The Jews in a Polish Private Town
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Authority in the Jewish Community

In eighteenth-century society, questions of honor and deference were a central preoccupation shared alike by Jews and non-Jews.¹ This focus on social status was made visible in civic and religious rituals, in public office and behavior, in dress and occupation. A strict formality, which concretized distinctions in rank and status, governed behavior in many dimensions of social and religious life. A highly refined tension surrounded these matters, and when a breach was perceived, it sometimes led to prolonged feuding and even to violence. Such disputes generally flowed from differences over nice distinctions in the social hierarchy. While there was tension between social classes, this chapter focuses mainly on the ruling group of Jewish society and on the struggle within it for power, authority, and status.

The ceremonies of religious life in general, and the synagogue in particular, provided many an occasion for the playing out of the fine distinctions in social standing. Who would lead the first procession on Sukkot (Tabernacles) or Simhat Torah (the day of rejoicing in the Torah); who would read the Book of Jonah on the afternoon of the Day of Atonement, and to whom would the shohet come first with his chickens on its eve? All the “honors” of the synagogue, such as being called to the Torah scroll as it was read, were the subject of competition, but one generally knew one’s place. The playing out of these distinctions was, after all, also a form of social control—it kept people in their place. There were also social rituals that served to reflect gradations of status: who visited whom on the Sabbath and festivals, who received which gifts on special occasions, and so forth. It was precisely in the gray areas, on the cusps of the higher status groupings, among people of roughly equal social status, that difficulties arose.

The death of a notable also provided the occasion for concretizing in various ways his or her status. An elaborate funeral, an effusive eulogy, a hyperbolic epitaph all served as indicators of the station of the deceased. In addi-
tion, a mantle for a Torah scroll or a curtain for the Torah ark woven of fine fabrics and inscribed with the name of the departed and of the donor might be donated to the synagogue. When the curtain was used on holidays or on the Sabbath, it would serve as a vivid illustration and reminder of the status of the family concerned.

The superiority of the wealthy and learned was taken for granted in Jewish society and was part of the order of things. Generally speaking, the system worked, and there seems not to have been much resentment on the part of the "silent democracy" against the "speaking aristocracy." These terms, employed by Perry Miller to describe Puritan society, are surprisingly apt here. The term democracy is used here not in a constitutional sense but in the sense that even the according of deference involves a measure of choice. The constant reenactment of the rituals reinforcing hierarchical distinctions was not always sufficient to maintain social control and social peace. When the system did break down and conflicts arose between rich and poor, learned and ignorant, merchant and artisan, the aristocracy had other means to exert its will. These included patronage, taxation, and access to the center of power represented by the town owner.

Particularly during the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century, a kind of Polish-Lithuanian Jewish aristocracy existed. Members of a relatively small number of families held an astonishing number of rabbinical and communal offices. Among these families were the Ginzburgs, Heilperins, Horowitzs, Rapoports, and Katzenellenbogens. In the middle of the eighteenth century, as Benzion Dinur has noted, there were in Poland about fifteen rabbis, ten leaders of the Council of the Lands, and several judges and heads of yeshivas from the Heilperin family. During the same period, the Landau family included rabbis in at least twenty communities, elders of the regions of Cracow-Sandomierz and Lwów, and leaders of a number of individual communities (figure 1). In Opatów, the members of the Landau family were the most influential members of the community from the last decades of the seventeenth century until about 1780.

During those nine decades, it was unusual if at least one member of the family was not an elder in the community. Thus, when in 1726, Yehezqel ben Sevi Hirsh Landau declined to accept a position in the kahal, this was noted in the communal minute book in the following language: "His honor the rabbi, our teacher, Yehezqel Segal [Landau] has declined the honor which is due [mahal 'al kevodo] and does not wish to be chief among the leaders at this time. [Nevertheless, he retains] the right of leadership in all matters great and small, sacred [and profane]." Communal officeholding was not the source of the Landaus' authority; rather, the reverse was the case: the Landaus held office because of their authority. This authority derived from their lineage, their learning, and their wealth. And these entitled them to office on
the communal, regional, and interregional level. These positions, together with their wealth, gave them access to the powerful magnates who owned or governed the towns in which the Landaus lived.

**THE LANDAUS OF OPATÓW**

The pedigree of the Landaus went back to prominent rabbis in the late Middle Ages in Italian and German lands (see figure 1). Yeqvī'el Landau (died 1561) was the rabbi of Prague; his son Moshe (died 1567) was a renowned rabbinic figure in Cracow and associated with Moses Isserles. It is not clear when the first members of the family appeared in Opatów, but it certainly was not later than the first decades of the second half of the seventeenth century when a certain Binyamin Wolf Landau is known to have lived there. His son, Yeḥezqel, was a judge and, possibly, head of the *yesivah*. Yeḥezqel's wife was Witta, daughter of Yiṣḥaq ben Ze'ev Ŭarif (died 1682), who was the communal rabbi in Opatów between about 1668 and 1673; he subsequently accepted a similar position in Cracow. Yeḥezqel was a merchant and attended the Leipzig fair in 1680. In 1683 he "farmed" the kahal commerce tax together with two other partners. By 1692, he was dead, leaving three sons and at least one daughter. These were Yosef, Ševi Hirsh, Binyamin Wolf, and Rekhl or Rekhish.

