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A COMPARISON OF THE TALMUDIC DISPUTATIONS

OF RABBI YECHIEL OF PARIS AND NACHMANIDES *concerning*

*The Talmud*

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1965-66 1000000

[illegible]

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the Jews are concerned. PREFACE. even to-day are so easily in-  
fluenced, when religious prejudices are injected as an element.

The fact that most, if not all, of the age-old ac-  
cusations against the Talmud and Rabbinical literature emanate  
from within, as the instances of the M'shumodim Donin and  
entire progress of anti-Semitism, without a religious back-  
Christian are typical, reduces the problem of conversion to  
ground, would find no solution in civilized states. But the  
the limits of the ability of Jewish scholarship to combat the  
entire volume of modern anti-Jewish propaganda is but a minor  
menace by making the treasures of Talmudism and Rabbinism an  
open book to the civilized world. Being an inner Jewish prob-  
lem, the Christian denominations will take no exception to  
such efforts, as the love of truth to-day is rooted too deep  
to admit mere bigotry as a factor in the attempt.

Admitting that beneath every anti-Jewish attack lies a  
germ of ancient and medieval prejudices, based upon the identi-  
cal misinformation which brought about the burning of the Talmud  
and the expulsion of the Jews during the Middle Ages, it be-  
comes even more important, in the present generation, to impart  
the truth to the non-Jewish world. That millions are spent  
annually by some denominations for the purpose of converting  
Jews, and that most mediums utilized are erstwhile Jews who,  
either for dollars or for promotion, deserted their ranks, is  
too well-known to require further proof that the means employed  
now are no different now than the means used in the time of  
Ludwig IX or James I.

Political expediency was more than once substituted for  
religious zeal by determined minorities or by losing majorities;  
it is therefore no new feature in history to find whole groups,  
even nations, looking thru the wrong end of the telescope where

the Jews are concerned. The masses to-day are as easily influenced, when religious prejudices are injected as an element, as they were in the days of Gregory IX; Elders of Zion libels, blood accusations, cries of internationalism, as well as the entire program of anti-Semitism, without a religious background, would find no audience in civilized states. But the entire volume of modern anti-Jewish propaganda is but a new edition of the defamatory matter supplied ages ago by apostates, which should be thrown out of court as Chose Usée. Both Rabbi Yechiel and the Ramban knew that the ground whereon they stood was mined, and clearly saw the results which were to follow; yet have the generations which followed them failed to attach the least blame to their names for having made the replies to Donin and Christiani, as they did. Truth is the mightiest weapon of the ages. Justice is but the handmaid of truth. But neither truth nor justice can prevail against ignorance. Knowledge properly seeded will bring out the truth, when justice will reign supreme. The evident intentions of the movers of the disputations are recorded in the events which followed; but the motives of Rabbi Yechiel and Nachmanides can best be appreciated now, after the lapse of almost seven centuries. It was therefore my sacred duty to translate the disputations in a form and manner which will be appreciated by the student. The duty entailed much research, particularly in translating the record of the Rabbi Yechiel - Donin Vikkuach, as there is practically not a single reference given in the printed edition ( Thorn, 1875 ). The Ramban's

Vikkuach, as edited by Steinschneider ( Berlin, 1860 ), altho a number of referances are given, also required much care in filling in omissions and correcting quotations. The introduction covers essential events as a background leading up to the disputations. The comparison between the two disputations gives the different angles from which each M'shumod chose to attack the Talmud and the people that believes in it, and furnishes the striking contrast between Rabbi Yechiel and Nachmanides. The biographical sketches of the chief figures in the disputations are given in the interest of truth.

Cincinnati, April 15, 1926.

## INTRODUCTION.

There are numerous records in the Talmud and Midrash, as well as in secular sources, of disputations between Jews and Romans, and between Jews and the early Christians. Most of those, however, were learned disputations, as the one on account of a statue, the image of Emperor Caligula, erected in the synagog of Alexandria, to which the Jews took exception, and because of which they delegated Philo to head a deputation to the Emperor, but which the anti-Semites of the day favored and appointed Apion to head their delegation; <sup>1</sup> or the refutations of R. Simlai <sup>2</sup> and R. Abbahu <sup>3</sup> regarding the Christian conception of the Trinity and their Dogmas in general. But this class of disputations belong rather to early polemical literature, which became an element in the religious life of the Jews about the middle of the second century B.C., when the Jewish scholars were called upon to defend Judaism against the Hellenists, and evidently ended with the document called "De Insolentia Judaeorum" by Agobard the Carlonigian prelate (779-840). Actual harm, politically or economically, to the Jews as a result of disputations were quite impossible prior to the thirteenth century, as the Church was not yet a potent political entity.

1. See Philo's Legatio ad Caium, pp. 20-45 which edition?

2. See GanesssR. VIII. Talmud Yer. Ber. 12a.

3. See Shab. 152b. Yalk. Gen. 47 and Gen. R. XXV.

In the thirteenth century, the political power of the Church reached its height. Innocent III, after the death of Henry VI (1197), commenced to preach crusades against heretics, particularly against the Mohammedans, and his undisputed powers left in their wake a trail of suffering among the Jews when, at his command, a crusade was conducted against the Albigeneses, (1209 - 1223). The Yellow Badge, the Inquisition, the Blood Libel and many other defamations are traced to the first quarter of the thirteenth century. In 1215 the secular power of the Church became supreme, for in that year, the fourth Lateran Synod was held, which was attended by Church officials from all European countries, who formulated the doctrine that the Church is above the State. It was during that time that resolutions were passed against the Jews, prohibiting them from charging a high rate of interest to non-Jewish borrowers, from appearing on the streets on Easter day, from holding public office, and forcing them to wear marks of shame on their garments. England expelled the Jews and Germany continued to persecute them, giving the blood libel as an excuse, although Innocent IV issued an edict against believing it (1247).

earlier  
cause of  
Blood 1170

later in  
1209

In the meantime, the Church added to its temporal powers also the power to censure the Jewish writings, to condemn what it disliked, and to inflict punishment upon those Jews who claimed that their writings were free from any evil expressions against the Christians.

Perhaps the strangest phenomenon of that period is the fact that it also was the Golden Period of Jewish scholarship in the Middle Ages. And yet, perhaps, that in itself was



partly the cause of the mighty attacks and organized efforts of the Church to destroy Judaism, or the Jews, or both. It was then that the great controversy over the Sefer ha-Madda and Moreh Nebuchim of Maimonides held the attention of all Jewish scholars. The hunt against heretics invaded also the Jewish habitation and, at least in one instance, the aid of the Inquisition was enlisted. Solomon of Montpellier, disappointed that his excommunication against those who studied the works of Maimonides (1232) was not at all effective, related his troubles to Inquisition headquarters, with the result that the Church seized and burned the works. This incident, no doubt, gave impetus to much less scrupulous and much more spiteful Jews, or ex-Jews, to bring calumnies against Jewish writings. Be it as it may, the fact remains that the year 1240 saw the inauguration of forced disputations, destined in the succeeding generations to grow into a formidable literature and become the inspiration for cruel and murderous treatment of the Jew. It is historically significant to note that this initial attack was instigated by a Jew named Nicholas Donin, of La Rochelle, France.

In the year 1225, Nicholas Donin had been publicly excommunicated by Rabbi Yechiel of Paris for his heretical leanings. He was subsequently converted to Christianity and inducted into the Franciscan order of friars. From the time of his conversion he was ever animated by a vindictive desire to bring ruin and destruction upon his former co-religionists, and an important role was played by him in the Christianization

thus for the first time demonstrating the peculiar psychology that has motivated almost every Jewish apostate since his day. In the year 1239 he brought to the attention of Pope Gregory IX a number of incriminating charges against the Talmud, thru which he convinced the Pope that it was a dangerous and blasphemous work, prejudicial to the welfare of the Church and Christianity. The statements of Donin prompted the Pope to issue several bulls to the bishops and kings of countries under his influence which had as their purpose the verification of the charges against the Talmud. All copies were to be seized and their contents submitted to the examination of the Christian authorities. The Pope, on June 9, 1239, addressed bulls to the bishops of England, France, Castille, and Leon, and on June 20, 1239, to the kings of France, England, Aragon, Castille, and to the bishop and members of the Franciscan and Dominican orders of friars of Paris. In France alone was any heed paid to these bulls. King Louis the Pious, (Ludwig IX), was a faithful son of the Church, who took the commands of the Pope seriously and endeavored to follow them zealously in his own kingdom. Donin also exerted every effort to make sure that the papal edicts were obeyed in every respect. In this he was aided by the Dominican and Franciscan friars. As a result, every copy of the Talmud that could possibly be seized was brought to Paris and an inquiry organized to investigate its contents. There is no information to be had regarding the details and method of procedure of this inquiry at Paris, excepting that an important role was played by Eudes of Chateauroux,

the chancellor of the University of Paris, and that a public disputation was ordered by the King to be held over the contents of the Talmud between leading representatives of the Jews and Nicholas Donin. The four rabbis who were called to defend the Talmud against the accusations of Donin were: Rabbi Yechiel of Paris, Rabbi Judah b. David of Melun, Rabbi Samuel b. Salomon and Rabbi Moses of Coucy. The dispute took place in 1240 at the court of King Louis and the chief defender of the Talmud was Rabbi Yechiel.

There are two sources of information that furnish the details of this disputation between Rabbi Yechiel and Nicholas Donin. One is written in Hebrew, the other in Latin. The Hebrew source was edited in its totality from a manuscript of the National Library at Paris in 1873, under the title of *Vikkuach Rabenu Yechiel of Paris*. The Latin source is found in the Latin manuscript number 16,558, folio 231, of the National Library at Paris. This last manuscript is less attended to than the former, altho it contains much additional information that is of some importance for a comprehension of the Christian reaction to the Talmud. It is entitled *Extractiones de Talmut*, and was composed after the burning of the Talmud in 1248, by the order of Eudes de Chateauroux, for the purpose of informing the Christian theologians as to the errors, blasphemies, and obscurities of the Talmud, because they might, thru ignorance, consider it a harmless book that could be tolerated. The author of the *Extractiones* was aided by two Christians who were apparently well-versed in Hebrew. Nicholas Donin, no doubt cooperated with them in its composition. The

work is made up of two parts. In the first part, the matter extracted from the Talmud is systematically classified under a definite number of headings, for example, the authority of the rabbis and the Talmud, blasphemies in the Talmud, etc., and in the second part it follows the order of the tractates of the Talmud. And at the end there is found, amid other documents, the thirty-five chief accusations that the Pope brought against the Talmud, with a commentary, the replies of Rabbi Yechiel and Rabbi Judah at the disputation, the bulls of Pope Gregory IX, and finally the condemnation of 1248 pronounced 2/ by Eudes de Chateauroux. *All this taken from Lohr, R. J. I. Why not*

The new method of attacking the vital center of Jewish life thru public debate, having received its start in 1240, was again resorted to by the enemies of the Jews. In the year 1263, another disputation was held about the Talmud, in Barcelona. Once again a converted Jew, named Pablo Christiano after his baptism, was the prime instigator of hostile Christian activity against the Jewish people. Christiano induced King James I of Aragon to summon Nachmanides, who was rabbi at Girone, to come to Barcelona and there defend the Talmud at a public disputation. Christiano, who was to engage in this verbal duel with Nachmanides, felt certain that victory would be on his side, and that the defeat of the rabbi would lead to the conversion of the rest of the Jews, either by their own consent, or thru force. *Give the source?*

There are two sources which supply us with the information regarding the controversy at Barcelona. The first is an

account of a verbal trial, written in Latin, which was probably redacted by the Dominican friars, and the second is a Hebrew source, written by Nachmanides himself called, Vikkuach ho-Ramban. According to the first source, the controversy took place on the twentieth of July, 1263, but Nachmanides omits to give the first day of the controversy, but mentions that it was on a Monday, and that the second session was held on the following Monday, July the 27th. The third session took place on the following Thursday, on July 30th, and the fourth and last session was held the next day, Friday the 31st.

The Hebrew sources of both Vikkuchim are here translated in dialogue form, altho neither of them were so edited in Hebrew, for the simple reason that it brings out the point of issue between the contending parties in a more comprehensive way, and leaves no doubt as to what one really said, which is the chief aim of this work.

With the exception of Verga's "Shebet Yehudah", but slight mention is made of the disputations in the Zemach David, Seder ha-Dorot, the Shalsholet ha-Kabalah, or Shem ha-G'dolim. But the sources of information are of such character that no doubt remains in the mind of the student as to the authenticity of the Hebrew version of the Vikkuchim, and can not at all be likened to the fictitious disputations between Pope Sylvester ( 314-335 ) and the twelve Pharasaic doctors before Emperor Constantine. Of course, there are fictitious records of disputations embellished by legend, but they all can be easily identified as such.

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for years 1869, 1874.

Maimonides, English translation of his preface to Yad ha-Hazakah,  
by Simon Glazer, responsa of, last book of  
his Yad ha-Hazakah.

Pirke Aboth

*2. all attributed to (but hardly by him)*

Pirke Hecholot on Kabalah, by Rabbi Ismael the High Priest.

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Talmud Babli to :

Aboda-Zara  
Baba Batra  
Baba Kama  
Baba Meziah  
Barochot  
Bechorot  
Hulin  
Megila  
Gitin  
Kedushin  
Kethubot  
Megilah  
Nedarim  
Nidah  
Pesachim

*no order*

## Talmud Babli to: (contd)

Rosh ha-Shana  
Sabbath  
Sophrim  
Sanhedrin  
Yebomot

no order

Tosphot to Sabbath and Aboda-Zara.

Vikkuach Ho-Ramban

Vikkuach Rabbeni Yechiel mi-Paris.

Yalkut to Genesis.

## CHAPTER I.

## DISPUTATION OF RABBI YECHIEL OF PARIS.

## A FREE TRANSLATION

Introductory remarks by the author of  
the account as given in the Hebrew version  
thereof. ( Thorn, 1873 ).

The dispute took place on Monday and Tuesday,  
Parasha Balak, the fifth day of the month Tamuz, 4999, (1240),  
in the court of Ludwig IX, at the city of Paris. Nicholas  
Donin, a convert, who had been, prior to his apostasy, ex-  
communicated by the Jewish authorities on a charge of open  
rebellion against the Talmud and Rabbinical law, became the  
instigator of infamous accusations against the Talmud, and  
serpent-like, he plotted to poison the minds of the govern-  
ment and the clergy against the books of the people, so that  
the People of the Book be driven to wholesale conversion.  
Death had no terror for the Jew of that generation, the univer-  
sal opinion of the scholars of the day being that, "Better  
are those who fall by the sword than those who sit desolate  
without the Torah." Donin, thinking that it might serve as  
evidence against the Jews, ordered the Four Turim by Jacob b.  
Ashur, to be brought to him, which was done. Rabbi Judah b.  
David, Rabbi Samuel b. Shelomo, Rabbi Yechiel, and Rabbi Moses  
of Coucy were chosen to defend the Talmud and Rabbinical law.

ה'תק"ל  
ה'תק"ל

The four Turim  
copies of Talmud each page  
being written in double columns

Impossible!  
Not written  
before  
1st half of  
11th century



Donin, however, first called out Rabbi Yechiel alone, and it was he who proved to be the faithful messenger of his people.

Rabbi Yechiel: Concerning what will you dispute with me, and what questions will you ask me ?

Donin: I will interrogate you about an old matter, for I will not deny that the Talmud is more than four centuries old.

Rabbi Yechiel: Indeed, more than fifteen centuries old.

I pray to you, my gracious queen, do not force me to answer him, since he admitted that the matter is of great antiquity, and till now no one spoke aught against it. Behold, the priest Jerome, as well as the entire clergy, know all the Talmudic laws, and if there was anything incriminating in them, he, or they, would not have left them unnoticed until now.

Moreover, were there not before now priests and apostates as worthy as these ? Yet not a word or voice was raised during the past fifteen centuries by them. This renegade continued to deny the authority of the Talmud and Rabbinism fully fifteen years ago and, as you know, every problem must be solved, so we decided to excommunicate him. Why we were brought here, before this sinner, to defend our very lives and our Torah, we cannot understand. Ever since we separated him from among us he continues to plot against us, if possible to destroy us, root, stem, and branch. But his labor is in vain. For our religion we will give our lives, and if your anger will consume us, remember that our exiled brethern are scattered to the end of the earth, and that the Talmud is to be found in Babylon, Media, Greece, Turkey, and in seventy other

? in Arab countries

St. Jerome  
the Church  
father

of all  
mis-  
under-  
stand  
the passage  
of time  
had only  
in the Bible  
and, as  
you know  
every body  
local place  
went needs  
(a traditional  
not) inter-  
pretation etc

1917 Ethiopia

countries beyond the waters of the Nile. Besides, he who touches our Torah, touches the pupil of his eye. Verily, our bodies are in your hands, but not our souls.

Courtier: No one will touch you.

Rabbi Yechiel: You cannot guard us.

The Queen: Speak no more thus or such! We are minded to protect you and yours. Sinners and criminals are they who perpetrate wrong upon you! So it is in our statutes, and so is the word of the Pope. Now answer this man, and do not quit the disputation.

Rabbi Yechiel: Who can force me to jeopardize all Israel by my individual opinion or statement?

The Priests: Nicholas Donin, you ask him your questions; he shall answer you; if not, we will see who will protect or save them.

Rabbi Yechiel: On your command I will make reply, but if I err, know ye that I do not represent the Holy People.

Donin: Do you believe in these Four Turim?

See note to page 1

Rabbi Yechiel: I believe in the laws and statutes written therein, as interpreted in the Talmud, which is so called because its meaning is instruction, based upon the commandment<sup>1</sup> of, "And ye shall teach them to your children." But the

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1. Deut. 11:19.

