

A PROFILE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF
TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURY
LINCOLN, ENGLAND

By

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ABBREVIATIONS

Fuller descriptions of the works of reference and collections of sources listed below will be found in the body of the Bibliography.

C.P.R.	Calendar of the Pipe Rolls
C.P.R.E.J.	Calendar of the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews
Misc. J.H.S.E.	Miscellanics of the Jewish Historical Society of England
Starrs	Starrs and Jewish Charters
Trans. J.H.S.E.	Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England

CHAPTER I

THE COMMUNITY

Introduction

In 1896 the noted scholar Israel Abrahams broke new ground in the study of medieval Judaic history when he published the first edition of a social history of the European Jewry, entitled Jewish Life in the Middle Ages. In this work Abrahams made a monumental attempt to reconstruct a semblance of the social life shared by all of the Jews of Europe from the tenth century through the fifteenth century. Although Abrahams' work was quickly proclaimed to be a classic in Judaic history, rarely did subsequent authors attempt to supplement Abrahams' findings with narratives or profiles of particular medieval Jewish communities.

Histories of the medieval Jews have generally followed one of two trends: Medieval scholars have traced Jewish history by interpreting the information recorded in the royal records. These records, while containing valuable information, dealt only with one segment of the Jewish community, the wealthy moneylenders and taxpayers. Studies based solely on the financial activity of the wealthier members of the community neglected the significance of the community and the life of the majority of the people within the community. These studies were often incomplete in that Judaism, the common denominator which bound these individuals together and dictated the circumstances of their lives was not accounted for. Judaic studies on the other hand often have

concentrated on the religious aspect only, ignoring the historic, geopolitical context within which the Jews existed. Jewish scholars generally have confined their research to the life and literature of the great gaonim and sages, thus again neglecting the majority of the individuals who made up the community.

Few studies have been published which have dealt directly with the history of a Jewish community as a whole, utilizing a synthesis of the two major approaches to Judaic history. In 1967 the author V. D. Lipman published The Jews of Medieval Norwich as an attempt to reconstruct a single Jewish community. Mr. Lipman's text provided an interesting and highly readable profile, although he leaned far more heavily on English royal sources than on the works of Judaic scholars. Such studies, however, provided a narrative, social and historical portrayal of the life of the individual medieval Jews; how they lived, and worked, and their role within the society in which they survived. In the abstract, the Jewish community existed within a social, political and economic context. A narrative history of a single community serves to bring these abstract concepts into focus by allowing for a familiarity with the lives, vocations, troubles and goals of the individual members of the community. In this manner it is possible to examine the poli-economic relationships which existed between the individuals and the community, the royal government, the townsfolk, and with their religion, represented by the synagogue. This study attempts to define and analyze these relationships as they applied to the individual Jews who resided in a single community; that of Lincoln, England, in the thirteenth century.

The Jewish community in Lincoln was organized in such a way that

that it resembled many Jewish communities on the Continent. While specific oddities, mutations in social customs or minor interpretations of a law made each community unique, all of the medieval Jewish communities in western Europe were organized along the same pattern of legal and governmental institutions. Moreover, their foundations were based on the same body of public law. This highly developed system of religious and social law, the halakhah, was primarily derived from the Bible and the Talmud. From this basis, the Jewish law was written down, formulized, expanded and interpreted during the Middle Ages until the minute detail for the structuring of the organized community life, in fact the every detail of the individual's life and conduct, was prescribed under the law. It was this body of rigid law that provided the cohesion for and the peaceful governing of the Jewish community.

In the ancient days, when the Jews governed their own states in Israel and Judea, study of the law beyond the basic religious tenets was left to the priests and the soferim (sages). The Israelite government was a highly centralized system in which power was vested in the royal family and the Levites (priestly families).¹ However, once the Galut (Diaspora) began, the Jews were cut off from previous external forms of authority. The clearest examples of Jewish national organization after the Diaspora existed under the Moslem governments of northern Africa and the Near East. Under Moslem domination in Spain and Morocco, the Jews continued to recognize a central leadership in the Rosh Galuta, literally this translated as Head of the Exiles, or Exilarch. The Exilarch, a descendant of the family of King David, received his power by virtue of his recognition by the Jews and by the caliphate as the leader of the Jewish communities. He appointed judges to the Jewish courts

and received taxes from his constituents.² The Exilarch shared his powers of authority only with the gaonim, the heads of the Jewish academies (yeshivot), who dictated the interpretation of the law to the communities in their own names.³ Thus the exiled Jews were able to maintain their national identity through a centralized system of government which dictated fiscal, social, criminal and religious law. This system was effective as long as the Jews remained under the control of the powerful caliphates. However, once the Moslem rule was dismembered, and the Jews spread through Europe, away from the control of the Exilarch, the centralized government had to be modified. Gradually, through the tenth and early eleventh centuries, the authority over the European Jews shifted to the local communities.

The end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries marked a period of revolutionary change in the attitude and self-image of the diaspora communities. At this time the European Jews appeared to have adapted themselves to prolonged existence in Galut. The local community was glorified as a cell of an ancient body, bound to the whole by virtue of its heritage and its law.⁴ The law of the Torah⁵ had been concealed from the common people prior to the Maccabean Revolt of C.E. 168. However, by the early Medieval period in Europe, the Jewish community became a society centered on the Torah, with the local community glorified as a "repository of binding wisdom."⁶ In this atmosphere, the educated members of the local communities rejected the authority of the Exilarch, (a hereditary position) and the far away gaonim, and demanded the rights and responsibilities of their own governance.⁷ During the eleventh century the French rabbi, Joseph Tov Elem (known to the French as Bonfils) published a decision which

declared that the local communities were in fact autonomous, not only from the Exilarch, but also from each other. And by the end of the eleventh century, the most famous of the French rabbis, Rabbi Solomon bar Yitzhak, known simply as Rashi, spelled out in his Responsa the precise functions of the local community and its leadership and the leadership's authority over the individuals of the community.⁸ Thus by the end of the eleventh century the decentralization of authority within the Jewish nation was completed.

The authority of the leaders of the local community was absolute. All the decisions to religious, moral and national questions were interpreted quickly and knowledgeably by the educated community leaders and local gaonim. To reject the decisions of a local leader became tantamount to a religious transgression; for such an act, according to Rashi, was to "turn naught to divine commandment and to slide back from the laws of Israel."⁹ In order to discourage disobedience, the local leaders inherited from the gaonim the weapon of Herem, excommunication.¹⁰ The local leaders therefore became the embodiment of the halakhic law and it was their responsibility to see to it that the members of their communities remained faithful to the law for the sake of the efficient and peaceful functioning of the community business and the welfare of its members.¹¹

Two or three sets of local leadership arose to govern the local communities. The first was the Beit Din, the Jewish court, which met to interpret the halakhah in accordance with the problems and questions which arose within the local community. Their authority was absolute within the jurisdiction of the community, and their decisions could not be appealed to a higher court.¹² The local judges even had

the authority to cancel the decisions made by revered ancient sages in order to keep the Jewish law apace with the changing nature of Judaic society.¹³ The judges who sat at this tribunal apparently were elected to their stations. The position required a great familiarity with the Torah, Talmud, and the writings of the rabbis; and thus the position went to the wealthy merchants and moneylenders and to the poorer sages who were supported by wealthy patrons.¹⁴ The wealthy were in fact the only members of the community who had the time to devote to intensive study. Moneylending in particular was never a time-consuming vocation. Therefore, it was the wealthy lenders who had the competency in the law to qualify for community leadership.

Aside from the Beit Din the need arose to establish a community council to govern the daily affairs of the community and to represent the local Jews in their relations with the royal Christian government of the land in which they resided. Thus the Parnassim were elected.¹⁵ It was necessary for the three to seven men who were elected as the Parnassim also to be familiar with the halakhah, because to them fell the responsibility of governing the community's morals and to see that the prescribed dress codes, purity of language and the Kushrut (dietary laws) and halakhic dictates were observed by the members of the community.¹⁶ In lieu of these responsibilities, the Parnassim also held the power of Herem. Other duties of this council included determining the wages paid to synagogal officials, the prices of food and setting correct weights and measures. The Parnassim also called the meetings of the community for the adoption of resolutions involving the allocation of taxes among the residents of the community, collection of charity, and provisions for study.¹⁷ The election of a wealthy man to

the position of Parnas (the singular of Parnassim) was deemed necessary not only by virtue of his learning, but also so that he be effective as a Shtadlan, intercessor for the community with the king. The wealthy moneylenders were well-known to the Crown and, in England, were even allowed to conduct their business within the ante-chamber of the royal castles.¹⁸ To be sure, the kings looked more kindly on their business with friends than with strangers. Occasionally the Parnassim shared their responsibilities in the moral sphere with the Tuve Ha'Ir (literally, the "Good of the City"). The Tuve Ha'Ir, or "Tovim" constituted a panel of seven to twelve men who also guarded the community against transgressions in purity of dress and language and other such dictates of the halakhah.

Although the Parnassim held complete authority over their constituents, they did meet together with the Parnassim and sages from other communities in order to discuss community affairs, to settle halakhic questions, and to issue ordinances. They followed merchants to fairs to hold these synods. In the eleventh century, such meetings were held three times per year during the fairs at Cologne.¹⁹ During the twelfth century, meetings were common in Troyes, but also appeared throughout the major communities of Germany.²⁰ The effect of these synods was to keep contradiction in the interpretation of the law at a minimum among the various local communities throughout northern Europe. At the same time the sovereignty of each was preserved.

The Jewish communities of Europe were allowed, in fact forced, to maintain their loyalties to the ancient laws and customs and to take charge of their own local government and welfare by the attitude of the Christian governments under which they existed. As settlements of Jews

sprang up within the feudal kingdoms of Europe, they existed as essentially artificial appendages to the predominant societies and governments. The Jews could not swear the religious oaths of fealty to the sovereigns of the European lands, and so they lived outside of the feudal order. The Jewish communities which were allowed to settle in the European kingdoms did so by obtaining charters from the monarchs of the lands, thus giving the Jewish communities the status of corporations, much like that held by the towns within the feudal system.²¹ Under these conditions, royal rule rarely touched the internal structure of the Jewish community. The royal governments tolerated the existence of the Jews within their towns and cities only when they served the effective tools in the financing of the royal family and its activities.²² As long as the Jews were prosperous within a country, so too was the royal treasury enhanced through a series of taxes, tallages and licenses.²³

A peculiar relationship between the Jews and the Crowns of Europe grew around the mutual benefit of partnership between the two. In return for the definite economic advantage to the king of having the Jewish merchants and moneylenders within his realm, the king not only left the government of the community in the hands of the Jews, but in fact extended his protection over the community members and their commercial activities. In some cases the Crown established Jewish monopolies in areas of trade where the Jews showed the greatest potential for prosperity.²⁴ The Jewish communities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries tended to flourish in the vicinity of royal castles, city halls, and other centers of the royal government in which the Jews were offered protection in the event of anti-Jewish riots.²⁵ The

system of economic and political privilege enjoyed by the European Jews existed as long as the Jews were able to fulfill the financial necessities of the Crown. These privileges, however, were withdrawn once the Jews failed to be a vital source of income to the kings.²⁶ This relationship between the Jews and the Crown, commonly known as Jewish Serfdom, was most apparent in England than anywhere on the Continent.²⁷

In England, as on the Continent, the Crown granted the Jews privileges in order to encourage moneylending. The king and his officers not only afforded protection to the lives of the Jews, but also protected their loans to the Christian population. The Crown lent the Jews his royal officers to collect on defaulted debts, allowed the Jews the right to trial by a mixed jury (that is, with an equal number of Jews and Christians), and exempted the Jews from certain taxes, such as the tax on wine.²⁸ The body of privileges enjoyed by the English Jews became known as the Assize of the Jews. It was uncertain whether the Norman kings of England codified these privileges in the form of charters, however Henry I (1100-1135) did issue a charter specifying the rights and protection afforded the Jews under his reign.²⁹ This practice was repeated in subsequent administrations.

The advantages of the relationship the Jews held with the English kings did not, however, come without decided disadvantage too. The Assize of 1181 barred the English Jews from possessing arms.³⁰ Although the Crown exempted the Jews from specific taxes, a multitude of others were levied upon them, including a poll tax, taxes on each business transaction and law suit, and a tax for maintaining a synagogue.³¹ Although the Crown encouraged Jewish immigration until the late thirteenth century, fees amounting to as much as 2,000 marks were levied on the

Jews settling within the realm.³² In return for the protection and charity of the Crown, a Jew was expected to add profit to the royal treasury by every activity of his life. Henry III stipulated this most clearly in 1253 with his statement: "No Jew remain in England unless he do the king's service, and from the hour of birth every Jew whether male or female serve Us in some way."³³

The Crown also tallaged the Jews on every occasion for which Christians were required to render feudal aids, such as the knighting of the king's eldest son, or in the event of a royal marriage.³⁴ The king in fact was able to levy enormous tallages on the Jews as he pleased, and did so at an average of three to four times per decade.³⁵

The Jews, however, were never in any position to defy the Crown, their sole protector in times of trouble. To the local townspeople, the Jews, with their alien habits of speech and different lifestyle, appeared as members of the Norman aristocracy.³⁵ As foreigners and infidels, the Jews were mistrusted by their neighbors. The Church capitalized on the hostility of the lay folk and agitated popular sentiment against the Jewish communities. At times the Church compelled the townspeople to boycott the Jews, and on occasion incited violence against the Jews and their property.³⁷ In each case, the Crown had to come to the aid of its Jewish subjects. The nobility also vented its anger on the Jews. The nobility was often in debt to the Jewish financiers, and in several instances of default, their lands were lost to the Jews. Lands falling into the hands of the Jews often escheated to the Crown. Consequently the nobles came to view the Jews as agents of the king, and on occasion, struck out at the Jews as a method of attacking the king. In several instances the documents recording the

debts owed to the Jews were burned or carried off so that the debts could not be reclaimed.³⁸ During civil war between the Crown and the nobility, the Jewish communities were attacked by rebellious barons. This occurred in the civil war during the reign of King John (1199-1216), and again later in the thirteenth century during the rebellion of the Disinherited Knights.³⁹ The single incident which best exemplified the precarious position of the Jews within the English society occurred as a result of events at the coronation of Richard I (1189-1199). Rumor spread at that time that Richard had rebuked the Jews, and the result was sweeping attacks on Jewish communities throughout the realm. The Jewish community at York was massacred in spite of Richard's proclamation for protection of the Jews.⁴⁰ Thus the Jews of England were bound at all times to the mercy and protective hand of the king and the royal officials. Therefore the Jews of England, as their compatriots on the Continent, purposely settled in the large towns and cities of South and Southeastern England, where royal castles existed.

It was uncertain how many Jews came to live in England. Estimates have ranged between two thousand and over sixteen thousand.⁴¹ Although a great many Jews were attracted to England by the prosperity of the communities there during the twelfth century, there were probably never more than four thousand Jews in England at any time during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The individual communities in England were small, comprising roughly one to two percent of the total populations of the host towns.⁴² Actual numbers for Jewish communities were, however, impossible to estimate. Movement from one community to another occurred with frequency within the realm. Jewish financiers also owned homes in towns in which

they did not reside.⁴³ The English communities became smaller during the thirteenth century due to emigration out of the realm by large numbers of Jews due to the worsening political and financial conditions of the English Jews from 1206 until their expulsion from England in 1290.

The Jewish community of Lincoln, England, was a relatively late addition to the number of Jewish communities within the realm; however it quickly rose to become one of the largest and wealthiest of the Jewries outside of London. The exact date that the Jews settled in Lincoln was not recorded, however the community first appeared in the royal records during the reign of Henry II in 1159. In that year the sheriff of Lincoln collected £ 40 from the Lincoln Jewry in taxes. Since £ 40 was a substantial sum for a new community, it must be assumed that the Jews first settled in Lincoln late in the reign of Stephen (1135-1154).⁴⁴

By the thirteenth century Lincoln had grown into an industrial town of approximately seven thousand souls, roughly two to three hundred of whom were Jews.⁴⁵ The medieval city was small, covering fifty-six acres along a hillside, however the population of the surrounding suburbs and liberties were included as citizens of the city. Steep Street, a Roman road, ran northward through the center of the city, straight up the hill to the Bail at the top of the hill.⁴⁶ The name of the road was appropriate, for the hill on which Lincoln was built constituted an incline of 165 feet within a distance of approximately 670 yards.⁴⁷

Within the Bail stood the royal castle and the Minister. The Bail was enclosed within walls, and the medieval city proper was situated

outside of these walls to the south. Just outside of the walls of the Bail was the High Market, in which the fish market was situated. South of the fish market, and on the east side of Steep Street stood the corn market, and below that, south of Mikelgate probably stood the butcher market.⁴⁸ On the west side of Steep Street, just south of the fish market were the parchment shops, (the skin workshops were situated further to the south), and the cloth market (known as the Drapery).

Although the Jews within the English communities rarely lived on a single street, they did endeavor to find housing which gave them access to the castle, to the local synagogue, and to the markets of the town.⁴⁹ While it was important that the Jews did not live overly far from the synagogue, proximity to the center of the market district appeared to be the primary consideration for choosing housing.⁵⁰ The homes chosen by the Jews also varied. The wealthier Jews built stone houses, generally three stories high, and often gabled.⁵¹ These homes often had small shops in front on the bottom story, and a kitchen in a separate building in an adjoining courtyard. Most of the Jews' homes were also equipped with small garden plots, which were used to grow vegetables and herbs.⁵² Although the Jews were noted for their stone homes, the middle class members of the community resided in ordinary wood-and-plaster townhouses, and the poorer families lived in small cottages.⁵³

The Jews of Lincoln lived throughout the city and in its suburbs, however they tended to live on concentrated areas around the corn market where the synagogue was located and along Brauncegate.⁵⁴ The Jews were also drawn to the area of Mikelgate, the major market section, on both sides of Steep Street, and along the swamp area of Bradeford.

