



A HISTORY OF ANTI-SEMITIC BIGOTRY

AS CHRONICLED

BY

COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS



BY BENJAMIN WEISS

PART I

BIGOT: *A person who is obstinately or intolerantly devoted to his or her own opinions and prejudices; especially one who regards or treats the members of a group (as a racial or ethnic group) with hatred and intolerance.* Merriam-Webster.com 2013

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While prejudice exists towards many religious and ethnic groups, over the ages bigoted acts against the Jews have been among the most prevalent, severe and unrelenting. This intolerance has manifested itself from the relatively inconsequential, such as slurs, insults and distribution of anti-Semitic paraphernalia (Eisler, 2014), to the devastating, including confiscation of property, expulsion from countries, and mass slaughter.

Volumes have been written about anti-Semitism and its effects, but

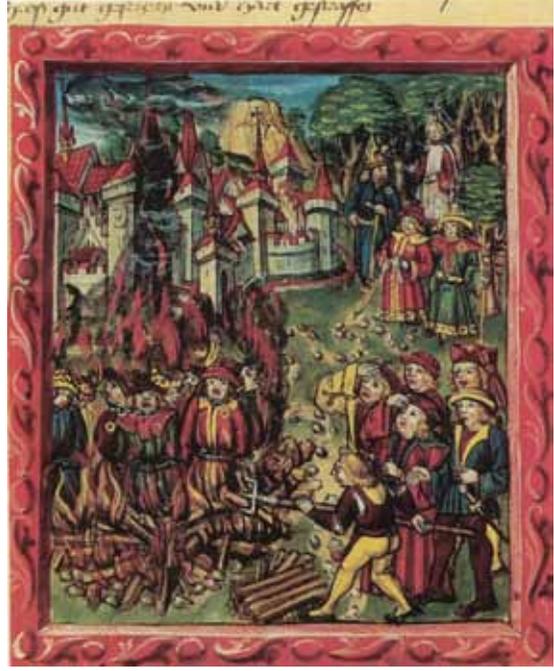
the question still remains as to the root causes of anti-Semitic attitudes: Why have they existed for centuries, and how have they been passed on from generation to generation? This article will attempt to examine this issue using historical medals as a backdrop and primary source of information.

Although the word *anti-Semitism* did not exist prior to the race theory of the 19th century, the sordid history of anti-Semitic acts and of using Jews as scapegoats goes back hundreds of years and has taken many forms: religious, economic,

Continued

Between 1348 and 1351 Bubonic plague swept through Europe, killing about one-third of the population. Although it is now known that it is a bacterial disease carried by rat fleas, at that time Jews were accused of causing the plague in order to destroy Christianity. This accusation spread through many cities in Europe, inciting the people to burn thousands of Jews at the stake. The illumination at right, from a medieval manuscript, depicts Jews (identified by the mandatory yellow Jewish badge and Jewish hat) of Ravensburg being burned at the stake during the plague in 1348.

*Lucerner Schilling, 1515; (Eban, 1984
Burgerbibliothek, Lucerne*



Continued

social, racist, ideological and cultural. As many of the populace were illiterate at the time, various art forms, such as paintings, drawings and in some cases medals were often used to spread these calumnies.

Among the more common types of slanders against the Jewish community throughout the ages were the false accusations that they caused wide-spread diseases and other natural or man-made disasters. An example of one such charge is that Jews were responsible for the Black Death, which killed as many as 200 million people in Europe during the fourteenth century, and for which Jews were blamed and many burned alive.

These and a multitude of other false accusations of Jews have resulted in oppression and abuse of the Jewish community almost beyond belief.

The persecution and extermina-

tion of Jews in the modern times of Nazi Germany during the Holocaust are well documented (Friedlander, 1997; Holocaust 2014), but these more recent events have a history of their own, in that the murder and mass relocation of Jews have taken place not only in early and mid-20th century Germany but in virtually every country in Europe for more than a millennium (Oberman, 1984).

Indeed, a chronological survey of anti-Semitism shows that anti-Semitic acts occurred throughout the world and encompassed dozens and dozens of periods, dating from the third century BCE through to the present time [see *A Brief Chronology of anti-Semitism* (web.archive)]. These atrocities are often reflected in historical medals designed and

Continued



Continued

issued to purposely vilify the Jewish community.

Indeed, anti-Semitic medals are probably the most common and most notorious of all the medals that have been minted for spreading religious hatred, a topic that has been considered in great detail by Daniel Friedenberg in his book, *Jewish Medals: From the Renaissance to the Fall of Napoleon (1503-1815)*, and Bruno Kirschner in his work, *Deutsche Spott-Medailen Auf Juden*, in which dozens of anti-Semitic medals are chronicled.

On these medals, Jews are sometimes depicted as causing natural calamities such as famine, plague, etc. Often they are portrayed as demonic, non-human creatures or profiting financially from the misfortunes of others. In different periods of history Jews were forced to convert to Christianity, and if they did not their properties were seized and their persons expelled, tortured or murdered. Medals were made to support these statements as well.

While it is generally known when and by whom anti-Semitic medals were made, it is difficult to determine definitively why they were manufactured, how many were struck, to whom were they distributed and what was their impact. A few of the author's colleagues graciously offered their opinion on these matters as follows:

“At times of economic strife such as famine or general misfortune, the

Jew becomes an easy scapegoat and this no doubt fed interest in the kind of anti-Semitic medals produced by Christian Wermuth and Johann Christian Reich in the 18th century. To judge from the numbers and variety - with many carrying graphic illustrations - they clearly found a ready market, distributed as they much have been through a network of retail outlets.” (Christopher Eimer, personal communication).

