



BOOKLET  
SERIES

FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM

# ANTISEMITISM: AN INTRODUCTION

A Brief History Of The Longest Hatred

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# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	4
The Mainstreaming of Antisemitism .....	7
Antisemitism—A note on spelling .....	8
Antizionism—A note on spelling .....	8
<b>Antisemitism: A Brief History of the Longest Hatred</b>	
The Greco-Roman World .....	9
Christianity .....	10
Early Christian Teachings About Jews .....	10
Replacement Theology .....	11
The Crusades .....	12
The First Crusade (1096–1099) .....	12
The Second Crusade (1147–1150) .....	12
The Third Crusade (1189–1192) .....	13
The Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834) .....	13
Ghettos and the Jew Badge .....	14
The Deadly Blood Libel: from 15th-Century Italy to 21st-Century San Diego .....	16
After the Holocaust: Christians Rethink Theology on Jews and Judaism .....	16
Islam .....	18
Jews in Islamic Thought .....	18
Islam and the Jews in History .....	20
The Battle of Khaybar .....	21
Expulsion of Jews from Arabia .....	22
The Pact of Umar: Codifying the Status of Non-Muslims .....	22
Identifying Badges and “Ghettos” .....	24
Islamist Extremism: A Modern Ideology Adapts European Antisemitism .....	25
The Far-Left Islamist Alliance .....	27



The “Jewish Question”: Antisemitism from the 19th-Century to Nazi Germany.....	27
Nazi Antisemitism: Jews as the “Anti-Race” .....	29
Redemptive Antisemitism .....	30
<i>Protocols of the Elders of Zion</i> : A Warrant for Genocide.....	31
The Holocaust: An Intercontinental Anti-Jewish Genocide .....	32
Antisemitism Adapts to 21st-Century Politics.....	34
Antisemitism’s Common Denominator.....	35
Compare and Contrast.....	36
Learn More .....	37
Take Action! .....	38

***“I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation.***

***We must always take sides.***

***Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.***  
***Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”***

— Nobel Laureate and Holocaust Survivor Elie Wiesel, 1986

# Introduction

This booklet is part of a series from StandWithUs that examines different forms of modern antisemitism, broadly defined as bigotry against Jews. Historically, antisemitism has caused intense violence against Jews, including expulsions, massacres, forced conversions, and genocides. In today's world, antisemitism is spread by three main ideological groups: the far right, Islamist extremists, and the far left. This volume provides an overview of the world's oldest hatred.

Other booklets in this series address far-right antisemitism, radical Islamist antisemitism, antisemitism on the far left, and more. Each volume includes a reading list and recommended action items.

This series is needed because antisemitism, which decreased after the Holocaust, is now rising to shocking levels. Further, despite much talk of antisemitism, many people are unfamiliar with its history. Well-intentioned individuals, particularly those in positions of leadership, often do not know much about the issue. This leads to inaction by university administrators, clergy, politicians, law enforcement, and educators, allowing antisemitism to grow until it becomes violent.

Well before Hamas launched a horrific war by massacring over 1,200 people in Israel on October 7, 2023, antisemitism was already on the rise. In October 2018, a white supremacist terrorist massacred 11 Jews at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Six months later, a worshiper at a San Diego synagogue was murdered in an attempted mass shooting. Another synagogue was attacked in December 2019 in Monsey, New Jersey, leaving one person dead and four wounded. Then, in Colleyville, Texas, in January 2022, a Pakistani-British gunman held a rabbi and three congregants hostage, demanding to speak to the “chief rabbi of the United States,” a title which does not exist. He believed the United States was controlled by this “chief rabbi” who had the power to release a Pakistani national who was convicted on serious terrorism charges.

Since the October 7th Massacre, this bad situation has become much worse. There has been a massive increase in antisemitic incidents, including:

- **Assaults and physical attacks**, including one resulting in the death of a pro-Israel protester in California and antisemitic murders in Washington, DC; Boulder, CO; and Manchester, UK.
- **Threats and harassment**, preventing Jewish students at numerous universities from attending classes and accessing other campus facilities
- **Vandalism of synagogues**, Jewish-owned businesses, and campus Jewish institutions
- **Hundreds of bomb threats** and “swatting” against synagogues and other Jewish sites.



According to the Anti-Defamation League, there were 9,354 antisemitic incidents in 2024 — an 893% increase over the past decade.

The Tel Aviv University Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2024 and J7 Task Force Annual Report 2025 also found sharp spikes in antisemitic incidents. The following is a small sampling of incidents from 2025.

### **United States:**

- **May 21:** Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky, a young couple who worked for the Israeli Embassy, were murdered outside a Jewish event focused on humanitarian aid in Gaza. The murderer—a far-left extremist—shouted “free Palestine” as he was arrested.<sup>1</sup>
- **June 12:** Jews and non-Jewish allies were brutally attacked by an Islamist extremist during a peaceful walk in support of Israeli hostages of Hamas. The attacker tried to burn them to death using Molotov cocktails and a makeshift flamethrower. An 82-year-old Jewish woman later died from her injuries.

### **Canada:**

- **August 20:** In Montreal, a Jewish father was assaulted in front of his children.<sup>2</sup>

- **February 8:** A 70-year-old Jewish woman was stabbed at a kosher supermarket in Ottawa by a man with a record of antisemitic posts on social media.



### United Kingdom:

- **October 6:** An Islamist terrorist rammed worshippers outside Heaton Park Synagogue in Manchester on Yom Kippur, then stabbed others. Three people were killed.<sup>3</sup>

Antisemitic float at street carnival in Aalst, Belgium.

### France:

- **April 22:** The chief rabbi of Orléans was attacked while walking with his child.<sup>4</sup>
- **November 3:** Threats referencing “revenge for Gaza” forced several Jewish schools in Paris to close temporarily.<sup>5</sup>

### Belgium:

- **May 19:** A child wearing a kippah was attacked; a Jewish girl was doused with wine by extremists shouting “Free Palestine.”<sup>6</sup>



### Australia:

- **November 1:** A woman was denied a job in Melbourne job for being Israeli.<sup>7</sup>
- **August 27:** The Australian government expelled Iran’s ambassador after intelligence confirmed the Iranian regime’s role in directing antisemitic attacks on Jewish sites.<sup>8</sup>

### Spain:

- **July 24:** Over 50 French Jewish teenagers were kicked off a Vueling Airlines flight in Valencia after singing in Hebrew.<sup>9</sup>

### Netherlands:

- **August:** Authorities investigated a nurse who threatened to kill Israeli patients.

This poster displayed at an anti-war rally in San Francisco incorporates numerous antisemitic slurs: Jews are the cause of wars, Jews cause wars for Israel, Jews are Nazis, Jews control the world, today's Jews are not the “real Jews,” Jews idolize money, Jews are the devil, Jews are white supremacists, Jews are capitalists, Jews are Zionist pigs, and Jews influence America.

## **Germany:**

- **October:** Three suspected members of Hamas were arrested for planning attacks on Israeli and Jewish institutions in Germany.

## **Italy:**

- **July:** A Jewish man and his son were assaulted at a highway rest area north of Milan, by a mob yelling “free Palestine.”
- **August-September:** In two separate cases, Jewish couples were physically assaulted and harassed in Venice.

## **The Mainstreaming of Antisemitism**

Antisemitism has evolved over time by adapting to different social, political, and economic contexts. Each era reshapes antisemitism to fit common prejudices and conflicts. In medieval times, it targeted Jews based on their religion. In the 19th and 20th centuries, it took on racist and ultra-nationalist forms, leading to the horrors of the Holocaust. Today, bigotry against Jews often comes in the form of conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, and hostility towards Israel and anyone who supports its right to exist.

