SYMBOLS AND IMAGES OF A CLASSIC ANTISEMITIC TROPE

A Visual History of the Blood Libel and Its Modern Manifestations
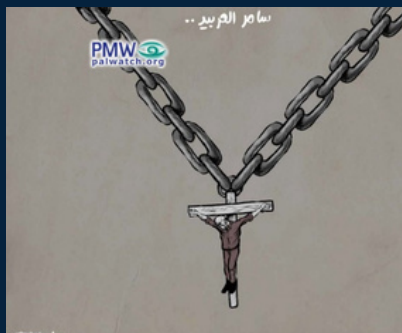
For centuries, those trying to foment antisemitism have used images and symbols to dehumanize and demonize Jews. The blood libel, the false accusation that Jews use the blood of Christians for religious ritual, is an antisemitic trope dating back to the Middle Ages. Woodcuts, paintings, sculptures and memes, depicting variations of the blood libel and equating the Jews with evil, have been created, distributed and recirculated over the centuries. Throughout history, these images have fanned the flames of antisemitism and incited the persecution of Jews.

The **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism,** adopted by Executive Order in 2019 and codified in the legal codes of 16 states, recognizes the dangers posed by these antisemitic tropes, images and symbols. One of the IHRA's included examples states: "Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis." **This IHRA example refers to situations in which symbols and images like those discussed in this paper are used to dehumanize and demonize Jews and the state of Israel "as a Jewish collectivity." It does not judge any interpretation of the Gospel and does not infringe on an individual's religious liberty.**

The Nazis used medieval images as propaganda to portray Jews as inhuman and dangerous so as to advance their aims and justify the murder of 6,000,000 Jews. Today, Hamas and its supporters similarly create cartoons and memes using classic antisemitic tropes to dehumanize and vilify Jewish Israelis in order to justify the use of violence against Israel. These memes frequently incorporate religious themes, including the ancient blood libel and the Crucifixion. The inflammatory images are designed to generate hostility towards Jews and the Jewish state of Israel. They have been disseminated in news publications, over social media and even in Palestinian schools where they have been shown to children to instill hate in the next generation.

Jews Depicted Mocking Christ:
The following painting shows a group tormenting and abusing Jesus, including individuals marked by stereotypical medieval Jewish features such as pointed hats and exaggerated noses. By portraying Jews as the ones who mocked, beat, and rejected Christ, the artist pins blame on and ostracizes Jews of the medieval period.

