

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS: A TANGLED HISTORY

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Session 6: The Middle Ages

THE CRUSADES

Schematic history of the Crusades

No.	Date	Events
1	1095-99	Declared by Pope Urban II in France; Jewish communities of the Rhineland annihilated; Antioch & Jerusalem taken, with their Jewish & Muslim citizens massacred; four crusader states set up (Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa, Tripoli)
2	1147-49	Sparked by recapture of Edessa by Muslims; Jews of France suffered; crusaders failed in the East; in Portugal, crusaders retook Lisbon from Muslims
3	1187-92	Sparked by Saladin's recapture of Jerusalem after Battle of Hattin; Richard the Lionheart & other kings took part; Acre recaptured & its citizens massacred
4	1202-04	Intended as an invasion via Egypt, the crusaders ended up capturing and sacking Constantinople, & established the Latin empire, occupying the Byzantine empire
5	1217-21	Captured Damietta in Egypt, but was defeated after attacking Cairo
6	1228-29	Emperor Frederick II recaptured Jerusalem, Nazareth & Bethlehem (for 10 years), and made a peace treaty with the ruler of Egypt
7	1248-54	After the Egyptian ruler Baibars defeated the crusaders of the Holy Land in 1243, Louis IX of France tried and failed to retake the area
8	1270	Another failed attempt organized by Louis IX, ending in Tunis, where he died
9	1271-72	Prince Edward of England (later Edward I) led an unsuccessful expedition to recover the Holy Land; by 1291 last traces of Christian rule there had ended

Speech of Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont, 1095 (Fulcher of Chartres)

For your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. For, as the most of you have heard, the Turks and Arabs have attacked them and ... have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians, and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire. If you permit them to continue thus for awhile with impunity, the faithful of God will be much more widely attacked by them. On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends. I say this to those who are present, it meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it. All who die by the

way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am invested.

Mainz Anonymous Chronicle

When Bishop John heard, he came with a large force and helped the [Jewish] community wholeheartedly and brought them indoors and saved them from their [the crusaders' and burghers'] hands. He arrested some of the burghers and cut off their hands ... Through the emperor, Bishop John removed the remnant of the community of Speyer to his fortified towns, and the Lord turned to them, for the sake of His great name. The bishop hid them, until the enemies of the Lord had passed.

Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson (c. 1140)

The hand of the Lord was heavy against His people. All the Gentiles were gathered together against the Jews in the courtyard to blot out their name, and the strength of our people weakened when they saw the wicked Edomites [Christians] overpowering them. The bishop's men, who had promised to help them, were the very first to flee, thus delivering the Jews into the hands of the enemy. They were indeed a poor support; even the bishop himself fled from his church for it was thought to kill him also because he had spoken good things of the Jews ... When the children of the covenant saw that the heavenly decree of death had been issued and that the enemy had conquered them and had entered the courtyard, then all of them—old men and young, virgins and children, servants and maids—cried out together to their Father in heaven and, weeping for themselves and for their lives, accepted as just the sentence of God. One to another they said: 'Let us be strong and let us bear the yoke of the holy religion, for only in this world can the enemy kill us—and the easiest of the four deaths is by the sword. But we, our souls in paradise, shall continue to live eternally, in the great shining reflection [of the divine glory].' ... The women there girded their loins with strength and slew their sons and their daughters and then themselves. Many men, too, plucked up courage and killed their wives, their sons, their infants. The tender and delicate mother slaughtered the babe she had played with, all of them, men and women arose and slaughtered one another. The maidens and the young brides and grooms looked out of the windows and in a loud voice cried: 'Look and see, O our God, what we do for the sanctification of Thy great name in order not to exchange you for a hanged and crucified one'