Talmud also contains Haggada, to aid man in comprehending a proverb and a figure. There is also some wonderful and hardly believable matter in the Talmud. An atheist will not believe <sup>2</sup> it at all. Concerning such matter in the Talmud I need not reply to you. If you have the inclination, believe it; if you have no such inclination, believe it not, for no law is derived therefrom. Yet I know that the Talmudic Sages uttered only honest and true words, altho, sometimes, it goes over the head of the student. Even similarly strange matter is found in Holy Writ, as for example, the speech of Balaam's ass; Lot's wife becoming a pillar of salt; the stars in their course making war against Sisera; the gourd of Jonah which came up in a night and perished in a night; the body which was cast into the sepulchre of Elisha and was resurrected as soon as it touched the bones of the great prophet, and much more similar matter which amazes. <sup>2</sup> Indeed, great is he who can reconcile the passages in Holy Writ, lest one seeing the apparent contradictions, become a destroyer. Thereupon, it is said: "I am the Lord your God that teacheth thee for thy profit." <sup>3</sup> God taught the Talmudists and they derived profit, for they were enabled by His help to penetrate the mysteries of the Torah, to make plain its paths. <sup>4</sup> As evidence, behold: "Death will be destroyed forever."

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2. Num. 22:28  
 Gen. 19:27  
 Jud. 5:20  
 Jonah 4:10  
 II Kings 13:21

3. Isa. 48:17

4. Ibid 28:8

and again: "He who dies at the age of one hundred will be <sup>5</sup> considered young;" <sup>5</sup> "For I have spoken to you from Heaven;" <sup>6</sup> and again: "And the Lord descended on Mount Sinai;" <sup>7</sup> "Visiting <sup>8</sup> the iniquity of the fathers upon the children;" <sup>8</sup> and again: "An Ammonite and a Moabite shall not enter the Congregation of the Lord;" <sup>9</sup> yet David, King of Israel, was a descendant of Ruth the Moabite. <sup>9</sup> *Similar* Like apparent contradictions are so many, that it is impossible to enumerate them. Without the Talmud, these difficulties would remain. Thus, it is self-evident that both Holy Writ and its interpretation were given upon Sinai thru one shepherd, Moses. The lack of unanimity in the Talmud cannot be pointed to as one of its faults. We do find contentious matter, as when one pronounces a thing contaminated and another that it is clean; one permits and the other forbids; but the law is established in all instances upon the universally accepted principle that a majority rules. Moreover, without the Talmud, one would find much hardship to know a given commandment, as for example, the commandment concerning Sabbath; it is mentioned in five different places in the Torah, piecemealed. But in the Talmud it is all codified. Tradition, as it is taught by the Rabbis, is a necessity, in order to understand the succinct text of the commandments of the Bible. The Torah itself orders to follow the

5 here is missing  
 in text the  
 contradiction  
 6 long verse  
 in Deut.  
 24/16

5. Ibid 65:20

6. Ex. 20:22

7. Ibid 19:20

8. Ibid 20:5

9. Deut. 23:4

interpretation of the sages, as it is said: "That which they will tell thee that thou shalt do."<sup>10</sup> And, if in doubt, the Torah orders one, saying: "Ask thy father and he will declare unto thee."<sup>11</sup> At times, when the matter required it, an extra guard was set up to protect a given commandment, as in the instance of secondary incest, the departure being based upon the charge of, "And ye shall guard My charges,"<sup>12</sup> meaning, "Set up a guard about My charges."<sup>13</sup> The whole of which may be likened to a man who received the keys to the inner doors of a palace, but not to the outer. He must have both.

Donin: Swear that you will answer the truth, and not dodge the questions with false utterances.

Priests: Swear!

Rabbi Yechiel: Woe that I came before you to be judged! By this demand you have perverted that which is right. You have no right to inflict an oath upon me on account of this cruel one's matter, nor on account of his accusations. In the Holy Writ, there is no law vesting the power in judges to make contending parties swear unless the cause has a monetary value, as it is written: "The oath of the Lord shall be

10. Ibid 17:11

11. Ibid 32:7

12. Lev. 18:30

13. Yebmot, 21a.

between them both."<sup>14</sup> But no such law is found concerning a cause which is entirely of a spiritual nature. You have come hither to listen and to render a decision. But now, after you demand from me something unlawful, I warn you not to sit in judgment.

The Queen: I beg of you to swear, nevertheless.

Rabbi Yechiel: My gracious Queen! Never before have I taken an oath, and I will not now commence to swear. Should I only swear, he will be the first one to call me perjurer by denying my contentions, when I will become but a mockery in the eyes of the clergy here present. Moreover, it is written:<sup>15</sup> "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

There being no need for the oath, I shall be guilty of violating this commandment if I comply with your command. I, however, maintain that I will tell the truth concerning all matters I do know; that which is concealed from me, there are among my people far greater scholars than I, for I really am the youngest among them, the only reason for my presence here is their accustomed seclusion.

*inexperience in appearing before the Christian clergy*  
The Queen: Seeing that it is really hard for him to comply, and believing him that he never took oath falsely, I withdraw my request.

Donin: The Talmud decides that one who giveth all of his

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14. Ex. 22:10

15: Ibid 20:7

seed to the burning flame of Molech is not guilty, but if he<sup>16</sup>  
 giveth only part of his seed, he is guilty, deriving author-  
 ity from the Torah which employs the term "of his seed" and  
 not "all his seed."<sup>17</sup> Who can believe in such law? It is  
 revolting to the soul, to think that if one burns part of his  
 children he is guilty, but if he increases his sin and burns  
 all of his children, he is not guilty!

The Priests: (Rose up and mocked.)

The Queen: (Took on an expression of amazement)

Rabbi Yechiel: There will come a day when you will not  
 mock this law; instead, you will repeat it if it be in your  
 power to do so. I now know your ways, which are contrary.  
 Your intentions are to frighten me. Would it not be better  
 and more righteous to listen to what I have to say ere you  
 make a mockery of the Talmud? My gracious Queen, I pray  
 you, listen; who is a greater sinner, he who kills one per-  
 son, or he who kills two?

The Queen: He who kills two; likewise the slayer of four  
 is a greater sinner than the slayer of two.

Rabbi Yechiel: You speak truly. Now there are four kinds  
 of capital punishment prescribed in the Torah, - stoning,  
 burning, beheading, and strangulation. The judges who pronounce  
 the sentence mete out the punishment to fit the crime. The

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16. Sanhedrin 64b.

17. Lev. 18:21.

doomed, before the sentence of of judges is carried out, confesses, and when the punishment is inflicted, he atones for his crime, and thus faces His Maker purified. So it is written concerning Achan, to whom Joshua said: "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him..... the Lord shall trouble thee this day."<sup>18</sup> Thereupon the Talmud declares: "The Lord shall trouble thee this day, but He will not trouble thee in the World to Come."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when one is found guilty of giving part of his seed to the burning flames of Molech, the judges have the right to inflict the death penalty of stoning upon him; he then confesses to his Maker, and by suffering the penalty he atones for his crime, and goes to face his Maker with a purged soul; but if he exterminates all of his children, the judges have no right to offer him confession and the death penalty as his atonement for such heinous crime. He must die naturally, in his sinful state, and God, in Whose keeping are all souls, will judge him as he deserves.

Donin: This people, the like of which never was, are shaming and blaspheming the deity of the Gentiles. And you clergy, why do you permit them to be among you? They even say concerning your deity that he was adjudged to be scalded in burning filth. Listen further to what the Talmud relates: "Onqelos the son of Qaloniqos desired to become a proselyte. He went to a medium who called up Balaam by

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18. Joshua 7:19:25

19. Sanhedrin, 44b.



means of necromancy. And he said unto him: "What is this man judged with?" And he replied, "per semen fervens." Concerning whom was the question of 'What is this man judged with' asked?

Rabbi Yechiel: Concerning Balaam was it asked; but do you know why he was judged 'per semen fervens'?

Donin: I do not.

Rabbi Yechiel: I will tell it to you; because on the advice of Balaam, the people of Israel commenced to be immoral, as it is related: "And Israel abode in Shittim," etc.<sup>21</sup> He therefore was judged in such manner, even as it is written: "In full measure",<sup>22</sup> which the Talmud interprets, saying: "with the measure that man measures, it shall be measured unto him!"<sup>23</sup>

Donin: The Talmud there<sup>24</sup> continues, saying: "Afterwards he called up Jesus, and said to him: 'What is this man judged with?' Concerning whom was this asked?"

Rabbi Yechiel: Concerning Jesus.

Donin: And the answer was: 'With boiling filth'?

Rabbi Yechiel: Since your separation from us, these fifteen years, you have been seeking to level accusations against

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20. Convert's quoting is faulty. See Gitin, 57a.

21. Num. 25:1

22. Is. 27:8

23. Sanhedrin, 100a

24. See Hashmotot ha-Shas, Gitin, 56-57a

us, to involve us in wickedness, but it shall not succeed, for your own words enanared you. Behold, I will answer as you have spoken. So it is written, and I will not deny it because of fear of you. For, in truth, not concerning the deity of the Gentiles have we spoken thus, but concerning a different Jesus who had denounced the authority of the Talmudic sages, and mocked at them, and refused to believe in aught but the written Torah. As evidence to my contention, behold, it is not mentioned here that it was Jesus of Nazareth, but simply the name Jesus. Moreover, if it refers to Jesus of Nazareth, he did more than deny the authority of the Talmud, for he enticed Israelites and made himself a god, and denied the very foundation of the Torah. It is therefore clear that this Jesus is another, who did not deny the Holy Writ, but did deny Talmudic authority, wherefore he is punished as an infidel in boiling filth.

Donin: Ye priests, mind it in your hearts and see how the people who dwell in your midst shame your deity. Listen: On the eve of Pesach they hung Jesus. Forty days before the crier went forth abroad and cried out saying: 'Jesus goeth forth to be stoned because he hath practiced sorcery, and seduced and led Israel astray. Anyone knowing aught in his favor, let him come and testify.'<sup>25</sup> Mind the vile names they call him, - sorcerer, enticer, and one who leads astray!

Rabbi Yechiel: They have indeed stoned him. For this day

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25. Hashmotot ha-Shas; See Sanhedrin 43a.

you have absolved us, as we were not there. Needless to say that we cannot be charged with what it was then written. The more wonder, since they had to stone him, that they did not speak of him very much more, for, in truth, in the entire Talmud, save only in that instance, no mention is made of him. Evidently they had prophetic vision that you are to take us to account concerning this matter, and deemed it best to make no more mention of him.

Donin: Concerning whom, among those who were hung, was it spoken of as the son of an unfaithful woman? The Talmud asserts: "And so they did to the son of Stada in Lud, and they hung him on the eve of Passover. Son of Stada, is he not the son of Pandira? The husband was Pappos b. Judah, but the paramour's name was Pandira. Son of Stada, was not the name of his mother Mary Magdalene? Yes, but she was called Stada, as people speak of a woman who goes aside from her husband as a Sotah, and thus she was nicknamed Stada." <sup>26</sup> Now, is it not clear that they called her prostitute?

The Bishops: Wherefore did you speak thus of Mary -- what has she done to you?

Rabbi Yechiel: <sup>are</sup> Why were you so frightened, and wherefore are you angry? Who made you judges over me? Have you forgotten the verse, "Ye have plowed wickedness," <sup>27</sup> and the verse,

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26. Hesronot ha-Shas, Sabbath, 104b ; San. 67a

27. Hosea 10:13

28

"Hear the causes between your brethern," and the verse,  
 "He that pleadeth his cause first seemeth just, but his  
 neighbor cometh and searcheth him out"? <sup>29</sup> You should not  
 listen to him alone under whose lips is the viper's venom.  
 Now hear me: You spoke well; about her we have nothing to  
 say; she neither sinned nor transgressed, needless to add  
 that she was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. For-  
 sooth the Talmud, including its Haggadic part, speaks not of  
 Mary Magdalene, mother of your deity, for the one just men- *delete*  
 tioned by Donin was a different Mary entirely. Behold my  
 evidence: the story of Jesus your deity was in Jerusalem,  
 whereas this Mary is mentioned as having been from Lud, a  
 place in the province of Palestine; it is not mentioned that  
 so it was done to Jesus of Nazareth; the name of the husband  
 of Mary, mother of Jesus of Nazareth, was John, for so it also  
 appears from your own Gospels, whereas the husband's name of  
 this Mary was Pappos b. Jehudah; this Mary is spoken of as the  
 one who died during the lifetime of Rab Poppa and Abaya <sup>30</sup>  
 which was four hundred years after the story of Jesus. And  
 yet further evidence that there was another Jesus. "Ever  
 let the left hand repel and the right hand invite, not like  
 Elisha who repulsed Gehazi with both hands, <sup>31</sup> and not like  
 Rabbi Jehoshua b. Perahiah who repulsed Jesus with both hands.

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28. Deut. 1:16

29. Prov. 18:17

30. See Tosphot Sabbath 194b; Hegiga 4b

31. II Kings 5:26.

What is the story of Rabbi Jehoshua b. Perahiah? It is as follows: When King Jannai killed our rabbis, Rabbi Jehoshuah b. Perahiah (and Jesus) fled to Alexandria, Egypt. When tranquility was reestablished, Simeon b. Shetach wrote to him, 'From me, the holy city, to thee, Alexandria of Egypt. My sister! My husband stays with thee; and I sit forsaken.' On his journey homeward he chanced to be in a certain inn, where an assembled multitude paid him great homage. Jesus stood by him. 'How beautiful is this hostelry,' exclaimed Jehoshuah b. Perahiah to Jesus. Thinking he meant the hostess, Jesus answered: 'But Rabbi, her eyes are very narrow.' This angered Rabbi Jehoshuah, and he said: 'Wretch, dost thou employ thyself thus?' and without further investigation, excommunicated him. Jesus pleaded with him on many occasions to be received again into the fold, but he would not notice him. One day, while Jehoshuah was praying, Jesus came again before him, and this time he was minded to receive him back, as a token of which he motioned to him with his hand, but Jesus misunderstood the motion, thinking that he was being repelled again, whereupon he went out and hung up a tiled cross and worshipped it. Then Rabbi Jehoshua came and pleaded with him, saying, 'Return,' But Jesus replied: 'Thus have I received it from my father's house and from thee that, he who sins and causes also the multitude to sin, is not given the opportunity to repent.' Truly, a teacher maintained that Jesus practiced witchcraft, enticed, and led the people (of Israel) astray, which seems to contradict his tiled-cross

Wrongly  
translated

worship mentioned here, yet it is possible that cross-worship was part of the practice in connection with sorcery, enticing, and leading people astray.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in truth, this Jesus was not the deity of the Gentiles, as it is evident that this one was in the days of Jehoshuah b. Perachiah, King Jannai, and Simeon b. Shetach, with whom Judah b. Tabbai received the Oral Law <sup>as well as from</sup> Jehoshuah b. Perachiah, from whom Shemaiah and Abtalion received it, from whom Hillel the Elder received it, who in turn transmitted it to his son Simeon I,<sup>33</sup> from whom his son Gamaliel II received it; and it is maintained in the Talmud<sup>34</sup> that Hillel, Simeon I, Gamaliel and Simeon II, successively reigned as presidents of their respective tribunals a century before the destruction of the Second Temple; Simeon b. Shetach preceded them by two generations, thus there have now elapsed 1472 years since the Jesus mentioned together with Jannai, Jehoshuah and Simeon, whereas, according to the reckoning of the Gentiles, this is the year 1240 since the birth of Jesus their deity; consequently, the Jesus mentioned in the Talmud preceded their Jesus by more than two centuries. Furthermore, the Jesus of the Gentiles lived in the days of Queen Helen, whereas the Jesus mentioned in the Talmud was during the reign of Jannai, who was the same one concerning whom it is said in the Talmud that in the end he was hung,

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32. Hesronot ha-Shas, Sotah, 46b

33. See English translation of Maimonides' preface to Yad ha-Hazakah by S.G.

34. See Sabbath, 15a.

but he was not at all their deity. In fact, it is clearly established that no mention is made of him anywhere in Talmudic literature. This supports the contention of the Talmud, "Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent, foretells thee that thou shalt have neither a son nor a disciple who would publicly boil a potpourri, as Jesus of Nazareth did." This reference is made to the Jesus whom Jehoshuah b. Perahiah repelled with both hands. Evidently, the deity of the Gentiles had an identical name, and was of the same place.

The Priests: And who will believe the smooth statements which you make to win your point, that there were two persons named Jesus of Nazareth, who died on the eve of Passover, both sorcerers and enticers, and adjudged to be boiled in hot filth? Does it not appear that you have divided one drop into two parts?

Rabbi Yechiel: Not every Louis born in France is a French king. It is not at all impossible; in fact, it does happen that two persons of the same city and of an identical name meet with a like death, and all know that it is not an uncommon occurrence.

The Queen: Why are you contaminating the air you yourselves must inhale? Behold, it is to your honor that he said your deity is not judged with boiling filth, whereas you are forcing to drag your own shame out of his mouth. And you, do

you faithfully maintain that you are telling the truth?

Rabbi Yechiel: May I so truly retain my life and return to my home! Concerning the deity of the Gentiles we even did not imagine that he be judged with boiling filth, much less speak such of him.

Donin: What is the meaning of the Talmudic expression, Baat Kol?

Rabbi Yechiel: The sound of a voice, as an echo. Since prophecy was no more when the dispersion of the Jews took place, the Baat Kol, or sound of a heavenly voice, served instead thereof.

Donin: Hear me, ye people, concerning these evil-minded sons, who utter mocking words and give it a guise of piety: "Rabbi Bar Bar Chana, while journeying thru a wilderness, heard a Baat-Kol re-echoing the words, saying, 'Woe unto Me that I am under oath, and now since I am bound by that oath, who can give Me the authority to break it?' When he appeared before the Rabbis to relate the incident, they said to him, 'Every Abba is an ass, and every Chana a fool! You should have said,

36  
'Thou mayest break it, Thou mayest break it.'"

