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**Johannes Pfefferkorn: Enemy of His People**

Johannes Pfefferkorn (1469-1523), was born to a Jewish family in Moravia and is said to have been educated by a relative, Meir Pfefferkorn, a *dayyan* (a rabbinic arbiter, a judge) in Prague. A butcher by profession, convicted of burglary and theft, he was released on payment of a fine. At the age of 36, he and his wife and children were converted to Christianity in Cologne (ca. 1504).

On the assumption that the principal source of the obduracy of his fellow Jews in rejecting the church's claims concerning Jesus lay in their religious literature, he called for the suppression of the Talmud and other Jewish religious books, the prohibition of usury, and forced Jewish attendance of sermons in which the Gospel would be preached to them. If they neglected to attend these sermons, they were to be expelled from their cities of residence, particularly Frankfurt, Worms and Regensburg. The Jews were, in fact expelled from Regensburg in 1519.

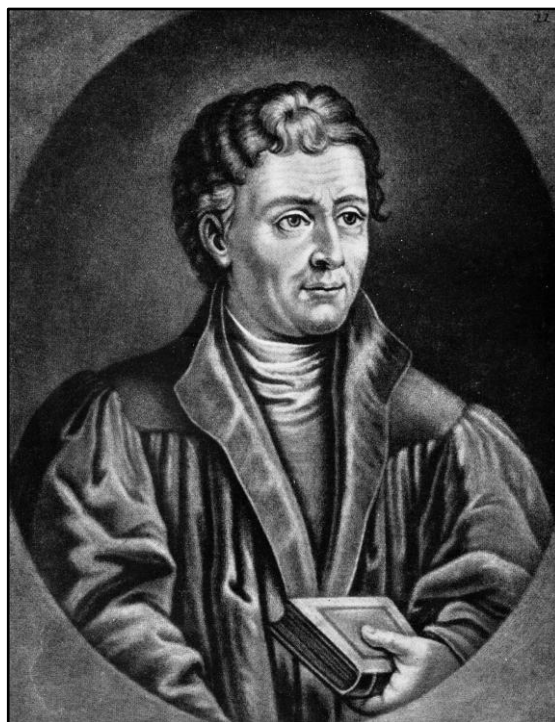
Pfefferkorn lobbied Maximilian I, the Roman Emperor, ruler of most of Central and Western Europe, to order the confiscation of Jewish books. In a succession of texts Pfefferkorn insisted that Judaism was a perversion of the original faith of the Bible, and that Jewish moneylenders were intent on undermining Christian society.

On August 19, 1509, Maximilian, encouraged by his sister Kunigunde, issued the "Imperial Confiscation Mandate," known also as the "Padua Mandate," which called for the collection and destruction of all Jewish books other than the Bible. Confiscations were accordingly conducted on Friday, Sept. 8, 1509 in Frankfurt and subsequently in Mainz, Bingen, and other German cities and towns. By the following spring, 1000 Hebrew books had been handed over in Frankfurt alone.

When the Archbishop of Mainz, the Frankfurt city council, and numerous German princes intervened on behalf of the Jews, Pfefferkorn addressed a petition to the Emperor (*Zu Lob und Ehre* – "In Praise and Honor," 1510) in defense of his cause. In the course of the following year, the Emperor was repeatedly asked to put a stay on the process. Finally, the Duke Erich of Braunschweig's appeal was successful: The Duke had borrowed money from Jews in Frankfurt, pledging his jewels as collateral. He then requested the Emperor to prevail upon the Jews to give him more time to pay off his debt, in return for which they would have their sacred books returned.

The books were indeed returned in June 1510, with the proviso that they not be removed from Frankfurt until the Emperor formulated a final decision as to their fate. To that end, Maximilian asked four universities and three scholars to provide legal and theological assessments of the Jewish holy texts.

