CONSCIENCE ON TRIAL

Conscience on Trial

Three Public Religious Disputations Between Christians and Jews in the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, translated from several Hebrew and Latin sources, annotated and with commentary by

Morris Braude, M.D.

"Thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth from thee."
Isaiah XLIX, 17



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Conscience on Trial

BY MORRIS BRAUDE

Life Begins
The Principles and Practice of Clinical Psychiatry
Scriptural Psychiatry
Conscience on Trial



By courtesy of the Hebrew Union College

Johann Christoph Wagenseil

In paternal affection to my children

FAY, ABRAHAM SAMUEL, DANIEL

Preface

The interest in the present work is not only academic; it is my design that it bridge a long gap in the field of Jewish polemical historiography and apologetics and make more readily available tried controversial weapons in what, nowadays, is euphemistically known as psychological warfare, the key to which may be found in the human dramas presently to unfold. Having ascertained that no English translations of these public verbal tournaments are extant, I have selected for this purpose, and in chronological sequence, (1) the two celebrated thirteenth-century religious disputations, namely, those of R. Yechiel of Paris with Nicholas Donin, and of Moses Nachmanides with Pablo Christiani, from Johann Christoph Wagenseil's book *Tela Ignea Satanae* (*etc.*) in Hebrew and Latin, published in 1681, and from Samuel Grinbaum's *Disputations of R. Yechiel of Paris* in Hebrew, published in Thorn, Poland, in 1873, and (2) the *Tortosa Disputation* of the early part of the fifteenth century, in Hebrew and its German version, and earmarked #40 in Ibn Verga's *Sefer Shebet Yehuda,* which purports to be a faithful record of its proceedings on the spot by Abu Benastruc, one of the Jewish apologists.

The sources and validity of my material will be discussed in their proper places. It is sufficient to note here that, excepting the Tortosa report, more of which anon, the texts of the thirteenth-century debates in the sources consulted are not free from typographical errors, obsolete punctuation, anachronisms and misquotations. I have endeavored to convey, despite these defects, the sense of the texts faithfully and simply.

For purpose of dedication I use a trite adage but in reverse order, and I am convinced that it epitomizes its real *raison d'être.* I believe the reason the Jews have been so relentlessly hated by the Christians is the former's disavowal of Jesus, who, the latter

assert, has thus been orphaned and stigmatized. Now, a very important lesson for all the Jews in the Dispersion and Israel to learn is to cease apologizing but, when put on the defensive to arm to the teeth, so to speak, with the weapons of a psychological warfare. This means a ready acquaintance with not only their own but also their antagonists' lore. The pronouncements by the Jewish advocates in these disputations along with many more of earlier and later times, properly arranged and brought up to date, will serve as factual, documented data in future discussions of this nature. It is fortunate that we possess an abundance of this armamentarium available to scholars and laymen alike. In recent times three books in this field, and of the first water, have appeared. One, entitled *Israel Among the Nations,* by Joseph Samuel Bloch, an erstwhile member of the Austrian Diet, is a storehouse of documented information in apologetics, brought quite up to date; another, more aggressive and equally eloquent, entitled *The Case of the Nazarene Reopened,* by Hyman E. Goldin, an American Jewish trial lawyer and profound scholar, utilizes the Synoptic Gospels in the manner of a judicial hearing before the Court of World Opinion on the execution of Jesus, which should irrefutably convince all of the baselessness of the charge of murder against the Jews, living and dead; the third, a *Thesaurus of Disputations and Polemics* by Yehuda David Eisenstein, is a veritable treasure chest. My own contribution as translator and commentator is to pool and appraise, as well as is humanly possible, much of the documented material against the day when the Jews shall again be put on their mettle. But they must also be prepared to go into the opponents' camp and fortify themselves with its literature and its ramifications. I am not so sanguine as to expect that Christian anti-Jewish feeling, so deeply rooted, will disappear in measurable time, but that at least a logical approach is in the offing.

Certain references in the text proper necessarily call for explanatory notes or comments. These I have assembled in numerical order in a supplement rather than using footnotes.

At this point I take great pleasure in thanking the Rabbis

Herman L. Davis and Leonard C. Mishkin, of Chicago, the former for reading my manuscript, and the latter for opening his unexcelled private library to me.

Lastly, may I express a hope that this work, even with its imperfections, may serve as a point of departure by scholars for research in this particular area of Jewish historiography.

Chicago, 1951 MORRIS BRAUDE, M.D.

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Introduction

To better understand the character of the text, it must be defined. It belongs to a class of literature usually designated as polemic or dialectic and is most commonly met with in the field of religious discourse comprehending doctrine and creed. It is either apologetic, or submissive, or militant. This definition may be widened to include impersonal or detached rhetorical dissertation, and oral disputation. The latter could be private or public. An ancient example of the latter is the Socratic method, and is quite unique. Disputation by dissertation long antedated the oral.

As long as Israel was autonomous but isolated and respected by its neighbors there was little occasion to apologize or defend itself. As soon, however, as its boundaries expanded or contracted with the varying fortunes of war with other nations and cultures, different kinds of emotions were mobilized, usually envy, and fear of subjugation. During Israel's glorious reigns, which were short-lived, the Jew was respected and held in awe. Internal dissension led to anarchy and conquest by foreigners with the inevitable dispossession and dispersion among contiguous nations. Jewry from then on was no more self-contained and its culture did not remain unsullied. Dispersion conduced to the absorption of a foreign tongue and manners but also invited contempt by most of its conquerors; a few were either tolerant or unobtrusive, while others attempted to impose their own way of life by force. Time and contiguity did what forcible subjugation failed

to do. During all the subsequent tribulations the great mass of Jews remained faithful to their tradition, rallied to their own people and practiced their religion unmindful of their hostile environment. This withdrawal into their own, often narrow, confines encouraged religious autonomy but, by the same token, aroused envy and malice to the point where either forcible absorption of a new culture or extermination was the alternative. Haman, the prototype enemy of the Jews, in his advice to be rid of them by royal decree, characterized the Jews of his day, as many of his stamp have done since, in this wise (Esther III, 8):

> And Haman said to the King Ahasuerus: "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it profiteth not the king to suffer them. If it please the king let it be written that they be destroyed."

This is the keynote to the psychological reasoning of all subsequent Jew-baiters. And, as in spite of all this clamor the Jews continued to undergo various fortunes in their several dispersions and yet maintained a modus vivendi, however precarious at times, Haman's advice continued to harass them and all sorts of diabolic expedients were invented by their oppressors to destroy them. In the countries where a so-called higher culture which included the art of writing existed, this method began to be used by the Jewish detractors. Of the non-Christian onslaughts the most notorious were by the Egyptian-Greek priests and grammarians, Manetho and Apion, respectively, who set the style for the later slanderers of the Jews, and the historian Tacitus. These wrote for posterity, but did not personally enter the lists with either apologists or challengers. However, they were not left unchallenged. In eternal gratitude to Josephus, the Jewish historian of antiquity par excellence, be it said that he took up the

cudgel for his people, and his *Contra Apionem* has somewhat helped to redeem him from the imputation of being a traitor to the Jews on other counts. About the same time, Philo, the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, took up the defense of the Jew mistreated in his own city, before Emperor Caligula. The discussions between pagan detractors and Jewish dignitaries were, at rare times, not so acrimonious, and it is recorded of some of our top-ranking *tannaim* that they had conversations with pagan overlords more in the nature of innocuous banter than bitter incriminations and recriminations. Even after the Church Fathers began their systematic sequestration and humiliation of the Jews all controversial disputations were in writing. This also obtained in the case of Moslem disputations. Saadia Gaon's arguments also took the form of a book. This was, more or less, the state of affairs until after the beginning of the Crusades, when the Catholic Church, fired by a zeal to bring the Jews into its fold by means fair or foul, most often the latter, or make life unbearable for them, and, spurred on by disgruntled and anathematized erstwhile Jews, began an organized persecution of top-ranking Rabbis, on whose shoulders the onus of defending their own people and their culture was laid, on pain of temporal and spiritual displeasure.

While the hierarchy had, for a long time, shown animosity to the Jews in Spain in a more or less desultory fashion which did not call for any defensive retaliation, certain Jewish leaders felt it incumbent upon themselves to publish tracts against it and its own heretical offshoots, like Karaism. To mention but the most celebrated ones, I begin with Yehuda Halevi, the Kimchis, father and son, and Moses Maimonides. Halevi wrote a tract, well organized and in his customary passionate way, called *Kitab-al-Khazar,* conceived as a colloquy between the king of the Khazars and a Rabbi, which constitutes an interesting chapter in Jewish polemical historiography. The Kimchis did yeoman's service in their accustomed scholarly way, while the Rambam took up the cudgel for the distracted Jews in Yemen when, under the constant hammering of their oppressors to

apostatize, they were seized with grave doubts as to their own constancy to their faith. In later years in Spain, always a hotbed for propaganda, Solomon ben Adret gave a good account of himself before his adversaries.

Now to go over to Central Europe, especially Germany and Austria. In the former in the first decade of the sixteenth century a replica of what occurred earlier in France and Spain was evolving. The Dominican Friars, feared for their ruthlessness and unrelenting threats in their pursuit to convert the Jews, now made use of the insipid Hebrew scholarship of discredited, and even criminal, erstwhile Jews, to compound with them in this infamous crusade which they hoped would distract and disconcert the world from the degeneracy of the papal hierarchy, which was then being convulsed by Luther's defection and heresy. Two notorious apostates, Johann Pfefferkorn and Victor of Carbin, published and widely circulated a series of libelous tracts against the Jews and the Talmud, and demanded the death of the one and the sequestration of the other. (These tracts preceded Luther's movement.) But, unlike the other oral bouts described in the present work, in which the burden of defense or apology lay heavily on the Jews, a non-Jew emerged as their advocate. This was none other than Johann Reuchlin, humanist and enlightened Hebrew scholar, who held the whole pack of obscurantists at bay and who, incidentally, stimulated a reacquaintance with Hebrew lore in Christian circles. In the latter, Lipmann Yom-Tov Muhlhausen, a Jew of great versatility, thoroughly conversant in his own lore and at home in the Latin language, the New Testament and early Church history, as a result of his brushes with the Church published a book entitled *Ha-Nitzachon,* which stirred up a hornet's nest in Christian circles, and which, many years afterwards, was directly responsible for Wagenseil's lucubrations in the volume he called *Tela Ignea Satanae (etc.),* some parts of which I have translated from the Hebrew and Latin into English, and which provide a portion of the text for the present work.

The second type, oral defense and apologetics, may be said

to have begun with the Crusades when the Church exerted relentless pressure on the Jews to receive baptism or suffer the consequences. The Jews, especially in Middle Europe, compressed and confined by special legislation and brute force, insensibly adopted a sheltered life but in the hallowed traditions of their fathers and, if not harassed by the Church, would have been content to enjoy the tolerance of their isolation with its attendant illusion of safety, such as it was. However, this was not to be their lot, and, as it had happened times before—and this statement bears repetition—certain discredited and unsettled Jews would leave the fold and wreak terrible vengeance on their former compatriots by means of despicable lies and foul incriminations, directing their shafts particularly against the Talmud. This necessitated immediate retaliation by the heads of the Jewish communities, usually great scholars and best equipped to meet these informers on their own terms. Not unexpectedly, these Jewish defenders of their faith came away with flying colors, which, however, had the paradoxical effect of aggravating, instead of mitigating, the sorry lot of the Jews. This brings me to a consideration of the dramas and their dramatis personae which make up the core of this book.

THE DRAMA

General Observations

Considered in historical perspective, the plots, settings, and personalities involved in all disputations may not inaptly be compared to a dramatic performance. In Paris, Barcelona and Tortosa the stage for these exhibitions was arranged with pontifical blessing, the audience consisting of royalty, court, councillors, ministers, priests, the military, and common people, all picked for purpose of acclaim. While gloom pervaded the camp of the Jews, their opponents, safe in their strength by papal backing and geared to action, were in holiday mood. However, as fortune would have it, they reckoned little with the stamina of the Jews. Unshakable in the justice of their cause, aware of their responsibility and the odds at stake for all Jewry, the

Rabbis, timid at first, but solidly secure in their scholarship in a tilt of words, and step by step gaining poise and self-assurance, turned the tables on their challengers and discomfited them no end, with the result that these were fain to call it a day. However, in all places it was a hard-won and short-lived victory.

The Plot

This may be said to have revolved around the personality of Jesus, whether he is God or begotten of human parents, whether he is the Messiah and already come, and whether the Christian dogmas are tenable. The matter of blasphemy and alleged disrespect to the Church in the Talmud was of less weight. The motif of the plot, then, was the proof of the truth or falsity of the Christian indictment of the Jews.

THE LOCALE

Paris

In the earlier, 1240, Paris scene, the proceedings were enlivened by the presence of Queen Blanche—the mother of St. Louis, King of France—who frequently interrupted in a friendly manner the sometimes desultory progress of the disputation to question Yechiel and to assure him of his personal safety. It is not of record, however, that she vouchsafed as much for the Jews in her kingdom who considered themselves safe as wards of the Pope Gregory IX, the real founder of the Inquisition. Quite the contrary, shortly after this *cause célèbre,* cartloads of the Talmud were burnt in bonfires by papal and royal connivance.

Barcelona

In this city in 1263 the exhibition was more pretentious, accompanied by military fanfare, in the presence of royalty, ministers, church dignitaries, even the rabble, and a sprinkling of Jews come, not out of curiosity, but by duress. And it was also more decorous. It was the hope of the friars and all others in the Christian camp that the Jews would be baptized en masse

when their defender, defeated as they had no doubt he would be, would turn Christian and set the pace for all the Jews to follow. As the performance with a few interruptions lasted well over a week, the scene shifted from the Commons to the King's palace and, finally, to the synagogue. Moses Nachmanides, chosen because of his great repute, showed more self-possession and astuteness than did R. Yechiel, and he gave the enemy no quarter but much uneasiness for their pains. The net result of this encounter differed little from that which took place in France a little more than a score or so years before. However, Nachmanides himself did not lose caste with the King of Aragon, but, on the contrary, was graciously dismissed by him and presented with a purse for his return home. The Jews of Spain did not fare so well. Goaded on by the Dominican Friars, an organized persecution, long in effect, was now accelerated with greater momentum and ruthlessness.

Tortosa

It is of record that this disputation lasted from February 1413 to November 1414 and encompassed sixty-nine sessions. We have authenticated reports from only eleven of them. Pitted against Geronimo de Santa Fé, or Joshua Lorki, and the Anti-pope Benedict XIII were a score or more Spanish Rabbis. Great consternation, as might be supposed, took possession of the Jews, who fervently prayed God, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, to keep vigil over them and extricate them from the perils of forced apostasy or its alternate, death. There being so many Jewish apologists, differences in policy, procedure and even language burdened them no end, and, while ostensibly gracious to them, the pope, nevertheless, became vituperative and menacing. As in the other theaters of oral combat, the challengers who comprised the papacy and its satellites, such as priests, Spanish grandees, Roman nobles and a mixed howling mob, displayed much pomp and fanfare and sent terror into the hearts of the affrighted Jews. It is to the latter's credit that they met their accusers successfully on their own terms.

In summary it may be said that these three disputations, as regards the Jews, were a victory academically, but a blight in reality.

THE LIBRETTOS

The books under consideration, one in Hebrew and Latin, and the others in Hebrew, which I have translated into English, are the most celebrated of the many so-called Jewish anti-Christian works, collected by *(a)* Johann Christoff Wagenseil and published in Germany in 1681, under the long Latin title *Tela Ignea Satanae, Sive Arcani et Horribiles Judaeorum Adversus Christum, Deum, et Christianam Religionem Libri*—or, in English, *Satan's Fiery Darts, etc.*—and *(b)* Ibn Verga's report on the Tortosa episode, and similar works. F. J. Baer, writing in the Hebrew journal *Tarbitz* (Volume II, page 172, January 1931, published in Palestine) on the subject of the two earlier disputations, mentions on the authority of Kisch and Lewin, an article in the *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums,* 1869 and 1874, respectively, that a Latin transcription of the Paris disputation, very much colored by the manipulation of the Church, appeared at the end of the thirteenth century. This Wagenseil edition is well over two hundred years old, with the format peculiar to the period, and presents the Hebrew and his own Latin version in parallel columns on the same page, the former sometimes hard to decipher because of misspelling and obsolete punctuation, while the latter gives a running but biased version, but also supplies references to Biblical and Talmudic sources omitted in the Hebrew portion. The original of the Hebrew report on the Yechiel disputation by his contemporary Joseph ben Nathan Official, is the common source of later copies. On the authority of F. J. Baer it may be said that R. Yechiel wrote a book, *Hahaydoah,* or "Confession," incorporating the issues in dispute, which also was translated into Latin. The style of this work is said to be milder than that of the Yechiel and Donin affair.

Moses Nachmanides himself published the Barcelona dispu-

tation, probably at the instance of the authorities of Gerona, his home town, and, by so doing, ran afoul of the Dominican Order, which was for indicting him before their own ecclesiastical court on the charge of blasphemy. This court was for letting him go with a light sentence, but the King, piqued because the matter was adjudicated outside his own jurisdiction over which he exercised the exclusive right, decided in Nachmanides' favor. It is also a historical fact that there was a Latin translation of the same episode bearing the seal of the King of Aragon. As will presently appear, the *Tortosa Disputation* was reported on the spot by both sides, in Latin and Hebrew.

THE DRAMATIS PERSONAE

These embrace personalities who played major and minor roles. Since Wagenseil's *Tela* was directly responsible for publishing for posterity the book I have now translated into English, and many more, which otherwise would not have been rescued from literary oblivion, something must be said about this man. What follows is largely from Graetz's original German *History of the Jews.*

Johann Christoff Wagenseil, an ecclesiastical jurist and professor in Altdorf, Germany, who flourished in the second half of the seventeenth century, was, by all standards, an affable man and not unkindly disposed towards the Jews. This characteristic, strange to say, made matters worse for them than did the men who vented their rage and were for applying the sternest measures in their anti-Jewish warfare. Wagenseil visited, among other southern European countries, Spain, and also northern Africa, rummaging everywhere in public markets as well as Jewish houses of worship and gatherings, for writings, sacred or profane, that impugned Christian tenets and practices. It is this variegated collection which he assembled between the covers of his *Tela* in 1681. He succeeded in ferreting out somewhere—probably in North Africa—a copy of the notorious *Toledoth Yeshu,* a bungling parody of the foundation of Christianity. Wagenseil, while including it in his collection, was, paradoxically, also for banish-

ing it, but evidently unsuccessfully. He even made representation to royalty and state officers through another book entitled *Christian Denunciation,* 1703, that an oath be exacted from the Jews that they do not say or publish anything derogatory of Jesus, Mary, the Cross, the Mass and other Christian sacraments. To his credit, though, be it said that he did not insist on forcible baptism of Jews and denied in writing that the Jews use Christian blood for ritual purposes. The following writings constitute the collection of his *Tela Ignea Satanae*:

1. *The Disputations of R. Yechiel of Paris and Moses Nachmanides with Nicolas Donin and Pablo Christiani, respectively;*
2. *Toledot Yeshu;*
3. *Hizzuk Emunah,* by Isaac ben Abraham Troki, a Karaite—translated into English by Moses Mocatta in 1851;
4. *Refutations;*
5. *Last Four Chapters of Daniel;*
6. *Zikkron Sefer ha-Nitzachon,* in verse;
7. *Sefer ha-Nitzachon,* by Lipmann Muhlhausen.

Besides translating the *Treatise Sotah* he wrote many more books not germane to the present work or its thesis.

Having given a short survey of the author of the *Tela,* I now proceed with the major actors of these sad dramas.

Rabbi Yechiel of Paris

He was born in Meaux, France, in the thirteenth century, was a disciple of Yehuda Sir Leon, and one of the last Tosaphists and of great repute as a teacher. It is reported that his students numbered three hundred. He was a staunch anti-Maimunist and the one who banned Nicolas Donin, later his bitterest enemy and opponent in the celebrated disputation now in review. By virtue of his reputation as a forceful lecturer and although younger in years than his colleagues chosen with him to rebut

Donin's charges, he was selected as the spokesman. He speaks of this episode with ingenuous modesty. In his debate with the renegade Jew he evinces some petulance and lack of finesse. He could hardly be blamed for exhibiting impatience—considering the odds at stake and the truculence of his antagonist. As a result of the unfavorable reaction in the Christian camp he was compelled to expatriate himself from France, and, spending his last years in Acre, Palestine, he died in 1286.

Moses Nachmanides

Born in Spain in 1195, he showed precocity so outstanding that he wrote a commentary on some Talmudic treatises when only fifteen years old. He had abiding faith in the inviolability and sanctity of the Oral Law and *Aggada* and literally worshiped at the shrine of Alfasi. It is told of him that he compared the intellectual exhilaration derived from studying the old Jewish literature to the sensual well-being from drinking old wine. As he never entertained any misgivings about the validity of the Talmud and the *Aggada,* he entered the lists against the Maimunists, who would explain the sacred Jewish writings from the standpoint of deductive philosophy or metaphysics. Nachmanides would have none of Aristotle and the Stoic philosophers who emphasized chance rather than teleology or design in the cosmic scheme. Aside from this, being the passionate Jew he was, he could not tolerate cold detachment; this characteristic may explain his interest in the *Cabala,* although as a practicing physician he must have had a knowledge of natural history. In his personality emotion was as sovereign as reason. While he subscribed unreservedly to the literal meaning of the *Aggadic* legends, when hard pressed, as in the celebrated disputation, the subject of the present work, he found refuge in the explanation that the *Aggada* must be considered more or less as material for homilies or sermons. When still harder pressed, he maintained that, not as in the Talmudic prescriptions, one need not subscribe to the allegories of the *Aggada* which do not directly bear on articles of faith. It is of interest, too, that in his encounter with

Pablo, Nachmanides practiced the amenities of good breeding characteristic of the cultured Jewish aristocracy of Spain of his day in contrast to the rough and tumble give-and-take—Graetz calls the Yechiel–Donin disputation a fight between two rough boxers—that took place in Paris in 1240. He died in 1270 in Hebron, Palestine.

Lipmann Muhlhausen

While this interesting person cannot be said to have played a major role in this drama, I must assign his celebrated book *Sefer ha-Nitzachon* as a very definite connecting link in the chain of events that goaded Wagenseil to publish his *Tela.* As a matter of fact, in his Latin foreword Wagenseil early and definitely mentions this book as provocative of a rejoinder. Who, then, was this Yom-Tov Lipmann Muhlhausen? From all available sources —and the most recent and exhaustive is a book in Hebrew by Yehuda Kaufman, an American-Jewish scholar in Israel—it is conjectured that Yom-Tov Lipmann was an Austrian Jew, though born in Germany, of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and thoroughly at home not only in Jewish lore but in Latin and especially also in the New Testament and early Church history, which knowledge he used to good purpose when defending the cause of the Jews against the Christian imputation of blasphemy and the already-hackneyed catalogue of anti-Christian calumnies. He wrote many more books, some rather of an esoteric nature, as on the *Cabala;* on the permutations and combinations of the letters of the *Aleph-Beth;* on prayer; and Bible exegesis. He was also more than a match for the Karaite apologists. His writings consequently show much versatility, and those of a disputatious character not only profound learning but wit and irony. His *Sefer ha-Nitzachon* stirred up a veritable hornet's nest in Catholic circles, and for a century after its publication there were many "refutations" by Christian scholars and Jewish apostates. One of the former was Wagenseil, who wrote his opus magnum about a century and a half afterwards, which has given me the rare opportunity of making a part of it

available to English-speaking readers. Incidentally, the *Tela* in two separate books, so scarce nowadays, is a family heirloom.

