The Unraveling: Seville, The Jews of Castile, and the Road to the Riots of 1391

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Listen to the voice of Seville, a voice wounded and melodious…. Here as in other places, they loved and hated for dark reasons and without any reason; they made prayers by sun and by rain; they interpreted life by giving death; they believed themselves to be strong by persecuting the weak, they affirmed the honor of God, but also the dishonor of men…. Certainly all life ends in night, but to illuminate it is our mission. Through tolerance.

-Elie Wiesel
Seville, April 1992

Inscription from “The Monument to Tolerance,” Seville.
Acknowledgments

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N.W.
A Note on Terminology

Several potentially confusing choices of terminology require explanation. First, I employ the term “anti-Judaism,” or hatred of Jews based on their religion, instead of “anti-Semitism,” or the hatred of Jews as an inferior race, a notion that did not emerge fully until the mid-nineteenth century. The word “secular” in this thesis is not used in its modern political sense, but rather to describe the temporal leaders (many of whom were religiously devout) of political entities. With regard to Christian missionary activity and sermonizing concerning Jews, I prefer the word “preachers,” which despite its Protestant overtones remains the most accurate way to describe these men. While many of those who preached both to and against the Jews belonged to the Christian Mendicant orders, especially the Franciscans and Dominicans, some, including the main figure discussed in this thesis, Ferrán Martínez, did not. With respect to Jewish communities, I will use both juderia (literally, “Jewry”) and the Arabic word aljama, a term used in official documents to describe both Jewish and Muslim neighborhoods. Since juderia carries geographical connotations, I will use it to refer to the Jewish neighborhood of Seville as a physical space, while I will employ aljama with regard to Jews as a community and to Jewish communal leadership. Finally, in describing the riots of 1391 and other violent outbursts against Jews, I prefer “riots” or “attacks” in place of “pogroms,” another term that bears nineteenth- and twentieth-century connotations.

The geography of the Iberian Peninsula in the late medieval period also warrants explanation, as Spain had not yet come into existence as a unified country. Since the bulk of my analysis focuses on Seville, I will generally refer to the province, Andalusia, and the kingdom, Castile, to which the city pertained. While I will refer to events in the Christian Crown of
Aragon in eastern Iberia and the Kingdom of Navarre in the northeast, these regions by and large remain outside of the focus of this study, as do Portugal in the west of the Peninsula and the Muslim Kingdom of Granada in the southeast. While as the events of 1391 vividly demonstrated, the anti-Judaism of the period did not respect borders, a greater focus on Seville, where the riots began, and Castile helps to inform my discussion of several historiographical questions.

I have attempted to render all names into their modern Castilian or English versions. In many cases, there are a bewildering variety of ways to spell these names (for instance, depending on the text, there are six different ways to spell Ferrán Martínez’ first name). I will occasionally cite authors who chose to use different versions. All translations into English are my own unless otherwise noted.

Finally, all population figures, especially the size of the Jewish community of Seville prior to the events of 1391 and the numbers of Jews who were killed, converted, or fled the Iberian Peninsula, should be regarded as approximations. Historians differ wildly on the statistics, and given the lack of surviving sources, it is difficult to come to firm conclusions. Much of our potential knowledge of the judería of Seville and many others of Iberia simply vanished as these communities were reduced to rubble.
Introduction

The remnants of the old judería, or Jewish neighborhood, of the city of Seville mesh awkwardly with modernity. A Star of David crowns the Romanesque doorway of the church of San Isidoro; fragments from a Jewish cemetery can be found, enclosed like museum pieces, inside an underground parking garage. Even the current layout of the neighborhood, with its narrow, winding streets leading away from the city’s Cathedral and Alcázar royal palace, owes more to a desire to attract tourists than to a striving for historical authenticity.

Even though nearly all of the physical evidence of this community’s existence has disappeared, the place of Seville in the history of the Jewish experience on the Iberian Peninsula remains intact. Whether through the histories of figures such as Samuel ha-Levi who attained enormous wealth and power in the service of the Kingdom of Castile, or through the invocation of Seville as one of the cities representative of the supposed religious tolerance of medieval Iberia, the memory of the judería of Seville is central to the story of the Jewish experience in Spain. This study will focus on a particular period of Sevillian Jewish history: the developments of the fourteenth century leading up to the devastating riots of 1391. In the summer of that fateful year, Christian mobs, beginning in Seville, rose up in town after town throughout Castile and Aragon and ransacked Jewish neighborhoods, killing thousands and compelling many others to convert to Christianity. The Jews of Seville, and those of nearly all of Castile and Aragon, never fully recovered. This thesis will address the factors that contributed to the growth of anti-Jewish sentiment among the Sevillian populace over the course of the fourteenth century and resulted in the massacres, focusing in the end on the words and actions of the priest most often
blamed by both contemporary accounts and modern historians for the outbreaks of violence in that year: Ferrán Martínez, the Archdeacon of Écija.

Scholars have not neglected the importance of the *aljama* (the Jewish community) of Seville in terms of population and cultural production. Most agree that Seville was probably home to the largest and most powerful of the Jewish communities of the southern Castilian province of Andalusia, though it probably ranked no better than third in terms of prominence in the Kingdom of Castile as a whole, behind the long-established communities of Toledo and the northern city of Burgos.¹ Regardless of its size, the *aljama* of Seville is an important case study in the rise of a violent anti-Judaism, particularly during the second half of the fourteenth century. The significance of Seville in this sense rests on its role as perhaps the largest fault line in Christian-Jewish relations in late medieval Castile. From a Host desecration allegation in 1354 to the riots of 1391 to the establishment of the first tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition in Seville in 1480, a more aggressive anti-Judaism tended to come to the surface first in Andalusia, and often in Seville earliest of all.²

The first part of this thesis (the first four chapters) aims to provide the basic historical background behind the growth of anti-Judaism in thirteenth- and especially fourteenth-century Iberia, from the development of the predominant Christian political and theological views of the Jew in medieval Europe to events in the Castilian context. It also discusses relevant developments outside of Castilian borders, including the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, increased efforts to convert the Jews of Aragon during the thirteenth century, and an outbreak of violence in Navarre in 1328 that eerily paralleled the events of 1391. This section

¹ For a contrary view, which suggests that Seville may have been the largest Jewish community in Spain prior to 1391, see Benzioni Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1973), 258-9.
will also discuss the growing prominence of the Jewish community of Seville after the Christian conquest of the city in 1248 and the demographic and cultural changes, along with war, disease, economic crisis, and foreign intervention, which contributed to the rise among the Christian populace of an anti-Jewish ideology that could justify massacre.

The second part (chapter five) focuses on the emergence of Ferrán Martínez as an instigator of violent anti-Jewish sentiment in Seville. While I concentrate mainly on Christian anti-Judaism rather than on the Jewish community of Seville itself, I try to avoid depicting the Jews of Seville and indeed of all Iberia as merely passive recipients of popular hatred. The relationships between the Jews, the ecclesiastical and temporal authorities, and the common people of Seville were considerably more complex.

A third part (chapter six and an epilogue) seeks to analyze the outbreak of the riots, their aftermath, and their consequences for the Jewish community of Seville and for the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula as a whole. It will deal with several of the questions that remain concerning the attacks of 1391. Was violence against Jews ready to erupt at any moment, with Martínez merely the spark? Can the riots be better characterized as a general revolt of the lower classes? Why were they so much bloodier in Andalusia and along the coast of Aragon than elsewhere? Finally, it will address the most enduring impact of the massacres: the conversion of thousands of Jews to Christianity and the problems it posed for Jewish and Iberian society.

In the end, this thesis seeks to make a contribution to an area of considerable scholarly dispute: the question of whether convivencia, or peaceful coexistence between Muslims, Christians, and Jews (the so-called “three cultures”), truly prevailed in medieval Iberia. This notion has proven especially popular in recent years—in this era of religious conflict—and has even entered political discourse. It has long been central to disputes over the nature of Spanish
identity: the most famous debate over this concept arose in the mid-twentieth century between the philologist Américo Castro, who promoted the idea of the broad impact of the “three cultures,” and the historian Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, who placed Christian identity at the forefront of Spanish identity. While there certainly were moments of peaceful coexistence between Jews, Christians, and Muslims—and conditions for Jews were certainly better during the High Middle Ages than they came to be during the fourteenth century—medieval Iberia was never any sort of interfaith paradise, as some popular versions of the convivencia thesis hold.

This study seeks to explain how, in the case of Seville, coexistence deteriorated into violence, and to discuss what, if any, conclusions can thus be drawn about the notion of convivencia and the related idea of religious tolerance. As a political idea of relatively recent origin, tolerance is a problematic term with reference to an era that had no conception of it. My hope is that this thesis can contribute in some small way to an understanding not of whether convivencia and tolerance prevailed before the events of 1391, but rather of how two religious communities may drift from interaction and coexistence to violence and massacre, and of the events and personalities that affect this path. As the events of recent years demonstrate, this problem is far from limited to medieval times. The issue of coexistence with the other is a universal human concern—from the Balkans, Rwanda, and Darfur to the streets of Seville more than six centuries ago.

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I

Exiles in Sefarad

It is uncertain when Jews first arrived on the Iberian Peninsula. Some Iberian Jews and their descendants cherished the tradition that these first Jews were members of the tribe of Judah who fled the Babylonian sack of the Temple in 586 B.C.E.\(^5\) Saint Paul’s desire, expressed in his letter to the Romans, to visit Iberia also hints at a Jewish presence there before the demolition of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Jews, after all, were a logical audience for Paul’s efforts to win converts to the then-Jewish sect of Christianity.\(^6\) At any rate, a number of Jews must have arrived in the wake of the Roman destructions of Jerusalem in 70 and again in 135 C.E. and settled in or near the site that the Romans called Hispalis on the Guadalquivir River in the south of the Peninsula: the city known today as Seville.

It is impossible to determine how large the Jewish population of the Seville area or of the Peninsula as a whole came to be during this era, but by the early fourth century, Jews represented a significant population, at least in the eyes of many Christian leaders. In Iberia and elsewhere throughout Europe, the authorities of the ascendant Christian faith tended to view the presence of Jewish communities as a significant problem and sought to adopt measures to restrict them. The anti-Jewish edicts of the Council of Elvira, held in the early fourth century in southern Spain, reflected perhaps the Catholic Church hierarchy’s central concern with Jewish populations: Jews’ impact on Christians. This Church council, a meeting of the bishops of Iberia, promulgated several canons concerning Jews. For instance, it prohibited Christian parents from

\(^6\) Baer, I, 16.
marrying their daughters to non-Christians, farmers from seeking out Jews to bless their crops, Christians and Jews from eating together, and Christian men from conducting adulterous relations with Jews or other non-Christians. The penalties for violating these canons included excommunication.⁷

The bishops’ attempts to restrict these forms of interaction between Jews and Christians were likely issued before the Edict of Milan of 313, in which the Emperors Constantine (a convert to Christianity) and Licinius recognized Christianity as a legal religion. Elvira therefore probably reflected the mindset of a minority faith that remained subject to persecution and whose leaders worried about the influence of other religions—particularly Judaism, given Christianity’s origins—on its members.⁸ Even as Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and of its province of Iberia, the Church leadership’s concerns continued.

First and foremost, they faced the issue of Christianity’s Jewish roots and the proximity this fact granted the followers of the two faiths, which in turn led to fears of conversion. In a Europe very slowly becoming Christianized, Judaism was also increasingly Christianity’s major religious competition.⁹ By and large, Church authorities denounced the Jews, sometimes in vitriolic terms, for refusing to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and they cast Judaism as an inferior and antiquated faith. At the same time, given Christianity’s recognition of the Old

⁷ Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book, 315-1791* (Cincinnati: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1938), 101-2. Interestingly, the penalty for Christians who allowed Jews to bless their crops (“let him be altogether ejected from the Church,” i.e. permanent excommunication) exceeded that for parents who permitted a daughter to marry non-Christians (excommunication for five years), which suggests the bishops saw the former issue as one of greater importance. I am indebted to Professor Jonathan Ray of the Georgetown University Theology Department for this suggestion.
⁸ Marcus, 101.
⁹ During this period, Jewish leaders also placed greater emphasis on proselytism than they did after Christianity became further entrenched in Europe. As will be seen, both Christian state and canon law (the Church law code) dealt harshly with Jewish attempts to proselytize to Christians.
Testament as part of God’s revelation, Christian leaders were forced to acknowledge that Judaism possessed some religious validity.

The recognition granted to Judaism under Roman law also complicated the issue of how best to deal with the Jews. As members of an official *religio licita* (“permitted religion”), Jews enjoyed the rights of Roman citizens and were allowed to practice Judaism. Even as the Roman Empire disintegrated in Western Europe, the rulers of the political entities that succeeded it generally respected and adhered to Roman legal tradition. Despite some important exceptions, this adoption of Roman legal precedent meant that Jews could continue to follow Judaism and not face forced conversion to Christianity. At the same time, both ecclesiastical and secular authorities, beginning in the late Roman era with the adoption of Christianity, began to impose legislation designed to limit Jewish influence and the spread of Judaism itself. For instance, laws restricted Jews from holding positions of authority over Christians, limited the professions Jews could perform, and narrowed Jews’ ability to construct synagogues.10

While the Jews continued to be able to practice their faith in a Christianized Europe, they enjoyed fewer rights than Christians in both legal and religious terms. At the same time, law and practice often did not coincide. The behavior of Christians towards Jews on the local level could be far harsher (including forced conversion and even massacre) or far more lenient, depending on circumstances, than the ideology prescribed by the authorities of the Church and the state. The examples of two great Christian figures of this era provide further insight into the dynamics of Christian-Jewish relations and how the Church sought to reconcile anti-Jewish sentiment with a respect for both the Old Testament and Roman legal tradition.11

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11 I am again indebted to Professor Jonathan Ray for the discussion that follows.
Saint Augustine (354-430) articulated the ideology that became the Church’s official policy towards the Jews during the Middle Ages. In works such as his City of God, Augustine followed an already well-established theory in defining the Jews as a people who rejected and killed Christ, and he viewed their dispersion as divine punishment.\(^{12}\) Augustine, however, took an innovative approach based on another element of Church doctrine: the idea that the events and individuals of the Old Testament prefigured, or foreshadowed, those of the New and therefore indicated the truth of Christianity. In Augustine’s view, the Jews, as the people of the Old Testament, served as its guardians and thus as unknowing witnesses to the true faith.\(^{13}\) Most critical for the Jews of Europe, however, was one of this theory’s corollaries: because the Jews served as valuable witnesses to Christian truth, they must be protected. Indeed, as Augustine and other leaders of the Church maintained, a portion of the Jews would survive and be converted to Christianity only with Christ’s Second Coming. Augustine invoked Psalm 59:11: “Slay them not, lest at any time they forget your law; scatter them in your might.”\(^{14}\) According to his interpretation, this Old Testament verse commanded that Jews not be killed. Their very dispersion and existence in Christian Europe was a manifestation of God’s will.

Augustine’s formulation of the Jewish role in Christian society represented the Jews as religious inferiors who deserved exile and degradation. Their very status as Jews, however, pointed to Christian truth and was therefore crucial to Christian purposes. Given Augustine’s great influence, it is unsurprising that the Church came to adopt the doctrine of Jewish witness and the cry of “Slay them not.”\(^{15}\) Throughout most of the Middle Ages, both secular and


\(^{13}\) Cohen, Living Letters, 32-33.

\(^{14}\) Cited in Cohen, Living Letters, 35.

\(^{15}\) Edwards, 12.
ecclesiastical authorities adhered to Augustine’s conception. Nevertheless, these theological principles did not always prevail in practice.

Pope Gregory I (590-604) was instrumental in implementing a vision similar to Augustine’s as Church doctrine. For instance, he condemned cases of forced conversion of Jews in southern France and the illegal confiscation of Jewish synagogues in Sicily—acts that violated both the tradition of Judaism as a *religio licita* and Augustine’s theory. While he viewed those who had converted Jews in southern France by force as acting “from the love of our Lord,” he pointed out that no Scriptural justification for forced conversion of the Jews existed. Such actions were counterproductive, since “when anyone is brought to the font of baptism, not by the sweetness of preaching but by compulsion, he returns to his former superstition, and dies the worse from having been born again.” He praised efforts to convert Jews by preaching and persuasion, but recognized that forced conversion tended not to produce faithful Christians.\(^\text{16}\)

In the Sicilian case, Gregory found that the local bishop had seized synagogues without adequate cause. He rooted his decision on this issue in Roman law, which allowed Jews to maintain synagogues as long as they did not construct new ones. He referred to a principle he had developed in a previous papal letter, in which he had concluded, “Just as one ought not to grant any freedom to the Jews in their synagogues beyond that permitted by law, so should the Jews in no way suffer in those things already conceded to them.” Although synagogues could not be deconsecrated once converted into churches, Gregory ordered that the local Jews receive compensation. He constructed a quid pro quo: as long as Jews observed the limits imposed on them by law, Christians should not infringe upon their rights. The broader principle in this case—respecting Jewish privileges so long as Jews remained within their legal boundaries—also became part of Church policy. In short, while Augustine provided a theological justification for

\(^{16}\) Marcus, 111-13. All quotations in this paragraph and the one that follows are taken from this book.
the Church’s stance towards the Jews, Gregory, in his capacities as a religious leader and as the temporal ruler of papal territories in Italy, gave this position legal and administrative backing. In his political role, Gregory must have viewed the Jews—many of whom were involved in commerce—as useful subjects. In this regard, he was no different than many of the secular rulers of the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{17}

The behavior described in Pope Gregory’s letters, however, reflected the dichotomy between the policies of the Church leadership and those of some local ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Even after Gregory confirmed the idea of protecting the Jews, violations continued. Iberia in particular became an area where local rulers disregarded the papal position on Jewish rights and privileges.

These conflicts with papal policy arose in part because of the political circumstances of post-Roman Iberia. As the Roman Empire imploded in the fifth century, a number of Northern European tribes, including the Vandals and Visigoths, invaded and settled on the Peninsula. The Visigoths, who practiced Arian Christianity, extended control over much of the Peninsula and apparently imposed a special tax on Jews. Their attitudes towards the Jews became increasingly hostile after the conversion of King Recared to Catholicism at the Third Council of Toledo (the Visigothic capital) in 589. At a series of Councils at Toledo throughout the seventh century, the Visigothic Church and state promulgated a series of anti-Jewish restrictions. Many of these sprung from concerns over Jewish converts to Christianity who had returned to Judaism. In contrast with the Gregorian and Augustinian approaches, Visigothic kings on several occasions made all non-Catholic religions illegal and attempted to baptize Jews by force. The fact that such edicts were issued multiple times suggests that their enforcement could be lax. The forced

\textsuperscript{17} Marcus, 111-13.
conversions under the Visigoths, therefore, appear to have had little long-term impact on treatment of the Jews at the local level.\textsuperscript{18}

These Visigothic persecutions, however, reflected larger trends in the history of the Jewish experience in Iberia and set a precedent for later Christian actions towards the Jews. While the focus on the reversion of Jewish converts was one maintained by both Church and state in Christian Europe throughout the medieval period, this issue took on particular importance south of the Pyrenees, which eventually became home to the largest Jewish communities of Western Europe.\textsuperscript{19} The conflict between the stances of the papacy and those of the Visigothic kings and the Iberian Church was also significant. In the Visigothic era, the Holy See, far away and relatively weak, had no realistic means of implementing its desired policy towards the Jews. This problem continued even as the papacy’s power began to increase over the course of the Middle Ages, but in reverse fashion. Papal attitudes during the High and Late Middle Ages, in contrast with those during the Visigothic era, were often more hostile towards the Jews than those of Iberian temporal rulers.

At any rate, a seminal event in the Jewish experience in Iberia soon intervened: the Muslim invasion and conquest of much of the Peninsula, including Seville (called Isbiliya in Arabic) in 711. Only small pockets in the north of Iberia remained under Christian control. The Jews found themselves under new overlords with a different conception of the Jewish role in society. In general terms, Islamic law recognized both Jews and Christians as \textit{dhimmi}, or

\textsuperscript{18} Baer, I, 19-21. Arians rejected the idea of the Trinity and placed Christ on a level below that of God. The Visigoths’ anti-Judaism might be attributed in part to a case of “convert’s zeal.” Baer notes this development within the context of other efforts to pressure and forcibly convert Jews in this era, including in France, Sicily (as shown by Pope Gregory’s letter) and the Byzantine Empire. This Visigothic attitude towards the Jews was therefore not unique, but may have been an indication of the spirit of the times. At any rate, the Visigoths’ anti-Jewish policies served as a leading example of what might be termed a strain of more hostile, if sometimes dormant, anti-Judaism within early medieval Christianity.

\textsuperscript{19} Baer, I, 47.
“People of the Book,” which entitled them to receive government protection and allowed them to practice their own religion and conduct their own affairs. In other words, Jews could establish their own legal, political, and religious mechanisms to govern their communities. Jews were still seen as inferiors and were required to pay a special poll tax (the jizya) to the Muslim ruler. Nevertheless, in this new state known as Al-Andalus, Jews enjoyed far greater privileges than they had received under Visigothic rule and were subjected to only sporadic persecution.

The period from approximately the tenth through the early twelfth centuries marked the high point of the Jewish experience on the Iberian Peninsula and is often dubbed the “Golden Age.” Jewish culture, philosophy, science, and literature—particularly poetry—flourished. The most powerful Jews served as courtiers for the rulers of Al-Andalus and carried out a variety of functions, including as physicians, diplomats, and financial officials. Many attained heights of wealth and power and were often seen by fellow Jews as their protectors. The surviving literature of this period often reflects a sense of confidence and pride and a feeling of a distinct “Sephardic” identity. In many ways, this era of Jewish life and cultural flourishing coincided with the emergence of Al-Andalus, with its capital in Córdoba, as perhaps the most powerful and

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20 Islamic authorities accepted Judaism and Christianity as legitimate, if incomplete, versions of divine revelation. For much more on the concept of dhimmi and the contract or “Pact of ‘Umar” which according to Islamic tradition codified the relationship between Muslims, Jews, and Christians, see Norman Stillman, ed., The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979).

21 Baer, I, 28-30. Two of the many examples of these Jews were Hasdai ibn Shaprut, who served as a leading adviser to the caliph Abd-al-Rahman III (912-61), and Samuel ibn Naghrela, who became vizier of the city-state of Granada in the mid-eleventh century and even led armies into battle.

22 The term “Sephardic” comes from the Hebrew word for Spain, “Sefarad.” This term itself originates from Obadiah 1:20 (“The exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sefarad”). During the era of Jewish life in Al-Andalus in particular, the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula identified themselves with this reference, a claim that continued long after they once again came under Christian rule. This tradition served as a fount of communal consciousness and bolstered the link that many Sephardic writers asserted between themselves and the royal and priestly line of Judah. For an overview of many of the aspects of Jewish life in Al-Andalus, see Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynn D. Dodds, eds. Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain (New York: George Braziller, Inc. & the Jewish Museum, 1992).
advanced state of Western Europe. Even as the power of Al-Andalus began to wane in the eleventh century amidst internal disputes, and the Muslim state disintegrated into small taifa (literally “faction” or city-state) kingdoms, the influence of Al-Andalus’s Arabized culture continued. Seville, which emerged as one of the leading taifa states, continued to serve as one of the major centers of Jewish life and cultural production on the Peninsula. The decline of Muslim power and the advances of the Christian kingdoms, which exploited the political weakness of Al-Andalus in order to conquer Muslim territories, however, soon affected Jewish communities.

The Golden Age had its threatening underside. While Muslim rulers tended to allow Jews to attain positions and influence at court, Jews remained defined as legal and religious inferiors. Popular attitudes towards the Jews were also often unfavorable. The very pursuit of power and wealth by Jewish courtiers, and often with it the improvement of conditions for their fellow Jews, could provoke resentment amongst the impoverished Muslim masses. Alleged violations of the dhimmi “contract,” such as instances of Jews appearing to wield power over Muslims, triggered anger and even violence. In the taifa kingdom of Granada in 1066, for instance, a riot broke out against the ibn Naghreila family that had controlled the post of vizier. The episode culminated in the massacre of the city’s Jewish community.

The Muslim Berber tribes, originally from North Africa, who grew in power on the Peninsula at the end of the eleventh century also shared a disdain for Jewish influence. They largely rejected Andalusi culture and its relative leniency towards Christians and Jews. Invited by the rulers of the taifa states—some of them Berbers themselves—to stem the advances of the Christian kingdoms of the north of the Peninsula, particularly after the Christian capture of the old Visigothic and Christian capital of Toledo in 1085, the tribe of the Almoravids soon seized control over the remnants of Al-Andalus. Jewish influence waned as the Almoravids sought to
impose a stricter interpretation of Islam in Iberia. The invasion and conquest of Al-Andalus by a
Berber empire with an even more rigid view of Islam, the Almohads, in the late 1140s brought
Jewish life to a halt. The Almohads’ demands that the Jews and Christians of Al-Andalus
convert to Islam resulted in a massive flow of refugees to the Christian states of the north, as
well as to other Muslim lands not under Almohad control. It appears that many of the Jews of
Seville, where the Almohads established their peninsular capital, fled north towards Christian
Toledo.23 For a century, there may have been no permanent Jewish presence in Seville.

