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Source: *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (Apr., 1977), pp. 224-235

Published by: [University of Pennsylvania Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1454572>

Accessed: 15-03-2015 23:24 UTC

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EDWARD I AND THE EXPULSION OF THE JEWS

By BARNETT D. OVRUT, Foxboro, Massachusetts

THE QUESTION why the Jews were expelled from England in 1290 has been the subject of much scholarly debate ever since the pioneering studies by Joseph Jacobs and Barnett Lionel Abrahams. Unfortunately, however, in their zeal to study either Jewish or medieval English history, modern historians have often neglected to place the expulsion within its proper perspective: a conscious act of an aggressive and far-sighted government made in response to a number of political and constitutional factors which were playing an important role in the development of the English state. The purpose of this paper, then, is to examine the expulsion in the broadest possible context, understanding it not as an isolated event but rather as a concerted action intricately related to the primary political-constitutional issues of the day.

The entire position of the Jewish community in medieval England was one predicated upon the Jews' function, in regard to the general population, as moneylenders. In return for royal protection and in order to foster this trade, the Jews acted as a ready source of money for the Crown. Such payments, most characteristically in the form of tallage, but also as loans, gifts, or fines, constituted the original and primary cause which conditioned and determined the exigencies of Jewish finance, which indeed formed the "pretext for the toleration which they enjoyed and the sole official *raison d'être* of their existence."¹ As Bracton made evident in his study of the English common law, this relationship between king and Jewry constituted a situation in which the former enjoyed an absolute proprietorship over the latter:

"The Jew can have nothing that is his own, for whatever he acquires, he acquires not for himself but for the king; for the Jews live not for themselves but for others, and so they acquire not for themselves but for others."²

By the thirteenth century the liquid wealth of the Jews had become so important to the Crown that tallage was utilized as a regular

¹ Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford, 1941), p. 105.

² Quoted from F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law*, vol. I (Cambridge, 1898), p. 468.

means to supplement the royal income. Just how vital the tallage was to the Crown in fact, can be fully recognized by studying its imposition in relation to the political fortunes of English kingship during the reigns of Henry III and Edward I. In a seminal article written some years ago, P. Elman demonstrated that during this century there existed an upward-downward trend in tallage imposition which roughly corresponded to the movement of political and constitutional history.³ Thus we can see that for the period 1221-31, when Henry III was either a minor or under the control of others, the annual Jewish tallage averaged 3000 marks; for the period 1233-57, when Henry, though master in his own house, was caught up in extravagance and faced a baronage reluctant to grant him money, the tallage averaged 7000 marks per annum; in the period 1259-69, with the civil war and temporary baronial victory, the figure fell to 600 marks; and finally, in 1271-90, with the restoration of internal peace and strong royal rule, the annual tallage rose to 2500 marks, significantly higher than in the previous period but a great deal lower than in the time when Henry was at the height of his power.⁴ As one can thus see, the "closeness with which the imposition of Jewish tallages followed this expansion and contraction of the royal power is sufficient proof of their importance,"⁵ at least during the reign of Henry III.

Correctly recognizing the position of the Jewish community in thirteenth-century England as totally dependent upon its fiscal activities and responsibilities, we might first assume that the expulsion of 1290 was due to the decline in the Jewry's ability to continue to satisfy the monetary demands of the Crown and its resulting inability to justify its existence in the realm. To be sure, ample evidence exists demonstrating the diminished capacity of the Jews to meet the royal financial needs. An actual decline in the tallage capacity of the Jews can be seen in the fact that the Jewish community was finding it increasingly difficult to meet the almost incessant demands of the Crown, tallage having been levied thirty times in the period 1233-79.⁶ For instance, the tallage of 1244, assessed at the incredible sum of 60,000 marks on the pretext of Jewish involvement in a ritual murder, required some six years to be fully paid,⁷ whereas that of 1271, assessed at just 6500 marks, fell short in pay-

³ P. Elman, "The Economic Causes of the Expulsion of the Jews," *Economic History Review*, VII (1937), 145-54.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 153-54.

