

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. Define the terms: *Shlachta*, *Khlops*, *Arendar*.
2. What is the origin of the word, *Cossack*?
3. How did the Tartars act towards the Jews in the years 1648-1650 in comparison to the Ukrainians?
4. On the 20th of Sivan (June 10th, 1648), the Cossacks captured the city of Nemirov. Describe what happened.
5. *Yevein HaMetzulah* is the most detailed and reliable account of the Cossack uprising. Who wrote it?

This and much more will be addressed in the fourth lecture of this series: "The Chmielnicki Uprising: The Destruction of Polish and Ukrainian Jewry".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind, as you listen to the tape and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

PLEASE NOTE: This outline and source book was designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it, as well, as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE

Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series IX Lecture #4

THE CHMIELNICKI UPRISING: THE DESTRUCTION OF POLISH AND UKRAINIAN JEWRY

I. The Beginnings of the Uprising

A. The King [Sigismund III] was a kind and upright man. He loved justice and loved Israel. In his days, the religion of the Pope (Catholicism) gained strength in the kingdom of Poland. Formerly, most of the [local] dukes and the ruling nobility adhered to the Greek Orthodox faith. Thus the followers of both faiths were treated with equal regard. King Sigismund, however, raised the status of the Catholic dukes and princes above those of the Ukrainians, so that most of the latter abandoned their Greek Orthodox faith and embraced Catholicism. And the masses that followed the Greek Orthodox Church became gradually impoverished. They were looked upon as lowly and inferior beings and became the slaves and the handmaids of the Polish people and of the Jews. Those among them, who were trained warriors, were conscripted by the King to serve in his army. This group numbered approximately thirty thousand fighting men, and they were called Cossacks. They were exempt from taxes to the King and the nobles. It was their specific task to guard the frontier which bordered the Province of [Little] Russia and the Kingdom of the Tartars, and to protect the country against attacks from the latter. For the Tartars had always been a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" (Isaiah 8:14) to the kingdom of Poland. There always existed an abiding enmity between the Tartars and the Ukrainians, resulting in continuous warfare between them. The Cossacks, therefore, enjoyed special privileges like the nobility, and were exempt from taxes. The rest of the Ukrainians, however, were a wretched and an enslaved lot, servants to the dukes and the nobles. . . . The nobles levied upon them heavy taxes, and some even resorted to cruelty and torture with the intent of persuading them to accept Catholicism. So wretched and lowly had they become, that all classes of people, even the lowliest among them (i.e. the Jews), became their overlords. **Rav Nossan Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter I**

B. In the year 5362 (1602), the seventeenth year of the reign of King Sigismund [III], there arose a Ukrainian Priest by the name of Nalevaiko, may his name be blotted out, to avenge the cruel treatment accorded his people. He exhorted his people with the following words, "How long will you keep silent at the cruelties perpetrated by the Polish people?" Gathering a large army of Ukrainians, . . . he staged a rebellion against the kingdom of Poland, and conquered all of [Little Russia] up to the City of Cudnow. When the king was apprised of this, he sent generals with all his army, equipped with chariots and riders, to wage war against Nalevaiko. The Polish army prevailed and they captured the enemy Nalevaiko alive. . . . The Cossacks who supported him were punished by having the number of their privileged reduced to twenty thousand. The rest were compelled to pay taxes to the king and the nobles. **Rav Nossan Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter II**

C. In the seventh year of Vladislav's reign, the year 5399 (1639), there arose a Cossack named Pavliuk, may his name be blotted out, to avenge the wrong of his people and to rebel against the kingdom of Poland. And many rabble and riffraff gathered themselves unto him. They crossed the passages of the Black Sea, [beyond the Dnieper Falls] . . . Each time the Ukrainians rebelled, they fled to this place, for no man came there save the Cossacks. No sooner had the adventurer arrived there, then hundreds and thousands of Cossacks and Ukrainians come to join him. They then planned together to blot out the name of Israel, G-d forbid. . . . They also partitioned the kingdom of Poland among themselves, . . . Pavliuk was to be their king in the capital city of Warsaw. . . . They destroyed many synagogues and killed approximately two hundred Jews. They also destroyed many churches and killed many priests . . . The Polish people struck an effective blow, and the oppressor Pavliuk, . . . was captured alive, together with his officers and advisors. . . . Of the twenty thousand [Cossacks] which prior to this rebellion had enjoyed special privileges, only six thousand were to receive them now, while the remainder were to be subject to taxes, like the rest of the wretched Ukrainians. To prevent another rebellion, he placed over them captains of the Polish army. **Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter III**

