

Acknowledgements

I began this book during the recent pandemic. I had just retired from almost fifty years of university teaching in 2020 and instead of a gradual transition to a new stage of life for me and my wife, we entered precipitously a new and unexpected phase of relative isolation and seclusion. The research for this book became my constant preoccupation and companion. It also became an enormous source of joy and sanity in a world that seemed and continues to seem in some ways out of kilter.

I had long valued the internet, despite its shortcomings, as a goldmine of information and intellectual stimulation. But I never expected it to yield so many instant discoveries and investigative leads. To enter digitally libraries and archives all over the world; to discover hardly read arcane books, pamphlets, and manuscripts online; and to be led from one clue to another while constantly sitting at my study desk were incredibly satisfying and exhilarating. I had previously spent decades traveling to Europe and Israel in search of hidden rare documents and manuscripts. Working exclusively at home could not replicate these learning experiences. But it did demonstrate, beyond a doubt, how much the practices of this historian have changed over the years and how these different tools of historical research could lead to exciting results.

The internet also facilitated constant contact with the larger circle of historians around the world and with librarians willing to respond to every query I made and to provide me with materials even my well-stocked university library could not supply. Authoring a book in a time of pandemic was truly a wonderful experiment in overcoming intellectual and social isolation and in connecting with books and with people.

I am so grateful to the community of colleagues who helped me write this book. First and foremost are those who read the entire manuscript and kindly offered me their astute comments: Iris Idelson-Shein, Arthur Kiron, Marsha Rozenblit, and Beth Wenger. Other scholars responded graciously to my many queries, especially about materials beyond my reach or subjects beyond my expertise: Israel Bartal, Maria Cieřła, Yaacob Dweck, Todd Endelman, David Fishman, Michael Ledger-Lomas, Claire Le Foll, Sharon Liberman-Mintz, Gabriel Moshenska, Ben Nathans, Stefan Rohdewald, Larry Silver, Adam Teller, Joanna Weinberg, and Marcin Wodziński. A special word of thanks to Eria Zimmels, librarian of the London College for Jewish Studies; Konstanze Kunst, Judaic Librarian of Yale University Library; and Havva Zellner of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, for their great efforts in acquiring for me copies of rare books, manuscripts, and digital images essential to my research.

It is an enormous honor and pleasure to be publishing my book in a series edited by my dear friend and colleague Vivian Liska. I am indebted to the gracious and efficient editorial support of the De Gruyter team who worked with me: Katja Lehming and Ulrike Krauss. Alice Falk's work as copyeditor was excellent and meticulous in every respect. Sophia Spielmann worked diligently in helping me prepare the bibliography for the book.

The following institutions sent me materials and information critical to the writing of this book: The libraries of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the Herbert D. Katz Center, University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, the British Library, the London School of Jewish Studies; as well as the National Archives United Kingdom, The British Museum, The National Portrait Gallery, United Kingdom, The Bath [United Kingdom] Record Office, and CemeteryScribes.com.

Several of my recently published articles represent earlier drafts of chapters of this book. A general overview of the book first appeared as "A Native of Poland Professing the Arts in London: The Unconventional Jewish Life and Thought of Solomon Yom Tov Bennett (1767–1838)," *European Journal of Jewish Studies*, 17 (2023): 176–203. Chapter 5 draws from "Two English Ladies and a Jew from Polotzk: A Chapter in the History of Jewish-Christian Interactions in Nineteenth-Century London," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 114 (2024), 569–601. Chapter 2 is an expansion of the Hebrew article "Polemic, History, and Self-Fashioning in Early Nineteenth-Century England: Solomon Yom Tov Bennett's *The Constancy of Israel* (1809)," *Chidushim* 26 (2024): 43–72, and Chapter 6 appeared in a preliminary form in "A Jewish Vision of the Jerusalem Temple From Nineteenth-Century London: Solomon Yom Tov Bennett's Temple of Ezekiel (Torat Ha-Bayit) [1824]," *Counting the Miracles. Jewish Thought, Mysticism, and the Arts from Late Antiquity to the Present: A Festschrift for Giulio Busi*, eds. Silvana Greco and Judith Schlanger, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025) 55–70.

I dedicate this book to my wife Phyllis on the occasion of our fifty-fifth wedding anniversary. What a wonderful journey we have traveled together! I thank her once again for her love and support. This is her book as well.

David B. Ruderman