One of the scholars was Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), a remarkable student of Greek and Hebrew, whose intellectual efforts were a major impetus to what ultimately became the Reformation. Reuchlin was the only respondent who defended the Jews and their teachings. He divided the Jewish writings into seven categories, arguing that only books that specifically libeled Jesus, such as "Nizachon" and "Toldoth Yeshu" should be considered heretical and destroyed. The Talmud, the Zohar, and medieval commentators should all be permitted.



Ironically, although Reuchlin wrote in confidence to the Emperor, with copies to a limited number of individuals, one of the recipients was Johannes Pfefferkorn, who responded publicly. He attacked Reuchlin, meanwhile enhancing incitement against the Jews. On the other hand, he condemned persecution of the Jews as an obstacle to their conversion, and defended them against the charge of the ritual murder of Christian children.

Pfefferkorn's attack, and the spirited public debate it created led to discussion of issues that divided the Catholic Church from the emerging humanist movement. Erasmus, the Rotterdam humanist, though not exerting himself on Reuchlin's behalf, termed Pfefferkorn "a criminal Jew who has become a most criminal Christian." In June 1513, the emperor ordered both Pfefferkorn and Reuchlin to refrain from further dispute.

Allies of Pfefferkorn in the Dominican order caused charges of heresy to be brought against Reuchlin. He was repeatedly acquitted, but each acquittal led to an appeal before higher authorities. Finally, in 1520, Pope Leo X set up a special ecclesiastical tribunal at Speyer to deal with the matter (November 1513). The judgment of March 1514, favorable to Reuchlin, was torn down by Pfefferkorn in Cologne. In the same year he published a further tract, *Die Sturmglocke* ("Alarm Bell"); however, he was taken to task for breaking the silence imposed by the emperor.

In 1520 the pope finally decided against Reuchlin, though by this time the proceedings were so far removed from the controversy against Jewish literature that the decision did not interfere with David Bomberg's first printing of the Talmud, then in process in Venice. Reuchlin had also introduced the study of Hebrew into European universities and translated the Psalms into Latin.



Pfefferkorn, in a master's robe standing over Reuchlin, wringing his hands

Pfefferkorn fired his last shot in 1521 with *Eine Mitleidige Klag* ("A Pitiful Complaint"), which the historian Graetz described as the most impudent and obscene of all his lampoons, and for which the printer, but not the author, was imprisoned. Responses from the other side were equally intemperate. Though his opponents exaggerated when they described Pfefferkorn as a complete ignoramus, his knowledge of Jewish sources was minimal and he had no acquaintance with Latin.

In 1521, Pfefferkorn wrote to Reuchlin, accusing him of being a major influence on Martin Luther (who published his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517), and lamenting the fact that the Pope had not silenced him earlier: "Yes, Reuchlin, if the Pope had done this to you eight years ago, Martin Luther and your disciples ... would not have dared to wish or contemplate what they are now publicly pursuing to the detriment of the Christian faith. Of all this, you alone are the spark and the enabler, to drive the holy Church into error and superstition."

Reuchlin died the following year, having repudiated Martin Luther and his movement. But his legal defense of Judaism and his academic study of its essential texts provided Christian Europe with direct access to Jewish teachings, a better understanding of their culture and more immediate access to the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, all of the Reformers were impacted by rabbinical Hebrew scholars, leading to renewed research into the biblical text.

### **Israel's High Court Protects Israel's Morality**

On September 16, Israel's High Court of Justice struck down a law enacted by the Knesset at the Government's request. The law in question called for asylum seekers to be jailed for three years without trial, simply for entering the country illegally. On one hand, the Government recognized that most of the people held under the law may not, under international law, be deported. On the other hand, the Government refused to examine their asylum requests. Instead, it treated them like criminals. The Court established a clear line of defense of Israel's moral standing by rendering such behavior illegal.



As Chief Justice Edna Arbel, who wrote the principal ruling, noted, most of those affected by the law come from Eritrea and Sudan – countries to which they cannot be returned even if they are not recognized as refugees, since their lives would be endangered. As Chief Justice Miriam Naor noted in her concurring opinion, since the 1950s the law has permitted the arrest of those in the country illegally only if they can be deported, otherwise the detention could be indefinite.

