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**A SOCIOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATION OF THE
EXPURGATED PASSAGES IN THE BABYLONIAN
TALMUD, TRACTATE SANHEDRIN**

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**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination**

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York**

**Type Date: February 2001
Advisor: Dr. Martin A. Cohen**

For Daniel

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ABSTRACT

During the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century, European governments, behind the authority the Catholic Church, issued several edicts calling for the censorship of all literature that could be construed as being offensive toward the Church and the respective ruling governments. Any book that was discovered containing such offensive material was subsequently destroyed. Out of fear that their sacred texts would suffer this horrific consequence, European Jews complied with the standards of censorship set forth by the various Christian governments and edited their manuscripts. The Talmud was perhaps the most significant text to succumb to this fate of editorial expurgation.

This study analyzes the original sociopolitical roles of the various, obviously polemical, passages about Jesus and early Christianity that were expurgated from the Babylonian Talmud. Due to the immense quantity of material contained within the Talmud, this study focuses on those passages contained within Tractate *Sanhedrin* that underwent censorship. These suppressed passages were recorded in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, which served as a primary source of reference for this study.

This research paper is divided into four chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the censorship of Hebrew texts in the sixteenth century, relating a brief history of expurgation, as well as the methods used in expurgating the texts. Chapter one additionally introduces *Hesronot HaSha*'s and how it is employed throughout the course of this study with various publications of the Talmud. The remaining chapters deal directly with the expurgated texts, dividing them into three main categories (which make up the next three chapters) and subsequent sub-categories. Chapter two deals with those texts that were completely omitted from the Babylonian Talmud and remain absent from the *Vilna Sha*'s. Chapter three involves those portions of the text that have been distorted in some manner, usually by means of word substitution or paraphrasing, and remain a part of the

text this altered form. Chapter four illustrates those portions of the text that *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates were removed or modified from their original, pre-censored structure, but have been completely restored to their original form in the *Vilna Sha*'s. Each of these chapters provides Hebrew text, translations and annotations of selected representative passages.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The History of the Expurgation of Hebrew Books

The Catholic Church, as a means to protect Christian doctrine through the exposure of its followers to books and ideas that it considered heretical, instituted a system of supervision to ensure the censorship of Hebrew books. Initially, censorship meant the destruction of these books, but eventually, beginning in the mid-thirteenth century, Jews were mandated to eliminate key words, phrases, and passages that the Church considered blasphemous. In 1263, the king of Aragon issued a decree that the Jews were to remove all objectionable passages in their writings. The failure to do so resulted in heavy fines, imprisonment, and the destruction of the works that were concerned.¹

During the sixteenth century, the period of Counter-Reformation, censorship became a fiery subject in Italy. In 1516, Leo X published a bull requiring every work being prepared for publication be submitted to certain censors for examination. If it was judged worthy of being printed, then this fact was attested by the examiner's signature. Though this edict was probably not intended to include Hebrew publications, they certainly were not

¹ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971 ed., s.v. "Censorship."

excluded. Even so, there is little evidence of interference with the publication of Hebrew literature until the pontificate of Julius III (1550-1553).²

On April 8, 1546, the Council of Trent issued the following decree concerning sacred books at its fourth session:

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, it decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall, --in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, --wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, --whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, --hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.

² William Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1899), 25-26.

And wishing, as is just, to impose a restraint, in this matter, also on printers, who now without restraint, --thinking, that is, that whatsoever they please is allowed them, --print, without the license of ecclesiastical superiors, the said books of sacred Scripture, and the notes and comments upon them of all persons indifferently, with the press oft times unnamed, often even fictitious, and what is more grievous still, without the author's name; and also keep for indiscriminate sale books of this kind printed elsewhere; (this Synod) ordains and decrees, that, henceforth, the sacred Scripture, and especially the said old and vulgate edition, be printed in the most correct manner possible; and that it shall not be lawful for any one to print, or cause to be printed, any books whatever, on sacred matters, without the name of the author; nor to sell them in future, or even to keep them, unless they shall have been first examined, and approved of, by the Ordinary; under pain of the anathema and fine imposed in a canon of the last Council of Lateran: and, if they be Regulars, besides this examination and approval, they shall be bound to obtain a license also from their own superiors, who shall have examined the books according to the form of their own statutes. As to those who lend, or circulate them in manuscript, without their having been first examined, and approved of, they shall be subjected to the same penalties as printers: and they who shall have them in their possession or shall read them, shall, unless they discover the authors, be themselves regarded as the authors. And the said approbation of books of this kind shall be given in writing; and for this end it shall appear authentically at the beginning of the book, whether the book be written, or printed; and all this, that is, both the approbation and the examination, shall be done gratis, that so what ought to be approved, may be approved, and what ought to be condemned, may be condemned.³

In addition to this declaration, the Council of Trent set up a prohibition of sale for all anonymous religious books, except those that had been cleared by an Ordinary. A list of these forbidden books was composed and continually updated. These catalogues were subsequently published all over Christian Europe.⁴

In 1554, a more systematic approach to the regulation of Hebrew books was enacted by way of the Church. On May 29, eight months after the Talmud was publicly burned in

³ J. Waterworth, ed., *The Canons and Decrees The Council of Trent* (Chicago: The Christian Symbolic Publication Society, 1848), as found on the Hanover College website.

⁴ *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 27.

Rome,⁵ a papal bull was issued ordering Jews to hand over all of their books and manuscripts that contained defamations and blasphemies against Jesus and the Christian religion.⁶ The very next month, a rabbinic ordinance was issued and adopted by the General Synod of Italian Congregations in Ferrara, Italy. It set up an internal system whereby no Hebrew book would "be printed without the authorization of three recognized rabbis and the lay leaders of the nearest large community."⁷ Similar ordinances were adopted in other Italian provinces. This ultimately led to the expurgation of all Hebrew books, which was a great task assumed by a number of individuals who were familiar with the Hebrew language. Naturally, this responsibility was initially assigned to Jewish converts to Christianity, the first two being Jacob Geraldini and Andrea del Monte.

In 1559, Pope Paul IV published the first Index of books that were prohibited.⁸ In December of 1563, during its twenty-fifth and final session, the Council of Trent discussed the topic of the index of books, and they issued the following statement:

⁵ This public burning occurred on September 9, 1553.

⁶ *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, Sponsor's Edition, 1941, s.v. "Censorship;" *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1964 ed., s.v. "Censorship of Hebrew Books."

⁷ *Encyclopedia Judaica*, "Censorship."

⁸ David Werner Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy* (Philadelphia: Edward Stern and Company, 1909), 310.

The sacred and holy Synod, in the second Session celebrated under our most holy lord, Pius IV, commissioned certain chosen Fathers to consider what ought to be done touching various censures, and books either suspected or pernicious, and to report thereon to the said holy Synod; hearing now that the finishing hand has been put to that labour by those Fathers, which, however, by reason of the variety and multitude of books cannot be distinctly and conveniently judged of by the holy Synod; It enjoins that whatsoever has been by them done shall be laid before the most holy Roman Pontiff, that it may be by his judgment and authority terminated and made public. And it commands that the same be done in regard of the Catechism, by the Fathers to whom that work was consigned, and as regards the missal and breviary.⁹

It was decided that this issue of expurgation was beyond the scope of the Council, and the Council, therefore, recommended that it be given directly to the papal authority to render a decision. Three months later, the *Index of Trent* emerged. It listed the books that were prohibited, including "the Talmud and its glosses, annotations, interpretations, and expositions, . . . but if they shall be published without the title Talmud, and without calumnies and insults to the Christian religion, they shall be tolerated."¹⁰ The Trent Index became the foundation for all future acts in regard to censorship. Every other Index used it as a basis, "and corrections and additions were made in accordance with the ten rules which prefaced it. One of these ten rules prescribed that certain classes of books, instead of being entirely condemned, might be read when freed of obnoxious passages."¹¹ Henceforth, the Jews submitted all their publications to preliminary censors, which were either their fellow Jews or Christian revisers.

⁹ *The Council of Trent*, 25th Session.

¹⁰ Franz Heinrich Reush, *Die Indices Librorum Prohibitorum des Isten Fahrhunderts* (Tubingen: Stuttgart Literarischer Verein, 1886), quoted in *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 52.

¹¹ *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 52.

In 1589, Sixtus V released his new Index. Though it did not make mention of Hebrew books specifically, the following rules are of interest:

Rule 11 – Books of the Jews, Mohammedans, or Saracens, and of other of that class of men, whoever they may be, that are enemies of the Christian religion, containing anything against the Catholic faith, rites, or discipline, when translated into Latin or any other language, shall be prohibited the same as books of heretics.

End of Rule 20 – Books or writings whose use is prohibited to the faithful shall also not be possessed, read, bought, sold, or carried by Jews, infidels, or others of that class of men living in Christian provinces or places. If any one of them be heedless in this matter, punishment by the above-named officials shall be inflicted according to the gravity of the offence. All books prohibited in one language are prohibited also when translated into any other.

Rule 21 – Books . . . in Rome shall be expurgated by the Congregation of the Index or by such as are appointed therefore by the papal throne. Books outside of the city may not be expurgated by one man, but such as need expurgation or correction shall be expurgated or corrected by three selected men and be approved or prohibited by the Bishop. From books which need expurgation or correction must be removed each and every heretical statement, and every statement which savors of heresy; likewise, everything erroneous, offensive to pious ears, audacious, scandalous, schismatic, seditious, blasphemous, harmful to the good name of others and especially of rulers, or contrary to the morals and the institutes of the Christian disciplines; likewise all such as teach anything new concerning the sacred rites and ceremonies contrary to the received usage and custom of Holy Roman Church; also ambiguous and doubtful words, which might lead away the mind of readers from the proper and [C]atholic idea to wicked opinions; also words of the sacred scripture which are taken from versions made by heretics and distorted to give a different sense from that laid down by the authority of the Fathers. Furthermore, the names of heretics must be erased (unless mentioned for the purpose of confuting them), and also any epithets applied to them for the purpose of praising them; new profane interpretations of well-known phrases, which heretics often use to deceive; all passages which teach sacrilege, superstitions, false interpretations of dreams, obscenities, and all similar passages by which men's minds are easily depraved. Likewise all passages which seem to ascribe necessity to the course of human affairs and teach that they are governed by fate, or fatal signs, or fortunes. Likewise all statements which tend to oppose or diminish ecclesiastical power, government, and freedom. In books of proverbs, saws, parables, etc., there must be eradicated all figures which might give offense to ecclesiastic rites, persons or dignity; there must also be removed all witticisms by which the dignity of others is affected, and all sarcastic words. Not only shall be expurgated books, but also marginal notes, obscene pictures, indices, letters, prefaces and everything which the book contains. Books of Catholics also, who live and die in the bosom of the Catholic Church, if they contain any trace of error, shall be subject to the correction prescribed in this Index; nevertheless, they shall not be considered among the prohibited books, but only as having need to expurgation, lest by such prohibition their good name or dignity should be thereby disgraced.¹²

The Index of Sixtus V made it very clear how the process of censorship was to be carried out, at least in terms of how works were to be expurgated. Though it still did not specify exactly what was to be removed from manuscripts, it did explain the types of words and

¹² *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 69-70.

passages for which to look. The Index also elucidated the process by which censors were to be selected, and how they were to go about their duties.

Several attempts were made to assemble an *Index Expurgatorius*, a catalogue that would list all of the words and passages from Hebrew books that were determined to be inappropriate by the Church's standards. The creation of such an Index would make the job of the expurgator very simple. All he would have to do was mechanically expurgate any passage in any book that was noted in the Index, ensuring a uniformity of the process.¹³ This was obviously an overwhelming challenge to complete, and the initial attempts to produce such an Index failed. Finally, in 1596 Domenico Irosolimitano completed it, though the final draft was not produced until 1626 by Renato de Modena, and it was given the title *Sefer HaZikkuk*, "the Book of Purification."¹⁴

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Inquisition left the Jews with the responsibility to expurgate their own books, though the Inquisitors retained the right to arbitrarily check books and punish the owner if the manuscripts were not properly revised. At that time, Jews living in Mantua were afforded an additional concession; that is, if their books were approved by any of the three converts appointed as censors,¹⁵ the books were exempted from any further molestation. By 1641, the work of expurgation slowed down in Italy. If any act of censorship occurred from this period until the middle of the eighteenth century it

¹³ Ibid., 63,

¹⁴ *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Censorship."

¹⁵ These convert censors were Laurentius Franguellus, Domenico Irosolimitano and Alessandro Cipione.

was only lightly enforced.¹⁶ In fact, during this relaxed period, the Jews had reversed some of the work done by the censors, restoring many of the expunged passages.¹⁷

A similar process occurred in Eastern Europe during the same period. The Council of the Four Lands, which represented the Polish Jews from 1594 to 1764, controlled the methods and statutes of the publication and distribution of Hebrew books. They were determined to prevent possible clashes with the Church authorities, and thus, they served as their own supervision unit.¹⁸ At the inception of the Council, a resolution was adopted, similar to that of the Synod in Ferrara, providing for the system of rabbinic approval for each Hebrew book. The resolution read as follows:

No [Jewish] printer shall print any [Jewish] books without the consent of the rabbis and [lay] leaders in keeping with the regulations laid down in the year 1594. . . . Should any printer disobey this order, then they [i.e., the rabbis and communal leaders] will close down his printing establishment and excommunicate the printer, along with anyone who took part in the work.¹⁹

Following the revolutions of 1848, censorship was abolished in all countries except for Russia.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Censorship of Hebrew Books."

¹⁸ Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, *Censorship and Freedom of Expression in Jewish History* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, Yeshiva University Press, 1977), 191-192.

¹⁹ Israel Heilprin, *Pinkas Va'ad Arbah Aratzot* (Jerusalem, 1945), 7, quoted in *Censorship and Freedom of Expression*, 192.

Expurgation Methods

The first recorded instance of censorship in a Hebrew book dates back to May 30, 1555.²⁰ It was here that the terms מזוקק (*mezuqqaq*), "expurgated," and מערין (*me'uyan*), "reviewed," were introduced, and they soon became part of the official language employed by the censors of Hebrew books. Later, additional words became part of the vocabulary of censorship, and eventually formulas, such as the following, were utilized as part of the seal of a censor:

הספר הזה עייניתיו וחקרתיו ודרשתיו וחקקתיו וצרפתיו וכבסתיו וניקתיו וטהרתיו
וחתמתיו.²¹

With regards to this book, I reviewed it, I interrogated it, I investigated it, I expurgated it, I refined it, I suppressed it, I cleansed it, I purified it, and I sealed it.

These nine verbs can be divided into the three principal performances of the censor. The first three terms refer to revision, the next five, expurgation, and the last is the signature.

