

# **A Geo-Historical and Cultural Overview of Jewish Life in the Bessarabia/Moldavia Region until the Beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century**



## **Introduction**

My long-term interest in my family's history brought me to research the subject of Jewish life up unto the nineteenth century. The "Through Their Eyes" Hebrew College course helped me achieve that objective by broadening my understanding of the history and culture of Jews in Europe from the fifteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century.

From my prior research I knew there was a limited amount of information available about Jewish life in Moldavia during this span of history. Nevertheless, I wanted to pursue my investigations further. Initially I did not trust a statement from the Encyclopedia Judaica that reads "...in the cultural sphere, Bessarabian Jewry in this period (15-18 centuries) was not advanced" and several other sources that seemed to be in agreement with this statement. In sharp contrast, I found pieces of useful material proving that Jewish life in the Moldavian region was diverse and equally advanced as in neighboring centers of Jewish settlement, i.e. Poland and the Ukraine. Jews fully participated in the building of the Moldavian principality establishing and improving commerce and trade in this region. During this time most rabbis who lived and served in Moldavia were originally from Poland and continued to maintain strong ties to Jewish life there. Travel between Moldavia and Poland was frequent and most books read and studied in Moldavia were published in Poland.

This paper includes an overview of the region, a general history of Moldavia, a history of the Jews of the region, the lives of rabbis and other famous figures who lived and traveled through the region and translated and annotated regional maps spanning four centuries. In addition, I point out particular characteristics attributed to Moldavian Jewry.

## **An Overview of the Region**

In the overview I describe the changing geography of the region and present a brief history of Bessarabia/Moldavia.

It is incorrect to assume that Bessarabia is simply another name for Moldavia. These are two distinct geographical regions with different histories. The name Moldavia is from the river Moldava whose waters traverse the region and empties near the mouth of the Danube River. The name Bessarabia is derived from the Wallachian princely family of Bessarab that once ruled South Bessarabia. The name originally applied only to the southern part of the territory.

Moldavia (Moldova in Romanian) is one of the Danube River principalities established in the beginning of the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century it became a vassal state of Turkey. By 1858, Moldova and Walachia constituted the Kingdom of Romania. Excluded from this new confederation was Bessarabia, lost to Russia in 1812 and Bukovina, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire since 1774.

Bessarabia lies between the rivers Prut, a tributary of the Danube, and the Dniester. Prior to 1812 almost the entire region was part of Moldavia with several districts under direct Ottoman rule. Bessarabia belonged to Russia from 1812-1918, and was part of Romania until the Soviet Union occupied the region in 1940. German-Romanian rule was established between 1941 and 1944. The Soviet Union reentered the region in 1944, and it wasn't until May 1990 that it became the independent state of Moldova. The most northern and southern sections of Bessarabia are now located in the Ukraine. And two small regions, the Dniester Republic (Transdnier/Transnistrian Republic) with a mostly Russian population and Gagauz-Yeri with a majority of Gagauz-Turkish speaking people have separated themselves from the state of Moldova and are trying to achieve independents.



From the Historical Atlas of Central Europe (Magocsi and Matthews, 1993)

The history of the Jews in Moldavia and Wallachia remains vague until the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Turkish sultans began to rule the area. Some evidence exists of a Jewish presence in the region long before that time. Near the town of Chotin in Bessarabia, engraved coins were discovered depicting Yehuda Maccabeus of the second century before the Common Era. Some historians have claimed that during the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE Moldova and

Wallachia were vassal states of the Jewish kingdom of the Khazaria. Khazars settled in the territory of the future Moldavia. In addition, there is speculation that Romanian Jews are partly descended from Khazars. Dr. Samuel Josef Schulsohn (New York) in his article "Immigration and Settlement of the Jews in Bukovina" tries to prove that there was an uninterrupted Jewish presence in Romania for centuries before a 14<sup>th</sup> century emigration into the area. He says that "... Jews partly came from Palestine, or were of Byzantine or Khazar origin and since the immigration from other European lands had not yet started, where else could they have come from."

My study will focus on Jewish history of the region from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, the proper name of the region is Moldavia and not Bessarabia.

