



Volume 1. From the Reformation to the Thirty Years War, 1500-1648  
The Commander of Imperial Jewry – Josel von Rosheim (c. 1480-1554)

Josel (Joselin, Yoselmann, Joseph ben Gershon mi-Rosheim) was the Empire's leading Jewish political figure under emperors Maximilian I and Charles V. Born at Hagenau in Alsace, he became a rabbi, merchant, and money-lender. During the 1510s, he advocated for Alsatian Jews and Jewish communities in the securing of market rights. He also helped defend Jews against charges of host desecration, and he brought Jewish grievances before the emperor. By the 1520s, he was called – or called himself – “commander” [*Befehlshaber*] of Imperial Jewry. Josel attended the royal coronation of Charles V in 1520, and he later secured charters of protection from Charles and Ferdinand I for the whole of Imperial Jewry. In 1525, he persuaded rebellious peasants to leave his town of Rosheim in peace.

Josel went on to advocate for Jews in the kingdom of Bohemia, the margraviate of Brandenburg-Ansbach, and the electorate of Saxony, where he met Martin Luther, who impressed him as a violent enemy of the Jews. During the 1540s, Josel acted to counter Luther's scurrilous attacks on the Jews, and he went to the Diet to defend their right to serve as moneylenders. In general, Josel saw loyalty to the emperor and his vicar, King Ferdinand, and opposition to the Protestants as the safest course for the Jews. Whatever the legal implications of the titles with which he was honored, his leadership and advocacy was an important sign that under Charles V the Imperial Jews began to be treated as a legally distinct body of Imperial subjects. Josel left an account of his life (in Hebrew), from which this document is taken.

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In the year 5279 (1518/19), the Emperor died, who is remembered for good,<sup>1</sup> and the community of Regensburg was driven out and uprooted from all the splendour and from our most precious possessions—the apple of our eye. The exiles were sent away in boats on the River Danube. A small remnant, including the Auerbach family, remained in Stadtamhof, in the domain of the dukes of Bavaria.<sup>2</sup> At that time the villagers of Dangolsheim arrogated powers to themselves, and they plotted together to expel all the Jews; indeed, they carried out their design. On one day in the month of Adar 5279 [2 February-2 March], they drove out all the Jews from Dangolsheim. And when the evil neighbours got word of this that same day, they wished to learn *kal ve-homer* from them and follow their example.<sup>3</sup> And God inclined the hearts of our master the *Unterlandvogt*<sup>4</sup> of Hagenau and the Bishop of Strasbourg to heed my supplications

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<sup>1</sup> Josel considered Maximilian I (r. 1493-1519) to have been a benevolent monarch. All footnotes taken from: Joseph of Rosheim, *The Historical Writings of Joseph of Rosheim: Leader of Jewry in Early Modern Germany*, edited by Chava Fraenke-Goldschmidt and Adam Shear, translated by Naomi Schendowich. Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 314-39.

<sup>2</sup> And thus not in the city's jurisdiction. Stadtamhof was a suburb of Regensburg.

<sup>3</sup> The term means a conclusion from a minor law to a major one and vice versa, a well-known Talmudic rule. The meaning here is that if a small village could expel its Jews, all the more could large towns do so.

<sup>4</sup> An Imperial district governor in Lower Alsace.

that I pour out before him. I went with our master the *Unterlandvogt* to Dangolsheim, and gave a stern warning, whereupon they [the villagers] repented of their evil intentions and deeds, and their violation of the privileges and the Public Peace. They restored the Jews to their homes, and afterwards the *Unterlandvogt* came with horsemen and hired soldiers to mete out vengeance upon them. And if God had not been with us, aiding the [Jews] in Dangolsheim through this said act of vengeance, and with us in Rosheim, all the Jews in the Rhine [region] would have been in danger. Blessed be God who has not failed [us] in his loving kindness.

