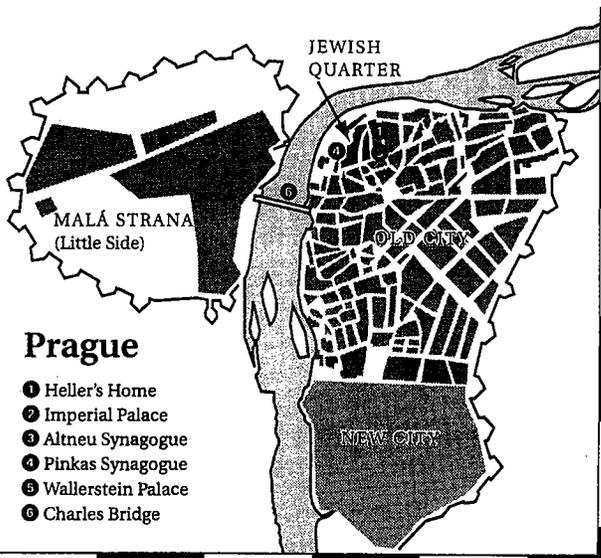


The World of Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller



לעונים, על הפשעים והמרדים והחטאים הזדונים. על כן קבעתי לעצמי ולדורותי, לבנים ולבני בנים, יום צום ותענית ואכל ומספד וקינים, ביום כ' לחודש סיון, שבו ניתנה תורה היקרה מפנינים, ועתה קרעוה פקעוה גוים רבים המונים המונים, יען כי יום זה הוא תחילה לגזרות ומכאובות וחלאים רעים ונאמנים, וגם כי בו הוכפלו הצרות וקלקולים מקלולים שונים, כי גם גזרת התקל"א היתה ביום ההוא ובאותן הזמנים, וגם כי יום זה לא יארע בשבת קודש בשום פנים, ע"פ הקביעות והלוחות אשר בידינו מתוקנים. * וחיברתי סליחות והקינות בבכי ותחנונים, לאומרים ביום זה בכל שנה ושנה עידן ועידנים, וכל איש אשר הריחו ה' ביראתו ובשם ישראל מכונים, ישים על לבו אלו הדברים והענינים, ויקבע עצמו יום זה לקונן עליו כעל שני חורבנים, אולי ישקיף ה' ויראה ממעונים. כי עדיין לא שכחה חמת המלך ה' צבאות מלך עליונים ותחתונים, כי עוד חמת יד המציק הצר הצורר נטויה בחרבות וכידונים, ותמיד הם פושטים בארץ ולמלחמה הם מוכנים ומזומנים, ובכל מקום אשר ימצאו מהיהודים הזרעים ובולעים כתנינים, והתאספו יחד עם רב מהרקים מזויינים ולבושי שריונים, ומאספים עליהם עם רב מהקדרים אשר סביבותיהם חונים, ויאמר: לכו ונכחיד ישראל ושמן נמחה כעננים, ולא נשאיר להם שאר וזכרון עם הראשונים והאחרונים. ואנחנו בשם ה' אלהינו נזכיר ועינינו לזה שוכן מעונים, ינקום נקמת דם עבדיו השפוף כמים על העצים ועל האבנים, ונקמת דם החסידים הקדושים, חכמים ונבונים, ובעלי תריסין עוקרי הרים, גאונים ורבנים, שוערים ומשוררים, שמשים וחזנים, בחורים ובתולות, ילדים וילדות, גדולים וקטנים, חשובים וחשובות, מלמדים עם תלמידים, נערים וזקנים, אשר נהרגו על קדושת שמו המיוחד באלו הזמנים, שנת ת"ח אשר חשבתי קזאת** יבא אהרן אל-הקדש לפני ולפנים, נהפך כנורי לאבל ושמת לי גונים, והקריבו את עולתם הישראלים והלויים והכהנים, ובשנת פ"ט שומרי משמרת הקדש*** הם האנשים ההגונים, נהרגו על קדושת שמו יתברך בחודש השביעי הוא ירח האיתנים, עם נשיהם ובניהם וטפם, בנות ובנים, ונטמאו ונתעבו טומאה תחת טוהר בידי הקדרים והרקים הטמאים גוי צז פנים. קויתי שק"ט**** ויבא רגז וכל מיני משחית המכונים, אף וחמה ומשחית ומשבר ומכלה, בכולם היינו נידונים, באלו השתי שנים.

