# Rabbi Yehuda Bibas vs. the reform movement (1776-1852)

Previously (see **here**) we mentioned that Rabbi Yehuda Bibas served as the Rabbi of the Island of Corfu (today, Greece) from 1831 to 1850. Rabbi Bibas' activity and vision was not limited to the Jews of Corfu. He traveled through Europe and North Africa visiting Turkey, the Balkans, Vienna, London, Germany, Hungary and Prague and many more Jewish communities.
The main message that he preached to all Jews was TESHUBA. He expanded the meaning of *teshuba* (literally: "return") from the conventional meaning of returning to God to the idea of a *teshuba kelalit* or *political teshuba*: the return of the Jews to the land of israel.
By living in the Diaspora he said:

*"We are giving our back to God, as our rabbis explained: A Jew that lives outside Israel is like a Jew without a God. And why we are living in the exile, going from city to city to look for our livelihood? Didn't the Tora say that Israel is a land that HaShem constantly oversees? A land in which you will not eat bread in poverty? Isn't it a land that lacks nothing? Every time we eat we give thanks to God for the good land that He granted us"*
Rabbi Bibas message of *teshuba* as active return to Zion made a powerful impact against the background of the Reform movement, very popular in those years. The reformers wished to introduce changes in the prayers, organs and music in Shabbat services, etc. but mainly they aimed to erase the memory of Zion, Jerusalem and Israel. The most important goal of the reform movement was to assert that Judaism is a religion without any national element. A Jew should have exclusive allegiance to Germany, for example, and not aspiring or praying to eventually going back to Israel.
*"In conformity with these views, the Frankfort Rabbinical Conference of 1845 voted that all petitions for the return to the land of our fathers, and for the restoration of a Jewish*

*state, and a Messiah that will take the Jews to Palestine, should be eliminated from the prayers books."*
(To be continued…)
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