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# The *Shtadlan* of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth: Noble Advocate or Unbridled Opportunist?

SCOTT URY

The old epoch is characterized by the Jewish *shtadlan*, the notable who by virtue of his wealth or of his private influence among the non-Jews, presumed to speak for the Jewish community, and without consulting its wishes, negotiated privately among the powers that were for what he alone considered its spiritual and political needs. . . . The *shtadlan* was born of the utter helplessness of the Jewish masses. They were abandoned to the random, irresponsible private whim of anyone who had money and influence and cared to use them for what he thought was their good. . . . The *shtadlan* can grow and flourish only in an epoch of darkness, like an obscure cellar weed. In the light of day he withers and disappears.

SHMARYA LEVIN  
*The Arena*, 1932

The '*shtadlan*' . . . a true aristocrat in the best sense—a man of breeding, a man of learning, a man of wealth . . . a man distinguished by warm Jewish feelings, with a great deal of love for people in general and, in particular, of pity for his own brethren, a man far removed from self-interest, from the desire for honour and fame, who cares only for the good of the community and of the individual . . .

*Der Yud* (Agudat Yisroel newspaper)  
14 October 1919

FEW historical figures have attracted such varied and colourful responses as the Jewish intercessor (*shtadlan*) of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, long the target of opponents' bile and consistently defended by die-hard advocates. While nationalistic and maskilic literature has presented the *shtadlan* as the epitome of Jewish political impotence and the cause, both direct and indirect, of the Jewish

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community's failure to represent and defend itself, other observers, mostly traditional Jews, have portrayed the *shtadlan* as the Jewish community's time-honoured, selfless leader.

As a result of this transformation of the *shtadlan* from a Jewish communal functionary to a symbol of Jewish political behaviour (or its absence) throughout the early modern period, the *shtadlan* and his activities (*shtadlanut*) have been addressed in a number of works.<sup>1</sup> In addition to earlier studies by Stern and Mevorach, more recent analyses, such as Lederhendler's monograph and Elazar and Cohen's co-authored study, address the *shtadlan*'s role within the Jewish community and his relations to non-Jewish sovereigns.<sup>2</sup> However, despite these efforts to work through the historical record, most of these works refer to the *shtadlan* only in passing. Thus, Elazar and Cohen's attempt to categorize thousands of years of history leaves the reader with a rather terse, textbook-like definition of the *shtadlan*.<sup>3</sup> Even Lederhendler, who provides a detailed analysis, presents the *shtadlan* as a historical foil to the new genre of political action. Here, as well, the *shtadlan* is examined as a means to an end and not as a topic worthy of independent study, analysis, and comparison.<sup>4</sup> While these discussions may serve the authors' main purposes, they often leave the student of early modern Jewry unsatisfied, wondering, searching. Underlying this confusion is a more fundamental problem: a detailed study of the *shtadlan* has yet to be written.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Questions regarding the exact origins of the *shtadlan* are, regrettably, beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a variety of opinions exist regarding whether or not later forms of political action among Jews ought to be viewed as direct continuations of the traditional genre of political intercession associated with the figure of Mordecai in the book of Esther. For further discussion of these issues, see Y. Kaplan, 'Court Jews before the Hofjuden', in V. B. Mann and R. I. Cohen (eds.), *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage and Power, 1600-1800* (Munich, 1996); and A. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn* (London, 1973), 421. For a survey of the present-day political ramifications of the historiographical literature on Jewish politics, see D. Biale, 'Modern Jewish Ideologies and the Historiography of Jewish Politics', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 10 (1994), 3-16.

<sup>2</sup> S. Stern, *The Court Jew* (Philadelphia, 1950), ch. 7; B. Mevorach, 'Ma'aseh hishtadlut be'eiropah leminiat gerusham shel yehudei bohemiya vemoravayah 1744-1745', *Tsiyon*, 28 (1963), 125-65; E. Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics* (New York, 1989); and D. J. Elazar and S. A. Cohen, *Jewish Political Organization* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985). Other works that address the image and role of the *shtadlan* include G. Bacon, 'The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Israel in Polish Politics, 1916-1939', *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 2 (1986), 144-63; D. Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York, 1986), chs. 3-4; and I. Bartal, 'Le'umi shehkdum ushetadlan shenetaher?', in I. Bartal (ed.), *Mosheh bedoro* (Jerusalem, 1987), 5-25.

<sup>3</sup> See Elazar and Cohen, *Jewish Political Organization*, 186. See also Biale, *Power and Powerlessness*, 71-2.

<sup>4</sup> Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, 14-35.

<sup>5</sup> A particularly constructive attempt to define the *shtadlan* can be found in I. Bartal and D. Assaf, 'Shtadlanut ve'orthodoksia: tsadikim polin bemifgash im hazemanim hehadashim', in I. Bartal, R. Eilior, and C. Shmeruk (eds.), *Tsadikim ve'anshei ma'aseh: mekharim behasidut polin* (Jerusalem, 1994). The authors' references to two terse descriptions of the *shtadlan* underscore this historiographical lacuna. See also a recent article by Bartal, 'Politikah yehudit terom-modernit: "Va'adei ha'aratsot" bemizrah eiropah', in S. N. Eisenstadt and M. Lissak (eds.), *Hatsiyonut vehahazarah lehistoriyah: ha'arakkhah mehadash* (Jerusalem, 1999), 186-94.

Given the amount of ink that has been spilled in both promoting and attacking the *shtadlan*, this historiographical void is somewhat surprising. The gap is even more alarming given the wealth of primary sources that have been collected and published. Among these are not only Halperin's collection of records from the Va'ad Arba Aratsot (Council of Four Lands) and Dubnow's earlier publication of materials from the Va'ad Medinat Lita (Lithuanian Council), but also Avron and Weinryb's separate publications of the Poznań community's records.<sup>6</sup>

In this chapter I will use the sources reprinted in these volumes to address several fundamental questions regarding the *shtadlan*, his activities, and his role as a communal functionary. Specifically, I will seek to answer such questions as: Who exactly was the *shtadlan* and what were his primary responsibilities? How did Jewish contemporaries view the community's official representative? What were some of the different strategies and tools that the *shtadlan* employed? To whom did he prefer to direct his pleas? And finally, what was the nature of the relationship between him and the Jewish community? Ideally, the answers to these questions will not only present a more well-rounded picture of the *shtadlan*, but also shed more light upon the relationship between Jewish communities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the various powers that ruled the Commonwealth. Later, conclusions drawn from this analysis of the Jewish community will be compared with the experiences of other communities, Jewish and non-Jewish, within the Commonwealth and elsewhere. This analysis will be used to determine whether the *shtadlan* was a phenomenon particular to a specific space, time, and culture, or rather was representative of a more general pattern of political organization and behaviour practised in different Jewish communities throughout the ages.

Before I embark on this endeavour, it is important to say a few words about the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its political framework, and the position of the organized Jewish community within this constellation. Traditionally, the historiographical literature has portrayed the period between the mid-seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries as one of a steady decline of the Commonwealth's financial, political, and military institutions.<sup>7</sup> The combination of foreign invasions in 1648 and 1655 and increasing political decentralization left the once powerful kingdom with dramatically fewer economic and political resources. While more recent research has challenged this view of a slow, steady decline, most scholars still point to the transfer of power from the monarch to the magnates, the destruction, famine, and epidemics that followed the Cossack and Swedish invasions, and the constant

<sup>6</sup> I. Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot* (Jerusalem, 1945); S. Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita* (Berlin, 1925); D. Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna* (Jerusalem, 1967); and B. Weinryb (ed.), *Texts and Studies in the Communal History of Polish Jewry, Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 5 (1950).

<sup>7</sup> Davies somewhat ironically entitles a chapter on this era 'Anarchia: The Noble Democracy' (N. Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1981), vol. i. See also M. J. Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 2-5.

interference of foreign powers as the primary forces responsible for the Commonwealth's slow and painful death.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, while the exact causes of the political decentralization and stagnation may still be debated, few scholars disagree with the contention that there was a general transfer of power from the centre to the provinces from the mid-sixteenth century to the late eighteenth century. Thus, in comparison to those of their Western counterparts, the rights and responsibilities of Polish sovereigns were severely limited. As early as 1539 the ultimate sovereignty over Jews and other residents of private towns lay in the hands of the local lords and not with the king.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, throughout the period in question both fiscal and military affairs were slowly removed from the throne's domain and transferred to the control of the magnates.<sup>10</sup>

Most importantly, the king's power was formally restricted by the national Sejm. The election of each new king was subject to the approval of the Sejm, as were all new legislative acts and official appointments.<sup>11</sup> As a result of these powers, the annual convention of elite magnates in effect exercised veto power over all of the king's decisions and initiatives. Moreover, the decision-making process within the Sejm itself was further handicapped by the principle of *liberum veto*, which gave each individual member the right to stall the process of debate and block the approval of potential laws.<sup>12</sup> This debilitating combination of structural deficiencies and estate interests led Sejm representatives to oppose the implementation of political or fiscal reforms that might have somehow restricted their rights, threatened their position, or endangered their financial situation.<sup>13</sup> All of this is not to say that the king was without influence or power. He convened the Sejm, appointed ministers and other officials, and wielded immense power through patronage.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Józef Gierowski and Andrzej Kamiński's ominously entitled chapter 'The Eclipse of Poland' in J. S. Bromley (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History*, 14 vols. (Cambridge, 1956–79), vol. vi. See also G. D. Hundert, 'Some Basic Characteristics of the Jewish Experience in Poland', *Polin*, 1 (1986), 31–2; and J. Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly: The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century, 1697–1795* (New York, 1991), 86, 95.

<sup>9</sup> A. Teller, 'The Legal Status of the Jews on the Magnate Estates of Poland–Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century', *Gal-ed*, 15–16 (1997), 41; and Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 39.

<sup>10</sup> Lukowski presents a particularly critical opinion of the *szlachta*'s role in Poland's self-destruction. See *Liberty's Folly*, 7, 23, 114, as well as 9–37. See also P. Skwarczyński, 'The Constitution of Poland before the Partitions', in W. F. Reddaway, J. H. Penson, O. Halecki, and R. Dyboski (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Poland: From August II to Piłsudski (1697–1935)* (Cambridge, 1941), 57, 61.

<sup>11</sup> Skwarczyński, 'The Constitution of Poland', 53–4, 61; Davies, *God's Playground*, i, 335, 338–9, 375–6; Gierowski and Kamiński, 'The Eclipse of Poland', 706; Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly*, 89, 94; and Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 2–5.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the *liberum veto*, see Davies, *God's Playground*, i, 345–8.

<sup>13</sup> See Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 6; Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly*, 9–37; and Gierowski and Kamiński, 'The Eclipse of Poland', 684, 691, 704.

<sup>14</sup> Note Davies's comment that 'in relation to the Sejm, he could not be said in any sense to be powerless' (Davies, *God's Playground*, i, 336; also see 335, 376). Even Lukowski notes that 'Restrictions notwithstanding, the king remained the greatest single source of patronage in the Commonwealth' (Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly*, 87–8). For additional comments on the monarch's powers, see Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 69.

