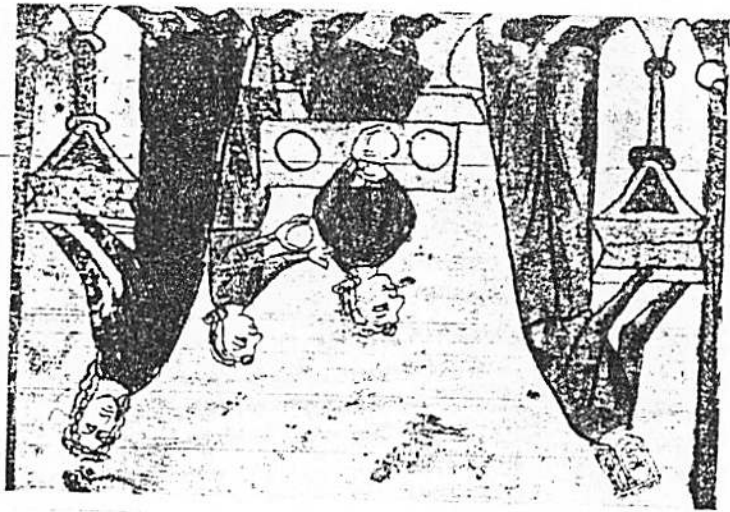


## The Baker

Anxious to prevent overly intimate relations with pagans, Talmudic rabbis had forbidden Jews to partake of their bread. Nonetheless Jews were permitted to buy bread from non-Jewish bakers, since bread did not contain any forbidden ingredients. In

Spain from about 1330,<sup>98a</sup> as a *shohet* slaughters the sheep, his assistant hangs them up by their hind legs and skins them. But in an Italian manuscript from 1433, a whole ritual slaughter-house comes to life before our eyes: an ox is being slaughtered, the lungs of another are being examined; two chickens are also being ritually slaughtered, while a woman, who presumably brought them, peeps in at the door to check on the progress of the operation. A bit later, two symmetrical illustrations also depict the *shebita* of an ox and the examination of its viscera.<sup>100</sup>

Sometimes a scene was more complete. In an illustration from definitely are not. the cut and the position of the beast rearing up on his hind legs. The shape of the blade is correct, but the downward direction of the cut and the position of the beast rearing up on his hind legs. The shape of the blade is correct, but the downward direction of the cut and the position of the beast rearing up on his hind legs. The shape of the blade is correct, but the downward direction of the cut and the position of the beast rearing up on his hind legs.



233 A Jewish bakery, Castile, first quarter of the fourteenth century: women knead the dough while men make the *mazot*. London, British Library, MS. Or. 2737, folio 87 verso (detail).



234 Decorating the *mazot*, made from unleavened dough, with a young man using a pin, and decorated by a young man using a pin, instrument prevent the dough from rising while it is in the oven. Jerusalem, Israel Museum, Ms. Rothschild 24.

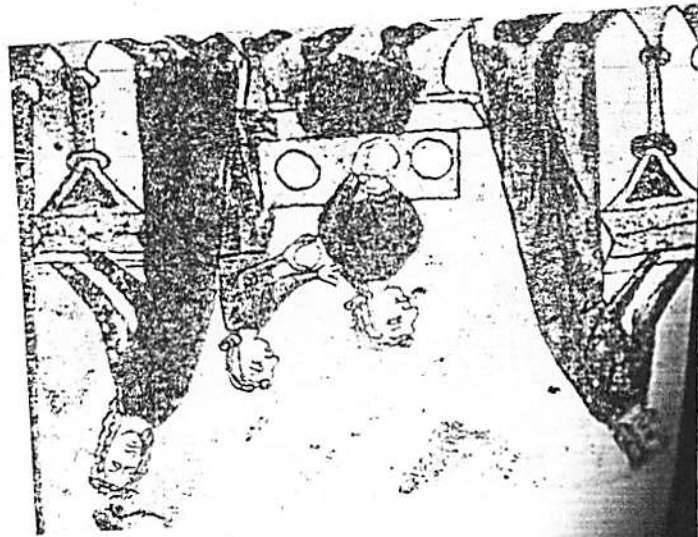
the Middle Ages, as long as Jewish classes of craftsmen—in Germany in the Spain and Italy throughout the entire period—naturally had Jewish bakers. There was no difference from that of his Christian and shaping round or flat loaves, loading and unloading the oven, all went on in Jewish baker had only one ritual obligation from the *halia*, that portion allocated to the separated with an appropriate blessing furnace, symbolized that portion of bread longer consume after the destruction of the Temple. As the feast of the Passover (*pesah*) community undertook the production of *mazot*, the flat unleavened bread essential this holiday. To avoid fermentation, the are the sole ingredients of the *mazot*, the stage of production. The grain was the time, especially during milling, since at no longer any Jewish millers.<sup>102</sup> The production: mixing, kneading, dividing, flat biscuits, and baking. These operations many people or groups as was necessary