Yosef died by drowning, childless and apparently still young, in 1714 or early 1715. According to the court testimony of his siblings, he left a fortune of "no more than 30,000 zloties," of which, they maintained, only 6,000 zloties would be left for his widow, Priva, daughter of Nathan ben Yiṣḥaq of Przemysł, after all his creditors had been paid. In 1694 and 1696, Yosef had held relatively minor offices in the kahal. His siblings said that before his death he had been planning to move to Jerusalem and had received permission to do so from the town owner.

Binyamin Wolf was probably the Wolf son of "Y," who was listed first among the three electors of the kahal in 1694. He subsequently moved to Tarnów, where he founded a dynasty of rabbis and elders. Rekhl married Nathan Neta Shapiro, who was descended from a line of important rabbis. Nathan, or Note, was a merchant; in 1721, he was to be found residing in a brick house together with his wife's nephew, Yehuda, son of Ševi Hirsh.

Ševi Hirsh (died 1715) was frequently an elder of the community and of the *galil*. He attended at least four meetings of the Council of the Lands. His wife was Sarah, the daughter of Dr. Naftali Hirsh Oettinger of Przemysł. Ševi Hirsh was known as Hirsh Wittes, or Witches, after his mother. He knew enough Polish to translate documents from Hebrew and Yiddish for the town owner's court. The two generations of Landaus following Ševi Hirsh took the family to the summit of its influence in Opatów, in particular, and in east...
Fig. 1 The Landau family
central Europe, in general. Sometimes, however, there were conflicts within
the family.

Şevi Hirsh and Sarah had at least five children: Avraham, Yehuda, Yehezqel, Yisḥaq, and Rekhl. The latter married Avigdor ben Menahem-Mendel Margoliot, rabbi of Chęciny. She bore him one son before her death: Naftali Hirsh. He called himself Landau after his mother’s family. Naftali was the rabbi of Wisznicz and Zelechów. All four brothers, sons of Şevi Hirsh, together with their cousin, Binyamin Wöl, were involved in the trade in luxury fabrics. In addition, they were all prominent in communal and intercommunal affairs. The oldest son, Avraham, was frequently a communal elder between 1711 and 1747. In 1721, he shared a large brick house with his brother, Yehezqel, next to a similar house occupied by Yehuda and Nota Shapiro. The latter, like the other members of the family, was generally referred to in the sources as Hasklewicz (Haskl = Yehezqel).

Yisḥaq (Isaak) was married to the daughter of a court physician of Jan Sobieski, Emanuel de Jona, also called Simḥah Menahem ben Yohanan Barukhmi-Yoni. In addition to his activities as a merchant of textiles and furs, Yisḥaq held rabbinical positions in Tarłów and Opatów (1719–24), Żółkiew (including, for a time, the “land” of Ruthenia), and Cracow. Yişqaq’s approbation was very frequently sought by rabbinic authors. Many of these were granted while he was in Żółkiew, leading one to suspect that the approval of the local rabbi was a necessary condition for publication.

Yehuda followed his father as elder of the galil from 1722 until his own death in 1737. Yehuda was married to Hayyah, daughter of Eli’ezer, rabbi of Dubno. Eli’ezer subsequently moved to Brody, where he was a prominent merchant. Yehuda may have been, briefly, rabbi of Rzeszów, but he returned to Opatów to seek the rabbinate, losing out to his brother, Yisḥaq. Yehuda was a frequent delegate to the Council of the Lands, particularly between 1719 and 1730. Like his brothers, Yehuda was involved in the textile trade. On the death of her husband, Hayyah donated to the synagogue a parokhet (curtain for the Torah ark), woven of silk with gold thread, for use on holidays, in his memory. Yehuda’s son, Yehezqel, donated a kapporet (a shorter curtain for the Torah ark) with gold and silver thread.

Yehezqel ben Şevi Hirsh was the youngest of the brothers. He was a sometime elder of the community, who succeeded his older brother Yehuda as elder of the galil in 1738, serving until his death in about 1747. He was married to the daughter of Menahem Mendel Auerbach, rabbi of Krotoșyn. Mentioned in the minute book of the Opatów community from 1711, Yehezqel also served as the rabbi of the kloiz in Opatów.

Yehezqel’s sons, Yehuda, Binyamin Wolf, and Yosef, all served as elders of the galil, the latter two virtually continually from their father’s death until the disestablishment of the councils in 1764. Little is known about Yehuda
ben Yechezkel except that he participated in a meeting of the Council of the Lands in 1742 and was elder of the community in 1747. Yechezkel is known to have had at least one daughter. She was married to Me'ir ben Binyamin Wolf Heilperin, rabbi of Opatów from 1712 to 1718 and, later, rabbi of Lublin. Binyamin Wolf ben Yechezkel was active in the community from roughly 1740 to 1769. For a time he held a rabbinical position in Krzeszów but continued to reside in Opatów. He was active as a merchant, and, together with others, he leased the kahal tax on commerce in 1758. Despite his being an elder of the galil, his name appeared on most of the tax rolls of the period, and he paid among the highest rates in the community. In 1764, his household numbered six people, including his wife, children, and a servant. Two other families lived in the same house.

