

SUPPLEMENT

THE BURNING OF THE TALMUD IN PARIS-1242

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE שאלו שרופה באש: קינה

HISTORY OF THE JEWS, VOLUME 3 BY HEINRICH GRAETZ

CHAPTER XVII

PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS AND THE BURNING OF THE TALMUD

Pope Gregory IX -- Emperor Frederick II and the Jewish Scholars. Jehuda Ibn-Matka and. Jacob Anatoli -- The Jewish Legislation of Frederick of Austria -- The Martyrs of Aquitaine and Gregory IX -- Louis IX of France and his Enmity to the Jews -- Attacks on The Talmud -- The Apostate Nicholas-Donin -- Disputation at the French Court between Yechiel of Paris and Nicholas-Donin -Judah of Melun -- The Talmud burnt at Paris

1236-1270 C. E.

WHILST⁶ these internal divisions continued, the poisonous seed that had been scattered abroad by the papacy was producing abundance of evil fruit. Persecutions of the Jews, which had hitherto been merely local, began to spread like a contagion, and became every year more violent and general. Innocent III, it is true, did not aim at the complete annihilation of the Jews, but only at their degradation. He desired to crush them down to a state lower than that of the rustic serfs, for which purpose the whole weight of the society of the Middle Ages, consisting of princes, nobles of high or low rank, the clergy of every degree, burghers and peasants, was to bear heavily upon them, to afflict them grievously, and to reduce them to a most pitiable condition. "The humiliation of the Jews afforded great pleasure to the lower grades of the people, who were rejoiced to behold a class of human beings, sunk yet lower than themselves, against whom they could use their clumsy wit and rough fists. This people, which was branded with a distinguishing badge by the Church and society, was regarded by the ignorant mob as a race of outcasts, who might be put to death like filthy dogs, without any feeling of remorse. All sorts of crimes were attributed to the Jews, and credited. Fierce attacks on the Jews were repeated from time to time, and in various places, on the plea of child murder, and with such an air of truth in the charge that even well-disposed Christians were filled with doubts, and were inclined to believe the tissue of lies. It happened once that the body of a Christian was found between

Lauda and Bischofsheim (in Baden). Who were the murderers? Jews, of course. On this altogether groundless accusation, the Jewish men, women and children of both towns were attacked by the mob and the clergy, and, without being brought to trial, were put to death. Then eight learned and pious men were brought up to answer for the supposed assassination of a Christian (on the 2d and 3d January, 1235); they were put to the rack, and, probably in consequence of the confessions wrung from them by the torture, they were executed. The plundering of Jewish houses was the invariable accompaniment of such massacres. The Jews in the neighboring districts thereupon implored Pope Gregory IX to grant them a charter, which might protect them against the arbitrary action of the murderous mob and the bigoted judges. In reply, he issued a bull to all Christendom (on the 3d of May, 1235), which repeated and confirmed the constitution of Pope Innocent III. So little sense of justice existed that it was the opinion of many that the Vicar of Christ had allowed himself to be induced to publish this bull by a bribe of a large sum of money from the Jews. However, whether this papal decree had emanated from love of justice, or had been the outcome of bribery, like many previous ones in favor of the Jews, it remained a dead letter. The spirit of intolerance and of Jew-hatred which was taught in the schools, and was preached in the pulpit by the Dominicans, became infused into the very blood of men, and the noblest natures were not able to escape contamination. Of what advantage was it to the Jews that they produced comparatively the largest number of scholars, who first rendered science accessible to Christians, either by means of translations and expositions of didactic writings in foreign languages, or through their own activity and discoveries, especially in medicine? They received no benefit from providing the marts of trade with wares, and the book market with works of genius, for the Christians would acknowledge no thanks to them for their labor, or repaid them by splitting their skulls.

