehead of the Jews who sought to protect their status under the Caliphate. A false messiah would certainly have disrupted this equilibrium. As a result, the story of David Alroy, and its presence in a near contemporary account, has been transmitted in three separate versions.

The final example from the Jerusalem manuscript is found in the closing pages of the Book of Travels. Amid Benjamin’s description of Germany, a list of cities with Jewish communities is recorded. This is directly followed by an additional 13 lines only seen in the Jerusalem text. Again, the London text is presented with the added words from the Jerusalem text in bold:

Cologne, Bingen, Worms, Strasbourg. All Israel is scattered across all the lands and he who does not gather Israel together, will not see good signs or live with Israel. When God will command with regards to our exile, and raises the horn of the messiah, then each one will say “I shall lead the Jews and I shall gather them”. These states have Talmud scholars and communities which love their brothers and speak of peace to all those near and far. When a guest comes to them they rejoice and make a feast for him and they say “Rejoice, brothers, because salvation from God comes in the blink of an eye”. And if we had not been afraid that the end would not come and we would have gathered, but we cannot be gathered until the time for song will arrive and the voice of the turtledove [is heard] in our land and when the messengers will come and constantly say “God is exulted”…. mourners of Zion and mourners of Jerusalem. And they will ask for mercy wearing black clothes for their own merits. And all those states in Germany that we have mentioned, there are more, Duisburg, Regensburg... 88

For both of these examples, it is undeterminable when the interpolation of these lines occurred. Adler unequivocally writes that these lines are ‘evidently an

87 Adler, Note 41, p. 52 and Note 1, p. 53. Adler’s note is cryptic and states that this is the result of dittolepsy in the London and Rome manuscripts.
88 Jerusalem, f.38r.; Adler, Note 29, pp. 71-72. Confusingly, Adler has inserted this passage into his edition of the London text, demarcating this by placing the additional lines within square brackets.
interpolation’ although no further explanation is provided. Adler does, however, identify that these lines are also present in the Hebrew editions (See Chapter 3). The language of this passage does indeed depart from the overall style of the text, replete with biblical quotations, supporting Adler’s assessment that these lines are an interpolation. Moreover, why would a scribe insert a passage, which broadly speaks of Jewish redemption in the middle of a description of German cities? Martin Jacobs comments that the Jewish communities in Germany, Prague, Kiev and [Northern] France may be later additions aimed at an Ashkenazi readership.89 This echoes José Magdalena Nom de Déu who noted that the final part of the text, although reflected in all of the manuscripts, was not written by Benjamin of Tudela, but by the fertile imagination of an Askhenazic compiler-editor.90 This would suggest that the entire ending of the Book of Travels has been subject to heavy editing in the transmission process, with Ashkenazi Europe added at a later, unknown date. Whilst I agree with Nom de Déu that the interpolation was not part of Benjamin of Tudela’s original text, the statements made by Nom de Déu and Jacobs that these lines were added specifically by an Ashkenazi writer are not altogether convincing. With the exception of the London manuscript written in an Ashkenazic script, the manuscripts are all Sephardic. They too contain the communities in Germany, Prague, Kiev and Northern France, where the (no longer surviving) exemplars are probably of Sephardic origin. On this basis, there is no evidence to support that these additions were made for an Ashkenazic audience as they are present in the earliest Sephardic manuscript transmission, no longer extant. Moreover, these additional lines do not describe places in Ashkenaz but are, instead, an overtly messianic message within the context of Ashkenazi Jewry. They speak of attempting to gather the Jewish diaspora, and wait patiently, strong in their convictions that God has not forgotten them in their exile, but will redeem them and return them to Zion in the messianic age. Yes, these lines are added in the middle of the description of Ashkenaz, but the generic messianic message means that any Jew, Ashkenazi or Sephardic, could have composed them.

Within the current state of research pertaining to the Book of Travels, scholars have commented on the completeness (or lack thereof) of the manuscripts and the potential scope for an edited text. Reuven Kashani, in 1992, wrote that the Book of Travels was compiled by an anonymous editor from notes written by Benjamin during

89 Jacobs, p. 34.
his travels, citing the Prologue as evidence. Kashani translates the first line of the Prologue as ‘...this book was composed of words which are told to me by a certain man from the province of Navarra whose name is Benjamin, son of Yona of Tudela’.\(^91\) This is contrary to the mainstream translation of the opening line which reads ‘This is the book of travels that was compiled by Rabbi Benjamin, son of Yona, from the land of Navarre’ (See Appendix 1). Kashani’s translation suggests that Benjamin of Tudela orally recounted his travels to a third party who composed the narrative,\(^92\) which contradicts Kashani’s earlier, unqualified statement, that the *Book of Travels* was compiled from notes. Kashani’s evidence is flawed as it is based on his interpretive translation of the Prologue, one which does not accord with the Hebrew text. There is, therefore, not sufficient proof to argue that the *Book of Travels* was compiled by an anonymous editor.

Similarly, David Jacoby has published an article which offers a brief overview of the *Book of Travels* without claiming to be exhaustive. Jacoby addressed the standard questions of chronology, Benjamin’s motivations and the purpose in listing Jewish communities. The article begins, however, with the assertion that the *Book of Travels* has been shortened and edited, not only by Benjamin himself, but by at least two other editors in the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth centuries. As evidence, Jacoby pointed to inconsistencies in Benjamin’s narrative, coupled with a lack of personal information and absolutely no indications of transport, conditions of travel, accommodation, companions, and even lack of first person narrative as further evidence of a revision of the text where the editor has removed all of this information. Like Kashani, Jacoby also cited the Prologue as further proof, noting that it refers to Benjamin in the third person and records his date of death.\(^93\) For Jacoby, this suggested that it was composed after Benjamin’s death by a Jew of Tudela who may have personally known him.\(^94\)

It has not just been modern scholars who have argued for a heavily redacted text; as seen above in the Latin contents of the Rome manuscript, the contents-
compiler quotes Bartolocci who wrote that the text has been ‘edited many times’. Arias Montano, the first Latin translator of the *Book of Travels*, writing in 1575, also believed the text to be abridged and translated the Prologue to begin ‘An abridgement [epitome] of the narrative of Benjamin’. Like their modern counterparts, these statements have been made without accompanying evidence. Since the early modern period, then, it has always been assumed that the *Book of Travels* has undergone some level of editing and revision.

The arguments made by Kashani and Jacoby are only asserted and the conclusions are, therefore, debateable. Claims of widespread deliberate editing across the text cannot solely be based on the Prologue, and in the case of Jacoby, by assuming that details, which may never have been present in the narrative, were edited out. Jacoby and Kashani may offer arguments for the revision of the *Book of Travels* but they are founded on a paragraph which itself is circumspect, both for its origins and authorship. Neither article has outlined a more critical textual comparison of the manuscripts to produce evidence in support of these claims. Since the earliest transmission of the *Book of Travels* is lost and cannot be reconstructed prior to the London manuscript the textual purity and the origins of the Prologue can only be surmised. As such, claims of editing and revision prior to the extant manuscripts are in the realm of assumptions and hypothesis and are not necessarily conducive to the conversation surrounding the *Book of Travels*’ history.

Adding his voice to the debate, Martin Jacobs wrote that since the Prologue is the work of an anonymous author it raises the question: ‘to what extent the editor revised, embellished or abbreviated Benjamin’s words’. Jacobs answered that the *Book of Travels* was ‘edited by several copyists, with the discrepancies between the textual versions going beyond the mere slip of a scribe’. The present study provides the documentary proof for Jacobs’ assertion; the amount of revision to the text can never be known. Based on the examples presented in this chapter it has been shown that the extant manuscripts have experienced multiple levels of scribal engagement. From a close, critical reading, copyists, at unknown dates in the text’s

96 See also Waxman, 1, p. 440 who commented that the ‘version we now possess has been abridged by editors’.
97 Jacobs, p. 32.
history, have certainly produced different states of the text through scribal error, deliberate omissions and interpolations, and self-censorship.

This study offers a more nuanced argument of scribal intervention. It does not argue that the *Book of Travels* underwent deliberate and wholesale revision. Rather, it shifts away from such claims in favour of an intensive examination of the manuscripts. Through direct comparison of the extant textual witnesses, supported by the examples above, there is, undoubtedly, no one transmission of the *Book of Travels*. Rather, the extant manuscripts attest to the survival of four versions of Benjamin’s original narrative: the oldest, which stands out for its use of ‘madman’ (משוגע) in reference to the Prophet Muhammad (London); the text copied by Isaac of Pisa, missing the passages of Aswan, Mount Sinai, Palermo, Messina and Russia (Rome); the fifteenth century fragment which refers to the Prophet Muhammad as ‘Muhammad’ (משה) (Oxford); and the text which had embellished the story of David Alroy, added messianic overtones to the end of the narrative and has both been self-censored and expurgated by the ecclesiastical authorities (Jerusalem). This has been shown through highlighting significant differences across the texts, ranging from scribal error to deliberate intervention. Taken together, the variants across the texts indicate that changes have been made to the text, across its manuscript transmission, which has produced four different states of the text. Whilst this study can only offer the briefest of overviews of the differences across the texts, an updated critical edition is essential for greater comparison and would benefit future textual study of the *Book of Travels*. As the next chapter will show, the transmission from manuscript to print is uninterrupted and, although the entire transmission cannot be reconstructed, the relatively quick jump from manuscript to printed editions attests to a continued audience for the *Book of Travels* in the age of print.
Chapter 3. ‘Masa’ot Shel Rabbi Binyamin’: The Book of Travels in Print

In the mid-fifteenth century print masters sought to perfect printing using moveable metal type; this was achieved by Johannes Gutenberg in the late 1440s/early 1450s who produced a Bible marketed and sold at the 1455 Frankfurt Bookfair. The new technology quickly spread and printing presses were set up across Europe which impacted the dissemination of knowledge; book prices dropped and were more widely available, spreading knowledge at a faster pace than before. Hebrew printing appeared quite soon after the invention of moveable type with presses established by Jews in Rome c.1470, in Spain c.1479 and in the Ottoman Empire c.1493.¹ The first full Hebrew printed books, respectively Rashi’s commentary on the Pentateuch and Jacob ben Asher’s Arba’ah Turim, were printed in 1475. The majority of the Jewish world embraced printing, calling it the “crown of all science” as it impacted the study of the Torah and Talmud, as well as prayer, by making texts more widely available with a standardized layout.² Questions, however, did arise regarding the production of texts and bindings which elicited responsa from the Rabbis.³

In the sixteenth century Hebrew printing presses produced some 2,700 books between 1500 and 1599.⁴ The majority of these were religious texts such as the Pentateuch, exegetical works on the Bible, the Talmud with various commentaries, works of Jewish law and prayer books. Among the Hebrew works produced in the sixteenth century is Sefer Masa’ot; the Book of Travels was printed three times, in relatively quick succession in the sixteenth century – in 1543, 1556 and 1583. This chapter traces the transmission of the extant Hebrew editions of Benjamin’s narrative. The first section addresses the Hebrew printers of the Book of Travels and the contexts

in which it was printed. It will be shown that the 1543 and 1556 editions were very much aimed at a Sephardic readership, albeit one in exile who used the *Book of Travels* to connect both with the past and a messianic future. The 1583 edition, on the other hand, was produced for a Christian audience. The second section seeks to ascertain the relationship between the editions and how they relate, if at all, to the extant manuscripts. Textual analysis of the editions reveals that the 1543 and 1583 editions are nearly identical whilst the 1556 is equally similar to that of the 1543 edition. It will further be argued that the texts of the editions are closest to that of the c.1520 Jerusalem manuscript.

**The Editions**

*Masa’ot Shel R. Binyamin (MiTudela), Constantinople 1543*

Benjamin’s narrative was first printed in Constantinople by Eliezer ben Gershom Soncino in 1543. The Soncino name is arguably one of the earliest and most famous Hebrew printing houses in the early modern era, with printing operations active across Italy, Greece, Turkey and Egypt. Historians speculate that the Soncino family was descended from Moses of Speyer (13th century) based on an autobiographical claim of Gershom Soncino on the title page of *Sefer Mikhlo* (see below). Irrespective of lineage, the family relocated to Soncino in northern Italy in 1454, taking the city as their surname, where they established their first press in the late fifteenth century, printing their first work (a tractate of Talmud) in 1484.

The most prolific, and famous, printer from the Soncino family was Gershom ben Moshe who began his career in Italy in 1489. Gershom printed works in Hebrew, Latin, Greek and Italian. Although comprised mostly of religious tracts, such as bibles and Talmuds, some secular works were printed, such as *Mashal ha’kadmoni* (1491) an illustrated work of parables, puns and mythical tales, indicating that there was scope to print works other than those religious in nature. According to Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Gershom was meticulous in his printing activities and would go through considerable effort to obtain multiple manuscripts of a text to determine the most

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5 Heller, *Sixteenth Century*, p. 209; Glazer, p. 84.
acceptable version to print. Nevertheless, the Soncino press faced competition as other Italian printing presses increased their output of Hebrew works, most notably the press of Daniel Bomberg, a non-Jewish printer who monopolized Hebrew book printing in Venice. It was, according to Gershom, the Venetian printers who ‘copied my editions and attempted to cause my downfall…’ which forced him to leave Italy.

Gershom closed his Italian press in 1527 and left for Salonika at the invitation of Yehuda and Shlomo ben Yaqar. This gives some indication that the Soncino name was already known outside of Italy. Gershom’s settlement in the Ottoman Empire thus provided the opportunity to cement any networks that had already been formulated when he was still in Italy, in addition to forging new ones. Although a press had already been established in Salonika in 1512, Gershom set up his own printing operations upon arrival in 1527. The Soncino press in Salonika was short-lived, however, and only two works were printed before Gershom left for Constantinople in 1530. With the help of his son Eliezer (about whom little is known), who followed his father from Italy, the Soncino press flourished in Constantinople with Gershom printing over 100 works until his death in 1543. The press continued under Eliezer who produced a further 20 editions until his death in 1547. Like his father, Eliezer also printed a range of books ranging from religious tracts such as the Pentateuch, rabbinical responsa and the halachic compendium Arba’a Turim (Four Rows) to more secular works such as Jacob ben Mosé di Algaba’s Amadis de Gaula, c.1541 (Amadis of Gaul) and Ibn Shabbetai’s Minchat Yehudah Sone ha’Nashim, 1543 (Offering of Judah, Hater of Women). Central to the discussion, however, is the Soncino edition of Masa’ot Shel R. Binyamin (MiTudela).

The appearance of the Book of Travels in print soon after the introduction of Hebrew printing is interesting in itself. Although it cannot be definitively known why the Book of Travels was transmitted from manuscript to print relatively quickly, it may be an indication of the narrative’s enduring popularity, either through its familiar title or as the result of the text being quoted in other works (detailed in Chapter 4). It must

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9 Posner and Ta-Shema argue that Soncino left Italy due to a mixture of competition and persecution, p. 163; Heller believes that Soncino left Italy solely because of competition, The Sixteenth Century, 1, p. xvi; Abraham Yaari maintains that Soncino left due to the Christian surroundings, Hebrew Printing at Constantinople: Its History and Bibliography (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967) [Hebrew], p. 21.
be noted that there is no systematic survey of the Soncino press to analyse what the press was printing and why. There are, therefore, a number of open-ended questions regarding the 1543 edition, some of which this section seeks to address. Through an examination of the little evidence which does exist, as well as the context surrounding the Soncini’s publication of the *Book of Travels* it is possible to reconstruct why they believed Benjamin’s account to be worthwhile to print, thereby making the text more widely available.

The 1543 edition does not offer any indication of how, when, or where, the Soncini were introduced to Benjamin’s narrative or by what means they obtained a manuscript copy. The title page is limited to the most basic printing details, nor does the edition contain a prologue or colophon. A number of broader possibilities (many of which are equally applicable to the later Hebrew editions of 1556 and 1583) can be explored to help determine the transmission of Benjamin’s narrative from manuscript to the first extant Hebrew edition.

The *Book of Travels* was extant in Italy from as early as the fifteenth century. As the Soncino press first operated in Italy, it is possible that the Soncini encountered the text, in manuscript, whilst still in Italy. It is also possible that the text was purchased through the network of the Hebrew book trade between Italy and the Ottoman Empire. The Soncini may also have learnt of the *Book of Travels* from Iberian exiles. Whilst those fleeing persecution lost many of their possessions, many ‘tried to save their books and bring them to their new homes’.11 This would account for the survival of any number of manuscripts of the *Book of Travels*. In printing the 1543 edition there is no doubt that the Soncini had access to a manuscript of the *Book of Travels*. Whether this was a permanent acquisition or the manuscript was on loan remains unknown. The 1543 edition does contain similar features to that of the Jerusalem manuscript. As will be discussed below, it is possible that the first Hebrew edition may have been based, if not on this manuscript, than on a near-identical version.

Why Eliezer printed the *Book of Travels* must also be addressed. In deciding which works to print the Soncini were dependent either on their ‘...accessibility to manuscripts [or] the expellee’s decisions about which manuscripts they wanted to

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In the case of Gershom Soncino, there is evidence to suggest that he actively sought out unknown manuscripts to print; on the title page of Mikhlo shel R’David Kimhi (The Entire works of Rabbi David Kimhi), the last work to be printed by Gershom, he declares: ‘I searched out and found books that had been blocked off and sealed up for an age, and I brought them forth’. This gives the impression that Gershom printed texts which no longer circulated (for whatever reason) with the aim of re-popularising them through print, with opportunities for greater distribution. On the presumption that Eliezer continued his father’s ethos, printing the Book of Travels can be, to some degree, seen as a “rediscovery”. This is not to suggest that it was a physical rediscovery of the text, owing to its rich manuscript tradition (as outlined in the previous chapter); rather, Benjamin’s narrative can be classified as a “rediscovered” text in the sense that in print it could be made available to a Hebrew reading audience which may otherwise not have had access to the text. Eliezer may also have been printing works for the Iberian exiles who settled in Constantinople after the Spanish Expulsion of 1492 (further discussed in Chapter 4). Concomitantly, Shifra Baruchson’s 1986 article discusses how Jewish printers in the Ottoman Empire were pioneers, as migrants who settled and brought the new technology with them. With the beginnings of Hebrew printing in the Ottoman Empire, the already established commercial system between the Jewish centres in the West and East expanded to include the book trade. As a result, it increased the selection of Hebrew books available to Jewish readers. It is, therefore, possible to suggest that the Soncini, who already had connections in Italy, used this network to export books. Since printing was a commercial enterprise for the Soncini, the marketability of the narrative would certainly have been a factor in Eliezer’s decision to print the Book of Travels.

Masa’ot Shel Rabbi Binyamin, Ferrara 1556

Like Constantinople, Italy was one of the many locations which Iberian exiles fled to after their expulsion from Spain and Portugal. Ferrara, in particular, welcomed Jews under the relatively tolerant rule of Duke Ercole d’Este who allowed them to

13 Glazer, p. 90.
14 Shifra Baruchson, ‘On the trade in Hebrew books between Italy and the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century’, East and Maghreb, 5 (1986) [Hebrew], 53-77, (pp. 55-56).
15 Baruchson, p. 69.
settle in his domain, issuing a safe conduct to ‘la natione hebraica lusitana et spagnola’ (the Hebrew nation of Lusitania [Portugal] and Spain). Ferrara also became a centre for conversos (those living in the Iberian Peninsula who “chose” conversion to Christianity to avoid expulsion) who sought to return to Judaism.

There is evidence for Hebrew printing in Ferrara as early as 1476 by Abraham ben Hayyim of Pesaro. The first press, however, was established in 1551 by Samuel ben Abraham ibn Askarah Zarfati. Zarfati’s press was continued by Abraham Usque, a Portuguese converso who, having returned to Judaism, settled in Ferrara. Of the many titles printed during his short, but productive, printing years was a Hebrew edition of Masa’ot Shel Rabbi Binyamin printed in 1556.

Abraham Usque was born in Lisbon, probably around the turn of the sixteenth century, into a crypto-Jewish family. Cecil Roth has suggested that the name Usque denotes Spanish origins, indicating a move within the Iberian Peninsula. In Portugal, Usque was known by a Christian name which he retained until his relocation to Italy at an unknown date. It is possible to suggest that the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition in 1536 forced Usque, a crypto-Jew to leave Portugal as it was no longer safe to remain. Usque’s whereabouts between Portugal and Italy are difficult to trace. Secondary scholarship commonly cites that Usque is known to have used the name Duarte Pinel. Aron di Leone Leoni and Siegfried Herzfeld have suggested that Usque tried, unsuccessfully, to obtain a licence to settle in Antwerp. This is based on an unspecified document discovered in the Archives Générales du Royaume in Brussels which lists a Duarte Pinel living in Antwerp c.1550. The name, however, is not found in other documents of the same year which lists the names of New Christians. On the assumption that this Duarte Pinel can be identified as Usque, he was unable to remain

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16 Harris, p. 57.
19 Usque, Consolacão, pp. 81-82.
in Antwerp. Usque is then lost from the historical record until 1553 when he is first linked with the Ferrara press.\textsuperscript{23}

Upon arrival in Ferrara, Duarte Pinel reverted back to his given name of Abraham Usque.\textsuperscript{24} With little evidence from the historical record, there are many gaps in our knowledge concerning Usque; his settlement in Ferrara intersects with the beginning of his printing activities, yet the question remains how Usque acquired the skills of a printer. Heller stated that Usque had printed Latin works in Portugal, although no evidence is provided to substantiate this claim.\textsuperscript{25} Yerushalmi sheds further light on this matter stating that scholars, who have accepted Usque to be Duarte Pinel (suggesting that there are sceptics), can point to a 1543 Latin grammar printed in Lisbon, as evidence.\textsuperscript{26} It is, therefore, possible that Usque began his printing career in Portugal, acquiring the necessary skills as a Christian, and then employing them as a Hebrew printer in Ferrara. Likewise, scholars debate how Usque, a crypto-Jew, came to learn Hebrew. Leoni and Herzfeld conclude that this cannot be determined,\textsuperscript{27} whilst Tamani suggests that it was during his time in Antwerp that Usque is ‘likely to have learned Hebrew’ although this statement does not have any evidentiary support.\textsuperscript{28} Usque certainly returned to Judaism, but the details of where and when he acquired Hebrew and Hebraic learning, and the extent of his knowledge, remains unknown.

Usque’s printing activities began in 1553 but abruptly ended sometime after 1556, possibly by the Italian authorities for printing Joshua Boaz ben Simon Baruch’s \textit{Shiltei Giborim} (Shields of Heros), a text of critical notes on the Talmud based on the works of Isaac Alfasi and Mordechai ben Hillel.\textsuperscript{29} Over the course of a few short years, Usque printed somewhere between 21 and 29 editions.\textsuperscript{30} The first of Usque’s works was an edition of the specific prayers required for the Jewish holiday of \textit{Sukkot} (Tabernacles) entitled \textit{Hoshanot l’Sukkot} which appeared in 1553. This was followed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Aron di Leone Leoni and Siegfried Herzfeld, ‘The \textit{Orden de Oraciones de mes arreo} (Ferrara 1555) and a \textit{Bakasah} composed by Abraham Usque’, \textit{Sefarad}, 62 (2002), 99-124 (p. 111). The authors have not identified this document in their article.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Giuliano Tamani, ‘La Tipografia Marrana di Ferrara (1552-1555) in \textit{L’interculturalita dell’ebraismo: atti del convegno internazionale ed. Mauro Perani} (Ravenna: Longo 2003), pp. 287-298 (p. 219)
\item \textsuperscript{25} Heller, \textit{Sixteenth Century}, 1, p. xxv.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Yerushalmi and Martins, p. 86.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Leoni and Herzfeld, p. 111.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Tamani, p. 288.
\item \textsuperscript{30} The exact number is debated among scholars: Tamani states 29, p. 298; Yerushalmi and Martins, agree with Tamani, p. 93, whereas Heller states 25, \textit{Sixteenth Century}, 1, p. xxvi.
\end{itemize}
by other liturgical works including prayer books for the Jewish holidays of Rosh Ha’Shanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) in Spanish. In 1554, Usque printed a psalter, followed by a daily prayer book in 1555 entitled Orden de Oraciones de mes arreo (Order of the Monthly Prayers), both of which were printed in Spanish. The most famous of Usque’s editions is the Biblia in lengua Española (Bible in the Spanish language) printed in 1553, commonly known to scholarship as the Ferrara Bible. The significance of the Ferrara Bible lies in the fact that it was the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Ladino, the language of many Iberian Jews, resulting in it becoming the most commonly used Bible by Sephardic Jews in Europe. 

Like the 1543 edition, it is not know how Usque came to own a copy of the Book of Travels; there are, however, many parallels which can be drawn between the two presses. As Usque was not a native to Italy, he may have acquainted himself with the availability of texts in Italy and been introduced to the Book of Travels (a work which had been available in manuscript for over a century). As has already been noted, some Iberian exiles brought their books with them into exile. It is thus possible that Usque, living in Ferrara, a city which offered refuge to many exiles, could have learned of the Book of Travels through converso and Iberian connections. How Usque obtained a copy of the Benjamin’s narrative is indeterminable. Of the Hebrew editions, is it the 1556 text which has attracted comment on its transmission; Adler has noted the textual similarity between the Jerusalem manuscript and the 1556 edition, stating ‘it is analogous to the edition of Ferrara, 1556’, a point which will be returned to in the textual comparison.

Masa’ot Shel R. Binyamin, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1583

Sixteenth-century Germany was a battleground of confessional politics that greatly affected Hebrew printing. German printers of Hebrew texts in the late sixteenth century had to contend with Imperial laws which governed the book trade, dictating in which cities they were able to print and promulgating policies that would mitigate the risks of printing works which could contain blasphemous or seditious content.

31 Yerushalmi and Martins, p. 87.
33 Stephen G. Burnett, ‘The Regulation of Hebrew Printing in Germany, 1550-1630: Confessional Politics and the Limits of Jewish Toleration’, in Infinite Boundaries: Order, Disorder and Reorder in
Nonetheless, Hebrew printing continued to be prolific as Hebrew books transcended confessional politics in that their appeal reached both Catholic and Protestant audiences who sought Jewish texts to pursue their study of the Bible. At the same time, these very same works could equally be sold to a Jewish audience. It is in this context that we see the third Hebrew edition of Benjamin’s narrative emerge from the press of the printer, Ambrosius Froben, in partnership with the Jewish printer Israel ben Daniel Zifroni. Against this backdrop, the Froben press had a narrow framework in which it could viably print Hebrew books. The following pages thus examine how the Book of Travels came to be printed in Reformation-era Germany, and argues for a Christian, rather than a Jewish intended audience.

The Froben press was established in Basel by Johann Froben (c.1490), a humanist scholar-printer, who printed some 250 titles, including many Hebrew-Latin works intended for Christian theologians. The press was inherited from father to son, passing from Johann to Ambrosius’ father Hieronymus (1501-1563) and then to Ambrosius himself. The historiography surrounding Ambrosius Froben’s printing activities as a Hebrew printer appears to conflict, with the crux of the debate hindering on Froben’s 1578-80 edition of the Talmud (details of which will be discussed below). Stephen G. Burnett believed that Ambrosius did not initially begin his career as a Hebrew printer; rather it was the printing of the Talmud in 1578 which instigated Froben’s Hebrew printing activities. This was in response to the burning of the Talmud at Rome in 1553; since no new Italian proposals had been fielded to print a new edition, Froben saw a gap in the market which he could fill. Joseph Prijs thus argued that Froben’s market for Hebrew works was dependent on conditions in Italy.34 With the requisite Hebrew type already in his possession and help from experienced Hebrew printers, Burnett argued that Froben decided to produce Hebrew books for both Jewish and Christian customers.35 Marvin J. Heller took a different view, stating that initially Ambrosius continued the press’ tradition of printing Hebrew works for Christian theologians, but that his printing of the Talmud marked a departure from his predecessors changing the objectives of the press to produce works for a Jewish

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Irrespective of how Froben entered into Hebrew printing, there is no doubt that once the press printed the Basel Talmud, Froben became one of the prominent printers of his time. The Basel Talmud of 1578 not only marks a significant change regarding who Ambrosius’ intended audience was, it is also the most famous of his works; what the *Biblia Sacra* was to Plantin, the Basel Talmud was to Froben. The printing of the Babylonian Talmud by the Froben press was financed by Simon Günzburg, a merchant and scholar from Frankfurt. Like Prijs, Haberman also suggested that it was printed to address a shortage of availability of Talmuds across Europe. This resulted in a heavily censored Talmud, marketed to a Jewish readership, which would allow the Jews to continue studying the Talmud in an acceptable format as directed by Christians. To help with the project, Froben was advised by Günzburg to hire a Jewish printer (for which he needed special permission by the German authorities), and sent Froben to Italy to meet Giovanni di Gara, a Christian printer of Hebrew books. On Di Gara’s suggestion, Froben hired Israel ben Daniel Zifroni (Sifroni) in 1578. An experienced printer, previously employed at presses in Cremona and Sabbioneta under Vincenzo Conti, Zifroni agreed to train Hebrew typesetters and organise new typographical equipment for Froben. The partnership would prove fruitful, with the press printing ten Hebrew works between 1579 and 1583.

In 1583 Froben and Zifroni moved the press from Basel to Freiburg im Breisgau (hereafter Freiburg). Marvin J. Heller suggests two possible reasons for Froben’s relocation. First, a dispute had arisen between Froben and Günzburg resulting in a court case. During the legal battle, Froben travelled to Rome to seek support for his Talmud from Pope Gregory XIII. According to unsubstantiated rumours, Froben promised to convert to Catholicism, which may have made his position untenable in Protestant Basel, forcing his move to Catholic Freiburg. Second, Froben’s license to print had been revoked which also would have necessitated a move. At what point

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39 Burnett, ‘Regulation of Hebrew Printing’, p. 337.
40 Jews had been expelled from Switzerland in 1349 with city edicts of expulsion declared through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Jews were officially expelled from Basel in 1543.
41 Haberman, p. 224.
Zifroni parted company with Froben is not known, although scholars state that he initially moved to Allschwil (near Basel); Zifroni certainly returned to Italy but does not reappear in the historical record until 1588 in Venice, where he worked for Di Gara until 1609.\textsuperscript{44} According to Anthony Grafton, Zifroni used his contacts and continued to sell Hebrew books to Swiss scholars. Johannes Buxtorf the Elder also turned to Zifroni, through the Swiss scholar Jacob Zwinger, to purchase Hebrew works for his classes and personal scholarship.\textsuperscript{45}

During Froben and Zifroni’s short operation in Freiburg, a mere two years, the press produced a mix of Hebrew and Yiddish texts ranging from religious texts, to belles-lettres and older popular titles, most likely for a Jewish readership.\textsuperscript{46} Amongst these was the Froben Press’ printing of \textit{Masa’ot Shel R. Binyamin} in 1583. Like the previous editions, how Zifroni or Froben obtained the \textit{Book of Travels} remains in the realm of speculation. When applying this question to the 1583 edition, however, there is reason to believe that the third Hebrew edition was not based on a manuscript but used the 1543 edition as its parent text. Whilst the 1543 and 1556 editions were undoubtedly printed from manuscripts, a textual comparison of all three Hebrew editions (outlined below) reveals that the 1543 and 1583 editions are nearly identical. The question is thus subtly transformed – not which manuscript was used by the Froben press but where either Zifroni or Froben acquired a copy of the Soncino edition to print their edition.

The same possibilities outlined for the other editions equally apply here. Zifroni or Froben could have been given a copy, or purchased the 1543 edition. In the former instance, the \textit{Book of Travels} may have come to Froben through his printing contacts, such as Günzburg or Di Gara. Alternatively, Zifroni, whilst resident in Italy, may have acquired a copy which travelled with him to Germany. A second, albeit more tenuous theory which has been proposed by Burnett is that when the family of Aaron of Pesario delivered his manuscript, \textit{Toldot Ahron}, to Zifroni to be printed (published in 1584) they may have brought other texts which had either been left behind in Italy, or perhaps even recently purchased to be delivered to Freiburg.\textsuperscript{47} On the assumption that a copy of the 1543 edition was purchased, it is equally possible

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{44} Post and Schumacher, p. 68.
\item\textsuperscript{46} Post and Schumacher, p. 68.
\item\textsuperscript{47} The sons of Aaron of Pesario brought the manuscript from Italy to be printed by Zifroni. See Burnett, ‘German Jewish Printing’ p. 514.
\end{itemize}
that Froben, a frequent attendee of the Frankfurt Bookfair, purchased a copy during one of his visits. These explanations are, nevertheless, only speculative and we are unable to determine with any degree of certainty how the Froben press, or any of the Book of Travels’ sixteenth-century printers for that matter, came to acquire Benjamin’s narrative.

Once in possession of the 1543 text, the decision was made to reprint the text; why a new edition was printed and for what audience remains to be seen. The Froben press had traditionally been printers of Hebrew works so there is no reason to assume that Froben would discontinue this practice. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary by virtue of the fact that Froben undertook the enormous task of printing a (permissible) Talmud, and actively sought out someone to train Hebrew typesetters which enabled him to expand his Hebrew printing operations. Where Froben’s printing activities might differ from his familial predecessors is the climate in which his printing activities can be situated. Prior to the Reformation Hebrew printing in the Holy Roman Empire remained an unregulated enterprise whereby any Hebrew book was permitted to be printed provided that it adhered to ecclesiastical censorship regulations. This policy changed after the burning of the Talmud at Rome in 1553, which resulted in the increased involvement of the Holy Roman Empire in both the religious and political factors that sought to control printing and the book trade within Germany. According to Stephen G. Burnett, the Reformation thus limited what German printers were able to print. In response, printers of Hebrew texts “followed the path of least resistance” and chose to reprint works that had already been censored or printed elsewhere. This may go some way in explaining how the Froben press came to print the Book of Travels, a work which was already known in Europe and had not yet attracted the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities. In this respect, Benjamin’s narrative was a ‘safe’ text to print, one which would not arouse suspicion at a time when Hebrew printing was a risk in Europe.

Froben’s caution is further exemplified on the title page of the 1583 edition. Burnett noted that Imperial regulations stipulated that a book’s title page was required to list the name of the author, the place of printing and the publication year. The Froben-Zifroni edition seemingly follows this requirement, indicating compliance with

49 Burnett, ‘German Jewish Printing’, p. 520.
the new printing regulations and suggesting that Froben sought to ensure the unhindered continuation of the press – without attracting the attention of either Imperial or ecclesiastical authorities. Although appearing to follow the regulations, closer examination reveals that the details provided are quite vague. Froben’s name is omitted from the title page, and instead bears Zifroni’s name as the printer. Similarly, the place of publication is equally unclear as it simply states Breisgau; this can refer either to the city of Freiburg-im-Breisgau or to the entire region. This is not unusual however. The title page of Sefer Chai Olam (The Book of Eternal Life), also printed in 1583, states ‘durch Israel in der Provinz Breisgau (printed by Israel in the province of Breisgau)’. The title page for Masa’ot Shel R. Binyamin may have been intentionally vague to make it difficult to trace the edition’s origins and printer. Some insight into this dilemma is provided by Rudolph Post and Jutta Schumacher. Although Froben received permission to hire Zifroni, Jews were not officially permitted to reside in Basel or Freiburg-im-Breisgau making Zifroni’s residency status unclear. Post and Schumacher thus contend that the press was careful not to reveal too much information about Zifroni’s whereabouts, which could have endangered his residency. With respect to Froben’s name not appearing on the title page, this might hint at the possibility that Zifroni published independently from Froben, albeit with the use of the Froben press. Nevertheless, Zifroni was legally and economically dependent on Froben. This conclusion has interesting implications for the possible readership of the 1583 Book of Travels editions, addressed in the next chapter.

It cannot be ignored, however, that the Froben press had traditionally printed Hebrew works for a Christian audience. As Stephen G. Burnett has indicated, Hebrew books for Christians were nearly always produced for export. Froben was not just printing for a local market, but for a wider, more lucrative market outside of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. Burnett further asserted that although Froben was primarily a Hebrew printer for a Jewish audience, he continued to seek out both Jewish and Christian clients. It can therefore be argued that the 1583 edition was marketed and available to both Jews and Christians, resulting in an edition of the Book of Travels which was

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51 Prijs, p. 232.
52 Post and Schumacher, p. 66.
intended for a dual audience. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the next chapter, the reception examples for the 1583 edition are predominantly Christian.

**Textual Comparison**

The above pages have focused on the individual transmission of the *Book of Travels* - how the printers of the 1543, 1556 and 1583 editions came to acquire and print their respective editions. It has already been noted that the 1543 Soncino edition and the Zifroni-Froben edition of 1583 are near identical which proves that the final Hebrew edition of the sixteenth century is simply a reprint of the first. The purpose of this section is two-fold: first, to determine if there are any significant differences between the 1543 and 1556 editions, and second to compare the manuscripts to the 1543 and 1556 editions to ascertain if the London, Rome or Jerusalem manuscripts provide the base text for either of these editions. Such comparisons will allow wider conclusions to be drawn regarding the transmission of the *Book of Travels* from manuscript to print. It will ultimately be shown that the 1543 and 1556 editions are based on, if not the Jerusalem manuscript itself, then a near identical version. The textual comparison will also demonstrate how each printer engaged with Benjamin’s narrative on a more technical level - with Usque omitting and inserting text and the 1583 edition changing terminology - highlighting how they have intentionally intervened with the text.

Similar to the textual comparison of the manuscripts, it is not possible to outline every variant. The editions, however, do differ in a number of minor ways which can be attributed to typography and the practicalities of printing. This is especially true with respect to spelling and how the editions employ abbreviations, either in the form of truncated words or by dropping letters at the ends of words. Equally, the editions also differ in their inclusion and exclusion of qualifying words, similar to those already discussed in the textual comparison of the manuscripts. Again, these minor differences are not noteworthy and do not alter how the text was read. For the purposes of continuity, many of the examples used below will be continue those of the previous chapter.

The printed editions of the *Book of Travels* all begin with the Prologue, which has been transmitted from the manuscript tradition. Whilst Jacobs has written of the
‘disparate prologues that turn up in manuscript and print versions’\textsuperscript{55} of the \textit{Book of Travels}, evidence suggests the contrary - the Prologue in the editions has been standardised. There are only two minor differences across the 1543, 1556 and 1583 editions. First is the line affirming Benjamin’s knowledge, as seen in the London manuscript:

\begin{quote}
והיה ר' בנימין איש מבין ומשכיל בעל התורה וההלכה
\end{quote}

Rabbi Benjamin was as a man of knowledge and an educated master of Torah and law\textsuperscript{56}

The 1543 and 1556 editions include the word ‘

\begin{quote}
והיה ר' בנימין הנזכר איש מבין ומשכיל בעל התורה וההלכה
\end{quote}

Rabbi Benjamin was \textit{remembered} as a man of knowledge and an educated master of Torah and law\textsuperscript{57}

The word ‘

\begin{quote}
והיה ר' בנימין הנזכר איש מבין ומשכיל בעל התורה וההלכה
\end{quote}

is, however, only seen in the London manuscript, and is not present in the Rome or Jerusalem texts. Second, the 1543 and 1556 editions conclude the Prologue by signalling where Benjamin’s own words begin, similarly seen in the Jerusalem manuscript:

\begin{quote}
וזה תחלת דבריו
\end{quote}

And this is the beginning of his words\textsuperscript{58}

This wording is unique to the Jerusalem manuscript. It has not, however, been included in the 1583 edition, which is, as will be seen, a rare departure from its reprint of the 1543 edition. Usually such additions and omissions are inconsequential; here, however, they take on added significance as it shows that, at some point, the Prologues of the different manuscript versions became conflated to produce a more standardised Prologue in the Hebrew printed editions. Although ‘

\begin{quote}
והיה ר' בנימין הנזכר איש מבין ומשכיל בעל התורה וההלכה
\end{quote}

is included from the London manuscript, the editions’ reproduction of the Prologue is closest to that of the Jerusalem manuscript. That the Prologue was included in the Soncino edition confirms that it was a feature transmitted from the manuscript tradition into print.

One of the themes which has helped to determine the different states of the manuscripts is the in/exclusion of cities across the texts. Similar evidence can be used to determine the manuscript to print transmission. For example, the city of Ascoli only

\textsuperscript{55} Jacobs, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{56} London, f.149r.
\textsuperscript{57} Both Prologues in the 1543 and 1556 editions are found on the verso of the title pages.
\textsuperscript{58} Jerusalem f.2r; Ibid. The 1543 and 1556 editions are otherwise unpaginated.
appears in the London and Jerusalem manuscripts but not that of Rome. It is also seen in the 1543 and 1556 editions. Situated between Amalfi and Trani the editions read:

From there it is a journey of one day to Ascoli. There are about forty Jews there and they are led by Rabbi Contoli, Rabbi Tzemach, his son-in-law, and Rabbi Joseph.59

Similarly the Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts include the city of Toron des Chevaliers. Although the Rome text states that the city has no Jews, the Jerusalem text indicates a community of 300:

From there it is five parasangs to Toron des Chevaliers which is Shunem and there are about 300 Jews. From there is it three parasangs to Saint Samuel.60

Here too the editions follow that of the Jerusalem manuscript, quoting a Jewish community of 300:

From there it is five parasangs to Toron des Chevaliers which is Shunem and there are 300 Jews.61

A third, and final, example from this set of evidence is St George, described between Ashkelon and Jezreel, which is not found in the Rome manuscript but is part of the textual tradition of the London and Jerusalem manuscripts. With a slight difference in wording between the manuscripts, the London text qualifies the length of the journey as a duration of one day:

From there it a day’s journey to [St Jorge] which is Lod

The Jerusalem manuscript and the editions all match in detail and do not specify a day’s journey:

From there to [St George], which is Lod.62

59 Soncino; Usque.
60 Adler, Note 38, p. 27.
61 Soncino; Usque.
62 Jerusalem f.16r; Soncino; Usque Adler, Note 7, p. 29. During the Crusader period Lod was known as St. George de Lidde. It is known to scholarship as Lydda.
The absence of the distance to the city in the Jerusalem manuscript, which is noted in the London manuscript, may be the result of scribal error. Although it results in awkward wording, the editions have reproduced the line as seen in the Jerusalem manuscript.