26. מתקנות מדינת ליטא בשנות הפורעניות

ועד שבט שנת ה"ט

על דבר אשר עינינו רואות בעו"ה כמה נפשות מישראל אשר נשבו ונטמעו בכל הגוים וכמעט נשתקעו ביניהם, וכבר מבואר בפנקס המדינה שהדבר הזה מוטל על הוצאות כלל המדינה, אך למקום קצו טרם יודיעו על זה אל ראשי הקהילות כנהוג תהיה שעה עוברת, על כן כתבנו רשות לכל הקהילות והמקומות אשר ישנו שם מנין יהודים, הרשות בידם לפדות כל נפש עד י' זהובים, בלי שום שאלה ורשות, ויקובל בחשבון המדינה, ויותר מעשרה זהו' על נפש אחת מישראל עד ששים זהו', יקחו רשות מהקהילה הסמוכה אליהם שמחזיקים אב"ד או שרגילים להחזיק, ויותר מששים זהו' על נפש אחת צריכים ליקח רשות מאחת מג' ראשי הקהילות יצו' או מראש הגליל קהילה שלהם, וכפי הסכמתם יקובלו בחשבון המדינה, והזריו בענין זה הרי זה משובת, ומשכורתו תהיה שלימה משוכן רומה.

אחר שראה ראינו מאנשי מדינתנו בעו"ה הולכים ודלים בצוקי העתים האלה, המפורסמים וגלויים, שירדו מטה מטה ונתדלדלו רוב הקהילות בעו"ה במדינתנו, ואת זה לעומת זה קשה עול המשא, כבד כוח הסבל לסבול עול הוצאות המדינה, והחובות אשר נשתרגו על צוארינו רבו כמו רבו עלינו, והשעה צריכה לכך במאוד מאוד לפקח בזה, כי מפקינא אית לן ומצלינא לית לן, — על כן הסכמנו להעמיד איזה הכנסה לתוך המדינה משכירת הטשאפאוי. —

בדבר עניים המגורשים, נעים ונדים בארץ לא להם ומתהלכים בה, ואין הארץ רחבת ידים לפנייהם להיות נטושים לארכה ולרחבה, רק מוטלים על קצת קהילות אשר יושביהם שאנן ושקט על שמריהם, וכמה קהילות אינם משיגים להוצאה מרובה כזו, — על כן למען יהיו זרזים בדבר מצוה להחיות עם רב ונפשות רבות מישראל, רשמנו זאת בספר: בהתועדות הסמוך יעינינו ויפקחו אלופי [ראשי] [מדינה] בצירוף הגאונים, אשר ראוי לסייע לקהילות הנ"ל להוצאה מרובה כזו; והכל לפי הענין ומעמד הקהילה, למען לא יהיו זרזים נפסדים.

* ראשי ד' ארצות קבעו אותו יום תענית ציבור לדורות לכל בית ישראל בפולין. ** זאת בגימטריא: ת"ח. *** בגימ' ת"ט. **** בגימטריא: ת"ט.

Appendix: Texts and Sources

All of the following four texts are translated by J. Davis from the Hebrew texts published by A. M. Haberman in Judah Leb Fishman-Maimon, ed., Li-khvod Yom Tov: Ma'amarim u-mehkarim 'ad shelosh me'ot shanah li-fetirato shel Rabenu Yom Tov Lipman Heller (Jerusalem, 1956), pp. 126-128, 135-138, 141. They are all taken from the Cracow, 1651 (?) edition of Heller's poems on the 1648 massacres.

I. Heller's blessing for those who do not converse during prayer

May He who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon,
Bless the one who guards his mouth and his tongue from interruption by any speech
Between "Baruch she-amar" and the end of the prayer service, and during the time of the public Torah reading.