⁷ Roth, *op. cit.*, pp. 45, 55.

ment by one-third of this total, the remainder being advanced by Earl Richard of Cornwall, with the Jewry then assigned to him for one year as security. Again, we note the difficulty experienced by specific individuals in meeting such payments: the imprisonment of a large number of Jews, including the entire community of Hereford, by Henry III in order to force payment of the arrears of the levy of 1272;⁸ the order sent to the various chirographers concerning the withdrawal of bonds of debt from the archæe and their transfer to the Treasury in 1273;⁹ the seizure of the Norwich bonds of one Abraham fil Deulecresse in 1275 for the payment of arrears amassed since 1272;¹⁰ Edward I's order to the Constable of the Tower of London calling for the arrest of all Jews, and their families, who had failed to pay the tallage of 1274, that "they may be dealt with as men who have been outlawed and who have carried off chattels which are ours."¹¹ Finally we can see the decline in the capacity of the Jews to meet tallage payments by comparing such assessments with the total income of the king:

1233-57:	total revenues—£ 932,000 (approximately) ¹²
	revenues/annum—£ 37,000
	tallage:revenue proportion—12.8%
1271-90:	total revenues—£ 810,000 (approximately) ¹³
	revenues/annum—£ 43,000
	tallage:revenue proportion—3 % ¹⁴

This decline in the tallage capacity of the Jews is corroborated by evidence not directly connected with the tallages themselves, namely by a comparison of the periodical value of the extant bonds enrolled in the various chirograph chests. For example, we see that while the value of the debts in the Cambridge Chest totaled some 2750 marks in 1240, they had fallen in value to some 425 marks at the time of the expulsion in 1290.¹⁵ Similarly our records for Norwich

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67. *Select Pleas*, p. xxxviii, 70.

⁹ *Cal. Ex. Jews*, I, 19-20.

¹⁰ *Cal. Ex. Jews*, II, 264.

¹¹ *Cal. Ex. Jews*, III, 103.

¹² Sir James H. Ramsay, *A History of the Revenues of the Kings of England, 1066-1399* (Oxford, 1925), I, p. 363; II, pp. 88-89.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ With a pound corresponding to 2/3 of a mark, 7000 marks would be the equivalent of approximately £ 4666, while 2500 marks would be roughly the equivalent of £ 1666.

¹⁵ H. P. Stokes, *Studies in Anglo-Jewish History* (Edinburgh, 1913), Appendix IV, p. 196.

show that whereas in 1239 the total value of bonds in that city's archa exceeded £ 4400,¹⁶ in 1290 this total was little better than £ 590.¹⁷ Turning from communities to individuals, we note that in 1239 Isaac fil Jurnet was far the wealthiest of Norwich's Jews, holding bonds worth £ 3668 5s. 9d.;¹⁸ by contrast in 1290 the city's richest Jew, Isaac fil Deulecresse, was worth just £ 294 13s. 4d.¹⁹ Finally from another line of evidence we see that in 1244 Moses fil Hamo of Hereford paid as relief (set at one-third) for inheriting his father's estate the sum of £ 3000; in 1284 Moses' son Elias left to his inheritors just £ 1260, an amount which was easily the largest sum recorded during the reign of Edward I.²⁰

The declining economic fortunes of the Jews thus worked to strip the community of its "raison d'être"—its entire position of legality and being in the English realm. However, while this factor did provide the Crown with a pretext to banish the Jews from England, I do not feel that it provides a final answer and explains exactly why expulsion became the royal policy. Indeed, why should the Crown have even bothered? Why did it not just confiscate all Jewish property, or tallage the Jews into destitution—as Edward may have intended with the 20,000 mark tallage assessed in 1287? Despite the relative impoverishment of the Jewry, expulsion on purely financial grounds makes little sense, particularly as it would have been more to the advantage of the Crown, which was in such great need of money for both its internal and external expenses, to have retained this source of income for as long as it yielded money, however little it might be. By itself, Elman's argument does not stand.

With the Crown still in such great need of ready money, we must consider the possibility that by the time of the expulsion it had found a source of funds which was far more fruitful and which did not present the difficulties inherent in the levying and collection of tallages. To be sure, it is readily apparent that as the thirteenth century progressed the great Italian merchant-bankers, particularly the Riccardi of Lucca, had come to supplant the Jews as a prime source of non-feudal income. This is not to suggest that the Italians in any manner replaced the Jews, for there is a great difference between the functions of the former, who lent money to the king to be repaid by way of control of export tariffs, taxes on movables, profits from

¹⁶ V. D. Lipman, *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* (London, 1967), pp. 41-45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80.