This too follows the examples of Ascoli and Toron des Chevaliers in which the editions similarly follow that of the Jerusalem manuscript. Taken as a whole, this set of examples has begun to show that descriptions in the editions, two of which are seen in the London manuscript but not Rome, and one which is found in the Rome text but not London, are all consistently found in the Jerusalem manuscript. These same cities are then seen in the 1543 and 1556 editions, often with similar wording to the Jerusalem text. On this evidence, an argument can begin to be made that the 1543 and 1556 editions have not used the London or Rome manuscripts as their respective exemplars.

Of the exclusions discussed in the previous chapter, the most significant is the city of Kufa where the scribe of the Jerusalem manuscript has written a vertical line within the text. As discussed, it denoted the omission of the description of Muhammad’s son-in-law, which has been preserved in the London and Rome manuscripts. Comparison of the editions reveals that the Soncino and Usque texts also contain this lacuna (as termed by Adler), which has been transmitted from the Jerusalem manuscript into the printed editions. To repeat the description of Kufa as seen in the Jerusalem text:

ושם יום לעיר קופה ושם קברו של כניא המלך ועלי בנו ובין בניו וכסת לפני כן ושמם יוסף פנים יהודים.

From there is it one day to the city of Kufa and there is the grave of King Jeconia and on top is a large building and a synagogue before it. There are about 7,000 Jews. From there it is a day and a half to Sura...

The 1543 and 1556 editions contain a near identical line – the large building is no longer on top:

ושם לעיר קופה מנהל יש שם קבר של כניא המלך בבני ובין בניו וככסת לפני כן שמם יוסף פנים יהודים.

From there to the city of Kufa is a day’s journey. There is the grave of King Jeconia. Before it is built a large building and a synagogue. There are about 7,000 Jews. From there it is a day and a half to Sura...

63 Jerusalem, f.24v.
64 Soncino; Usque.
Whilst the wording may be slightly different between the Jerusalem text and that of the editions, there is no doubt that the omission, as indicated by the Jerusalem scribe’s vertical line, has been reproduced in the 1543 and 1556 editions. As such, it is becoming increasingly evident that an argument can be made that it is the Jerusalem manuscript (or a very similar version) which has been transmitted into print.

Two longer interpolations found in the Jerusalem manuscript have also been outlined in Chapter 2, the first in relation to David Alroy and the second in the description of Germany. As was shown, neither of these passages are found in the London or Rome manuscripts. The printed editions, however, do contain these interpolations, further strengthening the evidence that the Jerusalem text is the base text used by the 1543 and 1556 editions. To return to the passage of David Alroy as quoted in the Jerusalem manuscript:

"ואם לא אהרוג את כל היהודים המנמצאים בכל מלכותי ובעת ההיא היתה צרה לכל הקהלות שבארץ פרס ושלחו כתבים אל ראש הגולה ואל ראשי הישיבות הקהלות אשר בבגדדleh וראויה茑ל הקהלות אשר בכל מלות צעירהเฟonas תקנת בחר את אחיו ואשתו ושלום...

The Caliph] said to the [Exilarch] that if not he would kill all the Jews in the kingdom. At that time, all of the communities were troubled in the land of Persia. They sent letters to the Exilarch and to the Heads of the Academies [yeshivah] of the communities which were in Baghdad “Why should we die before your eyes, we and also the communities in the kingdom? Restrain this man and do not let him spill innocent blood. Then the Head of the Exile wrote to him..."

On comparison with the 1543 and 1556 texts, both editions contain this passage, not seen in the London or Rome texts. There are, however, minor variants seen in the editions. The 1543 edition follows the above wording, with the exception of the word 'שבארץ' (in the land)’ which is changed to ‘ארץ’ (land)’ in the print version. The 1556 Edition closely follows the Jerusalem text, with some spelling variations, but also includes the 1543 'ארץ’. The translation, however, remains unaffected.

Likewise, the editions also include the Jerusalem manuscript’s messianic interpolations found in the narrative’s description of Germany. The passage, as seen the Jerusalem text reads:

"וקוטניא ובינגה ובגרתא ובשתראן וכל ישראל מפוזרים כלם בכל ארץ וכל מי שיבטל לא יתקבץ ישראל

לאו סימן טוב ולא יחיה עם ישראל ובין התמידי והקהלות יש בהם תלמידי חכמים וקהלות אוהבים את אחיהם ודוברים...

Jerusalem, f.28r.
Soncino.
Usque.
Cologne, Bingen, Worms, Strasbourg. All Israel is scattered across all the lands and he who does not gather Israel together, will not [see] good signs or live with Israel. When God will command with regards to our exile, and raises the horn of the messiah, then each one will say “I shall lead the Jews and I shall gather them”. These states have Talmud scholars and communities which love their brothers and speak of peace to all those near and far. When a guest comes to them they rejoice and make a feast for him and they say “Rejoice, brothers, because salvation from God comes in the blink of an eye”. And if we had not been afraid that the end would not come and we would have gathered, but we cannot be gathered until the time for song will arrive and the voice of the turtledove [is heard] in our land and when the messengers will come and constantly say “God is exulted”... mourners of Zion and mourners of Jerusalem. And they will ask for mercy wearing black clothes for their own merits. And all those states in Germany that we have mentioned, there are more, Duisburg, Regensburg...

Whilst the above passage is indeed found in the 1543 and 1556 editions, the printed texts identically include an extra half-line which has not been transmitted from the manuscript tradition. This variant tells of messages sent between communities to be strong in the law of Moses, indicated in bold:

This line emphasises the Jews’ exilic state and their response to it – to follow the law of Moses as this will provide further strength to endure exile. Like the examples of Ascoli, Toron des Chevaliers and Kufa, the two significant additions in the story of

68 Jerusalem, f.38r.
69 Soncino; Usque.
David Alroy and messianic interpolation seen in the Jerusalem manuscript have been transmitted into print. It can therefore be concluded that the 1543 (and by extention the 1583 reprint of the Soncino text) and 1556 editions have used the Jerusalem manuscript, or a near identical version which is no longer extant, as the base text for their editions.

As noted earlier this textual relationship was already been recognised by Adler. This has since been echoed by Nom de Déu who also indicated the correlation between the two texts. To date, however, no scholar has comprehensively commented on the relationship between the 1543 edition and the extant manuscripts. There are, however, asserted statements that have been made regarding the base texts used for the 1543 and 1556 editions. Adolf Asher and Abraham Yaari both wrote that Usque’s edition is based on another manuscript than the one used to print Soncino’s edition. The above evidence demonstrates that this is not the case. All of the additional passages, presented above, which are seen in the Jerusalem manuscript, are also found in both the 1543 and 1556 editions, thereby disproving Asher and Yaari.

Martin Jacobs has, more recently stated that Usque’s text ‘significantly differs from the editio princeps’. This is in direct opposition to Marvin J. Heller who asserted that the 1556 edition is a reprint of the 1543 text. Neither, however, have supported their claims with textual evidence or further elaboration (and the same goes for Kashani and Jacoby). It remains to be seen then, whether Abraham Usque used a manuscript exemplar of the Jerusalem text (or a related version), or if he simply reprinted Soncino’s 1543 text, like the Zifroni-Froben press did in 1583.

Whilst Usque’s 1556 edition may give the appearance of a different textual transmission to that of the Soncino text – the latter completely lacks references to Christians and omits the description of the Holy Sepulchre (See Chapter 6) – the comparative evidence between the 1543 and 1556 editions does not support this. This is best illustrated with the extra-half line from the above example which is not part of the Jerusalem manuscript’s interpolation. The line is unique to the 1543 and 1556 editions and suggests that they used the same exemplar, one which was extremely

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70 The Jerusalem manuscript is ‘sin duda, con el modelo que sirvió para la edición de Ferrara de 1556 – without a doubt served as the model for the Ferrera edition of 1556’, Nom de Déu, p. 14.
72 Jacobs, p. 129.
73 Heller, Sixteenth Century, 1, p. 265.

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close to the Jerusalem manuscript but with some variants. Of all the textual witnesses, in both manuscript and print, it is the 1543 and 1556 texts which are most similar.

A close textual comparison of the 1543 and 1556 editions does, nevertheless, reveal numerous minor, and arguably irrelevant differences which mostly amount to the in/exclusion of qualifying words and typographical errors. Across the entire text of the editions there is only one discrepancy worthy of note. This is in relation to the number of Jews quoted in the narrative for the city of Damira. The Jerusalem manuscript quotes 700 Jews in the city:

משם לדרירה ארבעה פרסאות ובשם כשבע מאות יהודים

From there to Damira is four parasangs and there are about 700 Jews

Whilst the 1543 edition is identical to that of the Jerusalem manuscript, the 1556 edition contains a lower number of Jews, writing 500 instead:

משם לדרירה ארבע פרסאות ובשם כשבע מאות יהודים

From there to Damira is four parasangs and there are about 500 Jews

Both the Jerusalem and 1543 texts have fully written out 700 (כשבע מאות) thus this difference cannot be attributed to the typographer misinterpreting the alpha-numerical notation. It is still possible that a typographical error has occurred by misreading the exemplar. Equally plausible is that the exemplar did indeed state 500 Jews (חמש מאות); this would support the existence of other versions of the Jerusalem manuscript present in Italy which have not survived.

Amongst the minor differences are instances where the respective printers of the 1543, 1556 and the 1583 editions have intentionally altered Benjamin’s narrative. Thematically these are specific to any mentions of Christians and non-Jewish pilgrims (although only the later examples will be outlined). Where the Book of Travels mentions pilgrims the printed editions do not always employ the same terminology (in a similar manner to how the manuscripts treat the name Muhammad); a selection of examples help to illustrate this. In the description of Trani, Benjamin observes that it is a popular port for pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land:

וּם מַתקבצִים כָל הַטוּעִים לְעֹבֵר לִיְרוֹשְׁלָם

75 Jerusalem, f.35r. The London and Rome manuscripts also state 700 Jews. See Adler, Note 11, p. 66.
76 Soncino.
77 Usque.
78 As the Jerusalem manuscript has been censored, the manuscript quotations are from the London text.
And there all of the mistaken ones [i.e. pilgrims] gather to cross to Jerusalem\(^{79}\)

The Soncino and Usque editions echo that of the London text. In an instance where the Zifroni-Froben edition differs from that of the Soncino text, the 1583 edition omits the explicit reference to pilgrims, and changes the line to ‘all who wish’:

And there all who wish gather to cross to Jerusalem\(^{80}\)

The second reference to pilgrims is at Acre, which notes that pilgrims arrive by ship into Acre and continue to Jerusalem. As the Jerusalem manuscript and 1543 edition both relate:

ושם נמל גדול שקורין פורטו לכל התועי הלכו לירושלם

There is a large harbour there which is called a port for all those who stray [i.e. pilgrims] to come to Jerusalem\(^{81}\)

Here again, the 1556 and 1583 editions replace the word *to‘im* (athonim); the 1556 edition removes the word ‘pilgrims’:

כל התועים הלכו לירושלם

whereas the 1583 text replaces *to‘im* with an alternative word, *nodrim*:

כל התודרים הלכו לירושלם

all those who have taken vows [i.e. pilgrims] who are going to Jerusalem\(^{82}\)

Yet again the term for ‘pilgrim’ differs across the editions. Moreover, the Zifroni-Froben text supplies an entirely different word not just from the Soncino edition but also within its own text. In the example above, the substituted word is *rotz‘im* (rollim, wish), in this example, however, the word printed is *nodrim* (nordrim, take vows).

A third example in the narrative describes how Christian pilgrims visit the Holy Sepulchre; as read in the London manuscript:

ושם הבמה הגדולה שקורין אותו שיפורקי. ושם קבר אותו האיש שהולכים אליו

And there is the great Church called the Sepulchre. There is the grave of that man which all the pilgrims go to\(^{84}\)

\(^{79}\) Adler, Note 1, p. 11. The Rome manuscript spells `תועים` with a ‘ת’ which can be translated as ‘those who stray’.

\(^{80}\) Soncino; Usque; Zifroni-Froben p. 5a.

\(^{81}\) Jerusalem, f.12r; Soncino.

\(^{82}\) Usque.

\(^{83}\) Zifroni-Froben, p. 9b.

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This line is notably absent in the Usque edition and is the result of self-censorship (addressed in Chapter 6). Here too the 1543 and 1583 editions differ. Whereas the Soncino text continues to employ to’im (תועים) the Zifroni-Froben edition again supplies nodrim (נודרים), rendering the line:

ושם הבמה הגדולה שקורין שפולכי קבר אוטו האיש שהlongleftrightarrow לכל התועים והנודרים אליה

And there is the great Church called the Sepulchre. There is the grave of that man which all of the pilgrims go to.

The Book of Travels’ sole mention of Muslim pilgrims is found in the narrative’s lengthy passage about those who travel via Baghdad to see the Caliph whilst on their way to Mecca. The London manuscript uses to’im also for Muslim pilgrims:

והתועים הבאים מארץ מרחק ללכת למכה

The pilgrims who come from distant lands to go to Mecca

The 1556 edition, however, exchanges pilgrims for the word men:

ואנשי המאשימים מארץ מרחק ללכת למכה

The men who come from distant lands to go to Mecca

The deliberate alteration of the text when the Book of Travels mentions pilgrims demonstrates how the respective printers of the printed editions engaged with the text. Whether the edition employed to’im, rotzim or nodrim the purpose is to convey that pilgrims visited holy sites. What the word choices of the printers reflects, however, is how ‘pilgrim’ could be interpreted by an audience. The London, Rome and Soncino texts all use תועים, to’im (and in the instance of the first example, it is spelled טועים). Whilst intended to be translated simply as pilgrim, a reader could equally read to’im as the root word טעה, ta’ah (to be mistaken, to err) or תענה, ta’ah (to stray, to wander). Readers choosing to read to’im as a pejorative term would therefore understand the Book of Travels to be an anti-Christian and anti-Muslim text suggesting that pilgrims of these religions are mistaken and erring in their respective faiths. Equally, an

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84 Adler, p. 24.
85 Soncino; Zifroni-Froben, p. 11a.
86 Adler, p. 35. תועים is also read in Jerusalem, f.20r, Soncino and Zifroni-Froben, p. 16a.
87 Usque.
audience did not have to read the text this way and could have understood to‘im simply as ‘pilgrim’. Usque and the Zifroni-Froben press may have recognised that this pejorative interpretation was possible and, due to the context of their printing activities (as outlined in the first section), thought it wise to substitute alternative words, rotzim and nodrim or to leave to‘im out altogether. It cannot be known with any certainty, however, if to‘im has been preserved from the Book of Travels’ twelfth-century context or if changes occurred in the, now lost, transmission process before the print form which the earliest manuscript survives.

One final interpolation which belongs solely to the 1556 edition is Usque’s addition of four lines at the end of Benjamin’s text. The first two lines are a direct quote from Deuteronomy 30:4: ‘If your dispersed will be at the ends of heaven, from there Hashem, your God, will gather you in and from there He will take you’. The final lines are taken from Nechemia 9:5 ‘Glory to God who is exalted above all blessing and praise’. This latter quote can simply be interpreted as general praise to God. As will be explored in the next chapter, Usque’s printing activities were frequently intertwined with the theme of messianic hope. Since one of the main features of the Book of Travels is the geographical dispersion of the Jews, Usque added the line from Deuteronomy, perhaps as a reminder to his Jewish readers that although the Jews have been exiled across the world God has not forgotten them as they await the ingathering of the exiles. Pertinent here is that these lines are exclusive to the 1556 edition and have not been transmitted from the manuscripts or 1543 edition.

The textual comparison of the Hebrew printed editions of the Book of Travels with the extant manuscripts has revealed that Soncino’s 1543 (and by extension the 1583) edition and Usque’s 1556 edition are closest to that of the Jerusalem text. As outlined, the Jerusalem manuscript includes cities and larger interpolations, or in the case of Kufa, a significant omission, not found in the London or Rome manuscripts. In each of these cases, they have been reproduced in the printed editions. Whilst Adler stated this link between the Jerusalem manuscript and Usque’s edition, this study has provided concrete evidence to support the relationship between the texts. What has not been previously explored is the connection between the 1543 edition and the extant manuscripts. Here too the evidence points to the Jerusalem manuscript (or similar but now lost text) as Soncino’s exemplar.
This chapter has also established the complex relationship between the editions. There are no significant differences between the 1543 and 1556 editions, contrary to what has been stated by Asher, Yaari and Jacobs. This again suggests that it is the Jerusalem text which has entered the print tradition of the *Book of Travels* (rather than Usque using the 1543 *editio princeps* as his base text as claimed by Heller). On the balance of probability then, the Jerusalem manuscript may have circulated in other versions (of unknown number) which have not survived; this would account for versions of the manuscript being present in both Constantinople and Ferrara. As such, it is the Italian textual tradition which has survived into the early modern period, both in Hebrew and Latin transmission (See Chapter 5) and, more specifically, the Jerusalem (or similar) text which has been preserved in print.88 Like the Jerusalem manuscript, the 1556 and 1583 editions have also been altered by their respective printers. Whilst Usque adds lines at the end of the text, the 1556 text represents a censored version which has carefully excised references to Christians. Similarly, the 1583 edition is sensitive to its intended Christian readership and changes the terminology for pilgrims. As such, an examination of the contexts in which these editions have been printed has provided invaluable insights into their transmission.

88 Adler, however, broke this chain in 1907 by returning to the London text for his critical edition.
Chapter 4. ‘A Man of Truth?’: The Hebrew Reception of the Book of Travels

Chapters 2 and 3 have outlined the transmission of the Book of Travels. They have traced the textual witnesses of Benjamin’s narrative in manuscript and in the early modern printed editions and demonstrated that different versions of the text have survived – namely the London, Rome, Oxford and Jerusalem manuscripts, of which the Jerusalem text (or a closely related version) has been transmitted into the printed editions of 1543 and 1556. The focus of this chapter is to return to the manuscripts and printed editions and explore the medieval and early modern reception of the Book of Travels. The purpose, here, is to think about the afterlife of the Book of Travels, its movement within and outside of Spain, to Italy, Constantinople and back to Europe.

As will be seen, the evidence for the medieval and early modern periods varies. The first section of this chapter examines a number of direct reception examples for the Book of Travels in manuscript. Each will be treated separately, outlining the nature of each text, its author and the context in which the Book of Travels has been quoted. The reception will thus be presented chronologically to better highlight the transmission links. The manuscript reception examples will then be examined as a whole to draw wider conclusions about the Book of Travels’ medieval reception. The second section of this chapter considers who the early modern audience was for Benjamin’s twelfth-century text. To date, no direct reception examples have been uncovered for the 1543 and 1556 editions; consequently, these editions can only be examined by situating the first two Hebrew editions more broadly, centring the discussion around the cultural milieu of the Jewish community. Only by making assumptions concerning the Jewish attachment to the printed word and cultural reading habits can an understanding of the readership of the first two printed editions of the Book of Travels be reached. The 1583 edition once again offers direct reception examples also outlined below. In locating the Hebrew reception of Benjamin’s narrative through both direct examples and broad contexts, the audience(s) of the text will be drawn out to reveal how readers interpreted the Book of Travels and made it relevant to their own time. One theme to emerge is that contemporary readers understood the Book of Travels to be an eye-witness account. Taking the narrative as
fact then, authors applied the text to a range of contexts including polemics, exegesis and history, all of which will be explored below.

**The Manuscript Reception**

The second volume of Asher’s 1840 edition of the *Book of Travels* includes all of Asher’s critical notes to his translation as well as three essays, two by Leopold Zunz and one by F. Lebrecht. Zunz’s first essay, entitled ‘An Essay on the geographical literature of the Jews’ offers an overview of all the geographical works composed by Jews, from the ancient world to Zunz’s own time. Stating that few Jews ‘studied the earth and its inhabitants’, Zunz’s list is remarkable in its breadth; it includes any Jew who noted any geographic, topographic or ethnographic information in a written work. As expected, Benjamin of Tudela is found in Zunz’s essay. In the brief entry, Zunz outlined the nature of Benjamin’s narrative, the authenticity of the information and how Benjamin has been quoted in other, non-geographic, texts. Zunz states ‘[t]he first authors who mention Benjamin are’, and proceeds to list six writers between 1368 and 1524 who quote from the *Book of Travels*. Since each of these examples pre-dates the printed editions of Benjamin’s narrative Zunz has, consequently, recorded some of the earliest known references to Benjamin of Tudela in manuscript. With no subsequent treatment of the *Book of Travels’ transmission and reception, these references have remained unexplored.

With Zunz’s list as a starting point, this section demonstrates how the *Book of Travels* was used by Jewish scholars as a factual account in the Middle Ages. In accepting Benjamin as an authority, the authors confidently included Benjamin’s information in their own writings, whether polemical, exegetical or narrative. Of the six examples, three cite Benjamin as evidence to support arguments that they have constructed, two use the account to relay information and one simply refers to Benjamin as a ‘master of travels’ without further identification. How these scholars became transmitters of the *Book of Travels*, who was being exposed to Benjamin’s narrative and how the reception examples establish the *Book of Travels’ transmission outside of Spain is the subject of the following pages.

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1 Zunz, p. 231. For the purpose of the essay see Introduction.
2 Zunz, p. 252.
Samuel ibn (Seneh) Zarza, Mekor Chaim

Samuel ibn Zarza’s Mekor Chaim (מקור חיים), written in 1368, is the earliest known work to quote from the Book of Travels. Little is known about the life of Zarza except that he was a resident of Valencia, Spain. His most famous work is Mekor Chaim (Source of Life), a philosophical commentary on the Pentateuch, divided into the weekly Torah portions (as it is read out in the synagogue). In the introduction of Mekor Chaim Zarza writes that he composed his commentary to illuminate and further understand the words of the sages – particularly Abraham ibn Ezra and Maimonides – thus building on the words of previous biblical commentators. According to Heller, he was highly regarded by his contemporaries.

Zarza’s use of Benjamin’s text is embedded in a discussion of reincarnation. From the outset, Zarza states his opposition to the concept of reincarnation, believing it to be a lie. Whilst he cites that other scholars do have proofs for reincarnation he remains unconvinced by their arguments. Rather, Zarza strongly states that anyone who subscribes to the belief of reincarnation is no better than the Piganush (פגאנוש), a non-Jewish people from the city of Sidon who believe in reincarnation. Zarza’s knowledge of the Piganush comes directly from the Book of Travels; in other words, this example is provided because Zarza is aware of, and familiar with, Benjamin’s narrative. Quoted nearly word for word, Zarza writes in his commentary on the Torah portion כי תצא:

They live in large mountains and nooks of rocks. There is no king, no prince and no ruler over them because they live on their own accord between the mountains and the rocks. Their border extends to Mount Hermon, a journey of three days. They are steeped in lewdness; they marry their sisters and daughters. They have an annual festival where everyone comes, men and women, to eat and drink together and swap their wives. They say that soul when it leaves the body of a good man enters the body of a child born at the moment of death and the soul of an evil man enters the body of a dog. This has already been written by Rabbi Benjamin, master of travels.

4 Heller, Sixteenth Century, 1, p. 493.
Here, the *Book of Travels* is employed as a polemical device. In the account, Benjamin’s description of the people only mentions three facts: 1) they have no ruler, 2) they are deeply immoral and 3) they believe in reincarnation, implicitly linking the belief in reincarnation with the immoral acts of incest and wife-swapping. Zarza could be drawing causal links between these three facets of their way of life, that they are immoral because they have no laws since they have neither king nor ruler. From Zarza’s argument it is clear that he derides those who believe in reincarnation and equates them with pagans. To illustrate this point, he provides the example of the Piganush, from the *Book of Travels*, not only to equate believers of reincarnation with pagans, but also to link that a belief in reincarnation is rooted in immorality. Benjamin’s description of the Piganush is thus used by Zarza to fashion a specific polemical argument, in this case, an argument against those scholars who believe in the idea of reincarnation.

More widely, Zarza’s inclusion of Benjamin is the first instance of the narrative being used as an eye-witness account. Based on how Zarza has applied Benjamin’s description, it can be inferred that Zarza believed the text to be a true account and that the information provided of peoples and places recorded in the *Book of Travels* could be trusted and, therefore, could be included in a religious context – in this case, a commentary on the Pentateuch. It cannot be conclusively stated if Zarza set a precedent for other Spanish scholars to accept, and thus use the narrative as an authoritative text. What will be shown, however, is that this trend continues throughout the medieval period and becomes one common thread which links the remaining manuscript reception examples.

**Isaac ben Moses Arma, *Akedat Yitchak***

Born in Zamora, Spain, Isaac ben Moses Arma (c.1420-94) was a rabbi, philosopher and preacher. Arma initially taught in Zamora before taking up rabbinical posts in the province of Aragon, where he ultimately settled in Calatayud. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, Arma went to Naples where he settled until his death. As a rabbi, Arma’s sermons were a platform in which he could counter the conversionist sermons of the Catholic Church (which Jews were forced to attend in late fifteenth-century Spain) by expounding on the basic tenets of Judaism. Whilst in Calatayud, Arma composed a number of works, both philosophical and polemical,
which incorporated the themes of his sermons. The Akedat Yitzchak (Binding of Isaac) is Arma’s seminal work. Composed, according to Zunz, c.1490, Akedat Yitzchak (עקידת יצחק) contains 105 ‘Gates’ (שערים) in which 117 sermons are written in the order of the weekly Torah portion. Its purpose is to demonstrate the truth of Judaism and further counter Christian polemic aimed at the Jews in Arma’s time.

In Gate 33 of the Book of Genesis (בראשית) under the heading Vayechi (ויחי) Arma describes the blessings that Jacob gave to each of his sons on his deathbed. Of the twelve blessings given, Arma concentrates on Jacob’s blessing to Judah, who is referred to as a lion (גור אריה יהודה). The ensuing discussion expounds on Judah’s wisdom and intelligence and how the kingship of Israel will derive from the tribe of Judah. From this, Arma also includes a discussion of King David’s direct lineage from the tribe of Judah. Whilst Arma highlights the loftiness of the kingship of Israel, he is also quick to point out how there will be a number of falls in Judah’s kingship, relating that the descendents of the tribe will become downtrodden and cursed. Nonetheless, Arma reinforces the belief that no matter how oppressed the Jews become, God will never abandon the Jews, will never break his Covenant with them and that there will always be descendents from the tribe of Judah who not only survive but will also retain power. The wider implication of Arma’s discussion is to show that since kingship is derived from the tribe of Judah, members of this tribe will always find themselves in positions of power. To support his argument, Arma quotes from the Book of Travels:

As has been recalled by Rabbi Benjamin, the master of travels, who saw, with his eyes in the land of Baghdad, a great city to God; there are tens of thousands of Jews there. On the day of the king’s birthday, a prince from the seed of David would ride with him in a second chariot and they would call out to him with great respect. [They were calling] ‘make way for the son of David’. In every generation there are such people, in every place, according to what has been told to us by the mouths of trustworthy sources from these lands. And who says that these princes and rabbis, who have been given positions in these kingdoms by the glory of those kings, are not descendents from this seed [of David]. All the more so, since the majority of Jews in exile are from the tribe of Judah.

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7 Heller, Sixteenth Century, 1, p. 145
8 Isaac ben Moses Arma, Akedat Yitzchak (Lvov, 1868). The edition is unpaginated.
9 Arma, p. 589.
Taken from Benjamin’s description of Baghdad, the ‘prince of the seed of David’ refers to the Exilarch of Baghdad (sometimes called the Head of the Exile, or Captivity). The Exilarch was a Jewish political leader and head of the Jewish community, but appointed by the Muslim ruler. The early history of the Exilarch had its origins in the beginning of the Islamic period which, by the time of the Abbasid caliphs of the twelfth century, had become an important institution of communal leadership to the minority Jewish community in Baghdad. As Arnold E. Franklin rightly states, the Exilarch was a symbol of Jewish empowerment. (The position of the Exilarch is further explored in Chapter 6). The title of Exilarch was hereditary and traced its descent from the Davidic line. In fashioning his argument, Arma takes Benjamin’s account of the ‘prince of the seed of David’ to prove that the descendents of David, and therefore of Judah, have continued to occupy positions of power, even as recent as the twelfth century (some 300 years before Arma’s time).

Two parallels can be drawn between Zarza and Arma: first, Arma has used the Book of Travels as an eye-witness account, in this example, to substantiate the fact that the Exilarch is, indeed, from the seed of David. Second, and more significantly, the narrative is also quoted in a polemical context, in this case, to strengthen knowledge of Jewish kingship. The Davidic lineage is not just a claim made by the Jews but one which is also recognised by the Muslims, evidenced by their appellation of the Exilarch as ‘saidna ben Daoud’ (Ibn ben Daoud) as recorded by Benjamin. In turn, Arma offers this as further proof for his argument that the tribe of Judah, whom David is descended from, will always attain positions of power – in this case, as embodied in the office of the Exilarch.

Considering the time-span between Zarza and Arma (approximately 120 years) Benjamin’s narrative had not lost its status, and use, as a reliable narrative. Additional direct reception examples of the Book of Travels between 1368 and 1490 have yet to be uncovered; nevertheless, it can be deduced that Benjamin’s authoritative reputation had not diminished, or Arma would not have included his information. It is from this point that the Book of Travels becomes firmly entrenched in the Judeo-Spanish

10 Arnold E. Franklin, This Noble House: Jewish Descendants of King David in the Medieval Islamic East (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 4. Franklin continues with a description of some of the offices and functions that were entrusted to the Exilarch, though the Exilarch’s influences fluctuated throughout the Middle Ages. The Exilarch, as a political institution under Arab rule, has its roots in the reish galuta (Aramaic, reish galuta, ‘head of the exile’) of the Babylonian exile and Talmud.

11 Franklin, p. 3.
Isaac ben Judah Abarbanel, *Commentary on the Prophets*

The name of Don Isaac Abarbanel (or Abravanel) is inextricably linked to the Spanish Expulsion of the Jews. A statesman and financier to kings in Portugal and Spain, Abarbanel was also a philosopher and biblical commentator who composed many influential works. The son of the Portuguese treasurer, Abarbanel was born in Lisbon in 1437. He received an extensive Jewish education as well as instruction in classics, philosophy and Christian theology. Like his father, Abarbanel was appointed treasurer under King Alfonso V of Portugal. Abarbanel was forced to leave Portugal for Spain in 1483 when fabricated charges were brought against him. Here too, he rose to prominence under Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, also in a financier capacity. Despite all of his efforts, Abarbanel was unable to prevent the expulsion of the Jews and left Spain with his coreligionists in 1492. Abarbanel settled in Naples where he remained until 1503, before moving to Venice where he died in 1508. Interestingly, Naples was where Arma also fled in 1492. There is no evidence to suggest that these great Jewish thinkers met, but as a younger contemporary of Arma, Abarbanel incorporated passages of *Akedat Yitzchak* into his own works.

Of Abarbanel’s writings, he is best known for his extensive commentaries on the Torah, the prophets, the Passover *Haggadah*, *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of our Fathers) and on Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed*. Within his commentaries, Abarbanel used his worldly experiences to interpret the biblical text, manifested in one of two ways: first, to demonstrate how the biblical text could impact contemporary Jewish life, and second, that contemporary events could be interpreted in light of biblical events. Within Abarbanel’s prolific writings are two instances where he quotes from the *Book of Travels*, both of which are found in commentaries on the prophets. Each section of commentary on that specific prophet is laid out in a formulaic manner, beginning with an introduction detailing the character of the book, the date of composition and the author’s intentions. The introduction also contains opening

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12 Eisenberg, p. 34; Heller, *Sixteenth Century*, 1, p. 45.
13 Eisenberg, p. 52.
14 Cohn-Sherbok, p. 177.
15 Eisenberg, p. 34.
questions which are then discussed at length by Abarbanel and resolved with detailed answers.\textsuperscript{16}

Abarbanel’s \textit{Commentary on the Later Prophets} (פירוש על נביאים אחרונים) was completed in Venice in 1505. The first reference to Benjamin is found in the Book of Ezekiel. Characteristically, Abarbanel’s commentary begins with an introduction, and in this case, two introductions; the first about Ezekiel’s greatness and the second about his prophecies. The focus here is on the first introduction where Abarbanel compares Ezekiel to the prophet Jeremiah. Among the many parallels drawn between the two prophets, Abarbanel notes that both died in Babylonia which is known because Ezekiel was buried there. The evidence used to support this claim is a passage from the \textit{Book of Travels} in which Benjamin records his visit to the grave of Ezekiel:

The synagogue of Ezekiel...is on the River Parat (Euphrates)...In the place of the synagogue there are about sixty towers and between each tower is a synagogue. And after the synagogue is the grave of Ezekiel. On top of the synagogue is a large cupola; it is a very beautiful building. It was built by Yechanya. 35,000 Jews come together at the grave of Ezekiel...and they come to pray there from distant lands. On the grave of Ezekiel is an oil lamp which burns all day and all night

Abarbanel concludes the passage relating the synagogue and grave of Ezekiel stating:

You will find this is in the book of travels made by the wise man Rabbi Benjamin who travelled from the city of Tudela in the kingdom of Navarra and went to many faraway lands. He wrote all of the things listed which he saw until he returned to Spain in the year 4933 from creation.\textsuperscript{17}

Abarbanel thus provides a third example of the narrative being used as an eye-witness account. In this instance the \textit{Book of Travels} is quoted to confirm a specific fact about the biblical landscape. Benjamin’s knowledge about Jewish history and tradition, already demonstrated in the above examples, is once again employed as an authority on the biblical past. For Abarbanel, Benjamin verifies, as recent as the twelfth century, the existence of a grave in the Middle East believed to be that of the Prophet Ezekiel.

Of equal interest to the above example is Abarbanel’s short description of who Benjamin was. Both Zarza and Arma simply refer to Benjamin of Tudela as ‘Rabbi

\textsuperscript{17} Isaac Abarbanel, \textit{Commentary on the Later Prophets} (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 432.
Benjamin, master of travels’ (also used by Abraham Farissol and further discussed below). This appellation points to the obvious fact that there was only one Rabbi Benjamin who wrote a travel account; Jewish scholars could thus reference Benjamin without further qualification. Abarbanel’s *Commentary on the Later Prophets*, however, was published post-1492. Now living in Italy, Abarbanel may have realised that his writings had the potential to reach other audiences, beyond the Spanish exiles. Consequently, he added a brief background on Benjamin by way of introduction to new readers. Alternatively, the additional information is used as a remembrance device; Benjamin was part of the Judeo-Spanish past which Abarbanel may have been nostalgic for. The inclusion of the mini-biography offered a link to that past, ensuring that the names and works of earlier Judeo-Spanish writers, particularly an authority like Benjamin, would not be forgotten.

The second mention of the *Book of Travels* in Abarbanel’s work is also found in a commentary on the prophets, in this case his commentary on the prophet Zachariah (Chapter 12). In a discussion about war, Abarbanel notes Zachariah’s terminology for the Jews – ‘a small number of Judah’ (יהודה אלופי). Jewish scholars across the centuries have debated the accuracy of this term; in his commentary, Abarbanel cites scholars’ opinions on both sides of the debate. He does, however, specifically highlight the opinion of Abraham ibn Ezra (often abbreviated to RAVA in printed editions, and who, incidentally, was also from Tudela) who had written that the heads of the exile in Baghdad are descended from David and are a large family with a large family tree. Whilst Abarbanel does agree that there are descendants from David in Baghdad, he disagrees with ibn Ezra that they are large in number. Rather, Abarbanel states that they are small in number, citing the *Book of Travels* in support:

As Rabbi Benjamin wrote in his travels, he saw them there but, he did not write that they were a large family but that they were individual men.  

Benjamin is thus used as a proof. Rather than using a direct quote, we can see how Abarbanel has interpreted Benjamin’s descriptions. Benjamin does not explicitly mention that there is a large family unit, descended from David, living in Baghdad. He does, however, name a number of individuals living in Baghdad, particularly the heads

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18 Isaac Abarbanel, *Commentary on the Prophets and Writings* (Jerusalem: 1960), p. 239.
of the yeshivot (academies). In this sense, Abarbanel has interpreted that whilst there are Jews descended from David living in Baghdad, they are individuals rather than a large family unit. In this reception example then, Abarbanel has applied the Book of Travels to an exegetical argument – to further understand the text of Zachariah and the term ‘a small number of Judah’ (אלופי יהודה).

**Solomon ibn Verga, Shevet Yehudah**

Similar to Samuel ibn Zarza, little is known about the author of Shevet Yehudah (The Sceptre of Judah). Solomon ibn Verga was born in Castile and fled to Lisbon during the Spanish expulsion of 1492. In 1497 ibn Verga was forcibly converted and remained in Portugal until 1506. When the conversos were permitted to leave Portugal in that year, ibn Verga went first to Italy before settling in Turkey (possibly in Adrianople where his son Joseph lived). Shevet Yehudah (שבט יהודה) is a monumental work comprised of a history of the Jewish people. Although Solomon ibn Verga is the primary author, the work was begun by his father, Judah, during the 1480s in Spain. It was Solomon who then penned the majority of the work, completing his contribution whilst in Italy. His son Joseph ben Solomon ultimately edited and wrote the final prayer of Shevet Yehudah before publishing the completed text.

Shevet Yehudah recounts the trials and tribulations that have befallen the Jewish people in exile. Focused specifically on the experiences of Sephardic Jewry, Marvin J. Heller states that the reader is struck by how ibn Verga is ‘introspective and deeply anguished at the unwarranted persecution of his people’. The book is comprised of sixty-four accounts of persecutions of Jews. David Wacks identifies that Shevet Yehudah used the intellectual tools and habits of Spanish culture in an attempt to come to a rational understanding of the 1492 Expulsion.

Included in this are descriptions of disputations between Jews and Christians. Ibn Verga displays a vast knowledge of Talmudic, philosophical and secular learning, quoting from a vast array of Jewish chronicles, including Josippon, the Book of Travels, Abarbanel and works of Kabbalah. Although he also includes legends and

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20 Zinberg, 2, p. 66.
23 Wacks, p. 152. For a more extensive discussion of the work see pp. 157-59 and pp. 167-69.
poetic tales in his writing, resulting in passages of doubtful historicity, the work is of a great value for ibn Verga’s understanding of the history of the Jews.24

Chapter 31 provides an account of the false messiah David Alroy, a Jew from Kurdistan, who lived in the first decades of the twelfth century. He was well-versed in Judaism, spending many years studying under the great Jewish sages of Baghdad. Continual violence between Christians and Muslims at the time inspired many groups of Jews to believe that this was a sign of the coming of the Messiah. Many Jews of the Persian Empire co-operated with their Muslim neighbours and took up arms against Christians; Alroy was one such leader who attacked foreign Christians in the city of Amadia, by permission of Imad al-Din Zangi, the ruler of Mosul. Alroy quickly gained support through his victories but also made enemies; Amadia was also a city of sectarian Muslim politics. As the Persian rulers came to hear of Alroy’s exploits they sought his death ultimately killing him, either through their own efforts or through Jewish assassins.25 The exploits of David Alroy are related by ibn Verga, using the Book of Travels as his unnamed source.

