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The Education of Children and Youth in the Seventeenth Century Amsterdam's Western Sephardi Community

Abstract: This article is a study of how the Amsterdam Sephardi congregation organized its educational system starting in the early 1600s. On 25 May 1616, the two existing congregations at the time, Bet Jacob [House of Jacob] and Neve Salom [Dwellings of Peace], founded the “Hebra Kedosa Talmud Torah” [Holy Confraternity Talmud Torah], an institution that was to fund the education of male children and youth. On that day, the lay congregational leaders elected two interim officers to organize the festivities two days later on Shavuot, the Jewish festival traditionally associated with the initiation of children in the study of the Torah. The newly formed school educated male children as young as five years old and consisted of six grades, starting with the teaching of the Hebrew alphabet, and ending with the Talmud. In 1637, the congregation founded the “Ets Haim” [Tree of Life] confraternity to provide stipends to older, deserving, and talented students, so that they remained in school. A third stage took place in 1639 when the three congregations united into one under the name “Kahal Kadosh Talmud Torah,” and the merged school consisted of seven grades. The author argues that this educational system was a blending of attributes from the Jewish medieval tradition and the Iberian Jesuit system which emphasized the character formation of its students that the lay founders of the Sephardi congregation had experienced while they were living as *conversos* in Spain or Portugal.

Keywords: Ets Haim, Amsterdam, education, Sephardim, school.

Słowa kluczowe: Ec Chaim, Amsterdam, edukacja, Żydzi sefardyjscy, szkoła.

Introduction

On Friday, 25 May 1616, the Ma'amad, or lay leaders of the Bet Jacob [House of Jacob] Sephardi congregation in Amsterdam, called a meeting of the *yehidim* (tax-paying community members).¹ At the meeting, the leaders announced their decision to collaborate with Neve Salom [Dwellings of Peace], the other Amsterdam congregation, to found the “Hebra Kedosa Talmud Torah” [the Hebra]. This confraternity would go on to fund and provide services to their community’s school. The leaders elected two interim officers to organize the festivities two days later on Shavuot. By assigning this holiday as the day to honor the confraternity, the Amsterdam Sephardim were re-establishing the medieval Jewish custom of initiating children in the study of Torah on such a festival.² While founding the school shows a symbolic desire to recover a Jewish past, it is worth considering to what extent such recovery could be possible for a community of former *conversos*. In this essay, I argue that the founders of the Amsterdam Talmud Torah Hebra were committed to recovering their medieval Iberian Jewish past, while simultaneously committed to preserving and propagating the secular education they had received in their youth in Jesuit schools.

The primary sources for this essay are the archival Portuguese documents dealing with the Amsterdam educational system that the early founders of the community put together in various stages. The first records we have are those dealing with the founding of the Talmud Torah confraternity on 27 May 1616, and its so-called Constitutions (*Constituições* in Portuguese), a document later renamed in Hebrew as *haskamot* (*ascamot*, ordinances). Additional information on the school system can also be found on long-term contracts given to teachers since about 1619. In 1637 the congregation founded the Ets Haim confraternity to fund the school’s upper levels. Eventually, Ets Haim became the institution that trained rabbis and religious teachers. Finally, we have several culminating documents put together in 1639, when the three existing congregations merged under the name “Kahal Kadosh Talmud Torah.” Examining these organizational documents

¹ I wish to thank Laura Leibman, Michael Hoberman, and Hilit Surowitz-Israel who read an earlier version of this essay and offered useful feedback. I am also grateful to the two anonymous peer-reviewers who offered useful comments and questions about the essay. Finally, I thank Michaël Green and Myriam Silvera, editors of the volume, for doing all the work that its publication entitles. Any errors, though, remain my own.

² Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, 1984), 18–34.

elucidates how the former *converso* lay leaders of the Amsterdam community organized and governed the Amsterdam community school. These documents also give details of the school curriculum and the pedagogy that the schoolteachers imparted, and that learned rabbis and cantors brought to Amsterdam from Italy and Ottoman Sephardi communities.

While recent scholarship has demonstrated that the founders of the Amsterdam Sephardi community brought with them a Catholic worldview that influenced their understanding of Judaism, it has yet to explore the Iberian educational institutions which educated many of them in their younger years. Instead, some scholars have been more inclined to explore the possible Calvinist influence on the Sephardi educational system. In a similar vein, scholars have already demonstrated that the initial return of former *conversos* to rabbinic Judaism was possible because they brought to Amsterdam from Eastern Sephardi communities learned rabbis and teachers to guide them. However, scholars have paid little attention to the pedagogical approaches used by these teachers and, more importantly, to how these learned teachers may have influenced their young male students. This essay contends that the Jesuit educational emphasis on the character formation of young students inspired the founders of the Amsterdam Talmud Torah educational system. This exploration will help us understand what the Amsterdam former *conversos* saw in their Christian past worth retaining and compatible with the rabbinic Judaism they had recently embraced. Although a Jesuit education's goal was to rear young Catholic males, this was only one objective of a broader, all-encompassing notion of education. To be educated in the Jesuit tradition meant to know classical languages, such as Latin and/or Greek, to demonstrate that one was cultured and pious, to appreciate theatrical performances, and to be a man of conversation. In sum, to receive a formation to become what in Spanish culture was known as *un hombre discreto* (a discreet or complete man).³ Similarly, the Amsterdam Portuguese Jews wanted to offer a complete education in their Talmud Torah educational system, while relying on Sephardi-learned rabbis and teachers to instruct their children in the religious Jewish-rabbinic tradition.

³ Baltasar Gracián (1601–1658), educated by the Jesuits and later a member and teacher of the order, authored *El discreto*—in English, *The Compleat Gentleman*. In the words of Pedro María Muñoz, “The discreet man is one who at any moment can read the minds of others and remains in control, all the while covering those errors which are inevitable in the human condition.” See the entry: Pedro María Muñoz, “Baltasar Gracián,” in Tracy Chevalier (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Essay* (Chicago, 1997), 357–358, here 358.

Scholarly debate on the Talmud Torah–Ets Haim educational system

Scholars have often discussed Amsterdam's educational system in their publications.⁴ Some scholars frequently rely on the 1639 so-called *merger agreement* of the three congregations—consisting of 42 ordinances of which one, ordinance 22, is dedicated to the school and its organization—as well as on two seventeenth-century Hebrew sources, comments left by visitors Rabbi Sheftel Horowitz, in the 1640s, and Shabbetai Bass, in the 1680s. Both rabbis were positively impressed by how the Amsterdam schools taught Sephardi children and contrasted the Amsterdam schools with the Ashkenazi school system. What most impressed Rabbi Horowitz was how those young students up to age thirteen—the age of majority in the Jewish tradition—were first taught the twenty-four books of Scripture and then the *Mishnayot* (Mishnah). Only upon reaching thirteen years of age, he reported, would they begin to study the Talmud.⁵ The comments left years later by Shabbetai Bass are even more extensive, as he first quotes Rabbi Horowitz's observations of the school system and then provides his own far more explicit comments. Scholars have read these comments as proof that the Amsterdam Talmud Torah school continued, decades

⁴ See Yosef Kaplan, "The Sephardim in North-Western Europe and the New World," in Haim Beinart (ed.), *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy* (Jerusalem, 1992), 2:240–314, mainly, 281–282; Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington, 1997); Matt Goldish, "The Portuguese Rabbinate of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century: A Unique Institution Viewed from Within and Without," in Chaya Brasz, Yosef Kaplan (eds.), *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others: Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Leiden, 2001), 9–19. See also, Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth Century Amsterdam* (Portland, 2004), 181–182, 210–211.

⁵ See Benjamin E. Fisher, *Amsterdam's People of the Book: Jewish Society and the Turn to Scripture in the Seventeenth Century* (Cincinnati, 2020), 27–84. In chapter one, Fisher discusses the children's education in the Amsterdam community. He has suggested that Amsterdam young girls and boys studied together in the society Keter Sem Tob (Crown of the Good Name), see *ibid.*, 50–51, 89. However, this reflects a misreading of Daniel Leví de Barrios' Spanish Baroque. Barrios refers to *mocedade*, a feminine noun meaning 'youth,' which Fisher has taken to mean a 'young girl' (*moça*) and *moço* a 'young boy' in the masculine form. Barrios alternates *moço* with *mancebo* and refers to *veinte mancebos prudentes* ('twenty young men') and to *hermanas diez y siete* ('seventeen sisters'), members of the Keter Sem Tob confraternity. This confraternity consisted of young males who gathered to study every Shabbat and seventeen females who performed some (unexplained) charity services. Despite these minor misunderstandings, Fisher's main ideas of the centrality of the Bible in the Amsterdam educational system are convincing and well-developed.

after its founding, to provide the community's children with an excellent education. As Benjamin Fisher has already pointed out, Rabbi Bass's focus is far more detailed and elaborated than Horowitz's. Bass describes the curriculum followed by the school as consisting of six classes. In the first four classes, the school taught the Bible to the children—Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings—and only in the fifth and sixth classes were the students exposed to the systematic study of the Talmud. Although Fisher provides a valuable interpretation of these two contemporary Hebrew sources and the primary Portuguese archival sources, what is still wanted is an examination of the pedagogical techniques that the actual teachers at the Talmud Torah schools were using in their teaching. In addition to the observations made by the two Ashkenazi visitors, we also know about the teaching pedagogy of teachers, such as Joseph Salom, formerly of Salonica, and Jacob Juda. We can demonstrate that these teachers taught the Bible in much the same way as in Ottoman Sephardi communities. The oral translation of the Hebrew Bible taught to Ladino-speaking children was done by what is known as *enladinar* (literally, 'to translate'). It taught children and youth small Hebrew grammatical units that students learned by rote and translated word-for-word into Ladino.⁶

Yosef Kaplan, who has published extensively on the Amsterdam community, has suggested that the Ets Haim Yeshivah curriculum, the advanced level of the Amsterdam educational system, resembles that of the Jesuit schools.⁷ Kaplan's suggestion is justifiable, as the former New Christians who founded the Amsterdam community received their education in Spain or Portugal. Jesuits had numerous schools scattered in most cities and towns and educated many well-to-do youths who attended Jesuit schools. Another piece of evidence supporting the Jesuit influence is in two seventeenth-century Jewish polemic works against Christianity, such as Rabbi Saul Levi Mortera's "Obstaculos y opociones contra la religion Xptiana."

⁶ See Aldina Quintana, "From the Master's Voice to the Disciple's Script: Genizah Fragments of a Bible Glossary in Ladino," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 6 (2008), 187–235. Amsterdam's records dealing with teachers' responsibilities often mention the teaching of Ladino. For example, when Abraham Baruh Franco left his teaching position in 1 Ab 5441 [summer 1641], the records indicate that he taught children "a parassah en Ladino." See MS Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief [henceforth: MS GAS] 334, no. 19, f. 100b.

⁷ Kaplan sees the Jesuit influence reflected in the rational approach adopted by the school: "Studies [in the Amsterdam school system] were graded and rational (showing no small influence from Jesuit pedagogy)." See Yosef Kaplan, "Jews and Judaism in the Hartlib Circle," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 38–39 (2005–2006), 186–215, here 196. See also id., *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden, 2000), 14.

