I. Poland: A haven turned upside down

Against the backdrop of multiple expulsion and ghettoization, Poland appeared as the only substantial ray of hope for the Jews. It wouldn’t last forever, but Poland offered the Jewish community a haven of peace that allowed them social and spiritual growth like nowhere else.

It had started in the middle ages when German Jews, escaping the Crusades, the blood libel, the Black Death and the Inquisition, started to massively migrate eastward towards Poland and Lithuania. The refugees were very well received and accepted, as their immigration created an economic boom for the local economy. They were accepted in all areas of government and business including by the kings and nobles of Poland; yet, the clergy or the people never accepted them.

By the end of the 15th century a ghetto was introduced in Krakow and persecutions started to pick up. But the Jewish community had been well established in Poland and the clergy’s expectations about the demise of the Jews didn’t come easy. As a matter of fact, the Jewish community continued to flourish for most of the 16th century. Between 1500 and 1648, the Jewish population of Poland grew from 15,000 to 50,000 and they were granted an almost complete autonomy from kings such as Sigismund II (1548-1572). Jewish education and Talmudic studies reached such a level of excellence during that period of time that they would influence European Judaism for years to come.

In spite of a noticeable period of respite, ritual murder and host desecration accusations continued to occur, having found a fertile soil in the new Jewish influx from Western Europe.

It is in Poland that Orthodox Judaism became divided into two sects: Those who favored Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), and those who didn’t. Hassidic Judaism was then started by the Baal Shem Tov or “Master of the Good name” (1698-1760).
II. The French Revolution

The French Revolution of 1789 brought on a dramatic change to France with the 1789 “Declaration Universelle des Droits de l’Homme” or Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It did not exclude the Jews, while not including them specifically either, even thought they had lobbied for their emancipation and pleaded with many nobles including King Louis XVI himself. Eventually, the Declaration after two years of work was ratified in 1791, giving Jewish people more freedom and validating their further emancipation (so it appeared!). The French Revolution was instrumental in the birth of the concept of freedom of religion provided it didn’t interfere with public order. This happened at a time when most European countries were restricting the rights of religious minority groups like the Jewish people. The assimilation of Jews was slowly starting to happen.

III. Napoleon and the Jews

Napoléon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was born on the French island of Corsica. In 1804, he became France’s Emperor by crowning himself Napoleon 1er. The same year, he introduced “Le Code Napoléon” which was the first modern legal code to be adopted across Europe. It was a major step in replacing the antiquated laws and codes of the now defunct feudal system of the Middle Ages.

From the beginning, Napoléon had one goal in mind: Make the Jews of France into Frenchmen. He had no intention of stopping them from practicing Judaism in the privacy of their homes, but he just expected them to give their allegiance to the Empire, as all French citizens should.

In 1806, two years after he became Emperor, he called for an assembly of Notables (along with a meeting of the Sanhedrin after almost 1500 years)¹ within the Jewish community. Questions about marriage, faith and patriotism amongst

¹ The last binding decision of the Sanhedrin was in 358, when the Hebrew Calendar was adopted. The Sanhedrin was dissolved after continued persecution by the Roman Empire. Over the centuries, there have been attempts to revive the institution, such as the Grand Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon Bonaparte.  
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanhedrin
others, were asked and to Napoléon’s satisfaction, the Jewish leaders responded that they would die defending France.

Some have claimed that Napoléon’s goal was simply to get rid of the Jews by process assimilation, intermarriage and conversion as opposed to elimination. He was quoted saying: “I will never accept any proposals that will obligate the Jewish people to leave France, because to me the Jews are the same as any other citizen in our country. It takes weakness to chase them out of the country, but it takes strength to assimilate them.”

Napoléon saw great benefits in protecting the Jews and was instrumental in doing so beyond France’s borders. He also helped the Jews of Italy and other conquered countries and helped tear down the doors of many ghettos. As a result, Jewish people originally admired him across the Empire. Judaism became the third official religion of France. The Jewish community, in admiration for their “savior”, even introduced a new prayer for Napoléon in their synagogue prayer books.