The youngest brother, Yosef, was active in Opatów continuously from the 1740s to the 1780s. He was married to his niece, Breindel, daughter of Me'ir Heilperin. While he continued to reside in Opatów, Yosef held the position of rabbi of Międzyrzecz Podlaski. In addition, he succeeded his father as rabbi of the kloiz in Opatów. Yosef was also a cloth merchant, and he paid taxes at an even higher rate, generally, than his brother Binyamin Wulf. In addition to his position as elder of the galil, Yosef sometimes held office in the community between 1747 and 1775. On June 13, 1756, he was one of the signers, together with his cousin Ya'akov (son of Isaac, and rabbi of Tarnopol) and twelve others, of the ban of excommunication against the Frankists enacted by the Council of the Land of Ruthenia at Brody.

In contrast to the children of Yechezkel, most of his brothers' children left Opatów. Avraham had five sons. One, Naftali Hirsh, was killed on the road between Chęciny and Przedborz soon after his marriage to Nehama, sister of Jacob Emden. Hayyim (died 1797), who briefly held a rabbinical position at Podkamin in the 1770s, spent most of his life in Brody, where he was a leading figure in commerce and a patron of the famous kloiz. His wife was Miriam Babad, daughter of Yekel. Hayyim formed a business partnership with his brother-in-law, Shmu'el. Of the other sons of Avraham, Yosef was rabbi of Nowe Miasto, while Ya'akov occupied a similar position in Lubartów. The latter was married to the daughter of Moshe ben Ziskind Rotenberg, rabbi of Hamburg. A fifth son, Dov Ber, remained in Opatów.

Of Yi’shaq’s children, one daughter married Yosef Ha-Levi Ettinga, rabbi of Rohatyn and, later, Chmielnik. Yosef’s sons, Ya’akov Simhah and Yisrael Yonah, took the name Landau, after their mother. At the end of the eighteenth century, from about 1788, Ya’akov Simhah Landau was rabbi of Opatów. Yi’shaq’s sons included Hayyim of Radziwiłłów; Aryeh Leib, a judge in Opatów and, later, Lwów; Asher of Cracow; Yosef, rabbi of Greiding; and Ya’akov, rabbi of Tarlow and, later, Tarnopol. The last had the title nesi eres Yisra’el and was charged with the collection of funds to be sent from Poland.
to the poor of the Holy Land. He also, as mentioned, signed the ban against the Frankists in Brody in 1756.

Of Yehuda's children, one daughter married Israel Berkowicz, rabbi of Stryj, and another married Mordekhai of Cracow. One son, Yosef, lived for a time in Opatów, where he was warden of funds for the poor of the Holy Land in 1726–27. Later, he was rabbi of Klimontów and Ostróg. Yosef's younger brother, Yechezkel (Ezekiel), was most famous of all the sons of the Landau family. He was born in Opatów in 1713 and died in Prague in 1793. After some years in Ludomir and Brody, Yechezkel accepted rabbinical office, first in Jampol (1745–54) and then in Prague (1754–93).

**CHALLENGES AND DISPUTES**

The Landaus were wealthy and learned, a dominant presence in the institutions of Jewish autonomy, especially in Little Poland and Ruthenia. They occupied important offices and formed marriage ties with others in similar positions from Tykocin (Tiktin) to Hamburg and from Międzyrzecz Podlaski to Brody, Lwów, Jampol, and Tarnopol. They were particularly prominent in the Cracow-Sandomierz region and had strong links to Brody. The Landaus were not an organized party, and from time to time there were splits and fierce disputes within the family. Moreover, on several occasions, their claims to leadership were challenged, and their integrity questioned.

The most serious charge, and also the most obscure because it has not been corroborated, was leveled by Jacob Emden. He claimed that Ševi Hirsh Wites had libeled two innocent, learned, and righteous men of Opatów, Y. Deikhes and his companion. As a result of this slander, the two were hanged. Emden claimed, further, that his own father had refused to visit Hirsh, who, near death, asked for him; his father responded, "will I be a friend to informers?" Now, Emden leveled his charge some forty years or more after the fact and in the midst of his great battle with Jonathan Eibeschütz. A number of members of the Landau family took the Eibeschütz side. Ezekiel Landau of Prague refused to condemn Eibeschütz in public, while declining at the same time to support Emden. As a result, Emden attacked the Landaus in his books, calling them the sons of Korah, an allusion to the biblical Levite rebels, and making various accusations against them.

The fact that the charge was made so long after the alleged event and in the midst of a ferocious feud must cast some doubt on its veracity. On the other hand, Emden, for all of his extreme language and sometimes outrageous charges, has often proved to be accurate. In this particular case, however, one wonders if he was not twisting the story somewhat. On the other hand, Emden may have been a witness to the event to which he alluded. In the winter of 1714–15, he had been in Opatów with his parents and his sister, Nehama.
She was betrothed to none other than the grandson of Ševi Hirsh Wittes. According to Emden, it was "at that time" that a feud arose in the kahal involving the Landaus, and "as a result, two men were hanged." Subsequently, however, Nehama did marry the grandson, but he was killed (by highwaymen?), and she remained a childless widow until her death. If Ševi Hirsh was guilty in the simple sense that Emden presented it, surely the match between Nehama and Hirsh's grandson would have been annulled. Still, until other sources can be found, the matter must remain moot.

