

# Great Controversies



## Contemporary Issues

**From the Crusades  
to the Holocaust:  
The Controversy  
Throughout Jewish  
History on How to  
Commemorate  
Tragedy**

**Rabbi Yechezkel  
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**Dedicated by  
Brian Botton,  
in commemoration  
of the yahrzeits  
today and tomorrow  
of his mother  
Esther bas Julie z”l,  
and his brother  
Shmuel ben Esther z”l**

# Great Controversies in Jewish History

## How Should We Commemorate Tragedies?

Rabbi Yechezkel Freundlich

- A. The elephant in the room:
  - a. Why is there so much tragedy throughout Jewish History?
    - i. There are 5 fast Days legislated by prophets
  - b. The magnitude of the Holocaust and its place amongst Crusades, Inquisition and Chmelnitsky uprising
- B. Model #1: Crusades
  - a. November 1095 in Southern France, Pope Urban II called for a Crusade to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim control
    - i. Realized in their own backyard had real enemies of the Church living in peace and tranquility
  - b. In May and June of 1096, Crusaders destroyed 3 major communities of the Rhineland: Speyer (8 Iyar), Worms (23 Iyar and 1 Sivan), Meintz (3 Sivan)
    - i. Tisha B'av Kinnah 25 ("Were that my head were water") confirms historical facts and establishes precedent for mourning:
      - i. We don't add new days of mourning to the calendar
  - c. Local fast days established in Worms and Meintz for hundreds of years
    - i. Sefer Rokeach (Eleazar of Worms c. 1176 - 1238, or Eleazar ben Judah ben Kalonymus) quoted in Beis Yosef (Rabbi Yosef Karo 1488-1575), fasted on Rosh Chodesh in Worms
      - i. Torah reading during Shacharis for Rosh Chodesh and mincha for a fast day; davened early and then ate
    - ii. Maharil (Yaakov ben Moshe Levi Moelin, 1365-1427) records fasting in Meintz on 3 Sivan in his discussion regarding saying tachanun in the month of Sivan
    - iii. Chavas Yair (Rabbi Yair Chayim Bacharach, 1639-1702): still in his day fasted in Worms, quoted by Magen Avraham.
    - iv. Shvus Yaakov (Yaakov ben Yoseph Reischer, 1661-1733), writes response in 1716 regarding the practice when Rosh Chodesh falls on Friday and the community davened maariv right after mincha
- C. Model #2: Blood Libel of 1171 and Chmelnitsky Uprising
  - a. Blois, France 1171, sits on the Loire River, Issac ben Elazar
  - b. Rabbeinu Tam, in Orleans, France, writes letter to let neighboring towns know
    - i. Worthy of fasting for all the Jewish people like the fast of Gedalia and indeed like Yom Kippur itself

- ii. R' Ephraim of Bonn in Sefer Zechira, description of tragedy in 1150s-1200s, all communities of France, Rhineland and England accepted upon themselves to fast on 20 Sivan
  - c. A selicha in mussaf of Yom Kippur referenced this and was said for hundreds of years
- D. Chmelnitsky Uprising, 1648-1649 (Tach v'Tat)
  - a. Jews are in Eastern Europe, as we've been expelled from England, France, Rhineland
  - b. 1648-1649 begin 20<sup>th</sup> of Sivan Rav Nosson Nata Honover, a survivor, wrote chronicles. Tells us when it began Nemirov, great major Jewish center. During respite of 1650 establish infrastructure and method to mourn. Vaad of the Four Lands established a fast for all generations for all of Ashkenaz on 20 Sivan.
    - i. Fasted for hundreds of years: quoted by Magen Avraham, Taz, minhagim sefarim...etc
    - ii. Chmelnitsky had same revulsive connotation as Hitler does for us
- E. Yom Hoshuah: Should we establish a special day, and if so, when?
  - a. Rav Yitzchak Halevi Herzog (Chief Rabbi of Palestine and then Israel from 1937-1959). Visits the Brisker Rav (Rav Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik, b. 1886 Volozhyn - d. 1959, Jerusalem) in November of 1942 about establishing a Day of Mourning as word of the tragedy begins leaking out
    - i. Brisker Rav sharply formulated his position opposing it, based solely on the Tisha Bav kinna
    - ii. Chozon Ish (Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz, (1878-1953) refers to fast days as a mitzvah d'rababnan and you need prophecy to be able to establish them, and how dare we institute such a thing.
    - iii. Rav Moshe Feinstein repeats this in his 1982 responsa
    - iv. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (YU) also strongly opposed a separate day, and taught that when you hear the words Worms and Meintz, you should be thinking about Vilna and Kovno and anything that is more relevant and accessible to our own experiences. They are archetypes.
  - b. Rav Herzog himself Winter 1944-1945 pens a response establishing that there is authority to establish a fast day forever - and it's nothing new, witness 20 Sivan!
  - c. What should be done?
    - i. Original proposal in the late 40s (quoted in letter from Chozon Ish) of chief rabbinate was to choose a week and have all Jews sit shiva for a week in mourning the national tragedy
    - ii. Rabbinate then proposed establishing it on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Teves, to make it part of an actual fast day and affiliate it with national Jewish Day of mourning
    - iii. 1951 the Knesset chose 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan in commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
      - i. Rabbinate succeeded in moving it to 27<sup>th</sup> of Nissan