A comparison of the passage by ibn Verga with that of the Book of Travels confirms that the salient points of the story are from Benjamin’s narrative; ibn Verga’s account, however, is not without its exaggerations. The entire passage is too lengthy to quote in full. Two examples, however, are presented below to highlight the similarities and differences between the accounts. The first example describes David Alroy’s background as recorded by Benjamin:

והיה מהיר בתורת ישראל בהלכה ובתלמוד בכל חכמת בני ישמעאל ובספרי החיצונים בספרי החרטומים והמכשפים. ועלה בדעתו יד במלך פרס ולקבץ היהודים הושבים בהרי חפטון ובחוף ירושלם

He was well-versed in the Torah of Moshe, in law and in Talmud and in all the external wisdom [secular literature] and in the tongue of Ishmael and their writings, and in the books of the magicians and sorcerers. He knowingly rose up against the king of Persia and gathered the Jews that live in the mountains of Chafton to go out and fight to destroy all the nations and to capture Jerusalem.26

Likewise, ibn Verga recounts similar details:

והיה חכם גדול בתלמוד ובכל חכמות חצוניות ובכל ספרי החרטומים והמכשפים והכשדים והאколоודים והיה אלדויד בחזקתו ובעיוות לבו הרים יד במלך ולקבץ יהודים אין יושבים בהרי חפתון והסיתם להם לצאת להלחם בכל הגוים

25 Harris Lenowitz, The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 81-92. Although an Arabic account from the 1160s is also extant (See Chapter 2), the details included by ibn Verga are not sourced from al-Magribi’s retelling.
26 Adler, p. 51.
He is a great sage in Talmud, in all exterior wisdom, in all the books of sorcerers and Chaldeans. The man, El-David, held the idea of rebelling against the hand of the king and collected a group of Jews living on Mount Chafton and incited them to fight against the non-Jews. 27

The two narratives are extremely close in their retelling of Alroy’s background. Benjamin’s narrative continues to be followed as seen in the exchange between Zid-el-Din, a vassal of the Persian king and the father-in-law of David Alroy. The Book of Travels relates:

There arose a king by the name of Zin el-Din, the king of Torgamim and a servant of the king of Persia sent for the father-in-law of David Alroy. He gave him a bribe of 10,000 gold talents to secretly kill David Alroy. So he went to his house and David was asleep and he killed him in his bed and his intentions were abandoned. And he did not return. The king of Persia went against the Jews who lived in the mountains. They saw this they sent for the great head [the Exilarch] to come and save them from the king of Persia and to appease him. The king of Persia was appeased by giving him 100 talents of gold and there was tranquillity in the land. 28

Ibn Verga’s re-telling of the same affair is significantly longer, adding dialogue and details not seen in Benjamin’s account:

And the Merciful God put into the heart of the king of Togorama, named Zid el-Din, who was subject to the king of Persia. He loved the Jews. He was acquainted with the father-in-law of David El-David and said to him: “You know that your people are with you and how they are in tremendous trouble with the king of Persia. Therefore you must save your soul to save your people. 10,000 gold [pieces] will be given to the Jews. And I will vouch for them and tell [the Jews] from me that if you kill that sinful man who has put many innocent lives in danger you will also receive a reward from God because you saved your innocent people.” And that man turned to the delivery of this people out of love and put his face to complete the matter. That very night he called David El-david to the feast and he provided him with drink. At midnight, in the middle of his intoxicated sleep, he jumped on him and cut off his head. He brought the head and delivered it into the hand of the king Zid el-Din. The king said when he saw the head

28 Adler, p. 53.
“Your blood is on your head”. And the king Zid el-Din sent the head to the king of Persia with trustworthy witnesses that he was the messiah that he asked about. The king’s wrath for David El-David abated. But, he said that he wished to take revenge on the Jews who followed him and asked all the communities to hand over all those who persisted after that accused one. They answered that they did not recognise them and asked where they should search for them. Then the king ordered to apprehend them. From their prison they appointed intermediaries and negotiated with the king a large sum of money, 100 gold talents. The RAM wrote that the Sultan asked him if he was the messiah, and he said yes, and the king said to him “and what is the sign?” and he replied that “they should cut off his head”. “And that he will live again”. Then the king commanded to cut off his head and he died. They said: it is better for him not to die with great suffering. Some of the fools are waiting for him to come back to life, but still the fool has not come.30

The salient points of the narrative – Zid el-Din’s bribe to the Jews to kill David Alroy, his beheading and the appeasement of the king of Persia – are consistent in the two accounts. The Book of Travels, however, relates this story in the third person whereas ibn Verga’s account incorporates dialogue. Harris Lenowitz has noted that ibn Verga’s retelling of the story is heavily influenced by the author’s recent experience of expulsion from Spain.31 Elements of this are seen in the above quote in which ibn Verga highlights the precariousness of the Jews’ position under others’ rule.

The Book of Travels is the only contemporary Hebrew account of David Alroy. Presumably Benjamin heard, and recorded, the story whilst travelling through the Middle East, since he states that ‘ten years ago a man arose called David Alroy’. It is therefore not remarkable that ibn Verga used, and directly copied from Benjamin’s narrative. There is no evidence which could help to speculate on whether ibn Verga’s readers would have recognised the Book of Travels in the text. Nonetheless, Shevet Yehudah provides a fourth reception example of the Book of Travels in manuscript. Here, the narrative is used as a source for a literary adaptation in a historical account. There is thus a subtle difference in the way in which ibn Verga quotes the Book of Travels compared with the two previous reception examples. Arna and Abarbanel have all used information from the Book of Travels of which Benjamin could have experienced first-hand. Ibn Verga, on the other hand, quotes an incident which Benjamin recorded based on the testimony of others. The above thus provides an example of a later medieval author attributing credibility to a part of Benjamin’s narrative, which is not an eye-witness account, to be employed in historical writing.

29 Attempts to identify this individual have been unsuccessful.
30 ibn Verga, pp. 51-52.
31 Lenowitz, pp. 86-88.
Abraham Zacuto, Sefer Yuchasin

Similar to Isaac Abarbanel, Abraham Zacuto quoted from the Book of Travels on two occasions in his Sefer Yuchasin (Book of Genealogies). Born in Salamanca c.1452, Zacuto was taught by his father, Samuel, and by Rabbi Isaac Aboab. Little else is known about his earlier years.  

Heller wrote that Zacuto attended the University of Salamanca as a student of astronomy and astrology. Whilst Sefer Yuchasin is a popular work for its historical content, Zacuto’s legacy is as an astronomer, having written a number of tracts on the subject. After the Jews’ expulsion from Spain, Zacuto went to Portugal where he served as Royal Astronomer under King João II and King Manuel I. Further evidence for Zacuto’s time in Portugal is scant.  

After the Portuguese expulsion of the Jews in 1497, Zacuto settled in Tunis. At an unknown date, Zacuto left Tunis for the Middle East where he died in 1515. During his time in Tunis, Zacuto composed Sefer Yuchasin (ספר יוחסין) in 1504. Divided into five sections, Zacuto sought to produce a historical chronicle of the chain of tradition of the oral Torah from Moses to his own time. He believed that earlier scholars had dealt with the subject all too briefly and inadequately. Sefer Yuchasin is thus a chronological account of Torah and Talmudic personalities for the benefit of Zacuto’s contemporaries.

Benjamin of Tudela appears on two different occasions in Zacuto’s chronicle. The first instance of Benjamin is in Zacuto’s Second Essay on the Amoraim. The reader is introduced to Rabbi Aba of Acre through a detailed discussion of whether the city of Acre is the beginning of the Land of Israel. A debated subject among Jewish scholars from all eras, Zacuto adds his voice and argues that Acre is indeed part of the Land of Israel. In shaping his discussion, Zacuto begins by citing two opposing midrashim – one which states Acre is within Israel, and the other stating that it is not. Zacuto next quotes the Book of Travels:

במסעות דר' בנימין אומר כי הוא יום אחד מצור הקדומה והחדשה והיא עכו אשר היתה בגבול אשר היא תחלת ארץ ישראל היא נמל גדול בשפת הים


Heller, Sixteenth Century, 2, p. 585.

Chabás and Goldstein, p. 9.

Chabás and Goldstein note a difference in scholarly opinion as to whether Zacuto died in Damascus or Jerusalem, p. 15.

Heller, Sixteenth Century, 2, p. 585. Sefer Yuchasin was only published posthumously, in abridged and altered forms across the centuries. The first complete edition was printed in 1857. See Zinberg, 2, p. 64.

See Chapter 2 in Tractate Beitzah and Chapter 2 in Tractate Niddah.
In the travels of Rabbi Benjamin he says that it [Acre] is one day from the ancient Tzur, as well as the new [city]. It is the Acre which was within the border of Asher. It is the beginning of the land of Israel. It is a large port on the edge of the sea.\textsuperscript{38}

Like Abarbanel’s use of Benjamin for the grave of Ezekiel, Zacuto enters into a discussion of biblical geography, this time centred on the Holy Land. Zacuto continues his argument by quoting a vast array of sources either supporting or denying Acre’s location within Israel. The theological implications for the (non)-inclusion of Acre into Israel are few; the main concern would be whether the commandments of the land of Israel (mitzvot ha’teluyot ba’aretz) would apply. In other words, if Acre was within the borders of Israel then these commandments would need to be observed by the Jewish inhabitants. Pertinent here, however, is Zacuto’s inclusion of Benjamin’s narrative and how he quotes the text as evidence to support his opinion that Acre is the beginning of the Land of Israel.

Unlike the previous reception examples, Zacuto does not use the Book of Travels as an eye-witness source per se. Rather, he accepts Benjamin’s observation that Acre is within the borders of Israel. How Benjamin formulated this opinion cannot be determined; what can be said, however, is that Zacuto relies on Benjamin as an authoritative opinion in this debate. Interestingly, Zacuto’s quotation of Benjamin is followed by the opinion of Maimonides who writes the opposite, that Acre is not within the borders of Israel.\textsuperscript{39} For Zacuto, Benjamin’s text offers at least one example – on a first-hand basis – of the tradition that Acre was considered to be a city within Israel by Jews in the twelfth century. In turn, this lent support to and demonstrated a historical tradition for Zacuto’s own opinion some 400 years later.

The second mention of Benjamin of Tudela in Sefer Yuchasin is found in the Fifth Essay which records the Acharonim. In the entry for Rabbi Yehudah bar Shmuel, Zacuto calls Rabbi Yehudah a great sage. No other biographical information is provided except that he died in 4935 in the Jewish calendar (corresponding to 1175) and is buried in Safed. Zacuto completes the entry on Rabbi Yehudah affirming that Benjamin knew of him:

\begin{quote}
ר’ בנימין דנבררה שהלך העולם והעשה ס’ המסעות בששת תקולית ואו ראוה אלראב"ד בפושיקירא
בר郿ת אבדיו שם עשיר וطيب, וגו ראה בוריו לכולי על עורג איו בחרו יアイ
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} Zacuto, p. 101.
Rabbi Benjamin of Navarre who travelled the world and made the book of travels in the year 4935 [A footnote corrects the year to 4933] saw the Ravid in Posquières in France and said that he was rich and wise. He also saw, in Rome, the grandson of the writer of the *Aruch*, a young and handsome man.\(^{40}\)

A description of Posquières is indeed found in the *Book of Travels*, where Benjamin speaks of the *yeshivah* headed by the Ravid:

уютطلاق על יד רב初めて לר ז”ל רב פעלים חכם גדול

There is a large *yeshivah* there under the hand of the great Rabbi Abraham bar Rabbi David [known by the acronym RAVID], of blessed memory, an accomplished rabbi, a great sage in Talmud and in verse.\(^{41}\)

Likewise, Zacuto’s statement in reference to Benjamin’s observations in Rome can be corroborated by the *Book of Travels*. In the description of Rome Benjamin tells of Rabbis Daniel and Yechiel:

ועם חכמים גדולים ובראשם ר’ דניאל רב ור’ יחיאל משרות האפיפיור

There are great Torah scholars led by Rabbi Daniel, the rabbi, and Rabbi Yechiel who serves the Pope. [Rabbi Yechiel] is young, handsome, true and intelligent...He is the grandson of Rabbi Nathan who composed *Sefer Ha’Aruch* and its commentaries.\(^{42}\)

As *Sefer Yuchasin* is a book of genealogies, it is clear that Zacuto is making an implicit genealogical link. Zacuto believed that during his travels Benjamin met members of Rabbi Yehudah’s family. It is possible that Zacuto sought to highlight the greatness of Rabbi Yehudah by including members of his family who were equally illustrious, both in their commitment to Torah knowledge and, in the case of Rabbi Yechiel, their prominent positions. In this second example of Zacuto’s application of the *Book of Travels*, Zacuto has returned to the, now more, established use of Benjamin as an eye-witness source, in this instance in the context of history, where the lists of rabbis in the narrative has helped to establish familial links. Of equal importance is Zacuto’s geographical location. Whilst the date of his move from Tunis to the Middle East is unknown, it is possible that *Sefer Yuchasin* provides an example of the *Book of Travels* in North Africa in 1504 as a consequence of the Iberian Expulsion.

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\(^{40}\) Zacuto, p. 219. How this discrepancy arose in *Sefer Yuchasin* is an open question. The author and date of the correction has also not been determined.

\(^{41}\) Adler, p. 4.

\(^{42}\) Rabbi Nathan ben Yechiel, born in Rome c.1035-1106. Adler, pp. 6-7.
Abraham Farissol, *Iggeret Orchot Olam*

The final name on Zunz’s list of authors is Abraham Farissol. Born c.1452 in Avignon, France, Farissol moved to Italy, first to Mantua, then to Ferrara in 1472/3 where he worked as a scribe, teacher and musician. Farissol is also the author of a number of works, including commentaries on the Pentateuch, Ecclesiastes and on the prophet Job, in addition to sermons. His work *Magen Avraham* (Shield of Abraham) is a polemic defending Judaism and is based on his experiences of participating in disputations with Christian monks at the court of Duke Ercole d’Este. Farissol’s most famous work is the 1525 *Iggeret Orchot Olam* (Letter on the Ways of the World). A geographical tract, Farissol states in the colophon that he was motivated to write by the recent discoveries of the New World. As a result, *Orchot Olam* (אגרת ארחות עולם) is considered to be the first Hebrew work on geography. Divided into 30 chapters, each chapter is limited to a single geographic area or subject, with a wide array of topics under discussion – from countries, cities and nations to cosmology, the Ten Lost Tribes, the appearance of David Reuveni in 1523 and the Garden of Eden.

The *Book of Travels* is not explicitly used in *Orchot Olam*. Whereas ibn Verga heavily relied on the *Book of Travels* but does not directly reference Benjamin, Farissol alludes to Benjamin of Tudela without using the narrative. The third chapter begins with a passage about the division of the globe into strips lengthways and widthways from East to West. Farissol states that this was done by the ancient scholars and is necessary for the study of astronomy. At the end of the paragraph, Farissol writes:

אלדד הדני ובעל המסעות רק בהליכותיו ובמאורעות לו ואומר בחלוקותם

Eldad HaDani and the Master of Travels, did not speak at all on this topic - only of his journeys and what happened to him.

The ‘master of travels’ referred to here can be none other than Benjamin of Tudela. The title ‘master of travels’ (בעל המסעות) had already been bestowed on Benjamin by Zarza (1368) and Arma (c.1490), and was simply continued by Farissol. Any reader of *Orchot Olam* already familiar with either Zarza or Arma’s works would thus have been able to identify Benjamin as Farissol’s ‘master of travels’. Clearly Farissol, writing in the 1520s, is confident enough that his readers would immediately recognise

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who the master of travels is.\textsuperscript{45} This could only have been possible if Farissol also deemed the \textit{Book of Travels} to have been sufficiently well-known to not necessitate the inclusion of his name (unlike Eldad Ha’Dani, a traveller from the ninth century, who may have been more obscure). What Farissol’s use of the narrative illustrates is how well-known the \textit{Book of Travels} was even outside of Spain despite the fact that we only have four extant manuscripts.

Farissol was not a Spanish scholar. Rather, he was an educated Frenchman living in Ferrara working as a scribe. Based on this, it is possible to assert with a degree of certainty that Farissol was introduced to the \textit{Book of Travels} in Italy. This could have manifested itself in one of two ways; 1) through his professional life as a scribe, or 2) in his social contacts. In either case, it seems most likely that Farissol copied the text in some capacity. Furthermore, it is probable that Farissol read Benjamin’s narrative in its entirety since he states that the information regarding longitude and latitude does not feature in the narrative at all. This implies a reading of the entire text, which is not as clearly seen in our previous reception examples. Nonetheless, David Ruderman has pointed out, Farissol had no further use of the \textit{Book of Travels} in his work.\textsuperscript{46} What is pertinent, however, is that Farissol’s (non)use of the \textit{Book of Travels} at least provides concrete evidence that Jews were not only copying the text in Italy prior to the arrival of the Iberian exiles, such as the c.1428 manuscript, but were also reading the text, with the potential to quote it in their own writings.

The breadth of the contexts in which Benjamin’s narrative is situated offers fascinating insights into how the text was interpreted by Zara, Arma, Zacuto, et al. These authors were the well-educated scholars of their day who composed theological, exegetical and historical works for their scholarly Jewish contemporaries. For them, the \textit{Book of Travels} provided more than just a list of place names of Jewish communities and their rabbinical heads. Rather they ascribed great value to Benjamin’s descriptions applying them to theological arguments (Zarza, Abarbanel), biblical geography (Abarbanel, Zacuto), history and genealogy (Arma, ibn Verga, Zacuto). The quotes used by each author are specific and employed to support a detailed argument for which the \textit{Book of Travels} could provide evidence. The text thus

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Orchot Olam} was translated into Latin by Thomas Hyde, of Oxford, in 1691 under the title \textit{Itinera Mundi, Sic dicta nempe Cosmographia}. Hyde identifies ‘the master of travels’ as Benjamin of Tudela in a footnote, citing Constantijn L’Empereur’s 1633 Latin edition.

\textsuperscript{46} Ruderman, p. 136.
provided a link to the Jewish historical past which pertained to the author’s contemporary world. As a result, the Book of Travels continued to remain relevant within the Judeo-Spanish scholarly world of the fourteenth, late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

The six examples attest to the fact that the Book of Travels was understood to be an authoritative source; where this authority derives from is addressed below. The examples also demonstrates that readers were aware of Benjamin’s text and that it continued to be read between the twelfth and early fifteenth centuries. Nonetheless, how prevalent the Book of Travels was in medieval Spain must be explored. On the premise that each of the scholars cited above had their own copy, or at least access to a complete copy of the text, the reception examples prove all the more interesting for the geographical implications and how it maps out the transmission of Benjamin’s narrative in Spain. The question of when and where the Book of Travels was composed is impossible to resolve; whether written during his travels, composed upon his return, or written in note-form along the way and then compiled at a later date (presuming that it was Benjamin himself who authored the complete account) remains an open question. Based on information in the Prologue, however, the assumption can be made that the Book of Travels is Spanish in origin, as it states:

עברית建筑师 היה עמו באומר לאמר קשתית בנות תותקל

He brought this book with him when he came to the land of Castile in the year 4933.47

In this light, the first reception example is particularly significant for the geographical jumps made by the text. The scant biographical details of ibn Zarza do note that he lived and wrote in Valencia. If Castile is interpreted here to mean the kingdom of Castile, located in what is now central Spain, Valencia is quite a distance, located on the central-eastern coast. This evidence points to the fact that in the intervening 200 years between Benjamin’s return to Spain and Zarza’s Mekor Chaim the Book of Travels spread to Valencia.

The next four reception examples, those of Arma, Abarbanel, ibn Verga and Zacuto, also have their origins in Spain, meaning that each lived, and was immersed, in the Judeo-Spanish cultural milieu prior to the 1492 Expulsion. This suggests the possibility that these four authors all became aware of the Book of Travels’ existence whilst resident in Spain. Arma lived in both Zamora and Calatayud, Abarbanel settled

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47 London, f.149r.
in Toledo, ibn Verga was born in Castile and Zacuto lived and studied in Salamanca. Their individual geographic location provides further evidence for the transmission of the *Book of Travels* to other Spanish cities. It can therefore be argued that the *Book of Travels* enjoyed a rich Spanish manuscript tradition. As noted in Chapter 2, the extant manuscripts are examples from consecutive centuries, thus between the 1170s and c.1520 there were at least eight manuscripts of the *Book of Travels* (the four extant textual witnesses plus their now lost exemplars). If each author of the above reception examples was consulting a different manuscript copy, it would attest to the circulation of a further six medieval manuscripts of the *Book of Travels*. Future research into the individual transmission of the six texts under discussion might help to establish which version of the *Book of Travels* was used by the authors. With the addition of the reception evidence to that of the extant manuscripts, it is possible to suggest that the *Book of Travels* circulated in at least 14 manuscript copies. From the twelfth to the early years of the sixteenth century, Benjamin of Tudela was very much in the consciousness of the Jewish scholarly world in Spain and was not only being read (scholars as receivers) but was also being transmitted in a nugatory fashion through other texts. The evidence of the extant manuscripts and Jewish use of the *Book of Travels* in manuscript across the medieval period further cements the argument for a continuous, pre-print transmission.

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An examination of Judeo-Iberian culture is of equal importance to further situate Benjamin’s medieval audience. Both in *al-Andalus* and Christian Spain Jews enjoyed a vibrant intellectual culture. A great deal of scholarship has dealt with what types of literature were being produced by Spain’s Jews prior to the 1492 Expulsion; few, however, go into great depths regarding who these works were intended for. Rather, modern scholars broadly speak of Jewish males, particularly rabbis, scholars and courtiers as the transmitters and audience of this culture. Books played a central role in this cultural setting. A medieval Jew who sought a particular work had three options to obtain it: it could be purchased from a private owner; it could be copied by a

hired scribe, or the Jew could copy the text himself. Hebrew books in the Middle Ages, therefore, tended to be consumed privately, and were often personal, user-produced books.\textsuperscript{51}

Norman Roth has noted that some Jewish communities within Spain had community libraries; synagogues also housed libraries. The third communal institution which also collected large numbers of books were \textit{yeshivot} (academies).\textsuperscript{52} Initially limited to an elite group of scholars to study Torah, Talmud and Jewish law, the number of scholars increased leading to the establishment of \textit{yeshivot} across Spain. This produced a growing class of intellectuals. With their ability to read and write, the number of potential authors grew; so too did the number of potential readers.\textsuperscript{53} Moreover, scholars were concentrated in a number of cities across Spain which may have facilitated the circulation and copying of books. As Michael Riegler states, the \textit{yeshivot} ‘undoubtedly constituted an inexhaustible fountain of material’ for scribes to copy.\textsuperscript{54} Religious Hebrew works, predominantly comprised of exegesis, homiletics, Jewish philosophy and law, were being written for, and read by, a scholarly audience committed to further understanding their Judaism.

Individuals also amassed large personal libraries. To give a few brief examples, the library of Judah ben Asher of Toledo (1270-1349) was expected to fetch 3,000 florins when sold upon his death; Joseph ben Solomon ibn Yahya, a rabbi in Lisbon, sold over 300 of his books to pay for his flight from Portugal in 1497, retaining some 100 more to pay for passage to Constantinople.\textsuperscript{55} An article published by Eleazar Gutwirth and Miguel Ángel Motis Dolander, based on a document in the Archivo Historico Provincial de Huesca, details 26 libraries from the Jewish community in Jaca in the fifteenth century, containing more than 600 Hebrew books.\textsuperscript{56} When the Edict of Expulsion was promulgated in 1492, however, libraries were lost. The edict clearly

\textsuperscript{56} The \textit{Book of Travels} does not appear in any of the libraries, but the authors do note that the lists should be understood as incomplete. Eleazar Gutwirth and Miguel Ángel Motis Dolander, ‘Twenty-six Jewish libraries from fifteenth-century Spain’, \textit{Library}, 18:1 (1996), 27-53, (p. 32).
delineated what could, and could not, be taken out of Spain by the exiles – gold, silver, coined money, grain, horses, gunpowder could not be taken whereas cloth and books were. For anyone leaving by ship, they were permitted to have 150 quintales (One quintal being equal to 41.55kg) of books. Haim Beinart provides further insight into books being taken out of Spain, citing the example of Solomon Hezi, an exile from Calatayud (the same city where Arma lived) who possessed 19 books and manuscripts. Some communities, however, were harassed when they sought to leave (contrary to the Crown’s edicts). The Inquisition, supervising the Jews of Ejea de los Caballeros, in Aragon, prior to their departure, demanded that they surrender all of their books; a total of 260 books were collected from approximately 30 families, with 140 books owned by three individuals.

Of the six medieval authors of the previous section, Arma, Abarbanel, ibn Verga and Zacuto all left Spain in 1492, settling in Italy, Turkey and North Africa. Of these four, there is evidence that Abarbanel took his library into exile. Ibn Verga must have taken some books with him since Shevet Yehudah was completed in Italy. A similar assumption can be made for Zacuto who composed Sefer Yuchasin in Tunis. The outcome of Arma’s books cannot be deduced. As argued above, there is a high probability that each of them possessed their own copy of the Book of Travels. Consequently, this provides a direct link of transmission for the Book of Travels beyond the borders of Spain. Although Benjamin was already known (at least in Southern France and Italy) outside Spain, more copies, in addition to works in which the narrative was embedded, would have contributed to a greater awareness of the Book of Travels within the Jewish world.

Medieval Jews were certainly reading the Book of Travels. In turn, the narrative was quoted in other texts; the six examples above confirm this. Through this, Rabbi Benjamin, the master of travels, was exposed to an audience of rabbis, scholars, and educated laymen. The manuscript transmission across Spain can be attributed to the value readers placed on Benjamin’s eye-witness descriptions. Perhaps, then, this can be extrapolated to suggest that readers who came across Benjamin in Zarza, 57

58 Beinart, p. 240.
59 Beinhart, p. 235.
60 Beinhart, pp. 232-33.
61 Abarbanel’s library was burnt during the French occupation during the First Italian War (1494-98), probably c.1495 when the French invaded Naples. Zinberg, 5, p. 284.
Abarbanel, Zacuto, etc. may have been driven to seek out the full narrative. The Jewish pursuit of knowledge, coupled with a love of the written word, further helps to explain the *Book of Travels*’ continuous manuscript reception.

Events of the late fifteenth century, namely the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and subsequently from Portugal in 1497, also impacted the transmission and reception of the *Book of Travels*. As Haim Beinart succinctly states, it was not just individuals and families who chose to leave but ‘entire communities that liquidated their communal, familial and personal property and departed’. The expulsions scattered the Iberian Jews but with them, into exile, came their heritage, culture and intellectual activities. Although the text continued to be copied by hand, such as the 1520 Jerusalem manuscript, the *Book of Travels* soon entered the medium of print. The next section will examine the reception of the sixteenth century Hebrew editions and how the *Book of Travels* took on new meaning for the Iberian exiles but also began to reach new audiences.

**The Editions Reception**

When the Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula many sought refuge in the neighbouring regions of Southern France, Italy, North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. Although many arrived destitute to their new homes, having lost both wealth and moveable property, the Iberian exiles transplanted their way of life, identity and culture, including their own written and oral heritage. Alongside the rabbis existed a broad spectrum of knowledgeable individuals who sought to (re)establish their vibrant intellectual culture and disseminate knowledge, as has been demonstrated above with Arma, Abarbanel and Zacuto. Iberian Jewry was particularly attached to its books; as such, printing presses were set up relatively quickly. Chapter 3 has already outlined the *Book of Travels*’ transmission into print. Unlike the Hebrew reception of the manuscripts, direct reception examples of the 1543 and 1556 editions have yet to be uncovered. Consequently, there is a disparate level of evidence for the reception of the *Book of Travels* in print. The reception of the first two editions is therefore discussed more broadly. It will be argued that the *Book of Travels* was printed for, and read by an Iberian readership. Although it cannot be known for certain how the *Book of Travels* was used and understood by this audience, this chapter demonstrates how Iberian

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62 Beinart, p. 209.
exiles, and their descendants, sought to preserve their cultural and intellectual heritage; a text like the *Book of Travels* may well have been part of this. The 1583 Hebrew edition had a different trajectory, and helped to introduce the *Book of Travels* to a Christian audience, limited to those who could read Hebrew. In addition to the edition being used by L’Empereur to produce the 1633 Latin translation, the edition was also used by Johannes Buxtorf the Elder, examples of which will be outlined below. It is, therefore, the purpose of the following pages to trace the sixteenth-century print reception of the *Book of Travels* and how its early modern audience(s) understood and used the text.

The Soncino Press, 1543

Many of the Iberian exiles took advantage of Sultan Bayazet II’s invitation to settle in the Ottoman Empire, instructing his representatives to receive them into the Ottoman fold and help them settle on Ottoman land with little restriction. Whilst Salonika may have numerically been the largest of the Ottoman Jewish communities, Constantinople was the more prosperous and influential of the two centres. Considering that Jewish culture revolved around the book, it is not unexpected to see a Hebrew printing press established soon after the arrival of the exiles. The first press was set up by brothers David and Samuel ibn Nahmias who printed their first work in 1493. Hebrew printing was prolific between 1504 and 1566, with some 126 works printed in Constantinople alone. It should be noted, however, that the market for printed Hebrew books was only possible with the economic improvement of the Iberian exiles.

As discussed above, the majority of printed books were religious works, to meet the needs of religious scholars to study the Torah, Talmud and to facilitate Jewish religious practice. Yet the Soncino also printed works of a secular nature. This is indicative of a move away from the practical printing of religious texts to a market for

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66 Rozen, p. 250.

67 Rozen, p. 261.
works of literature, philosophy, history and geography. This market was primarily comprised of Iberian Jews. Two motivations emerge which explain the demand for books: 1) whilst many exiles who fled the Iberian Peninsula did transport some, if not the whole of their libraries with them,\textsuperscript{68} many others lamented the loss of their libraries (as seen in the above section).\textsuperscript{69} The output of the Soncino Press may therefore reflect the texts which the exiles sought to replace to rebuild the libraries that were lost, with the \textit{Book of Travels} amongst the many titles; 2) once settled in Constantinople, some were motivated by an intellectual drive to seek out, and disseminate, knowledge as a noble and lofty pursuit.\textsuperscript{70} One way to accomplish this was printing through sponsorship; Citing Abraham Ya’ari, Mina Rozen noted that of 32 people who sponsored the printing of books between 1504-30, 23 were Iberian Jews ‘committed to disseminating knowledge’.\textsuperscript{71} Furthermore, Rozen commented that works such as the \textit{Book of Travels} and \textit{Sefer Yuchasin} were not only entertaining but also answered the need for knowledge.\textsuperscript{72} As new reading habits emerged, it is possible to discern the basis of a readership which read for intellectual and cultural purposes further contributing to a greater demand for books.

The growing market for Hebrew printed editions is discussed by Joseph Hacker who highlighted the role of wealthy Jewish families and their motives to purchase books. On the one hand, books were used as a symbol of enlightenment; even if the purchaser was not interested in the books themselves, they became a status symbol demonstrating literacy. Secondly, wealthy families devoted themselves to amassing books, either in manuscript or print, to keep in a single location for the establishment of ‘public’ libraries. Such collections were then made available to scholars and students for educational purposes and to facilitate the expansion of knowledge; moreover, these libraries served the purpose of introducing the population to the medium of the printed book.\textsuperscript{73} Here again, there is a recurring theme of an appreciation of the written word which translated into members of the Jewish community wanting

\textsuperscript{70} Rozen, p. 244.
\textsuperscript{71} Rozen, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{72} Rozen, p. 269.
\textsuperscript{73} Hacker, ‘Intellectual’, pp. 105-6.
to spread this appreciation of books and learning which extended beyond religious
texts.

The Soncino edition of Benjamin’s *Book of Travels* can be situated into this
framework. At present, no direct reception examples have been uncovered for the 1543
(nor the 1556) edition; based on the broader context of a Jewish readership in the
Ottoman Empire, assumptions can be made which help to reveal the reception of the
*Book of Travels*. There is no reason to suggest that the wealthy Jews of Constantinople
did not purchase books printed by the Soncino press. It would thus be reasonable to
consider that Benjamin’s narrative was purchased as a text to include in some of the
‘public’ libraries established by wealthy families. In opening up their libraries for
others, Benjamin’s text potentially reached a wider audience, albeit a readership which
did not leave a record of the texts it read or how they were understood.

Consideration must also be given to why readers took an interest in the *Book of
Travels* and why they would consult the text in the ‘public’ libraries. Whilst
Benjamin’s narrative does include descriptions of holy sites and related events, it is not
exegetical in nature, nor does it expound on Jewish law or rituals. It is thus reasonable
to deduce that the Soncini did not categorise Benjamin’s narrative as a religious text.
What the *Book of Travels* does offer, and may go some way in explaining its attraction,
is a wealth of knowledge pertaining to Jewish communities in the past. This may have
particularly resonated with an Iberian audience, one which was living in exile, to
reflect on the flourishing communities that had previously existed in Spain. In this
way, the *Book of Travels* provided a historical window into the Jewish past as a whole,
but especially allowed the Iberian exiles to recall their roots in Spain and a glorious
past.

The narrative may also have generated interest for its geographical
descriptions. Mina Rozen cites a travel guide to holy sites printed in 1520 in the wake
of the Ottoman Empire’s conquest of the Middle East in 1517. With the Holy Land
now under Ottoman rule the possibility of travelling to Judaism’s sacred sites
increased. Travel narratives would have thus attracted greater attention for their
geographical information; as a result, Benjamin’s own descriptions in the *Book of
Travels* may have offered some insight for those seeking to travel. Benjamin’s
narrative, then, may have been appropriated as a sort of guidebook for those seeking to

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74 Rozen, p. 253.
travel. By extension, as a travel narrative describing the Jewish biblical landscape and distant lands, the *Book of Travels* could have been read for entertainment, a common reception for travel narratives across the centuries.\(^{75}\)

In examining the *editio princeps* of the *Book of Travels* printed by the Soncino Press in 1543, this section has argued that Benjamin’s narrative was primarily read by an educated Iberian audience who transported their culture of learning with them from the Iberian Peninsula. As such, their demand for books grew, outside of religious tracts, with the Soncino Press feeding this demand. How the Soncini obtained Benjamin’s text is unknown yet they clearly saw a market for such a work. Once printed, the *Book of Travels* was read for its vast knowledge of the twelfth-century Jewish world, with readers interested in its historical and geographical descriptions.

**Abraham Usque, 1556**

Italy, with its long-established Jewish communities, was also a common destination for the Iberian exiles.\(^{76}\) Abraham Usque, printer of the 1556 Ferrara edition, was not just a printer but was also a publisher, translator and writer in his own right.\(^{77}\) This versatility is significant when considered in the context of who Usque was printing for, namely *conversos* returning to Judaism and Iberian exiles. It is for this reason that Usque translated many key religious texts into Spanish, including the Ferrara Bible (of which he personally undertook some of the translation), to reignite the *conversos* interest in Judaism.\(^{78}\) Many of the prayer books, for example, were printed to be user-friendly, with facing Spanish-Hebrew pages, enabling the reader to easily follow the synagogue service. Such texts were also useful for those who had returned to Judaism but had little or no knowledge of Hebrew.\(^{79}\) Additionally, Usque’s texts were often accompanied by introductions or prayers written by Usque himself (a point which will be returned to below).\(^{80}\)

If printing solely for a *converso/Iberian* audience, Usque’s attraction to the *Book of Travels* may be as simple as pointing to the Spanish origins of the text and its author. Usque had the opportunity to print a work by a Jewish author of Spanish origin

\(^{75}\) Rozen, p. 269.  
\(^{77}\) Yerushalmi and Martins, p. 93.  
\(^{78}\) Harris, p. 57.  
\(^{79}\) Tamani, p. 289.  
\(^{80}\) Leoni and Herzfeld, p. 102.
and did so knowing that his readership was itself Iberian or of Iberian descent. Equally, the narrative may have evoked a nostalgic past, one which recalled the flourishing Jewish communities. For example, Benjamin describes Barcelona as a beautiful and commercial city with a holy Jewish community:

There is a holy community there of wise and intelligent men...It is a small and beautiful city which sits on the sea. Merchants come with their wares from all places, from the land of Greece, Pisa, Genoa, Sicily, Alexandria in Egypt, from Israel and all its borders.81

A converso/Iberian exile reading the above passage perhaps would have recalled a pre-expulsion Spain in which the Jews enjoyed both spiritual and material wealth. A Spain where Jews, like Benjamin, could freely leave and return - a stark contrast when compared with the sixteenth-century Iberian readership’s exile. It is perhaps for these reasons that Usque chose, with this audience in mind already, to print the Book of Travels to maintain this perception for the converso/Iberian population in Ferrara. A parallel can thus be drawn with the 1543 edition – that of cultural continuation – to glorify the Spanish past.

The Book of Travels’ diasporic focus may equally have resonated with Usque in that Jews had experienced exiles before, accounting for the Jewish Diaspora which stretched from Europe to North Africa and the Middle East. The Iberian exiles remained devastated, agonising over their heart-breaking flight and the lives they left behind;82 in printing Benjamin’s narrative, Usque perhaps offered the generation of the expulsion and their immediate descendants a text which could offer consolation – demonstrating that despite their exile, Jews always re-established themselves, set up centres of learning and could, once again, flourish spiritually and materially. In this sense, Usque provided both the conversos returning to Judaism and the exiles with the encouragement (what is known in Hebrew as chizzuk) to continue the lifestyle they had in Spain, without compromising their Iberian identity. Usque thus used the Book of Travels to point out to his fellow Iberian exiles that they could take comfort in that knowledge that their situation was not unique, that the scattering of the Jews was not necessarily to their detriment, and that even in exile one could prosper.

81 Usque.
82 Leoni and Herzfeld, p. 107.
Intrinsically linked with the Jewish Diaspora is the theme of messianic hope, thoughts of return to the Holy Land and of the redemption. In Jewish thought, the ingathering of the exiles is a harbinger for the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic age to follow.\footnote{Belief in the ingathering of the exiled communities is repeated throughout Jewish biblical writings, see Deuteronomy 30:3-5, Isaiah 11:12; 27:13, 56:8; 66:20, Jeremiah 16:15; 23:3, 8; 29:14; 31:8; 33:7, and Ezekiel 20:34, 41; 37:21.} As an exile living in the Jewish Diaspora, Usque’s works are poignantly filled with messianic themes, both in his own works and in those which he printed by others, such as Samuel Usque’s Consolacão. For example, Usque inserted a Bakkashah (prayer) into his 1555 prayer book (\textit{siddur}) which asked God to end the sufferings of Israel and restore them to their ancient glory and dignity. Messianic references are also found in the elaborate title page which accompanied many of Usque’s editions, including the \textit{Book of Travels}. The title page includes the image of an armillary sphere with an anchor attached at the bottom. According to Yerushalmi, the sphere represents Usque’s Portuguese origins but also attributes a deeper meaning to the anchor. For the Portuguese, the anchor was a symbol of its great age of exploration; for Usque, argues Yerushalmi, the anchor is transformed into a symbol of Jewry’s latest age of wandering and the hope to secure refuge from its sufferings.\footnote{Yerushalmi and Martins, p. 92.} Surrounding the image is a quote from Isaiah 40:31 which speaks of those who hope for God:

\textit{וְקֵוָיָ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֣ל יִחְלְפוּ כִּיּוֹלָ֥ה יִעֲלוּ אֵבָרָ֖ם יִרְצֵוּ לָאָ֑ו לֹא יִיעֲפְזוּ לָא יִיעֲפְּנִֽו}

And those who hope for God who will renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles and they shall run and not be weary.

Through the appropriation of this line, Usque can be seen to be imparting a message; those in the Jewish diaspora who continue to hope for redemption have not been abandoned by God but, as the quote states, in their wait for the messianic age they can build and strengthen their faith until the time is right for the messiah to come. The message here is one of comfort and inspiration. Usque’s title page was intended to console and uplift the exiled Jews. The closing lines of the \textit{Book of Travels} express the messianic hope that God will ‘gather those who have been scattered among the nations’,\footnote{Usque.} which may very well have resonated with Usque. As Leoni and Herzfeld noted, Usque’s messianic themes were a way to reassure the anxieties and hopes of his
contemporary exiles.\textsuperscript{86} It can, therefore, be argued that Usque was attracted to, and printed, the \textit{Book of Travels} to console his fellow Iberian exiles.

As stated earlier, there are no known direct examples of reception for these early Hebrew editions. A discussion of the 1543 and 1556 editions, then, is reliant on a broader picture in which to draw conclusions about their possible intended audiences by discussing why the \textit{Book of Travels} was printed and why a Hebrew readership would have been interested in the text. Using this framework, it is evident that the intended audience for the first two Hebrew editions was very likely a Jewish audience, predominantly composed of Iberian exiles, some of whom may have been \textit{conversos}. This was a readership that was educated and actively sought out books; a Judeo-Spanish culture which valued knowledge and had cultivated a love of learning, both religious and secular, and which brought that cultural milieu with it into exile. This culture was then translated to their new homes in the Ottoman Empire and Italy where the Iberians were determined to enshrine the glorious past of life on the Iberian Peninsula.\textsuperscript{87} One means of preserving this culture was through books which became ‘a symbol of memory, survival, continuity and vitality’.\textsuperscript{88} The \textit{Book of Travels} can thus be seen as part of this cultural preservation – how Jews related to their own past – when the narrative was transmitted from a rich manuscript tradition in Spain into a printed book within the generation of the Spanish Expulsion. For Iberian readers, the \textit{Book of Travels} historicised the once flourishing Jewish communities of Spain. Yet, in addition to encapsulating the Jewish communities of the past, the readership, perhaps through the lens of the printers, infused new meaning into Benjamin’s narrative; on the one hand, simply reading it as a text by which to gain historical or geographical insight and on the other, reading the \textit{Book of Travels} as a text which could offer consolation for, and redemption from their present exilic state. In (re)claiming the \textit{Book of Travels} in print as a part of the Jewish cultural past, Benjamin’s narrative gained new relevance in the mid-sixteenth century, explaining its enduring popularity from its manuscript origins to a printed text among a Jewish readership.