The Christian states—Portugal, Aragon, Navarre, León, and Castile—that received these
Andalusi Jews tended to be welcoming. The Kingdom of Castile, to which many of the Jews of
Seville fled, likely had Jewish inhabitants for nearly two centuries prior to the influx of Andalusi
Jews.24 The Christian kingdoms not only had experience with Jewish populations but also
actively encouraged the new arrivals to settle. Many Andalusi Jews spoke Arabic, which
allowed them to serve a variety of functions as intermediaries, from diplomacy to trade, with
Muslim lands.25 Apart from their knowledge of language and commerce, these Jews also
brought a variety of scientific (especially medicinal), financial, and administrative skills they had
honored in Al-Andalus.26 In this era, the kingdoms of the north possessed few Christians who
could boast such skills or be trusted with such tasks. Since the relationship between kings and
nobles was often antagonistic, the monarchy was often reluctant to entrust fellow Christians from
the nobility, who had access to a power base, with these responsibilities. As a minority group
without any hope of challenging royal power, Jews tended to be trusted far more with duties such

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23 Julio González, *Repartimiento de Sevilla* [*The Division of Seville*], 2 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior
24 Baer, I, 42.
25 González, I, 362. Even the Almohads apparently allowed Jews to visit their territories as merchants
and emissaries.
26 Baer, I, 47-8.
as financial administration and tax farming. Jews consequently proved useful to Christian rulers, especially in the financial administration of their territories, in the collection of tax revenue, and in the resettlement of newly conquered urban areas.

Jews were also valuable to Christian monarchs because of a refinement of their legal and political status. Following the Augustinian and Gregorian framework, by the High Middle Ages secular rulers throughout Europe adopted a view of Jews as _servi regis_ or _servi Camerarum_, “slaves of the king” or “slaves of the [ruler’s] Chamber.” Jews were possessions of the secular leader, lived under his direct protection, and paid taxes to him. This arrangement maintained the Church’s idea that Jews were inferiors who must nonetheless be preserved while also providing for monarchs’ economic interests.\(^\text{27}\) In Iberia in particular, secular rulers promoted this idea through the _fueros_, or charters, granted to conquered or newly founded towns. As one Navarrese _fuero_ in 1176 declared, the Jews were “slaves of the Crown and belong exclusively to the royal treasury.”\(^\text{28}\) The establishment of this notion as the legal status of the Jews may also have emerged from the feudal system and its vision of societal organization. In a feudal society, every group had to have its assigned place.\(^\text{29}\) The Christian kingdoms placed the Jews in a position of reliance on the monarch that allowed the Jews to obtain financial benefits and gain protection. Nevertheless, such a situation also proved precarious.

Under both Muslim and Christian rule, during times of instability and popular fears of excessive Jewish power, Jewish communities could be subject to robbery, violence, and destruction. Examples included the 1066 riot in Granada and scattered anti-Jewish outbreaks as

\(^\text{27}\) Baer, I, 85-7.
\(^\text{28}\) Cited in Baer, I, 85.
early as the eleventh century in Christian kingdoms.\textsuperscript{30} In some sense, however, the Jews living under Christian control faced greater danger, since their status as \textit{servi regis} tethered them arguably even closer to the monarch. When a temporal leader died, the interregnum often left no strong authority in place to protect Jews. Furthermore, groups seeking to lash out at the monarchy could find the Jews, as royal property, a less risky target. Jews’ status as royal possessions thus left them increasingly vulnerable as anti-Jewish sentiment grew more virulent across Christian Europe.

Long-standing tensions within the Jewish communities also served to create inner division and to reinforce the negative aspects of Jews’ legal and political position. One dispute—a debate that occurred throughout the medieval Jewish world—pitted rabbinical leaders against the Karaites, a sect that refused to acknowledge the authority of the Talmud, the codification of Jewish oral law completed by approximately the sixth century C.E. The tension between the advocates of more rationalist strands of Judaism, influenced by the Greek learning acquired under Muslim rule, and those who favored a more traditionalistic and pietistic approach to religion was also particularly intense in Iberia. Conflict also occurred on a daily level between members of the community, especially between rabbis and communal leaders or \textit{mukdamim} (often wealthy merchants), whose interests often clashed. Given the decentralized nature of the communities of the Diaspora and with no unifying religious or political hierarchy in place after the destruction of the Second Temple, controversies over authority and the enforcement of rabbinical decrees were particularly commonplace.\textsuperscript{31}

Perhaps the greatest source of inner conflict among the Jewish communities of Iberia arose from the power of the courtiers. Their success at court could help ensure the protection of

\textsuperscript{30} Baer, I, 43.

\textsuperscript{31} I am again indebted to Professor Jonathan Ray for my discussion of these issues.
all Jews. Nevertheless, many Jews became angered by courtiers’ perceived tendency to neglect the duties of faith in favor of accumulation of wealth and power. Many Jews of lesser economic status, as well as the communal leaders responsible for collecting the *aljamas*’ taxes and delivering them to the monarch’s officials, also resented the privileges such as tax exemptions that both Muslim and Christian rulers granted to leading Jews.\textsuperscript{32} This trend had significant ramifications for the Jews of Seville and of Iberia as a whole during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Nevertheless, during the first half of the thirteenth century, these problems had yet to produce significant problems for the Jews of the Kingdom of Castile, now joined with the Kingdom of León. Castile and the Crown of Aragon in the east began to push once again into the territories of Al-Andalus. The armies of both kingdoms crushed the Almohads at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, leaving the Christian kingdoms as the dominant powers on the Peninsula. In 1236, the armies of Castile’s King Fernando III (1217-52) captured Córdoba and began to inch their way towards Seville. Two years later, the forces of the Aragonese King Jaime I (1213-76) conquered the city of Valencia on the Mediterranean coast. The Muslim Nasrid dynasty, which took control of the area of Granada amidst the collapse of Almohad rule, was reduced to paying tribute to Castile. These victories, however, cannot be labeled, as they sometimes are in popular imagination, as part of a *Reconquista* (Reconquest) of Iberia fueled solely by Christian religious zeal. While the Christian military campaigns often evoked religious ideals, in reality, the kingdoms were often as willing to fight against each other as against Al-Andalus. Indeed, the Christian powers dedicated little sustained effort to further conquests of

\textsuperscript{32} Baer, I, 91-93.
Muslim territory after the Castilian siege of Seville. Christian dominance of the Peninsula was generally secure.\textsuperscript{33}

Fernando III’s campaign against Seville was a long and costly affair, but on November 23, 1248, the Castilian King finally obtained the city’s surrender. In the words of the \textit{Primera Crónica General de España (First General Chronicle of Spain)} commissioned by Fernando’s son Alfonso X (1252-84), the city’s status as a port and trading center, as well as an area for agriculture, meant that there was “no such well-situated and harmonious city in the world.”\textsuperscript{34} Despite its hyperbole, the \textit{Crónica} reflected a sense of the city’s resources and economic possibilities that had been interrupted by the conquest. In the economic arena in particular, the Jews came to play a pivotal role in the city’s post-conquest redevelopment.

As occurred in other conquered cities, the monarchy approved the division, or \textit{repartimiento}, of the new territories. It is unclear how many Jews came to Seville with the conquest. The initial community—probably composed largely of Toledan Jews—was small. Evidence suggests that in 1290 it numbered 200 Jewish families, or about a thousand people, out of total population of perhaps fifteen to twenty thousand.\textsuperscript{35} Jews received a neighborhood along the city’s southeastern walls, near the site of the royal \textit{Alcázar}, or palace. This new \textit{judería} was eventually kept apart from other neighborhoods by walls, and several gates were constructed, with at least two between the \textit{judería} and the rest of Seville and at least one at the exterior city.

\textsuperscript{33} For a discussion of these developments, see Joseph F. O’Callaghan, \textit{A History of Medieval Spain} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 333-57.

\textsuperscript{34} Cited in Olivia Remie Constable, ed., \textit{Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 218.

\textsuperscript{35} Baer, I, 191. Population figures for medieval Jewish communities—particularly those of Castile—are notoriously sketchy, and as will be discussed with regard to the 1391 riots, subject to much historical debate. For this estimate, I follow the rubric of Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada in his \textit{Historia de Sevilla: la ciudad medieval, 1248-1492} [\textit{History of Seville: The Medieval City, 1248-1492}] (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 1976), which estimates one Jewish family to contain roughly five members on average. In no way, however, should this be considered an exact figure.
At this stage of Castilian history, secular authorities did not design this separation in order to ghettoize the Jews, but rather followed the standard practice for the layout of Jewish neighborhoods throughout Christian Europe. Indeed, the interests of both Christian officials and Jewish leaders favored separation. Jewish residence in one neighborhood near the seat of royal power facilitated tasks such as revenue collection and the protection of Jews. Jewish communal leaders and rabbis throughout the Middle Ages also approved of separation, since it made the members of the community easier to govern and less likely to fall under the influence of their Christian neighbors.

This physical separation, however, did not proscribe social and cultural interaction. According to tradition, upon the conquest the Jews presented Fernando III with ceremonial keys bearing the inscriptions, “God will open [the city], the King will enter” and “The King of Kings will open; the King of all the land will enter.” The tomb of the king in the Cathedral of Seville was also famously engraved in Castilian, Hebrew, Latin, and Arabic—the languages spoken within the domains of Castile.

Apart from these details, evidence of the properties distributed under the repartimiento—especially during the reign of Alfonso X—suggests some level of royal reward for Jewish services. For instance, Jews were granted three of the city’s mosques for use as synagogues; the

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37 González, I, 361-2.

38 “Dios abrirá, Rey entrará” and “El rey de los reyes abrirá; el rey de toda la tierra entrará.” See, for instance, José Luís Lacave, Juderías y sinagogas españolas [Spanish Jewries and Synagogues] (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992), 353.
monarchy awarded every other mosque in the city to the Church. Surviving documents refer to Jews as involved in a wide variety of economic activities, including farming, the exchange of money, the ownership of houses in Christian neighborhoods, and possession of everything from stalls in the marketplace to bakeries. Jews also served as the almojarifes, or officials in charge of collecting royal taxes and other revenue, of Seville itself, of the Seville region, and of the entire Kingdom of Castile at the time. These arrangements in Seville followed the royal tradition of allowing Jews to hold important administrative and financial posts. In Seville as in other localities, Jewish-Christian interaction (as well as with the Muslim inhabitants of these areas) occurred on a daily basis, from the marketplace to the Jewish acquisition of houses in Christian areas (and vice versa). Since most Jews lived in the cities, Jewish-Christian contact was especially common in urban areas. In thirteenth-century Iberia, as the advances of the Christian kingdoms meant the incorporation of new Jewish and Muslim populations into these realms, inter-religious contact was unavoidable.

The court of Alfonso X in many senses reflected this environment. Alfonso’s reign was known for its learning and its production of literary, religious, and scholarly works, especially translations of Greek and Arabic texts into Latin and Castilian. With many Jewish courtiers’ Andalusi heritage and knowledge of Arabic, Jews proved especially valuable in translation efforts and worked alongside Christian and Muslim colleagues. Alfonso’s reputation for learning and knowledge earned him the title of “the Wise.” Alfonso’s reign, however, should not

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39 Pedro Rubio Merino, *Archivo de la Santa Metropolitana y Patriarcal Iglesia Catedral de Sevilla: inventario general [Archive of the Holy Metropolitan and Patriarchal Cathedral-Church of Seville: General Inventory]* (Madrid: Fundación Ramón Areces, 1987), 214. González suggests that three synagogues was a large number given the number of Jews who arrived with the conquest, indicating particular royal favor or a recognition of Jewish utility in the process of repopulating the city.

40 González, I, 311.

41 González, I, 280. The fact that Jews held such posts proved a constant irritation to the Catholic Church hierarchy, as it seemed to violate the notion of Jewish inferiority to Christians (see Chapter 2).
be mistaken for an interfaith utopia. The landmark legal code *Las Siete Partidas (The Seven Sections)* produced under his auspices continued the legal protection of the Jews, but also recognized growing anti-Jewish sentiments throughout the Peninsula and throughout Christian Europe.

At their core, the *Partidas* reflected an effort by Alfonso to centralize power through a standardized codification of law based on a variety of sources, including Roman and Visigothic law and the canons of the Church. Due in part to resistance from the nobles and local authorities, which rejected such codes as an attack on their privileges, and other political and social factors, the *Partidas* were not actually enacted until the mid-fourteenth century.\(^\text{42}\) Still, their language reflected royal views of the Jewish population that held, at least in theory, for decades.

The clauses of the *Partidas* concerning Jews began by reiterating royal protection. “Jews are a type of people,” it declared, who “although they do not believe in the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, nevertheless have always been permitted by the great Christian lords to live among them.”\(^\text{43}\) Jews were allowed to live amongst Christians so “that they might live forever as in captivity and serve as a reminder to mankind that they are descended from those who crucified Our Lord Jesus Christ.”\(^\text{44}\) Alfonso X thus continued to uphold the Augustinian idea of Jewish witness.

The *Partidas* then proceeded to detail a number of restrictions on Jewish rights. While Jews could practice their faith, they faced the death penalty should they blaspheme Christ, proselytize, or convert Christians. Jews were also ordered to remain inside their *juderías* on Good Friday. Jews were banned from holding “an esteemed position or public office so as to be able to oppress any Christian in any way whatsoever,” from augmenting or ornamenting their

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\(^\text{42}\) Marcus, 34.

\(^\text{43}\) Carpenter, 27. In my discussion of the *Siete Partidas*, I use his translation.

\(^\text{44}\) Carpenter, 28.
synagogues, from harassing Jewish converts to Christianity, from employing Christian domestic servants or having Christian slaves, and from having sexual relations with Christian women. All of these laws stemmed from ecclesiastical and secular, often Roman, precedents. In this respect, Alfonso largely adhered to existing law.45

Perhaps the most remarkable section concerned allegations of Jewish ritual murder of Christian children:

Because we heard that in some places the Jews reenacted derisively—and continue to do so—on Good Friday the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, stealing children and placing them on a cross, or forming waxen images and crucifying them when children are unavailable, we order that if we discover from this time forward that such a thing has occurred in any part of our kingdom, and if it can be determined, then all those involved shall be seized, arrested, and brought before the king. And as soon as he has determined the truth of the matter, he shall order the guilty parties to be mercilessly put to death.46

The presence of such a clause in the Partidas indicates that the most serious anti-Jewish allegations had reached the ears of the court, and the text may reflect a certain level of credence given to these charges. More likely, however, the language Alfonso X used (“we heard”) and his demand that such cases come under his jurisdiction suggest that the King viewed these ideas as rumors and saw royal authority as a way to protect Jews against such accusations.47

This spirit of protection also emerged in other sections of the Partidas. For instance, the law requiring Jews to remain inside on Good Friday may have been intended to protect Jews from the possibility of religious violence. The code also defined the synagogue as “a house

45 Carpenter, 29-37. All quoted material is taken from these pages.
46 Carpenter, 29. The charge of ritual murder held, as the Siete Partidas mentioned, that Jews executed Christian children in mockery of Christ’s crucifixion. The related “blood libel” claimed that Jews used the children’s blood for ritual purposes (e.g. in matzo for Passover). These accusations led to dozens of instances of anti-Jewish violence during the Middle Ages and, regrettably, in more recent times as well. For their origins, see John McCulloh, “Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth,” Speculum 72:3 (July 1997): 698-740.
47 Carpenter, 65.
where the name of God is praised” and protected Jews in most cases from being brought to court on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. Alfonso even couched some restrictions on Jews, such as the limit on holding positions of authority over Christians, in vague language that allowed him to continue employing Jews in a variety of positions, including as doctors and financial officials. In sum, the Partidas struck a balance that adhered to the restrictions called for by secular and ecclesiastical legal precedent while still protecting Jewish interests. Finally, the dichotomy between law and practice, as with Gregory’s canonical legislation, meant that Jews on some occasions could continue to enjoy rights that were legally proscribed to them.48

Nevertheless, the last of the Partidas’ restrictions on Jews reflected a newer and harsher spirit. Citing “many errors and offensive acts [that have] occur[ed]” because of Jewish-Christian interaction, Alfonso X ordered “all Jewish men and women living in our kingdom [to] wear some sort of mark upon their heads so that all may clearly discern who is a Jew or Jewess.”49 This law derived from the aggressive anti-Jewish policy of the papacy of the early thirteenth century, particularly the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.50 Such stigmatization of the Jews also reflected increasing popular anti-Jewish pressures and clearly defined Jews as a societal “other.” These forces, as well as rebellion and political instability, may explain in part Alfonso’s somewhat schizophrenic policy towards the Jews, which ranged from the relatively protective attitude of the Partidas to the extortion and even the execution of leading Jewish figures in Seville towards the end of his reign.51 Nevertheless, most of the Jews of Castile

48 Carpenter, 103-4. The continued maintenance of Jews in high positions by both Alfonso X and his successors (see Chapters 3-4) bears out this theory.
49 Carpenter, 36.
50 For a discussion of these policies, see Chapter 2.
51 Baer, I, 130. See also Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho, “El antijudaismo o antisemitismo sevillano hacia la minoría hebrea [Sevillian Anti-Judaism or Anti-Semitism Towards the Hebrew Minority],” 73-157, in Segundos encuentros judaicos de Tudela: los caminos del exilio [Second Judaic Meetings of Tudela: The Paths of Exile], (Tudela, Spain: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996), 86-7. It appears that many
remained in a position of relative safety and security at the close of the thirteenth century. The pressures of the leaders of the Church and the rise of new Christian religious movements, however, boded ill for the future. Their efforts led to an environment where the exploitation of popular resentments put this very tradition of royal protection under effective and relentless attack.

Jews (such as Alfonso’s one-time chief almoharife, Isaac de la Maleha) supported Alfonso X’s son, the future King Sancho IV (1284-95), in a revolt against his father.
II

The Handmaid of the Church

The thirteenth century brought substantial changes to Christian Europe and to its relationship with non-Christians in particular. The Crusades, which continued throughout the century, and the Reconquista were parallel manifestations of a more aggressive posture by Christian powers towards Muslim lands. In 1204, the Fourth Crusade even sacked Constantinople, the capital of the Orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire, and established a Catholic empire that lasted almost sixty years. Western (or Latin) Christianity continued to spread in the northern and northeastern reaches of the continent. These developments were both fueled by and contributed to a significant increase in the Catholic Church's internal centralization and development of efficient governing mechanisms. A series of powerful popes throughout the century built up the papacy's administrative, judicial, and fiscal institutions and attempted to strengthen Rome's doctrinal and administrative control over the Church across Catholic Europe. Since the expansion of Catholic political power from Palestine to Greece and especially to Iberia brought many Muslim and Jews under Christian rule, a significant element of this period was an attempt on the part of the papacy and the Church in general to expand the Church's reach over non-Christians.

In Iberia, with the conquest of most of the formerly Muslim territories of the Peninsula, Christian rulers became sovereign over large Muslim and Jewish populations. In this environment, the hierarchy of the Church especially sought to centralize and expand its authority on the Peninsula. The Church’s Ecumenical Councils, the assemblies of bishops, cardinals, and other Church officials from throughout Latin Christianity often held in times of crisis and
division, served as a major instrument for directing the papacy’s desired policy towards Jewish
and Muslim populations. Perhaps due to their minority status and importance to the Christian
narrative, the Jews received particular attention.

The Third Lateran Council, held in Rome in 1179, marked one of the earlier examples of
this increasing anti-Jewish focus. Jews, the Council held, must be recognized as inferior to
Christians, and should be treated charitably “solely because of humanitarian reasons.”\textsuperscript{52} Among
other measures, it ordered that Jews and Muslims should be forbidden from having Christian
slaves, that Christian witnesses against Jews in legal cases must be accepted, and that converts to
Christianity should not be deprived of their property.\textsuperscript{53} This emphasis on ensuring that Jews held
no conceivable advantage or authority over Christians was the centerpiece of papal policy
towards the Jews throughout this period.

Lateran III did not raise new issues, but it marked a beginning of an intensified Church
preoccupation over Jewish status in Latin Christian Europe. The repetition of these concerns and
other complaints in papal letters throughout the period suggests that practices that the papacy
objected to continued to occur. In large part, this was due to European monarchs’ interests in
centralizing and increasing their own power. Along with the Church, they also sought to develop
a bureaucracy and more effective control over their territories. While the goals of Church and
state often overlapped, the two clashed especially on issues of power and ecclesiastical
privileges. The Church hierarchy experienced particular difficulties in Iberia, where secular
authorities had exerted strong authority over the Church since the Visigothic era, in obtaining

\textsuperscript{52} Solomon Grayzel, \textit{The Church and the Jews in the XII1th Century,} Vol. 1, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (New York: Hermon
Press, 1966), 297. I use his translations of papal documents in this chapter unless otherwise noted.
\textsuperscript{53} Grayzel, I, 297. Some secular rulers (including in Spain) granted Jews the privilege of not being subject
to a Christian’s testimony in a trial unless there was also a Jewish witness to the alleged offense. This
measure could help protect Jews against false, religiously motivated accusations.
enforcement by rulers of its decrees concerning Jews. In part because of the state’s influence, even the interests of Iberian Church leaders themselves clashed with Rome’s.

On occasion, local synods, or assemblies of bishops, could promulgate papal orders and perhaps have some impact. The major issue, however, was that conciliar decrees often did not suit royal interests. The Jews, after all, were considered royal property and served as a valuable tax base. A convert to Christianity no longer pertained to the King’s jurisdiction in the same way: legally, he was no longer a royal possession. Monarchs thus had an interest in preventing Jewish conversion to Christianity, and they often seized converts’ property as compensation. Such actions infuriated Church officials. Again, the very mention of these subjects in the canons of III Lateran suggests that the papacy lacked the authority to win secular rulers’ compliance on these issues.\(^{54}\) Still, as the popes of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries claimed ever-greater powers, they continued to seek harsher treatment of the Jews.

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216)’s attitudes left the greatest impact on the status and rights of the Jews of Western Europe. He was concerned that the Jews had gained too much influence and were treated too leniently by temporal authorities. His release of the traditional bull of protection \textit{Constitutio pro Judaeis} (1199), better known as \textit{Sicut Judaeis (And Thus for the Jews)}, however, mostly reflected traditional Church doctrine.\(^{55}\) Innocent began by affirming Augustine’s doctrine of Jewish witness. “Thou shalt not destroy the Jews completely,” he wrote, “so that the Christians should never by any chance be able to forget Thy Law, which, though they themselves fail to understand it, they display in their book to those who do understand.”\(^{56}\)

\(^{54}\) I am indebted to Professor Jonathan Ray for helping shape my discussion of this topic.

\(^{55}\) This bull was most likely first issued by Pope Calixtus II (1119-24), in the context of the anti-Jewish violence that had erupted with the launching of the Crusades. It was issued by many of his successors, especially during the thirteenth century, although the language dates back to the bulls of Pope Gregory I. For more information, see Grayzel, I, pp. 76-77.

\(^{56}\) Grayzel, I, 93.
Jews must be allowed to survive and should be protected from forced conversions, from harm at the hands of Christians, from interference with the celebration of Jewish festivals, and from the desecration of their cemeteries. The bull closed, however, with an important qualification: that the Church protected only Jews “who have not presumed to plot against the Christian Faith.” Later leaders of anti-Jewish campaigns—such as Archdeacon Ferrán Martínez—could use this loophole as a justification for their actions. In their view, Jews were inherent enemies of and plotters against Christians.

Innocent III articulated his views on the proper nature of the Christian-Jewish relationship through a metaphor: Judaism as Christianity’s servant or handmaid. Jews holding power over Christians in any way was a violation of divine law. His 1201 letter to the Archbishop of Arles in France reflected this attitude and marked one of the most significant changes in Church policy with regard to Jewish converts to Christianity. Jews who were converted to Christianity by force, Innocent maintained, could be forced to remain Christian against their will if they had not objected during the actual conversion. The mere fact of their silence implied some kind of consent, since “it is better expressly to object, than to give the least consent.” Since St. Augustine and Pope Gregory I, the Church had maintained that forced conversion was illegal; Jews could only convert of their own free will. Of course, forced conversions had still occurred under some secular authorities such as the Visigoths. Now, Innocent was moving the Church closer to that spirit. Converted Jews who sought to return to their former faith now met with increasing difficulties, at least in theory. This problem took on increasing significance in the Iberian and specifically Castilian contexts. In the aftermath of the

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57 Grayzel, I, 93.
58 Grayzel, I, 97.
59 Grayzel, II, 7.
60 Grayzel, I, 103.
events of 1391—when thousands of Jews were converted by force in situations similar to those described by Innocent—this policy provided justification for the view that their conversions were valid and irrevocable.

Still, in Castile as in many other places throughout Europe, Church decrees on the Jews remained unenforced. In 1205, Innocent III wrote to King Alfonso VIII (1158-1214), complaining of the King’s treatment of his Jewish and Muslim subjects. For instance, Alfonso had allowed Jews to dictate how much compensation they should receive if their slaves converted to Christianity, instead of following the fixed amount decreed by canon law (the ecclesiastical law code) for such situations. Furthermore, the King refused to force Jews and Muslims to pay the tithe to the Church on their possessions and even enabled them to avoid payment. These steps, Innocent charged, assured “the Synagogue grows in power [while] the Church becomes weaker, and the handmaid is openly preferred.”

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 provided another opportunity for the papacy to attack what it saw as Jews’ excessive power. Lateran IV renewed several complaints the Church hierarchy had expounded throughout the Middle Ages about Jewish practices and privileges: usury (the lending of money at excessive rates of interest), the payment of the tithe, Jews holding prominent offices and positions, and converts returning to Judaism. Accusations of usury were the single greatest element of anti-Judaism based on economics throughout the Middle Ages, especially since canon law—at least in theory—prohibited Christians from lending at interest. Any Jew guilty of “heavy and immoderate usury” against Christians, the Council decreed, should be cut off from all contact with Christians (the penalty of indirect excommunication) until “he shall have made sufficient amends for his exorbitant exactions.” Jews were also required to provide compensation to the Church for tithes and offerings from properties previously owned.

