

## Martyrs in rivalry: the 1096 Jewish martyrs and the Thebean legion

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**Abstract** As part of his chronicle telling of the persecutions of Jews in 1096 during the First Crusade, Shlomo bar Shimshon, writing about 1140, told the story of the Jewish martyrs of Cologne who had taken refuge in Xanten. This account stands out as the most theological and programmatic text of the entire chronicle. The reason is to be found in the local constellations of Xanten. By probing the different levels of knowledge the Jews of Cologne, and Shlomo, could have had about Xanten and its role in contemporary Christian religiosity, this article shows how Shlomo responded to what is known as the Thebean martyr cult and its associated legends on an almost one for one basis. Christian veneration of the Thebean martyrs and the propagation of their cult are seen through the prism of Shlomo's text. The essay wishes to show how the realm of shared culture or common ground between Christians and Jews can be further explored by "localizing the sources."

From April to July 1096, groups of crusaders and city dwellers attacked Jewish communities along the Rhine, Moselle, and Danube rivers. Driven to the Holy Land to fight the perceived enemies of Christianity and to "free" Jerusalem, they either killed and robbed or forcibly baptized countless Jews. In this mayhem, bishops and Christian city dwellers welcomed the life threatening situation for the Jews as an opportunity to baptize them; if this opportunity was given, it was the only way for Jews to save their lives. Numerous Jews, however, preferred death over conversion.<sup>1</sup> Forty-four years after the events, the Hebrew chronicler Shlomo bar Shimshon described the scene in the village of Xanten as follows:

*This pious, faithful man, the priest higher than his brothers, said to the congregation seated around the table: "Let us recite the grace after meals to the living God, our father in heaven since the table is now set before us in place of the altar. Now, because the enemy is coming upon us today, let us rise up and ascend to the house*

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This article is dedicated to Israel J. Yuval at the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. It is based on a talk I gave at the Radcliffe Institute and at the Humanities Center at Harvard University in January 2006. My thanks go to the staff at the Radcliffe Institute for my year-long fellowship, to the fellows at the Institute, and to the colleagues I met at Harvard who welcomed me with great kindness.

*of the Lord and do quickly the will of our Creator: that on the Sabbath each man slaughter his son, his daughter, and among his brothers in order to bestow a blessing upon ourselves today. Let no man have mercy on himself or on his fellow! And the last one to remain shall slaughter himself by the throat with a knife, or thrust his sword into his stomach, so that the impure ones and the hands of wickedness will not defile us with their abominations...*"<sup>2</sup>

The pious and faithful Jews were preparing for self- and mutual sacrifice, as an act of "kiddush ha-Shem" motivated, we are told, by the conviction that death was far better than apostasy. Individual Jews and entire Jewish communities are said to have understood these deeds as active resistance to their Christian persecutors; the persecutions are reported by at least three Hebrew chronicles—asccribed to Shlomo bar Shimshon, Eliezer bar Nathan, and the so-called "Mainz Anonymus"<sup>3</sup>—and over thirty Latin chronicles, *gesta*, and annals.<sup>4</sup>

Modern historians have taken their lead from these medieval records. For them, as for contemporaries of 1096, religion was the leading determinant of what went on. Indeed, historians have seen in religion the cornerstone of medieval culture; and within that perspective, Jews and Christians, especially in Central Europe, have traditionally been described as bearers of distinct and rarely interpenetrating cultures. Yet recently, these positions have begun to be rethought. Scholars have pointed to Jews and Christians as sharing a common conceptual language of religious images and symbols, while each of the two cultivated a reasonably detailed, if somewhat distorted, picture of the other. Jeremy Cohen, Israel Yuval, Shmuel Shepkaru, Ivan Marcus, and Robert Chazan have carefully examined the literary associations and symbols in the chronicles of 1096, which they argue should be understood as direct reactions to Christian images, rituals, and claims about salvation.<sup>5</sup>

The result has been to stress and unpack that aspect of the chronicles which dwells on martyrology and kiddush ha-Shem.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have assayed that Jewish martyrs saw themselves competing with Christians, devoted wholly to God, however, in a way that demonstrated the superiority of Judaism to Christianity, and of the Jewish martyr to the Christian one. This "competition" is also to be seen as part of the ongoing polemic between Jews and Christians.<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Cohen contends: "Quite simply, the message" (of the three Hebrew Crusade chronicles) "reads: Our martyrdom, the atonement it effected, and the salvation it secured were genuine; yours" (Christians martyrs) "are not. Our martyrs surpass your martyrs, and even your Martyr par excellence" (Christ).. "Our holy war, in which we readily died as martyrs, was greater, more meritorious, than yours."<sup>8</sup> With varying emphases, Shmuel Shepkaru,<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Cohen,<sup>10</sup> Israel Yuval,<sup>11</sup> Ivan Marcus,<sup>12</sup> Robert

Chazan,<sup>13</sup> and Simha Goldin<sup>14</sup> have pointed either to similarities and parallels between Jewish and Christian martyrology or to “a common ground in the language and thought of medieval Judaism and Christianity”<sup>15</sup> with regard to Christian crusade martyrology or even in some cases to actual knowledge of the Christian crusade martyrology among Jews. The Christian elements of this “common ground” include the belief in the sanctity of Jerusalem, the conviction of fulfilling God’s will (“God wants it!” *Deus le vult*), the perception of an threatening enemy, the “chivalrous ideal of fighting to the death and of committing suicide when victory appeared to be out of reach,”<sup>16</sup> the motifs of vengeance, martyrdom as imitation of Christ and act of absolute love of God and fellow Christians, and of Abraham’s binding of Isaac, the belief in death on the battle field as an “immediate entry visa into paradise,”<sup>17</sup> celestial rewards for the martyr (lying “in the bosom of Abraham;” the vision of God), expectations of the imminent final redemption, as well as the prominent role of women in Christian martyrology. Other Christian motifs such as the Last Supper, *Agnus Dei*, Pentecost, Maria (Miriam), St. John’s Day, and baptism might have been alluded to by the Hebrew chronicles, as especially Israel Yuval and Jeremy Cohen have pointed out, but are not specific to Crusade martyrology. More recently, Cohen and Shepkaru went one step further and argued that the Christian ideal of voluntary death, as well as its idealization in second generation monastic chronicles, provoked emulation among the Jews, “who could not fall behind and produced their own system of reward”<sup>18</sup> for voluntary death and their own narrative of the events;<sup>19</sup> “Dying to sanctify God’s name as portrayed in the Hebrew chronicles constituted a Jewish response to Christian crusading.”<sup>20</sup> Especially Shepkaru has taken into account what Jews might have witnessed of the Christian Crusade movement, and postulated direct responses to Christian ideals. He distinguishes between Jewish symbols that “turned the Rhenish heroes into emulators of past protagonists” and Christian ideals—these are the concept of absolute love, the ideology of chivalry, and the belief in celestial rewards for the martyr—that were adapted and transformed by the Jews for “defending themselves as Jewish crusaders.” Accordingly, these adaptations facilitated Jewish counter-polemics that became comprehensible to Christians as well.<sup>21</sup>

Despite these works, a comprehensive study of parallels and possible adaptations between Jewish and Christian concepts of martyrology about the time of the First Crusade and the writing of its accounts (in the first half of the twelfth century) remains a desideratum. Such a study needs to be undertaken to fathom what we call “shared culture” between Jews and Christians. It is also needed to explore what Jeremy Cohen has named the “common ground in the language and thought of medieval Judaism and Christianity.” The approach research has taken over the last decades has concentrated on

*Geistesgeschichte*, on symbols and theological associations. But are these always intended to be references to Christian theology and inversions of their images and symbols? Their aim is also to investigate if these references can be explained within an exclusively Jewish framework. We are asked: What did Jews actually know about these Christian ideas? How can we be sure that they knew? It is my contention that proof of the realm of shared culture and of possible interactions between Jewish and Christian elements of this culture may be found if we “localize” the sources. On a locally centered level can we trace actual knowledge of Christian concepts and ideas among Jews; or, at least, the probability that we can detect actual knowledge is much higher if we focus on the possibility of a locally centered “shared culture” or a locally centered “common ground.”