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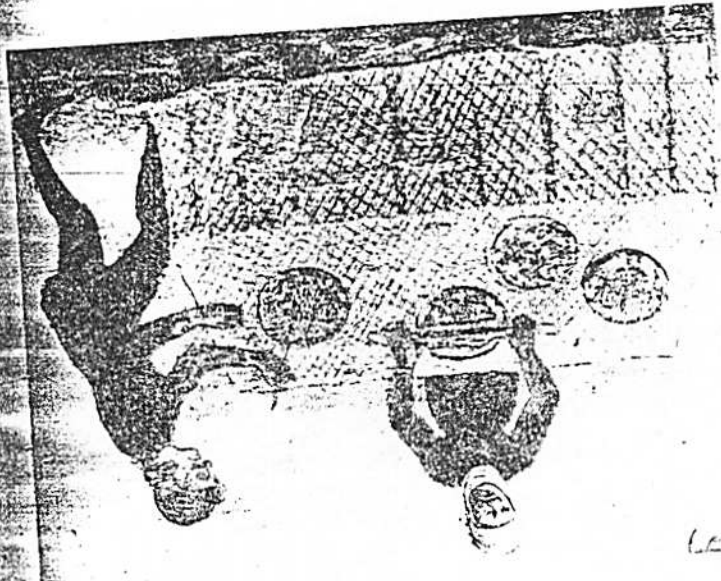
depict the *shebita* of an ox and the examination of its viscera. 100 the operation. A bit later, two symmetrical illustrations also brought them, peeps in at the door to check on the progress of being ritually slaughtered, while a woman, who presumably the lungs of another are being examined; two chickens are also house comes to life before our eyes: 99 an ox is being slaughtered, in an Italian manuscript from 1435, a whole ritual slaughter- assistant hangs them up by their hind legs and skins them. But Spain from about 1350, 98a as a *shohet* slaughters the sheep, his Sometimes a scene was more complete. In an illustration from definitely are not.

the cut and the position of the blade is correct, but the downward direction of the shape of the blade is very unlikely that it could be ritually slaughtered. Live makes it very unlikely that it could be ritually slaughtered. Certainly a permitted food, the necessity of capturing the stag is *shebita* of a stag in a very good illustration; although venison is as probably not Jewish had the curious idea of depicting the



Ferrara, Italy, c. 1470: the cakes are round, flattened by a woman using a rolling pin, and decorated by a young man using a stylus—the lines cut by this instrument prevent the dough from rising while being baked. Jerusalem, Israel Museum, Ms. Rothschild 24, folio 155 verso.

the Middle Ages, as long as Jewish-communities contained a class of craftsmen—in Germany in the thirteenth century, in Spain and Italy throughout the entire period we are considering—they naturally had Jewish bakers. The Jewish baker's work and shaping round or flat loaves, loading the oven, baking and separating the oven, all went on in Jewish bakeries. 101 The Jewish baker had only one ritual obligation, that of setting aside from the *balla*, that portion allocated to the Levites. This dough separated with an appropriate blessing and thrown into the furnace, symbolized that portion of bread the Levites could no longer consume after the destruction of the Temple. As the feast of the Passover (*pesah*) drew near, every Jewish community undertook the production of an original product, *mazza*, the flat unleavened bread essential to the celebration of this holiday. To avoid fermentation, the grain and water, which are the sole ingredients of the *mazza*, were supervised at every stage of production. The grain was checked right from harvest time, especially during milling, since at this period, there were no longer any Jewish millers. 102 The purity and temperature of the water were also supervised, as was every phase of production: mixing, kneading, dividing the dough, shaping the flat biscuits, and baking. These operations were consigned to as many people or groups as was necessary to complete them with



Decorating the *mazza*, made from unleavened bread, for the Passover in Ferrara, Italy, c. 1470: the cakes are round, flattened by a woman using a rolling instrument prevent the dough from rising while being baked. Jerusalem, Israel Museum, Ms. Rothschild 24, folio 155 verso.

Thérèse and Mendel Metzger

# JEWISH LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts  
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