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Introduction

What Is This Book About?

In the mid-seventeenth century, a huge wave of Jewish refugees and forced migrants from eastern Europe spread across the Jewish communities of Europe and Asia. Sparked by the anti-Jewish violence of the great Khmelnytsky uprising of 1648 in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the flight continued during the subsequent Russian invasion that began in 1654 and then in the fight against the Swedish occupation that lasted from 1655 to 1660.[1] Destitute, often traumatized by their experiences, and lacking any means of support, these refugees posed a huge social, economic, and ethical challenge to the Jewish world of their day. Communities across that world, touched by the crisis, answered this challenge in unprecedented ways and, both individually and jointly, began to organize relief for the Polish-Lithuanian Jews wherever they now found themselves.[2]

The aim of this book, therefore, is to examine this refugee crisis, its causes, its development, and what that meant in human terms for those caught up in it, as well as how the Jewish communities of the day organized to deal with it and what its consequences were for the future development of Jewish life. At its heart are three major questions, whose answers not only are crucial for understanding the events of the seventeenth century but also have significance extending well beyond it.

The first asks how Jewish society reacted to the persecution and violence suffered by the Jews of Poland-Lithuania. Clearly, suffering is not an abstract thing and must be studied in its particular historical context, in this case the seventeenth century; the same goes for the responses to it. However, the matter does not end there. How contemporaries understood these phenomena—and so reacted to them—was determined by the Jews'

cultural background, and this, though shaped by its immediate context, was rooted in an ancient and very diverse religious tradition. To understand the meaning of the events for the Jews of the seventeenth century, then, we must look back at the history of Jewish suffering and responses to it in previous times. On quite a different level, we will also see how the events analyzed here played a significant role in determining the development of Jewish society wherever they were felt. So, examining the Jews' reactions to the persecution and suffering of mid-seventeenth-century eastern Europe is of crucial importance for understanding the Jewish experience not just at the time but long before and long after it.

The second question asks about the character of the relationship between the various Jewish communities that cooperated to help the refugees. On one level, the relationship between the different centers during the seventeenth-century refugee crisis was based on the direct contacts between them; on another level, the common effort of helping the mass of unfortunates fleeing persecution and suffering brought different centers closer together, even when the direct contacts between them were sporadic and weak. On top of that, Jewish communities across the world shared a sense of belonging to a single collective that made them feel responsible for Jews suffering elsewhere. Since this multifaceted relationship was key in shaping relief strategies in the different places where the refugees found themselves, its elucidation is a central issue here. However, asking what connected the Jewish communities of the seventeenth century inevitably leads to asking about both the history of those connections and their future influence. In that way, this study, though it deals with only one historical setting, will also allow us to revisit one of the most difficult questions in the study of the Jewish past: What is it that has united the Jewish experience across such great distances of time and space?

The third of the questions this study asks deals with how the nature of the refugee crisis in the seventeenth century may have something to contribute to the ways in which we understand the history of refugee issues in general. We live in a time in which the mass movement of populations has become a global problem. The existence of so many people fleeing violence, persecution, or extreme poverty presents western society in particular with a range of extremely complex economic, social, cultural, political, and moral issues. Though still something of a stepchild in the rather presentist field of refugee and forced migration studies, the historical study of refugee issues is increasingly valued because of the perspectives it can offer on contemporary problems.[3]

The period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century is particularly fertile ground for this kind of study because it seems to have witnessed the first modern examples of refugee crises. In fact, according to Nicholas Terpstra, refugee movements actually characterize the early modern period since they were an expression of the new religious feelings aroused in the period of the Reformation.[4]

However, there are signs that the focus is beginning to move away from the questions of persecution and religious identity involved in refugee movements to issues of relief. Terpstra deals with these in his book, as does David van der Linden in his work on Huguenot refugees in the Dutch Republic.[5] The present study is also meant to be a contribution to this new direction. It takes as its starting point not the religious tensions that led to the mass flight of Jews from eastern Europe but the experiences of the refugees themselves. The discussion focuses on how they reached safety and were looked after, their interactions with the communities they found there, and the choices they made in rebuilding their lives. This, then, is a socioeconomic and cultural history of a refugee crisis that asks not how it was caused but how it played out on the ground and how it was resolved.

