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Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure and privilege to inform you of two upcoming trips. The first is to the Jewish heartland in **east central Europe, June 16 – 28, 2015**. We shall visit **Warsaw, Krakow, Prague and Budapest**, cities that possessed, before WWII, vibrant and creative Jewish communities. We will learn about prominent Jewish religious and secular personalities as well as important movements and parties. We shall also study the relationship between the people in each community and the Jews that lived among them. The destruction of these centers of Jewish life and the attempts to revive them after the Holocaust will also be examined. Please note that when we are in Warsaw, we shall visit the magnificent new museum dedicated to the history of Jews in Poland. This country, as well as the other countries that we are visiting, have transitioned from communism to democracy and free market economies. This, too, shall be of great interest. The trip also has an optional **extension to Dresden and Berlin, June 28 to July 3, 2015**. Both cities are rich in historical content. For anyone interested in the history of the Jewish people, the visit to Germany and Europe will be very revealing.

The second excursion is to beautiful **Italy, July 5 – 16, 2015**. We shall go to **Rome, Florence, Venice, Siena, Pompeii and travel along the Amalfi coast**. On this journey, as in all of our trips, we shall study not only Jewish history but the history of the countries we visit. In the case of Italy, this means looking at the history of the Roman Empire, the history of the Catholic Church, fascism and post war Italy. In Italy, Jewish history ranges from persecution to accommodation and assimilation. During the Renaissance, Italian Jewry was probably the most creative Jewish community in the world. Venice is unlike any other city on the planet. And, everyone should see Venice at least once in his or her lifetime. To see the work of Da Vinci and Michelangelo is to appreciate some of the greatest achievements of western civilization. This promises to be a wonderful tour and **I invite you to join me in an adventure in learning and enjoying**.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Berk