

## Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age

# Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture

Edited by  
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

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# Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age

The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies

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with the collaboration of  
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## Chapter 20

Eveline Brugger

(Institute for Jewish History in Austria, St. Pölten [Austria])

### Small Town, Big Business: A Wealthy Jewish Moneylender in the Austrian Countryside

Sources on Jewish money-lending, especially business charters, from the late medieval duchy of Austria indicate that “dynasties” of Jewish financiers were a common occurrence among the economic elite of the Jewish communities. Some of the earliest sources on Jewish business transactions in Austria, dating from the mid-thirteenth century, already document family members working together; this practice can be found among many of the more prominent families of Jewish financiers during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, which were the most prosperous time of Jewish business in Austria. There is plenty of evidence for relatives—whether the relation was based on blood or on marriage—working together in their business dealings. The family members in question weren’t (always) living in the same place, but cooperated with relatives whose business was based in another town, sometimes even another territory.<sup>1</sup> In most of these cases, we can observe a tendency among successful business families to gravitate toward the bigger, municipal centers—the most important Jewish businessmen

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<sup>1</sup> Eveline Brugger, “Loans of the Father: Business Succession in Families of Jewish Moneylenders in Late Medieval Austria,” *Generations in Towns. Succession and Success in Pre-Industrial Urban Societies*, ed. Finn-Einar Eliassen and Katalin Szende (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 112–29; here 113–19. On the topic of Jewish business charters in Austria, see the results of the ongoing publication project “Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich” funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): Eveline Brugger and Birgit Wiedl, *Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter*. Vol. 1: *Von den Anfängen bis 1338*. Vol. 2: *1339–1365*. Vol. 3: *1366–1386* (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Bolzano: Studien Verlag, 2005, 2010, vol. 3 forthcoming in 2012): [http://injoest.ac.at/projekte/laufend/mittelalterliche\\_judenurkunden/index.php?lang=EN](http://injoest.ac.at/projekte/laufend/mittelalterliche_judenurkunden/index.php?lang=EN)

and -women were usually found in the most important cities that housed the biggest, most prosperous Jewish communities, especially in Vienna and Krems. Even if a family had far-reaching business connections or even “branch offices” in smaller communities, they usually chose the most important city for their “head office”. A big city provided more business opportunities for the elite of Jewish financiers, whose clients usually came from the upper-class citizenry and the nobility. In addition, ducal protection was stronger and more effective, thus lessening the threat of persecution for the Jewish population.<sup>2</sup>

Not all Jewish business families were in the financial business exclusively. On the contrary, it was quite common among the Jewish elite to have both rabbis and financiers among the members of a family. It was not rare for rabbis to be moneylenders themselves, either, since a rabbi or scholar was not supposed to receive financial compensation for his services and therefore had to look for other means to make a living.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most impressive examples of a family who was famous both for the scholars and for the wealthy businessmen it produced is the family of Rabbi Israel of Krems. Israel’s son Hetschel (Chaim)<sup>4</sup> of Herzogenburg counted among the most prominent Jewish financiers in the duchy of Austria in the second half of the fourteenth century, but also had a reputation as a scholar. Hetschel’s son Aron Blümlein was rabbi in Krems, then in Vienna, where he fell victim to the Gesera, the murder or expulsion of all Austrian Jews instigated by Duke Albrecht V in 1420/1421. Hetschel’s grandson Rabbi Israel Isserlein was a famous scholar in the Styrian towns of Marburg (Maribor in today’s Republic of Slovenia) and Wiener Neustadt, but also gave loans on occasion. Many family members of these rabbis

<sup>2</sup> The Pulkau persecution in 1338, which marks the first outbreak of wide-spread violence against the Jewish population in the duchy of Austria, drastically showed the limits of the protection that the authorities were able to give the Jews in more remote places. See Eveline Brugger, “Von der Ansiedlung bis zur Vertreibung—Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter,” Eveline Brugger, Martha Keil, Albert Lichtblau, Christoph Lind, and Barbara Staudinger, *Geschichte der Juden in Österreich* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2006), 123–228; here 216–19, and Birgit Wiedl’s contribution to the present volume.