“In general, it is likely most of the *Kornjudenmedailen* of the 17th and 18th centuries were made as popular souvenirs and were sold by their artist/manufacturers, such as Wermuth and Reich.

They incorporated prejudices and iconographic references to popular beliefs then current which would have resonated with the purchasers, presumably wealthy peasant landowners and merchants concerned with hard times, famines, rising costs of living etc. To judge from the number of specimens available in the later collector's market places, they were made in substantial quantities, likely many hundreds rather than fewer than a hundred, or tens of thousands.

In several cases, the dies for their manufacture survived for many years and were sometimes re-used into the 19th century, by which time the purchasers would have been secondary collector types. For example, some *Kornjudenmedailen* were made in iron, a technique that

Continued





Continued

post-dates their 1694 date by a century or more.” (Ira Rezak, personal communication).

“Some medals were officially sanctioned, others were privately commissioned and still others were commercial undertakings aimed at collectors or designed to appeal to the wider public. Often those that were issued as a commercial enterprise reflected the biases and politics of the medalists. Estimating the numbers struck is very difficult, but it is probably reasonable to assume that mintages were in dozens or hundreds with just a few exceptions being much higher. This is based on the few instances where we know mintages and comparing the relative rarity of others.

“Generally medals were a fairly expensive luxury, which few could afford and fewer still could appreciate due to low rates of literacy and education. Another limitation was on the technical side, since the striking of medals, especially in high-relief, was labor-intensive and dies were vulnerable to breaking (as demonstrated by the several die varieties of some common medals of the period).” (Hedley Betts, personal communication).

Many of the medalists of that period, including Christian Wermuth, worked as entrepreneurs. They sold the medals to private and public clients on their own initiative. There must have been a good market for the medals made by anti-Semitic

manufacturers during the 17th and 18th centuries. We know, for example, that Christian Wermuth issued a list called a “specification, which was a price list of the medals he had for sale.” (Christian Stoess, personal communication).

Even if there were a limited number of such medals distributed, by giving them to individuals of influence - the merchant class, aristocracy, nobility, clergy - these medals would nevertheless have had a significant impact. And their intent was clear; medals were issued either to support the denigration of the Jews or to memorialize their vilification. Examples of some of these, shown below, are the subject of this discourse.

ANTI-SEMITIC, SLANDEROUS MEDALS RELATED TO CULTURE

Grain Jew (Korn Jude) Medals

As Friedenberg points out, one of the first of these anti-Semitic medals was reported in the early 16th century in Germany. These medals depicted, on the obverse, the Jew riding on a sow, and on the reverse, the face of a devil with horns, representations not uncommon in the medieval period (Lipton, 2014).

By the end of the 17th century a more common type of anti-Semitic medal made its appearance. These were the so-called “Korn Jude” (Grain Jew) medals. Most of these were struck in Germany and were

Continued





A Korn Jude (Grain Jew) Medal by Christian Wermuth, Germany, 1694. Silver struck medal, 36 mm Ref: Friedenber, p 3; Kirschner 54/18; Wohlfahrt 95035; Weiss Benjamin Weiss Collection

Continued

issued in various forms over a period of some 80 years. Apparently they were engraved largely, if not exclusively, by only two men: Christian Wermuth (1661 to 1739) and later by Johann Christian Reich (1740 to 1814).

Generally, Korn Jude medals were distributed coincident with periods of rising food prices and famine and were designed to perpetuate the myth that the Jews were to blame for these hardships and to portray Jews as diabolic speculators, particularly in grain crops.

To set the stage for the first of these medals we will consider, in 1694, heavy rains and a grasshopper plague swept throughout Germany. Food prices increased, speculation rose and the starving people blamed the Jews. This provided the *raison d'être* for the issuance of one of the prototypical Korn Jude medals.

These medals were not subtle in their design or meaning. The medals Wermuth made usually depicted on the obverse a figure carrying on his back a sack of grain on which is perched a devil opening the mouth of the sack, thereby allowing the grain to pour uselessly onto the ground.

So that there should be no misunderstanding these devices, the legend clearly identified the figure as DU KORN IUDE (You Grain Jew), with the legend below translated as “Famine Time” or “Expensive Time.”

The reverse, invoking the powerful instrument of Scripture, shows a grain sifter inscribed with a quotation taken from the Old Testament: *Proverbs, XI. 26*, indicated in the exergue (Exergue: An area on the lower portion of many medals beneath a horizontal line that separates it from the principal design of

Continued



Kornjudenmedaille "Grain Jew" Medal of Woman and Grain Peddler by Johann Christian Reich, Germany, 1772, Struck pewter or similar; 38 mm. Ref: Kirschner-28 (variant); JM-118 ; Brettauer-1905. Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

the medal and which usually contains lettering or symbols related to the subject of the medal), and translated as "He That Withholdeth Grain, the People Shall Curse Him: but Blessing Shall Be upon the Head of Him That Selleth it."

Almost a century later, between 1770 and 1772, there was another period of famine and high inflation in Germany, in which hundreds of thousands of people in Bohemia and Saxony starved to death. Again the Jews were blamed and corresponding medals were issued, those now produced largely by Johann Christian Reich. Like Wermuth, Reich also made several varieties of such KORNJUDE medals, often in base metals and no less virulently anti-Semitic than those of Wermuth.

One of which, struck in 1772, is shown above. On the obverse we see a small figure of a housewife with raised arms imploring grain

from a larger, heavy Jewish grain peddler. The peddler is carrying the obligatory sack of grain on which rides the figure of the devil, cutting a hole in the sack, causing grain to spill on the ground. The reverse shows the usual grain sifter with a legend from *Proverbs 11.26*.

