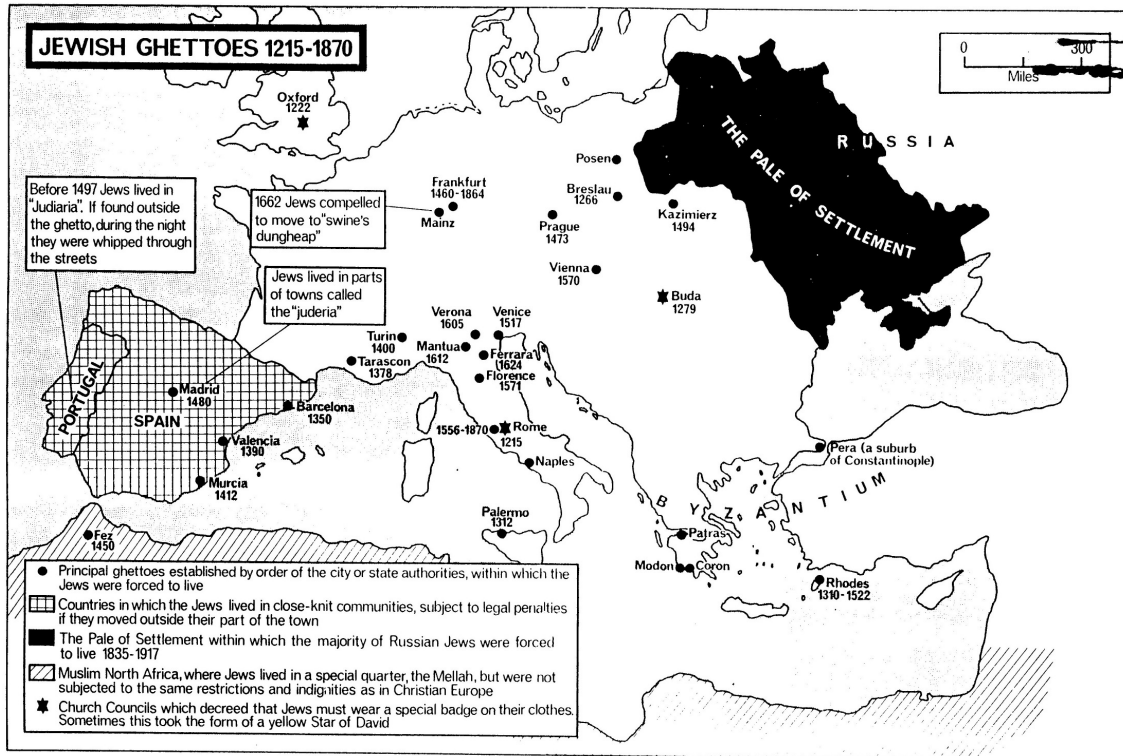


תהלים פרק נט פסוק יב

אל תהרגם פן ישכחו עמי הניעמו בחילך והורידמו מגגנו אדני:

Psalms 59:12

Do not kill them, lest my people forget; remove them from their possessions with Your power and bring them down, O Lord our Shield.



Baruch *or* Benedict de Spinoza

ברוך שפינוזה

(1632-1677)



חרם

July 27, 1656

THE SEPHARDI COMMUNITY OF AMSTERDAM The Writ of Excommunication Against Baruch Spinoza

The Senhores of the Mahamad² make it known that they have long since been cognizant of the wrong opinions and behavior of Baruch d'Espinoza, and tried various means and promises to dissuade him from his evil ways. But as they effected no improvement, obtaining on the contrary more information every day of the horrible heresies which he practised and taught, and of the monstrous actions which he performed, and as they had many trustworthy witnesses who in the presence of the same Espinoza reported and testified against him and convicted him; and after all this had been investigated in the presence of the rabbis, they decided with the consent of these that the same Espinoza should be excommunicated and separated from the people of Israel, as they now excommunicate him with the following ban:

After the judgment of the Angels, and with that of the Saints, we excommunicate, expel and curse and damn Baruch d'Espinoza with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of this holy congregation [*Kahal Kados*] in

front of the holy Scrolls with the 613 precepts which are written therein, with the anathema with which Joshua banned Jericho, with the curse with which Elisha cursed the youths, and with all the curses which are written in the Law. Cursed be he by day, and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down, and cursed be he when he rises up; cursed be he when he goes out, and cursed be he when he comes in. The Lord will not pardon him; the anger and wrath of the Lord will rage against this man, and bring him all the curses which are written in the Book of the Law, and the Lord will destroy his name from under the Heavens, and the Lord will separate him to his injury from all the tribes of Israel with all the curses of the firmament, which are written in the Book of the Law. But you who cleave to the Lord your God are blessed.