To describe and understand the Jewish life in the region, I will present a brief, general history of Moldavia and then describe details of Jewish life in the region.

### **General History of Moldavia from the 14th Century to 1812**

The Principality of Moldavia was established in the beginning of the fourteenth century with arrival of a Prince Dragos (1351-1353) from Kingdom of Hungary. He and a successor, Prince Bogdan (1359-1365), united the Principality of Moldavia under their rule.

In the middle of the 15th century, Moldavia yielded to the Ottoman Sultan Badjazet and with their surrender the sultan secured for its inhabitants the undisturbed exercise of Christian Orthodoxy. The Ottomans also granted privileges to Moldavian merchants permitting them 'to come by sea in ships belonging to merchants in Akkerman, and trade freely in Edirne, Bursa and Istanbul'. (Inalck, 1973)

Suleyman the Magnificent made the Ottoman Empire the first nation of Europe and western Asia. In 1538, he personally led a campaign against Voivoda Petru Raresh an insurrectionist leader on behalf of Moldavian independence. Suleyman the Magnificent's army occupied the main town of Jassy and forced the Moldavian prince to accept Ottoman rule.

Moldavia remained under Ottoman rule for three centuries. In the beginning of their coexistence the Moldavian territory operated as an external vassalage within the empire. Moldovans paid an annual tribute to the sultan and were expected to adhere and be loyal to Ottoman foreign policy. In contrast to the principalities along the Danube and the Dniester rivers where the Turks established fortifications to militarily control the populations, in Moldavia and Walachia governance was in the hands of local princes hailing from territorial dynasties.

At the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century the situation in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia changed when the Ottoman Turks imposed a humiliating government in the

region. Wallachia and Moldavia were governed for a century by Greek princes from Phanar, the Greek quarter of Constantinople. The Phanariot period began in the two principalities with the reign of Prince Nicolae Mavrocordatos. He was imposed as the titular head in 1711 replacing Moldavian Dimitrie Cantemir who fled to Russia after the Russo-Turkish War. During the Phanariot period, the Austrians annexed the Moldavian province of Bukovina in 1774 and the Russians annexed Bessarabia in 1812.

### **History of the Jews in Moldavia**

Historical records confirm that in 1574 Jews lived in Moldavia during the reign of Prince Roman I (1391-1394) and Alexander Bun (Alexander the Good) (1401-1433). Jews came to the region mostly from Poland and became influential in Moldavian trade and commerce. It is important to note that during this period the Jews were granted the privilege to live and do business anywhere in the province.

During the rule of Prince Stefan Chel Mare (Stephen the Great, 1457-1504) Suceava was the capital of Moldavia. Jewish merchants were active in the cattle trade and other businesses. There are several examples of Jewish involvement in Stefan Chel Mare's government and in the court system. Isaak ben Benjamin Shor of Jassy, a Jew, was an attended steward to Stefan Chel Mare. Isaak advanced to the rank of Logofat (from Latin: *logotheta* "one who accounts, calculates") to Chancellor, one of the highest positions in the internal affairs of medieval Moldavia. From 1473-1474, Isaac Berg (Beg), a Jewish physician in Stefan Chel Mare's court became the Moldavian emissary to the court of the Persian Sultan Uzun Hassan. He sought an alliance between Moldavia and Persia against the dominant Turks. In 1498, Stefan Chel Mare wrote a letter advising the Polish King Alexander Jagiello that his ambassador should pay a 1200 gulden ransom for a Polish noblewoman who had been freed by Jews from a Tartar prison.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries Jewish emigration to Wallachia consisted mostly of Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain or Jews from Constantinople. At this time Moldavian Jews were mostly of Ashkenazic descent having emigrated from Galicia, Poland and Germany. From the 15th century onward, Jewish Sephardic merchants from Constantinople began to reside in Bessarabia. Trade routes at the time crisscrossed the territory connecting Black Sea nations with Eastern Europe. Later, Jewish merchants from Poland also began trading and settling in Bessarabia laying the foundation of the first Jewish communities in northern and central Bessarabia. Jewish communities in southern Bessarabia had been in existence since the 15th century.