Approaching the Issues

Though the implications of the questions to be asked here are broad, the study itself is limited to the seventeenth-century refugee crisis, by which I mean both the experiences of the displaced and the efforts to help them. It was not the first such crisis in Jewish history—the expulsion and flight of the Jews from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century, for example, had caused their own upheaval a hundred and fifty years earlier.[6] Still, the seventeenth-century crisis was extremely extensive in terms of both geographical range and communities affected. It was felt from Amsterdam in the west to Safivid Iran in the east, and from the Baltic coast in the north to Ottoman Cairo in the south and touched both Ashkenazi and Sephardi centers.

The major Jewish communities involved included Kraków, Poznań, Slutzk, Prague, Vienna, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Venice, Padua, Mantua, Istanbul, and Jerusalem. In working together on behalf of the refugees, they began to exploit the various possibilities that had developed in the early modern world for transregional and cross-cultural connections between different Jewish centers. The need for concerted action on behalf of the Polish Jews strengthened the ties between these communities and

significantly increased the range of intercommunal cooperation. In fact, it was the first time that so many different Jewish centers had been brought into such purposeful contact with each other.

Most of the relief work was done on the local level, where individual communities were faced with a stream of destitute and desperate refugees needing homes as well as some means of support. The generosity with which the communities responded by opening their homes to the strangers or donating money to support them gave the refugees the opportunity to survive until they could decide on their futures. These could involve either a difficult and dangerous return to a previous home or a no less difficult start to a new life in new surroundings.

The costs of the crisis were extremely heavy for the refugees themselves. Not only forced to leave their homes and lose much of their property, most had, in one way or another, suffered (or witnessed) astonishing brutality during the wars and in the experience of flight and/or capture.[7] Thus the devastation they felt not only was due to displacement and impoverishment but had significant psychological and spiritual aspects as well. Tens of thousands of shattered lives had to be rebuilt in the wake of the crisis, presenting the refugees with a challenge that went beyond the social and the economic. In order to overcome the horrors they had undergone, they needed to make sense of what had happened to them so that their terrible experiences would become part of a cohesive life story rather than a shattering blow to it.[8]

This was best done in the realm of religious thought and ritual. Spiritual leaders, from the greatest rabbis to the lowliest preachers, struggled to find meaning in the tragedy. In addition, a great deal of religious poetry and prayer was composed, and time found in the calendar for communities (mostly Ashkenazi) to recite it together. In eastern Europe, a special day of memory and fasting was instituted, which provided the kind of social support that the returned refugees needed to work through their traumatic memories and normalize them within the framework of their daily lives.[9]

So, whether one looks at the social, economic, religious, or psychological aspects of the refugee crisis, it would seem that the local, regional, and transregional solutions that the Jews of the mid-seventeenth century found were remarkably successful. In fact, though it took more than two decades, the refugee crisis appears to have come to a more or less happy end just a few years after the last of Poland-Lithuania's wars was concluded in 1667. By that time, most of the Jews who had originally fled were

finally settled, having either resumed their previous lives back home or started new ones in new places.

Methodological Questions: Rethinking the Jewish Past

The first step in understanding this complex set of events must involve the reconstruction of the flight itself. The analysis will begin at the level of the refugees' individual experiences, as difficult and horrifying as they were, since almost everything that was done during the crisis was aimed at relieving the suffering of individuals, whether on their own or in groups.

The study will then discuss how Jews across the world organized in order to relieve the terrible distress that confronted them. This organization took many forms—social, economic, cultural, and religious—and was done on three levels: locally, in individual communities; regionally, through the collaboration of communities in a given territory or polity; and transregionally, by means of cooperation between communities in different territories or polities. The relief efforts, by their very nature, involved Jews in a range of different places meeting the refugees whom they wanted to help, an encounter that could have significant cultural consequences for all involved. These too will be examined.

Of course, this transregional cooperation had its limits. A number of communities either refused to take in refugees or shipped them out almost as soon as they arrived. Beyond that, a not insignificant number of unscrupulous individuals were happy to exploit the wave of philanthropic activity for personal gain. Though neither of these were major phenomena, they were as much a part of the response to the refugee crisis as intercommunal generosity and so cannot be ignored. In fact, it is really only by understanding the limits of Jewish solidarity that its full significance can be understood.

