**Sources for Session 4.**

**I Ottoman Empire**

**1.**

And when the Turkish Sultan Bayezid, the king of Tur­key, heard of all the wrongs that the King of Spain had done to the Jews, and of the fact that they were look­ing for a resting place for their feet, he had mercy on them and sent out his representatives, and a voice went out to all the lords of his kingdom, and a letter too, saying that none of his local rulers would be allowed to expel the Jews (who were now arriving), but rather all must receive them favourably... And fear of the King fell on the people, and the Jews were received very well and they were given protection ...And thousands and tens of thousands of exiled Jews came to Turkey and filled up the country.

**R. Elijah Capsali, 16th century, Crete**

**2. Looking at Conversos in Salonica**

1. **Rabbi Shmuel ben Moshe de Medina [Rashdam] 1540**

* Regarding all *conversos* who are coming to do *teshuvah* : we must consider that he whose father is of Israel [ie. Jewish], his mother also must be assumed to not be a Gentile.
* [..even if the children of *conversos*, born and raised as Christians are to be considered as Jews]…. Those who are children of *conversos* are called '*Israel'*, even after several generations. (in relation to Yoreh Deah 199)

1. **Rabbi Yosef Ben Lev [Rival 1500 – 1586]:**

* What of people who had not come immediately to the Ottoman Empire but rather lived for some time as Christian in other lands? Should they be judged harshly for their initial decision to continue living as Christians, since in their hearts, they have always been Jews.

"These *conversos* who left their residence in the Kingdom of Portugal on their way to Turkey – even if some of them ended up residing in Anconna and Flanders [where they continue to live as Christians] … one can say that they are Kosher Jews, because in their hearts they have considered *teshuvah*. "

**II Tiberias**

**3. From *Emek HaBacha,* Yosef HaCohen (b. Avignon 1496, d. Genoa 1575)**

Don Joseph Nasi came from Ferrara with those who had escaped from the iron furnace in Portugal. He lived there for a short time and then went to Turkey, where he found favour in the eyes of the Sultan Suleiman, who loved him very much. The sultan gave him the ruins of Tiberias and seven villages around it, appointing him prince and chief over them at that time. Don Joseph ent Rabbi Yosef ben Ardut, his agent, there to rebuild the walls of the city.

Ardut went and found favour also in the eyes of the Prince (Selim) who gave him a daily allowance of sixty coins. The sultan sent eight of his own household with him, together with an order, written and sealed with the royal signet, recommending him to the pashas of Damascus and Tsfat, as follows, ‘Do everything that this man requires of you.’ Hence an order was issued by authority of the sultan, as follows: ‘All builders and labourers in those villages must report for the rebuilding of Tiberias. He who does not appear will be punished.’

At his command they planted many mulberry trees there to feed silkworms. He also ordered wool to be brought from Spain to manufacture garments just like the clothes they made in Venice, for the man Don Joseph was very great and his fame spread throughout the land.

**III Amsterdam**

**4. Uriel Da Costa**

Having made this decision and finding it unsafe to profess this religion in Portugal, I began to think of changing my residence and leaving my native home. In order to do this, I immediately resigned from my ecclesiastical position in fvour of another, uninfluenced either by profit or honour, the two prevailing motives among the people of our country. I also left a beautiful house situated in the best part of the city, which my father had built.

When I had conclude all the necessary arrangements, my mother, brothers and myself boarded a ship, not without danger for it is illegal for those who are descended from Jews to depart without a special permit from the king. I must tell the reader that out of natural affection, I had communicated to my family my sentiments on the falsity of our religion even though the discovery of it might have proven fatal to me – so dangerous is it in that country to speak freely on this subject, even to one’s dearest friends. At the end of the voyage we arrived in Amsterdam where we found the Jews professing their religion with great freedom, as the Law directs them. We immediately fulfilled the precept regarding circumcision.

