

**From Oppression to Redemption: A
Reexamination of Illuminated
Sephardic Haggadot in Thirteenth-
and Fourteenth-Century Spain**

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Abstract

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Title: FROM OPPRESSION TO REDEMPTION: A REEXAMINATION OF
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This thesis examines the scholarship of one era of Jewish history, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain, through the lens of the illuminated Haggadot that were produced during that period. This type of Haggadah, beautifully decorated with narrative biblical scenes and non-narrative decoration, did not exist as an independent book, with or without illuminations, before the thirteenth century, despite its significant role in the family Passover seder. Scholars seek to understand the circumstances in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain that prompted Jewish patrons to commission these expensive books. Past scholarship traces the iconographic and stylistic sources of the imagery in the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot but does not consider the social, political, theological, or cultural context of these manuscripts, nor the meaningful story they have to tell about Jewish culture from this period. However, three recent scholars, Katrin Kogman-Appel, Marc Michael Epstein, and Michael Batterman, do examine the illuminated Spanish Haggadot, in part, as sources of cultural and historical information. The present study summarizes and critiques their recent works to assess how successfully their approaches expand our understanding of these unique manuscripts and the medieval Spanish culture in which they were produced. My thesis concludes by setting forth avenues of approach that deserve more attention in the analysis of the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot. The impact of anti-Semitism in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain on the production of illuminated Haggadot is particularly crucial to unlocking their mysteries. The situation for Jews in this period was precarious; taking into account the anti-Jewish laws, propaganda, and works of art as well as the Christian populace's hatred of Jews is necessary to unveiling the specific agendas of the patrons who commissioned the illuminated Haggadot. Only with a fresh outlook on Jewish art scholarship and a thorough analysis of each Haggadah in its historical and cultural contexts can scholars begin to understand the appearance and disappearance of the illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain.

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Introduction

In March 2012, authors Nathan Englander and Jonathan Safran Foer published *New American Haggadah*, a revised translation of the Jewish text used during the celebration of Passover seder.¹ The Haggadah has existed since the early centuries of the Common Era, when Jews began to celebrate the seder in their homes instead of at the Temple of Jerusalem, because of its destruction in 70 CE. Although the fundamental biblical story told in the Haggadah—the story of the Israelites’ salvation from Egyptian enslavement—has remained the same for thousands of years, the Haggadah has been revised many times throughout its history to accommodate different cultures and different eras. Sometimes a specific word was changed, or a certain ritual action. Often, different Haggadot included different combinations of the songs of praise, or *Hallel*, sung after the seder meal. Some Haggadot were found within other Jewish prayer books, while some existed as independent documents. A number of Haggadot were also illuminated, with narrative images and nonfigural decoration.

“Of all books ever written, this is the one that has been revised the most times,” Foer stated in an interview with Stephen Colbert in early March. “There are about 7,000 editions of it that have been created. Wherever there have been Jews, whenever there have been Jews, there have been new Haggadahs [sic].”²

¹ Nathan Englander and Jonathan Safran Foer, *New American Haggadah* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2012).

² Jonathan Safran Foer, interview by Stephen Colbert, 6 March 2012, Comedy Central’s *The Colbert Report*, <http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/410087/march-06-2012/jonathan-safran-foer>.

“They’re just constantly being made throughout time,” said Englander, in a National Public Radio interview. “I think out of all the traditional Jewish documents, it’s the one that’s most living.”³

Englander and Foer produced *New American Haggadah* because they believed that contemporary American Jews needed a new translation of the Haggadah, one that reflected the attitudes and desires of their own society. This is the same reasoning that has been involved in the creation of each new Haggadah throughout history; every alteration of the Haggadah was done deliberately and reflected the Jewish community from which it came.

The publication of *New American Haggadah* underscores how scholars of Jewish history use Haggadot as sources of information about Jewish culture. This present study examines the scholarship of one era of Jewish history, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain, through the lens of the illuminated Haggadot that were produced during that period. This type of Haggadah, beautifully decorated with narrative biblical scenes and non-narrative decoration, did not exist before the thirteenth century.⁴ Recent scholars are interested in discovering why, and in what social, political, and theological context, these Haggadot emerged. They seek to understand what happened in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain that prompted Jewish patrons to commission these expensive books. Comprehending why the illuminated Spanish Haggadot were created and what they meant to the Jewish families who used

³ Nathan Englander, interview by Terry Gross, 15 February 2012, National Public Radio’s *Fresh Air*, <http://www.npr.org/2012/02/15/146920283/nathan-englander-assimilating-thoughts-into-stories>.

⁴ Michael Batterman, “Bread of Affliction, Emblem of Power: the Passover Matzah in Haggadah Manuscripts from Christian Spain,” in *Imagining the Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, ed. Eva Frojmovic (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), 87.

them will aid scholars in uncovering more information concerning Jewish culture in Spain during this time.

All historians, including art historians, must analyze material artifacts as well as primary textual sources in order to interpret the cultures they research. Thus, the historian's discipline requires an approach that examines all aspects of a given culture, well beyond the basic factual details. By using all the tools—literature, material culture, religion, and applying alternative methods—the historian may assemble a comprehensive re-creation of the past. In general, art historians have not yet examined illuminated Spanish Haggadot incorporating a multidisciplinary approach. For example, their work depends on involved, often misguided discussions of iconographic sources and artistic style. Until recently, few of these art historians have considered that scholarly attention to the illuminated Spanish Haggadot is a worthy endeavor to reveal Sephardic Jewish history and culture, and by extension, to expand our understanding of medieval Spain. In 1930, Rachel Wischnitzer called attention to this particular problem with Jewish art scholarship:

Even though the significance of a compilation of Jewish iconography must not be underestimated, nevertheless the “how,” the “from where,” the “when,” and the “why” are as important for research as the content of a representation.... In conclusion we can say that research in the field of Jewish artistic activity is progressing only slowly....The work of those who occupy themselves with Jewish artistic activity is still developing more in breadth than in depth.⁵

⁵ Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, “Jüdische Kunstgeschichtsschreibung: Eine Bibliographische Skizze,” in *Festschrift zu Simon Dubnows siebzigstem Geburtstag*, ed. I. Elbogen, J. Meisl, M. Wischnitzer, 76-81 (Berlin: Jüdischer verlag, 1930). Translated by Eva Frojmovic on page 27 of “Buber in Basle, Schlosser in Sarajevo, Wischnitzer in Weimar: The Politics of Writing about Medieval Jewish Art,” in *Imagining the Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, ed. Eva Frojmovic (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002).

Wischnitzer contended that scholars must place Jewish art in its social and historical context, yet few illuminated Haggadah scholars who lived and worked after her time followed her advice. However, three recent scholars, Katrin Kogman-Appel, Marc Michael Epstein, and Michael Batterman, *have* examined the illuminated Spanish Haggadot as sources of cultural and historical information. The present study will summarize and critique their recent works, to determine if their scholarship is moving the study of the illuminated Spanish Haggadot forward to uncover the information that these manuscripts contain about medieval Spanish culture and history.

In Part One, I provide a historical background of Passover seder and the invention of the Haggadah. I also examine the history of medieval Spain and discuss the emergence of the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Part Two, I supply an overview of past scholarship concerning the medieval Spanish Haggadot, and then I summarize and critique the most recent works of the three current scholars. My conclusion then describes a comprehensive approach for pursuing the study of illuminated Sephardic Haggadot, including one aspect of medieval Spanish culture that none of the current scholars has yet considered.

The illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain are essential for studying Jewish history. By learning more about these manuscripts, we can learn more about Jewish culture in medieval Spain and how it influenced other cultures, as well as how its influence has affected society in the present day. The following chapter will begin this discussion by explaining the history of Passover seder and describing the Haggadah's function during the seder meal.

Part One: Historical Background

Chapter 1: Passover Seder and the Haggadah

Passover is one of the most important celebrations in Judaism. It commemorates the liberation of the Jews from Egypt and the covenant God made with the Israelites, as told in the book of Exodus: God aided the Israelites in their escape by inflicting ten plagues on Egypt, the last of which was the death of the firstborn. The Israelites were instructed, through the prophet Moses, to smear lamb's blood on their door posts; if they did so, God would pass over their houses and their firstborn would be spared.

Passover is a week-long festival, beginning with a meal called the seder. Not much information is known about early celebrations of Passover seder, although scholars date the first observances to the end of the Second Temple Period (516 BCE to 70 CE), before the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE.⁶ The seder ritual is not described in-depth in the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). The instructions from the Torah are those given for the first Passover meal, a sacrificial lamb called the "paschal sacrifice:"

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly: it is a Passover offering to the Lord.⁷

There are also instructions indicating how the Israelites should celebrate Passover sacrifices after they move to the Promised Land and God selects a site for the Temple,⁸ yet there is nothing in the Torah indicating how Jews should conduct this

⁶ Joseph Tabory, *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 3.

⁷ Exod. 12:11. All Hebrew Bible quotes in this thesis are taken from the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: the Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPSS Translation – Second Edition* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003).

⁸ Deut. 16:2.

celebration.⁹ However, the Torah does state that the history of Passover should be told to the next generation. Some scholars assume that today's tradition of retelling the story of the Exodus at Passover seder began in an effort to follow this command:¹⁰

And you shall explain to your son on that day, "It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt."/ And this shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on you forehead—in order that the Teaching of the Lord may be in your mouth—that with a mighty hand the Lord freed you from Egypt./ You shall keep this institution at its set time from year to year.¹¹

What little scholars do know about how Jews conducted the first Passover seders comes from Talmudic literature. The most detailed is the Mishnah, a written compilation of Jewish oral traditions and the first major work of Rabbinic Judaism. It was redacted by Rabbi Judah the Prince one-hundred and fifty years after the destruction of the Second Temple, in 220 CE.¹² The description of the seder ritual is found in the tenth chapter of the tractate *Pesachim* of the Mishnah. Joseph Tabory has extracted from this text the earliest explanation of how the ritual was conducted:¹³

2. They poured him the first cup...he recites the blessing for the day.
3. They brought him unleavened bread, lettuce, and haroset (fruit puree or relish)...they bring him the paschal lamb.
4. They poured him the second cup, he begins with the disgrace (or: lowly status) [of our ancestors], and concludes with glory as he expounds the biblical passage "my father was a fugitive Aramean" until the end of the section.

⁹ Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Exod. 13:8-10

¹² Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 6.

¹³ Ibid. Tabory "extracted" what he believes to be the description of the earliest Passover ritual in this way: first, he recognized that the basic structure of the Mishnah has several sentences where an action portrayed in the past tense is followed by an action in the present tense. Tabory believes that this was a way to show that the past tense action must be done before the present tense action, and that sentences constructed in this way represent the oldest part of the Mishnah. He then eliminated everything that was not written in this form; the five instructions above were the sentences remaining from the section regarding Passover. The numbering reflects those in standard texts of the Mishnah.

5. They poured him the third cup; he recites the grace after meals.
8. The fourth [cup], he recites the *Hallel*, and says over it the blessing of the song.

This ritual occurred in the Temple of Jerusalem, as commanded by God in the Torah, and Jews traveled from afar to observe the sacrifice. After the destruction of the Second Temple, however, Jews began to celebrate the ritual with a festive meal in their homes.¹⁴ Moving celebrations such as Passover seder to the domestic realm was a deliberate action on the part of the rabbinic authorities to bolster the Jewish religion even though the Temple no longer stood.¹⁵ The transfer of the seder ritual from the Second Temple to the home is known in history as the “cessation of the paschal sacrifice.”¹⁶ Today, Jewish people still gather in their homes with family and friends for the seder.

After the destruction of the Second Temple and the cessation of the paschal sacrifice, it was evident to Jewish religious leaders that the activities of the seder celebration would have to be codified. Because there was no longer a central location for the celebration, each household could celebrate differently; some of them may have conducted the ritual incorrectly. The discussion of the seder in the Mishnah is the first

¹⁴ Baruch M. Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder: The Passover Rite and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 28. The Mishnah offers information regarding some of the rules that the rabbinic authorities created for the home celebration of Passover seder, for example, the home ritual should begin at the same time of night as when it was celebrated in the Temple (Boker, *Origins of the seder*, 38). The main difference between the home ritual and the Temple ritual, other than location, was that the home ritual would not be celebrated with the paschal lamb (Bokser, *Origins of the seder*, 28).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37. The Passover celebration as described in the Hebrew Bible is cultic in nature; in Exodus 12, for example, lay people bring the sacrifice and consume it, careful not to break the animal’s bones. They act as priests because they have authority to conduct the ritual on their own. (Bokser, *Origins of the Seder*, 53). Because of the cultic nature of this description in the Hebrew Bible, it seemed acceptable for rabbinic authorities to change the Passover ritual so that it could be conducted by lay people in their homes.

¹⁶ Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 10-11. Passover was not the only ritual that moved into the home; in fact, the way that Passover was changed exemplifies how Judaism as a religion changed after the destruction of the Second Temple (Bokser, *Origins of the Seder*, 2).

known attempt to record the rules of the ritual, but several centuries later a new book was compiled to codify the Passover celebration. This book is called the Haggadah.

The Haggadah is a ritual book that aids the Jewish family during its observance of the Passover seder. The oldest versions of the Haggadah appeared within other prayer books; scholars have not found any Haggadot that appear as stand-alone books dating before the thirteenth century.¹⁷ The earliest complete Haggadah is part of the prayer book compiled by Saadia Goan, who was head of the academy at Sura in Babylonia in the tenth century.¹⁸ The Babylonian version spread throughout the Jewish world and over time split into several other versions, mainly Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Yemenite.¹⁹

The Passover seder ritual as celebrated today is comprised of two parts; eating and speaking. It is often described as a “performance” or “play” because of the active roles of its participants, who are called on not only to remember the Exodus story, but to reenact the experience of becoming free and coming together as a nation.²⁰ The Haggadah is the script of the Passover seder “play” and includes dialogue to read out loud as well as instructions for conducting the ritual (similar to stage directions). It aids

¹⁷ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History: A Panorama in Facsimile of Five Centuries of the Printed Haggadah from the Collections of Harvard University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America* (The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 16.

¹⁸ Ibid. There is another major version, the *Eretz Yisra'el* version, which fell out of use soon after the Crusades (see Joseph Tabory's *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah* for a more in-depth description). Both the Babylonian and *Eretz Yisra'el* version had descendents, but Haggadot created after the Crusades are all descended from the Babylonian version (Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 2).

¹⁹ Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 3. “Ashkenazic,” “Sephardic,” and “Yemenite” are names for Jewish populations in certain areas of Europe and the Middle East. Ashkenazic Jews were originally from the German region, and migrated to other areas of Northern Europe; Sephardic Jews were originally from the Iberian Peninsula, and moved to different areas after their expulsion in 1492; Yemenite Jews were from the southern Arabic peninsula. The word “Sepharad” is the Hebrew word for “Spain” (Isidro G. Bango, *Remembering Sepharad: Jewish Culture in Medieval Spain* (Madrid: State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad (SEACEX), 2003), 15).

²⁰ Rabbi David Silber, *A Passover Haggadah: Go Forth and Learn* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2011), xv.

the family in its study of biblical texts and observance of ritual actions, and it gives guidance on how to conduct the meal together. Eating, drinking, blessing, singing, and other actions take place during specific times throughout the ritual; every person participates in some way.

There are three main parts to the contemporary Haggadah; the story, the festive meal, and songs of praise.²¹ These parts are represented by fourteen stages that contain instructions for the ritual as well as passages to be read out loud:

Stages of the Haggadah (in chronological order)²²

1. Sanctifying the Day/Blessings over Wine (*Kaddesh*)
2. Washing the Hands (*Urechatz*)
3. Dipping the Greens/Vegetables (*Karpas*)
4. Breaking of the Matzah (*Yahatz*)
5. The Story of the Redemption (*Maggid*)
6. Washing of Hands (*Rahtzah*)
7. First Blessing of Matzah (*Motzi*)
8. Dipping the Herbs (*Maror*)
9. Second Blessing of Matzah (*Korekh*)
10. The Meal (*Shulhan Orekh*)
11. The Hidden Matzah (*Tzafun*)
12. Grace after the Meal: (*Barekh*)
13. Hymns of Praise (*Hallel*)
14. Concluding Songs (*Nirtzah*)

Since reflection on the Exodus story is one of the most important activities of the Passover seder, the fifth stage, The Story of Redemption (*Maggid*), is the largest portion of the Haggadah. It contains passages from the Torah,²³ instructions from the

²¹ Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 16.

²² *Ibid.*, 1. Tabory briefly mentions that the Hebrew words assigned to each stage are mnemonic devices to aid the participants in keeping the stages in the correct order.

²³ Although the main focus of Passover is the flight from Egypt as told in the book of Exodus, the core text of the Haggadah uses verses from the book of Deuteronomy. Scholars have debated about the reason for this oddity; some suggest that the passages from Deuteronomy which are used in the Haggadah were more popular at the time; some argue that these passages are more concise than the book of Exodus, and were chosen for brevity. (Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 2). Rabbi David Silber indicates that since the participants in the seder ritual were never slaves in Egypt, the biblical passages from Deuteronomy are

Mishnah, and also uses midrash.²⁴ Midrash is a means to interpret the Torah; the root of the word “midrash” is “darash,” meaning to “seek out,” “interpret,” or “explain.”²⁵ The Torah presents the history of Judaism and the laws that its people should follow, but its text is quite old; thus, the ancient Talmudic rabbis decided that they needed to explain the relevance of the Torah in contemporary times, and the concept of “midrash” was born.²⁶

Midrashic interpretations explore how to implement old laws in contemporary settings and also attempt to resolve contradictions among biblical passages. Often, the activity of midrashic exegesis involves the use of one passage from the Torah to explain another passage, but rabbis sometimes make inferences based on their own personal interpretations. For example, Deuteronomy 16:8 states, “After eating unleavened bread six days, you shall hold a solemn gathering for the Lord your God,” but Leviticus 23:6 commands, “You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days.” Talmudic sages reconciled this difference in number of days through the activity of midrashic exegesis: “The reference is to a kind of unleavened bread which cannot be eaten for the full seven

more appropriate as they address Jews who were born after the Exodus story (Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 15).

²⁴ Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History*, 16. Joseph Tabory discusses other alternative texts used during the *Maggid*. Common ones are The Passover of the Sages, The Four Children, The Plagues of the Seal, and The List of Thanksgiving. Other *Maggid* texts that are specific to certain communities are: Mah Chbar (Yemenites), Utkol (Tunisian), I Am the Lord (was known in France, Rashi rejected it; appears in the Old English Haggadah and later in a Baghdad Haggadah), He Gave Us Their Money (Yemen, Baghdad, India, and others), Emunim Arckhu Shevah (Jews of Baghdad and Haggadot printed in Jerusalem). For a more in depth description of these texts, see Tabory’s book.

²⁵ Judah Goldin, preface to *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 2. “Midrash” is also associated with the Arabic word *darasa*, which gives *madrasah*, meaning “place of explanation.”

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1. The activity of midrash is first known to have occurred during the five hundred years before the destruction of the second temple. For example, at Ezra’s reading of the Torah in 458 BCE, Levites and other important men interpreted and explained what it proclaimed.

days. That made from the new wheat can be eaten only six days.”²⁷ The “new wheat” is the Omer, or grain, which is brought on the second day of Passover. This new wheat can only be eaten for the last six days of Passover, since it is not brought until the second day. Therefore, the sages decided that the passage describing seven days referred to old wheat, or wheat brought before Passover, and the passage describing six days referred to the new wheat, or the Omer brought on the second day of Passover.²⁸

Talmudic midrash was used in the compilation of the first Haggadah. Today, Jews participating in the seder follow this older midrash, but they are encouraged to create new midrash as well. One of the main activities of *Maggid* is discussion and interpretation, among family members, of the Torah passages in the Haggadah.²⁹ While reading through the passages, members of the family reflect on the experience of becoming free and connect their own lives to the ancient story of the Exodus.³⁰ They also attempt to understand better God’s covenant with the Israelites, which includes the laws he set for them. Family members practice midrash to help explain the relevance of those laws, as well as other passages from the Torah, for their own time and their own social context. Midrash brings life to an ancient text, demonstrating that the Torah is still relevant today.³¹

By urging midrashic interpretation, the Haggadah allows the seder participants to apply the past to the present. Connecting the past and present demonstrates a

²⁷ Reuven Hammer, *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 32.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 451.

²⁹ Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, xvi.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

prevalent theme in the Haggadah: the cyclical nature of history. The Haggadah states that each generation of Jews will face its own oppressor and look to God for salvation:

And this is the promise that has sustained our ancestors and us, for not just once did somebody try to destroy us, rather in every generation they try to destroy us, but the Blessed Holy One saves us from them.³²

The Haggadah also emphasizes that before receiving God's salvation, it is important that the Jewish people suffer. In Jewish tradition, three forms of suffering were invoked by the Jews' covenant with God: *gerut* (alienation), *avdut* (servitude), and *innuy* (affliction). According to the Torah, God promised that once the Jewish people endured these forms of suffering, they would merit redemption.³³

Rabbi David Silber explains the necessity of this suffering, interpreting it as a way for the Jews to learn to be compassionate toward others so that they will not impose slavery or oppression on the people in their own nations.³⁴ Silber states, "Those who accept their destiny, along with the suffering entailed, will merit redemption, perhaps because they will have learned the principles for building an ideal society."³⁵

He quotes the book of Exodus for evidence of his interpretation:

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.³⁶

Celebrating Passover seder and reading from the Haggadah reminds participants that history is cyclical, that each generation of Jews will be oppressed in some way, and that each generation must endure suffering to understand how to rule their own nations.

³² Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 17 (of Haggadah section).

³³ Gen 15:13-14; Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 16.

³⁴ Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 22.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁶ Exod. 23:9.

These are the most important themes found in the Haggadah, themes which have stayed constant since the first Haggadot were compiled.

Still, some of the Haggadah text has evolved over time. When Jews moved to different locations they adopted aspects of the cultures in those locations;³⁷ the Haggadah text reflects the changes in Jewish tradition that occurred when the Jews moved from place to place. An example of this involves the four questions called *Mah Nishtanah* (sometimes represented as four statements, as below),³⁸ asked by the youngest child at the beginning of the ritual:

Why is this night different from all other nights?

1. On all other nights we may eat both leavened bread and matzah; on this night we eat only matzah.
2. On all other nights, we eat all kinds of vegetables; on this night we eat bitter herbs.
3. On all other nights we do not dip even once; on this night we dip twice.
4. On all other nights we may eat either while sitting or leaning; on this night we all eat while leaning.³⁹

In the earliest written account of the rules for Passover seder from the Mishnah, the dipping question (number 3) is formulated differently: “On all other nights we dip but once and tonight we dip twice.” Scholars contend that this reflects a custom from Roman Palestine, where people dipped vegetables in a sauce before meals.⁴⁰ The Babylonian sages who wrote the Babylonian version of the Haggadah changed this

³⁷ David Stern, foreword to *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2008), xii.

³⁸ Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 84. Scholars have differing opinions about why the “four questions” are often represented as statements instead of questions. In his footnote on this page, Tabory argues that the four questions are not questions but are answers to the previous question, “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

³⁹ Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 8-9 (of Haggadah section). “Leaning,” in this case, means reclining while eating, as the Romans did. This is a custom adopted from Roman culture.

⁴⁰ Tabory, *JPS Commentary*, 29.

question to fit their own customs, where people did not dip vegetables before their meals: “On all other nights we do not dip even once; on this night we dip twice.” It may be a subtle change, but it demonstrates something about Jewish culture in Babylon; they did not dip their vegetables before the meal as the Romans did.

When analyzing a specific copy of the Haggadah, the alterations of the Haggadah text can provide information about the Jewish culture that created it. Other additions to a particular Haggadah, such as illuminations, may also give insight into the culture from which that Haggadah came. The following chapter will introduce one type of illuminated Haggadah, from medieval Spain, and explore the historical context in which it was created.

Chapter 2: Medieval Spain and the Illuminated Haggadot

As noted earlier, scholars have not found any evidence of Haggadot existing as stand-alone books before the thirteenth century.⁴¹ When the Haggadah did emerge as its own book, some of the texts produced were decorated with figural and nonfigural imagery. Illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain, also known as Sephardic⁴² Haggadot, contained elaborate illustrations.⁴³ These were exclusively produced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, during a time when Christian oppression of Jews in Spain was becoming more violent.⁴⁴ Many scholars have dismissed Sephardic Haggadot as uninteresting, seeing them as simply imitative of Christian figural imagery.⁴⁵ However, more recent scholarship has attempted to demonstrate that the image cycles from medieval Spanish Haggadot have a unique story to tell about the cultural, political, and theological milieu in which they were created.⁴⁶

Before examining the illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain, I will explore in brief the history of the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages and the specific context in which these books were made. Rulership of the Iberian Peninsula changed multiple times, from Roman to Visigothic to Islamic, and finally to Christian hegemony. The Visigoths were a powerful tribe from Northern Europe, who in the third century threatened the Roman frontier in Northern Europe (south of the Danube River, the area known as the Balkans). In 381, the Visigoths signed a treaty with the Romans and

⁴¹ Yerushalmi, *Haggadah*, 16.

⁴² “Medieval Sephardic” refers to Sephardic Jews in the Iberian Peninsula before 1492.

⁴³ For a comprehensive list of the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot, see Appendix A.

⁴⁴ David Nirenberg, “Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain,” *The American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 1066.

⁴⁵ Marc Michael Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative, and Religious Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

became a military force for Emperor Theodosius I (379-95 CE) in the Balkans.⁴⁷ This treaty was upheld until Theodosius' death in 395, when the leader of the Visigoths, Alaric, established the Visigoths as an independent mercenary army that supplied military service for whichever imperial regime provided the best terms.⁴⁸

In the early fifth century, the Visigoths were hired by the Roman emperor to rid Iberia of the Sueves, Vandals, and Alans. These were other tribes that had moved into Iberia and begun to fight the Romans for control over the peninsula.⁴⁹ The Visigoths were hired to control the peninsula for the Roman Empire, but once they drove out the Sueves, Vandals, and Alans, they claimed the territory for themselves. Under the Visigothic king Euric (466-484), the Romans ceded control over Iberia to the Visigoths.⁵⁰

The Visigoths converted to Christianity in the fourth century, adopting Arian theology. The Arian beliefs were at odds with the orthodox Christian Church, however, and the Visigoths eventually renounced their Arian beliefs and accepted orthodox Christian dogma in the 560s.⁵¹ As Christians they were intolerant of other religions, including Judaism. During their rule of Iberia, the Visigoths enacted laws oppressing the Jews, including those restricting public expression of their religion and mandating

⁴⁷ Roger Collins, *A History of Spain: Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 20. Terms consisted of money, supplies, land, etc.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

forced conversions.⁵² When the Visigoths were defeated by Umayyad Islamic invaders in 711 CE,⁵³ the Jews hoped their oppression would end.⁵⁴

Most scholars agree that the Jews in Spain *did* have an easier time living under Islamic rule than under the Christian Visigoths. The main reason was that Islam preached tolerance toward the *dhimmi*, the “Peoples of the Book” (Jews and Christians).⁵⁵ The Muslim tolerance of the *dhimmi* enabled the Jews to participate in the political and economic environment of the Islamic empire, and allowed Jewish culture to flourish.⁵⁶ Education in science, philosophy, and literature was encouraged in Muslim Spain, and the erudite Jews took part in the study of these subjects, producing a number of written works in science, philosophy, and literature.

Whether the Jews of Iberia also produced art is unknown; there is no surviving material that provides evidence for the existence of religious or secular Jewish art from this period (eighth century - early thirteenth century).⁵⁷ Both Muslims and Jews strictly observed the Second Commandment, interpreting any figural imagery in a religious context as prohibited:

You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth./ You shall not bow down to them or serve them.⁵⁸

⁵² Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 12.

⁵³ Joseph O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1.

⁵⁴ Bango, *Remembering Sepharad*, 21.

⁵⁵ María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002), 29. “The Book” is the Hebrew Bible, which is part of the canon of holy texts for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

⁵⁶ Bango, *Remembering Sepharad*, 22.

⁵⁷ Katrin Kogman-Appel, “Jewish Art and Non-Jewish Culture: The Dynamics of Artistic Borrowing in Medieval Hebrew Manuscript Illumination,” *Jewish History* 15 (2001): 192.

⁵⁸ Exod. 20:4-5

Nevertheless, Islamic culture *did* permit non-figural imagery in religious works; Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula decorated their religious architecture and books with elaborate, non-figural designs. While much of the Islamic art from this time still exists today, no non-figural Jewish art from this period has been discovered.⁵⁹ Hebrew Bibles with Islamic designs do survive from the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, but these were made after Islamic rule ended.⁶⁰ If Jews did produce decorative art in the eight through early thirteenth centuries, it has not survived to the present day.

Although Jewish culture flourished, the Umayyad Muslims still did not treat Jews or Christians as their equals. Umayyad rulers retained many of the early laws that the Romans and Visigoths imposed on Jews, such as those limiting public expression of their religion and prohibiting the renovation of their places of worship, which they then simply applied to Christians as well.⁶¹ Jews and Christians were allowed to practice their own religions, but could not do so publically nor could they attempt to convert Muslims.⁶² In exchange for the freedom of practicing their own religions, Jews and Christians had to pay a special tax.⁶³

Unfortunately for Jews, Umayyad rulership became unstable as civil war began in 1009. By 1031 the Umayyad dynasty fell, and the Iberian Peninsula became a

⁵⁹ Kogman-Appel, "Jewish Art," 192.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Kogman-Appel does not explicitly state whether Jewish or Muslim artists decorated these Hebrew Bibles for their Jewish patrons; however, in one specific example (Paris, Bibliotheque nationale, cod. hebr. 21 "Second Bible of Joshua ibn Gaon, Tudela 1301-1302) she notes that the decoration was made by a Jewish artist, Joshua ibn Gaon.

⁶¹ Bango, *Remembering Sepharad*, 21.

⁶² Judaism is not a religion that encourages its members to actively convert people, the way Christianity and Islam do.

⁶³ Menocal, *Ornament*, 72-73. It is interesting to note that while Jewish culture flourished under this arrangement with Muslims, Christian culture did not. Jews were a people used to worshipping quietly and privately, as they had done under the Visigoths, and the arrangement with the Muslim rulers gave them more freedom than they had under the Visigoths. However, Christianity flourished publically, so the arrangement with Muslims seemed oppressive to them. (Menocal, *Ornament*, 74).

collection of various Muslim provinces ruled by local governors, called the *Taifa* Kingdoms.⁶⁴ Later in the same century, northern Christians pushed south into Islamic territory. *Taifa* leaders pleaded with a group of Muslims called the Almoravids, who were tribesmen from North Africa (Berbers), to protect them from the Christians. In 1090, the Almoravids assumed control over all of Muslim Iberia.⁶⁵

The Almoravids and their Muslim successors from North Africa, the Almohads, were less tolerant of Jews and Christians than the Umayyads. They enacted harsher restrictions on Jews and Christians, including forced conversions.⁶⁶ The Almohads, who gained control of Iberia in the early twelfth century, were the least tolerant of all. The Almohads criticized the Almoravids for giving Jews and Christians too many rights.⁶⁷ The Almohads killed Jews and Christians from Spain that refused to convert to Islam, along with those that had converted but were suspected of having done so falsely.⁶⁸ Because of the violence of the Almohads, many Jews and Christians moved north into the Christian kingdoms.⁶⁹

The long campaign of the “Reconquista,” the Christian conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, began in the eleventh century after the dissolution of the Umayyad Caliphate.⁷⁰ From the eleventh to the mid-thirteenth century, Christians enlisted the help of the Jewish people in their fight against the Muslims. Jews were offered incentives for colonizing newly captured cities for the Christians, including land grants, elective

⁶⁴ Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), xxix.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, xxx.

⁶⁶ Gerber, *Jews of Spain*, 24.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

⁶⁹ Norman Roth, “New Light on the Jews of Mozarabic Toledo,” *Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) Review* 11 (1986): 213.