The Polish chronicler Martin Bielski (1550) reported the story of Polish Christians fleeing the persecution of the Catholic clergy and converting to Judaism in Moldavia.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century many Moldavian princes started to limit privileges previously granted to Jews. In 1545, Jews complained to the Polish King that the Moldavian Prince Petru Raresh prevented them from taking Turkish horses to Poland and Lithuania, a common trade item at the time. In 1579, Prince Peter Schiopul (Peter the Lame) ill-treated Jews and expelled Polish born Jewish merchants from Moldavia (Iancu, 1996). The

Encyclopedia Judaica (Broghaus and Efron, Broghauz, 1900) states that Jews were completely expelled from the region in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. On January 8, 1579, the sovereign of Moldavia Peter Schiopul (Peter the Lame) ordered the banishment of the Jews on the grounds that they are ruining the merchants and that because of their total monopoly of Moldavian commerce. There is no evidence that the decree was enforced.

In 1591-1595, Prince Aron the Tyrant (Emanuel Aaron) was placed on the Moldavian throne due to the influence of Solomon Ashkenazi, the well-connected Jewish court physician of King Sigismund II, Augustus of Poland. Several sources claim that Emanuel Aron was of Hebrew descent, but I couldn't find verifiable proof. However, Emanuel's cruelty to the Jews is infamous. In despotic fashion he ordered the decapitation of 19 Jews of Jassy without due process of law. By his command the entire Jewish community of Bucharest was exterminated.

By 1612 Jews were well established once again in Moldavian commerce. To encourage their participation the Jews were invited by boyars, the great Moldavian landowners, to settle in Moldavia, to establish cities and markets, to administer estates, to run taverns and to build distilleries. These invitations to develop the Moldavian economy paralleled the economic expansion of Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries when Jews were invited to promote regional business.

The Prince Stefan Tomsa (1611-1615, 1621-1623) wrote to the Magistrate of Lemberg requesting that regardless of religion merchants be allowed to settle in Moldavia to promote trade and to do business without disturbance. To attract Jews to the area, he declared the expulsion order of Peter the Lame null and void.

In 1634-1653, Prince Vasile Lupu treated Jews with consideration until the appearance of the Cossack leader Bohdan Khmelnytsky. In 1652, Cossacks came to Jassy to claim Vasile Lupu's daughter Ruksanda for Timush, the son of Bogdan Khmelnytski. On his way he massacred Jews. According to the chronicle of Neta Natan Hannover, a Jassy rabbi in Jassy during late 17 century, between 1648 and 1653, many Ukrainian Jews sought refuge in Moldavia fearing death by Cossacks.

The most famous Moldavian of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the Prince of Moldavia, Demetrius Kantemir. He was a writer, a political leader and a scientist. He led ten thousand Moldavians on the Russian side in their fight against the Turks. After the Turks were victorious Kantemir fled and settled in Russia. Peter the Great awarded him the title of Prince of the Russian Empire.

Demetrius Kantemir wrote *Descriptio Moldaviae* the first and most complete description of Moldavian geography, history, government, and daily life. This work included a description of the life of Jews; their rights, occupations and relations with their neighbors. [Kantemir, 1714, translation 1973].

In the geographical section of *Descriptio Moldavei*, Kantemir described the town of Kilia in the southern part of Bessarabia, southeast Moldavia. Kilia was a small but famous trade port where ships from as far as Egypt and Venice would be anchored. Kantemir

described Kilia as a cosmopolitan town with Turks, Jews, Christians and Armenian living together peacefully.

A picture of religious toleration is described in the *Descriptio Moldavei*. “All guests of the monastery, an Orthodox or a Jew, a Turk or an Armenian, would receive not only a cordial reception, but the monks would accommodate and feed guests even if he and his companions regardless of their numbers wanted to remain in the monastery for a even a whole year.”

In the political section of the book, Jews were mentioned among other peoples living in Moldavia. According to the author, Jews were allowed to build wooden synagogues but not stone structures. Jews were citizens of the nation but paid an annual tax that was higher than other citizens. Jews were engaged exclusively in commerce and tavern keeping. The author reported that “...foreign traders, Turks, Jews and Armenians keep all commerce in their hands because the Moldavians are not enterprising and show no initiative.”

