

# Jews in Thirteenth Century England

by Ashton Brackett

The first Jewish settlement in England was brought by William the Conqueror after 1066 from Normandy.<sup>1</sup> Those in the settlement had a special status as “property of the king” which put them outside of the feudal system and left them under his complete power.<sup>2</sup> In exchange, he gave them protection despite not issuing a legal charter promising this protection. Because they were not allowed to own land, Jews were often forced into doing jobs that were prohibited for Christians such as being moneylenders and bankers, enabling them to make interest from loaning money and indebting many English Christians in the process.<sup>3</sup> By the reign of Henry II, 1154 to 1189, the Jewish community was well established financially and politically into English society and was a “regular source of royal revenue.”<sup>4</sup> Twelfth-century historian William of Newbury, who documented the affairs of his time, claimed that Henry II favored Jewish usurers “more than was right” because of the great financial advantages the Jewish usuries would bring him.<sup>5</sup> The economic and political security of the Jews in the twelfth century and the growing dissatisfaction with the status of Jews by Christians in England during Henry II’s reign left the nature of the coming century an interesting prospect. The status and treatment of Jews living in England around the thirteenth century under the reigns of Richard I, John, Henry III, and Edward I was influenced by the crusading spirit, sentiments of economic resentment and religious superiority, and the declining support and protection from the Crown, ultimately creating a toxic environment for English Jews.

Up until the end of Henry II’s reign, Jews could be tenants of land on the same terms as Christian tenants, but in many regards the Jewish community began to be treated as political and legal subordinates to English Christians, beginning with the reign of Richard I.<sup>6</sup> In March of 1190, King Richard issued the Charter of the Jews granting and confirming liberties to the Jews that had been given by Henry II, but this

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Elizabeth Mitchell, *Voices of Medieval England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales: Contemporary Accounts of Daily Life*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, an Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2016), 71.

<sup>2</sup> R. Langham, *Jews in Britain: A Chronology*, (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2014), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, *Voices*.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Gross, *The Exchequer of the Jews of England in the Middle Ages. A Lecture ... Reprinted from the "Anglo-Jewish Exhibition Papers*. (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1887), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England: Documents and Records, from Latin and Hebrew Sources, Printed and Manuscript*. (Gregg International Publishers, 1969), 94.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

was not effective in extending the quality of life many Jews had during Henry's reign.<sup>7</sup> At the time of Richard I's coronation in 1189, there were about 5,000 Jews in England who fixed themselves in mostly urban areas like London, York, and Lincoln since these were centers of business and trade.<sup>8</sup> Many citizens such as merchants, farmers, and nobles had to go through the Jews for most private transactions and were perpetually in debt to them.<sup>9</sup> This made Christians feel like they were being lorded over by the Jewish people which created a lot of resentment towards them.<sup>10</sup> The sentiment of the Third Crusade of eradicating "all enemies of the cross" added to this animosity as demonstrated by the events surrounding the coronation of Richard I on September 3, 1189.<sup>11</sup>

Jews were not invited to Richard's coronation, but the "chiefs of the Jews" wanted to make sure they would be treated as well as they were under Henry II, so they brought "first fruits most decorous and honourable" as gifts to the new king.<sup>12</sup> Rather than receiving thanks, the Jews were turned away at the door because of the King's edict that prohibited their attendance. Many Christians who witnessed this began insulting the group of Jews at the gate and striking them with fists, sticks, and stones.<sup>13</sup> Violent mobs broke out in and around London at the rumor that the King sanctioned the ejection of the Jews, which led the mobs to assault and murder Jewish people, loot their homes, and set their houses on fire.<sup>14</sup> William of Newburgh wrote that Jews were "either roasted in their own houses or if they came out of them were received with swords."<sup>15</sup> During this London massacre, a Jew named Benedict of York was caught by the mob and "in order to escape death, he was compelled to confess Christ, and being led into the Church was baptized on the spot."<sup>16</sup> He was spared because of his conversion, but most others refused to convert or were not given the opportunity before they were killed.<sup>17</sup> After the riots ended, Benedict of York requested that his forced baptism be annulled to which Richard approved, allowing him to re-establish his religious identity as a Jew before he died from mob induced injuries.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Richard I of England: Charter by Which Many Liberties Are Granted and Confirmed to the Jews, 22 March 1190." Internet History Sourcebooks Project. Accessed May 18, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520*. Vol. 1, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 195.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Gross, *The Exchequer of the Jews*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 100.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Robert C. Stacey, "The Conversion of Jews to Christianity in Thirteenth-Century England." *Speculum* 67, no. 2 (1992), 266.