More reliable is Emden's reference to a dispute over the rabbinate in Opatów between the brothers, Yehuda and Yišaq, sons of Ševi Hirsh. In a book published in 1755, Emden wrote that thirty years earlier there had been a disagreement over Yehuda's appointment to rabbinate of Opatów. Yehuda, Emden wrote, had received the position as a result of a bribe he had given the town owner. Yišaq, however, refused to recognize Yehuda as the new rabbi. The contest found expression in a dispute between the brothers over who would lead the procession around the synagogue holding the citron and palm branch on Sukkot. Yišaq had served as rabbi of Opatów from 1719 until 1727, or perhaps, 1728. At that time, he stepped down as rabbi but remained in Opatów; the sources refer to him as the previous rabbi. The circumstances surrounding his resignation may have had something to do with the dispute described by Emden. Yehuda, then an elder of the galil, may well have felt that his position was superior to that of his brother. He, therefore, was entitled to the honor of leading the first procession on Sukkot.

THE KLOIZ

Emden went on to say that, as a consequence of the controversy, the Landaus expended huge sums in payments to the town owner and built a synagogue of their own, which was called by the family's name. This was, no doubt, the kloiz of which, by 1728, Yišaq was the rabbi. In that year, the town owner issued an edict limiting the number of people permitted to attend services there. In fact, the kloiz was a room in Yišaq's house converted for purposes of worship and study. There is good reason to suggest that this kloiz was more than a conspicuous symbol of the wealth and self-importance of the Landaus. Like the more famous kloiz in Brody, established at about the same time and with which the Landaus were involved as well, it most probably was a center for the study of mystical texts.

In 1734, Yequito'el Gordon wrote to Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (RaMIiLaL, 1706–46) with a request in the name of the scholars of Poland, particularly the rabbi of Zólkiew, who was previously the rabbi of Opatów, and my lord, teacher, and rabbi knows him well, for he is the brother of the great 'path-breaker,' Rabbi Yehuda of Opatów, also known as R. Yehuda Witshes."
request was that RaMHaL explain a sample passage of the Zohar, with a view, according to one historian, to publishing a full Zohar with Luzzatto's commentary. 55

Whatever the case in this particular matter, it seems quite probable that Yišḥaq and Yehuda Landau, at least, were part of the network of mystic-scholars in Eastern Europe, which also had ties to Luzzatto in Padua. Several of the next generation of Landaus had ties to the Brody kloiz, including Ezekiel, Yosef, and, most notably, Hayyim ben Avraham, who acted as patron as well as participant. Since neither Yehuda nor Yišḥaq left any writings, the matter cannot be pursued further. Yehuda never did become rabbi of Opatów, and the position seems to have remained vacant until 1731, when Aharon Moshe Ya'aqov of Cracow was appointed. Earlier, in 1729, Yišḥaq left to take up the rabbinical position in Zolkiew.

DOMINATION OF THE KAHAL

Even before the great ruckus of 1744, to be described below, there was apparently a number of less dramatic incidents in which opposition was expressed in one way or another to the domination of communal life by the Landaus. The difficulties arose, for the most part, between members of the leadership stratum on the one hand and the Landaus and their allies on the other. Thus, in the early 1720s, Dawid (ben Icik) Zamojski (of Zamość), the town owner's comptroller for the kahal (rachmistrz), complained bitterly on at least two occasions that he could control neither Yišḥaq nor his brother, Yehuda Landau. 56 According to Zamojski, Yehuda had failed to account for his actions in negotiating loans for the kahal and in disbursing its funds. Not only did he not settle accounts with Dawid but disgraced and dishonored him. Moreover, year after year, in defiance of the rule that no one may hold office in the kahal for two years in succession, Yišḥaq Landau had kept his own people in office in the kahal. On one occasion, he obtained authorization to keep five of the nine officers in place for a second year, and “even this was not enough for him, six have remained in office with three new ones.” 57 At about this time, another petition reached the town owner, this one from the kahal but undoubtedly inspired by Yehuda Landau. The petition protested against the rule barring incumbents from continuing to serve in office. The kahal petitioners claimed that there was a need for experienced people, who were familiar with the kahal's creditors and able to negotiate with the galil in matters of taxation. 58 Among the other points, it noted that so many people had libeled and slandered the ziemiaški of late (i.e., Yehuda Landau and other communal elders), using foul language and calumny, that the kahal had decided to petition for permission to fine the people involved.

There was a dispute in 1726 between Yehuda and the kahal. The kahal
denied Yehuda's claim that it was his right as galil elder to attend meetings of the kahal year after year. In 1727, there was another disagreement, this time between Yiḥaqq and the kahal, possibly over the matter mentioned above—that is, his control of the kahal elections. Yiḥaqq contended that he had been libeled in the kahal minute books but did not explain how. There was other, perhaps related, evidence of tension, at the same time. Some arrer­dators had beaten the employees in the shop owned by Yiḥaqq and his brother, Avraham, and had thrown a bolt of about fifteen meters of cloth into the mud. The occasion for the violence was not recorded. Also, a certain Herszl Furernik (furrier) had insulted Yiḥaqq in some way.

In the kahal elections of 1728, an attempt was made to end Yiḥaqq Landau's general control over the kahal elections. It had been his practice to designate five people to remain in office. The Landau party was ignored and even excluded from the proceedings. Aside from his brothers, Avraham and Yehezqel, only one other member of Yiḥaqq's party can be identified with certainty, namely, Dawid Chęciński (Rapoport). He was a merchant and, next to the Landaus, the richest man in the community. He was sometimes referred to as Dawid Bogaty (the wealthy). He had been an elder in 1726 and 1727. The names of the rebels were not recorded. Since the exclusion of the Landau party reduced the number of qualified participants in the elections to a very few, a clever device was used to broaden the electoral rolls. The rule, at that time, was that to participate one had to have paid an average of at least four zloties weekly in sympla and commerce taxes during the previous year. The rebels reduced the year to thirty-seven weeks, thus effectively reducing the qualifying weekly payments by almost 30 percent, to two zloties, twenty-five groszy. This was, then, not a revolt of the masses but a conflict within the upper stratum of the Jewish community.

