

# The Making of Modern Ukraine

## 08 - Early Jews of Modern Ukraine

Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp495Uz\\_Cq4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp495Uz_Cq4)

00:00 All right, good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Maxsimas Milta.

I am a graduate student at European and Russian Studies program here at Yale, and also one of the teaching fellows for this class, and as the syllabus says, today's lecture is focused on the history of Jews in Ukraine, and we learned earlier that Jews are among those people who lived the longest in the territory of modern-day Ukraine, and hence, the topic of today, and the lecture will be today delivered by our special guest, Professor Glenn Dynner.

Glenn Dynner is the Carl and Dorothy Bennett Professor of Judaic Studies and director of Bennett Center at Fairfield University.

Since 2014, he has served as a professor of religion and chair of religion department at Sarah Lawrence College.

01:00 Professor Dynner holds a PhD from Brandeis University in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, and his scholarship focuses mostly on Eastern European Jewry, and more specifically, on the social history of Hasidism and Haskalah, also known as Jewish Enlightenment.

He also works on the topics of Polish Jewish relations, Jewish economic history, and popular religion.

Professor Dynner is the author of two award-winning books.

One of them is called "Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society," and the other one is called "Yankel's Tavern: Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland." Currently, Professor Dynner works on the book titled "The Light of Learning: The Hasidic Revival in Poland on the Eve of the Holocaust." For those of you who consider an academic career in your future, I'd like to emphasize the fact that Professor Dynner is also a coeditor of "Shofar," a journal of interdisciplinary Jewish studies, and he also serves on the editorial boards of "POLIN" and "East European Jewish Affairs" journals.

02:06 He's a member of several Jewish studies related advisory and academic boards, including YIVO, and also, an academic advisory board of the Fortunoff Archive here at Yale.

Professor Dynner, welcome to Yale, and thank you for joining us.

- Okay, thanks, Max.

(audience clapping) Thank you.

Yeah, it's great to be here.

I guess you figured out I'm not Timothy Snyder, and I teach at Fairfield, which is down the highway a little bit, and I missed my exit, and somehow I wind up here, which is a great honor, so I'm gonna be talking a little bit about the Jews of Ukraine up to the year 1648.

I understand you guys came up to the Battle of Grunwald in 1410, so I'm gonna go a little

bit beyond that because honestly, not a whole lot is known about the Jewish communities in this part of Eastern Europe before then, and so we're gonna go through all this, and we're gonna come up to 1648.

03:03 I assume, to this point, you've really been learning about the story of colonizers and the colonized.

Colonizers being Lithuanians, and then Poles, which you're just starting to get into, and the colonized being Ukrainians in this part.

What I would like to talk about today is a third very prominent group, and that's the Jewish community, which is neither one of these things, right? The Jews constitute a diaspora group, meaning they're without a homeland, so to speak.

They're a guest, and they have to somehow mediate between these colonizers and the colonized.

There's certain advantages to being a diaspora group, if you think about it.

They have a pretty far-flung social and mercantile network.

04:02 They speak their own language and are able to cultivate, you know, an elite culture or subculture in these parts, and, you know, it's a situation of where they're able to obtain economic niches and have a great deal of mobility.

Those things are true.

However, it's also a situation of physical vulnerability.

The Jews are members of a, well, ostensibly problematic religion, and, you know, as a result of this, they really wind up serving the more powerful groups, meaning the Lithuanian and the Polish colonizers, and this works out for a while until they really pay a horrible price for this, you know, because Ukrainians are gonna rise up under Chmielnicki, and Chmielnicki is an anticolonial hero from a Ukrainian perspective, but from a Jewish perspective, after a series of horrific massacres, you know, Chmielnicki, for them, is a vicious persecutor, and this is kind of the price that they pay.

05:20 I wanna start with the bad news and then move on to better news.

The bad news is Jews, as you probably figured out, are a pariah group, as some of the things I mentioned indicate, and that has very deep roots here.

It goes all the way back, in fact, to early church fathers.

The most benign, and, I would say, the formula that's basically adopted throughout most of real everyday life is probably that one that's attributable to Augustine, okay? And we'll go into that in a minute, but first, I just want to address this image, which, if you can make it out, is really a kind of image of ambivalence because over here on this side you have Jewish merchants, traders.

06:15 They don't look very prosperous.

On the other side, you have peasants in their holiday garb, and the painter is called (indistinct), who would paint Polish and Ukrainian kind of everyday life, landscapes, and depict sort of scenes of everyday life.

