

"A final introductory word of caution: prejudices always reveal more about the people who hold them than they do about those at whom they are directed. You will not learn much useful information about Judaism or Jews by studying antisemitism, but you can learn quite a lot about anti-Semites, their insecurities and their fears..."By the same token, examining the lives of Jews in Europe before World War II is important in its own right, but it will not answer the question as to why antisemites hated Jews any more than studying African American history will explain why white supremacists hate black people.

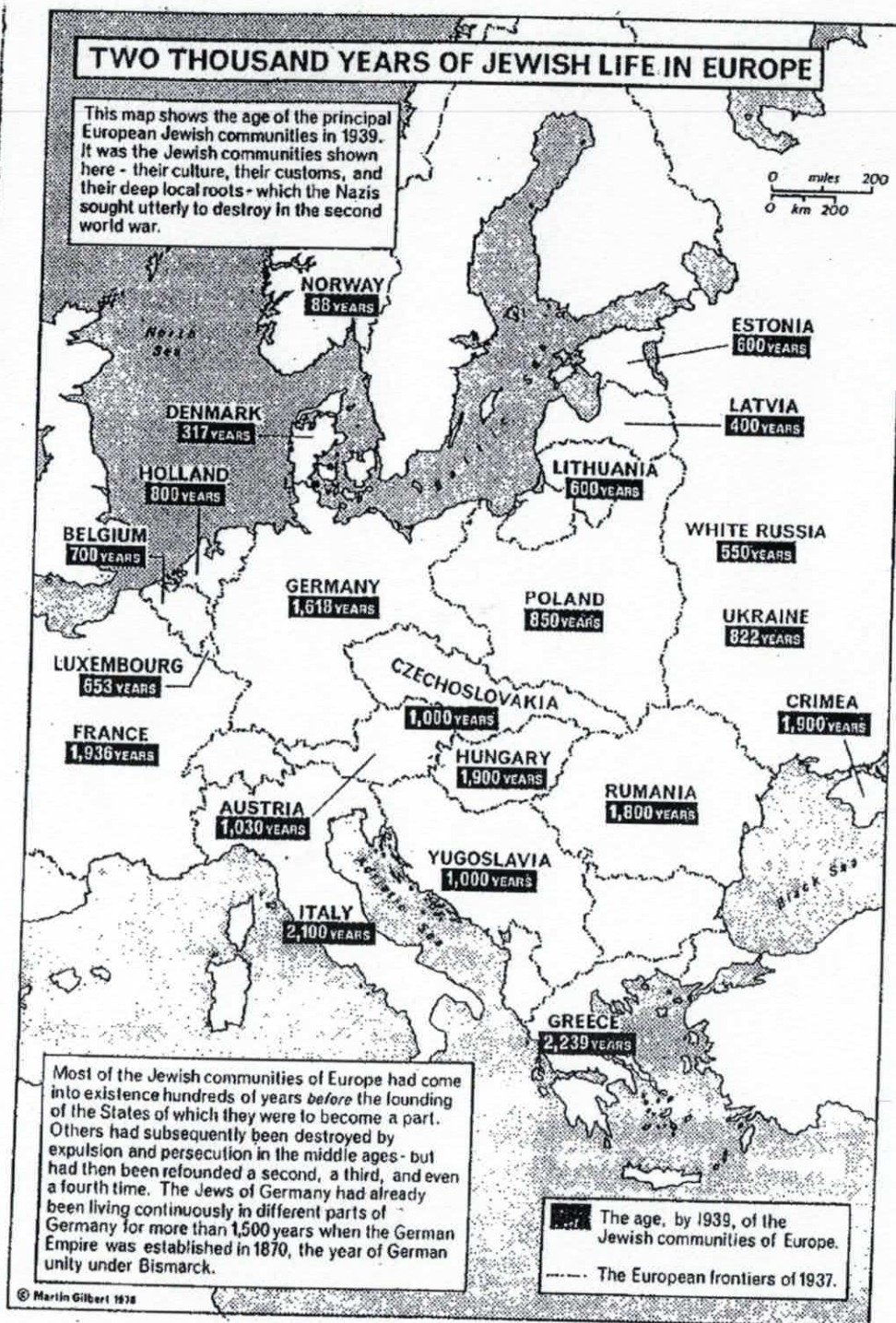
Prejudices are habits of thought; they are not reasoned responses to objective realities. When you read descriptions of common prejudices... keep in mind that these attitudes were based on imaginings about people rather than on who those people really were."

- Dr. Doris Bergen, *A Concise History of the Holocaust*

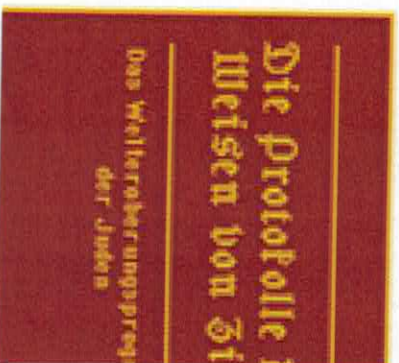
Addressing the Myth
of "the Wandering Jew,
peoples with no home"

see also, "Antisemitism and
Jewish Identity", reading 13,
Chapter 4, Holocaust and
Human Behavior.