## 25.

Would that my head were water,\*

and my eye a fount of flowing tears,  
that I might spend all my days and nights weeping,<sup>2</sup>  
for my slaughtered children and infants,  
and for the venerable oldsters of my congregation.

I call upon all of you to respond [to my cry], 'Vay! Ay!<sup>2</sup> Woe!'

And cry profusely<sup>3</sup> and intensify your weeping!

Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,  
because they have fallen by the sword!<sup>4</sup>

My eye shall be filled with copious tears,<sup>5</sup>

and I shall get me to the weeper's field.

I shall arouse the bitter of heart,

the confounded ones, to weep with me,

over the beautiful maidens and the tender lads,

wrapped in their scrolls and dragged to the slaughter.

Their appearance was ruddier<sup>6</sup> than rubies,

[more dazzling] than sapphires and gems,

yet they were trampled and discarded like the mud in the streets.<sup>7</sup>

'Turn away from the unclean [Jew]!

they called to each other,<sup>8</sup> lest they come too close.

Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,  
because they have fallen by the sword!

(1) Cf. Jeremiah 8:23. (2) Cf. Proverbs 23:29. (3) Cf. Ezra 10:1. (4) Cf. II Samuel 1:12.  
(5) Jeremiah 13:17. (6) Eichah 4:7. (7) II Samuel 22:43. (8) Eichah 4:15.

families, occupations — in order to conquer the Holy Land they called Palestine, while the Jews themselves were filled with no such zeal to regain their own homeland! In heaven, this irony did not go unnoticed, but aroused a terrible denunciation against the Jewish people, and especially against the Jews of Worms and her neighboring communities.

The classic work on Jewish history, *Seder HaDoros*, by R' Yechiel Halperin, records the following observation in his entry for the year 5380 (1620):

The author of the commentary *Sefer Meiras Eynayim* (SMA) on the *Shulchan Aruch* explained why the Jewish community of Worms suffered far more persecution, pogroms and evil decrees than other congregations. That *kehillah* was founded by Jewish exiles who made their way to Germany following the Destruction of the First Temple. After seventy years of exile, many Jews returned from Babylon to *Eretz Yisrael* and Jerusalem, but none returned from Worms. The community in Jerusalem wrote to the *kehillah* in Worms and urged them to join their new settlement in Jerusalem... but the complacent Jews of Worms dismissed this invitation out of hand. Instead, they responded, 'You stay where you are in the

great Jerusalem, and we will continue to stay where we are in our little Jerusalem!' This arrogant response was due to the prosperity and prestige the Jews of Worms enjoyed in the eyes of the local gentiles and their princes.

The success of Worms was its undoing! The prosperity of the Jew in exile is nothing more than a Divine test to see whether it will cause the Jew to forget his homeland and his heritage. Worms and the Rhineland failed and suffered bitterly. In our own times, the vast majority of the German *kehillah* failed, because, as *Mashech Chochmah* (*Bechukosai*) observes, 'They began to call Berlin, Jerusalem!'

#### ☞ The Calamity of the First Crusade

On November 27, 1095, in Clermont (south-eastern France) Pope Urban II called upon faithful Christians to join in arms to liberate the city of Jerusalem and its holy sites from the hands of the Moslem infidels who occupied it. Those who answered the call affixed crosses to their garments, and the campaign became known as *le Croisade* (from *croix*, French for cross), or the Crusade. At first, the Crusade seemed to pose no threat to the Jews who resided in peace with their Christian neighbors, but soon enough it became clear that the crusaders did not wish to wait until they reached far-off Palestine to 'avenge the

#### בה.

מי יתן ראשי מים\* ועיני מקור נוזלי,

ואבבא כל ימותי וילילי,

את חללי טפי ועוללי, וישישי קהלי,

ואתם ענו אבוי אויב ואללי,

ובכן בכה בכדי רב והרב,

על בית ישראל ועל עם יהודה פי נפלו בקרב.