Should we succeed in mapping out the settings and places where Jewish and Christian culture met, we may also be truly firm in our conclusions, particularly about perceptions of the martyr. This map, the eventual goal, will be constructed by repeating the process of “localization” for each of the episodes where this is possible and then by contrasting them. The work will also entail asking whether Jewish chroniclers, as they told their tales, took into account concrete personalities and local events. In the case of Xanten, now about to be discussed, this certainly was true.<sup>22</sup>

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The chronicle known as that of Shlomo bar Shimshon was composed in Mainz about 1140. One of its prime episodes recounts the assault on the Jews of Xanten. These are the questions that we pose as we examine the account: How much concrete and detailed knowledge did the Jews have of Christian martyrology and piety of that period and did they react to it? Did they orchestrate their actions and their narratives in order to invoke rivalry or to respond to it? Are there specific parallel features between Christian and Jewish veneration of martyrs that were intentionally created by the Jewish authors to highlight a rivalry situation between Christians and Jews? What other forms of knowledge of Christians beyond theological references could the Jews have had? What was the Jews’ realm of experience about Christian crusade culture? Johannes Heil has recently shown how Christian narrations reflect Jewish narrations that are otherwise lost.<sup>23</sup> Here we will see that the Jewish narration of the Xanten martyrdom in 1096 replies to specific Christian accounts; its knowledge of Christian martyrology is also highly detailed, and, even more, it is well versed about specific sites of Christian martyriological veneration.

What does Shlomo tell us? We learn that the crusader bands, the “enemies of the Lord,” attacked the Jews in Xanten on Sabbath eve at twilight, between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth day of the month

Tammuz, which is between the 27th and 28th of June 1096.<sup>24</sup> These Jews were part of a larger group that had survived the attack in Cologne thanks to Christians who hid them in their homes. In an attempt to protect this whole group from further persecution, the Archbishop had intervened and distributed them among seven fortified villages, one of which was Xanten, which lies about 60 miles North of Cologne. Considering the logistics of moving people so far, the Archbishop's was a sincere intention to move the Jews out of harm's way, or at least this is the image Shlomo seems to have wished to create. In separate reports, Shlomo bar Shimshon and Eliezer bar Nathan tell about the fate of the Jews in each of these places of refuge; besides Xanten, they were Neuss, Wevelinghoven, Eller or Ellen, Meer, Kerpen and Geldern, also at a distance from Cologne, and, for that matter, from each other.<sup>25</sup>

At first glance, neither Shlomo's nor Eliezer's report about Xanten provides location-specific information. Shlomo's account highlights a Friday evening gathering to celebrate the beginning of the Sabbath, one that could have occurred at any other place. Shlomo, however, adds the detail that "shorn" ones (tonsured religious) came to one Natronai bar Isaac, to convince him to accept baptism.<sup>26</sup>

Shlomo describes a group of Jews who "just as the Sabbath was setting in . . . were sitting down to eat bread, having sanctified the Sabbath . . . and recited the *motzi* over the bread, when they heard the voice of the oppressor, and the waters of wickedness came upon them, and they ate nothing but (the morsel of) the *motzi* . . ." Aware of the imminent danger, the head of the group started prayers for its rescue, but without success. He also called on a prominent member, Moses haCohen, named the priest of God on high, recalling Melchizedek in the Bible. Turning to the community and describing the prospects of eternal life in paradise, Moses then encouraged its members to martyr themselves, who all then agree to commit *kiddush ha-Shem*, "with one mouth and one heart." Moses adds several prayers concerning the actual situation of persecution. According to Shlomo, all members of the group performed *kiddush ha-Shem*, and their bodies are buried, but the circumstances of the burial and the identity of those who do the burying are left unsaid. Besides this communal scene, Shlomo also relates the martyrdom of Natronai bar Isaac and of an unnamed convert to Judaism.<sup>27</sup>

The first step in interpreting Shlomo's account of Xanten is to look at the genesis of his report. Shlomo and Eliezer have used a common source for their chronicles, a lost text that I call Phi, but which can be reconstructed insofar as it contained at least those texts that both chronicles have in common.<sup>28</sup> In the case of the report on Xanten, Eliezer is very concise, giving only the bare facts of the event. We find almost all of his text again in Shlomo's account. Therefore, we can assume that Eliezer's report reflects the content of text Phi (except for a story about a scholar from France<sup>29</sup> which

is probably Eliezer's addition). A comparison between the parallel texts of Shlomo's and Eliezer's accounts makes apparent the extent to which Shlomo edited, added, and produced a text that is very literary, highly constructed and imaginative.<sup>30</sup>

Part of Shlomo's imaginative work went into the many citations of, and associations with, texts of the Bible, the Midrash, and the Talmud. These allusions provide the subtext of the Xanten account and demand a second layer of interpretation. Another crucial difference between Eliezer's account and that of Shlomo is that according to Shlomo, the attackers' intention was also to baptize the Jews, whereas Eliezer doesn't mention baptism, and refers only to the killing of the Jews. (It is not clear whether Phi mentions baptism.) More importantly, Shlomo has integrated into his Xanten account the core elements of a theological program that defines and legitimates the act of kiddush ha-Shem. These elements are: first, the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, the Aqedat Yitzchak or "Binding of Isaac," which is the general model for martyrdom and self-sacrifice. Accordingly, "*each man slaughter his son, his daughter and among his brothers in order to bestow a blessing upon ourselves today. . . . And the last one to remain shall slaughter himself by the throat with a knife, or thrust his sword into his stomach, . . .*"<sup>31</sup> Second, God will not yield to the prayers and pleading of the Jews, for he had come "*to test this generation, to demonstrate their love for Him.*"<sup>32</sup> Hence, Kiddush ha-Shem is God's will: "*Amen, so be it and so is His will.*"<sup>33</sup> Third, the pious sacrificing of life is compared to the sacrifices that were offered to God at the Temple in Jerusalem before its destruction by the Romans; the altar now being "*in the valleys of the Rhine and the Moselle.*"<sup>34</sup> "*We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered;*"<sup>35</sup> "*We shall offer ourselves as a sacrifice to the Lord, as a whole-burnt-offering to the Most High One, a sacrifice upon the altar of God.*"<sup>36</sup> Fourth, reward for the sacrifice will be the paradise where the martyrs will sit in the company of the righteous and see God,<sup>37</sup> Fifth, Kiddush ha-Shem forestalls baptism with "*evil—or seething—waters,*" "*so that the impure ones and the hands of the wickedness will not defile us with their abominations.*"<sup>38</sup> And, sixth, Shlomo puts into Moses's mouth a call to God to revenge "*Thy servants blood that is spilt and that will yet be spilt . . .*"<sup>39</sup> a reference to messianic vengeance. Hope for a speedy arrival of "personal and national redemption,"<sup>40</sup> as Israel Yuval has defined it, is prevalent. "*And may their merit . . . serve for us as an intercessor before the Most High, to redeem us speedily from the Exile of the wicked Edom, speedily in our days.*"<sup>41</sup>

Shlomo's narrative about Xanten stands out as the most theological of all his accounts about the travails of Jews in the region of Cologne. It contains the longest speech of the entire chronicle, several comments by the author himself, and an extensive epilogue. Nowhere else in the chronicle do we find the theological elements of the kiddush ha-Shem ideology grouped

together with such density and interwoven with so many additional associations. When considering the entire chronicle—which also includes the accounts about Worms, Mainz, Speyer, Trier, Metz, Regensburg and Prague—the report about Xanten turns out to be Shlomo's most programmatic text.

But why did Shlomo choose to use his narrative about the events at Xanten to make so theologically developed a statement? As Eliezer's rendering demonstrates, Shlomo's account could have been a great deal shorter. "Localizing" the account, examining it as told by Shlomo in light of specifics we know about Xanten, brings us closer to the answer. Five questions will guide us: 1) to what situation in Xanten does Shlomo's report refer; 2) what was the realm of experience to which Shlomo, though in Mainz, had access nearly five decades after the events; 3) what information did the Jews of Cologne have about Xanten; 4) what was the overall religious environment that Shlomo's account was set in; 5) what was the connection of an element about to be introduced, the Thebean legion of Xanten, to the Crusade martyrology? What, in other words, were the associations and symbols Shlomo reacted to, and how intimately was he acquainted with them, as he composed his programmatic account?

Shlomo mentions that Xanten belonged to the archbishop of Cologne: "He (the bishop) dispersed them (the Jews) among his seven villages."<sup>42</sup> In fact, the archbishop of Cologne had ruled over the Xanten area in ecclesiastical and worldly matters since the sixth century. His castle complex along the Roman Limes road, the Roman frontier to the East, probably existed since around the year 1000. The complex, consisting of this castle, the neighboring church of St. Victor, and a settlement around a market developed from about the first half of the twelfth century into a place with a distinctly urban character. When Archbishop Hermann chose Xanten as a place of refuge for the Jews of Cologne, he sent them to the heart of his episcopal power in the Lower Rhine valley; personal connections to St. Victor—he had been provost of the monastery in Xanten from 1076 to 1085—might have been an additional reason.<sup>43</sup> In their quest for safety, the Jews reached Xanten, from Cologne, either by the Limes road or by ship on the Rhine, where they would die in the tower that dominated the entire castle; describing the location as *migdal* (tower),<sup>44</sup> Shlomo was using the same term as in contemporary Latin sources *turris*.