This includes one who speaks words of Torah; how much more so, general conversation and news.
May all the blessings written in the Torah of Moses our teacher and in all the prophecies come upon him.
May he see seed who are good, living, and well,
And may he merit two "tables" in the two worlds,¹
Namely this world, concerning which it is written
"behold it is good" (Gen. 1:31),
And the world to come, which is the day that is entirely long and good.²
And let us say Amen.

II. From the printer's introduction

"The printer writes ... After I saw³ [that the council of Four Lands decreed that the twentieth of Sivan should be a fast

day], I remembered that I had read selihot [liturgical poems] that had been written by our teacher, the great rabbi, Rabbi Yom Tov ha-Levi, the author of Tosefet Yom Tov, the head of the [Cracow] yeshivah and the chief rabbi of the holy community of Cracow and its region, may the Merciful One protect him and redeem him. [These selihot] are said in the holy community of Prague each year on the fourteenth of Heshvan. So I asked him, since his honor the rabbi has great skill⁴ in composing selihot, as he did once in the holy community of Prague, therefore let him not withhold this good, since he has the power⁵ to compose a selihah describing these events.

He answered me, [The events in Prague] were not like the misfortunes that have befallen us since the days of the destruction [of the Temple]. In those, the misfortune was always on account of the hatred against us, for they wanted to kill us to carry out vengeance with sword and slaughter.⁶ But in the holy community of Prague, it was not so: there the misfortune was only on account of the war and the looting of the city during the siege (that is, during the rioting)⁷, "and when permission is given to the Destroying Angel, [he does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked.]"⁸. This is called a "spreading affliction" (Mishnah Ta'anit 3:5). But God, may He be blessed, saved us, and no hand was raised against us or against our property, as I wrote in those poems.

The present events, however, are like all the past massacres [gezeirot]. All the evil things that they did to our ancestors they have done to the children.⁹ The scholars of that time have already composed selihot concerning them and narrated those events.

First of all, I said, let me go now and see and gather¹⁰ some of them, for the fingernail of the earlier scholars [is better than the belly of later scholars.]"¹¹

Furthermore, by saying their prayers, our prayers will be accepted, for things that are said by a child are not like things that are said by an adult,¹² and the lips [of their authors] will move in their graves,¹³ and their words will be like a ladder upon which our prayers will ascend to Heaven.¹⁴

dent. The truth remains that the two documents at hand—Chaya Feldman's letter and Hannah Weiss' testimony—are both Jewish sources. No corroboration of the incident is found in any German sources from the period. True, there is a testimony which describes the murder of one hundred Jewish girls in Cracow. This act was a reprisal for the murder of two S.D. men at the hands of Jewish girls whom they had raped.⁵⁹ However, the incident occurred during the summer of 1940 and is not related to the one under discussion here which occurred in 1942.⁶⁰

But this story also raises a larger issue, one which transcends the immediate boundaries of this event and speaks to the core of the classical Jewish response to catastrophe. The recent thought-provoking and insightful work of David G. Roskies and Alan Mintz has drawn our attention to the transtemporal patterns, overarching paradigms, and archetypes that govern this response throughout our history. In their effort to maintain faith in God in the face of often incredible suffering, Jewish victims of tragedy in all centuries felt constrained to view their experiences as part of a continuum and not as something radically new and different. Although they may have objectively believed that the magnitude of their suffering was unprecedented, they never presented it as such, for fear that this might indicate that God was finally breaking His covenantal bond and severing His close relationship with His people, a thought they simply could not abide and one that their faith would not allow them to accept. Whatever cataclysmic event they experienced was never seen in isolation, as *sui generis*, but, on the contrary, was portrayed as just the latest example of the age-old, consistently recurring phenomenon of God's punishment for Jewish sin. Indeed, the Jewish collective memory was so long and sharp that any time it confronted even a tragedy of major proportions, it was able to place it into paradigms of previously experienced tragedies and destructions. In fact, the greater the tragedy, the more potentially dangerous it was to Jewish faith and, hence, the greater was the effort to absorb it and subsume it under already established patterns and archetypes. Such a conception, in which even the unprecedented was assigned a precedent, was a comforting and reassuring one, allowing for the classical covenantal construct to remain intact. This continuity with the past provided great hope for the future.⁶¹

⁵⁹Testimony given on January 23, 1963, Yad Vashem Archives, TR-10/1171.