ודמוע תדמע עיני ואלכה לי שדה בוכים,

ואבבא עמי מרי לבב הנבוכים,

על בתולות היפות וילדים הרפים,

בספריהם נכרכים ולטבח נמשכים,

אדמו עצם מפנינים ספירים ונופכים,

כמו טיט חוצות נדשים ונשלים,

סורו טמא קראו למו מלקרב,

על בית ישראל ועל עם יהודה פי נפלו בקרב.

☞ *Would that my head were water. Significantly, this is the first kinnah recited on the Ninth of Av that is apparently unrelated to the destruction of the two Temples. Indeed, this elegy mourns the calamity that befell the Jewish communities of the Rhineland — Worms, Speyer and Mainz (Mayence) — in the year 1096, during the First Crusade, over one thousand years after the destruction of the Second Temple. The inclusion of this lament in the Tishah B'Av ritual serves to demonstrate that the source and cause of all Jewish tragedies in exile can and must be traced back to the Destruction of our Temple. The following incident illustrates this concept vividly.*

When the Jewish people became aware of the awesome devastation that befell our nation at the hands of the murderous Nazis in World War II, many sought to establish a new day of national mourning to commemorate *Churban Europa*. The contemporary Torah leaders were consulted. Among the responses was that of the *Brisker Rav*, R' Yitzhak Zev Soloveitchik, who said that the reply to this question lies in the *kinnah* before us. Why didn't the great Rabbis and Sages of that generation — among them the greatest of the *Rishonim*, including Rashi — establish a new day of national mourning to commemorate that new tragedy? The author of this *kinnah* addresses this question and offers this insight:

Please take to your hearts to compose a bitter eulogy, / because their massacre is deservant of mourning and rolling in dust / as was the

burning of the House of our God, its Hall and its Palace. / However, we cannot add a (new) day (of mourning) over ruin and conflagration, / nor may we mourn any earlier — only later. / Instead, today (on Tishah B'Av), I will arouse my sorrowful wailing, / and I will eulogize and wail and weep with a bitter soul, / and my groans are heavy from morning until evening.

Thus, the essential purpose of this *kinnah* is to drive home this lesson: There are really no new tragedies befalling Israel. All of our woes stem from one tragic source — the Destruction of the Temple on Tishah B'Av. To establish a new day of mourning would detract from the significance of Tishah B'Av and obscure its lesson and message. (See *Rashi* to II *Chronicles* 35:25.)

This *kinnah* also answers other major questions. Why does the exile continue? Why does God visit fresh calamities upon His people? Where have we gone astray?

One of the main reasons for the continuation of our exile is because Jews are often quite content and comfortable in their adopted, alien homelands and have all but lost their desire to return to the poverty and hardships of *Eretz Yisrael*. Slowly the Jew ceases to identify with his true home, the Holy Land, and begins to feel intense pride in his citizenship in his new country.

The destruction of the Jewish community of Worms in the German Rhineland was the work of the crusaders. How ironic! The crusaders were willing to leave everything behind — homes,

My eyes will shed tears<sup>1</sup> and I will wail  
and thus bestirring [friends to comfort me],  
and I will call them to cry, to don sackcloth and to eulogize  
that which is more precious than fine gold, more desirable than gold,  
whose glory is concealed within,<sup>2</sup>

honored as the most cherished vessel,  
and now I see it ripped, desolate, forlorn<sup>3</sup> —  
[namely,] the Torah, the Scriptures, the Mishnah and the Aggadah.

Raise your voice and moan and make this pronouncement,  
'Where is the Torah and the student who studied it?'

Behold, the place is desolate and no one dwells therein!<sup>4</sup>

Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,  
because they have fallen by the sword!

Water will stream from my eyelids, running over with tears,<sup>5</sup>  
as I bitterly bemoan the slain victims of Speyer.\*

It happened on the eighth day of the second month [Iyar],  
on the day of tranquility [the Sabbath].

My calm was transformed into a destructive tempest.