II Chmielnicki

A. In the year 5408 (1648), . . . the sixteenth year of the reign of King Vladislav, there lived a Cossack in the town Czehiryń, and his name in Russian was [Bogdon] Chmiel, may his name be blotted out, while in Polish he was Chmielnicki. He was one of the officers of the hundreds (sotski) of the Cossacks. He was very rich, possessing sheep and oxen and a very large multitude of cattle. He was an evil genius; a man of sinister designs, and a fierce warrior. His place of residence was Czehiryń, which was under the rule of General Koniecpolski. The general was aware of this man and of his manner of speech. While he was soft spoken, he had "seven abominations in his heart" (Prov. 26:25); a man plotting iniquity, in the manner of all the Ukrainians, who at first appear to the Jews as friends, and speak to them pleasant and comforting words, beguiling them with soft and kind speech, while they lie with their tongues and are deceitful and untrustworthy. . . . **Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter IV**

B. In that city [of Czehiryń] lived the Jew, Zechariah Sobilenki, who was its governor and administrator. He was the nobleman's tax farmer, as was the customary occupation of most Jews in the kingdom of [Little] Russia. **For they ruled in every part of [Little] Russia, a condition which aroused the jealousy of the peasants, and which was the cause of the massacres** The Jew, seated at another table [of the inn]. . . heard the story [of how Chmielnicki had forewarned the Tartars that Choronzhy, General Koniecpolski's son, was about to attack them, and Choronzhy was shamefully forced to retreat against the greater Tartar force]. . . Forthwith he informed the nobleman, and Chmiel was put in iron chains and placed in prison awaiting his death. . . . **Ibid.**

C. At night, all of them escaped behind the Dnieper to the wilderness. From there, they dispatched letters to the settlements where the Ukrainians dwelt, urging them to join the rebels. The Ukrainians responded and some twenty thousand hoodlums joined them. **Ibid.**

III. The First Taste of Victory

A. When the King and nobles heard of this, they dismissed it with laughter, for they said: "They will fall into our hands again as they did in their previous attempts." Subsequently, two Polish generals, Potocki and Kalinowsky, together with a thousand trained troops, proceeded to the city of Korsun, where they prepared for battle. . . . Chmiel, forthwith went to the king of the Tartars, together with all his troops, and made peace with them. They made a covenant together to wage war upon the kingdom of Poland. They also made a pact between them to divide the booty. Tartars were to appropriate the spoil in men and the prey in cattle, and Cossacks were to take all the booty, such as gold, silver, and clothes. . . . And it came to pass on Tuesday, the fourth day of the month of Sivan, 5408 (1648), that the Tartars and the Ukrainians attacked by way of the forests, from two sides. The Tartars attacked from one side and the Ukrainians from the other. . . . The [Poles] attempted to escape through the forest, the hill and the valley, but they fell into the ditches which were dug for them [by Ukrainian and Tartar scouts]. The Tartars and the Ukrainians had completely surrounded them. The Polish generals then implored them not to spill their blood on the earth but to take them captive. The Tartars granted their request and took captive the whole Polish army together with its two generals. They tortured them and placed iron chains upon the feet of the two generals, Potocki and Kalinowski. **Ibid.**

B. When many of the Polish magnates became aware of Chmiel's success, and that his plans held out promise for future successes, they too rebelled against the kingdom of Poland, and made an alliance with Chmiel. . . . The same day on which the Polish army and its two generals were captured, also brought the evil tidings that King Vladislav died, and the whole kingdom of Poland became as sheep which have no shepherd. . . . All the nobles, who governed the provinces beyond the Dnieper, and west of the Dnieper up to the City of Polannoe, fled for their lives. . . . In the midst of all the confusion, Duke Visnioviecki, of blessed memory, with his army, was stationed beyond the Dnieper. He was a friend of Israel, and unsurpassed as a war hero. He and his people escaped by way of Lithuania, and with him escaped some five hundred Jewish citizens; each one with his wife and children. **Ibid.**

