

Introduction **Beyond Expulsion**
A Paradigm Shift

“On Saturdays, we Jews have rest, and neither trade nor travel.”¹ Thus wrote Jaeckel of Oberbergheim to the magistrates of the city of Strasbourg in May 1548. Jaeckel, a Jew residing in a small village in Upper Alsace, had been summoned to Strasbourg for a court case that was scheduled for the Jewish Sabbath. He sent the magistrates a written request for adjournment of the case, proposing that he appear before the municipal court on a different day of their choice instead. Similarly, Gotlieb of Hagenau negotiated with Strasbourg’s magistracy about extending a court date because of the Sabbath. In 1566, Gotlieb wrote to the magistrates concerning a court case between his wards and a local burgher, Heinrich Preusser:

As is evident from the aforementioned writing . . . I should appear before your honors tomorrow, Saturday, at six o’clock. . . . However, Your Honors [know] that as a Jew, on Saturdays I cannot perform certain things; also it is not proper. So, therefore, to Your Honors, is my subservient request. You will show me another day, during the week.²

These brief exchanges have relatively little historical significance, other than that they neatly capture these surprising interactions, which, barring research in archives, would remain hidden. The city of Strasbourg had expelled its Jewish community in 1390.³ Jews were not readmitted into the city until 1791. And yet, despite the apparent exclusion of Jews from Strasbourg for four hundred years, Jews not only entered the city during that period but also appeared as litigants in its courts, corresponded with its magistrates, taught Hebrew and Judaica to the city’s Christian religious reformers, and worked and socialized with local residents. Jaeckel’s

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request to the magistrates suggests that he felt a degree of comfort in corresponding with them; indeed, in other documents, he explained that he had lent various burghers in the city over 800 Gulden and, thus, had great familiarity with the city and its leaders.⁴

That Jews and Christians interacted with and mutually influenced one another has been established by recent scholars. Older research on medieval Europe prior to the last third of the twentieth century focused on polemics, disputations, and persecutions, and subsequently emphasized Jewish isolation from the Christian world.⁵ More recent scholarship, however, has recognized that Jews and Christians resided side by side, as Jews often lived in the city center, near the church or local cathedral.⁶ Proximity allowed Jews and Christians to develop both commercial and social relations with one another, to become familiar with one another's religious traditions, and to impact one another.⁷ Countless examples of exchange can be found in polemics, rituals, money-lending logbooks, and contemporaneous and parallel cultural developments.⁸ A new generation of scholars has demonstrated that despite and alongside the animosity that surely existed between Jews and Christians, an intimacy of sorts also characterized their relationship.

The late Middle Ages, however, witnessed the expulsions of Jews from much of Western Europe. The monarchs of England, France, Spain, and Portugal expelled the Jews residing in their lands, as did some of the local and territorial leaders in Italy. In the Holy Roman Empire, Jews were expelled from many of the large cities in which they had resided. Logic would dictate that the relations between Jews and Christians ceased when the Jews were expelled from the areas in which they had lived for centuries. Indeed, many undergraduate survey courses in Jewish history use the expulsions from Western Europe as a divider between semesters, ending one semester with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, and picking up the narrative the following semester with the flourishing of new Jewish communities in eastern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, Amsterdam, and Italy, places to which refugees of the medieval expulsions had resettled. Not surprisingly, scholars of those lands have aptly demonstrated that the lives and experiences of Jews and their new neighbors, whether Christian or Muslim, were also extensively intertwined.⁹ The history of Jews in Western

Europe is often not revisited until the mid-seventeenth century, when Spanish and Portuguese conversos moved to Amsterdam and London, and when court Jews entered the cities of the Empire from which they had been expelled.

This approach, however, implies a gap in Jewish settlement in the Empire between the late medieval expulsions and the reintegration of Jews into cities in the mid-seventeenth century. Unlike the Jews in France, England, Spain, or Portugal, Jews were not expelled from the Empire in its entirety. Jews remained in the Empire throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, despite the expulsions that raged through the cities and other regions in the Empire from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Nevertheless, until recently, these Jews remained absent from both Jewish and European historiography.

