

Interpretations of The Ten Plagues in Jewish Tradition

Class 3: The Ten Plagues in Rabbinic Literature
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I. Rabbinic Associations...

Between Christianity and Plague

1. B. Sanhedrin 103a

ואמר רב חסדא אמר רבי ירמיה בר אבא מאי דכתיב (תהלים צא, י) לא תאונה אליך רעה ונגע לא יקרב באהלך לא תאונה אליך רעה (שלא ישלוט) בהן יצר הרע ונגע לא יקרב באהלך שלא תמצא אשתך ספק נדה בשעה שתבא מן הדרך

דבר אחר לא תאונה אליך רעה שלא יבעתוך חלומות רעים והרהורים רעים ונגע לא יקרב באהלך שלא יהא לך בן או תלמיד שמקדיח תבשילו ברבים [כגון ישו הנוצרי]

And Rav Ḥisda says that Rabbi Yirmeya bar Abba says: What is the meaning of that which is written: “No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your tent”(Psalms 91:10)? ...

Alternatively, the phrase “no evil shall befall you” means that you will be frightened neither by bad dreams nor by evil thoughts. “Nor shall any plague come near your tent” means that you will not have a child or student who overcooks his food in public, i.e., sins in public and causes others to sin, such as in the well-known case of Jesus the Nazarene.¹

Between Christianity and Donkeys

2. B. Shabbat 116a–b

אימא שלום, דביתהו דרבי אליעזר, אשתיה דרבן גמליאל הנאי. הנה הוה פילוספא בשבביתיה

¹ “The clue to this figurative meaning is given in the Talmud itself, b. Berach. 34a. The Gemara in this place is commenting on the following words of the Mishnah: “He who says “The good shall bless thee,” lo, this is the way of heresy. He who goes before the Ark, if he makes a mistake, another shall go in his stead, and let there be no refusal at such a time.” To ‘go before the Ark’ is to stand at the lectern to recite the prayers in the Synagogue. And the Mishnah has just remarked that some liturgical phrases are signs of heresy in the reader. Therefore the Mishnah directs what is to be done when a reader makes a mistake. Another man is to take his place and there must be no refusal on the part of the second man. That is the Mishnah. The Gemara says: “Our Rabbis have taught ‘He who goes before the Ark ought [at first] to refuse. He who does not refuse is like food without salt. He who refuses too much is like food of which the salt has burnt (or spoiled it.’ The meaning of this is clear. One who refuses too much is *open to the suspicion of heresy*, and he is like food that is spoiled or burned by too much salt.” A. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash, Augmented Edition* (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2007) 59–60.

דְּהָנָה שְׁקִיל שְׁמָא דְלָא מְקַבֵּל שְׂוֹחֲדָא. בְּעוּ לְאַחֲזֵכֵי בֵיהּ. עֵיילָא לִיהּ שְׂרָגָא דְדַהֲבָא, וְאַזּוּל לְקַמְיָהּ. אָמְרָה לִיהּ: בְּעֵינָא דְנִיפְלָגוּ לִי בְּנִכְסֵי דְבֵי נָשִׁי. אָמַר לָהּ: פְּלוּגוּ. אָמַר לִיהּ, כְּתִיב לָן: בְּמִקּוֹם בְּרָא, בְּרַתָּא לָא תִירוּת. אָמַר לִיהּ: מִן יוּמָא דְגַלִּיתוּן מֵאַרְעֵכוֹן, אֵיתְנָטִילַת אוֹרְיָתָא דְמִשָּׁה וְאֵיתְהִיבַת עֲוֹן גַּלְיוֹן, וְכְתִיב בֵּיהּ: בְּרָא וּבְרַתָּא פְתָדָא יִרְתוּן .

לְמַחֲרָה דְדַר עֵייל לִיהּ אִיהוּ חֲמָרָא לּוּבָא. אָמַר לָהּ: שְׁפִילִית לְסִיפִיהּ דְעֲוֹן גַּלְיוֹן, וְכְתִיב בֵּיהּ: אָנָּא לָא לְמִיפְחַת מִן אוֹרְיָתָא דְמִשָּׁה אֲתִיתִי [וְלָא] לְאוֹסְפֵי עַל אוֹרְיָתָא דְמִשָּׁה אֲתִיתִי, וְכְתִיב בֵּיהּ: בְּמִקּוֹם בְּרָא — בְּרַתָּא לָא תִירוּת. אָמְרָה לִיהּ: נְהוּר נְהוּרִיךְ כְּשְׂרָגָא. אָמַר לִיהּ רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: אָתָּא חֲמָרָא וּבְטַש לְשְׂרָגָא

The Gemara relates:

Imma Shalom, the wife of Rabbi Eliezer, was Rabban Gamliel's sister. There was a Christian philosopher [*pilosoph*] in their neighborhood who disseminated about himself the reputation that he does not accept bribes. They wanted to mock him and reveal his true nature. She privately gave him a golden lamp, and she and her brother came before him, approaching him as if they were seeking judgment. She said to the philosopher: I want to share in the inheritance of my father's estate. He said to them: Divide it. Rabban Gamliel said to him: It is written in our Torah: In a situation where there is a son, the daughter does not inherit. The philosopher said to him: Since the day you were exiled from your land, the Torah of Moses was taken away and the *avon gilyon* was given in its place. It is written in the *avon gilyon*: A son and a daughter shall inherit alike.

The next day Rabban Gamliel brought the philosopher a Libyan donkey. Afterward, Rabban Gamliel and his sister came before the philosopher for a judgment. He said to them: I proceeded to the end of the *avon gilayon*, and it is written: I, *avon gilayon*, did not come to subtract from the Torah of Moses, and I did not come to add to the Torah of Moses. And it is written there: In a situation where there is a son, the daughter does not inherit.

She said to him: May your light shine like a lamp, alluding to the lamp she had given him. Rabban Gamliel said to him: The donkey came and kicked the lamp, thereby revealing the entire episode.

Shmot 14:19-20:

יט וַיִּסַּע מִלֶּאֱדָה הָאֱלֹהִים, הִחֲלִדָּה לְפָנֵי מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּלְדָּד, מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם; וַיִּסַּע עִמּוּד הָעָנָן, מִפְּנֵיהֶם, וַיַּעֲמֹד, מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם. כ וַיָּבֵא בֵּין מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם, וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיְהִי הָעָנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ, וַיִּבָּר אֶת-הַלְּלָהּ; וְלֹא-קָרַב זֶה אֶל-זֶה, כָּל-הַלְּלָהּ .