Though working about 80 years later, Reich produced medals with iconography similar to that produced by Wermuth, apparently appealing to the same audiences and customers.

Reich produced more such medals or jetons (a jeton is a token or small, coin-like medal) with the same basic theme, one of which is shown on next page. As with others of this period, on this medal a Jewish grain peddler is seen, carrying on his back a sack spilling grain on the ground. On the sack sits a horned, goat-like devil. The peddler is walking toward the jaws of a

Continued



Corn Jew - Expensive Time by Johann Christian Reich, Germany, 1772, pewter (?) jeton, 29 mm. Ref: Brettauer-1908; Friedenberg 120; Kirschner-24, variant.

Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

toothed, alligator-like monster, representing hell. The legend reads in German, AKORNIUD VER ZWEIFEL UND GEH ZUM (with the words disappearing into the mouth of a monster/hell). The meaning is interpreted as: “Grain Jew: Despair and Go to Hell.” (Geh zum Teufel is a common German expression that amounts to “go to hell.”) The word “Teufel” is not shown but is suggested by the image of the mouth of hell (in the form of a rebus) and its rhyme with “Zweifel.” (A *rebus* is an allusional device that uses pictures to represent words or parts of words).

The exergue below reads THEUREZEIT 1772 (“Expensive Time 1772”). On the reverse is a horizontal grain sifter with an inscription translated as: “Fear God” and the same biblical saying as on the others of this type of medal.

Over the years still more vari-

ants of the obverses and reverses of Du Korn Jude medals were struck, the particular devices and inscriptions dependent upon whether grain crops were plentiful or scarce.

In years of famine, such as in 1694 and 1772, the reverse inscription implied that the Jews were hoarding grain (see above). In other years, such as in 1695, when grain was plentiful, Korn Jude medals were modified in order to continue the calumny against the Jews even in times when there was an abundant harvest and grain was less expensive.

In these cases, on the obverse, instead of Famine Time the medal was now stamped in German Inexpensive Time.

A gruesome Inexpensive Time medal was struck in 1695. On the obverse is a scene showing in the background a rich cornfield and barn with a nesting stork on the

Continued



Hanging Korn Jude (Inexpensive Time) medal by Christian Wermuth: Germany, 1695. Silver struck medal, 34 mm. Ref: Friedenberp p. 5; Kirschner 25

Image courtesy Busso Peus Nacht

Continued

roof. In the foreground is a Jew hanging from a fruit-laden tree, with the devil securing a rope around his neck. On the barn is inscribed LUC 12, referring to a chapter in *Luke, Chapter 12*, in which Jesus relates the Parable of the Rich Fool: "...There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, 'What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?' And he said," 'This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods...'

In the exergue is inscribed: WO[H]LFEILEZEIT (Inexpensive Time) 1695. The reverse shows a grain sifter, with the inscription again that attacks covetousness, the exact same sentiment and iconography as on the medal issued in times of famine, the first medal depicted in this article. In all cases, the

medals of this type were inscribed on the obverse with the usual DU KORN IUDE (You Grain Jew).

Kirschner suggests that the meaning of the medal is that the Jew is wishing for a fruitful harvest, but that the grain should still be expensive so he could make exorbitant profits.

Another example of an "Inexpensive Time" Korn Jude medal is shown on the next page. This piece, struck in 1772-1773 shows a Jew with stacks of grain, ignoring the pleas of a woman. The legend (translated) reads, "Poverty Is Weeping While the Grain Jew Is Laughing."

The reverse shows the Jew hanging from a tree with a grain harvest in the background, the legend, again taken from Scripture to give it more impact, reading "Avarice Is the Root of All Evil."

Several variants of these types of medals were issued during the

Continued



Top: *Inexpensive Time: Hanging Korn Jude Medal* by unknown medallist: Germany, 1772-1773, Lead cast medal, 40 mm. Ref: *Friedenberg 8; Kirschner no. 27, p. 61.* Private collection
 Above: *Kornjude Style Naked Jew on Grain Bushel, 1923* by [Friedrich Wilhelm] Fritz Hörnlein; Germany, 1923, Aluminum struck medal, 38 mm Ref: *Kirschner 30.*

Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued
 period of the late 17th century and early 18th century. Some had images similar to the obverse shown in this article's first medal, some with the hanging Jew, shown at left, with an abundance of grain, implying once again that the Jew is benefitting from the plentiful grain, and some with variations of these obverses but shown with the grain sifter on the reverse.

In all these medals the principal figure is clearly identified as DU KORN JUDE.

Although these medals might be viewed as ancient history, having been made centuries ago, inflammatory medals denigrating Jews are still being produced. One such medal, issued in 1923, shown above, and reissued as recently as 1993 shows on the obverse a "fat"

Continued



Feather Jew Medal by Christian Wermuth or Johann Reteke: Germany, c.1650, silver struck medal, 42x46 mm (oval). Ref: Kirschner Nr. 13 (non variant); Friedenberg 11/12 and 112 ; Brettauer 4765 & plate 23. Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

man sitting on a bushel of grain. As the legend is “Whether Jew or Christian - a Scoundrel,” one can interpret it as treating Jews and Christians equally, but because of the history of these types of medals Kirschner considers this to be a modern Korn Jude medal. The reverse legend translates as: “In Time of Evil, Without a Doubt, a Human Is Often the Other Devil.”

Feather Jew (Feder Jude) Medals

Another type of German anti-Semitic medal is the so-called Feather Jew Medal (*Federjudenmedaille*). Like the Korn Jude medals, the Feather Jew medals were made at different times and had slightly different iconography. One such medal, oval, and struck in silver about 1650, is shown above. The obverse depicts a hunched-over Jew

with a feathered cap holding a bag on which is engraved a Latin legend translated as “Alien Way of Life.”

