

The Expulsion^{of Jewish people} from Spain, 1492

"Fall of Granada" =
January of this year
(= Surrender of last
Muslim ruler to Catholic monarchs)
Same year as Columbus?
Is that important?

The Alhambra decree, an edict of expulsion^{an official, public order} was issued against the Jews of Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella. In March, it ordered all Jews of whatever age to leave the kingdom by the last day of July, 1492, and held accountable all subjects, Jewish and non-Jewish, to enforce the expulsion and Inquisition. ↗

Lasted for over 300 years. A violent historical event where Jews and Muslims were persecuted, leading many to convert to Catholicism to belong / be safe and prosperous.

(1) King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella [address to recipients, a redacted paragraph-
↳ Married, united Aragon and Castile, creating modern-day Spain, then a global superpower.
long list including all lands to which they claimed rule over as monarchs] Salutations

and grace. "1492" is important because colonial era is about to begin, and they will claim land globally, not just regionally.

(2) You know well or ought to know, that whereas we have been informed that in

= "crypto-Jews"

these our kingdoms there were some wicked Christians who Judaized and

to leave or rebel against one's faith

apostatized from our holy Catholic faith, the great cause of which was interaction

They're arguing that "New Christians" interacting with Jews is the root of the issue they perceive.

between the Jews and these Christians [...] in the city of Toledo in the past year of

1480

one thousand, four hundred and eighty, we ordered the separation of the said Jews

So what will they do?

in all the cities, towns and villages of our kingdoms and lordships and [commanded]

that they be given Jewish quarters and separated places where they should live,

⇒ Forced Jews into ghettos

hoping that by their separation the situation would remedy itself [...]

what is "the situation"?



(3) [...] we desired to content ourselves by ^{Jewish people} commanding them to leave all cities,

towns, and villages of Andalusia where it appears that they have done the greatest

injury, believing that that would be sufficient so that those of other cities, towns, and

↳ does this refer to population size? Magnitude or number of violent events? Pogroms?
villages of our kingdoms and lordships would cease to do and commit the aforesaid

AKA "We hoped it would set an example for all the other places."
acts. And since we are informed that neither that step nor the passing of sentence [...]

↳ formal judicial punishment
against the said Jews who have been most guilty of the said crimes [...] against our

The crime of "Judaizing"?
holy Catholic faith have been sufficient as a complete remedy [...] the principal cause

* * "Total fix" "ultimate"
of it be removed, which is to banish the said Jews from our kingdoms. Because [...] it

= "Let's get rid of the problem at the root"?
is reasonable that such an organization or corporation should be dissolved and

annihilated and that the [...] members and everyone for the others be punished [...]

= They are holding Jewish people responsible as a collective who "share" in

(4) Therefore, we [...] resolve to order the said Jews and Jewesses of our kingdoms to their "blame".

"leave" "don't ever come back"

depart and never to return or come back to them or to any of them [...] we order all

Jews and Jewesses of whatever age they may be, who live, reside, and exist in our to "exist"? estimated

The Iberian Jewish community began in 1st cent. BCE
said kingdoms and lordships, as much those who are natives as those who are not, "Natives"

who by whatever manner or whatever cause have come to live and reside therein, that means their families

Timeline / deadline to leave or escape
by the end of the month of July next of the present year, they depart from all of these could have been there for almost

our said realms and lordships, along with their sons and daughters, menservants and 1,500 years!

maidservants, Jewish familiars, those who are great as well as the lesser folk, of



"Do not ever dare to come back to your homes"

whatever age they may be, and they shall not dare to return to those places, nor to

reside in them, nor to live in any part of them, neither temporarily on the way to

AKA: "Jewish people, you cannot even so much as travel through our lands. You cannot somewhere else nor in any other manner, under pain that if they do not perform and comply with this command and should be found in our said kingdom and lordships

and should in any manner live in them, they incur the penalty of death and the

confiscation of all their possessions by our Chamber of Finance, incurring these

penalties by the act itself, without further trial, sentence, or declaration, And we

command and forbid that any [non-Jewish] person or persons [...] shall dare to

AKA: "If you come back, if we find you here, we will kill you and take all your money + possessions!"

receive, protect, defend, nor hold publicly or secretly any Jew or Jewess beyond the

date of the end of July and from henceforth forever, in their lands, houses, or in other parts of any of our said kingdoms [...] under pain of losing all their possessions [...]