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

II. Rabbinic Depictions of the Exodus Story

1. b. Megillah 10b

רבי יהושע בן לוי פתח לה פיתחה להאי פרישתא מהכא והנה כאשר שש ה' עליכם להיטיב אתכם כן ישיש להרע אתכם ואמר רבי יוחנן מאי דכתיב ולא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה בקשו מלאכי השרת לומר שירה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא מעשה ידי טובעין ביים ואתם אומרים שירה אמר רבי אלעזר הוא אינו שש אבל אחרים משיש ודיקא נמי דכתיב כן ישיש ולא כתיב ישוש שמע מינה

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi introduced this passage with an introduction from here: “And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, [and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to cause you to perish, and to destroy you” (Deuteronomy 28:63). The verse indicates that just as the Lord rejoiced in the good he did on behalf of Israel, so too, the Lord] will rejoice to cause you harm...

And similarly, Rabbi Yohanan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “And the one came not near the other all the night”(Exodus 14:20)? The ministering angels wanted to sing their song, [for the angels would sing songs to each other, as it states: “And they called out to each other and said” (Isaiah 6:3), but] the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: The work of My hands, [the Egyptians, are] drowning at sea, and you wish to say songs? [This indicates that God does not rejoice over the downfall of the wicked.]

[Rabbi Elazar said] that this is how the matter is to be understood: Indeed, God Himself [does not rejoice] over the downfall of the wicked, [but He causes others to rejoice]. The Gemara comments: One can learn from the language of the verse as well, as it is written: “So the Lord will rejoice [*ken yasis*]”(Deuteronomy 28:63). And it is not written *yasus*, [the grammatical form of the verb meaning: He will rejoice. Rather, it is written *yasis*. The grammatical form of this verb indicates that one causes another to rejoice. Consequently, these words are understood to mean that God will cause others to rejoice. The Gemara concludes: Indeed,] learn from it [that this is the case].

Cf. Sanhedrin 39b

2. Tanhuma Va'era

14:13:

חשך למה? תברך שמו של מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא, שאין לפניו משוא פנים, והוא חוקר לב ובוטח כליות. לפי שהיו בישוראל פושעין שהנה להם פטרונין מן המצרים, והנה להם שם כבוד ועשר ולא היו רוצין לצאת ממצרים, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: אם אני אביא עליהן מכה בפרהסיא וימותו, יאמרו המצרים, כשם שעבר עלינו, כך עבר עליהן. לפיכך הביא על המצרים את החשך שלשה ימים, ולא ראו איש את אחיו. ולכל בני ישראל היה אור במושבתם. וכתיב: וימש חשך. אמר רבי אבדימי בר חמא: אותו חשך כפול ומכפל היה. הנה מצרי עומד, אינו יכול לישב, יושב, אינו יכול לעמד. רבוץ, לא היה יכול לזקף. המכות האלו, שלשה על ידי אהרן, ושלושה על ידי משה, ושלושה על ידי הקדוש ברוך הוא, ואחת על ידי כלן. דם צפרדע וכנים שהיו בארץ, על ידי אהרן. ברד ארבה חשך שהו באויר, על ידי משה, ששך שלט משה בשמים ובארץ. ערוב דבר מפת בכורות, על ידי הקדוש ברוך הוא. ושחין על ידי כלן.

Why was darkness inflicted upon them? Because the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, shows no partiality, and searches the heart and tries the kidneys of all. He brought darkness upon them because

there were sinners in Israel who had Egyptian patrons, and enjoyed honor and wealth, and were unwilling to leave.

And the Holy One, blessed be He, said: If I bring a plague upon them in broad daylight, from which they will die, the Egyptians will say that just as it passed over us, so does it pass over them. Hence, He brought darkness upon the Egyptians for three days, and they saw not one another (ibid., v. 23). The children of Israel had light in their dwellings, so that they could bury their dead without being seen by their enemies. Even darkness which may be felt (ibid., v. 21) is written. R. Abdimi the son of Hama said: The darkness was doubled and redoubled. An Egyptian who was standing was unable to sit, while one who was sitting was unable to stand, and one lying down could not rise.

3. Shirat B'nei Ma'arava 4

אזיל משה מן שמי[ה] / וחזת לגבי בניה
ביידך אנה עתיד פרק / כל אוכל[סייה]

גלה אנה לך / כל נסייה
דאיקונין דסבך / חקיקה בכורסייה

הא אין סרב פרעה / מן למשלחה בנייה
ואין לא ידחול / מן שמיה דח[ייה]

זרק אין הוא / בנהרה מיינוקיייה
חשבן אחשב עמיה / במה דחשב [ייה]

טירנוס אין הוא / על כל בנייה
יתיב משעבד להון / בטינה ובליבנה

כל בכורוי אתקטל / בפלגות לילייה
לביה אנה מכבד / דירדוף בתר בנייה

מטמע אנה ביימה / כל נזלייה
נודע יתיה / דאנא אלה בשמייה

סגר אנה ליה / לסוף נסייה
עבד חשבן עמיה / במה דחשב עם בנייה

פרק אנה לבניי / מן שעבוד לבנייה
צלותה אדכרת / דתלתי סבייה

קרנהון אנה עתיד / זקיף למרוממיה
רחמי הנון / מן שירוה

Go, Moses! From the heavens/descend to My children
Through you I intend to rescue/all the people

To you shall I manifest / all the miracles
 For lo, the image of your ancestor / is graven on (My) throne
Lo, if Pharaoh should refuse / to release (My) children,
And if he fails to defeat / the Name of the Living One,
 If he should cast / (My) babes into the river
 I will seek reckoning from him / just as he sought from (My) children
If he acts the tyrant / against all the children
If he sits and enslaves them / with mud and bricks
 All his firstborn I will murder / at midnight
 I will harden his heart / so that he will pursue after (My) children
 I will sink all who come / beneath the sea
 I will make known to him / that I am the God of the heavens
 I am hedging him about / so as to save him for the ultimate trial
I will make a reckoning with him / just as he reckoned with My children
 I will redeem My children / from slavery among the bricks
 I will remember the oath / of the three forefathers
 I intend to exalt / their horn on high
 My beloveds have they been / from the beginning
 The oath is fulfilled / the time has come
 Great praise / shall I earn through (My) children!