**4ii. Uriel Da Costa**

I had not been there very long before I observed that the customs and observances of the modern Jew were quite different from those commanded by Moses. Now, if the Law was to be observed according to the letter, as it expressly declares, the Jewish interpreters are not justified in adding to it interpretations quite contrary to the original text. This provoked me to oppose them openly. In fact, I looked upon the open defence of the Law against such innovations as a service to God. The modern rabbis, like their ancestors, are an obstinate and stiff necked race of men, vigorous advocates of the teachings and institutions of the Pharisees, wot without a view to gain and, as is justly imputed to them, vainly fond of the conspicuous seats in the synagogue and greetings in the market place.

Men of this character could not bear my differing with them in the slightest degree. They insisted that I follow unswervingly their prescribed regulations or else suffer expulsion from the synagogue and the full sentence of excommunication. But it would have been unworthy of him who had so recently left his native country and been content to forego many other temporal advantages for liberty of conscience to be overawed and to submit to men who had no right to such power. Besides, I thought it both sinful and beneath a man to be a slave in things pertaining to the conscience. Therefore, I resolved to suffer the worst they could inflict rather than recant. Accordingly, they excommunicated me from their congregation. Even my own brothers who previously had looked upon me as their teacher, dared not take any notice of me as they passed me in the streets, for fear of the rabbis.

**4iii. Uriel Da Costa**

I entered the synagogue which was filled with curious spectators of both sexes. At the appointed time I walked up to the reading desk which was at the centre and with a clear voice read aloud the form of confession which they had drawn up for me, namely that I deserved to die a thousand deaths for the crimes I had committed such as the profanation of Shabbat, the breach of my religious vows. Etc which I had carried so far as to dissuade others from being converts to Judaism.

To atone for these violations, I submitted to their sentence and was ready to undergo whatever they wished to lay on me, promising not to be guilty of similar crimes in the future. When I had finished the reading, I stepped down from the desk. The chief reader came to me and whispering in my ear, bid me to go to a certain corner of the synagogue. When I had done this, the doorkeeper asked me to strip. Accordingly, I stripped down to my waist, tied a kerchief about my head, pulled off my shoes and, holding up my arms above my head, clasped a kind of pillar in my hands, to which the doorkeeper tied them with a rope. Having thus prepared myself for my punishment, the verger stepped forward and with a scourge of leather thongs gave me nine and thirty stripes, according to the Jewish custom (it was a legal commandment that the number of stripes should not exceed forty) for these very scrupulous and pious gentlemen take due care not to offend by overstepping their bounds. During the period of my whipping they sung a Psalm. Then I was ordered to sit down on the ground whereupon an elder came forward and absolved me from my excommunication. So now the gates of heaven which were doubly locked and barred against me were suddenly flung wide open. Oh the ridiculous ideas an conceits o mortals.

After this I dressed and went to the entrance of the synagogue where I prostrated myself. The doorkeeper held up my head while everyone, both young an old, passed over me, stepping with one foot on the lower part of my legs and making ridiculous gestures, more like monkeys than human beings. After they had all done this, I got up and, being washed and made clean by a man who stood near me for that purpose, I went home.

**IV Amsterdam - London**

**5. Letter of R. Menasseh Ben Israel to Oliver Cromwell 1655**

Three things, if it please your Highness, there are that make a strange Nation well-beloved amongst the Natives of a land where they dwell:  *Profit*, they may receive from them; *Fidelity* they hold towards their Princes; and the *Nobleness* and purity of their blood. Now when I shall have made good, that all these three things are found in the Jewish Nation, I shall certainly persuade your Highness, that with a favourable eye, you shall be pleased to receive again the Nation of the Jews, who in time past lived in that Island: but, I know not by what false Information, were cruelly handled and banished.

*Profit* is a most powerful motive, and which all the World prefers before all other things: and therefore, we shall handle that point first.

It is a thing confirmed that merchandizing is, as it were, the proper profession of the Nation of the Jews. I attribute this in the first place, to the particular Providence and mercy of God towards his people: for having banished them from their own Country, yet not from his Protection, he hath given them, as it were, a natural instinct, by which they might not only gain what was necessary for their need, but that they should also thrive in Riches and possessions; whereby they should not only become gracious to their Princes and Lords, but that they should be invited by others to come and dwell in their Lands.