<sup>3</sup> Martha Keil, “Gemeinde und Kultur—Die mittelalterlichen Grundlagen jüdischen Lebens in Österreich,” *Geschichte der Juden in Österreich* (see note 2), 15–122; here 63–64.

<sup>4</sup> Most male Jews were given a secular, “everyday” name in the vernacular and a sacred Hebrew name (*shem ha-kodesh*) to be used during religious ceremonies and for official Hebrew documents. Martha Keil, “‘Petachja, genannt Zecherl’: Namen und Beinamen von Juden im deutschen Sprachraum des Spätmittelalters,” *Personennamen und Identität. Namengebung und Namengebrauch als Anzeiger individueller Bestimmung und gruppenbezogener Zuordnung*, ed. Reinhard Härtel. Grazer grundwissenschaftliche Forschungen, 3: Schriftenreihe der Akademie Friesach, 2 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt Graz, Austria, 1997), 119–46; here 129–33.

were active as moneylenders; several of the men also held the office of *absamer* (ducal tax collector) for the Jewry of their territory.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, the descendants of Rabbi Israel of Krems would constitute a rather typical, though perhaps exceptionally successful, group among the elite of Jewish families in late medieval Austria if it weren't for the aforementioned Hetschel of Herzogenburg.

The small countryside town of Herzogenburg, situated south of the river Danube about 60 kilometers west of Vienna in the province of Lower Austria, developed out of a marketplace next to a priory of Canons Regular (founded in 1112). The area is rural even today; winegrowing has been the most important branch of agriculture since the Middle Ages, and even though there is evidence of trade (mostly wine) in and from Herzogenburg during the Middle Ages as well, it was on a fairly small scale.<sup>6</sup> Even though the big and important Jewish community of Krems was only 20 kilometers away, there is very little evidence of Jewish settlement in Herzogenburg until the middle of the fourteenth century, and it is surprising—to say the least—that a Jewish businessman of Hetschel's caliber, who for a time was the second most important Jewish financier in the duchy of Austria (surpassed only by the famous David Steuss of Vienna)<sup>7</sup> would be willing to choose such a remote place for his main residence during what can safely be considered the heyday of Jewish moneylending in medieval Austria.

In order to analyze the possible reasons for Hetschel's decision, it is necessary to put it in context with the general situation of Jews in the medieval duchy of Austria. Jewish life in Austria started later than in many other territories of the Holy Roman Empire; it was only during the first decades of the thirteenth century that Jewish communities began to develop. What followed was a lengthy struggle for the actual rule over the Jews between the Austrian duke and the emperor, which eventually ended in favor of the duke. Based on a generous ducal privilege issued in 1244, the Austrian dukes granted their Jews protection and favors in exchange for considerable taxation and ducal control of Jewish business.<sup>8</sup> This arrangement worked smoothly during the thirteenth century, which was mostly a time of peace and prosperity for the Austrian Jewry. Jewish settlement was spreading; from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, there are numerous business charters that show Jews doing business—not only moneylending, but also

<sup>5</sup> *Germania Judaica* III/1, 2, 3: 1350–1519, ed. Arye Maimon, Mordechai Breuer, and Yacov Guggenheim (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1987, 1995, 2003), III/1, 679 (Aron Blümlein); III/2, 1606 (David Steuss), 1625–1626 (Israel Isserlein).

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Hans Payrich, *Das Stift Herzogenburg. Die 875jährige Geschichte des Augustiner-Chorherrenstiftes St. Georgen-Herzogenburg von 1112–1987* (Katholisch-theologische Hochschule Linz: Unpublished Master's thesis, 1987), 1–50.

<sup>7</sup> On David Steuss and his family, see Brugger, "Loans of the Father" (see note 1), 117–18.