and other inheritances, and beyond this of losing whatever financial grants they hold

from us [...] — I'm comparing to loss of material wealth for non-Jews who harbor/help Jews vs. the threat of death without trial for Jews who dare to remain, in hiding, and are "found"

(5) [...] And we likewise give license and faculty to those said Jews and Jewesses that

they be able to export their goods and estates out of these our said kingdoms and

lordships by sea or land as long [as they do not export gold or silver or coined money]

or other things prohibited by the laws of our kingdoms [...] Jews are allowed to take their possessions as they flee, but not money? Am I reading that correctly?! How are they to start new lives, and who gets their monetary wealth?

AXA: This is a judicial/legal order (edict).
Everyone must comply.

(6) And we command all councils, justices, magistrates, knights, squires, officials, and

all good men [...] of the other cities, towns, and villages of our said kingdoms and

lordships and all our new vassals, subjects, and natives that they preserve and comply with and cause to be preserved and complied with this our charter and all that is contained in it, and to give and to cause to be given all assistance and favor in its application under penalty of [being at] our mercy and the confiscation of all their possessions and offices [...] And because this must be brought to the notice of all, so

Colonial era is about to begin. "New" will expand GLOBALLY, with the Inquisition-era persecution reaching Spanish & Portuguese colonies abroad.

that no one may pretend ignorance, we command that this our charter be posted in

the customary plazas and places of the said city and of the principal cities, towns, and

= an area governed by a Christian bishop

villages of its bishopric as an announcement and as a public document. And no one

↳ so it's not only a judicial order. It is also an "announcement" and a "public document"

shall do any damage to it in any manner under penalty of being at our mercy and the

AXA: "Don't tamper with the posted edict, or we will punish you"

deprivation of their offices and the confiscation of their possessions, which will

happen to each one who might do this. Moreover, we command the [man] who shows

them this our charter that he summon [those who act against the charter] to appear

before us at our court wherever we may be, on the day that they are summoned

during the fifteen days following the crime under the said penalty, under which we

command whichever public scribe who would be called for the purpose of reading

This is being used as an enforceable legal document. If accused of practicing Judaism, it holds the person responsible to appear in the Inquisition's court for investigation.



this our charter that the signed charter with its seal should be shown to you all so that we may know that our command is carried out.

[...]

I, the King, I the Queen,

I, Juan de Coloma, secretary of the king and queen our lords, have caused this to be written at their command.

Registered by Cabrera, Almacan chancellor.

Questions

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Guided Exploration

Edict of Expulsion ("Alhambra Decree"), 1492

Expert Annotations

Text / Annotation	Teacher Question	Teacher Background / Where to Push
"Apostatized from our holy Catholic faith"	What does it mean to <i>apostatize</i>? Does that word assume that a person freely chose a faith and then freely abandoned it? If someone became a Catholic because of coercion, threats, or violence, can we understand their later practice of Judaism in the same way?	Look up with students or have students look up <i>apostasy/apostatize</i> before answering. Then ask them to identify the assumption hidden inside the Edict's word choice: it describes the person as abandoning Christianity rather than returning to a religion they may never have freely relinquished. Many <i>conversos</i> had converted amid coercion or violence, while the Inquisition treated "Judaizing" among baptized Christians as heresy. (Encyclopedia.com)
"The great cause ... was interaction between the Jews and these Christians"	What does the edict identify as the problem: an action, a belief, or a relationship between people? What happens when ordinary contact between relatives, neighbors, and friends becomes legally suspicious?	The family dimension matters enormously. "Jew" and "New Christian" were not necessarily separate social worlds. Students can imagine one extended family containing openly Jewish relatives, baptized relatives, people privately practicing Judaism, and people whose actual beliefs are unknowable to us. See <i>Jewish Hispanic Heritage Month, ACTIVITY TWO, "Teresa de Lucena: A Family Story,"</i> for a historical example case and deeper dive into this phenomenon.

