



BRILL

ZUTOT 17 (2020) 74–82

ZUTOT:
Perspectives on
Jewish Culture
brill.com/zuto

How to Understand ‘*al yede*? Title Pages of Hebrew Private Library Catalogues Printed in the Dutch Republic during the Long 18th Century

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Abstract

As a first step towards more research in the field of Jewish private libraries and Hebrew auction catalogues, this *zuta* focuses on the understudied corpus of 18th-century Hebrew book sales catalogues printed in the Dutch Republic. It is not always clear if these 18th-century catalogues contain collections from private libraries or retail stocks of publishers, printers, or booksellers. In this article I will analyse and compare the title pages of several catalogues, in order to understand the meaning of the phrase ‘*al yede*’ in relation to ownership of the catalogued collections.

Keywords

private libraries – Hebrew book printing – sales catalogues – Jewish book ownership – Jewish book trade – Amsterdam

In March 1773, a collection of Hebrew and Judaic books and manuscripts was sold in Amsterdam.¹ In the 18th-century Dutch Republic it was not uncommon to publish a list of the books that would be sold at auction. For this book sale in 1773 a catalogue was printed with the following text on the title page:

1 This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 682022. I would like to thank my colleagues of the *MEDIATE* project for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

רשימת ספרים חשובים וספונים, חדשים גם ישנים, וכתובת ידות אשר היו תחת אוצר טמונים, ימכרו בעז"ה פה באמשטרדם בבית הגביר שלמה לוי מאדורא מוכר ספרים ועל ידי הבחור שלמה פרופס כ"ץ ביום ב' וג' שהם ה' ו' ניסן תקלג הבע"ל וכל אחד יכול לראות הספרים יום א' קודם המכירה בבית מאדורא הנ"ל על שטרו מאריק הרשימות נמצאים אצל הנוכרים למעלה²

A list of important and unknown books, new and old, and manuscripts, that were hidden in a collection, will be sold with God's help here in Amsterdam, in the house of Solomon Levi Maduro, bookseller, and by the young man Solomon Proops Katz, on Monday and Tuesday, which are 5 and 6 Nissan 5533, that comes upon us for good. And everyone can see the books on Sunday before the sale in the house of Maduro, mentioned above, on the Stromarkt. The lists can be found with the above mentioned³

In an article in *Studia Rosenthaliana* of 1988, Adri Offenbergh refers to this list of books as 'a completely unknown Hebrew auction catalogue of a member of a well-known family of Jewish printers, Solomon (ben Abraham) Proops.'⁴ While Offenbergh's focus in this article is on a different subject, I was triggered by his formulation and wondered if the collection on sale had belonged to Solomon Proops himself. After all, this is not so evident from the title page of the auction catalogue: the books were to be sold (ימכרו) in the house of Solomon Levi Maduro, who was a bookseller, and by (על ידי, 'al yede) Solomon Proops. Both names are highlighted in the same manner and nowhere it is stated how Solomon Proops is related to the collection, specifically if he was the owner. Is 'al yede an indication of whom the catalogued book collection belonged to, or should this phrasing be understood in a different way? For example, 'al yede may indicate that Solomon Proops was (merely) involved in this project as the printer and publisher. Moreover, the title page states that the books were sold in the house of bookseller Solomon Levi Maduro. So could it be possible that this catalogue was in fact not of a private library collection, but of retail stock?⁵

In historiography it is recognized that, within the disciplines of Hebrew bibliography and Jewish book history, the study of Hebrew auction catalogues

2 Amsterdam Municipality Archive, 334A, inv. 2417.

3 Translations of the Hebrew texts by the author.

4 A.K. Offenbergh, 'How Unique is Unique?,' *Studia Rosenthaliana* 22 (1988) 53–57.

5 In *Book Sales Catalogues Online—Book Auctioning in the Dutch Republic, ca. 1500—ca. 1800* this catalogue is categorized as 'auction catalogue retail stock.' However, it is not clear why.

and private libraries requires more attention.⁶ My aim is to comprehend the ownership of 18th- and early 19th-centuries Hebrew private library catalogues that were printed in the Dutch Republic. In this *zuta* I will examine the occurrence and meaning of *'al yede* in other catalogues. In order to do so, I will compare the title pages of the seven catalogues I have found so far that use the phrase *'al yede*.