However, as opposed to other European monarchs, the Polish sovereign could not be considered a representative of the absolutist model.

The Jewish community's place within this political framework lies at the core of this study. Recently Rosman, Hundert, and other scholars have done much to explicate the nature of relations between Jews and non-Jews on the local level.<sup>15</sup> This study will complement these works by concentrating on relations between representatives of Jewish communal organizations and the Polish authorities.

Most records date the founding of the Va'ad Arba Aratsot and the Va'ad Medinat Lita to the mid-sixteenth century. Both played crucial roles as umbrella organizations, intercommunal councils, official representatives of the Jewish community, and, perhaps most importantly in the eyes of the ruling powers, tax collectors for the Commonwealth's Jewish subjects.<sup>16</sup> Goldberg in particular has noted the similarity between the organizational structure of these Jewish communal institutions and the Polish political system.<sup>17</sup> These parallels raise the fundamental question: if the institutional structure of the Jewish community was modelled, consciously or sub-consciously, on that of the Polish political system, then was this also true of the actual functions, activities, and practices of Jewish community leaders?

#### FUNCTIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHTADLAN

You, magnanimous, high-minded man, you has the God of our fathers furnished with the noble desire of helping. You has He placed in a position, to you has He given influence and power . . . The fate of two million of our brethren will impart energy to your efforts, and the wonder-working God will soften the heart of the northern ruler before another Moses.

Open letter to Sir Moses Montefiore before his mission to Russia,  
*Voice of Jacob*, 10 April 1846

One of the fundamental premises of this chapter is that the *shtadlan* was an official functionary of the Jewish community. This is an important characteristic that helps differentiate the *shtadlan* from another, similar figure: the court Jew.<sup>18</sup> Indeed,

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, and G. D. Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town: The Case of Opatów in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> See J. Goldberg, 'Va'ad arba aratsot bemishtar hamedini vехаhevrati shel memlekhet polin–lita', in his *Hahevrah hayehudit bememlekhet polin–lita* (Jerusalem, 1999); G. D. Hundert, 'Security and Dependence: Perspectives on Seventeenth-Century Polish–Jewish Society Gained through a Study of Jewish Merchants in Little Poland', Columbia University Ph.D. thesis, 1978, 30–52; and Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 378.

<sup>17</sup> Goldberg, 'Va'ad arba aratsot', 136–7.

<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of the court Jew phenomenon, see F. L. Carsten, 'The Court Jews: A Prelude to Emancipation', *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, 3 (1958), 140–56; and L. M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King* (Minneapolis, 1990). Different views on whether or not court Jews existed in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth can be found in G. D. Hundert, 'Was there an East European Analogue to Court Jews?', in A. K. Paluch (ed.), *The Jews in Poland*, i (Kraków, 1992), 67–75; Hundert, 'Security and Dependence', 62, 63, 88; Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 145, 183, 184; and D. Stone, 'Knowledge of Foreign Languages among Eighteenth-Century Polish Jews', *Polin*, 10 (1997), 203–4.

whether paid or commissioned, the *shtadlan* received his mandate either from the *kahal* or from the *va'ad*. In addition to this distinguishing characteristic, a review of the different intercommunal records reveals that there were two types of *shtadlan*: the long-term, salaried *shtadlan* and the ad hoc *shtadlan* who was commissioned to perform specific tasks.

Both the intercommunal records compiled by Dubnow and Halperin and the Poznań community records include numerous accounts of long-term *shtadlanim*. Ostensibly these men were hired for extended periods of time to manage a wide range of the Jewish community's contacts with government representatives.<sup>19</sup> The terms of their employment were clearly delineated in contracts that detailed not only the *shtadlan's* main responsibilities, but also his salary, the manner in which he would be reimbursed for expenses, and the exact details of other indirect financial benefits such as housing assistance and exemptions from specific dues.

Dubnow and Halperin both reprint contracts between an intercommunal *va'ad* and a long-term professional *shtadlan*. The following excerpt from a 1781 contract between the Va'ad Medinat Lita and Hayim ben Yosef clearly details the *shtadlan's* mandate:

Thus we have unanimously agreed to choose the outstanding Torah scholar our rabbi and teacher Hayim the son of our Rabbi and teacher Yosef the *shtadlan* to serve as God's Messenger. He will defend and advocate the truth in all our lands, including Lithuania, may God protect it; his eyes will be wide open to all the needs of the Va'ad, and he will serve as its defence counsel in the presence of his majesty the king, government ministers, and nobles . . . at the beginning of each tribunal the above-mentioned Hayim will be required to reside in the blessed community of Vilna for six continuous weeks; during that time he will not be allowed to travel to any other location for any reason whatsoever.<sup>20</sup>

A similar contract between the Va'ad Arba Aratsot and Nisan ben Yehudah was written in 1730. Here, as well, the intercommunal *shtadlan* was instructed to be present at and observe high-level government commissions for extended periods of time, and was also expected to be ready to act at any moment upon the Va'ad's request.<sup>21</sup> At the local level the contracts between the Poznań *kahal* and various *shtadlanim* use similar language to describe responsibilities and values.<sup>22</sup> These documents are so similar that one wonders whether or not model writs (*agronim*) were kept on hand for such occasions. Regardless of their origin, the similarity between these agreements reflects the degree to which both the position and people's expectations had become standardized throughout the Commonwealth.

<sup>19</sup> Despite the role which Jewish women play in different accounts of *shtadlanut*, no records from the above-cited collections substantiate any cases in which Jewish women served as political interlocutors. On the image and role of Jewish women in the political sphere, see C. Shmeruk, *The Esterke Story in Yiddish and Polish Literature* (Jerusalem, 1987).

<sup>20</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, app. 6, pp. 301–2.

<sup>21</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 621, pp. 311–12.

<sup>22</sup> Weinryb, 'Texts and Studies', doc. 376A and 376B, pp. 166–7.

This demand for a skilled, permanent *shtadlan* necessitated the creation of a permanent position. In order to help secure such a functionary, institutions granted *shtadlanim* regular salaries, housing subsidies, and reduced tax rates. In fact, many of the records stipulate not only the extent to which the *shtadlan* should be reimbursed for work-related expenses but also the manner in which these costs should be repaid. The following citation from the agreement between the Va'ad Medinat Lita and Hayim ben Yosef is particularly revelatory:

And with great joy from this day forth for a period of three years we have accepted his candidacy under the following conditions: his salary will consist of one half the sum total of the poll tax according to the present level . . . and the blessed community of Vilna is required to supply this salary via weekly payments of two ivory pieces(?) . . . during this three-year period of service in Vilna the above-mentioned Hayim will be exempt from regular communal payments to the holy community of Vilna, including those taxes levied on kosher meat and ritual slaughter. The elders of Vilna are also required to provide the above-mentioned Hayim with a place of residence.<sup>23</sup>

While the Va'ad Arba Aratsot's contract with Nisan ben Yehudah does not specify tax exemptions or housing arrangements in the way Hayim ben Yosef's contract does, it clearly delineates the procedures through which the *shtadlan's* salary and travel expenses ought to be disbursed.<sup>24</sup> Even at the local level the Poznań community records detail the various ways in which the *shtadlan* should be compensated for his efforts. For example, a 1678 document notes the need to assist the *shtadlan* so that he can live in a more 'appropriate area'.<sup>25</sup>

The inclusion of such seemingly minute details concerning exactly who will pay the *shtadlan* for what reflects a high degree of familiarity with such offices. Indeed, not only are such formalities never given a written justification—they are merely listed on the assumption that all involved will understand their relevance, precedence, and implementation—but the excessive detail leads to the conclusion that previous, less exact writs were open to interpretation. Furthermore, the very fact that agreements from different institutions in different areas list similar, if not virtually identical, terms underscores the degree to which the position of the *shtadlan* had become an accepted and permanent part of the Jewish community's institutional framework at both the local and the intercommunal level.

Regular salaries, tax exemptions, and housing assistance were intended to provide the *shtadlan* with a handsome, steady income that would, theoretically, allow

<sup>23</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, app. 6, pp. 301–2.

<sup>24</sup> 'According to the law, we have budgeted a handsome, yearly salary that will be disbursed in weekly increments of 8 Polish zloty . . . In addition to this salary, the *shtadlan* will be paid for travelling to ministerial committees, such travel fees will be additional to his regular salary and will be paid by the honourable Va'ad elders' (Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 621, pp. 311–12).

<sup>25</sup> Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 1254, p. 211. 'The Va'ad is required to provide the *shtadlan* with housing assistance so that he can live in a suitable area as the present residence is not appropriate for a *shtadlan* . . .'. See also doc. 1692, p. 299.

him to commit the bulk of his time and energies to the community's needs and limit the risk that he be swayed by bribes.<sup>26</sup> This ever-present threat of corruption—which will be discussed at greater length below—contributed to the need for long-term, salaried *shtadlanim*.<sup>27</sup> In the end the combination of this need and the community's willingness to compensate such individuals led to the creation of the lucrative and valued position of *shtadlan*.

Often, communal institutions were in such dire need of *shtadlanut* that they were forced to turn to community members with a request that they either assist the official *shtadlan* or actually intercede in his stead. In many cases, the community had to threaten individuals with economic or social sanctions in order to coerce them into agreeing to such requests. Through this combination of social pressure and threats ordinary community members became deputized ad hoc *shtadlanim*.

The intercommunal institutions usually reserved such ad hoc actions either for intricate acts of intercession or for missions requiring that the *shtadlan* travel great distances. For instance, the Va'ad Medinat Lita of 1673 called for extra representatives to be sent to the Warsaw Sejm.<sup>28</sup> Less than twenty years later the Va'ad echoed this request and called for group representation in Warsaw.<sup>29</sup> A first-hand account of how a community member was deputized for a specific act of intercession can be found in Elyakim Zelig of Jampol's letters regarding his 1757 mission to Rome: 'And all eyes turned towards me as the responsibility to help the people of Israel in this time of trouble fell on my shoulders. . . . Thus, I found myself enlisted in the cause and I vowed in that moment of duress to come here, to the city of Rome.'<sup>30</sup> These examples illustrate how the intercommunal organizations used ad hoc *shtadlanim* either to bolster the community's representation to important events (such as the Sejm) or to undertake long-term, distant tasks that would take the official *shtadlan* away from his regular responsibilities.

Despite the regular appearance of such entries at the intercommunal level, the practice of deputizing ad hoc *shtadlanim* appears much more frequently at the local level. The Poznań community records include a number of documents that call upon community members (mostly *kahal* elders) to serve as *shtadlanim*. The majority of these missions appear to be the by-product of the local *kahal*'s financial limitations, the strain upon the official *shtadlan*,<sup>31</sup> and the sense that a hired intercessor who was not a community member might be less loyal than an actual community member.

