

Baruch Spinoza Chronology

- 1391 Spanish Jews are forced to convert to Catholicism for the sake of "social and sectarian uniformity."
- 1478 Establishment of the Spanish Inquisition, whose primary task is to convict and execute those found "judaizing."
- 1492 All practising Jews in Spain are given the choice to convert or be expelled.
- 1497 All Portuguese Jews (including Spinoza's ancestors) are forced to convert. A steady stream of Jewish refugees begins to flow from Portugal.
- 1587/8 Spinoza's father Michael is born in Vidigere, Portugal, to Isaac d'Espinoza
- 1609 Beginning of the twelve year truce between the United Provinces and Spain, effectively establishing political independence (after nearly a 100 year struggle) for the seven northern provinces as well as their (Protestant) sectarian separation from the (Catholic) southern provinces.
- 1618 Defenestration of Prague and beginning of the Thirty Years War.
Calvinist-inspired coup d'état in the Dutch Republic, led by the Prince of Orange, leading to the execution of Oldenbarnevelt and imprisonment of Grotius.
Uriel d'Acosta (or da Costa), a Portuguese "New Christian" who had returned to Judaism in Amsterdam but became disillusioned with the Jewish community, is excommunicated for the first time in Venice for denying the immortality of the soul and questioning the Mosaic authorship of the Torah, a decree later affirmed in Amsterdam in 1623 and renewed in 1633.
- 1619 Batavia, Java is established as headquarters of the Dutch East India Company.
- 1620 Francis Bacon writes *Novum organum*.
- 1621 Hostilities resume between Spain and the United Provinces.
- 1622 Probable date Spinoza's father arrives in Amsterdam, probably from Nantes.
Birth of Carel Fabritius (dies 1654) in Midden-Beesmster.
- 1623 Birth of Blaise Pascal (dies 1662).
- 1625 Death of Stadholder Maurice of Nassau; he is succeeded by his brother, Frederick Henry who consolidates the authority of the House of Orange.
Hugo de Groot (Grotius) (1583-1645) publishes, in exile, *De jure belli et pacis*.
- 1626 Birth of Jan Steen (dies 1679) in Leiden.
Founding of New Amsterdam.
- 1627 Birth of Robert Boyle (dies 1691) in Lismore, Munster.
- 1628 William Harvey discovers the mechanisms of the human circulatory system.
Descartes completes *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*.
- 1629 Descartes moves to Holland.
Birth of Christian Huygens (dies 1695) in The Hague.
- 1632 **24 November, birth of Baruch Spinoza, in Amsterdam, third child of Michael d'Espinoza, a merchant trading with Portugal, Morocco, the Canaries and Brazil, and Hanna Deborah Senior.**
Michael d'Espinoza serves as *Parnas* of the Beth Jacob synagogue and the Jewish school
Birth of Anton van Leeuwenhoeck (dies 1723) in Delft.
Birth of John Locke (dies 1704) in Wrington, Somerset.
Inquisitorial denunciation of Galileo.
- 1634 Alliance of the United Provinces with France against Spain.
- 1636 Etched portrait by Rembrandt possibly depicting Menasseh ben Israel