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 'Laws of Kings', 11: 4

Even Jesus the Christian, who thought he was the Messiah ... was the subject of a prophecy in the Book of Daniel [1: 14]: '... also the renegades of your people will exalt themselves to fulfill the vision, but they will stumble.' Could there be a greater stumbling block than this [Jesus]? For all the prophets spoke of the Messiah who will redeem and save Israel, who will ingather all its exiles, and who will strengthen them in the fulfillment of the Torah's commandments—while he [Jesus] caused Israel to be killed by the sword, their remnants to be dispersed and humiliated, the Torah to be switched for something else, and most of the world to worship a god other than the God of Israel! But the thoughts of God cannot be fathomed by human minds. For our ways are not like His, and our thoughts are not like His. All these activities of Jesus the Christian, and the Ishmaelite [Muhammed] who came after him, are all for the purpose of paving the way for the true King Messiah, and preparing the entire world to worship God together, as is written

[Zephaniah 3: 9]: 'For then I will convert the nations to a pure language, that they may all call on the name of God and serve Him together.'

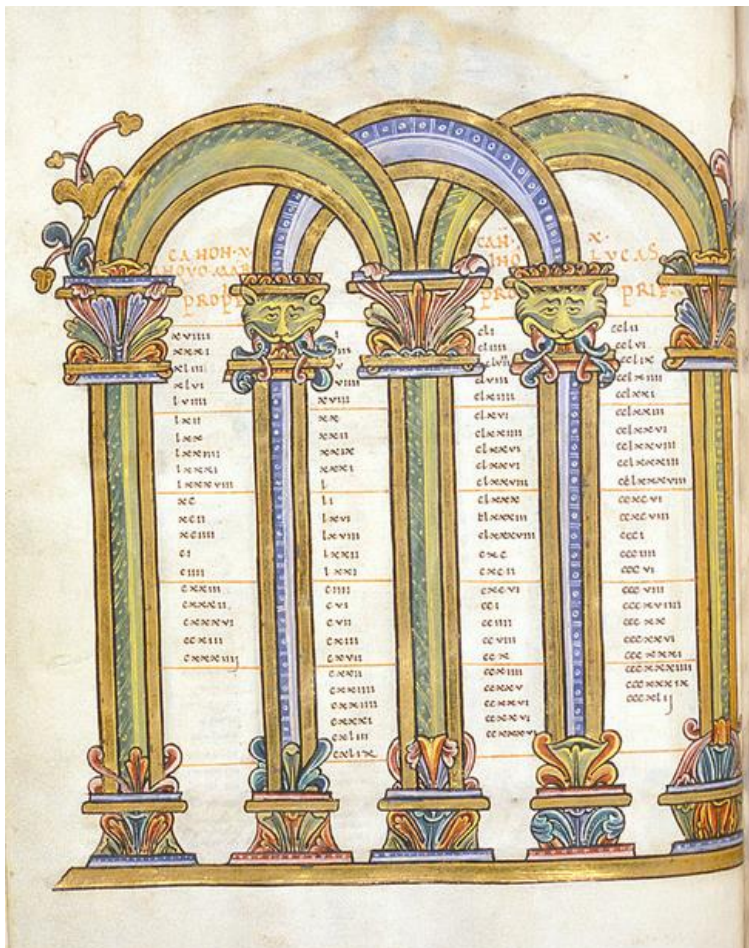
How will this work? For by then, the world will already be filled with the idea of Messiah, and Torah, and commandments, even in far-off islands and in closed-hearted nations, where they engage in discussions on the Torah's commandments: some say that the Torah's commandments are true but are no longer binding in these times, while others say that there are hidden, deep meanings to them, and that the Messiah has come and revealed their hidden secrets. But when the true King Messiah arrives, and will succeed and will raise them up, all the peoples will immediately realize that they had been taught lies by their forefathers, and that their ancestors and prophets had misled them.