We order that nobody should communicate with him orally or in writing, or show him any favor, or stay with him under the same roof, or come within four ells of him, or read anything composed or written by him.

Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto* (pp. 28-29)

signs of change, were detected in four aspects.

The social ascent of the court Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been pointed to as an undoubtedly new feature of Jewish society at that time.¹ As a result of their important economic role, these rich Jews acquired positions of influence with those in power — the emperor, king, princes, and bishops whom they served. In return for their services, they often secured privileges for themselves. Some of them were exempted from paying the *Schutzgeld* (protection money) that was a basic condition of the Jew's right to toleration in a certain place. The court Jew might also secure the right of residence for his family, his widow, or his sons-in-law. More than that, communities were founded or enlarged owing to the influence of a court Jew. In addition, court Jews were exempted from the jurisdiction of both Jewish and Gentile courts and were accountable for their actions only to the Royal Court (*Hofgericht*) like other officials of the ruler. Indeed, the court Jew's status resembled that of high officials in other respects as well. He was appointed to his post by his lord; he bore the title *Hoffaktor* or *Hofagent* and other similar titles, and received a salary. Finally, the court Jew also demonstrates his high standing by outward appearance. He is clad, if not entirely in the fashion followed by one of the other estates then, in any case, differently from his Jewish brethren. In his household his attire and equipage exhibit his wealth and influence.²

This type of Jew who acquires forbearance and standing by serving the politically powerful is no novelty in Jewish history. He is found wherever Jews lived amongst Gentiles and relied on the protection of the mighty. To serve the masters of the country with money and business acumen gave Jews their best chance to ascend beyond the level of the underprivileged. The Jewish financier and tax farmer of Muslim and Christian Spain are perhaps the most conspicuous examples of this.³ Still, the court Jews of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seem to have surpassed all their precursors. They were more numerous, their business activities were more extensive, and their influence increased; so did their proximity to those in power. No wonder that historians came to regard them as prime movers in what was happening in Jewish society at that time.

קדמות

יבר זה מסורת אגדה היא כידינו מאבותינו שעלו לפולין. ראו ישראל
התודיפות גמשכות והולכות והצרות מתחדשות ובאות והשעבוד הולך
הולך והולכות וישאמו בזהות מידת ארצי בידנו עד שלום הימים להם וישאמו
אשרהיהם על ישראל, המדי של וזמנו המאלי להחיות מולא, אי זה הדרך
להם בזה השאר מרצו להשמו מל מל מן השמים לנו לפולין, וילבו
יבאו ארצה פולין ויתנו למלך הר זהב, ויקבל אותם המלך בכבוד גדול. זה
הם עליהם ויתן אותם לוחמים לפני המלך והשורים, ויתן להם המלך לשבח
בכל ארצות ממלכתו לסחור את הארץ לארבה ולרחבה ולעבוד את ה'
במסמט דת. ותמלך מן בערם מכל עד וארוב, וישכון ישראל במה בפולין
איש ואיש, וישלחו ירידת במסחר ובכל מלכאן ושכורת, וחי איתו אגוש את
המדינה ויבנה בארץ, וישא להם שם בניימ, ויפחד את המדינות ממדינה
וישקו מן המדינות, ואלא המדי המדינות אשר משקת מלך פולסקי הדינה על
המדינה מן המדי פולסקי, מולנסו יקראו למלך קידול, וידי בדיחא
בארץ ויחשבו ימי זמנו שמים ועל כל מן מדינה המדי המדינות השמים
הדינה על המדי, המדי הידי ישר קבאן, ואלא ורא אמל למלך, ויאמר
איש אל ויעה, המדי המדי אל ארץ אשר בזה ישבו אבותינו מקדום, וכל קרה
שמוז פולין ו אמרו כמות ישראל לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא וזמנו של עולם אם
עדין לא תגיבנו שטור להנאל מגלות זו שחיה וזמנו ללילה, פח לין עמנו עד
שחזרים לארץ ישראל.