IV. The Atrocities Against the Jews

A. The Jews on this side of the Dnieper were informed of these dreadful events on the first day of the festival of Shavuous. All of them took flight on that day, unmindful of their gold and silver. They ran for their lives. All those in the province of Ostrog, as well as those over which Ostrog had jurisdiction, such as Biala Cerkiew, Pawolocz, Cudnow, and Lubartow, and also the communities over which they had jurisdiction - all of them fled. Some ran to Pollannoe, some to Zaslav, some to Ostrog, the Capital, and Stry Konstantnow, for these were fortified cities. All those in the provinces of the city of Lvov (Lemberg), in the Kingdom of [Little] Russia, and the communities belonging to them such as the environs of Nemirow, escaped to Nemirow, and those of the environs of Bar, such as Winnice and Strygrode, and Krasni together with the communities adjacent to them, fled to the city of Bar. Whoever failed to escape or was unable to escape was killed. **Ibid.**

B. Many communities beyond the Dnieper, and close to the battlefield, such Peryaslaw, Baryszowka, Piratyn, and Boryspole, Lubin and Lachowce and their neighbors, who were unable to escape, perished for the sanctification of His Name. These persons died cruel and bitter deaths. Some were skinned alive and their flesh was thrown to the dogs; some had their hands and limbs chopped off, and their bodies thrown on the highway only to be trampled by wagons and crushed by horses; some had wounds inflicted upon them, and were thrown on the street to die a slow death; they writhed in their blood until they breathed their last; others were buried alive. The enemy slaughtered infants in the laps of their mothers. They were sliced into pieces like fish. They slashed the bellies of pregnant women, removed their infants and tossed them in their faces. Some women had their bellies torn open and live cats placed in them. The bellies were then sewed up with the live cats remaining inside. They chopped off the hands of the victims so that they would not be able to remove the cats from their bellies. The infants were hung on the breasts of their mothers. Some children were pierced with spears, roasted on the fire and then brought to their mothers to be eaten. Many times, they used the bodies of Jewish children as improvised bridges upon which they later crossed. There was no cruel device of murder in the whole world that was not perpetrated by the enemies. All the four death penalties: stoning, burning, beheading and strangling were meted out to the Jews. Many were taken by the Tartars into captivity. Women and virgins were ravished. They lay with the women in the presence of their husbands. They seized comely women as handmaids and housekeepers, some as wives and concubines. Similar atrocities were perpetrated in all the settlements through which they passed. Also, against the Polish people, these cruelties were perpetrated, especially against priests and bishops. Thus, westward of the Dnieper several thousand Jewish persons perished and several hundred were forced to change their faith. Scrolls of the Torah were torn to pieces, and turned into boots and shoes for their feet; the straps of the *tefilin* served as laces around their feet. The leather boxes of the *tefilin* were cast into the streets. Other sacred books served to pave the streets. Some were used for kindling purposes, and others to stuff the barrels of their guns. The ears ring at the hearing of this. **Ibid.**

V. The Tartars

When the Jews of Pogrobiszczce, of Zywotow, of Baziowka, and Tetjew and their surroundings heard of what the Ukrainians had perpetrated against our brethren beyond the Dnieper; that the Tartars and the Ukrainians surrounded them, the Tartars on one side of the city and Ukrainians on the other, they said: "If we wait until the Ukrainians invade the city we will either perish or we will be forced into baptism (G-d forbid). It is preferable that we fall captive to the Tartars. For, we know that our brethren in Constantinople and in other Turkish communities, are very compassionate and they will ransom us." This they did. The four above mentioned communities surrendered to the Tartars, men, women and children, some three thousand souls. Among them there was *chazan*, Reb Hirsh of Zywotow. When the Tartars came into the city, he began to chant mournfully the Memorial prayer, Kail Moleh Rachamim, on behalf of our slaughtered brethren of the house of Israel. All the people burst forth with intense weeping. Apparently, their cries ascended on high, for the compassion of the captors was stirred. They consoled them with expressions of sympathy and said to them, "Do not despair, and do not deny yourselves food and drink. There are *shochtim* (ritual slaughterers) among you;

