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### This Unleavened Bread: Matzot as an Insight into Iberian History, Culture, and Power Dynamics

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*This Unleavened Bread: Matzot as an Insight into Iberian  
History, Culture, and Power Dynamics*

Sadie Gelman  
Art History  
Spring 2018



This project would not have been possible had it not been for my advisor, Erik Inglis, as well as professors Farshid Emami and Matthew Rarey. Words cannot express how grateful I am for all their patience, insight, and support during this process.

תודה  
(Thank You)

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## Introduction

During the holiday of Passover, Jews celebrate the flight out of Egypt as told in the story of Exodus.<sup>1</sup> Typically, this celebration takes the form of a feast, known as a Seder, where various objects assist in the retelling of the story of Exodus. One of the most important objects used is the Hebrew text known as the Haggadah. The term *haggadah* means *telling* in Hebrew and directly references the following phrase attributed to Moses; “And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the lord did for me, when I came out of Egypt.”<sup>2</sup> In accordance with this quote, the Haggadah recounts the story of Exodus while also providing detailed instructions on how Jews should recreate the flight from Egypt during the Seder. Haggadot usually contain Passover prayers, poems, and images describing and illustrating various traditions and rituals that occur during Passover along with the story of Exodus. For instance, Haggadot tend to illustrate the various foods that are eaten during different parts of the Seder that symbolize different points of the journey out of Egypt. One of these traditional foods is the *matzo*, the unleavened “bread of affliction” which the Jews ate while fleeing Egypt, since they did not have time to let their bread rise.

Haggadot have existed since the second century and continue to be used today. While originally mostly textual in content, images slowly started to appear in Haggadot after the eleventh century. The Middle Ages were arguably where quality of illuminated Haggadot reached their peak. It was not until the fourteenth century that Haggadot were extensively decorated, with images representing rituals and parts of the texts. Much like their Christian

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<sup>1</sup>This project was heavily inspired by the works of art historians Bezalel Narkiss, Michael Batterman, Katrin Kogman-Appel, and Marc Michael Epstein. All of these authors have written extensively on illuminated Haggadot, and therefore will be continuously cited throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup>Cited in Bezalel Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah* (London: The British Library, 1997), p. 8

manuscript counterparts from this same time period, medieval Haggadot included full-page illustrations as well as decorated letters or marginalia. The artistic qualities of these Haggadot from Medieval Europe are unrivalled by manuscripts that preceded this period.<sup>3</sup>

Many surviving examples of medieval Haggadot are attributed to different areas of medieval Iberia. These regions include Castile and the Crown of Aragon, a monarchy based in Barcelona. Their proposed dates range from 1300 to 1400. This group of Haggadot has its own distinct illustration program within the larger category of medieval Haggadot. In these manuscripts we see a flourishing of elements shared with various other sources, including Islamic art and Christian art, which reflects the kind of cultural blending that was occurring in Iberia. Specifically, these manuscripts incorporated detailed sequential scenes with figuration and full-page, intertwining vine-like decorations, all of which do not appear to such an extent in manuscripts from outside of the Iberian Peninsula.

One of the most distinctive qualities of these Spanish Haggadot lies in their depiction of the matzo. While a variety of foods are awarded unique significance during the Seder, these manuscripts from 14<sup>th</sup>-century Spain emphasize the importance of the matzo more than other foods. The matzo was one of the first objects to be awarded an illustration in Haggadot, accompanied by the appearance of the bitter herb eaten during the Seder, known as *maror*.<sup>4</sup> By the time of the matzo's appearance in medieval Spanish Haggadot, it is clear that the wafer had gone through an extensive transformation while the maror did not. Each of these manuscripts distinguishes the matzo wafer through illustration in a similar but peculiar manner: rather than depict the matzo as a simple wafer, these Haggadot depict the matzo as an elaborate roundel,

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<sup>3</sup>Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah*, pp. 8-10

<sup>4</sup>Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah*, p. 9

formed or surrounded by intricate, interlacing colorful patterns (see fig. a).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the matzot dominate the pages in all of the manuscripts, as the wafer is usually the largest object on the page and is situated near the middle of the composition. At times, the matzot disrupt their surroundings, appearing in the middle of a textual passage and cutting the verses in half. As a result, the words are forced to disperse around the roundel, and a phrase that begins on the right side of the wafer (since Hebrew is read right to left) is abruptly stopped by the wafer, and then continues on the left side of it. It is clear that space has been made for the wafer as the words disperse around it, further suggesting its importance as the wafer was drawn first and the words were added around it.

It is also in these depictions where we see a collision of figurative and non-figurative modes of representation. For instance, we see the qualities of a carpet page channeled through gold, unwinding floral patterns, and coupled with the appearances of figures who interact within the same space (fig. b). These designs ultimately render the matzo unrecognizable as the unleavened bread it is meant to represent. Importantly, this elaborate decoration is unique to Spanish Haggadot. Other manuscripts from outside of the peninsula do not award the matzo such an embellished appearance. Instead, in manuscripts from other parts of Europe, such as the Birds' Head Haggadah from what is now Mainz, Germany, the depictions of the matzot are miniscule and lost within the marginal scenes (fig. 1).<sup>6</sup>

Despite the intricate appearance of the matzot in all of the surviving Iberian manuscripts, very little has been written on these depictions specifically. While there have been extensive writings on the general illustration programmes of these manuscripts, the matzot's bizarre,

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<sup>5</sup> Figures of the matzot folios alone will be labelled with letters, whereas other images will be labelled with numbers.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Michael Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative, and Religious Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 100

colorful, elaborate representation has been largely overlooked. When acknowledged by prominent scholars of Jewish manuscripts such as Bezalel Narkiss or Katrin Kogman-Appel, the analysis is brief, and typically does not extend past the quick connection of the matzot's appearance to other forms of art present in the Iberian Peninsula, including Islamic manuscripts or gothic architecture.<sup>7</sup>

Through a close analysis of the visual appearance of the matzot this project will answer the following questions: why are matzot embellished in a certain way, where does this decoration come from, and what does this decoration signify? Given the constantly shifting power dynamics and cross-cultural relations in Iberia, I argue that the social and political climate of Iberia influenced how the matzo was viewed and depicted in Haggadot. Furthermore, I emphasize that the decoration of the matzot wafers were not inspired by a single source, but, rather, drew simultaneously from several different kinds of visual cultures that coexisted in the Iberian Peninsula. In addition, I argue that the cultural borrowing and sharing evident in these depictions had a much larger significance, and directly related to the cultural situation which surrounded their creation. In other words, through extensive research presented in this project, I argue that the decorative nature of the matzot holds a cultural significance for Jews, one that addressed and responded to the continuous oppression of Spanish Jewry in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Analyzing these images that grew out of this diverse region will ideally provide a better understanding of how Jewish interpretations and depictions of significant objects adapted and adjusted under various parties of influence.

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<sup>7</sup> Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Hebrew Manuscript Painting in Late Medieval Spain: Signs of a Culture in Transition." (The Art Bulletin 84.2, (2002); Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah*, p. 17

Visual analysis is a major component of the first three chapters. Many of the conclusions raised in these early sections will rely primarily on visual comparisons to other forms of art that flourished and evolved in the Iberian Peninsula. From there, in the following chapter, I connect the artistic developments to a larger, historical context. This chapter does so by connecting the appearance of certain motifs and elements to the power dynamics in the Peninsula, while maintaining an emphasis on the treatment of Jews at the given time.

### *The Manuscripts*

There are fourteen documented illustrated Haggadot from medieval Spain. Of the fourteen, two will not be discussed. The first, known simply as the Catalan Haggadah (Cambridge University Library, T-S, K. 10.1), has only a fragment remaining, and the matzo illustration does not survive. The second Haggadah, known as the Catalan Passover Parashot and Piyyutim (British Library, Or. 1424) is in a similar state, and all that remains are selections from the Old Testament, known as Parashot and Jewish liturgical poems, known as Piyyutim.<sup>8</sup> As a result, these manuscripts have been omitted from the following discussion.

Rather than introduce the twelve manuscripts individually, this section will present them in groups. For the most part, these groups will be based on the original location of each manuscript, since there are two main regions in Iberia where these manuscripts come from. The locations discussed below have been assigned to these manuscripts through stylistic analysis, as the Haggadot were compared to other dated manuscripts attributed to the same region, even though most of these Haggadot themselves do not contain any indication of their creation date.

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<sup>8</sup> Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles: Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 10

The third grouping of Haggadot have unclear origins, and visual comparisons to other manuscripts has proved insufficient in connecting them to a location. Regardless, this third section will discuss hypotheses on the origins, some raised in the published scholarship and others based on my own observations. It is important to add that the regional differences do not have effects on how the matzot are portrayed in each manuscript. The same kind of abstraction appears in all of the books, and there is not a distinct kind of style that ties the matzot to a particular region or distinguishes them.<sup>9</sup> If anything, the matzot's appearance are affected by the media used, as richer manuscripts from the Crown of Aragon used gold leaf in their depictions, but this does not affect the actual designs.

### *Crown of Aragon*

The Crown of Aragon consisted of a series of territories situated around the Western Mediterranean Sea, including what is now southern France. The center of the Crown of Aragon was based in modern day Barcelona. Along with acting as a political center for the Crown of Aragon and the monarchy, Narkiss has argued that Barcelona was also a “center of Hebrew manuscript painting.”<sup>10</sup> With its influence on different territories around the Mediterranean, the Jewish manuscripts from the Crown of Aragon reflect different sources of influence, including France and Italy. As summarized by Kogman-Appel, an accumulation of these influences may have been the result of travelers moving in and out of the Peninsula. Italian influence is evident in the iconography of manuscripts such as the Golden Haggadah, which references iconography

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<sup>9</sup> The exceptions here are the sibling manuscripts, where the “copy” has been assigned to a region based on an analysis of the “original.” Regardless these conclusions are not based on the matzot alone, but rather the books in question as a whole.

<sup>10</sup> Bezalel Narkiss as cited by Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) p. 24



of Italian relief panels.<sup>11</sup> For Italian influence specifically, Kogman-Appel states this could be the result of Christian merchants coming into Spain from Italy or Jewish travelers who “acquired them” while in Italy themselves.<sup>12</sup> Many of the Haggadot attributed to this area express this kind of external influence through their illumination styles.

There are seven manuscripts from the Crown of Aragon.<sup>13</sup> This group includes the Golden Haggadah (British Library, MS Add. 27210, c. 1320)<sup>14</sup> and the Barcelona Haggadah (British Library, MS Add. 14761, c. 1340)<sup>15</sup>, both of which are attributed to Barcelona. This group also includes the Rylands Haggadah (John Rylands University Library, MS heb. 6, c. 1330)<sup>16</sup>, the Brother Haggadah (British Library, MS Or. 1404, c. 1330)<sup>17</sup>, the Sister Haggadah (British Library, MS Or 2884, c. 1325 – 1375)<sup>18</sup>, the Cambridge Catalan Haggadah (Cambridge University Library, Add. 1203, late 14<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>19</sup>, and Kaufmann MSA 422 (late 14<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>20</sup> These manuscripts have been grouped together based mainly on illumination quality. Many of them share particularly rich, lavish illustrations, and, as a result, resemble manuscripts from royal courts, especially those from Barcelona. One manuscript of this group, the Rylands Haggadah, stylistically resembles a manuscript in a cathedral in Valencia, another kingdom

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<sup>11</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggado* p. 59

<sup>12</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot...*, p. 124

<sup>13</sup> The following two works have been heavily consulted for the dating of these manuscripts in this section: Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles: Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006)

<sup>14</sup> fig. a

<sup>15</sup> fig. c

<sup>16</sup> fig. e

<sup>17</sup> fig. f

<sup>18</sup> fig. b

<sup>19</sup> fig. g

<sup>20</sup> fig. d; This manuscript will be referred to as the “Kaufmann Haggadah” from this point forward.

within the Crown of Aragon. As a result, manuscript scholar Joseph Gutmann has proposed that this manuscript may be from that principality specifically.<sup>21</sup>

This connection to the Crown of Aragon is furthered by the use of French gothic inspired aspects embedded within the rich decorations. For instance, diaper patterns commonly found in French manuscripts are used as background patterns in the Rylands Haggadah (fig. 2) and the Brother Haggadah (fig. 3). In other manuscripts we see clear references to gothic architecture. In the Sister Haggadah, a figure situated in the margins of the matzo folio sits under a chapel-like structure topped with a shape bearing resemblance to the fleur de lis (fig. b), a symbol that became associated with the French monarchy.

