



*The Latin Document*

**IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY AND UNDIVIDED TRINITY.**  
When I wished to make a city out of the village of Speyer, I Rudiger, surnamed Huozmann, bishop of Speyer, thought that the glory of our town would be augmented a thousandfold if I were to bring Jews.

1. Those Jews whom I have gathered I placed outside the neighborhood and residential area of the other burghers. In order that they not be easily disrupted by the insolence of the mob, I have encircled them with a wall.

2. The site of their residential area I have acquired properly—first the hill partially by purchase and partially by exchange; then the valley I received by gift of the heirs. I have given them that area on the condition that they pay annually three and one-half pounds in Speyer currency for the shared use of the monks.

3. I have accorded them the free right of exchanging gold and silver and of buying and selling everything they use—both within their residential area and, outside, beyond the gate down to the wharf and on the wharf itself. I have given them the same right throughout the entire city.

4. I have, moreover, given them out of the land of the Church burial ground to be held in perpetuity.

5. I have also added that, if a Jew from elsewhere has quartered with them, he shall pay no toll.

6. Just as the mayor of the city serves among the burghers, so too shall the Jewish leader adjudicate any quarrel which might arise among them or against them. If he be unable to determine the issue, then the case shall come before the bishop of the city or his chamberlain.

7. They must discharge the responsibility of watch, guard, and fortification only in their own area. The responsibility of guarding they may discharge along with their servants.

8. They may legally have nurses and servants from among our people.

9. They may legally sell to Christians slaughtered meats which they consider unfit for themselves according to the sanctity of their law. Christians may legally buy such meats.

In short, in order to achieve the height of kindness, I have granted them a legal status more generous than any which the Jewish people have in any city of the German kingdom.

Lest one of my successors dare to deny this grant and concession and force them to a greater tax, claiming that the Jews themselves usurped this status and did not receive it from the bishop, I have given them this charter of the aforesaid grant as proper testimony. In order that the meaning of this matter remains throughout the generations, I have strengthened it by signing it and by the imposition of my seal; as may be seen below, I have caused it to be sealed.

*This charter has been given on September 13, 1084 A.D., in the seventh indiction, in the twelfth year since the aforementioned bishop began to preside in that city.*

*The Hebrew Report*

**AT THE OUTSET**, when we came to establish our residence in Speyer—may its foundations never falter!—it was as a result of the fire that broke out in the city of Mainz.

The city of Mainz was the city of our origin and the residence of our ancestors, the ancient and revered community, praised above all communities in the empire. All the Jews' quarter and their street was burned, and we stood in great fear of the burghers. At the same time, Meir Cohen came from Worms, bearing a copy of *Torat Cohanim* [either Leviticus itself or the midrash on Leviticus]. The burghers thought that it was silver or gold and slew him . . .

R. Meshullam said to them: "Fear not, for all this was ordained." We then decided to set forth from there and to settle wherever we might find a fortified city. Perhaps the compassionate Lord might show compassion and the merciful One might exhibit mercy and the All-Helpful might help to sustain us, as in fact He does this very day.

The bishop of Speyer greeted us warmly, sending his ministers and soldiers after us. He gave us a place in the city and expressed his intention to build about us a strong wall to protect us from our enemies, to afford us fortification. He pitied us as a man pities his son. We then set forth our prayers before our Creator, morning and evening, for a number of years.



was much stronger and more stringent than was their engagement in the details of statutory laws or their posing questions about rare cases. Their exertions were toward [understanding] the principles of law and the foundations of what is lawful and unlawful. After this, they turned their investigation and engagement to the purification of their deeds and the duties of their hearts. And any time there arose among them a question regarding a detail of the law and of rare matters, they would investigate in keeping with their power of judgment. . . . And they would learn its law from the accepted principles, but would not trouble their thinking to consider this ahead of time, given their disdain for this world and for its matters.<sup>33</sup>

Other medieval Jewish writers drew attention to unsavory side effects that were occasionally linked to Talmud study, particularly when students became enamored of the dialectical method of the tosafists.<sup>34</sup> The Rhineland Pietist R. Judah (1140–1217) accused students who specialized in the formulation of *quaestiones* of being motivated by arrogance,<sup>35</sup> and his student, Elazar of Worms (1176–1238), called *pilpul* (talmudic casuistry) a trap for those who are not pious.<sup>36</sup> Would-be scholars were rebuked by their teacher for bringing tosfist glosses to synagogue and reading them when they should have been reciting liturgical poems.<sup>37</sup> Medieval Jewish writings are filled with charges that students who pursued the dialectical study of Talmud were motivated by hunger for fame and recognition, knowing that their casuistic prowess could be leveraged into a form of communal power.<sup>38</sup> In the words of Profet Duran, “I saw that even he who did interest himself in the study of the law applied himself only to those things that would make him wise in the eyes of fools, or would make him seem learned to those who pretend to be scholars. . . . And many attempt to apprehend the depth of the give and take, posing *quaestiones* and making thousands and tens of thousands of distinctions—not for the attainment of the goal of knowing the Torah’s laws and that which can be derived from the talmudic *sugyot*, but only in order to vie with one another and lord it over the other.”<sup>39</sup>

The *way* in which Talmud had come to be studied was also targeted for censure. Some medieval Jewish critics complained that the tosfist’s dialectical method, whose seductive appeal made it the favored (and, often, sole) approach to Talmud study, actually heightened ignorance of the talmudic text itself.<sup>40</sup> Writing in twelfth-century Germany, R. Eliezer of Metz asserted that the casuistic posing of *quaestiones* distorted the true purpose of *talmud*,

motion by the inscription of *oral matters* are to be read as a celebration of the new order or as a lament over the displacement and loss of an older one may be debated.<sup>60</sup>



From the day that we were exiled from our land, and our Temple was destroyed, and the lands became distorted, and hearts were diminished, the ruling that “awe of your teacher should/must resemble awe of heaven”<sup>61</sup> is no longer said [upheld]. So, too, the rulings that obligate a disciple to his teacher have been nullified. For books<sup>62</sup> and compositions and commentaries—they are [now] those that teach us. And [now] everything depends upon one’s mental acuity, and on reasoning. And for this reason, each student is accustomed to establishing an academy for himself in their [his] city. So, too, one can no longer say to a student that he must not give halakhic instruction [in the presence of his teacher, or without the latter’s permission],<sup>63</sup> and a student, through powers of casuistry, can contradict the words of his teacher.<sup>64</sup>

Until this upheaval, asserted the Shneur brothers, greatest respect had been accorded to masters who were trusted links to the past. But this social hierarchy was overturned as Jews came to rely on inscribed *oral matters*. The ability to analyze a written text was now prized more than erudition, and young casuists lacking in life experience were accorded the esteem that had formerly been reserved for seasoned repositories of tradition. With logical acuity the new key to institutional prominence, new rabbinic academies were springing up all over, each headed by a young dialectician.<sup>65</sup> In short, the very locus of religious authority had shifted:<sup>66</sup> Written texts—and those most adept at teasing new meanings from them—now commanded greater respect than living tradents.

### Christian Responses to the Textualization of Rabbinic Culture

The well-documented shift in Christian anti-Jewish polemic that began in the twelfth century might be construed as circumstantial evidence for the talmudic text’s growing prominence in Jewish life.<sup>67</sup> From Christianity’s inception, its critiques of Judaism had focused on the inadequacy of Jewish doctrines and on the failure of Jews to grasp the meaning of Hebrew Scrip-