

THE DANGER OF SPREADING THE WORD: CENSORSHIP AND THE PRINT REVOLUTION

Dr. David Kraemer

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Prof. Kraemer is a prolific author and commentator. His books include *The Mind of the Talmud* (1990), *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (1995), *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (2000), and *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages* (2007, 2009), and *A History of the Talmud: From its Origins to the Present Day* (2019) among others. He is also the author and co-creator of The Haggadah app, for iPads.

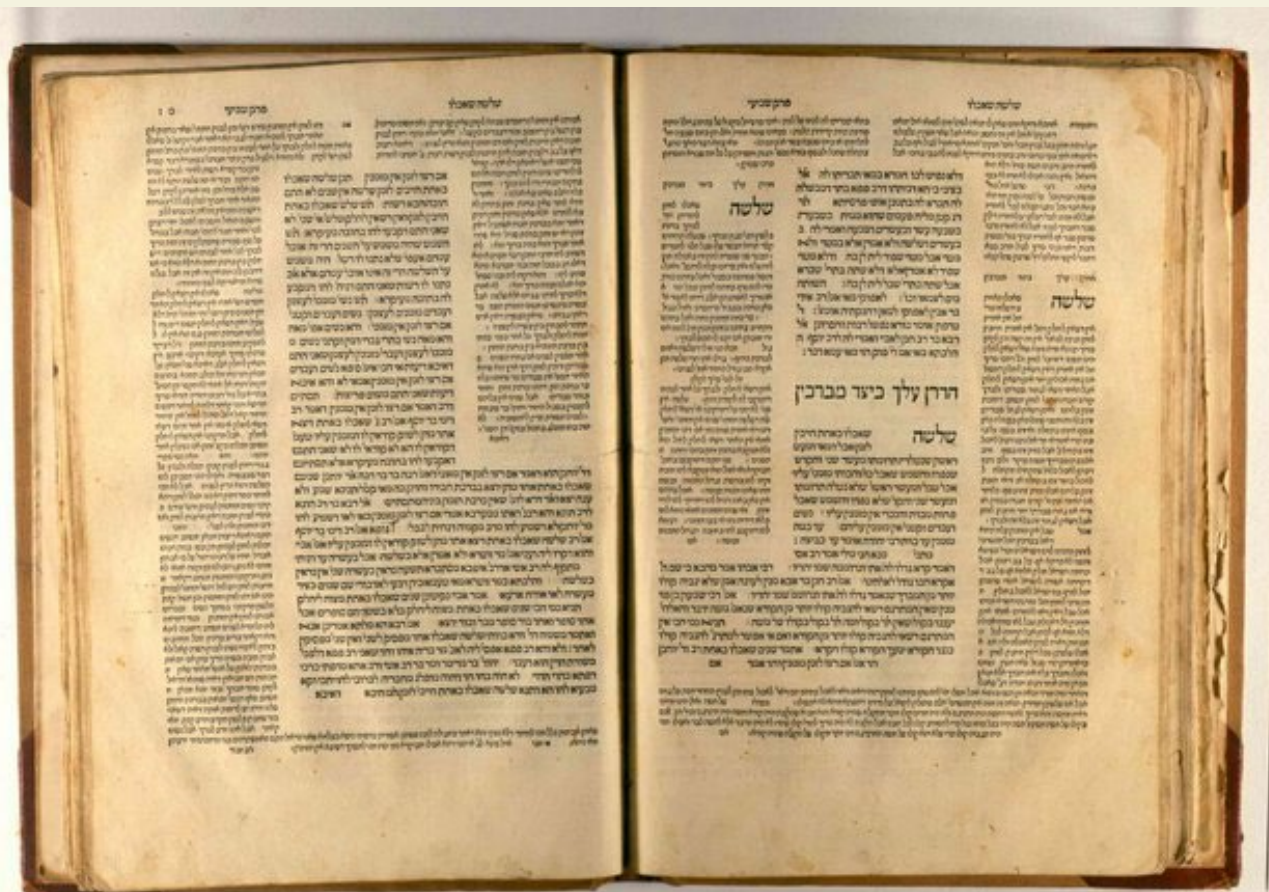
Siddur, Cairo Genizah



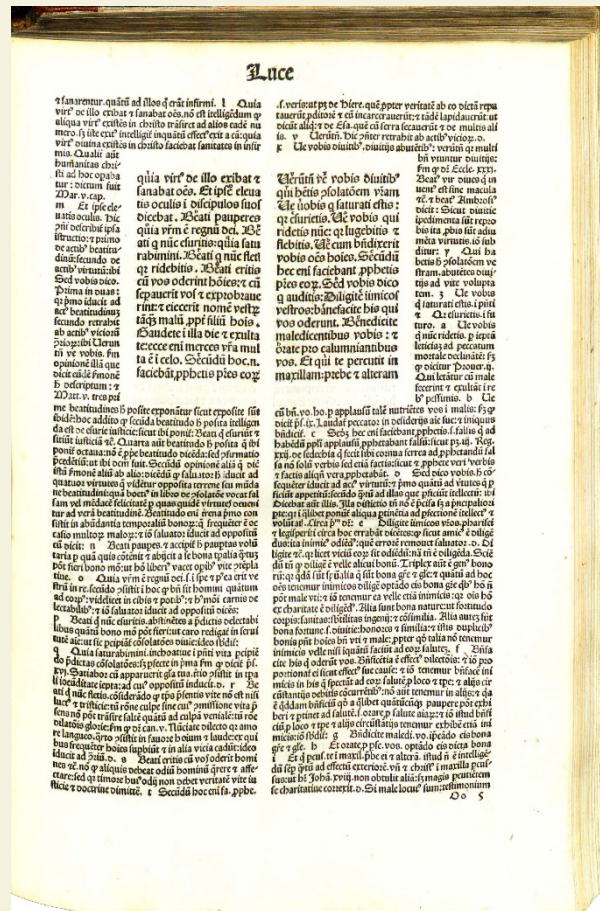
0.5., v. 10, p. 658-659

בכל מעת תבואתה וקרב מהרה שנת קץ
ואולתו ותן גשמי רעון על פני הארץ
ושבע עמך מברכותך ברוך אתה יי
מברך השנים: תקע בשופר גדול
לחירותו. ושא גם לקטוץ גליותו
ברוך אתה יי מקבץ נדחי עמי ישראל:
השיבה שפטי כבוד אשה ויועצו.
ככתולה ותמלך עלינו אתה לבדך.
ברוך אתה יי אתה המשפט:
למשומדים אל תהי תקוה אם לא ישוע.
לתורתך הנצרים והמינים כרגע אבדו.
ברוך אתה מכניע זדים. על גדי
העין חמו החמך תן לט שכר טוב.
עם עשי רעון ברוך אתה יי

Bombard Talmud, Venice, 1521



Latin Bible with Commentary, 1491



Soncino Press, Talmud, 1483

“Print books, so that they would provide two well-known benefits: first, that a large number can be made, until the world would be full of knowledge, and second, that the price will not be as high as the price of copies written with quills, iron pens, or lead.”

R. Gabriel, “corrector” of volume

Yosef Hacoheh, *Emek Habakha* (mid-16th cent.)

In those days... [converts to Christianity] brought evil slander against the Talmud before Pope Julius, saying: “there is one Talmud, scattered and dispersed among the nations and its laws are different from all other nations, and they speak libel against your messiah, and it is not fitting for the Pope to leave them in peace.” And the impetuous Julius was greatly angered... and he said, “Take it out and burn it.”

[Notice allusion to Esther, with converts in position of Haman and Julius as Ahashverus]

Mantua, 1596, Domenico Gerosolimitano (originally Shmuel Vivas), *Sefer Hazikkuk*

- Forbidden terms include:
- 1. any mention of the word “avodah zarah,” unless it refer explicitly to idolatry practices in the past; should be replaced with “Akum”
- 2. when the words “goy,” “goyim,” “nokhri” appears... it should be replaced with “Akum”
- 3. Any place mentioning the names Edom, Rome, or Italy in a disgraceful way should be erased.
- Etc. (there are 20 specific categories in this list)