As is typical with these types of medals, he is shown carrying a large moneybag on his back. The Latin inscription below is translated as “His Own Faults.” The reverse shows an image of a winged Cupid on a lion, with a Latin legend translated as “Love Conquers All.”

Kirschner and Friedenberg interpret the symbolism of medal’s obverse to mean (citing *Matthew 7*) that the Jew is a Pharisee, and as he judges others, so shall he be judged; and on the reverse (alluding to the Tale of Cupid/Amor and Psyche), that even Jews can be conquered by love.

As in the case of the Korn Jude medals, several variants of these Feather Jew medals were made, all of which, through imagery and words, were designed to imply that Jews use deceitful measures

Continued



Above: *Feder Jude (Feather Jew) Medal by Christian Wermuth, Germany, c.1700. Silver struck medal, 43 mm, Ref: Kirschner 41/11; Friedenberg p.111.*

Image courtesy Busso Peus Nacht

Continued

to attain public offices. The medal shown at the top of this page was engraved by Christian Wermuth around 1700. This typical example depicts on the obverse a merchant, wearing a feathered hat and boots, peering into a moneybag. As on the previous medal, on his back is tied a large sack on which is inscribed (translated) “His Own Faults.”

The legend around is written in German, translated as “I Wear the Feathers Which Everybody Can See; Another Wears Them as a Decoy.” Again, there is no doubt whom the figure represents, as the legend below, in a mixture of German and Latin, is inscribed “Hey Thou Feather Jew, Know Thyself.” On the reverse, the legend implies that Jews advance their careers by being a cuckold (i.e., a husband with an adulterous wife), a somewhat loose translation being: “By

Being Cuckolded Alone [You Will] Not Be Held up to Ridicule, for this Is Certainly Most True That Many People, Through Their Horns [i.e., through their cuckolding], and “According to the Common People, the Wife Allowed the Husband to Rise to Public Office.”

That is, the cheating woman puts the horns on the husband. (The word *SCOPTJCE* on the reverse may be translated as: sarcastic, derisive, and ironical).

Another variation of an anti-Semitic medal of the “Feder Jude” (Feather Jew) series, made in Germany in the 18th century, is shown on the next page.

This rare version shows on the obverse a figure riding a deer with a German inscription around it, translated as, “I Wear Horns So That All Can See, Another Wears Such (horns), but Is Unaware of Doing

Continued



Above: *Feder Jude* by unidentified medallist, Germany, c.1700. White metal, struck medal, 40 mm. See also: *Friedenberg*, pp.9-12. Image courtesy Kedem Auction House

Below, right: *Cuckold or Feather Jew Medal* by Christian Wermuth, Germany, ca 1700, struck pewter medal, 39mm. Ref: similar to Feill, 3431. Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

so.” The Latin inscription, below the deer, also alluding to cuckoldry, can be translated as, “Let Him Who Has Made Horns Not Refuse to Wear Horns” (meaning: “Let the one who has committed adultery not refuse to wear the symbol of adultery when he is cuckolded himself. The reverse inscription is the same as that shown in the medal previous.”

Still another “Cuckold Medal” with the “Feather Jew” motif is shown at right. The obverse of this one depicts a two-antlered Jew riding a large cock, with four smaller roosters in the background. The German legend rim reads “Where No One Can Become Someone.”

The reverse shows an ornately decorated open chest with a pair of antlers, the legend reading, “DIE LADE FVHRT DIE GROSTE ZVNFFT AVF ERDEN” and below in smaller letters “VM MANCHEN IST ES EWIG SCHADE” (“The



Clouds Drove the Guild off the Ground, to Some it Is a Shame For-

Continued



Pietism / Camel-Swallower Medal by Christian Wermuth, Germany, 1687, Silver struck medal, 42mm. Ref: Kirschner 4; Friedenberg 12 and 109; Feill #3928 (p.186 & photos XIII). Image courtesy Tradart

Continued

ever.” The German legend on box reads “DAS ER KOMT/ IN DIE/ HAHNREY/LADE.”

This piece closely resembles the previously described anti-Semitic, satirical “Feather Jew” medals, all of which played on the alleged sexual activities and financial prowess Jews used to achieve power and money.

The feathers shown in these Feder Jude medals substitute for horns depicted on Jews in other works of “art.” Both of them imply cuckold-ing and likely serve as a double entendre for the horns of lechery and horns of the devil.

Daniel Friedenberg describes another medal, made by Christian Wermuth around 1700, titled “False Integrity of Jews, Bad Priests and Tricky Lawyers,” which seemed to be designed to provide a general insult to Jews as well as to Catholics. This type of medal shows a

wolf and a fox in open country, with sheep in the background. The reverse has a German inscription translated as “He Who Trusts a Wolf in the Woodland, a Jew by His Oath and a Bad Priest and Tricky Lawyer by Their Consciences, Will Be Bitten by All Four.”

One more piece made by Wermuth that may be mentioned here also appears to be designed to denigrate those who do not follow the predominant Lutheranism of Germany, in this case Jews and Muslims. It is the so-called Camel-Swallower or Pietism medal. (Pietism was a movement within Lutheranism that began in the late 17th century and ultimately influenced Protestantism and Anabaptism, as well as the Methodist and Brethren movements.)

This medal, shown above, shows on the obverse an “African” dwarf swallowing a camel while gnats swarm about, the German legend

Continued



Continued

translated as “Catcher of Gnats and Camel Swallower,” referring to passages from *Matthew 24* in the New Testament which read, in part:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Ye blind guides, who strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel!”

