

## Life and Livelihood at Risk: Strategies of Ashkenazi Jews Facing the Threats of the 1380s and 1390s

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The first steps towards a theory of ‘Resilience’ were taken some forty years ago. They have since fostered keen shifts of perspective on a variety of scientific questions.<sup>1</sup> Rather than focusing on the reasons for people to break down, for species to become extinct, or for populations to disappear, scholars began to address the ability of individuals and groups to cope with internal and external factors like stress or disruption.<sup>2</sup> Although the concept quickly evolved and over time has been used in a growing number of disciplines, historians have so far remained reluctant to apply it to their own purposes. One reason for this hesitation may lie in the scientific approach taken in many early studies, particularly within the fields of ecology and psychology. Instruments and methods which have been applied successfully in such contexts<sup>3</sup> prove useless for historians, who rarely have the required measurable and

<sup>1</sup> For a survey of Resilience Theory see Martin Endreß and Benjamin Rampp, ‘Resilienz als Perspektive auf gesellschaftliche Prozesse: Auf dem Weg zu einer soziologischen Theorie’, in *Resilienz im Sozialen: Theoretische und empirische Analysen*, ed. by Martin Endreß and Andrea Maurer (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2015), pp. 33–55; Daniel E. Lorenz, ‘The Diversity of Resilience: Contributions from a Social Science Perspective’, *Natural Hazards*, 67 (2013), 7–24; Markus Keck and Patrick Sakdapolrak, ‘What is Social Resilience? Lessons Learned and Ways Forward’, *Erdkunde*, 67 (2013), 5–19; Hans-Joachim Bürkner, ‘Vulnerabilität und Resilienz: Forschungsstand und sozialwissenschaftliche Untersuchungsperspektiven’, IRS Working Papers, 43 (Erkner: Leibniz-Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung, 2010), online at <<https://d-nb.info/1028582749/34>> [03-01-2017]. See also the introduction to the present collection.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Aaron Antonovsky, *Health, Stress and Coping* (San Francisco [etc.]: Jossey-Bass, 1979), pp. 55–56: ‘My own preference is to ask, how can it be explained that a given individual, in this miserable world of ours, has *not* broken down? Or, in a group version, how come this group has such a relatively low proportion of people who have broken down?’

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Lorenz, ‘Diversity’ (as in n. 1), p. 9, and Steve Carpenter *et al.*, ‘From Metaphor to Measurement: Resilience of What to What?’, *Ecosystems*, 4:8 (2001), 765–81.

distinct set of data at their disposal. More recently, however, Resilience Theory has begun to be adapted in the social sciences, promising fruitful impulses for historical research.<sup>4</sup>

The following considerations do not attempt to deliver a fully developed set of tools to be applied by medievalists. Rather, they aim at exploring opportunities and limits of the approach. Choosing Jewish History to this end seems especially interesting as Resilience Theory may challenge common interpretations on how exactly Jews were able to survive and maintain their cultural and religious way of life despite various and often overwhelming threats and catastrophes. In particular, it questions old and new stereotypes concerning the Jewish minority's scope of action, which have led some observers to minimize the Jews' impact on historical events by reducing them to mere victims<sup>5</sup>, while others have portrayed them as agents of a conspiracy seizing control over everything.<sup>6</sup>

In order to evaluate whether the effort of engaging in this debate is worthwhile, the following case study deals with a short but eventful period of Jewish history. During the 1380s and 1390s Jewish families, who until then had enjoyed a short period of stabilisation and economic expansion after the deadly pogroms of the middle of the century<sup>7</sup>, again found themselves in fear for their lives and their livelihood. Following the lead of Resilience Theory this study does not aim at exploring the causes for the threats that emerged during the reign of King Wenceslas; rather, it will focus on Jewish players, their strategies and resources in dealing with them.<sup>8</sup> Special attention is drawn on interdependencies between different agents within Jewish society (individuals, families, communities), to analyse how strategies and actions of one actor could affect the resilience of others.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Endreß & Rampp, 'Resilienz als Perspektive' (as in n. 1).

<sup>5</sup> For a critique of this stereotype, cf. Alfred Haverkamp, 'Juden im Mittelalter: Neue Fragen und Einsichten' [first published in 2000], in id., *Neue Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte, 2000–2011*, ed. by Christoph Cluse and Jörg R. Müller (Hannover: Hahn, 2012), pp. 1–20, at p. 2. Over the last two decades, numerous other scholars have also sought to revise this view, and to integrate the histories of Jewish and Christian protagonists more closely.

<sup>6</sup> On this stereotype, cf. Johannes Heil, "*Gottesfeinde*" – "*Menschenfeinde*": *Die Vorstellung von jüdischer Weltverschwörung, 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, Antisemitismus: Geschichte und Strukturen, 3 (Essen: Klartext, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the contribution by M. Schlachter in the present collection.

<sup>8</sup> A fuller account will be given in my Ph.D. dissertation, which deals with the Jewish community of Nuremberg and explores political and diplomatic room for manoeuvre of Ashkenazi Jews in the later Middle Ages.

<sup>9</sup> Carpenter *et al.*, 'From Metaphor to Measurement' (as in n. 3).

## Life at Risk

In 1384 a series of deadly pogroms unsettled the Jewish cosmos of Southern Germany.<sup>10</sup> The first carnage had occurred in Schwabach in January.<sup>11</sup> In July and August the Jews of Nördlingen, Windsheim and Weißenburg fell victim to massacres.<sup>12</sup> In Nördlingen the entire Jewish community may have lost their lives to the rioters. Similar events seem to have taken place in Freystadt<sup>13</sup>, Dinkelsbühl<sup>14</sup>, Magdeburg, and Ingolstadt<sup>15</sup>, yet we do not know the precise dates or circumstances. Records only supply further details on the incidents in Nördlingen, Windsheim,

<sup>10</sup> For a survey see Arthur Süßmann, *Die Judenschuldentilgungen unter König Wenzel* (Berlin: Lamm, 1907), pp. 15–21; Jörg R. Müller ‘Judenverfolgungen und -vertreibungen zwischen Nordsee und Südalpen im hohen und späten Mittelalter’, in *Geschichte der Juden im Mittelalter von der Nordsee bis zu den Südalpen: Kommentiertes Kartenwerk*, ed. by Alfred Haverkamp, 3 vols, Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden, A 14 (Hannover: Hahn, 2002), I, pp. 189–222, at pp. 213–14; Michael Toch, ‘Die Verfolgungen des Spätmittelalters, 1350–1550’, in *Germania Judaica, Band III*, ed. by Arye Maimon, Yacov Guggenheim and Mordechai Breuer, 3 vols (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987–2003), III, pp. 2298–2327, at p. 2300, and Barbara Dohm, ‘Juden in der Reichsstadt Nördlingen während des späten Mittelalters: Studien und Quellen’ (Ph.D. Dissertation, Trier 2012), pp. 60–70.