In the year 5280 (1519/20), our lord, the Emperor Charles, was crowned king. I came to him and to his servants to plead for our people and our inheritance. We (that is to say I and the man who was with me) obtained comprehensive privileges for all of Germany. Notwithstanding this, in the same year, charters<sup>5</sup> were issued authorizing the expulsion of [the Jews] from Rosheim and from the *Vogtei* of Kaysersberg. With the help of God, blessed be He, I interceded with the King, and succeeded in having the expulsion from the *Vogtei* of Kaysersberg cancelled altogether, with the annulment of that particular charter of expulsion. However, the charter to Rosheim was not rescinded, [nor was that city's decision to expel the Jews]. By dint of supreme efforts we succeeded time after time, with great difficulty, in obtaining yet another postponement. To this day we still do not know [how matters will turn out], and we can but place our trust in our Father in Heaven. He will redeem us and save us from [our] assailants. May it be His will. Amen.

In the year 5282 (1521/22) we were required to come to Nuremberg by the decree of the great rabbi, our teacher Rabbi Samuel of blessed memory, and on that occasion I submitted a complaint about that place Oberehnheim, and what had been done to us inside the city and outside in the fields. I succeeded in securing the appointment of the Abbot of Weissenburg as commissioner, to hear our bill of complaint and the legal charges to which [the city leaders] were obliged to respond. Afterwards they were summoned before a judicial assembly, and during the interrogation they were filled with dread. Through the mediation of the *Underlandvogt*, they [the city] made a covenant with us. The [city] opened the gates and behaved peaceably towards us, in accordance with the text of the agreement signed between us.

In the year 5385 (1524/25) there was a tumult among the villagers, who gathered in all parts of Germany and, above all, in this region—Alsace.<sup>6</sup> They wished to make themselves masters and it was their intention to devour us alive. The scourge had already begun in certain places. By God's mercy, I came to them at the abbey called Altdorf, and spoke to their hearts with the Book,<sup>7</sup> concerning the counsel they should give to the leaders of their forces. They proclaimed loudly that the Jews were not to be harmed and also wrote many letters of safe-conduct for every city and region. Although in the end they went back on and broke their word and written promises; at all events, their public undertaking brought relief and deliverance for the Jews.

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<sup>5</sup> The emperor also approved the expulsions mentioned below.

<sup>6</sup> Refers to the German Peasants' War of 1525.

<sup>7</sup> The writer may mean that he convinced the peasants with words from the Old Testament that their view of the Jews was mistaken.

Then came the time and season of their defeat. The Duke of Lorraine<sup>8</sup> descended upon them and carried out a great slaughter among them. In other territories too thousands and tens of thousands were slain and drowned. Blessed be God who delivered us from their hands and from their evil devices. May He continue to save us. Amen.

In the year 5288 (1527/28), the *Landvogtei* of Hagenau referred accusations [against the Jews] to King Ferdinand, may he be exalted, and secured his consent to expel us, who are residents of the German Empire, for our places of abode in all the villages, and even from some of the towns. The *Unterlandvogt* was forced against his will to obtain from the King a decree called an *Ordnung*. Then all the Jews resident in the region entreated me to go out and come in before them as in the past and I consented to their request. And on account of an accident that befell my horse on the way, I resolved not to ride for the rest of the journey to the King's court, which was situated where it was, but to travel on foot. My reason for this was my hope that with the aid of much toil, prayer and supplication my intercession would succeed. I was obliged to follow the King's court to the holy community of Prague, and there I came in the King's chamber and, with God's help, I found favour in his eyes. He revoked the first decree and gave me a charter which reaffirmed that the Jews should be tolerated as in the past in accordance with the text of our privileges. Although I was authorized to expend up to 300 guilders for all this; in the event, I spent only 40 guilders all in all to cover the cost of my journey there and back to my home and additional expenses. And the adversaries decided to stir up fresh trouble, to undo what had been achieved, but God sent angels of destruction and slew them, three of the ringleaders died in a sudden plague, and the fourth was seized by his enemies in the domain of Hochfelden and put to death. And the land was quiet until this day. Blessed be God who took vengeance for us on our enemies, and saved us from their hands and from the evil designs that they had thought to carry out against us.