Antisemitism can become mainstream when Jews are dehumanized and accused of whatever a society considers to be most evil at any given time. On social media platforms and beyond, far-right extremists claim powerful Jews and/or Zionists are engaged in a conspiracy to destroy White people through immigration and other means. Far-left extremists use slogans about colonialism, racism, white supremacy, ethnic cleansing, and genocide to target anyone associated with Israel or Zionism. Islamist extremists, too, use these slogans but add into the mix the false and toxic charge that Jews and Israel seek to destroy Islam.

## **Zionism Defined**

**Zion is an age-old name for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, where Jews have had a constant presence for over 3,000 years.**

**Zionism represents the Jewish people's deep ties and desire to be free in their ancestral home. On a political level, it is a liberation movement supporting Jewish rights.**

## **“Antisemitism” – A note on spelling**

Antisemites don’t oppose Semitism. They hate Jews.

The term antisemitism (or anti-Semitism) is problematic for a number of reasons. Jews didn’t invent the term. It was created in the 19th-century by people who hated Jews.

Semitic or Aryan races are fiction. Originally, Aryan and Semitic were used to describe language families. Semitic languages include Hebrew and Arabic. Aryan languages include those belonging to Indo-European tongues.

In the mid-19th-century, European racists began viewing the world as a permanent life-and-death struggle between the white “Aryan race” and the “Semitic Jewish race.” In 1879, German journalist Wilhelm Marr coined the term antisemitism to give a “scientific” name to his brand of anti-Jewish racism.

Since the Nazi genocide of six million Jews under the cover of World War II, antisemitism has come to be universally understood as meaning anti-Jewish hatred.

## **“Antizionism” –A note on spelling**

David Hirsh, a professor of sociology at the University of London, wrote:

*Antizionists created a whole new “-ism” around their campaign against Israel—a way of thinking about the whole world. Within this antizionist framework, a caricature of Israel is endowed with huge symbolic significance. It is a significance which relates only here and there to the actual State of Israel. If the Palestinians stand, in the antizionist imagination, as symbolic of all the victims of “the west” or “imperialism,” then Israel is thrust into the center of the world as being symbolic of oppression everywhere. Like antisemitism, antizionism imagines Jews as being central to all that is bad in the world.<sup>10</sup>*

Dropping the hyphen in “anti-Zionism” describes it for what it is: an ideology that has very little to do with the actual meaning of Zionism.

# Antisemitism: A Brief History of The Longest Hatred

## THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

The renowned scholar Robert S. Wistrich describes antisemitism as “the longest hatred,”<sup>11</sup> tracing it to ancient times. The Jewish people have a history stretching back over 3,000 years, during which time they encountered many different civilizations.

Greek and Roman writers often held a belief in the superiority of their own civilization, expressing xenophobia toward Jews and other cultures by labeling them “barbarians.” Many Roman philosophers saw Judaism as a direct challenge to the basis of their culture.

Some examples:

- **Paganism vs Monotheism:**

Romans believed in a pantheon of gods. Jews, however, believe in ethical monotheism, which proposes there is but one single, invisible deity who created the universe according to a moral and eternal plan.

Romans took offense that Jews rejected their gods, and accused them of “arrogance.”

- **Food:** Pork was a favorite Roman dish. Jewish dietary laws (*kashrut*) forbid pork, preventing Jews from participating in Roman feasts.

Many Romans took this as a personal affront, giving rise to the stereotype of Jews as anti-social.

- **Sabbath:** Jews would not work every seventh day, the Sabbath. Romans had no weekly day of rest and labeled Jews as lazy and unproductive.



Detail from the Arch of Titus (see below) in Rome (81 CE) depicting Roman soldiers looting the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem.



Rome ruled its empire with brutality, including its occupation of the Land of Israel, causing numerous rebellions. In 67 CE<sup>12</sup>, Jews rose in a mass rebellion that Rome defeated in 70 CE. Jerusalem and its temple, the center of Jewish life, were destroyed. Another Jewish rebellion erupted in 115 CE. In 132 CE, the Jews again revolted, but this time, Rome so brutally crushed the uprising that nearly 600,000 Jews were killed.<sup>13</sup>

## CHRISTIANITY

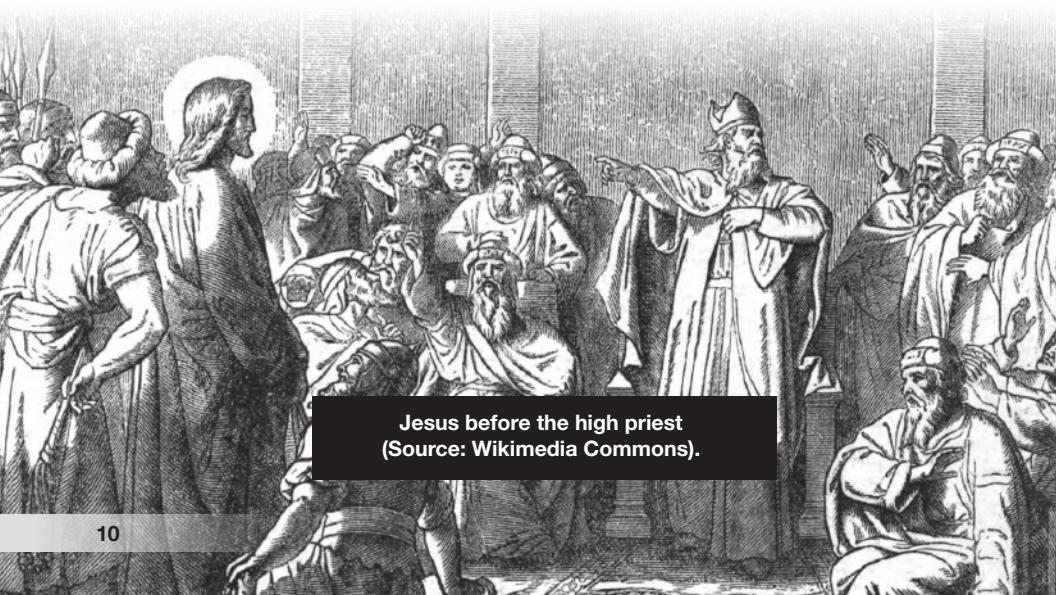
The growth and spread of Christianity, beginning 2,000 years ago, brought with it a turning point in the history of antisemitism.

Jesus and his disciples were Jews born in Roman-occupied Judea. They originally focused on spreading Jesus' teachings to other Jews.

This was a chaotic period in the region. Jewish relations with their Roman rulers were tense, and Jewish society was fragmented into rival factions. The primary ones were the temple-based Sadducees, and their main rivals, the Pharisees, who formed the basis of rabbinic Judaism still practiced today. The early Christians were one of many other small Jewish factions.

### Early Christian Teachings About Jews

The New Testament narrative tells of Jesus' three years of intense religious activity in the Galilee region of Israel. He then traveled to Jerusalem, where he came into conflict with the Jewish authorities. According to the New Testament, Jesus' trial and



crucifixion were the result of a conspiracy by Jewish “priests, scribes and elders” who “plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him” and give him to the Romans<sup>14</sup> to be executed.<sup>15</sup> In this narrative, the Jewish leaders conspire in the background and are held responsible for Jesus being put to death on the cross, a Roman method of execution.