<sup>11</sup> Probably on 21 January. The Nuremberg community included the victims of the persecution in Schwabach in their prayers: *Die israelitische Bevölkerung der deutschen Städte: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Städtegeschichte*, vol. III, *Nürnberg im Mittelalter: Quellen*, ed. by Moritz Stern in coll. with Siegmund Salfeld, 2 pts (Kiel: Fiencke, 1894–96), p. 199 (*Memorbuch*). Additionally, the events were noted between 18 January and 9 February 1384 by Nuremberg town officials: *Die Urkunden und Akten der oberdeutschen Städtebünde vom 13. Jahrhundert bis 1549*, ed. by Rainer Christoph Schwinges and Konrad Ruser, 3 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979–2005), III/2, pp. 1652–53, doc. 1682.

<sup>12</sup> The persecution of Nördlingen is mentioned in the Nuremberg *Memorbuch* (*Die israelitische Bevölkerung* (as in n. 10), p. 199), by chroniclers in Augsburg (*Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Carl Hegel, vol. IV, *Augsburg* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1864), p. 74; vol. V, *Augsburg* (1866), p. 30, and vol. XXII, *Augsburg* (1892), p. 27), and in records of other towns (*Urkunden und Akten* [as in n. 11], III/1 pp. 551–52 and 553–54, docs 538 and 541). The riots in Windsheim occurred on 6 August 1384, those in Weißenburg on 15 August (*ibid.*, vol. III/2, pp. 1742–47, docs 1748–49).

<sup>13</sup> Mentioned solely in the Nuremberg *Memorbuch*: *Die israelitische Bevölkerung* (as in n. 10), p. 199; cf. Wilhelm Volkert, ‘Die Juden in der Oberpfalz im 14. Jahrhundert’, *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 30 (1967), 161–200, at p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2 pp. 1778–79, doc. 1785.

<sup>15</sup> *Chroniken der deutschen Städte* (as in n. 12), vol. VII, *Magdeburg* (1869), p. 287. Cf. Herbert Reyer, ‘Magdeburg’, in *Germania Judaica III* (as in n. 10), II, p. 777; Wilhelm Volkert and Dirk Götschmann, ‘Ingolstadt’, *ibid.*, I, pp. 63–64; Dohm, ‘Juden in der Reichsstadt Nördlingen’ (as in n. 10), pp. 63–64.

and Weißenburg, indicating a correlation between the pogroms and intra-urban conflicts.<sup>16</sup> All three towns were members of the ‘Swabian Town League’ (*Schwäbischer Städtebund*), an alliance which had been founded as a regional defence federation but had progressively evolved into a regional power with its own jurisdiction and expanding political ambitions. In 1384, certain groups within the walls of some towns seem to have exploited existing animosities against Jews<sup>17</sup> for their attempts to gain power in times of shifting power relations.<sup>18</sup>

Given that the spreading news must have sounded terribly familiar to those who had memories of earlier persecutions (e.g., in 1336–38 and especially 1348–50<sup>19</sup>), we may assume that Jewish protagonists acted swiftly and forcefully in ways they had been used to, literally for centuries. Already in 1096, when the First Crusade was conjoined by rising animosities against the Jewish minority, the French communities had taken a clear course of action to deal with the situation: on the one hand, religious measures such as prayers and fasting were decreed, but on the other hand, worldly steps were adopted too. Centres of Jewish life communicated with each other, agreed on arrangements, and collected money to be given to the authorities, to address the threat.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2 pp. 1740–50, docs 1747–50. Cf. Eberhard Holtz, *Reichsstädte und Zentralgewalt unter König Wenzel, 1376–1400* (Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1993), pp. 98–99; Süßmann, *Judenschuldenentilgungen* (as in n. 10), pp. 15–21; Dohm, ‘Juden in der Reichsstadt Nördlingen’ (as in n. 10), pp. 60–70.

<sup>17</sup> *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2, pp. 1752–54, doc. 1753.

<sup>18</sup> The rebellion was at first successful in Windsheim and Weißenburg. It failed, however, in Nördlingen: Holtz, *Reichsstädte und Zentralgewalt* (as in n. 16), pp. 98–99; Dohm, ‘Juden in der Reichsstadt Nördlingen’ (as in n. 10), pp. 60–70.

<sup>19</sup> See Alfred Haverkamp, ‘Die Judenverfolgungen zur Zeit des Schwarzen Todes im Gesellschaftsgefüge deutscher Städte’ (first published in 1981), in id., *Verfassung, Kultur, Lebensform: Beiträge zur italienischen, deutschen und jüdischen Geschichte im europäischen Mittelalter*, ed. by Friedhelm Burgard, Alfred Heit and Michael Matheus (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), pp. 223–97; František Graus, *Pest – Geißler – Judenmorde: Das 14. Jahrhundert als Krisenzeit*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 86, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs*, ed. by Eva Haverkamp, MGH Hebräische Texte, 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 2005), pp. 5–6, 8, 258–59, 470–71; Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1972), pp. 37–38; Herbert Fischer, *Die verfassungsrechtliche Stellung der Juden in den deutschen Städten während des 13. Jahrhunderts*, Untersuchungen zur deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte, 140 (Breslau: Marcus, 1931; reprinted Aalen: Scientia, 1969), pp. 49–50, 195, 198. A resembling strategy can be found in 1421: Israel J. Yuval, ‘Juden, Hussiten und Deutsche: Nach einer hebräischen Chronik’, in *Juden in der christlichen Umwelt während des Späten Mittelalters*,

Due to of a lack of Jewish sources it cannot be ascertained which religious measures were prompted in 1384 in order to avert further harm. The existence in the Nuremberg *Memorbuch* of several entries relating to the persecutions at least shows that the communities soon included the events in their rituals of commemoration and hopes of salvation.<sup>21</sup> It may not be wrong to assume that prayers and fasting were performed as well. Other information indicates that the Jewish communities did not leave it at that but tried to prevent further harm by political and diplomatic steps similar to those of 1096.

Several sources mention payments by different Jewish communities to their respective town administrations in 1384 and early in 1385. A total of 13,600 florins was given by the Jews of Mainz, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, and Rothenburg to local Christian authorities. In a letter to Strasbourg dating 27 September, a citizen of Mainz has described the situation at length. According to his report, representatives of the Jewish community had surprised the council with a gift of 3,000 florins, brought without the council's demand, because the latter had kindly dispatched an embassy to Swabia a few weeks before.<sup>22</sup> In similar ways the council of Frankfurt, which had been involved in embassies to Swabia as well, received 600 florins on 15 October.<sup>23</sup> The tax records of Nuremberg show that shortly thereafter 'Reppin (the Jewess' gave 1,000 florins to the council—'unforced, as it was a bad time for

ed. by Alfred Haverkamp and Franz-Josef Ziwes, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, Beiheft 13 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1992), pp. 59–102, at pp. 81–82.