As an eloquent illustration of the attitude of the Middle Ages with regard to the Jews, the conduct of the greatest and most cultured German emperor towards them may be instanced. Frederick II, the last of the Hohenstaufen line of emperors, was the most genial and unprejudiced monarch of the first half of the thirteenth century. A Sicilian rather than a German, he had a liking for the sciences, and supported men of genius with princely liberality. He took an interest in having writings on philosophy and astronomy translated from the Arabic, and for this purpose he employed many learned Jews. The emperor carried on a correspondence with a young Jewish scholar, Jehuda ben Solomon Cohen Ibn-Matka, of Toledo (born in about 1215, and wrote in 1247). His learning produced so deep an impression on Emperor Frederick that he submitted a number of scientific questions to him, and expressed pleasure at the answers returned to them. The emperor then probably induced him to come to Italy (Tuscany). Jehuda Ibn-Matka possessed the right of free entry to the imperial court.

The emperor invited another Jewish sage, Jacob Anatoli (Anatolio), to leave Provence and take up his residence in Naples. He granted the scholar an annual stipend, so that he might be at leisure to apply himself to the translation of Arabic works of a scientific character. This man, whose full name was Jacob ben Abba-Mari ben Simon, or Samson (flourished

about 1200-1250), was the son-in-law of the prolific translator but sterile author, Samuel Ibn-Tibbon, who was praised by the Maimunists, and hated by the strict Talmudists. Anatoli resembled him as a son resembles his father, and in a manner continued his work of translation. Like Ibn-Tibbon he did not possess any creative genius, but was, so to speak, a handicraftsman in philosophy, who translated Arabic writings on this subject into Hebrew. He had undergone special training for this work with his father-in-law and his Christian friend, Michael Scotus. He had so exalted a reverence for Maimuni that he placed him in the rank of the prophets, and was naturally full of wrath against those who termed him a heretic. "These malicious bigots," he remarked, "would have condemned even David and Asaph, had they lived in these times." By the aid of philosophical catchwords, he interpreted Holy Writ in the spirit of Maimuni. He also tried to refer miracles, as far as possible, to natural causes, and was, in short, one of those men who divested Judaism of much of its mystical character. Following this method, he delivered public discourses on Sabbaths and festivals, which he collected into one volume (Malmed), which, in spite of its mediocrity, became the cherished book of the orthodox Provençal congregations. Frederick II entrusted him with the task of translating the writings of Aristotle, with the commentaries of the Arabic philosopher Averroës (Ibn-Roshd), hitherto unknown to Christians. A Christian doctor, probably Michael Scotus, the court astrologer of the emperor, translated these works into Latin, probably under the supervision of Anatoli.

From all this it might be expected that the Emperor Frederick entertained a favorable feeling towards the Jews, especially as, if only a portion of the accusations which his contemporaries leveled against his orthodoxy be true, he was by no means convinced of the truths of Christianity. Pope Gregory IX, his mortal foe, frankly reproached him with having said in public that the world had been deluded by three impostors, Moses, Jesus, and Mahomet, of whom two had died an honorable death, but the third had ended his days on the cross. The emperor can, therefore, hardly be supposed to have taken deep offense at the unbelief of the Jews; yet in spite of all this, the emperor Frederick was no whit less an enemy of the Jews than his antipode, the bigoted Saint Louis of France. A bitter enemy to the papacy, which hindered his undertakings in every possible way, he nevertheless executed in his realm the canonical decree which excluded all Jews from public offices, making an exception only in the case of a certain Jewish clerk of the mint at Messina. In his capital, Palermo, he shut the Jews up in a Ghetto, an act of intolerance which far outstripped that of the popes of the time. In Austria, the Jews were permitted to fill public offices, under the rule of the Princes of Babenberg. The Archduke Frederick I, the Valiant, recognized the worth of the Jews as promoters of wealth, entrusted the care of his finances to Jewish officials, and granted to them titles of honor. Two brothers, Leblin and Nekelo, were officially styled chamberlains of the Duke of Austria. Frederick I of Austria (in 1244) granted a royal decree to the Jews of his domain, which appears to have been inspired by a love of justice and humanity, and which became an example for other similarly disposed potentates who desired to protect their Jewish subjects from injury and violence. This statute, which consisted of thirty clauses, aimed especially at affording protection to the Jewish inhabitants of Austria against murder and assault. If a Christian killed a Jew, he was