Nicolas Donin

He lived in France in the thirteenth century. Before his apostasy he was considered a Talmudist of some reputation. As he expressed doubt about the value of oral tradition, he was placed under the ban of excommunication and for about ten years continued nominal adherence to Judaism. He tired of this life and finally abjured the Jewish faith and vowed vengeance on his erstwhile coreligionists. He accomplished this with diabolic cruelty, inciting the Crusaders to massacre the Jews while he denounced the Talmud before Pope Gregory IX as the stumbling block to the conversion of the Jews and deserving of destruction. He was also, on unimpeachable authority, the first renegade Jew who accused his former coreligionists of using Christian blood for ritual purposes (from Grayzel's *The Church and the Jews in the 13th Century,* 1933, page 339). The pope then ordered that all copies in the possession of the Jews be sequestrated and burnt. This act of treachery was perpetrated soon after his moral defeat by R. Yechiel.

Pablo Christiani

Unlike Nicolas Donin who, after baptism, joined the Franciscan Order, Pablo Christiani, an erstwhile Jew born in Montpellier, France, in the thirteenth century, became a Dominican Friar and an inveterate opponent and enemy of the Jews, whom he would convert more by casuistry than by physical force. Believing himself unassailable in the field of dialectics or disputations, he wrested permission from King James I of Aragon to debate publicly with Moses Nachmanides, whom he conceded to be an opponent of his own calibre and worthy and certain of defeat, arguing that example by emulation was the shortest way of conversion en masse. However, Moses Nachmanides by polite but adroit parrying and displaying much learning was finally awarded the palm of victory even by the King himself

and, as already intimated, was dismissed by him with compliments and a purse. Nevertheless, Pablo did not concede defeat but gave out a report of his own triumph and convinced Pope Clement IV to establish a strict censorship over Jewish religious and sundry writings prejudicial to the Church. To compound this expedient with conversion by oratory he ordered that the Jews attend the synagogue during his harangues and defray his traveling expenses, much to their anguish.

Geronimo de Santa Fé

He was physician to Antipope Benedict XIII. It is conjectured—Graetz, *History of the Jews,* Volume VIII, page 424—that he had previously attempted to convince Abner Burgos, the notorious apostate, of the heinousness of abjuration of Judaism, only later to backslide himself. Being in high esteem with the papacy and aware of the jeopardy of the Jews, he apostatized not only for temporal advantages but conceivably also as an overcompensation for self-hate, which detestation he projected on all the Jews, whom, if and when he should lose caste with his employer, he would destroy with himself.

Antipope Benedict XIII

As this personality is described somewhat fully in the notes to this text, I omit any characterization of him at this point.

MORRIS BRAUDE

The Foreword of Johann Christoph Wagenseil

Next in importance to the book entitled *Nitzachon* is the bewildering one which composes the two disputations published in Strasbourg. Indeed, you may judge its character from its Introduction:

> And now begin the words of Pablo, the infamous,
> May the Exalted Name help us!

And yet nothing is less likely to succeed than the words of Pablo, nor the disputation held in Paris between R. Yechiel and Nicolas, for the Jews and Christians, respectively. To this may be added the debate between Nachmanides and his opponents Fra Pablo and Fra Raymond Martin—the last is the self-same man who wrote the widely read book *Pugio Fidei*—instigated by, and in the presence of, the King of Aragon. In truth, both disputations were unlike in content and delivery. Hence, I cannot understand how these debates, so divergent, were mixed in one, and who contrived this similarity, which, at first blush, appears so unlike. How could he who writes so surpassingly and intelligently fill it with so many errors and gaps?

Inasmuch as we have no tokens of blatant mistakes which we could repair or bolster, our retorts will stand out rather sharply. All obvious errors in spelling in the text are indicated

by asterisks. We do know that both disputations took place in the same generation. R. Nachmanides and R. Yechiel were contemporaries. This is proved from *Zemach,* chapter 1, page 54, and from *Yuchasin,* page 132. I do not recall any prior debates, but later ones between Christians are famous. Thus, in the book *Candor Lilii* or "Lily White," page 38, may be read: During the pontificate of Urban IV, in the royal palace, and in the presence of King James, Fra Pablo Christiani of the Dominican Order of Friars publicly defeated and effectually silenced, in solemn debate, the most celebrated and learned Rabbi, Moses of Gerona; this is sworn to by Michael Pio and Francis Bosquet in a prefatory note to the *Pugio Fidei,* and corroborated by Joseph de Voisin. Raymond de Penna, an admirable and holy man, versed in ecclesiastical law and former General of the Order of Preachers, persuaded the most Christian King of Aragon and Narbonne, by his example, to curb the scurrilous calumnies of some of his subjects. That multitudes of Jews do not suffer death but be compelled to acknowledge the Christian Mission, Raymond, a holy man, expert in the Holy Scriptures, took up the study of the Arabic, Hebrew and Chaldean languages to prepare himself to confute the nonbelievers. Amongst others, Fra Pablo Christiani and Fra Raymond Martin, born in Saburats, Catalonia, Spain, appeared. Pablo gave out the report that he was victorious in the disputation with the most learned Moses of Gerona, held publicly in the presence of King James, and that he refuted all calumnies and errors. After this celebrated debate King James forthwith issued the notorious decree against the Jews, an account of which may be found in the *Ancient Law Reports of Lindenburg,* Volume 235, and which bears quoting:

> We, hereby, do commission and direct that you give our highly esteemed son Fra Pablo Christiani of the Order of Preachers safe conduct to visit your synagogues, homes or other places, to preach the word of God and dispute with you concerning the Holy Scriptures in public or private, in

familiar conversations or individually, and that you repair to him to listen attentively to questions of faith and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, humbly and reverently, and to answer him without prejudice and wile. You are to show him your books to which you refer for your truths, and to pay him the cost of carrying the books on which you rely for their authenticity from place to place. In addition, you are to pay the expenses of all others of his Order. Above all, we command all vicars and other officials in our jurisdiction to compel compliance when the Jews do not heed these fiats, out of your faith in, and love for, me.

Dated at Barcelona, July 7, 1263.

It is proper that these disputations be put on record in Christian writings to put an end to the arguments which Nachmanides has garnered from them. And if I cannot give a true version no one will dispute successfully.

I

Public Disputation

between

Rabbi Yechiel of Paris

and Nicolas Donin

Paris, 1239

Public Disputation between Rabbi Yechiel and Nicolas Donin

He is wise who can look into the dark future and frustrate the deeply rooted and inhuman wiles of our enemies which have wrought havoc to the poor and innocent. He[1] viciously spewed his venom on us and arrayed the king and his court against us. It was a time of grief and terror; he heaped upon us oppression, scorn and shame. We suffered mental torture, confusion, fear and gloom. Even the hosts of Heaven felt it. The sun and moon darkened, the sky was black with the gathering storm and the stars lost their luster. The lions roared and the dogs growled; all faces were ghastly and terror-stricken with the dire prospects in store for them; giants long dead were recalled to life and there was mourning on earth. Misfortune came to us from the North[2] when this fawning and cruel man swooped down upon us. He would scatter and hem us in with a new threshing-sledge, with gnashing of his teeth and blinking of his eyes. He came upon us with mockery on his lips and shameless quibbling to confute us and he fouled the most wholesome sayings of the sages. His voice hissed like that of a snake, and his words cut like a sword; he perverted justice to wormwood, and corrupted everything that was beautiful. In the end of days we will despise him like the creeping reptile and lose him among the nations. His name is Nicolas, may he sicken and perish! Erstwhile his name was

[1] Notes are on pp. 127 ff.

Donin, and may it rot! He covered us with confusion and brought our strife to the attention of the king,[3] senators, militia, bishops and judges. He called for help from the mob of fools.

On the second day of the week—Monday—when a portion of the Bible known as *Balak* was read in the synagogue, and the sixth day of July of the common calendar, the king called all his retainers to his palace. Immediately our opponent ordered that the Bible, the ornament of the true God, be discredited, and the apostate sought to kill all the Jews and to erect an idol in the place of the Tablets engraved by God's own hands, and he sought to deprive us of our right to interpret the words of Scriptures and the sayings of our own sages. He then ordered that the Four Orders[3a] of the Talmud be produced. He said in his heart: "With the help of the Fallen Angels I shall lay bare all their secrets, weaken their arguments, humble their pride, weaken their strength, confound their Four Orders, their traditional sacred treasure, and put them on their mettle to defend them." To take up the cudgel for God and His Laws and, with His help, were arrayed R. Yehuda bar David, Samuel bar R. Solomon, R. Yechiel, and R. Moses of Coucy.

Overwhelmed with grief and covered with confusion, they entered the gates to the king's palace and were met by surly judges assembled in an unlawful manner. The entire congregation of Israel was like a flock of sheep without its shepherd. The contemptible renegade then ordered that one of the four Rabbis be summoned, and called upon R. Yechiel. He, alone, it was who defended our Lord and His Laws. And He mercifully took pity on His people and the remnant of His inheritance. He put His words into the mouth of His servant, whose spirits then revived. He spoke with great earnestness and replied to all their questions, however insipid and vicious. In the meantime all the Jews stepped back and were seized with crying, terror and anguish; doled out charity and cried out to High Heaven that it is better for them to die as martyrs by the sword than to be orphaned without the sacred Laws.

But the defender of our faith took heart and addressed the

בשפתי נבון תנוח חכמה : לבאר
הזן משא רומה : המעמיקים עצה
לשחות תעלומה : להבות אביונים
נקיים עד הרמה * ובפי צדיק נו
תנוח חכמה † וברצונו שפך חימה
ושם בעיני מלכים ושרים לשפוד
יעמת : ביום שואה ושעוררת :
שמה וחוכיחה גאצה וכלימת : וקצף
וצער גדול ומשטמה בקרב הארץ
רבת המהומות וחשיכה גדולה
וסערת אימה : נפל על צבא עם
השמיטה : כי שמש וירח קדרו :
וכוכבים משו מאור ישעיו : וכוכבים
אספו נוגהם : אריה שאג וכלביא
נהם : וכל פנים פארור קבצו :
כי נעו גם נצו : ורפאים מארמן
יקיצו : ועל ואדת תאבל הארץ :
כי מצפון בא קרץ : בקום עליהו
שרץ : ממנו יצא הפורץ : גדר
והקורץ : במורג חרוץ חדש חרץ :
חרק בשיניו ובעיניו קורץ : בלעגי
משה ובחרפת אדם בא להתגולל
עליו ולהבאיש ריח נופת צופים :
דברי חכמים צרופין : קולו כנחש
ועל שפם יעטה : ולשונו כתרקוית
חרב בוטה : ומשפט ללענה מטה :

IN labiis Sapientis requiescit
dentia, ad explicandum fata
ſtra, & premenda alio
Scilicet, profunda
versarii noſtri) conſilia
res occultas (*quales ea ſunt, quæ de
Meſſia habentur*), eruere, atque
pauperes & innoxios nos redigere
ad vaſtitatem. (*Atq; ſane hoc facinus nuper cœptabant quidam homines nefarius*,) ſummo ſtudio animum
ſuam iram (*in nos*)
talia Regum ac Optimatum
lis proponendo, quæ ad indignationem illos movere poſſent. Erat
tum dies infauſta ac terribilis; plena calamitatis, infortunii, dedecoris ac opprobrii: terram occupaverant ira, ſævities, odium; ſtrepitus concitabatur ingens, tenebræ
magnæ cum horrore tremendo invaſerant exercitus cœleſtes. Nam
Sol & Luna nigreſcebant: & cœli valide commovebantur. Stellæ exhibebant ſplendores ſuos; Leones
medioxumi, maximi, rugiebant
fremebantque; omnium vobis
pallorem contrahebant; quippe
agitabantur, & irritabantur mortui gigantes revocabantur in vitam, orbis univerſus erat in luctu.
Ex Septentrione imminebat nobis
malum, dum homo vermis adverſus nos conſurgit. Ab eo nacturi
nobis illata eſt, imo ſciſſio & contritio. Videbatur enim eſſe tribulum recens muricatum, frendebat dentibus, nictabat oculis, labia ejus adoriebantur nos calumniis pudendis, ut (*noxam*) in nos devolveret, & fœtida redderet hyblæa mella, puriſſima nimirum verba Sapientum. Vox ejus ſibilum imitabatur ſerpentinum, obvelaverat myſtaceum, lingua, gladiorum tranſfoſſiones proferebat. Porro perverte-

bat

A Page of the Wagenseil Hebrew and Latin Text

apostate: "Why do you dispute with me and what is it you wish to know?" And the heretic answered: "About Jesus, and on this subject you can entertain no doubt because the Talmud is four hundred years old." To which the Rabbi replied: "More than fifteen hundred years."[3b] Now the Rabbi addressed the queen: "Gracious Majesty, do not oblige me to answer him. The Talmud is hoary with age and up to the present time no one has brought any charge against it. And, as is well known, Hieronymus,[4] a Church Father, knew our Scriptures and Talmud. If these had contained anything heretical they would not have left them unchallenged until now. Besides, during all this time have lived many priests and apostates of similar repute and not a word has been heard from them all these fifteen hundred years. What have you discovered in us to warrant your calling us at this time to dispute about our Bible and to defend our very lives because of a supposed sin forgiven these fifteen hundred years? We have always subscribed to the Books of Moses without straining their interpretation. You know that everything calls for elucidation, and so we have been anathematized and excommunicated. From time immemorial to the present day they have been ill-disposed towards, and quite ready to destroy, us. But we are determined to lay down our lives for our faith, the apple of our eyes. Have we not already suffered exile into Babylon, Mede, Greece, and other Seventy[5] Nations as far as, and beyond, the waters of Ethiopia, because of our Bible? You may have our bodies but not our souls, and you cannot destroy our Bible except by force." Then a *Chezron* [courtier] of the royal household interrupted and said: "No one will hurt you." And our advocate replied: "You cannot defend us against the fury of the mob." At this the queen[6] said with some heat: "Do not talk like this any more, because we are determined to protect you all equally. Moreover, I shall consider it contemptuous for anyone to trouble you, because these are the orders from the pope.[7] I insist, therefore, that you answer the apostate and do not be frightened." To this the Rabbi spoke up: "But who will assure us that you will not attack us before I can summon you to the

pope?" At this rejoinder the priests cried out: "Answer him if you can but if you cannot we shall then know what to do and see who will save you!" To this our defender spoke up: "I will answer him to please you but if I err do not exile my people who are holy." Now the wicked renegade, the beetle, arose and, displaying ignorance, asked: "Do you believe in the Four Orders of the Talmud?" And the profoundly learned scholar answered: "I believe in all the laws and ordinances written therein and transmitted to us. The word 'Talmud,' meaning 'study,' has its origin in Scriptures—Deuteronomy XI, 9: And thou shalt teach it to thy sons. But sometimes the language used is figurative and meaningful. There are also extraordinary expressions to bring conviction to dissenters, epicureans and heretics. You may believe it if you wish, and if not, you need not, and it is not binding. I know only too well that Talmudic lore is not to be underrated. The sages wrote only the truth, although not always understood by all. There are many such expressions in Scriptures, as, the ass's mouth; Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt; the battle waged by Sisera who fought the stars in heaven; the gourd, in the story of Jonah, which grew and withered in a day; the story of the prophet Elisha who breathed life in a dead body; and many more. It is considered a meritorious service to explain obscure passages in the Bible and to reconcile apparent contradictions which otherwise may lead to disbelief. In reference to this point, in Isaiah XLVIII, 17, it is said: 'I am the Lord thy God who teacheth thee for thy profit'; the Holy One, be praised, gave us the Talmud to help unravel the mysteries of the Scriptures and give them their due weight. Such examples are Isaiah XXV, 8: 'He will swallow up death forever'; Isaiah LXV, 20: 'For the youngest shall die one hundred years old'; Deuteronomy V, 9: 'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children'; II Kings XIV, 6: 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers, but every man shall be put to death for his own sin'; Exodus XIX, 20: 'And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai,' meaning that He came down from heaven; and 'From

heaven did I speak to you,' implying that He did not come down. Again, Deuteronomy XXIII, 4: 'An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord'; yet King David was descended from Ruth, a Moabite. And, lastly, it would be hard to explain these contradictory passages without the help of the Talmud, which reconciles them. All this lore was delivered to us from Mount Sinai. Even if one law permits and another prohibits, or one purifies and one defiles, these contradictions are explained by Exodus XXIII, 2: 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou bear witness in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to pervert justice'; in all cases the majority rule governs. And were it not for the Talmud no man could study and understand even one ordinance as formulated. For, behold, the laws concerning the observance of the Sabbath are documented five different times in the Bible, a little here and a little there, and by the time one comes to the second he has forgotten the first. But in the Talmud all these ordinances are integrated in an understandable way, making the study of them a joy. And, then, too, there are promulgated precepts so mysterious that only a reference to tradition may furnish the key to explain them, as, for instance, Deuteronomy XVII, 8: 'If there arrive a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, even matters of controversy within thy gates, then shalt thou arise, and get thee up unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose'; and, Deuteronomy XVII, 17: 'According to the law which they shall teach thee, thou shalt do.' The Holy One, blessed be He, has so instructed the sages, as is written, Deuteronomy XXXII, 7: 'Ask thy father and he will declare unto thee, thine elders, and they will tell thee.' What it means is that when you are in doubt you will find an explanation in tradition. And this is the reason the sages have built a fence around the divine laws to keep one from committing a sin when tempted, for instance, venery, as it is written, Leviticus VIII, 35: 'And keep the charge of the Lord,' meaning thereby to keep watch over a watch. This may be compared to the case of a

man who locked the inner but not the outer door of his home, and thus made it easy to make an entrance."

Right here the apostate insisted that the Rabbi swear that he would answer his questions forthright and truthfully and not beguile him with lies and sharp quibbling. All the priests goaded him to take an oath.

The Rabbi spoke up and said: "Woe is me that I had to come here and be judged by you who only pervert the truth and that it is in your power to exact an oath just to please this hard-hearted man. Besides, nowhere in all Scriptures, except in matters temporal, as in the case of indebtedness, do we find that a juridical oath is mandatory. Such is to be found in Exodus XXII, 10: 'The oath of the Lord shall be between them both, to see whether he have not put his hand unto his neighbor's good,' while in matters spiritual there is no mention of such an oath. And you came to hear our testimony and sit in judgment over it. Now I give you fair warning that you who would be both prosecutor and judge shall not combine these functions over me."

At this turn the queen interposed and said: "I ask you to take the oath." And the Rabbi answered: "Gracious Majesty, I have never taken an oath in my life and shall not begin now. Besides, if I were to swear to the truth of all my answers in rebuttal which may appear unfriendly and contrary to your religious belief in the presence of the clergy, you will call me a liar and perjurer. Moreover, there is a Scriptural injunction, Exodus XX, 7, that 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' It is idle to argue that it is not necessary, and, in truth, I do not dissemble but speak only the truth. The other Rabbis, of whom I am the youngest[8] and who are twice as learned as I am, know my shortcomings; nor am I privileged to come and go before the clergy as they are." But now the queen broke in: "As he seems to speak the hard truth and has never taken an oath, desist."

And now the ass opened his mouth and said: "It is written in your Codes, Sanhedrin LXIV, b: 'R. Aba, the son of Raba,

said: "If one caused all his seed to pass through the fire to Moloch, he is exempt from punishment, because it is of thy seed, but not all thy seed." ' Anyone with sense will be amazed at this and its like. And is it not absurd that he who sacrifices a part of his seed deserves the death penalty while he who aggravates this sin is exempt?" At this rejoinder the mob jeered and even the queen was taken aback.

But the Rabbi replied: "The time will yet come when you will not make yourselves merry and mock at this but rue it. But now I know your diabolical schemes your brains concocted to confound me. Would it not be more decent for you to hear what I have to say before you jeer at our venerable laws?" Then, addressing the queen, the Rabbi said: "Who sins more, he who kills one, or two?" To this the queen replied: "Two, and he who kills four sins more than he who kills two, and he who goes on killing more adds to his sins." "You have spoken the truth and judged fairly," remarked the Rabbi and he continued: "The Talmud, Sanhedrin VII, enumerates the four modes of capital punishment, namely, stoning, burning alive, decapitation and strangulation, and explains that it is mandatory on the Highest Court of Judicature to sentence the guilty one to one of these. He who is condemned to capital punishment must confess his sins and be forgiven. A case in point is found in Joshua VII, 25, when speaking of Achan: 'And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day'—this means you trouble us in this world but not in the world to come. It follows then that he who gives to Moloch only a part of his seed incurs the penalty of stoning, confesses and is forgiven. But he who gives all his seed to Moloch and thereby aggravates his sin is not given over to the jurisdiction of the Judicial Court but must be left to die in his sin, and the Holy One, bless His name, in whose hands are all souls, will judge him as he deserves." This explanation relieved his own mind and satisfied them.

Presently this antagonist opened his mouth and plied him with more questions and said: "These people blaspheme and affront the Christian god, and what are you priests doing about

it? They contemptuously disparage your religion and say that your god was afflicted with a burning seminal discharge." To confirm his accusation he read out of the Order *Nezikin, Gittin* LVII, a: "Onkelos, son of Kolonikos, was the son of Titus' sister. He had a mind to convert himself to Judaism. He went and raised Titus from the dead by magical arts and asked him: 'Who is most in repute in the other world?' He replied: 'Israel.' 'What then,' he said, 'about joining them?' He said: 'Their observances are burdensome and you will not be able to carry them out. Go and attack them in that world and you will be at the top, as it is written, "Her adversaries are become the head," etc. Whoever harasses Israel becomes head.' He asked him: 'What is your punishment in the other world?' He replied: 'What I decreed for myself. Every day ashes are collected and sentence is passed on me and I am burnt and my ashes are scattered over the seven seas.' He then went and raised Balaam by incantation. He asked him: 'Who is in repute in the other world?' He replied: 'Israel.' 'What then,' he said, 'about joining them?' He replied: 'Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all the days forever.' He then asked: 'What is your punishment?' He replied: 'With boiling-hot semen,' because he enticed Israel to go astray after the daughters of Moab." The apostate then asked: "Of whom is it said that he was afflicted with boiling hot semen?" And the Rabbi said: "Of Balaam." And the latter in turn came back with: "Do you know why he suffered so?" To which the apostate replied that he did not. And the Rabbi resumed: "I will tell you. It was because he enticed the Jews to harlotry with the Midianites in Shittim. He was, as a result, repaid in kind—measure for measure—as witnesses Isaiah XXVII, 8: 'In full measure when thou sendest her away, thou dost contend with her.' " Then the apostate called forth Jesus by necromancy and asked the Rabbi: "Who is he who suffers from this distemper?" And the Rabbi answered: "Jesus," to which the apostate replied with "What did he say about this hot semen?" He stammered this before the queen with malicious intent to vilify us. The Rabbi resumed: "Since our

dispersion fifteen centuries ago you have endeavored to involve us in deeds of wickedness but unsuccessfully, and you yourself have used unseemly words. I shall, therefore, not fail to show you up in speech or in print. In truth, however, we do not speak of your god but of another Jesus, who, like yours, flouted the words of the sages and subscribed to the Written Law only. This was common knowledge. He was known not as Jesus Nazarene, but Jesus of Gerada. Nor was this the only thing he did. He disowned the Jews, denied their basic beliefs and proclaimed himself god. Here, then, was another who subscribed to the Written, but not to the Oral, Law and, in consequence, was branded as a heretic."

But the apostate now harangued the priests: "Set your hearts on what is happening and see how these people living in your midst blaspheme your god and din your ears with a story that began with a historical judicial verdict, namely, that as Jesus was being led out to be stoned, this verdict was heralded for forty days, proclaiming that Jesus the Nazarene would be stoned for practicing magic, seducing and corrupting the Jews, and that all those who know anything in mitigation should come forward and so declare. This is the basis for the report that he practiced magic and was a seducer and corrupter."