Although the Norman Jews were undoubtedly the first of the

European Jews to settle within the realm, Jews from Spain, Germany, Italy, Morocco and Russia joined the English communities during the twelfth century.⁵⁵ Most of these probably spoke French as their street language during their residence in England, although they did pick up the local vernacular as well.⁵⁶ All of the Jews spoke Hebrew as a third language, and thus communication was only a minor problem for the cosmopolitan communities of the Anglo-Jewry. The Jews also took up the local mode of dress and appearance, although the Jewish men often sported short, trimmed beards.⁵⁷

The Jewish community in Lincoln, as with all the English communities of the day, was comprised of Jews who had come from, and maintained contacts with a variety of countries on the Continent. Those Jews who came from northern France and from the lower Rhineland, the dominant group in England, were known as the Ashkenazic Jews. Those who came from Spain, Morocco and Italy were called Sephardic. The distinction between the two groups was important, because the differences between these two groups went beyond family heritage and physical characteristics, and included variance in the mood and emphasis in forms of worship, scholarship, and to some extent, daily life style, language and occupation.

The Ashkenazim of northern Europe tended to emphasize devotion and faith above all else in worship and in their literature. Meticulous detail was given to strict observance of ritual and correct interpretation of Biblical and Talmudic treatises. The main flow of the Ashkenazic literary culture gave rise to sages such as Rashi (Rabbi Solomon Yitzhaki of Troyes, circa 1040-1105) and the Tosaphists.⁵⁸ These scholars provided clear and yet eloquent commentaries for

interpretation of the Pentateuch (Torah) and the Talmud. Although there was little original thought in their works, this school of thought held great sway over the religious and legal literature of thirteenth century England, and Lincoln in particular.⁵⁹

Mysticism evolved in both Ashkenazic and Sephardic worship, however it had more appeal to the Ashkenazim. The thirteenth century saw the rise of a particular mystical movement among the Ashkenazim of Germany known as the Hasidim, which literally translated as "The Pious Ones". This was an asceto-mystical movement which stressed simple expression of faith. Such a movement did not have appeal for the Sephardim. That this movement touched the communities of England is evidenced by the presence of Joseph Hasid of Bungay and his family in Lincoln.⁶⁰

The Sephardim, Jews from southern Europe, also strongly believed in adherence to the halakhah, but gave particular emphasis to philosophy, criticism and rationalism in their literature rather than simple faith and study of the law. It was the Sephardim who contributed the great philosophers and original thinkers to the medieval Jewish world. Sephardic scholarship produced major liturgical and didactic poets, literary critics, astute grammarians and lexicographers and some of the major linguists and translators of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Aside from the vast literary accomplishments of the Sephardic Jews, the relative freedom they enjoyed in Spain and Italy during the Golden Age gave them a far broader base of secular occupations than the Ashkenazim. The Sephardim were admitted to the medical schools of Spain and Italy and were also employed by kings, nobility and the Church as financial managers and tax-agents, though they only occasionally

indulged in moneylending. The Sephardim also maintained some contact with agrarian life as grape and olive growers, or, as in Italy, henna and indigo planters.⁶¹ The Ashkenazim, on the other hand, existed mainly as usurers and petty merchants or as tavern-owners in some areas.

Although the Ashkenazim were the dominant group among the English Jewry, it is significant to note that, while no definite record existed to explain the origins of the Jews of Lincoln, it was most probable that the community was originally settled by Sephardic Jews. According to the historian, Cecil Roth, the Lincoln community was settled by Jews from Italy.⁶² Although it is unfortunately infrequent that the names of the Lincoln Jews offered insight as to the individual's last country of residence, a few names among the Lincoln Jewry did distinguish Italian descent. Asher Lumbard contributed to the tallage at Lincoln in 1194.⁶³ Leon ben Salomon and his son, Jacob ben Leon were singled out as Italian Jews living in Lincoln.⁶⁴ Although evidence that Leon and his family were Italian was inconclusive, the name Leon was in fact the Italian derivation of the Hebrew, Levi.

Lincoln would have had a particular appeal to the twelfth and thirteenth century Italian Jewish merchants. The citizens of Lincoln were reknowned for their dyed cloth industry, especially their valued scarlet cloth and a green dye which bore the name "Lincoln Green."⁶⁴ The Jews of Italy were similarly involved predominantly in the wool and dyed cloth trades. During this period the Jews of Italy were particularly noted for their silk and woollen brocades, their embroidery work and their red and blue dyes. The Jewish communities of Italian towns such as Gaeta, Salerno, Brindisi and Benevento were almost entirely

supported by work as dyers, weavers and fullers.⁶⁵

The Jews in Italy were among the safest and most secure in twelfth and early thirteenth century Europe, however the prosperous Italian cloth dyers had in many instances been given by the Italian urban governments to the Church. Under ownership of the Church, the Jews were required to pay tithes to the archbishops. While several Jewish communities were paying exorbitant taxes to the clerics, the town governments also demanded taxes; thus the Italian Jews were saddled with double taxation.⁶⁶ Such was not the case in England, where the Jews rarely were given to noblemen or churchmen by the king.⁶⁷ Consequently the incentive for the Italian Jews to move into the Lincoln community was probably based on the desire for greater potential for wealth. Roth's interpretation that the Lincoln community was established by Italian Jews has not been disputed, however it is more likely that Jews from Spain settled in Lincoln prior to or simultaneously with the Italians.

The Golden Age in Spain ended for the Jews when, in 1148 the country was invaded from Morocco. While both the former Arab rulers of Spain and the Moroccan invaders were followers of Islam, the invaders were members of a fanatical sect. They were the Almohades ("Proclaimers of the unity of Allah"), a Moslem sect which tolerated no religious belief or practice save their own. The answer many of the Spanish Jews gave to the distasteful Moroccan ultimatum of conversion or martyrdom was a rapid emigration from Spain to Southern France.⁶⁸ The discovery of a Spanish style synagogue in Lincoln suggests that the Spanish Jews also fled as far as England. The Lincoln synagogue was similar to the Spanish synagogues in that its ark was a niche in the

eastern wall, rather than the Italian cupboard-style ark.⁶⁹ Once a group of medieval Jews settled into a new area, their first action as a community would most logically be to construct a synagogue, and thus it was probable that the Spanish Jews settled in Lincoln prior to or simultaneously with the Italian Jews. At least one Jewish family of Spanish origin was noted among the more prominent moneylenders of Lincoln, the family of Aaron Crespin and his brother Benedict.⁷⁰ Crespin was the English corruption of the Spanish, Crisp.

Although the Ashkenazic Jews had established communities in other major towns in England before the Jewish settlement appeared in Lincoln, there was a great deal of movement of Jews across the realm during the last half of the twelfth century as older communities declined and new ones were established and as Jewish moneylending activities expanded into new towns.⁷¹ By the end of the twelfth century names of householders such as Deulecresse ben Matatie, Simon Le Bret, and Judas le Fraunces, that is, Ashkenazic names, filled out the rolls of the community in Lincoln, creating a mixture of Ashkenazi as well as Sephardic ethnic backgrounds.⁷² This melding of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic cultures, while not unheard of on the Continent, was one of the distinct features of the English communities.

The history of the Jewish community in Lincoln followed the general history of all the English communities. In the period of 1189-1191 following the coronation of Richard I, the riots which struck at nearly all of the Jewish communities also touched Lincoln. Fortunately the Jews of Lincoln had been warned prior to the attack on their community, and were able to hide themselves and some of their belongings in the

royal castle. Their homes did suffer vandalism at this time, however, for in 1191 nearly one hundred of the townsfolk of all financial classes were fined for participating in attacks against the property of the Jews.⁷³ In 1220 the Jews of Lincoln faced another riot. During the violence, the Jewess, Sarra and her husband Deulecresse were murdered, Simon Le Bret was robbed, and Moses of Lincoln was killed.⁷⁴

During the time that Robert Grosseteste served as the Bishop of Lincoln (1235-1255), he labored to prevent friendly relations between the Jews and their Christian neighbors. At his urging, boycotts of the Jews periodically occurred in Lincoln which made it necessary for royal officials to intervene in order to prevent the town from starving the Jews. On a Sabbath in 1240, the citizens of Lincoln, in accordance with a papal bull, entered the homes of the Jews and seized their books. All copies of the Talmud found were subsequently burned.⁷⁵ In 1244 and 1245 Samikin, Aaron, Benet and Samuel, the sons of the Lincoln Jew, Cok (Isaac), were charged with the crime of coin-clipping.⁷⁶

The Year 1255 was the most infamous in the history of the Jews of Lincoln. In November of that year the body of an eight year old Christian boy, Hugh son of Beatrice, was found drowned near the synagogue.⁷⁷ The Jews were promptly accused of murdering the boy in mock sacrifice of Jesus. One Jew, Copin, was lynched on the spot, and nearly one hundred others were imprisoned in London to await trial. Of those who were sent to prison, eighteen were hanged for demanding a trial by mixed jury. Others stayed in prison, apparently until 1257.

The civil war between the royalists and the Disinherited Knights during the 1260's brought fresh suffering to the Jews of Lincoln. In 1264 an anti-Jewish riot in Lincoln caused many of the Jews to flee to

the Continent in order to escape harm. On 6 May, 1265 the king deemed it necessary to issue a letter to twenty-four specific citizens of Lincoln, ordering them to protect the lives and properties of the Jews there. In 1266 and 1267 these attacks by the Disinherited Knights were renewed, and the Jews of Lincoln were placed directly under the protection of the king. On 18 July, 1266 the king awarded Benedict and Hagin, sons of Master Moses and other Lincoln Jews compensation for the money they lost as a result of the burning of the documentation of their loans.⁷⁸

In 1272 the Lincoln financier, Manser of Bradesworth was jailed in the Tower of London for some unspecified crime, and in 1275 the Lincoln Jew, Leo, one of the wealthiest Jews of England was put to death for some equally mysterious reason.⁷⁹ During the years 1277-1279 thousands of English Jews were arrested for coin-clipping following the royal decree of 1275, which banned Jewish usury. During this time at least one Lincoln financier, Beleset, daughter of Solomon of Wallingford, was hanged for this crime.⁸⁰ In 1279 those Jews awaiting trial for their crime of coin-clipping found charges of blasphemy added to the list of accusations against them.⁸¹ Lincoln's Jewish community seems to have fared better than many of the English communities, and the population of the community remained extraordinary stable. However by the time of the Expulsion of the Jews in 1290, the effects of oppressive taxation and increasing anti-Jewish violence had reduced the wealth of the community to poverty level.

FOOTNOTES

¹For a background of this time period see: Bernard Bamberger, The Story of Judaism (New York, 1970), Part I, passim. A History of the Jewish People, H. H. Ben-Sasson, ed. (Cambridge, 1976), Parts I and II, passim.

²B. Halper, Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature: An Anthology (Philadelphia, 1921), pp. 64-68. This is an eye-witness account, written by the tenth century Babylonian scholar, Nathan Ha-Babli, which details the splendor, powers and duties of the Exilarch and the taxation of the local communities to support his office.

³A History of the Jewish People, p. 423. For translations of letters recording segments of the Responzot of the gaonim, see: A Treasury of Jewish Letters, Franz Kobler, ed. (London, 1953), pp. 69-94, 116-129.

⁴Jewish Society Through the Ages, H. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger, eds. (New York, 1971), p. 190.

⁵Also Pentateuch; the first five books of the Bible.

⁶Irving A. Agnus, "The Oral Traditions of Pre-Crusade Ashkenazic Jewry," Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman, Meir Ben-Horin, et al., eds. (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 6. Jewish Society Through the Ages, pp. 190, 212.

⁷A History of the Jewish People, pp. 425-436.

⁸Responsa; Answers. The decisions made by the gaonim in answer to questions concerning the halakhah. The Responzot (-ot is the feminine plural ending in Hebrew), in keeping with Talmudic methodology, took the question-and-answer form and were written in letters to the questioners and recorded by and for the students of the gaonim. Adele Biltersee, Jewish Post-Biblical History Through Great Personalities: From Jochanan ben Zakkai through Moses Mendelssohn (Cincinnati, 1918), pp. 56-57.

⁹Jewish Society Through the Ages, p. 212.

¹⁰A verdict of Herem was a drastic social and financial, as well as religious punishment. The deviant individual was made to "abjure" from the realm within the synagogue, and from that time forth, the community members were not allowed to approach him closer than four steps. In England this also meant that the properties and assets of the

excommunicated individual were confiscated by the Crown. The "banished" soul was, however, allowed to continue to attend services and was afforded a religious funeral at his death.

¹¹Jewish Society Through the Ages, pp. 212-213.

¹²A History of the Jewish People, pp. 504-505.

¹³Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁴The Nadib, or Patron of the Letters was a wealthy merchant or financier who supported promising students, writers and sages during the Middle Ages. The Nadib was a vital element of the system of charity in the Jewish communities. In Lincoln, one of the sons of Master Moses was identified as a Nadib.

¹⁵A History of the Jewish People, p. 503. Jewish Society Through the Ages, p. 212.

¹⁶Jewish Society Through the Ages, p. 212.

¹⁷A History of the Jewish People, pp. 431-432. Israel Abrahams, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages (London, 1932), pp. 49, 68. Abrahams equated the Parnassim with deacons, as unsalaried officials of the synagogue. Although the officers of the synagogue and the community government must have worked closely together, it is doubted that the elected Parnassim were seen as primarily religious rather than secular leaders.

¹⁸A History of the Jewish People, p. 432.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 436.

²⁰Salo Baron, Ancient and Medieval Jewish History (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 272-273. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 51-53.

²¹A History of the Jewish People, p. 502.

²²The two principal aids were collected at the knighting of the king's eldest son and on the marriage of the eldest daughter of the king. For an example of such an aid, see: Helen Chew, "A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E., vol. 11, 1924-1927.

²³Tallage, or talliage, a general tax levied as a lump sum on all the Jewish communities of the realm. In the case of a tallage, the community was collectively responsible for the sum. See Starrs, p. 1.

²⁴Cecil Roth, The History of the Jews of Italy (Philadelphia, 1946), pp. 87-88. In England an attempt was made by the Crown to give the Jews a monopoly over moneylending, however this was not effective.

²⁵Baron, p. 244.

²⁶Ibid., Chapter 11, passim.

- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 314.
- ²⁸ Cecil Roth, A History of the Jews in England (Oxford, 1949), pp. 131, 103.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 104.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98. Heinrich Graetz, The History of the Jews: A Sourcebook, vol. III (Philadelphia, 1894), p. 589.
- ³² A History of the Jews in England, p. 97.
- ³³ Baron, p. 316.
- ³⁴ Chew, "A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E., passim.
- ³⁵ This, of course, is an average, and not a set number of predictable tallages.
- ³⁶ H. G. Richardson, The English Jewry Under the Angevin Kings (London, 1960), pp. 4-6.
- ³⁷ The hostility of the Church toward the Jews became apparent as early as 1010. Problems of the Lincoln Jews with the Church will be discussed below.
- ³⁸ A History of the Jews in England, pp. 36-37, 62.
- ³⁹ Cecil Roth, Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 21, 54, Starrs, p. 136. J. W. F. Hill, Medieval Lincoln (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 209, 232-233.
- ⁴⁰ A History of the Jews in England, p. 21. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 54.
- ⁴¹ Baron, p. 243. V. D. Lipman, The Jews of Medieval Norwich (London, 1967), pp. 37-38.
- ⁴² Lipman, p. 38.
- ⁴³ Richardson, p. 21.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9. A History of the Jews in England, p. 11. Hill, p. 217.
- ⁴⁵ For information on the medieval city of Lincoln, see Hill, Chapter VIII, passim.
- ⁴⁶ See map, Appendix A.

⁴⁷Hill, p. 153.

⁴⁸It is not known precisely when the butcher market was moved to this location from its original site in an older part of the city.

⁴⁹Richardson, p. 8. Hill, p. 233. A "Street of the Jews" was noted in London in the early twelfth century.

⁵⁰Lipman, pp. 3, 16, 18.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 23.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 24-25, 32.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁵⁴See map, Appendix A.

⁵⁵Richardson, p. 6. A History of the Jews In England, p. 12.

⁵⁶History of the Jewish People, p. 26.

⁵⁷A History of the Jews in England, p. 95. Lipman, p. 32.

⁵⁸For a brief description of the Tosaphists, see: A History of the Jewish People, pp. 525-527.

⁵⁹The literary emphasis and accomplishments of the Lincoln scholars will be discussed at length below in Chapter IV.

⁶⁰Starrs, vol. I, pp. 44, 46, vol. II, p. 602.

⁶¹The History of the Jews of Italy, p. 86, Baron, p. 250, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 243.

⁶²A History of the Jews in England, p. 12.

⁶³Isaac Abrahams, "The Northampton 'Donum' of 1194," Miscs. J.H.S.E., vol. 1, 1925, p. lxvii.

⁶⁴Hill, p. 325.

⁶⁵The History of the Jews of Italy, pp. 77-87.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 89-90.

⁶⁷Baron, p. 316. King Henry III (1216-1272) pawned the English Jews to his brother, Richard of Cornwall. On 28 June, 1232, Peter de Rivaux was granted custody of the Jews. The English Crown never totally relinquished its authority over the Jews at this point, or at any time until the Expulsion of 1290.

⁶⁸Bamberger, pp. 153-159, 178-179; A History of the Jewish People, pp. 466-468.

⁶⁹Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 59.

⁷⁰Starrs, vol. I, p. 7, vol. II, n. 117. Aaron also was very active in London, and may have been a member of both communities.

⁷¹Richardson, p. 11.

⁷²Yosef son of Matthathies, Shimon of Brittany, and Yahuda of France. Starrs, vol. II, p. 162, n. 214, n. 573. Cecil Roth, "The Ordinary Jew in the Middle Ages," Neuman.

⁷³Hill, pp. 187-190; A History of the Jews in England, p. 21; Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 54.

⁷⁴C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, pp. 28, 31; Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 54.

⁷⁵A History of the Jews in England, p. 54; Lipman, pp. 58-59.

⁷⁶For a detailed account and analysis of the legend of Little St. Hugh, see: Hill, pp. 224-232. In 1202 suspicion of ritual murder by the Lincoln Jews had been aroused in a similar incident, but without the tragic results of 1255.