<sup>26</sup> See the contract between the Va'ad Medinat Lita and Hayim ben Yosef quoted above: Dubnow, (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, app. 6, p. 301. See also Weinryb, 'Texts and Studies', doc. 376B, p. 167; and Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 445, p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 1014, p. 271. 'The Va'ad is responsible for providing the *shtadlan* with a regular and satisfactory income so that he won't begin to wander . . .'

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., doc. 688, p. 167.

<sup>29</sup> 'In any case, the representation to the Warsaw Sejm must include two men who are able to stand before both the king and the ministers' (ibid., doc. 855, p. 227).

<sup>30</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 771, p. 427.

<sup>31</sup> Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 2037, p. 375.

The following excerpt from the Poznań record book from 1715 details the community's decision to enlist community leaders as ad hoc *shtadlanim*:

The Council should send communal leaders on official matters both independently, and, on occasion, with the *shtadlan*, as two representatives are always better than one. . . . From this day forward, every communal leader who is ordered by the elders, may God protect them, to perform an act of intercession must immediately undertake this task without any exception whatsoever. Even those who are not communal leaders are required to respond promptly to the elders' command and serve as emissaries of the elders, may God protect them. . . . And all those who disobey this command as well as all other commands mandated by the communal elders will be severely punished by the council and banished so as to serve as an example to all.<sup>32</sup>

Again, one of the main differences between the Poznań community's use of ad hoc *shtadlanim* and the implementation of ad hoc *shtadlanut* at the intercommunal level was the scope of such activity. While records from the intercommunal institutions usually refer to specific actions and ad hoc emissaries, the Poznań records include a general, almost wholesale, use of such ad hoc *shtadlanim*. Thus, writs in the Poznań record book announce the *kahal*'s general right to deputize any community leader and declare strict punishments for those who shirk their newly imposed responsibilities.<sup>33</sup> Clearly the exaggerated nature of these threats reflects the problems inherent in depending on non-professional *shtadlanim*. However, despite these pitfalls, financial constraints apparently forced the community to implement and rely on an admittedly imperfect system.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, despite the Poznań *kahal*'s tendency to rely on ad hoc *shtadlanim* more often than did the intercommunal institutions, it too preferred to retain a professional *shtadlan* whenever possible.

Some of the reasons for this institutional preference for a professional *shtadlan* can be gleaned from the manner in which *shtadlanim* are described. In the eyes of their contemporaries the professional *shtadlan* possessed a unique combination of the skill, courage, knowledge, and linguistic ability necessary to represent the Jewish community effectively. Again, the two previously cited agreements between the intercommunal institutions and their respective *shtadlanim* offer detailed portraits of the ideal *shtadlan*. After a rather desperate opening clause, the contract between Hayim ben Yosef and the Va'ad Medinat Lita eagerly turns to the new *shtadlan* as the community's last ray of hope.

And thus we have found a man true to our hearts, a wise and knowledgeable man whose lips flow with sweet honey, honey that is capable of overcoming the hatred within those before

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., doc. 2029, p. 372. See also doc. 235, p. 49; doc. 489, p. 96; and doc. 2037, p. 375.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., doc. 1717, p. 301; doc. 2029, p. 372; and doc. 489, p. 96.

<sup>34</sup> Several documents reflect the community's hesitancy to turn to a paid *shtadlan*. Note the following citation from the Poznań record: 'The council should discuss whether or not there is a need for two *shtadlanim* as perhaps one is sufficient' (Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 1510, pp. 256-7; see also doc. 819, p. 151; and doc. 211, pp. 42-3).

whom he stands. This man has the presence to stand before the king and his ministers and speak in a refreshing and noble manner, both his heart and his words are equally pure and wise.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to its references to the *shtadlan*'s intelligence and courage, this excerpt is particularly instructive because of its repeated emphasis on the *shtadlan*'s rhetorical skills. Thus, the 1730 agreement between Nisan ben Yehudah and the Va'ad Arba Aratsot similarly praises the new representative.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the *shtadlan* was expected to be an adept and well-connected representative who knew exactly how and when to take advantage of these connections. A 1739 record from the Va'ad Arba Aratsot calls for a *shtadlan* to be sent to the Warsaw Sejm who is not only well versed in the affairs of the day, but also recognized by the authorities and, perhaps most importantly, able to use his knowledge and public standing as an entrée into appropriate government offices.<sup>37</sup> Similar demands are made in a 1633 announcement from the Poznań community record book opening the search for a professional *shtadlan*.<sup>38</sup>

Through these excerpts a composite image of the *shtadlan* can be constructed. The *shtadlan* was expected to possess a wealth of knowledge concerning the customs, language, and balance of power in the non-Jewish world. However, knowledge and rhetorical skills were not enough, as he was also required to be a respected, well-known individual who would be welcomed by the relevant powers. Like 'a shepherd leading a lost flock',<sup>39</sup> the *shtadlan* was to combine all of these qualities as he bravely represented the Jewish community before the ruling bodies, skilfully circumvented future disasters, and intervened to rescue the Jewish community from imminent danger.<sup>40</sup> In the eyes of his contemporaries the *shtadlan* was anything but the maskilic and nationalist caricature of a cowardly toady. As a 1649 account from the Va'ad Arba Aratsot demands, 'Thus it was agreed to send emissaries to the above-mentioned evil council, these emissaries should be important men, men who have the strength and presence to stand in the chambers of the above-mentioned council so that their words can be heard and so that the above-mentioned decrees and laws [can be] overturned.'<sup>41</sup>

While certainly less than perfect, this system of relying on appointed individuals for political representation seemed to suit all those involved. This can be seen in the fact that, although the records do reflect periodic dissatisfaction with particular *shtadlanim*, they do not contain any calls for the transformation of the system itself. Furthermore, when communal institutions and leaders did search for alternatives,

<sup>35</sup> Dubnow, (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, app. 6, p. 301.

<sup>36</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 621, pp. 311–12. See also Weinryb, 'Texts and Studies', doc. 376A, p. 166.

<sup>37</sup> '... and the third will be the main *shtadlan* who is versed in the matters at hand and recognized and welcomed by the ruling powers' (Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 642, p. 327).

<sup>38</sup> '... a man who has the strength and prestige necessary to stand in the sovereign's court' (Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 211, pp. 42–3).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., doc. 322, p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 621, p. 312.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., doc. 205, p. 77.

they ultimately found them within the framework of the existing system of *shtadlanut*. At the very most, professional *shtadlanim* were supplemented by ad hoc emissaries who performed exactly the same functions. Why this system of political representation and action was never seriously challenged from within will be addressed in the following sections.

## THE STRATEGIES, TACTICS, AND TOOLS OF SHTADLANUT

... the Jews had no political tradition or experience, and were as little aware of the tension between society and state as they were of the obvious risks and power-possibilities of their new role.

HANNAH ARENDT  
*The Origins of Totalitarianism*

While the previous section was devoted to describing who the *shtadlan* was, the aim of this section will be to answer the question of what *shtadlanim* actually did. The first part will focus on the distinction between direct and indirect intercession, and examine who it was that representatives of the Jewish community actually approached. Did *shtadlanim* turn exclusively to the monarch, or did the decentralization of power lead to a similar redistribution of the *shtadlan*'s efforts? Later I will discuss the means used by *shtadlanim* to achieve their goals. Ultimately this examination of the strategies and tools they used will not only illustrate the different types of action taken by these representatives, but will also highlight what actions were not considered or undertaken.

Direct *shtadlanut* can best be understood as a personal appeal by a *shtadlan*—long-term or ad hoc—to a representative of the ruling authorities. In many sources we find a call for a *shtadlan* to appeal directly to the powers that be.<sup>42</sup> In his book *Jewish Privileges in the Polish Commonwealth* Goldberg emphasizes the important role of direct *shtadlanut* in securing privileges and charters. He writes that 'the request of the Jews is mentioned as the direct cause for issuing a privilege. . . . Occasionally the Jewish representatives themselves were received in audience by the king and could ask for a privilege for their community.'<sup>43</sup> In a letter written in 1757 describing a succession of dealings designed to combat the influence of the Frankist movement Baruch ben David Yon provides first-hand insight into the actual workings of such direct appeals:

I have just returned from the royal city of Warsaw, where, thanks to God, I found myself during last Hanukah, and thanks to the grace and strength that God gave me, I was able to

<sup>42</sup> Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 164, p. 32, doc. 211, pp. 42–3; Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 206, p. 42, doc. 269, p. 55; Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 621, p. 312, doc. 173, p. 61, doc. 276, p. 114, doc. 346, p. 147, doc. 902, p. 473, and doc. 232, p. 90.

<sup>43</sup> J. Goldberg, *Jewish Privileges in the Polish Commonwealth* (Jerusalem, 1985), 38.

gain the favour of the king and his ministers, my acts and service impressed them all, and in particular his majesty the minister Brühl, who decides on every matter in the kingdom, and I explained to him the entire situation from the moment that Shabbetai Tsevi appeared.<sup>44</sup>

The sheer volume of records describing acts of direct *shtadlanut* reflects the Jewish communities' preference for such appeals. By limiting the number of intermediaries between the community and the authorities, these direct efforts helped to ensure that the community's appeal remained as undiluted as possible, and limited potential expenses and confusion.

However much they were preferred, such direct appeals were not always feasible. Indeed, no ruler could ever receive every personal petition directed to him. Furthermore, Jewish communities often felt that such requests needed to be augmented by other, indirect actions. These concerns led to the development and frequent use of third parties, both Jewish and non-Jewish, as indirect *shtadlanim*. Unlike the Jewish communities of the era of absolutism, which depended on court Jews, or the communities in the Russian empire in the first half of the nineteenth century, which often turned to maskilim for advice, assistance, and *shtadlanut*, the *kahalim* under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth still wielded enough political power to be able to deputize community members and send them on clearly defined missions.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the phenomenon of Jews distancing themselves from the traditional community and either creating alternative Jewish communities or entering the non-Jewish world was still relatively uncommon at this time. Hence, the only situations in which these communities would use the services of Jews outside the community were those that required contacts outside the regular political framework. While the communal infrastructure may already have exhibited some signs of decay, the system itself continued to function.

An agreement negotiated in 1681 between the Va'ad Medinat Lita and the Va'ad Arba Aratsot includes a reference to one community's turn to Jewish contacts outside its regular sphere of influence. In an attempt to limit redundant efforts, confusion, and unnecessary competition, the agreement regulates the different responsibilities (both fiscal and political) of each *va'ad*. One of these regulations directly addresses the topic of indirect Jewish intercession.<sup>46</sup> In specific situations a community was required to turn to its sovereign with a request that he appeal to another ruler on behalf of a second Jewish community. Elyakim Zelig of Jampol's 1757 correspondence from Rome provides additional examples of such coopera-

<sup>44</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 768, p. 422-4. Also note Yon's description of his appeal to the papal representative in Poland: 'And thus I turned to the nuncio's court and to his majesty the nuncio himself. . . I gave the appeal to the nuncio's judge and to the auditor. After discussing the matter at length and in detail with the nuncio, he said they will receive a trial and be burned to death so that their memory will be destroyed and their bankrupt belief uprooted.'

<sup>45</sup> See Stern, *The Court Jew*, 177-207; and Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, 100-10.