²⁰ Elman, *op. cit.*, 147.

minting and exchange, royal fines, etc.,²¹ and the functions of the latter, who lent money to the population at large so that the proceeds of this transaction could be taxed by the king. That the Riccardi expenditure in England when the company operated as royal bankers (1272-94) aggregated something in the nature of £ 408,972, or slightly more than £ 18,500 per annum on the average,²² (as compared with an annual tallage assessment of just 2500 marks for approximately the same period), reflects the fact that royal finance under Edward I had become largely dependent upon the easily accessible and liquid loans of the Italians. However, though the Italians had certainly become the cornerstone of the entire royal financial structure, the great dependence of the Crown upon them does not at all explain why the Jews should have been expelled; it clearly would have been absurd and poor policy—certainly not a characteristic of Edward and his ministers—to have dispensed with the free source of money which the Jews had at one time represented, and which, with a period of tallage respite, they could possibly re-attain.²³

Similarly we must dismiss outright any religious motive as the cause of the expulsion. First, despite the prevalent and often blatant anti-Jewish attitudes displayed by clergymen and the general population, the English king was not one to accede readily to the demands of others when his own interests were involved. Secondly, the Church itself never advocated the banishment of Jews from any Christian land, but was rather primarily concerned with limiting social intercourse between Christians and Jews.²⁴ Finally, religious fanaticism

²¹ See R. W. Kaeuper, *Bankers to the Crown: the Riccardi of Lucca and Edward I* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 104-24.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 129. A measure of the Riccardi's importance to the Crown vis-a-vis the decline of the Jews may be found in the fact that for the 1287 campaign against the Welsh rebel Rhys ap Maredudd, the Italians supplied the Crown with some £ 8288, whereas money extorted from the Jews to help bolster the Riccardi resources for the war totaled just £ 430—this during a year of tallage. Kaeuper, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-99.

²³ Similarly the Italians were at times repaid by means of the Jewish tallage: "Sums exacted from the community of the Jews of England contributed more than £ 8000 to the total amount received by the king's merchants *de thesauro*." Kaeuper, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

²⁴ The primary concern of the thirteenth century Church was to limit social intercourse between Christians and Jews. At no time was it Church policy to expel Jews from any Christian nation. In fact in Italy, where Church power and influence were always strongest, the Jews enjoyed more relative freedom than in any other European state.

in medieval England, as well as social hatred of the foreigner, has always been marked by a strong economic undercurrent. One can see this manifested in most of the great anti-Jewish outbreaks of the eleventh and twelfth centuries: the great riots of 1189-90 in London, Norwich, York, Dunstable, Colchester, Lynn, Stamford, Ospringe, Thetford, and Bury St. Edmunds, which followed the coronation of Richard I and the gathering of the Crusaders during the Lenten period—always a time ripe for open hostility against non-Christians—saw the destruction of bonds of debt together with the typical acts of plunder, pillage, and forced baptism;²⁵ the sacking of the London, Worcester, Northampton, Canterbury, and Ely Jewries in 1262-67 witnessed similar actions, typified by the carrying off of the Cambridge Chirograph Chest to the Isle of Ely and the sacking of the Lincoln synagogue by a group of anti-royalist outlaws known as the "Disinherited." As James Parkes has made clear, anti-Jewish riots generally were instigated by those most heavily in debt to the Jews, "and the rioters often made their purpose perfectly clear by carefully seeking out and destroying the Jewish records of their indebtedness."²⁶ In short, the religious prejudice is obviously apparent, but while it cannot be laid to purely socio-religious causes, there is no reason to assume that it might have taken the form of a general expulsion.

That the king's decision to expel the Jews should have come when it did was primarily due to political-constitutional factors to which the Jews were only indirectly related. What was ultimately fatal to the Jewish position in England were circumstances which were concerned with the subsidiary function of the Jewish usurers: the transfer of land. As a number of historians have observed, the vast majority of Jewish loans went to small villagers or townsmen ex-

²⁵ It is highly probable that the *archae*, or *chirograph*, system and the so-called Exchequer of the Jews were developed by the Crown in reaction to the anti-Jewish riots of 1189-90. As Roth has succinctly put it, the object of Richard I's financial innovations concerning the Jews was to "ensure its more effective spoliation for the benefit of the Exchequer and to forestall the possibility of loss should there be another outburst of violence against them." Cecil Roth, *The Jews of Medieval Oxford* (Oxford, 1951), p. 22.