Most of the signatures found in Hebrew books that were censored are those of converted Jews. Some Jewish assistant that the official censor had entrusted with the work of expurgation often aided these native Hebrew scholars, though few of these Jews risked signing their own name or leaving any sort of trace that would lead to their identification.²²

The work of the censor was very tedious. His job was to go through each Hebrew book that contained content, determined by the Church to be blasphemous, and remove the

²⁰ Isaiah Sonne, "Expurgation of Hebrew Books – the Work of Jewish Scholars," *Bulletin of The New York Public Library* (December 1942); reprint in *Hebrew Printing and Bibliography*, ed. Charles Berlin (New York: New York Public Library, KTAV Publishing House, 1976), 203.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

offensive references. The means of this removal included overscoring words, phrases, or entire passages with black ink to render them illegible, and sometimes sections or even entire pages were torn out from the manuscript. A third method was to note the objectionable words and phrases with an explanation that the meaning was not contrary to Christian doctrine. The last method was to exchange unacceptable words and phrases with other less offensive choices.

As noted above, indices were composed and employed to help illustrate the guidelines for expurgation, as well as to encourage a sense of uniformity in the work of censorship. In general, the following rules, employed by Gershom of Soncino in his Pesaro and Soncino tracts published in the last decade of the sixteenth century, are typical of those attacked in all censorship and expurgation:

In every reference to non-Jews or non-Jewish customs an insult to Christianity was suspected; and so many of such references are found in the tract, *Avodah Zara*, "On Idolatry," that Marcus Marino omitted it entirely.

Of individual passages, all which treat of Jesus or of his works, or of which contain merely the mention of his name, were likewise omitted, . . .

Similarly mention of Rome or of Edom, which the Jews used constantly in reference to Rome, was not tolerated at all, even when the reference was to the pre-Christian empire; . . .

Other passages were omitted because they provide for a different interpretation of the law in the case of a Jew and non-Jew; . . .

On the ground of impiety, many anthropomorphic expressions were omitted, . . .

Other omissions were made on the charge of offence to good morals.

²² "Expurgation of Hebrew Books," 201.

It was not always that long passages . . . were censored on these various charges, but often single words alone were omitted; these might be names, as "Jesus," "Rome," "Edom," or even "[Y]avan" (Greece); or adjectives like "wicked," in the phrase "wicked kingdom," used of Rome. A betrayal of ignorance is seen in one such correction, where, in the expression "haters of Israel," the first word (*soneh*) gave offence, though the two words were only a common euphemistic expression for the Jews themselves.

Often in these cases, another method of correction was used in place of omission—substitution. The word Talmud itself, which was prohibited by the Trent Index, was replaced by "*Shishshah Sedarim*" (which appeared on the title-page), by *gemara* (the "Completion" and commentary of the *Mishnah*) or by *limmud* ("learning").

"Rome," "Edom," and "Javan" were often changed to "Babylon," "Persia," or "Aram," and for this reason the text was rendered in very many places unintelligible. . . .

Goy ("nation," non-Jew, Christian) was generally replaced by "Kuthite" or "Kushite"; *min* ("heretic," "unbeliever"), by "Sadducee" or "Epicurean"; *meshummad* ("apostate") by *mumar* ("convert"); *komer* (a non-Jewish "priest"), by *mesharet*, or *kohen l'avodah zarah* ("minister," or "priest, of idolatry"); "haters" of Israel, by "the evil ones" of Israel.

Anthropomorphic expressions were sometimes softened.²³

It is not difficult to imagine what a daunting task this was for censors. Each manuscript had to be examined carefully and expurgated accordingly. To make the job a little less daunting, censors often kept a copy of one expurgated manuscript and used it as a model for additional copies of the same work. As mentioned above, the *Index Expurgatorius* was employed when it was finally published. In reality, there was very little uniformity in the task of censorship. Each censor employed his own rules and style, thus producing variations on expurgated passages in the same work censored by two different expurgators. In addition, many of the expurgators were careless in their work, evidence of which can be discovered by looking at two different copies of the same manuscript that was expurgated

²³ *The Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 57-59.

by the same censor. The result clearly shows the sometimes-arbitrary methods many of these censors employed.²⁴

On the other hand, mandated Hebrew press-censorship in Italy proved to have its share of positive consequences. Each of the neophyte censors that represented the Church employed the assistance of some of the most accomplished Jewish scholars. These scholars were among the best critical minds of their time, and they devoted their skills to produce a uniform system into their expurgation.²⁵ The paradox, then, is that most of the expurgated editions that were produced in the sixteenth century, at the same time, are the best critical editions.²⁶

Hesronot HaSha"s

Turning more specifically to the focus of this thesis, the *Hesronot HaSha"s* must be presented. *Hesronot HaSha"s*, "Exclusions from the Talmud," is best introduced by its own title page²⁷:

Hesronot HaSha"s: It is a book of the collections of the Omissions;

Contains: All the words that are excluded from the Babylonian Talmud, and Rashi [Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhak], and Tosafot, and the Rosh [Rabbenu Asher], and the G"A (Gaon Eliahu, the Vilna Gaon), and the commentary to the Mishna of the Rambam (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon - Maimonides). These had been published by Emanuel Bambaste in Amsterdam in the year 5445 [1686-1687]. And also the completion of the excluded halakhic novellae and haggadic novellae of Our Teacher the Rabbi Shmuel Edels that was published in Amsterdam, which is how it exists today.

²⁴ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Censorship of Hebrew Books."

²⁵ Though this system was not always employed by those doing the physical expurgating, the fact remains that these scholars developed a highly critical system by which to expurgate the text in the best way possible to preserve as much of the original meaning of the texts that they were editing.

²⁶ "Expurgation of Hebrew Books," 236.

²⁷ Translated from Hebrew.

Collected and brought together by a person skillful in knowledge who has searched and researched without omitting anything in order to bring the totality to the measure of acceptable fullness, and we have included, in this new edition, the Responsa of Rabbi David Kimni to the Christians.²⁸

The focus of this study involves the notations that the *Hesronot HaSha"s* has indicated in regards to those words, phrases, and passages that were expurgated in the Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin*. Due to the enormous scope of the *Hesronot HaSha"s*, in that it covers the entire Talmud, the task of going through each and every one of these notations is daunting, to say the least. Thus, it was determined that a single tractate would be manageable for a project such as this. In addition to the Gemara text, this study also examines the notes made with respect to Rashi's (*Rabbenu Shlomo Yitzhak*) commentary, and that of his grandsons commonly known as the Tosafot.

For the purpose of this study, the notations in *Hesronot HaSha"s* are compared against the Vilna edition of the Talmud, commonly referred to as the *Vilna Sha"s*. I chose to use this manuscript because it is the most widely used and accepted version of the Talmud today. All together I employed the services of three different publisher's versions of the Talmud. My primary text was the Hebrew-English edition of Tractate *Sanhedrin* published by the Soncino Press. The Hebrew manuscript is true to the *Vilna Sha"s*, but the English translation often includes passages and words that were expurgated and remain omitted from the Hebrew text. The editors make notes in the places where this occurs. The second Hebrew-English edition I utilized was the Schottenstein Edition of Tractate *Sanhedrin*, published by ArtScroll-Mesorah. Even more so than the Soncino version, the Schottenstein

²⁸*Hesronot HaSha"s*, Druck von Joseph Fischer, ed. (Krakow: Verlan von A. Faust's Buchhandlung, 1893), title page.

volumes remain true to both the Hebrew of the *Vilna Sha"ss* and the English translation. The third text I used was the Steinsaltz edition of Tractate *Sanhedrin*. Unlike the other two versions, the Steinsaltz edition of the Talmud reversed much of the work done by the expurgators and included as much as possible what *Hesronot HaSha"ss* notes to be the original text. Steinsaltz does deviate from time to time, most often where it appears that either *Hesronot HaSha"ss* made a mistake, or where the act of censorship was most likely enacted by the Jews for Jewish motives, rather than the mandated Church reasons.

After reviewing each instance of censorship noted in *Hesronot HaSha"ss*, I discovered that the notes fell into three categories. The first group of texts are those that *Hesronot HaSha"ss* indicates to have been expurgated or censored, and these texts do not currently appear in the *Vilna Sha"ss*. The second category of texts are those that *Hesronot HaSha"ss* indicates to have been expurgated or censored, and these texts appear in the *Vilna Sha"ss*, though in some altered form, such as word substitution or paraphrasing. The third category of texts are those that *Hesronot HaSha"ss* indicates to have been expurgated or censored, however, they are restored in the *Vilna Sha"ss*. These categories form the basis for each of the chapters that follow in this study.

Each category is subdivided, where appropriate, in order to help bring further order to the expurgated passages. In addition, words, phrases, and passages are put into context and translated, where appropriate, in order to better ascertain the reasons for expurgation. Finally, each passage or group thereof is analyzed through the context of the passage from which it was removed and is compared to other examples within and across sub-groupings. It is the intent of this study to determine the possible reasons for the expurgation of these

words, phrases, and passages, as well as determine who was responsible for the expurgation, that is, the Church or the Jews.

CHAPTER 2

COMPLETE OMISSIONS

This chapter will illustrate and outline those portions of the text from the Babylonian Talmud²⁹ that censors completely removed, and which remain expunged from the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud. Each of these omissions, whether they are single words, phrases, or larger sections of text, will be reproduced in Hebrew, translated, and placed into the overall textual context according to where the *Hesronot HaSha''s* indicates it was removed. Each omission will be evaluated in terms of why the censors may have removed it from the original text, and why it remains missing from the Vilna edition. Since it is likely that many of these omissions were removed for the same or similar reasons, they will be analyzed together in sequence, so that the reader may distinguish the relationships in an orderly fashion.

Jesus Texts

The first group of omitted texts includes those that clearly mention or allude to יש"ו (*Yeshu*), who is Jesus. It is quite clear that the Talmudic censors removed every text that explicitly used the name *Yeshu*, or at the very least, they removed the name itself, and in

²⁹Unless otherwise noted, all omitted texts referred to in this manuscript come from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin*. Some of these texts are Rashi's commentary to the Gemara or the Tosefot's commentary to the Gemara. These will be specifically noted. All the folio numbers refer to where they would be found had they been included in the Vilna manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud, or where they are found in the above manuscript.

some cases, illusions to it, from the texts. The rationale for omitting *Yeshu* from the Talmud is explained in the previous chapter as one of the many themes that the Church did not want others writing about. It is obvious, then, why these texts were omitted. This motive should become clearer through the examination of the texts themselves.

The first text, omitted from the Gemara on folio 67a, follows a discussion concerning the punishment for the inciter to idolatry, which concludes with the general law that one should not conceal witnesses in order to entrap a subject, those liable to judicial execution by Torah law. The Rabbis noted an exception to this rule in the case of the inciter to idolatry. If such an inciter was suspected, the *Bet Din*³⁰ permitted witnesses to intentionally hide in order to apprehend the offender. The Gemara then illustrates a certain case brought to explain how these witnesses were to go about their duties, and what should be done if the accused repented, or did not repent, for his seditious actions. Should the accused choose to continue in his heresy and provocation of others, the witnesses were instructed to bring him to the *Bet Din* where he would be stoned to death. The omitted text comes in at this point:

וכן עשו לבן סטדא בלוד ותלאוהו בערב הפסח. בן סטדא בן פנדירא הוא אמר רב חסדא
בעל סטדא בועל פנדירא בעל פפוס בן יהודה הוא אלא אימא אמו סטדא אמו מרים מגדלא
נשי הואי כדאמרי בפומבדיתא סתת דא מבעלה:³¹

And thus they did to *Ben*³² Stada in Lydda: And they hanged him on the eve of Passover. Ben Stada is Ben Pandira.³³ Rav Hisda said, "The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira. The husband was Pappos Ben Judah. Rather, his mother was Stada. His mother was Miriam the Women's Hairdresser."³⁴ As they say in Pumbedita, "That one turned away from"³⁵ her husband."

³⁰ Trans., "the Rabbinic Court."

³¹ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 46.

³² The Hebrew word בן (*ben*) in connection to a name means "the son of." Though one might choose to say here "the son of Stada" as the Hebrew and English are interchangeable, I have chosen to leave the Hebrew word and consider it as though it is a

The omitted text clearly maintains that Ben Stada was a heretic who was stoned for the crime of inciting others to heresy, and he was hanged in Lydda on the eve of Passover. What is not so clear, though, is the identity of Ben Stada. This Gemara text, taken at face value, is rather confusing, almost serving as a riddle. Through close examination of the text, the reader is left with several bits of information. First, "Ben Stada is Ben Pandira." Who, then, is Ben Pandira? Ben Stada and Ben Pandira are one and the same. Rav Hisda then adds, "The husband [of the mother of this person, Ben Stada] was Stada, [and her] paramour was Pandira." Rashi, in his commentary to this passage, which was also censored out of the Talmud, seems to agree with this line of thinking:

בן סטדא. בעל אמו סטדא שמו:³⁶

Ben Stada – Stada is the name of his mother's husband.

This comes to explain why this individual was called by two different names. One was for his mother's husband, the other was for his mother's lover, and this line of thinking might lead to a question of paternity. Next, the Gemara seems to refute this information and instructs the reader that "The husband was [in fact not Stada, but rather he was known to be] Pappos Ben Judah," and "[Ben Stada's] mother was Stada." As a final point, the

part of the proper name for the individual. This style is consistent throughout the translation of all the texts in this manuscript.

³³ "Was he the son of Stada? He was the son of Pandera!" (Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, ed., *The Talmud*, Steinsaltz Edition, trans. and ed. Rabbi David Strauss [New York: Random House, 1996-99], 18:226.)

³⁴ "Hairdresser" designates her job title, which was associated with her name, similar to a surname. In other words, she was not simply called Miriam; rather she was called Miriam the Woman's Hairdresser.

³⁵ סטת דא – It is important to note the idiomatic play on words here through the Hebrew. Whereas סטדא is the name of an individual, it is broken down into two words that sound like the original: סטת דא, which literally means "one that turned away from" or "one that was faithless to" [her husband]. Both are euphemisms for adulteress.

³⁶ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 44.

Gemara imparts, "[Ben Stada's] mother was Miriam the Women's Hairdresser," and her nickname was "*Stat Da* – the one [who] turned away from her husband." Rashi adds:

סטת דא. על שם שזינתה קרי ליה הכי:³⁷

That one was faithless – This refers to the one that was a harlot and designates her as such.

Finally, the picture is clear: Ben Stada is the son of Pappos Ben Judah and Miriam the Hairdresser, who was also referred to as *Stat Da*, an allusion to her adulterous relationship with Ben Pandira.