\textsuperscript{86} Leoni and Herzfeld, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{88} Schmelzer, p. 266.
The previous chapter argued for the 1583 edition’s marketability to a dual audience – a Jewish readership and that of Christian scholars. Unlike its predecessors, there are direct reception examples for the 1583 edition from its Christian readership. One example (fully treated in Chapter 5) is that of Constantijn L’Empereur who primarily used the 1583 edition for his 1633 Latin translation of the Book of Travels. An earlier, and equally notable example is the Book of Travels’ use by Johannes Buxtorf the Elder in his Tiberias: sive commentarius Masoreticus triplex (Tiberias: or a tripartite commentary on the Masoretic Text). Stephen G. Burnett listed the Buxtorf family library as it stood in 1613; included in the list are two editions of Benjamin’s narrative, a copy of Montano’s 1575 Latin translation and a copy of the 1583 edition. The Hebrew quotes used in Tiberias are clearly taken from the 1583 edition as Montano’s edition does not contain a parallel Hebrew text to the Latin. This is further confirmed by comparison of the quotes to the 1583 text which reveals they are nearly identical, with minor spelling variations and vocalisation as the only differences. Prior to examining how Buxtorf used Benjamin’s Book of Travels, who Buxtorf was, his Hebrew background and what sort of work Tiberias is must be outlined. It will be shown that Buxtorf used the Book of Travels as a geographical text to establish the Jewish historical roots of select cities in the Middle East, all of which serve to further his argument on the origins of the Hebrew vowel points.

Johannes Buxtorf, known as the Elder to avoid confusion with his son of the same name, was born in Kamen (Westphalia). He began his university studies at the University of Marburg. He then studied theology at the Gymnasium Illustre at Herborn, where he was able to attend formal Hebrew tuition as taught by early Christian scholars of Hebrew, finally completing his Master of Arts, with theology, at the University of Basel. From 1591 until his death in 1629, Buxtorf was a professor of Hebrew at the University of Basel. This encompassed teaching Hebrew grammar to beginners and lecturing on biblical books. Based on poor lecture attendance Buxtorf complained in 1608 that few students studied Hebrew at all; the situation seems to have improved little by 1617 as the academic Senate at the University of Basel made attendance compulsory for Buxtorf’s classes for theology students and those studying

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for a Master of Arts. This may be an indication of the state of early Hebrew studies, suggesting that theology and arts students could continue to rely on Latin and Greek translations of biblical texts without having to resort to the original Hebrew. It would appear, then, that scholars who did learn Hebrew in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (such as Montano, Johannes Drusius, and Buxtorf) were those who went beyond the norm; yet in many ways they were pioneers who gradually transformed the study of Hebrew from a scholarly hobby into a recognised academic pursuit. The development of Christian Hebraism will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Buxtorf was fundamental to this transition; much of his scholarly career was devoted to making Hebrew authors known and providing the philological tools, such as his Hebrew grammar and dictionary, needed by Christian scholars to use these texts. In addition to his pedagogic interests, Buxtorf's writings extended to philological and theological works which helped develop biblical studies into an academic discipline. Tiberias is one such work which combines philology and theology. Published in 1620, Tiberias was written as a reference work for students interested in Jewish tradition. It presents an argument for the origins and antiquity of the Hebrew vowel points of the Bible using a historical model which closely accorded with both Jewish tradition and Reformation orthodoxy. In it, Buxtorf refuted Elias Levita’s position by citing that the vowels were either set by the Jewish sages of Tiberias or written by the men of the Great Assembly (a group of prophets, sages and scholars reputedly of the generation of Ezra the Prophet), a significant departure from the traditional Jewish viewpoint that they were given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai as part of the Bible. Buxtorf countered Levita by citing that the Hebrew vowel points are mentioned in both the Zohar (the foundational work of Jewish mysticism) and in a second mystical text called Sefer ha'Bahir (The Book of Brightness) which Buxtorf believed pre-dated the Talmud (a departure from the opinion of Joseph Scaliger) as cited by David Gans in Tzemach David and Zacuto’s Yuchasin.

90 Burnett, Buxtorf, pp. 23-24.
91 Burnett, Buxtorf, p. 3.
92 Burnett, Buxtorf, p. 13.
93 Burnett, Buxtorf, p. 5.
94 Elias Levita (1469-1549), a German Jew, was a Hebrew grammarian who tutored Christian scholars in Hebrew and Jewish mysticism throughout Italy. He was also a prolific author who produced Talmudic dictionaries at the invitation of the early Christian Hebraist, Paul Fagius.
95 Burnett, Buxtorf, pp. 203-5. For a more detailed discussion see Chapter 7.
96 Burnett, Buxtorf, pp. 210-12.
The first section of *Tiberias* provides the historical background of the centres of Jewish scholarship, quoting from a number of Hebrew texts, in addition to the Talmud, which had gained popularity amongst Christian scholars, including Abraham Zachuto’s *Yuchasin* and Benjamin of Tudela’s *Book of Travels*. These centres of learning were found across Judea and Babylonia in the time of the *Amoraim* (the group of scholars between c.220CE and c.500CE) who were lead by a *nasi* (literally ‘prince’ but refers to the leading sage of the generation), one for the Judean scholars and one for the Babylonians, and frequently moved the location of their academy. In *Tiberias*, Buxtorf includes five direct quotes from the *Book of Travels* and makes one additional mention of Benjamin of Tudela. This section highlights how Buxtorf used the quotes and what it can tell historians about one of the first direct examples of a Christian reception of the text based on a Hebrew edition, in this case the 1583 Froben-Zifroni edition.

Benjamin’s text is first encountered in Chapter IV of *Tiberias* where Buxtorf discusses *De Urbe Tiberiade* (On the city of Tiberius). The first quote describes the city of Sepphoris:

*مشם שלשה פרסאות לשיפוריה ציפורי ושם קברו של רבינו הקדוש ורבי חיא שעלה מבבל ויהו חן וגו*:

Hinc tribus milliaribus Sipura est, quondam Tziphori dicta, ubi Sepulchrum est Rabbi Jehудae Magistri nostri sancti, [et] R. Chaijae qui migravit ex Babylonia, [et] Jonae filii Ammitai prophetae, qui in monte sepulti sunt, aliorum plurimorum. Inde quinque milliaribus Tiberias est, sita ad Jordanem, quae ibi dicitur Lacus Kinnereth

From here it is three miles to [Sepphoris], formerly called Tzippori, where the graves of Rabbi Yehuda, our pious master, and Rabbi Chiyya, who moved from Babylon, and Jonah son of Amitai the prophet are, who were buried on the mountain with many others. From that place it is five miles to Tiberias, situated on the Jordan, which is called Lake Kinneret there.97

Sepphoris, whilst a centre of learning in its own right – one which was the seat of the *nasi* before Tiberias and had attracted scholars from Babylonia – is only mentioned in its relation to Tiberias.98 The second quote from Benjamin’s text in this section directly references Tiberias and its hot springs:

*ושם מים חמים הנובעים منه והם קבורים במערת הם חם טבריה*:

Rabbi Benjamin Tudelensis in Itinerario suo, ubi de Tiberiade agit: Illic etiam sunt aquae calidae scaturientes ex terra, quae vocantur Thermae Tiberiadas

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98 Buxtorf, pp. 17-18.
Rabbi Benjamin in his Itinerary, where concerning Tiberias he says: In that place there are hot waters from the ground, which they call the hot baths of Tiberias.\(^{99}\)

Buxtorf’s quotation from the *Book of Travels* is the last in a series of references to the hot springs included in other texts, such as the Talmud and Josephus, the former of which praises the hot springs for their medicinal purposes. Since Buxtorf is providing general information about the city of Tiberias his inclusion of one of the city’s defining features is to be expected. Immediately following this information, however, Buxtorf noted that Benjamin’s narrative recalls the discovery of certain famous graves, although no further explanation or quotation is provided.\(^{100}\)

The remainder of the quotes, including Buxtorf’s additional mention of Benjamin, are found in Chapter VI, *De translatione Scholarum ex Judaea in Babyloniam* (On the transference of scholars from Judea to Babylonia). Like the preceding quotes they pertain to cities, this time in Babylonia, which became great centres of learning under the Amoraim many of whom had moved from Roman Judea. Buxtorf once again cited the *Book of Travels* for its inclusion of information pertaining to the founding of three key cities - Nehardea, Sura and Pumbedita, all of which contributed to the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud. About Nehardea Buxtorf wrote that Benjamin had cited two names for the city but decides that Benjamin must have been referring to the whole region as Nehardea:

\[
\text{ומשם שני ימים לשפתיב ושם כנסת שבנו ישראל מעפר ירושלם ומאבניה וקורין אותה שפיתיב אשר}
\]

\[
\text{Inde bidui itinere est urbs Sephitif, ubi est Synagoga, quam aedificarunt Israelitae ex terra Hierosolymitana et ex lapidibus ejus (id est, ex ruderibus urbis Jerusalem) vocantque eam Sephitif, quae est in Naardea}
\]

From that place continuing for two days is the city of Sephitif where there is a synagogue which the Israelites built from Jerusalemite land and from its stones (which is from ruins of the city of Jerusalem) and they called it Sephitif, which is in Nehardea.\(^{101}\)

Buxtorf then quoted Benjamin’s description of Sura:

\[
\text{ומשם יום וחצי לסוריא היא מתא מחסיא היווה ראשי גליות}
\]

\[
\text{Inde diei unius et dimidia iter est Soriam, Mata Mehasja dictam, in qua fuerunt Capita exulum et Capita academiarum a principio}
\]

From that place is a journey of one and a half days to Sura, called Mata Mechsia, in which the heads of the exile and heads of the principal academies were from the beginning\(^{102}\)

\(^{99}\) Buxtorf, p. 19.

\(^{100}\) Buxtorf, p. 19.

\(^{101}\) Buxtorf, p. 25.

\(^{102}\) Buxtorf, p. 25.
This is immediately followed by two quotes on the city of Pumbedita:

\[
\text{Inde duorum dierum iter est ad El-jobar, quae Prisca Pumbeditha est, in Naardeensi tractu (id est, ad Euphratem) sita, ubi fuerunt quasi duo millia Judaeorum, inter quos discipuli sapientium docissimi}.
\]

From that place it is a journey of two days until El-Jobar, which is the ancient Pumbeditha situated in the region of Nehardea (which is on the Euphrates) where there were about two thousand Jews, amongst whom are most learned disciples of the wise.\(^{103}\)

\[
\text{Inde diei et dimidii ad Elnabar, quae est antiqua Pumbeditha, ad Euphratis ripam, fueruntque illae tria millia Israelitarum, et Synagoga Raf et Samuelis, et Schola}.
\]

From that place it is one day and a half to Elnabar, which is the ancient Pumbeditha, on the bank of the Euphrates and there are three thousand of Israel, the Synagogue of Raf and Samuel, and a school.\(^{104}\)

From the above quotes there can be no doubt that Buxtorf used his copy of the 1583 edition as a primary historical text to attest to the historicity of the cities of Tzippori, Tiberias, Nehardea, Sura and Pumbedita. This is integral to Buxtorf’s argument against Levita in which Buxtorf documents centres of Jewish learning to indicate that any of these ancient cities could have developed the vowel points system. Buxtorf has thus quoted from the *Book of Travels*, and other Jewish texts, as evidence in a scholarly discourse between a Christian and a Jew. This can further be inferred from Buxtorf’s own words from his final mention of Benjamin in which Buxtorf states:

\[
\text{Hic Rabbi Benjamin in Syriam peregrinatus est Anno Christi 1170, et inde suum Itinerarium conscripsit, unde colligere licet, si eo tempore loca ista tot Judaeis fuerint referita, olim longe celebriora fuisse}.
\]

This Rabbi Benajmin travelled into Syria in the year of Christ 1170 and from that time composed the *Itinerarium*, from which one can deduce that if in his time so many Jews were reported in these places, they would have formerly been even greater.\(^{105}\)

In attributing a definitive geographical place and year for Benjamin, Buxtorf subtly informs his readers that Benjamin is a reliable witness who can offer factual historical information. Buxtorf has thus appropriated Benjamin’s twelfth-century descriptions to be used as a historical text which could be quoted authoritatively in the seventeenth

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\(^{103}\) Buxtorf, p. 25.

\(^{104}\) Buxtorf, pp. 25-26.

century, thereby providing continuity from its Hebrew reception into a Christian context.

One final question remains to be explored: where did the *Book of Travels* derived its authority from. The medieval Hebrew reception examples are invaluable in answering how the text may have gained its status as an authoritative text. The anonymously written Prologue, found in the text as early as the London manuscript, describes Benjamin of Tudela as a ‘master of Torah and halachah [Jewish law] (בעל התורה וההלכה)’ as well as a ‘man of truth (איש אמת)’.106 This acts as a character reference for Benjamin and his authorial credibility. Later readers-cum-authors would have interpreted this as an endorsement of the text – as a truthful account which does not contain material contrary to the Torah which could be deemed heretical. The use of the title ‘rabbi’ may also have enhanced Benjamin’s authority. Whether Benjamin of Tudela truly bore the title of Rabbi, or was later added in front of his name as the text was more widely disseminated cannot be determined. Nevertheless, it denoted that an individual displayed extensive knowledge in Talmud and Jewish law.107 Bonfil, however, noted that some scholars maintained that, from the twelfth century, the title *rav* indicated someone who held a specific office or function within their Jewish community.108 According to Jonathan Ray ‘the common use of the designation of “Rabbi” was a general honorific during this period [i.e. the Reconquista]’.109 For Benjamin of Tudela, even if his rabbinic title was appended posthumously the intention was to bestow respect. Readers of the text then would have no cause to doubt the *Book of Travels’* content. The factual nature attributed to the *Book of Travels*, tracing its origins to at least Zarza in 1368 (and perhaps to the broadly-dated fourteenth century London manuscript), is a reputation which has largely been maintained across the centuries.

Through an examination of the Hebrew reception of the *Book of Travels* this chapter has revealed the sheer variety of contexts in which Benjamin’s observations and his text have been used. Unlike its modern use – to inform historians about the twelfth-century Jewish and non-Jewish worlds – Jewish audiences, in addition to

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106 London f.149r.
108 Bonfil, p. 31.
Buxtorf, employed the text in an array of uses which extended how the text, a travel account, could be interpreted. Both Zarza and Arma demonstrate the narrative’s use within the realm of polemics. Whilst Zarza produced a theological argument against reincarnation, Arma applied the text to anti-Christian polemics. Abarbanel found a dual-use for the *Book of Travels*, firstly for biblical geography in locating the grave of the Prophet Ezekiel and secondly, in an exegetical context understand the specific application of terminology. The use of the narrative as history is another theme to emerge, particularly seen in ibn Verga, Zacuto and Buxtorf. Ibn Verga incorporated the *Book of Travels*’ account of David Alroy as a literary adaptation, incorporating dialogue not seen in Benjamin’s text. Zacuto, in addition to establishing genealogical links, applies the text also in an exegetical context to adjudicate between interpretations relating to whether Acre is within the borders of the Holy Land. Finally, Buxtorf also uses Benjamin’s descriptions of cities to ascertain their credentials as ancient centres of learning where the vowel point system may have developed.

Within the early modern Jewish world it was shown that, despite no known direct reception examples, the *Book of Travels* was read in an Iberian context. It was discussed that Iberian exiles not only sought out works for the pursuit of knowledge, but also to connect to their Iberian heritage. It was also read as a text of consolation for their exilic state in which to gain strength from and seek solace hope for the Messiah and future redemption. Each of these examples thus speaks to the versatility of the *Book of Travels* and its multiplicity of uses which crosses the boundaries of time, culture and religions to contribute to its enduring transmission and reception.
Chapter 5. ‘A Book for All Men’: Christian Scholars and the *Book of Travels*

The sixteenth-century readership of the *Book of Travels* would appear to be dominated by a Jewish audience if only the 1543, 1556 and 1583 editions were taken into consideration. This is, however, not the whole picture. Sandwiched between the Usque and Zifroni-Froben editions is the first of two Latin translations of the *Book of Travels*, printed in 1575. It is through this edition that Benjamin’s narrative reached beyond its Jewish readership and into the world of Christian scholarship. How that transmission came about is the subject of the following pages. Whilst the 1575 edition, translated by Benito Arias Montano, introduced the *Book of Travels* to a wider textual community, a second Latin translation was produced in 1633 by Constantijn L’Empereur. The Latin editions contain differing levels of evidence with which to analyse the translations; the 1633 edition is accompanied by extensive *Notae* (notes) which provides more direct evidence for the text’s reception by their respective translators. There is nothing comparable for the 1575 edition. Both, however, contain prefatory material which provides insight into the Latin editions’ reception. This chapter thus investigates the *Book of Travels* in its Christian context of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and, above all, how Christian scholars read, understood and utilised Benjamin’s narrative. It will be shown that, whilst Montano appropriates the text for a Spanish geographic context, his interpretation of the *Book of Travels* is similar to that of Jewish scholars in using the *Book of Travels*. L’Empereur, on the other hand, interprets the *Book of Travels* as a polemical text. In challenging Benjamin’s descriptions, L’Empereur breaks the tradition of using the text at face-value, thereby introducing a new reading of the narrative.

The Christian scholars who feature in the story of the *Book of Travels*’ transmission and reception in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were men who belonged to a wider community of scholars known as the *res publica litteraria* (Republic of Letters).
An elusive entity to define, modern scholars have only offered broad descriptions of what the community was and how it functioned.¹ For our purposes here, the Republic of Letters is defined as an invisible community comprised of scholars, some university affiliated, who aspired to the ideal of scholarly co-operation through the sharing of knowledge. This was primarily accomplished through written correspondence in Latin.² These letters became the medium by which scholars could sustain an intellectual exchange of ideas.³ Thus, they were not necessarily private letters between two individuals; rather they could be shared amongst a circle of readers, and even published.⁴ A second feature was the exchange of publications which allowed for greater dissemination of knowledge. Additionally, some scholars and students undertook a voyage littéraire to visit centres of erudition to buy books, copy manuscripts and, more importantly, meet as many leading scholars as possible.⁵ Such a tour, however, was a luxury and many of the scholars in correspondence with each other never met.

The Republic of Letters, however, was not comprised of isolated individuals but men who bonded together in humanist learning (defined below) beyond national and ideological differences.⁶ Whether Catholic or Protestant, the ideal was to establish an egalitarian community which transcended the political and religious divisiveness of Europe (particularly against the backdrop of both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and dynastic wars) to create a “world of erudition”.⁷ As much as these scholars strove to live in a world above their respective societies, the reality is that few lived by their pen, with many earning a living by taking up professorships, entering the Church, becoming civil servants or tutoring the aristocracy.⁸ Entry into the Republic of Letters was based on a reputation for erudition and scholarly output. Having achieved one’s place it was, as Richard Maber states, ‘both a matter of obligation and a matter

² Burke, pp. 8-10.
⁵ Goldgar, p. 1.
⁶ Scott, p. xx.
⁷ Maber, p. 232.
⁸ Golgar, p. 3.
of prestige for any self-respecting scholar to maintain as wide an international correspondence as possible’.

The Republic of Letters evolved from the humanist movement of the fourteenth century and defined the scholarship practiced by early modern scholars, in conscious opposition to the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. As a broad intellectual and cultural movement, humanism contributed to biblical studies, political thought, art, science and philosophy. This was achieved through the study of classical literature and Christian antiquity which could then be applied to contemporary ideas and values ‘to bring about a spiritual renewal and institutional reform of Christian society.’ Receiving a humanist education, emphasising Latin grammar, rhetoric, poetry, moral philosophy and history was a key component, whilst the centrality of texts also became a defining feature. The (re)discovery of classical texts and the critical examination of Scripture and early Christian sources led to humanism’s motto of *ad fontes* (back to the sources). Underlying humanism’s textual criticism was the application of philology (ascertaining the meaning of a word in a specific context). Philology was especially applied to biblical scholarship. It was also a method used, coupled with textual criticism, to help determine the validity of texts. Humanists, therefore, were not only concerned about gaining knowledge but also in understanding the truth of texts and understanding why that knowledge was useful. Humanists were not just consumers of texts but also producers of them, publishing works such as translations of classical or Christian texts, or treatises of knowledge on a number of subjects. Consequently, texts also became the medium by which humanist ideas were transmitted.

In seeking to return to the original texts, humanists no longer solely relied on Latin translations – many preferred to read them in the original language. Erasmus, whose name has become synonymous with humanism, had preached the indispensability of Hebrew and Greek as the only means to a true understanding of the

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9 Maber, p. 233.
Bible, prompting humanists to follow his example. A humanist was thus expected to be a *vir trilinguis*—proficient in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. The inclusion of Hebrew was a direct result of the changes in biblical scholarship in which humanists, responding to the call of *ad fontes*, sought to read the Bible in its original language rather than using Jerome’s fourth-century Latin Vulgate. How to read the Bible and the validity of Jerome’s Latin translation was a hotly-debated topic among Christian scholars, further complicated by confessional politics. Whilst Catholics held that the Vulgate could not be superseded, Protestants advocated a more accurate translation of the Bible. Although beyond the scope of this study, the debate impacted scholars’ ability to study and print Hebrew works with some scholars being challenged by the authorities, such as the Inquisition.

Humanist biblical scholarship gave rise to a group of scholars—many of whom were theologians—who, through their knowledge of Hebrew, read rabbinic literature (traditionally defined as the Talmud and exegetical texts) to further their understanding of Scripture and Christian doctrine and dogma. Although no contemporary term for this group exists, in modern scholarship they have been termed Christian Hebraists, irrespective of confession. Whilst embodying the humanist culture of *ad fontes*, Hebraists equally focused on *hebraica veritas* (truth in Hebrew) and *biblia sacra* (Holy Bible). As linguists and textual critics, Hebraists applied *hebraica veritas*, the philology of the Hebrew words, to elucidate biblical passages to reveal the sacred truths of Scripture, *biblia sacra*. For Catholics, Hebrew was required for *hebraica veritas* to purify the text of the Bible. Protestants used Hebrew not just for *hebraica veritas* but also for *sola scriptura* (only Scripture), the belief that the Bible was the sole source of religious authority to establish doctrine. Hebraists, therefore, believed that an understanding of the Bible in Hebrew would help prove the truth of Christianity.

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A working knowledge of Hebrew allowed scholars to explore other genres of Jewish literature, not yet in Latin translation, ‘for professional reasons or to satisfy their intellectual curiosity.’ Often, this included rabbinic literature, such as Talmudic tractates, but also extended to Kabbalistic texts and works of Jewish history. In his examination of Hebraist libraries post-1600, Stephen G. Burnett classifies the Book of Travels as Jewish history among a list of forty-two books which Burnett terms the Christian Hebraist canon – to which Hebraists most frequently referred. In the table, Burnett has categorised where the works were found, whether in “Private Libraries”, “Institutional Libraries” or “Noble Libraries”; the Book of Travels is only found in the first. A fourth column states whether a work was included in Conrad Gesner’s Bibliotheca universalis (1545-55), where twenty-three of Burnett’s forty-two works were included; the Book of Travels is not found on Gesner’s list. Its exclusion by Gesner indicates that by 1555, just over a decade after its printing, the Soncino edition had not yet reached a Christian audience. Burnett, however, has shown that after 1600 this had clearly changed; the Book of Travels was now commonly found in Hebraist libraries. This chapter will argue that the 1575 Latin translation was a defining moment in the transmission and reception of the Book of Travels as it was no longer exclusive to a Hebrew readership. Whilst Christian scholars strove to learn Hebrew, reading texts in the original Hebrew remained confined to a minority in the late-sixteenth century. It will also address why a second translation was published in 1633, when Latin readers had a readily available translation. In assessing the Book of Travels transmission into Latin, it will be shown that the Book of Travels translators were both readers, with their own understanding of the narrative, and transmitters of the text.

**Benito Arias Montano’s Itinerarium Beniamini Tudelensis**

It is the Spaniard, Benito Arias Montano, who can be credited with introducing the Book of Travels to a Christian, Latin-reading audience. He was the first to translate the text from the original Hebrew, printed by the Plantin Press, of Antwerp, in 1575.

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18 Burnett, Hebraism, p. 137.


20 Burnett does not indicate whether these editions were in Hebrew, Latin, or both.
Who Montano was, and his relationship with the press, is critical to understanding how, and more significantly why, a Spanish cleric came to print a Hebrew text in the Spanish Netherlands.

Montano was born in Fregenal de la Sierra c.1525-6 into the lower nobility of Extremadura. Between 1546-7 Montano studied at the University of Seville. Here he was taught by the *converso* Hebraist Alonso de Montemayor. After Seville, Montano attended the University of Alcalá from 1551 where he studied under the Cistercian monk Cipriano de la Huerga, who held the chair of biblical studies from 1551-60. Both institutions were imbued with humanist learning, with Seville particularly popular for its Erasmianism. It was at Alcalá, famous for its Hebrew studies and centrality of philology, that Montano acquired his liberal method of scholarship – that of returning to the original Hebrew to correct the Vulgate on a critical basis. For Montano, ‘rabbinic learning served alongside ancient Greek and Roman literature to make sense not only of the biblical text, but of the historical and natural worlds in which biblical accounts take place and in which biblical books had been composed’. Montano thus acquired the tools of a Hebraist which would be employed in his career as a theologian and scholar.

The details of Montano’s life in the 1550s are scant. He was a temporary lecturer in Greek at the University of Salamanca (1553/4) but was not offered a permanent post. Montano then returned to Extremadura, opting not to seek academic posts. In the late 1550s, Montano travelled to Italy, visiting Venice, Milan and Bologna, where he sought Hebrew and Aramaic works. Montano was an avid book buyer who sought books for his own library, thereby gaining a reputation as a great bibliophile. Mostly, however, Montano divided his time between Seville, with like-

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21 Dunkelgrün has quoted the most recent scholarship which has contested the traditional date of Montano’s birth, 1527, for an earlier date. Dunkelgrün, n.6, p. 128. For biographical details of Montano see Aubrey Bell, *Benito Arias Montano* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922); B. Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano* (London: Warburg Institute, 1972) and Vicente Bécares Botas, *Arias Montano y Plantino: El libro flamenco en la España de Felipe II* (León: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de León, 1999). See also Dunkelgrün n. 4, p. 127 for further Spanish biographies of Montano.

22 Dunkelgrün, p. 129.

23 Dunkelgrün, p. 130.


25 Dunkelgrün, pp. 135-36.

26 Botas, pp. 48-50.
minded scholars, and his country estate at La Peña. In 1560 Montano was accepted into the Order of Santiago. Two years later, he was selected by Bishop Martín Pérez de Ayala to join the Spanish delegation to the Council of Trent (1545-63), arriving on May 15 1562. Montano’s attendance at Trent was to have a lasting impact. First, Montano made a positive impression when he spoke on the question of the Eucharist (1562) and on divorce (1563). Second, during the Council, Trent had become a hub for scholars, clerics and merchants from across Europe, offering Montano countless opportunities for both intellectual and material exchanges, enabling him to engage with scholars who shared his interests in philology, biblical antiquarianism and natural science. We know from Montano’s correspondence and other works that he purchased Hebrew books and objects of Jewish antiquarian interest, including a map of the Holy Land, an ancient shekel coin and Benjamin of Tudela’s travel account. A third outcome of the Trinitarian meetings was the decision to cement the Vulgate as the basis for all Catholic theology, thereby impeding study of the original texts. Although this did not immediately affect Montano’s philological biblical studies, as the Counter-Reformation continued, Erasmianism and Hebrew studies gradually became suspect, particularly in Spain. Whilst many of Montano’s contemporaries were imprisoned by the Inquisition in Spain, Montano was forced to contend with, and combat accusations of being a ‘hebraizante, judaizante, judío – Hebraist, Judaizer and Jew’ throughout his career. Above all, Trent was the arena in which Montano cemented his reputation as a notable theologian and Hebraist. Upon his return from Trent, Montano was given the (honorary) title of Chaplain to King Philip II. One of his duties was to acquire books for the Spanish monarchy, a role which would continue during his time at Antwerp, and be further extended upon his return to Spain and subsequent appointment as librarian to the Escorial (See Chapter 6). As will be seen, it was the Polyglot Bible which brought Montano to Antwerp and into the world of the Plantin Press.

The Antwerp of the sixteenth century was at the heart of the Spanish Netherlands; an era and region dominated by the Catholic Spanish monarchy and its

27 Dunkelgrün, pp. 137-40.
28 Dunkelgrün, p. 143-44.
29 Dunkelgrün, p. 148.
31 Bell, p. 24. Many of these accusations came in the wake of the publication of the Polyglot Bible in 1575, with León de Castro of Salamanca at the forefront of the denunciations. See Kamen, p.126 for a more general overview of Castro and his denouncements. See Dunkelgrün, n. 44, pp. 141-43 regarding claims of Montano’s Jewish descent.
fight against the encroaching Protestant and Calvinist “heresies”. It was also a mercantile and cosmopolitan capital of Europe with a diverse demographic.\textsuperscript{32} Whilst a crossroads for goods, Antwerp would quickly gain in stature as a centre of book production and selling – books frequently passed through Antwerp from the Frankfurt Book Fair to England.\textsuperscript{33} The presses of the Kammenstraat equalled, if not surpassed, those of Paris and Venice, printing any material, including the dissemination of Reformation works, which found a market. It is no wonder, then, that Christophe Plantin settled in Antwerp in the 1540s.

Concomitantly with Montano’s rise, Christophe Plantin began to establish his printing empire. Born in Saint-Avertin near Tours, c.1520, Plantin studied in Paris before moving to Caen where he was employed as a bookbinder and seller. With a brief return to Paris, Plantin finally settled in Antwerp with his family in 1548/9.\textsuperscript{34} Plantin registered as a \textit{poorter}, or burgess of Antwerp on March 21, 1550 as ‘Christoffel Plantijn, the son of Jean, from Tours, bookbinder’ and, in the same year entered the Guild of St. Luke.\textsuperscript{35} Plantin quickly became a renowned bookbinder, and his craftsmanship was highly sought. An unfortunate stabbing to the arm, sometime in 1554, is cited for Plantin’s switch into printing.\textsuperscript{36} Details of how Plantin obtained the capital to establish his press is disputed. Leon Voet suggests that between 1555 and 1561 Plantin printed works for Hendrik Niclaes, a merchant and founder of the Family of Love.\textsuperscript{37} During his career as a printer, control of Antwerp would pass between Catholic and Calvinist regimes; as Dunkelgrün astutely observes, a ‘change in confessional regime meant new business opportunities, but new threats of persecution too’.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, with his association with the Family of Love, Plantin had to continually

\textsuperscript{33} Dunkelgrün, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{35} Dunkelgrün notes that Plantin was listed as a printer by the guild, although he was not yet a printer himself, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{36} Dunkelgrün, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{37} Voet, 1, pp. 22-23. The Family of Love was a religious sect, which appeared Anabaptist, but was a mystical sect considered to be heretical by both Catholics and Protestants. For further information see Alastair Hamilton, \textit{The Family of Love} (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1981). The level of Plantin’s involvement with the Family of Love is a matter of scholarly dispute, see Dunkelgrün, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{38} Dunkelgrün, p. 58.
reaffirm his Catholic faith. Plantin, however, did not entirely avoid persecution. Whilst in Paris on business in 1561, workers at the press were found guilty, and condemned, for printing Calvinist tracts and pamphlets. Plantin decided to remain in Paris, joined by his family, until 1563, whilst his property was sold by his creditors. It was in Paris that Plantin began his relationship with Hebrew printing, as will be outlined below.

On his return to Antwerp, Plantin formed a printing company with his former creditors, now turned investors in 1563. All wealthy Flemish merchants, they were Cornelis and Charles van Bomberghen, Jacob de Schotti, Johannes Goropius Becanus, and later joined by Fernando de Bernuy – all were relatives of the famous printer Daniel Bomberg (Daniel van Bomberghen). Using archival research, Dunkelgrün has shown that Plantin was able to use Bomberg’s Hebrew type on condition that their provenance was mentioned in every edition (although this does not appear to be true for the Itinerarium) as the preservation of the Bomberg name was a key motivation for their investment. Such relationships are crucial to understand how Plantin came to print the Book of Travels. The enterprise was extremely successful and launched Plantin as one of Renaissance Europe’s foremost printers. By 1566 he had seven printing presses and a staff of 33 printers, compositors and proof-readers. The eight-year partnership produced 209 editions including classical literature, devotional works and scientific treatises.

One of the more famous projects to come from the Plantin Press was a revised edition of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros’ Complutensian Polyglot Bible. What began as a modest project was quickly transformed into an eight volume, multilingual, glossed and lavishly illustrated work which took four years to produce. Plantin, ever the opportunist and to reaffirm his Catholic confession, secured the financial backing and patronage of King Philip II. The Biblia Sacra, or Antwerp Polyglot Bible, further solidified Plantin’s position as Antwerp’s leading printer, as a result of which he was named chief printer to the Netherlands, which included the monopoly over university publications. More significantly, the project introduced Plantin and Montano.

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39 Dunkelgrün, p. 63.
40 Dunkelgrün, p. 64 and pp. 72-73.
41 Voet, 1, pp. 44-46.
42 Voet, 1, p. 60. For an overview of the Polyglot see Dunkelgrün, especially pp. 26-39.
King Philip had agreed to the project with the positive backing of the Inquisition and the theologians of the University of Alcalá. To supervise the project, Philip sent Montano:

We have decided to order you, given that you are both a priest and a theologian with great desire for knowledge, and deeply learned in Sacred Scripture, and as we have abundant testimony to the genius of your person, and your erudition and knowledge in those languages in which said Bible is to be printed, as well as your Christian zeal, to be present at and participate in the printing of that Bible. To that end, confident in your ready good will, we order that you set out for the province of Antwerp to assist there in the printing of said Bible and to direct its production. 43

Montano arrived in Antwerp in March 1569 with a reputation as an ‘outstanding Hebrew scholar’ preceding him. 44 Just like his time at Trent, Montano once again found himself immersed in a city with many possibilities for scholarly exchange.

An examination of the time scale between Montano’s attendance at Trent and his move to Antwerp indicates that the Book of Travels, acquired at Trent, was in Montano’s possession for over a decade prior to its publication in 1575. This is further substantiated from a comment made by Montano in his 1566 Comentario al profeta Oseas, where he mentions his acquisition of the Book of Travels at Trent, the enjoyment of reading it and the desire to see it translated into Latin. 45 The opening dedication to the Itinerarium Beniamini Tudelensis also sheds light on this timeframe. Montano writes on his time at Trent and how he came to translate the Book of Travels:

Some years ago when Trent was going on, a small Hebrew book was brought from Constantinople and was given to me by my friend a certain Venetian, which was inscribed with MAZZAGHOTH BENIAMIN [Masa’ot Benjamin]; when I had showed it to Martín Ayala, then the bishop of Segovia, a man equally learned and devout, and not ignorant of the Hebrew language, I was advised insistently to translate it into Latin for the benefit of the learned, and also by other friends to whom I explained the gist of the little book, who also requested it; yet I was not able to satisfy their desire at that time, because I had other concerns. But with my long

44 Rekers, p. 63.
45 The full quote can be found in Rosendo, La correspondencia de Benito Arias Montano con el Presidente de Indias Juan de Ovando (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2008), p. 356.
lasting travelling I was able to steal some hours for my studies at least at night, between other works, which I expounded in my nocturnal studies.\footnote{Benito Arias Montano, \textit{Itinerarium Beniamini Tudelensis} (Antwerp: Christophe Plantin, 1575), pp. 3-4.}

This passage reveals many significant details. First, Montano had a Venetian contact to supply him with Hebrew books. The extent of this connection, however, remains a mystery. Nevertheless, this unnamed Venetian correctly believed that Montano would be interested in Benjamin’s text. Second, Montano sought the opinion of Bishop Ayala. This suggests that Montano, whilst interested in the \textit{Book of Travels}, may not have originally intended to produce a translation and it was only at the behest of Bishop Ayala, and other friends, that Montano was persuaded to render Benjamin’s narrative into Latin rather than keeping the text for his personal use. Finally, the delay in its translation is addressed by Montano as being distracted by ‘other concerns’ – Montano received the text in either 1562/3, but completed the Dedication in 1574 and printed the \textit{Itinerarium} in 1575. In the intervening years, as Montano explains, he continued to work on his translation.

What value did the \textit{Book of Travels} offer Montano? Why did Bishop Ayala, and Montano himself believe that it would benefit the learned? In the above quote, Montano had showed the text to unnamed others who urged Montano for a translation. Thus, Montano’s translation was not a selfish exercise since he intended it to be for the ‘benefit of the learned (\textit{ad doctorum utilitatem Latinum facerem saepissimè})’.\footnote{Montano, p. 3.} Christian Hebraism was still a relatively new field and texts remained limited despite the exponential growth of printed Hebrew books and their presence in the Catholic book market. Now, Montano was in possession of a hitherto unknown author with the opportunity to add a new edition to the small Hebrew “canon”. This in itself may have been reason enough for Montano to undertake his translation, not only expanding his own knowledge but contributing to Christian scholarship overall. What of the content? What information did the \textit{Book of Travels} contain to interest Montano and prompt his translation? For this, the Dedication, in addition to the \textit{praefatio} of the \textit{Itinerarium}, sheds further light.

The \textit{Itinerarium} is dedicated to Juan de Ovando, a personal friend of Montano, whom he describe as a ‘\textit{vir omnium artium studiosissimus} (a man most devoted to all...
the arts).\textsuperscript{48} Both men were \textit{letrados}, educated men from the Spanish middle or lower nobility who became either civil servants or churchmen and comprised the numerous councils established by Philip II to administer the kingdom.\textsuperscript{49} The \textit{letrados} constituted a meritocracy, but one which was reliant on patronage and personal relationships.\textsuperscript{50} The circumstances of their friendship are not yet known, but it is not remarkable as both were active members in Philip II’s civil service. Citing a significant correspondence between the friends from 1568-73, Stafford Poole highlights how Montano and Ovando shared similar interests discussing news, books, geography and scientific instruments.\textsuperscript{51} Many of the letters are requests from Ovando to Montano for books, or catalogues of books – although there does not appear to be any explicit mention of the \textit{Itinerarium}.\textsuperscript{52}

Ovando’s role in the civil service is relevant to how Montano read and understood the \textit{Book of Travels}. Born c. 1514 to an illegitimate father who had married into an honourable and wealthy family, Ovando entered the \textit{Colegio mayor} of San Bartolomé at the University of Salamanca in 1547, where he received a degree in civil law in 1551. He was then appointed the chief ecclesiastical judge and vicar general of Seville in 1556. Rising through the political ranks, Ovando held various positions within the civil service, including the Supreme and General Council of the Inquisition. Outside of his political life, little is known about Ovando’s personal character and relationships. At the time of Montano’s Dedication, Ovando was President of the Council of Indies, appointed on 28 August 1571, which dealt with Spain’s colonial policies in the New World, Oceania and Asia, including expeditions, personnel, finances and the treatment and conversion of the indigenous population.\textsuperscript{53}

In the Dedication, Montano states his belief that the importance of the text lies with its broad geographical descriptions, writing:

\begin{quote}
\textit{libellum etiam hunc Latine vertendum duxi: quem legentibus pretium operae facturu(um) sperabam propter multam et iucundam regionem et rerum orbis notitiam, quam allaturum intelligo}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{48} Montano, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{49} Stafford Poole, \textit{Juan de Ovando: Governing the Spanish Empire in the Reign of Phillip II} (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), pp. 6-7.
\textsuperscript{51} Poole, \textit{Ovando}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{52} See Macías Rosendo, \textit{La correspondencia}.
\textsuperscript{53} For a complete biography of Ovando see Poole, \textit{Juan de Ovando}.  

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Furthermore I turned this little book into Latin: I trust that this work will be of value to readers on account of the information of the many and delightful knowledge of the regions and things of the world which I thought it would convey.\textsuperscript{54}

Montano further tells Ovando of the \textit{Book of Travels’} geographical slant:

\textit{attq(ue) sapienter sustine(n)dam geographiae co(m)odissima cognitiones coparata tibi antea attento studio constiterit: eam quoque terrarum orbis facie(m), qua(m) auctor hic sua te(m)pestate observatam depinxit}

and wisely supports the advantageous acquisition of geographic knowledge, obtained for yourself conscientiously [and] eagerly: it is also the face of the world which is depicted here as observed by the author in his time.\textsuperscript{55}

Conscious of Ovando’s interest in texts which offered geographic and ethnographic information – which could assist him in establishing imperial policies of expansion in the New World – Montano essentially advertises the \textit{Book of Travels} to Ovando as a geographical work. On this, Shalev commented that it seems idiosyncratic that a 400 year old text would find contemporary resonance.\textsuperscript{56} Montano drew Ovando’s attention to Benjamin’s narrative, perhaps thinking it could be useful to him in his official capacity as President of the Council of Indies, recognising that Ovando’s position required him to have complete knowledge and governance over all things in the Spanish Empire. Poole asserts that, as President of the Council of Indies, Ovando set out to learn all he could about the New World, its history and religion, the customs and rites of the natives;\textsuperscript{57} his official capacity necessitated him to learn about the unknown. As early as 1569, Ovando asked Montano to send works of astronomy, astrology instruments, geographical descriptions and maps, which Montano understood to be of help with providing ‘\textit{las descriptiones particulares de la provincias} (particular descriptions of the provinces)’.\textsuperscript{58} Works containing descriptions of the world were thus valuable resources in the sixteenth century for geographic and ethnographic, political and religious reasons.