<sup>21</sup> *Die israelitische Bevölkerung* (as in n. 10), p. 199.

<sup>22</sup> *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/1, p. 572, doc. 561: 'Und lassen uwer erberkeit wissen, daz der rat zu Mentze ir erbern frunde nuwelingen uz irme rate gein Ulme in Swaben und in vil andere stedte da selbis gesant hatten von solichir ufflouffe und geschichte wegen, als zu Nordelingen und in etzlichen andern steden zu Swaben an den juden geschehen sint, daz beste zu werben von dez ratz wegen zu Mentze [...] so quamen off einen dag etzliche Juden von der gemeynen Judescheit wegen zu Mentze in den rat und brachten in eime seckelin an dez ratz wissen drü dusent gulden und schanckten die dem rate ane alle bete umb dez willen, daz sich der rat mit ir vorgenant botschafft gein Swaben als fruntlichen bewiset hatten' (27 September 1384). This corresponds with a letter to Mainz talking about a meeting in Ulm to be held concerning the matter, *ibid.*, pp. 551–52, doc. 538.

<sup>23</sup> Again this money is classified as a present ('schanckten'): *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Juden in Frankfurt a.M., 1150–1824*, ed. by Isidor Kracauer, 2 vols (Frankfurt a. M.: Kauffmann, 1914), p. 263. I am indebted to David Schnur for useful advice concerning Frankfurt Jewry. See his recent book, David Schnur, *Die Juden in Frankfurt am Main und in der Wetterau im Mittelalter. Christlich-jüdische Beziehungen, Gemeinden, Recht und Wirtschaft von den Anfängen bis um 1400*, Schriften der Kommission für die Geschichte der Juden in Hessen, 30 (Wiesbaden: Kommission, 2017), at pp. 628–30.

Jews'.<sup>24</sup> In January and March of the following year another 3,000 florins were given to the local treasuries by the Jewish community of Nuremberg and by Meir of Erfurt, all of them marked as gifts. Payments by the Jewry of Rothenburg to the council of their town, where animosities had risen high, amounted to 6,000 fl. and were made before the end of 1384. They, too, were labelled as a *schenk*.<sup>25</sup>

It is safe to say that the transactions were entangled with the political process concerning the riots. All recipients were prominent members of the Town Leagues in Swabia and along the Rhine, which had acted swiftly and introduced drastic measures shortly after the persecutions. Not only had the towns' leaderships insisted on restoring the prior conditions and had punished the rioters harshly (some were executed), they had also taken provisions to stabilize the situation in all town affiliated with the Leagues.<sup>26</sup> Affairs had been arranged in a way that met the surviving Jews' interests. All Jewish claims, for example, remained valid. The Town Leagues insisted on their arrangement even when facing serious opposition from Nördlingen, whose magistrate simply refused to accept the decrees concerning the Jewish goods and papers. As a result, Nördlingen was suspended from membership in the alliance.<sup>27</sup> To enforce the agreement in Rothenburg, and maybe in other places too, an oath not to harm Jews had to be sworn by each and every citizen. Indeed, several men were later expelled from the town because they had declined to swear.<sup>28</sup> Notes from Nuremberg show that here, too, the listed persons were ban-

<sup>24</sup> 'Primo dedit nobis Reppin Judin 1,000 guldein unbetwungenlichen, do ez als ubel von der Juden wegen in den landen stünde'. This entry and the following data from Nuremberg were published in *Die israelitische Bevölkerung* (as in n. 10), pp. 244–45, doc. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Michael H. Wehrmann, 'Die Rechtsstellung der Rothenburger Judenschaft im Mittelalter, 1180–1520' (Ph.D. dissertation, Würzburg, 1976), p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> Measures included (1) a declaration of intent to prevent further riots and harm to Jews; *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/1, pp. 551–52 and 553–54, docs 538 and 541; (2) Punishment of rioters and those who killed the Jews, and (3) further measures on the riots in Windsheim and Weissenburg and concerning Jewish obligations; Nuremberg, Staatsarchiv (= StAN), Reichsstadt Nürnberg, Losungsamt, *Siebenfarbiges Alphabet Urkunden*, no. 201; *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2, pp. 1740–50, docs 1747–50. The decrees were publicly read out in various towns, e.g., in Frankfurt: *ibid.*, vol. III/1, pp. 577–78, doc. 568, and Schnur, *Juden in Frankfurt* (as in n. 23), pp. 628–30.

<sup>27</sup> Süßmann, *Judenschuldentilgungen* (as in n. 10), pp. 19–21, 28–31; Ludwig Müller, 'Aus fünf Jahrhunderten: Beiträge zur Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinden im Riess', *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für Schwaben und Neuburg*, 25 (1898), 1–124; 26 (1898), 81–182, here pt. 1, pp. 20–30; Dohm, 'Juden in der Reichsstadt Nördlingen' (as in n. 10), pp. 60–70; Markus J. Wenninger, *Man bedarf keiner Juden mehr: Ursachen und Hintergründe ihrer Vertreibung aus den deutschen Reichsstädten im 15. Jahrhundert*, Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, Beiheft 14 (Wien etc.: Böhlau, 1981), pp. 154–57.

<sup>28</sup> *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2, pp. 1752–54, doc. 1753.

ished and that measures were well coordinated among the Swabian and Franconian towns.<sup>29</sup>

To the Jewish communities the resolutions must have come as a relief, yet it goes without saying that the firm measures carried out quickly by the Town Leagues were not only meant as a favour towards the Jews. Both parties had their interests concerning the matter. While the Jews above all feared for their security, but surely tried to take hold on their business interests, too<sup>30</sup>, the Christian leaderships were worried about riots within their own walls.

Although the connection between the Jewish payments and the arrangements of 1384 is mentioned in several sources<sup>31</sup>, the exact nature of the transactions is ambiguous. So far, most scholars have classified them as compulsory tributes—Jews simply had to pay for their security.<sup>32</sup> They thus fitted them smoothly within an omnipresent narrative of Christian rulers who would seize every opportunity to press money from their vulnerable Jewish protégés. While this interpretation is justified in many cases, it sometimes misleads and wrongly degrades Jews to mere objects of Christian politics in cases when they were actually taking matters into their own hands. Bearing in mind the Jewish strategies of 1096 the events of 1384 can be read differently.

First of all, it is striking that all records independently label the payments as gifts (*schenk*). Although the wording may signify a multitude of social transactions<sup>33</sup>, in

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 1754–55, doc. 1754.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., Gerd Mentgen, *Studien zur Geschichte der Juden im mittelalterlichen Elsaß*, Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden, A 2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1995), pp. 476–81; *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2, pp. 1891–92, doc. 1902.