Facing History and Ourselves.



Protocols of the Elders of Zion, originally published 1903. This forged document (containing plagiarised German and French fiction) was created in Russia as propaganda against Jews, purporting to describe a Jewish plan for global domination



Clockwise from top:
Protocols covers in
 Germany, Syria, Mexico,
 Japan and France
 Source: Facing History
 website

* Reading Response: Addressing the Myth of a Jewish Conspiracy. Chapter 4, reading 11 in *Holocaust and Human Behaviour*, pp 185-187

The Myth of a Jewish Conspiracy

Global, 1900 :

Figure 1. This Weimar campaign poster ("The Wire Puller," 1924) depicts an antisemitic caricature of a Jew with a manipulative personality, urging workers to vote for the Nationalist Party.



In 1919, Erich Ludendorff, one of Germany's top military leaders, announced that Jews were one of several groups responsible for the nation's defeat. By 1922, he was focusing almost entirely on Jews as "the enemy."³

As proof, he cited the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a document supposedly containing the minutes of a secret meeting of Jewish leaders—the so-called "Elders of Zion"—held at the turn of the twentieth century. At that supposed meeting, the "Elders" allegedly plotted to take over the world.

In fact, the *Protocols* is a forgery; Russian secret police

wrote it in the early 1900s to incite hatred against Jews. At the time, few people paid much attention to the document, but after World War I, it became a worldwide sensation. Many believed that the *Protocols* explained seemingly "inexplicable" events—the war, the economic crises that followed the war, the revolutions in Russia and central Europe, even epidemics.

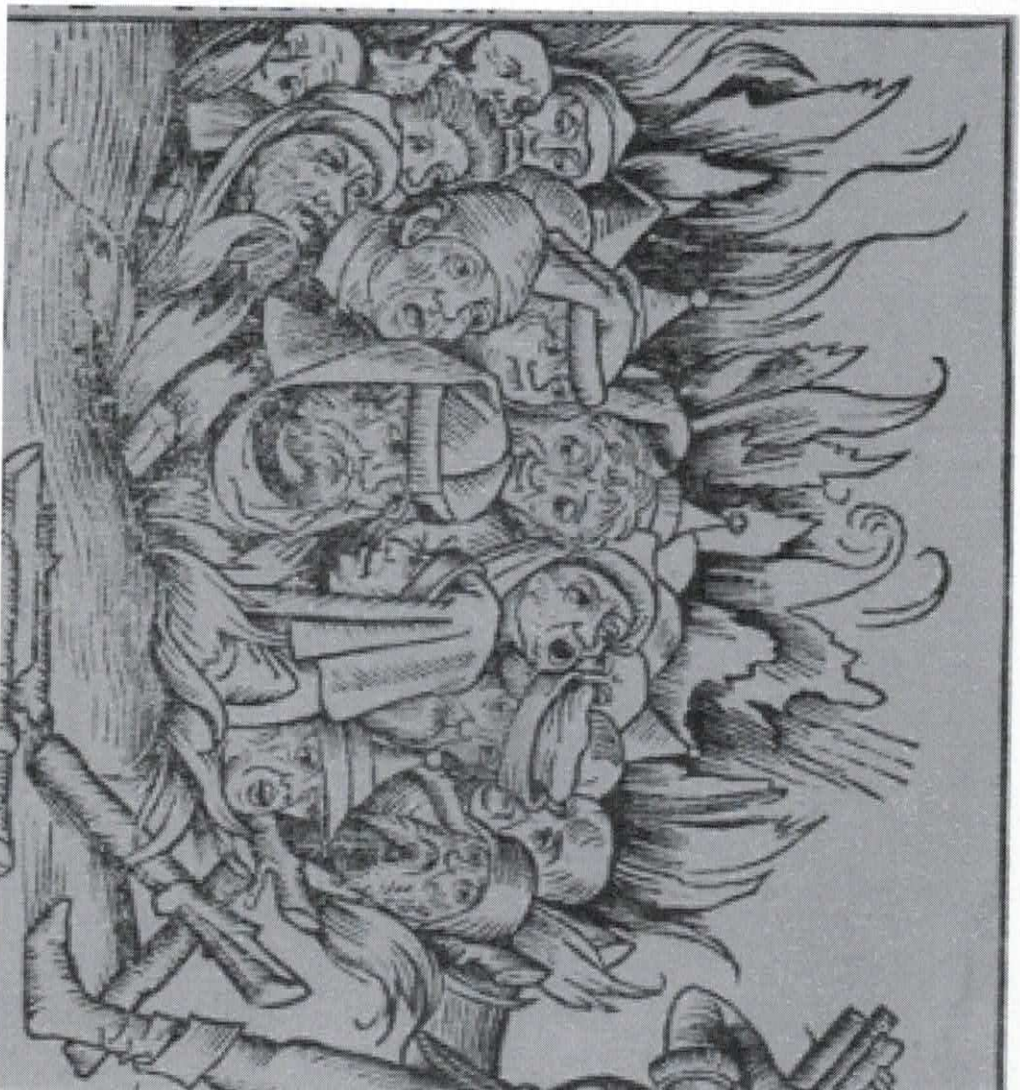
In August 1921, the *Times* of London showed how the authors of the *Protocols* had copied long passages from several fictional works to create the document. As a result of that expose, the British company that originally published the English version of the *Protocols* refused to print or distribute additional copies, and some newspapers no longer gave the document publicity. But neither action damaged the popularity of the *Protocols*. In recent years, studies have shown that efforts to debunk a lie often leave people more convinced than ever that the lie is true.⁴