They're together.

They're gathered in front of a tavern, but you can tell they're pretty apart, right? They're divided by their dress.

They're divided by their language.

You know, Jews are speaking Yiddish, predominantly, and the peasants have their own local dialect.

It's gonna be a Slavic language, and there's little kind of communication between them.

07:01 The Jews are also involved in very different activity, you know, as traders, as petty merchants, compared to the peasants who, on their holiday are dancing, and they're enjoying themselves, probably drinking, and inside, if we went in there, we would probably

see a Jewish tavernkeeper.

Jews leased taverns and distilleries from the nobility.

The vast majority of taverns and distilleries throughout these regions were actually run by Jews, and you really have sort of a, I would say, an interaction, but not an integration, right? An interaction within very prescribed social categories.

You can call it a symbiosis because Jews are providing essential services, the peasants providing essential services to them, but, of course, it can also develop into real animosity, misunderstanding, resentment, and outright violence, so that's why I would call it a situation of ambivalence.

08:03 Where does the pariah status come from? If we go back to Augustine, I'd like to look at this text very closely because it looks like anti-Semitism, but it's not really intended to be so.

This is from his "Contra Faustum": "It is not, as you say, not by bodily death "shall the ungodly race of carnal Jews perish," and what he's basically saying is you can't kill Jews.

You know, they may have rejected Christ, but they live among us, and they're not to be harmed bodily, and this is in a context of forced conversions at this time period, you know, outright violence and death, and so he's really actually proscribing this.

He's forbidding this kind of thing.

"For whoever destroys them in this way, "shall suffer sevenfold vengeance," that is, shall bring upon himself the sevenfold penalty under which the Jews lie for the crucifixion of Christ, and so he is blaming Jews for the death of Christ, and decide, or at least the murder of the human embodiment of God, is a pretty heavy penalty, so to the end of the seven days of time, the continued preservation of the Jews will be proof to believing Christians of the subjection merited by those who, in the pride of their kingdom, put the Lord to death, and here is perhaps the most dangerous formula of all because what it's basically saying is Jews are to be kept around in a state of misery, right? As witness to what happens when you reject Christ, but they're to be kept around.

09:51 Now, the reason why I consider this so dangerous is what happens when Jews don't fulfill that role of misery, of subjection? What happens then? What happens when they're perceived as maybe violating that hierarchy, even subverting that hierarchy? And, of course, at the heart of anti-Semitism is the claim of excessive Jewish power, influence, and wealth, and all these things come into play, so what I'm asking is is this formula a license to kill when that, the Jewish part of the deal is not held up, right? The subjection or the misery, and, you know, I think that kind of explains the trajectory that we're gonna follow.

10:38 Most of the time, most of the time, Jews are gonna lead a relatively prosperous and stable existence, but then there are these episodes, extremely violent devastating episodes, today, what we would call genocide in some cases, you know, and, you know, are Jews even aware of this bargain? Are they aware of this formula? It seems they are, to an extent, because rabbinical leaders will actually forbid ostentatious display like jewelry and fancy clothing and that kind of a thing, and they'll try very hard, but it's very hard to control such things also.

11:17 That being said, so we've got this kind of, I would say, dangerous balancing act, you know, and it's like a collective balancing act and this collective sense of ambivalence.

That being said, most of the Jews of the world are going to move to this part of the world, not all the Ukraine.

It's gonna be, also, you know, the Polish kingdom and other lands in Eastern Europe, but it's pretty incredible.

75% of the world's Jewish population is going to reside in Eastern Europe by the 19th century, and there's a reason for that.

12:00 It can't be that horrible if they're living there.

It certainly can't be that deadly.

The reason for that is that stability and relative prosperity.

They have economic autonomy.

They're not allowed to own land, yet that can also be, I suppose, an advantage because they move into somewhat more lucrative pursuits like trade, crafts, moneylending, and most importantly all, as time develops, leaseholding from the nobility.

They will lease pretty much all of the nonagricultural enterprises of the nobles.

Political autonomy.

We're gonna see how they develop virtually self-government.

Now, later on, anti-Semitic claims are gonna be that they constitute a state within a state.

I think that goes way too far.

You know, it's all contingent on the Polish landowners who own the vast majority of land in these areas and linguistic autonomy.

