

The English Medieval Jewry, c.1075–1290: An Introduction

William of Malmesbury tells us that William the Conqueror (1066–87) ‘had transferred’ some Jews to *London from *Rouen. The English medieval Jewry therefore shared the Ashkenazic culture of northern France and the Rhineland, which had developed in a Christian milieu, as opposed to the Sephardic culture of Islamic Spain and North Africa. This, however, was beginning to find expression in England by the early twelfth century (*see* Alfonsi, Petrus). The crusader attack on the Rouen Jewry in 1096, described by Guibert de Nogent, may well have led to a second influx of Norman Jews.

The first evidence of Jews in England comes again from Malmesbury, who describes how the leaders of the London *community presented gifts to William II at a church festival early in his reign. The king then provoked the Jews ‘to dispute with our bishops’, saying ‘in jest, I suppose’ that if they refuted the Christians by clear proofs and beat them, he would ‘join their sect’. The contest was held ‘to the great alarm of the bishops and clergy, who were filled with fear in their pious anxiety for the Christian faith’. Malmesbury adds, the defeated Jews ‘often boasted they were beaten by party passion and not argument.’¹

Sources for the early history of the English Jewry are few and scattered. The Laws of Edward the Confessor of *c.1136–38, c23, state: ‘the Jews themselves and all their possessions are the king’s; but if someone detains them or their money, the king shall demand [them] as his own property if he wishes and is able.’² The relationship is clear: the king permitted the Jews to reside in his kingdom, and granted them his protection; in return, they and their wealth were at his disposal. The Jews, for their part, fully accepted the Halachic ruling laid down by the sage Samuel after the Sassanid conquest of Babylon, 226 CE: *dina de-malkhuta dina*, ‘the law of the land is the law.’³ Confirmation that Henry I, ‘our father’s grandfather’, had granted the Jews their ‘liberties and customs’ and that they may ‘reside freely and honourably in our land’ comes in the charter issued by John in *1201. The earliest immigrants spoke *Judeo-French, based on the Norman dialect.

Initially Jewish residence was restricted to London. A St Paul’s Cathedral survey of c.1127 refers to three adjoining plots *in vico iudeorum*, ‘in the street of Jews’, in London. The first official record of the Jewry is in the *pipe roll, the annual audit of the sheriffs’ accounts at the royal exchequer, of 31 Henry I, Michaelmas 1130. This, the only extant pipe roll for Henry I’s reign, shows London’s Jewish magnates, including their leader *Rabbi Josce, proffering money for royal assistance in the courts to recover loans from major baronial and ecclesiastical clients. Thus Abraham and Deulesault offered one gold *mark (£6) to recover their debts against Osbert of Leicester; and Jacob and his

wife offered 60 silver marks (£40) against the abbot of Westminster. The credit facilities offered by the Jewry enabled the Crown to escalate the fines levied on the upper ranks of feudal society. London's Jews were also providing the Crown with credit, repayments being referred to as **in soltis*. The £600 paid immediately towards the £2000 fine 'for the sick man they killed' is an indication of the financial resources at the Jewry's disposal.⁴

King Stephen and the *Provincial Jewries

An English, as opposed to a London, Jewry emerged during the turmoil of Stephen's reign, 1135–54, when his succession was hotly disputed, first by Henry I's daughter, the Empress Matilda, and then by her son, Henry of Anjou. Stephen, possibly of necessity, took a more relaxed attitude than his predecessors. Whilst Henry I had created few new earldoms, Stephen created 12 between 1138 and 1140. The authority of a significant number was enhanced by special grant. Some have argued that Stephen's acceptance of earls ruling autonomous counties as surrogates for the king was only to be expected of a man who had been count of Boulogne, 1125–35. Indeed, for Warren the 'shift of power from central to local control was... a conscious rejection of the trend towards centralisation'.⁵

Stephen's approach quickly became evident in his policy towards other previously closely defended royal monopolies: the mints, the *coinage and the Jewry. The number of mints was allowed to double, from 24 in the later years of Henry I's reign to over 48 in Stephen's, of which 34 produced 'baronial' coins. Of these, 22 issued coins with Stephen's likeness, 5 with Matilda's, and as many as 17 produced coins with other designs.⁶

The Jewry was not slow to take advantage of this new flexibility. There is evidence of Jews living at *Oxford by 1141, at *Norwich, with the first recorded *ritual-child-murder accusation, in 1144, *Cambridge in the same year, and at *Winchester prior to 1148. *Lincoln, *Northampton, *Thetford, *Bungay and *Castle Rising were probably founded, as seigneurial Jewries, about the same time. Most of these towns had common characteristics: as major trading centres with good communications by land and, probably more important, by water, they were boroughs of early foundation, with a powerful, strategic, and often early Norman, castle. All except Bungay were Anglo-Saxon mint towns. Lincoln, Northampton and Cambridge had been Anglo-Danish *burhs*, thriving on trade. Winchester had been the administrative centre of the ancient kingdom of Wessex and, later, of Anglo-Saxon England. Oxford had been amongst the foremost Anglo-Saxon *burhs*.⁷

With the preaching of the First Crusade, there had been an assault on the Rouen community and later massacres of Jews in the Rhineland in 1096. The Second Crusade led to further but lesser attacks in 1146. In England, however, as Ephraim of Bonn wrote, 'the king of Heaven saved the Jews through the king [Stephen]. He turned his heart so that he protected them and saved their lives and property. Praised be the Help of Israel.' Certainly, through his sheriff, Stephen came to the aid of the Norwich Jewry during the St William ritual crucifixion trial.