First, I will describe two catalogues that are also related to the Proops family and that raise the question of how to understand *'al yede* therein. The first Dutch private library catalogue with almost exclusively Hebrew books was printed in Amsterdam in 1758.⁷ The title page contains a printer's mark of the Proops family, a monogram picturing the Kohanim's priestly blessing (the raising of the hands, *וְשִׂיֵאָה כַּפֵּיֵם*), but it is placed unusually high on the title page. While in other catalogues and books the bottom of the title page mostly informs us of the printer's name, this catalogue does not contain such an indication. The title page states that the books were to be sold in Amsterdam by (*'al yede*) the brothers Proops and by (*'al yede*) the broker ('makelaar') Abraham Semach Aboab Isaac.⁸ The Proops brothers must have been Joseph (d. 1786), Jacob (d. 1779), and Abraham (d. 1792) who took over the printing business of their father, Solomon ben Joseph Proops, after he passed away in 1734. Until they reached maturity they printed under their father's name; from 1751 onwards they started printing under their own names.⁹ Should we deduce from this title page that this was the private collection of one of the men involved? Or did the Proops brothers and Semach Aboab participate in the sale as a third party of an anonymous collection, as printer, bookseller, and broker?¹⁰ Or does it concern a catalogue of retail stock of the Proops brothers? Perhaps

6 See, for example, M.J. Heller, 'The Hebrew Book Trade as Reflected in Book Catalogues,' *Quaerendo* 26, no. 4 (1996) 245–257, esp. 245, reprinted in M.J. Heller, *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book* (Leiden 2007) 241–256; Y. Dweck, 'What is a Jewish book?,' *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010) 367–374, esp. 374.

7 There are indications of Hebrew catalogues printed before 1758 (e.g. a catalogue of Moses Raphael d'Aguilar from 1680), but this is the earliest physical copy I have traced so far. The catalogues of Sephardic Rabbis Isaac Aboab da Fonseca (1693), Samuel ben Isaac Abas (1693), Isaac d'Andrade (1701), and David Nunnes Torres (1728) all have a (partly) Dutch or Latin title page. Since the focus in this article is on title pages of Hebrew catalogues, the aforementioned catalogues are not included.

8 British Library (henceforth: BL) 1939.f.16.(1). For the Hebrew text on the title page see Table 1.

9 Heller, *Studies*, 39; 'Proops,' in M. Berenbaum and F. Skolnik, eds., *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol. 16 (2nd ed.; Detroit 2007) 562–563.

10 Abraham Semach Aboab Isaac was listed as a Jewish broker (*Joodsche Makelaars*) between 1742 and 1765 by the Amsterdam brokers gild, see *Lyste der naamen en woonplaatsen van de makelaars (... der stad Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1765) 35.

this could be inferred from the fact that the name of the Proops brothers is in a slightly bigger font than that of Semach Aboab.

Comparable questions apply to a second catalogue linked to the Proops family, that has a same oblong format and a similar layout as the one discussed above. Contrary to that catalogue, the title page of this list of books does state the printer: it was published in Amsterdam in 1784 by the widow and orphans of Jacob Proops.¹¹ Furthermore, the title page mentions that the books were to be sold *by* ('*al yede*) Joseph ben Jacob Proops. Joseph was active as a printer around 1793 until he died in 1796.¹² His father Jacob (ben David) (d. 1773) was probably a cousin of the above mentioned Proops brothers.¹³ Should we nonetheless understand that this catalogue contains the private library of Joseph ben Jacob Proops? Or was this Proops family member also part of the publishing and bookselling business and could this be a retail stock catalogue? We know of a wholesale stock catalogue printed by Solomon Proops – the father of the above mentioned Proops brothers – in 1730. This catalogue, titled *Appiryon Shelomo*, of which no known copy has survived, contained the titles of books published by the Proops printing business.¹⁴ Both the catalogues from 1758 and 1784 contain many books not published by the Proops family. Nevertheless, it was not uncommon that printers in Amsterdam kept books beside their own publications in stock.¹⁵ For example, a Yiddish sale advertisement from circa 1760 shows that the Proops family also sold books not printed by their own business.¹⁶ For many Jewish printers in Amsterdam the bookselling business