Rabbi Menachem ben Shlomo Hame'iri (1249-1315), *Beit Habechirah*, 'Avodah Zarah' 2b, 22a, 2ba; 'Bava Kama' 113b; 'Bava Metzia' 27a

... even if their faith is different from ours, they do not belong to the category of idolaters ... they believe in the existence of God the Blessed One, in His uniqueness and omnipotence, even if in some respects, from the point of view of our faith, they incur in some errors ... in our time, in the majority of cases, even if sometimes they share oaths in the name of important dead personages [the saints], they nonetheless do not consider them deities [and thus there is no idolatry].

Below: canon tables from the Bury Gospels
(10th century, England)
(British Library)

Below: Masoretic table from a 13th-century
Hebrew Bible (France/Germany)
(British Library)

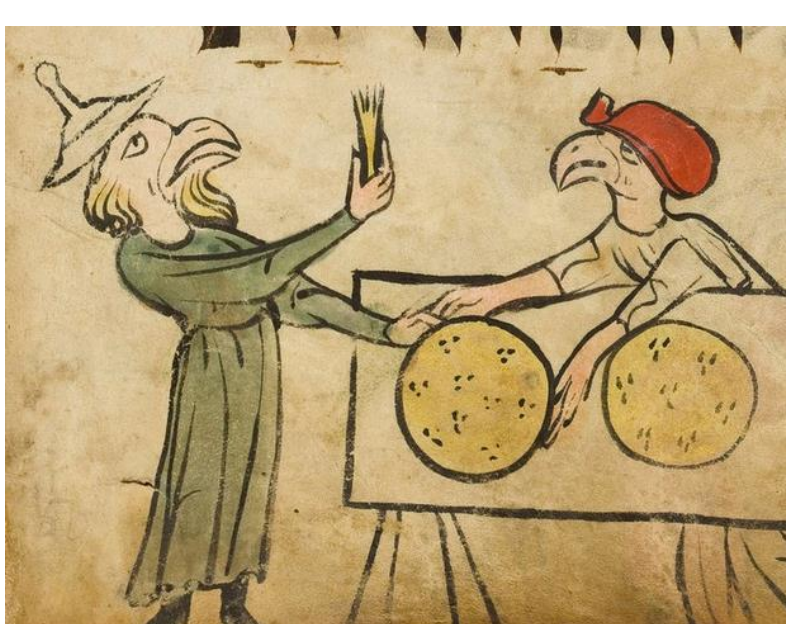


Exodus 20: 4-5

You shall not make yourself a graven image nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them, nor serve them.