Christianity slowly separated from Judaism over several centuries after Jesus’ death. When, in the fourth-century CE, Christianity became the Roman Empire’s state religion, “[t]he religious quarrel between two small and relatively powerless sects, both at odds with the pagan world in which they lived, was suddenly transformed into an unequal relationship between a triumphant state religion and a beleaguered religious minority.”<sup>16</sup> It was no longer politically acceptable to interpret the New Testament in a way that cast Romans as the villains in the story of Jesus’ death. Since texts are open to multiple understandings, the early church shifted the blame for Jesus’ death to “the Jews” as a whole.

## Replacement Theology

In early church theology, portions of the New Testament were interpreted so that “the Jew” became “the other.” A tradition called *Adversus Judaeos* (“Against the Jews”) developed. It was “a body of Christian polemical texts specifically directed against Jews, which were written from the first-century to at least the 18th-century CE.”<sup>17</sup> Central to *Adversus Judaeos* was the doctrine of replacement theology, which asserts “the Jews” lost their status as God’s chosen people, having been replaced by the “new Israel” (the church), making the Jews the “old Israel.”

*Adversus Judaeos* included the charge of deicide

(i.e., “killing of a god”), claiming “the Jews” murdered Jesus, believed by Christians to be the son of God and God incarnate. This literally demonized Jews, portraying them as the “Devil’s partners.”<sup>18</sup>



Killing of Jews during the First Crusade.  
\*Note the “Jewish hat.” [See page 14.]



Thus, Jews were perceived as the “enemy of mankind”<sup>19</sup> for which a “defense” was required. “Defense” meant systematic discrimination, mass expulsions, massacres, forced conversions, and physical isolation.

### **The Crusades**

Between 1096 and 1270, a series of crusades was launched from Christian Europe. The stated goal of the Crusaders was to recapture the holy land from the Muslims, who conquered it from the Christian Byzantine Empire in the seventh-century.

While the Crusaders’ main objective was the holy land, the Jews of Europe—cast as enemies of Christendom—were their first target.

#### **The First Crusade (1096–1099)**

The First Crusade set out in 1096 from southern France toward Constantinople. The Crusaders passed through the Rhineland (in today’s Germany), where they destroyed many Jewish communities. All along their way to the Holy Land, they murdered tens of thousands of Jews.

Once the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem, they laid siege to the city, conquered it, and massacred all its Muslim and Jewish defenders.

#### **The Second Crusade (1147–1150)**

A second crusade was launched over fears the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem was under threat. Again, Crusaders massacred many Jews in the Rhineland. This time, however, both religious and secular authorities sought to prevent further violence against Jews.

## The Third Crusade (1189–1192)

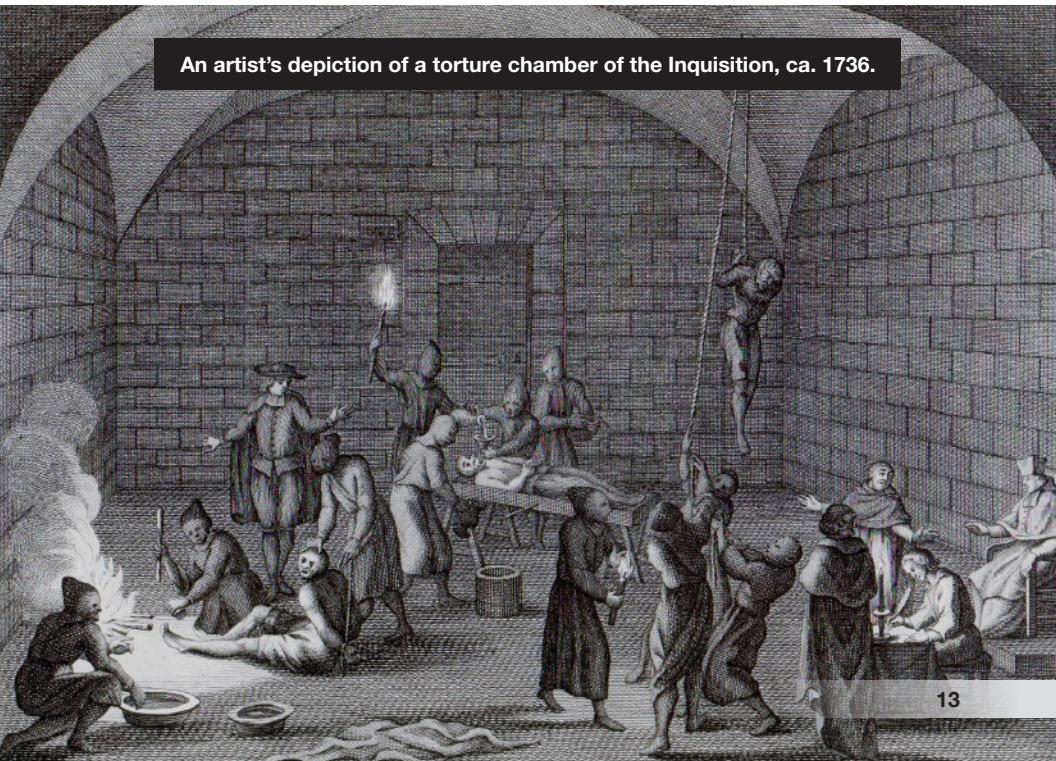
In 1187, Salah-al-Din (Saladin) retook Jerusalem in the name of Islam. A Third Crusade was declared in 1189 to reconquer Jerusalem. Again, anti-Jewish massacres took place. In England, York's Jews took refuge in the castle keep, while those left in the town were massacred. The castle keep was then besieged and about to fall when the 150 trapped Jews chose martyrdom and committed suicide.

## The Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834)

Established in 1478 by Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the Inquisition's original purpose was to oppose heresy in Catholic Spain. The Inquisition is remembered for its brutality, including torture to extract confessions, and mass burnings at the stake of "heretics."

Among the main targets of the Inquisition were the "New Christians," Jews who feigned conversion nearly a century earlier in 1391 after being given the choice of conversion to Christianity or death. The Spanish "Old Christians" disparagingly called them *marranos*, meaning swine. The "New Christians"

An artist's depiction of a torture chamber of the Inquisition, ca. 1736.



were legally marginalized by the *limpieza de sangre* (blood purity) law. This was the first time in history that Jews were classified along racial lines, setting a precedent for Nazi Germany. On March 31, 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella gave Spanish Jews a choice: expulsion or conversion. Most chose expulsion, and some 160,000 Jews left, mostly going to the Muslim Ottoman Empire. Those who converted remained under suspicion. Many remained Catholics but secretly kept Jewish traditions in their homes, despite the risk of being caught and persecuted.

### Ghettos and the “Jew Badge”

To physically separate Jews from Christians in western Europe, Jews were forced to live in walled ghettos that were locked and guarded at night.

The word ghetto likely comes from the Italian “getto”, meaning to pour molten metal into a mold. The first walled Jewish ghetto was established in Venice in 1516.

The “ghetto” was a refinement of a centuries-old practice that segregated Jews into specified areas of Europe’s cities. In 1179 and 1215, the Roman Catholic Church called for segregating Jews and forcing them to wear different clothing to identify and humiliate them. One such badge was the “Jewish hat,” designed to make the person wearing it look absurd.