11 BL 1939.f.16.(2). For the Hebrew text on the title page see Table 1.

12 Joseph ben Jacob Proops is not mentioned in studies on the Proops family. However, he is mentioned with Solomon ben Abraham Proops (d. 1833 according to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, see n. 8 above) as the printer of a nine volume *Mahzor* published in Amsterdam in 1793:

מחזור עם כוונת הפייטן (...) באמשטרדם בדפוס אלמנה ויתמי המנוח כהר"ר יעקב פרופס כ"ץ זצ"ל ויוסף בן המנוח כהר"ר יעקב פרופס כ"ץ זצ"ל ושלמה בן המנוח כהר"ר אברהם פרופס כ"ץ זצ"ל (...) בשנת (...) היום הזה נהיית (...).

13 Genealogical information is taken from the database 'Ashkenazi Amsterdam in the eighteenth century' of the Dutch Jewish Genealogical Data Base Akevoth: <http://www.akevoth.org/genealogy/ashkenazi/2184.shtml> (accessed 10 May 2018).

14 Heller, 'Hebrew Book Trade,' 245; 'Proops,' in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 563.

15 See B. van Selm, '*Een menigte treffelijkke boeken*.' *Nederlandse boekhandelscatalogi in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht 1987) 3–4; R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, 'The Hebrew Book Trade in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century,' in C. Berkvens-Stevelinck, *Le Magasin De L'univers: The Dutch Republic As the Centre of the European Book Trade* (Leiden 1992) 155–168, esp. 163.

16 S. Berger, 'Selling Books in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam: A Yiddish Sale Advertisement from Circa 1760,' *Zutot* 5.1 (2008) 129–134.

was an important part of their income.¹⁷ Could these catalogues have been a different way to advertise the books they had on sale?

A different example shows once more the ambiguity of the words *'al yede*. In two catalogues I came across the even more explicit phrase *ha-nimkarim 'al yede*, 'that are sold by,' which sounds so active that the person mentioned hereafter must be the book auctioneer.¹⁸ In the first catalogue, printed in 1797 by the Proops family, this is indeed the case: the collection came from the estate (עזבוֹן) of Jacob Levi and was *sold by* the curator (אפטרופסי).¹⁹ Another catalogue, from February 1810, specifies that the books of this collection were *sold by* Abraham ben Aaron Prins from Alkmaar, in Amsterdam.²⁰ He is also mentioned on the title page as the printer of the catalogue, along with the widow and heirs of Jacob Proops.²¹ Could it be possible, in this case, that the private library collection of Prins himself was being sold? Or, perhaps more likely, should we understand *sold by* as an indication that he was involved in this sale not only as the printer, but also as the bookseller of an anonymous collection or retail stock?²²

Another example is from a catalogue printed in 1812 in Amsterdam by Jacob Belinfante. My first impression led me to believe this was an anonymous collection, because no name is highlighted in the text, as was usual. However, below on the title page we find written in small letters *'al yede* Daniel Lopes Salzedo and it is stated that the list of books could be found at his house.²³ This catalogue also has a list of non-Hebrew books preceded by a Dutch title page,

17 For more information on the different roles in the Hebrew and Yiddish book industry, see S. Berger, 'Agents of the Book and Their Titles in the Amsterdam Yiddish Book Industry 1650–1800' (Hebrew), in A. Bar-Levav, C.B. Stuczynski and M. Heyd, eds., *Paths to Modernity. A Tribute to Yosef Kaplan* (Jerusalem 2018).