Pleasant young men<sup>6</sup> were murdered  
with splendid, venerable oldsters.

They assembled together and [decided]

to surrender their souls in reverence,  
for the unification of the One and Only Name,  
they declared the unity of God with fortitude.

Strong warriors, swift to fulfill His word.<sup>7</sup>

And my ministers and my youths expired

— altogether they numbered ten.

In my bitter agony and sadness, I compose elegies,  
as I remember today the murder of the holy congregations;

the community of Worms,\* proven and chosen.

Talmudic masters of the land, their purity unsullied.

(1) Jeremiah 13:17. (2) Psalms 45:14. (3) Isaiah 49:21. (4) Cf. Jeremiah 26:9.

(5) Cf. 9:17. (6) Ezekiel 23:12. (7) Psalms 103:20.

the assembled worshippers were able to repel their attack. Frustrated, the frenzied mob threw itself upon any Jew it could find outside the synagogue. Altogether they murdered ten men. In addition they attacked one woman who was given the choice of death or conversion. She gladly chose the former and died a martyr's death and proved to be an example for many other Jews who preferred to sanctify God's Name in death, rather than to abandon Him in life.

קהל נרמזא — *The community of Worms.* On the twenty-third of Iyar [Sunday, May 18, 1096] a large force of crusaders, led by Count Emicho, mercilessly attacked the Jews of Worms who had remained confidently in their homes. There they felt safe, relying on the promises of protection offered by their Christian neighbors. Many were

slain by the crusaders and their small children were seized for forced baptism. Jewish homes were pillaged and destroyed. The greedy mob even stripped the clothing from their victims' corpses, leaving them naked. Eventually, some Jews who had found refuge in the bishop's palace managed to send clothes to cover their shame.

But for the Jews of Worms the suffering was not over. God had singled them out for double tragedy. On the following Sunday, Rosh Chodesh Sivan [May 25,] the crusaders and local rabble attacked the bishop's palace to kill the many Jews who had taken refuge there. After fierce combat the crusaders prevailed and slew every Jew they could find. When the attack came, the victims were in the midst of reciting Hallel (Psalms 113-118); with God's praises on

ותרד עיני דמעה ואילילה ואגודה,

ולבכי ולחגור שק אקרא להספידה,

מפז יקרה וזהב חמודה,

פנימה בבודה כבוד כל כלי חמדה,

ראיתה קרועה שכולה וגלמודה,<sup>3</sup>

התורה והמקרא והמשנה ואגדה,

ענו וקוננו זאת להגידה,

אי תורה תלמיד והלומדה,

הלא המקום מאין יושב חרב,<sup>4</sup>

על בית ישראל ועל עם יהודה כי נפלו בחרב.

ועפעפי יזלו מים המע להגידה,

ואקונן מר עלי הרוני אשפידה,\*

בשני בשמונה בו ביום מרגוע הקרה,

מרגוע נחלפו להבעירה,

נהרגו בחורי חמד<sup>6</sup> וישישי הדרה,

נאספו יחד נפשם השלימו במרא.

על יחוד שם המיחד יחדו שם בגבורה,

גבורי כח עושי דברוי למהרה,

וכהני ועלמי נגועו בלהם עשרה.

ובמר יגוני ועצבי ילל אחבירה,

קהלות הקדש הריגתם היום בזכרה,

קהל ורמיזא\* בחונה ובחורה,

גאני ארץ ונקי טהרה,

blood of their savior.' In truth, it was their envy of the prosperous Jewish communities that incited the vulgar rabble and the greedy nobility to punish 'the murderers of their lord' wherever they passed. It was rumored that the French leader of the Crusades, Godfrey of Bouillon, had taken a solemn vow that he would avenge the blood of the crucifixion with the blood of the Jews and that he would not tolerate even one Jewish soul remaining alive.

Early in the year 1096, the French communities, threatened with extinction if they did not submit to baptism, called upon the great Jewish communities on the Rhine to ordain a day of public fasting and prayer. The Rhenish Jews complied and prayed fervently for the welfare of

their French brethren. However, they themselves felt perfectly secure, enjoying as they did the special favor of the Emperor and the local nobility.

But all too soon, the frenzied mobs of crusaders poured into Germany, thirsty for Jewish blood, and hungry for Jewish riches.

In the early spring, in the weeks between Pesach and Shavuot, violence broke out and atrocities escalated. The three Jewish communities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz felt the main brunt of the carnage, and their calamity is described in this *kinna* (see commentary below).