⁷⁰ O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 1.

privileges, tax exemptions, and tolerance of their religious beliefs under Christian rule.⁷¹ Jews were also assigned military responsibilities, such as guarding fortresses.⁷² With Jewish help, Christians successfully began to regain power. By the late thirteenth century, Christians had pushed the Muslims into a southern portion of the Iberian Peninsula, called Granada, and isolated them there.⁷³

Until 1248, when Christians finally gained control over most of the peninsula, Jews were treated with tolerance under Christian rule. Compared to the rest of Europe, Spain was a land of opportunity for the Jews because of the promises that the Christians had made to them during the Reconquista.⁷⁴ However, when this campaign was over, the Christians began to rescind some of their promises.⁷⁵ They enacted laws against the Jews in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as *Fuero Real*, *Leyes Nuevas*, *Especulo*, and *Las Partidas*.⁷⁶ Laws such as these forbade Christians from doing business or having personal relationships with Jews, forbade Jews from holding official positions, and forced Jews to wear distinctive clothing such as yellow badges with the Star of David symbol imprinted on them.⁷⁷ Some Christians spread hateful propaganda; for instance, they accused the Jews of being usurers (charging unfair and high interest

⁷¹ Gerber, *Jews of Spain*, 93.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 3.

⁷⁴ Gerber, *Jews of Spain*, 94.

⁷⁵ Bango, *Remembering Sepharad*, 26.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 184-186. These laws were drawn up by King Alfonso X of Castile, Leon, and Galicia (1252-1284), and his team of jurists. They were influenced by the anti-Jewish ecclesiastical laws that had been introduced to Europe after the Fourth Lateran Council. However, Alfonso X's laws softened the more extreme ecclesiastical laws and showed some tolerance toward Jews.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 186. *Las Partidas*, which included the law mandating that Jews wear distinctive clothing, was met with opposition from the nobility and much of it was not put in practice in Castile until 1348, when it was amended and enacted in the *Ordenamiento de Alcalá de 1348*.

on monetary loans)⁷⁸ and asserted that the Black Plague was the result of God's anger with the Jews' alleged heathenism.⁷⁹

The Christians sustained power by creating an atmosphere that was intolerant of any other religion, including Judaism. Although Christianity developed out of Judaism, and Christians included the Hebrew Bible in their canon of sacred texts,⁸⁰ there were many differences between Christian and Jewish religious beliefs. The most fundamental difference was the belief in Jesus Christ as the messiah. Christians accepted that Christ was the messiah, the Son of God, sent to save people from original sin and to bring about the new covenant. Jews, however, did not believe that Christ was the messiah. Because the belief in Christ as the messiah was central to the Christian religion, Christians saw those who denied it as infidels.⁸¹

The Christian concept of the Trinity (the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit) was another point of debate between the two religions. Judaism claimed that belief in the Trinity was polytheistic, or belief in more than one god, which was proscribed by the absolute monotheism of Judaism.⁸² Christians, on the other hand, did not view the Trinity as polytheistic; to them, the Trinity was one god in three persons.

Jews and Christians also differed in how they practiced their religions. Jews focused on "right actions": they maintained their covenant with God through proper

⁷⁸ Nirenberg, "Conversion, Sex, and Segregation," 1070.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1077.

⁸⁰ Christians renamed the Hebrew Bible the "Old Testament."

⁸¹ Daniel Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977), 107.

⁸² Ibid., 105.

observance of rituals and festivals.⁸³ Christians, however, focused on “right beliefs”: Christians had to believe exactly what the Church dictated.

After the Black Death, Christian hatred of Jews brought about a series of brutal and deadly anti-Jewish riots.⁸⁴ Jews were threatened, tortured, or killed if they did not convert to Christianity. Those who did convert were called *conversos*, and were denied communication with any friends or family who still remained Jewish. Eventually, Christians came to suspect them, and Muslims who had also converted, of secretly practicing their old religions. They persecuted them for tainting the purity of Spain’s Christian community during the Spanish Inquisition, which began in 1478 and was enacted by King Ferdinand II of Aragon (ruled 1474-1516) and Queen Isabella I of Castile (ruled 1474-1504).⁸⁵ Ultimately, the concern that Jews who had converted falsely would draw *conversos* back into Judaizing led to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.⁸⁶

Before the twelfth century, illuminated religious manuscripts in Europe were mostly made by monks in Christian monastic workshops.⁸⁷ These manuscripts were not usually created for private ownership; rather, they were made for monasteries’ use or for use in churches.⁸⁸ As the production of manuscripts grew and monastic libraries expanded, monks found it increasingly difficult to maintain a high rate of production and keep libraries up to date. They began to hire secular scribes and illuminators to

⁸³ Jacob Neusner, “The Tasks of Theology in Judaism: A Humanistic Program,” *The Journal of Religion* 59 (1979): 78.

⁸⁴ Nirenberg, “Conversion, Sex, and Segregation,” 1066.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1078.

⁸⁶ Bango, *Remembering Sepharad*, 195.

⁸⁷ Christopher de Hamel, *Medieval Craftsmen: Scribes and Illuminators* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Some illuminated manuscripts were made for wealthy and powerful individuals such as kings, bishops or other high ranking members of court.

help.⁸⁹ At the same time, universities in Paris, Bologna, and elsewhere were established. The universities created a new clientele, the students who needed books for class.⁹⁰ By the thirteenth century, there were professional secular workshops creating books for a broader spectrum of lay people as well as for the Church and its clergy. By the fourteenth century, it was rare for monks to produce manuscripts.⁹¹ The secularization of manuscript production gave non-Christian patrons, such as the Jews who commissioned the Haggadot, places to commission manuscripts.

While students purchased smaller, less expensive textbooks, wealthier patrons often commissioned elaborate illuminated manuscripts from the secular workshops. In the thirteenth century, kings, religious institutions, universities, and others in the social elite had access to these more expensive illuminated manuscripts. The “social elite” class in Christian Spain included many upper-class Jews as well as upper-class Christians. Some of the upper-class Jews were Jewish intellectuals serving in the kings’ courts, for example, in the court of Alfonso X el Sabio, king of Castile, Leon, and Galacia from 1252 to 1284.⁹² Others were medical doctors and financial administrators, many of whom were employed by wealthy Christians.⁹³ It was for the upper-class Jews that the illuminated Haggadot were probably commissioned. The majority of the Sephardic Haggadot date from the late thirteenth century to the year 1348, which marked the outbreak of the Black Death.⁹⁴ Christians blamed the Jews for this plague,

⁸⁹ de Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators*, 5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Albert Bagby, Jr., “The Jew in the Cántigas of Alfonso X, El Sabio,” *Speculum* 46 (1971): 670.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 44.

and perhaps the heightened persecution prevented Jewish patrons from continuing to commission more Haggadot.

Most of the Haggadot followed the same pattern in their use of imagery: they included a cycle of figural images in the first portion of the book, separate from and followed by the Haggadah text, and also included decorated initials and headpieces as well as other images throughout the text.⁹⁵ The image cycles preceding the text included narratives from the Hebrew Bible, such as the stories of Creation, Abraham and Isaac, Moses, and Joseph. They also included scenes showing contemporary Jews celebrating the Seder ritual.⁹⁶

The arrangement of the Haggadot produced in Iberia is not unlike the arrangement of some medieval Christian Psalters, such as the Winchester Psalter and the St. Albans Psalter (English illuminated manuscripts from the twelfth century).⁹⁷ The Psalters of this type included narrative illumination as a picture-book preface to the text or had narrative scenes incorporated in the text, as well as extensive ornamental decoration. They were also produced for private use, like the Haggadot.⁹⁸ It is possible that the layout of the Sephardic Haggadot was inspired by this particular type of medieval Christian Psalter. If this is true, the Psalters were only used as models for the basic organization of the images and text of the Haggadot. Naturally, aside from the

⁹⁵ Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, Macmillan, 1969), 26.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁹⁷ These Psalters were for individual use, and are distinct from the Psalters that were used in the Christian liturgy.

⁹⁸ Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula," in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*, ed. Vivian B. Mann et al. (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1992), 144.

organization of text and image, the two manuscript types are quite different.⁹⁹ For example, the Haggadot include a much wider range of images with a much different function than the Psalter images.¹⁰⁰ These particular Psalters were commissioned for the devotional experience of a single person; the images chosen were often tailored specifically for the patrons, so that they could privately reflect on their own spirituality.¹⁰¹ For instance, the Old Testament scenes chosen for the Psalter of Louis IX of France¹⁰² involve topics about royalty, cities, battles, and other similar topics that a king such as Louis IX would want to meditate on when he perused his personal Psalter.¹⁰³ The Haggadah, in contrast, is a book used by the whole family. While the specific function of the Sephardic Haggadah image cycles is currently under debate, the book itself was not used for one single person's spiritual reflection. The images in the Haggadot performed a different function.

The illuminated Haggadot of medieval Spain can offer insights into Jewish culture at the time of Christian rule. Recently, art historians have studied these Haggadot and attempted to realize these cultural insights. To gain a better understanding of the importance of the Sephardic Haggadot, the next few chapters will examine and critique recent scholarship of the illuminated Haggadot.

⁹⁹ Sed-Rajna, "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts," 144.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 144-145.

¹⁰¹ Harvey Stahl, *Picturing Kingship: History and Painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 1.

¹⁰² Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 10525.

¹⁰³ Stahl, *Picturing Kingship*, 169-201.

Part Two: Scholarship and Critique

Chapter 3: Scholarship Prologue

A facsimile edition of the Sarajevo Haggadah (a Sephardic illuminated manuscript from the fourteenth century), published in 1898, is the first publication of any Jewish illuminated manuscript. It marked the entry of Jewish scholarship into the field of art history.¹⁰⁴ This facsimile, by David Heinrich Müller and Julius von Schlosser,¹⁰⁵ included an essay by David Kaufmann on the history of Jewish art. Before Kaufmann's essay was published, there was no definition of "Jewish art" in art history scholarship.¹⁰⁶ Scholars contended that the Jewish people as a whole did not have their own artistic heritage or any inherent artistic ability, partly because of the second commandment which resulted in the Jewish prohibition on images,¹⁰⁷ and partly because of the nationalistic model of early art history; as Eva Frojmovic explains, a category of "Jewish art" was inconceivable to early art historians because they asserted that "art—like all culture—flows from the spirit of the nation and from the nation state."¹⁰⁸ Early art historians concluded that because Jews did not have their own nation and geographic area, like the Spanish or the Germans, they could not possibly "[posses] an art."¹⁰⁹ This contention aided art history scholars such as Müller and Schlosser, who already held some racist views about Jews,¹¹⁰ to rationalize and further their anti-

¹⁰⁴ Michael Batterman, "Genesis in Vienna: the Sarajevo Haggadah and the Invention of Jewish Art," in *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences: Essays in Honor of Sandra Hindman*, edited by David S. Areford and Nina A. Rowe (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 309.

¹⁰⁵ These men were scholars from Vienna: David Heinrich Müller was a professor of Oriental languages and Hebrew religion and philosophy at the University of Vienna, while Julius von Schlosser was a professor of art history at the University of Vienna.

¹⁰⁶ Batterman, "Genesis in Vienna," 316.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Frojmovic, "Buber in Basle," 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

Semitism. For example, Schlosser claimed that Jewish culture was not creative because it existed within other nations instead of having a nation of its own:

[It adopts] language and custom from its fellow citizens in whose midst it lives unmixed and stationary.... Its peculiar suppleness, the talent for emulation is already conspicuous in the earliest monuments of its artistic activity; being of extremely recreative rather than creative disposition, it has never been able to develop an independent language of forms and has never gone beyond skillful imitation.”¹¹¹

Scholars such as Schlosser insisted that there was no “Jewish Art” genre, because the Jews were incapable of creating original art.¹¹² Kaufmann’s essay presented an alternative viewpoint, as Frojmovic summarizes:

Kaufmann makes no attempt to define any essence of Jewishness for the art of illumination across periods and geographic areas. Unlike Schlosser, Kaufmann is happy for Jewish artists to have followed the art of their fatherlands, and be united by their faith alone. While Schlosser was preoccupied with questions of race and ethnicity, Kaufmann thought that Judaism as a religious confession determined peoplehood, without recourse to the concepts of race.¹¹³

In his essay, Kaufmann used religion instead of geography as the defining boundary for “Jewish art.” Thus, it was with Kaufmann’s essay in the Sarajevo Haggadah facsimile publication that the concept of “Jewish art,” art that was made by Jews and therefore part of Jewish culture, made its *début*.

Not until the mid-to-late twentieth century did scholars again become interested in studying the illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain. The earlier twentieth-century scholars of Spanish illuminated Haggadot include Bezalel Narkiss, Cecil

¹¹¹ Frojmovic, “Buber in Basle,” 12.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

Roth,¹¹⁴ and Joseph Gutmann,¹¹⁵ among others. Bezalel Narkiss's 1970 work, *The Golden Haggadah: A Fourteenth-Century Illuminated Hebrew Manuscript in the British Museum*, is a facsimile of the Golden Haggadah. This facsimile is an important contribution to the advancement of Sephardic Haggadah research. In it, Narkiss examines possible iconographic sources for the picture cycles in the Golden Haggadah, including contemporary Christian and late antique Jewish sources. He also discusses the impact of the midrash on the biblical imagery.¹¹⁶ Narkiss's other works deal with Jewish history in general and the history of Jewish art. For example, in his work *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, Narkiss discusses sixty Jewish illuminated manuscripts from all over the world. In his introduction to the book, Narkiss briefly summarizes the iconographical sources, the materials, the structures, and the types of illuminations in the manuscripts. The main portion of this publication includes one image with its own one-page description from each manuscript.¹¹⁷

According to Katrin Kogman-Appel, a more recent scholar of Sephardic Haggadot, these earlier scholars were influenced in part by Kurt Weitzmann's genealogical method of manuscript scholarship, published in 1947, and Erwin Panofsky's concept of iconography and iconology, published in the 1930s.¹¹⁸ In fact,

¹¹⁴ Some of Cecil Roth's contributions to the study of illuminated Sephardic Haggadot include: an article, "Jewish Antecedents of Christian Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 (1953): 24-44; a facsimile, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* (London: W.H. Allen, 1963).

¹¹⁵ Some of Joseph Gutmann's contributions to the study of Sephardic Haggadot include: a survey of Hebrew manuscripts, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (New York: George Braziller, 1978); an article, "The Illustrated Jewish Manuscript in Antiquity: The Present State of the Question," *Gesta* 5 (1966): 39-44.

¹¹⁶ Bezalel Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah: A Fourteenth-Century Illuminated Hebrew Manuscript in the British Museum* (London: Euphrosyne Press, 1970).

¹¹⁷ Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, Macmillan, 1969).

¹¹⁸ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 4. Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947). Erwin

many historians of medieval religious art used the genealogical method, because they could not believe that medieval artists had created new images or had been capable of any artistic innovation.¹¹⁹ They contended that religious images found in medieval manuscripts, frescoes, and mosaics were copies of earlier works of art, mostly early illuminated manuscripts, which are now lost and can only be recreated by devising a genealogy of images to reconstruct the lost originals. This genealogical method was first used in biblical textual scholarship (philology), pioneered in the mid-nineteenth century by German scholars such as Karl Lachmann.¹²⁰

One of the first uses of the genealogical method in art history scholarship occurred in the early twentieth century, when some of the early scholars of Christian illuminated manuscripts used it to suggest that there was an undiscovered tradition of Jewish manuscripts from antiquity that influenced early Christian manuscripts.¹²¹ In the 1920s, this proposal was reinvigorated when archeologists excavated Dura-Europas, a Jewish synagogue from antiquity (c. 240 CE) that contained wall paintings of stories from the Hebrew Bible. Scholars such as Weitzmann claimed that the existence of Jewish wall paintings from antiquity was proof that Jewish illuminated manuscripts from antiquity also existed.¹²² As further evidence of their conclusions, Weitzmann and other scholars argued that the Jewish haggadic¹²³ and midrashic themes present in early

Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939).

¹¹⁹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 44.

¹²⁰ Mary-Lyon Dolezal, "Manuscript Studies in the Twentieth Century: Kurt Weitzmann Reconsidered," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 22 (1998): 225.

¹²¹ Gutmann, "Illustrated Jewish Manuscript," 39. Gutmann lists some of the early scholars who promoted this view: Josef Strzyowski, Ormonde Maddock Dalton, Oscar Konstantin Wulff, Karl Woermann, Charles Rufus Morey, and Carl Wendel.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ "Haggadic" means "of or relating to the Haggadah."

Christian illuminated manuscripts could have only been influenced by earlier Jewish manuscripts, though no such manuscripts or fragments have ever been discovered.¹²⁴

The early scholars of the Sephardic Haggadot were influenced by Weitzmann and the other scholars who used the genealogical method in their exploration of Jewish art after the discovery of Dura-Europas. Until the 1990s, the few other publications that followed those by the early scholars also applied Weitzmann's and Panofsky's methods to their studies. These works included the scholarship of Kurt and Ursula Schubert¹²⁵ and Gabrielle Sed-Rajna,¹²⁶ among others. As Kogman-Appel states, the works of the Schuberts and Sed-Rajna highlight the relationship between images and their sources.¹²⁷

Today, most manuscript scholars have rejected Weitzmann's genealogical method for the study of images in favor of more varied interpretations of illuminated manuscript imagery, in some cases incorporating what can be gleaned from historical and cultural contexts.¹²⁸ The most recent scholars of the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot, Katrin Kogman-Appel, Marc Michael Epstein, and Michael Batterman, attempt to place the Haggadot in their historical and cultural contexts to gain a better understanding of Jewish history during the Middle Ages.

¹²⁴ Gutmann, "Illustrated Jewish Manuscript," 39.

¹²⁵ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 4. Some of Kurt and Ursula Schubert's contributions to the study of illuminated Sephardic Haggadot include: a book, *Jüdische Buchkunst*, Vol 1 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlaganstalt, 1983); an essay, "Die Auffindung des Mosesknaben im Nil durch die Pharaonentochter sowie die Darstellung der vierten Plage in den beiden Pamplona-Bibeln im Licht der jüdischen Ikonographie," *Festschrift für Hermann Fillitz zum 70. Geburtstag, Aachener Kunstblätter* 60 (1994): 285-92.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* Some of Gabrielle Sed-Rajna's contributions to the study of illuminated Sephardic Haggadot include: an essay, "Haggadah and Aggadah: Reconsidering the Origins of the Biblical Illustrations in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. Doula Mouriki and Christopher Moss, 415-27 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); an essay, "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula," in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*, ed. Vivian B. Mann et al, 133-155 (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1992).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

In the sections that follow, I will critique the most recent publication on illuminated Sephardic Haggadot from each of the three contemporary scholars. Katrin Kogman-Appel revisits and modifies the main arguments from her previous articles¹²⁹ in her publication from 2006, *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday*. Marc Michael Epstein, too, reviews and amends his previously published arguments regarding illuminated Haggadot from his book *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art & Literature*¹³⁰ in his most recent publication from 2011, *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative, and Religious Imagination*. Michael Batterman's Ph. D. dissertation from 2000, "The Emergence of the Spanish Illuminated Haggadah Manuscript,"¹³¹ still has not appeared as either a monograph or as a series of articles. According to the University of Oregon library, the dissertation cannot be acquired via interlibrary loan. However, Batterman has written two published essays regarding the Sephardic Haggadot: "Bread of Affliction, Emblem of Power: the Passover Matzah in Haggadah Manuscripts from Christian Spain" from 2002¹³² and "Genesis in Vienna: the Sarajevo Haggadah and the Invention of Jewish Art" from

¹²⁹ Her earlier articles on the Sephardic Haggadot include: "Coping with Christian Pictorial Sources: What Did Jewish Miniaturists Not Paint?" *Speculum* 75 (2000): 816-858; "Jewish Art and Non-Jewish Culture: The Dynamics of Artistic Borrowing in Medieval Hebrew Manuscript Illumination," *Jewish History* 15 (2001): 187-234; "Hebrew Manuscript Painting in Late Medieval Spain: Signs of a Culture in Transition," *The Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 246-272. She has also written a monograph on decorated Hebrew Bibles, *Jewish Book Art between Islam and Christianity: The Decoration of Hebrew Bibles in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Brill, 2004).

¹³⁰ Marc Michael Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art & Literature* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

¹³¹ Michael Batterman, "The Emergence of the Spanish Illuminated Haggadah Manuscript" (Ph. D. diss., Northwestern University, 2000).

¹³² Michael Batterman, "Bread of Affliction, Emblem of Power: the Passover Matzah in Haggadah Manuscripts from Christian Spain," in *Imagining the Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, ed. Eva Frojmovic, 53-89 (Leiden and Boston: Brill NV, 2002).

2004. In “Genesis in Vienna,” Batterman does not analyze any of the imagery in the Sephardic Haggadah; therefore, “Bread of Affliction” is critiqued here.

In *Illuminated Haggadot*, Kogman-Appel discusses the illuminated Haggadot from the Crown of Aragon, focusing solely on the narrative image sequence that precedes the Haggadot; she does not consider any of the imagery found within the text, though she does note in brief that these images exist. Kogman-Appel reviews the iconographic sources for the narrative scenes, arguing that they were influenced by Italian and French Christian art. She contends that the designers of the Sephardic Haggadot borrowed Christian imagery but consciously altered it to render it appropriate for a Jewish setting. She discusses how midrashic motifs and Jewish polemical writings aided these designers in altering the Christian imagery. Then, after a thematic analysis of the Haggadah picture cycles, Kogman-Appel attempts to construct a cultural profile of the Sephardic Haggadah patrons.

In *Medieval Haggadah*, Epstein analyzes the imagery of four illuminated Haggadot; one from Ashkenaz: the Bird’s Head Haggadah, and three from Sepharad: the Golden Haggadah, the Rylands Haggadah, and Brit. Lib. Or. 1404. Like Kogman-Appel, Epstein only examines the narrative sequences that preface the Haggadah text used in the seder ritual; he does not analyze any of the illuminations found within the text itself, though he does mention that illuminated Haggadot, in general, included text illustrations. Epstein studies the four Haggadot individually to determine the particular agenda of each one. He uses what he learns from the imagery to make conclusions about patronage and function.

Unlike Kogman-Appel and Epstein, in “Bread of Affliction” Batterman analyzes one particular type of image that is found within the text of the Haggadah; the image of the matzah. He argues that the image of the matzah is an image of divine presence, significant for the Jews in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain. Batterman posits that theosophical kabbalist ideas influenced the depiction of the matzah as a manifestation of God’s relationship with his people. He also contends that the artists appropriated and altered powerful Christian images, such as the image of the bread of the Eucharist and the image of Christ in Majesty, in the formulation of the image of the matzah.

In my critique of these works, I will examine the logic and clarity of the scholars’ contentions. I will also determine which arguments require further elaboration, and I will discuss significant elements of the Haggadot and their cultural history that these art historians omitted from their scholarship. I will begin with the critique of Kogman-Appel’s book, followed by the critique of Epstein’s book, and finish with the critique of Batterman’s essay.

Chapter 4: Katrin Kogman-Appel: *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday*

In this publication, Katrin Kogman-Appel opens with a brief history of Sephardic Haggadah scholarship. Much of this scholarship followed Weitzmann's genealogical method, or "recension theory." Though the genealogical method was carefully worked out in theory, flaws emerged when it was applied to specific manuscript genres. Kogman-Appel states that the application of the genealogical method led Weitzmann and his followers to assert that narrative illumination in a medieval manuscript was "nothing but the translation of a particular text into visual language" and was "a mere echo—often a 'conflated' or 'corrupt' one—of a much earlier and more successful version of this 'translation,' the prototype."¹³³ Weitzmann had no proof that these earlier prototypes existed; their existence was based purely on speculation.

Although Kogman-Appel uses the genealogical method in her early work, she observes that it did not provide satisfying results in her research.¹³⁴ In *Illuminated Haggadot*, she states that she will apply a different approach based on cultural analysis.¹³⁵ Following this approach, Kogman-Appel attempts to characterize the cultural milieu of medieval Spain and to create a cultural profile of the Haggadah patrons.¹³⁶ Kogman-Appel focuses on seven Sephardic Haggadot from the Crown of

¹³³ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 5.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Aragon for this study.¹³⁷ She dates these manuscripts to the reigns of Jamie II of Aragon (1291-1327) and his successor, Alfonso IV (1327-36).¹³⁸ However, she only examines the narrative picture-books at the beginning of the Haggadot, without considering the figural and nonfigural decoration found within the text portion of the Haggadah.¹³⁹ This is a major gap in her monograph, because the imagery found within the text offers further critical material to explicate illuminated Haggadot and Sephardic culture.

Kogman-Appel's overarching argument is that the Haggadah designers¹⁴⁰ used Christian imagery in their narrative decorations but consciously adapted and transformed this imagery to suit Jewish needs.¹⁴¹ She explains that Jews viewed the Hebrew Bible as historical, but Christians viewed it as typological; Christians saw prominent figures and events in the Hebrew Bible as "types," or precursors, of Christ and his life.¹⁴² Christians also created representations of these "types" in their art. One example, from the Morgan Picture Bible (1244-1254),¹⁴³ is an image of Isaac who is about to be sacrificed by his father, Abraham, climbing Mount Moriah and carrying

¹³⁷ They are: The Golden Haggadah, London, British Library, add. ms. 27210; London, British Library, ms. Or. 2884; The Sarajevo Haggadah, Sarajevo, National Museum, Haggadah; The Prato Haggadah, New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, ms. Mic. 9478; The Bologna-Modena Mahzor, Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Cod. A. K. I. 22 = Or. 92; The Rylands Haggadah, Manchester, The John Rylands University Library, ms. Heb. 6; and London, British Library, ms. Or. 1404.

¹³⁸ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 44.

¹³⁹ Kogman-Appel mentions that there exists decoration within the text when she is describing the iconographic program of each of the seven Haggadot on pages 15-21, but she does not analyze any of these decorations in her arguments. Fig. 13 is an example of this decoration within the text.

¹⁴⁰ As there is not much information about the degree of involvement of the patrons or artists, Kogman-Appel uses the word "designers" to encompass both of these groups of people. She defines "designers" on page 12 as "the people who were responsible for the subject matter, the contents and messages conveyed in the cycles. A whole range of persons can be taken into account as designers, and we do not know enough about the part each of them played in the process of decision making toward the design of a biblical image cycle. It is by no means clear to what extent a patron might have had an interest in designing such messages. The role played by an intellectual and scholarly leadership standing behind the patron is also not clear" (Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 12).

¹⁴¹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 54.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁴³ New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. M. 638, 1244-54, picture Bible, France. Commissioned by King Louis IX.

cross-shaped wood (fig. 21). The cross-shaped wood identifies Isaac as a “type” for Christ, who was sacrificed by *his* father, God, after walking to Golgotha carrying his cross. Kogman-Appel asserts that Jewish designers were aware of these kinds of typological images, and that the designers changed the images to make them more appropriate for Jewish Haggadot.

Kogman-Appel argues that the adaptation of Christian images for the illuminated Haggadot was accomplished by injecting midrashic elements into the imagery, by following the Biblical text more closely, or by creating entirely original compositions. In Part One of *Illuminated Haggadot*, Kogman-Appel focuses on tracing the iconographical sources of Christian imagery found in the Haggadot. In Part Two, she discusses ways that Jewish designers coped with these Christian sources. She also discusses the patronage of the Haggadot in Part Two.

To guide them in their decoration of the Haggadot, Kogman-Appel contends that the designers used memory, oral instruction, and Christian “motif books.” According to Kogman-Appel, “motif books” were collections of figure drawings, not necessarily attached to a particular iconographic context, that were used to aid artists when they created their art. As Kogman-Appel admits, none of these “motif books” has survived to the present day, nor is there sufficient evidence of their widespread existence in medieval Europe.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Kogman-Appel maintains that such books existed. Though she discusses critiques of Weitzmann’s method and claims that she is pursuing a different kind of analysis in her book, Kogman-Appel’s “motif book” argument is no less problematic than the application of Weitzmann’s genealogical method; as he

¹⁴⁴ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 53.

argued for the existence of hypothetical Ur-texts, Kogman-Appel argues for the existence of hypothetical “motif books.”

In Part One, Kogman-Appel asserts that the hypothetical “motif books” used by Sephardic Haggadah designers were of Italian and French origin.¹⁴⁵ She first discusses the influence of Italian “motif books” on the Sephardic Haggadot. As an example of this influence, she compares the Joseph cycle from the Golden Haggadah to the reliefs on a thirteenth-century marble panel from the church of Santa Restituta in Naples. The problem with this example can be demonstrated by highlighting one of Kogman-Appel’s comparisons, the scene of Joseph being thrown into the pit by his brothers.¹⁴⁶

The Hebrew Bible text reads:

When Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the ornamented tunic that he was wearing, and took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.¹⁴⁷

Kogman-Appel observes that the shape and placement of the pit is similar in the scene from the Naples panel (figs. 22 and 23) and in the scene from the Golden Haggadah (fig. 6). She also observes that, in both scenes, a tree separates the action of Joseph being thrown into the pit from the rest of the brothers. However, the inclusion of a tree to separate space is a common device in medieval art; the tree in the Golden Haggadah scene is another example of an artist using this compositional device. Kogman-Appel also observes that there are sheep in the foreground in both images. However, the sheep are placed in different positions; the sheep in the Naples panel are on the left side, while the sheep in the Golden Haggadah are on the right side. In

¹⁴⁵ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 55.

¹⁴⁶ Kogman-Appel’s description of the similarities is located on page 59.

¹⁴⁷ Gen. 37:23-24.

addition, in the Naples panel one brother throws Joseph into the pit, while in the Golden Haggadah two participate in this act. Kogman-Appel acknowledges this discrepancy, but it does not appear to sway her belief that the two scenes are iconographically close.

Another difference is that, in the Golden Haggadah, the designers included another part of the narrative; the scene of Joseph's brothers staining his garments with sheep's blood to make it appear as though Joseph was dead. This scene is located in the bottom left corner of the Golden Haggadah image, whereas it does not appear at all in the Naples panel. Kogman-Appel notes this difference as well, but again it does not change her opinion that the Golden Haggadah scene was based on the Naples panel scene. It seems that she dismisses these differences in order to maintain her thesis that Jewish designers were dependent on Christian iconography, rather than creating their own version of the narrative. The only concrete similarities that Kogman-Appel cites are the trees' placement and the shape of the pit. However, as stated before, the tree is a common compositional device in medieval art. That leaves the shape of the pit as the only similarity between the two scenes, which is minor since the image of a pit as a cylindrical well is also a familiar convention.

Since the Jewish designers of the Golden Haggadah did not see the Naples sculpture firsthand, Kogman-Appel suggests that access to a Naples panel "motif book" is the most plausible explanation for the similarities between the Italian sculpture and the Golden Haggadah cycle.¹⁴⁸ This shows a weakness in her argument; Kogman-Appel needed to use the concept of hypothetical "motif books" to prove that there was a

¹⁴⁸ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 56.

specific connection between these two works of art, which in actuality are not so similar at all.

Another instance of Kogman-Appel's problematic examples can be found in the section of her book regarding French influence on the Sephardic Haggadah. Kogman-Appel suggests that the Sarajevo Haggadah's depiction of Abraham and Isaac on the way to Mount Moriah is a "remote echo of Christian renderings."¹⁴⁹ She cites the Abraham and Isaac scene from the Morgan Picture Bible as an example of one such image. Though she includes both images in her book, she does not describe in what way the Sarajevo image echoes the Morgan Picture Bible image. In fact, they appear quite different. The illuminator of the Morgan Picture Bible (fig. 21) displays two parts of the story in one image: the first is Abraham and Isaac's journey to the place of sacrifice, the second is the moment when Abraham is about to sacrifice Isaac and an angel interrupts him, instructing Abraham to sacrifice a miraculously-appearing ram instead.

Not only does the image in the Christian manuscript conflate several moments of the narrative, it does so inaccurately and in a confusing manner. The image from the Morgan Picture Bible is not true to the text of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The text reads:

So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him./ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar./ Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you."/ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadah*, 102.

¹⁵⁰ Gen. 22:3-6.

In the Morgan Picture Bible, there is only one servant holding the donkey, yet in the story two are mentioned. Also, Isaac is seen walking up the hill alone, yet the Bible states that Abraham walks with Isaac holding fire and a knife. The image in the Morgan Picture Bible is also confusing because the angel in the second part of the story points to a ram standing on the left side of the image, the area dedicated to the first part of the story.