<sup>8</sup> Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten*. vol. 1 (see note 1), 35–38, n. 25.

selling and buying land – with noblemen, monasteries and the inhabitants both of the cities and of rural communities.<sup>9</sup>

This period was one of economic change, which increased the importance of money-based economy. Especially noble families often had difficulties in coping with this process, although some proved remarkably apt at working the new system in their favor. In the course of these developments, there is frequent evidence for the raising of money from Jewish moneylenders. The sources indicate many financial connections between the elite of Jewish financiers and noble debtors. Besides, the duke himself made use of Jewish loans, either to satisfy his own financial needs or as an instrument of power in his struggle against the opposing nobility by interfering in the business transactions between noblemen and their Jewish creditors.<sup>10</sup>

This dependency on ducal protection left the Jews in Austrian towns in a precarious situation during the first half of the fourteenth century, which brought about the first major persecutions of Jews in the duchy of Austria.<sup>11</sup> As opposed to most German cities, Austrian towns had little power over the Jewish community in their midst, which also meant no financial profit and hence no reason to value or protect them, while Jewish business was often seen as unwelcome competition and Jewish privileges were considered an unfair economic advantage over Christians.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that the first persecutions were carried out by the citizenry of the towns where the Jews lived, not by some higher authority, secular or ecclesiastical. Ducal protection often

<sup>9</sup> Brugger, “Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter” (see note 2), 127–29, 169–80; *Germania Judaica* III/3 (see note 5), 1977–85.

<sup>10</sup> Eveline Brugger, *Adel und Juden in Niederösterreich. Die Beziehungen niederösterreichischer Adelsfamilien zur jüdischen Führungsschicht von den Anfängen bis zur Pulkauer Verfolgung 1338* (St. Pölten: Niederösterreichisches Institut für Landeskunde, 2004), 32–39, 59–64; Eveline Brugger, “Do musten da hin zue den iuden varn – die Rolle(n) jüdischer Geldgeber im spätmittelalterlichen Österreich,” *Ein Thema – zwei Perspektiven. Juden und Christen in Mittelalter und Frühneuzeit*, ed. Eveline Brugger and Birgit Wiedl (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Bolzano: StudienVerlag, 2007), 122–38; here 123–30.

<sup>11</sup> Brugger, “Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter” (see note 2), 210–19; Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales. The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 57–65. See also Eveline Brugger, “Neighbours, Business Partners, Victims: Jewish-Christian Interaction in Austrian Towns During the Persecutions of the Fourteenth Century,” *Intricate Interfaith Networks: Quotidian Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ephraim Shoam-Steiner (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming, 2012); Birgit Wiedl, “The Host on the Doorstep: Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders in an Alleged Host Desecration in Fourteenth-Century Austria,” *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Connie Scarborough. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> Birgit Wiedl, “Jews and the City: Parameters of Jewish Urban Life in Late Medieval Austria,” *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 4 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 273–308; here 281.

proved ineffective, even though the dukes usually attempted to punish the attackers afterwards; thus, they were at least able to keep the Jews of Austria mostly safe during the period of the Black Plague, which brought about the persecution of Jews in many other territories of the Holy Roman Empire around the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

Yet even in Austria, sources from the decades after the plague indicate a deterioration of the situation of the Jewish population. Business charters are more numerous than before, but they indicate a decline in the protection which Jewish business received from the duke. Therefore, while the "official" legal status of the Austrian Jews did not change, their actual position became more precarious than before. A clear indication of this phenomenon is the growing number of *Tötbriefe* ("killing letters"), ducal decrees through which the duke nullified the debts of noblemen he wished to favor without any compensation for the Jewish moneylender in question.<sup>14</sup> Hand in hand with that went ducal attempts to limit the mobility of rich Jewish businessmen by seizing their property if the Jew in question left the duke's territory without permission.<sup>15</sup>

These actions were part of an ongoing development that slowly changed the overall status of Austrian Jews for the worse in the course of the fourteenth century. The Jews became one source of ducal income among many, while their status as a group under the direct protection of the duke lost significance. The loosening of the ducal protection can probably be seen most clearly in the fact that from the 1330s onward, the duke occasionally even allowed a nobleman to whom he was indebted to hold the wealthiest Jews of a city captive until they had paid him the money the duke owed.<sup>16</sup> Several times during the 1370s, the dukes themselves held the wealthiest Austrian Jews captive to extort enormous sums of ransom from them.<sup>17</sup>

Yet before the Jewish moneylending business began to feel the full impact of this policy, the third quarter of the fourteenth century became the time of the biggest business transactions. It is during that period that Hetschel of Herzogenburg got his remarkable career underway.