Word of this riot spread to other cities and a wave of targeting Jewish settlements began across England, leaving the Jewish community in great fear. Following the London attack, Richard I made a decree to end the violence against Jews and to reaffirm their right to protection; however, because Richard went off to fight in the crusades and was not there to enforce this decree, the groups of Christians persisted “according to their old ways.”<sup>19</sup> Because many English men were “indebted to the impious usurers in large sums,” this gave them an opportunity to enact violence against the group with economic power over them and attempt to destroy the records of their debts.<sup>20</sup> In February 1190, many Jews were butchered in their homes in Norwich.<sup>21</sup> A month after this slaughter, a young Christian mob in Stamford, believing “they could be doing honour to Christ if they attacked his enemies,” started attacking the Jews living in their town.<sup>22</sup> Historian William of Newbury said most of the Jews were able to escape, but “their houses were pillaged, and a great quantity of money captured.”<sup>23</sup> Jews living in Lynn were so upset from the injustice of the London massacre that they attacked a Christian church but gave up and fled once the Christians in the town took up their arms to fight back.<sup>24</sup> Jewish homes were “stormed and pillaged by the Christians” as well as burned and “many of them fell victims to the fire or sword.”<sup>25</sup> That same year in Bury St. Edmunds, with the King’s approval, Abbot Samson, head of the town’s monastery, ejected the surviving Jews from the town after a massacre of fifty-seven Jews on Palm Sunday.<sup>26</sup> Unless they were being protected by the local authorities, attacks like these happened on a smaller scale in many other towns where Jews resided.<sup>27</sup>

The most devastating and destructive attack on the Jewish community that erupted in the frenzy of Richard’s coronation was the massacre at York in March 1190. A violent riot erupted against the Jews, and their entire community was forced to take refuge in the York Castle where they did not have sufficient arms or food to survive.<sup>28</sup> Many committed suicide by slitting their throats, setting rooms on fire, or jumping from the castle walls to avoid being murdered or forced to convert by the Christians.<sup>29</sup> The Jews who were unable to make it into the castle were given the option of being baptized

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<sup>19</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 118.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

or killed.<sup>30</sup> Some converted to Christianity to save themselves, but those who refused “were butchered without mercy.”<sup>31</sup> Benedict of York, who had been forcibly baptized in London, had his home destroyed, and his wife, children, and his other relatives murdered as a part of the attack on Jews in York.<sup>32</sup> When the massacre ended and around five hundred Jews were dead, the conspirators went to the Cathedral and burned all the records of debt held within “by which the Christians were oppressed by the royal Jewish usurers.”<sup>33</sup> The men who perpetrated these crimes against Jews were almost completely unpunished since many were crusaders who left for Jerusalem, poor townspeople, or nobles who fled the area.<sup>34</sup> The crusading spirit, mixed with feelings of economic discontent and religious superiority, created a dangerous environment for English Jews and they could not rely on the king to bring their persecutors to justice.<sup>35</sup>

King Richard returned from the Crusades and felt that the people disregarded his decree of keeping “peace and security to the Jews in his kingdom after the rising at London” and was upset at the “great loss to the treasury.”<sup>36</sup> Instead of addressing the violence against Jews, he only wished to find a more secure way to preserve Jewish records of debts and legal transactions. Richard realized he needed a way to pursue payment even if the Jews’ copies were destroyed by popular violence.<sup>37</sup> He was the first English king to recognize the financial interest the Crown had in regulating interactions and disputes “between Christian borrowers and Jewish lenders” which led him to enact the Ordinances of the Jews in 1194.<sup>38</sup> The Ordinances of the Jews was a form of late justice to protect the Jewish community and his economic claims by condemning the murder of Jews and creating “a separate office of the treasury” called the Exchequer of the Jews.<sup>39</sup> In this new administrative institution, officials kept records and copies of Jewish business transactions in central repositories where they would not be in danger of destruction by Christians.<sup>40</sup> The Ordinances also required that all of the “debts, pledges, mortgages, lands, houses, rents and possessions” of the Jews be registered with the treasury.<sup>41</sup> The creation of the Exchequer gave Jews and Christians a place to resolve

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> James Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*. (Hardpress Publishing, 2012), 6.

