

Source Sheet Class 13-“2000 Years of Jewish History”-Rabbi Menachem Levine

Source 1

The quintessential *shtetl* Jew, the long-suffering but proud and noble ghetto-dweller, the scholarly, impoverished, pious and spiritual person, was developed and nurtured in Poland. The genius of Polish Jewry, its quick mind and wry humor, its quasi-holy Yiddish language, etched itself into the soul of Israel and reflected itself in the methods of Torah study and the rhythm of everyday life. It was in Poland that the inner beauty of Ashkenazic Jewry was revealed, and there its true essence of renewal, curiosity, naiveté, and idealism became externalized. Nowhere else did the Jew in exile become as openly Jewish and rise so high above the surrounding non-Jewish milieu, ignoring its ways and beliefs, as he did in Poland. In Poland the Jew developed the positive passiveness that gave him patience, serenity and a gentle, non-violent view towards life and its problems. The Polish Jew eventually became the prototype for his brethren in Lithuania and Russia as well, even though there would naturally be nuances of dissimilarity between the Jews in the different countries of exile.

Rabbi Berel Wein, *Herald of Destiny*, 284-5

Source 2

- “The testimony of the Christian alone may not be admitted in a matter which concerns the money or property of a Jew. In every such incidence there must be the testimony of both a Christian and a Jew. If a Christian injures a Jew in any which way, the accused shall pay a fine to the royal treasury.”
- “If a Christian desecrates or defiles a Jewish cemetery in any which way, it is our wish that he be punished severely as demanded by law.”
- “If a Christian should attack a Jew, the Christian shall be punished as required by the laws of this land. We absolutely forbid anyone to accuse the Jews in our domain of using the blood of human beings.”
- “We affirm that if any Jew cries out in the night as a result of violence done to him, and if his Christian neighbors fail to respond to his cries and do not bring the necessary help, they shall be fined.”
- “We also affirm that Jews are free to buy and sell all manner of things just as Christians, and if anyone hampers them, he shall pay a fine.”

General Charter of Jewish Liberties, the Statute of Kalisz, issued by Boleslaw Pobożny, called the Pious, of Kalisz, Prince of Great Poland, in 1264

Source 3

“Some of them the Jews had their skins flayed off them and their flesh was flung to the dogs. The hands and feet of others were cut off and they their bodies were flung onto the roadway where carts ran over them and they were trodden underfoot by horse ... And many were buried alive. Children were slaughtered at their mother’s bosoms and many children were torn apart like fish. They ripped up the bellies of pregnant women, took out the unborn children, and flung them in their faces. They tore open the bellies of some of them and placed a living cat within the belly and they left them alive thus, first cutting off their hands so that they should not be able to take the living cat out of the belly ... and there was never an unnatural death in the world that they did not inflict upon them.”

Yeven Mezulah, pp. 31-32

Source 4

“On the same day 1,500 people were killed in the city of Human in Russia on the Sabbath. The nobles Cossacks with whom the wicked mob had again made an alliance chased all the Jews from the city into the fields and vineyards where the villains surrounded them in a circle, stripped them to their skin and ordered them to lie on the ground. The villains spoke to the Jews with friendly and consoling words: ‘Why do you want to be killed, strangled and slaughtered like an offering to your G-d Who poured out His anger upon you without mercy? Would it not be safer for you to worship our G-ds, our images and crosses and we would form one people which would unite together.’ “But the holy and faithful people who so often allowed themselves to be murdered for the sake of the Lord, raised their voices together in almighty in Heaven and cried: ‘Hear of Israel the Lord our G-d, the Holy One and the King of the Universe, we have been murdered for Thy sake so often already. O Lord G-d of Israel let us remain faithful to Thee.’ Afterward they recited the confession of sins and said: ‘We are guilty and thus recognize the Divine judgment.’ Now the villains turned upon them and there was not one of them who did not fall victim.”

Rabbi Shabse HaCohen in his *Megilo Offo* account of Chmielnicki massacre’s