The reverse depicts a Jew draped in a prayer shawl, the German legend reading “The Pharisee Risen from Death.”

The Pharisees were a social movement and school of thought that arose in the Holy Land during the Hasmonean dynasty (140 to 37 BCE) in the wake of the Maccabean Revolt.

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Pharisaic beliefs became the liturgical and ritualistic basis for modern Rabbinic Judaism.

Below the figure of the Jew is stamped “Matth:XXIII.”, a reference again to *Matthew 24*:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one “proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves... because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither

suffer ye them that are entering in to enter... for ye devour widows’ houses, even while for a pretense ye make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive greater condemnation...”

By alluding to Jews, Muslims (depiction of a camel) and native Africans, and by referencing those passages in the New Testament, this medal not only serves as an insult to these groups but also may suggest that they are ripe targets for conversion to Christianity.

Daniel Friedenbergs observes that this medal may have had some official status as the rim is often stamped CFP, standing for *Cum Friderici Privilegio* or *With Frederick’s Permission*, referring to Frederick II of Saxony and Thuringia, who was Wermuth’s ruler at that time.

Alex Ben-Ariah notes that Wermuth may be mocking the events of recent history in his time: the Muslim Ottoman Empire was favorably disposed towards the Jews, particularly since the Spanish Inquisition of 1492 in which both Muslims and Jews were expelled from Spain.

In 1683, four years prior to this medal’s striking, the then mighty Ottoman Empire lost a key military campaign at the Battle of Vienna to the combined Holy Roman Empire, Hapsburg, German and Polish forces, which eventually led to its withdrawal from most of Europe.

Continued





Jewish moneylenders portrayed in a Spanish manuscript from the late 1200s.
From dancutlermedicalart.com

Continued

SATIRICAL, ANTI-SEMITIC MEDALS RELATED TO ECONOMICS

In the course of the Middle Ages, the power structure in Europe gradually ousted Jews from the fields of trade, crafts and agriculture, forcing them to serve as bankers and tax collectors for the nobility. Also, since the church forbade Christians to lend money at interest, some Jews became money lenders, one of the few occupations left open to them.

Because Jews were required by law to pay exorbitantly high taxes to the aristocracy, the Jewish moneylenders were allowed to charge high rates of interest. Thus, the wrath of the debtors was aimed at the Jews, rather than against the ruling classes. Jews were, therefore,

often looked upon disparagingly, and one of the common charges levied against them relate to their association with money lending, commerce and banking.

An example of a page from a manuscript, published in the 13th century, portraying an encounter between a loan seeker and a Jewish money lender is shown above.

Several medals were also issued to vilify Jews engaged in other financial occupations. Examples of such medals follow.

In the late seventeenth century the Austrian emperors began a campaign to remove the Ottoman Turks from Central Europe. Budapest fell to Leopold I in 1686. The Jews, who had found refuge among the Muslim Ottoman Empire sided with the Turks in defense of Budapest (known in those days as “Ofen,”

Continued





Above: *Jews and Turks Defend Budapest (Türkenkrieg medaille) by Martin Brunner: Austria, 1686. Copper struck medal, 42 mm, Ref: Kirschner 31, Freidenberg 18 and 108/109.*

Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

referred to on the medal), and when the city fell, the victorious Austrians commemorated their victory by issuing a medal suggesting how the vanquished Turks and Jews benefited financially from the war.

The medal shown above depicts on the obverse Turkish and Jewish figures around a furnace melting metal, with the Turk holding tongs and the Jew holding bellows. Ingots appear at the bottom of the furnace. The legend around translates as “Who Mints Money for Peace Now That the Turk and Jew Are Tired of War?”

The reverse legend reads “Ofen Belongs to Leopold. Luck Has Been Against Mohammed. He Loses the City of Ofen with All its Gold, Which Was Destined to Be Used for the Purchase of Peace.”

Along the rim is written, “By this Battle the Turkish Empire Nears its End.”

This medal expresses scorn for both the Jews and Turks by suggesting that they not only had profited from the war but also failed to bribe their attackers and thereby buy peace (a method used frequently in those times). It is typical of the anti-Semitic medals relating to economics in that it alludes to the libel of Jews making money from tragic events.

Unlike the medals made in Germany, this is the only Austrian anti-Semitic medal from the period of the Renaissance until the era of Napoleon. It may be added that after this conquest, the Ottoman Empire retreated from mainland Europe while the Jews were driven out of the city and were not permitted to return for almost a century (Ben-Arieh).

Another medal issued to denigrate the role of Jews in finance is shown above. It was designed to celebrate

Continued



*Jud Joseph Süs in Birdhouse ("Vogelhaus"). Unknown medallist: Germany, 1738, white metal/pewter struck medal, 38 mm. Ref: Fieweger 392; Kirschner 15; Friedenberg 115.
Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh*

Continued

the mistreatment of one particular Jew, Joseph Suskind Oppenheimer (1698 to 1738).

Oppenheimer, called "the Jew Suess," was a Jewish banker, financial planner and finance minister for Duke Karl Alexander of Wurtemberg. In the course of his career, Oppenheimer incurred many enemies, and when Karl Alexander died in 1737, Oppenheimer was charged, imprisoned and hanged. His body was subsequently thrown into a bird cage where it hung for six years.

The medal shows on the obverse a bust of Oppenheimer, labeled "Jew Joseph Suess Oppenheimer." On the reverse is depicted the "Jew Suess" enclosed within a hanging birdcage suspended from gallows with birds flying around, the inscription reading, "From this Birdcage the Rascal Suess Looks Out."

The public joy associated with

Oppenheimer being brought to "justice" was so great that several other medals related to this event were issued at about the same time.