Artist: Master of Saint Giles
Date: about 1500

Flagellation of Christ:
The tormentors whipping Jesus are shown with pointed caps and stylized faces that identify them as Jews in medieval visual language. The image illustrates how medieval viewers were taught to associate Christ's suffering with Jews of that time.
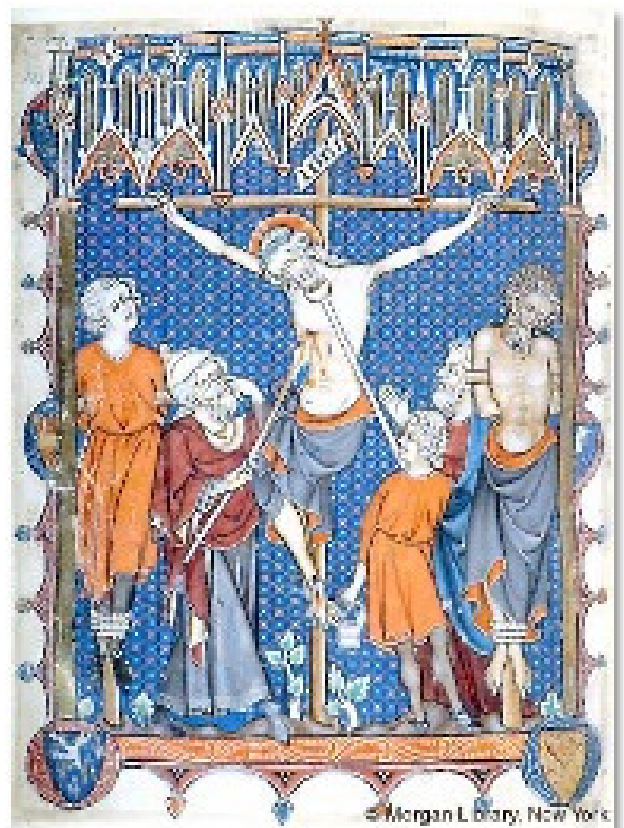
Artist: Unknown Italian painter
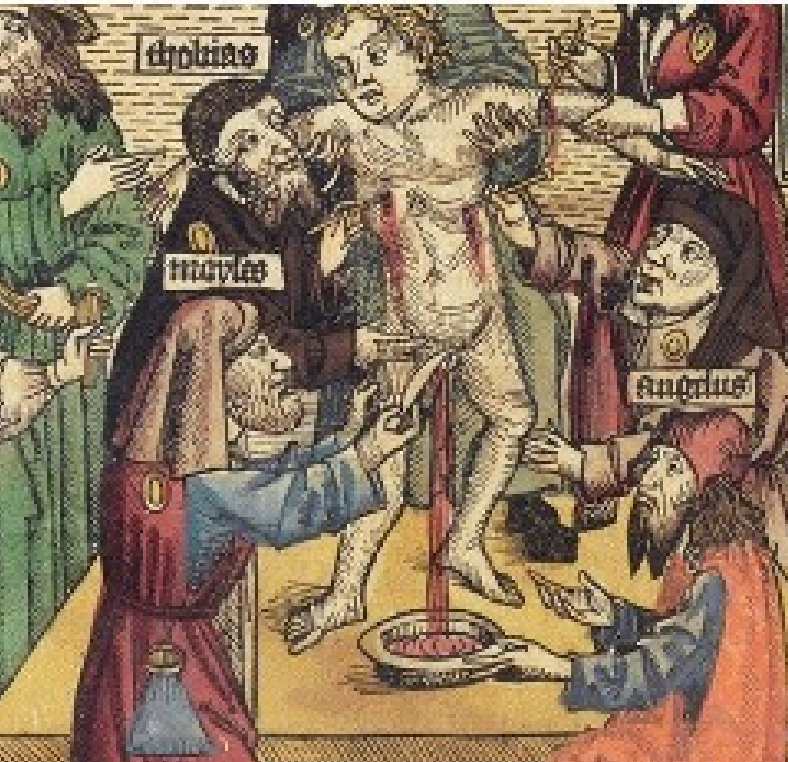**Date:** 1450

Crucifixion scene from the Psalter and Hours of Yolande of Soissons:
The following illustration shows Christ being nailed to the cross. The men inflicting the violence are dressed in garments and hats that medieval viewers associated with Jews. The exaggerated gestures and hostile expressions are used to dehumanize and demonize the Jews.

Date: Between 1280 to 1299
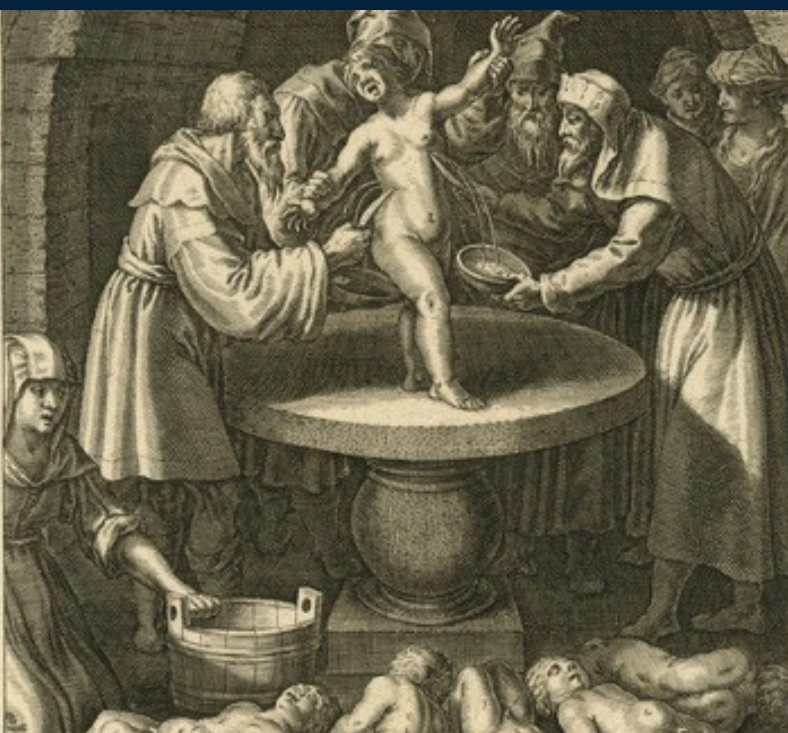**Manuscript:** Walters Art Museum, W.265