let them kill an abundance of sheep and oxen for your need, and forthwith we will bring you to your brethren in Constantinople to be ransomed." The Tartars kept their promise. Our brethren in Constantinople, may Hashem preserve them, redeemed them, together with other Polish captives, numbering approximately twenty thousand souls. They expended vast sums of money, all that was asked of them. They provided food and shelter for them to the present day; they favored them with many services without limit. The entire land of Turkey manifested such generosity, especially the people of Salonica, may Hashem preserve them. They ransomed a large number of captives. The renowned city of Venice, the crown city of Rome, and the beloved and laudable city of Livorno, as well as other holy communities of Italy contributed many thousands and tens of thousands of gold pieces which were forwarded to greater Constantinople for the ransoming of captives. May Hashem recompense these good people for the kindness shown to our brethren of the house of Israel, and keep them from evil until the coming of the Redeemer. **Ibid.**

VI. Chmielnicki Regroups

A. Following these events, the Tartars returned to their land with all their prize, and the oppressor Chmiel, together with his Cossack troops and many thousands of Tartars, who had remained with him, went to his city of Czehivyn. . . . He addressed himself to his servants, ministers and advisers and said to them, ". . . When the Catholic kings will hear of the evil we have perpetrated, they will make war upon us, and we are but few in number." They replied to him, ". . . Send letters to the Polish nobility and dukes, . . . tell them that you regret all you have done; that all was imperative in order to save yourself. This you must do so that they will not mobilize troops against us speedily. Meanwhile, send messengers to the king of the Tartars to supply you with additional troops. Also send letters to all Ukrainians in the kingdom of Poland to be prepared for the appointed time to gather themselves on their enemies, the nobles and the Jews." This he did. . . . **Ibid.**

B. When the thing became known to the Jews, through their friendly Ukrainian neighbors, and also through their own spies who had been placed in all their settlements, they notified their lords, the nobles. Immediately, messages were sent forth from community to community by means of horse riders, informing the Jews and the nobles of daily developments. . . . Had it not been for this action, there would have been no escape for the remnant of Israel (G-d forbid). . . . Meanwhile, Chmiel sent messages to the dukes and nobles, words of peace. He wrote to them words of comfort and sympathy. . . . He also advised the nobles to return to their homes, and he would return their estates to them. But the nobles paid no heed to his messages, for they understood that all this was falsehood and deceit; that he was merely seeking to ensnare. . . . The Cardinal, whose seat was in Gniezno, . . . was regent because of the King's death so that Poland should not be without government. . . . The Cardinal . . . announced under threat of punishment, throughout Poland, that all nobles should mobilize to wreak vengeance on their enemies. Unfortunately, they assembled very slowly, as was characteristic of the kingdom of Poland. **Ibid.**

VII. Nemirov

A. The oppressor, Chmiel, may his name be blotted out, heard that many Jews had gathered in the holy community of Nemirov, and that they had a great deal of silver and gold with them. . . . Accordingly, Chmiel sent a leader, an enemy of the Jews, and about six hundred swordsmen with him, to attack this noble community. In addition, he wrote to the city heads to help the band. The city leaders readily responded to give them their full cooperation. This they did, not so much because of their love of the Cossacks, but because of their hatred of the Jews. And it came to pass on a Wednesday, the 20th of Sivan (June 10th, 1648), the Cossacks approached the city of Nemirov. When the Jews saw the troops from afar, their hearts trembled from fright, though they were not certain, as yet, whether they were Polish or Cossack. Nevertheless, all the Jews went with their wives and children, with their silver and gold, in the fortress, locked and barred the gates, and prepared to fight with them. What did those evil doers, the Cossacks do? They devised flags like those of the Poles, for there is no way to distinguish between the Polish and the Cossack forces except through their banners. The people of the city were fully aware of this trickery, and nevertheless called to the Jews in the fortress, "Open the gate. This is a Polish army which has come to save you from the hands of your enemies, should they come." . . . Immediately they opened the gate. No sooner had the gate been opened than the Cossacks entered with drawn swords, spears and scythes, and some only with clubs, and they killed the Jews in large numbers. Women and young girls were ravished, but some of the women and maidens jumped into the moat surrounding the fortress in order that the uncircumcised should not defile them. They drowned in the waters. Many of them who were able to swim, jumped into the water, believing that they would escape the slaughter, but the Ukrainians swam after them with their swords and their scythes, and killed them in the water. Some of the enemy shot with their guns into the water and killed them till the water became red with the blood of the slain. **Rav Nossou Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter V**

