

Evidence Chart: How Free Were Jews?

Names _____

Date _____

Read each piece of evidence. Check the column or columns that fit, then explain your choice in a few words.

Place and time	Evidence	Flourishing	Restriction	Persecution	Why?
Baghdad, 8th to 11th centuries	The great Jewish academies of Iraq, led by the Geonim, answered questions of Jewish law sent from communities as far away as Spain and North Africa.				
Córdoba, 10th century	Hasdai ibn Shaprut, a Jewish physician, served as a diplomat for the caliph of al-Andalus and supported Jewish scholars and poets.				
Egypt, early 11th century	The Fatimid caliph al-Hakim issued harsh decrees against Jews and Christians, including distinguishing dress, and many synagogues and churches were destroyed. Later rulers reversed many of these measures.				
Granada, 11th century	Samuel ibn Naghrela, a Jewish scholar and poet, became a top minister and army commander for the Muslim ruler of Granada.				
Granada, 1066	A mob killed Samuel's son Joseph, who had succeeded him as minister, along with much of the city's Jewish community.				
Fustat (old Cairo), 11th to 13th centuries	Letters preserved in the Cairo Genizah show Jewish merchants trading goods from Spain to India, often in partnership with Muslim merchants.				
Spain and Morocco, 12th century	The Almohads, a strict North African dynasty, forced Jews and Christians to convert to Islam or leave. Many Jews fled; some converted outwardly while practicing Judaism in secret.				
Fustat, late 12th century	Maimonides, whose family fled the Almohads, settled in Egypt, became a physician to the royal court, led the Jewish community, and wrote his greatest works.				

Comparing Perspectives

In the PBS series *The Story of the Jews*, historian Simon Schama translates dhimmi as “tolerated inferior.” Many sources translate it as “protected.” Historian Mark Cohen argues that Jewish life under Islam was neither an “interfaith utopia” nor a time of constant persecution.

1. What does “tolerated inferior” emphasize? What does “protected” emphasize? Which fits the evidence above better?

2. Based on the chart, what caused conditions to change? Name at least two causes.