— *The slain victims of Speyer.* On the Sabbath, the eighth of Iyar [May 3, 1096], the crusaders surrounded the synagogue in Speyer. They were unable to breach its fortifications, and

*Twice they sanctified the One and Only Name in reverence.*

*On the twenty-third day of the month of Ziv [Iyar],<sup>1</sup>*

*they were purified,  
and in the third month [Sivan],*

*while reciting the Hallel [on Rosh Chodesh] in song,  
they surrendered their soul, bound up with love.*

*I moan over them with a wailing cry. Saturated [with tears]  
those adorned with a perfect crown upon their heads.*

*For the towering personalities of*

*the distinguished community of Mainz,<sup>2</sup>*

*quicker than eagles, stronger than lions,<sup>2</sup>*

*they surrendered their souls while declaring*

*[God's] unity and His awesome Name.*

*For them, I will scream out a shattering cry,*

*over my two Temples whose foundation were destroyed on this day,*

*and for the ruins of my miniature sanctuaries<sup>3</sup>*

*and houses of Torah study.*

*In the third month [Sivan], on the third day,*

*more misery and misfortune were added,*

*in this month which was turned into agony and grief.*

*I had hoped that on the day the Law was given [Shavuot]*

*I would renew my fortune [in the merit of the Torah],*

*but on the very day it was given it was returned.*

*It arose on high, [back to] its dwelling place,*

*together with its cover and its case, its expounder and its examiner,*

*those who study it and reviewed it in the darkness [of night]*

*as by the light [of day].*

*Please take to your hearts<sup>4</sup> to compose a bitter eulogy,*

*because their massacre is deserving of mourning and rolling in dust*

*as was the burning of the House of our God, its Hall and its Palace.*

*However, [we] cannot add a [new] day*

*[of mourning] over ruin and conflagration,*

*nor may [we] mourn any earlier — only later.*

*Instead, today [on Tishah B'Av], I will arouse my sorrowful wailing,*

*and I will eulogize and wail and weep with a bitter soul,*

*and my groans are heavy from morning until evening.*

*Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,*

*because they have fallen by the sword!*

(1) I Kings 6:1. (2) Cf. II Samuel 1:23. (3) Cf. Ezekiel 11:16. (4) Cf. Chagga'i 2:18.

crusaders on those two Sundays in Worms.

קהל מנצא — The ... community of Mainz. Terribly alarmed by the massacre at Speyer and Worms, the Jews of Mainz petitioned for the bishop's protection and paid him 400 pieces of silver for his promise. However, on the third of Sivan [May 27, 1096], when Count Emicho and

his multitudes arrived at the gates of the city, the burghers were only too happy to welcome the crusaders and join in their attack on the Jews. The populace led the crusaders to all the Jewish hiding places. The Jews, led by R' Klonimos ben R' Meshullam, valiantly resisted, but were outnumbered and weakened by their penitential fasting. After a brief struggle, a general massacre