The luxuriousness of these manuscripts as well as the gothic influence are best exemplified by the illustrations in the Golden Haggadah, where pale, elongated figures are depicted against golden backgrounds in various Biblical sequences (fig. 4). Indeed, the Golden Haggadah can be interpreted as a kind of forerunner of this group of manuscripts, and has the earliest attributed date of all the Aragonese manuscripts. Its illuminations are similar to those in other early 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts, and the Haggadah's illustrations are influenced by a Spanish-Latin art style. With this stylistic connection, the Golden Haggadah has been dated based on manuscripts like the "*Catalan Laws* of 1321<sup>22</sup>, which is one of the earliest known manuscripts containing moderate Italianizing influences mingled with late-thirteenth-century Franco-Spanish Gothic style."<sup>23</sup> The composition in both manuscripts are similarly constructed,

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<sup>21</sup> Gutmann, as cited by Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot...*, p. 19

<sup>22</sup> This manuscript is also known as the Usatici Barcionenses, and will be discussed again later in this paper. See fig. 22 for an image of this manuscript.

<sup>23</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...* pp. 56-7

as are the appearances and the placement of the elongated figures.<sup>24</sup> In turn, the other Haggadot in this group have been dated based on comparisons to the Golden Haggadah.<sup>25</sup>

### **Sibling Manuscripts**

There are two sets of manuscripts in this group that heavily resemble each other, so much that these two pairs have been referred to as “sibling manuscripts.” Each pair contains a proposed “original” manuscript, as well as a manuscript said to be a copy of the original. The similarities present in these pairs are, in part, how scholars have deciphered information about their past, such as provenance. For instance, the Sister Haggadah, which is part of the second pair of manuscripts, appears to heavily differ from the majority of the manuscripts from the Crown of Aragon, as its illustrations are far less rich and less precise than the others (fig. b). The connection to the Crown of Aragon instead comes from the manuscript’s similarities to the Golden Haggadah, which may have served as the model from which it was copied.

The first group contains the Rylands Haggadah, believed to be the original, and the Brother Haggadah, a supposed copy. The similarities stem primarily from illustrations, especially the full-page depictions of scenes from Exodus. Fol. 15v from the Rylands Haggadah is remarkably similar to fol. 3v in the Brother Haggadah (figs. 5 and 6). Both folios depict two scenes arranged vertically: on top is a depiction of Moses before Pharaoh and his magicians, and on the bottom is a depiction of the first plague where the water became blood. The similarities extend past the subject matter and into the details of the compositions. The general composition and the poses are nearly identical. In the top scene, Moses and Aron have transformed their

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<sup>24</sup> Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah*, p. 54

<sup>25</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...*p. 57

staffs into snakes, and stand close to one another in the center, with one brother in front of the other. The brothers face and point in different directions, one towards the magicians and the other towards Pharaoh, as the brother in front simultaneously stretches his left arm outwards to grasp the tail of the snake. The magicians are pushed against the left border as Moses' snake advances while devouring the staffs of the magicians, which have also been transformed into snakes. Meanwhile, Pharaoh sits under a pavilion in the right side of the frame, raising his left arm and pointing towards the scene in front of him. The bottom scene is a similar case, where the arrangement of the figures is nearly identical in each manuscript. In both, Moses and Aron stand to the left of the composition: one brother looks outwards towards Pharaoh, approaching from the right on horseback, while the other brother places his staff in the water, which has become blood. They stand in front of a similar background in each, near a single rock formation accompanied by a solitary tree present in both manuscripts. Furthermore, the patterns used in the background are also incredibly similar, where both utilize a gold-lace design on a blue backdrop.

Interestingly, these kinds of similarities are not evident in the matzot folios (see figs. e and f). While the Rylands depiction of matzo is largely damaged, we can still see that the Brother Haggadah includes much more detail in the composition. For example, the Rylands Haggadah lacks the elaborate Seder scene that the Brother Haggadah includes below the wafer. The images in the Rylands Haggadah's matzo folio are not representational, and mostly take the form of marginalia around the text, heavily contrasting the detailed scene included in the Brother Haggadah.

The similarities in the images make for a compelling argument that one manuscript is a copy of the other. However, the imagery cannot answer which manuscript came first, and which was copied. In the face of this challenge, scholars like Narkiss have suggested that neither of the

manuscripts are the true original, and both of them are copies of a model that no longer survives.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, based on similarities and differences in the texts, manuscript scholars including Raphael Loewe have concluded that the Rylands cannot be the archetype of the Brother Haggadah. A key piece of evidence for this claim is the fact that a stanza of a poem by Abraham Ibn Ezra is included in the Brother Haggadah, but does not appear in the Rylands Haggadah, meaning that the former must have copied it from a different source.<sup>27</sup> In addition, both manuscripts differ in their inclusion of biblical quotes. They both may quote the same biblical verse, but, at times, each will quote a different part of said verse. Typically, the Rylands Haggadah provides a shorter part of the quote in comparison to the part included in the Brother Haggadah, once again demonstrating that the Rylands Haggadah likely did not come first.<sup>28</sup> These similarities and differences have not only led Bezalel Narkiss to propose that there was a common model shared between both manuscripts, but has also led Katrin Kogman-Appel to propose that both came from the same workshop, and that the Rylands Haggadah's illumination followed the illumination of the Brother Haggadah, and likely copied it.<sup>29</sup>

The second group, as mentioned earlier, consists of the Golden Haggadah and the Sister Haggadah, with the Golden Haggadah as the proposed original and the Sister Haggadah as a copy. In this group, the similarities are not as obvious as those in the previous pair, as the images do not share the same kind of compositional layout and detail. The Sister Haggadah is noticeably less decorated, and the illustrations are much simpler. Instead, the similarities are evident in

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<sup>26</sup> Bezalel Narkiss, as cited by Raphael Loewe, *The Rylands Haggadah: A Medieval Sephardi Masterpiece in Facsimile*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1988), pp. 16-17

<sup>27</sup> Loewe, p. 16

<sup>28</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot...* p. 96

<sup>29</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot...* p. 96-7

selection of scenes and the general iconography (figs. 7 and 8).<sup>30</sup> In both the Golden Haggadah and the Sister Haggadah, we see scenes from Genesis, starting with the creation of Adam and then transitioning into a few scenes from Noah's Ark. From there, both manuscripts follow with a depiction of the Tower of Babel before showing several scenes from the life of Jacob, including a depiction of Jacob's ladder and Jacob and Esau. After, both manuscripts include several images from the life of Joseph before finally transitioning into sequential images from the book of Exodus. The depictions of matzot in both of these manuscripts are ornate and include more similarities than the wafers in the last pair. For instance, in both, the wafer is situated in the middle of the page where it interrupts a passage of text. Furthermore, both depictions include an interlacing, gold pattern generated mainly from straight lines that moves between red and blue sections on the wafer.

The similarities between the actual images themselves are perhaps too infrequent to imply that one was a copy of the other. The similarities that are apparent, however, have led Bezalel Narkiss to again propose that there was perhaps a common model that both manuscripts were referencing.<sup>31</sup> Kogman-Appel has observed that the Sister Haggadah also contains images similar to the Golden Haggadah, but concludes they were borrowed from an separate source. In turn, Kogman-Appel believes that the illuminator of the Sister Haggadah copied the illustrator of the Golden Haggadah, and used similar sources of inspiration. The discrepancies between the two manuscripts, she further notes, are the result of the artist completing the Sister Haggadah largely from memory.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot...* pp. 15-16

<sup>31</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...* p. 77

<sup>32</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot...*p. 74-75

## Castile

In this group, we only have two manuscripts; the Hispano-Moresque Haggadah (British Library, Or. 2737, c. 1300)<sup>33</sup>, and the Mocatta Haggadah (University College, Mocatta Library MS 1, c. 1300)<sup>34</sup>. Much like the manuscripts supposedly from the Crown of Aragon, those attributed to Castile have earned this conclusion based on style. Specifically, in Castile we see a perseverance of a style that heavily resembles Muslim art, especially decorative traditions from “Moslem Palestine and Egypt in the ninth to twelfth centuries.”<sup>35</sup> For instance, these manuscripts tend to include elaborate carpet pages and flattened representations of figures and objects. Simultaneously, there are clear similarities to the kind of style used in manuscripts created under Alfonso X, which extended off of Islamic-inspired styles as well. These manuscripts, including one known as *Libro del Ajedrez* from 1283, have their illustrations done in a flattened, decorative style with bright color schemes. Likewise, we see these same similarities in composition and color schemes in the Haggadot from this group, which are most apparent on full-page illustrations. In the Hispano-Moresque Haggadah, several pages include “spacious compositions” enclosed by a “flat, decorative framework,” elements typical in manuscripts under Alfonso X (fig. 9).<sup>36</sup> The Mocatta Haggadah, by contrast, only contains one full-page illustration of the Matzo wafer (fig. h.). Regardless, the similarities in style to earlier Hispano-Moresque manuscripts comes primarily from the decorative nature of the initial words. In addition, the depictions of architecture, particularly the inclusion of arcades and columns, exhibit similarities to 14<sup>th</sup> century Jewish Castilian Bibles such as the Cervera Bible from 1300

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<sup>33</sup> fig. i

<sup>34</sup> fig. h

<sup>35</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...* p. 16

<sup>36</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...* p. 51

(fig 10). It is these kinds of similarities between dated Castilian manuscripts and Haggadot that have allowed these Haggadot to be dated to around 1300.<sup>37</sup>

### *Uncertain Origins*

The remaining three manuscripts have more uncertain origins within Spain. These manuscripts are the Prato Haggadah (Jewish Theological Seminary, MS Mic. 9478, c. 1300)<sup>38</sup> and the Sarajevo Haggadah (c. 1350)<sup>39</sup>. The third manuscript of this group, the Graziano Haggadah (Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 9300)<sup>40</sup>, is one of the only Haggadot containing written evidence of a possible date. It includes an inscription stating the date it was sold, 1328, and therefore we can assume it was created around this time.<sup>41</sup>

The origins of the Prato Haggadah may remain uncertain in part because the manuscript is incomplete, and several folios contain only the underdrawing and lack coloration. In the pages that contain sections of color, the use of rich pigments, primarily blue and red, and gold leaf in the manuscript, as well as gothic-looking figures may perhaps point to the Crown of Aragon as an origin point (fig. j, fig 11). However, this is not certain as the same kinds of identification processes used for the manuscripts above (that is, those based off of illustration style) may not be the most effective here. However, the Prato Haggadah has been attributed to Spain based on the qualities its text shares with other manuscripts, in part because it uses a “Sephardic script,”

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<sup>37</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...* pp. 45, 51, 55

<sup>38</sup> fig. j

<sup>39</sup> fig k

<sup>40</sup> fig l

<sup>41</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot...* p. 23



perhaps written with a reed pen. This script heavily contrasts the blocky, thick writing in Ashkenazi manuscripts with its thin lettering that tapers off at the ends.<sup>42</sup>