⁷⁷The actual cause of the boy's death, of course, was disputed. For the site of the Lincoln synagogue, see map, Appendix A.

⁷⁸Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 54, 61; Hill, pp. 232-233, 209; A History of the Jews in England, p. 62; Starrs, p. 136; C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, p. 213.

⁷⁹Starrs, p. 206; Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 54.

⁸⁰Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 56; A History of the Jews in England, p. 75.

⁸¹Lipman, p. 169.

CHAPTER II

JEWISH CREDIT

It was unclear how many of the Jews who settled in medieval England from the Continent came to the realm as merchants and traders. However, once in England the Jewish capitalists met with staunch opposition from the monopolistic English trade guilds. These elaborate institutions were widespread in twelfth and thirteenth century England, and especially in towns established with cloth industries such as Lincoln. The English trade guilds enhanced their power through royal privileges and support from religious houses.¹ The guilds controlled specific areas of trade with such success that the Jews, who did not form guilds of their own, were not able to compete and often were forced out of the more prosperous areas of commerce. Consequently, Jews with capital resources in reserve from previous trade or from holdings abroad were forced to invest their capital elsewhere. To this end they began to finance the personal enterprises of their Christian neighbors, and thus moneylending became the primary livelihood of the English Jewry.² The Jews were, in fact, the only persons within the realm expressly authorized to lend money at interest.³

Usury was an acceptable and profitable occupation for the medieval Jews. Money was a scarce commodity, and as with any other marketable good, its scarcity dictated its cost. Thus, the interests on capital loans ran high.⁴ The Jews had entered England following the Norman

Conquest of 1066. The change in the government of England opened an era characterized by the revitalization in the building of religious houses and castles. The new feudal order imposed by William I and his successors expanded the fiscal responsibilities of the English barons and towns. Thus Jewish moneylending was introduced into England at a time when liquid assets were in great demand and in short supply.⁵ The financial activity of Jewish lenders was instrumental in significantly increasing the available currency within the realm. The Jewish financiers transcended the role of usurers to fulfill the need for "public bankers"⁶ for medieval England. The Jewish lending practices significantly accelerated the development of an English credit system.⁷

The introduction of Jewish credit in England enhanced the power and the position of the royal family as well as the country's general economy. The Jews in effect served as the private "bullion-brokers" for the English Crown. The special relationship between the king and his Jewish subjects, along with the revenue realized from the heavy taxation levied upon the Jews, substantially reduced the reliance of the royal house on foreign creditors. This degree of financial independence also diminished the need for the Crown to levy extraordinary taxes on the Christian community. As long as the English Jews were prosperous, the Crown was able to draw from their revenue to support the royal treasury during times of economic or political crisis.⁸ The importance of Jewish credit to the royal and national economies was the foremost reason that the Jews were allowed to settle within the realm.

Even in the early stages of Jewish usury in England, loans rarely were based on promise or verbal contract. In most cases securities, collateral to ensure repayment of the debt, was required.⁹ Starrs,

documents recording the particulars of the individual transactions (the name of the creditor and debtor, the security offered for the loan, and the dates of the transaction and the due date), were written by the Jewish lender or by a professional scribe.¹⁰ The starrs (an English corruption of the Hebrew **שטר**; sh'tar) were written according to precise formulae, generally in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic. Latin or Norman French, the court languages of medieval England, were occasionally employed in the writing of the bonds.¹¹

In the most common form of Jewish credit agreement, the money was loaned for a specific amount of time, usually three to eight months.¹² If the debt was not repaid by the date agreed upon, interest then began to accrue and was henceforth due by the week. This interest was never compounded.¹³ The securities offered on the loan were made available to the financier to be used at his or her discretion until the debt was repaid.¹⁴ If the debtor was delinquent in his payment, a date was set (usually after one year, one month and one day) at which time the financier was entitled to dispose of the securities as he chose.¹⁵

The average rate of interest charged by the Jews fell between twenty-one and two-thirds and forty-three and one-third percent annually.¹⁶ Although this rate was high, Jewish interest was generally fairer than that charged by Christian usurers. As the creditor and debtor came to know and trust each other, the interest charged for subsequent debts tended to decrease.¹⁷ The interest due on Jewish loans was not necessarily paid in currency. Commodities or farm produce were acceptable. The first accounts of this practice were recorded in the accounts of Aaron of Lincoln. Several of Aaron's debtors repaid him with soams of hay, corn or wool.¹⁸ Several other Lincoln financiers

advanced money on planted crops and were repaid in oats,¹⁹ corn, hay and wool.²⁰ Records from 1220 showed that even ecclesiastics, such as Roger de Neville borrowed from the Jews of Lincoln and paid the interest in soams of corn.²¹ While this practice occurred throughout the period of English Jewish usury, it became exceedingly pronounced after 1275. In that year King Edward I decreed that the Jews were no longer to engage in lending at interest. After this date the Lincoln moneylenders "bought" wool and corn with advance payments on a regular basis.²² In 1277 Master Elias ben Master Moses and Aaron ben Vives cooperated in a large loan which was repaid with forty sacks of wool.²³ At the time that the Jews were expelled from England in 1290, forty-six of the sixty-six Jewish households recorded in Lincoln owned substantial amounts of wool, and twenty-nine held assets in corn. In all the Jews of Lincoln had accumulated over £ 1595 worth of wool, and more than £ 601 in corn, while only about £ 423 in coin was owned by the Lincoln Jewry.²⁴

The securities received by the Jews for their loans were varied and included such valuables as students' books, jewelry, armor, crops, and land.²⁵ The only items regarded as unacceptable as security in Jewish pawnbroking were bloody cloth²⁶ and church chattels which were used in ritual or worship.²⁷ Even these meager restrictions were not effectively enforced. A large number of ecclesiastics of the late twelfth century owed debts to Aaron of Lincoln. Aaron's records at the time of his death, circa 1185, showed that nine Cistercian abbeys owed him debts totaling more than 6,400 marks.²⁸ St. Hugh of Lincoln owed more than £ 200 to Aaron, as well as nearly £ 100 more to other Lincoln Jews. The prior of Bullington also owed money to Aaron, as did

Hamelin, the dean of the Lincoln cathedral. When Hamelin died, the abbots of Kirkstead and Louth Park were forced to repay his debts to Aaron as tenants of the deceased Hamelin's properties.²⁹ The Chronicles of St. Albans recorded that the Abbot Simon died leaving that abbey in debt to Aaron for 600 marks and to other Jewish creditors for more than 200 marks.³⁰ Bishop Robert Chesney of Lincoln allegedly defaulted on a debt to Aaron, resulting in the ornaments of the cathedral escheating to the Jew. These chattels were reportedly redeemed by Robert's successor after his death in 1166.³¹ Others of the clergy who were in debt to Aaron were: John the priest of St. Margaret, Gregory the priest of St. Faith, Outi the cleric of Eastgate, and five of the canons of the Lincoln cathedral.³² The problem of pawned church vessels continued into the thirteenth century. In 1244 Lincoln ecclesiastical chattels again fell into the hands of a Jewish creditor, Jacob Episcopus, by virtue of a defaulted loan.³³

By the mid-thirteenth century the English religious houses had found a way of continuing to borrow capital from the Jews without violating the royal restrictions by offering corrodies and prebends as securities.³⁴ Corrodies were "rights" devised and sold by monasteries and convents which entitled the recipient to board for life with the brethren. Prebends entitled the recipient to all of the income from a religious house necessary for the maintenance of a cleric. Corrodies and prebends made attractive collateral, because they could be used or sold to others for as long as the debt remained unpaid.

Although chattels and corrodies were acceptable securities for Jewish loans, the majority of debts were transacted on securities of land or rentcharges. The rentcharge, an annual payment for a loan, was

in fact established during the middle ages as a means for investing capital in such a way that a steady income would be provided in future years.³⁵ Rentcharges provided a guaranteed minimum of income in old age as a protection against bankruptcy in the event of financial straits in years to come. The non-speculative investment in rentcharges therefore became a common form of security.³⁶

The result of the practice of offering lands as collateral for debts was that much land, including feudal fees and estates, changed hands. The Jews, unable to take the religious vows of fealty which enabled one to possess feudal lands, nonetheless came into possession (seisin) of knight's fees, (small estates) by virtue of defaulted loans. In a few cases Jews were actually able to command the rights of estate; by claiming wardships, escheats and advowsons.³⁷ The legality of Jewish possession of feudal estates was favorably decided according to Jewish law in the eleventh century Responsa of Rashi.³⁸ However, the English government denied the right of the Jews to become seised of feudal lands. In January of 1269 and again in 1271 laws were set down in England to guard against Jewish acquisition of estates. These laws "disseised the Jews of all that they possessed in the way of feudal hereditaments," and specifically forbade the Jews to install themselves in the feudal order by permanently occupying such lands in the future.³⁹

Even though examples did exist, particularly during the reign of Henry III, of English Jews claiming rights of fee owners, in most instances the Jewish interest in the land was temporary. Land continued to be the most popular security offered and accepted for Jewish loans. The Jews continued to be given seisin of land, "ut de vadio," as "beneficial leases" in which the creditor could draw profit from the land

until the debt was repaid.⁴⁰ Lands which passed to the Jews through forfeit usually were sold to non-Jews.

While the Jews rarely retained land which fell under the feudal system, urban possessions were often kept and were subsequently inherited by the children of the Jewish financiers. These urban properties included houses, garden plots, shops and messuages, all of which did not fall into the category of fealty, and possession of which did not require an oath of homage or fealty. The Calendar of the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews was filled with information concerning the number of homes and establishments owned by individual Jews.⁴¹ The record of Jewish possessions compiled and translated by B. Lionel Abrahams from the Queen's Remembrancer's Miscellanea of the Exchequer offered proof of the large number of establishments the Jews owned, even in 1290, a time of impoverishment for the Jews of England. A list included in Abraham's work of the properties held by the Jews of Lincoln provides an example of the general amounts of urban properties owned by the Jews.

Solomon ben Deulecress of London, a Lincoln Jew owned several houses, including two small rent houses in Brauncegate.⁴² Belaset, daughter of Solomon of Wallingford owned a house in Lincoln and probably other properties in Stamford.⁴³ The brothers Jacob and Ursellus benai Sampson Levi each owned messuages in Lincoln. Elias ben Benedict Gabbai,⁴⁴ a member of a once prosperous moneylending Lincoln family was reduced in his properties by 1290 to a single small cottage, while his brother, Josce owned a messuage, a very fine house with a copse and six shops.⁴⁵ Floria bat Josce (perhaps a member of the Bungay family) owned an expensive messuage in St. Martin's parish that she rented, and at

least one other in Lincoln. Master Benedict, the son of Master Moses owned three messuages in St. Mary's parish, one in Brauncegate, two shops and a tenement in the area of the St. Lazarus' Hospital.⁴⁶ Hagin ben Benedict, (the son, or probably the son-in-law of Master Benedict), owned an average messuage in St. Martin's parish and a plot of land in which his kitchen was built.⁴⁷ He also rented a house in Lincoln to Gershom the Jew.

Jacob ben Isaac of Brauncegate owned a messuage in Brauncegate and a home. Manser of Bradeworth possessed two messuages in Brauncegate as well as a good house.⁴⁸ Josce of Colchester owned tenements on Brauncegate and some fine houses. Benedict the Count owned one messuage and one vacant plot (this is most likely a garden plot). Another Lincoln Jew referred to simply as Judas owned good houses and a shop within the bailiwick of Lincoln. A woman named Diabella owned a tenement, and Hagin owned an undetermined number of rent houses and a small piece of land (again, probably an urban garden plot). Finally, Joye of Canterbury, widow of Vives of Winchester rented out two houses in Canterbury, though no Lincoln properties were recorded for her.

Those Lincoln Jews who were recorded as having properties in 1290 were by-and-large the more wealthy of the diminished Lincoln Jewry. Earlier, in times of prosperity, the Jews were known to own homes which reflected membership in all economic classes.⁴⁹ The wealthier financiers maintained large stone homes in some cases, and also retained houses in other towns and counties. This latter practice, often a result of defaulted loans, was common. A single example of the extent of the territory the Jewish financiers covered is offered by Isaac Gabbai, a brother in the aforementioned Gabbai family of Lincoln. Isaac held

debts on properties in Colchester, Lincoln, Nottingham, York, Kent, Canterbury and Norwich.⁵⁰ Maintaining homes in several counties made it easier for the wealthy lenders to travel outside their hometowns to expand their clientele and to pursue their previous transactions. Aaron of Lincoln held starrs in twenty-five English counties at the time of his death.⁵¹

Jewish financiers who held debts in a large number of counties often employed middle class Jews in far towns to act as their agents in recruiting and handling debts. Aaron of Lincoln employed such agents in seventeen counties.⁵² The regularity and tradition of this practice was attested to by the fact that it was deemed worthy of note in Rashi's Responsa. Rashi approved of the practice as long as the agent was paid a commission of one-fifth to one-third of the profits made on each transaction that he handled.⁵³ Thus many of the Jewish creditors lent small sums of their own money while transacting a large number of loans in the name of a wealthier financier. The historian Cecil Roth contended that these agents cooperated in their transactions and had collective access to large pools of funds reserved for loans.⁵⁴

Although the employment of agents as loan officers was common, actual partnerships between Jewish creditors were less frequent. These were discouraged by the Crown, and by the competitive nature of Jewish usury.⁵⁵ When partnerships did occur, they were almost always temporary agreements and often were formed between relatives. The typical Jewish marriage contract (ketubah)⁵⁶ provided that the bride's dowry be invested in debts by the groom's father in the period between the settlement of the marriage terms and the ceremony of marriage.⁵⁷ The profit from this investment went toward the cost of the wedding feast and

trousseau for the bride and groom, and at the same time, started the young man in his career.⁵⁸

The Jews also dealt in the buying and selling of their loans. Bonds of debt were considered one form of property, and were used much like banknotes.⁵⁹ The increased use of debts in this manner not only accelerated the flow of the currency system but served also to expand the amount of available currency within the English economy. The extent to which this practice might have influenced the growth of the English currency system was suggested by the small example that in 1240 the Lincoln archa⁶⁰ alone held starrs valued at £ 1,000.⁶¹

The Jewish financiers not only sold their bonds to each other, but also to a wide variety of non-Jews as well. Although the Christian barons and clerics appeared to have been actively competing with the Jews from 1100 to the Barons' War in 1269, they also became increasingly active in buying secured debts from the Jews.⁶² When a non-Jew bought a Jewish bond, he generally left the Jew in charge of the collection of the debt, though the Jew did so in the name of the purchaser and on his terms.⁶³ In this manner, a secondary market in speculation grew up around Jewish credit.

One of the best known speculators in Jewish bonds was Sir Adam of Stratton. Sir Adam was a clerk in the Exchequer at the end of Henry III's reign and continued to work in this capacity through the reign of Edward I.⁶⁴ It was clear from the formula by which Sir Adam bought debts from Hagin ben Master Moses, a well-known Lincoln Jew, that Hagin offered a guarantee on the bonds he sold, ensuring the buyer that the bonds were still active and legal.⁶⁵ It would be logical to assume that such guarantees were typical among the major businessmen of the

day and were expected as a show of good faith on the part of the seller in these frequent transactions.⁶⁶ In 1269 and 1271 the Crown decreed that it was unlawful to sell Jewish debts (or property) without royal license.⁶⁷ After 1271 several licenses were bought by the Jews. The Lincoln Jew, Isaac ben Benedict Gabbai sold debts to Thomas of Wainfleet after obtaining a license on 15 March, 1275.⁶⁸ In the same year Isaac's son-in-law, Isaac of Provins sold a debt of £ 20 to Robert, Bishop of Bath and Wells.⁶⁹ Solomon ben Jacob of Lincoln sold bonds to Durand of Newport.⁷⁰ After 1281 Henry of Braunceton, the king's clerk and archdeacon of Dorset bought a debt of £ 100 from the father and son team of Benedict of London and Hagin ben Benedict, both members of the Lincoln Jewish community.⁷¹

Not only were barons and clerics active in buying into the secondary market for Jewish usury, but members of the royal house, and even religious houses became involved. The queens of England occasionally indulged in speculation in Jewish debts. The innovative Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of Henry II, speculated in Jewish stars as a supplement of her own sources of wealth, independent from the royal treasury.⁷² Queen Eleanor of Provence, the wife of Henry III had several dealings with the reknowned Hagin ben Master Moses, member of the most noted family of Lincoln financiers.⁷³ It is possible that this Eleanor was instrumental in Hagin's appointment as Archpresbyter of the Jews,⁷⁴ as her successor, Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I, appointed Hagin's successor, Cok Hagin ben Deulecress, in 1281.⁷⁵

The religious houses of England accumulated a large amount of land during the thirteenth century at substantially reduced prices by buying Jewish debts. These ecclesiastics reimbursed Jewish creditors for the

price of a mortgage on bonded lands and then foreclosed on the delinquent debtors. Such a transaction between Elias of Lincoln and the prior of Bullington was recorded when difficulties brought matters to court.⁷⁶ The English laymen were also more receptive to paying their debts to Christian houses of worship than to the "unholy" Jews, and so a practice was established in which the Christian debtors donated their bonded lands to religious houses in return for release from their obligations to the Jews. In Lincoln, six debtors were recorded as donating their properties to Newhouse Abbey, and two others reportedly offered their bonded lands to Bullington Priory rather than let their property fall into the hands of Jews.⁷⁷ In this way, the churches acquired new lands, and the Jews were guaranteed payment on their loans. The activity had positive results for all parties involved.