Spain’s rapid imperial expansion increased the demand for accounts and maps of the New World. Europeans were unfamiliar with the newly discovered continent’s geography and equally sought descriptions of encounters with the natives and details of the histories of these non-European civilisations.\textsuperscript{59} The writings of ancient

\textsuperscript{54} Montano, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{55} Montano, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{56} Shalev, ‘Explorer’, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{57} Poole, pp. 140-41.
\textsuperscript{58} Macías Rosendo, \textit{La correspondencia}, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{59} Angel Delgado-Gómez, \textit{Spanish Historical Writing about the New World, 1493-1700} (Providence, RI: The John Carter Brown Library, 1994).
geographers and writers of exotic works, in turn, provided a model for detailed, vivid descriptions of the institutions and manners of unfamiliar peoples, the style of which was followed to produce contemporary descriptions of the New World. Ovando continued to ask Montano to send books, and within the correspondence are seen requests for the Descriptión de África by Juan de León and Descriptión orientale de Marco Polo. Since Ovando actively sought out travel literature, Montano believed that the Itinerarium offered a framework to help Ovando understand the unknown in the New World which could be equally applied to geography and ethnography. In turn, the Spanish could begin to conceive of the new lands and peoples encountered. Zur Shalev has also noted this connection, writing that as Ovando’s role was directly related to travel, exploration and colonisation, the geographical nature of Benjamin’s Book of Travels would certainly have interested him.

Shalev’s argument continues with an examination of the Spanish connection to travel and where Jewish travellers fit into this tradition. Based on the Praefatio, Montano styles Benjamin of Tudela as a proto-Spanish explorer as a means of establishing the historical roots of Spanish exploration. The Praefatio begins by extolling the Spanish people for their extensive travels, whether as royalty, soldiers, merchants, ambassadors or students, despite the hardships and dangers of travel. Montano continues by detailing Spain’s expansion to the Americas and the discovery of a hitherto unknown and diverse world. This desire to travel is, according to Montano, attributed to the Jews:

*Sed illud maxime hanc Hispanorum propensionem, diligentiam & felicitatem probat, quod ex Iudaeis…nonnulli etiam in Hispania nati & educati hac etiam parte audaciores, flagrantioresque extiterint, idque non sine felici exitu tentaverint*

But especially this inclination, zeal and success of the Spaniards is proven from the Jews… born and educated in Spain, some go out as courageous and passionate, and attempt this departure not without a favourable end.


64 Montano, p. 7.

65 Montano, p. 10. Nonetheless Montano, displaying his theological bias, is quick to point out that the Jews wander because they have been spurned by God.
Montano understood Iberian Jews to be adventurers, willing to travel and record what has been observed. Listing Mosen Nahamani (Nachmanides) and Abrahamus Esdrae (Abraham ibn Ezra), two of medieval Judaism’s most prolific biblical commentators, as two examples of Spanish Jewish travellers, to Montano, Benjamin is the Iberian Jewish traveller. This is especially evident in the way Montano praises Benjamin:

“He described his travels precisely, briefly and clearly, so that he should not yield to any of the ancients or its art, and by right could not be outdone in effort. With all those things added, which seemed to be worth remembering in the observation of places and peoples; and the fables intelligently divided from stories with useful meaning of diverse ancient readings closely observed near every place.”

The Praefatio, emphasises Benjamin’s Spanishness and his Navarrese origins:

Beniaminum Tudelensem ex ea Cantabriae parte, qua nunc Navarra vocatur, virum Iudaeum fuisse

Benjamin of Tudela from that the part of Cantabria, which is now called Navarre, was a Jewish man.

This may be an indication of Montano’s efforts to appropriate Benjamin as a proto-Spanish explorer, despite his Jewish faith. Since the Itinerarium was translated at a time when the use of Jewish works could draw accusations of “judaization”, Montano justified his use of the Book of Travels citing Benjamin as a testem et inspectorum (witness and observer) of both men and regions, having ‘visited and wandered through nearly the whole earth’, recording his travels ‘precisely, briefly, and clearly’. Montano thus read the Book of Travels in the context of exploration, demonstrating that Spaniards had, in previous centuries, set out on journeys which explored and recorded the peoples and places of their time. For Montano, living in the age of Spanish Exploration at the pinnacle of colonial expansion, Benjamin’s account had the potential to be used to highlight the earliest roots for Spanish exploration, thereby appropriating Benjamin the Jew and transforming him into Benjamin the Spanish Explorer, as aptly named by Shalev.
Fashioning a symbol of Spanish exploration could not have come at a more appropriate time. Historically the Iberian Peninsula was comprised of individual Islamic and Christian kingdoms that only appeared as marginal players on the wider European political stage. As the Christians advanced and conquered the Peninsula throughout the *Reconquista*, the kingdoms gradually united under a single Spanish monarchy. Despite the Spanish beginning a programme of centralisation, expansion and nationalism, there was no cohesive identity. Quoting Peter Sahlins, Henry Kamen states ‘There was no legal concept of a Spanish nationality in Spain during the early modern period. There were “subjects” of the Spanish [monarchy]’ but Spain remained composed of different regional identities and cultures.\(^6^9\) Spain, however, was rapidly becoming a major European player in the sixteenth century owing to its control over large parts of Europe and its colonial expansion. In turn, this led to riches, pride, influence and an enhanced reputation.

Kamen argues that the growth of the empire gave rise to the Spanish regions’ recognition that they now shared in a common enterprise. Although this did not develop into an overt Spanish identity, Spaniards acting in a diplomatic or military capacity outside of the Iberian Peninsula did use the word ‘Spain’ to identify their origins.\(^7^0\) How Montano identified himself, and to what extent he considered himself a Spanish nationalist would require intensive archival research beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, considering his position within the civil service and his roles at court, it is difficult to imagine Montano not taking pride in his country’s successes and newfound wealth and political relevance. It is within this context that Montano places the *Book of Travels* to reinforce Spain’s roots of exploration, taking inspiration from the historical past.

Montano’s reception of the *Book of Travels* in relation to Spanish exploration, colonisation and identity as a geographical text is, however, not the only way in which Montano understood Benjamin’s text. A second, and I would argue more significant, reception is Montano’s reading of the *Book of Travels* in a Hebraist context, using it as a geographical work for biblical geography. This application of the narrative is not novel, as Abarbanel used Benjamin’s text in a similar manner (See Chapter 4). A century after Abarbanel, however, and in the world of Christian scholarship, Hebraists


such as Montano sought to illuminate the biblical past of the Holy Land to clarify Scripture. Catholics in particular searched for meaning in the early Christian past to elucidate contemporary religious questions and problems posed by the Reformation. Many Christian scholars emulated Erasmus who, in 1518, advocated a ‘thorough understanding of the Holy Land’ for the purpose of biblical scholarship. This was pursued by scholars both for exegetical purposes and to recreate the Holy Land as inhabited by Christ. Montano’s reading of Benjamin’s text thus incorporates a key theme: that of *geographia sacra* (Sacred Geography).

Zur Shalev’s recent monograph is seminal in beginning to explore *geographia sacra* and how early modern scholars explored notions of space and geographical ideas. At its core, Shalev defines “sacred geography” as reconstructing the biblical landscape, often by translating the sacred text into a map. In the hands of both Catholic and Protestant scholars it is a grey area which blurs disciplinary boundaries crossing both religion and geography. As a result, the study of *geographia sacra* is part of, and just as contentious as, the history of biblical scholarship, as its foundations lie in the interpretation of Scripture. Whilst the Bible itself provided the main source of information, other texts were also employed; it was not uncommon to use pilgrimage accounts for their eyewitness observations not just of the locations in the Holy Land, but also for information about the peoples and their customs. Montano does just that, explaining in the *Praefatio*:

*Peregrinationemque suam adeo breviter atque dilucide descripsit...quae cum in aliis libris, tum praecipue in sacris scriptis explicandis non vulgari usui esse posit*

He described his travels precisely, briefly and clearly...this could be commonly useful to explain other books, especially Holy Scripture.

In his 2010 study, Shalev explores Christian Hebraism in relation to geographical works, travel literature and early modern geographical culture. He asserted that Benjamin was, for Montano, a ‘closer witness to the Biblical landscape of the Holy Land which provided a certain continuation of Scripture’. In this respect, Montano was simply continuing a reception tradition already seen amongst Jewish

73 Zur Shalev, Sacred Words, pp. 3-5.
74 Beaver, p. 274.
75 Montano, p. 11.
76 Shalev, ‘Explorer’, p. 23.
readers of the *Book of Travels*, namely Abarbanel (as seen in Chapter 4). Montano did, however, differ from his Jewish predecessors; he was not interested in pilgrimage and specific religious sites to visit nor graves of the prophets, but in the biblical dispersion of the Jews. As Montano writes in the *Praefatio*:

*Quisnam vero apertarum terrarium fructus mortalibus contingere soleat, praeterquam quod res ususque indicat, in Geographia sacra abunde est a nobis demonstratum*

For what fruit [benefit] of the newly discovered lands might be accustomed to touch upon mortal affairs except what the matter and the use shows, is made abundantly known to us in sacred geography.\(^77\)

Shalev identifies the reference to ‘our Geographia sacra’ as Montano’s *Phaleg: sive de gentium sedibus primis* (1572), a description of the whole world according to biblical sources, primarily Genesis 10, which outlines the genealogy and dispersion of the sons of Noah. It was not that Montano was seeking more peoples and lands to conquer, but a deeper understanding of the Bible. Shalev continues this argument, stating that Montano’s reading of the *Book of Travels* is an example of *ad fontes*, returning to the original Hebrew, in the uncommon context of geographical literature.\(^78\)

There is no doubt, then, that Montano reads the *Book of Travels* through a Hebraist lens of *geographia sacra* to understand the Bible.

This section has detailed the *Book of Travels*’ acquisition by Montano and his decision to translate it into Latin. It has been argued that Montano’s interest in, and reception of, the text was multi-faceted. First, the discovery of an unknown, untranslated Hebrew text piqued Montano’s interest as both a humanist and a Christian Hebraist. Second, Montano attached a geographic meaning to the text; Montano applied the *Itinerarium* to his own reality, and understood that the descriptions could be used for the exploration and colonisation of the New World. This reading was shared with Juan de Ovando in the belief that the information would be useful in the governance of the New World. In one letter to Ovando, Montano hoped that he would find ‘*una solución a los multiples problemas de la colonización* (a solution to the multiple problems of the colonisation)’.\(^79\) As Grafton argued, European scholars used classical texts to impose coherence on the discoveries of the New World. Grafton adds

\(^{77}\) Montano, p. 9

\(^{78}\) Shalev, ‘Explorer’, pp. 22-23.

the caveat, however, that it cannot be known how these texts helped to impose frameworks to govern the New World – whether they were used for a strategy of wonder, of superiority, of alienation or of assimilation.\(^{80}\) This can also be applied to the *Itinerarium*. Although there is no explicit statement indicating what Montano wanted to draw Ovando’s attention to, he nonetheless sent the *Itinerarium* to Ovando. Likewise, Ovando’s reception, and application, of the *Itinerarium* thus remains an open question.

Within a year of Montano’s arrival in Antwerp the Plantin Press printed his first work, the *Rhetoricorum libri IV* (1569), a collection of didactic poetry. In the years spanning the production of the Antwerp Polyglot, a professional and personal relationship grew which would see Montano print his entire corpus of 22 works at the Plantin Press, including two posthumously. Despite the friendship which developed between Montano and Plantin, the press was, as Leon Voet indicated, very much a business venture and expected to profit from the works printed.\(^{81}\) With respect to the *Itinerarium*, an examination of Plantin’s relationship to Hebrew printing will help to better understand his role in the Hebrew book trade.

As outlined by Dunkelgrün, Plantin was introduced to Hebrew printing during his “exile” in Paris. After the burning of the Talmud at Rome in 1553, Hebrew printing in Venice had all but ceased under Cardinal Carafa, relocating to Paris. In the shop of his friend, and business associate, Martin le Jeune, Plantin learned the ins-and-outs of Hebrew printing. He was, however, not wholly unfamiliar with the Hebrew book trade, having been buying and selling Hebrew books for le Jeune as early as 1558 thereby ‘gaining a feel for the market for Hebrew books’.\(^{82}\) With regular attendance at the Frankfurt Bookfair,\(^{83}\) Plantin recognised a market for Hebrew typography. This demand, however, was not just driven by Christian scholars, but by Jews as well. Although the Spanish Netherlands was as equally devoid of (openly practicing) Jews as the Iberian Peninsula, the Holy Roman Empire still contained Jewish communities.\(^{84}\) Plantin, then, printed Hebrew works for both a Jewish and Christian readership. In providing for a Christian market which sought out Hebrew books, Plantin certainly understood Christian scholars’ reading habits and could print books

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80 Grafton, p. 48.
81 Voet, 2, p. 283.
82 Dunkelgrün, p. 75.
84 Dunkelgrün, pp. 76-78.
accordingly. In this context, to print a Latin translation of a little-known Hebrew text would have attracted great interest. With Montano as translator, and his solid reputation, printing the *Itinerarium* was a low-risk venture with potential for great success.

In addition to Montano’s translated text there are two paratextual features in the edition: the first is the place names, in Latin, provided in the margins next to the translation; second, is an alphabetical index, with the heading ‘*Index Rerum, et Potissimum Locorum, Quae Hoc libello describuntur* (Index of Things, and the Principal Places, which this little book describes)’. Both would have been included as quick reference guides which easily directed the reader to a specific passage. Readers of the *Itinerarium*, then, did not necessarily need to read the text from start to finish or as a whole unit but could, with the paratextual material, locate passages of interest. The place names in the margin and index thus provided a quick reference guide for the reader.

The *Itinerarium* was well-received upon publication. It was the means by which the majority of Christian scholars were introduced to Benjamin’s narrative. As noted above, Burnett’s survey of Hebraist libraries has already shown that the *Itinerarium* was found in a number of private libraries. Some of the more famous names who read Montano’s translation include Joseph Scaliger, Isaac Casaubon and André Thevet.85 Copies were also sent to the Escorial and the Royal Library at Antwerp.86 Each of these reception examples could be, and warrant, a study in their own right. To treat the subject more broadly, the *Itinerarium* was consumed by a scholarly elite, comprised of an erudite and critical audience. Yet, Montano’s prefatory writings do not indicate how he himself critically engaged with the text, or the decisions he made in producing the translation. Further archival research in the Museum Plantin-Moretus, may shed additional light. Shalev cited one of Montano’s earliest critics, Bernardo José de Aldrete (1565-1645) a fellow Spaniard and humanist, vilified Montano’s uncritical use of Jewish texts, stating that Benjamin’s narrative

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contained lies which appealed to the uneducated. This suggests that whilst Christian scholars were grateful for the addition of a Hebrew text in Latin translation, some of its readers may have taken issue with its uncritical approach. True, Montano did not include any notes or glosses, but the prefatory material does not suggest that Montano sought to provide a dissected critical edition. Rather, his agenda was to translate a Hebrew text for wider dissemination. Despite Aldrete’s detraction, the edition was a success, and helped pave the way for a second Latin translation.

**Constantijn L'Empereur’s *Itinerarium D. Beniaminis***

Among the second generation of Christian Hebraists emerges a little-studied but prolific figure. A theologian by training and known for his biblical erudition, Constantijn L’Empereur van Oppyck (hereafter L’Empereur) was a product of the consolidation and institutionalisation of Protestant universities. Like his Hebraist predecessors and contemporaries, L’Empereur was a *vir trilinguis* (proficient in Hebrew, Greek and Latin) who entered academia with the ideals of *ad fontes*, particularly through the medium of philology. As will be seen, L’Empereur built his career around rabbinic literature for the purposes of biblical exegesis. To distinguish himself within the Republic of Letters L’Empereur styled himself *Professor controversarium judaicorum* (Professor of Jewish controversies), the purpose of which was to refute Judaism. It is in this realm of L’Empereur’s academic pursuits that the *Book of Travels* is found.

With the success of Montano’s *Itinerarium*, popular with scholars such as Buxtorf, Scaliger and Casaubon, it would seem surprising that L’Empereur produced his own Latin translation, published by the Elsevier press in 1633. Closer examination, however, reveals that these two editions, just over 50 years apart, approach the *Book of Travels* in entirely different ways. As discussed above, Montano was the first to translate and make the *Book of Travels* widely available to a Christian audience. The translation, however, is not accompanied by any indication of Montano’s critical reading of the text. L’Empereur, on the other hand, shaped his translation, entitled *Itinerarium D. Beniaminis* (hereafter the *Itinerary*) through the *Dissertatio ad lectorem* (Dissertation to the Reader) and, in particular, through the addition of his *Notae*, critical notes appended to the end of the text. Where Montano did not include any

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87 Shalev, ‘Explorer’, p. 23.
critical reading, L’Empereur’s edition appears hyper-critical by contrast, gathering all of the narrative’s perceived errors in the Notae. This distinction alone sets the 1575 and 1633 editions apart. Whether a new Latin translation of the Book of Travels may have been necessary is debated below; what is clear, however, is that L’Empereur did not simply publish a new translation. Instead, his Itinerary was a new version, not only containing the text, but including explanations of some of the information found in Benjamin’s narrative. Whilst predominantly based on the 1543 and 1583 Hebrew editions, L’Empereur was also able to consult Montano’s Itinerarium. The 1633 edition thus encompasses reception elements from previous editions, but, more importantly, represents an evolution in the transmission of the Book of Travels.

L’Empereur’s modern biographer, Peter T. van Rooden, has provided a portrait of L’Empereur against the backdrop of the Dutch scholarly world. Here, the salient details are outlined to better understand L’Empereur as an internationally recognised scholar in the seventeenth century. Born in Bremen in 1591 (d. 1st July 1648), L’Empereur graduated with an arts degree from the University of Leiden in 1607 before continuing his studies at the University of Franeker in 1614. During his time at Franeker, L’Empereur (allegedly) studied Arabic under Thomas Erpenius.88 Although his proficiency in Arabic is indeterminable, its presence in the Notae of the Itinerary, suggests a working knowledge. Similarly, Hebrew tuition was standard for theologians and chairs of Hebrew were gradually established in universities across Europe, a phenomenon especially prevalent in Protestant universities.89 How L’Empereur learned Hebrew is an open question. Van Rooden posits that L’Empereur learned Hebrew from Franciscus Gomarus and Guilielmus Coddaeus.90 Although he acquired Hebrew, van Rooden asserts that there is no indication that L’Empereur was interested in Hebrew in the early stages of his career.91 From 1622, however, van Rooden concludes, based on his purchase of a number of Hebrew Bibles, dictionaries and grammars, that L’Empereur became increasingly interested in Hebrew.92 After his matriculation, L’Empereur embarked on a European tour to ‘deepen his scholarly

89 See further Burnett, Hebraism, p. 11 regarding Hebrew in Protestant universities.
90 Van Rooden, pp. 45-46. Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641) was a Dutch theologian, appointed professor of theology at the University of Leiden (1594). Guilielmus Coddaeus (1574-1625) taught Hebrew at Leiden from 1601.
91 Van Rooden, p. 22 and 52.
92 Van Rooden, p. 37. The catalogue of L’Empereur’s library is held by the University of Leiden.
knowledge as a preparation for an academic career’ and to meet some of the century’s illustrious men. L’Empereur returned to Franeker as a student of theology in 1616, graduating the following year, where he received the theological training of an orthodox Calvinist. L’Empereur thus received an archetypal education for an individual seeking to join the Republic of Letters.

L’Empereur began his theology career at the High School of Harderwijk, and replaced his former teacher Erpenius (upon his death in 1624) as Chair of Hebrew at the University of Leiden in 1627 until 1646. Following this he was appointed professor of theology on 12 February 1647. The University of Leiden provided an ideal atmosphere for L’Empereur to focus on his niche interest in rabbinical literature for the purposes of biblical exegesis. One of the first Protestant universities in Europe, Leiden was founded in 1575 as an intellectual and spiritual centre from which Holland could draw its political leadership and spiritual autonomy. At Leiden, theological training was focused on scriptural theology and problems of dogma, encompassing biblical analysis based on philology. As L’Empereur sought to ‘apply his knowledge of theology and languages to the use of the Church and the Academy’ it is easy to see how L’Empereur fit nicely into the ethos of the university.

As a devout Calvinist and theologian, L’Empereur embodied the Hebraist ideals of ad fontes and biblia sacra to acquire accuracy in doctrine which could further the goals of the Reformation. L’Empereur was specifically interested in rabbinic literature, which he endeavoured to make accessible to a Christian audience. In his survey of L’Empereur’s personal library, van Rooden notes a number of rabbinic works by fellow Hebraists. This marks a significant difference between the age of Montano and that of L’Empereur. Whereas Montano had access to a selection of Hebrew texts in their original language, by the time of L’Empereur, a mere half-century later, many Hebrew texts had been translated into Latin for Christian scholars’ use. Between 1627 and 1634 L’Empereur expanded his collection of Hebrew books and Hebrew texts in Latin, many of which were purchased from the library of

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93 Van Rooden, p. 28.
95 Van Rooden, p. 29.
96 Van Rooden, p. 85.
97 Van Rooden, p. 1.
Further works were purchased from fellow scholars, or given to L’Empereur by his contemporaries. Interestingly, some of L’Empereur’s books were purchased directly from the Jewish community of Amsterdam. Between January and April 1631, L’Empereur bought eight folio works from Menasseh ben Israel.

Van Rooden unequivocally states that L’Empereur ‘enjoyed fame as an expert in rabbinical literature’ which won him recognition and a place within the Republic of Letters. Rabbinic literature is traditionally defined as the Talmud, responsa and biblical commentaries, halachic (law) works and works of ethics. L’Empereur’s main objective in reading rabbinic literature, like many of his contemporaries, was for the purpose of biblical exegesis. More specifically, L’Empereur ‘saw rabbinical literature as biblical exposition, either as a theology in the form of a doctrinal system, or as a description of the history and customs of the Jewish people’. This position may have been influenced by Erpenius’ own perception of the value of Hebrew texts. He believed that they provided a knowledge of history which aided understanding of Scripture. For seventeenth-century Christian scholars how they approached the Bible and its commentaries had not greatly evolved from their predecessors. Scripture, read in its original Hebrew, remained the source by which the purity of doctrine could be preserved and heterodox opinions refuted. Where the next generation of scholars differed somewhat was in their attention to Judaism’s customs and history, if only to better refute the Jews and their religion.

It is within this context that L’Empereur’s Itinerary, printed in 1633, can be situated. The exact timeframe from when L’Empereur first read the Book of Travels to the edition’s publication is difficult to pinpoint. Van Rooden suggests that as early as 1631 L’Empereur was encouraged by his colleague André Rivet, a professor of theology at Leiden, to produce a new translation. Even though Montano’s edition had become ‘valued in humanist circles’ Rivet may have proposed the undertaking of a new translation because Montano’s, according to van Rooden, albeit without further

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98 Van Rooden, pp. 84-85. L’Empereur purchased 71 Jewish books, those authored by Jews for a Jewish audience, in seven years, spending 900 guilders, Van Rooden, p. 96.
99 Van Rooden, p. 108.
100 Van Rooden, p. 1.
102 Van Rooden, p. 59.
103 Van Rooden, p. 231.
104 See Burnett, Buxtorf, Chapter 3.
explanation, was considered to be poor. In the Dissertatio L’Empereur hints at a similar motive, stating that Montano’s edition is full of errors:

*Quapropter in sequentibus versionem rarius quam praecedentibus defendo: lectori hoc relinquens ut de Ariae Montani sphalmatis judicium ferat, si utiusque versionem, quae per omnia differt, conferre libuerit*

Therefore I defend in the following [my] translation less frequently than in what has just been written, leaving it to the reader, so that he may bear judgement on Arias Montano’s errors, if he should so wish to compare the two translations which differ throughout.

L’Empereur indicates here that Montano’s edition contains errors but that it is for the reader to judge the errors through comparison of the 1575 text and the one now being presented by L’Empereur. To L’Empereur’s mind, then, his translation was to supersede Montano’s. Whether at the suggestion of Rivet, or not, L’Empereur undertook the translation ‘*ut novae versionis meae rationem omnibus redderem* (so that my new account may be translated for all men’). This echoes Montano’s statement that he too undertook his translation for the ‘benefit of the learned’. This is, of course, a very generalised motive. To truly understand L’Empereur’s intentions for translating the Book of Travels one must turn to the Dedicatoria Epistola (Dedication Letter), in addition to the Dissertatio, which provide greater insights into L’Empereur’s approach to, and engagement with the Book of Travels.

The transmission of the text to L’Empereur is a quintessential example of the network of the Republic of Letters and the spirit of sharing knowledge. In the Dissertatio L’Empereur informs readers that he consulted two Hebrew editions of Benjamin’s text – the 1543 Constantinople edition and the 1583 Breisgau edition. As outlined in Chapter 3 these editions are near identical and would not have presented many textual differences. L’Empereur further relates that the 1543 text was made available to him by [Daniel] Heinsius, a former student of Joseph Scaliger and contemporary of L’Empereur at Leiden. The 1583 edition was Johannes Buxtorf’s personal copy which had been given to Scaliger. Further in the Dissertatio, L’Empereur states that he was also provided with Scaliger’s copy of Montano’s Itinerarium by Johannes de Laet which included Scaliger’s *notae marginales*

106 L’Empereur, Dissertatio. The prefatory material to the 1633 edition is unpaginated.
107 L’Empereur, Dissertatio.
108 ‘*Hujus excusi itinerarii duae sunt editiones: una Constantinopolitana, quam mihi suppeditavit, pro suo singulari in me affectum Belgii decus magnus ille Heinsius; altera est Brisgoënsis, quam incomparabilis vir Johannes Buxtorfius olim ad magnum Scaligerum transmiserat*. L’Empereur, Dissertatio.
L’Empereur’s ability to consult so many editions of the *Book of Travels* highlights the movement of books between the men of the Republic of Letters. It demonstrates that a text could change owners several times but that personal libraries were often made available for scholars’ use. From this we can see how the *Book of Travels’* Christian transmission was centred on a small, close-knit group of Christian scholars whose interest in Benjamin’s narrative prompted them to share it with their contemporaries.

Van Rooden notes that L’Empereur included six dedications across his published works and was the medium by which L’Empereur honoured those who aided his professional advancement. His translation of the Talmud tractate *Middот* (1630) was therefore dedicated to the Estates of Holland for his appointment at Leiden.110 A second work, *Halichoth Olam* (1634) acknowledged the curators at Leiden (for his appointment as *Professor controversarium Judaicarum* in 1634.) The *Itinerary* is also dedicated to an influential individual; the opening lines of the *Epistola* reads:

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To the most noble and most great Franciscus van Aersen, knight, lord in Sommelsdijk and Plaet, councillor of the States General, ambassador to the French King and curator of the University of Leuven111
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Franciscus van Aerssen can be identified as François van Aerssen (1571-1641), an ambassador and member of the *Ridderschap* (The Knighthood of the Republic of the Netherlands). L’Empereur’s dedication to van Aerssen may have been in gratitude for his patronage and for helping to secure L’Empereur’s appointment as chair of Hebrew. Alternatively, L’Empereur was also seeking an appointment as professor of theology (which occurred in 1647) and may have used the dedication to gain the support of van Aerssen. Irrespective of L’Empereur’s motivations, like Montano, men of the Republic of Letters would include dedications to their patron, or potential patron, either to enhance their reputation or for monetary gain. In this respect L’Empereur and

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109 ‘Quod verò ad Scaligeri marginales quasdam notas attinet, quibus me astrictum non autumavi, de iis judicet vir Amplissimus Johannes Latius Societati Indiae Occ. praefectus: ut qui istas notas habeat, quas mihi pro vteri amicitia suppeditaverat, cum in versione occuparer’. L’Empereur, *Dissertatio* and *Van Roeden*, p. 154. According to *Van Roeden* the 1583 Breisgau edition also contains notes characteristic of Scaliger, held at the University of Leiden, but there is no indication that this was used by L’Empereur.

110 Burnett, *Hebraism*, p. 87-88.

111 L’Empereur, *Epistola*. 

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Montano included dedications as a standard (and expected) part of any humanist publication.

Within the *Epistola*, L’Empereur begins by detailing how there are many different genres of history. Under this umbrella, he includes recorded journeys which describe places, peoples and events. For L’Empereur, travel narratives are not only enjoyable, especially if they include inventions and elaborations, but can also be used to study historical truths based on the recorded accounts. L’Empereur thus assigns value to travel accounts in that they are a record to the past which can assist in establishing the historical narrative. In relation to Benjamin’s narrative, L’Empereur writes:

_Porrò inter itineraria quamplurima à multis plurimi factum fuit praesens hoc Benjaminis: quia non tantum Europam & Africam peragravit; sed ad intimas, imo etiam extremas Asiae regiones se penetrasse profitetur, ubi rariora quoque & hactenus orbi nostro ignota sibi vista testator: adeoque ipsius libellus plurimarum rerum exempla affatim praebet, ut nonnisi cum voluptate legi queat._

Furthermore, amongst the many itineraries by many great ones this work of Benjamin’s was made: because he not only travelled over through Europe and Africa; but penetrated into the most secret, likewise the deepest outer regions of Asia, or so he declares, where he bears witness to rare and hitherto unknown things which are unknown in our world: and indeed his little book sufficiently offers examples if many things so that one is able to read with enjoyment.¹¹²

For L’Empereur the _Book of Travels_ was an outstanding work among other travel narratives in their ability to illuminate places and things of the past. The above is, however, an overview of the nature of these texts. The *Epistola* continues that the narrative is not just to be read for enjoyment but also to counter Jewish beliefs:

_nihil enim tantopere studuisse ex toto scripto apparat, quam ut suam gentem non tantum magno ubique numero reperiri, sed etiam summa synedria, dominia, imo regna quoque nunc obtinere persuaderet. Hinc passim Israēltas magno studio numerare videos; eorumque jurisdictionem & imperium (iis praesertim locis quae remotiora sunt, ubi mendacia non facile deprehensum iri sperabat) magno conatu delineare. Et quorum haec? ut quum Judaeos ex eo impugnamus, quod eorum sceptrum usque ad Messiam perdurare debuerit (Genes. 49.10) jam vero per aliquot secula omne dominium sceptre designatum amiserint; illis quod respondeant suppetat, puta suum etiamnum regnum in Oriente inveniri, ubi multis locis summam jurisdictionem obtineant: quae alibi plenius deduco, hic innuisse contentus. Haec licet ita sese habeant, tantum abest ut me ab opera revocarent, ut eo alacrius susciendum duxerim, quo fraudes illas figmenta suis locis detegerem._

For it seems from the whole work that nothing was so greatly striven after, than that he could convince that his people are found to be everywhere in great number, but also hold now the greatest academies, lordships and indeed kingdoms. From this source you will see that the Israelites are counted with great effort; and their jurisdiction and authority (especially those who are in remote places, where he hoped that his lies would not be so easily detected) are outlined with great effort. And to what end it this? Since we attack the Jews on account of this

¹¹² L’Empereur, _Epistola_.

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matter, that their sceptre should endure until the Messiah (Genes.49.10), yet already in truth, for several ages, they have lost all lordship designated by the sceptre; to those who respond with this, it is enough that he had found some kingdom existing in the East, where in many places the Jews hold the highest jurisdiction: which I draw out more fully elsewhere, here it is content just to have mentioned this. Even though this may be fitting for them, they have recalled so much missing by me from the work, so that I consider having to undertake with the same readiness, I might expose that trickery invented in their places.  

With this passage L’Empereur emphasises one of the fundamental features of the Book of Travels – Benjamin’s record of the numbers of Jews found in each place and which locations they are autonomous, particularly the communities in the Far East. Like many modern scholars, L’Empereur seeks to understand the purpose of this accounting. From his answer, L’Empereur seems to understand that Benjamin is interested in recording Jewish dominions and kingdoms which are under their own jurisdiction and authority. This prompts him to ask ‘to what end is this’? L’Empereur responds that it is to attack the Jews; he needs to prove that there are not autonomous Jewish communities in the Far East to maintain his polemic that there is no longer any Jewish kingship because the Messiah has already come. Thus, L’Empereur questions the existence of an autonomous Jewish kingdom in the Orient stating that he will expose Benjamin’s trickery. L’Empereur’s words in the Epistola already begin to indicate his motives for translating Benjamin’s narrative – as a text to be used against the Jews. If the Epistola provides insights into L’Empereur’s thoughts on travel narratives as a source and establishes his intent to attack the Jews then it is the Dissertatio and Notae which truly illuminate how he engages with Benjamin’s narrative.

L’Empereur was first and foremost a Calvinist theologian writing within both a Protestant and humanist context. In his work Halichoth Olam, as quoted by van Rooden, L’Empereur openly writes what he perceives his role to be:

that I should set the truth of Christianity in writing against the errors of the Jews...and with this intention and purpose ‘that it may happen that God will grant them a change of heart and show them the truth, and thus they may come to their senses and escape from the devil’s snare’ (II Tim. 2:25-6), or, if their obstinacy should prevent that in this age, that the Christians should at least be able to show the fame of the Saviour more clearly to them, and better defend their dogmas, and thus establish the faith more and more firmly.  

Resolute in his Protestant confession, L’Empereur did not necessarily perceive the Jews as a threat; he did, however, theologically believe them to be wrong, accusing

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113 L’Empereur, Epistola.
114 Van Rooden, p. 167.
them of choosing to reject Jesus Christ and holding on to untruths.\textsuperscript{115} L’Empereur thus saw his task as two-fold: on the one hand, to educate the Jews in the error of their ways, and on the other, to strengthen the doctrine and dogmas of the Protestant Church. For L’Empereur and Hebraists in general, this was of fundamental importance in an era of Counter-Reformation and confessional tensions.

Throughout the \textit{Dissertatio} L’Empereur repeatedly states his intention to use passages from Benjamin’s narrative to attack the Jews. Traditionally this is accomplished by using rabbinic literature to refute Judaism. Benjamin’s text, however, is a travel narrative. Consequently, L’Empereur, through the \textit{Dissertatio} and \textit{Notae}, is not refuting Judaism so much as attacking the lies which have been written by Benjamin in his account. Whilst van Rooden has also noted that L’Empereur sought to refute Benjamin’s descriptions, particularly those relating to autonomous Jewish communities in the East and references to the Ten Lost Tribes, using Genesis 49:10, this is not further discussed with supporting evidence.\textsuperscript{116} It is my intention here, then, to build on van Rooden’s initial comment and demonstrate how the \textit{Itinerary} accomplishes this.

Underpinning L’Empereur’s refutation of passages of the \textit{Book of Travels}, is indeed frequent references to Genesis 49:10, first seen in the \textit{Epistola} above. The biblical passage relates:

\begin{quote}
לא יسور שבט י יהודה ומחוקק Moms רגליו עד כי יבוא שילה ולו יקהת עמי
\end{quote}

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawmaker from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him will be a gathering of peoples.

The great medieval commentator Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi) elucidated this passage to indicate that the kingship shall not leave the Jewish people after David and, despite the destruction of the kingdom, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 5a) states that the inheritors were the Exilarchs of Babylon. Furthermore, ‘until Shiloh comes’ is a direct reference to the arrival of the Messiah and the ingathering of the Jewish exiles, heralding the Final Redemption. Whilst a source of great strength for the Jews, Genesis 49:10 has a long history within the realm of Jewish-Christian polemics.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115} Van Rooden, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{116} Van Rooden, p. 154.
L’Empereur argues on the contrary that the Jews have lost the sceptre and no longer have any autonomy. This is first expressed in the Epistola:

*quod eorum sceptrum Usque ad Messiam perdurare debuerit (Genes.49.10.) jam vero per aliquot secula omne dominium sceptre designatum amiserint*

that their sceptre should endure until the Messiah (Genes.49.10), yet already in truth, for several ages, they have lost all lordship designated by the sceptre.\(^{118}\)

And yet, L’Empereur continues, the Jews maintain that there are autonomous Jewish kingdoms in the Far East. These thoughts are echoed in the Dissertatio:

*Tempore Messiae demum sceptrum ac gloriam expectant; attamen sceptrum & gloriam in comment. ad Genes.49. caput, alisque eorum scriptis, praecedere videas. [Greek] Hanc absurditatem qui sequuntur, invenit cum aliis Benjamin: adeo ut in mappis quibusdam geographicis Israelites procul in Oriente certus hujusmodi locus assignetur*

Whilst they await the sceptre and glory in the time of the Messiah, nevertheless you should see that the sceptre and the glory come first, as is nevertheless written in the commentary Genesis chapter 49 and in other writings of theirs. [Greek] Benjamin and others invented this absurdity [which the Jews] follow: therefore, as in the maps by certain Israelite geographers, a certain place of this kind is assigned in the East.\(^{119}\)

L’Empereur points out that Jewish geographers include the existence of an autonomous Jewish kingdom in the Far East. This is absurd for L’Empereur who cites that this is impossible as the sceptre of Judah (ie. Jewish kingship) has been lost to the Jews as the messiah, Jesus Christ, has already come. According to L’Empereur these passages in Benjamin’s account are fabricated descriptions. As will be seen in the Notae below, L’Empereur uses these passages to support his refutation of the narrative. Whilst space does not allow for a full examination of the Dissertatio, a brief summary of its contents is of value. L’Empereur opens with a broad sketch of Benjamin and his travels – where he travelled from and to and in which year he returned. L’Empereur then engages in a discussion of Benjamin’s description of the number of Jews living in Baghdad and how Benjamin presents life in Baghdad to be better than that of Jews living in Germany and Spain. The Dissertatio then appears to depart from Benjamin’s text and presents Abraham Farissol’s work *Orchoth Olam* and his recounting of the Portuguese’s sailing around Cape Verde to the Far East and the desert of Chabor. L’Empereur continues by noting a quote from Hosea 3:4 which tells of the nation of Israel’s exile and their subjugation under the dominion of Gentile kings but that the Jews ‘Messiae demum sceptrum ac gloriam expectant’ (anticipate the sceptre and

\(^{118}\) L’Empereur, *Epistola*.

\(^{119}\) L’Empereur, *Dissertatio*. 

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glory in the time of the Messiah). There then follows a lengthy debate regarding the exact distance of a parasang (one of Benjamin’s many ways to reckon distances between places) and the measurement of cubits. L’Empereur concludes the Dissertatio with the general assertion that Benjamin of Tudela advanced his people’s situation and condition which the reader might wish to investigate, but that if the text is vague at points, to not stop since L’Empereur will guide the reader.

The language of the Dissertatio reinforces L’Empereur’s intentions of using the Book of Travels to counter not only the descriptions recorded in the narrative but also the Jews themselves:

\[ \text{Nec omnia ista se vidisse testatur Benjamin; sed multa narrat tantum: & cum libri praefatio...multa quae Benjamin narrat ab ipso tantum audita fuisse, testantur. Verum ut fingit Benjamin, ita hujus figmenta auget Isaac f. Aramae: idque in eum finem ut nobis extorqueant e manibus telum, quo ipsos petimus e cap.49.v.10 Gen.} \]

Benjamin attests that he had not seen all of these things, but just wrote many things and with the preface of the book, many things bear witness that Benjamin had just heard them said to him. As Benjamin invents, so Isaac son of Arma increases these fictions: and in the end, so that they may tear away from our hands the weapon with which we attack them from Genesis 49:10.

Further in the Dissertatio, L’Empereur writes that the opinions of the erudite sometimes must be contested, ‘quidem eruditissimorum virorum opiniones saepe refellendas’ (indeed the most learned of men’s opinions often must be refuted). Such quotations clearly express L’Empereur’s opinion as to the veracity of the account and his role vis-à-vis the text. In other words, one must not accept Benjamin as a complete authority considering that he has invented fictions (similar language is employed in the Epistola, as seen above, when L’Empereur states that he will expose Benjamin’s ‘trickery’). Such fictions, then, must be refuted, according to L’Empereur, even if the person espousing them is a learned man. Whilst these themes are overtly stated in general terms in the Epistola and Dissertatio, it is within the Notae that L’Empereur accomplishes this purpose.

An entire study could be made of L’Empereur’s Notae to the Itinerary. Comprised of a little over 120 notes, there initially seems to be little rhyme or reason as to what L’Empereur has commented on. Closer examination, however, reveals that the Notae can broadly be divided into three main categories: 1) Places – where L’Empereur may explain the origins of a city, its name, a city’s size, or simply praise

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120 L’Empereur, Dissertatio.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
the city in question; 2) Words or terminologies which L’Empereur has further expounded on, many of which are shaped by philology; and 3) passages which L’Empereur highlights to counter Benjamin’s text. It is, of course, not possible to outline each note in detail. Rather, examples from the second and third categories will be discussed to gain greater insight into what L’Empereur chose to remark on. Furthermore, it will be seen that an underlying element of the Notae also reveals links between the Hebrew editions and Montano’s translation.