Moreover, it cannot be denied, but that necessity stirs up a man’s ability and industry; and that it gives him great incitement, by all means, to try the favour of Providence. And the Jews are forced to use merchandising until that time, when they shall return to their own country.

 The love that men ordinarily bear to their own Country and the desire they have to end their lives, where they had their beginning, is the cause, that most strangers having gotten riches where they are in a foreign land, are commonly taken in a desire to return to their native soil, and there peaceably to enjoy their estate; so that as they were a help to the places where they lived, and negotiated while they remained there; so when they depart from thence, they carry all away, and spoil them of their wealth: transporting all into their own native Country: But with the Jews the case is far different; for where the Jews are once kindly received, they make a firm resolution never to depart from thence, seeing they have no proper place of their own: and so they are always with their goods in the Cities where they live, a perpetual benefit to all payments. Which reasons do clearly prove, that it being the property of Citizens in populous and rich countries, to seek their rest and ease with buying lands and faire possession of which they live; many of them hating commerce, aspire to Titles and Dignities: therefore of all strangers, in whose hands ordinarily traffic is found, there are none so profitable and beneficial to the place where they trade and live, as is the Nation of the Jews. And seeing amongst the people of Europe, the chiefest riches they possess, some from Spain, those neighbour Nations, where the Jews shall find liberty to live according to their own Judicial Laws, they shall most easily draw that benefit to themselves by means of the industry of our Nation, and their mutual correspondence.

From hence (if it please your Highness) it results, that the Jewish Nation, though scattered through the whole World, are not therefore a despicable people, but as a Plant worthy to be planted in the whole world, and received into Populous Cities: who ought to plant them in those places, which are most secure from danger; being trees of most savoury fruit and profit, to be always most favoured with Laws and Privileges, or Prerogatives, secured and defended by Armies.

**6. Testimony of Luis Carvajal, 1596**

And thus, it is my desire and will to die for God’s Holy faith and true Law. I look to the Lord for strength, lacking all confidence in my own, for after all I am flesh born of fragile seed. And if, instead of five sisters – in addition to my mother – who are now in danger because of their trust in God’s Law, I had a thousand, I would give them all up for my faith in each one of God’s holy commandments.

In witness whereof I have written and signed this testament on mine, and with this final deposition, in which I reconfirm my faith, I hereby conclude the process of my trial.

My God and Lord, give me grace in the eyes of my captors that it may be seen an known in the kingdom and in all the kingdoms of the Earth that You are our God and that You, O most high and sanctified God, named Adonai, are rightly invoked by Israel and his descendants.

I commend this soul You have given me to Your most holy hands, solemnly declaring that I will not change my faith until I die nor when I ie. I happily bring to an end the course of my present life, bearing a living faith in Your divine promise of salvation through Your infinite mercy, and when Your holy will is fulfilled, of resurrection in the company of of our saintly patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their faithful children. For the sake of their holiness I humbly entreat you to admit me to Your love and not abandon me, and to deign to send me my succour and aid the saintly angel, Michael, our prince, with his saintly and angelic soldiery, to help me preserve and die in Your holy faith, and to free me from the Adversary’s hands and temptations.

My good God and Lord have mercy upon the glory of Your name, Your law, and Your people, and upon the world which You have created. Fill it with Your light and with the true knowledge of Your name, that Heaven and earth may be filled with praise of Your glory. Amen Amen.

**V New Amsterdam**

**7. Letter f members of Dutch West India Company regarding Jews in New Amsterdam, 26th April, 1655**

“We observe that it would be unreasonable and unfair, especially because of the considerable loss sustained by the Jews in the taking of Brazil and also because of the large amount of capital, which they invested in shares of this Company. After many consultations we have decided and resolved upon a certain petition made by said Portuguese Jews, that they shall have permission to sail and trade in New Netherland and to live and remain there provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the Company, or the community, but be supported by their own nation. You will govern yourself accordingly.”