פְּעָמִים קִדְּשׁוּ שֵׁם הַפְּיָיִד בְּמוֹרָא.  
בְּעִשְׂרִים וּשְׁלֹשָׁה בְּחֹדֶשׁ זִיב לְטַהֲרָה,  
וּבְחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּקִרְיַת הַלָּל לְשׁוֹרְרָה,  
הַשְּׁלִימוּ נַפְשָׁם בְּאַהֲבָה קְשׁוּרָה,  
אֲהִימָה עֲלֵיהֶם בְּבָכִי יָלַל לְחֻשְׁרָה,  
כְּלוּלֵי כְתָר עַל רֹאשָׁם לְעֻטְרָה.  
וְעַל אֲדִירֵי קֹהֵל מִגְּנֻצָא\* הַהַדוּרָה,  
מִנְּשָׂרִים קָלוּ מֵאֲרִיּוֹת לְהַתְּגַבְּרָה,<sup>2</sup>  
הַשְּׁלִימוּ נַפְשָׁם עַל יְחִיד שֵׁם הַנוֹרָא,  
וְעֲלֵיהֶם וְעַקַּת שֶׁבַר אֲשַׁעְרָה,  
עַל שְׁנֵי מִקְדָּשֵׁי יְסוּדֵם כְּהִיּוֹם עֲרַעְרָה,  
וְעַל חֲרָבוֹת מַעֲט מִקְדָּשֵׁי וּמִדְּרָשֵׁי הַתּוֹרָה.  
בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּשְׁלִישִׁי נוֹסֵף לְדָאָבוֹן וּמְאָרָה,  
הַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ לִיגוֹן וְצָרָה,  
בְּיוֹם מִתֵּן דַּת שְׁפָרְתִי לְהַתְּאַשְׁרָה,  
וּבְיוֹם נְתִינְתָה כְּמוֹ כֵּן אֲזַ חֲזָרָה,  
עֲלֵתָה לָּהּ לְמָרוֹם לְמָקוֹם מְדוּרָה,  
עַם תִּיקָה וְנִרְתַקָּה וְהַדוּרְשָׁה וְחוֹקְרָה,  
לוֹמְדֵיהָ וְשׁוֹנֵיהָ בְּאִישׁוֹן כְּמוֹ בְּאוּרָה,  
שִׁימוּ נָא עַל לְבַבְכֶם מִסְפָּד מֵר לְקֻשְׁרָה,  
כִּי שְׁקוּלָה הִרְיַגְתֶּם לְהַתְּאַבֵּל וּלְהַתְּעַפְּרָה,  
כְּשֶׁרַפַּת בֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ הָאוֹלָם וְהַבִּירָה,  
וְכִי אֵין לְהוֹסִיף מוֹעֵד שֶׁבַר וּתְבַעֲרָה,  
וְאֵין לְהַקְדִּים וּזְלָתִי לְאַחֲרָה,  
תַּחַת כֵּן הַיּוֹם לְיִנְתִּי אֲעוֹרְרָה,  
וְאֶסְפְּדָה וְאֵילִילָה וְאֶבְכֶה בְּנַפְשׁ מְרָה,  
וְאֶנְחָתִי כְּבָדָה מִבְּקָר וְעַד עָרֵב,  
עַל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל עַם יִהוּהָ כִּי נִפְלוּ בְּחֻרָב.

their lips they sanctified His Name. A youth named Simchah Cohen planned to avenge his father and seven brothers who had been murdered by the crusaders. He pretended that he would accept baptism, and was taken to the church. At the moment he was to receive the

sacrament, he whipped out a concealed knife and lashed out at those around him, stabbing the bishop's nephew in the act. Needless to say, the brave youth was torn to pieces by the infuriated bystanders.

All told, eight hundred Jews fell victim to the

Over these I do cry<sup>1</sup> and my heart moans deeply,  
and I summon the wailing-women and the skilled ones.<sup>2</sup>  
'Ay li', 'Ay lay,' they all cry with intense feeling.  
Is there any pain which compares with my pain?<sup>3</sup>  
Outside the [avenging] sword renders parents childless,  
while terror stalks the inner chambers.<sup>4</sup>  
My dead bodies, corpses of the sword,  
are strewn about naked, both male and female.  
Their cadavers rotting<sup>5</sup> for the wild beasts of the land  
and for the animals —  
suckling baby with hoary old man,<sup>6</sup> young men and young maidens.  
My tormentors ridicule them and humiliate them intensely.  
'Where is their God,' taunt they,  
'the Rock in Whom they sought refuge<sup>7</sup> until death?  
Let Him come and save and restore souls!  
Who is like You, O strong One, God,<sup>8</sup>  
Who patiently bears the bundles<sup>9</sup> [of their iniquities]?  
Will You remain silent and hold back,<sup>10</sup>  
not to gird Yourself in burning wrath,<sup>11</sup>  
when those who mock me say, 'If indeed there is a God,  
let Him fight!<sup>12</sup> [on your behalf]!  
Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,  
because they have fallen by the sword!

My eyes, my eyes, run with water!<sup>13</sup>  
For our singer has turned to mourning,<sup>14</sup>  
my flute has changed over to the sound of weeping,<sup>15</sup>  
without relief or composure.  
Who will bestir himself to console me?<sup>16</sup>  
And is there none to revive me with a strong embrace?<sup>17</sup>  
[God's] wrath went forth against me,  
while a storm [of anger] gathered<sup>18</sup> [to harm me].  
The cruel enemy<sup>19</sup> consumed and mutilated me.<sup>19</sup>  
My bones he shattered,<sup>21</sup> strew and pulverized.  
He trampled all my heroes,<sup>22</sup> [who were my] navel and umbilicus.  
There is no bandage or medicine from which to choose.  
[because] my wound is mortal,<sup>23</sup> beyond remedy or cure.  
Therefore I said, 'Leave me alone with my bitterness,  
so that with the weeping<sup>24</sup> of my tears, I will blister my cheeks.<sup>25</sup>  
Over the House of Israel and over the nation of HASHEM,  
because they have fallen by the sword!

