

THE AUDIENCES OF THE LATE MEDIEVAL HAGGADAH

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Introduction

The Passover haggadah is commonly considered a particularly popular Hebrew book. Numerous illustrated editions are produced to this day and sold every spring in bookstores around the world. When we look at the history of early Hebrew printing, however, it appears that only relatively few editions were in fact printed.¹ As the following paragraphs will show, the haggadah was subject to far-reaching developments during the fourteenth and fifteenth centu-

¹ Only three editions of the haggadot (one with woodcut illustrations) were printed before the early sixteenth century; for details, see the list published by Avraham Ya'ari, *A Bibliography of Passover Haggadot from the Beginning of Print to 1960* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bamberger and Wahrman, 1961). For some background on printing in Italy, see Abraham M. Habermann, 'The Printer Abraham Conat and His Types' [in Hebrew], in *Studies in the History of Hebrew Printers and Books* [in Hebrew], ed. by Abraham M. Habermann (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1978), pp. 3–12; Abraham M. Habermann, 'The Printers in the Soncino Family' [in Hebrew], in *Studies*, ed. by Habermann, pp. 13–96; Abraham M. Habermann, 'The Printers Isaac, Yom-Tov, and Jacob, the Sons of Avigdor Halevi Katsav of Padua' [in Hebrew], in *Studies*, ed. by Habermann, pp. 97–101; Peretz Tishby published a series of lists of Hebrew incunabula from Italy, which give a good statistical overview of the sorts of texts that were printed, 'Hebrew Incunabula, Italy' [in Hebrew], *Kiryat Sefer*, 57 (1983), 805–57; 60 (1986), 865–962; 62 (1988–98), 361–401; 63 (1990–91), 603–36; 64 (1992–93), 689–726; Peretz Tishby, 'Hebrew Incunabula (3), Italy: Bologna', *Ohev Sefer*, 1 (1987), 29–39.

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ries, well before the time that the print medium began to impact Jewish book culture. Whereas the typical medieval illustrated book was designed with two groups of readers in mind, the learned and the very rich, the makers of illuminated manuscript haggadot developed a visual language during these decades that was aimed at relatively wide audiences. It thus seems that during this formative period, the haggadah, which had begun to circulate as a separate book only in the thirteenth century, established itself firmly within the framework of the manuscript genre and did not quickly make the move to the printing press.

Although there can be no doubt that the printing press revolutionized the book, its industry, its dissemination, and, most of all, European culture in all its aspects,² recent scholarship has pointed out that manuscript culture co-existed with printed books for many decades, even centuries.³ The wealthy nobility, in fact, seems to have preferred old-style luxurious manuscripts over printed books, innovative as the latter may have been.⁴ Books of common interest were printed and marketed, and often reprinted, but for centuries books that were not expected to address wide circles of readers continued to be copied manually. This was true not only of luxury volumes for wealthy individual patrons, but also of simple, non-lavish copies of texts that were part of the cultural heritage and were used and read, but only within relatively small circles. Not necessarily simply a symptom of cultural conservatism, the continuation of manuscript culture in parallel with print culture had to do, first of all, with economic con-

² The notion of a printing revolution is primarily associated with the work of Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); see also Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and recently Roger Chartier, 'The Printing Revolution: A Reappraisal', in *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, ed. by Sandra Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor Shevlin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 397–408.

³ See, for example, David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). As in Christian society, manuscript culture continued in Jewish society for several centuries. Recently, however, David Ruderman discussed printing culture as one of five aspects that transformed early modern Jewry, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), chap. 3.

⁴ The Florentine bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci (d. 1498) described the lavish library of Federigo de Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino: it was filled with splendid manuscript volumes, in whose 'company [...] one printed book would have been ashamed', *The Vespasiano Memoirs: Lives of Illustrious Men of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. and trans. by William G. Waters and Emily Waters, Renaissance Society of America Reprint Texts, 7 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press / Renaissance Society of America, 1997), p. 104; see also Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Italian Renaissance Illuminations* (New York: Braziller, 1977), p. 11.

siderations and marketing prospects. The persistence of manuscript production provided a certain degree of intellectual flexibility, and enabled cultural agents to preserve and further develop certain elements that would have appealed not only to limited groups but to wide segments of the population.

At first glance one would assume that the haggadah, a small book containing a relatively stable liturgical text and a fairly traditional cycle of illustrations, would easily and rapidly have been conquered by the press. Yet until the eighteenth century it lived on as a manuscript genre,⁵ co-existing with printed editions. It is hard to believe that the relative dearth of printed editions of the haggadah in the early days of printing has anything to do with low expectations regarding the marketing prospects. Nor do the Ashkenazi or the Italian haggadot fall into the category of luxury volumes for the nobility, which, had they done so, would explain the persistence of manuscript haggadot.⁶ In fact, as I demonstrate in what follows, it may well have been late medieval scribes and manuscript makers, rather than early modern printers, who paved the way for the haggadah to emerge as one of the most popular Jewish books of all time. This article highlights some of the features of the visual language that emerged during the late Middle Ages and became typical of illuminated haggadot, features that proved to be instrumental in opening up the market to wide audiences, well beyond the learned and the very rich. It describes the transition of the haggadah from its function as part of the general prayer book to an individual small volume; whereas as the former it was individually commissioned

⁵ The catalogue of microfilmed manuscripts at the National Library of Israel lists nine manuscripts containing the haggadah from the fourteenth century, thirty from the fifteenth, three from the sixteenth, fourteen from the seventeenth, but about one hundred and twenty from the eighteenth. It is beyond the framework of this paper to study the implications of these statistics, but this is definitely worth an analysis. It certainly demonstrates that the haggadah manuscript lived on for at least three hundred and fifty years after the invention of the printing press and in parallel with print culture.

⁶ This does not apply to Iberia, especially Catalonia, where very costly luxury haggadot were produced during the fourteenth century. The most outstanding example is the Golden Haggadah, London, British Library (BL), MS Add. 27210, <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/hagadah/accessible/introduction.html>> [accessed 15 June 2012]. I have shown elsewhere, however, that other Sephardi haggadot must have belonged to the less wealthy, Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Illustrated Haggadot from Medieval Spain: Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 225–30. For reasons yet to be researched, no Sephardi illustrated haggadot from the fifteenth century have come down to us. It thus seems that at the time when the illustrated haggadah emerged in Central Europe as a widely disseminated book for various audiences, in Iberia it had ceased to exist as a common genre.

by a wealthy patron, as the latter it was produced for stock and disseminated into wide audiences.

This transition is part of a larger process. The late Middle Ages saw determinative changes in book culture that affected the book in general and redefined the character and appearance of the illustrated book in particular. From a handwritten, unique luxury object for the wealthy individual patron, the illustrated book eventually developed into a widely disseminated cultural product in multiple copies, which could be reproduced and reprinted over and over again. Whereas the design of a medieval manuscript was guided by one patron's individual tastes, preferences, and wealth, that of the printed book was based on marketing prospects for wide distribution and aimed at pleasing as many potential buyers as possible. Naturally the selection of the content was the first factor that determined the character of any given book as a private luxury object or as a widely distributed popular book, particularly in the secular book market.⁷

The content of the liturgical book, with its predetermined text and its clearly defined ritual function, is less susceptible to economic circumstances and considerations of individual, as opposed to, popular tastes. Yet, it appears that in many senses the history of the haggadah as a liturgical book during this crucial period was no less dynamic than that of secular literature. It is, in fact, the decoration program that offers an insight into these matters. In the pages that follow I sketch the development of the illustrated haggadah from a private owner's expensive gem into a popular, widely-used volume. This process did not begin with the first printing of an illustrated haggadah, perhaps shortly before 1492,⁸ but far earlier when scribes and artists began to think of the book as a reproducible object rather than as a unique work of art.

In many ways Jewish book culture followed the norms and fashions common in the Christian environment. In some aspects, however, it followed its own course. The pace of textualization of Jewish knowledge, for example, and the role

⁷ Literature on these issues is vast and cannot be listed here in full; some examples are Denis Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); *Laienlektüre und Buchmarkt im späten Mittelalter*, ed. by Thomas Kock and Rita Schlusemann, *Gesellschaft, Kultur und Schrift*, 5 (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1997); Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000).

⁸ There is a fragment of a haggadah with two woodcuts, perhaps printed in Iberia prior to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1496. Scholars do not agree whether it was printed in Iberia before 1492, or in Constantinople at the beginning of the sixteenth century. A facsimile of these pages appeared in conjunction with Ya'ari, *A Bibliography of Passover Haggadot*. For some notes, see Ya'ari, introduction.

of secular literature took specific turns in Jewish society, even though these phenomena were certainly influenced by the book culture current among Christians. More importantly, the attitude of Jews to artistic representation within the framework of religion and ritual was quite different from that of Christians.

