

# Anti-Semitic Bigotry : A Retrospective As Chronicled By Historical Medals

by Benjamin Weiss



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## ***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**

**W**hile prejudice exists towards many religious and ethnic groups (Endnote 1), 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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, 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 (Figure 1). These and a multitude of other false accusations of Jews have resulted in oppression and abuse of the Jewish community almost beyond belief.



**Figure 1. Jews Being Burned at the Stake**

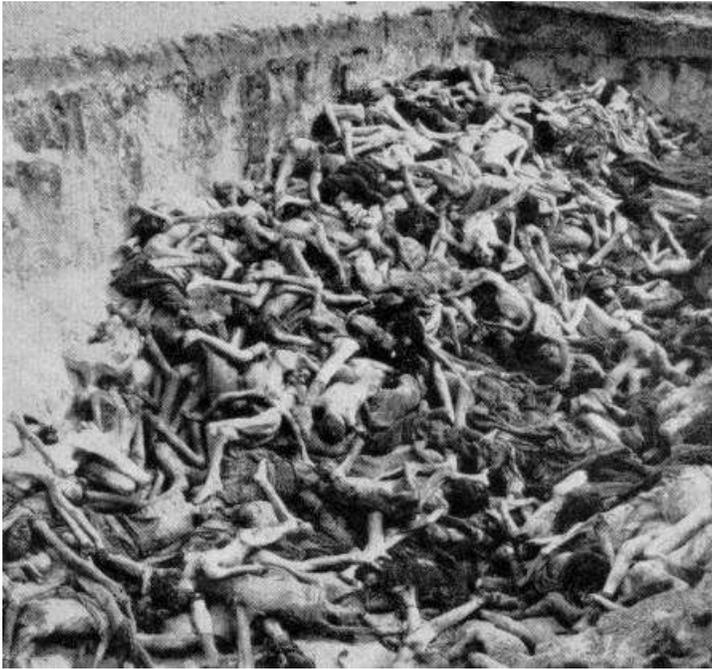
Between 1348 and 1351 a terrifying epidemic of Bubonic Plague often called the Black Death swept through Europe, killing about one-third of the population. Although it is now known that it is a bacterial disease carried by rat fleas, at that time the people accused the Jews of causing the plague in order to destroy Christianity. This accusation spread through many cities in Europe, inciting the people to burn thousands of Jews at the stake. This illumination, from a medieval manuscript depicts one such event, in this case Jews (identified by the mandatory yellow Jewish badge and Jewish hat) of Ravensburg being burned at the stake during the plague in 1348. Note that the Jews are shown wearing a yellow badge centuries before they were compelled to do so by the Nazis. (From wikimedia.org) (Luzerner Schilling, 1515); (Eban, 1984) Credit: Burgerbibliothek, Lucerne (Image source: Wikipedia)

As bad as the subjugation of the Jews was in the medieval period, it was nothing compared to the persecution and extermination of Jews in the modern times of Nazi Germany during the Holocaust in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the largest mass-murder of the twentieth century. By the end of 1945, more than half of the Jews in Europe had been murdered. Besides Germany, the countries where 75 percent or more of the Jews were slaughtered include Poland, the Czech Republic, Greece, the Netherlands, Hungary, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, and parts of the Soviet Union (Friedlander, 1997; Holocaust 2014; see also figure 2, figure 3 and Endnote 2). Indeed, the execution of this Nazi policy to systematically murder all the Jews in Europe was so heinous and unprecedented that a new word had to be created to describe it: *Genocide*.



**Figure 2. Extermination and Concentration Camps during the Holocaust of World War II.**

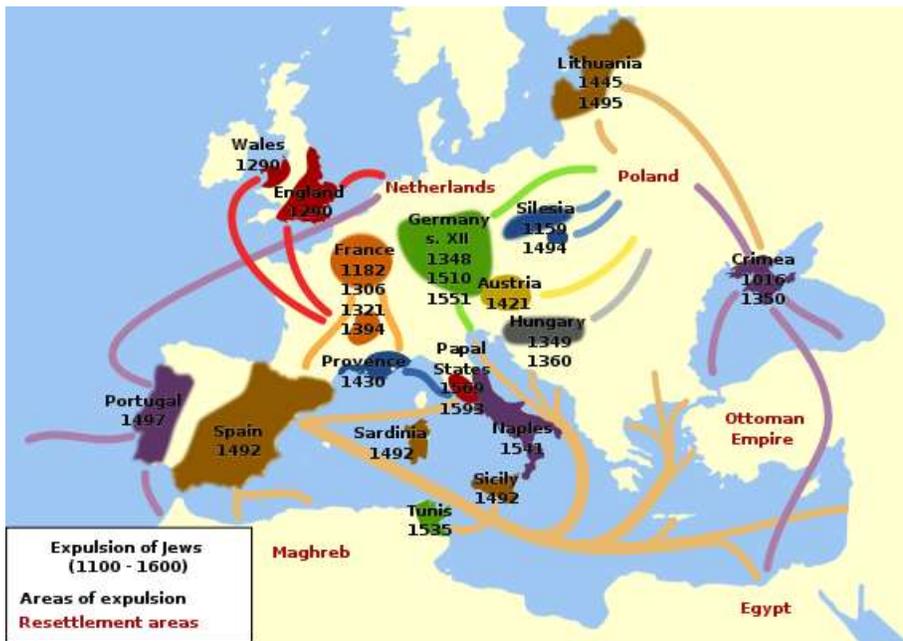
Several million Jews were held and massacred in extermination and concentration camps that were established during World War II. The more notorious ones were in Germany, (Buchenwald, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen), Poland (Treblinka, Chelmno, Majdanek, Belzec and Auschwitz/Birkenau), and the Ukraine (Babi Yar), but there were actually dozens of other such major camps and hundreds of smaller ones spread throughout several countries of Europe. (Image source: Wikipedia).



**Figure 3. Mass Grave at Bergen-Belsen**

Bergen-Belsen was a Nazi concentration camp in what is today Lower Saxony in northwestern Germany. This was just one of dozens of such camps throughout Europe in which millions of Jews were slaughtered during the Second World War. (Photo taken May, 1945.) (Source: Wikipedia)

These relatively 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-20<sup>th</sup> century Germany but in virtually every country in Europe for more than a millennium (Figure 4; see also Oberman, 1984). A chronological survey of anti-Semitism shows that anti-Semitic acts occurred throughout the world and encompassed 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 issued to purposely vilify the Jewish community.



**Figure 4: Map of Expulsion of Jews from European Territories 1100-1600**

During the period of 1100 to 1600, Jews were expelled from the European territories of Lithuania, Crimea, Silesia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, France, Wales, England, Provenca, Portugal, Spain, the Papal States, Naples, Sardinia, and Sicily and the North African territory of Tunis, and were resettled in the Netherlands, Poland, the Maghreb in northern Africa, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire.

The citation of Tunis as one of the areas from which the Jews were expelled in 1535 is particularly enlightening, as it brings into focus the religious nature of this geographical region in this period of time. In 1533, the Muslim ruler, Suleiman the Magnificent, the reigning Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, together with a fleet of 70 galleys, manned by slaves, including some 2000 Jewish oarsmen, conquered Tunis, then held by a local ruler subservient to Spain. A couple of years later, in 1535, the powerful, Catholic King Charles V of Spain assembled a fleet manned by enslaved Protestants, capturing Tunis and selling into slavery all the resident Jews, who had been confined to a ghetto by the Muslim rulers. So here we have an interplay of all the major religions: Christians vs. Muslims, Catholics vs. Protestants, and all of them subjugating the Jews (Wikipedia).

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-Medaillen 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 must have been through a network of retail outlets" (Christopher Eimer, personal communication).

"In general, it is likely most of the *Kornjudenmedaillen* 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" (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. 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” (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 sixteenth 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 seventeenth 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 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 (1661-1739) and later by Johann Christian Reich (1740-1814).

Generally the distribution of *Korn Jude* medals coincided with periods of rising food prices and famine and was designed to perpetuate the myth that the Jews were to blame for these hardships and to portray the Jew as a diabolic speculator, 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 through 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 (Figure 5). So that there should be no misunderstanding of 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 Scriptures, 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 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.”



**Figure 5. *Korn Jude* (Grain Jew) Medal**

Christian Wermuth, Germany, 1694, Silver struck medal, 36 mm

Reference: Friedenber, p 3; Kirschner 54/18; Wohlfahrt 95035; Weiss BW779

(Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)

Almost 100 years 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 in figure 6. 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 XI.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.



**Figure 6. Kornjudenmedaille "Grain Jew" Medal of Woman and Grain Peddler**

Johann Christian Reich, Germany, 1772, Struck Pewter (?) medal, 38 mm.  
 Reference: Kirschner 28 (variant); Friedenberg 118; Brettauer 1905  
 (Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

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 in figure 7. 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 toothed, alligator-like monster, representing hell. The legend reads in German, "KORNIUD 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.



**Figure 7. Corn Jew / Expensive Time**

Johann Christian Reich, Germany, 1772, pewter (?) jeton, 29 mm. Reference: Brettauer 1908; Friedenberg 120; Kirschner 24, variant.

Over the years still more variants 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.”

Figure 8 shows an example of one such medal struck in 1695. On the obverse is a scene showing in the background a rich cornfield and barn with a nesting stork on the 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, shown in figure 5. 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.



**Figure 8. Hanging Korn Jude (Inexpensive Time)**

Christian Wermuth: Germany, 1695, Silver struck medal, 34 mm.

Reference: Friedenberp p. 5; Kirschner 25

(Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

Figure 9 shows another example of an “Inexpensive Time” *Korn Jude* medal. 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 Scriptures to give it more impact, reading “Avarice is the root of all evil.”



**Figure 9. Inexpensive Time: Hanging Korn Jude Medal**

Unknown medallist: Germany, 1772-1773, Lead cast medal, 40 mm

Reference: Friedenber 8; Kirschner no. 27, p. 61.

(Source: Private collection)

Several variants of these types of medals were issued during the period of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some had images similar to the obverse shown in figure 6, some with the hanging Jew shown in figure 8 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 (Figure 10) and reissued as recently as 1993 shows on the obverse a 'fat' 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."



**Figure 10. Kornjude Style Naked Jew on Grain Bushel, 1923**

[Friedrich Wilhelm] Fritz Hörnlein; Germany, 1923, Aluminum struck medal, 38 mm

Reference: Kirschner 30

(Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

## 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 in figure 11. 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 winged Cupid on a lion, with a Latin legend translated as "Love Conquers All." Kirschner and Friedenberga 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.



**Figure 11. Feather Jew Medal**

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

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 to attain public offices. Figure 12 shows one 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, ironical).



**Figure 12. Feder Jude (Feather Jew) Medal**

Christian Wermuth, Germany, c.1700 Silver struck medal, 43 mm

Reference: Kirschner 41/11; Friedenberp p.111

(Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

Another variation of an anti-Semitic medal of the "*Feder Jude*" (Feather Jew) series, made in Germany in the 18th century, is shown in figure 13. 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 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 figure 12.



**Figure 13. Feder Jude**

Unidentified medallist, Germany, c.1700, White metal, struck medal, 40 mm

See also: Friedenberg, pp.9-12

(Image courtesy of Kedem Auction House)

Still another “Cuckold Medal” with the “Feather Jew” motif is shown in figure 14. 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 translates as “Where No One Can Become Someone”. The reverse shows an ornately decorated open chest with a pair of antlers, the legend reading, “The Clouds Drove the Guild off the Ground, to Some it Is Eternal Pity”; and on the box, “That He May Land in the Drawer of Cuckolds”.

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.



**Figure 14. Cuckold or Feather Jew Medal**  
 Christian Wermuth, Germany, ca 1700, struck pewter medal, 39mm  
 Reference: similar to Feill, 3431

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

Daniel Friedenbergl 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 (Figure 15) shows on the obverse an “African” dwarf swallowing a camel while gnats swarm about, the German legend translated as: “Catcher of Gnats and Camel Swallower”, referring to passages from Matthew 23 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 (140-37 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 23 :

“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...”



**Figure 15. Pietism / Camel-Swallower Medal**

Christian Wermuth, Germany, 1687, Silver struck medal, 42mm. Reference: Kirschner 4; Friedenber 12 and 109; Feill #3928 (p.186 & photos XIII). (Image courtesy of Tradart)

By alluding to Jews, Moslems (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 Friedenberg observes that this medal may have had some official status as the rim is often stamped "CFP", standing for "*Cum Friderici Privilegio*" (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 Moslem 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.

# 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 13<sup>th</sup> century, portraying an encounter between a loan seeker and a Jewish money lender is shown in figure 16.



**Figure 16. Jewish Moneylenders Portrayed in a Spanish Manuscript from Late 1200s**

(From dancutlermedicalart.com)

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

## Jews and Turks Defend Budapest:

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", 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 benefitted financially from the war.

The medal (Figure 17) 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 as, "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).



**Figure 17. Jews and Turks Defend Budapest (*Türkenkrieg medaille*)**

Martin Brunner: Austria, 1686, Copper struck medal, 42 mm

Reference: Kirschner 31, Friedenberg 18 and 108/109

(Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

Another medal issued to malign the role Jews played in finance is shown below (Figure 18). It was designed to celebrate the mistreatment of one particular Jew, Joseph Suskind Oppenheimer (1698-1738). 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, he was charged, imprisoned and hanged. His body was subsequently thrown into a bird cage where it hung for six years.

The medal (Figure 18) 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."



**Figure 18. Jud Joseph Süs in Birdhouse ("Vogelhaus")**

Unknown medallist: Germany, 1738, white metal/pewter struck medal, 38 mm

Reference: Fieweger 392; Kirschner 15; Friedenber 115

(Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

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. One was a box or screw medal, containing small pictures, which were hand-painted on parchment or tiny copper plates, of the life and death of Joseph Oppenheimer (Figure 19). These screw medals were so popular that they continued to be made up to the nineteenth century (Kirschner).



**Figure 19. Pictures Contained in Screw Medal of *Jud Joseph Süß***

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 18. The box contains the images of Süß's romantic life and his trial and hanging. Reference: Friedenber, p. 20. (Image courtesy of Tradart)

Another medal, shown in figure 20, depicts on the obverse a bust of Oppenheimer, similar to that on figure 18. On the reverse can be seen 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.



**Figure 20. Execution of Joseph Ben Issachar Süßkind Oppenheimer**

Unknown medallist, Germany, 1738, cast silver medal, 37 mm

Reference: Kirschner 14; Coll. Fieweger 383 (Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

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 Suess 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 Suess 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 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 (figure 21).