Who can pay attention to such words, saying that God laments why He took an oath, and that because Rabba <sup>refrained from</sup> refused to permit Him to break it, <sup>he (Rabba)</sup> He was abused. Such is their evil way to tell

every one who vowed or took, an path that his friend can give



him absolution; and annually, on the Day of Atonement, they conspire to break the vows and oaths which they take under Gentile authority, and therefore, do they not keep their vows or oaths in dealing with Gentiles. Moreover, so teaches them their Talmud: "He who desires that his vows shall be null and void shall stand up on the Day of Atonement and say -<sup>37</sup> Kol Nidre - All Vows, etc." They also rule that three<sup>38</sup> laymen may give a dispensation to break all vows. Therefore do this people, the like of which never was, ever break a vow or oath when a Gentile is concerned.

Rabbi Yechiel: Woe unto you, courter of falsehood and lies and hater of truth! I shall answer you in clear text. Your amazement to learn from the Talmud that God regrets His having taken an oath proves that your mouth reached<sup>39</sup> evil; is it not written: "And it repented the Lord; It<sup>40</sup> repenteth Me that I have set up Saul as king?" As for the oath concerning the deluge, it is written: "For as I have<sup>41</sup> sworn that the waters of Noah; this is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living<sup>42</sup> creature, etc.," which evidences that God made the token and

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37. See Nedarim, 23b

38. See Ibid, 22a; and Bechorot, 37a.

39. Gen. 6:6

40. I Samuel 15:11

41. Isa. 54:9. See full text in Baba Batra 74a.

42. Gen. 9:12.

covenant to remind Him of the oath, so that He might not repent it. Now that we are in exile, with you as our masters, with none to offer free-will offerings or sacrifices in the House of His Shekinah, where all peoples assembled to offer prayers, as Solomon expressed it in his dedicatory prayer, saying, "Moreover, concerning the stranger that is not of Thy people Israel..... that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name,"<sup>43</sup> why wonder that God regrets it! As to your question, 'How can any living being break the oath of God?' Even this was the note of regret in the heavenly echo, "Who can give Me the authority to break it," meaning that if it could be broken the redemption of Israel would not be delayed until the Messianic era. This is even the reason why the Rabbis told Rabba, "You should have said, 'Thou Mayest,' for God took the oath in anger, as it is written, "Behold I will gather them out of all the countries whither I have driven them in My anger, and in fury, and in great wrath, and I will bring them back unto this place;"<sup>44</sup> they, therefore, were right in surmising that God, having taken the oath in anger, perhaps made it conditional that when one in a future generation will say, 'Thou mayest,' the moment he will hear the note of regret in the heavenly echo - Baat Kol - the oath shall no longer be binding. Therefore did the Rabbis shame him. Concerning your evil question about Kol Nidre, read the text to the end: "And pardon shall be granted to the

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43. I Kings 8:41

44. Jeremiah 32:37; See also Nedarim 21b

whole Congregation of Israel, and to the stranger who sojourneth among them, when all the people transgress ignorantly;" for we do not absolve one from vows or oaths, save from such as were taken inadvertently. Concerning three laymen who may annul vows and oaths, include only such as were assumed by the individual upon himself, and do not at all include any one else; but vows and oaths taken between man and man no one can break, save only with the consent of the parties so bound by the oath or vow. As evidence, behold the punishment of Zedekiah: "Then the King of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes.....Moreover, he put out Zedekiah's eyes."<sup>45</sup> His punishment came about because he had violated an oath without the consent of the one concerning whom it was taken. And, it is further said: "That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt observe and do, according as thou hast vowed."<sup>46</sup> Concerning an oath we were admonished more so than all nations, for even when one swears to do harm to his own self, he is obliged to do so, and if he does it not he must bring an offering; for it is said: "or if any one swear clearly with his lips to do evil, or to do good;"<sup>47</sup> whereupon the Talmud comments, saying, "To do good to one's own self, or to do evil to one's self." It is also said: "And the Children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of

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45. Jer. 52:10-11;

46. Deut. 23:24.

47. Lev. 5:4.  
Baba Kama 91b.

the Congregation had sworn unto them." And, altho the Gibonites deceived them, by saying that they came from a far-off country, yet have the princes of the Congregation not broken their oath without the consent of the Gibonites.

*The text should no doubt be emended 791307 for 791307*  
 Donin: Who is the seer, and who made the moon speak, saying: "Said the moon to God, 'Lord of the Universe!'" It is unbecoming for two kings to make use of one crown,' and God said to her, 'Go, diminish thyself!' Whereupon she replied: 'Is it because I said the proper thing that I am thus punished?' Seeing that the moon is not appeased, God said: 'Bring, for My sake, an expiatory sacrifice, because I made the moon smaller;' <sup>49</sup> Behold, ye Priests! Has there ever been a like people in whose Torah it is written that their God is a sinner and that He commanded that a sacrifice be brought so that His sin be forgiven; should not every one who hears this laugh?

Rabbi Yechiel: You are frightened of the moon's speech! And who gave the trees of the forest speech, and song to cheer up the courtyard of King David, as it is written: "Then <sup>50</sup> shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy?" Did you mock the Talmud because of like expression? Is it not written: <sup>51</sup> "The Heavens declare the glory of God, etc.?" "Praise ye

48. Joshua 9:18

49. Hulin 69b.

50. Psalms 96:12

51. Ibid 19:2

52 Him, sun and moon." Moreover, all astrologists maintain that the heavenly hosts possess life. As for the sacrifice which God commanded to bring, your mocking at it disclosed your ignorance and your ability to distort plain matter. It is written: "And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night." 53 Now reason within your heart, - why was one diminished? Wherewith could she possibly have offended her Maker that He caused her to be lessened? At the time there was yet no man to make a deity out of her, to say that such might be the reason of her punishment. Thus, it can be none else than to say that some evil speech was beneath it all. "Evil shall not sojourn with Thee;" 54 and again, "He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before Mine eyes." 55 Indeed, there is none so despised and unbearable in the presence of God as the evil informer, as it is said: "Whoso slandereth his neighbor in secret, him will I destroy; whoso is haughty of eye and proud of heart, him will I not suffer;" 56 and

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52. Ibid 148:3

53. Gen. 1:16

54. Ps. 5:5

55. Ibid 101:7.

56. Ibid 101:5.

it is further said: "Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbor  
<sup>57</sup> in secret." Thus, because the moon spoke evil of her  
 neighbor, God caused her to be diminished, a fit punishment,  
 measure for measure, for an evil tongue, altho she employed  
 refined speech, saying: 'It is unbecoming for two kings to  
 make use of one crown,' meaning, of course, evil against the  
 sun. Nevertheless, after she had received her just punish-  
 ment and was ashamed of herself for having committed a sin,  
 God invited her repentance, so that all sinners may find an  
 example therein and repent. It thus was for a righteous  
 reason that the Talmud writes concerning it, "Let every  
 sinner repent and God will receive him," as it is said:

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" <sup>58</sup>

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the man of iniquity his  
 thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have  
 compassion upon him." <sup>59</sup> And because God finds delight in  
 letting us know that He favors repentance, He commanded us  
 to bring a sacrifice of appeasement because He did diminish  
 the moon. This is also as it is commanded in the Torah,  
 saying, "And one he-goat for a sin-offering unto the Lord," <sup>60</sup>  
 which was done on every New Moon, to appease God, because He  
 appeased the moon when she repented. It all is a voice call-  
 ing to sinners to repent. Therefore is the New Moon not a

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57. Deut. 27:24

58. Ezekiel 18:23

59. Isaiah 55:7

60. Numbers 28:15

holiday unto us, but unto God. For us He appointed one day as a holiday, Rosh ha-Shanah, which is also a New Moon, set aside for all of us to repent and be received back as was the moon.

Donin: You are evil-minded sons, and your own Talmudic laws convict you. Why do you say, "The best among the Gen-

<sup>61</sup> tiles kill;" "Gentiles and shepherds are neither to be cast in, or taken out of a pit, even when they are drowning;" <sup>62</sup> *? not let down by a rope into a pit*

Was a thing like unto this since time commenced? You also

say: "If one cast a stone in a courtyard and kill an Israelite, if there be living in the courtyard nine Gentiles, he is not guilty, the presumption being that his intention was to kill

a Gentile;" <sup>63</sup> Your Rabbis ruled: "A Gentile killing either a Gentile or an Israelite is guilty of homicide, but an Israelite killing a Gentile is not guilty;" <sup>64</sup> "A Gentile who observes

the Sabbath is guilty of a capital offense;" <sup>65</sup> "A Gentile who studies the Torah is guilty of a capital offense;" <sup>66</sup> a

Gentile is put to death upon the testimony of only one wit-

<sup>67</sup> ness, and without a warning; the money of a Gentile, because

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61. Misquotation: see infra (80).

62. Hesronot ha-Shas, Sanhedrin, 57a

63. Kethubot, 15a; Hesronot ha-Shas, Sanhedrin 79a.

64. Sanhedrin 57a

65. Ibid 58c.

66. Ibid. See Maimonides Responsa, 58.

67. Sanhedrin 57b.

of refusing to observe the seven Noaitic commandments, is free property for Israelites, who, in taking it, are not bound by the law of theft, robbery, or deceit;<sup>68</sup> If the ox of an Israelite gore the ox of a Gentile, he is free from paying indemnity, but if the ox of a Gentile gore the ox of an Israelite, the Gentile must pay;<sup>69</sup> the touch of a Gentile, even of a child a day old, contaminates wine;<sup>70</sup> all ridicule is forbidden, save only to ridicule idolatry;<sup>71</sup> cattle shall not be boarded in Gentile stables because they are suspected of sodomy;<sup>72</sup> a Jewish woman shall not remain alone among Gentiles because they are suspected of adultery, nor a man because they are suspected of murder;<sup>73</sup> a Jewish woman must not act either as a mid-wife, nor a wet-nurse to Gentiles, lest she bring up a son for the worship of idolatry;<sup>74</sup> it is forbidden to give a present to a Gentile or to admire him;<sup>75</sup> a lost article of a Gentile must not be returned."<sup>76</sup>

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68. The convert intended to quote Baba Kama 38a

69. Baba Kama 37b

70. Aboda-Zara 57a

71. Megillah 25b

72. Aboda-Zara 22a

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid 26a.

75. Ibid 20a

76. Sanhedrin 76b.



Now I will uncover your shame and demand from you all your blood, so that you will no more speak thus of us Gentiles, for it is but just to judge you as you judge us, and speaking as you do of us, who will save you?

Rabbi Yechiel: The net you spread is sure to ensnare your own self. I will have my voice heard in reply from first to last, regarding your misinterpretation. You opened by quoting: "The best among the Gentiles, kill!" Do you know the name of the Book and the place in such book where your quotation appears?

Donin: I do not; but Rashi was a great man and a profound scholar, in whom you believe more than your Master, Moses.<sup>77</sup>

Rabbi Yechiel: You are wasting breath - - is it all because you do not know the meaning of the Hebrew word GOYIM? In truth, the word designates both good and bad; "Praise the Lord, all ye Goyim;"<sup>78</sup> and, "All the Goyim are forgetters of God;"<sup>79</sup> sufficient proof that my contention is right. Now I will tell you the truth; you neither know whence nor how to quote. It is in Tractate Sophrim<sup>80</sup> and reads as follows: "In war, the best of the Goyim ye shall kill." And the law is just, for it is written: "And the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharoah."<sup>81</sup> These horses,

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77. The convert here, no doubt, refers to Rashi's comment on Gen. 14:7 q.v.

78. Psalms 117:1

79. Ibid 117:18

80. Tosphot Abada-Zara 26b.

81. Ex. 14:9

*why not look up  
in Gen. 14:9*

of Pharoah, where did they come from? Have they not died when  
 Egypt was plagued with a hailstorm?<sup>82</sup> But they that feared  
 God saved their cattle;<sup>83</sup> and it was those God-fearing Egyptians  
 who gave their horses to Pharoah to make war on Israel; there-  
 fore did Rabbi Simeon say: "In war, the best of the Goyim ye  
 shall kill." Forsooth, there is no man righteous and faith-  
 ful enough, when he comes to war on you, who will not kill you  
 at the first opportunity; therefore, be faster than he and  
 kill him first. And in this there is no discrimination in  
 favor of an Israelite, even as it is written: "If a thief be  
 found breaking in and be smitten so that he dieth, there shall  
 be no bloodguiltiness for him."<sup>84</sup> But the case entirely chan-  
 ges when you are the aggressor; you must make no war to kill  
 unless all efforts of peaceful settlement fail. So the Torah  
 admonished us, even concerning the Seven Nations: "When thou  
 drawest nigh unto a city to fight it, then proclaim peace  
 unto it."<sup>85</sup> "Remember such must be done to a city inhabited  
 by members of the Seven Nations, concerning whom we were  
 charged: 'Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.'<sup>86</sup>"  
 Needless to say that in time of peace no bloodshed must be  
 resorted to. As for the people among whom we find living and  
 protection, it is forbidden to us to touch even a hair's

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82. Ibid 9:25.

83. Ibid 9:20

84. Ibid 22:1

85. Deut. 20:10

86. Ibid 20:16.

breadth, either of their body or of their property. Concerning bloodshed we were warned more than any other people, as it is written: "Thou shalt not kill;" <sup>87</sup> without any difference between Israelite and any of the other nationals. Moreover, the commandment includes us all; both you and we are warned against bloodshed. Now, above all, you must grasp the meaning of Goy as it is used in the Talmud, which applied exclusively to members of the Seven Nations, which were spared by accepting peace conditions, as, for example, the Gibeonites. Thus it is easily understood why, where there are nine Goyim and one Israelite, there is no guilt of murder when one kills the Israelite, the presumption being that he intended not against the Israelite; but this does not permit to take the life of a Goy; he is not guilty after a trial, where the intent is declared to have been not against the one actually killed. The same rule applies to homicide, property, lost article, or present-giving; it includes only the members of the Seven Nations, who are designated in the Talmud under the term Goy. But even against them we were charged not to seek their destruction, as it is written: "And he shall reckon <sup>88</sup> with him that bought him." Moreover, these laws of restriction against perpetrating a wrong upon members of the Seven Nations, altho by reason of the peace terms they became virtual property of the Israelites, refer even to the period

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87. Ex. 20:13.

88. Lev. 25:50.

*Handwritten notes:*  
 If you have explained this to me, I will be glad to hear from you.  
 Love,  
 Leo Marx

when we had the upper hand and they were ~~pur~~ slaves. We were taught to "support the poor of the Goyim as we do the poor of the Israelites;" <sup>89</sup> to greet them <sup>90</sup> courteously; <sup>91</sup> to visit their sick; <sup>92</sup> to bury their dead; not to forbid their poor from gathering "gleanings" of the fields, "forgotten sheafs," and "corners" of the field; <sup>93</sup> and, it is related that Rabbi Johanan, when a hoary Goy passed by, rose up to honor him. <sup>94</sup> To substantiate, furthermore, that the term Goy does not apply to any other national, I need but to point out the following facts: we are observing our Torah even today with all our soul; many of us suffer burning, stoning, drowning, and hanging for its sake, yet all that which was forbidden us to do when Goyim are concerned, we do in your midst; we were warned not to deal with the Goyim <sup>95</sup> three days preceding their holidays; go now in this land and see how many of us do business with the non-Jewish neighbors even during the holidays; we not only board our cattle in their stables, but we sell cattle to them; we deal with them as partners; we are left alone with them; we board out our infants in their homes, and we instruct them in our Torah,

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89. Gitin 61a

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid; see Tosphot Abada-Zara 20a

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Kedushin 33a

95. Abada-Zara 2a

for, behold, there are many priests who can read Hebrew books. A civilized people, where the orderliness of family life is the rule, cannot be spoken of in connection with unspeakable crimes. Such were plainly spoken of in the Torah itself concerning the land of Egypt whence Israel came forth out of bondage, and concerning the Canaanites whereto they were going, as it is written: "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do."<sup>96</sup> In so far as ridiculing idolatry, because the manner of the worship of the idolatry spoken of<sup>97</sup> is profane, it is commendable to ridicule it; but otherwise profanity is strongly condemned. "All know why the bride passes beneath the canopy, yet he who profanes his tongue will cause a good heavenly judgment, even tho it be three score and ten years old, turned into evil upon himself."<sup>98</sup> And, it is further said: "The sin of profanity cause the visitation of plagues to be more frequent."<sup>99</sup> Now, having made full reply, I say: Woe unto you for attempting to harm us in speaking evil of such vile nature against us!

Donin: Were there not myriads of you eaten up by the sword of Bretagne, Anjou and Poitou? If you really are, as you claim to be, the God chosen people, where are the wonders

*in text  
should  
read  
X10 232*

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96. Lev. 18:2

97. Isaiah 46:1-2.

98. Sabbath 33a

99. Ibid ; Isaiah 9:16.

*in Bretagne  
(Brittany)*

and tokens of your God?

Rabbi Yechiel: It is all as it was written: "And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute the vengeance of the covenant."<sup>100</sup> Yet, in the end, when Messiah will come, we were assured that "As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things."<sup>101</sup>

Donin: Behold, is it not written in the Talmud: "The Goyim prefer coition with cattle belonging to Israelites than with their own wives;"<sup>102</sup> and Rabbi Johanan said: "When the serpent cohabited with Eve he emitted poison within her; Israel, who stood upon Sinai, got rid of the poison, but the Goyim who were not there did not get rid of it."<sup>103</sup> ?

Rabbi Yechiel: The Egyptians and Canaanites, who were drowned in a flood of prostitution were spoken of as such. Neither were they upon Sinai; nor have they subsequently recognized the Torah. But you, who did recognize and receive the Torah, and, as you claim that your deity did not come to break it, add to it or diminish aught from it, that poison, by your own claim, is no longer with you and, therefore, no assertion can be made that the Talmud spoke thus of you.