<sup>33</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 129.

<sup>34</sup> B. L. Abrahams, *Expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290*. (London: Wertheimer, Lea & co., 1894), 13.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 119.

<sup>36</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 132.

<sup>37</sup> Gross, *The Exchequer of the Jews*, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Mitchell, *Voices*, 71.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 132.

<sup>41</sup> "Medieval Sourcebook: English Jewry Is Organised: The Ordinances of the Jews, 1194." Internet History Sourcebooks. Accessed November 20, 2018.

disputes where the cases would be brought before two Christian and two Jewish lawyers who would help create a contract and solution.<sup>42</sup> This produced a more equitable judicial landscape for finding financial resolutions between the two parties, but because the king wielded power over the Jews, not all transactions were justly managed. The king could intervene on behalf of individual Christians by eliminating the debt or the interest on their loan which left the Jewish lender without any compensation for the capital lost.<sup>43</sup> Jews would continue to deal with lawsuits between themselves, but all legal matters between Christians and Jews were heard by the Exchequer of the Jews after its creation in 1199.<sup>44</sup>

The 1201 Charter of the Jews of England issued by Richard's successor, King John, affirmed the liberties granted by Richard I and Henry II because he recognized how useful they were in generating capital and wished to protect them accordingly.<sup>45</sup> Jews were practically, but not legally, the chattels of the king as defined in the 1201 Charter, so crimes against them had to be prosecuted even if the king did not feel warmly towards the Jewish community as a religious group.<sup>46</sup> Jews were given the freedom to move their residence within England as they wished so long as they obtained a permit from the king, showing they were not under his complete control.<sup>47</sup> Unlike Christians, who were subject to regular taxes, the Jews had special, high taxes that varied and were instituted by the king based on his need for increased money—usually to fund the Crusades or other wars.<sup>48</sup> At the turn of the century, despite their population being under one percent, the Jews were contributing around a twelfth of the annual royal revenue.<sup>49</sup> Due to his debt from the failed campaign against France, King John demanded so high a monetary contribution from the Jews in 1210 that they were unable to pay it, resulting in many being arrested and jailed.<sup>50</sup> Although two sections in the Magna Carta signed by King John in 1215 limited the power of Jews and the king over Christian debtors' estates, they were repealed in the 1216 re-issue under John's son Henry III.<sup>51</sup> High taxes continued under King Henry and from 1230 to 1254, he took

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<sup>42</sup> Mitchell, *Voices*, 72.

<sup>43</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 231.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>45</sup> "Medieval Sourcebook: English Jewry Is Organised: The Ordinances of the Jews, 1194." Internet History Sourcebooks. Accessed November 20, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> "King John of England and the Jews: Confirmation of the Charters of the Jews (10 Apr. 1201)." Internet History Sourcebooks Project. Accessed May 18, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 223.

<sup>48</sup> Léon Poliakov and Richard Howard, *The History of Anti-Semitism. From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 78.

<sup>49</sup> Abrahams, *Expulsion of the Jews from England*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Poliakov and Howard, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, 78.

<sup>51</sup> Langham, *Jews in Britain*, 17; Abrahams, *Expulsion of the Jews from England*, 22.

around a third of Jewish property each year as tallage, leaving their community even more unstable.<sup>52</sup>

Not only were the Jews exploited by the king and local elites, but they often lived in unsafe conditions; the larger Christian community was hostile and detested them.<sup>53</sup> English Christians saw the Jews as being favored by the monarchy and profiting off of Christian indebtedness.<sup>54</sup> They also did not see the Jews as allegiant to their town or as a part of their communities, but rather, as servants and men of the king.<sup>55</sup> Because the church prohibited Christians from moneylending due to the belief that making money off of money through charging interest was not allowed in scripture, the Christian noble population needed the Jews despite the hatred many felt towards the Jewish community.<sup>56</sup> The nobles needed loans to establish their businesses in order to generate capital and bring economic advancement to their towns.<sup>57</sup> Even some English religious institutions such as the Canterbury Cathedral Priory borrowed cash as early as the 1220s directly from the Jews.<sup>58</sup> Through Jewish usury, the king was able to gain possession of nobles' lands if they were too in debt to pay back their loans which fueled their hatred of the Jews and legitimized the idea that the king was using the Jews to take from Christians.<sup>59</sup> Highly anti-Jewish sentiments were expressed during the period of King Henry's reign by Christians who believed in "Jewish depravity" and believed the Jews were an "infidel race" and "enemies of the cross of Christ."<sup>60</sup> The anti-Jewish attitude can also be seen by how Christians spoke of former Christians who converted to Judaism. In 1200, two Cistercian monks became Jews and were considered "most vile apostates" who have fled into the "synagogue of Satan" and entered into the "eternal slavery" of damnation in hell.<sup>61</sup>