18 In the catalogues so far the word *yimakru* was more implicit connected to the world *'al yede*.

19 Ets Haim – Livraria Montezinos, Amsterdam (henceforth: EH) 34 C 04 (13); University Library Amsterdam (henceforth: UBA) Ros. Veil. 72; and Utrecht University Library, C oct. 683; Catalogus van een extra Fraaije Verzameling van Hebreuwsche boeken (...) alle dewelke Nagelaaten, door Wylen de Heer Jacob Isaac Levy, te Rotterdam, zullen verkogt worden (...) op Dingsdag den 25 April 1797 (...) Gedrukt te Amsterdam, by De Weduwe J. Proops (...). For the Hebrew text on the title page see Table 1.

20 EH 34 C 04 (16); UBA Ros. Veil. 77. For the Hebrew text on the title page see Table 1.

21 They printed also other books together, see M. Gutschow, *Inventory of Yiddish Publications from the Netherlands: C. 1650–c. 1950* (Leiden 2007) no. 462, 543.

22 There are traces of an Abraham ben Aaron Prins who was born in Alkmaar (d. 1850) and who worked sometime in his life in Amsterdam as a *parnas*, *mohel* and curator of the rabbinic seminary. See <https://www.dutchjewry.org/genealogy/ashkenazi/6989.shtml> (accessed 10 May 2018).

23 EH 34 C 04 (14). For the Hebrew text on the title page see Table 1.

which makes no mention of Daniel Lopes Salzedo. In the preface, however, he is mentioned as the broker ('makelaar').²⁴ In this function as such he is also mentioned on the Dutch title page of the 1811 catalogue of Solomon Jessurun's collection, again printed by Belinfante.²⁵ This catalogue is divided in a Dutch and a Hebrew section; the Hebrew title page mentions Lopes Salzedo as the keeper of the book lists. From this it is clear that Lopes Salzedo was not the owner of the collection presented in the 1812 catalogue, and that 'al yede in this case should be understood as being involved as a third party in an anonymous sale.

This exposition of the appearance of 'al yede on book sale catalogues' title pages shows its use and meaning varying according to different contexts. It is clear that we need more information on the title page in order to understand what is meant. It is worthwhile to continue this comparative approach and study other Hebrew catalogues of this period.²⁶ Fortunately not all catalogues are that difficult to interpret. As already mentioned in one of the examples above, occasionally the title page states that the collection of books was from the 'izavon (estate) of a certain person.²⁷ Other ways to refer to the collection's owner are: *asher hiniah aharav*, '[the books] he left behind,'²⁸ and *she-hiniah ahar petirato*, '[the books] he left after his death.'²⁹ So while some catalogues state very clearly to whom the collection belonged, others raise problems similar to the ones mentioned above. I will list here some more examples of catalogues that have a puzzling title page.

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- 24 Daniel Lopes Salzedo was listed in 1808 and in 1826 as a Jewish broker ('Joodsche Makelaar'), see *Koninklijke almanak voor den jaren 1808* vol. 2 (Den Haag en Amsterdam 1808) 552; *Aan kommissarissen van het makelaars-kantoor en verdere makelaars, te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1826) 19.
- 25 EH 14 D 26 (1); UBA KVB NV 837; and BL 1939.e.13.(5): Catalogus van eene zeer fraaije en wel geconfitioneerde verzameling, grootendeels Hebreeuwische (...) boeken (...) bijeenverzameld door (...) Salomo Jessurun (...) welke verkocht zullen worden (...) op Vrijdag den 27sten December, 1811 (...) Gedrukt te Amsterdam, ter boekdrukkerij van Belinfante en Comp, 1811. For the Hebrew text on the title page see Table 1. See also A.K. Offenber, 'A Mid-Seventeenth Manuscript of the (Unpublished) Hebrew Grammars of Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac Aboab da Fonseca Recovered,' *Zutot* (2003) 98–107.
- 26 In future research I hope to make a national comparison by including other, non-Hebrew, catalogues printed in the Dutch Republic, and a transnational comparison by including Hebrew catalogues printed in other countries.
- 27 E.g. UBA Ros. Veil. 71; UBA Ros. Veil. 76; EH 14 D 28; UBA Ros. Veil. 78; UBA Ros. Veil. 84; UBA Ros. Veil. 82.
- 28 E.g. The Hague, National Archive Zc 5; BL 1939.2.13.(4).
- 29 E.g. New York, Jewish Theological Seminary RB380:3; Oxford, ASC Stack 2nd SR.50.d.2:5; State and University Library Hamburg (SUB), B Abbas; Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (HAB), Bc Sammelband 3:1.