13:02 The vernacular everyday language is Yiddish, a combination of German and Hebrew with some Slavic elements thrown in, and then Hebrew, which functions a lot like Latin as an elite clerical language, a literary language, one that's not really spoken until the rise of Zionism.

Now, we can go way back to the origins of Jewish presence in what becomes the Ukraine, but historians will often start with the Khazar kingdom, and it's kind of exciting to historians to think that there was a Jewish kingdom.

Supposedly, the king converted to Judaism.

There's a classic called the "Kuzari," which tells this story how the king had a representative from the Christians and the Jews and the Muslims, and he chose Judaism, and it's exciting because you thought that it was only ancient Israel.

14:03 That was the last time that you had autonomy, and suddenly, we find we have this Jewish kingdom, and there are little bits of evidence here and there that such a Jewish kingdom existed, letters, mentionings in chronicles and that kind of a thing.

It's kind of a mess because there are historians who accept this and who devote their whole careers to writing about this, and then there are historians who completely deny it, who think this whole thing was a myth and that all these sources are forged.

Your reading was Dan Shapiro's article.

It's probably the best article we have on the origins of, you know, Jewish presence in the Ukrainian lands.

He kind of, he contradicts himself.

He kind of does both.

On the first page you'll notice he says, "There was no Jewish elite that converted," you know, "in the Khazar kingdom," and then, three three pages later, he's quoting it.

He's citing it.

15:00 He's mentioning it, and if you look at the footnote, he says that Pritzak's book on this, which goes through a lot of these sources, is complete nonsense, and I could write a whole book, you know, that contains all the mistakes in this work, and then, those three pages later, he's quoting Pritzak, so, you know, we're all over the place with this, and I think part of the problem is it's been politicized because if you are an anti-Zionist, it becomes very interesting, the possibility that actually Jews didn't originate in, you know, ancient Israel.

They originated in Khazaria, and this is something that the early Zionists are actually having to contend with, and so really, every anti-Zionist gets very excited about this possibility, and, of course, every Zionist historian is very interested in refuting even the existence of a Jewish presence in this kingdom, so Shaul Stampfer recently published an article in which he went through all these sources and showed they were all complete fabrications and nonsense, and that's where we are, so I can't say anything for sure about the Khazar kingdom other than, I don't know, maybe where there's smoke there's fire.

16:08 That may be the best that we can do.

There might have been some indication of a Jewish presence there among certain elites, but

we're on more solid ground when we get into Kievan Rus, and here's a map.

I watched a few of Professor Snyder's YouTube videos, and I noticed he didn't use a lot of maps, so here's a good opportunity to see what it looks like.

Anybody know what the Golden Horde is? Yeah, what's the Golden, well, not asking the grad students going- - Mongols.

- What? - The Mongols.

- Mongols, right? Do, you know, why it's called the Golden Horde? Their battle tents were gold, and so that's how they got this name, and I don't think it's pejorative, but I'm not 100% sure, so that's the Mongols over there, and we have Jewish presence is really on an axis, kind of a diagonal axis running through Kiev, and I looked at a map of trade routes, and sure enough, it's towns along a trade route leading into Hungary, and that's how the Jewish presence is determined there.

17:09 It's an unstable existence, you know, and it's not very permanent, and you find little tiny mentionings here and there.

It's not a sizeable Jewish presence there at all.

Where it's gonna get much bigger is when the Grand Duchy of Lithuania comes into the picture and effectively colonizes these areas.

Now, the Jews are temporarily expelled.

Some link it to the expulsion of Jews from Spain.

I guess it was a copycat expulsion.

That's what you read sometimes, but then, when he changes his mind a few years later, it's revoked under the same monarch, and now you have approximately 4,000 Jews in 24 Ukrainian towns.

That doesn't sound like a whole lot.

18:00 It's a frontier kind of existence where we find evidence of Jews actually taking part in the defense of these towns, which are under a lot of pressure from Tatars, especially.

They're learning to shoot.

They're doing even military exercises.

It's not your typical image of East European Jews, so it's kind of interesting, but they do manage to survive, and it becomes safer and safer as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania really sort of concretizes its presence there, and then you start to have more Jews moving in, and that's where we are, really, with our knowledge about these areas.

I mean, there's not a whole lot more, and we're kind of just about up to the point where you are in the...

I think we're past the point that you are chronologically, so now we're gonna go beyond that a little bit for the next 100 years or so, and this is where Poland, Crown Poland is gonna come into the picture, and I really call this colonization full-fledged because it is kind of a big land grab.