Henry II, 1154–89

On his accession, Henry II sought vigorously to re-establish the authority of the Crown over both currency and Jewry. The 1159 *Donum*, a levy on London and ten provincial Jewries, now including *Gloucester and *Worcester in the west, is evidence of Henry's acceptance of the value to the Crown of such a network. It raised £362 for his Toulouse campaign of 1159–61; London paid £133 6s 8d, just over a third. Norwich, Lincoln, Cambridge, Winchester and Thetford each paid between £44 and £30.⁸ As in London, so in the provinces: England's medieval Jewries were almost invariably sited close to the town's principal trading area. They were not ghettos, for Christian and Jew lived side by side. The Jews were not the only moneylenders in the realm. Prior to his accession, as duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and count of Anjou, Henry had had to rely on such local moneylenders as William Cade of St Omer and William Trentegeruns of Rouen. (See Usury.)

From 1158–59 the pipe rolls, now an unbroken series, provide valuable biographical and other details of the London and provincial Jewries. By the *1164 Constitutions of Clarendon, Henry ensured that 'pleas concerning debt... should be in the justice of the king'. Pipe rolls include further references to Jews offering the Crown money for 'help concerning their debts'. Between 1157 and 1164, Isaac, Rabbi Josce's eldest son, following his father's example, was making short-term loans to the Crown. From 1165 the pipe rolls indicate that provincial magnates such as *Aaron of Lincoln, England's wealthiest twelfth-century Jew, and from 1169 *Jurnet of Norwich, were encroaching on what had been the preserve of the London magnates. They also had London mansions on prime sites in Colechurch Lane and Lothbury, some with direct access to the city's great *synagogue, *magna scola*. In *1177 Henry II granted the provincial Jewries the right to their own *cemeteries, outside the city walls.

Gervase of Canterbury reports that in 1168 the emperor Frederick Barbarossa complained to Henry II of the excessive departure of his Jews for England. In 1182 Philip Augustus' decree, expelling the Jews from the French royal domain, will have led to a further influx. During Henry's reign personal names provide evidence of immigration from other French lands. Thus the pipe roll for 1182/83 records that a Peitevin at Eye in Suffolk owed 1 gold mark for custody of the son of Jacob of Newport Pagnell. Poitou was one of the lands acquired by Henry through his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine. Later examples of Jews bearing the name Peitevin, and Angevin, are found in the 1220 *plea roll of the *Exchequer of the Jews, by 1244 the former are numerous.

By 1186 Henry II began to exploit the taxation potential of the Jewry. For William of Newburgh, the Jews had lived in a country 'in which their fathers had been happy and respected';⁹ but Gervase of Canterbury reports that in that year the Guildford *tallage, totalling £60,000, was imposed. Next year, London Jews faced a tax of one-quarter on their chattels. The 1191–97 pipe rolls show arrears of the London community for the Guildford tallage as £3254 12s 8d.

During Henry's reign the number of provincial communities doubled, from ten in 1159 to twenty in the Northampton *Donum* of *1194, when their contributions increased from 63% to 73% of the whole. Bungay and Thetford had disappeared, but twelve new communities were assessed for the 1194 tallage: *Canterbury, *Warwick, *Colchester, *Chichester, *Bristol, *Hereford, *Nottingham, *Hertford, *Bedford, *Exeter, Wallingford and *Coventry.¹⁰ Thus the Crown could now call upon a network of provincial Jewries, extending from *York in the north to the rivers Severn and Wye in the west and Exeter in the south-west.

The 1189–90 Attacks on the English Jewries

September 1189 marks the end of the era of personal security that England's Jews had enjoyed. In *1181 the Assize of Arms had deprived them of items of personal defence. Richard I's coronation, and his forthcoming crusade, was the flash-point for an attack on the London community, when Rabbi Jacob of Orleans was killed along with some 30 other Jews. This was followed in the spring by assaults on East Anglian Jewries. In January 1190 (Kings) *Lynn's Jewry was plundered and burned; on 6 February the Norwich Jewry was attacked, but a number of its families found safety in the castle; on 7 March crusaders murdered *Stamford Jews; and, according to Ralph de Diceto, on Palm Sunday, 18 March, 57 were killed at *Bury St Edmunds, not far from the abbey; in the same month the Lincoln community, forewarned, fled to the castle bail. The 16 March attack, led by Richard Malebisse and other debtors, on the York Jews who had fled to the royal castle was of quite a different order. It was Rabbi Yom Tov of Joigny, a visitor to the city, who called for martyrdom, **Kiddush ha-Shem*, 'death in sanctification of the divine name'.