The State claimed that most of the asylum seekers are labor migrants, not refugees. Chief Justice Yoram Danziger described this claim as “dubious” as long as the State refuses to examine their asylum requests and refrains from deporting them.

The court toppled the house of cards the State built in defense of the law. The Court also challenged many of the State’s ancillary claims. Justice Arbel noted, for instance, that the State brought no comparative data to prove that asylum seekers are disproportionately involved in crime. In fact, a study by the Knesset’s research center concluded that the opposite is true. Nor did the State provide data proving that asylum seekers are an economic burden.

As for the announced plan to deport en masse those who entered the country from Africa to a third country, no such deal has been concluded.

The Court decreed the law invalid because it treats refugees as a criminals, depriving them of their freedom without trial. This, Justice Arbel wrote, deals a mortal and disproportionate blow to asylum seekers’ rights. Arbel further noted that there is no legal nor moral basis to imprison some in an effort to deter others from entering the country.

High Court President Asher Grunis wrote in his ruling that “in the present circumstances, keeping people incarcerated for up to three years, as allowed by the law, is illegal. Furthermore, the state intends to keep these migrants locked up for the entire period of three years permitted by the law. Some of these people have been imprisoned for over a year” .

Grunis added that “if, God forbid, the phenomenon re-appears and massive infiltration resumes, the problem will have to be re-evaluated.” He added that the present ruling rescinds the law under the existing circumstances. “Our ruling relates to the law that allows incarceration for up to three years. Even under the present circumstances, there is nothing to stop the legislation of a new law that would allow for imprisonment for a significantly shorter period.”



Justice Arbel referred to the implications of this decision for the Israeli public. “I can assume that this decision will not sit well with Israeli citizens and will be particularly hard for those living in the southern sections of Tel Aviv, whose distress sounds genuine, evoking empathy and a desire to help,” she wrote. “I would like to believe that the State will find a way to deal with the situation with the means at its disposal, so as to relieve the stress of local residents.”

Justice Arbel said that prolonged incarceration was the easy solution, but not the correct one. This solution is “the most harmful for anyone, but particularly for these migrants who are locked up for such extended periods. Depriving these migrants of their freedom for a prolonged duration is a critical and disproportionate infringement of their rights, impacting their bodies and souls. Let us not solve one wrong by creating another.”

“We cannot deprive people of basic rights, using a heavy hand to impact their freedom and dignity, as part of a solution to a problem that demands a suitable, systemic and national solution,” Arbel added. “We cannot forget our basic values, drawn from the Declaration of Independence, as well as our moral duty toward every human being, as inscribed in the country’s basic principles as a Jewish and democratic state.” The judge commented that Israeli reality will not change as a result of this ruling, but it will change for those 1,750 migrants, who will move out of an unresolved impasse involving incarceration to a life of freedom and hope for the future.

Arbel emphasized that “this issue does not involve a group of terrorists wishing us harm, but hard-pressed migrants arriving from an afflicted region, who live a life of destitution here as well. We are not oblivious to the public interest of local residents and to their claims of a loss of a feeling of personal security, as we are aware of the migrants’ impact on the economy. With that, we are convinced that the State cannot protect its citizens and its basic values while brutally harming the freedom and dignity of foreigners living in our midst. Other ways must be considered, even if they are more complex and require more patience.”

Responses from the political Right have been furious, in some cases calling for a restriction of the Court’s authority and a modification of Israel Basic law: Human Dignity and Freedom. In lieu of a constitution, Israel has enacted special-status law, of which the aforementioned is one. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had been a proponent of the law, said he respected the High Court's decision and would consider it accordingly while

searching for a solution that would "enable the implementation of our firm policy to put the brakes on infiltration and return thousands of infiltrators" to their native lands.