19:10 You know, you have Polish nobles, petty nobles, magnates, these large landholders, coming in and just grabbing up as much territory as they possibly can.

It's the result of the actual agreement called the Union of Lublin whereby the threat of Russia is such that Lithuania kind of accedes to this agreement, which seems to really benefit the Poles.

It's almost like a protection agreement, it seems like, and you'll probably learn a lot more about it, but for our purposes today, those Polish nobles are going to bring Jews in to settle their towns and to run their enterprises, and this is what it looks like, so the dark gold parts are what the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is, and these other parts are Poland, and this comes to be known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and by 1648, you go from 4,000 to 40,000 Jews living in 115 Ukrainian towns, and, you know, that colonizing activity is very good for the Jews because they have these economic possibilities.

20:32 They're still not allowed to own land, but what they do is they begin leasing the various enterprises.

Now, I'm gonna put a question to you.

Why is leaseholding, like, leasing a tavern or a mill, better, from the Jewish perspective, than owning it? And I'll give you a big hint.

They're leasing it from the all-powerful nobility.

21:01 Any ideas why it's better to lease than to own? Yeah.

- You have the protection of the nobles.
- You got it right away.

It's you have the protection the nobles.

Nobody is going to burn down a tavern if it belongs to the noblemen, but as, I mentioned before, you know, Jews are in a very physically vulnerable situation, so this leaseholding arrangement is actually very beneficial to Jews because they get noble protection, at least from that standpoint.

They're also being taxed pretty mercilessly, and the nobles don't want their best taxpayers to be, you know, physically assaulted either, so it's not the most stable situation, but it's one of, it's good enough.

You know, they have Polish protection.

Now, what's in it for the nobility? Why Jews? And I'll give you another hint.

It's not because they like Jews.

In fact, it's very much the opposite, so why would you invite Jews in to lease your various enterprises? Any ideas? Yeah? - Maybe so you can, like, keep your eye on them, make sure that they're not doing anything you don't want them to be doing.

22:14 - For sure.

I mean, there's a lot of control involved as well, but okay, yeah? - Wasn't moneylending sort of like disbelief? - Okay, good, so it's not quite true.

You know, you do have actual banks, at a certain point, the nobles can borrow from, but there are a lot of hoops to jump through, and Jews represent easy credit, you know, and you're in a socially superior position to your creditor, so that becomes very tempting, and Jews are involved very much in moneylending, and it's funny because what I base a lot of this on is an article, a series of articles by Shmuel Ettinger.

They're in Hebrew, so most of you wouldn't have access to them, but they're the most, I would say, full information about this time period and this place, and he spends a lot of pages trying to argue that Jews really weren't that involved in moneylending, but then he contradicts himself too.

23:15 I think moneylending has a bad image, but the fact of the matter is people needed credit, you know, and this is where they could get it, for the most part, so yes, moneylending's a big part of it.

Anything else about Jews that makes them attractive as leaseholders? Yeah? - Does it have something to do with the fact that because they're just, they can't enter other industries or they can't own land, then there's guarantee that they'll serve that role or that- - Very much so.

I would call it a captive service sector.

You know, they don't have a lot of options.

Yeah.

- Because they're not necessarily paying a tithe to the church, maybe they're (indistinct) be a good source of tax revenue.

Is that- - Okay, so that's a complicated question.

Yes, they're great source of tax revenue, but believe me, they're paying more taxes than anybody.

24:02 They're paying taxes to the crown, and we'll go into that a little bit.

They don't pay tithe to the church.

That's actually an interesting point that I haven't thought about a lot, so that's a great point, but they're paying so many other ways, including to their own communities, and I'm not, it probably offsets, but absolutely.

Now, one thing nobody thought of yet is politics.

No matter how wealthy your Jewish leaseholder is going to become, and some of them really do quite well by this system, they're never gonna be a political threat to you, okay? And I can add other things, business acumen, you know, historically involved in trade.

Where they came from was Western and Central Europe, especially the German- and Czech-speaking lands, and in those areas, they worked as merchants a lot of the time until they were pushed out by the townspeople.

25:03 They're also being pushed out of parts of Poland proper, we could call it, Crown Poland, by the same Christian townspeople, and they're moving.

They're being pushed into these areas, so it's actually, it's a great boon to the Jews who are losing opportunities in one place to be able to come to another place, but, of course, this is all a colonial scheme, so it's volatile.

It's dangerous, you know.