We may also learn something from Shlomo's narrative about the perceptions Jews had of the place assigned as their refuge. The "shorn" ones who were "acquainted with" Natronai bar Isaac had come to him "throughout the entire previous day telling him 'to defile himself in their evil waters'"<sup>45</sup> must have been canons from the community of St. Victor in Xanten. We can assume that Natronai's acquaintance with these tonsured clerics was not exceptional; therefore Natronai and other Jews must have had some knowledge

about the canon chapter of St. Victor and its significance. Indeed, the St. Victor community of canons was well known beyond Xanten. St. Victor himself had been venerated since the fifth century as one of the leaders of the Thebean legion. The earliest extant tale of woe or passion of these soldiers, the *Passio Acaunensium Martyrum*, had been written by bishop Eucherius of Lyon between 440 and 450.<sup>46</sup> According to the widely circulating legends, this legion of Christian soldiers from the Orient had been sent to regions north of the Alps by Emperor Maximilian at the end of the third century with orders to combat the enemies of the Roman Empire. The legion had already been divided into several cohorts under several leaders, and each cohort was on its way to a different military camp when the Roman Emperor demanded the soldiers bring sacrifices to the pagan Gods, or even persecute local Christians. The soldiers refused to obey and were consequently killed. The first martyrs among them, several hundred Christian soldiers commanded by Mauritius,<sup>47</sup> were murdered by the overpowering might of the Emperor's pagan soldiers in Agaunum, close to Lake Geneva in today's Switzerland.

Since the Early Middle Ages, numerous places have been venerated as locations where different cohorts and their leaders allegedly suffered; among the earliest cultic places north of the Alps are Cologne, with Gereon as the stalwart leader and Victor as the second patron saint;<sup>48</sup> for Bonn, there were Cassius and Florentius; for Münster, Mauritius, Gereon, Victor; for Magdeburg, Mauritius and Innocentius; for Mainz, Mauritius, Victor; for Worms, Mauritius; for Metz, Victor; for Trier, Thyrsus and Palmatus; and, significantly for our story, for Xanten, Victor.<sup>49</sup> The cult dominated the locale in the form of the Victorine community and made Xanten a famous pilgrimage site. Its fame was only second behind St. Gereon in Cologne.

Among the different tales of woe or passion about the Thebean martyrs,<sup>50</sup> a prominent and elaborate version from around the year 1000 circulated with the title *Passio sanctorum Gereonis, Victoris, Cassii et Florentii Thebaeorum martyrum*. It reports also about the Xanten saints and, in particular, it narrates how the "foolhardy and bloodthirsty (pagan) soldiers" murdered the "courageous Victor, Christ's soldier, together with his three-hundred-and-thirty" companions in Xanten and "let their holy bodies sink into the marsh."<sup>51</sup> Already this scene resembles Shlomo's description about a large community "of death" and its leader who suffer martyrdom. More than two decades before 1096 and after his return from Metz, where he had served as a teaching brother, the pro-imperial chronicler Sigebert of Gembloux (1028/29–1112) wrote a detailed version of the *Passio Sanctorum Thebeorum*. His story covers three books of poetical (2986) verses, using the *passio* of Eucherius as his principal model<sup>52</sup> and emphasizing the refusal of the Thebean legion—to 6666! men—to venerate the pagan gods, similar to Shlomo's account about

the Jews' resistance. Remarkable are three long speeches: in the first, Mauritius, the main leader of the legion, encourages his men with much enthusiasm to become martyrs as others, among them the Maccabees as Christian martyrs, have before them in expectation of eternal life; then Exuperius, the banner bearer, calls upon the men to lay down the weapons in order to suffer corporal pains.<sup>53</sup> Victor then appears, following the description of the mass killings and the martyrs' burial, who asks in horror what has happened. Upon hearing the news, he cries out—in another elaborate speech—whose climactic ending proclaims: "Heart, mind, reason, feeling, intellect, yes, even whatever of the soul begins, it sings the praise of Christ, it chooses and loves Christ, I live *in Christ*, I venerate Christ, I shall soon die *in Christ*."<sup>54</sup> Consequently, and according to his wish, Victor is beheaded. The three speeches are as central to Sigebert's *passio* as Moses' speech is to Shlomo's account. Both also feature the call to the reluctant<sup>55</sup> to become martyrs out of love for God,<sup>56</sup> "for they are worthy,"<sup>57</sup> describing the eschatological prospects of eternal life in paradise. To be sure, the Thebean martyrs don't kill each other; they let themselves being killed. However, in the Jewish, as well as in the Christian case, death is voluntary.

As Shlomo does through the "voice" of Moses haCohen, Sigebert, too, explains the method of killing, by sword and lances that emperor Maximinianus orders.<sup>58</sup> Neither account details the actual act of killing. Sigebert uses the image of an enraged wolf who kills defenseless sheep out of bloodlust, for he has no hunger.<sup>59</sup> With a slightly different connotation, Shlomo compares the Jewish community at the Friday evening gathering in Xanten to sheep by citing Psalm 44,23: "*For Thy sake are we killed all the day; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*"<sup>60</sup> After the killing, both, the Christian and Jewish martyrs fester in their blood, and Sigebert writes: "The lands are flooded with blood, the rocks are dripping with blood, the meadows are misty with blood, even the streams become red with blood."<sup>61</sup> Shlomo says: "In this *Aqeda* not one survived except for those who were lacerated and wallowed in the blood among the dead."<sup>62</sup> Nor in the two cases were there survivors, so that Shlomo and Sigebert both had to resolve the matter of the martyrs' burial. According to Sigebert, even though the dead martyrs' bodies were thrown into the river, the seven holy virtues (*fides, armor, spes, patientia, pietas, prudentia, iustitia*) appear as mourning women, who bury them.<sup>63</sup> According to Shlomo (and also Eliezer bar Nathan), the Jewish martyrs receive burial, but at whose hands, it is not said.<sup>64</sup>

With all this taken into account, can we claim that Shlomo has known and has used Sigebert's *Passio*? Is Shlomo's account deliberately modeled on Sigebert's *Passio*? Except for a copy in Limburg,<sup>65</sup> we don't know about the circulation of Sigebert's *Passio*. However, it may have been Sigebert himself who told Jews this story. As the "Gesta Abbatum Gemblacensium (continuatio auctore Godescalco)" point out, Sigebert had very close contact with

Jews during his stay in Metz: he had been “carissimus” of the Jews; “he learnt from them to distinguish the *Hebraica veritas* (the Hebrew Bible) from other editions,” and “he agreed with their opinions which they spoke according to the *Hebraica veritas*.”<sup>66</sup> Even when he returned to the monastery of Gembloux, he knew details that can only be explained by continuous contact with Jews. Towards the end of the *passio sanctorum Thebeorum*, Sigebert refers to the 22nd of September as the patrons day of the Thebean martyrs and praises this day as coinciding with the Jewish New Year’s day (Rosh haShannah).<sup>67</sup> Since the Jewish New Year changes each year in its relation to the Christian calendar, he had most likely received this information directly from Jews. Within the probable timeframe of his writing, the first day of the Jewish New Year fell on September 22nd only in 1072.<sup>68</sup> The exact dating of the *passio* which has been rather speculative is now possible. The *passio* was written in 1072.<sup>69</sup> It might have even been composed on the occasion of the “finding” of the Thebean legion martyrs in Trier whose sarcophaguses were “detected” and presented to the public in the same year.<sup>70</sup>

Yet why were the Thebean martyrs so close to Sigebert’s heart that he wrote their *Passio* as his first work upon his return from Metz to the monastery in Gembloux? In Metz, the church of St. Victor had long been an integral part to the town’s sites of veneration,<sup>71</sup> and the monks of Gembloux counted on the publicity of Sigebert’s *Passio* in their aim to establish their monastery as pilgrimage site of Exuperius, one of the Thebean martyrs.<sup>72</sup> In his theological conversations with the Jews of Metz, therefore, Sigebert could easily have discussed the most important Saints cult in the city.