<sup>46</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, app. 7, pp. 287-8. See also Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 392, p. 176.

tion. In his request for additional funding the ad hoc *shtadlan* of the Va'ad Arba Aratsot details his interaction with and dependence on the local Jewish community:

With God's guidance I arrived here safely, and God gave the wise, good and heroic members of the local community, may they be blessed, the strength necessary to undertake all possible efforts to approach the king and other high ministers in Rome; in particular, the wise and well-known genius the rabbi and teacher Shabtai Piani gave his heart and soul to our cause, and with God's assistance he had the strength to stand before the king and the ministers.<sup>47</sup>

Here, the *shtadlan*'s main role was to enlist the support of the local Jews who had the appropriate language skills and the political connections necessary to present the *va'ad*'s concerns effectively. Unable to intercede successfully on his own, the *shtadlan* turned to the local Jewish community not only for guidance and logistical assistance, but also for the actual act of *shtadlanut*.

In an article on the metamorphosis of Jewish politics Michael Graetz points to the international nature of Jewish responses to the 1744-5 decrees expelling Jews from Bohemia and Moravia as the first stage in the politicization of the Jewish 'masses' across Europe.<sup>48</sup> According to Graetz, the international nature of Jewish responses to this crisis led to the legitimization of international Jewish cooperation and, eventually, to the development of such organizations as the Alliance Israélite Universelle. As a result of these developments, 'the foundations were laid and the preconditions created for the entry of the masses, middle-class and proletariat, into Jewish politics'.<sup>49</sup> While these developments were certainly pivotal to the political development of east European Jewry,<sup>50</sup> Graetz's theory overlooks the fact that at the very moment when the Jews of western and central Europe were supposedly laying the foundations for the transformation of Jewish politics, Jewish institutions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were practising similar, if not identical, strategies. Although seemingly new to the Jews of western and central Europe, cooperation between Jewish communities in different lands may have seemed like traditional politics to many Jews throughout eastern Europe.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 771, p. 427. See also doc. 770, p. 425.

<sup>48</sup> M. Graetz, 'Jewry in the Modern Period: The Role of the "Rising Class" in the Politicization of Jews in Europe', in J. Frankel and S. Zipperstein (eds.), *Assimilation and Community* (Cambridge, 1992), 165.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 174.

<sup>50</sup> See Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, 137, 140-2; and S. Ettinger and I. Bartal, 'The First Aliyah: Ideological Roots and Practical Accomplishments', *Jerusalem Cathedra*, 2 (1982), 202-4.

<sup>51</sup> See Assaf and Bartal's discussion of the cooperation between hasidim from eastern Europe and Western Jewish leaders in their 'Shtadlanut veorthodoksia', 74-80. For another interpretation of the political transformation of the Jewish community in Polish lands, see J. Goldberg, 'Pierwszy ruch polityczny wśród Żydów polskich: Plenipotenci żydowscy w dobie sejmu czteroletniego', in J. Michalski (ed.), *Lud żydowski w narodzie polskim* (Warsaw, 1994). I am grateful to François Guesnet for bringing this article to my attention. A sweeping analysis of the political transformation of European Jewry throughout the second half of the 19th century can be found in Frankel's detailed study of Jewish responses to the Damascus blood libel: J. Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: 'Ritual Murder', Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge, 1997).



While these findings regarding Jewish intermediaries may shed light on political activities among Jews, an examination of the use of non-Jewish emissaries highlights the Jewish communities' attempt to respond to the ever-changing balance of power within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Baruch ben David Yon's account of 1757 illustrates how non-Jews were often enlisted. Here the *shtadlan's* direct appeal to Minister Brühl (discussed above) resulted in a commitment from the minister to forward the appeal to the king. Yon cites Brühl as promising: 'Write these matters in an appeal to his majesty the king and give the appeal to me. I will then pass the request on to the king himself.'<sup>52</sup> Indirect intercession of this type was certainly not unknown. Indeed, Goldberg notes the role which clerks and secretaries played in helping Jewish communities secure or renew charters and privileges.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to such interventions by non-Jewish officials, Jewish communities often depended upon non-Jews for less active forms of assistance. A record from the Va'ad Arba Aratsot meeting in 1739 offers a detailed account of the Va'ad's use of the treasury minister as an impromptu adviser:

At the outset, the loyal representatives should turn to his majesty the great treasury minister of the kingdom for guidance and protection. . . . using his knowledge and wisdom, he should determine whether the proposed sums are sufficient, to whom they should be disbursed and in what order, later, he should instruct the communal representatives on exactly how and to whom they should present their requests . . . in order to prevent unnecessary expenditures . . . if he should determine that the present allotted amount is insufficient, he has the authority to borrow further funds from the royal treasury of the Treasury Ministry.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the minister was not only entrusted with directing and coaching the *va'ad* delegation to the Warsaw Sejm, but was also given leeway to approve the allocation of further payments. While such advice might have cost the Va'ad additional funds, the expenses were seen as worthwhile investments that would help the *shtadlan* achieve the best possible results while simultaneously avoiding unnecessary costs and improper, if not damaging, transactions.<sup>55</sup>

These examples of indirect *shtadlanut* by both Jews and non-Jews illustrate the degree to which such actions were deemed necessary and were actually practised. They also reflect the level to which Jewish communities had developed a system of political action involving multiple contacts and strategies. Moreover, the multi-layered nature of this system illustrates the growing political decentralization of power in the Polish-Lithuanian lands. In the end the political realities of the time necessitated that the Jewish community be prepared to go beyond its own institu-

<sup>52</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 768, p. 423.

<sup>53</sup> Goldberg, *Jewish Privileges*, 39. See also Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly*, 106.

<sup>54</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 642, p. 327.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., doc. 642, p. 327 n. 2.

tional limits and turn to external parties, both Jewish and non-Jewish, in order to achieve its goals.

The example of cooperation between the treasury minister and the Va'ad Arba Aratsot serves as a useful link into our next question: to whom did Jewish communities and their *shtadlanim* prefer to turn? Traditional historiographical literature has long portrayed an almost exclusive alliance with the Crown as an integral component of pre-modern Jewish politics.<sup>56</sup> The king was often portrayed as a benevolent, good-natured ruler who protected his subjects with a kind and generous heart. This opinion was so strong that any damaging decree or action was often rationalized as the random act of jealous underlings carried out without the king's knowledge. Hundert has argued that, despite these myths, the 'royal alliance' failed to take hold in Poland-Lithuania. According to his analysis, these Jewish communities often turned to local authorities, and especially to magnates and other nobility, as political power became more and more decentralized.<sup>57</sup> The following pages will examine which of these approaches most accurately reflects the political strategies of organized Jewish communal institutions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Much like the traditional historiographical literature, the records of the Jewish institutions of Poland-Lithuania consistently refer to the Crown in a positive light. Since the Crown was assumed to have the power to overrule decisions made by lower-level bureaucrats or local authorities, a successful appeal to the king was usually considered one way of ensuring a favourable outcome. The Va'ad Arba Aratsot record book contains several entries that reflect this practice of turning directly to the Crown in order to reinforce standing charters or to overturn decisions made at a lower level. For example, an entry from 1676 describes the community's successful appeal to the monarch regarding the maintenance of present privileges.<sup>58</sup> An earlier entry, from 1638, records King Władysław IV's revocation of a local noble's right to tax synagogues.<sup>59</sup> Finally, an even more sweeping royal decision from 1658 calls on the authorities to grant individual Jews protection and security, demands a break in the collection of all poll taxes, and instructs local

<sup>56</sup> See Y. H. Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976), p. xii; Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, 14-19; and Biale, *Power and Powerlessness*, 56, 62. For discussions of how this alliance often continued beyond the Middle Ages, see M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia* (Philadelphia, 1983), 118-20; and D. Assaf, *Derekh hamalkut: rabi yisra'el miruzhin umekomo betoledot hahasidut* (Jerusalem, 1997), 272-90.

<sup>57</sup> Hundert, 'Some Basic Characteristics of the Jewish Experience in Poland', 31. See also id., 'Security and Dependence', 239-40, and id., *The Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 116-34. Rosman, too, has done much to broaden our understanding of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews at the local level. See *The Lords' Jews*, chs. 4-7. See also M. J. Rosman, 'A Minority Views the Majority: Jewish Attitudes towards the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and Interaction with Poles', *Polin*, 4 (1989), 34.

<sup>58</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 346, p. 147. See also Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 8, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 173, p. 61.

authorities to help Jews to regain property that had been repossessed.<sup>60</sup> In the eyes of Jewish leaders the king was still powerful enough to exercise his influence to secure communal privileges, overturn problematic decisions, and grant decrees that would, at least on paper, guarantee the safety and security of Jewish communities and their individual members. Thus, while political power may have been more decentralized than in the neighbouring absolutist states, the Jewish community still felt that the king possessed enough power to influence the decision-making process.<sup>61</sup> While this belief may have been incommensurate with the Crown's actual share of power, it was strong enough to convince the Jewish community of the need to court the Crown's favour consistently. Indeed, none of the remaining records encourage Jewish communities or their representatives to ignore the king or any of his functionaries.

Still, this faith in the king did not completely blind the representatives to the political realities at hand. Indeed, for every record noting a community's decision to turn to the monarch, a similar plea to a minister or a local official can be found. Furthermore, most of the writs cited above call on representatives to be brave wherever they might turn: to the monarch, to government ministers, to the Sejms, or to local powers. This multi-pronged approach reflects the Jewish community's awareness that exclusive reliance on one figure left them especially dependent and vulnerable. It also highlights the precarious balance of power between the monarch, his advisers, and local magnates and their representatives to the Warsaw Sejm. As this balance shifted, Jewish leaders found themselves in need of connections and alliances on every level. The practice of relying exclusively on the goodwill and financial need of the monarch had been replaced by the rather costly and time-consuming endeavour of having to please all of the people all of the time.

One of the intercommunal institutions' main targets for *shtadlanut*, outside the Crown itself, was the Warsaw Sejm and the local *sejmiki*. As mentioned earlier, the biennial Sejms often served as the true locus of power throughout the period in question. It was the Sejm that had the right to elect a king, approve appointments, and decide on legislative and fiscal matters.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, a large number of acts of intercession were directly related to them. A record dated 1628 from the Va'ad Medinat Lita announcing a special delegation to that year's Sejm typifies such acts.<sup>63</sup> The Va'ad Arba Aratsot record book contains similar entries, and includes a record from 1739 delineating the exact composition of the Va'ad Arba

<sup>60</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 232, p. 90.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., doc. 217, p. 82. Hundert notes several instances in which the Jewish community turned to the throne to circumvent or overturn local or middle-level decisions. See 'Security and Dependence', 195–6, 202–3, 215.

<sup>62</sup> For more information on the Sejms and their role in the commonwealth's political constellation, see Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly*, 89–95; and Skwarczyński, 'The Constitution of Poland', 54–61.