Hetschel was first mentioned in 1369, when his brother Zecherl granted a small loan of three pounds. The document identifies Hetschel and Zecherl as the sons

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<sup>13</sup> Jörg R. Müller, "Erez gezerah—'Land of Persecution': Pogroms Against the Jews in the regnum Teutonicum From c. 1280 to 1350," *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries)*, ed. Christoph Cluse (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 245–60; here 256–57; Michael Toch, *Die Juden im mittelalterlichen Reich*. 2nd ed. Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte, 44 (1998; Munich: Oldenburg, 2003), 62–63.

<sup>14</sup> Klaus Lohrmann, *Judenrecht und Judenpolitik im mittelalterlichen Österreich* (Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 1990), 171–73.

<sup>15</sup> Brugger, "Loans of the Father" (see note 1), 119–23.

<sup>16</sup> Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten*, vol. 1 (see note 1), 316–17, n. 407.

<sup>17</sup> Lohrmann, *Judenrecht und Judenpolitik* (see note 14), 216–17.

of Master (i. e., Rabbi) Israel of Krems. There is no mention in the document as to where Israel's sons had their residence, but it bears the seal of the Jewish judge of Herzogenburg, who acted as witness.<sup>18</sup>

The Jewish judge (*iudex Iudeorum*) was a Christian town official, usually a member of the urban elite, who was responsible for legal matters that involved both Jewish and Christian parties. He was often asked to corroborate business charters with his seal because very few Jews used seals.<sup>19</sup> Since Herzogenburg was not the residence of the Christian debtor, the involvement of the Jewish judge of Herzogenburg in the transaction can be seen as an indication that the Jewish creditors lived there or at least had some connection to the town. This is rather surprising in itself because there is no indication at this point that the number of Jews living in Herzogenburg would have warranted the appointment of a Jewish judge for them—even more so since the office rarely appears at all in market towns like Herzogenburg.

There are very few mentions of Jews living in Herzogenburg before the middle of the fourteenth century, although we know of one David of Herzogenburg who later moved to Regensburg—one of the most important Jewish communities in the Holy Roman Empire—and made a career as a businessman there, indicating a surprising connection between a small, unremarkable Austrian countryside town and one of the main centers of Jewish settlement and business activity in the Empire.<sup>20</sup> It has been speculated that Hetschel's family originated from Regensburg because in the fifteenth century, Hetschel's grandson Rabbi Israel Isserlein mentioned the graves of his forefathers in the city of Regensburg.<sup>21</sup>

While family connections between two important Jewish communities such as Krems and Regensburg were very common,<sup>22</sup> the question remains why a Jewish

<sup>18</sup> Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv (Provincial Archives of Lower Austria), Urkunden des Ständischen Archivs n. 5360; Hannelore Grahammer, "Hetschel von Herzogenburg und seine Familie," *Studien zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, ed. Martha Keil and Klaus Lohrmann (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau, 1994), 100–20; here 100.

<sup>19</sup> The standard method of corroboration for Hebrew documents was the issuer's (and sometimes the witnesses') signature. Only a select few Jews, all members of the financial elite, chose to adapt the Christian custom of using seals in their business dealings with non-Jewish customers as a demonstration of their important position. Martha Keil, "Ein Regensburger Judensiegel des 13. Jahrhunderts: Zur Interpretation des Siegels des Peter bar Mosche haLevi," *Aschkenas: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der Juden* 1 (1991), 135–50; here 135–40.

<sup>20</sup> *Germania Judaica* III/2 (see note 5), 1178–230. David of Herzogenburg makes two appearances in sources from Regensburg in the 1350s: Brugger and Wiedl, *Regesten* 2 (see note 1), 120, n. 692, 167–68, n. 799. In 1363, *David iudeus, filius Hedlini de Herczogenburga*—likely the same David—is mentioned in a rent roll of the Lower Austrian monastery of Göttweig, indicating that David returned to Herzogenburg at some point during the late 1350s or early 1360s. Adalbert Fuchs, *Urkunden und Regesten zur Geschichte des Benediktinerstiftes Göttweig*. Vol. 1: 1058–1400. *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum*, series II, 51 (Vienna: Gerold, 1901), 536, n. 602.