While debts contracted on the security of land were of vital importance, those debts which were transacted on ordinary chattels, or the smaller debts which were repaid before interest became due were considered of little importance by the royal government and were rarely recorded by the office of the Exchequer. This, however, was the most common form of transaction in Jewish credit. A single record which attests to this was included in the will of Isaac ben Benedict Gabbai. This will, a list of all the assets owned by Isaac at the time of his death in 1275, was transcribed within the Calendar of the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews. Prominent in this list were two members of Lincoln's mayoral families. Two members of the feudal nobility and one cleric also were recorded as owing money to Isaac. Six other debtors who seem to have been mere villagers or feudal tenants, two of whom in fact owned no properties or chattels worthy of mention, appeared in

Isaac's bonds.⁷⁸ While no other list from Lincoln as complete as that of Isaac's debtors has survived, with which to compare the types of debtors, it may be assumed that this account was typical of the types of transactions handled by most of the Jewish financiers of the thirteenth century.⁷⁹

Laws governing Jewish moneylending were interspersed throughout the religious texts used by the Jews of the Middle Ages. These laws had their ancient origins in the Pentateuch and the Talmud and grew in number and complexity in the various Responzot of the Middle Ages. The primary works (other than the Talmud itself) employed by the Jews of the thirteenth century for conducting their business activity according to the correct halakhah was the Mishneh Torah and the commentaries of Rashi.

The Mishneh Torah ("Repetition of the Law") was compiled by the famous Spanish physician-philosopher, Moses Maimonides, (1135-1204), between 1170 and 1180. The Mishneh Torah, (also called the Yad Hachazakah; the "Strong Hand"), was a simplified, systematic codification of Biblical law, Talmudic law, the Responzot of the gaonim, and also included the writings of the Palestinian, Spanish, and French rabbis.⁸⁰ The Mishneh Torah was written in fourteen volumes, one of which dealt exclusively with civil law.⁸¹

The famous French rabbi, Rashi, also interpreted specific tenets of the halakhah in his commentaries.⁸² Rashi's works were undoubtedly well-known by and of a great importance to the English Jewry. Rashi was a contemporary of William the Conqueror, and the Jewish communities of England and of northern France continuously maintained contact with each other. Rashi wrote simplified, yet traditional commentaries on

the interpretation of Biblical and Talmudic laws and translated several previous treatises into Norman French.⁸³ In England, as on the Continent, Jewish courts of law were established to deal with problems of Jewish community and business law.⁸⁴ Due to the size of the Lincoln community and the large amount of business activity there, it was probable that a Beit Din was established within that community. While the Jewish community was allowed near autonomy under the English legal and administrative system, a body of English law did grow up around the Jewish vocation of moneylending.

The Jews, who gained no protection for their persons and property from the feudal order, owed their well-being solely to the mercy of the king, and thus became his vassals exclusively. A mid-twelfth century English jurist wrote that the Jews of the realm should be "under the guard and protection of the King's liege...For the Jews and all theirs belong to the King."⁸⁵ This quote aptly expressed the popular theory that the Crown in fact owned the Jews and therefore also owned their debts and their profits. The Crown had the right to confiscate the properties and debts of a Jew at death, although in most cases only one-third of the deceased's estate was claimed by the throne. The rest was disposed of according to rabbinic law or as was dictated in a will.⁸⁶ The king also confiscated Jewish bonds as he pleased. Several instances were recorded in which the king (or queen) claimed the debts of individual Jews without specific cause for doing so. In 1275 King Edward I confiscated a debt of £ 13 owed to the Lincoln Jew, Isaac ben Benedict Gabbai.⁸⁷ In 1276 Hagin ben Master Moses lost a considerable amount of money in debts when Queen Eleanor confiscated a bond worth £ 333 and one-half mark from Hagin. King Edward I took fifty marks of

a debt worth 1,000 marks owing to Hagin.⁸⁸ While such practices were common in the latter half of the thirteenth century, it was not until the reign of John Lackland that the English kings began to act with such capriciousness in their treatment of the Jews. Jewish credit was, after all, a lucrative source of wealth for the Crown, and it was to the advantage of the royal house to ensure that the Jews continued to be prosperous.

During the reign of Henry I the Crown borrowed and bought property from the Jews. The king was granted special terms in his debts to the Jews, and in return the creditors were given privileges which permitted them to make greater profits elsewhere.⁸⁹ This practice was quickly replaced by a wide variety of taxes, tallages and fees levied on the activities of the Jews.⁹⁰ A poll tax was levied on every individual Jew, including infants.⁹¹ Taxes were also required of the Jews for marrying the person of their choice, for getting a divorce, for attending a wedding in London,⁹² and for permission not to wear the tabula.⁹³ The Jews paid fees for making attornment,⁹⁴ that is hiring a lawyer, for making bail, and in order to receive a trial by a mixed jury.⁹⁵ In addition the Jews paid to use newly built bridges⁹⁶ and to move from one town to another, though this tax was apparently not a fixed amount.⁹⁷ The Jews, as well as the Christians, were required to pay for licenses to sell their debts and properties, but were also assessed by the Queen for the renewal of leases and for the privilege of obtaining charters.⁹⁸

Tallages were also levied by the Crown in order to pay for the expensive activities of the royal family, such as the marriage of the female members of the royal family.⁹⁹ Although other segments of the English population also were taxed, the Jews paid inordinately higher

percentages of the royal income. A Jew was not able to avoid heavy taxation even by the extreme act of removing himself from his faith. In the event that a Jew converted or was excommunicated by the Jewish community, all of his chattels and assets immediately escheated to the king.¹⁰⁰ Even if a Jew ceased to be a Jew, his possessions did not. They remained the property of the Crown.

The recording and collection of the revenues from these multitudinous levies on the English Jews was made possible through the creation of the office of the Exchequer of the Jews, which functioned as a separate branch of the royal financial administration. The central organ of this Exchequer was a committee of two to five Justices of the Jews.¹⁰¹ This number was supplemented by the Archpresbyter of the Jews (the Presbyter Judaeorum), a leading member of the Jewish moneylending class. The Archpresbyter, who was appointed by the king or queen,¹⁰² attended the meetings of the Justices to keep certain records and to advise the Justices on specifically Jewish matters. If the Archpresbyter was unable to be present at a meeting, he then authorized a deputy to represent him.¹⁰³ It was the duty of the Archpresbyter to oversee the collection of Jewish debts and properties. The Archpresbyter, Parnassim and Beit Din¹⁰⁴ shared the authority of Herem, excommunication, of individuals who were delinquent in paying their taxes to the royal treasury.¹⁰⁵ Appointment to the office of Archpresbyter was made for life, and thus only six Jews served in that capacity between 1199 and the expulsion in 1290.¹⁰⁶ Hagin ben Master Moses, the Lincoln Jew, served one of the longest terms, holding the office from 1258 until his death in 1281.

The Justices of the Jews also were served by a Jewish escheator

who managed the collection of the succession taxes on the estates of deceased Jews and, with an assessor supervised the aurum reginae, the ten-percent duty for renewing leases and obtaining charters.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the Justices were supplied with a Jewish clerk from among the London chirographers.¹⁰⁸ The Exchequer of the Jews functioned on the local level by establishing supervision of the archae which existed in the towns which held large Jewish communities. The archae were coffers of chests in which the Jews placed the starrs which recorded the terms of their loans. The archa was not an English invention, rather, reference was made to this tradition in the Talmud, the Mishnah, and the Targum as the Archi or Archaen. In England these chests were placed under the care of the Exchequer and were supervised by a set of chirographers. The term chirograph was the Latin word for manuscript, starr, and so those who supervised (and perhaps also wrote) the starrs were given this title.¹⁰⁹ Each archa had assigned to it two Jewish chirographers and two chirographers who were Christian. Two copyists, (probably Jewish scribes) and a Jewish Clerk of the Escheats were also part of the local administration.¹¹⁰

The earliest known Lincoln chirographers were Elias ben Benedict and Benedict ben Pictavin, who served in 1220. Joseph ben Samuel of Lincoln also served as a chirographer early in the thirteenth century.¹¹¹ Vives ben Master Moses and Benedict ben Master Moses, brothers of the Archpresbyter, both served as chirographers at one time, as did the father-in-law of Benedict's daughter.¹¹² Another Jew named Vives also was a Lincoln chirographer two years after the death of Vives ben Master Moses in 1274.¹¹³ Jacob of Brauncegate was recorded as a chirographer of Lincoln in 1275, as was Manser ben Benedict.¹¹⁴ It is

possible that another Jew named Manser ben Master also served in 1275, but it is more probable that the two Mansers were in fact the same man.¹¹⁵ In 1290 a Manser of Bradesworth was recorded as a chirographer, though this again could be Manser ben Benedict.¹¹⁶ Finally, a Manser ben Solomon was recorded as a chirographer for 1290.¹¹⁷ The names Jacob Le Clerk and Manser Le Despenser appeared in the Exchequer court documents as Lincoln Jews. It is possible that the last names of these men described their role within the offices of the Exchequer at the local level.¹¹⁸

The Exchequer also appointed committees of Jews to oversee the efficient assessment of Jewish taxpayers for the levying of tallages. Tallages were assigned in specific amounts needed by the Crown. A group of seven Jewish men, known as Majores (that is, mayors) were then elected to assign each Jewish community a percentage of the fixed tallage according to the ability of the community's members to pay. Within each community a committee of six Assessors were then assigned to determine the percentage of the community's tallage individual households would contribute.¹¹⁹ Individual assessors stepped aside when the tallage of a relative was being determined, and individuals had the right to appeal their assessment if they felt that their share was inordinately high.¹²⁰ The royal records assigning the tallage of 1249 brought to light the practice of appointing two wealthy Jews to the committee of Assessors, two middle class Jews, and two Jews from the lower class so that "the rich be not spared and the poor not too much grieved."¹²¹

In 1194 and 1241 Josce ben Abraham of Bungay served as an assessor of the Lincoln community. Leon ben Solomon also served in this capacity in 1219 and again in 1241. Judas le Fraunces was appointed as

assessor in 1233 and in 1241, and the Lincoln financier, Isaac ben Benedict Gabbai, served in 1241 as one of the Colchester assessors, although he was counted as a Lincoln Jew also. In 1249 Elias haCohen was a member of the Lincoln assessors.¹²²

The Exchequer of the Jews was officially established by a decree of Richard I in 1190, though the Exchequer and its local branches were actually the end product of a gradual evolution and grew as a result of a number of problems. The officers of the archae were responsible for keeping exact, legal starrs in the archae. These starrs, once placed in these chests, could not be withdrawn, except by the official quit-claim process or by order of the king. In this way accusations made by debtors that Jewish creditors had forged new starrs or overcharged on old ones could be investigated.¹²³ The riots of 1189-1191, which were sparked by events at the coronation of Richard I also influenced the creation of the Exchequer of the Jews. During these riots the starrs in several towns, including Lincoln, were burnt or dragged off, thus destroying evidence of debts owed to the Jews. In order to discourage the use of violence as a means for evading payment of debts, the Exchequer was created to administer the local archae and as a means of placing the security of the starrs under the protection of the Crown. Subsequently the starrs were recorded in duplicate: the Jewish creditor retained one copy, and the second was placed in the archa. With these security measures, nearly all debts could be reclaimed in the event that one official copy was destroyed as a result of violence against the Jews.¹²⁴

A final solution which led to the establishment of the Exchequer of the Jews was the death of Aaron of Lincoln, circa 1185. Aaron's

estate was immense: a total of 430 persons owed debts totaling £ 15,000 at the time of his death. Aaron's personal records were also difficult to assess. As a result of the vastness of Aaron's estate, his four sons, Abraham, Vives, Benedict, and Elias, either could not or were not allowed to divide the estate. All of Aaron's debts escheated to the Crown, leaving Aaron's sons to their own financial resources with which to carry on the family business.¹²⁵ The acquisition of such an enormous account by the royal accountants required a separate body to sort out and administer the collection of debts owed to Aaron. The records maintained by the Exchequer of the Jews on parchment rolls provided an invaluable source of information regarding the moneylending practices of the Jews, and also the names of many of the important lenders in England.¹²⁶ It was possible to discover the names of some of the major moneylending personalities and families of thirteenth century Lincoln, and even to determine their positions in the community by forreting out their titles, the number and amounts of the debts owed to them from the several lists and accounts maintained by the Exchequer.

One of the most important and influential Lincoln moneylenders of the thirteenth century was Hagin ben Master Moses. Although Hagin's brothers, Benedict, Vives and Elias were also major personalities in the Lincoln community, Hagin was far more involved in lending than the rest of his family.¹²⁷ Hagin served the Lincoln community as a chirographer, as a court witness, and also as the Archpresbyter of the Jews from 1258 until his death in 1281. In spite of his rigorous duties, Hagin also had a long history of lending activity. In 1257 Hagin was first mentioned in the Plea Rolls of the court of the Jewish Exchequer

for a starr worth five and one-half marks. In 1258 and 1259 he acquired new debts in Stanmere, Cheyndut, Hautsted, and in Somerset county. In 1267 Hagin acquired a yearly rentfee of £ 15 from Sir John le Ferum of London and Lincoln. Also in 1268 Hagin obtained a debt of fifty marks from a knight of Hereford, and in 1269 he loaned another Hereford knight forty marks. In 1269 Hagin also loaned two marks to two men in Derteford and £ 10 to a knight of Lincoln. In 1271 Hagin and his brother Elias were recorded as owing a debt to Edward, the Price of Wales, and in 1275 Hagin served as a mainpernor for his brother, Benedict. Hagin and Aaron Crespin sold a debt of £ 15 to the Abbot of Derham, while Queen Eleanor quitclaimed one of Hagin's debtors. Hagin quitclaimed Roger de la Leye, the Archdeacon of Essex, in 1275 and also served as a witness for a quitclaim for Aaron Crespin in Sussex, although later in the year Hagin and Aaron had a dispute over property in London. In 1275 the Crown took a debt belonging to Hagin worth £ 500, and twice went to court. Hagin also made loans in York and in Leicester that year. Hagin and his son, Jacob, quitclaimed a steward of the king in 1276, and Hagin sold the queen all the debts owed him by Stephen de Chendut. Hagin also made a loan in Nottingham in 1276. Also in 1276 the king took from Hagin a debt of £ 333 and one-half marks, and fifty marks of a 1,000 mark debt from Norfolk county. In 1277 Hagin spent a great deal of time in court, over his own cases, and with Miles, nephew of Leon serving Hagin as his attorney, and also in support of the claims of Aaron Crespin. After Hagin's death in 1281, his son Jacob continued as a moneylender, and was listed as owing £ 80 worth of outstanding debts at the time of the Expulsion in 1290.¹²⁸

Another Lincoln financier with a long history of moneylending

activity was Isaac ben Benefict Gabbai. Isaac first appeared in the royal records in 1218 for quitclaiming a debt in Gloucester, and appeared again in 1220 for an investigation concerning his land and houses in Colchester. In 1244 Isaac was taken to court for charges of unlawfully demanding a debt, and appeared again in court that year as the attorney for Aaron of Stanford at Colchester. The Justices were again looking for Isaac in 1268, and in 1270 he appeared in the royal records as a creditor in Colchester. Bonds were recorded in 1273 in Isaac's name in Kent and York, and in 1274 Isaac appeared in court in Canterbury. In 1275 Isaac was again called to the court, but also made at least one more loan, and paid six shillings with Josce ben Aaron for a writ of residence in Essex. Isaac also obtained permission from the Crown and the Justices to sell all the bonds of Richard Le Bret that he owned to a Christian. In 1275 Isaac sold three such debts worth £ 24, £ 10 and ten marks. Also in 1275 Isaac was acquitted of a debt of Norwich before his death in that year. The complete list of Isaac's debts and possessions was recorded in the Plea Rolls for 1275, and gave the details of the succession tax and the inheritance of his heirs.¹²⁹

Leon ben Solomon was also a prominent Lincoln moneylender until his tragic death in 1256. Leon was hanged for his alleged role in the ritual slaying of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln.¹³⁰ Leon was first recognized in the official records when he was appointed an assessor for the tallage of 1219 for Lincoln. In 1229 Leon was given seisin of land by the king for a debt which he had financed along with other Lincoln creditors. In 1234 Leon again was acknowledged as a creditor in the Plea Rolls, and in 1241 he again served as a Lincoln assessor. In the year 1244 Leon acquired two more bonds, one of which was for thirty-

five marks and was secured on a plea of lands. In 1247 Leon was appointed as one of the ten Majores to levy a tallage of 4,000 marks on the English Jews. As a result of Leon's conviction and execution as a criminal, his properties escheated to the royal government.¹³¹ Therefore, Leon's son, Jacob, was deprived of his father's estate with which to begin his career as a moneylender. Jacob first appeared as a creditor in the official records in 1267, and was hence recorded as a creditor in 1268 and in 1270. Jacob apparently made no other loans before his death in 1279.¹³²

Manser ben Solomon of Bradesworth had a much longer career as a Lincoln financier than the unfortunate Leon ben Solomon. Manser was appointed chirographer in 1255 and was still functioning in that capacity in 1270. In the year 1266 Manser, along with Hagin the son-in-law of Master Benedict, Manser ben Benedict, Isaac ben Benedict, Elias of Doncaster, and other Lincoln Jews, was given royal permission to seize all the pledges of debts they owned unless the debtors could prove that they had been quit of their debts. This was granted by the king as a result of the damage done by "enemies of the king," the Disinherited Knights. In 1272 Manser was again recorded in the Plea Rolls, but had a charter revoked for his arrears in paying tallages owed to the Crown. This evasion of his taxes continued until Manser was jailed in the Tower of London for his negligence. Manser apparently was released within the year, for in 1273 he obtained a charter in connection with Benedict of Lincoln and Josce Bullock in order to sell a debt of £ 60 to Aaron ben Vives. In 1275 Manser spent much time in the court of the Justices of the Jews. In that year Manser filed suit demanding the payment of a debt worth £ 47 and one-half mark which had accrued £ 90

in interest. Manser also served as a Mainpernor for Isaac ben Abraham of Tykehill and also for Benedict of Lincoln in 1275.¹³³ Nothing more was recorded of Manser's activities after the Statutum de Judeismo, (Statute of the Jewry), issued by Edward I in 1275, but in 1290 Manser ben Solomon of Bradesworth was noted as owning a house in the parish of St. George in Lincoln.¹³⁴

The Statute of the Jewry was an attempt by the English Crown to take the Jews out of the competition for moneylending and to force them into the more "honorable" professions in trade and agriculture. Although the Jews were not allowed to own manorial lands, they were permitted at this time to lease land during a fifteen year period in contractual agreements which were not to exceed ten years. King Edward also neglected to take steps to loosen the control of the English trade and craft guilds over the competition and regulation of artisan and trade professions. Consequently the Statute only served to deny the Jews the right to continue in their primary occupation of lending, without allowing their employment in other vocations. The Jewish financiers were not even allowed to collect the monies they had previously expended in loans.¹³⁵ The economy of the Jewish community in England, already declining as a result of oppressive taxation, was thus effectively strangled by Edward's policies.