A similar process was likely used for the Graziano Haggadah. This Haggadah lacks the quantity of full-page illustrations present in other manuscripts, and decoration mostly comes in the forms of initial words or marginalia around the text. The depiction of matzo, which is rendered as a circle with a geometric pattern formed from intersecting lines on the surface, appears much like the depictions in all of the other Spanish Haggadot (fig. 1). Furthermore, this manuscript contains the same kind of “Sephardic script” that distinguishes it from Ashkenazi Haggadaot. This manuscript also shares certain aspects with the Sister Haggadah, particularly evident in “style, technique, and craftsmanship.” Similarities are evident in the matzot folios of both these manuscripts. For instance, though damaged, there are traces of a figure that was included in the middle of the wafer that held a similar pose to the figure besides the wafer in the Sister Haggadah. This may point to the Sister Haggadah as a source of inspiration while further confirming its Iberian origins and possibly linking it to the Crown of Aragon.<sup>43</sup> Lastly, the Sarajevo Haggadah has been attributed to Spain due to heraldic imagery on folio three, which includes three shields in the margins, one of which appears to be the coat of arms of Barcelona (fig. 12).<sup>44</sup> Art historian Evelyn Cohen has attached a date to the manuscript using this image, observing that this coat of arms was also used by “descendants of [Barcelonian count] Ramon Berenguer throughout the Crown of Aragon from the twelfth century on.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “Prato Haggadah, Folio 11r,” Annenberg Learner, accessed March 17, 2018.  
<https://www.learner.org/courses/globalart/work/201/index.html>

<sup>43</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...p. 23

<sup>44</sup> Cecil Roth, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1974) pp. 15-16

<sup>45</sup> Evelyn Cohen as cited by Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*... p. 24



## Chapter 1: Decoration

The intricate, delicate designs and patterns that cover the surface of the wafers vary from manuscript to manuscript. However, despite these differences, there are certain characteristics that manifest themselves in more than one depiction. One of these characteristics is color scheme. These manuscripts offer multicolored matzot that starkly contrast the brown color of the actual wafer. These depictions usually consist of color schemes that include red, blue, and gold (fig. a). The fairly consistent color scheme appears in all of the wafers for which we have color reproductions.<sup>46</sup> One matzot in this group remains incomplete, and only consists of blue and gold coloration while lacking the red evident in the other manuscripts. Through an analysis of the additional pages, however, we can see that red was used extensively elsewhere in the book. Therefore, we can hypothesize that red may have been used in some of the unpainted sections had the manuscript been completed, given the use of red in more completed folios with similar compositions (figs. j and 11).

Ornamentation is another main component that connects several of the matzot depictions together through the similarities. There are two main groups of ornamentation that dominate the depictions of matzot. The first group is classified by the use of regular geometric forms in the design's construction. This form of ornamentation tends to be symmetrical in nature. We see these geometric, symmetrical qualities in the matzo folio in the Golden Haggadah, where the main designs are formed from straight lines, and the wafer is both vertically and horizontally, and diagonally symmetrical (fig. a ). The second group uses irregular motifs such as floral

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<sup>46</sup> There are two Haggadot that do not have colored reproductions available. These manuscripts are the Mocatta Haggadah (fig. h) and the Cambridge Catalan Haggadah (fig. g). Bezalel Narkiss notes that the wafer in the Cambridge Catalan Haggadah included red, blue and gold coloration, but I do not have access to a colored image and therefore cannot compare it to the other manuscripts. As I result I cannot say that these manuscripts have the same color scheme, but, simultaneously, we can not assume that they did not.

patterns or depictions of figures, who are situated either within the wafer or around it. For instance, in the matzo folio in the Barcelona Haggadah, the wafer is surrounded by a variety of figures, and the designs are irregular and vine-like (fig. c). Alongside these two main streams there are other kinds of ornamentation that unite certain depictions and work in conjunction with these forms. Unlike geometric designs or irregular figuration, these connections are more minor, and do not dominate compositions. For example, references to architecture through the inclusion of pillars or arches are evident in several depictions. In the Sister Haggadah, the architectural motif appears in the form of a gothic, chapel-like structure to the side of the main depiction of the wafer (fig. b ). Another example includes the appearance of four figures with horns, which appear in two depictions; the matzot folios in the Barcelona Haggadah and the Kaufmann Haggadah (figs. b and c). None of these categories are mutually exclusive, and many matzot can be placed into several of these groups as they combine elements.

Given that many of these elements have similar and, at times, identical counterparts in other visual cultures, we can view this variety of decoration as a result of cultural sharing. In turn, we can hypothesize origins for the decorations based on where these designs appeared prior to the creation of the Haggadot. Before their appearances in Haggadot, however, similar kinds of motifs and images existed in multiple regions and cultures at the same time. Therefore, the complications present in this chapter should not sway us from uncovering origins: what it should do is caution us from trying to attribute a single origin point and classify the manuscript based on it.

## *Regular Geometric Decoration*

One of the best examples of a matzo depiction with geometric construction is in the Golden Haggadah. In this folio, the matzo's main sections are formed from two overlapping squares, with one tilted 45 degrees to form a star motif, inscribed within the circular shape of the wafer (fig. 13). Many of the depictions follow a very similar geometric construction. On the most basic level, the depictions in this category consist mainly of various shapes aligned symmetrically on a grid and anchored on a single, central point (fig. 14 ).<sup>47</sup> These shapes, typically circles, squares and hexagons, are centered in the same way and layered on top of one another to form the main unit of design. As the shapes move closer towards the center, they decrease in size and can become more detailed. The decreasing size and concentration of detail in the central areas of these designs conveys a sense of movement to the center of the unit, thus implying both an inward and outwards motion to or from the center of the design.

Arguably the closest parallel to the depictions of the wafers are the verse markers found in Qur'ans from Muslim Spain, or Al-Andalus. These circular markers contain many of the same qualities as the matzot, including an inwards motion and a concentration of detail in the center of the form. Verse markers from a page of a Qur'an manuscript from the Nasrid period in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth -century are only a few examples that exemplify the kinds of similarities (fig. 15). Three verse markers are included on the page: there is one large roundel formed by several overlapping sections with an intensely detailed center, and it is accompanied by two smaller markers with designs formed by intertwining lines that move inwards towards the middle of the marker. While the largest marker shares the same kind of composition formed by

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<sup>47</sup> Issam El-Said, *Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design*, (Reading, United Kingdom: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1993) 20-21.

overlapping sections, it is the smaller markers that more closely resemble the decoration on the wafers.<sup>48</sup> The network of overlapping lines which open up into a star formation in the center of the circle resembles matzot such as the ones in the Golden Haggadah and the Sister Haggadah (figs. a and b). Both of these matzot have their surfaces covered with a similar kind of network made of gold lines and curves which overlap and move towards the center, which then opens up and forms a star-shaped section much like the one in the verse markers.

On a more general level, the regular geometric composition, in combination with an inwards motion towards a central point heavily resembles art and architecture from various other Islamic objects from Al-Andalus.<sup>49</sup> The reliance on these geometric forms mirrors the ornamentation on objects like textiles, manuscripts, and furniture from the Almoravid, Almohad, and Nasrid periods in Al-Andalus. A banner captured during the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in the 13<sup>th</sup> century exemplifies this layout as star and octagonal sections alternate and decrease in size as they move inwards (fig. 16).<sup>50</sup> Here, the attention towards the middle is furthered with the inclusion of a small, eight-petalled rosette, which stands out as it does not appear elsewhere in the textile. We see this kind of arrangement and anchoring around a central point again in the Golden Haggadah matzo, as movement is directed to the center which contrasts the rest of the design as it is left open. Furthermore, much like the banner, the very center of the matzo is surrounded by a unique flower-like shape that does not repeat, and thus draws more attention inwards (fig. a).

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<sup>48</sup> Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992) p. 299.

<sup>49</sup> While general, these connections are important to discuss regardless, as certain writings published on the decorated wafers, such as art historian Michael Batterman's *Bread of Affliction, Emblem of Power*, do not spend as much time discussing similarities to Islamic art. Instead, more writing is dedicated to the connections to Christian art.

<sup>50</sup> Dodds et al... 326

This kind of construction also played a role in western European architecture, and this kind of geometric layout is evident in gothic rose windows.<sup>51</sup> The rose window's origins can be attributed to the Abbey of St Denis in France from around the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and these designs had travelled with French architects into Iberia by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Rose windows tend to consist of a circular, symmetrical pattern with “spokes” that radiate outwards from a center section (fig. 17).<sup>52</sup> The general layout of a rose window and arrangements of the matzot depictions work in a similar way. Several shapes are overlapped in each depiction to form designs, and these designs seem to extend outwards from a central point. An important distinction between the two layouts, however, is the basic units each design is constructed from. Specifically, many matzot depictions use polygonal shapes like squares and rhombi to form their design. Rose windows, on the other hand, are constructed from circles. Like a bike wheel, there is the main circle that encompasses the design, and a smaller circle inside that acts as a center point from which the spokes extend. Since matzot are not generated by these overlapping circles, many lack clear spokes that radiate outwards from a central point. One notable exception is the matzo in the Cambridge Catalan Haggadah. In this depiction, the matzo is generated by circles and, while damaged, still contains traces of spokes that radiate outward from a central, smaller circle (fig. g). Even in matzot that are not generated by circles, the emphasis on movement towards a central point remains.

The similarities are furthered by the presence of similar motifs in all of the forms of art above. In Christian, Islamic, and Jewish art, we see the presence of eight-pointed or eight-fold

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<sup>51</sup> While this section refers to the rose windows that existed outside of Iberia, it is important to note that similar, geometrically designed windows had existed in Iberia long before the rise of the rose window. Specifically, a similar kind of window consisting of circular openings arranged in a floral-like pattern appeared in the eighth century Asturian Churches of San Miguel de Villardevayo and San Miguel de Liño. Therefore, this kind of inspiration may have stemmed from an architectural history that developed within Iberia rather than outside of it, but the connections to Christianity and church architecture remains. Overall, this example proves that the geometric layout of rose windows among other designs were not novel.

<sup>52</sup> Painton Cowen, *The Rose Window: Splendour and Symbol*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

shapes. One of the most recurring motifs shared between Islamic art and matzot depictions is the eight-pointed star. This star is most commonly formed by two overlapping squares, like in the Golden Haggadah matzo discussed above. In other cases, the intersecting lines are removed and the star becomes a whole, complete shape. Indeed, the eight-pointed star is characteristic of Islamic art and architecture, both in and outside of the Iberian Peninsula. Architectural historians Yahya Abdullahin and Mohamed Rashid Bin Embi traced the first appearance of the star to 800s Egypt, where the “simple 6- and 8-point geometrical patterns used in the Mosque of Ibn-Tulun (876-879) are among the earliest examples of woven geometrical patterns in Muslim decorative arts.”<sup>53</sup> In Iberia, the eight-pointed star motif appeared in early Mudejar architecture (Spanish architecture reflecting a mixture of Islamic and gothic elements), as well as the Great Mosque of Cordoba (785-987), and was used in designs centuries after (fig. 18 ).<sup>54</sup>

The eight pointed star is not as apparent in Christian art by comparison. However, there exist rose windows with eight-petalled rosettes that fall within the category of recurring eight-fold shapes. This same rosette has origins in Islamic architecture outside of Iberia as well. The 2013 survey of the evolution of Islamic geometric design has noted some of the earliest examples of these rosettes in the 1200s, where they were “introduced to 8- and 12-point star patterns” on the Abbasid Palace and the Madrasa of Mustansiriyeh, both located in Baghdad (fig. 19).<sup>55</sup> In Iberia, the rounded eight-fold rosette makes an appearance in an illustration in a Qur’an manuscript from 1143, and is formed from several interlacing circles that surround the central area of the design (fig. 20).<sup>56</sup> As mentioned earlier, the matzo from the Golden Haggadah

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<sup>53</sup> Yahya Abdullahi, and Mohamed Rashid Bin Embi, “Evolution of Islamic Geometric Patterns,”(Frontiers of Architectural Research, 2013), 245-246.

<sup>54</sup> Abdullahi et al... pp. 245-246.