As we have seen in the catalogue of 1773, mentioned as the first example, the books were sold *in the house of* bookseller Solomon Levi Maduro. Could this also mean that ‘bookseller’ was just mentioned as his profession – as was done with rabbis, doctors, lawyers, and others – and that he was the owner of the collection? In several other catalogues this phrase is also used: a catalogue from 1772 mentions that the books were sold in the house of Joseph Schwerin; in a catalogue from 1802 it is written that the books were sold in the house of Rabbi Aron IJzerloon; in 1802 another book sale took place in the house of Rabbi Solomon Jessurun; and a catalogue from 1813 states that the books were sold in the house of Rabbi Hirsch Goudstikker.³⁰ Since these men were not ‘of blessed memory’ (ל"ט ז"ל \ ל"ט), we can be relatively sure that they were still alive.

Should we then infer from this that they were the owners of the collections on sale, especially since the names of the men in the last three catalogues are centered on the title pages? For instance, as mentioned above, Solomon Jessurun’s collection was sold after his death in 1811. Might it be possible that several years earlier, in 1802, he sold part of his collection himself? Although, other than the fact that the sale was in their house, there are no indications that they were selling (part of) their own collections. Could they maybe have provided a venue to sell anonymous collections in their houses? Or were these men active as booksellers and did they use their homes as bookshops?³¹

In this context the catalogue with the Hebrew book collection of Solomon Cohen Samuelsz, sold in Rotterdam in 1786, is also interesting. The catalogue has a Hebrew and a Dutch title page. While on the Hebrew title page no names are mentioned other than the Proops family as the printer, the Dutch title page mentions the curators, the auctioneer, as well as the owner of the collection.³² What does this imply about the aim of the two different title pages? Should we conclude that the title pages were printed one after the other, and that the printers considered it enough to mention the name on only one of them, or that the Jewish and the Dutch reader did not demand the same information?

30 In order mentioned: EH 34 C 04 (10); EH 34 C 04 (18); EH 14 D 26 (2); EH 21 E 89 (3).

31 The Amsterdam municipality authorities did not officially allow Jews to open bookstores. However, according to Shlomo Berger these Jewish bookstores were in practice opened and tolerated. See Fuks-Mansfeld, ‘Hebrew book Trade in Amsterdam,’ 136; S. Berger, *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam: Early Modern Yiddish Books in Paratextual Perspective* (Leiden 2013) 194.

32 UBA Ros. Veil. 70: *Catalogus Van Een Extra fraaije Verzameling Van Hebreuwsche Boeken (...) Dewelke Jurianus Van Meekeren En Johannes Nozeman, als Curateurs in de Boedel van Salomon Cohen Samuelsz (...) Publiek zullen Verkoopen, aan de Oostzyde van de Leuwe Haven, op den 31 July 1786 (...) Gedrukt Te Amsterdam, By J. Proops, Boekdrukker En Boekverkooper, in de Rapenburgstraat (...)*. For the Hebrew text on the title page see Table 1.

Contrary to catalogues that clearly state that the books came from the estate of someone, the use and meaning of the phrase *'alyede* in book sale catalogues generate many questions. The books on sale are, most likely, in some way related to the men whose names were printed on the title pages. However, there are no indications whether these catalogues contained their private library collections, whether they concerned the stock of their businesses, or whether these men were involved as third parties in the sale of anonymous collections. The problematic translation of *'alyede* seems intrinsically related to the problem of determining the function of the different persons involved in the book sales and mentioned on the title pages and, in some cases perhaps, to the difference between Dutch and Hebrew title pages of the same catalogue. This *zuta* confirms that further research in this field is greatly needed. In the coming years I will be studying this corpus of Jewish and Hebrew library catalogues and I will, hopefully, shed more light upon these questions.