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61 Grayzel, I, 113.
by Christians that came into their possession. The Council then denounced the practice of allowing Jews, as it saw it, “to be given preferment in public office since this offers them the pretext to vent their wrath against the Christians.” It also stressed the need to keep Jewish converts from returning to their old religion, since “there is less evil in not recognizing the way of the Lord than in backsliding after having recognized it.” While concerns about Jewish usury may have reflected the growing influence of the Christian burgher class and even of the lower classes—the groups who generally borrowed from Jewish moneylenders—these particular canons of Lateran IV generally did not break new ground in terms of restrictions on Jews. By and large, these were the same kind of canons whose provisions had been ignored by monarchs such as Alfonso VIII in the past.

The provisions of Lateran IV requiring forms of separation between Jews, Muslims, and Christians, however, marked a more ominous attitude towards the religious minorities of Western Europe. Most famously, the Council ordered that Jews and Muslims wear distinguishing symbols—a constant reminder of their inferior status. In many areas, this distinguishing dress took the form of a special Jewish badge. Furthermore, the Council decreed that neither group should appear in public between Holy Thursday and Easter Sunday, since they allegedly mocked and “poke [d] fun at the Christians” during this holy period. These measures, particularly the first one, brought the notion of Jewish inferiority into daily life in a far more direct fashion—through the power of physical difference—than more abstract injunctions over issues such as the tithe and conversion.

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62 For the rise of the burgher class, see Chapter 3.
63 Grayzel, I, 307-11. All quotations in this paragraph are taken from these pages.
64 Grayzel, I, 307-11.
65 See Grayzel, both volumes, for a detailed discussion of the badge issue.
Nevertheless, secular rulers continued to disregard the Church’s mandates if it suited their interests. Pope Honorius III (1216-27), Innocent’s successor, complained in several letters that Jews in Castile were successfully evading the requirements to wear distinguishing clothing and pay the tithe.66 Even so, Honorius was willing to show some flexibility at Castile’s request. According to King Fernando III, the Jews had threatened to leave should restrictions such as the badge be imposed. Honorius cited the claim that “the King, whose income in large measure derives from these very Jews, can hardly raise his expenses” in authorizing a suspension of the imposition of this Lateran IV canon.67 A few years later, however, Honorius complained once again to the Bishop of Toledo that Jews were still not distinguishable from Christians.68 Thus, the papacy was willing in some cases to adopt a more flexible posture, but still remained insistent on the need for the anti-Jewish measures of Lateran IV to be enforced.

Honorius and his successor Gregory IX (1227-41) continued to complain of clear violations of Lateran IV. Jews in Castile continued to hold high office, “by the use of which they rage against the Christians and cause some to observe their [Jewish] rites.” Gregory IX noted that Jews in Castile remained powerful, had Christian nurses and slaves, wore clothing that did not distinguish them from Christians, and continued to practice usury. The fact that the Pope used remarkably similar language in an earlier letter complaining about Jews’ privileges in the German territories indicates that this problem was far from limited to the Iberian Peninsula.69

Later popes continued these appeals. In 1250, Pope Innocent IV (1243-54) wrote to the Bishop of Córdoba over allegations that Jews in the area failed to wear distinguishing signs and were building a synagogue that was too tall. Apparently, the clergy of the province of Córdoba,

66 Grayzel, I, 145.
67 Grayzel, I, 151.
68 Grayzel, I, 169.
69 Grayzel, I, 205. All quoted material in this paragraph is taken from this page.
failing to win satisfaction from the Bishop and King Fernando III, had appealed directly to Inno-
cent IV over these violations of canon law. The Pope was a receptive audience for this kind of complaint. The King and some figures of the Castilian Church, however, were not.70

The popes of this period still sought to prevent the most egregious kinds of mistreatment of Jews. Honorius III, Gregory IX, and Innocent IV all reissued Sicut Judaeis. Furthermore, Gregory IX harshly condemned an outbreak of violence against Jews in France in 1236 spurred by Crusaders. Killing Jews, he argued, was wrong for several reasons. Some of the Jews would be saved on the Day of Judgment, and they ought to be protected. Furthermore, “these crimes were so unspeakably and terribly offensive to God in whose image the victims were created.” The Jews were still human beings. Finally, killing Jews was also an affront to papal power: it was “injurious to the Apostolic Throne whose privileges they have been granted.” To some extent, the papal justification for the protection of the Jews was self-interested.71

Innocent IV struck a similar tone in his 1247 letters to the Archbishop of Vienne in southern France. “Divine Justice has never cast the Jewish people aside so completely that it reserves no remnant of them for salvation,” he wrote. Christians who robbed or killed Jews were guilty of “either unpraiseworthy zeal or detestable cruelty.”72 In the popes’ view, while Jews ought never to have power over Christians and their temporal state should correspond with their spiritual one, they must not be physically harmed. This theory, however—particularly in an age when many Christians flung charges such as ritual murder against the Jews of Europe—was not always followed in practice. At any rate, pressure from the papacy against the Jews continued and began to have a greater impact through the efforts of the new Mendicant orders, especially the Franciscans and the Dominicans.

70 Grayzel, I, 275.
71 Grayzel, I, 227-9. All quoted material in this paragraph is taken from these pages.
72 Grayzel, I, 263.
The rise of these orders was closely related to the political, social, and economic developments of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Lateran IV’s canons on the Jews marked only a tiny part of this Council and the papacy’s broader efforts at reform. The burgher class posed new challenges to the Church and dovetailed with the rise of new religious movements. As cities expanded thanks to significant increases in both trade and manufacturing across Western Europe, new urban social groups found themselves often dissatisfied by Church teachings. The new, at times less religiously oriented and often more educated urban elites required a deeper spiritual and intellectual engagement with their faith than the late medieval Church often provided, and the urban masses posed new challenges in terms of charitable activities and teaching opportunities. The presence of Jewish minorities in the cities of Iberia and other regions of Europe represented another element that could diminish Church influence and power amidst these new social realities.

The papacy soon recognized that the Franciscans and Dominicans in particular could serve as useful weapons and allies in confronting these new challenges. Despite the Franciscans’ emphasis on poverty, which reflected certain anti-establishment feelings, their focus on missionary activity, ideas of spiritual unification and perfection, and charitable work in urban environments suited the papal project well.\(^73\) The Dominican order, with its origins in the preaching of Saint Dominic against heretics in the south of France, was especially well designed for increasing the power of the Church because of its emphasis on teaching, on preaching to

\(^73\) Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1982), 40. This statement, however, does not apply to some members of the Franciscan order (such as the Spirituals) who embraced radical poverty, often rejected papal authority, and in some cases took a view of Jews far harsher than the Church’s. These attitudes and their implications for Christian treatment of Jews can be seen in the violence against Jews in southern France and Navarre in the 1320s (see Chapter 3), and, one could argue, influenced the outlook of Ferrán Martinez.
urban audiences, and on combat against heresy.\textsuperscript{74} For these reasons, both of these orders won official papal approval following Lateran IV. The papacy soon relied on these Mendicants for many tasks, including the implementation of efforts to reduce Jewish privileges.

While Catholic tradition defined the Jews, despite their deficiencies, as possessors of some religious validity and as superior to pagans and heretics, they were still not Christians. Indeed, their mere existence posed a threat to the papal vision of a unified Christian world. With their focus on preaching in particular, the Franciscans and Dominicans were equipped to find the solution to this problem: the peaceful conversion of the Jews to Christianity. While the conversion of the Jews had remained a goal of the Church since the Christianization of the Roman Empire, large-scale and well-organized efforts to convert the Jews by and large did not exist until the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{75} With their ties to the papacy, organization, education, and missionary zeal, the Dominicans were particularly capable of undertaking this effort. The training of aspiring missionaries in the language of targeted populations was another important aspect of their conversion efforts. Knowing Hebrew and Arabic made these Mendicants, at least in theory, better able to win new converts from Jewish and Muslim ranks. This instruction would have special importance on the Iberian Peninsula, with its Jewish and Muslim populations (except for the Muslim state of Granada) now under Christian rule. In addition, since Saint Dominic himself was Castilian and since many natives of Iberia filled the Dominican ranks, the Dominicans played an especially crucial role in the Iberian context.

The Mendicants’ views of the Jews were also based in part on economics and their urban background. The new orders were often composed of members of the burgher class and may well have reflected the common anti-Jewish mindset of this group, especially given the rivalry in

\textsuperscript{74} Cohen, \textit{Friars}, 37.

commerce between members of such a class and the Jews.76 Above all, Mendicants operated in cities, where Jewish communities tended to be concentrated. Given their urban setting, preaching, and emphasis on poverty, Mendicants were also close to the lower classes, which tended to be hostile towards the Jews. It is unsurprising that many Mendicants held strong anti-Jewish opinions.

Another important development of this era coincided with the rise of the Dominicans in particular. Southern France—home to some of the most prominent Jewish communities of Western Europe—was also a notorious hotbed of Christian groups who challenged the Church. Beginning with the papacy of Innocent III in particular, the Church began to wage campaigns and even formal Crusades against groups whom it considered heretical such as the Waldensians and the Cathars. This effort to crack down on heresy led to the creation of the investigatory tribunal known as the Inquisition.77 Led in large part by the Dominicans, the Inquisition won jurisdiction over southern France and Aragon (by royal permission) by the mid-1230s. As an ecclesiastical tribunal, it maintained jurisdiction over Christians only. In its investigations, however, the Inquisition became involved in matters related to Jews, especially converted Jews who had returned to Judaism and were thus considered heretics.

The new orders and the Inquisition may also have become involved in the Jewish question because of ongoing disputes within the Jewish communities of Western Europe. Especially in the communities of southern France, controversy erupted between rabbis affiliated with the more rationalistic strain of thought of the great Moses ben Maimon (better known as Maimonides) and those who took a more pietistic view of Judaism. In the early 1230s, some

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76 Cohen, Friars, 41-3. Again, for the burgher class, see Chapter 3.
77 This Inquisition, which fell under papal and episcopal jurisdiction, should not be confused with the later and more famous Spanish Inquisition, which was not established until the late fifteenth century. The Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, were granted control over that Inquisition by the papacy.
pro-Maimonides sources alleged, leaders of the anti-rationalist movement appealed to papal legates and members of the new orders to intervene in this intra-Jewish struggle. Given the bias of such sources, it is hard to know for certain if forces within the Jewish communities did in fact issue such an invitation. At any rate, the Church, the Mendicant orders, and especially the newly established Inquisition seized the chance to intervene in Jewish religious matters. Such an intervention had significant consequences for the future of Jewish life in Western Europe.\textsuperscript{78}

The perils of this intervention for Jews became clear as the Church zeroed in on what it came to view as the main reason for Jewish refusal to accept Christianity: the books of the Talmud. Instigated by the efforts of Nicholas Donin, a French Jew who had converted to Christianity, to convince the Church hierarchy that the Talmud was a heretical work, Gregory IX ordered the confiscation of Jewish books and the Talmud in France, England, Aragon, Navarre, Castile, and Portugal in 1239. The books were to be seized on the first Saturday of the following Lent (March 3, 1240) and given to the Franciscans and Dominicans for investigation. “[The Talmud is] said,” explained Gregory, “to be the most important reason why the Jews remain obstinate in their perfidy.”\textsuperscript{79}

Again, however, secular rulers in large part disregarded the Holy See’s order. The Jews protested the Pope’s orders, and the Talmud and other books may only have been seized (and eventually burned as heretical) in Paris, the seat of the zealous King Louis IX (later Saint Louis) of France.\textsuperscript{80} Once again, monarchs showed themselves reluctant to take actions that struck so directly at the interests of their Jewish possessions. The attack on the Talmud, however, marked the beginning of a long effort to use these books as a weapon against Judaism. Popes continued


\textsuperscript{79} Grayzel, I, 243.

\textsuperscript{80} Baer, I, 151.
to condemn the Talmud for alleged errors and blasphemies against Christianity. Increasingly, a new tactic emerged, one that fit well with Mendicant efforts to convert the Jews. As they read and analyzed the Talmud, the friars began to posit that it in fact pointed to the truth of Christianity.

These efforts gained strength in Aragon, where, due in part to the proximity of southern France, the Mendicant orders exerted strong and growing influence at the court of King Jaime I (1213-76). Ramon de Peñafort (c. 1180-1275), the one-time Master-General of the Dominican Order, became a particularly powerful figure. While Jaime I proved himself as willing as any other monarch to disregard Church injunctions on the Jews if he saw fit, he acceded to the establishment of the Inquisition in Aragon. In 1242, he ordered that Jews and Muslims be made to listen to Christian sermons, which were often delivered by Dominican friars. Under Peñafort’s influence, friars began to use their knowledge of Hebrew in particular to argue that Jewish texts, especially the Talmud, in fact revealed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah and Christianity the true faith. This method meant granting the Talmud a certain degree of validity. The friars saw, however, that the idea that the Jews’ own texts undermined the entire basis of Judaism itself provided an ideal way to gain converts.

This notion may provide the best explanation for the holding of the Disputation of Barcelona in 1263, presided over by Jaime I and a group of Franciscan and Dominican friars. The King ordered the event, giving the Jews little choice but to participate. His command also showed the influence of the Dominicans in particular, who might have seen a formal disputation as a way to assess the idea of using Jewish texts to prove Christianity. During four sessions, Pablo Cristiani (“Paul Christian”), a Jewish convert to Christianity and a Dominican friar,

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81 Chazan, 38.
82 Chazan, 71-4.
challenged Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (or Nahmanides), the chief rabbi of the city of Gerona and perhaps the leading Jewish religious authority in Aragon.

A Latin account (written by Christians) and a Hebrew version (written by Nahmanides) of the events in Barcelona unsurprisingly differ in their versions of what took place. At any rate, it appears that Cristiani reflected the Mendicants’ tactics of conversion by arguing that Talmudic aggadot, or homilies, indicated the truth of Christianity. Among other points, he claimed that evidence in the Talmud proved that Jesus was the Messiah, that he had both a divine nature and a human one, that he died in order to save humanity, and that Judaism was now obsolete.\(^83\) Nahmanides retorted that Cristiani was misreading and distorting Talmudic texts.\(^84\) In some respects, the Disputation of Barcelona had inconclusive results, and it did not trigger a mass conversion of Jews. Still, it manifested the Mendicants’ approach to converting the Jews, one they continued to refine and export to Jewish audiences, willing or otherwise, through preachers such as Cristiani.

The Mendicant tactic of forced sermons to the Jews continued and apparently led to outbreaks of violence. Both Jaime and his son Pedro III (1276-85) imposed restrictions on preachers in order to try to preserve order. For instance, only a certain number of well-regarded Christian citizens were allowed to enter synagogues along with friars: apparently, in several cases, crowds followed the preachers inside and attacked Jews.\(^85\) Generally, the situation began to worsen for the Jews of Aragon. Mendicant pressure on Jews gradually expanded into the rest of Iberia. Their sermons both to Jews and against them in the course of their popular preaching provided vehicles for the release of popular animosities and influenced the style of later and more vitriolic anti-Jewish preachers, among them Ferrán Martinez.

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\(^{83}\) Cohen, \textit{Friars}, 111.
\(^{84}\) Chazan, 90-1.
\(^{85}\) Baer, I, 168-9.
The friars continued to refine their anti-Jewish argumentation. Perhaps the peak of the approach of using Hebrew texts to prove Christianity came with the writing of the Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos (The Dagger of the Faith against the Moors and the Jews), which was completed in Aragon in 1278. As the title suggests, the book attacked both Muslims and Jews, but it primarily focused on the latter. Most likely written by the Dominican Ramon Martí with a group of assistants, the Pugio Fidei sought to display the truth of Christianity through an exhaustive analysis of Jewish works. Providing extensive Hebrew citations and then translating them into Latin, Martí sought to prove once again how the Talmud, the Torah, and rabbinical commentaries all pointed to Christian truth. He even accused the Jews of altering the text of the Old Testament, the Word of God, in order to hide this message. Martí was scathing in his comments on the Jews of his era. “Modern Jews must be compared to ancient ones in no way, for they are a more stupid and worse people,” he concluded. In other words, Jews had been notorious sinners in the days of the Old Testament, but their contemporary counterparts were far worse. The importance of the Pugio Fidei lay in its substantial circulation—it became a sort of handbook for missionaries—and in the breadth of its usage of rabbinic sources. Rabbis, as Nahmanides had at Barcelona, protested that the Mendicants were the ones who had manipulated the texts. Regardless of the accuracy of men like Cristiani and Martí, however, their approach proved particularly threatening to Jews. The rhetoric of Martí in

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86 Chazan, 116-7.
87 Ramon Martí, Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos [The Dagger of the Faith against the Moors and the Jews], (Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1967), 277. This edition is a reprint of another edition of the Pugio Fidei published in Leipzig in 1687. Some Christian polemicists and Mendicants of Martí’s era, including Thomas Aquinas, circulated the claim that Jews had altered the Old Testament in order to hide evidence of Christ’s divinity or even knew Christ was the Son of God before (in their view) killing him. For more information, see Cohen, Friars, 124.
88 Martí, 895. (Judei moderni antiquis nullo modo comparandi, stultiores enim, et peiores sunt).
89 Cohen, Friars, 140.
90 Cohen, Friars, 154; Chazan, 175.
particular—especially the connection he drew between the Jews of the past and the Jews of the present—was deadly in the hands of future anti-Jewish polemicists like Ferrán Martínez, who brought such a comparison before a popular audience while stripping it of its context of Talmudic analysis.

Meanwhile, the papacy continued to push for restrictions on Jewish rights and privileges and lashed out against perceived Jewish threats. For instance, in 1267, Clement IV issued the bull *Turbato Corde (With a Disturbed Heart)*, which fumed over reports of Christian conversions to Judaism.\(^91\) He authorized the Inquisition in Provence and Aragon to investigate these converts, who allegedly included former Jews reverting to their old faith and even individuals who were born Christian. The fact that at least two later popes, Gregory X (1271-6) and Nicholas IV (1288-92), reissued this bull indicates both that these incidents continued to happen and that the Holy See saw them as a serious problem.\(^92\) Most importantly, *Turbato Corde* led to the Inquisition receiving even greater authority to investigate Jews. Nicholas IV even instructed inquisitors, while discussing an anti-Jewish riot in France, that Jews who allowed their children to be baptized during incidents of violence and then tried to undo the conversion were guilty of heresy.\(^93\) Inquisitorial power expanded, and Innocent III’s view on conversion was maintained.

Bulls by Martin IV (1281-5) and Boniface VIII (1294-1303), however, suggest that the papacy, perhaps because of Jewish protests of the Inquisition’s actions, came to believe that the inquisitors were acting with excessive zeal. For instance, Martin banned all members of the clergy from using torture and violence at the wishes of a third party to win confessions from accused Jews.\(^94\) Boniface affirmed that Jews under trial by the Inquisition enjoyed the right to

\(^91\) Grayzel, II, 15.  
\(^92\) Grayzel, II, 16.  
\(^93\) Grayzel, II, 165-7.  
\(^94\) Grayzel, II, 147-50.
know the names of witnesses and their accusers, unless the Jew was powerful and could exact revenge against them. These bulls, as well as the forthright papal condemnation of the accusations of ritual murder and the blood libel against Jews during this period and the continued reissue of Sicut Judaeis, suggest the popes again endeavored to protect Jews from the worst abuses.

In Aragon, the Mendicants’ efforts, if unsuccessful at obtaining mass conversions, nonetheless succeeded in weakening Jews’ status in society. In general, such efforts met with little success in thirteenth-century Castile, a more rural kingdom farther removed from papal and Inquisitorial power and as of yet without the economic and commercial power that had begun to emerge from the middle class in Aragon. With the advent of the fourteenth century, however, the efforts of the Church and the Mendicants began to have an impact in Castile as well.

One Castilian church meeting in particular hinted at their influence. In January of 1313, the Synod of Zamora, the assembly of the bishops of the province of Santiago de Compostela (roughly the northwestern part of Spain), met in order to enact the decisions of the recently concluded general Church Council of Vienne. It promulgated thirteen canons specifically referring to Jews. While its decrees applied only to this region, the Synod marked perhaps the clearest instance of the penetration of the Church’s more vigorous anti-Jewish attitude into Castile.

Its first canon once again protested the privileges granted to the Jews by the king, particularly the refusal to permit Christian testimony against Jews in trials unless a Jewish witness confirmed it. It also protested Jewish testimony against Christians in civil and criminal trials. Following Lateran III, it characterized the Jews as ungrateful, as disrespectful of

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95 Grayzel, II, 204.
Christians, and as a people who ought to be “subjugated…they are maintained…only because they are men.” These statements perfectly reflected the papal view of Jews as inferiors.96

The succeeding canons of Zamora continued with a familiar litany of complaints: Jews still held office, had Christian nurses and servants, and did not pay the tithe on inheritances and on formerly Christian possessions. Several, however, contained the more hostile tone expressed by the popes of the thirteenth century and Lateran IV in particular. The third canon, for instance, demanded Jewish separation from Christians: Jews should not “participate and walk with the Christians often,” to avoid leading Christians into error. The sixth canon stipulated that Jews should not appear in public from Wednesday until Saturday of Holy Week and ordered that they keep their doors and windows shut on Good Friday to avoid confrontation with Christians. Furthermore, the Synod ordered that Jews bear the distinguishing symbol called for by Lateran IV, that Jews and Christians not share meals, that synagogues “newly raised up and ennobled” be returned to their original state, and that Jews be kept from doing work in public on Sundays and Christian holidays.97

The Synod was also harsh in its condemnation of the practice of usury. Zamora’s twelfth canon ordered that Jews not use records of debt (proof of the amount the debtor owed, to which usurious interest could be added) “against Christians, nor from them demand [restitution] nor attain any other thing.”98 This standard actually went beyond established papal policy.99 In this

96 José Amador de los Ríos, Historia social, política y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal [Social, Political, and Religious History of the Jews of Spain and Portugal], (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1984), II, 562-3. I use the 1984 edition of Amador’s history, which was originally published in 1875 and 1876. All quotations in these paragraphs on Zamora are found in Appendix V of this text. All translations into English are my own.
97 Amador de los Ríos, II, 564-5.
98 Amador de los Ríos, II, 565.
99 Grayzel, II, 229.
sense, Zamora revealed an increasing zeal in the pursuit of anti-Jewish regulation among some leaders of the Castilian Church.

Nevertheless, the fact that these issues were mentioned at Zamora suggests that generally, the temporal authorities of Castile had put into effect neither the provisions of Lateran IV nor many of the measures called for in papal letters. Indeed, since some of these claims—including those about the ornamentation of synagogues and the lack of distinction and separation between Jews and Christians—were seized upon by Ferrán Martínez, the monarchy had evidently still not enacted some of these measures by the final decade of the fourteenth century. Zamora’s significance, however, lay in that the Spanish Church, despite royal influence, was increasingly coming into line with the position of the papacy and of other European countries with respect to the Jews.  

By 1313, France and England had expelled their Jewish populations (although France rescinded the order two years later, only to expel the Jews once again in 1394), and under pressure from the Mendicant orders, Jewish influence had waned in Aragon. While the Church’s pressures did not necessarily mean that these anti-Jewish restrictions were actually put into law by secular authorities, in a time when the Church and the papacy held great power, these calls still had an impact.

Whether these developments adhered to or broke with the Augustinian and Gregorian framework of the protection of the Jews remains a subject of debate. Jeremy Cohen has argued that the activities of the Mendicants in particular inaugurated a new and deadly form of anti-Judaism. Robert Chazan has maintained that the efforts of the Mendicants and the papacy remained consistent with Augustine’s doctrine, since they did not aim to kill Jews or convert

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101 Cohen, *Friars*. 
them by force.\textsuperscript{102} Regardless of whether these activities were in fact a break from traditional policy, the Church still forbade violence against Jews. Nevertheless, the friars and the papacy helped to create an environment in which greater hostility to Jews, particularly because of the Mendicants’ preaching, prevailed, and where violence was ever more likely to take place.

\textsuperscript{102} Chazan, \textit{Daggers of Faith}. 
III

Storm Clouds

The anti-Jewish legislation of the Synod of Zamora did not in itself change the climate of early fourteenth-century Castile and the attitudes of the monarchy towards its Jewish subjects. After all, its canons were issued only a few years after King Fernando IV (1295-1312) rejected the efforts of Pope Clement IV (1305-14) to crack down on Jewish usury in the kingdoms of Western Europe with a memorable phrase: “All of the Jews,” the King wrote, “and all their possessions are mine.” ¹⁰³ In other words, he continued to proclaim the doctrine of servis regis and to reject Church authority to regulate Jews. Even so, through the efforts of the Church leadership in Toledo, some Jews who lent money at interest were imprisoned.¹⁰⁴ At any rate, the King’s death in 1312, which left his infant son Alfonso XI (1312-50) as the new ruler, signified more serious problems for Castilian Jews.

As had happened throughout the history of the Jewish presence in Iberia, the death or loss of power of the ruler left the Jewish communities in a weak position. Although the death of Fernando IV did not result in any outright riots against the Jews, other elements in Castile used the weakness of the Crown to attempt to implement anti-Jewish measures.¹⁰⁵ At the head of these efforts was a social class that had become increasingly assertive during the thirteenth century: the burghers.