The study will conclude with a discussion of the extent to which all the philanthropic activity succeeded in the short and the long term, and how it helped shape the future of Jewish life for both the refugees themselves and the societies in which they ended up.[10]

Such an analysis seems to fly in the face of two generally accepted ways in which contemporary Jewish historiography conceives of the Jewish past. The first involves downplaying the significance of anti-Jewish persecution in Jewish history, while the second emphasizes the unique importance of interactions with surrounding non-Jewish societies and cultures for the development of Jewish life. Accordingly, before embarking on the

study, I should explain why I think it is time to revisit these popular preconceptions about Jewish history.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LACHRYMOSE CONCEPTION

For most historians of the Jewish past, the Khmelnytsky uprising of 1648 is synonymous with just one thing: huge massacres of Jews. Known popularly as *gezeirot taḥ ve-tat*, what seems to concern scholars most about them is the number of Jewish victims.[11] This has led to a very narrow focus on events, which conceals as much as it reveals. Though many thousands of Jews were massacred, many more fled the violence and survived. The intensive search for demographic data on the dead, important as it is, has left the experiences of the survivors largely unexplored. And since it was precisely them to whom the task of rebuilding Jewish life fell, that seems a terrible oversight.

This study, then, proposes a new approach to *gezeirot taḥ ve-tat* focusing not on the violence but on its consequences, local, regional, and transregional. At the heart of the discussion are not the dead but the living—the survivors, particularly those who fled the violence. In order to understand the full significance of the uprising for Jewish history we need to look closely at their experiences, not only during the war but after it, too. They were not simply a body of passive victims but individual people, each doing whatever s/he could, first to survive and then to reconstruct meaningful lives. Though they were initially swept up in events well beyond their control, it was the subsequent decisions they made and the actions they took that really determined the long-term effects of the uprising for Jewish life.

No less important than the survivors were those outside the war zone who helped them survive. They too had to deal with the immediate consequences of the violence, whether in the form of refugees turning up on their doorsteps or in the ever-mounting requests for money to help relief efforts elsewhere. In response, they developed policy on the local and regional levels and organized better forms of long-range cooperation, sometimes joining communities separated by thousands of miles. This work touched the refugees in their struggle to survive but also, in the consequent interaction of local Jews with the refugees from eastern Europe, influenced both the social life and the cultural development of the communities themselves. Beyond that, the more intensive forms of transregional cooperation helped shape a much more interconnected Jewish world better suited to face the challenges of changing times.

This rather broader way of looking at a major outbreak of anti-Jewish violence also has implications for the way we approach writing Jewish history. It suggests the need to rethink one of the fundamental axioms of contemporary historiography: deemphasizing the importance of anti-Jewish violence in order to avoid what Salo Baron, the doyen of twentieth-century Jewish historians, famously termed "the lachrymose conception of Jewish history."

For Baron, "the lachrymose conception" was one that saw in anti-Semitism and persecutions of Jews the moving force of Jewish history across the ages.[12] He rejected this idea, dominant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, arguing that "it would be a mistake . . . to believe that hatred was the constant keynote of Judeo-Christian relations, even in Germany or Italy. It is in the nature of historical records to transmit to posterity the memory of extraordinary events, rather than of *the ordinary flow of life* . . . the history of the Jewish people among the Gentiles, even in medieval Europe, must consist of more than stories of sanguinary clashes or governmental expulsions."[13]

Baron's view of the past thus juxtaposed two different, even diametrically opposed states: "the ordinary flow of life" and outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence. The first, he posited, referring to the period before the French Revolution, was a long-lasting norm, while the second were just short-lived exceptions. It was these two assumptions—that the "ordinary flow of life" was the realm in which the major developments of Jewish history occurred and that violence was essentially an extraordinary phenomenon of transient significance—that allowed him more or less to bracket out persecution from the historical processes he described. This idea has been extremely influential. Baron's students, and following them their students, have continued his approach, extending it beyond the premodern period, for which he originally intended it, to modern Jewish history, too.[14]

In his study of religious violence in medieval Spain, David Nirenberg took Baron's argument in a slightly different direction. He argued that religious violence was indeed a factor of significance but located that significance within the society in which it occurred. This was a systemic view, which understood religiously based attacks as part of the broad social and cultural system on which daily life was based. In fact, Nirenberg viewed that kind of violence as a key means of stabilizing a society made up of many different religious groups.[15]

Nirenberg's view seemed to contradict Baron in two ways: it contended first that attacks on Jews were a part of what Baron had termed

"the ordinary flow of life," and second that they were a factor of great significance in determining the nature of that life. Where he agreed with Baron was in his insistence that anti-Jewish violence was not a determining factor in the broader sweep of Jewish history. For Nirenberg, its significance was strictly limited to its own time and place and was not to be sought elsewhere.[16]

However, as this study shows, the effects of the mid-seventeenth-century violence were not limited just to the time at which it occurred. It sparked not only a massive shift of populations but significant, sometimes long-term, processes of social, cultural, and religious change. Thus the waves of refugees set in motion by *gezeirot taḥ ve-tat*, far from being of just contemporary significance, were a major factor in the development of Jewish life in the decades, even the centuries, to come.