to suffer the extreme penalty of the law; if he wounded him, he was to be compelled to pay a heavy fine, or lose his hand. If the murderer of a Jew could not be convicted by means of direct proof of the commission of the crime, but strong circumstantial evidence fixed the deed on him, then the relatives or friends of the Jew could appoint a champion to meet the accused in a duel. A Christian who made a murderous attack upon a Jewess was sentenced to the loss of his hand. Grave charges involving the persons or property of Jews were not to be determined by the evidence of a Christian, unless a Jewish witness confirmed the misdemeanor. A Christian who kidnapped a Jewish child for the purpose of compulsory baptism, was to be punished as a thief. The statute of Frederick the Valiant also allowed the Jews to exercise their own jurisdiction, so that the judges of the land could have no power over them. The synagogues and cemeteries of the Jews were also to be respected by Christians, and the latter were liable to heavy punishment for any outrage upon them. The statute further guaranteed to all Jews the privilege of free passage and free trading throughout the country, and the right to loan money on pledges. The rates of interest were limited, but were permitted to be sufficiently high. The right of accepting pledges, which had been granted to members of the Jewish religion, was strictly regulated as an object of vital importance for both the Jews and the Duke. This decree, moreover, shielded them against paying extortionate sums to the Christians for the conveyance of Jewish corpses from place to place. The Archduke Frederick remarked that he conceded these privileges to the Jews, in order that "they also might participate in his grace and good wishes." This statute also proved beneficial to the Jews of other lands, for within twenty years it was introduced into Hungary, Bohemia, Greater Poland, Meissen, and Thuringia, and later on into Silesia.

A duke of inferior rank thus set the example of protecting the Jews against caprice by means of fixed laws. The powerful emperor Frederick II thereupon censured Frederick the Valiant for his friendly attitude towards the Jews, and he, who himself had been expelled from the Church, published an edict that the Jews of Austria should be rigorously excluded from all public offices lest the race, condemned to perpetual slavery, oppress the Christians through its office-holding members. With particular satisfaction he pronounced the sentence that the Jews, wherever they were located, were the "servi cameræ" of the emperor. He adhered so strictly to the canonical decrees of the Lateran Council against them, that he was even more rigorous than the kings of Spain in executing the law which compelled the Jews in his hereditary provinces to wear a distinguishing badge, and he crushed them under a load of taxes. It is true that he permitted those who had come to Sicily from Africa (whence they had fled before the fanatical fury of the Almohades), to take up their residence under his sway. But whilst he remitted taxes from other colonies for ten years, he at once burdened the Jewish immigrants with heavy imposts, and restricted them to agricultural pursuits. He, indeed, promised his "servi cameræ" especial protection, but nevertheless he treated them as a despised race of human beings. Henceforward the three powers of Christianity, the princes, the Church, and the people, combined to utterly destroy the feeblest of nations.