Shirat B'nei Ma'arava 6:

אמר אויב אסור מרכבה
 בחרבה דלא מתרברבה
 גברייה עבדי קרבא

אמר אויב דחוקו בתר משועבדי
 הוון מאתיין ועשר שנין תחות ידי
 ומן בתר ערקו ומן שעבודי

אמר אויב זרוזו בתריהון ואנא עימכון היך גיברא
 חשיבין אנון בארחה ולית להון [מעברא]
 טרדנא עליהון ימא ומדברא

אמר אויב יתקוף חילי על חילותיהון
 כרעותי עבידו במשריתיהון
 למפלגא ית בזתהון

אמר אויב מליהו ידיכון מנהון
 נכיסו ית אנשיהון
 סאיבו ית נשיהון

אמר אויב עבידת דמין יתעבדו
 פרצופיהון מיתחות שמיא יאבדו
 צדיית קשתי בפריח יצעדו

אמר אויב קטילת רבא קטילו בהון
רברבניי יפלגון ית שללהון
שיתו לחבלה כל אנפיהון

אמר משה רעה ישראל האזינה נוהג כצאן יוסף
יושב הכרובים הופיע!

The enemy said: I will hitch (my) chariot;
With sword unsurpassed
(go forth) the heroes, waging war

The enemy said: Hurry after my slaves
Two hundred and ten years were they under my hand
But now they have fled from my enslavement

The enemy said: hasten after them, while I, like a hero, am with you
Entrapped are they upon the road, with no way across
We have blocked them from both sea and wilderness

The enemy said: My power shall overpower their forces
Do as I order against their camps
For the sake of dividing the spoils

The enemy said: Fill your hands with their belongings
Slaughter their menfolk
Defile their women

The enemy said: Bloody work shall be done
Their faces erased from beneath the heavens
As I empty my bow, they will scurry off

The enemy said: Act murderously against them
Let my nobles divide their spoils
Give every individual over to destruction

Moses said: O shepherd of Israel, give ear!
(You) who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned on the cherubim, shine forth!²

4. Shemot Rabbah 9:6

ויקרא גם פרעה לתַחֲמִים וְלִמְכַשְׁפִּים, בְּאוֹתָהּ שַׁעַת הַתְּחִיל פְּרֹעָה מְשַׁחֵק עֲלֵיהֶם וּמְקַרְקַר אַחֲרֵיהֶם כְּתַרְנַגְלָת, וְאוֹמַר לָהֶם,
כִּי אוֹתוֹתַי שָׁל אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, בְּנִהַג שְׂבָעוֹלָם בְּגִי אָדָם מוֹלִיכִין פְּרַקְמִטְיָא לְמָקוֹם שְׂצָרִיכִין לָהֶם, כְּלוּם מְבִיאִין מוֹרְיִים

² Translated by Laura S. Lieber, in Lieber, *Jewish Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) 23.

לאספמא, דגים לעכו, אין אהם יודעין שקל הכשפים ברשותי הן, מיד שלח והביא תיגוקות מן אסכולי שלהם, ועשו אף הם כה, ולא עוד אלא קרא לאשתו ועשתה כה, שנאמר: ויקרא גם פרעה, מהו גם, שאף לאשתו קרא ועשתה כן. ויעשו גם הם חרטמי מצרים, מהו גם, אפלו התיגוקות של ארבע וחמש שנים קרא ועשו כן.

"And also called Pharaoh to the wise men and to the sorcerers." At that instant, Pharaoh began to laugh at them [Moses and Aaron] and to screech at them like a chicken, and to say to them: 'Thus are the signs of your G-d? The way of the world is for people to ply their wares in a place that needs them. Nobody brings fish broth to Espamia [Spain], Fish to Ako [All places already well-supplied with fish]. Do you not know that all the sorcerers are under my dominion?'

Immediately [Pharaoh] sent for and brought in children from their school. And they did exactly [as Aaron had done]. And not only that! But Pharaoh even called his own wife in and she did exactly [as Aaron had done]. As it says: "And also called Pharaoh." What is the "also" [referring to]? That even to his wife he called. [The verse also says] "And they did also the sorcerers of Egypt." [Here], what does the "also" [refer to]? Even the four and five year old children were called and they also did this.

ונישליכו איש מטהו, אמרו יוחני וממרא למשה, תבן אהם מכניס לעפריים. אמר להם למתא נקא נקא שקול. ויבלע מטה אהרן את מטתם, הנה הוא דכתיב) משלי כט, יא: (כל רוחו יוציא כסיל וחקם באחור ישבחנה, הכסיל מוציא כל דבריו בפעם אחת כשיבוא לריב עם חברו, וחקם באחור הוא מסלקו. דבר אחר, כל רוחו יוציא כסיל, הרשע הנה משהוציא כל עצתו, אחר כן חקמו של עולם באחור ישבחנה, שכן אהם מוציא באחורו שועמד ובטל מלאכת בית המקדש, לפיכך לא מלך אלא על חציו של עולם, מה פתיב בו) אסתר א, ד: (בהראתו את עשר כבוד מלכותו וגו', אמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה ששה גיסין הנה מראה להם בכל יום ויום ואין אחד מהן דומה לחברו, ואחר כה הוא משלם לכל גדולי המלכות. ורבי חייא בר אבא אמר מיני יציאות הראה להם. רבי לוי אמר בגדי כהנה הראה להם, נאמר כאן) אסתר א, ד: (תפארת גדולתו, ונאמר להלן) שמות כח, ב: (ועשית בגדי קדש לאהרן אהיה לכבוד ולתפארת, מה תפארת האמור להלן בגדי כהנה גדולה, אף תפארת האמור כאן בגדי כהנה גדולה. וחקם באחור ישבחנה, שהפיל הקדוש ברוך הוא עצתו ונהרג את נשתי. דבר אחר, כל רוחו יוציא כסיל, זה פרעה שנהיה מלעיג על הקדוש ברוך הוא, שהנה סבור שמעשה כשפים הן מה שעשו משה ואהרן, וקרא לכל בניו לעשות כמותם, הני: כל רוחו יוציא כסיל, זה פרעה. וחקם באחור ישבחנה, זה הקדוש ברוך הוא, שנאמר) איוב ט, ד: (חקם לבב ואמיץ כח. באותה שעה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אם יבלע תנין את תניניהם של מצרים מנהגו של עולם הוא, נחש בולע נחש, אלא יחזר לברייתו ויבלע את תניניהם, מהו ויבלע מטה אהרן את מטתם, אמר רבי אלעזר, גם בתוך גם, מלמד שחזר המטה מטה כברייתו, ויבלע אותו. כשראה פרעה כן תמה ואמר: ומה אם יאמר למטה בלע לפרעה ולכסאו, עכשו הוא בולע אותו. אמר רבי יוסי בר רבי חנינא, גם גדול נעשה במטה, שאף על פי שבלע כל אותו המטות שהשליכו, שהיו רבים לעשות מהן עשרה עמרים, ולא העבה, וכל מי שרואה אותו אומר זה מטה אהרן, מפאן שהנה מטה אהרן סימן טוב לעשות בו נסים ונפלאות לדורות.