In the year 5289 (1528/29), the holy martyrs of Pösing, 36 souls—men and women, youths and young girls—were arrested because of a false accusation made by a *mamzer* and they died for the sanctification of God's Name. They were burnt at the stake on 13 Sivan 5289 [21 May 1529]. On that occasion, all those Jews in Moravia were taken into custody. In accordance with the request of our rabbis and the exigencies of the hour, I had to bring all the old imperial and papal privileges to the city of Günzburg. There, I prepared copies, which I sent together with words of apology in a booklet to the King and his servants, and they learned that we were innocent. They told the prisoners, "Go forth", and, with the help of God, blessed be He, those who had survived the torture chamber were proclaimed free and released. May God, blessed be He, favour us through the merit of those exalted martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sanctification of His Name.

In the year 5290 (1529/30) there was a great and clamorous cry from all the nations saying that the Jews are in treasonous communication with the Turks. Calumnies of this kind finally reached the ears of our lords, the Emperor and the King, may they be exalted, whereupon we were

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<sup>8</sup> Duke Antoine (1489-1544) of Lorraine, whose invasion in 1525 of Lower Alsace crushed the Peasants' War in that land.

outlawed and were not permitted to set foot in several lands.<sup>9</sup> With the consent of the communities, I prepared and put together a booklet containing our words of apology, and, with the help of God, I presented it before the two monarchs in the city of Innsbruck. And Joseph found favour with them, for they willingly accepted our words of apology and confirmed all our former privileges.

In the same year, 5290 (1530), there was an assembly of all the princes of the Empire and the nobles, as well as countless ladies, in order to establish preventive laws and regulations, and the princes and nobles intended to abolish usury. At that time, with God's help, I stood firm, and I obtained from the Emperor the renewal of our privileges from Emperor Sigismund.<sup>10</sup> The accusers were silent and there was peace in the land for a little while.

In the year 5291 (1530/31), the accusers were busy again, and they pursued and importuned the Emperor in Brabant and Flanders—lands not inhabited by any Jews. I came forward from the many and made the journey on horseback to those lands in order to plead our cause, with the help of God. I was at the Emperor's court from the first of Adar till the first of Sivan 5291 [18 February-17 May 1531] to work for the common good. Although the fighter Roth Royth had intended to swallow me alive—I was at the very gates of death—however, God in His great mercy sent His angel before me, and saved me from his hands and from the hands of all those who set an ambush for me. At that time I had an audience with the Emperor in his inner sanctum, and spoke to him concerning my business, and he gave me the right response. Meanwhile, as I was at leisure and secluded in my room, I composed the work entitled *The Holy Path*. And as this writer lives<sup>11</sup>, I took great pleasure in those days of solitude, and I said in my heart: "Happy were those righteous men of previous generations who directed their thoughts and minds to distancing themselves from the vanities of this world and to occupying themselves with the matters of the spirit.

In the year 5292 (1531/32), I was once again obliged to have an audience with the Emperor, may he be exalted, this time at the Regensburg Reichstag,<sup>12</sup> in order to stand guard over Israel. And God was with us on this occasion too. He preserved us from the accusations of the princes and nobles concerning usury, and gave us a means of livelihood among the nations. At that time the man from Italy, the righteous convert named Rabbi Solomon Molcho, may his soul rest in Eden, came with his alien ideas to stir up the Emperor by telling him that he had come to gather all the Jews to wage war against the Turks. When I heard about his plans, I wrote him a letter warning him not to provoke the Emperor lest we be consumed by the great fire. I left Regensburg, so that the Emperor should not say that I had a hand in his strange plans. When he came to the Emperor, he was put into chains and taken to Bologna, where he was burnt at the stake for the sanctification of God's Name and the faith of Israel. He reformed many sinners. His soul is bound up in Eden.

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<sup>9</sup> Refers chiefly to the duchy of Württemberg.

<sup>10</sup> Refers to a charter of 1433 for the Jews resident in the Imperial cities of Alsace.

<sup>11</sup> This is a type of oath, similar to "upon my life".

<sup>12</sup> The Imperial Diet of Regensburg, 1532.