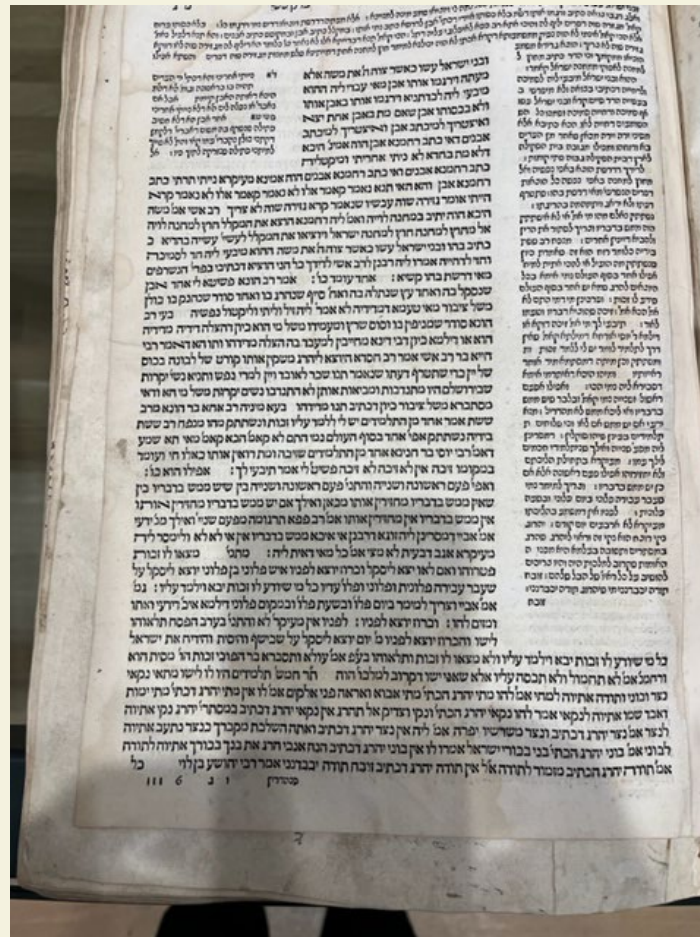
Esslingen Machzor, 1290



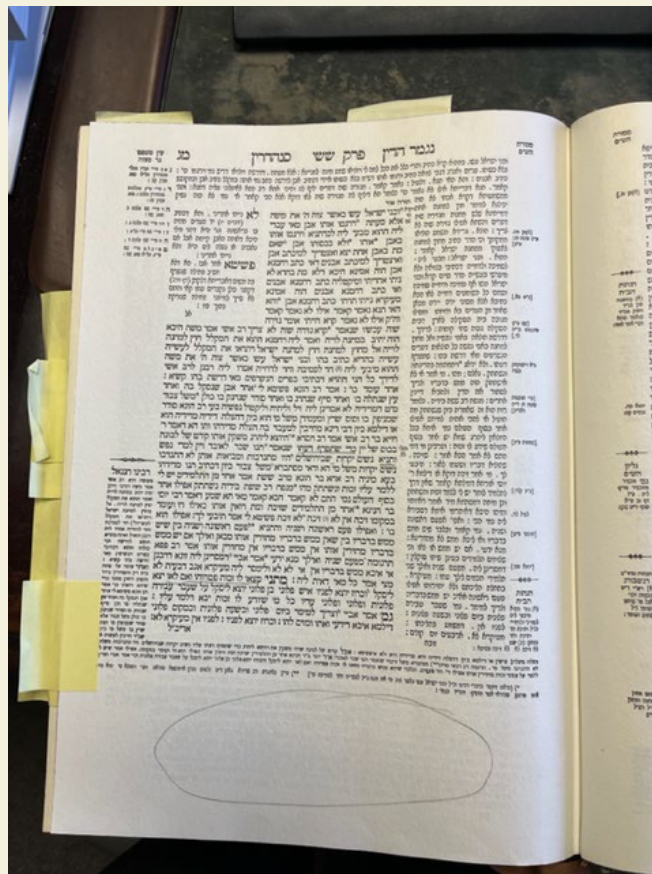
Image of Censored Radak Psalms (Naples, 1487)



Early Printed Sanhedrin, 43a



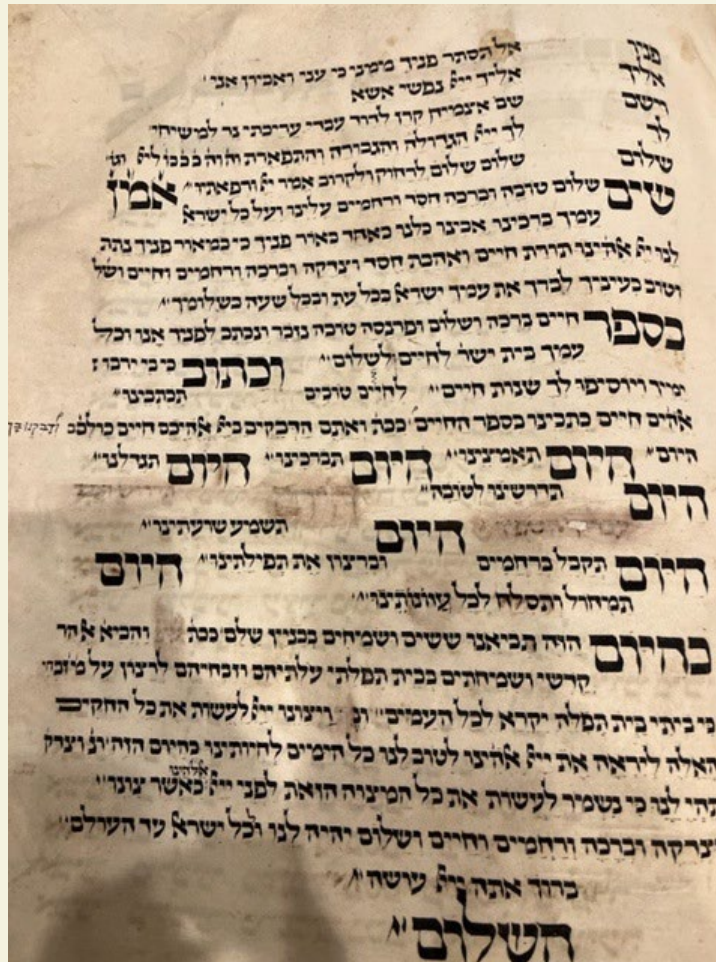
Censored Printed Sanhedrin



Shulchan Arukh, Orach Hayyim 307:16

- [Books containing] common riddles and proverbs, as well as words of desire, such as the Book of Immanuel, and books of war, one is forbidden to read them on Shabbat, and even during the week it is forbidden on account of [the prohibition of] “the company of scoffers.”

Esslingen Machzor, 1290



Ferrara, 1554, Delegates of Italian Jewish Congregations:

- “Printers shall not be permitted to print any hitherto unpublished book except with permission of three duly ordained rabbis.