<sup>31</sup> Elaborately in Nuremberg (*Die israelitische Bevölkerung* (as in n. 10), pp. 244–45, doc. 17) and in a letter from Mainz, cited above, n. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Claudia Steffes-Maus, 'Juden im mittelalterlichen Rothenburg o.d.T.: Das Beziehungsgefüge von Stadt, Reich, jüdischer Gemeinde und Individuum', in *Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Rothenburg o.d.T.*, ed. by Andrea M. Kluxen and Julia Krieger, Franconia Judaica, 7 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2012), pp. 11–31, at p. 25; Dohm, 'Juden in der Reichsstadt Nördlingen' (as in n. 10), p. 65; Karel Hruza, "'Anno domini 1385 do burden die iuden ... gevangen": Die vorweggenommene Wirkung skandalöser Urkunden König Wenzels (IV.)', in *Wege zur Urkunde, Wege der Urkunde, Wege der Forschung: Beiträge zur europäischen Diplomatik des Mittelalters*, ed. by Karel Hruza and Paul Herold, Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters, 24 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005), pp. 117–67, at p. 139; Arnd Müller, *Geschichte der Juden in Nürnberg, 1146–1945*, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur der Stadt Nürnberg, 12 (Nuremberg: Stadtbibliothek, 1968), p. 63; Wehrmann, 'Rechtsstellung' (as in n. 25), pp. 75–76, 114–15; Süßmann, *Judenschuldentilgungen* (as in n. 10), p. 7, yet rather neutral on p. 27; Müller, 'Aus fünf Jahrhunderten' (as in n. 27), I, p. 20; Otto Stobbe, *Die Juden in Deutschland während des Mittelalters in politischer, sozialer und rechtlicher Beziehung* (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1866), p. 57.

<sup>33</sup> Gadi Algazi, 'Introduction: Doing Things with Gifts', in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern*

our case it is safe to place the actions within the political framework of the late Middle Ages, when giving money to gain a favour or to receive political services was not so much a discredited exception but a common requirement, inherent in the day-to-day business of the political process.<sup>34</sup> This does not of course mean that all donations were conducted voluntarily. The thin line between payments that were enforced by stronger players taking advantage of the situation, and gifts that were advanced by choice in order to gain support, is often hard to draw.

In conclusion, it seems plausible that upon receiving the news of the terrible events in Swabia some of the most endangered communities as well as at least two prominent Jewish communities outside that region tried to influence the political process to the benefit of Jewish interests. Approaching their towns' leadership to this end would have been an obvious choice, as the latter were directly involved in decision-making connected to the events. During the negotiations between Jewish representatives and the town's officials money might have already been a bargaining chip. It cannot be ascertained in which cases the Jewish communities approached authorities on their own, offering money to gain support, and where, on the other hand, Christians pressured Jewish communities to pay for their security. Probably the situation varied from place to place. For some Jewries like in Frankfurt the

*Figurations of Exchange*, ed. by Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 188 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, 'The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach', in *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power and Gifts in Context*, ed. by Esther Cohen and Mayke B. de Jong, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions, 11 (Leiden, etc.: Brill, 2001), pp. 123–56; Valentin Groebner, *Gefährliche Geschenke: Ritual, Politik und die Sprache der Korruption in der Eidgenossenschaft im späten Mittelalter und am Beginn der Neuzeit*, Konflikte und Kultur, 4 (Konstanz: UVK, 2000), pp. 13–29; Mark Häberlein and Christof Jeggle (eds), *Materielle Grundlagen der Diplomatie: Schenken, Sammeln und Verhandeln in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Irseer Schriften, N.F., 9 (Konstanz: UVK, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Rainer Scharf, 'Fiktive Geschenke: Praktiken von "erung" und Bestechung am Hof Kaiser Friedrichs III. im Spiegel vornehmlich Nürnberger Quellen', in *König, Fürsten und Reich im 15. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Franz Fuchs, Paul-Joachim Heinig and Jörg Schwarz, Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters, 29 (Cologne, etc.: Böhlau, 2009), pp. 21–58; Paul-Joachim Heinig, 'Der Preis der Gnade: Sporteln, Kanzleitaxen und urkundliche Gebührenvermerke im europäischen Mittelalter', in *Regionen Europas – Europa der Regionen: Festschrift für Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Peter Thorau (Cologne, etc.: Böhlau, 2003), pp. 143–65; Groebner, *Gefährliche Geschenke* (as in n. 33); id., 'Accountancies and "Arcana": Registering the Gift in Late Medieval Cities', in *Medieval Transformations* (as in n. 33), pp. 219–43; Ivan Hlaváček, *Das Urkunden- und Kanzleiwesen des böhmischen und römischen Königs Wenzel (IV.), 1376–1419*, Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 23 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1970); Peter Moraw, 'Deutsches Königtum und bürgerliche Geldwirtschaft um 1400', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 55 (1969), 289–328.

situation was not as pressing and dangerous as in other areas and a comparatively small amount of money was given, probably as a sign of good will. Elsewhere, as in Rothenburg, the tension within the town was high<sup>35</sup> and may have forced a certain course of action upon the Jewish community. We should in either event not underestimate the will of Jews to influence a development that affected them, and there is no reason to think that with their lives at risk they did not use their financial resources to this end.

As the threat endangered the entire Jewish population in a town, diplomatic steps were carried out by the community leaders. They collected the money and chose spokesmen who approached the authorities on behalf of the group. The letter from Mainz shows this process in particular detail. Only in the case of Nuremberg we find individuals taking steps in addition to the collective effort. This was most probably connected to personal interests of the Jewish players involved. The family of the Jewess Reppin (i.e., Jutte, the wife of Jacob Rapp), for example, who paid the first 1,000 florins to the Nuremberg council, originally came from Nördlingen.<sup>36</sup> Up until the pogrom the family had maintained personal bonds to the Jewry of that place, as well as economic connections to Rothenburg, Nördlingen, and Weissenburg, some of which caused further problems the following years.<sup>37</sup> Hence she must have had a special interest in settling affairs there that probably went beyond security in the town of Nuremberg alone and might have made her interfere.

### Livelihood at Risk

These examples of more or less voluntary donations differ significantly from other Jewish payments around that time. For example, an anonymous chronicle relates that in 1384 the Jews of Augsburg had to pay 22,000 florins after city officials had seized them. If the report is reliable, then given the imprisonment and the amount

<sup>35</sup> When they recorded the oaths all citizens had to swear, the town officials of Rothenburg uncovered harsh anti-Semitic sentiments, cf. *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2, pp. 1752–54, doc. 1753.