(1) Eichah 1:16. (2) Cf. Jeremiah 9:16. (3) Cf. Eichah 1:12. (4) Cf. Deuteronomy 32:25. (5) Isaiah 5:25.  
(6) Deuteronomy 32:25. (7) Cf. 32:37. (8) Cf. Psalms 89:9. (9) Cf. 126:6. (10) Cf. Isaiah 42:14.  
(11) Cf. Psalms 76:11. (12) Judges 6:31. (13) Eichah 1:16. (14) 5:15. (15) Job 30:31. (16) Cf. Isaiah 51:19.  
(17) Cf. 64:6. (18) Jeremiah 30:23. (19) Cf. 51:34. (20) Numbers 10:9. (21) Eichah 3:4.  
(22) 1:15. (23) Jeremiah 15:18. (24) Isaiah 22:4. (25) Eichah 1:2.

ועל אלה אני בוכיה ולפי גוהם נהימות,  
ואקרא למקוננות ואל החכמות,<sup>2</sup>  
אלי ואליה כלם הומות,  
היש מכאוב למכאובי לדמות,  
מחוץ תשכל חרב ומחדרים אמות,<sup>4</sup>  
חללי חללי חרב מוטלים ערמים וערמות,  
נבלתם פסוקה<sup>5</sup> לחית ארץ ולבהמות,  
יונק עם איש שיכה<sup>6</sup> עלמים ועלמות.  
מתעתעים במו מוני ומרבים פלמות,  
אי אלהימו אמרו צור חסיו בוי עד מות,  
יבא ויושיע ויחזיר נשמות,  
חסין זה מי כמוך<sup>8</sup> נושא אלמות,<sup>9</sup>  
תחשה ותתאפק<sup>10</sup> ולא תחגור חמות,<sup>11</sup>  
באמור אלי מלעיגי אם אלהים הוא ירב,<sup>12</sup>  
על בית ישראל ועל עם יהוה כי נפלו בחרב.  
עיני עיני יורדה מים<sup>13</sup> כי נהפך לאבל<sup>14</sup> משורר,  
ועגבי לקול בוכים<sup>15</sup> מלהפיג ולקרר,  
מי יגוד לי<sup>16</sup> ומי מחזיק להתעורר,<sup>17</sup>  
המה בי יצאה וסער מתגורר,<sup>18</sup>  
אכלני הממני<sup>19</sup> הצר הצורר,<sup>20</sup>  
שבר עצמותי<sup>21</sup> זורר ומפרר,  
סלה כל אפירי<sup>22</sup> הטבור והשרר,  
רטיה ומזור אין לברר,  
מכתי אנושה<sup>23</sup> באין מתעיל ומזורר,  
על פן אמרתי שעו מני אמרר,  
בבכי<sup>24</sup> דמעי על לחי<sup>25</sup> לצרב,  
על בית ישראל ועל עם יהוה כי נפלו בחרב.

ensued. The victims, more than one thousand pure Jewish souls, were ignominiously thrown into nine large ditches for mass burial.

Throughout the spring and early summer, the crusaders continued to maraud and sack once proud and venerable Jewish communities, many of which had stood for over a thousand years. They brought death and destruction to Cologne,

Trier, Regensburg, Metz and Prague. In all, it is estimated that over 5,000 Jews lost their lives during the First Crusade. But worse than that, the Crusades introduced the idea of organized, massive, widespread terror against the Jews on a vast, sweeping scale — an idea that would continue, and find its ultimate, horrible expression in the awesome Nazi Holocaust.

BLOIS, 1171

א.מ.ה. ה'תתנ"א, סדר גזירות  
אשכנז ופרשת

גזרות בלויש ועוד

נוסח זה של גזירת בלויש (תתקל"א-1171), שקראנו עליה גם ברשימות  
שבסוף יספר זכירתי לרי אפרים ביד יעקב. נוסף ע"י אחד הפעתיקים  
לגזירות שנת תתנ"א לרי שלמה ביד סמסון. חבנו: מכתבים שתיים  
בענין הגזירות. הוא נמצא בכתב היד לפני המסקא 'בראשית באנו  
(ע"י נ"ם), ואיננו יודעים מי הוא מחברו.