In the face of such tribulations Isaac son of Rabbi Josce travelled to Rouen, where in March he negotiated with Richard I's chancellor the *1190 Charter. This, the first royal charter of liberties of which we have the text, granted him 'all customs and all liberties, just as the Lord King Henry II our father granted and confirmed in his charter'. Thus, as Brand points out, from Henry II's reign

there existed a specific written guarantee of the king's protection for members of the Jewish community and a written statement of certain of the jurisdictional and legal privileges and rules which applied to them... These privileges preserved and even enhanced the separateness of the Jewish community within the wider society.¹¹

With the *1194 Articles about the Jews, *Capitula de Iudeorum*, Richard I's justiciar, Archbishop Hubert Walter, introduced measures to protect Jewish bonds from the fate of those burned in York Minster by Malebisse and his associates. *Chests, *archae*, were established at a number of authorised Jewries, where bonds had to be registered before 'two lawful Christians, two lawful Jews and two lawful scribes', copies being kept

in the chest. Only such bonds were enforceable in the royal courts. The whole system, controlled by the barons or justices of the Exchequer of the Jews at Westminster, formed the basis for the Jewry's administration for the next century, refined by Henry III's 1233 Statute concerning the Jews. The plea rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, although incomplete, throw an important light on its operation from 1218, and provide an extraordinary range of evidence on the members of the English Jewry.

In 1201, two years after his succession, in return for a fine of 4000 marks,¹² King John granted two charters, the first to 'all Jews of England and Normandy', the second to 'our Jews in England'. For John, as for his predecessors, the charter was to ensure 'that his subjects would not exploit his Jews'. It was a virtual recapitulation of Richard I's 1190 Charter, omitting only Clause 12, relating to Jewish debt during a minority.

A remarkable series of public records commences with John's reign: the charter and fine rolls in 1199, liberate the following year, patent 1201, and close rolls in 1204. For Chazan, these 'non-Jewish documentary sources for the...English Jewry are literally many hundreds of times richer than those for France'. With the plea rolls, they provide 'a fuller historical reconstruction of medieval English Jewry' than is available 'for any other [contemporary] Jewish community of western Christendom' or, one might add, any other section of English thirteenth-century society, except the highest echelons of the baronage and church.¹³

John's problems began in 1204, when the French king, Philip Augustus, conquered both his duchy of Normandy and Anjou. Three years later John made two demands on the Jewry: first, a 4000-mark tallage; and second, a tenth of the value of all Jewish bonds, linked to a list of all debts, together with a valuation of each.¹⁴ In 1210, on his return from his Irish expedition in April, he ordered a 'General Captivity of the Jews', that is all those of consequence. This was followed in November by the 'Bristol' tallage of £40,000, described by the chroniclers as 'of unprecedented severity'. Even the poorest Jew had to pay £2 or quit the realm. Any shortfall led to sequestration of bonds and property, and in some cases torture and death. Isaac of Canterbury was hanged; Isaac of Norwich, held in the Tower of London, promised £6667 (10,000 marks) at 1 mark, 13s 4d, a day. Many Jews died in prison, and large numbers fled abroad. John now demanded that Christian debtors paid him directly for money owed on Jewish bonds in his possession. This dangerous policy he moderated in 1212 after a plot on his life. In response to baronial demands, Chapters 10 and 11 of Magna Carta in 1215 restricted the rights of Jewish creditors in relation to widows' dowries and the estates of minors.

Revival of the English Jewry

John died at Newark in October 1216. The lords of the Welsh March, led by William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, buried him at Worcester Cathedral and crowned his nine-year-old son as Henry III at St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester. With the country's finances and administration shattered by civil war and the French invasion, the Jewry was regarded

as too valuable an asset not to be revived. This was no doubt due to Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, who was active at the exchequer between 1206 and 1212, when he was appointed Henry's guardian; he served as Justiciar 1214–15. The royal exchequer reopened at the end of 1217, followed six months later by the Exchequer of the Jews, where control was in Peter's hands. According to Nicholas Vincent, his relations with the Jews, in particular with such leading figures as *Isaac of Norwich and *Chera of Winchester, 'appears to have been harmonious, even symbiotic'.¹⁵