It would appear that Yiḥaqq, although he resigned his office as rabbi in 1728, had a particular incentive to continue to control the kahal. As rabbi, he paid no taxes. These were paid by the community, but his commercial activities were limited. Once he left office, it seems, he still did not pay his taxes but, at the same time, expanded his commercial operations, even exporting grain to Gdansk and doing business in Zamość. Members of the kahal demanded that he desist from commercial activities if he wished to retain his exemption from taxes.

On April 13, 1728, Sanguszko's official submitted a closely written six-page report that sought to resolve the dispute between Yiḥaqq Landau and the kahal and to establish good order in the community. The recent elections were taken up first, and it was ruled that they be held again and that, this time, they include the unfairly excluded people. Further, the one rosh (rezydent) and four judges (duchowny) nominated by Yiḥaqq to remain in office were to be accepted in accordance with the earlier order of the town owner. The
abuse of reducing the year to less than fifty-two weeks was absolutely forbidden on pain of a fine of 100 red zloties.

While the report also demanded that Yiσhaq pay the taxes he owed within one week, it strictly forbade the kahal to interfere with his business dealings. Moreover, the slanderous statement about him in the kahal minute book was, under no circumstances, to be copied or circulated. As mentioned, the nature of the slander was not recorded in the sources. Also, the report continued, if Hersl Futernik did not retract his insult of Yiσhaq, he was to be made an example of and to be sentenced to three days and three nights in the kuna.63 The matter of the arrendators' attack on the Landaus' shop could not be investigated, because the central witness was away from the town. The following year, whatever penalty had, finally, been decreed against the arrendators was suspended because of their importance to the town owner's income. They continued to hold arenda.64

Yiσhaq, a figure of considerable authority and an active and wealthy merchant, was important to the town owner as a producer of revenues and as one who helped maintain order in the town. It is not, therefore, surprising, that he was protected by the town owner. A few years earlier, Sanguszko had written to the magnate, Zamoyski, owner of Zamość, demanding "instant justice" for Yiσhaq and his partner in connection with certain complaints they had about Zamość Jewish merchants.65

In the matter of Yehuda Landau, elder of the galil and sitting regularly with the elders, however, the report of April 1728 took the side of the kahal. It pointed out that Yehuda's father, (Sevi Hirsh Wittes) had also been a galil elder and that he, according to the records of the kahal, had participated only one year. Yehuda, therefore, had no right to continuous participation. He was to take part only in kahal deliberations of matters directly concerning his own office, on pain of a fine.66

Yehuda's death in the early months of 1738 was followed shortly thereafter by his daughter's demise. She had been married to Israel Berkowicz, rabbi of Stryj.67 On March 24 of that year, Sanguszko, who had received information "secretly, from excellent sources," ordered his gubernator to impound all of the goods and property of Yehuda's son-in-law. Yehuda had transferred substantial wealth to Israel Berkowicz and the town owner had been informed that Berkowicz was planning to move out of Opatów, taking all of his substance with him. Sanguszko demanded instant action in this matter.68 Berkowicz eventually left, presumably after he had arrived at some sort of financial settlement with the kahal and the town owner's officials.

Yehuda was followed in office as elder of the region by his younger brother, Yeσezqel. He must have experienced difficulties from the beginning of his tenure in office, since he received special writs of protection from Sanguszko in 1738, 1741, and 1743.69 The wording in the first two was very general,
but in the third the town owner promised him the help of the *gubernator* in the collection of debts owed to him by Jews in Opatów and asked that he prepare a list of debtors.

**Tensions in the 1740s**

There were tensions on a number of fronts in the community in the 1740s. In the summer of 1740, a certain butcher, Herszl Manaszewicz, defied the elders, refusing to accept their authority. The sources do not specify the nature of his defiance. Whatever he may have said or done, he lost his right of residence, and the kahal stipulated that no family was to arrange a marriage with him. The following spring, young Herszl appeared before the kahal and asked for clemency. It was granted, and his right of residence was restored.\(^7\)

Another sort of controversy is alluded to in the course of some vitriolic remarks written by Jacob Emden about Ezekiel Landau of Jampol and Prague. The latter, according to Emden, had been a supporter of R. Nahman Kossover (died 1746), who, in Emden's view, was an "ignoramus and acknowledged heretic," "a follower of Shabbetai Tzevi."\(^7\) Ezekiel Landau had sent Kossover to Opatów "to contaminate that holy community." When the faithful and proper Jews realized his true nature, they unmasked him. The Landau family, however, "made a great issue over this, igniting the flames of controversy," which led "almost to the spilling of blood."\(^7\)

Now, Kossover was associated with kabbalistic and pre-Beshtian Hasidic circles. Apparently, he had a somewhat uneasy relationship with Israel Baal Shem Tov, himself.\(^7\) Ezekiel Landau may have met Kossover in Ludomir, where they both are known to have lived for a time, or perhaps, in Brody. "The flames of controversy," to which Emden referred, cannot be traced in the archival materials. If, however, the Landau *kloiz* was, in fact, a center for the study and contemplation of mystical texts, there would have been a ready and interested audience for someone like Nahman Kossover. The rabbi of the *kloiz*, in this period, was Yechezkel ben Shvi Hirsh Landau, elder of the *galil* of Cracow-Sandomierz. Thus, it seems unlikely that Nahman's visit was tied to the "missionary" efforts of Beshtian Hasidism.\(^7\)