"And each man cast his staff." Yohani and Mamreh [two Egyptian sorcerers] said to Moses: 'You have brought grain to Aphri'im [A city will plenty of grain].' [Moses] responded to them: 'To a city of vegetables, take vegetables' [i.e. to impress people, bring what they appreciate]. "And the staff of Aaron swallowed their [the sorcerers'] staffs."

There it is written: "A fool vents, a wise man calms it down." (Proverbs 29:11). The fool releases all his words at once when he comes to quarrel with his friend, and the wise man, at the end, comes to remove it...

ויחזק לב פרעה, ויאמר ה' אל משה כבד לב פרעה, פועס הוא, מה הכבד פועס אף לבו של זה נעשה כבד, אינו מבין כסיל הוא) קהלת ז, ט: (כי כעס בחיק כסילים ינוח. במה מיסרים את הכסיל במטה, שנאמר) משלי כו, ג: (ושבט לגו כסילים, אף משה יסר פרעה במטה, שנאמר: והמטה אשר נהפך לנחש וגו'. דבר אחר, כבד לב פרעה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא, רשע, בלשון שהכבדת, בו בלשון אני מתכבד עליך, שנאמר) שמות יד, יח: (בהכבדי בפרעה. לך אל פרעה

בבקר הנה יוצא המימה, לא הנה יוצא אלא המימה בבקר, לפי שאותו רשע הנה משתבח ואומר שהוא אלוה ואינו יוצא לנקבו, לפיכך הנה יוצא בבקר, בשעה שהיא נצרה תפוש אותו. והמטה אשר נהפך לנחש תקח בינה, כדי שיתראה ממנו.

ואמרת אליו ה' אלהי העברים וגו' זה אמר ה' בזאת תדע, הנה הוא דכתיב (איוב לו, כב): הן אל ישגיב בכחו מי כמהו מורה, בנהג שבעולם בשור נדם שהוא מבקש להביא רעה על שונאו פתאום מביא עליו עד שלא ירגיש בו, והקדוש ברוך הוא, הוא מתרה לפרעה על כל מכה ומכה כדי שישוב בו, הנה הוא דכתיב: בזאת תדע כי אני ה' (הנהגה). אנכי נגף את כל גבולך בצפרדעים). שמות ט, יט: (שלה העז, על המים אשר ביאר ונהפכו לדם, למה לקו המים תחלה בדם, מפני שפרעה והמצריים עובדים ליאור, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אפה אלוה תחלה ואחר כך עמו, משל הדיוט אומר מתי אלהיך ויבצתון במריא, וכן הוא אומר) ישעיה כד, כא: (יפקד ה' על צבא המרום במרום, ואחר כך וגו'. והדגה אשר ביאר תמות.

... This is that which is written (Job 36:22), "See, God is beyond reach in His power, who governs like Him?" It is customary in the world that when flesh and blood seeks to do bad to his enemy, he does so immediately so that [the other] not become aware.

But the Holy One, blessed be He, warns Pharaoh about each and every plague, so that he would repent. This is that which is written (7:17), "In this you will know that I am the Lord"; (7:27) "behold I will plague all of your borders with frogs"; (9:19) "send, hasten your cattle."

ויאמר ה' אל משה אמר אל אהרן, אמר רבי תנחום למה לא לקו המים על ידי משה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא המים ששפך שפך על ידו שילקו על ידך, סניף לא ילקו אלא על ידי אהרן. ונטה ידך על מימי מצרים, הפל מה שביאור ובאגמים ובנהרות. ועל כל מקנה מימיהם ויהיו דם, מה שבקיתו. והנה דם בכל ארץ מצרים וגו', אפלו מה שמצרי רוקק דם הנה. מפני מה הביא הקדוש ברוך הוא עליהן דם, מדה כנגד מדה. שפך אמר לאברהם (בראשית טו, יד) וגם את הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי וגו'. לפי שלא היו מניחין בנות ישראל לטבל מטמאתו, כדי שלא יהיו פריין ורביין לפיכך לקו המים בדם. ונעשו כן משה ואהרן כאשר צוה ה'. והדגה אשר ביאר מטה, אמר רבי אבין הלוי ברבי, ממפת דם העשירו ישראל, כיצד, המצרי וישראל בבית אחד והגיגית מלאה מים, ומצרי קלף למלאות הקיתון מתוכה מוציא מלאה דם, וישראל שותה מים מתוך הגיגית, והמצרי אומר תן לי בינה מעט מים ונתן לו ונעשו דם, ואומר לו נשטה אני ואתה מן קצרה אחת, וישראל שותה מים והמצרי דם, וכשהנה לוקח מישאל בדם, הנה שותה מים, מכאן העשירו ישראל.

...Rabbi Aveen, the Levite, son of Rabbi, said: "From the plague of blood, the Israelites got rich. How? An Israelite and an Egyptian living in one house and a barrel was full of water; the Egyptian would go to fill the jug from it and it would be filled with blood. The Israelite would drink water from the barrel, and the Egyptian would say, 'Give me a little water in your hand' and he would give him, but it turned into blood. And he would say, 'You and I both drink from the same platter!' The Israelite would drink water and the Egyptian blood, but when he would purchase it from an Israelite with money, he would be drinking water. From here, the Israelites became rich."

