

Zeitschrift: Judaica : Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentums
Herausgeber: Zürcher Institut für interreligiösen Dialog
Band: 73 (2017)

Artikel: Prague jewry during the civil war : the Passauer Kriegsvolk in 1611 as reflected in contemporary Hebrew sources
Autor: David, Abraham
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-961039>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 12.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Prague Jewry during the Civil War – the *Passauer Kriegsvolk* in 1611 as reflected in Contemporary Hebrew Sources

By *Abraham David**

Abstract

Im Mittelpunkt des folgenden Artikels steht die Berichterstattung einer anonymen Hebräischen Chronik über den bis heute als Passauer Kriegsvolk bekannten Bürgerkrieg in Prag 1611. Von wenigen zeitgenössischen Bussgebeten abgesehen, ist die Hebräische Chronik die einzige jüdische Quelle, die davon handelt. Wie der Vergleich ihrer Schilderung der Ereignisse mit anderen zeitgenössischen Quellen belegt, muss ihr Autor Augenzeuge der Ereignisse gewesen sein. Wenn er in seiner Darstellung auch immer wieder die Rolle Kaiser Rudolfs II. als Beschützer der Prager Juden hervorhebt, ist er in seiner sachlich-fairen Berichterstattung dennoch durchweg unparteiisch und gibt nicht zu erkennen, mit welcher der Bürgerkriegsparteien er sympathisiert.

One of the most dramatic events in early seventeenth century Bohemia in general, and in Prague in particular, is undoubtedly the civil war known as the *Passauer Kriegsvolk* because of the involvement of the citizens of Passau, a Bavarian town near the Bohemian border.

In 1611, the Passau army led by their Bishop Leopold, engaged the Bohemians in a battle in Prague. The reason for this bloody military engagement was the struggle for the Bohemian royal crown, which began on April 17, 1608. An earlier agreement between Emperor Rudolf II¹ and his brother

* Dr *Abraham David*, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 89/4 Derekh Hebron, Jerusalem 93390, Israel; *Abraham.david@mail.huji.ac.il*. – This article is based on my lecture: *An Eyewitness' Account of the Civil War in Prague (1611) from a Contemporary Hebrew Chronicle* at the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg, 19.11.2007.

1 Rudolf II was born in Vienna on July 18, 1552, and died in Prague on January 20, 1612. – A lot has been written about him, including monographs like: GERTRUD VON SCHWARZENFELD, *Rudolf II. der saturnische Kaiser*, München 1961; ROBERT JOHN WESTON EVANS, *Rudolf II and his World. A Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612*, Oxford 1973; STEFAN EHRENPREIS, *Kaiserliche Gerichtsbarkeit und Konfessionskonflikt. Der Reichshofrat unter Rudolf II. 1576–1612* (Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 72), Göttingen 2006.

King Matthias,² sovereign of Hungary, Moravia, and Austria, stated that Matthias would rule Bohemia after the emperor's death. However, contrary to this agreement which was reached on May 1, 1609, in the Bohemian town of Brod, close to Prague, Rudolf sought to install his cousin, the aforementioned Bishop Leopold,³ on the kingly throne. The ensuing military engagement lasted for several months, during which Leopold's forces captured parts of Bohemia in the beginning of January 1611. The Prague quarter *Kleinseite (Malá Strana)*, i.e. the small quarter west of the Vltava River near the Hradčin Castle, was occupied by the Passauer army on February 15, 1611, which subsequently destroyed several monasteries there. In connection with these events, the first legal Union of Lutheran and Calvinist was established in the city of Prague. Finally, Matthias' army supported by Moravian and Hungarian militaries under his rule, defeated Leopold's forces, and on May 23, 1611, and Matthias was crowned king of Bohemia during his brother's lifetime. At that time, Rudolf II politically was powerless and isolated and a half year later, on January 20, 1612, he died in his Prague castle, and Matthias succeeded him as Emperor.

This civil war has been the subject of a few studies⁴ that offered different explanations of it. Thus, it has been argued that the civil war in Prague in 1611 was the result of the changes in the religious map of Bohemia in general, and in Prague in particular since the end of the 16th century onwards. Along with them and in accordance with the demands of the Hussite Revolution hundred years earlier and the ideas of the Protestant reformation

2 Matthias was born in Vienna on February 24, 1557, and died in the same town on March 20, 1619. In 1608, he became the sovereign of Hungry, Austria and Moravia. On May 23, 1611, he succeeded his brother Rudolf II as king of Bohemia. After Rudolf II died In the beginning of 1612 he succeeded him as the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. On him, see: BERND DIETER RILL, *Kaiser Matthias. Bruderzwist und Glaubenskampf*, Graz 1999.

3 Leopold V was born in Graz on October 9, 1586, and died in Schwaz on September 13, 1632. In 1607, he became Bishop of Passau and seven years later, he was also Bishop of Strasburg. He was a cousin of the Emperor Rudolf II.

4 See: FRANZ KURZ, *Der Einfall des von Kaiser Rodolf II, in Passau angeworbenen Kriegsvolkes in Oberösterreich und Böhmen (1610-1611)* (Bericht über das Museum Francisco-Carolinum, Jahresberichte 53-55), Linz 1897; ANTON CHROUST, *Vom Einfall des Passauer Kriegsvolks bis zum Nürnberger Kurfürstentag* (Briefe und Acten zur Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges in den Zeiten des vorwaltenden Einflusses der Wittelsbacher, vol. 9), München 1903; JAMES R. PALMITESSA, "The Prague Uprising of 1611: Property, Politics and Catholic Renewal in the early Years of Habsburg Rule," in: *Central European History* 31 (1998), pp. 299-328.

movement which spread in the Holy Roman Empire, a renewal and restitution of ecclesiastical properties was developed. Emperor Rudolf II himself was open minded and not opposed to those new trends. He even issued a decree that declared freedom of religion in Bohemia.⁵

A brief, but accurate description of these events is found also in a Hebrew chronicle from the early seventeenth century, which gives an overview over important events in the history of the Jews of Bohemia with focus on Prague. The manuscript of this text was discovered by myself in the beginning of the eighties of the last century at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York.⁶ The author of this *Hebrew Chronicle* is unknown and, thus far, unidentified. He wrote his chronicle in Ashkenazi Hebrew typical of that time and place. From the text itself, we learn virtually nothing about its author, nothing about his family's identity, or his profession, or his cultural baggage. All that certainly can be taken for granted is that he lived in Prague at the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century and apparently was an eyewitness of various contemporary events in Prague. Very recently, Alexander Putik from the Jewish Museum in Prague, suggested to attribute the *Hebrew Chronicle* to two authors assuming that these two were the communal scribes who recorded special events that happened in Bohemia, and particularly in Prague. The first one, he identified as Petahya b. Josef Sofer who recorded the events of the period from 1389 to 1581 (entries 1-65), and the other one as Abraham Josef Yequiel Kaufmann (Kafmann) SeGaL (Ha-Levi) who authored the records of the years 1598 to 1611 (entries 66-76).⁷

In the present study, I focus on that *Hebrew Chronicle*, for it sheds light on the Jewish aspects of this conflict. The author was after all an eyewitness of various contemporary events in Prague, the *Passauer Kriegsvolk* included.