To all this the Rabbi replied: "Because our fathers did stone him, must we Jews, living today, be held to account for it and for the circumstance that it was not widely reported at that time? That it was reported only casually in the Talmud[9] must be imputed to a presentiment our ancestors, through the Holy Spirit, had of the terrible repercussions on their descendants, who some day would be put on their mettle to defend themselves in this sorry business."

Just then the apostate broke in: "You still labor under the delusion that he was the son of an adulteress and that as the son of Stada he was hanged in Lydda on the eve of the Passover holiday, as you will find it documented in Sanhedrin VII. In it he is mentioned variously as the son of Stada, of Pandera, and of Papus, Yehuda's son, and of the latter's wife Mary Magdelene,

an adulteress." At this recital the leaders of the assembly became infuriated and exclaimed: "Why do you speak so ill of Miriam, and what has she ever done to you?" To this the Rabbi countered with: "Why are you so astonished and infuriated? Besides, who appointed you judges over me? You evidently forgot the passage in Hosea X, 13: 'Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies; for thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.' And, again, Deuteronomy I, 16: 'And I charged your judges at that time, saying: Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger that is with him.' And, also, Proverbs XVIII, 17: 'He that pleadeth his cause first seemeth just; but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him out.' You do not have to listen to his poisonous and inflammatory tirade, though I must own that we should not mention her sins, for, after all, she was one of our own bones and flesh. Neither the Talmud nor *Aggada* speaks of her, and she who is alluded to was someone else. And you know very well that this affair of your god took place in an inn in Jerusalem and this Miriam was in Lydda, which is on the outskirts of Palestine. Moreover, there is no record anywhere that they did so and so to Jesus, the Nazarene, or that the name of his father, the husband of Miriam, was John. Your Gospels speak of the father of Jesus as Papus, the son of Yehudah, and of his mother as Mary Magdelene. But this Mary died during the lifetime of R. Papa and R. Abaya—*Chagiga* I, 4b—which was seven hundred years after Jesus, while it is a historical fact that this affair of Jesus took place before the destruction of our Second Temple."

[At this juncture in the text there is an interpolation in Latin by Wagenseil, as follows:]

> In spite of the noisy demonstration by the mob at the mention of Mary Magdelene's name, it was seemingly satisfied with the Rabbi's rejoinder. However, the apostate was not yet done with heaping contempt on the Talmud, and, as soon as he could command the attention of the

mob, which again broke out in tumultuous uproar, he began to read from Sotah XLVII, *a*: "Our Rabbis have taught: Always let the left hand thrust away and the right hand draw near . . . not like Yoshua ben Perachya, who thrust one of his disciples[10] away with both hands. . . . What was the incident with Yoshua ben Perachya?[10a] When King Jannaeus put the Rabbis to death, Simeon ben Shetah was hid by his sister, whilst Yoshua ben Perachya fled to Egypt. When peace came Simeon ben Shetah sent this message to him: 'From me, Jerusalem, the Holy City, to thee, Alexandria, in Egypt. O my sister, my husband'—his teacher R. Yoshua—'dwelleth in thy midst and I abide desolate!' R. Yoshua rose and came back and found himself in a certain inn where they paid him great respect. He said 'How beautiful is this inn!' One of his disciples, Jesus, said to him, 'My master, her eyes are narrow!' He replied to him, 'Wicked person! Is it with such thoughts that thou occupiest thyself!' He sent forth four hundred horns[11] and excommunicated him. The disciple came before him on many occasions, saying, 'Receive me,' but he refused to notice him. One day while R. Yoshua was reciting the *Shema* he came before him. His intention was to receive him and he made a sign to him with his hand, but the disciple thought he was repelling him. So he went and set up a brick and worshipped it. R. Yoshua said to him, 'Repent,' but he answered him, 'Thus have I received from thee that whoever sinned and caused others to sin is deprived of the power of doing penance.' A master has said: 'The disciple practiced magic and led Israel astray. There are others who say that this brick—Sotah XLII—had the figure of a cross which the Christians later worshipped.' "

When the apostate ceased his tirade against us and the Talmud, our Rabbi continued: "As a matter of fact, he who was so mentioned was not their god, because this event took place in the lifetime of Yoshua ben Perachya, King Jannaeus,

Simeon ben Shetah, the disciple of Rabbi Hillel, of Rabbi Shoul and of Rabbi Gamliel who functioned as Prince of the Academy. And, as a matter of fact, the first chapter of the *Gemara Shabas* has it that Simeon, Hillel and Gamliel flourished as heads of the Academy one hundred years before the destruction of the Second Temple, and that Simeon ben Shetah lived in the year three hundred and seventy-two of the fifth millenium, that is, one hundred seventy-two years before the destruction of the Second Temple. This makes it one thousand four hundred and seventy-two years before Jesus. But according to the calculations of the Christians it is only one thousand two hundred and forty years since the birth of Jesus. Hieronymus figured it two hundred years earlier, which would make it coeval with Queen Helena and King Jannaeus. It was then that he was adjudged not to be a divinity and was executed by stoning. It is not mentioned in the entire Talmud. But it is stated in Sanhedrin XI that 'no plague shall come near thy tent,' implying that there be among you no disciple or son who shall burn his food publicly as did Jesus the Nazarene, and the reference to disciple could be to Jesus, or Yoshua ben Perachya himself."

But now the bishops had their say: "Who will believe you or your fawning remarks to curry favor and justify yourself? You tear one person in two when you declare that there were two Jesuses of Nazarene who practiced magic and corrupted the Jews and who were hanged on the eve of the Passover holiday."

In rebuttal the Rabbi said: "Not all the boys named Louis born in France will be king. And is it not an old observation that two men born in the same city can have the same name and die a like death? Are there not many like that in the world?" But now the queen took a hand: "Why do you pommel each other so? He promised you that on the subject of Jesus' burning semen he would close his mouth and here you are trying very hard to extort this libel from him. Are you not ashamed even to talk about it?"

She then continued and addressed the Rabbi: "Tell me on your honor: Is there a second Jesus?" And he replied: "As

true as I live and hope to return to my home, we were never of the opinion that Jesus suffered from burning semen and I never said so."

But the intemperate slanderer interrupted with "What is the meaning of the *Bat Kol*?"[12] And the Rabbi replied: "It is only the echo of a voice, not the voice itself, and it has been the medium for our prophecies since the dispersion of Israel."

And now the apostate: "You, wise men, just listen to their silly tales." And with much raillery he proceeded to read from *Baba Batra* LXXIV, *a*: "While Rabba bar bar Channa was one day walking with his grandson he heard a *Bat Kol* saying: 'Woe is me, I have sworn and who will absolve me from it?' And when they consulted the Rabbis they said to him: 'All Abbas are fools, and Channas, blockheads.' They should have said to you, 'It is null and void'! Who will believe you when you say that your God is grieved because you swore? And they derided the Rabbi who denied him absolution from his oath. This is their absurd practice with one and all who have taken a vow and which makes it easy for anyone to absolve anybody else from it. Year in and year out on the Day of Atonement they repeat a prayer which nullifies all oaths and vows made to non-Jews and, as a result, they do not fulfill their obligations to them. Furthermore, it is stated in *Nedarim* XXIII, *b*: "Whoever wishes all the vows he may have made throughout the year to be null and void shall come at the beginning of the year and say, 'May all the vows which I shall vow be annulled.' They say that three laymen may nullify a vow and hence they do not carry out their promises to a non-Jew. There never has been a like people. They are destitute of trust."

But the Lord put heart into the advocate of the faithful to answer the renegade with justice and understanding. And so the Rabbi opened with "Woe to you who perverts the truth with lies and equivocations. You hate the truth and slander us with your malicious tongue. But I shall answer you truly and explain the wonderful passages in the Scriptures which refer to God's lamenting His vows, such as Genesis VI, 6: 'And it

repented the Lord that He had made man on earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.' And I Samuel XV, 11: 'It repented Me that I have set up Saul to be king.' Likewise in reference to His vow concerning the flood, Genesis IX, 12: 'And God said: This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations.' Also Genesis IX, 14: 'And it shall come to pass, when I bring clouds over the earth, that I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh'; implying a determination to remember and not repent. But now that we are scattered all over the world and are your pawn and no one sacrifices to Him in His House of Splendor where once all people were wont to gather and pray to the end that all the nations of the earth acknowledge His name, why did He not repent of it? For you know very well that no one nowadays is stricken by sword or hunger as we were then. And as to your harsh questions how all living creatures can break a vow of God, it can be explained by the *Bat Kol* which said: 'Who will break my vow?'; in other words, who will do so in the end of days? This means that it would happen because the vow was made in anger and fury, as Jeremiah XXII, 37: 'Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries whither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them back into this place, and will cause them to dwell safely.' And, after He in anger swore to exile us, it is though He did not, unless someone in future generations will nullify the vow when hearing a *Bat Kol* say that it shall. And what in malice you asked me about the last sentence of *Kol Nidre,* which reads: 'And pardon shall be granted to the whole congregation of Israel and to the stranger that sojourneth among them when all the people transgress unwittingly' —we pardon only the ignorance, that man may not stumble in his vow and oath through error. When you declare that three laymen may absolve one's vows and oaths, this applies only when referring to one's own conscience and not to others. On the

other hand, no one may nullify vows between man and man, as may be seen from what happened to Zedekiah and his sons, II Kings XXV, 6–7: 'Then they took the king and carried him up unto the King of Babylon to Riblah and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in fetters and carried him to Babylon.' This was done as punishment for breaking his vows to the King of Babylon. And Deuteronomy XXIII, 24: 'That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt observe and do; according as thou hast vowed freely unto the Lord thy God, even that which thou hast promised with thy mouth.' Moreover, we have been careful to observe a universal precept, namely, that when one swears to injure himself it is incumbent on him to consummate it, and if he does not, he must bring a sin offering, as presented in Leviticus V, 4: 'Or if anyone swear clearly with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall utter clearly with an oath, and it be hid from him; and when he knoweth of it be guilty in one of these things that he shall confess that wherein he hath sinned.' In keeping with this, Joshua IX, 4, is to the point: 'But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, they also did work wilily and went and made as if they had been ambassadors and took old sacks upon their asses and wineskins, worn and rent and patched up; and worn shoes and clouted upon their feet, and worn garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and was become crumbs. And they went to Joshua into the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him and to the men of Israel: We are come from a far country; now, therefore, make ye a covenant with us. And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites: Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a covenant with you? And they said unto Joshua: We are thy servants, and Joshua said unto them: Who are ye? And from whence come ye? And they said unto him: From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the Lord Thy God; for we have heard the fame of Him and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the

two kings of Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon, King of Heshbon, and to Og, King of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. And our elders and the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying: Take provision in your hand for the journey and go and meet them, and say unto them: We are your servants; and now make ye a covenant with us. This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and is become crumbs. And these wineskins which we filled, were new and behold they are rent. And these garments and our shoes are worn by reason of the very long journey. And the men took of their provision, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the princes of the congregation swore unto them.

'And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them that they heard that they were their neighbors and that they dwelt among them. And the children of Israel journeyed and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-Jearim. And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the Lord, the God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes. But all the princes said unto all the congregation: We have sworn unto them by the Lord, the God of Israel; now, therefore, we may not touch them. This we will do to them and let them live; lest wrath be upon us because of the oath we swore unto them.' "

But the execrable one asked yet another question: "Who gave the moon the power of speech, as documented in *Chulin?* The moon said to God: 'Lord of the Universe, it is not decorous that two Kings use one crown,' to which He answered: 'Go and diminish yourself.' And she replied: 'Lord of the Universe, ought I to be punished for having spoken reasonable words?' And the Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'Bring me a sacrifice because I diminished the moon.' "

But the apostate showed only contempt for the written evidence presented and cried to the priests: "This is the people in whose Bible it is written that their God sinned and He ordered a sin offering to be brought to atone for His sin. Would not all who hear this laugh?" But our R. Yechiel, the advocate of the Jews, answered: "What you say about the moon is foolish, malicious, malodorous and confused. And who put words and song in the trees of the forest which adorned the door posts of the palace of King David, as Psalms XCVI, 12, recites? 'When shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy?' Will you ridicule this? There are many such references as Psalms XIX, 2: 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night revealeth knowledge; there is no speech, there are no words, neither is their voice heard.' And Psalms CXLVIII, 3: 'Praise ye Him, sun and moon.' And all the wise say there is life in the hosts of heaven who speak and praise the Lord, and to whom God said: 'Bring me a sin offering.' And Genesis 1, 16: 'And God made the two lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars.' From all this you may understand that the moon was made smaller because she committed the sin of slander. To this day no man has been born who could say that man bowed to her, for which reason she was diminished, unless it was through slander, for it is said, Psalms V, 5: 'Evil shall not sojourn with thee.' And Psalms CI, 7: 'He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes.' Nothing is so detestable and abominable before God as slander; witness Psalms CI, 5: 'Whoso slandereth his neighbor in secret, him I will destroy; whoso is haughty of eye and proud of heart, him will I not suffer'—do not read it 'him' but 'with him'; and again it is written, Deuteronomy, XXVII, 24: 'Cursed be he who smiteth his neighbor in secret'; and because the moon slandered her mate, the sun, God punished her. She tried to gloss over her indiscretion by using ingratiating words, saying that it was indecorous for both to exercise concurrent powers. But after she was made

smaller and felt ashamed of herself, the Holy One, blessed be He, relented in keeping with His desire that sinners repent dutifully. It is for this reason that our sages stressed the merit of repentance which is so acceptable to God, as may be judged from Ezekiel XVIII, 32: 'For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, said the Lord God; wherefore, turn yourselves and live.' And, in keeping with God's desire to acquaint us with the merit of a sinner's repentance, He said: 'Bring Me a sin offering.' By this is meant a propitiation, because He diminished the moon. And because God made the moon smaller He ordered that a he-goat be sacrificed on the first day of every month. The voice of repentance is public testimony that He desires the repentance of sinners. It is not a part of the monthly sacrifice to announce this purpose because this day is not strictly a holy day as is the first day of New Year which coincides with the first day of the month. This day is set aside as one for repentance by sinners in the hope of its acceptance, as was the case with the moon when she was diminished and she demurred. This day is also appointed as the one sinners may pray for forgiveness."

But now the apostate fairly shrieked: "You, who permit the spilling of gentile blood, are fools, and what is your authority for this? Does it not say in *Sopherim* XV*b* and *Abodah Zarah* XXVI*b*, 20 that it is your duty to kill even the best of non-Jews, that you may throw into a well a non-Jew, a sinner and the young of cattle, and that you do not haul them up even when drowning? Have you ever heard the likes of this? It is also documented that when there are nine gentiles and one Jew in a courtyard, and the Jew flings a stone on the roof killing a Jew, that the killer is exonerated, even though he swears that he aimed at a gentile and not at a Jew? *Ketubat*, chapter II, would have it that when one throws from a hiding place at a non-Jew, in a crowd of gentiles, he is freed. Your teachers, when speaking of the death penalty for manslaughter, say: 'If a gentile kills one of his own or a Jew, he is guilty, but when a Jew slays a gentile he is exonerated.' You also teach that a non-

Jew who observes the Sabbath or who preoccupies himself with the study of Scriptures is deserving of death. It is permitted to despoil and rob the body of a non-Jew, killed suddenly. And, although the sons of Noah adopted the seven precepts[12a] but did not abide by them, a Jew may avail himself of their money. And, too, when an ox owned by a Jew gore one of a non-Jew it is not guilty, but when an ox owned by a gentile gore one owned by a Jew, whether incited to it or not, the owner must pay in full; you also teach that gentiles who eat of creeping and loathsome animals defile themselves and so must be shunned; that it is forbidden for even a day-old infant to taste of wine previously used by a gentile; that there is no modesty in non-Jewish services, as Isaiah XLVI, 1–2, records: 'Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols are upon the beasts and upon the cattle. . . . They stoop, they bow down together'; that a Jew should not stable cattle in an inn owned by a gentile, not to witness their mating; that a woman should not conceive when witnessing an act of incest; that a Jew should not marry a gentile; that a non-Jewish woman should not suckle a Jewish child lest it be reared to idolatry; that you should not give a gift to a gentile nor praise his comeliness, nor return a lost article to him. Now I am going to proclaim your ignominy to all and you would do better to plough with ox and ass or cease such calumny against us. What you thought you would do to us we shall repay in kind. And who is going to save you who say that so and so, and in what manner, you can be rescued?!"

And the godly man wrapped his face in a mantle, from which shone an aura of holiness, and said to the apostate: "All this chatter will not atone for your sins. From the very start you belabored the phrase 'You may kill the best of gentiles,' but do you know the source of, and authority for, it?" And he answered: "No, but Rashi, a great and learned man whom you rate higher than even your teacher Moses." To this the Rabbi countered with "Why do you open your mouth to quibble about the word 'gentile,' of which you have no right to speak so authoritatively? There are good and wicked ones. Good, as Psalms CXVII, 1:

'O praise the Lord, all ye nations'; and wicked, Psalms IX, 18: 'The wicked shall return to the nether world, even all the nations that forget God.' And now let me correct your error and point out the truth. It is found in *Tractate Sopherim,* chapter XV. There you will find that when engaged in warfare you may kill the best of gentiles. Scripture sets the precedent—Exodus XIV, 23: 'And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.' Where did these horses come from? Did not all the horses in Egypt perish in a hail storm, and no cattle were left excepting those of Pharaoh's servants who feared the word of the Lord? Pharaoh made his servants and cattle flee into the houses, and these gave their horses to Pharaoh to war on Israel. It is from this Scriptural passage that Simon ben Yochai—*Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Tractate Beshalah*—deduced that the best of the gentiles, when at war, may be slain, because there is not a man, though upright and a believer and about to attack you, but he means to kill you and, if such be his intent, you have a right to kill him as a matter of self-defense, should he even be a Jew. It is declared in Exodus XXII, 1: 'If a thief be found breaking in and be smitten so that he dieth there shall be no bloodguiltiness for him'; it is permitted to kill him. However, if you must strive with him, offer peace. This was the practice among the Seven Nations of the sons of Noah. You may learn from this that even when you war on them that you may not kill them at once—that is, the Seven Nations—although Scripture adjures you to leave no man alive; still it is incumbent on you to offer peace first, especially when war has not been declared. It is forbidden to harm the people among whom we live and who protect us,[12b] even to the extent of a wisp of hair or in money matters. We, more than any people, have been careful not to spill blood—in accordance with the Commandment 'Thou shalt not kill,' and in this respect we do not draw the line between Jew or gentile, and, wherever possible, we substitute the payment of tribute for the death penalty, as in the instance of the Seven Nations and, specifically, the Gibeonites,

although contrary to general usage. All references to a non-Jew in the Talmud are to the Seven Nations subject to tribute, particularly in the matter of robbing them, non-restitution of their losses, and gifts to them. We are enjoined to take nothing by force from them, but to restore their losses. Moreover, we are taught to feed the poor of Jews and non-Jews alike; to greet them with tokens of peace; to give them an oral pledge for material damage; to visit their sick the same as the sick of the Jews and bury their dead along with those of Jews; and not to deprive them of the gleanings of the harvest. And let me tell you that the non-Jews have always been so because we subscribe to our precepts with all our hearts, and those who were stoned, burned, drowned and garroted for it, are without number. We have made concessions in all that is forbidden in conduct with non-Jews. You say that we must not stable our cattle in an inn owned by a non-Jew. Yet we daily sell cattle to gentiles, even in partnerships; we bring our infants to their homes to be breast-fed, and we teach gentiles the Scriptures. You know there are many priests who are versed in Jewish lore. How do you suspect bestiality? You have no laws or ordinances controlling bestiality or homicide, rape and lust, as is found in Leviticus XVIII, 23: 'And thou shalt not lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith; neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto; it is perversion.' And Leviticus XVIII, 3: '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.' And so we find that the Egyptians and Canaanites were steeped in lewdness and bestiality, but not you, because there are no men among you who are not married. And what you said about immodesty refers to the abominable sex practices of Peor.[12c] It is this idol worship found on Nebo, which is recorded in Isaiah XLVI: 'Nebo stoopeth . . . they stoop, they bow down together.' It is the same with the cattle. Nor are other abominations prohibited, though not specified in Scriptures. Now everyone knows why a bride is canopied, and yet all who slander and are given seventy years' penalty by adjudication for their

good are turned to evil because slander travels. And now woe unto you for attempting to injure us by such mouthings."

And the vile creature answered: "How many hundred thousands of your people were killed in Brittany, Anjou and Soissons, and where are your God's wonders and miracles, if you are the chosen people as you say you are?"

And the Rabbi: "It is found in Scriptures where it is said: 'I will bring to you the sword of vengeance,' but that at the end of days great miracles will be accomplished for us as at the time we went forth out of Egypt, as it is said in Micah VII, 15: 'As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things.' "

But the wicked man and sinner was on his feet again: "Your Scriptures say that when the serpent used wile to entrap Eve it cast into her the taint of lust. The Jews who stood around Mount Sinai did forego lust. Did the gentiles who did not stand near Mount Sinai not forswear lust?" And the Rabbi answered: "This applies to gentiles of whom I spoke to you, the Canaanites and Egyptians, who were addicted to lust, who did not approach Mount Sinai and who did not accept the Torah. You, on the other hand, who did accept it, and your god did not come to undo it, neither added nor subtracted anything from it, are not included in the sayings of the wise men of the Talmud."

But the enemy came right back with "Day in and day out in your appointed prayers you repeat bitter curses[12d] against apostates, priests and others, in this wise: 'May no hope be left to the apostates,' that is, those who turned Christian; 'may heretics,' that is, priests, disciples of Jesus, 'perish as in a moment, and may the kingdom of arrogance be speedily uprooted,' referring to your king and his subjects. You also teach that these will be consigned to Hell and perish. But they are not destroyed. You also say that the sinners of Israel and of other nations will go down to Hell bodily, undergo tortures for twelve months, at the end of which time their bodies will be consumed, their souls burned, and the wind scatter their ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous. And yet, heretics such as the disciples of

Jesus, priests, apostates and agnostics, who, you say, will pine away in Hell for all time, are not destroyed, because the curse of Hell cannot touch them. Has there ever been such a people as yours who curse the gentiles and their priests and abominate them with all your strength?"

But God was with our R. Yechiel, our mentor, for Israel's sake. He thus answered the man of steel: "When you opened your mouth about the curse on the apostates and the prayer 'May no hope be left to them,' you feared that they would be induced to recant and return to their former faith, that the heretics are not the disciples of Jesus but those who subscribed to the laws of Moses but not to the Talmud." To this the oppressor replied: "Did not Rashi, your famous teacher, classify them all as heretics, traducers and epicures?" And the Rabbi countered: "Everything Rashi expounds carries weight and is deferred to by the most astute scholars all over the world. He is of the opinion that Jesus was not your god, that he was not known as a heretic, but one who believed in the Written and not the Oral Law. But if he should be considered as one of his own disciples, he would then be consigned to Hell, because they were admitted into the Covenant of the Law given to our fathers on Sinai, as can be inferred from Deuteronomy XXIX, 13: '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 that is not here with us this day.' This means that, though they, who were not present when the Law was given to us, were admitted in our Covenant, and after his disciples were previously admitted in the Covenant of Israel and were in it for a long time and afterwards threw off its yoke, who can forgive them for this lapse? And because they did not recant there will be no forgiveness and they are consigned to Hell. 'And because they flouted Me and turned their backs on My Covenant they apparently adopted so sincerely,' the bodies will not perish; the flame of guilt issuing from their bodies will not be quenched but undergo eternal torture. While Hell may consume others, they themselves shall not be, because

their guilt cannot be washed away, as it is said, Psalms XLIX, 15: 'Like sheep they are appointed for the nether world; death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their form shall be for the nether world to wear away, that there be no habitation for it.'

"The nether world is Hell and they themselves shall not perish, but for the nations who never accepted the Covenant there is no Hell. But you, who, as a Jew, accepted the Covenant and afterwards threw off its yoke, who can forgive you?"