Jews are running these leases, but, you know, they're not very popular with the peasants who are now being enserfed, and this is like a second serfdom, it's called, and so there we have Augustine's rule being violated because they're in a position of superiority to the surrounding peasants by running these taverns and mills and tolls and so on.

It becomes a real problem.

It becomes intolerable.

26:02 Now, this is the reason they're not allowed to own land because if they own land, they're gonna be lording it directly over peasants who are farmers, essentially, and that's intolerable.

It just, the optics are too bad, but to run a tavern and a mill and so on, that's seen as okay except from the perspective of the peasants, who really experience this in a negative way, obviously, and, you know, we have a volatile system, but it's held in place as long as the Polish nobility is in power, and here's the thing.

The nobility doesn't want the headache of collecting taxes directly from these Jews.

Plus, they can't be trusted to, you know, pay their taxes, and they all seem to have the same name, like Yitzchak ben Moshe and so on.

You know, there's like 17 of them in one town, and so what they do is they entrust the Jewish communities, first Jewish tax collectors, specifically, and then the kahals, which is the Jewish self-government, to collect the taxes for them, and in the process, they're giving the kahal...

27:17 I guess you'd compare it to a municipality.

They're giving the kahals complete autonomy, almost, to run daily affairs, to manage the garbage collection and keep the streets clean and try to make sure people don't encroach on each other's leases, and they manage the educational system, and they start to develop these extensive instruments of autonomy to the point where when there are disputes between communities, they develop regional councils, and then, a real game changer is when the crown basically says, "Okay, we just want a lump sum from you," you know? "Forget about the individual communities collecting taxes.

28:04 "Give us one lump sum," and then the Grand Duchy of Lithuania says the same thing, and that's when developing out of that is the Council of Four Lands, which is kind of like

functioning as not just a supreme IRS, a supreme tax collector, but a supreme court that's adjudicating disputes between communities, that deals with, really, you call them national problems, a blood libel accusation, a ritual murder accusation, the accusation that Jews have killed a Christian child and used their blood for their, used the blood for their rituals, which never happened, I should emphasize, but it was kind of like the rumor that refused to go away because it symbolically reenacts the crucifixion, and it has a lot of resonance that way, so, you know, this Council of Four Lands would have somebody intervene and try to prevent, you know, this thing from getting out of control.

29:01 They would negotiate the taxes, and they would serve as a supreme court in secular matters.

Now, each kahal also had a rabbinical court, so the entire Jewish community is known as the kehila.

It's run by the kahal, but they also have rabbis who are sort of separate from everything.

That Council of Four Lands is mainly merchants, is mainly wealthy merchants and leaseholders, okay? The rabbis meet separately, and they tend to judge religious matters, which makes a lot of sense until you try to figure out what a religious matter is.

It's not so clear.

Murder seems to be a religious matter.

Theft, kind of, but it's also a business matter, so there's a lot of, like, jurisdictional disputes going on between rabbinical courts and lay courts, but by and large, you know, when things are functioning smoothly, they support each other, and there's a actual power to excommunicate members that's never really used, but the threat of excommunication, called the herem, is enough to scare people into obeying the authority of these various courts because being excommunicated would really be truly horrible.

30:16 You know, you would really have no place to go in Christian society, in Jewish society, and it's like social death, and a really devastating condition to be in.

It's never used until the rise of the false messianic movement of Shabbetai Tzvi, which happens later on.

We'll maybe touch upon at the very end.

Now, a shtadlan is a very important function.

The shtadlan is a lobbyist, and every community would have one.

He speaks the language of the land.

He knows the laws really well.

He's charming and has somewhat of a secular education, so a lot of times doctors would serve this purpose, and he basically is the go-between.

31:00 You know, he'll talk to the authorities when something goes wrong, and this is kind of like, you know, Jewish foreign policy, you could call it.

You know, this is how they defend their communities, through lobbying, yes, through giving of bribes.

I mean, this was actually totally on the books, out in the open.

It was a normal way of doing business.

You bribed the secular officials to protect your community, and no one seemed to see anything wrong with that.

Now, with this extensive autonomy, really, the most extensive autonomy since antiquity, you also have the development of vibrant religious life and the wooden synagogues.

Here's one in Khodoriv in the Ukrainian territories.

They can develop very ornate, beautiful artwork even though they're wooden synagogues, which suggests less wealth.



Beautiful ceiling paintings.