Edward's statute of 1275 was not a drastic departure from English policy, which had interfered with Jewish lending practices since 1269 when perpetual rentcharges were declared to be illegal, or from the Jewish policies of the Continental governments.¹³⁶ Throughout the thirteenth century ecclesiastical scholars and legal authorities on the Continent had deplored the exploitation of Jewish usurers by their

governments as an immoral practice, and had campaigned to end Jewish lending altogether. The laws of France from 1230 onward reflected the influence of the clergy which pressed for the abolition of Jewish usury. In 1239 Prince Archambaud of Bourbon outlawed Jewish money-lending "for the salvation of my soul and the souls of my predecessors"¹³⁷ In 1253 Louis IX of France moved to expel all the Jews within his realm except those engaged in manual labor for their livelihoods. So that his soul might be saved, the Prince of Brabant provided in his will that all usurers be expelled from his principality unless they vowed to give up the despised profession in favor of commerce. When the Prince died, his widow sent inquiries to the major Church intellectuals of the day for advice regarding the Prince's stipulation. In March of 1274 Thomas Aquinas sent his reply to the woman. Aquinas accepted the concept that the sovereigns of Europe had the right to possess the Jews and to "treat Jewish goods as their own property," as long as the Jews were left enough provisions to survive. However, Aquinas also pointed out that monarchs who exploited Jewish property for their own profit were in fact profiting from usury, and "they would do better to compel the Jews to work for their living, as is done in parts of Italy rather than to allow them to live in idleness and grow rich from usury."¹³⁸ It was only a year after this decision was published that Edward I issues his Statute of the Jewry. Although the clauses of this law which restricted Jewish moneylending were later repealed, Edward had sufficiently separated the Jews from their economic base in lending. The Jewish communities of England were not able to recover sufficiently from the damage done. Thus it was a destitute group which was expelled from the English realm in 1290. The Jews no

longer benefitted the Crown, and failed to find profit in the professions of trade or craft; consequently they lost their mandate and right to reside within the realm. They were forced to leave for the Continent on the mysteriously unlucky day of T'sha b'Av, 1290.¹³⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹Hill, pp. 154, 320. Evidence from Lincoln suggests that the churches backed the local gilds there: Ecclesiastics in Lincoln were active in the wool trade, and the markets were actually held in the churchyards of Lincoln until 1223, when they were ordered to relocate in the streets at convenient sites. Religious as well as industrial and trade gilds were not common during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England. For information of the functions and controls of the English gilds and religious connections, see: Sir John Clapham, A Concise Economic History of Britain (Cambridge, 1949), pp. 127-132.

²A History of the Jews in England, p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 102. Richardson, p. 73. This is not meant to imply that the Jews did not have competition from other segments of the English population, however this will be discussed below.

⁴A History of the Jewish People, p. 471.

⁵Richardson, p. 7. The first reference to Jewish financial activity in England was officially recorded in 1131.

⁶Starrs, p. xcv.

⁷A History of the Jews in England, p. 113.

⁸Baron, p. 251.

⁹A History of the Jewish People, p. 471.

¹⁰Starrs, pp. xvi-xix. The word "starr" and its Hebrew equivalent simply mean "document," and included all the legal documents of the Jews, including quitclaims, bills of sale, leases and Ketubot; marriage contracts. See Appendix B for an example of the typical starr written by the thirteenth century English Jews.

¹¹Starrs, pp. xvi-xvii. A History of the Jews in England, p. 125. Lipman, p. 82. Much of the legal language of the Hebrew language came from Aramaic. Several French and English words were also transliterated in the Hebrew starrs.

¹²Lipman, p. 86. Roth narrows this to five to six months.

¹³A History of the Jews in England, p. 107.

¹⁴Lipman, p. 86.

- ¹⁵ A History of the Jewish People, p. 471.
- ¹⁶ A History of the Jews in England, p. 107. An example is provided in Hill, pp. 219-220.
- ¹⁷ A History of the Jews in England, p. 106.
- ¹⁸ Hill, pp. 219-220.
- ¹⁹ Richardson, pp. 67-68, 78, 95. B. Lionel Abrahams, "The Condition of the Jews of England at the Time of their Expulsion in 1290," Trans. J.H.S.E., vol. II, passim.
- ²⁰ Lipman, pp. 163-164. Hill, pp. 219-220. Richardson, p. 68. Richardson suggests that such loans were contracted on all kinds of grain including wheat, barley, and peas, as well as wool and wool-fells. However, this authoress found no rentfees on these specific crops in her research of the bonds owing to the Jewish financiers of Lincoln.
- ²¹ C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, pp. 43-44.
- ²² This law was set down in the Statute of the Jewry by Edward I. This was a body of precise restrictions for the English Jews and on their financial activities. This decree is more fully discussed below.
- ²³ C.P.R.E.J., vol. III, pp. 297, 323.
- ²⁴ Abrahams, "The Condition of the Jews of England at the Time of their Expulsion in 1290," Trans. J.H.S.E., pp. 94-96.
- ²⁵ A History of the Jews in England, p. 105. Richardson, pp. 78-79. An example of a debt secured by a coat of mail is cited by Hill, p. 219. An example of a debt secured by a detinue of books is cited in Starrs, p. 135.
- ²⁶ A History of the Jews in England, p. 105. "Scarlet," or bloody cloth was banned because materials in such a condition were likely to have come into the hands of the debtor through robbery or some other form of violence.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ A History of the Jewish People, p. 473.
- ²⁹ Hill, pp. 218-219.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 218.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid., pp. 219-220.

³³C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, p. 85. The name Episcopus is translated as "The Bishop." It is unclear whether this name was used as a denotation of an office, or if it is a translation of the Hebrew, haCohen. In this case it is likely to be the latter.

³⁴Richardson, pp. 78-79. A History of the Jewish People, p. 106. Lipman, p. 81.

³⁵Richardson, p. 78.

³⁶Ibid. For examples of rentcharges from Lincoln, see C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, pp. 23, 210-211, 231, 246, and 250.

³⁷Helen M. Chew, "A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E., vol. 11, p. 95. C.P.R.E.J., Forward, passim.

³⁸A History of the Jewish People, p. 400. Ben-Sasson cites J. Elfenbein, ed., Responza of Rashi, p. 268.

³⁹"A Jewish Aid To Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E., vo. 11, p. 95.

⁴⁰"As in passage," Richardson, pp. 84-85.

⁴¹Mentioned above. The Plea Rolls were parchment scrolls on which the stars of the Jews were recorded by the officers of the court of the Exchequer of the Jews (see below). Selected translations of these rolls were edited by J. M. Rigg.

⁴²See Appendix A for map.

⁴³Bat, or the Ashkenazic: bas is Hebrew for daughter or daughter of.

⁴⁴Gabbai is the Ashkenazic pronunciation for קב"ל meaning collector or treasurer. This name implies that the Jew was the community treasurer, or was a store-keeper. Starrs, p. 137. This Jew is also identified as Isaac Gabbai, ben Benedict. Thus Gabbai could have been accepted as the family name, or both the father and the son could have followed the same profession.

⁴⁵Copse; a thicket of small trees or bushes for cutting.

⁴⁶Benedict's Hebrew name, that is, the way he signed his name was Berechiah de Nicole (Nicole is the French name for Lincoln). The Hebrew version of Benedict is actually Baruch.

⁴⁷"The Condition of the Jews of England at the Time of Their Expulsion in 1290," Trans. J.H.S.E., pp. 95-96.

⁴⁸The meaning or derivation of this name is unclear.

⁴⁹Lipman, pp. 23-32.

- ⁵⁰ Starrs, pp. 135-136.
- ⁵¹ A History of the Jewish People, p. 473.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 400.
- ⁵⁴ A History of the Jews in England, p. 106.
- ⁵⁵ Starrs, p. xcvi.
- ⁵⁶ The ketubah is a legally binding contract, first devised in the second century B.C., as a means of protecting the married woman and to lend dignity to the marriage. The ketubah is a rigidly formulaic text written entirely in Aramaic. This formula has not changed from the establishment of the ketubah until the present.
- ⁵⁷ The Jews, as was the case with their counterparts in the Christian upper classes, prearranged their weddings. This was done by the parents of the couple before they reached maturity. The bride's dowry was handed over to the father of the groom at the time the marriage was contracted. Baron, p. 13. Hill, pp. 236-237.
- ⁵⁸ A majority of the business partnerships between the Jewish financiers occurred between fathers and their sons or sons-in-law.
- ⁵⁹ A History of the Jews in England, p. 113.
- ⁶⁰ This is discussed below.
- ⁶¹ A History of the Jews in England, p. 113.
- ⁶² Richardson, p. 73.
- ⁶³ A History of the Jews in England, pp. 108-109.
- ⁶⁴ Starrs, p. 84.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 102.
- ⁶⁶ For examples of this, see: C.P.R.E.J., pp. 88, 186. Starrs, pp. 136, 170, 171.
- ⁶⁷ Starrs, p. 84.
- ⁶⁸ C.P.R., 1272-1281, p. 83.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 98.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 152.
- ⁷¹ C.P.R., 1281-1292, p. 116.

⁷²For information regarding Eleanor's financial resources see: Marion Meade, Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography (New York, 1977). For the wives of Henry III and Edward I, see Starrs, passim.

⁷³Starrs, pp. 82, 83, 171. C.P.R.E.J., p. 470.

⁷⁴The specific nature of this office is discussed below.

⁷⁵Starrs, p. 172.

⁷⁶C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, p. 5.

⁷⁷Starrs, passim.

⁷⁸C.P.R.E.J., pp. 266-268.

⁷⁹For more inclusive lists of the types of debtors and debts made to medieval Jews, see: Richard W. Emery, The Jews of Perpignan in the Thirteenth Century (New York, 1959), passim.

⁸⁰Israel Abrahams, Chapters on Jewish Literature (Philadelphia, 1899), pp. 135-137.

⁸¹Ibid. Adele Bildersee, Jewish Post-Biblical History Through Great Personalities: From Jochanan ben Zakki Through Moses Mendelssohn (Cincinnati, 1918), pp. 116-119.

⁸²Starrs, p. 271. Bildersee, pp. 137-148. Chapters on Jewish Literature, pp. 119-125. A History of the Jews in England, pp. 126, 128.

⁸³Starrs, pp. 269-270. A History of the Jews in England, p. 34.

⁸⁴Starrs, pp. lvii-lix, 278.

⁸⁵Baron, p. 315.

⁸⁶C.P.R.E.J., pp. 268-269, for example. A History of the Jews in England, p. 101.

⁸⁷Starrs, p. 136.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 83.

⁸⁹Hill, p. 43; Richardson, p. 25.

⁹⁰Hill, p. 46.

⁹¹A History of the Jews in England, p. 98. Graetz, p. 589. "The Condition," Trans. J.H.S.E., p. 83.

⁹²A History of the Jews in England, p. 98.

- ⁹³Lipman, p. 66.
- ⁹⁴C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, p. 269.
- ⁹⁵Lipman, p. 66. Mixed jury refers to a jury including Jews as well as Christians.
- ⁹⁶A History of the Jews in England, p. 98.
- ⁹⁷The amount of this tax seems to have varied between one and two bezants. See C.P.R.E.J.
- ⁹⁸A History of the Jews in England, p. 112.
- ⁹⁹"A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E., passim.
- ¹⁰⁰A History of the Jews in England, p. 98. Richardson, p. 32.
- ¹⁰¹A History of the Jews in England, p. 112. Lipman, p. 68.
- ¹⁰²A History of the Jews in England, p. 112. Graetz, p. 588. Starrs, p. 172.
- ¹⁰³A History of the Jews in England, p. 112.
- ¹⁰⁴The description and function of these bodies is discussed in Chapter I.
- ¹⁰⁵Graetz, p. 588.
- ¹⁰⁶These are: Jacob of Lindon (1199-1207)
 Josce (1207-1236)
 Aaron ben Josce of York (1136-1243)
 Elias le Eveske (1243-1258)
 Hagin ben Master Moses (1258-1281)
 Cok Hagin ben Deulecress (1281-1290)
- ¹⁰⁷"gold of the queen," A History of the Jews in England, p. 112.
- ¹⁰⁸Ibid. Roth suggests that Jews also filled other minor positions within the Exchequer office.
- ¹⁰⁹Starrs, vol. I, pp. xiv-xix.
- ¹¹⁰Ibid. A History of the Jews in England, p. 110. Under the Exchequer's administration, the Archae were confined to the towns in which there existed a major Jewish community.
- ¹¹¹C.P.R.E.J., vol. III, p. 44. Starrs, p. 174.
- ¹¹²Starrs, p. 173.
- ¹¹³C.P.R.E.J., vol. III, p. 122.

114 Starrs, p. 123.

115 Magister means rabbi, as does Master. The interchangeability of last names created a problem in sorting out the various families and individuals among the whole of the English population until the end of the thirteenth century, when family names became relatively constant.

116 Starrs, p. 206.

117 Ibid., p. 205.

118 C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, p. 288.

119 Starrs, pp. 3, 43, 71.

120 A History of the Jews in England, p. 100.

121 Starrs, p. 43.

122 Ibid., pp. 134, 156, 164, 165.

123 Such accusations were recorded in the Plea Rolls, and resulted in investigations in which the chirographers who had presided over the transaction were called to testify. In 1220 Moses ben Brun was actually convicted of forging a charter worth £ 24 owed by Richard, Prior of Dunstable to Moses' father. The entire English Jewry raised a bribe in order to commute Moses' death sentence, and in 1221, the English Jews were assessed for the cost of deporting the unfortunate Moses. See "A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E., pp. 97-99.

124 During the thirteenth century the English Jews and their archae experienced several more attacks. The Jews of Lincoln face pillage in 1220 from Christian Crusaders. In 1240, their books were burned, and the 1260's brought frequent attacks of the Jews of Lincoln.

125 A History of the Jewish People, pp. 471, 473. A History of the Jews in England, p. 101. Lipman, p. 67.

126 See Starrs, p. xiv. The feet of the starrs went to the debtor once he had repaid the debt. The copies of the starrs which went to the Jews were generally lost after the expulsion of 1290.

127 Little is known of two other of Hagin's brothers: Jacob and Isaac.

128 Starrs, pp. 82-102, 170-171. C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, pp. 254, 288, 199, vol. II, pp. 170, 249; vol. III, pp. 9, 297, 323.

129 Starrs, pp. 133-137. C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, p. 311; vol. II, pp. 118, 123, 266.

130 See Chapter I for the events of 1255.

¹³¹At this time the Jews had been pawned by the king. However the royal financial administration over the Jews continued to govern the financial obligations of the Jews.

¹³²C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, pp. 58, 92, 205; vol. III (for Jacob), p. 250. Starrs, pp. 156, 197, 223.

¹³³A mainpertor; was one who acted as a surety for a defendant's appearance in court on a specified day. The mainpertor was similar to one who posts bail in contemporary legal terminology.

¹³⁴C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, pp. 147, 210, 291; vol. II, pp. 19, 190, 293; vol. III, pp. 15, 24, 36. Starrs, pp. 136, 206, 207. "the Conditions," Trans. J.H.S.E.

¹³⁵Lipman, p. 163.

¹³⁶"The Conditions," Trans. J.H.S.E., "A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E., p. 95. Baron, p. 246. A History of the Jews in England, p. 96.

¹³⁷"The Conditions," Trans. J.H.S.E., passim.

¹³⁸A History of the Jewish People, p. 474, citing A. P. D'Entreves, Aquinas, Selected Political Writings (Oxford, 1952), p. 85f.

¹³⁹The Ninth day of the Hebrew month, Av. This was the historic date of the destruction of the Temple in Israel. The Ninth of Av is a day celebrated for its calamities throughout Jewish history. For the Expulsion from England on this date, see Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 63-68.

CHAPTER III

SECONDARY OCCUPATIONS

The Jewish community in Lincoln was not a classless society in which all the members competed for debtors on an equal basis. Only a small minority of the financiers within the community were able to amass large estates. Aaron of Lincoln stood out in the history of the Anglo-Jewry solely as a result of his great wealth. During the thirteenth century, when the English kings ceased to borrow from the Jews and resorted to taxing them in order to satiate their monetary needs, no other Jew was able to equal the fortunes of Aaron. However, there were other Jews within Lincoln who did accumulate large estates: the sons of Master Moses, Elias Episcopus and the Jewess, Belaset bat Solomon of Wallingford were just a few of the members of the wealthy class of the Lincoln community during the thirteenth century.

The estates amassed by individual Jews during the thirteenth century rarely remained intact during a full lifetime. Taxes and tallages whittled away at the larger fortunes, particularly after 1200.¹ Financial ruin came unexpectedly to many as a result of the periodic anti-Jewish riots. Accusation of ritual murder or of a number of torts, such as failure to pay tallages, caused many Jews to fall from favor with the courts or with the king. Loss of the king's favor meant liquidation of accumulated fortunes. Consequently the small faction of wealthy Jews within the Lincoln community constantly changed its membership.

According to the information furnished by the Nortampton "Donum" of 1194,² Vives and Abraham, two of Aaron of Lincoln's four sons, were among the wealthiest Jews of Lincoln at the close of the twelfth century. The wealthiest individual, however, was a Jew named Ursell (perhaps this was Ursell ben Pucelle, who first appeared as a financier in 1191).³ The Jewess Pucelle was an early money lender in the community and was also recorded in 1194 as a member of the middle class.⁴ Benedict Pemas⁵ was the third richest member of the Lincoln community, followed by Peitevin de Nicole (perhaps this was Peitivin the Great, owner of the Lincoln synagogue). The rabbi, Jacob de Nicole⁶ and Benedict ben Isaac also were assigned payments in the 1194 tallage which suggest that they were also members of the wealthy class.