ונעשו כן חרטמי מצרים, מלמד שהיו סבורין שהיו מעשה כשפים. בלטיהם, אמר רבי אביו בר נגרי אמר רבי חזק בר אבא: בלטיהם, אלו מעשה שדים). שמות ז, יא: (בלטיהם, אלו מעשה כשפים, וכן הוא אומר) בראשית ג, כד: (את להט החרב המתהפכת לשמר את דרך עץ החיים, לפי שמעשה כשפים על ידי מלאכי חבלה נעשים. ויפן פרעה, לא חשש ולא הרגיש במפת האלהים. ונתפרו כל מצרים סביבת היאר, רבי יהודה אומר שביאור לקו, ורבי נתניה אמר מלמעלה ומלמטה לקה, וכל מצרים לקו מימיה בדם, אמר לו רבי יהודה ומה אני מקים ונתפרו כל מצרים סביבת היאר, אמר לו לפי שהיו המצריים אומרים כל המים שהיו רואין משה ואהרן נעשו דם, והיו חופרין להוציא מים לשתות ממה שאין עיניהן רואין. אמר רבי ברכיה מאי דכתיב) שמות ז, כ: (וינהפכו כל המים אשר ביאר וגו', משל לעבד שהיה לוקה לפני רבו מה שהיה לוקה על מעיו הנה הופך על עצמו ולוקה על גופו, כך הנה היאר מהפך עצמו כדי שלא תשלט בו המכה ולא הנה מועיל שפלו נהפך לדם. אמר רבי יוסי בר אבין פלל ופרט וכלל אי אתה דן אלא כעין הפרט). שמות ז, יט: (על

מימי מצרים, הרי זה קלל, על נהרתם ועל יאריהם ועל אגמיהם, פרט) שמות ז, יט: (ועל כל מקוה מימיהם, הרי קלל אחר, מה אתה מרבה כל הדומין להו. מהו) שמות ז, יט: (ובעצים ובאבנים, רבותינו זכרונם לברכה אומרים אף עבודת פוכבים שלקחם לקח בדם, שנגאמר) ירמיה ב, כז: (אומרים לעץ אבי אתה. דבר אחר, ובעצים ובאבנים, שהיו המים ששותין עם יהודי בכלי אהד או בכלי עץ או בכלי אבן נהפכין בפיו לדם. ויש אומרים אף בימסאות ובתי כסאות שלקחם לקח בדם, וקשהיה אהד מהם הולך ויושב על גבי המטה או על גבי האבן או על גבי סלע היו מפסידין את בגדיהם בדם, וכן הוא אומר) שמות ז, כא: (ויהי הדם בכל ארץ מצרים).

Shmot Rabbah 18:

ויהי בחצי הלילה, הלא הוא דכתיב) ישעיה מד, כו: (מקים דבר עבדו ונעצת מלאכיו ישלים, אומר רבי אבהו: מקים דבר עבדו, זה משה, שנגאמר) במדבר יב, ז: (לא כן עבדי משה, והיאך קנים אלא כיון שהביא עליהם מפת החשך התחיל פרעה צונח) שמות י, כד: (לכו עבדו את ה' רק צאנכם ובקרכם יצא. אומר לו משה סייד) שמות י, כו: (גם מקננו ילך עמנו לא תשארו פרסה, מהו פרסה, אפלו בהמה שהיא פלה של מצרי ויש בה טלף אהד לישראל, אינו מניח אותה). שמות י, כו: (כי ממנו נקח, אחר שאמר: כי ממנו נקח, חזר ואמר) שמות י, כו: (ואנחנו לא נדע מה נעבד את ה'. אומר לו אם אתה שאתה בשר נדם בני אדם מתים אם עוברין על צוויך, ואם תוציא דבר מלפניך ותאמר גבוי לי כה נקד יכול העולם לעמד לפניך, אבל אנו שמא יאמר לנו אלהים הקריבו קרבן של מאתים ונעשר שנים, הוי: ואנחנו לא נדע. אומר לו פרעה, עד מתי אתה נכנס לכאן) שמות י, כח: (לך מעלי השמר לך אל תספ ראות פני. אומר לו משה יפה דברת) שמות י, כט: (לא אסף עוד ראות פניך. אומר הקדוש ברוך הוא מה עדין מתבקש לי להודיע לפרעה מפה אהת, מיד קפץ עליו אלהים בפכיוול נכנס בפלטין של פרעה בשביל משה, שאמר לו: לא אסף עוד ראות פניך, שלא ימצא בדאי, ואתה מוצא שלא דבר הקדוש ברוך הוא עם משה בביתו של פרעה אלא אותה שעה, מנין, שנגאמר) שמות ט, כט: (כצאתי את העיר אפרש כפי אל ה', ועכשיו קפץ הקדוש ברוך הוא ודבר עם משה, שנגאמר) שמות יא, א: (עוד נגע אהד אביא על פרעה וגו'. כיון ששמע משה שמח ונתגדל, שנגאמר) שמות יא, ג: (גם האיש משה גדול מאד. התחיל צונח בפרהסיה) שמות יא, ד: (כה אומר ה' כחצת הלילה, יפה אמרת: אל תספ ראות פני, אני איני עוד בא אצלך אלא אתה בא אצלי, ושר צבא הנה שעומד עמך ונה הפרכוס שלך וכל בני פלטין אלו שלך באין אצלי עמך ומבקשים הימני ומשתחוים לי שנגאמר) שמות יא, ח: (וירדו כל עבדיך אלה אלי והשתחויו לי לאמר, לא רצה לומר והשתחוית לי, משום כבוד מלכות. כיון שהגיע חצי הלילה כאשר אומר משה, מיד ויהי בחצי הלילה וה' הכה כל בכור, לפיכך מקים דבר עבדו ונעצת מלאכיו ישלים, שעשה עצה עם אברהם בשביל הדבר הנה, אימתי כשבאו המלכים ורדף אותם, אומר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא דנג עד חצי הלילה, בוא ונחלק הלילה אני ואתה, שנגאמר) בראשית יד, טו: (ויחלק עליהם לילה. כיון שהגיע השעה שלמה העצה, הוי: ויהי בחצי הלילה, לכה כתיב: ונעצת מלאכיו ישלים.

"And it was in the middle of the night" (Exodus 12:29) - this is [the meaning of] what is written (Isaiah 44:26), "He fulfills the word of His servant and completes the counsel of His messengers:" Rabbi Abahu said, "He fulfills the word of His servant" - this [refers to] Moshe as it is stated (Numbers 12:7), 'Not so My servant Moshe.'" And how is it that He fulfilled it? Rather, when He brought the plague of darkness upon them, Pharaoh began to cry out (Exodus 10:24), "Go and serve the Lord, but your sheep and cattle must stay." Moshe said to him, "Upon your life! And also our livestock we will take, not one hoof will remain" (Ibid. 26)." What is [meant by] a hoof? Even an animal that belongs completely to an Egyptian and has one hoof that belongs to a Jew, [Moshe] will not leave.

"Since from them shall we take" (Ibid.) - after he said, "from them shall we take," he went back and said "and we do not know with what we will serve the Lord." He said to him, "If with you, who are flesh and blood, [and] people die if they transgress your commands; [nonetheless] if you put out a proclamation in front of you and you say, collect this and that for me, the world can stand in front of you [and fulfill your proclamation]; but with us, perhaps God will say to us, 'sacrifice a sacrifice [that includes all of the sacrifices] of two hundred and ten years.'" That is [what is meant by] "and we do not know."