100. Leviticus 26;25

101. Micah 7:15

102. Abada-Zara 22b.

103. Yebomot 103b  
Sabbath 146a

Donin: Now, behold, you have a fixed daily prayer of bitterness directed against apostates, priests, and lay Gentiles, and according to Rashi's interpretation, it is a prayer for the destruction of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, of the king and the people, all of whom are denounced by you as villainous and wicked.<sup>104</sup> You furthermore adjudged to Gehenna, saying: "The priests, that is to say, the disciples of Jesus, and the apostates descend to Gehenna and never ascendthencefrom; the Gehenna itself might be consumed but these are never consumed, for they are doomed to eternal condemnation."<sup>105</sup> Has there ever been a like people which curses the Gentiles and their clergy, and use all their power to make them detestable?

Rabbi Yechiel: First, the benediction you questioned is directed only against two kinds of evil-doers, converts and infidels who rebel against the authority of the Talmud; for the former we pray that they may have no hope in the camp of their new religion so that they return back to our fold, and for the latter that they may be either humbled or destroyed, but in no way does this prayer refer to the followers of Jesus from among the Gentiles.

Donin: Did not Rashi interpret the meaning of Minim to be,<sup>106</sup> disciples of Jesus?

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104. See Rosh ha-Shanah 17a.

105. Ibid.

106. The convert evidently had either a manuscript of Rashi different than the printed text or relied upon a lie.

*Albani's reference to R. H. does not fit in. You ought to have consulted other references.*

Rameryt

Rabbi Yechiel: The comment of Rashi is not indestructible,.  
On the contrary, do you not know that his own grandson, Rabbi  
Jacob b.Meir of Orleans ( Rabenu Tam ) and Rabbi Judah (R"i)  
the Master of Nachmanides, and other world-renowned Gaonim  
questioned his authority and nullified his contentions ?

2. not  
true

Yet, in truth, according to Rashi, I may say that he did not,  
and could not refer to Jesus your deity, for no one is called  
Min save only one who believes in Holy Writ and not in its  
Talmudic interpretation. Conversely, should I leave it as  
you desire, to say that Rashi referred to Jesus your deity,  
it is but just that his disciples should be in Gehenna, for  
they entered the covenant of the Torah which was given to  
our fathers on Sinai, as it is said: "Neither with you only  
do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that  
standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and  
also with him who is not here with us this day." <sup>107</sup> Thus,  
it is obvious that even those who were yet unborn at the  
time of Revelation entered the covenant. And, because the  
disciples of Jesus formerly were in the folds of Israel's  
religion and had assumed its obligations a long time prior  
to their apostasy, who can say that they were forgiven? Such  
gross sin, since they did not repent, cannot be pardoned, and  
their place is in Gehenna, as it is written: "And they shall  
go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have  
rebelled against me;" meaning, of course, the apostates who  
abandoned the covenant of God and rebelled against Him; and



what will their punishment be? "For their worm shall not die,  
 neither shall their fire be quenched;" <sup>108</sup> meaning, of course,  
 the fire which comes forth of their bodies will never be  
 quenched, which is even as it is said: "And their form shall  
 be for the nether world to wear away;" <sup>109</sup> - the netherworld  
 will wear away, but they themselves will not wear away.  
 Nevertheless, speaking truthfully, the Gentiles who never  
 entered the covenant, are not so judged in Gehenna. But  
 you, Donin, who have been born a Jew and had assumed the  
 obligation of the covenant, became a convert to ease your  
 burden. Who can ever forgive you?

The Bishops: Swear upon your Faith if we can be saved by  
 adhering to our Testament.

Rabbi Yechiel: I can faithfully tell you that you may be  
 saved even by your religion, if only you will observe the  
 seven commandments concerning which you were warned.

The Bishops: Behold, we have ten. *(meaning 10 Commandments)*

Rabbi Yechiel: So much the better for you. But, behold this  
 Min, who was charged to observe 613 commandments, even tho  
 had he observed 612, but spitefully failed to observe the  
 one, his punishment would be destruction by fire, for he once  
 was within our covenant. There is one Gehenna both for Is-  
 raelites and for Gentiles who sin with their bodies, as it

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108. Isa. 66:24

109. Psalms 49:15

is fully written, saying: "For, behold, the day cometh; it burneth as a furnace, and all the proud and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and that day shall set them ablaze, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor brance."<sup>110</sup> And on the day the wicked ones will burn, the righteous will find healing, as it is said: "But unto you that fear My name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings."<sup>111</sup> Moreover, after the wicked will be burned they shall become ashes under the soles of your feet."<sup>112</sup> Thus you have in the Books of the Prophets *There* a Gehenna which ends, and a Gehenna which does not end. You lied in saying that in that benediction we refer, when praying for the destruction of evil rulers, to this government. We do not refer to this government for the good reason that it is not ruled by a wicked ruler. A wicked ruler was Pharoah, King of Egypt, who, altho seeing the wonders of God,<sup>113</sup> said: "Who is the Lord that I should hearken unto His voice?" So was Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who knew of God and yet said: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, and will be like the Most High."<sup>114</sup> And, as the Hebrew word used

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110. Malachi 3:19

111. Ibid 3:20

112. Ibid 3:21

113. Ex. 5:2.

114. Is. 14:14.

in that prayer is Zadon, it is indeed self-evident that we direct our supplication against such as he, even as it is said: "Behold, I am against thee, O thou Zadon."<sup>115</sup> So was also the King of Assyria, who said: "Who are they among all the gods of these countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"<sup>116</sup> They all slaughtered Israel, exiled them from their land, made war upon them, burned their Temple, and decreed daily new tyrannical laws against them, and never favored them with aught. Upon them, and such, we pray that God may bring destruction. But this ruler and the Pope, who protect us with a mighty power, who permit us to live and to make a living, and give us the right to leave a remnant in Israel in their land, in which we have neither portion nor inheritance, and after God gives us life they permit us to live, who could ever listen to the accusation that we requite evil instead of good? True, this adversary and enemy harmed us; but can this be a reason for us to be angry at the entire nation? Have we not an example of this kind, when it is said: "Shall one man sin and wilt Thou be wroth with all the Congregation?"<sup>117</sup> Such never was, nor will it ever be within the heart of Israel to requite evil instead of good. Concerning this ruler, it is said: "And thou shalt pray for the peace of the sovereign."<sup>118</sup> In so far as that

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115. Jer. 50:31

116. Is. 36:20

117. Num. 16:22

118. Pirke Aboth 3:2

John

2. You have made the whole historical point referring to the ship building of Lancaster which he came from, that is, e, that is, the origin of the ship building.

2. When I  
I have

2000

7-14-64 (52)

b49) (encl)  
not power

a mortal sin to give them a living, for even their own Torah they do not keep, but amend, diminish, add, and interpret it in a manner worse than folly. For example, the Talmud tells that "Og, King of Bashan, took up a mount three miles in diameter, intending to cast it upon the whole camp of Israel and kill them all, but the ants bore thru the mount so that his head stuck in its cavity, and he could not extricate himself despite his efforts with his enormous teeth, and Moses their Master then killed him;"<sup>123</sup> there was a bird named Bar Yuchna which laid an egg that drowned sixty cities;<sup>124</sup> Abba Saul once pursued a deer which ran into the hallow of Og's thigh-bone three miles without wither catching the deer or reaching the end of the hallow;<sup>125</sup> God said: 'They have conquered Me;'<sup>126</sup> in the Future to Come they will feast upon the Leviathan-meat which was kept in salt since the Six Days of Creation;<sup>127</sup> and drink wine which was stored away in the grape since the Six Days of Creation;<sup>128</sup> Rabbi Joshua b. Levi outwitted the Angel of Death and is still living in the Garden of Eden;<sup>129</sup> Adam begot evil spirits, demons and

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123. Barakot 54b.

124. Bechorot 57b

125. Nidah 24b.

126. Baba Mezia 59b

127. Baba Batra 74b

128. Barakot 34b.

129. Kethubot 77b.

Witch-queens by cattle, animals, and birds; <sup>130</sup> that he was  
 in size as big as the span of the world; <sup>131</sup> that he had  
 two faces, front and back; <sup>132</sup> that the angels on their visit  
 to Abraham ate three tongues in mustard; <sup>133</sup> that the son of  
 David will not come until the wall of Rome will fall, be re-  
 built and fall again; <sup>134</sup> that the world will be populated  
 entirely by infidels. <sup>135</sup> Such and like statements call forth  
 murmur and amazement from every one who hears them. Can any  
 scholar accept such book, or any reasonable mind judge its  
 value? Such windy matter deserves <sup>just as</sup> to be burned. <sup>136</sup> Hespasian  
 the Emperor did burn their Torah; and in the days of R.  
 Judah b. Babba it was decreed both that the ordained and the  
 ordainers shall be put to death; <sup>137</sup> and because of following  
 their Torah, Rabbi Chanina b. Teradian was burnt. <sup>138</sup>

The Bishops: Hearing Donin's indictment, rose up and ridiculed the Talmud and applauded him.

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130.

131. Hagiga 12a

132. Barakot 61a

133. Baba Mezia 86b

134. Sanhedrin 98a

135. Ibid 97a

136. *reference*

137. Sanhedrin 14a;  
 Abada-Zara 8b

138. Ibid 18a

Rabbi Yechiel: Donin, you mocked the statement that "God is localized in the space of four ells of the Halacha;" are you ignorant of the verse, "And there I will meet with thee, and I will speak with thee from above the ark cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the Children of Israel?"<sup>139</sup> There His Shekinah was localized between the two cherubim; in His House were prayers offered for all nations, so that His Name was glorified by them, even as it is written in the dedicatory prayer of Solomon the King;<sup>140</sup> For His House was beloved of Him, even as it is written: "The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year;"<sup>141</sup> and as it is written: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." But now, when it all was destroyed and remains desolate, with our God in Heaven saying, "I will go and return to My place," there is no space which God desires more than the four ells of space a man occupies when he is engaged in the study of the Laws of the Torah, for none other in the whole universe proclaim His Name or do His will, save only the one who is devoted to His Torah and offers supplications to Him. You spoke against the Rabbis for saying in the Talmud that God laments thrice daily for His desolate Temple and exiled children; remember, you have to tell much more amazing things

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139. Ex. 25:32

140. See supra (43)

141. Deut. 11:12.

concerning your deity. But, really, the Talmud added nothing to what is written in the Bible, saying: "The Lord doth roar from on High ..... He doth mightily roar ..... He giveth a shout."<sup>142</sup> Are there not three roars in the verse? You dread the power of the Rabbis to do away with fundamentals of Holy Writ! Be not dismayed! Their power is not strong enough even to uproot one law of the Torah for all times. Only when the need of the hour demands it, as was the instance of the prophet Elijah when he offered a sacrifice upon a temporary altar to sanctify the name of God against the Baalites,<sup>143</sup> altho contrary to the Torah which forbids sacrifices on any but the altar in the Temple, may the Rabbis make a departure from the written law, but as soon as the need disappears, the law remains in full force, as theretofore. Even you have a similar procedure, when the Pope gives a dispensation to the King to marry a near relative because the need of the hour demands it; but that does not do away with your laws of incest. Your questioning of the story of the three square mile mountain of Og is not to the point, as similar exaggerations are found even in the Bible itself, as for example: "The cities are great and fortified up to heaven."<sup>144</sup> Neither should Og's mammoth teeth call forth any laughter; it is merely a figure of speech. Nevertheless, our wonder-working God performed far greater miracles than

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142. Jer. 25:30

143. I Kings 18:31-32.

144. Deut. 1:28.



the one mentioned in the Talmud in connection with Og; He brought the Ten Plagues upon the Egyptians, divided the Red Sea, sent down Manna, brought down the quails; why then wonder at the story of Og? Is it impossible for God to do it? The bird, Bar Yuchna, which laid an egg that drowned sixty cities, surely is much smaller than the hawk's wing which stretched to the far South, of which Job speaks, saying: "Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom, and stretch her wing to the South? The thigh of the giant Og was not bigger than a similar member of the skeleton of an Anak, nor was Abba Saul smaller than any of the messengers who were sent by Moses to spy out the land (Canaan) of whom the Bible tells, saying:" And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight;"<sup>145</sup> Indeed, God doth say, 'they have conquered me' when the plain text of the Torah is interpreted to mean just what a majority decide that it means, for then God sanctions such decision. You mock at the promised feast of Leviathan-meat and stored-away wine. Behold, it is written: "And God created the great sea-monsters."<sup>146</sup> Evidently, as the plural terminology is employed, there were at least two sea-monsters created, whereas it is written: "In that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the slant serpent, and leviathan the tortuous serpent; and He will slay the dragon

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145. Num. 13:33

146. Gen. 1:21.

that is in the sea."<sup>147</sup> Who killed the other sea-dragon?  
 No doubt, as the Talmud says, God did not want such dragons,  
 or sea-monsters, to multiply, and to endanger traffic on the  
 high seas. He therefore, as the Talmud tells, killed one  
 of them. It is moreover said: "There is leviathan, whom  
 Thou hast formed to sport therein;"<sup>148</sup> and, "canst Thou draw  
 out leviathan with a fish-hook?"<sup>149</sup> Both verses speak in the  
 singular, evidently because the other one was dead. And  
 further it is said: "Will the bands of fishermen make a  
 banquet of him; will they part him among the merchants?"<sup>150</sup>  
 It also is written: "And the Lord God planted a garden, east-  
 ward, in Eden."<sup>151</sup> Who till now eats the fruits of Eden, or  
 who will eat them ultimately, unless it be as it is said in  
 the Talmud that a feast will be made when the leviathan-meat  
 will be eaten, and wine stored in the grapes be partaken of?  
 You wonder at Rabbi Joshua b. Levi that he never tasted death  
 and is alive in Eden; were there not others as, for instance,  
 Elijah, and the bones of Elisha which resurrected a man that  
 was cast in his grave?<sup>152</sup> When Adam said: "This is now bone  
 of my bones and flesh of my flesh"<sup>153</sup> his mind was at rest,

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147. Isaiah 27:1

148. Psalms 104:25

149. Job 40:25

150. Ibid 40:30

151. Gen. 2:8

152. See supra (2)

153. Gen. 2:23.

knowing that he was properly mated; for among all living creatures there was found no helpmate for him, and as he had to name them all, his mind was not at rest. It is moreover written: "And Adam lived a hundred and ten years and begot a son in his own likeness, after his own image"<sup>154</sup> which indicates that up till his hundred and thirtieth year he begot not in his likeness and his own image. It is therefore not at all strange that the Talmud made such inference, particularly where no charge to the contrary was given to him by his Maker. As to his size, is it not written: "Thou hast put all things under his feet,"<sup>155</sup> which is evidence enough that his size was bigger than the world, which all is but a figure of speech to indicate his greatness. As for his faces front and back, is it not written: "Thou hast formed me ( Zartani ) behind and before."<sup>156</sup> As for the angels eating tongue in mustard, have they not done more gross things than eating, for is it not written: "That the sons of God (angels) saw the daughters of man that they were fair; and they took them wives, whomsoever they chose?"<sup>157</sup> *Yes -*  
Hespasian, the Emperor who burned not only the Talmud but the Holy Writ as well. The ordained and the ordainer were warned, *man* in order to abolish the title Master and Rabbi Chanina b. Teradian were among the ten martyrs who suffered death rather than

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154. Ibid 5:3

155. Psalms 8:7

156. Ibid 139:5

157. Gen. 6:2

forsake the Torah. Such has been decreed ever since Creation; but not because our Torah was found wanting in aught.

"The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul .....  
 the ordinances of the Lord are true." <sup>158</sup> And our Torah  
 protects those who study it. May our God, the God of heaven  
 and earth, Who made the sea and dry land, and Who led our  
 ancestors across the Red Sea and gave us a true Torah, have  
 mercy upon us so that His Name be glorified and His Torah  
 observed, and be good to us because of His Lovingkindness,  
 to restore to us the sweetness of our share in life, and  
 gather us speedily in the harbor of our inheritance, Amen!

*This not by Yehiel but  
 author of account.*

*You omitted to mention that Yehiel was kept under  
 arrest so as not to consult his colleagues &  
 that after he finished his argument to his colleagues  
 Jacob b. David was questioned (see p. 16)*

## CHAPTER TWO.

## DISPUTATION OF NACHMANIDES.

## A Free Translation.

Introductory remarks by Nachmanides: The Rabbis relate: Jesus had five disciples, namely: Matai, Nakai, Nazor, Buni, and Todah. When Matai was brought for execution, he said: "Shall Matai be slain? Is it not written, 'Matai will come and appear before God'?" And the reply to him was: "Is it not written 'Matai shall die and his name perish'?"<sup>159</sup> When Nakai was brought, he said: "Shall Nakai be slain? Is it not written, 'And Nakai and the righteous slay thou not'?" And the reply to him was: "Is it not written, 'in secret places shall he slay Nakai'?"<sup>160</sup> When Nazor was brought, he said: "Shall Nazor be slain? Is it not written, 'And Nazor shall grow forth out of his roots'?" And the reply to him was: "Is it not written, 'But thou art cast forth away from thy grave like an abhorred Nazor'?"<sup>161</sup> When Buni was brought, he said: "Shall Buni be slain? Is it not written, 'Buni, my first-born son'?" and the reply to him was: "Is it not written, 'Behold, I will slay thy Buni'?"<sup>162</sup> When Todah was brought, he said: "Shall Todah be slain? Is it not written, 'A Psalm of Todah'?" And

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159. Ps. 42:3

Ibid 41:6. The Hebrew word Matai, meaning when, is used here as a pun.

160. Ex. 23:7

Ps. 10:8. The pun here is Nakai, meaning innocent.

161. Is. 11:1; Ibid 14:19. The pun Nazor, meaning twig.

162. Ex. 4:22-23. The pun - Buni means my son.

the reply to him was, "Is it not written, 'Whoso offereth Todah as a sacrifice honoreth Me'?" Thereupon Rashi comments that because they were courtiers, replies had to be given to them, but the replies were in harmony with the questions asked, which were sheer absurdities. <sup>163</sup> Like replies I am here chronicling, because similar questions were asked of me by Pablo Christiano in the presence of the king and his counsellors, on whose command the disputation between me and the convert took place at Barcelona (1263).

