



Basic Chronology

1. 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.

2. 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). Peter wrote to condemn the heretic Peter of Bruys, he mediated between Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux, welcoming Abelard as one of his monks, he read Petrus Alfonsi's *Dialogi contra Iudeos*, reusing its anti-Talmudic arguments in his own *Adversus Iudeorum inveteratam duritiem*, and he traveled to Spain where he hired translators—taking them away from their study of philosophy and astronomy—to translate the series of texts on Islam often (and rather misleadingly) called the *Collectio Toletana*, despite the fact that nothing links them with Toledo. Throughout Peter's polemics, we see hopes and worries of the abbot, fighter of heresies, and interested spectator of the new developments in knowledge.

3. 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.

4. 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, whose ecclesiology was marked by a strong fidelity to the Church and the pope as the successor of St. Peter... 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.

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

When in 1224 Frederick II ordered that heretics in Lombardy should be burnt at the stake, Gregory IX, who was then papal legate for Lombardy, approved and published the imperial law. During his enforced absence from Rome (1228-1231) the heretics remained unmolested and became very numerous in the city. In February, 1231, therefore, the pope enacted a law for Rome that heretics condemned by an ecclesiastical court should be delivered to the secular power to receive their "due punishment". This "due punishment" was death by fire for the obstinate and imprisonment for life for the penitent... 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.'

The Mechanics of Censorships

9. *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 God 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 places that mentions *Edom* or Rome or Italy in a negative sense should be erased.

12. Any place that mentions that God 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 God'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.

10. 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

11. 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. The papal court's interest in rabbinic texts boded ill for the Jews, and this precedent made it all the easier for Gregory to take a jaundiced view of the Talmud a few years later. According to [Yitzhak] Baer, the 1240 Debate was, at least in part, an outgrowth of earlier inquisitorial activities.

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.

12. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, *Aruch haShulchan Yoreh Deah 281:2* (early 20th 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.

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

[W]henver 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 O. 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.

14. The traditional Aleinu prayer

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