<sup>21</sup> Grahammer, "Hetschel von Herzogenburg" (see note 18), 102.

<sup>22</sup> Brugger, "Loans of the Father" (see note 1), 118–19.



businessman from an important family would leave the big communities behind and choose the small, rural town of Herzogenburg as his residence.

There are numerous sources on Hetschel's extensive business activities in Herzogenburg between the years 1369 and 1392, but they tell us little about his immediate family except for the standard mention of his father Israel of Krems. The name of Hetschel's wife is unknown; the business charter that indicates his death in 1392 gives us the names of four of his five sons. His fifth and most famous son, Rabbi Aron Blümlein of Vienna who died as a martyr during the Gesera, is only known from Hebrew sources.<sup>23</sup> Hetschel himself also enjoyed a reputation as a man of learning, even though his scholarly standing did not measure up to his importance as a financier.<sup>24</sup>

Hetschel's family was extremely well-connected, as it was the norm for the members of the Jewish elite. Hetschel himself upheld his close connection to Krems, his father's residence, throughout his life; besides Krems, his relations can be found among the leading members of the Jewish communities of Vienna and Salzburg. His son Aron Blümlein was rabbi of Krems for at least a decade before he took office in Vienna in 1418. Business transactions in Krems and Vienna are on record for Hetschel's sons Zecherl (Petachja, father to Rabbi Israel Isserlein), Frenzlein, and Jeklein, although none of them ever matched Hetschel's business standing; his fifth son Israel is only mentioned once together with his brothers in 1392.<sup>25</sup>

It is interesting to note that we only know the name of one female family member: Roslein, widow of Hetschel's son Frenzlein, who granted two loans in 1415 and 1416.<sup>26</sup> It is rather unusual for the women from a family of the Jewish elite to remain almost invisible in business sources; even though no other Jewish woman in late medieval Austria ever matched the importance of Plume of Klosterneuburg, "founding mother" to the Steuss dynasty in Vienna, many Jewish women (most often widows) took part in their family's business dealings and were active as moneylenders together with other family members or on their own.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Grahammer, "Hetschel von Herzogenburg" (see note 18), 103, 116–17. *Germania Judaica III/1* (see note 5), 679.

<sup>24</sup> *Germania Judaica III/1* (see note 5), 553.

<sup>25</sup> Grahammer, "Hetschel von Herzogenburg" (see note 18), 117–20.

<sup>26</sup> Rudolf Geyer and Leopold Sailer, *Urkunden aus Wiener Grundbüchern zur Geschichte der Wiener Juden im Mittelalter. Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschösterreich 10* (Vienna: Deutscher Verlag für Jugend und Volk, 1931), 510–11, n. 1708, n. 1713. Roslein's nephew Isserlein, son of Zecherl of Krems, who acted as her business partner in the document from 1415, was the future Rabbi Israel Isserlein of Marburg/Wiener Neustadt.

<sup>27</sup> Martha Keil, "Geschäftserfolg und Steuerschulden: Jüdische Frauen in österreichischen Städten des Spätmittelalters," *Frauen in der Stadt*, ed. Günther Hödl et al. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Städte Mitteleuropas, 18—Schriftenreihe der Akademie Friesach, 7 (Linz: Landesverlag, 2003), 37–62; here 51. Martha Keil, "'Maistrin' und Geschäftsfrau: Jüdische Oberschichtfrauen im spätmittelalterlichen Österreich," *Die jüdische Familie in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Sabine Hödl

Some of Hetschel's descendants occasionally appear as "Jews of Herzogenburg" in source texts, yet in most cases this seems to have been an indication of their place of origin, not of their residence.<sup>28</sup> There is generally not much to suggest that Hetschel's family ever considered Herzogenburg the center of their life or their business activities, even though Hetschel himself seems to have spent most of his adult life there—in 1390, shortly before his death, his house in Herzogenburg is mentioned in a charter from the archives of the Herzogenburg Priory.<sup>29</sup>

Hetschel's business contacts with Christian customers were not focused on Herzogenburg at all; the aforementioned charter indicating the location of his house is his only mention in the priory archives, which contain mostly local material. Hetschel's usual customers were members of the Christian nobility, both from Austria and from neighboring territories, or of the upper classes of the Viennese citizenry; entire municipalities, such as Vienna and Brunn (Brno) in Moravia, also counted among his debtors. Even though he also granted smaller loans to Viennese craftsmen on occasion, there is no indication that he had significant business contacts with the residents of the town he lived in, or with the population from the close vicinity.<sup>30</sup> Hetschel was the undisputed number two among the Austrian Jewish financiers of his time, only surpassed by the famous David Steuss of Vienna; for the inhabitants of a small countryside town, a businessman of his standing was obviously out of their league even if he lived right next to them.