Nachmanides: I will obey the command of the king, if I may enjoy free speech. For this favor, I beseech both, the king and friar Remon and his associates here.

Friar Remon: On condition that you speak not shamefully.

Nachmanides: I do not desire you be the censures thereof, <sup>2</sup> as I must express fully what I have to say in this dispute, as you are expressing your full desire in connection therewith. I understand how to express myself ethically, but I must express the prompting of my soul.

All: You have our permission of free speech.

Nachmanides: There are many matters of dispute between the priests and the Jews which do not touch the fundamentals, but the customs of their respective religions. I do not desire to dispute in this honorable Court save only concerning

163. Sanhed. 42b  
See Hesronot ha-Shas.

*no note of identifi-  
fication*

*Answer?*

*? with a  
frequency in  
Medieval*

*history, in*

*Culture, in*

*here'de*

*Really*

*was a*

*learned*

*person*

matters which are entirely decisive.

17, Taken from Arabic,  
means here 'religion',  
name 'man'.

All: Right! The disputation will be: (a) Whether the Messiah has already come, as the Christians contend, or he is yet to come, as the Jews believe; (b) Whether the Messiah is really God or a real man, born of man and woman; (c) Is the true Torah upheld by the Jews, or are the Christians practicing it?

ten or  
which  
he whole  
religion  
(of years)  
is based

Pablo Christiano: I can prove from their Talmud that the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets testify, has already come.

Nachmanides: Before we will debate this point, I would ask you to enlighten me: How is it possible for you to aver things which you can never substantiate?

Pablo Christiano: But the Talmudists did believe so.

Nachmanides: I am very much surprised at him, altho I did hear that he made similar statements to the Jews of many places. Let him answer me: Does he contend that the Talmudists believed in Jesus, that he is the Messiah, and that they believed that he was both, man and God, ~~and not simply~~ a man, even as the Christians think? Is it not a fact that the Jesus affair was during the Second Temple, and that he was born and was killed before its destruction? Whereas the Talmudists, such as Rabbi Akiba and his associates, and the Mishnaists, such as Rabbi Judah Nashi and Rabbi Nathan, were

Omitted  
intention  
point  
that when  
James I  
was in  
Jerusalem  
Pablo or  
found them  
to many  
Jews

all  
not with  
30/1/13

My misunderstanding passage. No reply by Christiano.  
Nachmanides go on to say: "Let him (Christiano) state what he means to say that God is of Israel."  
He is a Jew and a Talmudist.

49  
four (correct)

after its destruction. More so, to mention Rab Ashi, the compiler of the Talmud, who lived about five centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple. If, as Pablo Christiano avers, the Talmudists believed in Jesus, in his Messiahship, and in his religion, how is it that they remained within the folds of the Jewish religion and customs, they and their children and their disciples, and lived and died as Jews, even as we are today? We ourselves, who were instructed in the Talmud, follow its interpretation of the religion of Moses, and all that which the Talmudists observed and inaugurated, we adhere to until this day. For the whole scope of the Talmud is no more than to teach us the commandments and the Torah, even as the Fathers received the instructions how to follow the Torah in the Temple from the prophets and from Moses. If they believed in Jesus and in his religion, why have they not done as Pablo Christiano did, when he claims to understand the text written by them better than they did themselves?

Pablo Christiano: This is a lengthy argument calculated to destroy the debate. But notwithstanding your views, hear what I have to say.

Nachmanides: But this is clear evidence to me that he will not say anything consequential; yet will I hear what he will say because the lord our king wills it so.

Pablo Christiano: Behold, it is written: "The sceptre





descendants of Hillel who instruct the public in the Torah." <sup>165</sup>  
 Whereas today even this form of dominion disappeared completely,  
 for there is none among you now entitled to be called Rabenu,  
 our Master; <sup>166</sup> even in referring to you as Master, it is an  
 error, and you are assuming the title falsely.

Nachmanides: The latter part of your sentence is not part  
 of the debate, yet even this statement of yours is untrue. Ra-  
 benu does not mean Master; Rab is the word for it; and without  
 the traditional form of ordination, the Talmud calls a learned  
 man Rab. As for myself, I confess I am neither Master nor good  
 scholar. Nevertheless, let me inform you that the meaning of  
 the Talmudist in interpreting that verse is concerning political  
 power only. You are uninformed in Talmudic Law. You may possess  
 a bit of knowledge in Haggadah, which you have acquired. The  
 subject of ordination, (Semicha), mentioned in the Talmud, con-  
 cerns procedure in law, which is but right that any man exer-  
 cising judicial power should have such authority conferred upon  
 him by either the reigning prince or exilarch. Therefore, in  
 Diaspora, descendants of the princes of Judah, who had influence  
 and some power at the courts of Gentile kings, had the author-  
 ity to confer such ordination (Semicha). Such was the practice  
 for over 400 years after Jesus. And it never was thought of to  
 have the Semicha conferred only upon descendants of Judah. But  
 what the prophecy promised is concerning actual political potency

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165. Sanhedrin 5a

166. See supra (137).

and power. Nevertheless, as I pointed out before, in Babylon they had no dominion; and during the Second Temple, when the Hasmonean priests reigned, Judah had no form of power, for even the power of appointing presidents of tribunals and exilarchs was in the hands of the government. *Barre (Peter)*

*No! another point: For de vergeron.*  
Pablo Christiano: This is true; the Scripture says that dominion would not end, but it could be interrupted for a time.

*No*  
 Nachmanides: Behold, your majesty, Pablo Christiano has decided the dispute in the light of my words!

*No*  
Pablo Christiano: I rendered no decision, for the interruption of seventy years in Babylon is but a small matter, considering that there were many who had remembered the First Temple, even as it is related in the Book of Ezra, <sup>167</sup> which can be considered as a vacancy for a time. But now, since there is no dominion in your hands more than a thousand years, it must be considered a complete elimination.

Nachmanides: Now you are repenting your admission that that which can return is not complete elimination, and that the words of the prophet *there is difference* cannot be divided between a long and a short period of time. Furthermore, the periods I mentioned are long. Moreover, our Father Jacob, peace be with him! ~~did~~ not assure Judah with dominion over his own tribe alone, for he gave him the government of all Israel, as it is written, "Judah, thee

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shall thy brethern praise; and as it is also written: "For Judah prevailed above his brethern, and of him came he that is the ruler."<sup>169</sup> And behold, after the death of Solomon, Judah ceased to govern all Israel, as it is written: "There was none that followed the House of David, but the tribe of Judah only."<sup>170</sup> Thus, it is evident that what the prophecy means is that it will not be eliminated completely for all times. The truth of the matter is that during the period of exile it is neither elimination nor cessation, because it is not on account of Judah, but on account of the people; and the prophet could not assure Judah that Israel will not be dispersed so that he could rule over them all the time.

Pablo Christiano: The Talmud itself conceded that the Messiah has already come, and here is my evidence: "A certain man was plowing and the ox bellowed. Just then an Arab passed him by and asked him: 'Of what nationality art thou?' And he replied: 'I am a Jew.' Said the Arab: 'If so, let loose thy ox and thy plough.' (as a sign of mourning). Said the Jew: 'Why?' Said the Arab: 'The Temple is destroyed.' Said the Jew: 'How dost thou know it?' Said the Arab: 'I know it from the bellowing of thy ox.' While they were thus occupied, the ox bellowed again. Said the Arab: 'Harness thy ox, pick up thy plough again,<sup>171</sup> for the Redeemer of the Jews was born.'"

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168. Gen. 49:8

169. First Chron. 5:2.

170. I Kings 12:20

171. Midrash Raba, Lament. 1:57. The convert quoted wrongly, corrected text translation made.

*T. See Jer. Bar. c. 2  
150)*

Nachmanides: I do not believe in this Haggadah at all; yet it is full support to my contention.

Pablo Christiano: See! He denies their own books!

Nachmanides: Truly, I do not believe that the Messiah was born on the day of the destruction of the Temple, and the Haggadah which gives out the story is either untrue, or has a secret meaning known to the wise. Nevertheless, will I accept it in its plain form, even as you stated it, for it supports my contention. It asserts that on the day of the destruction of the Temple, the Messiah was born. If so, Jesus is not the Messiah, as you maintain, for he was born and put to death before the destruction of the Temple. In truth, his birth took place nearly two centuries before the destruction, but even your own reckoning admits that his birth took place seventy-three years before the destruction.

Pablo Christiano: Became dumbfounded.

*e. S. Gillis*  
Gillis K.C: The debate now is not concerning Jesus. The question now under discussion is: Whether the Messiah has come already or not? You stated that he has not come, and your book states that he has come.

Nachmanides: You run away with cunning, as is your custom in legal debates; nevertheless, I will give my answer here: it does not say that he came, but that he was born. On the day Moses our Master, peace be with him! was born, it can neither

be said of him that he came nor that he was a redeemer; only when he came to Pharoah with the command of God, saying to him: "Thus saith, the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go,'" <sup>172</sup> then he came. Likewise, <sup>when the Messiah will come to the Pope</sup> and say to him: "By the command of God, let my people go!" then will he have arrived. ) Till this day he has not come and is, therefore, not a Messiah at all. When David was born, he was neither king nor Messiah; but when Samuel anointed him, he became the anointed of God. When Elijah will invest the Messiah with <sup>my commandments</sup> the commandments of God, then will it be said: "He came!" *this belongs to him*

Pablo Christiano: The chapter, beginning with the words: <sup>173</sup> "Behold, My servants shall prosper!" relates to the subject of Messiah's death, of his being turned over to the hand of his enemies, of his being buried in the same grave with the wicked, even as it happened to Jesus, do you believe that it relates to Messiah?

Nachmanides: In its true sense, the chapter speaks for our people Israel in general, for such is the accustomed way of the prophets to say: "My servant Israel;" <sup>174</sup> "My servant Jacob." <sup>175</sup>

Pablo Christiano: And I can prove by the statements of their own scholars that it speaks of the Messiah.

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172. Ex. 5:1

173. Isaiah 52:13  
53:1-17

174. Ibid 41:5

175. Ibid 44:1

*You have not traced the whole subject of the prediction of the passage in Isaiah*

Nachmanides: It is true that our Rabbis, of blessed memory, in the Haggadah sermonize on it with reference to Messiah, but they never suggested that he would die by the hands of his enemies; for you cannot find in any of Israel's books, either the Talmud or the Haggadah, that Messiah, son of David, would ever be killed, or turned over in the hands of his enemies, or be buried with the wicked. Even your Messiah, whom you created for yourself, was not so buried. If you desire to listen, I will explain to you the meaning of this chapter.

All: We do not desire to listen to it.

Pablo Christiano: It is related in the Talmud: "Rabbi Jehoshua b. Levi asked Elijah: 'When will the Messiah come?' Answered Elijah: 'Ask Messiah himself.' 'Where is he?' 'At the gate of Rome, among the sick.' He went there and found him." <sup>176</sup> That proves that he has already come and is in Rome, the Rome where Jesus reigns.

Nachmanides: Is it not apparent from this very Haggadah, that he has not yet come, since he asked Elijah, 'When will he come'? Moreover, the same Haggadah relates that Jehoshua b. Levi asked Messiah himself: 'When will you, my Master, come?' <sup>177</sup> Being so, it is evident that he has not yet come, but that he was born, as it is plainly stated in the Hagadoth; and I believe the meaning thereof to be so.

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176. See Snahed. 98a.

177. Ibid.

*v.l. I do not think  
Haggadah*

The King: If he was born on the day of the destruction of the Temple, since when more than a thousand years have gone by, and he has not yet come, how can he ever come, seeing that it is not natural for a person to live a thousand years ?

Nachmanides: Altho the stipulated conditions of the disputation were that I should not debate with your majesty and that your majesty should not interpolate during the disputation, I will, nevertheless, diverge enough to say: Adam and Methuselah each lived nearly a thousand years, and Elijah and Enoch exceeded them by far, enjoying life forever.

The King: But where is he now?

Nachmanides: This is not relevant to the disputation, and I am, therefore, not obliged to answer you. Perhaps you will find him at the gates of Toledo, if you will send thither one of your runners.

The King: Adjourned the disputation until the following day.

Second Day: The king, a bishop, and all the clergy, professors and lecturers, and a large number of Jews and Gentiles gathered in the cloister, where the king ordered the disputation to be resumed. Pablo Christiano rose to speak.

Nachmanides: My lord, hear me!

The King: He will speak first, for he is the plaintiff.

all  
into  
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Nachmanides: Let me make a clear resumé of my opinion concerning the Messiah; he will then be able to reply accordingly.

The King: Gave his assent.

Nachmanides: Hear ye all nationals assembled! Pablo Christiano asked me: "Has the Messiah, of whom the prophets spoke, already come?" I said: "No." He thereupon produced a book of Haggadah wherein it is stated that on the day of the destruction of the Temple the Messiah was born. I said; "I do not believe in that Haggadah, yet it is evidence for my contention." I now desire to explain why I said that I do not believe that Haggadah. We have three different kinds of books, namely: The Bible, in which we all faithfully believe; the Talmud, which is an interpretation of the commandments of the Torah, for the Torah contains 613 commandments, and there is not one of these which is not fully explained in the Talmud; and the third book we call Midrash, that is to say, sermons. As, for instance, the bishop here would deliver a sermon, and one of the audience would write it down because he liked it. The belief in the Midrash is optional. If one believes in it, it is well; if he does not believe in it, he does no harm. There are among our scholars those whose writings tell us that Messiah will not be born until immediately preceding the end of our exile, when he will come to deliver us. Moreover, the name Haggadah, applied by us to this book, means that it consists of folk tales. Therefore do I not believe that the Messiah was born on the day the

*Your majesty asked a better question than  
any of them*

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Temple was destroyed. Nevertheless, I accept this Haggadah in its literal form, as you suggest, for it supports my contention that it does not refer to your Jesus, for he was not born on that day, and the whole interest therein was removed as a factor by a long process of intervening time. Your majesty, wiser than any of them, asked: "How can it be, when it is not within the nature of man to live a thousand years?" Now I will make my reply clear: Behold, Adam lived 930 years; he died because he had sinned. Had he not sinned his life would have been extended much more, perhaps forever; and both the Jews and Gentiles confess that the sin of Adam will be wiped off when Messiah's era will dawn; this is in so far as we ourselves are concerned; but the sin of Adam never rested upon the Messiah; he, therefore, remained immune from the visitation of death, and can live a thousand, or thousands of years, or forever. Even so the Psalmist avers, saying: "He asked life of Thee; Thou gavest him, even length of days for ever and ever." Your majesty again asked: "Where is the Messiah now located?" It is stated in Holy Writ that Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, but when he sinned, it is said: "Therefore, the Lord, God, sent him forth from the Garden of Eden." Messiah, who was absolved from that sin, was not subject to the punishment; thus it is established that his place is in the Garden of Eden. Even so was it asserted by the authors of the aforesaid Haggadah.

178. Ps. 21:5

179. Gen. 3:23.

180. See Supra (176).

The King: Have you scholars not said in that Haggadah that he is in Rome?

אמרו

Nachmanides: Not that he is located in Rome, but that on a certain day he can be seen there. Elijah told Rabbi Jehoshuah that he could find him and see him in Rome on a certain day. The reason he saw him there is given in the Talmud; but I am disinclined to repeat that reason in the presence of this gathering of many nationals. I will, however, impart it to your majesty in private.

The King: Consented to hear that reason in private.

Nachmanides: Messiah will remain there until he destroys<sup>181</sup> it, even as it happened with Moses, who was brought up in the house of ~~Pharaoh~~ until, in the end, he saw him and his people sink to the bottom of the ocean; and even as it is said of Hiram, King of Tyre: "Therefore have I brought forth a fire<sup>182</sup> from the midst of thee; it hath devoured thee;" and even so it is said: "There shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie<sup>183</sup> down, and consume the branches thereof." Moreover, in elaborating over this Haggadah, it is said: "Messiah will remain in Rome until one man will say to another: 'Here! Have Rome and all its possessions for a penny,' and the other will say: 'I have no need for it.'" <sup>184</sup> Are you (speaking to the King and to Pablo

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181. Ibid.

182. Ezek. 28:18

183. Is. 27:10

184. Pirke Hecholot, by Rabbi Ismael the High Priest, on Kabalah 5:5. See Arze ha-Labanon, 5361 edition.

*all related to (but hardly by)*  
*not translation but original from the original text*

Christiano, the whole audience now listening again) acknowledging that the sin of Adam will be annulled at the dawn of the Messianic era, even as I stated?

The King and Pablo Christiano: Yes; but not as you express it. The idea is, that as a result of that sin, all descended to Gehenna, but in the days of the Messiah it was annulled, because Jesus brought them all up.

Nachmanides: This statement of yours is in harmony with what our country folks say: "He who desires to lie, claims<sup>185</sup> evidence in a far-off place." There are many kinds of punishments mentioned following the sin of Adam and Eve: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake .... thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ..... in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread ..... for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."<sup>186</sup> "And unto the woman He said, ....<sup>187</sup> in pain thou shalt bring forth children." All of these are now as they were; everything which we can see or feel with our senses were not wiped out during the time of your Messiah, whereas Gehenna, which was not at all mentioned in the Torah, you say that it was not wiped out, because there is none to refute it. It would be best evidence to have one of you go there and return here to testify. Moreover, be it far from

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185. See Rabenu Asher, Shebuot 41:10.

186. Gen. 3:17-20.

187. Ibid 3:16.

2  
was not  
(wiped out)

God to punish the righteous with Gehenna on account of the sin of Adam. My soul is as near to the soul of my father as it is to the soul of Pharaoh. Because of Pharaoh's sin, my soul will not go into Gehenna. But the punishments were physical. My body is from my father and mother. When it was decreed that they suffer death, all their generations forever are by nature mortal beings.

Pablo Christiano: Yet I will bring evidence that the Messianic era has already passed.