**Figure 21. Burning of Jews for the Supposed Desecration of Sacramental Wafers in Deggendorf, Bavaria in 1492.**

Woodcut by Hartmann Schedel for the Nuremberg Chronicle, known as Schedelsche Weltchronik, published in 1493 (Wikipedia).

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 trying to destroy the Hosts by placing them in a bag of poison and sinking them into the local well, an act which caused the subsequent 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 (Figure 22). Pilgrimages to the Deggendorf church continued until the ritual was abolished in 1992.



**Figure 22. Deggendorf Church Host Desecration: 500th Anniversary**

Unknown artist, Germany, 1837, Pewter struck medal, 44 mm.

The obverse depicts a candelabric image of a Church altar with a German legend around reading, "Tomb of Christ Deggendorf Branch Church of Healing 1837." The legend on the reverse may be translated as "In Memory of the 500 Year Anniversary of the Healing in Grave Church, Deggendorf 1837." Reference: Kirshner, 3.

(Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

A related charge of the abuse of the Host, this one made against the Jews of Brussels in the fourteenth century, was memorialized in 1820, some 450 years later, by the issuance of a medal shown in figure 23. 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 wasn't 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 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the alleged desecration, was especially great, lasting eight days; it was commemorated by the issuance of this medal (Figure 23).



**Figure 23. 450th Anniversary of the Desecration of the Host**

Unknown artist, Belgium, 1820, Brass struck medal, 32 mm. Reference: Kirschner, p.31 (variant); Friedenberg p.20 (Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

The medal shown in figure 23 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 (Alex 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: "In 1370 Jews were 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 500<sup>th</sup> 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 fifteenth and sixteenth 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 (see Figure 1). The most notorious individual during this period was the Dominican prior and Grand Inquisitor, Tomás de Torquemada (Figure 24), who in the fifteenth century condemned thousands of *conversos*, men and women, to their death for secretly practicing Judaism. Later, in eighteenth 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).



**Figure 24. Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada**

(Image from Wikipedia)

The issue of conversion affected Jews in many walks of life. A case in point is in the field of music. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and extending into the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 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* (Figure 25), struck about 1700, 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: "A Jew rarely becomes a Christian unless he has done something wrong. He does it only for the money to avoid serious 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.



**Figure 25. Useless Baptism Medal ("Taufmedaille")**

Christian Wermuth: Germany, ca. 1700, bronze (silvered) struck medal, 43mm

Reference: Kirschner 2; Friedenberg 13/14 and 113; Fieweger 76

(Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

A related medal, this one struck to 'honor' Jews who converted to Christianity, is shown in figure 26. This piece, issued in 1887, 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".



**Figure 26. COPPER CONVERSION MEDAL**

Unknown artist, 1887, Bronze struck medal, semi-oval, 33 x 45mm  
 (Image courtesy of William Rosenblum)

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 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kienast 1967). This piece appears to celebrate the work done by the Reuters News Agency but has negative overtones (Figure 27). 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.



**Figure 27. German U-Boats in America**

Karl Goetz, Germany, 1916, cast iron medal, 58 mm Reference: Kienast 185  
(Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

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

Shabbatai Tzvi (also seen as Sabbetai Zevi and others) (1626–1676) 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.

Figure 28 shows a page from a manuscript published in 1666, the year Shabbatai Tzvi converted to Islam. On the upper panel, an image of 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 twelve 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 Hebrew 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 twelve 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 prophecy that the Messiah will be a descendent of the biblical King David (in this case suggesting it is Shabbatai Tzvi).



**Figure 28. Shabbatai Tzvi Enthroned**

Page from the Jewish publication Tikkun depicting Shabbatai Tzvi crowned as the messiah. Amsterdam, 1666.

During this period Jews were particularly receptive to the coming of a Jewish Messiah as the persecution and expulsion of the Jews in the fifteenth 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).

This interesting medal, shown in Figure 29, has a number of somewhat obscure allusions, employing both biblical themes and the writings of ancient Roman poets to convey its message. On the obverse can be seen a mountain being struck by lightning and which is surrounded by ominous looking, fantastical 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 SURGIT 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 SABBATISMVS POPVLO DEI RELICTVS. HEBR.IV.9 (a Latin translation of Hebrews 4.9, meaning "A Sabbath Rest for the People of God"). The Latin legend in the exergue reads: ASPICE 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: ASPICE, VENTURO LAETENTUR UT OMNIA SAECLIO (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 referring 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).



**Figure 29. Shabbatai Tzvi Medal**

Christian Wermuth, Germany, 1696, Bronze struck medal, 43mm.

Reference: Kirschner 32; Feille 3429 and plate XI; Friedenber pp.77/78 and 139.

(Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

An inscription on the edge (not seen) of the Shabbatai Tzvi medal (Figure 29, above) TEMPVS PRAESENS ESAV / FVTVRVM JACOB, (Present Time Esau, Future Jacob) refers to the biblical story of Esau and Jacob, twin brothers of Isaac and Rebecca, who competed for the inheritance of their father. According to Genesis 25, Jacob, the younger of the twins, tricked his blind father into blessing him with his inheritance, leading to conflicts between the brothers. Ultimately, Esau married two Hittite women in violation of Abraham's injunction not to take wives from among the Canaanite population, forever ruling out Esau as the bearer of patriarchal continuity. Jacob received Isaac's blessing (Figure 30), and with his name changed to *Israel*, is declared Isaac's legitimate heir in the continued founding of the Jewish people. Thus, with this inscription, Wermuth alludes to the ephemeral nature of some religions, as while Jacob is considered to be one of the patriarchs of the Israelites, his brother Esau is the progenitor of the Edomites, a group which after a time disappeared from history.



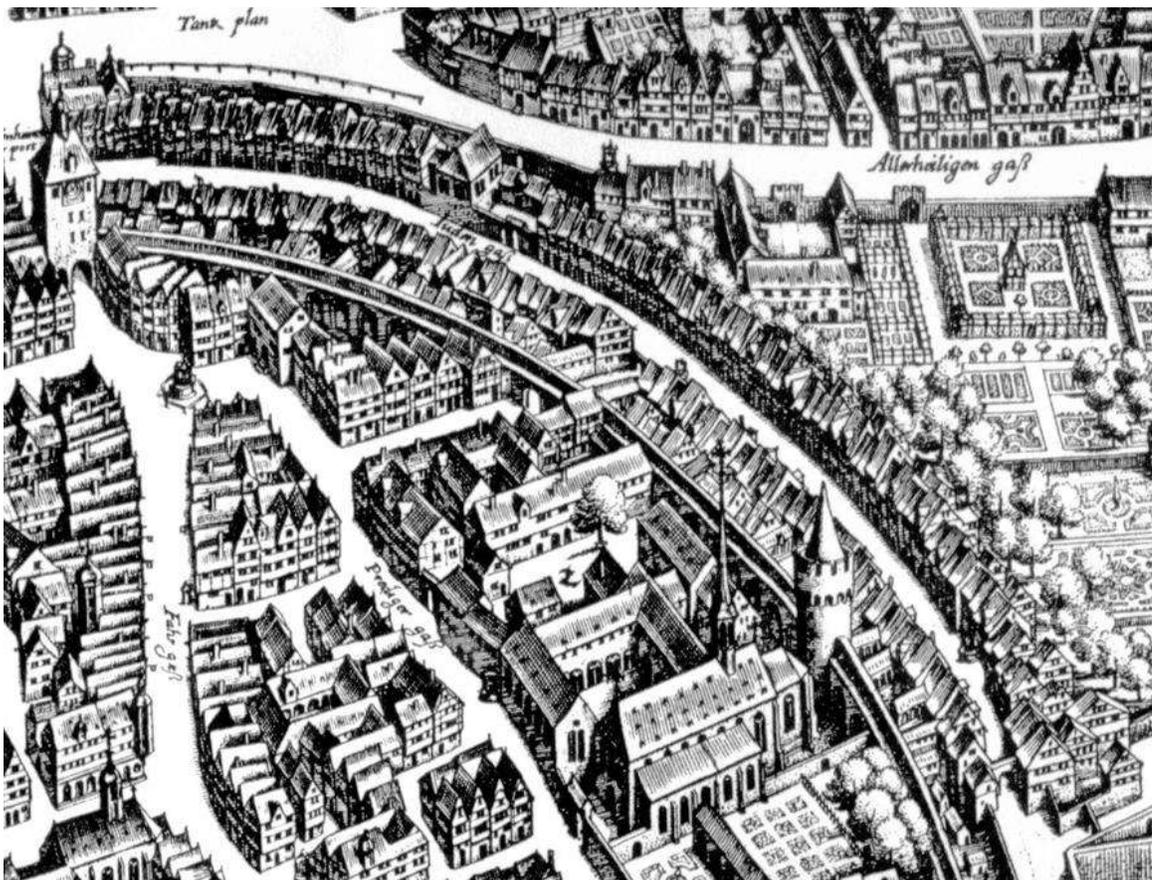
**Figure 30. Isaac Blessing Jacob**  
Gerrit Willemisz. Horst, Oil on canvas, 1638.  
(From wikipedia)

## OTHER MEDALS RELATED TO THE SUBJUGATION OF JEWS

**A**s mentioned earlier, anti-Semitic acts may be divided into different stages: slurs, insults and humiliations; forced conversions; physical punishments; confinement to ghettos; mass expulsion and relocation; and mass slaughter. Commemorative and historical medals exist which dramatize each of these types of acts. Some of these have already been discussed. What follows is a discussion of medals related to the confinement of Jews to ghettos, their expulsion from their homelands and their slaughter during the Holocaust in the period of Nazi Germany.

# MEDALS RELATED TO REGULATING THE MOVEMENT OF JEWS: GHETTOS AND EXPULSION

The mass relocation of Jews has taken place in virtually every country in Europe for hundreds of years (see figure 4). The first step generally was to confine Jews to specific areas of a city, the ghetto, the word originating from the name of the Jewish quarter in Venice, established in 1516, where the Venetian authorities compelled the city's Jews to live. By the 16th and 17th centuries, dozens of Jewish Ghettos existed not only throughout Europe, but in Africa and Asia as well. Some of the more well-known include the Roman Ghetto, created in 1555 by Pope Paul IV. It confined the Jews of Rome to live in a four-block area near the Tiber River, a section of the city that was subject to regular flooding. In Venice, Jews were locked up at night behind gates in a small section of the city. This ghetto was abolished after the fall of the Republic of Venice to Napoleon. During World War II the Germans established over 1000 ghettos in Poland and the Soviet Union. The most infamous of these Jewish ghettos was the Warsaw Ghetto, the largest ghetto in all of Nazi occupied Europe, with over 400,000 Jews crammed into an area of about one square mile. The segregation of the Jewish population in Eastern Europe, however, was predated by several centuries by a prominent ghetto in Frankfurt Am Main, Germany. This ghetto, shown in figure 31, was known as the *Judengasse* (Jews' Alley).



**Figure 31.**  
**The *Judengasse***  
**(Jew's Alley)**  
**Frankfurt city**  
**map of 1628,**  
**showing the**  
**curved**  
***Judengasse***  
**(from *Jüdisches***  
***Kulturmuseum*)**

The Frankfurter *Judengasse* was one of the earliest Jewish Ghettos in Germany. It existed for more than three hundred years, from 1462 until 1796, and was home to Germany's largest Jewish community in early modern times. It was located outside the city walls in the East End of the city of Frankfurt and had three town gates, which were locked at night and on Sundays and (Christian) holidays. When the gates were closed, the Jewish population was essentially locked in.

In 1711, one of the largest fires that ever occurred in Frankfurt broke out in the *Judengasse*. The fire started in Rabbi Naphtali's house, which was located directly opposite to the synagogue. Strong winds and the density of the buildings spread the fire, causing it to race through the ghetto.

As the gates to the ghetto were locked, the Jews were trapped inside. The neighboring Christians finally allowed the Jews to flee the burning ghetto and helped extinguish it when it appeared that the fire, if not contained, would spread to the Gunpowder Magazine and other buildings in the Christian sections of the city. The residents were unable to save the ghetto, and within 24 hours several people had died in the fire, almost every house was burned to the ground and many treasures were lost, including books, manuscripts and Torah scrolls.

After the disaster the inhabitants of the lane were allowed to rent houses in the Christian areas of Frankfurt until their homes were rebuilt. Those who couldn't afford the rent were forced to search for homes in Jewish communities in surrounding communities. Jews who had lived in the ghetto without permission were expelled.

Significantly, a medal was issued in 1711 apparently celebrating (!) the event (Figure 32), this by the virulent anti-Semite Christian Wermuth, who had previously made several other anti-Semitic medals (see Figures 5, 8, 11, 12, 25, 29). The obverse of the medal depicts a father, mother and two children, hands outstretched in lament. Behind are seen the flames of the fire destroying the buildings, while untouched is the gunpowder magazine. The legend reads: "And Indeed a Good Thing That in Such a Manner Is Proved," Wermuth evidently being pleased with the outcome.

On reverse is a long Latin legend, translated as, "Oh, Miraculous No less than Wretched Event! Alas for That Fortunate Day, When at Frankfurt Am Main, the Street (i.e., the *Judengasse Ghetto*) of the Jews Was Destroyed by Fire, Rabbi Naphtali from Poland Being the Cause, and over a Twenty-four Hour Period Burned to the Ground, Though the Store of Gunpowder Was Safe and All the Houses of Christians Were Unharmed. Which Street Now Rises Again from the Rubble on the 23rd Day of March, Now That the Foundation of the Synagogue Has Been Rebuilt." As if this was not enough, Wermuth added on the rim of the medal a quotation from Symphosius, "It Pleased the Gods for the Jew to Be Thrown into the Flames", a harbinger of the horrors to come to the Jews in Nazi Germany.

In his outstanding book on Jewish Medals, Daniel Friedenberg attributed this quotation, incorrectly, to Plato. The word 'Symposi' in the legend was assumed to refer to Plato's work called 'The Symposium', but 'Symposi' refers to the author of late antiquity Symphosius (also seen as Symposius). He wrote short riddles in Latin, and this quotation refers to Riddle 47, where the solution to the riddle is 'incense' ('*tur*' in Latin). Perhaps Wermuth meant for the reader to replace in his mind the word 'tur' with something like 'Jude' — that is, "It pleased the gods for the Jew (rather than 'incense') to be thrown into the flames" (Ralph Rosen, personal communication).



**Figure 32. Memorial of the Ghetto Fire in Frankfurt Am Main**

Christian Wermuth, Germany, 1711, Silver struck medal, 44 mm. Reference: Friedenberp p.15; Kirschner 33 (Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

The fire in the Frankfort Ghetto was of such historical importance that the Jewish community of Frankfurt annually remembers its anniversary with a period of penance and fasting.