For English Jews a new era now began, as a dramatic reversal of policy ensued. Nevertheless, the receipt rolls show that from 1218 to 1224 a sustained effort was made to enforce payment of the arrears of the Bristol tallage, whether from Jews or from Christians whose bonds had been acquired by the Crown. William Marshal, the regent, and senior lay members of Henry's Council of Regency had a keen appreciation, in Tovey's words, of 'what great Profit might arise from the Jews if they were kindly dealt with'.¹⁶ Marshal himself had been granted his personal Jew, of Chambay, one of the wealthiest in Normandy.¹⁷ Ranulf de Blundeville, earl of Chester, an executor of John's will and member of the Council, regarded Coventry and *Leicester as his own private Jewries; they made no contributions to the early tallages of the reign. During his shrievalty, 1216–23, Walter II de Lacy looked upon *Hamo of Hereford as his personal Jew. These men had a sympathetic administrator at the Exchequer in Peter des Roches, who had his own fruitful relationships with Isaac of Norwich, Elias of Lincoln and other Jews.¹⁸

The Council of Regency reissued Magna Carta in November 1217, but omitted Chapters 10 and 11, clear evidence of its acquisitive attitude to the Jewry. Jews in captivity were released. In spring *1218 Jewish immigration was encouraged, and orders were sent to the constables of the castles at Bristol, Gloucester, Lincoln and Oxford to supervise the elections of 'the twenty-four better and more discrete citizens' who were to be 'custodians of our Jews', and protect them 'especially from crusaders'. At Leicester in 1253, as at Winchester in 1264, 'the twenty-four' were termed 'Jurats', 'those who had taken an oath'. In 1218 the Jews of 17 towns – Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Colchester, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Lincoln, London, Northampton, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Stamford, Winchester, Worcester and York – were granted their own communities, where 'all matters, other than pertain to our crown, shall be administered according to their own law'. Communal status was later extended to Jews in other towns (Maps A and B).

The *sheriffs were to assure Jews that they had the king's firm peace and that they would suffer neither injury nor molestation. Canons 67–70 of the fourth Lateran Council, 1215, regulated the Jewish–Christian relationship, and placed restrictions on the Jewish communities. Those bishops who, following the Lateran decrees, sought to intervene were told 'our Jews are no concern of yours'. The papal legate insisted in 1218 that all English Jews should wear the *'badge of shame', the two tables; but dispensations

were available for cash. A number of these provide early evidence of the *community, *kehillah*, in action. After William Marshal died in 1219, his successor, Hubert de Burgh, continued this Jewish policy.

After the Council of the Canterbury province held at Oxford in April 1222, Archbishop Langton and the bishops of Lincoln and Norwich, following the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, issued orders that no Christian should have any communication with Jews practising *usury, or sell them provisions, under pain of excommunication. The royal council promptly intervened, commanding the three sheriffs to ‘proclaim throughout your district that if you find anyone who shall refuse to sell them food and other necessities you shall capture him and keep him in safe custody’.

*Tallages on the Jewry

Details of tallage contributions by Jewries in 1221 and 1223 provide a valuable hierarchy of the wealth of the 17 communities assessed: York paid twice as much as London in 1221 and a third more in 1223. In 1226 *Wilton, *Southampton, *Huntingdon and Bedford were also taxed; and by 1241, when Huntingdon and Southampton were omitted, the Jews of Warwick. The *1233 Statute sought to impose a maximum *interest rate of 2d per £1 per week, to replace *tallies with *chirographs, and to expel all Jews ‘not of service to the king’.

By the late 1230s England’s Jewry was dominated by a small group of what Lipman calls the ‘super-plutocrats’: *Aaron and Leo Episcopus of York, *David of Oxford and Aaron I le *Blund of London. After Aaron of York replaced Josce of London as *arch-priester in 1236, the lack of transparency in tallage apportionment fuelled hostility between communities, especially London and York. It also led to tension between the smaller communities and the super-plutocrats who controlled the assessment procedure. This came to a head in 1236, when 18 London Jews gave evidence of the bribery and corruption of four of Henry III’s officers responsible for the administration of the Jewry.¹⁹

A levy in 1239, of a third on the chattels and bonds of all Jews, lowered tax thresholds dramatically, further increasing tension. At Gloucester, for example, the number of taxpayers doubled, to 24. Bonenfaunt, the community leader, paid £3, but 10 others paid less than 1s. With total receipts, as Stacey explains, unlikely to have exceeded £3000,²⁰ Henry III, anxious for more cash for his Gascon expedition, intervened personally.

The Impoverishment of the Jewry, 1241–55

In *1241 Henry summoned 109 members from 21 communities. This meeting, which has come to be called the Worcester ‘parliament’, following Tovey’s term, *Parliamentum Judaicum*, was to discuss not the amount of the forthcoming tallage, 20,000 marks, but its allocation. Sums already paid towards the third would be taken

into account as contributions towards it. A committee was formed of six *maiores*, the wealthiest, and six *mediocres* or *minores* such as Bonenfant of Gloucester. The latter were to assess the former. The radical new distribution provided immediate relief for poorer communities and the less wealthy: the six smallest communities paid 0.2% or less. By contrast, Aaron of York was assessed at 6000 marks, Leo Episcopus and David of Oxford 2200 marks each; between them some 50% of the whole. The assessment of the London magnates, Aaron I le Blund and Aaron son of Abraham, was a mere 1200 marks each. The dominance of York over the leaders of the old-established London community was due to Aaron and Leo's mutually beneficial relationship with the rapidly expanding sheep-farming interests of the Cistercian and other monasteries of northern England.