Beginning in the mid-fourteenth century, Jewish residential patterns in the Empire shifted. During the medieval period, most Jews resided in cities, but by the fifteenth century most Jews lived in rural areas. The lack of a consolidated political power in the Empire allowed those Jews who had been expelled from a city to resettle in other areas, often in the surrounding countryside.¹⁰ As archival records show, there are countless examples of Jews residing in small towns and villages. These Jews paid local taxes, corresponded with local leaders, and adjudicated legal disputes in a variety of courts.¹¹

In addition, these rural Jews preserved their relationships with magistrates and residents in the very cities from which they had been expelled. *Beyond Expulsion* explores such relations between Jews and Christians in the city of Strasbourg. Located on the Rhine and Ill rivers, Strasbourg, the largest city in Lower Alsace, was a center of trade and essentially served as a regional capital. Its location on the rivers and on the borders between the Empire and France also rendered it an important European marketplace. These economic and geographic attributes had attracted a Jewish community to the city in the twelfth century. However, in 1349, the city's burghers expelled Strasbourg's Jews. Though a few families were readmitted two decades later, by 1390, all Jews were expelled from Strasbourg. It was only in 1791 that the ban on Jewish residence in Strasbourg was lifted.

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Beyond Expulsion examines Jewish-Christian relations in a city that banned Jewish residence for four centuries. The book advocates looking beyond the official exclusion of Jews by consulting with archival documents that unequivocally demonstrate that Jews actively participated in certain parts of the urban experience. The use of archival sources is the key to unearthing the relations between Jews and Christians that continued through this period. The earlier work of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century scholars of Alsatian Jewry focused only on restrictions against Jews, citing the numerous laws prohibiting Jewish presence in the city as evidence for the complete exclusion of Jews from Strasbourg.¹² By looking at the laws alone, it seems as though Jews were simply not permitted in the city, and that the magistrates viewed any violation of this ban as undesirable and punishable by law. This approach recounts the history of Jews in Strasbourg during the medieval period, and picks up the narrative again with the late-eighteenth-century debates about the emancipation of French Jewry, at which point almost 20,000 Jews lived in Alsace.¹³ What has not been discussed up to now is the process through which an area that had seemingly expelled its Jewish population came to boast of such a large Jewish population.

Documents in Strasbourg tell a completely different story, and establish a Jewish presence in Strasbourg at a time when Jews were not supposed to be there. Although the degree of Jewish presence shifted over time, interactions between local Jews and residents of the city took place on a regular basis throughout the early modern period. Echoes of the continued relationship between Jews and Christians are even discernable in the laws forbidding Jews from the city, as well as in the writings of both Christian theologians and members of the Jewish community. Examined in tandem, the archives and the more traditional sources highlight the nuances of Jewish-Christian relations in the city, and balance the picture of daily contacts between Jews and Christians with the very real restrictions and boundaries that simultaneously limited those contacts.

The fact that the urban expulsions did not sever relationships between Christians and Jews raises new and important questions about the extent of Jewish-Christian contact. Since Jews were present inside cities such as Strasbourg during the early modern period, they were

undoubtedly affected by the events that took place within the city. Specifically, Jews entered and exited the city as it underwent reform and the gradual transformation from Catholicism to orthodox Lutheranism. This book assesses the direct impact that the Protestant Reformation had upon the Jewish community of the Empire.

