

Jewish Illuminated Manuscripts: Torah as Art in Medieval Ashkenaz

Course Description:

Jewish illuminated manuscripts are among the treasured artifacts that have survived the trials of Jewish history and whose imagery provides a window into the Torah worldview of the Jews that commissioned them hundreds of years ago. The Leipzig Mahzor, produced in Worms, Germany in the 14th century, is a collection of *piyyutim* for holidays whose vibrant imagery reflect the teachings of the community's famed rabbi, R. Eleazar of Worms, the preeminent student of R. Judah the Pious, who led the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* movement. This course will trace the origins and structure of the Jewish communities of the German Rhineland and will provide an overview of their unique teachings and customs related to prayer, repentance, biblical exegesis, and piety. Primary text readings will be complemented with visual studies of the imagery found in the Leipzig Mahzor which was used by the community of Worms on holidays in the synagogue. Images from other contemporaneous Jewish illuminated manuscripts will also be considered. The course will also address the process of writing and illuminating Jewish manuscripts and issues related to art and *Halakhah*.

Course Objectives:

The students will gain an appreciation of the historical background in which the Leipzig Mahzor was produced and how its imagery and that of other illuminated Jewish manuscripts reflect the outlook of the Jewish communities in which they were produced. Students will be exposed to varieties of illumination styles and become familiar with concepts related to iconography and visual culture. Additionally, students will study excerpts of the major texts authored at the time including *Sefer Hasidim* and the *Hilkhot Rokeah* and will employ critical reading skills in analyzing these texts and related imagery.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Midterm (February 2) (40%)

Final (May 18) (40%)

There may be 1-2 short writing assignments which will count towards the midterm/final percentages.

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Spring 2020
ARTS 1975H
JHIS 4934H
JPHI 4933H



Attendance Policy: Every student is expected to attend the class meetings and participate in the class discussion. While I understand that there may be circumstances that require you to miss class, if you are absent for more than two meetings your grade will be affected.

Secondary Readings are available through E-Res and Canvas. Primary readings will be provided in class.

There may be a museum or rare book/library visit: TBD

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, rkohn1@yu.edu during the first week of class. The office is located in 215 Lexington Ave, Suite 505. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of your accommodations.

Topics:

Introduction

Week 1:

Part 1: History

Week 2

Background: The Origins of the Jewish Communities of Ashkenaz

Primary Reading:

R. Eleazar of Worms, *Perushei Siddur ha-Tefillah le-Rokeah*, vol. I (Jerusalem: Makhon ha-Rav Hershler, 1992): Introduction to *Yishtabah*, 228-229.

Robert Chazan, *Church State and Jew in the Middle Ages* “Bishop Rudiger of Speyer,” 57-59; “Emperor Henry IV,” 60-63.

Secondary Readings:

Kenneth Stow, “By Land or By Sea: The Passage of the Kalonymides to the Rhineland in the Tenth Century,” *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora*, ed. S. Menache (Leiden, 1996), 59-72.

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(Optional) Avraham Grossman, *Hakhmei Ashkenaz ha-Rishonim* (Jerusalem, 1981) 27-44

Piety and Persecution: The Crusades

Primary Reading:

R. Eleazar of Worms: Lamentation for Dolce of Worms.

Secondary Readings:

Kenneth Stow, *Alienated Minority* (Harvard University Press: 1992), 103-120.

Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 80-87.

Robert Chazan, "The Early Development of 'Ḥasidut Ashkenaz'" in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 75, No. 3 (Jan. 1985), 199-221.

Intellectual History:

Week 3

The Medieval Jewish library:

What did the medieval Jewish library look like?

תורה שבכתב/תורה שבעל פה

Secondary Readings:

Israel Ta-Shma, *Creativity and Tradition: Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Scholarship, Literature, and Thought*, (Harvard University Press: 1996) 1-36. Optional Rewading: 81-101.

Avraham Grossman, *Rashi*, (Littman: 2012) 53-70.

Part II: Introduction to Manuscript Study

Defining Terms:

Manuscript

Colophon

Codicology

Paleography

Folio

Recto

Verso

Illustration, Illumination

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Digital facsimile and Online Resources

Secondary Reading:

Malachi Beit Arie, “How Hebrew Manuscripts are Made” in *A Sign and A Witness: 2000 Years of Hebrew Books and Illuminated Manuscripts*, 35-46.