In the 1920s, Germany's 500,000 Jews accounted for less than 1% of the total population of about 61 million. Yet by focusing on Jews as "the enemy," antisemites made it seem as if Jews were everywhere and were responsible for everything that went wrong in the nation.

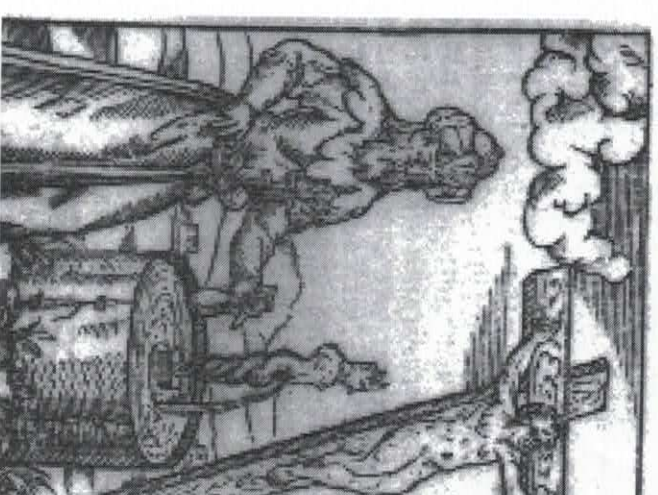
Excerpted from *Holocaust and Human Behavior* (Facing History and Ourselves, 2017), 185-186

³ Quoted in Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif Books, 1967), 149.

⁴ Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions," *Political Behavior* 32, no. 2 (June 2010): 303-30.



During the black death, Jews were blamed for bringing the plague to Europe. In Strassbourg, almost 200 Jews were burned to death in 1349.



Middle ages woodcut,
Jewish traveler is depicted
as poisoning a well to
spread the plague
source: [wikimedia
commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jewish_traveler_poisoning_a_well.jpg)



A 15th century Bible depicts a couple suffering from the blisters of the bubonic plague (Black Death) that ravaged medieval Europe. In the background is a Jewish "witch" casting spells that cause the plague.

Source: Corbis – Getty Images accessed from:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2014/07/24/334440738/shades-of-the-middle-ages-the-plague-popped-up-in-china-and-colorado>

THE BLACK DEATH

In October 1347, several trading ships from Genoa, Italy, pulled into the harbor at Messina in Sicily. Everyone aboard those ships was dead or dying of a mysterious plague. Europeans called it the Black Death, because victims had black swellings (each the size of an egg) on their bodies and black splotches on their skin. Today we know that bubonic plague is spread through the bites of fleas and lice that live on infected rats. But in 1347, people had no idea what caused the plague, how to treat it, or how to keep it from spreading.

From ports like Messina, the plague spread through Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Between 1347 and 1351, the disease killed more than one out of every four people in those regions. Almost every family was affected. The rich died along with the poor, saints along with sinners. In Europe alone, some historians estimate the death toll at more than 20 million out of a population of approximately 80 million.

In the matter of this plague the Jews throughout the world were reviled and accused in all lands of having caused it through the poison 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 [Sea] into Germany.³

As the disease continued to spread north and east, a new Christian group, known as *flagellants*, suddenly appeared to fight the plague. Organized in bands of about 200 or more men, the flagellants traveled together for 33½ days before returning home. (The number reflects the traditional reckoning of Jesus's age at the time of the crucifixion—one day for each year.)