Nachmanides: I pray to your majesty, hear me! Our debate is not rooted in the Messiah, nor are our fundamental differences lodged therein. In truth, to me, your majesty is worth more than Messiah. You are a king and he is a king. You are a Gentile king and he is a king over Israel. The Messiah is no more than a king of blood and flesh, as you are. When I serve my Creator with your permission, in exile, suffering in subjugation, stigmatized by the populace and shamed by them constantly, my reward is indeed great, for I am offering my own body as a sacrifice and thereby I will merit life in the World to Come, more and more. But when there will be a king, an Israelite, established by authority of my own Torah, ruling all peoples, I will be forced to stand by the religion of Israel. Then will my reward not be as great. But the foundation of the dispute and differences between Jews and Christians rests upon what you say is to you the pillar of divinity, which makes the subject difficult and bitter indeed. You, my lord

our king, a Christian, son of a Christian father and mother, have heard priests and preachers speak of the birth of Jesus; they have filled your brains and saturated the marrow of your bones with it, therefore, it stays with you as a force of habit. But that which you believe, and which is the prop of your faith, cannot be accepted by reason, nor adopted as a force of nature; the prophets have not foretold it, nor can the miracle thereof be elaborated upon, as I will demonstrate by conclusive evidence in its place and time. The Creator of the Heavens and the earth and all that is therein, becomes an embryo and spends an antenatal period of (seven) nine months in the womb of a Jewess. He is born an infant and grows up; then he is turned over into the hands of his enemies, who pronounce upon him the judgment of death and do put him to death, when, as you say, he returns back to his original state! The Jewish mind, or that of any other man, can conceive no such thing. Your words, in speaking thus, are vain and folly. This really is the basis of our differences. Yet, if your desire be such, we may also debate concerning the Messiah.

Pablo Christiano: And do you believe that he came?

Nachmanides: No; and I believe and know that he has not come; for there never was a man who said, nor one concerning whom others said, that he was the Messiah, save only Jesus, and in his Messiahship it is impossible for me to believe, because the prophet said concerning Messiah: "May he have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of

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the earth;" whereas, he had no dominion at all, but, on the contrary, during his lifetime, he fled from his enemies and hid himself from them until, in the end, he fell into their hands and could not save himself, much less save all Israel. Even after his death he had no dominion. Rome was not built because of him, for long before there was any belief in him, Rome was a great city, capital of most of the world. In fact after people commenced to believe in him, much of Rome's dominion waned. Even now the followers of Mohammed have a greater dominion than they that believe in Jesus. Furthermore, the prophet says, concerning the Messianic era: "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know the Lord;' for they shall all know Me." and it also is said: "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" and it is even said:

"And they shall beat their swords into plow-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall lift no sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" whereas, since the day of Jesus until today, the world is full of violence and robbery, and the Christians shed more blood than the rest of the nations, and commit more adultery, too. How hard would it go with your majesty and these your troopers if there

188. Ps. 72:8

189. Jer. 31:34

190. Is. 11:9

191. Ibid 2:4

would be no more instructions in the art of war! The prophet also says about Messiah: "And he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth;<sup>192</sup> thereupon, comments the Haggadah, the very book now in the hand of Pablo Christiano, saying: "When a report will come into the King Messiah that a certain state rebelled against him, he will merely say: 'Bring a swarm of grasshoppers and let them destroy it;' or when it will be reported to him that a certain district rebelled against them, he will merely say: 'let a swarm of flies come upon them and devour them.'<sup>193</sup> This was not what Jesus did; and you, his servants, find mounted horses to be of good service, and sometimes even those are of no benefit to you. And I still have more evidence from the words of the prophets to convince you.

Pablo Christiano: Such is his way! He makes lengthy speeches just when I have something to ask him!

The King: Nachmanides, be quiet; Pablo Christiano is the inquisitor.

Pablo Christiano: Behold their scholars said concerning Messiah, that he is more esteemed than the angels, and this is impossible to be with any other save Jesus, who is both the Messiah and God himself; for even so they interpreted the verse:<sup>194</sup> "He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high,"

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192. Ibid 11:4

193. See Supra (183)

194. Is. 52:13.



saying: 'He shall be exalted, above Abraham; lifted up, above  
 195  
 Moses; and very high, even higher than the angels.'

Nachmanides: Our scholars said it quite often of the  
 righteous! "The righteous are greater than the ministering  
 196  
 angels;" even of the people of Israel is it said: "Israel  
 197

is held more dear than the ministering angels." As for the  
 meaning of the Haggadah with regard to Messiah, it is this:  
 Abraham made proselytes, and preached to the nations faith in  
 God, and opposed Nimrod and was not afraid of him; Moses ex-  
 celled him, for he, in his meekness, stood against Pharaoh the  
 great, wicked king, without showing any deference for him, and  
 smote him with great plagues and delivered Israel from his hand;  
 the angels, too are urging the redemption of Israel, as it is  
 said: "And there is none that holdeth with me against these,  
 198  
 except Michael your prince;" and it is also said: "And now  
 199  
 will I return to fight with the prince of Persia." But

the Messiah will excel all these in his performance, for his  
 heart will be exalted in following the paths of God, and he  
 will come and command the Pope and the kings of all nations  
 in the name of God, saying: "Send forth My people that they

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195. Sanhedrin 93a, based upon Dan. 3:25

196. Hulin 91b.

197. Dan

198. Dan. 10:21

199. Ibid 10:20

may serve Me;" and he will perform many and great signs and wonders in their midst, for he will not at all fear them, and it is he who will remain in Rome until he will destroy it. And, if you are willing to listen, I am ready to interpret the entire chapter.

Pablo Christiano: I am not. But here is another Haggadah: "The Messiah prays for Israel that God may forgive their sins, and that he takes upon himself to suffer afflictions on condition that 'the resurrection take place in my days; and not only for the dead of my generation do I pray, but even for all who died since Adam, even until now; and not only for those who died a natural death, but even for those who were cast into the sea and were drowned, or who were devoured by wolves and other beasts.'" <sup>200</sup> Behold, the suffering which the Messiah took upon himself is the putting to death of Jesus, who received it upon himself by his own volition.

Nachmanides: Woe to him who feels no shame! All this Jesus did not do; he did not resurrect the dead since Adam, neither did he do aught of all this. Moreover, the prayer proves that he is a man and not God, and it is not in his power to resurrect the dead. As for the self-assumed suffering, it is a reference to the pain the Messiah suffers because he is delayed so much, seeing his people in exile without the power to redeem them, seeing those who serve that which is not God, seeing how they deny him and accept another Messiah.

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200. See Midrash Mishle 9:4.

Also Sanhedrin 98b; Pesachim 54a; Nedarim 39b.

Pablo Christiano: Behold, Daniel said: "Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to forgive iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal vision and prophet, and to anoint the most holy place."<sup>201</sup>

Now this seventy weeks means seventy times seven years, totaling 490 years, which are made up of the seventy years of the Babylonian exile and of the 420 years' duration of the Second Temple; and "to anoint the most holy place" refers to Jesus.

Nachmanides: Was not Jesus thirty times seven years before, according to our reckoning, and at least ten times seven years, even according to your reckoning? As for us, we must accept the former figure, which is based upon the testimony of the men of his own generation, who knew him and of him.

Pablo Christiano: So it was according to our reckoning; for the succeeding verse says: "Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem unto one anointed, a prince, shall be seven weeks;"<sup>202</sup> the anointed, the prince, is Jesus.

Nachmanides: This, too, is a gross error. The very verse divides the seventy weeks mentioned in the preceding verse; it subtracts therefrom the time unto the anointed prince seven weeks; it then figures the sixty-two weeks when "it shall be built again, with broad place and moat;" and in the

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201. Dan. 9:24

202. Ibid 9:25.

the succeeding verse it numbers one week when "he shall make a firm covenant with many," thus totaling seventy weeks. Jesus, whom you call anointed prince,, did not come at the end of seven weeks, but at the end of more than three score weeks, according to your own figuring. I should like to have your interpretation of the chapter in harmony with your figuring, so that I might make reply to it. But you can find no way in the world to harmonize the two. Yet, you seem to feel no shame to speak about something you know nothing of. However, I will tell you: the anointed prince was Zerubbable, who did come at the end of seven weeks, for so it is indicated in the Scriptures.

Pablo Christiano: But how can he be called Messiah (anointed)?

Nachmanides: <sup>203</sup> Cyrus, too, is called Messiah; and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is said: "Touch not my anointed ones." <sup>204</sup> therefore, he is spoken of as a prince; his rulership as a king will not be exalted, but he shall be honored and exalted among his people, even as it is said: "The princes of the people are gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham." <sup>205</sup> Now I will impart to you and your colleagues, if you have a desire to learn, or a heart to understand, the meaning of the whole chapter. I maintain before your majesty and all nationals here assembled that there was neither in this

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203: Is. 45:1

204. Ps. 105:15.  
II Chron. 16:22

205. Ps. 47:10.

chapter nor in the entire Book of Daniel any time limit set for the coming of the Messiah, save only at its end, for so it is evident from the text of the book itself, in this and in other chapters, which relate of his prayer to know when Messiah will come. But in the end of the book it is stated that it was told to him: "And from the time that the continual burnt-offering shall be taken away, and the detestable thing that causeth appalment<sup>206</sup> set up, there shall be a thousand, two hundred and ninety days." Now I will explain the meaning of the text of this verse, altho it might be questionable to the Jews here present. Daniel says that "from the time the continual burnt-offering was taken away" until "the detestable thing that causeth appalment" will be made desolate, meaning Rome, which destroyed the Temple, will elapse a thousand, two hundred and ninety years. "Then," Daniel continues saying, "Happy is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand, three hundred and five and thirty years;"<sup>207</sup> thus adding forty-five years. The reason for this is: At the first period the Messiah will come and lay waste "that detestable thing", which worships a no-god, and wipe it off from the face of the earth. Then he will gather the dispersed Israel into the wilderness of the nations, even as it is said: "And bring her to the wilderness<sup>208</sup> and speak tenderly unto her." then will he bring Israel

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206. Dan. 12:11; The Hebrew word Yomim must be here translated years and not days. See Lev. 25:29; Ex. 13:10; Gen. 24:54.

207. Dan. 12:12.

208. Hos. 2:26.

2 1/2 yrs. the  
whole  
calibration  
of the  
for a year  
(see next page)

to their land, which is as Moses, the first redeemer, did. *Manides believed that he*  
This will come to pass after the lapse of forty-five years. *Same in 1358*

Thereafter, the people of Israel will live undisturbed in their  
land, and they will rejoice in their God, and in David their  
king. <sup>209</sup> Happy, indeed, is he who waiteth and cometh to those  
good days! And, behold, it is now, since the destruction,  
a thousand, one hundred and ninety-five years, and it is our  
hope that the Messiah will come at that time, for this in-  
terpretation is well-founded, and proper, and believable. *Manides believed that he*  
*Same in 1358*

Pablo Christiano: Behold, the scholars of the Haggadah  
said: "Those additional days, what are they? They are the  
forty-five days in which the redeemer will be hid from them.  
Even as Moses, the first redeemer, appeared and then was con-  
cealed from them, so will the last redeemer appear and be con-  
cealed from them." <sup>210</sup> In this Haggadah, the scholars employ  
the term Yom, which means day, that is to say, forty-five  
days, and not years. *Manides believed that he*  
*Same in 1358*

Nachmanides: The Midrash quoted the language of the verse,  
where it speaks of forty-five Yomim, -years; such is an ex-  
pression of the Rabbis, "He quotes the language of the verse."

Pablo Christiano: There is not a Jew in the world who will  
not admit that the meaning of Yom is day. Your majesty, I  
appeal to you, let a Jew be brought forward and asked what  
the meaning of Yom is.

209. See Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5

210. *Reference?*

The King: Ordered a Jew from the audience to step forward and asked him: "What is the meaning of Yom in your language?"

The Jew: Day!

Nachmanides: My lord, the king! This Jew is a fit judge to be appointed by Pablo Christiano, but not by me. Yom, in scriptural language, designates a period of time, as: "At the time when I smote every first-born",<sup>211</sup> where the term Yom is employed; for a collection of days the term Yomim is employed, meaning years. In this instance the verse speaks of years, as it was necessary for Daniel to conceal the time-limit of the exile, even as the angel instructed him: "But, thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased."<sup>212</sup> But I am speaking wisdom to him who has neither knowledge nor understanding, and who should be judged by fools, who can make him believe such of which he should be ashamed.

*2. Jerome the famous church father*  
 Friar Arnold: See, Girnemosh interprets here the meaning of Yomim as days, which is the ordinary understanding of the masses. *people.*

Nachmanides: You can recognize from my argument that the word Yomim here is not to be taken in the ordinary sense as in other places; he therefore had to create the interpretation.

211. Num. 3:13; 8:17

212. Dan. 12:4



But I think that what he said to be days, as the masses understand them, is really meant for years, as the masses usually speak of "something which is many days since another thing happened" to emphasize that it is many years since.

Pablo Christiano: Behold, their scholars of the Haggadah said: "Messiah entered the Garden of Eden. On the merit of what? Because he saw his parents serving idolatry, and he separated himself from them and served God; he was admitted into the Garden of Eden." 213.

Nachmanides: Your quotation makes me laugh, for it is good evidence for my contention that he is the son of an idolator, a mortal man whom God rewarded when he departed from the ways of his fathers and did not serve idolatry, like unto them. Can such be said of God himself? Read the text of the Haggadah, which is as follows: "Fourteen entered the Garden of Eden, among whom are included Sorach, the daughter of Asher, and <sup>Bathya</sup> Beseyo, the daughter of Pharoah." 214. If the one mentioned by Pablo Christiano is meant for Jesus, and he is God, as you think, he surely is not among the women there, but the heavens are his throne and the earth his footstool. Far be it from saying so! But the truth is as I said at the outset, that he is in the Garden of Eden, in the house of Adam, where he lived before he sinned. So is the opinion of the Haggadic scholars, which is conclusive.

The King: Rose up and adjourned the debate.

213.

214.



Third Day: The king appointed the palace as the place for the continuation of the debate, and ordered that it be held in private.

Pablo Christiano: I will bring evidence, in rebuttal, the statement of a great scholar, the like of whom was not among them these four hundred years; his name is Master Moses of Egypt, <sup>215</sup> who states: "Messiah will die and his son and son's son will succeed him." Thus, it is not as you have stated that the Messiah will not die, as is the natural thing among mankind. To prove my argument, I want someone to bring the <sup>216</sup> Book of Shophtim.

Nachmanides: There is no such statement in that book; but I own that there are those among our scholars who do say so, even as I mentioned in the beginning that it is the opinion of the Haggadic books that the Messiah was born on the day of the destruction of the Temple and that he would live forever. But the opinion of the literal interpreters is that he will be born near the time of redemption, that he will live to a ripe old age, and will die glorified, and his son will inherit his crown, which is also my opinion, as I expressed it long before, during the course of this disputation.

Pablo Christiano: Looked in the Book of Shophtim and could not find the statement quoted by him.

215. Maimonides.

216. Last Book of Maimonides' Yod ha-Chazakah.

*1/4 can  
date  
impos-  
sible.  
Not yet  
60 years  
I will  
death  
of Maimonides*

Nachmanides: Took up the book and read: "The Messianic king is destined to arise for Israel, and he will rebuild the Holy Temple, and gather all the scattered of Israel." 217

Friar Arnold: He lies!

Nachmanides: Even now he was a great scholar, the like of whom there is none, and of a sudden he is lying!

The King: It is unworthy to disgrace scholars.

Nachmanides: He does not lie; I will prove by the Torah and by the prophets that his entire statement is true. The Messiah is to gather all the scattered of Israel and the dispersed of Judah, in fact, twelve tribes; your Messiah, Jesus, gathered not a man of them, and was not at the time of exile. The Messiah has to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem; Jesus did not do aught to it, neither building nor destroying. The Messiah is to have dominion over all nations, and he had no dominion even over himself. I shall read for you what the Torah tells us concerning this matter: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee .... And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, that persecuted thee." 218 Our enemies are the Christians, and they that hate us are the Mohammedans.

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217. Shophtim, Melachim 11.

218. Deut. 30:1-7.

Many knights

Pablo Christiano: Answered not a word and the debate was adjourned.

Fourth Day: All reassembled at the palace; the king took his seat on the throne; and the bishop and the many dignitaries, troopers, citizens, and a vast mob crowded into the palace.

Nachmanides: I am disinclined to continue the disputation any further.

The King: Why?

Nachmanides: Behold, this multitude here, they all prevent me, for they asked me not to; they fear sorely the anger of the preachers who cast a terror upon the public. Besides, the leading and most honored clergy among them sent a warning to me not to do it. Troopers from your own household told me that I am doing wrong in speaking against their belief. Even some of my fellow Jews were advised by citizens that I better not do it.

The Audience: Seeing that the king favored the continuation of the debate, reluctantly called out its assent, and it was decided to continue.

Nachmanides: I will debate, but I am within my legal rights to ask questions one day and let Pablo Christiano answer them, seeing that he has already questioned me three days and I did the answering.

The King: Nevertheless, you answer him.

Nachmanides: I will obey your command.

Pablo Christiano: The Messiah concerning whom the prophets spoke, according to your belief, will he be a perfect human and really divine?

Nachmanides: The original condition of the disputation was to debate, first: whether the Messiah already came; thereafter, we will debate: whether he is God himself. Behold, you have not proved that he came, for I have destroyed all your absurd evidence. In this, therefore, have I won, as the burden of proof is upon you, and so you have undertaken upon yourselves to decide. Should you not confess judgment in my favor; I am undertaking to produce conclusive evidence, if you will but hear me. And when it will become clear that your Jesus is not the Messiah, you have no need to debate concerning the Messiah who is destined to come to us, whether he will be a perfect human being, or what he will be.

Learned Judges: Judgment on the first question of the disputation in favor of Nachmanides!

The King: Nevertheless, answer!

