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Ancient Waters from New Fountains: Municipal Water Sources in 15th-Century Haggadot from Nuremberg*

Abstract: This article analyses visual representations of urban water fountains in two 15th-century haggadot, drawing attention to the use Jews made of water sources during their preparations for Passover. The first section concludes that these images present features unique to 15th-century Franconia, particularly Nuremberg. The second section shows that the Jews of Nuremberg made daily and exclusive use of the local urban water system, and argues that some of the images in the haggadot portray this reality. The final section focuses on rabbinic sources that discuss halakhic deliberations regarding the drawing of water for baking matzah and highlights the connection between this discussion and the images, as well as practical concerns associated with water usage in Nuremberg. This analysis shows that the images represent the tension between older halakhic traditions regarding drawing water for matzot and the practical constraints on local Jews' daily practices imposed by the contemporary urban environment.

Key words: Fountains, haggadah, Nuremberg, water systems, Passover, matzah, wells.

Introduction

The first folios of the Yahuda Haggadah, created in Franconia around 1465 or 1470 by an anonymous illuminator, present a series of images depicting the making of matzah, the unleavened bread eaten during Passover.¹ While this scene has a long history in German haggadot,² it is presented in the

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1 Yahuda Haggadah (Jerusalem, Israel Museum, Ms. 180/50) ff. 1v–2r.

2 It first appeared around 1300 in the *Birds' Head Haggadah* (Jerusalem, Israel Museum, Ms. 180/57) ff. 25v–26r.