That suggests that Nirenberg was right in portraying as too sharp the dichotomy that Baron drew between normalcy and persecution. However, the everyday life that Baron viewed as the stage on which Jewish history played out was deeply influenced not only by violence, as Nirenberg's book argued, but also, as this study demonstrates, by its long-term consequences. Of course, Baron was correct when he argued that violence and suffering should not be seen as the only, or even the major, moving force in Jewish history, but by insisting that persecution and its effects were not a part of "normal" Jewish life, he was unable to see what significance they did have.

So, in its focus on anti-Jewish violence and persecution as one key factor in the processes of Jewish history, rather than as a brutal interruption to longer-term developments, this study offers a nuanced corrective to Baron's approach. In fact, it suggests that a return, albeit in limited form, to "the lachrymose conception" is not only justified but actually an essential tool for understanding the Jewish past.[17]

INTERACTIONS WITH JEWS, INTERACTIONS WITH NON-JEWS: THE CONTEXTS OF JEWISH HISTORY

Though this book examines the fate of Polish-Lithuanian Jews, it is not a study of Polish-Lithuanian Jewry. Rather, it traces three groups of displaced Polish-Lithuanian Jews in the different environments in which they found themselves. The first group consisted of Jews who had fled from their homes but remained within the Commonwealth as what is today called "internally displaced persons." The second were Jews captured by Crimean Tatar forces who were then shipped to Istanbul for sale on the

slave markets. There, the local Jews with the help of a transregional fundraising effort involving most of the communities of Europe in one way or another ransomed as many as they could. The third were Jews, sometimes in organized groups, who had been displaced during the Commonwealth's wars with Russia and Sweden and made their way as refugees westward mostly to the Holy Roman Empire where they threw themselves on the mercy of the impoverished Jewish communities there.[18]

Though each of these environments was unique, they were not unconnected. The refugees created personal contacts between them: individual families were often split, with one member ending up in one place, and another in another. Sometimes, the same individual might even move from one to another, either during the return home or as a way to raise money to ransom a relative. These (and other) travelers also helped create information networks that allowed refugees in one place to learn about the fate of loved ones in another.

Perhaps more important, those engaged in relief work in one region were often in contact with those doing the same in another. Letters asking for help, usually in the form of money, were sent from Poland-Lithuania to the Jewish communities of Germany and Italy; from Venice (the clearinghouse for ransom money) to other communities in Italy, as well as to Germany and the Ottoman Empire; and from Istanbul to communities everywhere asking for help in ransoming the huge numbers of Jews on the slave markets there.[19] Relief efforts could be complex, involving a whole range of different transregional activities: the Viennese community not only sent relief money to the suffering Jews of Poland and took in the large numbers of refugees reaching the town but copied fundraising letters received from the Jewish communities of the Commonwealth and sent them on to the Jewish communities of Italy. In addition to letters, money itself, usually in the form of bills of exchange, was sent from one region to another—seemingly with little concern for the political borders it had to cross. Thus, large sums were sent by the Jews of Venice to communities in the Commonwealth, as well as to those of the Ottoman Empire, particularly Istanbul.

It was not just letters and bills of exchange that traveled between communities as part of relief efforts; people did too. In addition to the victims of violence, emissaries representing different communities and groups crisscrossed Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. The Jewish communities of Poland sent numerous individuals to central and western Europe to raise money to help in their relief efforts, while the Jews of Istanbul sent people to Italy and the Sephardi communities of western Europe to

raise funds to help with captive ransom. Even the Lithuanian Jews sold as slaves to merchants in Iran sent emissaries to the west to raise money. These men went to Jewish communities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, and Italy, all of whom donated money to help ransom the captives in the Safivid empire.

The story of the refugee crisis would seem, therefore, to be a kind of transregional "connected history," in Sanjay Subrahmanyam's terms.[20] The wars in Poland-Lithuania and the widespread diffusion of the refugees stimulated the development of a range of different connections between regions and communities far distant from each other. They did not create these connections: people, letters, information, ideas, and money had all circulated between Jewish communities before 1648. Rather they intensified them to levels hitherto unknown, relying, of course, on the greatly improved possibilities for communication that had developed by the mid-seventeenth century.