Yet how—this is our second question—did information about the Thebean martyrs reach Shlomo in Mainz? Shlomo had connections to Metz, since he included in his chronicle a report about the sufferings of the Jewish community in Metz during the 1096 persecution.<sup>73</sup> In addition, the Thebean martyrs cult was also very prominent in Mainz. The church of St. Victor<sup>74</sup> had towered over the river banks of the Rhine across the mouth of the Main River as far back as the eighth century. The Jewish community of Mainz might have even dealt with the provost of this church of St. Victor, since he belonged to the “consilium” of advisors of the archbishop of Mainz and, therefore, had influence and visibility.<sup>75</sup> Finally, Shlomo had also received a report from Trier, 50 miles north-east of Metz. Although the local Thebean cult is not mentioned in the Trier account, the Jewish reporter reveals in-depth knowledge of the city’s sacral sites.<sup>76</sup> Further, regardless of whether Shlomo, who wrote several decades after Sigebert, used the Latin text of Sigebert’s *Passio* as his direct model, it is clear that Shlomo was most familiar with contents of the veneration-tale it contains. His report reads as a rival story to the Christian *passio*. Therefore, Shlomo’s decision to write a detailed and programmatic account of Xanten might have been a reaction to the Christian

legend of this particular spot. Another of Shlomo's sources would have been information garnered from the Jews of Cologne, where some of the oral testimonies Shlomo used to construct his account about the events in Xanten surely originated.<sup>77</sup>

Our third lemma is what did the Jews of Cologne know about Xanten. Cologne was the largest and most significant town in German speaking lands and the home of the Jews who hoped for refuge in Xanten. It was also the most important stronghold of martyr-cults in the kingdom. The Jews had seen the Christian monuments of Cologne many times, especially the church of St. Gereon,<sup>78</sup> whose second patron was St. Victor. After the cathedral, this church was Cologne's most remarkable building, built in Late Antiquity and older than Cologne's cathedral. Supposedly, it was founded by the Empress Helena, the powerful mother of Constantine the Great and renowned protector of Christianity. The *passio* of St. Gereon written about the year 1000, depicts the church in euphoric terms as the marvelous and illustrious church that nobody could describe with words or ever imitate.<sup>79</sup> Probably because of its golden mosaics, the people of Cologne called St. Gereon the "Church of the Golden Saints *ad aureos sanctos*" or *Ad Sanctos*, to the Saints.<sup>80</sup> The building had to be expanded in the second half of the eleventh century to cope with the crowds of pilgrims that flocked there, a sign of the growing popularity of St. Gereon far beyond Cologne. Remarkably, from the ninth century, Xanten, too, had also been called *Ad Sanctos*, from which the name "Xantum/Xanten" derived.<sup>81</sup> Jews freely used this name; it was the common usage, after all, and they no doubt knew of its connection with the Thebean martyrs' cult; Shlomo and Eliezer write in perfect transliteration שׁוֹנְטוֹס = "Santos" or שׁוֹנְטוֹ = "Santa!"

In addition to all this, at the time when the Hebrew accounts were written, many events occurred in Cologne and Xanten that captured the attention of their inhabitants, regardless of their religion. The fire in 1109 that totally destroyed the church of St. Victor was dramatic, but the rebuilt structure was even more magnificent than the former. In 1128, the Archbishop Norbert of Magdeburg, once a canon at the Xanten community, consecrated the new church of St. Victor in a solemn celebration at the request of the Archbishop of Cologne. The following year, Victor's relics were transferred *in hoc scrinio*, into a magnificent metal reliquary, but they remained in Cologne for several more decades, their refuge since the Norman threat of more than 300 years earlier.<sup>82</sup>

It was symptomatic of the close connection between the canons of St. Victor and Cologne that the provost of the church of St. Victor (in Xanten) was often also the head of a religious community in this city—for instance, and notably, Provost Herrmann of St. Victor, who was also the provost of St. Gereon (in Cologne) when, during 1121, Norbert of Xanten (before he

became archbishop of Magdeburg) was instrumental in the finding and elevation of what all believed were the real bones of St. Gereon in Cologne. In its day, this event was sensational; the veneration and cult of the Thebean legion was booming.<sup>83</sup> Tumultuous events were thus occurring, which the Jews of Cologne certainly observed and whose measure they no doubt took, aware as they surely were of the fame and stories of the Thebean martyrs. Close contacts between Jewish and Christian residents of St. Laurence in the city center of Cologne are witnessed in the "Schreinskarten" (documents recording real estate transactions beginning in 1135).<sup>84</sup> And if after 1096, how much the more were there such relations prior to that date? The stories, whether handed down orally or in writing, of the Jews of Cologne, telling of life in that city were easily a model Shlomo may have used to write his Xanten counter-*passio*. We might also ask, tentatively to be sure, whether all the activity and creation of monuments to Christian martyrs moved the Jews of Cologne and the region to think about martyrs of their own—what form and significance Jewish martyrdom might take—even before 1096. It was surely so after the fact. As we are about to see, in creating the Jewish martyrology of Xanten, Shlomo was responding directly to details in the stories of the Thebean legion as they were set in Xanten's religious milieu.

Let us now look—our fourth question—at the overall religious environment as it served as the background for Shlomo's account, in particular, at the role of the Thebean veneration in its propagation by Norbert of Xanten,<sup>85</sup> who was the most prominent advocate for the reform and revival of Christianity in Germany and Eastern France in the second and third decades of the twelfth century. This reform movement started in the last decades of the eleventh century in the Latin West and strove for radical changes of Christian ways of life both inside the church and in the world. Its ideal and model was the Apostolic or primitive church and the imitation of the poor and suffering Christ. The members of the reform movement defined themselves programmatically as *pauperes Christi*, the poor people of Christ, in imitation of the poor and naked Christ on the cross.<sup>86</sup>

The future Archbishop Norbert embodied in his own person such a radical transformation. Although of noble descent, a canon of St. Victor in Xanten, and a member of the inner circle at the Emperor's court, in 1115, Norbert decided to leave all this behind and become an itinerant preacher, expressing, by doing so, opposition to the rich and mighty office bearers of the Christian church. Norbert gained great popularity among both men and women and acquired numerous followers. In 1120, he capped his project by founding his own (first) community in Prémontré, in the uninhabited areas of eastern France. Many additional monastic foundations, comprised of both men and women, quickly followed. By the middle of the twelfth century, there were about three-hundred of them in German lands alone. Norbert's reform movement had become a mass phenomenon.<sup>87</sup>

Norbert also had a special relationship with the Thebean legion.<sup>88</sup> During his stay in Cologne between 1121 and 1122, Norbert acquired numerous relics of the martyrs of the Thebean legion for the cultic devotions of his new monasteries Prémontré and Floreffe, indicating their religious orientation. Norbert probably gave some of these relics to the collegiate church *Unser Lieben Frau*, Of Our Lady, which he reformed according to his ideals, as well as to the cathedral in Magdeburg where he became archbishop in 1126.<sup>89</sup> In 1131, he also endowed his new foundation, "Gratia Dei" or "Gottesgnaden," in Magdeburg with relics of St. Victor from Xanten. This way Norbert added to the cult of the first Thebean martyr, the Arch-Thebean Mauritius, who had already been venerated for two hundred years in this center of Latin Christianity that bordered on the lands of the still pagan Slavs.<sup>90</sup>

Although it has gone unnoted in the scholarly literature, the martyrdom of the Thebeans mirrored Norbert's basic perception<sup>91</sup> of Christianity and his ideal church. He saw in the Thebean martyrs a Christianity that was suffering with and for Christ. His critics accused Norbert of demanding an asceticism so extreme that it might lead followers even "to death." The Thebeans were the counter image to a victorious and wealthy Christendom and to the forces of Latin Christianity that expressed themselves in the violent sallies and expansionism of the crusades. We are reminded that Exuperius is depicted as seeing himself as no longer a standard-bearer of war, but of peace.<sup>92</sup> Out of love for God and Christ and for their faith, the Thebeans, soldiers of Christ—*milites Christi*—let themselves being slaughtered like sheep at the hands of their powerful, bloodthirsty enemies.<sup>93</sup> This willingness to accept death for the sake of the *Agnus Dei* was also understood as an active fight for Christ. To this must be added that in Magdeburg, Mauritius and Victor, as soldiers of Christ in a more violent constellation, were regarded as the patrons of the missionaries against the pagans; and conversion of the pagans was another aspect of Norbert's program.

In these respects, there are striking similarities between the Christian reform movement as it was represented and exemplarily lived by Norbert of Xanten and the ideals of Jewish martyrdom set out in Shlomo's message. Crucial for both Shlomo and Norbert was the anchoring and embedding of religion in the broader community, seeking to augment wider participation in religious life. Religiosity, the experience of a direct relationship to God, and paradise, however different the essence, and certainly the nuance, of Jewish and Christian visions of this place, become accessible to everybody.

The parallel, and yet different, scenarios of martyrdom at Xanten epitomized for Shlomo and Norbert the essentials of their programs. Both groups of martyrs in Xanten—the ancient Christians and (now the) Jews—took upon themselves a martyr's death in order to prove their love for God. Both

were overpowered by bloodthirsty enemies; they both regard their martyrdom as active resistance; yet both also achieved a place in paradise, regardless, moreover, of social status or prowess in learning. In both cases, a large mass of believers had chosen the martyr's death.

For both Norbert and Shlomo, the universality of believers meant also the inclusion of women: During his stay in Cologne in 1121/22, Norbert was instrumental in the finding and elevation of what was considered the relics of St. Ursula and those of the over eleven thousand virgins who, it was said, had accompanied her to a martyr's death. Out of this abundant treasure of relics, Norbert secured a significant portion for himself.<sup>94</sup> These relics, together with their legends that were similar to those of the Thebean legends, became very popular. Their veneration corresponded not only to the growing number of mixed-sex, or women's, monasteries founded by Norbert, but also to the truly innovative prominence women were gaining in religious life for the first time since early Christianity.<sup>95</sup> In Shlomo's Xanten tale, women are passive (though martyred nonetheless), but in others of his stories they are notably prominent as actors. Shlomo describes an unexpectedly high number of martyrdoms of women. He, in fact, often portrays women as superior to men in their steadfastness in faith and their willingness to die for God!