5 This point is clarified by EVANS, *Rudolf II* (note 1), pp. 84-115; PALMITESSA, “The Prague Uprising of 1611” (note 4), pp. 300-304, 314 ff.; EHRENPREIS, *Kaiserliche Gerichtsbarkeit* (note 1), pp. 214-243.

6 Ms. Mic. 3849. – I have published this chronicle under the title: *כּוֹנִיקָה עֲבָרִית מִפְרָאָג מִרְאַשֵּׁת הַמָּאָה הַיּוֹם*, Jerusalem 1984; English version: *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague, c. 1615*, translated by Leon J. Weinberger and Dena Ordan, Tuscaloosa / London 1993; Czech version: *Anonymní hebrejská kronika z raně novověké Prahy*, transl. by Markéta Pnina Rubešová, Praha 2013.

7 Cf. ALEXANDER PUTIK’s review of the Czech version of my edition of the *Hebrew Chronicle from Prague* (mentioned above in note 6), in: *Judaica Bohemiae* 48/2 (2013), pp. 133-134, 136-137.

First, a few words on the *Hebrew Chronicle* which is arranged in chronological order. The entries begin with the year in question and, then, recount events related to Bohemian Jewry. Despite the natural emphasis on Jewish matters, the *Hebrew Chronicle* also sheds ample light on general events. Interspersed among the entries, we find information concerning Bohemian kings and Habsburg Holy Roman emperors, starting with the year 1471. Thus, the author mentions, *inter alia*, major events of the history of the kings and emperors, beginning with Charles V (1500/1520–1555) and ending with Rudolf II (1552/1576–1612) and his brother Matthias (1557/1612–1619).

The author describes the endless warfare over the throne – internal and external conflicts, such as: the Ottoman (Turkish) advancement into Hungary, which ended with the Ottoman victory at Mohács in August 1526, followed by the Bohemian King Ferdinand's I annexation of several territories of western Hungary a year later, and the unsuccessful Ottoman attempts to conquer Vienna in 1529 and 1532.

The chronicle also takes notice of revolutionary currents in western and central Europe in the sixteenth century, such as: the *Bauernkrieg* (peasant revolt) of 1525, the Lutheran reformation, and the Anabaptist movement, which spread throughout Bohemia and Moravia, too. He even briefly describes the persecution of the Anabaptists by King Ferdinand I in 1528 and 1535.

As an observer of general history, the chronicler is as reliable as accurate. In his later, more elaborated paragraphs, he provides explanations of the historical background and an eyewitness' account of contemporary events. The account of the *Passauer Kriegsvolk*, he begins with the year 1608:

שנת שס"ח בר"ח אייר, היה סיכוך ומהומה גדולה פה פראג בין אדונינו הקיסר רודולף יר"ה ואחיו [...] דוכס מאטיאש [...] שבא במדינה זו סמוך לפראג, ושכן בעיר פעםשין ברודז, והיה עמו שם רב אנשי חיל רוכבי רכש, והולכי רגל' עם כלי זיין מן אנשי מלחמה מדינת איסטריה, מעהררין, אונגרין, טטרין, ועשו היוזק גדול במדין' זו. גזו וחמסו והגרו ושרפו היוזק גדול יותר מן ד' פעמי מאה אלף', ורצתה דוכס מאטיאש למלוך בחזקת על מדינות פיהם, אונגרין, מעהררין וαιיסטריה, וגם אדונינו הקיסר יר"ה אסף גם עם רב במדינות פיהם ובאו לכאן בפראג לערך ד' אלפי איש אנשי חיל עם כלי זיין, והיינו בדאגה גדולה.⁸

[72] 5368 [1608] -- On Rosh Hodesh Iyyar [17 April 1608] there was contention and commotion here in Prague between our ruler Emperor Rudolf, may he be exalted, and his brother [...] Duke Matthias [...] who came to a city near Prague, residing in the city of Böhmisch Brod. With him there were great numbers of brave men mounted on steeds [Esther 8:10, 14] and armed infantry from the

8 DAVID, קרוניקה עברית, (note 6), No. 72, p. 20.

[ranks of the] warriors [Num. 31:49] of the countries of Austria, Moravia, Hungary, and Tatry. They did great damage to this city, stealing, rampaging, killing, and burning – inflicting damage of more than four times one hundred thousand. Duke Matthias desired to rule over the countries of Bohemia, Hungary, Moravia, and Austria by force. Our ruler, the emperor, may he be exalted, also gathered a great force from the cities of Bohemia, and a force of about twenty thousand brave armed soldiers, came here, to Prague. And we were extremely disturbed.⁹

The author goes on to note that the Jews of Prague remained unharmed during these disturbances, since they enjoyed special protection provided by the town council: **ונתנו העצה שומרים ברחוב היהודים לבלי זיק לשום יהודים, וזה היה** “לערך ד' שבועות, והש"י היציל אותנו מידם” The town council posted guards in the Judenstrasse to make certain no Jew was harmed. This [state of affairs] lasted for about four weeks, and God, blessed be He, delivered us from their hands”.¹⁰ As we will see, the protection granted to Prague's Jews during the armed struggles that took place in the time of Rudolf's II reign is a recurrent theme in the chronicle. Concerning negotiations between the kingly brothers, the chronicler adds:

ונתפשו, שנתנו למאטיאש כתר מלכות של אונגרין. וימלוך על אונגרין ומערבה רין ואיסטררין, ולאחר מות אדונינו יר"ה ימלוך ג"כ על מדינת פיהם, ונסעו לדרךם לעיר ווין בשלום, וגם אנשי פיהם כל אחד לביתו.¹¹

And they reached a compromise – Matthias was granted the royal crown of Hungary, [and it was agreed] that he would rule Hungary, Moravia, and Austria, and that after the death of our sovereign, may he be exalted, Matthias would rule over Bohemia as well. And they went peacefully on their way to Vienna, and the people of Bohemia returned to their homes.¹²

However, this did not bring the fraternal struggle to an end. In April 1610 a *Reichstag*, attended by the dukes and archbishops of the Holy Roman Empire, whose names the chronicler lists, was convened in Prague in another attempt to reach a settlement between the two brothers. Once again, a compromise was reached, as the chronicle reports:

9 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), p. 59.