Previous scholarship has explored this topic in a limited way. Salo Baron, for example, addressed the issue by extolling the theoretical implications of the Reformation for Western Europe's only minority. Baron argued that the rise of individualism, the diversity of denominations that developed in the Reformation's wake, the new bridges built between Jews and Christians who focused on the Old Testament, and the formation of "modern" states should have benefited the Jews. Instead, however, Europeans battled one another fiercely, such that years of religious wars and of antisemitic writings such as those of Luther effectively postponed any positive impact on the Jewish community until the Enlightenment.¹⁴

Although Baron discussed some of the conditions facing the Jews of the Empire, much of his discussion focused upon individual reformers, princes, and Jewish leaders such as Josel of Rosheim. Indeed, much attention has been given to the subject of the reformers and their attitudes toward the Jews. A large portion of the scholarship dealing with Jews and the Reformation has centered on the question of what Luther thought about the Jews, and whether and why his attitudes toward Jews shifted over his lifetime.¹⁵ More recently, important scholarship about other reformers and their attitudes toward Jews has been produced, as have significant treatments of Jewish responses to Christianity during this period.¹⁶ Works about cultural parallels between elites of the two communities have also appeared.¹⁷ These works greatly enhance the picture of the intellectual exchanges between Jews and Christians during the period of the Reformation.

The impact of the religious developments and reforms that had shattered Latin Christendom certainly went beyond the few elite Jews that debated with Christian leaders.¹⁸ Scholars have demonstrated that the Counter Reformation affected the Jewish communities of Italy through the establishment of the ghettos and censorship. Recent scholarship has even situated the ghetto in the context of early modern state-building.¹⁹

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The impact of the Reformation on local Jewish communities and the contextualization of the Jewish experience into local narratives of reform and state building must also be done for Protestant lands.²⁰ Jewish-Christian relations in Strasbourg afford a perfect context in which to explore this question.

Not only was Strasbourg an important economic marketplace, it was also a center of print culture, home to many artists and humanists. Strasbourg was well known for its religious reformers, whose impact was felt far beyond the city's walls. After its abolition of the Mass in 1529, the city had extensive involvement in the politics and religious wars of the Empire that continued until 1648. Its location on the border between the Swiss and German Protestants and the French and German Catholics rendered such involvement critical for maintaining the city's safety and autonomy. Strasbourg has been studied extensively by scholars of the Reformation, so much so that it is ordinarily discussed in contemporary textbooks about the Reformation.

Moreover, Strasbourg had a reputation as a moderate or even tolerant city. Both contemporary scholars and early modern men and women have hailed it as such.²¹ Recent scholarship has examined the respective experiences of religious radicals and Catholics in the city.²² Adding the attitudes of Strasbourg's magistrates, religious leaders, and residents toward Jews to the picture of the city's relatively tolerant attitude regarding Catholics and radical reformers refines the scope of early modern tolerance. In addition, a comparison of Jews with various Christian sects permits the contextualization of Jews' experiences in the Empire.²³

Beyond Expulsion is not just the story of how local Jews were influenced by events in the Christian world. Implicit in the paradigm is the notion that Jews were *active* participants in the lands in which they lived. This is clearly demonstrated in the steps that the Alsatian Jews took in the wake of the expulsions from the cities of Alsace. When the medieval urban Jewish communities disappeared through expulsions, Jewish life gradually shifted to the countryside, often with only one or two Jewish families residing in local villages. This new demographic reality became the norm in the Empire through the mid-seventeenth century, and necessitated a conceptual and physical restructuring of the

Jewish community. Although early modern Europe was by no means the first time and place that Jews lived in a rural setting, it was the first time that Jews living in the periphery lacked an urban center on which they could depend. Left without an urban center and its resources, Alsatian Jews responded by developing rural *kehillot*. These communities comprised Jews residing in various settlements, who pooled and shared the few resources they had with one another. New models for burial and prayer were developed, ensuring communal survival.