<sup>63</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 206, pp. 42–3; see also doc. 2, p. 1; doc. 269, p. 55; doc. 543, p. 128; doc. 668, p. 167; doc. 855, p. 227; and app. 7, pp. 284–5.

Aratsot's delegation to the biennial Sejm and other commissions.<sup>64</sup> These and other entries underscore how common such appeals to national and local councils actually were.<sup>65</sup>

The number of such entries and the amount of energy and resources invested in currying the favour of Sejm representatives reflect three major developments. First, the concentration on these acts of *shtadlanut* points to the political power that the Sejm wielded. Indeed, it was no longer sufficient to send a well-connected, articulate *shtadlan* to the Crown, since throughout this period the Crown's position would be consistently challenged. Secondly, this growing competition between political camps forced the Jewish community to broaden its contacts and areas of activity. Finally, this expansion of the Jewish community's agenda contributed to the further growth and development of the *shtadlan*'s mandate.

In conjunction with the large number of appeals to the Sejms the records also include a number of cases in which communal institutions and *shtadlanim* developed long-term working relationships with individual ministers. This practice of appealing to specific ministers can be seen as another indication of the growing decentralization of political power in the Commonwealth. Indeed, many of these ministers were apparently in the process of building their own power bases and could, theoretically, exercise tremendous influence on both the Sejm and the Crown. While many documents called on the *shtadlan* to be ready to appeal to all of the king's ministers, the treasury minister remained one of the preferred allies.<sup>66</sup> The origin of the alliance between the treasury and Jewish institutions can probably be traced to one of the authorities' primary reasons for supporting the *va'ad*'s existence: tax collection. Indeed, the *kahal* system, like other forms of corporate rule, was designed to support the rather underdeveloped state apparatus for collecting dues.<sup>67</sup>

Passages that attest to a strengthening alliance between the Jewish community and the treasury are plentiful. In one instance the Va'ad Arba Aratsot record book notes the treasury minister's intervention in 1657 on behalf of Jews living in urban areas and on private estates.<sup>68</sup> Nine years later the Va'ad Arba Aratsot turned to Kazimierz Kubolkowski, a minister to the king who also served as the treasury's scribe, for a loan.<sup>69</sup> This example is particularly important because Kubolkowski's loan helped cover debts incurred as a result of unpaid tax dues. The *shtadlan*

<sup>64</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 642, p. 325. The 1730 agreement between Nisan ben Yehudah and the Va'ad, discussed above, also contains a clause calling on the new *shtadlan* to intercede at the Sejm and other commissions. See *ibid.*, doc. 621, p. 312.

<sup>65</sup> See *ibid.*, doc. 329, p. 139 n. 3; doc. 519, p. 242; doc. 392, p. 171; and doc. 368, p. 162.

<sup>66</sup> See Jacob Goldberg's interpretation of this mutually beneficial relationship in 'Va'ad arba aratsot', 138. See also Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly*, 105–6.

<sup>67</sup> Thus Goldberg notes that 'The Va'ad Arba Aratsot was an institution founded not for legislative purposes, but in order to distribute the tax burden between the local and regional communal institutions' (Goldberg, 'Va'ad arba aratsot', 132).

<sup>68</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 231, p. 89.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., doc. 257, pp. 103–4.

had apparently had little luck erasing the debt and was forced to turn to a government official to raise the necessary capital. While Kubolkowski's decision was probably financially motivated—he apparently felt that lending to the Jewish community would prove a wise investment—his actions gave the community the opportunity to repay its debt. A 1739 alliance between the treasury minister and the Va'ad Arba Aratsot delegation to Warsaw stands as another example of close cooperation between the treasury and the Va'ad Arba Aratsot. Again, this agreement highlights the degree to which such forms of assistance, both tactical and financial, were often encouraged by economic incentives.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to these appeals, the Poznań records include specific references to *shtadlanut* carried out at the local level. According to an item from 1639, the community regularly approached the local general with the request that he appoint local officials sympathetic to the Jewish community.<sup>71</sup> This passage is pertinent because it shows not only that such appeals had already become common practice, but also that the Poznań community's dealings paralleled those of the Va'ad Arba Aratsot.

A 1634 announcement clarifying the community's right to deputize communal leaders differentiates between local missions and long-distance journeys.<sup>72</sup> A document from 1715 calls on the *shtadlan* to observe the activities of the local tax court.<sup>73</sup> These examples show that, while intercommunal institutions handled matters in Warsaw, local *kahalim* and their *shtadlanim*, both long-term and ad hoc, usually assumed responsibility for local affairs.

Such a division of resources and responsibilities reflects the degree to which political representation was coordinated between different Jewish institutions. While it would be an exaggeration to conclude that this inter-institutional cooperation was problem-free, its significance should not be underestimated. Local affairs were usually reserved for local *shtadlanim* and matters affecting the entire Commonwealth were dealt with, at least theoretically, by representatives of the intercommunal councils.

However, these strategies were not always enough to open doors, influence opinions, or produce favourable decisions. Indeed, the success of all political strategies, no matter how well designed and calculated, often depends upon their implementation. Foremost among the methods that *shtadlanim* used were emotional appeals, attainment of and dependence upon legal writs, and the presentation of gifts or payments.

All of the communal records include documents openly advocating tactics such as pleading and begging. For example, a Va'ad Arba Aratsot record from 1649 calls for an ad hoc delegation to plead, beg, and cry in the course of their appeal.<sup>74</sup> A copy

<sup>70</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 642, p. 327.

<sup>71</sup> Weinryb, 'Texts and Studies', doc. 131, p. 54.

<sup>72</sup> Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 235, p. 49; and doc. 489, p. 96.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., doc. 1984, p. 360.

<sup>74</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 205, p. 77.

of Elyakim Zelig of Jampol's report of his 1757 mission to Rome also speaks of the need to beg for the Pope's favour.<sup>75</sup> However, while later observers may have found this behaviour unbecoming and humiliating, the *shtadlan* and his contemporaries seemed to accept them as appropriate and effective modes of political conduct.

In addition to such emotionally based pleas, many *shtadlanim* tried to win the authorities' favour through rational argument and legal litigation. In most cases these tactics hinged upon the implementation of charters and privileges. We find repeated examples of *shtadlanim* securing or renewing favourable decrees.<sup>76</sup> The practice of turning to courts, both religious and secular, to resolve issues also reflects the use of rational principles.<sup>77</sup> Thus, one of Baruch ben David Yon's main goals in his campaign against the Frankists was to produce a decree by the papal nuncio that would overrule the bishop of Kamenets's earlier, pro-Frankist decision.<sup>78</sup> Elyakim Zelig of Jampol's mission was also aimed at producing a papal writ—one that would help the Jewish community defend itself against blood libel accusations.<sup>79</sup> This dependence upon royal documents and legal litigation highlights the faith that Jewish leaders had in the Commonwealth's political and legal system and the *shtadlan's* ability to represent the Jewish community successfully within that system.

However, such legal foundations did not always guarantee results. Therefore, in addition to emotional and rational appeals, representatives often used money and gifts to ensure success. All three record books include documents reflecting the practice of regularly distributing funds to ensure the authorities' cooperation and to avert potential problems.<sup>80</sup> A record of the Poznań community's expenditure for 1637–8 includes a litany of officials—local and national, civil and clerical—who received payments.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, a 1726 entry in the Va'ad Arba Aratsot's record book contains a listing of similar payments.<sup>82</sup> While some of these payments may have been related to specific requests, the wholesale manner in which they

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., doc. 771, p. 427 n. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 518, p. 122; Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 346, p. 147, doc. 231, p. 89, and doc. 276, p. 114.

<sup>77</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 993, p. 514; doc. 902, pp. 472–3; Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 1984, p. 360, doc. 106, p. 29, and doc. 551, p. 108.

<sup>78</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 768, p. 423.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., doc. 820, p. 438; and doc. 771, p. 427.

<sup>80</sup> For further discussion regarding the distribution of payments and gifts by Jewish communities, see Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 83–5, 122, 137, 200; Goldberg, 'Va'ad Arba Aratsot', 139; id., 'The Changes in the Attitude of Polish Society toward the Jews in the Eighteenth-Century', *Polin*, 1 (1986), 38; Teller, 'The Legal Status of the Jews on the Magnate Estates', 59; and id., 'Radziwiłł, Rabinowicz, and the Rabbi of Świerz: The Magnates' Attitude to Jewish Regional Autonomy in the Eighteenth Century', in A. Teller (ed.), *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland: In Honor of Jacob Goldberg* (Jerusalem, 1998), 259–60.

<sup>81</sup> See Weinryb, 'Texts and Studies', doc. 138, p. 59.

<sup>82</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 962, pp. 502–3, and doc. 342, pp. 145–6. Hundert's detailed micro-history of the Jewish community of Opatów contains a detailed description of the community's expenditures. See Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 99–104. Note, in particular, Hundert's contextualization of such actions on p. 102.

were distributed and the generic way in which they were recorded gives the impression that these blanket payments were standard, accepted practice.

Such regular payments were accompanied by payments intended to produce specific results. For example, a 1639 entry in the Poznań community registry describes payments made to the local general in order to influence his choice of mayor.<sup>83</sup> Again, Elyakim Zelig of Jampol's correspondence provides a vivid insight into the nuts and bolts of *shtadlanut*. In his appeal for additional funding, the *shtadlan* lists the officials in Rome whom he has to bribe in order to receive a papal writ condemning the blood libel in Jampol:

However, it was impossible even to find a point from which to begin to present our case. All of the gates, except for the gates of heaven, were closed. Furthermore, I had already disposed of all available funds and even had to borrow additional sums from the local book-seller. The entire amount was invested in our matter . . . indeed, additional funds are needed for several of the ministers and, in particular, the king's scribe as well as those officials responsible for the royal seal.<sup>84</sup>

Like many of his contemporaries, Zelig found that his efforts came to a dead end without additional funds.

In addition to annual dues paid to local officials and funds designed for specific purposes, institutions also made regular payments to representatives to the Warsaw Sejms. These were a combination of standing and specific payments; although they were given regularly, they were usually designed to help achieve specific goals. Thus, many of the delegations to the Sejm were responsible not only for gathering information and lobbying, but also for distributing cash and gifts designed to win favour. A copy of the 1681 agreement between the Va'ad Medinat Lita and the Va'ad Arba Aratsot refers to expenditure incurred as a result of 'presents' given to the king's assistants and ministers.<sup>85</sup> The Poznań record book also contains several entries emphasizing the need to be quite generous.<sup>86</sup> The record of the cooperation between the treasury minister and the Jewish delegation to the Warsaw Sejm in 1739 provides a particularly detailed view of how such payments were made.<sup>87</sup> It highlights not only the indispensable role that such payments played in lobbying the Sejm, but also the degree to which such transactions occupied the Va'ad Arba Aratsot's attention.<sup>88</sup> The Va'ad arranged for external counsel

<sup>83</sup> Weinryb, 'Texts and Studies', doc. 131, p. 54. See also Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 90, p. 18.

<sup>84</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 771, p. 427.

<sup>85</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, app. 4, p. 284; and Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 390, p. 171.