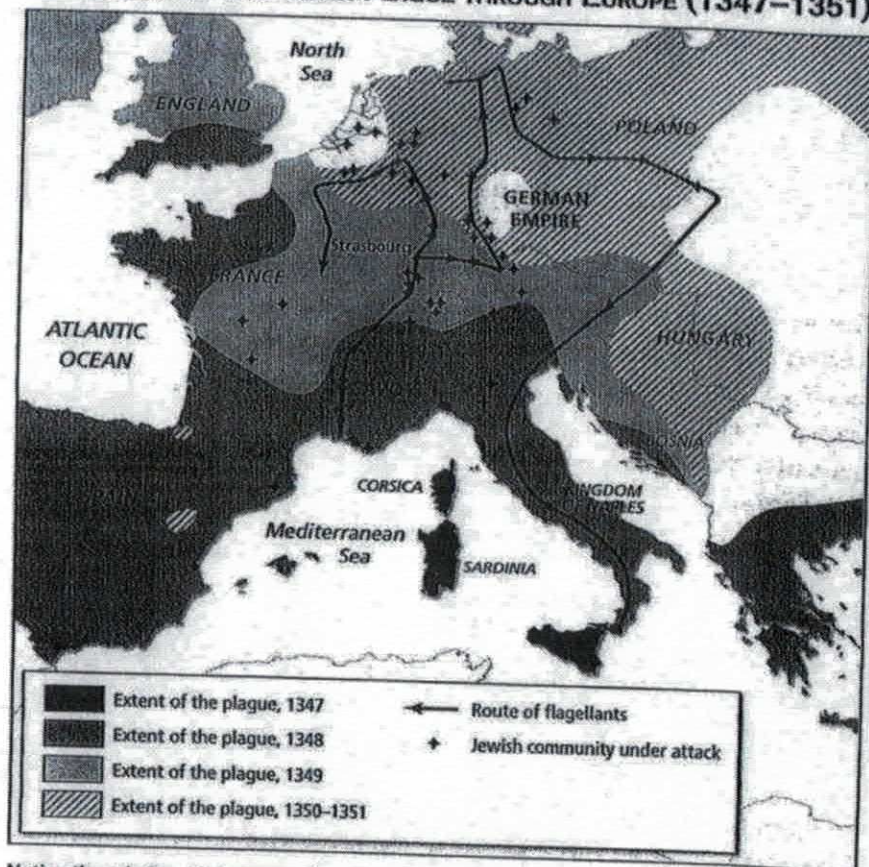
The flagellants recited prayers as they marched from city to city. When they approached a town, church bells rang to announce their arrival. Once in the town square, the men stripped to the waist and then whipped, or

flagellated, themselves with heavy leather thongs tipped with metal studs. They were beating themselves to atone for the wickedness of the human race and to earn another chance from God. The flagellants believed that they alone—not priests or bishops—could save "all Christendom" from hell. Each tried to outdo the others in suffering, as townspeople looked on in amazement. Onlookers often sobbed and moaned as they recalled their own sins.

To join the group, a man had to confess his sins and agree to beat himself as the others did. He also had to vow not to bathe, shave, sleep in a bed, change his clothing, or have any contact with women during the length of his journey.

Many townspeople brought children to be healed by the flagellants; still others dipped cloth in the flagellants' blood and preserved it in the hope that it would protect their families from the plague. When priests tried to stop the marches, they were stoned. Many people were convinced that only the flagellants were pure enough to cast out evil spirits.

THE SPREAD OF THE BLACK PLAGUE THROUGH EUROPE (1347–1351)



Notice the relationship between the route of the flagellants and the places where Jews were killed because people falsely believed that they were responsible for the plague.

Excerpted from Goldstein, Phyllis. A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism (Facing History and Ourselves, Brookline, MA, 2012), 93–97



- 1919 antisemitic cartoon in March 26, 1919 Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung*
- Bolsheviks and British strikers were similarly accused of being traitors who stabbed the Germans in the back
- Accessed from <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/publications/reviews/BarthRev069.htm>

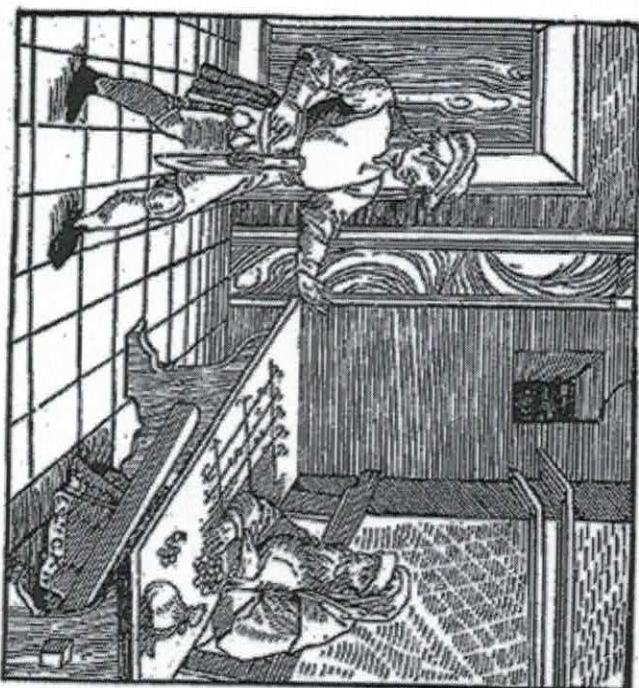
Please read "Rumors of Betrayal"

