

Still, he said that doesn't absolve the top leaders of responsibility.

"We learn this from the *eglah arufah*," Rabbi Schudrich said, referring to the Torah law requiring breaking the neck of a calf when the perpetrator of a murder cannot be found. "Even though the elders declare 'we didn't spill any blood,' there is still a moral blemish that cries out for atonement."

This was not the first time Rabbi Schudrich employed this analogy. The first occasion occurred in Poland in 2001, after publication of a book by NYU historian Jan Gross, *Neighbors*, detailing the 1941 pogrom at Jedwabne, during which hundreds of Catholics murdered some 1,600 members of Jedwabne's Jewish community, corraling them into a barn and setting it ablaze.

Poland prefers to view itself as a victim of Nazi Germany and not an accessory, and no one official was willing to take any responsibility for Jedwabne – until Rabbi

Schudrich dispatched a letter to Cardinal Jozef Glemp explaining the *eglah arufah* analogy. On March 4, 2008, on his weekly radio program, Cardinal Glemp took ownership: "It is altogether fitting, that as a Church we should, in the company of people of the Jewish faith, apologize to G-d for the sin committed according to the truth revealed in the Bible."

The story has a short postscript.

Agnieszka Magdziak Miszewska, a Catholic intellectual who eventually became Poland's ambassador to Israel, congratulated Rabbi Schudrich for his diplomatic achievement, saying: "Rabbi, you will always win your arguments as long as you quote the Torah."

In Europe, rabbanim wield great influence, especially in countries with sparse Jewish populations, where there are few Jewish elected officials or ambassadors to advocate for Jewish interests.

Rabbi Yaakov Bleich, Ukraine's chief rabbi, related a vignette from the



CER standing committee members debated the best ways to secure religious rights for European Jews last week in Monaco, a prosperous principality overlooking the Mediterranean.

"People who take care of their past are also going to take care of their future"

—Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt

inauguration of former president Viktor Yanukovich in 2010. Rabbi Bleich was on the reception line when Yanukovich's predecessor, Viktor Yushchenko, cut in front of him. Rabbi Bleich, not known for being shy, bristled, and Yushchenko yielded his place, saying: "Rabbi you were here first, so go first," Rabbi Bleich replied: "I just told him, 'Remember, presidents come and go, rabbis stick around.'"

**Jewish Rebirth** The battles that European Jewry fight today are no longer life and death, but for the right to live as observant Jews – to circumcise their newborn males, to eat locally slaughtered kosher meat, to safely walk the streets to synagogues and Jewish centers.

During three-days of meetings, members of the CER's standing committee debated the most effective methods to fight for the religious rights that are written into the EU's constitution, but often eroded by individual member nations.

For example, the Jewish community in Belgium's Constitutional Court to overturn a ban on shechitah passed in the regions of Wallonia and Flanders. Jews in Poland won a similar appeal when a court struck down a law banning shechitah, but now the government wants to pass a new law that would set a draconian quota on kosher slaughter based on how many Polish Jews keep kosher and on an arbitrary estimate of how much kosher meat they consume each year.

During the meetings in Monaco, the CER's standing committee won a consensus among a diverse group of rabbanim from more than a dozen European countries to limit authority for conversions to only established batei din that meet regularly. Converts from small towns that have no Orthodox infrastructure will not be accepted until they come to live in an area with an