B. The head of the yeshiva (rabbinical academy) of Nemirov was also there. His name was, Moreinu V'Rabbainu ((our master and teacher), the rabbi, Rabbi Yecheiel Mechel, son of his excellency, our teacher, Rabbi Eliezer, of blessed memory. He knew the whole of Rabbinic writings by heart and was proficient in all of the worldly sciences. On the Sabbath before the catastrophe, he preached and admonished the people that if the enemy should come (G-d forbid), they should not change their faith, but rather be martyred for the sanctification of His Name. This the holy people did. He also jumped into the water, believing that he would save himself by swimming, when a Ukrainian seized him and wanted to slay him, but the scholar implored him not to kill him, for which he would compensate him with a great deal of gold and silver. The Ukrainian consented, and he led him to the house, where his gold and silver were hidden, and the Cossack released him. The Rabbi then left that place with his mother, and the two hid in a certain house all that night till the morning dawn. On the morrow, . . . the Ukrainians searched the houses, suspecting the Jews might be hidden there. The Rabbi and his mother then fled to the cemetery. Thus, should they be killed, they would receive burial. But it so happened that when they came near the cemetery, a Ukrainian shoemaker, one of the townspeople, pursued the Rabbi with club in hand and inflicted on him wounds.

The Rabbi's mother pleaded with the Ukrainians to be killed instead of the son, but the latter paid no attention and proceeded to kill first the Rabbi and then the mother, may G-d avenge their blood. Three days after the massacre, the Rabbi's wife buried him, for in the town where the slaughter took place, the majority of the women were spared, except for the old and feeble who were killed. **Ibid.**

C. It happened there that a beautiful maiden, of a renowned and wealthy family, had been captured by a certain Cossack who forced her to be his wife. But, before they lived together, she told him with cunning that she possessed a certain magic and that no weapon could harm her. She said to him, "If you do not believe me, just test me. Shoot at me with a gun, and you will see that I will not be harmed." The Cossack, her husband, in his simplicity, thought that she was telling the truth. He shot at her with his gun and she fell dead for the sanctification of His Name, to avoid being defiled by him, may G-d avenge her blood. **Ibid.**

D. Another event occurred when a beautiful girl, about to be married to a Cossack, insisted that their marriage take place in a church which stood across a bridge. He granted her request, and with timbrels and flutes, attired in festive garb, led her to the marriage. As soon as they came to the bridge, she jumped into the water and was drowned for the sanctification of the Name. May G-d avenge her blood. **Ibid.**

E. These and many similar events took place, far too numerous to be recorded. The number of the slain and drowned in the holy community of Nemirov was about six thousand. . . . Those of the holy community of Nemirov who escaped the sword fled to the holy community of Tulczyn, for there, outside the city, was a strong fortress. **Ibid.**

VIII. Tulczyn

A. And it came to pass after the evil doings in the holy community of Nemirov, that a band of about ten thousand men, scoundrels, and hooligans, assembled together under the leadership of the oppressor of the Jews, [Maxim] Krzywonos, may his name and memory be blotted out. They proceeded from there to the holy community of Tulczyn, for there, in the fortress, were assembled some six hundred Polish troops and with them were gathered some two thousand Jews. Among them were also trained soldiers and seasoned warriors. The Jews and the nobles made a covenant to help each other in the struggle against their common enemy, and took an oath not to betray one another. They reinforced the fort, and, armed with all kinds of weapons, the Jews and the nobles took their posts on the ramparts. . . . After a lapse of several days, the Ukrainians took counsel together and agreed to send a peace offer to the nobles in the fortress. They would conclude a truce on condition that the Jewish spoil be delivered to them as a ransom for their lives. . . . The nobles immediately agreed to accept the offer. They sent for the Jews to disarm them one by one until all were disarmed. The Jews understood the trickery and wanted to attack the nobles first, . . . since they were first to betray the covenant. But the Rosh Yeshiva, of the holy community of Tulczyn, the scholar, our teacher and Master, Rabbi Aharon, cried aloud to the Jews, "Hearken my brethren and my people. We are in exile among the nations. If you will lay a hand upon the nobles, and the Catholic kings

