



## Roots

### 1. Numbers 15:39

And you shall remember all of the mitzvot of Gd, and you shall practice them, and you shall not stray after your hearts and after your eyes, after which you stray.

### 2. Mishnah Chagigah 2:1

One who looks at four things would have been better off not having entered the world: What is above, below, before and after. If one does not respect his Creator's honour, it would have been appropriate had he not entered the world.

### 3. Plato's Republic, Book 10 (<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/plato/p71r/introduction10.html>)

Poetry feeds and waters the passions and desires; she lets them rule instead of ruling them. And therefore, when we hear the encomiasts of Homer affirming that he is the educator of Hellas, and that all life should be regulated by his precepts, we may allow the excellence of their intentions, and agree with them in thinking Homer a great poet and tragedian. But we shall continue to prohibit all poetry which goes beyond hymns to the gods and praises of famous men. Not pleasure and pain, but law and reason shall rule in our State.

## Basic Chronology

### 4. George Haven Putnam, *The Censorship of the Church of Rome* Vol. 1, pg. 58-60

150 (about). A synod of bishops of Asia Minor, meeting either at Ephesus or at Smyrna, prohibits the *Acta Pauli*. The *Acta Pauli* was an historical romance written about the middle of the 2d century and having for its purpose the glorification of the life and labours of St. Paul... [T]he work was condemned on the ground that, although apparently the work of an "orthodox" Christian, it did not present an authentic record...

325. *The Council of Nicea* prohibits the *Thalia* of Arius.

325. *The Emperor Constantine* issues an edict directing the destruction of the godless books of Porphyry and of the writings of Arius. The penalty of death was ordered for any who might conceal copies.

### 5. Professor John Tolan, *Peter the Venerable on the Diabolical Heresy of the Saracens*

Peter of Cluny was poised at the confluence of various tides of change surging across Europe: monastic reform, new heretical movements, new applications of logic to theology (including attempts to prove the fundamental doctrines of Christianity by rational arguments)... Throughout Peter's polemics, we see hopes and worries of the abbot, fighter of heresies, and interested spectator of the new developments in knowledge.

### 6. Sarah Kay and Mirit Rubin, *Framing Medieval Bodies*, pp. 127-128

"I really do not know whether a Jew is a man, given that he does not yield to human reason, nor does he assent to the divine authorities which are his own... [Did the miracles of the Exodus happen] so that you, Jew, could... stuff your belly with a variety of foods? So that you could get drunk... and snore in a drunken stupor? Did these things happen so that you could give such great rein to your desires... and abandon yourselves to your lusts? So that you could abound so greatly in riches and fill chests with gold, silver and many treasures and so that you could elevate yourself with proud and dominating arrogance over inferiors? No!"... It is clear to Peter that reason, which demarcates man from animal, simply does not operate in Jews. For in his eyes Jews are only interested in worldly good. But the crucial question still remains. *Why* does reason not function in Jews? What is it that shuts down the working of reason in a Jew's mind? And it is here that Peter introduces the Talmud. According to him the fables of what to him is a hideous, bestial book overshadow the hearts of Jews and obliterate Jewish capacity for reason.

### 7. Michael Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, pg. 69

The friars' preparation for their ministry made them a dedicated and efficient body of men ... While papal letters facilitated the geographical spread of the order, the popes looked to the order as a band of talented men capable of shouldering various missions.

8. The Catholic Encyclopedia pg. 797, *Pope Gregory IX*

Up to the time of Gregory IX, the duty of searching out heretics belonged to the bishops in their respective dioceses. The so-called Monastic Inquisition was established by Gregory IX, who in his Bulls of 13, 20, and 22 April, 1233, appointed the Dominicans as the official inquisitors for all dioceses of France.

9. Dr. Saadia Eisenberg, *Reading Medieval Religious Disputation*, pp. 2, 13-14

[T]he 1240 Debate represented a turning point in the history of the relations between Ashkenazi Jewry and Latin Christendom. An impressive event attended by an imposing array of dignitaries, this debate offered an opportunity for broad public display of new argumentation. While Donin's specific argumentation does not seem to have served as a model for other formal debates – Pablo Christiani, the Christian protagonist in the disputations in Barcelona in July 1263 and in Paris 1270, did not follow Donin's line of argumentation – the very assertion that the Church had the right to confiscate, examine, and destroy Jewish literature – specifically the Talmud – set a new tone for Christian-Jewish relationships in centuries to come...

The clerical court found the Talmud guilty as charged and condemned it to flames. The Jews managed to forestall implementation of the sentence, but after a number of delaying machinations, twenty or twenty-four wagonloads of talmudic manuscripts – probably ten to twelve thousand volumes – were burned in Paris in the Place de Grève (the execution site which symbolized medieval French justice) over the course of one and a half days in 1242. The loss of books and resulting disruption of study among Jews contributed to the decline of the Jewish schools in northern France. Equally demoralizing for northern French Jewry was the vision of the Talmud, a symbol of Jewish history, accomplishment, tradition, values, and religion, going up in flames. From a long-range point of view Jews in Christian lands were now put in the position of having to respond to challenges to Talmudic law, ideology and literature proffered by antagonistic Christians, challenges which continued into the modern era.

10. Univ. of Texas, *Gutenberg's Legacy*, <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/educator/modules/gutenberg/books/legacy/>

The Catholic Church quickly realized the potential of the printing press as a challenge to its influence. Censorship was introduced into the print shop in 1487, when Pope Innocent VIII required that Church authorities approve all books before publication. The Church had censored books for centuries, though it became much more difficult to do so after the invention of printing. Controlling a dozen painfully copied manuscripts of a forbidden text may have been a manageable task, but controlling the thousands of copies churning off the presses every year was quite another matter. One of these forbidden texts was the Bible printed in any other language than Latin.

11. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century Germany      King Maximilian, Joseph Johann Pfefferkorn, and Johann Reuchlin

12. The Index Liborum Prohibitorum      1559, Pope Paul IV

13. Talmud, Berachot 62b

An *Edomi* pushed Rabbi Eliezer, and a snake that had been there bit him [the *Edomi*], causing Rabbi Eliezer to cite the verse (Isaiah 43:4), 'And I will place *adam* [a man] beneath you.'

#### Review Questions

- Which value systems may have informed the Church's early bias toward censorship?
- Who were the targets of early Church censorship?
- Who was responsible for instigating renewed Church censorship in the 12th century?
- What practical innovations made censorship practical in the 13th century?
- What major events in censorship occurred in 1240 and 1263?
- What inspired renewed censorship in the late 15th century?
- What led the Church to move to pre-publication censorship in the 16th century, and to create the Index?

## The Mechanics of Censorship

14. *Sefer haZikuk*, <http://onthemainline.blogspot.com/2010/08/apostate-rabbis-guidelines-for.html>

8. Any place in the Bible where debate and difference exists between the Jewish faith and ours, if there is an explicit challenge to our understanding, or if it brings a proof for the Jewish view, even if the names of Christian scholars are not mentioned openly, the entire matter must be erased. But if the matter is explained according to their opinion, but without a challenge to our faith then it is no matter.

9. Any instance of an insult against a law of the laws of our faith, or our teachings, or any custom or practice, or an insult toward a king, officer or one of the holy priests of our nation should be entirely erased.

10. Any place that mentions something which is a great heresy, such as transmigration of souls (*gilgul*) or the idea that all souls were created during the six days of creation, or that G-d cries, or that the souls of the wicked are turned into demons (*shedim* and *mazikim*), or that the evil spirits which possess people are the souls of the wicked deceased and the like, the entire thing should be erased.

11. Any place that mentions *Edom* or Rome or Italy in a negative sense should be erased.

12. Any place that mentions that G-d is pained over the loss of Israel should be erased.

13. Any place which mentions men who died for their faith, such as those who died in Portugal and Spain, if it is mentioned that they died sanctifying G-d's name (*kiddush ha-shem*), or if they are called by the name Holy or Righteous (*kedoshim* and *tzadikim*) should be completely erased.

14. Any place that mentions festivals, holidays or celebrations of ours in an insulting way, such as *lifnei eideihem* and the like, or if it says "it is prohibited for an Israelite to transact business with them on those days," should be erased.

15. The traditional *Tachanun* prayer, censored

"Guardian of the holy Turk, guard the remnant of the holy Turk, and let not the holy Turk be destroyed..."

## The Roles of the Jews

16. Dr. Saadia Eisenberg, *Reading Medieval Religious Disputation*, pp. 98-102

In 1232 or 1233, anti-Maimonists in Montpellier handed the more philosophical books of Maimonides over to local friars present to eradicate heresy; the mendicants then burned these texts... However, the connection between the Maimonidean controversy and the 1240 Debate is far from clear. In all the papal literature surrounding the 1240 Debate and the subsequent burning of the talmuds, the earlier burning of Maimonidian books goes unmentioned. Association between the two Jewish book-burnings is largely absent in contemporary Jewish literature as well. Three separate works, all written in response to the Debate and the subsequent burning of rabbinic texts, failed to mention the Maimonidean controversy or to connect it with the burning of the Talmuds...

In fact, only one source supports the relationship between the Maimonidean controversy in southern France and the Paris debate and ultimate destruction of hundreds of Talmud manuscripts. Writing some fifty years after the burning of the Talmud (or thereabouts), the pro-Maimonist Rabbi Hillel of Verona writes that "forty days did not pass from the burning of [Maimonides's] works until that of the Talmud...and the ashes of the Talmud were mixed with those of [Maimonides's overtly philosophical works which were handed over to the ecclesiastical authorities,] the *Guide for the Perplexed* and the *Book of Knowledge*, since there is still ash at the site."

Given the tendentious nature of this source, Baer's claim that the Maimonidean controversy set a precedent for subjecting rabbinic texts to inquisitorial authorities in 1240 is highly tenuous. Hillel's immediate pro-Maimonidean bias aside, there are historical issues of concern here as well, matters of time and place. It was not forty days, but approximately ten years, between the confiscation of Maimonides's writing and the burning of the Talmud. Furthermore, Hillel's vivid and evocative imagery of the mixing of the ashes of Maimonidean and Talmudic books notwithstanding, his words in no way comport with the facts; Maimonides' writing was burned in Montpellier, the Talmud in front of the Church of Notre Dame. Doubtless Hillel was aware of these discrepancies, and chose to connect the two burnings for rhetorical purposes. Hillel's letter cannot be taken at face value, as Baer would have it.

17. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, *Aruch haShulchan Yoreh Deah 281:2* (early 20<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania)

All of these [Torah scrolls written by non-believers] are disqualified by the Torah, but the writers' intent is not for worship of the stars. Even an Egyptian – we do not say that his thought is for the stars.

18. Polish rabbinic decree (1631), recorded in William Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* pg. 106

[W]henever you publish such books anew, you shall leave in place of any passage in which any of the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth are described a vacant space, and in that space you shall print a circle like this ○. For the rabbis and those who have learnt the omitted passages will know how to teach the youths in each case; while at the same time Christian scholars will be unable to base charges against us on such grounds.

19. The traditional Aleinu prayer

“For they bow to worthlessness and emptiness (וריק), and pray to a god who does not save.”