¹⁰⁴ Baer, I, 310.
¹⁰⁵ Examples of riots during an interregnum include anti-Jewish violence in the Kingdom of Navarre in 1035, in the Kingdoms of Castile and León in 1109 after the death of King Alfonso VI, in León in 1230 after the death of the last king of an independent León, and above all in Castile and Aragon in 1391 (see Chapters 5 and 6).
The conflicts between this new Christian middle class and the Jews were especially acute. Burghers were generally educated, usually in the law, and their families built their fortunes in the professions and especially in business, banking, and the craft sector, all of which were the motors of urban development across late medieval Western Europe. Burghers might work as merchants, manufacturers, financiers, and administrators, performing the tasks and possessing the kinds of educational and professional expertise that the monarchy and the nobility needed. These positions, however, had traditionally been and continued to be awarded to Jews. As inhabitants of the cities, burghers also lived in close proximity to and experienced almost daily interaction with Jews. As a result, burgher-Jewish rivalry sprang from religious, economic, and even personal sources. Unlike the high aristocracy, the Church, or the Crown, all of whom often relied on Jews to provide services in finance, tax collection, administration, and medicine, the burghers had no economic need for the Jews and stressed their own capacity to perform these tasks instead.

The best opportunity to restrict the privileges of their Jewish rivals came through the Cortes, the assemblies of the Church, the nobles, and the cities, which during the High Middle Ages began to meet on a regular basis. In 1188, meetings of the Cortes in the Kingdom of León (which united with Castile in 1230) began to include urban representatives, and by 1217 Castile had followed suit.¹⁰⁶ Such gatherings—often called by monarchs in order to win financial support for various endeavors from the three estates—provided opportunities for the representatives of the cities, called procuradores (procurators), to present appeals to the king.¹⁰⁷ While these representatives were not members of the lower classes, their urban background made

¹⁰⁷ In this era, Castile had no capital city; the capital was wherever the monarch was. With no set place to present appeals, the Cortes, events of substantial duration located in a particular city, gave the procurators their best chance to present their concerns.
them at least aware of the views of the ordinary urban Castilian about the Jews. Although the monarch often found himself in a strong position relative to the members of the Cortes and was free to accept or reject their petitions as he saw fit, in other times when the monarchy lacked power, the procurators could enjoy increased leverage. A time of interregnum provided just such a chance.

The Cortes of Palencia of 1313, with Alfonso XI still a minor, exemplified a situation in which the Cortes enjoyed power relative to the monarch. At previous meetings, such as at the Cortes of Haro of 1288, of Burgos of 1301, and of Valladolid of 1307, the procurators had presented complaints about Jewish privileges and asked that the monarchy prohibit Jews from serving as tax-farmers or tax-collectors. Such requests reflected burgher resentment of Jews’ holding of such posts. Palencia, however, marked a new intensity in the procurators’ pleas. They continued to complain of Jews serving as tax collectors and at other posts at court, and they demanded that the monarch ban Jewish judges from involvement in cases between Jews and Christians that involved a capital crime, that Jews be made to wear the badge, and that Jews not be allowed to avoid paying taxes. As with many of the complaints made at Cortes, and not only with reference to Jews, the mere presentation of these appeals did not result in royal action. On the heels of the Synod of Zamora, however, the Cortes of Palencia provided another signal of increasing anti-Jewish sentiment in Castile.

109 Julio Valdeón Baruque, Judíos y conversos en la Castilla medieval [Jews and Converts in Medieval Castile], (Valladolid, Spain: Ambiño, 2004), 58. See also Benzion Netanyahu, The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain, 2nd ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 75-80. 110 O’Callaghan, The Cortes, 180-1; Baer, I, 310. The last complaint about Jews avoiding taxes coincides with one made by the lower classes in the Jewish communities: that elite Jews were obtaining tax exemptions and imposing a burden on the poor. As will be seen, it marked one of the similarities between the Christian and Jewish lower classes of this period.
The Cortes of this period concentrated on several particular issues concerning Jews. Among these were, as above, complaints about Jews holding public offices and the various judicial and financial privileges that the monarchy had granted Jews. Perhaps the procurators’ biggest issues were alleged Jewish usury and the goal of achieving moratoria on debts owed to Jews by Christians. They repeated these complaints at virtually every session of the Cortes. At the Cortes of Valladolid in 1325, for instance—with Castile just emerging from Alfonso XI’s minority—the Cortes prevailed upon the King to provide for a temporary reduction in debts owed to Jews.111 During the Cortes of Madrid of 1329, the procurators petitioned the monarch once again to remove Jews (and some Muslims as well) from their positions as tax farmers. In their complaints, they tied Jews’ continued service in such offices to Castile’s economic problems.112 Again, the monarchy implemented few of the procurators’ biggest complaints concerning Jews into law. The monarchy, the nobles, and even the Castilian Church to a certain extent still valued Jews’ economic contributions and were reluctant to impose restrictions that might jeopardize them.113 Nevertheless, the fact that the procurators continued to raise these issues indicates that they remained issues important to the burgher class. Just as with the efforts of the papacy to impose anti-Jewish legislation, these continued pressures bore fruit over time.

During this period, many leading Jews continued to serve as courtiers or discharged a variety of financial and administrative functions, especially related to the collection of taxes. One of the leading Jewish courtiers of the first half of the fourteenth century was Joseph of Écija, who rose to become Alfonso XI’s almojarife mayor, or chief collector of royal revenue, and

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111 Valdeón Baruque, 59.  
112 Valdeón Baruque, 59; Netanyaahu, 81. While Muslims were included in many of the petitions of the Cortes that also applied to the Jews, Jews—as the group especially involved in the lending of money to Christians—tended to be the particular subjects of these petitions.  
113 Valdeón Baruque, 60-1.
spent much of his life in Seville.\textsuperscript{114} With regard to usury, an issue stressed by both the Church (as at Zamora) and the cities, a substantial number of Jews did serve as moneylenders, although to a lesser extent in Iberia than elsewhere.\textsuperscript{115} Many Jewish moneylenders worked on a small scale and lent primarily to Christian burghers and the urban poor. Wealthier Jews—especially in cities like Seville that became centers of international trade—often became heavily involved in commerce.

The majority of Jews, however, were economically impoverished. Many tended to work as artisans, tanners and dyers, and in some frontier areas such as Andalusia, as farmers. In urban centers such as Seville, such occupations and the social stratification of Jewish communities meant that both Jews and Christians of lower social strata tended to lead similar lives.\textsuperscript{116} The grievances of the burghers and members of the lower classes, who often found themselves with debts to Jewish moneylenders that they were unable to repay, however, contributed to a popular Christian identification of all Jews with the activities of an economic minority. The average Jew became associated with the alleged usurious behavior of some of the wealthiest members of the aljamas.

These generalizations often applied to Seville, but the specific circumstances of the city’s existence also gave the dynamics of Jewish-Christian interaction in the city a particular character. Above all, Seville was a port city, with the wide and navigable Guadalquivir River providing traders access upstream through Córdoba and downstream towards the waters of the Atlantic. This location had long established the city as a commercial center. After the Christian

\textsuperscript{114} Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho, “El antijudaísmo o antisemitismo sevillano hacia la minoría hebreab [Sevillian Anti-Judaism or Anti-Semitism Towards the Hebrew Minority],” 73-157, in Segundos encuentros judaicos de Tudela: los caminos del exilio [Second Judaic Meetings of Tudela: The Paths of Exile], (Tudela, Spain: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996), 100.
\textsuperscript{115} Baer, I, 85.
\textsuperscript{116} Montes Romero-Camacho, 83.
conquest, Seville became home to communities of foreign, especially Genoese and English, merchants. Since many Jews worked in international trade, the Jewish merchants of Seville often became quite wealthy. The fact that the *aljama* of Seville paid 5,626 *doblas* (a kind of coin) in taxes to the monarchy in 1294, an amount second only to that paid by the *aljama* of Toledo, hints at the community’s prosperity. Seville’s status as a port therefore contributed substantially to the growth and relative wealth of its Jewish community.

The city’s place on the frontier also contributed to the development of its *aljama*. While remaining in Christian hands after 1248, Seville was still influenced by its long history of Muslim rule and by its proximity to the territories of the Kingdom of Granada. The frontier served as a particular zone of interaction between Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and the occasional outbreaks of war between Castile and Granada, as well as incursions of Muslim forces from North Africa, could inflame interreligious tensions. To some degree, proximity bred hostility. Nevertheless, the reality of the frontier was more complex. Seeking to repopulate recently conquered areas such as Seville, the Castilian monarchs offered Jews incentives, including the acquisition of land, to encourage settlement. The frontier thus offered a particular attraction for powerful Jews who sought to bolster their own wealth and power. Furthermore, the presence of Muslim and Christian populations along the frontier exposed the Jews of areas such as Seville to strong non-Jewish influences and culture, especially since the coalescence of

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118 Figure cited in Antonio Collantes de Terán Sánchez, *Una gran ciudad bajomedieval: Sevilla [A Great Late-Medieval City: Seville]*, (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2008), 243. This amount marked the most assessed to any Andalusian city. Toledo paid the substantially larger sum of 10,561 *doblas*, which indicated its status as the largest and wealthiest *aljama* of Castile.

Jews into communities was a lengthy process.\textsuperscript{120} Frontier cities such as Seville were thus areas where Jews were able to more easily cross social boundaries.

Sources provide many examples of such interaction. For instance, in 1274, one of the leaders of the Jewish community of the city, Joseph al-Nasi, sold the site of a former olive oil warehouse to the Cathedral.\textsuperscript{121} That same year, Alfonso X donated the property of a deceased Jewish courtier, including various stores and warehouses and a vegetable garden located within the judería, to the Church.\textsuperscript{122} In 1327, the Church even exchanged the site of a former mosque in the judería for a granary in the Christian neighborhood of El Salvador in the city center.\textsuperscript{123} All of these examples show that the boundaries of the judería were far from rigid: Christians, including the Church, owned property within the judería, and Jews owned buildings in Christian neighborhoods. As the example of Alfonso X showed, the monarchy was even willing to facilitate such transactions.\textsuperscript{124}

Jews and Christians also interacted in many other areas of life. For instance, the ability of leading Jews to purchase land in the countryside, an act prohibited in non-frontier areas, created further zones of proximity. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women could serve as wailers at funerals of individuals of a different religion than their own, and some Christian men kept Jewish women as barraganas, or concubines. The prohibition of sexual relations between Jews and Christians in the Siete Partidas further indicates that such behavior did in fact take place.

\textsuperscript{120} Ray, 7.
\textsuperscript{121} Julio González, Repartimiento de Sevilla [The Division of Seville], 2 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Escuela de Estudios Medievales, 1951), II, 352. Joseph’s name suggests he was a leader of the aljama, since “Nasi” (“prince”) served as an epithet for Jewish communal leaders.
\textsuperscript{122} Pedro Rubio Merino, Archivo de la Santa Metropolitana y Patriarcal Iglesia Catedral de Sevilla: inventario general [Archive of the Holy Metropolitan and Patriarchal Cathedral-Church of Seville: General Inventory], (Madrid: Fundación Ramon Areces, 1987), 238.
\textsuperscript{123} Rubio Merino, 258.
\textsuperscript{124} Ray, 152.
While these examples of Christian-Jewish interaction on a daily basis were found throughout the frontier, they were particularly pronounced in large cities such as Seville.\textsuperscript{125}

Nevertheless, the efforts of monarchs such as Alfonso and his successors to boost their own power began to limit such possibilities for mobility. Increased centralization meant greater royal power over Jews, a goal often facilitated by maintaining Jewish settlement within the boundaries of the \textit{juderías}.\textsuperscript{126} The strength of boundaries on the frontier increased with the onset of the fourteenth century.

Seville also witnessed a progression of crises and disputes that heightened tensions between Jews and Christians. A series of calamities struck Andalusia towards the end of the thirteenth and throughout the fourteenth century. Renewed warfare with Muslim forces represented a significant drain on resources, while economic crises, civil conflict, famines, and outbreaks of disease took their toll. Seville may have lost population between 1275, when the number of inhabitants approached twenty thousand, and 1325.\textsuperscript{127} During and after this difficult period, the \textit{Cabildo}, or the chapter of priests responsible for administering the affairs of the Cathedral and of the archdiocese of Seville, reported several financial disputes with the \textit{aljama}. For instance, in both 1326 and 1337, the \textit{Cabildo} complained to the city’s authorities that Jews had failed to pay them thirty \textit{dineros}, an annual tax which the monarchy had ordered Jewish communities in Toledo and Seville to give to their local Cathedral chapter.\textsuperscript{128} This was far from

\textsuperscript{125} Baer, I, 313.
\textsuperscript{126} Ray, 149-52. As he notes, the Cortes of Valladolid of 1322 also legislated to this effect, requiring that “all the Jews who dwell in all the parts of the kingdom should come to dwell in the royal towns which belong to the King.” It is worth noting that this provision meant that Jews should not live under the jurisdiction of the nobles. Such laws may also have reflected the pressure of the Church, particularly with the precedents of Lateran IV and Zamora that urged increased separation between Jews and Christians. Most likely, however, the monarchy promoted distance between Jews and Christians because in this case it suited its own economic and political interests. For more, see Ray, 175.
\textsuperscript{127} Ladero Quesada, 25-27; 199-200.
\textsuperscript{128} Montes Romero-Camacho, 98.
a new concern. As early as 1256, Alfonso X had commanded the Jews of Seville to pay this tax.\textsuperscript{129} The \textit{aljama} had found ways to decrease and even avoid payment, and by the 1330s matters had come to a head. In 1336, Alfonso XI also reaffirmed an edict of Alfonso X that the Jews of Seville who lacked sufficient goods on which they could pay the tithe must pay a special annual tax of fifteen dineros, known as \textit{la cuarta}, to their local church.\textsuperscript{130} These issues suggest that both the Church and the monarchy sought to ensure better control over the Jews and to guarantee that the Jews remained sources of revenue.

In 1341, Seville’s local authorities imposed several economic restrictions on Jews. For instance, they limited Jews’ ability to work as artisans and to sell goods outside of stores owned by the \textit{concejo}, or municipal council. These same laws also provided for fines against Christians who inflicted violence against Jews in such common market areas, which suggests that some types of anti-Jewish disturbances had occurred. The charge of usury also continued to surface against Jews. In 1347, both the Archbishop of Seville and the \textit{Cabildo} alleged that the Jews were deceiving the common people by employing usurious rates of interest. These complaints and laws about Jewish economic practices all show that anti-Jewish sentiment in the city had increased.\textsuperscript{131}

The first half of the fourteenth century may also have seen the construction of a specific new symbol of growing tensions and of a desire to isolate Jews. While the evidence is uncertain, this period may have been when a formal wall between the \textit{juderia} and the rest of the city was constructed, since no source gives proof of its existence until 1344.\textsuperscript{132} If this was indeed the

\textsuperscript{129} Ray, 50: 91. As he notes, the paying of this tax had a highly symbolic value, since it was supposed to evoke the pieces of silver that Judas received as a reward for betraying Christ.

\textsuperscript{130} Rubio Merino, 303. See also Ray, 49.

\textsuperscript{131} Montes Romero-Camacho, 98-9.

\textsuperscript{132} Antonio Collantes de Terán Sánchez, “La \textit{juderia} de Sevilla: el espacio urbano [The Jewry of Seville: The Urban Space],” 115-38, in Pedro M. Piñero Ramírez, coord., \textit{La memoria de Sefarad: historia y\textit{}}
case, the city government must have seen the wall as necessary, either to protect the Jews from possible violence or, perhaps from a more anti-Jewish standpoint, to restrict their interaction with Christians.

A number of outside factors contributed to the development of the anti-Jewish feeling that had become apparent in Seville. The papacy’s anti-Jewish efforts of course had an impact. The writings of Abner of Burgos (1270-?), a Jewish convert to Christianity, also played a significant role. In works such as his Moreh Zedek (The Teacher of Justice), or Mostrador de Justicia in Castilian, Abner followed in the path of Pablo Cristiani and Ramon Marti in arguing that Jewish texts such as the Talmud pointed to Christian truth. He, however, wrote in Hebrew in an effort to better win over his former coreligionists. Perhaps the most striking aspect of his writings, however, was the virulence of his message. Jews must be converted, he argued, and by force or violence if necessary. The influence of his works—as evidenced by a number of Jewish counter-polemics composed against them—suggests that Abner’s views must have gained diffusion among both Jews and Christians. Events may also have influenced his writing. While Abner left open the option of violence on the theoretical level, bloody anti-Jewish incidents were occurring in areas of northeastern Iberia.

The 1320s were marked by episodes of anti-Jewish violence along the border between the Kingdom of Navarre, the Crown of Aragon, and southern France. In 1320 and 1321, the mass movement of the French Pastoureaux (also called the “Shepherd’s Crusades”) crossed into Iberia.


133 For more on Abner and the context of his works, see Baer, I, 328-54.
134 Baer, I, 334.
135 Baer, I, 353; Valdeón Baruque, 57.
and launched bloody attacks on several Jewish communities in Aragon and Navarre.\textsuperscript{137} While the forces of these two kingdoms pushed the Shepherds back, these popular movements inspired by religious fervor reflected the extremes of European popular anti-Judaism and the risks it posed for Jewish communities.

An outbreak of riots in the Kingdom of Navarre in 1328 represented an even more serious development. With the death of King Charles IV of France (who also ruled Navarre), mobs again exploited an environment of weakened royal authority to attack Jews. The crowds, guided by the sermons of a Franciscan preacher, Pedro Olligoyen, massacred several Jewish communities, including the \textit{aljama} of the city of Estella. Olligoyen’s followers became known as \textit{matadores de judios}: Jew-killers.\textsuperscript{138} When the authorities finally reestablished order, the friar was put on trial for inciting violence and destruction, and the towns where the massacres occurred were fined for the loss to the royal treasury that the Jews’ deaths represented.\textsuperscript{139} The events of 1328, however, revealed the extent to which anti-Judaism on Iberian soil had spread. Mobs followed the words of a preacher and, in a situation of royal weakness, turned their wrath against the Jews. These riots and the figure of the man who inspired them foreshadowed the events that unfolded in Castile and Aragon sixty-three years later.

The violence in Navarre made clear that the situation of the Jews on the Iberian Peninsula was growing more precarious. During the following decade, one of the top Christian officials at the court of Alfonso XI, González Martínez de Oviedo, campaigned against the Jews and even

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Valdeón Baruque, 58.}
\footnote{José Amador de los Ríos, \textit{Historia social, política y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal} [Social, Political, and Religious History of the Jews of Spain and Portugal], (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1984), II, 176-9.}
\end{footnotes}
floated the idea of expelling them altogether from Castile. Years of bad harvests and economic troubles increased pressures at the Cortes, where the procurators continued to demand the passage of anti-Jewish legislation, including moratoria on debts. While Alfonso XI continued to defend the rights of his legal possessions, in 1345 he granted a one-year moratorium at the Cortes of Burgos. At the Cortes of Segovia of 1347, the King noted that all his subjects, including Jews and Muslims who owed debts to Christians, had experienced economic difficulties. Some had even been imprisoned, and therefore “the aljamas [were] barren.” He henceforth ordered that no Christian, Muslim, or Jew be jailed over a debt owed unless such a step occurred by royal sanction. Such a declaration showed the monarchy’s desire to continue to protect the Jews from possible abuses.

The Cortes of Alcalá de Henares in 1348 marked another watershed moment. The Siete Partidas were finally enacted, and Alfonso XI agreed to the procurators’ demands that Jews be banned from lending at interest, in exchange for the creation of mechanisms to help Jews purchase certain lands as compensation. This deal, explained Alfonso, allowed Jews involved in moneylending to continue to flourish in other occupations. He couched the decree in theological language, explaining that “our will is that the Jews maintain themselves in our land, and so commands it the Holy Church, because still they are going to turn to our faith and be

140 Valdeón Baruque, 58. See also Baer, I, 355-8.
141 Valdeón Baruque, 61-62.
142 Fritz (Yitzhak) Baer, Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien: Erster Teil Urkunden und Regesten [The Jews in Christian Spain: First Part, Documents and Registers] 2 vols. II: Kastilien/Inquisitionsakten [Castile/Acts of the Inquisition], 1929-36 (Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1970), §176, 169-70. It should be noted that Jewish poverty was an excuse often given by monarchs of this period to avoid granting moratoria, which could diminish royal revenues, on Christian debts owed to Jews. While the aljamas may not have truly been “barren” during this time, Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike all suffered from the economic hardships of the fourteenth century.
143 Baer, Die Juden, II, §176, 170.
144 Valdeón Baruque, 62.
saved, according [to what] one finds through the prophecies.”145 The traditional doctrine of protection continued. In theory, such a declaration could have a devastating effect on Jewish courtiers, since the ban on lending at interest could deprive many Jewish financial officials of their livelihoods.146 As is perhaps unsurprising, however, this decree may not have been enforced, and at the Cortes of Valladolid of 1351, the procurators requested that it be lifted.147 This change resulted from the arrival on the Peninsula of the Black Death, which left economic chaos in its wake.

While Iberia was spared the very worst of the plague, the disease still left an indelible impact on the Peninsula and its Jewish communities. Among its many victims was Alfonso XI. Throughout Europe, Christians sought an explanation for the cataclysm, and the Jews, given the long tradition of Christian anti-Judaism, represented a logical target. The result was the worst anti-Jewish violence since the launching of the First Crusade in 1096: thousands of Jews were massacred, especially in the German states. While records do not indicate that any violence took place in Castile, the Jews of Catalonia in the Crown of Aragon were not so lucky. Attacks against Jewish communities took place in a number of localities. These incidents marked the largest disturbances against Jews in the history of Aragon, although, unlike in many areas elsewhere in Europe, the authorities sought to suppress the riots, and the assaults were popular in nature.148 The plague therefore had less drastic effects upon the Jews of Iberia than on the Jews of other European states, despite the enormous suffering and loss of life the epidemic inflicted upon Jewish communities.

146 Baer, History, I, 361.
147 Netanyahu, 95; Baer, History, I, 360-2.
The Christian population in Seville and throughout Castile, however, could not avoid being influenced by the wave of popular anti-Jewish violence that had swept through Europe and neighboring Aragon. In many popular conceptions, the image of the Jew—already condemned as a deicide, as a usurer, and sometimes, as in the rumor of ritual murder mentioned in the *Siete Partidas*, as a killer of Christian children—grew even darker and more likely to lead to violence in the future. The Black Death helped sow the seeds of the events of 1391.

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The first half of the fourteenth century contained ominous signs for the Jews of Iberia, and increasing anti-Jewish sentiments became more evident in Seville as well. Nevertheless, Jews continued to enjoy the protection of the Castilian state, and forms of social and religious interaction between Jews and Christians continued. Two more examples from Seville illustrate the complicated nature of Jewish-Christian relations of this period.

In July of 1342, Alfonso XI addressed a letter to Pope Clement VI, requesting papal permission regarding a new synagogue in the city. The building was to be funded by Joseph of Écija. Alfonso justified this violation of canon law by citing the Jews’ utility: they had helped to repopulate Seville and had even fought alongside Christians against the Muslims without fear of death. In short, the King wrote, “The Jews are extremely necessary.”149 While the Pope’s response is unknown, the value that the Castilian monarchs placed upon their Jewish possessions is clear.

Such praise of Jewish contributions to Seville and to Castile stands in stark contrast with an incident that occurred twelve years later. At some point in 1354, members of the *aljama* were

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accused of desecrating the Host, the body of Christ in the Eucharistic service.\footnote{One of the few surviving references to this event comes from a 1354 meeting of the leaders of the Jewish communities of Aragon. The takkanoth, or ordinances, they drafted refer to a charge of Host desecration in Seville and the dire consequences that such claims could have for the entire Jewish community. While there is no evidence that such an incident did not occur, the fact that it is only mentioned by contemporary non-Castilian sources (see below) suggests that to some degree it may have taken on an exaggerated reputation. For an exploration of the topic of Host desecration, see Miri Rubin, \textit{Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).} This charge, which first appeared in Europe in the thirteenth century, quickly became one of the standard and most vitriolic elements of late medieval anti-Judaism. Its implications were particularly severe: by depicting Jews as profaning the Host, stabbing it, or subjecting it to torture, representations of these stories in art and literature often cast Jews as demonic creatures seeking once again to crucify Christ. These accusations and the stories of miracles performed by the sacred Host (such as bleeding when a Jew stabbed it) that often accompanied them served as a justification for popular anti-Jewish violence throughout the late Middle Ages.

During these attacks, the entire community, not just the particular Jews who were sometimes charged with the offense, was targeted. The results of the 1354 accusation are unknown; however, the surviving documentation hints that some type of riot erupted against the Jews of Seville.\footnote{Julio Valdeón Barueque points to a reference to an attack against the Jews of Seville due to a charge of Host desecration from the archives of the island of Mallorca in his article “Un pleito cristiano-judío en la Sevilla del siglo XIV [A Christian-Jewish Lawsuit in Fourteenth-Century Seville],” 221-38, \textit{Historia, Instituciones, Documentos} [History, Institutions, Documents] 1 (1974): 229.} While the aljama survived the attack, this incident had profound consequences for the Jews of the city and the whole Peninsula. For instance, this charge may well have served as a precedent for other, later accusations of Host desecration made against Jewish communities in both Castile and Aragon.\footnote{Rubin, 110-15.} Above all, such an accusation increased popular hatred of Jews and raised the risk of violence. Even in an era when kings like Alfonso XI could support Jewish requests for synagogues, the Christian masses of cities like Seville had
grown more hostile to the Jews. Despite continued official protection, the incident of 1354, just like the riots of 1328 and the spread of the plague, indicated the fundamental fragility of Jewish existence in Christian Iberia. The events of the next several decades brought the *aljamas* ever closer to disaster.
IV

“A Wicked and Daring People”

The Host desecration accusation of 1354 indicated the rise of a more militant anti-Judaism among elements of the Christian population of Seville. It appears, however, that such disturbances did not occur elsewhere in Castile. The Seville incident may even have been an isolated case of the effects of the anti-Jewish mentality caused by the Black Death.\(^{153}\) Above all, a harsher anti-Jewish spirit had by and large failed to enter into the royal court. In fact, the son of Alfonso XI who ascended to the throne in 1350, Pedro I (1350-69), proved to be a strong defender of Jewish privileges. His policies and political difficulties, however, rebounded on Jewish communities with disastrous results.

