Introduction

"As If the Jews Had No Lord"

On January 22, 1392, after riots that, in the previous year, had ravaged many of the Jewish communities throughout their Crown of Aragon, King Joan and Queen Iolant, ruefully observed that the Jews had been treated "as if they had no Lord." For Joan and Iolant, the Jews belonged to the royal patrimony, and attacks against this minority demonstrated utter disregard of their monarchic authority. For the Jews, the riots of 1391–1392 were the most recent, though decidedly horrific, example of their historical vulnerability. As a people few in numbers, the Jews, for their own security, often relied on the security arrangements that they had negotiated with other members of the society in which they lived. In the Christian middle ages, territorial lords, who extended charters to Jews to come and settle in their lands, understood their obligation to assure the Jews of their safety in exchange for the economic benefits the Jews brought to the society, and for the taxes they rendered.

When Rüdiger, the bishop of Speyer, decided in 1084 "to make a city out of the village of Speyer," he promised those Jews, who would accept his invitation to establish residence in his territory, that he would surround them with a wall. Similarly, when in 1170, King Sancho VI of Navarre granted a new charter to the Jews of Tudela, he ceded, in perpetuity, the city's fortified area for their residence. Sancho acknowledged that if the Jews were attacked in the fortress, and the Jews either killed or wounded their assailants, the Jews would not be punished for defending themselves. In the following century, King James I of Aragon, in 1239, promised the Jews of the newly conquered city of Valencia that they and their property were under his special protection and

safeguard, and that no one would be allowed to harm either them or their property.[1]

While the history of the Jews in the Middle Ages encompassed long stretches of time in which governmental authorities successfully preserved and defended the Jews, incidents where Jewish-owned property was damaged, and when Jews were harmed and even killed, and their communities destroyed, were not unusual. Even as Bishop Rüdiger promised the Jews that an accurate appreciation of the charter's stipulations "remain throughout the generations," and despite the goodwill exhibited by his successor, Johann I of Kraichgau was simply unable – when the crusaders, en route to the Holy Land, invaded the town less than twelve years later, to protect his Jewish charges.[2]

In the early fourteenth century, after Judah ben Asher left German lands and came to settle in Castile, he viewed the German realm – doubtlessly in comparison with his adopted homeland, as one where, despite all guarantees, persecution of Jews was to be expected. When Judah, who became a Toledo communal leader and a renowned halakhist, died, in 1349, events in the Kingdom of Castile might have prompted Judah to reevaluate his perspective on the security of Sephardic Jews.[3]

[1] Alfred Hilgard ed., *Urkunden zur Geschichte der Stadt Speyer* (Strassburg, 1885), pp. 11–12, no. 11, for the 1084 *privilegium* extended to the Jews by Rüdiger Huozmann; Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1929), pp. 933–935, no. 578, for Tudela, and pp. 93–94, no. 91 for the city of Valencia. All are translated in Robert Chazan ed., *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1980), pp. 59–60, 72–73, and 74–75, respectively. The Tudelan Jews had received a charter in 1115 from King Alfonso I of Aragon in the wake of his conquest of the city from the Muslims. See Baer, *Die Juden*, vol. 1, pp. 920–921, no. 570, and *Chazan, Church, State, and Jew*, pp. 69–70.

[2] Karl Heinz Debus, "Geschichte der Juden in Speyer bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit," in *Die Juden von Speyer. Bezirksgruppe Speyer des historischen Vereins der Pfalz* (Speyer, 2004), pp. 2–10.

[3] "The Testament of Judah Asheri" can be found in Israel Abrahams ed., *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1926), pp. 166, 180, and 189. His perception surely derived in part from the imprisonment, by King Rudolph of Hapsburg, of Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg, the eminent teacher of his distinguished father Asher ben Yehiel. See Irving A. Agus, *Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg. His Life and His Works as Sources for the Religious, Legal, and Social History of the Jews of Germany in the Thirteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 125–155 and Jörg R. Müller, "Erez gezerah – 'Land of Persecution:' Pogroms against the Jews in the Regnum Teutonicum from c. 1280 to 1350," in Christoph Cluse ed., *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages [Tenth through Fifteenth Centuries]* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 245–260.