Simon of Trent, Nuremberg Chronicle:
The illustration of Simon of Trent depicts the classic blood libel, the false allegation that Jews use Christian blood for ritual purposes, it shows Jews collecting the blood of a young child.

Artist: Hartmann Schedel's workshop
Date: 1493

Medieval depiction of William of Norwich:
The story of William of Norwich is the first recorded blood libel in Europe. In 1144, a 12-year-old boy was found murdered in Norwich, England. Years later, Jews were accused of having committed the crime for religious ritual, even though there was no evidence connecting Jews to the incident. This image depicts Jewish figures binding the child William.

Artist: Unknown medieval illustrator
Date: 1100s

Another depiction of the ancient blood libel:
This engraving depicts Jewish figures gathering the blood of a child. The bodies of additional small children lie on the floor. Images like this one reinforced the false allegation that Jews used Christian blood for religious ritual and defamed Jews as bloodthirsty.

Artist: Unknown
Date: About 1500

German Engraving:
The following engraving presents a ritual killing of a Christian boy by Jews in Munich.

Publication: German edition of Matthäus Rader Bavaria Sancta.
Date: 1714

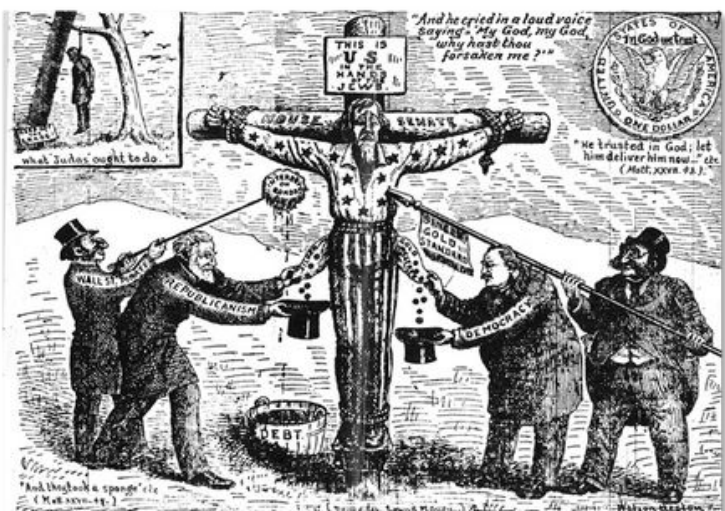**Legend Of The Jew Calling The Devil From A Vessel Of Blood:**
"The Jew Calling the Devil," or similar titles, come from a long tradition of antisemitic Christian folklore and visual propaganda that developed in medieval Europe and continued for centuries.

Published **1560** by the French School

18th century painting depicting blood libel in St. Paul's Church in Sandomierz, Poland:
The artwork located in the Sandomierz Cathedral, is another example of blood libel imagery. It depicts Jews gathering children and collecting their blood, reinforcing the myth that Jews use the children's blood for religious ritual.

Published in April 15, 1896 in the Sound Money magazine:
The cartoon titled History Repeats Itself depicts Uncle Sam crucified like Jesus. Jews with exaggerated and stereotypical features are seen emptying coins from Uncle Sam's pockets, framed as responsible for the problems in the United States at the time.