Down in the corner there, I put an image of this guy, who's chained to the synagogue wall outside by his neck.

32:05 Any idea what he did wrong? He broke the Sabbath, so this is actually called the kuna, and I put it there to remind us not to get too nostalgic about this flourishing religious life 'cause there's a lot of religious compulsion involved too.

You know, keeping the Sabbath was not a choice, at least not throughout this period of time, and if you go to the town of Czestochowa in Poland, you can actually see one of these on the synagogue wall.

It's pretty interesting.

Most people could pay a fine and get out of it, you know, and they would prefer to pay the fine than be publicly humiliated in this way, but it was there.

Now, Jews are able to move into cities, but again, you come into direct conflict with the Christian townspeople, and economics is something that's perceived in an ethnic way, right? There are groups against groups, Christians against Jews, and the Christians manage to exact a lot of money and payment from Jewish merchants, so it becomes very expensive to do business in cities, and that's where your leaseholding comes in, and the official word for lease is arenda.

33:19 You may see it in your readings.

The arenda can be a lease on everything we've talked about and some things we didn't talk about: tolls on roads, ponds.

You can lease the tax, and then you get to keep anything over the amount that you collect.

You can lease entire villages, taverns, and distilleries.

This is an absolute boon to Jews, economically, but let's just say it's not good to be a serf in this situation, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth comes to be known, as I don't know if you've heard this before, heaven for the nobles, paradise for the Jews, and hell for the serfs.

The reason is this is an arrangement that is not only economically debilitating for the serfs who have to continually work, you know, the nobleman's land for free along with whatever land they're able to work of their own, which is very small.

34:13 They have to, you know, pay the Jewish tavernkeeper.

They have to pay the Jewish miller.

There are even rumors that Jews lease the churches and held keys to the churches, which would be really humiliating, but some historians have said that's actually not the case, but that is something that made its way up through Ukrainian lore is that you even had to beg to use your own church, you know, so it's a really humiliating situation, whether that last thing is true or not, and that's the reason for the volatility, but nobody's going to attack the Jewish leaseholder for the simple reason that he's under the protection of the nobleman.

Nobles own the vast majority of land.

They're increasingly more powerful than the king, who becomes an elected monarch, and they really, I would say, they own their own towns, and those are increasingly attractive to Jews to settle in.

35:12 It's a system of patronage, really.

Now, inside the tavern, you have that integration that I was talking about, but it's really more of an interaction, and here you have Jewish musicians, non-Jews who are dancing, and you have the Jewish tavernkeepers over on that side, and notice that the wife of the tavernkeeper is pouring the liquor.

I'm not sure whose child that is in the corner there, but children were very much present in these taverns as well.

This was where people would spend their leisure time.

These were also, effectively, news venues, entertainment venues, banks, country stores, especially in the smaller, you know, rural areas or small towns.

36:06 They were the hub of everything, competing, really, with the church, you know, because after the wedding, you would, you know, proceed from the church to the tavern, where you'd be met by the tavernkeeper, who's kind of like the antipriest, but what I want to emphasize is gender because women worked in the society, in Jewish society, and it was expected.

It wasn't something that women fought for as a right.

It was absolutely expected.

Your value on the marriage market was determined by what business promise you could bring to the marriage.

That would often be linguistic, like, how well you speak Polish or Ukrainian or whatever, how well you know arithmetic, and these marriages were really business partnerships.

Usually, the husband would be dealing with the suppliers.

He might drive a taxi, you know, a horse and cart during the week.

37:01 The woman would be, the wife would be serving the customers, and it's a pretty rough lifestyle, but why that's important is the Jewish familial unit presents a kind of double-barrel threat economically because both the husband and wife are working, and this is absolutely the norm.

Occasionally, you have the situation where an extremely learned and accomplished rabbi would study all day long and the wife would work in the marketplace or in the tavern, whatever, but that was a pretty rare occurrence, okay.

Now, one arenda dispute that I went through pretty extensively illustrates the problem with authority, the way things stand, and the importance of the development of the Council of Four Lands, that supreme court.

I just wanna go through this really quickly because what happens in this situation of leases, and this is probably a tavern that's being leased, is competition between Jews, okay? In this case, Simeon leases a liquor arenda.

38:13 Reuben attempts to purchase it for the next three years before his term is up, so he's the encroacher, and then, Simeon goes and negotiates with the local nobleman, successfully, who gives it to him.