When Pope Gregory IX gave orders for another crusade to be preached, the warriors of the cross assembled in Aquitania, made an attack upon the Jewish communities of Anjou, Poitou, in the cities of Bordeaux, Angoulême, and elsewhere, in order to compel them to accept baptism. But as the Jews remained steadfast to their faith, the crusaders acted with unprecedented cruelty towards them, trampling down many of them beneath the hoofs of their horses. They spared neither children nor pregnant women, and left the corpses lying unburied, a prey to wild beasts and birds. They destroyed the sacred books, burnt the houses of the Jews, and possessed themselves of their property. On this occasion, more than three thousand persons perished (in the summer of 1236), whilst more than five hundred accepted Christianity. Once again did the surviving Jews complain to the pope of this unendurable cruelty. The pope felt himself obliged to send a letter about the matter to the prelates of the Church in Bordeaux, Angoulême, and other bishoprics, and also to King Louis IX of France (September, 1236), in which he deplored the events that had taken place, and signified that the Church desired neither the utter annihilation of the Jews, nor their compulsory baptism. What, however, could occasional letters of admonition avail against the bitter feeling of abhorrence towards the Jews that had been stirred up by the Church? The otherwise noble and well-disposed monarch, Louis IX, was so ruled by his prejudice that he could not bear to look at a Jew. He encouraged the conversion of the Jews in every way, and permitted the children of converted fathers to be torn away from their mothers, who still adhered to Judaism. The Jews had only one means wherewith to appease the rage that was kindled against them, and that was -money. In England, by its influence, they induced King Henry III to proclaim throughout his territories that no one should offer any injury to a Jew. But this means proved to be a double-edged sword that turned against the very people it was intended to benefit. In order to raise large sums of money, the Jews were compelled to charge extortionate interest, and even to have recourse to fraud. In this way, they incurred the hatred of the populace, and subjected themselves to further outrages. The repeated complaints about their usury prompted Louis IX to fix the rate of interest, and in many cases to remit a portion of the debts owing to Jews. But when this same king determined to repress usury, and called together a number of barons to decide upon the matter, the latter asserted that the peasants and merchants were unable to dispense with loans from the Jews, and that the Jews were preferable to the Christian money-lenders, because the latter oppressed their Christian debtors with still higher rates of usurious interest.

In the midst of all these troubles, petty inflictions and persecutions, there was only one spot in which the Jew might feel himself quite happy, and was able to forget his sufferings. The house of learning, where young and old gathered together in order to study the Talmud, was their only haven of peace. Absorbed in their study, the Talmud enthusiasts became entirely oblivious of the outer world, with its bitter hate, its malicious laws and its cruel tortures. Here they were princes, the majesty of thought cast a halo about their brows, and their delight in spiritual activity transfigured their features. Their whole happiness consisted in solving some difficult problem in the Talmud, or in throwing light upon some obscure point, or in discovering something new which had escaped the notice of their

predecessors. They looked neither for office nor honor in reward for their profound studies, and received no tangible recompense for their nocturnal vigils. They desired only to gratify their intense longing for knowledge, to satisfy their sense of religious duty, at best, assure themselves of reward in the hereafter. The allimportant occupation for all was study, and the flower of all scholarship was the Talmud. As soon as a child was able to lisp, he was led on the morning of Pentecost from his house to the synagogue or "school," with his eyes veiled, in order that they might not encounter anything profane. There the Hebrew alphabet, in its usual and also in a reversed order, and some appropriate verses were read to him. He was rewarded with a honey cake and an egg, with Scriptural verses inscribed on them. The day on which the child was first introduced to the Law was celebrated by his parents and the whole congregation as a festive occasion. If he proved at all intelligent, he was allowed to begin the Talmud, after having spent some time over the Bible. To be a student of the Talmud was esteemed the highest honor. Disgrace was the portion of the ignoramus (*Am ha-Arez*). A studious youth passed many years in the house of learning even till the time of his marriage; and to the end of his life the earning of his livelihood was held to be of secondary importance, and the study of the Talmud the aim of his existence. This absorbing study of the Talmud was certainly one-sided, but there was something ideal about it. The hand of the enemy had up to this time not violated this inner sanctuary. The temporal authorities did not concern themselves about the matter, the clergy had no power over the domestic affairs of the Jews; here excommunication itself proved ineffectual.

