

*Jews and Crime in Medieval Europe* is a topic laced by prejudice on one hand and apologetics on the other. Beginning in the Middle Ages, Jews were often portrayed as criminals driven by greed. While these accusations were, for the most part, unfounded, in other cases criminal accusations against Jews were not altogether baseless. Drawing on a variety of legal, liturgical, literary, and archival sources, Ephraim Shoham-Steiner examines the reasons for the involvement in crime, the social profile of Jews who performed crimes, and the ways and mechanisms employed by the legal and communal body to deal with Jewish criminals and with crimes committed by Jews. A society's attitude toward individuals identified as criminals—by others or themselves—can serve as a window into that society's mores and provide insight into how transgressors understood themselves and society's attitudes toward them.

"In this meticulously argued book, Shoham-Steiner draws on a range of religious and legal sources to explore a fascinating and almost entirely neglected topic. In illuminating these darker corners of Jewish life, *Jews and Crime in Medieval Europe* restores medieval Jews to their full humanity, showing them to be subject to the same passions and drives as (and sometimes conspiring with) their Christian neighbors, even as they grappled with unique challenges and restrictions."

—SARA LIPTON, professor of history, State University of New York at Stony Brook

"This erudite study of criminal activity, undertaken within the broad context of history, culture, and mentalités, combines methodological sophistication, interdisciplinary scholarship, and highly accessible writing."

—JAY R. BERKOVITZ, Distinguished Professor (Emeritus of) Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst

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