Unlike the scene from the Morgan Picture Bible, the Sarajevo image, which Kogman-Appel provides, presents only the first part of the story—Abraham and Isaac’s journey to the top of the mountain (fig. 15). She does not mention that in the Sarajevo Haggadah, the continuation of the story appears on the following folio (fig. 16): Abraham is interrupted by an angel of God. This is a major difference between the Morgan Picture Bible and the Sarajevo Haggadah; whereas the Christian example shows both parts of the story in one image, the Jewish example shows the two parts of the story in two succeeding images. Moreover, the illuminator of the Sarajevo Haggadah included both servants with the donkey and Abraham holding the fire and knife. This is a far more precise visual interpretation of the text. It is unclear how, as Kogman-Appel states, the Sarajevo image is an “echo” of the Morgan Picture Bible image. The Sarajevo image seems to be original and closer to the biblical text. Although Kogman-Appel later argues that some images in the Haggadot were original visualizations, she does not think this image is one of them.¹⁵¹ To substantiate her contention, Kogman-Appel should have described in what way the Sarajevo image echoes the Morgan Picture Bible image.

¹⁵¹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 111.

Kogman-Appel asserts that Jewish designers would have had access to the alleged Christian “motif books” through acculturation and cultural interaction. She defines acculturation by citing Ivan Marcus’ scholarship: acculturation is the degree to which “Jews internalized and transformed ‘various genres, motifs, terms, institutions, or rituals of the majority culture in a polemic, parodic, or neutralized manner.’ ”¹⁵²

Kogman-Appel argues that though a certain amount of acculturation was inevitable in any society where Jews lived, higher degrees of acculturation occurred in societies that had higher tolerance of Jews. For example, she indicates that “the situation in Islamic Spain was particularly apt to provide a context for cultural exchange,” more so than in Christian Spain, because Islamic rulers were more tolerant of Jews than Christian rulers.¹⁵³

Kogman-Appel states that Jews in northern Italy were able to acculturate to the same degree that they did in Islamic Spain; thus, according to her, Jews flourished in northern Italy.¹⁵⁴ Jewish moneylenders and doctors played an important role in the economic growth of the area.¹⁵⁵ There was less anti-Christian polemical writing originating from northern Italy as well, suggesting lower levels of persecution and less pressure on Jews to convert to Christianity.¹⁵⁶ Violent outbursts were rare.¹⁵⁷ Kogman-Appel suggests that the higher tolerance of Jews in northern Italy contributed to increased trade between Christians and Jews—including trade of the hypothetical “motif books.” She argues that Jewish travelers or Jewish merchants from Spain may

¹⁵² Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 126.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

have acquired these “motif books” in northern Italy and then brought them back to Spain.¹⁵⁸

There is a problem with this contention, however. Kogman-Appel claims that the influence on Sephardic imagery is from southern Italian “motif books,” such as those based on the Naples panel, not northern Italian “motif books.” She addresses this problem by speculating that southern “motif books” may have traveled to northern Italy before Jews got there, or they may have traveled with Jewish immigrants in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when Jews left southern Italy due to the Papacy’s strict regulations and increasing intolerance of Jews.¹⁵⁹ This is also how she argues that French “motif books” came to Spain, through trade before the expulsions of Jews in 1306 and 1394, or through Jewish migration after the expulsions.¹⁶⁰

Kogman uses a set of weak assumptions of evidence to prove Italian and French influence on the Sephardic Haggadah imagery. She applies the idea of hypothetical “motif books” to explain how a manuscript in Spain could have imagery similar to a stationary marble panel in southern Italy or a Christian manuscript in France. To explain how these alleged “motif books” arrived in Spain, she argues that Jewish merchants and travelers acquired them and brought them back to Spain. However, she has no proof that any of these Jewish merchants or travelers existed, let alone that there were “motif books” conveniently available for transport.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 127-8.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 130-1.

¹⁶¹ The only proof Kogman-Appel cites for her argument that Jews had access to “motif books” is a law from Barcelona in 1326 that forbade Jews from trading in “Christian holy books, explicitly those with Christian symbols and images.” She postulates that this law was enacted because Jews *were* trading in Christian books, and the Christians wanted them to stop. For Kogman-Appel, this law shows that “Jews must thus have had access to such books at least until 1326.” However, this law refers to religious books

Kogman-Appel employs all of these speculative arguments to give evidence for the similarities she perceives between Italian and French art and the Sephardic Haggadot; yet she does not convincingly demonstrate that there is formal and iconographic congruence between Italian art and the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot, nor between French art and the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot. Also, the reasons that Kogman-Appel gives for the similarities she sees are unclear. She builds one hypothetical argument on top of another, which results in the collapse of her entire thesis.

In Part Two of *Illuminated Haggadot*, Kogman-Appel discusses how Jewish designers coped with typological Christian imagery. She also attempts to construct a cultural profile of the Sephardic Haggadah patrons. Kogman-Appel begins with a section on midrashic influence in the Haggadah images, arguing that adding midrashic elements to the images was one way that Jewish designers altered typological Christian images. She sets forth specific instances of midrashic elements in the Sephardic Haggadot, and her examples are convincing.¹⁶² The midrashic elements found in the Haggadah cycles are not based on any specific text, but Kogman-Appel states that the exegetical ideas were common knowledge among Jews in medieval Spain.¹⁶³

Kogman-Appel submits that the Haggadah designers used Jewish polemical texts to help them recognize Christian typological representations. These polemical texts were argumentative writings by Jewish scholars that addressed Christian

that were produced for Christian consumption, not books of motifs for artists to use; therefore, it is irrelevant to her argument (Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 125).

¹⁶² Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 145-165. One example, on page 148, is her identification of four daughters in the image of Lot and his daughters escaping from Sodom on fol. 4v (fig. 4). This number of daughters comes from midrashim that reconciles the fact that Genesis states Lot had two daughters, but at one juncture claims that they were virgins and at another claims that they were married.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 143.

accusations against Jews, such as usury, and Christian dogma, such as the Trinity. They were aimed at an audience of “Jews whose faith was to be strengthened against Christian pressure.”¹⁶⁴ The writings were instructional, telling Jews how to deal with Christian pressure to convert as well as refuting Christian doctrine or anti-Jewish accusations.¹⁶⁵ Christian typology was also discussed in many of these texts, though most focused on the types found among the prophets and psalms, not among the historical books of the Bible (such as Genesis and Exodus).¹⁶⁶ Kogman-Appel asserts that Haggadah designers had access to these polemical texts and used their information about Christian types to aid them in translating Christian typological images for the illuminated Haggadot.¹⁶⁷

Kogman-Appel’s argument for polemical texts as sources for Jewish designers is problematic in many ways. Like her earlier arguments this “polemical text” argument is based on speculation, because she states that “very little real polemics was expressed pictorially.”¹⁶⁸ She thus has little concrete proof that the designers were influenced by the texts at all.

Another instance of the problem with this “polemical text” argument can be illustrated by her discussion of Melchizedek. In Christianity, Melchizedek is the prototype of the Christian priest. He was omitted from all of the Sephardic cycles.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 168.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 167-8. Kogman-Appel indicates one reason for the lack of polemical writings that focus on historical books of the Bible; Jews and Christians interpreted the historical books differently, but there was no way to prove which interpretation was correct because “both sides lacked clear-cut exegetical rules and criteria for determining the correct interpretation.” Kogman-Appel does not note whether there were “clear-cut exegetical rules” for the other books of the Bible.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 170.

Kogman-Appel contends that this is because few Jewish scholars dealt with him in polemical texts:

Jewish scholars were thus aware of the meaning of the Melchizedek story in Christianity, and through their writings so were the designers of the picture cycles. Therefore the scene, well known from various Christian pictorial sources, was not adopted in Jewish contexts. It was too heavily loaded with Christological meaning and, due to the rabbis' lack of interest in the figure, could not have been easily translated into a Jewish pictorial language.¹⁷⁰

This is a weak argument. The fact that Melchizedek is not present in the Sephardic Haggadah cycles does not mean that he was omitted because of Christian beliefs. One of the most interesting issues surrounding the Sephardic Haggadot is that the designers of each Haggadah selected a different combination of scenes from the Hebrew Bible; no two Haggadot use the same combination of scenes. Thus it appears that the designers of each Haggadah had their own particular agendas in mind when they created their Haggadah, and scene selection was based on these agendas. Perhaps Melchizedek was not an appropriate figure for whatever agenda the designers were trying to convey in the image cycles. He certainly does not have a role in the main story of Passover, that of the Exodus from Egypt. Or perhaps Melchizedek was not a popular figure in medieval Jewish culture; in fact, Kogman-Appel states that Jewish commentators had abandoned discussion of Melchizedek during the Talmudic period (first through fifth centuries C.E.) because early Christians had identified him as the original Christian priest. It is possible that because of this earlier abandonment of Melchizedek, he was not a popular figure among medieval Jews; the designers may have excluded him for relatively mundane reasons.

¹⁷⁰ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 170.

In addition to ignoring other reasons for the omission of Melchizedek, Kogman-Appel contradicts herself later in the chapter when she discusses the scene of Abraham and Isaac. She states:

Despite the importance of the Abraham scene in Christian thought and art, for some reason it was not a major topic in the polemics, nor was it a major challenge for Jewish artists and patrons when coping with its Christological content. This negative conclusion indeed indicates that the polemical writings and discussions served as a source of knowledge in Christological matters. If the polemicists hardly brought up the subject, the artists too were not challenged by it.”¹⁷¹

Here she claims that if polemicists did not comment on a Christian typology in their writings, the images using that typology were *easier* for the artists to translate. This directly contradicts her earlier statement that the Christian typologies absent from polemical writings, such as the figure of Melchizedek, were omitted by Jewish designers because these typological images were too *difficult* for the designers to translate without help.

Kogman-Appel uses the binding of Isaac image as an example of a narrative that does not appear in polemical writings, because according to her, this made it more accessible to the designers. To cope with the christological meaning of the Abraham and Isaac scene, Kogman-Appel observes that some designers exchanged the sword in the Christian images for a knife, in greater faithfulness to the text.¹⁷² Other designers, such as those of the Golden Haggadah, found another solution: “the traditional iconography was completely altered, and the result was a composition that in its details has no parallel in Christian or Jewish cycles” (fig. 4).¹⁷³ However, it is difficult to

¹⁷¹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 175.

¹⁷² See biblical quote on page 41.

¹⁷³ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 174.

understand why Kogman-Appel thinks that an original image, rendered directly from the text, is an “alteration” of traditional iconography rather than an example of Jewish artistic innovation.

Another problem with Kogman-Appel’s “polemical texts” argument is her vague discussion of the relationship between the Jewish designers and the polemical texts. Kogman-Appel states:

For the modern scholar, polemical texts serve as a repertoire of notions on matters of Christianity and undoubtedly reflect most of the knowledge available to Jews, together with the most common Jewish reactions to Christian beliefs and doctrines.¹⁷⁴

This statement claims that polemical texts are representations of what Jews knew about Christian typology in general, not documents that directly influenced the Jewish Haggadah designers. However, the rest of her argument is based on the notion that the polemical texts *did* directly influence the Jewish designers. For example, she states that “the knowledge gained from polemical writings guided the illuminators in avoiding specifically christological iconographic details.”¹⁷⁵ This implies that the polemical writings directly affected the illuminators’ decisions.

Although her discussion of how Jews altered Christian images is convoluted and confusing, Kogman-Appel’s section regarding the patronage of the Sephardic Haggadot is logical and well-argued. Kogman-Appel identifies two groups of Jews from medieval Spain; the rationalists and the antirationalists. The rationalist movement began during the period when Muslims ruled Iberia.¹⁷⁶ Islamic culture promoted the study of science and philosophy, and Jewish scholars participated in these intellectual pursuits. The

¹⁷⁴ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 169.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

rationalist way of looking at the world caused certain groups of scholarly Jews to modify their methods of biblical exegesis; they began to view stories in the Bible as allegories or metaphors, not literal descriptions of events that actually happened in history. Some scholars, such as Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164), began to think critically about Talmudic midrash.¹⁷⁷ Abraham ibn Ezra used a scientific and logical approach when critiquing midrash; one example involves chapter 25 of Exodus. This chapter mentions the materials gathered for the construction of the desert Tabernacle. Among these, acacia wood is mentioned, although the Israelites would not have had access to acacia wood in the desert.¹⁷⁸ Late antique midrashim state that Jacob had a vision from God and knew that the Israelites would need to build a Tabernacle in the desert, so he brought trees to Egypt and advised his sons to plant them and take them back when the Israelites departed.¹⁷⁹ Abraham ibn Ezra says this midrashic explanation is illogical; when the Israelites left to gather materials, the Egyptians believed that the Israelites went to worship and that they would return; it would be strange if the Egyptians let the Israelites carry away huge logs ten cubits in length.¹⁸⁰

The rationalist “attack” on the midrash and on Jewish tradition led to a reaction by groups of traditionalist Jews, the “antirationalists.” These Jews started a revival of midrashic exegesis. The antirationalist movement began in France, where Talmudic midrash was still held in high esteem because it never had to compete with the other types of interpretation that came about during Islamic rule in Spain. Solomon ben Isaac

¹⁷⁷ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 140. Kogman-Appel cites Abraham ibn Ezra’s writings, among others.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Abraham ibn Ezra disputes this particular midrashic explanation for Exodus chapter 25 in more ways than the one mentioned here; see Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, page 140 for further explanation.

(known as “Rashi,” 1040-1105) from France and Moses ben Nahman (known as “Nahmanides,” c. 1195-1270) from Catalonia were two popular antirationalists.¹⁸¹ As part of the midrashic revival, scholars produced works called “rewritten Bibles,” where they placed midrash into the traditional Hebrew Biblical text so that the midrash became part of biblical history.¹⁸²

Antirationalism spread to groups of traditionalist Jews in Spain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when Rashi’s biblical commentary gained increasing influence among Jewish scholars in Iberia. The tosafists, who were followers of Rashi in France, were a significant group who helped spread Rashi’s commentary to Iberia.¹⁸³ Kogman-Appel maintains that the acceptance of Rashi’s commentary in Iberia was a slow process, except among the Kabbalists, for whom “the mythic reality of the midrash did not create any problem.”¹⁸⁴

One intense point of debate between rationalists and antirationalists was the story of creation from the Hebrew Bible. Rationalists, being open to scientific and philosophical ideas such as those of the Greek philosopher Plato, believed that the world had always existed, but had been in chaos until God gave it order during creation. Antirationalists saw this view as blasphemous. They insisted on the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*; they believed that God created the world out of nothing.¹⁸⁵ Bahye ben Asher, an antirationalist and follower of Nahmanides, summarizes the viewpoint in his commentary on the Pentateuch (written in 1291-92):

¹⁸¹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 140. She lists several other popular rationalists and antirationalists as well.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 141-2.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 202-3.

‘The earth was *tohu* and *bohu*,’ *tohu* is the formless empty mass, which has no name. It is what the sages, in wondering about primeval things, searched when giving an object a name. The Torah calls this mass *tohu*; the philosophers call it *hyly*. *Bohu* is this substance after it takes shape. The name *bohu* is a composite word that means ‘a thing that has form....’ And the earth after this creation was *tohu*, meaning material without substance, and it became *bohu* after it received form.¹⁸⁶

In the antirationalist view, *tohu* was created by God and then given form, or *bohu*. This implies that *tohu* had no form to begin with and was only given form when God shaped it into *bohu*. In the rationalist view, *tohu* already existed; God did not create it.

Kogman-Appel states that, with the exceptions of the creation of Adam and Eve in the Golden Haggadah and London, British Library, ms. Or. 2884, and the full-fledged creation cycle in the Sarajevo Haggadah, the story of creation is “found neither in the monumental programs of late antique synagogues nor in medieval Hebrew manuscript illumination.”¹⁸⁷ Since there are no earlier models for the creation cycle found in the Sarajevo Haggadah, according to Kogman-Appel, this is strong evidence that the Sarajevo Haggadah’s creation cycle is based on Bahye ben Asher’s commentary. There is a problem with this argument, however; scholars today do not have a complete catalog of all ancient and medieval Jewish art, because much of what survives does so only in a fragmentary state. For instance, many of the murals at Dura Europas were destroyed, leaving the full identification of the entire narrative cycle in question.

Nevertheless, there are still convincing similarities between the creation images in the Sarajevo Haggadah (fig. 14) and Bahye ben Asher’s creation description.

Kogman-Appel describes how the formless colors in the first panel show, as the caption

¹⁸⁶ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 204.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

reads, “*tohu*.” The shapelessness of the *tohu* is emphasized by the fact that it is not in a round-topped rectangle, unlike the next panels which all include their scenes inside round-topped rectangles.¹⁸⁸ The round-topped rectangle was an ancient symbol for the Tabernacle and temple, and Kogman-Appel suggests that the artist of the Sarajevo Haggadah reinvented it to show the difference between *tohu* and *bohu*:

The Tabernacle-temple scheme symbolizes man’s ability to create something other from something existing and thus partly imitate God, who created the world *ex nihilo* on the first day and then formed it on the following days. The lack of the round-topped shape in the first panel—the depiction of the *tohu*—emphasizes the distinction between *tohu*, formless substance, and *bohu*, substance that received form.¹⁸⁹

Further correlation between Bahye ben Asher’s commentary and the Sarajevo Haggadah image occurs among the colors in the first panel. Bahye ben Asher wrote that God arranged each of the four elements (fire, air or *ruah*, water, and earth) in their proper order:

And scripture teaches us here, saying ‘the earth was *tohu* and *bohu*’ (Gen. 1:2), that the earth was shaped with form and darkness, which is the fire above the water, was mixed together with dust, and the two together were named *tehom* (the deep), like the waters of the ocean, where dust is mixed with water. . . and the *ruah* that was blowing entered the darkness and hovered above the water.¹⁹⁰

In the upper part of the first Sarajevo Haggadah panel, there is a black wavy substance, which Kogman-Appel indicates is the fire of darkness and the *ruah*. Below the fire there is water and the *tehom*. Kogman-Appel argues that this unique visualization of creation can only be based on Bahye ben Asher’s writings, which

¹⁸⁸ Kogman-Appel gives an in-depth discussion of the history of this representation on pages 200-201.

¹⁸⁹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadah*, 207.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

separate the *tohu* from the *bohu* in this particular way and also describe the position of the elements from which God made the world.¹⁹¹

Because of examples like the Sarajevo Haggadah creation cycle, which may be based on antirationalist writings, and the fact that there are several instances of midrashic elements in the other Haggadot, Kogman-Appel proposes that all of the Sephardic Haggadot from the crown of Aragon were commissioned by scholarly Jews who identified with the antirationalist movement or were at least open to antirationalist influence.¹⁹² She argues that these people were not elite courtier clerks, as many other scholars have assumed.¹⁹³ In Castile, most of the outstanding Jewish scholars *did* belong to the group of elite courtier clerks, but in Aragon, there were three types of elite courtiers; the secular clerks, the scholars and scientists, and the wealthy scholars of aristocratic background who had abandoned Judeo-Arabic culture and rationalist philosophy.¹⁹⁴ The secular clerks were criticized often by the other two types of courtiers for assimilating too far into Christian culture, so Kogman-Appel argues they would not have commissioned pictorial programs loaded with traditional values, midrashic teachings, and other topics that “were not only extrinsic to their preferred interests but pregnant with hidden, or not so hidden, attacks against their lifestyle.”¹⁹⁵ The scholars and scientists were rationalist philosophers, and obviously would not have commissioned a manuscript that promoted midrash and antirationalist beliefs.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 204-6.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 212. Kogman-Appel cites Narkiss’s and Batterman’s work.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

The last group, the aristocratic scholars, provided scholarly and spiritual direction for Jews and promoted the same messages that Kogman-Appel found in the Sephardic picture cycles: a critique of moral laxity, a revival of midrash, antirationalist beliefs, an affinity for Ashkenazic scholarship, etc. Therefore, Kogman-Appel concludes that most of the Haggadah patrons came from this group of people.

However, not all of the Haggadot are lavishly decorated with expensive materials, and some have poorly executed illuminations, such as Brit. Lib. Or. 2884. Scholars agree that the illuminator of Brit. Lib. Or. 2884 was influenced by the imagery in the Golden Haggadah; yet, the artistic technique of Brit. Lib. Or. 2884 is not as good as that of the Golden Haggadah (see figs. 7 and 17 for a comparison).¹⁹⁷ Manuscripts like Brit. Lib. Or. 2884 were less expensive to produce. The existence of less expensive illuminated Haggadot has led Kogman-Appel to propose that their patrons were from the “new middle class,” which was made up of salaried rabbis, preachers, teachers, and scribes. Some of them shared the cultural values of the elite, including antirationalist or traditionalist views.¹⁹⁸

Kogman-Appel ends *Illuminated Haggadot* with a discussion concerning the function of the image cycles in the Sephardic manuscripts. She states that the common notion of art as a means to teach the illiterate does not apply to Jews, because medieval Jewish culture was primarily a literate one; “certainly within the circles for which even the less luxurious exemplars of illuminated manuscripts were produced, at least the men

¹⁹⁷ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 221. Kogman-Appel suggests that the poor technique of the pictures is evidence that they were made by an untrained illustrator, perhaps an apprentice, but there is little evidence extant to identify much about the artist.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

could read.”¹⁹⁹ Therefore, Kogman-Appel rejects the notion that the images were included to instruct the seder celebrants about the ritual of Passover seder or its historical context. Kogman-Appel also submits that anti-Christian sentiment was not the main motive for the creation of the illuminated Haggadah cycles; the cycles should have included a greater number of popular depictions of Christians, such as the figure of Esau.²⁰⁰ Instead, the cycles revolve around outstanding figures from the Hebrew Bible (such as Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses); they focus on the patriarchs, on the history of Israel.

Kogman-Appel reasons that these images fostered a historical consciousness in the viewer; the pictures “do not evoke devotion or meditation or any mystical experience; their goal is an awakening of historical consciousness through the filter of traditional midrashic interpretation.”²⁰¹ She claims that the images promoted the antirationalist viewpoint of traditional exegesis and values through the Haggadah, which itself is a book whose themes promote the recognition of history and call for Jews to relive the historical Exodus experience.

Kogman-Appel contends that the illuminated Haggadah cycles functioned as mini-picture Bibles. She sees them as independent cycles that did not interact directly with a specific text, apart from their captions. She also stipulates that the cycles could

¹⁹⁹ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 143.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 183. Kogman-Appel briefly notes the significance of the Jacob and Esau story in her book. Epstein gives a more precise description in his book, *Medieval Haggadah*. He writes that Esau was one of “the various shoots of the Israelite family tree that branched off from the main stock,” one of “the brothers and half-brothers and cousins of the patriarchs. These, to the rabbinic mind, were the ancestors of the cultures with which the biblical Israelites would come into conflict. Medieval Spanish Jews identified these cultures with the various “nations of the world” within the scope of their contemporary experience. They understood the conflicts of the biblical Israelites with the nations which sprang from their own family tree as the dominant paradigm for their own relationship with other religious cultures” (Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 159).

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

not be seen during the ritual because “the text is read quite quickly and—apart from the meal—without significant interruptions;” accordingly, the images must have been viewed before or after the seder.²⁰²

The problem with this interpretation is that scholars today do not know how medieval Jewish families celebrated the Passover seder. Kogman-Appel states that the Haggadah is read quickly and without significant interruptions, but that may not have been the case in the Middle Ages. After all, as Rabbi David Silber notes, discussing the narrative of Exodus and creating midrash is an important part of the seder ceremony.²⁰³ Perhaps the picture cycles in the illuminated Spanish Haggadot were used during this part of the night. Kogman-Appel says much the same thing when she states that the only kind of interruption during the seder “is aimed at elucidation of the text, with additional interpretation or commentary;” however, she insists that “the pictorial cycle does not facilitate this procedure.”²⁰⁴ She does not indicate why the cycles would not have “facilitate[d] this procedure,” other than the fact that they were separate from the Haggadah text.²⁰⁵ Kogman-Appel assumes that the Haggadah’s reader would not have flipped back and forth between pages, but once again, she does not have any evidence to support this claim.

Overall, most of Kogman-Appel’s arguments in *Illuminated Haggadot* are based on her own speculations. She often has to “invent” evidence to prove her earlier speculative arguments, such as her contentions regarding “motif books” and Italian and French influence. Her examples are confusing, contradictory, and require further

²⁰² Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 228-230.

²⁰³ Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, xvi.

²⁰⁴ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 229.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

attention. While she disputes that any relationship exists between the opening picture cycle and the text that follows,²⁰⁶ she neglects to include in her analyses the imagery located within the Haggadah text. Thus, she further ignores any presence of text-image relationships in the Sephardic Haggadot.

Despite these questionable issues, Kogman-Appel's discussion of patronage is logical and well-explained. She examines the values and status of each group of Jews in the area where these manuscripts were created, and she connects the messages from the Haggadah image cycles to the group of Jews that most likely would have commissioned the Haggadot. She analyzes relations between different groups of Jews, not just between Jews and Christians; this helps to strengthen her argument and her credibility. However, this section on patronage only comes after several long, tedious chapters which contain problematic analyses of iconographic sources. It appears as though, despite her initial proclamation to use a different method of analysis than those that followed the genealogical method, Kogman-Appel could not fully break away from a method that focuses on the reconstruction of iconographic sources. Kogman-Appel should have spent less time discussing such sources and focused more on cultural analysis.

²⁰⁶ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 3.

Chapter 5: Marc Michael Epstein: *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative, and Religious Imagination*

In his introduction to this publication, Marc Michael Epstein calls attention to a problem in art history scholarship that he names “interpretive paralysis.” According to Epstein, interpretive paralysis occurs when there is a lack of information about a work of art, such as the patron’s identity, the artist’s identity, or the date when the art was created. When there is a lack of information, Epstein contends that many art historians cannot “engage imaginatively” with the selection of iconography or what it meant for the original audience; this is “interpretive paralysis.”²⁰⁷ Epstein states that many scholars of illuminated Haggadot have been victims of interpretive paralysis, and that their work is often disappointing.²⁰⁸ In the *Medieval Haggadah*, Epstein tries to avoid becoming such a victim.

Epstein argues that each Haggadah reflects a particular agenda, and the Haggadah designers deliberately and carefully chose imagery that reflected these agendas.²⁰⁹ Whereas some scholars, like Katrin Kogman-Appel, have made general assumptions about the Sephardic Haggadah genre, Epstein, in this study, chooses four Haggadot and analyzes them individually in order to discover the particular purpose of each one.²¹⁰ However, he only focuses on the narrative picture book cycles that precede

²⁰⁷ Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*, 8.

²⁰⁸ Epstein discusses Katrin Kogman-Appel’s work on page 150, as well as elsewhere throughout this book. He writes that she has meticulously traced and revealed the iconographic sources of the imagery, and has done a clear and coherent job of listing the midrashic elements in the imagery. However, her analysis rarely includes the meaning of the imagery, which Epstein claims is the “crux of the matter” (Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 150).

²⁰⁹ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 5.

²¹⁰ Epstein analyzes four Haggadot in this book. Three are Sephardic (The Golden Haggadah, The Rylands Haggadah, and BL Or. 1404), but one is Ashkenazic (The Bird’s Head Haggadah, Jerusalem,

the Haggadah text. Like Kogman-Appel, Epstein also ignores the imagery found within the text itself.²¹¹ This is a major omission, because, aside from the additional evidence it provides, the imagery within the text could corroborate, disprove, or alter his conclusions.

Because there is little historical information that survives regarding these Haggadot, Epstein analyzes the iconography in the picture-book cycles “as deeply as possible” so that he may “speculate in responsible ways concerning both the authorial²¹² intentions and the reception of the iconography by various successive audiences.”²¹³ He acknowledges that his interpretations may not be correct, but hopes that they will stimulate debate and new interpretations among Haggadah scholars.²¹⁴

In his discussion of the Golden Haggadah, Epstein demonstrates his process of examining the iconography with penetrating and thorough analysis. He first establishes that reading imagery is different from reading text. While text has to be read linearly for it to make sense, images do not; although Haggadah Hebrew Bible scenes are arranged chronologically, they do not have to be read in that order to have meaning. One image can relate to the images before and after it, to the other images on the folio, and to other images throughout the manuscript. Epstein reads the imagery of the Golden Haggadah in this nonlinear way, and is he able to discover themes that he argues would otherwise

Israel Museum, ms. 180/57, South Germany, c. 1300). As this thesis project only pertains to the Sephardic Haggadot, I will not review Epstein’s arguments for the Asheknazic Haggadah.

²¹¹ Epstein does mention that, in general, the illuminated Haggadot included text illustrations (Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 3); however, like Kogman-Appel, he does not analyze these illustrations.

²¹² Epstein uses “authorial” and “authors” just as Kogman-Appel uses “designers,” to refer to those who had a hand in designing the manuscript, such as the patrons and artists.

²¹³ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 8.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

be hidden by linear reading.²¹⁵

For example, through his nonlinear reading of the imagery Epstein points to a theme of animal stewardship as a justification for holy animal sacrifice. The first scene in the Golden Haggadah's image cycle is a scene of Adam naming the animals, which is placed diagonally from that of Noah helping animals into the ark (fig. 2), both scenes of animal stewardship. According to Epstein, the birds, sheep, goats, and the cow are representations of all of the kosher beasts mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as appropriate sacrificial gifts.²¹⁶ There are also three non-kosher animals in the Adam scene, but they still play a significant role in the narrative or the symbolism of the Golden Haggadah image cycle: the serpent is involved later in the Adam and Eve story; the hare represents Esau as an attribute of Jacob and Israel; and the donkey is significant for reasons which Epstein describes later in his book.²¹⁷ The last scene in the Golden Haggadah image cycle represents a contemporary Passover preparation, and shows Jews preparing the sacrificial lambs for the Passover meal (fig. 11). Epstein asserts that it is no accident that the first scenes, those of Adam and Noah, represent animal stewardship, while the last scene, that of the Passover lamb being prepared, is of animal sacrifice. These images were chosen to illustrate the theme of animal stewardship as a justification for sacrifice; since humans are respectful of animals and take care of them, they are justified in sacrificing them when God requires an offering.

²¹⁵ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 154. Epstein makes a distinction between *pshat*, or contextual exegesis, which is expressed through the conventional linear progression of scenes, and *drash*, or homiletic exegesis, which reveals the moral, theological, and political themes that are only conveyed by non-linear reading of the images.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

²¹⁷ Epstein describes the symbolism of the donkey on pages 262-265. It is discussed in this thesis on pages 77-78.

Some of Epstein's interpretations, like the one above, are clearly described and believable. However, some of his interpretations are not completely convincing. For instance, he argues that the scene of Joseph's betrayal on folio 6v (fig. 6) is linked to the scene of Nimrod casting Abraham into the fiery furnace on folio 3r (fig. 3) and the scene of Pharaoh throwing a child into the Nile on folio 8v (fig. 8).²¹⁸ Epstein observes that the Joseph scene is "equidistant" from the other two scenes, by which he means that the Nimrod scene is nine scenes before it, and the Pharaoh scene is ten scenes after it; Epstein suggests that the Joseph scene is being framed by the other two, and that it "forms the apex of a triangle with the narratives of the deeds of the evil kings as its sides."²¹⁹ He argues that the scenes illustrate an important theme:

The visual connection made here represents an independent exegetical move on the part of the authorship of the Golden Haggadah. Through a rather thinly veiled judgment of the deed of the brothers, it renders an implicit critique of the attitude that Jewish history is nothing but an endless stream of persecutions of innocent Israelites by the bloodthirsty gentiles. Yes, it is acknowledged, these gentile kings might behave villainously in their persecution of Jews. But groundless hatred between brother and brother is on par with such terrible deeds, and sometimes *sin'at hinam* (causeless enmity among Jews) can precipitate treachery as destructive as persecution by inveterate enemies.²²⁰

To prove that the designers intended to connect these three scenes and create the theme quoted above, Epstein states that the Joseph scene "[parallels] in its structure" the other two scenes; however, he does not describe what he means.²²¹ Looking at the images, the scenes of Joseph being thrown into the pit and Nimrod casting Abraham into the furnace are visually similar. In both scenes there are cylinders (the pit and the

²¹⁸ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 162.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

furnace) in the bottom left-hand corner. Joseph and Abraham are each being thrown into these cylinders by two men. However, the scene of Pharaoh casting a child into the Nile does not follow this same composition. There is no cylinder, and Pharaoh alone is throwing the child into the river when, in the other two images, two men are depicted. Also, the action of Pharaoh takes place in the bottom right corner of the scene, not in the bottom left corner as in the other two scenes.

Epstein contends that these three scenes were meant to be read together to provide a deep and complex meaning, yet they are on completely different folios and the Pharaoh scene is different from the Nimrod and Joseph scenes. His interpretation of these scenes is not convincing; when Epstein mentions that the Pharaoh image “parallels in structure” the other two, it is not readily evident without explicit explanation.