All this pedigree information, though it might seem superfluous, is very important in the greater scheme of the Babylonian Talmud as a whole. Each one of these names is mentioned elsewhere, either in this tractate or others, and the Rabbis attempted here to link these names to one another. First, the Gemara evidently connects the two names, Ben Stada and Ben Pandira as referring to the same person. Herford claims that these two names are synonymous with Jesus,³⁸ which will become clearer with the introduction of the next text below. Next, the name Pappos Ben Judah is the name of a man who was so suspicious of his wife that he would lock her in the house whenever he went out.³⁹ It is possible that the story of the parentage of Jesus became mixed up with Pappos Ben Judah

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Herford draws a connection between these three names and shows how they are used together in various text. For example, "*Yeshu ben Pandera*" is found in T. *Hullin* 2:23; "*Yeshu* is sometimes found as a variant of *Ben Stada* in parallel passages – thus *Sanhedrin* 43a reports, 'On the eve of Passover they [hanged] Jesus,' while in the same tractate, p. 67a, it is said, 'Thus did they to Ben Stada in [Lydda], they [hanged] him on the eve of Passover. Ben Stada is Ben Pandera, etc.'" (R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, [London: Williams & Norgate, 1903; reprint, New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975], 37.)

³⁹ *Gittin*, 90a.

because of the tradition that Pappos Ben Judah was jealous of his wife, along with the mistaken opinion that Pappos Ben Judah was a contemporary and friend of Rabbi Aqiva.⁴⁰ Finally, the name *Miriam Megaddela Neshaya* can be compared to that of Mary Magdalene,⁴¹ the same woman from the Gospel story. Though she is not the mother of Jesus as this passage suggests, the connection in this passage paints a clear picture that the authors knew that Mary Magdalene had some connection to the life of Jesus.

Examining this omitted passage in the context of what immediately precedes the text, sheds light on the differences of opinion between Christians and Jews with regards to the trial of Jesus. Whereas the Gospels speak of false witnesses,⁴² the Talmud illustrates that these witnesses were in fact legal. They were justified in their deception since they were acting against not only a heretic, but also an inciter to heresy. Ben Stada, otherwise known as Jesus, was this entrapped inciter who was subsequently put to death for his crime. The following passage, omitted from the Gemara at the end of folio 43a, continues the story of Jesus' trial and later execution:

והתניא בערב הפסח תלאוהו ליש"ו והכרח יוצא לפניו מ' יום קודם שהוא יוצא ליסקל על שכישיף והסית והדיח את ישראל כל מי שידוע לו זכות יבא וילמד עליו ולא מצאו לו זכות והתלאוהו בערב פסח. אמר עולא ותסברא בר חפוכי זכות הוא מסית הוא וריחמנא אמר לא תחמול ולא תכסה עליו אלא שאני יש"ו דקרוב למלכות הוא:⁴³

⁴⁰ Herford, 40. "One of the two conflicting opinions concerning the epoch of Jesus places him also in the time of Aqiba." This opinion cannot be true since Aqiba is known to have lived at the end of the first century and beginning of the second century C.E.

⁴¹ Mary is the English equivalent of the Hebrew מרים (*Miryam*). The similarities between the English "Magdalene" and the Hebrew מגדלא (*Megaddela*) are obvious.

⁴² Matt. 26:60; Mark 14:56-57.

⁴³ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 44.

But it was taught in a Baraita: On the eve of Passover Jesus was hanged. And the public crier went out before him 40 days [prior to the hanging, saying,] "The first day that he [Jesus] goes out to be stoned because he practiced sorcery, and he incited Israel and led them astray. Anyone who knows a favorable argument in his defense should come forth and plead in his favor." But they [the judges] did not find an argument in his favor, and they hanged him on the eve of Passover. Ulla said, "Do you imagine that there is one who would come and offer a favorable argument in his defense? He was an inciter, and the Merciful [God] says, 'You shall not spare nor shall you conceal him.'"⁴⁴ Rather, Jesus was different because he was close to the government.

This paragraph came as an example concerning the procedure for one who was found to be guilty of a crime punishable by public execution via stoning. The Mishnah⁴⁵ that opens the discussion states that a public crier was supposed to go out and announce the offender, his crime, and the imminent execution. The purpose of this public declaration was to attract the attention of anyone who might testify in favor of the accused in order to save him from his death sentence.

In the example illustrated above, a crier did go out and announce the crime and the punishment, and he called for witnesses. Since no witnesses came forth, Jesus was ultimately stoned to death and hanged for public view, as was the custom for someone executed in such a manner.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Deut. 13:9.

⁴⁵ *Sanhedrin*, 6:1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 6:4. "All that were stoned were [then] hanged; this is the view of R. Eliezer; but the Sages say, No one is hanged except the blasphemer and the idolater. They hanged a man [with his face] towards the people. . . . How did they hang him? They sank a post into the ground and a piece of wood protruded from it; and one placed together his two hands one upon the other and hanged him. . . . And they undid him at once, for if it remained [suspended] overnight, a *negative command* would be transgressed thereby. . . . Why was this man hanged? Because he blasphemed the Name, and the Name of Heaven was found profaned." (Philip Blackman, trans. *Mishnayoth*, Vol. 4, *Order Nezikin*, 2d ed., rev., corrected, and enl. [Gateshead: Judaica Press, 1990], 263.)

There are several less obvious points to note from this omitted text. First of all, the first line of this text links it with the previous text from folio 67a. Here the Gemara reads, "On the eve of Passover they hanged Jesus." The omitted text from folio 67a similarly reads, "And thus they did to Ben Stada in Lydda: And they hanged him on the eve of Passover." Thus one might conclude based simply on this evidence that Ben Stada, who as noted above, is also Ben Pandira, who is Jesus. But it is possible to think that there could have been others who were hanged on the eve of Passover. To counter this idea, one need only read further for another striking parallel. Both of these men were known to be inciters to acts of heresy.

The next point of interest is the inclusion of the statement of Ulla. Ulla, a Palestinian Rabbi and a disciple of Rabbi *Yohanan*, later went to Babylonia where he associated himself with the likes of Rabbi *Yehudah* and Rabbi *Hisda*. Herford suggests the existing possibility that Ulla was the person who brought the traditions involving Jesus to these Babylonian scholars,⁴⁷ where it subsequently ended up recorded in the Babylonian Talmud.

Finally, the last statement, "he was close to the government," deserves some examination. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, quoting the *Arukh*, suggests, "Some understand this to mean that Jesus was actually related to the kings of the Hasmonean dynasty."⁴⁸ This might imply that he was of Davidic descent and therefore a possible candidate for the Messiah. By looking at other uses of this phrase in the Gemara, one can draw another interpretation. Herford states that, "The phrase 'near to the kingdom'⁴⁹ occurs elsewhere, and is applied to the

⁴⁷ Herford, 355-356.

⁴⁸ Steinsaltz, 17:159.

⁴⁹ Herford chooses to translate the same Hebrew phrase in a different manner.

family of the Patriarch, Gam[a]liel II, of whom it is said,⁵⁰ that they were allowed to learn Greek because they were 'near to the kingdom.'⁵¹ Herford further explains that such an education was necessary since the Patriarch acted as the official representative of the Jews to the Roman government, and as a result, he had to carry on dialogue and exchange in Greek. Yet, Jesus was not in this position of an official relationship to the government. Three possible explanations remain for this phrase: either Jesus had friends in the Roman courts, political reasons existed for the Roman courts wishing to spare him, or Jesus simply spoke frequently of "the kingdom" whether it be Roman, heavenly or otherwise.⁵²

This textual omission is immediately followed by another large piece of text that deals with the subsequent trials and deaths of five men designated as Jesus' disciples:

ת"ר חמשה תלמידים היו לו ליש"ו מתאי נקאי נצר ובוני ותודה איתוהי למתי אמר להו
מתי יהרג הכתיב מתי אבוא ואראה פני אלקים אמרו לו אין מתי יהרג דכתיב מתי ימות ואבד
שמו איתוהו לנקאי אמר להו נקאי יהרג הכתיב ונקי וצדיק אל תהרג אמרו לו אין נקאי יהרג
דכתיב במסתירים יהרג נקי איתוהו לנצר אמר להו נצר יהרג הכתיב ונצר משרשיו יפרח
אמרו ליה אין נצר יהרג דכתיב ואתא השלכת מקברך כנצר נתעב איתוהו לבוני אמר להו
בוני יהרג הכתיב בני בכורי ישראל אמרו ל' אין בוני והרג דכתיב הנה אנכי הורג את בנך
בכורך איתוהו לתודה אמר להו תודה יהרג הכתיב מזמור לתודה אמרו ליה אין תודה יהרג
דכתיב זובח תודה יכבדני⁵³

⁵⁰ *Bava Qamma*, 83a.

⁵¹ Herford, 89.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 89-90.

⁵³ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 44-45.

Our Rabbis taught: Jesus had five disciples: Mattai, Naqqi, Netzer, and Buni, and Todah. They brought Mattai. He said to them, "Shall Mattai be killed? Surely it is written, 'When [מתי] shall I come and appear before God?'"⁵⁴ They said to him, "Yes, Mattai will be killed, as it is written, 'When [מתי] shall he die and his name perish?'"⁵⁵ They brought Naqqi. He said to them, "Shall Naqqi be killed? Surely it is written, 'You shall not kill the innocent [נקי] and the righteous.'"⁵⁶ They said to him, "Yes, Naqqi will be killed, as it is written, 'In secret places⁵⁷ the innocent [נקי] will kill.'"⁵⁸ They brought Netzer. He said to them, "Shall Netzer be killed? Surely it is written, 'And a sprout [נצר] shall bloom/sprout from its roots.'"⁵⁹ They said to him, "Yes, Netzer will be killed, as it is written, 'But you are cast out from your grave like an abhorred sprout [נצר].'"⁶⁰ They brought Buni. He said to them, "Shall Buni be killed? Surely it is written, 'My son [בני], my firstborn, is Israel.'"⁶¹ They said to him, "Yes, Buni will be killed, as it is written, 'Behold, I will kill your son [בן], your firstborn.'"⁶² They brought Todah. He said to them, "Shall Todah be killed? Surely it is written, 'A Psalm for Thanksgiving [תודה].'"⁶³ They said, "Yes, Todah will be killed, as it is written, 'Whoever offers up a Thanksgiving offering [תודה] honors me.'"⁶⁴

There is no supporting evidence that the events recounted in this sardonic tale ever occurred. Yet it is interesting to note the way that these Christian disciples met their fate. When brought before the Jewish court,⁶⁵ each of the disciples employed the use of Scripture to form the rationale for why he should not be killed; and for each of their arguments, the Jewish court countered with a Scriptural verse of their own in order to strike

⁵⁴ Ps. 42:3

⁵⁵ Ibid. 41:6

⁵⁶ Exod. 23:7

⁵⁷ "In secret places" is a euphemism for acting in a deceitful manner.

⁵⁸ Ps. 10:8

⁵⁹ Isa. 11:1

⁶⁰ Ibid. 14:19

⁶¹ Exod. 4:22

⁶² Ibid. 4:23

⁶³ Ps. 100:1

⁶⁴ Ibid. 50:23

the final blow upon these apostates. The sentence of their fate, death, was the same that was met by their master, Jesus.

What is most interesting to note here is the ironic word usage that both the disciples and the Jewish court bring into play. Each of the Scriptural verses contains a word that is either the same as or strikingly similar to the name of one of these disciples. Therefore, when the verses are translated, by applying the proper names rather than literal meaning of these words, this text takes on a more significant meaning. A transcript of the above passage, can be rewritten as follows:

The Jewish court brought Mattai before them. Mattai said to them, "Shall I be killed? Surely Scripture says, 'Shall I, מתי, come and appear before God?'" The members of the court said to him, "Yes, you will be killed, as it is written in Scripture, 'מתי, he shall die and his name perish.'"

The Jewish court brought Naqqi before them. Naqqi said to them, "Shall I be killed? Surely Scripture says, 'You shall not kill נקי with the righteous.'" The members of the court said to him, "Yes, you will be killed, as it is written in Scripture, 'נקי will kill in a deceitful manner.'"

The Jewish court brought Netzer before them. Netzer said to them, "Shall I be killed? Surely Scripture says, 'And נצר shall spring forth from its roots.'" The members of the court said to him, "Yes, you will be killed, as it is written in Scripture, 'But you are cast out from your grave like an abhorred נצר.'"

The Jewish court brought Buni before them. Buni said to them, "Shall I be killed? Surely Scripture says, 'בני, my firstborn, is Israel.'" The members of the court said to him, "Yes, you will be killed, as it is written in Scripture, 'Behold, I will kill בניך, your firstborn.'"

The Jewish court brought Todah before them. Todah said to them, "Shall I be killed? Surely Scripture says, 'A Psalm for תודה.'" The members of the court said, "Yes, you will be killed, as it is written in Scripture, 'Whoever offers up תודה honors me.'"

⁶⁵ It is inferred from the language used as well as the context that these five disciples were brought before the Jewish court, and this is with whom the dialogue exists.

Rashi's omitted commentary to this text offers support to this new transcript. Rashi offers explanation for both Naqqi and Todah:

יהרוג נקי. רוצח הוא נקי זה וראוי להרג שהרג במסתרים ותשובה בעלמא הוא מפני
האומות שקרוב למלכות היה והיו צריכים להשיב על כל ראיות של הבל שלהם:⁶⁶

The innocent [נקי] will kill – Naqqi is a murderer and he deserves to be killed, for he kills in a deceitful manner. This is a general answer for public consumption. For he was close to the government and they needed to provide an answer to all their examples of their stupidity.

זובח תודה יכבדני. מי שיהרוג תודה יכבדוני:⁶⁷

Whoever sacrifices/offers up a Thanksgiving offering [תודה] honors me –
He who shall kill Todah honors me.

Both comments are straightforward and play directly into the new transcript. Additionally, Rashi utilizes the phrase “close to the government,” which serves as a link to the previous text.

Those familiar with the Gospels of the New Testament recognize that Jesus had twelve primary disciples, so the number five described above is somewhat puzzling. Along the same thought are the names of the disciples that are listed above: Mattai, Naqqi, Netzer, Buni, and Todah. Only one of these names, Mattai, resembles any of those from the Gospels, Matthew, or other sources.⁶⁸ Herford posits that these five disciples were five Christians who were condemned to death on some occasion. They were not necessarily contemporary disciples of Jesus; rather, the designation “disciple” merely implies that they

⁶⁶ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 45.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Steinsaltz, 17:159.

were Christians.⁶⁹ In addition, the names used here are probably not their real names, rather, names that make some reference to Jesus and his trial,⁷⁰ thus, their inclusion at this point in the text.