Pharaoh said to him, "Until when will you enter here? 'Go away from me; guard yourself, do not see my face again!' (Ibid. 28)" Moshe said [back] to him, "you have spoken well; 'I will not see your face again.'" The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "What is still required for me? To inform Pharaoh of one plague." Immediately, He went into the palace of Pharaoh for Moshe - who said to [Pharaoh], "I will not see your face again" - so that he would not be found to be a fabricator. And you find that the Holy One, blessed be He, did not speak with Moshe in the house of Pharaoh except for that time. From where [do we know this]? As it is stated (Exodus 9:29), "When I leave the city, I will raise my hands to the Lord;" and now the Holy One, blessed be He, hastened and spoke with Moshe, as it is stated (Exodus 11:1), "still one plague will I bring upon Pharaoh, etc." Once Moshe heard [this], he rejoiced and became great, as it is stated, (Ibid. 3) "and also the man, Moshe, was very great." He began to cry out in public (Ibid. 4), "'so did the Lord say, 'at the middle of the night.'" You have spoken well, 'I will not see your face again.' I, myself, will not come again to you, but rather you will come to me; and your general that is standing with you - and he is your head officer - and all of these [in] your palace retinue will come to me with you and request of me - and bow down to me - that we should leave from here;" as it is written (Ibid. 8), "And all of your servants will come down to me and bow down to me saying" - he did not want to say, 'and you will bow down to me' because of the honor of the king. When the middle of the night arrived, as Moshe said; immediately, "And it was the middle of the night and the Lord smote every firstborn." Hence, "He fulfills the word of his servant. And completes the counsel of His messengers" - that He made a counsel (agreement) with Avraham because of this thing. When? When the kings came and he pursued them. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "It is enough for you until the middle of the night - come, let us split the night, you and I;" as it is stated, "And he divided against them at night (understood here as 'and He divided the night for them')." When the time came, he completed his counsel. That is [the meaning of] "And it was in the middle of the night." Thus is it written, "And completes the counsel of His messengers."

דָּבָר אַחֵר, וְיִהְיֶה בְּחֻצֵי הַלַּיְלָה, הִנָּדָא הוּא דְכִתְיִב (תְּהִלִּים קיט, סב): (חֻצוֹת לַיְלָה אֶקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ עַל מִשְׁפָּטֵי צְדָקָךְ. חֻצוֹת לַיְלָה אֶקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ עַל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם, וְלִנְוֹ עֲשִׂיתָ צְדָקָה, הִיאֵד, אֶלֶּא כִּינֹן שְׁאַמֵּר מֹשֶׁה) שְׁמוֹת יב, יב:) וְהַכִּיתִי כָּל בְּכוֹר, הַתְּחִילוּ מֵהֶם יִרְאִים וְיִשׁ מֵהֶם שְׁלֹא הָיוּ מִתִּירָאִין, מִי שֶׁהָיָה מִתְּנַבֵּא הָיָה מוֹלִיד בְּכוֹרוֹ אֶצֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַמֵּר לוֹ בְּבִקְשָׁה מִמֶּךָ טַל זֶה וְגַלִּין עִמָּךְ, כִּינֹן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ חֻצֵי הַלַּיְלָה הִרְגַּת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כָּל הַבְּכוֹרוֹת, וְאוֹתָם שֶׁהָיוּ נְתוּנִים בְּבִתְיָהֶם שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, הָיָה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא פּוֹסֵעַ בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין הַמִּצְרַיִם וְהָיָה נוֹטֵל נְשָׁמָתוֹ שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם וּמְנִיחַ נְשָׁמָתוֹ שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְהָיָה הִיְהוּדִי מִתְעוֹרֵר וּמוֹצֵא אֶת הַמִּצְרַיִם מֵת, בֵּין כָּל אֶחָד וְאַחָד, שְׁנֵאַמֵּר (שְׁמוֹת יב, יג): (וּפְסוּחֵי עֲלֵיכֶם וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בְכֶם נֶגֶף, הַתְּחִילוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹמְרִים: חֻצוֹת לַיְלָה אֶקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ לְכָד נְאֻמֵּר: עַל מִשְׁפָּטֵי צְדָקָךְ .

Another explanation: "And it was in the middle of the night" - this is [the meaning of] that which is written (Psalms 119, 62), "At midnight I arise to praise You for the judgments of your charity (*mishpetei tzidkecha*):" "At midnight I arise to praise You for" the judgments You enacted upon the Egyptians, and [that] for us You enacted charity. How is this? Rather, once Moshe said (Exodus 12:12), "and I will smite every firstborn," some of them began to fear, and there were [also] from them who were not afraid. One who was afraid would take his firstborn to a Jew and say to him, "I request of you, take this one and he will lodge with you."

When the middle of the night arrived, the Holy One, blessed be He, killed all of the firstborn. And [concerning] those that were placed in the houses of the Jews, the Holy One, blessed be He, would skip between the Jews and the Egyptians and take the soul of the Egyptian and leave the soul of the Jew. And the Jew would wake up and find the Egyptian dead between all [of the Jews around him], as it is stated (Ibid. 13), "and I will skip over you and there will not be a plague among you." The Jews [then] began to say, "At midnight I arise to praise You." Thus is it written (Psalms 119, 160), "all of the judgments of your charity."

III. Medieval Christians on Jews and Disease

1. William of Chartres, “Life and Miracles of Saint Louis” (c.1178–1219)

French Grand Master of the Knights Templar, a Catholic Military Order in Jerusalem

The matter of Christian usurers...seems to pertain to the...Church. The matter of the Jews, who are subjected to me by the yoke of servitude, pertains to me, lest they oppress Christians by their usury...under the shelter of my protection...and infect my land with poison...I wish to do what pertains to me concerning the Jews. Let them abandon usury, or let them leave my lands completely, lest it be further defiled by their filth. [Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 208]

2. Hartman Schedel, *Liber Cronicarum cum Figuris et Ymaginibus ab Inicio Mundi* [The Nuremberg Chronicle] (Nuremberg, 1493), Burning of the Jews at Deggendorf, Germany, 1338



3. The Confession of Agimet of Geneva, Châtel, October 10, 1348, cited in the Appendix to Johann S. Schilter’s 1698 edition of the Middle High German chronicle of the Strasbourg historian, Jacob von Königshofen (1346-1420)

The year of our Lord 1348:

On Friday, the 10th of the month of October, at Châtel, in the castle thereof, there occurred the judicial inquiry which was made by order of the court of the illustrious Prince, our lord, Amadeus, Count of Savoy, and his subjects against the Jews of both sexes who were there imprisoned, each one separately.