<sup>36</sup> Toch, 'Verfolgungen' (as in n. 10), p. 1017; Reinhard H. Seitz, 'Nördlingen', in *Germania Judaica III* (as in n. 10), II, pp. 977–94, at p. 985; Müller, 'Aus fünf Jahrhunderten' (as in n. 27), pt. II, p. 162.

<sup>37</sup> Ute Jäger, *Die Regesten der Reichsstadt Weissenburg*, Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft für fränkische Geschichte, 3rd ser., 9 (Neustadt/Aisch: Degener, 2002), doc. 121, pp. 68–69; *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2, pp. 1683–91, 1767, and 1891–92, docs 1704, 1773 (1383), and 1902. On the Rapp family cf. Angela Möschter, *Juden im venezianischen Treviso, 1389–1509*, Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden, A 19 (Hannover: Hahn, 2008), pp. 76–82, and map 2b.

of money, the events must be classified as an act of extortion.<sup>38</sup> Some 57,000 florins given by the community of Regensburg to the city in the same year were surely not optional either.<sup>39</sup> Strangely enough this event was neither mentioned by contemporary chronicles nor has it been noticed by scholars of our days.<sup>40</sup> On first glance the affair seems to be related to a conflict between three parties who were fighting over rights concerning the Jewish community—the city, the king, and the Dukes of Bavaria.<sup>41</sup> In the aftermath of this payment, and most likely as a result of it, several Jews of Regensburg made an unsuccessful attempt at escaping from the city.<sup>42</sup> One of those who tried to leave was Gnendel, probably the wealthiest moneylender in the city, who alone had to pay 32,000 florins to the council.<sup>43</sup> The documents show that Jews had taken provisions like negotiating safe-conducts with noblemen and towns in the vicinity of Regensburg before leaving, yet their plans were thwarted by the city's officials who seized them and again (forcefully) received them as citizens.

The acts of extortion the Jews of Regensburg and Augsburg endured in 1384 foreshadowed the events of the following years. What Jews were facing then was quite different from what they had been used to before. In 1385, in the course of a rapprochement between King Wenceslas and the towns of the Swabian League, the two parties came to an agreement which involved the confiscation of debts owed to Jewish moneylenders living in places affiliated with the League in Swabia.<sup>44</sup> The dirty work was carried out by the urban authorities, who were to take over Jewish

<sup>38</sup> This is underlined by the fact that the sources in these cases do not label the payments as 'presents'. Cf. the anonymous chronicler in *Chroniken der deutschen Städte* (as in n. 12), vol. IV (1864), p. 74; Hektor Mulichs, *ibid.*, vol. XXII (1892), p. 27; Burkhart Zink, *ibid.*, vol. V (1866), p. 30. There are no other sources besides these chronicles, which are based on each other. It might thus be possible that the anonymous chronicler mistook '1384' for '1385', as suggested by Sabine Mütschele, 'Juden in Augsburg, 1212–1440' (Ph.D. dissertation, Stuttgart, 1996), p. 235.

<sup>39</sup> München, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (= HStAM), *Reichsstadt Regensburg Urkunden*, no. 2531.

<sup>40</sup> Even Peter Herde, who verifiably consulted the source concerning a different matter, did not mention the actual incident in his survey, 'Regensburg', in *Germania Judaica III* (as in n. 10), II, pp. 1178–230, at p. 1221, n. 397.

<sup>41</sup> On this conflict, see Volkert, 'Juden in der Oberpfalz' (as in n. 13), pp. 188–90.

<sup>42</sup> HStAM, Reichsstadt Regensburg Urkunden, nos 2524–26 and 2533; Volkert, 'Juden in der Oberpfalz' (as in n. 13), p. 189; HERDE, 'Regensburg' (as in n. 40), p. 1199.

<sup>43</sup> HStAM, Reichsstadt Regensburg Urkunden, no. 2524.

<sup>44</sup> Süßmann, *Judenschuldentilgungen* (as in n. 10), pp. 32–86; Hruza, "Anno domini 1385" (as in n. 32); Wolfgang von Stromer, *Oberdeutsche Hochfinanz, 1350–1450*, Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beihefte 55–57, 3 vols (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1970), I, 155–77; Wenninger, *Man bedarf keiner Juden mehr* (as in n. 27), pp. 38–53; Michael Toch, 'Der jüdische Geldhandel in der Wirtschaft des deutschen Spätmittelalters: Nürnberg 1350–1499', *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 117 (1981), 283–310, at pp. 284–99.

obligations and levy them from the debtors with some alleviation, depending on the date of repayment. The collected money was to be repaid to the Jewish creditors, but Wenceslas allowed the towns to keep certain shares for themselves. It is not specified how much of the total amount of money lent out by the Jews was actually paid back to them after the town had cashed it in, and how much on the other hand remained with the Christian officials. The figures appearing in town documents suggest that the Jews lost rather much of their belongings whereas the towns gained major profits. Nuremberg alone received around 80,000 florins, of which approximately 60,000 remained available at the council's own disposition.<sup>45</sup>

Considering the impact the procedure had on the livelihoods of many influential moneylenders, one would expect a strong Jewish opposition. Yet there is hardly any evidence for such a reaction. An explanation might be that the collaboration of the two most important political players against the Jews (i.e., the king and the towns) and the well-organized enforcement of the operation made diplomatic attempts to avert it almost impossible.<sup>46</sup> The towns, for example, did not simply force directives upon the Jews. Instead they seized them, in Nuremberg even separated them from one another<sup>47</sup>, and then negotiated with the imprisoned moneylenders. This procedure obviously appeared useful to the town officials. From their point of view it was necessary to make sure that no Jews left with their business papers, as the Regensburg community members had tried the previous year. The Jews, on the other hand, could expect certain concessions on their behalf—a small basis for negotiation, so to speak. Indeed the financiers' capital stock was spared to some degree, as can be seen from what we know of their financial transactions during the following years.<sup>48</sup> Besides that, many towns abstained from taxing their Jews for some time, or made concessions in other ways.<sup>49</sup>

When confronted with the inevitable, most Jews seem to have accepted their lot for the time being. For those who refused to accept the situation, one option was to turn to a powerful supporter who had not directly benefited from the king-and-town plot. The case of Lesir 'the Young(er)' (*Lesir der jung*) of Rothenburg accords some insight into how this might have happened. Like most members of the Swa-

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Carl Hegel's introduction in *Chroniken der deutschen Städte* (as in n. 12), vol. 1, *Nürnberg* (1862), pp. 113–14.

<sup>46</sup> A detailed reconstruction of the political course of action is given by Hruza, "Anno domini 1385" (as in n. 32).

<sup>47</sup> *Chroniken der deutschen Städte* (as in n. 12), vol. 1, *Nürnberg* (1862), pp. 25–26.

<sup>48</sup> Süßmann, *Judenschuldentilgungen* (as in n. 10), pp. 119–20.

