

# 20 Sivan: A Forgotten Fast

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זכרון דוב

## 1. Seder Olam Rabbah, Chapter 8

(במדבר י, יא): "וַיְהִי בִשְׁנֵה הַשְּׁנִית בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בְּעֶשְׂרִים בַּחֹדֶשׁ נִעְלָה הָעָנָן". נמצאו עושין במדבר סיני י"ב חדש חסר עשרה ימים ואומר (שם לג, ב) "וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת מוֹצְאֵיהֶם לְמַסְעֵיהֶם וְגו'". נסעו ממדבר סיני ובאו להם לקברות התאוה ועשו שם שלשים יום שנאמר (שם יא, יט) "לֹא יוֹם אֶחָד תֵּאֱכָלוּ וְגו' עַד חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים וְגו'".

"And it was on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the second month of the second year, the cloud rose." It comes out that they [dwelled] in the Sinai desert for 12 months less 10 days, and it says "And Moshe wrote the stages of their journey", they travelled from the Sinai desert and came to Kivrot Hata'avah, and [remained] there for 30 days, as it says "Not for one day will you eat... for one month's worth of days..."

## 2. Taz, Orach Chaim 566:3

...ונ"ל דהתענית שגזרו מנהיגי שלש הארצות בצירוף גאונים להתענות בכל כ' סיון משום רוע הגזירות בעו"ה יש לקרות ויחל אפי' כשהל ביום ב' או ה' שתענית זה הוא קבוע אפי' ביותר מב' וה' דאחר הפסח וסוכו'...

And it seems to me that the fast that the leaders of the Three Lands [Greater/Little Poland, Galicia (with Podolia) and Volhynia] decreed, along with Gaonim, to fast on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Sivan every year because of the evil decrees, due to our great sins, one should read Vayechal even if it falls on a Monday or Thursday, since this fast is even more established than the fasts on Monday and Thursday after Pesach and Sukkot...

## 3. Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim 568:10

...וצ"ע כשמתענים כ' סיון במלכות פולין אם מותר לאכול על סעודת מצוה ומיהו בזמנינו על הרוב עושין כל הסעודות בלילה מיהו פ"א חל בע"ש כ' סיון והיה סעודת ברית מילה וצוה הרב לאכול ביום מפני שלא ימצאו אנשים שילכו בלילה...

And it requires study if when we fast on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Sivan in the kingdom of Poland if it is permitted to eat at a mitzvah meal, however, in our days, generally, meals are all made at night, however, one time it fell on Friday, and there was a Brit Milah feast, and the Rabbi commanded [the people] to eat during the day, since they would not find people to go at night...

## 4. Susan L. Einbinder, Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France, Chapter 2 (pages 45-46)

IN THE SPRING of 1171, the frightened (or scheming) Christian servant of a local Blois lord reported seeing a Jew toss a murdered child into the Loire River. No witnesses corroborated his testimony, no parents reported a missing child, and no corpse was ever produced. But the local lord to whom he told his tale had a score to settle with a prominent Jewish woman in Blois and saw an opportunity for revenge. Count Thibaut, to whom the lord turned, may or may not have given credence to the murder charge, but he had reasons of his own for exploiting it. Thibaut's mass arrest of the Blois Jewish community was not itself a new tactic of harassment. The captio was designed to intimidate the victims into paying for their release, an effective if terrifying strategy for raising large sums of cash. But in this case the mass arrest led to an unprecedented conclusion. An Augustinian canon validated the servant's testimony by ordeal, and ransom negotiations between the count, the imprisoned Jews, and their mediators collapsed. On May 26, 1171, by the Hebrew calendar the twentieth of Sivan of the year 4931, thirty-two Jewish men and women were burned at the stake. For the first time in medieval Jewish memory, the secular ruler charged with their protection had prosecuted his Jews and condemned them to death. Within a short time, the Blois incident was described or commemorated in a number of Hebrew documents. From the tone and content of the urgent letters that raced from nearby Jewish communities in Orléans, Paris, and Troyes to the Jewish communities in France and along the Rhine, we can glean both the facts of the incident and the writers' conviction that it boded further ill. In addition to five surviving letters, commemorations of the Blois incident survived in the Sefer Zekhirah, Ephraim of Bonn's prose chronicle of late twelfth-century persecutions; eight verse compositions;

two slightly variant martyrological rosters; and a brief Christian account in the chronicle of Robert of Torigni. This chapter offers a close look at the poetry, which has received no serious attention on its own. One motif in particular offers insight into the methods and concerns of the Blois poets—the motif of the fireproof martyr, which emerges in the claim that the martyrs of Blois, or at least some of them, were impervious to flame. In the hands of the Blois poets, all men trained as Tosafist scholars, the fireproof martyr illustrates some of the theological and polemical impulses that informed Jewish martyrological poetry and that made it a powerful vehicle for addressing persecution and doubt. The multiple Hebrew records for the Blois episode, which comprise a variety of genres, confirm how greatly the incident shocked contemporary Jews. The lists of the victims are troubling enough: The majority were women, at least one of them pregnant, and several children appear also to have died in the flames. The male victims included scholars and men of stature. Ironically, the sources attest to a flourishing Jewish community, one unprepared for impending catastrophe. The rabbi-scholars who sought, in prose and verse, to record (and interpret) what went wrong capture some of the trauma and disbelief felt by their fellow Jews.