[Jews were sometimes imprisoned separately to prevent suicide.] This was done after public rumor had become current and a strong clamor had arisen – because of the poison put by them into the wells, springs, and other things which the Christians use – demanding that they die, that they are able to be found guilty and, therefore, that they should be punished. Hence this their confession made in the presence of a great many trustworthy persons.

Agimet the Jew, who lived at Geneva and was arrested at Châtel, was there put to the torture a little and then he was released from it. And after a long time, having been subjected again to torture a little, he confessed in the presence of a great many trustworthy persons, who are later mentioned. To begin with it is clear that at the Lent just passed Pultus Clesis de Ranz had sent this very Jew to Venice to buy silks and other things for him. When this came to the notice of Rabbi Peyret, a Jew of Chambéry who was a teacher of their law, he sent for this Agimet, for whom he had searched, and when he had come before him he said: “ We have been informed that you are going to Venice to buy silk and other wares. Here I am giving you a little package of half a span in size which contains some prepared poison and venom in a thin, sewed leather-bag. Distribute it among the wells, cisterns, and springs about Venice and the other places to which you go, in order to poison the people who use the water of the aforesaid wells that will have been poisoned by you, namely, the wells in which the poison will have been placed.”

Agimet took this package full of poison and carried it with him to Venice, and when he came there he threw and scattered a portion of it into the well or cistern of fresh water which was there near the German House, in order to poison the people who use the water of that cistern. And he says that this is the only cistern of sweet water in the city. He also says that the mentioned Rabbi Peyret promised to give him whatever he wanted for his troubles in this business. Of his own accord Agimet confessed further that after this had been done he left at once in order that he should not be captured by the citizens or others, and that he went personally to Calabria and Apulia and threw the above mentioned poison into many wells. He confesses also that he put some of this same poison in the well of the streets of the city of Ballet.

He confesses further that he put some of this poison into the public fountain in the city of Toulouse and in the wells that are near the [Mediterranean] sea. Asked if at the time that he scattered the venom and poison the wells, above mentioned, any people had died, he said that he did not know inasmuch as he had left everyone of the above mentioned places in a hurry. Aske did any of the Jews of those places were guilty in the above mentioned matter, he answered that he did not know. And now by all that which is contained in the five books of Msoes and the scroll of the Jews, he declared that this was true, and that he was in no wise lying, no matter what might happen to him.

4. From the body of Königshogen’s history: The Cremation of Strasbourgh Jewry St. Valentine’s Day, February 14, 1349

In the year 1349 there occurred the greatest epidemic that ever happened. Death went from one end of the earth to the other, on that side and this side of the sea, and it was greater among the Saracens than among the Christians. In some lands everyone died so that no one was left. Ships were also found on the sea laden with wares; the crew had all died and no one guided the ship. The Bishop of Marseilles and priests and monks and more than half of all the people there died with them. In other kingdoms and cities so many people perished that it would be horrible to describe. The pope at Avignon stopped all sessions of court, locked himself in a room, allowed no one to approach him and had a fire burning before him all the time. And from what this epidemic came, all wise teachers and physicians could only say that it was God’s will. And as the plague was now here, so was it in other places, and lasted more than a whole year.

This epidemic also came to Strasbourg in the summer of the above mentioned year, and it is estimated that about sixteen thousand people died.

In the manner of this plague the Jews throughout the world were reviled and accused in all lands of having caused it through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells – that is what they were accused of – and for this reason the Jews were burnt all the way from the Mediterranean into Germany, but not in Avignon, for the pope protected them there.

Nevertheless they tortured a number of Jews in Berne and Zofingen [Switzerland] who then admitted that they had put poison into many wells, and they also found the poison in the wells. Thereupon they burnt the Jews in many towns and wrote of this affair to Strasbourg, reiburg, and Basel in order that they too should burn their jews. But the leaders in these three cities in whose hands the government lay did not believe that anything ought to be done to the Jews. However in Basel the citizens marched to the city-hall and compelled the council to take an oath that they would burn the Jews, and that they would allow no Jew to enter the city for the next two hundred years. Thereupon the Jews were arrested in all these places and a conference was arranged to meet at Benfeld [Alsace, February 8, 1349]. The Bishop of Strasbourg [Berthold II], all the feudal lords of Alsace, and representatives of the three above mentioned cities came there. The deputies of the city of Strasbourg were asked what they were going to do with their Jews. They answered and said that they knew no evil of them. Then they asked the Strasbourgers why they had closed the wells and put away the buckets, and there was a great indignation and clamor against the deputies from Strasbourg. So finally the Bishop and the lords and the Imperial Cities agreed to do away with the Jews. The result was that they were burnt in many cities, and wherever they were expelled they were caught by he peasants and stabbed to death or drowned.

[The town-council of Strasbourg which wanted to save the Jews was deposed on the 9th-10th of February, and the new council gave in to the mob, who then arrested the Jews on Friday, the 13th.]

On Saturday – that was St. Valentine’s Day – they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to baptize themselves were spared. [Some say that about a thousand accepted baptism] Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledged and notes that they had taken for debts. The council, however, took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working-men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt. After this wealth was divided among the artisans some gave their share to the Cathedral or to the Church on the advice of their confessors. Thus were the Jews burnt at Strasbourg, and in the same year in all the cities of the Rhine, whether Free Cities or Imperial Cities or cities belonging to the lords. In some towns they burnt the Jews after a trial, in others, without a trial. In some cities the Jews themselves set fire to their houses and cremated themselves.

It was decided in Strasbourg that no Jew should enter the city for a hundred years, but before twenty years had passed, the council and magistrates agreed that they ought to admit the Jews again into the city for twenty years. And so the Jews came back again to Strasbourg in the year 1368 after the birth of our Lord.

5. An Oath Taken By Jews Frankfurt on the Main, about 1392

The Jew shall stand on a sow’s skin and the five books of Master Moses shall lie before him, and his right hand up to the wrist shall lie on the book and he shall repeat after him administers the oath of the Jews: Regarding such property of which the man accuses you, you know nothing of it nor do you have it. You never had it in your possession, you do not have it in any of your chests, you have not buried it in the

earth, nor locked it with locks, so help you God who created heaven and earth, valley and hill, wood, trees, and grass, and so help you the law which God himself created and wrote with His own hand and gave Moses on Sinai's mount. And so help you the five books of Moses that you may nevermore enjoy a bite without soiling yourself all over as did the king of Babylon.