After discussing themes in the Golden Haggadah’s imagery, Epstein attempts to uncover information regarding the Golden Haggadah’s patron. To begin, he notes that there two types of scenes in illuminated Haggadot: those that are essential to the stories of Exodus and Passover, such as the scene of the Israelites crossing the Sea of Reeds, and those that are peripheral to the story, such as the scene of Miriam and the women singing after crossing the Sea of Reeds. Epstein stresses that the peripheral scenes deserve careful examination because they are not necessary to the stories of the Exodus and Passover yet they are included in the Haggadot.²²²

Epstein notes that there are forty-six depictions of women in the Golden Haggadah, many of whom are peripheral to the story of Exodus. There are more women

²²² Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 180-1.

in the Golden Haggadah picture cycle than in any other Spanish Haggadah; moreover, they are given greater importance in this version than in other Haggadot.²²³ One example, already mentioned above, is the image of Miriam and the women of Israel singing after crossing the Sea of Reeds on folio 15r (fig. 11). This story is not crucial to the Exodus narrative; indeed, it was omitted from many other illuminated Haggadot. The women in the scene are taller, larger, and standing closer to the foreground than any other figures in the Golden Haggadah image cycle. There is also no background in this scene, showing the women in a space that is “contextless, hence timeless, hence eternal.”²²⁴

Epstein observes that in the Hebrew Bible, there are more prominent women in Genesis than in Exodus. He notes that there were two types of Haggadah illustration configuration available to the designers of the Golden Haggadah; one type included narrative illustrations from the Book of Exodus only, while the other included scenes from both Genesis and Exodus. The Golden Haggadah represents the latter configuration; thus, Epstein claims that “the choice to include Genesis was a choice to include women.”²²⁵ While this may be true, Epstein does not acknowledge any other reasons that would explain why the designers chose to add the Genesis stories to this Haggadah. For example, the theme of animal stewardship discussed above required the addition of the Genesis narrative. Yet Epstein states that the patrons included Genesis to depict more women, as if depicting more women was the *only* reason why they would have included Genesis. It appears that Epstein is manipulating facts to prove his

²²³ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 178.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

argument. Nevertheless, the appearance of more women in the Golden Haggadah than any other Spanish Haggadah is still potentially significant.

Epstein proposes that the designers of the Golden Haggadah included more women because the patron of the Haggadah was a woman.²²⁶ Although there is no concrete evidence establishing the identity of the Golden Haggadah's original owner, there is evidence that it was owned by a woman in the seventeenth century. A title page was added to the Golden Haggadah in 1602 with a Hebrew inscription identifying three people: Rabbi Joab Gallico of Asti, his daughter Rosa Gallico, and his daughter's husband (fig. 1). Epstein notes that the inscription is difficult to interpret because its grammatical structure is ambiguous.²²⁷ Depending on how the inscription is interpreted, Joab Gallico may have given the manuscript to either Rosa or her husband on their wedding day, or Rosa may have been the one who gave the manuscript to her husband on their wedding day.²²⁸

Epstein supports the interpretation that Rosa owned the manuscript and presented it to her husband on their wedding day.²²⁹ He then argues that the Golden Haggadah was commissioned for one of Rosa Gallico's female ancestors and passed down from mother to daughter until Rosa's wedding day, "when the circumstance of its being given as a gift to a man—effectively passed into the male line of the family—was exceptional enough to occasion the addition of a title page."²³⁰ However, as Epstein admits, there is little information about the provenance of illuminated Haggadot in the

²²⁶ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 189.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 189-191. Epstein gives a more in-depth description of the grammatical ambiguity on pages 189-191.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

Middle Ages.²³¹ Epstein makes the assumption that the Golden Haggadah was given to a woman and passed down through the maternal line using only two pieces of evidence: his own interpretation of the title page, and the fact that there are many women depicted in the Golden Haggadah. He has no other proof. Thus, this conclusion is too speculative; there is not enough evidence to support it.

Not only does Epstein claim that the first owner of the Golden Haggadah was a woman, he also posits that this woman had recently lost a child when she was given the manuscript. Throughout his discussion of the Golden Haggadah, Epstein notes that there is a recurring theme of women showing sadness over the loss of children. For example, there are several Egyptian women mourning in the scene of the death of their firstborn on folio 14v; yet the biblical text does not explicitly mention women in the story.²³² Another example appears in the scene of Israelite bondage on folio 11r (fig. 10). Epstein cites midrash to explain the figure of the Israelite woman holding the baby in this scene:

Several midrashim relate how Rachel, the granddaughter (or daughter) of Shutelah of the tribe of Ephraim, although she was in the ninth month of her pregnancy, was forced to tread stubble into the clay alongside her husband. Tragically, as her heels were pierced by the course stubble and her blood flowed into the mortar, her exertions brought on labor, and when the infant emerged from its mother's womb it fell into the mixture in the brick-mold and was engulfed by it."²³³

²³¹ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 191.

²³² The Hebrew Bible text reads: "In the middle of the night the Lord struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on the throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of the cattle./ And Pharaoh arose in the night, with all his courtiers and all the Egyptians—because there was a loud cry in Egypt; for there was no house where there was not someone dead." Exod. 12:29-30.

²³³ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 197.

In the scene, a woman holds a baby directly over the brick-mold. Epstein claims that this proves she is indeed the Rachel mentioned in the midrash.²³⁴

A third example of the theme of sadness over the loss of children is found in the scene of Jacob lamenting Joseph's death, on folio 6v (fig. 6). The Hebrew Bible text reads:

All his sons and daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, saying, "No, I will not go down mourning to my son in Sheol." Thus his father bewailed him.²³⁵

The scene from the Golden Haggadah shows a woman in distress standing next to Jacob. Epstein puzzles over the identity of this woman, noting that she could be Leah (Jacob's surviving wife), Bilhah (his concubine), or Dina (his daughter).²³⁶ However, Epstein contends that the figure is Rachel, Joseph's mother.²³⁷ He points out that she is dressed in the same costume (pink tunic, white headdress) as the Rachel figure from an earlier scene of Jacob wrestling the angel on folio 5r (fig. 5).²³⁸

Yet, in the biblical narrative, Rachel is dead at the time of Joseph's "death." Epstein acknowledges this problematic fact; therefore, he cites a passage from the book of Jeremiah as evidence that although Rachel was dead, she was lamenting too:

Thus said the LORD: A cry is heard in Ramah—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted. For her children, who are gone.²³⁹

According to Epstein, the word "Ramah" has been interpreted through midrash to mean

²³⁴ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 197.

²³⁵ Gen. 37:35.

²³⁶ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 194.

²³⁷ This is a different Rachel from the granddaughter of Shutelah mentioned earlier.

²³⁸ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 195.

²³⁹ Jeremiah 31:15.

“a voice heard on high,” or Rachel’s voice from high above in Paradise.²⁴⁰ Thus, Epstein concludes that, in the illustration of Jacob lamenting Joseph from the Golden Haggadah, the unidentified woman is Rachel mourning Joseph from the beyond.

There are several difficulties with this interpretation. The quote from the book of Jeremiah is referring to actions that take place many years after the event of Joseph’s false death, when Rachel cries for all of the enslaved Israelites. Rachel and Jacob’s twelve children began the twelve tribes of Israel, and in the Jeremiah passage she is crying for all of the Israelites who are descendents of her twelve children. Although Joseph is one of her children, the text of Jeremiah is not referencing the event when Joseph’s brothers announce he is “dead” and Jacob mourns him. Epstein has taken this quote from Jeremiah out of context to prove that Rachel was lamenting for Joseph specifically, when in fact she was lamenting for all of the Israelites who were enslaved.²⁴¹

Another problem with Epstein’s interpretation is his claim that the woman in the scene of Jacob’s mourning is dressed the same as Rachel from the earlier scene of Jacob wrestling the angel. Rachel is not the only woman wearing a pink tunic and a white headdress in the Golden Haggadah; there are other women who appear in the same costume. One is Moses’ wife, Zipporah, in the journey to Egypt scene on folio 10v. Another is Sarah, in the scene on folio 3r where the angels announce she will bear a son. Also, Epstein says that Rachel is lamenting from Paradise, yet the artist did not choose to give the woman in the mourning scene any special iconography that signals

²⁴⁰ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 196.

²⁴¹ Jeremiah, chapter 31.

she is in Paradise. The woman with Jacob stands solidly on the ground and is not distinguished from the other figures.

Perhaps the woman in this scene is one of Jacob's daughters, trying to comfort him as the biblical passage states. Epstein rules out this interpretation by explaining that since the sons and daughters were comforting Jacob, it would require that they themselves were not in mourning.²⁴² Since he insists that the woman with Jacob is shown mourning, he concludes that she must not be one of his daughters (who is comforting). However, Epstein does not elaborate on why the sons and daughters could not comfort and mourn at the same time. The only explanation he offers is that "they were engaging in comforting him, which would require that they were not mourning or weeping themselves."²⁴³ Jacob's sons were involved in the plot to lie that Joseph died, so they would probably not be in mourning, but Jacob's daughters did not know that Joseph was still alive; it is possible that they could have mourned along with Jacob. Epstein needs to explain why he posits that a daughter could not be shown mourning while comforting her father. Moreover, since this is an artist's rendition of the biblical description, Epstein places the burden of his argument on the vagaries of artistic choices.

It is difficult to determine what the woman is doing in the scene. Jacob turns his body toward the woman and tears at his shirt in anguish; however, his eyes do not gaze at her. They stare off into space, vacant. In contrast, the woman looks directly at Jacob. Though she frowns, and is obviously unhappy, she does not tear her shirt in distress. She also reaches her hands toward Jacob; in what could be interpreted as a gesture of

²⁴² Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 193.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

comfort rather than one of mourning. Thus, Epstein constructs his argument that this woman is in mourning on too weak a foundation.

Despite problems with his interpretation, Epstein is confident that the figure in this scene is Rachel. He maintains that there are three appearances of a Rachel figure in the Golden Haggadah: Rachel in the scene of Jacob wrestling the angel, Rachel in the scene of Joseph's "death," and a different Rachel in the scene of Israelite bondage. That there are three Rachels in the Golden Haggadah is questionable, because of Epstein's problematic interpretation of the "Jacob in mourning" scene. Nevertheless, Epstein concludes that since a Rachel figure appears three times, the Golden Haggadah must have been commissioned for a woman named Rachel. As additional evidence of this claim, Epstein notes that the name "Rosa" is the traditional Spanish equivalent for "Rachel." Thus Rosa Gallico, who is mentioned on the title page from 1602, may have been named for her ancestor Rachel, the putative first owner of the Golden Haggadah.²⁴⁴ Moreover, since two of the Rachel figures are associated with the theme of loss of children, Epstein postulates that the Rachel who first owned this Haggadah recently lost a child.

This conclusion is far-fetched. Though Epstein notes that he has made bold conclusions in this book to avoid interpretive paralysis and to stimulate scholarly discussion, the evidence he provides for this particular conclusion is questionable, as described above. There certainly is a theme of sadness over the loss of children in the Golden Haggadah, and according to Epstein there are more depictions of women in the Golden Haggadah than any other illuminated Sephardic Haggadah. Nevertheless, there

²⁴⁴ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 200.

are other reasons that can be posited for the large number of women and the inclusion of the theme of sadness over the loss of children. For instance, perhaps the owner was a man who lost his wife in childbirth and wanted to commission an illuminated Haggadah in her memory; or perhaps the owner was a man or woman who lost a female child. Epstein has no credible evidence that the manuscript was commissioned for a woman who had lost a child, that the woman's name was Rachel, or that the manuscript was passed from mother to daughter until it reached Rosa Gallico.

In the next section of *Medieval Haggadah*, Epstein explores the Rylands Haggadah²⁴⁵ and London, British Library, ms. Or. 1404. These two fourteenth-century Spanish Haggadot are considered “siblings,” although they have stylistic differences.²⁴⁶ Most scholars claim that Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 was created first and was the model for the Rylands Haggadah.²⁴⁷ Epstein agrees with this assertion. He indicates that although the artist of the Rylands Haggadah was influenced by the rendition of images in Brit. Lib. Or. 1404, the two manuscripts do not have identical iconography. Epstein's goal in this section of his book is to determine why the artist of the Rylands Haggadah changed some of the images.

The Hebrew Bible illuminations in both the Rylands Haggadah and Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 follow the biblical text literally, yet they do so in different ways. For example, the scene of Israelite bondage in Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 shows twelve Israelite men laboring under an Egyptian taskmaster. In the Rylands Haggadah, there are only ten men.²⁴⁸ Epstein argues that the difference in number of men reflects the two ways that the book

²⁴⁵ Manchester, John Rylands University Library, ms. Heb. 6.

²⁴⁶ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 223. Epstein discusses the stylistic differences between the two.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. Epstein cites the scholarship of Raphael Loewe and Katrin Kogman-Appel.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 225.

of Exodus describes the collectivity of the Israelites; one is as *ha-'am*, simply “the people,” and the other is *bnei Yisra'el*, or “the sons of Israel.” *Bnei Yisra'el* refers to the twelve sons of Jacob, and by extension, the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁴⁹

Throughout Brit. Lib. Or. 1404, the designers deliberately chose to illustrate biblical verses which referred to the Israelites as *bnei Yisra'el* and depicted twelve men (or some multiple of twelve men) in the images. However, the verses describing the scene of Israelite bondage from the book of Exodus do not refer to the Israelites as *bnei Yisra'el*; they only refer to the Israelites as the unspecified number of “*ha-'am*.”²⁵⁰ Therefore, in depicting the Israelites in bondage as *bnei Yisra'el* and not *ha'am*, the designers of Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 broke from a literal interpretation of the text. The same scene from the Rylands Haggadah shows only ten Israelites and is a more literal depiction of the text because it does not identify the Israelites as *bnei Yisra'el* through the use of the number twelve. This is a subtle distinction that demonstrates how the designer of Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 “configures the iconography in such a way that it remains accurate to scripture while simultaneously extending itself in a nonliteral, symbolic direction,”²⁵¹ while the designer of the Rylands Haggadah “reacted to this symbolic homiletic turn by pulling back toward a more literal attention to the text of the scripture.”²⁵²

Epstein contends that there is a specific reason why the designers of the Rylands Haggadah preferred simpler interpretations and privileged “the narrative over the

²⁴⁹ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 227.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. Epstein states that only one text exists for the particular episode depicted here: Exod. 5:12: “Then the people (*ha'am*) scattered throughout the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw.”

²⁵¹ Ibid., 228.

²⁵² Ibid.

symbolic.”²⁵³ This reason is made clear when examining the treatment of Egyptians in the illustrations; the Rylands Haggadah displays a more vengeful, bloodthirsty attitude toward the Egyptians than does Brit. Lib. Or. 1404. In fact, most of the illustrations in Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 treat the Egyptians as equals of the Israelites and show empathy for the Egyptians’ suffering.²⁵⁴ This difference in attitude toward the Egyptians can be seen by comparing the scenes on folio 16v of the Rylands Haggadah (fig. 18) and on folio 4v of Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 (fig. 19). Both scenes depict the plague of wild animals. On the left side of the top scene in the Rylands Haggadah, the Egyptians are grimacing in pain as lizards and other wild animals swarm them. The Israelites on the right are pointing and smiling, mocking the Egyptians. Some of them are even throwing their heads back, as if they are laughing. In contrast, the Israelites in Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 point to the Egyptians with frowns and concerned looks on their faces.

In addition to the “mocking” body language of the Israelites, the Rylands Haggadah amplifies the Egyptians’ suffering by depicting more locusts, more lice, more frogs, etc. during the plagues than Brit. Lib. Or. 1404. It also shows many instances of the Israelites’ salvation, whereas Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 omits most of these scenes.²⁵⁵ The captions in each manuscript, too, indicate a difference in attitude towards the Egyptians. For example, one section from the book of Exodus describes how the Israelites took the Egyptians’ wealth from them. There are two biblical verses that the Haggadah designers could have chosen to describe the scene:

²⁵³ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 228.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 230.

The Israelites had done Moses' bidding and borrowed from the Egyptians objects of silver and gold, and clothing.²⁵⁶

or:

And the LORD had disposed the Egyptians favorably toward the people, and they let them have their request; *va-yinalzlu et mizrayim*—thus they stripped [or “plundered”] the Egyptians.²⁵⁷

True to form, Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 chose to include the first verse for its caption, which states that the Israelites “borrowed” the Egyptians’ wealth. The Rylands Haggadah, on the other hand, chose the second verse which uses the more aggressive word “stripped” or “plundered.”²⁵⁸

Epstein argues that the Rylands Haggadah used the less symbolic, more literal illustrations of the Biblical text to cloak its vengeful, gloating triumphalism, “as if—fearful of being charged with inciting its audience to feelings of vengefulness—the authorship of the Rylands Haggadah preemptively defended itself by asserting that it was merely being faithful to the text.”²⁵⁹ Epstein views the illuminations of the Rylands Haggadah as being a polemical reaction to those of Brit. Lib. Or. 1404, establishing a hostile interpretation of Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 that argues that it is “too quietistic.”²⁶⁰

Overall, Epstein’s arguments about the Rylands Haggadah and Brit. Lib. Or. 1404 are well-explained and convincing. All of the examples he uses corroborate his conclusions, and Epstein builds a strong case that the differences between these two Haggadot could provide significant insights into the patronage of the manuscripts as well as their cultural context. However, despite building a persuasive case, Epstein expends little space to conclusions that highlight either the patronage or the cultural

²⁵⁶ Exod. 12:35.

²⁵⁷ Exod. 12:36.

²⁵⁸ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 237-8.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

milieu for each manuscript. He speculates that both manuscripts construct parallels between the Egyptians and contemporary Christians, and between the Israelites and contemporary Jews. Because both the Egyptians and Israelites in these two Haggadot appear, in dress and behavior, to be of the same social status, Epstein contends that the Haggadot may be illustrating how Spanish Jews viewed themselves in relation to their Christian rulers:

While the Christians were masters on the political front, the Jews saw themselves as masters in their own context and on their own home ground. Though not legally the equals of Christians, Jews saw themselves at least as being equivalent (and sometimes superior) to their “masters” in terms of class, breeding, lineage, comportment, and style. If both manuscripts agree about something, it is to confirm the self-perception of Jews as *melakhim bnei melakhim* (royals, children of royals), heirs of the noble and free patriarchs and matriarchs, the equals or betters of their “masters,” regardless of their present political status.²⁶¹

This may explain why the Israelites are shown as social equals of the Egyptians, but it does not resolve why each manuscript has a different attitude toward the Egyptians. Epstein asserts that the differences between these Haggadot are “certainly significant in helping to unravel the divergent social and theological agendas of these manuscripts—which—more like parent and child than ‘siblings’—are less identical than they seem.”²⁶² However, Epstein does not “unravel” individual agendas. He only briefly speculates that there may have been a connection between the Christians and Egyptians and the Jews and Israelites in both manuscripts. At the beginning of his monograph, Epstein insists he will avoid the pitfalls of interpretive paralysis; yet it seems as though he has become its victim in the section regarding the Rylands Haggadah and Brit. Lib. Or. 1404. He does not elaborate enough on his brief

²⁶¹ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 233.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 245.

conclusions about these manuscripts and their relevance to medieval society. Epstein does the opposite of what he did in the Golden Haggadah section; he does not go far enough in his interpretations.

In his concluding chapters, Epstein discusses the extent to which Jewish designers copied Christian imagery. He disputes the existence of an inherently “Christian” iconography, arguing instead for “an aesthetic shared by Jews and Christians:”²⁶³

Each culture drew symbols—occasionally identical ones—from this common pool of motifs and each adapted them to its particular needs. The figures of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Zipporah, David and Elijah, were the common heritage of Jews and Christians, and each group utilized these figures to make particular exegetical, typological, or analogical points relevant to its own agenda, occasionally in relation to the art or texts of the other group.”²⁶⁴

Epstein asserts that scholars today interpret the iconography as “Christian” because they have seen more examples of medieval European Christian art than medieval European Jewish art. He suggests that more Christian art exists today because there were more Christians in medieval Europe than Jews, and because some Jewish art was destroyed as a result of anti-Semitism in Christian society.²⁶⁵

Epstein acknowledges that Jewish Haggadot did use some iconography that was Christian, and not part of a “shared aesthetic.” Moreover, he argues that the Jewish designers responded to these Christian images “in an indigenously Jewish manner.”²⁶⁶ As an example, he highlights the scene of Moses and Zipporah’s flight into Egypt from the Golden Haggadah (fig. 9). Epstein contends that this scene uses the Christian

²⁶³ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 148.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 246.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 268.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

iconography of the Holy Family's Flight into Egypt; a woman holding a child and sitting on a donkey (fig. 24 is what Epstein provides as the Christian version). The Golden Haggadah artist changed some features of the Christian image, and Epstein claims that these changes were meant as a subtle attack on the Christian iconography.²⁶⁷

One change that Golden Haggadah designers implemented is that the figure of Zipporah holds two children in her arms, whereas the Virgin holds only the Christ child in the Holy Family image. Epstein argues that the depiction of two children disputes the singularity of Jesus; because Zipporah cradles two children in her arms, she cannot be misinterpreted as the Virgin holding the Christ child. It is a different flight into Egypt, and it is not about Christ.²⁶⁸ The two children, Epstein argues, also illustrate the fruitfulness of the line of Moses as opposed to the barrenness of the line of Christ; Moses had many descendents, whereas Christ had none. According to Epstein, "while the portrayal of Jesus as the only begotten Son of God, never corrupted by woman, was a fine model for Christian clerics, it was uncomfortable and even repugnant for Jews, for whom family life and biological persistence were paramount."²⁶⁹

Epstein contends that the Golden Haggadah's artists also chose the Christian Flight into Egypt iconography because of the donkey's significance as a representation of the theme that biblical history is "both linear and cyclical."²⁷⁰ He describes this theme in more detail:

Tangibly and affectingly, Moses' movement toward his preordained role as redeemer of the people of Israel is linked with the movement of Abraham, the first Jew, toward his decisive role in the drama of the near-

²⁶⁷ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 246-8.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 262.

slaughter and rescue of his son. At the other end of history, the donkey accompanying Moses on his mission of salvation parallels the slow but inevitable progress of the Messiah toward the gates of Jerusalem for the ultimate redemption.²⁷¹

Epstein states that this theme of the donkey as a symbol of linear and cyclical history comes from Rashi's commentary, specifically his commentary on Exodus 4:20:

The ass: that is; the [same] ass which Abraham saddled on his way to the binding of Isaac, and the one upon which in the future the King Messiah shall be revealed, as it says: "Humble, riding on an ass."²⁷²

Epstein claims that the image of the donkey as a visual symbol of the theme of linear and cyclical history "makes a statement about the interconnectedness of Jewish history and its inevitable progress toward redemption."²⁷³ It is used throughout the Golden Haggadah's imagery, such as in the images of Adam's naming of the animals, Noah's ark, and Moses' flight into Egypt. Therefore, although the Golden Haggadah's artists used Christian iconography for the image of Moses and Zipporah's flight into Egypt, they chose it for specific reasons and changed it in subtle ways to make it serve a Jewish purpose.

The idea that Jews and Christians shared certain iconography, instead of Christians "owning" all of the iconography, is interesting and different from many other scholars' views. However, Epstein needs to be more specific when defining which iconography was Christian and which was shared. For instance, the biblical verse for Moses' flight into Egypt states:

So Moses took his wife and sons, mounted them on an ass, and went back to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God with him.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 262-3.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 262.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁷⁴ Exod. 4:20

The illustration of this verse in the Golden Haggadah may just be a literal interpretation of the text and not a copy of Christian iconography. The text explicitly notes the word “sons,” indicating that Moses had more than one son. The fact that Zipporah has two sons in her arms and rides a donkey in the Golden Haggadah image may just be a faithful rendering of the text, not a disputation of the singularity of Christ. Therefore, the Golden Haggadah image may not necessarily be commenting on the Christian Flight into Egypt. To make his argument stronger, Epstein should describe in more detail how the image in the Golden Haggadah is based on Christian iconography.

After finishing *Medieval Haggadah*, Epstein’s readers must ask if he did avoid becoming a victim of interpretive paralysis. As was stated above, he goes too far in his conclusions about the Golden Haggadah, but not far enough in his conclusions about the Rylands Haggadah and Brit. Lib. Or. 1404. His close reading of the imagery provides a solid framework for developing imaginative contentions, but Epstein’s contentions are either too imaginative or lacking in imagination. The examples he provides are not always clearly explained, leaving the reader confused and unconvinced by his arguments. Including a more in-depth discussion of the cultural context in which these manuscripts were created, explaining his examples further, and analyzing the illuminations within the text would allow Epstein to make more connections between the information he gleaned from the imagery and the important implications that these Haggadot hold for the study of Jewish history.

Chapter 6: Michael Batterman: “Bread of Affliction, Emblem of Power: the Passover Matzah in Haggadah Manuscripts from Christian Spain,” in *Imagining the Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*

While most scholars of the illuminated Spanish Haggadot have chosen to focus their studies on the cycles of images that precede the Haggadah text, Michael Batterman has chosen in his essay to analyze one type of image that appears within the Haggadah text; that of the Passover matzah, or unleavened bread. Of the three recent illuminated Spanish Haggadah scholars, Batterman is the only one who discusses the images found in the text of the Haggadah. However, because of the brevity of the essay format, Batterman is not able to explore the other images preceding the text of the illuminated Haggadot or the other decoration within the text. That none of the current scholars analyzes the entire iconographic program of the illuminated Haggadot underscores a major weakness in their scholarship; in order to gain a complete understanding of these manuscripts’ agendas, scholars must take into account all of their imagery, including the imagery found within the text. Analyses of the illuminated Haggadot are in danger of being too narrow or incorrect when some of the illustrations are omitted from scholarly discussion.

In his essay, Batterman states that there are three important foods involved in the seder ritual: the paschal lamb (*pesah*), the bitter herbs (*maror*), and the unleavened bread (matzah).²⁷⁵ The *maror* and matzah are physically present during the ritual, while

²⁷⁵ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 54. Batterman explains that the sacrifice of a lamb was a ritual from the Second Temple period, but was no longer practiced after the destruction of the Temple. Rabbi David Silber explains this further: “Following the destruction of the Temple, the Rabbis debated appropriate

the *pesah* is not, but all three are referred to in the text of the Haggadah. Images of the *maror*, matzah, and *pesah* appear in Spanish illuminated Haggadot at the point where the text introduces each of them; there is a direct relationship established between the text and the images. The *maror* and matzah images are included in twenty-two of the surviving Sephardic Haggadot, but the *pesah* only appears in eight of these twenty-two.²⁷⁶ It is apparent that the *maror* and matzah were a crucial part of the contemporary seder ritual, thus their appearance in the Sephardic illuminated Haggadot further underscores their significance.

Although the *maror* and matzah images are both treated equally in terms of size and orientation, Batterman describes the matzah images as being far more complex than those of the *maror*. The depictions of the matzah are stylized images of round wafers, centered on the page, accompanied by decorative motifs or supporting figures. They include abstract designs as well as figural elements and do not represent a literal or realistic depiction of a wafer of unleavened bread, unlike the representations of the *maror*. Batterman characterizes them as monumental, iconic, and devotional, as distinct from the narrative art that appears at the beginning of the Haggadot.²⁷⁷

In his essay, Batterman argues that these monumental images of the matzah are visual representations of the divine presence of God. The iconography, he states, is

ways to commemorate this sacrificial meal: some advocated eating a roasted lamb in lieu of the original sacrifice, while others forbade such a practice, which they deemed confusing and improper. Today, the Passover offering informs the organization of the seder-night ritual primarily on a symbolic level (as, for example, with the *korekh* sandwich and the afikoman)." (Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 65). Usually, a shank bone sits on the seder plate as a symbol of the paschal sacrifice, although it is not eaten.

²⁷⁶ Batterman, "Bread of Affliction," 55. Batterman lists the twenty-two manuscripts in his bibliography. He does not explicate why the eight Haggadot with *pesah* illustrations displayed this reference to an earlier form of the seder ritual. He neither provides an illustration of a *pesah* from one of the eight Sephardic Haggadot nor does he describe an example in his essay.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 55-57.

based on two artistic models that were prominent in medieval Christian Spain: the image of the bread of the Eucharist and the royal seal (marks of validation on official documents).²⁷⁸ He contends that the bread of the Eucharist and the royal seal were both symbols of Christian power, and that Jews actively appropriated these images not in spite of, but *because* of their power in Christian society; they used these images of Christian power to respond to Christian threats by turning the images into Jewish symbols of power:

In appropriating and transforming this imagery, Jews projected their own concept of rulership from their perspective as a minority culture and an exiled nation. Jewish cultural formulations of the matzah as a potent force and a badge of Jewish efficacy empowered the images to respond to the Christian threat and to fortify the Jewish position. In this way, the rituals and customary practices of Passover functioned as polemical tools, and the matzah images assisted in propounding the message.²⁷⁹

Before demonstrating the influence and power of two Christian visual sources for the matzah images, Batterman offers an explanation of why and how the matzah images represented the divine presence of God. He claims that the idea came from theosophical kabbalah, the influence of which had reached its peak in Spain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁸⁰ According to Batterman, theosophical kabbalists sought to gain mystical knowledge of God through his manifestations and emanations, and they took a special interest in Passover and the Haggadah.²⁸¹ While kabbalah was rooted in Jewish tradition, it was an independent ideology separate from Judaism. It did, however, influence the Jewish religious culture of Spain.²⁸²

²⁷⁸ Batterman, "Bread of Affliction," 59-60.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 61.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 62.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid., 63.

The central motif of theosophical kabbalist devotion, Batterman states, was “the sexual and mystical union of the masculine and feminine aspects of God.”²⁸³ This was described as intercourse between the “Shekhinah,” defined as God’s divine presence, or the gateway through which knowledge is disclosed and the portal through which humans have access to the divine realm, and her “husband,” *Tiferet*, defined as the next highest emanation of God after Shekhinah.²⁸⁴ The *Sefer ha-Zohar*, a late thirteenth-century canonical compilation of theosophical kabbalist writings, further describes the relationship between the Shekhinah and Tiferet: the Shekhinah is like the moon because it “shines with no light of its own” and depends on *Tiferet*, which is like the sun, to provide its light.²⁸⁵

According to the *Zohar*, the Exodus from Egypt took place in the middle of the month of Nisan, at the full moon, therefore symbolizing the state of intercourse between Shekhinah and *Tiferet*.²⁸⁶ When this intercourse occurred, the redemptive powers of God were at their height as Jews entered a “state of union” with him.²⁸⁷ Each Passover seder is celebrated at that same time of month to recreate the same conditions; therefore, the *Zohar* recognizes the seder as the site of the mystical union of the Shekhinah and *Tiferet*.²⁸⁸ A passage from the *Zohar* states that the matzah eaten during the seder is a manifestation of the Shekhinah; it is the key symbol of Passover and “provides a visual and ritual focus for the enactment of this redemptive process.”²⁸⁹

²⁸³ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 63.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 62. Batterman quotes the passage (*Zohar*, III, 95a-95b) on page 53.

Batterman attempts to prove that theosophical kabbalist beliefs influenced the medieval Spanish illuminated Haggadot by explicating how the connection between the matzah and the Shekhinah is depicted in several of the Sephardic Haggadah matzah images. For example, the *Zohar* describes the secret nature and difficulty of accessing the divine as a “locked gateway.” A kabbalist from Castile, Joseph Gikatilla, took this metaphor further and called the ten emanations of God ten “gates,” describing the Shekhinah as the first gate. In the matzah image from the Golden Haggadah, there is a locked door or gate in the center of the matzah (fig. 12). This suggests a connection with the kabbalist idea of the Shekhinah as a locked gate, according to Batterman.²⁹⁰

Batterman also demonstrates the visual connection between a round object and an image of divine presence by discussing the influence of the depiction of Christ in Majesty in Christian works of art.²⁹¹ He argues that the motif of *imago clipeata*—the image of a circular shield as a representation of the revolving cosmos, from ancient traditions—evolved to suggest the divine glorification of whatever figure was present inside the shield.²⁹² This motif was employed in some Christ in Majesty images, similar to the popular mandorla, an oval or almond-shaped frame around Christ, representing light emanating from him as a divine being. Most Christ in Majesty images include two angels flanking Christ and often holding the mandorla, which emphasizes the divine Christ in heaven, such as the Christ in Majesty from the Arroyo Beatus manuscript (fig. 25).