In the year 5293 (1532/33), judgement was wrought upon our brethren in Silesia, with the arrest of all the Jewish residents of the region. I had to go up to the cities of Schwabach and Ansbach, together with Rabbi Liebermann of blessed memory, in order to work for the release of the prisoners. The *Parnas*<sup>13</sup> and another two or three people had already been burnt at the stake because of a calumny about milk from sucking pigs of the forest, an accusation which in the end was shown to be false. And with the help of God, he told the prisoners that they were free. I expended in excess of six hundred guilders from the resources of the Jews in German territory in order to impress upon and prove to the Duke, Margrave George, that we and all of the Jewry were innocent of any crime and that this accusation was baseless.<sup>14</sup>

In the years 5293 and 5295 (1532/33 and 1534/35), judgement was wrought upon the Jews in the Barbary lands,<sup>15</sup> when our lord the Emperor went to wage war against those lands, and the towns of Coron and Patras were captured. For our many sins, some Jews were slain and some taken captive. The Jewish communities of Italy wrote asking for assistance in ransoming and maintaining the captives, as can be seen from what is written in their letter. However, although here in Alsace a tax of four percent was collected in order to redeem them, we did not succeed in placing this ransom money in reliable hands. And I said, "It is permitted to use this money for the ransoming of other captives, or for similar important religious obligations of this kind." Therefore, I used a portion of it for my activities in connection with the harsh decree against the Jews of Bohemia and the holy community of Prague, and a portion of it for other life-saving work. May this decision be acceptable in the sight of God, blessed be He.

In the year 5294 (1533/34), there was dissension and strife within the holy community of Prague between the community and the Horowitz people and others, and, consequently, many feuding camps arose in the other communities in Bohemia. The rabbis of Posen and Germany wrote urging that an agreement be reached, and that the settlement of the disputes be entrusted into the hands of righteous men. And it fell to the lot of that esteemed scholar, the great rabbi, our teacher Rabbi Abraham son of our teacher Rabbi Avigdor, the memory of the righteous is blessed, and my insignificant self, to draw up and establish new ordinances for the community. At the request and insistence of our rabbis, I journeyed with much toil and trouble to that great city to God, to serve as an assistant to the Gaon of blessed memory.<sup>16</sup> We prepared and enacted 23 excellent and estimable regulations, and upwards of 400 adult and responsible men were pleased to come and sign on the document. However, while I was still at table, the spikenard sent forth its fragrance, a supporter of Horowitz and his faction by the name of Shabbat Tash contrived to have me delivered into the hands of murderers. I had to plead in my defence three times in the city fortress of Prague, and all the community supported me. With God's help, I emerged blameless and unscathed from the lions' clutches. In addition to all this, certain people with imaginary fancies, wise men who were in that camp, made common cause with those who were attacking my honour. However, justice will be done in its own way: exemplary persons came from all sides and appealed to the rabbis of Italy and Austria,

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<sup>13</sup> The presiding official of a Jewish congregation.

<sup>14</sup> Margrave George (b. 1484, r. 1515-43) of Brandenburg-Ansbach and Brandenburg Kulmbach.

<sup>15</sup> Morocco and Tunis.

<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Abraham ben Avigdor (d. 1542), commentator on the Torah.

animated by zeal for the Lord of Hosts, to demand satisfaction for my insult, to fight my battle, and to give thanks for the blessings as they are written down in that book.<sup>17</sup> And the strife and dissension provoked and instigated by the Horowitz people has meant that, for our many sins, Jacob has been taken as spoil, to be destroyed and not built up, as is proved by the occurrence of calamity upon calamity. May the Holy One, blessed be He, forgive them and all our sins. May it be His will. Amen.

In the year 5296 (1535/36), the *Landvogtei* Hagenau, and also Ensisheim,<sup>18</sup> waged war against me due to tale bearing and bad men. I had to go up and do battle with the *Landvogtei* Hagenau in Heidelberg, and also many times in Ensisheim. With the help of the One who aids me, they were unable to vanquish me, and He saved us from their evil designs and from the hands of villains. May God continue and increase His aid to me from the Heavens. May it be His will. Amen.

