

THE JEWS OF ENGLAND

13th CENTURY

The 13th century brought to an end the two hundred years of Jewish life dwelling in England. Following the Third Crusade (1189), King John and his son Henry III lost no time in viewing their Jews as a constant source of money. Things became so bad for them, that in one instance, the Jews even sent a deputation to the reigning monarch begging for permission to leave the country. It was refused, however, since the Jews were still too useful to the treasury. Slowly their wealth was drained out of them, until by the end of the century, their financial value was basically nil. Lombards, Italian bankers, had come to England in the interim, and they gradually took the place of the Jews in England's economic life.

Under the vigorous urging of the Church, and because of an accusation of counterfeiting money, the Jews were finally ordered to leave the country during the autumn of 1290. The king, Edward I, did allow them to take along whatever cash they had, though their homes and the debts still due them were confiscated by the royal treasury. Edward also provided them with ships for the crossing to the Continent, although a number of captains robbed some of the Jews, and threw others into the English Channel. The majority went back to France from which their ancestors had come two centuries earlier. Yet, but sixteen years later, they suffered another expulsion when France, too, expelled its Jews in 1306.