By 1221, tallage figures reported that Elias of Lincoln (Elias Episcopus?) and his family were by far the wealthiest Jews in Lincoln. Elias was assessed an amazing £ 29 for his share of the tallage, while the next highest amount paid by a single Jew was a mere £ 4, paid by Peitivin's son, Benedict. In 1221 Ursell ben Pucelle ranked third in the hierarchy of the wealthy of the Lincoln Jewry. He paid approximately £ 3. Josce of Bungay, who apparently had recently moved to Lincoln⁷ paid slightly less toward the tallage than Ursell, and he was followed by Dueleccress ben Mathathie, Sampson Frumentin and Mosse ben Asser as members of the wealthy class.⁸

Another tallage list published by Cecil Roth showed that in the year 1240 Peitivin ben Elisa and his sister, Fluria, were assigned the highest percentage of the tallage for that year, at £ 17, followed by Leon (Levi) ben Solomon, who paid £ 14.⁹ Jacob Le Prestre was assigned £ 12 for his and son son, Peitavin's portion of the tallage. Abraham

de Colchester and Joia, Isaac ben Elias, Dyaie ben Elias and his wife, Ivetta, also paid high percentages of the tallage for 1221, followed by Peitivin ben Manasseril and Sarrah, Josce de Bungay and Deulecresse de Graham. Carsie Episcopus paid the eleventh highest tax, at £ 1.60 and might have been considered upper class, or at least upper-middle class within the community at large.

Finally, the most complete list to have survived was an assessment of the wealth of the English Jews at the time of their expulsion from England in 1290. This list included the amount of holdings each individual claimed in properties, monies, corn and wool.¹⁰ Again, one Lincoln Jew stood out as the wealthiest individual in the community: Jacob ben Isaac of Brauncegate's estate was estimated at £ 325, plus a messuage and a good house. Hagin ben Benedict, the grandson of Master Moses, held an estimated £ 269 and two messuages plus a plot with a kitchen.¹¹ Abraham ben Dyay's fortune came to approximately £ 233, and Solomon ben Deulecress of London owned roughly £ 220 and several houses. Moses ben Isaac of London, a Lincoln Jew, was worth £ 144, and Meyr ben Bonne's assets were estimated at £ 132. Abraham's younger brother, Dyay ben Dyay was assessed at £ 125, and Hagin ben Deulecress's fortune amounted to £ 106. Jacob ben Sampson Levi, member of an influential Lincoln family, owned £ 92 and a messuage, though his brother was assessed at only £ 51. Their sons and father held few assets to their names, however. Manser of Bradeworth owned £ 87 worth of assets, plus two messuages and a fine home. Finally, Jacob Cok ben Hagin's fortune amounted to £ 80.

These names comprised only a small faction within the whole community of Lincoln, yet the wealthy of the community were often assumed

to be examples of the entire community by later observers and were stereotyped in subsequent literature and scholarly works.¹² Another distorted, yet popular caricature of the medieval English Jew, personified by Shakespear's Shylock, was that of the sickly, round-shouldered soul, who lived hidden away from the public, counting his coins and pouring over parchment scrolls. This common stereotype of the Jewish financier was, however, far from true.

While moneylending was the principal occupation of the Jews in Lincoln, and particularly of the wealthier Jews, the Anglo-Jewry were not restricted solely to usury for a livelihood. Although records showed that for some Jews moneylending was a lucrative business, it was never a fulltime job. Only a few medieval families could in fact have survived solely on the profits of lending.¹³ Thus, several of the Lincoln Jews took on second and third occupations.

Many of the secondary occupations held by the wealthy Lincoln Jews were previously discussed. The wealthy lenders took on the profitable positions within the royal financial administration as chirographers and Archpresbyter. They also served the royal government as lawyers and witnesses to the courts of the Exchequer. As attorneys the Jews served their fellow Jews in the highly formulaic court proceedings. Miles, nephew of Leon, served Hagin ben Master Moses as his London attorney.¹⁴ Isaac Gabbai ben Benedict was employed by Aaron of Stanford as his attorney at Colchester in 1241.¹⁵ The Lincoln financier, Solomon Bunting, also took on a secondary income by working as an attorney.¹⁶ The Jewish attorneys not only acted in court for each other, but also served as attorneys for Christian financiers and debtors at the court of the Exchequer. Evidence for this point was afforded by Hel' (Elias) of

Sunnings, a Lincoln Jew who brought suit in 1244 against the debtor, William Tinte, in the name of a Christian client, John Tinte.¹⁷ Several Lincoln Jews also served as witnesses for quitclaim procedures in the courts of the Exchequer. Examples of the witnesses among the Lincoln Jewry included such illustrious personalities as Hagin ben Master Moses and his brother, Vives, and haRav Jacob de Nicole.¹⁸ Carsey the Bishop (Gershom haCohen) served with other prominent Lincoln Jews as a witness for a Christian charter which was registered at the Lincoln cathedral between the years 1252 and 1255.¹⁹

Not only did the wealthy Lincoln Jews find employment as government agents, but also as physicians and scientists. Medical and scientific studies were included in the lessons of the Jewish students in the middle ages, and Cecil Roth claimed to have identified a minimum of twelve Jewish physicians in medieval England.²⁰ The Jewish physicians of the middle ages were far more advanced than their Christian counterparts, and thus their services were in demand among the non-Jewish population as well as within the Jewish communities. The reputation of Elias ben Master Moses among the Christians was evidenced by the plea of the Count of Flanders that haRav Elias be permitted to journey to Flanders in order to attend to the Count's ill nephew. Elias was granted permission, and left for Flanders in 1280.²¹

Studies of the medieval Jewry often ruled out Jewish participation in trade in England because of the powerful monopolies enjoyed by the Christian trade guilds, and because so few records existed to lend evidence to the existence of Jewish merchants within the realm.²² Records of Jewish involvement in corn and wool trade after 1275 were often discounted as cover-ups for illegal lending activities. Indeed, such was

the justification given by King Edward I for expelling the Jews in 1290.²³ However, in 1278 Bonami ben Josce of York was granted a royal license specifically to trade in wool.²⁴ Jacob ben Hagin also got such a license to trade in cloth.²⁵ It is improbable that the Jews who lived in Lincoln, a town which existed by virtue of its cloth industry, did not find employment as dyers, fullers and weavers. The Responsa of Elijah Menachem (Elias ben Master Moses' Hebrew name and the name he used in his signature) dealt with the problems of Jewish cloth merchants and tailors, thus lending proof of the existence of Jewish merchants in Lincoln.²⁶ The Jewish financiers who were identified as leading members of the community, and yet had few debts registered to their names of the royal rolls, must have dealt in trade in order to supplement their income from usury. Middle class lenders, those who dealt extensively as pawnbrokers, were also involved in trading unreclaimed items. Consequently, the Jews must also have done repair work on Jewlry, clothing, armor and plate.²⁷ Jewish goldsmiths and silversmiths were necessary to the Jewish community as makers of synagogue chattels such as kaddish cups, candlesticks, the eternal light fixture and breast plates for the Torah scrolls, spice boxes, mezuzoth and yads (pointers used so that the Torah parchment would not become sullied by frequent handling).²⁸ Cecil Roth suggested that minters were also to be found among the English Jewry.²⁹ While the title of no Lincoln Jew identified such a profession, several Jews on the Continent were indeed employed to coin the monies of the realm.³⁰ Middle class Jews, particularly the Italian Jews, were known to supplement their incomes as skirmiseurs, that is, fencing masters, and as dance-masters.³¹ Jewish artists were also present, and the title Hozeh (seer) suggested that Jewish

astronomers were also present in England.

The upper and middle class Jews also increased their fortunes by opening their large homes as hostels. These Jewish inns were apparently attractive to barons supervising the crops outside the city until King Edward I forbade the Christians to continue to lodge with the Jews.³² Just as the wealthy community leaders found secondary employment at the royal courts, so did members of the educated middle class. Middle class jobs offered at the royal courts included clerks and scribes. Jacob Le Clerk was previously identified.³³ The biblical Hebrew and Aramaic used in the Jewish business documents during the middle ages was not written in script form; therefore, the writing of such documents required the skills of professional calligraphers. The sofer (calligrapher) was a skilled craftsman who had studied the halakkah and followed a precise ritual in writing. He had to know how to handle the special pens used to create correct Hebraic lettering.³⁴

The lower classes of the Jewish community, like their Christian counterparts, have not left many records. The lower class Jews spent a major portion of their day struggling to eke out a living, and therefore had no time to indulge in the luxury of education, thus the name of a poor Jew was rarely if ever recorded in the treatises of the Jewish religious leaders. Jews who did not participate in lending money on the security of lands or rents were rarely recorded in the Plea Rolls kept by the Exchequer of the Jews, and those too poor to contribute to the tallages were not recorded in the royal surveys. Consequently, little was written to contribute information about the life the poor led, what they did, or even who they were. However, they did constitute a major faction within the community. The percentage of poor Jews within

the English communities has been estimated at between one-third and "a large majority."³⁵ The lower classes of Jews, just as the wealthy class, was in constant flux. The lower class Jews were the most likely to convert, for they held no properties or chattels worthy of escheat, and therefore had nothing to lose by rejecting their religion.³⁶ Conversely, the Crown deported those Jews who did not add to the coffers of the royal treasury.³⁷ Thus, conversion among the lower classes of Jews appears to have been a problem in the English Jewries.³⁸

In the list of the chattels and properties of the Lincoln Jewish households at the time of their expulsion from England, every one of the sixty-six entries owned assets in some form, although many households had very little: Bonamy ben Bonamy claimed only twelve shillings worth of corn as the extent of his assets; Mansell de Tykehill owned only one small cottage, which was in poor condition at the time of expulsion. Mansell's father, Abraham of Tykehill, was registered as a moneylender in 1275.³⁹ Bonne, the daughter of Manser owned only £ 1 worth of corn assets, and Benedict ben Jacob held £ 2 and ten shillings in corn, although Benedict was possibly young and just beginning his career in the corn market. Moses le Evesk (the Bishop, haCohen) had only £ 3 in coin to his name, and Jacob ben Abraham only £ 4. Jacob's father, Abraham ben Elias owned £ 6, 13s. 4d. worth of wool, and therefore also was a member of the deprived class of Jews. Samuel and Abraham Levi were very poor members of the Lincoln Jewry in 1290, although their sons held assets which qualified them for middle class.⁴⁰ Leon ben Jasce ben Bonefy's fortune amounted to £ 7 in wool, and his brother Bon owned only £ 6, 13s. 8d. in wool assets, although their two brothers and their sister held middle class assets in wool and in corn. Josce

Gabbai also is recorded as holding only £ 8 in wool, although his relative, Elias, was wealthy in comparison to the majority of the community. Milca bat Benedict owned slightly over £ 5 worth of wool, and her daughter, Lely, owned just a little more. Milca's brother, Leon, held £ 4 in coin and nearly £ 11 in wool. Deulecress ben Solomon of Norwich held £ 6, 13s. 4d. in wool, and Trina bat Dulcia of York owned the same. A number of Jewish women were recorded in the 1290 list as having minimal assets, though their husbands or fathers had greater fortunes, and therefore, cannot be counted as members of the poorer class of Jews.

A scattered number of names related to lower class professions emerged which shed light on the vocations of some of the members of the lower economic classes of the Jewish community. Diaia le Scularius (the Ladder-maker) appeared at Norwich.⁴¹ It was not clear if the ladder-makers of the community doubled as carpenters; however, Jewish carpenters were needed in the construction of Jewish homes and particularly in the construction of synagogues, which held unusual structures, such as the bimah (reading stage), not familiar to the Christian. At Bristol a family name of Furmager was noted, possibly an identification of the family's profession as cheesemongers.⁴² Jewish cheesemongers fulfilled a position as necessary as that of the Shohet (koser butcher), for the Jews would not eat cheese that was made by Christians without rabbinical supervision. Although the English Jews were known to partake of wine that was made without supervision, they most certainly would not have done so on the Sabbath or on the holy days, thus, there must have been Jewish vintners.⁴³ Jewish fishmongers and ironmongers also plied the streets of the community selling their wares. Jewish household servants and maids were employed by the wealthier Jews.⁴⁴

A Jew named Benedict was noted whose last name identified him as either a washerman or a tanner. The excessive use of parchment by the Jewish community for Torah scrolls and books, both religious and secular in nature, and for their starrs makes the inclusion of Jews in the parchment profession logical, particularly since rabbinical law required that the parchment used for the making of Torah scrolls receive delicate and precise treatment.

Cecil Roth included soldiers, cross-bow makers and minstrels among the occupations pursued by the lower class Jews of England.⁴⁵ Military occupations were apparently included by Roth due to the mention of Jewish converts who took on the service of the king; however, medieval Jewish literature did refer to "strolling Cantors" who might have sought gain from their travels as minstrels.⁴⁶ Roth also suggested that Jewish stone masons existed in England, as they did in France and Germany.⁴⁷ Apparently this occupation was included because stone masonry and stone buildings first appeared in England about the time that the Jews arrived within the realm. V. D. Lipman suggested that the English Jews engaged in a variety of handicrafts (as they did on the Continent), and even "in agriculture and horticulture in order to survive."⁴⁸ The Jews of Southern Europe certainly were involved in agriculture,⁴⁹ but the evidence to support such practices among the English Jewry is limited. Both English Christians and Jews generally owned garden plots; and Jewish vintners possibly owned their vineyards, although this cannot have been usual in England.⁵⁰

Although Israel Abrahams generally discounted Jewish participation in trade or occupations other than moneylender, he did include England in his list of occupations of the Jews of Germany and Northern

France. This list included:

Scholars	Bakers
Financiers	Tailors
Professional scribes	Dairymen and cheesemakers
Merchants (many)	Women-traders
Money-lenders (many)	Butchers
Agriculturists	Goldsmiths
Vintners (many)	Retail dealers in general stores
Smiths	Glaziers
Sailors (rare)	Assayers
Travellers	Box-makers
Masons	Cowel-makers
Tanners	Makers of mousetraps
Bookbinders	Barterers
Card-painters	Booksellers
Sculptors	Spice-importers (many)
Armourers	Peddlers (especially dealers in
Stone-engravers	ornaments such as gold-embroidered
Innkeepers	gloves and headcloths, furs and
Doctors (comparatively rare)	dyes)
Coiners (many)	Salt-dealers ⁵¹

Although the precise occupations of the lower classes have not often been recorded, the Lincoln community was not a mono-occupational society of lethargic lenders and scholars. On the contrary, it was a bustling and multi-faceted community, which was enriched by the variety of livelihoods pursued by its constituents and normal in the composition of its socio-economic structure. The wealthier classes within the Lincoln Jewry expanded the influence of the Lincoln community by its participation in the royal financial governance of the community and the English Jewry and aided their fellow residents with their professional expertise within the courts and in religious endeavors. The middle class Jews of Lincoln fulfilled necessary roles as traders, scribes and retailers, and the poorer Jews traded their services for goods and produced items and services necessary for the survival of the community as a whole. The Lincoln community did not survive and functioned efficiently by virtue of its highly organized government

alone, but also because the individuals within that community worked together in fulfilling the needs of the whole.

FOOTNOTES

¹Heavy taxation of the Anglo-Jewry was apparent prior to John's accession to the throne; however, the distinct decline in the financial condition of the Jews is set at the time of John's expensive attempts to regain Normandy. Short periods of relaxation in the tallaging of the Jews occurred after the reign of John, during the regency of William Marshal. In general, however, the system of draining the Jewish communities of their finances continued until the Expulsion of 1290.

²Israel Abrahams, "The Northampton 'Donum' of 1194," Misc. J.H.S.E. The figures quoted in this section are rounded down from the exact amounts listed in the following lists.

³Starrs, p. 150.

⁴The assigning of membership in one class or another is speculative. Pucelle paid £ 2, 8d., far less than the £ 37 paid by her son. However, this classification of Pucelle takes into consideration the fact that the poorest of the community did not have the resources to contribute to the tallage, and yet roughly one-third of the taxpayers from Lincoln in 1194 did not pay percentages as high as did Pucelle. Several women were respected members of the moneylending class not only in Lincoln, but also throughout Europe. Talmudic and rabbinical law protected their interests and their legal status, and their names appear in prominent places in the roles of the Exchequer of the Jews.

⁵The last name Pernas is curious. At first glance it would appear that this was an occupational name, specifying Benedict as one of the three community leaders. Although this name is granted to three Lincoln Jews on this list, it appears only once among all of the other Jewries accounted for in 1194. Therefore, no assumptions can be made at this time as to the significance of this name.

⁶Nicole was the name given for Lincoln in several of the Latin, French and Hebrew lists during the middle ages.

⁷Although Josce was first recorded as a financier in 1194, his name was not mentioned within the rolls of the Lincoln community until 1221. Elya (Elias) de Bungeia (Bungay) was recorded on the "Donum" of 1194 as a Lincoln Jew, but no family relation is apparent.

⁸See Appendix B. Mathathie is probably a derivative of Matthias, and Asser a derivative of Asher. The last name Frumentin is a Latin derivative for "of grain," but the significance of this title is unclear.

⁹Cecil Roth, "The Ordinary Jew in the Middle Ages," Gleanings (New York, 1967), pp. 31-33. The article was also included in Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman.

¹⁰Helen Chew, "A Jewish Aid to Marry, A.D. 1221," Trans. J.H.S.E. (London, 1927), pp. 106-108.

¹¹Medieval kitchens were generally detached from the residences and built in the courtyards connected to the home.

¹²The Merchant of Venice and Ivanhoe provide excellent examples of the typical caricature of medieval English Jews. While most survey texts for medieval Jewish history discount any significance of the English Jews (that is, if they mention the Jewish community in England at all), the in depth study, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, by Israel Abrahams, serves as a classic example of the lack of appreciation shown by contemporary historians for the contributions of the Anglo-Jewry to the history of the Jews as a whole.