This domestic peace of the Jews was, however, soon to be destroyed; even from their intellectual asylum they were to be driven forth. The leader in the movement was a baptized Jew, who incited the temporal and the spiritual powers against his former co-religionists. A man, named Donin (or Dunin), a Talmudist from La Rochelle, in the north of France, conceived doubts of the validity of the Talmud and the oral law. For this he was excommunicated by the French rabbis. Having no position either among Jews or among Christians, Donin determined to accept baptism, and assumed the name of Nicholas. Filled with hatred against the rabbis and the Talmud, the apostate determined to revenge himself on both. Probably urged on by the clergy, he became the instigator of the great *autos-da-fé* of the Jews and their writings, and it was he that occasioned the bloody persecution in Poitou. His appetite for revenge was, however, not yet satiated. Donin or Nicholas betook himself to Pope Gregory IX, and brought charges against the Talmud, saying that it distorted the words of Holy Writ, and that in the Agadic portions there were to be found disgraceful representations of G-d; that in spite of this, it was held in higher estimation by the rabbis than the Bible, and finally that it was filled with abuse against the founder of the Christian religion and the Virgin. Donin demonstrated to the pope that it was the Talmud which prevented the Jews from accepting Christianity, and that without it they would certainly give up their unbelief. The excess of veneration paid by the compilers of the Talmud to earlier lawgivers caused cruel suffering. Without considering the sage remark of Abtalion, "Ye wise men, be cautious with your words," they, in their desire to immortalize every utterance, every familiar conversation, every trivial controversy, and even every joke made by one of the *Tanaïm* or *Amoraïm*, had incorporated these in the Talmud,

thinking that the outer world would be none the wiser. But the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children. On account of various unguarded statements, the Talmud was dragged before the judgment-bench to answer these charges, and the whole of the Jewish world, which had accepted the Talmud as its guide in life, was made responsible for its contents. This was the first time that it was thus accused, but in the course of the century the charge was repeated frequently and in a more bitter spirit. The apostate had made extracts from the Talmud, and formulated thirty-five articles, upon which he based his charges. Some of these alleged that the Talmud contained many gross errors and absurdities, and also rank blasphemies against G-d; in others, it was stated that it upheld dishonesty and duplicity in intercourse with Christians; others again asserted that the Talmud insulted and blasphemed Jesus, the Virgin, and the Church. Compared with the spiteful attacks which the Evangelists, the Church Fathers down to Hieronymus and Augustine, and various ecclesiastical scholars have made, with the intention of humiliating and injuring the Jews, the few passages in the Talmud concerning Jesus seem harmless jests; but the Church was waging successful war against the Synagogue, and was very sensitive to any disrespectful utterance. In his charges against the Talmud, Nicholas-Donin had, however, distorted the truth. He had stated that the Talmudical writings taught that it was a meritorious action to kill even the best among the Christians; that a Christian who rested on the Sabbath day or studied the Law was to be punished with death; that it was lawful to deceive a Christian; that Jews were permitted to break a promise made on oath; and he had made many other lying assertions.

The guilt of the Talmud, which implied that of the Jews, seemed unmistakable to Pope Gregory, for whom the apostate had drawn up these grounds of accusation, and to whom he had communicated them both by word of mouth and in writing. He immediately dispatched to the heads of the Church in France, England, Castile, Aragon, and Portugal, transcripts of the list of charges tabulated by Nicholas, and commanded them to confiscate all copies of the Talmud -- on the morning of the first Saturday in Lent, when the Jews assembled in their synagogues -- and to hand them over to the Dominicans and Franciscans. He also wrote to the monarchs of those countries, and called upon them to support the Church with their temporal power. The pope further admonished the provincials of the two orders of monks, who had inquisitorial power over books and doctrines, to submit the contents of the Talmudical writings to an examination; and if their judgment corroborated the charges of Nicholas-Donin, they were to burn the volumes of the Talmud (9 June, 1239).

Thus a new weapon for the destruction of Judaism was brought into play, and had this papal decree been rigidly executed, the spiritual life of the Jews, which was intimately bound up with the Talmud, would have been endangered in its most vital part. The pope gave Nicholas a special letter to be delivered to William, Bishop of Paris, which charged him with the vigorous persecution of the Talmud in France, the chief seat of Talmudical erudition, and the original home of the Tossafists.

