**Session 2.**

**Text 1. (i) Barcelona 1263**

On July 20th, 1263, in the presence of the Lord King of Aragon and many other barons, prelates, clerics and knights, in the palace of the lord king at Barcelona, Moses the Jew, called ’Rabbi’, was summoned from Girona by the lord king, at the request of the Dominicans, and was present there.

Friar Paul proposed to the said Rabbi that, with the aid of God, he would prove from writings shared and accepted by the Jews the following contentions: That the Messiah, who is called Christ, whom the Jews anticipate, has surely come already; also that that the Messiah, as prophesied, should be divine and human; also that he suffered and was killed for the salvation of mankind; also that the laws and ceremonials ceased and should have ceased after the advent of the said Messiah. When the said Moses was asked whether he wished to respond to these contentions which had been indicated, he said and affirmed that he would and that, if necessary he would remain in Barcelona for that purpose not only for a day or a week or a month but even for a year.

Then in the palace of the lord king, the said Jew was asked whether the Messiah, who is called Christ, has come. He responded with the assertion that he has not come. He added that the Messiah and Christ are the same and that if it could be proved to him that the Messiah had come, it could be believed to refer to none other than him, namely Jesus Christ in whom the Christians believe, since no one else has come who dared to usurp for himself this title nor has there been anyone else who had been believed to be Christ. It was then proved to him clearly, both through authoritative texts of the law and the prophets as well as through the Talmud, that Christ has truly come, as Christians believe and preach.

Since he did not wish to confess the truth unless forced by authoritative texts, when he was unable to explain these texts, he said publicly that he did not believe the texts which were brought against him – although found in ancient and authentic books of the Jews – because they were, he claimed, sermons in which their teachers often lied for the purpose of exhorting the people. As a result, he reproved both the teachers and the scriptures of the Jews. Moreover, all these issues, or almost all, which were proved to him, he first negated; then being confuted by authoritative texts and confused, he was forced to assent. It was added that the Messiah was born among men, that he came among men, and that he could not otherwise be or be understood. To this he was unable to respond.

**Pablo Christiani**

**Text 1. (ii) Barcelona 1263**

The prophet says that in the time of the Messiah, ‘And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord’, for they shall all know me”(Jeremiah 31:34); also, ‘The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea’ (Isaiah 11:9); also, ‘They shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more’ (Isaiah 2:4) Yet from the days of Jesus until now, the whole world has been full of violence and plundering…. But even your messiah, Jesus, did not gather one man of them, and did not even live in the time of the Exile. It is also the task of the Messiah to build the Temple in Jerusalem, but Jesus did not carry out anything in connection with the Temple, either building or destruction. Also the Messiah will rule over he peoples, and Jesus did not rule even over himself.

**R. Moses ben Nahman (Ramban) 1263**

### Text 2. Maimonides, Guide to the Perplexed (1190)

What then should be the state of our intellects when they aspire to apprehend Him who is without matter and is simple to the utmost degree of simplicity. Him, whose existence is necessary, Him, who has no cause and to whom no notion attaches that is super added to His essence, which is perfect - the meaning of its perfection being…that all deficiencies are negated with respect to it – we who only apprehend the fact that He is? There is accordingly an existent whom none of the existent things that He has brought into existence resembles, and who has nothing in common with them in any respect; in reference to whom there is no multiplicity or incapacity to bring into existence things other than He; whose relation to the world is that of a captain to his ship. Even this is not the true relation and correct likeness, for this likeness has been used in order to lead the mind toward the view that He, may He be exalted, governs the existent things, the meaning of this being that he procures their existence and watches over their order as it ought to be watched over.

**Text 3. Solomon ibn Aderet, 1305**

In fact, it is impossible for two opposites to join (i.e. tradition and Greek philosophy). Can a man believe or arrive at a conclusion to consider real the Biblical miracles, while in his heart there remains a conviction that it is impossible to bring forth water from a rock? As far as the followers of philosophy are concerned, whoever believes in anything which cannot be deduced from natural logic is to be called a ‘simpleton who believes everything’ and they alone are wise in their own eyes and we are considered stupid.

We are servants of God, He has made us, not we ourselves. We have decreed and agreed for ourselves and our seed and all attached to us, by the power of the herem (ban of excommunication) that for a period of fifty years no member of our congregation shall study the books of the Greeks which were written on the subjects of natural philosophy and metaphysics, whether they be composed in their language or whether they be translated into another, before he reaches the age of twenty five; that no member of our community should teach anybody these philosophical studies until he reaches twenty five; lest they be drawn after these wisdoms and turn aside from the Torah of Israel which is above all these wisdoms…We exclude from this our decree the study of the Science of Medicine. Although it too is based upon a study of Nature, nevertheless the Torah itself accords the physician permission to heal. This we have decreed as a ban over the Scroll of the Torah, in the presence of the congregation.