Mattai, as mentioned above, serves as a link to the list of the twelve disciples. Naqqi, the innocent, serves to mock the Christians who believed Jesus to be innocent. Several possibilities exist for Netzer. First of all, the Hebrew, נצר (*netzer*), means a "branch" or a "shoot." The connection to Jesus and Christianity is obvious. Next, נצר is a word that occurs in two texts from the Book of Isaiah,⁷¹ of which the first has been interpreted Messianically, and can thus be applied to a Christian view of Jesus. Lastly, and the interpretation that is most probable, is the word play between נצר and נצרי (*notzri*). Literally, נצרי means "Nazarene" or "one from Nazareth," and the title is frequently associated with Jesus. In addition, נצרי has become a euphemism for Christian, and this directs the reader to the connection with Jesus. The name Buni is linked with the Hebrew בני (*beni*), "my son," a designation that Christians frequently make for Jesus as their Messiah. The last name on the list, Todah, meaning "praise," or in reference to the "Thanksgiving offering" of the Temple cult, is the name that is most confusing because it is the most difficult one to find a connection with Jesus. The other four names are fairly straightforward in this regard; yet, this name leaves much more to the imagination of the reader. Since there is no outright explanation for the use of this name, perhaps, as Herford

⁶⁹ If such a trial took place, it could only have been during the period of the Bar Kokhba revolt, for "there is no other period than this (132-135 C.E.) at which Christians were persecuted and even put to death by Jews." (Herford, 95.)

⁷⁰ Herford, 93.

⁷¹ Isa. 11:1, 14:19.

suggests, this final name and the textual dialogue associated with it above⁷² comes to illustrate that the whole series of names were of pure invention.⁷³

It has been suggested that these three texts⁷⁴ were all originally part of a single account about Jesus.⁷⁵ The first passage, omitted from folio 67a, and the discussion that precedes it,⁷⁶ contains the description of the witnesses. This passage, along with the first of the two omitted from folio 42a, describes the trial and execution of Jesus. Lastly, the second omitted passage from folio 42a gives the account of five of Jesus' disciples. The reason that these passages come to be divided in the Talmud has to do with the way the Gemara is organized, that is, based on subject matter. Thus, the trial passage was printed along with the discussion concerning the concealing of witnesses, and the account of Jesus death and the subsequent deaths of his disciples are reported along with the discussion of stoning certain criminals.

The next three passages refer to Jesus and comment on his character. The first is simply a phrase that was omitted from the Gemara. It follows the statement, "You shall not have a son or a student who spoils his cooking."⁷⁷ This statement can be understood to mean that one who spoils his cooking is like one who is inclined to heresy.⁷⁸ The censored phrase immediately follows כגון יש"ו הנוצר⁷⁹ and thus the sentence should read, "You shall not

⁷² "Whoever sacrifices *Todah* honors me."

⁷³ Herford, 93-94.

⁷⁴ I.e., 67a and the two texts from 43a.

⁷⁵ Herford, 91.

⁷⁶ I.e., that portion of the text that was not removed from the Gemara manuscript.

⁷⁷ *Sanhedrin*, 103a.

⁷⁸ Herford, 60-61.

⁷⁹ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 49.

have a son or a student who is inclined to heresy, *like Jesus the Nazarene*." The implication here is obvious: Jesus was a heretic, and one is forbidden to associate with heretics.

The second omission is found in Rashi's commentary to the Gemara, "only Balaam will not enter [the World to Come,] but other [heathens] will enter."⁸⁰ Rashi writes:

"Rabbi Joshua says, 'If we say, 'The wicked will return to Sheol,' this refers to all the nations, as you have said here, as it is written, 'All the nations have forgotten God.'" This only means those who have forgotten God like Balaam (or anyone like him)."⁸¹

The exclusion to the text is simply the words כגון יש"ו הנצרי⁸² which follow "Balaam." Once again, this omission, similar to the previous, cites Jesus as being a heretic, "like Balaam," the most hated person in Jewish tradition, who has no place in the World to Come.

Lastly, another large portion of Gemara text with Rashi commentary was omitted. It follows the same suggestion as the previous two exclusions; that is, the idea that Jesus was a heretic and should be expelled:

. . . ולא כרבי יהושע בן פרחיה שדחפו ליש"ו בשתי ידיים.

⁸⁰ *Sanhedrin*, 105a.

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

⁸² Trans., "like Jesus the Nazarene"; *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 49.

כרבי יהושע בן פרחיה מאי הוא גדקטלינהו ינאי מלכא לרבנן אזל רבי רבי יהושע בן פרחיה ויש"ו לאלכסנדריא של מצרים כי הוא שלמא שלח ליה שמעון בן שטח מני ירושלים עיר הקודש ליכי אלכסנדריא של מצרים אחותי בעלי שריו בתוכך ואנכי יושבת שוממה עם אתא ואתרמי ליה ההוא אושפיזא עבדו ליה יקרא טובא אמר כמה יפה אכסניא זו אמר ליה רבי עיניה טרוטות אמר ליה רשע בכך אתה עוסק אפיק ארבע מאה שיפורי ושמתיה אתא לקמיה כמה זמנין אמר ליה קבלן לא הוי קא משגח ביה יומא חד הוה קא קרי קריאת שמע אתא לקמיה סבר לקהולי אחוי ליה בידיה הוא סבר מידחא דחי ליה אזל זקף לביהתא והשתחוה לה אמר ליה הדר כך אמר ליה כך מקובלני ממך כל החוטא ומחטיא את הרבים אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה ואמר מר וש"ו כישף והסית והדיח את ישראל.⁸³

. . . And not like Rabbi Joshua ben Perahyah who pushed Jesus away with both hands.

What about [the case involving] Rabbi Joshua ben Perahyah? When King Yannai killed the Sages, Rabbi Joshua ben Perahyah and Jesus fled to Alexandria of Egypt. When peace resumed Shimon ben Shetah sent to him [Joshua ben Parahyah, a message]: "From me [in] Jerusalem the Holy City, to you [in] Alexandria of Egypt – Oh sister, my husband dwells in your midst and I sit desolate." He [Joshua ben Parahyah] got up, he went, and he came up a certain inn. They did [showed] him a great honor. He said, "How beautiful is this אכסניא.⁸⁴ He [Jesus] said to him [Joshua ben Parahyah], "Rabbi, her eyes are narrow." He [Joshua] said to him [Jesus], "Wicked man! You engage yourself in such matters?" He [Joshua] brought out 400 trumpets and excommunicated him [Jesus]. He [Jesus] came before him [Joshua] several times [subsequently] and said to him [Jesus to Joshua], "Receive [me]!" He [Joshua] did not pay attention to him [Jesus]. One day he [Joshua] was reciting the Shema. He [Jesus] came before him. He [Joshua] thought to receive him [Jesus]. He [Joshua] made a sign to him with his hands. He [Jesus] thought that he [Joshua] was pushing him away. He [Jesus] went and put up a brick and he bowed down to it. He [Joshua] said to him [Jesus], "Return [repent]!" He [Jesus] said to him [Joshua], "Thus I have received [learned] from you: Everyone that sins and those who cause others to sin, do not allow him an opportunity to do repentance." And a Master said, "Jesus practiced sorcery, and he incited Israel and led them astray."

Rashi's commentary to the above text follows:

⁸³ Ibid., 50.

⁸⁴ אכסניא (*akhsanya*) can be translated as both "inn" as well "innkeeper." Joshua ben Parahyah used the word to mean the former, "inn."

ינאי מלכא. כהן גדול היה וקטל כולו רבנן במסכת קידושין: שמעון בן שטח. אחי אשתו של ינאי המלך במסכת ברכות והוא לא ברח: טרוטות. עגלות: אחי ליה. רבי הושע בן פרזיה: בידיה. דלקבלוהי:⁸⁵

King Yannai – He was the High Priest and he killed all the Rabbis in *Tractate Kiddushin*. Shimon ben Shetah – The brother of the wife of King Yannai⁸⁶ in *Tractate Berakhot* and he did not flee [with the other sages to Alexandria]. Narrow – Round. He made a sign to him – Rabbi Joshua ben Parahyah. With his hands – in order to receive him.

The connection of this text to the first two texts presented in this group is straightforward: Jesus is presented as a heretic who was shunned by his teacher. Even more striking is the repetition of a line printed in 43a, “[Jesus] practiced sorcery, and he incited Israel and led them astray.”⁸⁷ This is the core that links each one of these expunged passages concerning Jesus. The Talmudists believed that Jesus was a heretic who incited the Jewish people to become apostates by turning their back on Judaism.

In this Rabbinic tale, Jesus is associated with Rabbi Joshua ben Parahyah during the time of King Yannai. Historically speaking, King Yannai is Alexander Jannæus who reigned from 104 to 78 B.C.E.⁸⁸ Shimon ben Shetah and Joshua ben Parahyah were leading Pharisees at the time, and they were forced to escape to Alexandria to avoid a massacre of the Rabbis during this period. Herford suggests that Jesus’ name was inserted into this story, which takes place nearly a century before the time of Jesus, because of similar details associated

⁸⁵ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 50.

⁸⁶ I.e., He was King Yannai’s brother-in-law.

⁸⁷ In uncensored versions, these texts would be found in *Sanhedrin*, 43a, and 107a.

⁸⁸ Herford, 52.

with both Jesus and the otherwise unnamed disciple mentioned in this story.⁸⁹ Like the student in this story, Jesus incited the Jewish people to acts of heresy, he was seen as the founder of a false religion (thus the reference to bowing down to a brick,) and he practiced sorcery, a ritual that was rather common in Egypt where the student and teacher fled.

The rise of Christianity was seen as threatening by the Jewish leaders, and they needed to hit upon a way in which to deal with the issues involved. By linking Jesus to a classical story that was already a part of Rabbinic legend, the Rabbis discovered a masterful way to associate Christianity with that which was already disapproved in Jewish tradition.

Taking all of this Talmudic information together as a whole, it is still difficult to get a clear picture of the historical Jesus. Perhaps this was the Talmudists' original intent. They were clear in regards to their desire to connect Jesus to the already well-known traditional stories concerning heretics. By associating Jesus with the likes of Balaam, individuals who practice sorcery, inciters to heresy, apostates, and other abhorred acts, Jesus was made a villain, a dangerous enemy to the people of Israel, one with no place in the World to Come. It is not difficult to imagine, then, why the hand of a censor came to remove these texts. In later years, the rise of Christianity led to countless years of Crusades, forced conversions, Inquisitions, and other acts of religious persecution of which the Jewish people were often the target. Christian leaders were also making it a point to become educated where Jewish texts were concerned in order to find ways to counter Jewish arguments and attract more followers. It is likely that Jewish censors, adhering to the censorship regulations set forth by the Council of Trent and other edicts, carried out the majority of these acts of

⁸⁹ Ibid., 53.

censorship, as censorship was preferred over the complete destruction of sacred texts. Therefore, it is probable that Jewish censors removed all words and references to Jesus that could be interpreted as a polemic against Christianity.

Remarks Against Roman Leadership and Christians

The next category of complete omissions involves those words, phrases, and passages that speak negatively toward Roman leadership and Christians. Though many references to Roman leaders, governors, and rule remain in censored versions of the text, certain words that were once associated with or used to describe these references have since been removed. A similar statement can be attributed to references to Christian leadership, though most of these references appear in the text in code, and usually the word נוצרי⁹⁰ or some derivative thereof, which has come to mean directly or refer to "Christian," has been removed from the text.

The Gemara makes frequent references to the מלכות (*malkhut*), meaning the "government." It is common knowledge that in most cases the "government" is Rome, though an alternative translation of מלכות, that is "kingdom," would be applicable in the case of the appearance of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" or "God's kingdom," which is of course an entirely different entity. As a result of the relationship that the Jews endured with Rome during the Hellenistic and Hadrianic periods, negative feelings developed towards the Roman government, and this was often expressed within the folios of the Gemara. Therefore, when a reference to the Roman government appeared in the text, it was common to find a backhanded adjective affixed to the reference. The word that was used most

⁹⁰ Trans. lit. "Nazarene," though in more general terms it means "Christian."

repeatedly was רשע.⁹¹ Thus, to the Jews, Rome came to be known as not simply the government in charge, but “the wicked government,” a government that was despised for its oppressive and controlling decrees that they issued to their subjects.

The Censors removed most of these negative words that were used in conjunction with references to the Roman leadership.⁹² Not only was the word רשע eliminated when it was used with מלכות,⁹³ but it was also expunged when it defined individuals such as Tineaus Rufus,⁹⁴ the Roman commander in Israel in the days of the Hadrianic persecutions,⁹⁵ and the Roman Governor who ordered the execution of Rabbi Aqiva.⁹⁶ Two more omissions are recorded in Rashi’s commentary, presumably removed because he indicates Rome as a nation of killers and subjugators,⁹⁷ and he indicates Rome being the potential recipient of divine punishment.⁹⁸

One more exclusion from the text is also related to this idea. Though Rome is not directly indicated, the Roman Empire did succeed the Babylonians, with the Persians and the

⁹¹ Trans. “wicked.”

⁹² Those references that were reinserted into the text will be discussed below in Chapter 4.

⁹³ *Sanhedrin*, 98b, as noted in *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 49.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 65b, as noted in *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 46.

⁹⁵ Steinsaltz, 18:207.

⁹⁶ Rabbi Asher Dicker and Rabbi Michael Weiner, eds., *Tractate Sanhedrin*, vol. 2 of *Talmud Bavli*, Schottenstein Edition, ed. Rabbi Yisroel Simcha Schorr (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1994), 65b₂.

⁹⁷ The omitted phrase from the *Sanhedrin*, 106a, כתיב רומיים, meaning “the original text reads ‘Romans,’” points an otherwise vague text to indicate the Romans directly. (*Hesronot HaSha*’s, 50.)

⁹⁸ Within Rashi’s commentary on the phrase “Woe to the nation that will be [found attempting to hamper with God’s redemption of the nation of Israel]” in *Sanhedrin*, 106a, the words והקב”ה מביעם, meaning “And the Holy One Blessed Be He (God) will humble them,” are removed from the text. (*Hesronot HaSha*’s, 50.) The phrase in the Gemara subtly indicates Rome, and the words in the subsequent comment by Rashi were removed as an attempt to play down the idea of the feeling of superiority that comes to the Jews

Greeks in between, and thus much of the language attributed to those that forced the Jews into exile is thus ascribed to Rome. One example of this idea comes in a reference to the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar of who the Gemara adds, "לאותו רשע שחיק טמא".⁹⁹ *Hesronot HaSha*'s records¹⁰⁰ that this entire phrase was removed from the Gemara,¹⁰¹ but the words, "that wicked man" have been reinserted in the Vilna edition of the text. This is most likely due to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar is a well-known historical figure, and thus the Jews were able to rationalize the inclusion of this slander. "His bones be ground to dust," on the other hand, probably remained on the cutter's block as a compromise.