Despite long-standing promises of royal protection by Castilian monarchs, noble forces allied with Enrique of Trastámara were able, in 1355 – early on in that kingdom's civil war, to attack the Jewish quarters of Toledo and Cuenca. Armies of the future Enrique II – the cornerstone of whose political program was opposition to the (alleged) domination by Jewish officials of the government of his half-brother King Pedro, massacred the Jews of Briviesca in 1366, and demanded large sums of money from the Jews of Burgos. Later that year, Enrique, as king, compelled the Toledo Jews to render equivalently large sums, and in the following year, his forces destroyed synagogues in Valladolid, and pressed Burgos and Palencia Jewries for additional funds. Even Pedro, chided by his opponents as "king of the Jews," when in need of funds to pay his Muslim troops, allowed Jews of Jaén to be kidnapped by Muslims and to be sold into slavery.[4]

King Pere III of the Crown of Aragon, concerned about the resultant social anarchy unleashed by the Black Death, and the attendant attacks on Jewish communities, ordered local officials, such as those in Barcelona, to protect his Jewish subjects from further assaults. Although they were not accused, as they were in the mid-fourteenth century in other European lands, of having poisoned wells and therefore having directly caused the epidemic that devastated the Aragonese population, Jews were killed in the wake of the plague. Pere's measures could be favorably contrasted with the behavior of the authorities in contemporaneous Speyer, where its rulers were either unable or unwilling to protect the Jews. In the Crown of Aragon, as in Castile, the Jews' security, for better and for worse, was often seen as the exclusive concern of the monarchy.[5]

[4] Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1961), pp. 364–367 and Julio Valdeón Baruque, *Los judíos de Castilla y la revolución Trastámara* (Valladolid, 1968), pp. 33–34 and 43–50. Valdeón shows that Enrique II, as king, employed as many Jews in his administration as had his half-brother Pedro.

[5] Debus, Geschichte der Juden in Speyer, pp. 33–37, and Baer, *Die Juden,* vol. 1, pp. 324–328, nos. 230–232; and pp. 333–339, nos. 240–245. (Numbers 230, 232, and 240 of Baer have been translated into English in Chazan ed., *Church, State, and Jew*, pp. 128–131.) See Amada López de Meneses, "Documentos acerca de la peste negra en los dominios de la Corona de Aragón," *Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón* 6 (1956), pp. 291–447 and, generally, Jaume Sobrequés i Callicó, "La peste negra en la península ibérica," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 7 (1970–1971), pp. 67–101.

David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence. Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), pp. 237–241, demonstrates that the sins of the Jews and others were seen as the causal factors in the spread of the plague. Alexandra Guerson, *Coping with Crises: Christian Jewish Relations in Catalonia and Aragon, 1380–1391*

The most devastating attacks against the Jews of medieval Christian Europe took place during the riots that erupted, in 1391 and 1392, in the lands of Castile and Aragon. King Joan, Queen Iolant, Duke Martí, the infant and later king (and to a lesser extent, Martí's wife and future queen, Maria de Luna), who were responsible for the Jews' safety in the Crown of Aragon, attempted to suppress the uprisings. And so did the regency council, which surrounded the young King Enrique III of Castile.

Historians have expended much effort in attempts to understand these and other instances of violence against medieval Jewries. They have examined the attackers' motives from social and economic perspectives, and have explained how disadvantaged elements of the population lashed out against royally protected and economically successful Jews. Others have exhaustively chronicled the manifestations of Christian religious hatred toward the Jews, and have demonstrated that the rise of innovative and virulent strains of anti-Judaism in the late middle ages had a profound impact on the ideology of the assailants. Some scholars have attended to the hostility and competition between and among the governing authorities – royal, municipal, and ecclesiastical – and have viewed the harm that befell the Jewish communities as collateral damage in the ongoing strife between the various strata of medieval European society. Yet other writers have mounted social and psychological investigations into the assailants' motivations and have made convincing arguments that the violence reflected profound characterological impulses on the part of the attackers. All these methodological forays have yielded interesting and, at times, learned insights into these episodes of savagery.[6]

What remains to be investigated, more profoundly, are the responses of those individuals whose responsibility it was to protect the Jewish community. Students of the royal alliance that was forged between the Jews and the central authorities have long been aware that in the absence

(University of Toronto dissertation, 2012), pp. 21–39, argues that violence against Jews in the wake of the Black Death was not plague related. See Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1966), pp. 24–28.