In spite of this fire and its disastrous consequences, Frankfurt continued to confine the Jews, being one of the last cities in Europe to allow them freedom of movement. In 1769, when the Jews petitioned the Frankfurt city council to leave the ghetto on Sunday afternoons, the council responded by stating their request was “... an example of the unbounded arrogance of this people, who expend every effort to take all opportunities to set themselves up as equals to the Christian citizens” (wikipedia).

# Medals Related to the Expulsion of Jews

Some of the events associated with expelling Jews from countries were of such significance that they were commemorated in medals issued centuries after their expulsion. One such medal is that of Albert (Albrecht) III, which was engraved in the eighteenth century by the renowned medalist Franz Schega as part of a series of 17 portrait medals of Bavarian rulers (Figure 33). These medals had images of the rulers on the obverse and a legend highlighting their major accomplishments on the reverse. As can be seen, although this medal was issued some three hundred years after the death of Albert III, Schega chose to feature on the reverse the fact that under Albert's leadership the Jews (and pirates) were driven out of Bohemia, the legend reading, as translated: "Born in 1396, Overseer of the Public Peace, Once the Throne of Bohemia Was Overthrown and the Jews and Pirates Were Driven out under His Leadership. 1460." This expulsion occurred between 1432 and 1442, during which time, with the instigation of the clergy, Duke Albert III succeeded in having all the Jews of Upper and Lower Bavaria expelled. The Jews continued to be excluded from Bavaria and Munich for almost three centuries thereafter. At that point, in the eighteenth century, during the Austrian occupation, the Jews were permitted to return only to be periodically persecuted and expelled again until more recently, during the Nazi period of the 1930s and 1940s, when most were either expelled, forced into labor camps or systematically gathered up *en masse* and murdered, acts in which, according to a detailed study by Daniel Goldhagen (1996), the general population in Germany and its occupied countries were willing participants and that "In their eyes, *der Jude* is not merely a heinous capital criminal. He is a terrestrial demon" (See also *Endnote 3*). One might conclude that the demonic Jew espoused by Nazi Germany is not so unlike the demonic *Jude* depicted in the anti-Semitic medals shown here minted centuries ago.



**Figure 33. Albert (Albrecht) III der Fromme, Duke of Bavaria-Munich**

Franz Andreas Schega: Germany, c.1766-1770, Silver struck medal, 39 mm

Reference: Forrer V, 377 no. 9; Weiss BW807

(Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)

A medal which stands in stark contrast to that commemorating the expulsion of Jews was issued in the Netherlands; namely, one that celebrates the repeal of the edict expelling Jews from Prague (Figure 34).

Based on the trumped-up charge that the Jews were collaborating with foreigners, in 1744, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria expelled all the Jews from Prague and the rest of Bohemia. Protests from several countries convinced the Empress to revoke the edict. This medal celebrates the successful intervention of the Jewish communities of Europe against the expulsion edict issued by Maria Theresa.

The obverse shows the Empress sitting on her throne, with figures of Love and Justice on either side. She is shown handing down the repeal of the edict expelling Jews from Prague. A warrior pleads the cause of a rabbi standing behind. The Latin legend may be translated as "Exile Threatened"; below is a variation of the quotation from 1 Samuel 22:15, "May the Queen not suspect her loyal subjects of such things in such a way", referring to the false accusation that the Jews had betrayed Prague to the Prussians. The reverse shows the temple of Jerusalem with the symbolic burning of the original Edict of Expulsion of Jews from Prague. Coats of arms adorn the facade in honor of the countries protesting the edict. The legend (translated) reads: "Decree Revoked" and a rephrase of the quotation from Esther 9:28 "These are the days that should be remembered by all generations in every country throughout the world" (From Friedenbergl).



**Figure 34. Repeal of Edict Expelling Jews from Prague**

N. van Swinderen, Holy Roman Empire, Silver struck medal, 1745. 65 mm. Reference: Van Loon 205 (Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

A related medal, in this case celebrating the revocation of an edict expelling Jews from England, is discussed below.

# ANTI-SEMITISM IN ENGLAND

Although the majority of religious oppression of Jews occurred in continental Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe and Russia (although France, Spain and Portugal certainly cannot be excluded), there is ample evidence of its prevalence in England. In fact, the history of religious persecution in England goes back centuries, beginning soon after 1066, when William the Conqueror won the Battle of Hastings and took over the crown of England. Just a little over one hundred years later anti-Semitism was already widespread. On a number of occasions riots were sparked in which many Jews were murdered, most famously during the crusades of 1189 and 1190 when hundreds of Jews were massacred in the cities of York and London. The situation only got worse for Jews as the 13th century progressed. In 1218, England became one of the first European nation to require Jews to wear a marking badge, predating by more than seven centuries the practice forced upon the Jews of Germany by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime.

In both Christian and Islamic countries, persons not of the dominant religion were intermittently compelled by sumptuary laws to wear badges, hats, bells or other items of clothing that distinguished them from members of the dominant religious group. This stricture applied particularly to Jews, for not only Christians but also Muslims required Jews to wear distinguishing marks and clothing. A genizah document of 1121 describes decrees in Baghdad forcing Jews to wear: "...two yellow badges, one on the headgear and one on the neck. Furthermore, each Jew must hang round his neck a piece of lead ... He also has to wear a belt round his waist. The women have to wear one red and one black shoe and have a small bell on their necks or shoes..." (Johnson).

In 1274, Edward I of England enacted the Statute of Jewry, which also included a requirement: "Each Jew, after he is seven years old, shall wear a distinguishing mark on his outer garment, that is to say, in the form of two Tables joined, of yellow felt of the length of six inches and of the breadth of three inches" [*A Day in the Life of 13<sup>th</sup> Century England*, (BBC)].

The wearing of a yellow badge that was compulsory for Jews in some parts of Europe in the Middle Ages was revived in Germany by the Nazis during the Second World War (see section below on Medals Related to the Holocaust).

The persecution of Jews in England reached a zenith in 1290, when Edward I issued an edict ordering the entire population of English Jews expelled from the country (Endnote 4). All their property was seized by the crown and all outstanding debts payable to Jews were transferred to the King's name. The expulsion edict remained in force for the rest of the Middle Ages; Jews as a group were not allowed to formally return to England again until almost 400 years later, in 1656, during the Commonwealth period of Oliver Cromwell (Figure 35). English laws restricting the activity of Jews continued, however, until fairly modern times as it wasn't until late in the 19th century that statutes preventing Jews from even serving in Parliament were rescinded and English Jews received formal emancipation.



**Figure 35. Oliver Cromwell and Masaniello**

Wouter Müller: England/ Italy, 1658, Silver cast medal, 70 mm

Reference: M.I., i, 432/78; Eimer 47/198; Jones, 1979; 51/110; Med. Hist. Engl. 64/10; Scher 39/26; Weiss BW178 (Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)

The medal consists of two embossed, repoussé plates, chased, and united by a broad rim.

This medal was inspired by the rise to prominence of two commoners, considered remarkable in the 17th century: Tommaso Aniello and Oliver Cromwell.

Tommaso Aniello, called Masaniello (1620?-1647), was a fisherman, turned Neapolitan revolutionist, who in 1647 led a revolt of the lower classes against the Spanish rulers of Naples and the Neapolitan nobility.

The reverse of this medal compares Masaniello's revolt with that of Cromwell's in England. Like that in Naples, the English commoners and their representatives in parliament grew tired of the excesses of the nobility, in this case the rule of Charles I. During his reign, Cromwell's policy was both anti-Stuart and pro-Protestant, his most notable achievement being his championing a degree of unprecedented religious freedom, including his decision to permit the resettlement of Jews back into England after more than 350 years of banishment.

The act by Oliver Cromwell in 1656 to allow Jews to resettle in England was of such importance that three centuries later a medal was issued in England commemorating the three hundredth anniversary of this historic event (Figure 36). The obverse of the medal shows busts of Oliver Cromwell and Menasseh ben Israel, a Dutch rabbi who successfully petitioned Cromwell to rescind the expulsion of the Jews; a menorah below. The reverse depicts a woman reading a scroll reading 1656 ✠ 1956 and holding a plaque reading, in Hebrew, *Thou Shalt Know That Thy Tent Is in Peace*, Job. V. 24.



**Figure 36. Resettlement of Jews in Great Britain, Tercentenary**  
 Paul Vincze, England, 1956, Bronze struck medal, 38 mm. Reference: Eimer 2097; BHM 4467  
 (Image courtesy of Christopher Eimer)

## ANTI-SEMITISM IN FRANCE

**A**nti-Semitism in France, like that in other countries in Europe, goes back centuries, and, like that elsewhere, usually took various forms, including stereotyping Jews, segregation, and expulsion of Jews from cities and even from the country as a whole. The most notable expulsions of Jews that occurred in the 12<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup> centuries were from Paris by Philip Augustus in 1182, and from the whole of France by Louis IX in 1254, by Charles IV in 1306, by Charles V in 1322 and by Charles VI in 1394. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Jews were blamed for the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871). During World War II, some 75,000 French Jews, including about 11,000 children, were sent to Nazi death camps.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, anti-Jewish acts in France were often excused by the antagonism many French citizens had (particularly those among the Muslim community), regarding the disputes between the Palestinians and Israel. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century alone thousands of anti-Semitic actions and threats were recorded in France, the murder of several people at a Jewish supermarket in Paris in January, 2015, being one example of many. Many equated attacks against Jews and destruction of Jewish property and synagogues in France as a statement against the policies of Israel (Endnote 5). This may be viewed as analogous to attacking Catholics or destroying Catholic Churches in France as a protest against the policies of the Vatican state, which, thankfully, does not occur.

Figure 37 shows a medal issued in France about 1890 during the 3<sup>rd</sup> republic in support of an anti-Jewish alliance. It presents on the obverse a scene of a Jew holding a money bag, who is cowering on the ground while a man with his foot on him is beating him with a switch; a star above and a rising sun and church is seen in the background. Above is written, translated from the French: "In France, the French." The inscription below reads: "Always!! He Is Always the Enemy!!!" We know the figure on the ground is a Jew because he is labeled *LE JUIF* (the Jew).

The reverse shows clasped hands from heaven in front of a globe surmounted by a cross. The inscription, loosely translated from the French, reads: "The Jewish People Stripped Us and Want to Enslave Us. So Let Us Unite Against Him and Especially Avoid Him; It Is Our Sacred Duty", and below, "Anti-Jewish Alliance." Above is the legend, "*Garde a Vous!*" (Be on Guard!)

Further evidence that anti-Semitism is entrenched in French culture is the fact that the French word *juif* is defined in The New Cassell's French Dictionary as a 'grasping usurer'.



**Figure 37. Propaganda Medal in Support of an Anti-Jewish Alliance in France**

Unknown artist, France, ca. 1890, silvered bronze struck medal with suspension loop, 31 mm (Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

It is perhaps no coincidence that this anti-Semitic medal was issued at about the same period as that of the Dreyfus Affair of 1894.

Alfred Dreyfus was a French artillery officer of Jewish background who was accused of conspiracy and espionage and whose trial and conviction in 1894 on charges of treason became one of the most tense political dramas in modern French history. Known today as the Dreyfus Affair, the incident was widely regarded as an anti-Semitic act perpetrated by the French military brass to protect one of its own members. Dreyfus was summarily convicted in a secret court martial, publicly stripped of his army rank, and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island in French Guiana. Championed by leading artists and intellectuals like Émile Zola, after years in confinement, Dreyfus was finally released from prison in 1899, but it was not until 1906 that he was officially exonerated by a military commission and readmitted into the army. However, when Dreyfus' reinstatement came to a vote in parliament, General Auguste Mercier, who was Minister of War and who supported Dreyfus' conviction, refused to accept their verdict. Mercier immediately became a hero to the anti-Dreyfusard anti-Semites, so much so that there arose petitions for a gold medal to be made in his honor. (See Dreyfus, 1906).

Despite the imprisonment of Dreyfus based on false testimony, in 1906 a medal was, in fact, issued in homage to General Auguste Mercier (Figure 38). The medal pays tribute to him in his role in sentencing Dreyfus, as it refers to the "Traitor Dreyfus" in the legend above his bust on the obverse, and on the reverse legend, repeats his words spoken at the tribune regarding his opposition to their reinstatement of Dreyfus: "My conviction gained by the debates of 1899 has in no way shaken my conscience and does not allow me to join you to vote and emit words pronounced by the senate July 18, 1906."



**Figure 38. Dreyfus Affair: General Auguste Mercier**

J. Baffier, France, 1906, Bronze struck medal, 50 mm

(Image courtesy of William Rosenblum)

While French history is replete with examples of anti-Semitism, there was a brief period during the time of Napoleon Bonaparte that stands out as a notable exception. Although his actions were self-serving, Napoleon is viewed as one of the most prominent figures in the history of Jewish emancipation. Needing Jewish soldiers, in 1806, Napoleon convened a meeting with Jewish notables (called the Grand Sanhedrin) for the purpose of relieving the Jews from their dietary laws, thus enabling them to serve in the French army. In return the Jews received religious freedom and state protection in the French empire. This event was commemorated by the issuance of a medal (Figure 39), the obverse of which shows a bust of Napoleon Bonaparte and the reverse a subservient Moses handing the Tablets of the Law to Napoleon.



**Figure 39. The Grand Sanhedrin of Napoleon**

Alexis Depaulis and Nicholas Brenet, France, 1806, silver struck medal, 41 mm (Friedenberg p. 40) (Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

# RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY IN THE NEW WORLD

Religious persecution and bigotry were certainly not confined just to Europe. Early in the history of America, in some cases even before the colonies became the United States of America, several of the colonial states passed laws restricting the rights of individuals based on their religion. These strictures applied especially to Jews.

A small number of Jews, some of whom arrived in Boston in 1649, subsequently were given a stipend from the Puritans there on condition they leave and go back to Holland. A few years later, in 1654, fearing the return of the Inquisition when Portugal took over the Dutch colony in Recife, Brazil, a group of Dutch Jewish settlers arrived in New Amsterdam (a Dutch settlement established at the southern tip of Manhattan Island, now part of New York City). However, the Governor of New Amsterdam, Peter Stuyvesant, protested against the settlement of Jews, referring to them as ‘a deceitful race’ and an ‘abominable religion’ and ‘hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ’, who worshiped ‘the feet of Mammon’. Nevertheless, the Jewish settlers prevailed and, largely through the efforts of Asser Levy and some members of the Dutch West India Company, established the first, albeit small, Jewish community in North America (Congregation Shearith Israel), an event commemorated by the issuance of a number of medals. One, produced in 1999 by the Jewish-American Hall of Fame, shows on the obverse the settlers arriving in New Amsterdam, with the figure of Asser Levy with quill and rifle (Figure 40). The reverse legend, expressing their hope, reads, “They Can Rest Protected from Tyranny and Oppression Here.”