<sup>86</sup> Weinryb, 'Texts and Studies', doc. 138, pp. 57–8; and Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 167, pp. 32–3. See also Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 262, p. 106, and doc. 329, p. 139 n. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 642, p. 327.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 'Earlier records reveal large sums expended on the Sejm. . . . Without these sums, it would have been impossible to successfully complete these tasks.'

in order to limit unnecessary payments and made specific provisions in case the original budgetary allotments proved insufficient.

In addition to these details concerning the logistical organization of such delegations, the Poznań community's records include entries specifying the different forms that such payments took. From these records we learn that *shtadlanim* were apt to present not only cash payments, but also gifts in kind of fish, perfumes, spices, and other goods. These entries include detailed guidelines regarding the distribution of various items and reveal a hierarchy in which certain gifts were deemed more valuable than others.<sup>89</sup> This ranking of gifts offers a rare insight into the planning and strategy involved, and reveals how familiar communal institutions were with such practices.

While rational and emotional argumentation and legal litigation were often employed, the *shtadlan's* most successful and reliable means remained the calculated distribution of payments and gifts. Indeed, all of the communal institutions seem to have developed a set of regulations dictating not only the amount of money that *shtadlanim* were allowed to distribute, but also the manner in which such payments were to be presented. The common use of cash or gifts at all levels also illustrates the degree to which a common culture of political behaviour was practised by various communities within the Commonwealth.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, while representatives of the Jewish community may have distributed cash and gifts regularly, the various recipients of these payments were equal and willing participants in these transactions.

Finally, while Jewish leaders might have complained about the cost and energy involved in maintaining influence in such a decentralized and occasionally hostile political system, the willingness of government ministers, nobles, and Church representatives to work with Jews can be seen as a sign of the authorities' acceptance of the Jewish community as a permanent fixture of the Polish landscape. While some parties were interested in limiting the Jewish community's economic or residential privileges, others were just as happy—albeit in exchange for some form of payment—to support the Jews' demands that such charters be maintained or even extended.

<sup>89</sup> Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 492, p. 97; doc. 1049, pp. 179–80; and doc. 470, p. 93 n. 67. Hundert cites cases in which citrus fruits, coffee, sugar, beverages, and boots were used to gain favour. See Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 41, 103–4.

<sup>90</sup> Hence Goldberg's comment that 'many of the communal leaders simply adjusted to the reigning political culture' (Goldberg, 'Va'ad arba aratsot', 139). See also Davies, *God's Playground*, i. 338; and Lukowski, *Liberty's Folly*, 106.

## POWER, ITS TEMPTATIONS, AND ITS LIMITATIONS

We need to have in our parts honest *parnasim*, such as work in communal affairs with sincerity of heart, not like certain ones who remove the pearls from Ark-curtains and stud them into honey cakes as gifts for magnates in order to find favour in their eyes.

SHOLOM ASCH  
*Kiddush Ha-Shem*

Both traditional rabbinic literature and historical works have noted the potential for conflict between a community's political emissary and its leadership.<sup>91</sup> In fact, all three record books bear witness to institutional attempts to control *shtadlanim*. These efforts were designed to ensure that the community's representative—a man possessing linguistic and rhetorical skills, political status both inside and out of the Jewish community, and a myriad connections—should not fall prey to the temptations (financial, political, and social) that might entice him to begin serving another power. In many cases such restrictions were necessary to the maintenance of political authority, communal cohesion, and social control. Thus, Katz contends that contact with the authorities remained the exclusive responsibility of the communal institutions and their representatives.<sup>92</sup> While Rosman and Hundert have shown that contact with the authorities was not limited exclusively to communal representatives, they also note the potentially damaging impact that unofficial contacts might have upon a community's institutional framework. Therefore, they too appear to accept Katz's argument that the phenomenon of individual Jews approaching state powers directly might undermine the community's authority.<sup>93</sup> Another, related, fear was that a *shtadlan* who had accumulated too much personal influence or power might be able to challenge the *kahal's* role as the sole representative of the Jewish community in the political arena. The combination of these threats led to repeated attempts to restrict the activities of *shtadlanim*.

The first type of restrictive measure guarded against potential conflicts of interest. For example, an entry in the Poznań record book from 1660 calls on all *shtadlanim* to swear that they have no personal business with non-Jews that might interfere with the *kahal's* needs.<sup>94</sup> An entry in the Va'ad Arba Aratsot's record book

<sup>91</sup> See F. L. Carsten, 'The Court Jews: A Prelude to Emancipation', *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, 3 (1958), 152; Stern, *The Court Jew*, 181, 196–7; and Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 165–6, 173, 182.

<sup>92</sup> J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1993), 72.

<sup>93</sup> Hundert notes 'an incipient sense of disintegration and the weakening of communal discipline' caused by a perceived increase in the frequency of such acts in 18th-century Jewish society. Hundert, 'On the Problem of Agency in Eighteenth Century Jewish Society', in Teller (ed.), *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland*, 87. See also Hundert, 'Security and Dependence', 222, and id., *The Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 137–8. Rosman contends that the dissolution of the Va'ad Arba Aratsot in 1764 came as a result of persistent efforts on the part of the magnates to interfere in internal Jewish communal affairs (see *The Lords' Jews*, 189, as well as 173, 200–1, 205, 210–11). For another interpretation of this dynamic between dependency, acculturation, and communal disintegration, see Teller, 'The Legal Status of the Jews on the Magnate Estates', 60.

<sup>94</sup> Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 495, p. 159.

from 1646 describes a *shtadlan's* vow that he would not undertake any action that might damage the Va'ad's interests:

The respected elder, our rabbi and teacher, Hertz Ginzburg, may God protect him, swore before travelling to the blessed community of Lublin that he would not undertake any private matters in conversations with national leaders that might either contradict or damage the interests of the community, may it live for ever, and if, while at the said fair, he should undertake any such actions, whatever they may or may not be, such acts are to be considered null and void, like shattered pottery, as though they had never existed.<sup>95</sup>

As noted above, such vows were intended to ensure that the *shtadlan* would not be tempted to compromise the community's interests. However, the very fact that such entries were recorded leads one to suspect that such problems arose quite frequently.

Another way in which communal institutions attempted to curb the independence of the *shtadlanim* was by requiring communal leaders to chaperone them. While many of these delegations were ostensibly intended to maximize the *shtadlan's* effectiveness, one of their main purposes was, apparently, to ensure that communal funds were appropriately distributed. Hence, such arrangements were regularly required when the *shtadlan* was expected to present cash or other gifts. An entry for 1682 from the Poznań communal records reflects the community's concern over potential corruption: 'In every situation in which the *shtadlan* intercedes before a priest, a noble, or any other representative of the ruling power, and especially when he is supposed to present a gift, he must be accompanied by a communal leader. Furthermore, he should not be regularly accompanied by any one specific communal leader, but rather by different leaders on different occasions.'<sup>96</sup> This is certainly not the only entry demanding that the *shtadlan* be accompanied by another community member when handling gifts or other payments. An earlier entry approving the participation of communal leaders who did not know Polish underscores the degree to which such escorts were designed not only to improve effectiveness, but also to prevent corruption.<sup>97</sup>

The two intercommunal record books also contain entries calling for strict handling of financial affairs. Several entries in the Va'ad Medinat Lita's records limit the amount of money to be spent on specific acts of *shtadlanut*.<sup>98</sup> A similar need to control costs led the Va'ad Arba Aratsot to cooperate with the treasury minister in 1739.<sup>99</sup> These attempts to limit the amount of money that *shtadlanim* were allowed

<sup>95</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 198, p. 75; see also doc. 519, p. 242.

<sup>96</sup> Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 1461, p. 247. See also doc. 492, p. 97; doc. 551, p. 108; doc. 1714, p. 303; and doc. 1984, p. 360.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., doc. 470, p. 93: 'In matters involving gifts presented to the ruling powers, the *shtadlan* should not travel alone. He should be accompanied by a communal leader even if that leader is not familiar with the Polish language.'

<sup>98</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 858, p. 227; doc. 761, p. 188; and doc. 439, p. 93.

<sup>99</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 642, p. 327.

to spend on specific transactions should be seen as another way in which the communities attempted to exercise control—in this case fiscal—over the *shtadlan*.

While such conflicts over financial expenditures may seem more banal than intracommunal power struggles, their relevance should not be underestimated. An indictment in 1700 of a former Va'ad Arba Aratsot *shtadlan* Baruch Halevi Segal reflects the importance of these financial matters. The decree demands not only the *shtadlan*'s dismissal, but also his expulsion for having 'endangered the community's existence'. In addition to violating his vow not to travel to the Toruń fair, the *shtadlan* is accused of misappropriating communal funds:

After he disobeyed the orders of the communal council and went to Toruń in an act of rebellion and treachery, he did not hesitate to spread lies and slander against the council. There in Toruń he acted as an informant and passed over sensitive information to the ruling powers. Furthermore, he handed over excessive sums of Jewish money to non-Jews. In fact, it is known that he gave several thousand more than was necessary and accepted. Here was his downfall.<sup>100</sup>

The particularly scathing nature of this decree reflects the degree to which the *va'ad* took seriously such acts of insubordination, both fiscal and political. Indeed, why did the *va'ad* feel the need to hunt the *shtadlan* down, tarnish his reputation, expel him from the community, and attempt to prevent him from acting as a *shtadlan* for any other community?<sup>101</sup> Could they not simply have asked him to resign once he returned from Toruń? While the *va'ad*'s need to dissociate itself from his pledges and its concern over fiscal irresponsibility may have had some impact, the fear that a loose cannon—or, worse still, an impostor—was scheming to undermine the *va'ad*'s exclusive representation also motivated its actions. Indeed, a *shtadlan* who could negotiate with the authorities in the name of the entire community was beyond the communal leaders' control, and thus represented a threat that could not be treated lightly.

In addition to taking measures that might restrict a *shtadlan*'s political and fiscal jurisdiction, the various communal institutions repeatedly tried to prevent non-commissioned individuals from acting as *shtadlanim*. Such measures were designed not only to maintain exclusive control over communal representation, but also to protect official *shtadlanim* from competition. The following entry from the Va'ad Medinat Lita's records for 1662 is especially revealing:

In light of the fact that precedent and law mandate that no person may travel to the Warsaw Sejm without explicit approval and that several people have ignored this ruling and travelled to Warsaw, and that such acts lead not only to difficulties but also to conflicts, we find it necessary to reiterate the following warning: no man, no matter who he may be, including community leaders or local leaders, may travel without the permission of the

<sup>100</sup> Halperin (ed.), *Pinkas va'ad arba aratsot*, doc. 530, p. 255.

<sup>101</sup> For an illuminating analysis of discipline, punishment, and control within a local Jewish community, see Hundert's description in *The Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 69–71.

judicial court . . . and any person who arrives in Warsaw without such a writ of approval is to be punished, fined, and prosecuted via all possible material and financial punishments available, by all judicial leaders, may they live for ever, and other communal leaders in Warsaw.<sup>102</sup>

An earlier entry, from 1623, not only calls for the physical and financial punishment of such self-appointed representatives, but also forbids the official *shtadlan* to intercede on an offender's behalf.<sup>103</sup> Again, the stern nature of these decisions reflects the desire of communal institutions to maintain their right not only to supervise but also to appoint and control *shtadlanim*.