Nachmanides: The truth is that the Messiah will come, and he will be a full human being, the son of a man and a woman, both of whom will have shared in his being; and he will be of the seed of David, as it is written: "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse;" <sup>219</sup> and it is said,

moreover: "Until Shiloh come," <sup>220</sup> which means, until the man born as other men, in a Shiloh, which is Hebrew for secundiness, will come. Now, had your Messiah been the spirit of God, as you say, he cannot be said to be a descendant of David, even tho he was lodged in the womb of a woman tracing descent from David; he could not inherit the throne, for daughters and their issues are not heirs where there is male issue, and David and his descendants always had male issue.

Pablo Christiano: Behold, the Psalmist says: "A Psalm of David; The Lord saith unto my Lord: 'Sit thou at My right hand, <sup>221</sup> until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'" Who is this one whom King David names 'my lord', save only God? And how can a man sit at the right hand of God?

The King: He is asking well, for if the Messiah were mere man, really from the seed of David, David would not have addressed him 'my lord'. Had I a son, even a grandson, reigning over the world, I would not say to him 'my lord!'; on the contrary, I would expect him to call me 'lord' and to kiss my hand.

Nachmanides: And are you the wise Jew who discovered this news for which you gave up your religion and became a convert? And are you the one who advised the king to gather for your

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220. Gen. 49:10.

221. Ps. 110:1

pleasure the wise men of the Jews to debate with them your newly discovered theories? Have we not heard of this until now? Is it not a fact that there is not a Christian, from priest down to suckling, who does not ask of the Jews this question? For, in truth, this question suffers from old age.

The King: Yet answer it.

Nachmanides: Now, hear me: King David was the poet who composed the Psalms under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for the specific purpose of singing them before the Altar of God. He himself did not sing them, as he was disallowed to do so, according to the laws of the Torah. So he gave them to the Levites to sing. That it was so appears clear in the verse, saying: "And he appointed certain of the Levites, etc." <sup>222</sup> This being so, David had to compose the Psalms in the language fit for the Levite to recite. It would have been falsely spoken had the Levite been made to say: "The Lord saith unto me"; but it was proper that the Levite should say: "Saith the Lord to my lord; (meaning David) 'Sit thou at My right hand.'" Sitting at the right hand of God means to be under His protection, that God would save him and make him mightier than his enemies. And it was so. One of his warriors <sup>223</sup> unsheathed his sword on eight hundred fallen at one time.

Is there one among these troopers present here who can do it for your majesty? Of such is the right hand of God. And so

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222. I Chron. 16:4-5.

223. II Sam. 23:8

it is written by David: "And Thy right hand hath holden me  
up;" <sup>224</sup> it is likewise written: "The right hand of the Lord

is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." <sup>225</sup>

So it also is said of Moses: "Where is He that put His Holy  
Spirit in the midst of them? That caused His glorious arm

to go at the right hand of Moses?" <sup>226</sup> And at the downfall

of Pharaoh, it is said: "Thy right hand, O Lord, dasheth  
in pieces the enemy." <sup>227</sup>

Neither is it strange literary construction in the Bible to use the third person where the

first person is really meant, as it is found quite often.

For example: "And the Lord sent .... and Jephthah and Samuel" <sup>228</sup>

"Ye wives of Lamech," and so are all expressions of Moses,

in reference to himself, in the Torah. Here, the text itself

indicates that its meaning is as I have already stated. Know

ye, therefore, that the Psalms were composed under the guidance

of the Holy Spirit, and relate to David and his son, who will

sit on his throne; who is the Messiah, and what it was with

David in particular, will be with Messiah in general. The

Psalmist, speaking in the third person, is really speaking of himself.

224. Ps. 18:36

225. Ibid 118:16.

226. Is. 63:12

227. Ex. 15:6

228. I Sam. 12:11

229. Gen. 4:23.

right hand of God supported David, so that he conquered his enemies; so will His right hand support the Messiah until all peoples will become the footstool of his feet, for they all are his enemies, having enslaved his people and denied his coming and his reign. Some even went to the extent of accepting another Messiah. It is therefore proper that this psalm should be sung in the Temple, both in the days of David and in the days of the Messiah, his son, for it speaks of the throne of David and his reign.

Pablo Christiano: How can he speak such when their own scholars maintain that the chapter relates to the Messiah, that the words are to be taken literally that he sits at the right hand of God; for it is said in the Haggadah: "In the future time God will order Messiah sit at His right hand and Abraham to His left hand"?

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Nachmanides: Even this verifies my statement, long before expressed, that the prophecy is partly to be fulfilled with David, but fully to be consummated with the Messiah. Here, behold how Pablo Christiano is perverting the text of the Midrash. It says: "In the future time God will order Messiah to sit at His right hand and Abraham to His left. Abraham will become filled with envy, so that his face will turn yellow, saying: 'My son's son sits at the right hand of God and I at His left!' And God will appease him."

231



Here it is evident that Messiah is not a god, and that Jesus was not at all the Messiah. If the Messiah is God, why would Abraham feel ashamed, why would his face become yellow with envy? The expression of Abraham, 'My son's son', is best evidence that it has no reference to Jesus who, according to your statement, was not his 'son's son', or Abraham should say, 'my daughter's son'. The sitting of the Messiah to the right, even as the sitting of Abraham to the left, indicates that both are mere men. It is likewise conclusive proof that Jesus was not the Messiah, as the expression is: "In the future time", and the authors of this Haggadah lived about five centuries after Jesus. But what Pablo Christiano does is this: He devours the beginning and the end of the Haggadic text, and quotes to suit his argument, and is even not ashamed of it!

Pablo Christiano: Behold, in commenting upon the verse,  
 232  
 "And I will walk among you", the Midrash states: "This matter might be compared to the story of a king walking about with his manager in his beautiful park, and the manager continued to act as if stricken with awe. Said the king to him: 'Why are you so timid; I am no more than you are?' So will God, in the Future to Come, walk about with the righteous in the Garden of Eden, and when the righteous will behold Him, they will be filled with fright at His Presence. And God will say unto them: 'Why are you so shaken up with fright, I

am but like yourselves.'" If it be thus, one might say:  
 'There shall be no fear of Me upon you'. I therefore teach  
 you to know that, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be My  
 people.'<sup>233</sup> Is it not a fact, that saying, "I am but like  
 yourselves" means that God turned man like unto them?

Nachmanides: All that which he quotes, if he would only  
 understand it properly, is entirely against his own contention.  
 This story is yet to happen in a future time, in the Garden  
 of Eden. When Jesus was a man upon the earth, he did not  
 walk with the righteous in the Garden of Eden, for he con-  
 stantly fled from before his enemies and persecutors. The  
 truth is that the Midrash is relating a parable, even as it  
 begins with the words, "This matter might be compared to....,"  
 and has entirely to do with the subject of prophecy. The  
 righteous upon earth cannot perceive the truth of prophecy,  
 nor the effulgence of its divine glory, even as it is said:  
 "If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, do make Myself  
 known unto him in a vision; I do speak with him in a dream."<sup>234</sup>  
 Even Moses our Master, when he was first called to prophesy,  
 was stricken with awe, as it is said: "And Moses hid his face,  
 for he was afraid to look upon God."<sup>235</sup> But in the Future  
 that is to Come, when their souls will be cleansed from sin  
 and impurities, they will be privileged to behold that Glory  
 thru the illuminated mirror, as did Moses, of whom it is

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233. Ibid.

234. Num. 12:6

235. Ex. 3:6.

said: "And God spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speak-  
eth unto his friend." <sup>236</sup> In this wise the rabbis, speaking

metaphorically, stated that God would say to the righteous,  
"I am but like yourselves", so that they be not timid nor  
afraid, even as they are not afraid of one another. It is  
the language of the Scriptures, which applies the identical  
term as when one man speaks to a friend. But God did not  
become a man when He spoke to Moses. Such language is often  
used by the Midrashic scholars, as for instance: "If you will  
do My Commandments, I am but like yourselves." <sup>237</sup> And it is  
repeatedly used in the Bible: "And ye shall be as God, know-  
ing good and evil;" <sup>238</sup> "Behold, the man is become as one of  
us;" <sup>239</sup> "And he that stumbleth among them at that day shall  
be as David, and the House of David shall be as a godlike  
being;" <sup>240</sup> all of which is not intended as a real comparison.

Pablo Christiano: It is said in the Midrash: "And the  
Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters;" <sup>241</sup> the  
spirit spoken of here is the spirit of the Messiah;" <sup>242</sup> if

<sup>236</sup> Ex. 33:11

<sup>237</sup> *Reference*

<sup>238</sup> Ex. 3:5

<sup>239</sup> Ibid 3:22

<sup>240</sup> Zecha. 12:8

<sup>241</sup> Gen. 1:2

<sup>242</sup> Mid. R. Gen. 2

so, is it not evident that the Messiah is not a man, but the Spirit of God?

Nachmanides: Woe to him who knows nothing and believes himself a profound scholar! Adam, too, is mentioned in that Midrash; can it also be said of him that he was a God? It is evident that one who knows neither the beginning nor the end, perverts the words of the living God. The Midrash here interprets the Scripture as a prophetic expression about the Four Kingdoms, saying: "'Without form' refers to Babylonia; 'and void' refers to Media; 'and darkness' refers to Greece; 'the face of the deep' refers to the Wicked Kingdom; and 'the Spirit of God' refers to the spirit of Messiah, which will hover over the face of the waters, because the merit of repentance which is likened unto water, will bring it all about." <sup>243</sup> Now, behold, the Midrash passes on Four Kingdoms, the fourth being Rome, then it brings in the Spirit of God, as manifested in the works of Messiah, the real man, endowed with wisdom, filled with the Spirit of God, even as Bezalel <sup>244</sup> was, <sup>245</sup> and as Joshua was. Thus was it said concerning the Messiah who is destined to come in the future after the Fourth Kingdom, not because the literal meaning of the Scriptural verses upon which the Midrashic interpretation is based indicates that it is so, but because the very nature of Midrashic sermonization in many instances is such,

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243. Ibid; See Jer.4:23; Esther 6:18

244. See Ex.31:3

245. See Deut. 34:9

relying chiefly upon the nearness of the expression of the  
 verses or language used with that which is foretold. <sup>246</sup>

Pablo Christiano does not at all understand the text of the very book which he brought. His error is due to his lack of knowledge of the language.

The King: Adjourned the debate and the disputation ended.

Nachmanides: On the day the debate was adjourned, I was received by the king, who officially informed me that the debate was closed, remarking that he had never seen a man pleading "a lost cause" so well as I did. At the king's palace I heard that the king and the preachers intended to come to the synagog on the Sabbath, which prompted me to remain in the city additional eight days. On the following Sabbath, the king appeared in the synagog and sorely tried to convince us that the Messiah, wherever mentioned, is Jesus. I answered the king as follows: there is none more honorable in this world than the king, so are his very fine words; but I cannot endorse them to be true, for I have clear and redoubtable evidence, which shine as does the sun, that they are not true. Yet I cannot take the issue with him, and therefore will I limit myself to the single point which amazes me. The words which the king brings to us are a request to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, whereas the very thing was brought to the ears of our fathers by Jesus himself who made every effort to explain it to them, and in his

*2 No  
 altogether  
 8 days*

Thir Raymond de Penaforte  
all p. 104.

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face they have finally and forcefully denied his claim. If, as you say that he is God, he knew and could offer better proof than the king; yet even him have our fathers refused to believe, altho they have seen him and heard him; how can we believe and hearken to the king who has only secondary information concerning him, having heard about him from persons who knew him not, and were not of his countrymen, as were our fathers, who knew the truth and witnessed the whole matter?

Friar Remon: I maintain that the Trinity consists of reason, desire and will. Moreover, Nachmanides himself, at Granada, admitted to Pablo Christiano, that he believed the Trinity to consist of such.

*Gerona (where Nachmanides lived)  
Granada, in the south of Spain,  
was born  
the  
Machman  
Medan  
Gerona*

Nachmanides: Give ear and listen to my voice, both Jews and Gentiles! At Granada, Pablo Christiano asked me whether I believed in a Trinity. I replied by asking him: What is a Trinity; is it a combination of three bodies, and they are God? And he said: No. I then asked him: Is it a combination of three souls, as, for instance, three angels? And he said: No. Is it one composite being of three elements? And he again said: No. I then asked: What is it then? And he said: Reason, desire, and will. And I said further: I own that God is wise and not foolish, and desires without feeling, and wills without being weak; but the attribute of Trinity is an error, for reason is not an attribute in the Creator, but He and His reason are One, He and His desire are One, and He and His will are One. If so, it follows that reason,

desire and will are all one. Even if these three could be said to be attributes, it would not follow that God is composed of a Trinity, but that He is One possessed of three attributes. At this point, our king illustrated the meaning of the Trinity by a metaphor, which the naturalists taught him, saying: Wine has three things, - color, taste, and smell; yet it is all one. But this is entirely an error. The red, the taste, and the smell in wine are distinct qualities, possible to be independent of one another. There are red, white, and other colors. So it is regarding smell and taste. Moreover, the color, taste, and smell is not the wine itself; the substance of the wine is that which fills the bottle. It is therefore a substance possessed of three separate elements, which have no semblance of unity. And, if we should persist in this metaphorical error, we will be forced to the conclusion that it is not a Trinity, but a quadrinomial, for God Himself, His <sup>wisdom</sup> reason, desire, and will are four. Moreover, you should express it even as a quinquupartite, for God lives; He, His life, His <sup>wisdom</sup> reason, desire, and will are five. And, of course, all this is an obvious error.

Pablo Christiano: I believe in an absolute Unity; nevertheless is the Trinity found therein. But it is a great secret, which even angels and princes of heaven do not understand.

Nachmanides: It is a well-established fact that no man believes what he does not know; thus, even the angels do

not believe in the Trinity, as Pablo Christiano admits that they do not know the meaning thereof.

The King: Left the pulpit and departed with his entourage.

Nachmanides: The following day I was received in audience by the king, who made me a present of three hundred dinars, and bade me farewell with much esteem and love. May God reward me with a share in the World to Come. Amen.



## CHAPTER THREE.

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE VIKKUACH RABBENU YECHIEL AND THE

## VIKKUACH HO - RAMBAN.

There are ten fundamental differences between the disputation of Rabbi Yechiel of Paris and Nicholas Donin, and the disputation of Nachmanides and Pablo Christiano.

I. The contention of Donin, in repeating practically the entire list of the thirty-five counts of indictment against the Talmud, was a direct charge against the Jews for studying and instructing dangerous teachings, for spreading gross libels against their neighbors, for blaspheming the deity of the people among whom they live and from whom they derive their living, for lodging in their hearts a hatred against State and Church, and for dishonesty and cruelty. Both the Jew and his teachings, as exemplified in the quotations from the Talmud, constituted a menace to be rid of. He therefore openly demanded the expulsion of the Jews and the destruction of the Talmud, appealing to the clergy, before he proceeded with his second question in the disputation, saying: "And you, clergy, why do you permit them to be among you?" Pablo Christiano made no such appeals to passion during the entire disputation at Barcelona. On the contrary, he maintained that the real Talmudists, in fact its authors themselves, were as good as the Christians, saying at the very beginning of the disputation: "I can prove from their Talmud that the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets testify,

has already come." The obvious attack of Christiano against the Jews was an indictment for failing to believe in the Talmudic teachings, or for misinterpreting the Talmud. Evidently, conversion of the Jews was the chief object he had in view.

II. The Paris disputation of 1240 was motivated by a desire to exterminate every form of heresy. The Church then was doubly vigilant because of the erstwhile revolt of the Albigenses of southern France against its authority, which had made necessary the introduction of the Inquisition for the obliteration of all opposition to Catholic orthodoxy. The ecclesiastical forces, backed by <sup>Louis</sup> Ludwig IX, needed but the slightest suspicion against an enemy to bring about his destruction. They cared little for converts and had no intention whatever to engage themselves in missionary work. Nicholas Donin had but to inform the authorities that there was danger lurking from some source, be it the Talmud or any other source, and the much coveted revenge was in his grasp. Rabbi Yechiel knew it. His own interpretation of the disputation at its very opening is found in his words: "Why we were brought here, before this sinner (Donin) to defend our very lives and our Torah, we cannot understand." And, again he exclaims: "Verily, our bodies are in your hands, but not our souls!"

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sent  
see p.  
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The Barcelona<sup>11</sup> disputation of 1263 was not a threatening menace to the lives of the Jews, nor to the life of the Talmud. Pablo Christiano was essentially a zealous missionary, journeying among the Jews in the large Jewish centers, and preaching to them that the Talmud itself admits that Jesus was the Messiah.

If he had any other evil motive, as it very likely was the case, he successfully concealed it. Nachmanides, being sure of his ground, resorted to no pleadings, but boldly proclaimed: "I do not desire to dispute in this honorable Court, save only concerning matters which are entirely decisive."

III. The seriousness of the situation evidently had a great deal to do with Rabbi Yechiel's eagerness to impress upon his audience the sincerity of his replies and the absolute truth of his statements. At one point he exclaims: "May I so truly retain my life and return to my home!" And this concerning "boiling filth". Only when he wonders at the fright Donin had for the Moon's complaint, he relaxed the tension a bit by saying: "You are frightened at the Moon's speech!"

Nachmanides introduces the record of his disputation with Christiano by recounting the story of the five disciples of Jesus, and the humorous replies made to them, thereby stating that in such vein was he forced to reply at Barcelona. It is therefore not at all surprising to find in the Vikkuach that he advised the King and Christiano, saying: "It would be best evidence to have one of you go there (in Gehenna) and return here to testify. Or that he replied to the king: "Perhaps you will find him (Messiah) at the gates of Toledo, if you will send thither one of your runners."

IV. The subject of the disputation at Paris was forced upon Rabbi Yechiel, Donin selecting it, thereby saying; "I will interrogate you about an old matter, for I will not deny

*Gerson*  
 that the Talmud is more than four centuries old." The Barcelona disputation was more orderly, the subject being selected by mutual consent, Nachmanides demanding and all consenting to eliminate irrelevant matter and to confine the debate to the points at issue. It was the brilliancy of the great sage of Girona which practically forced the subject of the disputation upon his adversary, without casting the least reflection upon himself that he aimed to strengthen his position at the very outset.