However, when the pope's edict was to be executed, it appeared that the pretended Vicar of God upon earth did not really possess, even in the zenith of his power, the great influence he was supposed to have. Only in such places where personal interests and passions were concerned did the princes thoroughly carry into effect the violent policy of the pope; otherwise, unless the rulers were particularly bigoted, but little heed was paid to papal decrees even in the Middle Ages. The command of Gregory to confiscate the Talmud was entirely disregarded in Spain and in England, at least there is no record of any hostile measures in these countries. Only in France, where the priest-ridden and weak-minded Louis IX, having attained his majority, had nominally assumed the reins of government, was the Talmud really confiscated. The Jews were compelled under penalty of death to surrender their copies (March, 1240). The Talmud was then put on trial. Four distinguished rabbis of northern France were commanded by the king to hold a public disputation with Nicholas, either to refute the imputations leveled against the Talmud, or to make confession that it contained abuse against Christianity and blasphemies against G-d. Each of these rabbis was to be examined separately, and to give replies to the accuser.

The four rabbis who were summoned to act as advocates on behalf of the Talmud were Yechiel (Vivo) of Paris, Moses of Coucy, who had returned from his embassy to Spain, Jehuda ben David of Melun, and Samuel ben Solomon of Chateau-Thierry. Yechiel, who was more eloquent than his associates, and, besides, had more frequently entered into theological discussions with antagonists who belonged to the Church, was first called, unaccompanied by his friends. He was not asked to controvert the accusations made against them, but to confess that these were founded on truth. The disputation was held in Latin at the royal court (on the 5th of Tamuz -- 25th June, 1240), in the presence of the bishops of Paris and Senlis, of many Dominicans, and of the wise queenmother Blanche, who for all practical purposes was at the head of affairs. At first Yechiel refused to answer. He based his objection upon the constitution of the popes, which had assured independence to the Jews in their domestic concerns. He remarked that the Talmud was the very essence of their life, in behalf of which numbers of Jews were prepared to die. The queen, however, allayed his fears by assuring him that their lives were in no danger; she would protect them, and he was only required to answer the questions asked of him. When Nicholas demanded that Rabbi Yechiel should take an oath to answer to the best of his knowledge and ability, as otherwise he might attempt to pervert the truth by subtleties and evasions, the rabbi refused to do so. He said that never, in the course of his life, had he taken an oath, and that he would not invoke the name of G-d in vain. Thereupon the queen released him from the necessity of taking an oath. The discussion which now took place turned upon the two points, whether there were in the Talmud immoral sentiments and offensive passages against the Deity, and whether it contained insulting remarks concerning Jesus. Yechiel disproved the charge of blasphemy and immorality. With regard to the second of the accusations, he asserted that there could be no doubt that many odious facts were related in the Talmud concerning a Jesus, the son of Pantheras; these, however, had no reference to Jesus of Nazareth, but to one of a similar name who had lived long before him. He himself believed that this declaration was true, and affirmed it

with the solemnity of an oath. Tradition and Talmudical chronology had misled him into believing that the Jesus whose name occurred in the Talmud was not identical with the founder of Christianity. Yechiel also contended, among other things, that the Father of the Church, Hieronymus, and other Church Fathers, who were acquainted with the Talmud, had never asserted that it contained sentiments hostile to the Christian faith, and that Nicholas was the first one to raise these false imputations, inspired as he was with feelings of malice and revenge against his former co-religionists, who had expelled him from their community on account of his heresy.