Reading 2, Chapter 4 in

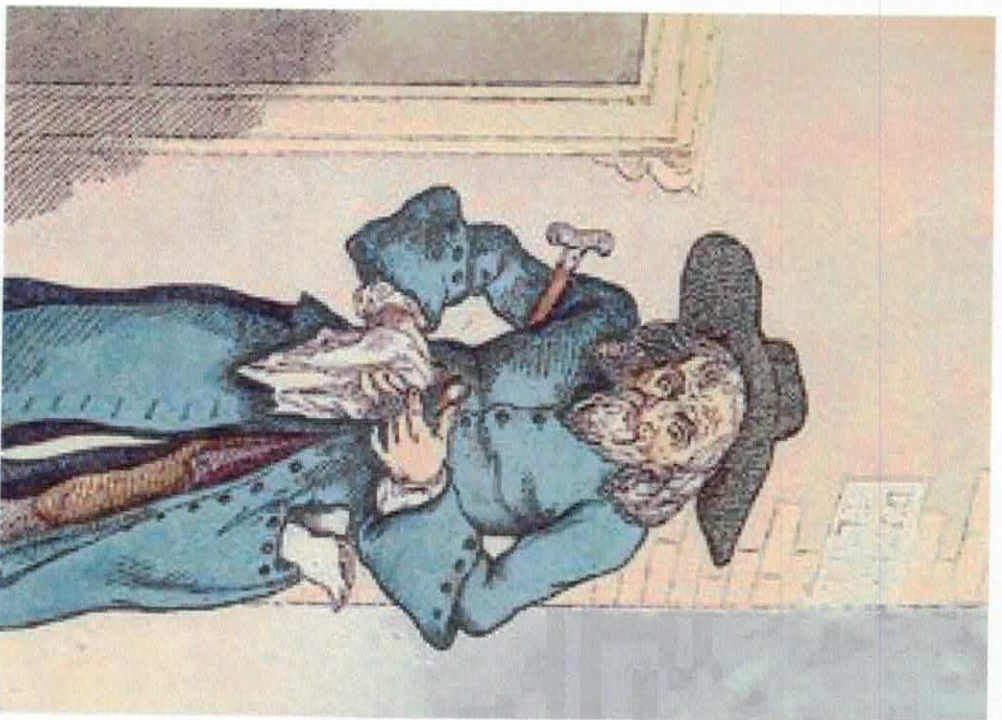
Holocaust and Human Behavior.

p. 162-164

"Jews" as wealthy
money lenders

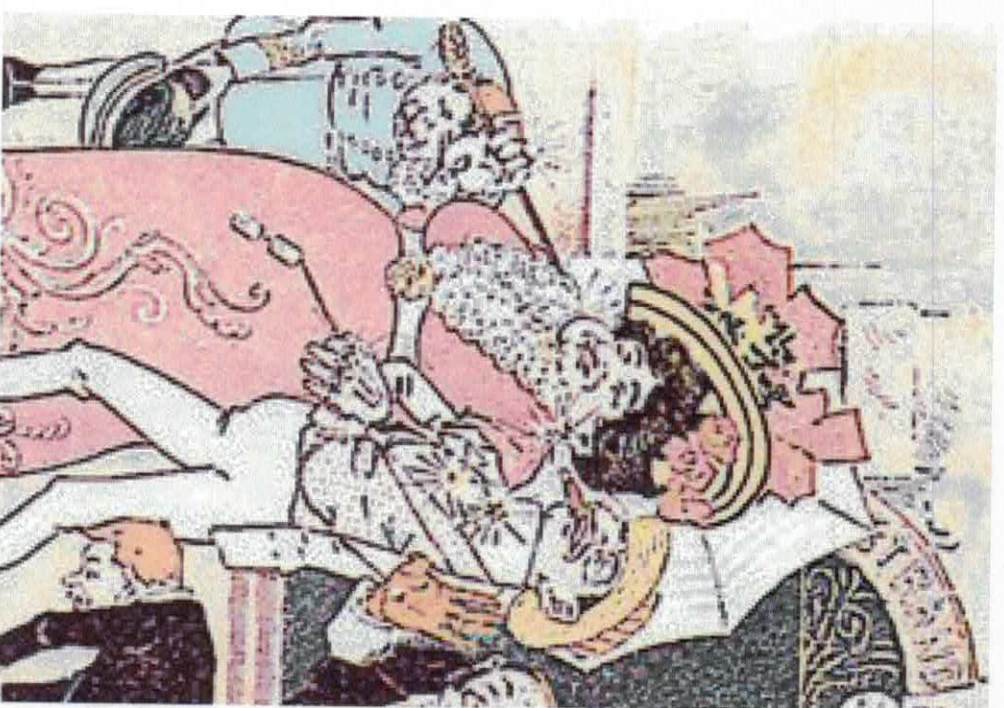


Farmers and a Jewish money lender,
Woodcut, Augsburg 1531



"The Jewish Broker". Caricature by Thomas Rowlandson, England, 1801

Source: "Beyond the Pale: The History of Jews in Russia" exhibition guide, an exhibit that has toured Russia since 1995
<http://www.friends-partners.org/partners/beyond-the-pale/english/about.html>



Late 19th Century German postcard of "ostentatious Jews"

Excerpted from Goldstein, Phyllis. *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*. (Facing History and Ourselves, Brookline, MA, 2012), 73

In this way, the "ill-acquired" property of one "race of infidels" would help finance the war against the other "race of infidels"—the Muslims.