**5. Orleans Community, Letter regarding the tragedy of the 20<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, 1171 (4931), brought in Gezeirot Ashkenaz Vetzorfat, page 142 (Einbinder translation, incorrect date corrected)**

וירח ה' את ריח הניחוח ברביעי בשבת בעשרים לחדש סיון בשנת תתקל"א לפרט, וראוי הוא לקובעו צום לכל בני עמנו. וגדול יהיה כבוד הצום הזה מצום גדליה בן אחיקם, כי יום כיפורים הוא.

And G-d smelled the savory offering on Wednesday the 20th of the month of Sivan in the year 4931 [1171 c.e.], which should be declared a fast day for all our people. And the fast will be greater than the fast of Gedaliah ben Ahikem, for it is a day of atonement.

**6. Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff, The Twentieth of Sivan**

This libel was a major factor in the banishing of the Jews from France that occurred ten years later...

Since this tragedy took place during the general period of the Crusades, the 20th of Sivan was often viewed as the mourning day for the murders and other excesses that happened during that era, since each of the early Crusades resulted in the horrible destruction of hundreds of communities in central and western Europe and the killing of thousands of Jews. In actuality, the blood libel of Blois occurred between the Second Crusade, which occurred in 4907-9/1147-1149 and the Third Crusade, which was forty years later, in 4949/1189.

The fast of the 20th of Sivan also memorializes an additional Jewish calamity. Almost five hundred years later, most of the Jewish communities of eastern Europe suffered the horrible massacres that are referred to as the Gezeiros Tach veTat, which refer to the years of 5408 (Tach) and 5409 (Tat), corresponding to the secular years 1648 and 1649. Although this title implies that these excesses lasted for a period of at most two years, the calamities of this period actually raged on sporadically for the next twelve years. First, the historical background: Bogdan Chmielnitzky was a charismatic, capable, and nefariously anti-Semitic Cossack leader in the Ukraine, which at the time was part of the Kingdom of Poland. Chmielnitzky led a rebellion of the Ukrainian population against their Polish overlords. Aside from nationalistic and economic reasons for the Ukrainians revolting against Polish rule, there were also religious reasons, since the Ukrainians were Greek Orthodox whereas the Poles were Roman Catholic. Chmielnitzky led the Ukrainians through a succession of alliances, first by creating an alliance with the Crimean Tatars against the Polish King. The Cossacks' stated goal was to wipe out the Polish aristocracy and the Jews. When the Tatars turned against Chmielnitzky, he allied himself with the Swedes, and eventually with the Czar of Russia, which enabled the Ukrainians to revolt successfully against Polish rule. The Cossack hordes swarmed throughout Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania in the course of a series of wars, wreaking havoc in their path and putting entire Jewish communities to the sword. Hundreds of Jewish communities in Poland and Ukraine were destroyed by the massacres. The Cossacks murdered unknown thousands of Jews, including instances in which they buried people alive, cut them to pieces, and perpetrated far more horrible cruelties. In sheer cruelty, many of their heinous deeds surpassed even those performed later by the Nazis. These events were chronicled in several Torah works, including the Shach's Megillas Eifa, and Rav Nosson Nota Hanover's Yevein Metzulah. The title, Yevein Metzulah, is a play on words. These are words quoted from Tehillim 69:3, where the

passage reads, *tavati biyevein metzulah*, "I am drowning in the mire of the depths," which certainly conveys the emotion of living in such a turbulent era. In addition, the author was using these words to refer to Yavan, Greece, referring to the Greek Orthodox religion of the Cossack murderers. ...