A Preference for Unframed Marginal Illustrations

The earliest extant illustrated haggadah is part of a miscellany, now in London, and was made *c.* 1280 in France.⁹ Medieval miscellanies were, in fact, prototypes of private, individual patronage; they constituted one patron's highly personalized private library and were tailored according to his individual tastes, needs, and interests. The London Miscellany has a strong liturgical focus,¹⁰ and the inclusion of the haggadah was thus natural. Even though this haggadah was not yet a separate book, and thus not necessarily part of our specific interest here, it is worth looking at its decoration as, in some respects, it foreshadows some of the features that would later become characteristic of the Central European haggadah; in other respects, its approach to decoration appears in some contrast to that of later haggadot.

The London Miscellany uses a variety of picture formats that are typical for thirteenth-century manuscript illumination: full-page panels, decorated initials, and marginal scrolls. All in all its decoration is so typical of gothic French book art that there were repeated suggestions that it was the work of Christian artists. The haggadah, however, follows a scheme of its own and includes a series of unframed marginal illustrations (Figure 4.1) that are detached from any scrollwork. In fact these pages do not display any scrollwork at all.¹¹

⁹ For a facsimile edition, see *The North French Hebrew Miscellany: British Library Add. Ms. 11639*, ed. by Jeremy Schonfield (London: Facsimile Editions, 2003).

¹⁰ For a discussion of this manuscript's contents, see Raphael Loewe's contribution in Schonfield, *The North French Hebrew Miscellany*, pp. 193–284.

¹¹ See Yael Zirlin's contribution in Schonfield, *The North French Hebrew Miscellany*, p. 124. Zirlin explains the idiosyncratic nature of the haggadah decoration by pointing out that the assumed Christian artists had no haggadah model at their disposal. Her approach, which leads to the determination that Christian artists executed the miniatures of the London Miscellany, is based exclusively on her search for models. The manuscript has not undergone any examination of its iconography beyond this traditional search. The question as to whether Jewish or Christian artists were at work should thus be revisited. More on this question, see recently Sara Offenber, *Illuminated Piety: Pietistic Texts and Images in the North French Hebrew Miscellany* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2013).



Figure 4.1. 'Miscellany, Northern France', London, British Library, MS Add. 11639, fol. 205^r. c. 1280. Reproduced with the permission of the British Library.

Picture formats communicate with their viewers in different ways. There can be no doubt that the unframed marginal illustration was intended to capture the viewer's attention differently from a large-scale framed image. It appears that this particular format soon turned into one of the most typical features of late medieval haggadah illustration in Central Europe. In German book art the unframed marginal illustration became a trademark of secular book culture, even though such images were occasionally also seen in books of a religious

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character. In Jewish culture, on the other hand, unframed marginalia became the most widely used format for religious books in general and the haggadah in particular. In fact, apart from scientific literature, nothing is known about Jewish secular book culture from this period.

The observation that there was a striking preference for unframed marginalia in religious contexts calls for some thoughts on the relationships between text, image, and viewer generated by different picture formats. Understanding these relationships will help to discern the possible reasons for the apparent preference among Jews for unframed marginalia in religious books. It appears that the choice of unframed marginalia may have been guided by both religious-theological and socio-economic considerations. The impression created by unframed marginalia suited the Jewish attitude towards the visual medium in a religious framework better than the framed panel, which has a significantly more iconic nature. But apart from these religiously motivated considerations, by choosing a secular-type format, which was dictated by social and economic conditions that were not relevant for religious books, Jewish book production professionals were able to turn the haggadah — in economic terms — into an equivalent of the secular book in Christian culture. By ‘secular’ I mean literary products that were aimed at a non-clerical audience. The contents of these books could be either fully secular, as in the case of heroic epics and romances, or ‘semi-secular’, so-to-speak, and present religious (often biblical) themes in a form typical of secular literature. In the following I first focus on the nature of the text-image-viewer relationship engendered by unframed marginalia. Then I take a closer look at the visual language employed for the different subject matters at various stages of the illustrated haggadah’s history and examine how developments in the visual language helped to make the haggadah into what it ultimately turned out to be: one of the Jewish world’s most popular books.

Biblical law forbids the worship of idols (Exodus 20. 4). From the very beginning of the study of Jewish art in modern academia it has naturally been assumed that this well-known fact affected the way in which Jewish art in general and figural art in particular developed. The preference for two-dimensional painting over three-dimensional sculpture is clearly indicative of this influence, for it is in line with the ritual law, which prohibits the creation of three-dimensional figures, but in no way restricts the use of figural motifs in two-dimensional form.¹² Late-antique and medieval Jewish art was always cre-

¹² For a relatively recent summary of the halakhic issue, see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 451–58; for the Middle Ages, see, for example, Maimonides’ statement *Mishneh Torah*, book 1, *Hilkhot*

ated and used in close conjunction with the norms and practices common in the visual cultures of the environment in which the Jews lived. However, as much as Jews and Christians must have shared a common visual culture, there were also apparent crucial differences in their attitudes towards religious art. Whereas Christianity takes no issue with the anthropomorphic representation of God, the designers of works of art used by Jews had to concern themselves with clear boundaries between the human and the heavenly realms, and a representation of the divine was not an option. In the following remarks I argue that the preference for unframed illustration is a reflection of these concerns.

As I have observed elsewhere, Jews were well aware of Christian practices with regard to artistic representation. Byzantine Jews of the sixth century and later were familiar with Christian icon worship, and Western Jews knew that European Christians did not venerate icons in the same way. The awareness that icon worship was not practised in Western Christianity, in fact, sparked the development of Jewish figural art in the thirteenth century.¹³ Once figural decoration was introduced into Jewish religious manuscripts, the unframed marginal illustration soon began to turn into a preferred medium of visual expression. Later on this mode became even more common, and in the fifteenth century we find it both in the German lands and in the Italian communities.

Unframed marginal illustrations appear in medieval art in various contexts, but are only occasionally found in religious books.¹⁴ They became associated primarily with secular culture in both the German lands and Italy, in a cultural process that had economic ramifications. Typically for paper manuscripts, these illustrations were quickly executed pen drawings. Such books were usually not commissioned, but were produced to be sold on the market. The educated wealthy middle class could afford them, so they were produced in larger numbers using cheaper methods.¹⁵ In Germany several workshops produced this

avodat kokhavim, 3. 10; for an English version of this paragraph, see *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*, ed. by Vivian B. Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 23–24.

¹³ Katrin Kogman-Appel, 'Christianity, Idolatry, and the Question of Jewish Figural Art in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 84 (2009), 73–107.

¹⁴ To these belong most notably a group of Byzantine Psalters from the ninth century and beyond; see Maria Evangelatou, 'The Illustrations of the Ninth-Century Marginal Psalters: Layers of Meaning and Their Sources' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2002). A Western example is the Utrecht Psalter, whose unframed illustrations were interpreted by Michael Camille as the 'locus of often complex text illustrations', and as a by-product of reading practices among monks, *Images on the Edge* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), pp. 106–07.

¹⁵ This was pointed out by Wolfgang Stammerl in the 1960s, and later by Liselotte E.

type of manuscript; the best known were the one run by Rüdiger Schopf, the so-called workshop of 1418, and that of Diebold Lauber in Hagenau, Alsace.¹⁶ In Italy we find this genre as early as the fourteenth century. Illustrated copies of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* fall into this category.¹⁷ However, this apparent link with secularization and economic developments in German and Italian book culture offer only a partial explanation for the striking Jewish preference for this type of illustration in religious art.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the unframed marginal illustrations in Hebrew manuscripts that are the subject of my current discussion are quite different in nature from the typical gothic marginalia that inhabit the scrollwork of medieval manuscripts from the thirteenth century on. As Michael Camille has observed, scrollwork marginalia are usually subordinated to a main image, often a framed initial. They can stand on their own representing aspects of the artist's world in contrast to what the written word stands for. They are part of a hierarchical system between low and high, sacred and secular, human and

Stamm-Saurma (Jeltsch); see, for example, *Wort und Bild: Studien zu den Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Schrifttum und Bildkunst im Mittelalter*, ed. by Wolfgang Stammer (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1962), p. 139; Liselotte E. Stamm-Saurma, 'Zucht und wicze: Zum Bildgehalt spätmittelalterlicher Epenhandschriften', *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, 41 (1987), 42–70; Liselotte E. Stamm-Saurma, 'Auftragsfertigung und Vorratsarbeit: Kriterien zu ihrer Unterscheidung am Beispiele der Werkstatt Diebold Laubers', *Unsere Kunstdenkmäler*, 36 (1985), 302–09; see also Norbert N. Ott, 'Deutschsprachige Bilderhandschriften des Spätmittelalters (zu den illustrierten Handschriften der 24 Alten Ottos von Passau)', *Münchener Jahrbuch für bildende Kunst*, 3rd ser., 38 (1987), 107–48.