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זה מהחסידיים הנשרפים

ילאו לכבוד לחוות, וירי כל לחוות, כעם והוות. לא יכילו עם אלהינו  
ועם נפשותם. וכי יעצור לכתוב דבר הצרה הזאת ולא ייתר לכבו. הן  
כשמוע איש סאחיו תצילנה שתי אוניו, תצא רוחו עד אכור קשתונותיו,  
אף כי אנחנו סרי הלכב. היספר איש צדוהיו ושפתיו לא תסכרנה, ואם  
תכתוב ולא תיגע. אך מצות הסלך היא וסצות רבינו יעקב. ולא נסנע  
ססנו.

נחננו קהל אודלינש, עלינו הביא את הענלה הננו סועקים תחתית,  
אשר כמשעינו כל זאת וחמאותינו, והשם בקרוביו נקדש.  
וסאו נתן עמו לסמיסה ויצת אש במקדשנו לא עלו לאשים קדשי  
קדשים כאלו. ויעלו מלאכי השם בלחב שלשים ואחד מלאכים, שרפים  
עוסרים ססעל לו, אשר באסוד הצר יהוציאום ושרפום אסרו: נקרא  
להם ונשאלה את פיהם, אולי יסירו כבודם בלא יועיל. ויענו כאיש  
אחד: לא כי באלהינו נדבק, באלהי ישראל, ואותו נרא בכל לב ובכל  
נפש. הם סוצאים הם השיבו אל לבכם, אולי ירך לב אחד ללחם,  
ויאסרו איש אל אחיו: חסן האש הזה נחרד, הלא זה יום נבחרנו. וכה  
אסרו בלכתם: השסרו לכם פן יפתה לבכם. חזקו ונתחזק ביראת  
יוצרנו, לסקן תהא מיתתנו כפרה על כל עוונותינו, ואלו הן חמאות  
ואשמות הציבור אשר בחם יתכפרו כל ישראל, כי אשי יי לחם  
אלהיהם הם סקריבים והיו קדש. וירח יי את ריח הניחוח ברכיעו  
בלשכת בעשרים לחדש סין בשנת תתקל"א לפרס, וראוי הוא לקובעו  
צום לכל בני עסנו. ונדול יהיה כבוד הצום הזה סצום גדליה בן אחיקם,  
כי יום כיפורים הוא. והוכו ונפצעו, וכאשר יענו אותם, כפצעייהם

5

THIS CONCERNS the saintly ones who were burned. It is difficult for the heart to express and the hand to portray the wrath and pain. The people of God cannot contain the anger in its soul. Who can pause to write of this tragedy, without having his heart spill over. Indeed when one hears of it, his ears ring and his spirit departs until he loses consciousness. How much more is this the case for us, afflicted in our hearts. Can a man tell his woes without having his lips tremble; can he write of them without being affected? Yet it is the command of the king and the command of Rabbenu Jacob Tam, and we cannot desist therefrom.

Upon us, the Jewish community of Orléans, has the burden been laid. Behold we groan under it. It is because of our sins and shortcomings that all this has happened. The Lord is sanctified by those closest to Him.

From the time He gave over His people to destruction and set fire to our Temple, holy ones such as these have not been offered up as a sacrifice. These angels of the Lord went up in flame—thirty-one angels, *serafim*, who stand by the Lord. When the oppressor ordered them taken out and burned, his men said: "Let us call them and ask them. Perhaps they will abandon their god." The Jews answered unanimously: "No.

We shall cling to our God, the God of Israel. Him we shall fear with all our hearts and all our souls." The Jews were taken out and the Gentiles watched them closely, perhaps one of them might waver. But the Jews said to one another: "Shall we tremble over this fire? Is not this day for which we were chosen?" Then they said as they went forth: "Take care, lest your heart be seduced. Strengthen yourselves and let us be firm in the fear of our Creator so that our death may serve as atonement for all our sins." Indeed these are the sufferings of the community through which all Israel achieves atonement. For those burned for the sake of the Lord bring offerings for their God and become sanctified. God inhaled this sacred incense on the fourth day of the week, on the twentieth of the month of Sivan in the year 4931 [May 26, 1171]. It is fitting that this day be established as a fast day for all our people. The significance of this fast will exceed that of the feast of Gedaliah b. Ahikam; it is a veritable Day of Atonement.