<sup>55</sup> Abdullahi et al...p. 246.

<sup>56</sup> Dodds... p. 230.



includes the motif towards the middle of the design and draws attention towards the center of the roundel.

### *Conclusion: On the Concept of “Borrowing”*

The overlapping presence of the design elements in multiple regions discussed above points to cultural borrowing that likely occurred over time with different groups moving in and out of the Peninsula. There are, however, a few things about this concept that we must keep in mind as we continue. The first and foremost is the very idea of “borrowing” versus “sharing”. Borrowing implies that the design originated within one group, and another group took it and used it in their own art. While it is fairly easy for us to look at these examples and claim these instances as a result of borrowing and transmission, the artists at work did not have the privilege of looking at these trends holistically. As a result, borrowing may not be the correct term to use here, and “sharing” may be more fitting. Specifically, this use of decoration may not have read as appropriation or borrowing at the time, and the different kinds of art were perhaps not as linked to different regions as they are now. A Jewish artist “borrowing” from a Muslim source likely did not read the art as distinctly Islamic, and this concept raises another question worth considering: did Jewish artists read the elements they incorporated as Jewish once they were utilized in Jewish works? Alternatively, was there something distinctly “Spanish” about the elements shared by all three religious groups used in Iberia? If so, did the artists and audiences recognize a certain Spanish quality? This question becomes particularly relevant when different manuscripts from different regions are compared against one another. For instance, the carpet pages in manuscripts from the Middle East starkly contrast the Qur’anic illuminations from Al Andalus. An illuminated folio from a 14th century Egyptian Qur’an lacks the kind of

straightened, regular geometric designs we see in the Qur'an from 1143 (fig. 20). In the Egyptian manuscript, the designs are instead irregular and organic, and appear as swirling vines and flora that surround the written words (fig. 21).<sup>57</sup>

It is also quite possible that little “borrowing” or “sharing” actually took place between cultures, and the use of certain motifs by different groups was coincidental because of their simplicity. For instance, when the recurring design of the eight-pointed star encompassed by a circle is deconstructed, its formation on a grid seems fairly simple (fig. 12). As a result, we can imagine several artists creating similar designs on this grid without necessarily being exposed to a pre-existing example. This may also explain the presence of the six-pointed star, now known to modern viewers as a Jewish symbol, on Islamic architecture.

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<sup>57</sup> Patricia Baker, *Islam and the Religious Arts* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 65

## Chapter 2: Artists, Audiences, Patrons

Prior to analyzing the contents of the actual manuscripts themselves, it is important to discuss the people that surrounded the creation of these books. This chapter will discuss a relationship between patrons, audiences, and the artists. The following analyses of the artists, patrons and audiences will be primarily founded on visual and comparative analyses, in combination with a close examination of the textual contents of these manuscripts. As we will see below, an analysis of these aspects can reveal information on the patrons, including cultural background as well as class background.

### *Artists*

As Haggadot, it is a given that these books were meant for Jewish traditions and Jewish audiences who would use them during Passover. Because they are all written in Hebrew, it is also likely that the scribes writing these manuscripts were also Jewish. What cannot be assumed, however, is that the artists working on these manuscripts were also Jewish. The way figures are depicted in the Haggadot bears a noticeable resemblance to Christian figuration, and, as discussed previously, many of the Haggadot also include references to European gothic art that had its roots in Christian Europe.

Perhaps one of the clearest indications of a possible Christian illuminator working for Jewish patrons is the Golden Haggadah. If we recall the discussion of this manuscript that appeared earlier in this paper, the way the figures are depicted in this manuscript is nearly identical in style to those appearing in a manuscript made for a Christian patron known as the *Usatici Barcionenses*. This manuscript was illuminated under James II around the first quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. If the manuscript was indeed illustrated by a Christian artist, Narkiss proposes

that said artist would be working under the supervision of either a Jewish scribe or the patron (fig. 22).<sup>58</sup> One complication to this theory comes from the fact that Jews were fleeing from France around the same time, and brought with them books of a similar visual style into Spain. In turn, we cannot ignore the possibility that a Jewish illustrator *was* actually working on the manuscript, but utilized the biblical images in the books from France as a model.<sup>59</sup>

A similar kind of analysis can be applied to all the Haggadot from the Crown of Aragon, as they all share high-quality illustrations that contain traces of French gothic and Italian influence and bear visual resemblance to a Christian manuscript counterpart. Furthermore, since the majority of these manuscripts have been attributed to Barcelona specifically, the workshops responsible for these manuscripts were in close proximity to the royal court, and may have had Christian artists working in them as well. Once more, however, the lines become blurred when we also consider that Jewish artists who not only worked near the royal court but also within it may have adjusted their drawing styles from exposure to other artists and artworks. We also must keep in mind that copying from models was not at all uncommon, as was the case with the Sister and Brother Haggadot, and therefore must not exclude the possibility of a Jewish illuminator behind all these manuscripts who drew in a Christian, gothic style according to the model provided.<sup>60</sup>

In regards to the manuscripts that came from Castile, there may have been a similar situation. Like the manuscripts from the Crown of Aragon, the artistic styles in the Castilian manuscripts heavily resemble the styles utilized by the royal courts. For instance, as mentioned above, the Hispano-Moresque Haggadah's full-page illustrations use a style similar to the one

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<sup>58</sup> Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah*, pp. 66-67

<sup>59</sup> Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah*, p. 66

<sup>60</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...* pp. 14,15, 42-44, 57

used in the court of Alfonso X, and therefore a same kind of analyzing process used for the manuscripts above may also be applicable here (fig. 9).<sup>61</sup>

Lastly, deciphering the artists of the manuscripts with no exact origins is, as expected, more difficult. The Sarajevo Haggadah, while lacking a complete, detailed history, does include the set of shields with coats of arms in the beginning of the manuscript. With one resembling the coat of arms of Barcelona, it may be that the workshop that produced this manuscript was also in close proximity to the royal court, and falls within the group of manuscripts attributed to the Crown of Aragon.<sup>62</sup> The remaining two manuscripts pose the largest challenge, as one is unfinished and the other has very little decoration to be analyzed in the first place. Operating under the conclusion that both manuscripts were from Spain, it is unlikely that they serve as exceptions and avoided either cooperation from a Christian artist or influence from royal courts. In the Prato Haggadah, we see the presence of elongated figures and gold leaf decoration, indicating a sense of luxury and possibly a connection to a royal court or Christian artist working under a wealthy Jewish patron. Unfortunately, the same thing cannot be said for the Graziano Haggadah, as the decoration is so limited that I cannot offer any further conclusions based on a comparative analysis.

### *Patrons and Audiences*

On the most basic level, we can assume that the patrons of these books and the audiences for which these books were made were all Jewish. What we can also learn from this aspect is that the patrons were literate, regardless of background. The audiences may have been literate as

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<sup>61</sup> Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts...* p. 51

<sup>62</sup> Roth, pp. 15-16

well, but it is also possible that a literate patron read to an illiterate audience on Passover. Passover, like many other Jewish holidays, requires a reading of the Haggadah. As Kogman-Appel states rather succinctly, “The ceremony is based on reading this particular text. Reading provided the context for which the art discussed in this book was created.”<sup>63</sup> The very fact that these books were commissioned in the first place, therefore, meant that the patron must have been literate. This conclusion is furthered by the fact that Jewish culture had moved away from oral recitation alone, and the written word had become crucial to Jewish culture. This is evidenced by the creation of anthologies of Midrashic commentary, which preserved quotes so as not to rely solely on oral transmission.<sup>64</sup>

More information about the patrons and audiences lies within the textual contents of the books. This analysis is not limited to the main religious texts alone, but also extends to accompanying texts and commentaries. Knowing that Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardic Jews had different Passover traditions, the details in descriptions of customs must be observed. For instance, descriptions of the contents of a Seder table is one place that these differences manifest themselves. In the Rylands Haggadah, several minor details in the texts and additional commentary point to an Ashkenazic celebration of Passover. One such detail includes the mention of a basket for the matzot on the table, a practice associated with Ashkenazi traditions, rather than a bowl.<sup>65</sup> However, these details are fairly minor, and conclusions cannot be drawn from these variations alone. Rather than indicating an Ashkenazi patron, it is equally as possible that the various parties involved in the creation of such manuscript were influenced by Ashkenazi traditions or, as Kogman-Appel states, were “open to Ashkenazi influence.” Indeed,

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<sup>63</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...p. 143

<sup>64</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...p. 144

<sup>65</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...p. 43

nearly all of the manuscripts show the effects of some Ashkenazi influence with an inclusion of midrashic elements popular in Ashkenazi Europe, but cannot be easily classified as Ashkenazi.<sup>66</sup>

The most evidence can be found in the illustrations. It is in these places that we also gain more specific kinds of evidence, particularly on the social and economic statuses on the patrons. Each manuscript has a remarkable amount of detailed, illuminated pages which vary in quality and style. These kinds of variations between illustrative quality can help us begin to perceive the differences in status between the patrons. For instance, a manuscript with rich, detailed illumination executed by multiple artists was likely commissioned by a wealthier individual who could afford high quality artists and scribes to create the manuscript. This is the case for the Golden Haggadah, which has numerous full-page illustrations executed with precision and detail. The sense of luxury is furthered by the use of gold leaf on several of the pages, as well as the fact that at least two artists worked together to decorate the Haggadah. The Rylands Haggadah also belongs to this same group. While the details on the number of artists working on the manuscripts remain unclear, the Rylands Haggadah has the same kind of detailed, colored illustrations that surpass many of the other manuscripts in quality. On the other hand, manuscripts with simpler drawings, perhaps even of a messier quality, were likely commissioned by someone not as wealthy. Two examples in this category are the Sister Haggadah and the Hispano-Moresque Haggadah. Kogman-Appel observes that both manuscripts contain images that “are colored drawings rather than paintings, and they normally use no gold,” heavily contrasting the kinds of illustrations in the Golden Haggadah, per se (see figs. 7 vs 8).

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<sup>66</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...pp. 140-141

Regardless, all of the patrons of these books had some degree of wealth that allowed them to commission these books in the first place.<sup>67</sup>

### **Scholarly Patrons**

Katrin Kogman-Appel proposes that even more specific information on the patron can be deciphered from the picture cycles in the manuscript. Through a close analysis of the images in the cycles, and by paying attention to how biblical scenes were altered (or, how they diverge from the original texts), Kogman-Appel has identified possible groups of individuals that may have commissioned these books. This analysis relies heavily on historical context, especially on the scholarly debates and popular literature of the time. During the Middle Ages, a key division was beginning to emerge amongst the Jewish community. As Kogman-Appel summarizes, we see the emergence of two distinct groups; rationalist Jews and antirationalist, Kabbalistic Jews. It is this kind of division that spurred alterations to biblical imagery, and, in turn, affected the Spanish Haggadot produced around this time.<sup>68</sup>

The kind of adjustments made to the images based on contemporary exegesis point to scholarly interference, so much that scholars were likely the ones commissioning the books and working alongside artists in order to adjust the images. These scholars responded to the debates occurring around them, and especially responded to the threat of Christian influence. In certain images, we see responses to not only the growing Christian threat but also to groups of Jews who shamefully fell victim to the church's grasp. For instance, rationalist courtier Jews were harshly critiqued for their "lax morals, their inadequate religious observance, and their tendency to leave

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<sup>67</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...pp. 188-189

<sup>68</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...pp. 218-219



Judaism.”<sup>69</sup> As a response, Kogman-Appel continues, images in manuscripts like the Golden Haggadah were adjusted at the requests of scholarly patrons to respond to these issues. For instance, the Golden Haggadah’s depiction of Joseph from Genesis has been changed to reflect a “courtier role model” in order to send a message to the problematic courtier Jews who neglected traditional Judaism. Rather than follow Christian imagery, which usually showed Joseph kneeling before the King, Joseph is depicted seated beside him (fig. 23).<sup>70</sup> By contrast, Kogman-Appel adds, manuscripts with images that are not altered, such as the Rylands Haggadah, may not have been commissioned by scholars, or were commissioned by individuals who were not as heavily influenced by the scholarly debates occurring around them.<sup>71</sup>

