



### From last time: Nachmanides the Scholar

#### 1. Maimonides, Introduction to 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Tractate Sanhedrin

Spiritual entities do not have physical pleasure and do not comprehend it, for they lack our senses, with which to experience what we experience. One of us who would be purified and would reach that status posthumously would also cease to experience physical pleasure and would not desire it; this would be like a great emperor wishing to lose his throne and return to playing with a ball in the street. At some point he certainly did prefer the ballgame over an empire, when he was young and foolish, just as we prefer physical pleasure over the spiritual.

#### 2. Dr. Saadia Eisenberg, *Reading Medieval Religious Disputation*, pp. 98-102

In 1232 or 1233, anti-Maimonists in Montpellier handed the more philosophical books of Maimonides over to local friars present to eradicate heresy; the mendicants then burned these texts... However, the connection between the Maimonidean controversy and the 1240 Debate is far from clear. In all the papal literature surrounding the 1240 Debate and the subsequent burning of the talmuds, the earlier burning of Maimonidian books goes unmentioned. Association between the two Jewish book-burnings is largely absent in contemporary Jewish literature as well. Three separate works, all written in response to the Debate and the subsequent burning of rabbinic texts, failed to mention the Maimonidean controversy or to connect it with the burning of the Talmuds...

#### 3. Nachmanides, Account of the 1263 Disputation

<https://web.archive.org/web/20060907082559/http://medspains.stanford.edu/demo/barcelona/disputation.html>

Our Lord the King commanded me to dispute with Friar Paul in his palace before him and his advisors in Barcelona. I replied: "I will do as the king commands, if you permit me to speak freely. I hereby request the permission of the king and the permission of Friar Raymond of Penaforte and his associates who are here." Friar Raymond of Penaforte replied: "So long as you do not utter blasphemies." I said to them: "I wish to observe your law in this regard. But I also wish to speak freely in debate, as you speak freely. I have the wisdom to speak properly in debate as you indicate, but it must be according to my will." They all gave me permission to speak freely...

He began: "Behold Scriptures say, 'the sceptre shall not pass from Judah, nor the staff from his descendants, until Shiloh comes,' meaning the messiah. Thus the prophet says that Judah shall have power forever, until the coming of the messiah who will descend from Judah. Thus today, when you Jews have neither sceptre nor staff, the messiah has already come, and he is of the seed of Judah, and his is the power."

I responded and said: "It was not the prophet's intention to say that the rule of Judah would never be suspended. Rather, he said that it would not pass away and be annulled completely. This means that, so long as there be a monarchy in Israel, it should belong to Judah. If because of their sins it should be suspended, it would ultimately return to Judah. This is proved by the fact that, prior to Jesus, there was a long period during which ruling authority was suspended from Judah but not from Israel and a long period during which rule was suspended both from Israel and Judah. For during the seventy years of exile in Babylonia, neither Judah nor Israel enjoyed ruling authority. During the period of the Second Temple, only Zerubabel and his sons ruled briefly from Judah. There remained, however, 380 years to the destruction, during which priests of the Hasmonean family reigned."...

#### 4. Some of the Writings of Nachmanides

The Letter of Nachmanides (*Iggeret haRamban*)

The Torah of Man (*Torat ha'Adam*)

Commentary to the Talmud

The Wars of Gd (*Milchamot Hashem*)

Commentary to the Maimonidean Book of Mitzvot

Commentary to the Torah

The Gate of Reward (*Sha'ar haGemul*)

Ethical Instruction

Laws of Illness, Death and Mourning

Analysis of Talmudic texts

Commentary defending Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi's *Sefer Halachot*

Law

Linguistic, midrashic and mystical interpretation

Divine Reward and punishment

## 5. Nachmanides, Introduction to Commentary on the Torah

I will place as illumination before me the lights of the pure candelabra, the commentary of Rabbeinu Shlomo, the desirable crown and splendid diadem, crowned in the logic of Scripture, *mishnah* and *gemara*. His is the lot of the firstborn, and in his words I will speak and in their love I will be foolish and with them we will engage in give and take, analysis and examination, in his simple explanations and analysis and in every story in its form as mentioned in his commentary. With Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra we will have open rebuke and hidden love.

## 6. Nachmanides to Genesis 9:12

We must believe the words of the Greeks, that the rainbow is created by the shining of sunlight through moist air, for in a vessel of water set out in the sun one may observe a sort of rainbow. When we look at the verse's text further, we understand this same message as well...

## 7. Nachmanides to Exodus 13:16

Gd will not perform signs and wonders in every generation before the eyes of every wicked person and denier, and so He instructed us to make a perpetual memorial and a sign for that which we saw, and to convey it to our children, and their children to their children, and their children to the final generation.

## Introducing: Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437 Lisbon – 1508 Venice)

### 8. Rabbi Joseph Caro, Beit Yosef commentary to Tur, Orach Chaim 168

This question was asked in the academy of the light of the exile of Ariel, the great one, our mentor Rabbi Isaac Aboab, may his memory live in the next world, in a great public gathering of sages and scholars, including the great eagle, our mentor Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel, may his memory live in the next world...

## 9. Some biography

Family line – Davidic heritage; Don Judah Abarbanel of Seville; Samuel Abarbanel; Judah Abarbanel

### Life in Portugal

The end of Portugal's Golden Age, under King Alfonso V

Treasurer to King Alfonso V; "The Great Eagle"

1483 - Flight from King Joao II, successor of Alfonso, to Castille

### Life in Spain

Employed by Ferdinand and Isabella to collect revenue and supply military provisions

Dominicans harass the Jews

### Expulsion

1491- The unification of Spain under Christian control

Pope Innocent VII balks; Ferdinand and Isabella do not

30,000 ducats; Kidnapping of Isaac

### Life in Naples

King Ferdinand I of Naples receives them

Plague

Don Isaac Abarbanel is invited into the royal service, but also expands his scholarship

Sephardim meet Ashkenazim

1503- Flight to Venice from Charles VIII of France

## 10. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Introduction to Book of Kings, translation by Dafna Seigman, copyright Melton Curriculum

And in the ninth year... the king of Spain conquered all of the Kingdom of Granada, and the great and mighty city of Granada. And in his position of strength and of great pride, a religious spirit overtook him, and Esau said to himself: "How shall I appease the god who helped me in battle? What shall I offer my maker who delivered this city into my hands, other than bring the stray sheep of Israel under his wings and restore them to the correct faith – or else expel them to another land and never allow them to return to my country or my presence?"...