At the Cortes of Valladolid in 1351, Pedro rejected the procurators’ complaints towards Jews, particularly with regard to debts. He emphasized Jewish weakness and their need for royal protection, and he alleged that Christians manipulated Jews through legal tricks. He depicted the Jews as a people in desperate straits, “ruined…for [Christians] not paying their debts.”\(^{154}\) Just as his father had done, Pedro used Jewish poverty as a justification for rejecting policies such as moratoria on debts. He also ignored the procurators’ requests on other issues, such as their plea to place Jews under the formal jurisdiction of the cities. Pedro’s claims may have reflected reality. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see his decisions as motivated by anything more than self-

\(^{153}\) Julio Valdeón Baruque, *Judios y conversos en la Castilla medieval [Jews and Converts in Medieval Castile]*, (Valladolid, Spain: Ambito, 2004), 64. While it is within the realm of possibility that attacks against other Jewish communities in Castile occurred both during and after the peak of the Black Death (roughly 1347-51), no evidence has survived.

interest. With Jewish officials serving at his court and with Jewish tax revenue continuing to flow into his coffers, it made little sense to put restrictions on a population that continued to provide him with financial benefit or to allow the procurators to win jurisdiction over his possessions. At the same time, he did accede to certain petitions of the Cortes: for instance, that Jews not use Christian names or work on Sundays. Pedro continued in the tradition of Alfonso XI, acting above all in the monarchy’s interest and satisfying the cities on issues that had little bearing on royal finances. Pedro’s stances at the Cortes and the presence of prominent Jewish courtiers in his government, however, came to generate opposition and a conception of the new monarch as a distinctively pro-Jewish sovereign. While his policies were consistent with those of his predecessors, they now produced a harsher reaction.  

The backlash against Pedro occurred as part of a wider European crisis of authority in the years after the Black Death. The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) between England and France in which Castile too became embroiled marked another example of this trend. In Castile, this crisis took a particularly anti-Jewish turn, and the power and reputation of one Jewish official in particular hurt Pedro’s fortunes.

Samuel ha-Levi, a Jew from Toledo, had originally served as the personal almojarife of Pedro’s powerful minister Juan Alonso de Albuquerque. In 1344 and 1345, ha-Levi served as tax-farmer in Seville, and he rose to become Pedro’s tesorero mayor, or chief treasurer, by 1353. He also served the monarch as a judge and diplomat. His position granted him

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substantial wealth and enormous power over the royal finances. The chronicler Pedro López de Ayala (1332-1407) claimed that ha-Levi amassed more than 170,000 doblas, four thousand silver coins, and a large collection of silk, jewelry, and other riches, while his family possessed 300,000 doblas.\(^{158}\) The synagogue that ha-Levi funded in Toledo during the late 1350s (known as the Sinagoga del Tránsito, which still survives today) symbolized the heights of power he had attained. Decorated in the Islamic-influenced Mudejar style, its interior even featured the castle-and-lion shield of the Kingdom of Castile-León, an indication of ha-Levi’s proximity to the sovereign.\(^{159}\) An inscription praised Pedro as “the great monarch, our lord and master…[may] God be in his aid and increase his power and glory and preserve it.”\(^{160}\) Ha-Levi also maintained important connections with Seville: his nephew Joseph ha-Levi served as the city’s almojarife.\(^{161}\) Samuel ha-Levi also may have owned a palace within Seville’s judería.\(^{162}\) Under the leadership of ha-Levi and other Jewish officials, Jews came to exert even greater influence over the collection of royal revenues.

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\(^{158}\) Pedro López de Ayala, *Crónicas [Chronicles]*, ed. José Luis Martín (Barcelona: Planeta, 1991), 256. López de Ayala should not be regarded as an objective chronicler of Pedro’s I rule, since he served as a supporter and chronicler of the Trastámara dynasty (see below). Nonetheless, his account reflects the perception of Samuel ha-Levi’s wealth among Pedro’s opponents in the nobility. One can imagine what the Christian populace’s view of ha-Levi might have been.

\(^{159}\) “Mudejar” also refers to the Muslim populations who lived under Christian rulers in Iberia (particularly after the conquests of the 1200s). In architecture, it means a style of construction that is “Muslim-like,” featuring motifs such as stucco ornamentation and geometric and floral design without the representation of human figures. Jewish, Muslim, and Christian builders all employed it in late medieval Iberia. Perhaps the most spectacular examples are the Alcázar in Seville constructed by Pedro I and the Alhambra in Granada. For more information, see Jerrilynne D. Dodds, “Mudejar Tradition and the Synagogues of Medieval Spain: Cultural Identity and Cultural Hegemony,” in Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynne D. Dodds, eds., *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., & The Jewish Museum, 1992), 113-31.


\(^{162}\) José Luis Lacave, *Juderías y sinagogas españolas [Spanish Jewries and Synagogues]*, (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992), 348. One of the major streets of the old judería, Calle Levies (Levis Street) today bears the name of his family.
Such prominence was bound to provoke resentment. Pedro’s rivalry with the nobles, several of whom were products of Alfonso XI’s liaisons with his mistress Leonor de Guzmán and thus potential claimants to the throne, did not help matters. Perhaps because of this insecurity, Pedro accepted no opposition and executed many real or perceived enemies among the aristocracy. His actions earned him either the moniker “the Cruel” or “the Righteous,” depending on one’s allegiance. The opposition that developed against Pedro, concentrated in particular among the nobility, began to coalesce around the figure of his half-brother Count Enrique de Trastámara (“the Bastard”), son of Alfonso XI and Leonor de Guzmán. Enrique and his followers soon realized they could use popular anti-Judaism as a weapon against Pedro.

A demonstration of such a tactic occurred in 1355, when Enrique’s forces launched an attack against Toledo’s two juderías, leaving perhaps hundreds dead, as part of a larger battle with Pedro’s troops for control of the city. Toledan Muslims also seem to have joined in the assault, a sign that anti-Jewish feeling in the city transcended religious boundaries. Another anti-Jewish riot broke out in the city of Cuenca east of Toledo. A royal letter indicated that mobs there threw some Jews off of towers. These attacks indicated a link between Enrique and anti-Jewish violence: at the very least, his supporters seized their opportunity to attack and plunder Jewish neighborhoods. Even though Enrique was forced into exile in France, his exploitation of anti-Jewish attitudes continued. Propaganda served as his primary vehicle.

Above all, Enrique and his supporters sought to cast Pedro as a friend of Muslims and especially Jews. In Enrique’s words, Pedro was “that wicked tyrant [the] enemy of

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164 Baer, *Die Juden*, II, §190, 185.
God...increasing and enriching the Moors and the Jews and lording over them.” Samuel ha-Levi provided the perfect example of Pedro’s pro-Jewish policy. Perhaps the most spectacular accusation of all was the legend that Pedro himself was the secret son of a Jew named Pedro Gil. The violence that accompanied Enrique’s forays into Castilian territory indicated the success of this campaign. In 1360, for instance, violence against the Jews in several northern Castilian towns, including Nájera and Miranda del Ebro, coincided with the Count’s movement into those areas. In López de Ayala’s account, the inhabitants of those areas “did it of good will, and by the deed itself they took fear and mistrust of the King, and were with the Count.” Enrique could support anti-Jewish violence out of self-interest: once the act was done, the rioters, fearing the King’s punishment for their attack against his possessions, could turn to the Trastámara forces for protection. Indeed, Pedro’s harsh reprisals only increased support for his half-brother. Enrique’s policy against the Jews was less driven by anti-Jewish hatred than by the recognition that advocating anti-Jewish violence had become good politics. It could bring the common people along with much of the nobility to his side in his struggle to seize the throne of Castile.

For his part, Pedro may have recognized the dangers this propaganda posed for his grip on power. Perhaps that is why he turned against Samuel ha-Levi, who was arrested, tortured, and executed in Seville in 1360 or 1361 on accusations of fraud. Other Jews resentful of ha-Levi’s position may also have planted these charges with the King. At any rate, such measures did not change the popular conception of Pedro as a defender of Jews. Furthermore,

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166 Cited in Valdeón Baruque, Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara, 39.
167 Valdeón Baruque, Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara, 26.
168 Valdeón Baruque, Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara, 34.
169 López de Ayala, Crónicas, 239.
170 Netanyahu, 103.
171 Netanyahu, 104-7; Montes Romero-Camacho, “El antijudaísmo,” 102.
his policies, including a costly war with Aragon and his harshness towards real or imagined enemies, continued to weaken his base of support. In 1366, full-fledged civil war erupted as Enrique invaded once again, backed by French mercenaries under the command of the knight Bertrand de Guesclin. Pedro I fled into exile, only to return in 1367 backed by English soldiers. The conflict became another theater of the Hundred Years’ War. Finally, the war swung once more in Enrique’s favor, and in 1369 he cornered and killed Pedro at Montiel in southeastern Castile. The Count now ascended to the throne as Enrique II (1369-79).

The damage done to Castile and its Jewish communities by the war was significant. The Jews suffered along with other Castilians from the effects of three years of bitter fighting, but they faced particular hardships. Their association with the unpopular Pedro left them open to assault, and they often suffered heavy casualties in battles for control of cities: during the siege of Toledo alone, thousands of Jews may have been killed. The presence of foreign mercenaries on both sides—the French on Enrique’s and the English on Pedro’s—allowed anti-Jewish influence from elsewhere in Europe to fester on Castilian soil. Both England and France had more violent anti-Jewish traditions, and both French and English troops attacked juderías in northern Castile: the French the community of Briviesca and the English the aljamas of Villaldeigo and Aguilar de Campoo. While these attacks were driven in part by a desire for plunder, they were also motivated by anti-Jewish feeling. Just as Castilian anti-Judaism was “Lateranized” through the decrees of the Synod of Zamora, so too was it “Europeanized”

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173 Valdeón Baruque, Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara, 48.
174 Valdeón Baruque, Judíos y conversos, 71-2.
through the civil war.\textsuperscript{175} It appears that even Enrique intervened to prevent further massacres by his French allies.\textsuperscript{176} Still, this foreign influence continued to further violent anti-Judaism in Castile.

In several areas, largely Castilian crowds attacked Jews. Mobs robbed the \textit{juderías} of the cities of Ávila and Segovia in central Castile, and riots broke out in the north-central city of Valladolid and in the city of Jaén in Andalusia. Some of these incidents occurred without the presence of Enrique’s soldiers or foreign troops, suggesting that a surge of popular anti-Judaism had arisen even without the direct impact of the conflict.\textsuperscript{177} Even if they did not necessarily take part in active anti-Jewish violence, the masses and the procurators at Cortes continued to push for anti-Jewish legislation.

At times during the conflict, Enrique adhered to a strict anti-Jewish policy. He imposed enormous fines on the Jewish communities of Burgos and Toledo. His impositions against Toledo in 1369 were particularly harsh: he ordered that the Jews themselves and their goods be sold in public until he received twenty thousand gold \textit{doblas}.\textsuperscript{178} He authorized his \textit{tesorero mayor}, Gómez García, to allow “the Jews and Jewesses of the said \textit{aljama} to neither eat nor drink, and to give them tortures and make [unto] them all the pressures...that can be made” until he could obtain the desired sum.\textsuperscript{179} Such a demand and the threat behind it left the \textit{aljama} all but bankrupt, but the Jews had no choice but to pay. Still, Enrique issued his order in a difficult


\textsuperscript{177} Valdeón Baruque, \textit{Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara}, 48; Netanyahu, 117.

\textsuperscript{178} José Amador de los Ríos, \textit{Historia social, política y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal [Social, Political, and Religious History of the Jews of Spain and Portugal]}, (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1984), II, 571-3. This document is found in Appendix VIII.

\textsuperscript{179} Amador de los Ríos, II, 573.
context: he had just reconquered the city after a prolonged siege, during which the Jews had maintained their loyalty to Pedro. Two years earlier at the Cortes of Burgos, when Pedro was in retreat and Enrique’s hold on the throne had seemed secure, he behaved towards the Jews in a more magnanimous fashion.

The Cortes of Burgos of 1367 reflected a peak of anti-Jewish sentiment, yet Enrique defended Jewish rights. The procurators declared that “the many evils and damages and deaths and exiles that came to them in past times were by the advice of the Jews that were ministers and officials of past kings…because they want evil and harm for the Christians.”180 They defined Jews as inherently anti-Christian and petitioned for further restrictions. These included the demolition of any places the Jews had fortified to protect themselves, the reduction of debts owed to Jews, the imprisonment of Jews who were late on paying debts to Christians, and a ban on Jews from serving in the royal court as tax-farmers, doctors, or as public officials.181 In response, Enrique agreed to destroy fortresses where they were unnecessary, but not if doing so “would destroy the Jews.”182 As monarch, he now saw the Jews as his predecessors had: a royal resource that ought to be protected.

Such a view also explained his response to the Cortes’ petition on the employment of Jewish officials. “Never was such a petition,” he observed, “demanded to the other kings of Castile.”183 He promised to award tax-farming posts to Christians should he find them qualified, to adhere to the policies of Alfonso XI on imprisoning Jews over debts, and to reduce Christian

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180 Cited in Valdeón Baruque, Judios y conversos, 75.
181 Baer, Die Juden, II, §205, 196-8; Valdeón Baruque, Judios y conversos, 75. It is noteworthy that these petitions suggest that Christian burghers practiced moneylending as well, presumably at interest, despite the prohibitions of canon law.
182 Baer, Die Juden, II, §205, 197.
183 Baer, Die Juden, II, §205, 197.
debts owed to Jews.\textsuperscript{184} Two years later at the Cortes of Toro, with his power consolidated once again, Enrique granted only a very limited moratorium on debts owed to Jews. Like his predecessors, he cited Jewish poverty as an excuse.\textsuperscript{185} These declarations marked a return to the traditional policy of the monarchy regarding Jews, at least on these matters. Enrique again found the Jews useful for his ends. This time, it was their protection that served his interests.

While Seville escaped the worst fighting of the war, the conflict did contribute to tensions within the \textit{aljama}. The majority of Jews remained loyal to Pedro, who remained their source of protection against the open anti-Judaism and violence encouraged by Enrique. At least one powerful and wealthy member of the community, Joseph Pichon, nevertheless chose to ally himself with the Trastámaras dynasty. Much like earlier Jewish courtiers, Pichon ascended to the post of Enrique’s \textit{contador mayor} (chief accountant), another position of substantial financial responsibility.\textsuperscript{186} Social tensions among the Jewish community of Seville were a factor in his decision. Pichon apparently neither served as a communal leader nor came from a traditionally powerful family, and his decision to support Enrique may have come from a sense that such a choice gave him the best chance to attain power.\textsuperscript{187} His success in winning Enrique’s support indicated both his own talents and the new King’s pragmatic outlook. Pichon could help Enrique in the collection of taxes and in the assertion of the power of the monarchy that the Trastámaras now controlled. The rise of Pichon elevated Sevillian Jewry to prominence yet

\textsuperscript{184} Baer, \textit{Die Juden}, II, §205, 197-8; Valdeón Baruque, \textit{Judíos y conversos}, 75.
\textsuperscript{185} Valdeón Baruque, \textit{Judíos y conversos}, 76. In fairness, given his own exactions against the Jews of Burgos and Toledo and the ravages of the war, this claim contained some truth.
\textsuperscript{187} Netanyahu, \textit{Toward the Inquisition}, 110. A few leading Jewish families, such as Samuel ha-Levi’s before his downfall, tended to control the communal leadership of Seville and other \textit{aljamas}. Pichon likely experienced difficulties in attaining power within this system. Still, it is noteworthy that he was joined in his service to Enrique II by the scion of one of these families, Samuel Abravanel. Perhaps Pichon’s decision is best attributed to the political gain his choice could bring to both himself and his relatives.
again, but also provoked a backlash from both Jewish elites and the procurators. To Jewish leaders, Pichon must have appeared as little more than an upstart and an opportunist who had aligned himself with a man responsible for massacres of other Jews. Such a view of Pichon must have played a role in his ultimate fate.

At the same time, the procurators and Enrique’s most enthusiastically anti-Jewish supporters saw the King’s employment of Pichon as a betrayal. In the petitions of the next Cortes, held once again in Toro in 1371, the bitterness of the procurators was clear. “Jews, thus like a wicked and daring people, enemies of God and Christendom, do with great boldness many evils and many bribes, in such manner that all the kingdoms or the greater part of them were destroyed and overburdened by the Jews,” they complained.\(^{188}\) This reference to Jewish role in taxation likely alluded to Pichon’s role at court. The demands made at this Cortes were harsher than ever: the procurators demanded that Jews live apart from Christians, bear a distinctive sign, not hold offices or tax-farming posts or even ride on mules, and that above all “they live as in other kingdoms in which there are Jews.”\(^{189}\) Much like Pedro and Alfonso XI before him, Enrique acceded on minor issues such as delays on debts owed to Jews and promised to decide on a badge for Jews to wear, but once again he ignored the Cortes’ requests that had greater potential to harm Jewish existence in Castile.\(^{190}\) Still, the spirit of Lateran IV and Zamora, along with foreign anti-Jewish influence, was stronger than ever.

Other elements of anti-Judaism manifested themselves throughout the late 1360s and 1370s. In Aragon, Host desecration allegations arose against the Jewish communities of Barcelona, Huesca, and in 1383, Lérida. In 1375 in Castile, Jews were compelled to participate

\(^{188}\) Cited in Manuel Colmeiro, *Cortes de los antiguos reinos de León y Castilla [Cortes of the Ancient Kingdoms of León and Castille]*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1861-1903), I, 329.

\(^{189}\) Valdeón Baruque, *Judíos y conversos*, 77.

in a disputation in the Cathedral of Ávila with a Jewish convert. That same year, Pope Gregory XI (1370-8) wrote to Enrique to urge him to prevent Jews from holding power and influence over Christians and asked him to support the efforts of the same convert, Juan of Valladolid, to preach Christianity to his former coreligionists. The influence of the Mendicant approach to Jews continued.\textsuperscript{191}

Seville too provided further evidence of anti-Judaism on the march. In 1371, its officials complained to Enrique II over royal privileges that allowed Jews to construct buildings in the judería above the height of its walls and that stipulated that Jews who committed adultery with Christian women had to be convicted based on both Jewish and Christian testimony.\textsuperscript{192} Meanwhile, from 1369 until 1377, the Cabildo of Seville became embroiled in a lawsuit against members of the aljama over a sum it alleged was owed to it by two Jews from Seville, Mair ben Yex and Zulema ben Atabeb, who farmed out royal customs duties.\textsuperscript{193} The Cabildo accused the Jews of acting “maliciously” and hiding evidence. It also made several disparaging references to Pedro I (under whose reign the original dispute occurred) as “Pedro Gil,” referring once again to that King’s supposed Jewish ancestry.\textsuperscript{194} These cases indicated a level of official anti-Judaism present among both the Church and the city government of Seville. At the same time, they indicated that Jewish-Christian interaction in the city continued. Jews continued to work as royal officials and maintained an expanding judería. Jewish men and Christian women even conducted illegal sexual relations. While anti-Judaism continued to rise in the city, intercommunal relations remained a fact of everyday life.

\textsuperscript{191} Valdeón Baruque, \textit{Judíos y conversos}, 82.
\textsuperscript{194} Valdeón Baruque, “Un pleito,” 235.
It was tension within Jewish communities over Joseph Pichon, however, that placed the
*aljamas* of Castile in serious trouble. Pichon’s Jewish enemies accused him of embezzlement—
similar to the charge leveled against Samuel ha-Levi—in the mid-1370s, but he escaped death by
paying an enormous fine to Enrique.\(^{195}\) After the King’s death in 1379, the Sevillian courtier
proved less fortunate. A group of other Jewish officials persuaded the new monarch, Enrique’s
son Juan I (1379-90), to allow the execution of an informer, a man guilty of committing *malsín*,
or slander.\(^{196}\) The right to execute informers with royal permission was a privilege the Jews of
Iberia cherished, as it provided a way to protect communities from dissenters who could threaten
the cohesion and even the safety of the *aljamas* by spreading falsehoods to Christians.\(^{197}\) The
King was unaware that this man was Joseph Pichon. In López de Ayala’s dramatic and possibly
exaggerated account, Pichon was lured out of his house in Burgos in 1379 and “taken and
slaughtered, without [the executioner] saying anything to him.”\(^{198}\) Regardless of how Pichon’s
death took place, Juan I was enraged. He ordered the three alleged masterminds of the plot
executed.\(^{199}\)

Pichon’s death had ramifications for the Jewish communities of all Castile. It alienated a
number of Jews and may even have been a factor in causing a few, including Pichon’s fellow
Sevillian Jew and collaborator Samuel Abravanel, to convert to Christianity during the ensuing
decade.\(^{200}\) It revealed the conflicts and rivalries that continued within the *aljamas*, both between

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\(^{196}\) For a brief discussion of *malsín* and the danger it posed to Jewish communities, see Benjamin R.
Gampel, “Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: Convivencia through The Eyes of Sephardic
Jews,” in Mann, Glick and Dodds, eds., *Convivencia*, 24.

\(^{197}\) Gampel, 24.

\(^{198}\) López de Ayala, *Crónicas*, 512.


\(^{200}\) Netanyahu, *Toward the Inquisition*, 121-22. Evidence suggests that Abravanel converted by 1388 and
took the name Juan Sánchez de Sevilla. His conversion allowed to him to continue serving the King in
financial posts. Jews were increasingly unwelcome in positions of authority.
Jewish elites and the masses and among the communal leaders themselves. Furthermore, it antagonized the new King, the Jews’ most powerful protector. Finally, it further fueled Castilian and specifically Sevillian anti-Judaism.

The procurators leapt at their chance to strike again at Jewish privileges. They had little love for Pichon, but his death provided a useful excuse. They claimed that he had been particularly well disposed towards the Christians of Seville and that the Jews had killed him for that reason.201 Pichon’s execution may also have encouraged the Archdeacon of Écija, Ferrán Martinez, to continue the anti-Jewish campaign he had begun a few years earlier.202 At the Cortes of Soria of 1380, the King agreed to eliminate the privilege of Jewish jurisdiction over criminal cases that involved only Jews. The Jews had lost “all dominion and all liberty in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Juan affirmed.203 This privilege had only caused harm to the monarchy, to Christians, “and to the common people of their aljamas generally and especially.”204 The King also acceded to legislation that adopted harsh measures against Jewish prayers alleged to be blasphemous, against the harassment of Jewish converts to Christianity, and against Jewish slaveowners who circumcised and converted their slaves.205 Jewish autonomy came increasingly under threat.

While the monarchy continued to intervene to protect Jews from outright violence, the Cortes of the 1380s served as a fulcrum for new anti-Jewish laws. At court, the King articulated

201 Netzahahu, Origins of the Inquisition, 122. For an example of this claim, see Diego Ortíz de Zuñiga, Anales eclesiásticos y seculars de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Sevilla [Ecclesiastical and Secular Annals of the Very Noble and Loyal City of Seville], (Seville: Guadalquivir, 1988), 236. This is a modern edition of a version of this seventeenth-century history of Seville published in 1795.
202 See Chapter 5.
203 Baer, Die Juden, §227, 221.
204 Baer, Die Juden, §227, 221.
205 Baer, Die Juden, §227, 220-2. All quoted material is taken from these pages. The restriction on insulting Jewish converts to Christianity suggests that both Jews and Christians viewed them with disdain and suspicion. This issue took on special importance after the mass conversions of 1391, but this provision may suggest that increasing numbers of Jews had begun to convert by 1380.
a vision of reformist Christianity based on a reaction to the trauma of the Great Schism, which erupted in 1378 and divided Catholic Europe between several claimants to papal authority. Pedro de Luna, a cardinal and the future antipope (one of several figures during the Schism who claimed to be the legitimate pontiff of the Church) Benedict XIII (1394-1423), became particularly influential in advocating this ideology, which included a reinvigorated desire for the conversion of the Jews. At the Cortes of Valladolid of 1385, debts to Jews were reduced once again, and in response to the problem of Christians sharing meals with Jews and “persevering with them night and day,” the Cortes demanded that such Christians be denied confession and be barred from receiving the Eucharist. The Cortes of Briviesca of 1387 even banned all conversation and “relations” between Jews and Christians, except for Jewish doctors, and ordained that neither Jews nor Muslims should work in public or even be seen on Sundays. While of course the promulgation of these laws did not necessarily translate into practice, the ideas of separation and degradation of the Jews had grown more powerful. Although many interests were at play in the sessions of the Cortes, the backlash after the death of Pichon may have led to the proposal of some of these new and increasingly restrictive laws. At the very least, Pichon’s murder may have been a factor that helped bring Juan I’s position towards the Jews closer into line with that of the procurators.