Beyond that, the seventeenth-century Jewish communities also did not create the improved channels of communication they exploited.[21] The early modern period as a whole is often characterized as a period of intensification of contact among different regions and centers, and in that sense, the Jewish experience must be seen as part of a much broader phenomenon. This might seem to suggest that the process of tightening intercommunal bonds would have occurred without the refugee crisis. While that is not implausible, it would nonetheless seem very likely that without the stimulus of having to deal with tens of thousands of indigent Jewish refugees, the process would have taken much longer and the connections made would have been considerably less robust. The case of the Sephardi trading diaspora that developed during the previous century can help demonstrate this.

Following the great exodus of Jews from the Iberian peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century, a steady wave of so-called New Christians, people of Jewish background who lived openly as Christians, left during the sixteenth for fear of persecution by the Inquisition. However, while most of the original Jewish expellees had settled in the Ottoman Empire, many of the New Christians remained in western Europe, settling in the great mercantile entrepôts of the Mediterranean as well as the Atlantic coast. Others traveled across the Atlantic looking for peace, security, and a good living in the New World.

Some New Christians returned to Judaism, setting up Jewish communities in their new homes, while others preferred to remain Christian (and yet others seemed to vacillate between the two). Nonetheless, they

remained connected to each other as a group. As much as to family connections, this was due to their common cultural background in Spain and Portugal. That, together with their geographical dispersion, meant that they were very well-placed to exploit the expanded transregional patterns of trade that characterized the age. After a long period of slow growth, a very extensive "Spanish-Portuguese" mercantile network developed by the end of the sixteenth century, stretching from the New World in the west to the Indian subcontinent in the east and connecting some of the most vibrant economies of the day.[22]

Based on the kinship, ethnic, and, to a certain extent, religious relations within the group, this trading network flourished for about a century and a half largely as a part of the burgeoning European colonial economy. At heart, it was a mercantile arrangement, whose functioning was determined, as Francesca Trivellato has shown, as much by economic logic as ethnic solidarity.[23] Its fate, too, was determined by the contours of the world economy: when these began to shift in the mid-eighteenth century, the Sephardi trading diaspora declined and eventually disappeared.[24]

The philanthropic network examined here, though it overlapped the Sephardi mercantile one, was of a different nature entirely. It developed as a result of an acute humanitarian crisis within Jewish society and its goal was to solve that critical problem as affecting only Jews. The network was made up not of individual merchants but of communal bodies (and their leaders) and it was based on Jewish ideals of philanthropy mandated in Jewish law.[25] That meant that the solidarity that underlay it was to a very great extent religious in nature. Mercantile logic—as well as the strong element of self-interest involved in any economic transaction—was a much less pronounced element in the philanthropic network, which demonstrated instead a significant degree of altruism. In addition, though connections with the non-Jewish world always played a crucial role in the relief efforts it undertook, the network *as a whole* was not dependent upon them and, when necessary, worked around the non-Jewish authorities.

In many ways, then, the philanthropic network had a much wider range than the mercantile one. In addition, the fact that the connections it created between its constituent parts were founded in Jewish law—particularly that concerning captive ransom—gave it additional flexibility and strength. Though possibly less immediate than the kind of ethnic bonds that underlay the Sephardi network, the connections based on shared religious principles (which not coincidentally excluded the non-Jewish world) seem to have called upon deeper and more powerful strata

of identification, perhaps similar to those identified by Gershon Hundert in his study of eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Jewry.[26]

Clearly the network was formed to deal with a specific philanthropic need and so largely ceased to function once it was met. Yet the intercommunal connections that it helped forge continued to grow and strengthen as time passed. In fact, as we shall see, the massive spread across the Jewish world of information and new religious ideas created by Sabbatheanism relied to no small extent on the improvements in communication during the refugee crisis.

In short, the philanthropic network developed in order to meet the pressing needs of the refugees, but the intensification in the circulation of people, money, letters, information, and ideas that it engendered had a longer life, serving to both shape and strengthen the bonds between its constituent parts.

This book, then, approaches the history of the Polish Jewish refugee crisis as a study of a group—the Jews—whose experience transcended political borders. What was it, then, that connected them? Though Jews in the seventeenth century clearly had a sense of their own peoplehood, it was tied very closely to their religious tradition, making the distinction between national solidarity (in the premodern sense) and religious solidarity almost irrelevant. Jews suffering far away were referred to as "brothers" while the motivation to help them was based on the Jewish laws of philanthropy. On top of that, Jews from different places (and their communities) maintained a range of different connections with one another, which also affected their willingness to help in times of crisis. As a result, while the discussion here treats local conditions in each of the three regions where the refugees were to be found—eastern Europe, central and western Europe, and the eastern Mediterranean—as the crucial factors they undoubtedly were, it also examines the nature of the connections between them, whether in the form of shared religious tradition or more concrete ties, in order to provide a nuanced understanding of precisely what it was that moved Jews in such completely different settings to cooperate with each other.

Such a "double contextualization"—local and transregional—also has a significance well beyond the study itself, since it suggests an additional dimension to the way Jewish cultural history is currently understood. One of the axioms of contemporary Jewish historiography is that the context for the development of Jewish culture in any given time and place is to be found in the culture of the society within which the Jews lived. David Biale has put this succinctly: "the culture of a minority group such as the Jews can never be separated from that of the majority surrounding it."[27]

However, the logical conclusion of such an approach is that there is little or nothing that connects Jewish cultures across space and time.[28]

Though most scholars understand the development of Jewish culture in any given place as the creative interplay between the Jewish heritage borne by the community and the non-Jewish cultural context in which it found itself, they pay little or no attention to the contemporary Jewish context in which that community might have functioned. However, as this study shows, Jewish communities in widely different places maintained with each other a range of connections, social, economic, and cultural, that were of crucial importance in their development.

Those ties were of varying strengths and intensities depending on the particular circumstances, but there was no time when they did not exist at all. Thus, in order to understand the development of any given Jewish community, it is not enough just to look at the non-Jewish environment in which it found itself. Connections with other Jewish centers of the day also provided crucial conduits for the transfer of people, goods, news, and ideas, and these too must have influenced its development. By examining them—in other words, by contextualizing the communities we study, each in its contemporary Jewish setting—we can see also how the connections between distant communities might have formed them into a "Jewish world." So, for all that it examines a single set of events, this study of the mid-seventeenth-century Polish Jewish refugee crisis emphasizes the more general importance of transregional phenomena in shaping Jewish culture and giving it common features that crossed the cultural boundaries of the non-Jewish world in which the Jews were embedded.

A Note on Terminology

Two terms that appear throughout this book, "refugee" and "trauma," are defined in a number of ways in current research. It is important, therefore, to explain how they are being used here.

Since the term "refugee" is now held to have quite a limited meaning due to the complex politics of contemporary relief programs, the umbrella concept of "forced migration," which contains within it a number of different categories, is often preferred.[29] These include: refugees (people who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, find themselves outside their country of origin); the internally displaced (those forced to flee from their homes as a result of armed conflict but remaining within their country of origin); the victims of human trafficking; and those leaving their homes against their wills as a result—or in fear—of government policy of some sort (today often concerned with development). This study, though

it prefers the term "refugee" to "forced migrant," deals with all four categories, treating each separately as a problem with its own unique set of characteristics.

The term "trauma" is often felt to be greatly overused in the academy, not least in the fields of critical theory and literary studies.[30] This study eschews those approaches, viewing trauma only as a psychological problem faced by individuals. Indeed, for most psychologists today trauma is a diagnostic concept. It refers to an experience of such severity that it overwhelms the brain's ability to assimilate it as a rational (narrative) memory. It is instead stored in a different part of the brain as a so-called emotional memory—"fragmentary sensory and emotional traces: images, sounds, and physical sensations."[31] Without the mediating effect of narrative memory, certain stimuli can act on the emotional memory of a traumatized subject retriggering all or part of the awful feelings aroused by the traumatic experience and causing the same extreme emotional and physical reactions as the event itself. When this process is particularly severe or uncontrollable, it is defined as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The reasons why some horrific experiences overwhelm the brain while others do not, and even more why a certain experience will overwhelm some people but not others, are still unclear.[32]

For that reason, this study follows the usage of psychologist Nigel Hunt in his study, *Memory, War, and Trauma*. There, he uses a definition of traumatized individuals that goes beyond those specifically diagnosed with PTSD to include people who are also struggling to deal with traumatizing experiences at a lower level of intensity.[33] A similar approach is adopted by Richard Mollica, founder and head of Harvard University's Program in Refugee Trauma, in his study on the treatment of refugee trauma.[34] Adopting this broader definition of the terms "trauma," "traumatic," and "traumatized" allows the discussion here to preserve a sense that the refugees were being forced to deal with terrible horrors both when they were on the road and in the years that followed, while at the same time acknowledging that there is no way to diagnose what their precise psychological condition was.

