

# Turning points in Ancient and Medieval Jewish History

## Lecture 6: the dark age of the Crusades and Christian antisemitism



### The background

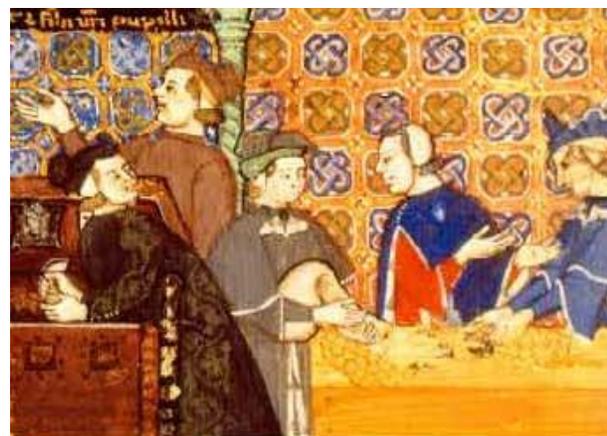
- **Early anti-Judaism** – blaming Jews for deicide and declaring that Judaism had been superseded
- **John Chrysostom** (349 – 407) – Church Father who wrote and spoke against Jews
- **Deicide** (the killing of the divine Jesus) and **supersessionism** (the replacement of Judaism by Christianity)
- The status of Jews in western Europe at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century – ‘the other’ but usually left alone
- **The 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council** (1215) - issued several pieces of Church legislation with dire implications for Jews

### The Crusades (1096 – 1303)

- The reasons for the Crusades – to recapture Jerusalem from the ‘infidels’ and to bestow indulgences
- Why were the Jews victimized? - Jews were also infidels and the fighting mobs were disorganized
- The beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Crusade (Pope Urban II) = the largest, most ‘successful’ Crusade for the Christians
- The Rhineland Massacres (1096) – major Jewish massacres in Mainz, Worms and Speyer
- The fate of the Jews during the other crusades (there were 8 in all) – massacres and local expulsions

### Forms of Christian antisemitism in the middle ages

- **Blood libels and ritual murders** (blood libels promoted antisemitism; ultimately to expulsion from England)
  - William of Norwich 1144
  - Hugh of Lincoln 1255
  - Simon of Trent 1475
- **Desecration of the host**, i.e. defiling the ‘host’ which is a wafer representing the flesh of Jesus
- **Rindfleisch destruction** in Bavaria and Austria (1298) – in response to rumours of host desecration
- Jews as devils and the *Judensau* – antisemitic iconography
- **The Black Death** (1347 – 1351) and well poisoning
- Other types of antisemitism in the middle ages
- The **burning of the Talmud** in Paris (1242)



Jewish moneylenders in the middle ages

### Moneylending

- What were the reasons for it? – Christians were forbidden
- What were the consequences? – resentment by the borrowers

### Expulsions of the Jews from Western Europe

- The massacre in York (1189) – suicide of Jews in **Clifford’s Tower**
- England 1290 – finally allowed to re-enter unofficially in 1655
- France – several expulsions during the middle ages
- Germany – many expulsions between 1096 and 1519

### Martin Luther and his followers also turn against the Jews

- Vilification of the Jews (1544) – Luther turned on the Jews when they did not support him

### Turning points during the era of the Crusades

- Anti-Judaism vs antisemitism: What’s the difference?
- The Jew as ‘the other’ and as the vulnerable – Jews were thought of as outsiders and were victimized
- Moneylending – an important role for Jews but not their only profession
- The rise of Polish-Ashkenazi culture – with suppression in the west, the east saw the rise to dominance of European Jewish civilization