Another medal, not shown here, depicts on the obverse a bust of Oppenheimer, similar to that above. On the reverse are two portrayals of Oppenheimer's life. On the top section he is shown being drawn gloriously on an elegant four-horse chariot, while on the section below, he is being carted off to his death unceremoniously on a horse-drawn wagon.

Another medal was a box or screw medal, containing nineteen miniature pictures, which were hand-painted on parchment or tiny copper plates, of the life and death of Joseph Oppenheimer, shown on following page.

These screw medals were so popular that they continued to be made up to the 19th century (Kirschner).

Continued



Figure 16. *Pictures Contained in Screw Medal of Jud Joseph Süß Oppenheimer*
 The top and bottom of this box or screw medal are similar to those of the obverse and reverse of the medal shown in Figure 15. The screw medal contains 19 tiny images of Süess' romantic life and his trial and hanging. Ref: Friedenbergr, p. 20.

Image courtesy Tradart

Continued

A striking feature of all of these medals is that in the legend Oppenheimer is not identified as a banker or finance minister, but as a Jew (IUD.IOSEPH.SÜS OPPENHEIMER), making his religious affiliation, rather than his occupation, the major point of his character.

The historical figure of Joseph Süess Oppenheimer was deemed so important that in 1940, at the behest of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazis produced a propaganda film "Süss the Jew," considered to be one of the most anti-Semitic films of all time. The film ends showing Süess being hanged in a cage similar to that depicted in the medal.

Interestingly, Oppenheimer, who virtually ceased to acknowledge being a Jew during the period of his prosperity, returned to strict orthodoxy during his imprisonment

and refused to become baptized in return for a reprieve. Medals related to conversion and baptism is considered in the next section.

MEDALS RELATED TO RELIGION

Blood Libel Medals. "Blood Libels" are a group of slanders against the Jews which have as its origins passages from the New Testament of the Bible. (For more on the religious origin of this term, see below).

Besides holding Jews responsible for such global calamities as famine and plague, it was not unusual to blame them for defilement of Christian religious objects, such as the consecrated wafers used ritually in the Catholic Mass (the Host). The accusation and murder of Jews by

Continued



Burning of Jews for the Supposed Desecration of Sacramental Wafers in Deggendorf, Bavaria, 1492. Woodcut by Hartmann Schedel for the Nuremberg Chronicle, known as Schedelsche Weltchronik, published in 1493. Wikipedia



Continued

burning them alive for the alleged desecration of the Host have been promoted in several forms of art, some of which go back to medieval times. (See above).

In 1837 a medal was issued that celebrated an anniversary of a similar supposed desecration of the Host by Jews, in this case one that was said to have occurred 500 years earlier in Deggendorf, Germany.

As the story goes, in 1337 Jewish guests at a Christian gathering were accused of stealing and attempting to destroy the Hosts by placing them in a bag of poison and sinking them into the local well, an act resulting in the death of several townsfolk. The consecrated wafers were retrieved from the well, placed in a chalice in the church, and in the ensuing anger, the Jewish community was slaughtered.

Five hundred years later, a medal was distributed memorializing the event. Pilgrimages to the Deggendorf church continued until the ritual was abolished in 1992.



Deggendorf Church Host Desecration: 500th Anniversary by unknown artist, Germany, 1837, Pewter struck medal, 44 mm. The legend on the obverse may be translated as "In Memory of the 500 Year Anniversary of the Healing in Grave Church, Deggendorf 1837." The reverse depicts a candelabric image of a Church altar with a German legend around reading, "Tomb of Christ Deggendorf Branch Church of Healing 1837." Kirshner, 3.

Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued





450th Anniversary of the Desecration of the Host, unknown artist, Belgium, 1820. Struck brass, 32 mm, Ref: Kirshner, p.31 (variant); Friedenberg p.20. Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

A related charge of the abuse of the Host, this one made against the Jews of Brussels in the 14th century, was memorialized in 1820, some 450 years later, by the issuance of a medal shown above.

In 1370 a group of Jews from Enghien, Belgium, were accused of stealing and desecrating the Host. Angry mobs killed hundreds of Jews in Brussels, many of whom were burned alive, and it was not long before Jews were banished from Belgium altogether.

The event was known locally as the miracle of St. Gudule and was memorialized by an annual festival. The festival that took place in 1820, the 450th anniversary of the alleged desecration, was especially great, lasting eight days, and was commemorated by the issuance of this medal.

The medal shown above is a variant of one published by Kirschner

where the medal's reverse more explicitly states in the legend (translated from the French), "Jubilee 1820 in Reparation for the Outrages of the Holy Hosts in the Year 1370."

It is of interest that in 1870, while preparing for the next festival, a series of publications exposed inaccuracies and falsifications in the sources upon which the blood libel took place, causing Pope Pius IX to stop the commemoration of these festivals (Ben-Arieh).

Concurrent with this, a different type of medal was issued, one that may be viewed as philo-Semitic. This medal was also made in Belgium, which at that time had become more tolerant toward Jews (the mayor of Brussels was Jewish). It showed on the obverse two Jews being burned, one of whom had the features and stance of Jesus on the Cross. The medal's reverse was inscribed: AIn 1370 Jews were

Continued

Continued

taken and burned live at Brussels under the pretext of having profaned the Host; their property was confiscated and all their co-religionists proscribed. It is the 500th year of a cruel act of spoliation and intolerance that the priests wished to celebrate in great pomp this year. Popular sentiment has repulsed it with energetic indignation. (Friedenberg, p. 22)

Converting Jews to Christianity

Efforts to convert Jews to Christianity began soon after the formal establishment of this religion and continue to this day.