will hear of it, they will wreak vengeance upon our brethren in exile (G-d forbid). Therefore, if our fate be decreed from Heaven, let us accept the judgment with rejoicing. We are not worthier than our brethren of the holy community of Nemirov. . . ." And the Jews hearkened to him. . . No sooner did the Ukrainians enter than the leader of nobles, Duke Cwerczynski, said to them, "Behold, here is the prize which you requested." . . . After these things, one of their intermediaries appeared, and planting a banner in the ground, he said to them in a loud voice, "Whoever, wishes to change his faith and remain alive, let him sit under this banner." No one answered him. Thus he announced three times, and no one responded. Immediately the gate of the garden opened, and the infuriated mob rushed in and killed a large number of Jews. Approximately fifteen hundred souls perished by all sorts of terrible deaths. **Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter VI**

B. After the slaughter of the Jews, they proceeded to attack the fortress. And the nobles said to them, "Behold, you made an agreement with us, why do you repudiate your pledge?" And the Ukrainians replied, "As you did unto the Jews, breaking your promise to them, so shall we do unto you, measure for measure." When those stationed on the wall began to shoot, the Ukrainians cunningly set the fortress afire, killing all the nobles and countless others. . . . As they did so did G-d repay them, because they violated the pledge of the Jews. When the nobles heard of this, they were stricken with remorse and henceforth supported the Jews and did not deliver them into the hands of the depraved. And even though the Ukrainians repeatedly promised the nobles immunity, they no longer believed them. Were it not for this, there would have been no escape for the remnants of the Jews. (G-d forbid). **Ibid.**

IX. Polannoe

Among the [martyrs of the holy community of Polannoe] was a wise and understanding and divinely inspired Kabbalist, . . . R. Shimshon of Ostropole. An angel would appear to him every day to teach him the mysteries of the Torah. This mystic composed a commentary on the Zohar based upon the Kabbalah of the Arizal, but it was never published. The angel had told him prior to the massacre, to indulge in sincere repentance so that the evil decree will not come to pass. He preached frequently in the synagogue and exhorted the people to repent so that the evil would not come to pass. Accordingly, all the communities repented sincerely, but it did not avail, for the evil decree had already been sealed. When the enemies and the oppressors invaded the city, the above mentioned mystic and three hundred of the most prominent citizens, all dressed in *tachrichim* (shrouds) with *taleisim* (prayer shawls) over their heads, entered the synagogue and engaged in fervent prayer. When the enemies arrived, they killed all of them upon the sacred ground of the synagogue, may G-d avenge their blood. Many hundreds who managed to survive were forced to change their faith and many hundreds were taken captive by the Tartars. **Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter VII**