Jews were more vulnerable in the twelfth century than they had been in the eleventh century. Economic and social changes that improved life for Christians in Europe increased the vulnerability of Jews. In 1096, Jews had been mainly engaged in trade. The richest among them provided luxury goods to kings and other nobles. Christian merchants did most of their business locally and traded in products produced nearby—wool, timber, and grains. By the twelfth century, however, those local goods were finding markets in distant parts of Europe, Asia, and North Africa. As this trade grew, so did partnerships and contracts among Christian merchants.

By the end of the eleventh century, Jews were being squeezed out of international trade and into occupations forbidden to Jews, Christians, and Muslims—banking, money lending, and currency exchange. All three faiths regarded the idea of charging interest on a loan as usury, which was a sin. (Interest is the price a borrower pays for a loan. Today the word *usury* refers only to the practice of charging unfairly high interest rates for a loan.) Although some Jews tried to avoid money lending, increasingly it was the only way many could earn a living. Few other occupations were now open to them.

The process of turning Jews into money lenders was gradual; it took place more slowly in some places than in others. But nearly everywhere, it pushed Jews to the margins of society and led to the stereotype of the Jew as greedy and money-hungry. Because usury was prohibited under Jewish law, Christians also saw this new occupational shift as proof that Jews were unfaithful to the laws of the God they claimed to worship. Thus, having made it impossible for Jews to hold other jobs, many Christians now blamed Jews for charging interest on loans that many Christians were eager to secure.

As life became more precarious for Jews in Europe, Jews in many communities became the personal property of their protectors, with no rights except those they acquired by supplying nobles with money on demand. Nobles kept a tight rein on "their" Jews, whom they needed to help finance wars and build palaces, cathedrals, and roads. They expected Jews to pay special taxes or to lend them money at a very low rate of interest or with no interest at all. How could Jews survive if they did not receive a return on their investments? They could do so only by lending money to everyone else—merchants, farmers, artisans, and other borrowers—at very high interest rates. As a result, many Jews were caught in a trap from which they could not easily escape.

The Blood Libels: Ritual Murder



A popular anti-Jewish myth that gained widespread acceptance was the notion that Jewsmurdered Christians because they need blood to perform satanic rites—the charge of ritual murder or blood libel. It was believed that Jews, usually led by rabbis, kidnapped Christian children on Jewish holidays in order to bleed them to death for occult rituals.

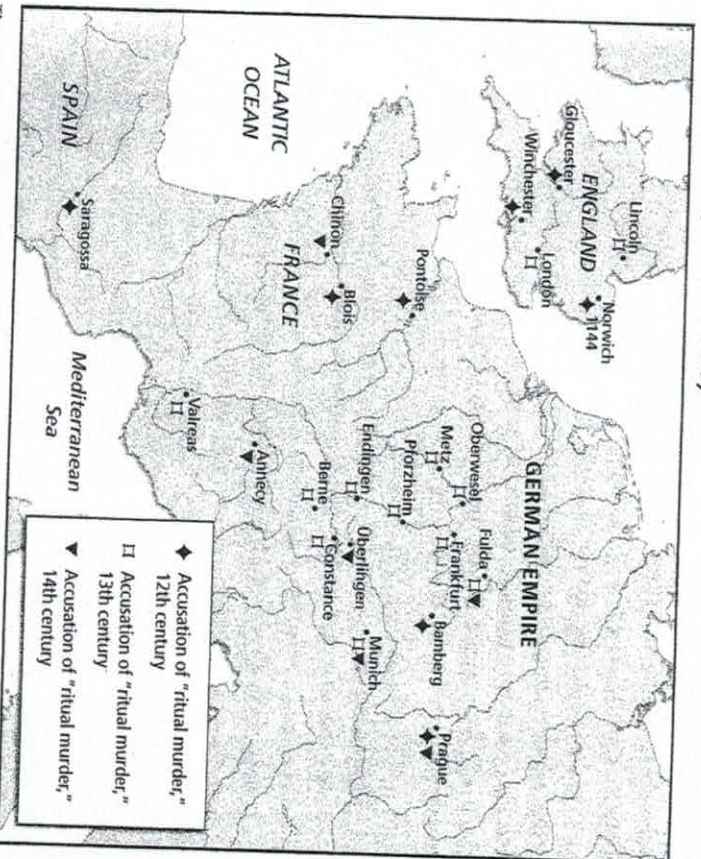
Woodcut showing Jews murdering the child Simon of Trent, printed in Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum* (Latin) / *Die Schedelsche Weltchronik* (German) printed by Anton Koberger in 1493. In English the book is known as the Nuremberg Chronicle. ~2000 copies of this book were sold between 1493-1509.