10 DAVID, (note 6), No. 72, p. 20-21; DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), pp. 59-60. As we see here and below the two brothers, the emperor Rudolf II and the king Matthias kept good relationship with the Jewish community in Prague and gave the Jews in their neighbourhood full defence and commanded to avoid any harm against them.

11 DAVID, (note 6), No. 75, pp. 21-22.

12 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), p. 60.

[בשנת ש"ע, היה פה פראג ועוד גدول הנקרא ריך טאג, ובאו לכך לראשונה דוכס מהרערין הנקרא קורפירש מזקסין עם אחיו, והגמון מן קעלין, והגמון ממונץ ערכי הרצוג מאקללאנץ, אחיו של אדונינו יר"ה ובישוף מפאסי נקרא לייפלט דוכס משטיאר מרק, ודוכס מברונשוויג, ושני אחיהם לנדרברין מההסין [...] ושאר [...] שליחות משאר דוכסים ומכל מקומות ריך, והוא הוצאות הכל מאדונינו, יר"ה [...] ושאר כל, והוא ערך הוצאה יותר מן ק"ן אלף.¹³

[75] In the year 5370 [1610], an important meeting, called the *Reichstag*, was convened here in Prague. The first to arrive were the duke of Moravia named Kurfürst of Sachsen with his brother, and the archbishop of Köln, and the archbishop of Mainz, archduke of Koblenz, our sovereign's, may he be exalted, brother, and the bishop of Passau named Leopold, duke of Steiermark, the duke of Braunschweig, and two brothers, counts [*Landgrafen*] of Hessen [...] and delegates from other duchies in all parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The expenses were paid by our sovereign, may he be exalted, [...] as well as everything else, costing him more than one hundred and fifty thousand.¹⁴

The chronicler then goes on to add how several participants in this *Reichstag* continued on to the court of Matthias in Vienna in order to negotiate an agreement between the warring brothers:

ואח"כ נסעו בשליחות לעיר ווין למלך מאטיאש הגמון מקעלין, ודוכס מברונשוויג ובישוף מפאסי ועשׂו פשרה בין אדונינו יר"ה ואחיו מלך מאטיאש יר"ה מהם המלכות ושאר סיכוסכיהם שהיה בינם, וגם תיקנו הרבה ענייני ושאר ענייני אודות הריך והמלחמות שהיא בינם, ואח"כ נסע כל אחד לביתו בשלום.¹⁵

Subsequently, a delegation to King Matthias left for Vienna, [consisting of] the archbishop of Köln, the duke of Braunschweig, and the bishop of Passau, and they negotiated an agreement between our sovereign and his brother King Matthias, may he be exalted, regarding questions of sovereignty and other issues; they issued several decrees and [settled] matters regarding [sovereignty] in the empire and other disputes. Later each one returned safely to his home.¹⁶

The terms of this agreement remained unknown, as the chronicler writes: “**וְאֵין אָדָם יוֹדֵעַ מָה שָׁהִי הָעֲנִינִי**”, והכל סוד בינם, “And no one knows what the agreements were; everything was kept secret between them.”¹⁷

This agreement barely lasted a year. As noted earlier, the struggle was reignited when Emperor Rudolf tried to install his cousin Leopold, bishop

13 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית*, (note 6), No. 75, pp. 21-22.

14 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), pp. 61-62.

15 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית*, (note 6), No. 75, p. 22.

16 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), p. 62.

17 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית*, (note 6), No. 75, p. 22; DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), p. 62.

of Passau, as king of Bohemia, rather than bequeath the crown to his brother Matthias, in direct contradiction to the agreement reached three years earlier, in 1608. Matthias refused to give up the crown of Bohemia, sparking a bloody war that lasted for several months. For his part, the bishop of Passau began to gather an army to implement the imperial promise.

And typically, the chronicler goes into great detail regarding the events related to this civil war in his hometown of Prague. He describes how Leopold's forces gathered in Passau, planning to invade Prague in order to capture the crown for Leopold. In the course of the journey they fell upon and destroyed various Bohemian towns.

שע"א [1611] לפ"ק, היה מהומה ומלחמה גדולה פה פראג שאדונינו הקיסר יר"ה בקש למלוך אחרי מותו את ליפולטוס בישוף מפאסי בן דודו ודוכס גרייטוס משטייאר מרק על מלכות פיהם בידיעת קצת דרכם הבהירה, והכל בסודי סודות. ובישוף ליפולטיס אסף עם רב, בעלי מלחמות אלפיים לערך ט"ז אלף מוחרים, והניחם בעיר פאסי נגד שנה, ועשו שם היזק גדול, ובכל סביבות אין אדם ידע על מה הם בפאס, ויחזרו העם כי אין להם שם לאכול ולשתות, לפי שהוא הכל מכלה [...] ויסעו שם למדינת פיהם, ו באו בערמה ובתחבולת לעיר בודוויז, ועשו שם היזק גדול גזלו וחמסו ולקחו מזומנים' וכסף וזיהוב לערך מאה אלפי', ומהם הרגו עיקר עירוני המקום [...] ובכל מדינות פיהם מקום שידם מגעת עשו היזק גדול.¹⁸

[76] 5371 [1611] -- There was strife and fierce fighting here in Prague for our sovereign, the emperor, may he be exalted, wanted to have his cousin Leopold, bishop of Passau, rule after his death, and Duke Grotius of Steiermark on the throne of Bohemia. This [conspiracy] was known only to a few, and everything was done in utmost secrecy. Bishop Leopold gathered a multitude, men of war by the thousands, approximately sixteen thousand chosen men, stationing them in the city of Passau for a year. And they did great damage there and in the surrounding area, and no one knew why they were in Passau. And the people returned [to their homes] for there was nothing to eat or drink there, for they had consumed everything [...]. From there they went to Bohemia, attacking the city of Budweis treacherously and with trickery, doing great damage – stealing, rampaging, taking money, gold, and silver worth approximately a hundred thousand and killing many of the townspeople [...]. Wherever they went in Bohemia, they did great damage.¹⁹

In what follows the chronicler describes the invasion of Prague by the Passauers, where they confronted local forces loyal to Matthias. Some Prague residents, however, joined the invaders, thus causing the outbreak of civil war. During these battles many casualties fell on both sides. On the one

18 DAVID, (note 6), No. 76, p. 22-23.

19 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), pp. 63-64.

hand, the invaders were pushed out of the city; on the other, their artillery continued to threaten the city and its fortresses:

וכששמעו אנשי פיהם, דהינו שלשה שטענדן שרים ופריצים ומקומו אספו גם הם במהרה עם רב, לערך י' אלף עם אנשי עיר, הכל בעלי מלחמה, רוכבי רכב והולכי רגל, איש חרבו על ירכו, ושאר כלי מלחמה המשחיתים, הם קני השריפה שקורין בל"א ביקסין. וביום ג' ב' אדר בעלות השחר באו אנשי פוייסאד בחזקת לערך י' אלף וחצי ושיברו השער של אויס ויאצ'ו לקטן, הנקר' קליאן זייד והרגו השומרים ושרפו בתינו. ואנשי פראג מהרו ובאו כנגדם כאיש אחד לערך ה' אלף וערכו מלחמה כנגדם, והשאר העם היו משמרים המבצר והראטשין וישן וחדר מקום, ונהרגו על אויס על ק"ז שני הצדדים תוך ג' שעות, לערך ח' מאות וקצת מעם ק"ז היה ידם עם אנשי פוסאד ושפכו עם קני השריפה, ועם זפת ומים חמימים שפכו מהחלונות על עם פיהם, ונהרגו עם רב, לולי זאת לא נשארה פרסה מעם פאסאד, ועם פיהם חזרו לאחר מכן למקום יישן וסגרו השער על הגשר, ומשמריהם המקומם, ואין יוצא ואין [בא] מק"ז למקום יישן. ועם פאסאד היו שכבים על אויס וק"ז ועל הבוחרים אחורי המבצר ולקחו גירוש גישץ' כל' המשחית, ועמדו נוכח המקומות, והיה בדעת לכלות המקומות.²⁰

When the news reached the people of Bohemia, the three classes—the lords, the squires, and the local rulers – quickly gathered a multitude of about ten thousand [men] including the townspeople, all soldiers, [both] mounted [men] and infantry, each with his sword on thigh [Exod. 32:27], and other destructive weapons of war, firearms called *Büchsen* in German. On Tuesday, the 2nd of Adar [15 February 1611], at dawn, the people of Passau, numbering approximately six and a half thousand, came in full force, and broke the outer gate [*ausse*], and hurried to the small [quarter] called Kleinseite [or Mala Strana, joined to the Old City by a bridge], killing the guards and burning our houses. And the people of Prague hurried, rising as one to oppose them. About five thousand [men] did battle with them while the remainder of the people guarded the citadel [Wysehrad] and the Hradcin as well as the Old and New Towns [Altstadt and Neustadt]. Casualties fell on both sides for approximately three hours in the fighting for the outer gate and the Kleinseite. Some eight hundred or more of the residents of the Kleinseite were in league with the Passauers and fired their rifles, and poured tar and hot water from the windows onto the Bohemians, killing many. If it had not been for this [conspiracy], none of the Passauers would have had a foothold [in Prague]. The Bohemians retreated to the Old Town, closing the gate to the bridge, guarding this place so no one could leave or [enter – Josh. 6:1] the Kleinseite for the New Town. And the Passauers prepared to attack the outer gate and the Kleinseite, and [...] behind the citadel. They placed a large cannon [*gross Geschütz*], a weapon of destruction, opposite these places, intending to destroy them.²¹

20 DAVID, (note 6), p. 23-24.

21 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), pp. 64-65.

This last action of the Passauers took place without Rudolf's knowledge. Upon learning that artillery had been placed outside the city, he feared that matters would blaze out of control, resulting in the destruction of Prague. He therefore commanded the Passauers to withdraw their artillery:

והיה בדעת לכלות המקומות, ובפרט רחוב היהודים [...] ובתוך כך נודע הדבר לאדונינו יר"ה
וציווה תيقף ומיד [...] ושלא יעשה שום היזק להמקומות, ובפרט על היהודים שם עיניו, וציווה
לבב יזיקו ליהודים, ושלא יעשו להם שום רעה ושינצראם כאישון עין, שדעת עם פאסואד ח"ו
לכלותינו ולגוזל ולשלול אותנו, והשם ית' הצל' אותנו מידם.²²

Intending to destroy them, especially the Judenstrasse [...]. When this was made known to our sovereign, may he be exalted, he immediately ordered [...] that no damage be done to those places, and he [specifically] ordered that no harm or injury should be inflicted on the Jews. [He] guarded them as the pupil of his eye [Deut. 32:10], for the Passauers intended, Heaven forbid, to destroy, rob, and take spoils, Heaven forbid, and God, Blessed be He, saved us from them.²³

The civil war came to an end when forces loyal to Matthias and their reinforcements defeated the Passauers. This paved the way for Matthias to claim the Bohemian throne, though not without further struggle. On 23 May 1611 (11 Sivan 5371) Matthias was crowned king of Bohemia, instead of his brother the emperor, who until then held both the throne of the Holy Roman Empire and of Bohemia:

ובתוך כך שלחו עם פיהם ווין למלך מטיאס לעזרה, ושלחו עם פיהם ט' אלף' אנשי חיל
רוכבי רכב והולכי רגל עם כל' זיון, ואח"כ בא המלך בעצמו עם ד' אלף' אנשי חיל ושרים
נכבדים, يوم ה' ניסן ש"א, וקבלו בכבוד גדול, והיה דירתו בישן מקום [...] ואח"כ נסע על
ראשיתן [...] ויהי כאשר ראה ליפולטיס ושריו ויועציו ועמו הפאסואד שהיו, אספו הפיהם עם
רב מכל מדינות פיהם וגם עם מטיאס שהיה בעזם, ויהי בלילה וינו[ס]ו לפולטיס ועמו
קודם שידעו עם הפיהם דבר, בדרך שבאו לעיר בודוויז. ויהי בוקר וירדפו עם הפיהם אחריהם,
ולא השיגו אותם ויושבו לפגג [...] יו' ב' י"א סיוון ש"א נכתר אדונינו מטיאש למלך על כל
מדינות פיהם ושלעיזיא בכבוד גדול.²⁴

At this time, the Bohemians sent [messengers] to Vienna, asking King Matthias for help, and he sent the Bohemians nine thousand brave mounted soldiers and armed infantry, later arriving in person accompanied by four thousand soldiers and nobles. On Thursday, the 10th of Nisan [24 March 1611], he was received with great honours, taking up residence in the Old Town [...], later moving to the Hradcin castle [...]. When Leopold, [along with] his lords, advisors, and the

22 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית* (note 6), p. 24.

23 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), pp. 65, 4th line from the bottom to p. 66, line 12.

24 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית* (note 6), p. 28.