If these conclusions are true, knowing that scholars were commissioning these manuscripts has implications for the matzot folios specifically. These scholars, Kogman-Appel claims, “had a deep- but not exclusive - interest in Kabbalah,” which may explain some of the design choices for the matzot. As art historian Michael Batterman states, kabbalists associated the matzo wafer with the *Shekhinah*, the Jewish Divine Presence. One reason for this connection is the association of “leaven with the forces of evil,” during the holiday of Passover, and the matzot, being an unleavened wafer in direct opposition to leavened bread, is divine. With this connection in mind, the embellishment of the wafer makes perfect sense, as embellishment was one way to glorify and “monumentalize” the matzot. This connection also explains some of the cosmic imagery evident in the depictions.<sup>72</sup> This is especially applicable to the matzot in the

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<sup>69</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...pp. 216-217

<sup>70</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...pp. 195, 221

<sup>71</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...pp. 227-229

<sup>72</sup> 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: Brill, 2002), pp. 62-3

Barcelona Haggadah and the Kaufmann Manuscript, which depict the matzot surrounded by four angelic figures, possibly the four winds, blowing trumpets at the heavily decorated wafer.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Batterman, 73

## Chapter 3: Stylistic Variation and Historical Context

Moving past patrons and audiences, it is now time to turn to the manuscripts themselves. As we have seen in the first chapter, similar motifs have appeared time and time again in different regions and cultures. Complications aside, this chapter asks the question of ‘why?’ Why did Jews choose to use different styles, and whom did they share imagery with in Iberia? This question is particularly important when trying to understand the presence of two very different kinds of decoration that serve different purposes; one representational and one aniconic. The Golden Haggadah is one example that captures this situation, as the book contains sequential images in the beginning that very closely resemble Christian biblical images (fig. 4), and includes aniconic, geometric designs in the matzo folio. The representations of humans evident in the beginning are now gone, and the wafer is abstracted, appearing as a red and blue disc with intricate, lace-like designs that cover the surface (fig. a). In others, the combination of styles is more evident, as some depictions actually include figures that accompany the elaborated wafer, further juxtaposing an iconic style and an abstract, geometric aniconic style on the same page (fig. c).

A number of possibilities are present here. One of which deals with the different kinds of ethnic groups of Jews that were coexisting in Iberia. Here, Kogman-Appel’s writings are valuable once more, as she has written extensively on the various stylistic influences within Iberian Haggadot and ultimately categorizes the manuscripts she studies into one of two groups; Sephardic and Ashkenazi. Through a detailed study of aniconic bibles and iconic Haggadot, Kogman-Appel groups manuscripts based on dominating visual styles. Manuscripts, such as the Damascus Keter from 1260, consisting entirely of aniconic imagery and lacking representation, Kogman-Appel claims, share the kinds of visual vocabularies present in Muslim manuscripts

(fig. 24 ). By contrast, manuscripts that contain representational and sequential imagery are associated with Ashkenazi Jews who originally resided in Western European countries, such as Germany, and are thus linked with the cultural practices of Western European Christians. The use of representational images resembles the visual vocabularies of Christian manuscripts such as Books of Hours, which contained several sequential images to chronologically and clearly detail different parts of Christ's life. The Golden Haggadah uses a similar kind of imagery, as the beginning of the manuscript contains many panels depicting events from the book of Genesis and Exodus (fig. 4). This chapter will follow a similar kind of methodology, as the following analysis will focus particularly on ethnic differences and the connections to the different visual vocabularies present in the Haggadot.

### *Jewish Groups in Iberia*

Prior to the arrival of Jews from Western Europe, Jews had been living alongside Muslims from the 8<sup>th</sup> century until the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, these Jews were expelled by the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties, and fled from Muslim-controlled Iberia, known as Al Andalus, into Christian Iberia.<sup>74</sup> For the time being, we will refer to these Jews as Sephardim, a term now used to refer to Jews who trace their origins to Iberia, and used by Kogman-Appel in her analyses. Shortly after, in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, various European countries, including modern day Germany and France, expelled their Jewish populations as well, leaving Iberia as one of the last places of asylum for these Jews.<sup>75</sup> Again, we will use modern terminology for the sake of

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<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Ray, "Hispano-Jewish Society: An Introduction," introduction *The Jew in Medieval Iberia: 1100-1500* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), pp. ix-xxiv.

<sup>75</sup> Haim Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002) p. 2

clarity, and identify these Jews as Ashkenazim, or Jews that trace their origins to Western Europe.

With these influences transmitted by Jewish immigrants, it is no surprise that Iberian culture started to experience a shift. On one hand, we have Jews coming from countries like France, which was known for its use of the gothic style in their Christian manuscripts and architecture. Christian manuscripts included representation, often featuring sequential, narrative images that included figurative depictions. If we recall the discussion of decoration at the beginning of this paper, gothic Christian manuscripts also had certain design elements that accompanied these narrative scenes, including the diaper pattern and decorative, floral marginalia.<sup>76</sup> At the same time gothic influence was present in architecture, particularly in large, circular rose windows consisting of a central point and spokes that radiate outwards from it. With all this in mind, it is reasonable to conclude that manuscripts from Iberia that featured narrative, biblical scenes were likely the result of influence from Christian representation. This kind of influence is apparent in manuscripts such as the Golden Haggadah, which feature sequential scenes depicting the events of Genesis and Exodus, featuring elongated figures against a gold background (fig. 4). The ties to Christianity evident here are furthered by the remarkable similarities the sequential folios share with the *Usatici Barcionenses*, as discussed earlier. Both manuscripts include figures executed in a similar visual style, wearing brightly colored clothes with their skin relatively pale and uncolored in comparison (fig. 22).

On the other hand, we have a sect of Spanish culture that developed from a relationship between Muslims and Jews, starting from the 8<sup>th</sup> century where Jews lived under the Umayyads. This culture developed through these Jews and was maintained by those who remained in the

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<sup>76</sup> Kogman-Appel, "Hebrew Manuscript Painting....", p. 251

Peninsula after the expulsions in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>77</sup> Art produced by Jews in these areas reflected a similar kind of transformation and inspiration, mirroring elements in Muslim manuscripts and architecture. We see the effects of this in synagogues from this time period, which were Mudejar in style. For instance, the Synagogue of Santa Maria la Blanca in Toledo, included Mudejar architectural motifs and decorations, such as vegetal decoration, interlacing patterns, and geometric designs (fig. 25 ).<sup>78</sup> Regardless of similarities to Islamic architecture, this building is attributed to Joseph ben Meir ben Shoshan, a Castilian Jewish finance minister working for Alfonso VIII.<sup>79</sup>

This influence is also evident in Hebrew manuscripts, which include imagery that heavily resembles the designs in Qur'ans and other Muslim manuscripts. These manuscripts contained compositions featuring intertwining, geometric designs that dominate the page as well as floral motifs and flattened forms lacking volume. A number of these examples from Castile survive, including a Hebrew Bible from 1301 attributed to Perpignan, and exemplify this influence through flattened representational images and geometric and floral patterns (fig. 25 ).<sup>80</sup> Another example includes a manuscript referenced above, known as Damascus Keter, attributed to 13<sup>th</sup> century Burgos which includes a carpet page consisting of interlacing patterns formed both by words and lines (fig. 24 ). In Iberian Haggadot, we see these qualities resurface.<sup>81</sup> For instance, the matzo wafer in the Sister Haggadah has its surface covered in a gold, interlacing geometric patterns that moves inwards towards the center (fig. b ).

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<sup>77</sup> Benjamin R. Gampel, "Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: *Convivencia* through the Eyes of Sephardic Jews," in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: George Brazillier, 1992), pp. 11-37.

<sup>78</sup> Jerrilynn D. Dodds, "Mudejar Tradition and the Synagogues of Medieval Spain: Cultural Identity and Cultural Hegemony," in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: George Brazillier, 1992), pp. 113-131.

<sup>79</sup> Dodds, 115-116

<sup>80</sup> Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, "Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula," in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (New York: George Brazillier, 1992), pp. 136-137.

<sup>81</sup> Kogman-Appel, "Hebrew Manuscript Painting....", p. 247

### *Conclusion: A Cautionary Note on Divisions*

It is no surprise that two distinct visual vocabularies, one featuring representation and the other aniconic, developed alongside each other in Sephardic Jewry, but for different reasons. As Kogman-Appel states in her analysis of this situation, different groups of Sephardim preferred different approaches for different reasons. As discussed in Chapter 2, Kogman-Appel proposes that a scholarly group of Jews were particularly influenced by Ashkenazic culture through literature. Through this exposure to Ashkenazic, western European culture, these Jews began utilizing gothic, Christian-inspired styles in their manuscripts.<sup>82</sup> By contrast, groups of Sephardim who remained separated from this rise of Ashkenazic literature continued to use their aniconic styles inspired by Mudejar art and architecture. Kogman-Appel proposes that there may have been more reasons underlying the use of an aniconic style, and says that this group of Sephardim aimed to preserve their cultural ties to Islamic culture in response to the growing, unfamiliar Ashkenazi culture, and a “dialogue” with the past Muslim Iberian culture was continued in order to preserve what was left of it.<sup>83</sup>

However, this kind of opposition may be too idealistic and, in reality, was less divided. Despite different visual vocabularies, many Haggadot utilize both styles throughout. Furthermore, if we return to the connections of the matzot to Ashkenazi literature and kabbalah, all manuscripts, regardless of origin, display this influence in their abstracted depictions of matzot. The similarities in matzot and the use of various styles in all the manuscripts challenges the idea that these two groups were in direct opposition to each other.

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<sup>82</sup> Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot*...p. 140 - 141

<sup>83</sup> Kogman-Appel, "Hebrew Manuscript Painting....", p. 268

When attributing different kinds of imagery to different groups, we also need to be cautious with clear-cut, clinical divisions. When analyzing medieval Iberia, these terms are limiting as much as they are important, but we will return to complications later in the section. Indeed, Kogman-Appel categorizes the manuscripts in question into one category or the other, claiming that, while the styles developed parallel to each other, “they never merged.” Again, this conclusion is challenged with all the Haggadot in question utilizing different styles and featuring figurative representation while also including a matzot depiction that undeniably shares designs with Islamic geometric patterns. While Kogman-Appel chooses to connect it to rose windows, the similarities with Islamic designs such as those found in the Golden Haggadah seem to overpower similarities to rose windows. This is mostly due to the fact that the Golden Haggadah matzot breaks the typical Rose window format, with a center-point and spokes, thus distancing it away from gothic architecture and moving it closer to designs found on objects like the Banner from Las Navas de Tolosa in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 16).

With similarities from designs prevalent in both cultures, it becomes harder to categorize manuscripts as “Christian” or “Islamic” based on dominant styles alone. This kind of categorization is further complicated by the material discussed in the first chapter, given that origins are harder to attribute when similar motifs were always used by different cultural groups from different regions. It is important to acknowledge a mixing and blending of cultural elements in these manuscripts, especially when examining works from Iberia where various cultural groups were interacting with each other, which is something that Kogman-Appel fails to consider in detail.