Overall, it appears that Hetschel merely transferred his family business to a branch office without changing the way that business was run. Practical problems with his relocation are unlikely: Jewish businessmen were extremely mobile as a rule, and while Christian rulers sometimes punished them if they left their territory, that was not an issue with Hetschel's move from Krems to Herzogenburg.<sup>31</sup> Neither was the somewhat remote location of Hetschel's new residence: first, because he did a lot of traveling (his connection to Krems, his place of origin, in particular remained strong throughout his life), and also because his status as a financier for the Christian elites was important enough for prospective creditors to come to him if necessary.

The question remains why Hetschel chose Herzogenburg in the first place. Other important Jewish businessmen sometimes relocated their business to small, comparatively insignificant places if the ruler of the territory motivated them to do so by promising them a special privilege that granted them exemption from the general fiscal obligations of the territory's Jewry. Such a "privileged" Jew would

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and Martha Keil (Berlin and Bodenheim bei Mainz: Philo Verlag, 1999), 27–50; here 36.

<sup>28</sup> Keil, "Namen und Beinamen" (see note 3), 124–25.

<sup>29</sup> Stiftsarchiv Herzogenburg (Archives of the Herzogenburg Priory), A.n.115.

<sup>30</sup> Grahammer, "Hetschel von Herzogenburg" (see note 18), 106–12.

<sup>31</sup> Brugger, "Loans of the Father" (see note 1), 119–23.

be granted special rights by the ruler, would receive a better legal status than the other Jews and direct protection from the ruler in exchange for paying his or her taxes separately instead of having to contribute to the general Jewish tax of the territory. Some rulers even tried to lure wealthy Jewish businessmen away from neighboring territories with the promise of such special privileges.<sup>32</sup> However, we do not know of any special ducal privileges that might have encouraged Hetschel to move, and since he remained in the territory of the same ruler when moving from Krems to Herzogenburg, it seems unlikely that this was his reason for relocating his business. Might Hetschel have been trying to remove himself a little from the influence of the duke, which would have been much more immediate in an urban center like Krems or—even more so—Vienna?

A closer look at the ducal policy toward Jews in Austria around 1370 provides some clues why Hetschel might have been keen on putting some additional distance between himself and the Habsburg brothers Albrecht and Leopold, who were dukes of Austria at the time. After several decades of increasing pressure on Jewish business, Albrecht and Leopold went one step further in 1370/1371. According to narrative sources, the dukes took all Jews in their cities captive and forced them to pay enormous sums of ransom in order to regain their freedom.<sup>33</sup> The Jewry of Krems had to pay 40.000 pounds, and since Hetschel is first explicitly mentioned as a Jew of Herzogenburg shortly after, it seems likely that this act of ducal extortion was his reason to try and separate himself financially from the Jewish community of Krems in order to avoid having to pay a portion of the ransom (which, given his family's financial standing, would probably have been substantial even though Hetschel himself was still at the beginning of his career in the moneylending business).<sup>34</sup> The downside was that greater distance to the rulers also meant weaker ducal protection in the case of a persecution, but since the last outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in the duchy of Austria was two decades in the past at the time of Hetschel's move, he probably considered it a risk worth taking.

Perhaps Hetschel chose Herzogenburg because the aforementioned David of Herzogenburg, who had moved to Regensburg twenty years earlier, was related to him and therefore provided an already existing family connection to the place. There is no evidence for an established Jewish community at the time Hetschel moved there, but the existence of a Jewish judge indicates at least a (somewhat) continuous Jewish presence for some time. During Hetschel's time in Herzogenburg, we know of several other Jews living there who were not part of

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<sup>32</sup> Brugger, "Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter" (see note 2), 146–47; Wilhelm Wadl, *Geschichte der Juden in Kärnten im Mittelalter: Mit einem Ausblick bis zum Jahre 1867*. 3rd ed. Das Kärntner Landesarchiv, 9 (1981; Klagenfurt: Verlag des Kärntner Landesarchivs, 2009), 123–25.