In the year 5297 (1536/37) Duke Hans of Saxony<sup>19</sup> outlawed us, and refused to permit the Jewish people even one foot's breadth of space in all his land. This was due to that priest named Martin *Lo Tohar*<sup>20</sup>—may his body and soul be bound up in hell! In the many heretical books that he wrote and disseminated, he said that there was no hope for anyone who aided the Jews. His numerous writings so inflamed the rulers and peoples against us that it was well nigh impossible for the Jews to maintain themselves. With the agreement of our rabbis, I procured excellent letters from other sages of the nations and from that place Strasbourg, and I journeyed up to request an audience with the Duke in Meissen and Thuringia. However, I did not succeed in presenting the letters until he came to Frankfurt, to meet the other prince, including the Duke of Brandenburg,<sup>21</sup> who likewise had intended to expel all the Jews. However, it so happened that through the disputations that I had in the presence of many gentile scholars,<sup>22</sup> I was able to refute the arguments of Luther and Bucer<sup>23</sup> and their followers with proofs from our Holy Torah, and they acknowledged the truth of my words. And a miracle within a miracle was performed for us, for it was revealed and made known to many, and to the same Margrave Joachim, that all those martyred persons who had been burnt at the stake in the days of his father in the year 5270 (1509/10)—38 Jewish souls—were burnt because of a lying, malicious, false accusation. For already at that time, the robber had retracted his false testimony, but an evil enemy and adversary, the Bishop, had ordered the priest not to divulge to the Duke the robber's last confession. As a result of hearing all these things, the Dukes<sup>24</sup> repented of their evil ways and gave them [the Jews] a foothold in their lands. To this day Duke Joachim has faithfully kept his word, but the Duke of Saxony has gone back on his promise, and

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<sup>17</sup> The aforementioned book of regulations.

<sup>18</sup> Ensisheim in Upper Alsace was the seat of government for the Austria lands on the Upper Rhine.

<sup>19</sup> Not Elector John (b. 1468, r. 1525-32) but his son and successor, John Frederick I (1503-54).

<sup>20</sup> Martin Luther.

<sup>21</sup> Elector Joachim II (1505-71), margrave of Brandenburg.

<sup>22</sup> Protestant theologians. This was not a Diet of the Empire but of the Protestant alliance known as the Schmalkaldic League.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Bucer (1491-1551) the principal Protestant clergyman of Strasbourg.

<sup>24</sup> The electors of Brandenburg and Saxony.

has done us great harm by outlawing us. For that reason, he has been overthrown,<sup>25</sup> and has received his just deserts. Blessed be God who has avenged His people.

In the year 5301 (1540/41), when I came to the *Reichstag* [Imperial Diet] of Regensburg to obtain improved conditions for our people in the form of further privileges from our lord the Emperor, judgement was wrought upon the Jews of Naples. Although the man from Rome named Solomon Romm was there in Regensburg and did all that he could to prevent the expulsion, the Emperor refused to listen to his words, and issued his harsh decree expelling them [the Jews] from that entire kingdom. He forbade Solomon to continue his endeavours on pain of forfeiting his head. The man had to go into hiding, and from there gained a little time, by means of his secret contacts with esteemed governors.<sup>26</sup>

In that same year, 5301 (1540/41), a child disappeared in Weissenburg Forest,<sup>27</sup> and was discovered stabbed to death—a putrid corpse trodden underfoot. Jews in that vicinity, [of?] the holy community of Tittingen [Tüttlingen], were falsely accused and placed under arrest. I had to intercede very strenuously with the Duke of Neuburg<sup>28</sup> and also with the Lords of Pappenheim<sup>29</sup> until, with the help of God, blessed be He, they were freed. And I cannot write of all the travails I suffered during those days. The Imperial Court of Justice<sup>30</sup> issued the Lords a summons in my name. And under pressure, the Swabian people retreated and withdrew from the battle. At all events, with the help of God, blessed be He, the Lords of Pappenheim were filled with fear and dread of them [?], and they released the Jews from their enforced confinement and acquitted them of the false accusation. Blessed be God who has not failed us in His loving kindness.