**Figure 40. First Jewish Settlers in America, 1654**

Alex Shagin, USA, 1999, Bronze struck medal, 49x47mm

(Image courtesy of Mel Wacks)

Another medal officially celebrates 350 years of Jewish life in America (Figure 41). On the obverse a group of settlers, positioned in the shape of a ship’s prow, is seen coming to the American shores, represented by stars and stripes; the legend is the well-known biblical phrase from Leviticus (that is also inscribed on the Liberty

Bell), "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land", in English and Hebrew. On the reverse, below a stylized city skyline, the legend reads "350 Years of Jewish Life in America 1654 [menorah logo] 2004." Above the skyline is an extensive excerpt from George Washington's letter sent in 1790 to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island (now the Touro Synagogue), expressing his opposition to bigotry and persecution of the Jewish citizens. It reads: "The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for giving to Mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection, should demean themselves as good citizens. May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while everyone shall sit under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid." Fittingly, the last phrases are taken from the Old Testament of the Bible.



**Figure 41. 350 Years of Jewish Life in America**  
 Dana Krinsky, USA, 2004, Bronze struck medal, 76 mm  
 (Image courtesy of Mel Wacks)

Although many of the early Jews settled in New York, by 1658, some, also seeking religious liberty, had arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, establishing a Jewish community there. Some later settled in the colony of South Carolina. South Carolina was one of the most progressive of the original colonies, having as its charter, drawn up by John Locke in 1669, provisions which granted liberty of conscience to all settlers, expressly noting 'Jews, heathens, and dissenters'. By 1800 South Carolina had the largest Jewish population of any in the United States, mainly Sephardic Jews who had emigrated from Portugal and Spain.

Even though Jews were welcomed in some states in the newly-formed United States of America, there was still significant intolerance toward them. In 1815, Secretary of State, James Monroe removed Mordecai Manuel Noah, the first Jew to have diplomatic status, from his position as US Consul in Tunis because he was Jewish, stating that, “the religion which you profess [is] an obstacle to the exercise of your consular functions.” Noah protested this decision and in the process received backing from John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who wrote letters supporting the separation of church and state and tolerance for Jews. During the Civil War, while some 7,000 Jews were serving as soldiers for the North, General Ulysses S. Grant issued an order reading, “The Jews as a class, violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department, and also Departmental orders, are hereby expelled from the Department.” One month later, President Lincoln revoked the order (Johnson).

Anti-Jewish expressions continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as exemplified by this propaganda cartoon published in 1896 (Figure 42). Titled *History Repeats Itself*, it shows a Jew hanging in a Christ-like manner from a cross labeled House-Senate and headed by a sign reading “This is US (Uncle Sam) in the hands of the Jews”, and “He trusted in God: let him deliver him now—etc. (Matt. XXVII.43)”, once more using scriptures to support the author’s malice toward Jews. An insert shows a person, obviously meant to represent a Jew, hanging from a tree with the caption: “What Judas ought to do”, a depiction not too dissimilar to that found in the Hanging Jew medals distributed in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany (see Figures 8, 9).



**Figure 42. History Repeats Itself. This is the US in the Hands of the Jews.**

Anti-Semitic political cartoon published in the April 15, 1896 issue of *Sound Money* magazine, authored by Watson Heston. The cartoon portrays Uncle Sam being crucified like Jesus. Two figures labeled "Wall Street Pirates" with caricatured Jewish features poke him with a spear and raise a poisoned sponge to his lips. The tub of poison is labeled "Debt", the poisoned sponge "Interest on Bonds", and the spear "Single Gold Standard." Below, figures labeled "Republicanism" (Caricature of James G. Blaine) and "Democracy" (Caricature of Grover Cleveland) pick Uncle Sam's pockets. (From Wikimedia)

The twentieth century also provides instances of anti-Semitic bigotry as illustrated by historical medals. One such example of anti-Jewish propaganda is revealed by commentaries surrounding a medal issued in the United States in 1933 of the newly-elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. This medal, while on its face is not anti-Semitic, it has been used to promote anti-Jewish invectives (Figure 43). On the obverse is an image of President Roosevelt with the flag of the United States and the American Eagle. On the reverse can be seen a Star of David with the Hebrew inscription within the star translated as 'Good Luck'. The star is surrounded by the legend HEALTH. WEALTH. PROSPERITY. In 1936, the notorious anti-Semite and Nazi propagandist, Robert Edward Edmondson, twisted the meaning of this medal in an article he wrote titled: *"Moe" Roosevelt Wins a Six-Point Solomon Star Medal*. He used the medal, claiming it as evidence, in his view, of the inordinate influence Jews had on the Roosevelt administration, publishing his interpretation of the reverse inscription to mean: "Good Luck and Wisdom to Franklin D. Roosevelt, our Modern Moses, Leading Jewry in 'The Promised Land' (America) under the 'Seal of Solomon'." He referred to the Star of David on the medal as the 'Solomon Star', the 'synagogue symbol of possession and world power'. Edmondson published numerous other anti-Jewish tracts, writing among other things, that Roosevelt was of Jewish ancestry— as if this in itself was an indictment of him—being a descendant of Claes Martenssen van Roosevelt of The Netherlands, whom Edmondson referred to as 'Rosenvelt'. Citing this medal and other material mentioned in the article, Edmondson concludes with: "This evidence merely adds more indisputable proof that the Roosevelt Communistic Administration is dominated by 'Invisible Jewish Leadership'." Edmondson was eventually tried for sedition in what became known as The Great Sedition Trial of 1944. Though the trial ended in a mistrial, Edmondson is widely believed by U.S. intelligence to have been an agent for Nazi Germany. (Wikipedia).



**Figure 43. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

Unknown artist: USA, 1933, Bronze, 31 mm. Medal issued by a Jewish organization in New York.  
(Image courtesy of Ira Rezak).

All these forms of bigotry were nothing compared to what was happening in the Old World.

Religious and racial bigotry in America was directed not only toward Jews but to other groups as well. North Carolina denied public office to all non-Protestants. Maryland banned non-Christians from holding public office or practicing law. Pennsylvania had laws preventing many business activities on the 'Lord's Day', i.e., on Sunday. These laws were passed despite the fact that much of the migration from Europe to North America in the seventeenth century took place because people were looking for more religious freedom. The Puritans and Pilgrims, for example, settled in the New World at least in part to pursue their own religious doctrines unfettered. Nevertheless, they showed marked hostility to other faiths, so much so that several religious groups were forced to establish their own doctrinal enclaves elsewhere. Many Baptists settled in Rhode Island and later moved to South Carolina, Quakers and Lutherans to Pennsylvania, Roman Catholics to Maryland, Anglicans to Virginia and Mormons ultimately to Utah. In most cases, the new settlers, in turn, forced out the established Native American Indian Nations, who had been living there for centuries (Weiss, 2012, 2013). The enormity of the issue of enslavement of African Americans and other Black Africans deserves a treatise of its own.

Some individuals of the period stand out as champions of religious liberty. Roger Williams, an early proponent for the separation of church and state, found himself unwelcome in the Massachusetts Colony because of his liberal religious beliefs. In 1636, he founded the Colony of Rhode Island where a number of non-Puritan colonists as well as others who believed in religious freedom joined him. His progressive attitudes regarding religious tolerance extended to Jews as well, for in 1658, the small colony of Newport, Rhode Island received its first Jewish residents, a group of fifteen families who emigrated from Barbados, where a Sephardi Jewish community had existed since the 1620s. Upon their arrival they formalized a new congregation in Newport (the second oldest Jewish congregation in America) calling themselves 'Yeshuat Israel'.

William Penn, a Quaker who supported peaceful relations with the Native American Indians (Figure 44), was also a leader in the fight for religious liberty. He and his agents encouraged German emigration to Pennsylvania by circulating promotional literature touting the economic advantages of Pennsylvania as well as the religious liberty available there. Largely because of his liberal beliefs, many different religious groups settled in Pennsylvania, the state which he founded and which bears his name. The legend on the medal "By Deeds of Peace" was Penn's favorite motto.



**Figure 44. William Penn Memorial**

L. Pingo, England, 1718, Silver struck meda 40 mm. Penn with Native American Indian clasp hands  
Reference: Eimer 482; BHM 201; Betts 531; MI ii, 438/40 (Image courtesy of Christopher Eimer)

# MEDALS OF TOLERATION

Not all medals were made to denigrate the Jews. Some were issued to support or encourage toleration. (One of these has already been considered elsewhere: Figure 34, *Repeal of Edict Expelling Jews from Prague*). In 1503, during the pontificate of Julius II (Figure 45) another one was produced, this one commemorating the end of a long period of persecution of Jews.



**Figure 45. Portrait of Pope Julius II**  
Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino), oil on poplar wood, ca 1512  
Born Giuliano della Rovere, Julius II was Pope from 1503 to his death in 1513. His papacy was marked by an active foreign policy, ambitious building projects (commissioned the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica), and patronage for the arts (commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel).

The medal is a uniface, hollow cast piece (Figure 46), showing a bust of a figure thought to be that of Benjamin Beer, the son of the physician Elijah ben Sabbetai Beer, but because of the date of the medal, this has been questioned. To get around this difficulty, it has been suggested that the date may not indicate the time of issuance of the piece but rather the future time when Benjamin Beer assumed the Messiah would come, but this issue remains unclear (See Friedenbergl).

Friedenberg has devoted several pages to this enigmatic medal. His overall conclusion is that it reflects the state of mind of the Jews in that period (the medal's date, M.III.D., can be interpreted either as 1497 or 1503). The Jews had had a disastrous 200 or so years, having been expelled from France in 1306, massacred in Germany in the mid-1300s and finally subjected to every type of discrimination, humiliation and torture in Spain, beginning in 1391 and culminating in the Inquisition starting in 1478, with all of its impending cataclysms for the Jews. The legend may be interpreted as an expectation, or at least hope, for the coming of the Messiah. It has been translated from the Hebrew in various ways, that in Friedenbergl being, "By the decree of Him who is the Guide of the Universe, blessed be He, by His eternal will. When all justice ceased and consideration failed, I beheld the length of that period reaching the appointed end of exile; but reflecting on the ways of Providence, as by Eli Romi the spiritual traces of them yet remain (then) I rejoiced and I fully hope in the Redemption, oh eternal, omnipotent God who art great and forgiving."

The catalog description of this medal in the Busso Peus-Nacht auction, from which the image of the medal was obtained (Figure 46), also states that it represents the end of the persecution of Jews during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Given what they have gone through up to this period, such an interpretation has some validity. They also point out other interpretations, however, in that it may actually be a mockery medal ridiculing the end-time prophets. It is noteworthy that this medal predates by about one century that of Shabbatai Tzvi, a person who had messianic leanings and about whom a medal was issued (shown earlier, Figure 29).



**Figure 46. Beer Medal: End of the Persecution of Jews during the Pontificate of Julius II**  
 Unknown medallist, 1503, Bronze cast medal, 166 mm. Reference: Armand II, 142, 16; Friedenberp p.72.  
 Benjamin Beer was the son of a famous Jewish doctor of the 15th century.  
 (Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

Empress Maria Teresa of Austria, while intolerant toward anyone not Roman Catholic, had a special animosity toward Jews and was considered to be the most anti-Semitic monarch of her time. During her reign, she proposed expelling all the Jews from her hereditary dominions, and in 1777 she wrote of the Jews: "I know of no greater plague than this race, which on account of its deceit, usury and avarice is driving my subjects into beggary. Therefore as far as possible, the Jews are to be kept away and avoided." Her son Joseph II, who followed her as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, did not share these bigoted views, and in 1781 granted religious toleration to Protestants and partial toleration to Jews (Patent of Toleration, enacted in 1781) and a year later extended full religious freedom to the Jewish population (Edict of Tolerance). These edicts were celebrated by the striking of medals commemorating his historic acts.

One of these (Figure 47) depicts on the obverse a bust of Joseph II with the legend reading "Love and Happiness of Mankind." The reverse legend translates as: "The One Who Commands that All Live Fully." A child stands before a base on which is inscribed: "Freedom of Worship Was Given by Joseph II to Protestants and Jews in His Empire in 1781." (Although some additional guarantees were given to Jews at that time, their full civil rights were not established until 1782)



**Figure 47. Edict of Emancipation**

Johann Leonhard Oexlein. Holy Roman Empire, Archduchy of Austria, 1781, Silver struck medal, 45 mm. Reference: Friedenbergs p.36.  
(Image courtesy of Tradart)

A medal with a similar theme (Figure 48) was issued in 1782 by Dutch Jews to commemorate the directives of Emperor Joseph II granting religious liberties to Protestants and Jews. On the obverse is a bust of Joseph II, with an inscription reading "Toleration Ordered." The reverse shows a radiant triangle (representing the Holy Trinity) over a crowned eagle, which holds a banner ("In God's Name"), protecting three figures (a Bishop, Pastor and Rabbi), representing the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religious faiths, respectively. The legend above the eagle reads "Under its Wings, it Protects Everyone", and below "These Friends 1782." Ironically, this medal was engraved by Johann Christian Reich, the same medallist who made the notorious anti-Semitic *Korn Jude* Medals of the 1770s.



**Figure 48. Religious Freedom Granted to Jews and Protestants.**

Johann Christian Reich, Pewter struck medal, 1782, Germany, 44 mm  
Friedenberg p. 37

(Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

A century later this event was still celebrated by the issuance of a medal commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Edict of Toleration by Joseph II (Figure 49).



**Figure 49. One Hundredth Anniversary of the Edict of Toleration.**

Unknown medallist, Bronze struck medal, 1881, 30mm. The legend on the reverse refers to the 100th anniversary of the Edict proclaimed on 17 October 1781. (Image courtesy of William Rosenblum)

Still another medal, issued in 1808, celebrates the enfranchisement of the Jews of the Kingdom of Westphalia, a region in Germany known for the 1648 Peace of Westphalia which ended the Thirty Years' War. The obverse of this medal (Figure 50) shows two winged genii embracing between religious symbols, one representing Christianity the other Judaism, the legend reading "United in the Kingdom of Westphalia." The reverse shows a kneeling Jewish woman in prayer before the Tablets of the Law which are leaning against a flaming altar; broken chains are seen at her feet. This medal refers to the then-unusual granting of rights to the Jews of Westphalia by Jerome Bonaparte, proconsul for Napoleon Bonaparte. The native Germans revoked this edict when they regained power; only in France did the Napoleonic Code, insuring Jewish equality, remain in force.