The Roman Empire eventually adopted Christianity as its official religion. When this occurred, all references to Romans in Jewish texts could be applied to Christians. Consequently, "Roman" became synonymous with "Christian." In addition, when interpreting the sacred texts, "Roman" was often used as a euphemism for "Christian." As illustrated above with the texts relating to Jesus, the Jews had to be very careful in terms of what they published so as not affront the Christian rulers and incite them to more acts of Jewish persecution. Therefore, most references to Romans and Christians had to be skillfully hidden within language that the Jews could pass off as something else entirely, or words, phrases, and paragraphs had to be removed altogether.

due to their special relationship with God, and because they could be interpreted as an attack on the government.

⁹⁹ Trans., "that wicked man whose bones be ground to dust."

¹⁰⁰ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 48.

¹⁰¹ *Sanhedrin*, 92b.

Just as Jesus is indicated as a heretic, so too can other references to Christians be associated with heresy. Within a discussion in the Gemara¹⁰² concerning days of rest for Jews and non-Jews, Rashi notes that Sunday is the official rest day for Christians. This seems like an obvious statement for him to make, but it points to the reality of the world in which he lived. In censored versions of the text, the word *הנוצרים*¹⁰³ is omitted,¹⁰⁴ most likely because Rashi's commentary is in reference to the idea that anyone who did not observe the Sabbath proper¹⁰⁵ deserved death. The Jewish censors, in all probability, omitted the reference to the Christians to avoid any confusion and subsequent interpretation that Christians deserved to die because they did not observe the Sabbath at its correct time.

The last completely omitted piece of text¹⁰⁶ in this category also comes from Rashi's commentary to the Gemara. The word *מינין* (*minin*) is used throughout the Gemara in order to label heretics, heretical actions, or in this case, heretical books.¹⁰⁷ Rashi's commentary on "the Books of the Heretics" is completely omitted from the Gemara¹⁰⁸ due to his definition of the books themselves. In a one-word answer, Rashi states that *מינין*, in this case, are *גלחים* (*galahim*), that is, "priests." Thus, these heretical books are not simply pagan books, but these are books that educated Christian leaders owned, read and whose words they observed, such as the New Testament and all other Christian literature that

¹⁰² Ibid., 58b.

¹⁰³ Trans., "the Christians."

¹⁰⁴ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 45.

¹⁰⁵ I.e., the Jewish Sabbath that begins on Friday at sundown and ends on Saturday at sundown.

¹⁰⁶ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 49.

¹⁰⁷ According to one theory, *מין* is an abbreviation for *מלשינים* (*MalshinIN*), the Hebrew for "informers." (*Censorship and Freedom of Expression*, 15.)

¹⁰⁸ *Sanhedrin*, 100b.

followed. It is obvious why Jewish censors wanted to remove this reference. By labeling Christian holy texts as heretical, Rashi's words only served as an offense to Christianity.

Conclusion

One final piece of omitted text¹⁰⁹ epitomizes all the others in this chapter. It comes in the form of a single word, משומד (*meshummad*) which means "one who became an apostate." It is associated with the word "gentile."¹¹⁰ This textual reference identifies a group of gentiles who were forced to convert from Judaism to heathenism. From all of the evidence presented above, one can draw the following connection: one who converted to heathenism or paganism, as practiced during the days of the Roman Empire, is a euphemism for one who converted to Christianity.

It is most certain that these textual omissions were mandated by the Catholic Church, and subsequently removed by censors, during the sixteenth century. Each one of these expurgated portions had the potential to offend the governments under which the Jewish people had to live. There was no need to provoke those in power and give them a reason to confiscate and destroy these sacred texts, let alone persecute and even kill the Jewish people. It was easier to comply with the papal edicts and completely omit these references, or cover them up with more covert language. This latter idea is the topic of the next chapter.

¹⁰⁹ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 44.

¹¹⁰ Rashi's commentary to *Sanhedrin*, 22b.

CHAPTER 3

WORD SUBSTITUTION AND PARAPHRASING

This chapter will illustrate and outline those portions of the text from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin*, which censors modified, in one form or another, from their original pre-censored structure, as compared to how they currently appear in the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud. Each of these alterations, whether they are single words, phrases, or larger sections of text, will be reproduced in Hebrew, translated, and placed into the overall textual context according to where the *Hesronot HaSha''s* indicates it was removed. Each change, where appropriate, will be placed into a group with other texts that seem to follow the same pattern. Each single textual revision or group of revisions will be evaluated in terms of why censors originally chose to remove or change it from the original text, what prompted the removal or change, and why the Vilna edition chose to publish it the way it did. It is not necessary to evaluate each textual reference in every group, and therefore, a few exemplary texts will be selected in order to demonstrate the pattern and evaluate the group as a whole. The other texts recorded in *Hesronot HaSha''s* will be listed in the notes.

Group 3A: גוי – גר

The first group of texts is gathered together because they share a noted difference in one word between what the *Hesronot Ha''Shas* writes should be in the text, גוי (*goy*), and what

is found in the current Vilna edition of the Talmud, נוכרי (*nokhri*). Both of these words have come to mean the same thing, "gentile," "non-Jew," or even "idolater."¹¹¹ Traditionally, the word גוי was used to denote not only non-Jews, but also a group of people or a nation.¹¹² The word גוי and its plural form, גוים (*goyim*), are currently used today as a part of English slang to denote a person or people who are not Jewish. Likewise, the word נוכרי, which is derived from the Hebrew root נכר,¹¹³ designates a "stranger," "gentile," or "heathen."¹¹⁴ It is possible that the editors of the Vilna text chose to insert the word נוכרי in place of גוי because it has a softer connotation. In truth, the two words are entirely interchangeable.

Both of these words are euphemisms employed by the Talmudists in order to keep the text sufficiently vague. It was assumed that Jewish scholars would fathom the authors' original intent in regards to the text, while allowing them the opportunity for denial should the need arise. Ultimately, these words and others that will follow, designate the Romans, the Christians, or whoever else the Jews were in opposition to concerning matters of religion and law. This is why it is possible that the words may have been omitted altogether from the text.

The first examples in this category are found in Rashi's commentary to the Gemara on folios 39a and 39b. In a conversation with a certain heretic, Rabbi Avina brings to mind a statement made by Balaam about the Israelites, "There is a people that dwells apart, and it

¹¹¹ Marcus Jastrow, ed., *Dictionary of the Talmud* (1950), s.v. "גוי."

¹¹² Ibid.; E.g., "אור לגוים" trans., "a light unto the [other] nations."

¹¹³ Trans., "to be unknown, strange," Jastrow, s.v. "נכר."

¹¹⁴ Ibid., s.v. "נוכרי"; "In editions published under the censor's supervision, our word is frequently changed into עכו"ם, גוי, כוש, כותי."

shall not be reckoned among the nations.”¹¹⁵ Ravina introduces this statement by telling the heretic that it was declared by “one of yours.” Rashi comments, “One of yours: One of their prophets, Balaam, a נכרי/גוי, that testified about us that we were not the same community.”¹¹⁶ Rashi then comments on the second half of the above Scriptural verse, “‘And [Israel] shall not be reckoned among the nations’: Every place that they mentioned נכרים/גוים, they did not mention the community of Israel.”¹¹⁷ Both of these remarks come to emphasize the Jewish people’s place in the world, that is, as being set apart from the other nations. Even Balaam, a well-known inciter to apostasy from Biblical times, one who is linked to Jesus as described in the previous chapter, and one who is a non-Jew, declares the Jewish community to be separate from the other non-Jews that are mentioned throughout Jewish textual tradition. It is important to note that the *Hesronot HaSha*’s lists this entire section of commentary as having been omitted from the text. This is a strong indication that textual references to Balaam were noted for their connection to Jesus, and it is likely that Christian censors forced the Jews to exclude these passages from their text.

Just as Rashi makes it clear that Balaam is indeed a non-Jew, so too Rashi identifies other figures in the same regard. In his commentary to the Gemara on folio 74a, Rashi states, “The master of my village: The lord of the town, and he was a נכרי/גוי.”¹¹⁸ Thus there is no mistaking the heritage of the individual who is in the position of power.

¹¹⁵ Num. 23:9.

¹¹⁶ *Sanhedrin*, 39a; the textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 44.

¹¹⁷ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 44.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

It is most likely that these references to non-Jews, as well as the others noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s,¹¹⁹ were originally removed to dampen the sentiment that Jews were held in a higher regard, or simply differently than non-Jews, namely Christians, in the eyes of God. Apparently, the editors of the Vilna text did not feel that this language constituted so much a problem, and they subsequently reinserted a synonym that maintains a certain level of deniability.

Group 3B: כותי – גוי

The next group of texts is gathered together for the same reason as the first. Only this time, where the *Hesronot HaSha*'s writes גוי, the Vilna edition of the Talmud records כותי (*kuti*). Though כותי, or "Cuthean," in its most basic sense, means "a member of the sect of Samaritans,"¹²⁰ when utilized in the Talmud, it is synonymous with both גוי and נכרי: a designation for a "gentile" or "non-Jew," most often employed as a euphemism for "Christian."

In each of the texts that belong to this category, it appears that the designation of the word, whether גוי or כותי, is based on a stylistic choice attributed to the editor. Since both גוי and כותי imply the same meaning, that is a "non-Jew," like גוי and נכרי, the use of either word is an arbitrary selection. All three of these words possess the same level of obscurity, and thus, there is a level of deniability to the implication of the words within the texts.

¹¹⁹ For other examples of censorship falling in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 40b; *ibid.*, 104a; *ibid.*, 105a.

¹²⁰ Jastrow, s.v. "כותי"; "The Cutheans were a pagan people brought by the Assyrians to Eretz Yisrael, whose subsequent conversion to Judaism was deemed insincere because they were found to have retained their practice of worshipping idols (see 2 Kings 17:24-41.)" (Dicker and Weiner, 79a₂.)

On folio 57a, in the context of laws pertaining to robbery and murder, the Gemara states, "כוחי/גוים and a shepherd of small cattle: one does not rescue [him from a pit] or throw [him] down [into a pit]." ¹²¹ Here, the text states that a Jew is not obligated to help a non-Jew who is in potential danger, but on the other hand, he is equally commanded not to be the cause of that danger. In other words, this text shows the ambivalence expressed towards those who were not Jewish, namely Christians. Similarly, as noted on folio 76b in the Gemara, a Jew need not return a lost object if it is found to belong to a כוחי/גוי. ¹²² Adin Steinsaltz paraphrases Rashi ¹²³ when he notes:

Restoring a lost object is a special act of kindness required of one Jew to another, but not for a non-Jew unless the deed will bring about sanctification of God's name. This is praiseworthy. If not returning the lost object leads to desecration of God's name, he is forbidden to keep it, and he must return it to the non-Jew. ¹²⁴

All three of these examples operate on the same general idea that Jews need not come to the aid of a non-Jew unless God commands it. Three more examples deal with sexual relationships involving a non-Jew, though they follow the same pattern. The Gemara instructs that a man is only liable for the crime of adultery if he has sex with the wife of another Jew. Intercourse with the wife of a non-Jew, one who is not a neighbor, does not count as adultery. Further, the marriage of a Jewish woman to a non-Jewish man has no legal validity under Jewish law. ¹²⁵ The Tosafot brings clarity to this text by commenting

¹²¹ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 45.

¹²² Ibid., 47.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Steinsaltz, 19:103.

¹²⁵ *Sanhedrin*, 52b.

on the directive that a Jew must not engage in relations with the wife of his non-Jewish neighbor:

This is the כותי/גוי and it comes to teach us that if לכותים/לגוי do not have the marriage structure that we do, even though there is no punishment of death, nor is there any warning. Nevertheless there is a prohibition.¹²⁶

Further along the Gemara states and the Tosafot further clarifies, "One who has intercourse with a כותית/גויה is as if he had sex with an idol."¹²⁷ Therefore, it is easy to draw the conclusion that intimate relations with both non-Jewish men and women, though not distinctly forbidden in all cases, was nevertheless certainly frowned upon.

It is then fairly obvious why Jewish censors originally extracted these references. While the first three examples show that a Jew had no obligation to help his non-Jewish neighbor or stranger, the latter three demonstrate the taboo associated with a Jew entering into a sexual and marital relationship with a non-Jew. Other references associated with this group¹²⁸ tend to follow the same principle. Again, the editors of the Vilna text did not feel that this language constituted an excessive problem, and they chose to use the word כותי, a synonym that retains an alternative surface meaning. As stated above, כותי was one of the standard replacements for גוי. The editors of the Vilna text probably chose to retain כותי, rather than restore the text to its original use of גוי, since כותי was already a common

¹²⁶ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 45.

¹²⁷ *Sanhedrin*, 82a; the textual difference in the Gemara and Tosafot is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 47.

¹²⁸ For other examples of censorship falling in this group, see Tosafot in *Sanhedrin*, 72b; *Sanhedrin*, 76b; Gemara, Rashi, and Tosafot in *ibid.*, 79a; Gemara and Tosafot in *ibid.*, 82a; Tosafot in *ibid.*, 85b.

euphemism denoting Christians. In addition, the word כותי offered a more comfortable level of deniability, since גוי had already been linked to Christians.

Group 3C: עובד כוכבים – גוי

The third group of texts follows the same semantic pattern as the first two groups. *Hesronot HaSha*'s maintains its use of the word גוי, while the Vilna edition of the Talmud selects another designation for the non-Jew, עובד כוכבים (*oved kokhavim*).¹²⁹ In its most basic sense, עובד כוכבים indicates an idolater. Yet, just like the words גוי, נכרי, and כותי, the utilization of the phrase עובד כוכבים, points to a non-Jew or gentile, and on its most concealed level, a Christian.

Once again, the choice between the two words as it appears in the text appears to be based within the editor's preference. Additionally, no real pattern seems to emerge concerning the Vilna editor's choice between the four different indicators for a non-Jew where the *Hesronot HaSha*'s continually employs the word גוי. Each of these words possesses the same level of obscurity, and thus there is a level of deniability to the implication of the words as employed within the texts.

The first example follows the motif of a Jew engaging in sexual relations with a non-Jew. In this case, a Jewish woman has sex with a non-Jewish man.¹³⁰ The issue at stake is the future affiliation of the child created through this union. Common knowledge of Jewish marital law would point to the fact that this child is the issue of a Jewish mother and would thus be Jewish. This is exactly what is stated in the text. The seed of a non-

¹²⁹ עובד כוכבים is often replaced by the acronym, עכו"ם (*akum*) which stands for עובד כוכבים ומזלות (*oved kokhavim umazalot*), lit. "worshiper(s) of stars and planets."

¹³⁰ *Sanhedrin*, 74b.