These writs also illustrate that such impromptu, unofficial missions were not unknown. The 1662 entry refers to 'several people' who refused to heed previous decrees and chose to travel to the Warsaw Sejm. The 1623 decree not only forbids such unofficial missions, but also instructs the *shtadlan* on what to do when such unofficial representatives encounter legal difficulties. The detailed nature of both condemnations leads one to conclude that these decrees came as the result of such unauthorized delegations.

The entry of unauthorized *shtadlanim* onto the political landscape can be seen as a harbinger of significant social and political changes. As mentioned earlier, one of the skills that made the *shtadlan* an effective intermediary, in addition to his knowledge of Polish, was his ability to gauge the non-Jewish political arena accurately. Thus, references to cases of non-commissioned Jews performing acts of *shtadlanut* demonstrate that an ever greater number of Jews not only knew Polish, but also felt comfortable enough in the Polish cultural milieu to manage without the assistance of the community's expert.<sup>104</sup> The skills and characteristics that had once made the *shtadlan* so valuable were becoming less rare. Ultimately, the fact that these skills were becoming more common posed an open threat to Jewish society. Communal institutions feared that the increasing number of people who knew Polish, were intimate with the non-Jewish world, and had extensive contacts with that society might further weaken the Jewish community's already tenuous position.<sup>105</sup> In later years the contradictions inherent in this dynamic would lead to the complete restructuring of Jewish communities in Polish lands and beyond.

<sup>102</sup> Dubnow (ed.), *Pinkas medinat lita*, doc. 534, p. 127.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., doc. 39, p. 9.

<sup>104</sup> For different opinions regarding the degree to which Jews in the Commonwealth knew Polish, see N. Stone, 'Knowledge of Foreign Language among Eighteenth-Century Polish Jews', *Polin*, 10 (1997), 205, 217; Hundert, *The Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 39, 44–5; and Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 176. Also see the previously cited example from the Poznań records (Avron (ed.), *Pinkas heksherim shel kehilat pozna*, doc. 470, p. 93).

<sup>105</sup> See Hundert, 'On the Problem of Agency', 87; id., 'Security and Dependence', 222; and id., *The Jews in a Polish Private Town*, 137–8, 143. See also Rosman, *The Lords' Jews*, 189, and also 173, 200–1, 205, 210–11; and Teller, 'The Legal Status of the Jews on the Magnate Estates', 60.



## THE CASE OF JEWS IN MORAVIA AND SCOTS IN POLAND

When I entered the private office at seven in the morning, there were one hundred men and women waiting in one room. I imagined we'd all have our fixed time for talking to the Kaiser, and I thought that we'd go in one by one. . . . Then we went into a big reception room, and stood in order all around, when all of a sudden a whisper began to be heard: 'Is that the Kaiser?' I looked, and there he was going from one to another taking the petitions from each and asking what it was about. . . . When the Kaiser came to me, I gave him my petition, but what could I say to him with such a crowd listening?

Ukrainian political representative

Many of the conclusions presented above raise the question of whether the *shtadlan* was a phenomenon unique to Jewish communities, or the direct by-product of the political structure of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In this section I hope to shed more light on this question by analysing two other corporate communities. First, I will examine the Jewish community of Moravia from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century; then I will briefly analyse the practices of the Scottish émigré community in Poland-Lithuania. The examination of these two communities—a Jewish community outside Poland-Lithuania and a non-Jewish community within the Commonwealth—will further our understanding of the *shtadlan*'s position, functions, and limitations.

The case of the Moravian Jewish community is particularly fruitful because, although its institutional structure was similar to that of the Jewish community in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, constant government interference radically changed the face of the Moravian institutions throughout the period in question. Thus, while Halpern, Hundert, and others point to the presence of national, regional, and local Jewish councils in Moravian lands, their organizational structure and spheres of influence were never as great as those of the Jewish councils in Poland-Lithuania.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, throughout the first half of the eighteenth century these institutions were forced to undergo a series of reforms that repeatedly restricted many aspects of communal autonomy.<sup>107</sup> In fact, the Jewish community's powers were so severely limited that various attempts to overturn these decrees in the middle of the eighteenth century yielded no results.

Many of these reforms can be seen as part of a general Habsburg policy between the period of the Thirty Years War (1618–48) and the reign of Maria Theresa (1740–80) to exercise more control over outlying provinces and corporate commu-

<sup>106</sup> I. Halperin, *Takanot medinat mehrin, 1650–1748* (Jerusalem, 1951), pp. ix–xvi. (The author apparently changed the Hebrew pronunciation and English spelling of his surname at some point between the publication of *Va'ad arba aratsot* and that of *Takanot medinat mehrin*.) See also Hundert, 'Security and Dependence', 237; W. O. McCagg Jr., *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670–1870* (Bloomington, Ind., 1992), 14–15; and V. Lipscher, 'Jüdische Gemeinden in Böhmen und Mähren im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert', in F. Seibt (ed.), *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern* (Munich, 1983).

<sup>107</sup> Halpern, *Takanot medinat mehrin*, pp. ix–xvi.

nities. With their booming economy and abundant natural resources, the Bohemian and Moravian lands were prime targets for these policies of increased centralization. Unlike the election of the Polish king, the election of the Habsburg monarch was not subject to the approval of any other body, and the king's powers were much less restricted.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the nobility's rights to local rule were, over time, curtailed.<sup>109</sup> In addition to these limitations on the nobility, from 1620 taxes were collected by the centralized Hofkammer,<sup>110</sup> and the centrally controlled armed forces became an important source of power in the seventeenth century.<sup>111</sup> Lastly, the combination of the government-led Counter-Reformation in the late seventeenth century<sup>112</sup> and the growing attraction of a Vienna-dominated court culture worked together to discourage internal dissent and unite new ruling elites throughout the empire.<sup>113</sup>

Despite these differences, the Moravian community's records reflect a system of political action and behaviour that is not dissimilar to that of the Jewish community of Poland-Lithuania. An examination of the Moravian community's records shows that the community regularly employed both professional and ad hoc *shtadlanim*, that such *shtadlanim* were often sent on missions to the capital, and that the community was constantly curbing the *shtadlan*'s activities and insisting upon its right to be the lone executor of communal policies. Furthermore, while the Moravian communal records do not include any actual contracts with *shtadlanim*, they do contain several documents that directly refer to an official intercommunal *shtadlan*.<sup>114</sup> These records include statements regarding a three-year term of service, a regular salary, and compensation for travel expenses.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, these documents are complemented by decrees that temporarily commission unpaid communal leaders to speak on the community's behalf.<sup>116</sup> Finally, while none of these entries specifically mentions particular characteristics and skills, one entry for 1709 does stipulate the social status of the emissary: it requires that all *shtadlanim*, both professional

<sup>108</sup> R. A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526–1918* (Berkeley, 1974), 55–6; and R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550–1700: An Interpretation* (Oxford, 1979), 199.

<sup>109</sup> C. W. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Empire, 1618–1815* (Cambridge, 1994), 35; Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 213; and Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, 130, 133.

<sup>110</sup> Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 148; and Ingrao, *The Habsburg Empire*, 35.

<sup>111</sup> Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 149, and Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, 63.

<sup>112</sup> Ingrao, *The Habsburg Empire*, 28–39, 50–1; and Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, 125.

<sup>113</sup> Ingrao, *The Habsburg Empire*, 64, 96, 99–100; and Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, 155. For an analysis of the nexus between court, culture, and mentalities in early modern central Europe, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufman, *Court, Cloister and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe, 1450–1800* (London, 1995). An examination of how these forces influenced one of the Habsburg empire's more prominent Jewish communities can be found in Rachel Greenblatt, 'Memory' and the Relationship between the Living and the Dead in the Old Jewish Cemetery of Prague: A Reading of Evidence in Stone', Hebrew University of Jerusalem MA thesis, 1998.

<sup>114</sup> Halpern, *Takanot medinat mehrin*, doc. 555, p. 193. See also doc. 508 (4), p. 177; doc. 486 (19), p. 165.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., doc. 333 (8), p. 110; doc. 634, p. 225; doc. 606, p. 215 n. 4.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., doc. 589 (1), pp. 205–6; doc. 100, p. 33.

and ad hoc, be of a relatively high social standing.<sup>117</sup> Thus, many of the conditions used to define the position of *shtadlan* in Moravia are similar, if not identical, to terms regulating *shtadlanim* in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Such parallels lend credence to the argument that the *shtadlan* and *shtadlanut* were institutions common to Jewish communities across time and space.

Like their contemporaries in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, representatives of the Jewish community of Moravia were also expected to obtain audiences with royal or high government officials in order to influence their decisions. *Shtadlanim* were repeatedly sent to the capital to appeal to the king, his ministers, and government commissions.<sup>118</sup> The records also refer to *shtadlanim* who were supposed to serve as permanent lobbyists in the capital.<sup>119</sup> The lack of entries referring to *shtadlanut* on other levels may be attributed to the distribution of responsibilities between national and local communal institutions: an agreement from 1720 grants the intercommunal institution the right to lobby on behalf of individual communities that lack their own resources or qualified individuals.<sup>120</sup>

In addition to having common strategies, the Moravian records testify to a similarly problematic relationship between the communal institutions and the *shtadlan*. However, unlike their Polish counterparts, the Moravian records actually include several entries calling for active opposition to attempts by non-Jewish authorities to appoint communal leaders.<sup>121</sup> While this opposition to external intervention in communal affairs is reminiscent of the fears expressed by institutions in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Moravian community seems much more concerned that the authorities might attempt to hand-pick Jewish communal leaders and thereby effectively abrogate the institution's autonomy. These repeated concerns reflect efforts by various Habsburg rulers to limit the powers of corporate communities.

This opposition to any infringements upon the community's autonomy is accompanied by decrees guarding against potential conflicts of interest, proclamations granting the community the exclusive right to appoint *shtadlanim*, and warnings intended to limit the *shtadlan*'s leeway and responsibilities. For example, an entry from 1709 forbids the appointment of any two ad hoc representatives who may have had a previous relationship (business, personal, or familial).<sup>122</sup> Another entry regulates the communal positions that former *shtadlanim* may hold.<sup>123</sup> These safeguards against possible corruption are bolstered by decrees demanding that all of the *shtadlan*'s actions be taken only after consultation with communal elders.<sup>124</sup> Such warnings against independent-minded *shtadlanim* were, again, particularly

<sup>117</sup> Halpern, *Takanot medinat mehrin*, doc. 509, p. 177.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 615 (1), p. 219; doc. 329 (4), p. 108.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 606 (9), pp. 214–15; doc. 646, p. 230.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 589, p. 206.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 177, pp. 57–8; doc. 100, p. 33.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 509 (5), p. 177. See also doc. 557 (7), p. 192.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 533 (10), p. 184.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 515 (11), p. 179; doc. 350 (13), p. 116; doc. 329 (4), p. 108.

stringent with regard to financial affairs. Several entries limit the amount of money a *shtadlan* was allowed to disburse without the prior approval of communal elders.<sup>125</sup> These attempts to pre-empt potential conflicts of interest and to prevent any *shtadlan* from accumulating too much power mirror actions taken by institutions in Poland–Lithuania.