¹⁶ This chapter in late medieval book culture is primarily known through the work of Liselotte E. Stamm-Saurma (Jeltsch); see, for example, her *Die Rüdiger Schopf-Handschriften: Die Meister einer Freiburger Werkstatt des späten 14. Jahrhunderts und ihre Arbeitsweise* (Salzburg: Sauerländer, 1981); and *Spätformen mittelalterlicher Buchherstellung: Bilderhandschriften aus der Werkstatt Diebold Laubers in Hagenau* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2001).

¹⁷ In Italy authors occasionally illustrated the first editions of their works in order to guarantee an accurate rendering of the illustrations. This was the case, for example, for *I documenti d'amore* by the Florentine humanist Francesco da Barberino (d. 1348); see *Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen 1300–1450*, ed. by Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1968–), Part 1: *Süd- und Mittelitalien*, I, 31–38, cat. no. 13; or one of the manuscripts of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (cat. no. 67). In general the practice of illustrating literary works with unframed water-colour marginalia seems to have been common among Italian intellectuals and literary figures: Boccaccio is known to have illustrated his own copy of the *Divine Comedy* (cat. no. 66); on Boccaccio's practices as scribe and illustrator, see also recently Rhiannon Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book: Production and Reading in Italy 1340–1520* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association / Maney, 2009), p. 16 with references to earlier literature.

monstrous, holy and sinful. They are quite different in nature, sometimes fabulous and monstrous, sometimes subversive, hybrid, and so on.¹⁸ Nothing of this, however, applies to the unframed illustration that is the subject of the current discussion. Scrollwork marginalia are bound to the scrollwork as some sort of framework and thus create a reality of their own. In contrast unframed marginal illustrations of the kind found in late medieval haggadot are independent illustrational units that accompany the text and mediate certain text-related visual contents to the viewer/reader.

Frames, often defined by philosophers and theorists as *parerga*, are an important aspect of aesthetic judgement. A frame is thought of as contributing to the completeness of a work of art. Frames or the lack of them are important in terms of visual communication, the mediation of visual information, and the relationship between image and viewer. In the context of manuscript illustration the text adds a third dimension to this relationship. Hence, even if considered in terms of aesthetic judgement, thoughts about frames can certainly help us to understand the role a frame or its absence plays in the perception and reception of religious images in Jewish book art.

A frame defined as *parergon* is a supplementary accessory, a by-product, subordinate to the *ergon*, the work itself. The frame delineates a work of art and clarifies the work's boundaries against a background. This raises questions as to whether the frame is integral to or a part of the work, or whether it belongs to the background. On the other hand, a *parergon* is not supposed to intrude upon or have a part in the work; that is, it should have no effect on its meaning. In Jacques Derrida's view the frame is a boundary that provides definition, but it is parergonal and belongs to both the work of art and the surrounding space and merges with either.¹⁹ This sense of liminality is particularly crucial for an understanding of frames in medieval manuscript painting, where the frames are often 'violated', to use Meyer Schapiro's wording.²⁰

¹⁸ For further observations on scrollwork marginalia, see Camille, *Image on the Edge*, chaps 1, 4, and 5.

¹⁹ For a discussion of picture frames as *parerga*, see first (in 1790) Immanuel Kant, for whom the *parergon* is not part of the work of art, *Kritik der Urteilskraft: Beilage: Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. by Heiner F. Klemme, Philosophische Bibliothek, 507 (Leipzig: Meiner, 2009), §14, esp. pp. 78–79; for Jacques Derrida's critique, see *La Vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), pp. 19–168; for a discussion on the latter, see Robin Marriner, 'Derrida and the *Parergon*', in *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. by Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), chap. 28, pp. 349–59.

²⁰ Meyer Schapiro, 'On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle

For Schapiro the frame was ‘a non-mimetic element of the image-sign’. He noted that the act of setting boundaries on an image is a relatively late cultural process, part of human evolution. Prehistorical cave art came unframed. After it had become common to frame images within boundaries, however, the frames were taken for granted. An image has a format and a frame, albeit just the edges of a sheet of paper. The closeness of a frame and a smooth picture surface provide the image with ‘a definite space of its own.’²¹ Nothing intrudes into this space. Nothing disturbs this space. A frame defines a picture space, whether perspectival or not. It also has the potential to make the representation of three-dimensional space more successful. The frame can thus also be approached as a means of isolating the picture from the rest of the world, to turn the picture into an island, so to speak. The frame allows the picture to appear as an independent entity.

This is not the place to discuss these theories in detail, but even these brief remarks clearly suggest the qualities that are not found in an unframed image. A frame means a boundary; a frame means definition; a frame provides a picture space with coherence; and a frame means order. An unframed image is limitless; it lacks definition and coherent organization of the pictorial space. The unframed image becomes a fraction of a larger whole and penetrates into the viewer’s field of vision. We shall see that these qualities are inherent in unframed marginalia in Jewish manuscripts.

Our first association with a frame is the neatly designed, physical device that encloses early modern and modern panel painting. However, there is a whole range of in-between framing devices, especially in medieval art, that do not fall into that clearly delineated category: frames that do not constitute a full enclosure; frames that have no clear-cut shape; violated frames, that is, frames that are being stepped on by figures in the image or other protruding pictorial elements. Such ‘violations’ allow the image to break out from the artistic sphere and to address the viewer in various ways. A frame designates a defined field, ‘but’ said Schapiro ‘such a field corresponds to nothing in nature or mental imagery where the phantoms of visual memory come up in a vague unbounded void.’²² Herbert Broderick suggests that the ‘violations’ of the frame in medieval art indicate that it belongs to the world of the image, whereas the modern

in Image-Signs’, *Semiotica: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 6 (1972–73), 9–19 (pp. 11–12), first published in *Semiotica*, 1 (1969), 223–42.

²¹ Schapiro, ‘On Some Problems’, p. 9.

²² Schapiro, ‘On Some Problems’, p. 9.

frame belongs rather to the world of the viewer.²³ Jean-Claude Lebensztejn distinguishes between framed medieval art, where an image is ‘an iconic symbol of the divine’, and early modern art, which is designed as an imitation of the visible and turns the framed panel into a window. He also calls our attention to what he labels ‘indecisive frames’, frames that are located between the inside and the outside, between the imitated and the imitating, the fictive and the real.²⁴

Narrative sequences are usually organized by complex framing networks, such as the one on the wooden doors of Santa Sabina from the early fifth century or in gothic vitraux in the thirteenth.²⁵ Medieval art occasionally also uses additional framing devices within framed pictures; Christ in Majesty shown in a mandorla within the frames of manuscript compositions or tympana is such a case. These additional framing devices isolate the appearance of Christ from the rest of the image and create a separate visual realm. On the other hand, as Broderick points out, these interior frames can be drawn into the narrative of the composition.²⁶

The unframed illustration thus creates a special relationship between image and viewer, a relationship that draws the viewer into the sphere of the image more than any framed representation can do. A variety of different framing strategies can be observed in Byzantine art, strategies that make the frame permeable, turning it into a liminal area, where an intimate relationship between the viewer and the image is possible. In Byzantine art, however, the sphere of the image is where the divine is present. Glenn Peers points out that early Christian art, in giving up Greco-Roman illusionism, diminishes the ‘differentiation between frame and framed’ that ‘allowed for the real emergence of devotional reality into the realm of the viewer’.²⁷ Some nine hundred years later

²³ Herbert R. Broderick, ‘Some Attitudes toward the Frame in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries’, *Artibus et Historiae*, 3 (1982), 31–42.

²⁴ Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, ‘Starting out from the Frame (Vignettes)’, in *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*, ed. by Peter Brunette and David Wills (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 118–40 (esp. pp. 120–25).

²⁵ Wolfgang Kemp, ‘The Narrativity of the Frame’, in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. by Paul Duro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 11–23.

²⁶ Broderick, ‘Attitudes toward the Frame’, pp. 31–32; for mandorla within tympana, see, for example, the discussion in Nino Zchomelidse, ‘Deus – Homo – Imago: Representing the Divine in the Twelfth Century’, in *Looking Beyond: Visions, Dreams, and Insights in Medieval Art and History*, ed. by Colum Hourihane, Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers, 11 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 115.

²⁷ Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), p. 5.

Jewish artists sought to create precisely the opposite effect. A shift back to realism enabled them to depict a sphere of human existence rather than a reality that could be interpreted as a sphere in which the divine is present. The use of unframed illustrations that represent the viewer's own reality and penetrate into his/her world allows the viewer to penetrate into the imagery and guarantees that there is nothing divine in this sphere — no object of devotion, no emanation of God. Hence, in the context of late medieval Jewish manuscript illustration an unframed image cannot be taken for a venerated icon in which the divine has a part.

This makes the preference for unframed marginal illustrations in medieval Jewish art first of all a religiously motivated choice (rather than driven only by economic or other considerations). Unframed marginalia not only generate a particularly close bond between image and text, letting the former play a crucial role in the mediation of the latter, but also create a setting in which the viewer can be drawn into the imagery and is thus able to assure the pious user of the manuscript that this imagery is part of his own human sphere. Bearing in mind that haggadot would be viewed by diverse audiences, including non-erudite members of the middle class, women, and children, these concerns about the representation or the non-representation of the divine take on greater emphasis. A sophisticated audience of knowledgeable scholars, educated prayer-leaders, and other erudite book users would have been able to cope with more daring imagery in terms of the divine realm.²⁸ However, when it came to providing wider audiences with religious imagery, this apparently became an issue, and the spiritual fathers of the illustrated haggadah wanted to make certain that the imagery could not be taken for iconic representation.²⁹

When the first European haggadah illustrators chose the medium of unframed marginalia as the most suitable for their task it may have been on religious grounds, but they must soon have realized that this form of art, with

²⁸ Even though a preferred medium, unframed marginalia do not, in fact, constitute the only form of illustration in Hebrew manuscripts. When Hebrew manuscript painting first developed in the 1230s it adopted most of those formats that were common at the time in Christian art. Later on the unframed format developed into a preferred medium.

²⁹ Hebrew manuscript illustration occasionally challenges the taboo of divine representation, but in these cases precautions are taken to clearly demarcate the boundaries of the realm where the invisible dwells, the divine beyond representation; for an example, see the representation of the couple of the Song of Songs in the Leipzig Mahzor, Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Voller 1002/I, fol. 64^v, which approaches the divine in terms of a female personification of the revealed Glory; for a discussion, see Katrin Kogman-Appel, *A Mahzor from Worms: Art and Religion in a Medieval Jewish Community* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), chap. 6.

its unframed drawings, also had far-reaching socio-economic implications of the sort I have noted above. Hence, in the further development of the haggadah such marginalia could turn it into a near equivalent of a product of secular book culture. Haggadot with unframed drawings could be produced in a way that made them affordable to a range of audiences, who, in turn, could easily accept the visual language employed without being trapped by the ‘dangers’ of iconic representation. In the decades that followed the creation of the London Miscellany this visual language became ever more ‘secular’, so to speak; it increasingly integrated elements of the daily lives of the viewers, who were thus drawn away from iconic representation into the realm of their own human existence.

Re-Creating the Viewer’s Social Reality

The haggadah in the French Miscellany in London was followed about twenty years later by the Bird’s Head Haggadah, which owes its name to the zoocephalic phenomenon characterizing most of its figures.³⁰ The Bird’s Head Haggadah is, in fact, the earliest extant individually bound illustrated haggadah from Central Europe (Figure 4.2). Its creators adopted the unframed marginal illustration as the dominant visual medium and created a highly innovative program that accompanied large portions of the haggadah text. The unframed marginalia are the sole medium of visual content, and they contribute a great deal towards breaking through any border between the viewer’s realm, the text, and the image space. It is all one and the same space.³¹

Yet, if we follow the visual idiom from the London Miscellany Haggadah via the Bird’s Head Haggadah into the fifteenth century, we can make several observations. Although the latter, with its wealth of unframed marginalia,

³⁰ For a facsimile edition, see *The Bird’s Head Haggadah of the Bezalel National Art Museum in Jerusalem*, ed. by Moshe Spitzer (Jerusalem: Tarshish, 1965); on the zoocephalic figures, see Marc M. Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative and Religious Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 45–61.

³¹ Unframed marginalia did, occasionally appear in thirteenth-century *mahzorim* from the Rhineland and Franconia. They may very well have to do with the above-mentioned attempts to clearly demarcate the human and the divine realm. However, they never dominated the visual language as completely as they do in the Bird’s Head Haggadah or any of the later haggadot. They appear together with other — framed — forms of illustration and seem not yet to have fully conquered the imagery. It is notable that the *mahzorim* were used by a different kind of audience of erudite scholars and learned prayer-leaders, whereas the haggadah would develop into a book used by much wider circles of the Jewish population. For more background on the use of medieval *mahzorim* in Ashkenaz, see Kogman-Appel, *A Mahzor from Worms*, chap. 4.



Figure 4.2. 'Bird's Head Haggadah', Jerusalem, The Israel Museum, MS 180/57, fol. 3r. Late thirteenth century. Reproduced with the permission of The Israel Museum.

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makes a clear attempt to break down the barriers between viewer and image, its focus is clearly theological and historical, and its overall nature is determined by what Marc Epstein recently treated as a metahistorical layer of visuality.³² The figures that inhabit the margins of the text, whether biblical or performers of rituals, are dressed in timeless uniform garments; the imagery is highly minimalistic in terms of details from daily life. The further we move through the fourteenth century into the fifteenth, the more the viewer is drawn into the imagery by means of a representation of social realities similar to his/her own. The imagery becomes less and less burdened with theological meaning and grows more and more into a medium with which the viewer can identify. Even where history plays a dominant role in the imagery, the borders between the historical element and the world of the contemporary viewer become blurred. Space does not allow me to conduct a full comparison here of the different haggadah cycles created between 1300 and 1500, but in the following I examine and closely analyse a few specific cases. These are meant to be representative of the different haggadah highlights in terms of subject matter: biblical history, rabbinic theology, and ritual.

The first image in the London Miscellany Haggadah illustrates the text *ha-lahma 'anya* ('This is the Bread of Affliction') (Figure 4.1). It shows a table set with various utensils and dishes with three young men behind it. At some distance we see an older man on a throne-like chair, who raises a golden goblet. All four men are dressed in timeless tunics — the older man is also wearing a cloak — and the overall nature of the image has something solemn and liturgical about it. The older man seems to have more the air of an ordained cleric than a father who guides his family through a liturgical meal; he performs a ritual and the three young men follow his actions; the one in the centre evinces a great deal of devotion and seems to be absorbed in private prayer. Nothing in this image suggests a crowded family gathering on the occasion of a ritual meal.

The Bird's Head Haggadah includes several compositions of a *seder* table. At the very beginning of the cycle we encounter an image of a couple seated behind a table (fol. 2^v). The page is damaged and the central part is missing, but two *maṣṣot* ('pieces of unleavened bread') can be seen clearly. The entire composition is framed by a large gothic arch which creates some sort of a space — not a private space, one should add, but rather a solid architectural space,

³² See Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*, esp. chap. 5. A recent discussion by Adam S. Cohen, 'La Haggadah multi-sensorielle', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 55 (2012), 521-39, describes how the imagery of early illustrated haggadot addresses the senses, and links this observation to the transfer of Jewish culture from orality to textuality.

which immediately creates an association with liturgical architecture. This, in fact, is the only image in the cycle that has some sort of frame. The next table scene, illustrating the *kiddush* ('benediction over wine'), quite similar to the former, is an unframed marginal illustration (Figure 4.2). In comparison to its counterpart in the London Miscellany Haggadah this image conveys an atmosphere of intimate family life. The homey character of the setting is reinforced by the hand-washing utensils to the left. Similar to the figures in the London Miscellany Haggadah, however, those of the Bird's Head Haggadah are dressed in timeless tunics. Apart from the different colours in which these tunics are painted there is nothing differentiating or individual about the clothing of the different figures, nothing that would create a reality with which the viewer would have been able to identify. Another table scene appears as an illustration for *ha-lahma 'anya* and shows a couple seated at the far ends of a long table (fol. 8^r). The man is reading the haggadah and the woman is listening. All of these *seder* table scenes, even though of a clearly more intimate character than the more ritualistic composition of the London Miscellany Haggadah, still convey something quite ceremonial, solemn, and remote.

In fourteenth-century Italian haggadot the figures are more rooted in their time in terms of costume and realia. The Wolf Haggadah, a manuscript written in southern France in the second half of the fourteenth century, but apparently illustrated in Italy several decades later, shows a recurring male figure holding haggadah-related utensils, including a goblet, the *maṣṣah*, and the *maror* ('bitter herb').³³ A symbolic pointer at the margins of the text, rather than a detailed illustration, this man does not form part of a lively family setting. The real-life Passover ceremony does not involve men standing around solemnly and raising ritually relevant utensils like a ritual expert during a synagogue service; rather, the ceremony involves people at a table celebrating a family meal of historical and halakhic significance. Hence these images seem to possess an educational character more than they function as realistic genre representations. The visual language of the Wolf Haggadah draws the viewer into its imagery by means of its unframed marginalia, but in terms of realia, it still does not fully exploit this medium.

The roughly contemporary Schocken Haggadah (Lombardy, c. 1380–1400) takes a similar approach of placing visual markers in the margins of the text. On the other hand, it is significantly richer in its imagery than the Wolf Haggadah

³³ Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Cod. Heb. 8°7246, fols 6^r, 21^v; for a digitised version of the haggadah, see <<http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/gallery/of-israel/haggadot/Pages/wolf.aspx>> [accessed 15 October 2014].

and almost every page is adorned with a marginal illustration. Often a man is shown performing tasks related to the *seder*, but there are only occasional compositions with more than one figure. Even though the richness in imagery foreshadows the visual language of fifteenth-century haggadot, the rigidity of the compositions, all still presenting the scenes with a minimum of detail and realia, indicates that this book marks only the beginning of a development.³⁴ Among its many illustrations it also contains a *seder* table. Whereas the table itself is quite rich in utensils and dishes, the three men behind it still communicate something of that sense of ceremonious ritual that we observed in the London Miscellany and the Bird's Head haggadot. The three male figures seem, again, to be symbolically marking the text rather than members of a family including elderly members, women, and children.

It is not until well into the fifteenth century that we begin to see illustrations in haggadot reflecting a different kind of visual language. Inspired by the *Zeitgeist* of early modern realism and by means of more accurate renderings of realia, haggadah artists of the period were making much greater efforts to draw the fifteenth-century viewer into the realm of the imagery. An early stage in this development can be observed in a haggadah, which again appears as part of a 'private library': a miscellany, now in Hamburg, produced perhaps in Mainz about 1425.³⁵ Taking a closer look at the illustration of *ha-lahma 'anya* in the

³⁴ Formerly Jerusalem, The Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, cod. 24085; for a description, see Yael Zirlin, 'The Schocken Italian Haggadah of c. 1400 and Its Origins', *Jewish Art*, 12–13 (1986–87), 55–72.

³⁵ The Hamburg Miscellany exhibits a somewhat unusual text–image relationship. Several of the images appear as unfinished drawings, whereas others are fully painted. Several of the painted images have fully coloured backgrounds, the edges of which demarcate the boundaries of the image and thus create some sort of frame. This applies especially to those images that represent interior settings. Other images, even though exhibiting fully painted landscape backgrounds, have no clear-cut framing device. On many pages the text left large margins of irregular shape to allow large compositions, whereas clearly the scribe determined the general appearance of the latter. It would make sense to assume that the scribe, in fact, executed the drawings while writing the text. All in all this manuscript exhibits a rather unusual text–image relationship wherein the two are almost integrated and seem to create one unified form of communication that encompasses both a textual medium and a visual language; the Hamburg Miscellany has never been published; images appear in Kurt Schubert and Ursula Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst*, 2 vols, *Buchkunst im Wandel der Zeiten*, 3 (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1983), I, figures 30–32; it is also the subject of a recent dissertation, Zofia Buda, 'Sacrifice and Redemption in the Hamburg Miscellany: The Illustrations of a Fifteenth-century Ashkenazi Manuscript' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Central European University, 2012), for the Haggadah, see pp. 76–167.



Figure 4.3. 'Miscellany, Rhineland (Mainz?)', Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Heb. 37, fol. 24r. c. 1425. Reproduced with the permission of the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek.

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haggadah of the Hamburg Miscellany, we realize that we are in the midst of a family gathering (Figure 4.3). Old and young are assembled around a table; they are sitting close together; they are pictured in various postures of interaction and communication. The scene allows the viewer to feel empathic and to become part of that gathering to a much greater degree than is possible when viewing the more solemn and ceremonial *seder* table representations in the Bird's Head Haggadah.

It is at this point in the history of the illustrated haggadah that Joel ben Simeon (*c.* 1420–*c.* 1492), one of the period's outstanding actors, appears on the stage. A particularly prolific scribe and illustrator, Joel began his career in the Rhineland during the 1440s. In 1452, at the latest, he moved to northern Italy, where evidence of his presence can be found in various places in Lombardy, the Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, and Tuscany.³⁶ From a sharp change in style observable in his subsequent work, it is clear that he must have received some further training after having arrived in Italy. Unlike his earlier work in the Rhineland, his figures are securely drawn, realistically proportioned, and display delicate facial traits. More specifically, he seems to have been inspired by the art in secular books with marginal drawings of the sort I mentioned above. Much of their nature is reflected in Joel's work in the second half of the fifteenth century.

While still in the Rhineland Joel produced two haggadot, but both manuscripts were badly trimmed and most of the marginal illustrations were lost. We are basically left with one image in the so-called First Nuremberg Haggadah, now in the Israel Museum, inserted into the text portion and adorning the page of *lefikhakh* ('accordingly') (Figure 4.4). On the one hand, Joel's visual language still seems to be similar to what he might have seen in earlier haggadot of the style of the London Miscellany, for example. The head of the family is shown to the right performing the blessing over wine. He appears not so much as a father and husband who is seated at the table together with his family, but, rather, as a teaching rabbi, seated on an elaborate chair in front of a lectern. On the other hand, however, the left part of the panel seems to speak a different language. There a family is shown as an independent, separate composition in an illustration that owes more to the model of the Hamburg Miscellany than to that of the London volume: men and women dressed in contemporary costume

³⁶ For a recent treatment of Joel ben Simeon's biography with references to earlier literature, see David Stern and Katrin Kogman-Appel, *The Washington Haggadah: A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript from the Library of Congress* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).



Figure 4.4. 'First Nuremberg Haggadah', Jerusalem, The Israel Museum, MS 181/60, former Schocken Library (Jerusalem), MS 24086, fol. 14^r. c. 1440.

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Figure 4.5. 'Rothschild (Murphy) Haggadah', Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, MS Heb. 4°6130, fol. 2^v. c. 1450. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Israel.

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are shown as a close-knit group. One of the men is lifting a cup performing the blessing, somewhat mirroring the companion image to the far right of the composition. It seems that Joel struggled here with designing a religious ceremony and could not easily make up his mind whether to choose the solemn, somewhat formal performer of a ritual or to depict the atmosphere of a family gathering of religious significance.

A quick look at one of the haggadot that Joel produced shortly after his move to Italy shows quite eloquently where his approach to the illustration of this book was heading. The so-called Rothschild Haggadah, also known as the Murphy Haggadah, currently held in the National Library of Israel, shows an elaborate *seder* scene as an illustration of *ha-lahma 'anya* (Figure 4.5). In a composition packed with realia, Joel created a scene taken from life: men and women, the young and the elderly all dressed in the fashion of the day with furnishings typical of a fifteenth-century household, including two large star-shaped Sabbath lamps; there are utensils in a rich variety of shapes on the table and under it we see a dog gnawing on a large bone.

Joel ben Simeon pursued the same approach in his subsequent work. Throughout his long career he developed a rich visual language through which he seems to have been tremendously successful in drawing the viewer into the world of the depicted figures. A whole range of social types is integrated into his frameless marginal compositions of both ritual and biblical-mythical scenes: the patrons of the haggadot are shown with their families next to wise scholars, wicked gentile knights, simpletons, common workers, vagabonds, and others (Figures 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8).³⁷ It is by means of these reflections of the society in which he lived that Joel was able to draw the readers and viewers into the world of the book. Everyone, from the wealthy to the poor, could find himself in the margins of these books. Whereas the ritual depictions of the London Miscellany look like solemn liturgical settings and symbolic markers, and those of the Bird's Head Haggadah appear as some sort of timeless halakhic instruction, Joel's images offer an insight into the life of his clientele.

In the London Miscellany Haggadah the four sons are represented generically by a single figure of neutral appearance, a young man who raises his hands in a gesture that suggests that he is asking a question (fol. 205^v). It is the actual act of asking that is referred to here, not any of the social types these sons are supposed to represent. In the Bird's Head Haggadah the four sons are entirely

³⁷ Katrin Kogman-Appel, 'The Illustrations of the Washington Haggadah', in Stern and Kogman-Appel, *The Washington Haggadah*, pp. 96–105.



Figure 4.6. 'Parma Haggadah', Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2998, fol. 10^v. Late thirteenth century. Reproduced with the permission of the Biblioteca Palatina.

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missing. In Joel's repertoire, finally, the four figures turn into representatives not only of human types, but of social groups. They display several characteristics in their costume, body language, and general appearance that easily associate them with scholars, vagabonds, aggressive gentiles, or commoners. The same approach applies to the other figures, which represent a cross-section of society. Their costumes are indicative of their social rank as either wealthy (Figure 4.6) or poor (Figure 4.7) and hard-working, scholarly (Figure 4.8) or uneducated.

In 1469 Joel produced a *mahzor* (pl. *mahzorim*, 'prayer book') for one Rav Menaḥem, the son of Samuel. As the unusually detailed colophon explains, the book was intended for the use of the latter's daughter Maraviglia. The manuscript also contains a haggadah with illustrations, and among these we find the image of a young lady, presumably Maraviglia herself, holding a *maṣṣab*.³⁸ This image, which replaces the conventional man raising the unleavened bread in other haggadot, indicates that representations of this kind were meant to portray the owners of the books. These patrons were thus supposed to find on the pages reflections of themselves, their families, and the society that surrounded them.

Occasionally only a slight shift in imagery marks a significant change in visual language. For example, several haggadot include illustrations of a man roasting meat on an open fire. The London Miscellany Haggadah (fol. 205^v) and the Bird's Head Haggadah (fol. 22^r) show a man, dressed as all the other men in the illustration cycle, turning a spit with a whole lamb (or perhaps a ram). The same is true in Sephardic haggadot, which often include the same scene.³⁹ The Hamburg Miscellany Haggadah shows an elaborate sacrifice scene in the interior of the Temple (fol. 31^r). In contrast, in his 1478 Washington Haggadah, Joel shows a physically impaired vagabond turning the spit with a chunk of meat (Figure 4.7).⁴⁰ As I show elsewhere, the lad was perhaps a miser-

³⁸ London, BL, MS Add. 26957, fol. 45^r; for the colophon, see fol. 112^r.

³⁹ In the Sephardic haggadot the roasting of the lamb is usually integrated in the cycle of full-page miniatures at the beginning of the book. These series represent full-fledged biblical cycles and conclude without interruption with a few scenes reflecting the preparations in a contemporaneous household. The roasting scenes are located between these images at the very end of the biblical cycle leading to the preparation series; see, for example, London, BL, MS Or. 2737, fol. 91^v; MS Add. 27210, fol. 15^r; MS Or. 1404, fol. 7^v; this latter manuscript also shows the roasting in an initial panel adjacent to the text; however, here, too, we see an entire lamb, fol. 8^r; Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS heb. 6, fol. 19^v; *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles*, ed. by Bezalel Narkiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press; Jerusalem: Israel Science Foundation, 1982–), 1: *Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts*, ed. by Bezalel Narkiss, Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, and Anat Tcherikover (1982).

⁴⁰ For a facsimile edition, see *The Washington Haggadah: A Facsimile Edition of an*

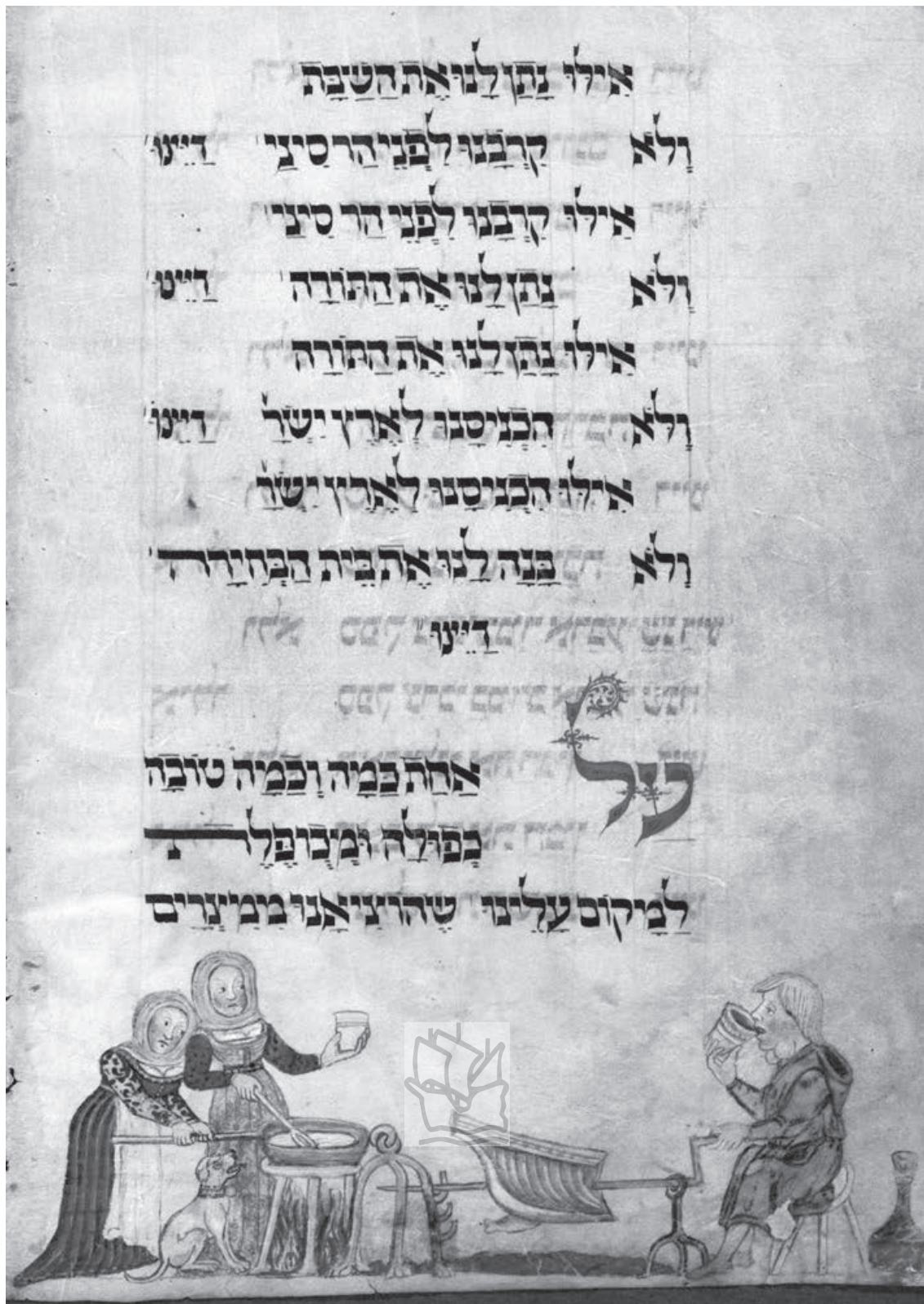


Figure 4.7. 'Washington Haggadah,' Washington, Library of Congress, Cod. Heb. 1, fol. 14^v. 1478.
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Figure 4.8. 'Washington Haggadah', Washington, Library of Congress, Cod. Heb. 1, fol. 5r. 1478. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Congress.

Figure 4.9 (following page). 'Miscellany, Rhineland (Mainz?)', Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Heb. 37, fols 26^v–27^r. c. 1425. Reproduced with the permission of the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek.

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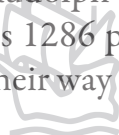
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able vagabond being taken in to partake of the *seder* meal, as the law prescribes: 'Here is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let anyone who is hungry come and eat. Let anyone who wishes come and participate in the Passover'.⁴¹ The difference between the two approaches to the roasting scene is obvious. Whereas the early haggadot, including the Hamburg Miscellany, clearly refer to the biblical Passover sacrifice in a timeless, symbolic idiom, Joel shows the here and now of the family getting ready for the meal. According to the ritual law, after the destruction of the Temple, one is not supposed to roast a whole lamb, but only a portion of the lamb's meat.⁴² Joel projected the symbolic representation of biblical content onto the contemporary setting of real life.

The highlight of the haggadah and its illustration cycle is the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, marking their liberation from bondage. Numerous haggadot offer visual representations of these acts and show the Israelites first being burdened by bondage, then leaving Egypt with Pharaoh's army pursuing them, and finally crossing the sea. The London Miscellany Haggadah shows only a few of these scenes. Most of its imagery is of a ritual nature and includes only two Israelites going down to Egypt and two others preparing the bricks for Pharaoh's treasure cities.⁴³ Similar to the figures in this haggadah that I mentioned earlier, these men are, again, shown as timeless markers of primarily symbolic value. They wear the typical timeless garments that appear so often in biblical scenes of the thirteenth century, and there is a minimum of detail.

The Bird's Head Haggadah depicts several more events, among them the Departure from Egypt as a large double-page composition (fols 25^v–26^r). To the left we see an isocephalic row of uniformly dressed men in tunics, led by Moses, who stands out only because of his funnel hat and his rod. There is special emphasis on the Israelites hurrying away taking their unleavened dough. On the right-hand page the Egyptian army is following. Kurt Schubert remarked that the repeated appearance of Rudolph of Hapsburg's heraldic eagle in the imagery of the Egyptians marks his 1286 pursuit of a large group of Jews leaving the Rhineland, apparently on their way to the Holy Land. Rudolph, in need



Illuminated Fifteenth-Century Hebrew Manuscript at the Library of Congress Signed by Joel ben Simeon, ed. by Myron Weinstein (Washington: Library of Congress, 1991); or a recent edition, see Stern and Kogman-Appel, *The Washington Haggadah*, with references to the earlier literature.

⁴¹ In the haggadah, the section of *ba-lahma anya* ('This is the Bread of Affliction').

⁴² See, for example, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, book 3, *Hilkhot hames u-massah*, 8. 11.

⁴³ Fols 204^r and 205^v.

of Jewish tax money, did not allow the Jews to leave the Empire. The famous Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg was among this group and was imprisoned.⁴⁴

At first sight this scene can be seen as an attempt to employ a visual language that elicits a topical setting. And it certainly did. However, there is nothing in this image that creates a contemporary social setting of the kind that we find in Joel's books. The background of this representation is the equation of Emperor Rudolph with Pharaoh, the prototypical persecutor of Israel. Taking an event of recent history to reinforce this image of persecution communicates polemics based on theological considerations. In visual terms it does not contribute a great deal to drawing the viewer into the composition by means of the visual language. Creating an allusion to the polemics of the time, an allusion of theological significance, is one thing; creating a composition packed with lively details of contemporary reality in order to enable the viewer to feel part of the setting, emotionally and socially, is quite another.

In contrast, the artist of the Hamburg Miscellany and, somewhat later, Joel ben Simeon depict these biblical scenes as contemporary dramas, pregnant with an abundance of detail taken from the viewers' environment and their experiences of daily life. The Israelites of the Hamburg volume go down to Egypt not as a symbolic row of timelessly dressed figures, but as a large crowd of people: men, women, and children, some in a carriage, some on horseback, some on foot (Figure 4.9). Two men are engaged in conversation, while at the end of the crowd a donkey seems to be digging in his heels, refusing to walk any further. Cattle and more donkeys are moving along with the people. Tents are shown to emphasize the text on the same page that mentions the temporary nature of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt ('This means that Jacob did not go down into Egypt to settle, but to stay there for a while'). In the background two medieval settlements are seen nestled in a rich landscape of mountains, trees, flowers, and more. The details of this composition offer far more than the minimum needed to come to terms with the biblical content of the scene. The image does not show a timeless biblical group, but a contemporary crowd of Jews, perhaps expelled from a German town, seeking refuge in some other place. By means of numerous details the artist draws the viewer into the composition so that he can imagine himself in this setting and experience the event vicariously. This reaction is not due to the inclusion of an element with significant political weight, such as the Hapsburg eagle; rather, it is elicited by drawing the viewer into a reflection of his or her own reality.

⁴⁴ Schubert and Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst*, I, 118–19.

The haggadah ritual is designed so that its performers will go through a mental process that makes them feel part of the Departure from Egypt, but this can be accomplished in various ways. One method is to evoke symbols that connect the reader with the past and allude to it intellectually rather than emotionally. However, what we see in the Hamburg Miscellany is different, and it is by means of its particular visual language that the viewer is integrated into the events at an entirely different level.

Joel ben Simeon followed the same path. Several of his manuscripts contain a large double-page composition of the Departure from Egypt on the left-hand page and the pursuing Egyptians on the right (Figure 4.10). Large crowds move from the right-hand side of the composition to its left. Several details, such as Moses raising his rod, the column of fire in front of the people, and the cloud behind them, allude to the biblical story. But apart from these allusions, this is a crowd of late medieval Italian Jews dressed in the contemporary fashion, taking with them a rich collection of dishes and household utensils. Even though all of Joel's figures are drawn with similar facial traits typical of all his works, there are some differences in age and expression. These are no longer the uniform, formulaic faces with the beaks of the Bird's Head Haggadah. This is a group of people that includes children, women, the young and the elderly, the rich and the poor. Whoever viewed these images could, so to speak, find him- or herself among these people. Similarly the Egyptian army is shown with its armour and weaponry, knights on horseback and common soldiers on foot, a carriage carrying a jester, and a small barrel hanging attached to one of the carriage's beams.

During his long career, spent for the most part in Italy, Joel must have returned to the German lands twice. We know that around 1460 he collaborated with Meir Jaffe, a scribe in Ulm, and decorated the London Haggadah, from which the composition of the Departure from Egypt described above was taken.⁴⁵ The year 1478 again found him in the German lands, where he wrote and decorated what is now known as the Washington Haggadah. It is likely that Joel produced other works during his sojourns north of the Alps, and it was prob-



⁴⁵ In a colophon on fol. 48^v Joel ben Simeon states that he *ainted* the Haggadah. Several of the illustrations, however, have been identified as the work of Johannes Bämle, a southern German publisher of manuscripts and printed books between the 1450s and 1475. For details, see Sheila Edmunds, 'The Place of the London Haggadah in the Work of Joel Ben Simeon,' *Journal of Jewish Art*, 7 (1980), 25–34; Yael Zirlin, 'Joel Meets Johannes: A Fifteenth-Century Jewish-Christian Collaboration in Manuscript Illumination,' *Viator*, 26 (1995), 265–82. For the identification of the scribe, see Mordechai Glatzer, 'The Ashkenazi and Italian Haggadah and the Haggadot of Joel ben Simeon,' in *The Washington Haggadah*, ed. by Weinstein, pp. 137–69.



Figure 4.10. 'London Haggadah', London, British Library,
MS Add. 14762, fol. 15^r. *c.* 1460.

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Figure 4.11. 'Second Nuremberg Haggadah', London, COLLECTION OF CINDY AND DAVID SOFER, fol. 6^v. c. 1465. Reproduced with the permission of Cindy and David Sofer.

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ably in these works that he introduced to Ashkenazi culture the iconographic themes he had developed in Italy.⁴⁶ He also seems to have acquired a certain degree of fame there, as his influence is discernible during the second half of the fifteenth century in several haggadot produced in the German lands.

Compositions that were apparently inspired by Joel's work are found in two manuscripts from Franconia that are seminal in our attempts to understand the dissemination of illustrated haggadot among wide circles of the Jewish population. Around 1465 a workshop in either Nuremberg or Bamberg produced perhaps a whole group of haggadot, of which two, the Second Nuremberg Haggadah and the Yahuda Haggadah, are extant.⁴⁷ As I have shown elsewhere the two were made in one working process by a team of scribes and illustrators who collaborated in a manner that indicates that they sought means of easy and fast reproduction in order to meet the needs of a wider market. The two volumes are very similar; they were written by the same scribe and then passed on to an illustrator, who supplied the under-drawings of the illustrations beginning with the Second Nuremberg Haggadah and then moved on to the Yahuda Haggadah. Perhaps, while some of the quires were still in the hands of the scribe or the illustrator, a colourist began his part of the project and then passed the quires on to yet another professional to add the final touches and to apply the final contours to the images.⁴⁸

At first sight the images in these haggadot — small unframed marginalia that adorn the outer and lower margins of every page — seem to be a crude product of somewhat sloppy amateurish illustrators. A closer look, however, indicates that this is not necessarily the output of non-professionals, but of a team of workers who sought innovative production methods inspired by the current trends in bookmaking, an alternative to print making, so to speak, without having to invest in a press.⁴⁹ The style of the marginalia was clearly influenced by woodcuts and it is quite possible that a woodcut model book

⁴⁶ For more on this process, see Stern and Kogman-Appel, *The Washington Haggadah*, pp. 62–87.