Passauers, saw that the Bohemians had gathered a multitude from all the cities of Bohemia, and that Matthias's followers supported them, Leopold and his supporters fled at night without the knowledge of the Bohemians, coming to the city of Budweis. In the morning, when the Bohemians gave pursuit, they were unable to overtake them, and returned to Prague [...]. On Monday, the 11th of Sivan 5371, our sovereign Matthias was crowned king of all the cities of Bohemia and Silesia with great pomp and ceremony.²⁵

It goes without saying that the situation of the Jews of Prague during this bloody civil war was of prime interest to our chronicler. On the one hand, he notes that the Passauers intended to harm the Prague Jewish neighbourhood, based on the mistaken assumption that the Jews were loyal to the opposing camp. In any event, Rudolf restrained his forces, preventing them from harming the Jews of Prague. Perhaps this was due to Rudolf's close ties with the Jews of Prague, his cultural contacts with them in particular. Rudolf was very much interested in Jewish mysticism, and another contemporary witness, the historian David Gans (1541–1613)²⁶ testifies to direct contacts between the emperor and the outstanding leader of the Jewish community, the Maharal (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel; c. 1525–1609).²⁷ The chronicler describes how Rudolf protected the Jews of Prague upon hearing that his forces have targeted the Judenstrasse, as we have seen above.

The chronicler notes another attempt by the invading Passauers and by local Prague residents to do harm to the Jews in the time of the fighting in the city. It was on the same day, Tuesday, 2nd Adar [1611] that four monasteries, or “cloisters,” were totally destroyed. Once again, Emperor Rudolf came to their defence:

עוד נס גדול אספָר כהוֹצָאנוּ מִמְצָרֵי וּכְקַרְיעַת יִם סּוֹף, בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַנְּלָאָפִי וּהַחֲרִיבּוּ אַרְבָּעָ קָלִישָׁטָר פְּהָ פְּרָאָג [...] וְאַחֲרָכָה בְּדַעַתְּמָכָה כְּכָל בְּדַעַת לִיהְוּדִים כֹּן, ח'וֹ להַרְוגּ וּלְאֶבֶד אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִי לְגַזּוֹל וּלְשַׁלֵּל אֶת מִמּוֹנָם וּלְ[ה]חֲרִיב אֶת רַחֲוֹב יְהוּדִי, לְוָלִי הַשֵּׁם צְבָאות רִיחֵם עַלְיָנוּ, וּשְׁלַחْ מֶלֶךְ בְּתוֹךְ הַמּוֹן הָעַם וּשְׁמַעוּ קֹול, שָׁאֵל יִשְׁלַחְוּ יְדֵיַם יְהוּדִי בְּשֵׁם אֲדוֹנוּנוּ

25 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), pp. 68, lines 2-3.

26 On his historical work *ספר צמה דוד* (*Sefer Tsemah David*) has been written quite a lot. For a list of selected references, see: ABRAHAM DAVID, “Four Traumatic Events in Prague’s Jewish Community in the 16th-century as seen through the eyes of David Gans, the author of *The Hebrew Chronicle from Prague*, and Joseph ha-Cohen,” in: *Judaica* 72 (2016), pp. 368-369, note 2.

27 On Maharal, a lot has been written. It is impossible here to give an overview over all these studies including numerous monographs. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to mention the recent publication of ELCHANAN REINER (ed.), *מהר"ל: אקדמיה, פרקי חיים, משנה. השפעה*, Jerusalem 2015.

הקייסר ייר"ה, וגם השלרים ראשיהם העם באו לעוזרת היהודי, ולא היה להם רשות ליגע ביהודי. והיינו בפחד ובמוֹרָא גָדוֹל, מצד אחד מהמי המונעים, ומצד שני מהעם פאַסַאָד שהיה ג"כ ח"ו דעטו علينا לשילול וללבוש אותן, ועשינו תשובה תפילה גדוֹל עד מאד, וגזרו תענית ומתפללים כל הלילה בב"ה, ועשינו ב' ימים צום כיפור.²⁸

I shall recount another miracle as great as the Exodus from Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea. On the aforementioned day [...] the masses arose by the thousands and destroyed four monasteries here in Prague [...]. Afterwards, they intended to harm the Jews as well – to massacre and exterminate [Esther 3:13] all the Jews, to rob, and plunder all their money, Heaven forbid! – If it had not been for the mercy of the Lord of Hosts, who sent an angel into the midst of the crowd, and they heard a voice [proclaiming], “Do not raise your hands against the Jews, by order of our sovereign the emperor, may he be exalted.” The lords, the leaders of the people, came to help the Jews, for [the masses] had no right to harm the Jews. We were terror-stricken, [being at the mercy] of the masses on the one hand, and of the Passauers on the other, who also, Heaven forbid, intended to rob and plunder [the Jews]. We repented greatly, prayed, and performed works of charity, declaring a public fast-day, and praying in the synagogue all night long; for two days we fasted and sought pardon for our sins.²⁹

Our chronicler adds that the Jews took an active part in their own defence, that armed Jewish guards patrolled the Jewish quarter. In his words:

וגם היהודים עשו חזק ברחוב היהודי בכל השערין סגור ומסוגרי אין יוצא ואין בא דרך השערין, ומשמרין את הרחוב עם ב"ה בעלי מלחמות בפקודת הראש גראָב מטונייא כל עם אחר, עם כל זיין ושירין על הוצאות קהָל סָך גדוֹל, וגם היהודים הלכו בכל מלחמה, ונוצרים יומ ולילה.³⁰

And the Jews fortified the Judenstrasse, closing all the gates; no one could leave or enter through the gates. The streets with synagogues were guarded by soldiers under the lead command of the Graf [Count] of Tonia, [who guarded the Jews] like any other nation, with weapons and armour purchased at great cost at communal expense, and even the Jews bore weapons, guarding by day and by night.³¹

The chronicler further emphasizes in the same paragraph: **ואפִילוּ בְשַׁבַּת הַיּוֹם** “Even on the Sabbath, [the Jews] bore weapons.” Here we have a testimony to armed defence of their neighbourhood on the part of Prague Jews alongside the local militia that is reflected in royal documents as well. Moreover, although it appears that arms bearing by Jews in self-

28 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית* (note 6), pp. 27-28.

29 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), pp. 67-68.

30 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית* (note 6), p. 24.