By the end of the 1380s, the fortunes of the Jews of Seville and of Castile had changed dramatically. The Synod of Zamora, the preaching of the Mendicants, the agitation of the procurators, and the violence in Aragon and Navarre, along with the plague, Enrique’s successful manipulation of anti-Jewish feeling to win the civil war, and Jewish courtiers’ self-destructive plot against Pichon all contributed to Christian hostility. At the same time, this era contained

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207 Baer, Die Juden, §234, 226.
208 Valdeón Baruque, Judios y conversos, 85.
times of prosperity and peace for the Jews of Castile. During Pedro’s reign, Rabbi Shem Tov of Carrión dedicated his Castilian Proverbios Morales (Moral Proverbs) to him, his “noble lord, [the] High King.”209 The fact that Shem Tov wrote in Castilian also points to a kind of cultural interaction that still flourished during this era. Nonetheless, Jewish-Christian coexistence became increasingly difficult. The sentiment reflected by Pedro López de Ayala in verses of his poem Rimado de Palacio (Rhyme of the Palace) reflects the hostile environment of the second half of the fourteenth century, particularly towards Jews serving as tax collectors:

\[Alli \text{ vienen judios, que están aparejados}
Para beber la sangre de los pobres cuitados…
Allí hacen judíos el su repartimiento
Sobre el pueblo que muere por mal defendimiento…
Aún para esto por lo vi hacer;
En las rentas del rey suelen parte tener,
Por que non se les pueda el pobre defender
De les dar lo que piden o todo lo perder.\]

There come the Jews, who are ready
To drink the blood of the poor afflicted…
There make the Jews their division
Over the people that die from lack of defense….
Still for this I saw worse done;
They are accustomed to have part in the King’s revenues
Because the poor man cannot defend himself from them
Giving them what they ask, or losing everything.210

López de Ayala’s poem devoted only a handful of verses to the Jews. Still, his lines reflected a stark, negative attitude towards them that had permeated even the elite during this period. These lines are particularly remarkable since Ayala supported the traditional policy towards the Jews and sought to prevent the violence of 1391. Even he was not immune from anti-Jewish vitriol.

\[209\] Valdeón Baruque, Judíos y conversos, 66-7.
\[210\] Pedro López de Ayala, Rimado de Palacio [Rhyme of the Palace], ed. H. Salvador Martínez (New York: P. Lang, 2000), 44-47.
This era of turbulence for Iberia and indeed for all Europe, marked by war, disease, and the Schism, made conditions for Jews even more difficult. While the king continued to seek to protect the Jews from violence, fewer and fewer Jews attained high office in the service of the monarchs or the nobles. The virulence of the Cortes’ petitions reflected an ever greater anti-Jewish zeal. Still, this sentiment had yet to take the form of all-out violence. It was in this respect that Seville and a particular priest came to the fore.
The details of the life of Ferrán Martínez, probably the man most responsible for the riots of 1391, remain fragmentary. By 1374, it appears that he had risen to the post of the Archdeacon of Écija, a town in the eastern region of the archdiocese of Seville. As Archdeacon, he enjoyed substantial responsibilities related to church administration, especially as a diocesan judge, or *provisor*, over cases involving Church property throughout the eastern part of the diocese. He thus played an important role in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and served as an assistant to the Archbishop. He also served as a member (or canon) of the chapter of the Cathedral of Seville and as a public preacher, and he was involved in financial transactions between the Archdiocese and the Holy See. With regard to his personality, one contemporary described him as “simple in learning and laudable in life.” He was well respected in Seville and served as the executor of the wills of many of the city’s elite. Some historians have suggested that he came from a relatively humble background, while others have claimed he was...

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213 Rubio Merino, 297-300.
related to a wealthy Sevillian family. At any rate, humble origins could explain perhaps the most important aspect of his preaching: his ability to connect with the common people of Seville over the issue of the Jews.

Martínez, of course, did not cause the events of 1391 singlehandedly. Because of the origin of the massacres in Seville, however, it is worth examining how he influenced the populace of Seville in translating their rising hostility to the Jews into outright violence. The question is how, as the historian Isabel Montes has asked, “the Sevillian populace saw the end of all their problems in the destruction and the sack of the judería.” It was in this respect that Martínez became a pivotal figure.

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It is unclear when Martínez began to campaign against the Jews of Seville. At any rate, by 1378 his activities had attracted enough concern that the leaders of the aljama felt compelled to turn to the King. Enrique II could not permit threats to the community that represented an important source of royal income and, after all, was the home of powerful officials such as Joseph Pichon. On August 25, 1378, the King issued an albalá (a royal letter or decree) that described Martínez’ alleged actions.

Above all, the Archdeacon preached inflammatory sermons to popular Christian audiences in the Mendicant tradition. The aljama had accused him of stirring up hatred of Jews among the masses by “preaching wicked and dishonest things.” Such behavior, the King

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217 José Amador de los Ríos, Historia social, política y religiosa de los judíos de España y Portugal [Social, Political, and Religious History of the Jews of Spain and Portugal], (Madrid: Ediciones Turner,
added, threatened to cause the Jews great harm and dealt him a disservice (deservicio).\textsuperscript{218} The Jewish community and the King, at the very least, viewed Martínez’ words as likely to cause a riot. Almost thirteen years before violence ultimately broke out, Martínez was already provoking anti-Jewish behavior among his largely lower-class audience. The Archdeacon’s great skill in communicating with his audience is the theme that dominates document after document about his anti-Jewish preaching.

Apart from the danger of inciting violence, however, Martínez posed a more direct threat to the Jews through his role as provisor. Establishing himself as one of the most powerful judges of the entire archdiocese, he claimed wide authority over cases pertaining to Jews, even those that normally did not involve the Church. By taking power over these cases, Martínez overstepped his mandate. Enrique II made it clear that the Jews were servi regis, who pertained to royal and not ecclesiastical authority. Furthermore, the Jews of Seville had found the Archdeacon a less than impartial judge. They claimed that he ruled against them unjustly and without regard for the law. While the details of these cases are lost, it appears that Martínez’ rulings were blatant enough to draw royal attention. In fact, the King’s letter complained that Martínez had disregarded a previous royal order on the issue. Martínez’ activities, then, probably drew Jewish complaints even before 1378.\textsuperscript{219}

The aspect which irritated Enrique II most, however, was Martínez’ disregard for royal authority. When the King paid a visit to Seville in 1377 or 1378, the albalá recalled, Martínez dared not act against the Jews, in light of the monarch’s previous order. Once Enrique departed, however, Martínez and some like-minded Church officials ordered various municipal councils of

\textsuperscript{218} Amador de los Ríos, II, 581. Here, deservicio should be read to reflect a strong sense of Martínez as a subject negligent in his duties to his sovereign.

\textsuperscript{219} Amador de los Ríos, II, 581.
the towns and villages of the archdiocese—such as that of Alcalá de Guadaíra just east of Seville—to ban Jews from living in their communities or face excommunication. In other words, the towns were ordered to expel their Jews. Martínez even visited Alcalá in person to try to enforce this command. The King pronounced himself “amazed” at Martínez’ continued interference in Jewish affairs “without making us know [of] it.” The Jews pertained to the monarch, and Martínez could not act against them without his order. What appeared to disturb the King most, again, was not Martínez’ activities in themselves, as harmful to the Jews as they might be, but rather his refusal to recognize royal jurisdiction.220

Enrique II decided to bring the Archdeacon to heel. He banned Martínez from interfering in cases involving Jews without an express royal order, mandated that his anti-Jewish sentences not be fulfilled, ordered all sentences of excommunication lifted, and demanded that the priest stop his attempts to force expulsion or to inflict harm against the Jews. If the Archdeacon once again disobeyed, he wrote, “be sure…we will order you to learn your lesson.” The King backed up this threat of punishment by instructing the authorities of Seville and of all the towns of the archdiocese to protect the Jews from Martínez and restore any damage that had been done after the royal party had left Seville. Regardless of Enrique II’s motivations for intervention, the order made it clear that the monarchy was not inclined to tolerate Martínez’ actions. Perhaps the most important aspect of the King’s order, however, was what it revealed about the Archdeacon’s attitude towards the Jews. Martínez wanted them out of the archdiocese.221

It is unclear whether the King’s orders had an effect on the priest. Enrique II died the following year, and soon after Juan I assumed power, anti-Jewish sentiment in Seville and in all of Castile rose with the murder of Joseph Pichon. The anti-Jewish legislation of the Cortes of

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220 Amador de los Ríos, II, 581-2. During this period, Archdeacons such as Martínez generally had the power to excommunicate.
221 Amador de los Ríos, II, 582-3.
Soria in 1380 added to this increasingly hostile climate. Perhaps Martínez quieted after Enrique II’s order and resumed his campaign once anti-Judaism appeared to be on the rise again. At any rate, he again prompted enough concern in the aljama of Seville that its leaders again turned to the monarch.

On March 3, 1382, Juan I issued another albalá regarding Martínez. He charged that the Archdeacon was continuing to preach and interfere in cases involving Jews, allegedly taking unprecedented measures and giving sermons that could provoke mob violence. His actions, the King claimed, went against all precedent demanding that the Jews be protected, a fact borne out by the copies of papal bulls and other documents that the Jews provided him to support their case. Martínez’ behavior challenged Augustine’s view on the role of Jews in society. Moreover, the Archdeacon had flouted Enrique II’s orders. Juan I made clear that the king must protect the Jews, his royal possessions, and ordered Martínez to comply with his father’s albalás. He again forbade Martínez from preaching harmful words against the Jews and ordered that all disputes between the Church and Jews (i.e. those in which ecclesiastical judges like Martínez normally had jurisdiction) be directed to the Archbishop of Seville instead. Finally, the monarch again directed the authorities to protect the judería. Juan I’s order, in short, contained little new other than to record that the Archdeacon had resumed his activities in defiance of royal authority.  

Juan I’s albalá evidently had no impact, since the Jews’ pleas soon resumed. A year and a half later, on August 25, 1383—five years to the day after Enrique’s letter—the King sent Martínez yet another order. This albalá’s tone was one of exasperation, and it illustrated how threatening Martínez’ sermons had become. Apparently, the Archdeacon had announced that he knew that the King and Queen would be pleased by and would pardon any Christian who killed or attacked Jews and that he himself would absolve anyone who did so. Martínez was now

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222 Amador de los Ríos, II, 584.
openly advocating violence. He also adopted another, subtler way to damage the Jewish community: trying to convert their Muslim slaves to Christianity. Since no Christian could be enslaved to a Jew, as Lateran III and the Siete Partidas had reiterated, conversion meant freedom. Such efforts not only threatened Jews with economic harm, but they also violated the privileges that the monarchy had formally granted Jewish communities. 223

Juan I responded with sarcasm. “We are much amazed,” he wrote, “that you know our intention and that of the Queen.” He ordered the priest again to cease his preaching against the Jews and admonished, “If you want to be a good Christian, be one in your house…do not go running around [with] our Jews in this way, by which the aljama of this city may be destroyed.” He concluded by threatening to make an example of Martínez so that no one else would dare follow his path. This letter may finally have silenced Martínez for a time, and it appears no anti-Jewish violence erupted despite the Archdeacon’s claim of royal support for rioters. 224

The King, however, soon became embroiled in other matters. That same year, the plague broke out once again in Andalusia, devastating the region. In 1385, Juan I invaded Portugal to stake his claim to the Portuguese throne, only to be dealt a humiliating defeat. The following year, the Duke of Lancaster and his English forces, allies of the Portuguese, invaded the northwestern province of Galicia, threatening Juan I’s own grip on power. During the distractions caused by these crises, Ferrán Martínez resumed his activities in Seville, if indeed he had ever stopped them at all.

By 1388, his preaching and legal interference had become significant problems for the Jewish community yet again. He continued to disobey the royal decrees. The aljama decided to sue him, perhaps in the hope that such a step might cause the officials of Seville to crack down

223 Amador de los Ríos, II, 585.
224 Amador de los Ríos, II, 585.
on the troublemaker once and for all. The resulting documentation provides one of the best insights into Martínez’ rhetoric and methods and one of the few surviving examples where his
own words—at least according to the public notaries—were recorded.

On February 11, 1388, members of the *aljama* met with Martínez outside the gates of the king’s *Alcázar* palace, a space that served as a public court. Ferrán Gónzalez and Ruy Pérez, the *alcaldes mayores* or governors of Seville, watched as Judah ben Abraham, a cloth merchant and a spokesman for the Jewish community, challenged Martínez, whom the document identifies as the leading *provisor* for the Archbishop. Martínez was thus at this point a top official of the archdiocese.

Abraham began by referring to the *albalás* of Enrique II and Juan I. He had their texts presented to and copied down by the notaries, and he alleged that the *aljama* had presented these copies in public many times. Evidently, he and other Jewish leaders were frustrated by the lack of action against Martínez. He accused the Archdeacon of continuing to interfere in Jewish affairs and cases, despite the monarchy’s commands. Again, the issue of jurisdiction over the Jews that Martínez contested so fiercely arose. Affirming the Jews’ status as *servi regis*, Abraham maintained, “The Jews are not constrained by the Church, only by the secular princes.” If Martínez continued to disregard his orders, the Jews would again complain to the King and see that he finally punished the priest.

After Abraham’s formal complaint and the presentation of the *albalás*, Martínez promised to respond. By this point, according to the notaries, a substantial crowd had gathered by the *Alcázar* gates, including many Jews. At some point, the document records, the two *alcaldes mayores* left, with Ferrán Gónzalez going inside the *Alcázar* for lunch. A slightly

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225 Amador de los Ríos, II, 341.
226 Amador de los Ríos, II, 579.
227 Amador de los Ríos, II, 580.
bizarre scene ensued. Abraham accused Martínez of confiscating a piece of cloth that apparently belonged to him. Martínez responded that one of his scribes had the offending item for a legitimate reason, accused Abraham of lying in his testimony, and vowed that the merchant would not obtain satisfaction for the cloth, no matter “how many Jewish dogs” he had as relatives in the juderia. The notaries duly transcribed the entire exchange.228

Martínez evidently did not give a more substantive response until eight days later. His argument was simple: in his sermons, he followed the Word of God. Any preacher or reader of the Gospels, he explained, could find how they described the Jews.229 All those who believed would be saved, and non-believers would be consigned to Hell.230 He then pivoted into a lengthy explanation of Jewish sin. The Jews had maltreated the Apostles, thrown them out of synagogues, and martyred them.231 They had behaved in a similar manner towards Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, who had all preached the Word of God to them.232 They had even killed a man named Avi who tried to stop them from building the golden calf and had disobeyed God’s orders by taking too much manna from Heaven.233 The Jews suffered captivity in Babylonia and received the curses leveled against them by Moses in Deuteronomy, he explained, because of their great sins.234 In an echo of Ramon Martí, he characterized the Jews as incorrigible sinners throughout history. Leaving aside the question of the merits of Martínez’ interpretation of the

228 Amador de los Ríos, II, 586.
229 Amador de los Ríos, II, 586.
230 Amador de los Ríos, II, 587. This reference to Mark 16:16 is the first in a long series of biblical references in Martínez’ response.
231 Amador de los Ríos, II, 587.
232 Amador de los Ríos, II, 587. Martinez may have been referring to Exodus 17:4 and Numbers 14:10, in which the Israelites are mentioned as ready to stone Moses.
234 Amador de los Ríos, II, 587. See, for example, Deuteronomy 28, 31, and 32.
Bible, these details may hint at the content of his sermons, which have not survived. His selective citation of the Bible, with his focus on Jewish sinfulness and cruelty, may well have been the type of rhetoric he used to inflame the ordinary residents of Seville, many of whom likely owed debts to Jewish moneylenders and whom by the late 1380s certainly were receptive to anti-Jewish rhetoric.

The most dangerous aspect of Martínez’ preaching, if his response did reflect his public sermons, was the connection he drew between the Jews of the Bible and the Jews of Seville. The nature of the Jewish people was static: inherently sinful then and inherently sinful today. “It is no wonder,” he exclaimed in his testimony, “that they steal and rob and lie to the kings and princes of the earth.” His appeal against the Jews thus played on both economic and religious resentment. Jews were killers, liars, and robbers in the Old Testament; Jews were no different in the late fourteenth century. Martínez even cast himself as a victim of Jewish lies. He claimed that he could prove that all of the sentences he had issued were just and that some Jews had offered him a bribe of 10,000 doblas in order to rule in their favor in one case. Such claims of Jewish riches and corruption again must have resonated in a city where perhaps seventy percent of the population lived in poverty.\textsuperscript{235} In such a situation, the contrast between the impoverished masses and the perceived wealth of Seville’s Jews was bound to cause trouble.\textsuperscript{236}

Martínez closed with two more threatening remarks. First, all the synagogues of Seville (which he claimed came to twenty-three) had been built and decorated illegally, and if he could, he would tear them all to the ground. The implications of this threat became clear in the years to come. In contrast with the views of the Church hierarchy, which allowed the Jews to maintain

\textsuperscript{235} Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, \textit{Historia de Sevilla: la ciudad medieval, 1248-1492 [History of Seville: The Medieval City, 1248-1492]}, (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 1976), 116.

\textsuperscript{236} Amador de los Ríos, II, 588. All quoted material in this paragraph comes from this text.
their synagogues and rebuild old ones, and Alfonso X’s notion that the synagogue was “a place where the name of God is praised,” Martínez claimed that all synagogues were illegal. He then told a story designed to put Jewish depravity into a Sevillian context. During the epidemic of 1383, “which here was great,” the Jews had interfered with his efforts to bring the Eucharist to comfort the sick and the dying. They had led their beasts of burden through Martínez’ procession, and the Archdeacon had ordered that his followers use “sticks and stones [to] disturb them so that they [the Jews] did not pass.” It is impossible to know whether such an incident actually occurred; nevertheless, Martínez admitted his links with anti-Jewish violence. Again, he refused to cede any ground, and vowed to continue his efforts to keep the Jewish “traitors” apart from Christians. While the results of the lawsuit are unknown, it failed as an effort to restrain Martínez.237

The fact that the Jews did turn to the King once again suggests that Martínez continued his activities. In July of 1388, Juan I issued a letter to the Cabildo in which he mentioned the Archdeacon:

I will command him [Martínez] to see, that although his zeal is holy and good...he ought to watch himself that with his speeches and sermons he does not move people against the Jews since although they are wicked and perverse, they are under my protection and royal power, and they ought not to be aggravated, unless to be punished by the terms of justice in which they are delinquent, and I will command him to do so.238

With this ringing endorsement of the Jews, Juan I committed himself again to their protection. As before, however, his words seem to have had little impact. In fact, his statement captures the sense of ambivalence among the authorities of Church and state towards the Jews. Generally speaking, they agreed that the Jews were “wicked and perverse,” but they protected them out of a

238 Cited in Ortíz de Zuñiga, II, 229-30.
sense of legal obligation and a desire to safeguard their own revenues. Their problems with Martínez were less his anti-Jewish substance than the disturbances he was causing and his disrespect for authority. Eventually, they lost any ability to control him. In the meantime, though, his antics finally drew the ire of the Church.

Martínez’ conflict with the Church hierarchy seems to have begun over the issue of the synagogues. He claimed in public—perhaps because he had begun to receive some pushback from within the Church over the unrest he was causing—that even the pope could not permit or give license to Jews to construct synagogues.239 The Archbishop of Seville, Pedro Gómez Barroso, had apparently tolerated Martínez’ preaching in the past, but his subordinate’s questioning of papal authority was another matter.240 Barroso convened a group of scholars and theologians to discuss the issue and, at some point towards the end of 1388 or at the beginning of 1389, summoned Martínez to explain himself.

This panel suggested that the Archdeacon had lapsed into error by limiting papal authority, citing bulls by various popes “in which they gave license to construct many synagogues.” Called upon to respond, Martínez refused to justify his position. He would only do so, he proclaimed, before “officials and others of the people.” Such an audacious statement shows that Martínez was so committed to his anti-Jewish course that he was willing to disobey the orders of his clerical superiors. He knew that the masses could be powerful enough to protect him. The common people, and perhaps the officials of Seville—the kinds of men who had complained at Cortes after Cortes about Jewish influence and financial control—were those

239 Amador de los Ríos, II, 592.
240 Sometimes called Pedro Álvarez de Albornoz to distinguish him from an earlier Archbishop of Seville (and Cardinal) also named Pedro Gómez Barroso.
who tended to support restrictions against Jews, and their presence and their pressure might cause Barroso and the theologians to reconsider their position.241

Archbishop Barroso responded that it was improper to summon members of the laity over such concerns. Only the learned could discuss the issue of synagogues and papal authority. Nevertheless, his panel agreed to reserve judgment and asked Martinez to avoid preaching about the question until it could reach a more complete decision. Yet again, the Archdeacon refused to give any ground in his sermons. He continued to challenge the pope’s power to permit the building of synagogues and even broadened his critique of papal authority. For instance, he preached that the pope could not issue dispensations to allow clergymen to marry or give dispensations from vows (nin en votos), and he claimed that the pope could not absolve people of their sins.242

Such disobedience finally provoked Barroso’s wrath. On August 2, 1389, he suspended Martinez from all of his duties, including hearing cases as an ecclesiastical judge and preaching, until the matter was resolved. “You were and are,” he charged, “contumacious, and rebellious, and suspected of heresy…every day…you affirm to be true what you first said, thus [you are] as [one] hardened in error.” He explained once again that his problem with Martinez was less with the substance of his claims—which could be discussed by the scholars—than with their impact on others. Such claims, when considered by the masses or even by less learned clergymen, could result in “great scandal” and a lack of respect for the pope. Barroso threatened Martinez with excommunication should he once again disobey.243

The fact that the Church intervened now, over ten years after Martinez had begun his anti-Jewish incitement, again suggests that what disturbed Barroso most was not necessarily the

241 Amador de los Ríos, II, 593.
242 Amador de los Ríos, II, 593.
243 Amador de los Ríos, II, 593-4.
Archdeacon’s preaching against the Jews. The rhetorical extremes that Martínez had reached were what demanded a response. Furthermore, the Church tended not to consider questioning the extent of papal authority as heretical per se, but making such claims in public, before an unlearned audience, was a serious issue. These claims may finally have provided the excuse the Church hierarchy had been searching for in order to take on Martínez. Most likely, though, the pressures of the period and the ascendance of anti-Judaism meant that the image of defending the Jews of Seville was not a beneficial proposition for the Church. Attacking Martínez’ questioning of papal authority in public, however, surely was.

Martínez’ preaching focused on the Jews, but was not limited to them. While his questioning of papal power may have begun with the issue of synagogues, his claims on clerical marriage, vows, and absolution had absolutely no relation to his favorite targets. These ideas too might have resonated with a popular, largely poor audience, which might have disliked the granting of special dispensations. Perhaps he simply took the opportunity, seeing the success and influence of anti-Jewish preaching, to promote his views on other topics. Regardless, it is misleading to characterize Martínez, as the great historian Henry Charles Lea did, as “the ideal example of the medieval zealot.” While primarily directed against the Jews, Martínez’ vision remained broader. At any rate, he for once may have recognized the need to restrain his rhetoric, and he fell silent. When Archbishop Barroso died the following July, however, Martínez could once again direct his attention towards the Jews and their synagogues.

He soon prevailed upon the Cabildo to restore him to his old position and name him as one of the provisores and administrators in charge of running the archdiocese after Barroso’s

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244 I am indebted to Father David Collins, S.J. for this point.
death. Now as powerful as ever, he received another stroke of good fortune when King Juan I died in a riding accident on October 9, 1390. The heir to the throne, Enrique III (1390-1406) was a boy of about eleven. The Regency Council established to govern Castile soon became notorious for its weakness, indecisiveness, and squabbling. With both Barroso and King Juan out of the way, a power vacuum existed in which Martínez could operate almost at will.

Martínez soon took an action that paralleled his orders from twelve years before. On December 8, 1390, he commanded the clergy of the town of Santa Olalla de la Sierra (now Santa Olalla del Cala) to demolish the synagogue there within three hours of receiving his order or face excommunication. The synagogue, as a place where “the enemies of God and of the Church, which call themselves Jews…do their idolatry,” ought to be destroyed. Martínez’ view could not have been more different than that of the Siete Partidas. The priest ordered their books and other possessions sent to him so he could deal with them according to law, while he commanded that the building’s tile, wood, and lamps be confiscated and given to the Church.

Martínez was careful to enumerate the penalties he would inflict on those who, mindful of the Archdeacon’s past run-ins with Archbishop Barroso and the monarchy or reluctant to take such a decisive step against the Jews, might disobey. Apart from excommunication, he threatened to come to Santa Olalla himself with force should any obstacle be imposed against his command. Finally, he directed that the interdict—the denial of Church services, such as the

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249 Amador de los Ríos, II, 612-3. The report of the clergy of Écija several years later, however (see below), suggests that Martínez may have ordered the synagogues destroyed within three “horas primas,” literally “three passages of the hour after sunrise.” Thus, the clergy may have had a deadline of three days, not three hours, to carry out these orders.
administration of the sacraments, to the residents of a community—be imposed against the town should it refuse.250

At the same time, just as in 1378, Martínez sent similar demands to other towns with small Jewish communities throughout the archdiocese. It remains uncertain to what degree the clergy fulfilled his commands. Apparently, in Alcalá de Guadaíra and the towns of Coria and Cantillana, crowds destroyed the synagogues, and the Archdeacon’s command to Écija contained the same provisions as the one sent to Santa Olalla.251 The Alcalá order called for the site of the synagogue there to be used as the workshop of a local church, so that, in Martínez’ phrase, the worship of Christ would replace that of the Antichrist.252 As elsewhere, the possessions of the synagogues should be given to the Church to do as it pleased with them, so long, he ordered, as “no Jew could ever have them.”253 Santa Olalla’s synagogue, it appears, survived until the general outbreak of violence in June of 1391: perhaps the clergy there called Martínez’ bluff.254 A similar refusal may have taken place in Écija. According to the testimony of the town’s clergy to the Archbishop of Toledo, Pedro Tenorio, in 1396, they “dared not to do it” in order to avoid the Regency’s displeasure and because of the pleas of the town’s authorities.255 The synagogue, they claimed, survived until the “little people” rose up against the Jews six months later.256 Martínez’ efforts therefore had only mixed success.