The Sources

Very little has been written about this crucial episode in early modern Jewish history, and what there is has tended to focus on just one aspect of the issue rather than the broad picture. The first to deal with the question seems to have been the late nineteenth-century Jewish scholar David

Kaufmann in an essay on the ransoming efforts on behalf of the Polish Jewish captives in Istanbul that was based on contemporary correspondence. It was not until the 1960s that the subject was picked up again, this time by the Israeli scholar Yisra'el Halperin, who published two seminal articles on the ransoming efforts. His are the only studies to date that embrace the transregional aspects of the story, dealing as they do with ransoming in both eastern Europe and the Sephardi world. Inspired by Halperin, two further essays have been written on the question, though neither has a wide perspective, one by Yosef Kaplan dealing in depth with ransoming in Amsterdam, the other by Daniel Carpi focusing on Padua.[35]

This study has eschewed the narrow approach, broadening its focus well beyond that even of Halperin. In doing so, it came up against a significant problem because its source base was highly fragmented. There was never any central, or even regional, organization dealing with Jewish refugee issues to collect and preserve the relevant documentation so the historian's usual technique of working through a body of archival sources was quite impossible. Instead, the story had to be reconstructed from myriad individual sources that appear almost at random in a whole series of different materials and that can often be identified only after a complex process of detective work.

Problematic as that undoubtedly was in creating a systematic discussion, in research terms it was a blessing in disguise. The enormous range of source material of quite different genres made for a much richer set of perspectives on the topic. It became possible not only to reconstruct the pathways of the refugees and the forms that the relief efforts took but to gain insights into the experiences undergone by individual refugees as well as the thoughts and motivations of those helping them. More than that, it permitted an examination of the crisis on the three major levels in which it took place: the personal, the local, and the regional/transregional.

One of the most remarkable features of the source base was its wealth of firsthand accounts of the refugee experience. In addition to two personal chronicles, I found literally dozens of shorter texts, usually of just a few sentences.[36] These fell into two basic categories: testimony presented to rabbinic courts in cases of missing husbands and autobiographical vignettes embedded in the introductions to rabbinic works. The first were verbatim accounts transcribed in the original Yiddish and published in collections of *responsa*. The second, more literary texts were written in Hebrew and provided a brief explanation of the author's suffering in order to thank God for his survival or to arouse the sympathy of potential readers and buyers. The two kinds of texts complemented each other in

important ways: while the autobiographical vignettes reflected the experience of educated men, the testimonies contained a great deal of evidence given by the rest of society, especially women; and while the testimonies brought details of flight only in as far as they impinged on evidence of the husband's death, the vignettes placed the author's refugee experience front and center.

As with all firsthand accounts of this kind, it was extremely difficult to assess their accuracy. However, since the importance of the texts lay less in what they told about great historical events and more about the individual experience of flight, their limited perspective became a virtue rather than a drawback. Beyond that, the basic similarity of so many accounts from widely differing sources strongly suggested a significant degree of accuracy.

While these sources were excellent for examining experience on the individual level, they were less helpful in reconstructing the broader picture of mass flight or capture—a problem most strongly felt in trying to reconstruct the process of being captured and sent from Ukraine to the slave markets of Istanbul. To do that, memoirs of non-Jewish provenance were of great help, even if they mentioned Jews only in passing. Two of the most important of these were the multivolume memoir of the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi, which recorded his extensive journeys inside the Ottoman Empire and beyond from the 1630s to the 1670s, and the account of Marcin Broniowski, the Polish ambassador to Crimea in the late sixteenth century.[37]

My understanding of the intermediate level of the crisis—the encounter of the refugees with the different communities they reached—relied to a very great extent on Jewish communal archives of various sorts. Though the survival of such material from seventeenth-century Europe is very patchy, many of the collections that do remain contained information about the refugees from Poland-Lithuania. This study relies on documents from the following Jewish communities (in alphabetical order): Amsterdam, Frankfurt a.M., Hamburg, Kraków, Mantua, Padua, Poznań, and Venice. On the regional level, the records of the Jewish councils of Great Poland, Lithuania, and Moravia also contain documentation about the refugees, as do those of the Council of Four Lands in Poland.[38] These sources are supplemented with records from non-Jewish authorities in various places. Of particular importance here are records from Slutzk in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (today in Belarus) and Vienna, as well as imperial legislation dealing with the regions of Moravia and Silesia in the Holy Roman Empire.[39]