For Stacey, this tallage 'inaugurated a new and ultimately disastrous decade... [for] the medieval Anglo-Jewry', with the eventual ruin of the super-plutocrats:²¹

By 1241, after two decades of economic and demographic growth,... the English Jewish community controlled approximately 200,000 marks in liquidable assets, a sum equivalent to roughly one-third of the total circulating coin in the kingdom. Per capita, this made them almost certainly the wealthiest Jewish community in Europe.²²

Henry III was now well aware of where this wealth lay. With the death of Leo in 1243 and David in 1244, Aaron of York was exposed to the full impact of the rapacity of Henry III; by 1255 he declared himself bankrupt.

Between 1244 and 1250 tallages totalled another £40,000. The clients of the Jewry began to feel the impact. On a Jew's failure to pay the full amount, the sheriff and chirographers were ordered to remove his 'better and clearer' bonds from the chest, following which the sheriff was to distraint the client's property. Thus, when Rachel, daughter of David Lumbard of Nottingham, owed £12 for her portion of the £10,000 tallage of 1246, they were 'to distraint in any way you know the Christians named in her chirographs.'²³

Tallage was not the only means by which the Jewry was impoverished. On the death of a Jew his heirs became involved in detailed negotiation over the *relief of one-third of the estate, due to the Crown. In 1231 the sons of Hamo of Hereford faced a claim for 6000 marks, in 1244 the heirs of Leo Episcopus of York one for 7000 marks, the highest relief in the Jewry's history. Although exempted from tallage, the two families were effectively ruined. David of Oxford's estate was assessed at 5000 marks; only by exercising her personal skills on Henry III did his widow, *Licoricia, ensure her survival in relative affluence.

The Jewry had further financial burdens to bear. From 1230 Henry III began to grant respite of interest on Jewish loans. Thus Robert Mucegros, Roger de Clifford and others 'on the king's service abroad' were to be free of interest on their debts to Jews. In some cases the principal also was pardoned, being deducted from the Jewish lender's debts

to the Crown. A further means of rewarding servants of the Crown was by extension of terms, the time limit after which interest became payable. On other occasions wealthier Jews were ordered to meet the living costs of, and even provide homes for, royal *crossbowmen.

*Elias l'Eveske, who replaced Aaron of York as archpresbyter in 1243, had to meet ever-increasing demands from Henry III. By 1252 crisis point had been reached. When a further tallage was ordered early that year, Aaron I le Blund and his brother Elias attempted to flee the realm with their families. As Stacey has pointed out, 'between 1241 and 1255 the king assessed close to 100,000 marks in direct taxation against the Jews ... , more than three times what he had assessed between 1221 and 1239'.²⁴ In 1254 l'Eveske cracked under the strains of office. On hearing of yet another 10,000-mark tallage, he made a highly impassioned, but wholly unsuccessful, plea for the English Jewry to be allowed to leave the realm.

Henry III had built a house for Jewish *converts, *Domus Conversorum*, in Chancery Lane, in 1232. His *1253 Statute concerning the Jews sought a general tightening up of the legislation relating to the Jewry. 'Based largely upon ecclesiastical canons,' it included provisions concerning synagogues and the wearing of the badge. This, together with rapidly deteriorating economic circumstances, led to increasing numbers of converts, 143 in 1255. Henry's response was to oblige monasteries to provide accommodation.

The ritual-child-murder charges, first raised at Norwich in 1144, and again at Gloucester in 1167–68, were renewed at Lincoln. The discovery of the body of 'Little St Hugh' in 1255 led to the hanging of 18 of 92 Lincoln Jews incarcerated in the Tower. This was the most notorious of such accusations.

Richard, earl of Cornwall

In 1247, when Henry III had ordered a recoinage, he placed control of the operation in the hands of his brother, Richard earl of Cornwall, who in four years minted £1 million in pennies, taking a profit of £20,000 for himself. In 1253 Richard lent the king 1000 marks, 'repayable from the Jews of England out of their tallage'. In the words of William Prynne, in his *Short Demurrer to the Jewes* (1656), 'those whom the king himself had excoriated he handed over to the earl his brother to be eviscerated'. This was not altogether a fair judgement, for Richard was too shrewd a businessman not to nurture a valuable resource; hence his intervention in 1255 to ensure the release of those Lincoln Jews still in the Tower.