On this basis, one may reasonably conclude that the Jews of Cologne in general, and Shlomo bar Shimshon in particular, to whom the events in Xanten were reported, had a relatively detailed knowledge of the traditions and symbolism of St. Victor's and the Thebeans' veneration in Xanten and Cologne. They had watched the events surrounding the rebuilding of the Xanten church and the sensational finding of the relics of the Cologne Thebeans. They witnessed the emergence of a new Christianity that chose to be represented by the martyr's ideal of the Thebeans and the eleven thousand virgins. Against this background, it is not surprising that the idea of emphasizing the martyrdom of the Jews in Xanten and highlighting its theological significance suggested itself. Confronted with the Thebean martyrs as its symbolic presentation, Shlomo bar Shimshon gave the Jews their own way to connect with this site of martyrdom and to create a new meaning for it. He could give an assertive voice to a rivalry between Judaism and Christianity which had ancient roots, but had acquired new forms during 1096 and in its wake.

We must now—our fifth, and final question—connect the legend of the Thebean legion of Xanten, to Crusade martyrology. The stalwart figures of the Thebean legions—Mauritius, Gereon, and Victor—are often presented in knightly armor holding aloft the banner of the cross. Considering the military aspect of the *passio*, it is hardly surprising that Gereon became the patron of warriors.<sup>96</sup> As patrons, Mauritius and Victor also played a crucial role in the often violent missionary efforts against the pagans of the East. Even though Norbert of Xanten interpreted Victor and Gereon as patrons of the ascetic

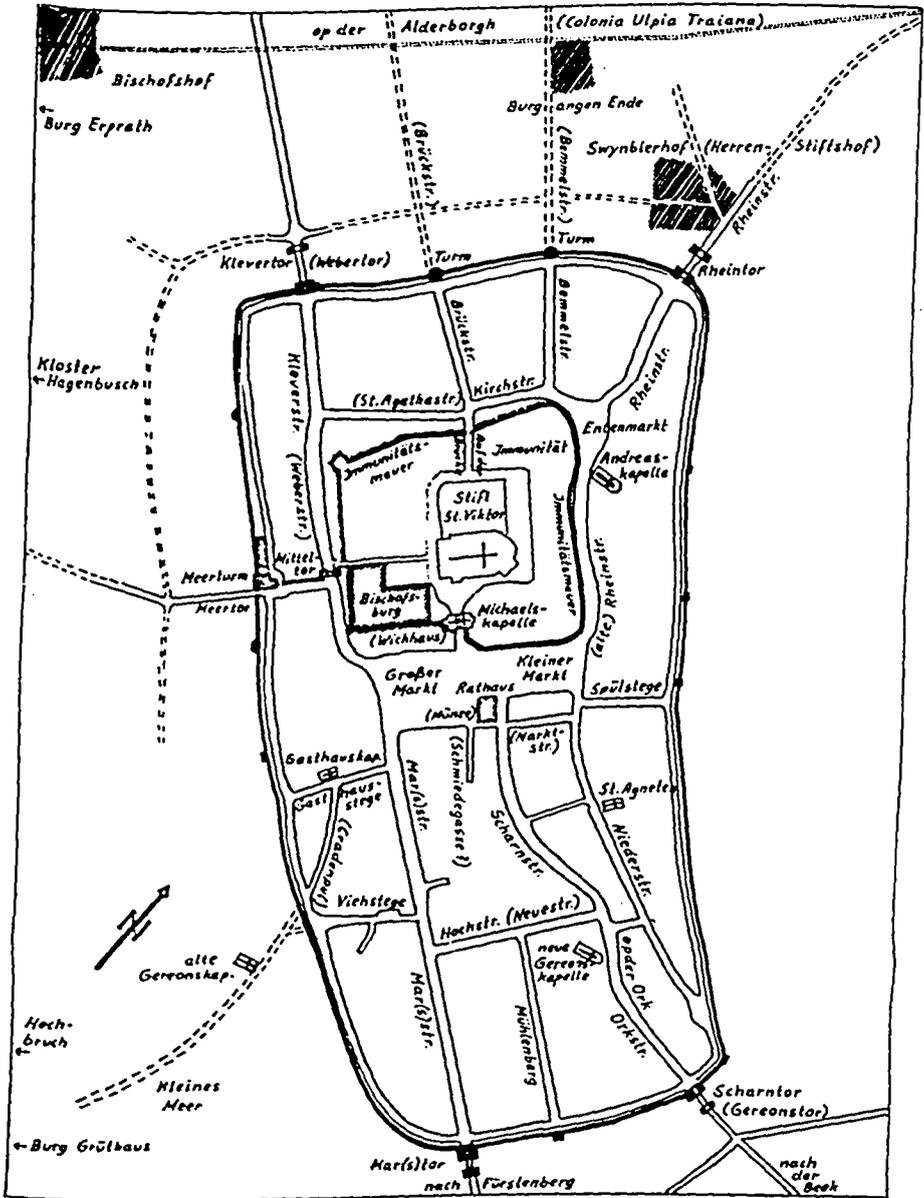


Figure 1. Map of medieval Xanten, in: Dieter Kastner, "Stadterhebung, Stadtwerdung und das Privileg für Xanten vom 15. Juli 1228," in Stadt Xanten, ed., *Studien zur Geschichte der Stadt Xanten 1228-1978. Festschrift zum 750jährigen Stadtjubiläum* (Köln, 1978), pp. 9-46

*pauperes Christi* movement, the Crusaders of 1096 and the developers of their “ideology” might have seen both as personifications of the Crusaders violent version of *imitatio Dei* (despite the fact that in the case of the Crusaders, death was sought after and thus not comparable to the Thebeans in the legend); regrettably, we cannot yet say whether the Crusades took the Thebean soldier-martyrs as their patrons.

What we can say, however, as a result of our investigation is that Shlomo clearly wrote his Xanten report as a rival to the story of the Thebean martyrs. We can distinguish two different scenarios. In the first, Shlomo wrote in reaction to the Crusaders, in the manner Jeremy Cohen, Israel Yuval, Shmuel Shepkaru, and others have shown. In the second, he counter-posed his story directly to the large-scale religious movement Norbert and others founded, the *pauperes Christi*, and their goal of *imitatio Dei*. It is not that in the second scenario, Shlomo deserts the motif of rivalry and greater—Jewish—glory: Shlomo did declare the Jewish martyrs as superior. To borrow from Jeremy Cohen: “Our martyrs surpass your martyrs, and even your Martyr par excellence.” However, the “Martyrdom par excellence” in the context of Xanten was Victor. In addition, this allowed Shlomo to enhance his vision of rivalry in a series of inversions. Shlomo implies: The Thebeans were steadfast and resisted the pagans. We, the Jews, have resisted the Christians, the pagans of our time!<sup>97</sup> Our martyrdom was a more *active* one. We committed kiddush ha-Shem; the Thebeans *let themselves* be killed by the impure pagans. We also rejected (whether before or after the fact) the pollution of baptism that Gereon and Victor stood for in the pagan East, and we even polluted their Christ image, since Natronai bar Isaac “mocked the image” with urine.<sup>98</sup> It becomes evident that Shlomo’s account is as much about baptism and conversion to Christianity as it is about martyrdom.<sup>99</sup> In fact, the text hints at the possibility that all Jews were forcibly baptized before their act of Kiddush ha-shem<sup>100</sup> which would then have been committed in order to nullify the baptism and to cleanse themselves from this pollution.

In Xanten in 1096, the Jews in the *turris* stood “face to face” before the veneration site of the Thebean martyrs (a distance of fewer than 50 meters). On a literary level, Shlomo wanted the Christian and Jewish martyrs to face each other “on site.” Another source from the end of the twelfth century suggests even more: In 1197, Jewish martyrs, killed by Christians in Neuss, were transported about 40 miles to Xanten so that they could be buried “by the graves of the righteous who were buried there during the persecutions of Tatn”u (1096).<sup>101</sup> Burial could have been in Neuss or even Cologne, about half the distance to Xanten from Neuss, where there was a Jewish community, as opposed to Xanten, where a real community’s existence is in doubt, and which was also a burial site for martyrs from 1096.<sup>102</sup> Xanten had obviously become the site of a Jewish martyr-cult. It was understood that the new

martyrs should rest side-by-side with their predecessors. The Jewish martyrs were indeed—if not literally—facing their Christian counterparts. Writing around 1140, was not Shlomo ben Shimshon giving voice to a perception and practice that was already active?