In the final chapter of *Descriptio Moldavei*, The Customs of the Moldavians, the author recorded a stunning irony describing how native Moldavians on the one hand lived friendly with people of other ethnic and religious backgrounds in towns and villages and had the reputation of being hospitable to every traveler, yet “... they considered it hardly a mortal crime to kill a Turk, a Tatar, or a Jew.”

By the early 18th century, permanent Jewish settlements had been established in several commercial centers: Iasi, Onitcani, Suceava, Kishinev, Bendery, Kiliya. Toward the end of the century relatively large numbers of Jews were living in most of the urban settlements and in many villages: in 1774 a Chapter of the Jewish burial society of Kishinev was signed by 144 members, in 1770 first synagogue was built in Bendery, Jewish population in Iasi as of 1803 was 3000, in 1775 a synagogue was built in Soroki.

It is recorded in a variety of sources that by mid-century there was not a single Moldavian town or village in which Jews hadn't already established a Jewish community. The census of 1803 showed 4000 Jewish taxpayers; probably lower than the actual number because Jews paid higher taxes per head than gentiles. By 1812 when the Russians began to rule Moldavia there was a permanent Jewish presence in Bessarabia with an estimated 20,000 Jews or 5000 families.

In 1803, Condica Liuzilor, tax registrar for the Moldavian Treasury, recorded about 3000 Jewish heads of families.

The Jews of Bessarabia engaged primarily in local commerce and the distillation of spirits. Jews traded to a considerable degree with neighboring countries. In villages, Jews made their living mainly as innkeepers or temporary leasers of property, businesses, tax collections and alike.

To further demonstrate the rich and diverse life of the Jews of Moldavia between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18th centuries, I will present a typical picture of life in several Moldavian towns.

During this time **Jassy** was the largest center of settlement in Moldavia. Today it is a city in Romania. Jassy's Jewish community was the oldest in Moldavia. Cemetery stones dating from 1467 can be found in the city today. Due to its location along the Poland to Turkey trade route, Jewish merchants started to settle in Jassy. As a result of the Cossack pogroms of 1648-52, the Jewish population of Jassy increased with refugees seeking asylum. Cossacks eventually made their way to Jassy in 1652 capturing displaced Jews only to free them when they received large sums of random money. Among the Jews saved from the Cossacks was Reb Natan-Nat Hannover. Reb Hannover was employed as a rabbi for several years in Foshkany and beginning in 1660 in Jassy. In 1662, he wrote his second book, a liturgical work based on cabalistic messianic teachings entitled "Shaarei Zion", published in Prague. In 1686, a synagogue was opened in the belt makers' neighborhood. A number of Polish Jews sold into slavery and later redeemed by wealthy Constantinople Jews relocated in Jassy.

Two other famous rabbis served in Jassy: Pethahiah Linda, son of David Linda who fled from Lvov during the Polish-Swedish war and his successor, Betzalel ha-Cohen who later became the Chacham-rashi wielding religious and social power over Moldavia and Walachia.

**Kishinev** ( Kishla-Nou in Moldavian) was established as a town in the 14th century. At the end of 17th century Kishinev was destroyed by Tartars. In the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Jews lived on both sides of the River Byk. The early history of Kishinev can be found recorded in a 1774 official statute of a burial society. Written in Yiddish the statute was signed by 144 members of the Jewish community and was approved by a rabbi in Jassy. At the end of 18th century, Hayyim ben Solomon Tyrer was the rabbi of Kishinev. At the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Zalman the son of Mordechai Shargorodsky, a pupil of the Baal Shem Tov, the spiritual founder of the Hasidic movement, became rabbi in Kishinev and in 1816 established a synagogue. By the beginning of 19th century Kishinev had become the main town of the province of Bessarabia under Russian rule.

**Bendery** was a castle town and the regional center of Bessarabia. In 1770 a synagogue was built inside the castle. After the town was moved to a new location outside the castle, the synagogue was visited only on Yom Kippur. In the 1840s, the city was home to RebWertheim, a rebbi and tzadik, the grandson of Rabbi Shimon Wertheim from Vienna.