- 1637 Descartes publishes *Discours de la Methode*.
- 1638 Spinoza's mother dies (November 5)**
Spinoza begins study at the Talmud Torah where he excels. His father may have ambitions for Baruch to become a rabbi.
 Menasseh ben Israel is appointed to the Amsterdam Yeshiva.
- 1639 Admiral Tromp, leading the Dutch navy, defeats the Spanish fleet at Dunes.
- 1640 The freethinker Uriel d'Acosta (born c. 1585) commits suicide.**
- 1641 Descartes publishes *Meditationes de prima philosophia*.
- 1642 Hobbes publishes *De cive*.
 Death of Galileo (born 1564).
 Birth of Isaac Newton (dies 1727).
- 1644 Descartes publishes *Principia philosophiae*.
- 1646 Birth of Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (dies 1716) in Leipzig.
- 1648 The Treaty of Westphalia terminates the Thirty Years War.
 The United Provinces sign a separate peace accord with Spain recognizing independence of the United Provinces.
- 1649 Descartes completes *Les Passions de l'âme*.
 Charles I of England beheaded.
- 1650 Under the tutelage of Dr. Franciscus van den Enden , Spinoza studies Latin, natural science (physics, mechanics, chemistry, astronomy, and physiology), and philosophy. Spinoza probably meets Clara Marie van den Enden (the master's daughter) with whom he is reported to have fallen in love.**
 Death of Descartes in Sweden.
 Death of William II, Count of Nassau, Prince of Orange.
- 1651 Probable date Spinoza first reads Descartes' philosophical works.**
 Hobbes publishes *Leviathan*.
 Cromwell passes the Navigation Act.
 The Dutch colonize the Cape of Good Hope.
Start of the first Anglo-Dutch war, which leads to the capture of several cargoes belonging to Spinoza's father, and near ruin of the Spinoza family firm.
- 1652 Despite strong opposition from his father, Spinoza takes up lens-grinding.**
- 1653 Jan de Witt appointed Council Pensionary of the province of Holland.
 Pascal joins the Jansenists at Port-Royal.
- 1654 Death of Spinoza's father, Michael. Upon his father's death his sister Rebekah tries to block his inheritance but he takes her to court, wins the case but then renounces the inheritance. His growing frustration with the Jewish community compels him to leave and move in with Van den Enden and he begins teaching in Van den Enden's school which is known as an institution of free enquiry.**
 Treaty of Westminster ends the first Anglo-Dutch war.
- 1655 After heated exchanges with the Amsterdam Sephardic rabbis at the weekday evening Keter Torah yeshivah discussion group, Spinoza is accused of heresy (materialism and "contempt for the Torah") before the Tribunal of the Congregation.**
Probable date of composition of Spinoza's *Korte verhandeling van God, de mensch en des zelfs welstand (Tractatus de Deo et homine etjusque felicitate; Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-being)*.

- 1656 Spinoza, at twenty-four years old, is excommunicated from the Amsterdam Synagogue, with the fiercest *cherem* the community ever imposed. Spinoza writes his *Apologia* against the rabbis in Spanish, a work later lost. An edict of the States of Holland prohibits the teaching of Cartesian philosophy.**
Christian Huygens uses the pendulum to regulate clock movements.
Pascal publishes *Lettres provinciales* (against the Jesuits).
- 1655-7 Probably period when Spinoza attends philosophy lectures in Leiden**
- 1658 Death of Cromwell.
- 1659 Huygens identifies the rings of Saturn.
- 1660 The Amsterdam Synagogue officially petitions the municipal authorities to denounce Spinoza as a "menace to all piety and morals."**
Restoration of the monarchy in England with the accession of Charles II.
Publication of the first work of Dutch "democratic republicanism," Johan de la Court's *Considerations of State*.
- 1661 Spinoza leaves Amsterdam for nearby Rijnsburg; begins writing *Ethics*; meets Henry Oldenburg (first secretary of the Royal Society).**
Inauguration of the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV of France.
Huygens invents the manometer (for ascertaining the elastic force of gases).
Robert Boyle publishes *The Skeptical Chymist*.
- 1662 Probable completion of Spinoza's *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*.**
Death of Pascal (born 1623).
- 1663 Spinoza moves to Voorburg, outside The Hague; takes up residence with the painter, Daniel Tydemann.**
New Amsterdam is seized by the English and renamed New York.
- 1664 Spinoza publishes, in the Hague, *Renati Des Cartes principiorum philosophiae (Principles in Cartesian Philosophy)* along with *Cogitata metaphysica (Metaphysical Speculations*, as an appendix), the only work published in his own name during his lifetime.**
- 1665 Beginning of the second Anglo-Dutch war (lasts until 1667).
- 1666 Newton's annus mirabilis (universal gravitation, differential calculus, lunar orbit).
Leibniz submits dissertation, *Nova methodus discendique juris*; also completes *De arte combinatoria*.
Louis XIV invades the Spanish Netherlands.
- 1667 Admiral de Ruyter sails his navy into the mouth of the Thames; destroys the English fleet. Treaty of Breda marks the end of hostilities between England and the Netherlands.
War of Devolution begins as French troops invade the Spanish Netherlands.
- 1668 Leeuwenhoek produces the first accurate description of red blood corpuscles.
Newton constructs reflecting telescope.
The Triple Alliance (England, United Provinces, Sweden) halts the French conquest of the Spanish Netherlands. Signing of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.
- 1669 Death of Rembrandt (born Leiden, 1606) in Amsterdam.
Spinoza moves to The Hague; takes up residence on the Stille Veerkade, with a small pension from his close friend Jan de Witt, the Grand Pensionary of the Netherlands.
Spinoza publishes anonymously the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, which is denounced by the (Calvinist) Church Council of Amsterdam as a "work forged in