The examination of Yechiel of Paris lasted two days, during which the Jewish congregations fasted, and offered up prayers to G-d to avert misfortune from their heads. On the third day, the second rabbi, Judah of Melun, was examined, without having been previously allowed to confer with Yechiel, who was kept in custody. In the main, he agreed with the statements of Yechiel, that the defamatory passages in the Talmud concerning Jesus did not refer to the man who was held in such great honor by the Christians, and that the Talmud was indispensable to the religious life of the Jews. The two remaining rabbis were not required to undergo an examination. As the result of this three days' discussion (25th-27th June, 1240), the commission, which had been appointed to make an inquiry into the Talmud, condemned it to be burnt, on the ground that Yechiel and Judah of Melun had been compelled to admit the truth of several of the charges. The sentence of condemnation, however, remained unexecuted. It appears that Archbishop Walter (Guatier) Cornutus, of Sens, a prelate influential with the king, had interceded on behalf of the Jews, and had succeeded in having many of the confiscated volumes restored to their owners. From a Christian source of information, which was intended to calumniate the Jews, but which only points conclusively to the corruptibility of the Church dignitaries of the time, it is gleaned that this prelate was won over to the side of the Jews by a bribe. The French Jews were filled with great joy at the unexpected issue of this event which was of such vital importance to them, and celebrated the day on which the copies of the Talmud were restored to them as a day of rejoicing. But they had begun to exult too early.

The prelate who had raised his voice in favor of the Jews died suddenly; the fanatical monks saw in this a heaven-sent punishment for his befriending the Jews, or persuaded the weak-minded and docile monarch that it was so. Thereupon he commanded that the volumes of the Talmud and similar writings should be sought for, and taken away from their possessors by force. Four-and-twenty cartloads of them were brought together in one spot in Paris, and committed to the flames (Friday, Tamuz-June, 1242). Two young men, one a Provençal and the other a German, named respectively Abraham Bedaresi and Meir of Rothenburg, wrote each an elegy upon this event. The French Jews or the French students of the Talmud, who imagined that they could as little exist without the Talmud as without their souls, did not remain passive in quiet endurance of their grief. They turned to Pope Innocent IV, the successor of Gregory IX, and begged that they might be permitted to retain their Talmudical writings, without which they could not fulfil their religious obligations. Their petition was acceded to. The new pope promulgated a decree that they

were not to be deprived of those writings which contained nothing antagonistic to Christianity (1243), and under this description the Talmud could be included, as the Christian clergy were unable to discriminate between one work and another. The fanatics, however, among whom was the papal legate, Odo, of Chateauroux, continued to agitate against this edict, till they induced the pope to give his sanction to the sentence of condemnation that had been passed upon the Talmud.

The grief of the French Jews on account of these events was heartrending. They felt as if their very hearts had been torn from them. The pious men among them kept the anniversary of the burning of the Talmud as a fast. One good effect, however, sprang from these wholesale methods of destruction. The opponents of the Maimunists were, to a certain extent, disarmed, and the fierce passions of the parties engaged in internal conflict were stilled for the moment. Jonah Gerundi was the sole survivor of the chief antagonists of the Maimunist teaching. But a short time before he had given the writings of Maimuni to the Dominicans and the Franciscans in Paris to be thrown into the flames.

As soon as Jonah became aware of the bitter hostility of the monkish orders of the Inquisition to the Talmud, which was so highly revered by him, he very deeply regretted that he had employed them as the instruments of his hate against Maimuni, and beheld in the burning of the Talmud a divine punishment for his having allowed the writings of Maimuni to be consumed by fire. He was so overwhelmed by the sense of his injustice that he publicly, in the synagogue, confessed his sincere repentance, and announced his intention of making a pilgrimage to the grave of Maimuni, there, veiled in mourning, to prostrate himself and, in the presence of ten persons, to implore the pardon of this great and pious man. For this purpose he set out on a journey, left Paris, and stopped at Montpellier, where he also made public confession of his remorse for his procedure against Maimuni. This act reconciled the two parties. The opponents cast aside all feelings of rancor, and treated each other as brethren. In his discourses, he repeatedly mentioned the name of Maimuni with the respect due to that of a holy man. This conversion possessed so much the greater importance, as Jonah was a rabbinical authority, and the author of several Talmudical works, which were held in high estimation.

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