And now the bishops asked the advocate of the faithful: "Do tell us on your faith if we can find salvation in our Bible?" And the Rabbi answered: "I will tell you what can give you salvation even according to your own belief. If you heed the seven precepts enjoined on you, you will find salvation in them." But they interrupted: "We have ten!" To which the Rabbi: "Well and good. But this heretic was commanded to observe six hundred and thirteen precepts. Were he to observe six hundred and twelve and fail only in one he would be sentenced to death for that one omission because of his membership in our Covenant. There is just one Hell for sinners of the flesh, be he Jew or gentile. The reference to burning to ashes is found in Malachi III, 19: 'For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace, and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall set them ablaze, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.' And now who is it who would mock and defy the Creator as did he who would not don his phylacteries lest he put them to shame and be reduced to stubble, as happened to him who is in haste to kindle anything and set it ablaze the following day? Even minor infractions may call for death by fire. The day the arrogant will be burned will be one of healing to the righteous, as is recorded in Malachi III, 20: 'But unto you that fear My name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings.' And after this burning they shall be as stubble under the feet of the righteous. Our wise say that there is one Hell of extermination and another one that is not. And

when you assert that the expression the 'Kingdom of Arrogance' applies to the one under which we live, you know you are lying. We do not consider this realm as arrogant. This term is applied only to the kingdom that mocks and despises the Creator. This is meant by Malachi III, 19: 'And all the proud and all that work wickedness shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall set them ablaze.' It refers specifically to Pharaoh the King of Egypt, to whom our Lord showed so many miracles and extraordinary signs but who arrogantly defied Him, saying: 'Who is He that I hearken to His voice?'; and to Nebukadnezzar, the King of Babylon, who despised the Creator, as you may find in Isaiah XIV, 14: 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to the nether world, to the uttermost parts of the pit'; and in Jeremiah L, 31: 'Behold, I am against thee, O thou most arrogant, saith the Lord God of hosts, for thy day is come, the time that I will punish thee. And the most arrogant shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up.' The same applies to the King of the Assyrians. All of these killed the Jews, exiled them from their land, warred against them, burned their homes and palaces and daily visited them with terrible deaths. It is these we curse in our prayers. On the other hand, who has ever thought of repaying with evil this kingdom and the pope, who, after the Creator Himself, strives to save our lives, permits us to eke out a livelihood and gives us sanctuary which is not permitted by Law, for, in truth, we have no portion nor claim to any of their lands? Who ever heard of repaying evil for good? And if one detractor harms us, shall we rage against a whole nation? It was never so, and the Jew does not have it in his heart to repay kindness with ruthlessness. As to this our kingdom we follow the precept which bids us to pray for its peace. It is the ancient kingdoms of Persia and Babylon, which sometimes feigned friendliness, but which in their arrogance visited upon us cruel laws and flouted and despised the Creator, we curse in our prayers."

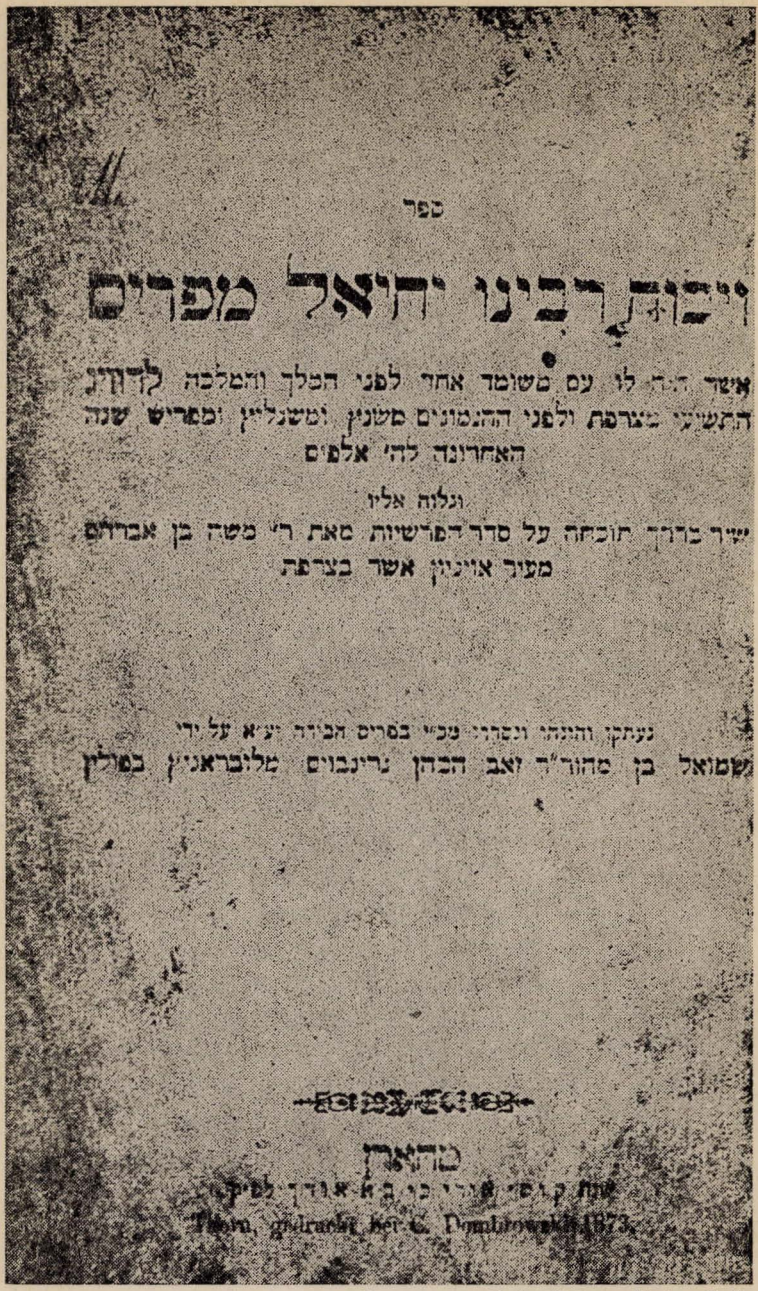
But the apostate was up on his feet again: "Just listen to

me and I shall recite to you some of their despicable fables. Your writings say that your God confines Himself to four cubits of the Law; that the night has three watches; that with every watch the Holy One, blessed be He, takes a seat and roars like a lion; that He daily weeps for the loss of His abode and palace dispersed among all the nations of the earth; and that your wise assume the right to delete certain words from the Bible. They recognize no inviolability in their Bible but add and subtract to, and misinterpret, it and then say that everything is vanity. There has never been a people like this. For instance, there is the fable of Og, the King of Bashan, who is said to have uprooted a mountain three miles long, which he was to hurl on the Jews, but which was hollowed out by ants burrowing through it, leaving only a collar of it clinging around his neck and which further prevented freeing himself by the growth of two long teeth; and his death by their teacher Moses. They have the fable of the gigantic bird, Bar-Yokni by name, that laid its egg, dropped its contents on, and drowned, sixty cities. Yet another legend tells how Abba Saul, a gravedigger, pursued a stag three miles inside of one of Og's bones without reaching the other end. Still another one would have it that God said: 'Make Me victorious!' But what man is there who can do it? And yet another one that avers that with the coming of the Messiah their righteous will banquet upon the flesh of the leviathan and regale themselves with grape wine, ready since the creation of the world; that Joshua ben Levi was snatched from the angel of death and is still living in Paradise; that Adam, the first man, visited all animals and beasts, that he fathered demons, spirits and Lilith; that he is so big that he spans the world from one end to the other, that he had two breaches, front and rear; that the angels who visited Abraham ate three tongues spiced with mustard; that the son of David shall not arrive until Rome shall be brought to its knees and when the whole world shall be convulsed. Can anyone believe such tales and such books, and do they not deserve to be burned? This actually happened during the reign of Vespasian, who commanded that the Bible be

burned. At the time of R. Yuda ben Babba it was decreed that all ordained Rabbis be killed. Another victim was Hanina ben Teradion." When the bishops and the mob heard the words of the living God they broke into an uproarious clatter.

But the Lord was with His servant, who put his faith in Him and who was ready to pay with his own life because of his love of our Torah and the remnant of His people. The Lord put the proper words in our defender's mouth to answer the foolish and discredited opponent, may his name and memory be execrated. And so the Rabbi began: "You ridicule the story how the Holy One, His name be blessed, has no more than four cubits of the Torah. Have you not heard or do you not know that while our Holy Temple was in existence His Presence was found veiled between the cherubim, as is documented: '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'? It is for this reason that He is so well known to all the nations, as the prayer of Solomon when he dedicated the temple he built, I Kings VIII, 43, will testify: 'Hear Thou in Heaven Thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for; that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as doth Thy people Israel, and that they may know that Thy name is called upon this house which I have built.' This is why I love this house so, Psalms LXXXVII, 2: 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.' And now that it is destroyed and neglected and our Lord is in Heaven, as it is declared: 'Let me go back to my original abode.' He is content with four cubits, because a man's body becomes stronger when he applies himself assiduously to the study of the Torah. Nobody in the whole world deserves to call on Him or do His bidding excepting he who busies himself with the Torah and prays to Him. The four cubits represent the height of man's stature. And as to your spoutings of what our wise say that the Holy One, blessed be His name, weeps three times a day, you yourself have said as much about your god. Our wise said no more than what

is found in Jeremiah XXV, 30: 'The Lord doth roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He doth mightily roar because of His fold; He giveth a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.' The word 'roar' is repeated three times in the text. And as to your uneasiness concerning the presumptuousness of our wise who change or delete any word from the Scriptures of a seemingly permanent nature, it is not so. They did it only as a temporary expedient. Take the case of Elijah who sacrificed on a high hill in the presence of the priests of Baal in direct violation of a Biblical injunction not to erect an altar on high places. He disregarded the Biblical prohibition because of the need of the hour to sanctify publicly God's name and to put to shame the prophets of Baal. The teachers of the Talmud have, therefore, established the rule of the 'need of the hour' over and against that of indefinite time, when the exigency so requires. This rule can be invoked in the present needs when the pope ordered the king to grant us certain privileges, and it is not to be reckoned as your sin. As to your question how Og, King of Bashan, could uproot a mountain three miles long, I might say that it is somewhat exaggerated. But you may find in Scriptures many instances of cities and fortresses built seemingly as high as Heaven. This is only an optical illusion, because, being taller than customary, they appear as though reaching Heaven. This, apparently, is what the wise had in mind, for the mountain exceeding in height the distance the eye is accustomed to judge, it appeared to them to exceed three miles. And as to your amazement that Og's teeth grew so long that they kept him from freeing his neck from this collar of mountain, it, too, was only an optical illusion. This is inferred from the saying: 'Shorten the hand of the wicked,' and this is the reason they could do no mischief. And so it seemed that their hands were short, although what is wrought by our Lord is greater and more wonderful than these. He performed greater miracles than these through our teacher Moses. Behold, through him, He smote Egypt with ten plagues, divided the sea, and rained down manna. Why, then,


ספר

ויכוח רבינו יחיאל מפריס

אשר היה לו עם משומד אחד לפני המלך והמלכה לדתינ
התשיעי בצרפת ולפני ההמונים משנים וחשלשים ומאתים שנה
האחרונה להיי אלפים

וגלוח אליו

עיר בדרך תוכחה על סדר הפרשיות מאת ר' משה בן אברהם
מעיר אוירון אשר בצרפת

נעתקו והגהו ונסדרו עכ"י בסדים הביהד ע"א על ידי
שמואל בן מהור"ר יצב הכהן ערינבוים מליבראניץ בסולן

כוהאמן

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Title Page of the Complete Report of the Yechiel—Donin Disputation

could He not do these things to Og? As for Bar-Yokni, the fabulous bird, the contents of whose egg drowned sixty cities, while slightly exaggerated, the basis for it is to be found in Job XXXIX, 13–14: 'The wing of the ostrich beateth joyously; but are her pinions and feathers the kindly storks? For she leaveth her eggs on the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may trample them.' Why then can you not conceive that the egg of Bar-Yokni, which spreads its wings in boundless space, can drop its contents and drown sixty cities? And as to the race of giants, it is recorded in Numbers XIII, 33: 'And there we saw the Nephilim,[12e] the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim; and we were in our sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight.' Even the Israelite spies, themselves larger in stature than ordinary men, were as grasshoppers in the eyes of these giants. And, while Abba Saul, who belongs to an earlier generation, appeared as a grasshopper to the spies, he appeared small as an ant to the giant. He could thus pursue three miles in the bone of Og without reaching its end. Now, as to what you say about the expression 'gain mastery over me,' Exodus XXIII, 2 is to the point: 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil, neither shall thou bear witness in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to pervert justice,' and when the greater part of one generation of men tend to be pure, the Holy One, blessed be He, mingles with them. But, when in a succeeding generation the majority of men become defiled, the Holy One, blessed be He, also abides with them but gains mastery over them, hence Psalms: 'Sing a psalm to Him who causes man to conquer himself,' implying that He must feel a great joy in being conquered. Now as to leviathan over which you made yourself merry, the wise say that its female will be killed in accordance with Genesis I, 21: 'And God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that creepeth wherewith the water swarmed, after its kind,' meaning that it was created bisexual, as is said in Isaiah XXVII, 1: 'In that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the slant serpent, and levi-

athan the tortuous serpent; and He will slay the dragon that is in the sea.' The Holy One, blessed be He, did not wish to have the sea monsters multiply. More of this in Psalms CIV, 26: 'There is leviathan whom Thou hast formed to sport therein.' Furthermore, he created leviathan male and female as He did all species of living creatures. What you say about the banquet for the righteous in Paradise when the Messiah shall arrive, it is for the pious of Israel who will celebrate with great camaraderie, as is predicted in the Song of Songs, VIII, 13: 'Thou that dwellest in the garden, the companions hearken for Thy voice: cause me to hear it.' And Genesis II, 8: 'And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden.' And the Lord planted fruit trees in the Garden of Eden of which now no one eats but which He hides for the righteous ones in the world to come. And what you assert about Joshua ben Levi, who is supposed to be living in Paradise, it finds its parallel in Elijah, who is now living in Heaven, II Kings II: 'And Elijah went up in a whirlwind into heaven'; and in Elisha, who resurrected a dead man after his own death, II Kings XIII, 20–21: 'And Elisha died, and they buried him. . . . And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they [Moabites] spied a band; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.' Now as to what our wise said about Adam's visiting all living creatures and not gaining composure of mind until he consulted Eve, it is sufficient to quote Genesis II, 20: 'And the man gave names to all cattle and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helpmeet for him.' This teaches us that whereas he named all living creatures he could find no helpmeet for himself because of an uneasy mind until, as Genesis II, 21, says: 'And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the space with flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be

called woman because she was taken out of man.' From then on his mind was composed. He did not sin in this regard, because he had no previous experience. As to your saying that he fathered spirits, devils and Lilith, we find in *Bereshit Rabbah* that there are many creatures with bodies and souls other than mankind who procreate and die; that they are called *lutin,* or spiritual beings, who give birth to offspring without body but with a soul in accordance with Genesis II, 3: 'He rested from all His work which God in creating had made,' that is, in the process of continued creation, but not finished. These are the demons whom He furnished with souls but whose bodies He did not complete. Only those with body and soul like the *lutin* were regularly conceived and procreated. It is supposed that Lilith cohabited with Adam, unknown to him, because she transformed herself into a form without a body, and so he inseminated her, and from her were derived the demons and spirits. This is what is meant by Genesis V, 3: 'And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot a son in his own likeness after his image,' implying that up to one hundred and thirty years of age he did not beget in his own likeness and image. And, as to Adam's stature which reached from Heaven to earth, and from one end of the world to the other, is it not documented in Psalms VIII, 6: 'Yet hast Thou made him but little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor; Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet'? It may appear greatly exaggerated to say that he lacked but little less of God's corporeal stature, as Isaiah XL, 12: 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountain in scales and the hills in a balance?' With reference to his breach, it is found in Psalms CXXXIX, 5: 'Thou hast hemmed me in behind and before,' which means he had an image front and rear. As to the angels who ate three tongues spiced with mustard, they performed greater feats than this, judging from Genesis VI, 1: 'And it came to pass when men

began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took them wives whomsoever they chose.' As regards the burning of the Torah at the time of Vespasian,[12f] not only the Talmud but all the Scriptures were put to the torch. You yourself subscribe to the Bible of Moses and admit that it is good. And were it not for the Talmud one could not understand its nature. When you say that a city containing it should be destroyed, it was not the city but those who were forbidden to read it who were martyred. This is what befell Hanina ben Teradion, one of the Ten Martyrs. It was Eleazar ben Perata who lied about his teaching the Torah and who was saved from a martyr's death, while Hanina ben Teradion, who clung closely to God's word and was continually busy expounding it in spite, and in the face, of royal prohibition, who paid with his life. The Torah is always true; it protects its votaries, and may our Lord, the God of heaven and earth, who created the earth and seas and who led our forefathers safely over the Red Sea and gave us the true Torah, commiserate us because of His name and renown, and show us mercy and return us to our inheritance, bring light out of darkness and gather us speedily together—Amen, Amen, Selah."

II

Public Disputation

between

Rabbi Moses Nachmanides and Fra Pablo Christiani,

Barcelona, 1263

Public Disputation between Rabbi Moses Nachmanides and Fra Pablo Christiani

Even as our Rabbis were under the necessity of answering all sorts of senseless questions, so will I in a like manner jot down my replies to the searing sophistry of Fra Pablo, his name be execrated, before royalty and councillors, may he and his kingdom be exalted. My lord, the king,[13] commanded me to enter the lists and close with this friar, his name be execrated, before his own august presence, in this tilt of words.

I said I would comply with the royal command provided I could talk freely and rely on his and his ministers' protection. At once Raymond interrupted with "Just so you do not slander our religion." To which I retaliated: "I do not propose to be judged by you unless I am permitted to answer freely your arguments against me. Know that I possess both learning and good breeding, and I shall speak humbly but in accordance with my convictions and under royal protection. Now in this debate, the essence of faith is not in question between us, and I have no intention to discuss before this august assembly inconsequential matters that do not bear on the fundamentals of faith." To this they answered in a body: "You have spoken well!" It was then agreed that we should first of all debate the question of the Messiah—if he has come already, in accordance with the belief of the Christians, or if he is still to come, as the Jews believe.

This disposed of, we shall take up the question whether the Messiah is really god or a common mortal born of man and woman and, lastly, whether we Jews are confirmed in the true faith.

At this Fra Pablo, his name be execrated, opened his mouth and said that he could prove from our Talmud that the Messiah has come already because the prophets have so foretold. And I answered: "I wish you would demonstrate to me how this is possible, because you always say things without proving them." Fra Pablo said that the sages of the Talmud believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that he is both man and god and not just an ordinary mortal, as the Christians assert.

To this I replied that it is generally known that Jesus did exist, that he was born at the time of the Second Temple, that he was executed before its destruction, before the era of the Rabbis such as R. Akiba and his disciples and those who, like R. Yehuda Ha-Nassi,[13a] who edited the *Mishnah* many years after the destruction of the Temple, and R. Ashi, who compiled the Talmud four hundred years after this event, and so, five hundred years after Jesus. Now, if these sages believed in Jesus, his messiahship and his ordinances, and wrote the Talmud for us, to which we now, as ever, and they themselves, subscribed, why did they do it? And how can Fra Pablo maintain that we believe in him when we know for a certainty that the sages and their disciples died in our faith? And why were they not baptized in the faith of Jesus as was Fra Pablo? And I should like to hear how, from whom and where he learned to be baptized? Did not the sages teach us all the laws and ritual we practice today? And did they not conduct themselves during the existence of the Temple in accordance with the precepts of the prophets and Moses, our teacher, peace unto him? And if they had believed in Jesus and his ordinances, they would have done as did Fra Pablo, who understands their words better than they themselves.

Fra Pablo, his name be execrated, retaliated: "This is a long speech to confuse the issue. At any rate hear me tell them that

I have unimpeachable proof that what he says is not true. I listen to him only because my lord, the king, so desires."

So he began: "The statement in Genesis XLIX, 10: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Yehuda, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, as long as men come to Shiloh,' refers to him as the Messiah; furthermore, the prophet says that the Jews will always be mighty and rule until the coming of the Messiah who is of his seed; therefore, you who do not have a ruler's staff and sceptre know that the Messiah who is of the seed of Yehuda has come already and the dominion is his."

This I met as follows: "The prophet never meant to say that the Kingdom of Yehuda shall perish for all time. He did say that as long as the tribe of Yehuda shall be worthy of it, it shall rule over Israel. And when the kingdom shall be abolished because of its iniquities, it shall be returned when Yehuda becomes penitent. To prove the truth of what I say, it is a historical fact that long before Jesus the Kingdom of Israel ceased to exist and that during Yehuda's seventy years' exile in Babylon it had no king, while at the time of the Second Commonwealth Yehuda had no ruler excepting Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, after whom there was an interval of three hundred and seventy years until the reigns of the Hasmoneans, who were of priestly descent. When in exile they had no country of their own, and where there is no country there is no king."

To this Fra Pablo answered: "Although they had no king in those days, they had dominion, as is expressly documented in the Talmud—Sanhedrin V, *a*. There were the exilarchs in Babylon who ruled over them with a rod in accordance with the prophecy: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Yehuda, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet.' There were the disciples of Hillel who gave public instruction, while today the scholars, thoroughly versed in Talmudic lore, have no authority. Nor have you any Rabbi today with the title of "master," and those that are so called hold the honor surreptitiously."

But I answered with some irony: "This is no disputation at

all, and you are not telling the truth when you say that the word 'Rabbi'[14] does not signify 'master,' but 'Rab' does, and that the Rabbis of the Talmud received this title without ordination and authority. As for myself, I must confess that I am not a Rabbi or even a moderately rated scholar." This I said in all humility. I then resumed and said that it was not the purpose of our Rabbis, peace to them, to expound the word in the text as a real kingdom. "You know neither law nor equity and only imperfectly a few legends and matters now in dispute culled from our sages. There is a principle in law that no one alone adjudge or absolve one without princely or royal permission. As long as there were still any of the royal seed in the time of exile who retained even a semblance of authority amidst foreign nations, as the princes in Babylon and exilarchs in Israel, they exercised both temporal and spiritual jurisdiction. This was the vogue when the sages of the Talmud flourished four hundred years after Jesus. It was not maintained by the Talmudic sages that the leader had to be of the seed of Yehuda, although it was their hope that from him would come David and a lawfully constituted government, although, as I have mentioned, this had been abolished for a long time. During the exile in Babylon they had neither sceptre nor ruler's staff, and while the Second Commonwealth lasted, the rulers and others in authority came from the priestly tribe, and no exilarch or prince was from the tribe of Yehuda. The government was vested in the priests, assistants or any others of their choice."

Now Fra Pablo observed: "While it is true that the sources say that the Jewish kingdoms will not be abolished forever, it could very well be that it is only an interruption." So I replied: "Fra Pablo, apostate, according to law, I win." To which he countered with "No, it is not so. Seventy years in Babylon was a short while, and there were many among the exiles who still remembered the First Temple, as is told in Ezra, and which may be considered an interval. But now that you have been in exile more than a thousand years, it can surely be considered permanent." And I then spoke up: "Now you may console yourself, for

the prophets do not distinguish between long and short exiles, and there have been, as I mentioned, times when hopes for their fulfilment have been realized. Our patriarch Jacob hoped that only Yehuda would enjoy the sceptre and the ruler's staff of an only kingdom while he was not destined to rule over all Israel, as it is written, Genesis, XLIX, 10: 'Yehuda will be lord over his brethren and surpass them.' And now the kingdoms of all Israel and Yehuda are one. And when Solomon died it was said, I Kings XII, 20: 'There was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Yehuda only.' It is clear, therefore, that the prophet did not say that the kingdom was lost forever. The truth of the matter is that the period of the exile cannot be called interminable and the kingdom entirely lost, especially that of Yehuda. The prophet was hoping that they would not be dispersed but have a kingdom forever."