31 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), p. 66.

defence was not so rare, however, it was outlawed from the thirteenth century on in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.³²

The Chronicler reported that after the Passauer army was defeated in Prague and the whole country, the political conflict between the two brothers was put to an end by a compromise has been done between them, however, the details were kept in secret. According to the agreement them, Rudolf II gave his brother Matthias the kingdom on Bohemia and Silesia, as he writes:

אח"כ היה וועד על המבצר, ולא יוכלו להשוו מלחמת המלכות, והיה סיכוך וחלוקים גדול בינהם עד שנעשה פשרה בן [!] אדונינו הקיסר יר"ה ואחיו מלך פ' מטיאש כידוע, ואסור להעלות על הכתב. יי' ב' י"א סיון שע"א נכתאר אדונינו מטיאש למלך על כל מדינות פיהם ושלזיא בכבוד גדול. והיינו אנחנו היהודים, גם להבדיל הרעלים במורה ופחד גדולה מלחמת עם המון ושאר בעלי מלחמה שלא יבא עליינו ח"ו, ולא לגזול ולחטום אותנו. וגם הרעלים ואדוני המלך מטיאש ציווה בעצמו לשratio וליעציו שיישו שמירה, ובפרט על היהודים, שלא יגע אחד מהם וננתן ו' מאות בעלי מלחמה עם קלי זיין ברחוב היהודים מעמו, וגם שרי פיהם נתנו ג"כ כמה מאות לשמריינו ולהצילנו.³³

Afterwards there was a conclave in the citadel, but they could not reach an agreement regarding the monarchy, and there was discord and controversy between them until a compromise was reached between our sovereign the emperor, may he be exalted, and his brother Matthias of Bohemia, as is well known but cannot be recorded. On Monday, the IIth of Sivan 5371 [23 May 1611], our sovereign Matthias was crowned king of all the cities of Bohemia and Silesia with great pomp and ceremony. And we, the Jews as well as the Christians, were greatly afraid of the of the masses and soldiers, lest they attack, rob, and plunder us, Heaven forbid, and the Christians. King Matthias himself commanded his lords and advisors to guard the Jews especially, [to ensure] that not a single one be harmed. He assigned six hundred armed soldiers from among his supporters to [guard] the Judenstrasse, and the lords of Bohemia assigned several hundred men to protect and guard us as well.³⁴

We see here that Matthias like his brother felt the obligation to protect the Jewish neighbourhood in Prague, because the Prague Jews were afraid of an attack by the local mob after the coronation of Matthias as king of Bohemia and Silesia on 23 May 1611.

32 This topic was briefly discussed by DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), p. 64.

33 DAVID, *כרוניקה עברית*, No. 76, p. 28.

34 DAVID, *A Hebrew Chronicle* (note 6), p. 69. – An official Privilege for preventing the Bohemian Jews' rights has been issued from the king Matthias' office on August 1611, see BOHUMIL BONDY / FRANTIŠEK DVORSKÝ, *K historii židů v Čechách, na Moravě a v Slezsku 906 až 1620*, 2 vols, Praha 1906, vol. II, no. 1041, pp. 801-803 = GOTTLIEB BONDY / FRANZ DWORSKY, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien von 906 bis 1620*, 2 vols. Prague 1906, vol. II, no. 1041, pp. 821-822. It might be that this act is mentioned by the author.

In connection with the events described above, three סליחות (selihot, penitential prayers) for the 2nd of Adar, prescribed for recitation by the Prague rabbi Solomon Ephraim b. Aaron of Łęczyca (in Yiddish/Hebrew: לונטשיץ; 1550–1619)³⁵ at that time, were printed as an appendix to the book of penitential prayers, published in Prague in 1613.³⁶ The first prayer which begins with: אלה אזכרה ואשפכה עלי נפשי, contains a brief description of how Prague's Jews were saved in the course of these terrifying events, praising God for their rescue. The details that emerge from the prayers are consistent with what is reported by our chronicler, including the attack on the city by the Passauers, the noise of the cannon, the fear experienced by the Jews, and the prayers offered for deliverance, which were answered.³⁷ As the composer R. Solomon Ephraim of Łęczyca writes:

בזכרי התלאות אשר עברו ראשי, גברו עתקו בשנת ש"א בחודש אדר השני בו ביום שלישי [...] מרחוק בא גוי כאשר יודה הנשר. נקראו חיל פסויאר אשר באו דרך הגשר. סללו להם דרך שם לכיבוש העיר בכושר. ערכו מערכת מול מערכת בלי פשר. פה וphet סער מתחולל. צר ומצוק מכל צד ביום שפכו סולל. קודר הלכנו מקהל רעים המחרידים איש שיבת, גם יונק ועולל. רעדת אחזתנו חיל כיוולדה מן מוליך יווצים שולל [...] מלא רחמים ברחמי העצומים חמל על עמו היושבים עוגומים.

35 This sage together with R. Isaiah Horowitz (*Ha-Shlah*) (c. 1555–1630) leaded the Jewish community in Prague after the passing of R. Judah Loew (*Maharal*) in 1609. He passed away in 1619 and left several rabbinic writings, including a commentary on the Pentateuch, called *כלי יקר* (*Keli Yaqar*), and collections of sermons. – On him and his works, see *inter alia*: MAX GRÜNWALD, *Rabbi Salomo Efraim Luntschitz. Oberrabbiner in Prag von Jahre 1604-1618: ein Lebensbild*, Frankfurt am Main 1892; MAX GRÜNWALD, in: *Illustrierter israelitischer Volkskalender*, Prag 5653 [1892/3], pp. 99-128; ISRAEL BETTAN, “Sermons of Ephraim Luntschitz,” in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8-9 (1931/32), pp. 443-480; ISRAEL BETTAN, *Studies in Jewish Preaching*, Cincinnati 1939, pp. 273-316; HAYYIM HILLEL BEN-SASSON, *עוור ועוני במשנתו של המוכחה ר' אפרים איש לנצ'ין*, in: *zion*, 19 (1954), pp. 142-166; HAYYIM HILLEL BEN-SASSON, *הגות והנאה*, Jerusalem 1959, index; OTTO MUNELES, *כתובות מבית-העלמין היהודי העתיק בפראג*, Jerusalem 1988, pp. 282-284.; MARK SAPERSTEIN, *Jewish Preaching 1200-1800. An Anthology*, New Haven / London 1989, pp. 401-405.

36 A very rare copy of that edition is located at the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, in New York (Rare room, 1760: 9); facsimile of the first page p. 19 below. – I want to express my gratitude to Mr. Avraham Frenkel of Nof Ayalon for letting me know about this text and generously giving me photo copy of those *Selihot* more than ten years ago.

37 The significant of this source was discussed by RACHEL GREENBLATT, *To Tell Their Children. Jewish Communal Memory in Early Modern Prague*, Stanford 2014, pp. 120, 122-126.

When I recall the tribulations I have experienced, which worsened in the year [5]371 [1611], on the second of Adar, a Tuesday [...]. From afar came a nation, as the eagle flies. They were called the Passauer Army and came by way of the bridge.³⁸ They paved themselves a path there to conquer the city with skill. Army was drawn up against army, with no resolution. A trap and a pit, a storm whirling. Anguish and distress from every side on the day they threw down ramparts. We went about gloomily due to the terrifying thunderous noises, elderly and also nursing babes and youngsters. Trembling took hold in us, anguish like a woman in childbirth, at the one who led the councilmen in plundering [...] may the merciful one, in his unbounding mercy, take pity on his people who wallow in misery.³⁹

חולעת יעקב אל תראי כי אתה גואלך וצורך, stresses that the Jews of Prague instituted a yearly day of remembrance on the 2nd of Adar, to commemorate their rescue, as the composer writes:

לכן קבלנו עליינו מדור לדור ועל זרעינו לאשר ישנו פה ק"ק פראג ואגפיה ואשר איננו אנתנו. כל שנה ושנה לספר חסדי יי' אשר עשה לנו.