SAME PASSAGE	How might a government create distrust inside a family or community when one person’s behavior can expose another person to punishment? What happens to trust when neighbors or relatives can become witnesses, informants, protectors, or suspects?	This moves the lesson away from abstract “religious intolerance” and toward the actual/lived social machinery of persecution.
1480 separation into “Jewish quarters” and “separated places”	What is a compulsory Jewish quarter? What changes when the government determines not only how people may worship, but where they may live and whom they may encounter?	In the Expert Annotator’s note, the use of the term “ghetto” refers to a connection between phenomena of segregating Jews from various societies. However, the word <i>ghetto</i> dates to Venice in 1516, which is a few decades after this document was written. At the same time, compulsory Jewish residential segregation had earlier precedents (Holocaust Encyclopedia). Students should be directed to consider, instead: “forced Jews into segregated Jewish quarters; compare with the later history of ghettos.”
EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT: GHETTO	Trace the word <i>ghetto</i>: when does the term appear, and how does its meaning change across European Jewish history? What similarities and differences exist between a medieval Jewish quarter and the ghettos created under Nazi rule?	Consider studying the continuity of a recurring use of space as a tool of exclusion and control. The institutions, purposes, historical circumstances (Holocaust Encyclopedia) and potentially interethnic bridge-building by bringing in cases of segregation in other communities, especially in U.S. history.

"Andalusia where it appears that they have done the greatest injury"

Who is the pronoun "they"? What does the edict mean by "injury"? Find the evidence in the preceding paragraph rather than supplying your own definition. What has the monarchy already accused Jews of doing?

Why these cities? What might have caused authorities to characterize Jewish presence or Jewish-Christian interaction there as particularly "injurious"? What evidence would we need before accepting the edict's explanation?

This is a fantastic sourcing exercise. The text's argument is essentially: Jews are allegedly causing Christians to "Judaize," prior separation and punishment have supposedly failed, therefore Jewish presence itself becomes the "principal cause" to eliminate.

Andalusia, particularly Sevilla, was one of the first major centers of inquisitorial activity. The tribunal established at Seville investigated large numbers of *conversos* suspected of continuing Jewish practices. Inquisitors interpreted continued relationships between *conversos* and openly Jewish relatives and communities as evidence that Jewish presence encouraged "Judaizing." This helps explain why authorities first experimented with geographic separation and expulsion there before the kingdom-wide expulsion of 1492. Historians also note another possible factor: Andalusia bordered the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada while the Granada War was underway, so the region had particular strategic significance to the monarchy.

EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT:
POGROM

What is a pogrom? Who commits a pogrom, and who is its target? Why does that distinction matter when assigning responsibility for violence?

Pogrom is a Russian term that entered common usage particularly for anti-Jewish mob violence in the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Historians often use it more broadly for anti-Jewish collective violence elsewhere. Crucially, persecution is not evidence that the persecuted population "caused" the violence committed against it. ([Holocaust Encyclopedia](#))

"Judaized" /
"Judaizing"

According to the authorities, what counts as "Judaizing"? Does the accusation concern only what someone privately believes, or also what they eat, observe, teach, encourage, or do with others?

Good place to distinguish **Judaism**, **crypto-Judaism**, and the inquisitorial category **"Judaizing."** The Spanish Inquisition particularly targeted baptized Christians accused of practicing Jewish rites or maintaining Jewish observances. ([Encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com)) See also the "Key Terms" on ACTIVITY ONE: "History of the Inquisition."

"Such an organization or corporation should be dissolved and annihilated ... members and everyone for the others be punished"

Watch what happens to responsibility in this sentence. Is the Edict identifying particular individuals who committed particular acts, or transferring guilt from individuals to a whole population?

This is your doorway into **collective attribution of guilt**. Have students diagram the logic: *some conversos allegedly Judaize → Jews allegedly influence them → previous punishments supposedly failed → therefore all Jews become the problem*. The leap is the historical object of study.

EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT:
COLLECTIVE
GUILT

What is collective guilt? How does blaming a population for acts attributed to some of its members change the standard of evidence? What happens when membership in a group itself becomes evidence of responsibility?

Collective accusations against Jews recur in different forms across Christian European history, including accusations that Jews collectively bore responsibility for religious or social harms. The important analytical habit is recognizing the move from **"a person did X" → "Jews do X" → "Jewish presence itself is the problem."** The conspiracy of collective Jewish guilt/blame is a core component of both historical ("classical") and modern antisemitism.