Jewish man is no better than the seed of a horse: it does not count. The offspring would be Jewish because the child would be weaned in the mother's community.¹³¹

A second example illustrates an instance where the Gemara text reads עובד כוכבים,¹³² and the *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates that the Tosafot text should say גוי,¹³³ but עובד כוכבים is instead recorded in the Vilna edition. From this evidence, it is likely that either the editor of the Vilna text was careful to match up his words while compiling the text, or there is a mistake in the *Hesronot HaSha*'s. A third instance of this pattern is unremarkable, and therefore will not be dealt with.¹³⁴

Group 3D: עובד כוכבים – עבודה זרה

The fourth group of texts is similar to the third group in that the Vilna addition employs the phrase עובד כוכבים.¹³⁵ It differs because here, *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates that the phrase should be עבודה זרה (*avodah zarah*),¹³⁶ meaning "one who practices idolatry."¹³⁷ The implication of these two phrases is identical, that is, they both indicate an idolater, and on some concealed level they indicate a Christian. They are interchangeable in any context, and therefore, the choice between utilizing one phrase over the other in this category must be seen simply as a stylistic choice of the editor.

¹³¹ There are five textual differences noted in the Tosafot text. Each one involves the use of the word עובד כוכבים or גוי. (*Hesronot HaSha*'s, 46-47.)

¹³² *Sanhedrin*, 59a.

¹³³ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 46.

¹³⁴ For another example of censorship falling in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 104a.

¹³⁵ Incl. the feminine and plural forms, and the acronym, עכו"ם.

¹³⁶ עבודה זרה is often abbreviated "ע"ז.

¹³⁷ Lit. "one who worships strangeness."

Two examples will briefly illustrate the trivial nature of this category. First, concerning a statement in the Gemara that a Jew should not form a partnership with an idolater for fear of having to swear by the idolater's God,¹³⁸ the Tosafot ends his comment by stating, "...in any event, this does not constitute עובדת כוכבים/ע"ז."¹³⁹ It is obvious that both phrases mean the exact same thing in this sentence. The same can be said concerning the noted difference on folio 97b. The Gemara explains the meaning behind a line of text from the Book of Isaiah that states, "You were sold for naught; and without money you shall be redeemed."¹⁴⁰ The Gemara states, "'You were sold for naught' – for ע"ז/עכו"ם [which are for naught.]" Once again, there is no difference in the meaning of these two phrases. Either one can be substituted for the other without the risk of altering the meaning of the text.

Group 3E: עובדי כוכבים – אומות העולם

Once again, this category involves the Vilna edition's use of the phrase עובדי כוכבים, where *Hesronot HaSha''s* indicates that a similar word or phrase occurs in the original text, אומות (*umot*) or אומות העולם (*umot ha'olam*). Where עובדי כוכבים clearly implies groups of non-Jews who practice idolatry, אומות and אומות העולם are more vague, meaning "nations," and, more specifically, "the nations of the world," indicative of all other groups of people who are not Jewish. Regardless of the surface meaning of both phrases, the suppressed denotation still indicates the Christians. Perhaps by utilizing the more definitive phrase, "idolaters," instead of the more vague and generally inclusive phrase, "nations of the world," the Vilna editors hoped to soften the implication of the text.

¹³⁸ *Sanhedrin*, 63b.

The first example for this category is found in Rashi's commentary to the word רָוָה (*raveh*).¹⁴¹ He states, "עכו"ם/אומות are sated and do not thirst after their creator. And thirst refers to the congregation of Israel who thirsts and longs to see its maker and observe his commandments."¹⁴² This statement expresses Rashi's opinion that non-Jews do not yearn for God like Jews do. One might take this statement as an indication that no other group of people can find favor in the eyes of God. A conclusion such as this would serve in no one's favor. What is most important to note here is how the use of either phrase is interchangeable, and using one or the other, does not change the meaning of the text.

The second example also illustrates just how trivial the difference is between the two phrases. In Rashi's comments to the discussion in the Gemara regarding to the repetition of the word נקמות (*neqamot*)¹⁴³ in Psalm 94:1, he states:

One [occurrence of the word] is [to designate] a reward – [This reward was] for Israel because God removed his presence from the אומות העולם and came upon Israel. And the Biblical text uses the term נקמות (*vengeances*) in the plural form because this reward is due to the fact that the Israelites merited God's presence by declaring, "We will do and we will hear." And the term נקמות means "recompense" where the other נקמה is for retribution on the אומות העולם עובדי כוכבים as their punishment on the Day of Judgment. As it is said in the first chapter of tractate *Avodah Zarah*, folio 4a, "God is a vengeful God and he is furious" at the אומות העולם עובדי כוכבים because God, in his honor, will punish them, and that is the meaning of the word הופעה.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 46.

¹⁴⁰ Isa. 52:3.

¹⁴¹ Trans., "hunger." (*Sanhedrin*, 76b.)

¹⁴² The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 47.

¹⁴³ Trans., "vengeances."

¹⁴⁴ The textual differences are noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 47.

What is most interesting to note from this passage is that the first instance of the phrase *אומות העולם* occurs the same way in both the notation in *Hesronot HaSha*'s and in the Vilna edition of the text. It is only in the ensuing two occurrences that there is difference. One might speculate that the mistake lies in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, but it is the Vilna text that employs both phrases in the same entry. Had the other phrase been used in the initial occurrence, it still would not change the intention of the passage. For each instance of the phrases *אומות העולם* and *עובדי כוכבים*, God punishes these non-Jews. Thus, the use of both phrases in the same note gives a clear indication that they are interchangeable. This idea is strengthened by the other instances of this difference between the texts.¹⁴⁵

Group 3F: רשעיהם – שונאיהן

Moving away from references to non-Jews, the next category deals with another pair of words that allude to a certain class of Jews themselves. Where *Hesronot HaSha*'s employed the word *שונאים* (*sone'im*), meaning "the haters" or "the enemies," the Vilna editors chose to use a synonym, *רשעים* (*rasha'im*), meaning "the wicked ones." The endings to both of the words, *הן* (*hen*) and *הם* (*hem*), denotes the third-person plural possessive pronoun, "their." So, respectively, the words mean "their enemies" and "their wicked ones." Both of these words are used in connection with another word, *ישראל* (*visra'el*), designating the people of Israel, or the Jews. Put together, both of these phrases, "the enemies of Israel,"¹⁴⁶ and "the wicked ones of Israel," are euphemisms for the people of Israel themselves that have gone astray from God. The expression initially refers to

¹⁴⁵ For other examples of censorship falling in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 91b; Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 98a; *ibid.*, 105a; Gemara and Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 110b.

¹⁴⁶ The phrase "the haters of Israel" can be substituted for "the enemies of Israel" based on the literal meaning of *שונאים*.

those involved with the incident concerning the Golden Calf during the revelation at Mount Sinai,¹⁴⁷ and it is subsequently used throughout traditional Jewish texts to denote any group of Jews who were guilty of the sin of idolatry.

It is possible that the word שונאיהן was removed, as indicated in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, because the phrase, "the enemies of Israel," is easy to misconstrue as implying those who are enemies of, or those who hate the people Israel. Since the Gemara and its commentaries usually associated negative content with these people, it is not hard to imagine why this word was either completely removed or another word, like רשעיהם, was used as a substitute.¹⁴⁸

The first example in this category involves a discussion of the Golden Calf incident. The text describes a word play on העלויך (*he'elukha*)¹⁴⁹ involving the Hebrew letter *vav*. The Gemara explains that this can be interpreted, "The רשעיהם/שונאיהן of Israel come to worship other [another] god[s]."¹⁵⁰ It is clear that one use of the phrase accuses non-Jews of this transgression, whereas the other points the finger at Jewish offenders. The second example clearly illustrates the negativity associated with these people. On folio 39b, the Gemara states, "In that hour the רשעיהם/שונאיהן of Israel descended to the lowest depths [of depravity]."¹⁵¹ These people were the lowest of the low, and there would be a great deal of trouble if these texts were misinterpreted to imply Christians rather than the sinners of

¹⁴⁷ Exod. 32.

¹⁴⁸ It is much more difficult to implicate another group of people by utilizing the phrase, "the wicked of Israel," which has a more internal implication.

¹⁴⁹ Trans., "which have brought you up."

¹⁵⁰ *Sanhedrin*, 63a; the textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 46.

¹⁵¹ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 44.

Israel themselves. Therefore, it is possible that the Vilna editors chose to employ רשעים in order to avoid this confusion.

Group 3G: גזירה – שמד

This category of differences demonstrates instances of a word change that distinctly alters the original intent of the text. In the cases where *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates the word שמד (*sh'mad*), meaning "religious persecution," or more pointedly, "to force one to apostasy," the Vilna text uses the word גזירה (*gezerah*), meaning "decree" or "law." In each occurrence of this textual difference, the active subject is the government, that is, the Romans, and later on, the Christians. The recipients are the Jews. Whereas the original word printed in the text implies that the government forced the Jews to convert from Judaism, the succeeding word indicates that the government merely set up a law prohibiting the Jews from certain actions. Though both of these words imply acts of religious persecution against the Jews, the latter is less offensive because it is less severe. The ultimate sin for a Jew is to convert to another faith, and the idea that a person or group would force Jews to convert is utterly appalling.

Each example of this textual difference is brief and unambiguous. The first example occurs on folio 14a, where the Gemara states, "The wicked government¹⁵² גזירה/שמד a law upon Israel...that whoever performed ordination will be killed."¹⁵³ Substituting the translations of the two words for the Hebrew, the text declares that the government either simply declared a law forbidding ordination of rabbis, or the government specifically decreed this

¹⁵² This is an instance where the word רשע as it modifies מלכות was not censored from the text as discussed above in Chapter 2.

¹⁵³ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 44.

law as an act of religious persecution. The latter meaning is implied through the overall context. The meaning becomes explicit by employing the word שמד. The same is true for the second example, which occurs in both Rashi and the Tosafot's comments on folio 32b. The two of them state, "It was a time of גזירת המלכות/השמד against circumcision and people were afraid...."¹⁵⁴ The third example also follows this same pattern. This particular passage in the Gemara is based upon the idea that if a Jew is given an order to kill another person, and the punishment for disobeying the order is his own death, he should allow himself to be killed and incur martyrdom.¹⁵⁵

This was taught only if it was not during a time of שמד/מלכות. But even if it was a time of שמד/מלכות, it is still not permissible to violate the minor commandment to not murder. When Rabin came, he said in Rabbi Yohanon's name, "Even without a שמד/מלכות, it was only permitted in private. But in public, it is still not permissible to violate the minor commandment to not murder."¹⁵⁶

In each of these examples, the use of the word גזירה still implies the meaning signified by the word שמד when considered within its context. Though employing גזירה may have served to soften the blow, it is difficult for the reader to escape the harsher undertone of the original text. Therefore, it is likely that another censored version of this text may have employed other words or simply removed these references altogether.

Group 3H: Basic Linguistic and Stylistic Differences

This category illustrates minor differences between the original text as presented in *Hesronot HaSha''s* and what currently exists in the Vilna edition. Most of these

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ The text cites an example involving a non-Jewish governor of a town ordering a Jewish subject to kill an anonymous individual.

differences involve the addition or exclusion of a prefix or suffix, or words and phrases that employ variations on grammatical style. None of these influence the meaning of the text, which implies that these are most likely differences in style, or they are errors originating from some scribal error over the generations when the text was copied by hand.

The first group of examples involves the addition or omission of a prefix or suffix. In Rashi's commentary on folio 39a, the Vilna texts records the addition of the prefix *bet*, which means "in the."¹⁵⁷ Therefore the phrase *ישראל בכלל/כלל* (*yisra'el bi-khlal/klal*)¹⁵⁸ can be understood to mean either "the community of Israel" or "Israel in the community." Put into the textual context, the meaning is exactly the same, and the difference is insignificant. The same can be said for the next two examples. In the Tosafot's commentary on folio 57b, the Vilna edition again marks a prefix, this time the letter *hey*, in connection with the word *רשע*, which is not noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*.¹⁵⁹ The difference between "a wicked man" and "the wicked man" has no bearing on the meaning of the text. In Rashi's commentary on the previous folio, *Hesronot HaSha"s* records a suffix, the letter *vav*, at the end of the word *כחמור* (*k'hamor*), where the Vilna text does not.¹⁶⁰ Again, the meaning of the passage is not compromised whether the word means "like his donkey" or "like a donkey."

¹⁵⁶ *Sanhedrin*, 74a; the textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 46.

¹⁵⁷ Depending on vocalization of the text, the letter prefix *bet* can be understood to mean "in" or "with," or it can mean "in the" or "with the."

¹⁵⁸ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 44.

¹⁵⁹ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 45.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

The final two examples belonging in this category involve the use of different styles within the grammar. On folio 21b, *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates¹⁶¹ that the words של רומי¹⁶² were removed; yet, the Vilna edition records שברומי.¹⁶³ The reference to Rome gives an indication as to why the words were removed to begin with, but the difference in the way they were reproduced is nominal. The last variation occurs on folio 96a.¹⁶⁴ *Hesronot HaSha*'s records לשונאי ישראל, while the Vilna edition writes לשונאיהם של ישראל. Both of these texts translate in the exact same manner, "the enemies of Israel."¹⁶⁵ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, however, employs a possessive construct form of the phrase.

Group 3I: The Remaining Modified Texts

The remaining texts placed into this category do not fit into any of the other groups. Each of these texts contains words that were altered from their original state as recorded in the *Hesronot HaSha*'s. In order to establish some means of organization, many of these texts are presented according to similarities based in their content. Due to the high volume of these texts, only the most exemplary are examined here. Those not discussed explicitly will be listed in the notes.

The first cluster of texts involves words or phrases that seem to be modified from their original form because they refer directly to Rome or Christians. The majority of the amended words, as they appear in the Vilna text, remove the overt reference to Rome or

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 44.

¹⁶² Trans., "of Rome."

¹⁶³ Trans., "that were in Rome."

¹⁶⁴ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 48.

¹⁶⁵ As noted above, this is a euphemism denoting Jewish apostates.

Christianity, as they originally appeared.¹⁶⁶ Only one example in *Sanhedrin*, where a change is noted, maintains its reference to Rome. In Rashi's commentary on folio 98a, the words "at the entrance to the city," occur. Rashi explains that the entrance in question is not the entrance to Rome, as one might think by reading the text. Though both the original text and the Vilna text explicitly employ the word רומי (*romi*),¹⁶⁷ the Vilna text precedes this word with another, העיר (*ha'ir*),¹⁶⁸ thereby forming the phrase, "the city of Rome."¹⁶⁹ This additional word is superfluous, as it is already implied through the contextual meaning of the sentence and Rashi's further commentary.

The other references to Rome, as mentioned above, have been changed so that the meaning, "Rome," or "Christian," is not implied openly. One instance is found in the same passage as the previous example, both in the Gemara text as well as in Rashi's commentary. Where *Hesronot HaSha"s* notes that the word "Rome" is utilized in the initial textual reference, both in the Gemara and in Rashi's commentary, the Vilna editors chose to replace "Rome" with the more ambiguous word קרתא (*qarta*), which means "a city."¹⁷⁰ קרתא, therefore, has subsequently become a euphemism for Rome, and most instances of this word own this implication.