## Chapter 4: Matzot in the Religious and Political Contexts

The previous chapter attempted to provide a better understanding of the significance of the cross-cultural interactions in the matzo folios of the Haggadot. What we have not addressed so far, however, is why the matzot were embellished in the first place. Perhaps this answer would come easier had all the objects associated with the Seder been given a similar treatment in the Haggadot. However, most of the objects are not awarded an embellished depiction, let alone a depiction altogether. For example, the shank bone, an object found on the Seder plate meant to symbolize a sacrifice, is not depicted in several manuscripts, including the Golden Haggadah, at all. Others are more generous in their illustrations, and include depictions of these other symbolic objects in the marginalia. In the Rylands Haggadah, for instance, a man and a woman are depicted eating *karpas*, the green vegetable that would be dipped in saltwater during the Seder to symbolize the tears of the enslaved Jews (fig. 26). In certain instances, the matzo is also depicted within a scene, situated at the Seder table, but these images accompany the main, embellished depiction on a separate page. We see this in the Barcelona Haggadah, where a man places a basket of unleavened bread upon the head of a child in folio 28v (fig. 27), prior to the matzo's more notable appearance once more in folio 61 (fig. c).<sup>84</sup> However, one object that begins to rival the decoration of the matzo is the bitter herb, or *maror*. Like the matzo, the maror is typically awarded a full-page illustration in nearly all of the manuscripts, but even then, these depictions do not match the level of detail in the matzo folios. These depictions of maror remain fairly true to the actual herb, and it appears as a recognizable leafy green vegetable. The Golden

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<sup>84</sup> Evelyn Cohen, Jerrilynn D. Dodds, "Seder Foods and Customs in Illuminated Medieval Haggadot" in *The Experience of Jewish Liturgy: Studies Dedicated to Menahem Schmelzer* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 33

Haggadah includes one such example of this, as the maror is depicted as a giant, green leaf in the middle of the Hebrew text (fig. 28). Even though the depiction here occupies an entire page and interrupts the text section like the matzo, the representation of maror appears completely different from the colorful, decorated wafer on folio 44v (fig. a ). This kind of relationship is seen in all of the Haggadot, except for three where the image of the maror does not survive.

One possible explanation for the choice to embellish the matzo and not other objects such as the maror was discussed briefly in Chapter 2 through references to Michael Batterman's article *Bread of Affliction, Emblem of Power*. If we recall the ending to Chapter 2, Batterman emphasizes the connections to Kabbalah, claiming that these connections led to embellished wafers in the Spanish Haggadot. The matzo wafer's connection to the Jewish Divine Presence, known as the *Shekhinah*, earned it the kinds of decoration evident in all the Haggadot. The divinity of the matzot is expressed through cosmic imagery such as the inclusion of the four winds blowing their horns in the Kaufmann Manuscript and the Barcelona Haggadah, as well as through an invocation of Kabbalistic motifs specifically (figs. c and d). The wafer in the Golden Haggadah includes one such motif, the closed door in the center of the roundel, which, Batterman summarizes, was "among the most fundamental metaphors in Kabbalah, signifying the secret nature of mystical experience and the difficult path to knowledge of the Godhead" (fig. a).<sup>85</sup>

Another explanation is linked more to the political and social environments that surrounded the creation of these manuscripts. Antisemitism was a constant threat to medieval Jewry, leading to pogroms and expulsions. It is this antisemitism that drove Jews into Iberia, and ultimately drove them and their Haggadot out in 1492 with the Inquisition. A consistent

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<sup>85</sup> Batterman, pp. 62-65

component of this antisemitism that followed Jews from country to country in the Middle Ages was blood libel. Blood libel refers to the kinds of widespread rumors that Christians would perpetuate about Jews kidnapping and killing Christians for their blood. Many stories of blood libel in the Middle Ages specifically targeted the matzo, as it was believed Jews used Christian blood as an ingredient.<sup>86</sup> These rumors followed an increased fascination with the Eucharist by Christians, as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 had solidified the Eucharistic wafer's ties to the actual body of Christ, and claimed that the host was indeed a "body of God."<sup>87</sup> As a result, the council ordered specific instructions for preparing and keeping the host, including protecting by keeping it locked away safely.<sup>88</sup>

This fascination and focus on the Eucharistic wafer gave life to two main streams of blood libel rumors. The first involved the idea that the matzo, as a flat, burnt bread supposedly made of the blood of Christian children served as a mockery of the holy Eucharistic wafer. In addition, the matzo-making process was a way for Jews to reenact the violence of the crucifix, and invoked the kinds of sharp tools Jews were using to prick their dough to ensure that it remained unleavened.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, the matzo's very existence was a threat to Christianity. The second kind of story included accusations that Jews were stealing and desecrating Christian hosts themselves as a way to enact anti-Christian violence. In some variations, to further the concept of violence enacted by Jews, the wafer was said to bleed when Jews desecrated it.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Hannah R. Johnson, *Blood Libel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2012), pp. 1-2

<sup>87</sup> Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*... p. 95

<sup>88</sup> Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*.... p. 96

<sup>89</sup> Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*...pp. 96 - 101

<sup>90</sup> Roger S. Wieck, *The Sacred Bleeding Host of Dijon in Books of Hours in Illuminating Faith: The Eucharist in Medieval Life and Art*. (New York: Morgan Library & Museum, in Association with Scala Arts, 2014)

Accusations rarely go without responses, and it seems hard to imagine that Jews remained silent when faced with stories like this. However, as art historian Marc Michael Epstein states, there were few safe ways for Jews to respond without furthering endangering themselves in an antisemitic environment, so responses may have come in an unconventional, subtle form. In the midst of rumors of blood libel in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in what is now Germany, a Jewish manuscript known as the Birds' Head Haggadah was created. Incidentally, this manuscript, where all the heads of Jewish figures are replaced with the unmistakable heads of birds, "is the earliest surviving illustrated version of the Haggadah text."<sup>91</sup> The images in the manuscript remain mysterious, but Epstein has proposed a theory that connects the images to the antisemitic environment of medieval Germany by arguing that the images were "iconographic responses" to these surroundings.

Aside from the use of birds' heads in the manuscripts, another strange element is the inclusion of visual sequences depicting the matzo-making process. Specifically, these bird-headed Jews are shown innocently and somewhat playfully engaging both with the baking process and the matzo wafer itself. In folio 25v, a man raises the tool for pricking the matzo up in front of a group of women and a child, instructing them on how to properly prick the matzo prior to baking (fig. 29). In another image, on folio 27v, a boy presents a man with the *afikomen*, the piece of matzo hidden during the Seder for children to find (fig. 30). None of these scenes depict anything maliciously or out of the ordinary: a tool for pricking bread is used exactly for that purpose, and members of the Seder use the wafer in a game for children. These images heavily contrast the kinds of rumors and antisemitic, propagandistic images that were spread at the same time.

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<sup>91</sup> Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah...* p. 47

Notably, unlike the depictions in the Spanish Haggadot, the matzo in these images are not embellished, and appear as monochromatic, yellow circles. Instead, the emphasis is on the baking process and the interactions with the wafer rather than with the matzo itself. In the context of the environment and the kinds of images invoked by blood libel, the choice to focus on these things seems appropriate. While the matzo was targeted, so were specifics in the baking process, including the use of the pricking tool and the intentional burning of the wafer. As a result, it makes perfect sense for Jewish artists to glorify a multitude of things that were targeted by blood libel rumors rather than on the wafer alone.

There is, however, an earlier image in the Birds' Head Haggadah that can be interpreted as a kind of embellishment of the wafer itself, but in an indirect fashion through several visual references. On folio 22v, Epstein notes the similarities between the descending manna and a Eucharistic wafer, citing the shape of the manna as well as a depiction of a quail which highly resembles depictions of the Holy Spirit as a dove in Christian manuscripts (fig. 31). This appropriation of Christian motifs in a Jewish manuscript is one way of visually communicating that Jews had “their own heavenly bread, and that they do not need to replicate the Eucharist in their matzot by nefarious means.” In turn, this visual was not only a way to glorify a Jewish iteration of a wafer, like the matzo, but also to respond to the idea that Jews were utilizing the matzot to mock the Eucharist by showing that there was no need to do so in the first place.<sup>92</sup> While this mode of embellishment differs from the images we see in the Spanish manuscripts, this example demonstrates that embellishment of certain Jewish objects had a special significance to Jewish readers, as it provided a response to the antisemitism in Europe, while also demonstrating how the choice to borrow imagery can also convey a message to other readers.

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<sup>92</sup> Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*... p. 101

### *Blood Libel in Iberia*

Iberia, of course, was not spared from the the spread of blood libel in Europe. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, blood libel rumors had made their way to the royal court, and subsequently appeared in the *Siete Partidas*, the seven-part code of law created under Alfonso X. The section of the code known as *Title XXIV* deals explicitly with the Jews in Iberia, providing instructions on how Jews were permitted to live under Alfonso and how Christians should interact with them. In the very beginning of *Title XXIV*, the first law ends with a reminder that Jews were linked to the crucifixion, stating “that they were descended from those who crucified Our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>93</sup> While this is similar to the origins of blood libel in Western Europe, where Christians claimed Jews needed blood to retain their connection to the crucifixion by reenacting it, the second law more explicitly invokes a rumor of blood libel by stating the following;

And because we have heard it said that in some places Jews celebrated, and still celebrate Good Friday, which commemorates the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by way of contempt; stealing children and fastening them to crosses, and making images of wax and crucifying them, when they cannot obtain children, we order that, hereafter, if in any dominions anything like this is done, and can be proved, all persons who were present when the act was committed shall be seized, arrested and brought before the king; and after the king ascertains that they are guilty, he shall cause them to be put to death in a disgraceful manner, no matter how many there may be.

We also forbid any Jew to dare to leave his house or his quarter on Good Friday, but they must all remain shut up until Saturday morning; and if they violate this regulation, we decree that they shall not be entitled to reparation for any injury or dishonor inflicted upon them by Christians.<sup>94</sup>

This law is not only founded upon a blood libel rumor, but also includes punishment based on it.

The document states that Jews should remain indoors to avoid Christian attacks on this holiday,

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<sup>93</sup> Robert I. Burns, S.J., ed., *Las Siete Partidas*, vol. 5, *Underworlds: The Dead, the Criminal, and the Marginalized*, trans. Samuel Parsons Scott (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 1433-4.

<sup>94</sup> Burns, p. 1434

implying that this rumor has a degree of truth to it, and that attacks against them are justified as Jewish victims will “not be entitled to reparation for any injury of dishonor inflicted upon them by Christians.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Jews were subject to physical violence on multiple occasions. In 1391, Jews were the victims of several attacks. As succinctly summarized by historian Norman Roth, “In the summer of 1391, inspired by the anti-Jewish propaganda of a minor archdeacon in Seville, mobs of lower-class peasants attacked and robbed Jews throughout Spain.”<sup>96</sup> Though this incident comes after the creation of most of these manuscripts, this example nonetheless shows the effects of rhetoric used in the *Siete Partidas*.

Keeping the iconography of the Birds’ Head Haggadah in mind, we can see a possible connection between a rise of antisemitism, especially blood libel, and an embellishment or emphasis on Jewish imagery. Just as the matzo wafer and the baking process was glorified through several references to respond to blood libel in Germany, we can picture a similar kind of situation here. With the wafer being a frequent component of blood libel, and blood libel rumors being so pertinent that the *Siete Partidas* described punishment for this rumored act, it is reasonable to assume Iberia had a fairly similar environment to Germany in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, with this antisemitism it is also appropriate to expect a response in a similar manner to the one in the Birds’ Head Haggadah (that is, a cautious, subtle response so as not to provoke more violence) presented by the Jews in Iberia. As a result, we can interpret the decorated motifs with borrowed imagery in a similar way we can understand the matzo sequences and depictions in the Birds’ Head Haggadah.