<sup>49</sup> After the confiscations Nuremberg Jews, for example, continued to pay half of their former annual taxes; cf. *Die israelitische Bevölkerung* (as in n. 10), pp. 25–34 (1382–85) and 34–36 (1388).

bian Town League, Lesir's home town had taken part in the plundering of the Jews in 1385. Yet the initial agreement with the Jewry seems to have failed—at least we know of renewed negotiations concerning the matter between the officials and the religious minority in 1386.<sup>50</sup> In order to increase the pressure the town had retained the Jews in their quarter until it became necessary to supply them with food.<sup>51</sup> It is obvious that owing to Jewish dietary laws deprivation must have served as an additional instrument of pressure. One of the representatives of the Jewish community who eventually came to terms with the authorities was Lesir the Young.<sup>52</sup> The town's tax records as well as various other financial documents reveal that he was a wealthy resident and successful moneylender.<sup>53</sup> Hence it is not surprising that he was left dissatisfied with the deal he had had to strike. Just two month after the Jews had been released, Lesir and his family were received under the protection and safe-conduct of Adolf of Nassau, archbishop of Mainz and bishop of Speyer.<sup>54</sup> Adolf was a powerful player concerning the political affairs of the Empire and therefore a good choice as a partner against royal ambitions.<sup>55</sup> Lesir was allowed to move freely within the archbishop's lands and to settle in the town of Miltenberg. Furthermore the agreement explicitly states that Adolf would help the moneylender and his family to enforce his claims in Rothenburg—a passage clearly referring to the bargains of 1385/86.<sup>56</sup> Unless further investigations bring new information forward, it is neither possible to determine if Lesir's strategy was successful, nor whether his was an isolated case or just one of many. At this point it is interesting

<sup>50</sup> Wehrmann, 'Rechtsstellung' (as in n. 25), pp. 78–80.

<sup>51</sup> *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2, pp. 1928–32, doc. 1950; cf. Wehrmann, 'Rechtsstellung' (as in n. 25), pp. 77–78.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 4, pp. 78–80.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71–73, 76, 269–92; Jürgen U. Ohlau, 'Der Haushalt der Reichsstadt Rothenburg o. T. in seiner Abhängigkeit von Bevölkerungsstruktur, Verwaltung und Territorienbildung, 1350–1450' (Ph.D. dissertation, Erlangen, 1965), p. 61; *Monumenta Zollerana: Urkunden-Buch der Geschichte des Hauses Hohenzollern*, ed. by Rudolf F. von Stillfried and Traugott Mercker, vol. VI (Berlin: Ernst & Korn, 1860), pp. 64–65, doc. 60; vol. VI (1890), pp. 229–31, doc. 336.

<sup>54</sup> Würzburg, Staatsarchiv (= StAW), *Mainzer Ingrossaturbücher*, 11, fol. 55r (21 September 1386); cf. *Die Regesten der Mainzer Erzbischöfe nach 1374/75*, <<http://www.ingrossaturbuecher.de/id/source/2507>> [18.09.2014].

<sup>55</sup> Alois Gerlich, 'Adolf I. von Nassau, Ebf. v. Mainz', in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 9 vols (Munich etc., 1980–98), I, col. 161; Anton Brück, 'Adolf I.: Graf von Nassau, Erzbischof von Mainz (seit 1373)', *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 1 (1953), p. 84.

<sup>56</sup> 'Auch sollen wir deme vorg(enanten) vns(er)me Juden getruvelich vnd vestedlich beholffen sin zu siner ansprache die er gein die von Rotenburg hait'; StAW, *Mainzer Ingrossaturbücher*, 11, fol. 55r. Lesir's name quite often appears in documents listing pawns that were probably prepared by town officials concerning the action of 1385; cf. Wehrmann, 'Rechtsstellung' (as in n. 25), pp. 269–92.

to note that while the Jewish community—at least, in Rothenburg—acted as a unit when faced with the seizure and during the negotiations with town officials, further steps seem to have been the outcome of individual ambition and family resources, rather than of a collective effort.

The following years remained dangerous. In 1388 the escalating conflict between the factions of the towns and the nobility eventually turned into war. The situation for Jews thus got even less secure and their economic activities were affected as well.<sup>57</sup> Probably confronted with another kind of extortion or financial oppression, the Jews of Regensburg tried once more to flee but were again captured by civic officials and forced to ransom themselves.<sup>58</sup> Even more unsettling was a pogrom that occurred in the city of Prague in 1389 and cost many their lives in an important centre of Jewish life and culture.<sup>59</sup> As if that were not enough, portentous news of the king's ambitions reached the towns of Franconia, Swabia and along the Rhine soon after the war had ended in 1389. Taking advantage of the weakened position of the towns, who had lost ground in the aftermath of war and were forced to dissolve their League, the crown allied with the high nobility to press money from the Jews. The urban authorities, limited in their scope of action and afraid of losing old privileges, were hardly able to resist the royal schemes directed against the religious minority within their walls. The plot took shape in 1390 and in the end hit the German Jewry even harder than the first one in 1385.<sup>60</sup> In return for a substantial fee by the members of the high nobility and other players, King Wenceslas ordered a complete cancellation of all debts owed on Jewish loans in all participating territories. Whereas in 1385 only a certain number of towns and cities of Swabia and Franconia were concerned, in 1390 to 1393 the cancellations involved towns and entire regions in Bavaria, along the Rhine, and in other parts of Ashkenaz.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of the proceedings in the places concerned, a variety of reactions of Jews can be identified depending on their location. The Jewish community of Frankfurt, for example, was able react before things were

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Urkunden und Akten* (as in n. 11), III/2 pp. 2733–45, doc. 2814.

<sup>58</sup> Volkert, 'Juden in der Oberpfalz' (as in n. 13), pp. 189–90.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Evina Steinová, 'Passio Iudeorum Pragensium: Tatsachen und Fiktionen über das Pogrom im Jahr 1389', in *'Avigdor, Benesch, Gitl': Juden in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien im Mittelalter, Samuel Steinherz zum Gedenken*, ed. by Helmut Teufel, Pavel Kocman und Milan Řepa (Essen: Klartext, 2016), pp. 159–85; Barbara Newman, 'The Passion of the Jews of Prague: The Pogrom of 1389 and the Lessons of a Medieval Parody', *Church History*, 81 (2012), 1–26; Ferdinand Seibt and Maria Tischler, 'Prag', in *Germania Judaica III* (as in n. 10), II, pp. 1116–51, at p. 1134. The pogrom is mentioned in the Nuremberg *Memorbuch: Die israelitische Bevölkerung* (as in n. 10), p. 202.