Forthwith Fra Pablo resumed by saying that there is a passage in Talmud which says that the Messiah has come already and brought proof from a book, *Ekka Rabbati,* which contains the following fable: One day a farmer's ox lowed and an Arab shouted to the farmer: "Jew, O Jew, unleash your ox, loosen the plough and jug." When the Jew complied, the Arab shouted: "Tighten the reins, draw in your plough and jug because your Messiah was just born." So I said: "I do not believe this fable at all; however, it bears out what I have been saying." At once the apostate put up a howl. "Look, he denies the story." To which I replied: "Indeed I do not believe that the Messiah was born at the time the Temple was destroyed. This fable is not true or may have another meaning intended by the sages, but I shall accept it literally. As I said, the Messiah was born on the day the Temple was destroyed, but it should be self-evident to you that Jesus is not the Messiah, because Jesus was born more than two hundred years before the destruction of the Temple, and, according to truth and their own reckoning, he was hanged ninety-three years before." This silenced the wicked man.

At this juncture Master Gilban, the king's judge, spoke up:

"We are not now arguing about Jesus but whether or not the Messiah has come. And if you choose to say that he has not, here is your own source which affirms that he has." To which I replied: "This is just your tricky way, but I, for my part, will answer you truthfully. We do not say that he came but was born on the day the Temple was destroyed, because on the day Moses, our teacher, peace to him, was born, he came and freed Israel from bondage, although he actually did not do so until some years later when commanded by the Holy One, blessed be He, when he said to Pharaoh, Exodus VIII, 1: 'Thus saith God, send out My people that they may serve Me.' Now, when the proper time for the coming of the Messiah shall draw near, he will, at God's command, repair to the pope and declare: 'Send out My people that they may serve Me.' Then he will come. Until then we cannot say that he has come or even that he is the Messiah, because the day David was born he was neither king nor Messiah, but when Samuel anointed him king and inducted him to God's ordinances he became king and Messiah. In the same way, when Elijah shall introduce the Messiah to God's Laws, he shall then become the Messiah and come."

Then the villain opened his mouth and urged the passage Isaiah LII, 13: "Behold, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high," which, he maintained, refers to the death of the Messiah directly, who was surrendered into the hands of his enemies and the wicked, just as it happened to Jesus, and added: "Do you now believe this reference to the Messiah?" To this I replied: "If you wish to know the truth, this text alludes to the people of Israel as a whole; this is the language the prophets use in many of their discourses, as Isaiah XLI, 8: 'Israel, my servant,' and Isaiah XLIV, 1: 'Jacob, my servant.'" But the apostate Pablo interrupted with "I deduce from the sayings of your sages that it has reference to the Messiah." So I said to him: "It is true that the Rabbis in their homiletic renderings of their legends speak of him as the Messiah, but they do not say that the Messiah was

executed by his enemies. You will find no reference in any Jewish book, not in the Talmud or the *Aggada,* that they executed the Messiah, the son of David, that he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies or that he was buried with the wicked. Even the Messiah of your own making was not buried. If you wish I can give you the true meaning of this passage. There is nothing in it to indicate that he was executed the way your Messiah was." But they would not hear of it.

Now Fra Pablo, his name be execrated, came right back and said there is a clear reference in the Talmud as how R. Yoshua ben Levi asked Elijah when the Messiah would appear, and he answered . . . [what was said is missing in the text] and "Where is he?" And he replied: "He is in Rome consorting with the sick." Thereupon, R. Yoshua visited Rome, found him and questioned him. "The inference, therefore, is that he has come already and abides in that city." I answered this by declaring: "It is expressly stated therein that he did not come but that he was born, as is evident from the *Aggadas* accessible to me." Immediately the king spoke up: "If he was born the day the Temple was destroyed, which is more than a thousand years, and he has actually not come, when and how will he come? Because it is not natural for a man to live a thousand years." As this called for an answer, I said: "Adam and Methuselah did, indeed, live close to a thousand years, and Elijah and Enoch, by God's grace, even longer, and are alive today. Your Majesty, I shall answer you as becomes royalty, although one of the conditions for this debate entered upon long ago was that I would not bandy words with my sovereign." So the king: "Where is he now?" And I said: "This is not up for discussion, and I will not answer lest you find me at the gate that leads to the scaffold if you will send over one of your runners to find out." This I pronounced with some irony. They now took off, and the king gave permission to return in seven days.

On that day the king repaired to one of the monasteries in the city where Jewish and Christian townsfolk assembled. Among them were high dignitaries, monks, Christian scholars, inquisitors

and riffraff. Directly Pablo, the villain, arose to speak; I interrupted and addressed the king: "My Lord, listen to me." And His Majesty replied: "Let him speak first. He is the challenger." But I would not be silenced and cried out: "Let me first give my views on the Messiah so I can rebut his arguments." Emboldened, I stood up and said: "Listen, all of you people here. This here Pablo asked me if the Messiah, as the prophets have intimated, has already come, and I replied that he has not. So he produced a book of fables to prove that the Messiah was born the day the Temple was destroyed. I met that by denying it, although it would appear so from what I said before. And now I will explain to you why I do not believe it. It is because we have three varieties of sacred books. The first contains twenty-four books making up the Bible. We subscribe wholeheartedly to them. The second is called the Talmud, which explains the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the Bible, and in these, too, we believe just as reverently. There is yet a third which is called the *Midrash,* which is allegorical and legendary. One of the listeners who was favorably impressed wrote, saying that if one cares to believe it, good and well, and if he does not, no harm will come. And there are wise men who have said and written that the Messiah will not be born until near the end of days to redeem us from captivity. For this reason I do not believe him who declares that he was born the day the Temple was destroyed. There is a similar fable in the German language entitled *Verkündigung,* or "Prophecy," which treats it as a gossip of neighbors. I, however, accept it literally because it can easily be proved that your Jesus is not the Messiah. I told you he was not born on that day but long before it. You, Gracious King, have posed a harder question than they did. You said it was not usual for a man to live one thousand years, but I can answer it. Adam, the first man, lived one thousand less seventy years and died because he sinned. And if he had not sinned, he would have lived on and on and possibly forever. Both Jews and Christians are agreed that his sin and punishment will end with the coming of the Messiah, and after his coming all punishment

will cease. The Messiah would then live thousands of years or forever. It is so written in Psalms CX: 'The Lord saith unto my lord: Sit thou at my right hand,' and Psalms XXI, 5: 'He asked life of Thee, Thou gavest it him; even length of days for ever and ever.' My Lord, you also asked me where he is today. Scripture definitely says that Adam was in the earthly Paradise, and when he sinned he was banned from it. Genesis III, 23: 'Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden.' And because the Messiah was declared free from Adam's sin, he has remained in the Garden of Eden. This, as I recall it, is what the Rabbis say in the books called the *Aggada.*"

But then the king spoke up: "Did you not say that the Messiah is in Rome?" And I replied that he is not always there, only that he was seen there on that day because Elijah told Yoshua ben Levi that he would find him there on that day and would be seen for a reason specified in the *Aggada,* but which I would not disclose before this mob. "Furthermore, I am unwilling to tell them of the legend that says that the Messiah would remain in Rome until this city is destroyed. We find a parallel instance in the case of our teacher Moses, who grew up in the palace of Pharaoh, finally separated, and drowned Pharaoh's people in the Red Sea. Another and similar case was that of Hiram, King of Tyre—Ezekiel XXVIII, 18: 'Therefore have I brought forth a fire from the midst of thee'; and Isaiah XXVII, 10: 'There shall the calf feed and there shall he lie down and consume the branches thereof'; and in *Perek Hilchot* where it is said that Rome would be destroyed to its foundation." To all this the king declared that it was an unimportant matter so far as he was concerned. All this was discussed confidentially between the king and me.

And now I resumed: "Do you now admit that Adam's sin will be forgiven during the Messianic era?" Both the king and the wicked Pablo answered: "Yes, but not the way you understand it. It is our belief that everybody goes to Hell but that their souls will be redeemed through Jesus, who will free them." To this I said: "There is a saying in our country that he who

wishes to tell a lie had better remove all those within hearing, because the penalties incurred by reason of the sins of Adam and Eve are many and for all to read, as Genesis III: '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 till thou return unto the ground, for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return'; and to the wife He said: 'In pain shalt thou bring forth children.' And all this still holds good today. Your Messiah will not expiate all we see and feel, nor Hell itself, which is not to be found in Scripture, and yet it seems there is no one who can convince you of its falsehood. Therefore send someone here; God forbid that the righteous be punished for the guilt of their father Adam, because my soul is so bound up with the soul of my father and that of Pharaoh, though so far apart. Not my soul, but my body, which is derived from the bodies of my father and mother, will be consigned to Hell in consequence of the indiscretions of Adam and Eve and the sentence of death imposed on them and their seed to the end of time."

Now arose Fra Pablo, his name be execrated, and exclaimed: "I will again bring proof that the time for the coming of the Messiah is long past." To which I replied: "My Gracious Sovereign, listen to me a moment. Our controversy has nothing to do with the personality of the Messiah, and you mean more to us than he does. You are a Christian, and he, a Jewish, king. Moreover, the Messiah is only flesh and blood, even as you are. And as I serve my Creator under your protection, forever a stranger, and the sport of the people among whom I live and put to shame by all, my reward in the next world will be in proportion to my suffering in this. But when the Jewish Messiah shall arrive and permeate the whole world with his precepts and I shall, of course, continue firm in my Jewish faith, my reward will not be as great. At this moment the controversy between Jew and Christian is narrowed down to the matter of his divinity, which may become very bitter. And you, our young royal lord, the son of a Christian father and mother, who have

all your life been hearing your monks and priests preach about the birth of Jesus and filled your head and bones with it, your familiarity with it has become confirmed by constant repetition. Just the same, what you have been made to believe in is not amenable to reason. Neither good sense nor nature can accept it. He cannot even explain the miracles, which I hope to do in time and place by overwhelming proof. That the Creator of Heaven and earth and all they contain can make a Jewish woman bear a child for nine months and then give birth to a son, permit it to grow up and then surrender him to his enemies to be condemned for a capital crime and to be executed, and then to assert that he was resurrected and returned to his original condition, does not square with Jewish understanding or with that of anyone else. You say these things only to confuse and to dismay. This is the crux of our dispute. However, let us now hear your version of the Messiah."

Then the wicked Pablo asked: "Do you believe that the Messiah has come?" And I answered: "I do not; I know for a certainty that he has not come, and there is no one who said or will say that he is the Messiah, only Jesus. And if one believes in his messiahship because of what the Psalmist said of him—Psalms LXXII, 8: 'May he have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth'—it does not apply to Jesus, because he had no sovereignty at all, but was driven from his enemies in shame and fled them and finally fell into their hands and could not save himself from them. How then could he redeem all Israel? Nor did he have dominion after his death. The supremacy of Rome was not because of him, for even before the time of Jesus Rome had conquered the greater part of the world, and after it adopted his religion it continued very mighty. Even today, the followers of Mohammed, your enemies, have greater dominion than you. In reference to it the prophet Jeremiah predicts—Jeremiah XXXI, 33—'And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord!' And Isaiah XI, 9: 'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.' And Isaiah II, 4: 'And they shall beat their swords into

ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' But from the day of Jesus to the present the whole world has been full of violence and bloodshed; and the Christians, more than any other peoples, have shed blood and indulged in venery. These prophetic hopes would indeed be hard on kings and their hosts were wars outlawed. And again the prophet Isaiah XI, 4, says this of the Messiah: 'And he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.' There is a passage in the book of legends belonging to Pablo which says that when it be reported to the King, the Messiah, that such and such a province has revolted he should order it laid waste and that when a province of an eparch is in rebellion he order a pest of flies to consume it. But it was not so with Jesus. You march on, armed to the teeth, horses fully caparisoned, and many times—for nothing. And I can bring many proofs from the writings of the prophets."

At this the apostate fairly shrieked: "This is what you get from long-winded speeches." And I was about to reply when they howled: "Stop! He is the challenger."

But now the ass opened his mouth: "Your sages say that the Messiah is honored more than the angels. This can refer only to Jesus, because he himself is God." And he brings proof from Isaiah LII, 13: "He shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high," more exalted than Abraham, more elevated than Moses, and far above the ministering angels. So I answered: "This is the way the sages always characterize all the righteous. For instance, there is a saying that the pious are greater than the ministering angels, and that our teacher Moses, peace to him, said to the ministering angels that 'Where we sit you have no right to stand.' We find it also recorded that 'God loves the Jew more than the ministering angels.' The meaning of the legend about the Messiah is this: Our father Abraham brought strangers into our fold to the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He. He fearlessly challenged King Nimrod. Moses did more than that with the miracles he performed so fearlessly against Pharaoh

and freed Israel, his people, from him, whereas the ministering angels avoided the subject of their liberation, as is found in Daniel X, 21: 'And there is none that holdeth with me against these, except Michael, your prince.' It is also said: 'I will now strive with the Seraphim'; but the Messiah will do more than all to exalt God's glory. He will come and command the pope and all reigning monarchs to free God's people so that they could serve Him, and give signals to the rebels fearlessly, and will remain in the city of Rome until it is destroyed. If you wish I shall explain the particular passages to you." But they would not listen.

But now the ass opened his mouth and brought proof from a legend that tells how the Messiah prays to the Holy One, blessed be He, to forgive the sins of the Jews, and how he takes upon himself their suffering, but only on the condition that the dead be resurrected. And not only the dead of his own time but all those that died naturally from the time of Adam to the present as well as those who died by drowning and by being devoured by wolves, leopards and other beasts. Then plaintively: "Is not the suffering he willingly took upon himself to atone for the execution of Jesus?" I answered: "Woe to him who has lost all sense of shame! Jesus did nothing of these. He did not bring to life the dead from the time of Adam to the present, nor the others you impute to him. Furthermore, this prayer only proves that he is man and not god, and that he has no power to resurrect the dead. But let me explain to you what there is to this fable of his suffering. It is nothing more or less than self-pity because he came so late and saw his people exiled and was so helpless to redeem them; that he had a presentiment that they would worship an alien god, deny the true God, and make themselves another Messiah and worship him."

Then arose the apostate and declaimed: "Daniel IX, 24,[15] says: '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.' Seventy weeks make four hundred and ninety years. The Second Temple lasted four hundred and twenty years, and the captivity in Babylon, seventy years; then came the holy of the holies, and that is Jesus." To this I replied: "According to our verified figures, Jesus antedated this by more than two hundred years, as those of his generation who knew and recognized him can testify. But according to your figures he preceded it by more than twenty weeks." And he answered: "That is true, but it is recorded in Daniel IX, 25: 'Know therefore and discern that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto one anointed, a prince, shall be seven weeks, and for three score and two weeks it shall be built again, with broad place and moat, but in troublous time.' The Messiah, the prince, is Jesus." This called for an answer from me: "This is a notorious error, because the text changed seventy weeks, stated as a fact, to seven weeks, to the coming of the Messiah. He then counts sixty-two weeks to build a broad place and moat, which makes sixty-nine; seven and sixty-two make sixty-nine. He then adds one week to confirm the Covenant to the people, making a total of seventy weeks. And Jesus, whom you call Messiah, the prince, did not come exactly to the seventy weeks. Look, you have misinterpreted the text out of hatred, and I heard that you understand nothing of it and defiantly speak about a matter you know nothing of. And let me teach you this: by the Messiah, the prince, is meant Zerubbabel, and he lived at the time of the seven weeks, as can be verified by the holy text." This he answered by asking: "How can he be called the Messiah?" which elicited this reply from me: "Even Cyrus was called Messiah—Isaiah XLV, 1: 'Thus saith the Lord to His anointed to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden,' and it is said of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—Psalms CV, 15: 'Touch not Mine anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.' Zerubbabel is called prince not because he reigned over a kingdom but because he was worthy of such honor in his own name. The word 'prince' is used in the following sense—Psalms XLVII, 10: 'The princes of the people are gathered together, the people of

the God of Abraham.' Now, if you and your kind wish to learn and have the brains for it, I will explain the text clearly to you. I declare before the king and his subjects that neither in the quoted passage nor in all of Daniel, excepting at the end of the book, is the final day for the coming of the Messiah mentioned. From this and from other parts of the text it can be surmised that he was constantly praying to know the final day, and so, lastly, it is divulged in the last chapter, Daniel XII, 11: 'And from the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away, and the detestable thing that causeth appallment set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.' And now I shall explain to you the text, although it may be distasteful to my Jewish friends here. And this is the explanation. From the time that the continued burnt offering was discontinued to the erection of those abominations by the Romans who destroyed our Temple, one thousand two hundred and ninety days elapsed, days being reckoned as years,[16] as in Leviticus XXV, 29: '. . . for a full year shall he have the right of redemption,' and in Genesis XXIV, 55: 'Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten.' To this figure he added forty-five years to bring it up to one thousand days. Afterwards says Daniel: 'Happy is he that waiteth and cometh to the one thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.' The original meaning is that the Messiah will come and will utterly destroy the pagan abominations. Afterwards he will assemble the Jews who are exiled in the wilderness of the nations as is prophesied in Hosea II, 16: 'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly unto her, and then will Israel return to his country.' Our teacher Moses, the first Redeemer, led Israel in the wilderness forty years. In the same way will the final Redeemer, as is prophesied in Hosea II, 17: 'And she shall respond there, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.' After that they shall enjoy peace on their own soil and rejoice in the Lord, their God, and their King David. Blessed are they who attain these happy days. It is one thousand one hundred and ninety-five years since the Temple was de-

stroyed, which are ninety-five years less than Daniel reckoned, and we think he will come at this time because this is the correct interpretation and worthy of belief."

Then Fra Pablo, his name be execrated, spoke up: "What is the meaning of these residual days?" which I answered as "These are the forty-five days the Redeemer is hidden. Just as Moses, the first Redeemer, appeared visible and then invisible in these days, so will the last Redeemer appear and disappear." * * * "and when a day is spoken of, it is a real day, and not years."

So now I interposed: "The *Midrash* construes forty-five days as forty-five years. This is not an uncommon way in the Scriptures." But the apostate came right back with "There is not a Jew in all the world who does not know that the word 'day' means a real day excepting the one who perverts it to suit his purpose."[17] Just then the king spoke up and ordered that another Jew be summoned and questioned as to the meaning of the word in his tongue. But I remonstrated to our lord as follows: "The Jew capable of matching wits with Pablo is no match for me, because the word 'day' in the text means 'time,' as in Numbers III, 3: 'On that day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt,' and Numbers VIII, 17: 'On the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt,' and the plural of 'days' means 'years.' Therefore this expression in Daniel means 'years.' This was necessary to hide its meaning as the angel twice ordered to do—Daniel XII, 4: 'And 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.' But I am speaking wisdom with one who does not understand but is aware that he will be outwitted." This Pablo answered with: "The word 'day' as used here is the popular one." I smiled at this sally and said: "You can tell from what he says that the word 'day' is not literal as in other places, and so must be interpreted differently. It is clear to me that the expression 'these days' as popularly used means 'years.' "

But the apostate was up on his feet again: "Look, the sages

maintain that the Messiah is in the Garden of Eden. There is a legend that the Holy One, His name be blessed, hid him in the Garden of Eden when he became aware that his ancestors were idol-worshippers and he would have none of them." Just then I grabbed his book and read from it legends which mention those who entered the Garden of Eden during their lifetime, as Sorach,[18] the daughter of Asher, and the daughter of Pharaoh.[19] "Now if Jesus was the Messiah and God, as you claim, then he would not abide in the Garden of Eden[20] as an ordinary mortal, but would have his seat in Heaven, and his feet on the earth. Nothing is more blasphemous than to assert that God abides in the house of Adam, because before his indiscretion the Garden of Eden was Adam's home. This is not the lore or the explanation of the Rabbis who wrote this legend." On hearing this the king got up and was gone.

On the third day the king ordered that the disputation be conducted privately in his own palace, and we took our seats at the palace gate. Immediately the apostate opened his mouth and sputtered a lot of nonsense. But presently I broke in: "I shall bring proof from an unimpeachable source, a man of rare wisdom, by name Moses, the son of Maimon,[21] who says that the Messiah will die, and that his son and the latter's son shall reign after him, in succession, unlike the man who brags that he will not die as other mortals." So now he demanded that the Book of Judges from the *Yad Hachazaka* be brought, whereupon I interrupted, saying: "I am familiar with its text. But I must own that some of our *aggadists* say that he was born the day the Temple was destroyed and that he would live forever. On the other hand, it is the opinion of the most eminent commentators that he will be born near the end of the period of the Redemption, that he will live a measurable lapse of time, shall die greatly revered, and bequeath his kingdom and crown successively to his son and the latter's male heirs. I have said already that I believe this and that there is no difference between this world and the Messianic except freedom from servitude in the latter." "Whoever said this, lied," broke in the wicked man, his name be

execrated. But I retaliated: "Up to now there was no such great wise man, and now he lies!" When the debate took this turn the king rebuked the challenger: "I will not tolerate abuse of the wise." And I spoke up: "I can prove from the Pentateuch and Prophets that he is not abusive, and that what he said is true, namely, that the Messiah will reassemble the twelve tribes of Israel, and that your Messiah did not restore one, nor did he come into existence to redeem them. That he is destined to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, but that Jesus not only did not build one but destroyed it; that the Messiah shall rule over all, but that Jesus could not rule even himself." To bolster my sources for confirmation I now proceeded to recite for them a portion of Deuteronomy XXX, 1–7: "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 thou shalt bethink thyself among all the nations whither the Lord, thy God, hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and hearken to His voice according to all I commanded thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine that are dispersed be in the uttermost parts of Heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, that persecuted thee." But the king presently arose and went his way.

The next day, which was the fourth, the palace was astir with preparations for the continuance of the disputation. The king took his seat as was his wont. There were present the mili-

tary, higher dignitaries, people from the suburbs and common folk in great number. I got to my feet and addressed the king: "I do not wish to go on with this debate." So the king asked: "Why not?" to which I replied: "I am sickened and appalled before this huge crowd. Not only that, but I was warned by the monks who fill the hearts of all with terror not to reopen it. Even the cavalry officers in your entourage advised me to say nothing against their religion. Fra Peira [a Franciscan], a very discreet man, belonging to the minor clergy, urged that it would not do. The common folk, otherwise well disposed towards the Jews, dissuaded me." This give-and-take lasted quite a while. Finally I said that I would resume the debate provided I would be given one day to consult with Pablo, the villain. He asked how many days I would require, and I told him three. At this point the king said: "Answer him, anyway." The apostate opened his mouth and asked: "Do you believe that the Messiah of whom the Rabbis speak was a man born of man and woman, or of God?" And I answered: "The first condition of our disputation was that we would limit it to the question whether or not the Messiah has come, as you assert; only then would we debate the question whether he is god or man. As a matter of fact you did not argue very convincingly that he came already, because I confounded your frivolous proofs, and I won legally because the burden of proof was on you and you failed. If you do not concede my victory but are willing to hear me further, I shall take it upon myself to marshal convincing, unassailable proof. I having proved that Jesus is not the Messiah, it will be useless for you to argue whether our Messiah is a mere man or what. I am certain that both sages and the judges will adjudicate in my favor." But the king was insistent: "Answer him, at any rate." So I replied: "The Messiah will come and he will be a mortal man born in wedlock from father and mother the same as I am, and that he will be of the seed of King David is foretold in Isaiah XI, 1: 'And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse,' and Genesis XLIX, 10: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Yehudah, nor the ruler's staff from between his

feet as long as men come to Shiloh'; and this is his son. Another version is that he will be born as are all the sons of men. And if, as you assert, he was born through the Holy Ghost, he could not have come from the loins of Jesse. Though he may be of his seed, he will not inherit his kingdom, because daughters do not inherit where there is a male heir, and David sired many sons."