Profiat Duran (d. 1414), *Sefer ma'aseh efodi*

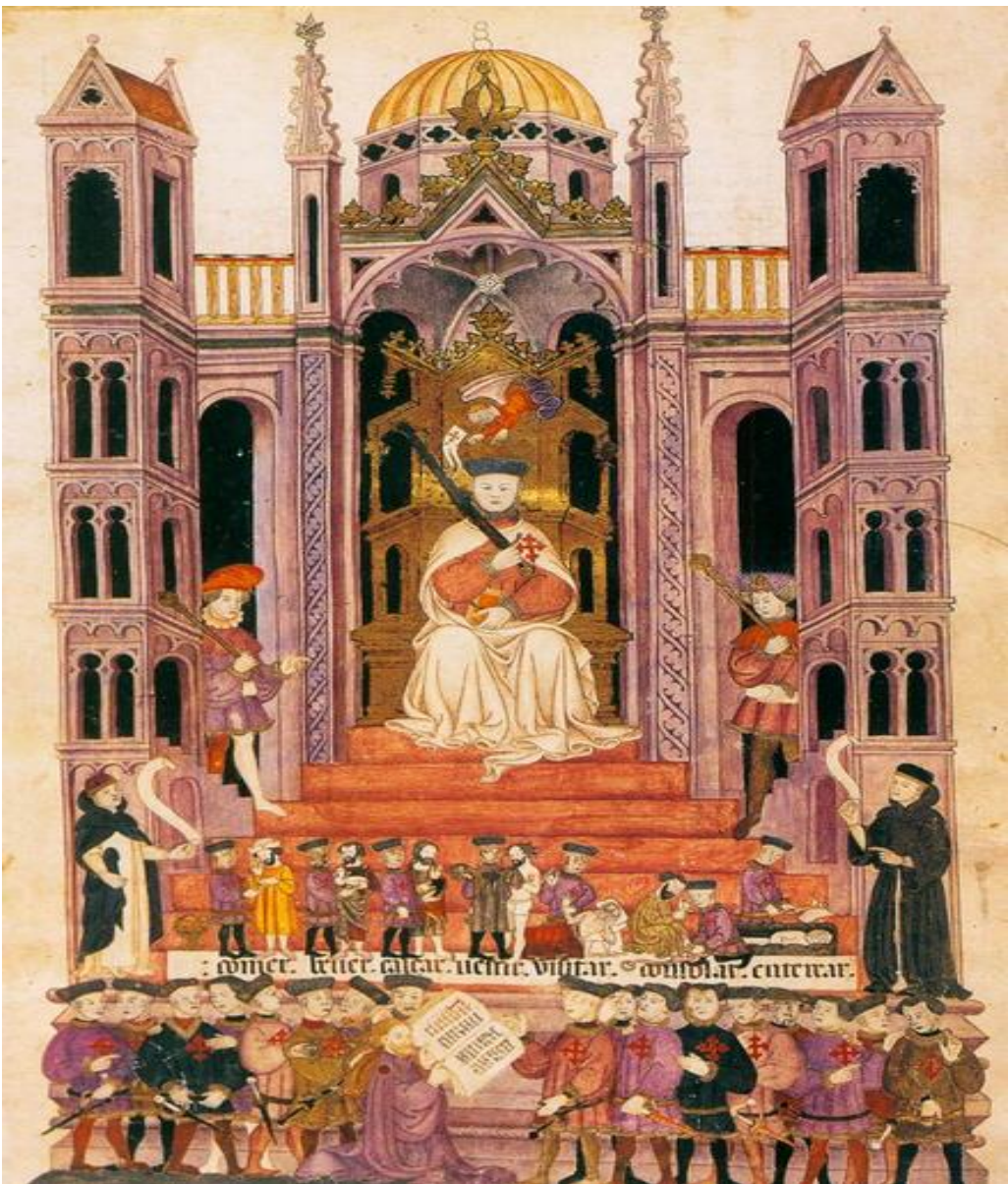
Study should always be in beautiful books, pleasant for their beauty and the splendour of their scripts and parchments, with elegant ornament and covers ... It is also obligatory and appropriate to enhance the books of God and to direct oneself to their beauty, splendour and loveliness. Just as God wished to adorn the place of His Sanctuary with gold, silver and precious stones, so is this appropriate for His holy books, especially for the book that is 'His Sanctuary'.



Left: Figures with 'bird's heads' making matzah;

Right: Pharaoh and his army, shown as figures with blank faces (the 'eye' is a later addition), ride to capture the escaping Israelites.

From the Bird's Head Haggadah, c. 1300, Mainz, Germany



Alba Bible, 1430

Luis de Guzman, grand master of the military Order of Calatrava, sits enthroned like a king, with an angel above his head.

Below him knights of the Order perform the 'seven works of mercy', apparently to newly converted Jews: feeding the hungry, giving drink, giving shoes, giving clothes, visiting the sick, consoling the mourners, and burying the dead. They are flanked on one side by a Franciscan, and on the other by a Dominican.

At the bottom, Rabbi Moses Arragel kneels to present his Bible to Luis de Guzman, surrounded by knights of the Order.

Further reading

Robert Chazan, *In the Year 1096 ... The First Crusade and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996)

Robert Chazan, *Church, State and Jew in the Middle Ages* (New York: Behrman House, 1980); contains many of the essential original documents from this period

Mark R. Cohen, *Under Cross and Crescent: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1994)

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