<sup>60</sup> Süßmann, *Judenschuldenentilgungen* (as in n. 10), pp. 86–131.

settled and in 1390 paid their town 1,000 florins—certainly in an effort to prevent the implementation of the decree, probably in a way similar to what we saw earlier.<sup>61</sup> The attempt was however unsuccessful, as the tensions between the town's officials and other protagonists increased over time. Frankfurt eventually reached an agreement with King Wenceslas in January 1391. The pressure on the magistrates came not only from the king but also from parts of the Christian population.<sup>62</sup> Anti-Jewish riots, such as those which occurred in 1391 in Gotha, showed how emotions could rise in similar situations. The violent protest had been promoted by debtors who expected a liquidation of their obligations even though the town did not participate.<sup>63</sup> Other towns tried to hold out like Frankfurt, but facing similar kinds of opposition ultimately failed.<sup>64</sup>

The role of the Jewish communities in the urban resistance against the second round of debt 'cancellations' is hard to assess. Did they take action, as when faced with the events of 1384, or was it was but a matter of the towns' self-interest to oppose the king's decree? At the same time, there is evidence of several individual reactions by Jews and Jewish families that were based on their own resources. In one case a Jewish moneylender in Haguenau named Mennlin was able to elude an act of extortion by escape. This was only possible because he had good connections to local town authorities who had warned him beforehand.<sup>65</sup> The family of the rich and influential Jekel of Ulm took more vigorous steps when the town of Nuremberg tried to lay hands on their assets, probably after Jekel's family had left town.<sup>66</sup> To fight for their claims the Jews took political action and concluded a pact with the lords of Em(b)s, who controlled the mountain passes on the way connecting the Lake Constance region with Italy. For their services, which included feuding the citizens of Nuremberg and harming their trade, the noblemen were entitled to a share in the money the Jews hoped to regain in case their plans turned out to be successful. An interesting, later turn of this story involved the Duke of Austria, who accused the Nuremberg of acting illegally, arguing the Jews had been his protégés at

<sup>61</sup> 'Wir han enphangen düsseldorf gülden von der judischeit wegin, die sie dem rade gegeben han von solicher koste und erbeit wegin, als sie umb iren willin gehabt han'; *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Juden* (as in n. 23), I, p. 270; cf. Schnur, *Juden in Frankfurt* (as in n. 23), p. 634.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 633–40, 649–61.

<sup>63</sup> Maïke Lämmerhirt, *Juden in den wettinischen Herrschaftsgebieten: Recht, Verwaltung und Wirtschaft im Spätmittelalter*, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Thüringen. Kleine Reihe, 21 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), pp. 287–88.

<sup>64</sup> e.g., Augsburg and Erfurt: *ibid.*, pp. 285–86.

<sup>65</sup> Mentgen, *Juden im mittelalterlichen Elsaß* (as in n. 30), pp. 276–77.

<sup>66</sup> For this episode and its sources see Müller, *Juden in Nürnberg* (as in n. 32), p. 66; Süßmann, *Judenschuldentilgungen* (as in n. 10), pp. 124–25, and my forthcoming study mentioned above, n. 8.

the time of the royal extortion.<sup>67</sup> It turned out that Jekel had additionally used a strategy similar to that adopted by Lesir the Younger some years before, by allying himself with an important and independent baron. In the end the town's officials, the noblemen, and the children of the late Jekel agreed on negotiations and settled their case in 1403. The Jews received their houses back and a payment, which, however, scarcely met their losses from the debt cancellation.<sup>68</sup> Other families took legal action against their former home towns after 1390. These include the aforementioned Nuremberg family of Jacob Rapp. Various court proceedings continued over decades, before an agreement was reached in 1472, when the initial opponents were long dead.<sup>69</sup>

Measures like these were more or less single cases. Most Jewish community members simply did not have the financial resources and connections to important Christians needed to engage in complicated legal actions or to gain the favour of powerful protagonists such as the archbishop of Mainz. Nor could they raise expectations of such profits as would persuade a nobleman to confront an influential agent like Nuremberg. What they could do, however, was to leave. Correspondingly, the ongoing emigration of Jewish families is a phenomenon far more significant than the individual acts of resistance we have mustered. It can equally be addressed as a strategy of adapting to the situation.

Emigration, of course, had many causes besides the depredation of 1390 and the following years. Some families had already decided to leave their towns previously, perhaps prompted by the riots of 1384, by the economic pressure of 1385, due to the insecure situation in the Empire during war time, or for religious, personal or still other reasons. Expulsions from Jewish centres like Strasbourg and from the territories of the Count Palantine in 1390 gave a further push to the migration of those years.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless several records show that the actions of 1390–93 gave a particularly strong impulse towards Jewish migration and that the communities in places that took part in them were affected more severely than others. While, for example, the number of Jews in Cologne, which did not participate, even increased

<sup>67</sup> *Quellen zur Handelsgeschichte der Stadt Nürnberg seit 1400*, ed. by Bernhard Schmeidler, Wilhelm Biebinger and Wilhelm Neukam (Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1934), pp. 69–70, doc. 78.

<sup>68</sup> One of the lost debts we know of was by a citizen of Nuremberg who alone owed Jekel 1,000 florins: *ibid.*, p. 96, doc. 113.

<sup>69</sup> Süßmann, *Judenschuldentilgungen* (as in n. 10), pp. 123–24; Müller, *Juden in Nürnberg* (as in n. 32), p. 67; Möschter, *Juden im venezianischen Treviso* (as in n. 37), p. 79.

<sup>70</sup> Mentgen, *Juden im mittelalterlichen Elsaß* (as in n. 30), pp. 120–22, 169–79; Franz-Josef Ziwes, 'Territoriale Judenvertreibungen im Südwesten und Süden Deutschlands im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert', in *Judenvertreibungen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Friedhelm Burgard, Alfred Haverkamp and Gerd Mentgen, FGJ, A 9 (Hannover: Hahn, 1999), pp. 165–87, at pp. 168–73.

during these years<sup>71</sup>, at least fifteen Jewish taxpayers left Nuremberg between 1385 and 1391. In Erfurt, documents for 1392 list twenty-one households fewer than in 1383.<sup>72</sup> In the year 1390 no more than eighteen Jews were mentioned in the tax lists of Augsburg—a dramatic slump compared to the 64 named in 1384.<sup>73</sup>

Certain groups appear to have been more eager to leave than others. In Nuremberg and Augsburg, for example, mostly the very wealthy financiers and the rather small moneylenders left, while Jewish entrepreneurs with relatively medium-sized business-operations stayed.<sup>74</sup> A possible explanation for this might be that the moneylenders with small capital were stricken comparatively harder by the liquidation of their obligations. Other than the wealthier Jewish families, they may have lacked possessions or assets that could in time of need be cleared to generate a new capital stock necessary for further business.<sup>75</sup> Whereas medium-sized and well-to-do entrepreneurs could regenerate their financial base and were since 1400 at least to some degree again able to make transactions of hundreds and even thousands of florins, the poorer ones were left out and looked elsewhere in the hope of a new start. The very wealthy financiers, on the other hand, were far more flexible in their decisions in the first place. Moving quite often from one town to another in search for new or better business opportunities, they were used to changing their homes frequently, they had the necessary resources to do so, and they were received, thanks to their economic potential, more easily and under better conditions than other Jews.<sup>76</sup> In 1385 and 1390–93 the foundations of their widespread enterprises were shattered if not destroyed. They were therefore eager to pursue their luck in northern Italy, where new opportunities had appeared.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Erich Wisplinghoff, 'Köln', in *Germania Judaica III* (as in n. 10), I, pp. 632–50, at p. 633.