David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths. Christianity, Islam and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (Chicago, 2014), pp 76–77 describes the political situtation of Iberian Jews in the late fourteenth century.

[6] See, *inter alia*, Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives* (Palgrave, 2002) and Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence*. Nirenberg's *Neighboring Faiths*, pp. 75–88, explores how struggles over control of the Jewish population were often reflections of larger conflicts over sovereignty and governance.

of monarchic authority – as for example during an interregnum, the Jews, who were almost entirely dependent on the rulers' promises and good graces, inevitably have been harmed. But insufficient energy has been devoted to examine the behavior of royal authorities, who were effectively in power during specific episodes of violence against Jews, to determine whether or not they fulfilled their mandate to protect this vulnerable minority.[7]

So why were they not successful? The day after the riots broke out in Valencia, the city fathers, in an attempt to deflect criticism of their own behavior during the unrest, cited the second half of the first verse of Psalm 127: "Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam," – " . . . except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain." The municipal leaders, on Monday July 10, did not only seek to make a theological assertion but also attempted to focus attention on the royals' lack of effective oversight.[8]

When over seven months later, in early 1392, both King Joan and Queen Iolant determined that their subjects had behaved toward the Jews "como los judios no habian senor," as if the Jews had no lord, they surely were making a political observation and not offering a theological reflection. But were Johan and Iolant correct in their perception that the Aragonese people, and indeed even the local authorities, considered the Jews as without protectors, and if so, why? And did the Aragonese King and Queen contribute to this understanding by their own ineffectual response to the violence?

To appreciate fully the actions that the Aragonese – and Castilian – royal authorities took to counter the burgeoning unrest, I present – in

[7] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976), and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Servants of Kings and Not Servants of Servants: Some Aspects of the Political History of the Jews" (Rabbi Donald A. Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, Emory University, 2005). See also Maurice Kriegel, "De l'Alliance royale à la religion de l'État. Yerushalmi entre Baron, Baer et Arendt," in Sylvie Anne Goldberg ed., *L'histoire et la mémoire de l'histoire. Hommage à Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Paris, 2012), pp. 29–43 and Marina Rustow, "La notion de l'Alliance royale et Yerushalmi por maître," in Sylvie Anne Goldberg ed., *L'histoire et la mémoire de l'histoire*, pp. 29–43 and pp. 57–69, respectively.

[8] The notion that God had abandoned the Jews was a staple of the adversus Judaeos tradition as far back as the writings of the early church fathers, but the implication of the Valencia magistrates, was that the Jews' conversion to Christianity, supported by the magistrates, would serve to bring the newly converted under the protective care of municipal and ecclesiastical authorities, if not again under the sheltering wings of the Lord. See, generally, Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide; The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1974).

the first part of the book before you, the first comprehensive treatment of these peninsular riots. The violence started, in early June, in the city of Seville in the Kingdom of Castile, and then broke out throughout Andalusia, and erupted as far north as Logroño. The turbulence did not respect borders. Jews were assaulted in the city of Valencia, in early July, and attacked afterwards in many locales within the same-named kingdom. Disturbances followed in the Balearic Islands, in Barcelona, Girona, and elsewhere in the principality of Catalonia, and in the Kingdom of Aragon. Eventually, in April 1392, the turbulence drew to a close in the mountainous city of Jaca. Throughout these ten months, hundreds if not thousands of Jews were killed, numerous Jewish institutions destroyed, and many Jews forcibly converted to Christianity.[9]

Reductionist analyses that have attempted to explain the unrest solely in terms of social and economic dynamics, or alternatively, through an exclusive focus on the nature of late medieval anti-Judaism, have to confront the undeniable evidence, among other intriguing phenomena, that people of all political and economic classes participated in these assaults, and that these attacks were not recorded either in Portugal or in Navarre. A uniform pattern to the violence cannot be discerned nor a clear profile of the rioters identified. And while social, economic, and religious tensions between Christians and Jews were present in the mid-fourteenth century peninsula, widespread violence did not erupt. There were sporadic attacks on Jews, but the events of 1391–1392 were surprisingly unique in their intensity, scope, and duration.[10]