V. Due, perhaps, to the precarious position of the Jews in France during the reign of Ludwig IX (St. Louis), the whole Vikkuach at Paris appears to be a record of a trial, with Donin as the plaintiff and Rabbi Yechiel as the defendant. The request for an oath sounds no less than the procedure for a court of justice. Moreover, the outrageous treatment accorded Rabbi Yechiel by imprisoning him for the duration of the disputation, makes it the more so.

Nachmanides appeared on the scene of the disputation as a scholar ready to deliver a lecture on subject carefully prepared, sure of his superiority, safe in his assertions that they could not be questioned. As such, he mastered his antagonist by exposing his ignorance, rather than by anger at his wickedness. Rabbi Yechiel, on the other hand, stressed the evil intentions, as well as the evil actions of his antagonist, in one instance pronouncing that "his punishment would be destruction by fire."

*2 Did not Nachmanides demand that he be allowed to question Rabbi Donin after he heard the trial for 3 days.*

VI. Rabbi Yechiel's attitude to the Haggadah was somewhat similar to that of Nachmanides. "If you have the inclination, believe it; if you have no such inclination, believe it not," he said to Donin. Nachmanides said to Christiano: "I do not believe in this Haggadah at all." But the different expressions clearly show the negative opinion of Rabbi Yechiel, and the positive opinion of Nachmanides. Donin endeavored to prove the Talmud a menace, without regard as to what part he was attacking; the Halachah to him was as dangerous as the Haggadah. Christiano endeavored to prove that the Jews did not properly understand the Talmud, basing his contention on their refusal to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus, which, according to his interpretation, the Talmud itself admits. His source of strength was the Haggadah he quoted. His tower of strength fell when Nachmanides positively refused to believe the literal meaning of that Haggadah. Rabbi Yechiel's reply regarding the Haggadah was of a negative character, as his whole attitude was to maintain his defensive position intact.

VII. The eagerness of Rabbi Yechiel and his religious fervency is best illustrated in his statement: "Concerning this ruler it is stated: 'And thou shalt pray for the peace of the sovereign.'" The contrast of Nachmanides' biting satire, in saying: "When I serve my Creator, with your permission, etc.... my reward is indeed great; but when there will be a king, an Israelite, etc..... then will my reward not be as great," best describes his state of mind. Christiano called forth

this statement from Nachmanides by asserting that he "will bring evidence that the Messianic era has already passed." Donin forced that defense out of Rabbi Yechiel by indicting the Jews, that they offered prayers against "the king and the people." His interpretation of the Talmudic statement, which

VIII. The audience of Rabbi Yechiel, whether it believed his defense or not, could find no pretense to be roused to indignation, or to feel offended at his replies, which were invariably particular as to the language used regarding their deity. He was bitter against his former pupil Donin. To this no one took exception. At best, he was a M'shumod and an informer, even in the eyes of the very people who used him as a tool to rid France of the least trace of heresy. Nachmanides replied proudly, often sarcastically, in one instance saying: "If the one mentioned by Pablo Christiano is meant for Jesus, and he is God, as you think, he surely is not among the women there." He spared not his adversary, pointing constantly at Christiano's ignorance and attempts at falsification; but neither did he in the least spare the feelings of the adherents of Christianity. With head erect, towering intellectually far above his audience, the flow of words came to him with a fine ingenuity, and made him the envy of his antagonists. He forced the judges to admit that his testimony destroyed Christiano's case, and to render judgment in his favor, even after he pleaded not to proceed further with the disputation on account of the threats he had received.

2 95 years after that time.  
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IX. Rabbi Yechiel made no statement based upon a future hope of his people. He maintained the positive character of the Jewish belief in the Halacha, and the implied respect for the Haggadah; but no one, even now, can point out the least error in his interpretation of the Haggadic statements, which formed the basis of Donin's attack. Nachmanides, in his reply concerning Daniel's prophecy, says in conclusion: "And behold, it is now, since the destruction, a thousand one hundred and ninety-five years, and it is our hope that the Messiah will come at that time, for this interpretation is well-founded and proper, and believable."

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p. 114  
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X. Rabbi Yechiel confined his replies to the meaning of the Talmudic quotations Donin complained about. When Donin denounced the Talmudic Halacha for giving powers to the Rabbis to "do away with the fundamentals of Holy Writ," Rabbi Yechiel replied that the power was only of a temporary character, citing the instance of Elijah's erection of an altar. It was ample for the M'shumod. The truth in Halacha, however, is that only a prophet had the power to suspend temporarily a law of the Torah. The Rabbis had the power to suspend a law of the Torah only when they ordered to refrain from doing a thing, such as blowing the ram's horn trumpet on New Year, when it falls on a Sabbath. In the Temple, it was not considered a violation of the Sabbath, but in the Diaspora they did consider it so. But when the Torah forbids a thing, the Rabbis had no power to permit it even temporarily. Such is the established rule concerning Sheb V'al Taashah, and Kum Vaasah. But Rabbi Yechiel, evidently, did not care to discuss the

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rules of Halacha with the M'shumod, being particularly eager to bring an instance from the Bible against which he could not complain. But Nachmanides was not content with bare interpretations of the Haggadic quotations which were flung at him by Christiano. He went much deeper into the whole subject, saying to the king: "the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is therein, becomes an embryo and spends an antenatal period of (seven)(nine) months in the womb of a Jewess. He is born an infant and grows up; when he is turned over into the hands of his enemies, who pronounce upon him the judgment of death, and do put him to death, when, as you say, he returns back to his original state! The Jewish mind, or that of any other man, can conceive no such thing." This is argument. And it was of a very dangerous nature. The proud position of the Jews of Spain during that period alone prompted Nachmanides to adopt such an attitude. He knew that he was called forth for a disputation. Rules were adopted and a subject selected. He was within his right, and that right he did not surrender either to king or bishop. Rabbi Yechiel knew that he was on trial; that his people were on trial. He resorted to no arguments. He was cross-examined, and as such he gave the best testimony in the history of medieval persecutions.



CHAPTER FOUR

BIOGRAPHIES OF RABBI YECHIEL, NICHOLAS DONIN, NACHMANIDES,  
AND PABLO CHRISTIANO.

A. Rabbi Yechiel ben Joseph of Paris was born at Meaux, at the end of the twelfth century. His French name was Sir Vives, and in rabbinical literature he is known as Yechiel of Paris, Yechiel the Holy, Yechiel the Pious and Yechiel the Elder. He was one of the most distinguished of the scholars and disciples of Judah Sir Leon, whom he succeeded as head of the Talmudical school in Paris, in 1224. This school, while under Yechiel's direction, was attended by many well-known Tosafists, which included Isaac of Corbeil, Perez ben Elijah of Corbeil, Yackar of Chinon, Meir of Rothenburg, and many other famous rabbis of the thirteenth century. Yechiel was favorably received by the French Court, and enjoyed the respect of non-Jew, as well as of Jew. His position as head of the Jewish community compelled him into enter into many controversies with Christians. Once he had to prove the falsity of the arguments advanced by the chancellor of the university, who attempted to show from the Bible that the Jewish ritual demands the use of Christian blood. On another occasion, he debated with a friar who, on the strength of a misunderstood text, maintained that the Jews could not consistently with their beliefs bear witness in courts of justice. However, the most important controversy into which he was drawn was the disputation that he had with the convert, Nicholas Donin, at

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the Court of Louis the IX, in which he refuted the charges of blasphemy that were hurled against the Talmud. But despite his heroic efforts, the decision of the prejudiced judges was not rendered in his favor and the Talmud was condemned. After this controversy, the status of the French Jews became steadily worse and the son of Rabbi Yechiel, among others, was thrown into prison on a baseless charge. He decided therefore to leave France with his son and go to Palestine, where he stayed until his death in 1286.

As an author, he was chiefly known as a Tosafist. He wrote Tosafot on many of the Talmudic tractates. He is also mentioned as a Bible commentator and as a writer of Halachic decisions, several of which are quoted by Mordecai ben Hillel and Meir of Rothenburg.

*This too is Jewishness. damn!!*

B. Nicholas Donin was born at La Rochelle, France, but lived in Paris during the first half of the thirteenth century. He was by no means an uneducated individual, as he studied at the Talmudic Academy of Paris, first under Rabbi Judah Leon and then under Rabbi Yechiel. In 1225, he was excommunicated by Rabbi Yechiel in the presence of the whole Jewish congregation, because of the heretical views he entertained about the value of oral tradition. For ten years, following his excommunication, he still continued to cling to Judaism, but in 1235 he decided to give up his ancestral faith entirely and to join the ranks of Christianity. He was baptized and inducted

into the Franciscan order of monks under the name of Nicholas Donin. Immediately following his conversion he commenced to exert every effort to exact vengeance from his former co-religionists. In the same year of his apostasy, 1235, the monks were preaching among the French to obtain recruits for a Crusade. In the following year, Donin succeeded in so inciting the Crusader against the Jews that the holy assassins massacred three thousand Jews at Bretagne, Anjou, and Poitou, and forcibly converted five hundred, in addition to burning all Jewish books that came into their possession. In 1239, he sent a list of incriminating accusations against the Talmud to Pope Gregory IX, at Rome, pointing out that the Talmud was an immoral, blasphemous work, subverting the integrity of Christianity and the Church. As a result of Donin's charges, the Pope issued bulls to the bishops and kings of the countries under his dominion, charging them to seize all copies of the Talmud and to burn them if an investigation of their contents revealed the truth of Donin's statements. France was the only country to obey the Pope's command, for the clerics and the king were no doubt stirred to action by the insistent demands of Donin. The French authorities confiscated every copy of the Talmud they could lay hold of and brought them to Paris, where an inquiry was held and a public disputation arranged between Donin and Rabbi Yechiel of Paris, over the contents of the Talmud. During the course of the disputation, Donin distorted, misinterpreted, and misquoted passages of the Talmud, partly thru ignorance, and partly thru malice, in order to convince the Christians present that the Talmud was a

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damnable work, worthy of destruction. He succeeded in winning his point, as the Talmud was condemned and ordered to be burned. In a letter written on May 9, 1244, to Louis IX, Donin took great pains to point out to the king that it was the Talmud alone which kept the Jews from deserting the faith of their fathers and becoming Christians. Altho the blood-libel charge was not brought out by Donin during the disputation, it is an established fact that he used this charge when he sought to stir up the Crusaders against the Jews. The Latin account of the disputation that was written some time later and called *Extractiones de Talmut*, was probably written under the supervision of Donin.

*but see  
p. 91!!*

C. Nachmanides, as he is commonly called now, or Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, or *Bonastruc de Portas*, as he was called by his countrymen, was born in Gerona about the year 1195. Gerona is a little town, in the province of Catalonia, in Spain. He was a cousin of Rabbi Isaac ben Reuben of Barcelona, who was famous for his Talmudic learning and piety. Nachmanides was related to the best Jewish families of Gerona. Two of his teachers were Rabbi Judah ben Makar, the commentator of the prayers, and Rabbi Meir ben Nathan, of *Trinqueta*. At the age of fifteen, he undertook to write supplements to the code of Rabbi Isaac Alfasi, nor was it at a much later date that he commenced to compose his work, the *Wars of the Lord*, in which he defends this great codifier against the strictures of Rabbi Zechariah. Concerning the private life

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of Nachmanides very little is known. We only know that he had a family composed of sons and daughters, but the later posterity of Nachmanides is better known to fame. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon was one of his descendants; so also was Rabbi Simeon ben Gershon; whilst Rabbi Jacob Saportas, in the eighteenth century, derived his pedigree from Nachmanides.

As to his calling, he was occupied as rabbi and teacher, first in Gerona and afterwards in Barcelona. For his livelihood, he probably depended on his medical practice. He was a great Talmudist, a great Bible student, a great philosopher, a great controversialist, and perhaps also a great physician. He represented Judaism from the side of emotion and feeling, as did Maimonides from the side of reason and logic. He tried to play the role of conciliator in the struggle of the Maimonidists against the anti-Maimonidists.

The second event in the <sup>public</sup> life of Nachmanides was the disputation he held in the court of Barcelona with a convert. In the year 1263, a convert, Pablo Christiano, induced King James I of Aragon to summon Nachmanides to a disputation that would be held at Barcelona. The controversy began on July twentieth, 1263, and lasted for four non-consecutive days. The king, before the controversy, promised Nachmanides that he could speak with perfect freedom and without fear. And when later, at the request of the Bishop of Girone, Nachmanides composed his account of the disputation, the Church fathers forgot the promise that was made to Nachmanides and commenced to persecute him for what he had said at the disputation.

Proceedings were started against him in 1265, and he was charged with making remarks offensive to the Christian religion. All copies of his account of the disputation that could be seized were publicly burned. Upon the complaint of the Dominican monks, Pope Clement IV, probably in 1266 or 1267, addressed a bull to King James I of Aragon, instructing him to restrain the blasphemies of the Jews against the Christian religion, and principally to punish this Jew, Astrugas de Porta, that is Nachmanides, for his written account of the disputation, which was full of lies and fictions. However, the king was sympathetically inclined toward Nachmanides and did not desire to punish him as severely as the Pope had demanded. Nachmanides remained for a short time after this, either in Castille or in South France, but in 1267, he left Europe and emigrated to Palestine. At this juncture of his life, he was a man of about seventy. During the three years he spent in Palestine, he wrote the bulk of his commentary on the Pentateuch. *completed*

His works, the Sacred Letter and the Law of Man, were an attempt to relieve the harshness of the antithesis of the impure body and the pure intellect. The destiny of man and the doctrine of reward and punishment is treated in the concluding chapter of the Law of Man, which is known under the title of The Gate of Reward.

He is perhaps the first Jewish writer who mentions the Apochryphal book, the Wisdom of Solomon, which he knew from

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positive statements*

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a Syriac version and which he believed to be genuine. He was influenced by mystical tendencies altho he never wrote a Cabbalistic book. He wrote several letters to his children which have been preserved. His letter from Acra is a sort of Ethical will. He died in the year 1270, in the Holy Land.

D. Pablo Christiano was a native of Montpellier, France, who surrendered his Jewish heritage and became a convert to Christianity. He joined the Dominican order of monks and then devoted every effort to convert his former co-religionists to his newly-embraced faith. The famous monk, Raymont de Penaforte, was quick to sense the value of Christiano as a tool to bring about the conversion of the Jews, so he sent him on a missionary journey among the Jews of the Provence, which ended in failure. However, Christiano entered the realm of Aragon with a view of engaging in religious controversies with the Jews of that region, and thus force them to give up their beliefs. He focused his attention upon Girone, where Nachmanides was rabbi, and thru the influence of Raymont de Penaforte, he succeeded in persuading King James I of Aragon to summon Nachmanides to Barcelona to participate with him in a disputation over the Talmud. Christiano felt sure that victory would be his and he anticipated that wholesale conversions would follow the disputation. But the king permitted Nachmanides to make an adequate defense and the latter defended the Talmud so well that the victory was awarded him. However, this momentary setback did not deter Christiano from further activity among the Jews. He denounced Nachmanides' account

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of the dispute as a libellous attack on Christianity and he was one of the individuals who prompted Pope Clement IV, in 1267, to issue a bull to King James I of Aragon, relative to the punishment of Nachmanides. Moreover, Christiano embarked on a proselytizing journey among the Jews, armed with a mandate which King James I had issued on August 29, 1263, in which he informed the Jews that he had appointed Christiano to preach the word of God unto them. Christiano failed to win any converts, despite the power vested in him. In a mandate issued by King James, also on August 9, 1263, the King ordered the Jews to efface from their books all blasphemies against the Christian religion, which might be pointed out in these books by Christiano.

Christiano finally went to Pope Clement IV and denounced the Talmud, asserting that it contained blasphemous statements against Jesus and Mary. The Pope issued a bull, in 1264, to the Bishop of Tarragona, commanding him to submit all copies of the Talmud to the examination of the Franciscans and the Dominicans. A commission was then appointed by the king, which included Christiano in their number, and which obliterated all passages in the Talmud, that apparently contained blasphemous statements against Christianity. In 1269, Christiano induced Louis IX, of France, to enforce the canonical edict requiring Jews to wear badges.



## CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, but little can be added to what has already been set forth in the preceding chapters of this work. It was inevitable that the disputation between Rabbi Yechiel and Donin should end with the defeat of the valiant defender of Judaism. Despite the cogency of his arguments, the Talmud was condemned by the French judges and all copies of it that had been seized were subsequently burned.

With regard to the outcome of the Nachmanides-Christian controversy, one is rather surprised, in the face of facts, to learn that a Dominican monk, named Denifle, wrote an article in 1887, in the Historisches Jahrbuch of the Gorres-Gesellschaft, in which he contended that Nachmanides had to flee from the scene of the controversy immediately following its termination. Denifle based his conclusion upon the Latin source of the disputation that was composed by the Dominican friars. This source not only maintains that Nachmanides fled, but that thruout the controversy he resorted to falsehood to support his cause. Now, in the light of actual happenings, it is plain that the Dominicans deliberately distorted fact in order to pursue their fanatical policy of propaganda. For the Hebrew source of the controversy was prepared by Nachmanides at the command of the Bishop of Girone. And there it is specifically stated that he did not run away, but that he parted amiably from the king, who advanced him money to defray his expenses. Moreover, when an official procedure was started against Nachmanides in 1265, it was rightly said that he had

*Gerome*

written for the bishop of Girone had offended the Christian religion, but contrary to the contention of Denifle and the Latin source, it was not said that he had made errors or untruths. Before the proofs and evidences of the controversy, it was impossible to advance such a charge at that time. But only in the charge which was laid much later against Nachmanides before the Pope was he accused of falsehoods. And when the Pope issued a bull repeating the charges of his accusation, he had no proof of the proof of what the monks had written him. All that he could do was to reiterate the charges. It is thus quite evident that the truthful and unbiased account of the disputation is the one by Nachmanides.

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