Der Stürmer Antisemitic Ritual Murder Cartoon:
A special issue of Der Sturmer from 1934. The image depicts Jews extracting blood from Christian children for use in religious rituals and sacrifices. The Nazis used old antisemitic imagery in their propaganda.

Another Der Stürmer Illustration:
Also in a 1934 Der Sturmer issue, "Storm above Judah," German paper sympathetic to the Nazis, attacks institutional churches as "Judaized" organizations. Jesus Christ is seen looking at modern clergy. Caption: "Two thousand years ago, I called the Jews a cursed people, but you have made out of them the Elect Nation."

Social Media Post by UNRWA:
In contemporary times, Hamas media and its supporters use age-old antisemitic blood libel images to demonize Jewish Israelis. A teacher in Jordan working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) posted this cartoon on Facebook in 2015. It depicts a Jewish person with a fork and knife, slicing a Palestinian child on a plate while drinking his blood.
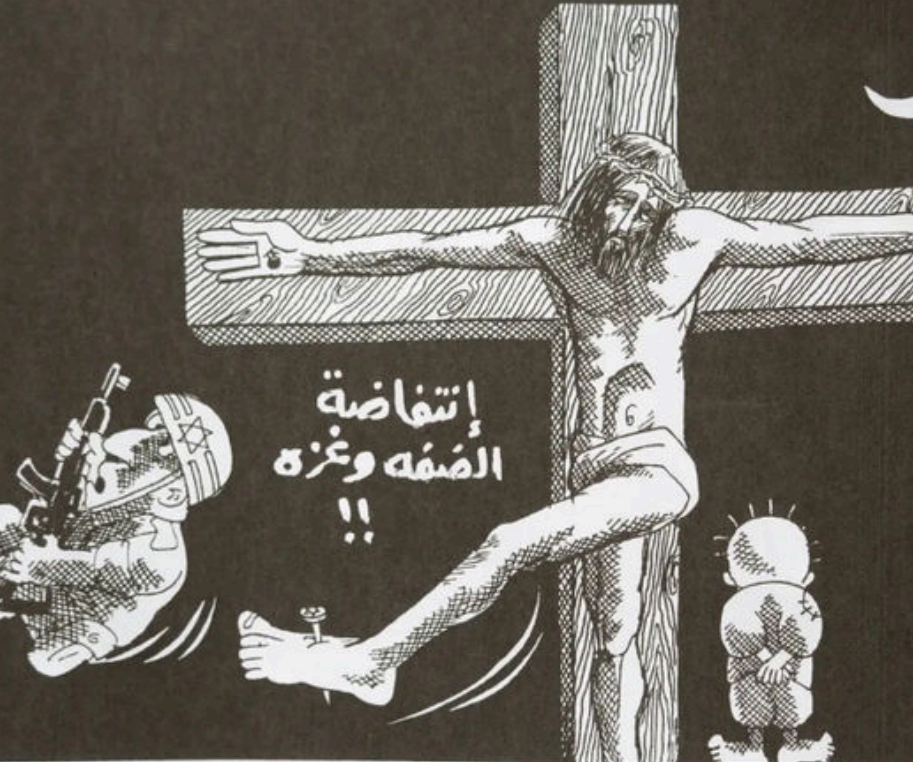
Lebanese Newspaper:
An untitled cartoon depicts Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu covered in blood eating a child. The image was published by a Libyan news outlet on October 20, 2023.

Al-Hayat al-Jadida Cartoon:
In March 2000, Al-Hayat al-Jadida published a cartoon showing a large Pope talking to a small Jew, depicted as the devil, with an oversize hooked nose, and the skin, feet and tail of an animal, wearing a kippa. The Pope exclaims 'Peace on Earth' while the Satanic looking Jew calls out 'Colonies on Earth.

Published in 1986 in Arab media, the cartoon depicts Jesus Christ kicking an Israeli soldier, using a charged religious image to make a modern political statement.