Still, in at least three towns of the archdiocese, the clerics and the crowds acted in accordance with his wishes, and the local authorities were either unable or unwilling to prevent the assaults. The violation of the traditional protection of synagogues meant that little could be

250 Amador de los Ríos, II, 613.
254 Netanyahu, Origins, 149.
255 Amador de los Ríos, II, 612-3.
256 Amador de los Ríos, II, 612-3.
done to prevent mobs from turning upon the Jews themselves. Despite the refusal to obey Martínez in some areas, anti-Judaism in the region of Seville was growing ever closer to erupting into full-fledged violence.

After the destruction of the synagogues, the leaders of the *aljama* turned to the Regency, headquartered in Madrid. The response was swift. Evidently, the gravity of the situation was apparent to more than just the Jewish leaders of Seville. On December 22, two weeks after Martínez’ orders were issued, the Regency sent out a letter bearing the names of Enrique III and several Regency officials, including Archbishop Tenorio of Toledo and Pedro López de Ayala, to the *Cabildo* and its Dean or head official, Pedro Manuel. The letter noted that Jewish petitioners from Seville had provided copies of Martínez’ orders to Écija and Alcalá de Guadaira. His actions had clearly gained substantial notoriety.

These Jews claimed that Martínez’ oppression had made conditions so difficult that they were ready to leave Castile altogether. They also pointed out that the *Cabildo* had restored a man to power whom Archbishop Barroso had suspected of heresy. The first argument was particularly effective. Regardless of whether the Jews of the Seville archdiocese were truly ready to emigrate, it was an idea that no royal official concerned about Castile’s finances could ignore.

The *Cabildo* met to formally read the Regency’s letter on January 10, 1391. Their orders were straightforward. Martínez’ actions were illegal, he must be removed from his post as *provisor*, and the *Cabildo* must restore the synagogues he had caused to be destroyed and compensate the affected Jews. The *Cabildo* shared responsibility because it had restored Martínez to his position after Barroso’s death, an act that left the regents “much amazed.” Furthermore, the letter again recognized the potential of Martínez’ actions to provoke anti-

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Jewish violence. If the Cabildo failed to act as demanded and allowed Martínez to remain a provisor, the regents would compensate Jews affected by any resulting attacks on them or their synagogues by taking funds from the Cabildo and the goods of its members. In addition, the Regency threatened to impose a fine of 1,000 doblas on each Cabildo member, with the funds given to the royal chamber. Meanwhile, yet another letter was sent to Martínez giving him specific instructions. As the letter implicitly acknowledged, though, the Regency acted out of a position of weakness. It could not prevent violence against the Jews, but only threaten to punish it after the fact. As the carrying-out of Martínez’ order to destroy the synagogues had shown, popular tensions against the Jews were rising ever higher.258

Nevertheless, when the Cabildo met again on January 15, they had little choice but to follow the Regency’s demands. With only one member dissenting, the chapter stripped Martínez of his status as provisor, ordered him to refrain from saying anything against the Jews or their places of worship in his sermons that could cause a disturbance, and gave him a year to rebuild the synagogues he had caused to be destroyed, all under threat of excommunication.259 The level of agreement among the Cabildo members with Martinez’ anti-synagogue stance is unclear. Perhaps they had been merely cowed by Martínez’ support among the masses, and thus seized the opportunity that the royal letter provided to restrain him.260 On the other hand, given their support for restoring him as provisor months earlier, perhaps they acted now from fear of punishment.

Whatever the Cabildo’s motivations, Martinez’ response to their decision reflected his confidence of popular backing. He began by reiterating an argument often advanced by leaders of the medieval Church: that God had granted humankind two swords, one for secular rulers to

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260 Netanyahu, Origins, 140-1.
protect and punish the laity as needed, and one for the Church to do the same with the clergy. These jurisdictions were entirely separate, and as a member of the clergy, no secular authority, not even the King of Castile, could judge him. Furthermore, neither the Dean and Cabildo nor anyone could rightfully take his position away or order him to restore the synagogues, as he had committed nothing wrong in attacking “the synagogues of Satan, in which they especially curse Jesus Christ three times a day and [also] the King and all the Christian people.” The very act of Jewish prayer was now, in Martínez’ eyes, an assault on Christianity and Christian lands. His attacks on the Jews, then, were the execution of his Christian duty.\footnote{Lea, “Acta,” 224. The “two swords” or “two powers” doctrine was expressed as early as the fifth century under Pope Gelasius I. Pope Boniface VIII perhaps best expressed it in his bull \textit{Unam Sanctam} (1302), which asserted papal supremacy over both spiritual and temporal realms. Among the scriptural justifications for this view was Luke 22, in which Jesus leaves two swords to the Apostles. “Synagogues of Satan” is a reference to the Book of Revelation 2:9 and 3:9.}

Finally, just as before, he challenged the legal basis for the very existence of synagogues. Every synagogue in Castile, he alleged once again, was built after canon law had dictated that no new synagogue should be constructed in a Christian land. He appealed to Christ and the Church to impose penitence on all those who had violated the law by ruling against him, except for the young King, who lacked knowledge and should therefore be granted mercy. He claimed that Archbishop Barroso had ordered his subordinates to do as they wished with the synagogues, as they had been built illegally, and Martínez had even destroyed two while the Archbishop was still alive.\footnote{Lea, “Acta,” 224-5.}

In sum, Martínez refused to yield despite the Cabildo’s sanctions and proceeded with his anti-Jewish campaign. His efforts were remarkable for several reasons. He acted in defiance of centuries of Church and state policy, refused to accept their orders, and still managed to avoid severe punishment. Archbishop Barroso, the city authorities, and King Juan were either
unwilling or unable to impose a lasting penalty upon him. Martínez operated in the Mendicant tradition and, particularly in his theological and economic denunciations of the Jews of Seville, effectively turned the call to convert the Jews by persuasion into one of violence. In the months to come, his followers demanded a choice from the Jews they confronted: conversion or death.

Martínez was pivotal in provoking the riots because he exploited the dichotomy between the views of the masses and the lofty justifications of the Church and the monarchy for the protection of the Jews. To the Christian populace of Seville in 1391, the logic of Augustine and Gregory made little sense. Martinez was the figure that built on the chain of disasters the masses had suffered and provided them with an outlet: robbery and violence against the Jews. He also recognized the fundamental ambiguity towards the Jews of the Church and of the monarchy. As he had tried to convince the populace as early as 1383, they did not need to fear royal justice; by 1391, the time was finally ripe. As the events of the following months showed, Martinez had made a shrewd reading of the political situation. He knew he could again rely on popular support. Amidst the chaos that engulfed Seville and all of Castile during the interregnum, it was all that he needed.
VI

“The Table of Our Disaster”

Unsurprisingly, the first act of violence came on a Christian holiday. On Ash Wednesday—March 15, 1391—several loyalists of Ferrán Martínez engaged in a confrontation with Sevillian Jews. This exchange, perhaps started by harassment of the Jews by Martínez’ followers, devolved into a near-riot. The officials responsible for keeping order in the city, Juan Alonso Guzmán, the powerful Count of Niebla, and Alvar Pérez de Guzmán, Seville’s alguacil mayor (a post roughly equivalent to the chief of police), arrived on the scene, accompanied by the alcaldes mayores (city governors). They ordered two Christians suspected of involvement in the disturbance to be publicly flogged, but the sentence only drove the populace of Seville into a rage. Some began to attack and rob Jews, while others seized Alvar Pérez and threatened to kill him. Juan Alonso Guzmán, other nobles, and the city authorities finally managed to restrain the rioters, but by the end of the incident, a number of Jews had been assaulted and killed.\footnote{For a number of accounts of this incident—the full details of which remain somewhat unclear—see Diego Ortiz de Zuñiga, \textit{Anales eclesiásticos y seculares de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Sevilla [Ecclesiastical and Secular Annals of the Very Noble and Loyal City of Seville]}, II, (Seville: Guadalquivir, 1988), 237; Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho, “Antisemitismo sevillano en la Baja Edad Media: El pogrom de 1391 y sus consecuencias [Sevillian Anti-Semitism in the Late Middle Ages: The Pogrom of 1391 and its Consequences],” 57-75, in \textit{Actas del III coloquio de historia medieval andaluza: Grupos no privilegiados [Acts of the Third Colloquium of Medieval Andalusian History: Non-Privileged Groups]}, (Jaén, Spain: Diputación Provincial de Jaén, 1984), 62; Benzion Netanyahu, \textit{The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain}, 2nd ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 143; and Mario Méndez Bejarano, \textit{Historia de la Judería de Sevilla [History of the Jewry of Seville]}, trans. Simon Hassan Benasayag and Adela Benelbas Benasayag (Seville: Castillejo, 1993), 90.}

While the judería was spared an all-out attack, anti-Jewish violence in Seville had again become a reality. The Christian masses of the city were now so intent on their anti-Jewish
course that they were willing to revolt against the authorities.\textsuperscript{264} Even attempts to punish Christians for provocations against Jews had only led to a riot and generated fears of even greater disturbances.\textsuperscript{265} A spirit of impunity prevailed. By the spring of 1391, an all-out attack on the juderia, fueled by the increasingly unrestrained power of Ferrán Martínez, was little more than a matter of time.

The Regency replaced the now-unpopular Alvar Pérez as alguacil mayor with Pedro Ponce de León, the Lord of Marchena. Perhaps it hoped this decision could calm the masses. Ponce de León, however, was no more able to keep the peace, and soon feuded openly with his fellow noble Juan Alonso Guzmán.\textsuperscript{266} The conflicts among the nobility and within the Regency leadership itself meant that little could be done to help the Jews when the onslaught began.

On June 4, June 5, or June 6, 1391—depending on the source—the attack came. The exact parameters of the assault remain unknown, but a letter written months later to the Jewish community of Avignon by the Aragonese rabbi Hasdai Crescas gives a general picture:

I will therefore set before you only in brief detail the table of our disaster set with poisonous plant and wormwood, giving you a bare recital of the facts so that you may satiate yourselves on the bitterness of our wormwood and drink from the wine of our grief…

On the day of the New Moon of the fateful month Tammuz in the year 5151 [June 1391] the Lord bent the bow of the enemies against the populous community of Seville where there were between 6,000-7,000 heads of families, and they destroyed their gates by fire and killed in that very place a great number of the people; the majority, however, changed their faith. Many of them, children as well as women, were sold to the Muslims, so that the streets occupied by Jews have become empty. Many of them,

\textsuperscript{264} For the larger question of whether the events of 1391 can be considered as part of a revolt of the lower classes, see Philippe Wolff, “The 1391 Pogrom in Spain: Social Crisis or Not?” Past & Present 50 (1971): 4-18.
\textsuperscript{265} Ortíz de Zuñiga, 237.
\textsuperscript{266} Netanyahu, Origins, 144.
sanctifying the Holy Name, endured death, but many also broke
the holy Covenant.\textsuperscript{267}

Crescas’ letter indicated several important details of the Seville attack. First, regardless
of the actual size of the \textit{aljama} in 1391 (as will be discussed later, the figure of 6,000-7,000
heads of families is almost certainly an exaggeration), Iberian Jews considered Seville to be a
large community. His account made clear the choices that the Jews of Seville and of many other
Castilian and Aragonese cities faced during that fateful year. Many residents of the \textit{judería} were
killed by the mob for refusing to convert, “sanctifying the Holy Name,” or \textit{Kiddush ha-Shem}.\textsuperscript{268}
The majority, however, chose not to accept death. Some converted voluntarily, while others
were brought to the baptismal font by force. Still others, not mentioned by Crescas, managed to
flee into exile in Portugal, North Africa, or Granada. The assault in Seville was the first attack
and set the pattern for the disturbances to follow. Jewish community after Jewish community in
Castile and Aragon throughout the summer of 1391 faced the same stark fate.

Similar riots spread first across Andalusia with remarkable speed. Everywhere, events
followed the same pattern: news of a previous attack arrived in a town, a Christian mob
gathered, and an assault began on that town’s Jewish community. Attacks on the Jewish
neighborhoods in the towns of Santa Olalla, Écija, Carmona, Cazalla, and Fregenal soon

\textsuperscript{267} Letter of Rabbi Hasdai Crescas in Franz Kobler, ed., \textit{A Treasury of Jewish Letters: Letters from the
Famous and the Humble}, vol. 1, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953),
272-5. Crescas was one of the leading Jews of Aragon and led efforts to rebuild after the catastrophe.
Yitzhak Baer translated part of this passage as “God bent His bow like an enemy,” a more likely
translation since it more directly evokes Lamentations 2:4. See Baer, \textit{A History of the Jews in Christian

\textsuperscript{268} The subject of the Jews who were killed by the mob, or may have killed themselves rather than be
converted, will be further discussed later in this chapter. The concept of \textit{Kiddush ha-Shem} permits Jews
to become martyrs under certain conditions, such as when facing conversion, rather than violate God’s
law. This detail further indicates that the rioters offered Jews a choice between conversion to Christianity
or death.
followed the riot in Seville. In Carmona, the city leaders later recounted, a mob of common or “worldly people” (*mundanales*), upon hearing the news of the Seville attack, “went to the said synagogue of this village,” tearing off its roof and “part of the walls.” “[The deed] weighed much on us and we did much…that they would not destroy it, and were not able [to] do more because of the great riot of the said people;” they claimed. Only a few days after the massacre in Seville, the *aljama* of Córdoba also came under assault. There as in Seville, the rioters were mainly members of the lower classes, but some of the richer burghers and even clergymen may have joined in the destruction. In Córdoba, too, wrote Crescas, “many changed their faith, and the community became desolate.” Violence then spread throughout Andalusia, encompassing the towns of Andújar, Jaén, Úbeda, and Baeza, among others.

Within ten days of the attack in Seville, the news reached the Regency Council, gathered in the central city of Segovia. It swiftly dispatched a letter in the King’s name, addressed to Burgos and other cities of Castile not yet affected by the riots:

Understand that it has become known how, in the last few days, in the most noble cities of Seville and Córdoba, through inducements and persuasion exercised by the archdeacon of Écija, some of the lesser people of the said cities, behaving like troublemakers and men of little understanding, without thought for our interests…[and not] fearing God or my justice, or considering the situation I am in or my age, attacked the Jews living in the *aljamas* of the said towns, killed some of them, robbed others and forced others to become Christians. As a result, the Jews who used to live

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269 Netanyahu, *Origins*, 149.
274 Kobler, I, 273.
in these communities have been driven out, about which I am very angry, because this does me great disservice... [The instigators] should be punished so that no one [else] may have such wicked and ugly temerity as to go out against these Jews in such a wicked way, knowing that [the Jews] were always guarded and defended by the kings, my ancestors, and the Church itself, according to its law, ordered them to be guarded and defended... I order you, each and every one, to remedy this matter at once, and to have it publicly announced... that nobody at all should dare to act or move against Jews in general or against any one of them, to do them any annoyance or damage or injustice. 

This letter was noteworthy in several respects. First, it reiterated Augustine and Gregory’s justifications for the protection of Jews. Even with all the gains made by the forces of anti-Judaism in fourteenth-century Castile, the monarchy still maintained the doctrine of Jewish witness. Second, it directly tied the violence to the influence of Ferrán Martínez. Third, it identified the rioters as members of the masses and acknowledged that Enrique III’s minority was a reason for the assaults. With the monarchy weak, those who committed violent acts against Jews could act with impunity.

The spread of the riots bore out this fact. From Andalusia, they spread north and east, encompassing the cities of Ciudad Real, Cuenca, Huete, Escalona, and Madrid, among others. The juderías were robbed, and the attackers again offered the Jews the choice of conversion or death. The aljama members who did escape either found sites of temporary refuge or fled Castile altogether. The aljama of Toledo, the leading Jewish center of Iberia, also suffered an attack. “[In] the temple of the Lord the priests and the learned were murdered. In that very place the Rabbis... together with their children and pupils, publicly sanctified the Holy Name. However, many who had not the courage to save their souls changed their faith here, too,”

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lamented Crescas.\textsuperscript{276} The riots then spread farther north through Castile and east into the Crown of Aragon. In Castile, their effects began to lessen somewhat. The Jewish communities of the cities of Burgos and Soria suffered less destruction than the \textit{alfamas} to the south, but the \textit{judería} of Logroño, near one of the main theaters of the war between Pedro I and Enrique II, received major damage.\textsuperscript{277} In general, however, the farther a Castilian Jewish community was from Seville, the lesser the violence.

Such a pattern did not apply for the major Jewish communities of Aragon. The Aragonese monarch, Juan I (1387-96), could protect few Jewish communities apart from that of Zaragoza, where he was encamped. On July 9, 1391, a mob devastated the \textit{aljama} of Valencia, leaving perhaps hundreds dead. The Valencia attack was particularly notable for several reasons. Sources suggest that some Castilians were involved in the assault, which began to shouts of “The Archdeacon is coming! The Jews must choose between baptism and death!”\textsuperscript{278} Martínez had become a sort of Iberian anti-Jewish folk hero. Nobles and even civic leaders were involved in this attack.\textsuperscript{279} Rumors of miracles, including stories of baptismal fonts that miraculously refilled in order to handle more Jewish converts, circulated in the city.\textsuperscript{280} Finally, the sermons of the Dominican preacher Saint Vicente Ferrer (1350-1419) may have played a role in fomenting a climate of violence. While Ferrer, following Church policy, opposed riots and forced conversion, his passionate sermons may have contributed to attacks against Jews.\textsuperscript{281} In the years

\textsuperscript{276} Kobler, I, 273.
\textsuperscript{277} Mitre Fernández, 21.
\textsuperscript{278} Baer, \textit{History}, II, 100.
\textsuperscript{279} Baer, \textit{History}, II, 101.
\textsuperscript{281} Meyerson, 181.
following 1391, he came to play a significant role in efforts to convert the remnant of Aragonese and Castilian Jewry.

After the Valencia attack, riots broke out against the Jewish communities of the Balearic Islands and of the cities of Gerona and Barcelona, among many others. A group of Castilians seems to have participated in the Barcelona attack. This assault, in which Crescas’ own son was among the victims, was particularly brutal and involved attacks by the lower classes against buildings associated with the aristocracy. “[Because] of our many sins,” Crescas wrote, “there is none left in Barcelona today who still bears the name of Jew.”

Towards the end of 1391, the riots finally petered out in both Castile and Aragon. In terms of the toll inflicted and the damage done, they constituted perhaps the biggest blow suffered by European Jews during the Middle Ages. While numbers are hard to verify, certain facts are clear. Dozens of juderias were sacked and their inhabitants deprived of their possessions. Thousands of Jews were dead, while thousands more converted to Christianity, either voluntarily or by force. They swelled the numbers of the already existing group of pre-1391 converts from Judaism, the conversos. Others fled into exile: 1391, to a large degree, began the Jewish exodus from Iberia. Many of the communities that remained were left with only a remnant of their former population, as in Seville; others, as in Barcelona, effectively ceased to exist. Numerous Jews also migrated into the countryside to escape the violence of the cities, shifting weight towards smaller, more rural aljamas. Although Jews could live openly in

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282 Baer, History, II, 104.
283 Baer, History, II, 104-5. For further discussion of the Barcelona riot, see Wolff, 10-18.
284 Kobler, I, 274.
286 Wolff, 6. He estimates that as many as 71 aljamas existed in Castile in 1391, from larger communities such as Toledo, Burgos, and Seville to others composed of only a few families.
Iberia for another century, and with time some of the *aljamas* flourished once again, Iberian Jewry never regained the heights of wealth, power and influence it had attained prior to 1391.

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Seville both marked the origin of the massacres and reflected some of their greatest effects on the Jews of Castile and Aragon. On a demographic level, its *judería* suffered grave losses. The Jewish community in the city after 1391 may have shrunk to one-sixth of its former size.\(^{287}\) At the time of the riots, the Jewish population numbered probably 450 or 500 families, perhaps two thousand people, out of a total Sevillian population of fifteen thousand or more.\(^{288}\) Crescas’ figure of six thousand or more heads of families might have attempted to include the Jews of the surrounding region, but probably was an exaggeration, not unusual in this period’s sources on population data.\(^{289}\) At any rate, Jews composed a substantial percentage of Seville’s total population—more than ten percent was a high proportion for any Castilian city—before the riots. This fact in particular may explain the virulence and impact of Ferrán Martínez’ message.

By the fifteenth century, as few as sixty Jewish families, or perhaps three hundred Jews, may have remained in the city.\(^{290}\) The estimate that perhaps seventy or eighty families managed to flee to Portugal or Granada suggests that most of the city’s Jews were either converted or

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\(^{287}\) Montes Romero-Camacho, “Antisemitismo sevillano,” 73. She also suggests this point in her essay “El antijudáismo o antisemitismo sevillano hacia la minoría hebreo [Sevillian Anti-Judaism or Anti-Semitism Towards the Hebrew Minority],” 73-157, in Segundos encuentros judaiicos de Tudela: los caminos del exilio [Second Judaic Meetings of Tudela: The Paths of Exile], (Tudela, Spain: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996), 124.


\(^{289}\) Benzion Netanyahu defends the accuracy of Crescas’ numbers in *The Marranos of Spain*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1973), 241, 257-9. He argues that as many as 25,000 Sevillian Jews alone converted in 1391. Given the studies of Ladero Quesada based on the census of the city of 1384 and the population reductions caused by the plague and its resurgence in Andalusia in 1383, however, this figure appears very unlikely.

\(^{290}\) Ladero Quesada, 124-5.
killed. Crescas’ claim that the majority of Sevillian Jews did convert—as Jews in many other localities did in 1391—seems plausible. The traditional figure of 4,000 Jews murdered in Seville given by historians such as Diego Ortíz de Zuñiga, on the other hand, is unlikely. While the exact numbers will never be known, hundreds of Sevillian Jews lost their lives and hundreds more, perhaps more than a thousand, converted to Christianity.

The judería itself was devastated and lost its identity as a distinctively Jewish neighborhood. Overnight, the majority or near majority of its residents had become Christian. The most symbolic feature of the old Jewish quarter’s transformation, and the one dearest to the heart of Ferrán Martínez, was the destruction or conversion of its synagogues. It is unclear if twenty-three synagogues, as Martínez had claimed, actually existed in the judería prior to 1391. The fates of two of them, which probably occupied the sites of two of the mosques that Alfonso X had granted the aljama in 1252, are known. One synagogue was consecrated as the church of Santa Cruz, while another became Santa María de las Nieves, better known as Santa María la Blanca. On August 2, 1391, the concejo (municipal council) of Seville formally granted the two churches the possessions they had maintained as synagogues, from stores to baths to the house of a former cantor. The concejo also instructed two officials, including a converso who had turned Christian before the riots, to organize the new parish system around these new churches. A third synagogue, on the site of what is today the Church of San Bartolomé, may also have become a church at this time, although some sources suggest it may have remained a

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291 Ladero Quesada, 124-5.
292 Ortiz de Zuñiga, 237. He observed that the figure of 4,000 dead seemed high, but that the records he found all reported it.
293 Baer, Die Juden, §249, 234.
synagogue until the expulsion of the Jews from Andalusia in 1483-84.295 At any rate, both the demographic and religious dynamics of the neighborhood had forever changed.

Christians from elsewhere in the city began to move in to the area, which became split into the new *collaciones* or neighborhoods of Santa Cruz, San Bartolomé, and Santa María la Blanca. The authorities attached a small fourth section, El Barrio Nuevo (literally “the New Neighborhood”), to the neighborhood of the Cathedral.296 A lawsuit over properties in the former *judería* in 1396 revealed the difficulties endured by Jews and *conversos* in this new environment. In July of 1392, Enrique III granted control over the goods of Jews in locations such as Seville who had fled the city and of *conversos* who had emigrated in order to become Jewish once again to his Christian courtier Ruy López Dávalos.297 This grant reflected an important consequence of the riots: the nobility, especially while the King continued to be a minor, took advantage of the opportunity to acquire property in former *juderías*. The dispute—between Dávalos and a city official and resident of San Bartolomé named Alfonso Fernández over the ownership of some houses that had belonged to *conversos* who had fled—stemmed from several effects of 1391. Many Jews and *conversos*, all their goods robbed and left with little more than their houses, had been forced to sell them in order to survive.298 The lawsuit also referred to several royal orders. Enrique III demanded that *conversos* not be impeded from selling their houses and non-mobile goods out of economic necessity, but two years later

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commanded that conversos who did so must remain in Castile for the next six years. The practice of conversos selling their goods and then fleeing the kingdom in order to re-embrace Judaism was clearly a problem.

In 1396, Enrique granted another donation involving the former judería. Two nobles and royal officials, Diego López de Estúñiga and Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, received the properties of the aljama’s communal buildings, as well as of the synagogues inside the judería that had not become churches. Once again, the nobility—and here, nobles particularly close to the young King—benefited. Even though a small Jewish community still lived in the neighborhood, the goods were still appropriated. It was another sign that the judería had become another Christian neighborhood of Seville.