**Figure 50. Granting Equality to Jews of Westphalia**

Abrahamson, Germany, Bronze struck medal, 1808, 43 mm. Reference: Friedenber, p.41  
(Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

Figure 51 shows another medal of toleration, this one related to the emancipation of Jews and Christians by a country dominated by Muslims. It was issued in 1850 on the occasion of reforms for the equality of rights of Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The obverse shows British ambassador Stratford de Redcliffe holding a staff with Abdülmeceid I, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. On the staff are flags with symbols of the three religious communities: the Muslim Crescent, Christian Cross and the Hebrew Tablets of the Law. In the background, the sun rises over the city of Istanbul. In front of the Sultan are representatives of the Jewish, Christian Orthodox and Muslim communities. The inscription reads: "For All, Equal rights." On the reverse is an inscription in French translated as: "Universal Association for the Emancipation of Christians and Israeli Peoples of the Middle East"; in the center is written: "And Conservation of the Ottoman Empire in the Conditions: 1° of Civil Equality and Policy; 2° of Complete Religious Freedom; 3° of the Separation of the Spiritual and Temporal; 4° of the Right of Ownership Granted to Foreigners."

One might speculate that this formal act of toleration toward Jews and Christians by Abdülmeçid may have been influenced by the fact that his mother Bezmiâlem was believed to be a Jewess (or some say a Christian), who converted to Islam before marrying Sultan Mahmud II, although it must also be remembered that traditional Islam recognizes both Moses and Jesus as prophets, who preceded the Prophet Mohammad.



**Figure 51. Emancipation of Christian and Israeli Peoples of the Middle East**

Emile Rogat, Ottoman Empire, Turkey, 1850, Bronze struck medal, 61 mm.

(Image courtesy of Tradart)

Many medals have been issued celebrating Jews and their accomplishments. One of the earliest, thought to be by the eminent Italian medallist, Pastorino de' Pastorini, and considered to be an extraordinary historical document of one of the most prominent Jewish families of the sixteenth century, is shown in figure 52. It is a uniface medal, made in Portugal about 1528, of the niece of her more famous aunt of the same name, Gracia Mendes Nasi. The finely sculptured piece portrays a young woman wearing a rich brooch. Around the figure is a Hebrew inscription of her name.



**Figure 52. Gracia Nasi, the Younger**

Pastorino de' Pastorini?, Belgium, ca. 1558, Bronze cast uniface medal, 62 mm (Image courtesy of Busso Peus Nacht.)

Gracia Mendes Nasi, the elder, was a diplomat, philanthropist and businesswoman and one of the wealthiest Jewish women of Renaissance Europe. The family originally was from Spain but fled to Portugal in 1492 when the Catholic Monarchs, Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon, expelled the Jews from Spain. In 1497, along with all the other Jews living in Portugal at that time, they were forcibly converted to Catholicism, becoming *Conversos* (also called Crypto-Jews, Marranos and Secret Jews). Later in life, Gracia Nasi devoted much of her time to helping hundreds of *Conversos* escape from the Inquisition.

An example of a medal that neither promotes nor opposes anti-Semitic bigotry but serves as a reminder of the consequences of religious intolerance is shown in figure 53.

In the mid nineteenth century the Belgian medallist Jacques Wiener engraved a series of medals depicting the most magnificent monuments in Europe. One of these commemorated the conservative synagogue in *der Glockengasse* (the Bell Lane) in Cologne, Germany. Funding for the new synagogue was provided by Abraham Oppenheim (whose name is mentioned in the Hebrew inscription on the medal), a son of the banker Salomon Oppenheim. The inauguration of this magnificent, neo-Islamic synagogue took place in 1861.



**Figure 53. Synagogue at Cologne**

Jacques Wiener: Germany, 1861, Bronze struck medal, 59 mm

Obv: View of the exterior Rev: View of interior Hebrew inscriptions, translated on the right as, "Abraham Oppenheim Built a House of God for the People of Cologne"; and on the left as, "It was Rededicated on the 23rd of Elul. Remember that God is good."

Reference: Van Hoydonck #182; Reinecke 61; Eidlitz, 187/1109; Weiss BW656.

(Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)

The Synagogue in Cologne, along with many other Jewish institutions, was sacked and burned by the Nazis in 1938, during what is commonly known as '*Kristallnacht*' (Night of the Broken Glass) (Figure 54). Cologne's Modern Opera house now sits on the site of the 19th century *Glockengasse Synagogue*. This synagogue was never rebuilt, although another one, the *Roonstrasse Synagogue* of Cologne, also destroyed during *Kristallnacht*, was rebuilt in the 1950s.



**Figure 54. Burning of Synagogue on "Kristallnacht"**

In November 1938, a pogrom (a series of coordinated attacks) against Jews throughout Nazi Germany and Austria were carried out by paramilitary forces and non-Jewish civilians. Over 7000 Jewish businesses, homes, hospitals and schools were destroyed and over 1000 synagogues were burned while German authorities looked on without intervening. The name *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) derives from the shards of broken glass that littered the streets after Jewish-owned buildings had their windows smashed. (Wikipedia)

# MEDALS RELATED TO THE HOLOCAUST

Long before the Holocaust, Jews were subjected to a variety of persecutions and physical assaults. These coordinated attacks against Jews, called 'pogroms', were generally initiated by official agents of the state, often with the support of local vigilantes. They were most commonly seen in Russia but occurred in other parts of Europe as well. Shown in figure 55 is a depiction of one such pogrom that took place in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1819, shortly after the emancipation of the Jews by Napoleon, an event that many Germans resented. The engraving shows two peasant women assaulting a Jew with pitchfork and broom. A well-dressed man, wearing tails and a six-button waistcoat, is holding another Jew by the throat and is about to hit him with a stick. Seen also, supporting the attack, are soldiers on horseback, giving the violence official sanction.



**Figure 55. Riot against Jews (Pogrom) in Frankfurt.**

Etching by Johann Michael Voltz, 1819.  
(Image from Amos Elon in Wikipedia).

Some medals have been made to memorialize the plight of the Jews during pogroms. One such is shown below (Figure 56). Depicted on the obverse is an old Jewish man on his knees, with his hands outstretched to the sky in prayer. Next to him are the corpses of his wife and child who were murdered; in the background is seen the murderous crowd running away from the slaughter. The Hebrew inscription reads the familiar prayer of Jews, *Shema Israel* (Hear O Israel). Inscribed on the reverse is a legend translated as, "For the Victims of the Pogrom" and with a reference to Psalm 44:27. The Hebrew inscription reads "Arise to Assist Us", which are the first words of this psalm, the full verse, taken from the *Tanakh*, being "Arise to Assist Us and Redeem Us for the Sake of Your Kindness." [The *Tanakh* or Hebrew Scriptures is the common textual source of the several canonical editions of the Christian Old Testament; it is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of each of the three traditional subdivisions: *Torah* ("Teaching", also known as the Five Books of Moses), *Nevi'im* ("Prophets") and *Ketuvim* ("Writings")].



**Figure 56. For Victims of the Jewish Pogroms in Eastern Europe**

Rachel Margaretha van Dantzig, The Netherlands, 1919. Silver Plaquette, 24 mm x 21 mm. Reference: Polak 64. (Image courtesy of Tradart)

Later, as Adolph Hitler gained power in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s, medallic objects were distributed to German subjects depicting Jews as evil. One such anti-Semitic object is shown in figure 57. This item, which was a pin designed to be worn on clothing, shows images of 'good' and 'evil', a stalwart Germanic type with sword and shovel radiating rays of light, and a wicked and wild-looking figure with a Star of David and Bolshevik-type hat, wielding a whip with flames burning from behind. The legend in old German lettering gives the viewer the choice of "International Peace or Jewish Dictatorship." These images of "Germania" versus "Judeo-Bolshevism" date from the street-fighting period when armed militias roamed German streets, beating and humiliating Jews.



**Figure 57. Anti-Semitic Pin**

Unknown artist, Germany/Austria, late 1920's-early 1930's, Round pressed aluminum pin with clasp, 30mm. (Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Ariah).

Several medals issued later, during the period of Nazi Germany, were designed in attempts to provide justification for the heinous acts perpetrated against the Jewish community. One of these, issued in 1939 titled "Why We Fight", is shown below (Figure 58). The obverse depicts a German soldier with industrial and agricultural workers, the legend reading (translated), "Greater Germany Fights for Peace against the Shame-Treaty of Versailles." On the reverse can be seen a large caricatured 'Jewish' figure wearing a Star of David, with flames behind him and images of money and weaponry before him, with the legend below reading, "For What Do Our Enemies Fight."



**Figure 58. Why We Fight**

Unidentified medallist, Germany, 1939, Zinc struck medal, 41 mm.

Reference: Kirschner Nr. 49.

(Image courtesy of Alex Ben-Arieh)

Numerous medals were issued to memorialize the plight of the Jews during the era of World War II (Szperling *et al.*, 2010). One, produced as a tribute to the millions of Jews who died in the Holocaust (Figure 59), depicts on the obverse a mother, clasping her two children in a protective embrace while under the watchful eye of an armed guard. They are standing on a railroad station with many others before being herded onto the cattle car that will transport them to one of the Nazi death camps. Sewn to their garments is the 'Star of David,' which every Jew was forced to wear. The reverse shows a shattered oak stump with a tribute to the collection of American numismatist Maurice Frankenhuis. Maurice Frankenhuis, who commissioned this medal, was a Dutch citizen of Jewish descent and a medallist in his own right. He spent a good part of his life building two huge collections of War memorabilia, one for World War I and one for World War II, the latter of which includes an extensive collection of coins, medals and other memorabilia related to the Holocaust; all were ultimately donated to museums in England and Israel.



**Figure 59. Holocaust Commemorative Medal: Tribute to the Six Million Martyrs**

Elizabeth Weistrop, USA, 1960, Bronze medal, 77 mm.

(Image courtesy of Aaron Oppenheim)

As this medal shows, all Jews, even small children, were required to wear this emblem on their clothing, as documented by this contemporary photograph taken in 1942 in Berlin, Germany (Figure 60).



**Figure 60. Jewish Children Wearing Star of David**

Photograph of Jewish Children in Berlin, Germany, 1942.

(Wikipedia)

It may be recalled that in the Netherlands some non-Jewish students courageously attempted to put self-made stars onto their clothing; they were promptly arrested and sent to a Nazi concentration camp in the Netherlands for a couple of weeks. Jews who refused to wear the star were transported to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, to a certain death.

A number of medals were issued to memorialize the horrors of the Holocaust (Szperling *et al.*, 2010), several depicting specific Nazi concentration camps throughout Europe. A more general medal commemorating the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of the Death Camps is shown in Figure 61. On it can be seen on the

obverse a prisoner watched over by a guard dog against a background of a concentration camp, a gas chamber, and a crematorium all surrounded by barbed wire, with the inscription “Never Again (in French) 1939-1945.” On the reverse is a blank space to engrave the name of the survivor.



**Figure 61. Anniversary of the Liberation of the Death Camps**  
Pierre-Fernand Provost: France, 1980, Bronze struck medal, 68 mm.  
(Image courtesy of William Rosenblum)

## ANTI-SEMITIC OR NOT?

The question might fairly be asked as to which medals should be unequivocally categorized as anti-Semitic. There is not universal agreement among the authors who have considered this question; several medals are deemed anti-Semitic by some, but not by all writers. Friedenber, for example, points out that a number of medals, considered anti-Semitic by some scholars, are ambiguous in their meaning. As evidence, he documents medals which may have a similar iconography to that which has been used in the past on medals that are clearly anti-Semitic in nature but do not explicitly mention Jews in their legends. His point is well taken in that one should not jump to conclusions without considering alternative explanations. It is the present author's view, however, that if a symbol or character has been widely used previously to represent Jews, then it is not necessary to explicitly state in writing the meaning of the symbol. To support this contention, one has only to cite symbols that are universally accepted to represent Christianity, for example: the Cross, Chalice, Dove, Host, etc. If these symbols are on medals, it is reasonable to assume they refer to that particular religion or to people of that faith. Medals use such iconography widely. Symbols abound representing Prudence, Charity, Justice, Commerce, Liberty, Victory, Anti-Semitic Bigotry : A Retrospective As Chronicled By Historical Medals

Science, etc. and virtually every country and many cities. If one sees a symbol used in art forms that is widely accepted as representing a people, it is not necessary to explicitly state in writing to what the symbol refers. Such is the very nature of iconography.

Of course there are marked differences in who creates these symbols and for what purpose. In one case they may be made by artists who wish to present their subjects as positive representations of how the subjects themselves wish to be viewed. In the other case the images are insulting, vicious and defamatory caricatures of a people devised by those who wish to portray them in the most unflattering and inflammatory light. The latter is clearly the intent of anti-Semitic medals.

Another question that may be posed is, What prompted artists to make such defamatory medals? After all, the people who designed and engraved these medals were accomplished artists, who had made many medals totally unrelated to anti-Semitism. In particular, one of the more prolific and indeed famous medalists of the period, Christian Wermuth, held the position of Engraver to the Mint at Gotha and was Court Medallist to the Ducal House of Saxony. He later was appointed Court Medallist to King Frederick I of Prussia, issuing over 1300 medals in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with subjects such as those related to the history of England and portrait medals of popes and Roman emperors. Among the works he made were the infamous satirical medals, which included the anti-Semitic medals discussed here. According to Forrer, these satirical medals refer to many kinds of subjects, not only Jewish usury and bribery but also to ecclesiastical hypocrisy and corruption of the imperial bureaucracy. The issuance of these medals even caused him problems with the authorities, who had him arrested, sold his possessions and tried to suppress these medals. Nevertheless, there must have been a market for these medals and a motivation for making them, as they were produced in large numbers and they still exist, although they are now quite rare.

In this regard, it should be pointed out that there is a marked difference between criticizing corruption and other such acts and denigrating an entire group of individuals based purely on their race, ethnicity or religious affiliation. This is what the medals in the current discourse portray, and this is the very essence of bigotry.

# BASIS FOR ANTI-SEMITIC ATTITUDES

**A**lthough the term *anti-Semitism* was not coined until 1879, the practice existed for centuries and even millennia before that. Even in antiquity, in Roman times, the 'children of Abraham' were persecuted and even slaughtered. In searching for an explanation for anti-Semitic attitudes, one must explore different possibilities. It could not be *just* because religious Jews wore distinguishing clothes and therefore were easy targets, or simply because they often separated themselves from non-Jews; the basis of the separation may have been as much social as religious in nature – differences in diet, reluctance to intermarry, and refusal to worship foreign gods or to accept new ones, such as Jesus of Nazareth – leading others to treat them as 'strangers'. But why throughout history were fables about the Jews often fabricated, then endlessly repeated – Jews being accused of causing famines, plagues, *et cetera* ? (Johnson).

