CHAPTER TWELVE

ME PUDET AUDIRE IUDÆUM TALIA SCIRE:
A LATE MEDIEVAL LATIN SCHOOL TEXT ON THE JEWISH CALENDAR

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1. Introduction

The areas and opportunities of sociocultural interaction that existed between Jews and Christians during the Middle Ages are a subject that has attracted much interest from scholars in recent years, but which is nevertheless far from being fully explored. Among the topics that still remain to be recognized as relevant, let alone studied to any greater degree, is the Christian appreciation for and appropriation of the Jewish calendar as a tool of computistical, chronological, and exegetical investigation. The only major publication of the twentieth century to shed some light on the subject was Walter Émile van Wijk's 1951 edition of the *Computus emendatus* of Reinher of Paderborn (1171), a pioneering effort to reform Christian Easter computations based on the astronomically more precise molad-reckoning of the Jews. Despite the highly innovative nature of this text, scholars have until recently shown little interest in Reinher's

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methods and intentions, leaving many of its aspects unexplored. Even less attention has accordingly been paid to the Jewish calendar’s presence in further Latin texts that were written in the centuries following Reinher, and for which modern editions are yet to be produced. These include treatises by the Franciscan scholar Robert of Leicester (1294), the famous Oxford Dominican Nicholas Trevet (1310), and the Westphalian Cistercian monk Hermann Zoest, who penned a Calendarium Hebraicum novum (1436) whilst at the Council of Basel. Closer to Reinher of Paderborn’s time, one can also find an anonymous Liber erarum, which appears to have been redacted in Northern Italy in c. 1191 and represents the translation into Latin of an unknown Hebrew treatise on the Jewish calendar. Together, these texts reflect a whole gamut of different approaches and vantage points from which medieval Christians could be motivated to access and study the calendrical knowledge of the Jews.

In what follows, I shall present a preliminary research report on another one of these Latin monographs, which stands out from among the aforementioned in being vastly more widespread, but also far more difficult to categorize in terms of origin and authorship. The text in question is a mid-fourteenth-century Computus Iudaicus, which can be easily identified by its rhymed introduction Me pudet audire iudeum talia scire (‘It shames me to hear that the Jew knows such things’). Although it is

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5 Studies, editions, and translations of these four texts, along with the Computus Iudaicus discussed in the present article, will appear in my forthcoming monograph Medieval Latin Christian Texts on the Jewish Calendar: A Study with Five Editions (Leiden: Brill), which was prepared as part of the Leverhulme Trust-funded research project at UCL, Medieval Christian and Jewish Calendar Texts, directed by Sacha Stern.