In February that year Henry again granted the Jewry to his brother. In return for 5000 marks, the patent rolls explain, 'he has assigned to him all his Jews of England, and also bound the said Jews to the payment of the 3000 marks' of the 1254 tallage. The king had already 'pledged his jewels of the old treasure', which included 76 girdles, 307 rings, 51 brooches, the queen's crown, the king's little crown, the crown

of Norway and a chaplet (*capellum*) of the Emperor. At Richard's request Aaron of York was exempted from the £1000 tallage of October 1255 on account of poverty, but London and the provincial Jewries were surcharged 10% for his 'portion'. The king was even to pledge the Jewry to his son Edward in 1262, in return for most of his estates; the following year Edward, also anxious for cash, granted it to the 'citizens and merchants of Cahors' for two years. In 1270, to subsidise the prince's crusade, Henry imposed a 6000-mark 'aid' on the English Jewry. Receipts being only 4000 marks, the next year he borrowed the sum outstanding from Earl Richard, who was to be repaid by the Jewry.²⁵

Elias l'Eveske's 1254 outburst and Aaron's bankruptcy indicate, as Stacey points out, that the Jewry was 'financially ruined and spiritually demoralised'. The year 1257 witnessed the triumph of the sons of *Master Moses, with the dismissal of Elias l'Eveske as archpresbyter 'for the trespass committed against the king and against his brother'. The evidence suggests that their victory was due principally to Earl Richard, for whom they had 'laboured much'. In the future few English Jews were to thrive without the support of a member of the royal family: during the reign of Henry III, from his queen, Eleanor of Provence, or brother, Earl Richard; during that of Edward I, from Eleanor of Castile, or his brother, Edmund earl of Lancaster. The only major patron outside the royal circle was that of *Aaron son of Vives, Gilbert, the Red Earl of Gloucester.

For some years the king had been granting selected Jewish bonds to members of the royal family – his queen, Eleanor of Provence; his brother Richard; and, above all, his hated Poitevin half-brothers, the de Lusignans: Aymer, elected bishop of Winchester in November 1250 but unconsecrated until 1260, and William de Valence, lord of Pembroke. This process became a major political issue when they demanded payment from the Jews' Christian clients. The *1258 Petition of the Barons at the Oxford parliament demanded an end to such royal trafficking in Jewish bonds, which they declared was 'to the manifest disherison' of landowners great and small, and the Provisions of Oxford pressed for 'reforms in the [administration of the] Jewry'. The struggle for Jewish bonds had become a struggle for that most important of all commodities in the medieval world, land.

Civil War 1264–65 and its Consequences for the Jewry

The papal dispensation of Henry III's oath to observe the Provisions of Oxford, and their formal annulment in January 1264 by St Louis, king of France, led to the outbreak of civil war. In the words of a contemporary chronicler, 'by the non-observance of these Provisions...the realm of England was profoundly troubled and many thousands of men perished', amongst them numerous Jews. Hostilities opened with Henry III's capture of Northampton in April 1264.²⁶

In London there were deep divisions. The popular party, strong supporters of de *Montfort's cause, fearing collusion between the patricians, the London Jews and the

royal troops, launched a violent attack on the Jewry. Other attacks, with the chests and their bonds as their principal objectives, were made at Bristol, Canterbury, Gloucester, Lincoln, Northampton, Nottingham, Winchester and Worcester. After Prince Edward's victory and de Montfort's death at Evesham in August 1265, his disinherited supporters burned the Lincoln synagogue, carried off the Cambridge and Bedford chests to their camp in the Isle of Ely, and plundered Norwich. When the forces of Gilbert de Clare, seventh earl of Gloucester 1262–95, entered London in April 1267, the Jewry was attacked again.

With peace restored, Henry III was desperately anxious to heal the ravages suffered by his Jewry. He revoked all de Montfort's pardons of debt, even those endorsed with his own seal, and granted that the Jews might recover their dues from all their debtors. Such debts were to be reinstated to their status 'as of the day of the battle of Lewes'. Those improperly removed from the chests were also to be restored, 'if they can be reasonably reconstructed'. At this time one can detect a greater readiness to issue licences under the 1253 Statute for Jews 'to tarry' in towns in which Jews had not been 'wont to dwell', as at Bridgnorth in 1267. Other licences were granted to Jews moving to established communities, such as Nottingham in 1273. The patent rolls show that in 1269 Henry III, fearing his rebuilding of Westminster Abbey would not be completed in his lifetime, commanded all issues of the Jewry to be devoted to that purpose.

At Prince Edward's instigation, measures were introduced to deal with what he recognised as the genuine problems raised by the barons in relation to the sale of Jewish bonds. By the 1269 Provisions of the Jewry debts secured on land in fee were prohibited, as was the sale by Jews of existing bonds, except under licence from the Crown. The 1271 Statute touching Lands and Fees of the Jews decreed that no Jew may 'have a freehold in manors, lands, tenements, fees, rents and holdings whatsoever by charter, gift, ... or any other wise'. No longer able to lend money at interest on the security of lands and so on, their economic activity was seriously limited. They could let houses lawfully only to Jews, not to Christians, except on leases already negotiated. In Oxford and York, where Jewish investment in domestic property was considerable, the implications were dire. In the capital Jews were permitted to repair and restore their 'houses formerly demolished'.