Strategies for physical and economic survival were also necessary after the expulsion. Rural Jews actively maintained a relationship with local urban governments and with local urban residents in the wake of expulsion, and when specific physical conditions, such as wars, threatened local Jews, Strasbourg's magistrates welcomed them into their fortified city. The Jewish presence in Strasbourg was by no means limited to extraordinary moments. In Alsace, since the economic markets of towns, villages, and cities were intertwined, rural Jews, like rural Christians, entered Strasbourg on a daily basis in order to do business. They sold wine, horses, and food, lent money, and, in a number of cases, also served as local doctors. Rural Jews and Strasbourg's magistrates even developed a contract that permitted Jews to work in the city as long as they adjudicated disputes in a municipal venue. The correspondence between Jaeckel of Oberbergheim and the city's magistrates should be understood in this context. From the magisterial point of view, Jews had a role to play in the city, specifically as money lenders who could provide a cash flow to both poorer and wealthier residents. Regulating this necessary and inevitable Jewish commerce was of utmost importance to the city's magistrates, who sought to protect the city's social order, its economic stability, and its autonomy in the face of the emperor. Thus, Jews also entered the city in order to participate as both plaintiffs and defendants in municipal courts.

Contacts between Jews and Christians were not limited to the economic sphere. Jews and Christians also developed social relationships with one another. The ways in which Jews and Christians interacted daily as neighbors often escaped historical preservation, but traces of these interactions have been preserved in court cases, rabbinic responsa, and municipal and territorial laws. Particularly in those rural areas of

Alsace in which Jews and Christians lived side by side as neighbors, there is evidence of shared space and activities, social networks, and alleged sexual liaisons. Jews participated in the social fabric of the towns and villages in which they lived, although they also faced exclusion in the forms of quotas, taxes, and other restrictions. Such participation was not embraced by either Jewish or Christian leaders. Laws, based on ancient and medieval traditions, were reissued by both Jewish and Christian leaders in the hopes of limiting contact between neighbors of the two different faiths. Though these laws were often disregarded, the attempts by religious and political authorities to assert boundaries between the groups is noteworthy, underscoring that although relations between Jews and Christians persisted in this period, such contacts were not seen as trivial nor as acceptable by the leaders of the Christian and Jewish communities. As was the case with economic contacts, any exchanges between Jews and Christians were (in theory) monitored closely by authorities.

The definition of what constituted inappropriate contact between Jew and Christian often shifted over time, and was affected by the evolution of religious reform in the city. From 1530 to 1549, the first generation of reformers in Strasbourg began to develop theological and exegetical works. They sought the help of local Jews, who taught them Hebrew, supplied them with Jewish texts, and shared with them first-hand knowledge of Jewish traditions. Jewish help was invaluable to the reformers, who believed that the Hebrew language was necessary for understanding the true meaning of scripture. Nevertheless, too much contact with Jews or with rabbinic sources invariably led to criticism. As Strasbourg's clerics adopted an increasingly orthodox Lutheran identity, they no longer needed Jewish help, since they already had access to biblical and theological texts designed for reformed believers. They saw the participation of Jews in such endeavors as harmful, recoiled from contact with Jews, and claimed Hebrew as part of a Protestant, rather than a Jewish, heritage.

As the process of reform evolved in the city, the attitudes and policies of city leaders toward Jews also shifted. At the onset of reform, Jewish participation in early modern Strasbourg was a daily and normative occurrence, albeit against a backdrop of restrictions and regulations. In

one vibrant example, at the same time as Strasbourg's magistrates developed the contract to govern Jewish-Christian economic transactions, they passed laws that rendered any Jewish business transactions illegal. By permitting Jews entrance into the marketplace, and mandating their presence in city courts, the magistrates addressed economic needs and their desire for autonomy; by promulgating laws that excluded the Jews, the magistrates set up boundaries that defined their city and their community as Christian. The Jews served as a rhetorical foil to the Christians during this age of religious definition, and restrictions barring Jews served as proof that Strasbourg was a good Christian city. In reality, these restrictions were ignored, and although they did not reside there, Jews were present in Strasbourg.