The city itself was less lucky than the nobles with regard to the assault. After reaching his majority, Enrique III conducted his first visit to the region in 1395 and 1396. He ordered Archbishop Tenorio of Toledo to conduct inquiries into the events of 1391 and imposed the hefty fine of 135,500 doblas on the city and its populace as punishment for the damage done to his possessions. He even threw Ferrán Martínez into prison in order to show that “anyone with the appearance of piety understands not to stir up the people.” These measures, however, were fleeting. Martínez was released within a few months, and the fine, never fully paid, was lifted a decade later at the instigation of one of the conversos charged with collecting it, Nicolás Martínez de Medina. The example of Martínez de Medina pointed to another important aspect of post-riot Seville and Castile: conversos remained in many of the jobs they had held as Jews,

300 Collantes de Terán Sánchez, “La judería,” 129.
301 Francisco Collantes de Terán y Delorme, Inventario de los papeles del Mayordomazgo del siglo XIV [Inventory of the Papers of Officialdom of the Fourteenth Century], (Seville: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, Delegación de Cultura, Sección de Publicaciones, 1968), 80.
302 Cited in Ortiz de Zúñiga, 250.
from tax collection to craft production. Wealthy conversos, such as Samuel Abravanel and Martínez de Medina, served in financial and administrative posts. Even leading Jews continued to serve in positions such as royal doctors and tax collectors. It is no small irony that some Jews or conversos continued to hold the same sort of economic positions as their ancestors, the very posts that had generated such resentment among the burghers and the masses.

Sources suggest that economic motives were in fact among the crucial factors behind the assaults of 1391. A certain kind of religious fervor, fueled by Martínez’ words and the choice that the rioters offered Jews—conversion or death—was evident. On many levels, however, economic considerations took precedence. Pedro López de Ayala described the attacks as follows:

The people were very aroused and they had fear of nobody, and the greed from robbing the Jews was growing every day. And that Archdeacon of Écija was the cause of this uprising against the Jews of Castile; and the aljamas of the Jews of Seville, and Córdoba, and Burgos, and Toledo, and Logroño and many others of the kingdom were lost through this uprising in this time; and in Aragon, the [aljamas] of Barcelona and Valencia, and many others [were attacked]; and those who escaped remained very poor, giving very great gifts to the lords to be kept from such great tribulation.

At least from his vantage point as Enrique III’s official chronicler and one of his ministers, López de Ayala viewed the attacks as part of a popular desire to rob the Jewish quarters and seize their possessions. In another account of the riots, he added:

[The King] heard new [stories of] how the people of the city of Seville had robbed the juderia, and that there most Jews were turned Christians, and many of them were dead. And that later [when] they knew of this news in Córdoba, and in Toledo, they did the same, and so in many other places of the Kingdom...And all

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304 Montes Romero-Camacho, “El antijudaismo,” 123.
305 Mitre Fernández, 63-8.
306 Pedro López de Ayala, Crónicas [Chronicles], ed. José Luis Martín (Barcelona: Planeta, 1991), 713.
this was desire to rob, as it seemed, more than devotion…And the beginning of all this deed and damage to the Jews came through the preaching and inducement that the Archdeacon of Écija, who was in Seville, did.  

Of course, López de Ayala reflected the monarchy’s official version of events, but his point about the rioters acting more from greed than from religious devotion deserves particular attention. It suggests that the rioters were motivated in good part by the economic resentments that Martínez employed in his trial testimony and must have played upon in his sermons. The image of the Jew as a rich tax collector, as a robber, and as a usurer joined with deep-rooted anti-Jewish sentiment based on religion. With royal and ecclesiastical authority weak, 1391 provided the perfect opportunity for many Christians to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the Jews. It was also no accident that during the riots, as in other episodes of anti-Jewish violence throughout the Middle Ages, the attackers took care to destroy records of debts owed to Jews. The combination of anti-Judaism based on theology with resentment based on economics was one that Martínez had mastered.

The attack in Seville also suggested that the riots were somewhat like Martínez himself: largely anti-Jewish, but ready to seize opportunities to find other targets. For instance, apart from the Jews, the crowds also beat and robbed Genoese merchants. Martínez may even have been involved in encouraging this attack. In several Castilian and Aragonese cities, Muslim neighborhoods were assaulted. López de Ayala observed, however, that the mobs largely held back because “they did not dare, for how much they feared that Christians who were captives in

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308 Netanyahu points to these incidents during the attack in Barcelona in particular in his Origins, 157. Such behavior took place throughout Castile and Aragon in 1391.
309 Mitre Fernández, 25.
310 Mitre Fernández, 25. He notes that Martínez is named in a 1383 document as the executor of the will of a female relative (perhaps the mother) of the alleged instigator of the disturbance against the Genoese. See also Montes Romero-Camacho, “El antijudaísmo,” 118-19.
Granada or beyond the sea [i.e. in Muslim lands or on ships] would be dead [as a result].”\textsuperscript{311} The vulnerable Jews could be attacked with impunity, but attacking Muslims could bring about retaliation. Finally, in the cities of Córdoba and Jerez in Andalusia and especially in Barcelona, crowds also turned against the nobles, perhaps because both the nobility and the monarchy were seen as protectors of Jews.\textsuperscript{312} To a certain extent, the attacks of 1391 must be seen as a kind of lower-class uprising, perhaps an echo of other popular movements in Italy, England and France during the 1370s and 1380s.\textsuperscript{313} While the general target remained Jews, in the chaos of the assaults other groups associated with wealth or social difference could also find themselves as targets.

The role of Ferrán Martínez in the events of 1391 beyond the area of Seville remains a matter of dispute. The shouts of “the Archdeacon is coming!” in Valencia suggest that Martínez gained a measure of renown across Castile and Aragon. Accounts of the Valencia and Barcelona riots suggest that bands of Castilians, perhaps sailors, helped instigate the assaults there.\textsuperscript{314} In May of 1392, King Juan I of Aragon responded to reports that a cleric, Martínez’ nephew, had been arrested in Zaragoza for preaching against the Jews. The King described both Martínez, “he who they say was the occasion of the destruction of the \textit{aljamas} of the Kingdom of Castile,” and his nephew as “such men [whom] they [the authorities] ought not to let live.” He left the city’s authorities with instructions should the Archdeacon himself arrive. “Send us him prisoner, or let him be thrown publicly into the river [Ebro],” the King ordered.\textsuperscript{315} The fate of the Archdeacon’s nephew is unknown, but this episode suggests that Martínez had allies across

\begin{itemize}
\item[311] López de Ayala, \textit{Crónicas}, 739.
\item[312] Mitre Fernández, 26.
\item[313] Wolff, 4.
\item[315] Baer, \textit{Die Juden}, vol. 1, \textit{Aragonien und Navarra [Aragon and Navarre]}, §446, 699-701. All cited material in this paragraph comes from this text.
\end{itemize}
Castile and Aragon and that King Juan was concerned about the possibility of a further outbreak of violence.

Based on these sources, Benzion Netanyahu has suggested that the hand of Martínez lay behind virtually all of the events of 1391, and that the riots arose as part of a careful plan.\textsuperscript{316} This idea is possible but unlikely. Martínez certainly played some role in the broader anti-Jewish current and may have had sympathizers in many locales, but organizing attacks across such a wide swathe of Iberia, from Seville to Barcelona, was a Herculean task. More likely, by the spring of 1391, anti-Jewish feelings in Castile and Aragon had simply reached a boiling point. The pressures of the past—the history of Christian anti-Judaism, the influences of the papacy and of the Cortes, the anti-Jewish propaganda of the civil war, the impact of the plague and of economic hardships and resentments—had prepared the groundwork for widespread violence. In many areas, preachers such as Vicente Ferrer or other figures from the Mendicant tradition, with their sermonizing both to and against the Jews, also laid the foundations for robbery and massacre. It took an instigator in one area to precipitate the explosion, to prove, as Martínez had attempted to do for years, that the Christian masses did not need to fear the authorities’ punishment. Once Martínez provided the spark and proved that such violence could succeed, the riots largely arose depending on local circumstances.

The geographic spread of the riots also points to the importance of local conditions. The worst incidents occurred in Andalusia—particularly in the larger \textit{aljamas} of cities like Seville and Córdoba—and in areas of Aragon, including Valencia and Barcelona. While many \textit{juderias} of both Castile and Aragon suffered from the wrath of the mobs, some saw less violence than others. The \textit{aljama} of Burgos, one of the largest Jewish communities of Iberia, was robbed, but only a few Jews may have been killed there, perhaps because it was far to the north of Andalusia.

Other zones, such as Murcia in the southeast of the peninsula and Asturias and Galicia in the extreme north and west of Castile, witnessed little or no violence, as did Portugal and Navarre. Even in central Castile, there were cities such as Ávila that avoided uprisings, while several towns controlled by the noble Mendoza family also did not witness violence.

These trends suggest several conclusions. They indicate once again the link between the presence of authority, whether royal or noble, and the protection of the Jews. The Jewish communities in the city of Segovia, where Enrique III and the Regency had established themselves when the riots broke out, and in the areas under the Mendozas’ control (where by royal grant, the Jews were the family’s property) remained largely safe. While anti-Jewish tensions had risen throughout Iberia, perhaps it was the particular conditions of localities such as Seville—especially the effects of Martínez’ years of anti-Jewish campaigning in that city—that explained the severity of the violence. The distribution of areas of peace amidst the broader swathe of the violence also suggests that the riots were somewhat spontaneous and not centrally planned. In a time of chaos and popular fervor, there were still zones where the local environment or other factors helped to keep the peace.

The single greatest legacy of the riots was the wave of conversions. This development was shocking, especially to those Jews who maintained their faith. In earlier cases of massive anti-Jewish attacks in the Middle Ages, particularly in the Rhineland during the First Crusade and in the areas attacked during the Black Death, most Jews had preferred the route of Kiddush ha-Shem, committing suicide or simply accepting death at the hands of the mob rather than apostatizing. In 1391, however, thousands of Jews chose conversion, some even before the

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318 Mitre Fernández, 21.
319 Mitre Fernández, 28.
outbreak of the riots. Among the *conversos* were Jewish communal leaders and rabbis, including Solomon ha-Levi, the chief rabbi of Burgos. Ha-Levi, who took the Christian name of Pablo de Santa María (he also became known as Paul of Burgos), became the bishop of Burgos and followed in the footsteps of Cristiani and Abner in seeking to convert his former coreligionists. In the years following 1391, he worked in conjunction with Vicente Ferrer and Pedro de Luna, now Pope Benedict XIII in Avignon, on efforts to pass ever more restrictive anti-Jewish legislation in both Castile and Aragon. These efforts culminated with another forced debate between Judaism and Christianity, the Disputation of Tortosa of 1413-14, and several years of mass conversions, this time largely voluntary. While conversionist gains began to ebb after those years and quiet returned for a time to Christian-Jewish relations on the Peninsula, it was the events of 1391 that opened the door to future disaster.

Modern historians have debated the factors behind the conversions. In his classic *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, for instance, Yitzhak Baer attributed them to the “moral deterioration” of the *aljamas* and their leaders. In his view, the influences of rationalism and skepticism—as witnessed by the debates over Maimonides’ works that had begun in the thirteenth century—and their impact on Jewish leaders such as Solomon ha-Levi led to an erosion of faith. The behavior of some leading Jews, such as the conspiracy against Joseph Pichon, may also have caused disillusionment. Other theories, however, seem more likely. For instance, some Jews interpreted the writings of Maimonides, who had escaped the persecutions of the Almohads and served as one of the great rabbinic authorities of medieval Jewry, as

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320 Samuel Abravanel of Seville, who converted by the late 1380s, may provide an example. The activities of Ferrán Martínez and the potential for violence may have influenced his decision. Solomon ha-Levi may also have converted prior to the riots, although the evidence is uncertain. At any rate, the climate was sufficiently hostile in the months leading up to the attacks to at least spur some conversions, but the majority occurred during the riots themselves.

321 Baer, *History*, II, 98; 117.
allowing for conversion in times of necessity, so long as the convert continued to practice Judaism in secret. By 1391, the Jews of Iberia had faced well over a century of ever-increasing pressures from the Mendicants and other preachers, the cities, and the forces of integration that accompanied living in an overwhelmingly Christian society. With the onset of the riots, the weight of these pressures became intolerable. Facing circumstances of life and death, it is not surprising that many Jews, from the poor to the elite, chose baptism.

After the riots ended, many conversos who had elected Christianity under threat of force (known in Hebrew as anusim) sought to return to Judaism. Emigration to areas where they could live openly as Jews—most frequently, Portugal, Granada, Provence, North Africa, and in a few cases as far as Italy or the lands of the Ottoman Empire—provided one option. For instance, relatives of Samuel Abravanel who refused to join him in the Christian ranks fled to Portugal. Nevertheless, emigration as a converso was risky and both the Castilian and Aragonese monarchies, seeking to staunch any flow of their subjects out of their kingdoms, tried to prevent it. In these circumstances, the phenomenon of “crypto-Judaism” emerged. While the anusim, as baptized Christians, could not practice Judaism openly in most cases, many did so in secret. Many other anusim did in fact become practicing Christians.

The Christian and Jewish responses to this phenomenon were complex. On one hand, the Church hierarchy and the papacy viewed baptized Jews as Christians, with all the rights that Christians enjoyed. Following in the tradition of Innocent III, they recognized the forced conversions as valid, and so long as the conversos did not lapse into heresy by reverting to Judaism, they were equal to all other Christians. Nevertheless, many Iberian Christians and

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322 Netanyahu, Origins, 163.
lower-ranking clergy continued to view all *conversos* as Jews. In some ways, this attitude, often concentrated among the lower classes, was a continuation of the resentments that Ferrán Martínez and other preachers of the era had so skillfully exploited. Among Jews, efforts to bring *conversos* back into the fold were matched by confusion and anger over the decision to convert. One of Paul of Burgos’ former students, Joshua ha-Lorki, wrote him an open letter seeking to understand his decision. Ha-Lorki’s conclusion—that Paul had encountered some kind of revelation—presaged his own eventual conversion to Christianity in 1412. 325 Taking the name of Gerónimo de Santa Fe, he led efforts to convert the Jews at the Disputation of Tortosa.

On the other hand, the attitude of Profiat Duran, a Catalan Jew who converted in 1391 and then fled to Provence in order to return to Judaism, reflected the anger felt by many Jews who had survived the catastrophe. In his letter-polemic “Be Not Like Unto Thy Fathers,” he advised a convert and former friend in words dripping with scorn, “[Do] not call thyself any longer after the honored name of thy wise father...For if he were alive he would say to-day: ‘Better no son than such a son!’”325 The divisions within Jewish and Christian communities caused by the riot of 1391 and the conversions continued for generations, even after the expulsions of the Jews from Iberia. The sixteenth century, for instance, saw the adoption of the law codes of *limpieza de sangre*, or blood purity. “New Christians” of Jewish or Muslim ancestry were restricted socially and banned from many professions. These regulations were another distant result of the assaults of 1391.

The societal confusion that resulted from the riots and the suspicions that *conversos* engendered among both Christians and Jews resulted in the explosion, particularly in the second

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half of the fifteenth century and beyond, of what became known as “the \textit{converso} problem.” The debate over what to do with the \textit{conversos}, particularly those considered crypto-Jews or “Judaizers,” consumed Iberian society, triggered bloody violence, and led to the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478. Its first major tribunal met in 1480 in a city that had now become a \textit{converso} hotbed: Seville. When the Jews were expelled from Andalusia in 1483-4 and from all of Spain (except Navarre) in 1492, the central motivation claimed by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella was the desire to keep the \textit{conversos} away from Jewish influence. The events of 1391 were the root of the \textit{converso} problem and ultimately, of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

Ferrán Martínez is thus a figure of no small importance. In a certain sense, however, the 1391 riots defeated his goals. He had advocated both the absolute separation of the Jews and their conversion. Despite future attempts at segregation and then conversion furthered by men like Vicente Ferrer, the events of 1391, by creating the \textit{converso} problem and throwing together Jews and Christians once more in cities like Seville, assured that separation could not be achieved. By battering down the walls of the \textit{juderías}, the riots in some ways made Christian-Jewish interaction—through the medium of the \textit{conversos} in particular—almost impossible to evade. It was because of 1391 that the “Jewish problem” largely became the \textit{converso} problem.
Epilogue

On June 7, 1403, in the town of Carmona near Seville—almost twelve years to the day of the start of the riots—Ferrán Martínez officially recorded his will. He established as his heir the Hospital of Santa Marta in Seville, an institution he had founded in 1385, and entrusted its administration to the city government. On July 14, 1404, however, approaching death, he revoked this donation and instead placed the administration of the hospital in the hands of the Dean and Cabildo of the Cathedral. The reason for this shift is unknown, but may have been related to the fine that was still being imposed upon Seville for the attack of 1391. Perhaps the city had balked or had tried to impose some fine upon Martínez for his role in instigating the violence. In some sense, the consequences of his incitement continued to follow him.326

This detail leads to larger questions about this man and the riots he helped instigate. Some of the historiography on Martínez has tended to identify him as either a fanatic Jew-hater or as a holy, if overzealous, individual.327 Neither approach helps to understand him and the events of 1391. While Martínez pursued his campaign against the Jews of Seville and their synagogues relentlessly, his broader targets included ecclesiastical and secular authority and perhaps the city’s Genoese merchants as well. The exact reason for his decision to focus on the Jews remains unclear. Given the lack of information about his life, it has even been suggested

326 Francisco Collantes de Terán Caamaño, Memorias históricas de los establecimientos de caridad en Sevilla [Historical Records of Charitable Establishments in Seville], vol. 1 (Seville: J.M. Ariza, 1884-86), 204, 221-34.
327 For the earlier view, see Netanyahu, The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain, 2nd ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 129-67; for the latter, see Diego Ortíz de Zuñiga, Anales eclesiásticos y seculares de la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Sevilla [Ecclesiastical and Secular Annals of the Very Noble and Loyal City of Seville], II, (Seville: Guadalquivir, 1988), 236. In a massive piece of understatement, Ortíz de Zuñiga described Martínez as possessing “zeal less temperate than was convenient.”
that Martínez himself was a *converso*. At any rate, the anti-Jewish spirit and the popular movements of the age, from Abner of Burgos and his followers to Pedro Olligoyen in Navarre, must have influenced him. The civil war, which ended just five years before the first mention of Martínez as the Archdeacon of Écija, must too have been a formative experience. While he himself was not a Mendicant, his closeness to the populace and his sermonizing against the Jews followed in the tradition of the friars. He could operate in both the worlds of the populace and of the Church hierarchy, utilizing both economic arguments that appealed the masses and legal and theological ones that he could use to justify his actions before secular authorities and his ecclesiastical superiors. His oratorical abilities and the particular context of Seville, from the Host desecration accusation to the growth of the *judería* to the propaganda generated after the murder of Joseph Pichon, enabled him to become particularly effective. While an anti-Jewish storm was building in late fourteenth-century Castile, it likely broke when and where it did because of Martínez’ presence and persistence.

Other factors also played a crucial role in the eruption of the riots. Without the deaths of King Juan and Archbishop Barroso, it is unlikely that Martínez could have succeeded in causing violence. At the same time, the attitude of the monarchy had helped to make the attacks possible. From the *Siete Partidas* to King Juan’s letter to the *Cabildo* on Martínez and his preaching against the Jews whom the monarch himself labeled as “wicked and perverse,” the Castilian Crown often showed ambivalence towards its possessions. Its defense of Jewish

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328 Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho, “El antijudaísmo o antisemitismo sevillano hacia la minoría hebrea [Sevillian Anti-Judaism or Anti-Semitism Towards the Hebrew Minority],” 73-157, in *Segundos encuentros judaicos de Tudela: los caminos del exilio [Second Judaic Meetings of Tudela: The Paths of Exile]*, (Tudela, Spain: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996), 115-16. Ortiz de Zuñiga claimed that Martínez was a relative of the famous converso Nicolás Martínez de Medina (see Chapter 6). See his *Anales*, II, 396.

populations was self-interested, and in times of crisis, it paid attention to other issues and failed to enforce its harsh words against Martínez. When the violence came, the Regency Council proved impotent to stop it.

The reforms and centralization of the Catholic Church that began in the thirteenth century also contributed to the events of 1391. While the pressures of the papacy and the Mendicants took a long time to take hold in Castile in particular, their emphases on restricting Jewish rights, their Inquisitorial and polemical attacks on Jewish teachings, and their practice of preaching both to and against the Jews served to detach some Jews from their faith and increase hatred of the Jews among the Christian masses. The roots of the extremism of Ferrán Martínez could be found in the anti-Jewish trends of Lateran IV and the Synod of Zamora.

Martínez exploited the fundamental disconnect between royal and Church teaching and the masses. The monarchy sought to protect the Jews, but at the same time could exploit them for political purposes. Their justifications for their defense of the Jews—and especially Enrique II’s changed attitude—made little sense to the populace. The Church hierarchy, which sought to balance its anti-Jewish rhetoric with the call of “Slay them not,” had a similarly ambiguous attitude towards the Jews. In cities such as Seville with a largely impoverished populace living close to a minority associated with hated occupations such as tax collection, the influence of the Church’s anti-Jewish teachings tended to win out over the complicated idea of Jewish witness and its justification of Jewish existence in the Christian world. Popular voices took teachings such as the Church’s castigation of the Jews as Christ-killers and usurers and applied them to their own environments. Thus the ideas of the Jew as the desecrator of the Host, as the murderer of Christian children, as a robber, as the figure who arrived in Christian towns to “drink the blood of the poor afflicted”—in short, the conceptions of Jews as killers and thieves in the here
and now—emerged, in Seville, in Castile, and all across Christian Europe. It was this application of Church doctrine to everyday concerns that Martínez employed to chilling effect.

The Jews of Castile also contributed in some sense to the onset of the disaster. The tensions within Jewish communities and the power of figures such as Samuel ha-Levi and Joseph Pichon led to jealousies and decisions with fateful consequences. With the murder of Pichon in particular, Jewish courtiers handed their Christian enemies a weapon.

The growth of the burgher class and their economic resentments also increased anti-Jewish hostility. With their work as merchants, as members of guilds, and as competitors for other economic activities performed by Jews, they increasingly began to squeeze Jews out of their old posts. The work of Mendicants and of preachers like Martínez in urban areas allowed for a nexus between the burghers’ economic anti-Judaism and the preachers’ religious anti-Judaism. Ultimately, with the rise of the burgher class, the Jews simply became less useful to the authorities and even expendable. The necessities of the Reconquest had made the Jews more useful and more prosperous in Iberia than elsewhere in Europe, and unlike in France, England, or the German states, they had not yet faced wide-scale violence. With the Reconquest largely finished and with the rise of the burghers, however, the Jews were no longer “extremely necessary,” as Alfonso XI had maintained, in economic terms. Perhaps this trend also explains the Regency government’s lackluster response to the riots.

These elements converged in fourteenth-century Seville with particular effect. As a frontier city with a large juderia, a port open to foreign merchants and foreign influences, and a place that suffered along with much of Europe from the generalized crisis of the fourteenth century, Seville became one of the centers for Iberian anti-Judaism. It provided fertile ground
for the projection of resentment onto a vulnerable minority. In those difficult times, Ferrán Martínez could best plant his poisonous legacy in Seville.

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The events of those years in Seville have also left us with a kind of testament. In an era when medieval Iberia is sometimes looked upon as an idyll of interreligious coexistence, the road to 1391 reminds us of both the promise and the fragility of the idea of convivencia. In spite of the tensions that ultimately consumed their relationship, Jewish-Christian coexistence thrived in areas such as Seville, and their interaction with each other and with the Muslim population of Iberia has bequeathed us an enormous and rich cultural heritage. It seems unfair to qualify this relationship, as the historian Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz argued, as “an impossible harmonic convivencia,” or as an arrangement that did not impact a fundamentally Christian Spanish identity.330 The case of Seville shows the impact of Jews in late medieval Castilian life and suggests that there was nothing fated about the decline of these relations. It was calculated choice—from the efforts of the Church to the propaganda of Enrique II to the preaching of Martínez—that altered the situation. At the same, the popular application of the philologist Américo Castro’s thesis of Christians, Muslims, and Jews as “three castes” or three cultures, all of whom left their impact on Spanish history and Spanish identity, also seems lacking.331 Above all, this theory tends to minimize the negative aspects of interreligious relations. As David Nirenberg has suggested, convivencia in some sense was predicated on violence. Violence was

an inescapable aspect of majority-minority relations. The case of Seville explores the complex
dynamics of coexistence and violence and shows the often slender grounds on which peace rests.

This story may be particularly instructive with regard to the concept of tolerance. While
the notion of tolerance is a modern one—no one in medieval Iberia ever characterized these
interreligious relations through the lens of tolerance and intolerance—Seville does provide an
example of how hostility between two communities can develop, and how peace can turn to
violence if resentment is left unchecked. If the history of Seville does have the voice that the
Elie Wiesel quotation that opens this thesis attributes to it, then perhaps it does teach us the idea
of tolerance, of the urgency of resisting hatred and the siren song of the demagogue. In this
sense, the history of the increase of Sevillian anti-Judaism and of the riots of 1391 is about more
than the deterioration of relations between Christians and Jews in a particular context. It is about
the choices we make for ourselves.

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332 David Nirenberg, Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages (Princeton,
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