“Obstaculos” is the story of a Portuguese *converso* who attended a Jesuit school and, as a student, felt like an outsider because of his New Christian background, which prevented him from becoming a Jesuit.⁸

We also know that the Spanish poet and playwright Miguel (Daniel Leví) de Barrios, who joined the Amsterdam community in the 1650s, attended a Jesuit school. Barrios left references to his Jesuit education in his polemic work against Catholics, *Desembozos de la Verdad contra las Máscaras del Mundo* [Unmasking the Truth against the World’s Façade]. In this work, Barrios expresses guilt for his past life in Spain, and he blames the Iberian *converso*’s life of apostasy on the Jesuits. “[Los padres] de la Compañía” (the Fathers of the Society [of Jesus]), he says, who instruct in their schools “the sons of Jacob” (Iberian *conversos*), had taught him the theology of the Trinity.⁹

Kaplan has also discussed the Iberian cultural background of the Amsterdam Portuguese Jews and their desire to be perceived as *gente política* (people of good breeding). They wanted to show that the Judaism they practiced was *bom judesmo* (worthy Judaism), to contrast it to the Judaism followed by Ashkenazi Jewry.¹⁰ These terms, which show up frequently in the Amsterdam communal records, carry Baroque-Iberian cultural ideas that are challenging to convey in English, as Kaplan himself admits. These terms express civic and cultural ideals that former *conversos* learned in their youth and brought with them as part of their cultural past and were determined to preserve them after their return to rabbinic Judaism.¹¹

⁸ See Yosef Kaplan, “Rabbi Saul Levi Mortera’s Treatise, ‘Arguments against the Christian Religion,’” *Studies on the History of Dutch Jewry* 1 (1975), 17, 21–23 [Hebrew]. See a condensed English translation in *Emmanuel* 2 (1980), 95–112. The original manuscript is accessible at Ets Haim Library, EH 48 D 38: “Obstaculos y opociones contra la religion Xptiana.”

⁹ *Desembozos*, undated but probably from the 1670s, is a polemic work against Christianity and against Barrios’ contemporary Isaac Orobio de Castro. The Amsterdam Ma’amad confiscated and censored the manuscript; Barrios finally published the booklet without the offending parts, in defense of Judaism. I am citing from the selection included in María del Carmen Artigas (ed.), *Antología Sefaradí: 1492–1700* (Madrid, 1997), 117. For a study of *Desembozos*, see Kenneth R. Scholberg, “Miguel de Barrios and the Amsterdam Sephardic Community,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 53 (1962), 120–159, here 147. For the censoring of Barrios’ book, see Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 247.

¹⁰ See Yosef Kaplan, “*Gente Política*: The Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam vis-à-vis Dutch Society,” in Brasz, Kaplan (eds.), *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others*, 21–40.

¹¹ These cultural ideals are evident in the theatrical way synagogue services and celebrations of some Jewish festivals such as Shavuot and Purim were conducted on several

The Jesuit order and its educational system

The founders of the Society of Jesus were ten men under the leadership of the former Spanish army soldier Ignatius of Loyola. In 1540, in Rome, Italy, they founded the Society “to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith.”¹² According to Jesuit scholars, the first school at Messina, in Sicily, Italy, was an immediate success among the town’s leading citizens. The founding of the school was a significant turning point in the character of the Jesuit Society that from then on undertook the schooling of youth as its formal ministry.¹³ Five Jesuit education attributes have corresponding parallels in the Amsterdam Talmud Torah school:

(1) The *Ratio Studiorum* [the *Ratio*], published in 1599, regulated teaching in Jesuit schools. This comprehensive document prescribes the administration, curriculum, method, and discipline of Jesuit schools worldwide.

(2) Jesuit schools provided education free of charge to students, and thus, Jesuits had to rely on donations from outsiders to cover the high costs associated with their schools. As a result, Jesuit schools catered to the sons of the wealthy to also educate poor children.¹⁴

(3) Jesuit schools were enormously successful, as their educational system focused on the specific needs of youth. This attention to the young impacted how contemporary civil society and families viewed adolescence as a life stage between childhood and adulthood.¹⁵

occasions. Kaplan, in “*Gente Politica*,” 27 has already shown that the Ma’amad made seating arrangements in the synagogue based on concerns for congregants’ proper behavior as well as making Christian visitors and tourists feel as if they were attending a theatrical performance.

¹² John W. O’Malley, S.J., “Introduction,” in John W. O’Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven Harris, T. Frank Kennedy (eds.), *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts 1540–1773* (Toronto, 2006), xxiv; xxiii–xxxiv.

¹³ John W. Padberg, S.J., “Development of the *Ratio Studiorum*,” in Vincent J. Duminuco, S.J. (ed.), *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives* (New York, 2000), 80–99. By 1599 there were about 200 Jesuit schools all over Europe, *ibid.*, 80. See also, O’Malley, “Introduction,” xxxi: “[Jesuits] all taught the ‘lower disciplines’ of the humanistic program . . . not as a preparation for theology, . . . but as a program complete in itself, . . . that would provide laymen with the learning and skills they needed to make their way in this world.”

¹⁴ See Olwen Hufton, “Every Tub on Its Own Bottom: Funding a Jesuit College in Early Modern Europe,” in O’Malley, Bailey, Harris, Kennedy (eds.), *The Jesuits II*, 5–23.

¹⁵ See Philippe Ariès, “Conclusion: School and the Duration of Childhood,” in *id.*, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York, 1962), 329 and ff. The idea that a Jesuit education resulted in a lengthened childhood is evident throughout Ariès’ book.

(4) The curriculum in Jesuit schools included little Catholic doctrine, as its educational goal was to prepare young men to succeed in worldly careers, thereby making a Jesuit education attractive to non-Catholics.¹⁶

(5) In addition to the network of schools in Europe, Jesuits transplanted their school system throughout the colonial mercantile Iberian empires. By their method of ‘accommodation’ or cultural translation, Jesuits educated the young in other non-Christian, indigenous societies.¹⁷

The founding of the Amsterdam Talmud Torah confraternity in 1616

When in 1616, the two congregations Bet Jacob and Neve Salom agreed to found the Hebra Kedosa Talmud Torah to “enjoy peace between the two congregations,”¹⁸ the governors most likely had two primary intentions. One was to raise funds to provide needy children with books and other educational necessities free of charge, instead of relying only on the communal *sedaca* (charity) funds.¹⁹ The other was to plan how the lay leaders of both congregations would govern the school. Becoming a confraternity member was free (*sem pagar*) and only required the modest monthly contribution—called *tamid*—of half a florin [*haskamah* 2].²⁰ Membership was open to males of all ages, and a look at the names of those who signed the agreement in 1616 demonstrates the confraternity’s intent to benefit its members as a kind of mutual aid society. Some were young students, such as Menasseh ben Israel, who was about 12 years old at the time²¹; Moshe Rephael de Aguilar

¹⁶ Hufton, “Every Tub on Its Own Bottom,” 8, quoting E. W. Nelson, mentions Henry IV of France, a Protestant, as “probably the royal figure who gave the most to the Jesuits.”

¹⁷ For the method of accommodation, see Peter Burke, “The Jesuits and the Art of Translation in Early Modern Europe,” in O’Malley, Bailey, Harris, Kennedy (eds.), *The Jesuits II*, 24–32. Also in the same volume, Charlotte de Castelnau-L’Estoile, “The Uses of Shamanism: Evangelizing Strategies and Missionary Models in Seventeenth Century Brazil,” 616–637.

¹⁸ See Termos de Talmud Torah e de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1051, f. 1b. There is no information available about how the two congregations educated their children before 1616. The two were originally one and had split into two around 1612, perhaps due to differences of opinion regarding rituals. See Herman Prins Salomon, *Portrait of a New Christian: Fernão Álvares Melo (1569–1632)* (Paris, 1982), 133–134. See also Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 172.

¹⁹ The *sedaca* funds paid the teachers’ salaries. *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁰ Termos de Talmud Torah e de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1051, f. 1a.

²¹ See Salomon, *Portrait of a New Christian*, 134–135, n. 31. See MS GAS 334, no. 1051, f. 5; Menasseh’s signature is number 27.

was about 18, and both later became congregational teachers. Others were the current school's teachers, like Jossef Shalom and Jacob Juda Leao. The names of most others signing the document stand out as having been born and raised as New Christians in Portugal. A total of 170 members signed the founding document. The collaboration between the two congregations lasted at least long enough for the celebrations on Shavuot, two days later, and the putting together of the confraternity's Constitutions, which were dated five months later (14 Hesvan 5376 [6 November 1615]). However, about two years later, in 1618, the two congregations split into three: Bet Jacob, Neve Salom, and Bet Israel, and the next recorded meeting discussing the school did not take place until four years later, in July 1620, when the list of paying members consisted only of 72.²² Another indication that collaboration stalled is that from about 1619 to about 1631, the three congregations, Bet Jacob, Bet Israel, and Neve Salom, were not sharing their respective teachers, and each referred to their school as Talmud Torah.²³

Like other confraternities in the Amsterdam community, Talmud Torah was an institution that blended attributes from the Jewish tradition and the Iberian Catholic ones.²⁴ From the Jewish tradition, the institution received a Jewish name, "Talmud Torah" [Study of Torah], and it was honored on Shavuot, a festival with a long and meaningful tradition associated with

²² Salomon, *Portrait of a New Christian*, 135, n. 32, citing d'Ancona, concluded that collaboration between Bet Jacob and Neve Salom "was never operative." Nevertheless, since 24 Sevat 5382 [4 February 1622], there was a collaboration between the three congregations on the *imposta* (taxes). See *Libro dos Termos da Ymposta*, MS GAS 334, no. 13.

²³ Bet Jacob congregation in 1619 formally hired Joseph Salom (he was already teaching). In 1621 it hired Rabbi Saul Levi Mortera; Jacob Yeuda replaced Yosef Yesurum. See *Termos de Talmud Torah e de Ets Haim*, MS GAS 334, no. 1051, ff. 6b–9b. Bet Israel in 1626 had three teachers: Jacob Montesinos, who taught from Aleph-bet to Rashi (commentaries) until 1626 when he went to Italy. Hazan Rubi David Pardo taught little ones (*meninos*) until 1626, and since 1626 replaced Pardo and taught *meninos* and *mosos* (youths). Josef Delmedigo was responsible for teaching older students (*mancebos*). See *Livro dos Termos de Bet Israel*, MS GAS 334, no. 10, see entries on 13 Nisan 5386 [1626], ff. 123b, 124a. In 5390 [1630], however, Salom ben Joseph (son of Joseph Salom) was hired to teach from Aleph-bet to Prophets, Rashi, and the beginning of Gemara, with the proviso that in the absence of R. David Pardo, he would substitute for him (*ibid.*, ff. 149b–150a). In 5391 [1631] (see *ibid.*, f. 152a), Ruby Semuel Tardiola, from Livorno, was hired to teach the last two upper levels: Halakha and Talmud. Neve Salom's records start in the year 5377 [1616–1617]. By then, it had three teachers and rented a room (*camara*) as a school. See MS GAS 334, no. 9, 20 *Tisri* 5377 [1616], f. 14.