As discussed at length in the previous chapter, many references to Roman leadership¹⁷¹ were removed from the text. In addition, many of these passages were changed in order

¹⁶⁶ As recorded in the *Hesronot HaSha"s*.

¹⁶⁷ Trans., "Rome."

¹⁶⁸ Trans., "the city."

¹⁶⁹ The textual differences are noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 49.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ And therefore, Christians.

to give the illusion that these texts refer to some other person or nation. For example, in regards to a series of conversations between Gamaliel II and a certain individual,¹⁷² *Hesronot HaSha*'s identifies this person as קיסר (*qesar*),¹⁷³ "the Roman Emperor," where the Vilna text disguises this man's identity by calling him כופר (*kofer*), "a certain infidel."¹⁷⁴ Though in many cases כופר has become a euphemism for קיסר, the intended meaning is still very much hidden. Likewise, the text was altered in Rashi's commentary on folio 25b in reference to the king's tax collectors. Though *Hesronot HaSha*'s notes that Rashi's entire comment was removed from the text, the Vilna edition has restored it in full with one exception. Instead of writing מלך האומות (*melekh ha'umot*), meaning "the King of the Nations," a known euphemism for the King of Rome, the Vilna text records המלך, "the king," which could technically imply any king of any nation.¹⁷⁵

Christians and other non-Jewish references were similarly altered. Rashi comments on the issue raised in the Gemara, that judges, who were chosen to serve in the Sanhedrin, must possess a vast knowledge of various subjects in order that they could recognize and judge people appropriately.¹⁷⁶ One of these subjects was sorcery, which was thought to be a common practice in Egypt at the time. On this, Rashi clarified that a judge needed to be able to discern one who was a sorcerer so that the judge could "kill those who trust in their sorcery in order to rescue themselves from the [judgment of] the court, and to expose those who practice sorcery, who entice and mislead through their sorcery, like the

¹⁷² *Sanhedrin*, 39a.

¹⁷³ Cf. Caesar.

¹⁷⁴ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 44.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; for other similar examples of censorship, see *Sanhedrin*, 91b and Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 97a.

¹⁷⁶ *Sanhedrin*, 17a.

Christians/Egyptians.” Where *Hesronot HaSha*’s states that this comparison was to חנוצרים, “the Christians,” the Vilna text has changed the word to חמציצים (*hamitzrim*), “the Egyptians.”¹⁷⁷ On the surface, the implication of the text changes dramatically. Yet to the learned scholar, the underlying meaning remains as it was originally intended.

The next example involves a discussion in the Gemara concerning a Jew who commits murder.¹⁷⁸ The penalty for the crime is based on the intent of the attacker. *Hesronot HaSha*’s notes differences in the text pertaining to the specific case of an attacker who meant to kill a non-Jew, but accidentally killed a Jew. *Hesronot HaSha*’s notes that the original word was נכרי, while the Vilna text employs the term, עכו”ם.¹⁷⁹ Further on in the text, the same discussion moves to the punishment for one who throws a stone into a group and unintentionally kills a Jew. *Hesronot HaSha*’s notes the same textual difference in both the Gemara and Rashi’s commentary in regards to the word used to describe the stone’s target. The Hebrew word for “group,” גו, printed in the Vilna text and several other versions of the text,¹⁸⁰ is strikingly similar to the Hebrew word for “non-Jew,” גוי, which is what *Hesronot HaSha*’s claims was printed in the original text.¹⁸¹ This word difference changes the overt meaning of the phrase from זורק אבן לגוי (*zoreq even legoy*) “one who throws a stone at a gentile” to זורק אבן לגו (*zoreq even lego*), “one who throws a stone into a

¹⁷⁷ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 44.

¹⁷⁸ *Sanhedrin*, 79a.

¹⁷⁹ *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 47; both of these words, as discussed above, refer to non-Jews and are euphemisms for “Christian.”

¹⁸⁰ גו appears in the Soncino and Schottenstein editions of the *Talmud*, both of which publish the Hebrew as it appears in the Vilna manuscript. The Steinsaltz edition of the *Talmud*, which in many cases reverts to the original text as noted in *Hesronot HaSha*’s, also uses the word גו. This latter fact is an indication that the word גוי is likely a misprint recorded by the editor of *Hesronot HaSha*’s.

¹⁸¹ *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 47.

crowd.” Though the latter phrase is more ambiguous, the overall content of the passage indicates that that this group was comprised of both Jews and gentiles, and the intended target was indeed one of the non-Jewish members.

The Gemara records a discussion concerning the prohibition of reading verses from *Song of Songs* at secular events and occasions.¹⁸² The Gemara imagines that the Torah might respond to such an offence by saying, “Master of the Universe, your sons have made me like a lyre upon which גוים / לצים play.”¹⁸³ Here, the Vilna editors replaced the original word, גוים, with a more anonymous reference, לצים (*letzim*), meaning “scoffers.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, the lyre changes from the hands of *goyim* to the hands of those who would mock Scripture. The intent is still the same, that is, referring to Christians, but the new word gives the Jews a level of deniability.

The next two texts that were altered originally contained a derivative of the root שמד. The first of these textual modifications involves changing the word משומדים, “those who force others to apostasy,” to the phrase כופרים בעיקר (*kofrim b'iqar*), “those who deny the principals of [the Jewish] faith,” as it appears in the Vilna text on folio 37a.¹⁸⁵ Though the original word differs from its predecessor in that it implies heretics who force others to do the same, the difference in the words seems to be based more on the choices of a synonymous word than an intent to alter the meaning of the text. Though *Hesronot HaSha*’s indicates that an entire entry to the Tosafot’s commentary was removed from the

¹⁸² *Sanhedrin*, 100a.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ The textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*’s, 49.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

text on folio 72b,¹⁸⁶ the only current difference involves the last half of the note. The comment is based on the phrase, "He is an Israelite; he is a member of the covenant." The Tosafot then comments, "He is an Israelite and not a gentile¹⁸⁷ member of the covenant, . . . who were not elevated." The ellipsis represents the differences in the text. *Hesronot HaSha*'s reports that the Tosafot originally said, "And he was not a heretic forced to convert to heathenism by those who incite others to oppose Jewish law,"¹⁸⁸ while the Vilna text currently states, "And he did not convert to an idolater, those who convert others to idolatry and were inciters. . . ."¹⁸⁹ Though the message is ultimately the same, the initial text is a bit more forceful in nature.

The final reference belonging to this group¹⁹⁰ is an example of the censorship of sexual content. According to *Hesronot HaSha*'s, the word אִמְתּוֹ (*amato*)¹⁹¹ was removed from Rashi's commentary on folio 103b. The Vilna editors inserted the word גּוּפוֹ (*gufo*)¹⁹² in its place. What is interesting to note here is that the censorship only occurs in Rashi's commentary to the text, but not in the Gemara itself, where the word אִמְתּוֹ remains in tact. It is puzzling that the Gemara is permitted to speak of the penis while Rashi is not.

¹⁸⁶ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 46.

¹⁸⁷ *Hesronot HaSha*'s notes a difference here between the words גּוֹי and כּוֹתִי. Refer to Group B above.

¹⁸⁸ Trans., ולא משומד דמשומדין מורדין.

¹⁸⁹ Trans., ולא מומר לעבודת כוכבים דמומרין לעבודת כוכבים היו מורדין.

¹⁹⁰ For more examples of censorship in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 66a, and Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 103b.

¹⁹¹ Trans., "his penis."

¹⁹² Trans., "his body."

Conclusion

It is fairly clear that many of the texts that were originally cut out of the Talmud through various acts of censorship found their way back into more recent versions of the text in some modified form. Apparently, what was once removed because it was considered offensive or polemic, was eventually changed, most often semantically and by means of words that were considered less objectionable by the censorship authorities, and was returned to its original place. In most of these cases, the original meaning of the text was restored, though it was often through the use of euphemisms, word plays, or by other linguistic means, such as synonyms.

CHAPTER 4

COMPLETE RESTORATION OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT

This chapter will illustrate and outline those portions of the text from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin*, which censors supposedly removed or modified in one form or another from their original, pre-censored structure, but have been completely restored to their original form in the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud. Each of these portions of the text will be reproduced in Hebrew, translated, and placed into the overall textual context according to where the *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates they should have been removed. Where appropriate, these texts will be placed into a group with other texts that seem to follow a similar pattern or resemblance in terms of the content and context of the passages. Each text or group, thereof, will be evaluated in terms of why censors originally chose to remove or change it or them from the original text, what prompted the initial removal or change, and why the editors of the Vilna edition chose to reinstate the original text into their version of the Talmud. It is not necessary to evaluate each textual reference in every group, and therefore a few exemplary texts will be selected in order to demonstrate the pattern and evaluate the group as a whole. The other texts recorded in *Hesronot HaSha*'s will be listed in the notes.

The first two texts involve the discretionary power of the *Bet Din*¹⁹³ to deal out physical punishments and death sentences, even when this penalty for a particular crime is not prescribed through Torah Law. It is likely that Christian censors, who did not want the Jewish courts to encompass this level of power, originally mandated the removal of these references from the Talmud. Though the jurisdiction of Jewish law only applies to the Jews themselves, a local government would still have to grant the Jewish court the authority to use this power. It is highly unlikely that any Christian government would be willing to do so, and thus, the portions of the Talmud dealing with this subject matter, were censored. By the time these segments of text were reinserted, the Sanhedrin was long gone and no longer seen as a threat to local government. These texts, in all likelihood, were viewed as historical, and their subject matter was not something that could occur under the conditions of the time, and thus, they were not relevant.

On folio 46a, a discussion between two Rabbis yields the following statement, "I heard that the *Bet Din* may flog and punish offenders who are not liable to receive such punishments as prescribed by Torah Law." The phrase that was removed, שב"ד מכין ועונשין,¹⁹⁴ clearly points to the power of the Jewish courts to inflict these punishments. Rashi's commentary clarifies what is meant by these punishments. He states, "[The judges of the *Bet Din*] are permitted to inflict lashes and hand out punishments of death that are not from the Torah." Though the punishment aspect of the sentence was not among the words removed by

¹⁹³ בית דין, trans., "court of law," usually referring to the Jewish Court of Law, also known as the Sanhedrin.

¹⁹⁴ Trans., "that the *Bet Din* may flog and punish;" *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 45.

censors from Rashi's comments,¹⁹⁵ the reference to the *Bet Din* was purged, thus eradicating their power to impose these decrees.

With regards to the punishment for the transgression of idolatry, the Talmud states that the *Bet Din* of Israel would execute a Jewish offender.¹⁹⁶ Though this might be an offense that non-Jews also are forbidden from practicing, Rashi makes it clear that the non-Jew offender is not executed for the violation of this law as a Jew would be.¹⁹⁷ Perhaps this clarification is the reason for the text's reinsertion, though the issue of the power of the Jewish court is still evident.

Group 4B – שונאי ישראל – The "Enemies" of Israel

Though Group 4B might serve as a footnote to Group 3F, where the Vilna editors changed the word שונאים to רשעים,¹⁹⁸ it is presented here as its own group because שונאים was not changed in several instances where *Hesronot HaSha"s* indicates that censorship did occur.¹⁹⁹ As discussed above, both שונאי ישראל and רשעי ישראל serve as euphemisms for apostate Jews, though the former might be easily confused with those outside of the Jewish community who were enemies or haters of the Jews. Regardless, the explanation for the reinsertion of this phrase is most likely due to its ambiguity. For example, in reference to

¹⁹⁵ ש"ד מותרין להיות, trans., "that the *Bet Din* was permitted to do" (*Hesronot HaSha"s*, 45.)

¹⁹⁶ *Sanhedrin*, 57a; The portion of the text that was censored, ישראל ממיתין, trans., "Israel that executed," makes it clear that this was the court of Israel that decreed this sentence and not another court; the textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 45.

¹⁹⁷ Steinsaltz, 18:105.

¹⁹⁸ For a full discussion on this textual difference, see Group 3F above.

¹⁹⁹ For other examples of censorship falling in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 93a; Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 94a; *ibid.*, 96a.

the people that God spared in his fury during the days of Balaam,²⁰⁰ the phrase שְׁוֹאֵיהֶם is employed. *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates that censorship occurred with regard to ישראל is employed. *Hesronot HaSha*'s indicates that censorship occurred with regard to the word שְׁוֹאֵיהֶם,²⁰¹ yet, the word remains in the current Vilna text.

Group 4C – ישראל

These texts concern elitist statements about Israelites²⁰² with regards to their relationship to non-Jews.²⁰³ In each of these texts, the word ישראל was removed²⁰⁴ because it gave the impression that Jews were viewed in higher regard than non-Jews both in the eyes of other Jews and in the eyes of God. For example, when questioning a witness to a murder, the standard questions posed concern the identity of the victim and whether he was a ישראל or a non-Jew.²⁰⁵ The issue that Christians most likely took with regards to this line of questioning, leading to the censorship of these words, is that the conviction and subsequent punishment for the crime of murder should not depend upon the religious identity of the victim. Rather, the outcome should be the same whether or not the victim was a Jew or not. This is not the original meaning of the text which implies that the punishment for killing a Jew is much more severe than killing a non-Jew. The reason for the reinsertion of these texts follows the same reasoning stated above for Group 4A, that is, the Jewish Court no longer has a power base to try and sentence Jews as they once did.

²⁰⁰ *Sanhedrin*, 105b.

²⁰¹ *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 50.

²⁰² ישראל, trans., "Israelite," is a Jew.

²⁰³ For other examples of censorship falling in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 37a; *ibid.*, 72b; Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 74a; Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 92a.

²⁰⁴ In some of the censored portions additional words were removed in addition to ישראל.

²⁰⁵ *Sanhedrin*, 40b; In addition to ישראל, *Hesronot HaSha*'s notes a difference in the language used for "non-Jew." Refer to the discussion for Group 3A above. (*Hesronot HaSha*'s, 44.)

Along these same lines, all references to the word ישראל on folio 79a originally came under the hand of censorship. As discussed above under Group 3I, this text involves a discussion in the Gemara concerning a Jew who murders another person. Most notable is the situation where a Jew throws a stone into a group of Jews and non-Jews. If he intends to kill a non-Jew, but he strikes down a Jew by accident, then he is not liable for a death sentence. Just as each reference to "non-Jew" was originally censored, so too were the references to "Jew."²⁰⁶ Once again, according to the secular censors, it should not matter whether or not the victim was a Jew or not. The crime committed still is murder.