TABLE 1 Title pages of Hebrew catalogues

Note	Source	Year	Title page
8	BL 1939.f.16.(1)	1758	רשימה מכל מיני ספרים (...) אשר ימכרו פה אמשטרדם בעז"ה על ידי האחים פרופס וע"י המאקעלאר אברהם צמח אבוהב יצחק ביום ד' ד'ג' שבט תקי"ח לפ"ק (...)
11	BL 1939.f.16.(2)	1784	רשימה מכל מיני ספרים חשובים חדשים וגם ישנים אשר ימכרו בעז"ה ביום ב' וביום ג' ראש חודש טבת תקמ"ה קודם חצות ואחר חצות על ידי יוסף בן המנוח כהר"ר יעקב פרופס כ"ץ זצ"ל (...) באמשטרדם בדפוס אלמנה עם יתמי המנוח כה' יעקב פרופס כ"ץ זצ"ל (...)
19	EH 34 C 04 (13); UBA Ros. Veil. 72; UUL C oct. 683	1797	רשימה מספרים רבים וחשובים יקרים ונכבדים (...) מעזבון המנוח המפורסם הנגיד התורני המושלם, פו"מ כ"ה יאקב לעוורדון זצ"ל הנמכרים ע"י אפטרופסי העזבון בבית המנוח הנ"ל זצ"ל בראטרדם ביום ג' כ"ט לחודש ניסן תקנז לפ"ק (...) באמשטרדם בבית המדפיסים פרופס (...)

TABLE 1 Title pages of Hebrew catalogues (*cont.*)

Note	Source	Year	Title page
20	EH 34 C 04 (16); UBA Ros. Veil. 77	1810	רשימה מספרים רבים וחשובים יקרים ונכבדים (...) הנמכרים ע"י כ"ה אברהם בן המנוח כ"ה אהרן פרינץ מאלקמוהר ז"ל (...). המכירה זיין ויערט ביום ד' ג' אדר ראשון תקע לפ"ק שהוא den 7 february 1810 (...). נדפס באמסטרדם בדפוס אלמני ויתמי המנוח כ"ה יוסף פרופס כ"ץ ז"ל וכ"ה אברהם בן המנוח כ"ה אהרן פרינץ מאלקמוהר ז"ל (...).
23	EH 34 C 04 (14)	1812	רשימה של ספרים חשובים ויקרים (...). הכל ימכור ביום ג' של שבת ז"ל לחדש השון הבע"ל בשוק הנקרא מווידרסטרט בבית 5060. על ידי דניאל לופז זאלזידו (...). באמסטרדם נדפס בבית הגביר יעקב בן כמוהרר צדיק הכהן בלאינפאנטי
25	EH 14 D 26 (1); UBA BKVB NV 837; BL 1939.e.13.(5)	1811	רשימה מספרים רבים וחשובים, יקרים ונכבדים (...) מעזבון המנוח הדיין המצוין החכם השלם כמה"ר ר' שלמה ישורון זצ"ל בק"ק הספרדים ת"ת יעא, באמסטרדם אשר ימכרו בבית המנוח הנל (...). הרשימות נמצאים בבית דניאל לופס זאלזידו (...). באמסטרדם (5572) בדפוס החברים (...). בלאינפאנטי כ'ץ יצו
32	UBA Ros. Veil. 70	1786	רשימה מספרים חשובים ויקרים רבים ונכבדים (...). הנמכרים בראטרדם יום ב' ו' לחדש אב תקמ"ו (...). נדפס באמסטרדם בבית ובדפוס אלמנה עם יתמי המנוח כהר"ר יעקב פרופס כ"ץ (...).