¹³Lipman, pp. 46, 39, 79. Roth, History of the Jews in England, p. 282. Richardson, p. 25. Richardson suggests that no medieval man could live solely on the profits of moneylending.

¹⁴Starrs, p. 83.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁶C.P.R.E.J., vol. II, p. 225.

¹⁷Ibid., vol. I, p. 55.

¹⁸Starrs, pp. 82, 170, 211.

¹⁹John P. Bischoff, p. 108, quoting from the Registrum Antiquissimum, vol. 8, pp. 89-90.

²⁰History of the Jews in England, p. 114.

²¹Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 49-51. Kobler, pp. 246-247. Roth also published an article devoted entirely to the life of Elias in Trans. J.H.S.E., vol. XV.

²²Contrary to previous and contemporary conditions on the Continent, the Jews of England were not granted licenses to trade abroad.

²³History of the Jews in England, p. 272.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Lipman, p. 80.

- 27 Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 27. Lipman, p. 81.
- 28 History of the Jews in England, p. 114. A Jewish goldsmith was even found in the employment of King John.
- 29 Ibid., p. 115.
- 30 Israel Abrahams, Chapters XI and XII, passim.
- 31 History of the Jews in England, p. 114.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 120, 124. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 90.
- 33 C.P.R.E.J., vol. I, p. 288.
- 34 Richard Siegel et al. The Jewish Catalog (Philadelphia, 1973), pp. 201-202.
- 35 Lipman, pp. 39, 46-48. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 36.
- 36 Richardson, p. 32. The kings of England claimed the authority to deport Jews who did not contribute to the royal treasury, therefore conversion provided the destitute members of the Jewry with a means of remaining in England.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 In London a hostel was set up by the monks for destitute Jewish converts. Much of the Responzot from this period deals with questions of how to deal with converts from the community.
- 39 C.P.R.E.J., vol. III, p. 15.
- 40 Ursell ben Sampson Levi held £ 51 worth of assets; Jacob, however, qualified as a member of the wealthy class, though just barely, with assets totaling over £ 92.
- 41 History of the Jews in England, p. 114.
- 42 Ibid. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 26. Lipman, p. 80.
- 43 Ibid. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 243.
- 44 Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 38-39. Gleanings, p. 33. The name of the Jewess, Joia, on the 1240 list is followed by the descriptive famula, or maid. Originally the Jews hired Christian servants (Sabbath Goyim). However, this was prohibited in England.
- 45 Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁶Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 216.

⁴⁷Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 28. Hill, p. 163, suggests that there might have been a training school for masons in Lincoln at this time, although there is no evidence to support this.

⁴⁸Lipman, p. 79.

⁴⁹Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 243. The History of the Jews of Italy, Chapter III, passim.

⁵⁰Lipman, pp. 26, 32.

⁵¹Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 266.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE LINCOLN JEWRY

The Jews of thirteenth century Lincoln, England, were constantly made aware of their Judaism by their coreligionists and by the Christian community. The Jews were plagued with daily vexations at the hands of the Christian government. Royal or church law dictated where the Jews could live, and where they could be buried.¹ Decrees issued at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 banned the establishment of new synagogues, forbade Christian nurses and servants to continue working in Jewish households, forbade the local religious houses from taking Jewish valuables into their custody for safekeeping, and introduced the Jewish badge into England.² This order was reaffirmed in 1222 by the Council of Oxford, and was renewed in 1253 by Henry III. In 1275 and 1279 Edward I also reiterated the ordinances requiring the Jews to wear this sign of their faith, enlarging the proportions of the hated emblem. The ordinances again were pronounced at the Synod of Exeter in 1289, the year prior to the expulsion of the Jews from the realm. After 1267 the English Jews were required to wear the Pileum cornutum; a spiked hat, as well as the badge, so that they might be easily distinguished from their Christian neighbors.³ By virtue of English law, synagogues or even the private homes of the Jews could be confiscated for existing too close to churches. The English Jews were not allowed to dispose of trefah meat by selling it to the less particular Christians.⁴ After

1251, the Jews were forbidden to eat meat at all on Fridays or during the season of Lent.⁵ Laws even existed that forbade the Jews to pray aloud.⁶ The Church continuously harranged the Christian population to restrict their interactions with the Jews, and the Jews lived constantly under the threat of bodily harm during the thirteenth century. In this age, when the crusade and jihad personified the might and glory of their religions, the powerless, homeless Jews indeed subscribed to a "Dispised and Humiliated Faith." Yet the life within the English Jewish community was not as bleak as it appeared on the surface.

The Jewish community, as discussed in Chapter I, afforded the individual security, protection and familiarity. The religious bonds of the medieval community provided the individual with a rich and vigorous lifestyle and intellectual world rarely equalled in the life of the layman in Western Christianity. The community and religious leadership held each Jewish individual close to his religion by seeing that all the members observed the commandments of tefillin, mezuzoth, and zizith each day, and participated in the celebration of the numerous holidays and holy days of the Jewish calendar.⁷ The thirteenth century Jewish sages and scholars of continental Europe noted the piety of the English Jews, although eyebrows were raised at the English willingness to drink wine prepared by Christians. The English Jews occasionally were known to wear signet rings with human likenesses inscribed upon them as well.⁸

The force within the Jewish community which bound its members together and constantly reinforced their commitment to their faith was the medieval synagogue. The community synagogue was never merely a place for prayer during the Middle Ages, but functioned as a business,

legal, civic, and social center as well. It was a place where Jewish males gathered each morning to daven (that is, to say prayers in the distinctly Jewish fashion), and to catch the latest news. Royal, communal, and personal announcements were passed to the community at the synagogue.⁹ The results of law suits were announced, as were properties for sale. Local politics also occasionally made its way into the synagogue activities. In 1188 the Jews of Canterbury offered their prayers in support of the local monks who were involved in a dispute with the archbishop.¹⁰ Any member of the community who had a complaint against the community at large or against a particular individual could interrupt the daily prayer service prior to the reading of the Torah and voice his grievance to the congregation. Lost or stolen items were also announced during services. The religious leaders also meted out public admonitions to delinquent individuals during the morning prayer meetings. An example of this practice was recorded in Vienna at which time the Reader proclaimed:

Hear all present, that _____ refuses to abide by his word...thereby he has excited the displeasure of the Rabbis and is unworthy to be regarded as a member of the congregation of Israel, to whom dishonesty and falsehood are an abomination, but _____ is a liar and deceiver.¹¹

The synagogue was also a place for intellectual discourse. In the afternoons the learned men of the upper classes, or students who were fortunate enough to have patrons to finance their study, met in the lower-story rooms of the synagogue to read the Torah, the Talmud, and the writings of the famous rabbis and to argue the fine points of the laws. The synagogue also functioned as a hospice for traveling rabbis and beggar students who brought news from European communities and

distant sages, and who brought books with them as they traveled. These books were borrowed and copied by the members of the Jewish local communities, as a medieval Jew's library was considered to be one of his most prized and sacred possessions.¹²

The medieval synagogue served not only as a social center of the community, but as a socialization center as well. Cleanliness in person and in speech, as dictated by the writings of the rabbis, was enforced by the religious leaders of the community, and were demanded in the synagogue. These practices, such as the washing of hands and scraping of shoes before entering the building, influenced the habits of the Jews in their homes.¹³ The local synagogue promoted the uniqueness of the local community and the "family" spirit of the members of the congregation. Complaints between neighbors were dealt with in the same manner that fathers' complaints regarding the disrespectful attitudes of their children were handled. Each community had its favorite hymns, and the authority of the local Beit Din and religious leaders took precedence over religious decisions made by famous rabbis who resided outside of the community.

The synagogue of Lincoln was a rectangular, stone structure which sat at the foot of Steep Hill, adjoining the corn market.¹⁴ The upper story of the building functioned as the actual prayer hall, and was a large, single chamber which contained no women's gallery or balcony. The separation of the sexes during prayer was not an ancient tradition, and only came into fashion during the thirteenth century.¹⁵ The Lincoln synagogue was probably built prior to the institution of this practice.¹⁶ When the community in Lincoln did instigate the practice of segregation, the women probably sat behind the men, partitioned

behind a curtain, as was common in many places on the Continent.

The building in Lincoln which served as the synagogue was built so that the east wall tilted slightly to the south.¹⁷ In this way the ark which housed the Torah scrolls stood precisely in the direction of Jerusalem. This ark was formed by a small niche in the wall that stood 34" high and 36" wide, suggesting room for three to four scrolls in all. These scrolls were protected by wooden doors, ornate curtains or both. The synagogue was built slightly taller than the neighboring houses or shops. This was a common feature of the medieval synagogues, as was the courtyard behind the structure. The courtyard served as a gathering place for the congregation after the services to gossip and exchange news. There the lower class working men could eat their meal before leaving for their jobs.¹⁸ The bottom floor of the building was divided into living quarters for the religious officers, and into rooms where lessons were delivered in the afternoon, and into chambers where the Beit Din of Lincoln sat.¹⁹

The religious government within the Jewish community was better defined than that of the secular community government, though the duties and the jurisdiction of the two bodies tended to overlap in many areas. The Beit Din, the religious court, provided the link between the secular and the religious authorities. Although the Beit Din held jurisdiction over financial and property disputes, as discussed in Chapter II, its authority and its judgments were based solely on the halakhah. The halakhah covered social, religious and criminal law as well as business practices; and so the Beit Din held authority over all such cases by virtue of its nature as an ecclesiastical court.

Little is known of the members of the court, though it is probable

that they were all upper and upper-middle class men who had a broad grasp of the complex law. That is to say that these men would have held the title of Magister (Magistri), or Rabbi. The title did not denote a specific profession during the thirteenth century, but was an indication of advanced learning. Since these judges did not have particular titles, it is impossible to determine who among the Lincoln Jews served on the court, other than to narrow the possible candidates to those such as the sons of Master Moses, Rabbi Meir, and Abraham Hayim haRav, and others who held such a title. The name of one Lincoln Jew, haRav Joseph Moreh Tsedek (c. 1271), literally, Teacher of Righteousness, may imply Joseph's status as a member of the court.²⁰

The Beit Din not only had the authority to hand down decisions which were binding for the Jews who resided within the community, but the court also had the authority to set the terms of punishment for specific crimes and to enforce that punishment. The court had the right to sentence individuals with Herem (excommunication), to banish Jewish criminals from the community, and to mete out corporal punishment.²¹ Their decisions were announced, and subsequently carried out in the synagogue.

Although a professional rabbinate did not come into existence until a later date, the thirteenth century synagogue did have a tightly organized hierarchy of salaried officials in its service. These were men who generally came from the families of the middle class rather than the wealthier class of financiers.²² Although no specific reason for this has been determined, it might have been due to the time and effort required in order to accumulate a large estate through moneylending. Those who were satisfied with lesser earnings and more time spent

in study or who were supported by patrons obviously made better candidates for religious office. The religious leaders of the community were not as powerful as the elected officials of the community, but synagogal positions were nonetheless prestigious offices.

The foremost position within the synagogue was that of the Hazan, predecessor of the cantor. The Hazan not only led the congregation in singing, but also served as the Master Reader during services and aided the members of the congregation in their selections for Torah reading.²³ The Hazan served as his community's representative in spiritual affairs, and stood as a community leader in religious, moral and intellectual activities.²⁴

The name of a single Lincoln Jew identified him as a potential Hazan, Hak Le Chauntur (the Chaplain). It was unclear whether Isaac actually lived in Lincoln, though his son and grandson were recorded in the Plea Rolls as Lincoln Jews.²⁵

The Gabbai (also written as Gabbei, Gabbay, and Gabois) served as the treasurer of the synagogue. His functions included gathering money and gifts made to the synagogue as well as distributing the mitzvot, the honor of reading from the Torah during services.²⁶ Isaac ben Benedict Gabbay has been mentioned several times above for his activities as a moneylender. The name Gabbay appeared to have become the family name, and yet served as an important clue to the occupation of at least one member of the family. While the name Gabbay might also have been translated as store-keeper, it is most likely that Benedict Gabbay was the treasurer of the Lincoln synagogue.²⁷

No other Lincoln Jew appeared to have incorporated his synagogal title into his name, and so it is impossible to distinguish particular

individuals as functionaries of the Lincoln synagogue. There were, however, other important positions within the Lincoln synagogue.²⁸ At least one Shohet (Kosher butcher) must have resided in Lincoln throughout the brief history of the community to prepare the meat for the Jewish citizens of the community. It is possible that a professional Jewish matzo baker also resided within the English communities at this time. While full-time Jewish bakers were not a traditional necessity for the Jewish communities of the Continent, the Christian bakers of England were the only citizens licensed to keep pigs within the town walls.²⁹ Needless-to-say the products prepared by the English bakers were considered wholly unkosher by the Jewry, and thus the Jews must have turned to other sources for their bakery needs. The community of Lincoln must also have contained at least one Mohel. It was the duty of the Mohel to perform the circumcision on the male children of the community, according to the ancient covenant. The Mohels of the thirteenth century were generally physicians and surgeons, occupations with which many of the medieval Jews were associated. Elias ben Master Moses, another member of the renowned family, was a physician of international prominence, and thus possibly also served the Lincoln community as its Mohel.³⁰ It is not known, and therefore is doubtful that this profession was included in the salaried offices of the synagogue, just as the jobs of maintaining a Jewish hospital and mikvah (ritual bath) were probable unsalaried positions.

A final office within the synagogue was that of the Shammas, or beadle. Although often described as the servant or janitor of the synagogue, only a man of considerable learning held this position. The beadle stood by the reader's side during the services and served as his

aide. If the Hazan was absent from the services, the beadle was qualified to take over his duties. It was the responsibility of the beadle to awaken the members of the community to come to the synagogue when services were about to begin. The beadle was the caretaker of the synagogue and of all the paraphernalia inside, and it was his responsibility to carry out the judgments of the Beit Din, including that of corporal punishment.

Aside from the official positions within the synagogue, religious leaders also arose within the community in the form of teachers and sages. The synagogues of medieval England were often built by wealthy financier-scholars who taught and sometimes lived within the walls of the synagogue.³¹ In the crisis that arose in 1255 over the alleged ritual murder of Little St. Hugh by the hands of the Lincoln Jewry, the royal records referred to the Jewish community as the schola (i.e., congregation) of Peitevin the Great.³² This Peitevin was the son of Benedict Le Jouene, and was a noted financier of his day.³³ It was possible that Peitevin was the builder and owner of the Lincoln synagogue. Rarely did one teacher have a monopoly over the students in a Jewish community the size of Lincoln. Other rabbis gathered students and fellow scholars in their homes to pray and to learn, and thus rarely participated in the affairs of the synagogue.³⁴ These rabbis taught their students through the exempla (morality tales) and by virtue of debate, as well as by intense research of the Torah and Talmud. These were the men who kept Jewish thought alive during the Middle Ages. They struggled with the problems of how the minute details of the law should be interpreted to fit every situation. They wrote their responsot and communicated with their peers throughout the world. They often

joined with merchants and traveled to the fairs where they met in synods with the rabbis from the schools of Gershom (of Germany), Rashi (of Northern France), and the Sages of Rome, to discuss the problems and issues of the day and to issue ordinances.³⁵ Several of these synods took place in the area of Troyes in Northern France during the last half of the twelfth century.³⁶ At the beginning of the thirteenth century three hundred noted English and French rabbis made a pilgrimage to Palestine in order to attend a synod of the works of Maimonides.³⁷ In 1220 a synod at Mayence decreed that the local Beit Din had the authority to excommunicate the Jews within their communities for the transgression of coin-clipping.³⁸ Local synods also took place within England. These gained in importance after 1204, when Normandy was lost by John Lackland and access to the Continent was limited. Such a council, called the "Jewish Parliament" met at Worcester in 1241. Two brothers, Jacob and Benedict Crispin, served as Lincoln's representatives at this meeting.³⁹

Education within the Jewish community was one of its most outstanding traits in comparison to the Christian population, and was certainly one of the most emphasized programs of the community. The Jewish attitude toward the necessity to provide the young with learning was observed by one twelfth century monk when he wrote:

The Jews, out of their zeal for God and their love of the Law, put as many sons as they have to letters, that each may understand God's Law...A Jew, however poor, if he had ten sons, would put them all to letters, not to gain, as the Christians do, but for the understanding of God's Law; and not only his sons but his daughters.⁴⁰

It is clear, however, that not all of the Jews could afford private lessons for their children. For those who did not have the

advantage of instruction, the reading of the Torah during the morning synagogue services provided sufficient public instruction, and all knew enough Hebrew to follow the prayers and hymns of both daily worship and the holiday services.⁴¹ Although the lowest economic classes within the Jewish community did not benefit from further study of the Law and Lore, the middle class merchants and financiers often displayed admirable competency in their knowledge of the Law (particularly of that portion of the Halakhah which concerned business practices).⁴² This phenomenon is not surprising, for moneylending was not a full-time occupation, and the financiers were able to spend the free moments in the afternoons immersed in their studies.