In 1262, Prague segregated its Jews into a ghetto, and in 1460, Frankfurt established a “Jews’ Alley.” Elsewhere in Europe, Jews were

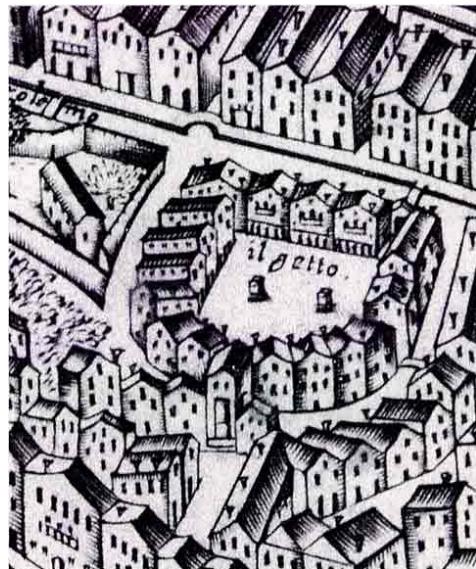


Jewish hat, England,  
13th-century.



also forced into ghettos. In 1555, Pope Paul IV issued a proclamation forcing Rome's Jews into a ghetto.

Ghettos were in poverty, unsanitary, dangerous, and overcrowded. They could not expand, forcing the residents to build up, creating the first "skyscrapers" of up to six or seven floors. Rome's ghetto near the Tiber River often flooded. Being locked in at night, the Jews were easy targets for massacres. One such attack was the Fettmilch riot of 1614 in Frankfurt.



Jewish ghetto.

During the Holocaust, the Nazis revived the ghetto and Jewish badge. In Poland, Jews from all over Europe were forced into small walled ghettos without enough food and medicine. Tens of thousands died of starvation and disease. From 1941–42, the Nazis "liquidated" the ghettos and sent over two million Jews to be murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka.<sup>20</sup>



## **The Deadly Blood Libel: from 15th-Century Italy to 21st-Century San Diego**

In the Middle Ages, myths emerged accusing Jews of ritually murdering Christian children and baking their blood into the Passover matzah (unleavened bread). Even in the 21st century, this myth—known as the blood libel—is still being spread.

In 1475, the body of Simon, a Christian boy, was found in Trent, Italy. A Franciscan friar incited against the town's Jews, claiming they had killed Simon to bake his blood into matzah. All of Trent's Jews were arrested, and, after interrogations involving torture, some “confessed.” Leaders of the Jewish community were burned at the stake and beheaded.<sup>21</sup>

So deeply woven into the fabric of European societies were these beliefs that this medieval episode left a lasting literary, visual, and racist legacy over the centuries that is still used up to the present.

On April 27, 2019, a white supremacist shooter attacked Jews at a synagogue in Poway, near San Diego, killing one person and injuring several others. His online manifesto invoked this medieval blood libel: “You are not forgotten Simon of Trent, the horror that you and countless children have endured at the hands of the Jews will never be forgiven.”<sup>22</sup>

In March 2020, Giovanni Gasparro released a new antisemitic painting called *The Martyrdom of St. Simon of Trent for Jewish ritual murder*, depicting grinning Jews as they collect blood from a child’s body.

## **After the Holocaust: Christians Rethink Theology on Jews and Judaism**

The shock of the Holocaust resulted in a serious reflection by major western Christian churches. In 1965, the Second Vatican

Council issued the *Nostra aetate* “Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions.”



The document unequivocally renounced the charge that “the Jews” were collectively responsible for the death of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> It forbade antisemitism for Christians and renounced replacement theology, calling God’s covenant with the Jewish people “eternal.”

Many Protestant churches also began a long process of reconsidering their beliefs, reaching similar theological conclusions as the Roman Catholic Church. These changes opened the gateway for a historic flowering in Jewish–Christian relations that have resulted in growing mutual respect between many Christians and Jews.

### **The Roman Catholic Church**

In 1904, Theodor Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, met with Pope Pius X, hoping for Vatican support. Instead, the pope told Herzl, “The Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people.”

In sharp contrast, when Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) came to Israel, he visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and placed a letter at Jerusalem’s Western Wall asking for God’s forgiveness. He assured, “the Jewish people the Catholic Church...is deeply saddened by the hatred, acts of persecution and displays of antisemitism directed against the Jews by Christians at any time and in any place.”<sup>24</sup>

Pope Francis (2013–2025) went even further, saying, “To attack Jews is antisemitism, but an outright attack on the State of Israel is also antisemitism.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Evangelical Protestants**

Evangelical Christians are not a monolith, but they comprise the largest pro-Israel bloc of voters in the United States. This is largely based on theological considerations, specifically a biblical belief that God gave the Land of Israel to the Jewish people, with whom God made an eternal covenant that is essential to the Christian faith.<sup>26</sup>

While most Jews appreciate this support, there are often sharp differences over social issues within the largely politically liberal Jewish community.

## Mainline Protestants

The situation is reversed in some liberal Protestant denominations. Most American Jews and liberal Protestants embrace progressive religious, social, and political views. While mainline Protestants have taken very similar theological stances on Jews and Judaism as the Catholic Church, there are serious strains over Israel.

Within many of these churches, an overtly anti-Israel movement has emerged. Many liberal Christian allies have pushed back internally, asking why Israel, a democracy, is singled out every year in numerous resolutions while most other Middle Eastern states, all dictatorships, are ignored. This obsessive focus on Israel is criticized as being influenced by antisemitism which still exists within these churches.

## ISLAM

### Jews in Islamic Thought

The history of Muslim-Jewish relations is different from the Christian-Jewish dynamic in one key area: classical Islam does not demonize Jews as being of the devil.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike the New Testament, the Qur'an does not present itself as being the fulfillment of the Jewish Bible but as a reassertion of its original message. This does not mean that Judaism is considered equal to Islam. It is a monotheistic religion to be "tolerated," which is not the same as equality.

Tolerance in the pre-modern Islamic world assumed that Muslims naturally had more rights than non-Muslims. While this gave Jews and Christians some, but not all, the rights and privileges that Muslims enjoyed, a ruler could easily choose to take those rights away.



There are many verses in the Qur'an that portray Jews in a positive light, and there are many others that are hostile, allowing for different interpretations. As a result, sometimes Jews were treated well under Islamic rule, and other times Jews were oppressed.

Jewish life flourished in the "Golden Age" of Muslim Spain. Yet, these Golden Ages were fragile, as the following episode in the life of Maimonides (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) illustrates.

Maimonides lived in 12th-century Cordoba in Muslim Spain. Born in 1135, he would become a respected rabbi, philosopher, and physician. He remains one of Judaism's towering figures.

In 1148, when he was 13, Cordoba was invaded by the Almohads, a North African Berber-led Islamic movement that sought to purify Islam of all foreign influences. Jews and Christians were given three options: conversion, exile, or death. The Maimon family remained in Cordoba by feigning conversion. Secretly, they remained Jews. They then moved to Fez, Morocco, which was also under Almohad rule.

In Fez, Maimonides and his family were outwardly Muslim while continuing to live Jewishly in private. When Maimonides' teacher, Rabbi Yehuda HaCohen ibn Shushan, was arrested and executed for secretly following Judaism, the Maimon family fled to the Land of Israel but then settled near Cairo, Egypt, far from the fanatical Almohads. There, Maimonides became the personal physician to Salah-al-Din, the famed Muslim general who defeated the Crusaders and founded the Egyptian Ayyubid dynasty.