⁶⁰One other issue also remains unresolved. Chaya Feldman's letter is dated August 11 (= 28 Av) and states that in a few hours all will be over. The end of Hannah Weiss' essay places the death of "the 93" on 13 Av (= July 28).

It is also interesting to note that a reference to a very similar story was made by Baila bat Rivka, "An Overwhelming View: One of the Last Paragraphs of the History of Sarah Schenirer's Seminary in Cracow, Poland," *The Jewish Observer* 18:5(April 1985):37. "Only years later, as a Bais Yaakov student and teacher, did I learn of the horror and *kiddush Hashem* that your beautiful white building [in Cracow] had witnessed, the leap to eternity by thirty-five young girls who jumped from the roof (the same roof that sheltered us) in order not to be defiled by the approaching German soldiers, *yimach sh'mam*." Did the author confuse this event with our story or do we have here the beginning of a new historical fact or myth, "the martyrdom of the thirty-five . . .?"

⁶¹See David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984); *idem.*, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia, 1988), 3-12; Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in*

He is called when He is near, and He may be found when we search for Him⁵⁰ and seek Him.
To those who send me⁵¹ may the mouth of the LORD say, "I have forgiven" (Num. 14:20) and to me may He answer, "according to your words" (ibid.)
The Messiah and the messenger Elijah: this one shall redeem us, and that one shall appear first to announce it.
Awesome, high, and holy, living and present,⁵² the LORD is our God.

Today, if we would listen to His voice,⁵³ we will merit [the fulfillment of the prophecy] "I will hasten it" (Isa. 60:22)
The explanations of "a time and times" (Dan. 7:25) have passed, but "in its [true] time" (Isa. 60:22), He will not delay it.⁵⁴
He has not revealed his heart's thought to his lip, [to reveal] when He will fulfill it
The Spirit of our Nostrils, the Messiah of the LORD, by whose hand will come salvation. May our eyes see it.⁵⁵

IV. Heller's Second Poem

These shall I remember⁵⁶ with threefold tears,⁵⁷ with great and bitter cries.⁵⁸

Woe, woe, woe is me, when I remember two years worse than any since the day that we were sent into Exile.⁵⁹

408, a year⁶⁰ we thought would be the Garden of the LORD,⁶¹ in which each man would go up to his inheritance,⁶²

409, a year in which my blood was spilled,⁶³ and one evil sickness was added to another.

When the men of Greece joined together with the men of Kedar,⁶⁴

And there was no king in the land,⁶⁵ they burst through and destroyed every bound.⁶⁶

Destruction follows upon destruction, calamity upon calamity. Outside there is terror and fear at home.⁶⁷

Let the heavens be astonished at this,⁶⁸ thick darkness as darkness itself, deep darkness without order.⁶⁹

There was also terror at home and fear outside, the sword that bereaves⁷⁰ and destroys.

They expelled those who were hidden in fortresses; a friend became an enemy,⁷¹ an informer and revealer.⁷²

The first that cooled Amalek's kettle of anger⁷³ was Great Nemirov.⁷⁴

The [troubles] increased as they increased,⁷⁵ [striking] two and three hundred cities like these.

Blood touches blood:⁷⁶ they spilled blood and they
robbed and destroyed property.⁷⁷
The blood of the sire and its young they did not
cover;⁷⁸ the daughters and women they raped.⁷⁹
They twisted the legs of infants, smashed their heads
against walls,⁸⁰ fouled their brains.
They were swifter than the weaver's shuttle. [My days]
pass without hope⁸¹ and melt away.