The Making of Illuminated Manuscripts

Weeks 4-6

Materials

Scribes (A Female scribe - Oxford Bodleian Library MS Can. Or. 89, fol. 257r)

Vocalizer

Illuminator

Patron

Audience

What kinds of Hebrew texts were illuminated?

Reading:

Evelyn M. Cohen, “The Decoration of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts” in *A Sign and A Witness: 2000 Years of Hebrew Books and Illuminated Manuscripts*, 47-60.

Live Demonstration of Illumination

Text layout

Parchment selection/preparation

Lining/preparation for writing

Script/paleography

Inks and paints

Gilding

Binding

What is iconography?

Standard Iconography and Jewish Departure

Varieties of Illumination Styles: Spain/Ashkenaz/Italy/Persia (Comparison Assignment)

Is there “Jewish” art?

A response to Christian visual culture: Appropriation and Subversion.

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Secondary Reading:

Eva Frojmovic, “Jewish Scribes and Christian Illuminators: Interstitial Encounters and Cultural Negotiation” in *Between Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 281-301.

Artistic representations in Halakhah

Reading:

Vivian Mann *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-36.

(Midterm)

Part III: The Thought of *Hasidei Ashkenaz*:

Piety and Pietism: The *Hasidei Ashkenaz* Movement

Week 8

Primary Reading:

R. Judah the Pious, *Sefer Hasidim*, Selections.

R. Eleazar of Worms: Introduction to the *Sefer Rokeah*: Laws of Piety

Secondary Reading:

Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society*, (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 1-36.

Repentance

Week 9

Primary Readings:

R. Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer Rokeah: Hilkhhot Teshuvah* selections.

Secondary Readings:

Ivan Marcus *Piety and Society*, (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 37-52.

The Unity of Torah: 50 *Sha'are Binah* and Biblical Interpretation

Week 10

Primary Readings:

R. Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei Razei Smukhim*, Introduction

The Book of Esther: R. Eleazar of Worms, *Sha'arei Binah*, Chapter 1
(Second Writing Assignment)

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Prayer and the Siddur

Primary Readings:

R. Judah the Pious, *Sefer Hasidim* (Selections).

R. Eleazar of Worms, Commentary to the Prayers of (Selections).

Secondary Readings:

Ivan Marcus, "The Devotional Ideals in Ashkenazic Pietism" in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, edited by Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 356-366.

Part IV: Text and Imagery

Week 11-14

Prayer and Piyyut

Primary Reading:

Sefer Hasidim par. 785, ed. Reuven Margalot (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1957).

Secondary Reading:

Mordechai Breuer. "The sheliach Tsibur in Medieval Ashkenaz [Hebrew], "Dukhan, 9-11 (1972-1978)

David Stern, "Jewish" Art and the Making of the Medieval Prayerbook" in *Ars Judaica* 2010, 23-44.

Image:

Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Voller 1102/I, Mahzor, Worms c. 1310, fol. 27r.

Midrash of the Song of Song as Imagery

Primary Reading:

R. Eleazar of Worms, *Drasha le-Pesach* ed. Simcha Emanuel (Jerusalem: Mekitze Nirdamim, 2006) Selections.

Images:

Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Voller 1102/I, Mahzor, Worms c. 1310, fol. 64v.

Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Voller 1102/I, Mahzor, Worms c. 1310, fol. 68v.

Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Voller 1102/I, Mahzor, Worms c. 1310, fol. 70v.

Shavuot: Revelation and the Torah Initiation Rite in Ashkenaz

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Primary Reading:

R. Eleazar of Worms: Sefer Rokeah, Laws of Shavuot

Secondary Reading:

Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 18-41.

Image: Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Voller 1102/I, Mahzor, Worms c. 1310, fol. 130v-131r.

Repentance and Eschatology

Reading:

Sara Offenberg, “Illuminations of Kol Nidre in Two Ashkenazi Mahzorim” in *Ars Judaica*, 2011, 7-16.

Images:

Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Voller 1102/I, Mahzor, Worms c. 1310, fol. 31v. Michael Mahzor, Bodeleian Library, MS Mich. 627, fol 48r.

Padua Ashkenazi Mahzor, New York Public Library, MS, Heb. 224 fol. 333v.