### **Israel's Economy on Yet Another Spurt**

The Israeli economy is likely to grow 3.4% this year, pushing the country's gross domestic product above the NIS 1 trillion mark for the first time, the Central Bureau of Statistics said yesterday in a preliminary assessment of the economy's 2013 performance. The projected growth rate is exactly the same as the rate last year, and much lower than the growth rate of 4.6% in 2011 and 5.7% in 2010. Moreover, the CBS said yesterday it revised its growth figures for the first half, cutting the second-quarter pace of expansion to 4.9% from a previous estimate of 5.1%. Still, the CBS projection is much higher than the 1.2% growth Israel experienced in 2009, the first full year after the world financial crisis.

Israel enjoyed a sharp rise in GDP in the second quarter, but analysts are doubtful whether the economy can maintain that pace. Although the start of natural gas production at the Tamar field last spring boosted output, another major factor was consumer spending, which showed a sharp and unexpected rise in the second quarter that economists say is unlikely to continue into the second half of the year.

The CBS did not say whether its growth projections included or excluded natural gas production, which is having a large impact on GDP. The Bank of Israel estimated in June that the economy would grow this year by 3.8% including natural gas production, and 2.8% without it.

Based on international comparisons, Israel's economy is doing well. The projected average growth rate for countries belonging to the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) is just 1.2%. Euro bloc economies are forecast to contract by 0.6% this year. The year before, average growth for OECD countries was 1.4%, and the euro bloc contracted by 0.5%.

At a news conference in Jerusalem on September 17, Oz Shimoni, chief statistician for macroeconomic issues, said business sector GDP – which excludes housing services, government and non-profit organizations -- would expand 3.5% this year, a slight increase over 2012's 3.4%. The CBS also forecasted a 1.9% drop for 2013 in imports of goods and services, following a 2.3% increase last year. Exports of goods and services will edge up just 0.1%, with service exports increasing 9.3% but merchandise exports dropping 3.6%.

In a separate report yesterday, the CBS reported that merchandise exports – not counting ships, aircraft and diamonds - declined at a 17.3% annualized rate in the June-August period, accelerating from an 11.9% decline in March-May. Equivalent imports declined at a 1.6% rate in June-August, extending by a 0.7% decline in the previous three months.

Shimoni said consumer spending is expected to increase by 4%, public consumption by 2.3%, with a 3.2% increase on the civilian side and a 0.3% drop in defense-related spending. The CBS also forecasts that investment in fixed assets would decline 3% this year, while investment in residential construction would drop 1%. Quality of life, defined by private consumption per capita, will increase 2.1% this year, picking up from 1.4% last year and 1.9% in 2011.

The cost of living is likewise expected to rise considerably, outpacing the expected rise in median income. The value of foreign currency in relation to the Israeli Shekel is expected to fall still further, after significant erosion in 2011/2013 from the former high of almost 5 Shekels to the Dollar to 3.5 at present and a projected 3.0 in 2014. Between 2005 to 2013 house prices rose by 44%. In 2008 103 average monthly salaries were needed to purchase a median home. In 2012, 132 salaries were needed. In 2013, 135. In recent years, housing costs have risen by 7-9% per annum.

## Israel's Frustrations With Itself

Israel recognizes only Orthodox Judaism and accords exclusive status to that denomination within Jewry. Jewish religious institutions are State Institutions. They receive plentiful governmental funding and are radically affected by Jewish religious political parties.

The past Jewish year in Israel, which ended in September, included heated elections for the Chief Rabbinate, an effort (failed, so far) to impose a core curriculum on Orthodox Jewish schools, and a dramatic High Court decision against the Jerusalem District Court's ruling in favor of the liberal Women of the Wall organization, which called for women's free access to and the right to conduct Torah reading and Jewish ritual customs at the Western Wall (The Wall is deemed to be the sole remains of the Second Temple). In response, a clear majority of Israelis believes that the State and Jewish religious institutions should have been separated long ago.