BLOOD AND THE BLOOD LIBEL

Twenty years before Hugh's death in 1255, a new element had been added to charges of ritual murder against Jews. They were now accused of murdering Christian children for their blood. This accusation has become known as the "blood libel." Like other charges of ritual murder, the "blood libel" is a lie that has led to the death of countless Jews over the centuries.

In the thirteenth century, most people in northern Europe believed that blood had enormous power. Christians thought it was a source of strength, because it held the power of the soul. They used animal blood in medicines and in amulets, or charms, to ward off evil. Jews also thought blood had power. Because they thought that blood contained the spirit of living beings, Jews were forbidden to taste blood. Jewish dietary laws require great care in the preparation of meat to avoid the possibility of eating blood (as those who keep kosher are well aware). Animals are

BLOOD LIBELS (1144–1500)



The map shows where in Europe Jews were accused of killing Christians for their blood for a period of approximately 300 years. Compare and contrast this map with the ones in

slaughtered in such a way that most of the blood is drained rapidly. Whatever blood remains is removed by broiling or soaking and salting the meat. Even today, observant Jews are not permitted to eat so much as an egg that contains a blood spot. Jews who come into contact with blood have to purify themselves before carrying out their religious obligations.

Despite the emperor's order, the accusations continued. In March 1247, two Franciscans (members of a monastic order founded in about 1215) accused the Jews of Valréas, in France, of crucifying a Christian child and using his blood for ritual purposes. Several Jews in the town were tortured and many others were killed. The survivors appealed to Pope Innocent IV for help, and he condemned such accusations in strong language. So did his successor, Gregory X. In 1271, Gregory issued the following statement:

Since it happens occasionally that some Christians lose their Christian children, the Jews are accused by their enemies of secretly carrying off and killing these same Christian children and of making sacrifices of the heart and blood of these very children. It happens, too, that the parents of these children or some other Christian enemies of these Jews secretly hide these very children in order that they may be able to injure these Jews, and in order that they may be able to extort from them a certain amount of money by redeeming them from their straits. . . .

And most falsely do these Christians claim that the Jews have secretly and furtively carried away these children and killed them, and that the Jews offer sacrifice from the heart and the blood of these children, since their law in this matter precisely and expressly forbids Jews to sacrifice, eat, or drink the blood, or to eat the flesh of animals having claws. This has been demonstrated many times at our court by Jews converted to the Christian faith: nevertheless very many Jews are often seized and detained unjustly because of this.

The decree, therefore, that Christians need not be obeyed against the Jews in a case or situation of this type, and we order that Jews should be exempted from Goldstein, Phyllis. A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism. Facing History and Ourselves, MA. 2012

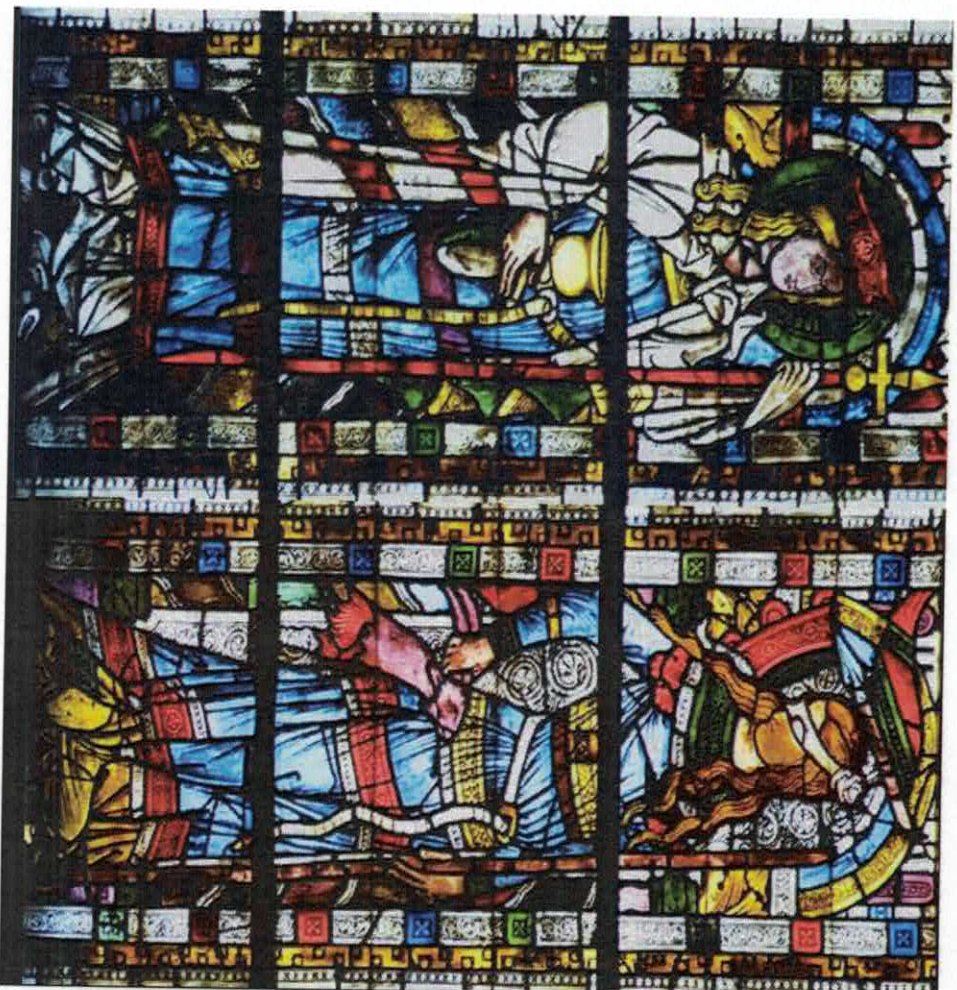
Creating the other: the appropriation of Christianity and Judaism, and the decisive change