To conclude, I have attempted to show that probing the shared culture or common ground between Christians and Jews with regard to the persecution of 1096 and its depiction in the three Hebrew chronicles requires investigating more detailed realms than has so far been endeavoured—and to which the most direct access is through “localizing” the sources. This procedure will at once support results already achieved in designating “common ground” between Christian and Jewish martyrologies, but it also invites us to reconsider these results in a different light.

## Notes

1. Eva Haverkamp, ed., *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs* (Hannover, 2005), pp. 9–14. For a different discussion about the primary goals of the attackers see David Malkiel, “Destruction or Conversion, Intention and reaction, Crusaders and Jews, in 1096,” *Jewish History* 15 (2002), pp. 257–280.
2. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 436, 437, (568–571). The English translation of this text and all other citations from the chronicle of Shlomo bar Shimshon in this article is from me taking into account the translations of Shlomo Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders. The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades* (Madison 1977), pp. 55–58, 56; Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God. Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia, 2004), pp. 73–75, 74, and Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 280–283, 281.
3. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*.
4. Haverkamp, “What Did the Christians Know? Latin Reports on the Persecutions of Jews in 1096,” *Crusades* 7 (2008), pp. 59–86.
5. In selection: Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*; idem, “A 1096 Complex? Constructing the First Crusade,” in Michael A. Signer and John Van Engen, eds., *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Notre Dame, 2001) pp. 9–26; idem, “The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles in Their Christian Cultural Context,” in Alfred Haverkamp, ed., *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge* (Sigmaringen, 1999), pp. 17–34; idem, “The ‘Persecutions of 1096’—From Martyrdom to Martyrology: The Socio-cultural Context of the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles” (Hebrew), *Zion* 59 (1994), pp. 169–208; Israel J. Yuval, “Two Nations in Your Womb,” *Perceptions of Jews and Christians* (Tel Aviv 2000) (Hebrew), esp. pp. 151–203; in English: *Two Nations in Your Womb. Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 2006), esp. pp. 135–190; in German: *Zwei Völker in deinem Leib. Gegenseitige Wahrnehmung von Juden und Christen* (Göttingen, 2007), esp. pp. 146–197; idem, “The Language and Symbols of the Hebrew Chronicles of the Crusades” (Hebrew), in Yom Tov Assis, Jeremy Cohen, Aharon Kedar, Ora Limor, Michael Toch, eds., *Facing the Cross. The Persecutions of 1096 in History and Historiography* (Jerusalem, 2001) (Hebrew), pp. 101–117; idem, “Christliche Symbolik und jüdische Martyrologie zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge,” in Haverkamp, ed., *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, pp. 87–106, esp. pp. 87–88,

- 105–106; idem, "'The Lord will take Vengeance, Vengeance for his Temple'—Historia sine ira et studio" (Hebrew), *Zion* 59 (1994), pp. 351–414; Shmuel Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds* (Cambridge, 2006); idem, "To Die for God. Martyrs' Heaven in Hebrew and Latin Crusade Narratives," *Speculum* 77 (2002), pp. 311–341; idem, "Death twice over: Dualism of Metaphor and Realia in twelfth century Hebrew Crusading Accounts," *JQR* 93 (2002), pp. 217–256; idem, "From After Death to Afterlife: Martyrdom and Its Recompense," *AJS Review* 24 (1999), pp. 1–44; Ivan Marcus, "A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis. The Culture of Early Ashkenaz," in David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews. A New History* (New York, 2002), pp. 449–516; idem, "From 'Deus Vult' to the 'Will of the Creator': Extremist Religious Ideologies and Historical Reality in 1096 and Hasidei Ashkenaz" (Hebrew), in Yom Tov Assis, et al., eds., *Facing the Cross*, pp. 92–100; Robert Chazan, *God, Humanity, and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Narratives* (Berkeley, 2000); idem, "Hebrew First Crusade Narratives and their Intertextual Messages," in Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, Lawrence H. Schiffman, eds., *Ki Baruch Hu. Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (Winona Lake, 1999), pp. 467–481.
6. See footnote no. 5.
  7. Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, p. 15; Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian World*, pp. 177, 183, 204; Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, p. 139; in Hebrew: p. 154; in German: p. 149, remarks more cautiously: "Scholarly literature discusses the great similarity between the acts of Jewish martyrs and those of Christian martyrs, almost as if the Jewish martyrs wished to demonstrate to the Christians: 'our martyrdom is greater than yours!' Without denying this resemblance, one cannot ignore the decisive difference: Christian martyrology did not advocate suicide or the killing of others." See about different aspects of the general situation of competition see Kenneth Stow, "Medieval Jews on Christianity," *Rivista di storia del Cristianesimo* 4.1 (2007), pp. 71–197.
  8. Cohen, "The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," p. 28; Cohen, "A 1096 Complex?," p. 13.
  9. Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian World*, pp. 166, 171, 173, 174, 177, 182, 183, 183–210; idem, "To Die for God"; idem, "From Death to Afterlife"; idem, "Death twice over."
  10. Cohen, "The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles"; idem, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, pp. 23–30, 62, 63; idem, "From 'Persecutions of 1096'," pp. 181–184.
  11. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, pp. 139–149, 189; in Hebrew: pp. 154–165, 202, 203; in German: pp. 149–160, 196, 197; idem, "'The Lord will take Vengeance,'" pp. 363–367, 371–373, 385–391; idem, "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation" (Hebrew), *Zion* 58 (1993), pp. 33–90, p. 67.
  12. Ivan Marcus, "A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis," pp. 465–472; idem, "From 'Deus Vult' to the 'Will of the Creator'."
  13. Robert Chazan, *God, Humanity, and History*, pp. 191, 192, 200–210; idem, "Hebrew First Crusade Narratives and their Intertextual Messages."
  14. Simha Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom* (in Hebrew: Tel Aviv, 2002, in English: Turnhout, 2008).
  15. Cohen, "Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," p. 23.
  16. Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian World*, p. 192.
  17. Cohen, "The Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," pp. 25, 62.
  18. Shepkaru, "From Death to Afterlife," p. 43.
  19. Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, pp. 29, 30. Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian World*, pp. 198–205.

20. Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, p. 57; idem, "Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," p. 22.
21. Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian World*, p. 185.
22. It was also true in the case of Trier. The report also took into account the political constellations at the time of the persecutions. Eva Haverkamp, "'Persecutio' and 'Gezerah' in Trier während des Ersten Kreuzzugs," in: Haverkamp, ed., *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, pp. 35–71; Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 470–478.
23. Johannes Heil, "Jenseits von 'History and Memory.' Spuren jüdischer Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter," *Zeitschrift für Geisteswissenschaft* 12 (2007) pp. 989–1020.
24. About the inexactitude in dating this scene see Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, pp. 77–79; Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom*, p. 146.
25. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 400–465, (540–551), (562–579).
26. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 440–441, (568–569).
27. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 432–443, (566–571).
28. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 118–129, (623).
29. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 440–441, footnote no. 44; Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds*, pp. 163–165.
30. As I could show in the edition of the three Hebrew chronicles, Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, especially pp. 49–70, 85–142. The term "imaginative" is here used according to Ivan Marcus's definition who convincingly referred to these Hebrew chronicles as "fictions: imaginative recordings of experience within a cultural framework and system of symbols." in "From Politics to Martyrdom. Shifting Paradigms in the Hebrew Narratives of the 1096 Crusade Riots," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982), pp. 40–52. Idem, "History, Story and Collective Memory. Narrativity in Early Ashkenazic Culture," *Prooftexts* 10 (1990), pp. 365–388; idem, "Representation of Reality in the Narratives of 1096," *Jewish History* 13 (1999), pp. 37–48; idem, "Medieval Jewish Studies. Towards an Anthropological History of the Jews," in: Shaye J.D. Cohen, Edward L. Greenstein, eds., *The State of the Field* (Detroit, 1990), pp. 113–127; see also Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 31, 32.
31. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 436–437, see the discussion in footnote no. 22, pp. 570–571; also Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, p. 82.
32. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 434–435, see the discussion in footnote no. 15, pp. 570–571; this includes also brotherly love, see Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds*, 185–191 with reference to Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 440–441, in the Xanten account.
33. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 436, 437. Translation from Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds*, p. 174; Marcus, "From 'Deus Vult' to the 'Will of the Creator'."
34. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, p. 141.
35. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 434, 435, see the discussion in footnote no. 18, pp. 570–571; in addition see the interpretation of Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, pp. 81, 82.
36. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 436–437, see the discussion in footnotes no. 23–24, pp. 568–569; about associations to the Last supper, pilgrimage, and the role of the priest, see the discussion in idem, p. 436 footnotes no. 19–21; and in Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, p. 141; Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, pp. 87–88; Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds*, p. 173; Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom* (English), p. 108.
37. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 436, 437, see the discussion in footnotes no. 25–33, pp. 440–441, footnote no. 47, pp. 568–569; also Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the*