Then did Fra Pablo open his mouth and recite Psalm CX: "The Lord saith unto my lord: Sit thou at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," and asked: "Who is it that David called his lord and where did he sit?" And the king addressed me: "This is a fair question, because had the Messiah really been of the seed of David, David would not speak to him as 'my lord'." Now I looked squarely at Fra Pablo, the wicked, his name be execrated, and said to him: "Are you the Jew who made this new discovery for which you were baptized, and would have all the Jewish sages debate with you on the proper interpretations of the legendary tales? As though we have not heard this before? Or as though even the novices in the monasteries have not already asked this question? It is, besides, a very old one." The king interrupted: "But answer him anyway." So I spoke up: "Now, listen to me. Know that King David sang these Psalms through the Holy Spirit and arranged them so that the Levites could chant them before God's altar. He himself did not and dare not sing them, because it is prohibited by Scriptural Law. All he did was to arrange their language so as to make them fit for use by the Levites. But if the Psalm were worded 'The Lord saith unto me,' the Levite would have chanted it falsely, because the Lord had not spoken to him. For this reason he intones: 'The Lord saith unto my lord,' and, as the Levite sings it thus, the meaning is 'The Lord saith to my lord David, Sit to my right.' The meaning of the word 'sit' is that the Holy One, blessed be He, watches over him with His right hand and makes him unassailable by his enemies. Thus it was that he slew eight hundred[22] people with his sword in one encounter. Is there one among the cavalrymen assembled here who could perform such a feat? This could happen only because of the right hand

of God. And so it is written, Psalms CXVIII, 15–16: 'The hand of the Lord doeth valiantly; the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly,' and Psalms XVIII, 36: 'And Thy hand hath holden me up.' Furthermore, such expressions in Scripture are common, as in the case of Lamech—Genesis IV, 23: 'Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech.' We find many such, and remember that the Psalms were composed through the Holy Spirit. These are said of David and his son, the heir to his throne, and he is the Messiah, and, while in a narrower sense this applies to David and his kingdom only, when speaking of his son, the Messiah, he will exercise dominion over all, because the right hand of God has enabled David to overcome his enemies, and enabled his son, the Messiah, to subdue all who were his enemies, enslaved his own people, denied his coming and dominion and, in the end, acknowledged another Messiah. For these reasons it was proper to chant this Psalm in the Sanctuary in the time of David and his son, the Messiah, as it is said: 'David's throne and his kingdom.' "

And now Pablo spoke: "How can this be possible? Their sages say literally that the Messiah sits at the right of the Holy One, blessed be He, and bring proof from the *Aggada* that says that in the future world." * * *

And the apostate continued: "It is stated in *Bereshith Rabba*: 'And the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.' This is the spirit of the Messiah. He cannot, therefore, be a mortal man but God." To this I replied: "In my opinion, need one be deeply learned and wise to ask such a question? There is more than that, namely, that the Spirit of God hovered, and that this spirit is that of Adam, the first man. Will you then say that he, too, is God? There is a saying that may be applied to you: 'He who does not know what is above or what is below in the text only perverts the words of the living God.' And he who construes the sentence 'The Spirit of God hovered over the spirit of the Messiah' refers to the future kingdom. With reference to the expression 'The earth was unformed' it is meant for Babylon, as in Jeremiah IV, 23: 'I beheld the earth and, lo, it was waste

and void.' The word 'void' refers to the kingdom of the Medes, as in Esther VI, 14: 'And hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet'; the word 'darkness' refers to the Greeks, who darkened Israel's eyes with their decrees. The expression 'on the face of the deep' means the kingdom of Edom, the wicked, and 'the Spirit of God,' the spirit of the Messiah. By whose grace or favor does it hover over the face of the waters? The answer is by the grace of the Divine Law which is compared to the waters, as in Isaiah LV, 1: 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye for water.' Now, the apostate overlooks the Four Kingdoms,[23] and Rome, the fourth one, and relies on the expression 'the Spirit of God' that the Messiah is mortal and full of the Spirit of God, the same word used by the Bible in the case of Bezallel, of whom Exodus XXXI, 3, records: 'And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship'; and of Yoshua, of whom it is said—Deuteronomy XXXIV, 9—'And Yoshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom.' Now, as to what he has to say about the Messiah, he is the Messiah who is destined to come after the Four Kingdoms shall be destroyed." This I said to prove to all that he does not know how to interpret the book he brought along, because he mistakes the sense of the text. But at this point the king and everybody else took leave. I believe that my discourse did not change their minds at all. Next day I presented myself before the king and said: "Your Majesty, let this debate remain as it is, because I have never seen one whom the law does not protect and, therefore, one who pleads in vain do as well as I did." I then overheard remarks around the palace gates that the king and his court were coming to the synagogue on Saturday next to go on with the discussion. So I waited there another eight days.

And when the next Saturday came around, I addressed the king respectfully and dutifully, but when he declared that Jesus is the Messiah, I stood up and said that while we respect pronouncements of the king, "I must deny that Jesus is the Messiah, because I have abundant proof, clear as sunlight, that what I

assert is true. However, I do not wish to prolong this debate with the king. It is most amazing how Jesus himself brought proof to our ancestors that he was god; this was met by a bitter denial. He could, more than the king can now, have affirmed this assertion, and, if the people in his lifetime disbelieved him, how can we believe the king, who has his information only by hearsay and who was not present as were our ancestors who heard and saw all."

And now arose Fra Raymond[24] and preached on the subject of the Trinity[25] and admonished the Jews to accept it, in this wise: "Accept the doctrine of the Trinity, because God is the embodiment of wisdom, will and power. In this respect your Rabbi is in agreement with Pablo." When I heard this I got up on my feet and said: "Jews, listen to me! Fra Pablo asked me if I believe in the Trinity, and I answered him by asking him: 'What is the Trinity? Does it mean three material bodies in the form of the children of mortal men?' To which he answered: 'No!' 'Or three immaterial things like angels and souls?' And he replied 'No!' 'Or is it something welded into three like the bodies made up of four elements?' He said: 'No!' And I countered with 'If that is so, what is the Trinity?' And he said: 'It is an amalgam of wisdom, will and power.' To this I replied: 'God is wise and not a fool, He is fearless, mighty and not a weakling. Furthermore, the term "Trinity" is a fatal error, because God's wisdom is not an accident. He and His wisdom are One and His might is One, therefore all these attributes are One, and it does not follow that there are three gods. These are only three attributes.' " Just then the king interjected that this concept is what the unbelievers teach. And he added that there are three qualities to wine, namely, taste, appearance and smell, and all are considered characteristic of wine. But this concept is a basic error, because the red color, the taste and the smell are three distinct and unrelated qualities of the wine. The same principle applies when the colors of wine are different, as red, white or others, and to taste and smell. Nor are the red color, the taste and the smell one, as is the container itself. By the same token

the body can be said to be composed of distinct elements, three in number, and none other. And there are no less than four accidents or essences embodying Him, His wisdom, His will and His might. The fifth essence is life. God, then, incorporates all five. This, I thought, would convince them of its absurdity. But Fra Pablo, his name be execrated, got on his feet and proclaimed that he believes in the Unity, although made up of Three, and that this is a very profound matter not even understood by the angels and heavenly hosts. But I came right back and said that it is as logical as can be that one does not believe what one does not know. That is why the angels do not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. At this they all hushed up. The king arose and all went their several ways.

The next day I appeared before the king and asked his permission to go back to my city. He said: "Go in health and peace!" And he gave me three hundred gold pieces for traveling expenses and I left him well disposed towards me.[26] May His Holy Name grant us life eternal.—Amen Selah!

These are the exact words which Moses, the son of Nachman, of the province of Aragon, used in the disputation with the apostate Pablo.

III

The Tortosa Disputation

between

Spanish Rabbis

and Antipope Benedict XIII and

Geronimo de Santa Fé

February 1413 — November 1414

Introduction

By some considered the most publicized, and certainly the longest—sixty-nine sessions—religious disputation in the long history of Jewish apologetics, a memorandum on its sources and a critique of its documentary evidence may not be amiss. Inasmuch as my present English translation of its Hebrew report is based on that found in the book entitled *Sefer Shebet Yehuda,* first published early in the sixteenth century, its authenticity as a source book will be considered first and be followed by an analysis of the event itself. Parenthetically, the title of this work is compounded of the name Yehuda, probably a common ancestral one, the word *shebet,* meaning "branch" or "offshoot." Aside from this English version, there are those in German by M. Wiener; in Jewish-German, 1648 and 1700; in Spanish; and one in Latin. Writing in 1924, Dr. M. Wiener, of Hanover, Germany, enumerated eleven editions then extant.

It is the opinion of the historian Graetz that the author of the *Sefer Shebet Yehuda* is Ibn Verga, of Seville, and that he appropriated the material for his volume largely from the Catalan Profiat Duran Efodi's literary contribution, the *History of Jewish Martyrology,* published early in the fifteenth century. This book, also, was the source for Samuel Usque's *Consolations for the Sorrows of Israel,* written in Portuguese. Graetz goes farther and clinches this supposition by quoting from Isaac Abravanell's book *The Salvation of His Anointed* written in 1497 to recoup the flagging belief of the Jews in the coming of the Messiah, which overtook them as a result of the seeming endless trials and tribulations, as follows: "This is evident from the work *The History of Jewish Martyrology* of Efodi which memorialized the Martyred Jews." The *Sefer Shebet Yehuda* by Solomon Ibn Verga, the father, and Joseph, his son, has enjoyed continued popularity. Some modern critics, as Isidore Loeb,

in France, are of the opinion that it is a conglomeration of facts and fancy and is inferior to Usque's parallel work. Fritz Baer, writing in 1923, on the other hand, maintains that Verga's work is the creation of one man and, as it antedated the *Consolations for the Sorrows of Israel* by one year, it may not be invidious to surmise that the author of the latter book may have consulted the *Shebet Yehuda,* as may be easily seen from a comparison of the parallel columns of citations from both books and from the original, common source of both, the *History of Jewish Martyrology,* in Graetz's *History of the Jews,* Volume VIII, pages 405–407.

Now, a few words about the author Ibn Verga. For this information I am indebted to Fritz Baer's *Researches Into the Sources and Composition of the Sefer Shebet Yehuda* and Dr. M. Wiener's Hebrew and German translations of this volume.

Ibn Verga—*verga* is Spanish for "branch" or "offshoot"—was born in Seville, but spent the early years of his life in Castile. This may be inferred from his text, which treats of matters Castilian. Even as a youth he entered the lists in a war of words to defend the Jews against Christian contumely. He witnessed much social injustice all around him, and out of pity for the unfortunate lot of the Jews he frequently came to their aid, even going as far as Portugal on missions of mercy, where he settled in 1492. To insure his own safety, he even paraded as a Christian. He threw off this mask when in 1507, along with the many exiled, he emigrated to Naples, where he put the finishing touches on the literary work now under purview. Like a few others before and since, he wrote this book to arm his coreligionists with documented data against the day when they would be constrained to apologize for their steadfastness to their profession of Judaism. Incidentally, the most modern work, almost encyclopedic in scope and for a similar end, is the volume entitled *Israel Among the Nations* by Joseph Samuel Bloch, published in 1929. A well advised observation on the need for such a book as the *Shebet Yehuda* is Ibn Verga's own statement on page 26: "The great misfortune of the Jew is that no one takes up his defense without incurring envy and hatred, be the cause ever so just." And lastly, Fritz Baer evaluated the *Shebet Yehuda* this wise: "The book *Shebet Yehuda* is the first one to publish from the Jewish standpoint their lot considered economically, socially, and altruistically, and the first one in Christian countries to touch on the Jewish Question." He died in 1554, in Adrianople.

THE TORTOSA DISPUTATION

As to its sources and their authenticity, there is this to be said: There are extant two; one, a Latin version or *Protocol,* the work of the notary Garcias Alvarez de Alarçon of Pope Benedict XIII, jotted down on the

Usque consolacão.

I.

Yngriterra Anno 5002.

(No. 12) Vi na ylha de Yngraterra muitos Israelitas multiplicados, e somente em Londres cidade, principal de todo o reino, se achavão duas mil casas mui ricas, passando com alguna quietud seu (l. sem) desterro aly e em todolas outras partes da provincia. (Das Uebrige von dem zum Judenthum übergetretenen frade pregador — Robert de Redingge — iſt daſelbſt der Cor. Ym. d. h. Cronica de Yngraterra entnommen.

II.

(No. 20) França Anno do mundo 5066.

Nesto mesmo anno me vi em França ... socedendo no reino outro Felipe, filho de Luis e neto do outro Felipe Augusto ... este sem dar mais rasaõ de si quo o odio, ... mandou pregoar, que si devesem fazer Christiaõs, quantos Judeos em seu reino se achavão, ou lhe fossem tomados todos seus bems et desterrados do reino .... deixando os quasi nuus .... de maneira que assi pera (para) lustimar de todos seus

ן' וירנא שבט יהודה

I.

(י"ח) האי אשר נקרא היום אינגלאטירה נעשה שם שמד גדול ועצום בכל אותם קהלות גדולות ועצומות אשר היו שם בימים ההם בחכמה ובינה ובבוד וביחוד העיר הגדולה הנקראת לונדריש אשר היו שם קרוב לשני אלפים בעלי בתים ... ושם עשה החכם ר' אברהם בן עזרא אגרת קראה אגרת שבת והשמד היה שימירו דתם ובאשר עמדו על קדושת השם העלילו עליהם שהיו עושים זיוף במטבע ובאה תביעה זו לפני המלך . . וחקר ודרש ומצא כי המעלילים המזיפים היו מטילים האשמה על היהודים ונמלטו . לימים שבו הנוצרים ובקשו מי שיעיד נגד היהודים .... צוה וגרשם והיה הגירוש זה שנת חמשה אלפים ועשרים ליצירה.

II.

(כ"א) שנה ה' אלפים וארבעים (l. וששים) ושש ליצירה קם פיליפו בן פיליפ וגרש את כל היהודים אשר במלכותו ונתאכזר מאוד נגד היהודים ולקח כל אשר להם בכסם וזהבם ומטלטלין וקרקע ונתגרשו בערום ועריה וחסר כל . והיו היהודים רבים כחול באותם מלכיות עד שאמרו שהיו כפלים כיוצאי מצרים והקהלות ההם היו גדולות בחכמה ובמנין וכן כתב הרלב"נ בפירוש מי מנה וכו' וחבר הפירוש ההוא ט"ו שנה אחר הגירוש . וקצת המירו דת אבל מועטים היו מאוד וקהל טולושא המירו כלם .

אפודי וכרון השמדות

I.

אמנם גירוש במלכות כולל נעשה ראשונה באי הנקרא קצה הארץ היא אינגליטיירה בשנה הנזכרה (המשת אלפים ועשרים ליצירה) שהיה שמה כמה קהלות גדולות וביחוד העיר הגדולה הנקראת לונדריש שהיו שמה סבני ישראל אלפים בעלי בתים ושם עשה הראב"ע מאמר שקראו אגרת שבת . ומלך האי ההוא עשה .... גרוש כללי לכל קהלות מלכותו וקבלה היא ביד חיהודים שהיה זה בסבת גלוח הסטבעות ... והוחיבם המלך עליו פעמים רבות ולא שמעו ולבסוף גרשום ממלכותו.

II.

ואחר זה בשנת ה' אלפים וסו' ליצירה היה גירוש צרפת הכלל הראשון בהיות מולך בה פיליפו בן פיליפום בן המלך לואיש והיה המלך פיליפו אכזרי מוב חרף השם וגרש את כל היהודים אשר בכל מלכותו ולקח כל אשר להם וגרשם בחוסר כל . והיו שם קהלות רבות ועצומות כפלים כיוצאי מצרים כמה שכתב הרלב"נ בפי' התורה בפסוק מי מנה עפר יעקב וחבר הפירוש ההוא כמו ש"ו (l. ט"ו) שנה אחר הגירוש ההוא. והיתה צרה גדולה לישראל. והיה סימן השנה ההיא ויגרשהו וילך ובחודש אב היה.

Documentary Proof That Both Ibn-Verga and Usque Drew Upon Efodi for Their Materials. (From Graetz's *History of the Jews*, Volume VIII, Note 1.)

spot, and found in the Escurial and Vatican. It is this version which was witnessed by the Jewish apologists and excited such consternation among them; and two others in Hebrew, according to Isidore Loeb. One of these, published by Solomon Joachim Halberstam in Kobak's *Yeshurun,* Volume 6, page 45 (Bamberg 1866), Loeb judges to be more correct and authentic than the other, which is Number 40 of the *Sefer Shebet Yehuda* by Verga, and comments: ". . . both versions give rather free translations of the same text, but the one in *Yeshurun* is superior to that of *Shebet Yehuda.* I believe that both reports, that of *Yeshurun* and the one of Bonastruc, are official versions by the Jewish apologists jotted down on the spot. . . . But as we have already said, notwithstanding its verbal excellence, the one in *Shebet Yehuda* is, nonetheless, fabulous rather than factual." In opposition to this stricture Baer, in his book *Researches Into the Sources and Composition of the Sefer Shebet Yehuda* (Berlin 1923), page 39, bases his defense of Ibn Verga's *Tortosa Disputation* on its similarity with a photostatic copy of the Vatican Latin *Protocol.* And to quote Baer again: "It is not just to impute mutual literary piracy to the copy in *Yeshurun* and the one in the *Sefer Shebet Yehuda.* The latter's text was improved by himself. This is easily proved by comparing its writing with the style of the letter he addressed to Bonastruc of Gerona, and their resemblance can not be gainsaid. Bonastruc had the same access to the sources as the writer quoted in *Yeshurun* and the notary of Pope Benedict XIII. All three reporters wrote from memory in their own individual styles, although after the eleventh session both sides were by papal fiat ordered to record the proceedings in writing. The Jewish sources are silent as to what happened afterwards. The reports were long or short depending on the sustained or flagging interest in the principal speakers and on the flair for interlarding fanciful or biased material. As a result, there was much misunderstanding and confusion, especially in jotting down the names of the disputants in all three reports. The Jewish version agreed on most points, above all, in the description of the despair which gripped the Jews. However, no fabulous accounts are met with in the Jewish reports."

While Samuel Usque is not immediately identified with the *Tortosa Disputation,* his celebrated book entitled *Consolaçam ás Tribulaçoéns de Israel,* or "Consolations for the Sorrows of Israel," is so close in time and content with Ibn Verga's *Sefer Shebet Yehuda* that something about the author and his work is germane. I have been fortunate in procuring a copy of this book in Yiddish by Eliahu Lipiner of Buenos Aires, published as recently as 1949 under the title *Bei die Teichen fun Portugal* or "By the Rivers of Portugal." Usque was born late in the fifteenth century in Spain, but because of the prevailing persecution by the Church and the royal decree of expatriation, he was compelled to feign apostasy.

But this unavailing, he and his family found sanctuary in Lisbon. Life becoming unbearable in this city, he and his collateral family again took to the road and settled in Ferrara, Italy, then free from religious intolerance. In this city his cousin Abraham Usque, with the financial help of the celebrated philanthropist Dona Gracia Mendes, opened a printing press where among other classics his book now under consideration was published. It is now four hundred years—1552—since Samuel Usque wrote his book in old Portuguese. He used this tongue for two reasons; first, to console the many voluntarily converted Jews ignorant of their ancestral language in their present native one, with the thought that all was not lost, and as a bid to recant their ostensible Catholicism; and secondly, to awaken the Christian persecutors from their sadistic folly, which the author considered a cosmic cataclysm which would rebound and destroy even themselves. From a purely literary point of view, it is conceded by competent judges that its style was a great refinement over the crude Portuguese of his day and by emulation inspired later writers to classical heights. So great was the immediate effect of its publication that the Church placed it on the *Index Expurgatorius* out of fear that it would neutralize its missionary propaganda.

Explanatory and critical notes on the text will appear in their proper places.

The Tortosa Disputation

The following is the English translation of the Hebrew report of this episode by Abu Astruc to the Holy Congregation of Gerona, Spain, in 1413. It is found on page 68 of the *Sefer Shebet Yehuda* by R. Solomon Aben Verga, edited with a German version by Dr. M. Wiener, head instructor in Hanover, Germany, 1856.

The report begins with a description of the panic and discomfiture of the Spanish Jews when ordered by the Antipope Benedict XIII,[27] then in flight from Avignon into Spain, to send representative scholars to dispute before him and a concourse of people ranging from the highest church dignitaries, courtiers and commoners to a surging mob, an alleged reference in the Talmud that the Messiah has already come and that he is Jesus. In this drama Benedict compounded with an erstwhile Jew, Yoshua Lorki, better known by his baptismal name Master Geronimo de Santa Fé, and to the Jews as *megadef*, or slanderer, the word being made up of the acrostics of his full Christian title.

And now for the report:

Eternal greetings and encouragement to you worthy sons of Israel, the nobility of Yehuda, esteemed in and out of your homes which serve as God's houses of worship and habitations for the study of the Talmud. I shall now confirm your faith in our Redeemer, who neither slumbers nor sleeps but is ever vigilant to help us in the hour of need. An offshoot of our people has decided to ruin us and to slander our true religion. He is Yoshua ben Lorki, who has planned to seduce and to show us

that he is a devout Christian. To this end he convinced the pope to summon before him the most esteemed Jews to verify an alleged reference in the Talmud that the Messiah has already come. He also urged on the pope the forcible conversion of all the Jews, because he was certain of victory over us. It is my wish to acquaint you with what happened that you may henceforth be enabled to enter the lists and cope successfully with any renegade. I wish you to realize, too, in what danger we were when confronted with a great assemblage of bishops and grandees, many of whom were determined to find us guilty. The apologists for the Jews, reputedly twenty-two in number, especially those from Aragon, assembled on the first of January[27a] on pain of displeasure of Lorki. From Saragossa came Serachya ha-Levi, Don Vidal Benveniste, and R. Moses ben Musa; from Huesca, Don Todros Alconstantini; from Alconizi, Don Joseph ben Ardut, and Don Meier Alcoya; from Daroça, Don Astruc ha-Levi; from Monreal, R. Joseph Albo; from Monzon, Don Joseph ha-Levi and R. Yomtov Carcosa; from Montalban, Abu Ganda; from Viljazet, Don Joseph Albaleg and the learned Bongoa; and from Gerona, Todros ben Yachya, a particularly impressive man. All the representatives, in an earlier meeting, decided on the spokesman to the pope and agreed on Don Vidal Benveniste, known for his versatility and familiarity with Latin. They also decided to avoid quibbling and vituperation not uncommon in their own academies and, hence, contempt by the pope, to answer Lorki and the bishops with deliberation and decorum and, finally, when in seeming despair, to comfort one another with forbearance and encouragement. So forewarned, we, the assembled, with God's guidance and His help to the oppressed, repaired to the palace of the pope, who greeted us graciously and inquired whence we came and the name of each one of us, which he jotted down and which put us in great trepidation. When we asked for the reason for this, we were told that it would not be to our disadvantage, it being, in fact, the custom of the papacy and royalty to record meticulously personal occurrences. Presently the pope harangued us as follows:

"You, the representatives of the Jews, the chosen people of one who once existed, but since rejected through your own guilt, need not fear this debate. As long as I am present you shall not be vexed nor put to grief; think and speak calmly, forthrightly, without fear or hesitancy. Geronimo said he wished to prove from your Talmud that the Messiah has already come; he may prove to us whether he speaks the truth or is just dreaming. Do not be afraid of him, because in a dispute of this nature each disputant has equal rights. Better go back to your lodgings and rest up; come back here early tomorrow morning." Furthermore, he ordered that we be lodged and fed according to our dietary laws at his own expense. Some of us were pleased with the pope's assurances while others had great misgivings, emotions not uncommon to Jews. Next day we appeared before the pope and found the great hall in which the disputation was to be staged draped in silks and containing seventy armchairs for the comfort of the bishops and cardinals attired in gold trappings. Also present were delegates from Rome, and Spanish grandees, altogether about a thousand persons. This was the setting every day of the disputation with the result that our courage gave way and turned to water. Yet, in spite of it, we intoned this prayer: "Praised be He who bestows majesty on man." And now the pope began: "You, learned Jews, may as well know that I did not come here or did I send for you to debate which of the two religions is the true one. I am convinced that my religion is the true one; your teachings were true once but are discredited now. The reason for your coming here is the insistence of Geronimo, who said that he could prove from the Talmud of your Rabbis, who were better posted on such matters than you, that the Messiah has already come; you will, therefore, in my presence debate this point only." The pope then turned to Geronimo: "Begin your disputation and they may answer you." Thereupon, Geronimo, quoting Isaiah I, 18–20, exclaimed: "Come now, and let us reason together . . . but if you refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword." At this point Don Vidal ben Benveniste answered in Latin. The pope was greatly pleased

with the Rabbi's discretion and bearing. He criticized Geronimo for using dictatorial and threatening language. Moreover, the challenger brought forth no convincing proof but already held himself out as judge and executioner. So the pope spoke up: "You are quite right, but do not be surprised at his effrontery, because he was once one of your own." In reply Vidal had this to say: "We defer to you because you are our lord," when Samuel ha-Levi added: "Lord, be gracious unto us and protect us." Both then begged the pope to excuse them from further disputation, because the Jews were unaccustomed to the labyrinth of syllogisms and logic which the learned Geronimo plied them with, but rather relied on tradition. Whereupon the pope: "If you plead because of fear you need not worry. I assured you protection, and what I promise I do not take back; on the other hand, you need not answer him when he tires you with syllogisms and logic with which you are unfamiliar, unless he brings proof from tradition, in which case you may rebut." But the disputation dragging wearily on, the pope ordered them to partake of food and report early the following morning, which they did. And, as the pope had ordered several grandees and other men of prominence to accompany us, we thought: "Would that the end be as propitious as the beginning!" On this day we all repaired to the synagogue, which we found crowded to capacity, and fell to crying and praying to God for success, that He bring to us light out of darkness, that our words before the multitude of lions be not uttered unseemly, whereupon R. Serachya ha-Levi before a congregation of people in grievous despair and hearts torn delivered this sermon: "Like cures like, and contraries, contraries." He gave a very plausible explanation of his premises, which, however, can be understood best when heard. He concluded his discourse with a prayer.