Despite continuing religious tensions, by 1198 the Church had largely given up efforts at converting Jews to Christianity and sought more to restrict interactions between Jewish and Christian people.<sup>62</sup> The Church especially wanted to limit situations where the Christian would be under the authority of a Jew, such as being a servant in a Jewish home.<sup>63</sup> King John acted similarly toward Jewish conversion, and the custom of Jews' property being forfeited to the king after conversion to Christianity can

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<sup>52</sup> Abrahams, *Expulsion of the Jews from England*, 22.

<sup>53</sup> Poliakov and Howard, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, 123.

<sup>54</sup> Mitchell, *Voices*, 71.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 141.

<sup>56</sup> Mitchell, *Voices*, 71.

<sup>57</sup> Robin R. Mundill, *The King's Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England*, (London: Continuum, 2010), 97.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>59</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 178.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 106, 103.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

be traced to his reign, serving as a disincentive to becoming Christian.<sup>64</sup> The Church was able to benefit from Jewish usury by acting as a charity to redeem the debts of individual Christians which improved the image of the Church and helped them form a reputation as saviors of English Christians from heathen Jews.<sup>65</sup> In 1215, almost 1,500 bishops from “all points of the Christian horizon” convened at the Fourth Lateran Council where they established certain policies concerning the Jews.<sup>66</sup> The Council decreed that all Jews must wear something—determined by the local secular authorities—on their garments to distinguish themselves as Jews and that they should not “show themselves in public” during Lent.<sup>67</sup>

In England, wearing a special garment was not regularly enforced until the Statute of Jewry issued in January of 1253; previously Jews had been allowed to pay a fee for exemption from this policy.<sup>68</sup> The system imposed by King Henry III required the Jews to sew cloth strips shaped like the two tablets of the ten commandments on their chest to distinguish themselves.<sup>69</sup> This ordinance served to enhance regulation and provide enforcement to separate Jews and Christians by making it a crime for a Jew to enter a church and by making every Jew pay “three pence a year to the King as tallage” after he or she turned twelve.<sup>70</sup> This statute also restricted Jews from living outside of the king’s designated cities where local registries were placed.<sup>71</sup> Despite Pope Gregory IX coming to England and urging Henry III to investigate the Talmud as an “immoral book offensive to Christians,” the King refused to act and never legally hindered the Jews from practicing their faith.<sup>72</sup> He wanted to direct royal effort into converting Jews to Christianity rather than prohibiting them from having access to their sacred texts. In 1232, Henry III founded the *Domus Conversorum*, or the House for Jewish Converts, in London to enhance his campaign for converting all of the Jews to Christianity.<sup>73</sup> Although their property would still be forfeited to the king, the house would provide the converts with a place to live, religious education, and a weekly pension.<sup>74</sup> With the house’s limited capacity at eighty, King Henry sent individual converts to religious houses until he could expand the capacity or build a new convert house.<sup>75</sup> Due to lack of

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<sup>64</sup> Stacey, “The Conversion of Jews to Christianity,” 266.

<sup>65</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 242.

<sup>66</sup> Poliakov and Howard, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, 64.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Langham, *Jews in Britain*, 18.

<sup>69</sup> Poliakov and Howard, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, 65.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Brand, “Jews and the Law in England, 1275-90,” *The English Historical Review* 115, no. 464 (2000), 1143.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Poliakov and Howard, *The History of Anti-Semitism*, 69.