The dedication to study by a large proportion of the community was essential for the preservation of the Jewish religion, for though the Torah and Talmudic texts were written, they were not comprehensible without the voluminous commentary which explained and interpreted the ancient tenets. So that it would no longer be necessary for each student to memorize the entire tradition word-for-word the process of writing down the vast commentaries was first begun by Rashi. This process was continued after his death by the Tosaphists.⁴³

The name Tosaphot literally meant "additions", and the name was given to those twelfth and thirteenth century Jewish scholars who provided supplements to the commentaries of Rashi. The Tosaphot included a wide-ranging number of scholars not only from France, but throughout Europe and England. The Tosaphot used the Talmudic tradition of the question and answer method used both in the Talmud and by Rashi to provide expanded adaptation of the legal tractates of the Talmud, the Torah and the Prophets to the changing society of the middle ages. In

this way several famed Tosaphot not only interpreted the ancient tenets, but provided innovations of their own to guide their communities.⁴⁴

The Tosaphists were numerous in England in the thirteenth century, and greatly influenced the literature produced by the English Jews of that time.⁴⁵ In Lincoln two major Tosaphists resided: Joseph of Nicole, (perhaps this Joseph is the same as haRav Joseph Moreh Tsedek), and Benedict ben Master Moses (known to the literary world as Berechiah de Nicole).⁴⁶ Although Master Benedict was one of the most famous of the English Tosaphists, he was not the only member of his family who wrote religious glosses. Benedict's father, Master Moses of London, and his grandfather, Rav Yom Tob Ben Moses of Bristol were also Talmudic authorities of renown. Rav Yom Tob wrote a juristic work entitled The Book of Conditions, and Master Moses wrote a book on Hebrew punctuation and grammar as well as a commentary on Alfasi's Halakhot.⁴⁷ Benedict's brother Elias, (laRav Elijah Menahem of London) wrote several commentaries on the Talmud, although he was best known for his international reputation as a physician.⁴⁸ Although many historians have discounted the literary activities and writings of the English Jews as having been negligible, this was not the case. Nor did they restrict their literary talents to the Tosaphot. The works of about twenty English Jews survived the expulsion or were quoted by subsequent authorities on the Continent, the rest, tragically, were lost to us. Among the English Judaic literature which survived were selections of Biblical exegesis, major grammatical works (this seems to have been the major franch of the expertise among the English Jews), religious and secular poetry, belle-lettres, and mystical works.⁴⁹ The variety of these works suggests that an active and enthusiastic literary community of Jews, in

fact, did thrive in England in the thirteenth century. This is further substantiated by the fact that several renowned rabbis from the Continent visited or moved to England at this time.⁵⁰ Although the English community which was best known for its scholars was London, Lincoln too held a number of learned men within its confines. The members of the family of Master Moses have previously been mentioned, as has Peitevin and Great ben Benedict Le Jouene and haRav Joseph Moreh Tsedek. Joseph's son, Abraham Hayim haRav Joshua also appeared among the names of the Lincoln jewry. Rabbi Meir appeared in 1271, though a Judah ben Rabbi Meir was recorded between 1256 and 1263. It is therefore probable that the second Rabbi Meir was a namesake of the first (perhaps his grandson).⁵²

The phenomenon of medieval Jewish mysticism was not confined to Germany, although the mystical movement was strongest there. Evidence of the influence of German mystical thought in Lincoln is suggested by the presence of Isaac ben Benedict the Hasid of Bungay. Millenarianism also had a strong appeal for the medieval Jews. This movement began as far back as the eleventh century, when the Spanish Jews calculated the coming of the Messiah in the first millenium after the fall of Jerusalem (c. 1068-1070). Such eschatological charting and calculating was also evident in Germany.⁵³ Millenarianism as well as belief in the coming of the Messiah gained a renewed fervor throughout the Jewish world in the early thirteenth century, for the end of the world was predicted in the German Zemirah⁵⁴ to occur in A. M. 5,000 (that is, in the year 1240).⁵⁵ Mysticism surged with new force each time that the Jews encountered renewed hardships and hostility. The approaching millenium offered solace and meaning to the Jews in the face of suffering

and strengthened their efforts to hold fast to their religion when times were most foreboding. As the plight of the Jews of England deteriorated in the thirteenth century, at least two major mystical works appeared: the Book of Creation, by Elhanan ben Iakkar of London, and the Secret of Lunar Intercalation, written by Elahanan ben Isaac.⁵⁶

The few writings of the Jewish intellectuals of England which survived the Expulsion of 1290 were probably only a fraction of the works produced by the mystics and philosophers there. They stood as evidence that a rigorous intellectual religious life thrived in the thirteenth century communities of England. It would have been impossible for such a literary circle to have existed without the cultural, instructional and social basis of the communities from which they sprung. The synagogue and its hierarchy of officials promoted study of the Jewish Law and established the bond of community brotherhood for the sage and the simplest Jew. The synagogue was in fact more than an institution within the community, it was the focal point for it, and was the one place all the members met for prayer, politics, business and for social events. From this solid foundation of the Jewish community-religion and its synagogue, Jewish intellectuals arose to delve into the complexities of the ancient scriptures, and contemporary philosophies and sciences and adopted these to daily life and worship. The religious life that existed within the medieval Jewish communities was intense, aggressive and multifaceted. It provided the spirit and the cohesion that brought the community together and kept it alive in an alien environment.

FOOTNOTES

¹This is not meant to imply that a ghetto existed in the thirteenth century English communities; it did not. The Jews were commanded to live in the major towns, where the official archae were located. They were restricted (at least in theory) from the countryside, and were banned from particular towns. The Jews also were not allowed to leave England, except with royal license.

²Lipman, p. 58.

³History of the Jews in England, pp. 95-96. In 1286 Pope Honorius IV also stipulated that the Jews should be forced to wear the badge so that sexual relations would not occur between the Christians and the Jews.

⁴Trefah; The technical Hebrew term meaning unkosher.

⁵History of the Jews in England, pp. 55, 102.

⁶Graetz, p. 590. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 41.

⁷"Home Rituals and the Spanish Synagogue," Solomon B; Freehof, Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman, passim. The Tefillin are the leather phylacteries which contain selections from Exodus 13: 1-10, 13: 11-16, Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, and 11: 13-20. These are worn wrapped around the hands and forehead for morning prayer (except on the Sabbath and holidays). The tefillin were created in order to satisfy the commandment, "And it shall be for a sign upon thy hand and for a frontlet between thine eyes," (Exodus 13: 9). The mezuzah is an enclosed parchment which contains the Shema and the Vehoyo im Shomoa prayers which is affixed to the doorpost in order to distinguish the Jewish home as one in which God is cherished. The zizith are the fringes on the Tallis; prayer shawl. This is worn by observant Jews as a reminder of the ever-present need to follow the commandments. The zizith also symbolize the four corners of the world, to which the Jews are scattered (the zizith are placed on the four corners of the shawl), and are included as such in the carrying out of the prayer service.

⁸History of the Jews in England, p. 125.

⁹Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 20-22. Also see C.P.R.E.J., p. 188, and for examples, passim.

¹⁰Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 15.

- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 22.
- ¹² A History of the Jewish People, pp. 524-525. Lipman, p. 139.
- ¹³ Freehof, passim. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 27.
- ¹⁴ Hill, p. 233. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 44. Abrahams suggests that the synagogues which existed elsewhere in England were round rather than rectangular in structure.
- ¹⁵ Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 57-58. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 39-40.
- ¹⁶ Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 58.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 59.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 57, 59-60. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 38, 41, 44.
- ¹⁹ Lipman, p. 150.
- ²⁰ Baron, p. 175. Starrs, pp. 278-279. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 57. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 20-26.
- ²¹ Lipman, p. 150. Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 20-26.
- ²² A History of the Jewish People, pp. 511-513.
- ²³ Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 32. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 30.
- ²⁴ Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 30.
- ²⁵ C.P.R.E.J., vol. II, pp. 63, 213; vol. III, pp. 276-277.
- ²⁶ Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 36. The mitzvot were often sold at auction during the Middle Ages, although his practice at times created animosity within the community.
- ²⁷ Starrs, p. 137.
- ²⁸ While the other synagogal positions were not mentioned in the royal records, we must assume that they did in fact exist in England, as they did in synagogues throughout the world. Their duties were essential to the smooth continuation of the synagogue and Jewish religion.
- ²⁹ In Lincoln, the only citizens fined for pigs left wandering in the streets were bakers. P.R.O. E 101/505/24. London bakers were also permitted by town law to keep pigs within the walls.

- ³⁰ Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 49-51. For a translation of a letter written by Elias concerning his work as a physician, and his international reputation as such, see Kobler, pp. 246-247.
- ³¹ Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 33, 48. Hill, pp. 223-232.
- ³² Hill, p. 61. Lipman, p. 124.
- ³³ Hill, p. 61. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, p. 61.
- ³⁴ Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, p. 33.
- ³⁵ Baron, pp. 176, 272-274.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- ³⁷ Jewish Society Through the Ages, p. 24. History of the Jews in England, p. 35.
- ³⁸ Starrs, p. 73. This ordinance is significant, although the Sepher Hassidim, (literally, "The Book of the Pious"), written in the twelfth century also prohibited coin-clipping.
- ³⁹ Starrs, vol. I, p. 6.
- ⁴⁰ A History of the Jewish People, p. 522.
- ⁴¹ Freehof, p. 226.
- ⁴² Irving A. Angus, "The Oral Traditions of Pre-Crusade Ashkenazic Jewry," Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman, p. 8.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, passim.
- ⁴⁴ A History of the Jewish People, pp. 525-527.
- ⁴⁵ A History of the Jews in England, pp. 126-128.
- ⁴⁶ Hill, p. 128. Lipman, p. 156.
- ⁴⁷ A History of the Jews in England, p. 127. J. R. Marcus, The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook, 315-1791 (Cincinnati, 1938), Chapter, "How the Medieval Jew Understood the Bible," passim.
- ⁴⁸ History of the Jews in England, p. 127. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 49, 53.
- ⁴⁹ History of the Jews in England, p. 127. Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History, pp. 49, 53.

⁵⁰ Baron, p. 137. History of the Jews in England, p. 126.

⁵¹ Starrs, p. 211. History of the Jews in England, p. 75.

⁵² Starrs, p. 211.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 175. Baron, pp. 137-145.

⁵⁴ Starrs, p. 175.

⁵⁵ Jewish Society Through the Ages, p. 27.

⁵⁶ History of the Jews in England, p. 128.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Jews of Lincoln, England, came together from several countries on the Continent and settled in the small community just prior to 1159. Thereafter their cohesion, brought about by their common heritage, religion and law, their independent and efficient local government, and the strict regulation of their primary livelihood, combined to give the Jews of Lincoln greater influence on the town and the national government than their numbers otherwise would have afforded. The history of the Jews of medieval England, and Lincoln in particular, corresponded closely with the general medieval history of the Jews throughout western Europe. The pattern of encouragement by the national government and prosperity, followed by decline, restriction, and eventual expulsion because the Jews no longer brought sufficient profit to the Crown was not witnessed in England alone. It occurred in fact with frequency throughout western Europe from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. Thus a study of the Jewish community at Lincoln provides a profile of general Jewish community history during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The evidence provided by this study suggests that the Jews of Lincoln, and other communities, were allowed to enter the realm and settle because the Crown was able to profit significantly from the taxes and escheats it received from the Jews. While Jewish lending was a major

source of revenue for the Crown, its protection was extended over the members of the Jewish communities; protecting their persons and properties, ensuring the collection of their debts, and guaranteeing the Jews justice in the royal courts. This mutual relationship existed until the financial status of the Jews deteriorated due to excessive taxation and Edward I's interference with Jewish moneylending activities. When the Jews ceased to be a vital source of wealth to the royal treasury, they were expelled from the realm in 1290.

During the era when Jewish usury was a lucrative business, the English Jews not only enhanced the royal purse, but also accelerated the growth of the currency market in the English economy. A secondary market grew out of Anglo-Jewish lending activities as members of the Christian society began buying debts owed to the Jews and buying lands acquired by the Jews as securities for defaulted debts.

It is also evident from this study that the Jewish communities did not exist as parasitic, mono-occupational societies. Although the communities were in essence artificial appendages to the feudal society, they were multi-faceted and multi-vocational societies. Although the socio-economic structure consisted of three strata, the wealthy, middle class and the poor classes worked together to create a viable community unit.

The synagogue provided a focal point for community unity. The synagogue provided the community members not only with a place in which to come together for prayer, but also a place to discuss business and politics and community gossip, and a place to socialize. The synagogal officials were charged with the responsibility of providing the members of the community with religious instruction and social behavior. The

religious cohesion promoted by the synagogue not only contributed to the bond of brotherhood and belonging within the community, but also gave rise to advanced intellectual endeavor within the individual communities.

An examination of the major institutions which influenced the Jewish communities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries provides insight into the social history of the medieval Jews. This study is focused on a single community so as to present an example of the lifestyle within the medieval Jewish community.

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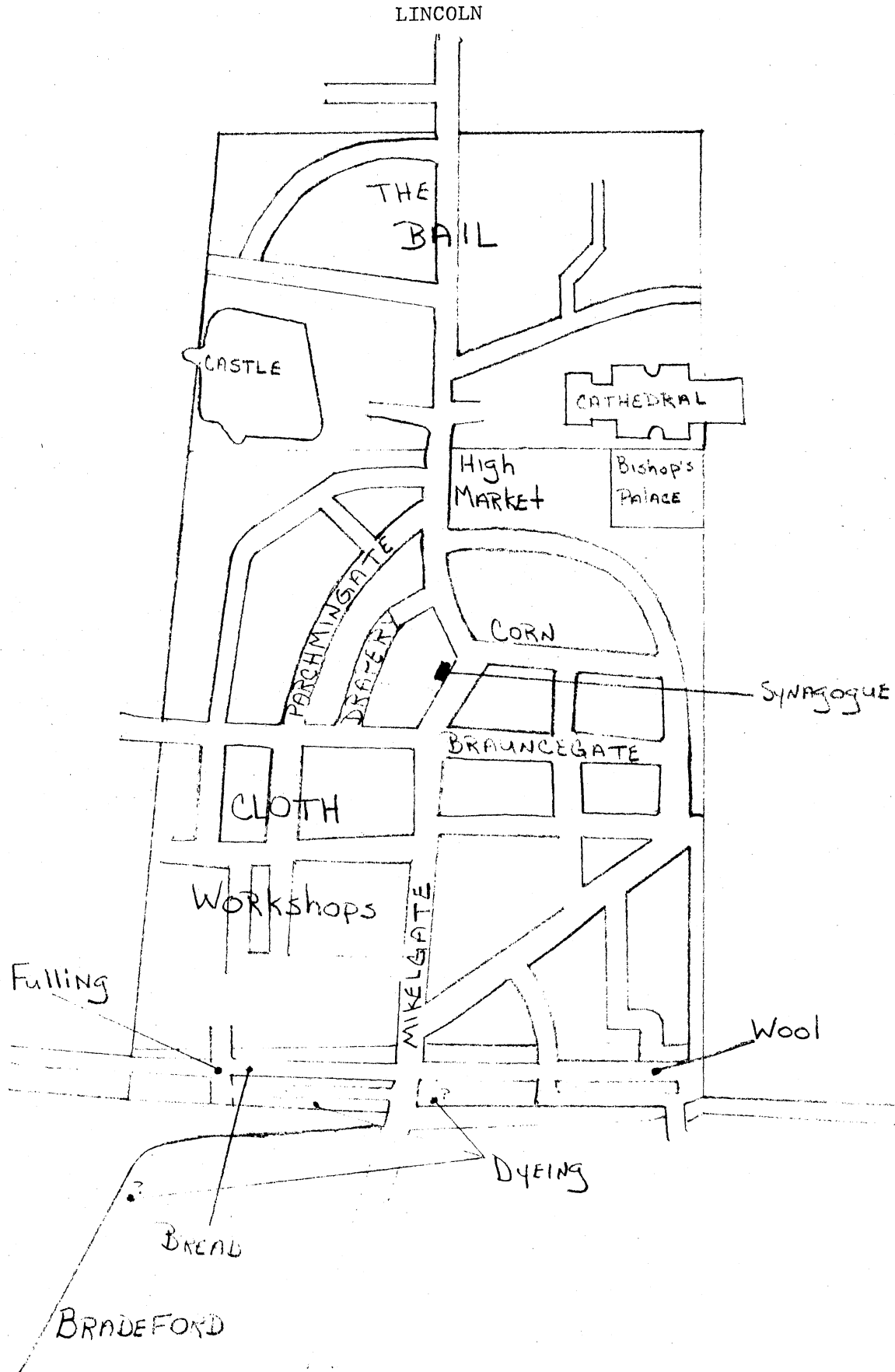
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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

MAP OF TWELFTH CENTURY LINCOLN, ENGLAND



APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES AND TRANSLATIONS OF LINCOLN STARRS

LINCOLN QUITCLAIM STARR

Starrs, p. 3. British Museum No. 1177

אין כחתקן מטפ מוצפ בושרה שחורה שאן אין
 יכום לערער עם קרקע

שקני האגה עקוקאנס מניקא בוכא מן א'קא
 ב'ו'קק משרה כפר

נישם טאנה עא אין ועא 'ורש' ועא חתנ' ועא
 של א'ש ואשר הבא'ק

מכחי אלוני קרקע ונקובה עמעה פטורה
 מעירעור' ומעירעור חתנ'

ומכח 'ורש' מ'וק שנהרא ניצולם ועצ ספול ומה
 שנוצת' כתרות'

וחתמת' עקור' ובעבור 'ורש' וחתנ' גרש'א
 אל'קא מניקוועא

(1) I, the undersigned, make complete acknowledgment that I ended my claim of the land

(2) which the Abbot and religious house of Newhouse bought from Ivo of Wykeham, of the field in the village of

(3) Nettleton. Not I nor my heirs and not my sons-in-law and no man and woman whatsoever acting

(4) from my authority. And that land mentioned above is ended (quit) from my claim and my sons-in-law' claim

(5) and of all my heirs from the day that the world was created and til its end. And that which I acknowledged, I wrote

(6) and signed on behalf of myself and on behalf of my heirs and sons-in-law. Garcia (Garsey) Evesk from Lincoln.

LINCOLN STARR

Starrs, p. 117. British Museum No. 1201

חתימא בגי אסיב כי קיבלתי עשרה דנרין ועשרה דנרין
בראון אע"י קיבלתי קאמג

א/נ החתום מאה קיבלתי (החצית) עבאר הנפ"ב
ל' יצחק בן

הנפ"ב ה' א' 1000. ואם שקיבלתי כתבת' וחתמת'.
ברכיה בר אליהו.

- (1) This my signature testifies that (because) I received £ 10 and ten dinarim from the Barton tax
- (2) [at Michaelmas,] 143 (1182)
- (3) And I the undersigned received one half on behalf of the [baron or the Generous] R(abbi) Yitzhak ben
- (4) the generous R(abbi) Yosef. And what I received, I wrote, and I signed. Berechiah bar Eliahu.

VITA

Barbara Poplinger Schwamb

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: A PROFILE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURY LINCOLN, ENGLAND

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