In Yemen in 1168, an extreme Muslim cleric came to power and decreed that Yemen's Jews must convert to Islam. Yemen's leading rabbi sent a letter to Maimonides seeking counsel. Maimonides



**Maimonides (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon).**

wrote his famous “Iggeret Teiman” (“Letter to Yemen”), in which he guided Yemen’s Jews on how to weather the oppression. He also received assistance from Salah-al-Din to intervene on behalf of the Yemenite Jews.<sup>28</sup>

This story illustrates how uncertain the situation of Jews living under Islamic rule could be. Maimonides was born into the Jewish Golden Age in Muslim Spain, saw its end, suffered persecution, witnessed the execution of his teacher, and fled for his life. He found refuge in another Muslim-ruled land (Egypt) and rose to a very high position in the court of a renowned Muslim leader, which gave him the opportunity to advise a persecuted Jewish community in another Muslim-ruled land and use his influence with Salah-al-Din to help them.

### **Islam and the Jews in History**

The Muslim–Jewish relationship began in the Arabian Peninsula of the seventh-century, where Jews had been living for centuries. By the sixth-century CE, “Jews were not only to be found in considerable numbers in Arabia but were well integrated into the life and culture of the peninsula.”<sup>29</sup> By the time of Muhammad, Islam’s founder, Jews spoke a Judeo-Arabic dialect, were organized into tribes, and had “assimilated many of the values of desert society.”<sup>30</sup>

Islam’s holy book, the Qur’ān, describes the interactions between Muhammad and Jews—offering an Islamic theological view of these events. Historians, however, do not rely on theology but seek to understand history based on objective sources, such as archaeology.

In 622 CE, Muhammad encountered in Medina a large and long-established Jewish community divided into three tribes.<sup>31</sup> At first, Muhammad tried to convince Medina’s Jews to join his faith,<sup>32</sup> but they would not do so.<sup>33</sup> The Jewish tribes were drawn into the battles between Muhammad’s Muslim followers and Medina’s pagan Arab tribes. The Muslim army was victorious and expelled two of the Jewish tribes.

The fate of the third Jewish tribe, the Banu Qaynuqa, was far more brutal: Muhammad ordered all the men (about 900) executed and gave the women and children to his warriors.<sup>34</sup>

## The Battle of Khaybar

After their expulsion by Muhammad from Medina, the Jewish Banu Nadir tribe took refuge in Khaybar,<sup>35</sup> a thriving Jewish district. Muhammad led his army to Khaybar, laid siege, and, after a brief but fierce battle, the Jewish defenders surrendered.

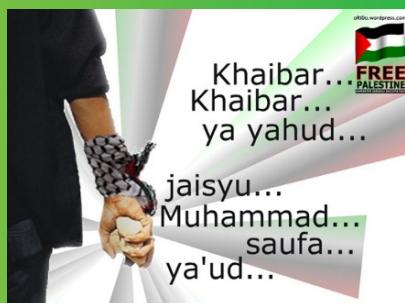
Here, the precedent was set for relations between Muslim authority and a conquered non-Muslim people. The Khaybari Jews' personal safety and property were guaranteed in this treaty of surrender, but they had to pay a 50 percent tax. Qur'anic support for this requirement is found in Surah 9:29: "Make war upon those who have been given the Scripture, until they pay tribute, being brought low."

The phrase "being brought low" is key. Jewish communities were "tolerated" and "protected" with limited rights if they accepted Islam's superior position<sup>36</sup> and paid an annual *jizya*, or poll tax. The Arabic word for this system is *dhimma*, and a protected person is a *dhimmi*. The dhimmi laws became known as the Pact of Umar.

## Khaybar's Legacy Today

The seventh-century Muslim military assault and defeat of the Jews of Khaybar echoes in the 21st-century. At many anti-Israel demonstrations, both in the Muslim world and in western cities, protesters chant in Arabic:

***"Khaybar Khaybar ya Yahud, jaysh-i Muhammad sawf-a ya'ud!"***  
("Khaybar, Khaybar oh Jews, Muhammad's army will return!")



*Meme from a radical Islamist website in Indonesia carrying the anti-Jewish slogan.<sup>37</sup>*

This is a battle cry, calling for a repeat of Muhammad's military defeat and subjugation of the Khaybari Jews as the model for the defeat and destruction of Israel. Its subtext, given its Qur'anic origins, is the demand for Israeli Jews to be returned to the inferior status of dhimmi.

## Expulsion of Jews from Arabia

Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (634–44) pursued a military campaign to conquer the Middle East. “Vast numbers of prisoners of war were brought into Arabia as slaves … the Jewish labor force was no longer necessary,” and the remaining Khaybari Jews were expelled, with many going to the Land of Israel.<sup>38</sup>

## The Pact of Umar: Codifying the Status of Non-Muslims

The Pact of Umar, named after Caliph Umar, one of Muhammad’s most senior and trusted companions, became the main principle governing the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. As the Arab Islamic empire expanded, ruling over newly conquered indigenous peoples, Muslim rulers committed themselves to protecting their dhimmis – the Jews and Christians. In return, “the dhimmis had to pay the jizya and kharaj” (poll and land taxes). If the dhimmis failed

to pay the jizya, the pledge of protection of a dhimmi’s life and property was subject to cancellation, meaning the dhimmi would have to convert, become a slave, go to prison, or be executed.<sup>39</sup>

According to Algerian-born scholar André N. Chouraqui,

*The dhimmi would have to convert, become a slave, go to prison, or be executed.*

*“There were twelve laws that limited the conditions under which the dhimmi was permitted to dwell within the community of the Believers, the first six of which were considered of binding and absolute importance.”<sup>40</sup>*

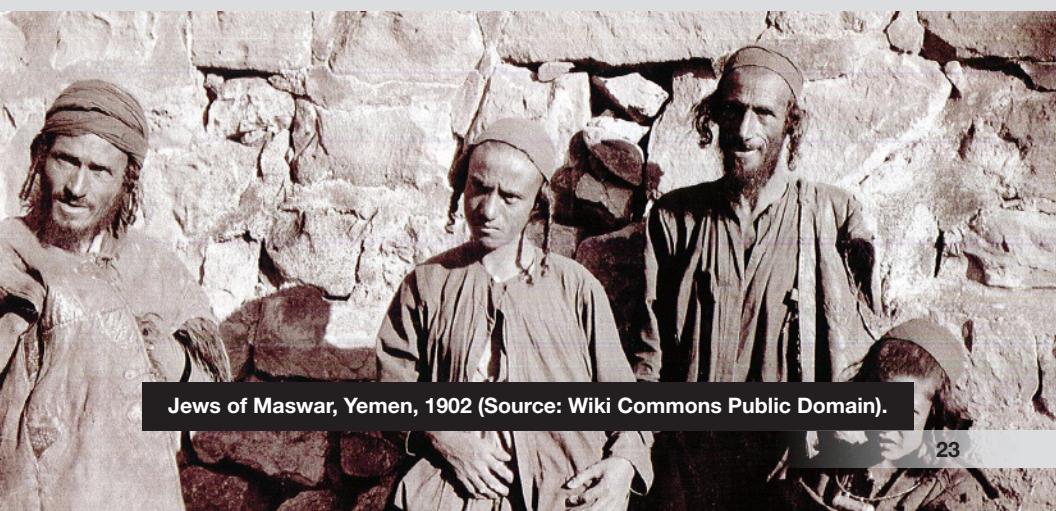
Violation of any of the first six laws was punishable by death.

