

During the 14th century, when the plague struck Europe, even doctors were unsure what was happening. Jupiter, Mars and Saturn were in alignment - did that have something to do with the pestilence? Could that event cause an imbalance within a human body?

In medieval times, when scientific theories were not at the forefront of explaining phenomenon like the Black Death, people thought that God was punishing them. Neither they, nor doctors of the day, realized that plague is spread by the bites of fleas which were carried to Europe on the bodies of ship rats.

As the situation worsened, groups of people were blamed - like the Jews. According to the "[Jewish History Sourcebook](#)," at Fordham University:

In 1348 there appeared in Europe a devastating plague which is reported to have killed off ultimately twenty-five million people. By the fall of that year the rumor was current that these deaths were due to an international conspiracy of Jewry to poison Christendom.

It was reported that the leaders in the Jewish metropolis of Toledo had initiated the plot and that one of the chief conspirators was a Rabbi Peyret who had his headquarters in Chambéry, Savoy, whence he dispatched his poisoners to France, Switzerland, and Italy.

By authority of Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy, a number of the Jews who lived on the shores of Lake Geneva, having been arrested and put to the torture, naturally confessed anything their inquisitors suggested.

These Jews, under torture, incriminated others. Records of their confessions were sent from one town to another in Switzerland and down the Rhine River into Germany, and as a result, thousands of Jews, in at least two hundred towns and hamlets, were butchered and burnt.

One account, which survives, is a "confession" of a Jewish man named Agimet who was arrested at Châtel (near Lake Geneva). After he was tortured, Agimet supposedly confessed to poisoning the wells of various European cities, thereby causing people to die of the pestilence.

See, also:

[The Black Death - What Was It?](#)

[The Black Death - Where Did It Originate?](#)

[The Black Death - Biological Warfare](#)

[The Black Death - Arrives in Western Europe](#)

[The Black Death - Scientific Evidence of Plague](#)

[The Black Death - Saving Lives by Fleeing Town](#)

Credits:

Clip from "[The Plague](#)," produced by the History Channel. Released by A&E Home Video in 2006. Total run time: 100 minutes. Clip online, courtesy the History Channel.

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