For further discussion of the Exchequer of the Jews see: Hilary Jenkinson, "Records of Exchequer Receipts from the English Jewry," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, VIII (1918), 19-54; Alice C. Cramer, "The Jewish Exchequer: An Inquiry into its Financial Functions," *American Historical Review*, XLV (1940), 327-37.

²⁶ James Parkes, *The Jew in the Medieval Community*, (London, 1938), p. 361.

periencing temporary financial difficulties, with wealthier knights, nobles, and higher clergymen borrowing but little.²⁷ Though we do find instances of lay and clerical magnates indebted to Jews, these belong primarily to the reigns of Richard I and John, when money was needed for crusading expenses, for the numerous continental military expeditions, and for the heavy royal and papal imposts characteristic of those years. As the thirteenth century advanced, the smaller landowners became very nearly the sole clients and chief victims of Jewish finance, while the monasteries and greater barons became, as we shall see, its indirect beneficiaries.

The involvement of the Jewish financiers in the active land market of the thirteenth century came about directly around their practice of selling bonds of debt, which included titles to the lands or to the rents generally pledged as security for the loans, to individuals with ready cash, a recourse frequently resorted to by the Jews throughout the century. Evidence exists to show that the heavy and incessant demands for tallage often compelled the Jews to sell their bonds. For the most part, as the extant starrs demonstrate, the purchasers of such bonds were generally the great abbeys, the higher barons, a few wealthy merchants, and royal officials. More than half of such transfers—which gave to the buyer all rights to the debts and to the lands/rents held as security for them—were transacted with monastic houses, such as Newhouse in Lincolnshire, the first foundation of the Praemonstratensian Order; Melsa; Malton priory of Glastonbury, and others.²⁸ Some of the more important lay magnates were also active purchasers of bonds of debt, particularly Gilbert de Clare, earl of Gloucester and Edward I's most powerful single political

²⁷ Elman, *op. cit.*, 148; Lipman, *op. cit.*, p. 94; M. M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society* (London, 1972), p. 164.

Elman's examination of the debtors whose names appear on the Cambridge rolls and those that appear on the rolls of debts compiled in 1255 and belonging to Abraham de Berkhamstead, shows that over 70% of the debtors belonged to the agricultural classes, particularly the smaller tenants. Elman, *op. cit.*, 148.

In spite of the expansion of production and the quickening of exchange that characterized much of the thirteenth century, we cannot conclude that the smaller landowners en masse continued to grow in wealth. In fact, as Postan has shown, the economic changes and variancies of the time go against such a conclusion, with the number of families on the rise seemingly negated and cancelled out by the downward movement of declining families. Postan, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

²⁸ *Cal. Ex. Jews*, I, 161, 277-78; III, 273-74; etc.

opponent.²⁹ Among the royal officials who trafficked in Jewish debts special mention may be made of Robert Burnel, William de Middleton, and Adam de Stratton.³⁰ However, in spite of the extensive activities of such organizations and individuals in this direction, the greatest single recipient of Jewish bonds and of the lands/rents secured by them remained the Crown, most specifically Queen Eleanor, Edward's consort. Having obtained seisin and then possession of such lands primarily through the seizure of bonds held by the defaulters of tallage, the king granted to Eleanor a vast fortune which added measurably to royal wealth and power.³¹

While the Crown's own trafficking in Jewish debts could and did prove beneficial to it as it continually acquired land, for the same reason participation in this trade by others was a practice which worked to the king's detriment. Conscious as he was of his rights as both monarch and feudal lord, Edward could not help but be aware of the potential dangers inherent in a trade which resulted in the baronage gaining in wealth and political-military power through their acquisition of land, and in those secular services owed to the king being lost forever as the abbeys acquired more property. Similarly, Edward was well aware of the effects of the sale of bonds of debt against the lesser landowners, for it was precisely this interest which formed an important element in the opposition to the Crown in 1258-65, and which, while supporting Simon de Montfort, complained bitterly at the Oxford Parliament of the Jewish money-lenders' habit of selling lands pledged to them as security for debts to the great magnates of the realm:

"Judei aliquando debita sua, et terra cis invadiates tradunt magnatibus et potentioribus regni, qui terras minorum ingrediuntur ea occasione."³²

²⁹ *Cal. Ex. Jews*, I, 137, 199; II, 117; *Select Pleas*, 48-50.

³⁰ *Cal. Ex. Jews*, I, 206 and passim; II, 68 and passim; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Henry III, 1266-72, 69.