And may that Sulphur and pitch flow down upon your neck that flowed over Sodom and Gomorrah, and the same pitch that flowed over Babylon flow over you, but two hundred times more, and may the earth envelope and swallow you up as it is Dathan and Abiram. And may your dust never join other dust, and your earth never join other earth in the bosom of the Master Abraham if what you say is not true and right. [This refers either to a decent burial or to resurrection.] And so help you Adonai you have sworn the truth.

If not, may you become as leprous as Naaman and Gehazi, and may the calamity strike you that the Israelite people escaped as they journeyed forth from Egypt's land. And may a bleeding and a flowing come forth you and never cease, as your people wished upon themselves when they condemned God, Jesus Christ, among themselves, and tortured Him and said [Matthew 27:25]: "His blood be upon us and our children." It is true, so help you God who appeared to Moses in a burning bush which yet remained unconsumed. It is true by the oath that you have sworn, by the soul which you bring on the Day of Judgment before the Court, [before the God of] Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is true, so help you God and the oath you have sworn [Amen].

6. The Epitaph of Asher aben Turiel, Toledo, Spain, 1349

This stone is a memorial
That a later generation may know
That 'neath it lies hidden a pleasant bud,
A cherished child.
Perfect in knowledge,
A reader of the Bible,
A student of the Mishnah and Gemara.
Had learned from his father
What his father learned from his teachers:
The statutes of God and his laws.
Though only fifteen years in age,
He was like a man of eighty in knowledge.
More blessed than all sons: Asher— may he rest in Paradise—
The son of Joseph ben Turiel—may God comfort him,
He died of the plague, in the month of Tammuz, in the year 109 [June or July, 1349].
But a few days before his death
He established his home;
But yesternight the joyous voice of the bride and groom
Was turned to the voice of wailing.
And the father is left, sad and aching.
May the God of heaven
Grant him comfort.
And send another child
To restore his soul.³

³ These sources are from Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book: 315–1791* (reprint: Cincinnati; Hebrew Union College Press, 1999), 50-57.

7. Black Plague: 1346–1353 [after the above events]

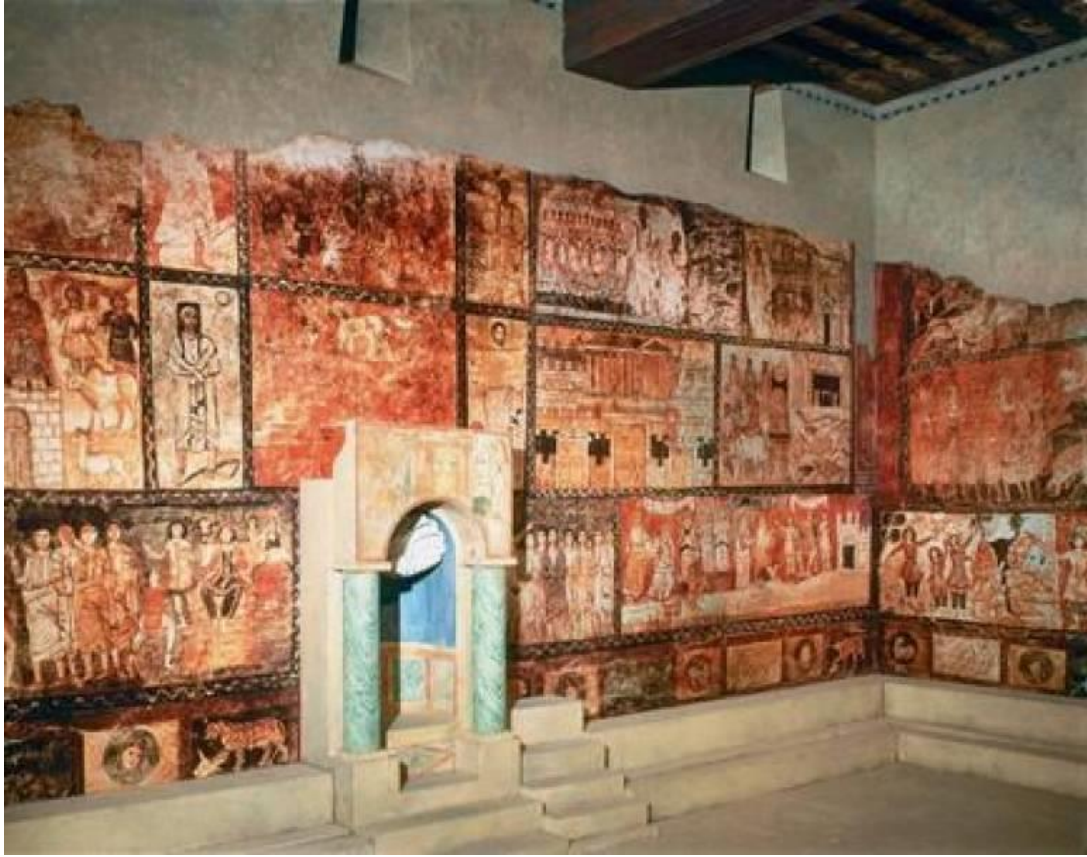
8. James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword*, 277

Jews were believed ready to poison wells, if they could, aiming to kill not just Christ, but Christians. Twenty-seven Jews were executed for well poisoning in Bohemia in 1163. The charges were repeated in Breslau in 1226, and in Vienna in 1267. In 1321, Jews were accused of a conspiracy to poison every well in France. Many Jews were burned at the stake as a result, and the Jews of Paris were expelled from the city. When the plagues struck, it was “logical” to think that the source of infection was poisoned wells. The 1348 Black Plague would result in anti-Jewish violence that far surpassed the First Crusade, with perhaps three hundred Jewish communities, including those in Mainz, Trier, and Cologne, being simply wiped out. The anti-Jewish mobs may have waved the banner of an insane rhetoric, making it seem they were irrationally avenging a long-dead Jesus or defending kidnapped children, but their very ferocity and the longevity of the Libel show that they were defending themselves. From what? Not from villains conjured by some chimerical fantasy based on nothing real, but from the threat logically deduced from a solemn doctrine of the Church.....that Jews were murders.

IV. Jewish Artistic Representations of the Exodus

1. Dura Europos, 3rd century, Syria









I. The Golden Haggadah, Catalonia, Spain (1320–1330)



II. Ivan Aivazovsky, The Waters of the Red Sea swirl over the Pursuing Egyptians (1891)

* note that Aivazovsky was Christian



III. Marc Chagall, Exodus