²⁹⁰ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 64-65.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 70-76.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 70.

Four Sephardic Haggadot from the fourteenth century adopted this iconography for their images of the matzah, such as the Prato Haggadah²⁹³ (fig. 20); in this illustration, two figures support and present a larger-than-life matzah to the viewer.²⁹⁴ These figures are standing firmly on the ground instead of floating in the heavenly realm; they each grasp the matzah between them, in this case, positioned in the earthly realm. They are obviously not angels, but Batterman does not identify who the matzah-holding men represent. Despite these differences between the figures in the Christ in Majesty image and the matzah image, Batterman maintains that the image of Christ in Majesty influenced the depiction of the matzah as a symbol of the divine presence of God. In applying this type of Christian imagery to the matzah, Batterman concludes that the Jewish designers were trying to demonstrate a connection between the matzah and a representation of divine glory, or divine presence.²⁹⁵

After Batterman gives evidence regarding the influence of theosophical kabbalist ideas on the matzah images, he indicates further that depictions of the bread of the Eucharist, and Christian royal seals were powerful images in medieval Spain and logical choices for the Jewish patrons when they sought inspiration for the depiction of the matzah.²⁹⁶ An image of the bread of the Eucharist was powerful in Christian society because Christians believed that the bread of the Eucharist was the body of Christ.²⁹⁷ The relationship between the matzah and the bread of the Eucharist is rooted in the fact that they are both types of unleavened bread used in religious rituals. Moreover, the

²⁹³ New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Ms Mic. 9478, c. 1320-35.

²⁹⁴ Batterman, "Bread of Affliction," 70.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 67-86.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 76.

Church understood that the Last Supper, the Gospel story narrating when Christ set forth the precedent for the Eucharist ritual, was the celebration of the seder on the first night of Passover.²⁹⁸ At the Last Supper, Christ declared to his disciples that the unleavened bread they ate was his “body,” and the wine they drank was his “blood.”²⁹⁹ Significantly, the parallel between the Last Supper and the Passover seder was being emphasized by the Church specifically at the time illuminated Haggadot appeared.³⁰⁰

After the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which sparked a new interest in the doctrine of transubstantiation, Eucharistic imagery proliferated within Christian culture. It also became a popular topic in religious discourse and a popular expression of piety in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.³⁰¹ The elevation of the Host during Mass became common practice, and there were an increasing number of miracles attributed to the Host. Batterman submits that “by 1300 the Eucharistic wafer was at the center of Christian religious culture and as a visual sign it encapsulated the power of the Church and the rewards of faith.”³⁰² Jewish knowledge of the bread of the Eucharist grew as well, among the elite Jewish courtiers through their close proximity to Christian culture, and among the common Jewish people through the activities of missionaries.³⁰³ This actually heightened Christian polemic against the Jews, particularly during the time the Sephardic illuminated Haggadot were produced. There were often processions of Consecrated Hosts through the streets, especially during Easter week, and Jews and Muslims were required to show respect for the Host through the act of kneeling or

²⁹⁸ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 67.

²⁹⁹ Matthew 26:17-30.

³⁰⁰ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 67-68.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 68-9.

hiding.³⁰⁴ Batterman contributes the historical and cultural background of the Host in order to demonstrate how Jewish designers of the illuminated Haggadot saw the power of this imagery and chose to imitate it for their images of the matzah. The matzah was understood as the antithesis of the Host and it was empowered to ease Jewish suffering during the time of Christian aggression.³⁰⁵

The image of the royal seal also influenced the Jewish designers when they created the image of the matzah. The seal was a stamp of Christian authority on important documents, including documents that enacted regulations oppressing the Jews in Spain.³⁰⁶ In this respect the royal seal would have represented power to the Jews in Christian Spain. Yet the power of the seal also had a history within Judaism. The seal is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Bible, referring to its function on important documents and to the status and power the seal gives its bearer.³⁰⁷ It is also used as a metaphor for the covenant between God and Israel. Batterman gives an example from the Song of Songs: “Let me be a seal upon your heart,/Like the seal [or signet] upon your hand.”³⁰⁸ He also states that circumcision has been described as a divine “seal” upon Israel, “a physiological opening of the flesh that corresponds with the ontological ‘opening’ of God and is a prerequisite for mystical union or encounter with God.”³⁰⁹ Furthermore, the theosophical kabbalists drew a connection between the seal and the idea of Shekhinah. In the *Zohar*, the Shekhinah is recognized as the impression of

³⁰⁴ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 70.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 76.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 77. Batterman cites Gen. 38:18, Jer. 22:44, and Neh. 10:1.

³⁰⁸ Song of Songs 8:6.

³⁰⁹ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 77. Batterman cites Elliot Wolfson’s article as one source for the connection between circumcision and a seal: Elliot Wolfson, “Circumcision, Vision of God and Textual Interpretation: From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol,” *History of Religions* 27 (1987): 189-215.

God's own seal, which validates his covenant with Israel. Since the *Zohar* also describes the matzah as a symbol of the Shekhinah, Batterman associates the matzah directly with the seal.³¹⁰ In this way, the seal was used as a metaphor for the power of the Passover matzah to validate the special status of Israel.³¹¹

Christian royal seals were often circular images, such as Batterman's example of the *signo rodado* from the kingdom of Castile (fig. 26). The *privilegio rodado*, invented in the twelfth century, was a certain type of charter issued by the king to grant a royal privilege. The *signo rodado* was a circular image that was illuminated and set underneath the main text. It was centered between columns that contained the names of the noble and ecclesiastical witnesses to the document. Batterman states that the *signo rodado* was used on hundreds of documents and would have been familiar to Castilian Jews and Christians as a symbol of royal authority.³¹² When the Sephardic Haggadah designers were looking for a symbol of power to inspire depictions of the matzah, the seal would have been a logical choice.

The first sections of Batterman's essay are convincing and thoroughly explained. An image of the matzah as the representation of divine presence has a legitimate place in the Haggadah; the main motif of Passover seder is the salvation that God brings to his people when they are oppressed. Thus, an image of the presence of God is appropriate in the Haggadah, because it symbolizes God's intercession and presence during the seder ritual. It is logical to assume that Jewish patrons would have wanted a powerful image for the representation of divine presence to demonstrate the

³¹⁰ Batterman, "Bread of Affliction," 77.

³¹¹ Ibid., 76.

³¹² Ibid., 84.

power of God. According to Batterman, an image of the matzah was the perfect avenue for depicting divine presence because kabbalism had made a connection between matzah and Shekhinah. Haggadah designers could successfully illustrate the power of the matzah by using well-known iconography that evoked power in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as of the bread of the Eucharist, Christ in Majesty, and Christian royal seals.

However, Batterman does not account for any other types of visual influence in these matzah images other than from Christian iconography. In her review of Batterman's article, Vivian Mann notes that the interlocking circular designs in the matzah images closely resemble those on carpet pages found in Islamic manuscripts, as well as the same designs on tile, plasterwork, leather, woodworks, and buildings made for both Muslims and Jews in the Iberian Peninsula.³¹³ Because the Muslims ruled the Iberian Peninsula for several centuries, the possibility of Islamic influence in Jewish art should not be ignored, especially when there are clear visual similarities between the two, as Mann notes in her review.

There is another part of Batterman's argument that requires further consideration. He asserts that there is a "subversive" political message in the matzah images; that by emulating Christian images, Jews "tapped into the sources of Jewish suffering and the visual embodiments of Jewish debasement in order to neutralize the

³¹³ Vivian B. Mann, review of *Imagining the Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, edited by Eva Frojmovic, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007): 104-105. There were several other reviews of Frojmovic's book, including those by Dana E. Katz from *The Sixteenth Century Journal* and Nina Rowe from *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences*, but Mann was the only reviewer who critically analyzed Batterman's essay.

threat and channel that power for Jewish benefit.”³¹⁴ Batterman contends that Jewish patrons specifically used Christian imagery to respond to the threat of Christian oppression:

Spanish Jews during this period endured political, economic, and juridical persecution, and physical assault. In staking their claim to continued existence in the Spanish kingdoms, elite Jews found support in the traditional religious ideology contained within the Passover Haggadah. Within this context, the central symbol of redemption [matzah] was fashioned into an image of Jewish identity and power.³¹⁵

Batterman states that the image of the matzah provided a message of “the affirmation of Jewish identity and the defense against a hostile Christian ‘Other.’”³¹⁶ He concludes that this is one way in which the illuminated Haggadah, a new type of book that emerged during the late thirteenth century, “addressed the needs of its readers.”³¹⁷

However, when Batterman uses the word “readers,” he means only the patrons of these Haggadot. Although the Haggadah’s main reader *was* probably the patron, various family members may have read passages from it as well. Thus, Batterman’s argument would be stronger if he included a discussion of how these illuminated Haggadot functioned for all of the seder participants during the ritual. When the reader turned the folio and viewed an image of the matzah, perhaps he or she would have stopped the ritual to show the image to the rest of the family and to explain the significance of it as an important symbol of the history of the Jews, specifically their last days under oppressive Egyptian rule before the Exodus. Or perhaps he or she

³¹⁴ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 75.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-76.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

reflected on its meaning privately. Although Batterman explains what the matzah image would have meant for the patron of an illuminated Haggadah, his essay does not address how the entire family received the “benefit” of this politically charged image during Passover seder.

At the beginning of his essay, Batterman puts forth three questions that he says he will answer:

What do these images actually resemble, or what did viewers ‘see’ in them aside from the wafer of unleavened bread? How were they understood to function within the performative context of the Passover seder and the ritualized reading of the Haggadah? What sort of interpretive apparatus equipped viewers to understand whatever message these images were meant to convey?³¹⁸

He thoroughly answers questions one and three, but the second question deserves closer attention. Batterman describes what the matzah images look like, what influenced them, and what they meant for the patrons, but he does not analyze how they were used during the seder. If the purpose of studying medieval Spanish illuminated Haggadot is to understand Jewish culture better, scholars should ponder how the images were actually perceived and used by all members of the Jewish family.

³¹⁸ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 58-59.

Conclusion

Having been wrenched out of their intellectual, social, and temporal contexts, and lying entombed in the vaults of research libraries, how *can* they [medieval illuminated Haggadot] be completely understood by a twenty-first-century scholar?³¹⁹

Marc Michael Epstein poses this question at the end of *Medieval Haggadah*, when he calls attention to the difficulty—and the necessity—of viewing the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot in their cultural and historical contexts. It is challenging for scholars to understand why these unique manuscripts were made during a particular time in history, since there is little available historical information about these illuminated Haggadot. Scholars have no artists' or patrons' names, nor do they have documentation about how the illuminations in these manuscripts were used during the seder.³²⁰ The only information scholars have is that which is contained in the Haggadot themselves—that is, in the text and the illustrations—and historical information about medieval Spanish society.

The most that twenty-first century scholars can do is to become experts in the culture, religions, history, and politics of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain and to analyze the illuminated Haggadot from the point of view of the Jews who created and owned them. The three recent scholars of the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot have chosen different approaches with which to examine these manuscripts; Kogman-Appel chose to analyze them in light of antirationalist and polemical writings, Epstein in light of the unique agenda of each Haggadah as evidenced by their iconography, and

³¹⁹ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 269.

³²⁰ Kogman-Appel, "Jewish Art," 189.

Batterman in light of kabbalist beliefs and Jewish responses to Christian aggression at the time when the Haggadot were produced.

There are shortcomings in all of these analyses, as discussed earlier. Kogman-Appel provides the most thorough cultural profile of the Haggadot patrons; yet this crucial examination only appears after long, tedious discussions of iconographic sources, the putative “motif books,” and polemical literature, much of which are feeble and unclear. Marc Michael Epstein agrees that Kogman-Appel expends too much effort in *Illuminated Haggadot* tracing iconographic sources and not enough effort delving into the more important issues of culture and patronage.³²¹ Despite this complaint, Epstein himself does not provide a detailed examination of medieval Spanish culture or how it influenced the illuminated Sephardic Haggadot. In his book, Epstein briefly mentions that the images of Egyptians and Israelites may have been metaphors for contemporary Christians and Jews, but he does not elaborate on what these metaphors demonstrate about the particular agenda of each Haggadah. Michael Batterman, in his essay, does furnish some information about how culture influenced iconographic choices in the Haggadot; for example, he argues that the image of the matzah was a defensive reaction to the specific persecution Jews faced in Christian Spain during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Moreover, Batterman is the only one of the three recent scholars who analyzes the decoration within the Haggadah text. However, he does not extrapolate from his own results to formulate further insights about the entire decorative program of the Haggadot. None of these scholars presents a comprehensive view of the entire group of extant illuminated Haggadot, nor do they thoroughly

³²¹ Epstein, *Medieval Haggadah*, 150.

consider the influence of all aspects of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century culture and history on the creation of these manuscripts.

Nevertheless, recent scholarship has, in many ways, improved upon the earliest scholarship of Jewish art, such as those works by David Heinrich Müller and Julius von Schlosser, partly because it has recognized the importance of studying “Jewish art” as its own genre. However, the recent scholarship still promotes some of the same ideas as the old scholarship. For example, Kogman-Appel asserts that the scene of the sacrifice of Isaac in the Golden Haggadah has “no parallel in Christian or Jewish cycles,” yet she states that it was an alteration of “traditional” Christian iconography.³²² Kogman-Appel thus asserts the same contention of the early Jewish art scholars, that Jewish art depended on the art of other cultures; in this case, on Christian art. Frojmovic has written compellingly concerning the problematic nature of early scholarship’s nationalistic view that still permeates scholarship today:

The dominant paradigm for the study of art history has remained that of national styles. The trouble is that unlike histories of western national arts, that of Jewish art could never follow the established models unproblematically, and it could never fit comfortably onto the map of art history, for Jewish art was nowhere on the (geographic) map...So Jewish artifacts have tended to remain in an untheorized space between nation, race, and religion, and outside general period surveys.³²³

Many recent scholars have dismissed the early scholarship as irrelevant or old-fashioned, choosing to remain silent about its anti-Semitism which asserts the inferiority of the Jewish people and their inability to create original and skillfully-rendered art. For instance, the only attention Kogman-Appel gives to the anti-Semitism in early scholarship is this single sentence: “Some of these [early publications] were marked by

³²² Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 174.

³²³ Frojmovic, “Buber in Basle,” 2-3.

some degree of prejudice.”³²⁴ She does not discuss how the ideas brought forth by this racism can still be found in scholarship today. Yet current scholars must *not* ignore the lasting impact of the early art historians’ racism on the field of Jewish art scholarship. Although recent scholars avoid the taint of anti-Semitism in their approach to studying Jewish art, many of them still retain the perception of the early scholars that Jews could not create any innovative art that was independent from the art of the culture that politically ruled over them. Current scholars of Jewish art need to raise awareness about the racism in earlier scholarship and understand how some of the perceptions that this racism created still affect scholarship in this day and age.

Just as scholars should bring attention to the influence of racism in Jewish art history scholarship, so too should they highlight the impact of racism on the creation of the Sephardic illuminated Haggadot. As discussed earlier, Christian persecution of Jews increased during the thirteenth- and fourteenth-centuries in the Iberian Peninsula. Kings passed harsh laws against the Jews, such as Alfonso X’s *Fuero Real*, *Leyes Nuevas*, *Especulo*, and *Las Partidas*, forbidding interaction between Jews and Christians and forcing Jews to wear distinctive clothing.³²⁵ Jews were accused of being usurers and heretics as well as of other crimes; one example charges that they kidnapped and ritually murdered Christian children to imitate the killing of Christ, and then, in a horrifying twist of anti-Semitic imagination, mixed the children’s blood into the Passover matzah.³²⁶ Christians were also physically abusive toward Jews; for instance, Christians forced Jews to kneel in front of the Host when it was carried through the

³²⁴ Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 1-2.

³²⁵ Bango, *Remembering Sepharad*, 184-186.

³²⁶ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 69.

streets. Abuse such as this was worst during the times when Holy Week and Passover coincided, because of the Christian belief that the Passover matzah was “a satanic antitype to the sacred Host.”³²⁷ For their own protection, many Jews hid in their homes during Holy Week.³²⁸

In their publications, Kogman-Appel, Epstein, and Batterman have examined some of these laws, slanderous accusations, and episodes of Christian violence to gain a better understanding of anti-Semitism in Christian Spain. Kogman-Appel’s discussion of Jewish polemical writings relates to Christian anti-Semitism. One result of anti-Semitism in medieval Christian culture was that Christians forced Jews to convert to Christianity and to accept Christian doctrine; in turn, scholarly Jews composed polemical writings to refute this doctrine. Epstein also refers to Christian aggression when he suggests that, in the Sephardic Haggadah image cycles, the Egyptians were metaphors for Christians and the Israelites were metaphors for contemporary Jews in order to make a comparison between the oppressive situation of the Israelites in Egypt and the oppressive situation of the Jews in medieval Spain. Batterman makes the most substantial connection between the illuminated Haggadot and Christian anti-Semitism in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain; although his essay is more focused than either Kogman-Appel’s or Epstein’s monographs, he devotes a large section of the essay to pointing out the specific instances of Christian persecution of Jews. Batterman describes the importance of the Host in Christian culture and that Christians accused

³²⁷ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 69.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

Jews of desecrating the Host to “[fan] the fires of popular resentment against Jews by re-creating the conditions of Christ’s torment.”³²⁹

Despite these references to Christian anti-Semitism in Kogman-Appel’s, Epstein’s, and Batterman’s publications, there is a great deal more to ascertain about the influence of anti-Semitism on Jewish society, more specifically, the impact it had on the Haggadah patrons and artists. There is another type of anti-Semitic evidence that these scholars have not considered; that is, the anti-Semitism in different forms of art, such as songs, dramatic performances, literature, and illuminated manuscripts. Illuminated manuscripts, in fact, offer unique perspectives because of the relationships created between text and image. As Debra Strickland contends, “the textual component of illuminated manuscripts often provides clues as to the contextual meaning(s) of accompanying imagery through the forging of relationships between words and pictures.”³³⁰

An example of this text-image relationship as it relates to anti-Semitism can be found on fol. 40v of Vienna, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek ms. 2554 (c.1220). This illuminated manuscript is a French *Bible moralisée*, or moralized Bible, a particular type of Christian picture book from the Middle Ages. The *Bibles moralisées* provide narrative illuminations of stories from the Christian Bible, with captions summarizing the stories. They also include illuminations and captions that “moralized” the biblical stories; the “moralized” scenes were interpretations of the biblical scenes, often revealing important theological or metaphorical meanings. The caricature of the

³²⁹ Batterman, “Bread of Affliction,” 69.

³³⁰ Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 12.

Jew often represents a number of evil figures in the moralized scenes of the *Bibles moralisées*, even when the figure is not specifically noted in the biblical or moralized captions as being Jewish.³³¹ Throughout the *Bibles moralisées*, the caricature of the Jew stands in for such evil or corrupt figures as heretics, usurers, philosophers, infidels, enemies, demons, and others.

On fol. 40v of Vienna ms. 2554 (figs. 27 and 28), the two roundels in the upper left section of the folio describe and “moralize” Samuel’s death. The caption for the biblical scene reads:

Here Samuel dies and the sons of Israel mourn him and feel great pain over his death and the Philistines are joyous and happy (I Kings 25:1).³³²

The caption for the commentary scene reads:

That Samuel died and the sons of Israel mourned him, and the Philistines were joyous signifies the good prelate or the good monastic who dies and the good Christians and all the friends of God mourn him and feel great pain and the miscreants and the wicked ones are joyous and happy.³³³

In the moralized image, the pious Christians on the left mourn the death of the monastic with anguished expressions, while the “miscreants” and “wicked ones” on the right stick out their tongues and make other irreverent gestures at the dead monastic. Though neither the biblical caption nor the moralized caption specifically mention that Jews are the miscreants, the imagery uses a familiar medieval anti-Semitic caricature of a Jew; a dark-skinned, bearded man, having deformed features such as a hooked or

³³¹ Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 25.

³³² Gerald B. Guest, *Bible moralisée: Codex Vindobonensis 2554, Vienna, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1995), 115. A more expensive facsimile that provides an almost perfect copy of the original manuscript is Reiner Haussherr, *Bible moralisée: Faks.-Ausg im Originlformat des Codex Vindobonensis 2554 D.* Osterr: Nationalbibliothek (Graz. Akadem. Druck.p U. Sanst., 1973).

³³³ *Ibid.*

bulbous nose, and wearing a pointed hat. This caricature is a manifestation of the idea that outward ugliness is a sign of inward “ugliness,” or sinfulness;³³⁴ by portraying Jews as hideous beings, Christians demonstrated that the Jews were a sinful and evil people and that they could stand in for any evil being.³³⁵ The illustration from the Vienna *Bible moralisée* thus associates the ugly, evil Jew with “miscreant” and “wicked one,” though the text does not. This is a clear example of how text and image in illuminated manuscripts work together to punctuate specific anti-Semitic attitudes and beliefs permeating Christian culture in the thirteenth century.

The text and images in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*,³³⁶ a Christian illuminated manuscript from thirteenth-century Spain, are especially pertinent to the study of illuminated Sephardic Haggadot because they were made during the same time and in the same geographic region as the Haggadot. The *Cantigas* is a collection of narrative songs with miniatures that celebrate the miracles performed by the Virgin. King Alfonso X of Castile and Leon commissioned the manuscript in the latter part of the thirteenth century; most scholars agree that Alfonso himself either wrote or edited the songs.³³⁷ Between 1257 and 1279, a total of 427 songs were created for the manuscript.³³⁸

³³⁴ Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, 95.

³³⁵ In her book, Strickland gives an interesting analysis about how the concept of flawed physical form came to be associated with sin and evil. She suggests that the ancient Greeks and Romans formulated the underlying basis of this concept through their climatic and astrological theories, as well as other theories. See Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, chapters 1-2 for an in-depth discussion.

³³⁶ *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Madrid, Escorial, ms. T.I. 1, late thirteenth century.

³³⁷ Connie L. Scarborough, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Spain as Portrayed in Alfonso X's Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 2.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

Alfonso X appears in the text and illuminations of several of the songs from the *Cantigas*, exhibiting his devotion to the Virgin.³³⁹ While praising the Virgin and demonstrating the piety of Alfonso X appear to be the main motives for the creation of this work, there is also a moralizing component in the *Cantigas*. Several of the songs highlight situations in which the Virgin rewards those people who act in accordance with the teachings of the Church and punishes those who do not. There are many instances where Jews are inserted into the text and illustrations as the people being punished; thus, the *Cantigas* also promotes anti-Semitic prejudice. Jews are shown as traitors, as enemies, as the devil's disciples, as avaricious people, and as other corrupt or evil figures. One example is cantiga 34 (figs. 29, 30, and 31). Albert Bagby Jr. summarizes the plot of this song:

In the City of Constantinople, a Jew steals a beautiful and unusual picture of the Virgin. Hiding it under his cloak, he takes it to his house and places it in a hidden chamber where he secretly insults it. But the Virgin allows the devil to murder the Jew for his deed. Meanwhile, a good and wise Christian finds and rescues the picture from its place of filth, and washes it carefully to cleanse it. He then takes it to his house and places it in a worthy spot, rendering it due honor.³⁴⁰

The lesson in this song proclaims what will happen to any individual who defiles an image of the Virgin;³⁴¹ however, instead of describing a generic man or woman, the songwriter deliberately chose to identify the evil figure as a Jew. To elaborate further on this negative attitude toward Jews, the artist chose to depict the Jew as his familiar medieval anti-Semitic caricature.

³³⁹ George D. Greenia, "The Politics of Piety: Manuscript Illumination and Narration in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*," *Hispanic Review* 61 (1993): 336.

³⁴⁰ Bagby, "Jew in the *Cantigas*," 676.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

The images in the *Cantigas* were viewed by Alfonso and his courtiers; therefore, the anti-Semitic messages in the illuminations would have reached only this small, private group of people.³⁴² The songs, on the other hand, were not only performed for the court but also for the populace; the anti-Semitism in the songs would have been heard by much of the public.³⁴³ Thus, this manuscript was not just intended to reflect the current state of anti-Semitic prejudice among the courtiers and royals; it was also a vehicle for promoting anti-Semitism throughout all levels of society.³⁴⁴ The anti-Semitism found in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, as well as in other forms of Christian art such as church altarpieces,³⁴⁵ showed the public what kind of behavior was acceptable and even encouraged towards Jews. As María Dolores Bollo-Panadero argues, in the Middle Ages anti-Semitic art “[served] to reinforce social control, shaping the ways an individual should believe, think, or act.”³⁴⁶

In addition to the heinous accusations and oppressive laws enacted against the Jews, Christians created propagandistic art that helped spread anti-Semitism throughout the population of medieval Spain. It was in this tumultuous environment that wealthy Jews began to commission illuminated Haggadot; the appearance of the illuminated Haggadot at this particular point in history is no coincidence, as Batterman concludes at

³⁴² Greenia, “Politics of Piety,” 334.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 337.

³⁴⁴ María Dolores Bollo-Panadero, “Heretics and Infidels: The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* as Ideological Instrument of Cultural Codification,” *Romance Quarterly* 55 (2008): 164; Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, 133.

³⁴⁵ One example of anti-Semitic imagery in an altarpiece is the altarpiece from the monastery of Vallbona de les Monges (fig. 32), now in the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC). The altarpiece depicts Jews desecrating the Host by stabbing it and placing it in a pot of boiling liquid. It also shows these Jews being burned alive or converting to Christianity. This altarpiece was created c.1335-45, along with several other altarpieces that all promoted the idea that Jews desecrated the Host. (Vivian B. Mann and Thomas F. Glick, *Uneasy Communion: Jews, Christians, and the Altarpieces of Medieval Spain* (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2010).) For more information, read *Uneasy Communion* by Vivian B. Mann and Thomas F. Glick.

³⁴⁶ Bollo-Panadero, “Ideological Instrument,” 166.

the end of his essay.³⁴⁷ Christian persecution certainly played an influential part in the choices of the Haggadot designers; the scholars' task is to uncover the nature of its impact.

While Batterman's argument—that Jews used images as defenses against Christian aggression—pertains to a specific image in the text of the Haggadah, his argument may also be relevant to the original decision to provide imagery in the Haggadah. The choice to illuminate the Haggadah—the book that guides the Jewish family through their celebration of Passover seder, the book that focuses on the story of the exodus from slavery in Egypt—may have been the wealthy Jews' response to the increasing persecution that they faced in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain. As Rabbi Silber states, one of the most important themes found in the Haggadah is that history is cyclical; every generation of Jews will be oppressed and saved by God.³⁴⁸ Jewish families recognize this theme during Passover seder by treating the seder as a performance rather than a simple reading. In performing their roles in the seder, family members become participants of the Exodus and experience the feelings of redemption that their ancestors experienced when God brought them out of Egypt.

For the Jews in medieval Spain, the idea that history is cyclical would have been particularly poignant because of the oppression and racism they faced and the salvation they sought from the increasingly harsh Christian rule in the kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. Perhaps the patrons of the illuminated Haggadot wished to emphasize this hope of salvation by commissioning a special Haggadah with visual representations of how God saved his people again and again throughout biblical history. This Haggadah

³⁴⁷ Batterman, "Bread of Affliction," 87.

³⁴⁸ Silber, *Passover Haggadah*, 17 (of Haggadah section).

would help to remind the patrons and their families that God would deliver them from their current oppression just as he saved Noah and his family from the flood, rescued Abraham from killing Isaac, or guided Moses in freeing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Scholars of the illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain have a challenging task; they must discover why these Haggadot were created during a specific time in history, from the late thirteenth century to the mid-fourteenth century, and how they functioned in Jewish society. To do this, scholars must consider all aspects of the cultural, political, and theological contexts in which the illuminated Haggadot were produced. They must also analyze the Haggadah text and the *entire* figural and ornamental decorative program. In their recent publications, Epstein and Kogman-Appel omit analyses of significant imagery as well as of the ornamental headpieces and initials, which are found in the Haggadah text. Their conclusions could be stronger and more convincing if they included analyses of the text decoration in their monographs. Batterman was not able to consider all of the imagery in his short essay, but perhaps he does so in his dissertation; however, his dissertation has not been published as a series of articles or a monograph and is not as easily accessible as is a published document.

Throughout history, the Haggadah has been altered to suit the needs of Jewish society; therefore a Haggadah from any era will provide information about the period of Jewish history from which it came. Illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain have a meaningful story to tell, because of the oppressive environment in which they were created and the unique text-image relationships that they display. Scholars cannot uncover this story until they analyze each Haggadah individually, discovering the

agendas of each by taking into consideration their entire figural and decorative programs as well as the contexts in which they were created. Scholars must also recognize and avoid the pitfalls of the older methods of art history scholarship, such as those by Julius von Schlosser and Kurt Weitzmann, which limit one's comprehension of Jewish art in part because they imply that medieval Jews living under Christian rule in Spain could not create anything innovative. Only with a fresh outlook on Jewish art scholarship and a thorough analysis of each Haggadah in its cultural context can scholars begin to understand the appearance and disappearance of the illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain.

Appendix A: List of the Illuminated Sephardic Haggadot from Medieval Spain³⁴⁹

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, ms. Hamilton 288, fourteenth century.

Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 2559, Mahzor, and Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Cod. A. K. I. 22 = Or. 92, first half of the fourteenth century (“Bologna-Modena Mahzor”).³⁵⁰

Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Oriental Library, Kaufmann Collection, ms. A 422, c. 1350 (“Kaufmann Haggadah”).

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, add. ms. 1203, late fourteenth century (“Cambridge Catalan Haggadah”).

Jerusalem, Israel Museum, CUL T-S K. 10.1, early fourteenth century (“Catalan Haggadah Genizah Fragment”).

Jerusalem, Israel Museum, ms. 181/41, fourteenth century (“Sassoon Haggadah”).

London, British Library, add. ms. 14761, mid-fourteenth century (“Barcelona Haggadah”).

London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, c. 1320-30 (“Golden Haggadah”).

London, British Library, ms. or. 1404, c. 1330-40 (“Brother Haggadah”).

London, British Library, ms. or. 1424, third quarter of the fourteenth century (“Catalan Passover Parashot and Piyutim”).

London, British Library, ms. or. 2737, late thirteenth century (“Hispano-Moresque Haggadah”).

London, British Library, ms. or. 2884, fourteenth century. (“Sister Haggadah”).

London, University College, Mocatta Library, ms. 1, c. 1300 (“Mocatta Haggadah”).

³⁴⁹ I could not find a comprehensive list of all of the illuminated Haggadot from medieval Spain. Therefore, this list is a compilation of the Haggadot discussed in Michael Batterman’s essay, “Bread of Affliction,” Katrin Kogman-Appel’s book *Illuminated Haggadot*, and Bezalel Narkiss’ books, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, Macmillan, 1969) and *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

³⁵⁰ Kogman-Appel discusses how the two fragments from Bologna and Modena are now thought to have been part of the same manuscript. (Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*, 17).

Manchester, The John Rylands University Library, ms. Heb. 6, 1330-40 (“Rylands Haggadah”).

New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, ms. Mic. 9300, fourteenth century.

New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, ms. Mic. 9478, c. 1320-35 (“Prato Haggadah”)

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Heb. 590, fourteenth century.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Heb. 636, fourteenth century.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Heb. 637, fourteenth century.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. Heb. 654, fourteenth century.

Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, ms. 2411, late thirteenth century (“Parma Haggadah”).

Poblet, Monasterio de Santa María, ms. 100, fourteenth century.

Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, ms. 2761, fourteenth century.

Sarajevo, National Museum, Haggadah, c. 1320-35 (“Sarajevo Haggadah”).