- Pagan and Christian World*, pp. 198–205; Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom* (English), pp. 108, 109.
38. See above footnote no. 1; Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 434–439: “May the merciful save us from wicked men, from conversion, from idolatry and from the impurity of the Gentiles and from their abominable rites.” About the aspect of pollution also see Kenneth Stow “Conversion, Apostasy, and Apprehensiveness. Emicho of Flonheim and the Fear of Jews in the Twelfth Century,” *Speculum* 76 (2001), pp. 911–933.
  39. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 438, 439, see the discussion in footnotes no. 36, 37, pp. 568, 569; and Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom* (English), p. 122.
  40. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, p. 141.
  41. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, p. 141; Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 442, 443, see the discussion in footnotes no. 50–52, pp. 566, 567.
  42. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 404, 405, (578, 579); p. 36 footnote 10, pp. 38, 39, footnote no. 14 (and there the bibliographical references).
  43. Ingo Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter. Sagentradition—Stiftsgeschichte—Stadtwerdung* (Köln, 2003), pp. 352–353, 404–415, about the castle: pp. 396–403; Michael Schmitt, “Xanten,” in Heinz Stoob, ed., *Deutscher Städteatlas V, 5* (Dortmund 1993); Friedrich Wilhelm Oediger, “Monasterium beati Victoris Christi martyris. Zur Frühgeschichte des Xantener Stiftkapitels (vor 1300),” in Hugo Borger, Friedrich Wilhelm Oediger, eds., *Beiträge zur Frühgeschichte des Xantener Viktorstiftes* (Düsseldorf 1969), pp. 207–268, 209–225; Walter Bader, “Bischofshof, Bischofsburg, Bischofplatz,” in Stadt Xanten, ed., *Studien zur Geschichte der Stadt Xanten 1228–1978. Festschrift zum 750jährigen Stadtjubiläum* (Köln, 1978), pp. 57–68; Walter Bader, *Die Stiftskirche des Hl. Viktor zu Xanten Sanctos* (Xanten, 1985), pp. 74–77; Klaus Flink, “Zur Stadtentwicklung von Xanten (12–14. Jahrhundert).” *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 182 (1979), pp. 62–88. Franz Weibels, *Die Großgrundherrschaft Xanten im Mittelalter* (Neustadt 1959), pp. 5, 6, 8.
  44. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 442–443.
  45. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 440–441, (568–569).
  46. Bruno Krusch, ed., *Passio martyrum Acaunensium*, MGH. rer. Merov. III (Hannover, 1896), pp. 20–41; Eric Chevalley, Justin Favrod, Laurent Ripart, eds., *Eucher et l’Anonyme: les deux Passions de saint Maurice*, in Otto Wermelinger, Philippe Bruggisser, Beat Näf, Jean-Michel Roessli, eds., *Mauritius und die Thebäische Legion. Saint Maurice et la Légion Thébaine* (Fribourg 2005), pp. 421–438. Michaela Zetler, “Zu Überlieferung und Rezeption der Passio Acaunensium Martyrum,” in Wermelinger, et al., eds., *Mauritius und die Thebäische Legion*, pp. 325–330; Robert Berg, *Der Heilige Mauritius und die Thebäische Legion* (Halle 1895), pp. 14–21.
  47. Maurice Zufferey, “Der Mauritiuskult im Früh- und Hochmittelalter,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 106 (1986), pp. 23–58.
  48. Hans-Joachim Kracht, Jakob Torsy, *Reliquarium Coloniense* (Siegburg 2003), pp. 266–268, 507.
  49. Hans Reinhard Seeliger, “Die Ausbreitung der Thebäer-Verehrung nördlich und südlich der Alpen,” in Wermelinger, et al., eds., *Mauritius und die Thebäische Legion*, pp. 211–226, 220–223; Thomas Bauer, *Lotharingen als historischer Raum. Raumbildung und Raumbewusstsein im Mittelalter* (Köln 1997), pp. 516–520, map no. 9; Frank G. Hirschmann, *Die Anfänge des Städtewesens in Mitteleuropa: Die Bischofssitze im Reich bis ins 12. Jahrhundert* (forthcoming Stuttgart, 2010); many thanks to him for letting me read his instructive book.
  50. Socii Bollandiani, eds., *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis*, Tomus A-I (Bruxellis 1898–1899), pp. 513–514; Tomus K-Z (Bruxelles 1900–1901),

- pp. 841–844; E. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio sanctae Luciae virginis und Passio sanctorum Thebeorum,” *Philosophische und historische Abhandlungen der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, phil.-hist. Klasse I* (Berlin 1893), pp. 1–125, 12, 13; G. Kentenich, “Der Kult der Thebäer am Niederrhein. Ein Beitrag zur Heiligengeographie,” *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter I* (1931), pp. 339–350; Eric Chevalley, “La Passion anonyme de saint Maurice d’Agaune,” *Vallesia* 45 (1990), pp. 37–120; Louis Dupraz, *Les Passions de S. Maurice d’Agaune* (Fribourg, 1961).
51. AASS Octobris V (Bruxelles, 1852), Col. 0766A no. 15: “Haec itaque dum agerentur, cohors illa, quae beatum Victorem comitabatur, ad locum, cui destinata erat, properans, pervenit ad oppidum Francorum, quod ex majorum suorum sedibus Trojam sive Xantum nuncupabant, ibique cum duce suo castra in pratis virentibus posuit. Nec minus audaces illi cruentique milites affuerunt, et preempto illic fortissimo Christi milite Victore cum trecentis triginta martyribus, sancta eorum corpora in locis palustribus submerserunt.” The earliest mentioning of the Xanten martyrs’ tradition is to be found in the *Liber in gloria Martyrum* of Gregor of Tours, see also about the passio Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, pp. 169, 171, 172, 182, 183, 189.
  52. Karla Pollmann, “Poetische Paraphrasen der Passio Acaunensium Martyrum des Eucherius von Lyon,” in Otto Wermelinger, et al., eds., *Mauritius und die Thebäische Legion*, pp. 227–254, p. 229 footnote no. 22: Sigebert used the passio of Eucherius in a version written perhaps around 500. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 21: The extant manuscript of Sigebert’s passio is from the first half of the twelfth century, probably from Gembloux.
  53. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” pp. 82–92.
  54. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 113 lines 665–668: “Cor, animus, ratio, mens, sensus, spiritus, immo, Quicquid inest anime Christum sonat, optat, amatque, Christo vivo, colo Christum, moriar modo Christo;” the above translation is mine.
  55. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 91 line 755. Compare to Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 438, 439, footnote no. 40.
  56. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 92 line 775.
  57. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 91 line 730.
  58. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” pp. 101–103, for example lines 244–245: “Hunc media gladio, mediat qua corporis umbo. . .” Maximianus (idem, pp. 239–241) suggests a list of other forms of death, for example drowning, or burning, and stoning: “Mille modis mortis hos perdat dextera fortis. Submergantur aquis, suspende, vel in ice flammis, Obiectato feris, lapidato, dissice serris.” Also Shlomo mentions martyrs “who were slaughtered, stabbed, strangled, burned, drowned, stoned, and buried alive—accepting upon themselves, with love and affection, seven deaths, corresponding to the seven days of the week. . .” Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 442–443. Maximianus promises the murderous soldiers the treasures which the Christian soldiers from the East supposedly possessed—as the Crusaders are looking for booty among the Jews.
  59. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” pp. 18, 104 (lines 326–333).
  60. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 434–435.
  61. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 104, lines 335–336: “Sanguine rura natant, cautes hoc sanguine rorant, Sanguine prata madent, hoc rivi sanguine fulvent.” The translation is from me.
  62. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 442–443.
  63. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 105, line 342–352.
  64. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 442–443.
  65. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” p. 15.