Church and Synagogue (Ecclesia and Synagoga)

First half of 13th century

Stained glass

Elisabethkirche, Marburg/Lahn, Germany



Anti-Judaism before the Enlightenment

Roman Empire, 66 C.E. - 400 C.E.: The birth of the Deicide Charge

Historians have traced anti-Jewish myths, hatred, and violence back more than 2,000 years to the time of the Roman Empire. Tensions with the Romans led Jews in Palestine to revolt in 66 CE. The Romans responded violently. Historian Doris Bergen explains:

Roman authorities worried that Jewish refusal to worship local and imperial gods would jeopardize the security of the state. At times such unease, coupled with political conflicts, turned into open persecution and attacks. In 70 C.E. the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, the focal point of Jewish life up to that time; sixty years later they dispersed the Jews of Palestine, scattering them far from the region that had been their home.

During this same period, a new faith was born out of Judaism and began to spread across the Roman Empire. Bergen continues:

The rise of Christianity added new fuel to anti-Jewish sentiments. Christianity grew out of Judaism—Jesus himself was a Jew, as were the apostles and important figures such as Paul of Tarsus. Nevertheless, early Christians tried to separate themselves from other Jews, both to win followers from the gentile (non-Jewish) world and to gain favor with Roman imperial authorities. Some early Christians also stressed their loyalty to the state by pointing out that the Kingdom of God was not of this earth and therefore did not compete with Rome. Such efforts paid off; in less than four hundred years, Christianity went from being a persecuted branch of Judaism to being the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. It is significant that some early Christian accounts blamed Jews for Jesus' death even though crucifixion was a specifically Roman form of punishment commonly practiced during Jesus' time. The version of events that had Jewish mobs demanding Jesus' death while the Roman governor Pontius Pilate washed his hands allowed later Christians to emphasize their difference from Judaism and downplay the hostility that Roman authorities had shown toward Christianity in its early stages. All of the false accusations against Jews associated with the Roman imperial period—that Jews were traitors and conspirators, that they killed Christ—remained familiar in Europe into the twentieth century.⁵

Excerpted from *Holocaust and Human Behavior*, (Facing History and Ourselves, 2017), 91-92

⁵ Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 4-6

For centuries, "the Jews" have been held responsible for Jesus's death. Did they actually play any part in it? Many scholars point out that only the Romans had the power or authority to put Jesus to death. Furthermore, the very question suggests that Jews were a united people with some influence over Rome in the first century of the Common Era. But in fact, Jews at that time were deeply divided over issues of faith and practice. Jews who held similar views banded together; many of these groups were intolerant of Jews with different views. Only a few had ties to the Romans.

If any Jews were involved in Jesus's death, they were probably Sadducees—a group associated with the high priests and other leaders of the Temple in Jerusalem. But the Sadducees certainly did not speak or act for the Pharisees, who seem to have been scrupulous in observance of traditional Jewish laws and whose concern for common people put them in opposition to the Sadducees. Nor did they speak for the Essenes, who abandoned Jerusalem in protest against the way the Temple was being run.

Each of these and many other groups had its own idea of what it meant to be faithful to God's will and its own plan for the future of the Jewish people. Perhaps that is why Jesus's closest followers did not blame "the Jews" as a group for his death. They were Jews themselves and continued to live as Jews.

*excerpted from Goldstein, Phyllis. A Convenient Hatred:
The History of Antisemitism. (Facing History and Ourselves,
MA 2012) p. 24*