²⁴ For similarities between Iberian confraternities and Amsterdam's, see Julia R. Lieberman, "Adolescence and the Period of Apprenticeship among the Western Sephardim in the Seventeenth Century," *El Prezente: Studies in Sephardic Culture* 4 (2010), 11–23. See also Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare among the Portuguese Jews in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Oxford, 2012), 124.

the study of Torah. According to rabbinic interpretation, the festival commemorates how God gave the Jewish people the Ten Commandments, the written Torah. Furthermore, it was customary to initiate Jewish children in studying the Torah on Shavuot since the medieval period.²⁵

However, the festival's dual purpose, celebrating learning and raising funds to provide good quality education to all children in the community, had goals like those of the Jesuit educational system. Those joining the confraternity participated in the celebrations. On the Shabbat preceding Shavuot, they received a collective *berakhah* (blessing) in the synagogue, and all the voluntary pledges made that day went to the Talmud Torah fund. Shavuot, therefore, became the festival when donors gave funding to support the school, and the confraternity honored them.²⁶ Several days after Shavuot, the annual installation of new officers took place, and five months later, the officers drew up a set of Constitutions. The new members signed and ratified the document.²⁷ Subsequent records show that the 1616 decisions became a tradition that lasted for decades. Students competed for prizes on Shavuot and in two other Jewish festivals: *Shabbat Micamoha* (Shabbat before Purim, in the spring) and *Shimhat Torah* (in the fall).²⁸ At least one year, though, in 1624, a member of the Bet Jacob synagogue, Rehuel Jessurun (formerly of Lisbon), staged at the synagogue on Shavuot a Portuguese allegorical play, the *Dialogo dos montes* [Dialogue of the Mountains]. Former Catholic adults who had attended Jesuit schools in either Spain or Portugal in their youth may have felt as if they were back at home.²⁹

²⁵ See Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 79.

²⁶ Other signs of recognizing donors were putting their names on *taboas* (boards), particularly in the upper-level classrooms. See, e.g., Termos de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 2a; see also *ibid.*, f. 24.

²⁷ See Termos de Talmud Torah e de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1051, ff. 1–6.

²⁸ See *ibid.*, f. 2b. However, later in 1624, the confraternity decided not to give prizes any longer to save expenses. See *ibid.*, f. 14b.

²⁹ The confraternity records do not mention the *Dialogo*, which remained in manuscript until 1767. See Rehuel Jessurun, *Dialogo dos Montes*, ed. and trans. Philip Polack (London, 1975). According to Daniel Leví de Barrios, Jessurun, alias Paulo de Pina, known as “the poet,” was previously a monk born in Portugal, see Daniel Leví de Barrios, *Triunfo del gobierno popular y de la Antigüedad Holandesa* ([Amsterdam], 5443 [1683]), nlb. Jessurun's interest in allegorical theatrical performances perhaps indicates that he was a Jesuit or was educated by the Jesuits. Polack identified the *Dialogo* with the Iberian tradition of allegorical plays (*autos sacramentales*) that explained Catholic theology. Margarida Miranda, “Teatralidade e linguagem cénica no teatro jesuítico em Portugal (XVI),” *Humanitas* 58 (2006), 391–409, demonstrates that theatrical performances in Jesuit schools were open to the public to entice possible local donors.

“Constituicoens da santa hebra do Talmud Torah deste Kahal de Bet Jaacob” [Constitutions of the Holy Confraternity of Talmud Torah of the Bet Jacob Congregation], which the first members of the confraternity ratified and signed in the fall of 1616, is a document that dictates how to organize and govern the Amsterdam school.³⁰ It resembles the third part of the Jesuit’s 1599 Latin *Ratio*, the “Rules for the Lower Studies.”³¹ The Amsterdam Constitutions meanwhile similarly regulate, in 28 chapters, the complex hierarchical structure that would govern the school.³² Like the *Ratio*, the Constitutions seem reactive to the contemporary absolutist monarchies under which the ex-New Christians grew up, and show a great deal of concern for distributing authority.³³ The ultimate authority were the members of the Ma’amad, or lay leaders of the community. Below them, there were two *parnassim* (lay officers) and one *gabay* (treasurer). The three were elected annually by vote of adult confraternity members, and had great power over the entire school system, responsible for hiring and supervising teachers and students, overseeing their daily attendance, and the monthly testing and grading of pupils (Chapter 6). The *gabay* also acted as the school registrar, keeping a notebook with individual records of the monthly progress or lack of progress made by each of the pupils, and then advised teachers on the appropriate action to take (Chapters 7 and 15).³⁴ Despite the officers’ potential lack of Jewish background and the teachers’ contrasting command of the subjects they taught, these lay people, not rabbis or schoolteachers, made teaching decisions. The *parnassim* and *gabay* together were responsible for administering the

³⁰ Termos de Talmud Torah e de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1051, ff. 1–3.

³¹ The *Ratio* consists of three parts. The third, the “Regulations for the lower classes,” would be familiar to the Amsterdam former New Christians who had received a Jesuit education. See Padberg, “Development of the Ratio Studiorum,” 94–96. In Amsterdam, the custom of constantly adding the so-called *termos* to original documents resembles the style of record-keeping used by the Jesuit order.

³² The Constitutions chapters, unnumbered in the original, are numbered here for convenience. The name “Constitutions” recalls a Jesuit document also called Constitutions, which is considered the basis of the *Ratio*. See John W. Padberg, S.J. (ed.), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (St. Louis, 1996), Foreword, vii–ix.

³³ The parallels between the evolution of the concept of childhood, education, and absolutism are suggested by Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 252. Paolo Quattrone also documents the effectiveness of the Society of Jesus in acting at a distance employing a strict hierarchical absolutist control, see Paolo Quattrone, “Accounting for God: Accountability Practices in the Society of Jesus (Italy, XVI–XVII centuries),” *Accounting, Organizations, and Society* 29 (2004), 7:647–683, mainly 648 and ff.

³⁴ These notebooks are often mentioned but to my knowledge, they have not survived.

revenue produced by the invested funds, in the following order: to pay teachers' salaries and rent of school space, to purchase prayer and study books and ritual items, to clothe poor students attending the school and provide them with the necessary books and *tefillin* (phylacteries), and, finally, to run the library (Chapter 7).³⁵ Teachers had to be present at monthly examinations of pupils, but they did not conduct the exams, nor did they decide to advance students to the next level or move them down if necessary; instead, the Talmud Torah *parnassim* made those decisions.

As I will demonstrate next, other steps followed those initiated in these 1616 Constitutions. Nevertheless, the Constitutions form the backbone of the educational system that remained in place until 1728, when a new set of regulations, this time referred to as “Novo Reglamento” [New Regulations] was put together.³⁶

Ets Haim confraternity founded in 1637

Another essential milestone in the organization of the Amsterdam school was the founding in 1637 of the “Santa Irmandade da Hebra de Hez Haim” [the Holy Confraternity “Tree of Life”], Ets Haim, for short. This confraternity was to provide stipends to older, deserving, and talented students.³⁷ In the preamble preceding the *haskamot*, we learn that the idea to found Ets Haim originated with the *parnassim* of the Talmud Torah confraternity (see il. 1–3). The school administrators were concerned about the older students as some, although talented, quit school to earn a living, just as they were “beginning to collect the fruit of their labors” in the two last levels of their education.³⁸ Funding for Ets Haim, as for Talmud Torah, was to come from members' dues. However, while only men could be members of the Talmud Torah confraternity, women were invited to become members of Ets Haim. The six florins entry fee for

³⁵ See also, Fisher, *Amsterdam's People of the Book*, 33 and n. 19.

³⁶ See Novo Reglamento, Termos de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334 B2, 5488–5570 [1728–1810], ff. 1–11.

³⁷ Termos de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1052, ff. 1–3. The document consists of a preamble and 14 *haskamot* (*aschamot* in the original). Each *haskamah* was assigned a number, and I have added the words *haskamot*, singular *haskamah*. It is worth mentioning that after 1616 the term “Constitutions” was never used again, and the Hebrew *haskamah*, singular, and *haskamot*, plural, substituted it.

³⁸ See Termos de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1052, ff. 1–3.

Considerando os Senhores Parnasim de Talmud Thorá que m.^{tos}
Talmidim de grande habilidade por Cauza da estreiteza dos tempos,
quando Começauão a Colher o fruto de seus Estudos, o dizeuão, acudindo
Ao assistente necessario, do qual se siguiu esse pouco a pouco diminuindo o
Estudo da Ley, ate Verse Expressamente a falta d'elle, buicandoe todos
Os Mejos para remedio Comunicarão Com os Senores do Mahamad o
mais Conueniente, E de Comun parecer determinarão que se deuia ordenar
hua Jimandade dos que Voluntariamente quizerem entrar nella, E gozar
dos merecimentos que se adquirem de semelhantes Obra, formandose hui ca=
bedal de cujo rendimento, E das promessas que Cada qual offerer pello
Discurso do anno se haja de dar Stipendio aos Talmidim que forem bene=
meitos E Capazes de poder medrar, para que Concinnem no ditto Estudo,
E a entrada de cada Jimad Sera hua Libra de grossos por sua vez so=
mente Limitandose Ha pequena Soma para que todos possam participa=
do merecimento de semelhante misua, Entrando tambem Nella as J.^{tes}
que quizerem ser admitidas pella ditta Soma, E se alem dos seis florins
de entrada quizer algum offerer mais para o ditto Cabedal E podera
fazer, E se furo os arhamot que se costumão para o gouerno E repar=
taçã do rendimento, de que se siguirã honra E Louvor diuino E premio
grande aos que participarem da ditta Jimandade.

Seguem as arhamot da Sancta Jimandade da
Alabia de Dez hajm. Na Volta.

Em Nome del Rio Bendito, Em Amsterdam
26 de Tamuz 5397 annos, da Criação.

Reuendos o Senhor favorecido Com que propoñdo da Thua Em
14 de Siuan a miua de darse stipendio aos talmidim que continuarem
no estudo da Santissima Ley, se leuauando a receber missebrah 117.
Jimás, Com grande Zelo e feitor que os augment sempre para seu serviço,
de que resultou ter efeito o haure de conseguir dita miua, Com aplauzo
e Comuicção dos Senõs do Mahamad, para haue de fazer archamot
Com que haja de ser gouernada, nos juntamos os obaços assinados pauarim
de Talmud Thora que este anno seruimos, Em Companhia dos Maham
Saul Luy Morera, e Inuocando primeiro o fauõ do Senhor do mundo,
a cujo serviço e honra dedicamos o exercicio de dita Habia, Orde
namos as que seguem.

1^o

Que esta Santa Habia seja intitullada Com o nome de Derz hajm, que
significa fluore de VIDAS, por ser a uõre e subteito da Ley que
he a Verdadeira Vida.

2^o

Que dita Habia seja a quarta Caixainha no se K'K' de Bet Yahacob,
depois da Sedaca, Habia e Talmud Thora, de Jorec que haucndo quem pro
metta, para as cinco Caixainhas o thezoueiro desta miua se Notará
Em quarto lugar o que prometer.

3^o

Esta Santa Habia faza sua festa juntamente Com a miua de Talmud
Thora Em dia de Parcor de Sabuet, e os Jimás ou subindo a deper,
ou prometido de fora, alem dos tres placar que prometerem para Talmud
Thora, prometerão outras tres placar para esta miua.

4^o

Os Pauarim de Talmud Thora terão obrigaço de No ditto dia fazer
deitar hua missebrah geral a todos os Jimás, e Consequientemente Cochava
a todos os difuntos Jimás.

5^o

Tambem ditos Pauarim seão obrigados a subteitar hua tabora no midras
adonde se medda alicão mayor, na qual seão escritos todos os Jimás e
Jimás cada hun Em seu lugar, para que seão seus nomes por honra do
dianete de A. gaurando do merecimento do meddar que oij se exer
cita.

