

History of Anti-Semitism
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Unit #8 - Poland and the Ottoman Empire

1. Jews welcomed to a divided Poland by the royalty
2. Responses to Toleration
 - a. Kings vs. Church
 - b. Anti-Semitism blossoms
3. Jewish Self Defense
4. Catastrophe – Chmielnitzki
5. Hasidim Vs. Mitnagdim
6. Jews welcomed into the Ottoman Empire
 - a. Secondary but comfortable status (not always)
7. A False Messiah

Reading # 1

Do not imagine that in matters touching the Christian religion you are at liberty to pass any law you please. No one is great and strong enough to put down all opposition to himself when the interests of the faith are at stake. I therefore beg and implore your Royal Majesty to revoke the aforementioned privileges and liberties. Prove that you are a Catholic sovereign, and remove all occasion for disgracing your name and for worse offenses that are likely to follow.

Archbishop Olesnicki

Reading #2

“Estates were devastated, manor-houses reduced to ashes, and human beings barbarously done to death. The victims were flayed and burned alive, mutilated and left to the agony of a lingering death. Infants were slit like fish or slaughtered at the breasts of their mothers or cast alive into wells. Women were ripped open and then sewed up again with live cats thrust into their bowels; many, married or unmarried, were violated before the eyes of their menfolk, and those that were comely were carried away.”

“These persons died cruel and bitter deaths. Some were skinned alive and their flesh was thrown to the dogs; some had the hands and limbs chopped off, and their

bodies thrown on the highways only to be trampled by wagons and crushed by horses; ...some children were pierced by spears, roasted on the fire, and then brought to their mothers to be eaten.”

Reading #3 - Yewen Mezulah (The Miry Depth) - Chronicle published in 1653 by Rabbi Nathan Hannover

The oppressor Chmielnitzki – may his name be blotted out – heard that many Jews had assembled in the holy community of Nemirov, and that they had a great deal of silver and gold with them. [Because of the Cossacks, many Jews came from the countryside to the fortress of Nemirov.] He knew also that the congregation of Nemirov itself was distinguished for its riches. It was once a great and very important community, full of justice and the abode of righteousness, a community of scholars and writers, but now they have been murdered!

Accordingly, Chmielnitzki – may his name be blotted out – sent a certain leader, an enemy of the Jews, and about 600 swordsmen with him against this honored congregation. In addition he wrote to the magistrates of the city that they should help with this band; to this the citizens readily responded that they would help them with all their might and main, not so much because of their love of the Cossacks, but because of their hatred of the Jews. [The Greek Catholic townspeople hated the Jewish merchants, their competitors.]

It came to pass on a Wednesday, the 20th of Sivan, that the Cossacks drew near to the city of Nemirov. When the Jews saw the troops from afar they were frightened, though as yet they did not know whether they were Polish or Cossack.

Nevertheless all the Jews went with their wives and infants, with their silver and gold, into the fortress and locked and barred its doors, ready to fight them. What did the scoundrels, those Cossacks, do? They made flags like the Poles, for there is no other way to distinguish between that Polish and the Cossack forces except through their banners. Now the people of the town although they knew of this trick, nevertheless called to the Jews in the fortress: “Open the gates. This is a Polish army which has come to save you from your enemies, should they appear.”

The Jews who were standing on the walls, seeing that the banners were like the flags of the Polish forces and believing that the townspeople were telling them the truth, immediately opened the gates to them. No sooner had the gates been opened than the Cossacks entered with drawn swords, and the townsmen too, with swords, lances and scythes, and some only with clubs, and they killed the Jews in huge

numbers. They raped women and young girls; but some of the women and maidens jumped into the moat near the fortress in order that the Gentiles should not defile them and were drowned in the water. Many of the men who were able to swim also jumped into the water and swam, thinking they could save themselves from slaughter. The Russians swam after them with their swords and their scythes and killed them in the water. Some of the enemy, too, kept on shooting with their guns into the moat, killing them till finally the water was red with the blood of the slain.

The number of all those murdered and drowned in the holy community of Nemirov was about 6,000; these met all sorts of terrible deaths, as has already been described. May God avenge their blood!

Reading #4

In their petitions, the Jews claimed that I am fomenting disturbances and that I oppose the government with violence. This is a base lie. I have never had such an intention. I am a Christian. In this region, infidel Jews have not only deprived Christians of their means of existence, but they carry out aggressions, murders, robberies and oppress the holy sacraments. Without their sanction and their written authorization for the priest, no newborn child can be baptized. They bewitch the paps, the lords of the nobility, and thereby gain their acquiescence. They rape Christian women and do many other things that are difficult even to list. Impelled by my fervor for the holy Christian faith, I have decided, in company with other men of honor, to exterminate the cursed Jewish people.

Basil Voshtchilo, grandson of Chmielnitzki

Reading #5

I, Isaac Zarfati...proclaim to you that Turkey is a land wherein nothing is lacking, and where, if you will, all shall yet be well with you. The way to the Holy land lies open to you through Turkey. Is it not better for you to live under Muslims than under Christians? Here every man may dwell at peace under his own vine and fig tree. Here you are allowed to wear the most precious garments. In Christendom, on the contrary, you dare not even venture to clothe your children in red or in blue, according to our taste, without exposing them to the insult of being beaten black and blue, or kicked red and green, and therefore are ye condemned to go about meanly clad in sad colored garments.

Isaac Zarfati – an Ottoman Jew

Reading #6

Many sold their houses and land and all of their possessions, for any day they hoped to be redeemed. My good father-in-law left his home in Hameln, abandoned his house and lands and all his goodly furniture...He sent on to us in Hamburg two enormous casks packed with linens and peas, beans, dried meats, shredded prunes and ...every manner of food that could be kept. For the old man expected to sail any moment from Hamburg to the Holy Land...For three years the casks stood ready, and all this while my father-in-law awaited the signal to depart. But the Most High pleased otherwise.

Glueckel of Hameln