Why was this date chosen to commemorate the atrocities of the era? On the 20th of Sivan, the Jewish community of Nemirov, Ukraine, which was populated by many thousands of Jews, was destroyed by the Cossacks. The rav of the city, Rav Yechiel Michel, passionately implored the people to keep their faith and die *Al Kiddush Hashem*. The Shach reports that, for three days, the Cossacks rampaged through the town, murdering thousands of Jews, including Rav Yechiel Michel. The shul was destroyed and all the *Sifrei Torah* were torn to pieces and trampled. Their parchment was used for shoes and clothing. Merely five years before, the community of Nemirov had been proud to have as its rav the *gadol hador* of the time, the *Tosafos Yom Tov*, who had previously served as rav of Nikolsburg, Vienna and Prague. At the time of the *Gezeiros Tach veTat*, the *Tosafos Yom Tov* was the rav and *rosh yeshivah* of Cracow, having succeeded the Bach as rav and the *Meginei Shlomoh* as *rosh yeshivah* after they passed away. The *Shaarei Teshuvah* 580:9 quotes the Shach as citing an additional reason why the *Vaad Arba Ha'aratzos* established the day of commemoration for the *gezeiros Tach veTat* on the 20th of Sivan: this date never falls on *Shabbos* and therefore would be observed every year.

## 7. Wikipedia, Khmelnytsky Uprising

From the 1960s to the 1980s historians still considered 100,000 a reasonable estimate of the Jews killed and, according to Edward Flannery, many considered it "a minimum".[28] Max Dimont in *Jews, G-d, and History*, first published in 1962, writes "Perhaps as many as 100,000 Jews perished in the decade of this revolution." [29] Edward Flannery, writing in *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism*, first published in 1965, also gives figures of 100,000 to 500,000, stating "Many historians consider the second figure exaggerated and the first a minimum".[28] Martin Gilbert in his *Jewish History Atlas* published in 1976 states "Over 100,000 Jews were killed; many more were tortured or ill-treated, others fled ..." [30] Many other sources of the time give similar figures.[31]

Although many modern sources still give estimates of Jews killed in the uprising at 100,000[32] or more,[33] others put the numbers killed at between 40,000 and 100,000,[34] and recent academic studies have argued fatalities were even lower.

A 2003 study by Israeli demographer Shaul Stampfer of Hebrew University dedicated solely to the issue of Jewish casualties in the uprising concludes that 18,000–20,000 Jews were killed of a total population of 40,000.[35] Paul Robert Magocsi states that Jewish chroniclers of the 17th century "provide invariably inflated figures with respect to the loss of life among the Jewish population of Ukraine. The numbers range from 60,000–80,000 (Nathan Hannover) to 100,000 (Sabbatai Cohen), but that "[t]he Israeli scholars Shmuel Ettinger and Bernard D. Weinryb speak instead of the 'annihilation of tens of thousands of Jewish lives', and the Ukrainian-American historian Jarowlaw Pelenski narrows the number of Jewish deaths to between 6,000 and 14,000".[36] Orest Subtelny concludes:

Between 1648 and 1656, tens of thousands of Jews—given the lack of reliable data, it is impossible to establish more accurate figures—were killed by the rebels, and to this day the Khmelnytsky uprising is considered by Jews to be one of the most traumatic events in their history.[26]

In the two decades following the uprising the Commonwealth suffered two more major wars (The Deluge and Russo-Polish War (1654–67); during that period total Jewish casualties are estimated as at least 100,000.[19]

## 8. Yitzchak Alfasi, Moadei Kodesh, Chaf Sivan – Hayom Hamar Hazeh (page 333)

צרות ראשונות [אחרונות?] משכחות את הראשונות וכך נשתכח רושמו של יום יום [?] כ' בסיון, מה עוד שהוא לא נתקבל בכל תפוצות ישראל. אולם, משתכפו הגזירות ובאה על העם הגזירה הנוראה הנקראת גזירת רינדפלייש שבטתה נחרבו מאה ארבעים ושש קהילות בצרפת, בווריה ואוסטריה, חזרו וקיימו את צום כ' בסיון. ביום ז' באייר ה'נ"ח לאלף הששי (1298) אחד האצילים בשם רינדפלייש הסית את ההמון אשר בעיר רוטינגן להרוג את היהודים, משום ש"פגעו" ב"קרבן" של הקתולים, הוא הלחם ה"קדוש" שלהם. כל קהילת רוטינגן הושמדה. משם פשטו על קהילות נוספות אשר בחלקן נזכרות בספר אזכרות נשמות לקהילת נירנברג. ביום י"ב בתמוז היה השמד בקהילת

ניושטאט שבה נשרפו משפחות שלמות, מהן ששרפו את עצמם מבלי להשתמד חלילה. משם עברו לקהילת ווינדשהיים ומשם לקהילת איפהובן... כך עברו הרוצחים מקהילה לקהילה... רוב היהודים מסרו עצמם על קידוש השם. המקונן על הטבח הזה מספר כי הקדושים הלכו ב"שירים ובמחולות" אל המוקד...