"Banish" / "depart and never return"	Define <i>banish</i>. How is banishment different from migration? From fleeing? From choosing to relocate? What does the word tell us about who possesses power over movement?	Excellent vocabulary moment because students may casually treat all geographical movement as "migration." Banishment is compulsory exclusion by an authority.
EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT: "Depart and never return" + modern Spain	More than five centuries later, Spain created a special path to citizenship for Sephardic descendants of Jews expelled from Spain. Put those two state actions beside one another. What changed in how the Spanish state described the expelled community and its descendants?	This one is especially powerful because Spain's own 2015 law explicitly described the 1492 Jews as compelled toward conversion or expulsion and called their descendants members of a diaspora forced into exile. The special application window was later extended through October 1, 2019, so I would say Spain <i>created</i> or <i>offered</i> this pathway, not that it currently offers the same open program. (BOE)
"live, reside, and exist"	Why might the document need all three verbs: <i>live</i>, <i>reside</i>, and <i>exist</i>? What becomes different when a law regulates not simply where a population may live but whether its members may "exist" within the realm at all?	Let students sit with the verb. It turns geography into a question of legitimate presence. You can follow with: What would compliance look like if your identity itself makes your presence unlawful?
"those who are natives as those who are not"	Why does the Edict explicitly include people who are "natives"? What does <i>native</i> imply? How does that language complicate the idea that Jews were foreigners who could simply be "sent back" somewhere else?	This is stronger than simply telling students "they had been there for 1,500 years." Make them notice that the edict itself acknowledges nativeness and nevertheless orders expulsion.

EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT: how old was Iberian Jewish life?	How long had Jews lived in Iberia by 1492? What evidence do historians actually possess, and what remains uncertain?	Scholars can securely place Jewish communities in Roman Iberia, while traditions about much earlier settlement are harder to substantiate. One scholarly account argues that communities likely expanded as the Jewish diaspora spread through the Roman Mediterranean, particularly after Rome destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE. (Cambridge University Press)
Second Temple / Diaspora connection	What does it mean for a community shaped partly through earlier displacement to encounter another state-ordered displacement many centuries later? When does somewhere become “home”? After one generation? Ten? Fifty?	Roman-era Jewish settlement in Iberia formed within the wider Mediterranean Jewish diaspora; that diaspora expanded substantially in the centuries surrounding the destruction of the Second Temple, when Jews were exiled from Jerusalem and their historic homeland. (Cambridge University Press)
Deadline / “depart ... by the end of July”	What would complying with this order actually require? Make a list: home, work, property, relatives, language, routes of travel, religious community. What decisions would have to be made in roughly four months?	This makes “expulsion” concrete without needing graphic material. It also prepares students to understand why conversion could appear as one possible response to the decree.
Penalty for Jews remaining vs. Non-Jews who shelter them	Compare the punishments. What happens to a Jew who remains? What happens to a non-Jew who shelters or protects a Jew? Why might a government punish not only the	The asymmetry matters. Students should notice that the decree regulates both the persecuted population and everyone around it.

	targeted population but people who assist them?	
SAME PASSAGE: "receive, protect, defend ... publicly or secretly"	What happens to solidarity when helping someone carries a penalty? What kinds of relationships become dangerous? How might this change the calculations of neighbors, employers, servants, friends, and relatives?	The decree is deliberately changing the cost structure of helping.
EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT: BYSTANDERS	A bystander is not necessarily someone who does nothing. What choices exist between perpetrating harm and successfully rescuing someone? Where might compliance, silence, assistance, concealment, denunciation, and resistance fit?	This makes the framework much less binary. Then return to the primary source: <i>Which of those possible behaviors is the monarchy trying to prevent?</i>
Jews who remain / crypto-Jews	If openly living as a Jew becomes legally impossible, what choices remain? Leave? Convert? Hide? Practice secretly? What would each choice cost?	Avoid implying we can know why every individual stayed. Some converted willingly, some under pressure, some left, some remained, some maintained Jewish practices secretly, and identities could change over generations.

"Announcement and public document" + judicial order

What does it mean for the same text to be a legal command, a public announcement, and a judicial instrument? Who needs to read it for each of those purposes?

Great state-power question. **As law**, it establishes obligations and penalties. **As announcement**, it makes the order publicly known. **As enforcement instrument**, officials can invoke it against people who violate it. Posting it publicly also allows authorities to say people cannot claim ignorance.

"no one may pretend ignorance"

Why does the decree care whether everyone has heard about it? What relationship exists between publicity and enforcement?

I would draw students' eyes here. The monarchy isn't merely declaring an ideology. It is building an **administrative system for implementation**: publish → communicate → enlist officials → punish noncompliance.