Throughout the seventh century, Jews were flogged, executed, had their property confiscated, forbidden to trade and forcibly baptized (such converted Jews were later called *conversos*). This reached a peak during the Christian Inquisitions in Spain and Portugal in the 15th and 16th centuries. Then, as in more recent periods, many Jews were suspected of not truly converting to Christianity (these secret Jews were called *marranos*, a term of abuse derived from the Spanish word for “swine”) but rather were accused of still adhering to their original faith.

These individuals were dealt with severely, in some cases by burning them alive. The most notorious individual during this period was



Tomas de Torquemada (1420 to 1498)

the Dominican prior and Grand Inquisitor, Tomás de Torquemada, who in the 15th century condemned thousands of *conversos*, men and women, to their death for secretly practicing Judaism.

Later, in 18th century Italy, Pope Pius VI published an Edict on the Jews, which led directly to their forced baptisms. Even more recently, now in Britain, it is said that Benjamin Disraeli, born a Jew, could never have become Prime Minister had he not been baptized, in effect “encouraging” his conversion (Johnson).

The issue of conversion affected Jews in many walks of life. A case in point is in the field of music. During the late 19th century and extending into the 20th century, there were many examples of Jews who, by desire or by necessity or coercion, converted to Christianity. Felix Mendelssohn was a convert. Johann Straus, founder of the famous Viennese musical family, was a son of

Continued



Useless Baptism Medal or "Taufmedaille" by Christian Wermuth: Germany, ca. 1700, bronze (silvered) struck medal, 43mm Ref: Kirschner 2; Friedenberg 13/14 and 113; Fieweger 76.

Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

a Baptized Jewish innkeeper. Gustav Mahler, in order to be appointed head of the court opera in Vienna had to convert to Catholicism. Arnold Schönberg was born a Jew but raised as a Catholic. The list goes on (Johnson).

Not surprisingly, medals were produced that relate even to this specific issue. One such medal, the so-called *Useless Baptism Medal*, struck about 1700 and shown above, relates to the efforts to convert Jews to Christianity and suggests that this Baptism was insincere.

As may be seen, on the medal's obverse a priest with a prayer book is pouring water on the head of a kneeling Jew who has a millstone around his neck; an executioner is standing behind the Jew about to push him into the water. The legend in German is translated as "Thus He Remains Innocent."

The reverse legend may be translated as "Jew rarely becomes a Christian unless he has done something wrong. He does it only for the money to avoid seri-

ous punishment, for if he would steal he would be punished too harshly."

On the rim is an additional engraving "When the mouse eats the cat, then a Jew becomes a true Christian." As Baptismal medals are often given to the family to celebrate this event in the Christian community, this medal, also called the Mockery Medal, apparently was made to mock the "false" baptisms of Jews.

A related medal, this one struck to "honor" Jews who converted to Christianity, was issued in 1887, and shows on the obverse a Star of David with "Jehovah" in Hebrew with the legends "Christ in You; The Hope of Glory; Holy is His Name" while the reverse shows a Christian cross with Hebrew legends, translated as "Father Glorify Thy Name."

A medal that is just tangentially related to the conversion of Jews is that by the German medallist Karl Goetz, who made a large number of satirical medals in the early 20th century (Kienest 1967).

This piece appears to celebrate the

Continued

At right: Conversion medal, 1887. Bronze struck medal, semi-oval, 33 x 45mm.

Image courtesy William Rosenblum

Below, right: German U-Boats in America by Karl Goetz, Germany, 1916, cast iron medal, 58 mm (Kienast 185)

Image courtesy Busso Peus Nacht



Continued

work done by the Reuters News Agency but has negative overtones. On the obverse can be seen a telegraph pole with a double head of Jewish caricatures speaking “Reuter clamor” (referring to the panic reports by the English news agency.) The reverse shows three animated men discussing the issue in front of an American flag, with the inscription translated as “Schemers at work.” The medal refers to the purported role the Reuters News Agency played in spreading false information about the German U-boats used in the World War. This news service was founded by Paul Julius Reuter.

Reuter, whose father was a rabbi, was born in Germany as Israel Beer Josaphat, but after moving to England, like a number of other Jews of that period, converted to Christianity and changed his name to Reuter.

A medal related to Shabbatai



Tzvi is another piece alluding to the forced conversion of Jews to a different religion. In this case the medal, which is directed toward the followers

Continued

Continued

of the Jewish-born Shabbatai Tsvi, ridicules his conversion to Islam. This satirical medal was issued by Christian Wermuth in 1696, twenty years after Tsvi's death.

Shabbatai Tzvi (also seen as Sabbetai Zevi and others) (1626 to 1676) was a Turkish-born Sephardic Rabbi who, at age 22 in 1648, started declaring to his followers that he was the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

This assertion was supported by Nathan of Gaza, who declared Shabbatai Tzvi to be the Messiah, and is based, in part, on Tzvi's supposed birth date, which according to Jewish legend is the date of the destruction of both Temples and also the date 'prescribed' in some traditions for the birth of the Messiah. He apparently suffered from manic-depressive illness, and during his manic phase he had "illuminations" whereby he believed he could communicate with God.

As history has shown in other cases, many religious Jews interpreted these visions as evidence of his genuineness as the Messiah, rather than the acts of lunacy.

The image shown on this page is from a manuscript published in 1666, the year Shabbatai Tzvi converted to Islam. On the upper panel, an image of



Shabbatai Tzvi Enthroned ; a page from the Jewish publication Tikkun depicting Shabbatai Tzvi crowned as the messiah. Amsterdam, 1666.

Library of Congress

Shabbatai Tzvi is seen seated on a throne, holding a scepter. Four cherubs support aloft a large crown marked in Hebrew "The Crown of Tzvi."