X. Panic

A. We were informed in the holy city of Zaslów that the Tartars and the Ukrainians were besieging the holy community of Polanów. . . . Zaslów was only six miles from Polanów. On that Thursday, whoever was able to flee, fled. We abandoned our homes which were filled with merchandise and books, and other good things. We did not spare our possessions. We only thought of saving ourselves and our sons and daughters. Some escaped to the capital city of Ostrog. I fled . . . to the holy community of Miedzyrzecz, two thousand cubits from Ostrog, the capital. In the community of Ostrog and its adjacent community of Miedzyrzecz, lived more than ten thousand householders. . . . Duke Visniewiecki and one thousand warriors arrived. The great hero Laszcz and the rest of his army followed. There was great rejoicing among us. We thought that we would return to our homes after Shabbos Chazon, for we were only four miles distance from the holy community of Zaslów. . . . On Sabbath eve we were stunned by the evil tidings which reached us. . . . The noble Wiszowty, who was the governor of Polanów . . . had fled. He said, "Polanów has been captured. All the nobles and the Jews therein were murdered and the enemy's onslaught is reaching Zaslów. Duke Visniewiecki, together with his troops, fled to Konstancynów, and the Tartars and the Ukrainians are pursuing them. Some of them are marching toward Ostrog and Miedzyrzecz." . . . The mass of people . . . were under the [erroneous] impression that the general, [Duke Dominic], escaped to the kingdom of Poland. (Duke Dominic with his army were actually waiting close by for reinforcements) . . . The heads of the community of Ostrog announced that no Jew should dare to remain in that community, nor for that matter in the community of Miedzyrzecz, for the enemy is only two miles distant from us. . . . All the people fled in accordance with the announcement. Whoever had a horse and cart traveled in it. Those who did not possess a horse and cart, even though they had sufficient money to buy them, would not wait, but took wife and children by the hand and fled on foot, casting away all belongings. . . . On that Shabbos Chazon, three rows of horses and carts, moved along one next to the other in width, and for a stretch of seven miles, the entire distance between Ostrog and the holy community of Dubno in length, the road was cluttered with horses and carts, one behind the other, and innumerable pedestrians. Within two hours on that Shabbos Chazon, three horse riders, one Jew whose name was Moshe Tzoref of Ostrog, together with two nobles, ran after us. They said to us, "Why are you marching so slowly? Behold the enemy is close behind us. They are now in Miedzyrzecz. We escaped with difficulty." Immediately there was such confusion and panic among our brethren of the house of Israel that it is indescribable. Everyone threw from his cart silver and gold, vessels, books, pillows and bed covers in order to be able to escape more quickly, to save the lives of his family. The field was cluttered with gold, silver, and clothes, and no Jews paused to take them. This time the admonishing words of the Prophet came true, "They shall cast their silver in the streets." (Ez. 7:19) Some cast away everything; horse and cart and all that was in it, and with only wife and children fled for their lives into the woods. Many women and men who had led their children by the hands, released them when this panic seized them, ran for their lives into the woods and into the pits. Thus did the verse of Leviticus come true. "And you shall flee when none pursues you." (Lev. 26:17), for it was all a falsehood; the enemies, the Tartars, did not pursue us. . . . On the Sunday following Shabbos Chazon the truth became known to us. . . . Then the anxiety was relieved, and, from that day on, everyone slackened his pace. We walked from place to place through cities and villages, sleeping in the streets. **Ibid.**

XI. Assessing the Damage

A. Similarly, slaughters took place in many other communities, the fury of which cannot be recorded. Thus they devastated more than seven hundred communities, all the cities and settlements up to the Vistula River. **Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter XIV**

B. Among those Jews who had escaped across the Vistula River, a terrible plague broke out. They cast their dead on the cemetery in the darkness of the night, so that their unfriendly neighbors might not notice them and delight when they beheld a new grave. The plague was different from any other plague. They were stricken with high fever, as a result of the trying journey and the fright. Many poor people, whom the Gentiles did not permit entry into their homes, had to sleep in the streets and they died of starvation and exposure. No man offered aid to his brother, and no father took pity on his child. More than one hundred thousand Jews perished of this disease (may the L-rd preserve and save us). And the Jews became impoverished. The balance of silver and gold and garments which they managed to retain, they sold for half their value, silk and other garments, for one third of the value. Books were worthless, for there was no buyer. The Torah lay in a deserted corner, for the Gentiles bought only silver and gold and garments. **Ibid.**

XII. Rebuilding the Ruins

A. After Sukkos of 5410 (1649), the Polish nobles returned to their homes and to their estates. Also the remnant of Israel, "orphans of orphans" returned. They were destitute and poor, and they found no respite even there because prices were high and food was scarce. For, of the Ukrainian people, thousands and tens of thousands perished from starvation. And the famine for bread was not so great as the lack of money, for the Cossacks and the Tartars had robbed them of all of their money and treasures. . . . The wretched Jews, however, though indigent and destitute, appeared in the eyes of the multitude and of the nobles as rich people. . . . They were compelled to give exorbitant taxes, so that nothing remained in their hands, and their poverty grew worse from day to day. Nevertheless, they offered praise and thanks to the Holy One, blessed be He, for the peace which they enjoyed. **Rav Nosson Nota Hanover, Yevein HaMetzulah, Chapter XV**