The disputation was resumed on the third day when Geronimo began: "Your Talmud[28] says that the world will last six thousand years; of these two thousand will be moral chaos, two thousand under the reign of the law, and two thousand represent the period of the Messiah. It is clear from this that the Messiah

has been living these two thousand years. Who else but our Redeemer can this be?" But when the pope saw that Lorki was drawing his speech out to great length he halted him with "Geronimo, I knew for a long time that you are a forceful preacher, but this is not why we came here. It is to hear you prove what you promised; better be careful not to lose yourself in your preachings." And to the Jewish apologists he said: "You may answer him now." So Vidal ben Benveniste: "Lord and Pope, let us first go into the matter of the nature of the Messiah; we shall then be able to tell whether he has come already; when he shall be acknowledged as the Messiah we, too, will believe in him." But the pope interrupted: "This is no answer to his question, because one of the conditions of this debate was not the nature of the Messiah but his advent. You have taken refuge in a practice you Jews commonly use when you debate a problem, and that is, when anyone poses one question you distract him by changing the subject." But now Don Vidal: "Lord and Pope, we begin by speaking of present circumstances and then particularize the way a naturalist[28a] does. But if this method is unacceptable to you, our Lord, we shall not use it, but I would like to comment on the way the learned Geronimo comes to his opinion. He extracts such meaning or proof from the text which bolster his own premises and disregards contrary views. But because of our sins, which have become cumulative, a great part of these two thousand years has disappeared, from which it can be clearly seen that he has not yet come." To this Geronimo replied: "According to this version either you do not understand it at all or pretend not to, because the expression 'and two thousand years shall be the days of the Messiah' is that of the prophet Elijah, which he imparted to his disciples and which, in turn, they proclaimed in his name, as may be gathered from *Tanna Debe Eliyahu,*[29] and which those learned in the Talmud know. But the Rabbis or compilers of the Talmud who accepted it made this addition—'because of cumulative sins,' etc.—and accordingly denied that Jesus is the Messiah. But Elijah, in his capacity as prophet and who knew the truth, has said: 'The days of the

Messiah will last two thousand years,' known to him through prophecy." At once Serachya ha-Levi countered with "Lord and Pope, how can one honestly explain his cause and hew to a one-sided version when it can be readily seen that it may have a double meaning, and how can one call his one-sided explanation incontrovertible? Geronimo maintains that the Talmudic sages purposely added something to the end of this text, which pretense he uses to bolster his argument while his opponent submits that the entire text, beginning as well as end, was announced by Elijah to confound his enemies; moreover, when neither disputant produces incontrovertible proof, the matter must be left undecided. How can Geronimo prove what he had set out to? His opponents may say that if you want your proof credited I must interpret the text differently and you cannot disprove it, and, if you oppose me, how do you explain it? So I answer, how do you prove yours? And this, too, can be said that if an opponent argues with us in the manner of the Talmud, he will, according to it, when an explanation is not immediately obvious, usually say: 'Maybe this text can be interpreted differently.' When no decision is reached the solution is held in abeyance until such a time as the author himself can bring more cogent support. It is also more just to assume that a passage in the text be attributed to one and the same man rather than to two separate authors. In such a case, it was the Talmudic tradition to say—R. Ashi, or so and so, says—that as a result of our sins, which have become cumulative, a greater part of the two thousand years has gone. Bearing this in mind, we proposed to our lord at the outset that he see to it that he who was alleged to have come was born as the Messiah or not, because when we find the Messiah already born we would adopt the view of Geronimo; but if not, we would adhere to our opinion." To this the pope observed: "It is undoubtedly as you say that he who would make his point should prove it by indicating how necessary it is that it admit of no other meaning." Whereupon Geronimo: "Lord and Pope, my proof is not predicated on that statement alone; I know of many more." To which the pope:

"He has evidently disregarded the Christian manner of debating and, instead, has reverted to the Jewish one by changing the subject when at bay; I insist that you answer the Jews about that scriptural text." And so Geronimo: "But Elijah lived long before the Jews were dispersed, and hence we must assume that his statement 'because of accumulated sins,' etc., was made by someone else in exile; even if we admit that he was urged by his disciples to make this pronouncement, it must be evident that his disciples were his contemporaries; hence, the only plausible inference is the one which attributes it to the Talmudic Rabbis as I always maintained." Up rose Don Vidal: "Lord and Pope, granted that it was of Talmudic origin, must we impute it to the saying, supposedly of Elijah, that the 'days of the Messiah' will be two thousand years? If the Messiah had already come will it then mean: 'And at the end of the fourth thousand year the Messiah will come, or at the beginning of the fifth thousandth year, or such or such a year, will the Messiah come?' Is it possible, therefore, that he will first come at the end of the two-thousand-year period?" And Geronimo: "Elijah simply wished to say that the Messiah will be present during the entire two-thousand-year period and that later in the seven thousandth year, the world will be destroyed." R. Joseph Albo now entered the fray: "This has been answered already to the satisfaction of the lord and pope, namely, that we have to give a different meaning to this text. This would make it unnecessary to accept your explanation. Furthermore, while the Talmudic sages whom you would enlist in your proof accepted it textually, they would not do so were it contrariwise. They did indicate that there are two fixed periods for the appearance of the Messiah, namely, the one promised by God, and the other when, through repentance, the Jews shall deserve God's grace. Hence, that reference is no criterion for the exact period for the coming of the Messiah, but it means substantially that two thousand years will be allotted to the coming of the Messiah, and when the Jews shall be worthy of it, he will appear at the beginning, but if not, he will come any time in the course of it, and if even then they shall be

undeserving of it and not repent until near its end, the Messiah will come at the end of this time; this two-thousand-year period will not end without his appearance sometime." And now the pope: "But why do you not say that when the Christians shall be worthy of it he will come at once, and if not, will he have to wait until the end of the two-thousand-year period?" This question was answered by the Jewish apologists in this wise: "We merely assert that the Redeemer will come for only those in exile. But what need is there of him for people who enjoy the blessings of peace? The Messiah is indispensable only to a people exiled and enslaved." And again Geronimo: "But why do you not adopt my explanation?" It was now the apologists' turn: "Why not adopt ours? Have we not explained that justice which is not above suspicion cannot be used as proof? We know the lord and pope has given us this assurance and that he will not go back on his word. You know very well the great reputation of our teacher Rashi; he, too, interprets the passage as we do." But Geronimo: "I maintain my former point of view and belief that the Messiah has already come; you, on the other hand, persevere in the opinion that he has not come; consequently, the burden of proof that he has not appeared is on you." This was answered by the apologists: "Let the bishops who see the truth explain on whom it is incumbent to marshal proof; because, as a long time has elapsed since I accepted the Torah of Moses, it devolves upon him who would contest my position to produce the proof." So the bishops now entered the fray: "It is undoubtedly as you say, and we are astonished at Geronimo, who in his speeches has dealt neither so justly nor lived up to his promise he made at the opening of this disputation, that he himself would produce proof. We came here only on the orders of the pope to discover the truth." The apologists continued: "The lord and pope has already shown us why we prayed to him—'Grant us grace,' and to you we said: 'Grant us help,' and not as Geronimo commenced his speech: 'May the sword devour you.' Do not think that because we steadfastly cling to our faith we expect prosperity and dominion

wholly or in part. It is not so. Judging from what we see today, dominion and honor are yours. In spite of your extraordinary might and splendor which we see around here, we are all the more tenacious of our religion, which God in His Majesty vouchsafed to us in the presence of six hundred thousand people and spectacular miracles, and we will abjure our faith only when He who has given it to us shall Himself come and say: 'Believe in so and so!' but not at the command of Geronimo, who would say to us: 'Forsake it!' in order to curry favor with you and achieve your rank. Only He who can read man's mind can judge." Thereupon Geronimo: "What I have in mind is what I said already, namely, that the Messiah has come already; furthermore, that Talmudic text is not the only one substantiating my position; there are others." And now the pope: "I have already told you that this is no exception, and when you say that text supports another, woe to him who is in need of such support to buttress his cause and is unaware of his own strength. The vine by reason of its frailty needs support, but not the cedar of Lebanon, which, indeed, supports many other trees."

At this point the pope excused us, and, satisfied with this day's happenings, we repaired to the table. Geronimo accomplished nothing that day. On the fourth day Geronimo began with a sentence little different from that of the first day, and proceeded thus: "Elijah said to Yehuda: 'The world counts no less than eighty-five Jubilee Years and the Messiah will come in the last Jubilee Year.' And when the latter asked: 'Will this take place in the beginning or end of this period?' he answered: 'That I do not know.' " Then the learned R. Matatia took up the argument: "This Talmudic passage in no way means that Jesus is the Messiah, because he did not exist according to the reckoning of the Jubilee Years." But Geronimo: "I never maintained that Jesus is the Messiah, only that he—the Messiah—came; it is all the same whether this took place ten years or ten days before." And the apologists: "Now let our Lord himself see and judge if this be not Jesus, in whom we recognize signs of greatness and wisdom, who then should it be, Matthew the

fool, or Maresti, the blockhead?" Whereupon the pope: "Why did you not understand Geronimo, who is one of your own? He would get the better of you by trickery. If you had admitted that the Messiah came as appears from the text, it would have ended the debate, and if you had said that he may have come but that he was not Jesus, he would have answered you, and then you asked if he could have been Matthew or Pico?" To this the apologists replied: "You, our Lord, saw it clearly, and we did not know how inventive hatred and intrigue could be." Later on R. Matatia addressed Geronimo: "Learned sir, before you bring proof from the Talmud that the Messiah has already come, why do you not do the same to disprove it? There is a passage in the Talmud which says: 'May those who calculate a fixed date for the coming of the Messiah, perish.' " Hereupon the pope remarked: "I have already heard much of this Talmudic passage and would very much like to hear it explained." So Matatia said: "We have a simple explanation of it, that he be cursed who tries to calculate and fix the date for the coming of the Messiah to the detriment of the people. Because, should a calculated time come without the appearance of the Messiah, the people will lose hope, and the heart of those waiting for salvation united in a common bond will weaken. Moreover it commits the sin of tempting God to reveal the secret of the Messiah's advent, which He keeps from all nations and even prophets." This angered the pope, who exclaimed: "Oh, foolish and contemptible people, oh, you conceited Talmudists, does Daniel, who calculated the Messiah's coming, deserve the Talmudic curse that he perish? In truth, you Talmudists are blasphemers and perverse!" In the meantime Don Todros arose and said: "Oh, Lord and Pope, if the Talmudists appear so foolish to you, why do you demand from them proof that the Messiah has already come? Silly twaddle should not be considered proof!" This provoked the pope to great fury. But Don Vidal managed to insinuate: "Lord and Pope, it does not become the character of your holy office to find fault with the disputants in the matter under discussion, because one of the conditions of the disputation

was freedom of speech. It could well be that we have offended you in another way, by improper language. But in mitigation of this we have prayed to you for forgiveness in this wise: 'Vouchsafe us, O Lord, your favor.' " But the pope answered: "Do not think that you can appease me with empty words. What can you say in the defense of the expression which curses those who calculate the coming of the Messiah?" Forthwith Don Vidal: "The word 'calculators' in Hebrew refers to him who can figure out a problem, but a prophet who foresees with the help of the Holy Spirit is commonly known as a seer, not a calculator. This may be seen from I Samuel IX, 18: 'Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is?' because he can see through a thing by the gift of prophecy." This mollified the pope, who assured us that justice was on our side as any one with understanding can see. At this juncture we all left, and returned to our posts next morning. But when we came back to our lodgings a violent quarrel arose between us and R. Matatia and R. Todros because of their unbridled tongues. As soon as we returned to the debate we addressed Geronimo: "Learned sir, why do you bring proof that the Messiah has already come from some of the *amoraim* and not from R. Ashi, the last and the most famous of them all, who said: 'You may wait for him till now but no longer,' because he saw that up to his time the Messiah had not shown up." To this Geronimo replied: "This is exactly what I always said, that you cannot prove the Messiah's coming by one who does not believe it; Elijah, who knew the truth, was the first one to give this information." At this the Jewish apologists arose and said: "Tell us, sir, was R. Ashi wise or conceited, honorable or a cad?" Whereupon Geronimo: "There is no question to judge from the tenor of his writings but that he was a great scholar and pious man." And the apologists: "How could he then defy the words of Elijah? We can willy-nilly accept one of two probabilities: this was either not the real prophet Elijah who mistook the text, or the genuine prophet Elijah, and that R. Ashi knew what he meant and explained, as already stated. If he had any misgivings about it,

he would have agreed with the pronouncement of the prophet. Why then should we appear wiser than he?" Now Geronimo: "Admitting the textual meaning, what can you say in defense of your calculating the Jubilee Years which I interpret in my way?" Now arose R. Albo: "The meaning of that text is to explain that the age of the world is no less than what it is already admitted to be and possibly even longer. It is as if someone said: 'I do not want to give less than twenty pennies,' yet it does not imply that he need not give forty or fifty pennies. And, in the same way, it is possible that the world can endure longer and that the Messiah will come in the final Jubilee Year." But the bishops now asked: "Is there then no fixed date for the coming of the Messiah?" This was answered by Matatia: "This is nothing new to us, nor do you have a fixed date, because that text says that the Messiah will make his appearance in both two-thousand-year periods." We now noticed that a notary[30] of the pope was jotting down what we were saying. This put us in a panic, fearing that he would falsify our speeches and later give the pope the opportunity to say: 'You said so and so,' and so accuse us of lying and leave us defenseless, because the reporter was the pope's own choice. So we decided to appoint only one spokesman. If his language were acceptable to the pope, well and good, but if not, we could say that we disagreed with him, or that he was mistaken, or that his opinions were not ours. And so ended the disputation that day. We returned the following day in great consternation. Forthwith, Geronimo began quoting from the Jerusalem Talmud, *Tractate Berachot* II: "The Messiah was born," when R. Yuda observed that "it is based on Isaiah X, 34, XI, 1: 'And Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one . . . and there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse.' This can only mean what you cannot deny, that the Messiah was born the day the Temple was destroyed."[30a] Hereupon the learned Abu Astruc observed: "This has already been argued in the disputation between two world-famous men, R. Moses Nachmani and Fra Pablo Christiani,[31] wherein the latter set out to prove that the Jews deserved to be called Canaanites

because they appropriated their land and economy; the Christians, on the other hand, deserved to be called Jews because they superseded them." Presently the pope asked: "How did the Rabbi Nachmanides answer this challenge?" And Astruc continued: "He gave the answer that when one wishes to transfer to another place he must appropriate all its property; if now the Christians have replaced us, why did they not take our true possessions, as prophecy, the heavenly fire, the *Urim* and *Tumim,* and the like? But since the Jews lost them, we have never found them elsewhere, from which we conclude that it was the intention of the donors to conceal them against the day when we shall return, when they shall be restored to us." And now the pope asked: "Before whom was that disputation held?" Abu Astruc: "Before the devout King Don Pedro the Elder,"[32] and again he asked: "And what answer did Pablo Christiani give to Moses Nachmani?" This elicited this reply from Astruc: "He kept quiet and said nothing." At once the pope: "That king, while admittedly pious, was not wise, and Pablo Christiani's silence was not discreet, because he could have said that since the appearance of our Redeemer, who saved the world and took the place of Adam to save the souls of our ancestors, we do not need any other condition." Now Vidal: "It is not so important to know where, but that he was, in fact, born, and even granting this, it does not involve a contradiction, because it is possible that he was born on that day, but also that he has since been in Paradise. Even Maimonides denies the supposition that the Messiah was born on the day the Temple was destroyed; he explains the text by interpreting it that the Messiah may be born every day in every generation, especially when the Jews shall deserve to have one. I say, too, that it was the purpose of the author of this text to call the Jews to repentance and to explain to them that the coming of the Messiah has no fixed date, as had the Babylonian exile. R. Chasdai explained it the same way." This angered the pope, who exclaimed: "You did not come to my palace to tell us what your commentators said but what you say. What purpose do the lucubrations of this old

man, which are nothing but frivolous prattle to prove that the Messiah was born but did not come, serve? If his coming is contingent on the deserts of the Jews, why was he born at all? His coming could have been delayed for the day when the Jews showed themselves worthy of it." Thereupon the apologists: "Suppose they merited it today. Should the Messiah be born today? Can a day-old infant be its leader? Did not Moses, though eighty years old, seek the help of God, his brother Aaron and the Seventy Elders?" Whereupon the pope: "But then you were six hundred thousand and more!" The apologists: "Where there is profound understanding, there is no need for a guide, because of the inherent capabilities of the human mind; according to Talmudic tradition, that generation was an understanding one, in comparison with whom we are only as flies, and each and every one of us requires ten guides because of our puny comprehension." And now the pope: "I can assure you every one of you is in need of a king and judge. But let us go back to the subject under discussion." At this moment a scholar from Rome[33] took the floor: "Lord and Pope, as you may know, there are homonymous words acceptable by both Jews and Christians, and נולד —'he was born'—is such a one. This is evident from Psalms XC, 2: 'Before the mountains were brought forth'; and Job XV, 35: 'They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity.' Now the root ילד is found in both and expresses the same thought. Furthermore, the sentence 'The Lebanon will fall through a mighty one,' which is followed by 'and a twig is to sprout,' cannot be accepted literally as taking place forthwith but only after a long time. The various writings are meant to console the Jews for the loss of their Temple and to bolster their hope that they will be restored to their pristine splendor. Even if you accept that text literally, who would compel its author to declare that the Messiah should come instantly? It seems more to the point to say that the prophets merely emphasized his importance. In reference to this subject the Talmudic scholars say: 'Seven things[33a] existed before the world was created, and one of these was the name of the Messiah'; the

expression 'creation' is used advisedly, although nothing at all existed in the world, the purpose being to insure to humanity the idea of the unity of God. And so it was foreseen that on the day the Temple would be destroyed the Messiah would be born. And because the Jews were then not worthy of it, he did not appear then but will await the day when the Jews in exile will be chastened from their previous sins." On that day the disputation broke up. When we assembled the following morning we addressed Geronimo: "*Targum* translates אתילד for נולד in the text, which means 'he will be born,' as in I Kings XIII, 2: 'Behold, a son shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name'—which event occurred only five hundred years afterwards." This was replied to by Geronimo: "The word דנלד does not necessarily denote any time in particular, because it means 'he will be born' as well as 'he is already born.' " But we all said: "This is precisely a proof and confirmation of our assertion; we say 'he will be born,' which does not compel us to accept your explanation; and so the structure you built up totters!" With this Geronimo attempted to retrieve his mistake but could not and felt very much ashamed. He then tried, unsuccessfully, other means of proof, but everyone could see that he was only covering up his former mistakes. At this point, thinking that we got the upper hand in this tilt of words, we decided to ask for an honorable withdrawal by reaching the bishops and Joshua ben Lorki to influence the pope in our behalf. We did not succeed, because the pope declared that Geronimo was in duty bound to prove his point however much it was against his own interest. Next day when the portion of Deuteronomy XXV, 17, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way as ye came forth out of Egypt," was read, the pope said: "You Jews prate about your miracles. What man in his senses can say that the Messiah was born, that he has for a long time been in Paradise and that he has lived fourteen hundred years?" But we met this with "This also astonished Pablo Christiani, but R. Moses Nachmani said to him that as Adam lived one thousand years, and as anyone who has lived

so long, he can live even longer. Nor can we gainsay this, as, according to tradition, both Enoch and Elijah are still living in Paradise." Now the pope: "This offers another difficulty because it is so inconceivable." And Astruc: "Lord and Pope, inasmuch as you believe so many miracles attributed to your Messiah, grant us at least one out of ours." This so angered the pope that we trembled for a worse fate. And so we represented to him that our colleague was wrong and at variance with us all, that he spoke in jest, although it did not seem so, because the pope was not of our way of thinking. So we reiterated what we prayed at the beginning: "Your Holiness, grant us mercy." We now repaired to our lodgings and berated R. Astruc in this wise: "We have good reason to scold you for your tongue, because you have put a sword in the hands of our enemies; we were, neither singly nor collectively, decided to speak as you did. We feel that we had given a good account of ourselves to the pope, who favored us more than he did Geronimo. Now, seeing that the pope is consumed with rage, who, excepting God in Heaven, will protect us? One should not rely on a miracle to extricate us from our indiscretion." We retired in shame and disgrace that day and returned the following morning in great consternation. But God was kind to us, and we found the pope friendlily disposed. Once again arose Geronimo: "If you believe the Messiah was born, I will prove to you that he has come." Thereupon the apologists: "We do not believe that he was born; all we said was that the author of that text may have understood it so." To which the pope: "Geronimo, what is the source of your belief that he was born and has come?" So Geronimo: "Lord and Pope, the Talmud, where it is recorded, 'Samuel said: How does one know that the Messiah was born on the day the Temple was destroyed?' It is found in Isaiah LXVI, 7: 'Before she travailed she brought forth' which *Targum Jonathan* explains this wise: 'Before the need for it arises, you shall be redeemed, and ere the tumult of the destruction of the Temple be heard, the Messiah shall come.' " This called for a rebuttal by our apologists: "We are not concerned here with

CONSOLACAM AS TRI-
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Empreſſo en Ferrara en caſa de Abraham aben
Vſque 5313 Da criaçam a 7 de Setembro