So the question remains: Why did anti-Semitic feelings persist for such a long time and why do they still exist to this day? Often the question is posed as: What did the Jews do to deserve such a fate? or, What did they do to elicit such behavior in their persecutors? An ancillary question is: For how long would the Jews of every historical period be castigated for the killing of Christ by Romans, even with the concurrence of some ancient Hebrews, an event that occurred millennia ago? Putting the question in this way implies that somehow the Jews were the ones who were at fault for the sufferings they were made to endure, in effect, blaming the victim. The question might more appropriately be asked: What is it about the character or upbringing of the individuals who engaged in these bigoted acts that makes them so intolerant? Did the tormentors receive teaching or indoctrination that encouraged them to behave for centuries and centuries in such an abominable fashion?

The means by which intolerance towards Jews is perpetuated is manifold. One means is through the repetition of stories, taught informally in the home or community and handed down from generation to generation as a part of the group's culture. This supposition finds support both from anecdotal evidence as well as from carefully researched studies.

A couple of personal anecdotes may be cited to help the reader understand one of the reasons why this writer entertains the view that anti-Jewish teachings in the home initiate and maintain bigotry.

My earliest and most vivid experience of anti-Semitism took place while still a child. One day I was over at a neighbor's farm playing with a young boy who was in the care of an elderly woman. She called him in from playing outside so he could do his daily religious education exercise. I went with him into his room. His lesson that afternoon was from a comic book-type bible with gaily colored figures and scenes on every page. The particular story that he was to read that day told of how the Jews killed Christ. That episode made a great impression on me. As I saw it, the main theme of the story boiled down to this: Jesus was the most wonderful and most important person ever to exist, and the Jews killed him. My young friend would be made to read this story almost every day that I was there.

Another tale, told to me by a friend many years later went something like this:

“While a young girl, my grandmother warned me to be careful during Easter because during this time of the year Jews would find young Christian girls and put them into a barrel containing nails pointed inward. They would then roll the barrels down a hill in order to get the girl’s blood, which the Jews would use in various religious rituals.” This story, told to her each Easter, made enough of an impression on my friend that it was still vivid in her memory, and she could still recall and relate the event some 50 years later. Many variations on this theme surely have been told and re-told.

It seems likely that this type of religion-based indoctrination in the home contributes substantially to the anti-Semitism that is prevalent throughout the world, and provides an insight into how anti-Semitic feelings could be sustained from one generation to the next.

I recognized fully that these little anecdotes are overly simplistic and that far more subtle and more sophisticated ‘explanations’ are given nowadays in order to inculcate individuals into anti-Semitic attitudes. Perhaps such indoctrination is not nearly as prevalent now as it was in the past, but it certainly still exists in some communities, and slanderous stereotypical caricatures of Jews, some of which are based on religious ideologies, still persist in many parts of the world.

Academic evidence supporting the proposition that such feelings are passed down through generations was recently provided in a study published by Voigtländer and Voth (2012) on *The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany*. By comparing actions local towns in Germany exhibited at different periods in history, they found that communities that reacted to the Black Death some 600 years ago by blaming and massacring Jews were far more likely to lead pogroms against Jews in the 1920s, to vote for the Nazi Party, to turn Jews over to the Nazis and to attack synagogues in the 1930s and 1940s.

The degree and persistence of these prejudices suggest that they are maintained not merely by a haphazard, informal recitation of anti-Semitic stories, but that a more formal instruction is also involved, either secularly or religiously inspired, and propagated either in schools or through religious studies. One must surely entertain the possibility that there is embedded in the teachings of the dominant religions, Christianity or Islam, concepts that allow, or even encourage, anti-Semitic feelings. Indeed, there is ample evidence that religious theology is sometimes subverted and used to inspire the adherents to engage in anti-Jewish acts. Writings from the most sacred Christian and Muslim texts, i.e. the New Testament of the Bible and the Qur’an, are frequently quoted and exploited to justify such prejudicial feelings against Jews.

**Anti-Semitic Passages in the New Testament:** The New Testament is a collection of Christian works written in the common (*Koine*) Greek language during the first and second centuries by early Jewish disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. Over the early years, various writings were considered for inclusion (see website: *Early Christian Writings*), some accepted and others excluded, a prominent version of the New Testament, written around 150 CE, now consisting of the letters of the Apostle Paul and the Canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Although many more of the early Gospels and other works were excluded than were included in the ‘final version’, several anti-Semitic sentiments, some of which are shown below, remained.

The Gospel of John raises the accusation to that of a corporate guilt against 'the Jews' in general: "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him" (John 5:16). The Gospel of John also says of Jesus: "He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him" (John 7:1) and adds darkly that "no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews" (John 7:13). In the crowning accusation, John depicts Jesus as accusing 'the Jews' as follows: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

In summarizing how the words in the New Testament form a biblical basis for why Jews of today are held responsible for acts of the past, Paul Johnson, in his book *A History of the Jews*, writes:

The collective guilt charge in Matthew, and the 'sons of the devil' charge in John, were linked together to form the core of a specifically Christian branch of anti-Semitism which was superimposed on and blended with the ancient and ramifying pagan anti-Semitic tradition to form in time a mighty engine of hatred. In fact, the several books of the New Testament are rife with anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic polemics. To cite just a few of numerous examples: the origins of the Jewish 'blood libel' accusation [depicted in several medals shown above and in the woodcut shown in figure 62] may be found in the Gospel of Matthew 27:25, where it is written "His blood be upon us and on our children." In explanation, Todd Baker (Baker 2002) states : ... "the anti-Jewish interpretation is the oldest and most frequently cited in the history of the Church. This view says the Jewish people are permanently guilty and condemned in the eyes of God for their murder of Jesus Christ. As such, the cry of 'His blood be upon us' means that the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem admitted full guilt for killing the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby invoked God's curse upon themselves and their descendants until the end of time."

These biblical accounts are the precursors of later 'Blood Libel' stories immortalized in print and text, one of the more infamous involving that of Simon of Trent. (See figure 62 and endnote 6).



**Figure 62. Blood Libel: Fifteenth century woodcut showing Jews murdering the child Simon of Trent.** The round yellow patches are badges that Jews were forced to wear. (In Hartmann Schedel, *Nuremberg Chronicle* or *Buch der Chroniken*, printed by Anton Koberger in 1493).

Other authors who have studied this issue in some detail also conclude that religion forms a strong basis for the origins of anti-Semitism. Christopher Browning (2004), in a book *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy*, states the following:

Christians and Jews had lived in an adversarial relationship since the first century of the Common Era, when the early followers of Jesus failed to persuade significant numbers of their fellow Jews that he was the Messiah. They then gradually solidified their identity as a new religion rather than a reforming Jewish sect. First, Pauline Christianity took the step of seeking converts not just among Jews but also among the Pagan populations of the Roman Empire. Second, the Gospel writers — some 40 to 60 years after the death of Jesus — sought to placate the Roman authorities and at the same time to stigmatize their rivals by increasingly portraying the Jews rather than the Roman authorities in Palestine as responsible for the crucifixion — the scriptural origin of the fateful “Christ-killer” libel. Finally, the Jewish rebellion in Palestine and the destruction of the Second Temple motivated early Christians not only to dissociate themselves completely from the Jews but to see the Jewish catastrophe as a deserved punishment for the stubborn refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah and as a divine vindication of their own beliefs. Christians and Jews, two small sects that had much more in common with one another by virtue of their monotheism and scriptures than either had with the rest of the tolerant, syncretic, polytheistic Pagan Roman world, developed an implacable hostility to one another.

For more on the biblical basis of anti-Semitism, as found in the New Testament, see the [patheos.com](http://patheos.com) website.

**Anti-Semitic Passages in the Qur’an:** Historically, during the Golden Age of Jewish Culture in Spain, between the 8<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and later in the Middle Ages, relations between Jews and Muslims were generally benign, and even mutually beneficial. In Muslim dominated lands, Jews were usually allowed to practice their religion and to administer their internal affairs, and both Muslim and Jewish cultural and economic life flourished. Nevertheless, while some verses in the Islamic holy book the Qur’an preach tolerance towards the Jews, other passages are clearly anti-Semitic. Sometimes it includes Christians with Jews in their maledictions, as: “O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust” (Qur’an 5:51); and “Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book [i.e., Jews] had faith, it were best for them: among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors” (Qur’an 3:110). In other passages the Qur’an singles out the Jews in particular and absolves Christians, as in: “Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say, ‘We are Christians’: because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant” (Qur’an 5:82).

For more on Muslim anti-Semitism, see [wikiislam.net](http://wikiislam.net).

The point of all this is not to cast aspersions on religious teachings as a whole but to suggest that embedded in the Scriptures of Christian and Islamic writings are certain passages that have been used to promote bigotry.

This dichotomy is readily exemplified by considering the great historic figure of Martin Luther, who in the 16<sup>th</sup> century ushered in the Protestant Reformation (Figure 63). On the one hand, he remarked on what he saw as some of the shortcomings of the Catholic Church, particularly with their practice of issuing indulgences (simply put, an indulgence was a payment to the Catholic Church that purchased an exemption from punishment or penance for some types of sins), and began a period of reform that revolutionized Christian theology. On the other hand, Luther's later writings were unquestionably anti-Semitic and served as a theological basis for the subsequent hatred, persecution and ultimate massacre of the Jewish people.



Martin Luther's major work on the Jews was published in 1543, a 65,000-word treatise *Von den Juden und Ihren Lügen* (*On the Jews and Their Lies*). In it he states that the Jews are a "base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth." They are full of the "devil's feces ... which they wallow in like swine." The synagogue was a "defiled bride, yes, an incorrigible whore and an evil slut ..." He argues that their synagogues and schools be set on fire, their prayer books destroyed, rabbis forbidden to preach, homes razed, and property and money confiscated. They should be shown no mercy or kindness, afforded no legal protection, and these "poisonous envenomed worms" should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time. He also seems to advocate their murder, writing "[w]e are at fault in not slaying them." (various sources from Wikipedia).

**Figure 63. Martin Luther**  
Lucas Cranach the Elder, oil on panel,  
1528. (From Wikimedia)

Another case in point is the celebration of those who, through their religious zeal, have promulgated heinous acts against those whose religious beliefs differed from their own. One example is Godefroy de Bouillon (1061-1100), leader of the First Christian Crusade.

Though barbaric in their execution and though they led to the slaughter of countless thousands of individuals, including many Jews (as illustrated in an illumination from a French bible, Figure 64), the Crusades are still nevertheless glorified by the issuance of commemorative medals such as this one on the Inauguration of the Statue of Godefroy de Bouillon, now standing in the Place Royale in Brussels (Figure 65). The reverse of this medal, showing an equestrian statue of Godefroy triumphantly carrying a raised flag, has the Latin inscription, translated as, "His Fatherland Established This for its Hero in the Year 1848", clearly indicating that this person, who was responsible for so many deaths, was still considered a hero at that time.



**Figure 64. Crusaders Slaughtering Jews.**

Illumination from French bible (c. 1250), depicting Jews (identifiable by the *Judenhut*, the "Jew hat" men were forced to wear to distinguish them from Christians) being massacred by crusaders during the First Crusade, 1096 CE, as revenge for the death of Jesus, who looks on at the top left. (From [notintheheavens.blogspot.com](http://notintheheavens.blogspot.com))



**Figure 65. Godefroy de Bouillon, Leader of First Crusade**  
Laurent Joseph Hart, Belgium, 1848, Bronze struck medal, 72 mm  
*Reference:* Forrer II, p.435; Weiss BW565  
(Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)

From this evidence one can reach the same conclusions that countless others have established through the ages. Namely, that while religion serves as a source and inspiration for the most unselfish acts and noble deeds, by distorting and subverting the basic tenets of their religious doctrine, and by providing the excuse for political and military aggression, religious zealotry has been responsible for some of the most heinous crimes, massacres and injustices ever promulgated against Jewish humanity.

Not only is anti-Semitism manifested in some of our religious heritage but it is expressed in our secular politics, literature and the arts as well, and its prevalence serves to perpetuate negative stereotypes of Jews. Prominent among those artists and other figures who have evidenced anti-Semitism in their works are celebrated composers, authors and playwrights, such as Richard Wagner (Figure 66), considered by many to be the greatest operatic composer of all time, Charles Dickens (Figure 67), generally regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian period, known for his portrayal of 19<sup>th</sup> century life in England, and William Shakespeare (Figure 68), clearly the preeminent poet and playwright of the English language, to mention but a few. Wagner's portrayals of Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Klingsor in *Parsifal* are widely considered to be reprehensible persons he put into his operas to express his well-known anti-Semitic feelings (*Parsifal*, of course, can easily be put into the religious category as the plot involves the mysteries and miracles of the Christian Holy Grail, with Klingsor playing the protagonist to the Christian hero Parsifal), and the notorious figure of Shylock in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is unambiguously portrayed as a Jew.



**Figure 66. Richard Wagner: Bayreuth Festival**

Charles Wiener, Germany, 1876, Bronze struck medal, 71 mm

The obverse depicts a bust of Richard Wagner. The reverse shows characters from several of Wagner's Operas, with bridge inscribed BAYREVTH in background and Valhalla beyond. The characters are as follows, from left to right: Siegfried (with sword), Wotan (with staff), Brunnhilde, Tannheuser (with harp), Parsifal (with Holy Grail), Lohengrin, and Hans Sachs (with book). Richard Wagner is at far right. Below are the swan from Lohengrin and the three Rheinmaidens from Das Rheingold.

Reference: Forrer VI, p. 482; Weiss BW586.

(Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)



**Figure 67. Charles Dickens**

John Severinus Conway, USA, 1912, Bronze struck medal, 70 mm.  
 On the obverse is a bust of Charles Dickens; on the reverse characters from his novel *A Christmas Carol*  
 (Image from Yale Collection)



**Figure 68. William Shakespeare**

Jean Dassier, England, ca.1733, Bronze struck medal, 43 mm  
 Reference: M.I. i, 208/42; Forrer I, p.516 (Illustrated); Eisler I, 283/1; Thompson 39/01;  
 Weiss BW372  
 (Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)

There have even been medals of Shylock commemorating this character, one of which portrays Shylock with devil's horns (Figure 69). On the obverse it reads in verse: "This Is the Jew, Which Shakespeare Drew", and around the outer rim runs the rhyme, "Av'rice and Titled Lust, Alone We Blame. Yet Blush We must for 'Tis a Nations Shame." Below the bust is the text "VP / No Private Boxes." On the reverse are abbreviations surmounted by leaves and a legend reading, "The Dramas Laws, the Dramas Patrons Give. And he Who Lives to Please, Should Please to Live." The text in center reads "What D'ye Want?", followed by "OP OB" and "DPO."