Edward I

Henry III died in November 1272. Only in August 1274 did Edward and his queen return from crusade. The coronation took place the next month. In 1273 his ministers had imposed a levy of a third on all Jewish moveable goods, the heaviest tax since 1241. Many Jews, lacking the cash, had to pay in bonds; thus their creditors, distrained by the sheriffs, carried the burden. This caused a political furore, which Edward, with vivid memories of the Petition of the Barons, 1258, now sought to assuage.

At the same time, he began to address the problem that had bedevilled his father's reign: cash flow. He persuaded a parliament, meeting in April 1275, to impose a customs duty of 6s 8d, half a mark, on each sack of wool or 300 woolfells exported from England and Ireland. Yielding some £10,000 per annum, this provided Edward with a degree of security for the loans that he had been receiving whilst on crusade from the Riccardi of Lucca. Their officers were to hold half the customs seal, the cocket, attached to the sacks of wool exported from 16 accredited ports. Two local officers held the other half. The first clause of the *1275 Statute of the Jewry enacted that 'no Jew shall lend anything at usury ... beyond 18 March. Covenants made beforehand shall be kept, but usuries shall cease.' In October a further parliament approved a tax of one-fifteenth on moveables.²⁷

Usury, 'which had led to disinheriting the good men of this land', being prohibited, Jews were to live by 'lawful merchandise ... and their labour'. The chests, with bonds negotiated before the Statute, were closed, and their contents scrutinised. New chests, however, were opened later. In bonds contracted after 1275, large quantities of grain and wool are recorded, but the overall evidence suggests that the Jewry was not wholly converted to trading in such commodities, and that usury was not eradicated. The Statute permitted Jews to lease farmland, but only for 15 years, leading Rigg to suggest that Edward already had a 1290 *expulsion in mind, should his 1275 provisions fail.²⁸

This legislation also reinforced article 9 of the 1253 Statute. The badge of shame had to be 'of yellow felt, six inches long and three inches broad' (15 by 7½ cm) and worn by 'each Jew after he or she is seven years old'. Residence was again restricted to 'where the chirograph chests are wont to be'. The Statute also imposed a chevage of 3d a year on all Jews aged 12 years or more, for the benefit of the House of Converts (*see* Poll Tax). In the same year, at the instance of his mother, Eleanor of Provence, Edward I commanded the *expulsion of all Jews from her dower towns of Cambridge, Gloucester, *Marlborough and Worcester, each of which had a chest. Ordered to move to specified neighbouring communities, not all obeyed.

The fifteen Articles Touching the Jewry for Enquiry of c.*1276 have been examined by Brand. Two relate to the coinage: the first to Jews who 'falsify and clip coins, and buy silver plates fused from clippings'; the second to 'Christians and Jews who give and receive in exchange good money for clipped money'. They thus anticipate the *coin-clipping crisis, one of the most horrifying episodes in the history of England's medieval Jewry.²⁹ It opened late in 1276, with commissions to try accusations of coin-clipping in London and Nottingham, and later extended nationwide. According to the chroniclers, 680 Jews were incarcerated in the Tower. Rokéah has shown that in London and Middlesex 269 Jews were hanged, as compared to 29 Christians.³⁰ There were also many executions at provincial centres.³¹ Rokéah notes that 'receipts ... connected with coinage offences, exceed a princely £16,500 in a period of some five years'.³²

Immediately following the Articles is a text with no title, but its principal concern is the evasion of the provisions prohibiting usury in the 1275 Statute:

By a new and wicked device, under colour of trading and good contracts and covenants, [the Jews] have dealings with Christians by bonds and divers instruments... in which they stipulate for twice, thrice or four times as much as they part with to Christians... avoiding the term 'usury'.

Draft proposals are then put forward to remedy the situation.

The late 1270s witnessed the forceful entry of Edward I and Eleanor of Castile into the land market. By pardoning debts to the Jewry, Eleanor in particular acquired encumbered estates. Probably the most spectacular example was the release by William de Leyburn to Edward and his queen of Leeds Castle,³³ which, situated on its lake, became a favourite residence of theirs, and of Edward III and Henry VIII. By 1290 Eleanor had gained an unsavoury reputation, which even led to a letter of remonstrance by the archbishop of Canterbury, who warned her of the dangers to her immortal soul.

In 1280, following a papal bull, Edward I commanded 'sheriffs and all bailiffs... to induce the Jews' during Lent,

by such means as they under the inspiration of the spirit of truth may think most efficient, to...hear without tumult, contention, or blasphemy, the word of God preached by the [Dominican] friars, and ensure others do not interfere with those converted.