Holding in his hand the butcher's knife for the
slaughter,⁸² preparing the one who was without
fault or blemish
He opened the chest and took out the lungs; he felt
them and examined them.⁸³
He cried in mockery, This one is kosher, get up and
eat! This one is unclean, it is not good.⁸⁴
He was roasted alive, stuck through and skewered with a
spit.⁸⁵

And they pressed them, squeezed them, and crushed them
between beams and long benches,⁸⁶
And trod on them like grapes in a wine press or like
olives in an oil press.⁸⁷
The corpses were thrown in every place. City and
fortress stank and smelled.⁸⁸
To openings and pits they were dragged still alive, and
into them they were thrown.⁸⁹

Eager were men and women to unify the Unique Name
One [woman] to another, and one [man] to another, they
cried and said,⁹⁰ "The LORD is our God, the LORD
is One."⁹¹

The "Alenu" in song and voices of melody they spoke as
one,⁹²
Until they fell and died, and not one of them was
left.⁹³

They placed cats in bellies that were torn open and
sewn up after the innards had been ripped out.⁹⁴
They tasted their fat after heating it to melt it.⁹⁵
He made shoes from the pages of scrolls, and laced them
with the straps of tefilin.⁹⁶
Defiling and despising⁹⁷ Bibles, Talmuds, and codes of
law, they trod on them with their feet and
stamped.⁹⁸

They defiled the pure sanctuaries, the small Temples
where the scattered ones of Israel gather,⁹⁹
By killing them there after hanging them alive from the
ropes of candelabra and lamps.¹⁰⁰
Every bird and winged thing,¹⁰¹ dogs and pigs, fed on
the corpses in the streets.¹⁰²
When [the animals] entangle their ways, so as not to
touch them, it is a miracle.¹⁰³

They cooked them alive in vats and kettles of boiling water.¹⁰⁴

They speared children with lances in the sight of their parents, and as if they had mercy, they blinded them.¹⁰⁵

They hid them in water until it flowed over their heads.¹⁰⁶

I find more bitter than death the amputation of hands and legs.¹⁰⁷

They split the bellies of pregnant women and they dragged out the fetuses.¹⁰⁸

They forced them to deny the God of Israel, and so they apostasized and left Judaism.¹⁰⁹

May it not come upon you, all you who pass by the way.¹¹⁰ Is there rebellion like unto this?

They enslaved them with rigor¹¹¹ and with all kinds of slavery.

A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand; I have chosen to stand in its threshold.¹¹²

As I dwell there in safety, day and night, He watches over me.¹¹³

But now they are burned down;¹¹⁴ the gate is smitten into ruin,¹¹⁵ and every bird and winged thing may fly in them.

He mocks me, shots out the lip, shakes his head, and gestures with his hand.¹¹⁶

The one called by His Name, created, formed, and made for His glory.¹¹⁷

Was not hurt initially in his body, but only in his wealth.¹¹⁸

Therefore he fled from the sword¹¹⁹ over the Wesel.

Days of affliction came upon him. He hoped for light, but behold darkness came, for comfort and behold calamity.¹²⁰

You have become a plague against Your people,¹²¹ and no illness or affliction has spared them.¹²²

Their brightness was defiled, and they descended into the grave, but we have taken no instruction.¹²³

They are buried in graves and also in fields and forests, those who would come into no town and were not informed on.

Boards for coffins are no more to be found, and for shrouds there is little linen.¹²⁴

They went mournfully to the tents of Kedar¹²⁵, captives¹²⁶ to the sons of Kedar,

To another land, over the sea in galleys, boats, and ships.¹²⁷

The hands of the sons of Keturah, the Egyptian slavewoman, was mighty over the sons of Sarah, the Hebrew mistress.¹²⁸

They beat them with the staff of anger: wounds, bruises, and festering sores.¹²⁹

Is it not because my God is not in my midst that these evils have befallen me ?¹³⁰

For these I weep¹³¹ and my eyes shed tears.

Uncountable multitudes, hundreds of thousands, have died by the sword, famine, plague,¹³² and other illnesses.

Look, O LORD, and see, and give us a sign for good.¹³³

I was sold for nought. Without money, return me.¹³⁴

Remember my affliction and my anguish¹³⁵ and the depth of my pain.

Be jealous for Zion with a great jealousy,¹³⁶ my Holy One, my Father.

And fulfill, "Behold I send to you Elijah the Prophet" (Malachi 3:23).