The throne is guarded by 12 Lions of Judah, surrounded by eight worshipful disciples. On the steps leading to the throne is inscribed "In Those Days and at this Time, I Will Cause a Shoot of Righteousness to Grow up unto David; and He Shall Execute Justice and Righteousness in the Land" (*Jeremiah, 33:15*). Below the steps, in large He-

Continued



Continued

brew letters is written “Tikkun” (a prayer book of daily readings and the source of publication of the image).

In the lower panel, a larger-than-life Shabbatai Tzvi is portrayed seated at a round table with 12 apostles, behind whom is a crowd of his followers.

The Hebrew words below read, “Messiah the Son of David Has Come.”

The reference to David alludes to the prophesy that the Messiah will be a descendent of the biblical King David (in this case suggesting it is Shabbatai Tzvi).

During this period Jews were particularly receptive to the coming of a Jewish Messiah as the persecutions and expulsions of the Jews in the 15th century during the Spanish Inquisition were still fresh in their memories.

Also during this same period Jews were being persecuted in Russia, which had a long history of anti-Jewish oppression. In 1479 Russia evicted Jews from their territory and prevented them from immigrating there.

Later, during the lifetime of Shabbatai Tzvi, in 1648-1649, there was an especially notorious pogrom in the Ukraine where tens of thousands of Jews were barbarously murdered; only those who converted to the Russian Orthodox faith were

allowed to survive (Dubnow 2000).

It was against this background that Shabbatai Tzvi rose to prominence, as the Jews were ripe for the coming of a Messiah. Shabbatai traveled throughout Europe and gained a wide following. However, because he was developing such a large number of adherents and was creating a danger to the establishment, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV gave Shabbatai Tzvi and his followers the choice of death or conversion to Islam.

He chose the latter and at the age of 40, Shabbatai Tzvi converted to Islam along with many of his disciples. As a result of his conversion and for being revealed as a false Messiah, his name became disdained in the Jewish community. Muslims and Christians joined in ridiculing him and his followers. (For more on Shabbatai Tzvi, see Abramson 2012).

There is an interesting medal, shown above, with a number of somewhat obscure allusions, employing both biblical themes and the writings of ancient Roman poets to convey its message. Some refer indirectly to Shabbatai Tzvi.

On the obverse can be seen a mountain being struck by lightning and which is surrounded by ominous looking, fantastical

Continued





Shabbatai Tzvi Medal by Christian Wermuth, Germany, 1696, Bronze struck medal, 43mm. Ref: Kirschner 32; Feille 3429 and plate XI; Friedenberg pp.77/78 and 139.

Image courtesy Alex Ben-Arieh

Continued

creatures, including snakes, a lion and other beasts.

Inscribed on the mountain is “MONTES ESAV” (Mount Esau) and on the lower part a citation from the books of Zachariah and Obadiah. To the right is an alchemist striking an anvil over a furnace. The legend in Latin reads “*Six Days of Labor, Worse Times,*” a sentiment that is contrasted on the reverse by “Sabbath, the Seventh Day, Better Times.” The Latin inscription around is translated as “*The State of the Church Today Is Most Flourishing.*” The exergue below reads CARDU’ ET SPINIS FLORET / PALIURUS ACUTIS. Ralph Rosen points out that this is a near transcription of Virgil *Eclogues 5.39* (in the context of the death of Daphnis), which is: CARDUUS ET SPINIS SUR-

GIT PALIURUS ACUTIS (... *the Thistle and the Thorn with its Sharp Spikes Rises up*).

This refers to a plant sometimes called by Christians the “thorn of Christ” or “Jerusalem thorn.” On the medal, Wermuth changes SURGIT (rises up) to FLORIT (blooms).

On the reverse of this medal is a mountain on which stands a lamb with a banner (representing Shabbatai Tzvi), while a dove, holding an olive branch, flies overhead. Rays of light from the sun shine from above and herds of sheep (representing his followers) stand around the base of the mountain. Around is the legend SABBA-TISMVS POPVLO DEI RELICTVS. HEBR.IV.9 (a Latin translation of Hebrews 4.9, meaning “*Sabbath rest for the people of God*”). The Latin leg-

Continued

Continued

end in the exergue reads: AS-
PICE VENTURO LATENTUR
UT OMIA SECLO.

Rosen points out that this is a slightly mistranscribed version of Virgil *Eclogues 4.52*, which should read in the Latin: AS-
PICE, VENTURO LAETEN-
TUR UT OMNIA SAECLO
(See *How Everything Rejoices in the Age That Is about to Come.*)

Other legends read “*Shabat (Sabbath), the Seventh Day Better Times*” and “*Shabat Treasure Chest Still Kept Back from God’s People.*”

The various legends allude indirectly to Shabbatai Tzvi, using biblical quotations refer-

ring to the Sabbath in mockery of the name Shabbatai, a type of contrivance Wermuth has used with other of his anti-Semitic medals.

Given Wermuth’s other related works, another possible reason for this medal’s creation may have to do with the Ottoman Empire’s decline at the hands of Christian Europe at this time. With his references to passages in the Old and New Testament on this medal, Wermuth may have interpreted religious meanings for the Ottoman decline (Ben-Arieh). □

END PART I of this multi-part feature story by Benjamin Weiss. Read more in upcoming issues of The Shekel!

Medal Collectors of America

Medal Collectors of America is an organization of collectors of historical and art medals. The award-winning MCA Advisory is included with membership.

Membership • \$55.00 Print Edition • \$25.00 E-Advisory
MCA • c/o Barry D. Tayman • 3115 Nestling Pine Court • Ellicott City, MD 21042
WWW.MEDALCOLLECTORS.ORG