6^a E para que a Ley Com o aprendimento della Na em Augmento por todos Os modos, terá obrigação ditos Parnasim de tomar á Sua Conta a Despesa do Haal, que se tem Comegado E aopuzente esta muy falta, Reforçando no modo que melhor lhes parecer para que se Continue, de Sorte que todos possam empregar alguma parte do dia no aprendimento da Ley, tendo obrigação expressa de assistir nella o Parnasim a quem aquelle dia tocar a assistência de Talmud Thora, para dar ordem aos lugares, Cantos E o mais que Necessario for; E na Despesa que na Casa da Congregação se faz Sabat a tarde, terá obrigação de assistir todos os Parnasim del Talmud Thora, procurando por os argumentos E respostas Em tudo que sem alterçõis possam Continuar e tirar delles sem escandalo, o furo que se pretende.

7^a Na eleição que em Cada anno se fezer dos seis Parnasim del Talmud Thora se Nomeará hun Deller para Thourneiro, O qual no fim de seu Anno, Com o parecer dos de mais Parnasim seus Compañheiros repartirá as Misnos daquelle dia, No qual sera obrigado adar conta dal Thora, Nomear os Noveos Eleitos E ficar assistindo Em chamar a Synagoga.

8^a Haverá hun Livro Em que se escreverão estas Arshamos, E Conseqüentemente todos os Junias que forem entrando, E as eleições que se fezerem, O qual sera Em poder do Thourneiro, que em outro Livro animará Contas Com o Cabedal desta misna a parte, E Com o rendimento E distribuição de Gastos, E outro si Com as pessoas a quem se der o Cabedal; E ditos Livros passarão de hun a outro Thourneiro para que por todos Com clareza sejaõ Succesivamente Continuadas Ditas Contas E eleições.

9^a Que ditos Parnasim não terão Vacancias, E poderão servir mais de hun año se parecer que he Conueniente, E por pequisa Obrigação fiera sempre hun para dar informações aos que de Novo Vierem, das eleições, repartições E outras Circunstancias.

10^a O Cabedal desta Santa Havia não poderá ser Diminuido por Cazo algum, Nem applicado a Nenhua outra Couza, E somente os reditos delle E as promessas que para repartir se fizem, se repartirão pello Talmidim que Continuar em na forma que a diante se declara. E se, o que Deus não permitira, Succeder que por algum Cazo não Imaginado se quera dispor d'elles.

dinheiros para outra Couza, não podera ser Senão pelo Voto dos Jmãos homens
que de idade de Vinte annos arriba se acharem prezentes nesta Cidade.
No K K de Ber Jacob, nem se fará junta da Jmandade Senão por
Resolução primario tomada entre os Senoas do Maamad E Panasim de
Talmud Thora, E a proposta que se fizer Sera resoluida por os tres quartos
dos Jmãos que Na junta se acharem, que Serão todos os que Não
tiverem impedimento Justo para Virem a dita Junta.

11^a

Cabedal desta Santa Maria se Entende a entrada dos Jmãos Em todo
o tempo, E as promessas que Expressamente para o Cabedal se haõ feito E
fizerem, E dito Cabedal se procurará dar o ganho no modo Em que mais
se Entenda Conueni, E Sera sempre por parecer de todos os Panasim de Tal-
mud Thora, E pella maior parte dos Votos.

12^a

Os Panasim faráõ repartição dos redditos tanto do Cabedal Como da pro-
messas, pellos Talmidim que para isso lhes pozuerem benemeritos, E a caridade
do stipendio que se lhes dara Sera deliburado pella maior parte dos Votos de
ditos Panasim, que dito stipendio poderá acrescentar ou diminuir Conforme
lhes parecer, tendo sempre Consideração a habilidade a continuação E inco-
modidade que lhes Cauzar a ausência de Talmud Thora, E dita repartição
Se podera fazer em cada Ros hodes ou a tempo, Conforme aos Panasim lhes
parecer mais Conueniente; Bem entendido que Não se podera dar stipendio a
Nenhum Talmid que pelo menos não haja maldado hui Anno Quemara.

13^a

E por que he Couza grata ao Senor que sua Ley seja festejada E honrada
por todos os modos, pareceo Conueniente, tanto para animar aos Talmidim.
Como para alegrar a Congrega vendo o furo que de sua Misua Saye, q
quando o Senor nos fizer merce de que Com bem, se acabe de maldar alguma
Quemara d'alição maior, tenhaõ Obigação Os Panasim que Lheõ Serui-
rem, de ordenar que Conforme o Numero dos Talmidim que ouuerem ausido
ao estudo della, haja Naite K K tantas noites de festa, que se procu-
rará seja nas do Jmeino, nas quas daraião ditos Talmidim Cada hui sua
Noite seguinte por suas idades, Os quas tirarão seu Sujito de algum passo
da Quemara que maldou, E depois de todos, a Noite que Seguir daraião
o Senor Haham, E ditos Daraiot Serão acompanhados de Louros diuitos
Com toda a sollemidade que as Aschamot do Kaal não enconhaõ; E todos
Os Panasim que ouuerem Seruido Em Talmud Thora Em quanto Semaldou
aquella Quemara Cuyo Compimento se fizer, ausirão juntamente acenados

Com os que actualmente seuirem para sollenizar Com mais perfeição ditas
festas; E todos juntos, á sua propria Cultra E despeza, depois de Compi-
do o giro das ditas noites; Ordenado hun Coniite aos talmidim da
Quemara no qual assistirão ditzos Panasim passados E presentes, Em Casa
do thezoureiro que lucta sevir ou Naquelle que para isso elle ordenar;
E No ditto Coniite assistirão tambem os Kobirim de Talmud Thorá.

14^o.

Ultimamente se para melhor e exercicio de sua misua parecer Em algun-
tempo acrescentar ou emendar estas archamot, se podera fazer no modo
Em que mais convenientemente pareça aos S.^{os} do Maamad E Panasim de Tal-
mud Thorá que entao seuirem; Com o que se haõ por festas E aprouadas
pello Senor do Maamad estas archamot, as quas No novo Thezou-
reiro seia da theua Em Cada hum anno no Sabat que se qur depois de
Sabuot para que os Panasim entendão a obrigação que lhes occorre, E
os Dachiim se esforcem a cumprir a ley E entrar Em tao grande misua,
cujo merecimento Nos seja Catodo Israel lembrado diante do Senor.

A Grahaõ perataz Amen

Moseh Delgado
Michael Teuda Leao
Ischack Naar

Joseph...
Geovão Jesus...

Il. 3, see the caption under the illustration 1

men and women was very affordable, just six florins.³⁹ Members could also add voluntary pledges or *promesas* to the principal capital and with the revenue, deserving advanced *talmidim* received a monthly stipend. Ets Haim's founding was announced to the congregation from the synagogue *tevah* (reader's stand), and 117 new male members were honored with a collective *berakhah* (blessing). The annual celebration was to be, together with the entire school, on Shavuot, when living male members would be honored collectively. Those no longer living would be remembered annually with a *hashkavah* (prayer) for their souls (*haskamot* 3–4). The school *parnassim* ensured that the members' names—men's and women's—were inscribed on *taboas* (boards) put up on classroom walls so that their names would reach God's presence.⁴⁰

The *parnassim* also took charge of the so-called “Yessivah do Kaal,” a study group opened to all-male, adult congregants, where they could study Torah during weekdays, and, on Shabbat, there would be students' disputations. This study group was, in essence, a way to honor congregant donors of the school system, and resembles the Jesuits' approach to educating lay-people beyond their secondary schools (*haskamah* 6). The treasurer, one of the six *parnassim* serving in the Talmud Torah confraternity, would keep an accounting book, serving as a bridge to entering *parnassim* (*haskamot* 8 and 9).

The Ets Haim confraternity soon became a fundraising success, even though the number of students who took advantage of the stipend started and then remained low for decades, oscillating between eight and nine until 1644, when it reached twenty.⁴¹ As the confraternity's income exceeded the number of students in need of a stipend, in 1652, the *parnassim* amended its eighteenth *haskamah* and decided to accept younger students, of the fifth level, to encourage them to continue their studies.⁴² However, the

³⁹ See MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 1b. In the original, the terms “libra de grossos” and florins (guilder) are used interchangeably. For the equivalency of “libra/livra de grosso” (one Flemish pound) with six guilders or florins, see Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 176 and 397, n. 115.

⁴⁰ *Haskamah* 5.

⁴¹ The first listing of nine students receiving stipends is dated 2 Elul 5399 [1639]. It includes: “Moshe Zacuto, Benjamin Dias Pato, Abraham Zacuto, Joseph Pardo, Semuel Valero, Moshe de Aguilar, Selomo Valero, Moshe Moreno, Josiahu Pardo.” The following list, dated 5401 [1641], consists of eight students. Some remained students for as long as over ten years. For example, Moshe Moreno appeared until at least 1645, and Moshe Zacuto and Benjamin Dias Pato until 1649.

⁴² MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 13a, 5 Hesvan 5411 [1650].

amended *haskamah* made it clear that their monthly stipend of 50 placas (coins) would always be at least two lower than the stipend given to the next, sixth-level, students.⁴³ These younger students would also be penalized for late arrival. The short supply of students in the upper levels, along with the recruitment of needy meritorious students, strongly suggests that only talented but in need of a stipend students reached the upper levels to become rabbis or teachers.

The merging of the three congregations in 1639

In 1639, the lay leaders of the three congregations finally put their differences aside and merged into one congregation under the name “Kahal Kadosh Talmud Torah.”⁴⁴ As they gathered human and financial resources, one of the communal institutions that benefited the most from the merger was the school. The newly formed congregation put together a document that scholars refer to as the “merging document,” and that consists of 42 chapters.⁴⁵ Chapter 22 includes a description of salaried personnel and their responsibilities. This chapter specifies that the merged community selected seven current teachers and assigned each of them to teach one specific level, thereby giving a succinct curriculum of the newly formed school. They made no changes to the first five levels, but they divided them into two levels for the teaching of the Talmud (Gemara). Mordecai de Craastro [no former congregation mentioned] was the first-level teacher.

⁴³ “Placa” in Portuguese-Spanish was a ‘plak,’ or ‘stiver’ in Dutch. One guilder or florin was divided into 20 stivers or placas. See Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, xvii, Note on Monetary Units.

⁴⁴ Talmud Torah, the name designated to the new united congregation, continued to be also the name of the confraternity founded in 1616 to support the lower levels of the school.

⁴⁵ The merging document is in Livro dos accordos da Naçao, MS GAS 334, no. 19, ff. 1b–7. For the merging document see Wilhelmina C. Pieterse, *Daniel Levi de Barrios als geschiedschrijver van de Portugees-Israëlitische gemeente te Amsterdam in zijn ‘Triumpho del gobierno popular’* (Amsterdam, 1968), 155–167. See also Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans*, 187. Daniel Leví de Barrios, forty-four years later (1683), gives very similar information, demonstrating how enduring the Amsterdam educational system was. For the sixth level, in addition to Gemara, Barrios says that they studied grammar, rhetoric, and Hebrew poetry. He also equates Ladino with Castilian. See, e.g., his description of the third level: “hazer construir las parasiot . . . de hebreo en español” [to translate the *parashiot* [weekly biblical reading] from Hebrew to Spanish], and the fourth level: “la quarta [escuela] del Jazan Abraham Barux maestro de las constryciones propheticas . . . en castellano” [the fourth school taught by the Hazan [cantor] Abraham Barux, teacher of the Prophets in Castilian]. See Barrios, “Hes Jaim, Arbol de Vidas,” in id., *Triumpho del gobierno popular*, 589–594; 591. I’m citing from the online copy at the University of Amsterdam.