66. Georg Heinrich Pertz, ed., MGH SS 8 (Hannover 1848), p. 550 lines 8–10: “Nec solummodo christianis, sed et Iudeis in eadem urbe commanentibus erat carissimus, pro eo quod Hebraicam veritatem a caeteris editionibus secernere erat peritus, et in his quae secundum Hebraicam veritatem dicebant, Iudeorum erat consentiens assertionibus.” See also Mireille Schmidt-Chazan, “Sigebert de Gembloux, le Lotharingien”, in *Publications de la Section Historique de l’Institut Grand-Duc de Luxembourg* 106 (1991), 21–48, 29, 30: In 1092 Sigebert wrote the chronology of his *Liber decennalis* “according to the Hebraica veritas”.
67. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio”, p. 119, line 865.
68. Sigebert also mentions Sukkot as the time of veneration of the Thebean martyrs; Sukkot was celebrated in 1072 between the evening of October 4th and the 6th which is the veneration day in Trier. About the Thebeans in Trier, Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, p. 171.
69. The most recent speculation was provided by Schmidt-Chazan, “Sigebert de Gembloux, le Lotharingien”, p. 24. She suggests 1072–1073. Pollmann, “Poetische Paraphrasen”, p. 238 dates the passio between 1074 and 1078.
70. About the event in Trier, Franz-Josef Heyen, “Die Öffnung der Paulinus Gruft in Trier im Jahre 1072 und die Trierer Märtyrerlegende”, *Archiv für Mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 16 (1964), pp. 23–66; Eva Haverkamp, “‘Persecutio’ und ‘Gezerah’”, p. 50; Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, pp. 171–172; Heinz Heinen, *Frühchristliches Trier. Von den Anfängen bis zur Völkerwanderung* (Trier, 1996), pp. 45–52.
71. Hirschmann, *Die Anfänge des Städtewesens in Mitteleuropa*.
72. Pollmann, “Poetische Paraphrasen,” pp. 239–241.
73. Also Sigebert reports about this persecution in his “World Chronicle,” see Eva Haverkamp, “What did the Christians know,” p. 82.
74. Hirschmann, *Die Anfänge des Städtewesens in Mitteleuropa*.
75. Stephanie Haarländer, “Die Mainzer Kirche in der Stauferzeit (1122–1249),” in: Friedhelm Jürgensmeier, ed., *Handbuch der Mainzer Kirchengeschichte*, Vol. 1, *Christliche Antike und Mittelalter*, Part 1, (Würzburg 2000), pp. 290–346, 312.
76. Haverkamp, “‘Persecutio’ und ‘Gezerah’,” and also p. 50: The elevation of the Thebean martyrs in 1072 was important to the continuator of the *Gesta Treverorum* who wrote the Latin report of the persecution of the Jews in 1096. See above footnote no. 71.
77. Shlomo himself noted: “Thus did my fathers and the other elders who ... saw the momentous happening, relate to me.” Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 438–439, (568–569); see also Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, p. 76.
78. Bader, *Die Stiftskirche des Hl. Viktor zu Xanten Sanctos*, pp. 92–107; Kracht, Torsy, *Reliquarium Coloniense*, pp. 266–268, 507.
79. AASS Octobris V (Bruxellis, 1852), Col. 0768C no. 19.
80. AASS Octobris V (Bruxellis, 1852), Col. 0768C no. 20. Kentenich, *Der Kult der Thebäer am Niederrhein*, p. 340.
81. Bader, *Die Stiftskirche des Hl. Viktor zu Xanten Sanctos*, pp. 62–69.
82. Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, pp. 363–365, 413–415, 207–209: In the year 863, relics of Victor and a community of clerics are first mentioned. At that time, in a cloak-and-dagger operation, the abbot transported the mortal remains of Victor to Cologne to safety shortly before the pagan Normans attacked Xanten and destroyed the church of St. Victor.
83. Georg Pertz, ed., *Vita Norberti Archiepiscopi Magdeburgensis*, MGH SS 12 (Hannover, 1856), p. 682; Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, pp. 209, 225. About

- the St. Gereon cult in Xanten see idem, p. 224. Johannes Christian Nattermann, *Die Goldenen Heiligen. Geschichte des Stifts St. Gereon zu Köln* (Köln 1960), pp. 65–69. Shortly after 1140, the convent of St. Mauritius was founded in Cologne which also shows the popularity of the Thebeans at that time, see about the foundation Wolfgang Peters, “Die Gründung des Benediktinerinnenklosters St. Mauritius,” *Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins* 54 (1983), pp. 135–166.
84. Benjamin Laqua presented a talk about the Schreinsbook at the Fifteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem 2009. Manfred Groten, “Die mittelalterliche jüdische Gemeinde von Köln und das Schreinswesen des Kirchspiels St. Laurenz,” ed. in Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Jüdisches Leben im Rheinland vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Köln 2005), pp. 28–45, p. 35.
  85. Franz J. Felten, “Zwischen Berufung und Amt. Norbert von Xanten und seinesgleichen im ersten Viertel des 12. Jahrhunderts,” in Giancarlo Andenna, Mirko Breitenstein, Gert Melville, eds., *Charisma und religiöse Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter* (Münster, 2005), pp. 103–149; idem, “Norbert von Xanten. Vom Wanderprediger zum Kirchenfürst,” in Kaspar Elm, ed., *Norbert von Xanten. Adliger-Ordensstifter-Kirchenfürst* (Köln 1984), pp. 69–158; Kaspar Elm, “Norbert von Xanten. Bedeutung-Persönlichkeit-Nachleben,” in idem, *Mittelalterliches Ordensleben in Westfalen und am Niederrhein* (Paderborn, 1989), pp. 7–43.
  86. Constant Mews, “Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender in Religious Life. Robert of Arbrissel and Hersende, Abelard and Heloise,” *Viator* 37 (2006), pp. 113–148. Alfred Haverkamp, “Neue Formen von Bindung und Ausgrenzung. Konzepte und Gestaltungen von Gemeinschaften an der Wende zum 12. Jahrhundert,” in Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter, eds., *Salisches Kaisertum und neues Europa. Die Zeit Heinrichs IV. und Heinrichs V.* (Darmstadt, 2007), pp. 85–122.
  87. Stefan Weinfurter, “Norbert von Xanten als Reformkanoniker und Stifter des Prämonstratenserordens,” in Elm, ed., *Norbert von Xanten*, pp. 159–188.
  88. Perhaps not incidentally, Norbert decided to have all abbots of his community annually assembled at Prémontré on October 9th, the veneration day of the prominent martyr Dionysius, who was especially celebrated by the Ottonian rulers and in France. October 9th had originally been Victor’s day which, because of Dionysius, had been moved to October 10th. Both cults were closely connected which is also demonstrated by the oldest depiction of Victor in Xanten. This depiction of Victor and Gereon (or Georg) from around 1080 to 1090 can still be seen at the Dionysius chapel in Xanten. About the veneration days and these depictions, Runde, *Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, pp. 214–215, 401, tables 6a and 6b.
  89. When Norbert took over the archbishopric of Magdeburg, his life began to contradict his own religious program, see Felten, “Zwischen Berufung und Amt,” pp. 130, 131; Elm, “Norbert von Xanten. Bedeutung-Persönlichkeit-Nachleben,” pp. 13, 15.
  90. Elm, “Norbert von Xanten,” p. 36; Dietrich Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Magdeburg bis in das 12. Jahrhundert*, Vol. 1 (Köln, 1975), pp. 22–25, 232–234; Vol. 2 (Köln, 1972), pp. 388–390.
  91. About Norbert’s religious program and ideals see Felten, “Zwischen Berufung und Amt,” pp. 104–115, 119–120, 124–125. Felten, “Norbert von Xanten. Vom Wanderprediger zum Kirchenfürst,” pp. 82–84; Elm, “Norbert von Xanten. Bedeutung-Persönlichkeit-Nachleben,” pp. 10–14.
  92. Dümmler, “Sigebert’s von Gembloux Passio,” lines 694–695.
  93. AASS Octobris V (Bruxellis, 1852), Col. 0763A, no. 9.
  94. Wilhelm Levison, “Das Werden der Ursula Legende,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 132 (1972), pp. 1–164, pp. 110, 133–134. Pertz, ed., *Vita Norberti*, p. 682.

95. See footnote no. 86.
96. Kracht, Torsy, *Reliquarium Coloniense*, pp. 266–268. And see footnote no. 88.
97. About the names for Christians and Christianity see Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, p. 14, footnote 14.
98. Yuval, “Christliche Symbolik und Jüdische Martyrologie,” pp. 92–93. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, p. 440.
99. In this I agree with Jeremy Cohen’s discussion of the Xanten story in *Sanctifying the Name of God*, pp. 73–90 and with Kenneth Stow who writes in “Conversion, Apostasy, and Apprehensiveness,” p. 925: “The Hebrew chronicles are concerned as much with conversion to Christianity and return to Judaism as they are with Kiddush haShem.” See also Friedrich Lotter, “‘Tod oder Taufe’. Das Problem der Zwangstaufen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs,” in Haverkamp, ed., *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, pp. 107–152.
100. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 434, 435, see above footnote no. 27: “when they heard the voice of the oppressor, and the waters of wickedness came upon them, and they ate nothing but (the morsel of) the *motzi* . . .” I thank Kenneth Stow for this observation.
101. As reported by Ephraim bar Jacob of Bonn, see Adolf Neubauer and Moritz Stern, eds., *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1892), pp. 73, 210.
102. Haverkamp, *Hebräische Berichte*, pp. 404–407. The presence of a local Jewish community in Xanten in 1096 or 1197 is very unlikely: reliable sources only start in the thirteenth century. Compare Ismar Elbogen, Aron Freimann, Chaim Tykocinski, eds., *Germania Judaica*, Vol. 1. *Von den ältesten Zeiten bis 1238* (Breslau 1934) pp. 497–500.