- Hell by a renegade Jew and the Devil and issued with the knowledge of Mynheer Jan de Witt."**
Pascal's *Pensées* published posthumously.
- 1671 Leibniz sends Spinoza his *Notitia opticae promoteae*; Spinoza sends Leibniz his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.**
Clara Marie van den Enden marries Dr. Kerckrinck, a wealthy Amsterdam physician and disciple of Spinoza.
- 1672 Louis XIV, having undermined the Triple Alliance, invades the United Provinces. The Dutch open the dikes and manage to hold the French within a day's march of Amsterdam. **Jan de Witt and his brother are held responsible (by an already incensed, anti-libertarian Calvinist clergy) for the invasion, and are beaten to death by a mob on 20 August. Spinoza is so outraged that his friends have to lock him in his house to prevent him from running out into the crowd with a sign declaring them to be the ultimate barbarians.**
William of Orange is made Captain-General of the United Provinces.
- 1673 Spinoza is invited by the Elector Palatine to accept a Professorship of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg; Spinoza declines the offer due to concerns over his academic freedom.**
The French are expelled from Dutch territory, but not before they lay waste to large areas of the countryside.
- 1674 At the instigation of William of Orange, an edict banning *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (and Hobbes' *Leviathan*) is issued by the States of Holland.**
- 1675 Spinoza completes the Ethics and prepares it for publication, but is deterred by reactions to the rumour that he was about to publish a book which sought to show there was no God.**
Leibniz visits Spinoza in The Hague and confers with him "several times and at great length".
- 1677 21 February, Spinoza dies of a lung ailment complicated by the glass dust from his lens grinding.**
Publication, by Spinoza's friends in Amsterdam, of the *Opera Posthuma* (*Ethics, Tractatus politicus, Tractatus de intellectus emendatione, Letters, Hebrew Grammar*) under the initials B.D.S.
Leeuwenhoeck discovers spermatozoa.
William of Orange marries Princess Mary, daughter of the Duke of York.
- 1678 Dutch translation of Spinoza's works published.**
The States of Holland and States General formally ban Spinoza's philosophy, threatening authors who summarise it and publishers with heavy fines and long terms of imprisonment.
Tractatus Theologico-Politicus is published in French translation under three different clandestine titles.
- 1679 Death of Hobbes (born 1588).
- 1689 *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* becomes the first work of Spinoza published in English.**

Text of Spinoza's *Cherem*, 1656

(Preserved in Spanish in the records of the Amsterdam synagogue)

The members of the council do you to wit that they have long known of the evil opinions and doings of Baruch de Espinoza, and have tried by divers methods and promises to make him turn from his evil ways. As they have not succeeded in effecting his improvement, but, on the contrary, have received every day more information about the horrible heresies which he practised and taught, and other enormities which he has committed, and as they had many trustworthy witnesses of this, who have deposed and testified in the presence of the said Spinoza, and have convicted him; and as all this has been investigated in the presence of the Rabbis, it has been resolved with their consent that the said Espinoza should be anathematised and cut off from the people of Israel, and now he is anathematised with the following anathema:

"With the judgment of the angels and with that of the saints, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and of all this holy congregation, before these sacred Scrolls of the Law, and the six hundred and thirteen precepts which are proscribed therein, we anathematise, cut off, execrate, and curse Baruch de Espinoza with the anathema wherewith Joshua anathematised Jericho, with the curse wherewith Elishah cursed the youths, and with all the curses which are written in the Law: cursed be he by day, and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lieth down, and cursed be he when he riseth up; cursed be he when he goeth out, and cursed be he when he cometh in; the Lord will not pardon him; the wrath and fury of the Lord will be kindled against this man, and bring down upon him all the curses which are written in the Book of the Law; and the Lord will destroy his name from under the heavens; and, to his undoing, the Lord will cut him off from all the tribes of Israel, with all the curses of the firmament which are written in the Book of the Law; but ye that cleave unto the Lord your God live all of you this day!"

We ordain that no one may communicate with him verbally or in writing, nor show him any favour, nor stay under the same roof with him, nor be within four cubits of him, nor read anything composed or written by him.