



Telling Histories

images, memories, narrations

From the Margins to the Centre: Memory of the Shoah, Society and Jews in Postwar Netherlands

After the Second World War a small Jewish community remained in the Netherlands, numbering about 30,000 Jews. The formal ideology of the leadership was one of *shlilat ha-galut* (negation of exile), a serious attempt to end Jewish community life in the Netherlands, aiming for emigration of all remaining Jews to Israel. Indeed a significant part left for the United States, Israel and other destinations, but to almost everyone's surprise a majority stayed in the country. This lecture focuses on



Amsterdam 1956. The inauguration of the first new synagogue after the war

the reconstruction of the Dutch Jewish community and will demonstrate how conflicting memories of the Shoah determined its position in Dutch society. Were Jews part of an imagined Dutch collective, or was their position defined by very specific Jewish experiences? Case studies of war monuments and the construction of memorial days on the national and Jewish calendars will show how national identity, war memories and questions of public morality became intertwined and resulted in transforming the Jewish community from a 'marginal' to a 'central' role in society at large.

Bart Wallet is historian at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and a specialist in Jewish Studies. He wrote his dissertation on early modern Yiddish historiography [University of Amsterdam 2012], was a postdoc researcher in the NWO 'Dynamics of Memory' Project, studying postwar Dutch Jewish history, and was a guest professor in Jewish history at Catholic University Leuven. Together with the Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam he made the exhibition 'Out of the Shadows. Dutch Jews after 1945'. In 2015 he was visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.