As the city began to adopt a more orthodox stance, the magistrates also sought to curtail contacts between Jews and local Christians. By 1570, they attempted to halt most economic contacts between Jews and Christians by rescinding the terms of the contract that they had developed thirty-five years earlier. Trade between Jews and Christians persisted, in spite of magisterial laws that not only sought to limit contacts with Jews but also vilified Jews through the use of traditional antisemitic language and stereotypes. The city magistrates, who had protected local Jews by banning the printing of Luther's antisemitic tracts in 1543, permitted the publication of books and artwork that depicted the Jew as the enemy of the Christian city. As the city's religious and political leaders each sought to strengthen the adherence to an orthodox Lutheran confession in the city, they erected stronger boundaries between Jews and Christians.

Jews were not formally engaged in the process of confession building, and did not possess the political authority to create and revise laws and policies. Nonetheless, they were also involved in a process of self-definition. As they wrote about themselves and the community at large, Jewish authors such as Josel of Rosheim and Asher of Reichshofen analyzed the role that Jews played in history, and opined about the relations that Jews had or should have with their Christian neighbors. By constructing such boundaries, categories, and schema, these men were able to answer some of the challenges and questions faced by the Jews of early modern Alsace, including the impact that reformers had

upon local Jews, the divine reason for the seemingly constant expulsions and persecutions of Jews, the ways that the lives of contemporary Alsatian Jews connected to past Jewish experiences, and the connections between the local community and more distant Jewish communities. These men's self-exploration suggests that questions of identity and of constructing and defining community were important to Jews and Christians alike. Both composed "autobiographical" texts, a genre that became increasingly common among contemporary Christian authors. This confirms that even as they constructed boundaries and separate identities, Jews and Christians shared experiences and ideas.

The myriad contacts between Jews and Christians and the evolving limits to those contacts illustrate that at the onset of the Reformation, the Jews actively participated in various urban experiences, specifically in the marketplace and the municipal court system. In addition, Strasbourg's reformers' need and desire for resources in Hebrew and Judaica created new avenues for Jewish-Christian interaction.

Yet Jewish participation in urban life and its culture was not unfettered. Contacts between Jews and Christians were limited by authorities, Jews were forbidden residence in Strasbourg, and quotas governed their residential patterns in the countryside. Laws were designed to limit the extent of the social and economic contact between Jews and Christians. Individual Jews and Christians did not embrace one another, aware of and influenced by the boundaries between the two groups.

As the Reformation in Strasbourg progressed, it had a direct and negative impact on local Jews. Salo Baron argued that the Reformation adversely affected the Jews. In Strasbourg, this process was directly related to local developments, rather than to the antisemitic writings of specific reformers. Christians' increasing need for confessional definition led to a greater rift between them and Jews. As Christian authorities cracked down on the contact between different Christian confessions, they also sought to limit relations between Jews and Christians. In a place like Strasbourg, where Jews were forbidden residence, decreased economic and intellectual exchanges in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries meant that Jews and Christians had increasingly fewer shared spaces.

The magistrates' attitudes and policies toward Jews in Strasbourg were in some ways strikingly similar to their treatment of Catholics and

religious radicals in the Lutheran city. Pragmatic concerns, such as local politics or economics, influenced the city's officials (and at times, its religious reformers) to adopt a moderate stance toward members of different confessions or faiths. At the same time, concerns about preserving the city's religious identity invariably led to policies that restricted cross-confessional or interfaith exchanges. No doubt Strasbourg's location on the border, along with its importance as an international market, helped facilitate the more moderate policies for which the city was renowned. Yet this was by no means ideological tolerance. Moderation for moderation's sake did not exist in this period. The moderation of Strasbourg's magistrates was *realpolitik*, fueled by the magistrates' desire for economic stability, social order, and autonomy from powerful neighbors.

The similarities in Strasbourg's treatment of Jews, Catholics, and radicals firmly underscore the fact that Jews were a part of European society.²⁴ Moreover, the magisterial balance of pragmatism and ideology, which in many ways continued medieval Christian policy toward Jews, affirms that even after the expulsions, Jews remained part of the very lands from which they had been expelled. *Beyond Expulsion* tells the story of how Jewish-Christian relations continued to be adapted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in response to shifts in residential patterns, sharp changes in theology and religious identification, and ensuing battles over faith.