But in 1808, caving under the pressure of many very upset leaders and statesmen, Napoléon felt obligated to introduce a "Restrictive Decree.” The Jewish community was in shock and lost much of its wealth and influence almost to the point of a total bankruptcy. The 1815 Council of Vienna worked very hard at re-establishing the old order, as a new anti-Napoleonic nationalism would help to once more take away basic rights from Jewish people. By 1819, the Germans were again inciting violence against the Jews and Pope Pius VII reinstated the ghetto. Emancipation would continue very slowly and sporadically across Western Europe.

IV. The Pale of Settlement

The Pale of Settlement was the name given to a region of Imperial Russia that comprised about 1,000,000 square miles (20% of European Russia), where Jews were allowed to live. It included much of present-day Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Ukraine, and parts of western Russia. It was acquired by the Russian Empire during several military conquest that took place between 1791 and 1835.

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2 Schwarzfuchs, Simon: *Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin* (Routledge & Kegan, 1979) p.50
and it lasted until the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917.

The order for the confinement of the Jews was made official by Catherine II at the same time when she extended an invitation to all foreigners to enter Central Russia, all people “except the Jews”.

Even within the Pale itself, Jews suffered many restrictions, additional taxes and much hardship. About 90% of Russian Jews lived inside the Pale, and yet, the Jewish community grew from 1.6 million in 1820 to 5.6 million in 1910. At the same time, the pogroms of the 1870s through the 1910s created a very hostile environment that exacerbated the miserable conditions in which the Jewish people lived.

The first pogrom might have been as early as 1821 in Odessa, Ukraine. The official reason given for the subsequent hundreds of pogroms was the assassination of Alexander II in 1880 for which some blamed the Jews.

Pogroms became government sponsored riots against the Jews, and they claimed the lives of many in the little Jewish “shtetls” (hamlets) of the Pale.

The pogroms and other boycotts and hardships led to mass immigration to the United States in 1881 and 1914 of 2 million Jews.

The Haskalah or “enlightenment” seeking to modernize Judaism in hope of better integration, also took place at the same time.

Eventually, the Pale of Settlement was dismantled in 1917 after the fall of the Russian Empire.

V. The Dreyfus Affair and Theodor Herzl

In 1894 France, at a time when Jewish people thought that their emancipation had prevailed, Captain Alfred Dreyfus (An Alsatian Jew) was accused of treason against the French Government. The French revolution of 1789 and Napoléon had brought a hope of equality and integration into French society for French Jews, but Anti-Semitism as a temporarily inactive volcano of hatred, had just spewed its lava again. As the Dreyfus trial went on, mobs of angry Frenchmen were shouting “Death to the Jews” on the streets of Paris.
The Vienna newspaper *Neue Freie Press* sent their Paris correspondent, Hungarian journalist Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) to follow the Dreyfus Affair.

To be sure, Herzl’s obsession with Jewish existence in a land of their own predated the Dreyfus Affair. But it is the very treatment of Captain Dreyfus and by association, the Jews of France, that prompted him to compile his work of several years into the historic pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* or “The Jewish State”, published in Vienna in 1896 in which he stated:

“Palestine is our unforgettable historic homeland. . . Let me repeat once more my opening words: The Jews who will it shall achieve their State. We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, and in our own homes peacefully die. The world will be liberated by our freedom, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness. And whatever we attempt there for our own benefit will redound mightily and beneficially to the good of all mankind.”

Herzl was convinced that the only viable solution was a mass exodus of the Jews of Europe back to Israel, the land of their ancestors.

But Zionism existed long before Theodor Herzl. And Theodor Herzl, if not the originator of the concept of Zionism, was definitely the visionary, catalyst and leader of political Zionism.

VI. **The Protocols of the Elders of Zion**

One the biggest hoax in the history of anti-Semitism is the pamphlet known as *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. It was presented as being the minutes of a late 19th century meeting of Jewish leaders planning to take over the world. It first appeared in Russia, from a government press in 1905.

While the vast majority of scholars worldwide have written off the *Protocols* as an anti-Semitic hoax, it continued to be used worldwide. A tragic example can be seen in the actions of American automobile giant Henry Ford.