Cartoon published in Arabia.com. April 7, 2002. "DO NOT KILL HIM TWICE":
Viral cartoon depicts a scene reminiscent of a Christian Pietà, with a Palestinian woman cradling a Palestinian man in her lap like Mary has been depicted cradling Jesus Christ after the crucifixion. In the cartoon, an Israeli soldier raises a bayonet to stab the figure, with blood splattering. The English text reads "Do not kill Him TWICE."

Posted in 2019 in Al Hayat Al Jadida:
In the official daily newspaper of the Palestinian Authority, the cartoon depicts Samer Arbid, a Palestinian terrorist arrested for the murder of Israeli teenager Rina Shnerb, portrayed as Jesus crucified on a cross hanging from a chain.

Cartoon posted on X by Huddais Abdul Hussain in April 2023:
The cartoon depicts an Israeli soldier aiming a gun at a Palestinian man who is shown on a cross symbolically representing Jesus, while another Palestinian appears to be trying to save him
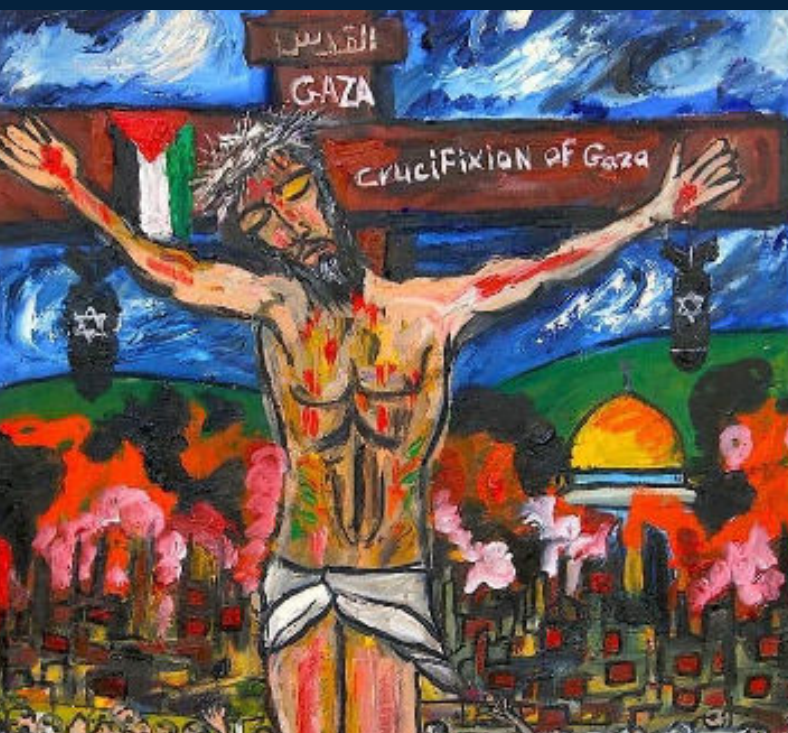
An image posted on Facebook in February 2022:
The post shows two Israeli police officers arresting a man portrayed as Jesus alongside the caption "If Jesus came to Israel today"

WAKE UP CHRISTIANS!!!

..IF JESUS CAME TO
ISRAEL TODAY

Posted on X in November 2023:
A cartoon depicting the war in Gaza as a crucifixion.

CAl-Fateh – The Hamas Web Magazine for Children, 2003:
Caricature of an evil Israeli soldier, merged with a caricature of a Diaspora Jew, reminiscent of prototypical European anti-Semitic cartoons.

CAl-Fateh – The Hamas Web Magazine for Children, 2004:
Children are asked to color in the illustration showing a Jew during the war of 1948 brandishing a knife dripping with the blood of an Arab he just stabbed, lying dead in the lower right-hand corner

Falestinona, website of Fatah's Information and Culture Commission, May 6, 2019:
In the cartoon, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is shown with a bloody hand, smiling over a basket containing a bloody, dead Palestinian infant from Gaza that has been left on the doorstep of a Palestinian Muslim family (symbolized by the man's crescent head) for the month of Ramadan. The cartoon insinuates that Netanyahu murdered the baby