Group 4D – Israel Strikes Back

As discussed above,²⁰⁷ a Jew is not responsible to rescue a non-Jew from danger unless the Jew transgresses a commandment through the act of not rescuing the non-Jew.²⁰⁸ The notes to the Soncino publication of the Talmud put this view in perspective:

Not a few of these harsh utterances were the natural result of Jewish persecution by the Romans, and must be understood in that light. In actual practice, these dicta were certainly never acted upon, and it is significant that a commission of Roman officers, after investigating Jewish law in its relation to Gentiles, took exception only to two laws, one relating to the damage done by a goring ox, and the other permitting a Jew the use of property stolen from a Gentile. Rabbi Gam[a]liel repealed this latter law.²⁰⁹

This is the most probable rationale for why the words that came under censorship here were later restored. So, in the case of a ישראל שסתמן,²¹⁰ the robbery of a non-Jewish victim, the

²⁰⁶ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 47.

²⁰⁷ See the discussion for Group 3B.

²⁰⁸ *Sanhedrin*, 57a.

²⁰⁹ I. Epstein, ed., *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin*, Hebrew-English Edition, trans. and ed. H. Freedman and Jacob Shachter, (London: Soncino Press, 1969), 57a₂.

²¹⁰ Trans., "Israelite who happened upon."

Gemara states that the Jew is not obligated to do anything. In actuality, this was not the case since it was viewed as material inserted to serve as a backlash to Jewish persecutions under the hands of the Romans, and the law was never upheld.

Group 4E – The Gentile in the Jewish World

It would seem that Jews were very protective of their traditions and created laws prohibiting non-Jews from engaging in Jewish practice. It is unlikely that Jews were ever able to prosecute offenders of these laws, unless they were apostates that wished to remain connected to the Jewish community. Jews did, however, feel a strong sense of ownership where their practices were concerned, and they maintained a desire to remain a distinct group of people.

With regards to cases concerning non-Jewish observance of the Sabbath and the study of Torah, the Gemara issues the same penalty for both: they were liable for מיתה (*mitah*).²¹¹ Though, in all likelihood, the *Bet Din* could not carry out this sentence on non-Jews, the manifestation of these laws in the Talmud gives credence to the protective nature that Jews attributed to their tradition and practices. The reason for the initial censorship of these texts is obvious. It involves Jews issuing death sentences on non-Jews. Their subsequent reinsertion is based on the reasoning above, that is, the implausibility that Jews could ever put these laws into effect.

²¹¹ Trans., "death," as in the case of a death sentence or execution; *Sanhedrin*, 58b; the ruling with regard to a mandated death sentence for a non-Jew who engages in the study of Torah is later overturned. (Ibid., 59a); *Hesronot HaSha*'s records that censorship took place with regard to the word מיתה in both of these passages and the Tosafot's commentary on folio 59b (*Hesronot HaSha*'s, 45.)

Laws involving intimate relations with non-Jews came under the same level of scrutiny. For example, the Gemara states, "[A Jewish man] who cohabits with an ארמית (*aramit*),²¹² a zealous person may kill him."²¹³ According to Jewish law, a child born to a non-Jewish mother would not be Jewish. Thus, it is likely that this law was decreed in order to dissuade any Jewish man from generating children that could potentially return for an illegitimate claim to their father's inheritance. Regardless, the word ארמית was restored to the text because it has no meaning at face value and thus maintains a high level of deniability.

Group 4F – מינים – Heretics and Informers

As discussed earlier,²¹⁴ the term מינים appears throughout the Gemara as a label for heretics and heretical actions. *Hesronot HaSha*'s records multiple instances of censorship concerning this word, which has come to serve as a euphemism for Christians. This underlying meaning is the most likely reason for the initial removal of the word. In several instances, the word was restored, and this is probably due to the content of the passage in which it is used. For example, the Gemara states, "*Adam HaRishon*"²¹⁵ was a מין."²¹⁶ The meaning behind this statement is that by disobeying God's command, Adam, akin to a heretic, rejected God's divine authority.²¹⁷ Another example²¹⁸ of this reinsertion occurs

²¹² Trans., "Aramean woman," a euphemism for a non-Jewish woman; the textual difference is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 47; for another example of censorship falling in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 57b.

²¹³ *Sanhedrin*, 81b.

²¹⁴ See Chapter 2, *Remarks Against Roman Leadership and Christians*.

²¹⁵ Trans., "the first man."

²¹⁶ *Sanhedrin*, 38b; the omission of מין is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 44.

²¹⁷ Herford, 198-199.

²¹⁸ For other examples of censorship falling in this group, see *Sanhedrin*, 37a; *ibid.*, 39a-39b.

during the description of the conditions of the world that will precede the Messiah. The Gemara declares on folio 97a:

It was taught in a *Baraita*: Rabbi Nehemyah says, "In the generation when the son of David will come, insolence will increase, honor will dwindle, the vine will produce its fruit yet wine will be expensive, the entire kingdom will turn to heresy,²¹⁹ and there will be no rebuke." . . . It supports Rabbi Yitzhakh; for Rabbi Yitzhakh said, "The son of David will not come until the entire kingdom turns to heresy."²²⁰

As previously discussed,²²¹ מלכות is a euphemism for the ruling government, or in this case, the entire population within the government's jurisdiction. Therefore, the message here involves the idea that when the general population turns to heresy, the Messiah will come. The underlying implication points to Christians, yet the overt message is not necessarily offensive to anyone.

Group 4G – המלכות – "The Government"

Noting one case of censorship involving the word מלכות in the previous group, *Hesronot HaSha*'s records several more instances of censorship involving this word, as well as others that refer to the ruling government, be it Rome or Greece. Whereas many of these references were completely omitted,²²² it is clear that some of these references were reinstated according to the way they originally appeared in the text because they utilize the terms in an imaginary sense, or as a geographical or an historical reference. Some of the references to מלכות, like those on folio 97a, speak of possible situations, and thus are not

²¹⁹ The omission of the words למינוח, trans., "the kingdom to heresy," is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 48.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ See the above discussion under *Remarks Against Roman Leadership and Christians* in Chapter 2.

based upon current conditions. Therefore, these references can be interpreted as not being a direct offense to any one particular government. The same can be said for the references to מלכות on folio 98a. An additional occurrence of censorship on the same folio refers directly to רומי,²²³ though the reference uses Rome as an indicator for a particular location, and thus it cannot be understood as being offensive. The same line of thinking applies to a reference concerning the יונים (yevanim)²²⁴ on folio 46a, where the Gemara states, "It was during the time of the Greeks. . . ." The final instance of censorship associated with this group involves the use of the term קיסר.²²⁵ This term is reinstated within a conversation between the Roman Emperor and Gamaliel II, where most of these references to the Emperor were changed to כופר.²²⁶ Perhaps this reference was reinserted because the ensuing discussion does not actually involve Gamaliel; rather, the Emperor's daughter steps in and answers his question. Due to her involvement, it becomes a family matter and elevates the status of their own kin.

Group 4H – בני נח – Noahides

The Noahide Laws are those ordinances that God gave to Noah in the creation of their covenant following the flood.²²⁷ The observance of the Noahide Laws is compulsory for

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Trans., "Rome"; the omission is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 49.

²²⁴ Trans., "Greeks"; the omission is noted in *Hesronot HaSha*'s, 45.

²²⁵ *Sanhedrin*, 90b.

²²⁶ See the above discussion under Group 3I in Chapter 3.

²²⁷ Gen. 9:1-17; the seven Noahide Laws are: a) not to deny God (i.e. idolatry), b) not to blaspheme God, c) not to murder, d) not to engage in incestuous, adulterous, bestial, or homosexual relationships, e) not to steal, f) not to eat a limb torn from a living animal, and g) to set up courts to ensure obedience to the other six laws. "Judaism regards any non-Jew who keeps these laws as a righteous person who is guaranteed a place in the World to Come." (Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* [New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991], 509.)

all of humanity, because Noah represented the entire human race when he entered into his covenant with God. Subsequently, Abraham and Moses entered into covenants with God securing a higher level of standards for the Jews. Therefore, the Jews not only abide by the Noahide Laws, but they are liable to an additional set of laws, setting them apart from the rest of humanity. Finally, the term בְּנֵי נֹחַ (*bene noah*)²²⁸ refers to all of humanity other than the Jews.

Hesronot HaSha's indicates several passages where the term בְּנֵי נֹחַ incurred censorship.²²⁹ In each one of these passages, the general sense is that Noahides do not live up to the standards of Jews, thus implying that Jews are superior to all other people. For example, in Rashi's commentary on folio 59a, Rashi states that "the Noahides are cruel," and because of this, when they conquer another nation they are not permitted to take beautiful captives since they are not to be trusted in terms of their treatment. It is not difficult to imagine, then, why these references were originally removed from the Talmud. Their subsequent reinsertion might be based on the fact that Christians believe that they indeed do live by a new covenant, and therefore no longer are considered to be merely Noahides.

Group 4I – אֶדוֹם – Edom

אֶדוֹם (*edom*),²³⁰ a Biblical name that can be traced back to Esau, is a euphemism employed to refer to the Roman Empire by the Talmudists who subsequently applied every verse

²²⁸ Trans., "Noahides."

²²⁹ For examples of censorship with regards to בְּנֵי נֹחַ, see Rashi's commentary in *Sanhedrin*, 59a; Tosafot in *ibid.*, 63b; Rashi's commentary in *ibid.*, 75a.

²³⁰ Trans., "Edom," referring to the Edomite Kingdom (Seir) as mentioned throughout the Hebrew Bible. The Edomites were descendent from Esau. (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1985 ed., s.v. "Edom;" *ibid.*, "Edomites.")

from the Bible that makes references to Edom or Esau to the Romans.²³¹ *Hesronot HaSha"s* notes two instances that the word אֶדוֹם came under stroke of censorship,²³² presumably because the inference of both of these passages portrays Rome, and thus Christians, as a negative force. The reason behind the ensuing reinsertions of the word אֶדוֹם is not entirely clear. It is possible that the texts were restored because these particular references are rather ambiguous; neither one is particularly offensive. The reference on folio 12a is in the context of a Biblical scene, and thus the reference truly can be applied to the original Edomites. Similarly, Rashi's commentary to the Gemara on folio 97b refers to three periods of Jewish exile: Egypt, Babylonia, and *Edom*. This last exilic period, Rashi explains, is supposed to last three times as long as the first two, roughly 2000 years, which turns out to be a rather prophetic statement since the Jews returned to sovereignty in Israel in 1948.

Group 4J – צֶלֶם – Idols

The word צֶלֶם (*tzelem*) is recorded as having been censored in several places.²³³ It would seem that these instances involve the hand of Jewish censors, as the word צֶלֶם, in these cases, is generally employed as referring to Jewish acts of idolatry. For example, the Gemara recounts the story of those Jews who bowed down to idols during the days of Nebuchadnezzar.²³⁴ God eventually condemned these "enemies of Israel" when Hananyah, Mishael, and Azaryah emerged from the fiery furnace. The subsequent reinsertion of the word צֶלֶם can therefore be explained through the rationale that Jews recognized the realities

²³¹ Soncino, 12a.

²³² *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 43, 49; censored editions record the word אֶרֶם, "Aramean," as being used in place of אֶדוֹם (ibid.)

²³³ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 48-49.

of their own history, and these are stories from which to learn. Here, censorship can only mean denial. Rather, later editions of the Talmud included these references to Jewish idolatry because they illustrated that these actions will not go unpunished, thus serving as an example for Jewish piousness and devotion to God.

Group 4K – Other Restorations

A handful of other examples of textual restoration exist that do not fit into the above categories as listed. One of these is merely a phrase that was removed from Rashi's commentary, but the text from which it was taken in the Gemara was left unedited.²³⁵ Thus, its subsequent reinsertion is expected. Another word that was completely restored is the word גר on folio 105a.²³⁶ It is used repeatedly in the Gemara to refer to those "other nations" of the world besides Israel that forgot their obligation to God as prescribed by the Noahide Laws. It would seem that the word גר is used here in place of any of the other synonyms described above due to the fact that the reference is specifically to other "nations," a fairly literal meaning of this word. A third remission involves the phrase ויבנה ויפול (*vayibbaneh vayippol*),²³⁷ which is repeated twice in succession.²³⁸ Upon further review of the story, the censors must have realized their error that this phrase was supposed to be repeated, since the story involves the three-time rise and fall of a certain city. By deleting one reference to the phrase, censors cut out one of these instances.²³⁹

²³⁴ *Sanhedrin*, 92b-93a.

²³⁵ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 49.

²³⁶ *Ibid*.

²³⁷ Trans., "and will be [re-] built and will fall."

²³⁸ *Sanhedrin*, 98a.

²³⁹ *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 49.

The final two instances of repealed censorship involve slander to individual enemies to the people of Israel. It is not clear why the word רשע was reinserted with regards to Balaam on folio 105b. The reference refers to God's anger at the Jews during the days of the "wicked Balaam." Perhaps it is because this account describes God's fury towards the Jews during the time of the Biblical Balaam that the negative adjective defining Balaam was replaced. Though the undertone can be interpreted as referring to Rome or Christians, the overt meaning is fairly direct. Likewise, the Gemara recounts Baladan, the King of Babylonia during the days of Hezekiah, illustrating his appearance as one "whose face turned into that of a dog's."²⁴⁰ The explicit offensiveness ascribed to this statement is undeniable,²⁴¹ but the person about whom it is stated has no connection to the Romans or the Christians. Thus, it is easy to imagine why this instance of censorship²⁴² was later recalled.

Conclusion

From the information gathered through the examination of these passages, several general reasons can be stated for why these instances of censorship were later repealed, returning the text to its original form. First of all, history plays a large role in the way that people read these texts. Many of these passages deal with actual historical events or those stories that are recounted in the Bible. It makes no sense to edit the Talmudic references to these passages that one might look up elsewhere and discover the truth. In addition, changing times led to changing conditions making references to certain issues irrelevant. Second,

²⁴⁰ *Sanhedrin*, 96a.

²⁴¹ Ginzberg explains, "This is a reminiscence of Merodach [Baladan son of Baladan] as sun god. Baladan's dog-face is very likely a Jewish 'explanation' of the dogs seen on the Assyrian-Babylonian monuments in the company of Merodach." (Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* {CD-ROM} [Chicago: Davka Corporation, 1998], 6:9, note 82.)

²⁴² *Hesronot HaSha"s*, 48.

statements that have no historical base, that is, passages of text that allude to imagined scenarios, are not nearly as offensive as those based in reality. Therefore, several of these statements were reinserted. The third reason concerns instances involving the use of ambiguous language and unspecified references. If the passage is slanderous to no one in particular, then there is no real point in censoring the language. Fourth, there is little harm done by reinserting words that have no contemporary meaning or relevance. The last reason for restoring censored passages is simply due to the fact that the censors made a mistake and edited parts of the text that never should have been edited in the first place.

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