He taught *meninos* (little ones) the Hebrew alphabet. Josef Faro (Neve Salom), of the second level, taught sight-reading and introduced them to chanting the weekly *parashah*. Jacob Gomez (Neve Salom), the third level, taught the translation of the *parashiot* from Hebrew to Spanish. Abraham Baruch (Bet Jacob), the fourth level, taught the weekly *parashah* by the method of *ladinar* (*parasa em ladino*). Salom ben Josseph (Bet Israel) taught the fifth level the *haphtarah*, or portion of the Prophets and Rashi's commentaries (*porfetas e Resy com seus argumentos*). Isaac Aboab (Neve Salom) taught the sixth level, Hebrew grammar, and the first Gemara lesson. Saul Levi Mortera (Bet Jacob) taught, the seventh and highest level, the *lisao grande*, Gemara, Tosephot, and Talmud.

Additionally, the merged school put together a new set of 22 regulations, the Talmud Torah and Ets Haim *haskamot*,⁴⁶ as well as a document referred to as *Advertencias* [Warnings] addressing students' behavior (see il. 4–5).⁴⁷ These two new documents re-affirmed the commitment that the lay governors of the Amsterdam school had to mold the students' character. Furthermore, they closely resemble the Jesuit educational system that also emphasized the character formation of its students.

The Talmud Torah and Ets Haim *haskamot* made everyone with a stake in the school accountable, including the *parnassim* or governors. Six *parnassim* were nominated each year, so that one of them would be present daily, including on Shabbat, for lessons and prayers. The *parnassim* heavily supervised the teachers, holding them accountable to be on time and fining them if they were late or absent. Students were expected to obey the *parnassim*, and those who did not, could be punished physically or with monetary fines. Student's parents had to either accept these school rules or keep their sons from receiving an education altogether.

The *Advertencias*, dated shortly after the merger on 22 Sivan 5399 [1639], were preceded by a short preface stating that these warnings were to ensure that religious study (*meldar*) would continue with the zeal and fervor necessary to learn the Torah. The *Advertencias* emphasized norms of moral behavior expected of teachers, students, and their parents, and they

⁴⁶ This 1639 new and more extended document is not to be confused with the previous 14 *haskamot* of 1637. It consists of 22 *haskamot* (*escamot* in the original). *Haskamah* 1 discusses the recent merging of the congregations and the Ma'amad's prerogative of adding new *haskamot* (2–10 are new). *Haskamot* 11–22 mostly coincide with the original ones, although 15–16 are new. See MS GAS 334, no. 1052, ff. 23b–26a.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 7–8a.

bear resemblance to the rules for students of the Jesuit order.⁴⁸ Chapters 1 and 2 deal with teachers' responsibilities, daily schedules, and guidelines for obeying and following the school *haskamot*. Chapters 3–6 are addressed to students of the highest level and urge their participation in the Yeshivah, the adult study group composed of members of the Ets Haim confraternity that funded their monthly stipends.⁴⁹ Chapter 7 discusses students 16 years old and older, and their obligation to attend and participate in Jewish services weekly and on Shabbatot. From 16 years of age and up, the youth receiving free-tuition education were expected to provide services to the congregation. Chapter 10, the last, warns parents that they ought to accept the school teaching and discipline (*doctrina e castigo*). To conclude, these two documents demonstrate that in the following years after the merger, the school became increasingly more concerned with tightening the rules governing its upper-level students and teachers. At the same time, the younger children's education of the school's younger pupils is discussed less frequently.

Graded schooling

One of the most discussed aspects of the Talmud Torah–Ets Haim school system is that it taught students in seven (six until the merging of the three congregations in 1639) increasingly more advanced levels. Each level was assigned a teacher and its own separate classroom space.⁵⁰ Some scholars have suggested that the contemporary Dutch Latin schools may have influenced the school, as they also taught the young in six or seven levels or grades.⁵¹ It is essential to point out that both Dutch Latin and

⁴⁸ Rules: 434 – “Purity of Heart and Intention,” 437 – “Diligence,” 440 – “Modesty.” See Claude Pavur, S.J. (trans. and commentary), *The Ratio Studiorum: The Official Plan for Jesuit Education* (St. Louis, 2005), 189, 191.

⁴⁹ MS 334, no. 1052, f. 7a, Chapter 4: Although the term Yeshivah in this chapter is unclear, I interpret it to refer to the study group or “Yessivah do Kaal,” where adults met daily and on Shabbat afternoons.

⁵⁰ The Jesuits had introduced this grading system in their schools in the mid-sixteenth century and emphasized students' level of knowledge rather than age. The scholar Gabriel Codina Mir, S.J., has demonstrated that the Jesuits followed the pedagogical method known as the *Modus parisiensis*, which the Society's founders had experienced during their years of study at the University of Paris. See Gabriel Codina Mir, S.J., *Aux sources de la pédagogie des Jésuites, le 'Modus parisiensis'* (Roma, 1968), 258–260.

⁵¹ Among those who suggest a Dutch influence, see Fisher, *Amsterdam's People of the Book*, 44–45; Goldish, “The Portuguese Rabbinate,” 9–19, here 12. To my knowledge, there is no tangible evidence that Jan Amos Comenius's ideas on education had any impact on the Sephardi educational system, as Goldish suggests. Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*,

terno das duas moedas de prata que está na guarda da coroa.
gregaria de Bretanha, em que se representa um David. O Sr.
Duque, Lo. P. de Portugal, de fora,

Os ^{os} Deputados em nome da nação unida, a pediram, a pedimento do Sr. Doutor
da Misericórdia de S. Paulo, e a favor da Misericórdia de S. Paulo. Que o Sr. Doutor, e os
ditos Deputados, assim como os Deputados de S. Paulo, ficando por sua conta,
e respondendo os rendimentos das abateduras e gado
que se fizerem na república della, cada anno ficando facultada aos
governadores da república, e estado o tempo que aquisição ou omissão
mistra e comprou do gado, e a fazerem aditos misuras e gado
della que omissões e abateduras e gado se fizerem, sem embargo de
mas se entenderem que em quanto dita misura tiver desobediência
do Sr. Doutor e rendimentos della, com o Sr. Doutor e gado
talmente convenientemente conforme as disposições desta Misura e gado
Memoria de S. Paulo em aberto que todos asinaram.

Sebastião de S. Paulo, Selmo de S. Paulo, Favor de S. Paulo

Sebastião de S. Paulo

Em asacção unida e augmento de S. Paulo e do Sr. Doutor
partes se devida fazer as advertências seguintes e que o Sr. Doutor
do S. Paulo se continue com zelo e fervor que com o Sr. Doutor
e o Sr. Doutor de S. Paulo, origem e fundam. de S. Paulo e do Sr. Doutor.

1. Que serão obrigados os Deputados a continuar todos os dias as S. Paulo, assim
na S. Paulo, como nas escolas, melhando as S. Paulo, e do Sr. Doutor,
com cuidado e diligência e parecendo Vaxar nellas, seguiras as S. Paulo
e do Sr. Doutor.
2. As S. Paulo a S. Paulo, pelas mensas cada qual aos S. Paulo, tal
S. Paulo, de S. Paulo, assim, no S. Paulo, como, no S. Paulo, guardando juntas
as S. Paulo, que S. Paulo, S. Paulo, em S. Paulo, S. Paulo, S. Paulo, que
nella se de S. Paulo.

- 3 Os Talmidim de maior lica que de presente assistem sua casa na
 Eijcia, da qm por diante mel darão no Verão duas horas em q
 eis Inverno duas p^o que vendesse sua consideração, e applicação, seja
 a remanade de Essaim, my numerossa de ymass e bendim ento. esse
 premiados com forme seu merecim^{to} e el dia Bendito melhor serido
 como em seu diuino fauor esperamse
- 4 E por que atenção dos d^{os} ymass que offercerão sua estada, se som ende
 p^o que aja a frecentamento d'aloj com que se faca serviço ass^o domus
 do com manifesto e euidente fruits os que receberem as paca a
 este exemplo. serão muy contidos em acudir a dital hora a Eijcia sem
 faltarem dia nem hora alguma p^o que os p^o parratim terão luum em q
 at^o notem. eu laueas de desentare do tam^o q^o telles des^o sendo os
 dinarios em faltas e aduertidos elles que contuem nas se reformas
 rem, teras com elles o d^o que lhes parecer p^o que as obras do d^o se
 tratem com Verdade, enão com engano e queza
- 5 Os Talmidim que de nuncio for em adm^o d^o p^o receberem as paca
 guardaras em seu moldar do d^o q^o lhes for assignada, e os q^o ja
 q^o tem seão contenuando nella. e d^o q^o com bom oração e bondades e
 muito temer del dia, de que Resulta grande edificação e buege
 na Eijcia que se faça na esngas e pello consequense, ass^o d^o almos
 q^o se dizem antes de saliente sabat, e os mais dias os que de uen
 rem a elle, p^o Louados
- 6 Os que forem de idade de ate 16 annos geral^{te} viras todos os dias da
 formara dos d^o almos antes de d^o bit, e como a peraca q^o se
 py antes de minha de sabat, nas saueudo d^o d^o imp^o d^o
- 8 Os Talmidim q^o fuciem idade conuemente acudiras a p^o se p^o siba cos
 tume muy Louado. e vale em todo Israel, em que se deu reparar
 do sendo a oracaõ Intencionada e haue que abre as portas do
 Ceo. e a alma e bondade com que se d^o se o q^o se ad e consagrar
 al dia B. q^o da mais sae de faldadas do acatamento de seia
 diuina Magestade
- 9 Na congregação todos os Talmidim de qual quer qualidade o q^o se ja
 estaraõ con m^o quietação e humildade. em seu lugar e sem busca
 rem outros, Presando por seu luum com atençaõ e Preuerçias
 sem falarem nem se deuetirem da oracaõ, ensõ m^o d^o q^o se
 lal e exortaõ mel dando suas licetis sem perturbarem em asu
 tos, nem Responderem, talis quando lhes tocar por serem pergun
 tados, sendo muy obediente ass^o p^o parratim, e d^o bit, ass^o
 qual se encomenda m^o se as sempre dos p^o m^o em sua hora
 tanto na esngas como em talmudoras com que os talmidim
 tenras fuidado e temor, o q^o se de m^o consideração no geral

Il. 4 (and il. 5 on the following pages). Advertencias. Amsterdam Municipal Archive, inv. 334 "Archief van de Portugees-Israëlietische Gemeente," entry 1052. © Stadsarchief Amsterdam

Junta de Tejas p^a el Dio B. ser mai louada e engrandecida
Lo. os ^{res} Paes dos Talmudim se deueão conformar com do obediencia
e foygo de ley des sem inquietarem os ministros a quem for
antes Receberas com bom animo o ensino e posicia com que
gouernarem esuceedendo que não se agradem de ella se quier
se guardarem as obrigacões a que declarada, sera necess^o os
med^{os} q^{os} for Rebelde ser castigado, e faltando na emenda, e
Dificias priuile de Talmudicos para seu Baito o ad ministr
vem a se q^{os} gosto, sem prejuizo dos bonis q^{os} agi somente
seua por braves o caminho da Verdade, com meliorand^o e Refor
cao em o que pertence as seruiços do sei Domundo e de ma san
tissima ley sem outis algum Respeito Humano.