Reuben, in this case, goes all the way to the queen and gets her scribe to support his side, and he tells the town council to award the lease to Reuben.

The towns council agree, town council agrees, but for a bribe.

Reuben pays the bribe.

Simeon bribes the nobleman, so lots of bribes going on here, and offers an even higher price, and the nobleman orders the town council to withdraw it from Reuben, and then the queen steps in and supports Reuben, so you have, like, these conflicting secular authorities that get involved, which leads me to think it's much more than a tavern.

39:01 It could be, you know, an entire right to distill, which is called (speaks in foreign language), but it's something that is pretty lucrative, so they actually don't stop with the authorities, not even the queen.

They now go to the rabbis, and the rabbis are extremely prominent in this society, which is a, you know, community of believers.

Some of these rabbis have their own yeshivas, these Talmudic academies, where they teach the Talmud all day long, but when disputes occur that have to do with some aspect of Jewish law, halakha, they will often send questions to the most prominent rabbis, and this is what happens in this case, so Rabbi Isaac Ben Bezalel of Volodymyr, he argues in favor of Simeon, and he quotes a medieval German source to basically say, "Do not encroach," okay? So he's basically anti-Reuben, anti-encroachment, but then they go to a more prominent rabbi, Isaac Luria, who's young, but he's kind of a rising star, and he actually

rules in favor of Reuben and says that the laws of encroachment don't apply 'cause this is only a potential purchase, right? The lease term hadn't begun yet, so it's a potential, it's like the next three years of the term, and he says, "It's known in the entire kingdom "that we buy the right to farm taxes and liquor "and other rights in the town with an arenda contract," and they're also accustomed to sell the arenda before the term for the first holder of the arenda expires, and they sell it to a second person, so Reuben's okay.

40:47 He's allowed to encroach, okay? Now, Luria's young.

He may be brilliant and a rising star, but he's young, so he sends it to an older rabbinic authority for a kind of second opinion, just to make sure, and this guy, his name is Rabbi Joseph Katz, and he rules, actually, against him and rules in favor of Simeon, so you see it's a whole mess.

41:14 It's a jurisdictional nightmare, and he argues that the laws of encroachment do apply to ownerless property, and only when there's a complete public agreement can that law be abrogated, and we don't know how it's resolved, but we do know that about 50 years later, the Council of Four Lands finally issues a ruling banning any Jew from bidding on an arenda that's held by a fellow Jew, and then, the Lithuanian Council steps in and agrees.

They reiterate the ban, and they give a reason: Competitive bidding causes damage to the Jewish community by raising the costs of leasing the arenda, so now, with the Council of Four Lands, which began as, basically, a tax collecting, you know, institution, we actually have it regulating daily life and economic law, and things start getting more regulated, more normal, and more in favor of Jewish business practices, but there's a downside to all this liquor sales.

42:24 It may be lucrative, and that's why people are fighting about it.

Here's a much later depiction.

You see a pretty satanic-looking Jewish tavernkeeper who's looking on unconcerned as the peasants are drunk and passed out, and, you know, this is a real problem, you know, and people begin to blame peasant drunkenness on Jews, and they accuse the Jewish tavernkeeper of, you know, driving up his drinking debts and taking advantage of the peasantry, and it causes a lot of social instability as a result.

43:01 Now, on the positive side of things, we know from rabbinic takkanot that non-Jews were also part of this thing and profiting from these arendas on liquor because you can't keep a tavern running on the Sabbath if you're Jewish or on holidays, like we just had the holiday of Rosh Hashanah.

It's not lawful, so what do they do? They have local Christians helping them to run the taverns on those days, and actually, it becomes a formal partnership because that's legally, halakh-ically, what you have to do, and so, really, you see a surprising amount of cooperation and, you know, economic integration going on at the local level where, if you really wanna spell it out, Christians are helping Jews to get around their own Sabbath restrictions so that they can remain profitable and they're also making, you know, a fair amount of money doing so, so there's a fair amount of cooperation going on.

44:07 There are rabbis who are against this practice, strenuously against it, and Rabbi Betzalel Darshan of Przemyśl blames the 1648 massacres on this practice itself.

How much time is left? - About 10 minutes.

- 10 minutes, good, okay.

(student speaks faintly) Six minutes, okay, so yeah, in very emotional language, "The blood of fathers and sons, "the blood of pious men and children, or women, "the blood of saintly men and women "and the blood of baby boys and girls "still suckling at their mother's breasts "who had never sinned or committed," sorry, "any crime, "and the blood of rabbis and their disciples "was spilled like water." This is the 1648 uprising, and Chmielnicki massacre of the Jewish communities he's talking about.