The Jewish communal records, insofar as they mention contacts with other communities regarding relief efforts, were also helpful in assessing the nature and extent of the highest, transregional aspect of the refugee crisis. Particularly important was the archive of the Italian Jewish community in Mantua, which preserves a great deal of its correspondence on seventeenth-century refugee issues with other communities, particularly Istanbul, Venice, and Vienna.[40]

The best source for understanding the transregional organization, particularly around fundraising for captive ransom, was the personal correspondence of the two figures who spearheaded the effort, Shmu'el Aboab and Moshe Zacuto from Venice. Though not officially appointed, these two men organized the transregional philanthropic efforts of the Sephardi communities of Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. For the most part, these included ransoming Sephardi merchants captured by pirates, supporting Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, and raising money for communities or individuals in distress. Following 1648, they added fundraising for ransoming the captives in Istanbul to the long list of causes they supported. Both highly educated, Aboab and Zacuto maintained their correspondence in Hebrew.[41]

A final class of sources I used that are worth mentioning here are various contemporary Yiddish-language compositions—most often short poems or stories—that addressed the refugee crisis in one way or another. These were published as chapbooks for the popular market and so their value lies less in reconstructing events and more in illuminating attitudes on the Ashkenazi street.[42]

Taken together, this set of sources, though fragmentary, was extremely rich. It allowed me to examine the refugee crisis from a wide range of perspectives and to integrate them together into a complex whole. This study will, therefore, treat the Polish Jewish refugee crisis, in all its settings and on all its levels, as a single, interconnected phenomenon with a beginning, middle, and end.

The Structure of the Book

In order to encompass all that in a single monograph, what follows is divided into three broad parts, each of which addresses the experiences of one particular group of refugees. The first deals with the internally displaced who remained within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the second with those trafficked to the slave markets of Istanbul, and the third with the refugees who fled westward to the Holy Roman Empire. The

geographical nature of the division has its own advantage in that it allows us to examine the different forms that relief took in each region: the relief of halakhic (legal), spiritual, and psychological problems are emphasized in the first part, the transregional fundraising effort to help ransom the captives in Istanbul in the second, and the difficulties faced by the Jewish communities of the empire in dealing with the refugees, as well as the tensions that arose as a result, in the third.

Each part is organized chronologically, from the first waves of refugees in 1648 to their settlement or return home in subsequent decades. The discussion, however, does not end there. By examining the interactions between the Polish Jews and the Jews in each of the settings in which they found themselves, it goes on to tease out some of the longer-term consequences of the crisis. These could be quite immediate, such as helping facilitate the spread of the Sabbathean movement, or could be felt years later, such as with the positioning of Polish-Lithuanian Jewry to tighten their profitable relationship with their magnate masters during the eighteenth century or the development of modern German Jewry (and German Jewish identity) into the nineteenth.

A number of motifs can be found in all three parts that serve as links between them. The first is the development of an informal network of information that brought news from one region to the others. The second deals with the issues of identity and identification that the refugee crisis caused. Many Jews had their identity brutally stripped from them while others took advantage of the situation to alter theirs, which presented Jewish societies across the Jewish world with the problem of determining the identity of the refugees who reached them. The third concerns issues of gender: the refugee experience had a number of clearly gendered aspects not limited to the immediate context in which they arose.

The conclusion draws these threads together to show how all the separate pieces of the crisis combined into a complex whole. In addition to the motifs already mentioned, it explores the significance of the communications that developed between various communities as well as the nature—and limits—of the solidarity that bound the Jews of different places during the crisis. It then shows how the various relief strategies used in the three regions formed part of a single philanthropic approach that Jewish society as a whole had at its disposal to deal with problems of this kind. And once the outlines of the crisis have become clear, assessing the degree of success Jews across the world had in dealing with it will demonstrate just how important a moment this was in the development of the Jewish world on the brink of modernity.

Finally, a word about narrative style. In addition to organizing the book into three parts, I have structured the discussion in each around three different perspectives: that of the individual refugee, that of the local community engaged in relief work, and that of those working on transregional issues. This was a challenging way to write, and I had to take great care to ensure that the transition from one to another was logical and smooth so as not to give the text a fragmented feel. The choice to adopt such a narrative strategy was a conscious one. It was an expression of my deeply felt belief that only through the integration of all three points of view into a single narrative would the book be able to examine the crisis in the kind of human terms that are absolutely crucial for understanding refugee issues—in the past as in the present.

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