



# DIFFICULT NEIGHBOURS?

## Jews & Christians in Medieval Legal Texts

Tuesday, 2 April 2019

11:00–12:45 Session 1,  
chair: Milan Žonca

*Neighbors and Partners in Crime: Evidence of Jewish-Christian Collaboration in Crime from Jewish Legal Sources*

Ephraim Shoham-Steiner  
(Ben Gurion University)

I will present two cases of theft from legal Jewish sources from the late 10th early eleventh century that show partnership in crime in the neighborly context involving Jews and non-Jews. One is a case of two Jews who fight in a Jewish court over the relationship and profits of non-Jewish thieves who sell them stolen goods and the other is about a Jew who teams up with a local lord to extort money from a renegade Christian cleric (maybe a monk) causing a fellow Jew serious financial damage.

*Wenceslas IV's Jewish Policy in Bohemia*

Kajetán Holeček  
(Prague Centre for Jewish Studies)

The paper examines Wenceslas IV's Jewish policy in Bohemia, especially in the light of events which occurred in 1385 and 1389. In 1385, Wenceslas IV annulled Jewish debts in some cities in the Holy Roman Empire and this action was also echoed in Bohemia. During Easter 1389, there was an attack on the Jewish community in Prague. In both cases, Jews were arrested in Bohemian cities. What was the meaning of these arrests and what is interpretation of this action in the context of the King's policy and the policy of his ancestors? Based on the King's privileges and narrative sources (chronicles etc.), I want to analyse Wenceslas's treatment of the Jews at the end of 14th and the beginning of 15th century in Bohemia.

12:45–14:15 Lunch break

14:15–16:00 Session 2,  
chair: Daniel Boušek

*Demarcating the Borders of Covenant: Christians in Jewish Legal Codices of 13th Century Ashkenaz*

Chana Shacham-Rosby  
(Ben Gurion University)

The high middle ages saw the emergence of legal codices cataloging the details of Jewish practice. One might expect these compositions of Halacha to focus solely on requirements and procedure for living life in accordance to Jewish law. However, there is a lot of theological and exegetical material included, as well. In this workshop I would like to explore tangential discussions of Jewish uniqueness and separation from Gentiles imbedded in Halachic instruction. The primary example will be circumcision ceremonies.

*Jews and Christians in Some Lesser Known Early Modern Collections of Responsa*

Pavel Sládek  
(Prague Centre for Jewish Studies)

Medieval responsa, especially of Ashkenazic origin, have been for long recognized as an important source for the study of Jewish – Christian relations. For the early modern period, very little attention has been paid to the responsa from this angle and not even their potential has been examined up to date. In this paper, several collections of responsa containing material potentially relevant for the study of Jewish – Christian relations will be presented as test-cases before the participants. Do the early modern responsa deserve more attention by scholars interested in the study of Jewish – Christian relations

16:00–16:30 Tea Break



**16:30–17:15 Session 3,  
chair: Dita Válková**

***Family Ties: Children and Conversion in Late Medieval  
Ashkenaz***

**Ahuva Liberles Noiman**  
(Ben Gurion University)

Conversion from the Jewish minority into Christian majority in late medieval German lands had wide implications on family structures: Relationships and family ties were unravelled as the offspring of converts often found themselves torn between religious and social worlds, when one of the parents was baptized and the other chose to stay loyal to their former religion. In this lecture, I wish to focus on children who considered conversion from Judaism to Christianity in order to join their baptized parent.

Religious conversion of children was considered problematic from a legal point of view in both religions: In Judaism, conversion could not take place in cases when "the mind is not yet fully sharpened" (שאינן גמירות הדעת / Animus contrahendi), as in the case of a child. In Christian medieval thought, child conversion was a well discussed matter, raising other ethical and practical issues such as natural parental rights on the one hand, and knowledge that baptizing young souls can save children from errors before they will be educated wrongly, on the other hand.

This paper will address the following questions: What were the decisive factors influencing children who had to choose their own religion? What role did Jewish and Christian authorities play in this scenario? How did gender and age complement the treatment regarding such children? Can we speak of a revised meaning to the legal term "free will" on the threshold of Reformation?

**Wednesday, 3 April 2019**

**10:00–12:00 Session 4,  
chair: Milan Žonca**

***Anti-Jewish Rhetoric of Canon Law: Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Jews in Medieval Bohemia and Moravia***

**Daniel Soukup**  
(Palacký University Olomouc)

The presentation will investigate one of the aspects of anti-Jewish violence and rhetoric in the Late Middle Ages (14th-15th centuries). The main interest is based on how the canon law and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the (Arch) bishopric of Prague shaped the perception of medieval Jewish community in the Czech lands (e. g. clothing regulation, Jewish-Christian public and private relations,

prohibitions and rights etc.). The basic sources for the discussion are statutes of the episcopal synods (Vienna 1267, Mainz 1310, Olomouc 1349), especially the Statuta provincialia Arnesti (1349) named after their collector, the first Archbishop of Prague, Ernest of Pardubice. Methodologies developed by a number of eminent historians (Guido Kisch, František Graus, Alfred Haverkamp, Elisheva Baumgarten, Michael Toch, Christoph Cluse etc.) in describing the legal status of Jews in medieval Europe and various forms of anti-Jewish discourse are applicable in the present context as well. The presentation will summarize the collection of Statuta provincialia Arnesti and compare it with the papal canon law, state legislative as well as Jewish autonomous law (Halakha).

***Cooperative Law Enforcement in Medieval Ashkenaz: Christian Authorities in the Service of Jewish Justice***

**Rachel Furst**  
(LMU Munich)

Rabbinic authorities throughout medieval Europe strictly censured the voluntary use of non-Jewish courts. Jewish community ordinances prohibiting recourse to non-Jewish justice were enacted repeatedly both in Germany and in France (as in Spain and elsewhere). Nevertheless, Jewish litigants did occasionally sue one another in Christian courts, and sometimes the rabbis even approved. In my talk, I will examine one specific context in which the use of the Christian legal system was sanctioned by medieval rabbinic authorities and enacted in practice: for the sake of extraditing recalcitrant Jewish offenders.



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