In the year 5302 (1541/42), judgement was wrought upon all the Jews of Bohemia, including the holy community of Prague, by means of the snakes, the fiery serpents [Num 21:6]. The Jews suffered four severe punishments: captivity, killing, burning, and crucifixion, and worse than all these, a bitter and hasty expulsion. In response to many pleas, I came, like a brother in adversity, to join other men of deeds from the holy Prague community in an earnest appeal to the King, may he be exalted. And God, blessed be He, beheld the great fast and affliction of souls, the repentance, prayer and charity, and He left a small remnant. And in the end, praise God, I was privileged to see the children return to their own territory, multiply in number and rebuild what had been destroyed. However, I was informed by them, both verbally and by letter, when I was with them in the holy community of Prague on the first of Tammuz this year [19 June 1547], that some factions had reverted to their corrupt ways and had resumed the disputes. So I spoke to their hearts with words of explicit rebuke until they consented to follow the path of truth and peace. And so be His will.

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<sup>25</sup> Refers to the defeat, capture, and expropriation of John Frederick by Charles V in 1547.

<sup>26</sup> Probably refers to Imperial councillors.

<sup>27</sup> Weissenburg im Nordgau, today in western Bavaria.

<sup>28</sup> "Duke of Neuburg" refers to the ruler of Pfalz-Neuburg, a Palatine Wittelsbach appanage created in 1505.

<sup>29</sup> The counts of Pappenheim's lands lay in the modern state of Bavaria about thirty kilometers from Neuburg on the Danube.

<sup>30</sup> The Imperial Chamber Court [*Reichskammergericht*].

In the year 5304 (1543/44), judgement was wrought, for our many sins, upon five people—a man, three women, and a virgin—through a false accusation concerning a child whose corpse was found, trodden underfoot. They tortured the man, the women, and the virgin until they were at death's door, but praise God they refused to make a false confession. And during that time, I was active for a month in the holy community of Würzburg, and also in Speyer in connection with the Emperor's letters [to the bishop of Würzburg]. We, that is myself and the other people, including none other than our teacher Rabbi Selkelin of blessed memory, and Rabbi S., may God protect and preserve him, expended on this matter an enormous sum in numerous expenses. This was the ransom money to liberate the prisoners. And they were set free. The virgin sanctified God's Name, enduring much torture for more than 32 weeks. Blessed be God who saved them.

In the year 5305 (1544/45), the Emperor, may he be exalted, set out with a great army to fight the King of France, and he advanced as far as a town near Paris.<sup>31</sup> And, at that time, the counsellors issued a mandate, requiring all the Jews in German territory to contribute to the war effort. Eventually we reached a compromise and agreed to give him, the Emperor, 3,000 guilders at 15 batzen per guilder and 400 crowns for beverages, apart from additional gifts to the value of 1000 guilders. We levied three-quarters of a guild for every hundred.<sup>32</sup> And on the same day when I was with the holy community of Worms, all the princes and dukes planned to expel the Jews and to appeal to the Emperor in this connection. Whereupon, there arose a good man,<sup>33</sup> who is remembered for good, and explained and demonstrated to them that this could not be done: the Jews could not be removed from under their government, for Christian religious laws and precepts required that they be retained within the domains of the Roman emperor and king, as a sign and testimony to the truth of Christianity. The evil scheme for a total expulsion was cancelled, but individual Jews have been expelled from the domain of Mainz,<sup>34</sup> and from Esslingen, and Landau, and, since then, from other places. All this is by reason of the fact that, for our many sins, this generation is not worthy and does not conduct itself honestly and righteously as did our fathers, as they have told us. But those who fear the word of God redeemed themselves, and follow the path of truth and peace.

In the year 5306 (1545/46), our lord the Emperor came to Regensburg and commanded all the princes and dukes to attend the *Reichstag* (Imperial Diet) and to reconcile their differences of opinion and their disagreements on matters of faith.<sup>35</sup> Although most of them came, the two dukes, Saxony and Hesse, and their followers were rebellious and vexed the Emperor; they rebelled against him for several years. Meanwhile, I laboured to obtain new privileges and credentials, the like of which no emperor or king had ever granted us before. Already in Speyer, the Emperor and his counsellors had promised to give them to me, and during this Diet at Regensburg I strongly urged the counsellors to keep their word. And, indeed, with the help of

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<sup>31</sup> Soissons, which lay on the road to Paris from the northeast.