## **Dhimmis were forbidden to:**<sup>41</sup>

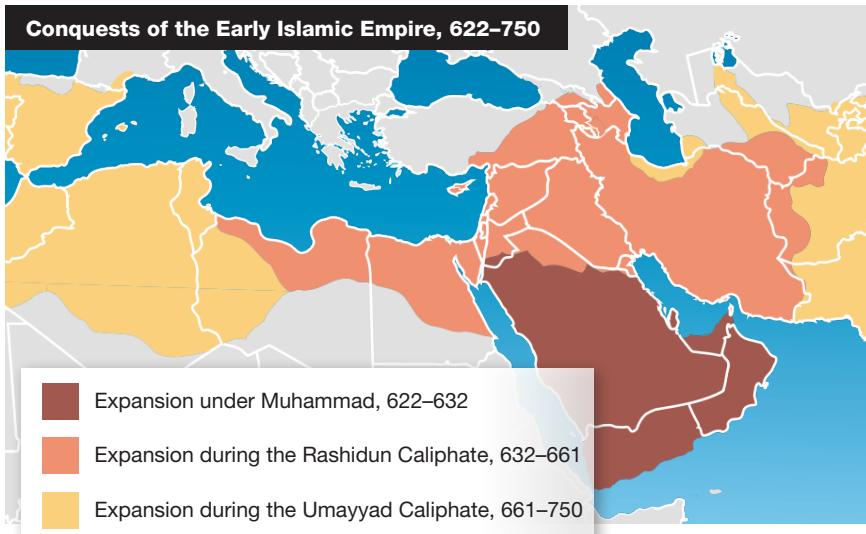
1. Touch the Qur'an lest they mock it or falsify its text
2. Speak of the Prophet in false or contemptuous terms
3. Speak of the faith of Islam with irreverence
4. Marry or touch Muslim women—marriage between a male dhimmi and a Muslim woman also being prohibited (but not between a dhimmi woman and a Muslim man)
5. Do anything that would turn Muslims against their faith
6. Do anything that would aid the enemies of Islam or their spies

*The remaining six laws were not capital crimes but were nonetheless enforced. Dhimmis were:*

1. Compelled to wear distinctive clothes with a sash and a piece of cloth in yellow for the Jews and in blue for the Christians
2. Prohibited from building their homes, synagogues, or churches higher than the Muslims' tallest buildings
3. Prohibited from performing their religious ritual in public or letting their bells, shofars, prayers, or chants be heard in a Muslim city
4. Prohibited from drinking wine in public or, for the Christians, from displaying their crucifixes
5. Required to bury their dead discreetly without letting their prayers or their lamentations be heard
6. Forbidden to own horses (considered noble animals), only donkeys or mules



**Jews of Maswar, Yemen, 1902 (Source: Wiki Commons Public Domain).**

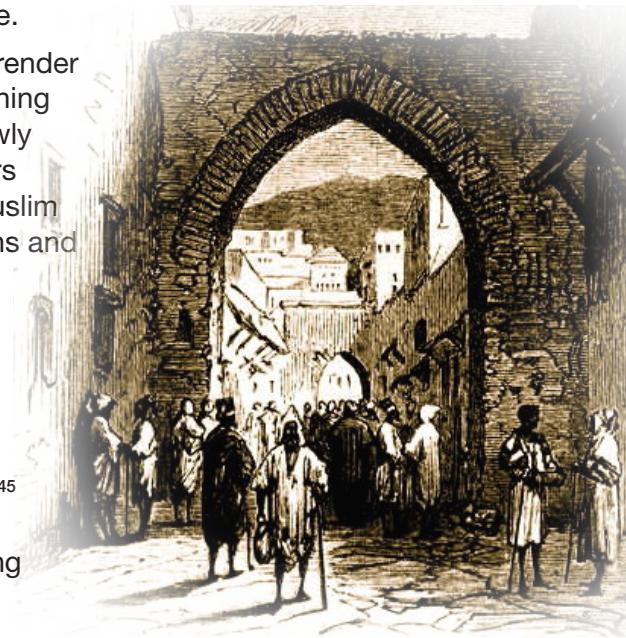


The Jewish experience in Arabia “foreshadowed that of all the peoples subsequently conquered by the Arabs.”<sup>42</sup> In the seventh and eighth centuries, Arab Muslim armies invaded and colonized the eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and parts of Europe. Many indigenous non-Muslim and non-Arab peoples and religions, including centuries-old Jewish communities, came under Arabian Muslim rule.

The Khaybar treaty of surrender became the model governing relations between the newly arrived Muslim conquerors and their majority non-Muslim subjects, mostly Christians and Zoroastrians.<sup>43–44</sup>

### Identifying Badges and “Ghettos”

Early in Islamic history, dhimmis were required to wear identifying garments.<sup>45</sup> These badges came long before similar rules targeting Jews in Christian lands.



The Mellah Gate (Jewish Quarter), 1880.

In 15th-century Morocco, the Marinid dynasty required all Jews of Fez to live in a walled district of the city. This area was called a *mellah*, meaning “salt” in Arabic, probably because the area’s soil had a high salt content. A century later, another Jewish mellah was established in Marrakesh. In the early 19th-century, the ruler of Morocco, Sultan Suleiman, ordered all Jews to live in mellahs. In the cities, these were walled areas with gates. In rural areas, Jews were required to live in separate villages.<sup>46</sup>

### **Islamist Extremism: A Modern Ideology Adapts European Antisemitism**

Syrian-German historian Bassam Tibi writes, “Islam is a religion and a civilization that deserves respect, while Islamism is a political ideology to be subjected to critical inquiry.”<sup>47</sup> Tibi explains that the term

“Islamism” is a translation of the Arabic word *al-Islamiyya*, coined by Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928.<sup>48</sup>

Grounded in this important distinction between *Islam*, the religion, and *Islamism*, the political ideology, Tibi describes a process of the “Islamization of Antisemitism” and identifies antisemitism as a key component of Islamist ideology.<sup>49</sup>



Member of Hezbollah giving Nazi salute.



Haj Amin al-Husseini, the first leader of Palestinian Arab nationalism, dedicated himself to Nazi Germany’s cause. On November 28, 1941, al-Husseini (left) was Hitler’s honored guest in Berlin. Al-Husseini recruited Bosnian Muslims to fight for Nazi Germany, made regular pro-Nazi Arabic radio broadcasts to the Middle East, and used his high level-contacts to prevented the rescue of 4,000 Jewish children, all of whom were murdered. After WWII, he returned to the Middle East and led the effort to destroy Israel at birth.

Islamism is a 20th-century political ideology that combines Islamic teachings with modern European political organizing methods. There are two major strategies Islamists follow: the ballot or the bullet.

Among the violent Islamists are two groups: organizations like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram, among many others, with a global vision to fight against liberal democracy and all unbelievers, including fellow Muslims. Other Islamists include ultra-nationalists, such as Hamas, that have more local or regional agendas while also supporting the ultimate goal of a world ruled by an Islamic theocracy.<sup>50</sup>

Islamism also combined the negative Qur'anic verses regarding Jews with modern European antisemitism imported to the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries. Islamist ideologues leaders such as Sayyid Qutb created a thoroughly modern *Islamist antisemitism* that strongly echoes Nazi-style hatred against Jews. This is part of what fuels many terror groups, both Sunni and Shi'ite.

In a massive global survey on antisemitic attitudes, the Anti-Defamation League measured 100 countries in seven regions. The region with the highest average score of antisemitic attitudes was the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>51</sup>

The Americas	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Middle East and North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Asia	Oceania (Australia, New Zealand)
23%	27%	39%	76%	25%	26%	17%

Tensions surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict play a role in these negative attitudes. However, they are also caused by antisemitic Islamist ideas being spread to hundreds of millions of people in the region. These antisemitic beliefs are not merely antizionist; rather, they reflect specific anti-Jewish stereotypes, including conspiracy theories about Jews controlling governments, banks, and media.