Like their counterparts in the Commonwealth, leaders of the Moravian community claimed the exclusive right to appoint and direct communal representatives. An entry for 1650 demands that only official representatives attend the intercommunal congresses.<sup>126</sup> Here, too, any self-appointed leader is subject to severe punishment. The record calls not only for the expulsion of any non-commissioned representative from the congress, but also for financial penalties. On its own, this decree may be seen as an attempt to discourage impostors while simultaneously limiting the use of and expenses involved in hiring professional ad hoc *shtadlanim*. However, its placement among other documents designed to reassert the community's power underscores the degree to which this was intended to serve as a clear warning to those who might be tempted to circumvent communal institutions.

This brief survey of the Moravian community's records reflects a number of phenomena common to both the Moravian and the Polish–Lithuanian communal institutions. In both cases, the communal institutions employed individual Jews to lobby the non-Jewish authorities; implemented similar strategies of lobbying the Crown, high ministers, and government commissions; and attempted to maintain exclusive control over such representations.

However, despite these parallels, it is important to note the differences between the two records. Unlike the communal records of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Moravian community's records make little, if any, reference to the use of non-Jewish officials as secondary intercessors, the practice of gaining favour via the distribution of cash or gifts, or the need to flatter, bribe, or lobby local officials. Furthermore, the Moravian community seemed far more concerned with the possibility of external intervention in communal affairs than any of the Polish–Lithuanian institutions. The reasons for these disparities may be found either in the differences between the distribution of power in Moravian lands and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, or in differences between the accepted modes of political behaviour in the two lands. The relatively high degree of political decentralization in Polish lands apparently led to an increased need to build alliances at many different levels and to use more persuasive means—such as gifts of money and the use of non-Jewish proxies—to achieve desired goals. At the same time, however, this decentralization may have allowed the Jewish communal institutions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth to develop a much more intricate system of internal autonomy. Thus, references to attempts by outside authorities to intervene directly in internal communal affairs appear much more frequently in the

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 555 (5), p. 192; doc. 496, pp. 170–1.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 51, p. 18.



Moravian record book. These reforms reflect successful attempts by the central authorities in 1728, 1748, and 1754 to limit the Jewish community's autonomy.<sup>127</sup>

Despite these differences, both Jewish communities chose to communicate with the authorities via *shtadlanim*. In the end, this method of representation—the basic tenets of which were never challenged—gave the Jewish communities a political system that allowed them to appeal to the authorities without threatening their own exclusive control over communal representation, policy, and power.

The similarity of the political actions used by different Jewish communities adds weight to the interpretation that the *shtadlan* represented a uniquely Jewish means of political representation. Maskilic and nationalistic condemnations of Jewish political behaviour typify the school of thought according to which the Jewish community unnecessarily resorted to scurrilous or self-abasing behaviour in order to achieve short-term and short-sighted goals. However, such conclusions hinge on the assumption that Jewish communities had the option to choose between different styles of political action, and that despite these options they consistently chose the one which forwarded immediate interests at the expense of the community's long-term political development.

The degree to which intercession was indeed a phenomenon particular to the Jewish community can be further examined by analysing the experiences of another corporate group in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: the Scots. In an article comparing Jewish society in Poland with that of other ethnic groups,<sup>128</sup> Hundert concludes that 'we have found clear evidence that other non-Polish, primarily commercial groups came to organize themselves in ways similar to the Jews. This suggests that contemporary Polish conditions were partially responsible, along with Jewish traditions which antedated the arrival of Jews in Poland, for the course of development of the Jewish institutions.'<sup>129</sup> The rest of this section will re-evaluate Hundert's findings in the light of documents detailing the activities of the Scottish community in Poland.<sup>130</sup>

An examination of these documents reveals several parallels between Scottish and Jewish communities.<sup>131</sup> While there is no evidence that the various Scottish institutions employed a specific, professional representative to act as an intermediary between the community and the authorities, communal elders themselves often served as official, apparently ad hoc, emissaries.<sup>132</sup> For example, a record of the Lublin Brotherhood for 1710 lists expenses incurred as a result of Jacob Gregorie's journey to the 'Warsaw Free Council'.<sup>133</sup> The records for 1727 contain two separate entries for 'travelling expenses to Tursk for the Synod'.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Halpern, *Takanot medinat mehrin*, pp. x-xii.

<sup>128</sup> G. D. Hundert, 'On the Jewish Community in Poland during the Seventeenth Century: Some Comparative Perspectives', *Revue des Études Juives*, 117 (1983), 349-72.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 370.

<sup>130</sup> A. F. Steuart, *Papers Relating to the Scots in Poland, 1576-1793* (Edinburgh, 1915).

<sup>131</sup> For more information on these brotherhoods, see *ibid.* 76-8. See also Hundert's analysis in 'Security and Dependence', pp. ii, xiii-xiv, xxii-xxiii, 52-60, 235-6.

<sup>132</sup> Steuart, *Papers Relating to the Scots in Poland*, 78-9.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 175.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 212-13.

The weight of these documents is further bolstered by Goldberg's comment that representatives to the Sejms were used to seeing a deluge of 'arbitrators and representatives of various organizations and lobbies'.<sup>135</sup> Davies also notes the regular presence of lobbyists and other unofficial representatives at the Warsaw Sejm.<sup>136</sup> While it would be an exaggeration to conclude that such entries represent a coherent system of political representation and action, they do illustrate that the practice of sending communal representatives to the Sejm and local *sejmiki* was not specifically limited to Jewish communities.

Other records relating to the Scottish communities shed more light on the political realities of the time. In one entry the Lublin Brotherhood records a payment to the 'Royal Chancellery' for the procurement of the 'Privilege for Żmigród'.<sup>137</sup> This entry is strikingly similar not only to the Jewish practice of lobbying the authorities for the renewal of privileges and charters, but also to the Jewish community's practice of paying, either in cash or with gifts, for the procurement of such documents.

Another document reflecting common modes of political behaviour is an oath of loyalty taken in 1681 by a member of the community upon entering the 'Ancient Borough of Warsaw'. The vow includes a pledge not to be swayed by various temptations and 'to fulfil all my duties with faithfulness and conscientiousness, and not for gifts from friends, from fear, hatred, or anger, or other reasons which might deter therefrom'.<sup>138</sup> This clause further underscores the degree to which financial incentives and various forms of social pressure were used on a society-wide basis.

This brief examination of the Scottish community in Poland confirms Hundert's conclusion that some of the strategies and actions that the Jewish community employed may be considered by-products of the political realities in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The use of emissaries, the need to concentrate energies on the Sejm and related commissions, and the regular distribution of money or gifts appear to have been practices employed not only by the Jewish community. Indeed, while the records of the Scottish brotherhoods do not reflect a complex political apparatus, they do bring to light many parallels between Jewish and non-Jewish corporate communities.

At the same time the Moravian community records reveal a great deal of similarity between the structure and operating procedures of Jewish communities in Polish and Moravian lands. Hence, many of the entries describing the *shtadlan's* role and responsibilities in Moravia are almost identical to records detailing Polish *shtadlanut*. Furthermore, while the Moravian community's records reveal a political system that is much less developed than that of the Polish communities, the nature of the *shtadlan's* missions and activities are virtually identical. These

<sup>135</sup> Goldberg, 'The Jewish Sejm: Its Origins and Functions', in A. Polonsky, J. Basista, and A. Link-Lenczowski (eds.), *The Jews in Old Poland* (London, 1993), 160; Goldberg, *Jewish Privileges*, 37; and *id.*, 'Va'ad arba aratsot', 137.

<sup>136</sup> Davies, *God's Playground*, i. 338.

<sup>137</sup> Steuart, *Papers Relating to the Scots in Poland*, 175.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 326.

similarities add credence to the argument that Jewish communities in different lands adopted similar modes of political organization and behaviour.

However, if these political apparatuses and mores were uniquely Jewish, then are we to conclude that the Scottish community in Poland was practising a Jewish mode of political behaviour? While the political organization, representation, and behaviour of the Jewish community may have been more intricate than that of other corporate communities, it was not, by any stretch of the imagination, unique.

#### EPILOGUE: WHAT'S SO JEWISH ABOUT JEWISH POLITICS?

'And these messengers went with heads bent low?'

'Do we ever do anything but with heads bent? Could we do it any other way?'

Y. L. PERETS, *The Dead Town*

Like any other social, cultural, or political transformation, the new school of Jewish politics that emerged in eastern Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century defined itself in relation to the fathers against which the sons and daughters revolted. Through this search for a new style of politics, the *shtadlan* evolved into one of the central images against which the new generation of activists revolted and, in the process, defined itself.<sup>139</sup>

In order for their Nietzschean transvaluation of the Jewish world to take place, however, the avant-garde had to convince potential supporters that the solution to the Jewish community's woes lay in resolving problems that were both particularistic and intrinsic to the Jewish community. Indeed, if the sources of the problems at hand were common to both Jews and non-Jews, then the solution would lie in a transformation of the entire society. While some Jewish political parties advocated the large-scale restructuring of entire societies, others concentrated on restructuring the Jewish world. In the eyes of the latter group, a unique history was directly responsible for the sorry state of the Jewish community's political development. The *shtadlan*, as a central symbol, if not the actual personification, of this apolitical political past, bore the responsibility for the sins of the past as well as for their present-day ramifications. Thus, the collective memory was shaped to suit the political and ideological goals of those who controlled and defined the historical agenda.

However, like their nationally oriented sons and daughters, the fathers were also products of their own particular environment. In this case, the environment was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a once mighty dynasty whose central authority was constantly challenged by ambitious magnates and jealous bureaucrats, corporate communities and Church officials, hostile external powers and less than loyal

<sup>139</sup> See the citation of Y. L. Perets in Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics*, 156; see also S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day* (Philadelphia, 1918), ii. 160, 308.

internal forces. In this state of increasing political decentralization a set of political institutions, codes, and modes of behaviour coalesced. The purpose of this chapter has been to examine these institutional developments and the political culture they engendered. On the basis of this examination it can be argued that many of the institutions often associated with the 'Jewish political tradition' can also be seen as direct by-products of a particular political system and not as the inevitable result of any specific group's predestined historical development.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Note Elazar and Cohen's comment that 'There has been very little regard for the fact that the present behavioral patterns of the Jewish political world, revolutionary though some of them might seem, are in essence extensions and modifications of what can only be described as a Jewish political tradition' (Elazar and Cohen, *Jewish Political Organization*, 1). For additional teleological interpretations of the 'Jewish political tradition', see *ibid.* 13, 21, 211, and 217.