<sup>72</sup> Reinhold S. Ruf-Haag, 'Juden und Christen im spätmittelalterlichen Erfurt: Abhängigkeiten, Handlungsspielräume und Gestaltung jüdischen Lebens in einer mitteleuropäischen Großstadt' (Ph.D. dissertation, Trier, 2009), p. 145.

<sup>73</sup> Augsburg, Stadtarchiv, *Steuerbuch 1390*, fol. 25r, and *ibid.*, *Steuerbuch 1384*, fol. 14r–v.

<sup>74</sup> For Nuremberg and Augsburg, see Toch, 'Geldhandel' (as in n. 44), p. 299, and Mütschele, 'Juden in Augsburg' (as in n. 38), pp. 238–39.

<sup>75</sup> In Nuremberg in 1392 some Jews without citizenship were obliged to pay taxes in a specific relation to their assets. Whereas we can determine that most of these Jews possessed around 15 florins or less and were either community employees or members of poorer families, there are also some who belonged to rich families and were listed with a taxable wealth of 30, 75, 80 or even 120 florins on their own. Given that even community members who were involved in business dealings on a much smaller scale (if at all) owned reasonable amounts of money, there is reason to believe that the richer families still had sufficient resources to keep their enterprises going.

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Jekel of Ulm and his family.

## Conclusions

We have seen that Jews dealt in very different ways with the various emerging threats and acts of oppression during the 1380s and 1390s. Certain measures were initiated by Jewish communities as a whole. This is true especially for religious responses but applies to diplomatic moves as well. The latter involved the raising of money, establishing channels of communication with Christian authorities, and spreading information. The diplomatic steps were assigned to members of the leading Jewish families who dealt with the Christian authorities on a daily basis and had the necessary connections and financial means. This way of dealing with dangerous situations was based on collective memory and experience gained by Jewish protagonists throughout the centuries, as a comparative look at the deadly pogroms of 1096 reveals. In 1384 such an approach was successful due to a mutual interest of town officials and Jews. Diplomatic action were however ill-fated when important Christian authorities resisted and other powerful allies stayed away, as was the case in 1385 and 1390–93. In these scenarios Jewish communities sometimes even had to perform the invidious task of negotiating terms of surrender.

It is not surprising to see the Jewish community emerge as a source of resilience, especially in matters of a religious nature. Yet some problems endangering Jewish life or livelihood could not, or would not, sufficiently be handled by collective effort—at least not sufficiently in view of the interests of a certain group of influential and wealthy Jewish families. Consequently the latter tried to solve those problems on their own, as we have observed in several cases. The resilience of the Jewish elite seems to have derived rather from individual and family-based resources than from the Jewish community itself. The outlined cases show that individual strategies of Jewish players had a fair chance of success if they were based on an significant quantity of stamina and persistence, keen political analysis, legal experience, sufficient financial means and, last but not least, good relations with powerful Christian authorities both at home and abroad.

Having such resources at their command, Jewish families could quickly decide to leave once their assets were in danger. For those who were in need of substantial support by other community members or who for whatever other reasons decided to stay, the situation thus became even more difficult. They had to cope with a shrinking community, to stabilize their economic position, and to keep up good relations with the Christian authorities, all at the same time.

These findings suggest that a crucial task for resilience studies will be to analyse the social stratification of a given social group and the interdependencies of its dif-

<sup>77</sup> See the contributions by A. Veronese and L. Raspe in the present volume, as well as Möschter, *Juden im venezianischen Treviso* (as in n. 37).

ferent layers in view of the group's resilience in general. Applied to late-medieval Jewish communities, the unequal distribution of resilience resources appears to have had a significant impact on collective resilience. Resilience studies thus promise further insight into the complex history of the Ashkenazi Jewish community during the middle ages and beyond.

## Zusammenfassung

### Strategien aschkenasischer Juden angesichts der Bedrohungen der 1380er und 1390er Jahre

Im Jahr 1384 erschütterten Verfolgungen in Windsheim, Weißenburg, Nördlingen und andernorts die Judenschaften des Reichs. Um ein Ausgreifen der antijüdischen Aggressionen zu verhüten, aktivierten die Gemeinden ihre diplomatischen Kontakte zu den christlichen Autoritäten des Schwäbischen Städtebundes. In ihnen fanden sie wichtige Verbündete, die zügig wirkungsvolle Maßnahmen gegen die an den Verfolgungen Beteiligten umsetzten und sich aktiv um eine Eindämmung der antijüdischen Stimmungen bemühten. Das Vorgehen entsprach den Interessen der christlichen Obrigkeiten, die eine Verbreitung innerstädtischer Unruhen fürchteten. Es ist zugleich als Verhandlungsergebnis der jüdischen Akteure zu werten, die nicht nur politische Kontakte, sondern auch finanzielle Mittel in die politischen Prozesse einbrachten.

Als König Wenzel 1385/1390 in wechselnden Allianzen zunächst mit den Mitgliedern des Städtebundes, dann mit deren Kontrahenten, den Fürsten des Reichs, Verträge zur Plünderung der jüdischen Geldhändler beschloss, schlugen ähnliche diplomatische Schritte fehl. Lediglich einzelnen Familien und Finanziers gelang es, fragile Ansprüche zu behaupten. Es handelte sich hierbei um wohlhabende Juden und Jüdinnen, die bei ihrem Vorgehen nicht auf die Gemeinde angewiesen waren, sondern eigene politische Kontakte, wirtschaftliche Verbindungen und finanzielle Ressourcen einsetzen konnten. Am Beispiel der Emigration dieser jüdischen Führungsschicht – eine der häufigsten Reaktionen im Umgang mit den Entrechtungen von 1385/90 – zeigt der Beitrag abschließend das Spannungsverhältnis von kollektiven Interessen und individuellen Strategien jüdischer Akteure im Umgang mit externen Bedrohungen, das sich für weitere Untersuchungen empfiehlt.

The Jews of Europe around 1400  
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Edited by  
Lukas Clemens and Christoph Cluse

2018

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden