

TITLE:Golden Haggadah _____ **LOCATION:** Barcelona, Spain _____ **DATE:** 1320 _____

ARTIST: unknown Christian Artists _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Late medieval/ Early Gothic _____ **PATRON:** Wealthy Jewish Family _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Illuminated manuscript , pigment on vellum

FORM:

he Golden Haggadah is one of the most lavishly decorated medieval Haggadot, containing 56 miniatures (small paintings) found within the manuscript. The reason it is called the "Golden" Haggadah is clear—each miniature is decorated with a brilliant gold-leaf background.

FUNCTION:

The book used to tell the story of Passover around the seder table each year is a special one, known as a haggadah (haggadot, pl). The Golden Haggadah, as you might imagine given its name, is one of the most luxurious examples of these books ever created. In fact, it is one of the most luxurious examples of a medieval illuminated manuscript, regardless of use or patronage. So although the Golden Haggadah has a practical purpose, it is also a fine work of art used to signal the wealth of its owners. Wealthy Jewish patrons often commissioned luxury objects like illuminated manuscripts the same way that their Christian or Muslim counterparts would.

CONTENT:

A hagaddah usually includes the prayers and readings said during the meal and sometimes contained images that could have served as a sort of pictorial aid to envision the history of Passover around the table. In fact, the word "haggadah" actually means "narration" in Hebrew. Because this is a private commission and it's function was for home use, it can avoid some of the more stringent restrictions against holy images in a synagogue.

CONTEXT:

On the eve of the Jewish holiday of Passover, a child traditionally asks a critical question: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" This question sets up the ritual narration of the story of Passover, when Moses led the Jews out of slavery in Egypt with a series of miraculous events (recounted in the Jewish Bible in the book of Exodus). For the last and most terrible in a series of miraculous plagues that ultimately convinced the Egyptian Pharaoh to free the Jews—the death of the first born sons of Egypt—Moses commanded the Jews to paint a red mark on their doors. In doing so, the Angel of Death "passed over" these homes and the children survived. The story of Passover—of miraculous salvation from slavery—is one that is recounted annually by many Jews at a seder, the ritual meal that marks the beginning of the holiday.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The long flowing body, small architectural details and patterned background reveal that this manuscript was created during the Gothic period. Jews living in the Greco-Roman world were also influenced by pagan artists who created sweeping narratives of the heroic deeds of their gods. The style of this manuscript is similar to other French Gothic manuscripts in the handling of space, architecture, figure style, facial/gestural expression and the medium itself.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The book is read from the right to left according to the manner of Hebrew texts.

INTERPRETATION:

There are 56 miniature paintings illustrating scenes from the Passover, The exodus from Egypt, The scenes of Liberation and a cycle of other events from Genesis to Exodus.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Spanish monarchs Isabelle and Ferdinand were hardliners when it came to religion. As staunch Roman Catholics, the dynamic duo embarked on a program of religious oppression directed at both Jews and Muslims. The same year that they ousted the Moors from Granada (1492), the Spanish pair also instituted the Spanish Inquisition. The Spanish Inquisition was a royal edict that decreed that all Jews living in Spain must convert to Christianity. Some, called conversos, did, but others chose exile instead, leaving the Spanish economy, which they largely supported, in shambles rather than succumb to all the new forms of torture invented to make people convert.

TITLE: Cathedral of Notre Dame at Chartres **LOCATION:** Chartres, France **DATE:** 1145-1155 burned in 1194, rebuilt in 1260
ARTIST: Thierry of Chartres **PERIOD/STYLE:** Gothic Europe **PATRON:** The North Transept was dedicated by Blanche of Castille and her son Louis IX. The South portal was donated by the Duke of Brittany

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Limestone and stained glass

FORM:

The Royal portal originally had 24 figures now only 19 survive. Their upright, vertical posture reflects the verticality of the church itself. The heads of the figures are serene and humanized. It is an example of Early Gothic. Its stained glass windows (176) are the most intact collection of medieval glass in the world, measuring 26,900 feet in total area. Illustrating the Bible, the lives of saints, even traditional crafts of France, the windows are like a gigantic, glowing, illuminated manuscript. The exterior surface of Chartres features more than 2000 figures.

FUNCTION:

The Portals were used by the Church hierarchy, not commoners. Chartres Cathedral was the visible soul of the middle Ages. Built to house the veil of the Virgin given to the city by Charlemagne's grandson, Charles the Bald, or Byzantine Empress Irene? in 876. It is thought that this is the tunic worn by Mary during the Birth of Christ. It was completed in 26 years. This is a remarkably fast construction as per the importance of the relic. It also housed the enshrined skull of St. Anne the Virgin's mother, which was donated to the church in 1205 by crusaders.

CONTENT:

The royal portals feature the kings and queens of the Old Testament connecting the French royalty to those of the Bible. The Central portal features Christ as the Judge of the world. The capitols feature the life of Christ. The left portal features the Ascension to Heaven. The right portal features the Birth of Christ. The 12 apostles, signs of the Zodiac (symbols of the cosmic and earthly worlds) and 24 elders are featured in the voussiors and lintel. The figures of the archivolts on the right hand portal are the 7 female personifications of the liberal arts with learned men of antiquity at their feet. The royal jamb portraits are dressed in a courtly manner.

CONTEXT:

The figures on the Royal portal reflect a celebration of the revival of classical scholarship in the 12th century. They also reflect the power and majesty of Christ. The cathedral itself represented a group effort of the stonemasons, masons, carpenters, and metal workers, all of whom gave their time, skill and treasure to build it. It was the pride of the community, and a symbol of the cities importance. Chartres was also home to a great Cathedral school and before the founding of the University of Paris, it was one of the best known centers of learning in Europe. Intellectual understanding as well as faith was now among the paths to salvation. The curriculum of the cathedral school was the 7 liberal arts. (grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.) the images of these personified liberal arts can be found in the Virgin portal on the West facade.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Jamb statues stand away from the wall, almost entirely in the round. This is different from the flattened jamb statuary of the Romanesque period. The depiction of Mary in the right portal are reminiscent of Byzantine representations of Theotokos. Gothic architecture advanced innovations of the Romanesque period. They used the rib vault system, the use of bays, they changed the oculus from the facade of the Romanesque church and turned it into a rose window, and they continued the Islamic Spanish use of the pointed arch. The new innovations of the Gothic period is the flying buttress, they added the chevet and choir to the apse. They also began to add decorative pinnacles to the church roofs.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The sculptures on the Royal Portal are carved to imitate the verticality of the church and more robust 3D portrayals than those of the Romanesque. The subject matter of the royal portal tympanums are different from Romanesque themes. Gothic portals focus more on the possibility of salvation. The west facade of the church has details that bear witness to the interior plan. The three portals mark the width of the nave, the flanking towers mark the width of the side aisles. Walls have almost completely dissolved in favor of stained glass lancet windows. The vaulting is quadripartite. The elevation features a nave arcade, triforium gallery, clerestory, and

INTERPRETATION:

During the Gothic period the Cult of the Virgin reached its greatest popularity. As the mother of the savior, she stood compassionately between the last judge and the horrors of Hell, interceding for all her faithful. Worshipers in the later 12th century sang hymns to her and dedicated great cathedrals to her. Light becomes the manifestation of the divine. Stained glass takes the place of importance from manuscript illumination and mosaic. The church is likened to a summa (summary of law, philosophy, and theology. The key to the iconography is the character of medieval thought. Vincent of Beauvais divided learning into *mirrors of nature* (plant and animal forms), *instruction* (liberal arts), *History* (story of humanity from Adam and Eve to the Last judgement) and *Morality* (figures of

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The two spires are different because one was built in 1160 and the other is from 1507 and is much more elaborate and decorative. The building was saved from total destruction during the French Revolution, when rebels ran around chopping each other's heads off and hating on all religious institutions. Their goal, initially, was to blow the whole building to smithereens. The local dynamite expert convinced the revolutionaries that such a blast would only create more inconvenience with rubble and dust and all, which, in the end, would only stop the flow of traffic and the movement of rebel forces. That little bit of logic saved Chartres from total destruction. Still, revolutionaries helped themselves to brass found inside the church.

TITLE: Dedication page with Blanche of Castile and King Louis IX of France **LOCATION:** Paris, France **DATE:** 1226-1234

ARTIST: Members of a Parisian guild **PERIOD/STYLE:** Gothic **PATRON:** Blanche of Castile

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:

FORM:

A dazzling illumination in New York's Morgan Library could well depict Blanche of Castile and her son Louis, a beardless youth crowned king. A cleric and a scribe are depicted underneath them. Each figure is set against a ground of burnished gold, seated beneath a trefoil arch. Stylized and colorful buildings dance above their heads, suggesting a sophisticated, urban setting—perhaps Paris, the capital city of the Capetian kingdom (the Capetians were one of the oldest royal families in France) and home to a renowned school of theology.

FUNCTION:

Moralized bibles, made expressly for the French royal house, include lavishly illustrated abbreviated passages from the Old and New Testaments. Explanatory texts that allude to historical events and tales accompany these literary and visual readings, which—woven together—convey a moral.

CONTENT:

Assuming historians are correct in identifying the two rulers, we are looking at the four people intensely involved in the production of this manuscript. As patron and ruler, Queen Blanche of Castile would have financed its production. As ruler-to-be, Louis IX's job was to take its lessons to heart along with those from the other biblical and ancient texts that his tutors read with him. accounts of from the Old and New Testament. Stories of Noah's Ark, Samson and Delilah, the Revelation of St. John, and the Apocalypse are just a few of the gems that can be found in the handful of moralizing Bibles produced in France.

CONTEXT:

In 1226 a French king died, leaving his queen to rule his kingdom until their son came of age. The 38-year-old widow, Blanche of Castile, had her work cut out for her. Rebellious barons were eager to win back lands that her husband's father had seized from them. They rallied troops against her, defamed her character, and even accused her of adultery and murder. Caught in a perilous web of treachery, insurrections, and open warfare, Blanche persuaded, cajoled, negotiated, and fought would-be enemies after her husband, King Louis VIII, died of dysentery after only a three-year reign. When their son Louis IX took the helm in 1234, he inherited a kingdom that was, for a time anyway, at peace.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Queen Blanche and her son, the young king, echo a gesture and pose that would have been familiar to many Christians: the Virgin Mary and Christ enthroned side-by-side as celestial rulers of heaven, found in the numerous Coronations of the Virgin carved in ivory, wood, and stone. This scene was especially prevalent in tympana, the top sculpted semi-circle over cathedral portals found throughout France. On beholding the Morgan illumination, viewers would have immediately made the connection between this earthly Queen Blanche and her son, anointed by God with the divine right to rule, and that of Mary, Queen of heaven and her son, divine figures who offer salvation.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

On the right, the artist, donning a blue surcoat and wearing a cap, is seated on cushioned bench. Knife in his left hand and stylus in his right, he looks down at his work: four vertically-stacked circles in a left column, with part of a fifth visible on the right. We know, from the 4887 medallions that precede this illumination, what's next on this artist's agenda: he will apply a thin sheet of gold leaf onto the background, and then paint the medallion's biblical and explanatory scenes in brilliant hues of lapis lazuli, green, red, yellow, grey, orange and sepia. The decision to mirror images of Mary and Jesus from the portals of contemporary Gothic cathedrals was reflective of the rising influence of secular queens in Gothic Europe.

INTERPRETATION:

In his left hand, between his forefinger and thumb, Louis holds a small golden ball or disc. During the mass that followed coronations, French kings and queens would traditionally give the presiding bishop of Reims 13 gold coins (all French kings were crowned in this northern French cathedral town.) This could reference Louis' 1226 coronation, just three weeks after his father's death, suggesting a probable date for this bible's commission.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

As a pedagogical tool, perhaps it played no small part in helping Louis IX achieve the status of sainthood, awarded by Pope Boniface VIII 27 years after the king's death. Blanche of Castile was Elanor of Aquitaine Granddaughter.

TITLE: Röttgen Pietà **LOCATION:** Germany **DATE:** 1300-1325

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Late Medieval Europe **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: painted wood

FORM:

The term pietà refers to the moment after Jesus' death when Mary, his mother, cradles his lifeless body. The Röttgen Pietà depicts this moment with real emotional force despite the unrealistic nature of the sculpture. The anonymous sculptor whittled both Mary and Jesus' heads larger in scale than their bodies, thus rendering both figures oddly out of proportion. The stylization and the anatomical incorrectness adds to the overall sentiment of extreme sadness.

FUNCTION:

All of these Pietàs were devotional images and were intended as a focal point for contemplation and prayer. Even though the statues are horrific, the intent was to show that God and Mary, divine figures, were sympathetic to human suffering, and to the pain, and loss experienced by medieval viewers. By looking at the Röttgen Pietà, medieval viewers may have felt a closer personal connection to God by viewing this representation of death and pain.

CONTENT:

One of the unique elements of the Röttgen Pietà is Mary's response to her dead son. She is youthful and draped in heavy robes like many of the other Marys, but her facial expression is different. In Catholic tradition, Mary had a special foreknowledge of the resurrection of Christ and so to her, Christ's death is not only tragic. Images that reflect Mary's divine knowledge show her at peace while holding her dead son. Mary in the Röttgen Pietà appears to be angry and confused. She doesn't seem to know that her son will live again. She shows strong negative emotions that emphasize her humanity, just as the representation of Christ emphasizes his.

CONTEXT:

The Black plague, the Great Schism, famine, the Hundred Years War, and the Crusades, were all cause for sorrow during the Gothic era. There was much strife during this particular century, and the Röttgen Pietà seemed to encapsulate not only Mary's sorrow over the loss of her son, but also the sorrow of nearly everyone in Europe at the time. Pietà statues appeared in Germany in the late 1200s and were made in this region throughout the Middle Ages. Many examples of Pietàs survive today. Many of those that survive today are made of marble or stone but the Röttgen Pietà is made of wood and retains some of its original paint. The Röttgen Pietà is the most gruesome of these extant examples.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

This depiction of Mary and Jesus doesn't show the mother and son looking outward toward onlookers in a glorious golden glow like previous depictions had. Instead, it turns older conventions on their heads by showing Mary propping up an adult Jesus instead of a plump baby, which was the norm.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

There are no gold or bright colors to be found in the Röttgen Pietà, only dark subject matter with darkly painted tones to match. Even more notable is that Mary doesn't even look up. This depiction is meant to convey the drama of a mother's sorrow and to elicit feelings of empathy and sadness in onlookers.

INTERPRETATION:

In the later Middle Ages, a number of preachers and writers discussed a different type of Christ who suffered in the way that humans suffered. This was different from Catholic writers of earlier ages, who emphasized Christ's divinity and distance from humanity. Late medieval devotional writing (from the 13th-15th centuries) leaned toward mysticism and many of these writers had visions of Christ's suffering. Francis of Assisi stressed Christ's humanity and poverty. St. Bernardino of Siena, imagined Mary's thoughts as she held her dead son. It wasn't long before artists began to visualize these new devotional trends. Crucifixion images influenced by this body of devotional literature are called Christus patiens, the patient Christ. The effects of this new devotional style, which emphasized the humanity of Christ, quickly spread throughout western Europe through the rise of new religious orders (the Franciscans, for example) and the popularity of their preaching. It isn't hard to see the appeal of the idea that God understands the pain and difficulty of being human. In the Röttgen Pietà, Christ clearly died from the horrific ordeal of crucifixion, but his skin is taut around his ribs, showing that he also led a life of hunger and suffering.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

This sculpture was an example of Andachtsbild, a form that evokes meditation and deep reflection from viewers, that originated in northern Europe.

TITLE: Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel **LOCATION:** Padua, Italy **DATE:** Chapel: c. 1303
Fresco: c. 1305

ARTIST: Unknown architect; Giotto di Bondone (artist) **PERIOD/STYLE:** Proto-Renaissance, late Gothic **PATRON:** Enrico Scrovegni

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:

FORM:

The 67 frescoes, which narrate events in the lives of the Virgin Mary and Christ, cover the entire walls. On the wall opposite the altar is the grandiose Universal Judgement, which concludes the story of human salvation. The artist modeled the figures' bodies by painting shadows on the faces of the crowd and between the folds of their clothing, adding depth to a scene that also added bursts with color. The painting fits into a broader cycle of frescoes, which Giotto arranged to complement the architecture of the Arena Chapel in Padua.

FUNCTION:

Enrico Scrovegni was probably embarrassed that his father was fodder for Dante's smear campaign, but he was more frightened about whether or not his father had ended up in the treacherous seventh circle. Pope Benedict XI granted "indulgences" to the younger Scrovegni in 1304. Indulgences allowed penitent Christians to make a charitable gesture that would allow their sins to be forgiven. The Arena Chapel was just such a gesture for Enrico, who hoped to usher his father's soul into heaven, bypassing the more sinister land of purgatory. Enrico bankrolled the chapel, hired the renowned artist Giotto di Bondone to fill it with lavish frescoes, and dedicated it to the Virgin of Annunciation.

CONTENT:

The lamentation, or the gathering of the disciples and Mary around the lifeless body of Jesus. Against a rich, royal blue background, angels flutter above in a state of despair. Countless figures stand around the body. Some bow their heads in grief. Some, like the central figure, flail their arms about while others tug at the body. By the altar, Giotto painted the Annunciation, and at the other end, by the entrance, a large Last Judgment. Along the long walls are found the stories of Mary and Jesus Christ, depicted in 37 fresco vignettes arranged in three tiers, with each painting roughly 7.5 feet square. Giotto, as was common in that time, relied largely on the Bible for the subjects of his paintings but also drew on some extra-Biblical sources, including the Meditations on the Life of Christ by the late thirteenth century monk known as Pseudo-Bonaventura.

CONTEXT:

Christ has just been taken off the cross and laid on the ground. His mourners are in a state of disbelief. Magdalene is caressing His feet, John the Baptist throws out his arms, and the Virgin searches for signs of life. This is one of the most auditory scenes in the chapel. The mourner's wails reverberate through the landscape, mingling with the cries of the distorted angels in the sky.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

This kind of depiction of gripping emotion was unheard of until Giotto got his hands on a paintbrush. Attempting to render a religious scene with a greater sense of realism and three-dimensionality, Giotto showed off his serious skill for making figures look like they had real emotions and occupied real space. The Frescoes of Giotto were the first since the Roman period to depict human forms suggesting weight and roundness. They marked the advent of what would afterward become painting's central role in Western Art. What most strongly separates Giotto from his contemporaries is the dramatic and emotional power of his work.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Giotto painted his figures with a sense of anatomical structure beneath their drapery. The Scrovegni Chapel is also commonly known as the Arena Chapel, since it was built near the site of an ancient Roman arena. Giotto and his assistants painted from top to bottom. Since the painting was executed *alfresco*, moist plaster had to be applied only to a surface of sufficient size to be decorated in one day. We can assume that preliminary drawings were made for individual picture fields, so that Giotto could leave the execution of the secondary figures, the backgrounds and the decorative bands to members of his workshop. Without assistants and specialists, it would not have been possible to realize such an extensive decorative program in the short space of two to three years.

INTERPRETATION:

In the middle ground at the right side of the painting are three men. One, the leftmost one, is almost certainly St. John the Apostle – along with the halo he is often depicted with short hair and a clean-shaven, youthful appearance. He gives himself up entirely to his grief, with arms outstretched and his body inclining towards Christ's. The two men behind St. John, the only ones remotely calm and peaceful in demeanor, are probably Joseph of Arimathea (the grey-bearded one) and Nicodemus, who are specifically mentioned in the Gospels as having been present. Finally, at the left of the painting and in the middle ground is a crowd of mourning women. A rocky mountain ridge divides the composition and directs our gaze toward Mary and Jesus. The tree in the background is likely the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, barren since the Fall of Man and reminding us of original sin. In the sky are eleven angels, like almost all of the other figures sharply depicted in their forms of grief. One might say, in fact, that in this painting, Heaven and Earth are joined in mourning.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The Arena, or Scrovegni Chapel, was named after Enrico Scrovegni. Scrovegni's father was a usurer or moneylender. Like a modern-day banker, his profit came from his loans' accumulation of interest. However, accumulating too much cash money was a sign of greed and a surefire way to be damned to the seventh circle of hell. The special place where usurers went in the afterlife. Dante based an account of a usurer in his *Inferno* on Scrovegni's father, Reginaldo, to show what would happen to anyone who even had an inkling of desire to go into the money-lending business.