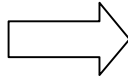


## Cause and Effect of Prejudice (General)

Cause



Effect

## The Position of Jews During the Middle Ages

a) *The Bishop of Speyer in Germany grants Jews permission to live within his city. (1084) Local laws such as those described in the document were left in the hands of lords and bishops. Originally, Jews in Medieval Europe were directly responsible to the king concerning jurisdiction and dues<sup>1</sup>. Later, the king handed the "right" of supervision and taxing down to his lord vassals.*

"When I made the villa of Speyer into a town, thought I would increase the honor I was bestowing<sup>2</sup> on the place if I brought in the Jews. Therefore I placed them outside the town and some way off from the houses of the rest of the citizens, and, lest<sup>3</sup> they should be too easily disturbed by the insolence<sup>4</sup> of the citizens, I surrounded them with a wall. Now the place of their habitation which I acquired justly (...) that place, I say, I transferred to them on condition that they pay annually three and a half pounds of the money of Speyer for the use of the brethren. I have granted also to them within the district where they dwell, and from that district outside the town as far as the harbor, and within the harbor itself, full power to change gold and silver, and to buy and sell what they please. And I have also given them license to do this throughout the state. Besides this I have given them land of the church for a cemetery with rights of inheritance. This also I have added that if any Jew should at any time stay with them he shall pay no tolls. Then also just as the judge of the city hears cases between citizens, so the chief rabbi shall hear cases which arise between the Jews or against them. But if by chance he is unable to decide any of them they shall go to the bishop or his chamberlain. They shall maintain watches, guards, and fortifications about their district, the guards in common with our vassals. They may lawfully employ nurses and servants from among our people. Slaughtered meat which they may not eat according to their law, they may lawfully sell to Christians, and Christians may lawfully buy it. Finally, to round out these concessions, I have granted that they may enjoy the same privileges as the Jews in any other city of Germany. (...). Given on September 15th, 1084, etc"

Source: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1084landjews.html>

1. **What rights were granted to the Jews by this charter<sup>5</sup>?**
2. **Why did the bishop assign a separate area for the Jews to settle?**
3. **How was the Jewish community organized?**
4. **What does the source text say about the contacts between Jews and Christians?**

b) *The city council of Zurich adopted several laws against Jews in the 14<sup>th</sup> century:*

"Jews are not allowed to stand by a window or to walk in the streets during the week of Good Friday and Easter." (1319)

"The Jew Vinnelin owes the city council 10 mark penalty after having visited a Christian woman. He may be kept in the tower with water and bread." (1323)

"We, the major and the city council of Zurich, have decided that Jew may neither testify over a Christian in a trial, nor can they witness." (1404)

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<sup>1</sup> Abgaben

<sup>2</sup> bringen, beschenken

<sup>3</sup> damit nicht

<sup>4</sup> Bosheit

<sup>5</sup> Freibrief, Urkunde

**Compare the source texts a and b. Describe in your own words how the position of Jews changed during the Middle Ages and name some of the reasons for this change (p. 9 in your booklet).**

c) *Medieval Pogroms*<sup>6</sup>: *The Cremation*<sup>7</sup> of the Strasbourg Jews

Jacob von Königshofen, chronicler<sup>8</sup>, gives a description of the pogrom of Strasbourg in 1349.

“In the year 1349 there occurred the greatest epidemic that ever happened. Death went from one end of the earth to the other (...). All wise teachers could only say that it was God’s will. This epidemic also came to Strasbourg in 1349 (...), and it is estimated that about sixteen thousand people died. In the matter of this plague the Jews throughout the world were reviled<sup>9</sup> and accused in all lands of having caused it through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells<sup>10</sup> and for this reason the Jews were burnt (...). On Saturday they burnt the Jews in Strasbourg on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to baptise themselves were spared<sup>11</sup>. (...) Everything that was owned by the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender<sup>12</sup> all pledges<sup>13</sup> and notes that they have taken for debts. The council took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working-men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. (...) It was decided in Strasbourg that no Jew should enter the city for 100 years, but before 20 years had passed, the council and magistrates agreed that they ought to admit the Jews again into the city. And so the Jews came back to Strasbourg.”

**How does Jacob von Königshofen assess the reasons for the Strasbourg pogrom? What does his testimony tell you about (some) people’s judgement of their time? Discuss with a partner and summarize your results in full sentences.**

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<sup>6</sup> An organized persecution/killing of a particular group of people

<sup>7</sup> Verbrennung

<sup>8</sup> Chronist

<sup>9</sup> beschimpft

<sup>10</sup> Brunnen, Quellen

<sup>11</sup> schonen

<sup>12</sup> aushändigen, abgeben

<sup>13</sup> Pfand