(For an in-depth background on this, see the booklet “Antisemitism at the Heart of Islamist Extremism.”)

## THE FAR-LEFT ISLAMIST ALLIANCE

Many of these right-wing, anti-democratic, antisemitic, homophobic, and misogynistic Islamist movements find support among some Western leftists.

For example, during an anti-Israel “teach-in” in Berkeley in 2006, feminist philosopher Judith Butler replied to a question from the audience about the left’s relationship with the Islamist terror groups Hamas and Hezbollah. She said:

*“I think: Yes, understanding Hamas, Hezbollah as social movements that are progressive, that are on the Left, that are part of a global Left, is extremely important.”*<sup>52</sup>

Eva Illouz, an Israeli leftist often critical of her government’s policies, strongly criticized Butler,

*“To call Hamas and Hezbollah members of the global left is not only an insult to the left, but a serious blow to it. Two armed movements, financed by Iran, calling for Sharia law, Jihad, and the murder of Jews, that practice the sexual purity of women, endorse capital punishment, and are self-declared homophobes cannot belong to any left that I and most people know.”*<sup>53</sup>

Some on the left see in Islamism an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist force, despite Islamism’s oppression or opposition to women, LGBTQ+ people, religious minorities, and democracy.<sup>54</sup>

*(For an in-depth background on this, see the fourth booklet in our series, “Far-Left Antisemitism”)*

## THE “JEWISH QUESTION”:

### *Antisemitism from the 19th Century to Nazi Germany*

Prior to the French Revolution, Jews in Western and Central Europe were forced to live within walled ghettos.<sup>55</sup> The French Revolution overturned the old order, taking power from the monarchs and clerics and giving it to the people. Both the American (1776) and French (1789) Revolutions were the political expression of the “Age of Enlightenment,” which began making Europe more secular and democratic, and led to the creation of modern states.

Napoleon, who declared himself emperor in 1804, expanded the French Empire to most of Europe. “Throughout French-occupied territory, Jewish equality before the law, as indeed legal equality



Cartoon in Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*.

for all inhabitants, was constitutionalized.”<sup>56</sup> Western and Central European Jews experienced the Enlightenment as emancipation. The vast majority of the world’s Jews, however, lived within the Russian Empire, ruled by a monarch. All Jews were segregated in a region called the Pale of Settlement, mostly in today’s Poland.

After Napoléon’s fall in 1815, Jews were not yet fully equal citizens in France, Germany, or England. Yet, as the century progressed, these Jews slowly gained more civil rights. They began assimilating and taking their place in European secular society in the professions, arts, sciences, and economy.

Meanwhile, a reaction by monarchists and the church to the Enlightenment began. They opposed secularization and liberal democracy, which they equated with Jewish emancipation. This is the origin of the antisemitic “Jewish Question” that haunted modern Europe until the 20th-century.

A range of political and social forces were also unleashed. Nationalism, communism, socialism, liberalism, capitalism, secularism, and racism offered competing explanations and solutions to problems in the modern world. There was a constant tug between these forces, often erupting in street violence, revolutions, and wars.

In this environment, the “Jewish Question” became a significant

negative focus for many of these movements, each casting Jews as their enemy. Socialists perceived Jews as central to capitalism, while capitalists saw Jews as leaders of socialism. Nationalists accused Jews of disloyalty, while internationalists imagined Jews as “tribalists.” Different “solutions” to the “Jewish Question” were offered by these movements, including calls for Jews to assimilate (lose their unique identity), or be expelled or returned to ghettos.

In this environment, racial antisemitism emerged. This new antisemitism used bogus scientific claims that Jews were a foreign Semitic “race” that was lethally dangerous to white “Aryan” civilization.<sup>57</sup> The slogan “The Jews Are Our Misfortune” became popularized and later adopted by the Nazis.<sup>58</sup>

### **Nazi Antisemitism: Jews as the “Anti-Race”**

The Nazi state was built on an ideology that viewed human existence as a perpetual life-and-death conflict between the races. They claimed a racial hierarchy with the Aryans (white Germanic Europeans) at the top. Other races such as Slavs, Africans, and the Roma were categorized as Untermenschen (sub-humans).

The Nazis put Jews in a separate category altogether: *Gegenrasse* (German for “anti-race”), the Aryans’ most bitter and eternal enemy. Nazism visualized “the Jew” as a dehumanized disease-carrying parasite contaminating a healthy world.<sup>59</sup>



Nazi poster depicting Jews as parasites infecting the world.

## Redemptive Antisemitism

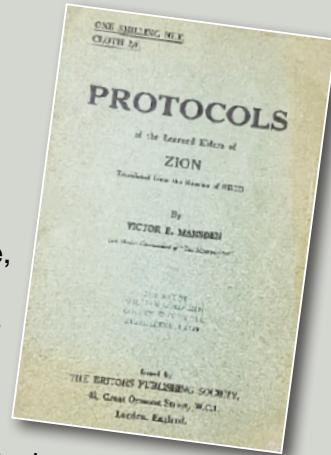
Antisemitic beliefs are adaptable. It was but a short step from imagining “the Jew” as the Antichrist to “the Jew” as the anti-race, leading to the formulation of a cosmic and eternal racial struggle between “Aryan” and “Jew.” Germany’s redemption, indeed that of the entire world, required nothing less than the complete destruction of “the Jews.”

This is redemptive antisemitism,<sup>60</sup> in which Hitler saw himself as the white race’s “savior.” In *Mein Kampf*, he declared, “Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: *by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*”<sup>61</sup>



# Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Warrant for Genocide

The infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, written around 1900 by Russian secret police, remains a main source for most modern antisemitic conspiracy theories. It is “a crude and ugly, but tragically influential, forgery alleging a Jewish world conspiracy.”<sup>62</sup> Its lies about Jews, which have “been repeatedly discredited, continue to circulate today, especially on the internet. The individuals and groups who have used the *Protocols* are all linked by a common dangerous purpose: to spread hatred of Jews.”<sup>63</sup>



The *Protocols* are “purported to plan Jewish domination of the globe through control of political parties, banks, the press and public opinion, ‘casting a net of gold and steel around the world.’”<sup>64</sup> The *Protocols* were proven to be a deliberate hoax in 1935. By then, however, it had long been widely distributed and read years earlier by a young Adolf Hitler, feeding his antisemitic obsessions. For this, historian Norman Cohn dubbed the *Protocols* a “warrant for genocide.”<sup>65</sup>

As the 19th-century gave way to the 20th, antisemitism grew into a mass movement. After its defeat in World War I (1914–1918), a humiliated and economically desperate Germany was plagued by political instability. Racist antisemitic theories promoted by Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Party, which used the *Protocols*, gained greater popularity, propelling the Nazis to power in 1933.



The *Protocols* have been translated into scores of languages. These include every European language, plus Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Turkish, Japanese, Malay, and others.



Killing of Jews in Ivangorod, 1942.