<sup>73</sup> Stacey, “The Conversion of Jews to Christianity,” 266.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>75</sup> Susanne Jenks, Jonathan Rose, Christopher Whittick, and Paul Brand. *Laws, Lawyers, and Texts: Studies in Medieval Legal History in Honour of Paul Brand*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 141.

funding for the project, in 1255, he wrote letters to 160 houses asking them to keep the converts with them for two more years because he did not have the money to house them.<sup>76</sup>

The Jews continued to become more unpopular with English Christians which was epitomized by claims that Jews living in Lincoln crucified a young Christian boy in 1255.<sup>77</sup> The rumors of this Jewish ritual murder were so prevalent that King Henry III felt compelled to investigate.<sup>78</sup> The verdict was found guilty after a Jew named Copin was claimed to have confessed, making this the first time a European ruler supported the allegation of Jewish blood libel.<sup>79</sup> Ninety-two other Jews were sent from Lincoln to King Henry in London to be put on trial, although eighteen were hanged immediately for protesting the all-Christian jury, requesting Jews be placed on the jury as well.<sup>80</sup> The seventy-four who were not killed went to the Tower of London where they stayed until Richard of Cornwall, the Franciscans, and the Dominicans intervened and had them released in 1256, suggesting the relationship between Jews and Christians was not entirely antagonistic.<sup>81</sup>

In return for loaning King Henry III some money in 1255, his brother Richard FitzRoy was given economic custody of the Jews, allowing him to benefit from their financial dealings that had previously enriched the king.<sup>82</sup> Because Henry “no longer had a direct financial obligation in protecting the Jews,” he relaxed protection for their communities insofar as all of his economic interests would be preserved.<sup>83</sup> The Jews suffered greatly during the Barons’ Wars of 1263 to 1267 as Simon de Montfort’s followers ravaged the Jewries of London, Winchester, Canterbury, and Northampton in an effort to destroy the bonds and contracts that signified their debts.<sup>84</sup> Many Jewish men were killed, and many surviving women were baptized to avoid being murdered.<sup>85</sup> King Henry tried to stop De Montfort in order to protect the money that would eventually be ceded to the Crown, but was not able to stop the violent rampage of De Montfort’s adherents. They violently assaulted the Jews in Canterbury in 1261, massacred most of the Jews who lived in Derby in February, 1262, and burned many houses of London Jews after looting them in 1264.<sup>86</sup> In 1265, a group of rebel barons sacked the Lincoln Jewry and went into their synagogue where they killed Jews and

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>81</sup> Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 87.

<sup>82</sup> Jenks et al., *Laws, Lawyers, and Texts*, 137.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>84</sup> Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 88.

<sup>85</sup> Stacey, "The Conversion of Jews to Christianity," 281.

<sup>86</sup> Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 88-89.



burned all of their bonds and charters which were the only copies of those business records.<sup>87</sup> After the Barons' War, Jews were living in such terror that King Henry appointed burgesses and citizens of certain towns to protect and defend them because "they fear[ed] grave peril" and were in a "deplorable state."<sup>88</sup>

Under Edward I, the Jews found they were valued least and received fewer protections. A large factor in this shift was that Christian moneylending was more accessible because of the Church's altered attitude on usury; Jews were no longer necessary as financiers and bankrollers. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 expressed the church's new definition of "usury" and their stance on the ethics of banking which allowed for Italian bankers to open banking branches in important cities across Europe.<sup>89</sup> Over time, English kings and the English people began preferring these "merchants of Lucca" as lenders and became less reliant on Jewish bankers to financially support them and their political and business obligations.<sup>90</sup> In 1275, Edward enacted the Statute of Jewry which fully prohibited the Jews from lending money at interest, putting them in a tough economic position considering other employment opportunities were either not as profitable or not open to them.<sup>91</sup> Jews would not be able to integrate into the community of Christian merchants because of the 1253 prohibition on Jews paying local taxes since they "serve the King" and can only pay their tax money directly to him.<sup>92</sup> This led to many Jews being arrested for coin clipping and put in the Tower of London where they "lived as a virtual community."<sup>93</sup> Due to the position of Jews as bankers and moneylenders, they could "force their debtors to take depreciated coin" which is what caused most coin clipping complaints to be aimed at the Jews.<sup>94</sup> Between 1278 and 1285, hundreds of Jews were hanged for money clipping and in 1278 alone, 293 Jews were executed in London for the crime.<sup>95</sup> The policy was changed and imprisoned Jews could pay a fine to the Crown for their alleged crime and have their property confiscated in exchange for their lives.<sup>96</sup> Although this policy was welcomed by the prisoners, it was another way for the king to exploit the Jewish people and create an environment of distress and insecurity in addition to their battle to find work. To further ostracize Jews and destroy their way of life, they had to strictly follow the policy of wearing a Jewish badge and, after 1280, they

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>89</sup> Mitchell, *Voices*, 74.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Brand, "Jews and the Law in England," 1142.