**Soroki** was another old Moldavian town. The first mention of Jewish settlement in Soroki was in 1657. A synagogue was established in 1775. The Jewish burial society came into existence in 1777. In 1817 there were 157 Jewish families living in Soroki. David Solomon Eibenschutz served as rabbi and encouraged the study of Torah.

### **Distinguished Rabbinic Moldavians and Visitors to the Region**

A Jewish philosopher, mathematician and physician, Josef Salomon Del Mediggo, visited Moldavia on his way from Constantinople to Poland (1618-1620). In Jassy he met Rabbi Salomon ben Araja from Yemen who served as a rabbi in Jassy for 40 years. According

to an article written by Dr. Samuel Josef Schulsohn, Josef Salomon Del Mediggo lived in Moldavia for 11 years. A student of Galileo Galilei, Josef Del Mediggo visited Rabbi Leon de Modena of Venice on numerous occasions.

Documents show the presence of a Jewish physician, (unknown given name) Cohen, in the court of Prince Vasile Lupu in 1640. He was in held in favor by the Sultan of Turkey and played a crucial role in transporting secret documents involving a secret alliance between Sweden and Russia to Vasile Lupu. It was probably due to Cohen's influence that the Prince issued enactments in favor of the Jews of Moldavia.

Hayyim ben Solomon of Czernowitz was also known as Hayyim ben Solomon of Mogilev, Hayyim ben Solomon Tyrer and Hayyim Chernovitzer (1760-1813). He was a rabbi, cabalist, tzadik, and a pupil of the Ba'al Shem Tov. After serving as rabbi in five Moldavian towns including Mogilev, Chernovitz and Kishinev, he settled in Jerusalem where he died in 1813.

Hayyim ben Solomon was the author of: "Siddur shel Shabbat", cabalistic homilies on Sabbath related subjects, Poryck 1818; "Sha'ar ha-Tefillah", cabalistic reflections on prayer, Sudilkiv, 1837; "Eretz ha-Chayyim" in two parts: (1) a homiletic commentary on the Prophets and the Hagiographa, and (2) a commentary on the Talmudic treatise Berachot, Chernovitz, 1861. Sender Margalioth mentioned Chayyim ben Solomon in his response on the Shulchan Aruch, Eben ha-Ezer. Devarim Hayyim: Davarim Nifla'im u-Meshalim Na'im", Cernauti (Chernovitz), Schulim Silber, 1923 which is a commentary to the weekly Torah portions read in synagogues on the Sabbath. One of Chayyim ben Solomon's main works "Sefer Be'er Mayim Chayyim", a commentary on the Pentateuch written in two parts, Chernovitz, pt 1, 1820, pt 2, 1849. Part of Be'er Mayim Chayyim (The Well of Spring Water) was translated into English. An excerpt from this book is presented below. It is a commentary on Numbers 15-39 and reflects a traditional interpretation of the Torah at that time.

*"Do not follow after your heart and after your eyes"*: Lest a person think that it is impermissible to experience corporeality and that one must only walk, day and night, involved in Torah and the commandments, therefore the Torah states, it is not thus, for "do not follow after your heart...according to your desires." The explanation is that in truth, you do desire these [corporeal] things. But the word "desire" (*zonim*) is from the word for food (*mazon*), as it is explained in the case of Rahav the harlot (*zonah*) in her inn (cf. Targum Yonatan on Joshua 2:1). That is to say, you are permitted, and indeed, must be fed (*nizon*) by them, to enjoy all of the delights of this world. Only do not let the lusts (*ta'avah*) of your heart and your eyes become a bodily craving which would lead you to come to a house of prostitution and to expand your "food" to the lusts of your heart.

Chayyim ben Solomon's works "Be'er Mayim Chayyim" and "Siddurei shel Shabbos" are quoted in the Stone Edition of the Chumash along with other rabbinic commentaries as edited by Rabbi Nosson Scherman.

David Solomon Eibenschutz was a rabbi and a cabalist. He was a pupil of Rabbi Moses Zebi Heller, author of "Geon Zebi". He was a rabbi in Buzhanow, Volynia, Soroki and



Jassy in Moldova. From Jassy he moved to the land of Israel where he died in Safed in 1812.