According to Alex Ben-Arieh, the background of this medal and an explanation of the abbreviations is that in 1809 the theater of Covent Garden, after being closed for a period of time, re-opened charging higher prices than before. Its manager and his family were known to be receiving high salaries, and some of the theater's owners were from the aristocratic class. Popular discontent with the prices led to disturbances which took on an anti-Semitic tone, with the Jews perceived as enemies of the working class. This medal attacks the price rise and the Jews who presumably protect it and demands "OP OB", meaning "old prices and open boxes", and "no private boxes." The initials "VP" on the obverse mean "Vox Populi", i.e., "The Voice of the Public." The clear reference to "The Jew" associated with "Avarice and Lust" in the rhyme on the obverse supports this contention.



**Figure 69. "Old Price" Riots, Covent Garden: Shylock**

P. Wyon?, England, 1809, white metal struck medal, 43mm. Friedenberg pp. 22-23, Eimer 1005, BHM 676

(Image courtesy of Christopher Eimer)

Consider also Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire) (Figure 70), the celebrated French philosopher, historian, dramatist and writer, who is widely viewed as the embodiment of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Enlightenment, and who is remembered primarily as a crusader against tyranny and bigotry. Though he attacked the established Catholic Church and advocated freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and separation of church and state, Voltaire nevertheless also evidenced anti-Semitic sentiments in his writings.



**Figure 70. Voltaire**

Georg Christian Waechter: France, 1770, Bronze struck medal, 59 mm

Reference: Molinari 91/347; Pollard II, 864/929; Weiss BW625

(Image: Collection of Benjamin Weiss)

Not only have anti-Semitic feelings been advanced by formal literature and art but it has also been passed down through less formal writings, using comic-book style literature that can be found in such seemingly innocuous places as small, rural restaurants and gas stations.

## Early Anti-Semitic Coin

**A**lthough this discourse concentrates on medals, coins also have been used to disseminate anti-Semitic hatred. One of these, shown in figure 71, is considered to be the first anti-Semitic coin. It was issued by Bishop Ulrich I, who ruled in Halberstadt, then part of the Holy Roman Empire, late in the twelfth century. A silver pfennig, it was believed to be used for tax purposes rather than for ordinary commerce. The theme for his coin was of Biblical origin. Taken from the New Testament, he selected the story of the stoning of St. Stephen by Jews, an event which is believed to have taken place in the first century CE.

At the time of St. Stephen's life, Jews did not wear cone-shaped hats, but during the twelfth century they were required by law to wear such hats so that they were clearly distinguishable from the rest of the citizenry. Although the coin was issued about 1000 years after the purported St. Stephen stoning, this imagery is repeated on the coin. It depicts two men wearing conical hats, with St. Stephen shown falling from the thrown rocks, a halo over his head, indicating his canonization. Based on their garb, there can be no mistaking the fact that Jews are the ones being shown doing the stoning.



**Figure 71. Anti-semitic Coin: Stoning of St Stephen**  
Silver pfennig, ca 25 mm, 12<sup>th</sup> century  
(Image courtesy of the American Israel Numismatic Association)

The stoning of St. Stephen was also memorialized in many paintings, one of which by Rembrandt is shown in figure 72. As in other paintings produced over the years, the offending Jews are clearly identified by their yellow hats.



Blaming and castigating the Jews living in one period for something their distant Hebrew ancestors may have done millennia ago is not uncommon. It still happens today.

**Figure 72. The Stoning of Saint Stephen**  
Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, Dutch, 1625, Oil on oak panel (Wikipedia).

# PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

One must keep in mind that persecution of Jews because of their religion is not unique to them alone. Religious differences are the common cause of many past wars and atrocities. Historians can easily count them by the score, but we just have to recall: the Muslim conquests of the 7th and 8th centuries; the Crusades waged by the Roman Catholic Church, which lasted for centuries during the middle ages and which are still celebrated in more modern times by the issuance of medals (see, for example, figure 65); the religious wars carried on in Europe for over one hundred years in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, from 1524 to 1648, following the onset of the Protestant Reformation; the French Wars of Religion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century between the French Catholics and Protestants (Huguenots) in which between two and four million people perished; the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions issued in 1492 and 1501, ordering Jews and Muslims to convert to Catholicism or leave their homeland. In more recent history, one can cite the massacre of over one million Christian Armenians by the Muslim Turks during World War I and the murder of millions of innocent civilians, Jew and Christian alike, by the Nazis during the Second World War. Still more recently, one can remember the long-standing war between the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, wars that had their origin from the time of Henry VIII and which were the cause of the so-called Glorious Revolution (for medals related to these events, see Weiss, 2014) ; the brutal war in the Central African Republic between Muslims and Christians; the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 waged between Islam and Christianity, in which between one and three million persons perished; the Second Sudanese War (1983-2005), likewise between Muslims and Christians, in which up to two million people died; in India in the mid-1900s, the epic battle between the Hindu majority, the Sikhs, and the Muslim minority, leading ultimately to its partition and formation of the new state of Pakistan, with the subsequent religious wars between India and Pakistan resulting in up to one million casualties; the current wars in the Middle East fought largely between Muslims, Christians and Jews; and wars between Sunni and Shia Muslims – hostilities that can be traced to their epic schism in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when the Islamic Prophet Muhammad died, leading to a dispute over who is the rightful successor to Muhammad as a caliph of the Islamic community. These latter religious disagreements caused the loss of countless thousands of lives and are still going on. If not the *justification* for these conflicts, religion was and often is used as its *excuse*. As Seneca has said, “Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by rulers as useful.”

A further point may also be made. In addressing the issue of holding current peoples responsible for the actions of their ancestors, we must ask this question: Should we ascribe yesterday’s injustices onto today’s innocents? Should we persecute or vilify today’s Catholics for the persecution of Protestants following the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, or for their massacre of the Huguenots in 17<sup>th</sup> century France? Or conversely should we hold grudges and exact punishment on today’s Protestants for their subjugation of Catholics in 16<sup>th</sup> century England? Should we hold today’s polytheists responsible for the persecution of Jews and early Christians during the Roman Empire, or today’s Christians for the acts of the crusaders for their murder of Muslims and Jews during the Middle Ages, or today’s Muslims for the slaughter of 8<sup>th</sup> century Christians, or today’s Roman citizens and their descendants for the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth more than two millennia ago, etc. etc.?

Finally, at the risk of sounding trite, it should be emphasized that although there still are pockets of enduring bigots, some of whom have an unwarranted impact on society, the vast, VAST majority of the world’s population is tolerant and supportive of all minority groups. The point of all this is not to cast aspersions on religious teachings as a whole but to suggest that certain passages in religious literature have been used to cause major and even catastrophic events in society.

# CONCLUSION

In reviewing the history of intolerance against the Jewish people, as reflected in historical and commemorative medals, and the role medals have played in recording and even promoting such religious bigotry, we find that a wide variety of anti-Semitic medals were produced as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and continue into present times. These medals were engraved by highly regarded medallists, using historically recognizable iconographies and often employing religious passages taken directly from both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible as supportive evidence for the slander the medals portray.

The answer to the question of how anti-Semitic feelings have been perpetuated for centuries, having been passed down through generations and generations of individuals throughout the world, is multifaceted. Partly, it appears to be through the informal indoctrination of children by the telling and re-telling of anti-Semitic tales in the homes, and through formal religious literature of society. This is evident mainly in the New Testament of the Bible, revered by Christians, but also, to a lesser extent, in the Qur'an, the central religious text of Islam. Such feelings have also been maintained through classical literature and art produced in Western culture by some of our most esteemed practitioners of the humanities. In addition, it has been advanced through less formal writings, such as comic-book style literature that can be found in the homes of deeply devout individuals. And finally, it has been spread, and continues to be spread, as a form of propaganda, by way of historical and commemorative medals, the main subject of this work.

# ENDNOTES

1. Besides the systematic murder of some six million Jews by the Nazis before and during the Second World War, many other massacres and mass injustices have occurred throughout history, several of which were also directed toward ethnic, racial or religious minorities. Some of the more notorious in modern times include: The killing and forced relocation of Native American Indians by European settlers in North America in the 18th and 19th centuries; The enslavement and mistreatment of millions of black Africans by Europeans during the 18th and 19th centuries; The mass killings of Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians by the Ottoman Empire toward the end of the First World War; The Nanking Massacre, also known as the Rape of Nanking, an episode of mass murder and mass rape committed by Japanese troops against Nanking (Nanjing) in 1937 during the Second Sino-Japanese War; The bombing of Guernica, Spain, by fascist Germany in 1937; The Katyn massacre, a series of mass executions of Polish nationals carried out by the Soviet Union secret police in 1940 in the Katyn Forest in Russia where over 20 thousand people were killed; The NKVD prisoner massacres, a series of mass executions also committed by the Soviet Union secret police against prisoners in Eastern Europe during World War II, which led to the deaths of over one hundred thousand individuals; Apartheid, a system of racial segregation in South Africa enforced on black inhabitants by white Afrikaners during the period of 1948-1994, at which time millions of non-white South Africans were removed from their homes and forced into segregated neighborhoods; The Rwandan Genocide, a mass slaughter of Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda by members of the Hutu majority, where during a three-month period in 1994 up to one million Rwandans were killed; In Cambodia, a genocide carried out between 1975 and 1979 by the Communist Khmer Rouge regime led by Pol Pot, in which one and a half to three million people were killed; The Srebrenica genocide, where Bosnian Serbs killed thousands of Muslims in 1995 in the former republic of Yugoslavia — the list goes on.
2. A distinctive feature of Nazi genocide was the extensive use of human subjects in ‘medical’ experiments. According to Raul Hilberg (1961), "German physicians were highly Nazified, compared to other professionals, in terms of party membership," and some carried out experiments at Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, and Natzweiler concentration camps. The most notorious of these physicians was Dr. Josef Mengele, who worked in Auschwitz. His experiments included placing subjects in pressure chambers, testing drugs on them, freezing them, attempting to change eye color by injecting chemicals into children's eyes, and various amputations and other surgeries. The full extent of his work will never be known because the truckload of records he sent to Dr. Otmar von Verschuer at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute was destroyed by von Verschuer. Subjects who survived Mengele's experiments were almost always killed and dissected shortly afterwards.

It should be mentioned that, partly at the insistence of the Allied powers who occupied Germany after the Second World War but mainly through the efforts of the government and people of post war Germany themselves, this country enacted and enforced statutes that are among the most anti-Nazi and anti-discriminatory in the world.

3. The book *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, which began as Daniel Goldhagen's Harvard doctoral dissertation, was reviewed by Richard Bernstein and published as a NY Times book review titled, "*Was Slaughter of Jews Embraced by Germans?*" from which the following

was excerpted.

"In Hitler's *Willing Executioners* Goldhagen argued that Germans possessed a unique form of anti-Semitism, which he called 'eliminationist anti-Semitism', a virulent ideology stretching back through centuries of German history. Under its influence the vast majority of Germans wanted to eliminate Jews from German society, and the perpetrators of the Holocaust did what they did because they thought it was 'right and necessary'. For Goldhagen, the Holocaust, in which so many Germans participated, must be explained as a result of the specifically German brand of anti-Semitism.

"The perpetrators of the anti-Jewish slaughter, Goldhagen contends, did not kill Jews because of threats or some German propensity for obeying authority. They participated in the slaughter because they were steeped in a historical culture of anti-Semitism. They tortured and massacred Jews, starved them, toyed with them, punished them for their birth, and they did so voluntarily, even eagerly, with unsurpassable malice and cruelty.

What is the meaning of cruelty? Even when a society executes criminals, as Goldhagen notes, it does so in 'a quasi-clinical manner: swiftly, without torment, and with minimum pain.' By contrast, Goldhagen says, 'the Germans' killing of the Jews was often wrathful, preceded and attended by cruelty, degradation, mockery, and Mephistophelean laughter. Why?' Goldhagen's answer centers on the Germans' hatred for the Jews, a hatred so deep that it was akin to a kind of mysticism.

"Goldhagen's morally unsparing analysis will no doubt provoke much debate and quite likely some protest. He is, after all, essentially saying that the crime of the Holocaust was the reflection of a special iniquity lying within the German culture and the German people. That seems almost too extreme a conclusion to be true. But Goldhagen reminds us that near the end of the war, the Germans were ordered by Himmler to stop the killing, but they continued anyway. The author asks his readers to imagine the Danes or the Italians openly informed by their leaders that their goal was 'to kill, root and branch, another people.' The reaction, he says, would be 'as to the words of a madman.' Just such a mad program was announced to Germans. 'They evinced not surprise, not incredulity, but comprehension,' Goldhagen writes. 'The annihilation of the Jews made sense to them.'"

4. Recent analyses comparing the genomes of Ashkenazi Jews with those of non-Jewish Europeans suggest that most present-day Ashkenazi Jews, who were expelled from England in 1290, from France in 1394 and from Spain in 1492, migrated to Eastern Europe, becoming the Ashkenazi community and are descended from just 350 individuals dating back to between 600 and 800 years ago. (Carmi, et al., 2014).
5. Relevant to this issue of the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, in an opinion piece in the *New York Times* (August, 2014), Deborah Lipstadt wrote:

"It's true that this is not the anti-Semitism of the 1930s, which came from the right and was rooted in longstanding Christian views that demonized the Jews. Traditionally, Islam did not treat Jews this way. But in the past century a distinct strain of Muslim anti-Semitism has emerged. Built on a foundation of antipathy toward non-Muslims, it mixes Christian

anti-Semitism — imported to the Middle East by European missionaries — and a more leftist, secular form of anti-Semitism. It is evident in political cartoons, editorials, television shows and newspaper articles.”

Similarly, in an article on *Antisemitism: Past and Present*, published in the Fall, 2014 issue of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Magazine, it states:

“Much has been written about the alarming rise of anti-Semitism. The attention is important; so is historical context. Anti-Semitism is often called the longest hatred. It is the most adaptable and resilient— always there to fill a vacuum, provide a scapegoat, and offer simple answers to complex questions. Its durability speaks to its distinctiveness.