"God is righteous." We can't blame God for this, and notice he's not gonna blame the Cossacks either.

45:05 He's not gonna blame Chmielnicki.

"It is we who are wicked "because of our repeated desecrations of the Sabbath.

"A select group, "the majority of villagers who undertake arendas, "buy and sell on the Sabbath through the agency of villagers "all in a deceitful manner." They also order their gentile servants to "do such and such work, "and they sit and teach them "how to repair what has spoiled the job." This has all happening on the Sabbath, and, of course, God has punished the entire Jewish community for this.

"Oy for my eyes, which saw this many times, "and I had no way of protesting." Then he goes on, kind of like a Jewish mother.

"Now, you see what happens, and maybe you'll listen to me," and turns out nobody listens to him because this practice continues.

It's the only way of running a lucrative tavern and distillery.

In fact, rabbis get involved in writing contracts up where they form fictitious partnerships, and the practice continues, but let me go back to that Chmielnicki uprising because it's absolutely devastating, and yet I'm not gonna condone massacres, obviously, but it's understandable the position of Cossacks and Ukrainians.

46:19 Now, who are Cossacks? They're essentially peasants who resist serfdom.

They obtain horses and weaponry.

They often will ride down in the Zaporozhian district and make, carry out raids on the Ottoman territories, and the Polish army tries to use them and register them in the Polish army, but then they try to cut down their numbers, and there a series of Cossacks revolts against the Polish government, Polish Lithuanian government, and in 1648, there's a major uprising led by Chmielnicki, who's a semi-polonized Ukrainian nobleman who's been spurned.

47:05 He fell in love with a daughter of very powerful wealthy Polish nobleman who threw him into jail, and he broke out and rode down and fomented rebellion, and the rebellion...

Look, I mean, if they could reach the Polish nobility, they probably would've tried, but you can't reach them.

They're too mobile.

They're too powerful, and so who do they attack? The perceived agents of the Polish nobility, namely, the Jewish leaseholders and other Jews in their midst, and Jews are massacred in huge numbers and in very sadistic manners.

I'm not gonna read because it's absolutely horrific, and you wonder if there's like a little bit of imagination going on in these chronicles.

This is the famous one by Nathan of Hanover, but let's just say it's gruesome, and a colleague of mine, Adam Teller, has found a Polish version of this that seems to pretty much verify that this kind of thing was happening.

48:07 It's a furious massacre, and if the Jewish population pre-1648 was 40,000, only about 21,000 seemed to survive.

Many, 8,000, become refugees and are wandering across Europe.

1,000 convert to save their lives, and 3,000 are taken captive mainly by Tatars and sold in slave markets in far-flung places in the Ottoman Empire, often redeemed by the local Jewish communities there, and, you know, it's an absolute shock to the Jewish sense of security and stability.

As a result, and I'm gonna finish here, as a result, you know, there's a kind of psychic trauma to the Jewish collectivity that makes it easier for this false messiah, Shabbetai Tzvi, to arise.

49:03 You know, it's a little bit later, but he bases his whole career on vengeance for the 1648 massacres and managed to convince Jews all over the world that he's the messiah, and they follow him, and they sell off their possessions, and some move to the land of Israel convinced that the Messiah has come, but, you know, after that disappointment and throughout this period, really, Jewish communities managed to reconstitute themselves very

quickly.

We know that from the number of houses.

The Jewish population continues to increase, really significantly increase.

How do we explain this if it was such a devastating massacre? It seems that the poor were probably the main victims because they have fewer means of fleeing, you know, the Cossack armies.

The wealthy are able to flee successfully, and they can come back and reconstitute these towns, and that seems to be what happened in this case, but look, this is a point in time when the system broke down, when it didn't really work, but I just wanna end by saying that the system really worked most of the time, that this was more the exception than the rule.

50:20 There was this kind of economic-based symbiosis, really based on a relationship with the Polish nobility, and it's really only with the decline of the nobility itself towards the end of the 19th century that the system breaks down completely.

That's when you're gonna have the so-called pogroms, these anti-Jewish riots, you know, beginning the 1880s, and then 1903 to '06, and the worst being in 1919 and during the Holocaust.

This system usually worked and usually kept Jewish life in the Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe relatively secure and prosperous.

Okay, thank you.