To support his critical notes, L’Empereur has drawn on a wide array of sources, biblical, classical, medieval and contemporary. The most frequently cited classical authors include Ptolemy’s *Geographia* and Josephus, although Pliny, Homer, Herodotus and Livy are also used. Of his contemporaries, L’Empereur quotes Georg Fabricius, Antonius Thysius the Younger, Scaliger and Buxtorf. The presence of Arabic in the notes is the result of L’Empereur’s heavy use of *Geographus Nubiensis* (the Nubian Geographer), identified as al-Idrisi (c.1100-65). Born in Morocco and educated at Cordoba, al-Idrisi worked in Palermo at the court of Roger II and is contemporary with Benjamin of Tudela. A second Islamic work, entitled *Historia Saracenica* (History of the Saracens), by the author known as known as Georgio Elmacino is also used, albeit in a Latin translation from 1625. The largest body of texts L’Empereur quotes from, however, is from among rabbinic literature. Nine Talmudic tractates are used (predominately the Babylonian, but with some instances of the Jerusalem Talmud). A further sixteen Jewish authors are also used, such as brothers David and Moses Kimchi, Rashi, Maimonides, Abarbanel, Abraham Zacuto, Joseph Caro, Abraham Farissol, David Gans and Moses Alshich. In many ways, the Notae are a demonstration of L’Empereur’s academic inclinations – the study of the Bible, philology, rabbinic literature and any source which can help clarify a text to reach an ultimate level of truth. L’Empereur did not just approach the *Book of Travels* as a Hebraist in his overall aims of refuting Judaism, but as a humanist intent on correcting Benjamin’s inaccuracies.

Benjamin’s recording of rabbis’ names is at the core of the *Book of Travels*. It is not surprising, then, that L’Empereur has included a few notes on rabbinic names.


124 The tractates used by L’Empereur are: Horayot, Brachot, Bava Basara, Bava Metzi, Shabbat, Makkot, Avedah Zarah, Middot and Sanhedrin.

125 Many of these authors have quoted Benjamin of Tudela in their own writings of which Abarbanel, Zacuto and Farissol are detailed in Chapter 4.
Two examples, which follow each other, come from the city of Lunel. Beginning with the second example, this is a biographical note of Rabbi Shlomo ha'kohen, ‘R. Selmo sacerdos’ (Solomon the Priest) in which L’Empereur relates that this rabbi died in 1105 and extols his great learning of Scripture and Talmud. Pertinent here, however, is the final line of the note which states:

*Caeterum mortis tempus evincit, Benjaminem dum Judaeorum magistros aliosque in istis civilitibus, quas describit, commemorat, non tantum suo tempore viventes recensere; sed eos quandoque qui obierant*

The time of death of others makes clear that, when Benjamin commemorates themselves and others in those cities which he describes, he does not just make a census.126

L’Empereur thus provides his thoughts on the ubiquitous presence of rabbis’ names throughout the narrative, whilst simultaneously accounting for Benjamin’s quotation of the numbers of Jews in each place. Although he states that Benjamin was making a census, L’Empereur’s writings do not provide any further indication of what he believes this census may have been for.

The first note pertains to a qualifying adjective in Rabbi Samuel’s name. L’Empereur’s Hebrew-Latin text reads ‘[יומא]יומא שמעון – R. Samuel praelector’ (Rabbi Samuel the chazzan, or reciter). The opening line of the L’Empereur’s note reads:

*In edition Constant. legitur זקן senex: sed melius Brisgoae editus codex חזן: nam ut sequentium epithet, sunt officiorum nomina; pariter & hic officio ab aliis ejusdem nominis distinctus fuit*

In the Constantinople edition it reads “elder”: yet the better Breisgau book published “reciter”: for as the following epithets are the names of offices, and this office was equally distinguished from others by its own name.127

The note continues with evidence from the Talmud, Rashi, Joseph Caro and Maimonides outlining the differences between the two offices where a *senex* is a learned man who *populo Scripturam sacram praelegat* (reads out sacred Scripture to the people) and a “reciter” is the *Concionator in synagoga* (the song leader in the synagogue).128 Significant here is the discrepancy between the two printed editions. L’Empereur has done his research, checking four texts in order to explore the distinction between elder and recite, in order to make an informed judgement as to which edition to follow. As stated in Chapter 3 the 1583 Breisgau edition is a near-identical copy of the 1543 Constantinople edition, yet the texts diverge in this instance. Comparison with the manuscripts reveals that all read יומא שמעון, as does Usque’s

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126 L’Empereur, *Notae*, p. 150.
1556 edition. Montano’s *Itinerarium* also translates ‘Samuel senex’. How this change came about in the Froben-Zifroni edition is not known. L’Empereur has, however, chosen to use יַּרְנָו in his translation.

As discussed above, L’Empereur’s prefatory writings reveal that his intention was to expose lies and inaccuracies in the *Book of Travels*. A number of Notae support this aim and form the third thematic category, in which L’Empereur sought to refute Benjamin’s account, as outlined above. The first example of L’Empereur highlighting an error is found in Benjamin’s description of Rome where he relates that ‘There is the palace of the king Tarmal Gilsin, and there is within the palace 365 palaces like the days of the sun’. L’Empereur translates this as:

*Adhaec palatium regis, regis inquam Galbini: in cujus palatio trecentae & sexaginta aulae, quae dierum anni numerum aequant*

Moreover the palace of the king, of the king, I say, of Galbinus: in whose palace are 360 aulae, which equal the number of days in the year.

L’Empereur’s accompanying note is two-fold. The first part is a philological explanation of his chosen spelling of Galbinus. The second half of the note directly relates to Benjamin’s claim that the palace contains 360 aulae. On this, L’Empereur questions if Benjamin actually saw this palace:

*At palatium illud quod trecenta & sexaginta palatia in se complecteretur, & tria milliaria pateret, quis vidit praeter hunc Benjaminem, vel potius quis se vidisse scripsit?*

Yet that palace, which encompassed 360 palaces within it, and extended across three miles, who saw [it] except this Benjamin, or rather who wrote that he had seen it?

L’Empereur does not provide an answer and simply continues with how the number of 360 came to be calculated for the days of the year. The note concludes with another question, asking who has the time to examine everything related to the Jews:

*Sed quis omnes Judaicas nugas recenseat?*

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129 Montano, p. 16.
130 The Notae contain another instance where it is clear that the London manuscript was not used by Soncino to print the 1543 edition and has therefore not been transmitted from the Hebrew to Latin world. L’Empereur has included the city of Shunam in his translation which is not part of the London text. L’Empereur, Notae, p. 178.
131 The Rome and Jerusalem manuscripts diverge from the London text, with Rome reading ג₪ מאת שנה (366) and the Jerusalem manuscript stating שלש מאות שנה (360). Contrary to the London manuscript, Rome and Jerusalem agree and write שנה instead of שנה (sun).
132 L’Empereur, Notae, p. 156. Interestingly, the text agrees with that of the Jerusalem manuscript.
133 Adler identifies the palace as the Colosseum, English part, p. 6.
134 L’Empereur, Notae, p. 156.
Yet who can examine every nonsense relating to the Jews?\textsuperscript{135}

Both questions in the note are rhetorical. They reveal to the reader that L’Empereur is not convinced that all of Benjamin’s descriptions are an eye-witness account (also addressed in the \textit{Epistola} and \textit{Dissertatio}). In the instances where L’Empereur does not believe the account, the description is dismissed as \textit{nuga} (nonsense). The second question is also telling and suggests that there is so much nonsense relating to the Jews that it is impossible to engage with all such occurrences. Although L’Empereur writes more broadly here, subsequent \textit{Notae} point out further passages of \textit{nuga} in the \textit{Itinerary}.

A near identical note to the above is seen in the description of Abydos and its location in relation to the Propontis (the modern Sea of Marmara). Benjamin writes ‘From there it is a three day sea-journey to Abydos which sits on the arm of the sea. It is a journey of five days between the mountains until the great city of Constantinople’.\textsuperscript{136} On the phrase ‘between the mountains’ L’Empereur states his disbelief at this claim:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Quis has nugas serat? Propontis Constantinopolin & Abydum interjacet, lacus vel mare aliquod: noster inter montes eò tendi persuadere conatur. Transmittenda navibus Propontis; non verò terrestri itinere inter montes eò tenditur. Sed loca, locorumque distantias, \& circumstantias itinerum ex auditu quoque referre videtur; nisi ipse etiam finxerit. Quare singulis refutandiis non immorabor.}
\end{quote}

Who can speak of such nonsense? The Propontis lies between Constantinople and Abydos, a lake or some sort of sea: our [author] tries to persuade that it extends between the mountains. The Propontis must be crossed by ship; it is not true that it extends between the mountains with a journey on land. But he seems to report places and distances of places and circumstances of a journey also from hearsay, unless he just made it up himself. Wherefore, I shall not delay to refute each one.\textsuperscript{137}

Once again, L’Empereur has highlighted a section of Benjamin’s text and labelled it \textit{nugas}. Similar to the note above, L’Empereur places this in the context of how Benjamin came to record his journey – whether through first-hand experience, second-hand information or invention. Moreover, the end of this note reiterates L’Empereur’s overall aim to refute Benjamin’s nonsense and other erroneous passages.

A third example relates to the description of China where he describes that when ships become stuck in Sea of Nikpa, the sailors sew themselves into skins with knives and throw themselves overboard, where they are seized by a gryphon and taken

\begin{footnotes}
\item[Ibid.\textsuperscript{135}]
\item[\textsuperscript{136}]usaha ימי דרכ יאבדו يوسפת על דרך הים המחורח חמש ימים ביניו וה cámara הוא מיתר
\item[\textsuperscript{137}]L’Empereur, \textit{Notae}, p. 163.
\end{footnotes}
to dry land. The sailors then cut themselves out of the skins and slay the griffin.\textsuperscript{138} L’Empeurer comments that this entire episode is rubbish:


Within skins] Such a foul (ie. rubbish) story expresses, the cleverness of Benjamin to us, well enough and more….Thus from this it may be possible to observe how much faith he is worthy of in other things. It is therefore not in the case that R’Isaac, son of Arma, brings [Benjamin’s] authority to Gen 49:10, where with this argument thus dismissed he strives hard to prove his case.\textsuperscript{139}

L’Empereur clearly expresses his incredulity in this note. Whilst \textit{nugae} is replaced by \textit{putida fabula} (foul story) the meanings are synonymous. Here the implication is that Benjamin is not successful in proving his case. More important is that L’Empereur links Benjamin’s nonsense to ‘cleverness’; in other words, Benjamin’s fabrications are inherent in his personality. Although applied specifically to Benjamin, the subtext is that it is not just the \textit{Book of Travels} which contains inventions but other Jewish writings as well. Extrapolated further, L’Empereur does not just label Benjamin a liar but all Jews which is a natural characteristic for them. This, then, is the underlying message which L’Empereur conveys to readers of the \textit{Itinerary}.\textsuperscript{140}

Baghdad equally captured L’Empereur’s attention. Some of the notes pertain to the \textit{yeshivot} and to the Exilarch, others focus on the caliphate. Within the latter category, L’Empereur questions why Benjamin, when in Baghdad, did not name the Caliph at the time:

\textit{Unde clarius apparat, quod jam in praecedentibus monui, Benjaminem ists omnibus locis non fuissæ, quæ tamen se lustrasse scribit. Nam si Bagdadi fuit, qui Abbasidæ illius, qui tum Calipha erat, nomen ignorare potuit? Sane si quisquam ea in urbe innotuit, Calipha potissimum. Ex his \& similibus lectores conjiciant, an fide mille mereatur, quum de gente sua passim ea commemorat, quæ in eum finem ex cogitata, ut 10. c.49 Geneseos detorqueatur, meritò quis suspicetur

It appears more clearly, as I have already warned in the preceding paragraphs, that Benjamin has not visited all of the places himself which he writes that he traversed. For, if he was in Baghdad then which of those Abbasids was then the caliph whose name he was able to ignore?\textsuperscript{139}

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\textsuperscript{138} Abel bin Adam lehmod ha'adam lemod ha' adamant non obstiperscat? (Who is not struck down by such stupidity?)’ See L’Empereur, \textit{Notae}, p. 159.

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Certainly if anyone had become known to them in that city [it would] especially be the caliph. From these and similar, readers can conclude whether he deserves credit, since he speaks about his people everywhere, which he has thought up [namely] that he can distort [Gen 49:10] and one may rightly mistrust [him].

Similar to earlier Notae L’Empereur again expresses his doubt that Benjamin travelled to all of the places recorded in the narrative. As proof, he cites Baghdad and the fame of the Abbasid caliphate believing it impossible that a traveller would not record the name of the caliph as it was known throughout the Islamic world. L’Empereur states that he is simply presenting the evidence and leaves it to readers of the Itinerary to come to their own conclusions on the matter of Benjamin’s credibility. L’Empereur, of course, is not impartial and his intention (which impacted how he chose to interpret the text) is to highlight the flaws in the Book of Travels to attack the Jews.

The above Notae demonstrate that L’Empereur did not always judge the Book of Travels’ descriptions to be credible. These sections are labelled as nuga and are summarily dismissed. There are, however, other Notae where L’Empereur believes Benjamin to have erred; these are not, however, considered nuga, rather, L’Empereur seeks to correct Benjamin’s account. One example relates to the description of Jerusalem. On the words aedes sancta (ancient temple) where Benjamin records the names of the four gates in Jerusalem – the gates of Abraham, of David, of Zion, and of Jehoshaphat – (facing our ancient Temple, now called Templum Domini), L’Empereur states that Benjamin has erred:

Vehementer errat cum Templum sepulchri Domini nostri eo loco collocate. Ubi Aedes sancta quondamstructa fuit. Nam templum illud ad Helena in Calvariae monte, loco istius sanctis Veneris ad Adriano constrecti

He [Benjamin] errs vehemently when he places the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord in that place where the Ancient Temple was once built. For that temple was built by Helen on Golgotha [lit. skull mountain] in the place of that [temple] of Venus built by Hadrian.

L’Empereur takes issue with Benjamin’s statement that the Holy Sepulchre was built on the site of the ancient temple of the Jews. The note then supplies the correct information and asserts that the ancient temple was some distance away.

141 L’Empereur, Notae, p. 186.
142 A second example relates to the city of Shunam, mentioned earlier for its absence in the London manuscript. See L’Empereur, Notae, p. 178.
143 "ושחרשו ארבעה שערים ארבעה שערים אלברם ושער דוד ושער ציון ושער גושפת הוא שער יהושפת לפני בית המקדש הוא שער בית המקדש ששה באתי קדם גליים שניים וארבעים מטרים"
144 L’Empereur, Notae, p. 173.
145 The Temple of Venus was built by Hadrian on the site of Golgotha and was destroyed by the Byzantines to build the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 326. For a brief overview of Aelia Capitoline
L’Empereur subsequently quotes Georgio Elmacino’s *History of the Saracens* which includes further details of the history of the site. L’Empereur thus displays no misgivings in seeking to challenge Benjamin when he perceives the narrative to be inaccurate.

As seen earlier, Benjamin’s claim of autonomous Jewish kingdoms captured L’Empereur’s attention. It is not surprising then that these passages feature heavily in the *Notae* in which L’Empereur believes Benjamin to have erred. From the city of Tanai to the land of Khuzistan, L’Empereur offers explanations for the presence of the Ten Lost Tribes and attempts to make sense of Benjamin’s descriptions of the Tigris and river Gozan. To highlight one example, on Kheibar, Benjamin states: ‘They say that the men of Kheibar belong to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh’. Similar to when L’Empereur used a number of sources to understand the difference between ‘elder’ and ‘reciter’, here too L’Empereur explores this statement further. To do so, L’Empereur cites Eldad Ha’Dani (the Danite), a narrative from the ninth century of a Jewish traveller from North Africa who claimed to be from the lost tribe of Dan:

> Attamen Eldad Danita, in suo libello de tribulis Israëlis, secus statuit: nam Gadem conjungit cum Naphthali & Aschere...Rubenam autem alibi apud Zebulonem collocat

Nevertheless, Eldad ha’Dani, in his small book on the tribes of Israel, thought differently: for he connected Gad with Naphthali and Asher...but he places Reuben near Zebulun elsewhere.

In other words, the two accounts contradict; whereas Eldad claims that Gad, Naphthali and Asher live in one place and Reuben and Zebulun in another, Benjamin records Gad living with Reuben and half of Manasseh. L’Empereur, however, does not attempt to reconcile this disagreement and merely points to their disagreement:

> Inter se non convenient; & tamen uterque loca à se lustrate scribit. Fabulatores istos magis congruere decebat

They do not agree with each other; and yet each writes of places which he himself toured. It was fitting that such liars should agree more.

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146 For Eldad’s account see Abraham Epstein, *Eldad ha-Dani: sipurav ve-hilkotav* (Bratislava: Avraham Alkala’i, 1891). See also Cooper, ‘Conceptualizing Diaspora’, pp. 112-15, and Jacobs, *Reorienting the East*, pp. 43-4. In using Eldad ha’Dani, L’Empereur has not only revealed that the account was available in the early modern period among Christian scholars but also that some credibility was attached to the ninth-century account, which has since been questioned in modern scholarship. The text of Eldad ha’Dani is bound with the *Book of Travels* in the London and Rome manuscripts.


One can almost read this note with a tone of scepticism – how it is that two accounts, both of which claim to be first-hand can completely contradict one another. Although the passage is not explicitly labelled erroneous, L’Empereur makes sense of the contradiction by explaining that both Benjamin and Eldad are liars. For L’Empereur, discrepancies exist because both have invented some of the descriptions which, in turn, means that errors exist in the narratives.

A second note on the Ten Lost Tribes also highlights an error made by Benjamin. In the mountains of Naisabur, Benjamin states ‘four of the tribes from Israel live in the mountains of Naisabur, the tribes of Dan, Zebulun, Asher and Naphtali, who were part of the first exile of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, as it is written “And he put them in Halah and in Habor by the river Gozan and in the city of the Medes”’.\(^{150}\) L’Empereur’s Hebrew text of the embedded quote reads: ‘ויגלם בלחלה וחבור והרי גוזן ‘ויגלם בלחלה וחבור והרי מדיה. In the corresponding note, L’Empereur quotes a German scholar’s observation on the inclusion of the Hebrew letter lamed \([\lambda]\) to the word בלחלה (Halah):

*Eruditissimus Schikardus rectè in Taarich observat, Benjaminem omninò errare, quam voci בלחלה præponendo literam ב radix facit lamed; nec montes Mediae, sed urbes Mediae scribendum: idque ex collatione 2 Reg.17.6*

The most erudite [Wilhelm] Schickard observes correctly in Taarich that Benjamin is entirely in error when he placed a radical lamed \([\lambda]\) before the letter ב [beit]; nor is it *the mountains of the Medes* but should be written *cities of the Medes*; and [this all comes] from the comparison with 2 Reg.17.6.\(^{152}\)

Wilhelm Schickard was a German contemporary of L’Empereur and professor of Hebrew at the University of Tübingen.\(^{153}\) At some point, the two scholars must have discussed the *Book of Travels* and Schickard drew L’Empereur’s attention to the additional lamed \([\lambda]\) in the city of הלחלה (Halah), which renders it as לחה given in Latin as *Lahlah*. L’Empereur finds Benjamin culpable for this error. This may, however, not be the case. The additional lamed \([\lambda]\) is present in both the 1543 and 1583 Hebrew editions – the texts used for L’Empereur’s translation. Yet, it is not present in the

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150 יש בריה, ניבorer א르בעה שבטים מישראל שבעת דן שבעת זבולון שבעת אשר שבעת נפתלי, הגלות היאשו שנהלה. Adler has identified the biblical quote as 2 Kings 18:11.
153 For a brief biography see http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Schickard.html [accessed 2 August 2015]. Inadvertently, we are introduced to another Christian reader of the *Book of Travels*. 
manuscripts. There is, therefore, no definitive way to know if Benjamin made the error or if it was an error in the transmission process. Interestingly, L’Empereur addresses the possibility of such mistakes arising in his *Dissertatio*, where he states that ‘scribes are not without their fault and numbers in places are incorrect or place names exchanged’. Why he blames Benjamin in this instance is not known.

The same note also enlightens the reader as to why Benjamin includes the Ten Lost Tribes in the *Book of Travels*. According to L’Empereur it is to prove that some Jewish communities have retained their autonomy:

> Caeterum quae noster de lato Israēlitarum dominio in his montibus, cum p.98 tum 100 disserit, praecedentibus sunt similia: quibus hoc operam dat, ut genti suae sceptrum nondum ablatum fuisse persuadeat.

Moreover our [author] examines the rest concerning the extensive dominion of the Israelites in these mountains, not only on page 98 but also on page 100, they are similar with the preceding: he gives the work to anyone, so that he may convince that the sceptre has not yet been removed from his people. Benjamin indeed makes multiple mention of the Ten Lost Tribes, often in relation to their location. According to L’Empereur, the purpose of this is to not only demonstrate their continued existence but to also show that they live under their own dominion. For Benjamin’s readership, and the Jewish nation on the whole, this would prove that Genesis 49:10 has not been negated and that the sceptre remains with Judah, hence the Messiah cannot yet have come. It is this claim that L’Empereur seeks to invalidate in the *Epistola, Dissertatio* and *Notae*.

Another note examines Benjamin’s references to the river Gozan in an attempt to identify it and its precise location. Based on evidence from the *Book of Travels*, L’Empereur first links the Gozan with the river Oxis in Persia. The note continues by identifying the Gozan with the Sambatyon:

> Caeterum Gozan quibusdam cum Sabbathico fluvio idem habetur: nam quemadmodum noster ad illum fluvium multorum Israēlitarum dominium insequentibus collocat; sic isto fluvio ipsos arceti quominus ad alias regiones transeant, affirmant Judæi. Eldad Danita libro in superioribus citato, easdem tribus quas Paulo post noster ad flumen Gozan habitare testatur, ad Sabbationem ponti

By certain others the Gozan is considered the same as the river Sambatyon: for since he [Benjamin] places our river near the dominion of many Jews, in the following; thus the Jews assert one can cross that river to pass through to other nearby regions: Eldad ha’Dani, in the

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154 ‘Licet non diffitear, quin scribarum culpa ac incuria numeri forte locis quibusdam corrupti fuerint, vel locorum nomina permutata’. L’Empereur, *Dissertatio*.

book cited above, places our tribes to dwell near the river Sambatyon, near the same river Gozan a little bit further on than our [author].\textsuperscript{156}

L’Empereur once again compares Benjamin’s account with that of Eldad ha’Dani to show that the Gozan is actually the river Sambatyon. The travellers, however, appear to disagree on which side of the river the Ten Lost Tribes actually dwell.\textsuperscript{157} Nevertheless, only in the next note pertaining to the mountains of Naisabur does L’Empereur conclude and pronounce: ‘\textit{Verum ipsi Gozan est Ganges} (For the Gozan, in truth, is the Ganges [River])’.\textsuperscript{158} The same note further details that the Lost Tribes are segregated because of the river:

\textit{Sensus ergo est, quatuor istas tribus ita ab aliis hominibus segregari}

Therefore, it is thought that these four tribes are thus segregated from other men.\textsuperscript{159}

Quoting Eldad ha’Dani, the Jerusalem Talmud and Abraham Farissol, L’Empereur expounds that they are segregated because the river hinders access to the Tribes. This further highlights the tribes’ inaccessibility, impeding would-be visitors from attempting to search for their exact location. Consequently, the segregation of the Lost Tribes allows them to dwell undisturbed within their autonomous communities. In a work such as the \textit{Book of Travels}, the Lost Tribes are an important theme in Benjamin’s descriptions of the Far East as their continued existence is a symbol of hope for the diasporic Jews, sustaining the belief that the Jews still possess the sceptre of Judah and kingship. These passages are of equal importance for L’Empereur and his understanding of the narrative; he interpreted Benjamin’s descriptions in a polemical light. As understood by L’Empereur, the narrative’s inclusion of the Far East and the Ten Lost tribes are written to prove the truth of Gen 49:10 – that the sceptre had not left the Jewish people. If L’Empereur could prove that Benjamin invented the descriptions, he could then argue that that the Lost Tribes do not exist thus supporting his theological argument that Christianity has inherited the sceptre of Judah.

All of these examples, where L’Empereur has labelled sections of Benjamin’s narrative either as nonsense or erroneous have the same purpose – to demonstrate that

\textsuperscript{156} L’Empereur, \textit{Notae}, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{157} This idea that the Ten Lost Tribes existed beyond the Sambatyon River is mentioned throughout rabbinic literature, as well as in Josephus and became accepted throughout the Jewish Diaspora. See \textit{Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences and Culture}, ed. M. Avrum Ehrlich (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2009), pp. 82-83 and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, \textit{The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
\textsuperscript{159} L’Empereur, \textit{Notae}, p. 206.
not all of the passages can simply be accepted as fact, because the information itself is incorrect or because what is recorded has been fabricated. L’Empereur, in turn, uses these inaccuracies to attack the Jews on the whole. If a travel narrative can propagate such inventions, other Jewish writings must also contain lies. This remains the overarching message which L’Empereur conveys to readers of the Itinerary through his Notae.

Undoubtedly, L’Empereur produced the Itinerary in his role as a Christian scholar and polemicist against the Jews. Hebraists were devout Christians, often theologians, who were deeply interested in all-things Jewish to reinforce their own beliefs. L’Empereur used his knowledge of Hebrew and expertise in rabbinic literature to refute Judaism. In his opinion, it was Jewish attachment to rabbinic literature (here meaning the Talmud) which allowed the Jews to continue to believe in untruths and reject Christ. This medieval motif was perpetuated by Buxtorf in his De abreviaturis and maintained by L’Empereur. As van Rooden contends, L’Empereur constructed a theological argument, on the basis of Genesis 49:10, to counter passages of Benjamin’s narrative. Although L’Empereur’s overall aims are introduced in the Epistola and Dissertatio, it is within the Notae that his attack is most evident to demonstrate the lies that can be perpetuated by the Jews. Whilst Benjamin offered hope to the Jewish diaspora with his descriptions of autonomous Jewish communities, L’Empereur concluded that these were fabrications attesting to the fact that kingship had not passed from Jews to Christians. It is interesting to note, however, that L’Empereur displays a degree of respect for Benjamin, stated indirectly when he writes: ‘even the most learned of men’s opinions often must be refuted’. In this way, L’Empereur fits neatly with the traditional Christian polemic that the Jews, despite their great learning continued to hold onto false beliefs. The Itinerary upholds this by demonstrating that Jewish works were useful to remind Christians (read Protestants) of their fortune in maintaining the correct beliefs.

In determining how L’Empereur came to translate, interpret and use the Book of Travels as a polemical text against the Jews, the question of the Itinerary’s intended audience must also be explored. Who was L’Empereur’s readership which he

160 McKane, p. 73.
161 Van Rooden, p. 92.
162 Van Rooden, p. 154.
163 ‘...quidem eruditissimorum virorum opiniones saepe refellendas’. L’Empereur, Dissertatio.
164 Van Rooden, p. 172.
addressed in the *Dissertatio ad lectorem* and *Notae*? This can partially be answered by examining the printer of the *Itinerary*, the Elsevier Press. The symbiotic relationship between scholars, printer-publishers and universities has already been touched on in relation to Plantin’s appointment as the official university printer in Antwerp. This tripartite relationship was also a factor in the realisation of the 1633 edition; similar to how Montano printed all his works with Plantin, so too did L’Empereur print his works with the official university printers at Leiden, the famous Elsevier printing dynasty.

The progenitor of the press was Lodewijk (Louis) Elsevier, born in Louvain c.1546 to Hans Louvain, a printer by trade. Raised in the shadow of the University of Louvain and its humanist scholarship, Louis began his career as a bookbinder. Louis then moved to Antwerp c.1565 and worked for Plantin as a bookbinder. Political and religious upheaval in the Netherlands forced the Elseviers to migrate first to Liège, then Wesel and Douai before finally settling in Leiden in 1579/80. It was in Leiden that Louis left bookbinding to establish a printing press. The Elseviers’ prime location, living in a house adjacent to the university, allowed Louis to specialise in academic texts. In addition to printing the works of the Leiden professors, the Elseviers printed other textbooks required by the university. The fact that 96% of what Louis printed was in Latin further demonstrates that the Elseviers specialised in scholarly printing. According to David W. Davies the majority of books published at the press falls into four categories: religion and theology, law and politics, classics and French plays and *belles lettres*. Exploiting the proximity to the university, the Elseviers were also booksellers, selling texts to students and professors acquired at the Frankfurt Bookfair and through links established by Louis with the Paris book trade.

Louis died in 1617 and was succeeded by his grandson Isaac (1596-1651), who not only continued, but expanded the printing house. The most significant shift came when Isaac was appointed official printer to the University of Leiden in 1620. Further opportunities to expand came when Isaac purchased Hebrew type from the

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167 Davies, p. 142.
168 Davies, pp. 12 and 21-25.
169 Davies, p. 48.
widow of Thomas Erpenius in 1620, who in turn had acquired it from the Plantin Press.\textsuperscript{170} Isaac left the printing business in 1626, transferring the press to his uncle Bonaventura (1583-1652) and his brother Abraham (1592-1652). The partnership between Bonaventura and Abraham cemented the success of the Elseviers, balancing Bonaventura’s business acumen with Abraham’s direct involvement with the press. The height of the press also coincided with, and was certainly helped, by the new political and religious stability in the Netherlands (which had earlier forced the family to flee), leading to an economic boom.\textsuperscript{171}

In 1626 Bonaventura and Abraham were reappointed official university printers. Part of the contract included the agreement to maintain oriental printing and improve publications to increase the reputation of the university. The proliferation of the press during these years is impressive, printing an average of 18 works a year.\textsuperscript{172} Moreover, between 1626 and 1642 the Elseviers printed 13 books in Hebrew and Oriental languages for students studying in Leiden.\textsuperscript{173} The Elseviers’ co-operation with the university was a mutually beneficial relationship: the press provided the facility for Leiden’s academics to publish their works, by which scholars endeavoured to become known within the Republic of Letters. Those who were able to make a name for themselves helped raise the profile of the university. In turn, the Elseviers received tax breaks and stipends to employ proof-readers from the university.\textsuperscript{174}

As a professor at the University of Leiden, L’Empereur published around ten works between 1628 and 1637 at the Elsevier Press. Included in this list are Latin translations of the Talmud, such as Tractate Middot (1630) and Halichoth Olam, or Keys to the Talmud (1634), alongside works of Jewish commentaries on the prophets, like D. Isaaci Abrabanielis & R. Mosis Alschechi Comment. in Esaiae prophetiam 30 (1631). L’Empereur, according to van Rooden, produced rabbinic works to ‘[unlock] a literature which had hitherto only been accessible to specialists’ and could therefore be used to help teach rabbinic literature.\textsuperscript{175} These editions, then, were intended for fellow academics to use as teaching aids. Consequently, students at Leiden would purchase

\textsuperscript{170} Fuks and Fuks-Mansfield, 1, p. 12. It is interesting to note the numerous times in which the Plantin and Elsevier Press’ paths crossed.
\textsuperscript{171} Davies, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{172} Davies, pp. 58-59.
\textsuperscript{173} Fukses and Fuks-Mansfield, 1, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{174} Davies, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{175} Van Rooden, pp. 107-10.
them as textbooks. L’Empereur’s publications then had a dual audience, contemporary academics on the one hand, and university students on the other.

The *Itinerary* was not just used as a textbook. It was also a critical edition of a text which engaged in Jewish-Christian polemics, and presented Benjamin as a polemicist. As such, the text could be used by other Christian scholars in other works which might seek to refute Judaism. This is best reflected in the Index found at the end of the *Itinerary*. Although dominated by people and places, under the letter ‘E’ are listed all instances of ‘Error’ found within the text. The Index thus facilitates easy navigation to the erroneous passages. Whilst there is more evidence of direct use of Montano’s *Itinerarium* (suggesting that further research is needed into specific reception examples of the *Itinerary*), L’Empereur’s edition, with its agenda of refutation of Judaism would not have gone unread. Scholars would have sought out the text to incorporate into their own writings, perhaps using the index to look up specific passages, such as the abovementioned ‘Error’. The fact that it was reprinted in 1636 is a further indication of the demand for the edition.

Part of the *Itinerary*’s popularity was also due to its unique facing-page translation. L’Empereur was the first Christian scholar to produce bilingual Hebrew-Latin editions, a new trend which developed within the humanist movement for greater philological investigation. Where Montano produced his Latin translation because only a small minority of scholars could read Hebrew, L’Empereur expected his readers to engage with the original language but through the lens of his *Notae*. The 1633 edition, therefore, surpasses its predecessor in layout. For students this would have been advantageous, particularly for language tuition, whilst academics would have been able to follow the translation process. The size of the book is equally important having been printed in the Elseviers’ famous duodecimo format (240mm). The diminutive size of the *Itinerary* made it portable thereby appealing to academics and students alike. By 1633, L’Empereur was already a recognised authority of rabbinic literature and his works generated demand among fellow Protestant scholars. Still, the audience for such a work remained small. Nevertheless, L’Empereur’s translation was reprinted in 1636, albeit without the Hebrew text. The volume, edited by George Calixtus and his son Friedrich Ulrich and printed by H. Mullerus in Helmstedt,

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176 L’Empereur, *Index*.
178 Van Rooden, pp. 130-31.
provided readers with both Montano’s Latin and L’Empereur’s Latin of the Book of Travels.

In its Latin transmission the Book of Travels was completely reconceptualised by Christian scholars. This chapter has examined that transmission from a Hebrew to a Latin text to show how, through a sharing of knowledge by like-minded men the Book of Travels, now known in Latin as the Itinerary, became one of the key texts among Christian Hebraists within the Republic of Letters. It has further argued that the 1575 and 1633 editions were printed for a scholarly audience. Despite their different confessions, both Montano and L’Empereur approached Benjamin’s narrative from theological and scholarly perspectives. Where the 1575 and 1633 editions diverge, however, is in their application of the text. Montano’s Itinerarium appropriated Benjamin of Tudela as a proto-Spanish explorer who not only visted the Holy land and could describe to readers the biblical landscape of the Holy Land, but could also be seen as a forbearer of the New World explorers. In contrast, L’Empereur approached Benjamin’s text in the true spirit of humanism – by reading the text with a critical eye to determine the reliability of a text prior to its use. In subjecting the Book of Travels to rigorous academic study, L’Empereur was the first to question the veracity of Benjamin’s narrative (a trend not seen in the Hebrew reception). L’Empereur’s translation, however, was not without an agenda. In defending the Protestant confession, L’Empereur studied and translated the Book of Travels to gain a better understanding of Judaism to attack the Jews and refute Judaism. This method of reading was not novel but rather a continuation of medieval practice. It does, however, represent an evolution in the reception of the Book of Travels as the text was now engaged with on a polemical level – not just for L’Empereur to refute Gen 49:10 but also through his interpretation of Benjamin himself as a polemicist. Yet, it is important to note, as Thomas E. Burman does, that scholars were ‘not always in polemical mode’.179 Although Christian scholars primarily read texts as philologists it would be unwise to think that the beliefs of the translators, and readers, would never intrude into their work.180 L’Empereur’s Notae are a perfect example of this as they balance philological explanations with polemical ones. Within Christian scholarship then, the

179 Burman, p. 192.
180 Burman, p. 21.
Book of Travels was an invaluable source for those interested in philology, biblia sacra, biblical geography and Jewish-Christian polemics.

As Stephen G. Burnett has noted, the “canon” of Jewish texts was small.\textsuperscript{181} Scholars not only shared works but also produced works for each other based on mutual interests. If one scholar read a particular Hebrew work which contained information of value, ‘the currency of that text increased’.\textsuperscript{182} In many ways, this is what happened to the Book of Travels; it entered the world of Christian scholarship in 1575 as an interesting text for Montano to read and translate for all men. In turn, it was read and annotated by prominent scholars of the early modern world. In 1633, L’Empereur repackaged the text, granting Benjamin’s narrative greater exposure to an ever-increasing audience of students and academics of the Republic of Letters. One must, however, note that these translations were made by a Hebrew-reading elite for an elite group of scholars across Europe whose lingua franca was Latin. The Book of Travels may have circulated amongst a minority, but it at least achieved wide geographical distribution. The Book of Travels’ transmission, however, was not always such a straightforward narrative. The text encountered both self-censorship and ecclesiastical excisions. How this affected Benjamin’s narrative is the subject of the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{181} Burnett, Hebraism, p. 139. Burnett lists 20 of the most common texts found in Hebraist circles, see pp. 160-62.

\textsuperscript{182} Burnett, p. 220.
Chapter 6. ‘Protecting the Faith’: Censorship and the Book of Travels

Censorship has had a continual presence in societies wishing to police morality, knowledge and ideas which run counter to their social, religious and cultural norms. It is not surprising, then, that the proliferation of printed material from the fifteenth century onwards goes hand in hand with the gradual institutionalisation of censorship, particularly within the Catholic Church. Already in the medieval period, censorship was largely in the hands of the Church, albeit in a loosely-organised fashion as books were an expensive commodity. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, however, states that effective censorship before the age of print was ultimately impossible, and even an impractical task. This was because heretical works in manuscript were reproduced slowly and could easily be kept within small reading circles. Such texts, therefore, were limited in their influence by their small number of copies and even smaller potential readership.¹ The advent of the printing press saw numerous shifts: the growth of available texts and an increase in the number of potential readers resulted in a shift in how both the Church and governments controlled what was printed. This was especially true in Italy and Spain where the ecclesiastical authorities promulgated censorship laws and compiled indices librorum prohibitorum (Indices of Prohibited Books). This is not to suggest that the Church did not welcome the new technology; although the printing press could be a means of widely disseminating devotional works, there was a growing concern about the dangers posed by print.² The rise of the Protestant movement and the circulation of its tracts, in particular those which called the authority of the Church into question, became a cause of concern for the Church.³ This, of course, ran parallel to the Church’s equal concern with respect to rabbinic literature, fearing that such works contained anti-Christian material. As books became more readily available, the Church responded to both problems with the implementation of a more systematic and institutionalised censorship. Whilst some works always remained banned outright, the Church would later concede that some works could be made permissible by excising

objectionable passages, leading to later indices including an index of expurgated books (further detailed below).

In outlining the transmission and histories of the afterlives of the Book of Travels, a number of allusions have been made to censorship in the preceding chapters. Since the historiography of the Book of Travels remains piecemeal and largely focused on intra-textual studies, it has never previously been known that Benjamin’s narrative, an innocuous text, seemingly free from religious polemic (until L’Empereur), was in fact considered problematic and controversial in the early modern period. Across its transmission, the Book of Travels has been subject to both internal Jewish censorship and ecclesiastical censorship. The latter has been manifested in two ways: first, in the manuscript tradition where the Jerusalem manuscript was censored by the Italian Inquisition in 1599; and second, in Latin translation when Montano’s Itinerarium was placed on a number of indices in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Parallel to ecclesiastical intervention is evidence of self-censorship in Usque’s 1556 printed edition. The following pages will explore the nature of this censorship and how it impacted on the transmission and reception of The Book of Travels.

The Jerusalem Manuscript

The confessional politics of the early modern age led the Catholic Church to become increasingly concerned that heterodox ideas would pervade accepted orthodoxy and corrupt the purity of Christian society. By the mid-sixteenth century, the Church intensified its fight to prevent the spread of heresy, and in particular to arrest the spread of Protestantism. To do so, a number of controls were implemented, among them censorship. This did not preclude Hebrew literature. Whilst is it not the purpose of this study to offer an in-depth history of censorship in early modern Italy, a brief overview is nonetheless of use.