**Text 4.**

**The Ethical Will of Judah ibn Tibbon, (1160?)**

My son, list to my precepts, neglect none of my injunctions. Set my admonition before your eyes; thus shall you prosper and prolong your days in pleasantness! ....

You know, my son, how I swaddled your and brought your up, how I led you in the paths of wisdom and virtue. I fed and clothed your; I spent myself in educating and protecting you. I sacrificed my sleep to make your wise beyond your fellows and to raise you to the highest degree of science and morals. These twelve years I have denied myself the usual pleasures and relaxations of men for your sake, and I still toil for your inheritance. [After the death of his wife the father devoted his time to Samuel, his son.]

I have honoured you by providing an extensive library for your use, and have thus relieved your of the necessity to borrow books. Most students must bustle about to seek books, often without finding them. But you, thanks be to God, lend and borrow not. many books, indeed, you own two or three copies. I have besides made for your books on all sciences, hoping that your hand might find them all as a nest. [The father probably compiled reference books for the use of the son.]

Seeing that your Creator had graced your with a wise and understanding heart, I journeyed to the ends of the earth and fetched for your a teacher in secular sciences. I minded neither the expense nor the danger of the ways. Untold evil might have befallen me and your on those travels, had not the Lord been with us!

But you, my son! did deceive my hopes. You did not choose to employ your abilities, hiding yourself from all your books, not caring to know them or even their titles. Had you seen your own books in the hand of others, you would not have recognized them; had you needed one of them, you would not have known whether it was with your or not, without asking me; you did not even consult the catalogue of your library....

Therefore, my son! Stay not your hand when I have left you but devote yourself to the study of the Torah and to the science of medicine. But chiefly occupy yourself with the Torah, for you have a wise and understanding heart, and all that is needful on your part is ambition and application. I know that you wilt repent of the past, as many have repented before you of their youthful indolence. . .

Let your countenance shine upon the sons of men; tend their sick and may your advice cure them. Though you take fees from the rich, heal the poor gratuitously, the Lord will reward you. Thereby shall you find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Thus wilt you win the respect of high and low among Jews and non­-Jews, and your good name will go forth far and wide You wilt rejoice your friends and make your foes envious. For remember what is written in the *Choice of Pearls*[53:617, of Ibn Gabirol]l: "How shall one take vengeance on an enemy? By increasing one's own good qualities."....

My son! Examine regularly, once a week, your drugs and medicinal herbs, and do not employ an ingredient whose properties are unknown to your. I have often impressed this on your in vain....

My son! I command you to honour your wife to your utmost capacity. She is intelligent and modest, a daughter of a distinguished and educated family. She is a good housewife and mother, and no spendthrift. Her tastes are simple, whether in food or dress. Remember her assiduous attendance of you in your illness, though she had been brought up in elegance and luxury. Remember how she afterwards reared your son without man or woman to help her. Were she a hired nurse, she would have earned your esteem and forbearance; how much the more, since she is the wife of your bosom, the daughter of the great, art you bound to treat her with consideration and respect. To act otherwise is the way of the contemptible. The Arab philosopher [probably Al­Ghazali, 1058­1112] says of women: "None but the honourable honours them, none but the despicable despises them."....

If you would acquire my love, honour her with all your might; do not exercise too severe an authority over her; our Sages [Gittin 6b] have expressly warned men against this. If you give orders or reprove, let your words be gentle. Enough is it if your displeasure is visible in your look; let it not be vented in actual rage. Let your expenditure be well ordered. It is remarked in the *Choice of Pearls*[1: 3] "Expenditure properly managed makes half an income." And there is an olden proverb: "Go to bed without supper and rise without debt." Defile not the honor of your countenance by borrowing; may the Creator save your from that habit! ....

Examine your Hebrew books at every New Moon, the Arabic volumes once in two months, and the bound codices once every quarter. [Arabic and Latin were the languages of science in Spain, the Provence, and southern Italy.] Arrange your library in fair orders so as to avoid wearying yourself in searching for the book you need. Always know the case and the chest where the book should be. A good plan would be to set in each compartment a written list of the books therein contained. If, then, you art looking for a book, you can see from the list the exact shelf it occupies without disarranging all the books in the search for one. Examine the those leaves in the volumes and bundles, and preserve them. These fragments contain very important matters which I collected and copied out. Do not destroy any writing or letter of all that I have left. And cast your eve frequently over the catalogue so as to remember what books are in your library.