Meanwhile, Yechezkel's brother, Yišaq, rabbi of Żółkiew and the land of Ruthenia, was seeking the rabbinate in Cracow. His principal rival was the candidate supported by the brothers Shmu'el and Gedaliah Ickowicz, the famous agents of Hieronym Radziwiłł.\(^7\) Their candidate was Yosef Yonah The'omim Frankel, Shmu'el's son-in-law. According to Majer Bałaban's hypothesis, the Landaus had succeeded in ousting the incumbent rabbi, David Shmelke, and were seeking the position for Yišaq.\(^7\) Gedaliah Ickowicz, however, journeyed to Cracow, where he negotiated with the kahal elders and purchased the office for his brother's son-in-law. Ickowicz took care, also, to obtain writs authorizing The'omim Frankel's appointment from both the gov-
error (wojewoda) and the monarch, himself. The Landaus did not give up easily and, using their influence, caused the arrest, twice, of The’omim Frankel’s wife near the end of 1744. No putative grounds for those arrests are mentioned in the sources. Ultimately, Frankel gave up the effort, and by 1748 Yišaḥq Landau was rabbi of Cracow. According to Emden, he paid 40,000 złoties for the position.77 Yišaḥq held the office until his death in 1767.

**The Great Ruckus of 1744**

On December 23, 1744, Sanguszko issued to Yehezqel Landau the fourth, and the most strongly worded, of a series of letters of protection begun in 1738. He threatened that if anyone harmed Yehezqel or his sons, he would face the confiscation of his property and the loss of his life.78 This was in response to Yehezqel’s petition after what he described as a “rebellion” (bunt) against him the previous week.

Even before the tension exploded into violence in December, the previous months had seen escalating controversy and resentment. The issues focused on the control of the offices of the kahal by Yehezqel Landau, who, year after year, ensured that he, his sons, and their allies would hold office and control the distribution of the tax burden, particularly the commerce tax. In the latter matter, it was claimed that Wolf, son of Yehezqel and rabbi of Krzeszów, who held the contract for the collection of that tax, exempted his friends, family, and allies, thus unfairly burdening everyone else. There were loud arguments and sometimes violent disputes during the fall, but on December 18, just before the Sabbath began at sunset, there was a full-scale riot on the Jewish street.79

No less than seven descriptions or partial descriptions of the riot by eyewitnesses have been preserved.80 Six of these descriptions supplemented and corroborated each other, for the most part; the seventh was quite different. What follows is a reconstruction of the events based on the group of six testimonies. The witnesses included the gubernator, Józef Pozoski, and five Jews: Alexander Boruchowicz (krawiec), Abuš Solarz, Lewek Szmaier, and the two main victims in this version, Szymon Lewkowicz Czapnik and Abuš Herckowicz Faktor. All of the five Jews were artisans or commercial agents who, although distinctly less prosperous than the wealthy merchants who controlled the kahal, were gainfully employed, taxpaying members of the community.81

Sometime in early December 1744, a certain tailor, Józef Lewkowicz, was sentenced by a Jewish court to pay a fine and to be locked in the kuna for an unspecified offense. On December 11, Józef’s brother-in-law, Szymon Czapnik, apparently angry at this treatment, approached the leaders of the community and, in the course of an angry discussion, “thumbed his nose at the rabbi.”82 A small disturbance began, and the šamash, David, was sent to call
the gubernator. Asked to explain, Szymon claimed that the elders had forbidden him to appeal his brother-in-law's case. The gubernator expressed some dismay that such a sentence had been pronounced without his knowledge. The elders interrupted Szymon and announced that he would be fined for insulting the rabbi. Szymon replied to the gubernator that he had not done the least thing to give the elders an occasion to fine him.

Meanwhile, the elders had prepared a written version of the sentence and fine they intended to impose on Szymon, and they asked the gubernator to sign it. He refused, saying that he did not know all the facts and that he could not read what was written. "I am not literate in Jewish; I cannot sign while Szymon admits to no guilt and has appealed" the case (nie umiem po Żydowsku). The gubernator told the elders they must obtain authorization in writing from the town owner and that, meanwhile, they were to do no violence to Szymon.

On the following Friday, Yehezqel Landau returned to Opatów with the necessary authorization from the town owner. The elders, the rabbi, and Landau met in the kahal office to formulate the judgment or, perhaps, the ban of excommunication against Szymon.\textsuperscript{83} As this was happening, Jews were gathering in the two nearby synagogues for the services marking the eve of the Sabbath. Meanwhile, Szymon Czapnik learned what was taking place and, together with his brother, Szymon Cyrluk, plus Lewek Szaier and Abuś Faktor, went to alert the gubernator and begged him to stop the proceedings so they could appeal the judgment. He agreed to accompany them to the courtyard of the synagogues where the kahal office was.

