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Robert Chazan, *Refugees or Migrants: Pre-modern Jewish Population Movement*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2018. 262 pp. ISBN 978-0-300-21857-2.

Refugees or migrants? Since the start of the European migrant crisis in 2015, this has become a leading question in public debates about today's global migrations and has increasingly sparked the interest of scholars of past population movements. Robert Chazan, a leading expert in medieval Jewish history, makes an important contribution to this debate by providing an excellent synthesis of Jewish migratory movements from biblical times to revolutionary emancipation in Western Europe. *Refugees or Migrants* challenges the widespread popular and historiographical consensus that premodern Jewish migration was predominantly the result of 'governmental expulsion, hostile legislation, and popular animosity and violence' (p. 4). The book convincingly counters that, throughout history, most Jews voluntarily relocated in search of social and economic betterment.

Part I, 'Perspectives', skillfully traces the genealogy of the idea that Jewish migration was predominantly a consequence of persecution. For the ancient Jews, the belief in an omnipotent God meant that all catastrophes were regarded as divine punishments for having neglected the covenant. Shaped by the memory and canonization of Assyrian and Babylonian exile, the biblical Israelites and Judeans came to regard banishment as the most drastic of divine punishments. We learn that forced displacement under Assyrian and Babylonian rule subsequently shaped the memory of the First Jewish-Roman War, giving rise to the false notion that the Romans definitively exiled the Jews from the Land of Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Christians also came to consider Jewish exile as divine punishment, first and foremost for rejecting and 'murdering' Jesus. Only in the eighteenth century did the idea of divine punishment gradually lose influence in favour of new naturalistic explanations for the Jewish diaspora. Yet Chazan shows that the idea that persecution and violence were the main drivers behind dispersion remained prevalent. Explanations as to why Jews continuously befell such violence ranged from their being an unassimilable community to the self-fulfilling prophecy of nurturing an

exile identity. This helpful long-term analysis of the 'lachrymose conception' of Jewish history would have been even stronger had it reached beyond the 1950s. After all, despite Salo Baron's seminal revisionist approach to Jewish history with which the first part concludes, the 'widespread consensus' (p. 4) about perpetual forced migration apparently persisted in the second half of the twentieth century.

The remainder of the book is devoted to the refutation of the lachrymose conception of pre-revolutionary Jewish migration. In Part II, 'Jews as Refugees', Chazan demonstrates that, although governmental expulsions played a key role in Jewish self-conceptions, they hardly occurred for almost two millennia. Therefore, these expulsions cannot explain Jewish population movements, at least until European authorities reinvented expulsions as a governmental policy in the late twelfth century. The author shows that other forms of governmental oppression and popular violence did not typically cause Jews to move: they realized that moving to unknown parts without governmental protection would hardly lead to more security. Persecution during the Great Plague, for instance, was too widespread to result in significant population movements.

Part III, 'Jews as Migrants', provides a compact account of five periods of Jewish mobility, from Late Antiquity to the end of the eighteenth century. In the first period, there were two established Jewish communities in Palestine and Mesopotamia, and a growing community in the Mediterranean region, all living in relative peace with local majorities. From the seventh to the twelfth century, a succession of Islamic empires became the home of most of the world's Jews. Jewish communities flourished in this second period and the Islamic world offered significant opportunities for volatile mobility, allowing new Jewish centers to emerge in North Africa and Spain. In the third period, from around 1000, Northern Europe slowly developed into a significant economic center, and began to attract Mediterranean Jewish merchants. Chazan points out that from the late thirteenth century onwards, popular animosity, mixed with a desire to purify society and extract wealth, eventually led Western European governments to expel the Jews. In the fourth period, Jewish refugees moved into north-eastern Europe. Finally, the fifth period saw the adoption of the emancipatory principles of the French Revolution in Western Europe. With equality imbued in law, migration increased drastically, with many Jews finally moving west in search of economic opportunities.

Refugees and Migrants is concise and argument-driven, making it a stimulating read. Readers will not find in-depth discussions of the particularities of important Jewish hubs, such as Baghdad, Salonica, and Venice. Of course,

such a bird's-eye view inescapably leads the author to sometimes neglect local particularities. For instance, while the book does a great job at contextualizing Amsterdam's policies vis-à-vis Jewish immigrants as reflective of a broader Atlantic pattern, it does not take into consideration why an adjacent city such as Utrecht did not conform to this pattern. Nonetheless, it offers an outstanding guide for regional historians to contextualize local migration patterns within a global perspective.

Chazan makes a compelling case that will have a profound impact on *longue-durée* perspectives of human migration. In some sections, a more thorough engagement with current academic debates about the parameters of forced and voluntary migration could have further strengthened the book's main argument. Patterns of migration are complex, as are the reasons for people to relocate, yet the book fails to justify its clear-cut distinction between refugees and migrants. Indeed, what constitutes migrants' search for 'betterment' remains somewhat opaque. These small criticisms do not detract from the fact that this book provides a solid foundation for future scholars to investigate the motives of Jewish individuals and communities to migrate to different parts of the world. *Refugees and Migrants* is an accessible and thought-provoking study that offers valuable material for students to discuss past and present human migrations.

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