Early [Late?] tragedies make earlier ones be forgotten, and so the impression of the day of the 20<sup>th</sup> of Sivan was forgotten, in addition to that it had not been accepted in all Jewish communities. However, when the decrees followed immediately, and the awful decree known as "the Rintfleisch massacre", through which 146 communities in France, Bavaria, and Austria were destroyed, they reestablished the fast of the 20<sup>th</sup> of Sivan. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of Iyar 5058 (1298) one of the nobles named Rintfleisch convinced the masses in Rottingen to kill the Jews, since they "attacked" the "sacrifice" of the Catholics, their "holy" bread. The entire Rottingen community was destroyed. From there they spread to additional communities, some of which are mentioned in the memorial books of the Nirenberg [Norenburg? Nuremberg?] community. On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz, there was a destruction [or forced conversion] in the Neustadt community, in which whole families were burnt, some burnt themselves rather than convert, [G-d] forbid. From there, they moved on to the Windsheim community, and from there to the Iphofen community... So these murderers passed from community to community... Most of the Jews gave themselves over for Kiddush Hashem. The lamenter/eulogizer on this slaughter tells that the holy [people] went "in song and dance" to the pyre...

## 9. Selichot for Chaf Sivan, published by the Hungarian Jewish Community after the Holocaust

### סדר היום

א) אור ליום כי ילמדו פרק משניות ברכים ויאמרו תפלת אנא קדיש דרבנן דעלוי נשמת הקדושים.

ב) ביום כי שעה ומחצה קודם חצות היום (לפי הזמן הנהוג כעת הוא 11:30) יהא בטול מלאכה ונעילת החניות עד לאחר תפלת המנחה.

ג) בשעה הנ"ל יתאספו כל הצבור לבית כנסת אחד דוקא בכרי שתהא ההתעוררות ברוב עם ואם אין בית כנסת א' מכילין יתאספו בכמה בתי כנסיות לפי רוב העם ד' יוסף עליהם ויאמרו תהלים בצבור לכהים חצי שעה במתינות.

ד) אח"כ יתחיל הרב הדרוש לומר לפני העם דברי כבושים לעורר את השומעים לתשובה. — אחר הדרשה יאמר השי"ן א' מלא רחמים בנוסח הנדפס כאן ויאמרו כל הצבור תהלים כי יעקב ד' והרב יאמר הקדיש בנוסח הנדפס פה לפי נוסחא ישנה לעלוי נשמת הקדושים שלא נשאר אחריהם מי שיאמר עבורם קדיש. — אחר הקדיש יאמרו אב הרחמים שאומרים בשבת קדיש על הנדרגים עד קדוש השם.

ה) לאחר חצות היום יתפללו תפלת מנחה, אשרי חצי קדיש, מציאין ס"ת וקוראין ויחל אם יש לכהים עשרה המתענים ומשלימים. אין קוראין לתורה רק מי שמתענה ומשלים. — אחר קריאת התורה מחזירין ס"ת למקומו ומתחילין לומר סליחות על הסדר כפי הנדפס בקונטרס זה, בהתעוררות ובמתינות. — אחר הסליחות אומרים היק ומתפללים שומע וכל מי שקיבל את התענית (אסל' שלא להשלים) והתענה עד כעת אומר ענינו ביום צום תעניתנו, השי"ן יאמר ענינו בין גואל לרופא אם יש עשרה המתענים ומשלימים ואם לאו יאמר ענינו בשומע תפלה. אחר שיע אומרים אבינו מלכנו מסוק בפסוק בנוסח שאומרים בתענית צבור כפי הנדפס בסדורים תחנון שמע ישראל ד' מלך, ד' הוא האלוהים, קיש ועלינו.

ו) נכון לילך על הקברים ביום זה ומי שלא הלך קודם סדר היום ילך לאחר זה.

ז) לעת ערב יתקבצו כל הקהל ויעשו הסידים על המשניות שלמדו במשך השנה לעלוי נשמות הקדושים ויתפללו תפלת ערביה ויעשו סעודה מצוה.

ח) יגדור פרצת עמו ישראל ברחמים ולא ישמע עוד שוד ושבר בגבוליו וישלח לנו משיח צדקנו בקרוב אכיר.

# סליחות

## ליום כי' סיון

שנקבעו על ההריגות דשנת  
ת"ח במדינת פולין מגאונים  
וקדושים ז"ע, ועתה נתחדש  
אורם באורה שיניים למדינת  
הונגריא.

נ ע ר כ ו

ונדפסו בהסכמת הרבנים הגאונים שליט"א  
ע"י הלשכה המרכזית לקהלות הוראים  
דמדינתנו על הריגת אחבני בני  
מדינתנו משנת תשי"א והלאה ובפרט  
בשנת תשד' תשי"ב הידי ועל הריגת בתי  
כנסיות ובתי מדרשות וכליון ספרי תורה  
ושאר ספרים קדושים.

הרשם ירחם ויאמר הרף.

ת. ש. ו.

נדפס בדפוס של אחים נעוורין בודפשט הונגריא.