Therefore, we accepted upon ourselves for all generations and for our descendants. Who will be here in the holy community of Prague [...]. Every year to tell of God's loving kindnesses that he did for us.⁴⁰

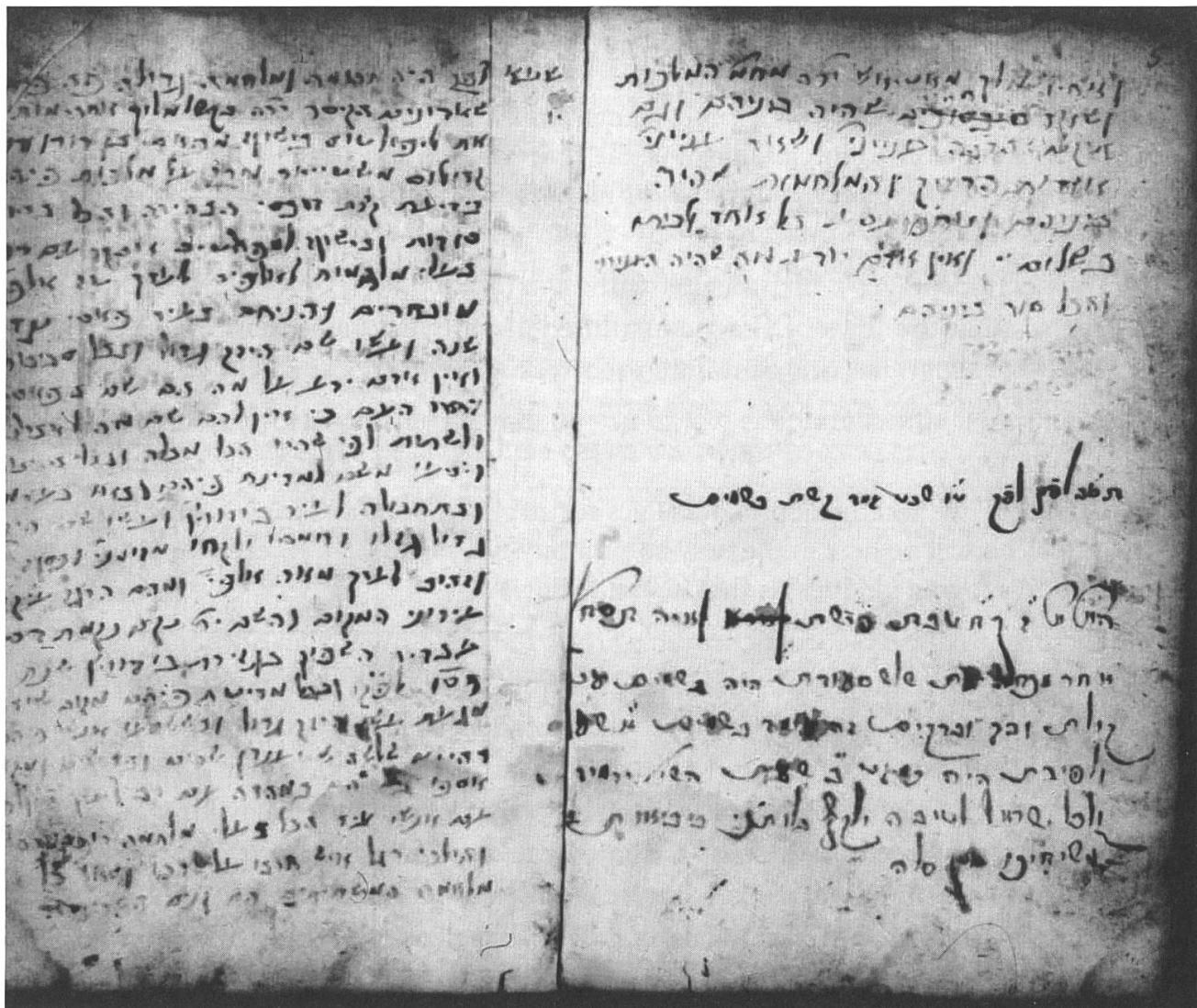
To sum up: The Hebrew chronicle from Prague contains an authentic account of traumatic events afflicting Bohemia in general, and Prague in particular, in the beginning of the second decade of the seventeenth century. With regard to the events in Prague, as described, it is evident that the author was an eyewitness himself of the bloody struggle until today known as the *Passauer Kriegsvolk*. A comparison of the chronicle with what is known from other Bohemian sources, including royal documents, proves the high degree of accuracy in the details and data as well as the historical thinking and scholarly work done by its author. To the best of my knowledge, with the exception of the data found in the above-mentioned penitential prayers, the chronicle is the only Jewish source that deals with these events. But our author remains always impartial and does not give any hint to which camp he feels loyalty, although he stresses time and again that and how Rudolf protected Prague Jews during the battles in the city. Nevertheless, we cannot conclude that he himself supported Rudolf.