Illustrations

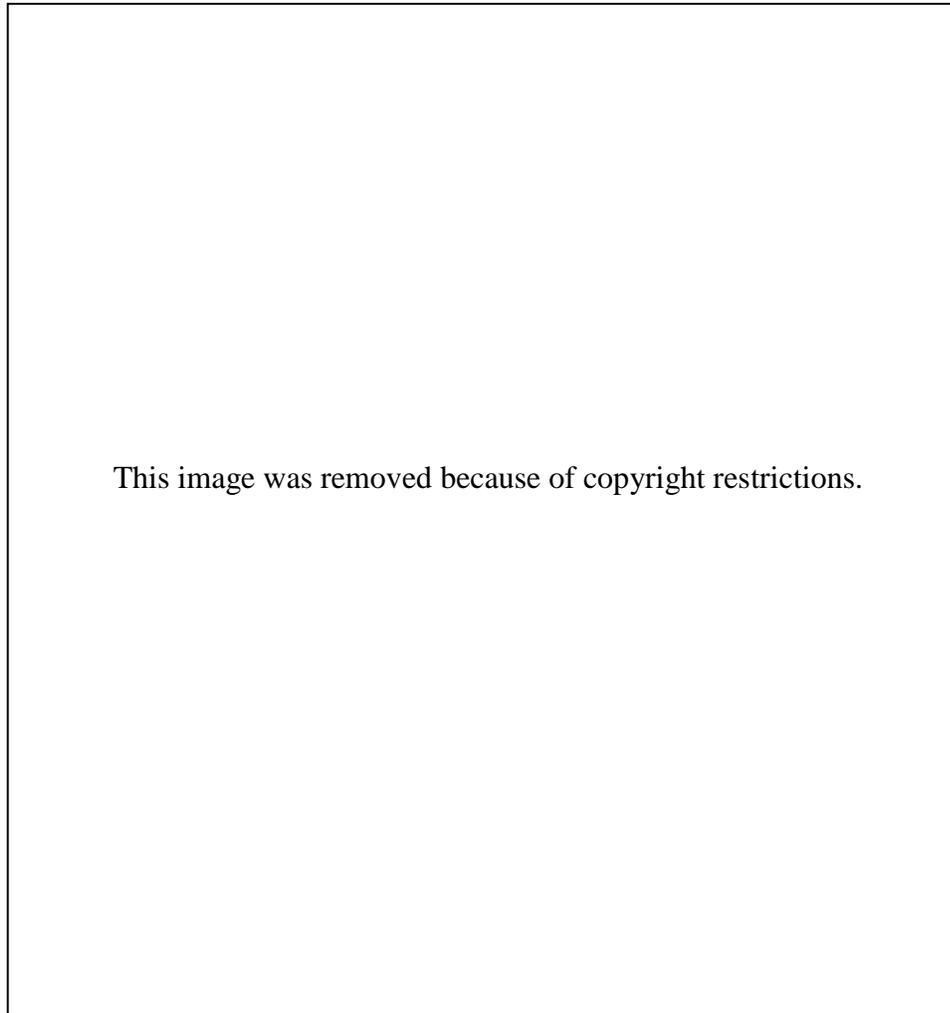


Figure 1: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 2r: title page added in 1602.

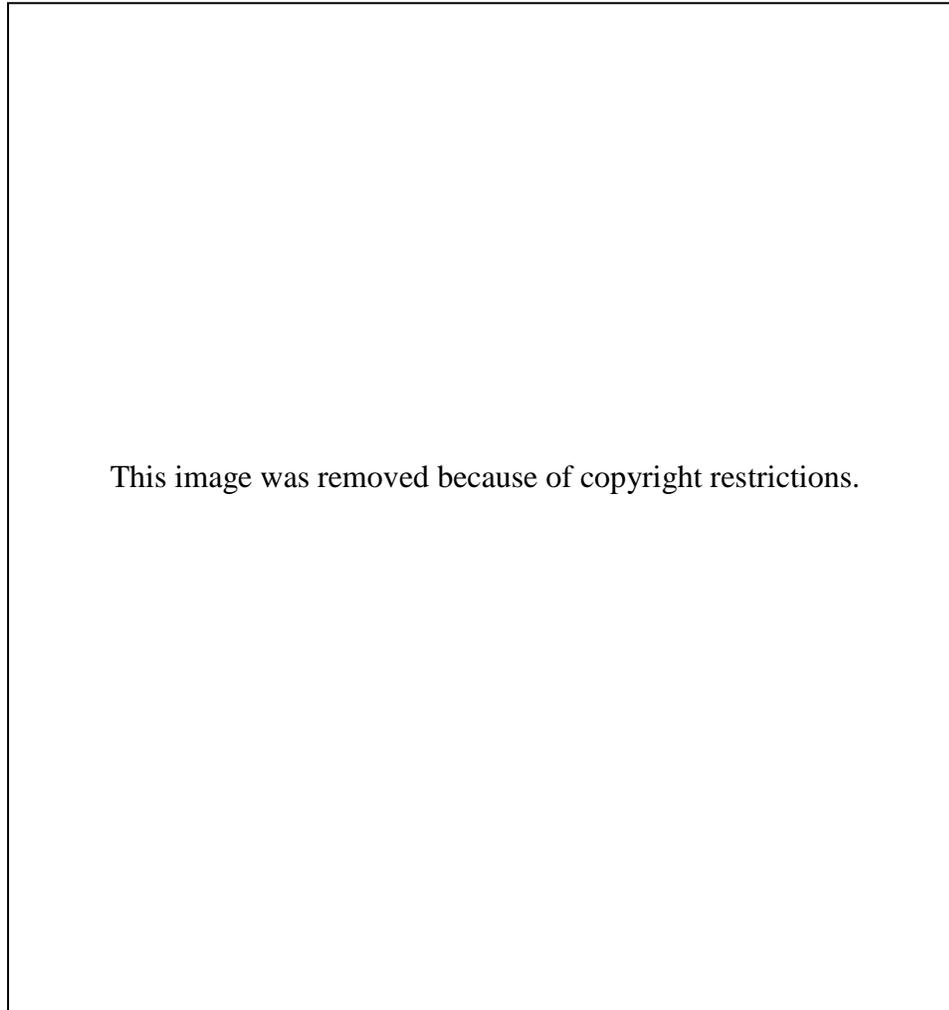


Figure 2: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 2v: Adam naming the animals, creation of Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah leaving the ark.

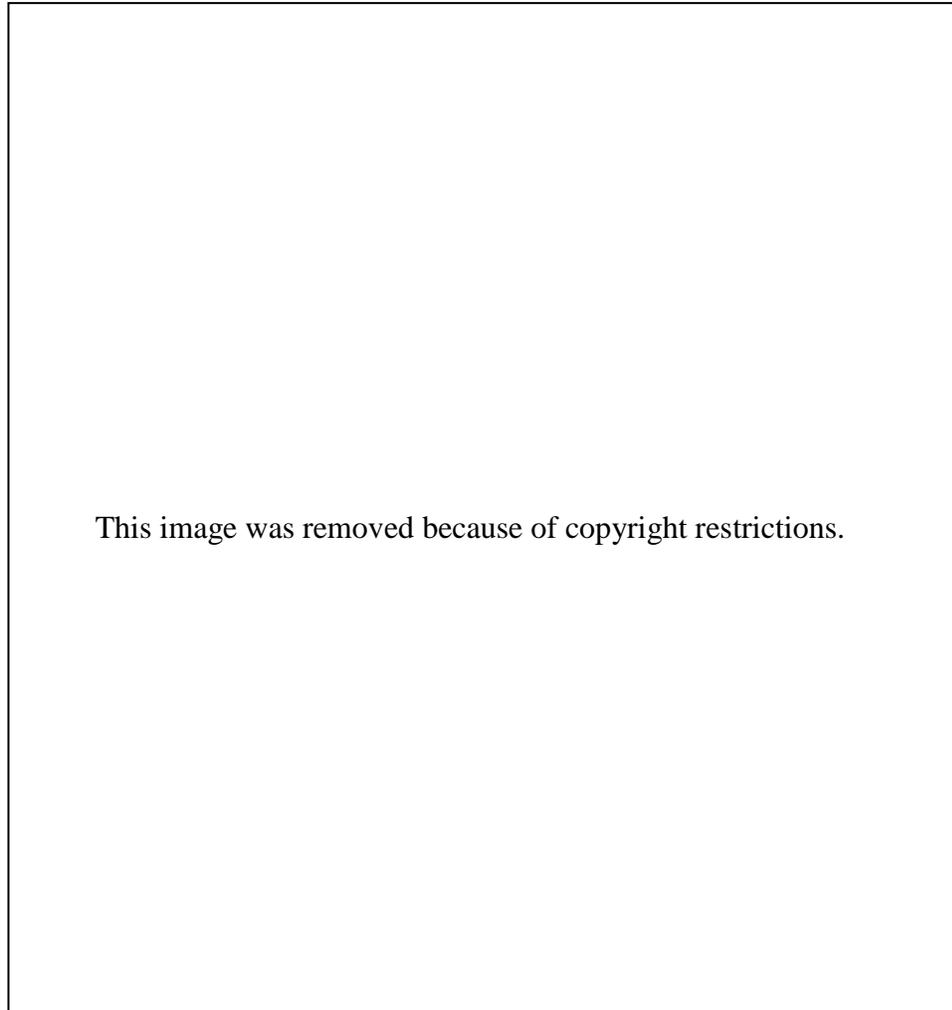
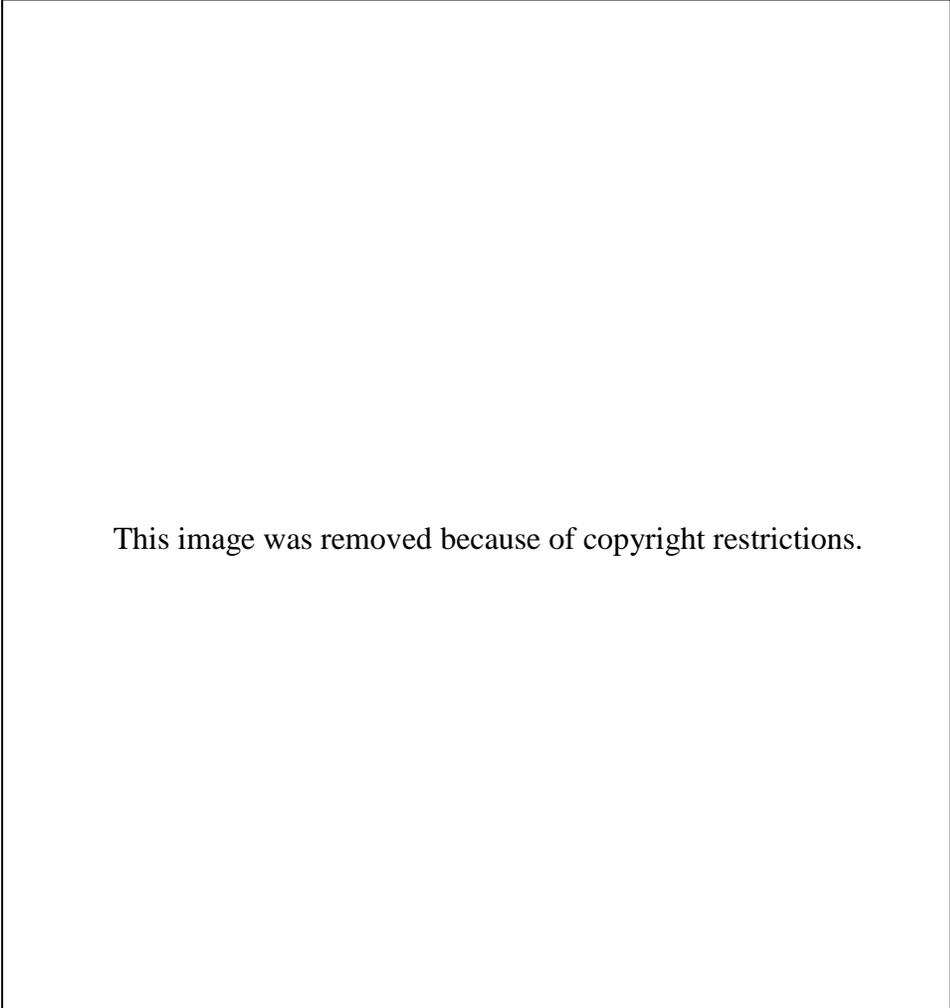


Figure 3: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 3r: preparation of wine and nakedness of Noah, the Tower of Babel, Abraham and Nimrod, Abraham hosting the three messenger angels.



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Figure 4: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 4v: Lot escaping from Sodom, the binding of Isaac, Isaac blessing Jacob, Esau returning from the hunt, Jacob's dream.

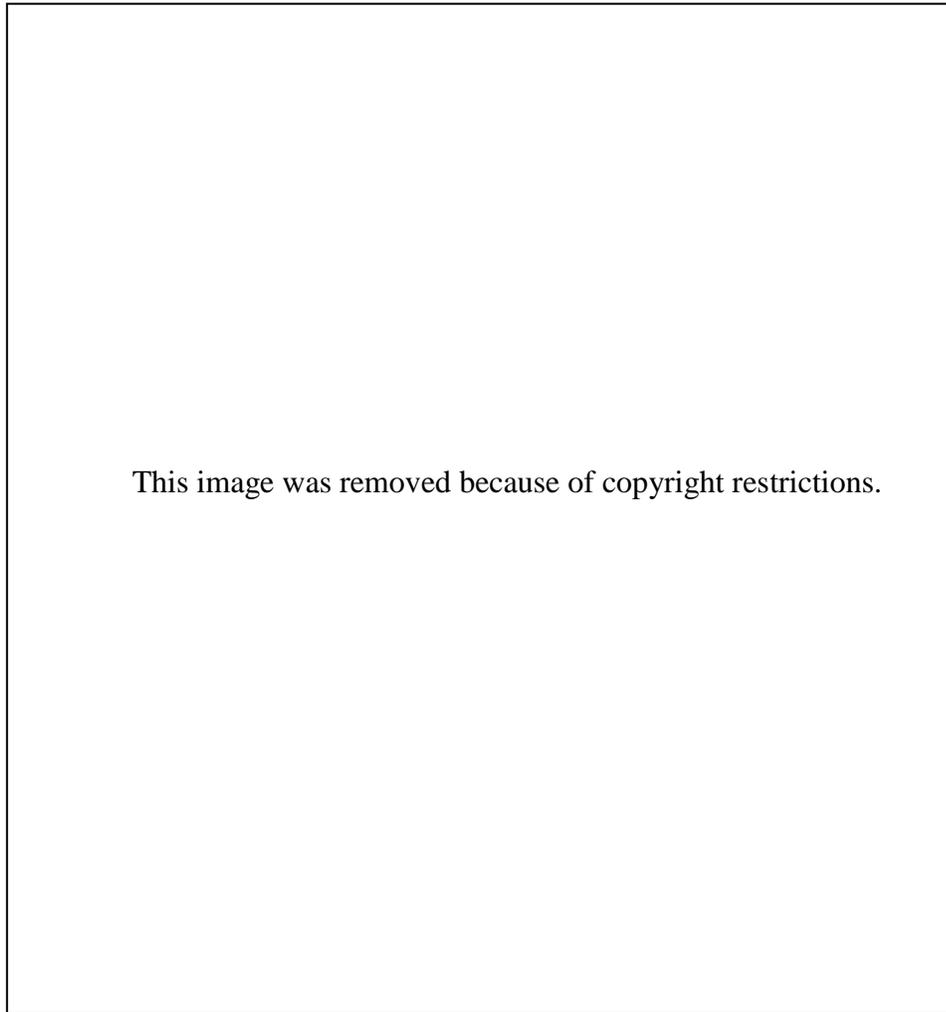
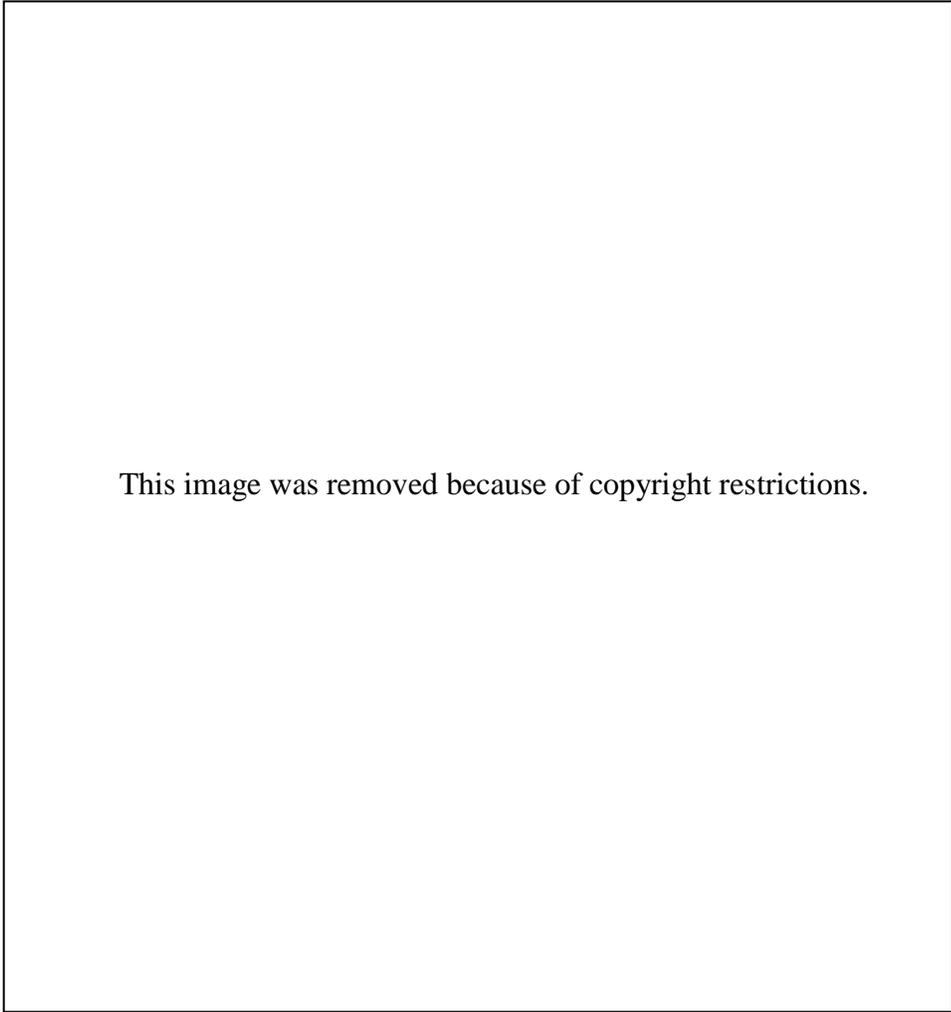


Figure 5: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 5r: Jacob wrestling with an angel, Joseph's dreams, Joseph reporting his dreams, Joseph on the way to Dotan.



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Figure 6: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 6v: Joseph cast into a pit, Joseph sold to the Ishmaelites, Jacob mourning Joseph's death, Joseph and Potifar's wife, Joseph in prison.

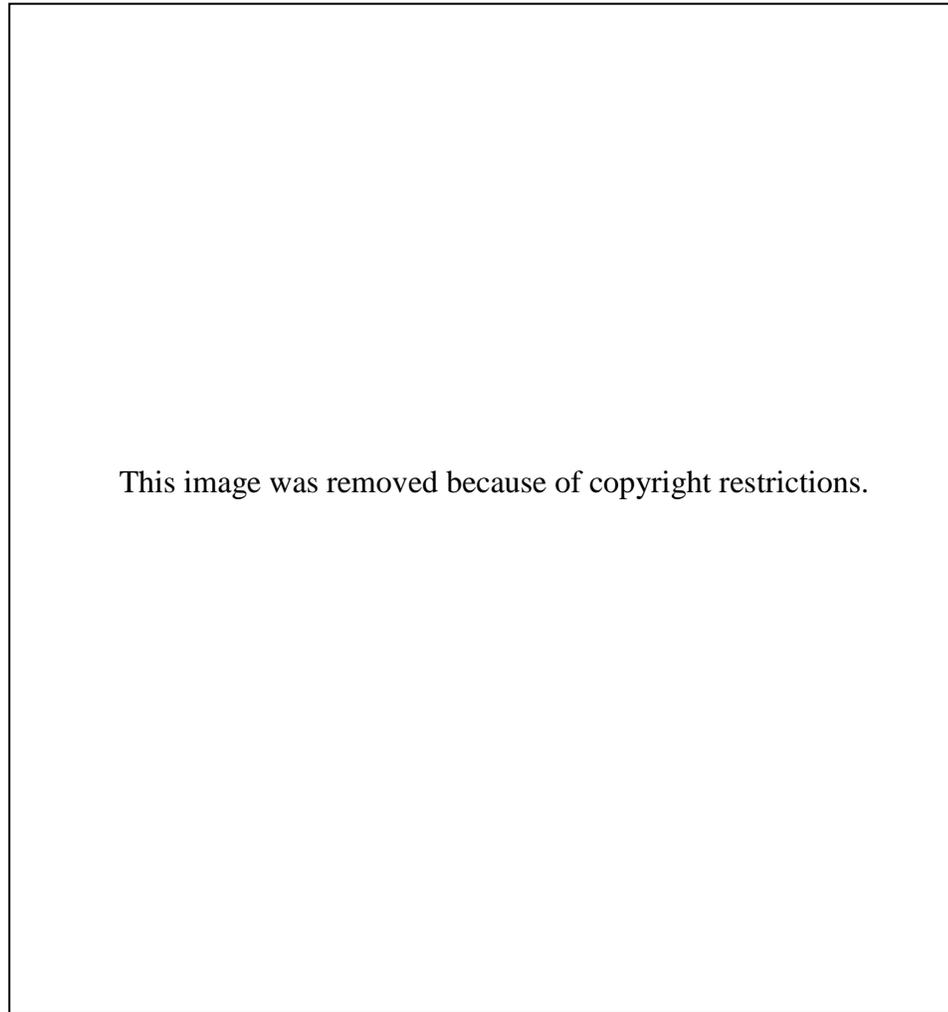


Figure 7: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 7r: Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, the arrest of Simon, Joseph kissing Benjamin.

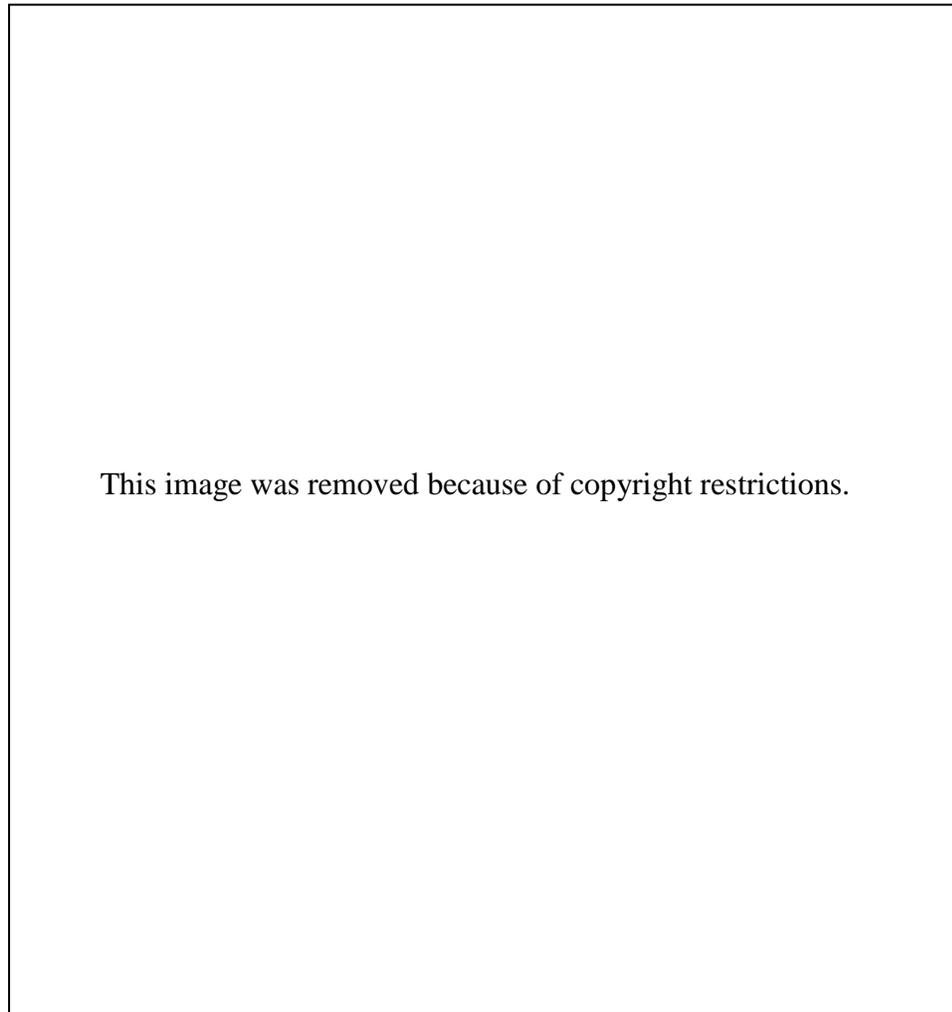


Figure 8: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 8v: Jacob and Pharaoh, Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, the burial of Jacob, Pharaoh addressing the midwives and infants being cast into the river.

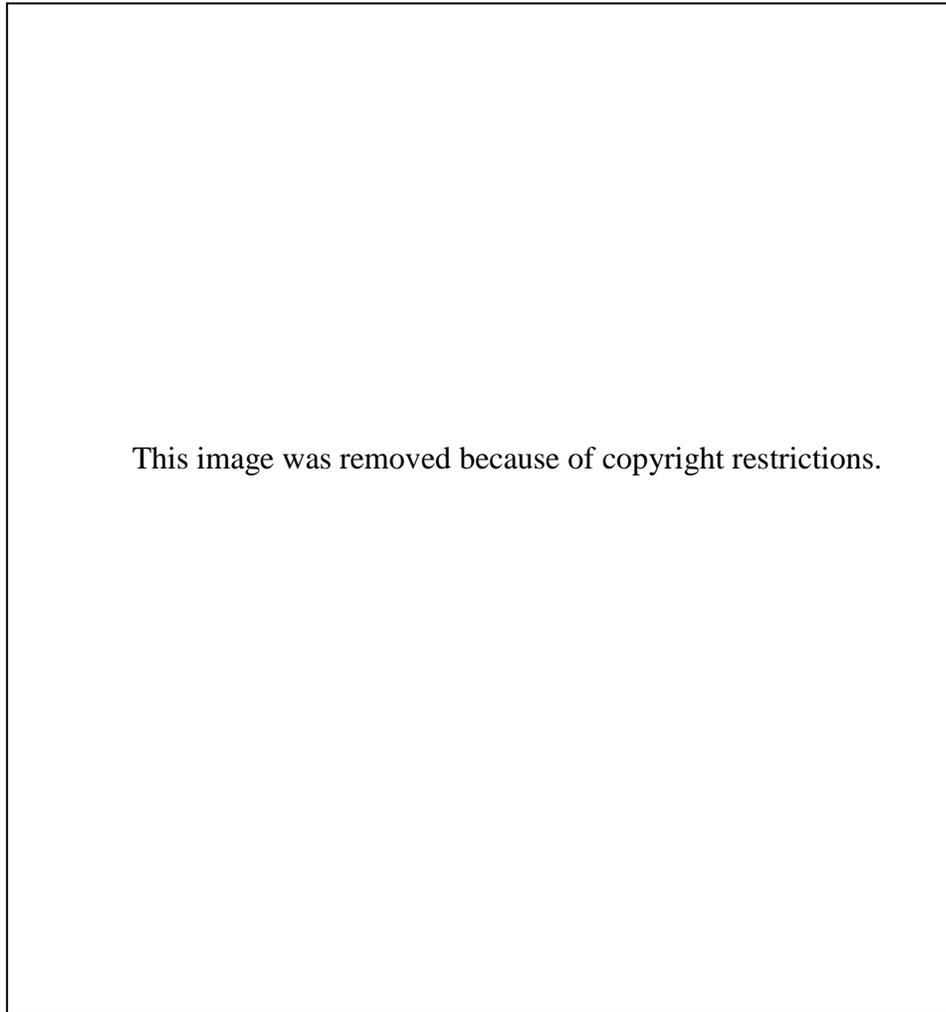


Figure 9: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol.10v: Moses at the burning bush, Moses returning to Egypt, Moses and Aaron performing miracles before the Israelites, Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh.

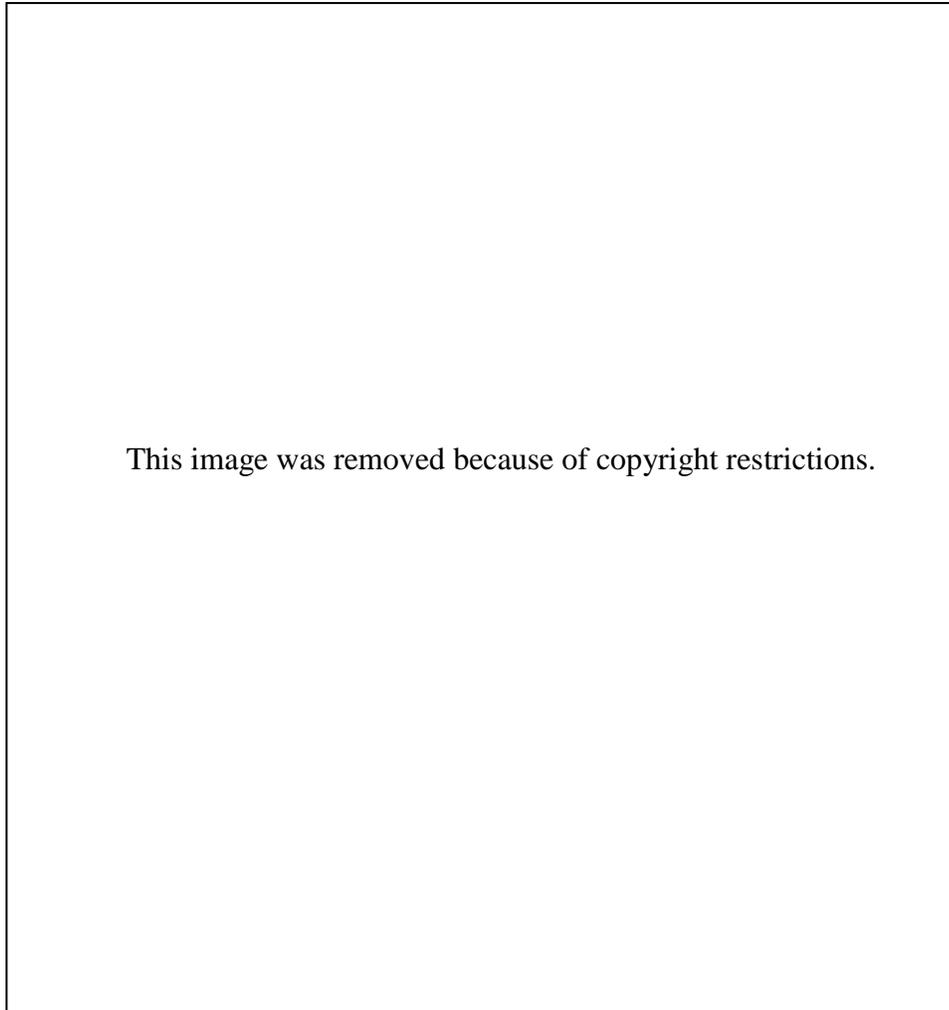


Figure 10: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 11r: The bondage in Egypt, Aaron's rod swallowing the magicians' rods, the plague of blood.