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<sup>95</sup> Burns, p. 1434

<sup>96</sup> Norman Roth. “The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492.” *The Historian* 55, no. 1 (1992), p. 20

We do, indeed, see a variety of Christian images reinterpreted and reframed in Jewish contexts, just as we saw with the image of the descending manna invoke Christian images in the Birds' Head Haggadah. One such example of this appears in the Prato Haggadah and the Sarajevo Haggadah, both of which include compositions of two figures flanking and carrying a giant matzo wafer. As Batterman notes in his writing, there is an undeniable similarity to a kind of image known as *imago clipeata*, which featured either an important figure or symbol in a roundel surrounded and presented by figures. While initially a visual trend in antiquity, in Iberia it had connections to Spanish art as some manuscript images included depictions of Christ within a circular form surrounded by angels.<sup>97</sup> Another example of this includes the visual similarities and references to Spanish heraldic imagery, such as shields or seals. A good example of this is present in the Barcelona Haggadah and the Kaufmann Haggadah, both of which feature shields in the center areas of the wafer depiction (figs. c and d ). It is the inclusion of images like these that allowed Jews to strengthen their identity under growing oppression by asserting a unique form of autonomy using reappropriated symbols and signs.<sup>98</sup>

### *Conclusion: Significance*

There is, undoubtedly, a connection between Christian oppression and the use of Christian motifs in these Jewish manuscripts. With all the evidence presented above, we can conclude that the use of Christian elements in the matzot folios or just in the books altogether had a specific meaning for Jews who were living under a Christian rule and majority. The question that remains, however, is the significance of the geometric designs shared with Islamic

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<sup>97</sup> Batterman, p. 67

<sup>98</sup> Batterman, pp. 65-9



art and architecture. Unfortunately, the answer to this question is fairly murky and largely unclear, but what I propose is the following: the choice to adapt motifs from Muslim art does not contain the same kind of significance that the choice to borrow Christian motifs did in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

We can begin by stating the most obvious fact about the lack of connection, which is simply that the inclusion of Muslim motifs did not begin with an oppression of Jews by Muslims in Iberia. This may be partially due to the fact that Jewish art and Muslim art contained similar motifs before the arrival of both in Iberia, which may be coincidental or because of the evolution of the two religions side by side in the Mediterranean. If we recall the discussion of motifs from the first chapter, both Muslims and Jews had utilized geometric forms such as six and eight pointed stars in their art and architecture. Both of these religious groups had used similar forms for centuries, unlike the use of Christian forms and references by Jews to respond to diminishing power under Christian rule.

As they did in the Middle East, Jews and Muslims interacted in Iberia, as they lived under Muslim dynasties prior to the creation of Christian kingdoms. Importantly, Jews were not treated as equals under Muslim rulers, so this relationship was not one of peace. Like Christians living there, Jews were treated as second-hand citizens, and were known as *dhimmis*, or, protected minorities. While Jews were still the victims of heavy antisemitism and were not allowed certain privileges, there were still periods of times where Sephardic culture flourished. Indeed, it is this continued coexistence in this environment is what eventually gave rise to Sephardic culture, which, as we know, shared similarities to Islamic culture and religion. While the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties drove Jews out of Muslim Al Andalus and into the Christian kingdom, the

shared narrative of Jews and Muslims continued on.<sup>99</sup> In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jews and Muslims were further united under the Christian kingdoms, as they were both categorized as “non-Christian” minorities. We see this kind of conflation in two images of a manuscript from the 13<sup>th</sup> century known as the *Cantigas de Maria*, executed under the rule of the Christian King Alfonso X. The first image depicts a scene with a Jewish moneylender positioned under a curtain containing two six-pointed stars. In this second image, a group of Muslim warriors are depicted attacking a castle, with one soldier in front brandishing a shield with several six-pointed stars on it. While the six-pointed star had not yet accumulated the Jewish significance it holds today, this symbol was still included to distinguish Jews and Muslims from Christians. Importantly, the star did not identify them as neither Jews nor Muslims, but rather united both minority groups under the label of “non-Christian” under Christian rule (fig. 32). In sum, the boundaries between the two groups were further blurred both politically and visually.<sup>100</sup>

Another reason we can understand this decorative phenomenon as one that existed and thrived under Christian rule is that Jews had a specific issue to respond to living in Christian kingdoms. In other words, blood libel was a consistent aspect of Christian relations with Jews. As discussed above, blood libel was even instituted in Spanish law documents. Again, as Epstein proposes, timely blood libel accusations provided the underlying motive for the choice to embellish matzot baking sequences in the Birds’ Head Haggadah, and may have also served as the impetus for the embellishment of the wafers in Spanish Haggadot. In regards to relations with Muslims, there is no equivalent of blood libel that would have functioned similarly. Indeed, Jews

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<sup>99</sup> Vivian B. Mann, et al., editors. *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*. (New York: G. Braziller, 1992).

<sup>100</sup> Pamela A. Patton, “An Islamic Envelope-Flap Binding in the Cloister of Tudela: Another ‘Muslim Connection’ for Iberian Jews?” *Spanish Medieval Art: Recent Studies*, Colum Hourihane ed., (Arizona: ACMRS, 2007) p. 86.

were oppressed under Muslim rule, but there was not a consistent, single aspect of oppression that there was a need to respond to.

## Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the matzot in medieval Iberian Haggadot provide insight into the arts and culture of Iberia. Previous writings on Iberian Haggadot had overlooked the matzot's significance, but through this intense analysis, it is clear that the matzot were more than decorated representations of the wafers with "borrowed" imagery. Instead, the matzot depictions in these Haggadot contain images that were directly related to the social and political situation of Jews living in Iberia. This decoration has also highlighted the diversity of Iberian artistic culture by incorporating several different visual vocabularies that Jews shared with groups living in the region.

Furthermore, the significance of the matzot is not limited to or defined solely by its use of shared elements and connections to Muslims and Christians in Iberia, and these decorated wafers held a specific importance for the Jewish community in Iberia specifically. A purposeful accumulation of Christian imagery, especially heraldic symbols, communicated a desire for autonomy and power under an oppressive system. The choice to reclaim the imagery of the oppressor was used as a visual way to communicate this desire while also expressing a kind of Jewish significance as these images were mixed and reformed with Kabbalistic motifs. As a result, the matzot not only served as a means of visual communication between the oppressor and the oppressed, but also reflected the interests and beliefs of Spanish Jewry.

While the imagery in the Haggadot and the matzot are connected to oppressive environments, there is also a sense of celebrated diversity of Iberian Jewry that is communicated through the decoration as well. The varied appearances of the wafers from different regions in Iberia provide more evidence that the Jewish community in Iberia was far from uniform. This mixture of designs that appear in all of the Haggadot heavily challenge attempts to associate the

works with a single group or single origin. This mixture also likely reflected the reality of life in the Peninsula, where communities were not divided or dictated by modern terms such as “Ashkenazi” or “Sephardic.” In addition, the shifting quality of the manuscripts demonstrate the patrons came from different backgrounds and social groups.

The matzot have served as an opening into a much larger topic of relationships in Iberia. Indeed, the constant response to oppression through manuscript illustrations complicates the idea of “convivencia,” where all three religious groups lived harmoniously in Iberia. Many questions remain on the complex history of the Peninsula, including the visual relationships between other religious groups. We are left wondering if Islamic art from the same period contained a similar kind of visual response hidden within the decoration, or if Jews were communicated specific messages to their Muslim neighbors alongside their responses to their oppressors. What we can say fairly confidently after this lengthy analysis, if anything, is that the history of Iberia as well as the people living in the peninsula cannot be oversimplified. The attempts to oversimplify the diverse history of the region has ultimately forced modern terminology and viewpoints on the Peninsula while largely overshadowing the complexity of the region and its inhabitants.

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I affirm I have adhered to the Honor Code on this Assignment.  
Sadie Gelman



## Figures



Figure 1: folio 26r with marginal depiction of Jews baking matzot from the Birds' Head Haggadah



Figure 2: folio 19b from the Rylands Haggadah with a diaper-patterned background.



Figure 3: folio 3v from the Brother Haggadah with a diaper-patterned background.





*Figure 4: fol. 2v from the Golden Haggadah showing Scenes from Genesis showing Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel*



## Figures



Figure 6: folio 3v. from the Brother Haggadah showing Moses and Aron turning their staffs into snakes (stop) and the first plague of blood (bottom)



Figure 5: folio 3v. from the Sister Haggadah showing scenes from Genesis



Figure 7: folio 15v from the Rylands Haggadah, showing Moses and Aron turning their staffs into snakes (stop) and the first plague of blood (bottom)



Figure 8: folio 32 of the Golden Haggadah showing scenes from Genesis



# Figures

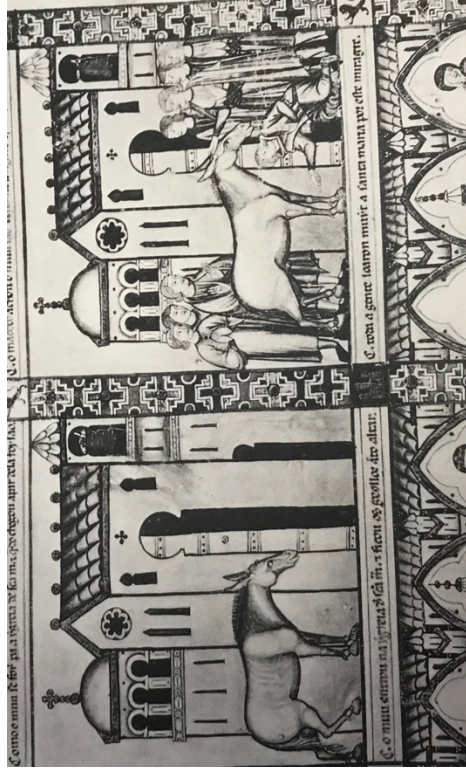


Figure 11: Pael of Story of the sick mule from Cantigas of Alfonso the Llearmed with flat composition and decorative framework



Figure 10: cota IL- 72 from the Cervera Bible displaying architectural elements like columns and arches



Figure 11: folio 36a from the Prato Haggadah



Figure 9: folio 3 in the Sarajevo Haggadah with Spanish heraldic imagery in the margins



## Figures



Figure 13: detail of folio 44v from the Golden Haggadah showing the star motif in the center

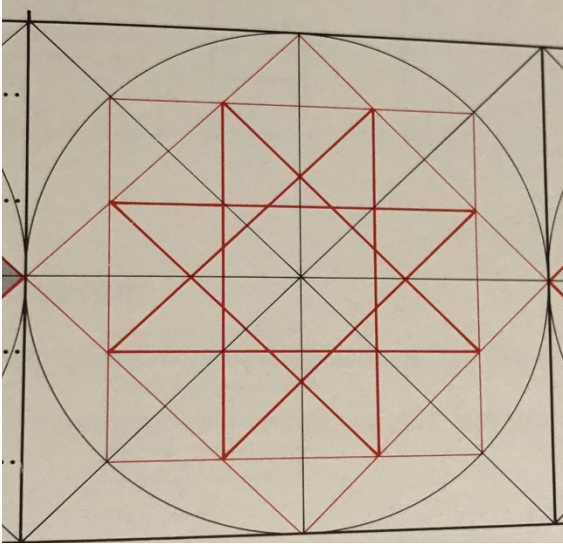


Figure 14: diagram showing gridded formation of decoration inscribed within a circular unit



Figure 15: folio 338b from a Qur'an manuscript featuring three verse markers, late 13<sup>th</sup> century



## Figures



Figure 16: Banner from Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212-1250