The number of admissions to the *Domus Conversorum* suggests that the friars had little impact.

The last tallage imposed on the Jewry was in *1287. The Bury chronicler reported that, as a preliminary, on 2 May 'Jews throughout England of every age and both sexes were thrown into prison. They returned home only after they had agreed to pay the king £12,000'. Delegates from 18 communities were summoned to discuss details at the 'mini-parliament' in London at Eastertide. Less than £5000 was received.³⁴

The Expulsion

In July *1290, the year after he expelled the Jewry from his duchy of Gascony, Edward instructed his sheriffs and the *Constable of the Tower of London that all Jews, with their wives, children and chattels, were to quit the realm by 1 November, on pain of death. Edward's motives still arouse lively debate. He blamed the Jews for maliciously contriving a worse sort of usury, called courtesy (*curialitas*). Others have attributed it to the impoverishment of the Jewry. For Prestwich the expulsion of the Jews was 'part of the price for financial stability'.³⁵ For Stacey it was one of a number of 'connected elements in an evolving political bargain' between Edward and his parliament. For the

knights it may have been perceived 'as the only way to ensure that the king would fulfil his previous engagements to eliminate Jewish lending and the traffic in Jewish bonds', an aim that they had sought 'ever since 1258'.³⁶

Linked to this was the hostility towards the royal family, especially Edward's queen, Eleanor of Castile, whose voracious appetite for land led to her continued large-scale trafficking in Jewish debts, and estates encumbered by them. The popular view was summarised by the ditty: 'The king covets our pennies, the queen our fine manors.'³⁷ To what extent did Edward I's need to sever such links between the royal family and the Jewry play a part in the expulsion? Significantly, the shrine of Little St Hugh (d.1255) in Lincoln Cathedral is attributed to the post-expulsion years, that is more than 35 years after his death, and 'displays such close acquaintance with the Eleanor crosses [marking her funeral procession in 1290] that it has to be considered alongside them'.³⁸ The political message behind the crosses was the piety and power of the English Crown in the person of Edward I.

At the expulsion in 1290, the Constable of the Tower recorded that 1461 Jews embarked from the port of London for Wissant, halfway between Calais and Boulogne, of which 126 poorer Jews paid customs dues of 2d rather than 4d. Small numbers also departed from other ports. The suggestion that 16,000 were expelled is far from the mark. (*See Population Size.*) Most went to France, a smaller number to Germany. The last word perhaps rests with Snooks: 'Probably the most important effect of these [Jewish] money-lending facilities, which were less localised than other factor markets, was a decline in interest rates in the thirteenth century.'³⁹

See also Cemetery, Community, Jews and the Court, Synagogue, and Jewish Court.

□ For general studies of the English Jewry: Roth (1964); Richardson (1960); Mundill (1998); Skinner (2003)

Notes

1. Malmesbury, *GR*, 563.
2. O'Brien (1999), 184–5, 96–7.
3. Neusner & Avery-Peck (2003), 82.
4. *PpR*, 1130, 53, 146–9, discussed in Hillaby (1995), 8–12.
5. Warren (1987), 94.
6. Blackburn (1994).
7. Hillaby (2003a), 14–40; Stacey (1995).
8. *PpR*, 1159–60, 3, 12, 17, 24, 28, 35, 46, 53, 65; Hillaby (2003a), table 1, p. 21.
9. Newburgh (1996), 555.
10. TNA/E101/249/2.
11. Brand (2000), 1138–9.
12. *Rot Ob*, 133.
13. Chazan (2006), 155.
14. Stacey (1988), 137.
15. Vincent (1992), 119–22.
16. Tovey (1738), 77.

17. Richardson (1960), 202 n. 1.
18. Vincent (1992), 121–2, & (1996), 177–80, 288–90, 363–4.
19. Adler (1941).
20. Stacey (1987a), 147.
21. Stacey (1985), 175–249, & (1987a), 158.
22. Stacey (2003), 41.
23. Causton (2007), no. 206.
24. Stacey (1988), 138.
25. Denholm-Young (1947), 120, 157–61.
26. For the Montfortian case, Stacey (1991); Treharne (1986), 171–208.
27. Prestwich (1990), 98–103; Kaeuper (1973), 135–71.
28. Rigg (1902), xlii.
29. Brand (2000), 1144–58; Skemer (1999).
30. Rokéah (1990), 98.
31. Rokéah (1993).
32. Rokéah (1990), 92.
33. *CCR*, 1278, 499; *CPR*, 1279, 334.
34. Rokéah (2001).
35. Prestwich (1990), 344.
36. Stacey (1997), 77, 100.
37. Guisborough, 216.
38. Stocker (1986), 109–17; Colvin, 1 (1963), 485.
39. *Enc Jud*, 6 (2007); 625; Snooks (1995), 42.