The 2011 Religion and State Index, edited by Shahar Ilan, Hiddush Vice President for Research and Information, was conducted by the Smith Institute among 800 respondents – a representative sample of Israel's adult Jewish population (maximum sampling error: 3.5%). Hiddush is a reliable but partisan association that primarily incorporates Reformed and secular Jews, and is committed to the promotion of equal status for Conservative and Reformed Judaism in Israel. While speaking in terms of the freedom of religion, Hiddush's terms of reference are exclusively related to the struggle for equal status of other recognized Jewish denominations.

The survey that provided data for the Index is conducted by Hiddush in association with Israel's primary daily newspaper, Yediot Achronot. The 2011 survey is the third such and clearly indicates that the number of Israelis in favor of separating religion from the State has reached a new high, standing at 61% (including 84% of seculars) – a 9% rise from last year. Thirty-nine percent are against separating religion from the State (83% of ultra-Orthodox Jews, 73% of religious Jews and 54% of traditional Jews).

According to the survey, 51% of the public believe the tension between the haredim (Jewish Ultra-Orthodox) and the secular communities is the most difficult conflict in Israeli society. Fourteen percent chose the relations between the rich and poor, a mere 1% pointed to the tensions between new immigrants and veteran citizens as the most difficult.

Seventy-five percent of haredim, 80% of seculars, 79% of religious Jews and 58% of traditional Jews mentioned the secular-haredi conflict as one of the two most difficult tensions. Eighty-three percent of those with an opinion believe the State of Israel must allow its citizens freedom of religion and conscience (95% of seculars and 73% of traditional Jews, and even 64% of religious Jews and 77% of haredim), and 17% are opposed.

### Marriage

Sixty-two percent support the State's recognition in all types of marriages – religious and civil (including 92% of seculars and 53% of traditional Jews), and 38% are against (96% of haredim and 73% of religious Jews). However, in any event, 61% would rather see themselves or their children get married in a religious-Orthodox ceremony (100% of haredim, 95% of religious Jews, 78% of traditional Jews and 33% of seculars). Twenty-one percent prefer a civil marriage (39% of seculars), 13% a Reform or Conservative ceremony (20% of seculars), and 5% are in favor of living together without getting married.

In 2010, 9,262 marriage ceremonies were performed abroad, 3,972 Israeli grooms and 1,899 Israeli brides, or whom only 2% were Arab. In Israel, 35,887 marriages were conducted between Jewish couples.

There are also individuals who are Jewish according to Orthodox law, but who lose their marriage rights in certain circumstances. Those defined by the rabbinical authorities as illegitimate (born to a woman who conceived a child with a man who is not her husband) are considered ineligible for marriage.

Divorced women are not allowed to marry men who carry any of the traditional "Cohen" family names (denoting families who are considered to be the direct descendants of the priests, forbidden from marrying divorcees and converts).

### Conversion

Israel accords special privileges to its Jewish citizens, particularly immigrants. The Prime Minister's Office has a special branch, responsible for the promotion to Judaism of non-Jewish Israeli citizens. Respondents were asked which types of conversion the State of Israel should recognize. Thirty-nine percent were in favor of preserving the Orthodox monopoly (100% of haredim, 80% of religious Jews and 46% of traditional Jews), 36% would open the door to any conversion – including non-religious (56% of seculars), and 25% are in favor of every religious ceremony in Israel and abroad.

### Sabbath Laws

By law, there is no public transportation on the Sabbath (Saturday) in any of the cities and townships where Jewish citizens form a majority of the population. Forty one percent of the respondents said they support the provision of public transportation on the day of rest, but only to a limited extent (including 53% of seculars and 40% of traditional Jews), 23% want it to operate as it does on weekdays, 21% settle for the current situation (39% of religious Jews and 36% of traditional Jews), and 15% would cancel that too.

The law also forbids the opening of businesses and the operating of factories on the Sabbath. Among respondents, 67% supported the operation of shopping centers outside cities on the day of rest (94% of seculars and 57% of traditional Jews) and 33% were opposed (100% of haredim and 69% of religious Jews). As for kiosks, convenience stores and minimarkets, 59% were in favor of keeping them open on Shabbat (87% of seculars) and 41% were opposed (100% of haredim, 81% of religious Jews and 57% of traditional Jews).