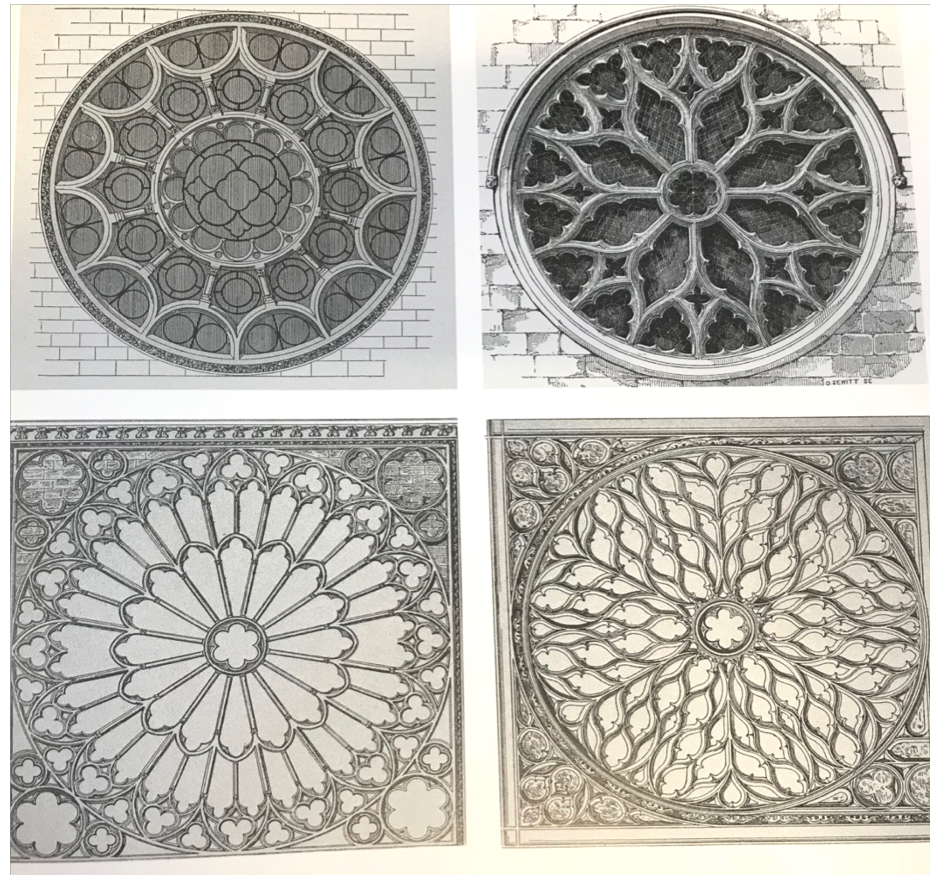


Figure 17: various kinds of rose windows found in gothic architecture



## Figures



*Figure 18: star-like construction in the dome of the Great Mosque of Cordoba*



*Figure 19: Geometric design from the Abbasid Palace in Baghdad*

## Figures

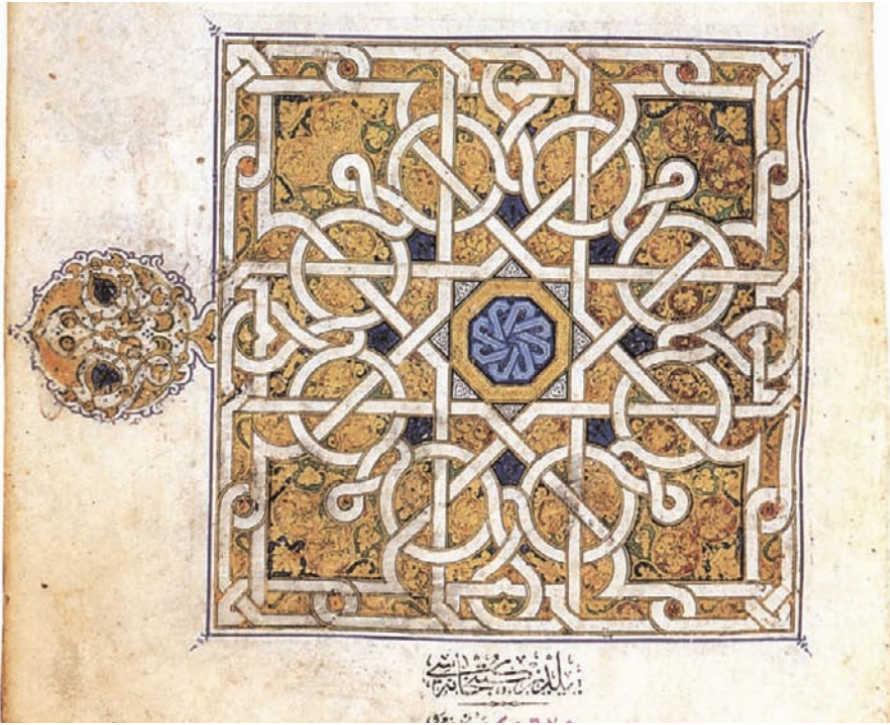


Figure 20: folio 3a from Qur'an manuscript, 1143

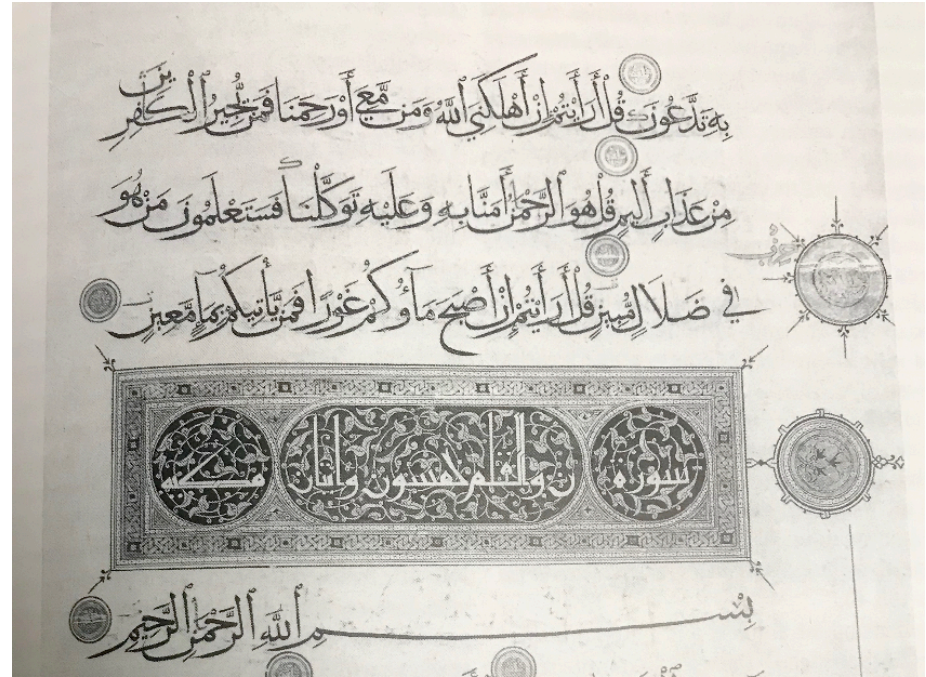


Figure 12: illuminated folio from an Egyptian Qur'an, circa 1330



## Figures



Figure 22: Folio 67 from the Usatici Barcionenses displaying stylistic similarities to the Golden Haggadah



Figure 23: detail of folio 7r from the Golden Haggadah showing Joseph sitting besides the King



Figure 24: Carpet page from the Damascus Keter



Figure 213: Interior of Synagogue of Santa Maria La Blanca



## Figures

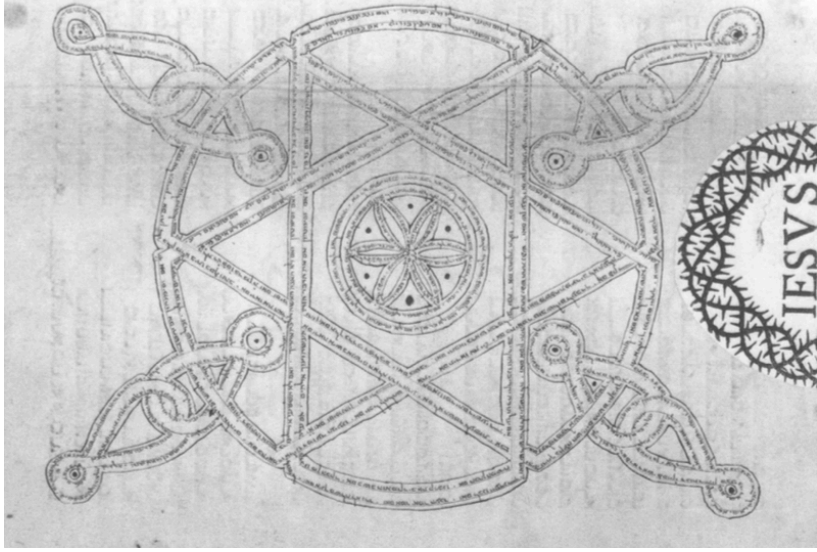


Figure 25: Folio with micrography (left) and folio with flattened, representations (right) from Perpignan Bible

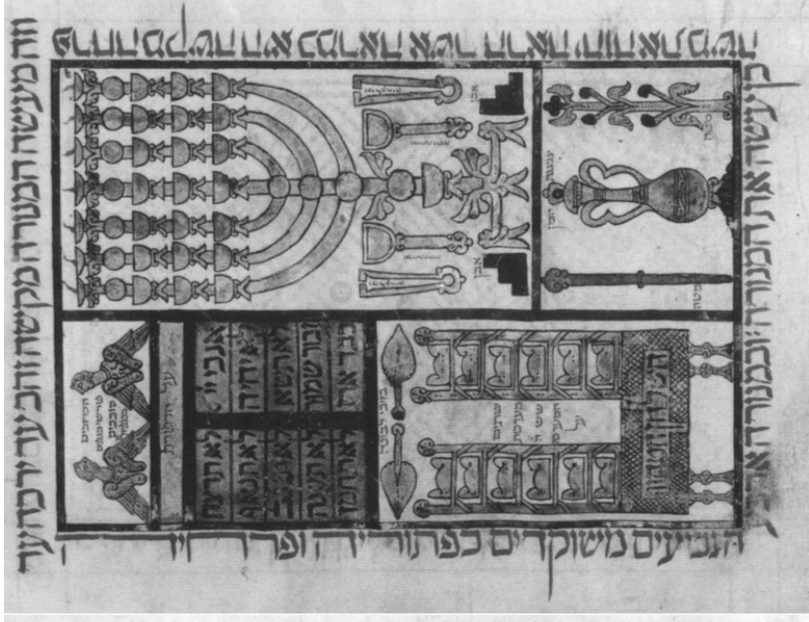


Figure 26: A man and woman dip greens in saltwater on folio 19b. of the Rylands Haggadah



Figure 27: A man places a basket of matzot on the head of a boy in folio 28v. of the Barcelona Haggadah





Figure 28: maror depicted in folio 45v of the Golden Haggadah



Figure 29: folio 25v from the Birds' Head Haggadah, showing a man instructing women how to properly prepare the matzo



Figure 30: a boy presents a piece of matzo (the afikommen) to a man in folio 27v of the Birds' Head Haggadah





Figure 31: Comparisons between Birds' Head Haggadah Manna depiction on folio 22v and image of Christ

## Figures



Figure 32: Six-pointed stars decorate the shields of Muslim soldiers (left) and the curtains above a Jewish moneylender (right) in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*





Figures – Matzot Depictions



Figure a: folio 44v. depicting the matzo wafer from the Golden Haggadah



Figure b: folio 51v depicting the matzo wafer in the Sister Haggadah



## Figures – Matzot Depictions



figure d: folio 61 depicting the matzo wafer from the Barcelona Haggadah



Figure c: folio 39r depicting the matzo wafer from Kaufmann MSA 422



## Figures – Matzot Depictions



Figure f: folio 31a (damaged) depicting the matzo wafer from the Rylands Haggadah



Figure e: folio 17v depicting the matzo wafer from the Brother Haggadah





Figure g: folio 66v. depicting the matzo wafer from the Cambridge Catalan Haggadah



## Figures – Matzot Depictions



Figure i: folio 43r depicting the matzo wafer in the Mocatta Haggadah



Figure h: folio 22v. depicting the matzo wafer from the Hispano-Moresque Haggadah



# Figures – Matzot Depictions



Figure j: folio 29a depicting the matzo wafer from the Prato Haggadah



Figure k: folio 26 depicting the matzo wafer from the Sarajevo Haggadah

## Figures – Matzot Depictions



Figure 1: folio (labelled as “page 50” on the Jewish Theological Seminary website) depicting the matzo wafer from the Graziano Haggadah