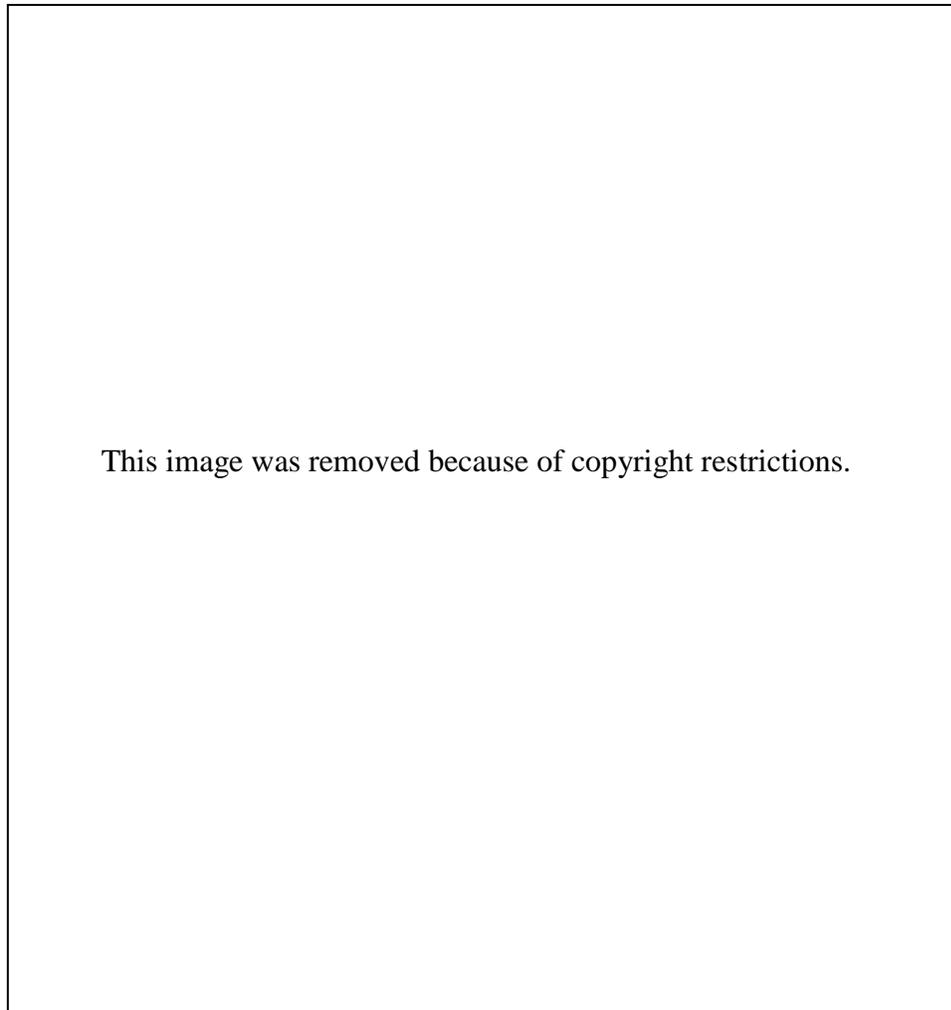


Figure 11: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 15r: Miriam dancing, preparing for the Passover feast.

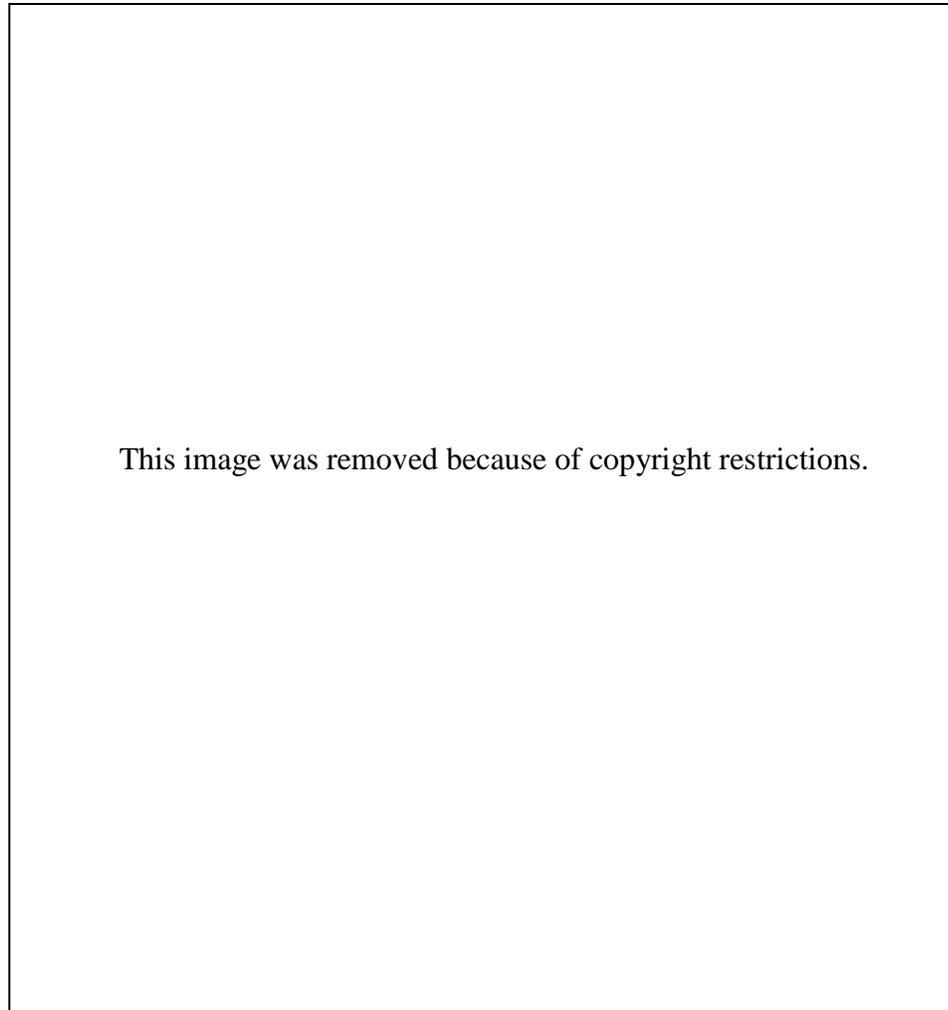


Figure 12: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 44v: matzah.

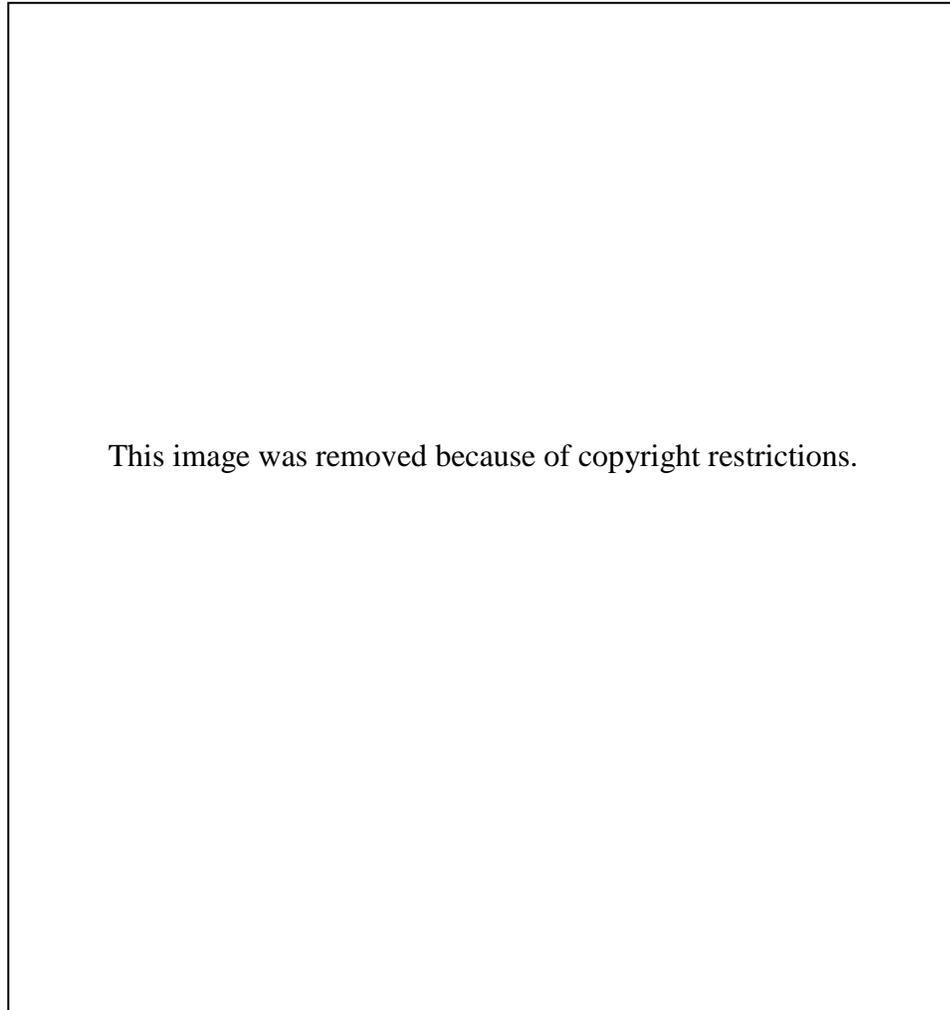


Figure 13: Golden Haggadah. London, British Library, add. ms. 27210, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 78v.

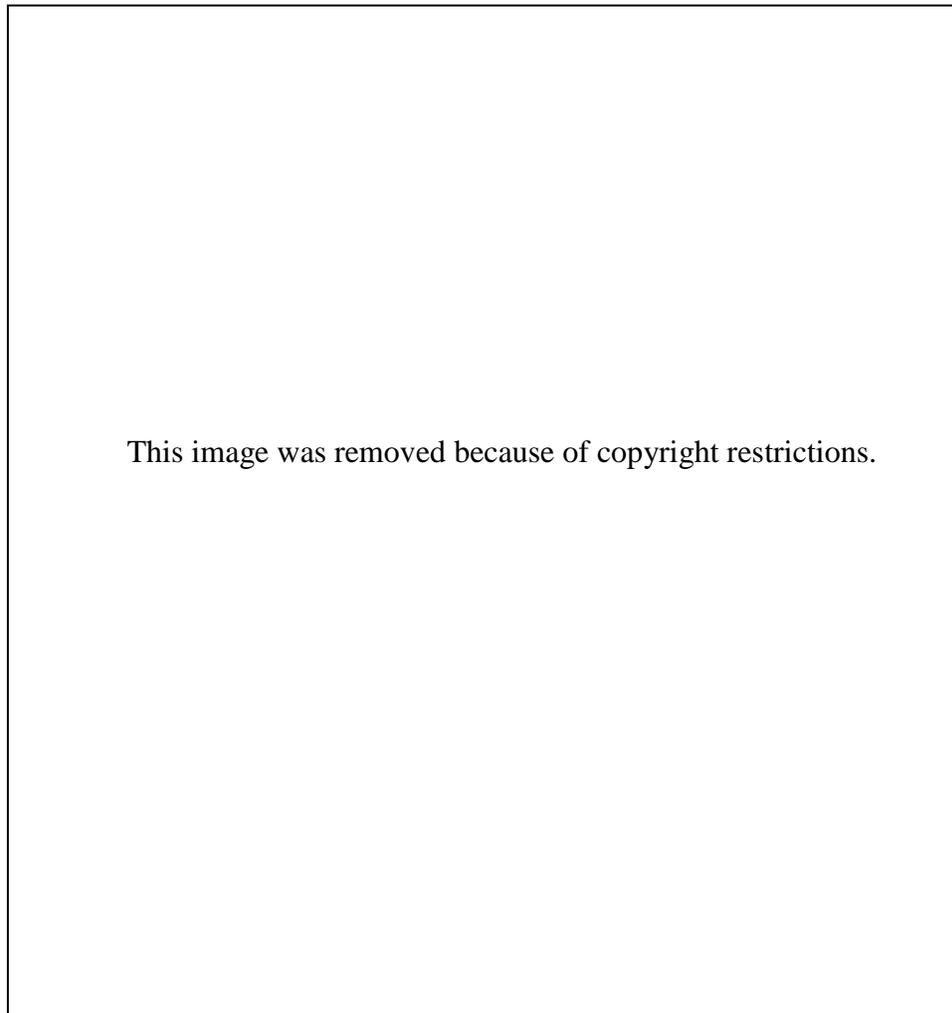
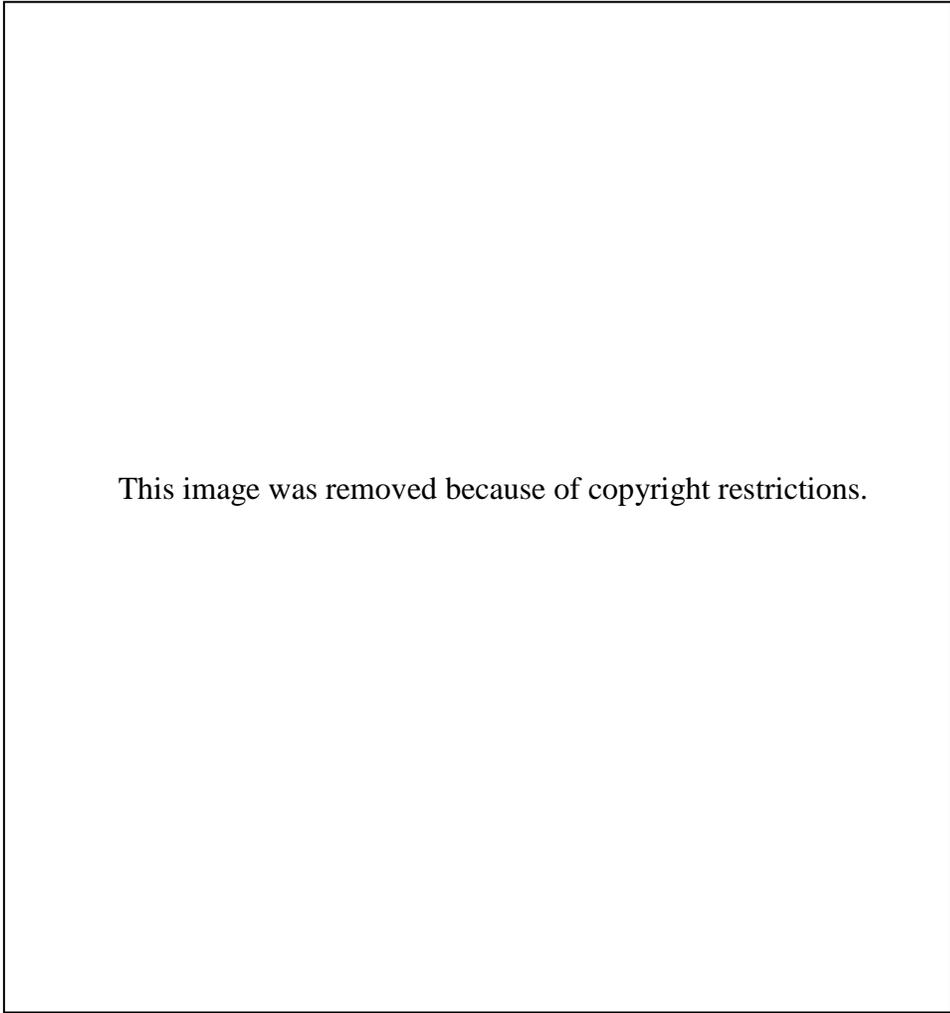


Figure 14: Sarajevo Haggadah. Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Aragon, c. 1320-35, fol. 1v: the creation.



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Figure 15: Sarajevo Haggadah. Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Aragon, c. 1320-35, fol. 7v: Lot escaping from Sodom, Abraham and Isaac on the way to Mount Moriah.

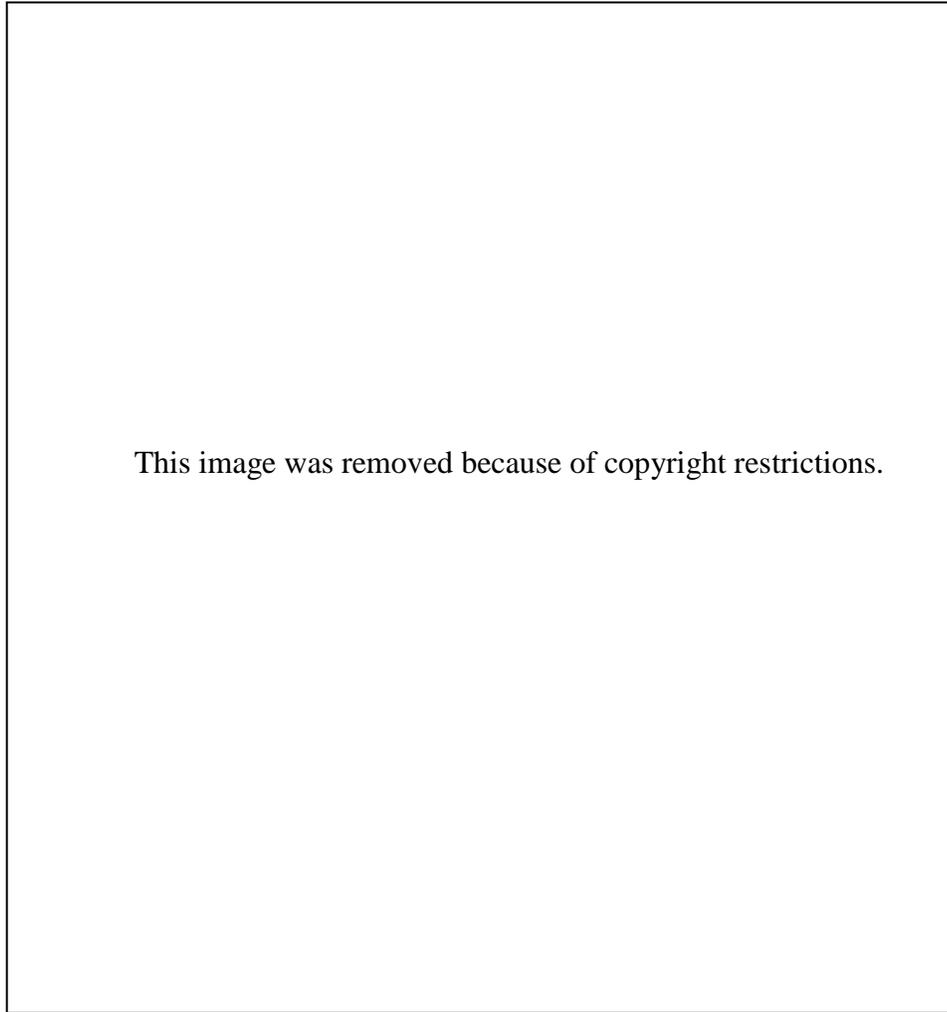


Figure 16: Sarajevo Haggadah. Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Aragon, c. 1320-35, fol. 8r: the binding of Isaac, the meeting of Rebecca and Isaac.

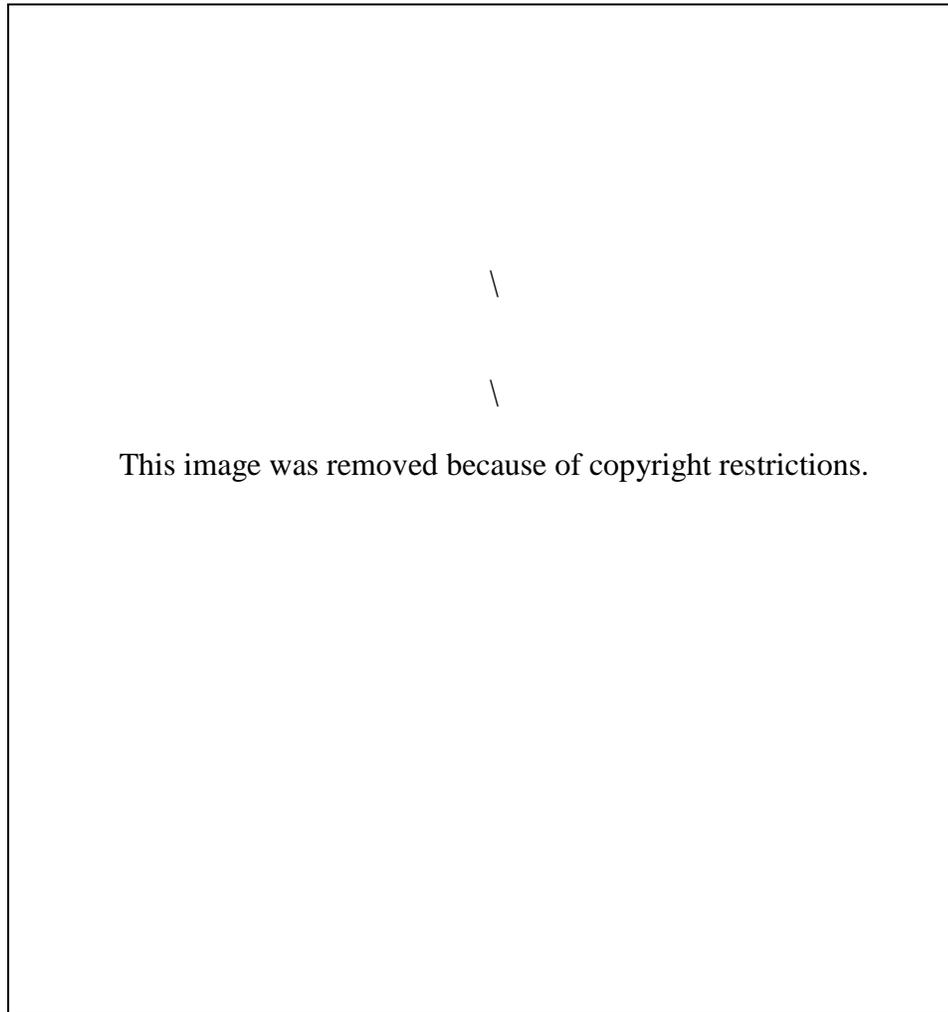


Figure 17: London, British Library, ms. Or. 2884, Passover Haggadah, Catalonia, c. 1320-30, fol. 9v: Joseph kissing Benjamin, Joseph hosting his brothers.

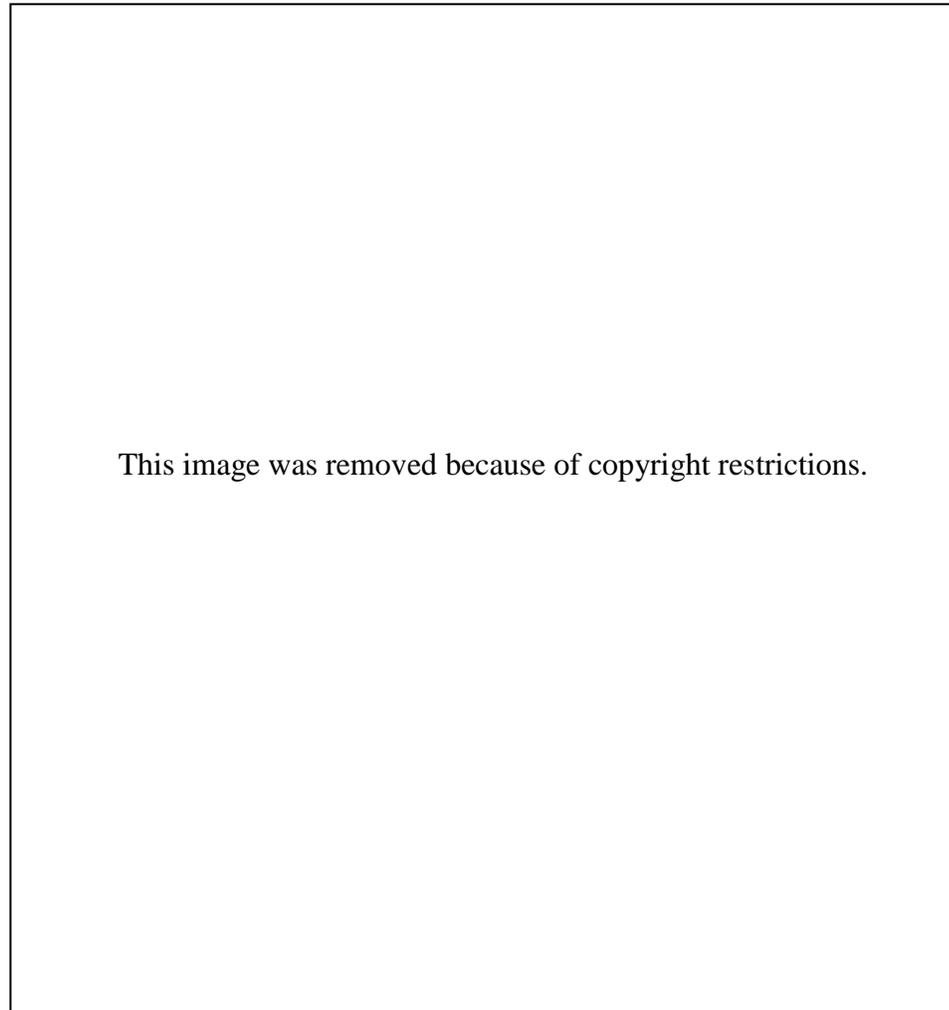


Figure 18: Rylands Haggadah. Manchester, John Rylands University Library, ms. heb. 6, Catalonia, 1330-40, fol. 16v: the plague of wild animals, the plague of livestock disease.

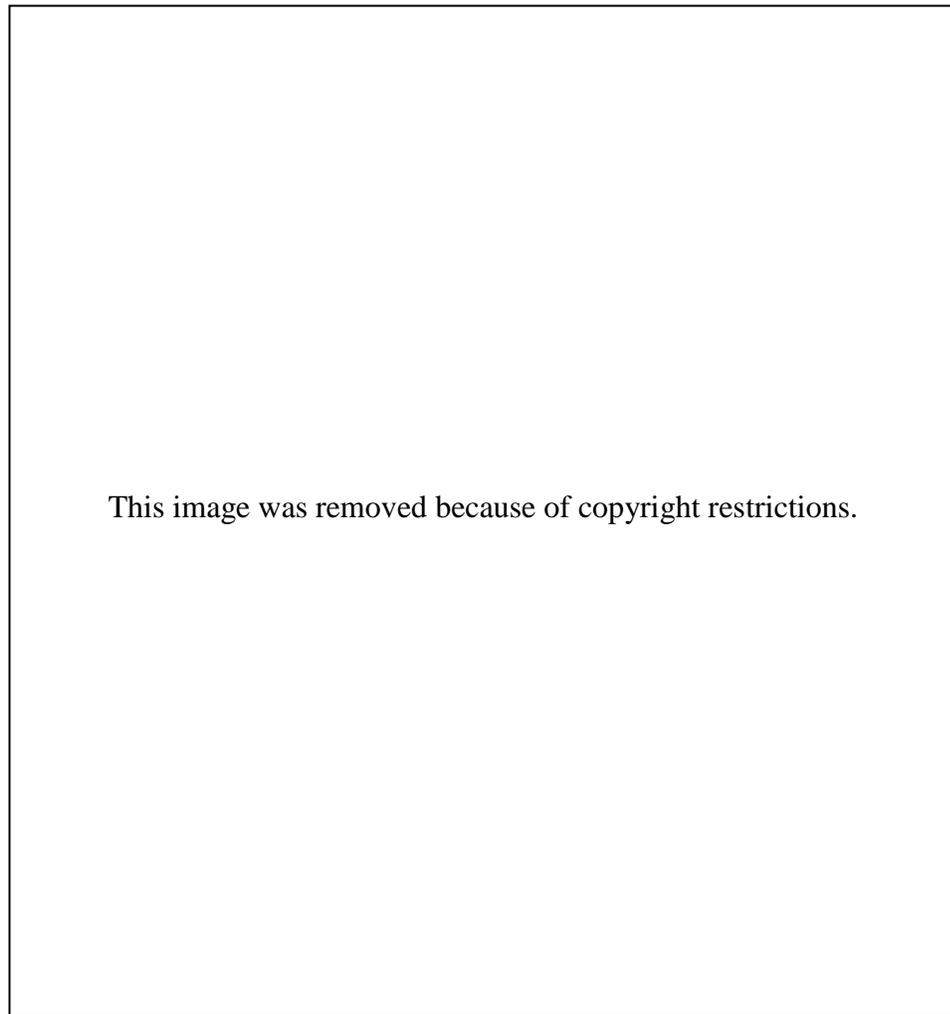


Figure 19: London, British Library, ms. Or. 1404, Passover Haggadah, Catalonia, 1330-40, fol. 4v: the plague of wild animals, the plague of livestock disease.

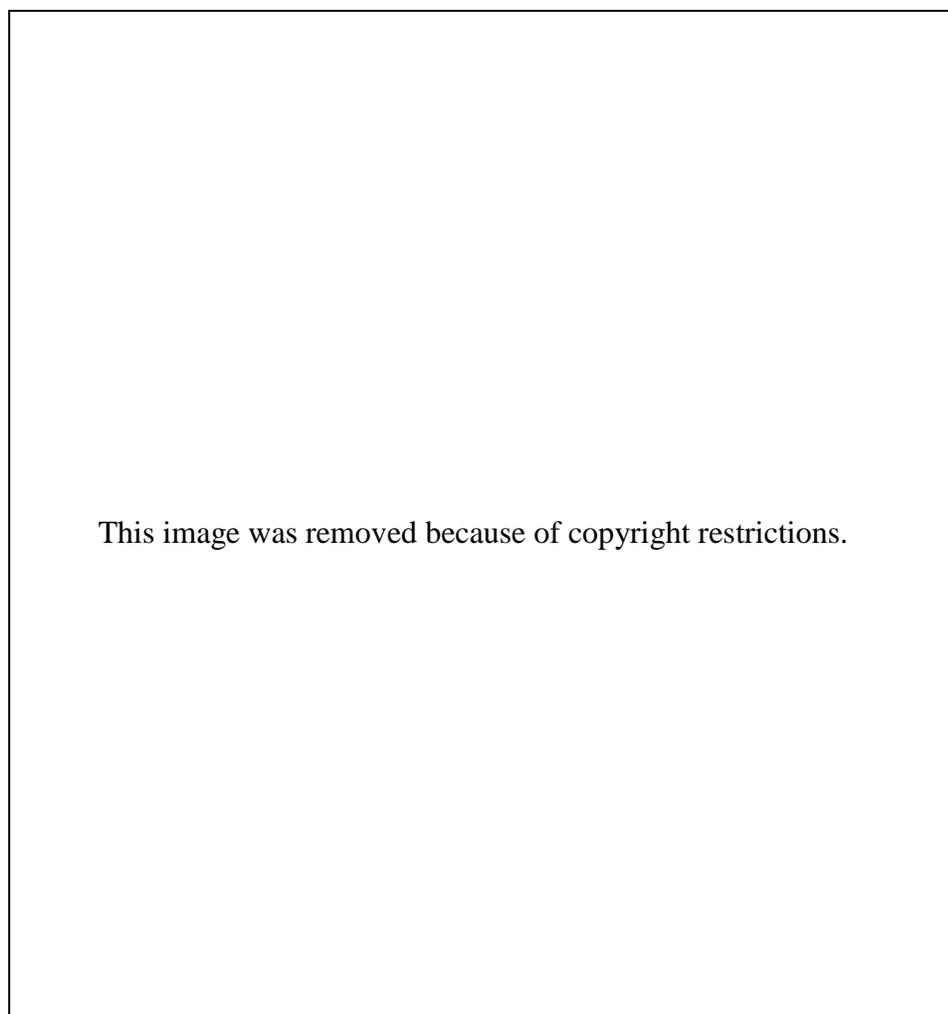


Figure 20: Prato Haggadah. New York, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Ms Mic. 9478, c. 1320-35, fol. 29: matzah.

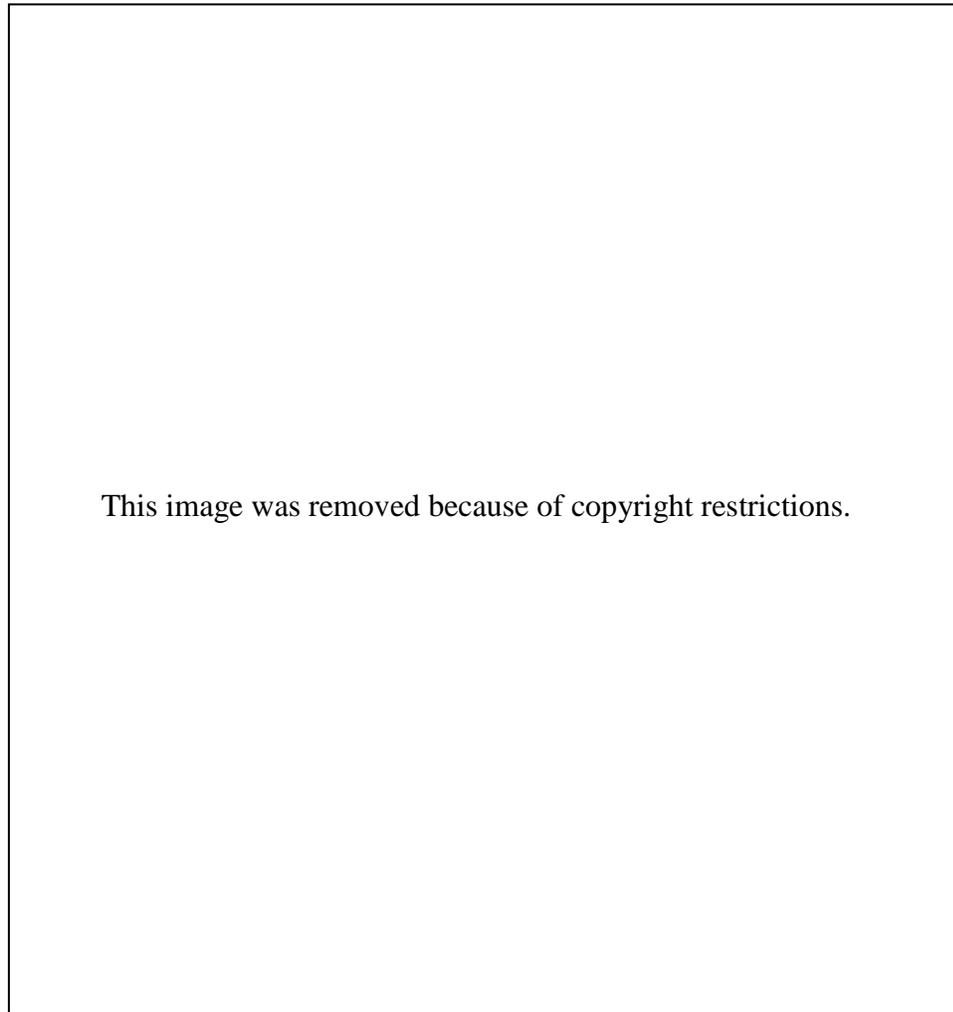


Figure 21: Morgan Picture Bible. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. M. 638, France, c. 1244-54, fol. 3r: Noah producing wine, nakedness of Noah, the Tower of Babel, the binding of Isaac, the four kings preparing for war.