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4 Although the *Protocols* have been recognized as a hoax since 1921, I provide a link to the whole book for further research or studies. [http://ddickerson.igc.org/The_Protocols_of_the_Learned_Elders_of_Zion.pdf](http://ddickerson.igc.org/The_Protocols_of_the_Learned_Elders_of_Zion.pdf)
From 1920 to 1927, Henry Ford published a newspaper *The Dearborn Independent*. The newspaper published *The Protocols*, at the same time as *The Times* in London discredited the pamphlet, but this did not stop Ford who was quoted saying: “*The only statement I care to make about the Protocols is that they fit in with what is going on.*”

Written to influence the Czar against a Jewish/Masonic takeover, *The Protocols* failed, but further damage was done that would far exceed the expectation of the original forgers.

Hitler himself relied heavily on the *Protocols* and even quoted them in *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler is believed to have been greatly influenced by the *Protocols*. The book helped him to rationalize the destruction of European Jewry. In many ways, the *Protocols* were a catalyst for the Holocaust as they became part of “The Solution to the Jewish Question”.

In the 21st century, *The Protocols* continue to be published and distributed by neo-Nazi fringe groups and Islamist groups around the world. *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* is classified under "controversial knowledge" and available on Amazon.com.

VII. **The Nuremberg Laws**

In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were introduced and Jewish people lost their citizenship. Marriage and/or sexual relations between Jews and Aryans were prohibited and severely punished. Additionally, guidelines were created to determine who in Germany would qualify as a “mischling” (half-breed) and who wouldn’t.

The Nuremberg Laws would set the stage for the final delegitimization of the Jewish people before the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” could be implemented. By 1935, Hitler is solidly established in power. Few if any would dare

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to contradict him. His obsession with the “Jewish problem” would soon lead him to
the next step in his attempt at the destruction of European Jewry.

VIII. The Final Solution to the Jewish Question

As early as September of 1939, a section of the SS known as the
Einzatsgruppen (task forces) was set aside for the annihilation of Jews, Gypsies and
Communists. They concentrated on Jews and were responsible for the death of
1,300,000 people. The Einzatsgruppen were directed by the Gestapo (German Secret
Police). The killings were mostly done by shooting in open-air area over mass
graves prepared prior to their deaths. While most of the killings did happen by
shootings, Hitler realized that one bullet per victim was a high price to pay and that
it would take months if not years to accomplish the task. As a result, the
Einzatsgruppen started to experiment with carbon monoxide. It wasn’t very
successful as it was too slow and the victims agonizing screams “bothered the
German soldiers”.

Time being of the essence, Hitler decided that Jews would all be exterminated
since they couldn’t be expatriated fast enough. The next step was officially adopted
at the Wannsee Conference that only lasted 90 minutes, and was a meeting of senior
Nazi officials in January 1942 to inform different department assigned to the “Jewish
Question” that Reinhard Heydrich had been assigned chief executor of the “Final
Solution to the Jewish Question”.

The plan apparently approved by Hitler was to send the Jews to forced labor
camps to help rebuild Germany and let them die during their work or exterminate
the survivors after the work was done. As the allied forces were pushing Germany
back, the forced labor came to a halt and extermination became the sole reason
behind the rounding up of the European Jews. Adolf Eichmann attended the meeting
and was charged of organizing the deportation by Heydrich.

The Holocaust was almost successful in eradicating all Jews from Europe.
Very few people who were taken to the camps survived. The train system used by
Hitler was the most sophisticated way to bring Jews to the camps at the time. He
went out of his way to gather Jews who had left Germany or even lived in different European countries.

**IN THAT WAY, THE HOLOCAUST IS THE ONLY GENOCIDE IN HUMAN HISTORY WERE THE PERPETRATORS WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO BRING THE VICTIMS BACK TO THEIR DEATH AT A GREAT COST.**

In the words of author Lucy Dawidowicz and as used in the title of her great work on WWII and the Holocaust, the Second World War could easily be renamed *The War Against the Jews.*

Hitler used all the cattle cars he could gather to take Jews to their death. At the end of the war, during the Russian campaign, it cost him greatly and it is believed that it was one of the main reasons he lost against Russia.