“In recent years, new forms have emerged: anti-Zionism and Holocaust denial or, more insidiously, Holocaust minimization. And we see Holocaust glorification, as demonstrators through Western Europe shout slogans such as ‘Jews to the gas.’”(See also Figure 73, below, of a window in Germany defiled with racist graffiti).



**Figure 73. Windows Vandalized in Spremberg, Germany**

On September 5, 2014, windows of the editorial offices of the Lusatian Rundschau in Spremberg, Germany, were smeared with Nazi slogans, Star of David and swastikas.

(Picture alliance / dpa)

6. Simon of Trent was a child victim of an alleged ritual murder by the Jews of Trent. He was born in 1472, the son of Andreas Unverdosben. The following account of this episode is excerpted from the Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906.

The harmonious relations between Christians and Jews in Trent had excited the anger of the semi-demented Franciscan friar Bernardinus of Feltre, who was a son of a notorious enemy of the Jews. Endeavoring to incite the people against the Jews, Bernardinus predicted that at the next Jewish Passover a ritual murder would occur. In accordance with this prediction, the child Simon, twenty-eight months old, disappeared. The people of the community declared that the child would be found among the Jews. Although a careful search through the Jewish quarter

proved fruitless, after the body of a child was found in a river, the Jews were nevertheless accused of murder and of using the blood of the Christian child for ritual purposes at Passover (a common, well-worn, anti-Semitic Blood Libel). All the members of the Jewish community, women and children included, were arrested and tried. After weeks of torture, they 'confessed' in the exact words dictated by their clerical tormentors and assassins. Eight of the wealthiest Jews, after receiving baptism, were put to death, some being burned at the stake and the rest beheaded.

But the cruelty of the proceedings had aroused general indignation, and Pope Sixtus IV., alarmed for the reputation of the Church, commanded Bishop Hinderbach to suspend proceedings and, together with the Bishop of Ventimiglia and the Bishop of Trent, conduct another investigation.

The Bishop of Ventimiglia reported to Rome that, as the result of the investigations, he found the Jews to be innocent, that Simon had been killed by Christians with the intention of defaming the Jews, and that Bishop Hinderbach had planned to enrich himself by confiscating the estates of those executed. Sixtus IV then appointed a commission of six cardinals to investigate the two proceedings. The head of the commission, being an intimate friend of Bernardinus of Feltre, the result was a foregone conclusion, especially since the whole Catholic Church would have been involved in the condemnation of the Bishop of Trent. Accordingly, Sixtus IV declared the proceedings against the Jews in Trent to be '*rite et recte factum*' (Done properly and correctly).

About a century later, both Bernardinus of Feltre and Simon of Trent are said to have been canonized by Gregory XIII, the former as a prophet, and the latter as a martyr.

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# BIOGRAPHY OF MEDALLISTS

**Abrahamson, Abraham:** Abraham Abrahamson (1754-1811), a German medallist, learned the art of medal engraving from his father and later studied in Italy.

**Baffier, Jean:** Jean Baffier (1851-1920), born in Neuvy-le-Barrois, in Berry, was a French sculptor and writer. In Paris he worked as a stonemason at the Cathedral of Nevers. As a sculptor he became known for bronze figurines and pewter pieces. Later he became interested in traditional music and folk tales and founded The Rise of Gaul. Like many of the folk movement founders, Jean Baffier had very reactionary and anti-Semitic ideas.

**Brenet, Nicolas Guy Antoine:** Nicolas Brenet (French) (1773-1846) was born and died in Paris. He contributed extensively to the Napoleonic series of medal, executed under the direction of Denon (over 50 pieces are known to have been done by him). His piece, "Austria Subdued", has been highlighted by Forrer with an illustration.

**Conway, John Severinus:** John Conway (1852-1925) was an American artist and sculptor. He received his artistic training at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Ecole Julien, and at the École des Beaux-Arts. During his career Conway worked in Paris and Italy. His most famous work is the Milwaukee Soldiers Monument, a bronze sculpture titled "Victorious Charge" that was completed in Rome and shipped to Milwaukee. His works appear in several museums.

**DASSIER, Jean:** The Dassier family constituted a group of celebrated Swiss medalists from the late 17th to mid-18th centuries. The father, Domaine Dassier (1641-1719), was Chief-engraver at the Mint of Geneva from 1677 to 1720. His son, Jean Dassier (1676-1763), who succeeded his father as Chief-engraver on his father's death in 1720, studied die-sinking under his father and later in Paris under Mauger and Roettiers. One of Jean Dassier's sons, Jacques Antoine (1715-1759), learned the art of die-sinking under the celebrated goldsmith Germain of Paris. He was engaged as Engraver at the Royal Mint, London from 1741-1757. Another son of Jean Dassier, Antoine (1718-1780), worked with his father for a number of years, issuing a series of medals bearing the signature DASSIER ET FILS.

Jean Dassier is considered one of the greatest of the eighteenth century medalists. He was also the most prolific of the family, issuing several series of medals, including a series of small medals (jettons) *Les metamorphoses d'Ovide*, a series of medals representing celebrated men and women in France during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (*les hommes illustres du siecle de Louis XIV*), a series of medals depicting the principal Protestant Reformers, The Genevan Theologians, medals illustrating the history of Geneva and, when in England, a series of famous English men (The British Worthies) and a series of English Sovereigns from William I to George II. In conjunction with his son, he also issued a series of small medals illustrating Roman history.

**Depaulis, Alexis Joseph:** Alexis Depaulis (1790-1867) was a medallist who was born in Paris. A pupil of Andrieu and Cartellier, he entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where he earned a number of medals for his work. Several of his medals were exhibited at the Salon.

**Goetz, Karl:** Karl Goetz (1875-1950) was born in Augsburg, Germany in the state of Bavaria. He attended school in several cities in Germany, including Augsburg, Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin and Düsseldorf. Later in his career he spent time in Utrecht, Paris and Munich. Over his lifetime Goetz created over 600 medals, most of which were cast. Many of them were satirical in nature, several of which relate to World War I, the most famous of which is the propaganda piece on the *Sinking of the Lusitania*. He is also noted for his dramatic portrait medals. His medals are displayed in museums around the world, including those in Germany, Austria, England, Norway and the United States. Goetz was a member of several artistic and numismatic societies in Germany and Austria.

Karl Goetz exhibited strong emotions in his medals, some of which expressed his prejudicial feelings, most notably in the anti-Black medals shown in this article.

**Hart, Laurent Joseph:** Hart was born in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1810 and died in Brussels in 1860. He was a pupil of Braemt, Veyrat and Jouvenel. Before the revolution of 1830, he served as coin engraver to the Mints of Brussels and Utrecht. His medals, which are numerous, are often of particularly high relief and are generally of above average merit. (Forrer, Vol II, p. 433)

**Hörnlein, Fritz:** Hörnlein (1873-1945) was a Dresden engraver.

**Muller, O. (Wouter):** O. (or Wouter) Muller was a silversmith and medallist of Amsterdam, whose work dates between 1653 and 1688. Bolzental calls him “der Meister Muller”, and gives him high praise for the excellence of the execution of his medals. Like those of Peter van Abeele, his medals are embossed and chased and are in high relief.

**Pastorino de’Pastorini:** Pastorino (1508-1592) was an Italian painter, coin engraver and medallist. He was a pupil of Guillaume Marcillat, a celebrated French painter on glass. Early in his career, he worked in Rome and Siena, one of his works being the great window over the door of the cathedral of Siena. Later in life he worked at the mints of Parma, Reggio d’Emilia, and Ferrara, where he was Master of the Mint. In Bologna he entered the service of Grand Duke Francesco of Tuscany. He spent the remainder of his life in Florence. His major contributions to medallic art are his fine portrait medallions.

**Pingo, Lewis:** Lewis Pingo (1743-1830) was a British medallist and coin-engraver. He succeeded his father Thomas Pingo and in 1815 became chief engraver at the Royal Mint, London. His major work was in engraving coins but he did produce some medals of note, one of them being of William Penn.

**Provost, Pierre-Fernand:** Pierre-Fernand Provost was a contemporary French medallist who designed medals memorializing the Holocaust, some of which are sold by the Monnaie de Paris.

**Reich, Johann Christian:** Reich was a German medallist, who was born in Furth about 1740 and died in 1814. He began as an assistant to a counter manufacturer but started a business of his own, bearing his name, about 1770. In addition to medals, his factory had organs, clocks, mathematical instruments, musical boxes, and other objects. In the opinion of Forrer, this medallist’s work does not rank high in artistic merit.

**Rogat, Emile:** Emile Rogat (1770- ca 1850) was a French sculptor, medallist and coin engraver. His medal production was mostly between 1815 until the time of his death. He made several medals of the Napoleonic series and Durand series.

**Schega, Franz Andreas:** Franz Angreas Schega (1711-1787) was born in Rudolphwerth. As a young man he apprenticed to an armorer. Schega held the post of Mint engraver and Medallist at Munich in 1738 and was appointed to Medallist of the Court in 1751, an office he held until 1774. He died blind in Munich. Schega was self-taught and according to Forrer rose to uncommon ability in his profession. Hedlinger called him "the first Die-engraver in Europe." Among other medals, Schega is the author of a series of portrait medals of some 17 Bavarian rulers from Otto III to Charles VII, each with a portrait on the obverse and an inscription on the reverse.

**Swinderin, Nicolaus Van:** Nicolaus Van Swinderin was a medallist who worked at The Hague from about 1730 to 1760. He was chiefly employed by the House of Orange but made several medals of British interest.

**Van Dantzig, Rachel Margaret:** Van Dantzig (1878-1949) was a Dutch sculptor, engraver and draftsman. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in her hometown of Oudergem and later moved to Brussels. As no women were admitted at the Brussels Academy at that time, Van Dantzig received private lessons from Professor Charles Van der Steps. She then moved to Paris, where she took classes at the *Académie Colarossi* in Paris. Van Dantzig was a member of *Arti et Amicitiae* and active member of St. Luke. She participated in several exhibitions, in 1913 winning a medal for her sculpture. From 1918 she lived and worked in Belgium.

**Vincze, Paul:** Paul Vincze was born in Hungary in 1907 into an artistic family. The son of a Jewish father and Roman Catholic mother, he studied at High School of Arts and Crafts in Budapest. His early interest in sculpture led him to the studio of E. Telcs, one of the school's great medallists and teachers, where he stayed for seven years.

In 1935 he won a scholarship to Rome, where his work took on a more classical influence. Two years later he moved to England where he worked from his studio in Chelsea. He designed and modelled medals and coins for many different nations. After his marriage in 1958, Vincze moved to a studio near Nice, where he died in 1994 at the age of 86.

**Wermuth, Christian:** Christian Wermuth (1661-1739) was a famous German medallist, born in Altenberg and died in Gotha. He was educated in Dresden where he learned die-sinking. In 1689 he was appointed Engraver to the Mint at Gotha and in 1688 Court Medallist to the Ducal House of Saxony. In 1703 Wermuth was appointed Court Medallist to King Frederick I of Prussia. With the help of his pupils, Wermuth issued, over the space of about twenty years, over 1300 medals. Forrer notes that, with few exceptions, his medals are of little artistic merit. They are noteworthy, however, in that many of his medals were satirical in content, some of which were suppressed and consequently of great rarity. Included in this group of satirical medals are a large number of anti-Semitic medals, such as the *Korn Jude* and *Feder Jude* medals. Indeed, Christian Wermuth has the unsavory reputation of being the foremost anti-Semitic medallist in history (Friedenberg).

**Wiener, Jacques (Jacob):** The Wieners were a Jewish-Flemish family of extraordinary artists and die engravers. Jacob Wiener (1815-1899), who often signed his medals as Jacques Wiener, was the eldest of three brothers [the others were Leopold (1823-1891) and Charles (1832-1888)], all of whom excelled in the art of medal engraving. Jacques was born of Hungarian parents, studied in Paris and then settled in Brussels. In 1845 he decided to engrave medals representing the exterior and interior of monuments with a degree of precision of details that had not yet been attempted. The first in the series was a group of ten medals, 50 mm in diameter, depicting famous Belgian churches. All but one of these medals were done in collaboration with his brother Leopold. Jacques Wiener then undertook what was to be a series of 50 medals, each 59

mm in diameter, entitled “Medals of the most remarkable Edifices of Europe”, to represent the principal monuments of Europe. Of these the majority were cathedrals, churches and mosques. Three depicted synagogues. He was unable to complete the whole task as only 41 medals were issued, some of which were done in conjunction with his brother Charles. He also engraved dies for a large number of other monuments, including prisons, town halls, the stock exchange etc. In addition to buildings, he engraved dies for individuals commemorating important events in their lives. His work was not only prodigious but was also the best rendition of perspective of the interior of buildings I have seen. This intricate and minute work, however, was to take its toll, for by 1872 Wiener had almost completely lost his eyesight, and after 1874 he produced no more medals. His collective works have been catalogued by Emiel van Hoydonck who lists, mostly with photographs, 233 medals and 62 jetons by Jacques Wiener. The vast majority of his medals were struck in bronze, with a relatively few in silver.

## Biographical Sketch of Benjamin Weiss

**B**orn in the Bronx and raised on a chicken farm in New Jersey, Ben received his undergraduate and graduate training from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, where he earned a Ph.D. in Pharmacology in 1963. Following post-doctoral training at the National Institutes of Health and Columbia University, he worked at the National Institute of Mental Health, where he was Chief of the Section of Neuroendocrinology, and the Medical College of Pennsylvania, where he held the positions of Professor of Pharmacology and Psychiatry and Chief of the Division of Neuropsychopharmacology. He was also a Visiting Scientist at the Mario Negri Institute in Milan, Italy, and a Visiting Scientist at the Weitzman Institute in Israel. He currently is Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology and Physiology at Drexel University College of Medicine.



During his scientific career Weiss has edited two books and has published over 300 scientific articles on his research in the fields of Molecular Biology and Molecular Pharmacology and has been named by the Institute for Scientific Information as one of the Top One Thousand Most Quoted Contemporary Scientists in the World.

Ben was introduced to the field of medal collecting in 1972 and since then has been an avid collector of historical and commemorative medals. He is currently a Member of the Board of the Medal Collectors of America and the Webmaster of the website of the Medal Collectors of America. In addition to collecting medals, Ben has published a website, *Collection of Historical and Commemorative Medals* [www.historicalartmedals.com](http://www.historicalartmedals.com), which presents images, descriptions and historical commentaries on over 500 medals, both European and American, dating from the 16th through the 19th centuries. Currently, his main interests are in studying the origins of religious and ethnic intolerance and in publishing articles exploring the role medals play in religious and racial bigotry.