David Solomon Eibenschutz was the author of many talmudic and cabalistic works most of which exist in manuscript form only. He wrote “Lebushe Serad”, first part – commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, Orah Chayyim, which comments on David ben Samuel’s “Ture Zahab” and Abraham Abele Gumbinner’s “Magen Abraham” (Mohilev, 1818), the second part is on Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah (Mohilev, 1812). “Ne’ot Deshe” is a compilation of 138 responsa, published in Lemberg in 1861. “Arbe Nahal” is a treatise on the Pentateuch with synagogue sermons (Kopust, Sdilkov, 1835; Krotoschin, 1840; Zhitomir, 1850 and Lemberg, 1856). “Ne’ot Deshe” also includes two responsa written by Solomon ben Judah Aaron Kluger, chief dayan and preacher from Brody, Galicia.

The teachings of Jacob Leib Frank (1726-1791), a false Jewish messiah claiming to be the reincarnation of Shabbetai Tzvi (1626–76), took root in neighboring Podolia, the Ukrainian part of Poland. The town of Chotin in nearby Bessarabia became a center of Frankist activity from 1760 to 1770. Internal trouble caused by Frankist propaganda in Moldavia forced the Chacham-rashi of Jassy to appeal to the pasha of Chotin to prevent Frankists from moving to and seeking refuge in Moldavia.

### **The Particularity of Moldavian Jews**

The Jews settled in Moldavia at least a few hundred years after they first settled in Poland. By many accounts, at the end of eighteenth century the Jewish population in Moldavia was about thirty thousand which was a fraction of the number of Jews in Poland. During this period the general population of Moldavia was far smaller than in Poland.

It seems to me that the borders between countries and principalities between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were fluid and not enforcable. People in close proximity to towns near borders could freely visit each other. For example, Mogilev in Polish Podolia was across the Dnister River from the Moldavian town of Soroki. Rabbi Chayyim ben Solomon of Mogilev became the rabbi of Soroki and later had his works published in Czernowitz and Lemberg, Poland. It appears that Jews could travel across borders freely. This was not unique for Moldavia. The Jewish life in Italy, France, Germany and Poland was similar in this regard.

I would propose that years of Ottoman influence colored Moldavian Jewry in a fashion that differentiated it from Jews from other European countries. This is just an impression and needs to be investigated further. Further evidence of their particularity can be found in a distinctive Moldavian Yiddish spoken that was strongly influenced by the local Ukrainian dialect. Some linguists have named it a Bessarabian or Romanian Yiddish. In Moldavia the Jews also spoke Romanian one of the family of Romance languages.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that Jewish life in Moldavia spanning the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was highly diversified, culturally developed, similar to Jewish life in other countries in Europe and especially close to Jewish life in neighboring Poland.

I agree with Simon Dubnov's assessment as presented in his book "The Newest History of Jewish People", volume 1 (1789-1815) (Dubnov, 2002): "Newcomers from neighboring Ukraine and Galicia colonized this sparsely populated Danube region, where in the second half of 18th century the princes invited the Jews and Armenians to settle. Jewish settlements were purely Ukrainian in character. Jews lived in towns, in smaller villages and as tenants of landlords. In both principalities (Bessarabia and Walachia) the number of Jews at the end of 18th century was not less than thirty thousand. The majority of the Jews lived in larger towns like Jassy and in the smaller villages of Moldavia close to the Ukraine. Only a few thousand Jews lived in Walachia. Early Hasidim found refuge in the remote corners of Moldavia escaping from Haidamak and Galician poverty. Moldavia benefited economically and culturally from its close neighbors Podolia and Volynia once the territories were incorporated into Russia after second division of Poland (1793)..."

In my opinion, the life of the Jews of Moldavia was very similar to the Jewish life in the parts of Ukraine which belonged to Poland at that time (Podolia and Volynia). Life was good for the Jews of Moldavia and Poland when local kings and princes invited them to settle and when privileges were extended allowing them to develop trade and commerce. At various times life turned bitter when new kings and princes expelled the Jews from these territories or limited their privileges and rights, but the cycle would usually reverse itself when a new regime would invite the Jews to return again.

**Yefim Kogan, June 2006**

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