<sup>32</sup> A property tax of 0.75%.

<sup>33</sup> Probably Alessandro Cardinal Farnese (1520-89), papal legate.

<sup>34</sup> That is, the episcopal territory [*Hochstift*] of the Elector-archbishop of Mainz.

<sup>35</sup> Alludes to a colloquy between Catholic and Protestant theologians, which Charles V ordered to proceed concurrently with the Imperial Diet.

God, blessed be He, they were written down and sealed with the Emperor's hand and seal. Soon afterwards, the Emperor resolved to gather forces and to wage war against those two aforesaid princes. Then came the people whose tongue you cannot understand—the Spaniards—and would have attacked the Jewish people, had it not been for God who was with us, aiding us when I came to that great governor—chief minister to the Emperor—named Granvelle,<sup>36</sup> and requested him to implore and entreat the Emperor to protect us, and he did what we asked. He went to the Emperor and said to him: "Behold, the Jews have suffered much persecution at the hands of those Lutheran heretics, and now come your own people, the Spanish, and will attack them in spite of the new privileges that you previously granted them [the Jews]. And the Emperor gave a gracious reply: "It would not be right to leave the Jews unprotected. Here are written and signed orders that no soldier from any of our armies shall lift hand or foot to injure or harm any Jews on pain of punishment." Therefore, it was publicly proclaimed by Imperial command in all parts of Germany that anyone violating the Emperor's decree would be punishable by death. All at once the Spaniards became well disposed towards the Jews, and when the Emperor arrived with his army to do battle, the Jews brought them bread and wine and supplied the forces with more than 50 wagons. The two princes, Saxony and Hesse, together with all the German cities, had huge forces, more than 100,000 foot soldiers and armoured horsemen. However, although our lord the Emperor, may he be exalted, did not possess so great and powerful an army as they did—only 40,000 in all—God came to his aid, so that he pursued and totally destroyed them. And in the end he captured the two princes. They are still in his custody. We strenuously appealed to all the Jews to pray morning and evening for the safety of the Emperor and to recite "Our Father Our King" and the Hymn of Unity,<sup>37</sup> and in the holy community of Frankfurt the Jews prayed that God should protect our lord the Emperor, and his people Israel. For His hand is not too short to save the many and the few. The victory that the Emperor won was in the year 5307 (1546/47). And God performed miracles and wondrous acts for us: in His mercy He protected the Jewish people, so that we did not lose a single person in this great war. Blessed be God who did not fail us in His loving kindness, and delivered us twice over from those great multitudes. May He continue and do more also. Amen.

In the year 5307 (1546/47), our lord the Emperor sent the commander of the forces with 10,000 soldiers to besiege the city of Frankfurt and subdue it. If the city were to capitulate and sue for peace, he was to agree conditionally. The Jewish community sent emissaries to me to request that I intercede on their behalf with the commander, Count von Buren.<sup>38</sup> The city was captured and the gates were opened to the commander and all his soldiers. I went with proposals to the commander bringing him a gift of 800 guilders. And there was peace for the Jews in the street<sup>39</sup> and in the city. The plunder and loot taken in Feuchtwangen and Darmstadt was sold cheaply to the Jews, and they were able to make a certain amount of money. Praise God, their prayers were efficacious and their mourning was turned into joy. May God continue to grant peace to all Israel.

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<sup>36</sup> The Imperial chancellor, Nicolas Perrenot de Granvelle (1484-1550).

<sup>37</sup> Jewish penitential hymns.

<sup>38</sup> Maximilian of Egmont (1509-48), count of Buren and Leerdam, an Imperial commander whose army came up the Rhine to support Charles V in the campaign of 1546.

<sup>39</sup> Jews' Street, the heart of the Frankfurt ghetto.

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