When they arrived, the elders, the rabbi, and Yehezqel Landau, with a document in his hand, were coming down from the kahal office and beginning to make their way across the courtyard to the brick synagogue. Abuś approached Landau to ask for a delay so they could appeal. Landau replied to Abuś that the matter didn't concern him. Abuś then said he would put up 1,000 red zloties as a bond. He called out in Polish to the gubernator, "I protest." Pozoski then intervened and said to Landau and the rabbi, "Leave them in peace until they come back from the town owner." The response from Yehezqel Landau was (roughly), "Don't look for gifts from us, it will get you nowhere."\textsuperscript{84} His sons, Wulf and Yosef, called out, "if these rogues put up one thousand, we'll put up two [thousand] and prove we're right." At about the same time, Landau punched Abuś in the mouth, according to one source, three times. A brawl began, with Wulf Landau, Szaja Futernik, and others calling out to their attendants, "beat the hooligans and we'll pay you."\textsuperscript{85} Szaja Futernik and some others grabbed Szymon Czapnik, and the guards and the elders' attendants brought clubs and saps into play, beating him "and anyone else they chose." The gubernator could not stop the tumult.\textsuperscript{86} Melech, the court beadle, punched Abuś Faktor repeatedly in the mouth in the course of the mêlée. In addition to Szymon and Abuś, Herszl Manaszewicz, Nosson, son
of the salt dealer, and Marek Chaimowicz were attacked. The attackers included Melech, the Landau's attendants and servants, and those of Nosson Wigdorowicz, Szaja Futernik, and Wolf Szmuklerz.

On the following Tuesday, the entire municipal court conducted an official viewing of the wounds of the victims. They visited Szymon Czapnik's house, where they found him in bed, ill and injured. His head was swollen, and there was a cut below his left eye and other wounds on his face. His clothing was bloody. They also saw Abuś Faktor, who had been beaten about the left eye and had scratches on his face and swollen lips. The victims accused the galil elder, Yehezqel, and his two sons, of having caused the riot. In addition, they charged seven others, all elders and beadles of the kahal.

Needless to say, the seventh version, presented by Yehezqel Landau, was quite different from those of the other witnesses. In Landau's account, Szymon Czapnik, Abuś Faktor, and their fellow conspirators arrived at the kahal offices on that Friday afternoon in a fury. When Landau and the elders left the kahal office for the synagogue, Szymon, Abuś, and their supporters began shouting insults. A great crowd of several hundred Jews had gathered, and a tumult began, which spread into the Jewish street. Landau spoke worthily to Abuś Faktor, appealing to him to desist, but Abuś yelled all the louder, inciting others to join the ruckus. Landau was standing in the midst of the crowd, holding the decree signed by the town owner. Abuś, however, who had no respect for the galil elder's office, punched Landau in the mouth. Jumping to the head of the mob, Szymon Czapnik punched Landau in the neck. Then the two rebels fell upon Yehezqel, tearing at him. Other Jews joined in, shouting insults and curses at Landau, his sons, and his daughter-in-law. The mob tried to enter the women's gallery of the synagogue to beat the galil elder's wife. That night, Landau was ambushed or kidnapped briefly, and his life was threatened. The beating and the attack made him ill, and he took to his bed.

Both sides were summoned to appear before Sanguszko on January 22, 1745. He brought down his judgment on the first of February. Abuś and Szymon, together with their "helper" Herszl Manaszewicz, should, he said, by all rights, be expelled from the town, but the lord was clement. He sentenced Abuś and Szymon to be placed in the pillory in the marketplace in Kolbuszowa on the fourth of the month: for Abuś, 100 lashes; for Szymon, in view of his injuries, 50 lashes. Herszl Manaszewicz was to be locked in the kuna during three successive Sabbaths, morning and evening, at the times of prayer. Abuś was to spend two Sabbaths in the kuna, Szymon, one. Moreover, Szymon was to pay to the lord's treasury the fine originally imposed by the kahal (400 korcz owsa). In the future, Sanguszko added, all Jews were to respect each and every one of their officials in accordance with the dignity of their offices. They were not to foment any disturbance, rebellion, sedition, or
tumult on the Jewish street or anywhere else. The punishment would be a fine, lashes, and expulsion from the town. In September 1745, Yehezqel Landau appeared before the town owner to obtain his approval of a number of decisions taken earlier by the kahal. Among these was the removal of the right of residence of Abūs Faktor, who, despite, or perhaps because of, the severe punishment meted out to him, continued to defame and insult the elder of the galil. Moreover, the original decree of expulsion against Herszl Manaszewicz, enacted in 1740 and commuted in 1741, was once again put into force.90

**PEOPLE OR POSPÓLSTWO?**

Earlier, some two weeks after passing sentence on the rebels, Sanguszko had issued a rather long list of twenty-three points, or instructions, to the kahal. These dealt for the most part with disputes that had arisen during the previous few years. In the preamble, he noted that the great malevolence of the people (malevoli populi) against the kahal elders and the elder of the region had led to various tumults and that these might lead the whole town to ruin. Now that the particular tumult had been dealt with, it remained to identify the internal causes, treat the problems, and calm both sides. In this way, order would be brought to the city.91 The points dealt almost exclusively with conflicts between the Landaus and the pospólstwo, rather than with the artisans and poorer Jews. The pospólstwo consisted of the enfranchised members of the community, that is, those who paid a weekly sympla of two zloties or more but held no office. Thus, the points dealt with complaints presented by four elected representatives of the pospólstwo, all of whom were wealthy merchants and some of whom had been, or would be, elders of the community.