Estes apontamentos. Fizeras os ^{res} Parnatim de Tal
mudora com consentim^{to} e aprobação dos ^{res} de Madaba
p^a se publicar em datua e hixem a noticia de todos q^{os}
obseruaraõ, e firmaraõ todos no Livro q^o terue da misu
de Esbaim, e Permittira el Dio Bendito que agora
este sempre floresca o amor e perfeição de sua lant^o
ley que res o que se pretende, em Amst^{am} a 22^a
Iuan 5399.

Jacob Sekanoff Samuel Goebl Daniel de Agones
Joseph de Gossy Daniel Curjel

~ Cruz de Ulul 5399 ~

Junta de ^{res} Parnatim e Sabudo dos Talmudim Prometida de auentajas
Continuando em eltrando com ocuidade deuido acordada q^o de lhos pagaste
agui adiante ogabaro a lhos nomear com condicão. q^{os} meos piquenda
Ano de 8^o de amudan ate a 11. e dos 2^o ate as cinco em Duerno
a odes e ite de com enbra e os grandes com a mesma obligacão atida
fom se passado a li sumo lops de re contada a falta vntira q^o datta
hudo grechem de spacia, Logarnas q^o tenir ou qual q^o uer
dre e achar a tal falta a notare e adan ao gaboy de estaim
e adercontare. Sendo los coros de sua conuocencia o sauer de
fontrola e son a pena de boveda de Clarada se anã der em
notta Lembrando de llos, e os Salarios sendo os seguintes

A Moisés Zacuto cadamez p 5 - A Moisés de Aguilera p 5: 10
 Benjamín pato - p 5 - Salomón Valero p 4: 10
 Abraham Zacuto p 4: 10 - Moisés Moreno p 2: -
 Joseph Pardo - - - - p 2 - Josué Pardo p 2: -
 Samuel Valero - - - - p 2 - deo suo p 2: 10 cadamez
 e quereza el Dio q m. lo em com mais fenoze e zelo q se
 seguiu a vontade de aquellas q offeniam suyo a la misua
 O firmada de Moisés Daniel de Aguilera - Samuel Pardo

Ordo de Scluat
 El Parnassim q Mehor se tenen al dia em Talmud
 hora se punitata e fzered as ordens seguintes q justifica
 q tano hdd punita los Robissim q se fueren de guardar
 que os moscos não vido a Mandados q hum notempo de sua licadadico
 for louza necess q otuvico sub beneficio de nome Talmudico
 que estelan e Robissim dadas q sig. q for necess q accender
 al q fzer. pois he da herba q isto descaçava os moscos
 andala pedindo plas abras equimado de q dora
 que os espulas hmlidados sum hederio de limpaçam q se
 necessario fazem no os moscos e sujanse
 Mas ajda concertar notempo do meloar q parece mal e se
 contra o servico de q Dio empreçitub dos moscos.
 Quas teleyad embdo Talmud fzeren em que quer tempo que
 seja livres profano qada indecente mofarax a tano qm q fzerem
 qda teleyad nãoficad qm loub q Robissim notempo do m. e dora
 mais q estinas as deus Talmudim do bene q fzerem de b. f. laces
 qnas vido q sum me dora ad no notempo do m. e dora do bene q fzerem
 q de sabat Michamocha Lordeante se le mece a Meloar qela
 mensam das 8 ate as 11 e atarda de 2 ate as 3 pias
 horas q que seja em seu tempo. Wto sum to diez de graney

II. 5, see the caption under the illustration 4

Jesuit schools taught adolescents—more precisely, from about the age of ten—a secondary education. Dutch Latin schools also followed a humanistic curriculum—the so-called *Modus parisiensis*, like the one offered in Catholic Jesuit schools. The *Modus parisiensis* was one of the original educational systems that inspired the Jesuits.⁵² In contrast, the Amsterdam Talmud Torah–Ets Haim school taught children from about five or six and up to the rabbinate. Thus, if there was an influence from the non-Jewish world, it could not have been only reflected in the number of levels that the Amsterdam school included. Based on the original school records from 1616 to the merging in 1639, I see two significant influences that resulted in the curriculum the three congregations agreed to when they merged. One was the pedagogical approaches that teachers from the Ottoman Sephardi communities brought to Amsterdam, such as the method known as *ladinar*, a technique harkening back to thirteenth-century Spain⁵³ and whose name means ‘to translate.’⁵⁴ The other was the Jesuit educational system—emphasizing the character formation of its students—that the Iberian founders of the community had experienced in their schooling.

Character formation of Amsterdam Sephardi youth

The period between 1616, when the Hebrah Talmud Torah was founded, and before 1639, when the three existing congregations merged into one, was critical for developing the educational school system. Highly qualified teachers imported from other Sephardi communities were offered

97–98 and 346, n. 175, sees it as a feature of the non-Jewish world in general. Steven Nadler in his *Spinoza: A Life* relies only on the observations made by the two Ashkenazi visitors, Rabbi Sheftel Horowitz and Shabbetai Bass, mentioned above, see Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge, 1999), 61–65.

⁵² See Benjamin Roberts, *Through the Keyhole: Dutch Child-Rearing Practices in the 17th and 18th Century. Three Urban Elite Families* (Hilversum, 1998), 107–108.

⁵³ See Quintana, “From the Master’s Voice,” 187–188. See also Edwin Seroussi, “New Perspectives on the Music of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogues in North-Western Europe,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35 (2001), 2:297–309, here 302. In his paper, Seroussi interprets that beginners learned to read the prayers with intonation and to read Torah with the tune of the Masoretic accents. See also Barrios in his *Triunfo del gobierno popular*, p. 521 (original online at the University of Amsterdam), who adds that the students chanted the Pentateuco “con accents pausantes y harmonicos” [with pausing and harmonic accents].

⁵⁴ The so-called Ferrara Bible is a result of such a method of translation. See Harm den Boer, “La Biblia de Ferrara y otras traducciones españolas de la Biblia entre los sefardíes de Europa occidental,” in Iacob M. Hassán, Ángel Berenguer Amador (eds.), *Introducción a la Biblia de Ferrara: Actas del Simposio Internacional sobre la Biblia de Ferrara, Sevilla, 25–28 de noviembre de 1991* (Madrid, 1994), 251–296.

long-term contracts. These documents provide us with evidence of their qualifications, the numerous expectations the lay leaders had of them, and, perhaps most essentially, details of what they taught to their students. In 1619, for instance, the Bet Jacob congregation offered Josef Salom a ten-year contract.⁵⁵ Salom had already been serving as a teacher and *hazzan* (cantor) since his arrival in 1614. His responsibilities included teaching general studies, such as Kol Bo, the book of Jewish laws and customs. He also instructed students in non-Jewish subjects, demonstrating once again that the Jesuit educational system served as a model in Amsterdam, as the Jesuits were known for their concern for the character formation of youth. Salom furthermore propounded the merits of politeness (*cortesia*) and good behavior. The children had to be quiet, both in school and synagogue. They also had to arrive on time and, outside of the school, they were not to wander around town.⁵⁶

The school did not change much for decades, as evidenced by the comments left by the aforementioned Rabbis Sheftel Horowitz in the 1640s, Shabbetai Bass in the 1680s, or Daniel Leví de Barrios in 1683 in his work *Triumpho del gobierno popular*.⁵⁷ The first five levels the school offered educated all children from age six to thirteen, the age of religious majority when they would ideally go on to learn a skill as apprentices and then enter the working force. According to Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, fathers were responsible for sending their sons to school at age six, but this may not have always happened so early.⁵⁸ As there was a constant arrival of families to Amsterdam from other New Christian centers, including

⁵⁵ In 1616, when the Constitutions were ratified, his signature was number 12, among the first members. See MS GAS 334, no. 1051, f. 3b. For his contract, dated 1619, see *Termos de Talmud Torah de Ets Haim*, MS GAS 334, no. 1051. The lengthy contract, dated 22 April 1619, is on ff. 6–9.

⁵⁶ In the merging document of 1639, Yosef Salom was assigned to teach the fifth level. See MS GAS 334, no. 19, [year] 5398 [1637–1638], f. 22. On Salom's musical and singing skills, see Seroussi, "New Perspectives," 297–309. Salom was already in Amsterdam in 1616, as his name appears on the list of males who became members (signature number 12).

⁵⁷ Pieterse, *Daniel Levi de Barrios*, "Ets Haim," 97–105, compared the 1639 *haskamot* to Barrios, *Triumpho del gobierno popular* and found them very similar. I would like to thank Professor Anneke Bart, Department of Mathematics at St. Louis University, for translating Pieterse's document from Dutch into English. See also David Franco Mendes, Lajb Fuks, Renate Gertrud Fuks-Mansfeld (eds.), *Memorias do estabelecimento e progresso dos judeos portugueses e espanhoes nesta famosa cidade de Amsterdam 1772* (Assen, 1975), 110.

⁵⁸ Julia R. Lieberman, "Childhood and Family among the Western Sephardim," in Julia R. Lieberman (ed.), *Sephardi Family Life in the Early Modern Diaspora* (Waltham, 2011), 129–176, here 159. See also Menasseh Ben Israel, *Thesovro dos dinim que o povo de Israel, he obrigado saber, e observar* ([Amsterdam], Iliahu Aboab, 5405 [1645]), part 1, 93–94.

Iberia, and often without a Hebrew or Jewish background, age was not the only factor used to place students. The last two grades of school, which included the study of the Talmud, were intended to train rabbis, cantors, and religious teachers. Only the best students reached the upper levels. Each school did not necessarily entail one year of study, particularly at the more advanced levels, and some students spent much longer time than others in the same grade. Each grade taught monthly lessons. After each lesson, all pupils went on to the next lesson. However, each pupil was tested individually and moved up or down according to his progress in their monthly examinations. This individualized educational system is very similar to the one followed by Jesuit schools.

Another Jesuit influence is the physical separation of each grade assigned to a teacher. Until 1675, instruction took place in houses with separate rooms rented. The newly founded Amsterdam *esnoga* (synagogue) also had a specific space for the community library that served the school, and seven classrooms where boys, separated by age and grade, received their religious education.⁵⁹ The parallels between Amsterdam's school, where students learned Hebrew, and Jesuit schools, where students learned Latin, are evident in these upper levels, except for the difference in the language being taught.⁶⁰ As for the number of students per class, Menasseh ben Israel, writing in *Thesovro*, 1645, describes the ideal class as consisting of twenty pupils, and certainly no more than thirty, which would necessitate an additional teacher.⁶¹ There is no evidence of the school having more than one class for the same level. The size of each class as described by Menasseh seems to be what took place and coincides with Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld's calculations that the average class size was about thirty students by the end of the seventeenth century.⁶²

⁵⁹ John O'Malley, S.J., explains that in Italy before the Jesuits opened their schools, no such buildings existed for primary or secondary education. See John O'Malley, S.J., "How the Jesuits Became Involved in Education," in Vincent J. Dominuco, S.J. (ed.), *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives* (New York, 2000), 56–79; 71. See also Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 145, who considers that the three main characteristics of early modern education were the following: (1) A concern for gradation, according to the difficulty of the subject. (2) Separation of topics taught. (3) Separation of pupils by age. These three concerns are present in the Western Sephardi Talmud Torah educational system.

⁶⁰ *Haskamah* 20 refers to pupils at the beginning of the *parashah*: "Os talmidim de prinsipio da parasa" [The pupils learning the *parashah* [weekly biblical reading]]. Then, on *haskamah* 21: "Os talmidim de prinsipio deparasah ate profetas" [The pupils learning the *parashah* and the Prophets].

⁶¹ Menasseh Ben Israel, *Thesovro*, [1645], part 1, 92–94.

⁶² See Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 346, n. 175.

A meritocratic school system

As we have already discussed, both Jesuit education and the Amsterdam school offered tuition-free education, even though both educational systems were not what one might consider schools for the poor only. Starting in 1616, all children in the community were receiving the same education regardless of socioeconomic background.⁶³ The records specify that needy students had to additionally demonstrate an ability to learn. Needy students received books, prayer books, and other ritual objects, such as *tefillin* (phylacteries). Furthermore, if enough funding were available, poor and worthy students (*pobres e benemeritos*) would also receive clothes and food. The school library was a great resource that benefited all students and teachers. However, as we have also mentioned, the school expected all students to excel and fully engage in the learning process through emulation and competition.⁶⁴ Even at the most elementary level—the aleph-bet class—students were motivated to move up to the next level by entering competitions open only to those who completed the level in one year.⁶⁵

Meritocracy, with its positive and negative consequences, is ever-present in the records understudy here and even more evident at the upper levels of the school. For instance, the monthly stipend Ets Haim provided to each student was proportional to their “merits, persistence and the difficulties they had to face to attend school.”⁶⁶ This form of reward appears to have more to do with contemporary attitudes toward youth than with the Jewish tradition.

The records also make it obvious that the school put a great deal of emphasis on emulation.⁶⁷ For example, in recognition of the pupil’s accomplishments, the completion of each tractate was a cause for a special celebration: “the *parnassim* would organize, on winter evenings, as many celebrations as the number of pupils [completing a tractate] and each pupil would deliver a sermon on the theme of the Gemara studied.” The

⁶³ For Jesuits offering free-tuition education, see Hufton, “Every Tub on Its Own Bottom,” 5–23.

⁶⁴ MS GAS 334, no. 1051, f. 8. In the 1660s, the institution *Vestiaria dos Talmidim* provided clothing to students. See Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, 85.

⁶⁵ MS GAS 334, no. 1051, f. 24.

⁶⁶ *Termos de Ets Haim*, MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 3a, [*haskamah*] 12.

⁶⁷ The Jesuit *Ratio* referred to emulation as “*honesta aemulatio*” or honorable rivalry. See *The Ratio Studiorum*, 149, [355], *Concertatio*.

celebrations concluded with a feast in honor of all pupils, and current *parnassim* and *rubissim* all attended the celebration.⁶⁸

Certain practices in the more advanced levels sometimes presented similarities to the Jesuit method of disputations mentioned in the *Ratio*, which paired students in instructive debate.⁶⁹ Two records demonstrate the school's use of pairing students as a pedagogical activity. In the first, a manuscript dated 1665 by Rabbi Moshe Raphael de Aguilar, a former student who became a sixth-level teacher in 1659, we find the following entry: "In the year 5425 [1665] the *parnassim* of Talmud Torah gave orders that my pupils would rehearse on summer afternoons, on Shabbat, in deciding publicly one difficult point of the *parashah*, as in a colloquium."⁷⁰

The second, a record of a public display from 1699 makes evident the great control the *parnassim* continued to have in educational matters, as well as the resemblance between the school's practice of student pairing and the Jesuits'. The activity in question was referred to in Portuguese-Hebrew as *fazer* (to make) *pesaquim* (in Hebrew, 'rabbinic questions'), and, in this instance, was a disputation between Rabbi Selomon de Oliveira's advanced rabbinical students (see il. 6–7). The disputants were referred to as proponent (*propoente*) and respondent (*respondente*). The questions and answers (in Portuguese, *propostas e respostas*) the disputants debated were used equivalently to the Hebrew *sheelot u-teshuvot* ('questions and answers'), the rabbinic method of *responsa*. The document preserving this encounter consists of a preamble and eight regulations (*reglas*, or 'rules') that the *parnassim* put together to ensure order during the disputations

⁶⁸ Termos de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 3, [*haskamah*] 13. My translation.

⁶⁹ See Walter J. Ong, S.J., "Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite," in id., *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca–London, 1971), 113–141; p. 139 refers to this method as an initiation "into an aggressively competitive man's world" that only changed much later with the advent of co-education.

⁷⁰ See the manuscript: Moshe Raphael de Aguilar, "Tratado da Immortalidade da alma," Ets Haim Library, EH 48 A 11 D, f. 437: "No anno 5425 [1664–1665] ordenarao os señores [*sic*] parnassim de TT que os meus discipulos se exercitasem nas tardes de Sabat do veraõ en ducidir en publico huã questaõ ou dificuldade da parasa en forma de colloquio." Aguilar, for a while, had a private school, and in 1659, the congregation hired him to replace Menasseh ben Israel. Shlomo Berger, *Classical Oratory and the Sephardim of Amsterdam: Rabbi Aguilar's 'Tratado de la Retórica'* (Hilversum, 1996). Although Berger does not mention it, all evidence of his intellectual background strongly suggests that he studied in a Jesuit school in Iberia or France before being a student at Ets Haim. On one occasion, as Berger documents, Aguilar took a walk with his students, a sign of concern for the student's mental well-being.

and avoid passions in defense of the propositions.⁷¹ The rules give the impression that the activity was fiercely competitive. Preparations started thirty days before the disputation. The contestant and the respondent, selected from the rabbinical students on a rotation system, received the proposed question in writing. Fifteen days before the disputation, the two disputants provided their written answers to the *parnassim*, who would make the necessary copies and distribute them to the other students. These activities in the late 1600s, for students at the highest levels, suggest a new direction in the Amsterdam Sephardi school system. Although still offering education to young children and youth, the new major interest was to showcase the rabbinic knowledge of senior students. David Sclar's recent study on the library of the Ets Haim Yeshivah expresses a similar idea when he states that "the initial concern for primary education made way for an interest in training rabbis."⁷²

Discipline and conformity

Corporal punishment of children as a form of discipline was, for many centuries, part of education in both Christian and Jewish societies.⁷³ In Christian societies, the flogging of school children has a very long tradition. With the advent of Jesuit schools in the sixteenth century, the use of corporal punishment intensified, and the *Ratio* specified how corporal punishment had to take place. Jesuit educators were aware that good student-pupil relationships could not develop if the teacher meted out physical violence, and therefore assigned the task of beating children to others, usually, an older student called the corrector.

Menasseh ben Israel recommends that teachers not be strict (*rigurosos*) to pupils, thereby insinuating that discipline should come from elsewhere.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Termos de Ets Haim, MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 141b.

⁷² See David Sclar, "A Communal Tree of Life: Western Sephardic Jewry and the Library of the Ets Haim Yesiba in Early Modern Amsterdam," *Book History* 22 (2019), 43–65, here 58.

⁷³ For Catholic societies, see Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 261, and Ong, "Latin Language Study," 125. For Jewish societies, *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 6, under the topic of education, provides illustrations of two classrooms. From the late medieval period, from the *Coburg Pentateuch* by Simha Levi and Abraham Molerstadt, dated 1396, a teacher admonishes a child with a whip. In the second, from the Renaissance, in a wall chart from Ferrara, Italy, 1590, an angel rewards good pupils, and a teacher flogs a bad one. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 6 (Jerusalem, 1971), 428, 387.

⁷⁴ Menasseh Ben Israel, *Thesovro dos dinim*, part 1, 96.

	Comprados	Cobrados de 20
1702 1/2 Monta cabras como parece	1607.78	1344.6
5 Immanuel de Eliau namias	5	5
20 Immanuel Ximenes Belmonte	20	20
40 Immanuel Leuy Duarte	40	40
20 Moseh de Pinto	20	20
50 Moseh machado	50	50
30 Por Rahel machado	30	30
20 Por Jaacob machado	20	20
12 Moseh de Abraam mocata	12	12
12 Moseh pereyra	12	12
12 Moseh Rafael Salom	12	12
15 Moseh este. Bueno henriquez	15	15
10 Moseh de Selomio Salom	10	10
12 Moseh mendes da costa	12	12
7.10 Moseh Senior henriques	7.10	7.10
6 Moseh pauheco	6	6
6 Moseh orobio de Crafo	6	6
6 Moseh de Sahac Abarbanel	6	6
6 Moseh gabay fero	6	6
5 Moseh Rodriguez nunes	5	5
30 Moseh de Jaacob de Pinto	30	30
10 Moseh Antunes	10	10
8 Menase Abarbanel	8	8
6 Menase Abnyador da Costa	6	6
20 Natam Curiel	20	20
10 Refuel ferme	10	10
12 Refuel mende da costa	12	12
6 Refuel Herzquia Atlas	6	6
100 Rahel Suato Pinto	100	100
40 Semuel Cohen nari	40	40
40 Por Sara Caonet nari	40	40
20 Por fern C. nari seu subrimo	20	20
30 Selomio Curiel	30	30
12 Semuel Leuy Ximenes	12	12
10 Selomio de Immanuel Abaz	10	10
20 Semuel de Prado	20	20
12 Semuel Soures	12	12
10 Simon Abarbanel Soiza	10	10
5 Simon da costa	5	5
6 Semuel haym de la pusa	6	6
4 de Debra la para	4	4
6 Selomio Rocanova	6	6
4 Saul Leuy morteyra	4	4
10 Selomio Abarbanel Soiza	10	10
2 Selomio Loyzada	2	2
3 Selomio Antunes	3	3
6 Semuel de Selomio Abarbanel	6	6
3 Semuel Abarbanel Soiza	3	3
24553 Duem 114. Co Guy no 20 a 2049.95.	2343.78	1949.16
de fins no 9. 19.	2049.95	793.10
ad. de p. 10. 119.	2044.16	

5459 152 141

Atendendo o R. P. de El Parnaim de Steinhaym resoluido em Primeyro
 de Setembro de 1692 da Ley de D. N. de fazer pesaqum pelas pessoas mais
 necessitadas do medrao do R. de moedo da R. de S. Tomé de Steinhaym para
 nomeado os T. H. abaixo especificados para o lugar d' d' d' Parnaim
 em melhor forma deste excelente exercicio em ordem e augmento de
 nota Santa Ley Luzim domedras e vitas aduordem das disputas
 que pozao recreio payxoims em defender os discursos e que se faz
 em melhor reglam para acertar as fins de respeito do progresso dos
 estudos e aplaura do Santo R. R. que de outro reduidos as regras
 seguintes a saber ^{N. 1}

Em Primeyro lugar Comesara a dar a Seela do T. H. do Medrao
 segund a ordem de seus lugares entregandoa por escrito a o qualhe
 seguir e que fara resposta aditta pergunta dentro de 30 dias, os
 quais se dara e em Notades de bat proximo e no segundo mez
 para a Seela de segundo T. H. o qual se constituyra propoente e quem
 he seguir sera o respondente e nesta forma se hauer de
 continuar e seguir a o giro de hum Notades a outro consecutivamente

3^a 15 dias antes dos 30 darao o propoente e respondente suas repostas
 Ambos em hum mesmo dia aos Erriuicos q. do R. de Parnaim
 nomearem para que façao as copias necesarias de que entregao
 as duas repostas aos restantes T. H. que exercitab dito e fizes
 3 dias antes de Notades para se poderem Capasitar os dias sinalados

3^a ou 4 dias antes de Notades na ultima semana de cada os
 sinalados para discuir sobre ditto Pesal em collegio pleno as
 mesmas oras que se assiste no medrao, Primeyro se fara a
 resposta o respondente e seguir a o mesmo o Autor da pergunta
 e depois cada qual dos T. H. restantes por ordem em seu tempo
 em forma collegial sem interrupçao, arguirao em Primeyro
 lugar a o respondente o que sobre a materia se lhes offerezer e
 apontar e depois de se hauer debatido o discurso ou resposta
 do respondente, se ventilara na mesma forma ao propoente

4^a Os T. H. deueo observar cada qual na arguicao e discurso
 firirem sobre cada ponto contra o respondente a o tempo de
 replica e duplica ^{de} sem maior continuacao de arguicoes
 nem movim de questao enao estando satisfeito com a satisfucao
 que he do respondente, e propoente cada qual em seu tempo
 sobre a replica e duplica se he fe se aura de pasar adiante
 rezervando a definitucao do R.

5^a Deueo todos Comedir nas Arguicoes e replica de sorte que se
 ventile a tumba do respondente e propoente no termo sinalado
 de 3 dias antes de Notades e por se acaso nao se poto de todo
 ventilar no ditto tempo se considera mais o que me dia de
 Notades para que nelle se cometa o pesal pello R. de Steinhaym

6^a para que nada se deuyra nem aja amenoa Interrupçao na lida
 geral e continua de Guemara nao se poto no Medrao de
 Steinhaym abrir Livro nem discuir direyta nem Indirectamente

Il. 6 (and il. 7 on the following pages). Rules for fazer pesaqum. Amsterdam Municipal Archive, inv. 334 "Archief van de Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente," entry 1052. © Stadsarchief Amsterdam

de hum para com outro sobre a seela ou Perak theodia
 finalado para a ventilação nem tao pouco se considera de
 nunhua sorte a correspondente nem proff porao faltas aomes
 nem aliad Geral pela referida Cauza em d'nos menhu
 dos outros T. H. que exercitao adito excelente estado dos Perak

que nenhum podra despoir do dia da conclusão do Perak e cu
 em pro ou em contra Couza Algua nem tao pouco me
 a menos questao nem disputa sobre esse particular

O Propoente que he o que da a seela a cada qual em senten
 antes de se manifestar no Medras sera obrigado entres
 a seela a os Ter^{as} para que a comonique com o d' H
 despoir de sua approvaçã a parteipe a os T. H.

- R. Ishaac milano
- Dauid Abenatar
- Dauid Serfati
- Dauid Nunes Torres
- Ishaac meatos
- Selomoh demeza
- Igaud demeza
- Aaron Sasportas
- Dauid Israel de Hamburgo

(Handwritten signatures and notes)
 O Jo da v...
 David Mendez da Silva
 Joao de Barros

5459

Em 13. de Tamuz se oferecerão na Cmoje nas Couzas domes de C. A brigant
 Montalto f. d'ed. os quaes pagou em contado Jhaac de Macatya adrao de clar
 o David de irado de C. em de uelrand. a mpra de Seraim com conditã
 em dia de Sebuoth se deitase a cada a Mosel Montalto, eliau d'orta, e
 Rebrael Montalto, Calter Montalto, Sarah d'orta, cad. A brigant
 Montalto: ed. f. C. Bos. a crediter em d. como f. no L. de mpra.

(Handwritten signature)
 A. f. Genjo felix

5460

Em 5. Adar me mandou Jhaac Hoshia Kabaana f. d'ed. que offereseu na
 Cmoje nas Couzas do 2.º de sua dema a C. H. de Kabaana que fer de leg
 para a Misva de Seraim pto qual se lle deitara a cada d'os d' anno
 na Cmoje em dia de Sebuoth, ed. f. C. Bos. a crediter em conta
 f. no L. de mpra.

(Handwritten signature)
 A. f. Genjo felix

Lay school officers ordered and controlled physical punishment, not teachers. The Ma'amad were in charge of penalizing the students, and the Ets Haim *haskamot* specified that if fathers did not wish to have their sons punished, they should not send them to the Talmud Torah school.⁷⁵

However, the school also relied on other forms of penalizing misbehavior. One form of ensuring attendance and punctuality for older pupils (and teachers) was monetary fines. The records frequently mention this form of discipline: the Talmud Torah *gabay* recorded the pupil's *faltas* (absences), with the corresponding fine; the money collected from fines reverted to the school. On one occasion, at least, the father of a student tried to question the legitimacy of fines, although without success. In 1644, Sarah Cahanet, widow of the well-known cabalist Haham Abraham Cohen Herrera, left a legacy of 1,000 florins to Ets Haim to benefit needy students, but with the proviso that her relatives would have preference. Forty-five years later, on 24 Iyar 5448 [1688], Menasseh Delgado claimed the right for one of his sons, Isaac Delgado, who was studying under Rabbi Joseph Franco, and he received an award of 35 florins per year. However, Isaac was in the habit of arriving late to school and therefore was fined, resulting in a lower grant. Although his father tried to prove that it was unfair, he ended up signing a document agreeing that if any of his three sons were penalized for lateness, he would have to pay the fine.⁷⁶ In 1651, among the names of pupils fined for being absent are the names of two rabbinic students that were to become well-known rabbis: Moshe Zacuto and Abraham Cohen Pimentel.⁷⁷ This form of disciplining students in Jesuit schools, according to Ariès, remained common in the seventeenth century but had been more prevalent in the previous century.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 24b, *Haskamot* 9 addressed to the Talmidim: "Que os Talmidim obedecerao em tudo a os . . . parnassim e [os] poderao mandar castigar . . . e o pay que nao quizer que se castigue seu filho que o merecer nao tem para que o mandar a Talmud Torah" [The pupils are obligated to obey the *parnassim* (governors) who could ask to punish them . . . and the parent who does not want his son to be punished that not have to send his son to the Talmud Torah [school]].

⁷⁶ On Sarah Cahanet's legacy in 1644, see Fisher, *Amsterdam's People of the Book*, 37. The original is in MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 10a. The discussions about Isaac Delgado, on 24 Iyar 5448, and 1 Ab 5448 [1688], when the father signed acknowledging the conditions, and the *parnassim* added the comments about the three sons, Isaac, Joshua or Moshe: as each of them is as the others ("pois o mesmo he hum que outro"). See *ibid.*, ff. 131b, 133b.

⁷⁷ See *Termos de Ets Haim*, MS GAS 334, no. 1052, [year] 5404 [1643–1644], f. 11a, the list of students receiving a monthly stipend, and the deductions for the fines.

⁷⁸ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 261, cites the Jesuit *Ratio* as the origin of this form of penalizing youth, either depriving them of their allotment or with corporal punishment.

From our twenty-first century perspective, the most critical aspect of this topic is not the fact that adolescents misbehaved in school, but rather the strong reaction of the school governors. Records often mention misbehavior during classes, and the school governors addressed it several times. In 1695, the records tell us that in the *Medras Grande*, or the highest level that Haham Jacob Sasportas taught, class attendance and behavior during class were unacceptable. Although the school prescribed a schedule of three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon, the records tell us that the class meetings lasted only about half. In addition, during class, there was a lot of “idle conversation” (*conversacion inutil*). The Ma’amad addressed the problem by ordering that those classes’ meetings would increase in length to nine hours, and if there was enough time, one *maguid* or student-leader would read aloud either *Icarim* or the *Aqueda*.⁷⁹

The Talmud Torah school also expected a great deal of conformity. Students who did not abide by its rules were admonished at first and potentially expelled. For instance, although the Talmud Torah Constitutions mention the hairstyle older students preferred, the school itself did not allow it. Teachers were not to allow their pupils to style their hair in the current Iberian fashion, with the so-called *gadelhas ou copette*, as such was “a gentile indecent fashion inappropriate for the sons of Israel.”⁸⁰

We do not know how many children succeeded and failed in school. Some children thrived and went on to the upper levels, where they received advanced rabbinical training. Many school graduates became successful rabbis in Western Sephardi communities in Europe and the New World.⁸¹ Nevertheless, there are also indications that some students had difficulty moving up from one grade to the next. The few students going up to the upper levels is an indication that those from poor families were sent to work or to be apprenticed instead of reaching rabbinic training levels. Similarly,

⁷⁹ See MS GAS 334, no. 1052, f. 134a, Termo Elul 5455 [1695]. See also Levie Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, n. 198; 344.

⁸⁰ See MS GAS 334, no. 1051, *haskamah* 17, f. 3a. Preachers and moralists in contemporary Spain often criticized this fashionable hair-do for men. The *gadelhas* consisted of long hair from the head parted to the sides of both temples and down to the ears; the *copette* was a lock of hair raised above the front head. Barbers styled the *tupé* (‘forelock’ in English) with hot irons to so-called *lindos* (pretty men), upper-middle-class young men. See Rafael González Cañal, “El lujo y la ociosidad durante la privanza de Olivares: Bartolomé Jiménez Patón y la polémica sobre el guardainfante y las guedejas,” *Criticón* 53 (1991), 71–96, here 86. In 1645, Menasseh Ben Israel in *Thesovro*, part 2, 168, condemned the *gadelhas* and *copette*.

⁸¹ For a list of some of the graduates see Levi Bernfeld, *Poverty and Welfare*, n. 175; 346.

the fierce public disputations that required lengthy preparation and self-confidence on the part of the youngsters have led me to conclude that only the best students survived the meritocratic system.

Conclusion

This essay has explored how the lay leaders of the Amsterdam Sephardi community organized an educational system to educate their sons in three stages, from 1616 to 1639. The first stage started in 1616, when the two congregations, Bet Jacob and Neve Salom, founded the Talmud Torah confraternity, an institution that was to fund the education of their male children as young as five years old. They divided their school into six grades, starting with teaching the Hebrew alphabet and the aleph-bet and culminating with the study of the Talmud. The Talmud Torah school blended attributes from the Jewish tradition, such as the medieval custom of initiating very young children to study Torah on Shavuot, and by bringing to Amsterdam rabbis and teachers from Eastern Sephardic and Italian communities. Equally important was the Iberian Jesuit influence many of the lay leaders had received as adolescents. As the lay leaders of the Amsterdam congregations soon realized that they were not addressing the needs of the older students, in 1637 they founded the Ets Haim confraternity that took care of educating youth and provided monthly stipends to needy and gifted students that would otherwise quit school to make a living. The third stage took place in 1639, when (by then) three congregations merged and formalized the school system, uniting their financial and human resources. Previous scholars have suggested that the Amsterdam Sephardi educational system was influenced by Dutch Latin schools. As discussed before, the similarities between Dutch Latin and Jesuit schools are explainable because both Calvinists and Jesuits were inspired by the French *Modus parisiensis*. But other than the division into levels, there is no concrete evidence of contact between Dutch Latin educators and Sephardic ones during the period when the latter was organizing their educational school system. In contrast, I have demonstrated throughout the essay the parallels between the character formation of the Jesuits' educational school and Amsterdam's Talmud Torah.

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