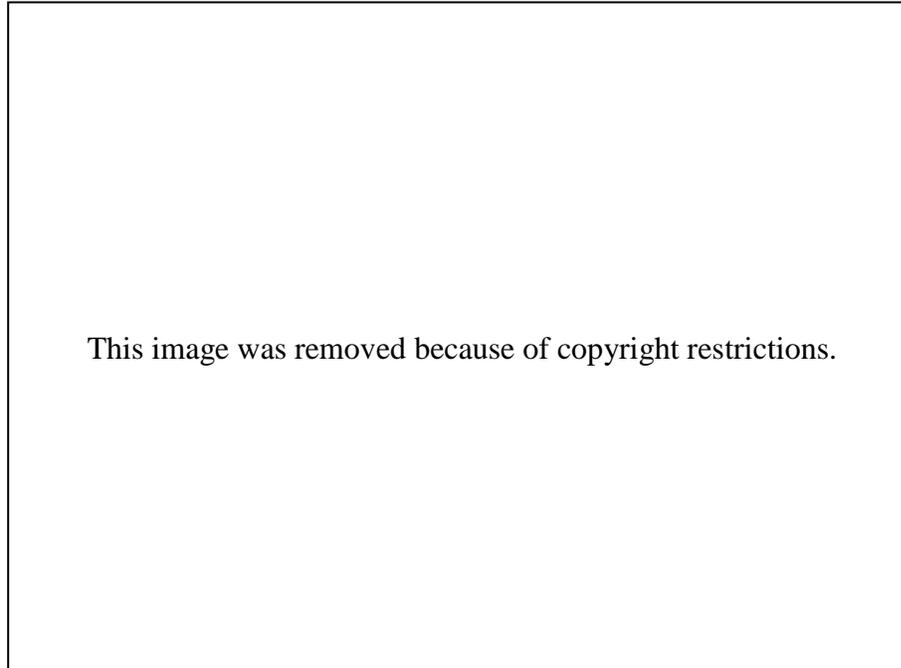


Figure 22: Naples, Sta. Restituta, marble panel, early thirteenth century: Joseph scenes.

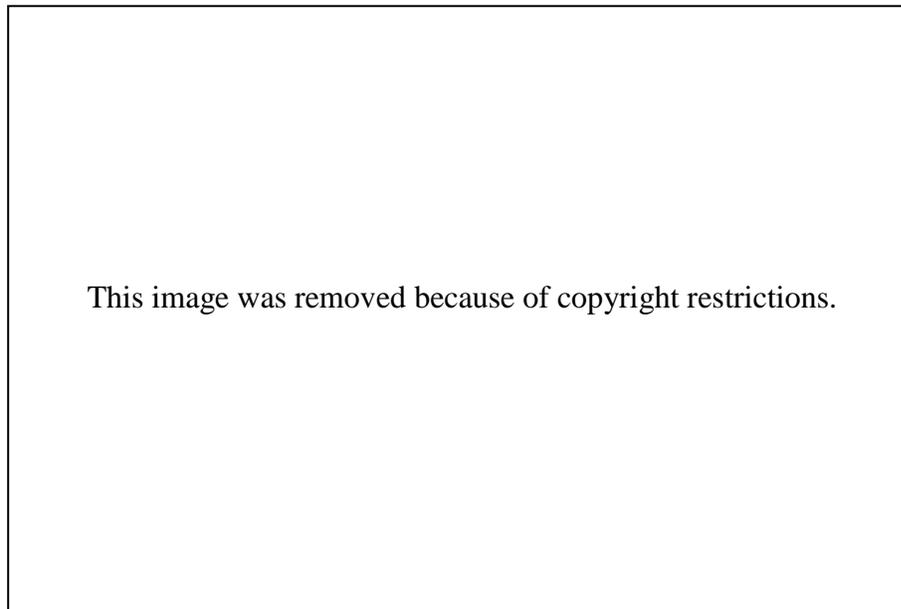


Figure 23: Naples, Sta. Restituta, marble panel, early thirteenth century: Joseph scenes.
Detail, 3rd panel.

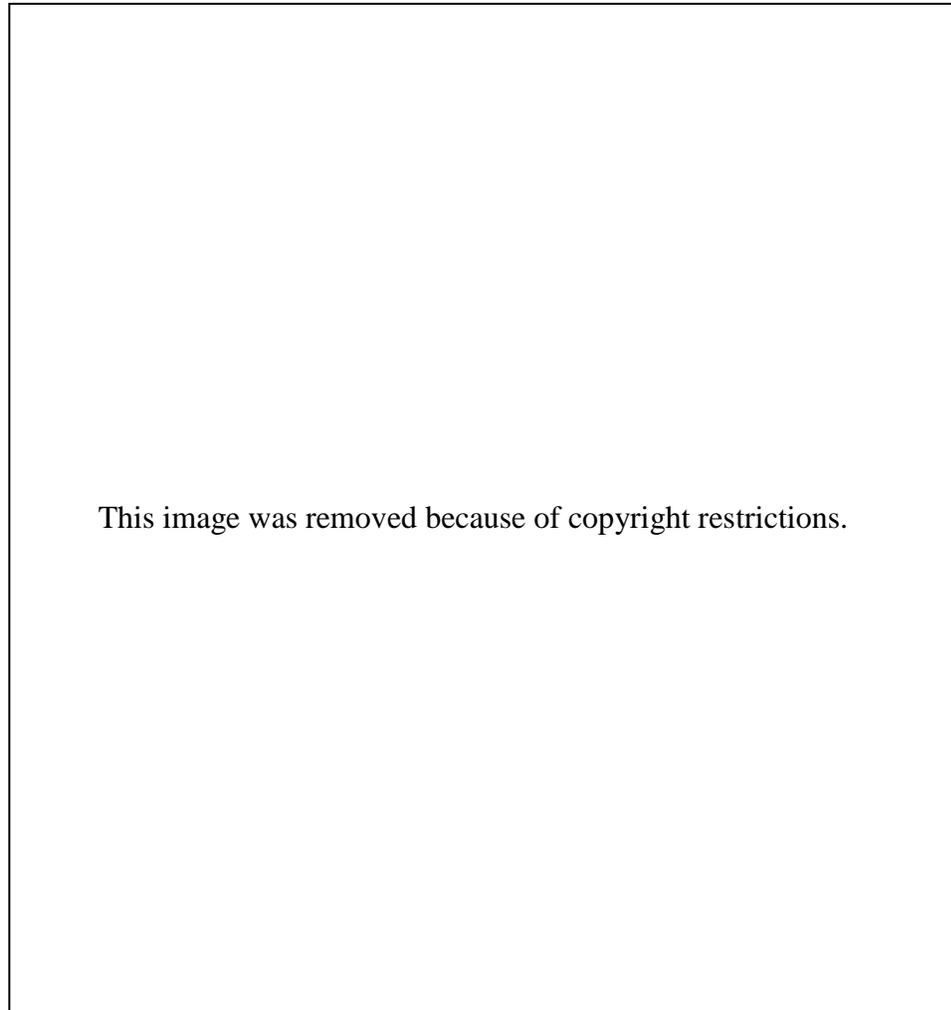
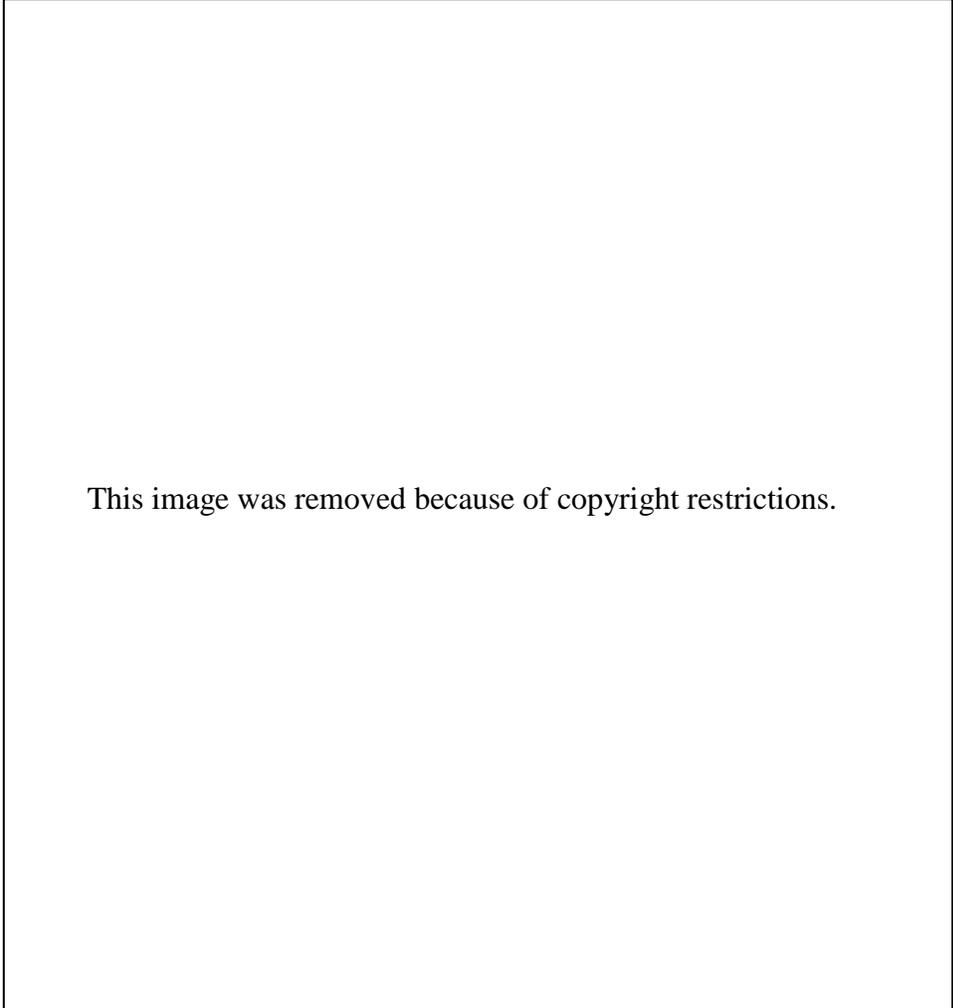
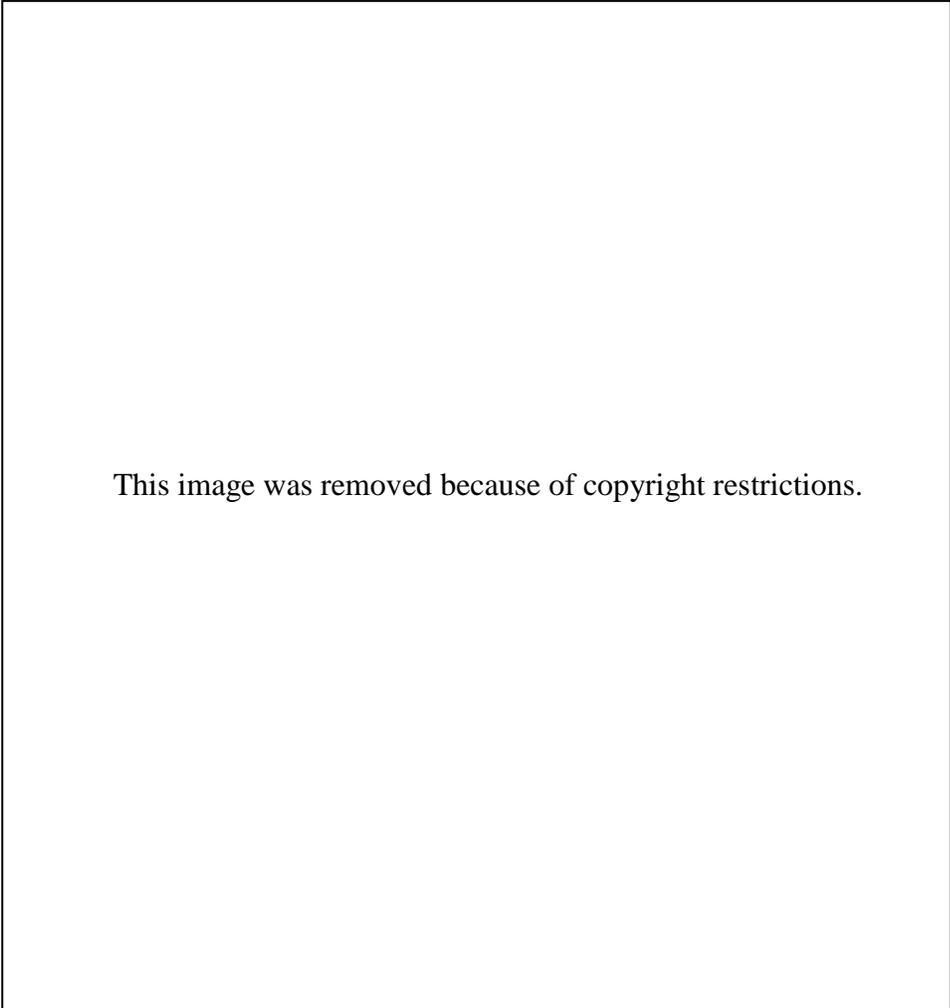


Figure 24: *Flight Into Egypt*, Jean Pucelle, c. 1320, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters ms. 54.1.2, Book of Hours for Jeanne D-Everaux, France, first quarter of the fourteenth century, fol. 83.



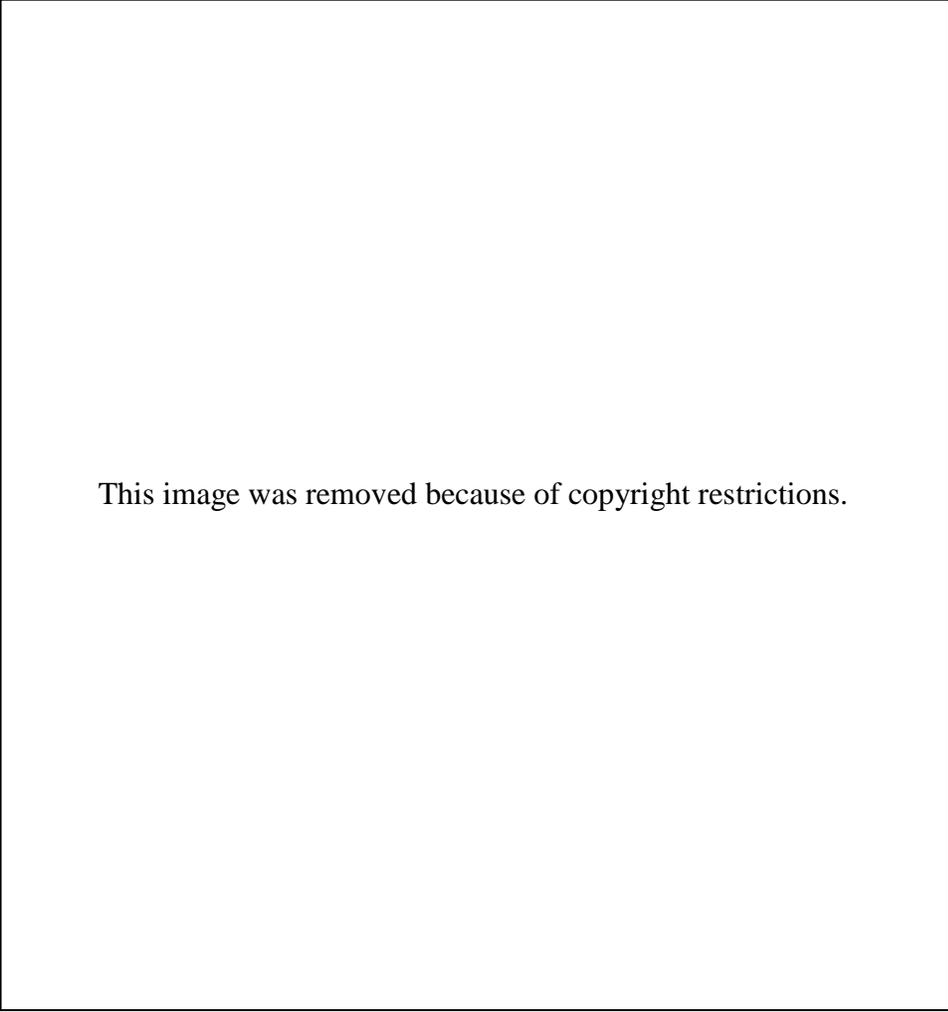
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Figure 25: Arroyo Beatus Manuscript. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. n.a.l. 2290, 1220, fol. 53v: vision of God enthroned.



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Figure 26: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. n.a.l. 2475, 1314, fol. 3:
Privilegio rodado of Alfonso XI.



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Figure 27: Vienna ONB cod. 2554, *Bible moralisée* (French), c. 1220, fol. 40v: top left: death of Samuel (I Kings 25:1); top right: David in the desert (I Kings 25:1-8); bottom left: Nabal curses David (I Kings 25:9-11); bottom right: David vows to kill Nabal (I Kings 25:12-13).

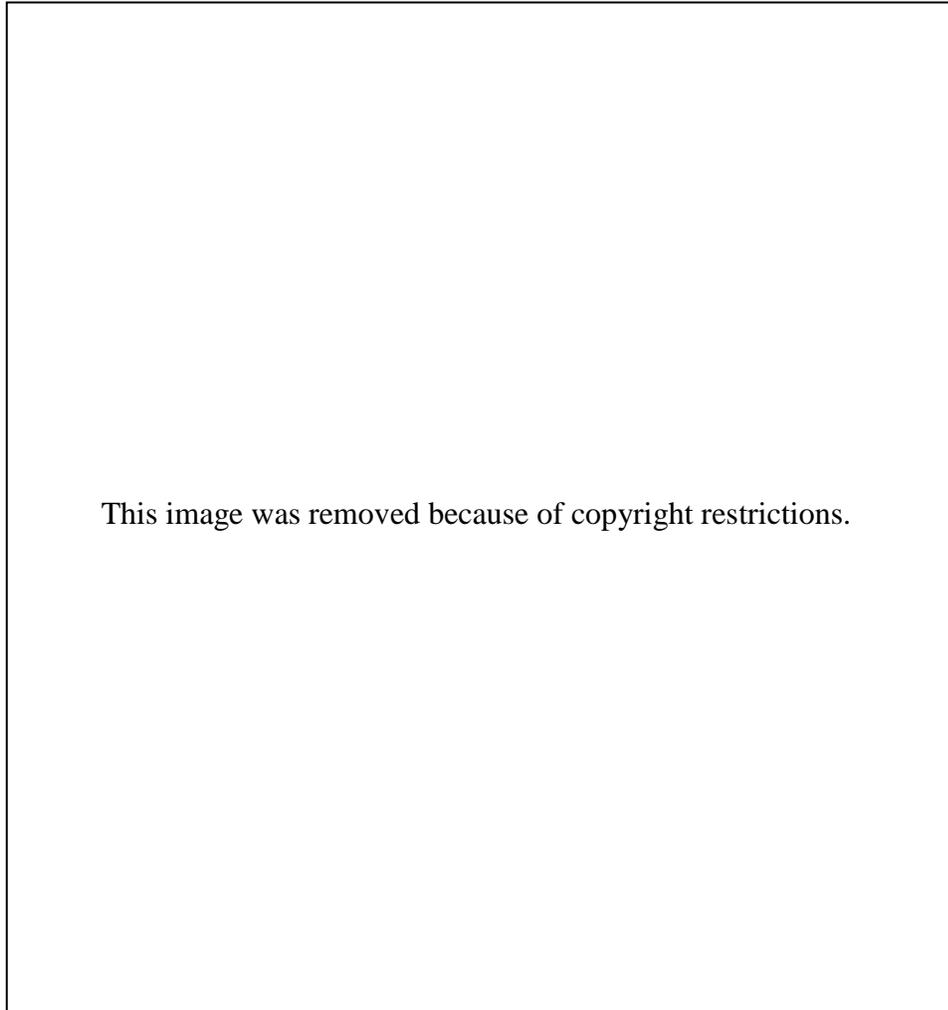


Figure 28: Detail of death of Samuel from Vienna ONB cod. 2554, *Bible moralisée* (French), c. 1220, fol. 40v.

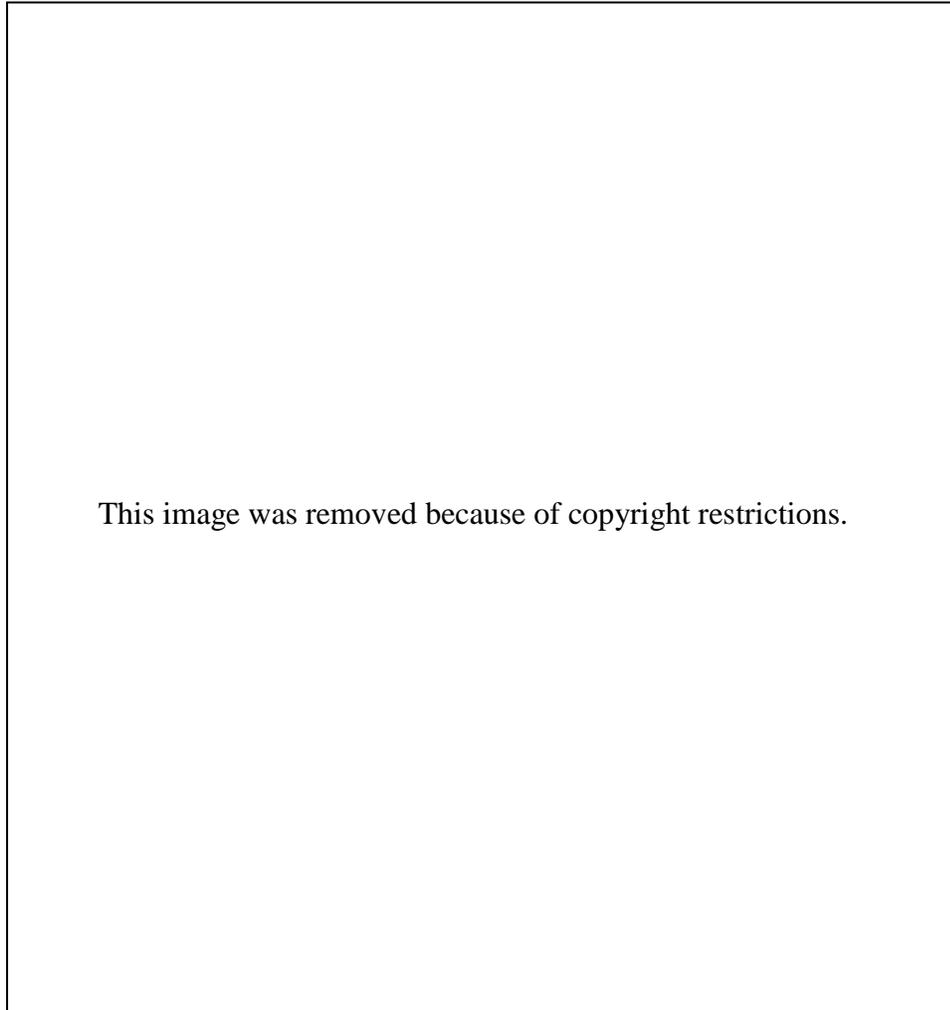


Figure 29. “How Holy Mary Got Even with the Jew for the Dishonor He Did to Her Image,” *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (illustration for cantiga 34), late thirteenth century, Escorial, MS T.I. 1, fol. 50r.

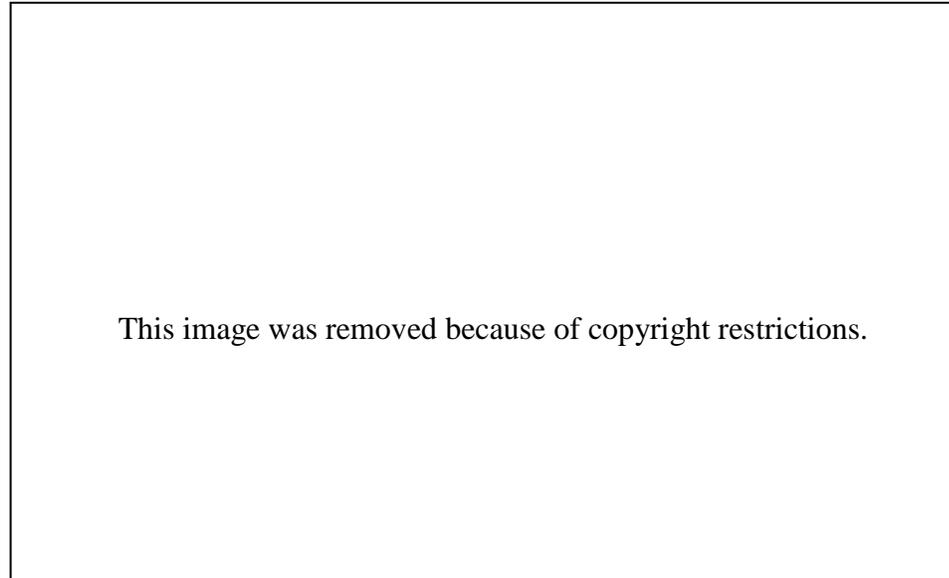


Figure 30: Detail of Jew from “How Holy Mary Got Even with the Jew for the Dishonor He Did to Her Image,” *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (illustration for cantiga 34), late thirteenth century, Escorial, MS T.I. 1, fol. 50r

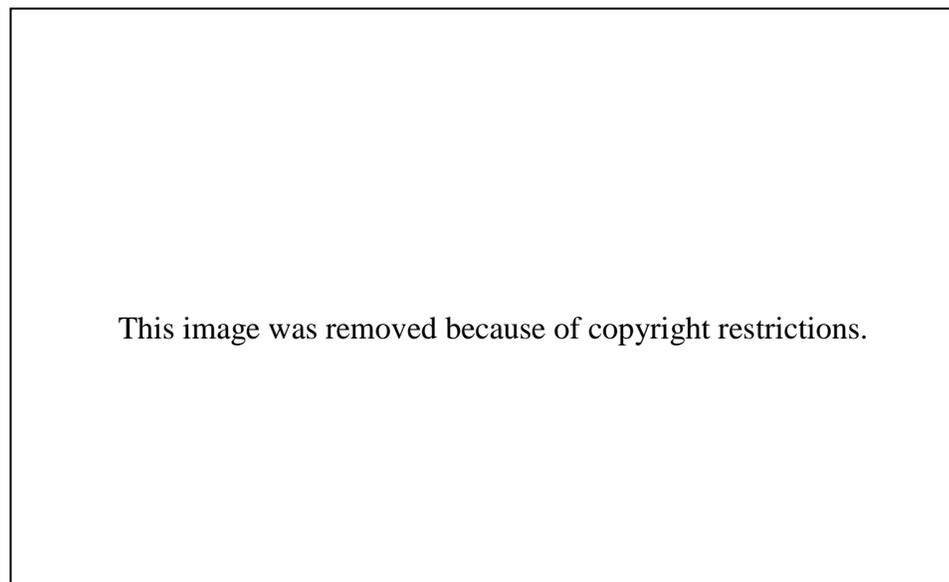


Figure 31: Detail of Christian from “How Holy Mary Got Even with the Jew for the Dishonor He Did to Her Image,” *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (illustration for cantiga 34), late thirteenth century, Escorial, MS T.I. 1, fol. 50r.

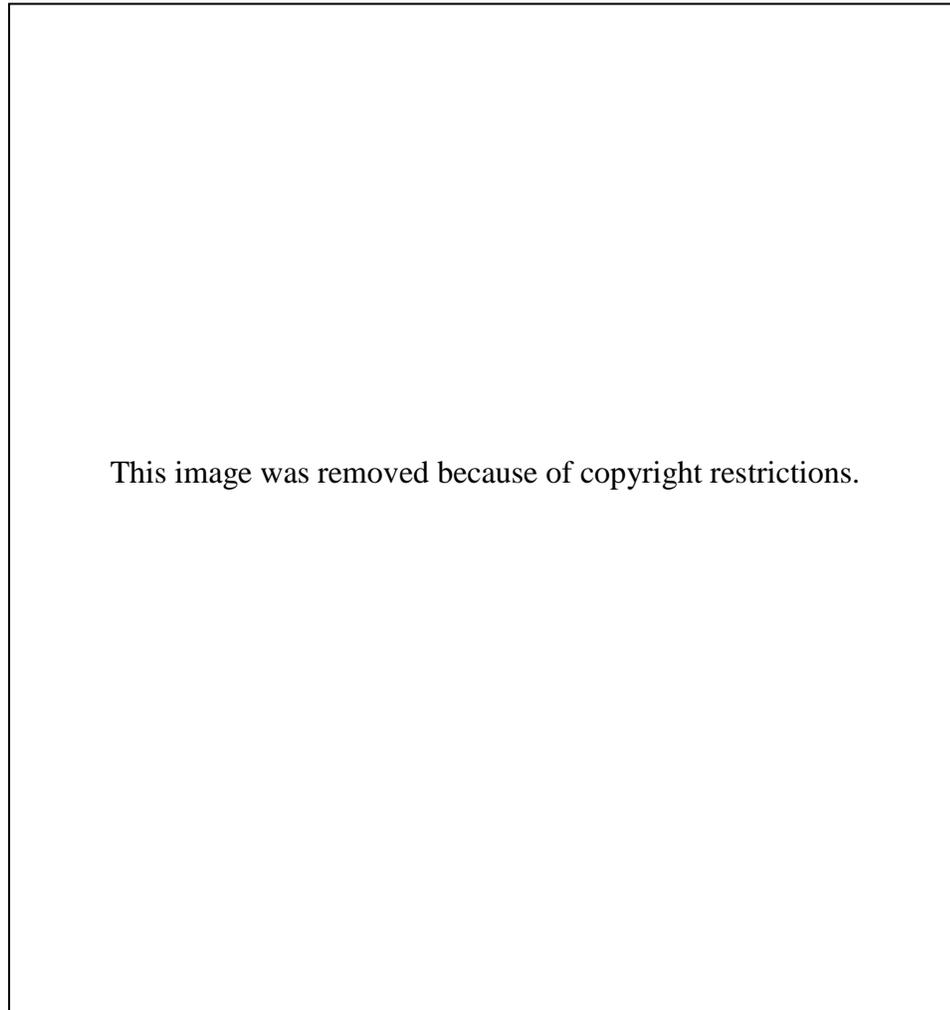


Figure 32: Altarpiece from Vallbona de les Monges, now in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC), c. 1335-45. Left side: A Jew attempts to desecrate the Host by placing it in boiling water. A pious woman realizes the fact and recovers it. The Host is then set on the altar. The Jew and his wife burn in fire in the presence of other Jews. The woman who recovered the Host dies among saints. Epiphany related to the central image. Right side: Miracle of the Host that runs away from the hands of the priest when he tries to administer it to an unworthy Jew. The Jew converts and receives Communion. The converted Jew is baptized. The Annunciation. Two panels showing another Host desecration.

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