Concerning the complaint that year after year the galil elder’s family and allies held the important offices in the kahal, Sanguszko, making reference to the ordinance of 1728 forbidding Yehuda to interfere in kahal elections, ruled that if one son served as elder of the community, the other had to wait three years before holding office. He then extended this to a general principle, that is, son was not to succeed father nor brother in kahal offices without an intervening period of three years.92 Kahal elections were to be orderly and without any outside interference. Under no circumstances were the electors to leave the kahal office until their task was completed. In addition, Sanguszko authorized a procedure in which the delegates to the Council of the Lands were to be elected by the kahal and the pospólstwo, sitting together.93

The points also addressed the matter of distribution of the tax burden and, particularly, the charges against Binyamin Wulf Landau that he was favoring certain of his allies in his management of the tax on commerce. Sanguszko ordered that the collection of the commerce tax be removed from its lessees
(Wulf Landau and his partners) and placed in the control of two kahal trustees for a period of at least one year. If Wulf and his partners were to regain this lease, they must undertake first, as the pospółstwo insisted, to collect the tax fairly from everyone, especially the powerful. Though it is not certain precisely when, the farming of the commerce tax was in fact restored to Wulf and his partners.94

EPILOGUE

It is simply not possible on the basis of the existing sources to establish whether there were any connections between the "great ruckus of 1744" and either the Kossover disturbance or the contest for the Cracow rabbinate. Clearly, though, while the riot pitted artisans and poorer members of the community against the Landaus, their allies, and their servants, the existing tensions between the leadership groups—the pospółstwo, on the one hand and the Landaus and their allies on the other—created the conditions in which such an explosion became possible. Whatever else may have happened on that Friday afternoon, Yehezqel Landau's authority had been challenged. There was, as he himself put it, "disrespect for the dignity of [his] office." Because of his access to the center of power—that is, to the town owner—he was able to prevail, successfully overcoming a rival group within the elite.

After their father's death, Yosef and his brother Binyamin Wulf acted as elders of the galil continuously until the regional councils ceased to function in 1764. Binyamin Wulf died in about 1770, Yosef in about 1788.95 By then, however, the town was clearly in decline, and the Landau family had begun to dissociate itself from Opatów and to move elsewhere. The coincidence of the gradual movement of the Landaus to other places and the town's slide into obscurity is illustrated by several incidents, beginning in the 1770s.

The first of these has been mentioned earlier, namely Ezekiel Landau of Prague's advice to a young rabbi not to bother with the rabbinate in Opatów: "I do not recommend returning to Poland for such a middling town."96 In March 1777, Isaac Lubelski, a prominent and wealthy merchant, protested to Lubomirski that he was being systematically excluded from participation in the kahal. He named three individuals who controlled the kahal and who, by implication, were responsible for his exclusion. The three were Berek Golda, Lewek Futernik, and Moyiesz Chęciński.97 What is notable, here, is that none was a Landau.

Another incident was recorded in the kahal minute book in 1789. Eli'ezer Segal Landau, son of Yosef and rabbi of Turobin, appeared before a meeting of the expanded kahal, which included the rabbi and the higher taxpayers, as well as the officers.98 The entry records a compromise between Eli'ezer and the kahal. It seems the kahal had demanded that Eli'ezer pay the expenses for
the funeral of his late father. In response, Eli'ezer demanded the return to him of a number of items his father had provided for the synagogue. These included two Torah scrolls, two curtains for the Torah ark—one with gold thread, the other with silver—two mantels for the Torah scrolls, and one short white curtain for the Torah ark (kapporet). These had been in the synagogue for many years, but, contrary to the kahal's claim, Eli'ezer claimed they had been lent and not donated. The obvious compromise was reached: the kahal dropped its demand that Eli'ezer pay for his father's funeral, and Eli'ezer agreed that the items provided to the synagogue by his father would belong absolutely to the community. The agreement was duly signed by Eli'ezer and by the rabbi of the community, his distant cousin, Ya'akov Sim-\textit{\textḥah} ben Yosef Landau.

There is a Hasidic tradition that may or may not reflect actual events but that, nevertheless, reveals something further about the forces at work in Jewish society at the end of the eighteenth century and, perhaps, about what was happening to families like the Landaus. A promising young student, Yisra'el ben Shabbetai of Opatów, whose father was a poor bookbinder, was taken to Chęciny to display his erudition before the Avigdor, the rabbi of Chęciny. The rabbi embarrassed the young man regarding his undistinguished lineage. "If his father is a bookbinder (korekh sefarim), he must be related to me. We are both Levites, and the kor\textit{ḥi} family are Levites." Kor\textit{ḥim} was a popular name for the Landaus; Avigdor was married to Rekhl, daughter of Ševi Hirsh Landau. In the story, of course, after the rabbi made sport of the young man, the tables were turned and the rabbi was shamed by the young man's erudition. Yisra'el ben Shabbetai grew up to become a prominent Hasidic leader, known as the maggid of Kozienice.\textsuperscript{99} It may be that one of the unnoticed dimensions of Hasidism was precisely its modification of the significance of lineage in determining social status.

For a hundred years, the Landau wielded considerable authority in Opatów and, most of the time, were accorded the deference due them according to the contemporary norms of Jewish society. When one comes to evaluate their actual power in the town, however, one is led away from the Landaus to a source outside of the community. The true locus of power in the sense in which Max Weber employed it—the ability to realize one's will against the resistance of others—was centered in the town owner and his administration.\textsuperscript{100} In comparison with the power of the magnate-aristocrats, that of the Landaus, and the Jewish elite was limited, indeed.