[9] Although some of these horrific attacks have attracted the interest of scholars, all the local episodes of violence can be fully appreciated only when seen in the aggregate. Eduard Feliu, "Sobre la lletra que Hasday Cresques adreçà a la comunitat jueva d'Avinyó parlant dels avalots de 1391," *Tamid* 5 (2004–2005), pp. 171–219 and Norman Roth's two articles, "1391 in the Kingdom of Castile, Attacks on the Jews" and "1391 in Aragón, Catalonia, Valencia and Majorca," *Iberia Judaica* III (2011), pp. 19–48 and pp. 49–75, respectively, are recent attempts, based on secondary sources and previously published documents, to chronicle the riots. For interpretations of the Castilian violence, see Emilio Mitre Fernández, *Los judíos de Castilla en tiempo de Enrique III. El pogrom de 1391* (Valladolid, 1994), pp. 25–27. In the effective absence of documentary evidence regarding the Castilian riots, Mark Meyerson's brief analysis in his *Jews in an Iberian Frontier Kingdom. Society, Economy, and Politics in Morvedre, 1248–1391* (Leiden and Boston, 2004), p. 272, appears persuasive.

[10] While Baer, *A History*, vol. 2, pp. 95–110 grasped the economic causes and appreciated the social dimension of the unrest, he stressed religious ferment as the major causative factor. Philippe Wolff, "The 1391 Pogrom in Spain. Social Crisis or Not?," *Past and Present* 50 (1971), pp. 4–18, on the other hand, cautioned scholars not to be "hypnotized" by the "predominantly anti-semitic character of the disturbances" and

So why did the latent social and economic tensions which had long simmered in Iberian society, and the religious antagonism toward the Jews which had been kept in check with relative success, flare quickly into murderous attacks that not only lasted many months but spread effectively across a wide swath of the peninsula? By focusing on the days and weeks leading up to the attacks, and the actual time during which the riots and conversions took place, we have the opportunity to observe how daily decisions made by the royal authorities influenced the shape and scope of the violence. In the second half of the book, I will examine the behavior of the Aragonese royal family, King Joan, Queen Iolant, and Duke Martí – who was in the city of Valencia when the riots erupted, and the Duchess Maria, within the context of their biographies and their records as protectors of Jewish communities, their developing royal concerns and interests and the limits of their effective power, and their evolving relationships with each other. Within these necessary contexts, the lords' behavior, during these ten months of upheaval, will be evaluated. Although the Jews' security was of interest to all of them – Jews at the very least were crucial to their treasury, the safety of the Jews was simply one of many interests competing for their attention. How they juggled the multiplicity of their concerns is the subject of this book. These rulers cared about the Jews; the question remains whether the Jews were a sufficiently high priority for these royals that the Jews' safety could reasonably be assured.[11]

instead emphasized the social and economic dimensions of the "revolt." See the interesting comments by Jaume Riera i Sans in the "Colloqui," *Jornades d'història dels jueus a Catalunya* (Girona, n.d.), pp. 172–173. Riera argues that late fourteenth century millenarian sentiment is the key to appreciating both the ubiquitousness of the riots, and the contours that the violence assumed. See, infra, the chapter on the city of Valencia, note 10.

Muslims – who presented an economic profile different from their fellow minority Jews – were among the targets in many locales. Interestingly, the Muslims seem not to have been either gathered into fortresses or brought to the Cross in order to secure their safety. A thorough treatment of their fate during the riots is a desideratum.

[11] Maurice Kriegel, *Les Juifs à la fin du Moyen Age dans l'Europe méditerranéenne* (Paris, 1979), pp. 206–215 stresses the significance of the political vacuum that obtained in the peninsula. On royal authority and the Jews, and the events of 1391, see David Nirenberg, "L'Indécision Souverain: Génocide et Justice en Valencia, 1391," in Julie Claustre, Olivier Mattéoni, and Nicolas Offenstadt eds., *Un Moyen Age pour aujourd'hui: mélanges offerts à Claude Gauvard* (Paris, 2010), pp. 495–508.