38 This is the Charles Bridge.

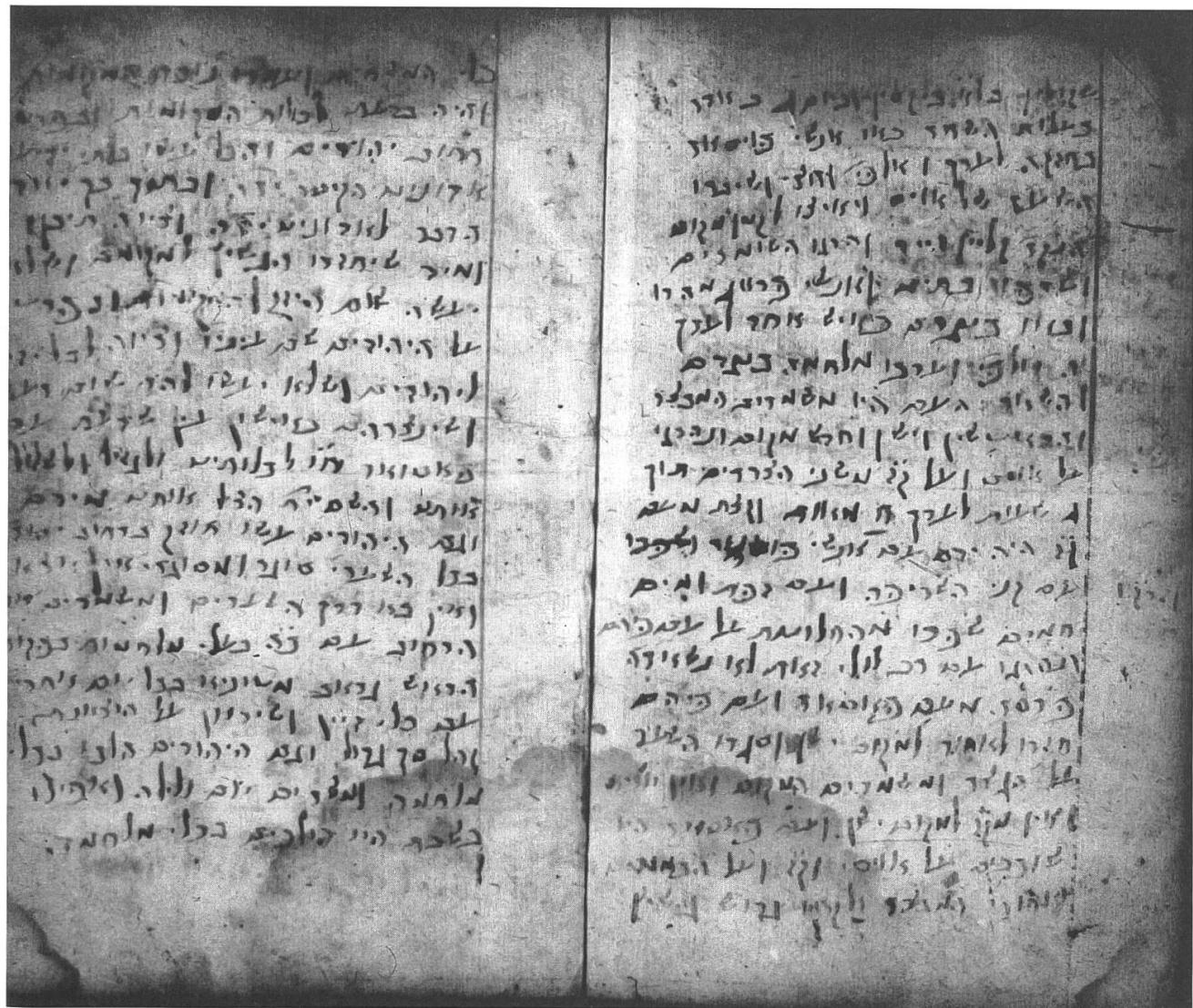
39 This paragraph, except the first and the last sentences was translated into English by GREENBLATT, *To Tell Their Children* (note 37), p. 124.

40 This paragraph was translated into English by GREENBLATT, *To Tell Their Children* (note 37), p. 125.

Appendix:



A paragraph from the Prague *Hebrew Chronicle*
Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York
Ms. Mic. 3849, fol. 16v-17r
(cf. p. 3 note 6)



A paragraph from the Prague *Hebrew Chronicle*
Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York
Ms. Mic. 3849, fol. 17v-18r
(cf. p. 3 note 6)



A paragraph from the Prague *Hebrew Chronicle*
Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York
Ms. Mic. 3849, fol. 18v-19r
(cf. p. 3 note 6)



A paragraph from the Prague *Hebrew Chronicle*
Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York
Ms. Mic. 3849, fol. 19v-20r
(cf. p. 3 note 6)

ס. סליחות ליום שני באלול

הנוליגון ז. יונד הרטבר. ז. ז. גוטמן. ד. חנוך גולדשטיין. צ. ז. גוטמן. ל. מילר. ש. מלמן. א. קומן.

אללים לנו מחסח'נו עוד עורה בערה גמزا מאר
אחים בעליך אדוביים זולתך לבך בר נזבך שפך אלהים
כבר או שולב באחפת משימים וראחוף קוד גבך דאת

אָפָרָה וְאַשְׁפֵּחַ עַלְיָוֶטֶן. בְּזֶבֶרְיָה הַתְּלָאֹת
אֲשֶׁר עֲבֹרוֹ רָאשִׁי. גִּבְרוּ עַתְּחַזְבְּשָׁנָת שְׁעָא
בְּחַדְשָׁת אַדְרָבֶשֶׁבֶן בְּבָיּוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי. דָּוּמָה בְּמִיעַט שְׁכָנָה
בוּנְפֵשִׁי. הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אָסְפָרָה אֶל חַקְמִים
שְׁמִימָה. וְחַסְדֵּי אַזְבִּירְבֶּס לְהַרְיִמָּה. זָה זַבְּדוֹלְדוֹד דָּוָר
יְסִין יְרֻופָּה. הַבּוֹנוֹ לְהַזְּצִיא אַמְּבָלְצָרְהַזְּצִיקָה עַצְפָּה
בְּהַר עַבְּיִם מְלָאֹת בְּרָעָה. יְדָאָה לְהַשְׁחָאָה הַסְּתִירָה
לְפִנְוֹתָה בְּחַחְפָּה בְּצֶל שְׁדֵי בְּכֶל פְּגָעָוּמָאָדָע. לְהַשְׁלָמָם
בְּכֶל רַעֲבִים עַמְּרָה. מְרוֹחָק בָּאָתוֹמָאָשְׁר יַדָּאָה
בְּגַשְׁר. גְּקָרָא חִילְפּוֹסְיָא רָאשָׁד בָּאָוֹדָרְגָּשָׁר.
לְלוֹלָהָט דָּרְדָּשָׁס לְכָבּוֹשׁ הָעִיר בְּפֶפֶשֶׁר. עַרְבָּוּמְעָרָה
בְּזָלְמַעְרָה בְּלִיבְשָׁה. פְּהַוּבְּחַתְּסָעָר מְתַחְולָל.
בְּצָדְזַמְצָק מְבָל צְדָבִיּוֹם שְׁנָבָטָסָל. קְוֹדָז חַלְבָּנוּמְקוֹל
עַמִּסְדָּמְחָרְיוֹם אִישׁ שִׁיבָּה גָּבְעַזְקָוּשָׁלָל. זְרַעָה
אַתְּזָנָשׁ חִילְבְּזָלְדָּהָמָן בְּתָלְדִּי וְעַצְּמָת שְׁדָלָל.
שְׁזָקָוּ עַלְיוֹנוֹ פְּלָחוֹת וְשְׁמוֹעוֹת. חִילְמָלִים מְבָנִית
בְּצָדְזַבְּצָוֹת וּמְפָעֹות. שִׁיבָּלְחָרְבָּמְפָחָזָס וּמְלָוָת
זְעוּוֹת. תְּעֻבָּוּחָשָׁרְיוֹת וְהַשְּׁבִיחָוּאָה הַכְּפָרִים
בְּפְרָעוּמָה. פְּרָעוֹת
שָׁם

The first page of the first penitential prayer for the second day of Adar 1611,
by R. Solomon Ephraim b. Aaron of Łęczyca (cf. p. 13, note 36)