Never intermit your regular readings with your teacher; study in the college of your master on certain evenings before sitting down to: read with the young. Whatever you have learned from me or from your teachers, impart it again regularly to worthy pupils, so that you may retain it, for by teaching it to others you wilt know it by heart, and their questions will compel your to precision, and remove any doubts from your own mind.

Never refuse to lend books to anyone who has not the means to purchase books for himself, but only act thus to those who can be trusted to return the volumes. [Before the invention of printing each book was written by hand and was therefore expensive.] You know what our sages said in the Talmud, on the text: "Wealth and riches are in his house; and his merit endures for ever." [Ketubot 50a applies this verse, Psalm 112: 3, to one who lends his copies of the Bible.] But, [Proverbs 3:27] "Withhold not good from him to whom it is due," [you owe it to your books to protect them] and take particular care of your books. Cover the bookcases with rugs of fine quality, and preserve them from damp and mice, and from all manner of injury, for your books are your good treasure. If you lend a volume, make a memorandum before it leaves your house, and when it is returned, draw your pen over the entry. Every Passover and Tabernacles [that is, every six months] call in all books out on loan.

I enjoin on your, my son, to read this, my testament, once daily, at morn or at eve. Apply your heart to the fulfilment of its behests, and to the performance of all therein written. Then wilt you make your ways prosperous; then shall you have good success.

**Text 5. Seville 1391**

The following Sabbath, the Lord poured out his anger like fire, shook his sanctuary and desecrated the crown of the Torah, that is the community of Barcelona, which was overtaken on that day. The number of the dead reached two hundred and fifty. The rest of the community escaped to the fortress where they took refuge while the enemies looted the Jewish streets and put some on fire. The governor of the city had no hand in the attack. On the contrary, he did his best to save them…

The Jews were fed and it was decided to punish criminals severely. Then the masses and the mobs rebelled against the city leaders; they attacked the Jews who were in the fortress. Many died as martyrs, among them my only son who was newly married. I have offered him for a sacrifice as an innocent lamb. Many committed suicide, some throwing themselves down the fortress; before reaching the ground, their bodies were totally torn apart. Some others went out from there and sanctified the Divine Name in the street. All the rest were baptized. Only a few escaped to baronial cities, even a child could count them. They were the elite. Because of our sins there is today no one known as a Jew in Barcelona.

We are here today in the whole region of Aragon, with God’s mercy upon us, protected from violence. He has left a remnant in all these places and after the great efforts and the wide dispersion we are left without any property except our bodies. In any case, our heart is full of fear and our eyes are directed towards our Father who is in Heaven so that he may pity us for our pain and that He may not let us fall, and may it be His will, Amen. I am the man who saw affliction under the staff of His anger, Hasdai bar Abraham bar Yehuda Crescas, who is writing here in Saragossa, on 20th day of the month Marcheshvan, in the year 5152 since the Creation.

## **Hasdai Crescas, Letter to the Jewish community of Avignon**

**Text 6. Solomon Alami, Iggeret Musar (1415)**

If we ask ourselves why all this happened to us, then we have to accept the truth: we ourselves are at fault…We and our Iniquities caused this evil to happen. Our sages were jealous of each other and disrespectful…there was so much quarrelling among the wise men… There were the scholars who attempted to interpret the Scriptures in the Greek manner and clothe it in Greek dress. They believed that Plato and Aristotle had brought us more light than Moses our master…Now, if a man should not be able to ‘live by his faith’ why should he suffer death for it and endure the joke and the shame of dispersion among the nations? It serves no good to quote Scriptures as support for philosophical opinions: the way of reason and the way of faith are too far apart and will never meet…Those who read a few columns in a book of Greek philosophy will soon tear to shreds the scrolls of the Torah…The next in line of decadence were the leaders of the communities and those favoured and trusted by the kings. Their riches and their high position made them forsake humility…They acquired costly wagons and horses, dressed in precious garments…They gave up study and industry and cultivated idleness, vainglory and inordinate ambition…Everyone chased after coveted positions; envy estranged a man from his fellow and they didn’t mind denouncing one another before the court…The burden of taxation they shifted to the poorer classes. In the end, the Court itself found them despicable and removed them from power…There is no communal spirit among us. People quarrel over trifles; they hold banquets, listen to music imitate the gentiles in their clothes and hair dress.