## The Holocaust: An Intercontinental Anti-Jewish Genocide

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

—United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

The Nazi genocide of the Jews was not the first, nor the last, in human history. It was, however, unique in several ways. According to historian Deborah E. Lipstadt:

*“It was the only time in recorded history that a state tried to destroy an entire people, regardless of an individual's age, sex, location, profession, or belief. And it is the only instance in which the perpetrators conducted this genocide for no ostensible material, territorial, or political gain.”*<sup>66</sup>

The genocide progressed in stages under cover of the Second World War, starting with Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. At first, it sent battalion-sized death squads called *Einsatzgruppen* (special deployment groups) to Poland to carry out mass-murder operations, primarily against Jews but also murdering political enemies such as Polish intellectuals, clergy, and communists. After the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* followed the German army as it swept into Eastern Europe. In all, they murdered more than a million Jews, mostly by firing squads, in thousands of locations. Babi Yar, a ravine in Kyiv, Ukraine, was the site



Over a two-day period, 33,000 Jews were murdered in the Babi-Yar Massacre in 1941.

of one such massacre, where German forces and Ukrainian collaborators murdered the entire Jewish population of Kyiv, 33,000 people, over a two-day period in September 1941.<sup>67</sup>

### **Bullets Were Too Expensive: Mass Murder by Gas**

The Nazis deemed these efforts to be “inefficient” and sought more “effective” methods of mass murder in the form of “extermination centers” (Auschwitz, Sobibor, Treblinka, and others), all in occupied Poland. They were designed as mass murder factories and, for efficient lethality, used specifically designed, industrialized gas chambers.

The Nazis pressed their genocide not only throughout continental Europe but also in North Africa, Germany, and its fascist allies, Vichy France, Mussolini’s Italy, established slave labor camps in Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia. An estimated 4,000 Jews died in the Tunisian camps.

In 1941, in a bid to control Iraq’s strategic oil fields, pro-Nazi Arab nationalists in Iraq, with assistance from Berlin, overthrew the pro-British government. As the British retook Iraq, Arab mobs in Baghdad and Basra, incited by Nazi propaganda, committed a two-day massacre of at least 200 Iraqi Jews, known as the Farhud.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Romani Genocide**

The Nazis also considered the Romani peoples (known pejoratively as “Gypsies”) as sub-humans, considering them to

be “enemies of the race-based state.” During the war, the Nazi death machine murdered an estimated 1.5 million Romani by firing squad, by starvation, and in the gas chambers of the death camps.<sup>69</sup> The genocide covered much of Europe.

### **Hitler’s Last Order: Destroy the Jews**

Hitler’s obsession with annihilating the Jews was demonstrated right to the end with his “Political Testament,” his last communication to the German nation, written at 4 a.m. on April 29, 1945, just before he committed suicide in his Berlin bunker. With Berlin lying in ruins, overrun by Allied forces, he declared,

*“Above all I charge the leadership of the nation and their followers with the strict observance of the racial laws and with merciless resistance against the universal poisoners of all peoples, international Jewry.”*<sup>70</sup>

The Allied victory over Nazi Germany came the next day. But for two-thirds of European Jews, some six million men, women, and children, it was too late.

### **Antisemitism Adapts to 21st-Century Politics**

After the shock of the Holocaust, antisemitism was forced into the fringes. Today, however, collective memory of that period is fading fast. Historian Gil Troy describes antisemitism as “a stain on the body politic we just can’t remove.” He elaborates:

*“It not only is the ‘longest hatred,’ but it is the most plastic hatred: adaptable, flexible, artificial, durable and mass produced. It keeps mutating like a computer virus, targeting our ideological vulnerabilities.”*<sup>71</sup>

Antisemitism’s adaptability is seen in the strikingly similar language used by neo-Nazis, Islamist extremists, and many far-left antizionists.

# HOW Antisemitism WORKS

**Group Defines  
Itself as “The  
Good People”**

For Neo-Nazis:  
White Christians

For Islamists: Global Ummah/  
Muslim Community

For Far Leftists:  
The Oppressed and Their Allies

**The “Good  
People”  
Face a Crisis**

Economic Decline

War

Social Divisions and Distrust

**They Blame...**

The Jews

Zionism

Israel

**They Propose  
a “Solution”**

Kill/Expel Jews

Dismantle Zionism

Destroy Israel

## Compare and Contrast: Antisemitic Tropes Connecting the Extremes

This chart demonstrates the similarity in antisemitic language used by three hateful ideologies.

### The common antisemitic stereotypes shared by extremists from different parts of the political spectrum:

JEWS AND/OR ZIONISTS:	WHITE SUPREMacists	RADICAL ISLAMISTS	FAR LEFTISTS
Control the media, news, Hollywood	✓	✓	✓
Control the U.S. and other governments	✓	✓	✓
Are rich and powerful; control banking and finances	✓	✓	✓
Are tribal or racist	✓	✓	✓
Conspire to control the world	✓	✓	✓
Are foreigners, interlopers, invaders, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Are irredeemably evil	✓	✓	✓
Are loyal only to themselves	✓	✓	✓
Deliberately murder children	✓	✓	✓
Are warmongers	✓	✓	✓
Are disloyal, unfaithful, treacherous	✓	✓	✓
Distort, exaggerate, or lie about the Holocaust to profit from it	✓	✓	✓
Use the antisemitism card to silence debate about Israel or the Holocaust	✓	✓	✓

## Learn More

This booklet is part of a series produced by StandWithUs. These volumes detail the different forms of modern antisemitism, covering the following subjects:

- Antisemitism: An Introduction
- Far-Right Antisemitism
- The Antisemitism at the Heart of Radical Islamism
- Far-Left Antisemitism

For more in-depth study of these topics, please visit:

- [www.standwithus.com/library/booklets](http://www.standwithus.com/library/booklets)

For footnotes from this booklet, visit:

- [www.standwithus.com/library/booklets/antisemitism-an-introduction](http://www.standwithus.com/library/booklets/antisemitism-an-introduction)

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# TAKE ACTION!

Whether on campus, in the community, at work, in school, or on social media, you are not helpless in the face of antisemitism.

Here is a list of some actions you can take:

1. Call out antisemitism, whether on social media, at the “water cooler,” or wherever. That said, don’t assume everyone is a malicious antisemite. Many people are simply ignorant and can change if you engage them constructively about antisemitism.
2. Antisemitism exists not only among our political rivals but also in our own political circles. If someone in your “camp” promotes antisemitism, use your shared values as a starting point to educate about why that’s wrong.
3. Report incidents of antisemitism to the proper agencies and institutions (law enforcement, campus administration, StandWithUs, etc.).
4. If it is clear you are confronting a malicious antisemite, arguing is a waste of time. They are baiting you, claiming a right to interrogate you. *Don’t fall into that trap.* But DO educate yourself on the all forms of antisemitism so you can educate others.
5. We are not alone. We have allies in all faith and ethnic communities. Develop relationships with them.
6. A rising tide raises all boats. All forms of bigotry should be of deep concern. Just as we expect our fellow citizens to stand with us against antisemitism, we need to stand with them when they are threatened.

7. Support Israel. Did you know that Israel's 6.7 million Jews make up almost *half* of the world's Jewish population? Supporting Israel can mean many things.

- Support it when it is in danger, particularly if there is a war.
- Support its people even if you disagree with some of its government policies.
- Visit Israel, meet its diverse population of Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Baha'is.
- Read Israeli online newspapers in English. Learn about its politics, dilemmas, challenges, and achievements.
- Support groups like StandWithUs so we can continue telling Israel's amazing story.

# StandWithUs

Through a generous partnership with Evelyn and Dr. Shmuel Katz, StandWithUs has been able to produce cutting-edge print materials for over two decades. Students, community members, and activists worldwide have used our popular booklets and brochures to educate the public about Israel and antisemitism.



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