As detailed in the previous chapter, Christian interest in Hebrew texts led to an increased demand for Talmudic tractates and rabbinic literature, especially in Latin translation. Consequently, this initiated a struggle, both within the Church itself and in its relationship with Jews, Christian Hebraists and the book-world, over attitudes towards the Talmud. The earliest censorship was thus directed at the Talmud. The suspicion of Hebrew books, however, was not limited to the Talmud – all Hebrew books were suspect. To allow some permissibility, not only for the Jews to possess and read their own texts, but also Hebraists, censorship, as argued by Amnon Raz-
Krakotzkin, became the means by which Jewish works could be transformed into a form of permitted knowledge, and in turn, incorporated into a Christian discourse.4

Prior to the formulation of the Church’s censorship policy and the Inquisition’s establishment of the Congregation of the Index in 1572, the Catholic Church, under Pope Julius III, condemned and eventually burned all copies of the Talmud in Rome on 9 September 1553.5 Although the reasons are beyond the present study, the event had significant implications for Hebrew literature produced in Italy. In the months following the burning, a second papal bull was issued by Pope Julius on 29 May 1554 which banned the Talmud outright. The decree, however, permitted the printing of other Hebrew literature with two provisions: 1) that any book prior to printing needed to be submitted to the authorities for approval, and 2) all books already owned by Jews which contained anything derogatory towards Christianity should be given to the authorities to be censored.6 Once corrected, books were returned to their owners.7 The Italian Inquisition, then, was primarily concerned with slanderous attacks against Christianity.8 Expurgation booklets, whilst not printed, circulated in handwritten copies and provided rules for the censorship of passages that mostly contained offenses against Christians and Christianity. They listed hundreds of Hebrew books, but especially rabbinic commentaries by Rashi, David Kimchi, Isaac Abarbanel and others.9 The most famous of these expurgation booklets is Sefer ha’Ziqquq (The Book of Expurgation), compiled by Domenico Gerosolimitano in 1596.10

The detailed comparison of the manuscripts undertaken in Chapter 2 has already revealed that the Jerusalem manuscript displays evidence of self-censorship. This was specifically seen when the Book of Travels referred to Muhammad, whereby the Jerusalem manuscript omits these instances. It was concluded that this was the result of scribal interference, either directly copied from the exemplar or by the hand of the Jerusalem scribe which indicated self-censorship. Also noted in Chapter 2 is the

4 Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 3.
5 For further discussion see Raz-Krakotzkin, Chapter 1, and Fausto Parente, ‘The Index, the Holy Office and the Condemnation of the Talmud and Publication of Clement VIII’s Index’ in Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy, ed. Gigiola Fragnito. Trans. by Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 163-193.
6 Popper, pp. 37-38; Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 81.
7 Parente, p. 175.
8 Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 123.
9 Frederica Francesconi, “‘This passage can also be read differently...’: How Jews and Christians Censored Hebrew Texts in Early Modern Modena”, Jewish History, 26:1-2 (2012), 139-160 (p. 145).
10 See Raz-Krakotzkin, pp. 121-124, where the 20 rules to guide the censers are translated in full; Francesconi, n. 47, p. 157.
Italian signature of Fra Luigi da Bologna to confirm that that the text was examined by the inquisitorial office in 1599, most probably in Modena. Based on extensive archival research by Frederica Francesconi, it was Fra Luigi who directed and signed expurgation orders, while Rabbi Netanel Trabotti, Modena’s rabbinal authority, would correct the works in his study. Nonetheless, little is known about the actual procedures of correction. Francesconi hypothesises, however, that Fra Luigi and Rabbi Netanel may have followed one of the instruction booklets for the expurgation of Hebrew books (of which more below). Consequently, it cannot be definitively known who physically censored the Jerusalem manuscript.

On inspection, the manuscript reveals that there are 17 instances where the text has been expurgated. It is the purpose of this section to list these excisions and place them in the context of the Italian Inquisition’s censorship of Hebrew books. Since the 1556 edition is the closest textual variant to the Jerusalem manuscript, where possible, the missing words have been supplied from Usque’s text. Where the 1556 edition does not follow the Jerusalem text, due to Usque’s self-censorship (discussed in the second section), the words are taken from the London manuscript to provide, at the very least, a close approximate. In folio order, the following is expurgated from the Jerusalem text of the Book of Travels:

1. והוא מקום טועות לגוים (te’ot l’go’im) in reference to a place of pilgrimage for the gentiles.12

2. במא (bamah, church) which is called שלב כי טרא די רומה, in reference to the great church of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome13

3. סלטיאני אל אטיסאני (Church of St John in the Lateran), in reference to statues of Samson seen outside the Church. St John in the Lateran is already named five lines earlier than the censored instance appearing as בָּסָיִילָא אֶל אֶטְרָאָן בַּבָּמָא (Basilica of St John in the Lateran. In the church...). This, however, escaped expurgation.14

4. טועים (to’im, pilgrims), in reference to pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem from the port at Trani.15

5. In this instance, it is not known what the Jerusalem scribe wrote to warrant expurgation. The London manuscript and 1556 edition do not agree. Whereas the former reads ‘הנצרים’ (notzrim, Christians) Usque has printed ‘גוים’ (go’im, nations, ש פיטרה של רומא). Adler, p. 7.

11 Francesconi, pp. 143-44.
12 Jerusalem, f.3v; Usque.
13 Jerusalem, f.4v; Usque. The BL text does not include the same details but reads: ש פיטרה של רומא.
14 Jerusalem, f.5r; Usque. Adler, p. 8.
15 Jerusalem, f.6r; Usque.
but commonly used to refer to non-Jews). This is in reference to the Wallachians who do not keep Christian laws; therefore it is plausible that the Jerusalem manuscript did read *notzrim*.

6) בָּהָמָה, הָבָהָמָה, הָבָהָמָה (church, churches). These excisions are in quick succession and are found in Benjamin’s description of Constantinople. The first and third are in reference to the Church of St Sophia, which Benjamin notes contains pillars of gold and silver. The second reference relates to Benjamin’s comment that the city has as many churches as the days of the year.

7) בֵיָהוּמָלְדוֹת יֵשׁ נֶוֶזְרִי (byom toldot Yeshu ha’notzri, on the birthday of Jesus the Christian). As this is changed in the 1556 edition, the wording has been taken from the London manuscript. Here, Benjamin comments that celebrations are held in Constantinople on Christmas which he called ‘the birthday day of Jesus’.

8) וְשָׁם הָבָהָמָה הָגָדוֹלָה שֶׁכּוּרִינָהוּ שָׁמוֹנְשְׁפּוֹרִים. וְשָׁם קְבֵר אוֹתָה אוֹתָה שָׁמוֹנְשְׁפּוֹרִים כְּלָה הָתְרוֹמָי אֵלִי (And there is the great Church called the Sepulchre. And there is the grave of that man which all the pilgrims go to). Like the above example, the text has been supplied from the London manuscript as this is not found in the 1556 edition.

9) לַעֲרֵילֵי (arelim, uncircumcised) in reference to a church on Mount Zion. Similar to St John in the Lateran, the word *bamah* (בָּהָמָה) remains uncensored.

10) לְאַל הָ וזֶ רֶ מ (el ha’qomer, to the priest). This is a reference to the abovementioned church on Mount Zion requiring repairs to a fallen wall. According to the *Book of Travels*, the Patriarch ordered the priest to rebuild the church. Here again *bamah* (בָּהָמָה) is uncensored.

11) Once again the London manuscript and 1556 edition disagree. The manuscript text reads ‘לעֵין שַׁמְיָם’ whereas the Usque text has been changed to ‘לעֵינָמ שַׁמְיָם’. On the balance of probability, it is more likely that the Jerusalem manuscript read *to’im*.

12) The excision on this page is not found in the text of Usque’s edition. Based on the London manuscript, the Jerusalem manuscript may similarly have read ‘לעֵינָמ שַׁמְיָם’ (like the Christians) in reference to the *Book of Travels* comparing the caliph in Baghdad to the pope of the Christians.

13) Within the description of Baghdad, Benjamin speaks of a people who follow in the laws of ‘הָנָצְרִים (notzrim, Christians). The words of the Jerusalem text cannot be reconstructed as the 1556 edition does not include this either. The text is thus supplied from the London manuscript.

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16 Jerusalem, f.7v; Usque; Adler, p. 13.
17 Jerusalem, f. 8v; Usque.
18 Jerusalem, f. 8v; Usque; Adler, p. 15.
19 Jerusalem, f.13v; Adler, p. 24.
20 Jerusalem, f.14r; Usque.
21 Jerusalem, f.14r; Usque.
22 Jerusalem, f. 15r; Usque; Adler, p. 27.
23 Jerusalem, f. 19v; Adler, p. 54.
24 Jerusalem, f.22r; Adler, p. 41.
במה לכומרים הנקראים סורייאנים (bamah l’cumrim ha’nikraim suryyanim, a church of the priests called Syrians) in reference to a church at the foot of Mount Sinai – probably that of St Catherine’s Monastery.25

העוברים (ha’ovrim, those who pass, pilgrims; but could be interpreted as ‘to transgress’ from עבר [saff]) in reference to Messina as a place for pilgrims to find good passage to Jerusalem.26

Based on the excisions made in the Jerusalem manuscript, it is clear that the censor was concerned with things connected to Christianity. Yet, of the 17 expurgations made some of the words which should have been expurgated remain in the text. This occurs five times for the word bamah,27 three times in the case of go’im28 and once in reference to Muslim pilgrims where to’im is left uncensored.29 Furthermore, if the first St John in the Lateran from f.5r is added, a total of ten other excisions should have been made.

A censor certainly did not necessarily need to read an entire text, or even understand the context in which these words were found to deem them profane and in need of expurgation. According to Sefer ha’Ziqquq ‘when the word goy, goyim, nokhri, or nokhrit appears, if it may be understood as implying slander, insult or vilification of the Gentile, the word should be erased’.30 Censors were thus trained to spot key words such as נוצרים, במה, ישו (Christians, church, Yeshu [Jesus]) to be excised. Returning to the censorship of the Jerusalem manuscript, it is possible that the censor of the manuscript quickly skimmed the text to find, and thereby censor, any words relating to Christianity. Those that were found, the 17 instances noted above, were excised. If the text was only superficially read, it is understandable how oversights may have occurred. On a similar line, Raz-Krakotzkin argues that censors may not have been scrupulous in their role; criticism from clerics suggest that the earliest censors did not faithfully perform their censorial tasks, either by haphazardly censoring a text, thereby leaving the expurgation incomplete, or censoring insignificant matters whilst passing over passages which should have incurred excision. According to Raz-Krakotzkin, Luigi da Bologna, although considered one of the most meticulous

25 Jerusalem, f.37r; Usque; Adler, p. 69.
26 Jerusalem, f.37r; Usque; Adler, p. 70. The London manuscript reads שנה.
27 Jerusalem, f.12r, f.14r, f.15r, f.32v.
28 Jerusalem, f.28v, f.30r, f.33r.
29 Jerusalem, f. 20r.
30 Francesconi, p. 149.
censors, did not avoid criticism for his censorial practices.\textsuperscript{31} There is no doubt that further comparative research with the censorship of other Hebrew books would shed more light on the application, and effectiveness, of Italy’s earliest censorial practices, which, in turn, may offer more insight into the apparently inconsistent censorship of the Jerusalem manuscript.\textsuperscript{32}

As the next section will show, Hebrew printers were attuned to the censorial policies of the Church which prohibited the Talmud and censored Hebrew books in general. How this affected the Hebrew transmission of the \textit{Book of Travels} is explored below.

**Abraham Usque and Self-Censorship**

Of the three Hebrew printed editions, the Soncino Press, while operating in Italy, would have been familiar with Italian censorial practices as outlined above. The relocation of the press to the Ottoman Empire, however, freed the Soncini from these constraints, allowing for increased printing freedoms. The Ottomans did not lack their own censorship laws; the Islamic authorities permitted Hebrew printing on the condition that the text did not contain Arabic letters or any religiously provocative material.\textsuperscript{33} The edition of the \textit{Book of Travels} printed by the Soncino Press did not contain Arabic, nor does it seem that any of the Islamic descriptions attracted the attention of the Ottoman authorities. Thus, the 1543 edition was not subject to censorship. From within the Jewish world, the community of Salonika decreed, in 1529, that all manuscripts to be printed required the consent and approval of six rabbis in the community. There is, however, no evidence that this decree was implemented.\textsuperscript{34} Despite both the Islamic and Jewish authorities promulgating censorship laws, the 1543 edition did not encounter any restrictive measures and could be printed and transmitted without intervention in the text.

In contrast, Abraham Usque’s 1556 edition of the \textit{Book of Travels} was printed in an increasingly restrictive atmosphere. As noted above, the 1553 papal decree which followed the burning of the Talmud permitted Hebrew printing provided that works

\begin{itemize}
\item Censors could be criticized for collaborating with the Jews, for incomplete censorship, or if unimportant matters were censored whilst passing over others. See Raz-Krakotzkin, p. 112 and Popper, pp. 97-98.
\item An excellent starting point is Francesconi’s study of Modena, see in particular n. 3, p. 2.
\item Hacker, \textit{Hebrew Book}, p. 110.
\end{itemize}
were submitted to ecclesiastical authorities for approval prior to their printing. Ferrara, the location of Usque’s printing operations, however, was not yet a part of the Papal States; moreover, papal decrees often went unheeded. Nevertheless, it is within the realm of possibility that Usque remained wary of the Church. The Papacy’s authority may not have extended over Ferrara, but that of the rabbis did. The Italian Jewish leadership responded to the burning of the Talmud by implementing a censorship policy. A rabbinic decree issued on 21 June 1554 required printers to obtain the permission of three “duly ordained” rabbis in addition to the consent of the heads of the community (where there was no head, permission was obtained from the nearest printing community). The names of those giving their approbation then needed to be listed at the beginning of the text. Joseph Hacker has demonstrated, through the examination of a number of editions from this era, that the decree was not necessarily enforced. In the case of Usque, Hacker’s conclusion is correct – only one Usque edition, the 1555 edition of Issur v’Heter (Forbidden and Permitted) complied with the rabbinic decree. Printing the Book of Travels the following year, neither the title, nor first pages, lists any names, revealing that Usque did not adhere to the rabbinical censorship decree.

The 1556 edition may suggest a non-compliance with the prevailing censorship practices but a closer examination of the text reveals a number of differences which are the result of Usque’s deliberate intervention in the text. As already noted, the 1543 and 1583 editions are nearly identical; the following examples then, are the differences between the Soncino and Usque editions which reveals that Usque engaged in pre-publication self-censorship. The most numerous of these examples are Usque’s erasure of all references to Christians. The word commonly used to denote Christians, found throughout the 1543 and 1583 editions, is נוצרים (notzrim, Christians). In the 1556 edition, the word notzrim is wholly excised by Usque. For example, during Benjamin’s visit to Baghdad, he likens the Caliph to the Pope, read in the 1543 edition as:

\[ \text{כום הפפה על הנוצרים} \]

like the Pope over the Christians.

\[ \text{כום הפפה על הנוצרים} \]

35 Popper, p. 53.
36 Hacker, Hebrew Book, p.111; The complete decree is reprinted in Heller, p. 409
37 Hacker, Hebrew Book, p. 112.
38 Whether this was through his own initiative or at the behest of an informally organised internal Jewish censorship is unknown.
39 Soncino.
Usque has omitted the word notzrim rendering the line:

like the Pope.\footnote{Usque.}

The *Book of Travels* also contains two references to Jesus, both of which are wholly excised from the 1556 edition. The first instance appears in Benjamin’s description of Constantinople’s Christmas day celebrations. Benjamin terms Christmas as the birthday of Jesus:

on the birthday of *Yeshu ha’notzri* (Jesus the Christian).\footnote{Soncino.}

Maintaining his self-censorship, Usque omits *Yeshu ha’notzri*, rendering the line:

on the historical day.\footnote{Usque; Adler, p. 15.}

The second reference to Jesus is more indirect in the narrative. The *Book of Travels* does not fail to take note of other religions’ holy sites. Whilst in Jerusalem, Benjamin comments on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

There is the great Church which is called *sepukuri*, which is the grave of the man that all the pilgrims come to.\footnote{Soncino; Adler, p. 24.}

This line is expurgated in its entirety from Usque’s edition.\footnote{Usque.}

The above examples demonstrate how the text of Usque’s 1556 edition closely resembles the text of the Jerusalem manuscript. There is no doubt that a number of the censorship instances in both the Jerusalem manuscript and Usque’s edition are identical. The chronology, however, confirms that Usque’s self-censorship was independently made as the Jerusalem manuscript had not yet undergone expurgation. Usque’s decision to deliberately change the text may be the result of a number of possibilities, with both personal and external factors. First, the omission, or alteration of all Christian references could be borne of personal experiences as a *converso*. Put simply, Usque may have developed a hostility for all things Christian. Since Usque, and as has been argued, many of his readers were amongst the generation of the
Spanish Expulsion, many of whom had undergone (forced) conversion, Usque may not have wanted to include overt references to Christians since this was the group responsible for Jewish persecutions of past and present. Irrespective of the neutrality of the Christian references throughout the *Book of Travels*, Usque’s personal bias may have led him to expurgate them from his edition.

Second, Usque’s self-censorship can be understood as a response to the era in which the edition was printed. Published a mere three years after the burning of the Talmud Hebrew printing continued to operate under a great deal of scrutiny, a direct consequence of 1553. It must be noted, however, that *indices of prohibited books* had yet to be drawn up (the first Roman Index was drafted in 1559). Usque, therefore, would not have feared being placed on an index but would certainly still have been conscious of the threat of ecclesiastical censorship. By censoring the *Book of Travels* pre-publication, Usque ensured that the text would not be subject to further censorship, having already expurgated anything which could lead to the condemnation of the book, thereby allowing the 1556 edition to be freely printed and sold unhindered.

Neither the 1543 or 1556 editions were the subject of external censorship. Whilst the Soncini printed in a relatively open, non-restrictive atmosphere, Hebrew printing in Italy had to navigate the censorial practices of both rabbinic and ecclesiastical authorities. With respect to the 1556 edition, it is impossible to know if a contemporary readership was aware of Usque’s self-censorship, especially since none of the textual interventions affect the meaning of the text. A reader may have only perceived the changes and omissions if another edition, or even manuscript, was read alongside Usque’s text—an unlikely scenario. The print run of the 1556 edition has yet to be determined (if it can ever be known) but there is no evidence to suggest that it had far reaches; most probably the text circulated amongst the Jews of Ferrara and the surrounding areas. It is, therefore, not the textual witness which carried the ‘weight’ of the *Book of Travels*’ transmission in the early modern world. As earlier chapters have already detailed, it was the 1543 and 1583 editions which introduced Christian scholars to Benjamin’s narrative which allowed for the *Book of Travels* to be appropriated by a whole new audience. The text of the 1556 edition does, however, reappear in the nineteenth-century, and is used as the base text for Asher’s 1840 English translation of the *Book of Travels*. This was possible as one of the two extant copies of Usque’s text is held in Berlin (the other copy is in the British Library), making it quite the rare edition. Although Usque’s edition contains significant
omissions, the *Book of Travels*’ transmission on the whole remained uninhibited in the
sixteenth century as the 1543 and 1583 editions were also available.

**The Ecclesiastical Censorship of the *Itinerarium***

Simultaneous to the implementation of censorship by the Church in Rome, its
application by the Italian Inquisition and the establishment of the Congregation of the
Index, the Spanish were also developing their own policies of censorship. Like their
Italian counterparts, the Spanish Inquisition fought to prevent heretical ideas, and in
particular Protestantism, from entering Spain and corrupting the Spanish-Catholic
public. Here too, Hebrew works were suspect, and labelled dangerous texts, but even
more so in Spain where *judaizing* (the threat of Jewish influences) was a perceived
threat to Catholic hegemony. The *Itinerarium* (published in 1575) was one such work.
In examining the censorial practices of the Spanish Catholic Church and inquisitorial
authorities, this section will outline how Montano’s translation of the *Book of Travels*
came to be listed first as a prohibited work, and then as an expurgated one.

State censorship was instituted in Spain relatively quickly following the
printing press when Ferdinand and Isabella promulgated laws on press control on 8
July 1502. These laws required all printed material to be censored prior to any work
being printed in Spain and the censorship of all books to be imported. This was
achieved through the examination of texts by qualified, and salaried, scholars.45
Simultaneously, the Office of the Inquisition was struggling to prevent the introduction
and spread of heterodox books, specifically Protestant tracts, within Spain in an
attempt to maintain Spanish religious unity.46 Spanish censorship then, was two-fold:
on the one hand, state censorship which had the authority to grant printing licenses and
oversee pre-print censorship and, on the other, Inquisitorial censorship which held
authority over post-print censorship and the sale of books.47 The two, of course, were
inextricably linked. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,
succesive monarchs issued new and detailed laws which further regulated state

51-63 (p. 53).
46 Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *The Golden Age of Spain, 1516-1659*, trans. James Casey (London:
Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 216; Maurice Boyd, *Cardinal Quiroga, Inquisitor General of Spain*
History of Censorship, 26-27 September 2003, Princeton. web.princeton.edu/sites/english/csbm*
[accessed 15 June 2015].
censorship. By the mid-sixteenth century, Philip II was concerned that unfit books had indeed been published. Reform was needed. A letter from the Inquisitor-General, Don Fernando de Valdes to Philip II made several recommendations for the reform of Spain’s censorship practice, a number of which were adopted. Philip II’s famous censorship laws were issued on 7 September 1558, covering all aspects of the printing and book trades, including the importation of books, guidelines for censors to examine texts, and ultimately supported both pre-publication censorship and book-banning. They were to remain largely unchanged until the mid-eighteenth century.48

Amongst the most (in)famous tools for policing censorship were the Indices of Prohibited Books. The first official index was produced by the University of Paris in 1544. The University of Louvain quickly followed suit publishing their index in 1546. The Roman Inquisition assumed the role of ecclesiastical censors in Italy in the 1540s. Under papal authority, three indices librorum prohibitorum were promulgated – 1559, 1564 (drawn up by bishops appointed by the Council of Trent) and 1596. The Index drawn up by the Council of Trent in 1564 distinguished itself from the earlier university indices by including ten general rules concerning prohibited books, which were approved by Pope Pius IV.49 The Tridentine Index was republished in 1571 as the Index librorum prohibitorum at the request of Philip II with Arias Montano as one of its editors. Montano was certainly no stranger to his era’s zeal for literary censorship. In compiling the Tridentine Index, Montano seems to have treated his role as censor with some ambivalence, as he found himself in the common position in which the censors themselves were frequently censored authors. In addition to the Itinerarium, Montano’s biblical commentaries were often subjected to censorship, especially Isaiah which included rabbinic exegetical writings.50

It is these compilations which became the predecessors and underpinned the genesis of the Spanish indices. The “universal” indices from Rome were received differently throughout the Catholic world: within the Italian states they were adopted at different rates and had an uneven application; France ignored them, and the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions compiled their own indices, and were often divergent from

the Roman indices.\textsuperscript{51} Don Fernando de Valdes heavily borrowed from the Louvain Index of 1550 and simply added Spanish texts to compile the first Spanish index of 1551. Subsequent and revised editions were produced in 1554 and 1559. From a mere 79 pages in 1559, the \textit{Index et catalogus librorum prohibitorum} of 1583 had grown to about 300 pages.\textsuperscript{52} From 1583 onwards, the compilation of indices became an increasingly complex process. In the hands of inquisitorial committees, subsequent indices took years to assemble, producing indices of over a thousand pages. Indices were reissued in 1612, 1632, 1640 and 1707.\textsuperscript{53} Each was accompanied by its own guiding rules promulgated by the inquisitor–general, dictating which works were to be prohibited. Once a work was placed on an index no one was legally allowed to read, print, buy or sell the prohibited text, unless a specific license was issued by the Inquisition.\textsuperscript{54} The indices of the mid-seventeenth century, however, reflect a change in censorship practices. Rather than outright prohibition of a book the Inquisition now allowed for the expurgation of problematic material to render the remaining text permissible, allowing for books that would have otherwise been forbidden to now be owned and read.

From the Spanish indices’ inception, Montano’s \textit{Itinerarium} was among the prohibited books.\textsuperscript{55} It was first listed on the \textit{Index et catalogus librorum prohibitorum} of 1583 (hereafter Index 1583) compiled by Cardinal Gaspar Quiroga, Inquisitor General of Spain from 1573-94.\textsuperscript{56} The index was compiled by a board selected from the University of Salamanca and incorporated the Tridentine Rules into Quiroga’s fourteen rules which guide the index. At its core, Index 1583 banned ‘\textit{qualquier libro que es malo y degrada la doctrina} (any book that is bad and corrupts doctrine)’.\textsuperscript{57} In Quiroga’s \textit{Al lector (To the Reader)}, he states ‘\textit{este INDICE tan es benefice publico de los Catholicos, y a proposito de quitarles las ocasiones, que el demonio, y sus ministros les offrescen con libros} (this index is of great benefit for Catholics, and is fit to remove from their hands the opportunities that the devil and his ministers offer them)’.

\textsuperscript{53} Manning, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{54} Boyd, pp. 72-73.
\textsuperscript{55} Whilst the papal indices are beyond the scope of the present study, it is noteworthy that the \textit{Itinerarium} was also placed on Clement VIII’s Roman Index of 1596.
\textsuperscript{56} For a detailed biography of Cardinal Quiroga see Boyd.
\textsuperscript{57} Gaspar Quiroga, \textit{Index et catalogus librorum prohibitorum} (Madrid: Alphonse Gomez, 1583). Unpaginated.
for the purpose of removing from them the offerings of the devil and his ministers with books)\textsuperscript{58} with the intention of protecting the faith. Turning the pages of Index 1583, the content is simply a list of titles; where multiple works have the same, or a similar title, such as \textit{Biblia}, additional information is provided, including the place of printing and year. The entry for Benjamin thus reads:

\begin{center}
\textit{Beniamin Ca[n]tabri itinerarium, seu peregrinatio, de Hebraea lingua in Latinum versum}
\end{center}

The Itinerary of Benjamin of Cantabria his travels, translated from Hebrew into Latin.\textsuperscript{59}

An examination of Quiroga’s fourteen rules helps to illuminate how a seemingly inoffensive text was placed on the index. Rule Four prohibits ‘\textit{los libros de Iudios o Moros} (books of the Jews or Muslims)’ which are in any way contrary to the Holy Catholic faith, or that the purpose teaches the Jewish sect.\textsuperscript{60} The decision to include Montano’s \textit{Itinerarium}, then, was likely rooted in this wide ranging rule. None of Montano’s other works were placed on Index 1583, indicating that Montano himself was not a prohibited author. Rather, and in all likelihood, the \textit{Itinerarium}’s prohibition is simply derived from that fact that it was a \textit{libro de Iudios}. The following year, Cardinal Quiroga produced the first \textit{Index librorum expurgatorum}. This permitted works to be printed or imported into Spain through the erasure of objectionable passages in an attempt to save works, irrespective of the author’s status.\textsuperscript{61} The concept of expurgation was certainly not a new development. As seen above, Montano may have helped to devise a system of expurgation for the Spanish Inquisition, via the Tridentine Index, in which books did not need to be condemned absolutely but could be read upon correction (i.e. expurgation). Likewise, the Italian Inquisition, demonstrated through the Jerusalem manuscript, also devised its own methods of expurgation in the same timeframe, that of the 1570s.\textsuperscript{62} Thus the 1584 index enabled texts containing a few heretical or misleading sentences to be saved through censorship;\textsuperscript{63} even if the author was prohibited, expurgation could render a specific work permissible. The \textit{Itinerarium}, however, was not included.

\textsuperscript{58} Quiroga, \textit{Al lector}.
\textsuperscript{59} Quiroga, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{60} Quiroga, \textit{Reglas generales}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{61} Ortiz, p. 216.
\textsuperscript{63} Boyd, p. 73.
Quiroga’s indices were superseded by Cardinal Antonio Zapata y Cisneros’ *Novus index librorum prohibitorum et expurgatorum* published in 1632. As cardinal and archbishop of Burgos, Zapata was made inquisitor-general in 1627, resigning the post in 1632, after the publication of Index 1632. Although much was taken word for word from the Tridentine Index, Zapata added orders and warnings to booksellers and traders across Spain.\(^{64}\) In his introduction Zapata recognised that he was continuing a tradition of protecting the faith from heretical works, stating, ‘*Este continuo desvelo des los enemigos de la verdad* (this [index] continues the vigilance against enemies of the truth)’.\(^{65}\) Zapata further writes:

\[\text{nos a obligado a nueva vigilancia mas apretadas diligencias, para salir al camino de tan graves inconvenientes, de los muchos descaminos de libros perniciosos que en estos Reynos en entrado}\]

This has compelled us towards heightened vigilance and tighter measures when confronting the serious troubles from the many wrong paths in pernicious books, with have entered these kingdoms.\(^{66}\)

Zapata’s statement indicates that despite the Inquisition’s best efforts, heretical works continued to find their way into Spain warranting greater surveillance. Index 1632 was thus compiled with more than 2,500 entries. Following its predecessors, Zapata also included 14 rules. *Regla XIII* (Rule 13) pertains to ‘*de la Thalmud, i otros Libros de Rabinos, i Hebreos* (Concerning the Talmud, and other books of the Rabbis and Hebrews)’.\(^{67}\) Rule 13 also prohibits ‘*nefandos libros de los Hebreos* (nefarious books of the Jews)’.\(^{68}\) The prohibitions of Index 1632 with respect to Hebrew books extended not just to the Talmud, its glosses, annotations and interpretations, but any Hebrew work deemed disreputable by the Inquisition.

Whereas Montano’s other works were not placed on Quiroga’s *Indices*, they were included by Zapata. Significantly, it is not just the *Itinerarium* which appears in Index 1632; Montano was also included in the index as a prohibited author for his other writings. Both entries are found in the section of works which ‘*sunt prohibita nisi expurgata* (are forbidden to be printed without expurgation)’.\(^{69}\) Zapata’s Index


\(^{66}\) Ibid.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.

\(^{69}\) Zapata, Part II, p. 1.
details by page number, in the form of a list, which words and passages were to be excised from the *Itinerarium*. These excisions will be presented and interpreted below. Despite the *Itinerarium* being placed on Index 1632, 57 years after its publication, Montano’s translation could now be read in his native Spain, albeit in a censored version.

Index 1632’s expurgations of the *Itinerarium* range from the deletion of a few words to removing a few lines to the expurgation of pages of text. The discussion will follow this order in presenting the examples. On the censorship of a few words, Index 1632 has proscribed the erasure of any mention of the learning and wisdom of the rabbis and the accompanying phrase ‘of praiseworthy’ or ‘of blessed memory’ which was commonly written after the names of respected rabbis. Benjamin too, had frequently written *zychrono li’vracha* (זיכרונו לברכה, of blessed memory) after a number of rabbis, translated by Montano as *bonae memoriae*. In some cases Montano had written alternative phrases but retained the meaning. There are over 15 instances in the *Itinerarium* where this has been applied, the majority of which are found within the first 20 pages. To highlight two examples, amongst the rabbis listed for the city of Beziers is ‘*Joseph filius Nathanael bonae memoriae* (Joseph son of Nathaniel of blessed memory)’. The Escorial copy of the 1575 edition has scribbled-out *bonae memoriae*. Similarly, for the city of Posquières, it lists a number of prominent rabbis, amongst them ‘*Isaac filius Mosis laudabilis memoriae* (Isaac son of Moses of praiseworthy memory)’. Again, the *laudabilis memoriae* has been erased from Moses’ name.

A total of nine longer lines have also been censored; four of which are a continuation of the above theme. The four excised lines are:

\[
\text{[Abrahamum filium Davidis] felicis famae, virum officiosum, et tu[m] in disciplinalibus, tum etiam in sacris libris apprimè doctum}
\]

\[
\text{[Abraham son of David] of blessed fame, a dutiful man and most learned in study, and also in sacred books}\]

\[
\text{[et David] celebres vir, que[m] principem nostrum alii appellant}
\]

\[
\text{[And David] a renowned man, whom others call “our leader”}\]

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70 Montano, p. 15.
71 Montano, p. 17.
72 Montano, p. 16.
73 Montano, p. 22.
among whom are learned men and skilled in lecturing and teaching, the greatest of their
generation, among them that great master [Aaron Cuteus]\footnote{Montano, p. 26.}

and good men and merciful, and observers of teachings\footnote{Montano, p. 32.}

Here, Benjamin again highlights rabbinical learning and the leadership of the rabbis. A
reader of the \textit{Book of Travels} might certainly have understood that Benjamin held
rabbis in high esteem. Although not all of these praises are censored, the Inquisition
certainly did not seem to want such bold admiration for rabbis to be readily available
to a Christian audience. To some degree, this may be an extension of the medieval
tradition of the “blinded Jew”; in other words, rabbis should not be perceived as
having wisdom when they, and Judaism on the whole, refuse to see the truth of
Christianity. In a more contemporary context, the Inquisition was wary of Christian
scholars’ use of rabbinic literature. As Christian Hebraists saw great value in these
works (as demonstrated in the previous chapter), the Inquisition may have feared that
their admiration of the rabbis could lead to apostasy. In censoring these additional
phrases, the Inquisition may have tried to mitigate praise for the rabbis to diminish
rabbinic literature.

Further to the examples above, two of the nine lines pertain to the synagogue.
The first is in reference to the wisdom and prudence of the sacred synagogue found in
Benjamin’s description of Barcelona. Montano’s Latin reads:

\begin{quote}
in qua Synagoga sacra est sapientibus ac prudentibus frequens, & magnatibus etiam ornate
\end{quote}

In this instance, the censors have expurgated the entire line. The second excision is a
description of the synagogue of the Exilarch in Baghdad; Benjamin’s words, as
translated by Montano, are as follows:

\footnote{Montano, p. 14.}
At verò magna illa synagoga, que ad illum virum Captiuitatis caput pertinet, marmoribus constructa est, varis & elegantissimis omnium colorum auro argentoque exornatis. In ipsis verò columnis Psalmorum versus aureis litteris incise leguntur. Ibidem porrò ante arcam ordines subselliorum decem sunt marmoreis gradibus distincti; in quorum supremo Caput captiuitatis cum Dauidicae familiae primoribus considet.

Whereas truly that great synagogue which belongs to that man, the head of the Captivity, was built and ornamented with diverse and elegant marble in every colour and with gold and silver. On the columns themselves, lines of the psalms in letters of gold are carved to be read. In that very place, further off, before the ark, are ten benches of marble which are arranged at distinct levels in which the Head of the Captivity will be seated with the leaders of the family of David.77

No immediate explanation becomes apparent for why the censors would have excised these lines. One possibility lies in Christian art in which, particularly in the medieval world, depictions of Synagoga and Ecclesia were a frequent motif. The figures of Synagoga (Judaism) and Ecclesia (Church) were the personification of Judaism and Christianity, with Synagogue often depicted with bowed head, blindfolded and holding a broken staff and Ecclesia, erect and crowned.78 To borrow from Jonathan Adams, the figures represent a ‘replacement theology’79 which describes the supersession of a triumphant Christianity (Ecclesia) over a subjugated Judaism (Synagoga). For Benjamin to describe the exact opposite, and even laud the synagogue, would have been antithetical to accepted Christian teachings of a defeated Judaism.

A third theme which is heavily censored is references to King David or the House of David. The above quote contains mentions to both the synagogue and the family of David adding further weight to the censors’ decision to expunge the passage. An additional two lines in the Itinerarium referencing David are also excised. The first reference is found in Benjamin’s description of the leaders of the Jewish community in Mosul. As translated by Montano, the text recounts:

Zachai haNassi exposteritate Dauid regis

Zakkai the Prince, from the descendants of King David80

77 Montano, p. 69.
80 Montano, p. 58.
This qualifying description of Zachai ha’Nasi (the prince) as being a descendant from David is not found in the 1543 edition. For whatever reason, Montano added it only to have it expurgated.

In the second, and comparable Davidic reference, Benjamin adds a similar qualification to Chanan ha’Nasi’s name:

Hhanan Hanassi, ex progenie Davi regis: quod deductus per saecula familiae codex indicat

Chanan the prince, from the progeny of king David: which the book handed down through the generations of the family.81

The implications of Jews claiming Davidic lineage is a direct challenge to the Church (a challenge which L’Empereur sought to defend as outlined in Chapter 5). More problematic for the Church would be the theological implications. Jewish tradition believes that the messiah, who had not yet come, will be from the lineage of King David. If Jews maintained a claim to Davidic lineage it remained a possibility for a Jewish messiah to be born and redeem the world. This stood in direct contradiction to the Church – the messiah had already arrived and redeemed the world from sin.82 In this context, the censors would have felt justified in censoring such claims, particularly in their zeal to protect the Catholic faith.

Whilst these smaller instances of censorship are important to understand the bigger picture of inquisitorial censorship of the Itinerarium they are overshadowed by four longer passages which are expurgated by Index 1632. Three of these proscribed passages are a page to a page and a half, whilst the fourth includes the final paragraph of the Book of Travels. Benjamin’s description of Baghdad has featured heavily throughout this study. Once again, it is at the forefront of the longer passages to be censored as outlined by Cardinal Zapata. Of the four, Baghdad comprises the first and second longer expurgations. Following Benjamin’s prosaic statement of the number of Jews, he notes how the Jews of Baghdad live in peace led by wise scholars. He continues with a detailed list of the heads of the ten yeshivot (religious academies) before singling out Daniel, son of Chasdai, who is called the ראש גלות (Head of the Captivity, or Exilarch) who holds authority as the lay leader of the Jewish community

81 Montano, p. 76. In both examples, Montano has not directly translated ha’nasi (the prince) and has, instead, rendered the Hebrew into Roman characters. It may be that he treated ha’nasi like a title, similar to that of Caliph.

by the permission of the Caliph. The passage describes Daniel’s authority over both
the Jews and Muslims, how he is accompanied by knights when he travels, and is able
to ride a horse dressed in silk and embroidery. Index 1632 expunges the entirety of this
passage in Montano’s translation; in the Latin starting from ‘sunt veró ibidem Synedria
decem’ (there are in that place ten academies)’ until ‘super sudarium torquem gestat
(he wears a necklace on his headscarf)’, totalling just under two pages of censored
text.\footnote{Montano, p. 66.}

The censors’ expurgation of Baghdad continues about a paragraph later where
Benjamin discusses how far the Head of the Captivity’s authority extends. The
excision picks up, mid-sentence, from ‘inquam, harum omnium regionum’ (as I said, of
all the regions)’ until ‘Synedrij viros’ (the men of the Sanhedrin).\footnote{Montano,
pp. 68-69.} Again, Index 1632 has objected to Benjamin’s account of the Exilarch. In this passage, the censors have
removed references to the Head’s authority and the fact that he appoints leaders for
these Jewish communities. Also censored is the description of the Head’s wealth, his
ownership of multiple estates and his business involvement, which entitle him to
receive taxes. Benjamin’s comment on the Exilarch’s wisdom and scholarly
achievements, being well-versed in doctrine, is also censored. The end of the passage,
also expunged, refers to the Exilarch bestowing money to Baghdad’s nobles and the
provision of a chariot in which to travel.

As already seen in Chapter 4, the discussion focused on the Exilarch and how,
as Isaac Arma argued, he was ‘the prince of the seed of David’. In the context of
censorship, the idealisation of Baghdad, and the position held by the Exilarch,
challenges the status quo adopted by the Church since the Middle Ages – that of the
downtrodden Jew rejected by God. Furthermore, this passage counters the polemics
surrounding Genesis 49:10, demonstrating that the sceptre of Judah was retained in the
person of the Exilarch which resulted in his exalted position in Baghdad.\footnote{Jacobs
includes a significant discussion on why the Book of Travels includes such idyllic depictions of
Baghdad and the Exilarch, pp. 131-137.} In painting
a picture of the Exilarch as a wealthy ruler of an autonomous Jewish community the
Book of Travels suggests a level of equality with that of the Islamic Caliph. For these
reasons alone, the Inquisition would have certainly censored this passage to maintain
their portrayal of the subjugated, non-autonomous Jew. The person of the Exilarch also
contained messianic potential. As the ‘seed of David’ the Exilarch was venerated for

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83 Montano, p. 66.
84 Montano, pp. 68-69.
85 Jacobs includes a significant discussion on why the Book of Travels includes such idyllic depictions of
Baghdad and the Exilarch, pp. 131-137.
being descended from the Davidic dynasty. This formed a ‘significant component of their status’\textsuperscript{86} since it offered messianic potential. If the present Exilarch was not himself the messiah, the family lineage at least made them a potential progenitor of the messiah.\textsuperscript{87} As such, Benjamin’s extolling of the Exilarch could have been interpreted, by both Jewish and Christian readers, as implying messianic hope. Here, the censors equated the descriptions of the Exilarch with messianic undertones which necessitated the expurgation of such a large section of text.

Another rationale for this particular expurgation is the portrayal of the Caliph. In his survey of Jewish travel literature, Martin Jacobs wrote that Jewish travellers often depicted Muslim rulers as benevolent monarchs who respected the autonomy of their Jewish subjects and granted considerable authority to Jewish communal representatives. In the glorification of the Caliph’s good relations with the Jews and the Exilarch, this section could be read as a comment on Christian monarchs and their mistreatment of the Jews in the Christian west.\textsuperscript{88} The whole passage, then, can be read as a polemical remark against Christian monarchs and their relationship with the Jews, which may have warranted its excision.

Zapata may also have borrowed certain restrictions from the Neophyte Index and incorporated it into the ethos of his index. Compiled in Italy between 1578 and 1583, the Neophyte Index, as noted by Gustavo Sacerdote, was particular to censor all references to Jerusalem, the Jewish Temple and the advent of the messiah. Furthermore, the Neophyte Index did not allow authors to speak of the former greatness of the people of Israel or their predilection for God.\textsuperscript{89} Had the passage relating to the Exilarch been allowed to remain, a Spanish-Christian readership (albeit a scholarly minority) would have been introduced to a historical image of a once flourishing Jewish community with wealth and influence. Once again, the Inquisition turned to censorship to protect a specific narrative crafted about the Jews.