### Ministry and Family News

Progress in the **translation of John's Gospel** into modern Hebrew has been a particular joy this month. The effort to retain the distinctive styles of each author has constituted a challenge, but an enlightening one. John's highly suggestive language in the discourse passages is often staggering, leaving one with the antinomies of his glorious deity in relation to his humanity, indeed, often just of his deity. Some of these are evident in any translation, but are brought to the fore when one translates or exegetes (ultimately the same exercise).

For example, if the Son has life in and of himself as does the Father, how can it be that this is "given" him by the Father (John 5:26)? Of course, the answer is readily available from other texts, and any theologian can offer them. But translation does not permit the provision of any such answer, and therefore must leave the question hanging. The antinomy presented by the text points to the limits of human language to describe deity, leading to the humbling of human pride and to heartfelt worship: "O God, you are glorious beyond comprehension."

Having preached and lectured through **Micah**, I now wish to edit the Hebrew and English versions one more time and then present them to the publisher. Due to the expenses involved in self-publishing, I am hoping to find a publisher for Micah. Sales of my commentary on Malachi have now covered the expenses, but the initial outlay is quite a burden on my budget. **MaozNews readers could greatly help** by writing reviews of my books on the Amazon, Barnes & Noble websites.

We intended to turn in our faithful Kia (Soul) before its value drops considerably when the bumper-to-bumper guarantee runs out, and replace it with a pre-owned, certified Chevrolet Equinox (a bit larger, higher safety standards, a more comfortable drive) but have decided against doing so at this stage due to the cost involved. Our Kia has served us well by reducing the costs of our visits to the US, and we are confident it will continue to do so. We

have encountered absolutely no mechanical problems with this vehicle, although each visit involves some 10-15,000 miles of driving.

Returning home, my first project, alongside translating the New Testament, is to complete my **commentary on Romans**. I hope to complete this project in the first quarter of 2014.

To my delight, **the children and their families will be coming to Israel** in December on occasion of my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Our house will be full to overflowing, and so will my heart. I am grateful to God for my family. We will have a quiet, discreet celebration of our love and of the happy pleasures of family; I do not enjoy birthday parties, especially not my own.

**Bracha and I** are in excellent health. I do not recall feeling better in the last 15 years, and that while in the course of a strenuous trip in which we have already driven just under 9,000 miles, slept in an endless number of beds and had scores of meetings. I am grateful to the Almighty beyond words, and ask for grace to use these energies to his praise and glory, and to the strengthening of the church of Christ in Israel.

The Erez family – San Jose: **Noam** has been achieving high marks in Junior High. She is captain of her volleyball team. **Maya** is enjoying her first year of being the Big Sister at school, where she and **Nadav** study. The Thompson Family – Cleveland: **Shlomit and Keith** lost their third child – Shlomit was 10 weeks pregnant. In the goodness of God, Bracha was able to be with them and assist. **Jonathan** has begun attending playschool. **Caitlyn** (Kay-Kay) is learning to speak, and to stand up to her brother. The two are unusually affectionate one toward another: driving from Toronto to Cleveland, they held hands all the way. **The Richardson family** – Seattle: **Yotam** is going to school this year again and making excellent progress. **Avishai** enjoys having Mommy all to himself for whole mornings twice a week.

**Katya** has given birth to **Emma**. The first few weeks were difficult, as Emma developed an extreme allergic reaction that developed into infections, but careful treatment has restored her to health. At the same time, Katya, Felix and Maya were ill, adding to the burden. They are all now well. **Rose** has achieved very high matriculation marks in Math and Literature, subjects in which she failed in High School. She is now studying Grammar while cramming for an exam in English in order to achieve a still higher grade than required for entrance to College. She has also made significant spiritual progress.



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