B. In those days, the King, may his glory increase, issued an ordinance throughout the provinces of his kingdom, that whoever had been forced to change his faith, may return to his former faith. All the forced converts returned to Judaism, and the Jews continued to reside in all the cities where they had been converted. . . . Also, the women whom the Cossacks married by force, fled to the cities which were populated by Jews. . . . In the places where severe carnage took place, hundreds of boys and girls and infants, had been converted. The Jews took them back by force from the hands of the Gentiles. After thorough investigation, they provided them with identifying tags giving the names of the families to which they belonged. These were hung on the neck of each child. Many women had become *Agunos* (women unable to marry because of unaccounted status of their husbands) and many widows who had become subject to *yibum* (levirate marriage)

became *Agunos* because the *yovom* (levir) had departed the land. The authorities of the Council of the Four Lands . . . instituted many appropriate ordinances for their benefit and they instituted a public fast for the whole Kingdom of Poland, to be observed on the twentieth day of Sivan, for generations to come, for on that day the terrible slaughter of Nemirov had occurred, and it had been the first community to submit to massacre, for the glorification of His Name. **Ibid.**

XIII. The Ukrainians Rise Again

A. And it came to pass prior to Passover of 5411 (1651) that the Tartars and the Ukrainians assembled a fourth time, and on that Passover, the children of Israel drank the "four cups of poison." They slew hundreds of Jews, and hundreds went into captivity to the Tartars . . . and all the children of Israel escaped to the Metropolis of Lvov. The king himself went out to fight them and with him were three hundred thousand able soldiers of the Polish army, and eighty thousand men composed of Germans, French, and Spanish soldiers, also one thousand Jewish fighters. . . . The Tartars and the Ukrainians came upon them suddenly with their accustomed shouts and savage outcries and said, "Let us attack the Polish people and we will defeat them as we did in our previous attempts." . . . The hand of the Polish army prevailed and, reinforced by the Germans, they . . . struck a severe blow on the Tartars and Ukrainians, and they smote them and pursued them unto destruction. The Tartar king escaped to his land in great embarrassment and with very few of his forces. He took the oppressor Chmiel with him into captivity, because the latter did not inform him of the strength of the [Polish] king's army. All of the high ranking officers, among them the nephew of the Tartar king, became the prisoners of the [Polish] king. . . . The Tartar king sent letters to the king, may his glory increase, to release his nephew in exchange for this foe, the oppressor {Chmiel}, who at this time had been his prisoner. . . . The king refused. . . . Then the king sent his two generals and Duke Visniviecki, and, with them, one hundred and fifty thousand able bodied soldiers to conquer all the Ukrainian cities in the land of [Little] Russia and to make war on the Tartars afterwards. This they did. They proceeded and captured the cities in the Land of [Little] Russia one by one. **Ibid.**

B. And it came to pass that the king of the Tartars heard that the hero, the Duke, died and that the two generals were preparing to make war on him. He made peace with the oppressor Chmiel. Chmiel paid him a ransom of eighteen million gold pieces, and also supported him. The Tartars and the Ukrainians assembled . . . a fifth time to make war against Poland. The great war thus renewed itself in Poland after the Holy Days 5412 (1651). . . . Moreover a severe epidemic had broken out in the whole Kingdom of Poland. In the city of Cracow, and in other communities, in the Kingdom of Poland, in the summer of 5412 (1652) more than twenty thousand persons perished. . . . Unto the present day throughout the kingdom of Poland, there reigns the sword, famine, and a great pestilence. And these latter troubles make us forget the former. Every day the tragedy is greater than the one on the day preceding it. . . . Shall we say that we have not sinned? Behold, our iniquities testify against us. For we have sinned, and L-rd found out the iniquity of the servants. . . . Since the day when the *Bais HaMikdash* (Holy Temple) was destroyed, the righteous are seized by death for the iniquities of the generation. **Ibid.**