Spain’s obsessive worry over judaizing and apostasy is another facet which may explain some of the expurgations. Since the \textit{Book of Travels} was now disseminated throughout Spain in Latin, \textit{conversos} (Jews who converted to Christianity, many through forced baptism) who learned Latin may have had the opportunity to read the \textit{Itinerarium}. One of the primary reasons for establishing the

\textsuperscript{86} Franklin, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{87} Franklin, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{88} Jacobs, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{89} Sacerdote, p. 269.
Spanish inquisition was to ensure that the *conversos* did not lapse in their Christianity. As Renée Levine Melammed has written, Jews could be clearly identified as non-believers; *conversos* in the eyes of Spanish society, however, were viewed as either atheists or *judaizers* – neither of which were an acceptable alternative. Furthermore, the Church viewed every *converso* as a possible *judaizer*. The Church, therefore, felt responsible for saving the baptised souls of those who may have wavered in their Christianity. As such, the monarchy and Church did not wish any material to be available which could lead *conversos* astray. Such a positive literary portrayal of Jews, then, could certainly not circulate unchecked in Spain for fear of the effects on the *conversos*.

The third and fourth lengthy censored passages share the theme of redemption and are found in the closing paragraphs of the *Book of Travels*, in the region known as Ashkenaz, traditionally identified with Germany and Central Europe. Here, the *Book of Travels* describes God’s remembrance of the Jews in the exile and how the “horn of the anointed”, an explicit reference to the messiah, will be raised to gather the Jews from their exile. The redemptive discourse is then interrupted with a comment on the nature of Ashkenaz. Both passages are proscribed for expurgation by Index 1632. For the third passage, the censorship begins mid-sentence so that the passage begins:

*Itaque Israëlitae omnes per cunctas regiones dispersi commorantur*

All Israel remain dispersed in every region.

The censors continue to expurgate the rest of the page and into a third of the next where the text is again readable from ‘*Hae igitur metropoles* (Therefore these cities)’.

The fourth (and final) passage to be expurgated from the *Itinerarium* encompasses the entire end of the narrative. In keeping with the style of the text, Benjamin records the Talmud scholars within France, citing the students of wisdom who study day and night. The text then adds how the people of France rejoice at the arrival of travellers. This is the first and only instance in the *Book of Travels* which

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91 Montano, p. 112. The present study of the Latin editions has not undertaken to include instances where a clear Christian interpretation has been spun into the translated text. One example, however, which demonstrates that this did indeed occur is found in this passage where Montano has changed Ⱨ Ⱨ Ⱨ Ⱨ Ⱨ (horn of the anointed) to *cornu Christi* (horn of Christ).
92 Montano, p. 113.
comments on the reception of travellers and the hospitality of a specific community. The same passage then returns to the subject of the Jewish exile. It continues by giving Jews chizzuk (support) to be strong in their faith in the laws of Moses, and entreats God for mercy through the wearing of black garments.  

A closing prayer for redemption immediately follows. Again, the censors have begun mid-sentence, excising from ‘in que sapientum (in which the wise)’ until the final amen. If followed, the Itinerarium would then end ‘maximum regni totius metropolin Lodouici regis regiam iuxta Siban fluuium sitam (the entire city is in the realm of King Louis situated by the side of the river Seine)’ thus expurgating the final 11 lines.

The uncensored copies of the Itinerarium (in other words, all but one) reveal that Montano’s translation of the final lines of the Book of Travels closely follow that of the original Hebrew; Montano did not attempt to mitigate the Book of Travels’ supplication for the Jewish redemption. The final lines read:

Deus misericors misereatur nostri atque illorum, et confirmet super nos et super illos id quod scriptum est: Et reducit et congregabit te ex omnibus populis in quos dispersit te Dominus Deus tuus. Amen Amen

It is possible to suggest that Montano retained the prayer for redemption, and indeed all passages related to Jewish redemption in his translation, for readers to understand them in a theological context. The Jews, as discussed in many of Catholicism’s foundational theological works, were to be treated as witnesses to the Old Testament and also as witnesses to the prophecies of Christ and were, therefore, not to come to any violence or persecution for they were needed at the End of Days to convert to Christianity in recognition of Jesus Christ and the true faith. This was most starkly expressed by St. Augustine in City of God in which he teaches that the Jews should be allowed to live freely and maintain their religious practice. This is, Augustine argued, because the same God who Christians worshipped was the source of Jewish scripture. As such, the Jews ‘bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about

93 Montano, p. 114.
94 Ibid.
95 Soncino.
96 Montano, p. 114.
These sentiments were echoed by St. Bernard of Clairvaux in letters written to the Cistercian monk Radulph who preached violence against the Jews on the eve of the Second Crusade. Bernard vehemently opposed such violence and preached the exact opposite. In one letter, Bernard wrote:

The Jews are not to be persecuted, killed or even put to flight. Ask anyone who knows Sacred Scripture what he finds foretold of the Jews in the Psalm ‘Not for their destruction do I pray’, it says. The Jews are for us the living words of Scripture, for they remind us of what our Lord suffered. They are dispersed all over the world so that by their suffering for their crime they may be everywhere the living witness of our redemption…we are told by the Apostle that when the time is ripe all Israel shall be saved…If the Jews are utterly wiped out, what will become of our hope for their promised salvation, their eventual conversion? 

Montano’s decision to keep the prayer at the end of the Book of Travels can thus be linked with the Catholic belief that the ingathering of the Jews will not hail the coming of the messiah as conceived of by Jewish tradition, but that it will signal the Christian End of Days when the Jews will recognise Christ, convert and ultimately attain salvation. It is for this reason that Montano, and his readers, can pray for the ingathering of the Jewish exiles.

The inquisitors’ rationale to censor passages with a redemptive theme follows similar reasons to that of the expurgation of the Davidic references. Like the third paragraph, the concluding lines of the Book of Travels explicitly reference the ingathering of the Jewish exiles, Jewish redemption and the fulfilment of the messianic prophecy. Such overt messianic hopes, which would signal the end of the Jewish exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem were again in direct opposition to the Church. Israel Jacob Yuval argued that the ‘messianic scenario was designed to restore the political and religious position of the Jews and to elevate them from a humilitated nation into a triumphant one’. In censoring the messianic passages, the Inquisition could erect a barrier. On the one hand, shielding conversos who had not fully relinquished their Jewish ties, to not remind them of any sort of messianic hope and the as-yet-to-occur (according to Jewish tradition) final redemption lest they retain any sort of hope for its arrival. On the other hand, it allowed Christian dogma to continue to challenge Jewish

theology through the recognition of Jesus as the messiah and Christianity superseding Judaism. It is from this perspective that Index 1632 expurgated these passages.

The censorship of the passage which contains the description of France is uncharacteristic of the indices given that the majority of the excisions in the *Itinerarium* have been of a theological nature. As the description of France is not stylistically different to any of Benjamin’s other descriptions of the communities visited, what prompted Zapata to place this on the list of expurgations? One theory may be that the Spanish censors may have digressed from the religious agenda of the index in favour of a political one. France and Spain fought numerous territorial wars throughout the sixteenth century. The censors may have incorporated this into their censorial practices and, as warring enemies, would not have wanted to see France praised in any context thus extending the remit of the censorship to include these lines in the *Book of Travels*. The validity of this hypothesis would, however, require further research into propaganda during this period, which is beyond the scope of the present study.

The above pages have presented the indices proscriptions for Montano’s *Itinerarium* which would allow for its dissemination in Spain. What remains to be explored is how the censorship of the *Itinerarium* by the ecclesiastical censors worked in practice. It has already been noted that Quiroga and Zapata’s *indices* did not have any authority outside of Spain. Of the four digitised copies of the *Itinerarium* in European libraries none contain any evidence of censorship. The only copy which has been censored (that I am aware of) is that of the *Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial* (hereafter Escorial) in Madrid. This copy is not only significant for its censorship; it is also noteworthy because it is the copy of the *Itinerarium* sent by Plantin to Philip II. This was in accordance with a decree of 1573 which stated that of the books printed in the Spanish Netherlands, one copy must be sent to the royal library at Antwerp and one to the Escorial.100

The Escorial Library is fundamental in understanding censorship in Spain. The personal library of Philip II, it forms part of the larger complex known as *San Lorenzo de El Escorial*; the royal complex, built throughout the 1560s, is comprised of a palace, basilica, monastery and library all dedicated to San Lorenzo (St Lawrence). The library itself was integral to Philip II’s plan in demonstrating his value of

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100 Putnam, 2, p. 362.
scholarship. Whilst not a humanist scholar himself, Philip was raised amongst books and would read whenever possible. Housed in a special wing, Philip purchased works on subjects of special interest to himself, including: architecture, warfare, art, music, theology and magic. With a budget of 50,000 ducats, Philip used his extensive diplomatic network, Montano included, to amass his collection.\textsuperscript{101} Its first librarian was none other than Montano, appointed in 1576. As librarian, Montano had vast purchasing power and could buy whatever he liked. He was also invested with the task of systemically organising the collection of books, which resulted in the development of a system of classification.\textsuperscript{102}

Philip II’s conceptualisation of the Escorial included the idea to save rare books in country parishes from ruin. Philip thus adopted a policy, possibly following the example of the Catalan bishop of Vic, Joan Baptista Cardona, to store books condemned by the Inquisition in the Escorial. Although a license was required, Quiroga granted this dispensation to the monarch. By 1639, the Escorial possessed 932 prohibited works.\textsuperscript{103} This has been subdivided to show that within the 932 books: 428 were prohibited under the auspices of the indices, of which 204 could be expurgated, 168 were Hebrew books, 104 were Bibles and other books of the divine offices, 37 were works authored by heresiarchs.\textsuperscript{104} The proscribed books were shelved by language and class (the level of prohibition according to the indices) and stored in the salón alto, the floor above the salón principal behind a reja (grille).\textsuperscript{105} Although the personal library of Philip, the repository of banned books became the archive of the Inquisition.

In opening the Escorial, Philip proclaimed it to be ‘\textit{todos los hombres de letras que quisieran venir a leer} ([for] all the men of letters who wish to come to read)’.\textsuperscript{106} This was, of course, extended to even the prohibited books. Scholars, monks and the Escorial’s librarians were all permitted to consult the works, albeit with proper licenses to read such works and subject to checks on their character and academic

\textsuperscript{103} Kamen, \textit{Escorial}, pp. 106-8.
\textsuperscript{105} Nuñez, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{106} Nuñez, p. 91.
qualifications. Censors equally had access to the repository, especially as the archive was where books underwent expurgation. Books awaiting censorship, however, were stored outside of the archive. Consequently, librarians of the Escorial were required to ensure that the dangerous works did not accidentally enter the main library. The *Itinerarium* was one such work, languishing on the shelves for years uncensored.

The catalogue entry for MS 42-VI-9 lists that the *Itinerarium* was examined by the censors twice, listing the censors names and year examined. The Escorial copy was first censored in 1641 by Andrés de Santa María. A subsequent examination was made by Lorenzo de Villarrubia in 1707. The men entrusted to this task were Hieronymite monks at the Escorial. As noted earlier, Zapata’s index was promulgated in 1632; what then, accounts for the nine-year gap between when the *Itinerarium* should have been censored to when it actually was?

Closer examination of the Escorial’s copy of the *Itinerarium* shows that what was ultimately excised from the text in 1641 and what was proscribed by Index 1632 does not match. To understand this discrepancy, one must turn to subsequent Spanish indices. The *indices*’ expansion continued throughout the seventeenth century. Whereas Index 1583 is an approximate 300 pages, Index 1632 had grown to over 1,000 pages. With only an eight-year interval, another index was produced, the 1640 *Novissimus Librorum Prohibitorum et Expurgandorum Index* under the direction of Antonio de Sotomayor. Major revision of the *indices* in Spain was undertaken by Diego Sarmiento y Valladares which resulted in the publication of *Novissimus Librorum Prohibitorum et Expurgandorum Index* in 1707.

In tracing the expurgations of the *Itinerarium* across the *indices* it becomes clear that Montano’s *Itinerarium* was never censored in accordance with Zapata’s expurgations. It was, however, censored according to Index 1640, in the year following the promulgation of the latest index. Whilst Index 1640 omits many of Index 1632’s smaller excisions, such as the phrase *bonae memoriae*, the four longer passages detailed above remain censored according to Index 1640. The censorship which is seen in the Escorial’s copy of the *Itinerarium* is thus the work of Andrés de Santa María. Index 1707 does not diverge from its immediate predecessor and maintains the same

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107 Nuñez, p. 87.
108 I am indebted to the Escorial for providing additional information, via e-mail, regarding the identity of these monks. ‘Los censores, Andrés de Santa María y Lorenzo de Villarrubia, eran dos monjes jerónimos del Monasterio del Escorial, virtuosos en obras y en doctrina, a los que se les encomendaban estas labores’. Personal communication from José Luis del Valle Merino, 11 April 2013.
109 Vose.
expurgations to be made. Lorenzo de Villarrubia, therefore, put his signature to the copy confirming that it conformed to the most up-to-date expurgations according to the most recent index promulgated.

There are a number of factors which may account for the uneven application of the Spanish Inquisition’s control over printed material. Patricia W. Manning rightly states, that ‘in order to understand the ways in which printed matter was policed, however, it is crucial to study not only the types of works banned or expurgated in these listings, but also the manner in which the Indices were enforced’. There is no doubt that burning books and outright prohibition were the easiest methods to dispose of, or stunt the dissemination of offending works. As has been stated, the Italian and Spanish Inquisitions developed the practice of expurgation in the 1570s which permitted acceptable portions of a work to circulate with greater ease. This system, however, did allow for immense loopholes. First, it was the job of the Inquisition to patrol the ports and bookstores; the number of forbidden books which circulated in early modern Spain suggests that inquisitors were not always meticulous. Second, the rules and edicts promulgated by the Inquisition lacked specification, and enforcement. When regulations were not followed there appeared to be few consequences. Although Manning’s research pertains mostly to Madrid, there is significant evidence that both Inquisition and state measures of censorship were less efficient in more peripheral realms. Finally, censorship was further undermined by the Inquisition’s granting of licences to read prohibited books. The most common readers granted such permission were Catholic theologians, especially those engaged in counter-Reformation activities. Men of letters, however, could also apply to read specific books for a limited period of time.

The task of censorship was a long and onerous process. Henry Kamen quotes one censor reporting to the Inquisition that to expurgate a private library in Madrid took four months of working eight hours daily. Furthermore, not all inquisitors undertook their duties as expurgators with great enthusiasm. Although the indices

110 Manning, p. 25.
111 Manning, p. 90.
112 Manning, p. 25 and p. 70.
113 Manning, pp. 70-71.
114 Manning, p. 149.
115 Manning, pp. 73-74.
116 Kamen, Inquisition, p. 120.
117 Manning, p. 90.
guided the censors in what they were to excise, with each successive index released, inquisitors did not always have the time to check the status of books and note any changes.\textsuperscript{118} It quickly becomes clear that within the measures established by the Inquisition to control heretical and unorthodox books, a lack of manpower may have been a contributing factor in the time-scale of the \textit{Itinerarium}'s censorship and why it took until 1641 to be expurgated. This, of course, resulted in great inconsistency in the Inquisition’s censorial practices. With respect to expurgations, some books were treated more lazily with only crosses made through the forbidden passages so that the text remained largely legible, contrary to inquisitorial orders that excisions should be entirely illegible.\textsuperscript{119} The Escorial copy of the \textit{Itinerarium} is not one such example – all of the proscribed excisions are entirely illegible. Inconsistency may further be the result of instances where individuals were granted permission to expurgate their own works. Nonetheless, a lack of personnel and surveillance to confirm that such expurgations were accomplished resulted in the uneven enforcement of the \textit{indices}.

In consideration of the above factors, Henry Kamen concluded that ‘neither the Index nor the censorship system produced an adequate machinery of control’\textsuperscript{120} and that ‘the Inquisition’s overseeing of literature, in short, looked imposing in theory but was unimpressive in practice’.\textsuperscript{121} R.W. Truman does not disagree but added the caveat that since pre-print censorship was controlled by the crown, any consideration of the effects of censorship in early modern Spain needs to take both into account.\textsuperscript{122} Vose took a slightly different view and stated that the very existence of the \textit{indices} conveyed the solemnity and seriousness in which the Inquisition undertook its censorial task.\textsuperscript{123} It follows then, that the overall picture of Spanish censorship is one of fluidity, with varying levels of application and effectiveness. It ultimately demonstrates, however, that Spain did not necessarily seek to destroy knowledge but rather limit its accessibility.

With the above discussion in mind there is little evidence to suggest that the Spanish \textit{indices} impeded the transmission and reception of the \textit{Book of Travels} – even in Latin translation. Although the Escorial copy belonged to the private library of Philip II, scholars and monks were able to obtain licenses to read works held in the

\textsuperscript{118} Vose.  
\textsuperscript{119} Truman.  
\textsuperscript{120} Kamen, \textit{Inquisition}, p. 131.  
\textsuperscript{121} Kamen, \textit{Inquisition}, p. 132.  
\textsuperscript{122} Truman.  
\textsuperscript{123} Vose.
collection. Any reader requesting the *Itinerarium* prior to 1641 would certainly have read the text in its unexpurgated form. Readers after this date, however, would have encountered a censored text. As large sections are excised, post-1641 readers would have had a different experience of the text, one which may have hindered their understanding of Benjamin’s narrative. This is, however, exclusive to the Escorial’s copy of the *Itinerarium*; the extent of the reception of the *Itinerarium* more generally in Spain in the period under discussion is not yet known and merits further investigation.

Greater contextualisation of the *Book of Travels*’ censorship under the Italian Inquisition would provide a wider comparison base for their respective approaches as to what was censored. A detailed study is beyond the confines of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is useful to briefly contrast, within a broader spectrum, the differences in what the Italian Inquisition in 1599 expurgated and what the Spanish Indices sought to expurgate. From the examples outlined, there is a vast divide in what was perceived to be problematic. The Italian Inquisition was primarily interested in words pertaining to Christianity. Although it has been shown that in none of these cases, the descriptions were slanderous against Christians or Christianity, censors scanned texts for a set-list of words to censor, irrespective of their textual context. Such was the case with the *Book of Travels* in 1599. The Spanish Inquisition, based on the larger passages excised from the narrative outlined above, appears to have been concerned with censoring fundamental concepts found within Judaism. Descriptions related to the family of David, the Messiah, and the Exilarch in Baghdad, and even the respect and honour shown to rabbis and prominent Jews were all excised. It was the responsibility of the Spanish Inquisition to protect Catholicism against *judaizing*, not only to prevent *conversos* relapsing into their Judaism, but also to defend Christians from Jewish influences and ideas. Whereas the Italian Inquisition censored the *Book of Travels* for any potential attacks on Christianity, the Spanish Inquisition guarded against knowledge and ideas which encroached on their Catholic homogeneity.

With respect to the transmission of the *Book of Travels* parallels can be drawn between the Jerusalem manuscript and the *Itinerarium*. Both underwent expurgation several years after the respective texts were produced. In the intervening time, the Jerusalem manuscript (or similar text) was used to produce the Hebrew printed editions. Likewise, Montano’s translation was consulted by L’Empereur for his 1633
translation. As such, one may almost say that the censorship applied to the *Book of Travels* came too late to truly hinder its transmission. With two lines of transmission, there were plenty of Hebrew editions, and Latin copies of the 1575 and 1633 editions throughout Europe which ensured that the *Book of Travels* survived beyond the Indices of Prohibited Books and the expurgations of both the Italian and Spanish Inquisitions.
Chapter 7. Conclusion

The Book of Travels is not a medieval text which faded into obscurity only to be rediscovered in the nineteenth century; rather it is a text which has experienced an uninterrupted transmission. The aim of this study has been to determine that textual transmission and how the Book of Travels was understood and used by later readers.

An examination of the London, Rome, Oxford and Jerusalem manuscripts’ codicology and individual histories provided the necessary contexts in which to explore the broader transmission of the narrative. With the exception of the Rome manuscript of 1428, the extant manuscripts can only be broadly dated. Whilst the identification of watermarks was unable to provide a more accurate chronological range, because of the unfortunate degredation of the paper stocks, the texts are from successive centuries –fourteenth (London), fifteenth (Rome and Oxford) and sixteenth (Jerusalem) – demonstrating that the Book of Travels enjoyed a continuous transmission in manuscript. The 1428 date of the Rome manuscript is of additional significance. The Book of Travels is undoubtedly Spanish in origin. At some unknowable point, the text was transmitted beyond the Iberian Peninsula. It would be easy to assume that the Book of Travels was taken out from the Iberian Peninsula during the 1492 Expulsion. The 1428 date of the Rome manuscript proves otherwise. By (at least) the fifteenth century the Book of Travels had been transmitted to other Jewish communities outside the Iberian Peninsula indicating that the medieval transmission of the Book of Travels was not solely an Iberian one.

That the text of the Book of Travels was altered in the course of its medieval and early modern Hebrew transmission is a central theme to emerge from the detailed textual comparisons (Chapters 2 and 3). Based on the codicology, the Book of Travels was never expensively produced; the extant manuscripts are paper copies, with no decoration, bound in quarto format. The codicology therefore points to an inexpensive transmission in which the text was copied by individuals who desired to own copies of the narrative. This is intrinsic to the private nature of Hebrew book production in the Middle Ages where books were copied by professional or semi-professional scribes either for individuals or for themselves. A Hebrew text’s transmission was governed
by copyists rather authoritative supervision.¹ As John Tolan observes, ‘a medieval text is an ephemeral and unfixed thing: any copier, translator or printer can change it into something completely different’.² This illustrates how scribes and printers, whether through error or deliberate intervention, could change a text’s transmission even before readers brought their own interpretations and agendas to a text. From as early as the sixteenth century, scholars have asserted that the Book of Travels has undergone revision and editing by at least one, if not, multiple editors. These claims, however, have not been supported through textual evidence.

Based on the textual comparison of the manuscripts and the Hebrew printed editions, the Book of Travels contains variants across all of these textual witnesses. This is particularly true of the Rome manuscript with its omissions and the Jerusalem manuscript with its additions. Discrepancies in numbers, the in/exclusion of cities, the ways in which the Prophet Muhammad is referred to, and how each version of the Book of Travels handles Christian references and pilgrims, display the various interferences in the text by scribes and printers. Where readers of the London manuscript would have encountered the ‘madman’ instead of Muhammad, the Jerusalem text removed all references to Muhammad. Similarly, readers of the 1556 and 1583 editions would have read texts devoid of references to Christians. The variants across the manuscripts not only demonstrate that the extant manuscripts are not directly textually related but that the medieval transmission is attested to in four separate versions. Further variants in the printed tradition illustrate that the transmission of the Book of Travels across the centuries has not remained pure and has, in fact, been altered. Since the earliest transmission is lost, an Ur-text cannot be reconstructed. This further legitimizes an approach to the Book of Travels which focuses attention on the forms of the text as it was read and received rather than by the putative original.

The textual relationship between the Jerusalem manuscript and Abraham Usque’s 1556 edition has already been noted by scholars. Nevertheless, the centrality of the Jerusalem manuscript (and its now lost counterparts) remains understated. Here too textual comparisons reveal that the 1543 Soncino edition is based on a similar text. Copied in Italy c.1520, the Jerusalem text spawned Hebrew editions in Constantinople,

¹ See Beit-Arié, East and West, pp. 81-83.
² Tolan, p. 160.
Italy and Germany. The Jerusalem text was further perpetuated through Latin translation. Montano used the 1543 edition for his Latin translation printed in 1575, whilst L’Empereur consulted the 1543 and 1583 editions (incidentally the same text) to produce his 1633 Latin translation (Chapter 5). It is a single textual witness, the version of the Jerusalem manuscript, which has been preserved in the medium of print. Here, further research is needed to ascertain if this trend continues with later manuscripts, and the early modern vernacular editions in French (1734) and English (1783).

Tracing the chronological transmission of the Book of Travels and focusing on the textual witnesses provides sufficient evidence to state that the Book of Travels not only survived in different states but continued to be transmitted across time, borders and religious divides. Missing from this picture, however, is the vital component which adds depth to the question of the text’s survival; the Book of Travels enjoyed an enduring and rich transmission because it continued to find relevance amongst audiences. Who these audiences were was the focus of Chapters 4 and 5.

The fragmentary and largely descriptive modern historiography has mined the Book of Travels for what the narrative can tell scholars about the Jewish and non-Jewish twelfth century world. As such, the modern reception is an authoritative one in which the Book of Travels has been used as an eye-witness account. The antecedents for this reception, however, date to the Middle Ages. Whilst the extant manuscripts attest to a medieval Jewish readership, their readers are silent. It is the six direct reception examples explored above which highlight how medieval Jewish authors understood the narrative. Three broad categories emerged: polemical arguments, biblical geography and history-genealogy. As such, the Book of Travels was interpreted in a multiplicity of contexts which might not have been expected for a travel narrative. It is the last two categories which particularly highlight the roots of the modern uses of the Book of Travels; medieval Jewish authors also understood the narrative to be a factual source which could shed light on Jewish history and the biblical landscape. This was not exclusive to a Jewish audience, but is also exemplified by Christian readers such as Johannes Buxtorf and Montano. How a travel narrative became a de facto history text requires some explanation.

The limits of space do not permit a full discussion of the small, but notable debate surrounding the origins of Jewish historical writing. Initiated by Yosef
Yerushalmi in the 1980s, he argued that prior to the sixteenth century Jews did not write history. This has since been challenged by Robert Bonfil, who noted that Yerushalmi failed to provide a working definition for history/historiography on which to base his arguments. Most recently, David Wacks wrote that Christians and Muslims developed official state histories and royal historiographies in the medieval period but that the stateless Jews had no reason to write them. 3 In accepting that medieval Jews did not produce any significant historiography, those seeking accounts of the Jewish past would have encountered a lacuna. With the Book of Travels read as a true account by medieval and early modern readers, the narrative’s descriptions were understood as historical insights into the past. Consequently, the Book of Travels has been appropriated, and perpetuated, as a travel narrative-cum-history by its later readers, which has helped to sustain its relevance and contribute to its transmission across the centuries.

The Hebrew print editions enabled the Book of Travels to reach even wider audiences. In the absence of direct reception examples, further research might prove fruitful as there are early modern Hebrew writers who quote the Book of Travels in their writings. 4 The 1543 and 1556 editions, nevertheless, circulated amongst a largely Iberian readership. The Soncino Press marketed the narrative on a cultural level—a connection to the Iberian and biblical past, and to replace the lost libraries of those who left Spain in 1492. Usque’s own interest in the Book of Travels was projected onto his intended audience, printing it for fellow exiles and conversos who sought to re-embrace their Judaism and longed for redemption from their exilic state. This also accounts for the additional four messianic lines printed at the end of the 1556 edition. As David Ruderman writes ‘the publishing of books also constituted a means of arresting motion, of preserving and storing the memory of the past and its traditions as an attempt—albeit elusive—of fixing and stabilising the present’. 5 The Book of Travels became further entrenched in Iberian culture as exiles and their descendants used books as symbols of memory and continuity.

4 Such as: David Gans, Gedaliah ibn Yahya and Rabbi David ben Solomon ibn Zimra.
By the sixteenth century, Jews were no longer the sole recipients of the Book of Travels. As shown above, the 1583 edition was used by Buxtorf to illuminate the ancient roots of cities in the Middle East within a scholarly discourse. Montano too used the narrative for the purposes of biblical geography. The Book of Travels in its Christian reception then exhibits a certain consistency in that it initially continued to be read as an eye-witness account. Yet, Montano also appropriated Benjamin of Tudela as a proto-Spanish explorer, demonstrating that the text had a contemporary resonance for the Spanish exploration of the New World. Montano’s 1575 Latin translation thus generated interest in the Book of Travels and transmitted it to Latin-reading Christian audiences. The present study would be incomplete without an examination of L’Empereur’s 1633 Latin translation. Here there is a notable shift in how the Book of Travels was understood; L’Empereur challenged the eye-witness authority and trustworthiness of Benjamin as author which had been accepted since the fourteenth century. Through the Prefatory material in which L’Empereur explicitly stated his intentions to attack the Jews, the Notae shed further light on how L’Empereur interpreted the narrative and used passages to dispute its descriptions, thereby highlighting the ‘nonsense’ and ‘lies’ of the Jews. By the seventeenth century, the Book of Travels had entered into the realm of polemics. As the Book of Travels was transmitted amongst a Christian readership the text took on new layers of interpretation and uses. The 1575 edition is further significant for its success as measured by the number of Christian scholars who owned and annotated their own copies. Individual studies of these examples would further contribute to an understanding of the Book of Travels’ reception within the Republic of Letters.

A seemingly innocuous text, in the centuries under examination, the Book of Travels has experienced varying levels of censorship (Chapter 6). First, the text has been subject to ecclesiastical censorship in both manuscript and print. The Jerusalem manuscript was excised in 1599, although the Hebrew printed editions had already printed and transmitted the text rendering the censorship ineffectual. Second, Usque deliberately altered the text to omit all Christian references. Third, the Spanish Inquisition in its fight to maintain Catholic hegemony and prevent the relapse of conversos also proscribed a number of passages in successive Indices of Prohibited

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6 Such as: Johannes Buxtorf the Elder, Joseph Scaliger and Isaac Casaubon.
Books. Despite outright prohibition, expurgation and self-censorship the transmission of the *Book of Travels* continued, albeit occasionally in attenuated form.

The *Book of Travels* has enjoyed a rich and uninterrupted textual transmission. The textual witnesses have shown that the narrative has survived in four separate states where scribes and printers alike have freely altered the text. To fully appreciate the *Book of Travels*’ transmission, however, one must turn to the reception of the text and how both Jewish and Christian audiences read, understood and appropriated Benjamin’s narrative. In approaching the *Book of Travels* through its transmission and reception, this study has offered a new framework with which to engage with the *Book of Travels* and its afterlives. Intra-textual studies of the text can only be taken so far; this is not to close the conversation but to add a new dimension. Questions of authorial intentions, authenticity and the extent to which the text is full of fables and embellishments quickly become redundant when the discussion is shifted to its transmission and audiences. As a result, this has revealed that the *Book of Travels* was understood as a more complex text than given credit for by most scholars. In attracting both Jewish and Christian readers alike, the *Book of Travels* endured and continued to find relevance amongst audiences. Through its versatility the *Book of Travels* has, therefore, achieved a prominent position within the Jewish and Christian worlds, crossing cultural and religious divides between its twelfth century origins and the seventeenth century.
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Appendix

The Prologue and the Book of Travels’ description of Baghdad have been frequently referred to through this study. The two passages have thus been transcribed. The text has been supplied from the Jerusalem manuscript. Since the earliest transmission of the Book of Travels is lost, there is no basis for choosing the London manuscript over the other extant manuscripts. As such, the Jerusalem manuscript has been given preference as it is the text which has transmitted the Book of Travels into print, in both Hebrew and Latin, thereby reaching the widest audience.

Prologue

This book is composed from the words that one man from the land of Navarre related whose name is Rabbi Benjamin, son of Jonah from Tudela. He went out and came to many far lands, as will be explained in these words of his. In all the places that he went, he wrote all the things which he saw or which he heard from men of truth which were heard of in the land of Sefarad. Similarly he mentions some of the sages and leaders in some of the places. When he returned, he brought these words of his with him to the land of Castile in the year 4933 [1173]. The aforementioned Rabbi Benjamin was educated and wise, a master of Torah and halachah [Jewish law] and in everything that they tested, in order to check him, found his words correct and accurate, stable in his mouth, because he was a man of truth. This is the beginning of his words:1

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1 Jerusalem 82647, f.2r.
Baghdad

The city of Baghdad is the largest in the Levant, governed by Emir al-Mu'min al-'Abbas from the family of the Prophet, and he is responsible for all the Ishmaelites and all the kings of Ishmael. He has a palace within Baghdad that he uses to control the Christians, similar to the Pope. There are three courts and within the palace there is a great forest of all kinds of trees and between them are all kinds of animals. Within the forest there is a means of water coming from the river Euphrates and at a certain hour, he takes himself to it and rejoices and drinks a cup of it. With his attendants and his ministers, there is the great king 'Abbas and he loves Israel very much, and in front of him serve many from Israel and he knows every language and is skilled in the Torahs of Moses and reads and writes in the holy language. And he does not want to enjoy except according to his wish, and does miracles and signs in them, and sells them in his court and they are the greatest of the earth, and from them he eats and drinks and is to all the nations and they cannot do a good man with faith and the people of Israel.
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וכל זה עשה מלך יא"ק מלח Helvetica introduced the idea of using a single, unified font for all types of text, including titles, headings, and body text. This was a revolutionary concept at the time and paved the way for modern typography and design. Because of its influence, Helvetica is one of the most widely used and recognized fonts in the world today.
From there it is two days to Baghdad, which is a great city. The head of the government is the caliph, the leader of the faithful, the Abbasid, from the family of their prophet. He is in charge of the law of the Muslims and all the kings of Ishmael bow down to him; he is like the pope of the Christians. He has a palace inside Baghdad that spreads over three miles. Within the palace is a large forest with every kind of tree in the world, whether fruit-bearing [trees] or non-fruit-bearing [trees]. There are all the species of animals. Within the forest is a pool of water that comes from the River Chidekel. When he decides to stroll through it, he comes to rejoice and drink; they trap birds, beasts and fish for him. And he comes to his palace with his advisors and ministers. There the great king the Abbasid.

He loves Israel very much and many of his servants are from Israel. He knows all the languages and is knowledgeable in the Torah of Moses and reads and writes in the Holy Tongue [Hebrew]. He only wants to benefit from his own work. He makes mats and seals them with his seal and his ministers sell them in the market and the great leaders of the land buy them, and from their money he eats and drinks. He is a good man, a master of truth and is a speaker of peace for all men. The Muslims are not permitted to see him. Pilgrims come from distant lands to go to Mecca, in the land of Yemen, and petition to pass before him and they say to him from the palace: ‘Our lord, light of the Muslims, illuminator of our law, show us the radiance of your face’. But he does not heed their words. His ministers and servants serve him and they say: ‘Our lord, spread your peace upon these men who come from distant lands, who desire to take refuge in the shadow of your glory’. At that time, he raises and lowers the corner of his robe out from the window and the pilgrims come and kiss it. One of the ministers says: ‘Go in peace because he already wants and gives you peace, our lord, light of the Muslims’. He is like their prophet in their eyes. They continue to their houses rejoicing at the speech that the prince addressed to them and gave them peace, and each one kissed his robe.

All of his brothers and all of his family, each one has a palace within his palace. However they are all imprisoned in chains of iron in every house. They are guarded in every house so that they cannot rebel against the great king because one time there was a rebellion against him by his brothers and they crowned one of them king. They decreed over all his family that they be bound in chains of iron so that they cannot rise up against the great king. Each one sits in their palace in great honour and they have villages and states and they have officers bring the land tax to them. They eat and drink and are happy all the days of their lives.

In the palace of the great king are large buildings and pillars of silver and gold and chests and every precious stone. He does not leave the palace except on one occasion in the year, the holiday that they call Ramadan. They come from distant lands on this day to see his face. He rides on a mule, dressed in royal garments made from gold and silver and on his head is a turban which has precious stones with no measure of value. On the turban is a black scarf for the sake of modesty of the world, as if to say, look at all this honour, darkness will cover it, covered by darkness on the day of death.

All the Ishmaelite [Muslim] rulers from all the lands come with him dressed in fine garments and riding on horses; all the princes of Arabia, princes of Madai and Paras, princes of Tibet, all within a three month journey. He goes from the palace to the house of prayer that is on the Gate of Botzza. It is a large house of prayer and everyone goes dressed in garments of silk and purple, both the men and the women. In all the courtyards and markets you will find all kinds of musical instruments, and they sing and dance before the great king called Caliph; they greet him in a great voice and they say to him: “peace upon you our lord the king”, he kisses his robe and indicates to
them peace, grasping his robe in his hand. He goes to the courtyard of prayer and ascends a wooden tower and interprets their law to them. The learned Muslims rise and pray for him in great abundance for his piety and all respond “amen”. Afterwards he blesses them and they bring a camel before him and he slaughters it, and this is their pesach sacrifice. He gives to the princes, and they send for some from him to taste from the slaughter by the hand of their holy king and they rejoice in this.

Afterwards he exits the house of prayer, he goes to the bank of the Chidekel [Tigris] and returns unaccompanied to his palace. The leaders of the Muslims go by ship on the river until he enters his palace. He does not return by the way which he came and the same road that is on the river is guarded all year so that no man shall pass in the place of his footsteps. He does not leave from the palace more than [once] each year. He is a pure and pious man.

He built the palace on the other side of the river on the bank of the Parat [Euphrates] which is on one side of the city. He built large houses, markets and inns for the ill poor who come to be healed there. There are about sixty shops of healers; they all have spices and all their needs are supplied by the house of the king. Any ill person who comes there is funded from the money of the king until he is healed. There is a great building that is called dar-al Mraftan. It is a building where all the insane are imprisoned in the summer. They imprison each one in chains of iron until their minds return. Each one returns to his house but each month they are examined by officers of the king, if their minds are settled they are released and they go on their way. All this the king does out of charity for all who come to the city of Baghdad, whether sick or insane. The king is a pious man and his intentions are for the good in this matter.

There are, in Baghdad, about 1,000 Jews. They dwell in serenity, quietly and in great respect under the hand of the great king. Among them are great (wise) scholars and the heads of the yeshivot are engaged in the Torah of Moses. In the city are ten yeshivot [Torah academies] – the rosh yeshivah [head of the academy] of the great yeshivah is ha’rav Rabbi Shmuel ben Eli, rosh yeshivah of Gaon Yaakov; the deputy of the levi’im is head of the second; Rabbi Daniel is rosh yeshivah of the third; Rabbi Eliezer the scholar is the rosh yeshivah of the fourth; Rabbi Eliezar ben Tzemach is the head of the seder (order), he is from the family of the prophet Samuel, peace be upon him. He and his brother know how to play the songs that were played by the bards in the time that the Beit Ha’mikdash [Temple] existed; his is the rosh yeshivah of the fifth; Rabbi Chasadya praised of all the scholars is head of the sixth; Rabbi Chagai, the prince, is head of the seventh; Rabbi Azaria is head of the eighth; Rabbi Avraham, nicknamed Abu Tahir, is head of the ninth and Rabbi Zakkai ben Bastnaei, master of the siyum (completion) is head of the tenth. They are called batlanim (idlers) as they are not engaged in other work, except in the needs of the community. Each day of the week they judge (bring justice) to all the Jews of the land except on the second day [Monday] when they all come before the Rav Shmuel, rosh yeshivah of Gaon Yaakov. He stands with the ten batlanim, roshei yeshivot to judge all who come before them. They are led by Rabbi Daniel, son of Chisdai, called Head of the Exile (and his palace is there) He possesses the book of lineage until King David. The Jews call him lord, head of the exile, and the Muslims call him Saidna ben (son of) Daoud. He has great authority over all the communities of Israel under the hand of the Emir, leader of the faithful, lord of the Muslims, because that was what he commanded to his descendants and he made him a seal over all the communities of Israel who live under his law. And thus he commanded all people, whether Muslim or Jew, or from any nation in his kingdom that they stand up before him and give him respect; any who do not stand up receives 100 blows. He goes with knights from the nations and from the Jews and each
time that he goes to see the face of the great king it is announced before him to make a path for “the lord, son of David” as is required for him. They say in their tongue “Amilou tarik la’Saidna ben Daoud”. He rides on a horse and wears clothes of silk and embroidery and a large turban on his head. On his turban is a large white headscarf and on the headscarf is a necklace. His authority extends over all the communities in the land of Shinar, Paras, Karasan, Sheba, which is Yemen, Diyar Beich and all the land of Aram Naharim, and the land of Kot that sits near Mount Ararat, the land of Alaniya which is surrounded by mountains and there is no way for them to leave, except for the iron gates that were made by Alexander of Macedon. Here the nation is called Alan; and the land Sicviya, and all the land of the Torgamim until Mount Asnei, and the land of the Gurgi’in until the River Gichon [Nile]. They are the Gurgashim and they [follow] the laws of the Christians; until the gates of the countries and the good lands and until the land of Hodu [India]. The head [of the exile] gives all the communities permission to appoint any community rav (rabbi) and chazzan (cantor), who go to him and acquire smicha [rabbinic ordination] and receive his authority and they bring gifts from the end of the land.

He has inns, gardens and orchards in Bavel and very large private estates inherited from his forefathers. No man is permitted to take anything from him. He has inns belonging to the Jews and markets and traders and a certain amount of tax each year, except that which is brought from a distant land. The man is very rich and knowledgeable in verse and Talmud and numerous from Israel dine at his table every day. However, at the time of his confirmation as the great head, he gave large amounts of money to the king, to the princes and to the ministers. On the day the king ordained him with authority and installed him in a second chariot which took him from the palace of the king to his house with drummers and dancers. And he bestows smicha to the men of the yeshivah.

The Jews here in Baghdad are Talmud scholars and rich men.

The city of Baghdad has 28 synagogues between Baghdad and al-Korech, which is on the other side of the Chidekel as the river runs through the country. The largest synagogue of the Great Head is a building with pillars of marble of all types of colours, coated in gold and silver. On the pillars are letters of gold – verses of Psalms. There, before the ark is a marble staircase of about ten stairs and at the top are the seats of the Great Head with the leaders of the House of David. The circumference of the city of Baghdad is 3 miles. It is a land of palm trees and orchards that is not found in all the land of Shinar. Merchants come here from all the lands and there are wise men and philosophers with knowledge of magic, and they know all types of sorcery.