<sup>33</sup> Lohrmann, *Judenrecht und Judenpolitik* (see note 14), 216.

<sup>34</sup> Grahammer, "Hetschel von Herzogenburg" (see note 18), 105–06.

Hetschel's immediate family. Since several of them had family connections to Krems just like Hetschel had them, Hetschel's move to Herzogenburg could have encouraged other members of his community of origin to follow his example. Unlike Hetschel, those Jews chose their business partners among the local Christian population: the Jew Trostl, son of Leubman am Eck of Krems, is mentioned twice (1372 and 1373) in the archives of the Herzogenburg Priory<sup>35</sup>; a Leubman of Herzogenburg makes several appearances in Lower Austrian charters from the 1370s, indicating that this might be a case of an entire family moving from Krems to Herzogenburg and doing business there.<sup>36</sup> Leubman seems to have spent the rest of his life in Herzogenburg and obviously did well there—in 1382, the Jewess Istyr, widow of Leubman of Herzogenburg, collected a debt from a prominent Austrian nobleman.<sup>37</sup>

Charters from the archives of the Herzogenburg Priory contain several further mentions of Jews in Herzogenburg during the last years of Hetschel's life: the aforementioned charter that locates Hetschel's house was issued by the Jewess Grässel, widow of Heman of Herzogenburg, and sealed by the Jewish judge of the town.<sup>38</sup> In the same year 1390, the Jew Efferl, brother-in-law of Yriman of Herzogenburg, bought a house in Herzogenburg, proving that Hetschel was not the only Jew to own a residence there.<sup>39</sup>

Jewish property can be traced in Herzogenburg well into the fifteenth century, as can the continuing existence of the office of Jewish judge.<sup>40</sup> Hetschel's move to Herzogenburg could very well have advanced the development of Jewish settlement in his new place of residence. However, even the presence of such an important person, who played a big role as a businessman and also had some standing as a scholar, ultimately didn't bring Herzogenburg into the "inner circle" of important Jewish communities in the duchy of Austria. The town remained a rather remote countryside place as far as Jewish settlement was concerned, and during the early fifteenth century, we learn of most of its Jewish inhabitants when they appear in the sources as Jews "of Herzogenburg" after they had moved to one of the bigger communities.

<sup>35</sup> Stiftsarchiv Herzogenburg (Archives of the Herzogenburg Priory), D.n.15a, D.n.18.

<sup>36</sup> Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (Municipal and Provincial Archives of Vienna), Bürgerspitalsurkunde n. 258; Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv (Provincial Archives of Lower Austria), Urkunden des Ständischen Archivs n. 897, n. 957.

<sup>37</sup> Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv (Provincial Archives of Lower Austria), Urkunden des Ständischen Archivs n. 1078.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>39</sup> Stiftsarchiv Herzogenburg (Archives of the Herzogenburg Priory), A.n.116.

<sup>40</sup> Eveline Brugger, "Hetschel und wer noch? Anmerkungen zur Geschichte der Juden in Herzogenburg im Mittelalter," *900 Jahre Stift Herzogenburg: Aufbrüche, Umbrüche, Kontinuität*, ed. Günther Katzler and Gabriele Stöger-Spevak (publisher to be determined, forthcoming in 2012).

Still, Jewish presence in Herzogenburg can be proved until the Gesera of 1420/1421. The Jewish report of the persecutions lists Herzogenburg as one of the destroyed communities, but unfortunately does not tell us how many Jewish inhabitants the town used to have before the persecution hit.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Arthur Goldmann, *Das Judenbuch der Scheffstraße zu Wien (1389–1420), mit einer Schriftprobe. Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutsch-Österreich. 1* (Vienna and Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1908), 127; Samuel Krauss, *Die Wiener Geserah vom Jahre 1421* (Vienna and Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1920), 80.