- **Only two** Jews (out of 150,000 to 300,000) survived **Chelmo.**
- **Two** Jews (out of 600,000), Rudolf Rader and Haim Hirshman, survived **Belzec.**
- About **70** prisoners survived **Treblinka** (out of 800,000),
- **Auschwitz I, II and III** had **7650** survivors when liberated by the Soviets on January 27, 1945 (out of over 1,000,000).

**IX. Reflections on the Holocaust**

The Holocaust left an eternal scar on the Jewish soul. To this day, decisions are made based upon the Holocaust (politically & spiritually). It is very common for Jewish historians to look at Jewish history from two different vantage points: Pre-Holocaust and Post-Holocaust.

**Where was God in the Holocaust? Why is there Evil?**

**Options:**
- God does not exist.

  *Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

  *Rom. 1:20*
For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, 
His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being 
understood through what has been made, so that they are without 
excuse.

• God does not care.
  1John 4:7-8
  Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who 
loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not 
know God, for God is love.

• God exists but evil doesn’t.
  Gen. 3:5
  “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, 
and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

  Eccl. 7:20
  Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good 
and who never sins.

  James 3:16
  For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and 
every evil thing.

• God is not great.
  Psa. 150:2
  Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent 
greatness.

  Luke 9:43
And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples,

So, God is good, God is great and Evil exists.

Possible Explanations:

- God allows free will.
- There are no good people.
- Suffering is in accordance with our sin.
- God brings benefits from suffering.

Miscellaneous Facts on the Holocaust

- God did stop evil: Hitler was very close to obtaining the atomic bomb (within 6 months). This would have made him virtually unstoppable and would have surely helped him in annihilating the rest of European Jewry.
- A Holocaust survivor might just need a hug – not a theological discourse.
- Nazi Germany and Hitler did not happen in a vacuum. There has been 2000 years of history. The Nazi Holocaust was Luther's words put in action.
- Hitler had his master plan laid out as early as 1920.
- As a result of WWI, Germans needed a scapegoat and had come accustomed to extreme violence.
- Germans feared the Jewish cultural theft, world takeover, Bolshevism and the biological threat of intermarriage.
- Many Germans also feared the Nazis and therefore did not try to help the Jewish people.
- Zionism became more militant in the aftermath of WWII. European Jewish people realized their need for a country. In 1948, the new State of Israel was declared by Ben Gourion, which led to immediate war. Israel continues to be in turmoil to this day and will be until the Messiah returns.
X. Post-Holocaust Jewish history and the New anti-Semitism

In light of the last two thousand years of Jewish history, it is obvious that one over arching theme has been anti-Semitism. We have also noticed that there has been a progressive morphing of the anti-Jewish sentiment from theological and/or religious at the closing of the biblical canon, all the way to racial during the Holocaust.

Yet there is another form of anti-Semitism that has emerged from a further morphing of this longest hatred against the Jews, and that is the new anti-Semitism. The key word here is NEW. It is not so much that the object of anti-Semitism has changed but mainly the way it is carried out.

So, The NEW Anti-Semitism has a lot in common with what I call the old anti-Semitism as far as the goal is concerned. It was, is, and always will be the complete destruction of the Jewish people just because they are Jewish. Today, the phoenix of doom, it is reborn after 70 years, in spite of the Jewish people’s creed of NEVER AGAIN.

It is as if Satan kept a few coals slowly burning under a pile of consumed ashes, waiting for the opportune time to re-ignite the age-old hatred. It is possibly the beginning of Satan’s final attack against Israel. As such, it is delivered to the world in a new package, making it more believable and easier to accept than its racially motivated predecessor of almost seven decades ago. It has new boundaries, a new source, and a new methodology.

Jewish history cannot be studied apart from anti-Semitism. It is against this unfortunate backdrop of blood and tears that we do our best to paint a picture of the love of Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah. We must tread lightly!