³¹ *Cal. Ex. Jews*, I, 289; II, 17, 178, 303, 308; III, 57, 64, 170, and passim; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, II, 62, 212, 350; *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, I, 180, 184; II, 271.

A lengthy entry in the Close Rolls lists a series of manors that had been bought by the Queen from Jews and others. Of the thirty entries, seven were bought directly from Jews, and we are to assume that they were the result of the purchase of bonds of debt. The total value of these manors is listed at £ 679, with the total amount of money paid for them by the king accounted at £ 866 13s. 4d. The total value of advowsons is 970 marks, and the manors include more than 40 knights' fees. *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, II, 80-81.

³² "The Jews transfer their debt claims and the land they hold

It was thus for the purpose of halting the growing economic and political power of the Crown's traditional opponents, or at least of keeping it within manageable bounds, and with the aim of attaining the support of the smaller landowners that Edward I brought about a series of enactments in 1269-75 which, while purporting to have as their objective the limitation of Jewish usury, actually sought to achieve little more than a restriction of the Jewish role in the land market. Beginning with the Provisions of Jewry 1269, provided by Henry III "with the advice of the Lord Edward,"³³ the latter in effect the power behind the throne, the purpose of this legislation was to prohibit further sale of bonds of debt by Jews:

... no Jew from this day forth /shall/ sell any such fee to a Christian on pain of forfeiture of life and chattels, and that no Christian purchase it, on pain of forfeiture of his chattels and inheritance. And in like manner . . . no Jew hereafter may sell his debts unless he have first obtained licence of the King. And if a Christian purchase it by license of the King, let him have no more than the King would have if the debt were in his hand, that is to say, the chattel that is found in the charter without interest.³⁴

Such injunctions continued in 1271 with the Mandate of the King Touching Lands and Fees of Jews in England, by which the Crown once again grappled with the problem at hand by seeking to limit further the right of the Jews to hold and sell land.³⁵ Finally in 1275 Edward took the most positive step to date, as the Statute of Judaism decreed that "henceforth no Jew shall lend anything at money, either upon land, or upon rent, or upon other thing."³⁶

Whatever their intent, the prohibitive enactments of 1269-75 did have the effect of somewhat restricting Jewish usury and its subsidiary features, thus helping to erode further the Jewish tallage base. However, it did not put such practices to a complete halt. Whereas the poorer members of the Anglo-Jewish community—by far the majority of the Jewish population—were severely hurt economically, its wealthier members appear to have managed to continue to prosper. Probably because of their greater liquid wealth, trading capital, and mercantile contacts, such individuals were often

in mortgage to the magnates, who thereby accumulated lands of the smaller landlords." Quoted from Postan, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

³³ *Select Pleas*, p. xl ix.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. li.

³⁵ *Select Pleas*, p. liii.

³⁶ *Statutes of the Realm*, I, 221.

able to divert their energies from moneylending to wholesale trade in corn and wool, commodities on which they had previously been accustomed to make advances and in which they had traded when forced to foreclose. On closer analysis, however, it appears that such transactions were often merely a means to conceal usury under the guise of trade, as V. D. Lipman has demonstrated in the case of Norwich. As we can thus see, the fact that the phraseology and figures of transactions in wool and corn in 1275-90 are so stereotyped reflects the notion that the Norwich Jews—and likely those of the other English towns—"continued moneylending under the camouflage of produce contracts, which were couched in conventional form—a form indeed that must have been connived at by authorities."³⁷ Edward himself seems to have acknowledged the continuance of Jewish usury, for in 1284 he sought to regulate the practice through the Articles Touching the Jewry, which specified the level of interest a Jew could receive for loans made to Christians.³⁸ In fact so widespread did the practice of usury remain, as did the Jewish role in the land market, that the Crown was left with no alternative other than the removal of the Jews from the realm. The failure of the prohibitory enactments to restrict the role of the Jewry in the transfer of land, thus led directly to the final decision for expulsion, as the royal writ, issued in November 1290 to justify this action, makes apparent:

To the treasurer and barons of the Exchequer. Whereas the king in his parliament at Westminster at the quinzene of Michaelmas, in the third year of his reign, ordained that no Jew of the realm should henceforth lend anything in money to any Christian upon lands, rents, or other things, but should earn his living by trade and labor, and the Jews afterwards maliciously deliberating amongst themselves, changed the kind of usury into a worse, which they called 'courtesy' (curialitum), and depressed the king's people under color of such by an error double that of the previous one; wherefore the king, by reason of their errors and for the honour of Christ, has caused the Jews to leave his realm as perfidious men.³⁹

³⁷ Lipman, *op. cit.*, p. 168. Lipman shows that the vast majority of prices quoted for grain was 6s. 8d. per quarter, generally well above the prevailing market price. The contracts for both grain and wool appear as advances of money made on the security of these commodities. Lipman, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-68.

