

Course Title: "Limits and Possibilities of Art for Recovering Medieval Daily Life"
Instructor: Adam S. Cohen, with Linda Safran

Description: The course will begin with a general introduction not only to the potential of using art for an increased understanding of medieval daily life but also to the methodological challenges in doing so. More specifically, the course will focus on illuminated haggadot, books that were used in the household and contain pictures illustrating certain facets of "daily life." Although often used by scholars as simple reflections of quotidian activities (or, to be more precise, activities related to the holiday), these pictures must be understood within the broader context of how medieval manuscript illuminations functioned. Juxtaposing these images of Jewish life with those in contemporary Christian manuscripts demonstrates how such pictures may be carefully constructed statements that do not always correspond directly with actual lived experience. Indeed, the very existence of such illustrated Hebrew books reflects an awareness of and tension with surrounding Christian culture. This exploration of the illustrated haggadot thus yields insight into the complex nature of the primary evidence at our disposal and provides greater nuance into how modern scholars can construct a more accurate picture of the lives of medieval Jews beyond the elite. Finally, the course will examine selected materials beyond the confines of medieval Ashkenaz to provide comparative examples.

Preliminary Bibliography:

- Adam S. Cohen, "The Multisensory Haggadah," in *Les cinq sens au Moyen Age*, ed. Eric Palazzo (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2016), 305–31
- Evelyn Cohen, "Seder Foods and Customs in Illuminated Medieval Haggadot," in *The Experience of Jewish Liturgy: Studies Dedicated to Menachem Schmelzer*, ed. Debra Reed Blank (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 23–39
- Marc Michael Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative and Religious Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011)
- Julie Harris, "Making Room at the Table: Women, Passover and the Sister Haggadah (London, British Library, MS Or. 2884)," *Journal Of Medieval History* 42 (2016): 1–23
- Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Another Look at the Illustrated Sephardic Haggadot: Communal and Social Aspects of the Passover Holiday," in *Temps i espais de la Girona jueva; actes del Simposi Internacional celebrat a Girona 23, 24 i 25 de març de 2009*, ed. Silvia Planas i Marcé (Girona: Patronat del Call de Girona, 2011), 81–101
- eadem, "The Audiences of the Late Medieval Haggadah," in *Patronage, Production, and Transmission of Texts in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish*, ed. Jonathan Decker and Esperanza Alfonso (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 99–143

Mendel Metzger, *La Haggada enluminée* (Leiden: Brill, 1973)

Linda Safran, *The Medieval Salento: Art and Identity in Southern Italy*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Sarit Shalev-Eyni, *Jews Among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance* (London: Harvey Miller, 2010)

eadem, "Who Are the Heirs of the Hebrew Bible? Sephardic Visual Historiography in a Christian Context," *Medieval Encounters* 16 (2010): 23–63

Assignment (marked for assessment):

Each student will be responsible for presenting in class a review of one reading assigned for that session and submitting a written, critical response to it.