The useful dichotomy that is drawn between the vertical alliance, where Jews rely on the Lord, and the Jews' horizontal relationships with other governing institutions within the society, is nevertheless simplistic. This is especially so in the middle ages when royal

Thanks to the voluminous documentation found in Aragonese archives, and particularly the letters – preserved in the Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó – that Joan, Iolant, Martí, and Maria penned during the ten months of unrest that gripped the constituent kingdoms of their Crown, we can reconstruct the course of the disturbances and their immediate aftermath. The Jewish communities were viewed by the royal family as its patrimony, so naturally it preserved information about the violence. While these sources only sporadically inform us who was responsible for these assaults and why they occurred, the documents do enable us to follow the daily behavior of the royal family, and to observe how its members reacted to the turbulence and, specifically, to the attacks against the Jews.

Consequently, the available evidence allows for a volume on the Jews' protectors. The surviving data should not lead us to imagine that the royal response was the determining factor in the spread of the violence, but awareness of the royals' personal concerns and idiosyncrasies also lets us explore the importance of contingency factors in the development of the riots. While the assaults are an important feature of medieval Iberian history, the documents permit that the violence can be chronicled, as well, from the perspective of concerns central to Jewish political history – the effectiveness of the royal alliance – both in the middle ages and beyond.

There are comparably few contemporary sources available in Castilian archives that can tell us about the actual progress of the riots in that kingdom, or inform us of the royal response. And, regrettably, few if any Jewish sources, aside from a letter written by the Saragossan rabbi, courtier, and philosopher, Hasdai Crescas, were composed during the course of the riots. Owing to the paucity of Jewish materials, this landmark event in Castilian and Aragonese history, and in Jewish history, will be told mainly from sources external to the Jewish community.[12]

power was severely restricted by the effectiveness of local officials upon whom they needed to rely.

Many authors have made reference to King Joan's actions during the riots. See, among others, Rafael Tasis i Marca, *Joan I. El Rei Caçador i Músic* (Barcelona, 1959), pp. 195–207, and the brief but accurate comments about the royal family in Eliseo Vidal Beltrán, *Valencia en la época de Juan I* (Valencia, 1974), pp. 60–61.

[12] On the sources available for the riots in Girona, and by extension for the unrest in the Crown of Aragon, see Jaume Riera i Sans, "Els avalots del 1391 a Girona," in *Jornades d'història dels jueus a Catalunya* (Girona, n.d.), pp. 95–96. A Hebrew poem ascribed to Reuven Girondi, translated into Catalan in Riera, p. 156, was prove to be fabricated: see, below, the chapter on Girona. Important documents have been published by Fritz Baer in his documentary compilation *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien*, volumes 1

For the most part, the book before you is a history of suffering, and of political neglect, benign and otherwise. Let us begin.[13]

and 2, and by Jaume Riera i Sans in many of his publications. Noteworthy is his "Los tumultos contra las juderías de la Corona de Aragón en 1391," *Cuadernos de Historia. Anexos de la Revista Hispania* 8 (1977), pp. 213–225. Other published sources will be cited in the appropriate chapters.

Aside from the Aragonese royal documentation extant from those ten violent months, I have also utilized a variety of sources from municipal archives. Much more information about the riots was revealed over the months and years after the unrest came to an end, but that archival exploration would have made the project the labor of a lifetime.

On the relevant Hebrew sources, written months and years after the riots, see the appropriate chapters. I have generally eschewed their use for details about the events, especially given the richness of the archival information.

[13] Some materials in Part II, Chapters 8 and 10 have appeared in my "'Unless the Lord Watches Over the City . . . ': Joan of Aragon and his Jews, June-October 1391," Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter eds., *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations. In Honor of David Berger* (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2012), pp. 65–89; and in my "Royal Priorities: Duke Martí, the Riots against the Jews of the Crown of Aragon and the 'Blessed Passage to Sicily,' (1391–1392)," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 10 [Aldina Quintana, Raquel Ibañez Sperber and Ram Ben-Shalom eds., *Between Edom and Kedar. Studies in Memory of Yom Tov Assis*, Part 1] (Jerusalem, 2014), pp. 35–53. They are utilized here with permission of the publishers.

MAP 1. Iberian Polities 1391–1392