³⁸ *Select Pleas*, p. lvii.

³⁹ *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, III, 109.

By means of the prohibitory enactments and the final expulsion Edward was merely waging "war" on the barons and monasteries, seeking to weaken their economic and political power by in some way limiting the acquisition of that foundation upon which such strength lay—land. This policy takes on further clarity when one views it in the perspective of the struggle between the Crown and the barons, the latter generally supported by the English church, which dominated the political and constitutional history of the thirteenth century. From the vantage point of hindsight, we can recognize Edward's attitude towards the Jews as part of a conscious policy which sought to deal with a problem that was pressing upon the king both as a feudal lord and as the royal head of an increasingly complex and bureaucratic state. Part of this policy concerned the legislation which brought about the Statutes of Mortmain (1279) and Quia Emptores (1290), each of which sought to limit the political power of the magnates while yet preserving those "secular services upon which the defense of the realm was theoretically dependent."⁴⁰ As the former sought to prohibit land grants to the Church except by royal license, and as the latter worked to prohibit further subinfeudation, their relationship with the enactments concerning Jewish usury can be sensed. Similarly, taken in concert with other royal measures concerning the lay and ecclesiastical magnates—the century's legislation concerning distress, generally in the interests of the feudal tenants;⁴¹ court action which consistently favored the free alienability of land on the part of such tenants;⁴² the Crown's increased summoning of knights to parliaments during the latter half of the century; the struggle with the Church over taxation and the freedom of royal clerks from ecclesiastical courts; and Edward's meddling in the private affairs of his earls and barons⁴³—the royal policy towards the Jews was one designed ultimately for political ends. To put this another way, Edward possessed a definite policy in regard to his magnates, one which took shape in a series of attempts to limit their power in relation to that of the king, and while building his own power through his own acquisitions and through attainment

⁴⁰ T. F. T. Plucknett, *The Legislation of Edward I* (Oxford, 1949), p. 107.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴³ Characterized by Edward's treatment of the Marcher lords, earls Gilbert de Clare and Humphrey de Bohun, in their private disputes. See M. Altschul, "Earl Gilbert the Red and Edward I," in *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science* (Baltimore, 1965).

of the support of the lesser landowners, to define the position of the king as a feudal monarch and overlord. That the Jews became involved in this and were thus eventually expelled from the realm, was due to the subsidiary aspects of their usury. We can therefore conclude, with Postan, that the expulsion was not so much a single and isolated step but one ultimately made in relation to circumstances with which the Jews were indirectly but inextricably connected:

Thus viewed, the summoning of knights or minores to the successive parliaments between 1254 and 1294, ending with the final establishment of the practice in 1295, must be considered together with a whole series of enactments in the second half of the century, beginning with the clause in the Provisions of Westminster of 1259, which protected freeholders from the abuse of power by barons, and ending with the Statute of Quia Emptores of 1290, which put an end to the continued formation of mesne tenancies. These enactments also link up with the expulsion of the Jews in 1290, which must not be viewed as an isolated act and a mere concession to anti-Semitic sentiment, but as one of a series of measures designed to deal with the economic grievance of smaller men. In other words, if what Simon de Montfort and Edward I tried to do was to win the support of the knightly class, they did so not by bowing to its new strength, but by coming to its relief.⁴⁴

To deal with the economic grievances of the smaller men meant also to deal with the political strength of the magnates, and it was this that Edward sought to accomplish in his expulsion of the Jews from England. Rather than an event conditioned by any purely religious or economic factors—factors which certainly existed but which do not, in themselves, explain why expulsion constituted the royal policy—the general banishment of the Jews in 1290 must be seen as part of a conscious policy on the part of the king by which, in seeking to augment his own power and to define more fully his own position as feudal monarch and overlord, he sought to come to the aid of the lesser landowners and to cut down the power of the great lords.

⁴⁴ Postan, *op. cit.*, p. 165.