⁴⁷ London, COLLECTION OF CINDY AND DAVID SOFER, for a digital version with bibliography, see <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss-pr/mss_d_0076/> [accessed 15 June 2012]; Jerusalem, Israel Museum, MS 180/50.

⁴⁸ Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Die Zweite Nürnberger und die Jehuda Haggadah: Jüdische Illustratoren zwischen Tradition und Fortschritt* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 225–40.

⁴⁹ For this and similar reasons for the persistence of manuscript culture, with a focus on Italy, see Brian Richardson, *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chap. 1.

served the illustrators in the planning of their work. Hence, in many ways the two books mark a turning point in the history of the illustrated haggadah on its way to becoming a popular book.

Joel's work must have been known to the Franconian illustrators because the compositions of the Departure from Egypt and the Transmission of the Law on Mount Sinai are clearly modelled after his work.⁵⁰ But apart from these iconographic similarities these manuscripts share a great deal of Joel's visual language. The cycles of the two Franconian haggadot are replete with detailed preparation scenes, ritual scenes, *seder* tables with large families gathered together, and more. Even though not drawn realistically, but depicted in a somewhat naïve idiom, they reflect a great deal of realia, including contemporary furniture, a variety of tableware that has counterparts in the works of contemporary goldsmiths from the area, household utensils, and costumes (Figure 4.11).⁵¹

A brief look at a series of images illustrating several aspects of the preparations towards the holiday can demonstrate how easily the contemporary viewers must have seen their own environment reflected in the scenes, even though not realistically represented (Figure 4.12). The preparation of the unleavened bread, spread over two or three pages, is shown in a series of several images, all referring in minute detail to the most precise requirements of ritual law: from the moment the wheat is brought to the mill to the finished *maṣṣot* being drawn out of the oven we encounter the entire process of mixing the flour and water, kneading the dough, forming the breads, and bringing them to the oven. In effect, a late medieval Ashkenazi household comes to life in this 'family portrait'. These two pages appear at the very beginning of the manuscript. Thus, even before the text begins, readers find themselves immediately drawn into a visual representation of their own reality, an opening into the text of the haggadah and the biblical and ritual marginalia that accompany the text throughout. The text begins with instructions for cleaning the house and ritually removing the last traces of leaven. At the margins we find a series of small illustrations showing the members of the household performing the different tasks prescribed by the ritual law (Figure 4.13). These illustrations certainly served as visual aids to remind one of the halakhic issues involved, but they also mirrored the lives of those who purchased these books and were drawn into their imagery.

⁵⁰ The Transmission of the Law is not a subject typically included in the haggadah, but it is found in several of Joel's Italian *maḥzorim*; for some information, see Kogman-Appel, *Die Zweite Nürnberger und die Jehuda Haggadah*, pp. 170–78.

⁵¹ Note, for example, the type of cup on the table, which was common during this period in the German lands, Kogman-Appel, *Die Zweite Nürnberger und die Jehuda Haggadah*, pp. 274–75.



Figure 4.12. 'Second Nuremberg Haggadah', London, COLLECTION OF CINDY AND DAVID SOFER, fol. 2^v. c. 1465. Reproduced with the permission of Cindy and David Sofer.

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Figure 4.13. 'Yahuda Haggadah', Jerusalem, The Israel Museum, MS 180/50, fol. 2^r. c. 1465.

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Conclusions

The visual language of the late medieval haggadah had an extended evolution from its early beginnings in the late thirteenth century, through Joel ben Simeon's treatment in the second half of the fifteenth, up to the two Franconian haggadot. The last appear, in fact, as particularly close equivalents of the secular book culture that developed in parallel in the German lands and in Italy. From the early beginnings of Hebrew manuscript painting in general, and of haggadah illustration in particular, the unframed marginal image was the preferred medium of illustration in these volumes. The book trade underwent significant changes during this period, changes that ultimately led to the invention of the printing press. Far-reaching economic and social shifts affected the book market, its clientele, and the way books were used, when an ever-increasing wealthy middle class began to acquire cultural goods that had hitherto been sought only by the nobility. Decades before Johannes Gutenberg used a press for the first time in 1455, bookmakers had already begun to adapt to the evolving situation, producing paper manuscripts and engaging in an entirely different approach to illustration. Simple, quickly-executed, only partially-coloured pen drawings that enabled the illustrators to work on greater numbers of copies were the result. Another move towards accelerated book production was the appearance of the woodcut. One of the consequences of this development was the fact that books were no longer produced exclusively to order, but made in several copies for the open market and to be kept in stock.

The late medieval haggadah was intended for use by anyone who could read or would have been read to. Although the text might have depended on a literate reader, everyone could relate to the images, which could draw in any viewer whether a learned ritual expert, a literate member of the household, or a person unaccustomed to reading who participated in religious ceremonies primarily by listening. Such people were not necessarily 'illiterate' in the modern sense of the word. There were different levels of literacy or illiteracy in the Middle Ages. Prior to the twelfth century, for example, silent reading was rare. People were read to aloud and the practice of listening to a read text did not necessarily imply illiteracy. Women used books, which does not necessarily imply that they were fully literate in the modern sense of the word, and they actively participated in rituals and absorbed the texts that were read to them at levels other than silent, private reading.⁵² Some listeners could silently and independently

⁵² On the question of whether women were involved in reading the haggadah, see Katrin Kogman-Appel, 'Portrayals of Women with Books: Female (Il)literacy in Medieval Jewish

follow a text, perhaps without being able to read. These different degrees of literacy imply active reading versus the passive consumption of texts.⁵³ Images in haggadot were thus not necessarily simply a ‘haggadah for the illiterate.’⁵⁴

Like their Christian colleagues, Jewish scribes and illustrators were well-aware of these new possibilities. Haggadah production, which began to flourish during this period, developed in exactly that niche. People such as Joel ben Simeon realized that even though the haggadah was in its essence a liturgical book, it was also a close counterpart to what would develop into the secular book for the middle class. Creating a type of book that was not intended for ritual experts during official synagogue services, these scribes and illustrators modelled the haggadah after the trends common in the secular book market.

Culture’, in *Reassessing the Roles of Women as ‘Makers’ of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. by Therese Martin, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2012), II, 525–64.

⁵³ Paul Saenger, *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997); Paul Saenger, ‘Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages’, in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Alain Boureau and Roger Chartier (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 141–73.

⁵⁴ This refers to Pope Gregory’s (d. 640) famous dictum, *Epistolarium*, PL 77. Gregorius I, 1128–30, about murals being a bible for the illiterate; this, however, should be contextualized in Greco-Roman culture, where the demarcation between the literate and the illiterate played a certain social role; see Saenger, *Space between Words*, chap. 1; it is not naturally applicable to later medieval uses of illustration. As to secular audiences for a prayer book, a parallel phenomenon in Christian art would be the emergence of Books of Hours intended for a secular patronage. However, the Book of Hours followed, socially speaking, different paths. Used by a relatively small class of nobility, it kept its original iconographic character based on biblical imagery. The Book of Hours underwent several developments over the decades between the fourteenth and the early fifteenth century, but nothing comparable that would draw the viewer into the imagery can be observed there. Hence in many senses the observed development of the haggadah is unique. Literature on medieval Books of Hours is vast and cannot be listed here; for introductory surveys offering good overviews, see Roger S. Wieck, *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (New York: Braziller, 2000), *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: Braziller, 2001), *Picturing Piety: The Book of Hours*, ed. by Roger S. Wieck, Sandra Hindman, and Ariane Bergeron Foote (London: Paul Holberton, 2008); on Books of Hours and medieval reading practices, see Saenger, ‘Books of Hours’. Exceptions are some Books of Hours that display marginal patron portraits — many of them female — that in some sense create a visual realm into which the patron can be drawn. These unframed patron portraits are clearly set apart from the framed initial panels of religious imagery with which they are juxtaposed. For a recent discussion of these portraits, see Margo Stroumsa-Uzan, ‘Women’s Prayer: Devotion and Gender in Books of Hours in Northern France, c. 1300’ [in Hebrew] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2010), chap. 5.

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The unframed illustration was a suitable theological solution for coping with issues of religious representation and, at the same time and in social terms, the haggadah emerged as a close counterpart to the secular book, easily finding its place within the economic realities of the fifteenth-century book trade.

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