Title Page of the First Ferrara Edition of Usque's *Consolaçam*

the *Targum of Jonathan*. But both the *Targum* and Samuel are to be understood from their own separate texts. At any rate, the *Targum* does not say more than that when the Messiah will come he will do so suddenly, much as a woman who gives birth suddenly, as already quoted—'before she travailed she brought forth.' In no way does the *Targum* say what Samuel said, but that when the Messiah shall come he will appear suddenly. This is also the opinion of the sages who said: 'Three things come unheralded—one of which is the coming of the Messiah.' " Whereupon the pope: "It is enough for me to know that you admit that the Messiah has come." But this we met with "Not at all. We only said that Samuel, the author of the text, had this erroneous opinion and belief; the *Targum,* on the other hand, conceived under the influence of the Holy Spirit, does not assert the same but explains it by saying that when the Messiah will come he will appear suddenly. In truth, the author, as does every Jew, believes that, when he who will gather together the Jews dispersed all over the world and build the Temple, and when all the nations of the world will flock to him and pronounce God's name, then, and only then, shall we concede that he is our Messiah. But every interpretation which contradicts it opens the door to a different meaning. Now, it so happens that the very reference Geronimo adduces says expressly that the Temple will be built under his tutelage. Where then is the Temple built in Jesus' time?" Geronimo had nothing to say to this but switched to other drawn-out matters. The disputation was now interrupted and postponed to February 15, when the pope once again summoned us to appear before him. He referred once more to the text of Samuel which says that the Messiah was already born, and proceeded: "I thought about it all last night how you beguiled us with empty words, asserting that the word נולד is a homonym and signifies that he will be, and was, born. However this may be, the fact is that Jesus was born in 3671, one hundred fifty years before the destruction of the Temple, which happened in 3828 after the Creation." Now Vidal:[34] "Lord and Pope, it is a Talmudic rule that when there

are several explanations for a single text, no single one can set aside the simple meaning. For the record here is what it says: 'No text should ever be construed other than simply and naturally,' and when there comes an *amora* and deviates from the simple meaning of a sentence, we would say that he did it arbitrarily, giving it a hidden and otherwise mystic meaning. We also regard that explanation as untrue which contradicts the simple version of the Talmud; even Geronimo cannot deny it. Now we ask that our Lord consult Scriptures and see for himself that there is no reference to your Saviour in it. When it reads, 'before she travailed she brought forth,' it refers to Jerusalem, as, 'Is a land born in one day?' and again: 'Rejoice ye with Jerusalem.' But if this refers to your Saviour, what miracle could this be when one could say (Isaiah LXVI, 8), 'Who hath seen such things? Is a nation brought forth at once? For as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children.' What has the birth of a nation to do with the business of the Redeemer? As a matter of fact, the prophet speaks of the future when our people in exile will be reunited. Because, when the people through God's providence shall be suddenly reunited, it could be said: 'Whoever heard such a thing?' Furthermore, what can be the meaning of Isaiah LXVI, 12: 'And if ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem,' which was destroyed long after its founding?" And Geronimo: "While you pervert the sense of the Talmud, I shall bring proof from Scriptures which you can not juggle. Behold, it is said in your Bible—Genesis XVIX, 10—'The sceptre shall not depart from Yudah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet as long as men come to Shiloh,' which the *Targum* translates: 'until the coming of the Messiah.' As you have neither sceptre nor ruler's staff, how can it mean 'it shall not depart'?" This was taken up by Astruc: "We have made it a condition at the beginning of the disputation that no text susceptible of several meanings be considered incontrovertible in opinion or faith. Furthermore, Geronimo, you know what Eben Ezra and the older and younger commentators say about this text, namely, that it can be understood in two ways: First,

that Yudah's sceptre shall not depart forever but intermittently —appearing and disappearing—which condition shall prevail until the coming of the Messiah, because once the Messiah, our Hope, shall come there shall be no interruption. Second, we find after the word עד, a *Jetib,* which has a hyphenated accent and which, as a consequence, calls for the following interpretation: Yudah's sceptre shall not depart forever because Shiloh, that is, the Messiah, will restore the sceptre to Yehuda." Thereupon Geronimo: "We are not compelled to paraphrase the accented word because it does not agree with Scripture." Then Don Vidal: "Oh, you learned Geronimo, you believe only that which supports your views, but that which does not, you do not. We can, besides, offer another explanation. The word עד in the previous quotation may be conceived in the same way as the one in Genesis XXVIII, 15: 'For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.' The sentence does not mean that after he had done it, he promised he would leave him, but the contrary, as in the story of the king who would say to his minister: 'I shall not leave you until I am certain that you are a famous prince,' which does not mean that he will leave him later. The sense of the text is that no dominion shall fail Yudah until they deserve that Shiloh, around whom the nations shall flock, come." Then Geronimo: "Why should I accept your explanation and not that of Moses the Preacher, to whom Rashi, your great exegete, refers in his commentaries? He says that the text 'Yudah's sceptre shall not depart' refers under the term לשכת הגזית to the courtroom of the great Sanhedrin which was located in the country of Yudah, and that the word 'sceptre' refers to the Sanhedrin. But, inasmuch as the Sanhedrin is non-existent, so is Yudah's sceptre non-existent." This was answered by the apologists in this wise: "We still do not understand how you deduce proof from it. Besides, Moses the Preacher was only a storyteller and in no wise learned in the Talmud. The Biblical text quoted has no such meaning. Jacob merely spoke to his children."

This is all of the manuscript I can find, but I know from

hearsay that the apologists were honorably dismissed, although they as well as the Spanish Jews, who expected great things from it, subsequently suffered much.

Notes, Bibliography and Index

Notes

1 Nicolas Donin.

2 Paris.

3 King St. Louis of France.

3*a* The Four Orders of the Talmud may be explained by recalling that "both the First and Sixth Orders possess each but one Tractate with *Gemara—Berakoth* and *Niddah*—hence *Berakoth* was looked upon as belonging to *Moed* just as *Niddah* was probably drawn to *Nashim*." (H. L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash.*)

3*b* Donin, who disowned the validity of Oral Tradition, calculated this figure from the period of the eruption of Karaism, about four centuries anterior to the date of this dispute.

4 Also known as Jerome-Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius, a church father. Next to Origen he was the only Christian scholar who read Hebrew. He flourished in the fourth century of the Vulgar Era.

5 Seventy Nations. This is an *Aggadic* assumption based upon the ethnological tables in Genesis X, where seventy grandsons of Noah are enumerated each of whom fathered a nation.

6 Blanche, the queen-mother of St. Louis of France, celebrated for her good sense.

7 Pope Gregory IX, the real founder of the Inquisition.

8 Graetz, in his *History of the Jews,* German edition, vol. VII, p. 155, in a footnote remarks:

> In the disputation between R. Yechiel and Nicolas the manuscript reads as follows: "It was generally known that there are greater men than I although I am the youngest of them all, and that they could not come and go before the priests as freely as I." The Wagenseil rendering—"but I could not come and go as they did"—is false.

9 On the scanty reference to Jesus in *Mishna* and *Gemara,* the following from J. S. Bloch's *Israel und die Völker,* p. 33, quoting from Wagenseil's *Tela,* p. 59, is apropos:

> And let me repeat again and again that there is nothing in the *Mishna* disparaging or scurrilous to the Christian Sacraments. This does not even except the Tract *Avoda Zara* which may seem to speak disdainfully of the Trinitarian fatherhood. The truth is that this particular Tract touches only on the crass cult of the heathen and superstitions of contemporary Rome. What do we Christians care whether the Roman holidays, the Calends and Saturnalias, or even Mercury or Aphrodite, are there mentioned by name? "This is written by an honest enemy of the Jews but also an honest scholar." [Bloch's comment.]

In the same work, p. 34, Bloch quotes an opinion by Heinrich Laible, a teacher in Rothenburg an der Tauber, Germany, from p. 7 of a book entitled *Jesus Christ in the Talmud,* published by H. Reuther & O. Reichard, Berlin 1891, as follows:

> While one would naturally expect to find in the great

Talmud, which encompasses all sorts of religious views and observations, some reference to Jesus, his acts and teaching, we are confronted with the amazing fact that he is scarcely mentioned, and that little was known of him. This is in contrast to previous Christian opinion that the Talmud reeks with calumny against Christ. This is a Christian myth, undoubtedly predicated on the assumption that all allusion to idolatry and Rome was meant for the Christians. No. Judging from the information available Jesus is given scant notice in the Talmud.

10 Manuscript and old editions read "Jesus the Nazarene."

10*a* Graetz, in his *History of the Jews,* in a footnote to p. 118, vol. III, draws attention to an error in the Simeon b. Shetah–Yehuda b. Tabbai incident, recorded in the Babylonian *Sotah,* 47*a*, which substitutes the name of Yoshua b. Perachya for Yehuda b. Tabbai. This matter, made much of by the apostate Donin in his disputation with R. Yechiel of Paris, is the celebrated letter written by Simeon b. Shetah, President of the Sanhedrin and a brother to the reigning Queen Salome Alexandra. He enjoyed great celebrity as a scholar and leader of the Pharisees. Because of the exigency of the times and fearful of political repercussions, being then in disfavor with King Alexander Jannaeus, he invited Yehuda b. Tabbai, a scholar of his own calibre, to share the burden of his office. The latter was then an expatriate in Alexandria, Egypt. This Simeon b. Shetah did in a letter couched in cryptic language, supposedly from the Jews in Jerusalem to the Jews in Alexandria, challenging them to return Yehuda b. Tabbai to his fatherland. The letter ran as follows: "From me, Jerusalem, the Holy City, to thee, Alexandria, Egypt: My lawful spouse dwelleth in thy midst, and I abide desolate!" As such it is documented in the Jerusalem *Chagiga* II, 2, p. 77, and Sanhedrin VI,

9, p. 23. Graetz's calling attention to this error is a service of great merit.

11 A horn is blown at the ceremony of excommunication. The large number—four hundred—used on this occasion indicated the extremity of the charge and the penalty.

12 *Bat Kol*: All ancient Jewish writers agree that the essence of a *Bat Kol* is auditory perception from an invisible source. The modern version of this phenomenon is that it is self-emanating and phonetic, sometimes muffled, but at times quite clear and always a personal experience, based on delusional content. It is understandable that masses of people in close aggregation, through suggestion or psychic contagion, may also experience it. This is exemplified historically by the experience of those assembled around Mount Sinai who heard a voice but did not see the source.

12*a* The Noachian Laws: Yehuda ha-Levi, in his *Al-Khazari,* enumerates the seven precepts derived hermeneutically from Genesis II, 16: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat," as follows:

1. Not to worship idols.
2. Not to blaspheme the name of God.
3. To establish courts of justice.
4. Not to kill.
5. Not to commit adultery.
6. Not to rob.
7. Not to eat flesh of a living animal.

12*b* Documentary evidence denying Donin's allegation of mistreatment of, and discrimination against, non-Jews by Jews:

Talmud Berachot, 28*a*—Even the Biblical prohibition against the admission of Ammonites and Moabites in the fold of Jewry is untenable because of the confusion in the

various nations conquered by Sennacherib destroying their own identities.

Tractate Gerim, 3—Declares that the bread, wine, and oil of the *Ger-toshab* are undefiled; that his wage be not delayed even overnight, that he may not be settled in undesirable living quarters in a city largely inhabited by Jews, but, on the contrary, be accommodated in the more desirable section.

Sefer Mitzvoth, by Moses b. Nachman—Cautions to keep alive proselytes and save them from injuries and, specifically, to rescue them from drowning and assist them to recover from illness.

Sefer Chassidim, 358—Do not betray a proselyte; return to him articles lost and do not belittle or disparage him.

Deuteronomy I, 16—"And I charged your judges at that time saying: 'Hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger that is with him.' " Rashi's comment thereon is important: "Just as the Eternal, your God, Lord of all lords, who treats all alike and who does not discriminate against any human being, who is vigilant over the rights of widows and orphans and the stranger whom He feeds and clothes, just so should you love the stranger because you, too, were once strangers in Egypt."

12*c* Specifically, phallic worship.

12*d* *Birkat ha-Minim*: This prayer of imprecation, the twelfth in the Eighteen Benedictions of the daily prayers, was composed in the early part of the second century of the vulgar era by Samuel the Younger, a disciple of R. Gamaliel II, and at the latter's request. It was directed especially at the *Minim,* or Judaeo-Christian informers, and probably other dissenting sects. This prayer was used as a means to disqualify conductors of synagogue service who would omit it.

12*e* *Nephilim,* or Fallen Angels: These were the angels who,

for rebellious conduct against God or through weakness under temptation, were degraded or condemned to a life of mischief or shame on earth. They are the same that fell from Heaven in disgrace, and they may represent the *bene Elohim* (Genesis VI, 4).

12*f* This is an anachronism. R. Hanina b. Teradion was executed during the incumbency of Emperor Hadrian, almost a century after the reign of Vespasian.

13 James I of Aragon.

13*a* R. Nathan is here meant Yehudah ha-Nassi, 135–220 C.E.

14 The title Rabbi—What follows is from the original German Graetz's *History of the Jews,* vol. IV, p. 431, note IX:

> The title Rabbi was not in use before the destruction of the Temple. Honorable titles were never in use, because it was considered unnecessary. On the authority of R. Sherira Gaon, who in a letter to Jacob Nissim of Kairwan deals with the titles given to Talmudic sages, as Rabban, Rabbi, Rab and Mar, it may be inferred that the title Rabbi, as a rank of prestige, began with Yochanan b. Zakkai in Yabneh. This is what he said: "In the days of old and great men there was no need for the titles Rabban, Rabbi or Rab." Furthermore, the title Rabbi applied to Jesus and to John the Baptist as found in the Gospel of St. Luke is an anachronism.

15 The cryptic but canonical Book of Daniel, to judge from its style and tenor, may be said to have been written at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes by one of the ultra-pious Jews —*Hassidim Horishenim*—to console them both as a religious duty to remain steadfast in their reliance on Divine Providence and to confirm them in the belief of their own invincibility. The Book of Esther, wherein God's name is never mentioned, on the other hand, written by a more

realisitic man of the world, was intended to inculcate similar hopes but from the standpoint of diplomacy rather than prophecy. The period of the writing of the Book of Daniel is also fixed by Josephus and by Porphyrius, a pagan Neo-Platonic philosopher. The former has much to say on this subject in his *Antiquities,* Book X, chap. XI, paragraph 7. The latter wrote a polemical controversy mentioning the grievous times for Jewry but categorically denying the Sibylline nature of the alleged christological implication. The prophecy in Daniel XII, 6: "How long shall it be to the end of the wonders? . . . And swore by Him that liveth forever that it shall be for a time, two times and a half," that is, three and a half years, is historically correct. It was at this time that Antiochus Epiphanes received word that the Parthians and Armenians—to the north and east—had thrown off his yoke and that he declared war against them (Daniel XI, 44). This took place in 146 or 147, Seleucid reckoning. The Seleucid Era, named in honor of Seleucid, a general of Ptolemy's, began in 312 B.C., or more than a year before the rededication of the Temple. Its violation lasted almost three and a half years, *Tamuz* 168 to *Marcheshvan* 165. This was very close to the prophecy which foresaw such a period lasting three and a half years.

16 Additional proofs that in Holy Scriptures the word *yom* or "day" signifies years may be found in Genesis V where are mentioned the genealogies of Adam and his offspring most of whom lived over nine hundred years, and in Deuteronomy II, 14.

17 At this point it is of no small interest to mention what another philological interpretation a Samaritan polemicist and apologist gave to the word *yom.* He was Abu l-Hasan, who lived in the eleventh century and who published nine points in his dispute against the Jews, the last of which bears on the matter now under consideration. I am indebted for this information to A. S. Halkin's dissertation on the

"Samaritan Polemics Against the Jews," in the *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research,* vol. VII, p. 10, 1935–1936:

> Amongst the nine points in dispute against the Jews, the last one is on the reading of Genesis II, 2: "And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made," and which the Samaritans changed to the sixth day. This author, therefore, sets out to demonstrate the correctness of the Samaritan reading, and his proof is, as heretofore, mainly philological, even if in a negative sense. The word *yom* designates seven different time periods:
>
> 1) The time of daylight—Genesis I, 5;
> 2) The period of an evening and a day—Genesis I, 5;
> 3) A stretch of twenty-four hours, no matter when it begins—Exodus XXI, 21;
> 4) A period which is to include a little more than twenty-four hours, such as the Sabbath day or the Day of Atonement;
> 5) A day linked up with a particular incident, such as defilement. No matter when it occurs during the day, it is reckoned complete—Leviticus XIV, 57;
> 6) The time of our duty to obey God's Law, which has no limits, for we continue to live as long as we fulfill our charge—Deuteronomy IV, 4;
> 7) The infinite day of the Last Judgment—Deuteronomy XXXII, 35.

18 From the *Jewish Encyclopedia*:

> Serah, designated "Sorach" in Wagenseil's text, the daughter of Asher, the son of Jacob and Zilpah, is

counted among the seventy members of Jacob's family who emigrated from Canaan into Egypt. Her name occurs in connection with the census taken by Moses in the wilderness. This special mention makes her history extraordinary, and she became the heroine of several legends. One of them is that she was the first person to tell Jacob that his son Joseph was still living, and, for this reason, Jacob blessed her with eternal life. Moses addressed himself to Serah when he wished to learn where the remains of Joseph were to be buried. The principal Synagogue of Ispahan, Persia, was called "Serah bath Asher," and the Jews from all parts of Persia make pilgrimages to it.

19 Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh and foster mother of Moses, around whom were woven many legends; one is to the effect that she is numbered among the persons who entered Paradise alive because she saved Moses and as a result was freed from death. This legend is found in *Derek Eretz Zutta.* Her name is mentioned in I Chronicles IV, 18.

20 From the *Jewish Encyclopedia*:

"Garden of Eden" is not always synonymous with "Paradise." The *Aggada* credits nine mortals with entrance to Heaven or Paradise while alive, to wit: Enoch, Eliezer, Abraham's servant, Serah, the daughter of Asher—Sotah, 13*a*—, Bithia, the daughter of Pharaoh—I Chronicles IV, 18—, Hiram, King of Tyre, Elijah, Messiah, Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian—Jeremiah XXXVIII, 12—and Jabez, the Yehudaite.

21 Nowhere has Moses Maimonides shown greater sublimity of soul as guide and comforter than in his *Letter of Consolation to the Yemenite Jews* when these were so sorely tried by the Mohammedan hierarchy to apostatize them to Islam. This letter, a model of piety and humility, as-

signed three psychological and, eventually, physical patterns, or ways of attack, which their enemies had unsuccessfully tried to wean them away from their faith. The Assyrians and Romans, by fire and sword; the Persians and Greeks, more subtly, by sophistry and poetic charm, respectively; and the Moslems, by trickery. *Mutatis mutandis,* this last named expedient combined with casuistry is what characterized the anti-Jewish weapon in the Paris and Barcelona Disputations.

22 II Samuel X, 18: David slew seven, not eight, hundred men.

23 The Four Kingdoms were Persia, Greece, Arabia, Rome.

24 Raymond Martin was a Dominican preacher who lived in Spain in the thirteenth century. He specialized in Oriental languages to enable him to dispute against the Jews and Moors and was appointed by King James I of Aragon as Royal Confessor and censor of Jewish writings. His most famous book was entitled *Pugio Fidei Raymundi Martini Praedicatorum Adversus Mauros et Judaeos.* This book was forgotten for a long time but was resurrected by Joseph Scaliger. The author quotes extensively from *Bereshith Rabba.* His arguments against the Jews were the hackneyed ones exploited by the gentry of his stamp, Christian-born, or apostates. These arguments are plentifully repeated in the Barcelona Disputation.

25 It is of no small historical interest that the dogma of the Trinity was first held Biblically untenable by R. Simlai, in *Bereshith Rabba.* R. Simlai, an Aggadist of the first rank, lived in the fourth century of the Vulgar Era. This is the only reference to the subject in the Talmud. It is conjectured that he aimed it at Origen, a church father and coeval with himself, who learned Hebrew from Palestinian and Alexandrian Jews and who showed some acquaintance with the Septuaginta. R. Simlai pointed out the utter untenability of this dogma on textual grounds, but that Christian opponents manipulated the texts to suit their purpose. R.

Simlai, therefore, may be considered the first Jewish anti-Trinitarian polemicist.
Maimonides on the Trinity:

> When reading my present treatise, bear in mind that by "faith" we do not understand merely that which is uttered with the lips but also that which is apprehended by the soul. . . . If, however, you have a desire to rise to a higher degree, viz., that of reflection and to hold truly the conviction that God is one and possesses true unity without admitting plurality or divisibility in any sense whatever, you must understand that God has no essential attribute in any form or in any sense whatever, and that the rejection of incorporeality implies the rejection of essential attributes. Those who believe that God is one and that He has many attributes declare the unity with their lips and assume plurality in their thoughts. This is like the doctrine of the Christians who say that He is one and He is three, and that the three are one. (*Guide for the Perplexed,* Friedlander's translation, chap. L, p. 76.)

26 Although treated considerably by King James I of Aragon, Moses Nachmanides was finally, in 1266, obliged to expatriate himself from Spain. This was the direct result of Pablo's and Raymond's representations to Pope Clement IV that the defender of the Jewish cause subsequent to the Barcelona Disputation reported it as a Jewish victory to the detriment of the Church.

27 Antipope Benedict XIII, or Pedro de Luna, was born in Illucca, Aragon, Spain, in 1328, and died near Valencia, about 1423. He came of an ancient, rich and influential family and was possessed of considerable learning, especially in secular and canon law. Because of his tendency to domination and intrigue, he espoused the causes of several

popes in Rome only for selfish interests and to foment schism. As a result of all this, he was compelled to betake himself to Avignon and finally to Spain. Before the Tortosa Disputation, he had already engaged in controversies with the Jews, hoping to best them in battles of words and reap their wholesale conversion as steps in self-glorification.

27*a* Should read "February 14."

28 Talmud *Abodah Zora* IX*a*.

28*a* This refers to Aristotle.

29 *Tanna Debe Eliyahu* is a "composite name of a Midrash consisting of two parts whose final redaction took place at the end of the tenth century of the Common Era. . . . The underlying theme of *Tanna Debe Eliyahu* . . . is the evolution of a series of periods in the world system. The three main periods are (1) The Present world; (2) the Messianic era; and (3) the Future world. These are subdivided into (*a*) 2000 years of confusion; (*b*) 2000 years of the Torah; and (*c*) 2000 years of the Messiah; (*d*) the inauguration of general peace; and (*e*) the future world."

30 This reporter or notary, according to Ehrle, was Garcias Alvarez de Alarçon. His *Protocol,* designated as *Codex Vatican* 4069, is also found in the *Gebiet der Geschichte der von der Gorres-Gesellschaft,* Paderborn, Germany, 1906, p. 580 f.—Fritz Baer.

30*a* Mentioned by Maimonides in his *Letter to the Yemenite Jews.*

31 This colloquy is not reported in the Nachmanides–Pablo Christiani disputation.

32 Should read "James I of Aragon" instead of "Don Pedro."

33 The "scholar from Rome" is identified as Solomon Maimon, or Isaac, according to the reports in *Yeshurun* and the Latin *Protocol.*

33*a* Authority for this statement is *Pesachim* LIV, 71.

34 While Verga publicizes Vidal Benveniste as the spokesman and principal apologist, *Yeshurun* and the *Protocol* do not mention him at all, which Loeb imputes to the probability

that he may subsequently have abjured Judaism. While some authorities speak of Vidal as Ferrer, this individual in the *Protocol* can be identified as Serachya ha-Levi, the chief Rabbi of Aragon and successor to Chasdai Crescas. (Baer Moritz Kayserling in the *Jewish Encyclopedia,* vol. III, p. 41, denies his identity with Don Ferrer of Gerona.) Vidal Benveniste wrote the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* to refute Geronimo's claim to Jesus's messiahship.

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