<sup>93</sup> Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 90.

<sup>94</sup> Jacobs, *Jews of Angevin England*, 226.

<sup>95</sup> Stacey, "The Conversion of Jews to Christianity," 272; Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 90.

<sup>96</sup> Mundill, *The King's Jews*, 91.

were under heightened pressure to convert, being forced by royal officials to attend weekly sermons facilitated by Dominican friars as commanded by King Edward I.<sup>97</sup>

With the Jews continuing to struggle to survive, King Edward I claimed instead of “living by trade or by their own labour” they were continuing to practice usury and used this as part of the justification for issuing the Edict of Expulsion on July 18, 1290.<sup>98</sup> The edict notes that the Jews usury changed from charging interest to charging favors and also mentioned forged debt obligations owed to Jews.<sup>99</sup> What had prompted the expulsion was a parliamentary negotiation lasting four months involving King Edward who wanted to raise taxes for Christians despite the lack of military or political necessity.<sup>100</sup> As a part of the compromise for getting the tax approved and gaining the support from the nobles and barons, the Jews were to be expelled.<sup>101</sup> Although Edward knew stopping Jewish business would diminish much needed resources from the Royal Treasury, his barons desperately wanted relief from Jewish debts.<sup>102</sup> The Jews had also been unable to provide as much financial support to Edward I as they had to previous kings because of the destruction done to their property by the barons and the prohibition on usury which made it easier for the King to limit his body of financiers to the Italians.<sup>103</sup> The Edict of Expulsion informed the Jews that they had to leave England and Wales before All Saints’ Day and that if they refused to go, they would be “liable to the penalty of death.”<sup>104</sup> The Jewish community had the option of fleeing to mainland Europe, Scotland, or Ireland and were allowed to bring all of their possessions with them.<sup>105</sup> Any Jewish property left behind was taken by the king and a fraction of the debts previously owed to the Jews were now owed to the king directly.<sup>106</sup>

For the Jewish community in England, the thirteenth century was marked by progressively increasing hostility, discrimination, murder, poverty, and decreasing favor from the king, with their century-long persecution culminating in the Edict of Expulsion in 1290. In a period when the Church’s prohibition on Christian moneylending could have hindered the capitalistic business ventures of English Christians, the Jews played a crucial role in developing the English economy and providing the king with a way to collect even more money for the Crown. The king was able to have a hold on the nobles, merchants, and barons through their indebtedness to Jewish usurers and the Church used its enactments to embitter the social and religious

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<sup>97</sup> Stacey, “The Conversion of Jews to Christianity,” 268.

<sup>98</sup> Brand, “Jews and the Law in England,” 1157; Stacey, “The Conversion of Jews to Christianity,” 282.

<sup>99</sup> Brand, “Jews and the Law in England,” 1157.

<sup>100</sup> Stacey, “The Conversion of Jews to Christianity,” 282.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Abrahams, *Expulsion of the Jews from England*, 28.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 34, 37.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>105</sup> Mitchell, *Voices*, 73.

<sup>106</sup> Abrahams, *Expulsion of the Jews from England*, 72.

relations between Jews and Christians even further.<sup>107</sup> By the 1260s, kings had been confiscating Jewish synagogues and transforming them into churches and the Barons' War left the Jews in a renewed state of economic and political fragility.<sup>108</sup> Paired with intensified competition from Italian moneylenders and a king who was less willing to defend the Jews, the 1275 Statute of Jewry outlawing Jewish moneylending solidified the decline of Jewish prosperity in thirteenth-century England.<sup>109</sup> Following decades of exploitation, discrimination, and antagonism under the reigns of Richard I, John, Henry III, and Edward I, Jews were not allowed back into England until the 1640s when Oliver Cromwell invited their return.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., Jacobs, 130, 143.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., Stacey, 265.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Julius, 127.

<sup>110</sup> Osterman, Nathan. "The Controversy over the Proposed Readmission of the Jews to England (1655)." *Jewish Social Studies* 3, no. 3 (1941): 301-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4464425>.